



# Clinton County Historical Association North Country Notes

Issue #422

June, 2019



## Winfred Porter Truesdell: Champlain's International Art Publisher

By David Patrick

Winfred Porter Truesdell was an internationally known art publisher who lived in Champlain, New York. He amassed a collection of thousands of bookplates, lithographs and photographs and published many books related to printing between the years 1903 and 1933.

His best-known publication was a periodical called *The Print Connoisseur* which he published for 12 years. Truesdell started printing near Boston but moved to New York City and then to Champlain, where he lived for 18 years. It is likely that many people today have never heard of Truesdell. He is certainly Champlain's unknown art publisher.

Truesdell was an art connoisseur at an early age. By 1901, at the age of 24, his passion was collecting printed bookplates. His first wife Amy also had an interest in bookplates and designed some herself.

What is a "bookplate?" It is essentially a printed label that the owner of a book would use to indicate to others, especially if the book was loaned, who the book belonged to. Instead of writing the name of the owner in the book, book owners could easily paste a printed label in the book with their name on it. The bookplate evolved over time to encompass elaborate, custom designs that were made by engraving copper or zinc plates similar to that of lithograph prints.

Truesdell lived near Boston where many bookplate artists and collectors lived. He contributed articles to national and international magazines devoted to bookplate collecting. Between the years 1902 and 1908, he is mentioned numerous times in

the periodical *Journal of the Ex Libris Society* which was published in England ("ex libris" is Latin for "bookplate"). The editor noted the high quality of his 5,000-piece collection.

Around 1903, Truesdell purchased a printing press and called his publishing business the "Troutsdale Press." Between 1903 and 1907, he published 12 booklets that showcased the work of various bookplate artists. After 1907, Truesdell's interests in bookplates appears to have waned. He was now interested in a similar field: engraving and lithography.



*A bookplate designed by E.B. Bird in 1904, published in a book printed by Winfred Porter Truesdell. Private Collection.*

### Thank you for picking up our newsletter!

The Clinton County Historical Association (CCHA) is a non-profit organization that is chartered by the New York State Board of Regents. We collect and preserve items that have relevance to Clinton County.

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# Association News: Museum Weekend around the Corner

By Geri Favreau, President

CCHA is eagerly looking forward to sunshine and warmer weather. It's been a very busy winter but our busiest seasons are ahead. Check out the list of upcoming events on page 3. Please attend if you can.

Plans are being made for the 12th Annual Museum Weekend on June 15 and 16, when once again, 16 county museums and other venues will be open for free from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Many venues will offer special events and incentives to visitors.

A Clinton County History Conference will be held on June 22 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., at the Beekmantown Town Hall, 571 Spellman Road. Among the topics at the conference, which is open to the public: Preservation, Genealogy, Tourism, Historic Markers and more.

New York State Historian Devin Lander, a graduate of SUNY Plattsburgh, will be speaking. The cost is \$15 per person (includes lunch), and you must register by June 7 by contacting me at gerifavreau@gmail.com or 518-569-8984. Co-sponsors are CCHA, the Clinton County Historian, the Adirondack Coast Cultural Alliance and the Town of Beekmantown.

More details on the History Conference and Museum Weekend will be in an events card dedicated to these two important events as plans are firmed up.

We hope to see you at the Museum! Thanks for your support!



*AmeriCorps VISTA volunteers participated in the community-wide "Day of Caring" on April 13, doing spring cleaning and organizing at the CCHA Museum.*

## In the Gift Shop

Thanks to a grant from the Rotary Club of Plattsburgh, this 63-page book, "The Clinton County Suffrage Story," has been published and is now available at the CCHA museum.

The book was written by CCHA Director Helen Nerska along with several Plattsburgh State students: Paris Blais, ToniAnn Buscemi, Sean Kessler and Alexander Meseck.

The fascinating stories in the book bring to light the women and men in the county's woman suffrage movement, culminating in the right to vote on Nov. 6, 1917.

