



# North Country Notes

## 400th Issue



Lindsey LaMarche

Great weather and smiles for our Opening Day Ceremony, April 19, 2007.

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This is the 400th issue of North Country Notes, established by Allan S. Everest and Charles W. McLellan in November of 1960. Everest, as you will see from the first issue reprinted inside, considered the first issue experimental.

Some forty-seven years later his experiment can certainly be considered a success. North Country Notes has grown from a single two-sided sheet to an eight page newsletter containing information on many topics of interest to history buffs in Clinton County and as far away as California.

We can imagine Everest and McLellan discussing a newsletter in early meetings held at the Plattsburgh Public Library and returning to their homes to type the first edition for printing.

One can only imagine their surprise at today's production methods - a laptop computer and a high speed photocopier that folds and addresses each copy in the

blink of an eye.

For one dollar, those interested in history could join the Association. Members attended meetings and received a copy of a pamphlet on the Battle of Plattsburgh.

Today, individual memberships cost \$30 and include a subscription to North Country Notes and unlimited free admissions to the Museum.

Then, as now, joining the Clinton County Historical Association was an expression of an individual's commitment to preserving the rich history of this county for the future.

The commitment to preservation, collection and education by members of CCHA since its charter in 1945 created a path that has led us to our new Clinton County Historical Museum in the Four Chimneys Building, CCHA's permanent home.

The ribbon was cut and the first visitors were welcomed into the

Museum on April 19, 2007. What a great day for CCHA!

Opening the Museum is a significant achievement for the Clinton County Historical Association in many ways, not the least of which is the fact that it was accomplished with over 1400 hours of volunteer labor, a tribute to North Country persistence. Many more volunteer hours have been given since the opening.

The first edition encourages people to demonstrate their interest by becoming involved as members and volunteers. In this 400th issue we repeat that invitation.

We hope you will become a member if you have not already joined. If you are a member, we invite you to get involved as a volunteer - become involved in the many activities CCHA has to offer!

## Saranac's Independence Cemetery

One of the sad facts of settling a town is that a location is needed to bury the town's dead. The early residents of Saranac recognized this and took the necessary steps. In 1827 it was voted "that the town raise \$100 for the purpose of purchasing a suitable piece of land for a 'burying-yard'. It was also voted at the same meeting that Ephraim Colbourn, Platt Thorn, Ira Vaughan, Andrew Otis, and Wright Spalding be a committee for the purpose of making the choice of a site for the burying-yard, and prepare the same as they shall think proper." (Hurd, 361)

Land for the cemetery was purchased from property owners in 1827, providing a burying place for all of its citizens. Many families used a family burying ground until that point. The cemetery contains the graves of many of Saranac's settlement era families and provides information about their struggles to survive in this wilderness known as the Adirondacks.

The original burying ground occupied only a small area and was owned by the Town of Saranac and operated by the Supervisor. The town burying ground was annexed following the formation and incorporation of the Saranac Independence Cemetery in 1884. The first thing the newly formed Saranac Independence Cemetery Association did was fence the land. Ribbon wire, a new form of non-barbed wire that was about  $\frac{1}{2}$  wide was used along three sides. The front of the "Old Cemetery" is bordered by a black iron fence which was erected in 1884. The fence, manufactured of Saranac iron by Bowen & Signor Iron Works, is similar to one that was installed at the Schuyler Falls Cemetery. It is one of the only documented examples of Saranac iron in the town. The cemetery was enlarged several times until it reached its present boundaries. The "Old Cemetery" is separated from the "New Cemetery" by a large field. This field is owned by the cemetery association and is being reserved for future burials. Although orderly, the older cemetery is laid out in a rather irregular pattern at times.

New Englanders from Vermont and Massachusetts, as well as French Canadians from Quebec, settled Saranac in the early 1800's. Few French Canadians are buried in this cemetery as most were Roman Catholic and were buried in Catholic cemeteries in neighboring villages. Therefore, many of those interred in the Independence Cemetery followed the Protestant faiths, primarily Methodist and Presbyterian. From 1827 until the present time, the cemetery has been a public burying place with no religious affiliation.

