



North Country Notes

Issue #408

Fall 2011

Cataloging the Peter Saily Collection By David Patrick

NEW-YEAR'S BALL.
The honour of Mr. P. Saily's
company, is requested at a New-Year's
Ball, to take place on Tuesday the 16th
of January, at Mr. Israel Green
Hotel.

Managers. { Capt. SIDNEY SMITH,
 Mr. M. M. STANDISH,
 Mr. CHS. F. DURAND,
 Capt. R. E. DE RUSS

PLATTSBURGH,
 JAN. 15, 1816. }

**ANNIVERSARY OF THE
 ELEVENTH OF SEPTEMBER.**

The honor of Mr. P. Saily's
company is requested at a Ball, on the
11th instant, at 6 o'clock P. M. at
the house of Joseph I. Green, in the
Village of Plattsburgh.

Plattsburgh, Sept. 9, 1817

M. SMITH,
 N. Z. PLATT, L. RANSOM,
 JOHN PALMER,
 JOHN WALWORTH, M. M. STANDISH,
 S. PITCHER, F. L. C. SAILY,
 Managers.

York Governor DeWitt Clinton, Governor George Clinton, General James Wilkinson of the War of 1812, fur trader John Jacob Astor and many people in the county. Some of his descendants were also involved in civic matters in the county and their documents and letters are also found in this collection.

The Clinton County Historical Association museum holds a large collection of papers that had been owned by Peter Saily Esq. of Plattsburgh and many of his descendants. The collection finally landed into the hands of descendant Elizabeth Saily Warren who donated it to the museum in 1993.

Peter Saily (1754-1826) arrived from France in 1783 and settled in Plattsburgh. He built his house on the corner of Cumberland Avenue and Saily Avenue (the house present today is not the original house). He was a prominent businessman, political leader and judge.

The Saily collection consists of 401 articles and comprises letters, deeds, wills, legal papers, survey descriptions, customs documents, inventory lists, invitations and currency. Many of his letters concern important matters and were written by well-known people in the state including New

Since 1993, several attempts have been made to catalog the collection of material. Lists had been made that described each article, but unfortunately, the items were not individually numbered. Finding a particular item out of 401 articles scattered in several boxes was difficult. I was asked if I wanted to tackle this project. I viewed it as a challenge.

Starting in January 2011, the individually typed lists made by previous catalogers were scanned into the computer using optical character recognition (OCR) software and converted to editable text. The lists were extensively edited and spell checked and duplicate entries were removed. The entries were then imported into Excel so the items could be numbered and additional columns of information added. Each item was given an accession number in the form of 93.014.xxxx.

Cataloging the Peter Saily Collection continued

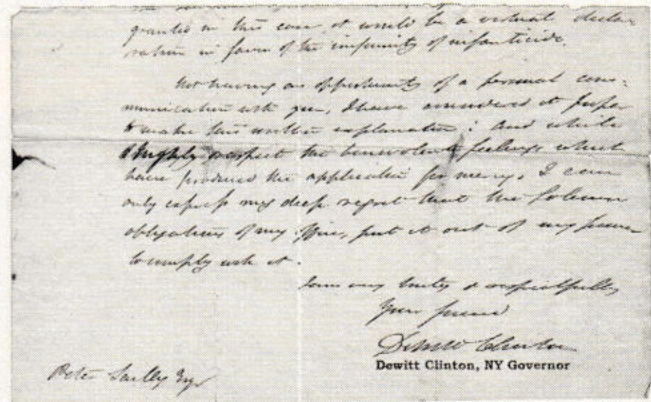
After the Excel worksheet was created, it was now time for the hard part. All of the items had been placed in archival folders in several acid free boxes but their order was random. Using the "Find" function in Excel, specific information from each item was entered. The information entered was either a date or a name on the document. The search would usually find several close matches and additional inspection of the document was needed. Unfortunately, it was found that some documents were identical or were duplicates, and afterwards, additional inspection was needed to ensure the right document was selected. An accession number was then written on the document in pencil and also on its folder or envelope. The box number the item was placed in was added to the worksheet. This was repeated over 400 times for the next six months. Patience is a virtue.

