Northern Reaches *of* Lake Champlain

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An Interpretive Guide to the Borderlands of Lakes to Locks Passage

by LAKES TO LOCKS PASSAGE

To Addie Lawrence Shields (1916-2009)

One of New York State's finest county historians, and Clinton County's own. Her guidance that "geography predestines history" has shaped the stories we tell about Lakes to Locks Passage.

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Sailing the northern reaches of Lake Champlain. Photograph by Paul O. Boisvert

A SILVER DAGGER

The historian Ralph Nading Hill proclaimed Lake Champlain "the most historic body of water in the western hemisphere: a silver dagger from Canada to the heartland of the American colonies that forged the destiny of France and England in America, and the United States."

For thousands of years, the interconnected waterway of the Hudson River, Lake George, Lake Champlain, and the Richelieu River offered a faster, and often safer, travel route than through the dense forests alongside it. Abundant wildlife and edible plants sustained semi-nomadic people and passing travelers. Eventually the long, narrow Lake Champlain—bounded by Canada to the north, the Adirondack Mountains to the west, and the Green Mountains to the east—became the northern gateway of European settlement into New York and New England. The Champlain Valley was a corridor for explorers and settlers, connecting the Dutch and English settlements in New York City, Albany, and Schenectady with the French along the St. Lawrence River, Montreal, and Quebec City. As the stage for many battles to control the "Wilderness Empire," this 120-mile-long lake shaped the fate of two great nations.

Today, the northern reaches of Lake Champlain play a central role in trade with our Canadian neighbors to the north, and offer a delightful place to explore our shared heritage. This guidebook will help you imagine the events that were shaped by the landscape that surrounds you.
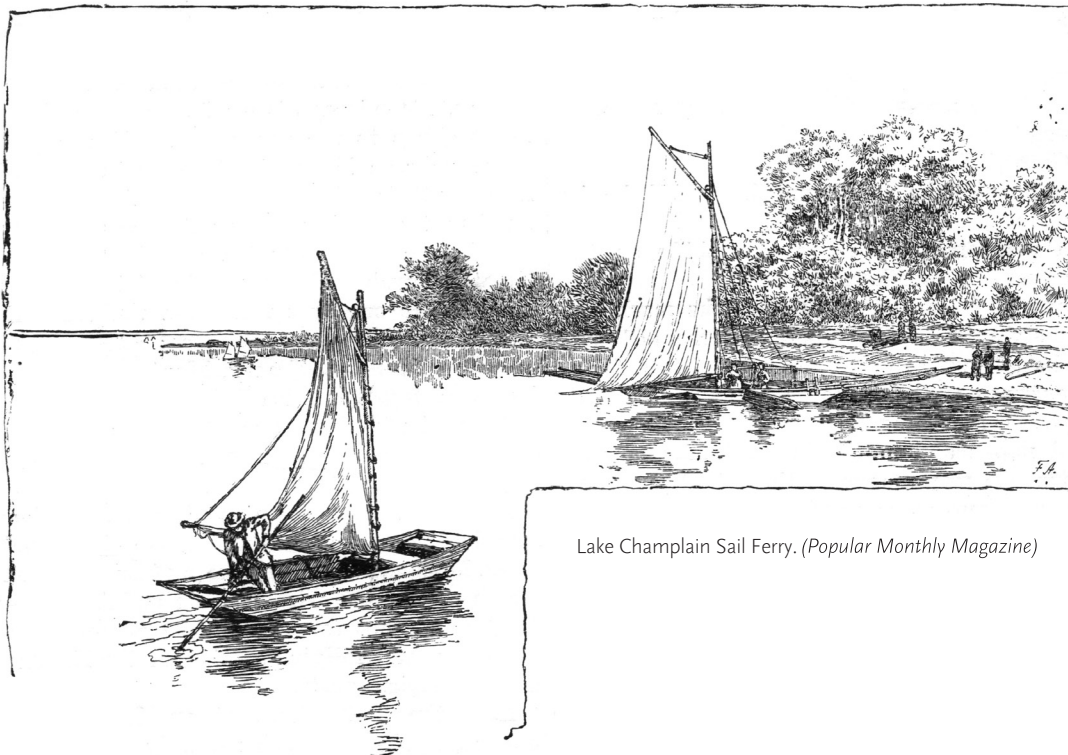
Lake Champlain Sail Ferry. *(Popular Monthly Magazine)*

Wjihozo Creates The World

...pita nôowat odainazagwa awani kiziôt wadzoa
ta tkôkoal siboal ta nebesal ta kisokw
wadzi môdzasait namatak wadzônemo chaga ta opedinal kanewa ozesgwiganal
ozomi daakwaswal wadzi gizi pmosat ni aiyagô wadzi gizi môzdit
aiyagô patkwabit ni odawakan weldzial wadzi kizi pmakannikhozit
ni omaônemen ali psanildzôt nagako wadzi kiziôt wadzoa ta benôkowal...
kiziton nebesal ni wadzi olito katsi nebesal neigô
kwolebokwabik ta paami gizi molôgek yo batkwabit...pitawbakw

...very long ago there used to be someone he made mountains
and hills rivers and lakes and weather.
for beginning at first he had a body and arms but his legs
too short to be able to walk and he had to be able to move
he had to sit and he used his hands to be able to travel
and he gathered it hands filled with sand to make mountains and hills...
he made it lakes and to make big lakes
he turned sitting and then made a deep one here...the place in between

NATURAL FORCES AND FIRST PEOPLES

Ancient continental collisions created the underpinnings of this landscape. Very recently in Earth's chronology, giant ice sheets sculpted those underpinnings into their present shape. As the ice retreated, plants, animals, and people moved in to populate the place. The Abenaki people, who refer to themselves as "People of the Dawn" have a beautiful story of this creation process. Abenaki elder Ambroise Obomsawin shared the story of Wjihozo, their creator, with the ethnologist Gordon Day in 1968. *(See translation, left.)*

Gastropod fossil. Photograph by Randy A. Abar

Bedrock Basics

Over 450 million years ago, a shallow tropical sea covered the present-day Lake Champlain Valley. The sandy beach solidified into sandstone. In some places, the sandstone preserves the ripples formed by shoreline waves; in others, the ripples record the action of a stream, with the steep slope of each ripple indicating the direction of flow. Marine creatures that sank to the ocean floor calcified into local bedrock: Limestone layers, named Chazy or Beekmantown or Crown Point, record the places where geologists first identified the particular formations, known as type sections. Curious visitors can find rock containing beautifully-preserved fossils of giant snails (gastropods), trilobites, and other sea life around the lake, anywhere weather, waves, or waterfalls have broken apart this evenly stratified gray-blue rock. Fossil hunters may not remove rocks from

Saranac River escarpment. Photograph by Robin Brown

beaches on state land, such as those at Crab Island or Point au Roche, because they are held in the public trust.

Continental collisions and mountain building formed much of the present-day physiography of the valley. About five million years ago, the Adirondack Mountains began to rise in a dome formation, known as a massif—an uplifted area of ancient metamorphic rock formed at high temperature and high pressure 19 to 25 miles underground. Called the Adirondack Shield, it consists mostly of anorthosite, quartzite, and marble, and forms part of the Grenville orogen (mountain belt) that stretches beneath North America from Mexico to Labrador.

Shaped by Ice and Water

The shape of the Champlain Valley that the Abenaki attribute to Wjihozo, their Creator, is explained by geologists as the result of the movement of melting ice at the end of the last Ice Age, about 10,000 years ago. Glaciers built up over 20,000 years reached a depth of almost a mile thick. The weight of the ice, armored with the load of rocks it carried in its underbelly, scoured the land, pushing everything in its path in a southeasterly direction. Wherever a glacial lobe ended, it dropped a terminal moraine—a heap of debris collected along the glacier's path. Some of that debris blocked the lowlands between

Altona Flatrock. Photograph by David Katz

Lake Champlain and the Hudson River. A glacial lake called Lake Vermont filled with meltwater. This lake was so deep that many of today's surrounding mountains spent centuries as islands. Valley soils owe their fertility to the fact that they had accumulated this lake sediment rich in nutrients.

Lake Ontario, another glacial lake located many miles to the west, accounts for why some places surrounding Lake Champlain have almost no soil whatsoever. When melting ice finally uncorked glacial Lake Ontario, thousands of cubic meters of water

rushed into the Champlain Valley. Along the way, it scoured the sandstone bedrock completely clear of soil. The Altona Flat Rocks, a portion of which is protected in the Nature Conservancy's Gadway Preserve, demonstrates the extraordinary power of flowing water. These bare rocks now support a rare collection of jack pines, blueberries, and other hardy plants.

Similar cataclysmic floods from other glacial outbreaks cut deep into bedrock formations. The most dramatic and popular geologic site is Ausable Chasm, where
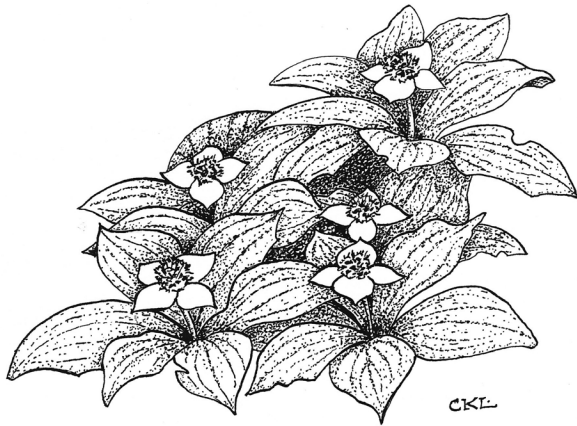
Bunchberry blossom. Drawing by Clelia Lion

Jack pine branch, Gadway Pine Barren. Photograph by David Katz

a 200-foot-deep gorge was cut through 500-million-year-old Potsdam sandstone by the glacial ancestor of the Ausable River. Ausable Chasm opened as a tourist attraction in 1874, and visitors today still admire the dramatic rock formations, some with likenesses of creatures carved into the rock walls.

Less spectacular than the carvings, but just as impressive, are the glacial deposits that demonstrate the massive forces at work at the end of the last ice age. The Ingraham Esker runs for nearly 20 miles from Champlain through the town of Chazy, where it levels off near Point au Roche State Park. A river of meltwater, which flowed through a tunnel in the ice, left this snakelike deposit of sand and gravel ten to 30 feet high and up to 1,000 feet across. Engineers like to use the naturally graded sand and gravel from eskers in road-building. This formation has been mined substantially for highway construction, notably for the Adirondack Northway (I-87), completed in 1967.

The esker also provides a record of the next chapter in geological history, when the Atlantic Ocean finally broke through from the north. Waves eroded the crest of the ridge and seashells accumulated on its flanks; telltale evidence of the saltwater creatures that lived there 10,000 years ago. As the glaciers disappeared, the Earth's crust rebounded and this valley rose above sea level, reversing the direction of water flow. In fact, the region still experiences occasional earthquakes as the land continues to rise. Rainfall has created a lake with fresh water that flows north through the Richelieu River to the St. Lawrence River.

At 435 square miles, Lake Champlain is the sixth largest fresh water body in the United States and was briefly called the "sixth Great Lake." It is 120 miles long, 11 miles wide at the broadest point, and 400 feet deep; the watershed area covers 8,234 square miles in New York, Vermont, and the Canadian province of Quebec.

Waterways for Wildlife

Three major rivers flow out of the Adirondack Mountains into the north end of Lake Champlain, all stocked with trout and landlocked salmon. The Great Chazy River takes shape on the slopes of Lyon Mountain and meanders through convoluted oxbows. One winds right through the Village of Champlain. The Saranac River originates 81 miles west of the lake with more than three dozen source lakes and ponds and navigable rapids, ultimately flowing into Cumberland Bay in the City of Plattsburgh. The Ausable River comes from Mount Marcy in the Adirondack

Blue Jay. (Adirondack Coast Visitors Bureau)

Great blue heron. Photograph courtesy John Cossick (USGS)

High Peaks, dashing over tough sandstone and plunging into the depths of Ausable Chasm before spreading out into a birding paradise along the shores of Lake Champlain.

For millennia, Lake Champlain's 120-mile reach has guided migrating birds to and from summer breeding grounds in northern Canada. They follow the path of the waterway from their lofty vantage point, descending to rest and feed in the broad marshes at the rivers' outlets. The watery path formed by the Hudson River, Lake George, and Lake Champlain is known as the Atlantic Flyway. Geese, ducks, and songbirds travel the Flyway in the spring and fall, while monarch butterflies come north to feast on milkweed and breed in the summer.

Birding at Kings Bay. (Adirondack Coast Visitors Bureau)

Lifeways of Native Peoples

The great lake now called "Champlain" was home to indigenous peoples for many thousands of years before Europeans ever set foot on its shores. The oldest surviving archaeological evidence dates to about 11,000 years ago, when seawater filled the valley at the end of the last Ice Age. Nomadic people followed big game called paleofauna, hunting mastodon, wooly mammoth, caribou, and giant beavers across a landscape resembling arctic tundra, where edible and medicinal plants grew in abundance. The salty waters of the Champlain Sea supported both large sea-going mammals and smaller fish.

As the climate warmed, the landscape changed. Temperate northern woodland species replaced tundra-like, cold-weather plants. Native people traveled seasonally along the lake to hunt, fish, harvest plants, and gather building materials for homes, canoes, and sleds. Tools made from exotic stone indicate that Native residents maintained social contact and intertribal trade networks with Native groups in the Great Lakes, the St. Lawrence Valley, the Canadian Maritime Provinces, and the Connecticut and Hudson River Valleys.

During the Woodland Period, beginning about 3,000 years ago, people began to supplement their ancient ways of hunting and fishing with farming of native food plants. The practice of formal planting
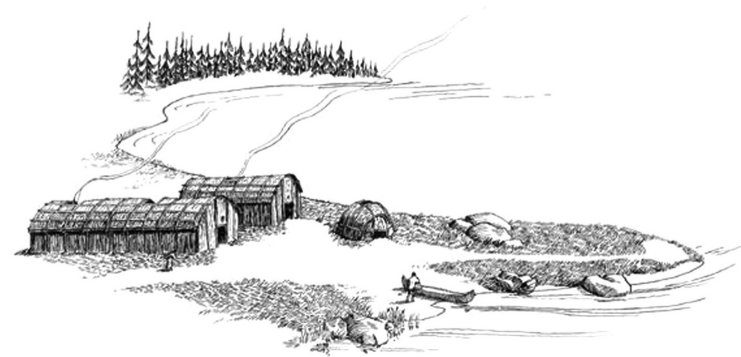
Iroquois Village. Drawing by John Fadden (Six Nations Indian Museum)

Woman cutting sweetgrass. Photograph by Elizabeth Watson (courtesy of Francis Rooney)

practices reached this region about a thousand years ago, and evolved into the planting system known as the "three sisters," combining the cultivation of corn, beans, and squash. As new groups of Native people migrated to the region, the lake became the boundary between Iroquoian people who called themselves *Haudenosaunee* ("People of the Longhouse") to the west and Algonkian people who called themselves *Wôbanakiak* or *Abenaki* ("People of the Dawn") to the east. The easternmost tribe of Iroquoian people— the Kanienkehaka
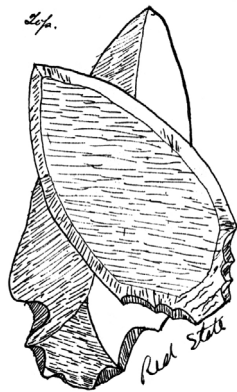
Slate spear point. Drawing by Dr. D.S. Kellogg. (Special Collections, Feinberg Library, SUNY Plattsburgh)

Mohawk—call the lake *Caniaderiguarunte,* "The Door of the Country." Abenaki people trace their origins to this lake, which they call *Bitawbakw,* "The Waters Between."

