

NORTH COUNTRY NOTES

Issued Monthly by the Clinton County Historical Association

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

No.325 PRESIDENT: Mark A. McCullough EDITOR: Helen W. Allan November 1995

ANNUAL DINNER, NOVEMBER 4

The Historical Association is honored to have as guest speaker Joseph F. Meany, Jr., the acting New York State Historian. Mr. Meany's talk will focus on a research initiative suggested recently for local historians in New York, entitled "Native Sons & Daughters: New Yorkers and American Westward Migration." New Yorkers played an important role in westward expansion, and Mr. Meany will describe some of the people who packed up their belongings and made the courageous move to the west. Dinner reservations are still available; the deadline is Oct. 31. Please call 561-0340 for information.

Joseph Meany has worked for the New York State Museum for over twenty years as Senior Curator, Staff Historian and Acting Historian. His curatorial work has contributed to numerous exhibits in the Museum including The Age of Elegance in Ireland, South Street Beat and City of Neighborhoods. More recently he was co-curator of The Janes Who Made the Planes and Electric City at War: Schenectady, 1941-1945.

BREWER ACQUISITION

The museum's collections have recently been enhanced by an extensive collection of glass plate negatives, film negatives and prints, given by George and Eileen Brewer. Now resident in Florida, Mr. and Mrs. Brewer continue to show their interest in the Historical Association and its museum. Their photographic collections contain a wide array of images of almost every imaginable aspect of North Country life. There are photographs of the military barracks, steamboats, hotels, street scenes, historic structures, high school and college sports teams, accidents such as the 1920 Bridge Street cave-in, the raising of the original 'Philadelphia' in 1935, and other subjects too numerous to mention. Cataloging this wonderful collection will be time intensive but ultimately very rewarding. It should be noted that the Historical Association does not have the wherewithal to print the negatives; perhaps a grant will be sought for that purpose.

The Brewers have shown their confidence in the Clinton County Historical Museum by donating such a treasure. We wish to express our gratitude and appreciation.

AS THE (POLITICAL) WORLD TURNS

Editor's note: The following editorial appeared in the Plattsburgh Press-Republican on Monday, April 26, 1948. At that time the P.-R. cost 20 cents daily and a year's subscription locally was \$6.00.

"EVERYBODY WANTS TO GET IN THE 'LIBERAL' ACT"

"There is one election prediction that we feel safe in making at this early stage of the game: A liberal will be elected President in November. We make this prophesy with confidence after reading a recent issue of the New York Times Magazine.

"The magazine's editors asked President Truman, Messrs. Dewey, Stassen, Taft and Warren from the Republicans, and Mr. Wallace from his own self-made party to define liberalis. (Maybe they asked Senator Vandenberg, Speaker Martin, General Eisenhower and General MacArthur, too. We don't know.) Anyway, six replied.

"Mr. Truman's contribution was synthetic. Apparently busy with affairs of state, he turned the job over to his White House staff. They assembled portions of the President's speeches that emphasized his present objectives - with accent on the domestic. Since Mr. Truman's own program was used to define liberalism, we assume that he and his associates consider that he can wear the title of liberal just as it is, without alteration.

"Mr. Wallace's definition also ran more to the current and personal than to the abstract and philosophical. It was not surprising to read he described liberalism as the beliefs of a man who thinks just as Henry Wallace is thinking, or at least speaking publicly, today.

"The Republicans, on the other hand, ran more to the objective approach. Both Mr. Taft and Mr. Dewey apparently went to the dictionary first thing, and both were struck by the fact that liberal and liberty are derived from the same Latin root - which, as anyone who staggered through first-year Latin should remember, means free.

"Mr. Stassen must have gone to the dictionary, too, because he agreed with his rivals from New York and Ohio, that, semantically speaking, liberalism is closely bound up with individual freedom.

"We don't blame the gentlemen if they skipped the most pertinent dictionary definition of 'liberal' in the political sense. For Webster's Unabridged still says it is something 'having a tendency toward democratic or republican, as distinguished from monarchical or aristocratic forms', which is hardly up-to-the-minute, no matter how philosophical you're feeling.

"Messrs. Warren, Dewey and Taft also agreed - we judge without collusion or help from the audience - that liberalism is a much abused and distorted term. After reading the six entries, we are inclined to agree with them fully.

"From the definitions of these intelligent and experienced politicians, the conclusion is inescapable that liberalism is the foundation on which each of them is basing his campaign. It is, therefore, a potpourri of the political beliefs of Harry Truman, Bob Taft, Tom Dewey, Harold Stassen, Earl Warren and Henry Wallace. And this is a mixture to make the contents of boarding house hash seem, by comparison, as easily definable as salt and pepper.

