Guide to the Marjorie L. Porter Collection of Ballads and Lore

73.2

Special Collections
Benjamin F. Feinberg Library
State University of New York College at Plattsburgh
2 Draper Avenue
Plattsburgh, NY 12901

Revised by Debra Kimok & Michael Burgess
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Audio Materials Index
By Dr. Timothy Clukey

Title: Marjorie L. Porter Collection of Ballads and Lore
I.D.: 73.2
Creator: Marjorie Lansing Porter
Collection Size: 12 linear feet
Acquisition Information: Materials donated by Marjorie Lansing Porter and Sean McNamara Rosemeyer
Language of Material: English
Access Restrictions: None
Location: Special Collections, SUNY College at Plattsburgh
(518) 564-5206
http://www.plattsburgh.edu/library/specialcollections

Preferred Citation: Marjorie L. Porter Collection of Ballads and Lore [Box #, Folder #], Special Collections, SUNY College at Plattsburgh.

Subject Headings:
Porter, Marjorie Lansing, 1891-1973
Adirondack Folklore
Clinton County (N.Y.)—History
Clinton County (N.Y.)—Social Life and Customs
Essex County (N. Y.)—History
Essex County (N. Y.)— Social Life and Customs
Plattsburgh Barracks (N.Y.)

See Also: Online Index to Marjorie L. Porter Photographic Materials:

See Also: Online Index to Marjorie L. Porter Audio Materials

Hundreds of folk songs, ballads, and interviews with senior citizens of the North Country and Adirondack Region recorded between 1941 and 1967 (primarily during the 1940s and 1950s). Listen to these recordings in Special Collections at SUNY Plattsburgh.
Biographical Note

Helen Margarete (Marjorie) Lansing Porter was born on August 21, 1891 in Port Henry, New York to Charles Wendell Lansing and Helen Margarete Prescott. She graduated from the Plattsburgh Normal School in 1912 and for parts of her career she served as the historian for the city of Plattsburgh and both Essex and Clinton counties, N.Y., researching and writing prolifically about Champlain Valley/Adirondack history. Mrs. Porter was the first Clinton County Historian, beginning in 1944 and serving until the end of 1952 and from January 1953 until July 1954.

Mrs. Porter inherited and edited the Essex County Republican, the newspaper founded by her great grandfather, Wendell Lansing, in 1839. The Lansing family also owned the Plattsburgh Sentinel, edited by her grandfather, Abram Lansing. She also for some time edited the North Countryman and Essex County News newspapers and with G.Glyndon Cole, the periodical, North Country Life/York State Tradition.

In addition, Mrs. Porter presented historical programs for locally and for radio stations throughout New York State.

In 1941 Mrs. Porter began “collecting” oral histories and traditional folk songs of the Champlain Valley region, recording senior citizens talking, singing, and playing the fiddle into a Soundscriber recorder. She donated these and other historical materials and photographs to the North Country Historical Research Center (now Special Collections, Feinberg Library, SUNY Plattsburgh).

She was involved in the U.S. Work Progress Administration’s Federal Writers Project, for which she wrote her 1942 publication, History and Guide: Keeseville-Chesterfield-Ausable.

She also collected historic artifacts in her “Red Barn Museum,” which in 1955 became part of the new Adirondack History Center Museum in Elizabethtown (http://www.adkhistorycenter.org/).

Mrs. Porter was married and divorced twice—first to Howard Guy Millington in 1912, with whom she had three children, Helen (1913), John (1915), and Mary Elizabeth (1918), and then to Homer Porter in 1922, with whom she had two more children, David (1922) and Philip (1924).

She died on April 14, 1973, at the age of 82.

Scope Note

The original donation by Marjorie L. Porter consists of manuscripts of published books, newspaper stories, and magazine articles; voluminous notes and clippings on North Country, N. Y. history and folklore; Soundscriber (and reel-to-reel copies) recordings of reminiscences and folk songs narrated and/or sung by senior citizens of the Adirondacks and the Champlain Valley for Mrs. Porter (456 interviews); photographs and prints; letters received by Mrs. Porter; letters and documents collected by her; and miscellaneous personal memorabilia.
Mrs. Porter’s work has long been recognized as significant for regional history and folklore and has been consulted hundreds of times since it came to SUNY Plattsburgh Special Collections. Even prior to the donation, as early as 1959, a folk operetta, “The Ballad of Lieutenant Korby,” based on Porter’s historical research and using songs from her collection, was written and produced by Robert Feregen and SUNY Plattsburgh professor of music, Dr. George Yokum, and presented in Hawkins Hall on the Plattsburgh campus.

