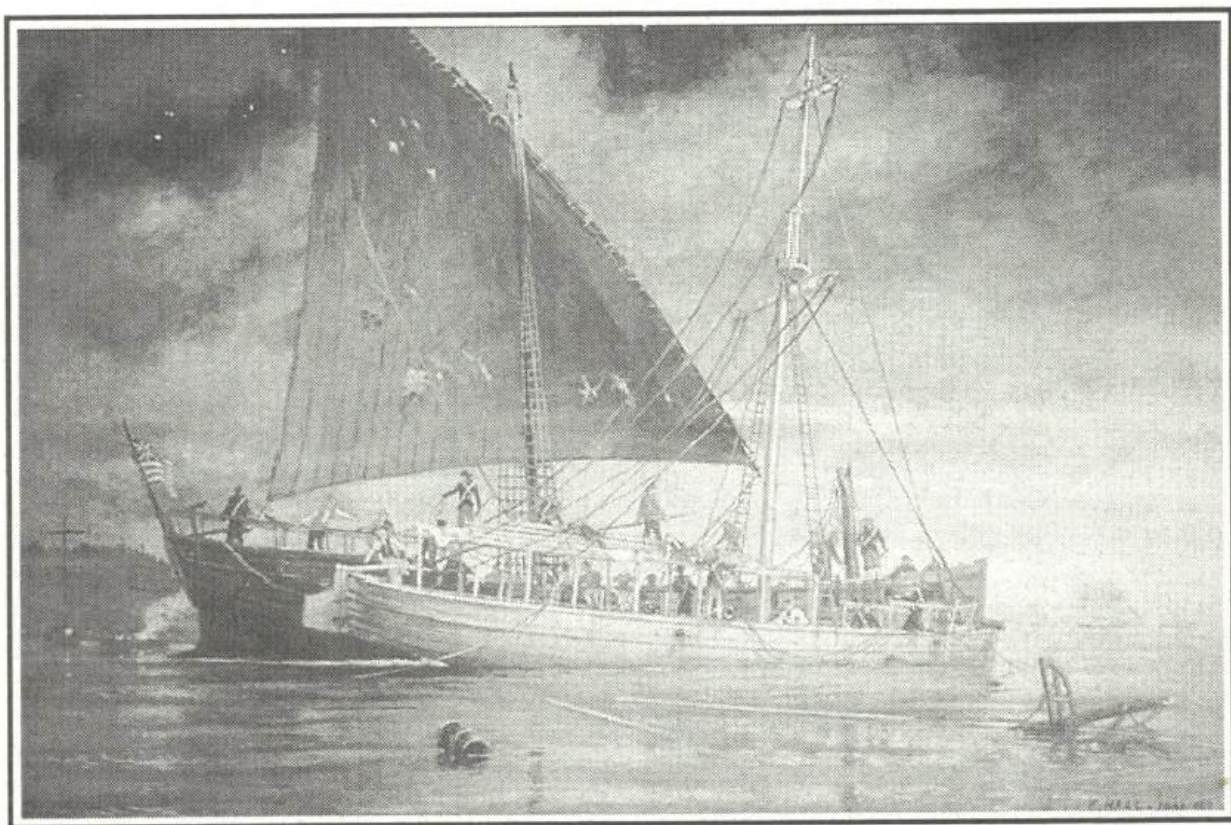


THE ANTIQUARIAN

Published annually by the Clinton County Historical Association



2003

CONTENTS

The Submerged History of Lake Champlain
by Steve Peters

1



William H. Miner and the Development of the Altona Flat Rock Region

by Kristina Parker

10



African Americans in the Battle of Plattsburgh

by Don Papson

17



Pride of Locality in the Journals of Dr. David Sherwood Kellogg 1886-1909

by Debra Kimok

26



THE ANTIQUARIAN, Vol. 20, 2003

Mary Anne Ducharme, Editor

©2003 Clinton County Historical Association

Published annually by

**THE CLINTON COUNTY
HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION**

48 Court Street, Plattsburgh, NY 12901



Preserving our past for the future

OUR 2003 COVER: painting by Ernest Hass, courtesy of the Lake Champlain Maritime Museum. The *Philadelphia* sinking at Valcour Island, October 1776.

CCHA Executive Director: John Krueger

President: Noel Stewart

Vice President: Matt Booth

Treasurer: Maurica Gilbert

Secretary: Susan Ledges

CCHA Board of Directors

Craig S. Allen Susan Ledges

Sylvie Beaudreau Paul Leduc

Matt Booth Jim Reh

Harvey Duchin Laura Rice

Maurica Gilbert William Rowe

Dave Glenn Noel Stewart

Mike Kulik Dawn-Marie Turner

This publication was made possible with public funds from the New York State Council on the Arts, a state agency. Partial funding for this publication is also received through agency contract agreement with the County of Clinton.



Submerged History of Lake Champlain

by Steve Peters

The great inland waterway, explored in 1609 by Samuel de Champlain, is famed as a scenic playground. Hidden in its deep waters are witnesses to some of the struggles that defined the origins of American nationhood. It is a graveyard for shipwrecks of historical significance, and no less, it is the birthplace of great innovations.

Not long after Fulton's steamboat first plied the Hudson River, Lake Champlain's own steamboat *Phoenix* caught fire and burned to the waterline. Steam was the cutting edge of new technology at the beginning of the 19th century, but the "poor man's steamboat" remained a horse-ferry. The only existing original horse-ferry now lies at the bottom of Burlington Bay.

Lake schooners like the *Water Witch* sailed the length and breath of the lake with cargo that provisioned North Country inhabitants. Belonging now to the annals of wind, water, and sail on Lake Champlain, the *Water Witch* lies at the bottom of the lake.

The opening of the Champlain Canal in 1823 allowed boats to travel from any part of the lake to New York City and the rest of the world without leaving the water. Vessels were created solely for Lake Champlain that were thin enough to fit in the canals, yet were still able to sail the lake. The *General Butler* was one such vessel, but it now sits on the lake bottom waiting for preservation.

While we have discovered an extensive number of relics on the bottom of the lake, a management plan is still in its infancy. The preservation of such relics is

an arduous task that is time-consuming, issue-ridden, and costly.

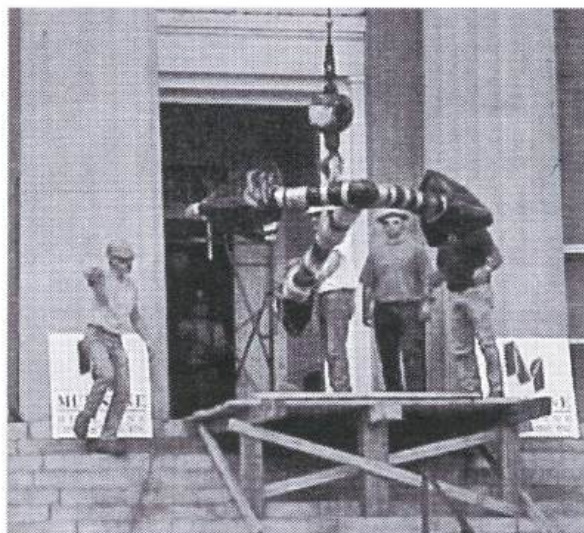
Once an artifact is found, what should be done with it? The answer to that depends on the historical significance and value to society. Who determines which artifacts are more valuable than others?

After it is decided which artifacts deserve preservation, there are many levels of preservation that can take place. When the anchor of the *Confiance*, a British warship, was found, it was raised to the surface. It was then returned to the lake until a preservation plan could be developed. While most people found the replacement of the anchor to be a peculiar action, the cool lake water had already preserved it for almost two hundred years. Once a plan for its restoration was in place, the anchor was raised and brought to the Lake Champlain Maritime Museum. While there, it underwent an

expensive and time-consuming process.

Is this the process that should be followed for entire shipwrecks or just pieces of them? Other considerations must be made for the protection of the artifacts while they sit on the lake bed. Treasure hunters have been known to pillage wrecks for their valuable relics. In addition, "silent killers" lurk within the lake. Pollution and non-native animal life are threatening Lake Champlain's underwater history.

In the murky waters of Lake Champlain lie many stories. While most historians have focused on the means by which humans used the lake, this is an account of story endings that unfolded long ago. Every



Courtesy of the Clinton County Historical Museum.

After a two-year conservation process at the Lake Champlain Maritime Museum, *The Confiance* anchor was hosted up the front steps of the City Hall building in Plattsburgh where it can now be viewed.
Photo by Lorene Saunders.

man-made object on the bottom has an explanation, and it is only right that the detection of each relic becomes the beginning of a new story. What begins a mystery carries with it the wonderment of discovery, a feeling that must have possessed our ancestors when they first looked upon this long and magnificent lake in the wilderness.

ROCK OF AGES

Tectonic plates don't make good dinnerware

A half-billion years ago when the Adirondack Mountains were twice as high as they are now and resembled the Alps, Lake Champlain was formed. Towering peaks dropped steeply down to what then was an arm of the Atlantic Ocean. This vast body of salt water extended over present day New England as part of an ocean. Movement of tectonic plates resulted in immeasurable forces that created the Green Mountains of Vermont and also became majestic and jagged peaks like the Adirondacks. As the earth cooled during the next ice age, great sheets of ice swept down from the north and collided with the mountains, cutting them down relentlessly. While ice, miles deep, sat on the Champlain Valley, a warming trend began. With the melting of the ice came the emptying of massive rivers into the area. Lake Vermont, as geologists call it, was formed. However, the weight of the ice compressed the earth so much that the Champlain Valley area was lower than sea level. This being the case, when the ice receded past the valley of the St. Lawrence River, the Atlantic Ocean rushed in and made a home for itself, called the Champlain Sea. Relieved of the massive weight of the ice, the seabed slowly began to rise once again above sea level, cutting it off from the rest of the Atlantic Ocean. With no ocean connections, the Champlain Sea was slowly diluted to become modern day Lake Champlain.

THE WINDS OF CHANGE

The four seasons of Lake Champlain: fall, winter, spring, and July

More often than not, the lake can be blustery enough to make a seasoned boater wish he were on shore. The weather of the lake is affected by many unique geo-

graphical and meteorological factors. Lake Champlain, the sixth largest fresh water lake in the United States, occupies a north-south fault zone which causes the long, deep, narrow valley in which the lake resides. The lake flows north into the Richelieu River, which flows into the St. Lawrence River and out to the Atlantic Ocean. Lake Champlain has a complex and irregular lake basin with submerged valleys and cliffs. Numerous islands and peninsulas have divided the lake into five major basins: the southern part of the lake, the main basin, Mississquoi Bay, Mallets Bay, and the northeast arm of the lake.

While most of the lake traffic is shut down from December through April because of ice, the remaining seven months have always been very active. Wind creates havoc when it chops the water into turbulent crests and troughs capable of capsizing any of Lake Champlain's most modern motorized vessels. According to a prominent local meteorologist, the lake produces a one to two foot surf in the center of the lake when the wind is blowing up to twenty miles per hour. When sustained winds hit thirty, waves can reach three to four feet. Waves can be even higher when the wind is blowing out of the south, and it has a chance to travel the entire length of the lake without much interruption. There have been substantiated reports of swells on Lake Champlain reaching over eight feet. When the ocean-like conditions of this large lake combine with the average air and water temperatures (55° F. and 44° F., respectively), it can be perilous.

It is only in the past several years that the bottom of the lake has been systematically explored by researchers. In 1996 the Lake Champlain Maritime Museum began a sonar survey of the entire lake. After completing the 2003 field season, the "Lake Survey Project" had largely surveyed the entire lake bottom. The survey found over one hundred shipwrecks, including the *Spitfire*, the last vessel in Benedict Arnold's fleet which had not been located. The *Spitfire* is considered to be the best surviving colonial ship in the nation.

THE FLOATING HIGHWAY

150 years ago the family station wagon had oars

Importing and exporting people, supplies, and services has always been a critical part of the North County livelihood. Today, the major trade routes are

Interstate 87, 15 from Montreal, 89 in Vermont, two airports, and the railroad.

For early settlers roads were primitive or non-existent because of two major roadblocks: the Adirondack Mountains and the Green Mountains. Lake Champlain became the expressway, with Plattsburgh and Burlington, existing major ports, transporting services and people to and from the north Country.

As early as 1873 a canal system was considered, leading to the north, bypassing the Richelieu Rapids, and connecting Lake Champlain with the St. Lawrence into Lake Champlain. The construction of the canal was blocked.

The logical alternative of a southern canal route was completed in 1823. The canal began at Whitehall, led through 64 miles of New York State's woodlands, and connected with the Hudson River at Waterford. Thus, there was a continuous waterway that permitted exporting of raw materials from the North Country to New York City and the Atlantic seaboard. In 1868, at the peak of the industrial age, Lake Champlain had well over 1,000 steamers, ships, and canal boats operated by more than 3,300 people.

The ingenious canal system, completed in the early 19th century, was an indirect result of Robert Fulton's steamboat in 1807. His hundred-foot steamer, *North River*, made its journey to Albany on the Hudson River with great fanfare. Not long after, the Winans brothers from Poughkeepsie began construction of a steamboat on Lake Champlain. Christened the *Vermont*, it surpassed the length of Fulton's *North River* by twenty-five feet and had a top speed of five miles per hour. The *Vermont's* claim to fame was that it was the first steamship of any kind on a lake, and the Winans brothers were proud that it could travel from Whitehall to St. Jean in twenty-four hours (barring bad weather and breakdowns).

Lake Champlain was by far the busiest inland waterway in America at the time, and the most perilous.

ABANDON SHIP!

The making of an underwater museum *The Phoenix*

One of the more famous ships of Lake Champlain was the *Phoenix*. Completed just after the battle at

Plattsburgh Bay in 1814, the *Phoenix* was the second steamship on Lake Champlain. Purchased at the incredible cost for the time of \$45,000, the *Phoenix* traversed the length of the lake twice a week traveling at a maximum of eight miles an hour. Although convenient, each passenger was charged ten dollars (a lofty sum for the time) to go from St. Jean to Whitehall.

The importance of the *Phoenix* was perhaps epitomized by its famous cargo. While touring the northeast on his inaugural trip in 1817, President Monroe used the *Phoenix* to traverse Lake Champlain. A year later the exhumed body of Revolutionary War General Richard Montgomery was carried on the *Phoenix* from Canada to be buried properly in New York City.

The *Phoenix* became infamous not because of its passengers or its service, but because it went down in flames on September 4, 1819, like its namesake. The cause was allegedly an unattended candle, but there was speculation of arson as well. A detailed account of the fire was printed soon after in the *Plattsburgh Republican* on September 11, 1819:

The boat took fire about two o'clock in the morning of the 5th instant, a few miles north of Colchester point, between Burlington and Plattsburgh. Before the fire was discovered and the passengers awakened, it had made such progress as to forbid all hope of extinguishing it. The fire burst forth and spread with such astonishing rapidity . . . that many of the passengers came off without their clothes.

This night was not without human casualties. The *Plattsburgh Republican* states that there was ample room in the lifeboat for thirty people, but someone cut the line at the bow when only half that number were on board. Captain Sherman of the *Phoenix* acted bravely and did his best to get everyone off the ship, begging the people in the boat to take Mrs. Wilson, a member of the *Phoenix* crew. They would not come back for her or anyone else. In the same *Plattsburgh Republican* article, Judge Hoit comments:

We regret to say that there were some persons on board of the boat who thought only of their own safety, and who assumed an

authority which at such a time ought only to rest with those possessed of cool deliberation and the common feelings of humanity, and forbade the return of the boat or any assistance being rendered to those who were left.

Mrs. Wilson; fourteen-year-old Gilbert Painter of Quebec; the ship's pilot, Mr. Manning; and four other crew members perished in the flames. The vessel burned itself to the water line as a strong northwest wind blew the hull into the Colchester Shoal where it eventually sank in shallow water. The engine machinery and boiler were salvaged for the *Phoenix II*, but ice pushed the charred steamer in to deeper water. According to Ogden Ross in *The Steamboats of Lake Champlain 1809-1930*, in some mysterious manner, the bell from the *Phoenix* made its way to the tower of the Presbyterian Church in Danville, Illinois.

One hundred and fifty-nine years after the *Phoenix* sank, its relatively intact hull was discovered by divers. The *Phoenix* is the oldest surviving steamboat hull in the world and it can still be seen in sixty feet of water halfway between AuSable Point and Colchester Point, just south of Stave Island. A mooring buoy marks its place as a protected artifact of the State of Vermont Lake Champlain Underwater Historic Preserve.

The Philadelphia

In 1776 the British were attempting to reclaim their authority over the American colonies by sweeping down from the north, through Lake Champlain to Albany, where they would meet other British troops coming north from New York City. Learning of England's plan to secure Lake Champlain, General Benedict Arnold attracted over 400 shipbuilders to Skenesborough (now Whitehall). In the summer months, they worked frantically to transform local timber into the first colonial navy. In the process they invented a new warship called a gondola which was similar to the European canal boat except that it was armed. They built eight of these fifty-four foot flat-bottomed boats along with four seventy-two foot galleys.

The *Philadelphia* was one of the gondolas. Measuring over fifty-three feet long and over fifteen feet wide, she weighed in at twenty-nine tons. The ship was heavy,

made of solid oak and reinforced to stop enemy fire. And it was loaded with enough ordinance to supply eight three-quarter pound swivel guns and three cannons. A nine-pound cannon was mounted on each side of the boat. The desperation of the colonists for munitions is evidenced by the fact that each of these cannons was about seventy-five years old at the time. The bow-mounted twelve-pounder was cast in Sweden a hundred years earlier.

