

NORTH COUNTRY NOTES

Issued Monthly by the Clinton County Historical Association

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

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DECEMBER PROGRAM

Due to bad weather the November program had to be canceled. Scheduled speaker Tom Campbell, curator of the Henry Graves mansion in AuSable Forks, has graciously agreed to present his program on Monday, December 6 at 7:30 p.m. in the Clinton County Government Center meeting room. Mr. Campbell will interpret the Graves house through the use of video and slides. The program is free and open to the public.

SLATE NAMED FOR BOARD

Jack Myers, chairman of CCHA's nominating committee, has announced the following slate of nominees for three year terms on the Board of Directors:

Rose Matthews

Celine Racine-Paquette

Keith Herkalo

Fred Smith

Ann Hasting

William Laundry has been nominated to fill an unexpired term in the class of 1994.

The election will take place at the December 6 program. and nominations will be accepted from the floor. Directors may serve no more than two consecutive terms of three years.

ADDITION TO BY-LAWS

At the October meeting of the Board of Directors it was proposed and unanimously agreed that the Association will create a class named "Director Emeritus" to honor Board members who have served the Association for a minimum of 18 years or three terms (not consecutive). Nominated for this honor are Ruth Hecht and Allan Everest who are due to retire this month. Mrs. Hecht and Dr. Everest have served on the Board for many years, preceding the change in our constitution and by-laws which provided for only two consecutive terms. They have both served as president and in many other capacities, and it is hoped that they will continue to be involved with the organization. Members will be asked to vote on this addition to the by-laws at the December 6 meeting.

RARE BOOK ENTERS MUSEUM COLLECTION

Thanks to the generosity of Harold and Stella Boire, long-time patrons of the museum, we have received a two-volume book published in 1789 and 1795, written by David Ramsay, M.D. of North Carolina. As a member of Congress from that state, Ramsay explained in his 1789 preface, he had access to all the official papers of the United States. In writing 'The History Of The American Revolution', Ramsay was able to peruse "every letter written to Congress by General Washington, from the day he took the command of the American army till he resigned it.... The same was done with the letters of other general officers, ministers of Congress, and others in public stations."

Describing the aftermath of the evacuation from Canada in the northern campaign, Ramsay continued: "General Gates was about this time appointed to command in Canada, but on coming to the knowledge of the late events in that province, he concluded to stop short within the limits of New-York. The scene was henceforth reversed. Instead of meditating the recommencement of offensive operations, that army which had lately excited so much terror in Canada, was called upon to be prepared for repelling an invasion threatened from that province.

"The attention of the Americans being exclusively fixed on plans of defence, their general officers commanding the northern department, were convened to deliberate on the place and means most suitable for that purpose. To form a judgement on this subject, a recollection of the events of the late war, between France and England, was of advantage. The same ground was to be fought over, and the same posts to be again contended for. On the confines of Lake George and Lake Champlain, two inland seas, which stretch, almost from the sources of Hudson's River to St. Lawrence, are situated the famous posts of Ticonderoga and Crown-Point. These are of primary necessity to any power which contends for the possession of the adjacent country, for they afford the most convenient stand either for its annoyance or its defence. In the opinion of some American officers, Crown-Point to which the army on the evacuation of Canada had retreated, was the most proper place for erecting works of defence, but it was otherwise determined, by the council convened, on this occasion. It was also, by their advice resolved, to move lower down, and to make the principal work on the strong ground east of Ticonderoga, and especially by every means to endeavour to maintain naval superiority in Lake Champlain. In conformity to these resolutions General Gates with about 12,000 men, which collected in the course of the summer, was fixed in command of Ticonderoga, and a fleet was constructed at Skenesborough."

(Cont'd on p. 3)

The succeeding events on Lake Champlain, leading to the Battle of Valcour on October 11, 1776, are well known to every student of Champlain Valley history. Once again we are indebted to Mr. and Mrs. Boire for an important donation, this time of a book through which we hear a voice from the past, describing major events in the early years of the United States.

THE HISTORY OF A DOLL HOUSE

On December 25, 1918 in a darkened house in Peru, New York, six-year-old Virginia Mason tiptoed downstairs to see if Santa Claus had left gifts in her stocking by the fireplace. But when she saw a large doll house, Virginia dashed back upstairs to tell her parents about a play house by the Christmas tree.

Charles Mason, Virginia's father, was a draftsman at A. Mason & Sons' lumber mill in Peru. He drew the plans for a doll house with nine rooms and had a carpenter at the mill build it. The house was Charles' last gift to his little daughter for he died in the 1918 influenza epidemic.

Santa Claus was generous and left several pieces of miniature and a family of tiny dolls in Virginia's stocking. Pauline, her mother, made clothes for the dolls and blankets for little beds. After playing with the toy house for eight years, the owner put it away. Her granddaughters were the last to play with the 1918 doll house.

(Editor's note: Mrs. Virginia Mason Burdick recently gave her treasured doll house, dolls and furniture to the museum.)

NEW HOMEOWNER SOUGHT

At the Association's annual dinner last month Randy Beach unveiled the prize in CCHA's second annual doll house drawing. Built by Rand Hill Builders, this year's 'home' is a cozy log house with a real smoking chimney - just the thing for a North Country winter. The doll house project has a double purpose: that is, to provide an exciting gift for some deserving child and to raise much needed funds for the museum. We probably don't need to remind our members that CCHA's new home brought with it the challenge of affording utilities, taxes and the maintenance of a large building. Thus, the doll house drawing is the Historical Association's effort to end the year in a satisfactory financial position. And please don't forget, your contribution to the museum is a tax-deductible gift.

We are grateful to Gregory Supply Co, the Doll House Shoppe, Blair & Webber Photography, My Doll House, Champlain Centres, Ray's Appliance Sales & Service, Git 'N Go Duty Free Shops and members of the Board and staff for their sponsorship of the doll house. This year's drawing will take place at the museum on December 18 at 4:00 p.m.

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SAFEGUARDING THE FUTURE

The Association is pleased to announce that it has recently established an endowment fund. Thanks to the generosity of Mrs. Martha Bier and other friends of the Association and its museum, the long sought goal of an endowment fund has been achieved. Gifts may be added to the fund at any time, and we hope that members and friends of the organization will consider this step when planning end-of-the-year donations or actual bequests in a will. If desired, forthcoming gifts can be made known to the Association in strictest confidence.

The Association considers the endowment fund a way of ensuring the future of the museum and its fine collections of objects which represent the cultural history of Clinton County. We are deeply grateful to those who have decided that a commitment to the Clinton County Historical Museum will be reflected in their financial planning.

AS TIME GOES BY

A recent antiques magazine advertisement prompted one of our members to point out that the Baird Clock Co. of Plattsburgh started making advertising clocks for Coca-Cola exactly a century ago in 1893. Now highly prized by collectors, the clocks made by Edward Payson Baird at 18 Bridge Street were both advertising and non-advertising (an example of the latter style can be seen in the museum, on permanent loan from the Plattsburgh Public Library). The Baird era in Plattsburgh was brief - from 1889 until 1896. Little was known about Edward Baird until the late Dr. Leonard Schiff and his son began their research into the man and his manufacture of clocks both here and in Montreal. They turned up a considerable amount of information which appeared in their 1975 book, 'Edward Payson Baird, Inventor, Industrialist, Entrepreneur'. Copies of the book are hard to find, but if located, they are well worth the search.