

NORTH COUNTRY NOTES

Issued Monthly By The Clinton County Historical Association

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FEBRUARY PROGRAM

Insights into the earliest history of the Champlain Valley will be offered in a program scheduled for Monday, February 5 at 7:30 p.m. Our speaker is Bill Umbreit, a local stonemason and restoration carpenter, whose avocation is the study of Indian artifacts. A former sculptor who taught at the college level before moving to the North Country in 1986, Mr. Umbreit will present a slide/lecture entitled "Archaeological Evidence of Native American Habitation in Clinton County." Actual examples of his current work at a local, but unidentified, site will be shown. Stone tools excavated from the site will be shown with copies made for use as study models. Mr. Umbreit's slides also include pottery. This program is open to the public free of charge and will take place in the meeting room of the Clinton County Government Center in Plattsburgh.

LIMITED HARDCOVER EDITION OF MACOMB BOOK

Only five copies remain from the special edition of The Military Career Of Alexander Macomb & Macomb At Plattsburgh by Allan S. Everest, issued just before Xmas. Priced at \$30.00, this elegantly bound volume is a perfect presentation item.

WAR OF 1812 ACQUISITION

Visitors to the museum's 175th Battle of Plattsburgh exhibit admired General Macomb's dress sword, presented to him by the State of New York in 1817 in recognition of his gallantry during the siege of Plattsburgh. At that time the sword was on loan from a Macomb descendant who had presented a full-length portrait of the general to the museum in 1989. We are delighted to announce that the sword and scabbard have now been given to the museum. CCHA is deeply appreciative of the trust shown in it by General Macomb's descendant who chose our County Museum to receive long-held family and national treasures.

THE BREDENBERGS OF CHAMPLAIN
(by the late Hulda Bredenberg McLellan)

"Our father, Isaac Bredenberg, died in November, 1907, and in June, 1908 Mother took us four children, Oscar, Henrik, Mabel and I (Hulda) to Sweden to visit her parents, with the intention of possibly staying in Sweden instead of coming back to the U.S.A. While there, we saw our first pair of skis. They were very long - 9 ft. - narrow - high at the middle, and were used only for cross country skiing. One of the famous races in Sweden was the Vasalopet (Vasa race) from Sweden to Norway, and this type of skis was used.

"When we did return to the U.S.A. in 1909, we brought back with us two pairs of skis. Of course, we returned to the village where we had been living - Champlain, New York. We lived in a small house opposite the old Champlain High School, owned by Hugh McLellan. My brothers, then 14 and 16, started to make skis. There was a shed in the back of the house, and Oscar wrote to Hugh McLellan in New York City asking if they could tear down a wall so that they could put up some kind of machinery to make the skis.

"They were crudely manufactured, but surprisingly good skis. The boys in the neighborhood would come in and help out as they could. This was their first knowledge of skis. Henrik fixed up a contraption with a bicycle and a belt fastened to a lathe, and the boys around would turn the pedals on the bicycle which turned the lathe. When the skis were shaped and sanded, they would be brought into the kitchen. A copper boiler was put on the stove - filled with water. The skis would be placed in the boiler, which softened the wood so that they could be bent to make the camber. Then they would be put into frames to dry, after which they were varnished. The only binding the first skis had were straps under the middle with a buckle. Ski poles were made of wood at first and later with bamboo. The first skis sold for about \$1.50 - certainly much less than \$5.00. The hills off Elm Street in Champlain were ideal for skiing and even jumping. I can recall jumping all of 10 ft. Cross country skiing was the most popular.

"My brothers continued manufacturing skis, improving them all the time. They finally built a small factory up on Prospect Street and started to get orders outside of Champlain. At this time Oscar was working at the Sheridan Iron Works, and Henrik put in all his time at the small factory. When Christmastime neared, Oscar would help out in the evenings, and I can recall taking midnight lunches to them when they would work practically all night to fill orders in time for Christmas.

"Things improved and they were able to get many customers. Early in the 1920s their chief buyer was Hanscom Hardware Co. of Haverhill, Mass. Other customers were A.G. Spaulding, St. Paul's School, Hatch Hardware Co. of St. Albans, Vt., Dartmouth College, Sears Roebuck, R.H. Macy Co., Boston College, Cahill Sporting Goods Co., G.L. Starks of Lake Placid, Princeton University, and Hamilton College. Sometime along this time, Henrik was ski instructor as well at the Lake Placid Club. How he got up there, I have no idea.

"In the early 1920s they built a fairly large factory and started to manufacture other lines - such as hockey sticks (which could be used by professionals), oars and paddles, also oars for the boats at AuSable Chasm, and toboggans. The brand name which they chose for their product was 'Broadmount'. Our name - Bredenberg - means broad mountain in Swedish.

