



# Placid Pioneer

December 2005

## Lake Placid Volunteer Fire Department Centennial 1905 - 2005

by Beverley Pratt Reid, Town Historian

**Thank You** are the only words to start a story about the Lake Placid Volunteer Fire Department. Can you imagine how many hundreds of men and women have donated thousands and thousands of hours to keep our area safe? Can you imagine how many meals have been left uneaten and warm beds left so that these volunteers could answer the "call"? These are the reasons we cannot say Thank You enough to the hundreds of volunteers that have made up the Fire Department these one hundred years.

When the Fire Department was first organized the hoses were on horse drawn vehicles. The horses were workhorses and some times were hauling on jobs far away from the fire house. In the winter the hoses were frozen more often than not. Many of the volunteers were farmers and usually out in the fields. These and other factors led to very slow response time. There were three different alarm systems when they erected the brick building on Main Street next to the Post Office. The building contained an apartment on the second floor as well as a huge meeting room. Different firemen lived in the apartment and were night drivers.

The three departments continued until 1919 when new by-laws were drafted and they became the one unit known as The Lake Placid Volunteer Fire Department (LPVFD). There were still, however, three siren locations that called the men to duty. These sirens could be heard all over town. In the present day pagers call the firemen to the fire.

Since 1957 the LPVFD have had their own track to train and compete on. Training now takes over eighty hours for a volunteer to become a firefighter. Plans are also in progress

for a new training facility to be erected behind the new Fire House on Old Military Road, at a cost of \$200,000. This facility will allow training never before provided in Essex County and once again raise the level of expertise of our firefighters.

Many feel that the 1966 fire at the Marcy Hotel was the biggest fire and others will argue for the Mirror Lake Inn fire of January 1988. There are, of course, many others that these volunteers have attended and have personal feelings about. There were also terrible forest fires in the early 1900's. Needless to say, they all could have been much worse had it not been for the dedication of the firemen.

The number of calls made in the early days were not recorded, however, during the 1930's—1960's the average yearly calls were 70. Now the calls have increased to 327. Of course, now the volunteer firemen not only attend fires, they also answer automobile accident calls, standby for village crews, false alarms, disasters and standby for neighboring departments.

Prices of vehicles have gone from \$1,300 in 1917 to \$303,000 in 2005. Fire fighting equipment has changed from just hoses to turnout gear, air packs, jaws of life, etc., etc. Thankfully, all the new equipment helps to keep the volunteers safe and provide efficient rescue to the victim. At least a very dangerous job has been made a little less challenging.

The citizens of Lake Placid and the Town of North Elba can never say Thank You enough to all these dedicated men and women. Also thanks should go out to their employers who willingly let them take time from their jobs to "answer the call".

**THANK YOU for 100 years of dedicated service!**



### Winter Lecture Series!



### Fight Cabin Fever!!!



**Wednesday, 01-11-06**

*"There's More to Adirondack Architecture than Great Camps"*

Steve Engelhart, Director, Adirondack Architectural Heritage

**Wednesday, 02-22-06**

*"A History of North Country Railroads: A Tour"* Chris Brescia, Railroad Historian

**Wednesday, 03-15-06**

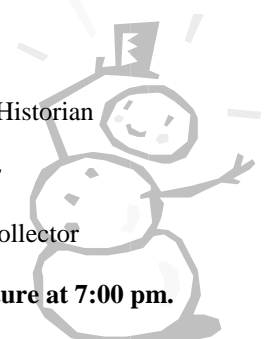
*"The Elba Iron Works":* Lee Manchester, Reporter, *The Lake Placid News*

**Wednesday, 04-19-06**

*"Ski Areas in the Northern Adirondacks"* Natalie Leduc, Ski Instructor, Collector

All programs will be held at Howard Johnson's Restaurant: Dinner at 6:00 p.m., Lecture at 7:00 pm.

*If you can't come for dinner please come for the program!*



For more information, please call 523-1608 and leave a message.

## Message from the President

by Peter Roland, Jr.

2005 has been a very productive year for the Historical Society. Beginning in January, the inaugural winter lecture series was extremely well attended and provided a great way to ward off cabin fever during the winter months. Director Gary Francois has put together another interesting line-up of speakers for the upcoming season (see schedule on page 1), and we hope you will take advantage of these programs.

As reported in the June newsletter, a new partnership with the railroad allowed us to reconfigure the museum to function like its historical use as a station. This created more of a "living history" museum, and greatly enhanced the visitor experience for both museum and railroad patrons.

We also had the opportunity to host two great events during the 2005 museum season (see related story on page 3). The Community Day celebration, chaired by trustee Laura Jean Clark, continues to grow and has become a very important fundraiser- and "funraiser"- for the Historical Society. The History Museum was also the site for a "Business After Hours" mixer in October sponsored by the Lake Placid/Essex County Visitors Bureau and the Essex County Business Council.

