

NORTH COUNTRY NOTES

Issued Monthly by the Clinton County Historical Association

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

No. 309 PRESIDENT: Mark A. McCullough EDITOR: Helen W. Allan May 1994

MAY PROGRAM

Historic preservation is the topic of CCHA's May program. "Mummies and Monuments" will present a look at the unique preservation methods used by the University of Chicago's team of Egyptologists in Luxor, Egypt. Our speaker is Susan Lezon, a local photographer and conservator who has been a member of the team during the last decade. Her work focused on the need to photograph Egypt's monuments and thereby preserve them, in a sense, for future generations. Susan's unique slide/lecture will be followed by a discussion period. The program takes place at the County Government Center on Monday, May 2, 1994 at 7:30 p.m. and is open to the public.

INTERNATIONAL MUSEUM DAY CELEBRATION

On May 18 museums around the world will celebrate International Museum Day. This event was inaugurated in 1977 to raise the public's awareness of the role museums play in society. To comply with this year's theme of "Behind The Scenes", the County Museum is inviting the public to discover the many activities that take place within the museum and the varied professions that make up museum work. Three hour-long sessions are scheduled at 10:00, noon and 2:00. Participants will have an opportunity to learn about collections management and preservation of manuscripts, maps, photographs, and textiles, plus publishing and the daily administration of an historical agency. Pre-registration is required and there will be a limit of 12 persons at each session. Please call 561-0340 now to make your reservation.

McMASTERS WRITING PRIZE

Six entries were submitted to the 1994 competition. Although the judges found the essays interesting, their final decision was that an award would not be given this year. The contest was established in 1975 in memory of Miss Emily McMasters, a former CCHA curator, who made a bequest to the Association.

ORGAN REPLACEMENT

Editorial note: The more things change, the more they stay the same. That old French saw seems appropriate at the present time as we wonder what the final disposition will be of the Air Force Base property and equipment. The following letter, donated by Robert and Helen Booth, shows that fifty years ago the community was going through a similar period of anxiety. Robert C. Booth, Bob's father and a well known local attorney and community leader, evidently felt strongly that efforts should be made to retrieve the organ from the chapel at the military barracks.

My dear Miss Bishop:

November 22, 1946

I have obtained your name from Rev. T. Chester Baxter, Pastor of the Trinity Episcopal Church in this City, and I hope you can assist us in obtaining the information which we request in this letter.

When the Army abandoned Plattsburgh Barracks last Spring, the entire establishment was ordered stripped of anything that could be moved and equipment of all kinds was shipped out to storage.

Practically the entire contents of the Chapel was treated in this manner, removed from the Chapel and so far as we can learn, was shipped in care of the Chief of Chaplains at Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania. Among the things shipped was the organ, which I understand was a Hammond electric organ.

As you no doubt know, the State of New York has this Fall taken over the Plattsburg Barracks in its entirety and has established here Champlain College to meet the critical shortage caused by returning servicemen who want a college education. I am advised that over 90% of the students attending Champlain College are veterans of this War.

The management of the College has requested us to help them locate the organ and, if possible, obtain permission to have it returned to the Chapel so that effective religious services can be held in the very beautiful atmosphere that the Chapel formerly possessed.

It is my recollection that your organization raised the funds to build and equip the Chapel, and I do not know whether the organ was purchased by the Organization or was a gift of an individual. Whichever may be the case, we feel sure that the donor would be happy to have the organ returned to use in its original surroundings rather than be languishing in some storehouse doing no good to anybody.

At the dedicatory ceremonies of Champlain College, the Institution was dedicated to the memory of the soldiers and sailors who lost their life in the Second World War. We are, therefore, carrying on the tradition of Plattsburg Barracks as an instrument of peace to educate our citizens for peaceful and scientific pursuits, rather than as an instrument of war which we have been compelled to forge twice during my lifetime. I am sure your organization would be glad to help us in beautifying the Chapel by the return of the organ if such a thing is possible.

Will you be good enough to take this matter up with anybody that you think would be interested or could be helpful to the end that we may, first, locate the organ; second, obtain permission from whoever owns it to have it returned; and third, return the organ, with suitable recognition to the proper parties, to the Chapel.

If you have any helpful suggestions, will you please write me personally, and accept my thanks for your assistance.

Very truly yours,

Robert C. Booth
President, Chamber of Commerce

THE WAY IT WAS THEN

Picture yourself, dear reader, as a subscriber to the *Republican* (an early Plattsburgh newspaper) on September 30, 1820. Your attention might have been seized by certain items of international news although the local notices might have seemed of more immediate interest.

