



# North Country Notes

Issue #416

Fall 2015

## ***WWI, Shell Shock, and Plattsburg: The Unique Role of US Army General Hospital #30 by Penelope D. Clute***

The "European War" began August 1, 1914, with the allies fighting the Germans in France. By mid-1915, American newspapers carried stories about unusual behaviors observed in French and British soldiers. Early headlines described "Strange New Diseases Caused by Battle," and "Lose Their Mental Poise — Surgeons With the French Army Have to Cope with Soldiers' 'Hypnosis of Battle'".

Soon there were articles about "shell shock," a mysterious condition that manifested itself in surprising physical symptoms in soldiers who had no physical wounds. Fatigue, tremor, confusion, loss of balance, paralysis, headache, nightmares, impaired sight and hearing, mutism and speech disorders appeared in men with no apparent physical injury. Thus, the problems were believed caused by being near to an exploding shell, whose concussion may have caused injury in the spinal cord, or by being buried by debris thrown up by an explosion.

The numbers of these cases grew, and the British and French military tried to determine the cause and effective treatment. Some viewed men who showed these symptoms as cowards, and imposed military discipline, not treatment. Britain executed 306 soldiers for cowardice during WWI. Others took the view that the symptoms were faked to be removed from the trenches and avoid unpleasant duty.

Medical experts soon realized that the term "shell shock" was a misnomer, that many men who were not near exploding shells were showing the same symptoms. "War neuroses" became the new term in the military, but "shell shock" remained in the

media and popular usage.

When the United States declared war on Germany on April 6, 1917, shell shock was no longer a remote curiosity. In May 1917, a representative of the National Committee for Mental Hygiene visited Canada to determine their experience, so the U.S. could make plans.

*"The report of his investigation indicated that 12 per cent of all disabled returning from overseas would be classified as nervous and mental disease; that one-half of these would be war neuroses, one-fourth mental disease, one-seventh head injuries with nervous symptoms, and one-tenth various neurotic conditions, and that a ratio could be expected of something over 13 nervous and mental cases from every 1,000 troops in home territory."*

The Army announced in October, 1917, that neurologists would spend the coming winter studying the condition in British and French hospitals.

In March 1918, the U.S. Army issued a general order to the effect that shell shock is a nervous disease that can be prevented if everyone works at it. The order stated that many men who developed the condition had shown signs beforehand that they were "fast approaching the limit of their nervous endurance." It urged soldiers and officers who observe such signs to bring them to the attention of a medical officer, who could then intervene.

Large numbers of shell-shocked men were expected to need treatment upon their return from France. The Army believed that these men could recover with effective "reconstruction." To do this, it was crucial to distinguish shell shock cases from other mental or

## *WWI, Shell Shock, and Plattsburg - Continued*

nervous conditions, "insanity," and "epileptics." Thus, criteria were developed to classify returning soldiers, and separate hospitals were created to handle them. The Secretary of War directed all disabled soldiers to be classified into one of three categories:

- (1) those who could be restored to full military duty,
- (2) those who could be fitted for special or limited military duty, and
- (3) those whose disabilities disqualified them from further military service.

During 1918, the post hospital at Plattsburg Barracks was altered, expanded and renovated, then designated as U.S. Army General Hospital No. 30 on September 21, 1918, with maximum capacity of 1200 beds. It was identified as the one hospital for patients with "psychoneuroses," also called "shell shock."

The "Reconstruction Services" provided at Plattsburg's General Hospital No. 30 were viewed as key to restoring the men who were suffering from what was believed to be a temporary, treatable condition. These services included vocational crafts, electro-therapy, hydro-therapy, and competitive games, as well as attention from psychiatrists. The goal was to achieve "maximum restoration, mental and physical. . . ." The treatment approach at Plattsburg was that shell shock is curable, not a permanent disability.

Plans were underway to create more beds at other hospitals for "psychoneuroses" cases. Then, the war ended; the Armistice was signed on November 11, 1918. Shortly thereafter, Surgeon General Ireland made public statements to the effect that shell shock was "cured" by the signing of the Armistice. He said that the symptoms of 2000 patients disappeared once the possibility of returning to the trenches ended.

