



North Country Notes

Issue #415

Spring 2015

Jean Arthur and Plattsburgh, N.Y.

By David Palmieri

Between her birth in Plattsburgh on October 17, 1900 and her death in Carmel, California on June 19, 1991, Jean Arthur squeezed in a 50 year acting career that began as perhaps the most idealistic of America's Sweethearts – a tradition Mary Pickford began and that continues today with Jennifer Lawrence – and ended with her transformation into a truly unique, let us say eccentric, performer in television, the theater and the university classroom. At her peak from 1935 to 1945, she was extremely popular, well-paid, and kept her studio, Co-



*Jean Arthur Publicity Photo
Mid-1930s*

lumbia Pictures, in the black by starring in a series of profitable films, some classic, and some potboiler, that all benefited from her luminous presence.

At birth she was Gladys Georgiana Greene. Her father Hubert Greene's English family

had settled in St. Albans, Vermont after the Revolutionary War. Eighteen-years old in 1881, he joined millions seeking adventure in the west and established himself in the Dakota Territory as a photographer. There, he met the daughter, Johanna Augusta Neilson, of a family of post-Civil War Norwegian immigrants. Johanna would become his wife and the mother of his three sons and daughter. When Hubert's studio in Fargo failed, he decided to move his family back east and settled, probably in 1897, in Plattsburgh. When Gladys was born, Hubert was working as an assistant at the Woodward Photography Studios on Clinton Street in the still standing Hager's Block. After renting three apartments in Plattsburgh, the family disappears from the City Directory in 1903.



*Jean Arthur Fashion Photo
1920's*

Gladys Greene's career in front of the cameras begins in Manhattan during World War I. The story goes that the client of a photography studio where she worked offered her a modeling job. Gladys was soon earning a living at it. In 1922, after some experience as an extra at their Astoria

Jean Arthur Continued

studio, she signed a contract with Paramount Pictures, and she and her mother moved to Hollywood. It was then that Gladys decided the time had come to give herself a performing name and she invented Jean Arthur to honor two heroes: Jeanne d'Arc (Joan of Arc), the savior of France, and England's King Arthur. The new Jean Arthur felt that her life would be heroic, and so it was.



Jean Arthur in *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*
1939

It took thirteen years to learn her craft and become a star. When the talkies arrived in 1927, audiences discovered her distinctive husky voice, compared to "a thousand tinkling bells" by her most astute director, Frank Capra. By 1930, however, she was too old for ingénue roles and decided her big chance for success



Gary Cooper and Jean Arthur, *Plainsmen*
1936

had come and gone. She returned to New York and acted in the theater. Then, trading on good reviews, she got a second shot at Hollywood

and in 1934 signed with Columbia. Her performance in John Ford's comedy *The Whole Town's Talking* caught the attention of Capra who cast her in her breakout role as journalist Babe Bennett in *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town*.



Jean Arthur in *You Can't Take It With You*
1938

For the next ten years she created some of the most unforgettable characters in film history. Annie Oakley opposite Gary Cooper in *The Plainsman*; Alice Sycamore, the sane daughter of Lionel Barrymore's beautifully insane idealist in *You Can't Take It With You*; and her favorite and perhaps greatest performance, Clarissa Saunders, the cynical Capitol Hill secretary who schools Jimmy Stewart in the Senate's corrupt ways in *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*. These memorable roles were created by an artist whose meticulous nerve-wracking preparation for scenes was legendary.

The Jean Arthur that Plattsburgh honors in 2015 with a plaque had a tortured relationship with the city. She never owned her birth here and, in fact, told a *Collier's* reporter in 1950 that she was born in Manhattan. All is forgiven. Like other cities around the country who honor their stars of Hollywood's Golden Age, the people of Plattsburgh today begin their celebration of an actress who wrote her own rules and, starting from within their city limits, made a unique and enduring contribution to the Seventh Art.

President's Report for 2015

We had a banner year and about the end of October we were out of breath - but gladly so. You may wonder sometimes – are we flying by the seat of our pants or is there some force bigger than ourselves pushing and pulling us through? There is a force, so to speak.

Last year we used our strategic plan to help us with our interpretive plan – which led to a number of actions, including the reorganization of the interior of our building and a 4 phase plan, to deal with the exterior of our building. All our actions fall under the goals laid out through our strategic plan so we are using these ‘goals’ as a starting point for our 2014 annual report.

When Melissa Peck, our Director/Curator, and I sat down to look back at this year, it became very obvious that – first there was a lot to report – and second this banner year was a result of strong team work between our Director and our Volunteers. This was Melissa’s first full year as Director/Curator and her third year working with CCHA. Her spirit is infectious and her talents are many, and we are grateful she chose us.