Markers in the cemetery include the typical collections of types from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century to the present day. Most are simple rectangular stones made of marble or granite. There are three headstones made of white zinc. The engravings are simple and record the necessary information from the period. There are several stones of substantial size, as well as two or three in the shape of an obelisk. Decorations repeated throughout the markers include urns, willows, wings, angels, lambs, and the hand of God. Some plots are framed by granite or cement curbing and three plots are enclosed by low chain swags.

A New York State historical marker notes that the Town of Saranac sent 416 men to the Civil War and that five of these men were among the 25 who helped capture John Wilkes Booth.

The Saranac Independence Cemetery is an example of a small town's pride and respect for those who have gone before them. Here, people can learn the history of the region, search for relatives that have been only a name on a piece of paper, and enjoy peace and quiet in a pastoral setting.

Jan Couture, Historian  
Town of Saranac

## The Russell Rosewood Writing Desk

In April 1999, CCHA purchased a number of artifacts at the Vermont auction of the contents of the home of Elizabeth Sailly Warren on behalf of her estate.

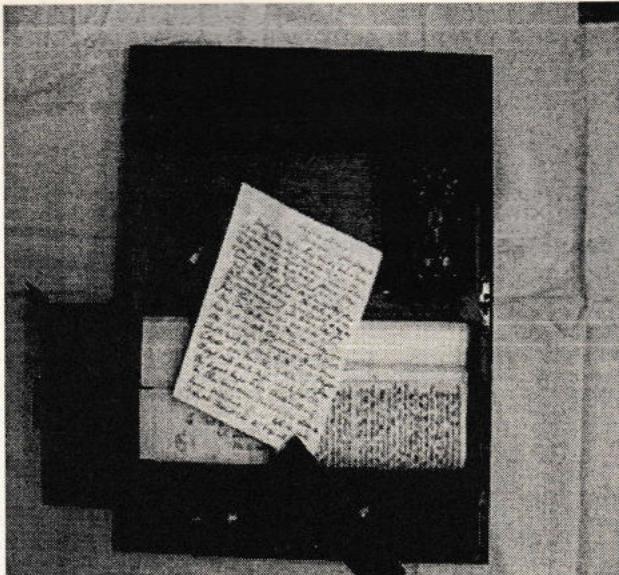
Among these items was a small lady's writing desk made of rosewood with a brass inscription plate on top. The official estate inventory doesn't mention that the box contained letters, however, they were discovered in an inconspicuous, but not secret, compartment.

This correspondence is mostly from Captain Samuel Law Russell to his wife Elizabeth Sheldon Platt Russell (1803-1874), who later became the second wife of FLC Sailly, and great grandmother of Sailly Warren. The affectionate letters are often addressed, "Dear Libby".

They span from 1827 to 1839 and include the death notice she received from his commanding officer and the resolution passed in his honor at the time of his death, both transcribed here.

Captain Russell (1797-1839) was born in New York City and married Elizabeth Sheldon Platt, daughter of Nathaniel Zephaniah Platt, in 1822.

He was in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Reg. US Infantry and had served in Florida since June 1837. He was killed in an Indian attack during the Second Seminole War on Feb. 28, 1839 near the current Key Biscayne, Florida on the Miami River. Fort Russell, previously known as Ft. Dallas and Ft. Bankhead, was renamed after him.



The Russell Rosewood Writing Desk

Fort Fanning E.F.  
March 16<sup>th</sup> 1839

At a meeting of the Officer's serving at this Post, called for the purpose of testifying their respect for the Memory of the late Captain S. L. Russell of the 2<sup>nd</sup>. Infy, recently killed in an engagement with the Indians, near Fort Dallas on the Miami River E. Flo. The following Resolutions were unanimously adopted -----

Resolved --- That in the untimely death of Capt. S. L. Russell, late of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Regiment U.S. Infantry, his family have sustained an irreparable loss, Society been deprived, of One of its brightest ornaments and the Army of one of its most honorable high minded and efficient Officers, and that we do deeply sympathise with his family and friends in their sore bereavement.

