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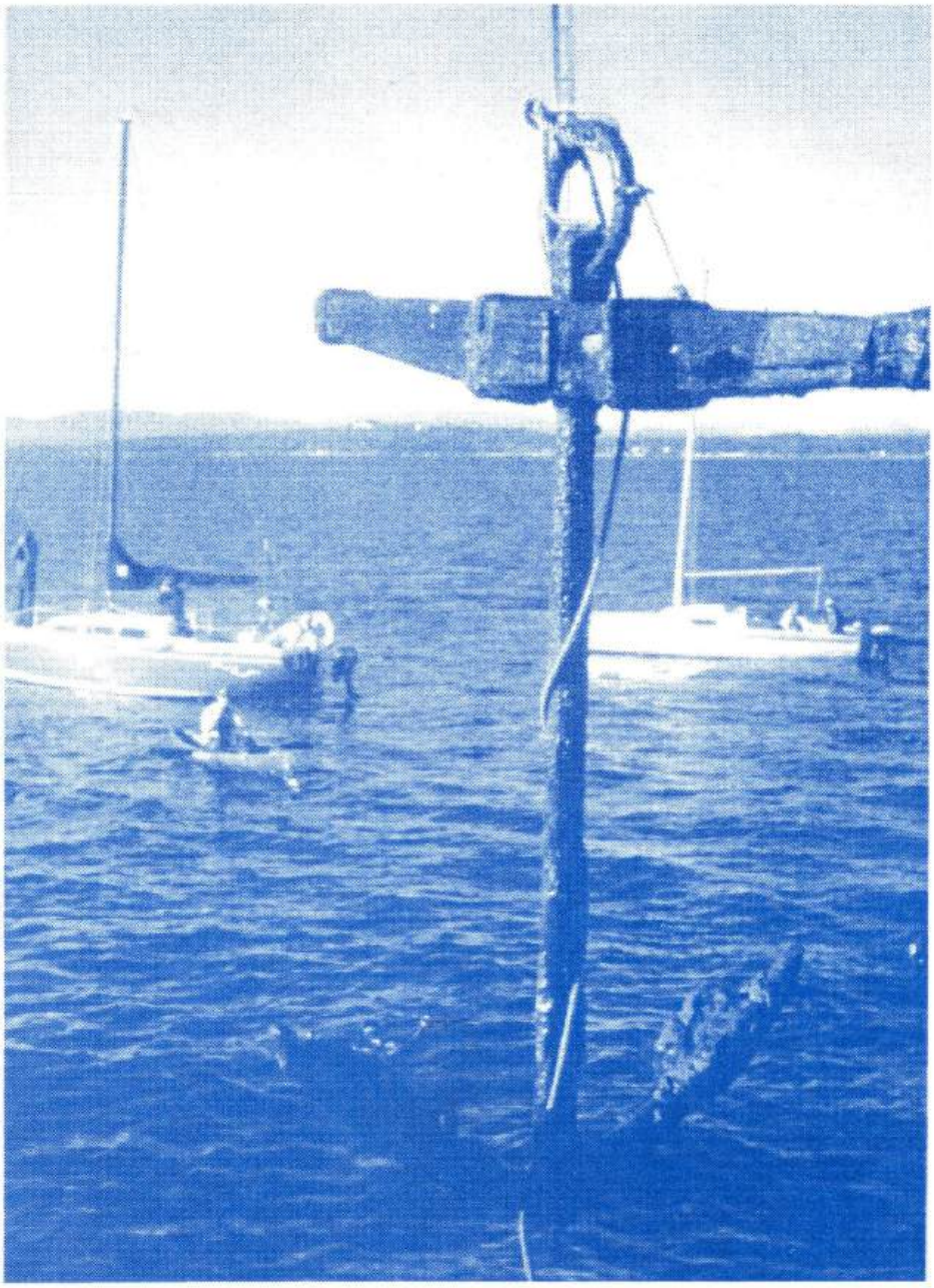

2000

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Preserving our past for the future

CLINTON COUNTY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION
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Plattsburgh, NY 12901

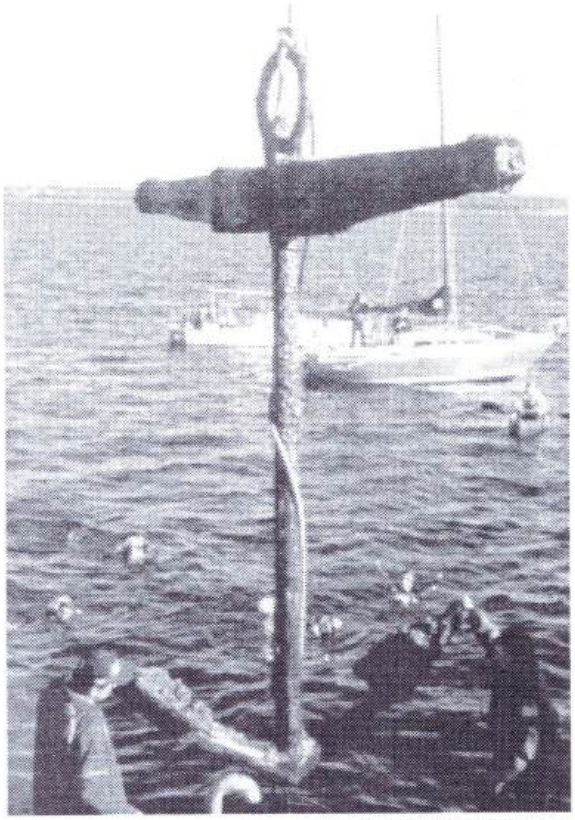
THE ANTIQUARIAN, Vol. 17, 2000

David Kendall Martin, Editor

For Want of an Anchor...

Art Cohn

The enormous anchor, believed to be from the British flagship *Confiance* and recovered on September, 11, 1998, from Plattsburgh Bay, has returned to the community of Plattsburgh. The anchor's history, recovery, conservation, and return represent a significant chapter in both past and present regional, national, and world events. Perhaps most importantly, the anchor offers an opportunity to become a focal point around which the Plattsburgh community can build a permanent repository for the anchor and the history it represents.



Lake Champlain Maritime Museum

Raising the Confiance Anchor

The history symbolized by the anchor is profound. The Battle of Plattsburgh Bay, which took place on September 11, 1814, was a decisive American victory that helped bring the War of 1812 to a close. The war broke out two years earlier and quickly engulfed Lake Champlain in the chilling expectation of conflict. The lake was the strategic north-south invasion route subject to much discussion in military planning sessions. From the American perspective it was essential to hold the lake to keep the British at bay in the Richelieu River; the British perspective, of course, viewed control of the lake as necessary for an invasion of the States from the north. This was not a new analysis, having been played out by the French and British forces in the 1750's and American and British forces during the American Revolution.

At the outbreak of this war, the region's citizens found their patriotism in conflict with their economic interests. British Canada was the Champlain Valley's principal trading partner and the war threatened to interrupt the stream of commerce. As military affairs took over, resourceful lake entrepreneurs began an active campaign of smuggling and actually provided British forces with much of the food and material they needed to wage war against America. The American high command responded by sending Lt. Thomas Macdonough to organize their lake naval forces. Starting with a few modest gunboats and converted commercial vessels adapted for mounting cannon, the contest for control of the lake was begun.

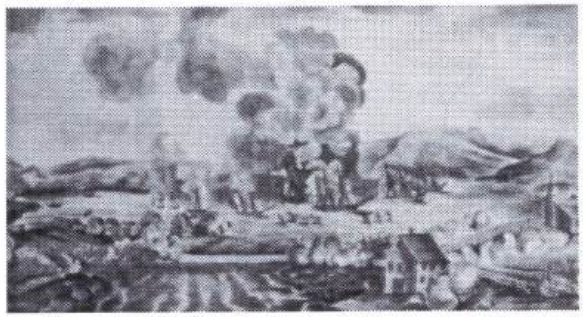
The British were not idle, and at their Isle aux Noix shipyard they built gunboats and ships with the goal of seizing the lake from the Americans and using it for a southern invasion. In 1813, Colonel Murray organized a raid into the Champlain Valley that quickly demonstrated the weakness of the American position. Macdonough's ships were forced to hide in Burlington harbor as the British naval force sacked the storehouses in Plattsburgh, captured and burned the sloop *Essex*, and generally intimidated the local inhabitants before returning to their northern base. It was clear that the Americans needed to improve their strength on Lake Champlain. During the winter of 1814, Macdonough moved his headquarters to Vergennes, Vermont.

Vergennes was the ideal location to launch a shipbuilding effort. Located eight miles up the navigable Otter Creek, it was protected from the kind of lightning raid which the British might launch to burn the ships while they were under construction. From a practical point of view, the community at the 30-foot falls already possessed a shipyard and sawmills necessary to produce the lumber for the ambitious fleet building. What was perhaps even more important was that the falls was also home to the Monkton Iron Works, a large but fledgling series of furnaces and forges which could produce the vast quantity of spikes and rods needed to fasten the new warships together. The Monkton Iron Works would also supply the fleet with the shot and shells it needed to face the British.

The shipbuilding contest was intense. Navy Secretary Jones arranged for the exceptional New York City shipwright Noah Brown to travel to Lake Champlain with gangs of ship carpenters; by March the effort was in full swing. When Macdonough arrived at Vergennes, he found the partially completed hull of the Lake Champlain Steamboat Company's first steamboat "in-frames". Macdonough needed the hull but did not trust the new steam technology, and so he finished it off as the 17-gun schooner *Ticonderoga*. The biggest ship in Macdonough's navy began construction in March and forty days later, *Saratoga*, a 26 gun ship, was launched. Six 75-foot long gunboats were also built, each carried a large gun in its bow. While the shipbuilding effort was going on, the point of land on the north side of the mouth of Otter Creek was fortified with cannon to protect the emerging navy. It is still known as "Fort Cassin," after Stephen Cassin, the young Lieutenant in charge.

By spring, the new American fleet was formidable but news reached Macdonough that the British were building a powerful new warship-calculated to shift the balance of power to them. It was to be their new flagship, *Confiance, a* frigate large enough to carry 36 guns. When Macdonough heard of this, he implored U.S. Navy Secretary Jones to let him build another warship. Initially his request was turned down until President Madison interceded to authorize the expenditure. This time, Noah's brother, Adam Brown, was sent to the lake and, in a remarkable feat of shipbuilding skill, laid the keel for the new Brig and nineteen days later launched it into the waters of Otter Creek. Initially called *Surprise*, it was subsequently christened *Eagle*, a 20-gun brig, that, along with the other vessels of the American Fleet, engaged the British at the Battle of Plattsburgh Bay.

The tale of the battle is well known. An invasion



Lake Champlain Maritime Museum

Early 19th century interpretation of the Battle of Plattsburgh

force of veteran troops marched down from Canada and took up positions on the north side of the Saranac River in Plattsburgh. The American forces, consisting of a small regular army contingent supplemented by thousands of militiamen from Vermont and New York, massed on the south side of the river. However, it was the impending naval contest that everyone knew would be decisive. Macdonough anchored his ships in a line, with spring lines deployed so that he might turn his ships during battle to bring his fresh broadside to bear. Around Cumberland Head came the still unfinished British fleet, with carpenters still working to complete *Confiance* as she prepared for battle. British commander Downie tried to sail north around the end of the American line, but the wind failed him and, forced to anchor east of the Americans, an intense battle erupted.

The Battle of Plattsburgh Bay lasted two and a half hours. In the end, Macdonough's ability to turn his battered ships coupled with the British inability to execute that same maneuver was decisive. The intensity of the battle is hard to reconstruct in words. Large muzzle loading cannon at close range firing into wooden ships is a combination that causes horrific

human damage. There was terrible loss of life on both sides, and nowhere was that carnage more concentrated than on board the British flagship *Confiance*. The

Lake Champlain Maritime Museum

Shot damage to the anchor

Americans shot away three of the vessel's four anchors early in the battle, and Confiance was unable to maneuver. The crew tried to swing their ship around, but only succeeded in reaching a position that subjected the vessel to the concentrated fire of fresh broadsides from the American flagship *Saratoga* and the brig *Eagle*.

The following account of the battle was recorded more than 80 years later. Benajah Phelps, by then 101 years old, had witnessed the engagement as a 14-year-old boy. Phelps's father, who participated in the battle as one of the Vermont Volunteers, ordered his son to stay home to "look after the women folks" and do the chores on the family farm. Young Benajah watched the ships clash from Sawyer's Hill on South Hero Island where he had a perfect view of the battle and saw the moment when the British hauled down their colors to surrender. In 1901, the periodical *The Outlook* (Nov. 2, 1901, vol. 69:573-578) interviewed Phelps and recorded his recollections:

" Well, that [the surrender] *was about twelve o'clock. Pretty soon I saw two or three men pushin' out a boat down in Rockwell's Bay ... I was bound to go on board the ships, so I run down and jumped in. It was a four-oared boat, and we rowed out to the big British ship* [Confiance]. *She was a fine ship, I tell ye ... The plankin' was white oak six inches thick. The small balls did not go through these planks. They were just stuck solid full of balls ... It seemed as if you couldn't git any more balls in. The grape-shot and rifle-balls pooty [sic] nearly covered the plankin' all over. The riggin' was cut all to pieces. There wasn't any of it left ... The decks was the most awful sight I ever saw. It was- it was awful!"*

The old gentleman shut his eyes and shuddered, as if, even after the lapse of eighty-seven years, the scene of carnage was as vivid as on that September day of long ago.

"Blood, blood was everywhere! The decks was covered with arms and legs and heads, and pieces of hands and bodies all torn to pieces! I never see anything in this world like it! Seemed as if everybody had been killed They must have fought terribly before they hauled down the flag. It 'most made me sick!"

