

# The Quarterly JOURNAL

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## SIMEON SCRIPTURE'S FULLING MILL ON THE BASIC CREEK

*Although small sawmills and gristmills lingered on for many years in Greene County, by the Civil War era the fulling mills were disappearing, the victims of the mass production of cloth. The small local fulling mill for the shrinking and degreasing of woolen material, as well as their combing machines for straightening wool fibers, was a boon to the overburdened pioneer housewife, one she was quick to utilize. The Scripture fulling mill on the Basic Creek served many Greenville area families, yet Beers' *History of Greene County* (1884) makes little mention of this early local industry. Fortunately a number of early 19th century documents have surfaced, a part of the Hallenbeck Collection at Bronck Museum. They are the basis for this article.*

—The Editor

In the early years water power was a basic source of energy for small industrial establishments on Greene County's interior streams. Mill sites, either natural or man-made, were a source of potential wealth and economic power. Patentees, such as Augustine Prevost, were alert to these sites' importance. The Basic (Basick) Creek, flowing from north to south, bisected his land holdings; its water power was used to operate several of the Greenville township mills, Augustine Prevost's included.

On December 2, 1793, Augustine Prevost transferred title to 320 acres of land (more or less) to Eleazer Knowles, land which straddled the Basic Creek just north of today's Route 81 at West Greenville. In that deed, Knowles was forbidden to build any water works (dams); Augustine also reserved title to the water flow. Strangely enough, he did not retain ownership of the creek bed through Knowles' property.

## JAMES VAN GELDER'S LAKE KISKATOM— PURE WATER AND CHEAP ELECTRIC POWER

—Editor's Research

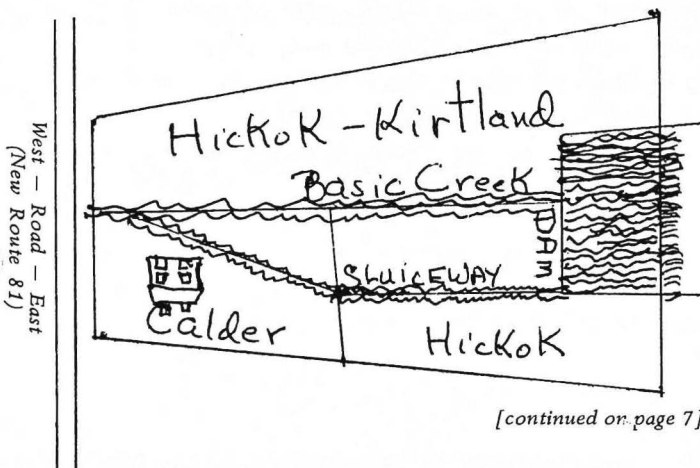
It was a well-conceived plan to supply the village of Catskill, its suburbs, and Athens with an enormous supply of pure water; cheap electric power was to be an important by-product. The brain-child of James Harvey Van Gelder (Yale '64), the water supply had first been proposed to the Catskill village trustees in 1880-1881 when it became obvious that a more dependable source of water for household, public and fire protection purposes was needed; the dug wells, springs and cisterns were no longer adequate. But the village had voted in favor of the less expensive plan, that of pumping from the Hudson River. (See *Quarterly Journal*, Fall, 1978).



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After the Deiper Hook pumping station on the Hudson River was developed in 1883-84, Catskill village did continue to grow; also, the pollution of the river increased as indoor sanitary plumbing grew in popularity. The steam pumping system with its water from the Hudson, was not the bargain it first appeared to be—repairs of an extensive nature were already needed. By 1897, with 12½ years of experience, it was found the Hudson River water

[continued on page 3]



[continued on page 7]

*With this issue of The Journal, your 1979 Membership is now due. Fill in the convenient form enclosed and return it promptly. The volunteers who must do the follow-up will appreciate having fewer names to telephone in January.*

*Please help us "Kick Off" our 50th Anniversary Celebration with your early 1979 membership.*

"This village of from 600 to 800 inhabitants, is in the town of Windham, 26 miles northwest from Catskill, on the stage road to Delhi. The village is situated on a small stream, called Red-Kill, which takes its rise in the Catskill Mountains, and empties into the Schoharie Kill, a branch of the Mohawk. On both sides of the stream there is a continuous ridge of mountains, which extends to a considerable distance down the Schoharie Kill. These may be properly considered as belonging to the Catskill range, the most prominent portion of which lies farther to the east.

"The whole surface of the country is very uneven and to those who are unaccustomed to mountain scenery, the appearance is truly romantic, the hills being stripped of their timber so as to present their huge, rocky projections in the most bold and imposing manner. It is not more than 25 years since they were all covered with heavy hemlock timber, and the valley of the Red-Kill, including the spot now occupied by the village in consideration, was one dense wilderness. The sudden exit of hemlock and the rapid increase of population at the same time, will probably suggest to the reader the cause of both.