After May 1919, no more neuropsychiatric cases were referred to General Hospital No. 30, and it closed on October 10, 1919. The U.S. Army Medi-

cal Department reported that "this hospital was a decided success, as evidenced by the fact that cases of this class, which were a source of so much trouble to other countries, were handled without any unusual difficulty."

Although fear and anxiety likely played a significant role in the soldiers' suffering, decades of experience since then has shown it is not that simple. We now realize that what was called "shell shock" was not peculiar to the First World War. At least since the Civil War, writings have described returning veterans who were not the same as the men they used to be. Different terms have been used to describe them, all connected to their war experiences, such as:

**Civil War:** "insanity," "melancholia"

**WWI:** "shell-shock," "war neurosis," "combat stress"

**WWII:** "combat fatigue," "nervous exhaustion"

**Korea:** "operational exhaustion"

**Vietnam:** "PTSD - post traumatic stress disorder"

**Iraq & Afghanistan:** PTS - post traumatic stress & TBI - traumatic brain injury

We now realize, better than they did 100 years ago, that war experiences endured by military members can have lasting traumatic consequences. Treatment must continue after battles end.

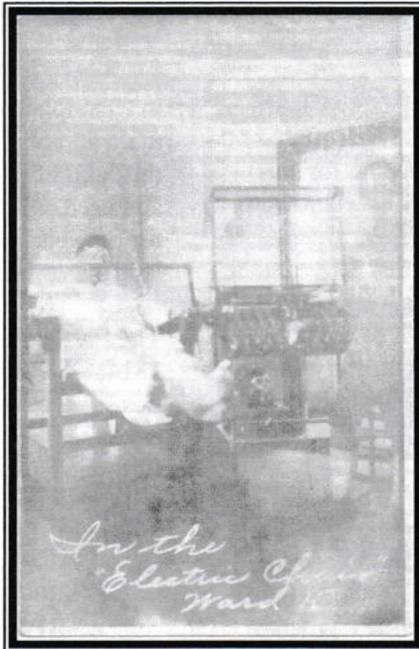
### **Author Bio**

Penelope D. Clute : Plattsburgh City Court Judge, 2002-20012; Clinton County Attorney 1989-2001; Practicing Attorney with Clute , Clute & Thompson law firm 1978-1988. Since retiring more than 3 years ago, Penelope has concentrated on researching local history, writing a monthly column on You and the Law in the Press Republican , and developing her photography. Her photography can be viewed online at:  
[www.PenelopeCluteFineArtPhotography.Zenfolio.com](http://www.PenelopeCluteFineArtPhotography.Zenfolio.com)

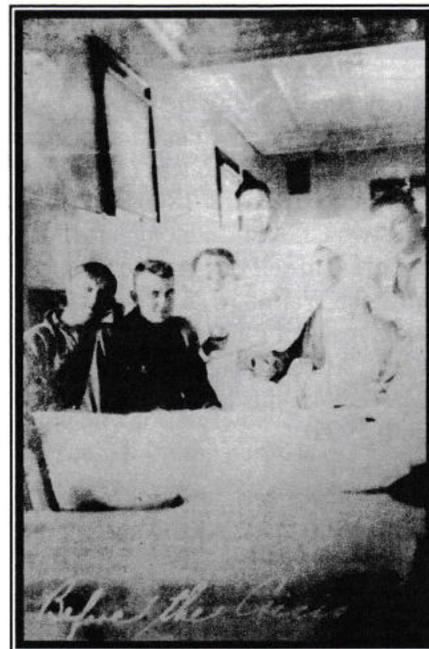
Postcard Images from General Hospital No. 30 - Plattsburgh Barracks - Donated by George Morris