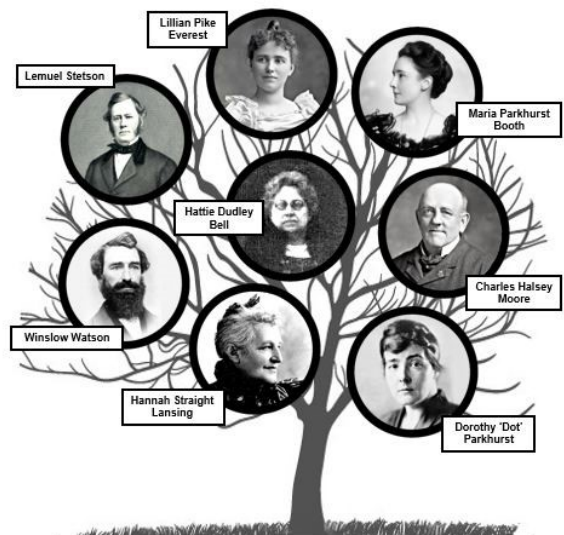
There were also many anti-suffragists in the County who fought against the movement.

Find out which side your ancestors were on.

Copies of the book were donated free of charge to high schools in Clinton County, the libraries in the Clinton Essex Franklin Library System, and public historians throughout the region.

If you're interested in getting a copy for yourself or to give as a gift, contact us at the CCHA museum at 518-561-0340 or at director@clintoncountyhistorical.org.

Copies may be purchased at the museum for \$5.



## CLINTON COUNTY SUFFRAGE STORY

Paris Blais - ToniAnn Buscemi - Sean Kessler  
Alexander Meseck - Helen Allen Nerska

# CCHA Coming Attractions

## **“North Country at Work” Exhibit**

**CCHA Early Industry Gallery**

**Open throughout May**

CCHA and North Country Public Radio's North Country at Work team are showcasing photos of work in Plattsburgh and Clinton County from the 1800s to the present, with listening stations where you can hear work stories from people in your community. Premieres May 2. Free.

## **“Native Women: Ancient Traditions and Modern Rights”**

**CCHA**

**May 23, 6:30 p.m.**

CCHA trustee and Town of Saranac Historian Jan Couture will describe how local native tribes set the stage for women's suffrage and gender equality. Free.

## **“Clinton County at Work Live!”**

**Plattsburgh Memorial Chapel**

**June 1, 7-9 p.m.**

Join co-sponsors North Country at Work, the Plattsburgh Memorial Chapel and the CCHA for a celebration of labor history. Folks will tell stories about their work or the work their family did, and we'll have time at the end for pop-up storytellers to share their own work stories. Free.

## **“Valcour Island Update”**

**CCHA**

**June 10, 6:30 p.m.**

CCHA emeritus trustee and Valcour Island expert Roger Harwood will bring the public up to date on the historic Bluff Point Lighthouse, trails and camps. Free.

## **“Sunday on the Island”**

**CCHA**

**July 14, 9 a.m.-3 p.m. (Reservations required)**

Tours of the Bluff Point Lighthouse open from 9 to 3. Boat leaves Peru Dock every 20 minutes from 9 to 1. Call CCHA to reserve a seat. \$25 per person. Rain date Aug. 11.

## **“The Iron Industry Heritage of Clintonville”**

**Keeseville Fire Station, 8 Pleasant Street, Keeseville**

**July 17, 7 p.m.**

Gordon Pollard discusses one of the region's most vibrant early commercial sectors. Co-sponsored with Anderson Falls Historical Society. Free.

## **“Tours of the Old Base Oval”**

**CCHA**

**July 13 and 27; August 10 and 17**

**Meet at 10 a.m.**

The Saturday tours of the heart of Plattsburgh's massive historic military base are free to members, \$5 for guests.

## **“Street Drive”**

**Plattsburgh**

**August 24, 9 a.m.-1 p.m.**

CCHA volunteers will be collecting spare change at several intersections around the city in our annual fundraiser.

## **“Women's Equality Day”**

**CCHA**

**August 26, 6:30 p.m.**

Join Carol Hetfield from the North Country Underground Railroad Historical Association in a celebration of women's suffrage and the struggle for civil rights. Co-sponsored with the League of Women Voters.