During the late 19th century, Dr. David S. Kellogg spent decades exploring the shores of Lake Champlain. The stone and bone tools he discovered helped to prove that Native people did live in the Champlain Valley, dispelling a myth that had survived since Champlain's time. His papers can be found at the SUNY Plattsburgh Feinberg Library Special Collections.

Lake Champlain served as an important travel corridor for Native people, who led the first Europeans along the waterway about 400 years ago. By the nineteenth century, much of the lakeshore had been claimed by Europeans, but a few settlements of Mohawk and Abenaki families persisted, supplementing their subsistence ways by peddling wild game, medicinal herbs, and ash-splint baskets to their non-native neighbors. Native culture forms a strong component of regional culture, contributing traditional practices of maple sugaring, herbal medicines, hunting techniques, snowshoeing, and many wood crafts to North Country life. Today, Mohawk families with ties to the Lake Champlain area can be

found living at Kahanawake, near Montreal, at Akwesasne on the Saint Lawrence River, and at Kanatsiohareke in Fonda, NY. Abenaki families with ties to Lake Champlain can be found living at Missisquoi (Swanton, VT), Odanak (Saint Francis, Quebec), Lake George, and Saratoga Springs. The history of these Native peoples is inextricably woven into the cultural landscape of Lake Champlain.

Indian beadwork purse. (Alice T. Miner Museum)

SHIFTING BOUNDARIES AND ALLEGIANCES

When Samuel de Champlain began his voyages to the New World in the early years of the seventeenth century, he developed allegiances with Algonkian people, who enlisted Champlain in their efforts to resist the movement of the Iroquois into the Champlain Valley from the southwest. They asked him to accompany a war party to the southern end of the lake to do battle against their enemies. The battle on the shore in present-day Ticonderoga on the 30th of July 1609, in which Champlain killed two Iroquois with a single shot from his firearm, marked the first involvement of European weapons in intertribal warfare. Almost a century later, the Great Peace of 1701, initiated by Abenaki and Mohawk peoples linked to Catholic mission villages in New France, helped to diminish intertribal hostilities.

Between Two Flags

Champlain's excursion into Lake Champlain forged the way for exploration of the region by the French from the north, while the Dutch and British traders penetrated from the south. Native people allied with those Europeans they deemed most likely to further their own territorial interests. The Abenakis, Hurons, and Montagnais sided with the French; the Iroquois sided with the Dutch and the British.

Standing on the bluff above the Saranac River in Plattsburgh in front of the statue of Samuel de Champlain, one can follow his gaze out over the lake and envision the waves of explorers, fur traders, and soldier-settlers who passed by, intent on gaining control of the Lake Champlain waterway. An early confrontation took place a few miles to the north in 1666, when a French officer stationed at Fort Saint Anne across the water on Isle la Motte lost his life in a fight with a party of Mohawk at the mouth of the Great Chazy River, a river that now bears his name. Over the next 75 years, numerous raids unfolded in three "wilderness wars" known by the names of British monarchs—William, Anne, and George. These conflicts culminated in what is known as the French and Indian War (Seven Years War), which ended with the French ceding Canada to Britain in 1763. This final conflict played out largely in Lake George and the upper reaches of Lake Champlain, where

Champlain Monument. Photograph by Boire Design. (Adirondack Coast Visitors Bureau)

in late October of 1759, General Amherst's fleet swept the French from the lake. While retreating north to Quebec, the French scuttled three ships in the waters below Cliff Haven, just south of Plattsburgh. A cannon salvaged in 1968 from one of these sailing ships has been restored and placed on display in the lobby of Clinton County Community College, overlooking the site.

Travelers enjoyed quiet passage along Lake Champlain for only a short time before war came again to the valley. To protect their territory over the years, European forces had built a series of forts and garrisons along the waterway. In 1774, the British strategy to control Lake Champlain led them to build a stockade and garrison house located at the southern end of Point au Fer, south of Rouses Point. This they lost to the Americans as the summer of 1775 unfolded and Revolutionary forces moved north into what is now Canada. That campaign failed, and the American troops limped back to Crown Point, burning the Point au Fer post on the way south. The British promptly took back control of Point au Fer and stayed until 1796, when they finally relinquished their claim to the waters of Lake Champlain. Today, a raised causeway across swampy ground makes Point au Fer more accessible than it was in those days, and the earthworks described as "Old Fort" on Seneca Ray Stoddard's 1893 map of Lake Champlain are still visible in the landscape.
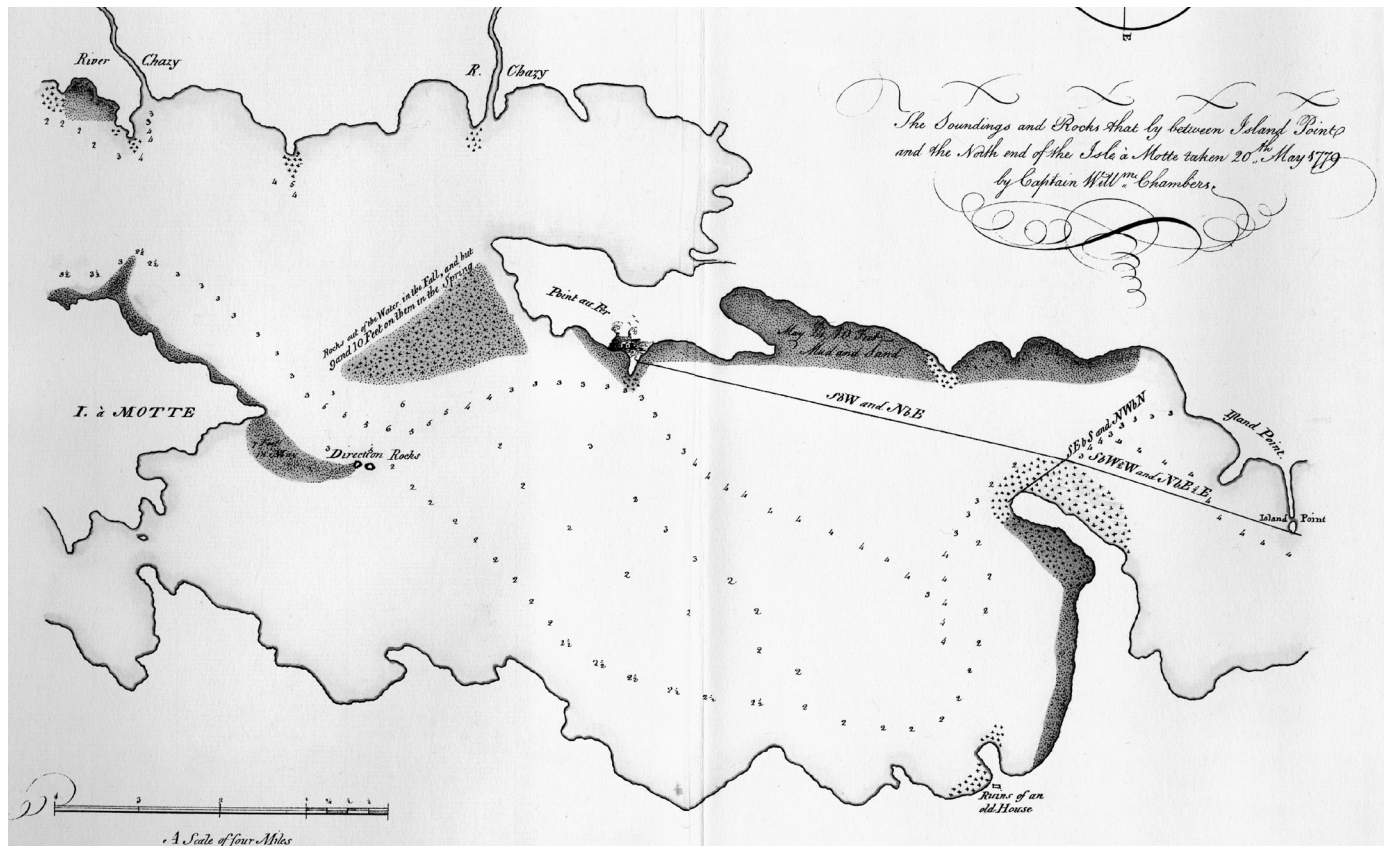
Point au Fer, *Atlas of Lake Champlain, 1779-1780* by Capt. William Chambers. (Special Collections, Middlebury College)
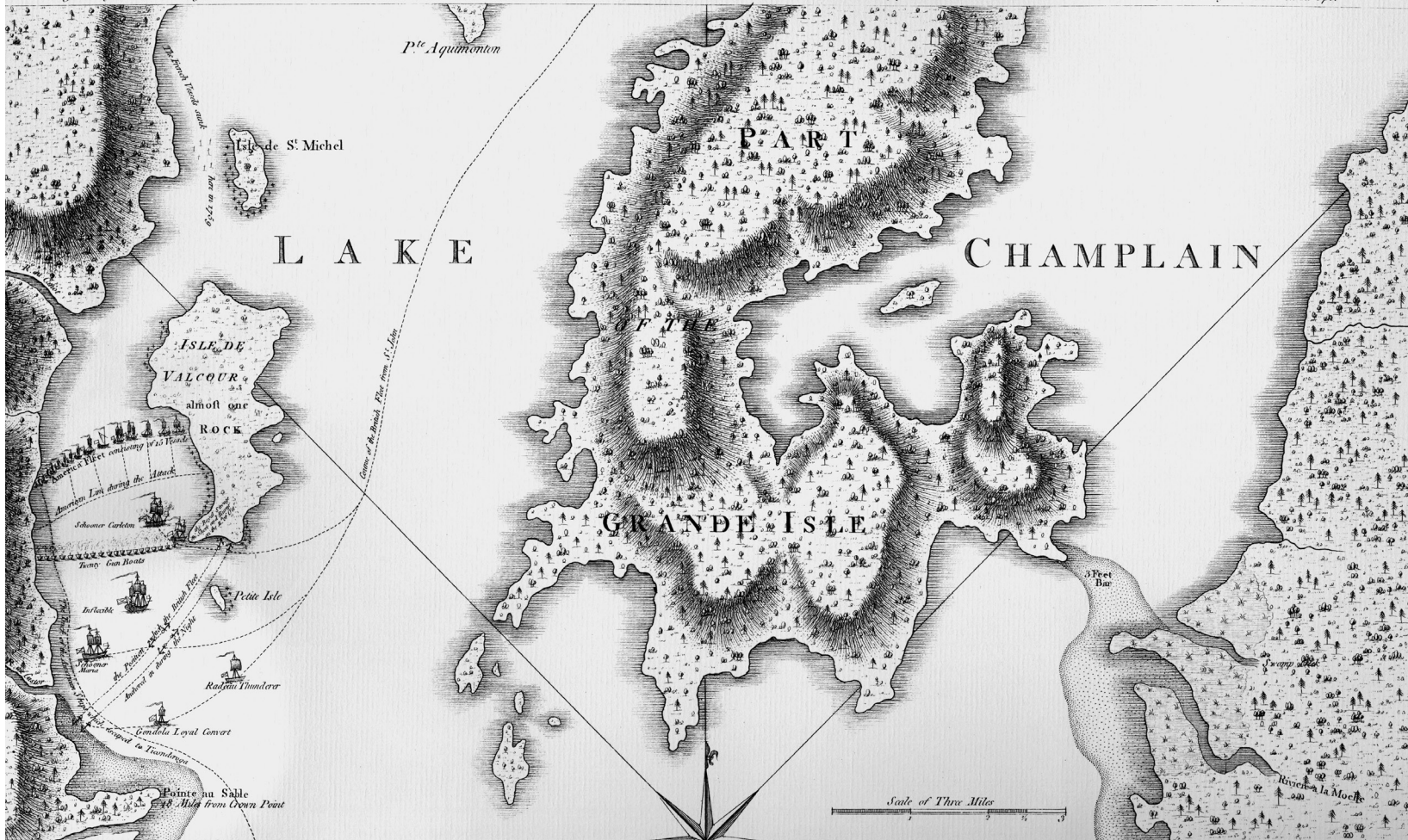
Detail, Battle of Valcour, *Atlas of Lake Champlain, 1779-1780* by Capt. William Chambers. (Special Collections, Middlebury College)

Bluff Point provides a commanding view of the stretch of water where Benedict Arnold outmaneuvered a British fleet in the Battle of Valcour, early in the War for Independence. Especially if there's a strong wind blowing from the north, Arnold's strategy unfolds at your feet. His fleet of 16 little boats had made their way north from Whitehall to face British General Guy Carleton's fleet of 29 ships. They met on October 11, 1776, on a cold "winter lake," deep blue and dotted with whitecaps. The British inflicted considerable damage to the American fleet on the first day of the battle. Arnold then brought his navy into the shelter of Valcour Bay, where the

fierce north wind prevented the British from pursuing. Instead, they formed a blockade. Under the cover of night and a dense fog, the American ships crept through the British line, reassembling to the south at Schuyler Island for another battle. The American fleet broke up. Arnold and some of his men escaped overland to Crown Point and Ticonderoga, as three enemy ships led a lively pursuit. The British dallied for a month before returning to St. Jean, Quebec. Although Great Britain controlled Lake Champlain once again, it was too late in the season to take advantage of it. Such is the changeable North Country weather that a blanketing fog can follow close on the heels of a cold northern gale.

In 1777, the British campaign moved south along Champlain under the leadership of General John Burgoyne, pausing to drive the Americans from Ticonderoga and Mount Independence, and to fight battles at Hubbardton and Walloomsac (Bennington). Historians say that although the Battle of Valcour was a victory for the British, it delayed their advance to control the interconnected waterway and set up their defeat at Saratoga, considered by historians to be the turning point of the Revolutionary War.

In 1935, the American gunboat *Philadelphia,* sunk during the Battle of Valcour, was recovered from Valcour Bay, restored, and reassembled. The Smithsonian Institution installed it in the National Museum of American History in 1961.

