

NORTH COUNTRY NOTES

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CLINTON COUNTY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

No. 32

Allan S. Everest and Charles W. McLellan, Editors

Jan. 1967

The January Meeting

of the Association will be the annual meeting and election of officers, Monday evening, January 9, at 8 o'clock in the auditorium of the new high school on Ruger Street.

The program will be a musical evening. Dr. Fred Flindell of the College faculty will perform Masi's "The Battles of Lake Champlain and Plattsburgh" and Tom Chapin, talented folk singer who is attending the College, will sing ballads and folk songs of the North Country from the well-known collection of Mrs. Marjorie Porter, Essex County Historian.

Riddle of the Month

Miss Grace E. Arnold of Ausable sends a very complete answer to the November riddle: "In 1867, when the Ausable branch of the D&H railroad was built, Nehemiah Harkness, a surveyor and father of J. W. Harkness, who owned and occupied the old Harkness farm where he was born, took the job of grading four miles of the railroad bed near his home. He asked the company to establish a 'plank station' there, which was accordingly done and named 'Harkness' in consideration of Nehemiah Harkness, who had also been active as a promoter in selling and owning stocks in this railroad branch. Some years later the Harkness post office was established which served about one hundred families and could boast of having one of the first rural mail routes in northern New York, which was largely due to the efforts of J. W. Harkness."

New riddle: What is the origin of the name of the hamlet of Churubusco?

MASI AND THE BATTLE OF PLATTSBURGH

A discovery of great interest to the people of the North Country was made by Dr. Eugene Link of the College faculty in the course of research in Boston last summer. He learned of a newly uncovered manuscript at the Boston Public Library, a piano sonata commemorating the battle of Plattsburgh. He arranged for a copy to be made and brought it to Plattsburgh. This is the music which will be heard at the meeting on January 9th, undoubtedly its first performance in Clinton County.

Francesco Masi, a fashionable piano teacher of Newberry Street, Boston, like his musical contemporaries in this country and Europe, decided to celebrate a great battle in music. In 1816 his piano sonata was published entitled "The Battles of Lake Champlain and Plattsburgh". He punctuated his martial music with phrases descriptive of the progress of the battle. During Dr. Flindell's rendition, these descriptions will be announced by Dr. Everest.

Julius Caesar Hubbell, To Judge Pliny Moore

(October 24th, 1811)

Dear Sir,

I am sensible that honor & good-breeding would require, under some circumstances a different course of conduct, than I have pursued, with respect to my addresses to your Daughter. I feel however that I am not Destitute of the former, and hope that I am not thought so, of the latter; and therefore, under these impressions, approach you at this time with more confidence -

I have been a long and constant visitor to your house, drawn by the purest motives, and most ardent attachment. At an early day my heart was touched with the goodness of your excellent daughter Ann, and a thousand subsequent instances, have rivited my affections for her,—and also flattered me that our feelings were reciprocal. Although I have been heretofore silent, it has not been from inclination. I have ever wished that circumstances would warrant me in declaring to you my wishes,—but I feared the consequences. I have been flattered by your kind indulgence and politeness, and under such favorable auspices have enjoyed my life, anticipating the time when my situation would render it consistent for me to make known my feelings and intentions. Notwithstanding I never have explained myself to you, yet I have always deemed it of the greatest importance, (next to that of possessing the young Lady's whole heart,) that I should have your & Mrs. Moor's cordial approbation, before I could expect to be married to your daughter. - It is your approbation to that important event or wish, that I now seek—I think my happiness depends on a union with Miss Ann, sanctioned by your and Mrs. Moor's blessing.

I am sensible that Parents are anxious, that their children should settle in the world, under favorable circumstances; and that commencing on moderate means, is venturing them to the mercy of Providence, and the good conduct of the person with whom they connect—I regret extremely & consider it unfortunate, that my means are not more ample, more equal—and feel that if I am so happy as to marry Ann, she will make a sacrifice for me,—yet with this belief, I trust my exertions will be unremitting to render her comfortable & happy, and certainly my love & gratitude must be greatly excited—

I don't wish to burden you with too long a letter, but it may not perhaps be improper here to state to you something of my standing.—I commenced business, literally with nothing. My Father is a man of property but his oldest children require his assistance more than I, and I never asked him for the common article, a horse,—Neither do I make any calculations on what I may eventually have, and perhaps am now entitled to, and therefore will acknowledge that I expect to live by my own exertions and economy—I estimate my property now, putting it at a moderate value, at \$1,500 besides my debts—I owe something above \$150, which is principally to the Clerk and Sheriff, not yet due—

Thus Sir I have ventured on this important subject. If this should be favorably received, my feelings will be relieved, and I shall hope to profit by your advice. In the mean time Sir, I remain

with great respect

Your Humble Servant -

Julius C. Hubbell

(McClellan Collection)

FORT TICONDEROGA IN 1892

After a visit to Fort Ticonderoga, Dr. David Kellogg wrote in his *Journal* for June 20, 1892:

"On a board nailed to quite a high post is the following notice: 'These Ruins Are Private Property And Visitors are Earnestly Requested Not to deface or damage them in order that they may be preserved.'