## **“Memories of Fort Montgomery”**

**Plattsburgh Memorial Chapel**

**September 19, 6:30 p.m.**

James P. Millard, publisher of the award-winning America's Historic Lakes website and author of “Fort Montgomery: Through the Years...”, will discuss one of Lake Champlain's most fascinating, and misunderstood, historic sites.

## **“Out of the Attic Antique Appraisal”**

**CCHA**

**October 12, 10 a.m.-1 p.m.**

Ted Comstock is back to help you figure out if that stuff you've been storing is junk or a rare antiquity. This annual fundraiser is one of CCHA's most popular events. \$5 per item appraised.



## Truesdell's International Art (cont.)

During the 1910s Truesdell focused his work on American and European engravers who made beautiful lithograph prints. Publishing at the time relied on artist-engravers to reproduce portraits, paintings, drawings and historic scenes in astonishing detail using engraved copper plates, etched zinc plates, blocks of wood or even carved linoleum. The engraved plates were used in a printing press for mass production of the image. Over the next 30 years, Truesdell collected over 9,000 lithograph prints. He bought many prints on three European trips in the early 1920s.

### "The Print Connoisseur" Magazine

Starting in October of 1920, Truesdell printed a quarterly magazine called *The Print Connoisseur* which was devoted to articles related to engravings and engravers, print makers and artists. The magazine ran from 1920 to 1932 and comprised 46 issues.

Truesdell's *Print Connoisseur* magazine usually had four or five articles written by guest writers. Truesdell sometimes wrote one or two articles himself for an issue. The magazine included high quality prints of engravings and wood cuts. Most magazine covers were printed in black and white but some were printed in color. Truesdell supported his magazine through subscriptions and ads placed in the back.

Truesdell's studio was originally in New York City when he started printing *The Print Connoisseur* in 1920. In 1922 and 1923, he had the Clinton Press in Plattsburgh print the magazine while he was in the process of moving to Champlain or traveling in Europe. Between 1924 and 1926 Hugh McLellan of Champlain used his newly established Moorsfield Press to print the magazine.

Afterwards, Truesdell printed them himself.

### Truesdell's Book Publishing (1924-1933)

In 1924, Truesdell published his first large book on the work of artist and engraver Charles Meryon which was written by Loys Delteil (who also contributed articles to his magazine). Other books followed for the work of engravers Henry Wolf (1927) and Gustav Kruell (1929), both books written by Ralph Clifton Smith.

Truesdell was considered an authority on George Washington, Abraham Lincoln and the Civil War and often gave talks

on the subjects. In 1926 and 1927, he published several important books related to the lithographs of Col. Elmer E. Ellsworth, the first northern soldier killed in the Civil War. Truesdell's Ellsworth books were an expansion of the articles printed in his *Print Connoisseur* magazine in April and July of 1926.

Truesdell spent many years collecting Abraham Lincoln lithographs. In 1916, he planned to publish all of the portraits and engravings of Abraham Lincoln. He was in discussions with Frederick Hill Meserve (1865-1962) to use prints of Meserve's Lincoln photographs for the upcoming book. In 1911, Meserve had published his authoritative book on all of the Lincoln photographs known to exist. Truesdell wanted to print a similar book and Meserve offered him 112 prints from his exclusive negatives.

Four years later, in 1920, Truesdell printed an announcement for the upcoming book, but it wasn't until 1933 that he printed Volume 2 of the planned four-volume series. Truesdell died before printing Volumes 1, 3 and 4.

### The McLellan Lincoln Collection

In 1918, Hugh McLellan semi-retired from the architectural business in New York City and moved back to Champlain to settle his father's estate. His father, Charles Woodberry McLellan, had been a friend of Abraham Lincoln and Robert Todd Lincoln from 1856 to 1860 in Springfield, Illinois, and continued his friendship with Robert up to his death. At the end of his life, Charles was one of the top five Lincoln collectors in the country (known as the "Big Five"). His Lincoln collection was stored in a large, fire-proof vault in the McLellan cottage and contained many letters written by Lincoln from 1838 to 1865. The most

important letter he owned was a reply by Lincoln to the Thomas Jefferson Day Dinner celebration in Boston in 1858. Lincoln was unable to attend, but his letter, really a speech, was read at the dinner and is said to have helped him win the East. Hugh McLellan printed the letter in 1923 with his Moorsfield Press.