One of our major goals at the CCHA is to collect and preserve Clinton County artifacts. Every year, we receive hundreds of objects to be considered for acquisitions. This year, our collections committee accepted over 700 artifacts into the permanent collection. The collections committee meets monthly, to review all incoming donations, and we often use local experts to help us identify and assess our collections.

We also continue to find ways to make the collection more accessible to the public. Our collection of over 30,000 objects is maintained in a database by volunteers who this year were responsible for inputting hundreds of new catalog entries into the system. Separate from the permanent collection, we also house an extensive research library. Louise Patinelli, completed an inventory of the library creating a database of those materials, making them readily available for our numerous research requests.

A recent addition to this library was a collection of files given to the CCHA by the City of Plattsburgh, which documented Jim Bailey’s research over the years as the City of Plattsburgh Historian. These files are currently in the process of being integrated into our library.

Volunteer Roger Black continues to spend hours digitizing and restoring our collection of glass plate negatives.

His work has made these one-of-a-kind images available to the public.

2014 was a breakthrough year for CCHA’s exhibits and programs. With Roger Black’s expertise and a grant provided by the Champlain Valley National Heritage Partnership, CCHA installed the first touchscreen exhibit in Northern, NY highlighting the history of the Catholic Summer School Educational/Resort Campus in Cliff Haven.

The gallery housing this new exhibit was also renovated with a Destination/Tourism theme. New colors and an interactive photo wall helped to illustrate the history of vacation and hospitality in the County, showcasing many forgotten Inns and Hotels that once lined the roads of the County. Support from the Holiday Inn at Plattsburgh, UFirst Federal Credit Union and Adirondack Mall Realty made this new gallery possible.

An exhibits committee meets every month to plan and design new Museum exhibits. Two new touchscreen exhibits have been released this spring and were also funded by the Champlain Valley National Heritage Partnership. They highlight the history of the Plattsburgh Barracks and Clinton County’s Civil War veterans.

In addition to new exhibits, we offered a variety of programs to the public in 2014. For children and families, we began the year with the Clinton County Family Heritage Interview Series, where we invited families to participate in video documentation of their family history.

Jan McCormick and Andy Black joined us in February adding to the 2014 Snowball events where CCHA joined other local organizations in celebrating winter throughout the month of February., with ian “Adirondack Survivor” program.

Jan McCormick, of History Out of The Box, lead a series of Junior Docent workshops at the Museum highlighting the history of Plattsburgh’s Barracks The series culminated with a special forum lead by Clinton County Historian, Anastasia Pratt. Former Airmen and civilian personnel from the Plattsburgh Air Force Base joined the junior docents for a public information session.

Combined Report Continued

In the summer, Matthew Hewson continued CCHA's *Civil War Youth Camp*, introducing youth aged 9-14, to the life of a Civil War Soldier. A new youth camp was rolled out this year in commemoration of the Officer Training Camps in Plattsburgh. The "*Citizen Soldier Youth Camp*," was also designed by Matt Hewson and funded in part by the Chapel Hill Foundation. This program highlighted the history of the officer training camps in Plattsburgh and their national impact during WWI.

John Krueger, City of Plattsburgh Historian held four walking tours on the Old Base. Visitors of all ages enjoyed a guided stroll around the Oval with John, one of the County's most highly regarded historians.

Our education committee is currently in the process of setting up a travelling school program with the 4th grade students at Saranac Elementary. Jan Couture, CCHA Secretary and Town of Saranac Historian, will be working with teachers to develop an education series covering the early history of the County.

Other programs in 2014 included presentations and book signings on local history topics, featuring local historians, Vickie Evans, Helen Nerska, Joe Bebo, Richard Frost, Roger Black, and Penny Clute.

Special guests from Florida, Don and Barbara Benjamin surprised us this year when they announced that their new book, "Remembering the Royal Savage Inn" would only be sold at the CCHA, with all proceeds going to benefit the Museum. They joined us in July for a very well attended book-signing.

Partnerships with professional archaeologists and preservationists allowed us to offer a very unique service to the public this year. In April we held our first ever collections workshop with professional textile conservator, Abby Zoldowski and Museum consultant Jan McCormick. Attendees learned the basics of textile preservation and proper handling methods. In September, Ted Comstock former curator at the Adirondack Museum donated his time to the Museum to perform verbal appraisals at our 2nd Annual Out of the Attic Antique Appraisal.

In October, SUNY Plattsburgh Archaeologists, Dr. Christopher Wolff and Dr. Andy Black joined us for the second year in celebrating International Archaeology Day. Members of the public were invited to bring in their relics for identification and to also enjoy a display of Native American artifacts collected by local historian, Thomas Pray.