Estate of Mary Pell'

"So if 'Visitors deface or damage', it must be for some other reason than the preservation of the 'Ruins.'"

GUILTY OR NOT GUILTY?

(From the records of the Champlain Presbyterian Church)

Nov. 29, 1839. The Standing Committee reported the case of Samuel Starks, charged with passing counterfeit money. They stated that Mr. Starks was stopping in Hemmingford, L.C. He declined coming over the Line, but agreed to meet the Committee at Nye's store across the Province Line.

The Committee met Mr. Starks as agreed upon, & taken in writing the explanation & circumstances of the matter as he stated them. The substance of which was, that in the course of the past fall he had passed, principally for lumber & cattle, about 300 Dollars of money which proved to be bad.

That about the first of September last he had business in Berkshire, Vermont, which led him across into that part of Canada which lies adjoining, and that he was walking along in the highway alone, and a man met him & enquired who he was & what his business was & then asked him if he Starks did not want to borrow some Money. On replying that he should like to loan about 300 Dollars, he immediately took it out & gave him that amount, telling him at the same time, that if he proved honest with regard to this, he would let him as much more as he wanted.

Starks also states that he gave the man no consideration for the money, & no note or any other evidence of debt. That he had never seen the man before, did not enquire what his name was or where he lived & has never seen him since, although he has tried to find him.

He says he paid out the money supposing it to be good.

The cattle purchased with the bills, he drove to Vermont, but before he had sold any, he was overtaken by Mr. Shepherd Shaden who had taken some of the money & returned with him, & fearing that that he should be troubled he had remained ever since on the other side of the Line.

The bad money he says he has redeemed as far as he has had opportunity to do so.

The Church voted that the explanations are not satisfactory, and that Mr. Starks be cited to appear at the meeting of the Church two weeks from today . . .

Dec. 13, 1839. Samuel Starks case postponed.

Jan. 3, 1840. Case of Samuel Starks postponed.

Jan. 13, 1840. Samuel Starks being present was called on to know whether he had anything farther to offer . . . He acknowledged that under the circumstances of receiving the money, he ought to have ascertained whether the money was good before passing any of it. He admitted that he had suspicions with regard to its being good, but thought that if it proved bad, he could then redeem it with good money.

The Church after freely exchanging their views of the whole matter . . . voted with one dissenting vote (3 declining to vote) that he had not satisfied the Church of his innocence, and that they believed that he had passed a large amount of counterfeit money, with some reason for believing that it was counterfeit, that he was entirely inexcusable for doing so.

The Church also voted that he be excommunicated.

(McLellan Collection)

"PIONEER HOMES"

Copies of the Association's publication, "Pioneer Homes of Clinton County", are on sale at all local bookstores and from the Association. Price of the paper cover is \$3.75 and for the hard cover, \$5.00.

THE SEARCH FOR A MUSEUM

A Museum Committee consisting of Robert T. Booth, Allan Everest, Hans Hirsch and Ignatius Lacombe followed leads all fall in a search for proper quarters for an association museum and meeting place. Its first preference would be an entire house, but it has looked at a variety of other places. Contrary to an unauthorized television announcement in December, the D & H station is only one of several sites, all of which seem to be beyond our financial capacity. The committee agrees with the promoters of a history center for Montreal that the Plattsburgh project is too important to rush into, even if there is no museum in time for Expo 67. All offers and suggestions are welcome.

ON THE WAY UP

Balloon ascensions and parachute jumps were the great attraction at the Clinton County Fair on Boynton Avenue in the late 1800's. Huge balloons 65 feet high and 40 feet in diameter were inflated with hot air, and many ropes were needed to hold it on the ground. In one instance, two attempts were made to get man and balloon in the air together, but twice the balloon went up alone.

The balloonist hung on to ropes while in the air. When he had reached a certain height, usually 2,000 feet, he dropped from the balloon. After falling several hundred feet, a primitive parachute was supposed to open and slow down his descent. After he had let go, the balloon, simply a big bag which had lost its ballast, slowly turned over and emptied itself of hot air, coming down not far from its owner.

The balloonists were called aeronauts, cloud-splitters, or more often "Professors". Several different ones were hired for the County Fair in the years between 1888 and 1894: Professor Bassett in 1888 and Professor Northrup for the next three years. In 1893 a female astronaut was the hit of the fair. Those who were lucky enough to land nearby were escorted back to the fairgrounds by hundreds of delighted children.

There were many hazards to the profession. Not the least was the failure of the equipment to arrive by train, in which case he was not paid. Nor was he if his balloon went up without him. More dangerous were the tricky weather conditions. In 1891 a sudden west wind threatened to take balloon and Professor over Lake Champlain; worse still, the balloon started to split. The balloonist kept his head and landed safely on Oak Street; his balloon came down near Ouimette's brickyard on the Lake Shore Road. Within limits the balloonist could vary his landing place by pulling on certain of the parachute strings.

Plattsburgh was lucky in not witnessing any serious tragedy. However, it was a dangerous business and the state legislature outlawed it in 1892. In spite of the law, Clinton County crowds were treated to the spectacle for a few more years, until the novelty wore off and the feature was dropped from the program.

Betty Flatt, SUC

32 JAN '87

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CLINTON COUNTY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

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