Resolved that the gallantry and Courage displayed by the deceased in the engagement in which he lost his life, is worthy of our warmest Admiration and reflects the highest credit upon his Character as a Soldier.

Resolved --- That in the testimony of their high regard for his Character, as a kind husband, an affectionate Father, a warm and generous companion, a devoted and consistent Christian, an intelligent courageous and efficient Officer, the Officers of this Regiment be requested to wear the usual badge of Mourning for one Month.

Resolved --- That a copy of these Resolutions signed by as many of the Officers of his Regiment as practicable, be sent to the family of the deceased, and to the Editors of the Army and Navy Chronicle for publication.

(Signed)

Alex. Cummings, Lieut. Col. Comg. 2<sup>nd</sup> Infy.  
Gustavus Loomis, Maj. 2<sup>nd</sup> Infy.  
E. K. Barnum, Captn. 2<sup>nd</sup> Infy.  
Thompson Morris, Captn. 2<sup>nd</sup> Infy.  
J. J. B. Kingsbury, Captn. 2<sup>nd</sup> Infy.  
S. T. Day, Captn. 2<sup>nd</sup> Infy.  
J. W. Penrose, 1<sup>st</sup> Lieut. 2<sup>nd</sup> Infy.  
E. R. Long, 1<sup>st</sup> Lieut. 2<sup>nd</sup> Infy.  
J. M. Clendenin, 1<sup>st</sup> Lieut. 2<sup>nd</sup> Infy.  
J. R. D. Burnett, 1<sup>st</sup> Lieut. 2<sup>nd</sup> Infy.  
H. W. Wefells, 1<sup>st</sup> Lieut. 2<sup>nd</sup> Infy.  
J. W. Anderson, 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieut. 2<sup>nd</sup> Infy.  
Geo. C. Westcott, 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieut. 2<sup>nd</sup> Infy.  
A.Y. Hoffman, 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieut. 2<sup>nd</sup> Infy.

On account of the remote and distant stations of many of the Officers of the Regiment, it was thought advisable to transmit the above copy with the names annexed rather than delay them longer to obtain the names of others, who would have joined us in these expressions of respect for our departed Friend and Brother Officer.

Headquarters 2<sup>nd</sup> Infy.

Fort Brooke E.F.

April 20<sup>th</sup> 1839

J. M Clendenin  
Capt. 2<sup>nd</sup> Infy

## ***Transcription of the Death Notice from Captain Russell's Commanding Officer***

Key Biscayne, E.F.

March 1, 1839.

My dear Madam,

The feelings of friendship for you afford my distressed mind no relief in the melancholy duty devolved upon me of communicating to you the afflicting intelligence: - the sad tidings must be disclosed – that your husband, Capt. S. L. Russell has been called from life to eternity. While moving his company yesterday, down the river from Fort Miami to Fort Dallas, a distance of only three miles, a party of Indians, in ambush, fired on the boats, and as the Captain was gallantly landing his men to repel the attack, he received three bullet wounds, one of which took effect in the head and instantly deprived him of life. His corpse was brought off without having fallen into the hands of the savages. The rites of Christian burial, with military honors, were performed over him today, and his remains deposited in a high mound at the mouth of the Miami river, north bank, on the west shore of Key Biscayne Bay.

I sympathize deeply with you in the bereavement which the almighty has ordained; and pray that you and your dear children, may find support through the painful trial, in a reliance upon the unbounded goodness of a merciful and immutable God, and in the consoling reflection that your late husband and their father, was endowed with, and sustained, the highest character among those of his profession for mind, integrity, bravery, moral worth and domestic virtue.