After completion of the cataloging, the Excel document was prepared for input into PastPerfect, an archiving program used by museums to inventory their collections. Excel proved good for this task. In July, the 401 rows by 13 columns were loaded into PastPerfect using the Import function (a task in itself) and the archiving project was complete. The museum staff now has a comprehensive description of each item at their fingertips.

A number of very interesting documents was found during the cataloging. The first item found was a letter from New York Governor DeWitt Clinton to Peter Saily, written on February 28, 1825, about the pending execution of Peggy Facto. She was accused of strangling her newborn with a cord and throwing the child into a fire. The governor wrote to Saily and quoted what Judge Reuben Walworth said in his official report: "I became satisfied that the woman was perfectly abandoned and depraved and that she had destroyed this child and probably the one the year previous, not for the purpose of hiding her shame, which was open and apparent to every body that saw her, but for the purpose of ridding herself of the trouble of taking care of them

and providing for their support."

Clinton also noted that the judge sent a petition signed by some villagers suggesting that he pardon her if she would go back to Canada, or secondly, commute the sentence to life imprisonment. After reviewing the facts, the governor wrote: "I can



therefore see nothing in the two first suggestions which would warrant the extension of mercy." He also noted that some "enlightened and benevolent men" did not believe in this type of justice but that the crime of murder was a justifiable reason to execute her. Facto was hung a few weeks later on March 18, in the arsenal lot on Broad Street where St. John's school used to be.

An odd letter was written by the Under Sheriff J. D. Warren in Plattsburgh on March 20, 1855 about the pending execution of Joseph Centerville, who had killed his sister-in-law. He was to be hung at the County Prison yard on the 28th between the hours of 12 and 2 PM. The letter was written to L. D. Brock Esq. and he was asked to (basically) RSVP for the event. Years later, Samuel Vilas built his home on the site, and more recently, his house was incorporated into the M.A.I. school on North Catherine Street, and became part of the Catherine Gardens development.

Two letters written by fur trader John Jacob Astor were found in the Saily collection. The first one was sent from NYC on November 30, 1813 to George Astor Jr. in care of Peter Saily (was

Cataloging the Peter Saily Collection continued

George Jr. the son of his older brother George?). The second letter was written to Peter Saily on December 18, 1813. In Astor's first letter, he was concerned about the safety of furs being transported on boats from Canada (he suggested that batteaus instead of sloops be used due to the river conditions north of the border). He had also heard that a Vermonter had armed a boat and was patrolling the east side of Lake Champlain as a Privateer (this was during the War of 1812). He said that if this was true, great care must be taken. In the letter to Saily written a few weeks later, he also mentioned the shipment of furs and a dispute he had related to customs and someone making false accusations. He also mentioned the Privateer sailing on the east side of the lake. Finally he asked Saily to destroy the letter addressed to George Astor Jr. (thankfully, this was not done).

John Jacob Astor

Appletons' Cyclopaedia of American Biography, 1900, v. 1, p. 112

Peter Saily was also head of Customs in the District of Champlain which stretched from Rouses Point to Plattsburgh. The most interesting item in the collection related to customs was a small booklet titled "Instructions for the Inspector of Customs for the Champlain District" that was dated 1810. It described the principal duties of masters of ship vessels. Another document dated in 1826 was an abstract of

expenses incurred for prosecuting several smugglers in 1816, 1822, and 1823. Peter's son, F.L.C. Saily was later appointed Collector of Customs in Plattsburgh by the US Treasury Department on May 9, 1826 and this appointment document is also in the collection.