During 2011-2012, SUNY Plattsburgh Communications Professor Timothy Clukey digitized all of the recordings and created an index to them—the mp3 files are available on a computer audio station in Feinberg Library’s Special Collections. See the link to the online index on the first page of this guide.

See also the additional materials donated in 2013 by descendants of Mrs. Porter.

Series List

73.2a: Manuscripts of published books, newspapers, and magazine articles, and stage productions

73.2b: Notes and clippings

73.2c: Published versions of Mrs. Porter’s writings

73.2f: Miscellaneous material including maps, printed programs etc.

73.2g: Marjorie Lansing Porter Correspondence (Rockwell Kent, Ray Bender, Noah John Rondeau, and many others) (3 boxes)

73.2h Deeds, Agreements, Wills, and Letters, 1832-1906, Collected by Porter

73.2i Scrapbooks containing advertising cards, and clippings from newspapers of the 1860s, 1870s and 1880s (4 boxes)

73.2j Book length manuscripts of a fictionalized account of William Gilliland, written by Charles W. Lansing, Mrs. Porter’s father

73.2k Marjorie Lansing Porter Family-Related Materials

73.2L Paper Indexes to Audio Materials
Container List

73.2a  Manuscripts of published books, newspapers, and magazine articles, and stage productions

Box 1

Box/Folder

1/1  Lem Merrill
1/2 - 1/5  Old Plattsburgh

1/5/2

- Monuments
- Siege of Plattsburgh (song)
- The Noble Lads of Canada (song)
- Ballad of Plattsburgh Bay (song)
- Embarkation of the Green Mountain Boys
- Soldiers and Sailors of the War of 1812

1/6  Plattsburgh Barracks
1/7  Marjorie L. Porter Material on North County. Undated mimeograph list of her publications and manuscripts.

Box 2

Box/Folder

2/1 - 2/3  Essex County Notes
2/4 – 2/5  Clinton County Almanac
2/6  Ballad Collecting, Lore, Stories

- Ballad Collecting – Recording
- A Woman is a Sometimes Thing
- The Ballad Story (1956)
- Let’s See – The Adirondacks
- Here We Are – Upstate Things ‘N Stuff (April 9, 1968)
- Up in the Adirondacks
- Folk Songs
- The Day of the Spank
- Home Again
- The Rabbit Council
- John Brown’s Body
Box 3

Box/Folder

3/1 – 3/2  Here We Are—Upstate Things and Stuff (1966-1970)
3/3  I'll Tell You a Story
3/4  Articles published in Panorama Magazine
3/5  More about Pioneers

Box 4

Box/Folder

4/1  Tour guides
4/2  Plattsburgh guide
4/3  History of Keeseville

Box 5  Miscellaneous newspaper articles

Box 6

Box/Folder

6/1  Another Country Heard From
6/2 – 6/3  Biographical sketches
6/4  Biographical sketches – Clinton County
6/5  Biographical sketches – Franklin County

Box 7

Box/Folder

7/1  Work Projects Administration of NYS (Guidelines)
7/2 – 7/4  History and Guide: Keeseville- Chesterfield- AuSable

Box 8:  Encyclopedia Series

Box 9

Box/Folder

9/1  Redford Glass
9/2  Radio talks
9/3 Dear Editor
9/4 Vignettes
9/5 Dawn Valcour Community
9/6 Adirondack Iron
9/7 Split Rock Story

Box 10

Box/Folder

10/1 Muskets to Missiles
10/2 Champlain Story
10/3 Ballad of Lieutenant Korby

73.2b Notes and Clippings

Box 1

Box/Folder

1/1 Town of Essex
1/2 Town of Chesterfield
1/3 Town of Jay
1/4 Town of Westport
1/5 Elizabethtown

