

NORTH COUNTRY NOTES

ISSUED MONTHLY EXCEPT SUMMER BY THE

CLINTON COUNTY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

No. 93

Allan S. Everest and Charles W. McLellan, Editors

April, 1973

The April Meeting

of the Association will be held on Monday evening, April 2, at 8 o'clock in the auditorium of the Plattsburgh Public Library. The speaker will be Mr. Edwin N. Cotter, Jr., Superintendent of John Brown's Farm in Lake Placid, who will talk on "John Brown, the Abolitionist."

The May meeting will feature a presentation by Dr. and Mrs. Adolph Dittmar, on "Noah John Rondeau", whom they knew.

The public is cordially invited to these meetings.

NOTES FROM A BOY'S DIARY

(Carlisle H. Dana, at the age of about 12 years, kept a diary in 1863. He lived with his family in Plattsburgh. From the North Country Collection at the Feinberg Library, Plattsburgh).

June 11—Got to school late.

June 13—Lessons perfect good boy all day. Done a little at tinkering.

June 14—Drew 3 pails of water for mother and got her wash tub for her out of the cellar read two chapters in the bible Went to Sunday school & walked home. It rained in the morning played a little while with dandelions.

June 15—Went up to Strongs and back. Looked after our cows all the morning and was late to school took a whip away from a little boy and threw it over the fence, that was at recess threw a stick and hurt Sammy Strong.

June 21—Cut my thumb with the ax. I hadent ought to have touched the ax.

July 1—Mother told me to put away my drum & drum sticks I didnt do it till a good while after went over to Mr. Platt in the morning.

GENEALOGICAL QUERY

The Genealogical Committee, both to advertise its presence and activity, and to seek help of the historical membership in finding means to help others with their family-tree searching, is starting a query section in the **North Country Notes**. Anyone with ideas on answering the queries, or interested in having a workshop to learn more about genealogical searching, please contact Mrs. Charles Kinney, 561-6127.

QUERY No. 1—Mrs. **Urban Hauer, 810 E. Indiana, Spokane, Wash. 99247**:

I am searching for divorce record or 2nd marriage record for **Jennie Henderson**, who married (1) **George H. Rowell**, in Madison, N. Y. on Oct. 20, 1904. She married (2) _____ **Blount**, who ran a restaurant in Clinton, N. Y. (probably prior to 1923). Rowell's parents were: **Horace Rowell** and **Melinda Dustin** of Malone, N. Y. Jennie's parents were: **Andrew J. Hendersen** and **Elizabeth Smith** of Madison, N. Y. Any pertinent data would be appreciated.

ADDRESS FOR SUBSCRIPTIONS

Memberships and queries of a financial nature should be addressed to the new Treasurer, Mr. John Baxter, Box 112, West Chazy, N. Y. 12992.

The First Ten Years of the Home for the Friendless

ORIGINS

The "Home for the Friendless" was organized in March 1874 by a group of "far-sighted and generous ladies of Plattsburgh and vicinity". It was chartered by the State of New York on May 20, 1874. The Home in 1919 changed its name to the "Children's Home of Northern New York". It claimed to be the first legally organized charitable association in Northern New York.

Before 1874 the Clinton County poorhouse was the only refuge for the county's paupers. It was a wretched place where men, women and children of all ages were objects of hopelessness. One woman "drew attention to the case of a baby boy, sick, lying in a hard cradle on staw, covered with but a single cotton garment, cared for by a gabbling idiotic woman and within hearing of the ravings of the insane". Miss Marcia C. Brown, principal of the young ladies' department at the Plattsburgh Academy, challenged area women to remedy the situation. The ladies of different Protestant churches responded. This helped to awaken the people to the fate of the children who were being brought up in the poorhouse.

A house was offered rent-free. The organizational meeting was held on March 16th. A society was created, a committee to draft a constitution was appointed, and an appeal to the public was launched. The first legal advisor was Judge Peter S. Palmer. Smith M. Weed, a member of the legislature, was a generous donor. Through the efforts of these two men, a charter was obtained. During March a President, Vice-president, Secretary, Treasurer and Board of Managers were appointed. On July 1st the doors were open under a Mrs. Atkinson who "comes to us as a special blessing from the Hand of Providence". Dr. J. Platt Foot offered his services as a physician and surgeon.

Two children, commonly referred to as "inmates", were accepted into the Home. The house was furnished with gifts from friends. The society solicited in the village and requested their Managers to campaign in neighboring towns. There were a few large gifts — one for a hundred dollars — several legacies, and money obtained through a special law for paupers with children under sixteen, with the exception of babies. Generally, the people of the community did not like the institution. This was their cry: "We pay taxes to support the Poor-house. Let the poor go there."

Later, a home on Oak Street was obtained for \$2,500. Mr. John H. Myers, chairman of the Advisory Committee, advised raising \$1,000 and mortgaging the rest. This was done. By 1879, the Home was obviously overcrowded. An addition was built for \$750. Mr. Myers aided by "consenting to superintend its erection, offering to advance the fund required and consolidate the amount with that due on the mortgage, thus becoming our only creditor".

In 1882 Mr. Allan Moore purchased a house on Broad Street, where the Junior High School now stands and then known as the Flory place. On February 24th he presented it as a gift to the Home. He paid \$4,000 and left a mortgage of \$700. Smith M. Weed, Andrew Williams, S. D. Bowen, C. E. M. Edwards, M. D. Meyers, George W. Hartwell and John H. Myers donated the remaining \$700. Some members of the society thought that an addition to the new house was desirable before moving in but the Advisory Committee abandoned the idea. Alterations and repairs were made amounting to \$1,529. The Home borrowed \$1,000, the Oak Street property was sold for \$2,000 and the society was able to pay off all debts. Later that year Mr. Weed donated a piece of property adjoining the Broad Street house.