And I tender you the services, in any way that I may be useful, of your obt. Servt. and friend,  
*Sylvester Churchill*

To Mrs. Eliza S. Russell

Garey's Ferry, Black Creek

## 140 Years Ago—Supposed Victim of Murder Reappears

In October 1867 Andrew Weatherwax appeared among his family and friends and shocked them all. He had been thought dead, murdered, some twelve years before in 1856. His cousin and presumed murderer was Captain John G. Weatherwax, part of a large family that lived about six miles south of Plattsburgh.

The New York Times reported the story on October 27, 1867, and the Plattsburgh Sentinel (published weekly) a few days later on November 1, 1867.

In late June 1856, the Captain sailed for a Canadian port and took his cousin Andrew and one other man as employees on the ship. On the return voyage they put into Pike River and there occurred the infamous event. The Captain and his cousin quarreled frequently and often. They disagreed loudly and with threats of violence over the course of the day and into the evening. The third man, later to become an important witness, heard the sound of a dull heavy thud and then the quarrelling stopped. The next morning Andrew Weatherwax's hat was on the forward deck and near it was some blood. The Captain did not speak of his cousin Andrew or the disagreement to the third man.

Captain John Weatherwax returned to Plattsburgh with the ship and the other sailor, but without his cousin. When asked about it, he was said to give evasive answers.

Six or eight days later, a body was pulled from the water where the boat had moored at Pike River. He had been killed by a violent blow to the head and the body was identified as Andrew Weatherwax, the missing cousin. The Captain was arrested on the 8th of July.

His attorney took advantage of international law and treaties and established that the event had occurred in Canada, not in Plattsburgh, and that the local and state authorities had no jurisdiction in the matter. The captain was released and eventually the Canadian police had him arrested and taken to Montreal to be confined in jail.

He stayed in jail for one year. Apparently there were two trials, but no conviction ever materialized. He returned to Plattsburgh and was essentially shunned by his relatives for the next eleven years.

At this point, Andrew reappeared. According to the *recently deceased* sailor, he left the boat at the wharf that fateful night in 1856 and wandered off to a rum shop somewhere nearby. He became embroiled with some other tipsy fellows he found there and soon found himself arrested and before a magistrate.

He had no funds for the fine and was held for lack of paying it. A man stepped forward and offered him a position and an advance on his wages to pay the penalty to the court. He shipped out on an English vessel as a common sailor to China, Australia and to various ports on different ships, before finally returning home.

There is still a mystery in this case; no one ever identified the beaten body in Pike River as anyone other than Andrew Weatherwax. No one was missing from the area and too long a time had passed for the authorities to investigate.

*The 1850 federal census for the Town of Peru shows Andrew Weatherwax, age 19, listed as a sailor. He lived with Andrew Weatherwax, age 66, a farmer and Sarah Weatherwax, age 56.*

The Northern New York Library Network has multiple older North Country newspapers online in a searchable format and the New York Times now allows full access to their issues from the early 1800's up to 1922. Google NNYLN or New York Times Archives .