In addition to programs and exhibits, Publications are another way the CCHA promotes the history of Clinton County. Backed by a grant from the Champlain Valley National Heritage Partnership, this month the CCHA Civil War Sesquicentennial Committee has announced the publishing of "Clinton County: Civil War Record: 1861-1865." This book represents the culmination of a 4 year project to commemorate the 150th Anniversary of the American civil war. The book includes the names of over 5,200 soldiers who enlisted in Clinton County and over 1,000 buried in County Cemeteries. Town historians throughout Clinton County were provided with copies.

A group of over 10 volunteers on the Lighthouse Committee, headed by CCHA Past President, Roger Harwood, open the doors to the Bluff Point Lighthouse every Sunday in the summer for visitors to Valcour Island. In addition to welcoming visitors, this group is also responsible for creating the numerous displays in the Lighthouse that interpret the history of the Island and Lake Champlain. Currently, the lighthouse is undergoing a facelift through a project funded by the Department of Environmental Conservation. Updates on the project can be found on the Bluff Point Lighthouse's new facebook page.

Our activities are for the benefit of the entire County, and we reach out to the community and collaborate as much as possible. To do so, we partner with local museums, schools and other institutions to share resources and coordinate programs. This year we had numerous opportunities to be involved with a variety of different organizations and individuals, through programs and social media.

In addition to those opportunities mentioned previously, we provided input to the Lakes to Locks Blueway Trail project, where members of our Board sat on a committee to develop a point of interest inventory for

Combined Report Continued

Clinton County. CCHA Vice President Geri Favreau is also leading a committee on the Museum Campus to improve signage. Throughout the year, we host and support the Adirondack Coast Cultural Alliance, by participating in monthly meetings and the County-wide Museum Weekend in June.

In the spring, two town history tours were held in conjunction with the Town Historians of Chazy and Schuyler Falls. Three CCHA board members sat on a committee with the Friends of the Old Stone Barracks, offering support and consultation to the group.

In commemoration of the 200th Anniversary of the Battle of Plattsburgh in September, we worked with youth from the Work Experience Program to build a float for the Annual Battle of Plattsburgh Parade. Later in the fall, we collaborated with Clinton County to host an Intercounty committee for the Adirondacks meeting at the Museum, where over 30 representatives from 14 different counties attended.

Our audience is continuously growing with the use of social media. Our facebook page continues to attract interest. This year we reached over 1,200 likes, or followers. Weekly, we reach nearly 1500 people with our posts. Thank you, Julie Dowd, for making this such an interesting communication. Our local media also deserves recognition here. The Plattsburgh Press, Denton Publications and the Lake Champlain Weekly have assisted us with promoting our activities. And thank you to Gordi Little and Calvin Castine for their support. They have taped and broadcast three events here this year – our Exhibit opening, archeology day and the release of our Civil War Record book.

And we have a new web site. Melissa Peck created it, and the new format is easier to manipulate by staff, with no coding involved. With this, we are able to keep the website updated and keep our members more informed.

Throughout the year, the Museum applies for a variety of grants and also is host to a variety of fundraisers. This year we raised over \$39,000 in grants for a renovation project, exhibits, and historic markers. The largest grant of \$30,000 was given to us by the County from the Tobacco Settlement Money Funds. With this

grant we will renovate the front entrance of the building, by rebuilding the wooden canopy and replacing the deteriorating cement steps.

Our membership and funds from the County continue to be a significant source of income for the Association. These funds are used to off-set the operational expenses of the Association.

Other significant fundraisers include the Annual Appeal, our Annual Street Drive, our Clinton County Art Show/Book Sale, our Out of the Attic Antique Appraisals, and sales through our gift shop.

All of this would not be possible without the support of our memberships and volunteers. We were privileged to invite 62 volunteers to our Volunteer appreciation party this year. We need more volunteers so please call us!

I don't want 2014 to pass without expressing my heartfelt appreciation to the CCHA Board. The Executive Committee – Geri Favreau – Vice President, Jan Couture – Secretary, Bill Laundry – Treasurer – along with Melissa Peck, meets regularly in an effort to make our board meetings more efficient. Committee chairs are John Conley – Building and Grounds, Geri Favreau – Fund Raising and Membership and the Sesquicentennial Civil War Committee, Julie Dowd – Communications and Outreach, Roger Harwood – Lighthouse, Jan Couture – Education, Ellen Adams – Collections, Bill Laundry – Budget & Finance, and Melissa holding down the Exhibits Committee – yes, we need a chairperson.