Phelps's stirring account of the battle preserves images that might otherwise have been forgotten and confirms the high toll paid by both sides for the American victory. With the naval battle won, the British land forces, initially so confident of the outcome, were demoralized and marched back to Canada. The rumor of further hostilities remained in the Champlain Valley throughout the fall, but both nations wanted an end to the conflict and negotiated a peace treaty at Ghent. The War of 1812 was over. The people of the Champlain Valley had seen their last military engagement and gladly made the transition back into the active pursuit of commerce. The naval contest was decided by the surrender of *Confiance*. It is fair to conclude that the inability of *Confiance* to turn itself around during the height of battle was a primary cause of her striking her colors. *Confiance* had attempted to present a fresh broadside but was unable to because three of her four anchors had been shot away. The loss of the anchors and the resulting inability to maneuver was decisive.

One of these anchors, after being lost in a moment of terrible violence, remained on the lake bottom as a silent witness to a conflict that shaped the destiny of the nation. Its story began to come alive

Lake Champlain Maritime Museum

Ken Van Stockum, Bill Van Stockum, Art Cohn, and Frank Pabst

again when, in 1996, scuba divers Bill and Ken Van Stockum were gliding along the bottom of Plattsburgh Bay and located a huge anchor protruding from the bottom. They were so exited that they were later unable to relocate the anchor and recruited John Lambrinos to help them find it again.

They also recruited Captain Frank Pabst, a veteran diver and marine contractor, to help them raise the anchor and bring it to shore. The enormity of the

Lake Champlain Maritime Museum

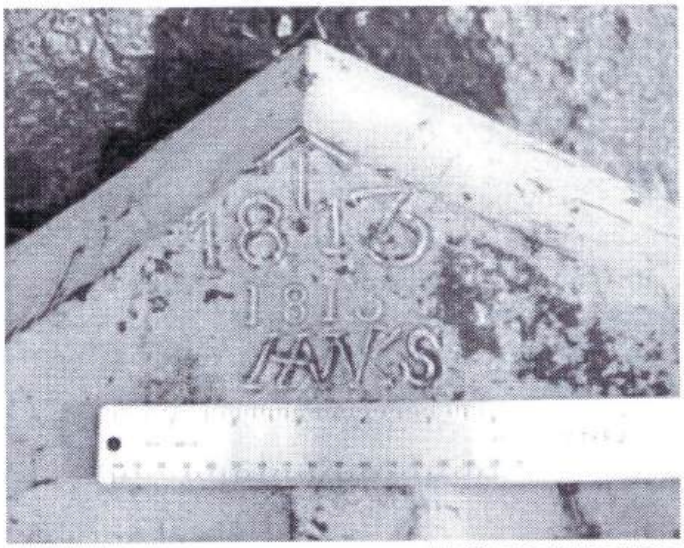
anchor (it was 13 feet long with a 14-foot wooden stock still attached) quickly generated much public and press enthusiasm. It also began to generate concern for the finders, and they called the Lake Champlain Maritime Museum (LCMM) to ask for advice. We suggested they immediately call New York State officials to inform them of the circumstances and allow one of our conservators to examine the anchor and make suggestions for its temporary stabilization. This advice was welcomed and a call was placed to the New York State Museum in Albany. Our examination of the anchor revealed not just the iron and wood components we expected, but most amazingly the word "*Quebec*" still preserved in white paint on the face of one of the flukes. While discussions about the anchor's fate were begun, we recommended wrapping the anchor in blankets and keeping it constantly wet. In hindsight it became clear that raising the anchor was probably a mistake.

There was concern expressed by the local community that Albany officials would attempt to load the anchor on a truck and bring it to the Capitol. Meetings between the divers, community representatives, and state officials revealed that the state's only concern was for the preservation of the anchor in Plattsburgh, and through these discussions, the group worked toward consensus. After several meetings and much informal discussion, it was agreed that this would best be achieved by returning the anchor to the lake bottom until all interested parties could agree on a plan for recovery, conservation, and exhibition. Ken Van Stockurn, the anchor's finder and unofficial guardian, put the plan into action, and the 3000 pound 185 year old anchor was placed back into the lake's generally preserving environment. The rapid encroachment of zebra mussels, which had recently begun to colonize the lake, however, created a new sense of urgency to work out a preservation plan.

The divers, the Clinton County Historical Association (CCHA), and New York State officials requested the LCMM to draft a proposal for the anchor's conservation while they looked internally for a place which might be available to house and publicly exhibit such a large object. Permits would have to be obtained and funds located to help implement the plan. Progress was swift and steady: the CCHA was recruited to be the local permit holder, LCMM agreed to do the anticipated two years of conservation in their new lab, New York State officials assured local residents of their desire to facilitate a long-term exhibit in Plattsburgh, and Senator Stafford arranged for a state appropriation. Additional financial support would later be added by the Lake Champlain Basin Program.

The legal issues surrounding submerged cultural heritage are complex and evolving. In 1987, Congress enacted the Abandoned Shipwreck Act, which essen-

tially transferred title and management responsibility for historic materials to the individual States. Excepted out of this transfer was military property that would remain the property of the flag nation which owned it when it went to the bottom. We reasoned that the U.S. Navy would need to be a party to the agreement as they had captured *Confiance* and therefore became the title holder. The Navy, through the Naval Historical Center in Washington, D.C., was very supportive. By August, 1998 the CCHA was ready to move the project forward and proposed a raising to coincide with the annual Battle of Plattsburgh celebration sched-



Lake Champlain Maritime Museum

The dated tip of the anchor

uled for September 11.

Officials at the State Museum, to facilitate the community's efforts, accelerated their permit review and approval process. LCMM agreed to take responsibility for the anchor's conservation once it was raised, and Plattsburgh City officials agreed that the anchor could be placed on exhibit at City Hall once the conservation was completed. All that was needed was for the Navy formally to sign on to the plan, but unexpectedly a major stumbling block appeared which threatened to tear the whole process down. The Navy began to consider whether the British might still have an interest in the anchor. We reasoned that the *Confiance* had surrendered and become U.S. property and therefore it was probably not necessary. However, Navy lawyers concluded that if the anchor was shot off prior to the surrender, it went to the lake bottom as British property and they still had an interest that needed to be respected.

This opinion was issued about 10 days before the scheduled raising, which had become a focal point for the weekend celebration with the potential for national news coverage. The Navy was trying to protect their own interests in warships abroad, while the local community wanted to celebrate their heritage. Tensions began to rise and things started to look grim. The Navy Historical Center enlisted the help of the State Department, and British authorities first became aware of the situation less than two weeks from the scheduled raising. The anchor was scheduled to be raised on a Friday. On the Wednesday before, a contentious meeting of some 20 local folks was held on board the *MV Juniper* where some defiantly suggested that the anchor be raised on Friday with or without permits. Others argued that the positive value of the project would be lost if that occurred and advocated waiting-even if it meant postponing the raising until some time in the future. To their credit, the group came together and agreed to wait, even if it meant the momentum for the weekend had to be sacrificed. In an absolutely amazing conclusion to the affair, the very next day, the day before the scheduled raising, the Naval Historical Center informed New York State officials that the British Defense Forces had formally endorsed the plan. They would transfer their interest to New York so that the anchor could be managed by the State and raised, conserved, and exhibited in the local community.

Lake Champlain Maritime Museum

Ken Van Stockum and the anchor stock

The rest, as they say, is history. Captain Frank Pabst and the Van Stockums re-raised the anchor and, after a short viewing in Plattsburgh harbor, transferred the anchor by barge to LCMM. Over the past 23 months we have evaluated, cleaned, disassembled, drawn, photographed, researched, and conserved the anchor. Simultaneously, the Plattsburgh community, lead by the Battle of Plattsburgh Association (BOPA) and Assemblyman Chris Ortloff, have been working hard to establish a permanent museum dedicated to the military history of the region. With an eye to the historic stone barracks located at the former Plattsburgh Air Force base, momentum to establish this new community resource has begun to move forward.

The anchor's return and exhibition should provide the opportunity for the community to focus their efforts on the establishment of a new museum devoted to the Battle of Plattsburgh Bay and other appropriate community history. The anchor symbolizes an important chapter of American and British military history; and the project to bring about its raising, conservation, and exhibition represents a significant step in modem underwater resource management. We should dedicate ourselves to building upon this ancient and recent history to insure that the future of the anchor and the history it represents have a permanently accessible venue for school children, local residents, scholars, and visitors alike.

The return of the *Confiance* anchor is cause for community celebration. It is also a demonstrable example of cross-lake cooperation. All too often I have heard contentious comments betraying resentment between Vermont and New York. It is a time for that to stop. Just as the Vermont militia manned the lines to help stop the British Army from crossing the Saranac and the Vergennes-built ships defeated the British Navy in New York waters, the Plattsburgh community and Lake Champlain Maritime Museum have worked cooperatively to achieve this laudable moment. We need to dedicate ourselves to increased cross-lake cooperation. It is one lake and we share its history and its future.

ART COHN is co-founder and executive director of the Lake Champlain Maritime Museum, is Coordinator of the Lake Champlain Underwater Historic Preserve program, and has been locating and documenting the lake shipwrecks for more than two decades.

For Further Reading

Alan S. Everest: *The War of 1812 in the Champlain Valley* (Syracuse University Press 1981).

Dennis M. Lewis: *British Naval Activity on Lake Champlain During the War of 1812* (Clinton County Historical Association 1994).

Kevin Crisman: *The* Eagle, *an American Brig on Lake Champlain* (New England Press, Shelburne, Vermont, in association with the Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, Maryland, 1987).

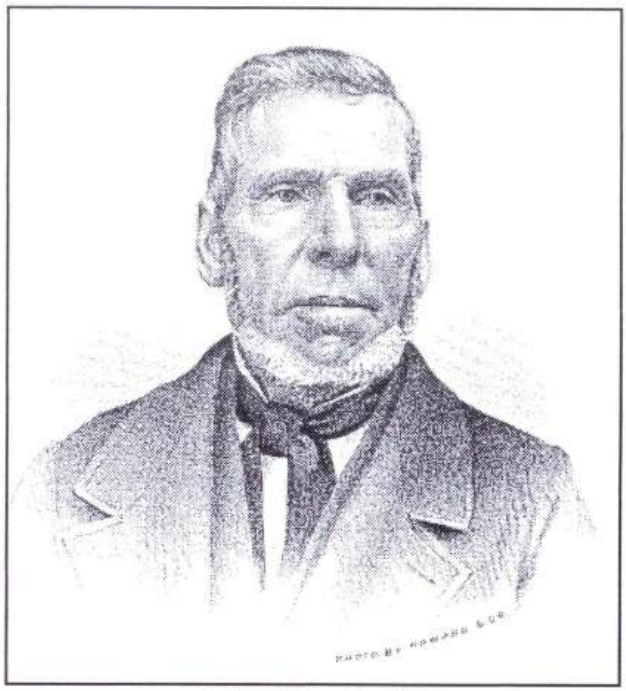
Norman Ansley: *Vergennes, Vermont and the War of 1812* (Brooke Keefer Limited Editions, Maryland, 1999).

"A MAN'S A MAN FOR A' THAT"

The Underground Railroad in Clinton County

Tom Calarco

You can't get much closer to the Underground Railroad's proverbial Promised Land than Clinton County. On its eastern border, it is a gently rolling countryside that flattens out along the shore of Lake Champlain, a snatch of landscape with orchards reminiscent of the Finger Lakes. As you go west and south, the land gradually rises into forested foothills that lead up to the peaks of the Adirondacks in neighboring Essex County.



Stephen Keese Smith

Settlers came to this region in significant numbers around the turn of the 19th century. Many were from New England. They came to grow crops and raise livestock and engage in the lumber trade.

In those days, before apple orchards dotted the lowlands, the legendary Underground Railroad was active in Clinton County, but not without opposition. The story of its operation in the county is inseparably entwined with the rise of abolition. What we can learn of its extent is largely teased out by a study of Clinton County's abolitionists.

Stephen Keese Smith has left testimony to its operation. Of Smith, fellow abolitionist Nathan R. Weaver wrote, "His place was a station on the underground railroad. He believed 'a man's a man for a' that,' black or white, and he was not the man to turn a deaf ear to the entreaties of any colored man in pursuit of freedom, albeit by so doing he was liable to the maledictions of some not in sympathy with those seeking a refuge."

Smith was a member of the Quaker community in Peru, New York, called the Union. In 1887 he dictated his memoir to D. S. Kellogg and described the Underground Railroad there. Among his stories was one about the day the Clinton County Anti-Slavery Society formed on April 25, 1837, "[The] delegations (from the town societies at Champlain, Beekmantown, Schuyler Falls, and Peru, with more than a half-dozen wagonloads comprising the Peru delegation) were to meet in the courthouse in Plattsburgh and organize a county anti-slavery society. When our procession of delegates came into Plattsburgh, we were egged and hooted and otherwise mobbed. Elder Witherspoon of the Methodists, [my uncle] Samuel Keese and my grandfather, Stephen Keese rode together at the head of the procession ..." The mob threatened the elder Keese by shouting, "Your gray hairs shall be no protection to you," and a petticoat was held out of a window on Margaret Street to ridicule the abolitionists' manhood. "We drove around to the Cumberland House," Smith continued, "but were not allowed to hold our meeting in the court house. Samuel Chatterton, an officer in the army, I think, was president of this meeting [a meeting of those who were not abolitionists]. St. John B. L. Skinner and others ... spoke nobly. The speaking was from the Cumberland House steps. Skinner begged and besought the mob to desist and the meeting would adjourn to Beekmantown. It did desist, and we adjourned to the

Stone Church in Beekmantown. Messengers were sent ahead and when we got there tables were spread in abundance. The meeting was held the rest of that day and the next. The county society afterward continued to hold meetings in different towns." Violent mobs commonly threatened Abolitionists throughout the nation during the 1830's.