Defensive Frontier

Settlers flowed into the valleys after the Revolution, eager to farm the fertile land, harvest the timber, mine the iron deposits, and export the riches of the country. But international affairs soon interfered. Following the Treaty of Paris in 1783, which ended the American Revolution, Jay's Treaty of 1794 facilitated ten years of peaceful trade between the United States and Great Britain during the French Revolution, which began in 1789. Eventually, however, both France and England challenged the United States' neutrality, and after several confrontations, President Jefferson levied the Embargo Act of 1807, preventing the export of American goods. North Country producers could no longer legally trade with their Canadian neighbors.

Heated protests got nowhere, so people found inventive ways to carry on their business along the borderlands. At Rouses Point, a wharf was built straddling the border so that goods could be unloaded from an American boat and shifted directly onto a
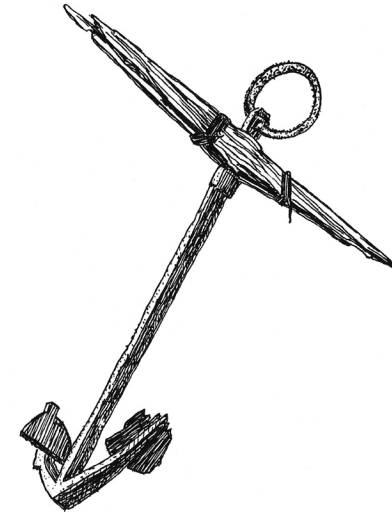
Anchor cut loose by sloop USS *Preble.* Drawing by Clelia Lion

Canadian vessel. North Country beef, pork, wheat, potatoes, cheese and butter continued to flow into Canada, as northbound trade increased with the population growth.

The United States brought the trade conflict to a head by declaring war on Britain in 1812. British forces stationed in Canada targeted Lake Champlain as an invasion route. Both sides knew that whoever controlled Lake Champlain determined the outcome of the war. But control of the waterway required success both on land and water. Two failed American attempts to invade Canada, in the fall of 1812 and again a year later, punctuated by a series of British raids in the summer of 1813, sent civilians fleeing out of harm's way. Both sides invested their energies in building warships.
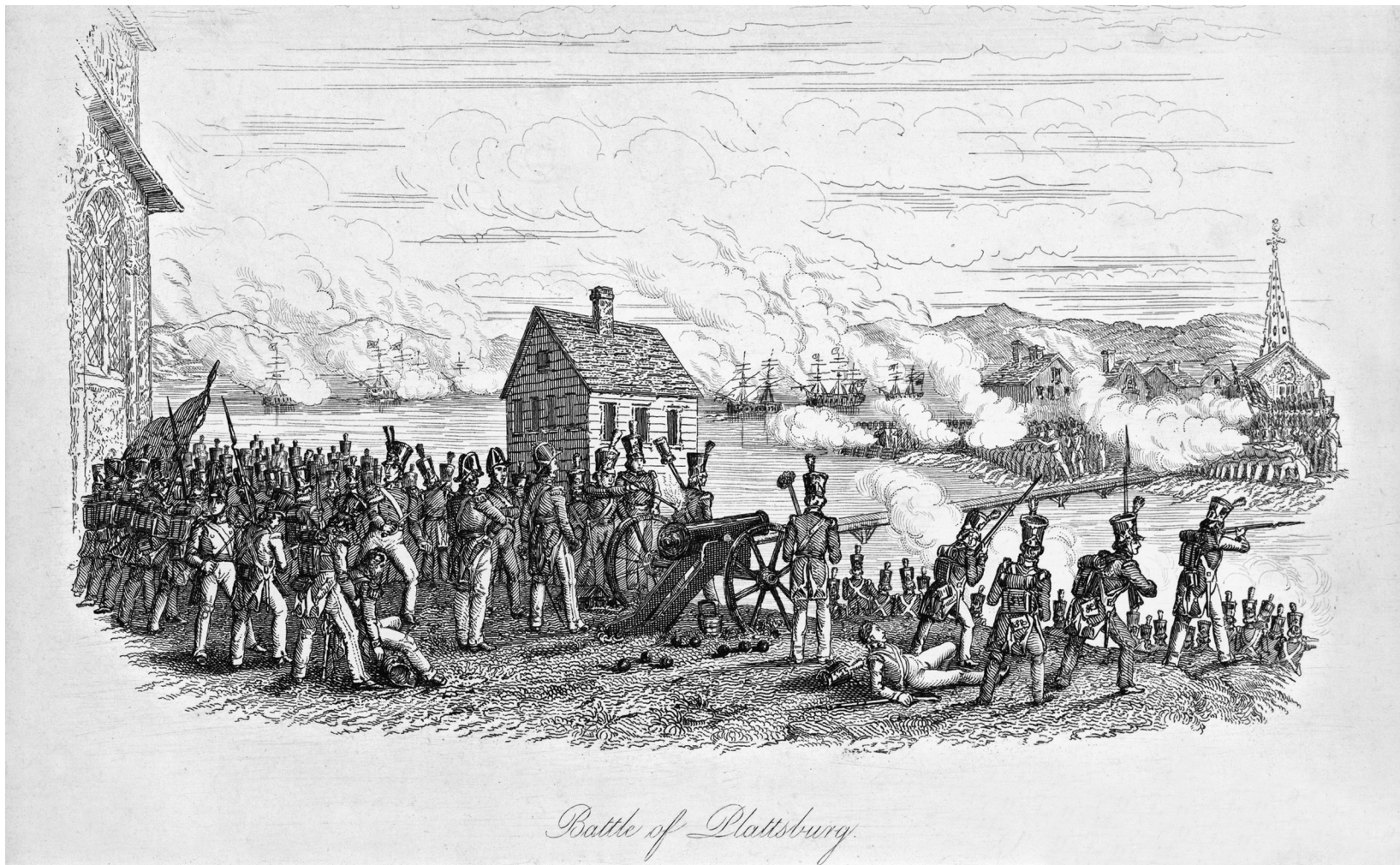
Battle of Plattsburgh, engraving. (Alice T. Miner Museum)

Lieutenant Thomas Macdonough commanded the American fleet on Lake Champlain, keeping the British confined to the Richelieu River in Quebec throughout the summer of 1813. Both the British and Americans expanded their naval fleets during the following winter. Macdonough commissioned five ships, including the 26-gun ship *Saratoga* and several gunboats, and refitted the steamboat *Ticonderoga* as a sloop-of-war. On land, Major General George Izard was in charge of the Northern Army protecting Lake Champlain, with Field Commander Alexander Macomb and a force of 4,700 American troops.

Battle of Plattsburgh commemorative scarf. (Alice T. Miner Museum)

In the summer of 1814, 15,000 British troops arrived in Canada, fresh from their victory over Napoleon, and ready to propel the invasion. British General Prevost sent troops west towards Kingston, Ontario to create a diversionary attack on Sackett's Harbor. In response, the United States War Department ordered General Izard to move all available troops from Plattsburgh towards Sackett's Harbor. With Izard's best troops gone, Prevost struck quickly, leading his force of 11,000 men across the border at Champlain on September 1. They reached Beekmantown five days later and clashed with a small detachment of U.S. regulars and militia, driving them back to Plattsburgh and across the Saranac River.

When the British ship *Linnet* opened fire on the *Saratoga*, only one ball hit, freeing a fighting gamecock from its cage. The unharmed cock settled on a gunslide with a lusty crow of defiance. The crew cheered this auspicious sign of an American victory.

Meanwhile, Macdonough had moved his small fleet into position in Plattsburgh Bay when Prevost crossed the border. There they waited until the British fleet arrived on the 11th of September. Macdonough fought "from anchor" with his ships in a defensive

line formation running northeast between Crab Island and Cumberland Head. He had them fitted with spring lines, placed underwater in such a way that the ships could swing themselves completely around to deliver a fresh broadside facing the enemy. The American warship *Saratoga* faced off against the British *Confiance; Saratoga's* first shot raked *Confiance's* deck, killing Captain Downie, the newly appointed fleet commander. Ultimately, Macdonough sank the British *Confiance,* which prompted the *Linnet* to surrender.

The American naval victory helped to frustrate the British assault on land. Macomb made such deceptive use of his small force that Prevost, deprived of support from the water, decided to call off the attack and retreat to Canada. The U.S. victory at Plattsburgh took place shortly before the signing of the Treaty of Ghent, which ended the War of 1812. The American victory denied the British negotiators at Ghent leverage to demand any territorial claims against the United States, and proved once again that naval command of Lake Champlain was the key to control of the entire region, earning Plattsburgh Bay recognition as a National Historic Landmark in 1960.

Macdonough became the hero of the decade, praised in popular songs and commemorative memorabilia. A century later, the city of Plattsburgh built a 135-foot-

Macdonough Monument. (Adirondack Coast Visitors Bureau)

tall limestone obelisk in his honor, capped with a proud eagle and surrounded with bas-reliefs and the names of the four principal ships of Macdonough's fleet. Inside Plattsburgh City Hall, just across Margaret Street from the monument, murals illustrate the battle action alongside the anchor of the British battleship *Confiance,* recovered from the lake bottom on September 11, 1998, and now conserved for permanent display. On request, the City Historian, located in City Hall, will open the monument so visitors can climb the iron staircase for a fine view of the bay.

To get perspective on Plattsburgh Bay and the naval battle, follow the bicycle path that links downtown Plattsburgh to the City Beach, Cumberland Head State Park, and the interpretive wayside exhibits along the north shore of Cumberland Bay. Visit the Kent-Delord House, once occupied by

British artillery officers, and now survives as an historic house museum located on the bluff overlooking the mouth of the Saranac River. Visitors can learn about the wartime tribulations faced by the local residents and see the tea chest left behind by a departing artilleryman. The more difficult maneuvers of the land battle, and the greater context of the conflict, are laid out in a diorama and exhibits at the Battle of Plattsburgh Association Museum, located in the museum campus on the" Old Base" at the south end of the city. Nearby, the Clinton County Historical Association exhibits uniforms, weapons, and historical artifacts collected over many generations.

The War of 1812 ended before many of the enlistments did, so the U.S. Army put men to work. Some New Englanders got their first glimpse of the North Country as they dismantled cantonments along the western shore of the lake. Others built log barracks in Plattsburgh. The Rebellions of 1837 in Canada prompted construction of stone barracks in 1838. The sole surviving example stands proudly at the center of the "Old Base" campus. Over the course of two centuries, Plattsburgh has hosted all four branches of the United States military. Troops trained here for the Mexican War, Spanish American War, and for both World Wars. Dozens of regiments marched off to the Civil War from this hotbed of abolitionism, the reform
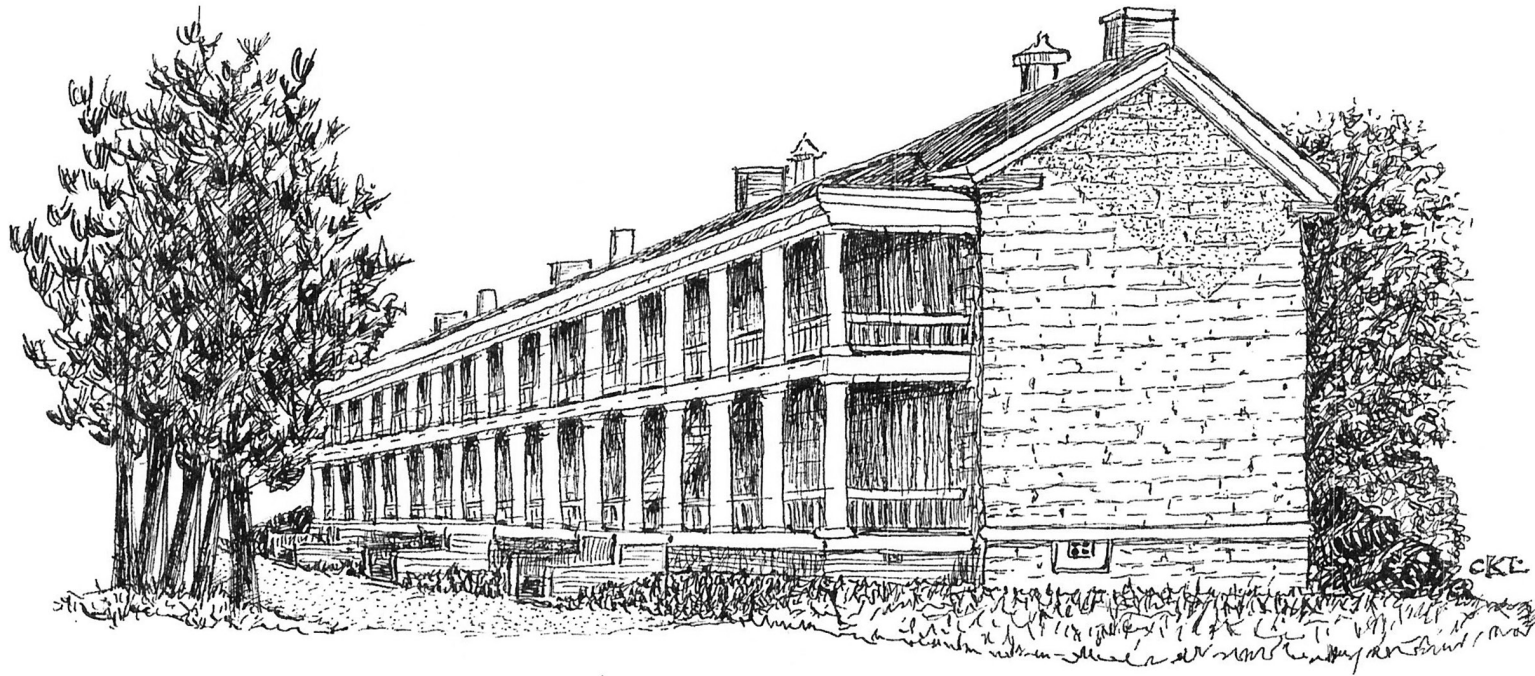
Old Stone Barracks, Old Base. Drawing by Clelia Lion

movement determined to end slavery in the United States. A few of these soldiers' graves are located in the cemetery located at the southern end of the "Old Base."