"Mr. Bennet Osborne was the first man to introduce the tanning of leather in this vicinity, at least to any extent. He erected his buildings in the woods and commenced operations, about 20 years ago, on the ground now known as Windham Centre. There were then but two or three dwellings in the place and these of a rude appearance. By constant slaying of the hemlocks, and close attention to his business, Mr. Osborne soon succeeded in gathering quite a number of inhabitants around him. The place grew up under the name Osborneville, and has been so called until a very late period. Its existence may be attributed entirely to the tanning business, which has also been its principal support for a number of years. But for future prosperity, its dependence must be placed upon something else, the tanning operations having already ceased on account of a scarcity of bark. The numerous lofty hills which overlook this village from every quarter, and were once fruitful sources of wealth to its inhabitants, must now remain as monuments of the past. They are like Sampson shorn, and look as though they had been cradled over by the hand of the destroyer.

"I will now give you an idea of the present extent to which mechanical business is prosecuted in this place, but it will be difficult to give the prices of labor in the various branches, as there are but few journeymen employed:

[continued on page 8]

Mrs. Shelby Kriele, who has served in the capacity of Assistant Curator for the past several years, has been elected Curator with full responsibility for managing the extensive collections at Bronck Museum. Your editor, who served as Curator for many years, will continue with the library and *The Quarterly Journal* activities. The Society is fortunate in securing Mrs. Kriele's services, since the continuance of the corporation and its museum depends upon the recruitment of younger personnel.

Maggie Van Cott, the noted 19th century female evangelist, is closely related with the religious history of Greene County. Her personal Psalm Book, with notations in the flyleaf section, has come from Mrs. Mark Scully of Coxsackie. From that same source has come a silk crazy quilt made by the mother of Mrs. Emory Chase; the Cairo Fair second prize ribbon is still attached.

In appreciation for the restoration and adaptive use of the Uncle Sam—Cantine House on Catskill's West Side, as well as to advertise the Society's activities, the Bronck Museum has partially furnished the bedroom area for exhibition purposes. Framed over the mantel is Angelica Van Buren's handwritten invitation to Dr. John Ely (Member of Congress) to partake of a Christmas Dinner at The White House.

The combined efforts of the CETA team and the museum and library staff is being used to develop a photographic history of the Haines sawmill. When framed, it will be displayed with the Scott painting of that mill illustrated in the Summer 1978 issue of *The Journal*. Esther H. Dunn is supplying the captions.

After considerable excitement on the part of the state staff involved in the restoration of the original NYS Senate Chamber designed by Henry H. Richardson between 1879 and 1881 and opened officially in 1881, the only known surviving chair has been lent by Bronck Museum to the state for study purposes. More than 100 museums and societies were contacted.

*Urban Wilderness: Resorts of the Catskills* is the title of a two-year traveling exhibit being assembled by the Gallery Association of New York, Inc. An extensive collection of artifacts relating to the theme of the show has been lent from Bronck Museum.

*Molders of Troy*, depicting the immigration to this country and the rise of the Irish in economic status, has been filmed by Bowling Green Films, Inc., in Coxsackie this summer. Interior props have been supplied by Bronck Museum for a nominal fee of \$100.

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**VAN GELDER'S LAKE KISKATOM** [cont'd. from p. 1]

pumping plant was being operated at an annual average cost of \$4,887.89, or at \$12.51 for each million gallons of water produced. The pumping plant was approaching its limit; the Hudson River silt was also settling in the village water mains, that system having no filtering reservoir. Corrective action was definitely needed. James Van Gelder continued to press his campaign for the conversion to a gravity system of Cauterskill water, ruling out Green Lake and the Catskill and the Potic Creeks as inadequate. But once again, the Catskill voters, by 156 to 65, optioned for the continued use of the Hudson River water.

It was then that James Van Gelder turned to the concept of a privately-owned corporation which would not only supply pure drinking water by a gravity system to the village of Catskill and the surrounding hamlets, but would also produce cheap electric power for homes, businesses and the trolley line. Electricity was no longer considered a fad or toy for the wealthy but rather a household necessity.

Financial backing for this gravity water system was sought over the next several years from such wealthy men as F. N. DuBois (manufacturer of sanitary specialties and plumbing supplies), from Silas Dutcher of the Hamilton Trust Company of Brooklyn, from William G. Rockefeller (Standard Oil of New York), Chauncey M. Depew (NYC and Hudson River Railroad), Andrew Carnegie (steel magnate), and Charles P. Taft (Yale Classmate of Van Gelder and brother of President Taft). But financial backing was not forthcoming from these men, they feeling such a project not within their areas of interest. In the meantime, Van Gelder, on January 10, 1900, purchased 33 acres of land from Thomas E. Ferrier—it was a key parcel needed for the gravity water system.

