

# NORTH COUNTRY NOTES

ISSUED BY THE

CLINTON COUNTY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

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No. 386

July 2002

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## *The Meeting Schedule*

**July 1, 2002** – Mr. Don Papson will speak about the “New York’s Day of Jubilation: July 4, 1827, an address to commemorate the 175<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Emancipation Act of 1827 which ended 200 years of slavery in New York and liberated the last of the the state’s 10,000 slaves.” New York’s Emancipation Act led directly to the development of the Underground Railroad in the North Country. When Britain ended slavery throughout its Empire in 1834, fugitives were able to safely flee though New York to Canada. Local abolitionists organized North Country Anti-Slavery societies and acted as Underground Railroad agents until the Civil War.

Mr. Papson holds a BA in History from San Francisco State University and an MA in Education from Northwestern University. From 1982-1992, he published *Amerrikua*, a review of native and non-native cultures of the Americas. His one act play, “On My Way to Canada,” which was inspired by the réollections of Peru abolitionist Stephen Keese Smith, was staged by Plattsburgh State University Theatre Department students in March. His dramatic historical reading, the “Road to Freedom,” was presented at the Adirondack Museum and Plattsburgh State University in February. Mr. Papson is currently collaborating with Mountain Lake Public Broadcasting to develop the reading into a documentary.

The meeting will be held at the Clinton County Government Center, 137 Margaret Street, in the First Floor Meeting Room, beginning at 7:30 p.m.

**August 5, 2002** – Mr. John Tomkins III, will announce the winner of the McMasters Writing Prize and provide an “Update of the Valcour Island Lighthouse,” at the Clinton County Government Center, 137 Margaret Street, in the First Floor Meeting Room, beginning at 7:30 p.m.

## *Lighthouse Committee*

The Lighthouse Committeewill be opening the Lighthouse on Valcour Island for the season of 2002. The dates of the openings are July 7, 14, 21, 28; August 4, 11, 18, 25 and September 1. The time of the Open House is

from 1:00 p.m. until 3:00 p.m. on each of these dates. Volunteers have signed to to act as docents on all but the following dates: August 18<sup>th</sup> and September 1<sup>st</sup>. The Committee is also looking for volunteers to help in developing small static displays for the interpretation of the Lighthouse and the surrounding area (Fresnel lens, the Iron Tower, Architecture, the Lighthouse Keepers family life, geology and ecology of the island, etc.). If you are interested, please call or email ([clintoncohist@westelcom.com](mailto:clintoncohist@westelcom.com)) the Museum, and you will be contacted.

**Special Note: Although the Lighthouse will be open, public transportation to the Lighthouse is not available.**

***Adirondack Architectural Heritage (AARCH)  
Tour of Valcour Island  
July 19th***

The waters surrounding Valcour Island in Lake Champlain were the scene of the Battle of Valcour, an important naval battle during the Revolutionary War. Here in October 1776, a small American colonial fleet under the command of Benedict Arnold engaged the British Fleet. Although most of the American fleet was sunk or scuttled, the effort succeeded in holding off the British southern advance until the following year, thereby buying the Americans much needed time. During the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the island was briefly home to a fledgling "free love" colony. In 1874, a lighthouse was built on the island to aid navigation on the lake. Valcour Island is now part of the Adirondack Forest Preserve and the lighthouse is now being restored by the Clinton County Historical Association. Tour will include a boat ride to Valcour Island and around nearby Crab Island, a four mile walk around the island, and lunch at the lighthouse. Tour will begin at 10 AM and end at 3:30 PM. The tour fee is \$40 for AARCH members and \$45 for non-members. Please call 518-834-9328 for details and to make reservations.

***Publications Committee***

*We wish to thank Mr. Norman D. Jorstad for his writing "What Happened to Ezra Dominy." This article HAS encouraged many of the other writers of community history to submit their writings to the Notes. Although we cannot guarantee immediate publication, we do deeply appreciate the efforts put forth and will publish them at a later date. Due to the length of this article, it ran in two parts (Part 1 in Issue 385, and Part 2 in Issue 386) Thank you, again, Mr. Jorstad!*

## *WHAT HAPPENED TO EZRA DOMINY*

By Norman D Jorstad

### Part 2

As the first order of business, Ezra built a home which stood until the 1940s, when it, the barn, and other buildings were torn down. For its day, it was a pretentious house which was altered little over the years. It had five rooms downstairs and four upstairs. Rhoda, visual-izing her own home in Beekmantown, planted trees both to shelter the home and provide respite from the hot summer sun. An elm tree, which I vividly remember, grew into a great crowned monarch which defied years of lightning, howling winds of winter and the summer thunderstorms. Along the road in front of the home she planted a row of red cedars, similar to those which were moved from elsewhere on the property to the Chicago Century of Progress Fair in the 1930s.



