

NORTH COUNTRY NOTES

ISSUED MONTHLY EXCEPT SUMMER BY THE
CLINTON COUNTY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

No. 84

Allen S. Everest and Charles W. McLellan, Editors

April, 1972

The April Meeting

of the Association will be held at 8 o'clock on the evening of Monday, April 3rd, in the auditorium of the Plattsburgh Public Library. The program will consist of a public discussion, perhaps led by a panel of which Mr. Carleton Rennell, Ward 2 alderman, will be a part. The subject of the discussion will be "Local History and Politics" and will cover such topics as a museum, urban renewal and its impact on distinctive old houses, and a Historic District for the Macomb Street area of Plattsburgh. Watch the local paper for further details, which are not available at this printing.

The public is cordially invited.

AMENDMENTS TO ASSOCIATION'S CONSTITUTION

At the meeting of the Board of Directors on Sunday, March 12, the following amendments to the Constitution and By-Laws were adopted. They will be voted on at the next regular meeting of the Association, on April 3.

1. To the Constitution, Article II—Purposes—a second paragraph: "The Association is formed exclusively for scientific and educational purposes within the meaning of Section 501 c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 or the corresponding provisions of any future United States Internal Revenue law."
2. To the Constitution, Article VI, Section 1—Board of Directors: "The board of directors shall consist . . . not to exceed a total board of **seventeen**."
3. To the Constitution, Article VII, Committees:
 - a. To Section 1, add "f. Genealogy"
 - b. Add a Section 7 describing the functions of this new committee.
4. To the By-Laws, Article II, Section 2—Quorum: "A quorum of the board of directors shall be **nine**."

RENEWAL OF MEMBERSHIP

Members who have not rejoined the Association by the time of the mailing, about April 25th, of the May issue of "North Country Notes" will receive no further copies of the "Notes". Memberships—new or renewed—may always be sent to the Treasurer, Mr. John Caramia, at 75 Court Street, Plattsburgh. Memberships are \$2 (student), \$3 (individual adult), \$5 (family), \$10 (contributing) and \$25 (patron).

WANTED

Materials on the sugar bush in Clinton County. Pictures and written or printed material are welcome, and will be returned if the owner desires. Contact John Baxter, Box 112, West Chazy, New York.

The Palmer Hill Iron Mines

PART II

Men could be seen drilling high on the walls and the operation called "driving the wall" made them resemble bats. The three inch Ingersoll and Eclipse drills were run by compressed air from a compressor outside the mine. Three-inch iron pipe conducted the air to the work area, often a distance of 1,000 feet or more and branches of rubber hose then ran to each drill. The compressed air released into the mine as a by-product of the drilling reduced the cases of throat disease and sore eyes considerably so that only one day in 100 was lost due to illness. Both companies had good safety records, and few injuries and no deaths were publicly reported during the many years of mining. One and a quarter inch cartridges of "Rendrock" or atlas powder were used for blasting, which took place at noon and at the end of the workday. Usually between 85 to 100 charges were exploded each day. Various batteries were used to detonate the explosives and one such battery used by the Rogers Company proved unreliable owing to the highly magnetic condition of the mine.

Fiber rope had long been replaced by wire rope to haul the ore cars from the mines. It was estimated that it took four tons of primitive ore or two to two and a quarter tons of separated ore to make one ton of iron. From the year 1865 to 1880 estimates for the amount of ore removed from Palmer Hill were as follows: Ellis Lot— $\frac{1}{2}$ interest—29,691 tons; Half Mile Square— $\frac{3}{8}$ interest—365,024 tons. The Rogers Company removed approximately 400,000 tons of ore from their $\frac{5}{8}$ interest in Half Mile Square during the same period. A million tons is the estimated total amount of ore removed from all the Palmer Mines, with an average assay of 40% iron.