Smith's account is not the only glimpse of Clinton County's anti-slavery activity that day. Another was published in the July 26, 1837, issue of *The Friend of Man*. It is a lengthy report that consists of extracts from a 31-page pamphlet, much of which was written by Thomas B. Watson, a Peru lawyer, who was the convention's secretary. A lecturer for the American Anti-Slavery Society, Watson toured throughout the Adirondacks during the late 1830's, often joined by a colleague from Utica, New York, Rev. Edward C. Pritchett. Watson notes that "for a number of years there have been in different parts of the county, Anti-Slavery or Abolition Societies. Within the last years, the number of town societies have [*sic*] increased, and the subject has excited more attention generally in this county than at any other period."

Watson's report includes a list of names which historians can use to map fairly precisely the Underground Railroad in Clinton County. These names include individuals from the already organized societies in Peru, Keeseville, Plattsburgh, Beekmantown, Chazy, Champlain, and Mooers, as well as those who signed a petition calling for this first county-wide convention – in all 121 individuals, with 49 coming from Peru.

Watson also reported the mobbing of the convention and the forced move to the Stone Church in Beekmantown. He included the interesting fact, not mentioned by Smith, that a petition had been circulated among Plattsburgh residents the day after the announcement of the convention, demanding it to be held elsewhere. Dated April 12, 1837, it was signed by 114 individuals. So, when the abolitionists arrived in downtown Plattsburgh on April 25, 1837, the mob came as no surprise.

At the county organizational meeting, Watson, Pritchett, and Samuel Keese were appointed a committee to prepare a constitution and preamble. Elected as officers were president, Noadiah Moore of Champlain; vice-presidents, Silas Hubbell of Champlain, James S. Sheddon of Moorestown [*sic*], Peter Weaver of Plattsburgh, Rev. Abraham Haff of Peru, R. S. Lockwood of Saranac, Dorus Martin of Ellenburgh, Baruch Beckwith of Beekmantown, and Ira P. Chamberland of Chazy; recording secretary, Orson B. Ashmun of Champlain; corresponding secretary, John H. Barker of Peru; and to the executive committee, Samuel Keese of Peru, Rev. Haff, and Horace Boardman of Plattsburgh. The main speakers were Moore, Watson, Pritchett, Boardman, Witherspoon, and Samuel Keese.

In addition to advocating upholding the Constitution and refraining from violence, 24 resolutions were passed, the most significant of which were:

- That to forbear the discussion of the slave question ... is full of danger to the slave, the slaveholder, the rights of free working men, the peace and prosperity of our common country ...
- That slaveholders and abolitionists both, have a right so to interfere, because such interference is nothing but the exercise of the right of liberty of speech and the press, guaranteed by the Constitution.
- That it is the duty of every voter of whatever party to use the influence of his right of suffrage, for the abolition of slavery, the establishment of equal rights and the security of free discussion.
- That all those laws, customs, constitutions, and records which declare the slave to be property, and seek to place him on a level with 'chattels personal,' are daring infringements of the slave's rights and God's holy law, and should be immediately repealed.

The Clinton County Anti-Slavery Society was not the first such organization in the county. In Clinton County the first anti-slavery societies were forming at least as early as 1835. A report of a meeting opposing the abolitionists led by former slave owner General Benjamin Mooers in Plattsburgh on September 10, 1835, suggests that an anti-slavery society had probably already been formed by that date. We know for certain that the women of Peru had formed such a society by the end of the year. Though we have not

located accounts of the Peru Female Anti-Slavery Society's earliest meetings, an account of its third annual meeting in 1837, held at the Union's meeting house, provides interesting background.

"We make this report on behalf of two hundred females of Peru and vicinity," the report stated. "... We deem it a privilege, thus peaceably to assemble, and exercise the rights of free people, in expressing our thoughts on subjects presented to this meeting, instead of sharing in the degradation and the calamity of our colored sisters, for whose special benefit the society first organized. An unalterable conviction, that liberty or despotism, must ere long gain the undisputed supremacy of this nation – the plea for freedom must become loud enough to succeed in the emancipation of the enslaved or our labors are lost. Repent or perish, is the only alternative left for this Republic."

Issues they discussed included the denial of trial by jury to colored persons in contradiction to the Constitution; the tyrannical "Gag Rule" then in force in Congress that prevented the discussion of slavery; the District of Columbia allowing free colored citizens to be arrested and claimed as slaves; the recent murder in Alton, Illinois, of religious publisher, Elijah Lovejoy, by a pro-slavery mob; and a petition signed by 600 area women to be sent to Congress urging the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia and protesting the annexation of Texas.

The report concluded with a summary of the society's activities and an exhortation to continue the battle against slavery. "We have raised from the sewing circle the sum of $20 which has been expended for free goods for the use of the circle; $10 have been subscribed to obtain copies of the Liberator, which have been received and distributed in different parts of the surrounding country, and we trust have thrown some light on the deep sin of slavery; postage paid for papers and pamphlets received $2.28; whole expenditure $23.28; we have now on hand $27 worth of clothing and $10 in the treasury. We find on looking over the annals of our society that in 1835 no more than 310 names could be obtained praying for the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia, which is little more than half the number forwarded the present year, [this] shows that our cause is advancing and we trust, it will continue to advance so long as the fierce demon of slavery walks over the sunny plains of our beloved, yet guilty country."

Finally, it pledged to "remember those that are in bonds as bound with them by making it the subject of our sleeping, and waking thoughts that we may be able to go on in the way that will bring a blessing on our efforts, else vain will be all our exertions to aid in this most noble work."

The Report was signed by society president, Hannah E. Keese, probably the first wife of Samuel Keese, and society secretary, Ruth H. Keese, the daughter of John H. Keese and cousin of Stephen Keese Smith. The Peru society, among a handful of societies in the state when it was formed, was, by the end of 1837, one of 274.

The women of Peru had two male counterparts, one at the Union and the other, the West Peru Anti-Slavery Society, which formed April 11, 1837, two weeks before the county organizational meeting. Watson's colleague Pritchett wrote a report of its organizational meeting. Smith was one of the organizers, and Pritchett presented a lecture. Officers installed were Philip Signor, president; Ashley Arnold, vice-president; Embree E. Hoag, secretary; Lorenzo Milton Weston, secretary; and as directors, Smith, Dr. Abner Weston, and Nucum Weston. On the motion of Smith's uncle, Samuel Keese, the following resolutions were adopted:

"Resolved, That slavery has long enough disgraced our otherwise national escutcheon ... [and the interests of all] require its immediate abolition.

"Resolved, That we view slavery to be an evil in the land ...

"Resolved, That the revolution ... calls for the wielding of moral and spiritual weapons, as being the most efficient in removing the evils, and the most consistent with the precepts of the gospel of peace."

There were at least seven anti-slavery societies in the county in addition to the county society by 1837. The county's proximity to Canada made it an obvious destination for fugitive slaves. But how did the fugitive slaves get here and when did they begin coming? The Underground Railroad did not appear all at once. It was a gradual process that followed the formation

of the anti-slavery societies and conflicts within churches.

Concerning routes fugitives traveled, Smith recollected, "There were stations at Albany, Glens Falls and then here in Peru. The Negroes would come through the woods and be nearly famished. We kept them and fed them for one or two days and then ran them along to Noadiah Moore's in Champlain." Of course, it was hardly so simple. The Underground Railroad was a complex web of spreading routes and byways. It is significant that Clinton County's leading Underground Railroad conductor, Noadiah Moore, was in the lumber business and owned mills and a foundary just north of the border in La Colle, Canada, and that his sister married a Hubbell, whose family included the abolitionist lawyer Silas Hubbell, a man who did much business in Canada. The lumber business is an important key because there were a number of other lumbermen who were members of ant-slavery societies in Troy and Albany.

The Champlain Canal was a major factor in the development of the fugitive slave traffic in the county. Built in 1823, it linked the Hudson River ports of Albany and Troy with the port of Whitehall, from which steamboats delivered passengers and cargo to northern New York, Vermont, and Canada. It is also noteworthy that the shipment of lumber was among its most active enterprises. An 1837 document reveals that fugitive slaves were already using the Champlain Canal to get to Clinton County. "A slave of middle age, of noble size, six feet high, had made his escape from the southern States, and passed up the Champlain canal, and from Clinton county, passed through Franklin county, into the north part of St. Lawrence county, with intent to go to Ogdensburgh, and cross over into Canada," wrote abolitionist Alvan Stewart.

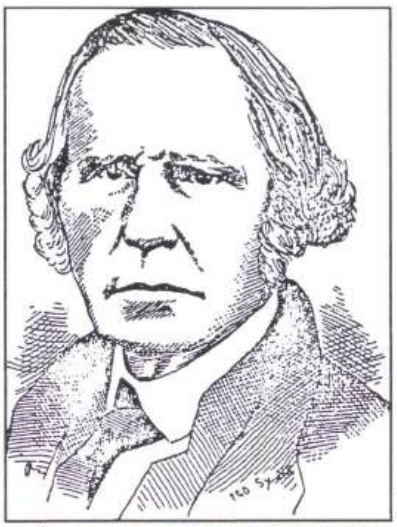
Some fugitives also came to Clinton County via Vermont. Underground Railroad historian Wilbur Siebert wrote, "Nathan C. Hoag, a brother-in-law of Mr. Rowland T. Robinson of Ferrisburgh [Vermont] was a Quaker preacher whose home was in a secluded spot which pursuers were not likely to find. Sometimes refugees remained there for months, working in the house or on the farm. When Hoag's place seemed to be an unsafe retreat, Mr. Robinson drove his passengers to the home of Joseph Rogers, a mile north of Ferrisburgh and the same distance west of the old stage road. Morah Rogers, the sister and housekeeper of Joseph, recorded in her diary that Mr. Robinson once brought a fugitive slave to their house who was then forwarded eight miles north to McNeil's place in Charlotte and across Lake Champlain." Addie Shields, Clinton County Historian, has pointed out that favorable southeasterly winds, which are common on Lake Champlain, facilitated such travel.

In addition Siebert claimed that an Underground Railroad station operated in Rouses Point. The source of his information was a letter written to him in 1896 by attorney and former Congressman Martin Townsend of Troy. Townsend, who was 89 at the time he wrote, had been an abolitionist and the attorney of fugitive slave Charles Nalle, who was rescued from federal marshals in Troy by Harriet Tubman and others in 1859. He wrote that "fugitives arriving in Troy were forwarded either to the Niagara River or to Vermont and Lake Champlain to Rouses Point."

No local historians have identified any abolitionists in Rouses Point; however, there is a legend that claims "General" Ezra Thurber was the stationmaster there. His brick house, built in 1818, is currently owned by Les Mathews who said renovation of the house in the last decade revealed remnants of a tunnel. The son of one of Rouses Point's earliest pioneers, Ezra Thurber was among the most prominent men of the county during the early part of the 19th century. In 1817 he hosted a celebrated visit by President Monroe. He was the leader of the local militia, vice-president of the first county fair, and – most important in considering his role as an Underground Railroad conductor – customs officer at Rouses Point for more than 30 years. Another factor is his conversion to the Baptist faith in 1824, after which he became the church's deacon and leading financial sponsor. The Baptists were generally sympathetic toward abolition.

Probably the two most important conductors in the county were Noadiah Moore and Samuel Keese. A devout Quaker preacher, Samuel Keese had been inspired since birth by the teachings of his religion that had condemned slavery even before the Ameri-

can Revolution. In 1835-36 he attended the New York Yearly Meeting of the Friends and worked to promote the idea of immediate emancipation. In 1836 he wrote to *The Liberator*, "We shall encourage the labor of free men over that of slaves by giving a preference to its productions ... Pledging ourselves that under the guidance and by the help of Almighty God we will do all that in us lies consistently with the Declaration [of Independence] to overthrow this most execrable system." In 1838 Keese was described by the touring abolitionist lecturer Luther Lee as the man "who probably has done more in the anti-slavery cause than any other ..." Smith wrote, "Samuel Keese was the head of the depot in Peru. His son, John Keese, myself, and Wendell Lansing [publisher of *The Essex County Republican* and later *The Northern Standard* at Keeseville] were actors. I had large buildings and concealed the Negroes [*sic*] in them. I kept them, fed them. Often gave them shoes and clothing. I presume I have spent: a thousand dollars for them in one way and another." Virginia Burdick, a great-granddaughter of Smith, said she remembered her father telling her of an incident when "the slaves came into the kitchen to be fed, [and] they were chattering with the cold, and the firelight would light up their dark, startled, terrified faces."



Courtesy of Special Collections, Feinberg Library, SUNY-Plattsburgh

Samuel Keese

Noadiah Moore was a businessman and farmer, son of the influential judge, businessman, and Revolutionary War veteran Pliny Moore, a former slave owner. A member of the First Presbyterian Church, according to Smith, he "first came to the Union and stirred us up to work in the anti-slavery cause. His place was a station in the Underground Railroad in Champlain, about seven miles from Canada. He went with the Negroes to Canada and looked out for places for them to work."

Moore became the leader of the county's Liberty Party, the nation's first abolitionist political party, organized in Albany, New York, April 1, 1840. Its formation was the result of the division of the American Anti-Slave Society. In Clinton County, however, the split had little effect on the abolitionists' readiness to aid fugitive slaves. In 1841, for example, the Peru Female Anti-Slavery Society affirmed their devotion to the cause by declaring, "Shall we withhold this cup of cold water from the toil-worn slave and the panting fugitive. ... In the name of humanity, we answer *NO!* Remember that we are candidates for immortality, and let us perform our part, that at the final review, when there shall be neither servant nor master, the soul-cheering language may be applicable to us, 'inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me.' "

Clinton County Historical Association

The deathbed of Noadiah Moore surrounded by members of his family; from the left: daughter-in-law Mrs. Samuel W. Moore, son Samuel, daughter Mrs. Bartlett Nye (Laura M. Moore), son Pliny, and widow Caroline (Mattocks) Moore. The original was an ambrotype, later transferred to a glass plate negative.