**New and renewed members, donors and sponsors, from January 1, 2007 through August 31, 2007**

Senator Betty Little and the Empire State Development Corporation, City of Plattsburgh MLD Grant Program, Calongne Security, Adirondack Architectural Heritage, Algonquin Chapter of ADK, Bernard & Shirley Amell, Stasia Arcarese, Ara Asadourian, James and Anne Bailey, John & Dorothy Barton, Thomas C. Beach, Jr., Sylvie Beaudreau, Roger & Christine Bigelow, Dr. Howard Black, Ed Bohin, Harold & Stella Boire, Robert & Helen Booth, Dr. & Mrs. John Boule, Brown Funeral Home, Mary Brown, Dr. and Mrs. Edgar Burde, Bruce Butterfield, Prentiss & Frieda Carnell, Dorothy Carr, James Ciborski, Clinton County, Tilly & Richard Close, Penny & John Clute, Shirley Coffey, Jan Couture, Jeannette Covey, Randy & Jennifer Dame, John Drown, E. Eager, Peter Eckstine, Connie Fisher, Leona Gadway, Irving Goldman, Theresa Graves, Robert Haley, Francesca Hartnett, Richard Jarrette, Charles Kaczor, Lori Keever, Key Foundation, Debra Kimok, Judy King, Carole & Harold Klein, Mr. & Mrs. Arthur LaMarche, William Laundry, Sonia Long, Sandra Lowe, Eleanor Martinsen, Maurica Gilbert, Agnes Maynard, William & Virginia McBride, Agatha McDonald, Iris McLean, Meadowbrook Healthcare, Dr. Alan and Bruni Michaud, Lauren Mihalek, Maureen Morrow, Mountain Lakes PBS, Ruth Mowry, Thomas & Katherine Murnane, Helen, Nerska, North Country Workforce Partnership, Joanne Orr, David Patrick, Victor Pawlewicz, Gordon Pollard, Charles & Jean Raymond, William & Bunny Rowe, Marion Schmitt, Kathy & Jen Schumacher, Fulton & Cathy Sheehan, Doug & Evelyn Skopp, Charles Smith, Jr., Frederick Smith, Kim St. Louis, Don & Pat Stahl, Beth & Tim Stanton, Keith & Kathleen Stark, Noel & Debbie Stewart, Stewart's Foundation, Town of Beekmantown, George & Marcia Wagner, Peggy Whipple, Lynn & Ann Wilke, NYSCA and the Upstate History Alliance.

**For the period September 1 through November 10, 2007**

Ron and Carol Allen, Marie Beemer, Ellsworth and Dorothy Buchanan, Judy Cavanaugh, Linda Coryer, Harney Davey, Janet Deeb, Sheila Deso, Alita and Mark Desso, Joyce Doorey, Jerome and Janet Downs, Ronald and Linda Everleth, Nancy Frederick, Sheila Geoghehan, Jay and Sally Hartlaub, Francesca Hartnett, Roger Harwood, Heald Funeral Home, Region Six Historians, Ann Johnson, Keith Johnson, Susan Kennedy, Patricia Kinney, Carol Klepper, Pat LaFontaine, Cheryl Ann Lamora, Medical Staff of CVPH, Susan Mody, Henry Morlock, H. Nicholas Muller, Brian and Cynthia Murphy, William and Barbara Murray, Alexandra Nerska, Celine Paquette, Patricia Parker, Peru Central School, Quaker Valley High School Staff Fund, Leona Quinn, S.D. Quinn, Sharon Ratner, Bill and Bunny Rowe, Marilyn Smith, Ruth Smith, Kathleen St Denis, Martha Strack, David and Margaret Tallman, Paul and Diane Webster, Connie Wheeler, Adelle Wightman, Patricia Williams, Richard and Bonita Wingler, and Dale Wolfe.

## **Upstate History Alliance Grants**

CCHA has been awarded two planning-related grants this year: first, a *Get Ready!* grant, which paid consultant Anne Ackerson to spend a day in July with select Board members reviewing the planning process, our needs and our goals. The grant is from the New York State Council on the Arts under the Grants for Museum Advancement program and it is administered by the Upstate History Alliance. We have recently been awarded the next grant in the series, the *Get Set!* Grant, to enable us to work with consultant Linda Norris to develop a Strategic Plan.

A Strategic Plan is an absolute must for mapping the future path of the Museum and for successful grant outreach. Anyone wishing to serve on the committee to work on this multi-phased planning project with board members should call the Museum to sign up now.

## Monday, December 3rd Program, Jim Millard

### LAKE PASSAGES:

#### Remarkable Journeys on Lake Champlain, Lake George and the Richelieu River 1609-1909

Jim Millard is the publisher of the popular *America's Historic Lakes* website, *The Secrets of Crab Island*, *Fort Montgomery through the Years*, and the recently released *LAKE PASSAGES: A Journey through the Centuries, Volume I - 1609-1909*. Jim will give an image-rich presentation highlighting some fascinating journeys that occurred along these important transportation corridors over the 300 years since Lake Champlain's discovery by Europeans in 1609.

