

NORTH COUNTRY NOTES

Issued Monthly by the Clinton County Historical Association

48 Court Street, Plattsburgh NY 12901, 518-561-0340

No. 300 PRESIDENT: David C. Stortz EDITOR: Helen W. Allan July/August 1993

OPEN HOUSE AT THE VALCOUR LIGHTHOUSE

Saturday, August 21 is the day, with a rain or storm date on the 22nd. The lighthouse will be open from noon till 5:00 p.m. and a suggested donation to help preserve the structure is \$2 for adults and \$1 for children. Visitors arriving at the island by private boat should moor in North Bay, immediately to the north of the lighthouse. There is no dock, so be prepared to anchor or beach your boat and follow a marked trail to the lighthouse. For those who require transportation, it is available on the *M.V. Juniper*, captained by owner Frank Pabst. Call the Juniper Boat Dock for (561-8970) for information and reservations. (Please note that the price of the boat excursion does not include the lighthouse donation.)

The annual Open House is the only opportunity to inspect the interior of the lighthouse and to climb to the light chamber for an unparalleled view of Lake Champlain. This year is a particularly important one as the lighthouse will be nominated to the National Register of Historic Places. We expect a large attendance of invited guests and CCHA members and friends to be present at a ceremony at the lighthouse on August 21. Presentation of the certificate will take place at approximately 2:30 p.m. that afternoon. Call us in mid-August for an update.

Funding from the Lake Champlain Partnership Program underwrote the research and preparation of the lighthouse's nomination to the National Register. That work was carried out by CCHA member Julie Robinson who also assisted the Association in compiling the architectural/historical survey of the City of Plattsburgh some years ago.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION

We hear from the Air Force that funds are now available to partially rehabilitate the Old Stone Barracks. That's good news, for the building was deteriorating rapidly due to a hole in the roof and other areas of decay. Constructed in 1838 and placed on the National Register in 1971, the Old Stone Barracks is the oldest structure at PAFB. An adjacent building, similar in design, was razed in 1964 when there was much less importance attached to historic preservation than there is today. An Army lieutenant by the name of Ulysses S. Grant lived in that lost structure while he was stationed at Plattsburgh Military Barracks.

RECENT ACQUISITIONS

CCHA has acquired some wonderful objects for its collections this year. We now own a portrait in oil of Thomas Treadwell, one of the earliest settlers in Clinton County. The unsigned, early 19th century painting depicts Treadwell in a serious pose but with a hint of humor playing around his mouth. The surprising and prominent element in the portrait is his green eye patch. According to his descendants, Treadwell's eye was damaged by a low-hanging branch during a riding accident.

A native of Smithtown, L.I., Thomas Treadwell was born in 1742 and graduated from Princeton in 1764. He became one of the original proprietors of Plattsburgh and settled in the Beekmantown area. Prominent in judicial and political affairs in the North Country, he was highly respected among his fellow men. He died in 1832.

Our grateful thanks go to Dana Babcock and Eleanor Hancock, descendants of Thomas Treadwell, who are joint donors of the painting.

Another most welcome addition to the collections is a lithograph entitled "Naval Heroes of the United States." A scene of the Battle of Lake Champlain (Plattsburgh), 1814, is surrounded by images of Thomas Macdonough, victor in that battle against the British; Isaac Hull (Constitution & Guerriere, 1812); Jacob Jones (Wasp & Frolic, 1812); Joshua Barney (Hyder Ally & Gen. Monk, 1782); Wm. Henry Allen (Pelican & Argus, 1813), and Charles Stewart (Constitution & Levant, 1815).

This rare lithograph was made and published by Nathaniel Currier (prior to his partnership with James Merritt Ives) in 1846. It is a marvelous addition to the Historical Association's collections of War of 1812 and Battle of Plattsburgh materials. It also marks the second time in as many years that CCHA's good friends and benefactors, Harold and Stella Boire, have specifically purchased an early Currier print as a gift to the museum. It is added to the already impressive list of objects they have given, including a large collection of Redford glass collected by Harold's mother, Eva Boire of Mooers.

Those of us who saw an exquisite piece of folk art loaned by Allan and Elsie Everest to a show some years ago will remember it well. In 1824 a young Peru boy named Peter Rider drew and decorated a perpetual calendar which is a small gem of fraktur. The calendar which bears his name is contained within a pillared edifice surmounted by an eagle and tree branches. Though fragile, the colors are still bright and the writing is clear. Owned previously by Mrs. Clarence Mace, a descendant of Peter Rider, the calendar is now in the collections of the museum, thanks to the generosity of Dr. & Mrs. Everest.

