The year 2018 proved to be an ambitious one for CCHA. Our jam-packed calendar boasted more than 60 events that CCHA sponsored, hosted or supported, and our more than 500 members and nearly 60 volunteers and interns were a constant, positive community presence.

Before we dive into what we're sure will be an equally productive 2019, we wanted to review some highlights from 2018, and remind our members how CCHA accomplishes its mission. All of the following material comes from our 2018 annual report, which is available at the CCHA Museum on the Old Base Museum Campus in Plattsburgh.

To keep up with CCHA, members receive North Country Notes twice a year and Events Cards, as well as additional notices and invites to our members and sponsors for special events. We have three Facebook pages, including a county Civil War record and one to track the Valcour Island Lighthouse, all maintained by volunteers Julie Dowd, Roger Harwood and Pat Parker.

As usual, CCHA sponsored several interesting lectures in 2018, including talks by Dick Soper of the Champlain Valley Transportation Museum, SUNY interns Matt Hoth and Makenzee Bruce, Bill Laundry, Jan Couture, Susan Howell Hamlin and Helen Nerska.

Nerska and Couture also offered a series of mobile lectures during several walking tours of the historic U.S. Oval.

Another successful new event was a boat ride to tour Valcour Island. Two tour days filled up quickly, and CCHA plans to do them again in the summer of 2019.

CCHA took part in many events throughout the Region this year, including the State of the State and State of the County addresses, the Legislative Breakfast, the Civil War Program in Ogdensburg, an event hono-
Association News: What’s in Store for 2019

By Geri Favreau, President

As we start a new year, we reflect on the past one, and 2018 was a very good year, as you can see from our 2018 Annual Report—a condensed version of which you can find starting on Page 1 of this issue of North Country Notes.

The report highlights all of CCHA’s great accomplishments and the new friends we made, as we hosted, co-sponsored, or attended more than 60 events in 2018 in addition to running the association and museum.

Looking forward, we anticipate 2019 to be an even better year.

The Old Base Museum Campus Committee will continue to work hard to make the OBMC, the collection of wonderful museums that surround CCHA, into a destination for local residents and the growing number of tourists seeking to explore our area’s incredible history.

We’re always looking for members to help explain that history, by the way, so if you’re interested in contributing to North Country Notes, please contact the Museum.

CCHA members and officers will continue to plan and promote the America 250 event commemorating the anniversary of the Revolutionary War and the birth of our country—just seven years away, in 2026. In the near future, CCHA plans to upgrade our computer technology, continue to reorganize our space, and make some necessary upgrades to our building.

Constructed in 1905 for the U.S. Army Band, the CCHA Museum building will continue to make noise in 2019, singing a song of local history.

In the Gift Shop

Although the holidays have come and gone, the CCHA Museum Shop is open all year long, with plenty of offerings for collectors and anyone interested in local history.

We’ll start with Jim Millard, who knows as much about Fort Montgomery as anyone in the region, and has re-issued a series of his books: “Bastions on the Border—Great Stone Forts at Rouses Point on Lake Champlain”; “Fort Montgomery Through The Years”; and “The Secrets of Crab Island.”

We also have one copy of Jim’s “Lake Passages: A Journey Through The Centuries, Vol. 1 1609-1909.” Jim has agreed to do a program for us in the spring, so stay tuned for more details.

Two brand new titles are worth a look.

“The Plattsburgh Military Reservation,” by Richard Frost and Melissa Peck, continue to be hot sellers.

“We featured the Witherill Hotel as our holiday ornament this year, and we still have copies of “Welcome to the Witherill” by Susan Howell Hamlin. Either makes a great gift all year round.

With the recent Showtime miniseries “Escape at Dannemora” capturing attention and awards, now is the time to check out Lawrence P. Gooley’s “Dannemora’s Death House.”