"So maybe we need some new definitions, like 'individualists' and 'government planners' or 'free enterprisers' and 'moderate socialists.' Almost nobody wants to be called conservative any more, because the name-calling of recent political campaigns has made the word synonymous with Tory, reactionary, mossback (*an ultraconservative*) or fascist, depending on who is doing the name-calling.

"But it's popular to be a liberal nowadays. All you have to do is make up your own definition, pin the label on, and there you are. Only trouble is, with so many labels there's the chance that none of them will mean anything."

SECOND ANNUAL CHRISTMAS ORNAMENT

Want a little extra "light" on your Christmas tree? We have the answer in the second annual Christmas tree ornament! This year the image is of the Valcour Island Lighthouse, and it is unbelievably cute. The image is a hand-painted, one-dimensional rendering of CCHA's adopted building, which faithfully depicts the architectural details of the lighthouse. The ornament is also available in a shelf size which many people like to display year-round. The tree ornament is \$8.50; the shelf size is \$12.00. Please place your orders as soon as possible for the second ornament in CCHA's unique limited edition of Clinton County buildings.

ABA HELPS TO GUARD THE LIGHTHOUSE

The sun was shining on the Valcour Lighthouse on Saturday, September 30 when members of the Adirondack Builders' Association were ferried to the island. Adopted by ABA as a community project, the lighthouse was about to receive two new steel doors to protect it from an increased rate of vandalism. Sad to report, for the past few years the Historical Association has invested most of the annual interest from the restricted lighthouse fund not on restoration of the structure's interior, but on protective devices to keep out intruders. However, steel doors and barred windows are expected to provide a solution to the problem, and it is to be hoped that we can now move forward with restoration work.

Thanks to the cooperation of Chris Booth and Randy Beach, co-chairs of ABA, an appeal by the Historical Association was answered by ABA members Jules Trahan, Bruce Pellerin, Paul Patunoff and Dan LaFavre, all of whom gave up a precious Saturday to spend it at the lighthouse, installing the new doors. The Historical Association will be forever grateful to ABA for its commitment to the lighthouse.

Although the original double doors on the south side have been replaced, they will be carefully preserved to provide documentation for the National Register-listed structure. The Valcour Lighthouse is not the first one in the U.S. to suffer vandalism, but it is a comment on our society that the building requires such heroic measures to guard it for posterity.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION LECTURE

On November 8 at 7:30 p.m. SUNY Plattsburgh's History Department and College Auxiliary Services will sponsor an appearance by Chester H. Liebs, McLellan Distinguished Professor of History at SUNY. Founder of the Historic Preservation Program at the University of Vermont, Professor Liebs entitles his program "From the Northway to the Tokaido Road; Landscape Lessons from Japan." He is the author of Main Street to Miracle Mile and American Roadside Architecture. The event will take place in the Angell Center Ballroom. The public is invited to attend.

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NEW BOOK IN THE MUSEUM SHOP

With military history much on our minds as a result of the PAFB closure, we are pleased to offer a new book entitled "FORGOTTEN SUMMERS: The Story of the CMTC camps, 1921-1940." Written by Col. Donald M. Kington (Ret.), the book is a fine study of citizens' military training camps in America. Organized by the Army to enhance military preparedness in the U.S., the four or eight week training courses were designed to provide training for young men that would prepare them for warfare.

Plattsburgh's military barracks (*notice that the 'h' was not in use at the time*) was an important site for the CMTC camps. Inspected by General Leonard Wood when the camps were in their infancy, Plattsburgh had a proud history of training young men during their summer vacations, some of whom falsified their ages to attend. Many 'names' were in attendance at the camps. Col. Theodore Roosevelt, Jr. (whose father was photographed here with Gen. Wood) frequently spent periods at Plattsburgh as a CMTC commander. Plattsburgh seems to have been one of the more socially inclined camps with dances taking place most evenings in 1927, "...with partners made up of waitresses and students from a summer school then in session down the road." The reference is to the Catholic Summer School at Cliff Haven.

Perhaps the most intriguing feature of the book is its reliance on first-person accounts of CMTC camp life, gleaned by the author from participants in a 1975 reunion. Our own Pete Hubbell of Chazy, a participant at Plattsburgh in 1936 and at Pine Camp (later called Fort Drum) in 1937 tells us that he enjoyed the field work, marching exercises and wearing uniform. It was a valuable experience for him prior to his military service in World War II.

Donald Kington's book is a must for the Christmas stocking of anyone interested in the 'Plattsburg Movement', as the original idea of the camps was called, or the person who wants to learn about the training camps at Plattsburg (sic). The softcover book costs \$18.95, plus 7% tax (for NY residents) and \$4.00 S/H.