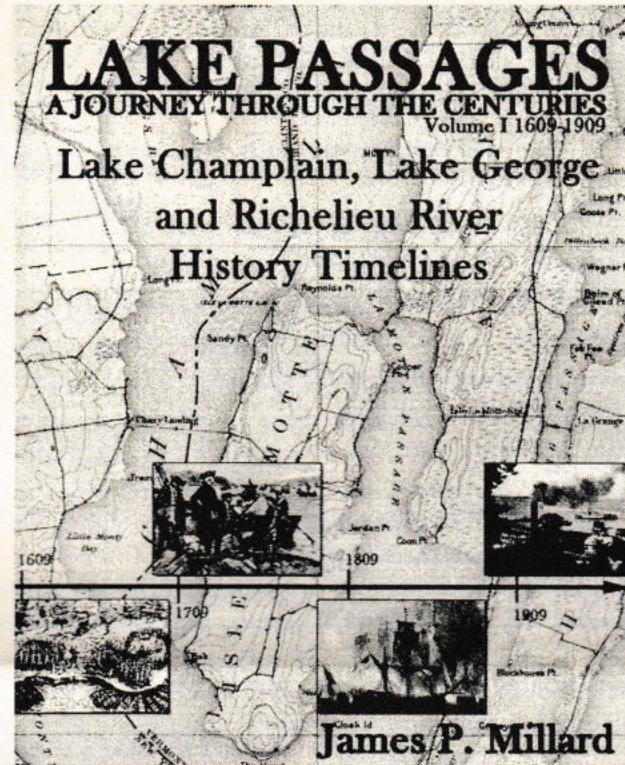
As always, the program is free and open to the public. The program is here at the Museum in the second floor gallery at 7 pm. Refreshments will follow and Jim's book will be available for sale.

#### Upcoming programs:

There are no programs scheduled for January, February or March. Programs will start again in April.

*Membership renewals are being mailed through November and December. We are also attempting to contact lapsed members about rejoining.*

*If you are unsure as to your status as member, please call Ken at the Museum, 518-561-0340, and he will get an answer to you as soon as possible.*



Experience the eyewitness, primary source accounts of Samuel de Champlain, Major Robert Rogers, Gen. Benedict Arnold, Gen. Alexander Macomb and a host of others in this exciting timeline and compilation of experiences on these historic waterways. A must for serious students of the region's history, this book brings together a multitude of sources and eyewitness perspectives. Finally, there is one book that enables the reader to easily see what, when and where an event happened on these important transportation corridors.

Now in our bookstore and available at the program for \$22.95. Don't forget that buying the book from us, as opposed to that big mega bookstore, helps to keep our doors open.

**Jim's other books are also available in the Gift Shop.**

**CLINTON COUNTY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION**  
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### **VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES**

CCHA invites you to be part of its exciting expansion. We need assistance staffing our new Museum, and welcome students, adults, and community organizations to help us tell Clinton County's story.

**To volunteer, call  
518-561-0340**

### **CCHA Recipient of Senator Elizabeth Little Member Item Grant**

In Fall 2006 we were awarded an Empire State Development grant that was to help us immensely with the repairs, maintenance and redevelopment of our new home at 98 Ohio Avenue. The \$50,000 grant was spent mostly on the work required to convert our heating system from oil to electric and on our new security system. Another large expense was the purchase of special offset door hinges that enabled our inaccessible areas to suddenly become ADA compliant without major structural modifications.

The remainder of the grant was spent on paint, cleaning, and general maintenance. This grant is truly a gift that keeps on giving; the change to the heating system will likely save us \$6,000 per year in heating costs based on the current price of fuel oil. Thank you Senator Little and Empire State Development.

### **Are you a writer? We need help with NCN!**

You've probably noticed how tardy this issue of the North Country Notes is. We've been busy, but it's more than that. We need someone to take on the job of the newsletter, someone that likes to write and edit. The information on upcoming programs and events is easy, and for someone interested in researching our local history, the writing is enjoyable. We need someone to put it all together.

Please consider stepping forward and volunteering to make this newsletter interesting, informative and on time.....