Our “Gently Used” book section has over 60 titles at very reasonable prices, with many rare and hard-to-find volumes. A few samples:

“Pioneer Homes of Clinton County 1790-1820” (Allan S. Everest)

“Our North Country Heritage” (Allan S. Everest)

“Plattsburgh, New York—A City’s First Century” (Richard B. Frost)

“The Naval War of 1812” (Theodore Roosevelt)

“Beekmantown: Forest Frontier to Farm Community” (Philip L. White)

The portrait negative collection is continually updating; all we need is a last name to locate any Brush Studio portrait negative you may be interested in. Portraits can be scanned and made available for personal use for $10 per jpg. Call 518-561-0340 or email your request to director@clintoncountyhistorical.com. Be as specific as possible.

We also have CDs, DVDs, notecards, coloring books, historical calendars, maps, prints, pictorial postmarks and photo prints.

Past copies of the Antiquarian, a journal covering a variety of local historical topics (issues 1984-2003) are available for $5 each, while the Moosfield Antiquarian (May 1937-February 1939) edited by Hugh and Charles W. McLellan is available for $25 per copy or $140 for the set of all eight issues.
Museum Corner

By Helen Allen Nerska, Director

The museum remains busy with both visitors and volunteers. I would like to encourage all CCHA members to take an opportunity to come in and bring your friends and family.

We have special tours for groups – and we have special projects for volunteers. Both activities reflect your museum’s ability to respond to the responsibility of being the County’s focal point for local history.

We are also happy to serve as a venue for your book club or other group meeting and include a tour of the museum as part of your program.

Exhibits are changing – we are adding and adjusting with the objective of always having something new to show visitors. Most recently we added the Native American Women exhibit curated by Jan Couture. This new exhibit connects perfectly with our Clinton County Suffrage Story exhibit.

There are a number of special projects going on related to our “inner workings.” The Collections Committee is meeting every two weeks identifying items in all those boxes “packed up” before each museum move but never quite “unpacked.” Maurica Gilbert is heading up this effort, supported by Mary Nicknish, Jan Couture, Jerry Gagnier, Rosemary Thomas, Peter Sorrell, Bill Laundry, Julie Dowd, Luke Cyphers and Geri Favreau.

Committee recommendations are made to the Board each month and upon Board approval, the processing begins with our part-time staff member Makenzee Bruce taking the helm and managing the outcomes, whether the decision was accession, deaccession or pass on to another like organization.

Additionally, this fall we had SUNY Plattsburgh interns working with us to inventory our document room and our map room flat files.

While John Weed and Ryan Barry were only with us for a semester, we found, with their help, we can take many steps forward in verifying our collection data.

A second project, which should be completed in the spring, is the alphabetizing and recording of our Woodward/Brewer portrait collection of 17,000 glass plate negatives. These negatives cover a period from about 1890 to 1920 and some beyond.

The project is headed up by Simon George from the Senior Community Service Employment Program, with help from Sue Coffey, Maureen Morrow, Cassidy O’Brian and Mary Nicknish. The portraits are a virtual “Who’s Who” of area residents. Just ask us to see if your ancestors are in this collection.

Another SCSEP worker, Patty Amore, has also been helping with inventory and cataloguing negatives.

And don’t miss our display promoting the CCHA negative collection in the Clinton County Government Building, which will be up until the end of January.

CCHA Director Helen Nerska (top) played host to Seton Academy high schoolers at the Museum for Seton Service Day. Students helped with CCHA’s project to organize celluloid and glass-plate negatives.

Coming out of the 2018-19 holiday season, we will be open throughout the winter.

We are looking forward to another great year.
CCHA 2018 Annual Report (cont.)

Researchers come in-person, and many requests are received via phone, email and regular mail.

Our Museum's six galleries continue to draw visitors of all ages from around the world. The first floor this year featured the Military Timeline, The Clinton County Suffrage Story, and Native Women: Ancient Traditions and Modern Rights. The second floor continued to exhibit Arts & Leisure and Business & Industry, as well as a popular firearms exhibit. The lower level highlights a different town each year, which in 2018 was the Town of Clinton. A new exhibit highlighting our collection of Wedding Gowns is being planned for the spring of 2019.