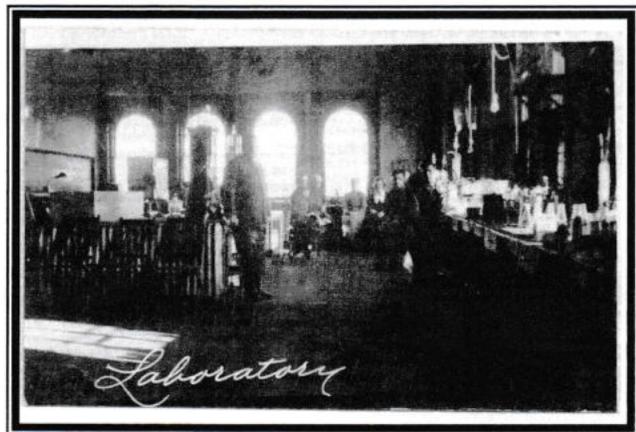
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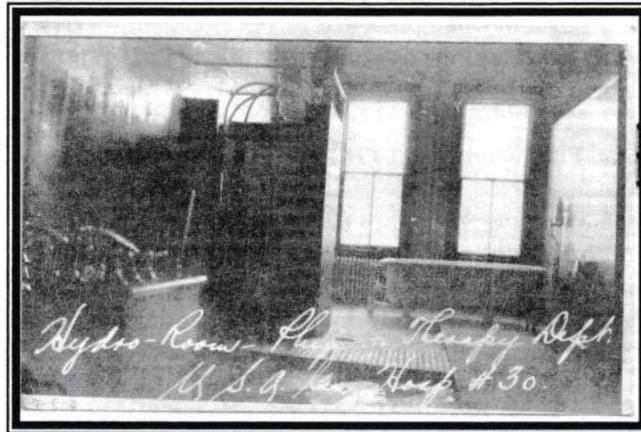
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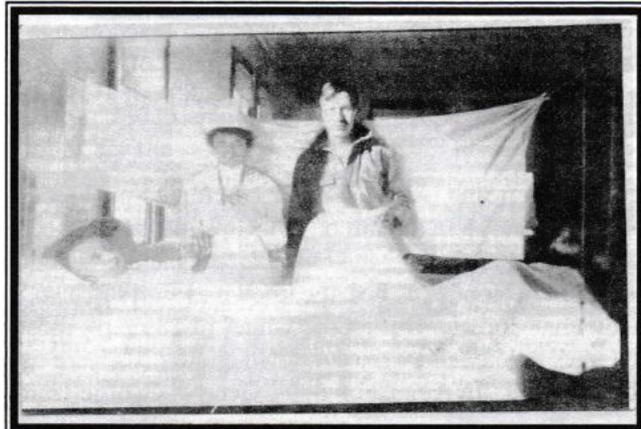
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## The Establishment of a Permanent Military Base in Plattsburgh After the War of 1812 by David Patrick

Many people are aware that the land along Lake Champlain on the former Plattsburgh Air Force base (often called the Old Base) was used as a training site for soldiers since the early 1800s. What is not widely known is that two Clinton County landowners were instrumental in the drive to sell this land to the United States government after the War of 1812. These land owners were Champlain resident Pliny Moore and Plattsburgh resident Levi Platt. After the sale in 1816, a permanent military base was built on this land and was continually occupied up until 1995.

Pliny Moore was born in 1759 and served in the New York militia near Albany during the Revolutionary War. In 1787, Moore received an 11,600 acre land grant called the Smith and Graves Patent (also called the Moorsfield Grant) which encompassed most of the present Town of Champlain. The grant was divided among Moore and 17 other soldiers who received land for their service. Pliny Moore was instrumental in the founding of the Village and Town of Champlain and its development for over 30 years as well as the establishment of Clinton County in March of 1788.

Levi Platt was born in 1782 and came to Plattsburgh around 1797 at the age of 15. He was the son of Zephaniah Platt, the founder of Plattsburgh. Levi operated saw mills and grist mills and helped Plattsburgh to grow commercially. Although he had no law degree, he became a judge in Clinton County and was later appointed postmaster of Plattsburgh.

By the early 1800s, Moore had purchased land in Plattsburgh along Lake Champlain. Much of the land he owned was undeveloped prior to 1812 and is now in the oldest part of today's city. He owned land that would now be on Peru, Hamilton, Macomb and Macdonough Streets. This land also encompassed much of the lakeshore where today's "Oval" is. Levi Platt also owned some of this land.