As September came to a close, Arnold, his fleet of fifteen ships, and his "wretched motley crew" of soldiers and seamen began patrolling the northern end of the lake. On October 11, 1776, the British rounded the southern end of Valcour with a fleet of twenty-nine ships to find the colonial forces in defensive positions in the narrow strait. The battle lasted five and a half hours and the Americans were beaten to a pulp. There were many casualties; the *Royal Savage* was lost; and other ships were taking on water. The *Philadelphia* took a twenty-four pound ball in the bow and eventually sank about an hour after the engagement.

The forty-four crewmen of the *Philadelphia* surely knew the meaning of the word 'awe' as the enemy fleet, twice their number, slid ominously around the south end of Valcour Island. The inexperienced crew with its ancient cannons was peppered by lead shot and flying splinters of wood. Five days after the battle, on October 16, 1776, only twenty-six men were present to receive payment for their services.

As night fell, the battle ceased temporarily. Arnold, using great skill, escaped with the rest of his fleet in the night. The colonists wrapped their oars with grease-soaked rags to minimize the sounds of rowing. In the morning, the British fleet, realizing that the rebels had escaped, followed the ailing ships south overtaking all but four of Arnold's boats. While the Americans lost the battle, they prevented the British from staging a larger invasion of the Champlain Valley and Hudson Valley in 1776. This gave the colonies time to amass a larger army and replenish their supplies.

The *Philadelphia* was found virtually intact and upright on August 2, 1935, just off Valcour Island in sixty feet of water. Amazingly, the mast was still attached and a mere fifteen feet from the surface of Lake Champlain. Salvage expert Lorenzo F. Hagglund

brought the ship up to the surface for the first time in 159 years. For the next twenty-five years, the *Philadelphia* rested on a barge and once again traveled the lake, not as a warship, but as a tourist attraction. When Hagglund died in 1961, the ship was turned over to the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American History, where it was preserved. The *Philadelphia* is on display as an everlasting reminder of the courage that built America.

The Royal Savage

During the Battle of Valcour Island, another important colonial ship was lost. The schooner *Royal Savage* suffered the same fate as the *Philadelphia*, although in a slightly less dramatic fashion. Prior to its sinking, the *Royal Savage*, along with the *Enterprise*, lured the British fleet around the southern end of Valcour Island. The British found Benedict Arnold's fleet anchored in defensive positions ready to fight. The wily Arnold knew that the British would be at a disadvantage sailing into the wind during battle. But the *Royal Savage* was a casualty. Historian Peter Palmer notes the fate of the ship in an article titled, "Royal Savage" in the *Plattsburgh Republican* on March 21, 1868.

The Royal Savage sustained the fire of the British vessels for some time, during which her mast was crippled and much of her rigging shot away. She then attempted to return to the line, but, running too far to the leeward, grounded near the southwest point of the island, and was abandoned by her men, who succeeded in reaching other boats in safety. At night the British boarded the schooner, and set fire to her . . . The hull of the schooner lies on the spot where she was sunk, and her upper timbers can yet be seen at low water in the lake.

While the sinking of the *Royal Savage* does not involve much mystery, it spawned the curiosity of generations of treasure hunters. Fanciful legends were told of a large amount of gold stored in the stern of the ship and that the weight was the reason for the sinking. The location of the ship was always well known because it could be seen off of the south end of Valcour Island

when the water level of the lake was low. On March 21, 1868, a story in the *Plattsburgh Republican* described the pillaging of the *Royal Savage*:

Capt. George Conn anchored his schooner over the wreck, and with grappling irons, succeeded in dragging several large pieces of oak plank from the side of the vessel. He sends us a large stick for a cane, and pieces for rulers and other articles have been presented to other parties, also a piece to Clinton Lodge for a gavel. The wood is as black as ebony, and almost as heavy. It finishes with a beautiful polish.

During the *Royal Savage*'s two-century tenure on the lake bottom, individuals have been trying to raise the large and heavy schooner from the abyss. Accounts of such instances note the use of common fishing gaffs, specially fashioned hooks, and stump machines.

In the *Plattsburgh Sentinel* on November 27, 1903, one treasure hunter notes that "The timbers were fastened together by wrought iron spikes from one-half to five-eighths square, some of which can doubtless be found on our old farm in Peru—at least they were there very recently." Such cannibalism did not leave much for accurate preservation of the ship. In 1908 a diver was commissioned by the Lake Champlain Tercentenary Commission to recover as many artifacts as he could. Items recovered included silver spoons and cannon balls, but none of the mythical gold.

Captain Hagglund raised the *Royal Savage* just as he did with the *Philadelphia*. He stored it on Valcour Island, hiring a watchman to keep souvenir hunters away. The fragile *Royal Savage*, exposed to the elements, deteriorated until Captain Hagglund dismantled the old ship and gave pieces of it away. The existence of the *Royal Savage* is now only evident in a pile of unrecognizable timbers. Pieces of the vessel are now scattered across the country.

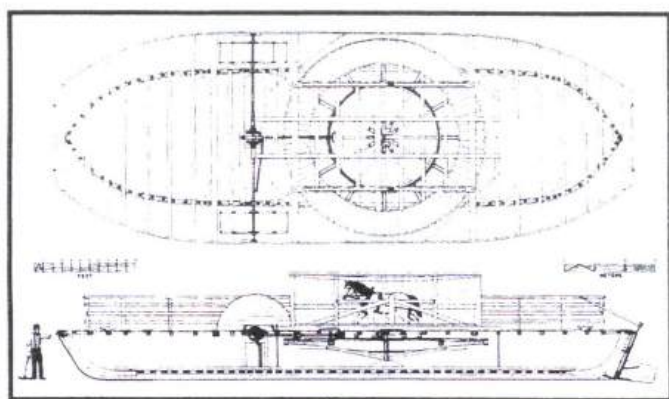
The Horse-Ferry

Perhaps one of the most interesting secrets of the depths of Lake Champlain is the horse-ferry wreck in Burlington Bay. The sixty-three foot ferry was discovered in 1983 in fifty feet of water using side-scan

sonar. To date, it is the only known surviving artifact of its kind and little is known about it.

Horse-ferries were a more efficient and inexpensive means of transportation for people, livestock, and raw materials than sail or paddle. These ferries were relatively common throughout the 19th century and ten of them operated on the lake. But the names of the boats and their owners have yet to be uncovered by research.

The "poor man's ferry" adapted the paddle wheel mechanism and design of a steamboat, except instead of an engine and boilers, the means of propulsion were horses. The Burlington Bay ferry used two horses that walked on a horizontal turntable that connected to two paddle wheels through gear mechanisms on each side at mid-ship. It had a stable shed aboard for the working horses and a railing to protect the passengers.



Courtesy of the Lake Champlain Maritime Museum.

The Burlington Bay Horse Ferry, drawing by Crisman and Cohn.

But, for the most part, the decks of these ferries were open to the elements and perhaps less than pleasant on inclement days. The North Country is known for not being a very forgiving place, and barring the short summers, traveling the lake on an open deck would make for a very tough life. The horse-ferries were, of course, impossible to operate from December through mid-April when the lake was frozen.

The Water Witch

Like more than one Salem witch, the schooner *Water Witch* drowned in late April of 1866. Jehaziel Sherman built the *Water Witch* as a steamboat, competing with the Champlain Transportation Company

(CTC). Sherman ran the boat as a freighter and passenger steamer, leaving port ahead of CTC ships like the *Phoenix II*, and offering lower fares. Three years after its construction, CTC eliminated the competition by purchasing Sherman's *Water Witch*, stripping it of its engine and boilers, and then selling it as a merchant schooner. For the next thirty-one years, it freighted raw materials.

In April of 1866, Thomas Mock, his wife, and three of their children were the crew aboard, hauling a load of heavy iron ore from the Cheever Ore Bed near Port Henry. The weight of the cargo made the ship sluggish and unresponsive in the rough lake water. When a breaker slammed viciously into the ship, the massive weight of the iron ore shifted to one side, tipping the vessel and immediately flooding the holds. The family frantically attempted to reach the small boat towed behind the *Water Witch*, but the ship went down so quickly that the boat was pulled down in its wake. Unable to save the youngest daughter, Roa, who was in the cabin below decks, they plunged into the frigid waters, floundering in the high waves for about twenty minutes before luck found them in the form of a passing sloop.

In 1977, 110 years after the *Water Witch* plummeted to its grave, a sport diver was being towed by his boat when he hit the sunken schooner. Dazed and senseless, the driver made his way to the surface only to spend the next two years trying to relocate the ship. James Kennard, who has located many of Lake Champlain's hidden treasures, assisted the diver in finding the *Water Witch* with a sophisticated side-scan sonar.

The General Butler

Named after Civil War general Benjamin F. Butler, the *General Butler* was a unique sailing vessel/canal hybrid built in 1862. These ships were developed exclusively on Lake Champlain so that they were able to sail the length of the lake and also fit through canals. They were long and thin like the *General Butler* which measured eighty-eight feet by fourteen feet. Before these ships went through the canals, they removed their masts to pass under the bridges.

The *General Butler* was hauling a load of Isle La-

Motte marble through a rough storm on December 8, 1876. Captain William Montgomery reported that ten-foot swells caused the wheel to give way and the ship crashed into the Burlington Breakwater. He labored to save the ship but to no avail. An account of the events that transpired is available on the Lake Champlain Maritime Museum website:

The General Butler had been declared uninsurable the previous year and while approaching Burlington from the north, her steering mechanism broke. The captain ordered his big anchor dropped, and while held into the face of the storm, jury-rigged a tiller bar in an attempt to gain enough steerage to make it safely into harbor. He cut the anchor line and drifted to the south end of the breakwater where the forces of the waves were so great it repeatedly lifted the ship up on top of the structure. Montgomery realized the ship was doomed and with each crashing contact he dropped his human cargo onto the breakwater's ice covered stones. By all accounts, the captain was the last to leave the ship, and upon his departure, the General Butler sat back into the trough and sank.

Drenched with each new surge, the crew huddled atop the breakwater in the freezing December temperatures. They were rescued though the heroic efforts of James Wakefield, the Burlington ship chandler, and his son in a small fourteen foot open boat.

The *General Butler* was found 104 years later in 1980 in forty feet of water. Most of the ship was in

excellent condition with many artifacts from 1876. It became the first member of the State of Vermont Underwater Historic Preserve in 1985, and has two mooring buoys to mark its place

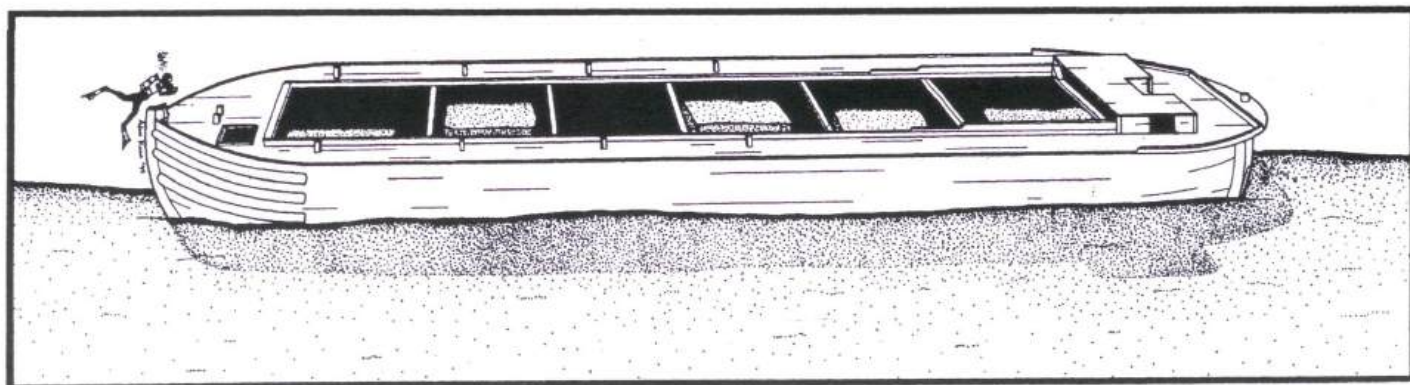
THE KITCHEN SINK

They don't call it the kitchen 'sink' for nothing

Boats, designed to float, are susceptible to sinking, as these stories illustrate. But ships are not the only things that find their way to the depths of Lake Champlain. In spring floods, items are swept out through the rivers to the lake and rest on the bottom never to be found again. In addition to trash in the lake, objects are swept overboard in high waves, or by fishermen who drop their fishing poles into the water. Anchors, bottles, china, arrowheads, military artifacts, ice fishing shanties, and airplanes have all been discovered on the bottom of Lake Champlain. Some of them have become historical artifacts.

In 1987 an Indian clay pot was found in Cumberland Bay. Called the Cumberland Bay Pot, it was dated to between 1300 and 1600 AD and was found in fifty feet of water in excellent condition. Archaeologists determined that the eleven inch tall pot was a cooking vessel. Its story is unknown. Could the owner have accidentally dumped the pot out of a dugout canoe? Or did high waves tip the boat, spilling contents and owner to the bottom of the lake?

An interesting artifact was found by local diving expert Captain Frank Pabst. Along with fifteen muskets and two sabers, he found a two-pound swivel gun. According to Pabst, before the gun was tossed over the



Courtesy of the Lake Champlain Maritime Museum.

A nineteenth century standard canal boat near Port Henry. Drawing by Adam Kane.

side, a stopper had been inserted in the barrel and the touchhole was spiked. More than two hundred years later, the ball and the powder were still dry.

Another secret that the lake hides is the whereabouts of an airplane that crashed in 1971. On January 27 of that year, five people departed in a jet from Burlington Airport bound for Providence, Rhode Island. Only four minutes after take-off, the plane vanished, never to be seen again. Numerous searches yielded nothing. However, in April of 1971, airplane debris was found washed up on the shore of Shelburne Point, Vermont. Nothing was ever found of the five people aboard. It is among the many unsolved mysteries that haunt the bottom of the lake.

PRESERVING THE TREASURES

After the Battle of Plattsburgh, the British flag-ship *Confiance* was anchored at Whitehall. Left to rot, the ship eventually sank into the shallow waters of the Poultney River where it sat until 1873. Dredging operations in a nearby channel allowed the ship to surface and float into the newly deepened channel where it blocked lake traffic. J.J. Holden was hired to remove the ship from its inconvenient location and did so effectively with twenty-four kegs of gunpowder. Walking canes, sold for a dollar each, were made from the splinters.

This blundering waste of a significantly historic ship has since been bitterly regretted. The appreciation of our submerged history has increased with each new discovery, further fostering new interest in our regional history, and new studies in preservation.

For decades, preservation of ships and artifacts from the lake took the form of raising as many as possible. Now, it is proven that the wiser approach is to leave as many artifacts in the lake as possible where the cold water keeps them preserved as they are thoroughly documented, evaluated, and management plans are developed

for them.

In 1985 Vermont was one of the first states to establish a system of selected underwater historic sites, marked by mooring buoys, so that divers can visit these relics of the past. So far, the program has been very successful with minimal wear and tear on the sunken vessels.

In 1991 a diver was arrested in Vermont for removing Revolutionary War artifacts from the lake bed, a signal that preservation is taken seriously.

Lake Champlain is shared by two states and the lake bottom is public land. Because of the Abandoned Shipwreck Act of 1987, the federal government gave ownership and jurisdiction of the shipwrecks to the respective states but the subject of jurisdiction remains a touchy one. The fact is clear, however, that New York has been severely deficient in its management of submerged artifacts. But there are signs that individuals and groups in the region are becoming more pro-active.

While many divers have a better understanding of the historical and informational value of Lake Champlain's wrecks, there is still risk from pillagers who dive with hammers and crowbars.

Another vandal threatening our treasury of sunken ships in Lake Champlain was discovered in 1993: the zebra mussel. These two-inch mollusks can congregate in thousands in one cubic square foot on a boat hull and in the Great Lakes some shipwrecks have collapsed from the sheer weight. There is also a concern that the mussels have the effect of corroding iron fittings

of ships such as the *General Butler*, and without these fittings, the boat becomes a mere pile of wood on the lake floor. However, recent study gives reason for hope because it was found that yellow perch and sheepshead feed on zebra mussels and may control the population.

All underwater shipwrecks deteriorate with time, limiting the window of opportunity for their study.

LAKE CHAMPLAIN BY THE NUMBERS

- 435 square miles of surface area
- Maximum depth of 400 feet
- 6.8 trillion gallons of volume
- 587 miles of shoreline
- 120 miles in length
- Maximum width is 12 miles
- More than 70 islands
- 8,234 square miles of land drain into the lake
- Refills once every 2.6 years
- 608,000 people live within the basin area

There are a number of different ways to go about studying shipwreck sites. The most expensive is full-scale recovery and conservation which calls for the stabilization and care of an entire ship and its contents. An example is the preservation of the ship *Wasa* by the Swedish government, which has cost more than twenty million dollars in the past three decades.

Recovery of a vessel's artifacts followed by the documentation of the hull is a middle ground approach. After the shipwreck is investigated, the hull is left in place, perhaps to become an underwater preserve for recreational divers to visit. A number of shipwrecks in Lake Champlain, with hulls fully documented, have been left in place by researchers. This approach avoids the significant expenses associated with the conservation and curation of the vessel's artifacts.

