

# Greene County Gleanings

by Raymond Beecher

"I am now 89 but the memories are still vivid" writes Ted Van Loan of Florida. That remark is written across the first page of a 66-sheet typescript autobiographical account of growing up in Catskill. Born in that village in 1905, and residing in Grandfather Van Ness Van Loan's house at 31 Prospect Street but frequently spending spare time at Grandfather Cole's farm on the northern outskirts of Catskill, the Van Loan account of these years provides a fascinating glimpse of Catskill life in the early decades of the twentieth century. The author frankly admits he was a "youthful hellraiser" and never spares himself by whitewashing his antics. The account is all the more personal since it was written not for publication but rather primarily for his children. On very short term loan to this historian, it came with a stamped envelope to insure prompt return. After a few nights reading, it was on its way back to Florida.

In addition to recollections of the Van Loan and Cole households, there are memories of Christmas events, school and Sunday School (St. Luke's) education, neighbors including Judge Chase, the Pettin-gills, William L DuBois, the Hayden family, and a minisketch of Martin Nils Van Buren Wilcox in of the pillared house. The domestic arrangements at 31 Prospect included the problems of adequate water supplies, use of various outbuildings, heating with coal, the use of the cellar, and lighting the house first with kerosene and then with electricity.

Ted and his close friend "Pen-ny" (Penfield Sylvester Jennings) were apparently lads headed for trouble in the eyes of some of the Catskill uppercrust. Mention is also made of other male companions including the three Bagley brothers, Chauncey Smith, Pell Hopkins, Jake DuBois, Johnny Morrison and the three Murray lads. One gathers Aunt Florence Cole Vincent kept an "eagle eye" on Ted and his friends whenever they appeared up at the Cole farm.

Places and characters on Main Street occupies several pages where

we read of A.P. Fox's ice cream and candy store, H.L. Boughton's with its wired trolley system to and from the cashier, Van Gordon's for school supplies, Dietz the baker for both bread and more fancy baked goods, and the several tobacco shops with their sidewalk cigar store Indians. The paint store with its iron dog was an attraction, especially since the local legend grew that the dog barked at midnight on New Year's Eve.

Mechanical and woodworking interests led Ted Van Loan to places like Day and Holtz, the Catskill Supply Company, Fred Horn's electrical supply store, and the Catskill Foundry. Automobiles were becoming more plentiful and these horseless carriages were of particular interest to the male contingent of the village. Individuals meriting a few lines were Teddy Henderson, blind Eddy Root, Joe Riley the one-man police force, Watson Brandow of the Catskill Trolley line, as well as Henry Han-son, Andrew "the vegetable ped-dler", and Eddy Babcock.

The River with its dayboat pass-ings, Day's boat house for swimming, Roger's Island for expedi-tions, and boating from Benters on the Creek to Ram's Horn Creek and other pages of coverage. Sports of all kinds for both winter and summer loom large in Ted's recol-lections. The family breakup and his departure from Catskill in 1924 end this period of his life's recol-lections.

GC News 11/23/1994