When American General Wade Hampton's army occupied Plattsburgh in the fall of 1813, his troops camped on Moore and Platt's land and built barracks and blockhouses. The encampments became known as Forts Brown, Scott and Moreau. During the winter of 1813-14, most of the trees on the land were cut down and fences were used for firewood. In August of 1814, General George Izard was commander of the Northern Army and was stationed

in Champlain and Plattsburgh. When Moore asked him to do an appraisal for war damages, Izard suggested that this land be purchased by the United States Government and used as a permanent military base. After Izard left for Sackets Harbor, General Alexander Macomb had the land surveyed and the boundaries were established.

The Battle of Plattsburgh occurred on September 11, 1814, with the Americans victorious over the British. By this time, several thousand American troops had strengthened the three fortifications and damaged the land even further. This made Moore and Platt more determined to sell their land. On December 1, Platt wrote Moore about the appraisal of the 200 acres of land they wanted to sell:

I have had the Grounds described to us by Gen'l McComb Appraised by Judge Delord and Col'o Smith they say that \$13,000. is a fair price for so much as is included within the lines marked out of the Swartwout purchase together with 3 or 4 acres included which is taken off of Brother Zepha's lot West of the Forts if you are willing to sell for that price. My plan is, to pursue Gen'l McComb, he will be at Washington in about two Weeks. I think that he will approve of the Appraisal, and urge Government to purchase)....

With the appraisal in hand, Pliny Moore traveled to Washington in January of 1815 to meet with Secretary of War James Monroe. Unfortunately, the Secretary told Moore that he was not authorized to purchase this land and Congress had to authorize the sale. Moore was likely still in Washington when he wrote his "*Memorial to Congress*" which described the land in Plattsburgh. His draft gives a good indication of the military buildings present and the damage done to the land by the troop encampment. It also includes words and phrases that he erased in the final version of his petition.

To the Honorable The Senate & House  
of Representatives of the United States  
in Congress assembled

The Memorial of Pliny Moore  
and Levi Platt Citizens of Clinton County  
State of New York Respectfully

## Continued - The Establishment of a Permanent Military Base in Plattsburgh After the War of 1812

showeth —

That ["The Forts in the Campaign of" erased] in the fall of the year Eighteen hundred & thirteen Maj'r General Hampton then Commanding the Northern Army took possession of a tract of land the property of your Memorialists adjoining the Village of Plattsburgh on which a Cantonment for the Troops under his Command was built That most of the Timber for the Barracks & for fuel consumed by said Troops during the succeeding winter ["& last winter" erased] was taken from said Land then fences ["& fruit trees" erased] burnt up & destroyed & much damage done to the buildings That during the last Campaign Forts Block Houses Arsenels Extensive Barracks Stores Hospitals Work-Shops & houses for the Artificers have been erected on the premises — That in the Month of Aug't your Memorialists applied to Maj'r Gen'l Izard Then Commanding the Northern Army for an order of Appraisal of damages & Allowance for privation & uses — on which the General Observed that the property ought to belong to the United States & asked if we would sell on being answered in the affirmative he said if we would fix a reasonable price he would recommend to the Government the purchase ["Four or five days" erased] Shortly after General Izard marched to the Westward The Command devolved on Gen'l McComb The Enemy Invaded Plattsburgh ["were driven back & the Command nother" erased] during the Invasion the House occupied by one of your Memorialists was torn to pieces by order of Gen'l McComb & he observed that conversation had been had with Gen'l Izard for the purchase that the United States ought to own the property that he would point out the boundaries Necessary for public use & cause a Survey to be made & that he would recommend the purchase all which he did —

After a Survey & plan was compleated by Mr. D his Engineer the property Comprehending the whole of the Public fortifications & works at Plattsburgh comprising two Hundred Acres of Land including the remains of the dwelling House the barn out houses Garden & Orchard were Valued by Col'o Smith of the Army and Judge Delord & the valuation approved by Major General McComb & Your Memorialists have come to the metropolis for the purpose of making the Conveyance — On Application to the Hon'ble the Secretary at War he informs your Memorialists he has no power to conclude a purchase without a Law of your Honorable body & Recommended to your Memorialists this course for that purpose — Your Memorialists therefore Solicit relief in the premises ["And as in duty bound either by authorising the purchase of Compensation for damages & use in Your wisdom may direct" erased] & Your Memorialists as in duty bound will ever pray

General Macomb's survey described in detail the location of the land being sold. The 'Metes and Bounds' document was written on December 30, 1814.