Yet far away in an exotic land, the Russian Emperor Alexander was causing anxiety by allying himself and his army of more than a million men with Austria, Britain, France and Prussia. According to the *Albany Argus*, "his power is infinitely more dangerous, and more to be dreaded, than that of the dethroned Napoleon ever was". Concern in the United States had to do with the recent insurrection in Spain, and Alexander's apparent desire to dictate matters in that country.

Meanwhile, concerning the liberty of the press, "the King of Prussia, on being asked one day why he permitted so many libels to be printed against him, said 'Myself and my subjects have come to an agreement, I do as I please, and they write as they please'".

In the "late foreign news" column you would note that the regular trading ship *London Packet* had arrived in Boston from the Isle of Wight after a voyage of 34 days, bringing London newspapers dated up to August 9th.

Having read these reports, you would have moved on to local news and read that the Clinton County Agricultural Society had announced show dates of Oct. 10 at Plattsburgh and Oct. 11 at Chazy. The officers were Allen Moore, Robert Platt, Dr. John Miller, Moses Hoyt, Alexander Scott and Julius C. Hubbell. The committee of manufactures included Matthew Sax, Jonathan Griffin, Russell Ransom, Silas Hubbell, Charles Marsh and Peter Munsey.

You might have shaken your head at the insolvencies listed in the newspaper, while notices of estates to be sold at public auction, such as that of the late Melancton Lloyd Woolsey, would be of interest to you. An item culled from the *Saratoga Sentinel* reported that progress on construction of the Northern Canal was rapid. John Rugar asked that the owner claim a two year old red steer that had broken into his enclosure - and pay the charges.

In a society note the marriage was announced of Dr. Samuel Beaumont to Miss Charlotte Taylor. The Bank of Plattsburgh gave notice of the impending election of thirteen directors. The New-York State Literature Lottery offered a first prize of \$25,000 and M. M. Standish was the vendor for the lottery tickets priced at \$8.50. J. Kennedy of the Plattsburgh Distillery wanted to exchange whiskey for rye, corn or barley at one gallon a bushel. The Misses Flagg and Rogers advertised their fashionable assortment of Leghorn and straw bonnets from New York which could be purchased with payment of grain, butter or sugar.

And a final note to the shopper in the family. According to Gilead Sperry, president of the Village of Plattsburgh and the Assize of Bread, henceforth a shilling loaf, made of good wheat flour, should weigh three pounds and a sixpenny loaf one pound and 8 ounces.

MONSTROUS EVENT

While there is no editorial comment implied in this item, we wonder how Champy is reacting to news that the existence of his/her possible Scottish relative in Loch Ness has been totally discredited. A deathbed confession revealed that Col. Robert Wilson faked a photograph to hoodwink the British press in the 1930s - so successfully that 'sightings' were made for the next sixty years.

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RECENT ACQUISITIONS

Many thanks to Mary Howell who has donated an indenture between William Steward and Lott & Asa Elmore dated Sept. 17, 1814, concerning property in the Town of Peru. Mrs. Howell also gave the museum a copy of the *Plattsburgh Republican*, dated Sept. 30, 1820.

The museum collections have benefited also from donations from Saily Warren including a book of meditations inscribed in the best copperplate writing "Mary N. Platt, Mr. Wall's School, Dec. 7, 1816." The inscription adds that Mary Platt was the best reader of the young ladies in the Plattsburgh Academy, attested to by William Swetland, Secretary.

Muriel Baber has given several pieces of china and glass decorated with the logo of Ausable Chasm, saved from the hotel fire. Rodney Swift has contributed turn-of-the-century photographs of downtown Plattsburgh and a programme for the Plattsburgh Glee Club.

SUMMER FUNDRAISER

CCHA's April program, presented by Chris Beaudin, put everyone in the mood for antiques hunting. His informative program reminded us of the thrill in finding that special piece of china, glass, silver, jewelry or furniture to add to our own collections.

There will be plenty of opportunities for antiques shopping when the Historical Association presents its first antiques show on July 9 and 10 at Clinton Community College. Combined with a large vintage car meet, the show is expected to draw dealers and car owners from a wide area in New York, Vermont and Canada. The venue couldn't be more pleasant for a summer event. Community College, occupying the former Hotel Champlain, is located at one of the most scenic locations in the North Country, and it has a spectacular view of Lake Champlain. Food will be available along with other attractions.

The Association will need a corps of volunteers to make the weekend a success. If you can help, now's the time to give us a call at 561-0340.