But the county was not immune to the conflict within the nation's churches that was one of the causes of the split. An illustration of this conflict occurred in 1843 at Champlain's First Presbyterian Church. Noadiah Moore, one of its members, led a group who

took a public stand against slavery. The group included Silas Hubbell, Lorenzo Kellogg, O. B. Ashmun, and the church's pastor and Moore's brother-in-law, Rev. Abraham Brinkerhoff. Moore offered two resolutions. The first, which condemned "American Slavery as a sin," was passed. But the second, which pledged to convince their slaveholding brethren that slavery was wrong and that they should immediately abandon it, was not. This stand apparently was not well received, and, according to James Freeman Nye in a 1902 address, "ridicule [was] heaped on" them by some church members. The action by the abolitionists apparently triggered a period of turmoil within the church, which was burned down by an unknown arsonist on June 17, 1844.

The Liberty Party continued to grow in strength in the county. In 1844 they published their own newspaper, *The Herald of Freedom*, of which, held at the Feinberg Library, only one known issue exists. The paper was a monthly that lasted for less than a year. Its editor, Orson Branch Ashmun, was the younger brother of Jehudi Ashmun of Champlain, noted Episcopal preacher who worked for the colonization of American blacks in Liberia. At the top of the front page, just below the masthead, was the notice that the newspaper was published by the Executive Committee of the Clinton County Liberty Party. Noadiah Moore is listed at the head of the committee along with its other members Edward Moore of Plattsburgh, Calvin Cook of Clintonville, Ebenezer Drury of Peru, and Anderson Keese of Keesevile. Beneath them was a listing of more than 50 individuals who were distributors of the newspaper. Moore is also the subject of a joking article on the front page. Referring to members of his family, the headline reads: *N. M.'s Slaves*. It begins, "N.M. ... the only consistent abolitionist, has turned out at last to be a slaveholder. ... Their condition now, in 1844, is as follows: five children, one daughter married who has made her escape to Canada; two sons with families reduced to the condition of tradesmen, and still held to labor and service; another, the youngest, working with his father at the same trade; while the next oldest, contrary to the rules of the slave code, and in defiance of his master, has actually entered himself as a student of the Academy and had the audacity the other day of presenting a tuition bill of $6 [about $100 in today's currency] for his master to pay."

The activism of the party was a success, as demonstrated by the election of 1844, which delivered by far the largest concentration of Liberty voters in Clinton County, more than any other county in northeastern New York: 410 of 4,500 votes or 9.1%; the next highest was Washington County with 327 of 8,600 votes or 3.8%.

In 1845 Gerrit Smith, who would run as the party's presidential candidate in 1848, made a tour of the Adirondacks to rekindle support. He began in Saratoga and concluded in Clinton County. A summary of his trip was published in the June 25th 1845 issue of the *Albany Patriot*, a Liberty Party newspaper. His remarks bring insight to our search for the Underground Railroad here. In Keeseville, he met with "that true friend of the slave, Wendell Lansing"; "here," he added, "are many sincere haters of slavery." On the way to Plattsburgh, he met with Calvin Cook of Clintonville and James W. Flack of Ausable Forks. In Plattsburgh he spoke at the courthouse in the afternoon and the Methodist Church in the evening. He lamented that there were fewer than a half-dozen abolitionists in Plattsburgh, but was buoyed by the arrival of "that wise and steadfast friend of the slave, Noadiah Moore." He also mentioned meeting abolitionists O. B. Ashmun, Edward Moore, William G. Brown, Horace Boardman, Benjamin Ketchum, George Beckwith, and Henry Hewitt. Clinton County, Smith wrote, "will probably be the first ... in our state to throw off its political shackles and stand forth for the slave."

One of the founders of the Washington County Anti-Slavery Society in 1834, Wendell Lansing came to Keeseville and started the *Essex County Republican* in 1839. In 1846 he left the newspaper business to devote his time to his farm in Wilmington. It was there that his homestead on the hill was one of the depots of the Underground Railroad and headquarters for abolition lecturers.

William G. Brown was a resident of Plattsburgh. His obituary in the *Plattsburgh Republican* notes "he was one of those who espoused the cause of the abolition of African slavery in this country at a period

when to do so was to run the risk not only of personal obloquy, but of personal violence. He abhorred the Fugitive Slave Law, and assisted more than one slave to escape into Canada by the 'underground railroad,' and to his honor it may be said, now that the passions of that period have died out, he was once hung in effigy in the village for helping negroes [*sic*] regain their freedom."

But, after 1845 enthusiasm in the Liberty Party began to dwindle nationally, and even Smith was considering leaving the party in 1846. Those in the Adirondack region tried to remain steadfast, and Noadiah Moore invited Smith that summer to the county's Liberty Party Election Convention. Smith declined the invitation, citing as one of the reasons the support some party members gave to pro-slavery candidates in the prior election. In his reply Moore urged Smith not to leave the party, adding that "The Liberty Party in Clinton County has ever been steadfast to the principle ... never to vote for slaveholders or their supporters." The convention ended hopefully for the abolitionists in Clinton County. Noadiah Moore was nominated for State Senator, Peter Weaver for State Assembly, and O. B. Ashmun for Sheriff.

The 1846 election revealed a fascinating outcome, which supports the probability that the Underground Railroad continued to be active here in Clinton County. It concerned the 1846 state referendum to eliminate the $250 property qualification for black suffrage, or – to say it more plainly – to give equal rights to blacks. Clinton County had the highest pro-suffrage vote in the state with 72.8%, and Essex was right behind with 70%. By contrast, no other county reached 60%. Of the 59 counties, only ten recorded percentages over 50%; three of these were neighboring counties, Franklin, Washington, and Warren.

On September 18, 1850, the second Fugitive Slave Law, a provision of the Compromise of 1850 that included outlawing the slave trade in Washington D.C. and slavery in California, as well as extending slavery into the territories of Utah and New Mexico, was passed by Congress after nine months of debate. By this law, capture of fugitive slaves was made easier and the penalties for those helping the fugitives were dramatically stffened. Oddly, the effect of the law was to increase the flow of fugitives.

It is impossible to determine if or how much the second Fugitive Slave Law increased slave traffic through Clinton County. If so, additional routes had developed by then. One of them, the opening in 1850 of the Northern Ogdensburg Railroad that connected Rouses Point with Ogdensburg, made passage much easier. Other alternate routes also had developed through the Adirondacks. Emily McMasters wrote that one of these involved the participation of John Brown, who was in North Elba for a two-and-a-half year stretch during 1849-1851.

Though there were many souls sympathetic to the Underground Railroad in Clinton County, the fact remains that helping fugitive slaves was illegal, so there were plenty of people in opposition. As late as 1855 in Keeseville Samuel Keese reported to *The Liberator* that in the rabidly anti-slavery village of Peru the Methodist Episcopal "pastor objected to the exhibition of The Liberator in his pulpit," another example of the unchristian behavior exhibited by so many churches, even in strongly anti-slavery areas.

An illustration of a neighbor's opposition was described by Smith in his memoir, "We were watched ... by the Methodists. Old Chauncey Stoddard wouldn't let a Negro into his house or feed one. He used to come out into the field, an old man, and hold his cane over my head and say we were not law-abiding citizens...."

Ironically, the farm where Smith secreted the fugitive slaves was formerly a site where slaves worked. Smith had bought the farm from Rev. Abraham Haff, an avid abolitionist who had inherited it from his father, John Haff, a former slave owner. "John Hoff [*sic*] of Peru owned slaves," Smith said. "A twenty-year old Negro belonging to him ran away to Essex. They wouldn't ferry him across the lake to Charlotte, Vermont, because they knew he was a runaway, but detained him till Hoff came. He came on horseback, put a rope around the boy and fastened the other end of the rope to the saddle and started for home, making the boy walk. Whenever the boy lagged, Hoff would whip him. At Keese's the boy fell, faint and limp as a rag. He had been whipped a great deal and was exhausted. After resting awhile they started again and

came up to the center of The Union, to Uncle Henry Green's. They stayed there all night, as it was so dark they could not well go through the blazed road. Mr. Hoff put the Negro under the horse's manger. He tied the rope so tight around his wrist that the boy moaned and cried so piteously the old man could not sleep. He went out and loosened the rope, which had cut through the skin. At daylight they went through to Mr. Hoff's place, one and one half miles. Part of the land this slave worked on I now own. Uncle Henry Green's son told me this two years ago."

There also was the problem of slavecatchers, who were far more numerous than most people realize; although I have yet to come across a story about slave catchers in Clinton County.

But what of the Underground Railroad routes and the actual houses used? Do any of them exist today? Such identification is always filled with doubt. So many cubbyholes and crawl spaces exist in old homes that could be mistaken for hiding spots. However, I have the good fortune of benefiting from the work of two wonderful local historians, Addie Shields and Emily McMasters. Their research indicates that there are still a few stations left that were part of the Underground Railroad; although one major omission remains: finding the location of what was probably the county's most active station, the farm of Noadiah Moore.

In addition to Smith, Nathan Weaver, the son of Abolitionist Peter Weaver, also provided a description of an Underground route, "Another station on this road [now Route 22] was the Chittendon's, on the Ira Rowlson place in Beekmantown, and also Townsend Adams', West Plattsburgh." Using Smith and Weaver and other oral tradition, McMasters began to sketch the route, and Shields has added testimony from her own life-long experience to develop it further.

According to Shields, the main route into the county began in Keeseville, on the Clinton County side of the Ausable River. There, a man named Bigelow had a station and his house remains today with a blue and yellow plaque out front. Set alongside the Ausable River near the main bridge, the house extends quite far down the rocky slope overlooking the river.

Another alleged station in Keeseville is the former Dr. H. O. Tallmadge house on Front Street. Interestingly, Dr. Tallmadge lived kitty-corner to the Methodist Episcopal Church, which we mentioned before as the seat of opposition to Abolitionism. The Baptist Church, a denomination well known for its support of the Abolitionists, however, was only one lot removed across Front Street from the Methodists.

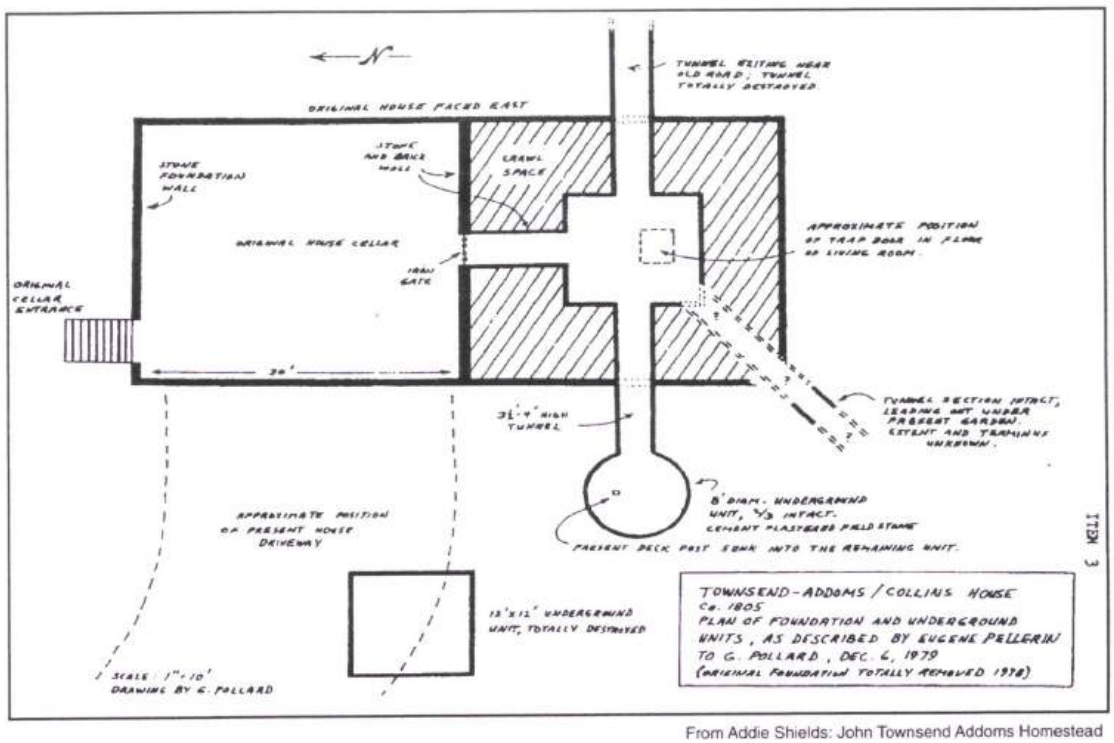
To the west of Keeseville were the homes of Stephen Keese Smith and Samuel Keese, only three-quarters of a mile from each other. Smith's farmhouse, a short distance from Route 22 along the Union Road outside the village of Peru, and the barn where he hid fugitive slaves still stand with another blue and yellow plaque out front. The house, now owned by Richard Stafford, was the beginning of a line of stations that led to Noadiah Moore and the Canadian border.

A house which may have been part of a secondary route and which may have housed slaves for indefinite periods as hired hands was the Townsend Addoms house in the Town of Plattsburgh just south of Beekmantown. John Townsend Addoms, the son of John Addoms of Cumberland Head, was a circuit rider for the Methodist Church. Church meetings and Sunday school were held here. While Townsend Addoms has not appeared on any listings of anti-slavery meetings, he did sign the petition that called for the organization of the county anti-slavery society. Although his house no longer remains, care was taken while renovating the site to document the various tunnels found in the basement by current owner of the property, Eugene Pellerin. In 1979 Shields elicited a number of affirmations from locals about the house's use as a station. Among those confirming it as a station were John Banker, born in 1899; Stella Hildreth Sanger, born in 1901; and Minnie Wright, born in 1910.