The Board of Trustees is currently in the process of developing a strategic plan for the Historical Society. The process began in September with a full day retreat facilitated by a consultant from the Museum Association of New York, funded by a grant from the Upstate History Alliance. One theme that emerged during the retreat was the desirability of increasing community outreach by our organization, through educational programs and other initiatives. We will be working over the winter in further defining the vision for the Society developed at the retreat and creating a plan to implement the goals and objectives defined in the process.

Executive Director Gary Francois has resigned effective March 31 in order to devote more time to his photography. Our visibility and service to the community throughout the year has improved greatly during Gary's tenure. We sincerely appreciate all of Gary's efforts over the last three seasons at the History Museum and wish him the best in his future endeavors.

It is clear that our ability to continue current operations and possibly expand programming in the future is totally dependent on the support of our membership and other organizations which support our efforts. If you have not renewed your membership this year, or would like to make an additional end of the year donation, please use the form enclosed to show your support. Your financial contributions, along with a dedicated corps of volunteers, will allow the Historical Society to continue providing service to the Lake Placid-North Elba community.

*We thank you for your support and wish you a fine holiday season!*

### Position Available

May 1, 2006

### Director The History Museum

If you or someone you know might be interested in this position, please send resume and cover letter to:

Search Committee  
Lake Placid-North Elba  
Historical Society  
P.O. Box 189  
Lake Placid, NY 12946



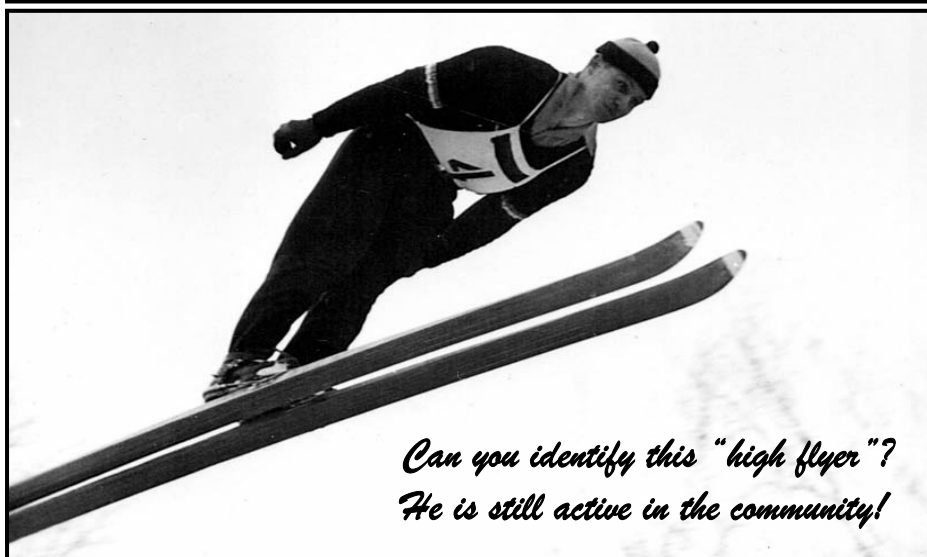
### Lake Placid – North Elba Historical Society

P.O. Box 189, Lake Placid, NY 12946  
518-523-1608

#### Board of Trustees

Peter Roland, Jr., President  
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Tracy Lamb  
Edmund Lynch  
Therese Patnode  
Greg Peacock  
Steve Preston  
Beverley Reid

Executive Director  
Gary Francois



*Can you identify this "high flyer"?*  
*He is still active in the community!*



## From the Director's Desk by Gary Francois

### *On Leaving Something Behind*

The calendar moves on, and another season at The History Museum ended on Sunday, October 16. It is always a sad occasion to close the doors of the old place and bring an abrupt halt to nearly 5 months of "life", knowing that silence will prevail through a long winter until spring. But so goes life for those who choose to live in North Elba and its accompanying climate. Another season will come again.

The 2005 season was highlighted by a new working relationship with the Adirondack Scenic Railroad. Those who visited us this recent season saw the changes to our physical space, and inclusion of our museum admission in the railroad ticket price. During the busy, beautiful summer, my staff and I also worked on exhibits to improve the visitor experience wherever we thought possible.

The 2005 season was also the conclusion of my third season as museum director. During the 2003 through 2005 seasons, I believe that The History Museum and society programs have undergone significant improvements. With much accomplished and a capable Board of Directors looking after the museum, it is time for me to move on, personally. I shall remain as Executive Director through March 31, 2006. I shall then devote much of my time once again to being a photographer.

No matter how much we enjoy our work, we all have good days and some bad ones. Sure, there were days when I could not wait until 4:00 pm to lock the door, but there were many afternoons, over three seasons, when I did something else at closing time.

