

By Raymond Beecher

Just as some historians are questioning Admiral Peary being the first explorer to reach the North Pole, Greene County had its challenger to Henry Hudson. Several decades ago it was Samuel Van Loan who sought to direct the credit to his ancestor, Pietre Van Loon of the Adirondacks. His notes would be edited and published by Catskill's Walton Van Loan, a cousin. It is believed Walton saw a potential market for such a booklet what with the increasing interest in the forthcoming Hudson-Fulton Celebration of 1909.

It is related by Samuel Van Loan that his ancestor, being persecuted by the Spanish in the Province of Walloon, arranged for sail-

ing passage to North America for himself, his family and a few friends. Sailing the Saint Lawrence River, these migrants finally came ashore in what was to become northern New York. The exact spot is uncertain but near a large lake. Further tradition has it that from this crude Adirondack settlement came manufactured cloth from fiber and smelted iron, both products serving as trade goods with the local Indian tribes. Gradually Pietre grew in importance in the eyes of the native tribesmen and one summer they included him on a lengthy hunting and fishing expedition into the Upper Hudson Valley. This was not long after the Van Loon arrival in the New World in 1581.

Grandson Pietre, to become known as "Pietre of the Hudson River," eventually removed to Fort Orange, first coming down with his Indian allies in the year 1620 to trade and to secure a wife. He never returned to the Adirondacks but married at Albany where he reared a family. Both husband and wife were skilled language interpreters, useful to the Dutch and the Indians. At Fort Orange they were referred to as the Walloon, pronounced "Ver Loon." The line of descent has been suggested as 1) Pietre of the Adirondacks; 2) Adriance; 3) Pietre of the Hudson River; 4) Adriance of Manhattan Island; 5) Jan of Loonenburg; 6) Alburthus of Loonenburg; 7) Nicholas of Loonenburg; 8) William of Loonenburg; and 9) Isaac of Catskill.

The booklet continues with other Van Loan local Greene County history; it also contains three interesting illustrations, namely that of the Alburthus Van Loan stone house in the upper part of Athens village, the John and Jane Dies Georgian stone mansion on the bank of Catskill Creek, and a likeness of Captain Isaac Van Loan who plied the Hudson in his sailing sloop between Catskill and New York. Capt. Isaac had other credits, being a founder

of St. Luke's Episcopal Church at Catskill, a 1810 High Sheriff for the County of Greene, and later a member of the state legislature in the year 1819.

Walton Van Loan was cautious in endorsing this family legend, calling the reader's attention by means of a footnote that Munsell's *Annals of Albany* identifies Jan Van Loan as of Lnyck, Holland who was married in Albany in 1680.

And while Samuel and Walton Van Loan's booklet never succeeded in supplanting the Henry Hudson claim, the publication has acquired the reputation as being a choice item in any Greene County history collection, public or private. On July 25, an almost mint copy came to the Vedder Memorial Library from the family of recently deceased society member Irving Meserole King Sr. of Brewster, Cape Cod and formerly of Catskill, the son of Katharine Meserole Decker. It augments nine other box-fuls of historical paper material heretofore deposited with the Greene County Historical Society as a Decker-King Memorial.