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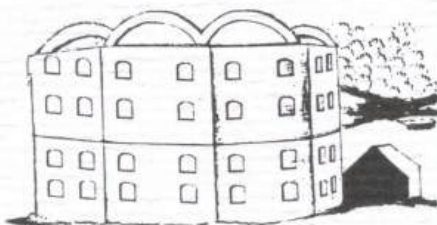
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COVER PHOTOGRAPH: Tanks and troops
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THE BEST FROM THE MCMMASTER'S PRIZE, 1989

TOWARD A DEFINITION OF NEW YORK STATE'S NORTH COUNTRY

By Gregory A. Cook

A chapter from a longer work by Gregory A. Cook of Burke, which won the McMasters prize of 1989 for the best historical writing about the three-county area of northern New York.

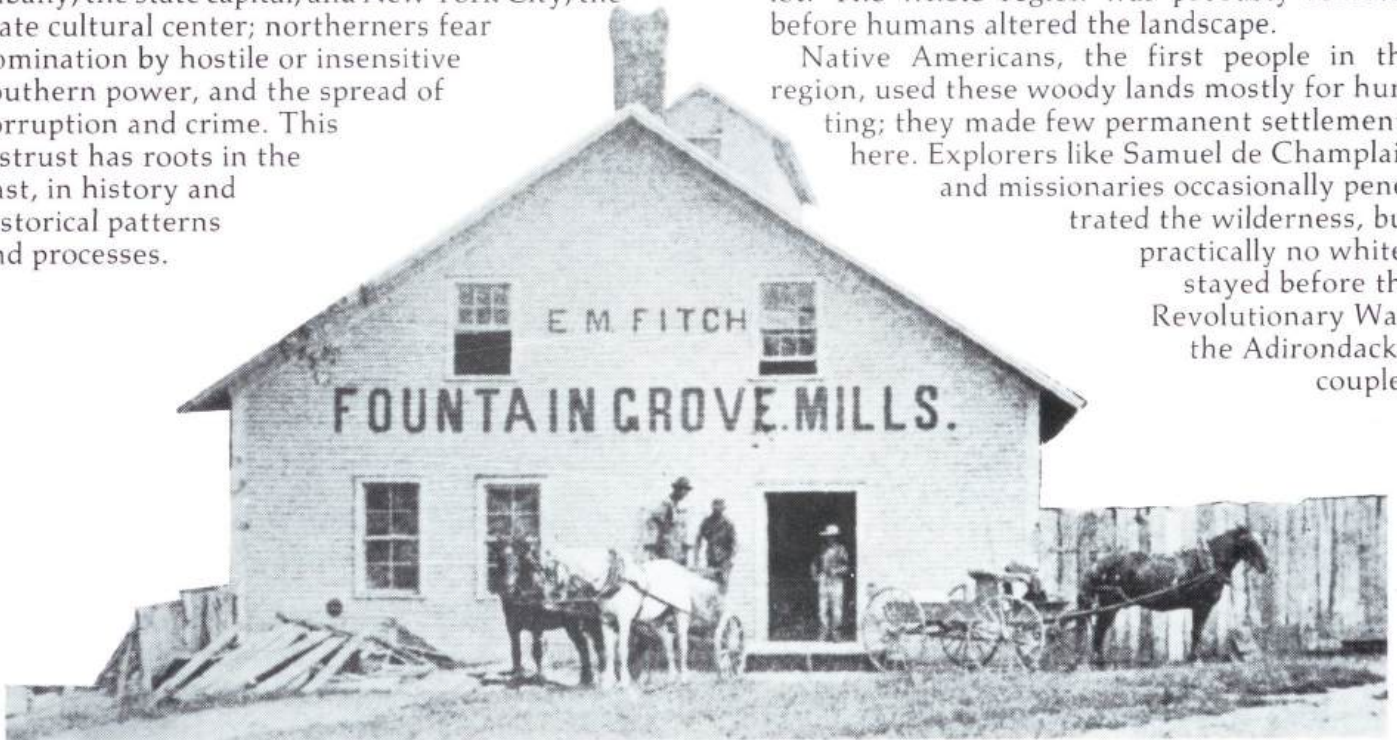
IV. Living on the Edge

The North Country lies on New York State's periphery. Peripheral areas, as a generality, are often weakly tied to the core; they are often frontiers, or ex-frontiers, of some sort. The North Country's relationship to the "Empire State" is no exception; mutual ignorance permeates this particular periphery-core bond. Indeed, North Countryers distrust and fear Albany, the state capital, and New York City, the state cultural center; northerners fear domination by hostile or insensitive southern power, and the spread of corruption and crime. This distrust has roots in the past, in history and historical patterns and processes.

Glaciers covered northern New York during the last ice age, contributing to regional landscapes. Sandy hills now cover sedimentary strata--sandstone and limestone--after ancient lakes retreated. Weather shaped and shifted this base material, four distinct seasons eroded and weathered rocks to create soil. Rain and Adirondack runoff ensured an abundant water table, enabling forests to grow.

As an ecoregion, the North Country features diverse terrain, ranging from relatively flat land in the St. Lawrence Valley area, to rocklands in the Adirondack foothills, and mixtures in the Champlain Valley. Much land is unsuited for tillage, used instead as grazing acreage or woodlot. The whole region was probably forested before humans altered the landscape.

Native Americans, the first people in the region, used these woody lands mostly for hunting; they made few permanent settlements here. Explorers like Samuel de Champlain and missionaries occasionally penetrated the wilderness, but practically no whites stayed before the Revolutionary War; the Adirondacks, coupled



Fountain Grove Mills was operated by Emmet M. Fitch, a member of one of the oldest families in Mooers. SUNY Plattsburgh.

with Iroquois power, shielded northern New York from American colonists. New York north of Albany was wilderness, hence undesirable for settlement.

Land pressure in New England and postwar land grants to veterans changed that situation. New Englanders trickled in, with all their cultural baggage: farming, Protestantism, and firm Anglocentric views. These settlers drove the Native Americans, defeated British allies, on to reservations, preventing another world view from coloring their Yankee attitudes. Families cleared and cultivated the land; the landscape was transformed. Here, reproduced in quasi-original form, lived an extension of New England.

But several waves of new people diluted the Protestant status quo. These new settlers, refugees from overpopulated, overfarmed areas, were not substantially different from the New Englanders and Yorkers in their livelihoods, conservatism, or rural backgrounds, save in one respect--their Roman Catholic religion. French Canadians and Irish came in large numbers during the latter half of the nineteenth century; suddenly the North Country was bicultural as never before. This change did not happen smoothly, even though family farms adjoined; neighbors might exchange greetings, but Protestants and Catholics did not intermarry. Increasingly, Catholic churches stood in contrast to, and in competition with, Methodist, Presbyterian and Baptist worship houses.

Natural and cultural barriers bottled these volatile elements: to the south the Adirondacks, to the east Lake Champlain, to the west Lake Ontario, and to the north heavily-populated Ontario and Quebec and the St. Lawrence River. And perhaps just as important, the North Country had no vital, abundant resources the world clamored for; though wool goods and cheese were important in the economy, the North Country's distance from most markets hurt its competitive chances. Some factories, like Malone's famous Ballard Mill, produced "exportable" items, but in the nineteenth century the majority of products were for local use.

The North Country landscape had changed from the time the first white settlers arrived--less natural, more ordered and subjugated. Stone walls grew from field-picked rocks, and roads developed from hunting trails and military turnpikes. Travel remained difficult, but rail-

roads afforded some access to outside regions. The North Country was internally dynamic, and local business burgeoned.

But all this ended. Economic shifts and improved transportation forced changes, leading to greater reliance on state, national and international networks. A fundamental transformation in scale occurred. Gradually, larger, non-local businesses and services displaced the "home-town team." Stripped of its indigenous industries by modern oligopolies (i.e., chain supermarkets, national name-brand products, extraregional banks), the North Country was little more than a bare farm-and-services skeleton. Dairy farms and small town stores, along with a handful of scattered industries (mostly in places like Watertown, Massena and Plattsburgh) remained the regional economic underpinnings.

Amidst this flux World War II stands out as a turning point. Before the war, rural children were often educated in local one-room schools; if they could be spared from the farm, and could afford boarding in town, they went to the nearest high school. Dirt roads were the rule, and many rural families lacked electricity. After WW II most school districts centralized, providing buses for rural students; railroads closed down, roads were improved, and new interstate highways (e.g., N.Y. 81 and 87) increased intrastate travel and commerce; and most homes were electrified. Extreme localism broke down under pressure from new integrating infrastructures: schools, telephones and roads. Now, students mingled with other young people they previously would not have met. Good roads aided interregional travel and forays outside North Country boundaries. Telephones provided rapid communication at local or larger levels. North Country eyes looked up a bit from the patch of earth at their feet, to the greater world around them.

The North Country's peripheral situation--living on the edge--shapes the region. Culturally, residents embrace a regional identity, and reject outside influences, which are slow to diffuse into the area; politically, the region whines that it lacks clout; economically, northern New York beckons outside business and tourists. Living on the edge is contradictory, living on the edge is precarious. Three intertwined factors reflect this precarious existence, and are crucial to understanding the region: A)

localism and distrust of outsiders dominate the regional world view; B) the North Country's relationship with Canada and Canadians is ambivalent; and C) disaffected groups seek haven in the area.

A). North Country society fears and distrusts the outside. "Downstaters" are a favorite target for derision; popular wisdom marks them as loud, rude, and often corrupt. New York City denizens are considered foreigners, ignorant of northern life.

Localism manifests itself in other ways, in regional newspapers, for example. The content and editorial policy of hometown newspapers say much about a region. In the North Country, papers focus on local news. This is understandable, but there seems almost to be a willful disregard for state, national and international news in the region. Availability of news is another localistic symptom. In small towns major magazines and newspapers, such as the *New York Times*, can be hard to obtain, except perhaps by "the regulars," those who reserve them. Country dwellers must drive into town to buy such news. Other symptoms: people huddle around radio scanners, listening to accident reports or the capture of illegal aliens or drug smugglers at the border, while ignoring national news broadcasts. Home satellite dishes are used, not as tapping devices of international airwaves, but to enhance major network reception and to receive stations unavailable in cable-less homes.

All these traits point to a lack of wider vision, and speak of an isolationism unattributable to romantic rejection of outside values, or naivete; xenophobia is the rule. Emphasis is on local affairs, and the ignoring of goings-on elsewhere. This blindness causes losses, some of them close to home.