The masters of Ships and of vessels of any size, are requested to pay a strict attention to the above extracts and to perform their duty as the law directs; as they have heretofore disregarded the directions contained in the 93d section of the law; they are now informed that its provisions, and the law generally, shall be rigidly enforced.

The Custom-House-Office of the District of Champlain, is kept at *Marinus Francis Durand's Esqr.* at Cumberland Head; where entries are to be made; manifests delivered and clearances and permits obtained. The north point of Cumberland Head affords a good harbour, against the effects of a south wind; and the south point a sufficient shelter from north wind.

Collector's office, District of Champlain, May 22d 1810.

PETER SAILY, Collector.

An interesting letter from General Wilkinson was found addressed to Saily on January 6, 1814. I read it and soon realized the significance of it. I have written considerably on the history of the War of 1812 in the Town of Champlain. I knew Wilkinson and his troops were there at the end of March in 1814. He had invaded Canada from Champlain and fought at the stone mill in Lacolle on his failed attempt to conquer Montreal. In the letter, Wilkinson asked Saily about the conditions of the roads were from Champlain to L'acadie and whether the roads could handle large carriages. He also asked Saily to find out what the disposition of the troops were at Isle aux Noix, St. Johns, L'acadie, St. Philippe, the "half way house" and Chambly. Finally, he asked Saily to meet him at Chateauguay a few days from then so he could discuss some things he did not want to put on paper.

Cataloging the Peter Saily Collection continued

**Melancthon Lloyd Woolsey
County Clerk, 1802**

Also in this collection are a number of papers from Peter Saily's relatives and in-laws such as F.L.C. Saily, Col. Carlos Adolphus Waite who served in the Mexican and Civil Wars, and Capt. Francis Russell who was killed in a fight with Seminoles Indians in Florida.

Probably the biggest group of documents in the collection are the deeds for land in the county that Peter Saily, his children and their heirs owned over a one hundred year period. The names on the deeds are a who's who of prominent Clinton County residents: Melancthon Lloyd Woolsey, Pliny Moore, Zephaniah Platt, Theodorus Platt, Nathaniel Platt, Charles Platt, Levi Platt, Jonas Platt, James Bailey, Benjamin Mooers, Benjamin Graves and John Addoms of Cumberland Head as well as many other names that are not as easily recognized.

Finally, a number of printed invitations to parties, teas and celebrations were found. These included invitations to Israel Green's tavern in 1816 and 1820 for a ball and a celebration on the birth of George Washington, an invitation to tea from the "cantonment" in 1821 and an invitation to a ball in 1817 celebrating September 11 and the Battle of Plattsburgh (this event was held at the house of Joseph I. Green). A poster for the Battle of Plattsburgh events in 1844 included a procession by men who had served in the war 30 years earlier. That was surely an event to remember. A speech was given then by Amasa Corbin Moore, son of Judge Pliny Moore of Champlain. That speech has been

preserved in another collection.

With the Peter Saily collection fully cataloged, many interesting documents were found. People will now be able to research these papers more easily. Off to the next project.

Clinton County Historical Association thanks David Patrick not only for the time, energy and expertise he devoted to the Peter Saily collection project, but also for his forethought in pursuing a grant for the museum through his workplace. CCHA was the grateful recipient of a \$1,000 check from IBM in acknowledgment of David's many hours of volunteering at CCHA.