On August 16, 1882 the new home was occupied for the first time, and thirteen "indigent, aged women" were accepted. There was no nursery department. However, an infant was taken in occasionally and cared for by the matron or the caretaker. Soon the Home became too crowded and an addition was imperative. The ladies were hesitant to campaign among the townspeople again. They went to friends and were able to raise \$3,072, with which they built an annex. In 1884 a school was opened in the house. Later a building was converted into a school house for \$750.

OBJECTIVES AND CHARTER

The primary need for the home was for "separate shelter and care for homeless children who were sharing inadequate quarters with the ill, the elderly and the insane".

Many were not orphans but had one or more parents living. Often they could not be cared for at home, while others were neglected or abused at home.

The ladies of the Home, social leaders of the community, were happy to move the children from dismal surroundings and place them where they would get good care. Otherwise, they believed, the children would be led into a life of crime. This institution provided them with some aspects of parental affection and home influences.

The charter most importantly provided for the establishment and maintenance of "a house of industry and home for the relief of friendless, destitute or unprotected females, and for friendless or unprotected children". A board of female directors selected an executive committee to conduct business in accordance with the constitution and by-laws. They were given power to buy and hold real estate. The Board of Managers could appoint matrons and other necessary help, make by-laws and regulations, and govern the children as their natural guardians.

The children were liable to work if the parents gave them up. The children were also entitled to draw an annual stipend from public school funds. The charter was amended in 1876. The change allowed the Board to consent to the adoption of a child.

The Constitution stated that the object of the organization was to "provide relief for destitute women and children, to supply their necessities, promote their intellectual, moral and religious improvement, and fit them for situations of usefulness and self-maintenance". It was to be a Protestant association managed by a president and a board of thirteen managers. They were authorized to control funds, and appoint and remove officers. The managers were appointed from each of the neighboring towns. It was their duty to report destitution, collect funds, and attend to the interest of the association in their towns. The managers were from Peru, Keeseville, Moira, Port Henry, Lyon Mountain, Malone, Standish, West Chazy, Cooperville, Redford, Beekmantown and Hammondville.

ASPECTS of LIFE in the HOME

The by-laws spelled out some age restrictions. Females had to be more than three years old. Males had to be over three and under ten. If any under three were being considered, they had to have a written permit from the president.

The children were expected to give some time to manual labor. They could not leave the house without a permission slip. "They will be expected to rise and retire at the hours specified, keep their rooms well arranged, be neat and tidy in dress and person, industrious during working hours, and listen attentively to such advice as shall be given them by the managers or matron."

Final admission was governed by certain procedures. There must be an examination for hereditary or contagious disease. The child had to be "immediately bathed, and all its clothing fumigated and washed". Children could be received from Overseers of the Poor until homes could be found for them.

Certain requirements had to be met before a child could be adopted. The parents must be members or regular attendants of a Protestant Evangelical Church. They had to be recommended by the pastor and two respectable citizens. The children were not to be placed where liquor was used. Suitable education and maintenance for the adoptee were necessary. After adoption, the parents were to inform the Home about the child's welfare at least once a year. There was a one to three-month trial period. If the child still remained, the legal papers were drawn up for adoption.

From old photographs we know that the younger girls had short, boyish haircuts. Older girls had longer hair. They wore long, black dresses with white, starched aprons. The boys also had short hair. They wore dark pants and light shirts.

The children attended school at the Home. Later they were able to attend the city schools. They were still taught sewing, knitting, singing and drawing at the Home.

Holidays and special outings highlighted the childrens' rather austere stay at the institution. According to the Annual Report of 1882, picnics, sleighrides, and an excursion on Lake Champlain were outings undertaken during the year. They were reported to have had a bountiful dinner on Thanksgiving Day. "Christmas, by a tree, laden with

attractive toys, candles, etc., the children having a happy time, as shown in their bright eyes, glistening with wonder and surprise."

This Home was supported by voluntary contributions. No state aid was given. Many people sent clothing and food. The managers from each town forwarded contributions to the Secretary. Cash donations were sent directly to the Treasurer. Anything was appreciated, and the revenue from rummage sales and other projects helped to keep the institution going long after its first ten years.

Cheryl Light, SUC

RIDDLE OF THE MONTH

Old riddle: The Rev. John Henry Hopkins, once rector of Trinity Church in Plattsburgh, subsequently composed "We Three Kings of Orient Are." Samuel Woodworth, a member of the early staff of the Plattsburgh REPUBLICAN, later composed "The Old Oaken Bucket."

New riddle: What were the early names applied to Ausable Chasm?

MUSEUM NOTES

The museum committee is now planning a late spring opening in its new quarters on the third floor of the Plattsburgh City Hall. The Association has recently received unusually timely donations from two sources to further its museum work. One is a generous check from Maurice Crook of California, formerly of Champlain, and the other a gift of new carpeting for the museum from the Plattsburgh Mayor, Father St. Pierre.

Other recent gifts include a deed box, watch and change purse with old coins from the estate of the late Mrs. Kate Merrihew, made available by Mr. Donald Studholme; a Civil War recruiting poster, a Hotel Champlain plate, and a collection of early-century post cards.

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Issued by the

CLINTON COUNTY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

William Stanford, Secretary
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