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The firm's name was Bredenberg Bros. They continued to produce skis, hockeys, oars and saddles into the 1930s in ever increasing quantities. In the late 1930s they started with laminated skis and steel edges.

"I returned in 1939 to Champlain to run the office. There was a great demand for skis during the war, especially by the Army. I can recall calling the Army Base in Boston, and sold them all the skis we had on hand, over the telephone. An inspector was sent up to oversee the packing. I believe most of the skis went to Russia under Lend Lease.

"Sometime in the 1940s, the company was taken over by Andreef Corp., a Canadian company, who started to make badminton racquets and tennis racquets, as well as laminated skis. It flourished for a while, but finally went into bankruptcy in 1947."

Ed. note: Happily, a pair of Broadmount skis survived and was donated to the collections of the Clinton County Historical Museum.

SMITH WEED HOUSE

Little did we know when the January issue of Notes went to press that within a few days the former Smith M. Weed home would be badly damaged by fire. At the time of writing the fate of the building is undecided by the owners, American Legion, Post 20. We can only hope that this fine example of Victorian architecture with its splendid decorative details can be saved and rehabilitated. Hats off to Jeffrey Kelley, director of the Kent-Delord House Museum, for arranging temporary storage of quantities of books from the Weed house.

IF YOU HAVEN'T ALREADY RENEWED YOUR CCHA membership, won't you help us to save on further billing by dropping your check in the mail? Seventy per cent of our current members have rejoined so far, and we've heard some very favorable comments on our 1989 schedule of programs, exhibitions and publications. Thanks to your support we will be able to continue offering you more of the same. CCHA is regarded as one of the most active historical agencies in New York State; let's keep it that way!

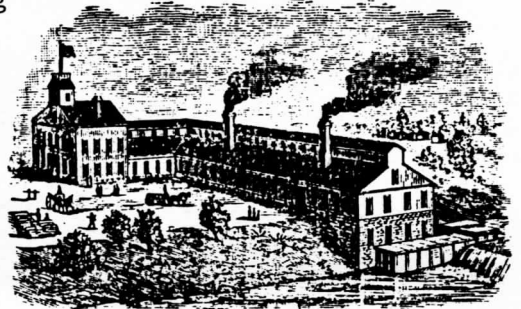
(From the Plattsburgh Republican, April 2, 1887)

"Curtis Veeder, of this village, has just taken out a patent on bicycle seats, which makes it easier for the rider than the present style. Mr. Veeder is himself an expert rider, having driven his machine from Ferrona to Plattsburgh the other day over heavy roads - a distance of eighteen miles - in a few minutes over two hours."

Ed. note: By 1902 the Sears Roebuck catalogue offered its "Kenwood" model (for either sex) at \$10.95. Also available was the "Napoleon" for gents and the "Josephine" for ladies at \$15.75 including 10 days' free trial offer - and Curtis Veeder's seats, perhaps?

THE SARANAC HORSE NAIL CO.

The Saranac Horse Nail Co. was organized in January, 1878. Its capital is \$90,000, and employment is given to from 50 to 75 men. They have in operation eighteen machines, producing one and one-half tons of finished nails per day. These machines are known as the "Mills", the patents for which are owned by the company. They are of very peculiar construction, and to the unmechanical mind seem complicated, but their operations are easily understood. The nail is forged (or hammered) hot, the machine making about 700 revolutions per minute, each eleven forming a nail. Thus it will be seen about 65 nails are forged each minute. The iron used in the manufacture of these nails is selected from the best brands of Norway iron. From the forging machines the nails are placed in tumblers for polishing, into which a strong current of air is forced, blowing all dust, etc., therefrom, and the product leaving in a remarkably bright form. The nails are then put through finishing machines, by which the points are rolled out and trimmed cold. There are five of these machines in operation, known as Woodford's patent. The process of manufacture embraces the principles and effects of the old method of forging by hand, avoiding all straining of the iron, while the finish is equal, if not superior, to that of any other machine made nail. The product is both blued and polished, as ordered, and the works manufactures six sizes.



The manufactory is located on the Saranac river, and is provided with a valuable and extensive water power. The illustration above given, represents the building, which is 150 feet long by 42 feet wide. The trade of the company is all parts of the world, and the manufacturers are held in great esteem wherever known. The officers of the company are, Hon. S.P. Bowen, president and treasurer; Hon. Andrew Williams, vice-president; W.S. Guibord, secretary."

From Dillon's Plattsburgh Directory, 1882-83

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