"Why, of course," Banker said, "all of us old folks knew that." Mrs. Sanger, a friend of the Collins family, descendants of Julia Addoms Collins, Townsend Addom's daughter, said that family members told her runaways sometimes stayed there and worked for a while. Mrs. Wood, a friend of Lorena Collins, an Addoms great-granddaughter, revealed that, "There were passages from the various cellars. ... Under a long table was a secret door that led to a dry cistern. I've heard stories of lawmen coming down the lane and whoever was sheltered getting under the table, opening

the trapdoor and descending into the cistern."

Emily McMasters, who also knew of the Townsend Addoms site, claimed the White Pine Tea Room, now the Klondike Inn, on Route 22 was a station. That site is along the main route that led to Noadiah Moore.



From Addie Shields: John Townsend Addoms Homestead

Diagram of cellar, John Townsend Addoms Homestead before demolition

Also, just up the road on the other side is the Chittendon's, referred to by Nathan Weaver, followed by the Ira Rowlson farmhouse, whose original owner was Amos Barber. Farther up the road is the Dawson house, currently owned by the Lawrence W. Gonyo family, where Addie Shields lived as a child. She points to strong circumstantial evidence. The house is only a half-mile from a lot deeded to three Black families who had been slaves of Judge Thomas Treadwell manumitted by him in 1794. It is also a mere 900 feet east of another lot where two log houses occupied by free Negroes were situated during the Underground Railroad period. It is well established that fugitives first sought the safe havens of those of their own race. Thus, the legend that runaways also stayed at the Dawson house may have foundation.

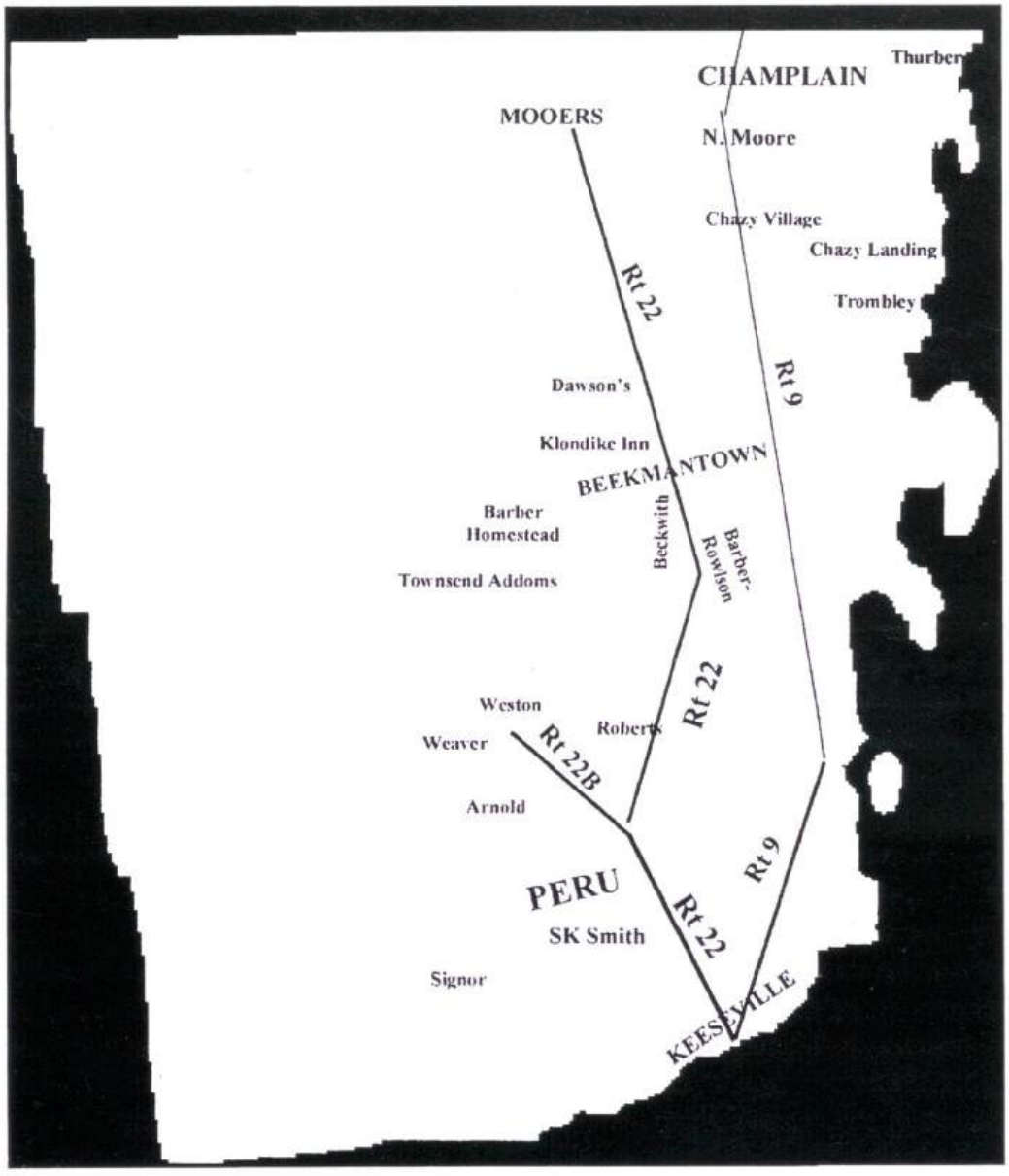
Shields also believes a stone house in Chazy, now owned by Brent Ladue, nestled in a small bay along Lake Champlain was a station. This would be part of a secondary route.

On Route 9 north of Chazy village and over the Champlain town line is a red brick house with white shutters, the home of Robert Trombly. This house, built in 1809-10 by Daniel Kellogg, is five or so miles from the Canadian border in the vicinity of the farm or farms where Noadiah Moore harbored fugitive slaves. Daniel Kellogg's son Lorenzo married Sarah P. Moore. Lorenzo inherited the house in 1851 from Daniel's widow. The Trombly family has heard rumors that Lorenzo Kellogg "smuggled black slaves."

If we cross-reference lists of names of participants in anti-slavery meetings, members of the Liberty Party, subscribers to the *Herald of Freedom*, and those identified by Gerrit Smith as Abolitionists following his 1845 visit with the names of individuals or families listed in Allan Everest's book *Pioneer Homes*, we find twenty-four additional houses that could have been stops on the Underground Railroad. Among the most compelling cases are the Peter Weaver house and the Weston house in Schuyler Falls, the Barber homestead on Barber Road in Beekmantown, the Ransom Tavern and Julius Caesar Hubbell house in Chazy, and both Pliny Moore's farmhouse and homestead in Champlain. Weaver was one of the vice-presidents of the county society and a leading member of the Liberty Party. The names of both Weaver and Barber account for four anti-slavery members each, the former of the West Peru Anti-Slavery Society and the latter of the Beekmantown Anti-

Slavery Society. G. Ransom of Chazy was a member of the county anti-slavery society, and Hubbell, a brother of the Abolitionist Silas Hubbell, married Noadiah Moore's sister. Pliny Moore was the father of Noadiah. His farmhouse passed first to his daughter and her Abolitionist husband, Rev. Abraham Brinkerhoff. After 1835, it passed to the Nye family whose son married Noadiah Moore's daughter. However, the suggestion that any of those or any of the other houses were Underground Railway stations is pure speculation. We know only that those who live in them were sympathetic to the cause of the slave. They do represent, however, a starting place for further study of the Underground Railroad in Clinton County.

No one knows how many fugitives came to Clinton County. Not enough evidence exists even to speculate on numbers. But we can be certain that the anti-slavery movement was very active in our remote outpost of freedom.



Some possible Underground Railroad routes in Clinton County

TOM CALARCO, writer and Underground Railroad researcher, lives in Schenectady, New York. His article is a version of the paper for which he was awarded the 2000 McMasters Prize for North Country historical writing by the Clinton County Historical Association. During the past three years he has been involved in several research projects on the topic with the Easton, New York, library; the Washington County Historical Society; and the Warren County Historical Society. Last year he wrote and co-produced a 37 minute CD-ROM for the latter, which is available for loan to schools and organizations. His column on the Underground Railroad appears periodically in the Glens Falls weekly, The Chronicle. *Calarco, who has been funded by the Furthermore Publication Program, the New York State Arts Council, the New York Council on the Humanities, and the National Endowment for Humanities, is currently working on a book on the Underground Railroad from New York City to Canada. A documented copy of this paper may be consulted at the Clinton County Historical Association.*

For Further Reading

Samuel J. May: *Some Recollections of Our Anti-Slavery Conflict* (Fields, Osgood & Co., Boston, 1869).

William Still : *The Underground Railroad* (Porter & Coates, Philadelphia, 1872, rev. 1886, Arno Press reprint 1968).

William H. Siebert: *The Underground Railroad: From Slavery to Freedom* (Macmilliam, New York, 1898).

Larry Gara: *The Liberty Line: the Legend of the Underground Railroad* (University of Kentucky Press, Lexington, Kentucky, 1967).

C.S. Brown: *Memoir of Rev. Abel Brown* (Worcester, 1849).

Strangers in a Strange Land: John Chinaman in Northern New York

Amy M. Godine *

In a May issue of the *Champlain Journal* from 1875, wedged snugly between articles on the Prussian army and transatlantic shipwrecks, is a lengthy dispatch titled, "John Chinaman In Trouble." It tells the story of a Chinese immigrant in Nevada City who, weary unto death of the harassment and abuse he routinely suffered at the hands of local boys, decided to fight back tooth and nail – a lot of nail as it happened, leaving deep scratches on the faces of his boy assailants that "despite the best efforts of the surgeons, grew worse and worse." At first the good citizens of Nevada City sided with the long-bullied "Chinaman," but sympathy turned to horror as rumors mounted of a secret poison he kept stashed (somehow) behind his fingernails, a tactic so vile, so original, so...*Asian*, that the immigrant was ultimately run out of town.

The story compels our interest for a lot of reasons – the racist characterization of the malevolent "Mongolian," his namelessness that hints at the apocryphal, the uneasily alternating notes of sympathy and revulsion, and, most of all, the implication that a story about Chinese immigrants is above all a *western* story, a western *problem*, worth running for its oddness, its foreign-ness, like the next-door articles on distant shipwrecks or military build-ups in central Europe.

Indeed, as long as the Chinese could readily find work out West, their story would remain exotic, weird, and somewhat unimaginable for newspaper readers in Northern New York. But all that had begun to change in the 1870s. The great continental railroads now completed, the Chinese laborers are dispensable. State legislatures draft a raft of Chinese laws and prohibitions. There are anti-Chinese riots in Los Angeles; homes and businesses are burned in Denver and San Francisco. Miners murder thirty Chinese in Wyoming; Chinese residents are driven out of towns in Washington, Oregon, and northern California. Farm-dwelling Chinese are forcibly removed to urban Chinatowns, and Chinese laundries, long the staple of the Chinese urban economy, are subjected to a raft of increasingly draconian, obnoxious regulations. The idea, of course, was to drive the fed-up and fearful Chinese out of the West once and for all, and, to a remarkable degree, it worked. By the end of the nineteenth century, California was home to only half of all the Chinese in this country. The rest were moving east, drawn to the manufacturing and industrial centers of the midwest and the east–or, if they came from the west, via Liverpool or London, for example, they were steaming to the well-established Chinatown in Montreal, catching up with a smuggler, and hoping to make their way south to New York City through the porous borders of northern Vermont and New York.

By 1892, stories about Chinese immigrants in the Northern New York press have moved from the foreign news page into local columns like the *Plattsburgh Sentinel's* "Local Paragrams," "In And About Town," or "Personal Mentions." The Far West no longer "owns" the story right. John Chinaman–still nameless, still the casual, repeated victim of stereotypes and slurs–lives in Canton, Plattsburgh, Chateaugay, Malone. And, by 1902, when the U.S. Senate must decide to re-enact or not the twenty-year-old Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, the ugly nativism that forced the exodus of Chinese laborers from California to points east has moved east as well, as strident, charged, and boldly racist as ever.

Witness the inflammatory front-page headline in the *Plattsburgh Sentinel* on March 22 of that year. "Plattsburgh Invaded!" blared the lead. Yet an invasion implies intent, aggression, and disruption. The Chinese "border jumpers" who periodically flooded the turn-of-the-century county and town jails of Northern New York hoped only to slip through Clinton County on their way south to New York City with as little incident as possible.

No love of Plattsburgh landed them with such numbing regularity in upstate New York – just bad luck, worse timing, and an adamantine wall of legislation that would deny Chinese laborers United States citizenship from 1882 until 1943.

Even so, to the Northern New York customs officers, U.S. marshals, sheriffs, immigration lawyers, interpreters, commissioners, jailers, bursars, court reporters, and investigators who chased, caught, tried, defended, judged, and jailed them; or fed, inspected, interviewed, and wrote about them, the steady undocumented aliens might have *felt* like an invasion. In the year 1902 alone, news items or full-blown stories about Chinese arrests, hearings, and legislation are running in the *Plattsburgh Sentinel* at a rate of two or so a month. "Nineteen Chinese who surrendered at Rouse's Point taken to Malone." "Chinese Inspector D'Arcy arrested 6 at Rouse's Point..., one of them a 10-year-old boy, no larger than one half his age." "Thirteen Chinese added to Sheriff Dominy's boarders." "Lot of 41 Chinamen brought to Port Henry jail...on 10:50 train."

This was the year that Plattsburgh's county jail held as many as 131 "almond-eyed Celestials" at one time (*Celestial* was a semi-ironic allusion to China's honorific moniker, the Celestial Kingdom). It was also a year that followed a long investigation into the "intolerable overcrowding" in Northern New York's county and town jails, an inquiry that resulted in a report from a state prison commission calling for the construction of a federal penitentiary specifically for the undocumented Chinese.