Financial problems hampering the mining industry in the late 60's and 70's were caused by increased material and labor costs, tariffs, the discovery of better sources of iron elsewhere and the development of more efficient processes using other types of ore. Unions had been active for a time and strikes were frequent. Indications of the severity of the situation came when the Peru Company went into receivership and Francis J. Dominick became receiver on February 8, 1879. Copies of hundreds of his letters as receiver of the company tell a nearly day-to-day story of his attempt to keep the business going. He mentions the fact that prospecting was still in use at Palmer Hill and the best indications were from the deflection of the needle of a miner's compass. It was still possible to obtain ore rights in those years and an offer was made to Giles B. Slocum in 1882 for a license to mine ore for twenty-five cents per ton. This low figure resulted partly from the leanness of the ore and "is a better deal than the Chateaugay Company has made." A \$3,000 offer for a quit-claim deed to one quarter of the ore was made but Dominick preferred the royalty: "If your title is disputed and ore can no longer be obtained no outlay would be made. Nothing can be more uncertain than an iron mine. One day it may be paying and the next worth nothing." Also, in 1882 a controversy arose between the two companies when the Peru Company began mining the Rogers side of the big pit which the Rogers Company had abandoned seventeen years earlier. It was understood that the boundary agreement in 1864 was only a verbal one between James Rogers and Francis Saltus. A succession of Rogers Company leaders then brought Henry D. Graves into the feud. He had been a trustee of the company in 1871 and became vice president in 1877 when John replaced his brother James as president. When John died in 1879, Graves became company president. On December 29, 1870 the Rogers Company had incorporated and this move plus excellent handling of financial matters enabled the company later to pay off all its debts in the iron business and make a transition to the pulp and paper business, thus keeping the J. & J. Rogers Company alive. In September or October of 1871, the J. & J. Rogers Company had held a tax sale of some properties. When the two sides met to settle the dispute over the dividing line a disagreement developed concerning the big "horse", (a large vein of soft rock) which included two possible points where the line could begin. The involved description of the proceeding, to settle the boundary feud is included in the Peru Steel and Iron Company papers and the dispute was settled.

The two companies had used telegraph or messenger for many years to maintain communications between the mines and the rest of their works. In 1875 the Rogers brothers decided to install a telephone between their works at AuSable Forks and the mines at Palmer Hill. The new invention was brought from the 1876 Centennial Fair in Philadelphia by George Cahoon and was reported to be the second or third such installation in the world to be operated by a large company. Not to be outdone, Francis Dominick wrote on April 27, 1883, "I propose to build a telephone line between Clintonville and Palmer Hill and I desire to place the poles on the highway over the plains." The work was to be done by Warren Dow of Plattsburgh.

On Thursday, October 1, 1885, at 10:00 A.M., a public auction was held in connection with a bankruptcy case involving Rosalie G. Bloodgood and another against the

Peru Steel and Iron Company, which had closed down its ore mines in November 1884. Pumps were kept running to keep the water down but the mines remained closed. In four more years payment would have been due on \$100,000 worth of twenty-year mortgage bonds at 7% interest. Despite the series of disasters the Peru Steel and Iron Company remained active with a new president, George H. Cleaves, in 1887 when the company became known as Peru Steel Or Company, Limited.

In 1884 work stopped at the Rogers mines and the men went to Arnold Hill. The newspapers continued to publish the proceedings against the Peru company and on July 3, 1886 a story reported the sale of Peru Steel and Iron to a Mr. Callahan of Keeseville. The Rogers mines were active for a few more years. In 1885 the Summit Pit was closed and reopened in 1887. Repairs were made continually on the equipment in the active mines even though a mortgage sale of the abandoned mines was held in 1886. New mines opened as old ones closed, and in 1890 a new road and whimsey house were constructed. The mines were finally closed permanently before a foreclosure sale in 1893. Abandoned iron mines are still to be found throughout the area, but as rising water and falling rock erase man's great labors, a little less can be seen of this once great north country industry as each year passes.

(Written by Clifford Mossey, SUC. His primary source was the manuscript records of the Peru Steel and Iron Company at the Feinberg Library, SUC.)