Combined conservation and documentation is a less expensive method that retrieves and preserves portable items while large artifacts are left submerged and documented thoroughly.

Technological conservation involves the digital documentation of small artifacts as well as large objects such as hulls. After documentation, all artifacts are replaced in their original sites.

The final method is taking no action. By leaving an artifact on the bottom of the lake, the deterioration is significantly slower, and the hope is that new technology and a rational plan of preservation will be developed. The most appropriate combination of actions for the shipwrecks of Lake Champlain remains an open question.

Arthur Cohn, Lake Champlain Maritime Museum Director, believes that "these objects are of public value, that they are public resources, and that they have tremendous power to teach and enrich our understanding of the past, which is a very wonderful and valuable thing."

As each day passes, there are many different factors that are taking their toll on our historic wrecks. Each wreck gives us a view of exactly what life was like at the time of its sinking, acting as a window into the past. I would encourage anyone and everyone to become pro-active with historical issues that concern the lake. There could never be enough support for this cause. Preserving the past is a valuable and enriching

task and, as history has shown us, preservation can only get better.

STEVE PETERS of Wilmington, N.Y. attended Plattsburgh State University with undergraduate studies in speech communications, and graduate work in Liberal Studies in Administration and Leadership. His passion for local history began during his senior year at PSU in a History of Plattsburgh class taught by Dr. Richard Frost. Steve works for North Country Community College as a Student Affairs Coordinator at the Ticonderoga Campus. This article was a McMasters History Writing Competition winner in 2000. To contact the author: e-mail stevepeters00@hotmail.com.

For Further Reading

Lake Champlain Underwater Historic Preserve: A Management Study for the State of New York. This and other reports by Arthur Cohn, Adam Kane, et. al., are available at the Maritime Research Institute, part of the Lake Champlain Maritime Museum, 4472 Basin Harbor Road, Vergennes, Vermont, 05491. Some of this information is also available at the Clinton County Historical Association, 48 Court Street, Plattsburgh, 12901.

On the web: Lake Champlain Basin Program Website: www.lcbp.org/lakefax.htm.

The Lake Champlain Basin Program (LCBP) is a federal, state and local initiative to restore and protect Lake Champlain and its surrounding watershed for future generations.

For a complete bibliography of this article, contact The Clinton County Historical Association.

William H. Miner

and the Development of the Altona Flat Rock Region

by Kristina Parker

The area known as the Flat Rock is located in Altona, New York. The surrounding locality was primarily untouched by European civilization until the early 1800s. The attraction that drew people to the location was the blueberries that grew there. Blueberry picking was slow to develop in the area, remaining a family venture until the 1880s when companies began to control berry lands. In the first decades after 1900, one man with one goal changed the history of Flat Rock blueberry industry and community. William Miner's arrival to the Altona area eventually changed Flat Rock itself, the seasonal community that resided there, and the communities on its boundaries by building a hydroelectric dam and supporting the blueberry picking industry.

The most comprehensive work written about the Altona Flat Rock is *History of the Altona Flat Rock* by Larry Gooley. The book examines the history of the area chronologically from the formation of the rock locality until 1980. The video by Paul Fredrick, "A Place Out of Time," is also a chronological view of Flat Rock. The author focuses on the scientific development of Flat Rock and its current uses, only briefly exploring the residents of the locality. Other works written about the locality focus on the technical aspects of the dam built by William Miner. Since the hydroelectric dam was a failure, it is virtually ignored by most authors of works about Miner and his involvement in northern New York.

What has been overlooked to date is the degree to which the construction of William Miner's dam on the Altona Flat Rock affected the Flat Rock community, as well as the communities surrounding the Flat Rock locality. Miner saw Flat Rock as a potential site for a hydroelectric system and therefore supported the development of the area with capital. As well as developing his own interests in electricity, he supported the exist-

ing blueberry industry that provided income to local families. After the power project failed, he continued to fund berry picking. Upon Miner's death however, the industry struggled, and eventually the seasonal community and lifestyle was abandoned, and the dam that had created a lake was opened.

Flat Rock as a Company Town: 1880-1910

In the 1880s Woods Brothers established a company directly involved in Flat Rock. Though there had been previous entrepreneurs involved in picking blueberries and selling them on a large scale, the Woods Brothers established the first berry camps at Flat Rock. The settlement was seasonal and the buildings were taken down at the end of each season and reconstructed the next year in the same location. Each camp was numbered so that all materials were kept together during the off-season. During the season the camps became a small town. The Woods Brothers' camps were occupied by at least fifty families each season. The town had a store and a dance pavilion. Others who owned land at Flat Rock began to construct camps. The largest was that of the Trombley Brothers, who began to build camps on Flat Rock and ship blue berries in the 1890s. By 1900 Trombley had bought the Woods Brothers' holdings.

Whether one picked berries for Woods Brothers, Trombley Brothers, or a smaller landowner, the residences were shacks or homemade tents. The one room wooden shacks were hastily put together and disassembled by the pickers themselves. Emma Johnson lived in the Trombley camps and characterizes them as poor quality, saying "Those camps weren't much of anything. They were just enough to keep the rain off of you, and that was about all." No beds or household items were provided. Laundry was done in a small creek that ran by the buildings.

The majority of people who worked on Flat Rock were local inhabitants, coming from towns surrounding Flat Rock, such as Altona, Chazy, Mooers, and Champlain. However, small groups traveled from as far away as Malone, Montreal, and Vermont. The workers came in family groups with every age group represented from elderly men to children just a few months old. Strangers became familiar friends because it was part of each family's tradition to come back year after year to pick berries and live in the same area of the camp. With common backgrounds, and the camaraderie of the summer season, the families enjoyed evening entertainment after a day of picking. They gathered in the dance pavilion for a vigorous square dance, adapting well-known dances to spirit of the Flat Rock community, giving them titles such as *The Blueberry Waltz* and *The Flat Rock Quadrille*.

The workday began by getting up at first light and picking until the containers were full around noon time when the berries were measured. After a lunch break, the pickers worked through the heat, or wind, or cold wetness of the day's weather, until nightfall when the berries were again measured and packaged. During a typical workday of fifteen hours, a family of five could pick one hundred and fifty quarts, with a pay between five and ten cents a quart. Once the berries were prepared for shipment and the workers received payment, companies such as Trombley Brothers sent the berries throughout New York, Vermont, Connecticut, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, and Canada.

From the 1880s until 1910, the entire Flat Rock community took on the structure of a company town because the companies depended on the seasonal workers and found it necessary to supply their basic needs. Survival of the community depended on the picker-buyer relationship. Without the picker the companies would not have been on Flat Rock, and without the

buyer there would have been little economic incentive for anyone involved.

Why Miner Came to Chazy

William Henry Miner was born in 1862 in Juneau, Wisconsin. In 1873, he was orphaned and came to Chazy to live with his uncle, John Miner. In 1880, he began a career in the railroad industry in Lafayette, Indiana. While at Hutchins Refrigerator Car Company as a mechanical supervisor, he developed a shock-absorbing device for railroad cars so that the couplings between them did not break. He patented the device on October 20, 1891, and began to make his fortune. On February 2, 1897, he established W. H. Miner, Inc. of Chicago, Illinois.

In 1903, Miner and his wife Alice returned to Chazy to run John's 144-acre farm, developing it into the famed 18,000-acre Heart's Delight Farm. To provide electricity to his farm and eventually to the town of Chazy, he undertook the building a series of

dams in Chazy and Altona. He also became a major benefactor for the Chazy community and surrounding towns, building the Chazy Central Rural School, the Physicians Hospital in Plattsburgh, and funding the restoration of the Kent-Delord House Museum in Plattsburgh.

While William Henry Miner made his fortune elsewhere, he chose Chazy as his residence. His wealth provided employment and development in Chazy, and it also benefitted Altona and Flat Rock because of his wish to provide electricity for Heart's Delight Farm.

Miner Changes Flat Rock's Landscape, Inhabitants, and Industry

In order to generate the electricity he needed for the expanding farm, Miner created a series of hydroelectric dams in the towns of Chazy and Altona. When referring to the dams in 1909, he wrote that the dams not only



Courtesy of the Chazy Town Historian's Office.

Seasonal pickers in front of the blueberry shacks which were hastily put together and disassembled by the pickers themselves.

produced power, but also created beautiful lakes.

Ten concrete dams have been constructed across these streams [Tracey Brook and Chazy River] thus affording a series of lakes hundreds of acres in extent. The largest of these--Lake Alice--is more than two miles in circumference. These lakes not only add greatly to the beauty of the farm, but also serve as storage reservoirs for the power plants.

Unlike his previous ventures, the Flat Rock dam not only changed the environment of the area, but also the community.

Miner and his surveyor, Levi G. Bundy, located the site for the Flat Rock dam on May 10, 1910 and the site for the reservoir it would create on October 11. The area selected would cover the blueberry camps owned by Trombley Brothers at Cold Spring. The title to that land was purchased from John Trombley on November 16, 1910, and two days later, the camps were removed. Miner continued to buy land from John and Edward Trombley until February 9, 1912, providing more than sufficient land to build the dam. The Trombleys were allowed to continue harvesting berries for five years on the land that was not flooded.

Rather than using the local labor force for dam construction, Miner chose to use a majority of immigrant laborers. They were housed at his farm in Chazy while construction of the boarding camps began on November 24, 1910. One boarding house, known as the Italian Camp, was seventy-two feet long and twenty-three feet wide and three stories high. It consisted of offices, foreman's lounge, foreman's dining room, laborer's lounge and dining area, foreman's sleeping quarters, and laborer's sleeping quarters. Later, other labor camps were built behind the concrete wall of the dam. These camps were two-story structures with three walls and the second floor consisting of the walls and supports of the dam. The front wall was made of wood and tar paper with an exterior ladder to reach the door on the second floor. Each floor had one window. In comparison to the blueberry shacks the quarters were, if not luxurious, at least more spacious and weather resistant.

The flurry of building activity included tool storage

buildings, a horse barn, two engine houses, a blacksmith shop, a storehouse, and a crusher plant. As of March 3, 1911, Flat Rock was no longer a wilderness camp of blueberry pickers' shacks and tents.

A very different social dynamic also emerged as 510 workers, a mix of local men and immigrants, labored side by side while dam construction was underway. A majority were the immigrants, facing adjustment to an unfamiliar place among strangers with whom they had no ties or common bonds. The top-level management was from Burlington, Vermont, having been employed by E. F. Moore, who was the engineer.

With the first group arriving at Flat Rock on December 12, 1910, the unskilled laborers were Italian, Russian, Polish, Bulgarian, and Spanish. Newly entering the United States at Ellis Island, they had left their families in the old countries. For example, Wasily Fraulko left alone from Zaprino, Russia and resided in Altona as a Miner employee. Most planned to return to their country of origin or eventually move on to other employment.

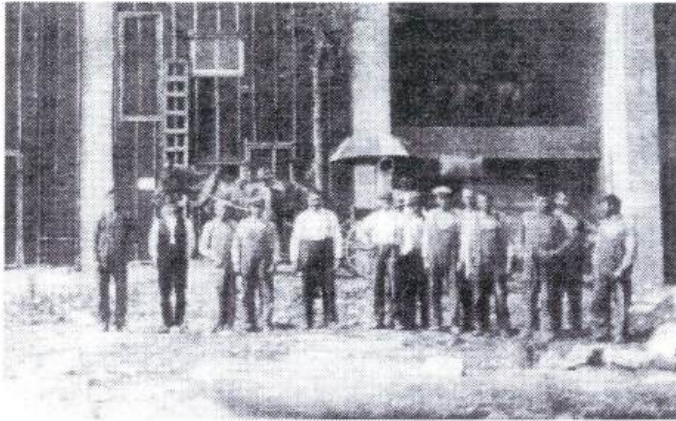
Those employed by Miner were all males, primarily between the ages of eighteen and forty. Hartun Kozil, for example, was an eighteen-year-old whose fate it was to drown while swimming in "the ditch," a trench dug to direct water flow to the dam. The newspaper report stated that he was a "young foreigner" with "no relatives in Chazy."

The 1915 United States Census of Altona verifies sixteen Russian males employed by Miner. Residing in a boarding house between the residence of Levi Bundy and Adolphus Parker, the youngest of the Russian group was twenty years of age and the oldest was fifty-two. All except three had been in the country for at least two years.

To ease the loneliness of separation from families, and the fears of being in a strange land, each ethnic group naturally segregated with those sharing a common language and customs. The Russians lived under a portion of the dam. The Italians lived in the Italian Camps. Other workers were housed at Heart's Delight Farm in the Bulgarian Camps.

Separate living quarters were maintained because of strife between the ethnic groups which was fueled by the alcohol at the Italian store. Although no one was

killed in fights at the dam of Flat Rock, a fight did erupt at Heart's Delight Farm between the Russian and the Italian laborers. A Russian man was shot after insulting an Italian and brawling at the evening meal.



Courtesy of Town of Chazy Historian's Office.

The boarding houses for these Russian laborers were built using the walls and supports of the dam.

Prior to Miner's arrival in Altona the majority of foreign-born residents were French-Canadian, French, English, Scotch, and Irish. One hundred fifty-six immigrants lived in Altona, 140 of whom were born in Canada, and 129 were French Canadian. The only two Eastern European immigrants were members of the Feinberg family. Most families from Canada had been in the country at least ten years, obtained citizenship status, and spoke English. They had assimilated into the community. In 1905, Chazy was home to 113 immigrants, ninety-nine of whom were born in Canada, and ninety-five of which were French Canadian.

Interaction between the immigrants and the blueberry pickers was not common. The laborers resided in the boarding houses and the pickers stayed in the camps. It was only on Saturday nights that all might come together for the evening party. However, children rarely attended the parties if the immigrants were present because of the possibility of drinking or rowdiness among the different ethnic groups.

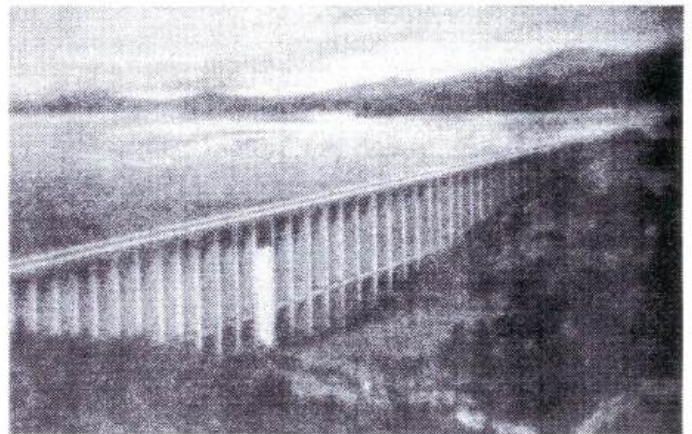
The Flat Rock Dam: An Innovation of its Time

The 510 men employed by William Miner did more than stay within their ethnic enclaves. Their wages were hard-earned constructing a dam, a lake, and a powerhouse. At the time the first excavation

for the dam began, on December 14, 1910, the end product was to be 18,000 feet in length. The water it held back would flood 200 acres of cleared land. The dam was to be "the largest of its kind in this part of the country." The newspapers reported that the work would be completed by the summer of 1911.

Flat Rock is composed primarily of Potsdam Sandstone, but Miner attempted to build the dam on cobblestone. The cobblestone formed one mile of the southeast side of the structure. E. M. Mooers advised him that the inflow from Cold Brook was not great enough to fill the dam and that the cobblestone ridge would not hold water. However, Miner chose to ignore all advice and proceed as planned.

In this manner the construction of one of the few permanent structures on Flat Rock began in 1911. Miner paid for the use of seventy-five horses and two Pierce Arrow trucks, operating twenty-four hours a day. The horses hauled the cobblestone from the dam site to the crusher plant where it was made into cement. The two trucks then hauled the cement back to the dam site. On January 31, 1911 the crusher plant went into full operation making concrete. Twisted metal reinforcing beams were placed in the dam itself to make it more structurally sound. Miner introduced more technology into the area in order to stop the water from leaking through Cobblestone Hill. A railroad track was constructed around the reservoir site and the cars were filled with concrete. As the cars went around the track the concrete was dumped and flowed down the ridge and raked flat before it set. The result was a six



Miner's Flat Rock dam. Reprinted with permission from *History of Altona Flat Rock*, by Larry Gooley.

to eight inch thick seal over one mile of land. After the cement had hardened, tar was poured into any cracks that developed. The work was completed and the gates of the dam were closed at noon on March 11, 1913.

Simultaneous to the construction of the dam, a powerhouse was built. The building was constructed of stucco with a barrel tile roof, in the Spanish Revival style. William Miner preferred the style in any construction that he directed, even though it was certainly non-traditional in the New England farm community in which he lived. The powerhouse contained three turbines and three General Electric generators. Since power was produced elsewhere along the Chazy River, the Flat Rock powerhouse was only to be used eighty-six days out of the year when it was not a dry season. It was put into operation in 1915, after the reservoir had filled with water and functioned intermittently until 1922. The venture was eventually abandoned because cracks continued to develop in the concrete



Photo by Kristina Parker.

Footprints of laborers left in the cement of the dam site.

over Cobblestone Hill and mechanical problems occurred at the powerhouse. The dam was hence known as the Million-Dollar Dam.

Miner Improves Blueberry Industry

When the powerhouse was put into operation, Miner was also deeply involved in the blueberry business. He had purchased more land than required to build the dam and by 1915 the berry rights that Trombley Brothers held had expired. Miner began his own berry camps and business.