Box 2

Box/Folder

2/1 Schroon Lake
2/2 Port Henry
2/3 Lewis
2/4 North Hudson
2/5 Willsboro
2/6 Crown Point
2/7 North Elba
2/8 Keene

Box 3 Ticonderoga
Box 4

Box/Folder

4/1 Chazy
4/2 AuSable
4/3 Champlain
4/4 Ellenburg
4/5 Mooers
4/6 Dannemora
4/7 Peru
4/8 Keeseville
4/9 Keeseville biographical notes

Box 5  Mining and Iron Industry

Box 6  Lumbering

Box 7

Box/Folder

7/1 Adirondack guides
7/2 Hunters and trappers
7/3 Camp Poke-O-Moonshine
7/4 Adirondack Park Agency
7/5 Conservation and forestry
7/6 Geology
7/7 Newspapers
7/8 Roads
7/9 Redford Glass
7/10 Stephen K. Smith
7/11 Northern New York Economic Conditions
7/12 Boats and shipping on Lake Champlain
7/13 Samuel de Champlain
7/14 Irving Bacheller
7/15 Victoria Woodhull
7/16 Redford
7/17 Indians
7/18 Underground Railroad
### Box 8

**Box/Folder**

| 8/1  | John Brown          |
| 8/2  | Alonzo and Melissa  |
| 8/3  | Eleazer Williams    |
| 8/4  | Battle of Valcour   |
| 8/5  | Kent-Delord House   |
| 8/6  | Railroads           |

### Box 9

**Box/Folder**

| 9/1  | Churches          |
| 9/2  | Churches – Essex County |
| 9/3  | Churches – Clinton County |
| 9/4  | First Presbyterian Church, Plattsburgh |
| 9/5  | White church, Crown Point |

### Box 10

**Box/Folder**

| 10/1 | Battle of Plattsburgh                          |
| 10/2 | Louis Joseph Papineau                          |
| 10/3 | Louis Riel                                     |
| 10/4 | Civil War                                      |
| 10/5 | Whitehall                                      |
| 10/6 | Bishop Genealogy                               |
| 10/7 | John Bird Burnham – bibliography               |
| 10/8 | Manley family                                 |
| 10/9 | Plattsburgh town records (copy)                |
| 10/10| Samuel Bridge (copy); Traver Van Vliet (copy); Lone Mt. Diary (copy); Unknown writer (copy) |
| 10/11| Thomas Haynes’ memorandum                     |

### Box 11

**Miscellaneous notes and clippings**
Box 12  Notes and clippings pertaining to artists

Box/Folder

12/1  Rockwell Kent
12/2  Edna West Teall
12/3  Rembrandt Peale
12/4  Ruth G. Mould
12/5  William Henry Jackson
12/6  Alexander Lawrie
12/7  Other artists

Box 13  Folklore

Box/Folder

13/1  Place names
13/2  Water witching
13/3  Sea serpent
13/4  Passenger Pigeons
13/5  Mining
13/6  Traditional crafts
13/7  Outline for projected book "Adirondack Portfolio"
13/8  Folklore Lee Knight
13/9  Miscellaneous folklore

Box 14

Box/Folder

14/1  Noted men and women
14/2  North Country Chronicle
14/3  Miscellaneous
14/4  Notes and Clippings on Folk Music

73.2c  Published versions of Mrs. Porter’s writings

Box 1  More about Pioneers

Box 2  Newspaper Articles

Box/Folder

2/1  See Clinton County First
Our Folks: North Country Portfolio
Clinton County Almanac

