

# NORTH COUNTRY NOTES

ISSUED OCCASIONALLY BY THE  
CLINTON COUNTY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

No. 35 52

Allan S. Everest and Charles W. McClellan, Editors

February, 1969

## *The Next Meetings*

### THE FEBRUARY MEETING—

*of the Historical Association will be held Monday evening, February 3, at 8 o'clock in the auditorium of the Plattsburgh Public Library. The speaker of the evening will be Mr. G. Earl Dedrick of Putnam Station, who will talk on "Very Early Pioneering in the Champlain Valley." Mr. Dedrick, retired from more than thirty years as a government worker, is a member of the Essex County Historical Society with a lifelong interest in local and area history. He has written and published articles on the early history of the Ticonderoga-Putnam Station area. The public is cordially invited to attend.*

### ASSOCIATION OFFICERS FOR 1969

At the annual meeting of the Association on January 6th, the following officers were elected:

President, Paul Allen, RFD, Peru.

Vice President, Eugene Link, Cumberland Head, Plattsburgh.

Secretary, David K. Martin, West Chazy.

Treasurer, Mrs. Aileen Sechler, Tom Miller Road, Plattsburgh.

This is the first time since the Association was established more than 20 years ago that Mr. J. Bernard Stratton has not appeared as an officer. The Association extends him heartfelt thanks for years of faithful service as treasurer.

New and renewed memberships may be sent direct to either the Secretary or the Treasurer.

### SEASONAL EVENTS IN HISTORY

January 30, 1846—The Methodist Church on Court Street was burned, the fire catching from a stovepipe in the basement. Robert Platt, although living at Valcour, had contributed generously to the building of that church, was one of the largest subscribers toward the rebuilding of a new one. (The "new" church still stands behind the facade of the former Lash Furniture Store on Court Street, now threatened with demolition.)

January 30, 1858—Death of Hiram Walworth who, as a boy of fourteen fought in Captain Aiken's company of volunteers at the battle of Plattsburgh. The Walworth homestead is now 33 Broad Street, Plattsburgh.

January 31, 1868—A public meeting of citizens of Plattsburgh village was held at the Court House to consider the subject of supplying the village with pure and wholesome water. The meeting was partly a result of the conflagration which destroyed much of downtown Plattsburgh during the preceding summer.

February 1, 1889—Free postal delivery system went into operation in Plattsburgh.

## *Bond Raising During World War 1 in Plattsburgh*

During World War I the United States had four major Liberty Loan Campaigns. The Liberty Loan bonds were often termed "war bonds" because the name seemed more appealing to the public. These bonds were similar to the Savings Bonds of today, and with them the government borrowed from the citizenry to support the war effort. During these campaigns Plattsburgh played an impressive role not only in Clinton County but in the state.

The first issue of bonds was authorized by Congress on May 3, 1917 in the amount of two billion dollars. They were available in denominations of \$50,000; \$1,000; and \$500, and were all to mature in 30 years. They could be bought by cash, a government-installment plan, or a partial payment plan.

The officers of the four national banks in Plattsburgh met on May 17 and agreed to promote the loan vigorously. Toward the end of the month the local campaign began in earnest. The officers of Clinton Prison made the first large response to the drive by subscribing \$12,000. A week later the Boy Scouts began to canvass the city. By the end of the drive they had sold 125 bonds for a total of \$11,150. Each scout who sold ten bonds or more received a war service emblem. Recognition was also given to the female employees of the Plattsburgh Shirt Company who had combined to purchase a total of \$2,000 in bonds. Altogether, the citizens of Plattsburgh purchased \$350,000 in bonds by June 15, the last day of the drive.

The newspapers carried articles pointing out how the bonds would help the farmers—the money would help to draft 500,000 more men who would need a half billion dollars' worth of food. The farmers were thus urged to buy bonds as a patriotic duty and a good investment. The newspapers also carried slogans to promote bond sales:

Your bond will help to break the Hindenburg line.

The Kaiser started this—we can finish it—Buy a Bond!

Help to sink the submarines—Buy a Liberty Bond!

Don't let your money be neutral—Buy a Bond!

Our Boys' Bayonets must be backed up with Bonds!

The hand that rocks the cradle can take a Baby Bond!

On September 28, 1917 Secretary of the Treasury McAdoo announced the details of the second Liberty Loan campaign. Locally the citizens organized for a more systematic drive by creating a committee of businessmen, led by John F. O'Brien as chairman. The drive began on October 4 with O'Brien urging purchasers to buy on a partial payment plan rather than withdrawing their savings from the bank.

The student camp at Plattsburgh also created a committee to conduct a drive in the camp. The members of the committee started by personally subscribing \$60,000.

In Clinton County, all towns outside of Ausable, Black Brook and Champlain, in which banks were located, were included in the Plattsburgh district. Quotas for each district were announced, based on the assessed valuation of the towns. The entire county had a quota of \$1,700,000.

Mayor Mooers of Plattsburgh declared October 24 a civic holiday for the purpose of having a Liberty Loan demonstration. Merchants decorated their places of business and householders displayed the American flag. Regular soldiers and student officers paraded that day, and later the student officers in training at the Plattsburgh Barracks were addressed by Governor Whitman.

By the last night of the drive the Boy Scouts had sold over 2,500 bonds for a total of \$24,350. The parents and friends of scouts were invited to attend some entertainment at the YMCA as a celebration. On the same night O'Brien appealed for additional subscriptions, and the public purchased \$50,000 more in bonds. The city of Plattsburgh was then over the top with \$606,000 of which \$201,000 came from the training camp.