To maintain order in the blueberry camps and survey his holdings on Flat Rock, Miner hired three watchmen: John Murphy, Melbourne Parker, and Louis Barnaby. John Murphy and Louis Barnaby were provided with housing and gifts courtesy of Miner. Louis Barnaby eventually resided in the powerhouse.

Miner's berry camps were run much the same as those previously run by Trombley Brothers. But he was able to use his wealth to improve the living conditions of the families that worked for him. He provided better housing by using the unoccupied immigrant housing. Approximately eighty families resided in Miner's berry camps. The additional structures that were built were sturdier than Trombley's houses. Bertha Rabideau, age ninety of Altona, and a berry picker for Miner, said that her family's house had bunk beds, a stove, and a big kitchen. The camps also had wooden floors, which were considered a luxury by the families who had picked for other buyers. The newly formed lake provided families a place to bathe and do laundry. There was a community well for drinking water. Instead of having a company store, local grocers from Altona and West Chazy came to Flat Rock to make deliveries.

When it was raining the children were paid ten cents to assemble blueberry crates that held thirty-two quarts each. On a good picking day, Bertha Rabideau's family filled approximately eleven or twelve of these, earning thirty-eight dollars, more than they had earned with the Trombleys.

Already wealthy, Miner was able to ignore the price wars with which smaller buyers had to contend. Profit was not his first priority and in fact, the majority of the crates of berries were given as gifts to his business associates in Chicago. To package the berries for transport, Miner employed men to run the on-site berry house, as well as drive the Pierce Arrow trucks used to haul the berries to Heart's Delight Farm or the West Chazy train station.

The sense of community was maintained on Miner's land. Most of the families came back each year to the same camp. Rabideau remembers staying at the Flat Rock houses with her parents and eight siblings. Her aunt and uncle lived next door and her brother, Louis Barnaby, lived in the powerhouse. Even families who traveled from Malone and Dannemora were well

known friends because they picked every year.

The sense of community was evident on Saturday nights. Miner kept buildings open for square dances and parties, and anyone who could play an instrument was in high demand. The children found more leisure time than the adults, and in the evenings they gathered outside the berry house to play games. Since no berries were shipped on Sundays, everyone had the day off and the family might fish at Kimball pond, or go swimming in the lake.

Under Miner's direction the Flat Rock community remained much the same as it had been prior to the construction of the dam. Even after the hydroelectric power failed Miner continued to operate his berry business, providing employment for hundreds of local people.

The Disappearance of a Community

William Miner died in Plattsburgh, New York in 1930. A former employee of Heart's Delight Farm, Bernard Menard, characterized his death as a tragedy.

It affected everything, everything that he had a hand in. Around here it was like when the President dies today . . . all the good he did for everybody and all the work he'd been doing for years, years.

Bertha Boulerville of Woods Falls, New York knew Miner and his wife. She remembered the day that Miner died and pointed to the employment that was lost. She said, "It was so sad . . . he made a lot of work for a lot of people."

There is no doubt that Miner's death had a profound effect on the Flat Rock community. Shortly after his death a hole was blasted in the Flat Rock dam to allow Cold Brook to once again flow to the Little Chazy River. The powerhouse was also destroyed at the same time. Yet, even in death, Miner's Flat Rock venture benefitted the local community. Before the powerhouse was torn down, Louis Barnaby and his family were provided with housing courtesy of the farm. All the windows, doors, and flooring were sold to Pearl and Anna Parker for \$100 for use in the house they were constructing in Altona.

The farm stopped buying blueberries. Later Heart's

Delight Farm rented the camps to prominent local citizens, but that eventually failed. Former blueberry pickers then rented the houses; but since Heart's Delight Farm was not buying berries, they had to be sold to local stores with all the normal commercial risks and no guaranteed market or prices. Bertha Rabideau, former Flat Rock resident, became a buyer selling the berries throughout New York and Vermont. But the berry community gradually dwindled from its glory days when Miner was alive.

In 1957, a forest fire on Flat Rock during the blueberry season destroyed the buildings that had surrounded the dam, and it also marked the end of the entire Flat Rock community. No one was allowed to live on the Miner property on Flat Rock and only local members of surrounding towns ventured near Miner's dam to pick berries.

Donna Mattot picked blueberries on Flat Rock as a child in 1967. She went with her siblings and her grandmother, picking until dark during the season and her Uncle John sold the berries to local stores. Mattot never saw any other people during her time on Flat Rock. The Flat Rock community was only a fading memory.

Viewing Flat Rock's development from a barren land of jack pines and rock, to a thriving community, and its return to an uninhabited locality, one can see the pattern of influence of William H. Miner.

Miner's initial involvement with the Flat Rock community came about because of his dream of creating hydroelectric power. The venture served to undermine the existing community. Miner began the project by buying the land necessary for the dam and lake, as well as additional berry lands. He then moved and destroyed camps that were at the future lake location.

While constructing the dam Miner employed Italian, Russian, Polish, Bulgarian, and Spanish immigrant males creating a transient population with circumstances that did not allow them to remain after the project. The indigenous Canadian and American-born population continues to shape the local future.

By the time the dam was complete Miner had bought out many blueberry buyers, making the pickers dependent on him alone to buy their daily harvests. He also used his wealth to improve the standard of living

for those in his employ. He allowed pickers to live in former immigrant facilities rather than the company shacks of the past. He constructed additional housing that was more weather resistant than the shacks. He created a community well, and allowed residents to use his lake for recreational purposes. He paid high rates that did not fluctuate according to market price. The support and improvements that Miner made continued until his death.

Despite his good intentions, his wealth and his indifference to economic viability left the industry with a base too narrow to maintain it. When Heart's Delight Farm stopped buying, there was a void that could not be filled.

The sudden death of Miner meant the death of the Flat Rock community. Because he owned the majority of the land on Flat Rock, no large company could step in as had been done in the past. After Miner's death, his wife controlled the land, and decided to end involvement in the blueberry operation. Although the pickers tried to prevent the collapse of the industry and the community, without Miner's funds it was inevitable.

Today, Altona Flat Rock is still owned by Miner Institute, the company that Miner created in his will. There is no longer a hint of the thriving community that it once was. What remains of Miner's failed attempt to create hydroelectric power is the 2,300 foot long dam and the poured concrete – encasing the footprints of Miner's immigrant laborers now vanished.

For Further Reading

Chazy Central Rural School, "The Man Behind the School: William H. Miner". [article on-line] Chazy Central Rural School 2002, accessed 17 April 2002; available from <http://ccrs.neric.org/history/whminer.html>; Internet.

Duquette, Ken. *Chronological Entries in Miner Diary Regards Flat Rock*. Chazy: Miner Institute.

Gooley, Larry. *History of the Altona Flat Rock*. Elizabethtown, New York: Denton Publications, Inc, 1980.

United States Bureau of the Census. Clinton County (part 1). Plattsburgh: State University of New York, 1905.

W.H. Miner Agricultural Research Institute. *William H. Miner and Hydroelectric Power: Development for the Heart's Delight Farm, Chazy, New York (1907-1930)*. Chazy: privately printed.

For a complete bibliography for this article contact the Clinton County Historical Association.

KRISTINA PARKER is the 2003 winner of the annual McMasters competition for history writing, sponsored by the Clinton County Historical Association. She is attending Plattsburgh State University as a senior history major with a minor in museum management. She has been employed by the Alice T. Miner Museum in Chazy, New York, the 1812 Homestead in Willsboro, New York, as well as Feinberg Library Special Collections at Plattsburgh State University. Ms. Parker is planning to complete her degree at Plattsburgh State and begin a career in museum curatorship and historical writing. She has been a life-long resident of West Chazy, New York and has special interest in local and regional history. To contact the author: e-mail PAK3263@mail.plattsburgh.edu.

African Americans and the Battle of Plattsburgh

by Don Papson



Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress.

Seaman Charles Black to the left of Macdonough on the flagship *Saratoga* during the Battle of Plattsburgh on September 11, 1814.

Written history represents the limited knowledge, interpretation, and perspective of a few people. Truth is not always fully served.

My wife, Vivian Papson, is a descendant of African American men who fought in the Revolution and the Civil War. When she asked a member of the Battle of Plattsburgh Commemoration Committee two years ago about black men who fought in Plattsburgh in the War of 1812,

she was told emphatically that there were none.

Vivian began research and discovered Gerald T. Altoff's book *Among my Best Men: African Americans and the War of 1812*. Black men, in fact, had fought alongside Thomas Macdonough in Plattsburgh Bay on September 11, 1814. I was able to identify two men in particular: Seaman Charles Black, and Private Cato Williams.

As founder and president of an educational non-profit

organization, the Red Hummingbird Foundation, Vivian decided to donate a copy of Altoff's book to the city of Plattsburgh. Mayor Daniel Stewart invited Vivian to present the book to him at his weekly press conference, and she was accompanied by Marlene Fields, chairperson of the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Commission.

The stories were not entirely new to Plattsburgh, for Altoff had lectured in Plattsburgh, and Keith Herkalo had done research himself. *The Plattsburgh Press Republican*, however, treated the news that black men fought in the Battle of Plattsburgh as a revelation. A large picture of Vivian holding the Altoff book appeared in the *Press* the next day. City Clerk Keith Herkalo was quoted in the accompanying article: "The city has been pursuing stories of the Battle of Plattsburgh . . . and our black brothers and sisters who were here at the time were part of those stories."

Obviously black representation in the Battle of Plattsburgh weekend was appropriate. With permission from the Commemoration Committee, the Red Hummingbird Foundation sponsored two black re-enactors for 2001. Plattsburgh State University's Center for Diversity, Pluralism and Inclusion contributed to the costs of uniforms.

Re-enactors Charles Prather and Lennaire Miller were stationed at the Battle of Plattsburgh Interpretive Center in City Hall where they could answer questions. However, I received a call from the chair of the organizing committee who remained strongly unconvinced that black men had fought in the battle or that they "belonged" in the re-enactment. After the call, I spent seven hours writing the first draft of this paper to prove my point, and the matter seemed settled.

But the situation became uncomfortable in other ways. Charles and Lennaire were repeatedly asked why they were not outside with the other re-enactors, and we realized with dismay that we had not integrated our men into the weekend, we had segregated them! I hurriedly obtained permission for Charles and Lennaire to join the re-enactment, only to discover they were now afraid to leave the Interpretive Center. They had overheard an individual comment that he was "a *real* re-enactor," with the implied meaning that they were not. By the time we managed to persuade Charles and Lennaire to join the other men, the re-enactment was over.

Writing accurate history is always a challenge; modify-

ing old habits of historical interpretation and behavior are other challenges entirely.

After the experiences of 2001, it was nearly impossible to convince two black men in our community to be re-enactors for the next year. I was ready to abandon the whole idea, when, at the last minute, Charles Prather decided to return as Seaman Black and his son, Jason Blake, agreed to portray Private Williams.

Charles and Jason were warmly welcomed. The 2002 re-enactment was integrated and Pvt. Williams marched proudly in the parade next to General Alexander Maccomb.

A crowning moment in September of 2002 was the unveiling of Dean Mosher's well-researched painting titled *Close Action! Master Commandant Thomas Macdonough at Plattsburgh Bay 11:35 a.m. September 11, 1814*. The painting, in the City Hall Rotunda, revealed Macdonough's outreached right arm, leading the viewer's eyes to a black sailor. When the Battle of Plattsburgh Association, which commissioned the painting, opens its War of 1812 museum at the Old Plattsburgh Air Base, the painting will speak of the valor of all the men, black and white.

Fighting for freedom has often not meant freedom for African Americans. While some of the 5,000 Black Patriots and 20,000 Black Loyalists who participated in the American Revolution were freed as a result of that war, most African Americans remained enslaved.

There was constant fear of black insurrections, and the United States took steps to disarm black men. In 1792, Congress passed a law restricting service in the military to "each and every free and able-bodied white citizen of the respective states." In 1798, the Secretary of War wrote to the commander of the Marine Corps that "No Negro, mulatto or Indian is to be enlisted."

However, there were less restrictive policies during the War of 1812. Desertions were endemic, and the Army was forced to call upon black men to sustain its ranks. By 1814, black recruits were being commonly accepted.

The incident which "most fired the national heart of America" and led to the declaration of war in 1812 was the impressment of American seamen. In 1808, a British man-of-war outside Norfolk fired on the U.S. frigate *Chesapeake* killing three U.S. sailors and wounding eighteen. The British seized four sailors they claimed were deserters from the Royal Navy, three of whom were African Americans.

By 1812, Britain was ready to capitulate by repealing its shipping and impressment laws, but it was too late. "Free Trade and Seamen's Rights" had become the battle cry.

In *Black Defenders of America 1776-1973*, Robert Ewell Greene lists 80 men who served the nation in army regiments during the War of 1812, with the following men serving in the Champlain Valley:

Pvt. John Alfred, Vermont farmer, 30th, discharged June 17, 1815.

Pvt. George Bolton, Jr., Augusta, Massachusetts, farmer, 34th, deserted in Plattsburgh, September 1814.

Pvt. Nathan Gilbert, 34th, discharged at Plattsburgh, June 4, 1815.

Pvt. James Gomaus, baker, died February 19, 1813.

Recruit John Moore, Londonderry, New Hampshire baker, served until March 31, 1815.

Pvt. Jacob Palmer, Stonington, New London, Connecticut farmer, enlisted at Plattsburgh, February of 1814, deserted in July.

Pvt. Solomon Sharp, Conway, Massachusetts farmer, absent at Plattsburgh on April 15, 1814, exchanged as a prisoner of war, received at Chazy, May 11, 1814, discharged February 2, 1818.

Pvt. Samuel Stanley, Oxford, Massachusetts farmer, discharged August 10, 1814.

Pvt. Francis Thompson, Bethlehem, Rensselaer County, farmer enlisted March 1813, wounded, prisoner of war.

Pvt. Cato Williams, Massachusetts farmer, enlisted May 24, 1812.

This Cato Williams was the soldier chosen for the re-enactment, age 19 in that year. According to military records, he was born in Lanesborough, Massachusetts, although his marriage and death certificates list his birthplace as Williamstown, just north of Lanesborough. He served in Captain Samuel H. Holly's Vermont company of infantry and was on the regiment's payrolls when it was stationed in Burlington, Vermont in January and February of 1813. He was listed as present on the duty roster of Captain John Bliss's Company on November 30, 1813; as absent and left sick at Burlington on May 31, 1813; as transferred to Lieutenant Green's Company on December 20, 1813.

Private Williams' regiment, the 11th, also saw service at Chrysler's Farm and Lacolle Mill. In late March, 1814, after the Americans suffered 104 killed and wounded at Lacolle, General Wilkinson, who had ordered the attack, was retired from service. Brigadier General George Izard was promoted to Major-General, and on May 4, 1814, took command of the bedraggled right wing of the U.S. forces headquartered in Plattsburgh.

The conditions under which Private Williams lived, along with most soldiers of the time, is revealed in part by a letter written by Izard to John Armstrong, the Secretary of War:

The dragoons are without clothing; their arms, with scarcely an exception, unfit for use- and they have not been paid for many months.

The riflemen have had no pay for considerably more than a year. I regret to say that several desertions have taken place from these two corps since my arrival.

In ten weeks, Izard transformed 2,000 men into a disciplined force. He reinforced the troops with new enlistees, some of whom were black.

In another letter to Armstrong, Izard reported the "annoyance of officers and soldiers" of doing duty with negroes. Izard's solution to the racial tension was the standard army response: to organize black soldiers into a special segregated corps of "pioneers." It was these men who were assigned the most backbreaking of all work, involving shovels, picks, axes, saws, and the labor of trenches, breastworks, log-cutting and fort-building. Izard's black pioneers must have been strong men, for on July 19 he reported "the fortifications are progressing fast. They will be nearly finished this month."

In one of the stunning twists of illogic in this war, Armstrong then ordered Izard to remove his troops from Plattsburgh and assist the war efforts on the Niagara frontier. Despite Izard's dire prediction, that "everything in this vicinity . . . will in less than three days after my departure be in the possession of the enemy," he had no choice but to march 4,000 men from the Champlain Valley on August 29-30. A vivid memory of this spectacle was reported to Congress on January 22, 1828 by New York Congressman Martindale:

I myself saw a battalion of them, as fine martial looking men as I ever saw attached to the Northern army . . . on its march from Plattsburgh to Sacket's Harbor, where they did service to the country with credit to New York and honor to themselves.

Among these men, likely segregated into a small battalion, were the black regulars.

General Alexander Macomb, now in command of Plattsburgh quickly set about rebuilding his forces, urgently calling up New York and Vermont militia. Major General Benjamin Mooers, a veteran of the Revolution, was regional commander.

Right on cue with Izard's prediction, Sir George Prevost led approximately 14,000 men across the border with the firm intention of securing Lake Champlain and the lands south of it. His tactic was the defeat of American forces by separating New England from the rest of the country.

At the onset of the war black men were excluded from the Army and Marines, but men of color suffered no such exclusion from the Navy in the War of 1812.

In *American Patriots*, Gail Buckley writes:

One sixth of the U.S. navy seamen who fought in the War of 1812, serving on warships and privateers were black. They fought conspicuously in the only two American naval victories that directly affected the course of the war – Captain Oliver Perry's on Lake Erie, on September 10, 1813, and Lieutenant Thomas McDonough's on Lake Champlain, on September 11, 1814.