B). Though they greatly enhance the local economy, Canadians, especially Quebecois, encounter deep-seated ambivalence from North Country residents, who know little of their Canadian neighbors. So, while local radio stations carry Expos or Blue Jay baseball games, free trade negotiations or Canada's constitutional wranglings receive scant mention. Few schools do more than teach (Parisian) French; there is no rush to study or teach Canadian literature and history. SUNY-Plattsburgh boasts a renowned Canadian Studies program; however, its impact in the North Country, aside from academic circles, is dubious.



Snug Harbor Marina, Plattsburgh, is filled with sail boats, many of them Canadian. Plattsburgh Press-Republican.

Canadians are warmly welcomed for their economic impact--they spend money here. Lured by relatively uncrowded campsites, beaches, and some cheaper goods, Canadians "get-away" to northern New York (e.g., Alexandria Bay, Lake Champlain, and many local campsites); they use it for a spot in the sun in the summer, or a quiet weekend retreat. This silence explodes at regional checkout counters, scene of international friction and misunderstandings: challenges to currency exchange rates, mutual cursing, and language barriers.

This scenario sends a mixed message: North Countryers welcome the money, but store workers complain about calculating sales involving Canadian (i.e., foreign) money; tourism promoters cry out for visitors to northern New York, but residents worry about Canadians buying up

available real estate; and North Country teenagers take advantage of lower Canadian drinking ages, yet few interact with young Canadians. The North Country is indebted to its next-door neighbors, but has yet to live comfortably in the same neighborhood.

C). Disaffected peoples sometimes move to the periphery, where the core's grip lacks potency. In the 1790s French refugees attempted settlement in Northern New York, but their venture (Castorland) failed. Twice in the 1860s Irish Fenians encamped in the area, once at Malone and once at Fort Covington, using the area to operate against the British in Canada. Amish families now live near Ogdensburg. And since the 1960s individuals have moved to the North Country searching for peace and non-urban lifestyles.

The largest dissident group in the region is the Mohawk tribe of Native Americans. Ironically, some North Countryers are jealous of Native Americans. Ignorant of treaty rights, local residents believe Native Americans are "favored." The reality of reservation life--the similarities to ghettoization and apartheid--isn't real to most of the Mohawks' neighbors. Unlike the other disaf-

fected, they have little choice but to live on the edge. Confined into swampy territory near Massena, the Mohawks have faced exploitation from various groups--government officials, missionaries, and local whites. But inspired by 1960s activism and a resurgence of awareness of the Native American heritage, they struggled to retrieve their traditions, including the disappearing Mohawk language. Akwesasne, the Land Where the Partridge Drums, was reborn. One group reclaimed land in Altona. And at Akwesasne residents started a newspaper, *Akwesasne Notes*, devoted to native rights and environmental issues world-wide, and Mohawk language school, both steps towards a revitalized culture. But in recent months speakeasies, gambling and untaxed tobacco smuggling have dominated news from the reservation. These problems, added to the preexisting problems of alcoholism, unemployment and pollution, combine to create a concentrated version of North Country problems. Still, the Mohawks show that activism can create change.

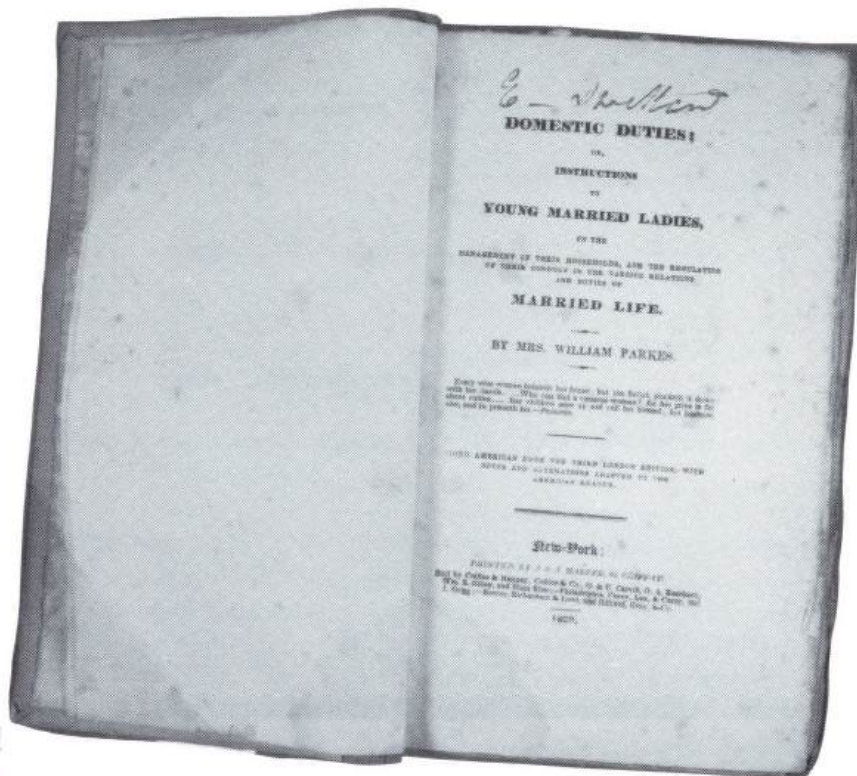
Gregory Cook is an adjunct instructor for North Country Community College in Malone, and is a past instructor at Paul Smith's College.

THE DOMESTICATION OF BETSEY KETCHUM

by Susan M. Ouellette

This is a section from a larger work by Susan M. Ouellette of Keeseville, a runner-up for the McMasters prize in 1989. The author portrays Betsey Ketchum-Delord-Swetland against the background of the changing place of women in the 19th century.

In 1829, Betsey Delord married for the second time an old family friend, William Swetland, a widower with two daughters. With her new marriage and her renewed interest in religion,



This book guided Betsey in the management of her household. Kent-Delord House Museum .

Betsey started off on a new life course. She began a domestic evangelical campaign of her own aimed at her husband's conversion. She wrote about it in her memorandum book, praying that she would be able to carry on her responsibilities to "my family and more especially to those committed to my charge by a second marriage and my only daughter, direct her in the choice of a partner for life, and for my dear companion [William] who has not professed his belief in Jesus Christ in spite of the many exhortations of our worthy pastor. *May an almighty God direct me in my course.*" In all her letters for and about Henry Delord, Betsey never once mentioned religion in connection with him. In fact, the only reference that remains of religion in any of the pre-1820 letters to or from Betsey is a joking reference by her step-father, Caleb Nichols, who wrote that the only reason that young girls cared to go to church was because of young, good-looking preachers.

Betsey's new husband did not have the social prestige that her first husband had commanded, but he was a respected gentleman in his own right. It is very possible that William had known part of Betsey's family from New England since he had been born in Salisbury, Connecticut, the birthplace of Betsey's mother and her oldest sister, Polly Averill. After graduation from Middlebury College, he joined a law firm located in Washington County, New York and in 1811, he came to Plattsburgh to start his own law office. He became the leader of the Bar and was known as the "great lawyer of Northern New York."

What William had that Henry Delord didn't was money, and perhaps this second marriage of Betsey's provided her with the financial security that Henry's aristocratic status had not. Betsey had fallen "heir in common" with her daughter Frances to the Delord property on Cumberland Avenue, but she no longer could derive income from the properties in Peru since John Palmer had purchased them in the original auction. Cash was becoming increasingly important to people who wanted to maintain a respectable style of living and William's cash assets and his thriving law business could have been the answer to Betsey's dilemma. Evidence of this is contained in a letter written by William Swetland to Henry Webb, the future husband of Frances Delord. William wrote to Henry to describe the repairs and upkeep he had performed on the Cumberland Avenue property and stated outright that

he had been completely responsible financially for them. On the other hand, William, although he had remained a widower for eight years after the death of his first wife, needed a wife to care for his two daughters who were now nearing adulthood. Who better to teach them the refinements of genteel living than the widow of Plattsburgh's only European aristocrat?

Betsey's seduction by the evangelical doctrine, however, had now changed her view of the role she should play, and she was no longer occupied by fashion or entertainment. From this distance, it is hard to assess whether William felt she was a worthy wife for the latter or the former reason. Whatever William's thoughts, Betsey proceeded to raise his daughters in a household that had become very middle class in appearance, and he soon followed in the wake of Betsey's own conversion. In a letter to her daughter away at school, Betsey wrote about her feelings for William after he became baptized and professed his conversion, "I love him better than ever--it was all that was wanting."

Betsey's metamorphosis was complete by the end of the 1830s, but the ramifications of her transformation, as that of many of her contemporaries, would continue to affect American society. As the century in tandem with the Industrial Revolution progressed and the agrarian roots of American society receded, men's and women's roles became more polarized. The development of a woman's sphere and all it entailed became more apparent towards the end of Betsey's life.

The seeds of this polarization can, however, be found early. For instance, the beginnings of the domestic sphere can be found in the new publications aimed at educating women exactly how to conduct themselves which were published in the 1820s and 1830s. In Betsey's own library was a copy of *Domestic Duties: or Instructions to Married Ladies on the Management of their Households, Regulations of their Conduct in the Various Relations and Duties of Married Life*, written by a Mrs. William Parkes. Since the publication date was 1829, it is possible that this worthy tome was a bridal gift to Betsey. One wonders, however, if Betsey chose the book herself and, if so, why? She had already been a wife or mother for thirty years by the time of her marriage to William Swetland. Perhaps she needed guidance in the new social milieu of which she had become a part. The table of contents covers four major subjects, with num-

erous specific instances: Social Relations, Household Concerns, Regulation of Time and, of course, Moral and Religious Duties. On page 13, one can read the author's admonition: "The mistress of a family has, too, the power generally of being the mainspring of its movement and the regulator of its habits. Exerting this power properly, she sees around her everyone obedient to the laws of order and regularity." It is clear that Betsey was taking this advice very seriously, as were thousands of other American women, and in accepting it, they were solidifying the ideals which placed women on a pedestal as the caretakers of morality and virtue which they would be forced to maintain into the twentieth century.

The power Mrs. Parkes referred to in her book was a new reality. Never before had women been allowed the freedom of decision-making for such an important part of the lives of their family. Once the belief existed that women had the power and the duty to pursue their domestic concerns, it was only a matter of time before those concerns were turned outward towards the evils which could invade and poison the home. As the repository of all goodness, it follows that women must also be fierce defenders of virtue and enemies of vice. Turning this ambition outward, women became legitimate leaders of the movement to maintain stability in a vice-ridden world. Betsey had begun with her own enlightenment, proceeded to convert her family and now, through her membership in the newly forming women's societies she was helping to foster her own new morality in her community. Betsey was both a president of the Female Tract Society of Plattsburgh and a superintendent of the Female Charitable Society of Plattsburgh.