Box 3 Essex County Notes

Box 4 Miscellaneous newspaper articles

4/1 Adirondack lore treat for visitors
4/2 Scouting New York State’s early Americana
4/3 War of 1812 period marked by confusion and outstanding service of prominent citizens
4/4 History of the town of AuSable
4/5 History of the town of AuSable
4/6 Early surveyors assisted in setting up county, town lines in Plattsburgh area
4/7 Up on Convey Hill
4/8 The Champlain Valley --- steeped in history
4/9 Early surveyors helped lay out what is now Clinton County
4/10 News items tell story of Chazy
4/11 Champlain Valley history rich in fact, fiction from days of Indians
4/12 Victuals in the “buttry”
4/13 Plattsburgh once had stage coach service
4/14 Neighbors across the lake
4/15 Lake Champlain lighthouses
4/16 Lake Champlain lighthouses
4/17 John Brown’s body lies in North Elba Town
4/18 Much done in work in history
4/19 Essex, Clinton graveyards hold heroes (sic) of Revolution
4/20 Many beautiful vistas to see before snow
4/21 Winter in the Adirondacks
4/22 Spring at hand, “living earth” puts on robe of many colors
4/23 Black Brook takes name from stream
4/24 His goal was to preserve timberlands for a park
4/25 Chinese nursery rhymes please young, old alike
4/26 Travelers enjoyed old time taverns
4/27 Redford may be called the Quebec of Clinton
4/28 Old mountain road led to brick kilns
4/29 Lake Champlain a key in war, peace of nation
4/30 School bells ring loud in history of community
4/31 Fair at Essex has long history
4/32 Taking the short cut to VT. During the “dead of winter”
4/33 Teddy Roosevelt got the news here
4/34 Sense of history required to assess region’s origins
4/35 North Country heritage ties Vermont to New York
4/36 Traver Van Vliet tells own story
4/37 Adirondack grandeur holds as winter weather sets in
4/38 Old lamplighter of long, long ago
4/39 Summer vagabond’s plight when this century was young
4/40 Essex County sites listed
4/41 Apple’s importance to area dates back to 18th century
Lodgings awaited travelers through Adirondack byways
Clinton, Essex have had distinguished leaders
Clay pipes manufactured at Rouses Point, Westport
Famous Tahawus Club series by pioneer photographer
Many painters came to the Adirondacks
North Country charm continues to attract artists
Town of Essex “has a mind” in addition to rich heritage
Prison site ideal one
Beginning of phone service
Historic plums in Essex pie
Saranac log drives were hard
Lumbering long has been prime in the North Country
Lumbering history goes back to 1700s
Early Adirondack settlers had to cut own “travel ways”
Point-O-Rocks key landmark for area’s railroad history
The first train in Keeseville
Rail era recalled in Champlain area
Travel in Adirondacks prompts dozen of yarns
Interesting stories on houses
Thompson place has roots going back 150 years
It’s not all sweetness in building houses
Plattsburgh’s Witherill a historic landmark
Iron played major Essex County role
Iron one of treasures of Adirondack region
Deserted Standish roared when iron age boomed here
Rocks, Rocks, Rocks
Death recalls importance of area’s iron ore industry
Peru had an early blast furnace
North Country foundries flourished in late 1800s
Ghost Towns return to life as old timers “remember when”
People, personalities relate human saga of Essex County
When mining was No. Country’s big industry
Curiosity, history coincide
Iron still the big word sown around Port Henry
Forges grew up near rivers
Iron industry here like house that Jack built
Cloudsplitter watches history
North Country iron industry flourished
Essex firm made horse nails
“Moriah” may be biblical
Essex peaceful sanctuary to long-time residents
Giant bell recalls old firm
On forges in the wilderness
First Dannemora prisoners helped iron economy
When AuSable River powered valley industry
Sociology figures greatly in North Country history
More questions about our area
Many Clinton changes noted
“Neighbor” still carries same fine old meaning
Tours make summer nice
Many generations cheated by poor use of resources
“Vermont” soaked 150 years
Essex iron ties renewed from Witherbee’s booklet
Northeastern corner of state remains an undiscovered area
Future of Adirondacks questions for long time
Planes replace fire towers
Hard fight for suffragettes
St. John’s, Que., played neighborly role with US
History of many towns linked to Lake Champlain
Story of North Country challenge of interpretation
Diary tells of migration
Finds area history fascinating study
Great AuSable influential in growth of Keeseville
Dannemora Prison dates back to 1845
Myriad publications tell the North Country story
Wise use renews forests
Census taking in the 1840s
“Foreign correspondence” elbowed local news aside
E’town museum’s old press first was used in Keeseville
Adirondack rocks millions of years old
Area fold ballad recorded
Fascinating stories abound about No. Country
Kinship bridges U.S. – Canada border
Essex heritage ties to treasure
History gaining importance as lore become big business
When spring cleaning really was a chore
Springtime in Adirondacks
Baking bread important part of early North Country life
Last century’s swim togas rarely mentioned in public
Daniel Boynton of North Jay had a long memory
The facts about Essex County
Vocabularies spell the times
North Country liberty poles
Front ST. in Keeseville contains historic sites
Behind the Adirondack front
Odds and ends about Clinton County towns
Area has some real blizzards in 1890s
Our area wonderland
Pious instruction was the aim of North Country epitaphs
North Country features stern winter beauty
Early settlers kept account of happenings
Doc Carlin had the answer to assortment of things
Solon of long ago tells how it was in Washington
Stowerville ghost hamlet
Fascinating story behind towns
Town's in Clinton County have romantic story
Vermonters settled Ellenburg
Area about Keeseville can boast some real history
Let’s tour streets of old-time Keeseville to meet familiar names
18 townships in Essex
Historic scenes listed for region
Lost town revisited
Places to check as weather clears
John Brown returns to North Country
North Country churches fought slavery
Adirondack boys in many bloody battles
Conflict took terrible toll from young men of N. Country