Needless to say, the suggestion failed to arouse much support from the boosteristic Northern New York press. It wasn't just the insulting implication that the local jails weren't up to the job of managing their own affairs, or the skeptical conviction, as expressed by the *Sentinel*, that as soon as some new fancy facility was erected, smugglers would simply relocate to a less rigorously patrolled swath of border, rendering "the proposed Chinese prison...more expensive than useful." Why build a central prison, asked the *Sentinel*, as long as "the Chinese coming in the border are now quite equitably distributed, the jail of each county getting a proper share," and a share as well, we might infer, of federal reimbursements for the expense and upkeep of every Chinese inmate! For then as now, if jails cost money, they also have their ways of making money, and federal paybacks to the local municipalities were a cash cow that would assuredly be missed.

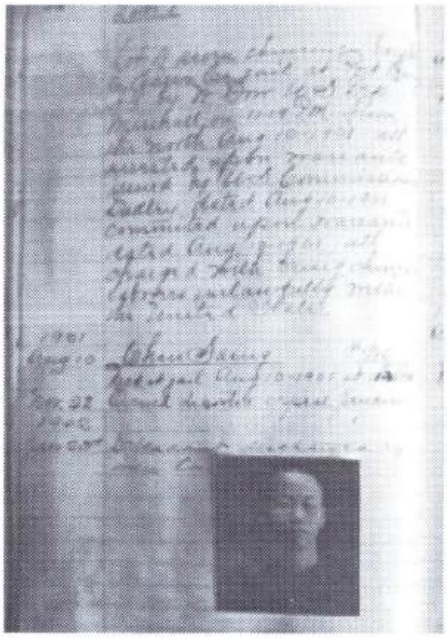
In Franklin County, for example, where in 1902 a barn next to the county jail in Malone was converted into a detention center especially for Chinese inmates, the county pocketed three dollars a week per prisoner; yet "the actual cost for their board," wrote the county historian Frederick Seaver, "was under a dollar per week per head, so that the county cleared two dollars and more on its contract with the federal government." A nice piece of change, this, when we recall that this jail could hold as many as "200 Chinaman" at a time, with another "300 or 400 in the detention house." Thanks to federal largesse then, this county-one of New York's poorest-was raking in as much as $4,000 a year! No wonder state reports calling for a federal penitentiary that would put the counties' "Chinese Jails" out of business died a swift and emphatically unlamented death.

But the report had its effect: within a year of its release, several prisons in Northern New York made key capital improvements, specifically designed to improve the stays of the unfortunate Chinese. Plattsburgh, for instance, built itself a sort of jail-within-the-jail especially for the Chinese, a construction project outlined in proud, explicit detail in the *Sentinel*:

"They [the Chinese] are confined in a detached wooden two-story building in the jail yard. The building is 27 by 33 feet. In order to fit it for winter use the sheriff ceiled it [*sic*] on the inside with building paper and pine ceiling. He has also constructed an addition which is not yet ceiled 18 by 20 feet. A small kitchen for cooking purposes in the hot weather – 12 by 16 feet – is also nearly completed. Each floor of the Chinese quarters is provided with a closet and a lavatory. The separate building for Chinese is now in shape to take good care of this class of prisoners. There is ample room for comfortable housing 70 or 80." One of these structures, incidentally, might well have been a former outbuilding from the county almshouse once used to house the violently insane. Clinton County social historian Cornel Reinhart believes this structure was

moved from the almshouse to the jail in the 1880s, and it might have been the one to gain a flimsy coat of building paper and pine ceiling in 1902.

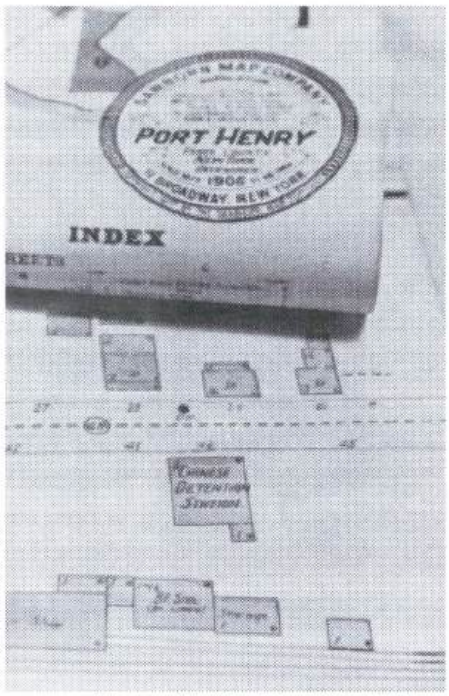
Port Henry, which caught the overflow of Chinese prisoners from Plattsburgh, went one better than the bigger jail to the north. Rather than spruce up the ancient jail in the village hall, it built the Chinese detainees a jail of their own – or to use the name that crops up on a 1906 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, a "Chinese Detention Station" – perhaps the only house of detention in Northern New York earmarked for one group. Two heavy ledgers with the photographs, names, and legal status ("Discharged" or "Deported") of some 650 Chinese who were detained in Port Henry from 1901 to 1903, some of them as long as half a year, may be perused at the Sherman Free Library in Port Henry, and it is an oddly affecting thing to pore over page after page of mugshots of these long-gone, exhausted, hard-traveled faces, many still framed by the traditional pigtails and collarless tunics of the "Flowery Kingdom," with a few awkwardly western-garbed exceptions.



Courtesy of the Essex County Historical Society, Nancie Battaglia, photographer

Mugshot from "Chinese Detention Station" ledger, Port Henry, c. 1902

Although a handful of the Chinese detainees was discovered hiding out in Chinese laundries at Ticonderoga and Malone, hinting at a sort of Underground Railroad that operated independently of the Old Boy network of long-time smugglers, most appear to have been winnowed into the region with the help



Courtesy of the Essex County Historical Society, Nancie Battaglia, photographer

"Chinese Detention Station" from a Sanborn Insurance Map, Port Henry

of local operators, for whom border smuggling was of course a regional tradition harking back to the British/American trade skirmishes and embargoes of the eighteenth century. Border runners worked out of villages like Malone, Chazy, Burke, Mooers, Champlain, and Fort Covington, but also came from cities like Boston and Montreal. Every back road or wagon trail that meandered south from the wide plains of the St. Lawrence valley into the open farmland and wooded fastness of Northern New York was known to them – and for that matter, still is: the smuggling of Chinese and other illegal aliens remains an abiding challenge for local agents of the federal Immigration and Naturalization Service in Northern New York. Today's illicit cargo is ferried south in RVs with tinted windows, minibuses, utility vehicles, and trucks. A hundred years ago, North Country smugglers hid their human contraband in hay wagons, dry goods boxes,

car trunks – and even, in the case of two Chinese arrested at Rouse's Point, ice chests. This last was a particularly painful memory for Marjorie Ladd Saxe, daughter of a Rouse's Point customs officer whose job it was to inspect canal boats for smuggled goods in the first decade of the twentieth century. In an oral history published in *North Country Notes*, Mrs. Saxe remembered when her father discovered the living cargo in the ice chests, both of them on board canal boats passing through Rouse's Point. A small child at the time, she burst into tears. "He had to seize not only the men but the boat as well. I heard him say that he felt sorry for the boat owner's wife and children. Families lived on canal boats and it was like having your home taken away. It was gone for good. The wife and children began to cry when my father discovered the Chinamen. I cried when Father told Mother about it. He said the Chinamen were very frightened and said nothing when he took them to the jail in Rouse's Point. The government sent them back to China... I recall going by the jail and feeling sorry for the sad-looking men waiting to be shipped back...."

Another time, wrote Mrs. Saxe, one Pete Sequin, a Rouse's Point taxi driver, was hired to take three passengers to Sweet's Ferry at Chazy Landing. Two of them were heavily veiled women – the elderly aunts of the third passenger, Sequin was told, the one who arranged for the ride. But nephew and aunts never exchanged a word, and Seuin grew suspicious. Feigning an overheated engine, he pulled his taxi over at a farmhouse, ducked inside, and quickly phoned Customs Officer Ladd, who met the taxi with the town sheriff at the dock. Needless to say, the veiled aunts turned out to be Chinese immigrants in disguise, and their nervous "nephew" their anxious smuggler. All were arrested, and two went back to China, along with the Chinese men that Officer Ladd sometimes turned up hiding between the great lashed-together piles of lumber on the canal boats. The "Chinese inspectors" who specialized in making these arrests were evidently as border-savvy then as they are today, and as likely to be shifted to El Paso, Texas, for a taste of action to the south–witness the case of one Inspector Ketchum of Malone, whose six-week Texas sojourn is proudly noted in the local newspapers.

As often as these transports, arrests and hearings crop up in the "Local Items" columns of the smalltown press – sometimes as many as four Chinese-related stories a day! – they seem to have occasioned little editorial fanfare. For one thing, as Mrs. Saxe observed, the Chinese were famously compliant; for all the drama of chase and discovery, these weren't shoot-outs at the O.K. corral. The fact that the Chinese were routinely transported by train to Plattsburgh from Malone or from Plattsburgh to Port Henry in a "Lot of 15" here, a "Lot of 41" there, reveals something of this tractability, though perhaps it was no more than a weary pragmatism. For, if they did make a break for it, who would hide them? How far could they get? Even the "Plattsburgh Invaded!" story is not nearly as alarmist as the screeching headline suggests. Notwithstanding the impressive head count (131 Chinese in a single ramshackle county jail is news indeed!), the overarching *tone* of the piece is unfazed and even self-congratulatory:

"No one should think that this number will overcrowd our county jail, as Sheriff Cunningham in anticipation of this influx has made ample provision for the comfortable accommodation of at least two hundred more than the present number... These prisoners give the officers very little trouble. They require no watching to prevent their escape.... ." Further, notes the reporter proudly, these "invaders" are treated to "a twenty-five pound of the best rice, twenty-five pounds of mess pork, a bushel of potatoes, beets, and cabbage." Those Plattsburghers knew how to put on a spread! Then, too, so did the good citizens of Port Henry, who supplied *their* Chinese detainees with such ample stores of rice and macaroni that the *Elizabethtown Post* complained of shortages and price hikes in local stores.

That local newspapers were determined to report improved jail conditions in such detail is telling. Clearly, their readership took an interest and even demonstrated some for the welfare of the out-of-luck Chinese. At times, the gently parodic tone of so many Chinese-related articles even warms to a discernable compassion. In 1909, a quiet disapproval is expressed when a Chinese mission student enrolled in a women's seminary at Herkimer is arbitrarily harassed and de-

tained at the border on her way to Montreal, and in 1914, when an elderly Chinese immigrant, a used clothes seller in St. Albans, Vermont, is brutally bludgeoned by two local youths, coverage is extensive, and sympathy for the murdered man, a "harmless old Chinaman," "a peaceable man," seems sincere.

Never did these spasms of fellow-feeling for the "friendless Chinese," however, translate into anything like opposition to the numerous re-enactments of the Chinese Exclusion Act. On this score, local attitudes bluntly mirrored the jingoistic tenor of the nation. There was your local Chinese laundryman, a known citizen and paying advertiser like Mr. Charlie Leon who owned businesses in Chateaugay and Madrid, stand-up merchants, "industrious, peaceable, and law-abiding," who beguiled you with their "Ingenious Celestial Method of Identifying Customers..."(in 1902, a Plattsburgh reporter wrote a comic piece about Chinese laundry checks in which "Two Gold Tooth" appears on the same page with "Redhead Scar Cheek," and "Rednose Man" follows "Man Who Looks Like Horse"). Then there was the infinitely less amusing, treacherous, generic "John Chinaman," a frequent subject of Northern New York editorials that inveighed against the Yellow Peril.

John Chinaman smoked opium in secret dens, whisked the flower of American girlhood into the much-rumored white slave trade, butchered innocent foreigners during the infamous Boxer Rebellion of 1900, and spat on your laundry when you weren't looking. Thanks to what the *Hamilton County Democrat* described as his notoriously "highly evolved...evasive powers," he could not be made to register with local authorities in accordance with state legislation, and secretly held all westerners and women in contempt. Witness this "human interest" wire piece from the *Democrat* in 1892: "He [the Chinese father] does not consider her [his daughter] worthy of a name, but calls her Number 1, 2, or 3. He considers her as without mind or soul... As she grows up she is a slave, in her own and her husband's home." And as dispatches from abroad hastened to explain, John Chinaman's imperial cabinet was medieval; and his appreciation of all technological advances Westerners had brought him was nil.

Labor held John Chinaman in particularly ill regard. Although illiterate, non-English-speaking Chinese laborers could pose no imaginable threat to Plattsburgh's typesetters, for instance, the local of the Typographical Union took pains to publish its endorsement of a re-enacted Exclusion Law in 1901, and *any* law that would "tend to exclude cheap foreign labor of any kind." The influential immigrant union organizer Samuel Gompers, head of the American Federation of Labor, did the same in the pages of the *Sentinel* in the early winter of 1902 – and his word would have counted. Plattsburgh had a lively manufacturing community of cigar makers, and Gompers, a former cigar maker himself, would likely have found more than a few local readers for his 1902 pamphlet, "Some Reasons for Chinese exclusion: Meat vs. Rice, American Manhood against Asiatic Coolieism — Which Shall Survive?"

In this fateful season, newspapers across the nation were heatedly debating the Exclusion Law, up for re-enactment in the spring. The *Sentinel* ran as many as three dispatches about the Senate hearings in a December 1 issue in 1901. One of these stories presented the anti-Chinese bill of Senator Lodge (one of a fistful of aggressive anti-immigrant proposals bandied about in that session). And while a second piece dutifully aired the reasoned views of the well-regarded Chinese ambassador to this country, Wu Ting Fang, the third piece, a dispatch from San Francisco, made the paper's bias clear.