Ezra Dominy Home, Serena Township, LaSalle County, IL

Four generations of Dominy's lived in the old weather-beaten house with its handhewn beams. Little did Ezra dream that the house he built in 1835 would serve so many of his descendants. First in the home lived Ezra and Rhoda and their eleven children: **Nathaniel**, b. July 8, 1807; d. Nov. 28, 1887; m. Philinda Finch in Grand Ridge, IL; **Rebecca**, b. May 16, 1809; d. Dec. 5, 1895; m. Andrew Greenless of Dayton, IL; **John Smith** Dominy,

b. June 13, 1812; d. July 9, 1883 in Iowa; **Belinda**, b. Dec. 11, 1813; d. Sept. 27, 1835; m. Martin Lewis; **Sarah**, b. Aug. 5, 1816; d. May 8, 1832; **Elizabeth**, b. July ; m. Jacob Peterson in Serena,IL; **Lorenzo**, b. July 9, 1832 d. Apr. 18, 1887, in Serena,IL; **Amy**, b. Oct. 12, 1 ; d. July 19, 1827, **Ezra Augustin**, b. Oct. 3, 1825; m. Ann Eliza Pool in Serena,IL; **Gilbert**, b. Mar. 16, 1828; m. Mary E. Pool; **Amy Ann**, b. Oct. 22, 1830; m. Matthias Pool in Serena,IL.

As the brothers and sisters married and moved on to other parts of Illinois and other states, Ezra Augustin stayed at home and helped farm the 200 acres now accumulated. When Ezra died, Ezra Augustin became the patriarch of the home. He married Ann Eliza Pool and fathered the third generation. They had four children, sons William and Arthur and daughters Ella and Eva. Arthur Dominy, the 2d oldest of the third generation, became the father of Chester Dominy and Mary Davis Dominy, the fourth generation. Mary, Chester and their father, Arthur, were all born in the same small room in the upper floor in Ezra's home.

Ezra Dominy's connection with the Presbyterian Church began some years before he came to Illinois. He became the first Bible agent of Indian Creek. Soon after his arrival he, with a few of like faith, joined in social worship and kept up, as best they could without having a pastor, religious meetings in the neighborhood. Soon, however, the Methodist pioneer was there to help the little flock in the wilderness and Father Dominy was not slow to lend his aid in building up the church of Christ. He was no bigot. He could unite with all true Christians in the worship of God.

He was, in the broadest sense, a true Christian philanthropist and in his heart could most cheerfully say.

*"Give me the man whose liberal mind means general good and all mankind, who, when his friend by fortune's wind falls tumbling headlong to the ground can meet him with a warm embrace and wipe the tears from off his face. "*

The descendants of Ezra Dominy, including wives, husbands and children, held a reunion on September 3, 1873. Over 100 were present including children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. The Ottawa, Illinois, Republican described the event as follows in an article dated September 11, 1873:

*"Four generations of the Dominy family, ranging in ages from the patriarch of 87 years down to a six months infant,*

gathered on the morning of the 3rd inst., in the grove near the residence of Mrs. Rebecca Greenless, eight miles north of Ottawa, for the purpose of holding a family reunion. There were present on the occasion no less than one hundred relatives, all of whom entered with zest into the festivities. Ezra Dominy is the grandson of Nathaniel Dominy, one of three brothers, who came from England and settled on Long Island. Ezra's father moved from Long Island to Plattsburg, N.Y. in 1796, where he followed the calling of a farmer. Ezra married Rhoda, daughter of John Smith of that place May 22d, 1806, and with her came west, settling in La Salle county in 1835, and have continued residents thereof from that day to this. They have shared the hardships of the early settlers and witnessed the wondrous changes by which the country was transformed from a wilderness, the home of the red man, into a densely populated district, the home of an enlightened, prosperous Christian people. They have also seen their family grow into four generations, numbering eight children, forty-five grandchildren, and forty-three great-grand children, all living and enjoying the fruits of their labors. From 10 A.M. to 2 P.M. the time was passed in conversation, amusements, etc., and in preparations for the dinner, for which purpose a table eight-five feet long had been constructed. This was covered with the bounties of the season, and decorated with the treasures of the pantry, the flower garden and the forest. At 2 P.M. old and young gathered around it and, after the blessing of the Great Giver of all things had been asked by Ezra Dominy, proceeded to do justice to the skill of the housekeepers who had prepared it. The large family cake, a magnificent centerpiece, was cut by Gilbert Dominy and distributed among the throng. As we can not do justice in a description of what was said and done on this occasion, we shall not attempt it. Remarks were made by the aged patriarch, who expressed a desire to meet one and all again on earth, and finally in a better land, and by Nathaniel Dominy, one of his sons. W. E. Bowman, the photographer, managed, as usual, to give his "views" and, what is better, had his coach and viewing apparatus with him. Five negatives were taken of groups and of the reunionists at dinner."

