



Clinton County Historical Association

NORTH COUNTRY NOTES

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PRESIDENT: Jane F. West

EDITOR: Shirley Koester

JANUARY 1998

JANUARY PROGRAM

"Coopersville: The Surge and Sway of a Small Place," will be the topic of the Historical Association's meeting on Monday, January 5, 1998. Suzanne Moore, author of *The Living Stone: St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Church, Coopersville, New York*, will discuss the entire spectrum of Coopersville history, utilizing her extensive research, which included study of original documents and interviews with current and former Coopersville residents. Her lecture complements the Clinton County Historical Museum's current exhibition of the same name.

This lecture is free and open to the public. It will be held in the first floor meeting room of the Clinton County Government Center, 137 Margaret Street, Plattsburgh, at 7:30 pm.

ELECTION OF BOARD MEMBERS

At the January 5, 1998 meeting of the Association, the Nominating Committee will be presenting, for a vote by members of the Association, a slate of names to fill the expiring terms on the Association's Board of Directors.

THE STEAMBOATS OF LAKE CHAMPLAIN 1809 - 1930

The Museum Shop now has the new edition of *The Steamboats of Lake Champlain, 1809 - 1930* by Odgen Ross with new essays by Art Cohn, the director of the Lake Champlain Maritime Museum. Out of print for 60 years, this is a classic work in its field, detailing Champlain Valley steamboating from the launch of Vermont I to the age of elegant travel in the first decades of the twentieth century. This 210 page softcover book has extensive illustrations and pictures and makes a wonderful gift. It is available for \$29.95.

LIFE AT THE FRONT, 1864

DeWitt C. Stratton of Chazy was nineteen years old when, in January 1864, he enlisted as a private in the Union Army. He served in Company I of the 118th New York Volunteers (the Adirondack Regiment). The regiment took part in significant engagements at Drury's Bluff and Cold Harbor. Cora Grenier, Stratton's grandniece, recently donated his letters to the Museum.

May 18th, 1864

Camp in the Woods

Dear Father, I take this opportunity of writing a few lines to let you know that I am well and hope these few lines will find you all the same. I wrote yesterday and for fear you will not get it I will write this evening. I have been fixing a mud hole in woods this afternoon so teams could pass. Our Reg. got into a fight, the 16th, about 8 miles from Richmond. They were attacked at about 4 o'clock in the morning. It was foggy so our men could not see the Rebs. come up until they got close on them then they opened fire on both sides. The Rebs took six pieces of artillery from our folks and opened the shell and shot the whole length of the line. Our brigade was obliged to retreat with the loss of 186 men and 11 officers in our Reg. Capt Ransom was shot through the arm and side. He has had his

with a pen and part with a pencil. The most I worry about is to think that you feel bad because I am in danger. I don't think that a war was [balance of letter is missing]

June 4th, 1864

Coal Harbur, VA

Dear Father and Mother, I take this present opportunity of writing a few lines to inform you that I am still alive and well while thousands are falling on every side. We left where we was the 30th of May and have gone up the Pamunkey. We are now in the front where there is the sound of a gun every second. The mail came to the Reg yesterday, Walter got a letter. I dont know but there was one for me but I was not with the Reg when the mail [illegible words] will be back tomorow and I can get it. Salome wrote in her letter that the news came that I was killed. I dont know who should start the story although I have been in some prety hot places. While I am writing I am laying flat to the ground behind a brestwork. The bullets are aflying over prety sharp. There was seven killed and wounded in our company yesterday. I am not with the Rigement much when they are in front, they are not suposed to [illegible] the pioneers to bury the dead.

June 8th, 1864

Coal Harbor, Va

Dear Father and Mother, I take this present opportunity of answering your letter dated May 26 which I received yesterday and was glad to hear from you and hear that you was well. I am well and hope these few lines will find you all enjoying the same blessing. You said Cyrenies and Eliza Jane had had the measles, you must be very careful and not let them take cold. There has not been much fighting today, only a little picket firing last night. Our men went out under a flag of truse to bury our dead. The firing was stopped for two hours, our men fetched in three hundred dead bodies, besides a great many that had been buried in the night. These were men that was killed four or five days ago in a charge that our men made on the enimies brest work. Our men rallied