Metes and Bounds of a Tract of Land in the Town of Plattsburgh, County of Clinton, State of New York, Conveyed by Pliny Moore and Levi Platt, on the 30th of December, 1814; to the United States containing two hundred acres — Beginning at the Shore of Lake Champlain at a Stone marked U. S., .....

Moore and Platt employed several people in Washington to lobby for the sale of the land. Elisha Winter, Moore's representative in Congress, wrote him about the proposed bill. One concern was that the State of New York had to cede the land to the United States government. He wrote: *"The Committee to whom it was referred have reported several Amendments. One is making an Appropriation of \$21,500." another is provided it can be purchased at a reasonable price." Third that the State of New York will Cede Jurisdiction." The Two first amendments I consider unimportant. The Third I hope the Senate will reject*

## Continued - The Establishment of a Permanent Military Base in Plattsburgh After the War of 1812

*although Mr German & Mr Taylor say our State have never refused they qualify the Cession in such manner as that it can do no injury to the Citizens of Plattsburgh, reserving the right of Serving Legal Process."*

The House quickly passed the law on January 15, 1815, and the Senate passed it on February 7. The President soon signed the bill. Elisha Winter wrote Moore after the signing: *"The Bill founded on your Petition has rec'd the Signature of the President, it now Only wants the presence of yourself or Mr. Platt to compleat the business."* The bill signed by Congress for the potential purchase stated:

Be it enacted or that it shall be lawfull for the Pres of the U. S. and he is hereby authorised to cause to be Purchased for the use of the United States — the whole or such part of that Tract of land situate adjoining the Village of Plattsburgh in the State of N. York, on which Forts Moreau & Brown now stand as Shall be by him Judged necessary for the Military Purposes of the U. States

After the law was signed, Levi Platt traveled to Washington to get the deed signed by Secretary of War James Monroe. Unfortunately, the War of 1812 had officially ended with the Treaty of Ghent's proclamation on February 18 and some in Washington questioned the location of a peacetime military site in Plattsburgh. It was suggested that the military build a garrison closer to the Champlain border ("Fort Blunder" was built on the lakeshore in Rouses Point soon after). Levi wrote Pliny on February 27, 1815, and stated:

The fact is as I have understood that some of the Senators have called on the Secretary and made objections to the makeing of the purchase of our lands talked of repealing the Act authorixing the purchase Mr. Munroe however differed with them in Opinion and the subject has not yet been spoken of in the Senate and I do not think it will be....—

Unfortunately, with the war over, James Monroe had second thoughts about the purchase of the land. The sale was about to fall through. Platt gave an update to Moore in an April 15 letter:

Mr Munroe in consequence of the peace declined purchasing our land unless it should appear that the spot on which the public works at this place are erected is the proper point for a garrison in time of Peace some troops are to be stationed on this Frontier but it has been suggested to the Secretary at War that Plattsburgh was not the proper place that a more eligi-ble situation could be found nearer the lines — the decision of this question will rest very much on the Opinion of Gen'l Macomb and he has written to the War department in answer to a letter on that subject in which he is decidedly in favor of this place and urges a variety of reasons in favor of his Opinion and recommends a purchase. I have not any doubt on the subject I think that in about 6 weeks we shall sell and receive our money at Albany.

Many months passed without a decision by the government. To make matters more complicated, James Monroe had become Secretary of State back in February and Moore and Pliny had to negotiate with a new Secretary of War. Platt wrote a letter to Pliny on September 2 and described the situation:

Judge Delord returned this Morning from New York he says that he has seen Gen'l McComb Gen'l Swartwout and Maj'r Rees also brother Charles all of whom advise that some person should go to Washington for the purpose of closing the sale and think there is no doubt but that the new Secretary will pay for the land on tendering the deed if therefore on this advice you think it adviseable to go yourself to Washington or if it is not convenient for you to go if you will send by Zepha the bearer of this letter the Deed of the premises I will set out and endeavour to close this business.

