

Greene County Gleanings

6/10/93

By Raymond Beecher

One of the earliest and certainly the foremost female academy in the United States was Sarah Pierce's Litchfield establishment which commenced operation in 1792 in Connecticut and continued to attract students, including a number of Greene County girls, until its closure in 1833. For her doctoral dissertation completed in 1985, Lynne Templeton Brickley selected Miss Pierce's school. Now, in 1993, her research, and that of the Litchfield Historical Society's staff, has resulted in a 132-page publication. Because of some assistance rendered by this columnist, a copy of the new volume is now available

at the Vedder Memorial Library.

Twenty-one female students, most from affluent post-Revolutionary Greene County families, are known to have enrolled. These are identified as:

- Sally Barton (Catskill, c.1812)
- Eliza S. Benton (Catskill, c.1810-12)
- Polly Bill (Catskill, c.1813)
- Sarah P. Brace (Catskill, 1832)
- Susan Brace (Catskill, 1831-32)
- Catharine S. Bronk (Coxsackie, 1825-26)
- Harriet Butler (Catskill, c.1814)
- Mary Charlotte (Catskill, 1817)
- Betsy Day (Catskill, 1807)
- Harriet Day (Catskill, 1807)
- Julia Day (Catskill, 1802)
- Nancy Day (Catskill, 1802)
- Sarah Holmes Edwards (Hunter, 1822)
- Venelia Fitch (Coxsackie, 1826)
- Melissa Hale (Catskill, 1802)
- Sophia Hale (Catskill, 1802-03)
- Elizabeth Hyde (Catskill, 1824-25)
- Caroline McVeagh (Catskill, pre-1814)
- Laura Porter (Catskill, c. 1811)
- Ann Salisbury (Catskill, 1816)

Elsie Van Dyck (Coxsackie, 1825)

Several manuscript items pertaining to the education of Catharine S. Bronk and Elsie Van Dyck at this pioneer female academy survive in the collections of the Greene County Historical Society. It is also noted that Jessie Van Vechten Vedder in *Historic Catskills* calls the reader's attention to the fact that Ruth Pierce, married to Dr. Thomas O'Hara Croswell of Catskill, was a sister of Sarah Pierce. The Catskill Braces were also related. This may well have explained the recruitment from Catskill.

The new volume is a significant addition to the literature pertaining to the education of young women. It contrasts the nature of these earlier institutions with those to follow, particularly Catharine Beecher's at Hartford and Emma Willard's at Troy.

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Since most of Greene County was joined with the County of Albany until the year 1800, some of its earliest manuscripts are to be found in that adjacent county. It is all a matter of knowing where to research. One such early document of interest is one relating to the sale and purchase of a Dutch farmstead at Catskill under date of January 9, 1662. It illustrates the lack of hard currency and the use of both wheat and beaver skins as a measure of value.

The January 9, 1662 contract between Jan Andriessen, a former resident of Dublin, Ireland, and now residing at Catskill, and Jan Cloet (Clute) from Neurenburgh, involved twenty-two morgens (46.42 acres) of land. Included were both arable

and woodland "together with house, barn, rick, and whatsoever is thereon fast by earth and nail, on the south side of said Kill." In selling to Clute, Andriessen secured a price of four hundred skipples (Dutch measurement) of good winter wheat and a gelding named Ante.

Payment was to be made in three installments, the first amounting to one hundred skipples of wheat in the month of December, 1663, and the said horse the next spring. The second, in an equal amount of wheat, came due in December of 1664. Finally, a like payment in December of 1665. Title was not to pass from Andriessen to Clute until final settlement.

The contract allowed Clute to

enter upon the farm in the fall of 1662, seeded down with thirty-two skipples of winter wheat, at the expense of the seller, for the benefit of the buyer. As a side transaction, Clute was to get two wagons and two ploughs and six sows of a year old.

This Anglo-Dutch agreement was witnessed "in the colony of Rensselaerswyck in New Netherland,"; signing as witnesses were Jacob Tyssz van der Hyde and Arent Cornelise Vele; the notary was D.V. Scheeluyne.

The rick, listed with house and barn, was probably the Dutch style hay barrack consisting of upright poles and adjustable roofing. One such barrack is shown in the Van Bergen overmantel.

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