Although after the War of 1812, it was never again at center stage, New York's northern reaches of Lake Champlain continued to play a strategic role in America's defenses. In 1816, construction began on a fort at Rouses Point, but within the year, surveyors discovered that it was located nearly a mile north of the U.S.-Canadian border. Construction stopped, the unnamed citadel took the nickname "Fort Blunder," and residents salvaged stone from it to construct buildings in the village. After the respective governments adjusted the international boundary by the Webster-Ashburton Treaty of 1842, work began on Island Point, now safely within United States territory, where Lake Champlain flows into the Richelieu River. Fort Montgomery, completed in 1871, was initially armed with 32-pound cannons, 10-inch Rodmans, and 24-pound flank howitzers but never garrisoned. In 1926, the U.S. government sold the fort at public auction. When work on the bridge between Rouses Point and Vermont began in 1936, the contractor took down most of the fort and used the stone for fill. The ruins, visible from the Champlain Bridge, remain in private hands. The fort
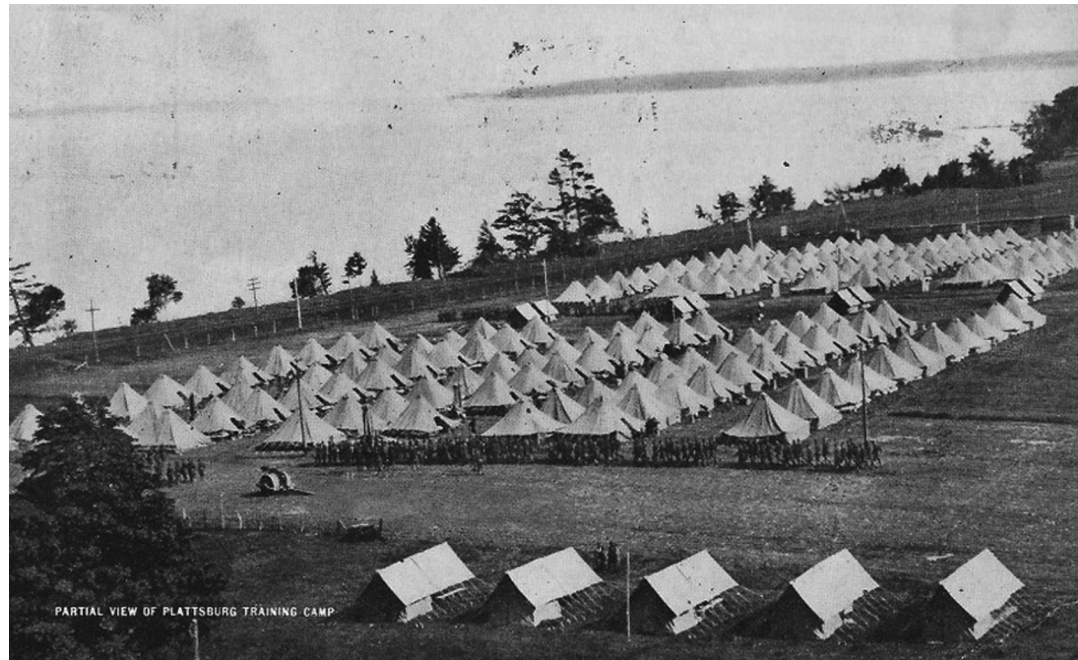
Army Training Camp, Plattsburgh. (Clinton County Historical Association)

grounds are posted and trespassing is strictly prohibited.

In 1915, Major General Leonard Wood introduced a civilian preparedness training camp program at the Plattsburgh Army Base. The "Plattsburgh Idea" reflected Wood's philosophy that, in a democracy, every citizen had a duty to prepare to defend his country. The first class of recruits paid their own way and bought their own uniforms. Although the program was controversial at first, it led to the National Defense Act of 1916, which included the formation of the Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC), consisting of six months of universal military training for male college students and professionals. An interpretive exhibit for the "Plattsburgh Idea" is at the Plattsburgh City Court on the south end of the U.S. Oval at the Plattsburgh "Old Base."

At the end of World War II, the U.S. Army Air Forces took over the Plattsburgh Barracks for a convalescent hospital, which soon came under U.S. Navy control. Afterward, the N.Y.S. Legislature established the Associated Colleges of Upper New York (ACUNY) for returning veterans under the G.I. Bill. In 1948, the Oval was used as student housing

Reveille in camp. (Clinton County Historical Association)

B-47 Stratojet exhibited at PAFB entrance. Photograph by Robin Brown
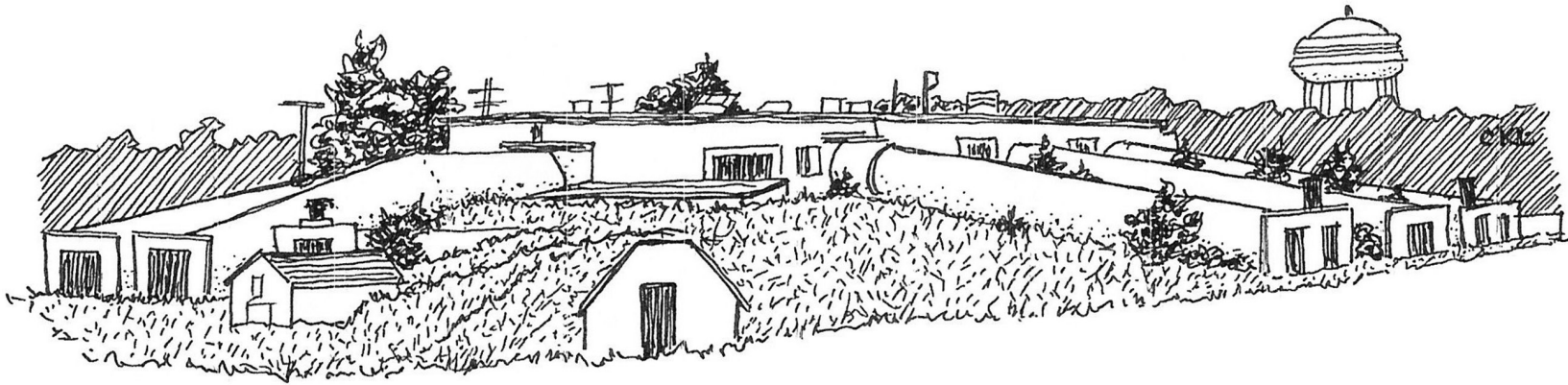
Crew Readiness building at Plattsburgh Air Force Base, locally known as the "Octobuilding." Drawing by Clelia Lion

and classroom space for a Champlain College two-year program in liberal arts, business administration, and pre-engineering. After 1954, ACUNY ceased to exist and Champlain College was assimilated into the SUNY system.

Meanwhile, Cold War concern for air defense of the Northeast prompted construction of an air force base. In 1956 Plattsburgh became a Strategic Air Command (SAC) bomber base, home to the 380th Bombardment Wing. The U.S. Air Force placed the first operational intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) fitted with nuclear warheads at the base in 1961, and built 12 174-foot-deep Atlas-F missile silos within a 50-mile radius of Plattsburgh. The base stepped down from alert in 1965 and began flying SAC polar routes the following year.

Plattsburgh Air Force Base deployed most of the B-52 Stratofortress aircraft, as well as their supporting KC-135 refueling planes sent to bomb Hanoi during the Vietnam War. The Plattsburgh Air Force Base Museum tells the story of this significant wing of the Strategic Air Command during the Cold War.

Eventually, the silos were sold to private individuals or town governments, and in 1991 the base was reassigned to the 380th Air Refueling Wing.

Atlas ICBM 556th Strategic Missile Squadron site at Ausable Forks. (United States Air Force)

Tides of Settlement

During European settlement citizens followed soldiers, and soldiers became citizens in between the tides of warfare. They came from Quebec, New England, and the Hudson Valley of New York. But the rules for acquiring land followed the whim of kings far across the ocean. Most of the land holdings, known as seigneuries, granted by the French king in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were never occupied, leaving the British free to redistribute land to soldiers who had served in the French and Indian War: 500 acres for enlisted men, 1,000 for officers. Many of the soldiers sold their land to companies that consolidated huge tracts of forestland.

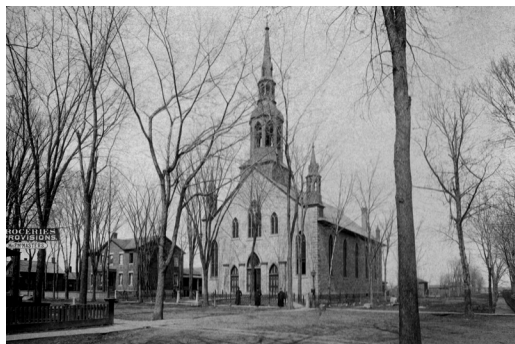The first settlers into the country set up landings at the river outlets to handle trade or laid claim to the waterpower sites further upstream. Today, New York's blue and gold historic markers identify many of these places.

Saint Peter's French Church. (Clinton County Historical Association)

Farm family portrait. (Clinton County Historical Association)

Jean Baptiste La Framboise and his family settled in Chazy soon after the Treaty of Paris in 1763. On an early map of Beekmantown, the land around Point au Roche is divided into strip lots typical of French Canadian land use practice. Plans for settlement surrounding a church and convent never materialized since the location had no waterpower sites to provide a magnet for commerce. The outlet of the Saranac River, with the potential for waterpower and a lakeshore landing within a few miles of each other, would prove the most prosperous spot in the region. Charles von Fredenburgh, a German-Swiss mercenary who had served with the British, snatched up that location in a 30,000-acre land patent in 1766 and began promoting settlement.

Eager settlers from the north kept pace with those from the east and the south. By the end of the eighteenth century, a quarter of the families in Champlain (which then included Chazy, Mooers, and Chateaugay) had French surnames. Quebecois immigration was slow but steady until the late 1830s, when a growing sense of nationalism and the economic disadvantages of French speakers in Canada gave birth to the *Patriote* movement. When the Rebellions of 1837 were promptly crushed by the British government, their leader, Louis-Joseph Papineau, escaped to the United States, as did many of his followers. Clinton County's northern towns became home to many of these Canadian refugees who had come to farm or work in the woods, mines, quarries, or mills that clustered around the waterpower

Shirt factory, Plattsburgh. (Clinton County Historical Association)

sites. During the American Civil War, some Quebecois crossed the border to replace factory workers who had volunteered to fight for the Union. Relative poverty and the shortage of good land in Quebec accelerated

migration after the war, and the proportion of Clinton County residents of French-Canadian ancestry continued to grow for generations. As the twentieth century drew to a close, one-third of the county's people had French-Canadian ancestry.

Freedom's Other Battle

After the Revolutionary War, a group of Quakers established a settlement called The Union in what would become Peru. These pacifists believed in civil rights for all, and offered a haven to the frightened populace during the War of 1812. Later they went on to shape the abolitionist movement, and conducted the dangerous work of helping fugitive slaves escape to Canada.

In the spring of 1837, abolitionists from many parts of the county met at the Methodist Church in Beekmantown to organize the Clinton County Anti-Slavery Society. Its mission was expansive; they wrote, "The object of this society shall be the abolition of slavery throughout the world." It was composed of local anti-slavery organizations from Beekmantown, Champlain, Chazy, Keeseville, Mooers, Peru, Plattsburgh, and West Chazy. Initially there was considerable opposition to their work, but support grew. Indeed, in 1846 there was a statewide referendum to eliminate the requirement that black voters own a minimum of $250 in property. More Clinton County voters (72.8%) favored the proposition than any other county in New York state.
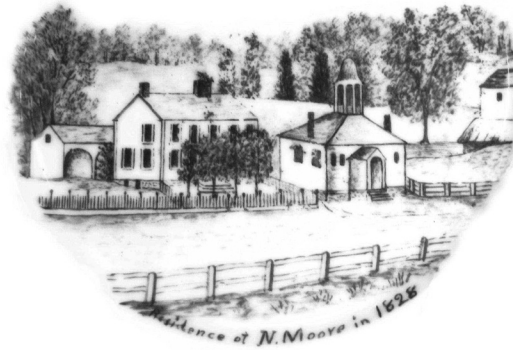
Residence of Noadiah Moore. (North Star Underground Railroad Museum)

Lake Champlain extends north through Canada, so the waterway served as a principal route on the "Underground Railroad," the network of concerned citizens helping fugitive slaves make their way to freedom. We know that black refugees hid on the farms of Samuel and Catherine Keese and their nephew, Stephen Keese Smith in Peru, and were driven in a wagon pulled by a fast team of horses to the Champlain home of Noadiah and Caroline Moore, just south of the Canadian border. Along with Keese, Moore was the county's most active abolitionist. He carried the freedom seekers on the last leg of their journey, across the border. Other refugees, starting from Boston and passing through Vermont, came through Rouses Point, then on to Montreal or west to Ogdensburg, which had the narrowest crossing of the St. Lawrence River. Once in Canada, they sought refugee settlements between Windsor and Toronto, Ontario, or in Montreal, Quebec. But some former slaves remained in Clinton County, at a settlement called "Richland" in Beekmantown, near the present Northway Exit 40. To find out more about the Champlain Line of the Underground Railroad, explore the powerful exhibit "Waterways to Freedom" at the North Star Underground Railroad Museum at Ausable Chasm.

Catherine Keese, Underground Railroad "conductor" (North Star Underground Railroad Museum)

COMINGS AND GOINGS OF COMMERCE

Because dense forests covered the land, nearly all traffic traveled by water. The heavy clay soils left behind by the glacial lake and Champlain Sea made land transport very difficult, so early roads ran directly from inland hamlets to the lake shore. From there, ferries carried traffic across the lake between New York and Vermont, while sloops, packet boats, and lumber rafts carried people and goods the length of the lake.

Water as the Superhighway

Starting in the late 1700s, ferry operators purchased licenses for landings, allowing them to make crossings to the opposite shore. Many of these landing places are now lost to memory. Chazy Landing survives in name only. A bridge replaced the Rouses Point-to-Alburg ferry in 1937. The Lake Champlain Transportation Company came to dominate the passenger service business in the nineteenth century and still maintains year-round ferry service. Today, a 24-hour ferry runs between Cumberland Head and Grand Isle, where the fast-moving flow keeps solid ice from forming in winter. A longer run connects Essex, NY, with Charlotte, VT, and operates as far into winter as conditions permit. In summer, an additional ferry connects Burlington, VT, with Port Kent, NY, where passengers can connect with Amtrak rail service.

A French apple boat on Lake Champlain, *Popular Monthly*. (Private collection)

Coal boats near depot dock, Rouses Point. (Rouses Point Historical Society)

Steamboat *Vermont*. (Clinton County Historical Association)

Just two years after Robert Fulton launched the first commercial steamboat service on the Hudson River, the steamer *Vermont* began service on Lake Champlain. From 1809, she made weekly trips from Whitehall at the south end of the lake to St. Jean, Quebec. But in 1815, late in the season, her engine threw a rod through the hull and she sank in the Richelieu River. By the 1840s, steamboats served the length of the lake daily, with Port Jackson (later Valcour), Plattsburgh, Chazy Landing and Rouses Point serving as important northern Lake Champlain landings.

As commerce recovered after the War of 1812, the products of the countryside found a ready market in Canada, by way of the Richelieu River. But American markets needed the grain, potash, iron, and lumber from the valley. Plans set aside years before to fund construction of a canal to link

Whitehall, at the head of Lake Champlain, with the Hudson River at Fort Edward, finally found favor in the New York State legislature. The Champlain Canal opened in 1823 to meet the eastern terminus of the Erie Canal at Waterford, just north of Albany.

A farmer could pay off the cost of clearing his land by selling potash, made by burning branches and stumps. England required that all potash made in the Colonies go to the homeland, and continued to provide a cash market for decades after the Revolutionary War.

The Champlain Canal forever changed the direction and nature of trade and commerce in the Champlain Valley. Producers turned their sights south to New York City, or west to Buffalo, New York. Lake commerce

exploded and local shipyards built fat, blunt canal boats to carry the loads of potash, stone, iron, lumber, and every sort of farm produce.