The single most striking evidence of Betsey's remarkable transformation is visual. The very fact that the Delord family members were painted says something about their own social pretensions, but in Betsey's case there is still more to know than that. A comparison of two of her likenesses tells her story without the need for words.

In 1818, Betsey was painted by A.D.G. Tuthill. In this painting, she is very fashionable and worldly-looking. Her hair is curled becomingly on her brow and her stylish velvet and silk dress is cut low, exposing a great deal of shoulder and bosom. She wears a beautiful lace cap and there

are jewels in her hair, on her ears and around her neck. The painting portrays her for what she is in 1818, a lady aspiring to the gentry. One can easily imagine her dancing at the British minister's reception amid the glitter and pomp of Washington.

In the second picture, taken after her marriage to William Swetland, Betsey is barely recognizable. A comparison of the former image with the latter gives one the impression that these are two different people. Gone are the curls, jewels



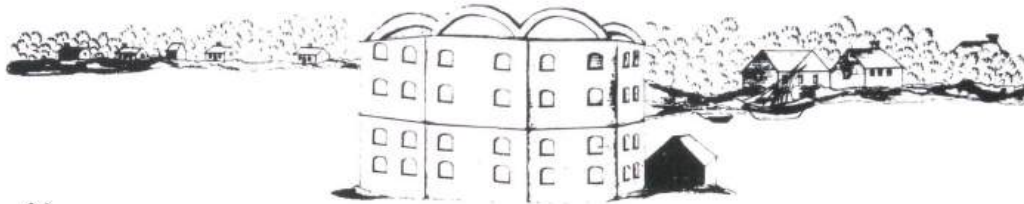
Above: Betsey Delord as a fashionable young married woman. Right: Betsey Delord Swetland in her later years. Kent-Delord House Museum.

and stylish dress. Replacing them is a plain habit of black with demure white cuffs and collar. Serviceable black bombazine dress covers every portion of her body from her earlobes to the floor, and even gloves cover all but her fingers. Her hair is severely pulled back and covered with a full bonnet. The tone of the picture is of a stolid and self-righteous person who has subscribed to all the rules of mid-19th-century middle-class society. Even Betsey's dour, unsmiling expression denies the aristocratic pretensions that she had possessed in her earlier years.

Susan Poland Ouellette and her family live near Keeseville, New York. She is pursuing a degree in history at SUNY Plattsburgh. In June she delivered her entire paper on Betsey Ketchum at the Conference on New York State History at Tarrytown, New York.

THE MEN WHO BUILT FORT BLUNDER

by Warder H. Cadbury



Sketch of the American Fort at Rouses Point, on the River Richelieu about 20 chains South of the Old Line found erroneous, and is considerably within the New established Line, or Parallel 45° North Latitude; it can command 3/4 pieces of Cannon and is ~~well~~ proof, with respect to its commanding position (see Plan of the Boundary Line.) This Sketch was taken by Colonel Bouchette on board the Steam Boat in May 1818— and copied by

Robert Bouchette Lieut. —

A drawing of Fort Blunder, "taken by Colonel Bouchette on board the Steam Boat in May, 1818." Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, Canada.

One rainy day, while browsing idly among some old manuscripts in a bookstore basement, my eye caught the signatures of McIntyre, McMartin and Totten on some faded papers decorated by an amateur hand with ribbons and seal. These names are well known to the Adirondack historian; and to my delighted surprise the document turned out to be the formal contract for the construction of what later became known as Fort Blunder at Rouses Point.

One strand of this story concerns Joseph Totten of the Totten and Crossfield Purchase, and his grandson and namesake, the army architect of Fort Blunder. The other revolves around Archibald McIntyre, Comptroller of New York, and his two successive mining ventures in Essex

County in collaboration with his brother James and two brothers-in-law, Duncan and Malcolm McMartin. Both of these families, connected with the very beginnings of Adirondack recorded history, became associated in the enterprise at Rouses Point.

We first meet some of the characters of this story in July, 1772 at Sir William Johnson's "castle" on the Mohawk, when the final papers of the Totten and Crossfield Purchase were signed with due ceremony. With a stroke of the pen the title to the last remaining land owned by the Mohawks, over a million acres in the heart of the Adirondacks, were deeded over to the white man by the Indians. Stephen Crossfield and Joseph Totten were ship carpenters from New

York, and they clearly had little interest in the transaction beyond lending their names to help conceal the names of the real speculators, the Jessup brothers, who hoped to make a fortune. Yet the dummy names gained an immortality by being perpetuated on deeds and Adirondack maps to the present day.

Meanwhile in the same year, 1772, was born in Scotland the man who was to figure prominently in the later history of the Purchase, Archibald McIntyre. Two years later his parents emigrated to New York with their children. With other Scottish families they established a settlement at Broadalbin, near Amsterdam.

Archibald received his education in Albany. He represented the Broadalbin area in the Assembly and was then appointed Deputy Secretary of State. In 1806 he was appointed Comptroller; he held the office for fifteen years, longer than any other person, except the late Arthur Levitt. From his base in Albany, Archibald was able to help his relatives in Broadalbin and elsewhere. His sister Margaret married Duncan McMartin, Jr.; Duncan prospered in business, served in the state senate, built a woolen mill in Broadalbin at the time of the War of 1812, and in 1818 became a judge of the Court of Common Pleas. Archibald's other sister, Jane, married Malcolm McMartin, brother of Duncan. And so the two families of McIntyre and McMartin became closely related in their personal and business affairs.

Archibald McIntyre's first venture in mining in the Adirondacks began about 1809 in the town of North Elba. With other investors he formed the Elba Iron and Steel Manufacturing Company, which built a forge of four to six fires on the Chub River, close to Lake Placid. A community grew up in a hitherto barren and backward region. Apparently the "proprietors" were Archibald's brother James, who had served in the state Assembly, and his sister Jane's husband, Malcolm McMartin.

For the duration of the War of 1812 the family's various projects prospered. But with the return of peace the bottom dropped out of the price of woolen goods, and Duncan McMartin's factory was forced to close. As for the Elba Company, for a number of years its pig iron was marketed by the way of Lake Champlain. But in time it was discovered that the ore contained so much carbon and sulphur that it was unsatisfactory. Then the furnaces were supplied with ore

from the Arnold Hill mine in Clinton County, transported only during the winter when snow made the roads passable. Finally, however, the difficulties of supply and the distance to markets forced the closing down of the operation in 1815. Except for a few hardy natives, the great valley at North Elba was deserted and forgotten until John Brown, the abolitionist, moved there in 1849 to help a struggling colony of freed slaves. Little trace of the Elba Iron Works remains.

Although the end of the fighting and the signing of the Treaty of Ghent brought adversity to Duncan McMartin, it brought opportunity to his brother Malcolm and to James McIntyre, just as their enterprise at Elba was failing. In the summer of 1816 the federal government decided to erect at Rouses Point a permanent fortification whose guns could command the entrance to Lake Champlain from the north. Moving to Plattsburgh, Malcolm McMartin and James McIntyre got the job as contractors.

To draw up the plans and to supervise construction, the Army chose a young West Pointer, Joseph G. Totten. He was no stranger to the Champlain Valley and the whole northern frontier, for he had distinguished himself as a brave, resourceful soldier in the recent war with Great Britain. In 1812, as chief engineer of the Army of the Center under General Stephen Van Rensselaer, he was required to participate in the abortive attempt to storm Queenstown Heights on the Niagara River. The following year he served under General Henry Dearborn, who was at least as inept as Van Rensselaer had been, but in September 1814 his talents at defensive fortifications helped to win the glorious victory at Plattsburgh.

As he journeyed northward on Lake Champlain that summer of 1816, and gazed at the Adirondack peaks looming up in the west, perhaps Totten mused about his grandfather, who was once a nominal titleholder to those mountains. Grandfather put his name to the Totten and Crossfield Purchase, perhaps thinking it was a sound investment for the future of his son Peter. But the conflict in loyalties engendered by the War for Independence soon shattered such dreams. The senior Joseph Totten could not bring himself to take up arms against the King, and he left for Nova Scotia. As with the Jessups, whose Tory sympathies also made them flee to Canada, Totten's move denied him all future claims in the Purchase, and most of the lands

reverted to the state. But his son Peter evidently remained on the American side; he married in 1787 and in the following year his only son, our Joseph G. Totten, was born.

The boy hardly knew his parents. His mother died when he was but three years old, and soon thereafter his father moved to Santa Cruz in the West Indies as consul, and left his young son in the care of his brother-in-law, Jared Mansfield of New Haven. The boy's uncle was a learned mathematician, and he saw to it that his ward received a good education. When he moved to West Point in 1802 to accept appointment as captain of engineers and teacher at the newly founded Academy, he took his nephew along.

A brilliant student in the classroom, Totten soon proved his worth in the field, for after his graduation in 1805, he accompanied his uncle to Cincinnati to assist him in his duties of Surveyor-General of Ohio and the Northwest Territory, by appointment of President Jefferson. These two years of practical experience, a keen and well-trained mind and combat know-how all conspired to fit him for what was to be the great labor of his life -- planning and constructing seacoast fortifications. His later accomplishments were so notably successful that we may pardon him for making a blunder of his first assignment, especially since the fault was far from his alone.

Meanwhile, the formal contract for the mason work of the fort was drawn up. This document is before me as I write, but its eight pages are too much to quote in full. It specifies in detail the manner of construction, interlarded with much legal lingo. Within two weeks Totten is to prepare the "grillage of timbers" on top of which the heavy masonry is to be laid; he is further required to build a wharf at which vessels may unload the stone from quarries on Isle La Motte and King's Bay. For each perch (about 25 cu. ft.) of straight wall a worker will receive \$2.12½, and a dollar more for the vaulted arches. Octagonal in shape, and covering an area of three quarters of an acre, the fort would require some three million bricks. at a total cost of about two hundred thousand dollars.

The contract is dated November 1, 1816, and on the last page appear the signatures: Brv. Lt. Col. Totten, in behalf of the United States, James McIntyre, Malcolm McMartin and John Stewart; and as witnesses, Melancton Smith, one of the proprietors of Plattsburgh, and Lt. Isaac Craig of the Army Engineers.

On his arrival, Totten promptly reconnoitered the possible sites for the proposed fort and selected Island Point, "adjacent to the ridge where Jacques Rouse erected his first home. It was an island during the spring when the water in the lake was high, and a point of land connected with the main shore by a narrow, flat, swampy isthmus when the lake waters were low."