PHOTOS FROM RECENT EVENTS



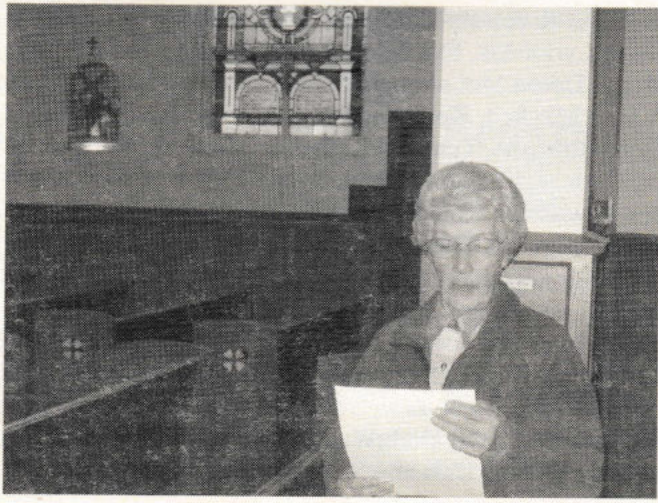
Above: Members of the Daughters of the American Revolution, Saranac Chapter, viewing Civil War objects they currently have on exhibit at CCHA. Below: CCHA Members and Friends from Lake Forest Senior Living Community enjoy an afternoon of touring and tea at the museum.



Photos from Recent Events continued



Clockwise from top left: Bob St. John hosts a tour of the Old Frog Farm, participants in the Champlain tour, kids of all ages enjoyed playing dress up during Civil War Day co-sponsored with the NNYAC Genealogical Society. The tour of Ellenburg kicked off with Yvonne Taylor at St. Edmund's Church and included a stroll through Sheldon Hill Cemetery.



Other News and Upcoming Events

2011 Lighthouse Docents

Anne & Jim Bailey
 Carolyn Burakowski
 Joan Clark
 Tricia Davies
 Alita Desso
 Kathy Devins
 Heather and Fred Finn
 Roger Harwood
 Carol & Frank Hochreiter
 with Matt and Olivia
 Peter & Claudia Hornby
 Scott and Carol Johnson
 Helen Nerska
 Nancy Olsen
 Pat Parker
 Kim & Bernie Peine
 Marilyn Smith
 Yvonne Smith
 Nancy Tyrell
 Lynn Valenti

In July, Clinton Community College hosted a mini-exhibit from CCHA during their recent celebration of the 100th Anniversary Gala of Hotel Champlain II and the release of Richard Frost's new book on Bluff Point, in conjunction with their new capital fundraising campaign.

Photo at right: From our collections – a white lace graduation dress c. 1911, cream swiss dot fabric parasol, a wide brimmed green straw hat and the Plattsburgh High School Class of 1909 graduation photo.

That Class of 1909 included Roswell Hague, Maud Rugar, Bertha St. Louis, Katherine Smith, Frances Haley, Lee Ellenwood, Edna Banfield, Agnes McCarthy, Jennie Hinman, Calvin Bridges, Dorothy Truesdell, Alta Grismer, Pearl Mitchell, Florence Levy, Whitney Sweet, William Sperling and Clifford Arnold.