In January of 1816, Moore and Platt employed Major James Rees to lobby in Washington for the purchase of the Plattsburgh land. James Rees to lobby in Washington for the purchase of the Plattsburgh land. Henry Platt wrote

## Continued - The Establishment of a Permanent Military Base in Plattsburgh After the War of 1812

to Moore and stated: "*Captain Sidney Smith has Rec'd a Letter by the last mail from Major Ja's Reuse [Rees], in which he Says Respecting our Lands that. Tell Jud[g]e Levi Platt and Jud[g]e Moore that their land Yet hangs on the Tenters but that a favourable issue is hoped in the Course of Two or three days.*"

On February 20, 1816, Levi Platt finally received a letter from Major Rees stating that he had closed the sale. He wrote Moore of the good news: "*By the Mail I have received a letter from Major Rees saying that he had Closed the sale of Our property to the U. S. at the appraisal together with 7 Mo. Interest and we are also to receive pay for the damages done on the land not included in the sale. We shall have to wait till an appropriation is made before the money can be had which will be done. Major Rees says in One Month when the money will be paid in New York.*"

More uncertainty concerned the appropriation of funds for the purchase. Abraham Brinkerhoff, who had married one of Zephaniah Platt's daughters, was now involved with the sale (Brinkerhoff Street is named for his wife who donated land to the Presbyterian Church; Abraham later married Pliny Moore's youngest daughter after the death of his first wife). He wrote Moore on April 15, 1816, from New York City and stated that the appropriation of money would be delayed: "*I have doubts, if any law will pass this Session, Congress are so occupied with the New Tariff and compensation to themselves, that I fancy all other Claimants will have to yield. Besides they are actually run aground as to funds, there is even a Scarcity of Treasury Notes, so that if you have Friends in either House you had better jog them.*"

On June 5, Henry Platt wrote Moore and stated that the paperwork was finally moving forward: "*...as soon as the Deed for the Land at Plattsburgh should be recorded and sent to Washington the money would be paid. The Deed has been Recorded in the Secretary of States Office in Albany and sent to Washington by Major Rece Uncle Charles will write me as soon as the money is paid which I think will be in 8 or 10 days.*"

In June, James Rees traveled to Washington to pick up the money. On the 18th, Abraham Brinkerhoff received the money in New York City and wrote Moore of the good news: "*...I have this day received the long expected Sum of Nineteen Thousand Five hundred and fifty six Dollars 82/100 from Major Rees to whom I gave*

*duplicate receipts to acc't with you and Judge Platt.*" Henry Platt then wrote Moore and stated that Charles Platt would go to New York and pick up the money: "*... I now have the pleasure to inform you that the Cash is paid to Abrm Brinckerhoff Ju'r and also that Col. Swartwout is paid and the Mortgage Cancelled in presence of Uncle Jonas  $\frac{3}{4}$  Uncle Charles has gone to New York will there Recv the money from Uncle B [Abraham Brinkerhoff] and be at this place on the 15 Inst to meet Yourself Levi &c. Therefore there will be no necessity for Either you or my self going to New York.*"

The deed for the sale of the land was finally signed on July 31, 1816, by Pliny Moore and Levi Platt. The deed, which was several pages long, described in detail the 200 acres of land that was being sold to the government. An excerpt from the deed stated:

All that certain piece or parcel of Land situate lying and being in the Town of Plattsburgh aforesaid, being One undivided fourth part of all those certain Tracts of Land herein after described, excepting so much thereof as hath heretofore been sold and conveyed by the said Levi Platt & Pliny Moore to the United States of America,....

With the completion of the sale, Plattsburgh became a permanent military site for the United States Government. The three forts and surrounding buildings were converted to barracks and expanded over the years. Two large stone barracks were built in the 1830s and soldiers trained there from before the Civil War to World War II. Officer's houses were built in the late 1800s on the site of Forts Scott and Moreau. The "Parade Ground" seen in a 1814 map continued to be used for that function for the life of the barracks and then became the Oval. In the mid-1950s, the base was converted to the Air Force's Strategic Air Command and Plattsburgh Air Force Base was born. The base remained operational until 1995 when it was closed by order of Congress. The Spring 2015 issue of North Country Notes had a history of the military base after 1816.