Twenty years later, the Chambly Canal bypassed the rapids on the Richelieu River of Quebec to provide a 12-mile waterway for freight moving to Montreal or Quebec City. Although some pig iron, lumber, and building stone went north to the Canadian provinces, shipments southward to U.S. markets incurred no customs duties, so the Champlain Canal retained the bulk of freight traffic.
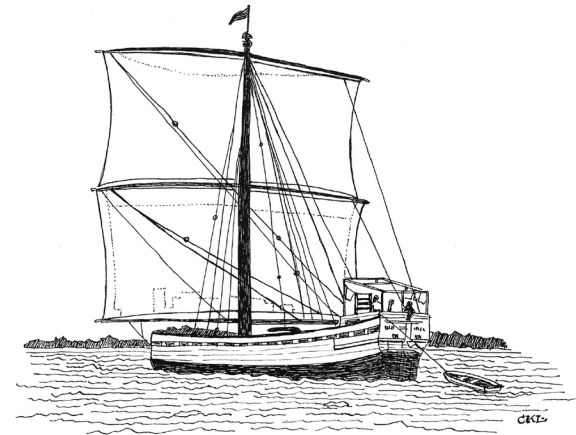
Sailing canal boat. Drawing by Clelia Lion

Expansion of shipping on Lake Champlain meant that mariners needed help finding their way in the dark. For many years, navigation lights consisted of simple lanterns maintained by local farmers on private lands. In 1838, a lighthouse constructed

Point au Roche Lighthouse. Drawing by Clelia Lion

on Cumberland Head, on the approach to Plattsburgh Bay, was lit by 11 lamps backed by reflectors. Shortly after the Federal Lighthouse Board took control of navigation aides in 1852, the light was upgraded to a Fresnel lens. A few years later, the building was dismantled and moved to a more visible location, where a new fifty-foot stone tower guided mariners. Lighthouses at Windmill Point and Point Au Roche improved navigation in the late 1850s. A modern integrated lighthouse with the tower in the corner of a stylish, mansard-roofed keeper's cottage went into service on Valcour Island, opposite Bluff Point, in 1874. However, by the 1930s, steel skeletal towers replaced most manned lighthouses around the lake.

A nineteenth-century guidebook described the waters of Lake Champlain as "crowded with shipping of all kinds; steamers, tugs, sloops, schooners, canal-boats, barges, and small craft...constantly passing to and fro, giving life and animation to the scene." As demand for industrial resources accelerated, traffic on the Champlain Canal and Lake Champlain doubled every eight years, reaching over a million tons in 1863. In winter, the frozen lake often served as a highway for sleighs, hay wagons, and even herds of sheep that were driven across the ice to markets in Vermont. But a solidly frozen lake could never be counted upon. By the end of the twentieth century, the average date for solid freeze-up at the widest point on the lake, was February 15. In some years, the ice has never frozen solid.

D&H passenger train at Plattsburgh station. (Clinton County Historical Association)

By the middle of the nineteenth century, railroads began to replace shipping by boat, which could not operate through the winter months. The Northern Railroad (later called the Ogdensburg & Lake Champlain, and then the Rutland) was completed in 1850. It connected Ogdensburg on the St. Lawrence River with Rouses Point on Lake Champlain and then eastward through Vermont to Boston. In 1851, the first refrigerated boxcar began service and
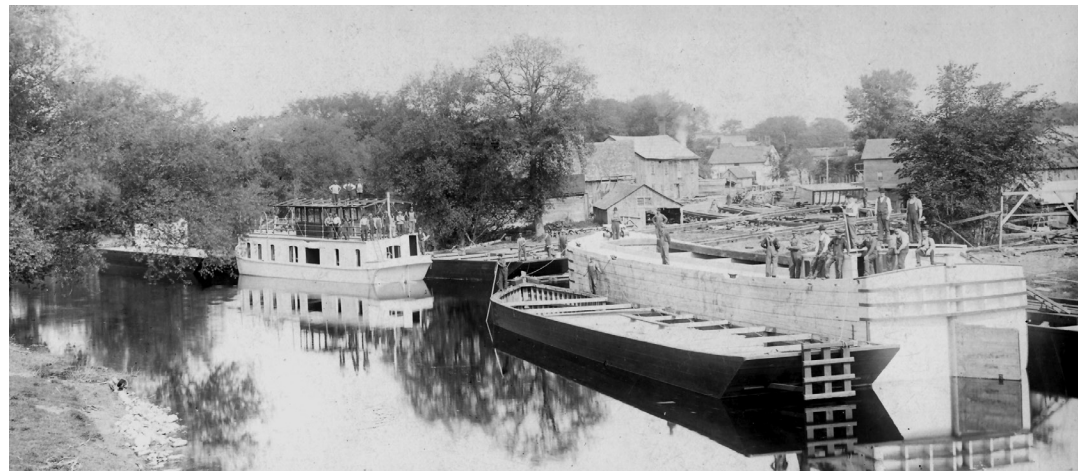
Canalboat shipyard, Champlain. (Samuel de Champlain History Center, Champlain, NY)

US Marshall destroying liquor, Rouses Point. (David Martin Collection)

five years later, a line opened north to Montreal. Refrigerated rail service expanded markets into eastern New England and made dairying and apple growing profitable in the late nineteenth century. It wasn't until 1875 that a rail line along the lake's steep and precarious New York shore replaced the Champlain Canal route south to Albany and New York City.

Although lake traffic declined with the rise of the railroad, it boomed during Prohibition from 1920 to 1933. Many residents of Rouses Point, Champlain, Mooers, and Plattsburgh used every imaginable means they could devise to get Canadian booze into the States. Bootleggers used farms, hotels, garages, and mountain camps as storage depots and transfer stations for illegal liquor. Canadian taverns and stores profited immensely from Prohibition; in November 1929, over 35,000 people crossed the border at Rouses Point to Canada, mostly to drink legally and buy alcohol to sneak back for home consumption.

Forests First

The French had an early interest in the vast forests of the Champlain Valley because the muddy soils of Quebec did not grow good timber. White oak for barrel staves and ship construction and white pine for masts and planks were in the greatest demand. As settlers cleared land, they burned the felled trees, processing the ashes into potash and pearlash, used to cleanse wool for bleaching and dyeing, and to manufacture soap and glass. Potash production was the most profitable endeavor in the 1790s and early 1800s because it was high in value for its weight and thus economical to transport long distances. Initially, much of it was made on the farm, but later asheries produced it in larger quantities. Once most land had been cleared, the number of asheries began to decline, decreasing from ten in 1835 to four in 1855.

Peru lumber mill. (Clinton County Historical Association)

Lumber mill at mouth of Saranac River. (Clinton County Historical Association)

Prior to the Revolution, logs were prepared for the British market as squared timber rather than finished planks as Britain preferred to "add the value" in the mother country. As a result, few sawmills were built before the Revolution. Unmilled logs were rafted northward to Quebec for export to Britain. The lumber business expanded in post-Revolution America, accelerated by the Napoleonic Wars, which cut off Britain's supply from the Baltic countries. By the early nineteenth century, Clinton County was a leader in timber production; the completion of the Champlain Canal in 1823 transformed the business as canal boats could carry milled lumber. Clinton County residents built more sawmills and shipped their production southward. Production peaked around 1845, when the six lakefront towns had 126 sawmills.

In 1868, a new process for making paper from wood pulp instead of rags dramatically

expanded the market for marginal timber. By the early 1870s, mills were producing pulp paper, and the business expanded greatly in later decades, keeping the logging industry viable. In 1920, the Saranac Pulp and Paper Company took over the Lozier Touring Car plant on North Margaret Street in Plattsburgh and re-tooled it to produce molded paper products. Berst-Forester-Dixfield bought the site in 1936 and dramatically expanded production, running three paper machines capable of producing nearly 300,000 pounds of paper per day. At the end of World War II, Diamond Match Company moved in to produce kitchen matches for about a decade. Georgia Pacific bought the plant in 1963 to turn it into the first tissue production facility in the GP Group, making the popular Quilted Northern and Brawny brands of bathroom tissue and paper towels.

Iron from the Mountains

"The country abounds in iron ore," wrote Horatio Gates Spofford in 1813. When the first open hearth Catalan forge was built on Plattsburgh's Saranac River in 1798, the ore came from Vermont. A decade later, the Arnold ore bed was discovered several miles northwest of Clintonville, the first of many rich deposits that would supply the industry. Most were north of the Ausable River above Keeseville, or in the mountains to the west.

Small villages grew up around the iron works where ore was crushed and smelted into pig iron. The larger operations produced their own charcoal and wrought iron bars. Dedicated factories made wire, horseshoes and the nails to hold them in place. In 1880 a tenth of U.S. iron was mined in New York State, much of it in Clinton County. But by the end of the century, the industry declined rapidly due to competition from Minnesota where surface mining provided a cheaper alternative.

With the fortune he made inventing rail car improvements, William H. Miner invested in his community by building the first consolidated rural school in New York State, funding Physician's Hospital in Plattsburgh and developing his Heart's Delight Farm into a model farm and training school for teaching scientific agricultural practices.

Arnold Hill Mine crew. (Clinton County Historical Association)

Fruits of the Land

Farmers who first cleared the land practiced diversified farming, producing food for their families and livestock, and selling the surplus. Wheat from the Champlain Valley fed people in the cities of New York and New England until the middle of the nineteenth century when grain from western New York, shipped by canal, undercut their prices. For many farmers, extra cash came from producing the hay and oats that fed draft animals in logging camps and manufacturing villages.

The invention of a refrigerated railroad car in 1848 vastly expanded the market for milk, butter, and cheese, making dairy farming more profitable in the North Country and altering the farm economy. Milk trains bound for Boston stopped in every town. Potatoes

Wagon-load of apple barrels. (Clinton County Historical Association)

Haymaking. (Clinton County Historical Association)

became a cash crop for farmers as starch factories began to serve the garment industry in Massachusetts and Rhode Island. Maple sugar was a significant product of Chazy, and farmers supplied the meat and vegetables to the timber and iron industries whose workers were generally unable to produce their own. The lake shore climate and local Dover loam soils provide an ideal environment for apple orchards, which still flourish in Peru, Beekmantown, and Chazy, where the county's first orchard was planted by the LaFramboise family before 1790.

It took only eight bushels of apples to make a barrel of cider, the most common drink in early America. Farmers made cider in quantities sufficient to last a full year. Cider gained even greater value when distilled into hard cider and applejack. The Temperance Movement put a damper on both markets.

Other marketed products included eels, frogs, and ice. In Champlain, frog farming was once a sizeable industry and eel boats ran from Rouses Point to New York City with a screened compartment below the waterline to keep the eels alive. Ice harvesting began in December or January, as soon as the ice on the lake was thick enough. In 1892, an ice boom hit the region due to expanding markets and a mild winter on the Hudson. Ice was shipped via the canal and by rail. The invention of refrigeration sent the ice industry into decline, ending forever in 1954.

Egg carton, Heart's Delight Farm. (Alice T. Miner Museum)

Chazy Orchard packing house. (Chazy Orchards)

In the twentieth century, the forestry industry concentrated on pulpwood and firewood products—and in recent years, Christmas trees. As the number of small family farms declined, the better land along the lake shifted almost entirely to large dairy and apple production, part of the nationwide trend towards specialized cash crops.

Local Transport

A shipyard began operation at Chazy Landing in 1807, followed by others in Rouses Point, Plattsburgh, and Champlain. Local boat builders turned out an extraordinary array of watercraft throughout the nineteenth century. Steamers, ferries, canal boats, sloops, schooners, and tugs rolled off the ways of shipyards that have since disappeared completely from the landscape.

To look at the Great Chazy River today, one could not imagine that Sylvester Alonzo Kellogg and James Averill, Jr. launched hundreds of canal boats from their workshops just downstream from the town center. They built traditional canal barges designed to be towed by mule alongside a canal. To navigate Lake Champlain, traditional canal boats were rafted together into tows of a dozen, so that steamboats could tow them the length of the lake. The same shipyard also built canal schooners equipped with two gaff-rigged masts that allowed them to run up or down the lake under sail. When the barges entered the Champlain Canal, the crew stepped the masts, stowed the sails, and proceeded by mule power to their destination.

Early in the twentieth century, Henry Abram Lozier sold his American Bicycle Company in Ohio and moved to Plattsburgh to build two- and four-cycle marine engines used in heavy transport canal barges. When he died in 1903, his son, Harry Lozier, retooled the factory, located on the lake shore at Margaret and Catherine Streets, to manufacture a top-of-the-line luxury touring
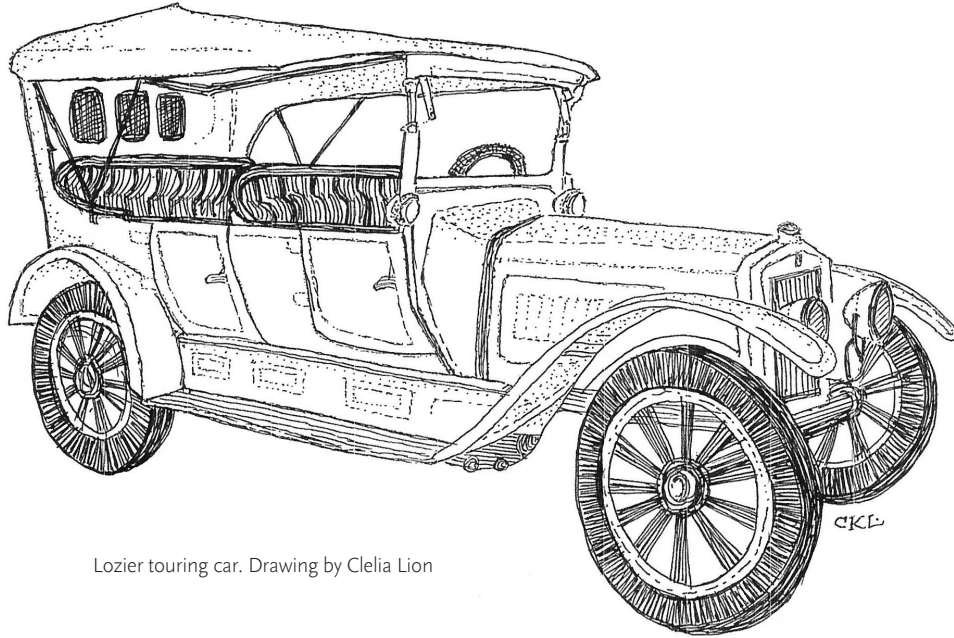
Lozier touring car. Drawing by Clelia Lion

business complex with tenants in aerospace, rail transport, composites, market research, manufacturing, warehousing, high tech engineering, pharmaceuticals and health care.