On the Great Lakes, more than a hundred black sailors were among the four hundred men in Perry's 1813 armada, dispatched to spearhead an invasion of Canada. Perry complained at being sent "a motley set of blacks, Soldiers, and boys" for nine new ships. Commodore Isaac Chauncey replied that "I have yet to learn that the Colour of a man's skin or the cut and trimmings of the coat can affect a man's qualifications or usefulness. I have nearly fifty blacks on board this Ship [the *General Pike*], and many of them are amongst my best men..."

Faced with the urgent need to strengthen forces, Commodore Macdonough had already recruited infantry

soldiers, such as Private Cato Williams, but he also needed men for his ever-expanding flotilla. Sailing Master Henry Few, working in Newport, Rhode Island sent 27 men, then an additional 21 with Master's Mate Peter Vandevere.

The recruitments raised issues of racism because there were blacks among these new recruits and Few would be able to send as many as fifty more, if Macdonough wanted them. But Macdonough wanted no more "black tars," a request that Few and another recruiter C. B. Thompson found an imposition on their efforts. It is not known if Macdonough's prohibition in recruiting African Americans was a personal prejudice or a judgement that the presence of blacks would make it more difficult to recruit whites.

Nonetheless, Altoff states that a large number of black sailors crewed the Lake Champlain squadron. Among those was a West Indian named Peter Joe who had previously served as a gun crewman on board the 44-gun frigate *President* and Seaman John Day who fought on the galley gunboat *Viper*.

There is an often-repeated story reported in *The Sailor's Magazine and Naval Journal* in July 1831 about Chaplain Henny H. Penny who had immoral habits so shocking to Macdonough that he refused to call on him for any religious services. In the tense hours just before the battle, when Macdonough summoned the fleet to prayers, he called upon a Baptist steward on board his ship, "a pious colored man."

There were eight stewards on Macdonough's ships: Benjamin Latham, David Crany, James Sloan, George Fergusson, Eben. W. Chadwick, David Griffith, Benjamin Sullivan, and Sewell Prince. Because the Navy's muster rolls did not identify men by race, we don't know which of these men it was who led the prayers.

Not everyone believes that a black man led the prayers. Michael J. Crawford, Head of the Early History Branch of the Department of the Navy feels that there is "reason to doubt" that Macdonough was in the habit of calling upon "a pious Baptist to pray." Baptists disapproved of set prayers and prayed extemporaneously.

Macdonough was a devout Episcopalian. Crawford believes that the Commodore led his men in prayer himself by reciting from the Episcopal Book of Common Prayer appointed for use before a naval battle.

Whether a Episcopal Commodore led the prayers,

or a black Baptist is a question that we may never answer definitively.

Seaman Charles Black was among the sailors at the Battle of Plattsburgh. He was a Pennsylvanian whose father fought at Bunker Hill, and whose grandfather fought in the French and Indian War. He began his adventures in the War of 1812 by being impressed on board a sixty-four gun British ship and ordered to take arms against his country. He refused, thereby forfeiting nine hundred dollars prize-money coming to him. He was placed in irons and kept prisoner on board and then sent to the infamous Dartmoor Prison in South Devonshire. Black was exchanged, shipped to France, retaken and sent back to Dartmoor, and after being exchanged a second time, he succeeded in reaching the United States.



Lennair Miller as Pvt. Cato Williams of the 11th U.S. Infantry and Charles Prather as Seaman Charles Black for the Battle of Plattsburgh Commemoration Weekend, September 2001.

The British occupation of Plattsburgh was accomplished on September 6. Most historians, including Benson J. Lossing, state that General Prevost set up his headquarters at Allen's farmhouse on an elevated ridge north of the village, about a mile from the Saranac River.

However, the daughter of Colonel Melancton Smith, who commanded Fort Moreau, told a different story. Elizabeth S. Martin wrote: "General Prevost; his assistant, General Rottenburg; and staff officers" made their headquarters in her father's home which was located on Margaret Street (at the present site of the Federal Building). The Smith home afforded the British a "solid-mason-work"

cellar which they used as a wall of defense from the American cannons and sharpshooters stationed on the opposite side of the Saranac. The basement contained a kitchen "where, before the war, the emancipated slave servants of the family . . . used to enact high life below stairs."

The Smiths were a prominent family. The colonel's father, Judge Melancton Smith, had played a pivotal role in New York's ratification of the U.S. Constitution. He was one of Plattsburgh's first proprietors, and its main street was named for his wife Margaret. She was from an abolitionist Quaker family, the Motts of Long Island. Judge Smith, a slave owner, was a founding member of the New York Manumission Society. New York State had the largest number of slaves in the north, and the Society promoted the gradual rather than immediate end to slavery.

Judge Smith kept a home in New York City. When he died in 1798 of yellow fever, his slave Maria was "transferred" to his son Melancton II who had settled in Plattsburgh. There he built "a residence of more architectural pretension and commodious size than any other in the village." When the war began, Maria's new master was a widower with a young son. A patriot, he joined the 29th U.S. Infantry as a major and was quickly promoted to colonel. He served in the northeastern campaign and then was given command of Fort Moreau.

Maria was pregnant at the time of the Battle of Plattsburgh. Perhaps she accompanied the colonel's son to the village of Peru, where many of Plattsburgh's residents took refuge at the Quaker Union. There many people viewed the battle from Hallock Hill.

Early on the morning of September 11, on the east side of Cumberland Head, Captain George Downie scaled his guns on the *Confiance* to signal General Prevost that he was about to attack Macdonough.

According to a story passed down in the Addoms-Hagar family, Downie signaled his movement southward from Chazy Landing by firing a shot at Fort Izard on Cumberland Head, just west of the house of Major John Addoms. One of the Major's negro slaves saw the ball strike near the empty fort, dug it up and took it to the family.

The actual battle lasted only two hours and twenty minutes, but it was violent and decisive. It began at 8 am. By 8:15 Captain Downie had been killed. Commodore Macdonough was knocked down by the flying head of a

decapitated crew member, and later knocked unconscious by a falling spar.

Master's Mate Peter Vandevere, who had recruited black seamen in Newport for Macdonough, was killed aboard the *Eagle*. On the *Saratoga*, a black seaman known as "Cookie" was killed, and Charles Black was wounded.

Colonel Melancton Smith's home, as were many others, was pierced by bullets and balls fired from the American works, and one ball passed through the parlor killing a young British soldier who was quietly helping himself to lunch. It is said that the bloodstain was never quite effaced.

Macdonough credited much of his victory to the accuracy of his gunners, a large number of whom were black volunteers. By 11:35, the battle was over. It was, as Macdonough said, "a Signal victory."

After Plattsburgh was free of the British, slave owners and abolitionists joined in a victory celebration. Commodore Macdonough was honored at a public dinner at Israel Green's Inn. Israel and his wife were "of the Quaker faith," and "strong abolitionists as well as actively involved in convincing others of the evils of slavery." Local Quakers universally spoke of the Inn as "Uncle Israel's." Preachers and other Friends stayed there when traveling on yearly missions up and down their district which included Grand Isle and parts of Canada. When slaves fled from the home of Major Benjamin Mooers on Cumberland Head, the Quakers on Grand Isle would "secret them."

"Black Maria," the slave of Melancton Smith, who was pregnant during the battle, celebrated the birth of a son four days after the battle. He was as "coal black" as she was, and she named him for her master's enemy, Sir George Prevost. It was said that this was "a compliment of which the commander of the British forces was probably never informed, and could not, therefore, fully appreciate."

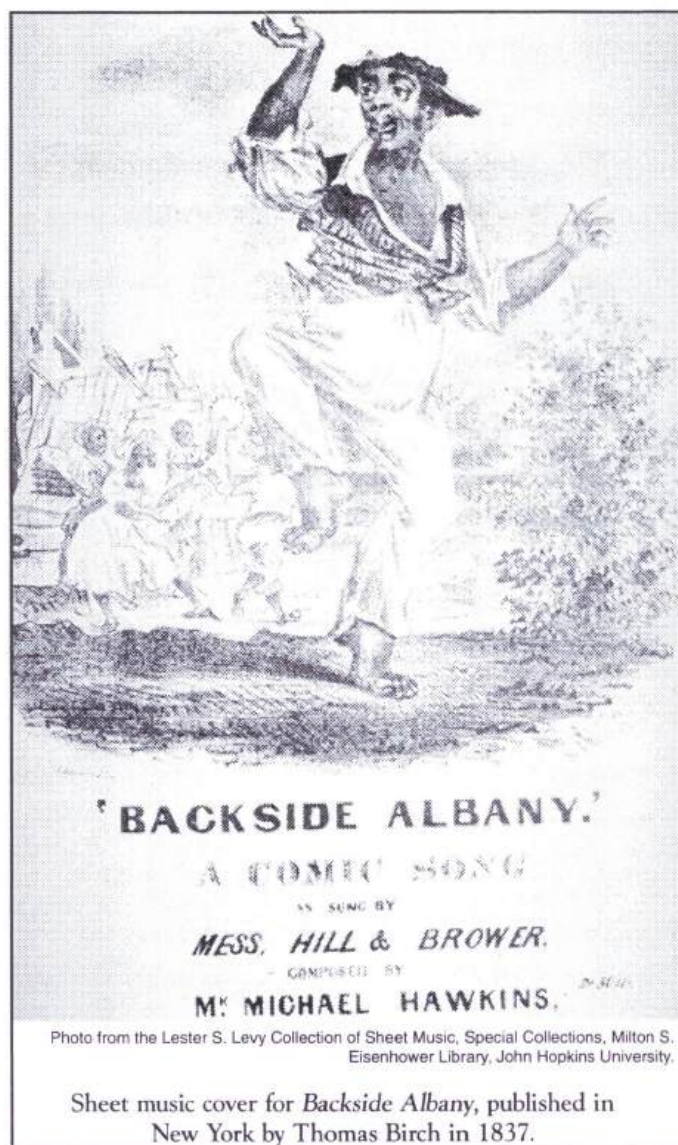
Was Maria's choice of a name for her son a joke? Or a slave mother's act of defiance? Did Maria know the British had evacuated six thousand Black Loyalists from New York City in the last days of the Revolution? Did she know that Sir George Prevost had once been the military commander of Nova Scotia where many of the Black Loyalists settled? Had she prayed that the British general would free her and her unborn child?

Two years after the battle, Maria gave birth to a

daughter, Caroline, and Melancton Smith recorded his "Slave Entitlement" to the child and Maria's son in the Plattsburgh Minute Book on July 22, 1816.

Black sailors became central to other celebrations of the victory on Lake Champlain. They were the inspiration for the nation's oldest known dialect song written by an American: *Siege of Plattsburgh*, also known as *Backside Albany*. Composer Micah Hawkins set his satirical verses to the music of *The Battle of Boyne Water*, a famous Irish ballad.

The song implies a public awareness of the important role of blacks in the Battle of Plattsburgh. However, the black speaker of the song had to be clownish, not heroic, because it could not be admitted that the final invasion had been stopped with the help of a despised race.



Hawkins is thought to have derived his dialect for the song from the speech patterns of Anthony Hannibal Clapp, a family slave. When Clapp died in 1816, Hawkins wrote:

. . . though of a race despised, deserved he much respect . . . Upon the Violin, few played as Toney play'd. His artless music was a language universal and in its Effect – most irresistible.

Siege of Plattsburgh was the most popular song of the war, remaining popular as late as the 1840s. Its comical-demeaning portrayal of a negro sailor initiated the minstrel show tradition which reinforced racist stereotypes in the United States for the next hundred years.

Governor Tompkins may have been present at the song's premier at The Green Theater in Albany on February 7, 1815. Hopkins Robinson, a white entrepreneur who specialized in negro impersonations, performed the song in blackface.

Siege of Plattsburgh

*Back side Albany stan' Lake Champlain,
One little pond half full a' water;
Plattebug dare too, close 'pon de main;
Toun small – he grow bigger, do', hereater.
On Lake Champlain
Uncle Sam set he boat,
An' Massa M'donough he sail 'em;
While Gen'ral M'comb
Make Plattebug he home
Wid de army, who courage nebber fail 'em.
On 'lebenth day September,
In eighteen hund'ed an fourteen,
Gubbernor Probose, and he British soger,
Come to Plattebug a tea-party courtin';
An he boat come too
Arter Uncle Sam boat.
Massa 'Donough do look sharp out de winder-
Dan Gen'ral M'comb
(ah! he always a-home,)
Cotch fire too, jis like a tinder.
Bang! bang! bang! den de cannons 'gin t'roar,
In Plattebug an' all 'bour dat quarter;
Gubbener Probose try he hand 'pon de shore,
While he boat take he luck 'pon de water –*

*But Massa M'Donough
Knock he boat in he head,
Break he hart, broke he shin, 'tove he caffin in.
An' Gen'ral M'Comb
Start old Probose home-
Tot me soul den, I mus die a laffin.
Probose scare so he lef all behine,
Powder, ball, cannon, tea-pot, an' kittle-
Some say he cotch a cole-trouble in he mine
Cause he eat so much raw an' cole vittle-
Uncle Sam berry sorry,
To be sure, for he pain,
Wish he nuss heself up well an' harty-
For Gen'ral M'comb and Massa 'Donough home
When he notion for a nudder tea party!*

Ironically, the contribution of black men to the victory on Lake Champlain provided politicians with an opportunity to increase the number of black recruits. Governor Daniel Tompkins, who had once been a legal counsel for the New York Manumission Society, lobbied for the formation of two black regiments which were authorized six weeks after the battle. Each would consist of 1,080 men who would serve three years. Slaves who enlisted would gain freedom in exchange for military service: when discharged, they would be "deemed and adjudged to have been legally manumitted." Enlistees would need the written consent of their masters or mistresses who would be entitled to their "pay and bounty." However, these black regiments never saw service, for the war ended with the signing of the Treaty of Ghent on December 24, 1814.

There are other postscripts to the stories of the individual blacks associated in the events of the Battle of Plattsburgh. Cato Williams returned to Massachusetts. On November 18, 1818, he and Polly Eldridge were married by the Justice of the Peace in Pownal, Vermont where her parents Amos and Susanna lived. There is no record of his having received a military pension for his service. Cato died on December 21, 1863 of heart disease at the age of 68.

Charles Black, also never receiving a pension, returned to Philadelphia and did not continue a military life. In 1815, the War Department declared that "A Negro is deemed unfit to associate with the American soldier," and in 1820, the Army issued a more specific order: "No negro

or mulatto will be received as a recruit of the Army." In 1838, black naval enlistments were restricted to no more than five percent. Ironically, it was Isaac Chauncey who signed the order. He was the one who commended the performance of his black sailors to Oliver Perry.

The Philadelphia which Charles Black knew became a center of social change and civil unrest. Philadelphia was the natural gateway between North and South. A stream of free negroes and fugitive slaves passed through it towards the North, and another stream of recaptured and kidnapped negroes flowed towards the South. Freedmen and their children flocked to the city. Thousands of German and Irish immigrants arrived each year and displaced negro laborers from their jobs. Crime and poverty increased in black communities. Social tensions escalated into a series of six race riots between 1829-1849.

After the 1842 riot, Charles Black re-emerged from historical obscurity in a letter written by white abolitionist Henry C. Wright to a black abolitionist in Boston, William Cooper Nell:

A colored man, whom I visited in the hospital, called to see me to-day. He had just got out, and looked very pitiful. His head was bent down; he said he could not erect it, his neck was so injured. He is a very intelligent man, and can read and write. His name is Charles Black and he resides in Lombard Street. He was at home, with his little boy, unconscious of what was transpiring without. Suddenly, the mob rushed into his room, dragged him down stairs, and beat him so unmercifully, that he would have been killed, had not some humane individuals interposed, and prevented further violence.

It is a matter of conjecture if Henry Wright knew Charles Black as a fellow abolitionist, which would explain the attack on him. Some fugitive slaves found their way from Philadelphia to Montreal, and Charles Black would have known from his naval service that the Champlain Valley was an ideal corridor to freedom.

"Black Maria" Haynes, whose husband was a barber, received her freedom in 1818 after Colonel Smith died. Two years earlier, her master had married Anna Green, the daughter of Israel and Sarah Green at whose inn the Battle of Plattsburgh victory party had been held.

Maria remained in Plattsburgh, and the year after she was freed, she became one of the original members of a religion class organized by the Methodist Episcopal Church. Segregated at communion, Maria was described as a "pathetic sight, going solitary and alone to the table of her Lord." She baked cakes for fashionable parties and gave these affairs her "general superintendence." Her daughter Caroline served as "lady's maid in the dressing room." When Caroline died at the age of fourteen, a funeral procession formed at the Haynes home on Bridge Street and mourners walked to the Riverside Cemetery. Friends of the "greatly esteemed" family joined Maria along the way, singing hymns. Her son-Sir George Prevost-was with her.

After the War of 1812, the number of slaves in Clinton County had rapidly decreased. In 1810, the county had 29 slaves and 32 free African Americans. In 1820, only two remained in slavery and 96 were free.

In 1817, as one of the final acts before moving to Washington D.C. to become James Madison's Vice President, Governor Tompkins spearheaded the passage of a law to abolish slavery in New York. The law took effect on July 4, 1827 and New York became the last northern state to end slavery.

But discrimination was a battle far from won. Where the 1777 state constitution treated free blacks as equals, restrictive racist voting qualifications were enacted by the New York Constitutional Convention in 1821. Race was substituted for property ownership as a qualification for suffrage.