The heart of the CCHA mission is our collection, and the Museum's Collections Committee had a fantastically productive year in 2018. CCHA receives items weekly for our collection from many generous donors. This year a Battle of Plattsburgh era gun with a direct county connection was donated by long time CCHA member Lee Turner. CCHA received ownership of a number of Lake Champlain anchors held in our collection formerly on loan from New York State. We were very fortunate to hire Mackenzie Bruce, a recent SUNY Plattsburgh graduate and former CCHA intern, to help with collections. She has processed approximately 1,300 items in six months, working up to 30 hours a week assigning accession numbers, photographing or scanning the items for record-keeping, assigning locations, entering into our computerized indexing system, preparing items for storage by placing them in acid free boxes with acid free paper if necessary, and placing them in the assigned location.

Nearly 15,000 items in our collections need processing, and Mackenzie's hiring has helped CCHA work through this immense backlog.

Roger Black continues his work curating our glass-plate negative collection and making the photos available to the public. Through his efforts, more than 100 images are on the North Country Public Radio's "People at Work" website. There are thousands of negatives, both portraits and scenes, still to be processed. The Brush Studio portrait negatives have all been alphabetized and are being logged by volunteers under the guidance of Simon George, who works for us under the SCSEP pro-

No annual report would be complete without mentioning our nearly 60 volunteers and interns. The association honors them every year with a party at Trustee Mary Nicknish's home.
This year CCHA is honoring three of our Board Members for awards/recognition they have received from other community-minded organizations: William D. Laundry, for winning an Office of the Aging State Award for Volunteers; Julie Dowd, who received the Hugh Hastings Award at the Association of Public Historians of New York State conference held in Rochester; and Bernie Bassett, chosen for the 2018 Adirondack Good Scout Award from the Twin Rivers Council Boy Scouts of America.

Maurica Gilbert does all our general bookkeeping duties including our taxes, serves as a docent, helps with general building issues and exhibits, as well as chairing our Collections Committee. With her many years at CCHA, Gilbert continues to be our "institutional knowledge" go-to person.

What separates CCHA from every other association in the County and perhaps the North Country is the longevity and legacy left behind by our volunteers.

Notable contributors to that legacy include Allan Everest, Rich Frost, Harry Kehoe, Emily McMaster, Marjorie Lansing Porter, Elizabeth Gilliland, John Ross, Dick Ward and many more. Our volunteers are the heart of our organization. We are keepers of the history of Clinton County.

CCHA Director Helen Allen Nerska, who was president from 2011-16, is a part-time employee and fully engaged in the business of CCHA. The Allen family has been involved in CCHA for many years: In 1945 Cornelia Hagar Allen, Helen’s grandmother, was Vice-President of the Board; in 1968 and 1969 Paul Hagar Allen, Helen’s father, was the Board President. Nerska attends numerous seminars, workshops and webinars learning all she can about managing collections and a Museum. She speaks frequently on topics of county history, and helps with the work of the Board’s many committees and subcommittees, as well as CCHA volunteers and interns.

Finally, CCHA collaborates with dozens of local, regional and national groups. Here’s a partial list: Adirondack Architectural Heritage (AARCH), Adirondack Coast Cultural Alliance (ACCA), American Legions, Vista, Associates for Training and Development, Association of Public Historians of New York State, Battle of Plattsburgh Committee, Champlain Valley Heritage Network, Clinton Community College, Community Bank, DAR/SAR, Friends of the Old Stone Barracks Committee, Lake Forest Senior Community Center, Lakes to Locks, League of Women Voters, North Country Public Radio, North Country Chamber, Office of the Aging/Senior Council/ICEO, Plattsburgh State University, Plattsburgh Memorial Chapel Association, Seton Catholic, UFFirst Federal Credit Union, United Way, Upward Bound, VFW and others.