Plattsburgh had a housing crisis after World War II. Several families bought Lustron homes, considered the crowning achievement in prefabricated housing. Made from porcelain-enameled steel from easily-assembled parts, Lustron houses could be shipped efficiently and assembled quickly.

car that sold for $5,000, twice as much as the average cost of a house at the time. Lozier cars also did well on the race course, taking (a disputed) second place at the Indianapolis 500 in 1911. After ten years, the company moved to Detroit, but you can view two restored Lozier touring cars at the Champlain Valley Transportation Museum, located in the museum campus on the Old Base.

Aerospace and Technology

The Plattsburgh Air Force Base was the most important addition to Clinton County in the twentieth century, and was the driving force for the region's economy for

nearly half a century. When the U.S. Base Realignment and Closure Commission voted to close the base in 1995, the region lost 7,000 jobs, sending a shudder of dismay through the area. However, smart strategic planning by city and county officials has turned the abandoned space into an industrial park through the Plattsburgh Airbase Redevelopment Corporation (PARC). Economic Development Zone incentives for the 5,000-acre base, combined with excellent transportation infrastructure, shaped the economic resurgence. A new Plattsburgh International Airport now serves civilian passengers. In 12 years, PARC transformed the base property into a lively, diverse

The Old Base is now an important part of the city, with diversified housing, a museum campus, and lakeshore recreation trail. Two retired jets mark the entrances. The United States Oval Historic District Walking Tour guides you through the generations of military history to be found on the Old Base.

Plattsburgh Airport. Photograph by Robin Brown

Cottages at Hotel Champlain. (Clinton County Historical Association)

LEAPING INTO THE LANDSCAPE

The spectacular scenery of Lake Champlain attracted tourists even before they were identified as such. The sublime wildness of the mountains to the east and west contrasted sharply with the more open countryside along the lake, presenting an intoxicating blend of nature's wealth.

Luring the Public

Beginning with Theodore Dwight's *The Northern Traveller* in 1825, a completely new genre of publication, guidebooks for travelers, offered detailed histories of the landscapes, forts, and battles that laid the foundation of the nation. An 1833 guidebook by G. M. Davidson described the shores of Lake Champlain as "unredeemed from a state of nature" interspersed with "villages of a cheerful and thriving appearance." Steamboat service made the travel convenient, while luxurious furnishings made it comfortable. When Charles Dickens traveled the length of the lake in 1842, he declared the accommodations aboard the steamer *Burlington,* "a perfect curiosity of graceful comfort and beautiful contrivance."

Most travelers in the first half of the nineteenth century came for business, pursuing the profits to be made from lumber, iron, and stone. Others, like Dickens, traveled to see the country so they could write about it or illustrate it in paintings and engravings. Professional writers and artists laid the groundwork for the tourism industry by sharing the beauty and excitement of the landscape with a public eager to learn about their new nation. A few more decades had to pass before those people had the leisure time, the disposable income, and a railroad to help them get here on their own.

Seneca Ray Stoddard, whose tourism publications dominated the market for two generations, published his first guidebook to the region in 1874, the same year that the railroad began carrying passengers up the

Ausable Chasm. (Clinton County Historical Association)

western shore of Lake Champlain. An index at the front of *The Adirondacks Illustrated* begins with a list of summer resorts, only three of which were located on or near Lake Champlain: The Ticonderoga Hotel, Chasm House at Ausable Chasm, and Foquet's Hotel in Plattsburgh. Stoddard described Foquet's

as "near the depot and steamboat landing, peculiarly a hotel for the tourist and summer traveler generally," indicating its departure from the usual practice of locating hotels in the center of the business district.

An advertisement at the back of the book states that a complete line of Stoddard's

"crystal" views of Ausable Chasm were offered for sale in the hotel office, along with maps and guides written, illustrated, and published by Stoddard. Stoddard also offered a catalog of more than 600 stereoscopic views, 70 of which depicted such exotically named features of Ausable Chasm as "Hell

Hotel Champlain. (Clinton County Historical Association)

selection as the "Summer White House" for President McKinley in 1897 and 1898. Guests enjoyed several different golf links, tennis courts, bridle paths, canoes, rowboats, and Singing Sands Beach. Steamboats docked at a private landing and five trains each day stopped at the hotel depot. Excursion trains carried guests to the High Peaks for day trips.

In 1909, at the time of the Tercentennial celebrations of Champlain's exploration of the lake, the Hotel Champlain hosted yet another president when William Howard Taft presided over a state banquet at the height of the festivities. A year later, fire broke out as the staff prepared to open for the season. The hotel's rebuilt steel frame and concrete-stone structure guaranteed that this facility would not burn a second time. It took only 13

Gate" and "Devil's Oven," which are still part of the tour today. His narrative of a visit to the chasm describes the iron stairways, galleries, and bridges, followed by a boat ride that thoroughly resonates with today's visitor experience.
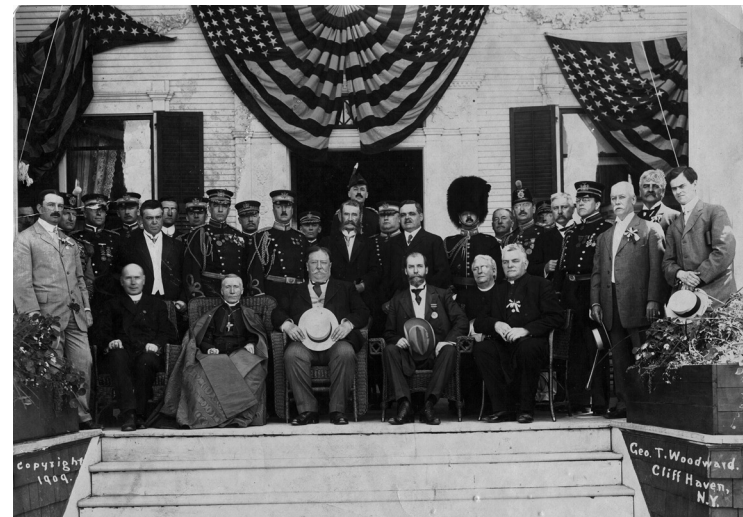
By the time Stoddard published his maps of Lake Champlain and Lake George in 1892, the tourist business had taken hold in the Champlain Valley, accelerated by a new guide to the history and yachting pleasures of the lake by William H. H. "Adirondack" Murray published in 1890. Murray had launched a veritable stampede into the woods by publishing a collection of his popular articles entitled, "Adventures in the Wilderness" in

1867. His name loomed large in the world of travel and recreation.

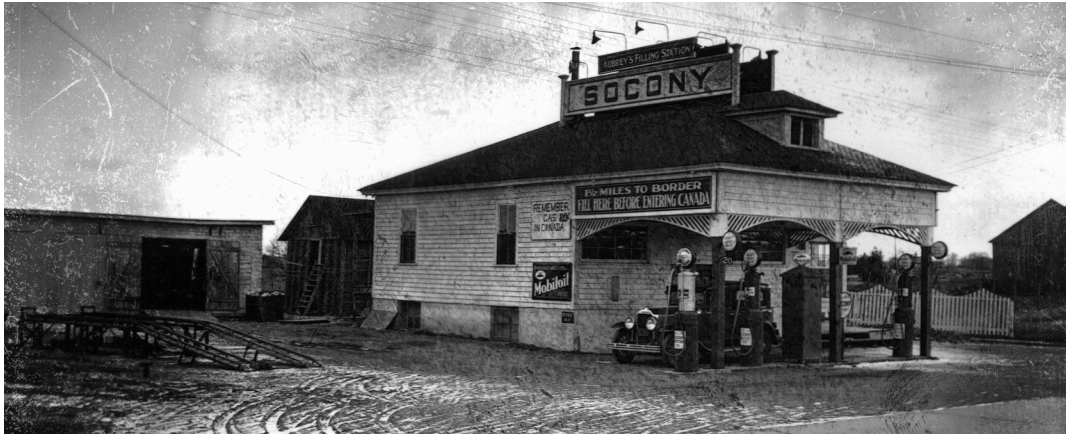Proof of this new era of summer resorts rose grandly atop Bluff Point, just three miles south of Plattsburgh. The Delaware & Hudson Railroad spent a quarter of a million dollars on the 500-room Hotel Champlain, which opened in June of 1890. This "hotel of hotels" fulfilled the highest expectations for summer resort life, a position reinforced by its

President Taft at Hotel Champlain, 1909. (Clinton County Historical Association)

Abrey's filling station. (Clinton County Historical Association)

months to rebuild. However, fire was not the hotel's ultimate undoing. After the Delaware & Hudson Railroad sold the hotel in the early 1930s, the hotel struggled through the Great Depression and World War II before finally closing its doors in 1951.

Tourism in the twentieth century turned more and more to automobiles, greatly stimulated by articles in motoring magazines announcing the Champlain Tercentennial celebration in 1909. The new Hotel Champlain boasted a garage that could accommodate 50 cars managed by mechanics from Glens Falls. Seneca Ray Stoddard published a map for early automobile tourists that featured cameo photos of livery stables that could also service gasoline engines. His last guidebook, published in 1916, noted that the Hotel Columbia in Rouses Point catered particularly to motorists. As the two

Golfers at Catholic Summer School. (Clinton County Historical Association)

Lozier touring cars on display at the Lake Champlain Transportation Museum make clear, auto touring was still a leisure pursuit enjoyed by wealthier folks. Its popularity increased all through the 1920s, as did road improvements.

The Delaware & Hudson Railroad picked up where Stoddard left off in providing tourist information. A promotional brochure

entitled "A Summer Paradise," published in 1905, gave detailed information about hotels and camps available by the entire season, the week, or for "transients" who could only stay a day or two. Property descriptions mentioned their proximity to both the Catholic Summer School at Cliff Haven and the Military Training Camp where the public was invited to attend dress parades, band concerts, and mock battles.

Homegrown Entertainments

While visitors with the financial means to spend the summer months far from home filled the hotels and hostelries along the shores of Lake Champlain, local folks enjoyed their hometown amusements. Many people perched by water, where a breeze could soften the summer heat. Anyone who tired of their own environs could hop the excursion steamer *Maquam,* later replaced by the *Chateaugay,* to make the trip through the Champlain Islands to Saint Albans Bay, where a floating theatre and a dance pavilion drew crowds all summer.

Two attractions in the village of Champlain brought folks in from Quebec as well as the surrounding countryside. A trotting park at the International Fairgrounds tested the speed of steeds from all over the North Country. Quieter entertainment could be found at Island Park, developed in 1877. Bridges

connected two islands in the Chazy River to each other and to the shore so people could stroll over to hear concerts in the bandstand. A bathhouse, conservatory, and dance pavilion provided varied entertainments. Electric lights, installed in 1901, turned the pathways into a fairyland on summer evenings.

The Plattsburgh Traction Company extended trolley service south from the city to take people to "The Barracks" for the military spectacles, or further on to Cliff Haven to attend events at the Catholic Summer School of America, modeled on the Chautauqua communities in western New York and Ohio.

The trolley ran extra "Buffalo cars" to Clinton Park when the Northern New York League teams played baseball. Fans could buy tickets good for both transportation and admission. A short train ride to the west brought people to Chazy Lake for summer outings.

A bicycle craze swept through Plattsburgh in the mid-1890s, triggering calls for speed limits and consideration for pedestrians. Many people embraced the opportunity to explore on their personal set of wheels; one such expedition was captured by a Stoddard photograph, now on display at Ausable Chasm.

The decades of the Great Depression and World War II would completely change the face of tourism, forcing the grand places to close or find a new function. The Catholic Summer School of America survived into the 1930s and was eventually redeveloped into the residential neighborhood of Cliff Haven. Hotel Champlain still survives thanks to the Society of Jesus, which bought it in 1951 and converted it to a Jesuit seminary, Bellarmine College. The modern, fireproof structure proved so perfectly suitable for schooling, it became the obvious choice as a home for Clinton Community College in 1969. Today's visitors are welcome to view Valcour Island from an expansive porch and learn about the military history from interpretive signs overlooking the lake. A cannon and an anchor retrieved from the waters off Bluff Point, on display in the grand entryway, bear witness to the battles fought just offshore.

Rockwell Kent earned an international reputation for his depictions of the Arctic in prints and paintings, but his views of his native North Country communicate the power of this place. His works can be seen at the museum bearing his name in the Feinberg Library at SUNY Plattsburgh.

Lyceum. (Samuel de Champlain History Center, Champlain, NY)

Beaches, Boats, and Bicycles

A new, leaner version of tourism evolved when families took to traveling independently in the family car. This population exploded midcentury as soldiers returning from service abroad got on with their lives. Expansion of "The Barracks" into a modern Air Force base gave this region a captive audience of young families eager for summer entertainment.

In summer, the preferred destination for anyone who owned an automobile was the beach. During the 1920s, styles for women's bathing suits evolved to make swimming considerably easier. The shores of Cumberland Bay attracted more and more people, many of whom arrived in their cars. The beach turned into a thoroughly chaotic parking lot on summer weekends. Plattsburgh established a public beach in 1928, imposing some order on the parking situation and prohibiting cars from the beach. Just a few years later, with the help of the Civilian Conservation Corps, the state of New York reclaimed a swampy stretch of shoreline on the adjacent parcel for Cumberland Bay State Park.

Just north of Cumberland Head, Point au Roche reaches out into the lake to form Treadwell Bay. A perennial navigation hazard, the point sheltered a commercial dock from strong south winds until the railroad sucked away lake traffic. By the mid-twentieth

Singing Sands Beach. (Clinton County Historical Association)

century, the lakeshore had become a beloved haven for summer recreation by families from nearby and across the Canadian border. In 1952, Harry Neverett operated a campsite and swimming area known as St. Armand's Beach. A decade later, two local businessmen, Robert Duley and Norman Dame, developed the adjacent property into an amusement park called Fantasy Kingdom. This attraction joined a string of theme parks stretching from Lake George Village north into Quebec. It featured a giant's castle, houses for the Three Little Pigs, and Captain Hook's pirate ship. After Fantasy Kingdom closed, the state established Point au Roche State Park here in 1975 with 12 miles of multiuse trails and 2.5 miles of bicycle trails.

Frozen Lake Champlain is a winter wonderland. (Photo courtesy Andy Sajor)

Late nineteenth-century tourists came to the region eager to get out on the water, but they seldom owned the boats that would get them there. They could arrange for excursions on small, steam-powered launches or paddle about in canoes owned by the resort hotels. Most private rental properties included use of a canoe or rowboat. The American Canoe Association had raised public awareness of the joys of paddling by hosting annual regattas on Lake Champlain in the early 1890s, but the boom in small-craft ownership was still half a century in the future.

Cyclists at Ausable Chasm. Photograph by Seneca Ray Stoddard (Anderson Falls Heritage Society)

Postwar prosperity, combined with a revolution in boat-building materials, fueled an explosion in pleasure boating to match the appetite of baby-boomer families. Aluminum, fiberglass, and plastic all helped lower the cost of fishing boats, powerboats, sailboats, and even sailboards. Plattsburgh Sailing Club started up just after World War II to serve the growing popularity of Cumberland Bay as a racing venue. The club closed in 1969 and reorganized as the Valcour Sailing Club. It has been organizing a full schedule of sailing races since then and now plays a central role in the city's Mayor's Cup, which grew from an afternoon event

in 1978 to a week-long, city-wide festival. Further north, the Point au Fer Sailing Club hosts five races each summer, catering to Canadian sailors who enjoy punctuating their cruising schedule with a few friendly races.