Truesdell was also interested in the Lincoln collection and visited Hugh McLellan several times to see it. Over the next five years, he helped McLellan catalog the collection, arranged meetings with buyers and auction houses in New



A sketch of Winfred Porter Truesdell signed by sketch artist William Oberhardt and Truesdell and given to Hugh McLellan. From the *Print Connoisseur* article, "The 'Heads' of Oberhardt," June 1921.

Original sketch in the CCHA collection.

## Truesdell's International Art (cont.)

York, and kept abreast of similar auctions from the other "Big Five" collectors. He used some of McLellan's material for his upcoming Lincoln books and *Print Connoisseur* magazines.

After negotiating with various auction houses and agents, Hugh and his brother Malcolm sold their father's collection to John D. Rockefeller, Jr., in 1923 for \$43,500 (over \$648,000 today). Rockefeller, in turn, donated the collection to Brown University where it is known today as the "McLellan Lincoln Collection." Hugh McLellan worked with the librarian at Brown on the cataloging and display of the collection.

### The Moorsfield Press

When Hugh McLellan founded the Moorsfield Press in Champlain in 1919, he had a basic knowledge of printing from his days at college when he printed envelopes. Truesdell had 16 years of experience working with a printing press and was also an experienced publisher. He was instrumental in helping McLellan establish his press and quickly became his mentor. McLellan's first publication in 1919 acknowledged Truesdell's assistance: *"The kindly advice of Mr. Winfred Porter Truesdell in the typography of this brochure, and his assistance and encouragement, are gratefully acknowledged."*



*Frederick Reynolds (left) and W.P. Truesdell at Hugh McLellan's house in Champlain in 1922. Reynolds printed portraits of many famous people. Courtesy Special Collections, Feinberg Library, SUNY Plattsburgh.*

In 1922, McLellan suggested to Truesdell that he move to Champlain and establish his own press.

McLellan wrote: *"I may say that the Moorsfield Press is a flourishing institution around here. I told you about Mr. Truesdell sending his Golding 12x18 press up. I have installed a motor on it, and Woodberry [son Woody] is now singing in the other room as he runs off a job on it. Mr. Truesdell is here now, and we've been printing for a week ... I am trying to induce Truesdell to come up here permanently and open up a real printing office - at any rate we would be kept busy."*

In the early 1920s, Truesdell went to Europe three times in search of art and to sell ads for his magazine. He asked

McLellan to help with the production of his magazine which was being printed by the Clinton Press in Plattsburgh. He needed McLellan to manage his affairs, pay bills, handle printing problems and correspond with authors. McLellan found his hands full handling Truesdell's work as well as overdue bills. This work left little time for his own printing.

When the Moorsfield Press became more established, McLellan and Truesdell printed the magazine in 1926 and 1927. These publications show the unique style of the Caslon old-style font. It is the same font that McLellan would use when he issued his own historical magazine called the *Moorsfield Antiquarian* in 1937 and 1938, as well as many historical pamphlets he printed over the years.

In 1945, Hugh McLellan was one of the founding members of the Clinton County Historical Association as well as President. His son Woody published the North Country Notes newsletter using the Moorsfield Press starting in 1960.

### Life, Education and Marriage

Winfred Porter Truesdell was born on Nov. 13, 1877, in Lynn, Massachusetts. According to Woody McLellan, Truesdell "was a self-educated man, never having obtained a formal high school education, yet he spoke French and Spanish fluently and became popular as an after-dinner speaker." He also described him as a "remarkably brilliant man."



After Truesdell moved to Champlain, he met his second wife, school teacher Edythe Gettys. They married in August of 1924 and lived on Oak Street in Champlain.

*Edythe Gettys, circa 1904-07, from the CCHA collection.*

On May 27, 1939, Truesdell died at his house of a heart attack after being ill for a year. He was buried in the Glenwood Cemetery in Champlain.

Edythe never moved Truesdell's books or the printing press. When she died in 1970, heirs settled the estate and donated most of Truesdell's bookplates, magazines, lithographs and photos to Special Collections, Feinberg Library, at SUNY Plattsburgh, where the collection's more than 9,000 items are available for researchers.