Our Board members all participate on our various committees and fundraisers and their guidance and attentiveness is critical to our success. Maurica Gilbert stepped down from our board this year but she did not step away too far. She remains as our book-keeper, docent and committed volunteer.

98 Ohio is a busy place – even Tuesday, when we are supposedly closed, we have visitors, friends, meetings and a myriad of activities going on. Stop by – there is lots to do and see. Thank you all - and with your continued support we are guaranteed to have another good year.

Thank You to our Business Sponsors and Grantors

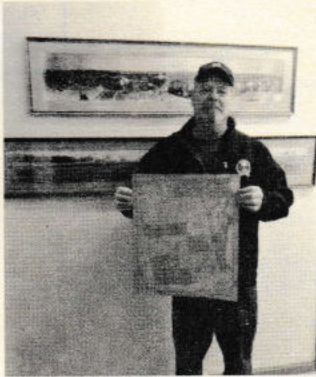
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Photos from Recent Events



Bill Gadway recently donated a 1938 Clinton County Highway Map to the Museum. Every month the collections committee meets to review artifacts for the permanent collection.



Pat Loughan, President of Friends of the Plattsburgh Public Library, Joseph Bebo, Author, and Melissa Peck, CCHA Director pose for a photo after a joint program at the Plattsburgh Public Library. The program featured a presentation and book signing for Bebo's latest publication, "Family Legends: The Charbonneau Letter."



Mike Candelaria, Robert Greenspan, Carson Drake, Kyle Chapman and Ian Bellerive, Phi Mu Delta brothers from SUNY Plattsburgh volunteered for projects at the CCHA for the United Way Day of Caring on April 18th.



Elizabeth Rogers, Julie Dowd, Louise Patinelli, Helen Nerska, Jan Couture, and Mary Nicknish are just some of the friendly faces you'll see when you stop by the Museum! We are very lucky to have so many great volunteers!

UPCOMING EVENTS

SATURDAY, MAY 2, Starting at 11 AM,

Jean Arthur Commemoration Day

The CCHA is partnering with SUNY Plattsburgh's Center for the Study of Canada, the Strand Center for the Arts, and the City of Plattsburgh to present a day to commemorate film star and Plattsburgh native, Jean Arthur. The day will begin at 11 a.m. with an historic marker dedication ceremony at 94 Oak Street. A 12 p.m. reception at the Center for the Study of Canada and 2 film screenings of "Mr. Smith Goes to Washington" will follow at 2 and 7 p.m. at The Strand Theatre. The historic marker was funded by a grant through the William G. Pomeroy Foundation.

MONDAY, MAY 4, 7 PM, at the Museum

Monday Night Lecture Series, "Adirondack 102 Club" with Marty Podskoch

Join author and historian, Marty Podskoch, for a talk about his new book, the *Adirondack 102 Club*. Podskoch's latest project encourages folks to visit all 102 towns and villages in the Adirondacks! Copies of the book will be available for sale during the event.

SATURDAY, MAY 9, 10 AM – 4 PM, at the City of Plattsburgh Recreation Center

2nd Annual Clinton County Art and Book Fair Fundraiser

Artists of all mediums will be present to bring together a culmination of artwork generated in our County and about our County. A large book sale will also take place during the event, everything is priced to sell. All proceeds from the book sale benefit the CCHA, proceeds from artist sales, go to the artist.

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New in the Museum Shop Spring 2015

Adirondack Outlaws – Bad Boys and Lawless Ladies by Niki Kourofsky - \$14.95

Benedict Arnold in the Company of Heroes by Arthur Lefkowitz- \$20

Clinton County Civil War Record 1861-1865 by CCHA - \$75/two volume set

John Quincy Adams – His Role in the War of 1812, At the Treaty of Ghent by Vincent Puliafico - \$5.00

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North Country Honor Flight Yearbook 2013 by Daniel Kaifetz - \$15

Remarkable Women of Clinton County by Anastasia Pratt - \$19.99

Saranac Valley (Three volumes in one: The Pioneers, The Boom Days, The Plank Road Gazette) by Sarah Baker - \$20.00

Scrap Books – A Collection So We Won't Forget by James Rochester - \$30 (A compilation of Northern Tier people who served in all wars)

"Songs to Keep" – Treasures of an Adirondack Folk Collector: Marjorie Lansing Porter: DVD \$20; CD \$15; Song Book \$15. Purchase CD & Song Book for \$25, all three for \$40. DVD published by Mountain Lake PBS, CD & Song Book published by TAUNY

When Washington Burned – An Illustrated History of the War of 1812 by Arnold Blumbert - \$20