In winter, nobody needs a boat to go fishing, as long as the bays freeze over. Lake Champlain attracts ice fishermen from far and near. By mid-winter, ice shanty villages appear in sheltered bays at Rouses Point, Point Au Roche State Park, Plattsburgh Bay, and Valcour Island. When the winter winds blow, ice-sailing enthusiasts can be found gliding over the lake.

A second bicycle craze swept the region 100 years after the first one. In the mid-1990s, Lake Champlain Bikeways grew out of a network of dedicated cyclists and interest groups from New York, Vermont and Quebec. Now, a designated bicycle route circumnavigates the lake; shorter, thematic loops offer cyclists access to the countryside along secondary roads. In Clinton County, seven of these routes lead cyclists through broad fields, affording grand views of the Green Mountains to the east and the northern Adirondacks to the west. A bike path skirts the lake from the Plattsburgh City Beach to the southern edge of the Old Base, and another takes pedestrians and cyclists along the north bank of the Saranac River.

Precious Places

All of these recreation opportunities bring people into contact with nature and give them a chance to appreciate the extraordinary riches of the Champlain Valley. Nature's wonders have benefited from this exposure, as conservation efforts have increased in proportion to public awareness of the needs of the environment. The Adirondack Park, whose boundaries reach into the valley from the southwest, stands as the great conservation success of the last century, but many important features also exist outside of the "Blue Line."

Sandstone pavement barren with Jack pine. Photograph by David Katz

With a complementary mission, The Nature Conservancy has preserved the Clintonville Pine Barrens, 900 acres of pine heath and very special habitats of statewide and global significance located in the town of AuSable. New York State's Department

Bird watchers at Ausable Marsh. Photograph by Robin Brown

of Environmental Conservation manages Ausable Point Campground, Crab Island, and Valcour Island. It also protects the wildlife management areas at Ausable Marsh, Wickham Marsh, Montys Bay, Kings Bay, and Lake Alice. Bird watchers, hunters and trappers all appreciate these refuges that are rich in wildlife.

Students from The Miner Institute use pavement barrens preserves as a laboratory to study hydrology, marginal ecosystems, and the behaviors of rare species of plants and animals.

Lake Champlain presents both the greatest opportunity as well as the greatest challenge for natural resource management. The comings and goings of commerce have introduced some invasive creatures and

Moccasin Flower, Gadway Pine Barren. Photograph by David Katz

Haircap moss, Gadway Pine Barren. Photograph by David Katz

plants that now thrive here, pushing out native species and making a nuisance of themselves. The picturesque farm fields that give the region its broad, scenic vistas require close management to prevent phosphorous-rich loads of fertilizer from running off into the waters of the lake. Even signs on storm drains warn the public that everything going down them eventually ends up in the lake. Since 1990, the Lake Champlain Basin Program has encouraged collaboration among state and federal agencies in New York, Vermont, and Quebec for a comprehensive watershed-based planning effort for the entire lake ecosystem.

All sorts of people participate in the efforts to keep the lake healthy. Taxes on hunting gear support Wildlife Management areas. Citizens groups stabilize stream banks and monitor water samples along the rivers and streams flowing into the lake. Others volunteer to remove invasive species, the worst of which are water chestnut, sea lamprey, alewives, and zebra mussels. Visitors can help stop the spread of these problem species by following instructions posted at every boat launch site around the lake.

Keeseville

The mighty Ausable River takes its name from the French *au sable,* meaning "of sand." (You will see several spellings of the river, town, and chasm–Au Sable, AuSable, and Ausable. The choice of which to use can be a contentious issue.) The river is the boundary between Clinton and Essex Counties, but Keeseville straddles the river, creating one community. Downstream, the Ausable River and Dead Creek form a broad delta along Lake Champlain, made from silt carried from the High Peaks. Ausable Marsh and nearby Wickham Marsh Wildlife Management Area are prime destinations for birding.

North Star Underground Railroad Museum. Photograph by Drew Alberti

After the French & Indian and Revolutionary wars, commissioned officers were offered land in the Adirondacks in lieu of monetary payment, and land speculation was big business. When John Keese, a Quaker from Dutchess County, bought the piece of land that spans the Ausable River to which he would give his name in 1812, there had already been two previous owners who had constructed a sawmill and gristmill on the waterway. The hard Potsdam sandstone of the riverbed fractured easily and neatly into building stone used for many of the village's early buildings, some of which remain today.

In 1815, an iron rolling mill anchored this thriving industrial community using the power of the river to process iron ore extracted from the nearby Arnold Mine. They concentrated on mass production of horse nails using machines invented and patented by local blacksmith Daniel Dodge. By 1860, a visitor would describe Keeseville as a bustling Adirondack hamlet containing "seven churches, the Keeseville Academy, two extensive rolling mills, three nail factories, a machine shop, ax and edge tool factory, a cupola furnace, a planing mill, two grist mills, and a nail keg factory."

Tourism played no small role in the development of the town of Chesterfield and village of Keeseville. Since opening as a privately-owned tourist attraction in 1870, visitors have come from around the world to witness the grandeur and beauty of the Ausable Chasm: a uniquely-carved river canyon made of 500-million-year-old rock. Visitors have travelled through this natural wonder by horseback, foot, snowshoe, ski, raft, and tube.

Nature

Ausable Chasm, State Route 9 (518) 834-7454
www.ausablechasm.com

Clintonville Pine Barrens, Buck Hill Road
(518) 576-2082 www.nature.org

Poke-O-Moonshine State Day Use Area, 135
State Route 9 (518) 897-1200 www.dec.ny.gov

Wickham Marsh Wildlife Management Area,
County Route 17, (518) 897-1291 www.dec.ny.gov

History

Adirondack Architectural Heritage, 1745
Main Street (518) 834-9328 www.arch.org

Anderson Falls Heritage Society Museum,
96 Clinton Street (518) 834-7342 Limited
Hours of Operation

North Star Underground Railroad Museum,
1131 Mace Chasm Road (518) 834-5180
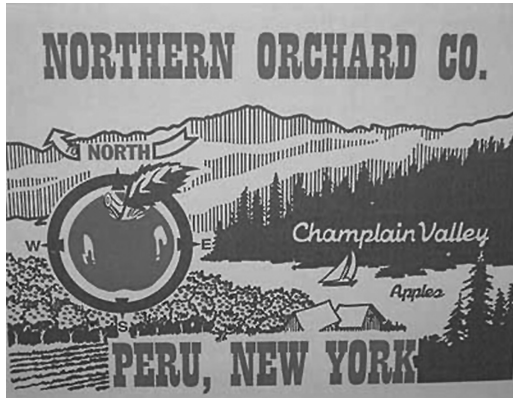www.northcountryundergroundrailroad.com

Keeseville Historic District: see *A Thoroughly
Wide-Awake Little Village* by Virginia
Westbrook. Book is available from Friends of
the North Country, 1 Mill Street, Keeseville
(518) 834-9606.

Culture

Northern New York American/Canadian
Genealogical Association, Dannemora Civic
Center, (518) 492-4142 www.nnyacgs.com By
appointment

Float tour through the gorge. (Ausable Chasm)

Peru

On October 11, 1776, the Revolutionary War put Peru's waterfront on the world stage when Benedict Arnold led a tiny, makeshift American navy against a seasoned British force in the channel between Peru's shore and Valcour Island. Early settlers had fled the territory in the face of war, but others arrived soon after peace was restored. Quakers established a settlement known as "The Union" in 1789 near the present Keese Homestead and Quaker Cemetery, on what is now called Union Road. Formed from Plattsburgh and Willsboro, a part of Peru was annexed back to Willsboro in 1799 and the towns of Ausable and Black Brook were taken off in 1839. Legend has it that early settlers thought that the mountains surrounding the town resembled those of Peru in South America, which is how Peru earned its name in 1795.

Harvesting abundant timber became Peru's first industry and resulted in several sawmills being built along the Little Ausable River. Rail lines from Valcour, Lapham's Mills and Peru Village led to the Lake Champlain ports of Peru Landing and Port Jackson, where white pine and other timber were shipped by raft to Quebec. As the lands were cleared of timber, the area's fertile soil gave rise to agriculture, which continues to this day in the form of dairy farms and several large apple orchards.

Northern Orchards advertisement. (Northern Orchards)
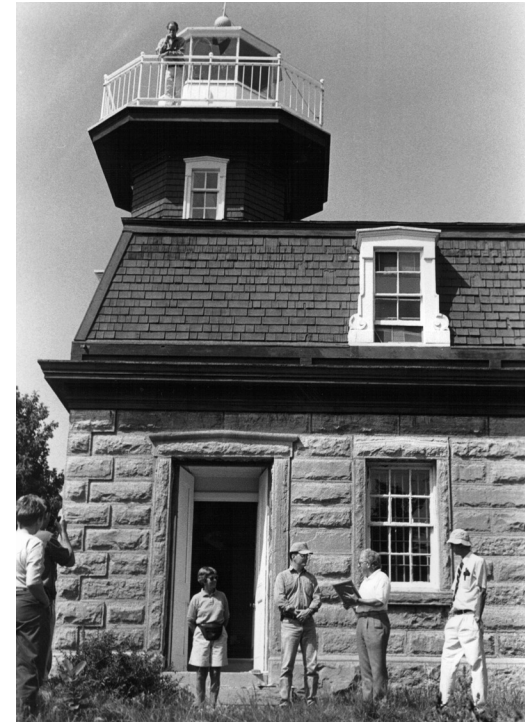
Valcour Island Lighthouse. Photograph by Roger Harwood (Clinton County Historical Association)

In the mid-19th century, the town's Quaker heritage and location on the easily navigable waterway made Peru a hotbed for abolitionist activities. Many residents illegally harbored fugitive slaves and assisted their trek across the Canadian border. The homes of Stephen Keese Smith and Samuel Keese are documented "stations" along the Underground Railroad.

Lake access is used for recreation these days, with a NYS boat launch just south of the Silver Stream outlet and a beach and campground where the Ausable River meets the lake. An extensive marsh at the river outlet hosts thousands of migrating birds in spring and fall, attracting flocks of birding enthusiasts as well.

Nature

Ausable Marsh Wildlife Management Area, Ausable Marsh Campground Road
(518) 897-1291 www.dec.ny.gov

Macomb Reservation State Park,
201 Campsite Road (518) 643-9952
www.nysparks.com

Valcour Island State Bird Conservation Area, boat access only (518) 402-8924 www.dec.ny.gov

History

Babbie Rural & Farm Learning Museum,
250 River Road (518) 643-8052 www.
babbiemuseum.org

Recreation

Ausable Point Campground and Car Top Boat Launch, 3346 Lake Shore Road, (518) 561-7080 www.reserveamerica.com

Peru Docks State Boat Launch, State Route 9, 1.5 miles north of Hamlet of Valcour
www.dec.ny.gov

Port Jackson, Peru. From *Ballou's Pictorial Drawing-Room Companion*, 1859. (Town of Peru Historian's Collection)
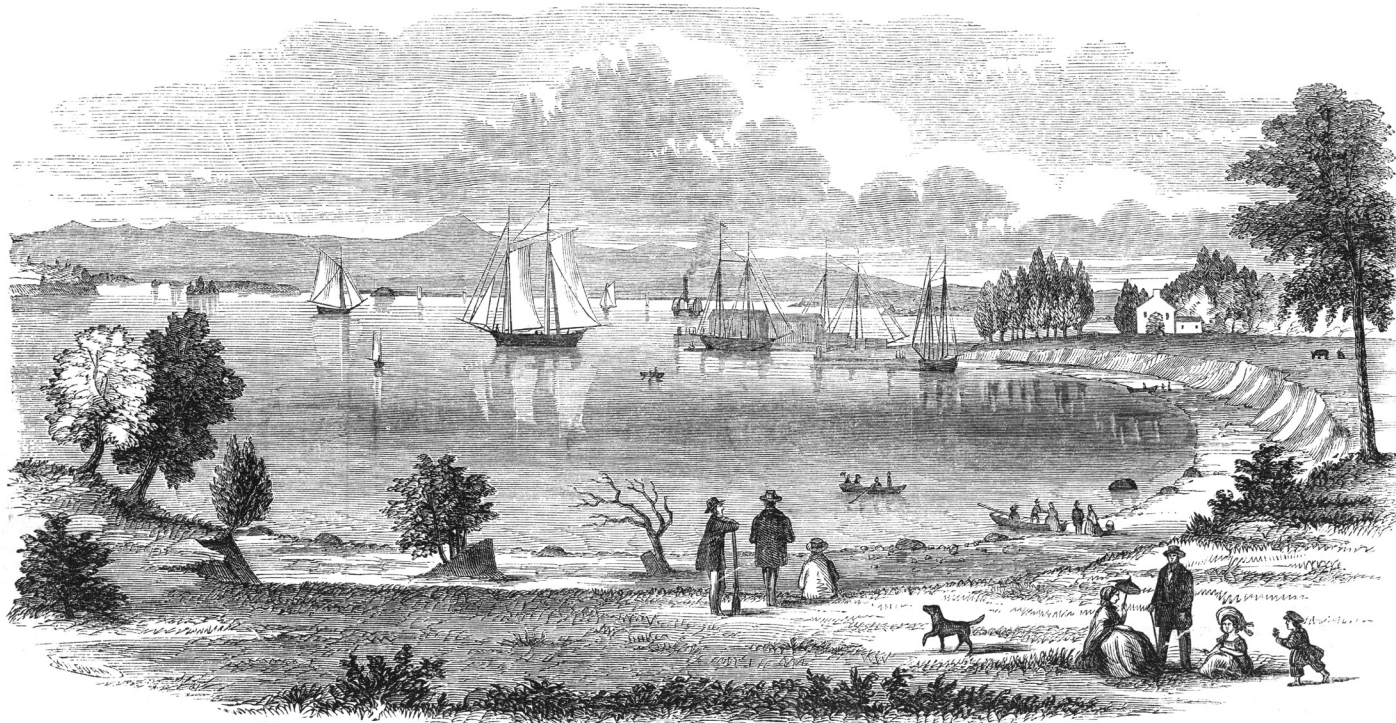
PORT JACKSON, PERU, CLINTON COUNTY, NEW YORK.

Plattsburgh

Plattsburgh is a vibrant city, known for its extraordinary location at the confluence of the Saranac River and beautiful Lake Champlain. Charles de Fredenburgh started a settlement in 1769, but he disappeared when the Revolutionary War began, leaving it open for Zephaniah Platt and his associates to move in after the war. The earliest buildings in Plattsburgh consisted mainly of mills and rough dwelling houses situated near fortifications for protection. The Saranac River provided the water power that spurred the growth of early industries, while Lake Champlain provided a route to move goods to national and foreign markets.