**Box 5**  **Miscellaneous newspaper articles**

Champlain Valley Tour Offers Preview of Festival Year
Up on Convey Hill
Glenmore School
Grandma Fifield’s garden interesting
Historical viewpoint
History of Plattsburgh Barracks
Bluff Point, South of City, is focal point for history of this area
Keeseville a century ago
Essex iron ties renewed from Witherbee’s booklet
Discovering bits of history in your own neighborhood
Recalling Valcour encounter
Artifacts recall life of Champlain
Westport has special story
Spiritual, farming advice
Many doctors came north
Keeseville plays role in history
Stevenson wintered up here, willed youngsters a birthday
Loyalist pioneer first settled area around Hemmingford
Pioneer family was active
Quarterly details area lore
Another anniversary coming for Battle of Plattsburgh
Delord portrayed in oils and letters
Adirondacks guide roster studded with longevity
Papineau War bought turmoil to the Northeast
New Yorker wrote 30 novels
Adventure and characters in North Country history
Northeast corner becomes major area for exploration
‘A- going to be a battle’
Industrial raised near Ti
Where are the treasures of long ago Plattsburgh
Essex, Clinton graveyards hold heroes of Revolution
Old-timer’s anecdotes enriched area history
Kent- Delord House archives reveal famed history
Keese family plays large role in area history
From the Historical viewpoint
Valcour battle anniversary significant to Saranac area
In the local spirit of 1776
Battle of Plattsburgh relived
Papineau War brought turmoil to the Northeast
Vaucour's name a mystery
When rebels raided north
“Ironshoes”
Boats always plied the lake
Lord Howe’s burial place remains historical mystery
Franklin Falls spot of renown
Name research on Ticonderoga
Old journal tells story of Sax Trip
Watson were Port Kent
Adirondack guides of old gained respect for loyalty
Old ‘medicine’ sales meant waving ‘red flags’ for public
Franklin Falls was rebuilt quickly
Takes a lot of digging to find out about Simmons
If Canadian sympathizers foresaw 1970s, then what?
Watson ancestors lauded
The mystifying story of Benedict Arnold
Old roads give rare views
Benedict Arnold was a hero
The fabulous Smith Weed
Westport has historic setting
Hats a rummage sale can recall other years
Brown site deserves exploration
A diary reflects period of writing
Dick Shutts of Indian Point and the good old days
On-site research of North Country’s ghost towns
Pigeons ‘shut out the sun’
Vacation magic word for area
Beauty in outdoor scene
Crown Point has deep roots in history of North Country
‘Foreign correspondence’ elbow local news aside
Winchester won back in 1837
Age of Wood peaked a hundred years ago
E’town museum’s old press first used in Keeseville
Take look at K’ville
The Forest Fire of 1908
“Crazy Dow”
“Crazy Dow”
Split Rock Historical Lore
Split Rock Historical Lore
Mrs. Porter relates story of the Irish Glen
Looking Back
Time for Adirondack jaunt
In North Country they lift their eyes ‘unto the hills’
Diaries tell story of early life in Valley
Flocks of pigeons over S. Lawrence
Civil War letters got to the heart of the era
Arnold defeated but gains time for Americans
Finding cannons telescopes history
Lake Champlain key route in past, present development
Some Hessians stayed here
No end of incidents after tornado hit in mid-1870s
Adirondack guides of old gained respect for loyalty
Keeviseville offers a lot
Port Kent a natural spot for emerging lake traffic
Great AuSable influential in growth of Keeviseville
Contributions to pigeon lore
History of Keeviseville both varied and interesting
What measure is time when in the Adirondacks?
Prospect Hill observation Point
Fair at Essex has long history
Bill Smith’s hair…. A real North Country tradition
How did pioneers get to Northern New York
Quebec traditions recalled
View is one of classic beauty on road below Schroon River
Each town in county has special feature
Area promotion ‘inevitable’
Arsenal Inn has history that goes back to 1811
Valley native ascends Whiteface Mt.
’Saranac’ label on many things
Alice-like Peru alters size
Tells local story on canvas with oils
North Country art works finally receiving acclaim
Many area attractions await influx for Expo 67
History of Split Rock
That’s a pleasure in pathless woods
1609 to 1959 A Lake with History
Where the Rivers flow North and South
Let’s take a look at Keeviseville back through the years
Church dedicated on Dec. 25, 1816
Split Rock Historical Lore
Crown Point yields vignettes to the historian
Saranac Lake noted as health center
Public demands trails
Going to school before buses
City- Montreal railroad formed 169 years ago
Reading papers in old Port Henry
Pioneer schools had gamut of tax dollar problems
Lake Champlain was merciful
Religion in our heritage
Settlers’ old roads are still rewarding
Steam boating on lake
Scenic beauty on Lake Champlain
Champlain Valley history rich in fact, fiction from days of Indians
Champlain Canal gave lift to business
Transplanted New Englanders form church
Church discipline serious
Lake settled by people from New Hampshire, Valley
Old Lake Champlain has always had her moods
Canal brings about changes in Lake Champlain commerce
Earlier day Essex and Clinton County newspapers
From trail to Northway 178 years
Lake found in 1642
Curiosity ingredient opens Champlain Valley
Navigation season about to open
Recent law spells out rules for scenic trails
Remember heroes of war
Yankee notions
Plattsburgh Bank set up with $300,000 in 1871
Rembrandt Hall boasts famed curved stairway
Planning for Adirondacks began in state 100 years ago
Saving vignettes for winter
Highway maps good guide to little known sites
Boreas range of Adirondacks most beautiful during fall
E'town History tied to Iron
Ideas blossomed in area in 1890s
The craftsman of yore
Historical viewpoint
Life in summary Adirondacks worth the hazards