CCHA has come a long way since 1945. We could not do it without the continued support of our members, donors, sponsors, grantors and especially our volunteers. We look forward to continuing our mission of preserving and spreading the story of the rich history of Clinton County!
The Spanish flu: World War I's most prolific killer

By Mary Anne Ducharme

Scarcely full grown, thousands of North Country boys left home beginning in 1917 believing in the Cause and their own invincibility. They were poised unknowingly on the cusp of an event greater than the Great War. Packed like sardines in military camps or troop ships or in the trenches, the boys were cut down by an enemy deadlier than Hun mortars. For every 10 boys coming home in coffins, military statisticians knew what the people on the home front never guessed: eight of those 10 died of the Spanish flu.

The flu killed some of the boys on the European front. Some died before they ever left home port. They were denied the victory homecoming and illusions of battle glory. A doctor wrote a letter describing 100 deaths a day in a Boston military base and "boys laid out in long rows" at the morgue. "It beats any sight they ever had in France after a battle."

Vaccines for the Spanish flu had no effect, and the plague spread undeterred. Baffled doctors had never seen anything like this. Laws were enacted that everyone, military and civilian, wear gauze face masks in public. In at least one camp, water fountains were sanitized with blow torches. But nothing halted the deadly stalkers.

The onset could be abrupt, from seeming health to critical illness in the span of hours. Deadly toxins spread to every organ, producing a wracking cough, terrible headaches, a violent, retching nausea, and hallucinations.

Severe muscle pains left patients feeling as if they had been beaten with a club. Red spots accompanied 105-degree fevers, and hemorrhaging lung linings caused blood to spurt from one patient's nose while he fought to breathe. When an old army doctor later conducted an autopsy on that soldier, the right lung resembled melted red currant jelly.

On Nov. 11, 1918, the headline was blared on the front of every newspaper: There is Peace with Victory! But the end of the Great War did not stem the tide of death. The Spanish flu came in three waves, the first relatively mild, the second more deadly and swift, and the third equally deadly, but with more localized force. In Keene Valley, the brunt of the epidemic was felt in the hard winter of 1920 when undertakers and grave diggers could not keep pace.

"No one is able to solve the mystery of whence it comes and where it goes," Peru farmer Nathan Weaver wrote in his diary.

At the Alice Hyde Hospital, the nurses were sick; at the Tupper Lake Sanitarium, patients were left on the porch by despairing families even though all the beds were taken. Some hospitals refused flu patients. At Lyon Mountain, 200 miners were sick. Town after town shut down and began quarantines.

Hugh McLellan detailed his brush with the Spanish flu in his diary. A renowned architect who spent much of his time in Champlain, McLellan is well-known to local historians because he designed the Champlain monuments in Plattsburgh and Crown Point. His story of the onset of illness closely parallels that of other patients, but through the worst of it, when there are blank pages in his diary, he could recall nothing. He recorded in his diary what the doctor said: "You were far gone, Hugh, and lucky to be alive." He endured a recovery typical of this illness: slow, difficult, painful. Six weeks on, the exertion of a bath caused him to collapse. Depressed and afflicted with lingering symptoms, he finally went back to work seven weeks after those first terrible headaches.

Beulah Lavarnway (Donovan, nee Trombly) was born in 1908, and her brother Hersey Trombly was born in 1914, the children of Aurelia and Wilbur Trombly of Chazy. In an oral history, Beulah testified to the sudden onset of the flu. She made a pie feeling well but became too ill to put it in the oven. Hersey recalled the nightmares when he had the flu, though he was only 4 at the time. Both remembered cousins orphaned by the epidemic coming to live with their grandparents in Sciota.

The whole family had been sick at the Trombly house. Dr. Swift of West Chazy, summoned by phone from Patton's Store in Ingraham, dutifully came, examining Aurelia, who was also afflicted with asthma and unable to leave her bed. Her toddler, Doris, and other children Roy, Beulah and Hersey, were delirious with pneumonia. Wilbur, less sick than the others, kept up the fires to ward off the biting cold and cared for his family as best he could. They all survived in this family. Their cousins' family wasn't so lucky.