Black men were "free" but far from equal.

Dr. Robert Clarke, a Delaware County Delegate at the convention, eloquently opposed the disenfranchisement of New York's men of color.

Sir, when the hour of danger approaches, your 'white' militia are just as willing that the man of color should be set up as a mark to be shot at by the enemy, as to be set up themselves. . . . In your late war, they contributed largely towards some of your most splendid victories. On Lake Erie and Lake Champlain, where your fleets triumphed over a foe superior in numbers and engines of death, they were manned, in a large proportion, with men of color . . .

They were volunteers; yes, Sir, volunteers to defend that very country from the inroads and ravages of a ruthless foe, which had treated them with insult, degradation, and slavery.

Jonas Platt, the son of Plattsburgh's founder, Zephaniah Platt, was a convention delegate from Oneida County. As executor of his father's estate in 1808, he had manumitted and liberated "Cato a negro Slave belonging to said Estate aged about Twenty Four Years." Now he spoke out passionately for the rights of the black men. "As a Christian, who hopes for mercy in the world to come," he said, "I can not, I dare not, consent to this unjust proscription."

The eloquence of Jonas Platt and Dr. Clarke fell on deaf ears; they could not stem the racist post-war backlash.

State Senator Samuel Young argued for the majority opinion:

This discussion of colour is well understood. It is unnecessary to disguise it, and we ought to shape our constitution so as to meet the public sentiment.

It was not until well into the last century that racial prejudice was removed from the law. Equal treatment in the military did not come into effect until 1948 with the Executive Order by President Harry Truman.

In the 1960's, civil rights laws came into effect only after bitter conflict and racial violence. But societal prejudice is still alive, even though our laws no longer support a racial caste system.

In 1996, Greg Altoff wrote a history of the black men who served in our second war with Britain. Altoff was inspired to write his book after meeting an elderly World War II veteran, who was black and who told him no African Americans served in the War of 1812.

But black men did serve and die in that war, and we thanked them with prejudice and denigration and by portraying them as the comical clowns of minstrel shows.

This history should now stand corrected.

DON PAPSON is a teacher who until recently lived in Saranac. He has developed dramatic readings, plays, lectures, and magazine articles, and currently is serving as Research Director for a documentary series titled *Road to Freedom* produced by Mountain Lake Public

Broadcasting. His writings uncover the hidden stories of our history and have included the abolitionist Quakers, the history and repeal of slavery in New York State, the role of African and Native men in the Revolution and Civil War, and the Underground Railroad in our region. He is a founding member of The Red Hummingbird Foundation, a not-for-profit educational foundation with a mission to build community through the humanities. To contact the author: Don Papson, 3 Plattsburgh Avenue, Plattsburgh, New York 12901.

For Further Reading

Altoff, Gerard. *Among My Best Men, African Americans and the War of 1812*. Put-in Bay: The Perry Group, 1996.

Cadbury, Warder. "The Music of Victory," *The Antiquarian* 1990. Plattsburgh: Clinton County Historical Association.

Mahar, William. "Backside Albany and Early Blackface Minstrelsy, A Contextual Study of America's First Blackface Song." *American Music*, 6:1 Spring 1988.

Dobson, Thomas. 1816. *Official Correspondence with the Department of War, Relative to the Military Operations of the American Army Under the Command of Major-General Izard on the Northern Frontier of The United States in the years 1814-1815*. Philadelphia. On microfilm Mf 5621/Mf E355 I 98, Feinberg Library, Plattsburgh State University.

Shields, Addie. "Slavery Town of Plattsburgh, Clinton County." Part IV of a study about slavery and the Underground Railroad in Clinton County. (Addie Shields is the Clinton County Historian).

For a complete bibliography of this article contact the Clinton County Historical Association.

Pride of Locality

in the Journals of Dr. David Sherwood Kellogg, 1886-1909

by Debra Kimok

Writing history is tricky business. Every document, every interview, textbook, narrative, event, etc. is subject to interpretation by the observer. And every interpretation is conditioned by the writer's background, experiences, and point of view. Add to this the problems of selective memory, selective reporting, and personal bias—how the primary documents are constructed in the first place—and the interpretation becomes even trickier. Consider the case of Dr. David Sherwood Kellogg, a prominent Plattsburgh physician in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. His viewpoint, his social standing, and his desire to represent events a certain way, all influenced the way he constructed his personal journals. Those of us who dare to interpret those journals, what is there and what is not, and how the information is presented, do so with the knowledge that this is only one man's viewpoint and that our analysis is our own. We do this carefully, trying to put it all into context, scouring many resources to try to understand what Dr. Kellogg was thinking. An impossible task perhaps. We must take into account that there are always other viewpoints to consider and that the writing of history can never be complete. We can only continue to attempt to fit pieces together and hope that eventually, together, we get it right.

On the other hand, we must also be conscious that the writers of these primary documents may well have had their own bias to convey and that their viewpoints are influenced by the conditions and ideas of their time. We must think critically about what we read and remember that just because words are in print does not necessarily mean that they are complete truth. However, almost one hundred years later, we have the benefit of hindsight to aid us in our analyses. Perhaps the ideas that we now consider flawed *were* truth to the contemporaries who espoused and disseminated them.

The pride of locality is a good subject for an extensive treatise. The tendency towards organizing, searching, and recording . . . is an illustration of the pride of locality . . . Every place has its history, its romances, its pleasant spots, its natural scenery, its geology, its natural history, and its everything to make it interesting & worthy of study.

Plattsburgh physician Dr. David Kellogg expressed this philosophy in his journal on January 30, 1886. It was not only an opinion, however. He put these ideas into practice in his own research, in his journal and essay writing, and in the education of his children. Kellogg's belief that the study of local history was important was shared by many other contemporary upper and middle class Americans. By the 1880s a heightening nationalism and localism had swept New England and was expanding to the rest of the country.

Historian David J. Russo attributes this partly to the polarizing national trauma of the Civil War. He claims that "the re-emergence of nationalism after the war was enhanced by the Centennial celebrations of 1876," which marked the birth of the nation. Furthermore, Centennial celebration officials encouraged local communities to hold simultaneous commemorations. According to Russo, this was the pivotal event that spurred the late nineteenth-century formation of local, county, and state historical societies that "collected artifacts and documents, sponsored research and writing through the publication of papers, addresses, and collections of source material, and held elaborate commemorative meetings in memory of important historical events."

While the development of these societies was greatly influenced by the Civil War and the 1876 Centennial, their special character and purpose derived from more

than patriotic fervor. Lingering economic and political sectional tensions encouraged a heightened "pride of locality" by citizens endeavoring to claim and validate their regional superiority. But more than North vs. South ideological competition stimulated this struggle for dominance. Historian Mike Wallace attributes the increased formation of historical societies to class tensions resulting from the growing industrialism that was characteristic of the age. Along with the new factories came waves of foreign immigration, disruptive labor strikes, and corrupt, money-driven political machines. Wallace asserts that "by the 1880s . . . upper- and middle-class men and women established ancestral societies and historical associations in great numbers" in order to portray a mythological colonial past. In that view the rule of a New England aristocracy provided for an individualistic, righteous, and stable society. This was in sharp contrast to the contemporary perception of instability.

Whereas Russo claims that the 1876 Philadelphia Exposition spurred a patriotic celebration of the American past, Wallace credits "the great strikes of the 1880s" as reaction against cultural dominance by "the older patrician elite." Identifying with these aristocrats were "middle-class professionals, small businessmen, and civic and political leaders."

Dr. Kellogg was one of these middle-class Protestant Americans who traced his lineage to this older elite and followed their example in his research of local Plattsburgh history. Known for his medical skills, Kellogg was also highly regarded for his knowledge of select

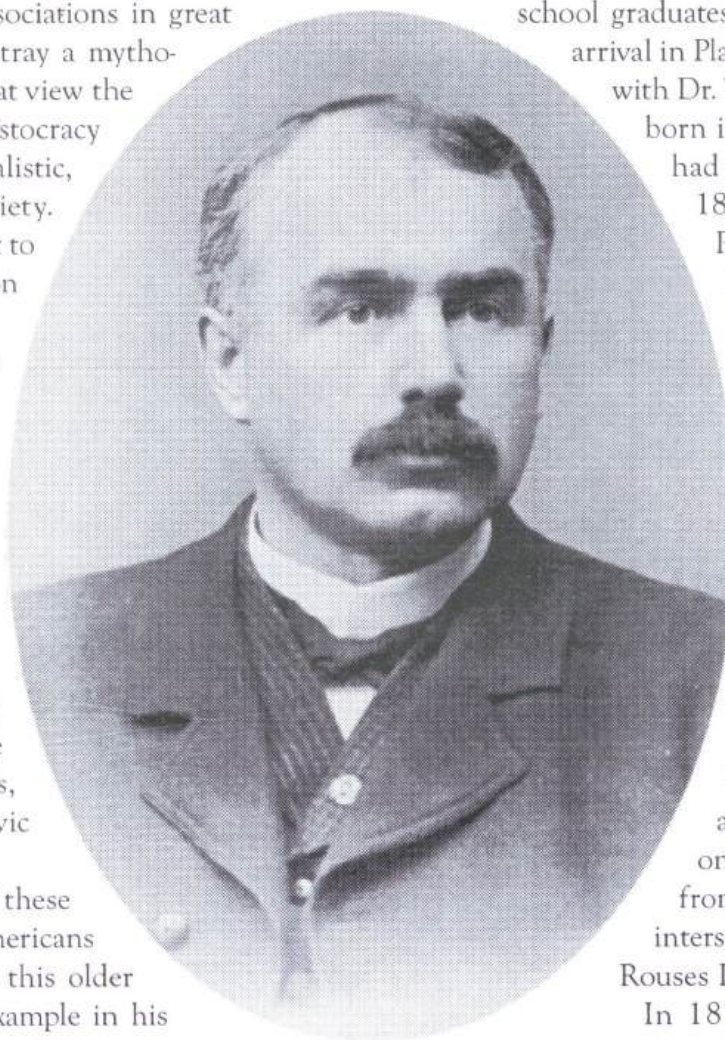
facets of Plattsburgh's history. These subjects included the participation by local people in various American wars, early Indian settlement in the Champlain Valley, glacial formations and the effects of the Ice Age in this region, local folklore and place names, and an exhaustive investigation and documentation of his own family genealogy.

Born in Essex, Vermont in 1847, David Sherwood Kellogg attended the University of Vermont, receiving his M.D. in 1873. Although there is no indication in his journals as to why he decided to practice in Plattsburgh, it is possible that he was encouraged by local contacts with other University of Vermont medical school graduates. For a short time after his

arrival in Plattsburgh he shared an office with Dr. T. B. Nichols, who had been born in Enosburgh, Vermont and had graduated from UVM in 1843. Likewise, the prominent Plattsburgh physician, Dr. E. M. Lyon, had also received his degree from UVM.

Another possible explanation for Kellogg's relocation to Plattsburgh is the city's healthy economy at that time. According to historian Allan S. Everest, "the village grew steadily during the 19th century." Plattsburgh in the 1870s had at least two reliable banks, many thriving mercantile enterprises and industries, and was on the railroad line that ran from Albany to Montreal and intersected with the Ogdensburg-Rouses Point route.

In 1875 Kellogg married Elizabeth Smith of Burlington, Vermont and raised five children: Robert, Nelson, Elizabeth, David Jr., and Francis Fellows. In addi-



Dr. David Sherwood Kellogg, at the age of 41 in 1888. This photo is from *A Doctor at all Hours* by Allan S. Everest. Published in Brattleboro, Vermont by the Stephen Greene Press, 1970.

tion, Kellogg and his wife were guardians for his sister's three children. Theodora, Helen, and Francis Kellogg Kyle went to live with their "Uncle Wood" after their parents, Fannie and Osceola Kyle, both died.

Kellogg took great pride in his New England heritage and conducted an exhaustive genealogical search of the Kellogg and Smith ancestral roots. After years of communication with relatives and official record-keepers in New York, Vermont, Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Hampshire, and Illinois, he had traced his family line to 1472, making a connection with Master William de Shirwode of Shirwode Forest, County of Nottingham, England. He also found that Phillippe Kellogg of Becking and Great Leighs was "the first of the name in England from whom the Kelloggs of the New World can, with certainty, trace their descent." An especially rewarding aspect of his genealogical search was the discovery that, by virtue of his kinship with John Haviland, John Tilly, and Captain John Gorham, he was entitled to membership in the exclusive Society of Colonial Wars, an honor for which he had specifically applied. Likewise, Kellogg was given membership in the patriotic society, the Sons of the Revolution, because his great-grandfather, Captain Adiel Sherwood, had served in the Revolutionary army.

Although he was very proud of his American military and colonial heritage, Dr. Kellogg's investigation also revealed a somewhat scandalous episode of bigamy in his family history. His father's cousin, Harvey F. Aubrey, in his eighties at the time, sent the doctor an account of what had been designated "The Aubrey-Castle Incident:"

Now all I know is what I remember my father saying that his father, John F. Aubrey, was born in France or Germany . . . came to this country early in the Revolution, that he married a Miss Woodworth.

In 1775 my father was born, that soon after [John] went with the army and was taken by the Indians, and it was reported that all were killed . . . After a while my father's mother married Mr. Abel Castle in Essex . . .

In about 9 or 10 years by some strategy Dr.

Aubrey got clear from the Indians and made his way to find his wife and child . . . The first she knew he walked in Mr. Castle's house, and there met his wife and three children. My father said there was a great time, his mother fainted, Mr. Castle came in and the two husbands met. Of course no one was in fault. The whole matter was talked over, neighbors consulted, and the matter was left to the wife . . . She having 2 or 3 children by Castle, she decided to live with him.

Dr. Aubrey went to the South part of Vermont and there married and raised a family. My father remained in Essex with the Castle family . . . He married one of the daughters of David Kellogg, sister of your Grandfather Russell Kellogg.

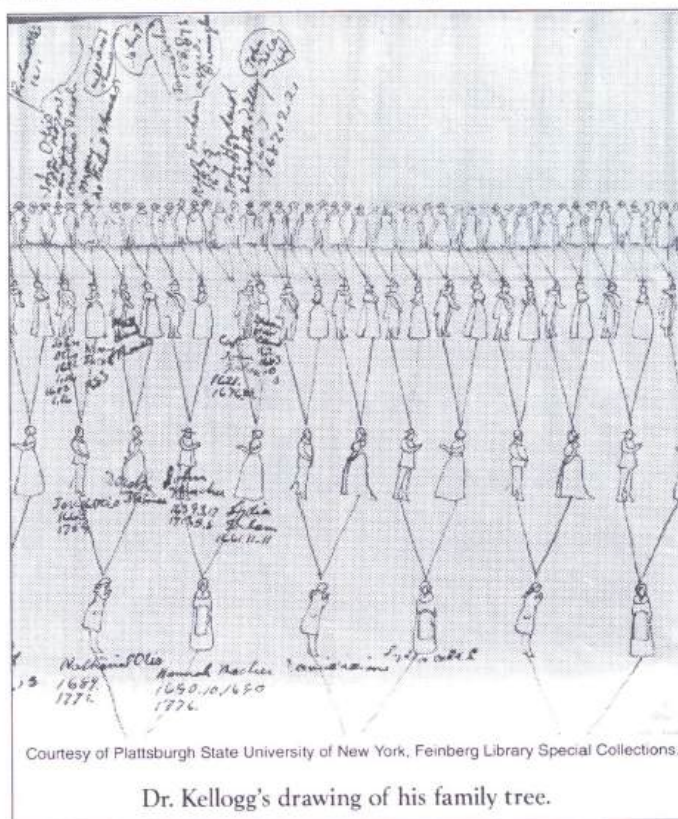
This clarified confusing ancestral records for Kellogg. If future historians, or his children, were to examine the Kellogg genealogy, this entry would explain discrepancies or embarrassments that might otherwise put his pedigree in doubt.

Genealogical search was a tool widely used by Victorian antiquarians to validate inherited prestige, particularly in view of a new class of black ex-slaves and a flood of foreign immigrants. Wallace writes that a shared, British-based ancestry formed a bond among Boston patricians who "by the end of the nineteenth century" were "banding together in genealogical and historical societies." The more America changed, the more these preservers of its past deemed it necessary to assert the importance of historical study. And as the cultural heirs of the founding settlers, they believed that this research and its dissemination became their right and their duty. Indeed, Article 2 of the Constitution of the New England Historic Genealogical Society states that "the objects of the society shall be to collect, preserve, and disseminate the local and general history of New England families." David Sherwood Kellogg, as a member of this Society, not only searched endlessly for validation of his roots, but he recorded the results at length in his journals. Furthermore, he constructed, as proof of his heritage, a meticulously detailed drawing of his family tree. This thirty-eight-inch by fifteen-inch illustration depicts the Kellogg and

Kellogg's journals also contain many references to the growth, accomplishments, travels, and antics of his five children and nephew and nieces. Always conscious that they would someday read his accounts, Kellogg romanticized their lives. For example, reminiscing after a Thanksgiving celebration, Kellogg referred to his family as "real sweetness and light." Moreover, when his niece Theo landed a teaching position at the Plattsburgh Normal School, her "Uncle Wood" noted in his journal that "there is hardly a girl in her college class that has really so good a place." He also boasted that he had used his influence to help her to secure the position. In this way, he could praise Theo and at the same time illustrate the power that went with prestige in the community. In the doctor's journal accounts, he recorded family illnesses and deaths but never mentioned undignified or troubling behavior.

complained to friends about the unacceptable and possibly sexual mistreatment of servants by Tabor. Finally in outrage, Chapleau attacked the gentleman farmer with a sled stake. In a village that by 1870 was comprised of nearly fifty-percent French Canadians, ethnic tensions in Plattsburgh were high during Chapleau's trial and sentencing. Waller argues that

the Brown brothers, French Canadians, who had been riding with Chapleau at the time of the murder, were pressured into giving testimony against him in order to allay the potentially explosive situation. Although the younger brother John hanged himself before the case went to trial, the elder Nelson's testimony clinched the guilty verdict. Waller asserts that the defense was insufficient, avoiding issues that probably would have mediated Chapleau's guilt, but that also might have 'further aggravate[d] the conflicts briefly unveiled by the murder.' This was done with the understanding that



Chapleau would be convicted of second-degree murder and thereby avoid the death penalty. Waller portrays it as an unofficial agreement between the French and American communities. However, the plan backfired when the non-local judge and jury brought in a verdict of first-degree premeditated murder.