Mr. Wu argued that the American press had grossly exaggerated the threat of a Chinese influx, and urged editors to meet him "in a debate in which he promises to pulverize them with facts and arguments." Ah, that more of the Chinese were as honorable and cultivated as the well-spoken Mr. Wu! If this were so, the *Sentinel*'s editors piously observed, "the exclusion act would be unnecessary." But the diabolical chicanery of John Chinaman was not to be underestimated. Witness the news from San Francisco, where the Chinese Six Companies, a consortium of benevolent associations of long standing, were demanding that every Chinese man in the United States "contribute the sum of $1 [to a political] fund...to be used in the effort to defeat exclusion" – and if they didn't pony up, the

consequences would be dire indeed!

Not a few weeks later, the *Sentinel* ran a piece from Bangor, Maine, with the inflammatory headline, "Happy Chinamen in Jail Having A delightful Time at Uncle Sam's Expense," a droll account of Chinese inmates feasting lazily on "all sorts of Celestial delicacies," tugging blissfully away on opium cigarettes, and engaging in covert, card-less gambling in which "exciting games are carried on under the noses of the guards, who, not understanding what is going on, are unable to stop it."

But Bangor was still three states to the east, and the fact the *Sentinel* chose not to use the occasion of this dispatch to investigate parallel offenses in the jails closer to home cannot be accidental. Yes, the Chinese in the local jails were a sort of nuisance, but on the other hand... those numbers sure translated into a lot of local jobs! As for the fiercely anti-immigrant rhetoric of organized labor, Northern New York was never much of a union stronghold, its electorate historically disinclined to embrace any kind of legislation that defined the Exclusion Laws in terms of "another phase of the war between capital and labor."

But the threat of the "Yellow Peril" on cultural, that is to say, racist grounds – this was another kind of argument altogether, primitive, familiar, and instantly embraceable. And it was on these grounds that Clinton County's District Attorney, Charles Vert, made his high-flown appeal for the re-enactment of the Exclusion Act in the influential pages of the downstate *New York Sun* on January 9, 1902, a letter republished in its entirety in the *Sentinel* on January 24.

Vert reasoned his support for the Act not in terms of labor's case but rather loftily in *spite* of it. In truth, he noted, the economic interests of the United States would likely be well served by an inflow of Chinese laborers: "a living machine, a cheap producer," to whom "there should be no more objection than to new labor-saving machines." But machinery was controllable. The proliferation of an inferior and undesired race was not.

"We already have one race problem. We should not heedlessly or hastily invite another... Were the Chinese a people that could be assimilated the case would be quite different." And here Vert draws a firm distinction between other immigrant groups and the Asian, "a being apart," likening him to "the barbarians...Rome invited in...to fight her battles for her. Shall we invite in the Chinese to fight our industrial battles for us? Prudence would dictate that we count well the cost."

In the Spring of 1902 the Chinese Exclusion Law was re-enacted, followed by further re-enactments, refinements, and embellishments in 1904, 1911, 1912, 1913, 1914, 1917, and 1924, along with other quota laws aimed at the restriction of immigrants from eastern and southeastern Europe. Not until 1943, the advent of World War II, when military need compelled us to court China as an ally in the struggle with Japan, were the Chinese Exclusion Acts repealed, marking the end of over a half century of continuously anti-Chinese legislation.

Did the legislation ever work? From 1900 to 1910, Chinese immigration dropped, and dropped again in the succeeding decade – a fact perhaps reflected in the pre-World War II conversion of the Chinese Jail in Port Henry into a "tenement house" for workers at the Port Henry furnace and the mines. The Chinese jail-within-a-jail in Plattsburgh has long since vanished from living memory, too. One by one, the Chinese laundries of the North Country closed their doors, leaving only the occasional photograph to attest to their ghostly presence. When Prohibition was enacted in 1920, the focus of the border patrol shifted from the arrest of aliens to the capture of rum runners and bootleggers – a vivid chapter of northern New York social history that for high stakes drama, subterfuge, car chases, shoot-outs, hiding places, and the like, understandably outdistances the darker, more disturbing saga of, say, a frightened, homeless twelve-year-old awaiting deportation orders in a lonely Clinton County jail. Yet scan the clipping files of the U.S. Border Station at Burke, crammed to bursting with headlines on recent busts of undocumented aliens, not just from China any more but from Turkey, Poland, Mexico, Sierra Leone, and who can doubt which story has proven the more foreboding and abiding. It is, after all, nothing more or less than the story of anybody

driven to the point of leaving hearth and home for something better, and desperate enough to break the law to make a dream come true.

AMY GODINE is a writer and independent scholar of North Country social and ethnic history, co-author with Elizabeth Folwell of Adirondack Odysseys, *and frequent contributor to* Adirondack Life. *Her curatorial projects include* Lasting Roots: Ethnic Neighborhoods of the Southeastern Adirondacks *and forthcoming* Dreaming of Timbucto, *an exhibition about an African-American Adirondack farm settlement before the Civil War. Amy Godine lives in Saratoga Springs, New York. A documented copy of this paper may be consulted at the Clinton County Historical Association museum.*

For Further Reading

Amy Godine: "Chinese to Go" in *Adirondack Life* July/August 1999.

Peter Kwong: *Forbidden Workers: Illegal Chinese Immigrants and American Labor* (The New Press, New York, 1997).

Lynn Pan: *Sons of the Yellow Emperor: A History of the Chinese Diaspora* (Little, Brown; Boston, 1990).

Puzzles in Portraits

by David S. Patrick

In the early years of Clinton County, two men had a profound impact on the development of several towns within the county, Pliny Moore of Champlain and Benjamin Mooers of Plattsburgh. Because of their wealth and importance, a number of portraits have been made of them.

Over the last 200 years versions of these portraits have been dispersed in many family branches throughout the United States. With so much time elapsed, information about these portraits has been long forgotten.

Several portraits of Pliny Moore and Benjamin Mooers have recently been "discovered" through genealogical research that I have been doing on the Moore, Nye, and McLellan families of Champlain, but documentation of the history of these portraits has been difficult to find.

I have recently tried to piece together the different likenesses of these two individuals and have found a lot of interesting and confusing information along the way.

Pliny Moore was born in Sheffield, Massachusetts, on April 14, 1759, and enlisted in the Revolutionary Army in 1776. In 1781 and 1782, the State of New York raised two regiments on bounties of unappropriated lands within the state. Pliny Moore re-enlisted and received a claim to land found in the 11,600 acre Smith and Graves Patent (also called the "Moorsfield Grant") in what is now the Town of Champlain. Starting in 1785, Pliny surveyed this land and by 1788 had moved to Champlain with several other settlers to build a new settlement. His settlement was originally called "Moorsfield on the River Chazy."

Pliny was very active in Federalist politics and was appointed the first Justice of the Peace in 1788 and Judge in the Court of Common Pleas a year later. In 1807, he was appointed First Judge and remained in that position until the mandatory retirement age of 60 in 1819. Pliny also held the offices of Superintendent of Highways and Commissioner of Taxes for Clinton County. He was also President of the Great Northern Turnpike Company, which worked to lay out highways in the Champlain area.

When Pliny died in 1822 at the age of 63, he had amassed great wealth from his mills, merchant business, and farms. Over the previous years, he had bought land in his grant from other settlers as well as land from the Canadian and Nova Scotia Refugees and owned as much as 5,000 acres, which was distributed to his seven children.

One year older than Pliny, Benjamin Mooers was born in Haverhill, Massachusetts, on April 1, 1758. In 1776, he also enlisted in the army where he served in various capacities. At the close of the war in 1783, he, with ten other people, traveled to Point au Roche and established a settlement, two years before the Platts settled Plattsburgh. He remained at Point au Roche until 1794 or 1795 and then moved to Cumberland Head where he started a family. In 1821, he moved to Plattsburgh and lived in the house that is still standing on the corner of Bridge and Pike Streets, commonly referred to now as the "Benjamin Mooers house." During the September 1814 Battle of Plattsburgh, this house had been used by General Macomb as his headquarters and bombed by the British with cannon fire from Lake Champlain. Benjamin died in 1838 at the age of 79.

Benjamin Mooers was also very active in politics and was a staunch Democrat. He was the first Sheriff of Clinton County, was Treasurer of the county for 38 years, was in the State Assembly for four terms, and was a State Senator for four years. During the War of 1812, he was called back to duty and rose to the rank of Major General. He commanded the militia in Plattsburgh and earned the commendation of the Legislature for his leadership during the war.

In his lifetime, Benjamin bought a huge amount of land from the Canadian and Nova Scotia Refugees

in the Champlain area. In a 1798 tax assessment conducted by himself, Benjamin was noted to have owned 36,840 acres. The town of Mooers was formed from Champlain in 1804 and was named after him because he owned so much land there.

Pliny Moore and Benjamin Mooers were bitter enemies. In 1797, Pliny had been appointed the first postmaster of Champlain. In 1804, Benjamin Mooers had written the Postmaster General to state that Pliny was not running his post office well. The Postmaster General wrote to Pliny and told him to resign his position. In a letter of reply, Pliny described Benjamin Mooers as his "personal declared enemy":

> *I am informed Application has been made to you by Gen'l Mooers (My personal declared enemy & I believe the only one of any respectability who is so in the County) to remove me from the Post Office. I believe he will not attempt to allege any thing against my private Character or public Official conduct as to my Politicks. I am a Federalist.*

In 1806, Pliny was passed over for First Judge, and Judge Bailey was appointed to ensure that Benjamin Mooers was not considered by the appointment council. A year later, Pliny was appointed as First Judge, but Benjamin wrote to Nathaniel Z. Platt a month later to state that Pliny had taken a "false oath" and he would swear to it at the proper time. Nathaniel wrote to Pliny:

> *I have just had a dispute with Gen'l B. Mooers respecting your Appointment. I contended that it was honorably obtained. He made use of some unpleasant assertions. I told him he could not nor dare to make them known. He then said that he believed you had taken a false oath and that he was ready and willing to swear to it – on what occasion he did not say. I denyed it and reprobated him by saying I did not believe it - his declaration was exactly this: that he believed you had taken a false Oath & if he was called upon he was ready to swear it - this is too much to put up with.*

With so much animosity between them, it is surprising that the children and grand-children of the two men intermarried. In 1826, four years after Pliny died and six months after his wife Martha died, Pliny's youngest child, Amasa Corbin Moore, married Benjamin Mooers' daughter, Charlotte Mooers. Benjamin was alive for the first twelve years of their marriage. Amasa and Charlotte had many children and descendents. With the names of Moore and Mooers in the genealogy of the Amasa Corbin Moore family, much confusion has occurred even to this day.

Two grandchildren of Pliny and Benjamin also married. Pliny's grandson, John Wolcott Hubbell, married Margaret Beckwith in 1856. She was the daughter of Hannah Elizabeth (Mooers) Beckwith. Some of their descendents are still living in this area.

The Pliny Moore Portraits

A photograph of Pliny Moore's likeness has long been known to exist. One copy was owned by my grandmother and the other by her cousin, Charles Woodberry McLellan III. This photograph of Pliny is now hanging in the Clinton County Historical Association's museum and was used for the cover of Allen Everest's book, *Pliny Moore, North Country Pioneer.* Other copies have surely been distributed to distant relatives.

The portrait is a photograph of Pliny's likeness

Courtesy of the Patrick Family

A photograph of the likeness of Pliny Moore

made from an original painting or drawing by an unknown artist. The photograph has been given a romantic, airbrushed look. Imprinted on both copies are the words *COPY BY ADAMS / PORTLAND, ME.*

A second, similar likeness of Pliny is found in the book, *Andrew Moore and his Descendants*, published in 1903 by the Honorable Horace L. Moore. To determine if this picture was identical to the previous one, the first one was superimposed over this one using image software on a computer, and the differences between the two were highlighted. The pictures were found to be identical except for the airbrushed look of the first picture. It is suspected that the first photograph is derived from the second photograph.

Courtesy of Special Collections, Feinberg Library, SUNY Plattsburgh

Pliny Moore in the book Andrew Moore and his Descendants

During my genealogical research, I found several notes made by my grandmother that made reference to a painting of Pliny Moore that was owned by a particular family living in New York State. I had assumed that the first photograph of Pliny was made from this painting. I was able to track down the owner of the painting, a descendent of Amasa Corbin Moore. The owner and I had assumed that his portrait was painted during Pliny's lifetime. After I was given a quality slide made after the restoration of the painting, I had it professionally scanned and digitized so that it could be edited on a computer and later printed.

Private Collection.

A painting of Pliny Moore made in Florence, Italy, in 1879

After close inspection of the scan, I was able to find the signature of the artist in the corner of the painting: *H. Luthine deVere / Florence 1879.* This was stunning. It appeared that the painting was made in Florence, Italy, in 1879, 57 years after Pliny died.

Private collection

The signature on the painting may show H Luthine deVere/ Florence, 1879 or a spelling close to that

To determine if the photograph of Pliny Moore in the *Andrew Moore* book was of the painting, the images were again compared using image software. Clear differences in the shape of Pliny's face and clothes were noted between the two.

It is suspected that the photograph of Pliny in the *Andrew Moore* book is of the original painting or drawing. It is also believed that Admiral John White Moore, Pliny's grandson and great-grandfather of the current owner, supplied this picture to the book's author since he was one of the two biggest contributors of family information, as noted in the book's introduction.