During the War of 1812, Plattsburgh was once again in the path of destruction, but the U.S. Army and Navy held the British, marking the end of the forward advance on American soil. The excitement did not interrupt commerce for very long, but continued suspicion of British military activities prompted the building of the Old Stone Barracks in 1838. Just two years later, however, the old fortifications were destroyed to make way for a giant parade ground.

The Champlain Canal boosted the industrial significance of the city, but commerce on the lake eventually gave way entirely to rail transport. The city expanded its output beyond iron and timber to include marble sawing, ice, furniture, clocks, sewing machines, typewriters, shirts, razor blades, paper, and dynamite. From 1904 to 1914, the Lozier Motor Company built its luxurious vehicles and powerboats here.

A lively summer tourist trade, international business connections, and the establishment of a New York State teacher's college propelled Plattsburgh into the twentieth century. In 1909, celebration of the Tercentenary of Samuel de Champlain's exploration of the valley focused national attention on this small city and gave a boost to its arts and culture. A century later, the college has matured into a university and the military legacy of the army/air force base has evolved into a creative and engaging community. Community leaders have concentrated on reclaiming the waterfront for recreation, creating a Heritage Trail from the south end of the City Beach to Scomotion Creek Riverwalk, and improving Monument Park (1909) and Macdonough Monument Park (1913) with handicapped accessibility, lighting, and extensive flower beds maintained by volunteers.
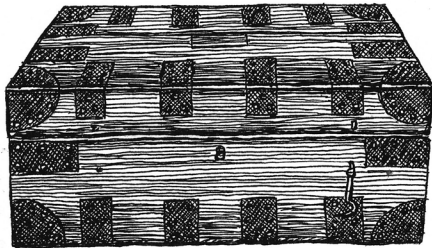
History

Heritage Trail, Riverwalk Park, Monument Park (1909)

Champlain Valley Transportation Museum, 12 Museum Way (518) 566-7575 www.cvtmuseum.com

Lake Champlain Transporation Co. Cumberland Head ferry. Photograph by Robin Brown

British officer's chest, Kent deLord House. Drawing by Clelia Lion

Saranac River Pedestrian Bridge. Photograph by Robin Brown

Clinton County Historical Museum,
98 Ohio Ave (518) 561-0340
www.clintoncountyhistorical.org

Crab Island, accessible by personal
watercraft only

HMS Confiance Anchor, exhibited at City
Hall, 41 City Hall Place

Kent-DeLord House Museum,
17 Cumberland Avenue (518) 561-1035
www.kentdelordhouse.org

Macdonough Monument, City Hall Place
at Cumberland Avenue (518) 563-7702,
open by appointment

Plattsburgh Bay National Historic Landmark,
Marker in Monument Park www.nps.gov

United States Oval Historic District Walking
Tour and City Court Exhibits, US Oval,
(518)563-7870

War of 1812 Museum, 31 Washington Road
(518) 566-1814 www.battleofplattsburgh.org

Culture

Imaginarium Children's Museum of the
North Country, 4709 Route 9 (518) 324-7426
www.imaginariumchildrensmuseum.org

North Country Cultural Center for the Arts,
23 Brinkerhoff Street (518) 563-1604
www.plattsburgharts.org

Plattsburgh State Art Museum and Sculpture
Garden, 101 Broad Street (518) 564-2474
http://organizations.plattsburgh.edu/museum

The Strand Theatre, 25 Brinkerhoff Street
(518)563-1604 www.plattsburgharts.org

Recreation

Cumberland Bay State Park, 152 Cumberland
Head Road (518) 563-5240 www.nysparks.com

Dock Street Landing, east end of Dock Street,
city-owned parking and docking for tour boats,
picnic tables, and food concession

Green Street Boat Launch, south bank of
Saranac River mouth

Northern Forest Canoe Trail, from Old Forge,
N.Y. to Fort Kent, Maine (802) 496-7285
www.northernforestcanoetrail.org

Plattsburgh Municipal Beach, 4 Beach Road
(518) 324-7709 www.plattsburghrecreation.com

Riverwalk Park www.cityofplattsburgh.com

Saranac River Trail www.facebook.com/
saranacrivertrail

Wilcox Dock Boat Launch, Cumberland Ave.
(site along Lake Champlain Birding Trail)

Chazy

Chazy Orchards packing room. (Chazy Orchards)

Fantasy Kingdom Brochure. (Donald Duley Collection)

Both the town and the river got their name from a young French officer named de Chézy. In 1666 he was ambushed by Mohawks who didn't want a French settlement established on Isle La Motte, a small fertile island in Lake Champlain. Jean Baptiste La Framboise, his brother Bonhomme, and Francois Monty would later attempt to establish a settlement, but abandoned it during the American Revolution when British General John Burgoyne brought his army of regular soldiers, Canadians, and Indians south from Quebec in 1777. Jean Baptiste returned after the Revolution, rebuilt his home, and became the first apple grower in the North Country.

At the turn of the 20th century, local residents Alice and William Miner would endow Chazy with the Alice T. Miner Museum in the center of town, and the William H. Miner Agricultural Research Institute located on the 15,000-acre experimental farm he established as "Heart's Delight." Minor's fortune was made from dozens of railroad technology patents. From 1878 to 1963, Chazy Marble and Lime Company quarried limestone from the Chazy River, ideal for flux in a blast furnace.

The original French settlers had big plans for Point au Roche in Beekmantown, but without a river for water or power, people went elsewhere. Land holders harvested timber for export as potash, and by the mid-1820s, Beekmantown had more asheries than any other town in the region. Merino sheep moved in as the forest disappeared, but by mid-century the wool industry had moved west. Since the 1880s, apples and dairy have been the foundation of the economy.

In the 20th century, Point au Roche became a premier recreational attraction. In 1960, Fantasy Kingdom, a fairy-tale village and amusement park, invited young visitors to use their imagination. Today, Point au Roche State Park is filled with recreational activities, including hiking, biking, nature trails, playgrounds, beach and boat access, cross-country skiing, and ice fishing.

Nature

Lake Alice Wildlife Management Area, Miner Farm Road (Route 191) (518) 897-1291 www.dec.ny.gov

Montys Bay Wildlife Management Area, Lake Shore Road (518) 897-1291 www.dec.ny.gov

History

Alice T. Miner Museum, 9618 State Route 9 (518) 846-7336 www.minermuseum.org

Heart's Delight Farm Heritage Exhibit, 1034 Miner Farm Rd (518) 846-7121 www.whminer.com/heritageexhibit.html

Recreation

Point Au Roche State Park,
19 Camp Red Cloud Road
518)563-0369 www.nysparks.com

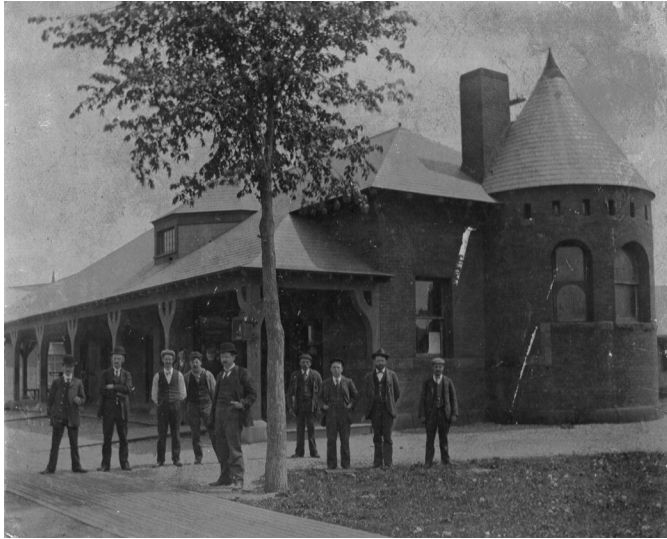Recreational parks at Chazy and West Chazy

Sugaring off in West Chazy, 1925. (David Martin Collection)

Indian berry pickers, Altona Flat Rock, 1916. Photograph by David Harris (David Martin Collection)

Champlain and Rouses Point

The town of Champlain forms the northeastern corner of county and state, bounded by Canada to the north and Lake Champlain to the east. The Chazy River flows through much of town, meandering around an oxbow in the village of Champlain and finally draining into Kings Bay. The long reach of Point au Fer holds distinction as the last piece of U.S. land occupied by the British Army, which finally withdrew in 1796, 13 years after the close of the Revolutionary War.

Rouses Point Delaware & Hudson Railroad station, 1899. (Clinton County Historical Association)

Milling built the river towns, while shipping built the lakeshore towns. In 1783, Jacques Rouse founded the community that would evolve into Rouses Point. A few years later, Pliny Moore built a sawmill on the Great Chazy River, establishing the hamlet that would grow into the Village of Champlain. Thereafter, the towns would grow from both Yankee and Quebecois stock.

In 1850 the Northern Railroad (later the Ogdensburg and Lake Champlain) connected the St. Lawrence River and Rouses Point, and in 1855 a direct connection to Montreal was established. Rouses Point became a railroad hub for trains from Boston and New York City to points west and north. At one time, Rouses Point was served by five railroad lines. Summer tourism peaked at Rouses Point following the construction of hotels in the 1880s, including the Holland Hotel, the Massachusetts House, and the Hotel Montgomery. The Windsor was in operation by 1920 and closed in the 1950s. As the first and last stop at the New York-Quebec border, Rouses Point enjoyed much cross-border trade of both the legal and illegal variety. Prohibition brought rum runners and revenue men, and also created frequent mishaps as drivers failed to negotiate sharp turns in the road on their way home from bars in Quebec.

Only the Anchorage Hotel and the Holland Hotel survived until recent years, the former closing in the 1960s while the latter housed railroad workers on layovers until 1993. In the village of Champlain, the Samuel de Champlain History Center offers exhibits on village history and a library about the explorer and the ensuing Franco-American culture in Northern New York and New England.

Nature

Kings Bay Wildlife Management Area, State Route 9B (518) 897-1291 www.dec.ny.gov

History

D&H Railroad Station Visitor Center, Pratt St., Rouses Point, restoration in process

Fort Montgomery overlook, from old bridge approaches

Samuel de Champlain History Center, 202 Elm Street, Champlain, (518) 298-1609 www.moorsfieldpress.com/samuel_de_champlain_history_center.html

Recreation

Champlain Boat Launch, River Street www.vchamplain.com

Chazy River Boat Launch, Off Route 9B, 1/4 mile south of Coopersville at mouth of river (518) 402-8920 www.dec.ny.gov

Shoreline Walkway, Rouses Point, from downtown to a scenic pier, marinas, and boat launch

Village of Rouses Point Bicycle Path www.rousespointny.com

Hotel Montgomery. (Rouses Point Historical Society)

Sportsman's Pier, Rouses Point. (Adirondack Coast Visitors Bureau)

Lake Champlain Islands

Ancient sedimentary rocks, laid down 500 million years ago and compressed into limestone, schists, and dolostone, make up the islands of Lake Champlain. Most of the islands lie in the waters of Vermont. Nearly half still bear the names of former owners who farmed the land or used it as pasture for livestock. Several became home to summer resorts, served by regular steamboat service. Four islands in the northern reaches of Lake Champlain lie in New York waters, all of them in public ownership.

Crab Island takes its name from the fossils of ancient shelled creatures, called trilobites, found in its limestone shoreline. The island served as a military field hospital for both British and American soldiers during the final battles of the War of 1812. Casualties from both sides were buried on the island.

Valcour Island forms a narrow strait against the mainland shores of Peru and Plattsburgh, a geographic feature that can cause hazardous weather conditions for boaters. The narrow strait offered a strategic haven for the American fleet during the Battle of Valcour Island in the fall of 1776. Craggy outcrops, sandy beaches, and protected bays make for a varied shoreline. The picturesque Bluff Point Lighthouse stands on the western shore facing the Peru boat launch. Just to the southeast, the one-acre rock of Garden Island supports an important nesting site.

Remnants of a family farm can still be found on Schuyler Island, taken by eminent domain during World War II when the U.S. government secured the island as an important backup to Plattsburgh Air Force Base. After the war, the island was given to New York State. Although the island has no improved boat launch, it serves as a stop on the Lake Champlain Paddlers' Trail and is a popular destination for divers.

Today, the Lake Champlain Land Trust is dedicated to preserving significant islands, shoreline areas, and natural communities in the Champlain Region. Through educational programs, hikes, and paddle routes for both children and adults to enjoy, there are many ways to connect to the lake. Learn more at www.lclt.org.
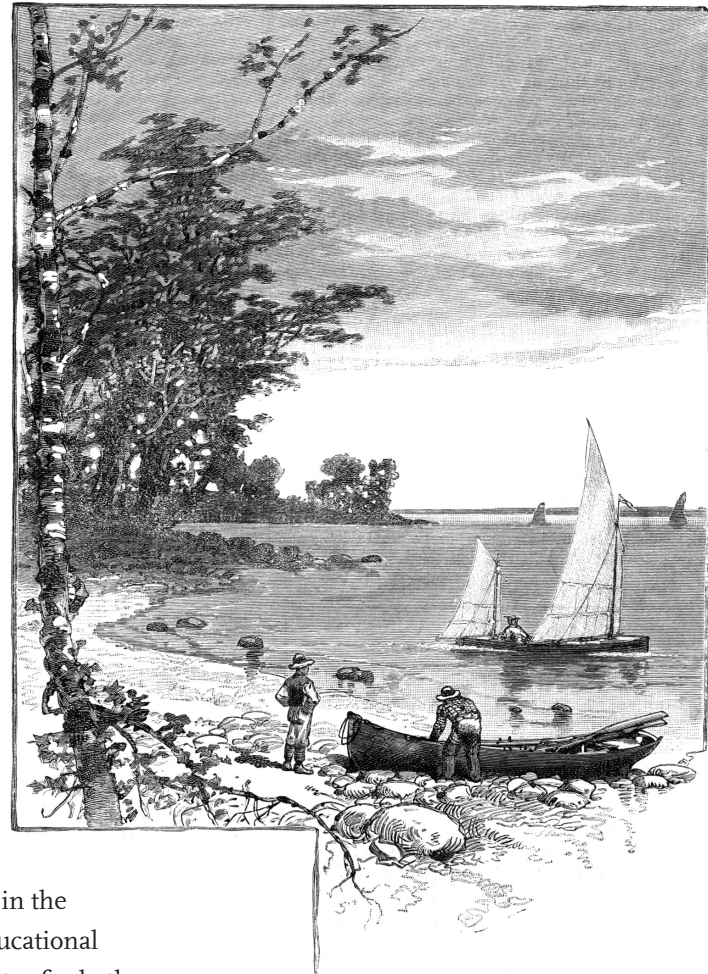
MAGNAN BAY FROM THE CARRYING-PLACE.

Canoes on Lake Champlain Islands, *Popular Monthly Magazine*