township which he named Smithtown. It is written about Rhoda's death that: *"she was about 8 years old when she emigrated with her parents from Clinton Co. N.Y., and settled at Beekmantown, where she married Ezra Dominy on the 22d of May, 1806. They resided there until the year 1835, when they, with their family, removed to La Salle County, Illinois, and settled on Indian Creek, now in the town of Serena. She was the mother of eleven children, eight of whom still survive. She was a member of the Presbyterian church, and an earnest Christian, and died in the faith of the atoning blood of Jesus Christ. She leaves a husband who is also in the 87<sup>th</sup> year of his age and a large circle of relatives and friends to mourn her loss. The funeral was held at Bend school house, conducted by the Rev. Wetley Batchelor, and was attended by a large concourse of people. The Elder preached a very affecting sermon. The singing was led by Professor Kelley, assisted by Mrs. Chamberlain on the organ. The music was very appropriate and solemn, and was rendered beautifully and impressively."*

Ezra Dominy, an early settler of and one of the oldest persons in La Salle county, died in Serena Township, where he had resided since 1835, on the 13th of January 1879. Both he and his wife were most devout members of the Presbyterian Church. After his wife's death, Ezra began to gradually fail and as his obituary stated: *"... and about 2 A.M. of January 13th, 1879, he fell asleep in Jesus. Such was his infirmity that he could not give a dying testimony, yet none who knew him can doubt he was entered into rest. On Tuesday following a large congregation assembled at his funeral, and took a last look at this ancient patriarch, and then laid him away in his last resting place, to await the resurrection of the just."*

The funeral occurred on the following day, and was attended by nearly all of the inhabitants in the vicinity and by probably the largest number of relatives ever assembled in the county on an occasion of the kind. The venerable pioneer preacher, Rev. W. Batchelor, preached the sermon. The following biographical sketch of Ezra was written by one who knew him well. *"Ezra Dominy the subject of this memoir, was born on Long Island in 1786, moved to Plattsburgh, New York in 1796 and was married to Miss Rhoda Smith, daughter of Mr. John Smith, of the same place, May 22d, 1806. He came to the place of his late residence with his family in 1835, at which time there were only twenty-two families from the mouth of Indian Creek to the head of the timber on mid creek, some fifteen or twenty miles. They shared the hardships of the early settlers and witnessed the great changes by which the county was transformed from a wilderness the home of the red man, into a densely populated district, the home of the enlightened, prosperous and christian, people. They have seen their family grow into four generations, numbering eight*



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children, forty-five grandchildren and forty-three or more great  
grandchildren, all living to enjoy the fruit of their labor."



Ezra and Rhoda Dominy – circa 1874

*(We hope that you have enjoyed the story of Ezra Dominy. Any readers that have and wish to share additional information on Ezra Dominy and his descendants with Mr. Jorstad may contact him at [engheim@earthlink.com](mailto:engheim@earthlink.com).)*

**WELCOME ABOARD NEW MEMBERS!!  
THANK YOU FOR JOINING US!**

Mr. J. Rock, Mr. C. Kaczor

## RECENT COLLECTION ACQUISITIONS

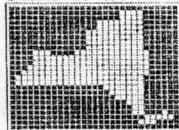
The Association would like to thank the following individuals for their donations to the collections of the Museum.

Mr. Richard Ward for his donation of "Our Musical Album" sheet music from the Adgate House (in Ausable Chasm), presented by Dunham & Gilbert, Medical Hall, Plattsburgh, NY.

Mrs. Priscilla Altizer for her donation of original documentation (1853 to 1909) of the Z.Platt/Erastus Carpenter property, the Elmore Property in Button Brook, the Heyworth Farm, the Stone House, Thomas Arbuckle documents, and a hand drawn map of the Macomb Patent.

These programs are made possible with public funds from the New York State Council on the Arts, a state agency.

State of the Arts



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