

NORTH COUNTRY NOTES

ISSUED OCCASIONALLY BY THE

CLINTON COUNTY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

No. 46

Allan S. Everest and Charles W. McLellan, Editors

June, 1968

THE ANNUAL SUMMER TRIP

A bus tour of some of the pioneer homes of southern Clinton County will be held on Saturday, June 8. The tour will be conducted by Dr. Allan Everest and will include visits inside a few of the homes and passing comments on many more.

Bring a picnic for noon at Ausable Point, where the custodian will give a short talk about the development of the place. The bus will leave the College gymnasium in Plattsburgh (on Rugar Street) at 10:00 A.M. and return there about 4 P.M. The cost of the bus will be \$1 for adults, 50 cents for young people of high school age. The itinerary includes Peru, Ausable, Schuyler Falls and West Plattsburgh.

If you plan to come, please return the enclosed slip to the Secretary, David Martin, West Chazy, New York to reach him by Wednesday, June 5.

STATE MUSEUM SEEKS ARTIFACTS

In anticipation of a later moving of the State Museum to the new Cultural Center in the South Mall at Albany, the State Education Department has just issued an appeal for historical objects that "help tell the story of man's history in New York State." The new site will provide four times the space now available to the Museum in the State Education Building. A long list of wanted items includes early electric motors, antique tables, a printing press, early agricultural equipment, a carriage and a streetcar. Interested people are asked to contact the State Historian in Albany.

Association members are also reminded that the Association Museum hopes eventually to tell the story of man's history in the North Country, and welcomes artifacts associated with this part of the State.

RIDDLE OF THE MONTH

No one has offered an explanation of the quotation from French's *Gazetteer*, given in the April "Notes". However, Mr. Richard Patterson of Verdun, Quebec, suggests, in answer to "What Were They?" in the March "Notes" that the "canal" from the saw mill to the grist mill in West Chazy was undoubtedly a sluice way. He writes, "One of the old grist mills that was once on the Lacolle River was supplied water power in a similar way, except that it was an underground sluice way".

New riddle: Where was the "Still Farm" and why was it so named?

The Cumberland Head Lighthouse

By the early decades of the 19th century, transportation on Lake Champlain had become heavy enough to warrant a lighthouse. Steamboat traffic had appeared in 1809. A canal connecting the lake and the Hudson River was completed in 1823. It was not unexpected when on March 3, 1837 the Lighthouse Bill was passed by Congress. It provided \$10,000 for two lighthouses on Lake Champlain, one of which was to be on Cumberland Head.

The procedure for building a lighthouse consisted of appointing an agent who resided near the site. This agent was to purchase the land and supervise the construction according to government specifications. The agent chosen to carry out this task was David B. McNeil. At the outset he was chided by a federal auditor for not going through proper procedures for acquiring the land. Nevertheless, he bought from Luther Hagar some three acres on the tip of the Head for \$398.20 in "current lawful money."

Construction of the lighthouse, which McNeil supervised, was completed on June 15, 1838. The original light was built separately from the dwelling and somewhat nearer the shore than the present structure. The light itself had eleven lamps and many bright reflectors. A few months later, Lt. C. T. Platt, United States Navy wrote a report in which he praised the construction and effectiveness of the light for entering and leaving Plattsburgh harbor. However, he found that the light was obstructed by "thick and lofty forests" so that it was hidden for 50 rods distance when approaching from the north.

On March 2, 1867, Congress appropriated \$18,000 to be used solely on construction "on a more eligible site," since no more land was bought at this time. On November 1, 1868, the new light was exhibited; and by 1869 the new tower and keeper's dwelling were completed, old building removed and grounds graded. The new lighthouse was a fifty-foot tower with an attached dwelling. It was built of limestone from Isle la Motte.

From 1869 to 1877 controversy raged over obstruction of the light by trees. It seems that it was obstructed not only from the north (Point aux Roches) but also from Plattsburgh. A very costly elimination of this problem was started in 1870 when Congress appropriated \$3,000 for the purchase of 15 acres at \$200 per acre. Owners of the adjoining land requested compensation of \$100 for removing the trees or \$200 for sale of the land and removal of the trees. The authorities chose to buy the land and attempt to resell it for the initial cost after the trees were removed. In 1872 more land was purchased for tree-removal from Jonathan T. Hagar for \$1,000. About 1877, \$250 was appropriated for more land.

Not much is known about the keepers of the light. In 1838 the first keeper, Deacon Samuel Emery, was best known for his "posey-loving housekeeper (who) turned the government grounds into one vast flower garden." The early keepers received \$350 a year. The longest tenure was that of William Taberrah at \$480 from 1871 to 1909, followed by his widow at \$510.

Just prior to World War II, a metal tower with an automatic light was built in front of the old tower. Although the light was automatic, Mr. Anderson, the last keeper, continued to live at the no-longer-functioning lighthouse. Shortly after the war began, the lighthouse was officially closed and allowed to deteriorate, and was subject to vandalism and theft.

During the war the buildings were put up for sale along with all the property. Military personnel were allowed first choice and in this way all the land was sold. The lighthouse itself and some adjoining land was purchased by Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Church shortly after the war ended. At first they did not live in the lighthouse dwelling, but have subsequently moved into it. They have transformed it into a charming home and enlarged it by building an addition.