On October 29, 1816, he wrote to the Secretary of War:

"Enclosed is a copy of a letter I have just written to His Excellency, Gov. Tompkins, on the subject of obtaining for the U. States the title to certain lands at Rouse's Point. Having lately rec'd orders through Gen. Swift to commence the foundations of the work on Island Point, some proceeding to ascertain to whom the land belonged, and to secure the property and the jurisdiction, became necessary; presuming the Government wished (as was originally designed) the point so fortified as to be secure from surprise, and competent to sustain a vigorous and protracted siege, I have requested the Governor to procure for the United States the title to about 500 acres of land, which will embrace all the ground within point-blank shot; the tract is principally covered with wood, and will furnish most of the timber necessary in the construction of the works, and all the fuel for the garrison for many years. It is proper to observe that the part of the tract, on which the proprietors have set so high a price as to make it prudent to resort to the interposition of the Legislature of the State, will be indispensable for the location of the Work; and the remainder, long unfit for culture, and valuable only for timber which in this country is little used and very abundant, would be assessed at a trifling value.

Having, during the whole summer, been in a state of preparation, I was unable to begin the foundations of the work on Island Point the moment I was ordered. That work is now rapidly progressing. My estimate for the expenditure for this year does not equal the monies I have on hand, so that there will not probably be a necessity to request a further supply."

It seems odd that actual construction was begun before a clear title to the land was obtained. But 480 acres were ceded to the United

States on November 21, 1816 by an act of the State Legislature, for which the State was reimbursed. Actually the State already owned an 80-acre lot, number 62, of the Canadian and Nova Scotia Refugee Tract. It seized the lot in 1814 on the death of William Hazen of St. John, New Brunswick, since state law at the time forbade an alien from bequeathing property in New York to his heirs if they were also aliens. In 1816 the State added to the one lot by acquiring the five adjoining strips, each of 80 acres. A twelve-man commission of Clinton County residents appointed as appraisers awarded \$21,292 to the owners, \$2,500 of which was put in escrow for lot 62, pending court determination of its legitimate owner.

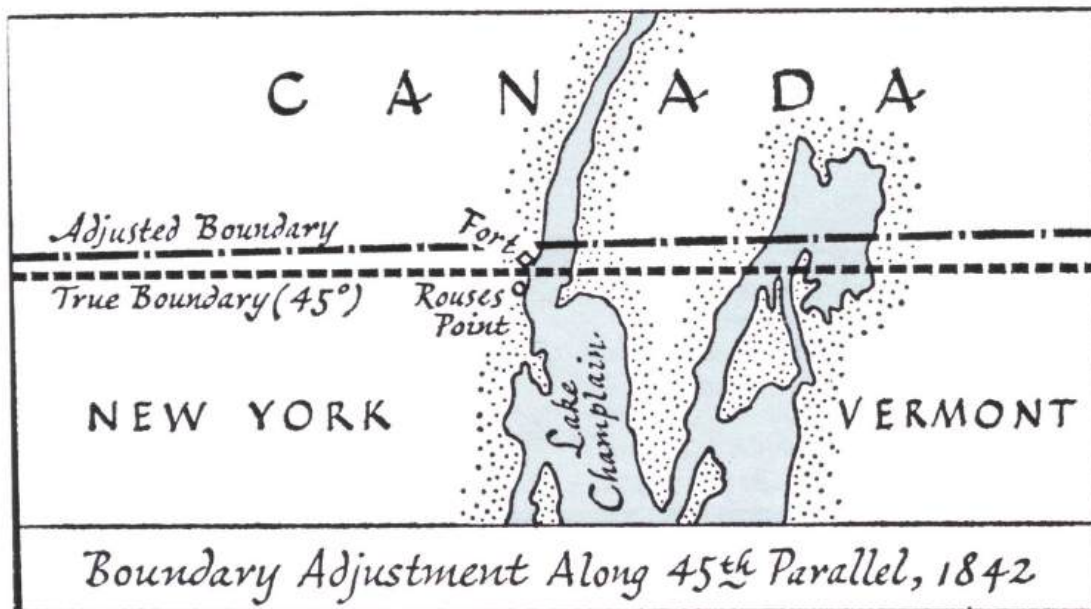
The following year, 1817, was a busy one. On March 21 Totten reported to his superior, Brig. Gen. Joseph G. Swift of Plattsburgh:

"I arrived at this place on the 3rd. inst. since which time I have been very actively engaged in pressing forward affairs so as to keep above water with my work at Rouse's. The contractors are busied in drawing stone on the ice, and there is no doubt but that with a little exertion and favorable weather we shall succeed."

One can imagine the excitement at the fort site when word arrived that the President, James

Monroe, was to pay a visit. He was spending the summer months of 1817 touring the northeast on horseback. His trip ushered in the "Era of Good Feelings" following the divisiveness of the War of 1812, and also acquainted him personally with the nation's northern defenses. From Maine he journeyed west to Burlington and then crossed the lake. People at the fort must have gotten up very early that July morning, for according to the *Plattsburgh Republican* the President

"... passed Cumberland Head in the Steamboat, about ten o'clock on the night of the 25th -- at the line at 4 o'clock, A.M., and landed at 6. (He breakfasted with General Ezra Thurber.) After having inspected the work which is erecting on a small island north of the point, the President, accompanied by his suite and Col. Totten, who had by special order joined him at Burlington, proceeded on horseback to view the site for the principal work on the mainland. The position selected by Col. Totten is justly regarded as the key to one of the most important inlets to the heart of our country; and it will be favorable to our defense, that the chief magistrate has made himself personally acquainted with its importance. At eight o'clock the President embarked





Contractor Andrew Weston used stone from Fort Montgomery to build a new bridge at Rouses Point in 1937. Clinton County Historical Museum.

on board the Steam Boat and arrived (at Plattsburgh) at noon."

Apparently President Monroe had asked Totten to join his entourage as he journeyed westward, for we find the young military architect writing again to General Swift on October 5:

"I shall always regret that I could not accompany the President. I had been out of money for some time, was very much in debt, the creditors were really suffering, and I had just rec'd a draft which I could not negotiate short of Albany -- these facts were stated to him, he was pleased that I did not conceal them, and directed me to proceed about my business without delay.

My work goes on very well and to my perfect satisfaction. We are just throwing the arches over a 2nd tier of embrasures. The large piers are at the height for springing the great arches (which however we shall not attempt this fall), the small piers are 8 ft. above the 2nd platform and all parts of the work in a like state of forwardness."

However, an expected danger soon appeared, for Totten wrote again on November 5 from West Point:



"I have rec'd several intimations that some unprincipled men in Canada near the line have avowed an intention to set fire to the combustible material of the Castle at Island Point, so soon as the laborers are withdrawn for the winter. Such an attempt may possibly be made, and the results would be (from the great quantity of timber collected within the walls) an injury to be repaired only by rebuilding a great part of the walls. I think it important to be secure against such sort of enemies, and therefore beg leave to request of the War Department, through you, that orders may be given to some officers in the Line to furnish a small guard as soon as I can prepare for them."

At the same time Archibald McIntyre journeyed up from Albany to visit his brother and sister, for he writes to Duncan McMartin on November 7: "I paid our friends to the North a visit and saw all but your brother (Malcolm) who was in chase of a stolen horse. All were well and comfortable and prosperous."

The threat of vandalism and the episode of the stolen horse may have been intimations of what lay ahead. The first shock, in 1818, was the discovery that the walls of the fort were settling in the soft soil under the increasing weight of stone, cracking the masonry badly. Thus young Totten, who was to become the nation's foremost fortifications engineer, learned by bitter experience the importance of firm foundations. He blundered in using a "grillage of timbers" instead of piles driven into the earth. According to tradition, pickets from the old battleground at Plattsburgh, with slabs, boards, hemlock logs and stumps were all thrown together loosely for the undergirding of the fort.

But the final shock came in October, when it was discovered by a boundary-survey team appointed under the terms of the Treaty of Ghent, that the fort was *nearly a mile north of the 45th Parallel, and so on Canadian soil*. Construction was stopped immediately, and it was not until the Webster-Ashburton Treaty of 1842 that the dispute with Canada was finally settled. By that time the old fort had fallen to ruins, its decay hastened by those who took its stone to build their houses in the vicinity. In 1844 the government began all over again to build a fort -- Fort Montgomery -- but that is another story.

The honor of bestowing the famous sobriquet of "Fort Blunder" may rightly belong to Archibald McIntyre, for on December 8, 1818 he wrote to Duncan McMartin:

"The line of 45 no doubt runs Rouse's Point into Canada, and hence operations cease there, which will enable Jamie to return to Broadalbin. What a miserable blunder this was on the part of our government."

Once again the families of Malcolm McMartin and James McIntyre were without a livelihood. They returned to Broadalbin and became involved in lengthy negotiations to obtain satisfaction from the government for breaking its agreements. Among the papers found with the original contract was the following letter, dated June 22, 1821, from James McIntyre, in behalf of

his associates, to Captain J.L. Smith of the Army Engineers in Washington:

"Inclosed you will receive duplicates of an account made out agreeable to the direction of the Secretary of War and also of an account amounting to \$5745.50 which is the one we think ought and we trust will be allowed him. With the latter we will be perfectly satisfied although it is not half the damage the stoppage of the works has been to us. If, however, his Honour will not allow that, we must put up contented with the former, amounting to \$5596.25.

We are so unacquainted with doing business with the United States, that we take the liberty of trespassing on your goodness to close this concern for us . . ."

Subsequently Colonel Totten spent the years 1828-38 at Newport, Rhode Island, in charge of the construction of Fort Adams. He was then made Chief of Army Engineers and moved to Washington. He continued on friendly terms with his former associates on Lake Champlain and once endorsed an application for admission to West Point by one of the family. He participated in the battle of Vera Cruz in 1847 and, during the Civil War, declined an offer to become a Union commander on account of his age. For his many services he was brevetted Major General on April 21, 1864, and died the following day. Fort Totten, on the East River in New York, is named for him.

As for the McIntyres and McMartins, their subsequent careers are too complicated to present here. Suffice it to say that after much exploring and the following up of rumors of rich silver deposits in the Adirondacks, they found and developed the rich iron deposits at Tahawus.

Several of the documents related to the building of Fort Blunder are housed at the Dodge Memorial Library in Rouses Point.

This article was edited by Allan S. Everest to include additional information.

Warder H. Cadbury teaches in the Philosophy Department at the State University at Albany and pursues Adirondack history as an extracurricular activity. Syracuse University Press has recently reprinted his edition of Wm. H.H. Murray's Adirondack classic, Adventures in the Wilderness.