### Author Bio

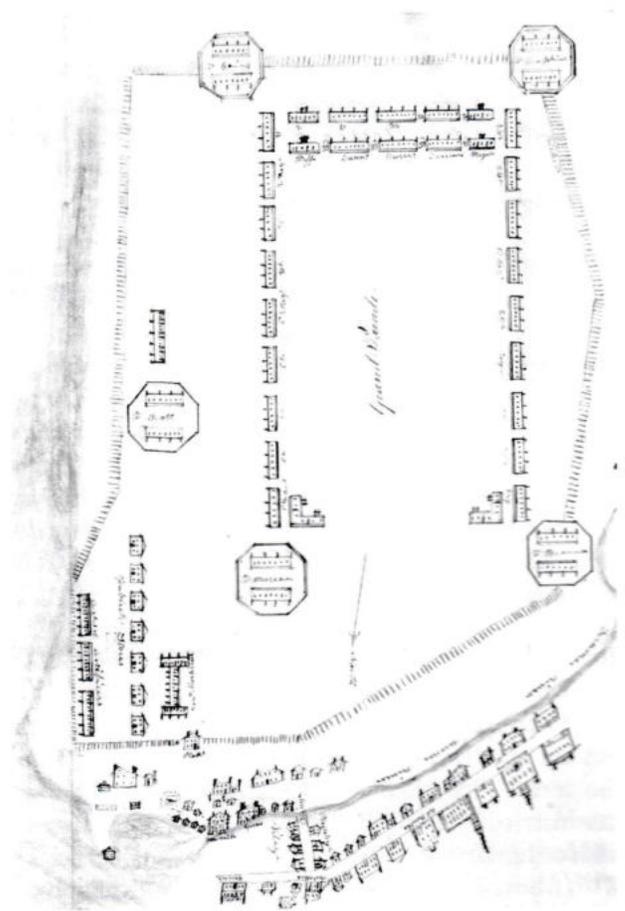
David Patrick was born and raised in Plattsburgh and is a direct descendant of Pliny Moore through his oldest child, Noadiah. He has written extensively about the Moore, Nye and McLellan families of Champlain and has published thirteen historical calendars related to the Town of Champlain's history. Research material courtesy Special Collections, Feinberg Library, State University of New York, College at Plattsburgh.

# Plattsburgh Maps



**Map of lots owned by Pliny and Levi.**

Pliny and Levi owned many lots in what is today the oldest part of Plattsburgh. In 1812, much of this land had not been settled. The land not purchased by the Government is now Macomb, Macdonough and Peru Streets. The US Government boundary line closely resembles the boundary today except that Peru Street/Route 9 extends through the property.  
 Courtesy Special Collections, Feinberg Library, State University of New York, College at Plattsburgh



**Map of Forts Scott, Moreau and Brown**

Another view of Forts Brown, Moreau and Scott show the individual huts that were built around the "Grand Parade" grounds.  
 Courtesy the Library of Congress

**Map of Forts Scott, Moreau and Brown**

During the War of 1812, three American forts and a blockhouse were built on Pliny and Levi's land. At the time, this land was undeveloped and contained Pliny's orchards. Forts Scott and Moreau were where the present day Oval is. Nothing remains of these structures. Fort Brown is a large earthen mound between Peru Street and the Saranac River. A blockhouse was built where Macomb Street is today.  
 Courtesy the Library of Congress



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# Spring/Summer Events at the Clinton County Historical Association



April 25th - Digital Exhibit Openings



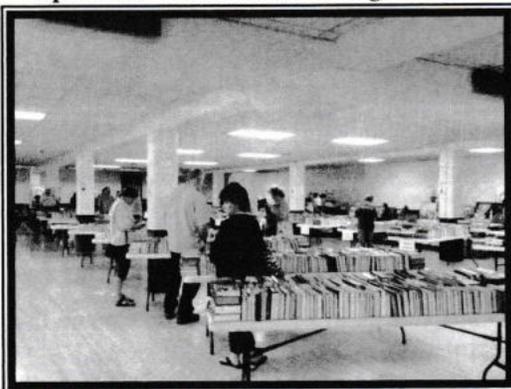
April 26th - Town of Saranac History Tour