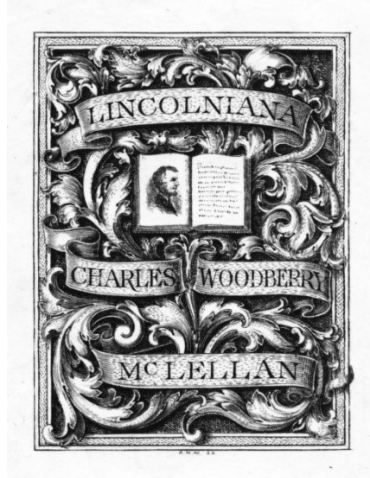
*Writer David Patrick, a direct descendent of Judge Pliny Moore and relative of historian Hugh McLellan, has written extensively about the Moore, Nye and McLellan families and published 15 historic calendars on the Town of Champlain. Research material and some images courtesy of Special Collections, Feinberg Library, SUNY Plattsburgh.*



# Truesdell's International Art (cont.)



Bookplate made for "Big Five" Lincoln collector Judd Stewart in 1909 by engraver Arthur Nelson MacDonald. Private collection.



Bookplate made for "Big Five" Lincoln collector Charles Woodberry McLellan in 1922 by engraver Arthur Nelson MacDonald. Private collection.



Bookplate made for Winfred Porter Truesdell and signed by the artist. Private collection.



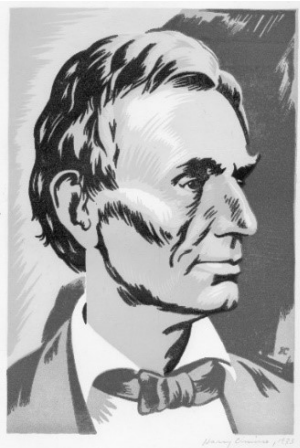
Lithograph of British Gen. John Burgoyne. Courtesy Special Collections, Feinberg Library, SUNY Plattsburgh.



Lithograph of Thomas Macdonough. Courtesy Special Collections, Feinberg Library, SUNY Plattsburgh.



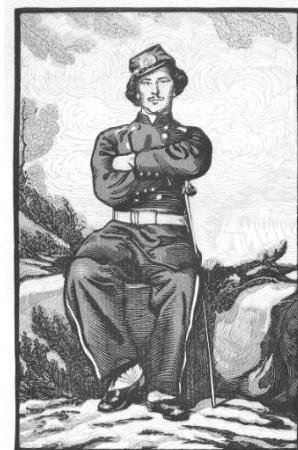
Lithograph of Elmer E. Ellsworth, first northern casualty in the Civil War. Private collection.



Color wood cut from "Engraved & Lithographed Portraits of Abraham Lincoln, Volume 2." Private collection.



Color wood cut from the Print Connoisseur article "Edward Wilson's Marines." Private collection.



Color wood cut of Elmer E. Ellsworth. Private collection.

# CCHA Launches Photo Preservation Project

By Roger Black, CCHA volunteer

CCHA has formed a new group to oversee management and display of its thousands of photographs of historical scenes and portraits in its collection.

The Historical Photographs Working Group was created to ensure that the glass and celluloid negatives as well as photo prints will be well looked after for many decades in the future.

The HPWG is chaired by Roger Black, overseen by CCHA President Geri Favreau and Director Helen Nerska, and includes members Sue Lezon, Sarah Jennette and David Patrick.

One of its first goals is to create a master database of the thousands of glass and celluloid negatives from the archives in preparation for the launch and uploading into an online photo gallery that will be accessible through the CCHA website.

Work on the database has been underway for several years, and the online photo gallery could be launched in the next few months. Uploading the photos to the online photo gallery is a process that will take several years and will depend on the efforts of CCHA volunteers.

The HPWG will also be responsible for producing print copies of historical scenes and portraits for sales to CCHA members and the general public. The photo prints are an important fund raiser for CCHA and an invaluable gift to local residents who can preserve family memories and area history.

Why not check with CCHA to see if a member of your family is in the 17,000-portrait collection?

Eventually, the online photo gallery will be more than just a collection of old photos but also a place where the history of Clinton County will be told in a story form that is rich in imagery.

