

# NORTH COUNTRY NOTES

ISSUED OCCASIONALLY BY THE

CLINTON COUNTY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

No. 6

Allan S. Everest and Charles W. McLellan, Editors

Nov. 1961

## *The Next Meeting*

will be held on Monday evening, Nov. 6, 1961, at 8:00 o'clock, in the Association Rooms over the Plattsburgh Public Library. The speaker will be REV. JOHN F. BOYLE, S. J., of Bellarmine College, on "CLINTON COUNTY IN THE CIVIL WAR." The public is cordially invited.

*In harmony with the topic, this issue of the NOTES is devoted to the Civil War.*

## *Clinton County Goes To War*

There were no days in the history of our town that left a deeper impression in the hearts of our people than did the 27th of April 1861. In the evening of that day about a thousand young men from this community left to join the Union Army. The streets were lined with men, women and children, silent and sorrowful, as they marched along in a drizzling rain to the boat waiting to take our boys to Whitehall. Franklin Palmer was their Captain and Royal Corbin their First Lieutenant. This was the 16th New York Volunteers. At the landing they listened to a farewell address by Mr. George W. Palmer. The people of this north country raised \$2,335 to pay their expenses. This was the first offering of the north country to the Union cause. And again in September of the same year the 96th Company left for the front. Many of the members of these companies were only boys. Eighteen, nineteen, twenty years old. As you know, many never came back.

*(From a paper "Plattsburgh Once Upon A Time"  
by Simon E. Fitzpatrick, December 4, 1924.)*

We had a very pleasant time coming down, being met by crowds of people all along the line of the railroad from Whitehall, cheering and waving banners, not for us alone, but for the cause we intend to fight and die for if necessary. Old Clinton County is not behind in brave hearts and hands to fight for our country, for our company is the first, except the ones from Ogdensburgh, that arrived here from Northern New York. Companies are reaching here almost every hour of the day, marching from depot to barracks, colors flying, drums beating, crowds of people shouting — in fact, the whole city is turned into one great camp, and all the people are soldiers, in feeling if not in fact. The place we occupy is the old Adams Hotel, opposite the Delevan. There are five companies besides ours in the building. The place is not fit to drill in, but we expect to be ordered out to the barracks tomorrow. They are about a mile out of the city, and there I am in hope to drill the men thoroughly. I hardly think there is a boy among us who could be bought to return home.

*(From a letter written at Albany, dated May 1, 1861, taken from Hurd's "History of Clinton and Franklin Counties, New York")*

From Company C to the Ladies of Plattsburgh and Vicinity :

Ladies—Permit me to acknowledge the receipt of the stockings, shirts, and have-locks forwarded to us in care of Mr. Palmer. Please accept our heartfelt thanks for your most liberal and timely contribution to our comfort. We left home—most of us—hurriedly, with no outfit, and expecting to receive immediate attention from State authorities. We have been here now a month and a half, but have received no uniforms, and many of us are in a state of almost entire destitution. You may judge, then, of the opportuneness of your gift, and how gratefully it will be remembered. The articles of clothing are all the more acceptable because they came from our homes. They are not only comforts, but mementos. They assure us that hearts are feeling for us, and hands working for us in places where we most care to be remembered. To the young misses, whose thoughtfulness has supplied us with needles, thread, etc., we beg leave to express our particular obligations. God bless every kind heart that prompted and every fair hand that aided this good deed. For ourselves, we hope that our conduct, both out of battle and in battle—if we ever come to it—will be such as not to make you sorry that you have done something for our comfort.

Frank Palmer, Captain Co. C.

*(Letter from Camp Morgan, Albany, June 10, 1861, quoted in Hurd ; submitted by Lawrence A. Senecal, student at the College of Education)*

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*(The following are excerpts from Civil War letters to Cornelius and Annette Fisher of Beekmantown from cousins Forress and Stephen Fisher, nephew Leonard Austin, and a brother William. Now in possession of Mrs. Julia Gardephe Simmons of Saranac.)*

August the 12th 1862

You will be somewhat surprised to learn that I have enlisted but you neednt be for I have. Yes I have sold myself to Uncle Sam, & put myself into one of his private dwellings next friday morning. You will want to know my reasons for doing so & I will tell you. In the first place our town is so near Canada line that the cowards & Tories begun to cross over in droves & begun to thin out our ranks so that we were not going to be able to fill our quota of men without resorting to a draft & that is something that I could not stand & more I would not. There is to much hog about me to be drove in that sort of way. Now I'll tell you I am not the sort of fellow to go south I know & you know it to. A fellow that cough's & sneezes as I do evry spring come to go down there & lay on the ground a few damp nights will put an end to this child without standing to stop bullets. Now Corneal I am in a very bad fix to go if any body ever was. My haying is not done my harvesting coming on fast & got to leave a well dug & not stoned up & a poor sick wife & a little boy. I know not how to leave. It will be very hard to tear myself away from him but it all must be. I did not go into it thoughtlessly. It has been on my mind a long time but I never thought I could go away until last friday morning & my poor Father it is a hard blow to him to have his two only boys leave him for the field of blood.