One morning in late January of 1919, Joseph Pombrio came to Aurelia Trombly's house with a coffin. He had heard she was dead. She wasn't, but it was little wonder he came with a coffin. It had been only three weeks since he had lost his son, David, his daughter-in-law, Addie, and two grandchildren to the Spanish flu. David, a stone mason, had lived in Barre with Addie and their seven children. Their oldest son was overseas in the Navy. The other children ranged from 17 years to a few months old.

David died first, his body on the floor of the kitchen where he collapsed. Addie was helpless to move him. A day later, she watched as her son Ellis died in his bed, a boy of 16. Addie died next, also in the kitchen, trying to prepare food for her family. Virgil, at the age of 17, died in the room where Ellis had passed six days before.

The older children, Oral, Max, and Audrey, did what they could to care for Ivas Marie, an infant, and five-year-old Doris, but it was clear that they would all soon die without intervention. So Anna, Addie's sister, stayed in the house with the children, nursing them through a long and difficult convalescence.

This drama was played out so many times in the North Country that there is scarcely a family with roots here that was not touched and forever altered by the outbreak. And the Spanish flu is more than dead history. With all our advances in medicine and science, we remain close to the brink. In 1918 all anyone had to do to get the disease was breathe. That has not changed.

Mary Anne Ducharme, winner of the McMaster Prize in 1999, taught English for many years at Northeastern Clinton. This is excerpted from an article she wrote for The Antiquarian in 2002.
Native American Women: Ancient Traditions, Modern Rights

By Jan Couture, Trustee

CCHA has a new exhibit showcasing the influence of Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) women on the women’s rights movement in New York State. Created in conjunction with the CCHA’s “Women’s Suffrage in Clinton County” project, the exhibit, “Ancient Traditions, Modern Rights,” reveals an under-reported facet of the struggles for both Native and women’s rights. A visitor will not see any weapons, arrowheads, or feathers. What you will see is the beadwork and basketry that helped the people of the Iroquois Confederacy survive as they were assimilated into white society.

Discover how women such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton were influenced by the liberties of the Haudenosaunee society. The Mohawk Creation Story shows the roots of the reverence the Haudenosaunee have for women. Read quotes from past and present leaders that illuminate the important role women played and continue to play in Native society. Unfortunately, you will also discover how the traditions of the Haudenosaunee women have weakened as modern world pressures grow.

Be sure to take home a recipe (perfect for the cold winter months) using traditional Native “Three Sisters” (corn, beans, squash) ingredients, and a pattern to make a longhouse. Touch a beaver pelt and discover how it was used in trade for beads. Appreciate the odor of sweet grass and see how it is used in baskets, and learn about threats that could destroy the Mohawk basket tradition.

Donations, Memberships, Grants and Support

April 1 to Nov. 30, 2018

CCHA Coming Attractions for 2019

Antique Valentine Creations Crafts Day
Feb. 2, 11 a.m.-3 p.m.
Bring the kids to make Valentine’s Day cards for your friends and families. Free, ages 5 and over. Sponsored by Stewarts.

Crafts at the Museum
Feb. 20 and 21, Noon-2 p.m.
Free, ages 6-12. Part of the Snowball celebration. Sponsored by Stewarts.

Sunday on the Island, July 14
Register early!
CCHA will again offer transportation to the historic Bluff Point Lighthouse on Valcour Island from the Peru Dock. Last year we sold out early. We are taking reservations now but payment will be due June 15. $25 per person. Call 518-561-0340 to reserve your seat.

Speakers Gallery
If your group is looking for a speaker, please contact us. For example, Helen Allen Nerska, shown below with Hometown Cable’s Calvin Castine, will continue to speak regularly on the women’s suffrage movement in the North Country. We also offer a choice of many other local history topics, and if we can’t do it, we know who can.