April 28th - Historian's Meeting at CCHA



May 2nd - Jean Arthur Commemoration Day



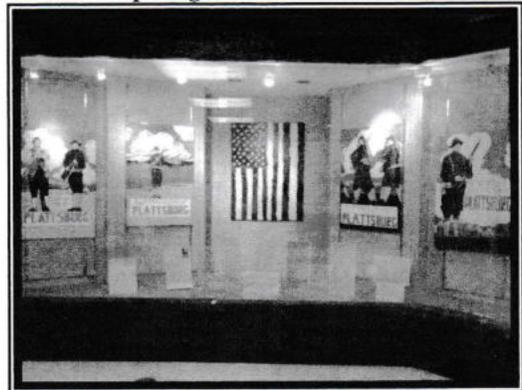
May 9th - Art and Book Fair Fundraiser



June 4th - Preparing for Cumberland Head Class Visit



June 6 & 7th - Museum Days Weekend



July - Plattsburgh Idea Exhibit in C.C. Gov't Center

# Spring/Summer Events at the Clinton County Historical Association



June/July/Aug - Plattsburgh Barracks Walking Tour



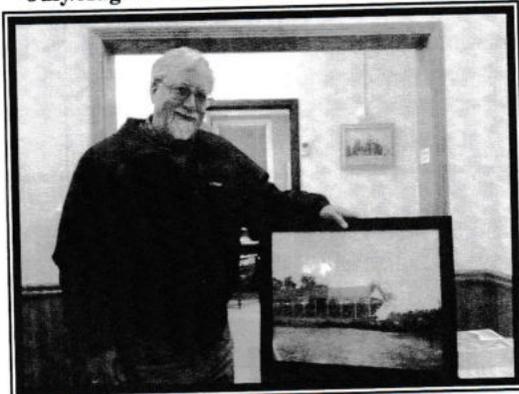
Summer - DEC Lighthouse Restoration



July/August - Summer Youth Camp Series



August 19th - Altona Red Hatters Tour



Promoting CCHA Premium Photo Collection Sales



August 22nd - Streetdrive Fundraiser!



August 23rd - Catholic Summer School Historic Marker Ceremony



On behalf of the Board of Trustees, Helen Nerska, CCHA President and Melissa Peck, CCHA Director want to thank everyone for your support this season!

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PERMIT No. 185

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**- Request for Materials -**

During the years before World War I, selected politicians and military leaders voiced concern about America's military preparedness. One outcome of this concern was establishment of citizen training camps geared toward college students and businessmen. One such camp was established at Plattsburgh in 1915. In 1917, an officer's training camp was held here.

Over the next few years, additional camps were opened elsewhere for similar purposes. Plattsburgh, however, stood as the center of this movement, which became known as "The Plattsburgh Idea." Although philosophies and strategies for training evolved over the years, such camps continued to operate at Plattsburgh right up to the eve of World War II in 1939.

The Clinton County Historical Association plans an exhibit and other activities to commemorate the hundredth anniversary of the first officer training camp. As part of our planning, we would welcome artifacts, photos, diaries, and other items relating to the camps in Plattsburgh. Please call the Museum at 518-561-0340 if you have something to offer, and if you have further questions.

**- SAVE THE DATE & Other Announcements -**

**Thursday, October 15th**

***Welcome to the Witherill Book  
Release & Presentation  
With Author, Susan Howell Hamlin***

At the Museum, 6 to 8 p.m.  
Cost of the book is \$29.99 with proceeds to  
benefit the CCHA.

**Saturday, October 26th**

***CCHA's 70th Anniversary Party***

At the Valcour Conference Center, 5 to 8:30 p.m.  
Featuring a dinner, brief historical review, 40's music, and  
auction of one-of-a-kind items. \$50 per person.  
Please call 561-0340 to register. Seating is limited.

**Available in October!**

We are pleased to announce our First Annual Holiday  
Ornament Fundraiser. This year we are celebrating the Old Stone Barracks  
in Plattsburgh, NY. Cost is \$15.00 per ornament - while supplies last!  
Sponsored by the Holiday Inn at Plattsburgh  
and a donation from Maurica Gilbert