On those afternoons, I would lock the front door then just go sit on one of the waiting room benches. And sit there only, maybe for a few minutes or a half hour or so. There was mostly silence. I would gaze about our front room, look at the farm implements, stare at

John Brown (or note him staring at me) and just take it all in. I had a great feeling of pride in what work that I (and those who helped me) had done.

But a museum is not a constant place, nor should it be. Things change; directors change; exhibits change, and that is to keep the public's interest. And though I shall step down as Executive Director, there will be many times, for the rest of my life, when I shall recall 4:00 pm and sitting on a bench in the waiting room, taking in that contentment.

I thank you for the opportunity to serve as your Executive Director. I hope to have made some lasting contributions, and a part of me will always be between the cracks of the old place.



### **All we want for Christmas is...**

Photocopier  
Flat storage files for maps & documents  
Extension Ladder  
Office chair(s)  
Digital Camera  
Legal size File Cabinet  
*If you can donate any of these items,  
please let us know!*

### **Need an exciting "old" space for your next party, event or wedding?**

New in 2006, the Museum Building is available for rental function space to individuals and organizations.

For more information  
contact the museum:  
518-523-1608, please leave a message.

## Two Great Events in 2005!

**Community Day 2005** on Saturday, July 30 was a tremendous success. Over 400 residents and visitors enjoyed the craft fair, silent auction, flea market, live entertainment and free train rides for Historical Society members. Many thanks to all



those that attended and especially the businesses that supported this most important fundraiser through their generous donations.

The History Museum hosted the October "**Business After Hours**" event sponsored by the Essex County Business Council and Lake Placid/Essex County Visitors Bureau. Over 125 area businesspeople and tourism professionals visited the museum, and many took advantage of a special "Ray Brook

Ramble" train ride provided by the Adirondack Scenic Railroad. Delicious food and beverage was provided by Lisa G's, Station Street Bar & Grill, Goose Watch and Swedish Hill Wineries, Lake Placid Pub and Brewery, and Great Adirondack Steak and Seafood. We appreciate the efforts of all the organizations and businesses that made this event a great success!

# Bev's Bits... A report from the Town Historian

by Beverley Pratt Reid

Some interesting "bits" I have learned while reading through a box of old papers:

The first Town Board was organized and held its first meeting on March 5<sup>th</sup> 1850 and named John Thompson as the first Supervisor of the Town of North Elba. From that date until 1903 the Supervisors held office for only one year, with a couple of exceptions. Willis Wells has the distinction of holding office the longest, a total of twenty-nine years.

The Village of Lake Placid was incorporated in 1900 with John Shea elected as Mayor. His successors, on the average, only held the position for two years until Robert Peacock was elected. His tenure was a total of thirty-four years.

The first telephone service was introduced in 1901, the water and sewer lines were completed in 1903 and the electric street lights were installed in November 1906. The parishioners of St. Agnes celebrated mass in their new

church on Saranac Avenue, (the second) on August 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1905. The population of two thousand continued to grow, houses and hotels were built and the Lake Placid Club became the playground of America.

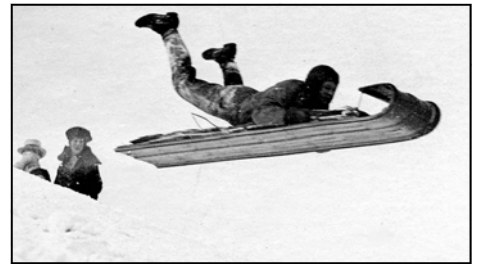
In August, 1921 the first wireless telephone was installed at the Cascades Hotel. Guests were able to get stock reports, listen to ball games and concerts as well as the world news. The article states: "Perhaps some day it may even largely supplant the phonograph."

The proposed budget for the police department in 1905 was One Thousand Dollars and was included as a proposition at election. The proposition also included the request that taxes be levied for said amount. The second request was for three thousand dollars for the care and maintenance of streets and sidewalks and macadamizing of Main Street from "Methodist Church to Nash's corner".

In April, 1913 a contract was signed

by John F. White for the Town and Frank G. Walton for the Village for a lease of "the front room of the Town Hall building with the use of basement for jails and etc....." for a one year rental of two hundred dollars to be paid in quarterly payments.

**More "bits" next time...**



If you have any questions relating to the history of the Town or Village, please do not hesitate to contact me:

**Beverley Reid, Town Historian**  
518-523-2965  
E-mail: [bmpreid@adelphia.net](mailto:bmpreid@adelphia.net)

## THE HISTORY MUSEUM



**A NEW 2006 EXHIBIT**

**LAKE PLACID-NORTH ELBA HISTORICAL SOCIETY**  
P. O. Box 189, 242 Station Street  
Lake Placid, New York 12946