73.2f Miscellaneous Material Including Maps, Printed Programs, Local History Memorabilia, etc.

73.2g Marjorie Lansing Porter Correspondence (Rockwell Kent, Ray Bender, Noah John Rondeau, Pete Seeger, and many others)

73.2h Deeds, Agreements, Wills, and Letters, 1832-1906, Collected by Porter
Box 1 Aaron Dean Fletcher
Box/Folder
1/1 Will, estate papers, letters, etc.
1/2 Notes and articles on Fletcher

Box 2 Arnold Papers
2/1 Indentures, agreements and other documents
2/2 Receipts, chattel mortgages, acknowledgements, orders to pay
2/3 Letters
2/4 Invoices and statements
Box 3

Box/Folder

3/1  Whitney papers
3/2  Merriam papers
3/3  Anson letters and documents (copies)
3/4  Ellen Walker correspondence, 1844-1850
3/5  Miscellaneous letters, 1861-1960

73.2i  Scrapbooks containing advertising cards and clippings from newspapers of the 1860s, 1870s, and 1880s

73.2j  Book-length manuscript of a fictionalized account of William Gilliland, written by Mrs. Porter’s father, Charles W. Lansing

73.2k  Marjorie Lansing Porter Family-Related Material

Box/Folder

1/1  Genealogies

73.2L  Paper Indexes to Audio Materials

Box/Folder

1/1  Indexes to songs and singers