How Plattsburgh Has Met the Bread Question

DODD'S BAKERY

(Contributed by Edward Dodds of Chazy. It is taken from an article in the PLATTSBURGH REPUBLICAN of 1877 and concerns his grandfather's bakery, which was located just west of the present D and H railroad station. His grandfather, George W. Dodds, affectionately known as "Cracker" Dodds, owned and operated this bakery from 1837 until 1886. "His house and mine at 48 Court Street—the old Guy Dunham house—was in my family for 94 years.")

For some time previously to 1817, George and John Freligh had conducted the bakers' business in the long wooden building on Bridge Street, east side of the bridge, which was torn down about two years ago, the site being now occupied by Delaney's brick building. On the 12th of June, 1817, the co-partnership was dissolved, John Freligh assuming sole charge of the business supplying both soldiers and citizens as his advertisement in the REPUBLICAN states with "every article in the bakers' line."

About 1824 a branch of Brooks' Bakery in Burlington, Vt., was established in Plattsburgh in a building on Peru Street opposite the Bonner place, the site now being a vacant lot, and about the year 1828, Josiah Bracket bought the establishment and moved it to Bridge Street, where Dodds' Bakery is located. Here Bracket carried on the business until 1834, when he sold out to Alpheus Lawrence and Henry McMasters, who about a year afterwards sold to Ephraim Buck, who for several years had conducted a bakery on Margaret Street near where Marcus Miller's store now is. After buying out Lawrence and McMasters, Ephraim Buck transferred the business to his son, Ira Buck, who in 1837 sold out to George W. Dodds, who has conducted it ever since—a period of 41 years. He still occupies the same old stand, but has since enlarged the premises by the addition of several adjacent building lots.

Probably there is hardly a Clinton County man, woman, or child, who reads these lines that cannot attest from personal experience to the excellence of Dodds' crackers and other products of his Bakery on Bridge Street where for so many years he has kept on quietly supplying the village with all varieties of the staff of life. But perhaps there are not many people who are aware how wide a reputation Dodds' crackers, etc., have acquired and sustain, and that it is no uncommon thing, as we learn, for orders to be received from Pennsylvania, Indiana, Minnesota, and other distant states.

This is very strange, you will say; and so it seems until you learn the secret, which is this: In nearly all the bakeries throughout the country the gases which arise from the consumption of fuel used in baking, are allowed to come in direct contact with the bread, crackers, etc., the consequence being of course, that the flavor is somewhat injured and the quality of the bread, etc., impaired. But in Dodds' Bakery this is done away with. His ovens are constructed almost precisely like the old fashioned brick ovens, which used to be considered an indispensable accessory to every well ordered kitchen, the only difference being that in the old-fashioned

style the fire was kindled within the oven, and afterwards drawn out when the oven had become sufficiently heated for baking purposes; while here the fire flues are outside entirely, the flame passing across the front so that none of the gases arising from the burning fuel are allowed to remain in the oven at all. This arrangement is entirely different from that of ordinary bakeries and is sufficient of itself to account for the superior quality of Dodds' crackers, bread, cake, etc.

It is hardly necessary to add that everything about the establishment is kept scrupulously clean and neat, and that the best quality of stock is used. Many of the old hand appliances have long since given place in this establishment to machinery, driven by horse power, and it would interest housewives to pay a visit here and see how the rolling pin and other antiquated pieces of kitchen furniture are superseded. The old village ordinances governing the supply, quality, weight, etc., of the staff of life have long since become null—probably on account of the Fathers having discovered that so long as the present proprietor remains in charge these precautions are unnecessary. Whether this be so or not, the people understand that the product of Dodds' bakery are unexcelled, and hope that he will continue in the business for the next forty years as he has during the last.

RIDDLE OF THE MONTH

Old riddle: One of the Friends' Meeting Houses at The Union in Peru was moved across the road and became a part of the home now owned by Robert Rulfs. The other was moved several miles to become a horsebarn on the farm now owned by Virgil Forrence, Jr. on the Peasleeville Road, Peru. It has since burned.

New riddle: Which is the oldest church building still standing in Clinton County?

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Issued by the

CLINTON COUNTY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

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