THE ARMY MANEUVERS OF 1939

by Joseph P. McGrath

In 1939 America was poised on the brink of a new age. The seeds of a new way of life were taking root and Depression-weary Americans were looking ahead to good times. A war was about to rage in Europe, but Americans had other things on their minds. "Happy Days Are Here Again" was a popular tune that expressed the sentiment of the people; other tunes were the "Beer Barrel Polka" and "3 Little Fishes."

I don't know how old you were (or even if you were born), but I do know you were going to the movies to see "Gone with the Wind," or "The Wizard of Oz." *Grapes of Wrath* was a literary hit. Lou Gehrig gave a tearful farewell in Yankee Stadium. Fluorescent light was invented by GE, the yellow school bus came into being, and Birdseye Frozen Foods were "in."

Gasoline cost 19¢ a gallon; bread was 8¢ for a pound loaf, and milk was 12¢ a quart. A new Ford cost \$680 and a 3-bedroom house \$3,850. On May 17th, Princeton edged Columbia 2 to 1 in baseball and NBC *televised* its first sporting event, with Bill Stern behind the microphone; and for a local event, St. Dismas church, built by the inmates at the Dannemora Correctional Institution, was completed and opened for church services.

The War Department released information that the army would hold maneuvers in northern New York in the late summer of 1939. Local leaders, many of them veterans of World War I, knowing the value and need of such training, and having close association with the military at the Plattsburgh Barracks, cooperated with the War



An aerial view of the 1939 First Army maneuvers' encampment in the Saranac Valley. Associated Press.

Department in securing the necessary "room" in which to hold the war games.

On January 30th, 1939, at a special meeting of the Clinton County Board of Supervisors, a resolution was passed pledging full support to the War Department. Letters of support from Benjamin Feinberg, Majority Leader of the state Senate, Charles Harrington, Robert C. Booth, prominent Plattsburgh attorney, and many others, were influential proponents of the idea. Clinton County won the games in 1939 over the competition of Pine Camp at Watertown, partly because of this evidence of hearty cooperation, partly because the War Department wanted a new area in which the units could work out their tactical problems; Pine Camp had had the games in 1935.

The first effort was to secure leases for encampment areas, where semipermanent bivouac areas would be located, and for easement rights for the troops to come on to private property as the war games progressed. It was early decided that orchards, growing crops, houses and barns would be off limits, that is, unavailable for use by the troops. All of these details are more fully developed in Robert Sloma's and my sources, which are now housed in the archives of the county museum.

On July 31, 1939 the local papers printed a map and a lengthy article showing an area of 228,000 acres or 450 square miles to be "The Maneuver Area for the August War Games." Beekmantown - Saranac - Plattsburgh (town and city) - Schuyler Falls - Peru - Black Brook - Au Sable were to be the "host towns."

In addition to securing the land, plans had to be formulated to assure supplies for the troops. Bids had to be solicited for food, feed for the cavalry and other animals of the Army, as mules were still part of Army transportation, straw for the bedding of the men, wood for the kitchen field ranges, ice, lumber (one always has to build), lime for the latrines, and many other items.

The food supplies alone were a logistical nightmare; the estimated need for a few of these items was: 344,000 lbs. of fresh beef, 234 tons of bread, 328 tons of potatoes, 140 tons of cabbage, 113,000 dozen eggs, 14 tons of bacon and 700,000 pints of milk. Most of this food came by refrigerated railroad cars, although local businesses bid and supplied:



Two members of the 43rd Signal Corps. from Providence, R.I. are ready for action near Beekmantown.

bread by Bouyea Bakery

milk by Plattsburgh Dairy

fresh fruit by Lombardoni Fruit Company

Needless to say, the economic impact brought great joy to the business community.

When the troops arrived, they must have repeatedly heard the phrase "Don't take any wooden nickels." Actually, the city was trying to pay a part of the cost of putting on a huge pageant in celebration of the 125th anniversary of the battle of Plattsburgh. Wooden nickels were sold throughout the city; most merchants accepted them in trade. But the committee anticipated, correctly, that many people would keep the nickels as souvenirs. The pieces, which were rectangular in shape, were so popular that the supplies ran out, and 25-cent circular pieces were then issued.

The chronological events of the 1st Army Maneuvers, in which 52,000 men took part, are as follows:

August 13, 1939 - the National Guard troops arrived by train, truck convoy and foot. However, even before the 13th many of the regular army troops were in the area. The most famous outfit was the 7th Cavalry Brigade from Fort Knox, Kentucky, which represented the complete armored strength of the U.S. Army.

The 27th Div, NYNG, was placed at Lapham Mills; the 44th div, NYNJ NG, at South Platts-

burgh; the 110th Horsed Cavalry, NYNG, at Schuyler Falls; 1st Corps HQ at the Plattsburgh Barracks; the 43rd Div, Conn-Vt-RI-Maine NG, at East Beekmantown; the 26th Div, Mass-NH NG was in West Plattsburgh; the 18th Inf Brigade, regular army, Mass-Maine-Vt, was in Saranac; the 1st Div, regular army, was in Redford. A list of all the units is contained in the materials deposited at the museum. They can be consulted by veterans who served with these units and wish to look up their outfits.

It would have been a pleasure to interview railroad people of that era. When one realizes the importance of the railroad to the success of the "games" and visualizes single track part of the way from Albany, and the need to keep regular



Engineers from either the regular army or the National Guard built a trestle bridge across the Saranac River near Morrisonville.

traffic moving, one can appreciate the tremendous task undertaken by the railroads.

August 16th and 17th were devoted to a regimental-level maneuvering. It was a rough period, for it rained and several men were injured by the lightning storms. Eleven regimental exercises went on at the same time so that Clinton County was jumping with marching troops, but the spirit of adventure was still fresh and the men sang as they marched along dusty or muddy roads.

One of the reports in the *New York Times* for that day was headlined "Troops Want More Beef." One of the troops of the 101st Horsed

Cavalry (a troop is the equivalent of a company in an infantry regiment) received 15 pounds of meat for 109 men and 153 pounds of beef for 583 men. (Whoever came up with the ad "Where's the Beef" must have researched this story.) All I can think of is a supply officer standing, ramrod straight, in front of a colonel or general trying to explain away the fiasco.

At the same time the papers were reporting that 20 or 30 State Troopers were transferred from the maneuver area to downstate because of the milk strike and the expected violence. There was also the report of the devastating fire which destroyed the dining building at the Catholic Summer School, Cliff Haven. That particular event I remember most vividly as I was on guard duty that night.

The *New York Times* assigned Hanson W. Baldwin to report the "War Games," and report he did! He not only thoroughly covered the actual maneuvers, but wrote liberally about the North Country. This is a typical Baldwin dispatch - First Army HQ, Plattsburgh, NY (without the H), Aug 17 - "the infantry, 'queen of battles,' operated in 'combat teams' supported by artillery and in some cases by platoons of light tanks. While the soldiers were crawling and fighting in the pine thickets and grassy meadows splotted with the white tracery of Queen Anne's lace and the yellow heads of golden rod, the combat engineers of the various divisions were receiving instructions in the difficulty of bridge construction." With such command of the written word and an eye towards the beauty of a northern New York summer, who could not enjoy Hanson W. Baldwin.



The 97th Observation Squadron was based at the Malone air field. Photographs from the collections of Arthur Gordon.

Baldwin also mentioned the nicknames of the New York National Guard Regiments: the 165th Inf Regt NYNG, the old 7th Regt, also known as the "Silk Stocking Regiment"; the 105th Inf Regt NYNG from upstate New York, known as the "Apple Knockers" – they actually had an apple in the regimental coat of arms – and the 14th Regt NYNG of Brooklyn, called the "Gas House Gang." A dispatch to the *Times* on 8/13/39 read: "Silk Stocking" soldiers get "Gas House" Surprised. Patrols of the "Gas House" 14th had literally stripped the pants off half a dozen of the "Silk Stocking" whom they encountered in the dark while on patrol.

There was a "battle" in Beekmantown; the area of the engagement was referred to as "the swamp," the later location of the New York Power Authority's substation; also "battles" in West Plattsburgh, Redford and Terry Mountain. One report told of the mechanized cavalry units chasing each other in the area of Fern Lake!

August 18 and 19 – the games became larger – units of brigades were battling each other. A brigade consisted of two infantry regiments with artillery and other supporting units. In 1941 brigades were done away with and the army went to the triangle division. This was the first overnight problem and Baldwin wrote lyrically that "shelter tents dotted the lush fields and rocky hillside of the Champlain Valley." Wherever he was, John Calkins and I were not! The dictionary defines bivouac as a temporary military encampment made with tents or shelters, thus to rest or assemble in a bivouac. Bivouac for the frontline troops was marching from here to there and then back to here. You slept or rested *standing up*.

Numerous foreign observers were assigned to the maneuvers. Seventeen nations sent military attachés. Lt. General Frederick von Boettcher came from Germany. He presumably would outrank all military personnel; however, on August 8th the War Department promoted Maj. General Drum to the rank of Lt. General, and that took care of that. Japan had a Maj. General, China a Colonel, Great Britain a Colonel, and so on. Baldwin wrote of a German officer's criticism at the time: "In the German Army we do everything in peacetime that we expect to do in war; in your Army you do nothing in peacetime that you do in war." I must assume he had to eat those words later many, many times.

Hanson Baldwin had great fun writing about Disco, New York, the "town" or dot on the map

seven miles directly south of Saranac and seven miles southwest of Peasleeville. It was erected by the high command on Governor's Island to serve as the headquarters for the 1st Division. In one article he refers to it as "the one-house town," nothing more, and in another story he wrote that the 16th Inf Regiment pushed slowly ahead on to Disco Heights. And the headline of the article read "Village of Disco Captured." Disco isn't even on a map today.

On the 20th he wrote: "Activities which started yesterday were the first in a training series intended to teach the tactics of night fighting. The regular army units got the idea, but the National Guard did not, and it is no exaggeration to say the fog of mimic war hung thick above the pine brakes and birch groves of the Champlain Valley."

It was during this exercise that the following episode unfolded. It is about Sam Biafore, who in later years was the manager of the Dannemora Branch of Key Bank. In 1939 Sam was the youngest regular army first sergeant. He was in Co. B, 5th Inf, and Co. B was encircling the 13th Inf Regt near Pickett's Corners when they came upon the the headquarters of the 13th just as it was preparing to move. Needless to say, the commanding officer of the 13th was a wee bit chagrined to be captured by Sam and his outfit. The umpires complimented 1st Sgt Sam Biafore, and while they could not award a Bronze Star for "pretend war," they awarded him the best available thing, the Command Post sign – CP 13 of the 13th Inf Rgt. For this he had his picture in the *New York Times*.