Memberships, Donations and Other Support Received

Robert and Mary Adams, Joe and Janet Alexander, Ron and Carol Allen, Algonquin Chap. ADK, Stasia Arcarese, Ara Asadorian, Cliff Barrette, John Barton, Thomas Beach, Donna and Jack Bell, Rod and Christine Bigelow, Bill McBride Chevrolet, Ken and Ada Bills, Dave and Carol Bodah, Stella Boire, Robert and Helen Booth, Brown Funeral Home, Carolyn Burakowski, Emily and Edgar Burde, Bruce Butterfield, William and Margaret Caldon, Caterpillar Foundation, Kathy and David Champagne, Chapel Hill Foundation, U. Chase, Walter and Nancy Church, Jim Ciborski, City of Plattsburgh, Jane Claffey, Joan Clark, Jim and Susan Coffey, Shirley Coffey, Bill Conway, Linda Coryer, Herb and Irene Cottrell, Luke and Lisa Cyphers, Bob and Jean Davis, Jim and Caroline Dawson, John Dawson, Janet Deeb, Suzanne DeForge, Heidi Dennis and Roger Columbus, Msgr. Lawrence Deno, Alita and Mark Desso, Nelson Disco, Anne Doherty, Julie Dowd, Jerome and Janet Downs, John Drown, Bainbridge and Ellen Eager, Glenn Estus, Ron and Linda Everleth, Joan Fitzpatrick, Ellen Fleming, Mason and Joan Forrence, Nancy Frederick, Robert Garrow, Maurice and Gina Gilbert, Noel Sowley and Maurica Gilbert, Irving and Eleanor Goldman, Alfreda Guay, Ramona Harlem, Steve Harstedt, Francesca Hartnett, Rebecca Hayes, Bob Heins, Frank and Carol Hochreiter, Claudia Hornby, Jacqueline Huru, IBM, Arnold and Theresa Jensen, Euclid and Susanne Jones, Marceline Kavanagh, Keeseville Pharmacy, Caroline Kehne, Susan and Richard Kelly, Bill and Jane Kelting, Debra Kimok, Don Kinneston and Peg Donegan, Carol Klepper, Tim and Jeanette Kononan, William Krueger and Suzy Johnson, Dorothy Lacombe, Arthur Lajoy, Connie Lalonde, Arthur and Rosemary Lamarche, Bill Laundry, Rick Laurin, Chantal LeFebvre, Roland and Martha Lockwood, Dennis and Marie Lyriotakis, Eva Martin, Marti Martin, Steve Martin, Beverly Maynard, Marshall and Ann Maynard, Pat Maynard, Mark and Deena McCullough, Meadowbrook Healthcare, Ann Merkley, Nancy Meyers, Howard and Myrna Miller, Charles and Joan Mitchell, Kelly and Miles Moody, Henry Morlock, Marilyn Morton, Ruth Mowry, Jim and Janet Murnane, Pat and Sheila Murnane, Tom and Katherine Murnane, William and Barbara Murray, Anna Nardelli, Merrie Nautel, Alexander Nerska, Chris and Sandra Neuzil, Sylvia Newman, Sam Northshield, Jack and Joanna Orr, Jim Papero, Celine Paquette, Victor Pawlewicz, Chuck and Shelley Payson, Peru Central School, Peru Pharmacy, Pfizer Foundation, Plattsburgh Professional Firefighters, Gordon and Sandra Pollard, Colleen Prescott, Walker Funeral Home, Pearl Rabin, Jim and Grace Racette, Christine Racine, Donna Racine, Rodney Ralston, Sharon Ratner, Marianne Rector, Geri Rickert, Kevin and Melissa Roser, Bill and Bunny Rowe, Thomas Rummey, Ed and Jean Schiffler, Kathy Schumacher, Fred Smith, Curt and Michele Snyder, John and Joanne Southwick, Sowley Management, Merritt and Joan Spear, Edward Stansbury, Noel and Debbie Stewart, Marty Strack, Dave and Roberta Sullivan, Jack Swan, John and Louise Tanner, Town of Beekmantown, Town of Peru, Donna Toye, Hunt True, Tony and Joanne Vaccaro, Lynn Valenti, Stuart and Linda Voss, Marlene and Irwin Waite, Alan and Jackie Walker, Dick Ward, Steve and Sue Welch, Kay Wellman, Phyllis Wells, Peggy Whipple, Lynn Wilke, William and Lucy Wilson, Dale and Ruth Wolfe and Clinton County.

Other News and Upcoming Events

CCHA Awarded Grant Funding for Research and Interpretation of Native American Artifacts

The Board of Trustees and Staff of the Clinton County Historical Association are pleased to announce the awarding of a grant from the Champlain Valley National Heritage Partnership. This one-time, single purpose \$10,000 grant is making it possible for CCHA to research its collection of Native American artifacts in anticipation of a new exhibit. This funding is specific to the Research and Interpretation of Native American Artifacts at CCHA and comes from a 2010 Champlain Quadracentennial Legacy Grant.