your cousin Forress

Sept the 30/62

Dear brother & family

Foras and Steaven are out on picket have been out most a weak. It is very warm here, land unhealthy. There is about one third of our regiment sick or at least pretend to be. We cant muster only about from 60 to 75 men in our company able for duty. Our Captain and both lieutenants are sick. The boys had as lives the captain wold be sick as not for we are beter of without him than we are with him. They say the rebels are bound to get back into MD for they cant live in Vergina for the want of food. There wer 3 car loads of rebel prisners came along here yesterday. They

wer a hard looking set. Wer some of them bar footed and bare headed raged & dirty. Said they wer coming north to hire out whare they cold get something to eat, that they had got sick of the war and wer glad to get away from it. Now Neal a soldiers life is a prety hard life. We have some good times. Have enuf to eat such as it is. Hard crackers and steaming meat sometimes. But there is no use of whining for it is al for our contrey.

May 18th 1863

On your account I hope that this cruel war may never part you & yours as it has me & mine. It is a horrid scourge & a disgrace to this once happy nation. It is no nearer end today than one year ago that is by this individual nation. I know not what influence foreign powers may have in stopping it but as for the North's whipping the South they cant do it unless they can kill traitors at home first & the numberless radicals that are all cry & no wool. Those that say they would do so & so but are mighty careful to stay out of harms way.

F. B. Fisher

June 10th 1863

I am filled hourly as it were by conflicting emotions of hope & fear. If we get rumor good news it is echoed by thousands of throats that the death blew to Rebellom is struck & ere the cold winds of the next autumn shall reach us we shall each be to our own homes. But may be the next hour brings us still more authentic news of some defeat in our cause which will more than over balance the first report & then how is tide of feeling turned by long faces by some & loud curses by others. So they may fight away or lie on bad as ever. It makes me no odds. I can stand it as long as the rest I reckon especially if they dont march me to far or make me fight any guess I am in no serious danger. Uncle B Fisher is still in the Eckington Hospital at Washington. His wife & one child has been very sick with diptheria. He is no better. L Howes is quite unwell. Eri Tenant of Mooers died last night with typhoid fever. Cant be sent home on account of hot weather. Write soon.

Forress

Sept the 7th 1863

As to my health it remains about the same. If I cure up my dysentery for two days the third day I will double quick it the most of the time. Our Regt is more sickly at present than it has been other time & the talk is that the Dr is going to report it unfit for duty & be sent north somewhere to recruit. I do not want the boys sick but I had just as live go north awhile & recruit as not. The oftener you write the better & the longer the letters the better it suits me. You will never be the looser in being kind to the poor soldiers. They as a general thing are a neglected set & a kind word spoken to us in season how good it is. But as hope is like an anchor both sure & steadfast we will as long as we are permitted to live hope on that this horrid fratricidal warfare may soon come to an end & all of us that are alive may be permitted to once more join our home and friends. It is no wonder to me there is so many sick eating such miserable fare & so much filth is enough to kill the heartiest man but we cant help it. We have got to eat what is furnished or starve for our monthly pay would no more than feed us & we must send some home. Our families would suffer & I know that many do. I have used more than half of my wages for the last three months & I believe that if I had not furnished myself something to eat I should not have been alive now.

F. B. Fisher

March 29th 64

Dear Uncle

I wasent satisfied when i was a Solgerin befor so i had to enlist a gain & that wasent all that I done. I had to get me a nice little woman to take care of my Bownt you

know. Eight hundred and fifty two is worth taking care of isent it and there isent anything like a nice little woman to take care of it for you is they.

Leonard Austin

Sept 15th 64

I left my Regt the 22d August. My complaint general debility being all worn out & run down no strength neither apeteite. Then I was taken with a cough one of my old fashioned ones & that holds on pretty well yet but I think I will get the better of it in time, also my legs have took to paining me & are some swollen but they are better so that I think I shall try & go back to my Regt this week as I am very lonesome away from it. We have to lay on the ground here & eat buggy hard tacks so you see its poor feed for a sick man. There are some die evry night more through sheer neglect than ought else. Unless a man has influential friends in a Hospital his care is slim.

They have got Little Mac up before the people and I think with him hold of the Helm of state things may soon assume a different aspect. The soldiers cannot sound his praises high enough & whether he gets the home vote or no 9 tenths of the men in the field will give him their hearty support.

Forress

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### *Our Latest Publication*

Members who have not picked up their copy of the *History of Cumberland Head*, written by Mrs. Bess Hagar Langworthy and published by your Association, may do so at the November meeting. This is a valuable contribution to regional history.

### *Clinton County Newspapers*

The College of Education is microfilming all Clinton County newspapers. Members who have copies (even single copies) are urged to loan them for this purpose, thus making the run as complete as possible. Contact Dr. Everest at the College.

#6 Nov. 1961

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