By this time everybody was ready for a break as it was now the middle weekend. Rest and relaxation was the order of the day. The happenings of that weekend are well documented in the local papers. Plattsburgh entertained 51,998 soldiers but my buddy and I were in Saranac Lake; if you think I was going to hang around Plattsburgh – no way! One report in the paper concerned a fire in town on Saturday afternoon, and the fire trucks had to be rerouted around Margaret Street; they could not get through the mob. Bill Levy told me he was working in Scheier's Liquor Store that summer and he could not keep the shelves stocked.

The culmination of the whole exercise was fast approaching. **Monday, August 21st** saw the start of the Corps maneuvers, which meant division-sized units against division. Baldwin wrote of a platoon of four reconnaissance cars

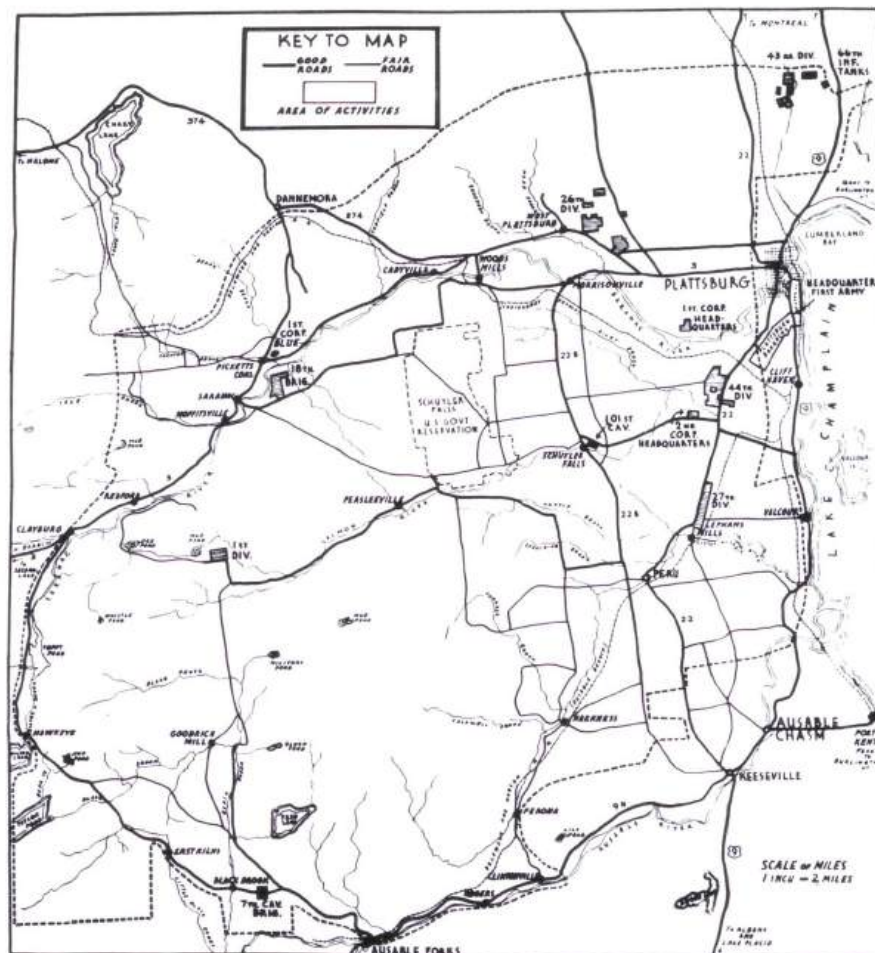
from the 7th Cavalry swinging wide on a 90-mile enveloping movement against the enemy, taking up a position well in the enemy's rear atop two hills and remaining there all day observing the enemy's movements and reporting them by radio to corps headquarters.

Some of the towns that shared in the action that day: West Plattsburgh, as the 43rd Div prepared to cross the Saranac River. Morrisonville-Cadyville and Woods Mills as the 26th Div crossed the river. A trestle bridge was constructed by the 101st Eng, 26th Inf Div Morrisonville. The 71st Inf Regt crossed the Saranac near Plattsburgh but was pushed back across the river by the mechanized cavalry of the 1st Corps. By nightfall the reserves of the 2nd Corps pushed the 1st Corps back across the Saranac. It would appear that no river in history was crossed and recrossed more often than the Saranac.

Morrisonville made the news that day and night. A platoon of scout reconnaissance cars, the snouts of their 50-caliber and 30-caliber

machine guns poking over their armored sides, roared across the Morrisonville bridge early in the day and surprised the 43rd Div Headquarters. On **August 23rd**: "Guns flashed along the line of the Saranac River this AM as modern 'Jeb Stuarts' in the iron horses of the mechanized cavalry raked the flanks of the enemy in the concluding operations of the First Army corps problem."

Headlines for the final phase: "50,000 men 'fight' on a Ten-Mile Front - Biggest Mock War Begins - Defenders Rush to Gain Champlain Ridge - Advance Guards Battle in Streets." On the **23rd of August**, 12,500 Regulars (the Blue Defending Army) were pitted against 38,400 men, the Black Attacking Army. The Black forces were the 26th Inf Div, 43rd Inf Div, 27th Inf div and 44th Inf Div, reinforced by some regular army units. The Blue defending forces were the 18th Inf Brigade (Regular Army), reinforced by the 7th Cavalry Brigade, mechanized. Maj. General Woodruff, commanding general of the Blue forces, made his headquarters in the vicinity of Saranac.



Map of the maneuvers area donated by Katherine E. Rowelson.

The Black forces were divided into two Corps – one consisted of the 26th and 43rd Inf Div in the north, the other the 27th and the 44th Inf Div in the south sector. The Black forces were reinforced by the 101st Hosed Cavalry, a battalion of 37 Infantry Tanks, anti-aircraft artillery regiments and observation aviation, the entire force under the command of Lt. General Hugh Drum.

The regulars with their armored forces pushed hard against the Black forces and would have ended the maneuvers the very first day except that the scenario had to be played out by both sides. General Short, commanding general of the 1st Inf Div (Regular Army), was “shot” and out of action for 30 minutes by a roving band of 101st Hosed Cavalry in the “jumbled forests and dusty roads” between Redford and Peru. The 1st Div did reach and battle the Black forces in “the little town of Peru.”

The 101st Hosed Cavalry were busy the whole day largely with advance guard scrimmages between the Saranac and Au Sable rivers. General Short sent his 7,200 men to advance with “speed and aggressiveness” from Mud Pond on the Peasleeville Road to meet the 101st Cav in the “tangled pine forests” along the Salmon river.

A battalion of the 18th reached the outskirts of Peru, shoved its outpost into the town, and a “fine soldiers’ brawl” occurred in the streets. The 75s of General Short’s artillery knocked out the 27th Div headquarters. The 1st Div and the 27th Div fought “their own private feud” along the outpost line of route 22B extending from Peru towards Schuyler Falls and the curve westward towards Cadyville.

In Cadyville the 27th Inf Div was holding a line against the 18th Brigade. General Drum held out the 43rd NE Div and the 44th on the first day of the maneuvers with the plan to push the 44th Inf Div, during the night, into the line between the 26th Inf Div and the 27th Inf Div. The 43rd was to be pushed across the Saranac west of Cadyville. All of you remember the allied forces crossing the Rhine, but it has a more realistic feeling when it is in your own backyard!

August 24, the last day of the exercises. The weather climaxed the “war.” Three soldiers were killed by a bolt of lightning and a fourth died from natural causes. Fifteen others were injured by the storm that covered the entire maneuver area. On this day, the departure of half the

military attachés who had been observing the “war games” took place.

The 43rd Inf Div crossed the Saranac between Cadyville and Elsinore. All plans for the crossing were in place but for one minor factor -- the bridge train of pontoons went astray and was captured by the Blue forces. An umpire convinced a reluctant regular army lieutenant to let them go on their appointed way. That’s the way to run a war! The 43rd Div finally crossed the Saranac, the job was done, and to all intents and purposes the 1939 version of the Battle of Plattsburgh came to an end. The beginning of World War II was but seven days later -- September 1, 1939.

Now the trains began to roll southward and eastward. The games had brought about an economic upswing to the North Country, but what were the conclusions? What had been learned?

According to a contemporary publication:

1. The maneuvers cost \$2,000,000, killed seven men, and proved in mock war the army needed more money and training to be effective in a real war.
2. The United States Army was relatively less prepared in 1939 than it had been in 1917.
3. War games without fighting planes were as synthetic as chowder without clams.
4. America did not have, either in existence or on paper, an Army capable of repelling a first-class invader.

It was evident that more training was necessary and so the Guard was ordered to another week of training that fall. In 1940, maneuvers involving 100,000 troops were held at De Kalb Junction, and they were of three weeks’ duration. In September 1940 the National Guard was federalized and ordered to active duty. In May 1941 the Tennessee maneuvers took place, and in July and August the Arkansas and Louisiana maneuvers were held.

It was the inevitable march towards December 7th, 1941 and June 6, 1944, and hopefully these maneuvers had some small part in bringing us to May 7th and August 15th, 1945.

Joseph P. McGrath is recently retired from the insurance business and the Clinton County Office for the Aging. He was not a resident of the North Country but in the maneuvers he was a part of the 107th Inf (7th Regt, NYNG).

SUNY PLATTSBURGH 1889-1989 A SUMMARY

by Douglas A. Skopp



The State Normal School, Plattsburgh. Clinton County Historical Museum.

The New York State Normal and Training School at Plattsburgh was chartered on June 15, 1889 and was the last of eleven public normal schools to be established in the state. It was built to train public school teachers for the area's elementary and secondary schools. Before it opened in September 1890, most public school teachers in this part of the state had little or no formal training. As the North Country grew in population after the 1880s, and the state began to enforce its requirements for compulsory schooling for every child, the need for teachers increased.

The first Normal Hall was built, at a cost of some \$90,000, on a fifteen-acre tract of land purchased by the City of Plattsburgh from one of its wealthiest and most influential citizens, Smith M. Weed. When the school opened, it was the most modern in the state; the grounds and pond, with its forty-foot fountain, were praised as one of the finest parks north of Albany. Of the more than 105 students who were accepted, more than 80 actually enrolled. All were at least sixteen years old and either held a high-school diploma or demonstrated their competency in high school subjects. Many had already taught several terms in one or two-room schoolhouses

and sought formal training and certification to enhance their professional standing. Eighty percent of the students were women. Teaching school was virtually the only acceptable professional employment for a single woman in an age which believed that a woman's proper role was at home. Well into the 1930s, female teachers who married were unable to gain teaching contracts.