On March 26, 1918 Secretary McAdoo announced the third Liberty Loan drive. Plattsburgh renamed O'Brien as chairman and J. P. Boylan of the Chamber of Commerce as head of publicity. The campaign opened in Plattsburgh on April 18. Ceremonies were started with a parade followed by an address given by Congressman J. S. Fassett. A line was stretched on Margaret Street from the Witherill Hotel to the Court House. A "liberty ball" was placed on the line and moved according to the success of the campaign.

The Fourth Ward responded to the campaign by giving a parade in which 90 to 100 cars were decorated. The cars carried about 900 school children, each waving

a flag. An honor roll was published daily in the newspapers, naming the subscribers to the campaign. President Wilson named April 26 as Liberty Day and encouraged citizens to rally and give their support to the drive. A Liberty Day parade was held followed by speeches and musical selections in the Plattsburgh theatre.

On May 4 it was learned that the drive had already gone over the top of the \$420,000 quota, with 36 hours to spare. The Fourth Ward led the other wards and had won the liberty boll. On May 6 Plattsburgh went over the top by about \$24,000, thus ending the third campaign.

The fourth Liberty Loan campaign was announced to begin on September 28, with O'Brien again named as chairman. He had recently been presented with a silver plaque for his work up to that time. The quota for Plattsburgh was set at \$922,000 for the fourth drive.

Liberty Loan emblems were given to families if all of their members had purchased at least one bond. The emblem consisted of a slip of paper six inches square with a bold red circle in the center containing the words "One hundred percent household". An honor roll was published with the names of people who bought bonds on the first day of the campaign. A copy of the roster was sent to servicemen overseas who came from Plattsburgh.

In mid-October the Chairman of the Liberty Loan Committee for Northern New York admonished the people of Plattsburgh for not doing their share for "our boys over there". His letter was printed in the newspapers and brought generous responses. On October 24 the campaign ended with Plattsburgh going over its large quota by \$8,000.

It is hard to recapture the excitement that prevailed as each drive was launched and lagging enthusiasm was revived by new public sales techniques. This was the first time that the government expected ordinary citizens to buy its bonds, and for most people the smallest bond was still too large for their pocketbook. Yet Plattsburgh as a patriotic and a military town fully met its quotas in all four drives.

Albert Vander Voort, SUC

## *Indians in the War of 1812*

The attitude of the Indians along the border was of momentous concern to both sides during the War of 1812. The British wanted the active aid, the Americans the mere neutrality of the Iroquois at Caughnawaga, near Montreal and at the St. Regis reservation astride the border. The Americans exploited their advantages to the full in this intensive struggle. The St. Regis Indians received daily rations from the federal stores at French Mills (Fort Covington). Indian relations were coordinated by Militia General Benjamin Mooers at Plattsburgh, who was instructed to encourage Indian neutrality with subsidies. For example, the three chiefs at Caughnawaga were to receive \$50 each. Indian leaders were wined and dined by Governor Tompkins in Albany.

Mooers supervised the activities of the young spy, Eleazer Williams. Williams was a well-educated Indian from Caughnawaga with some white ancestry. He served as the eyes and ears of the northern army under a succession of generals. He was eventually made Superintendent General of the Northern Indian Department and Commander of the Corps of Observation. This Corps consisted of a body of rangers, Indian and white, including his brother John and his father Thomas, who operated secretly under his direction. Williams described their activities in his "Journal": "No movement made by the enemy but is known to them. The lives and liberties of the greatest personages among the enemy are often within their grasp and at the mercy of this secret corps of observation. Always in motion and activity, ready to execute the orders of the government however delicate and dangerous the nature of it may be."

So dangerous were his activities considered by the British that they ordered his capture. But Williams left standing orders that if he were taken, his rangers must seize a high-ranking enemy—Prevost, if possible—to hold for exchange. Williams conferred with and undertook missions for Generals Dearborn, Mooers, Wilkinson, Hampton, Izard, Macomb and Lieutenant Macdonough. Through timely information he probably helped to save Sackets Harbor and St. Regis from capture. His conscientious scruples against war (he later became a minister) were finally overcome at the battle of Plattsburgh, where for the first time he took up arms. At Plattsburgh he devised a trick with which to frighten Prevost, and Macomb directed him to

execute it. Crossing to Burlington, he obtained from the commanding officer there a letter to the effect that Governor Chittenden was marching for St. Albans with 10,000 men and that 5,000 more were on the move from St. Lawrence County and 4,000 from Washington County. The letter was deliberately allowed to fall into British hands and probably hastened their retreat after the battle.

With skill and money most of the St. Regis Indians and many of those at Caughnawaga were kept neutral. One important result was the fact that the war in northern New York lacked the horrors of Indian warfare that were a part of every British campaign in the West.

### RIDDLE OF THE MONTH

The January riddle, answered by Mrs. Eleanor Spaulding of the town of Ausable: Peru village was first called Cochran's Mills, then Hackstaff's Mills, and finally Peru by John Cochran. Ausable Chasm was first known as Adgate's Falls, then Birmingham, then by its present name, probably given by Elkanah Watson.

New riddle: What 19th century Presidents visited Clinton County while they were in office?

### RECENT MUSEUM ACQUISITIONS

Photostats of commissions to Captain Ecuyer (1776) and Captain Rouse (1790)—gift of Jack Ross of Rouses Point.

Posters of the 1915 to 1917 era—gift of William Howell of Plattsburgh.

**Genealogical and Family History of Northern New York, vol. II**—gift of Murray Hyatt of Plattsburgh.

Framed picture of PHS Cadets in 1889—gift of the Board of Education.

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