Although the charge was eventually reduced after several appeals and local outcry, Kellogg seemed unconvinced of any mitigating circumstances. Tabor was a fellow Vermonter and Plattsburgh citizen, and Chapleau was not. Chapleau challenged local authority, a real threat for a town half populated by French Canadians. Furthermore, Kellogg was an acquaintance of Tabor and was called to examine his body after the murder. He had seen first-hand the gruesome results of a sled-skate beating. In his journal Kellogg described

Tabor as "a very honorable and honest man" with an invalid wife and three children who "bore up bravely." Chapleau was a "beast." There were indications that both of these descriptions were inaccurate. To Kellogg, the killer was a French Canadian, and the murder was a prime example of the degenerative effect of too many foreigners in Plattsburgh.

Sometimes Kellogg was compelled by his sense of historic responsibility to record an incident even when he was personally averse to doing so. He maneuvered through these inner conflicts by an incomplete and mitigated report. This was the case on January 14, 1887, when he wrote about an unnamed "young lady" who had been caught shoplifting. Unlike his usually very detailed style, he omitted her name from the report. Even accounts of his children's birthday parties included the names of every child in attendance. However, because this girl was young and considered part of "the best society here," he was reluctant to leave a record of her crime for later generations to read. Moreover, even though he excused her behavior, writing that "she is poor and probably felt as if she needed the lace but could not pay for it," he considered himself "mean to write this." Kellogg perhaps believed that this incident illustrated what he perceived as a degeneration of individual character influenced by the new heightened materialism that was beginning to affect even the "best society."

Kellogg romanticized not only his family and local life and history, but also his professional existence. He provided very limited descriptions of his medical practice. He wrote that he had to travel long distances by horse and buggy and that he sometimes had to arise several times during the night for emergency calls (usually births). He recorded the number of babies he delivered and his opinion that illness and death were difficult. He illustrated his professional dedication when he wrote that he was preoccupied "day and night" with thoughts of a six-year-old typhoid patient. He claimed, "every ring of the telephone bell or door bell of the house, startles me. I think word is coming that she is worse and that I am wanted immediately." On the other hand, Kellogg never recorded graphic details of his patients' illnesses or of his recommended treatments. If his personal journals are any indication

of his true interests and feelings, then it seems he was more interested in recording folk sayings that he collected while on calls than he was in revealing the conditions of his patients' lives.

Considering the technicality and gruesomeness associated with a physician's work, it is probable that Dr. Kellogg deemed the medical details unfitting content for a "book which would interest most people." These things he saved for his medical journal, in which he kept his professional notes. Unfortunately, this source is difficult to assess because it contains only eight entries over eight months. It is possible that these are the only medical cases the doctor recorded, but more likely they are the only surviving documentation. His personal journal entries also lack any discussion of other local doctors' medical treatments, theories, or practice. He did report that he often consulted with other physicians and he wrote about their social gatherings in detail. After he was appointed the historian of the Medical Society of Clinton County in 1887, Dr. Kellogg solicited "all the facts possible in the lives of each and every physician who has ever practiced, or continues to practice, medicine in [Clinton] county." However, although he did begin this project, like his medical case-history journal, little evidence remains that it progressed very far.

Although apparently unwilling to denigrate his own social class, Kellogg could be quite critical when dealing with issues like political corruption. To him, the growing political machines of the time were added evidence of corruption resulting from the declining power of the old elite. However, even in these situations, Kellogg tempered his disdain with humor. For example, every election day he dryly commented about the current price of the vote and which party had been victorious. On November 2, 1886, he placidly wrote, "votes sold for from five to twenty dollars. As the Democrats had the most money their entire county ticket was elected." He did not, however, criticize one political party more than another. The 1888 presidential election particularly amused him and he recorded the local events in detail. Having heard rumors early in the evening that the Democratic candidate, Grover Cleveland, had been elected, Kellogg remarked that "It did not seem possible . . . that the American

People could do such a foolish thing." Kellogg seemed pleased when the initial reports of Cleveland's election turned out to be wrong and the local Democrats who had been bragging of their victory were humiliated by an all-night torch parade held by the Republicans in Plattsburgh. He wrote that when he heard of the "twenty-five Republican majority in Congress . . . You may believe I let my light shine then."

Sardonically he commented that "when the crowd in the early morning got up to Wallace Hartwell's they drummed but did not shout. They waited until Mr. Hartwell, who supposed the crowd to be Democratic, had lighted up his house considerably. Then they gave three cheers for Harrison [the new president]. In less than two minutes no light was to be seen in that house."

While this entry indicates Kellogg's Republican leaning, he did not elaborate on his political ideologies. Most likely he identified most with the Gilded-Age mugwumps: "men from the upper ranks of business and professional life [who] had expressed their distaste for machine politics, corruption, and the cruder forms of business intervention in political affairs."

Like Kellogg, "such men," according to historian Richard Hofstadter, "were commonly Republicans, but independent enough to bolt if they felt their principles betrayed." In an unusually long 1890 journal entry, he focused on the procedures of the new voting law, the Saxton Ballot Bill, which had been designed to curb fraud in elections. He wrote "the whole arrangement so far seems to please everybody" and that "it certainly makes one feel that there is dignity in voting."

More importantly, however, he was opposed to the election of a president who, according to Hofstadter, was "unsympathetic to the farmers." Kellogg, and the elite with whom he identified, were not necessarily concerned with the well being of the farmers who sought to assert political control through the populist movement. However, Kellogg did share the farmers' dislike for the apparent "domination of the country by industrial and financial capitalists," who corrupted the political system through "crass materialism."

Kellogg's criticism of the wealthy Plattsburgh banker, Samuel F. Vilas, demonstrates the doctor's repulsion to what he perceived as the greed of the



Photograph collection, Plattsburgh State University College of New York.
Feinberg Library Special Collections.

Dr. Kellogg's office was located on Margaret Street.
This view is from lower Brinkerhoff Street.

"vulgar nouveaux riches." This new monied class of Americans were bribing their way to control of the political process. In his description of Mrs. Smith M. Weed's funeral, Kellogg reproved Vilas for keeping his bank open when "the stores, banks, and saloons were nearly all closed" in honor of Mrs. Weed. He also commented on Vilas's character when the banker died a few months later. Although he wrote that "there have been much worse men than Mr. Vilas," he presented him as eccentric and miserly as Scrooge himself. He recounted several stories of Vilas's supposed penny-pinching, but one is especially revealing of his feelings:

[Vilas] is said to have been accustomed to go into the kitchen and tell the servant, "When you make tea, take a little pinch every time and you will soon save enough for a whole drawing." He is said to have been in the habit of examining the milk in the pans to see if the servants were drinking any of it. One girl arranged the pans so that when he tipped one up, he spilled the whole thing on to himself.

In the same entry, Kellogg disclosed a "suggestive" comment made by an employee when Vilas died. He quoted this person as saying that "God had blessed [the Vilas employees] by removing this old man this morning." While this may or may not have been said,

it is the view of Vilas that Kellogg chose to record for posterity.

Kellogg held up the American farmer as the ultimate individual entrepreneur. Cultivation of the soil hearkened back to America's colonial period, a time of honesty, stability, and rule by wealthy paternalists. The extent of Kellogg's interest in describing farm life was directly related to how it reflected these values.

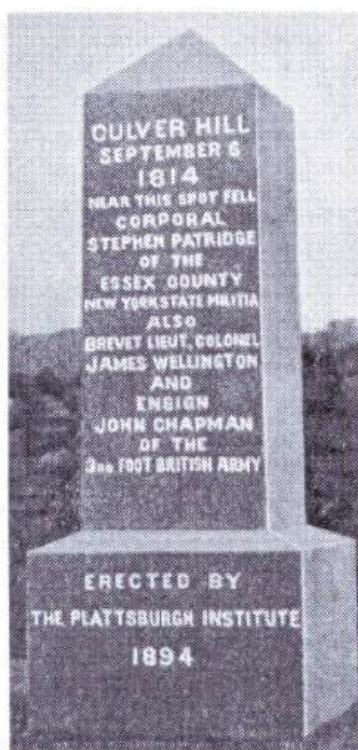
One example of his inclination to romanticize farm life was a description of one of his trips to Morristown. He painted a verbal landscape of a typical North Country day when he wrote that the leaves were "deep red" and "light yellow," the atmosphere "hazy," the mountains "dim," and the lake "leaden." He imagined a deer drinking from the "amber water" that ran alongside the road, and like the other picturesque natural wonders, the farmers were "digging potatoes . . . pitching buckwheat . . . and cutting corn." Agricultural labor was an important part of the panoramic pastoral scene of honest individual endeavor and community loyalty. Likewise, Kellogg's reminiscences of his own childhood on a Vermont farm overflow with romantic descriptions. All was beauty and innocence, with no allusion to drudgery, droughts, floods, diseases, or financial difficulties. There is no mention of the plight of the farmers, no sympathy with the populist cause.

Romanticized history was publicly memorialized by the historical societies typical of the age. According to Wallace, "the [Virginia] Mount Vernon Ladies' Association [MLVA] was the model" for later New England preservation societies. The MLVA was founded in 1853 to rescue Mount Vernon, the home of George Washington, from the hands of "soulless speculators" and to turn it into a shrine to reunite a fragmenting nation. Historian Marvin Trachtenberg claims that "monuments are a medium of continuity and interaction, not only in space but across time." By erecting shrines and memorials to famous dead military and political figures, the new historical associations hoped to regenerate in Americans, and

to inspire in the new immigrants, a patriotic devotion and to reassert the dominance of the old American elite.

Kellogg initiated the formation of a local "organization of gentlemen of this vicinity, for literary, scientific and historic purposes." He was named the first president of the Plattsburgh Institute, whose membership list read like a "who's who" of contemporary local intellectual society. This organization had as its main objectives "the preservation of relics of the Battle of Plattsburgh and of the other invasions of the enemy before the battle" and "the marking of places of historic interest."

Because of the value that Dr. Kellogg placed on local military history and on the lives of prominent members of Plattsburgh's society, he recorded in great detail the Institute's 1894 discussion, planning, and erection of a memorial to local soldiers who had died during the 1814 battle near Culver Hill in Beekmantown. One hundred dollars was spent on the granite monument, forty dollars of which was raised upon its proposal at the Plattsburgh Institute's eleventh meeting. When the Culver Hill monument was erected, special trains had to be employed to accommodate the crowds. Dr. Kellogg wrote that there were at least five local newspapers covering the event and that a reporter from the *Burlington Free Press* traveled all the way from Vermont and devoted four columns to the story. This journalist claimed that the Culver Hill monument was the first one on the "New York shore of Lake Champlain" to commemorate any of the wars with England. Moreover, one of the several speak-



Courtesy of Kellogg Collections, Plattsburgh State University College of New York, Feinberg Library Special Collections.

The Culver Hill Monument was erected by the Plattsburgh Institute in 1894.

ers at the Culver Hill dedication, the Honorable G. G. Benedict of Burlington, congratulated Plattsburgh on the patriotic efforts of the Institute:

There can hardly be too many [historic societies] nor too many monuments erected by them; for such memorials not only serve to assist future historians, and to gratify the curiosity of tourists, but to perform the higher duty of cherishing the noble virtue of patriotism.

Kellogg headed other commemorative efforts that followed the Culver Hill dedication. Among them was his suggestion to a group of Normal School students that each donate twenty-five cents for the placement of a "suitable tablet" at the Bridge Street bridge, a site of conflict during the Battle of Plattsburgh. He recorded that there seemed to be "no opposition" and that "the exercises . . . cannot fail of being of great value to all concerned." A few months later, in his role as president of the Institute, Dr. Kellogg asked the Sons of the Revolution to erect a monument at Valcour Island in commemoration of the Revolutionary battle that occurred there. Although the doctor considered it an important site, the Sons declined to invest what he had asked, and suggested instead "a natural boulder with a suitable inscription chiseled on it." This boulder still stands on Valcour Island today.

Over time Kellogg gained a reputation as somewhat of an expert on local military history. In pursuit of this expertise, he visited military forts from Canada to Ticonderoga. His journals include very detailed descriptions of these excursions and the conditions of the forts he explored. He also studied primary documents related to American battles and read published war histories. Some examples of these are the letters of Colonel N. Whiting, an officer in a New England regiment during the French and Indian Wars, and *Hadden's Journal and Orderly Books*, which recounted the experiences of a British soldier who fought at the Battle of Valcour. He also read local histories written by Plattsburgh lawyer Winslow C. Watson, several Revolutionary War studies by William L. Stone, and many more. He concentrated most of his research on military conflicts that preceded the chaos of the American Civil War. His goal was to direct attention back

to an earlier time when supposed stability reigned as a result of a more homogeneous and righteous ruling aristocracy.

In his travels to abandoned forts and through purchases and gifts, Kellogg acquired an extensive collection of "musketeers, sabers, powder horns, and cannonballs from various wars." Not surprisingly, he kept a cannonball on his desk. This collection was considered so valuable that he loaned part of it to the Albany Art and Historical Society. After Dr. Kellogg and his wife had both died, their son Nelson donated the military artifacts to the Plattsburgh Normal School. Unfortunately, these were lost in the school's 1929 fire.

In addition to collecting objects, Dr. Kellogg interviewed several senior citizens who had been alive during the 1814 Battle of Plattsburgh. It is evident that in his avid study of soldiers' writings and his own near-obsession with journal keeping that he valued first-hand accounts of historical events. He wanted to document people's experiences of the pre-Civil War, pre-industrial era before these connections were no longer available. The Clinton County Historical Association published these oral histories in 1964 as *Recollections of Clinton County and the Battle of Plattsburgh, 1800-1840*. Taken alone, these documents do not comprise a history of the battle, but only relate how these elderly people recalled the local situation.

For example, Mary William Torrey, 90 years old at the time of her interview with Dr. Kellogg, was a servant in a Plattsburgh household when the battle began. She remembered that "the British had a blacksmith shop on wheels in which to heat their shot . . . Mrs. Newcomb had pickles, soft soap and everything all turned over and destroyed. Mrs. Newcomb's 17-year-old daughter and I worked hard all one day cleaning up and only got the kitchen cleaned." In addition to relating hardships, however, Ms. Torrey graphically described death and suffering, topics Dr. Kellogg avoided when describing his own world. She told of a British sergeant who had been shot and killed and "blood was oozing from his mouth like beer."

Because of his intensive research and collecting of artifacts, Dr. Kellogg was in demand locally to give lectures regarding the military history of the Champlain

Valley. Especially indicative of his widespread reputation is a letter he received from a man in Philadelphia requesting information on the Battle of Plattsburgh. Apparently this man had been informed by someone in Port Kent that Dr. Kellogg "would be about the best one to give [him] some interesting points about the immediate locality."

In addition to being sought after for this kind of information, Kellogg was also a promoter of the education, preservation, and commemoration of local patriotic and elite-based history. Because the classroom is an ideal forum for inculcating ideas, Kellogg offered prizes through the Teachers' Association of Clinton County for historical essays by schoolchildren, and he participated as a judge in several of these contests. He also encouraged study of patriotic texts within his own family. He proudly recorded in his 1889 journal "a partial list of books" which his son Robert had read during that year. This list included the *Story of the American Indian*, *Palmer's History of Lake Champlain*, and Plattsburgh newspapers.

As respected as the doctor was locally for his historical knowledge, he was more widely known for his collection of Indian "relics" and their significance to the history of the Champlain Valley. Like the "Boston Brahmin anthropologists," he "sought to rescue the remnants of Indian cultures" as part of the preservation of past generations. He regularly wrote essays and gave lectures concerning this collection and traveled long distances in search of artifacts to add to it. His journal contains descriptions of his explorations along Lake Champlain's shores from Port Kent to Rouses Point. Everest writes that Kellogg had in excess of "15,000 artifacts. Newspaper editors began to talk of an Indian museum in Plattsburgh." This museum never evolved and in 1909 Kellogg sold his collection of Indian "relics" for six thousand dollars to Amherst College in Massachusetts.

Dr. Kellogg corresponded with other collectors and traveled throughout the Champlain Valley and Vermont to view the artifacts that other amateurs had found. One of these, Joseph Cook of Ticonderoga, regarded the doctor as "the Champion collector of Prehistoric articles from the Champlain Valley." Of particular significance were his discoveries at Dead

Creek near Cumberland Bay. Even as late as 1964 this was considered a "complex and important site" by P. Schuyler Miller of the Society for Pennsylvania Archaeology. He wrote, "Kellogg's notes are the sort that you can trust and use." Furthermore, in a letter to Everest in the same year, Miller also claimed that the professional archaeologists Beauchamp and Parker listed Kellogg as their "principal informant in the area."