The Training School enrolled more than 130 children between the ages of six and fourteen, attending the first through eighth grades. In 1895, the school was so successful in attracting students that a three-story wing was added to the original Richardsonian "Romanesque-Revival" building, in order to provide for additional classroom space and science laboratories. By 1896 a kindergarten class and, by the turn of the century, high-school grades were added. Normal school students observed "teacher-critics" working with these pupils and then completed several hundred hours of supervised practice teaching. In this way, the training school was a model school which demonstrated the latest pedagogical techniques. Plattsburgh's "best" families sent their children to the training school.

Plattsburgh's superintendent of schools, Mr. Fox Holden, became the Normal School's first principal. Thirteen others comprised the first faculty; noteworthy among them were George H. Hudson, who taught natural sciences, and George K. Hawkins, who taught mathematics until he became principal in 1898. All Normal School students had to show mastery in approximately 40 subjects. The disciplines of the day were history, grammar, one or two foreign languages (Greek and Latin were popular until the turn of the century, German for a while longer; French seems to have been the most popular), as well as the teaching methodologies associated with each. Although a sum of \$5000 was appropriated by the Legislature for a library, students were encouraged, in the words of Commissioner of Education Andrew S. Draper in the first catalogue, to "bring with them, for reference, any suitable books they may have."

Tuition was free. Students were able to find room and board in the community for \$3 or \$4 per month. Some commuted from their homes by horseback or even by train from outlying areas, or took Plattsburgh's trolley across town.

In 1891 three women, all of whom had advanced standing, graduated in the first commencement exercises. In 1892, 26 students, only one of whom was a male, completed the two-year curriculum. By 1900, more than 770 students had been accepted for study. About half of these graduated, taking up teaching careers in

the North Country's rural one or two-room schools and attacking the pervasive illiteracy in the region.

Beside their vigorous course of study, the first students organized clubs and societies: the Delta Clionians and the Agonian societies had their clubrooms in Normal Hall. Picnics, outings on the lake, concerts and promenades were popular social events. In 1893, an athletic team composed of Normal School students and older boys from the Training School won first place and a "Cardinal Victory Banner" in a county-wide competition. Since then, teams at the school have been called "Cardinals." The Normal School's first newspaper/literary magazine, which appeared in 1898, was also called *The Cardinal*.

In 1910, in order to supplement declining enrollments, since many of the state's most prestigious colleges and universities now offered teacher-training programs, Principal Hawkins introduced a two-year teacher-training course in commercial subjects. This program, the only one in any State Normal School, led to lifelong licensure to teach business and secretarial practices in high schools. Soon, students from all across the state enrolled at Plattsburgh. In 1922, the commercial course was expanded to require three years' study. More men than women completed it; high-school teachers were more often men than women. P.N.S. also began to offer post-graduate training to those who wanted to keep up with changing practices, in order to be more competitive and to boost salary.

An abandoned one-room schoolhouse on the Rock Road south of Plattsburgh. Clinton County Historical Museum.





Members of the 1897 State Normal School baseball team (in a relaxed pose). Clinton County Historical Museum.

Many returned to study who were otherwise unable to meet the state's rising standards for formal licensure and in danger of losing their positions. Summer courses for these purposes were begun in 1922.

World War I only briefly interrupted the P.N.S. routine; a shortage of male students forced the suspension of men's athletic competition in 1917-1918. By the early 1920s, however, "normalcy" indeed returned. Ivy, with each graduating class contributing its share, covered Normal Hall's brick walls. All school functions took place in the single building: athletic competitions in the gymnasium, shop instruction in the basement (the students printed their own publications), two or three-times-a-week assemblies in the auditorium for recitations and orations, the library and formal classroom activities, and student teaching in the Training School on the first floor. The library had tripled in size to more than 7,000 volumes.

Maturing elms, oaks and evergreens graced the campus. The pond now reflected a stately academic community. In the summers, the

Chautauqua Lecture Series set up its tents on the bank nearest Beekman Street. Dr. Hudson, by now an eminent geologist and paleobotanist, took students on field trips to Valcour Island or along Lake Champlain. The orchestra performed regularly, as did dramatically-inclined students in various pageants and tableaux. "Normalites," as the students called themselves, pursued competitive sports, organized social and special-interest clubs, and were involved in community affairs.

The routine of the Normal and Training Schools changed abruptly on Saturday morning, January 26, 1929. Normal Hall was rapidly consumed by fire. Luckily, no human lives were lost. Only a few small boys were in the building, practicing music with Professor Lyndon Street; he lowered each boy out of the window to the ground fifteen feet below, and escaped himself as the roof and walls were beginning to collapse. One of the boys' pet dog panicked and could not be rescued. Everything in the building was destroyed: the library; Dr. Hudson's valuable collection of minerals and fossils; Dr. Kellogg's

guns and artifacts from early wars; all teaching materials and furnishings, and Dr. Hawkins' special pride and joy -- paintings, drawings and pieces of sculpture that had been acquired to create an art gallery for students and townspeople alike.

Hawkins, now 67 and ill, had earlier announced his intention to retire at the end of the academic year. Getting out of a sick bed to marshal local supporters of P.N.S. in an effort to rebuild it to its former glory, he more than anyone else deserves credit for the survival of a normal school in Plattsburgh. His immediate priority was to find classroom space for the students and pupils. By Wednesday of the next week, students met for classes in City Hall, while Training School pupils and their teachers were placed in various of the city's public schools.

The Department of Education in Albany hesitated to rebuild the Normal School in Plattsburgh. Glens Falls wanted one, as did three other communities. After much political pressure, Plattsburgh prevailed. The new fireproof building, designed in Tudor style by Albany architect William E. Haugaard, cost nearly a million dollars, this at the time of the Great Depression. Its construction stimulated the local building trades and the economy in general. Completed in 1932, it was known as Normal Hall until it was renamed Hawkins Hall in 1955. The uniquely successful commercial program, however, was not restored to Plattsburgh, but was relinquished to Albany in 1931.

The Training School ("Model School", as it was known even before the fire) now accommodated more than 200 pupils. Students in the Normal School numbered just under 400, down from a high of more than 500 in 1925. As was the case with the first Normal Hall, all activities were included in the new building.

Dr. Hawkins continued his work through the first year of the new building, retiring after Commencement in 1933. His successor as principal, Dr. Charles C. Ward, faced declining enrollments because of the loss of the commercial program and the onset of the Depression. Ward, a vigorous leader in teachers' organizations, used his wit, charm and great energy to gain political support and increased enrollment. Rebuilding the library holdings was one of his highest priorities. He employed Dr. Edward E. "Doc" Redcay in 1936, soon to become Dean of the College, in order to intensify training in the liberal arts.

In 1937, after two years of negotiations between Plattsburgh, Albany and Washington, Principal Ward was allowed to implement a four-year home economics teacher program. Launched in part with Federal relief funds designed to help the country regain prosperity, its up-to-date four-year curriculum enhanced the Normal School's reputation in much the same way as had the commercial course. In 1939, the Board of Regents authorized the school to award a bachelor of science degree to students who completed the new four-year course of study in education. By 1940, there were 700 students at Plattsburgh Normal School, despite an enrollment cap from Albany of 500.

Normal schools, however, were becoming increasingly outmoded. Only nine states still supported them in the 1930s. Since the beginning of the century, the trend had been toward the establishment of education departments at public and private universities and colleges, traditionally thought to rate above normal schools in the pecking order of American higher education. Even an undergraduate without a degree from such an institution was more competitive for a teaching position than was a graduate of a normal school. During the Depression, many school superintendents employed teachers from the abundant pool of college students who had interrupted their studies to earn some money.

Because he valued the normal schools' professional approach and focus on problems of education, Dr. Ward worked to upgrade them to colleges. With the support of Plattsburgh's influential state senator, Benjamin F. Feinberg, this transformation occurred in 1942. Plattsburgh Normal School became Plattsburgh State Teachers' College. The school song, "Domes of Normal," was sung for the last time and ceremoniously "buried in a coffin."

World War II put new demands on the College. As a part of the national war effort, it helped train would-be pilots in mathematics and meteorology, provided courses for the men stationed at Plattsburgh Barracks, and encouraged its Home Economics students to work with the community in nutrition, food preservation and home-management problems. In 1943 the College began offering courses for the U.S. Cadet Nurse Corps which, after the war, was transformed into a school nurse-teacher program.

In 1943 the government authorized the College to offer an accelerated course for men who entered the armed services. As a result, women

again greatly outnumbered men on campus. Social and athletic activities were accordingly affected. In the apple harvests of 1943 and 1944, students and faculty helped to save the county's crops, which otherwise would have been lost because of the shortage of labor.

President Ward, who acquired this title when the College was created in 1942, foresaw a great burst of activity in education after the war. As early as 1944 he petitioned Albany for more buildings and permission to enroll more students. The G.I. Bill allowed veterans to seek higher education in unprecedented numbers. To meet their needs, the State University of New York was created in 1948, again with essential leadership from Plattsburgh's Senator Feinberg. The second and third buildings on campus were hastily erected -- two temporary annexes, the "chicken coops," were built behind Normal Hall for much-needed classroom space.

To accommodate the enlarged student body, the College leased Conway Hall, near the junction of Rugar and Broad Streets, which provided housing for 50 women students, as well as other homes along Court Street -- College Court, Holden Hall, the first Hawkins Hall which was later known as Wells Court -- where townspeople served as housemothers and fathers to students.

In 1949, ground was broken for Macdonough Hall, the second dormitory in the whole of State University. Meanwhile, Twin Valleys, the 700-acre Adirondack wilderness site 30 miles south of Plattsburgh, purchased in 1945 through student contributions, became the center of a nationally-acclaimed outdoor-education program.

By 1950 Plattsburgh's student body had swollen to more than 830. With Macdonough Hall taking shape, President Ward continued his drive for a new classroom building for the burgeoning home economics program and in order to provide more facilities for the science and mathematics department.

Macdonough Hall was opened in 1951, not six months before Dr. Ward died. The stress of the increased bureaucracy in the new State University and the tedium of supervising the construction undoubtedly contributed to his rapidly deteriorating health. He did not live long enough to see the ground-breaking for the new home economics and science building. It was completed in 1955 and named for him.

Dr. Charles C. Ward, a former president of the State Teachers' Training College at Plattsburgh. SUNY Plattsburgh.