The magazine *Heritage*, published by the New York State Historical Association, tells us that a definition of traditional American folk art is as follows: "Folk art derived from long-standing handcraft traditions, usually brought here from Europe, handed down by word of mouth (not by books), often found among isolated or restrictive societies, created by a single artist. Examples include basketry, whittling, fraktur, and sculptural ceramics."

VOLUNTEERS ARE V.I.P.s - VERY IMPORTANT PEOPLE !

On May 27 the Historical Association was honored as a 20-year-old station for volunteers by the Retired Senior Volunteer Program. Our certificate was presented at a recognition luncheon attended by more than 200 volunteers who give their time and effort unstintingly to museums, libraries, the arts council, the medical center and so on. CCHA's museum was one of the first volunteer stations in Clinton County back in 1973 when we opened the museum in City Hall. If memory serves correctly, Ethel Jacques was our first volunteer and Steve Riley directed the program. Meanwhile, volunteerism is the name of the game in Clinton County and we couldn't get along without these great folks from R.S.V.P.

In Memoriam: Ruth Patterson was a docent at the Clinton County Historical Museum for many years. Her loyalty and dependability made her a most valuable member of the Historical Association. We miss her.

QUILTS GALORE

CCHA volunteer Beth Brush recently suggested that the museum might display some of its modern quilts at the Champlain Valley Quilters' Guild show at Clinton Community College on August 14 and 15. Her idea also led to a month's display of four quilts in the brand new showcase in the County Government Center. The four quilts, made in 1976 for the national Bicentennial by groups of women in the Town of Plattsburgh, are among seven that were subsequently given to the museum. The other three are currently on display in the museum and all seven will go to the CCC show in August. Shown at the Government Center, "Turkey Tracks" was sewn by the Tom Miller Road/Wallace Hill Road group; "Le Moyne Star" by Treadwell Mills; "Country Lanes" by Cliff Haven, and "Churn Dash" by Morrisonville/West Plattsburgh. At the museum, "Chimney Sweep" is by Salmon River/South Plattsburgh; "Oak Leaf & Reel" by Cumberland Head, and "Variable Star" by Cadyville.

INFORMATION, PLEASE

Has your address changed due to the 911 system? If so, please don't forget to inform us of your new address. It is particularly important in the case of bulk mailing that we get it right.

During the fall we will let you know the approximate date of circulation of the *Antiquarian*. Then we hope you will let us know if your copy has not been delivered. Some members have not received their copies in the past, but we were unaware of the non-delivery. The same is true for *Notes*.

"August 8, 1876 - The first ascent of Lyon Mountain by a woman was made by Miss Hattie Lyon, a granddaughter of Nathaniel Lyon, an early settler at its base and from whom the mountain took its name." *Three Centuries in Champlain Valley*, Tuttle, Saranac Chapter D.A.R., 1909.

NORTH COUNTRY NOTES

Clinton County Historical Association
48 Court Street
Plattsburgh, NY, 12901

U.S. POSTAGE
Non-Profit Org.
PAID
Plattsburgh NY
PERMIT NO. 185

THE MORE THINGS CHANGE, THE MORE THEY STAY THE SAME (with thoughts of PAFB in mind)

“Fort Montgomery, at Rowse’s Point, Lake Champlain:

Much interest is felt in the recent determination of the Federal Government to fortify its coast, lake, and frontier line, as conveyed in Mr. Seward’s instructions of the 14th of October. The American Government, however, have for some time past been repairing and enlarging the system of fortifications on the Canadian frontier. One of the strongest of the enlarged works is Fort Montgomery, at Rowse’s Point, at the head of Lake Champlain. This fort has been nicknamed Fort Blunder, because erected upon British soil, afterwards given up, under treaty, to the United States. The fort has been considerably enlarged, and is now nearly completed. It will mount sixty-five guns in position, and twenty-five barbette. It is protected on the land side by a moat and rampart of earth; and on the whole, it is a very formidable work. Rowse’s Point is about thirty-eight miles from Montreal, and upon the main line of railway communication between Boston, New York, and Canada. Lake Champlain, which lies between the States of New York and Vermont, extending for four miles into the Lower Canada, is 105 miles in length, north to south, its breadth varying from ten miles to half a mile. It contains numerous islands, receives several rivers, and discharges its superfluous waters by the Richelieu river into the St. Lawrence. This lake was the centre of many important military operations during the revolutionary war, and now forms an important medium of commerce.”

Taken from an unidentified source, this item appeared in print in 1861.

EARLY BIRD NOTICE

Please mark Saturday, October 23 on your calendar as the date of CCHA’s annual dinner. This year we are privileged to have as our guest speaker Dr. William Tramosch, president of the New York State Historical Association at Cooperstown. Look for more information in the next issue of *Notes*.