It was at the Cumberland Bay site that Dr. Kellogg claimed that he discovered his first archaeological finds. Known by various names such as "Dead Creek," and "Scomotion," the doctor referred to it simply as "the Creek." Everest noted that Kellogg's success in finding large amounts of Indian artifacts at the Creek "owes partly to the fact that he was one of the first to search before remains had been disturbed." His discoveries dispelled earlier beliefs that there had been no Indian settlements in the area. This find also became the focus of studies that linked Indian tribes and settlements. For example, W. D. Lighthall of Montreal consulted Kellogg in an attempt to validate his theory "of a Montreal (or rather Hochelagan) origin of the Mohawks." This theory Miller also believed, in large part because of Kellogg's pottery discoveries in the Champlain Valley. After eighteen years of searching and collecting, Kellogg claimed to have evidence of forty-five such sites in the Champlain Valley and on the Vermont side of the lake.

Discovery of these sites not only proved that Indians had once occupied permanent settlements in the Champlain Valley, but that the European settlers had conquered them. To Victorians, this demonstrated cultural superiority of the colonials. In an essay called "Lake Settlements," which Kellogg read for the A.O. Club in his office in 1879, he referred to the local sites as "prehistoric evidences of man's existence." In another lecture he described the region as "without history" before its discovery by Europeans. Furthermore, in his 1887 lecture on "The Champlain Valley," the doctor referred to the Indians as "savages" and attributed the origin of the name of Lake Champlain to the explorer who "discovered" it. Likewise the Industrial Souvenir Edition of Plattsburgh 1887 refers to the native Indians as "savage warriors . . . perhaps gliding along stealthily

to surprise and kill the enemy and seize his scalp as a trophy . . ." This account praises the French forces who "took measures to stop further incursions," of "hostile Indians" who "attacked the feeble white settlements, sparing neither age nor infancy from the torch, the tomahawk, and the scalping knife." These references imply that "civilized" life did not exist in the area prior to European exploration and that the settlers brought about the order and stability that was so revered by the new Victorian antiquarians.

Francis Fellows wrote in 1933 that his father "certainly never expected" that his journals "would be read by other than his family and friends." Rather, certainly he must have not only believed, but hoped that others would read them. It was natural for the doctor's historical consciousness to carry over when writing in these journals. In his work, in his play and social life, and in the education of his children, history was always a priority and nearly an obsession. Moreover, what else could he have intended when he published excerpts from them in the February 4, 1893 *Plattsburgh Republican*?

There are many important topics and social issues of the time missing from Kellogg's accounts. For example, although Susan B. Anthony traveled to Plattsburgh in 1894 to aid in the struggle for women's suffrage, Kellogg never mentioned her visit or the issue. Furthermore, he describes life outside his own society only in passing, such as the Irish Settlement near Plattsburgh or the soldiers at the Barracks.

The journals are comprised mostly of romanticized portrayals of parts of Plattsburgh life which affected the doctor directly: his family, his social class, his own endeavors and travels, local folklore, nature, and the weather. These accounts must be absorbed along with other evidence, remembering that "every piece of history is an individualized view of a segment of past reality . . . which calls forth . . . a clear image or understanding of some past." In Dr. David Sherwood Kellogg's presentation, "the view of . . . past reality" was one intended to elevate the mythological colonial elite society with which he identified. Like many Victorians, Kellogg perceived that the new increased cultural diversity and corporate political involvement was threatening of this old order. His journals reflect

what he believed were the "ideals 'most necessary to preserve' and to bequeath to the future" the qualities of patriotism, individual endeavor, honesty, and most importantly, respect for the descendants of the nation's founders.

DEBRA KIMOK was born in Plattsburgh and studied history and English literature at Plattsburgh State University and in Chester, England. She received a Master's of Library Science at the University of Buffalo. She completed an internship at the Clinton County Historical Museum, and works part-time for the Council on the Arts for Clinton County as a grant coordinator. Since 2000, she also has been working full-time as a Visiting Assistant Librarian for PSU's Feinberg Library. This paper was originally written as part of an internship for PSU's Special Collections under the supervision of Associate Librarian Wayne Miller and Dr. James Lindgren. For a complete bibliography contact the author: Debra Kimok, Feinberg Library, 2 Draper Avenue, SUNY, Plattsburgh, NY 12901.

For Further Reading

Consult the Kellogg Collection, the David Sherwood Kellogg Journals, at Special Collections, State University of Plattsburgh, New York.

Kellogg, David. *A Doctor at All Hours*. Ed. Allan S. Everest. Vermont: The Stephen Greene Press, 1970.

Russo, David. *Keepers of Our Past: Local Historical Writing in the United States, 1820s-1930s*. New York, London: Greenwood Press, 1988.

Wallace, Mike. *Visiting the Past: History Museums in the United States Presenting the Past*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986.

Routine Eye Exams

Contact Lenses

Eye Glasses

Sun Glasses

LASIK

Retina Surgery

Cataract Surgery

**Glaucoma
Management**

**Treatment of
Eye Diseases**

450 Margaret St.
Plattsburgh, NY
566-2020

30 Woodruff St.
Saranac Lake, NY
891-8412

5 Lake View St.
Lake Placid, NY
523-2020

14861 State Rt. 30
Malone, NY
483-0065

Eye Care for the Adirondacks

450 Margaret St., Plattsburgh, NY 12901

Eye Care and Eye Wear for All Ages!

Providers of primary care for patients of all ages

We offer a full range of services from routine
eye exams to treatment of eye diseases

Eye Care for the Adirondacks

Look familiar?

How long has it been since your eyes were checked?



Call today, have your eyes checked.

518-566-2020

or

800-272-1003

Eye Physicians and Surgeons, provide medical and
surgical treatments of the eye

and also offer the latest technology in Laser Vision Correction

Kjell Dahlen, M.D., Benjamin Vilbert, M.D., Thomas Berbos, M.D.

Gault Farrell, M.D., Carl Wille, M.D., Stanley Hatch, O.D.

David Kirkpatrick, O.D., Richard Erenstone, O.D.



Abbott Frenyea Russell & Coffey PC

Certified Public Accountants

**MEETING ALL YOUR FINANCIAL
PLANNING NEEDS**

134 Boynton Ave., Plattsburgh, NY 12901

Tel: (518) 561-7030 • Fax: (518) 561-7107

www.afrc-cpa.com



– Printing, Copying & More –

Proud printers of this publication!

94 Margaret St., Plattsburgh, NY 12901 e-mail: info@heritageprint.com

(518) 563-8240 Fax (518) 563-9377

www.heritageprint.com

MORRISON AND MILLER, INC.

Insurance • Real Estate • Appraisals

Dan Clermont John Girard

Servicing our community since 1920.

We remain dedicated to providing excellent, personal service.

563-1130

53 Broad Street, Plattsburgh NY 12901

Charles W. Paepke, O.D., F.A.A.O.

Brett M. Paepke, O.D.

Family Eye Care and Contact Lens Services

Member



American Optometric
Association

202 West Bay Plaza

Plattsburgh, NY 12901-1786

Phone (518) 563-5460

Fax (518) 563-5471

www.paepkeoptometry.com

**LAKE CHAMPLAIN CARDIOLOGY
ASSOCIATES, LLP**



Cardiology



John D. Baker, MD David L. Sable, MD
Brent W. Hastings, MD Alon A. Steinberg, MD
Joel M. Wolkowicz, MD

52 Tom Miller Road • Plattsburgh, NY

563-2404

J. Langley Associates

The Definitive Name in Insurance

...For all your needs

PERSONAL

Home and Auto, Tenant
Recreational Boats and
Vehicles

COMMERCIAL

Package Policies, Workers
Compensation/Liability,
Estate, planning and Life
Insurance

748 Rt. 3 (across from airport)
563-2380 • Fax 563-2397

Visit us on the web at
www.jlangley.com
email: jlanguass@aol.com

COMPETITIVE EDGE TRAINING

communication skills training & consulting



KATHLEEN DULEY
Owner/Trainer

40 Sandra Avenue ▲ Plattsburgh, NY 12901

e-mail: kcompedge@aol.com

Tel (518) 563-0431 ▲ Fax (518) 566-8680

Northern Insuring Agency, Inc.



Smart People...

Smart Solutions

800-807-6542

www.northerninsuring.com



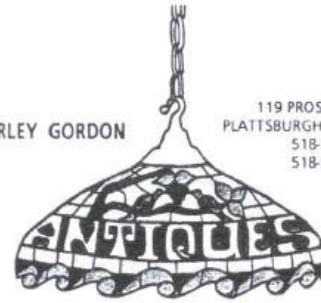
Complete Auction Service

518-561-0491
800-215-8751

CAGA
CERTIFIED
APPRAISER

Martin & Sons Auction Sales & Service, Inc.

Stephen Martin
P.O. Box 266
Plattsburgh, New York 12901



PHILIP & SHIRLEY GORDON

119 PROSPECT AVENUE
PLATTSBURGH, NEW YORK 12901
518-561-3383
518-561-4740

In the Heart of the Champlain Valley



*Growers & Packers of
Fancy McIntosh & Cortland Apples*

**OPEN FOR
RETAIL SALES**

Forrence Orchards, Inc.
2731 Route 22
Peru, New York 12972

Tel (518) 643-9527
Fax (518) 643-9509

Kinneston Associates, inc.*



Donald F. Kinneston

"30 years serving the community"

1-800-821-6753
562-8000

- Financial & Estate Analysis
- Investments
- Pension & Profit Sharing Plans
- Business & Personal Life Insurance
- Long Term Care

Securities Offered Through
Hornor Townsend & Kent Inc.

Member NASD SIPC
600 Dresher Rd., Horshman Pa. 19044
800-934-0777

Wagenshot

ANTIQUES & COLLECTABLES

Ruth B. Smith, Shopkeeper
298-3451



683 Prospect Street
Champlain, NY 12919

Open Daily 10 a.m. - 6 p.m.
Heated Year Round

Suite 211, West Bay Plaza, Plattsburgh, NY 12901

*not affiliated w/Hornor Townsend & Kent Inc.



CONTRACTORS Inc.

www.conroyandconroy.com

William Conroy

President
48 Spellman Rd.
Plattsburgh, NY 12901

Tel: (518) 562-2460
Fax: (518) 562-2461
Cell: (518) 572-9025
Wconroy@conroyandconroy.com

U.S. SWORDS

U.S. COINS

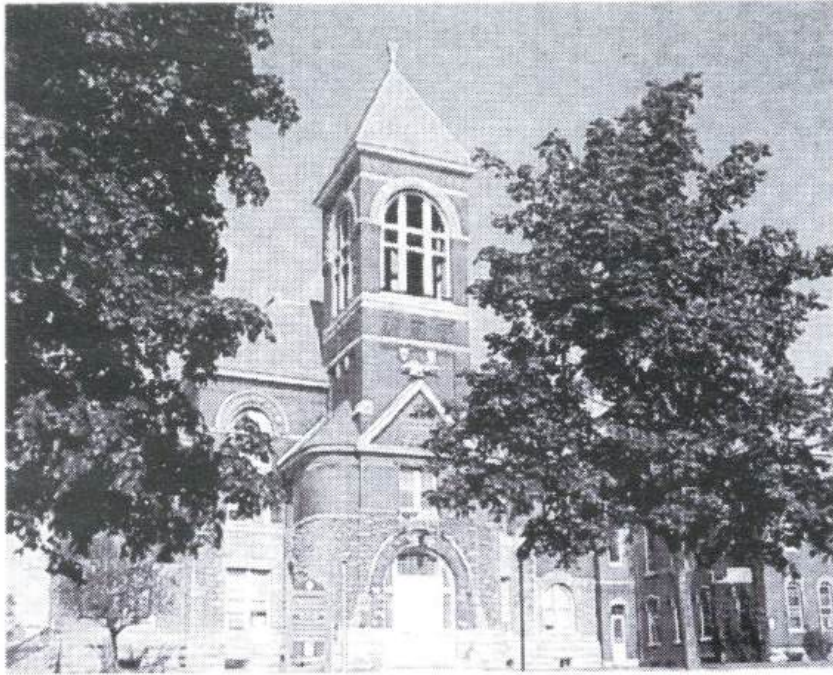


RODNEY RALSTON

COLLECTOR
U.S. MARTIAL ARMS
ACCOUTREMENTS

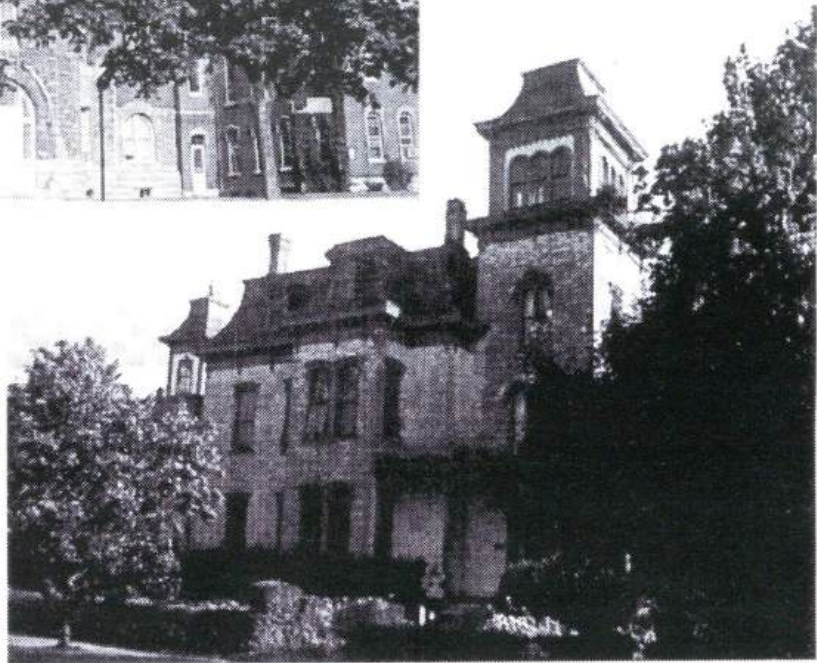
518-563-3988

231 CHAMPLAIN DRIVE
PLATTSBURGH, NY 12901



*Serving Area
Residents &
Businesses for
over 30 years.*

*Providing design
services for the
restoration, additions,
& alterations to
North Country
buildings of historic
significance.*



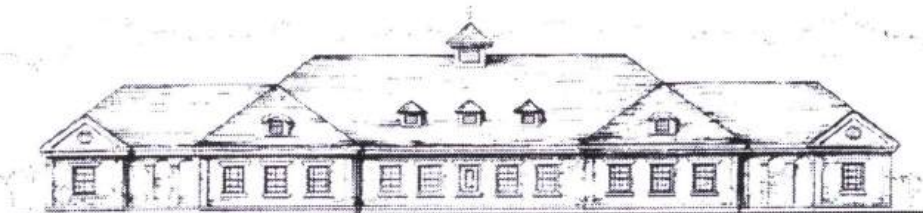
McKENNA ASSOCIATES

ARCHITECT

PLANNERS - ARCHITECTURAL ENGINEERS

ONE OAK STREET, PLATTSBURGH, NEW YORK

TEL: 518-561-0303 FAX: 518-561-0662



Ref 01098



Alexander C. Edwards, CPA

www.aecocpas.com

Solving Real Life Problems Since 1920

Alexander Edwards and Company

Certified Public Accountants and Business Consultants

47 Dock Street
Plattsburgh, NY 12901-3049

518.563.1600 ext 1
Fax 518.563.7625
e-mail: alex@aecocpas.com



Maurica A. Gilbert, CPA

Partner

www.aecocpas.com

Solving Real Life Problems Since 1920

Alexander Edwards and Company

Certified Public Accountants and Business Consultants

47 Dock Street
Plattsburgh, NY 12901-3049

518.563.1600 ext 2
Fax 518.563.7625
e-mail: maurica@aecocpas.com



**HAZARDOUS
MATERIALS
MANAGEMENT
INC.**

ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES:

Phase I/II Assessments • Lead Paint Inspections • Asbestos Inspections
Training and Education • Indoor Air Testing

Mark A. McCullough, CIH, P.O. Box 1209, Plattsburgh, NY 12901 - (518) 562-4666



Plattsburgh's Italian Restaurant Since 1951

20 Margaret St., Plattsburgh, NY 12901

Phone (518) 563-3003

Arnold Pavone, Prop.

BLAIR & WEBBER photography

- Family Portraits • Instant I.D. Photos in Color
- Old Photos Copied • Senior Portraits
- Commercial Photography • Proms

*Specializing in Fine Portrait
Photography for Over 50 Years*
Hours: 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday-Friday
Saturdays & Evenings by Appointment

561-4550

Neal Keach, CPP

Award-Winning Photographer

5383 Peru Street • Plattsburgh, New York 12901



BY CHOICE HOTELS

Comfort Inn Banquet & Conference Center

411 Rt. 3 & Exit 37
Plattsburgh, NY 12901
(518) 562-2730
800-950-0403

The Antiquarian is published yearly by the Clinton County Historical Association.
Current and prior year copies are available for sale at the Museum Gift Shop - \$5.00 per copy
Telephone (518) 561-0340 • Fax (518) 563-6823