Excerpts from an essay by
Diane Stadnyk, SUC

HOW CHAZY RAN ITS SCHOOL

(From Chazy School Records, Book 1)

At the annual schoolmeeting legally warned Sept. 9th 1811 after choosing John Cofrin Esq Moderator & Elisha Morgan Clerk pro. Tem. Resolved that Revd Joel Byington, John M. Grant Esq and Elisha Morgan stand as Trustees for this district for the year ensuing; & that Elisha Morgan officiate as Clerk. Resolved that the trustees shall employ a teacher as soon as may be, for one month on trial, and at the expiration of sd term that they warn a school meeting.

As above ordered the Trustees employed Daniel Hill to begin school September 11th for twelve dollars pr month to receive half payment in wheat & half cash. Said Hill to collect his school bill.

Elisha Morgan Clk

Novm 3d 1818 The inhabitation of Destrict No 2 met at the schoolhouse according to adjournment.

Resolved that the school house be built according to the plan drawn by the committy except the addition of two feet in length viz. thirty four feet in length, twenty four in breath, to be two story. Hight twenty feet from the foundation to the eves, or top of the side wall. Two windows in the south end, three in the west side, one in the N. end, & three in front of each story. Twenty four pain to each window. a hall of six feet across the north end, outsid door to be at the east end of said hall, & a stairway from it to' the upper story.

Solomon Fisk—Clerk

SUMMER NEWS AND NOTES

This is the last publication of "North Country Notes" until September. The next regular meeting of the Association will be held on Monday, September 9, when Mrs. Elsie Everest and Mr. Glyndon Cole will present a program entitled "An Evening with the Kent-Delord Collection".

Mrs. Eleanor Spaulding of Ausable has just mimeographed a limited edition of the "Index to Town of Old Peru Records as Copied by J. W. Harkness in 1902." To this she has added genealogical sketches of the old families written by modern descendants. The whole makes a bound volume of 80 pages of valuable local history.

Correspondence continues with the Quartermasters' Museum (see notes of May 1968) concerning the uniforms of General Benjamin Mooers, on display there. The Curator sent enlarged photographs of the various items but regretted that he cannot part with them at this time (las three words underlined in his letter). The Association continues to explore ways by which the uniforms may be made available to us at some future time. Meanwhile, among the Kent-Delord papers at the Feinberg Library a bill for the Generals' complete uniform has been discovered, dated 1812, and adding up to about \$280, a large sum for the day.

Recent additions to the Museum of the Historical Association, according to the Curator, Miss Emily McMasters, include:

A page from Harper's Weekly of 1899, matted and ready for framing, of pictures of Governor Roosevelt and President McKinley at Plattsburgh. It was presented by Mr. Rutherford Gettens of Washington, D. C.

Old school and church programs of Beekmantown, donated by Mrs. R. D. Hughes of East Beekmantown.

A document of 1819 signed by Elisha Button of Peru, sheriff of Clinton County, and donated by Mrs. Eleanor Spaulding of Ausable.

A 48-star flag, flown at Loon Lake and donated by Mrs. Mabel Atwood.

Courses to watch for:

The summer seminars offered by the New York State Historical Association at Cooperstown. For information, contact Dr. Louis Jones at Cooperstown.

"The Early History of the Champlain Valley," offered by Dr. Allen Everest from June 25 to July 12 at the college in Plattsburgh in conjunction with Fort Ticonderoga. The Fort is offering scholarships for qualified persons. For information, contact Dr. Everest at the college.

TRAVEL IN 1813

(A letter to General Mooers from his second wife, Elizabeth Addoms Mooers, after her boat trip to Burlington and stage to Middlebury. From the Kent-Delord papers at the Feinberg Library.)

Middlebury July 2, 1813

My Dear Husband

We arrived at Burlington last night at ten. Sent up to the stage house, engaged seats in the stage. We then went to bed. Was waked in the morning at half after two with the morning gun. I got up and drest myself. In a short time the stage horn was blown for us. I waked Charles & the men. We went on shore. The stage was full of men. I had to set between two limbs of the law & came so all the way. They was polite to me. We arrived hear a little after twelve with twelve in the stage. Found our friends all well & very happy to see us. I have pade out 7 dols & a quarter & feel as well as can be expected for the fartige I have had. I beg that you will write me immeadely & let me know the particularls—how you do & the family. The Capt of the steem boat told me that he intends leaveing Burlington for Plattsburgh every Weddensday early & return the same day. The family joins me in love to you, our family and friends. Kiss my dear little girls for me and tell them to be good girls. That we may injoy much of the preasence of God when seperated & when we meet again is my sencear prayer.

Eliza Mooers

THE GENERAL MOOERS PORTRAIT

Through the kindness of John Mooers Idle of Chicago, the portrait of General Benjamin Mooers has been received by the Historical Association for appraisal and an offer of purchase. The portrait will need major restoration. The Association will seek expert advice on its value, and invites interested members to consider donating it to the Association so that it may remain in Plattsburgh. The portrait may be viewed at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Allan Everest, 26 South Catherine Street, Plattsburgh, preferably with an advance telephone call to be sure that someone will be at home.

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Issued by the

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David K. Martin, Secretary
West Chazy, New York

46 JUN '68