arm taken off and is still alive. James Reay was shot in the leg and broke it and trying to get away he broke the other and was left on the field. Jo Casavah was shot dead. The other two Casavah boys was wounded and left on the field. The Trombly and Parker boys was all in the hospital. So was Eugene McCredy. I heard today that the Rebs killed what men was left on the field wounded. There has been a fight today about 2 miles from our camp our men drove the Rebs and took 1000 prisiners and two pieces of artilyery. Our Brigade was not out today. There is four Reg. in our Brigade, the 8th Coneticut, the 10th and 13th New Hampshire and 118 New York. I was in the 10th New Hampshire Reg the time of the fight. They did not hardly loose a man, all of the pioneers was in that Reg. They had better brest-work then the 118 did. I dont know as you can read this. Write soon, dont worry about me, give my love to all. So good bye

D. C. Stratton

May 22nd, 1864

Camp 10 miles from Richmond

Dear Father, I take my pen in hand to inform you that I am well and hope these few lines will find you the same. We have got lines of brestwork here six miles in length which reaches from the James River to the Appomatox River. Last night about eleven oclock the Rebs attempted to make a push on our brestwork and we opened about 25 canon loaded with shell and shot and drove them back in great haste. We did not loose a man. The Rebs are a trying to throw up brestwork in front of owers, but we shell them now. Since I have comensed to write our men have fired five or six canon. They keep picking away at them, they say general Grant is doing prety well this spring, but we cant believe everything we hear. When I see a thing I can believe it. I know I saw a few dead bodies on both sides. I think the Rebs loss was full as heavy as ours. We are encamped in a wheat field. The wheat is just heading out, I dont think it will do the Rebs any good, or our folks. We turn horses into bait. The weather is quite cool, I dont think it is much warm here now than I have seen it to home this time a year. I saw [illegible word] Robison [letter is torn here] Lewis, Walter, John Rodgers, Will are all well. I dont know as you can read this, part of it is written

with shouts and yells untill they got within thirty yards of the Rebs brest work when the Rebs rose up and fired into our men and they fired grape shot and shell into our men and our men broke and run for their life and the Rebs shelling them all the time. Our men got back into their brest work and the next day/night the Rebs thought they would make a charge so our men let them get up pretty close and then rose up and pored a voly into them . They was oblige to fall back with twice the loss of ours the day before. Well, the Lord has spared my life so far and I still hope and pray that my life will be spared that I may come home and see you all once more. I should like to see you all but a person cant enlist for three years and after they have been gone five or six months get sick of it and say if they had known that if they had got to fight they never would enlisted. It is not so with me, I expected when I enlisted to have to stay three years and do a good deal of hard fighting. The only thing I can do is to trust in the Lord, his will be done, he giveth and he taketh away, he doth all things well. Lewis is well. Walters and John Rodgers, Elihew Wilson and all the Chazy boys are well. I will come to a close by bidding you good bye. Write often, give my best respects to all enquiring friends. you may think I write very often, but I want to let you know what is going on

Dewitt C. Stratton

Private Stratton died at the 18th Army Corps Hospital on July 2, 1864. The official cause of death was listed as typhoid fever.

A NOTE FROM JANE RUPP

I have accepted a new postion as Director of the Marion County (Ohio) Historical Society effective January 1, 1998. Thus, I will soon be leaving the North Country. It has been a pleasure to learn and teach about Clinton County's rich history. I urge the Association to continue its unceasing efforts to educate the public. Many thanks to Board members, staff and volunteers, without whom my task here would have been impossible. I wish the CCHA and this region the best in the future.

CHAIR CANING WORKSHOP SCHEDULED

The Historical Association will be offering a chair caning workshop at the museum on six consecutive Thursdays, beginning January 29th and running through March 5th, from 6:30 to 8:30 pm. (Caned chairs are the ones that have the little holes around the edge.) The cost will be \$65 plus a materials fee of approximately \$15. The instructor will be Shirley Koester. Participation is limited to 10 people. Contact the Association office (561-0430) to register. Payment will be required to secure your registration. The course fee will benefit the Historical Association.

VOLUNTEERS SOUGHT

People with fine sewing and needlework skills with an interest in early 1800's costume (circa Battle of Plattsburgh) are being sought to form a group to study original clothing and to learn appropriate reproduction techniques with an eye to making period costumes for the Battle of Plattsburgh celebration. Contact the Historical Association office at 561-0430.

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