Courtesy of Special Collections, Feinberg Library, SUNY-Plattsburgh

A likeness of Pliny Moore found in the Plattsburgh Sentine of 1891

Private collection

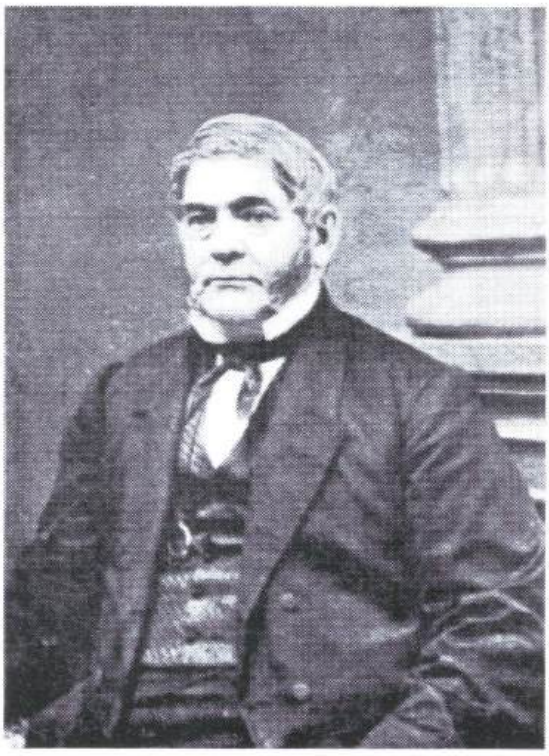
A possible painting of Pliny Moore or his son, Amasa Corbin Moore

During his naval career in the United States Navy, J.W. Moore had sailed all over the globe and had been in the Mediterranean in the 1850's and 1860's; although it does not appear that he was there in 1879. It is likely that he supplied a copy of this photograph to a painter in Florence.

A fourth version of the portrait was published in the *Plattsburgh Sentinel* on January 16, 1891, when the *Sentinel* was doing a series of articles on noted men and women of the Champlain Valley and the Adirondacks. Pliny's grandchildren were still alive when the article was published, so there is little doubt that this likeness is of him.

Another mysterious portrait is associated with Pliny Moore. It is also owned by the owner of the 1879 painting. Little information is available about the history of this painting, and, in fact, it is not even known who the subject is; although some have speculated it might be Pliny Moore.

The painting shows its subject from the front. This person is holding a document and is sitting in front of a series of books. It is known that Pliny was a Judge



Courtesy of Special Collections, Feinberg Library, SUNY-Plattsburgh

Amasa Corbin Moore in the book Andrew Moore

for many years, so perhaps he is sitting in front of law books. On 1808, Pliny received an honorary Master of Arts degree from Middlebury College when his son Noadiah received a degree. Perhaps this person is holding a diploma. Finally, the person in the portrait appears to have the same curved eyebrow as Pliny does in his other portraits.

There are several troubling aspects about this painting, though. First, the dating of the painting by the conservatory that did its restoration indicates that it was painted sometime after 1834 and probably between 1835 and 1840. This is because the colorman's stamp (a stamp placed on specially prepared painting cloth) was of an Edward Dechaux of New York City who was in business between 1834 and 1865. Also, the suit the person is wearing does not appear to be an 1808 style.

If not Pliny, this painting could be of his son, Amasa Corbin Moore, who was born in 1801 and was a lawyer in Plattsburgh. A photograph of Amasa taken about 1860 was also found in the *Andrew Moore* book and was probably supplied by John White Moore.

The Benjamin Moores Portraits

Five versions of portraits of Benjamin Moores are known to exist. Two are drawings found in books and a newspaper, two more are of paintings, and the fifth is a colored print.

One drawing of Benjamin Moores is found in the book, *Pictorial Field-Book of the War of 1812*, published by Benson Lossing in 1869. The second drawing is found in the Plattsburgh Sentinel for December 20, 1889, and was later published in the 1897 book, *The Souvenir Industrial Edition of Plattsburgh.*

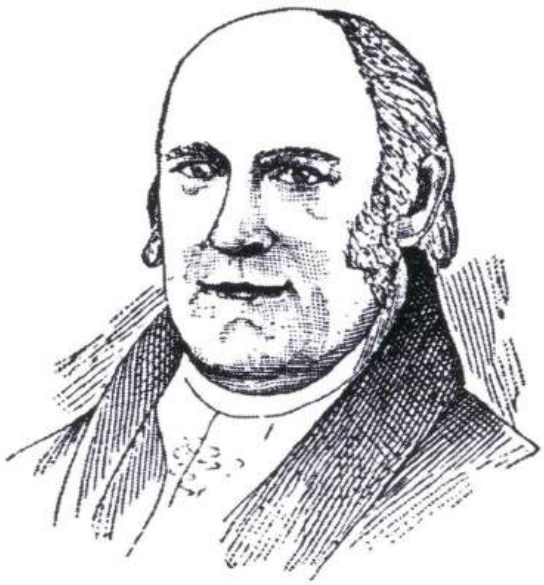
Two large paintings have also been made of Benjamin Mooers. The first is found in the Clinton County Historical Association's museum. The Association bought it from a Mooers descendent in 1969. The painting had smoke damage from the Chicago Fire of 1871 and has been restored poorly.

A second, recently discovered, portrait of Benjamin Mooers is owned by a Moore-Mooers descendent. The slide made from the restoration of this painting was also scanned and digitized, and I performed extensive editing to remove the spots and imperfections found on the original painting. A framed print of this painting is now hanging in the Association's museum.

This painting of Benjamin Mooers is intriguing

Courtesy of Special Collections, Feinberg Library, SUNY-Plattsburgh

Benjamin Mooers in the book Pictorial Field-Book of the War of 1812

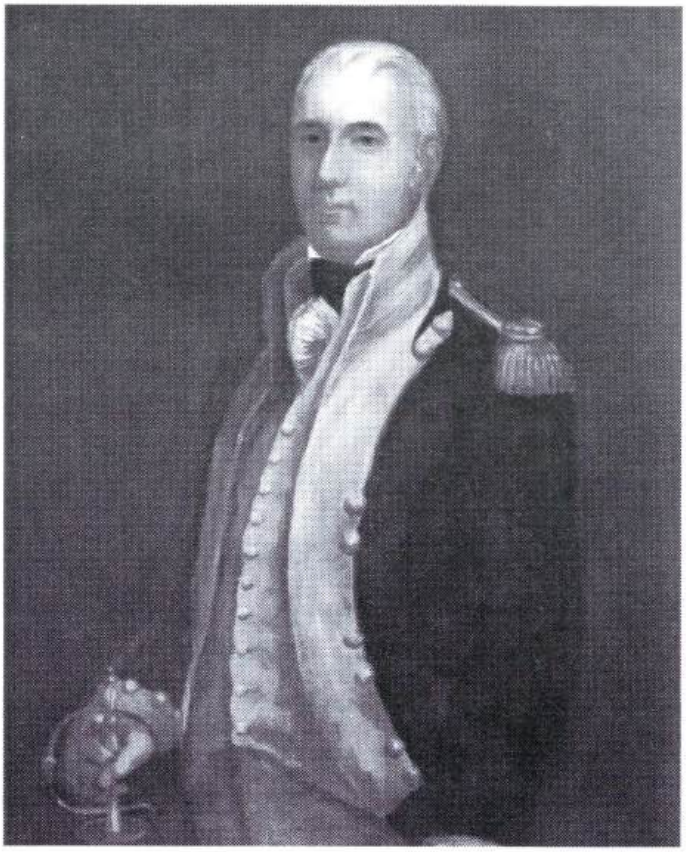


Courtesy of Special Collections, Feinberg Library, SUNY-Plattsburgh

Benjamin Mooers in the book The Souvenir Industrial Edition of Plattsburgh

Clinton County Historical Association

A painting of Benjamin Mooers that was damaged in the Chicago Fire of 1871



Private collection

A second, higher quality, painting of Benjamin Mooers shows him in the same pose

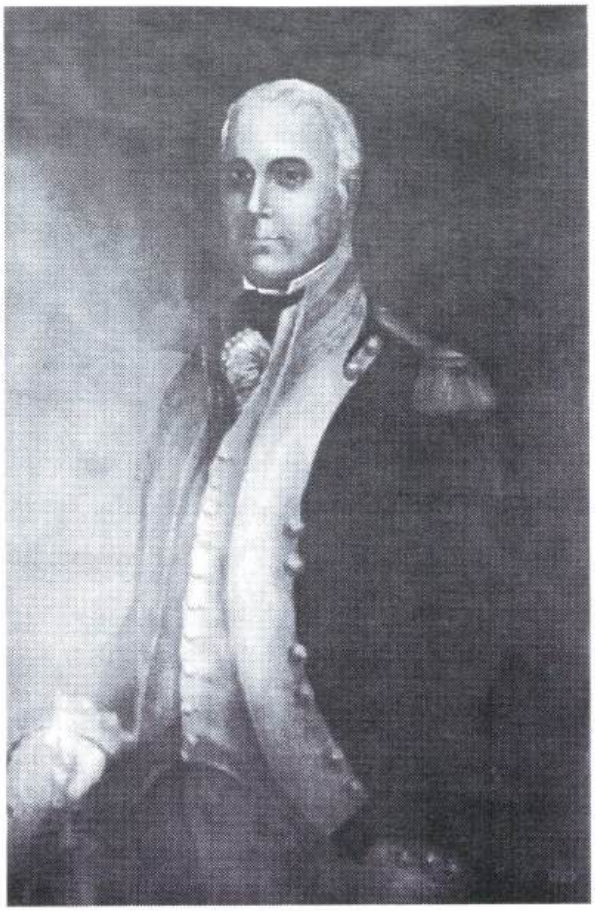
since it is an exact copy of the painting in the museum except that the head is painted rather differently. In this painting, the face is thinner and he has hair that extends down over his forehead. His sideburns are also thinner and do not extend as far down as in the first painting. The shape of the mouth is also quite different. Benjamin's posture, uniform, and sword are the same in both paintings, however. It was believed by the grandfather of the painting's owner that the museum's painting is the original from which his portrait was copied.

It is likely that the restoration of the painting may be responsible for some of these differences. Close inspection of the shape and color of Benjamin's mouth and chin highlights this problem. The coloring around the eyes is also quite different between paintings. If the conservatory had little information about what the original painting looked like, it may have restored Benjamin's face inexactly.

A color print of Benjamin Mooers in a similar pose was recently discovered, owned by yet another Moore-Mooers descendent that I found living close to me. This person owns what appears to be a 100-year-old color print that is only about 16 inches wide. Close inspection shows that Benjamin's face is painted differently compared to the first painting but closely resembles the face in the second painting. More prints of this type surely exist since it appears that it might have been mass-produced.

Thus, there appear to have been two different portraits of Benjamin Mooers, one painted in military uniform, the other in civilian clothes. The whereabouts of the original civilian portrait is unknown.

Each portrait has a unique yet mysterious history. Future work with these portraits should involve people with experience in 19th century paintings and dress. Perhaps in due time, other Moore and Mooers relatives will be discovered who own yet different likenesses of these two men.



Private collection

The third likeness of Benjamin Mooers was probably mass-produced in the early 1900s

DAVID S. PATRICK is a direct descendent of Pliny Moore and his oldest son Noadiah Moore (also written about in this magazine) and is related to two branches of Benjamin Mooers' descendents through the intermarriage of the Moore and Mooers families. He was born and raised in Plattsburgh where he received a B.S. in Physics at Plattsburgh State and an M.S. in Electrical Engineering at SUNY-Binghamton. He currently works at IBM Corporation in Essex Junction, Vermont. During the last five years, he has compiled an 800-page booklet of genealogical and historical information related to his Moore, Nye, and McLellan relatives from Champlain. Much of this information was compiled by his relative, Hugh McLellan, in the early 1900s and is now found in the Special Collections at SUNY Plattsburgh. Since moving back to the Northeast, he has been able to find and meet several relatives in the area and track down the portraits mentioned in this article. Using high quality slides made after the restoration of the paintings noted here, he had them professionally scanned using a $70,000 8,000 dpi drum scanner and digitized. The image files were then edited on a computer to remove any spots and imperfections found on the original paintings. The image files were then printed on special 16x20 inch photographic paper, developed and professionally framed.

For Further Reading

Allan S. Everest: *The War of 1812 in the Champlain Valley* (Syracuse University Press, 1981).

Allan S. Everest: *Pliny Moore, North Country Pioneer of Champlain, New York* (Clinton County Historical Association, Plattsburgh, New York, 1990).

Virginia Mason Burdick: *Portrait Painters of the Early Champlain Valley 1800-1865* (1975).

Afterwords

As we survey the articles for this years' *Antiquarian*, we are struck by how much illegal activity has been important to the history of Clinton County. This is likely because we lie on the Canadian border and that superb waterway, Lake Champlain. Amy Godine and Tom Calarco both treat the vigor of such activity with their studies of the flow of Chinese sneaking into the county at the turn of the last century and the stream of fugitive slaves flowing out of the county prior to the Civil War. It would be interesting to have similar studies of the smuggling of goods just before the War of 1812 and the rum running of the 1920's.

It also crosses our mind, as Amy Godine points out, how much these activities of the past reflect the present-day problems of illegal aliens, ethnic prejudice, and civil disobedience.

We thought, too, how Tom Calarco's and David Patrick's articles reveal the inconclusiveness of the study of history. Way always seems to open into way. Where was Noadiah Moore's farm? What are the origins of the Pliny Moore and Benjamin Mooer portraits?

Above all, we are delighted to celebrate the growing energy centering on the remembrance of the Battle of Plattsburgh revealed by Art Cohn's article. This energy is a sign of renewed recognition of the value of history to our own times. A special quality of this awareness is that it encompasses both sides of the lake, Vermont and New York – and Canada. Through the study of a past war we seem to be coming into closer harmony as partners working toward common goals. We hope that this energy will soon embrace the neglected importance of the Battle of Valcour as well, and that the symbolism of dead enemies buried side by side in Clinton County soil can be enlarged to help move forward our approach to universal brotherhood.

- David Kendall Martin, Editor

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Clinton County Historical Association
48 Court Street
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