Planning has already begun to build photo and history sections for the Frank Pardy Photo Collection of Rouses Point, the Catholic Summer School of America in Cliff Haven and possibly the Lozier Boat and Automobile Factory in Plattsburgh.

But perhaps the most valuable contribution of the HPWG will be to put in place a group of people dedicated to preserving the region's history through these invaluable photographs.

*Patty Amore, left, is among the many people helping the Historical Photographs Working Group to organize the CCHA photograph collection and launch an online gallery.*



## Donations, Memberships, Grants and Support

Dec. 1, 2018, to March 31, 2019

Robert and Mary Adams, Janet Alexander, Jane Alexander, Allen County (Indiana) Public Library, Ron and Carol Allen, Martha Bachman, George and Betsy Baker, Kathy and Ira Barbell, Larry and Vesta Barcomb, Jack Barrette, Bernie and Betty Bassett, Jack and Donna Bell, Barb Benkwitt, Rod and Christine Bigelow, Kit and Sally Booth, Alan and Jennifer Booth, Tom Braga, Ronald Brault, Brown Funeral Home, Caroline Burakowski, Mark and Holley Christiansen, City of Plattsburgh Fire Department, Jim and Susan Coffey, Paula Cormier and Sarah Gooley, Herb and Irene Cottrell, Jan and Dave Couture, Richard Daly, DAR Library, John Dawson, Msgr. Lawrence Deno, Nelson Disco, Geri Favreau, Andrew Favreau and Kasey Kirk, Fidelity Charitable Gift Fund-David Patrick, Connie Fisher, Mason and Joan Forrence, Maurica Gilbert and Noel Sowley, Rod and Dodie Giltz, Linda Harwood, Jim and Elinor Hays, Judith Heintz, Pat Higgins and Mark Cohen, George and Kay Hubbell, Jacqueline Huru, Theresa Jensen, Ray and Lola Johnson, Richard and Susan Kelley, Bill Kelting and Jane

Saxe Kelting, Harold and Carole Klein, Carol Klepper, Michael LaFontaine, Art LaJoy, Connie Lalonde, Bill and Beverly Leege, Dorothy Lewis, Jim Lindgren, Steve Martin, Village of Champlain – Beverly Maynard, Marshall and Ann Maynard, Deborah McNamee, Ann Merkley, Miles and Kelly Moody, Henry Morlock and Ursula Jones, Anna Nardelli, Merrie and Alan Nautel, Helen Nerska, Chris and Sandra Neuzil, Sylvia Newman, Mary Nicknish, Northern Insuring, NYS Library, Nancy Olsen, Don Papson, Celine Racine Paquette, Donna Racine, Stan and Christina Ransom, Marianne Rector, Geri Rickert and Bill Umbreit, Kevin and Mary Ryan, Roby Scott, Lawrence Shanley, Jeff and Janet Stephens, Noel and Debbie Stewart, David and Sandy Stortz, Jack Swan, Village of Dannemora—Larry Seeny, Gary and Billie VanCour, June Venette, Stewart's, Stuart and Linda Voss, Steve and Sue Welch, John Willey, Dale and Ruth Wolfe and Clinton County.



**CLINTON COUNTY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION**

98 Ohio Avenue  
Plattsburgh, NY 12903  
Phone: (518) 561-0340  
www.clintoncountyhistorical.org



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Issue 422, June 2019

**Current Resident or:**

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## To the Lighthouse, Once Again:

### This Year's Sunday on Valcour Island Is July 14

This July 14, CCHA will again offer transportation to the historic Bluff Point Lighthouse on Valcour Island.

Last year's event was a huge success, with over 100 visitors enjoying the island.

CCHA's chartered boat will take visitors across the water beginning at 9 a.m. and continue until 1 p.m., with the final return voyage at 3 p.m.

A seat on the boat costs \$25. We are taking reservations, but last year we sold out early. Payment will be due June 15. Rain date is Aug. 11.

CCHA will also have T-shirts and ornaments depicting the lighthouse available for purchase. Call 518-561-0340 to reserve your seat.

For those with their own transportation, the lighthouse will be open for tours every Sunday in July and August from 1 to 3 p.m.