Currently CCHA Staff, aided by interns from SUNY Plattsburgh's Anthropology and History Departments, are focused on cataloging the collection, which ranges from stone tools to baskets and beadwork. This research and new interpretation will culminate with an exhibit focused on the history of Native American people in the region that now includes Clinton County. The exhibit is scheduled to open spring 2012, with associated public programming, especially for school groups and families, planned for spring and summer.

We expect to use the same input technique described by David Patrick to insert the eight hundred plus artifacts catalogued by the interns into PastPerfect via Excel. All the catalogued items then will be fully accessible for research purposes.



CCHA Intern Melissa Peck researches Native American artifacts for Champlain Valley National Heritage Partnership Grant project.

Our interns sign a *Learning Contract and Internship Proposal* which is approved by both SUNY and CCHA. The contract specifies the work to be performed, evaluation methods, start and finish dates and number of credits.

Melissa Peck has just finished her term with us after having worked most of the summer and into early fall. Melissa concentrated on the cataloguing of our native American artifacts and the planning of the upcoming exhibit. She graduates in December with an Anthropology major and an Archaeology minor. Chris Sanders, currently interning at CCHA, is a history major with a photography minor. He is assisting us with data input, inventory processes and photographic cataloguing.

Programs Winter 2011

Monday, December 5: 7PM

Book signing & talk by Jack Bilow

with commentary on his War of 1812 books

At CCHA, refreshments follow. Free and open to the public.

Thursday, December 8: 5-8PM

3rd Annual Holiday Shopping Night at the Plattsburgh Museum Campus (CCHA, BOPA, CVTM)

Find unique gifts and support local museums at the same time!

Book signing by Gordie Little at CCHA from 6-8pm

Bring the family and hear a local legend share his newest publication "Little Champy Goes to School." Pick up a signed copy for the kids or grandkids.

Saturday, December 17: 10AM-2PM

Ornaments from Nature Make 'n' Take Workshop

Kids can create decorations inspired by nature and made from natural materials. At CCHA, free and open to the public.

CLINTON COUNTY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION
98 Ohio Avenue
Plattsburgh, NY 12903
Phone: 518-561-0340
www.clintoncountyhistorical.org

Issue 408, Fall 2011

NONPROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PLATTSBURGH, NY
PERMIT No. 185

Board of Trustees

Helen Nerska, President

William Laundry, Vice President

Jan Couture, Secretary

Maurica Gilbert, Treasurer

James Bailey

Luke Cyphers

Heidi Dennis

Julie Dowd

Geri Favreau

Richard Jarrette

Timothy Kononan

Mary Nicknish

William Rowe

Current Resident or:

New in the Gift Shop

The War of 1812 in the Champlain Valley by Allan S. Everest. A reprint by Syracuse University Press and now available in print again. Softcover, \$19.95 As the 200th anniversary approaches, there will be a steady stream of new books about the War of 1812. But for readers interested in the effects of the war on the ground in the Champlain Valley, there remains just one foundational text, now available for the first time in paper by Syracuse University Press. Although first issued in 1981, Allan S. Everest's *The War of 1812 in the Champlain Valley* is still required reading for those hoping to understand the Plattsburgh campaign, considered critical to the war. *From the Adirondack Almanack.*

Hotel Champlain to Clinton Community College— A Chronicle of Bluff Point by Richard B. Frost. 2011. This lavishly illustrated softcover looks at the history of CCC's home from 1890 up through today. After a sixty-year reign as a resort hotel, the Hotel Champlain closed in 1951. For the following 16 years it was operated as Bellarmine College. Since 1969, Bluff Point has been the home of Clinton Community College. A great Christmas present at \$22.95.

For young readers-The Iroquois, The Six Nations Confederacy by Mary Englar, \$8.95, The Mohicans by Weintraub and Dunn, \$6.50 and Life in a Longhouse Village by Bobbie Kalman, \$8.95.

Last copies— now out of print: The Mohican World 1680-1750 and The Mohicans and Their Land, both by Shirley W. Dunn (softcover). \$24.00 each.