Upon Ward's death in February 1952, at age 61, Dean Edward E. "Doc" Redcay was appointed acting president. Redcay declined the request of faculty and College Council to accept the presidency. Dr. George W. Angell assumed the office in February 1954.

President Angell's 20 years at Plattsburgh coincided with a period of unprecedented growth in American education and deep changes in American traditions. New York State invested dramatically in its university which, under Governor Nelson Rockefeller, became the largest in the world. In many ways it was an idealistic, enthusiastic era, whose goal was accessible quality higher education for every citizen in the state. During the prosperity of the 1950s and 1960s, the costs of such an enterprise seemed manageable. Since the end of the 1960s, however, the annual political debate over the university's budget has exposed strains in the relationship between governors, legislatures and Boards of Trustees.

Tuition, at first free, then \$20 per semester in the 1930s, began to climb in the 1950s as more of the costs of public higher education were passed on to students. Accessibility had to be controlled by enforcing enrollment limits. The Plattsburgh campus, for example, once had a projected enrollment ceiling of almost 9,000 students. As costs increased, this was cut back to the present level of fewer than 6,000.

In 1956, Dr. Angell's Five-Year Plan projected a vast expansion in the direction of Rugar Street. Three new residence halls, an athletic field and library were built, funded from the 1957 passage of a \$250 million bond issue and through the State Dormitory Authority. Harrington, Macomb and Kent residence halls, Saranac dining hall, and Feinberg library were all opened by 1961; Hudson Hall, the new science building, was opened in 1963.

Plattsburgh residents took obvious pride in the College growth. When Dr. Angell announced further building plans in 1963 that would decimate the neighborhoods in the triangle between Rugar and Broad Streets and Draper Avenue -- more than 80 pieces of property were involved, mostly private homes -- the community in general continued to support the College, despite the hardship on individual property owners and the impact this growth would have on the city's tax base. By 1977 the campus expansion was complete: from Memorial Gymnasium, the Field House and its Ronald B. Stafford Ice Arena on Rugar Street; to the new Feinberg Library and the George W. Angell College Center; to the new high-rise dormitories clustered around two dining halls; to modern classrooms, art studios and laboratories in Yokum Communications Lecture Hall, Beaumont Science Building and the Myers Fine Arts Building, with its state-of-the-art theater; to the nine-story Kehoe Administration Building, which President Angell dubbed the "Power Tower," to a central heating plant and a spacious infirmary. The College grew from one building in 1945 to 32 in as many years. Many city streets were absorbed or shortened by the campus expansion.

Dr. Angell emphasized the theme of "Education for World Understanding." Foreign students attended the College in large numbers and its reputation began to spread throughout the country as a place for innovation in teacher education. Until the fall of 1962, when the first liberal arts programs were started, all students received training for a teaching career, although many took up other professions.

Dr. Angell chose this time to reorganize the Administration, removing individuals from their positions as heads of Divisions whom he believed to be more in tune with the College when it was devoted exclusively to teacher education. Stresses in the faculty were avoided with difficulty; the "across-the-pond" syndrome began,

and faculty organizations (American Association of University Professors, the Faculty Senate, and eventually collective bargaining with a faculty union) sought a greater role in College governance.

Students in the mid-1960s also sought greater independence from executive authority. The College found, for the first time, that its attempts to act *in loco parentis* were unsuccessful. Since the school's foundation, its female students had been held to stricter regulations than its males. By the end of the decade, these rules and others relating to housing and alcohol were relaxed. As elsewhere in American campuses, a more mature, independent-minded, even self-centered student body emerged. The Student Association took real responsibility for student affairs and sought influence in faculty appointments and curricular structure.

In the process, many of the old traditions lapsed such as Christmas parties for the faculty and staff, pageants, the tug o' war across the pond between first and second-year classes, wearing class beanies and other interclass rivalries and rituals. The College doubled in size every five years from 1955 to 1970, from 800 to more than 5,200. In 1975 it exceeded 6,800, its highest enrollment. This rapid growth cost SUNY Plattsburgh its old sense of family and closeness; for example, before the 1970s the cafeteria in the basement of Hawkins Hall was the daily meeting place of faculty, students and administration for coffee and conversation. At the end of the 1980s, "old timers" still recall fondly those "smaller, happier days."

Dr. Angell's last five years in office were clouded by the national agonies over the Vietnam War and belated adjustments to the civil rights of minorities and women. At Plattsburgh, students were assertive but constructive in their energies, thanks in great measure to the patience, judicious leadership and moral sense which they found in the president. At his retirement in 1974, Dr. Angell could look back upon a period of astounding growth and change. He had only begun to experience the annual budgetary crises that emanated from Albany, as enrollments appeared to be declining and the inflation of the 1960s and 1970s made the sustaining of the university at former levels increasingly difficult.

Dr. Joseph Burke succeeded Dr. Angell as president from 1974 to 1986. During his tenure the College concluded its physical growth but

continued to diversify its programs at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. His motto, "Better with Less," was difficult to achieve, given the annual fiscal crises that have not yet abated. A major retrenchment in 1982 was the closing of the Campus School, which broke more than a ninety-year strand in the College heritage. Still, President Burke's foresight helped the College revive its often sagging self-esteem. The campus beautification efforts, for example, have produced many flower beds and tree plantings. The College has become a focal point for the arts on a national scale -- the Rockwell Kent Gallery, the Winkel Sculpture Court and a rapidly growing collection of world-class art in its "Museum without Walls" -- resurrecting Dr. Hawkins' ideal of making the school an inspiration for the entire community.

SUNY Plattsburgh has much to be proud of over the last quarter century. It has been transformed into one of the nation's premier undergraduate multipurpose public institutions of higher learning, a "best buy," according to a recent issue of *Changing Times Magazine*. Some of its faculty are internationally-renowned scholars. Teaching is first-rate, thanks in part to the determination of the Administration to support small classes and intensive contacts between students and faculty; the Honors Center, Freshmen Seminars, and the Distinguished Visiting Professor Program are but three examples. Many of its programs, such as Canadian Studies, Women's Studies, Environmental Science and the In Vitro Cell Biology Program, have gained national reputations. Performing arts at the College, too, have made it a showpiece for the community and distinguished visitors.

Plattsburgh students, too, both collectively and individually, have gained the highest hon-

ors: the forensic team and the hockey team have major national championships to their credit; individual students have received scholarships and awards, published their research, gone on to significant careers in public affairs, commerce, medicine and the sciences, the arts and education.

Dr. Burke's successor, President Charles O. Warren, who took office in July 1987, insists despite the budget difficulties that weigh so heavily, that SUNY Plattsburgh remain excellent. Quoting from Maya Angelou, he enjoins the College community to strive for "quality as an ideal . . . always out in front of you." Given the state's hesitancy to fund fully the needs, support for desirable programs and growth will need to come from private, voluntary sources. Accordingly, the Plattsburgh College Foundation, launched by President Angell in 1970, collects and manages a rapidly increasing endowment. Recently the Foundation distributed more than \$300,000 in grants and scholarships to students. Drawn from funds contributed through the generosity of alumni, faculty and friends, the Foundation in the future will be more important than ever to SUNY Plattsburgh as it helps its students cope with rising costs of their education.

The College enters its second century still committed to the ideal that inspired its beginning one hundred years ago: providing the best possible educational experiences to help all students achieve their fullest potential.

*Dr. Douglas R. Skopp is the chairman of the History Department at SUNY Plattsburgh. He is the author of the recently published **Bright with Promise**, a history of the college's one hundred years.*

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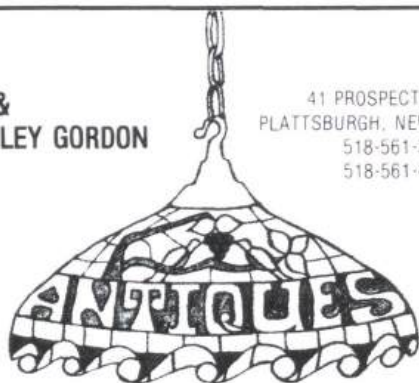
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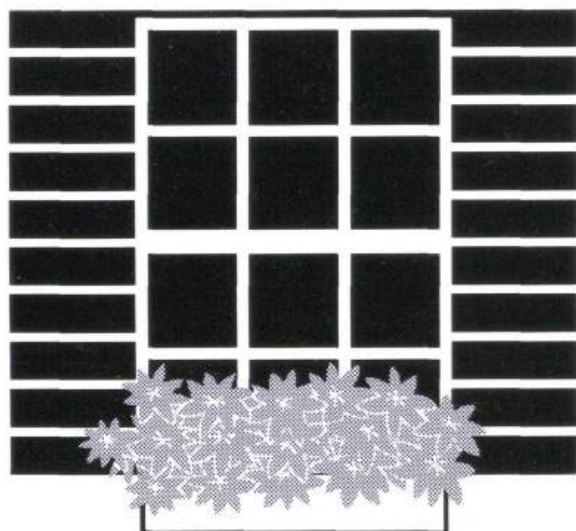
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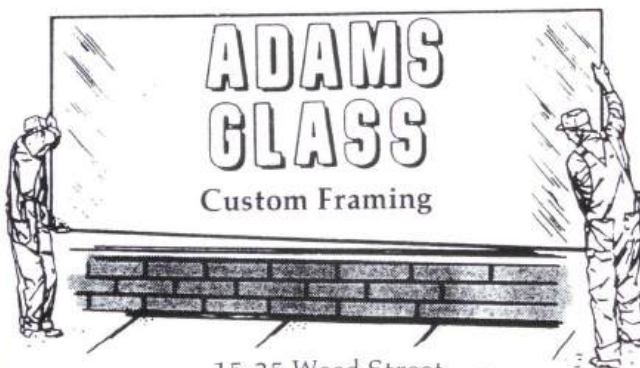
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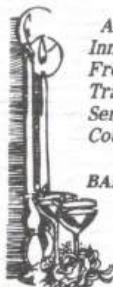
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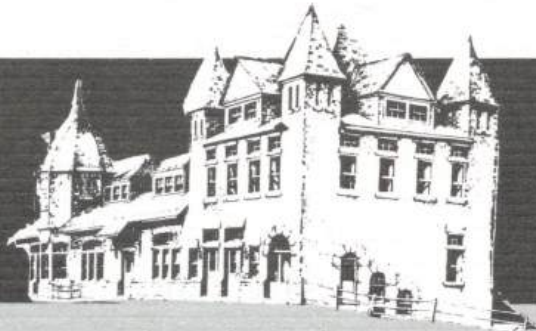
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