On February 27, 1902, Senator William C. S. Wiley of Catskill introduced a bill in the New York State Senate to incorporate the LAKE KISKATOM WATERWORKS AND ELECTRIC POWER COMPANY, of which James Van Gelder, John N. Pine, David M. Post, Arthur P. Van Gelder, and Charles A.

Wardle were the incorporators. This bill was passed by both houses of the legislature and was signed into law by the governor. A special charter was granted on April 15, being Chapter 607 of the Laws of New York, 1902. Within a few months John N. Pine would be dead from a serious fall while replacing a bridge floor and Senator Wiley would replace him on that board.

The reader should recall that this was an era when small electric power plants, located on rural streams, were being constructed; the idea of producing electrical power from the Catskill area creeks was not as far-fetched as it seems today. The old Woodstock power plant (near Cairo) was a good example.

James Van Gelder now entered into a publicity campaign for the project. His gravity water system, similar to the famed Croton water plan which supplied New York City, would tap a 45-mile portion of the Cauterskill and the Catskill Creeks. The storage reservoir, Lake Kiskatom, would be formed not directly on the Cauterskill Creek but rather on its tributary, Glenbrook. Along the edge of the great plateau at the foot of the mountains and easterly from Kiskatom Flats, nature had provided a natural storage basin. It lay within five miles of the village of Catskill and ten miles from Athens. When dammed, it would provide 63 acres of water surface, with a depth of between 15 and 20 feet, and a water capacity of 275 million gallons. The distribution reservoir would be closer yet to Catskill.

Electrical power would be produced by a series of five strategically located powerhouses, taking advantage of the 325-foot fall to sea level. The chief power station, opposite the northerly end of Lake Kiskatom, would be fed by means of a six-foot tunnel, 4,000 feet in length, the latter lined with the newly developed Portland cement.

Approximately 1½ miles downstream on the Cauterskill, a 12-foot dam would provide a long stretch of level water to feed one of the four smaller powerhouses. Again downstream, at the Natural Dam (by Reed's old pistol factory), a unit would utilize a fall of 28 feet. At Rushmore's Dam, just below the junction of the Cauterskill and the Catskill Creeks, a third small powerhouse would provide generating capacity from a ten-foot fall.

The Van Gelder paper went on to compare costs of manufacturing from steam. If electrical power produced from Lake Kiskatom water was sold at 25% less than from steam, it would produce a gross income of \$117,810 annually. Taking out \$17,810 for annual expenses, a profit of \$100,000 could be realized. Capitalized at 5%, the Lake Kiskatom power project would justify a maximum investment of two million dollars. Since the actual cost was projected at



Lake Kiskatom Water Works Stock Certificate

Sydney Thomson Photo

## JAMES VAN GELDER'S LAKE KISKATOM

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between \$350,000 and \$400,000, James Van Gelder and his supporters felt the Lake Kiskatom Water Works and Electric Power Company would become a very profitable undertaking.

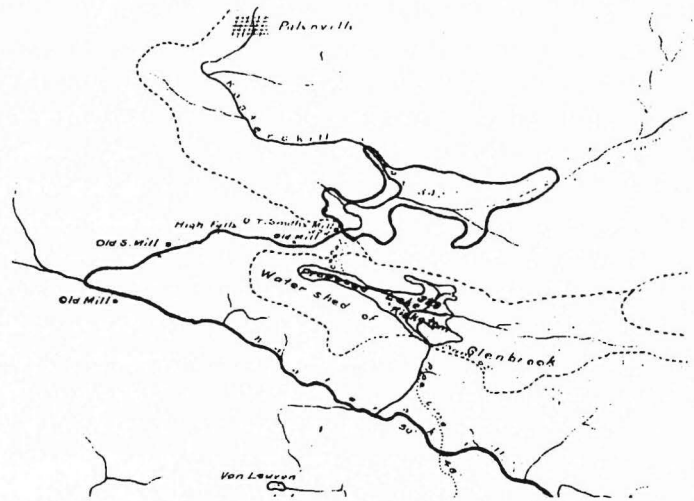
From the beginning, it was the intent of this corporation merely to secure the necessary land and water rights, build suitable reservoirs and impounding basin, maintain a gravity system and sell pure water on a more or less wholesale basis to Catskill and surrounding districts. It did not propose to install water mains or to provide water directly to buildings, that being the responsibility of the Catskill Board of Water Supply; neither did it plan to sell electrical power directly to village residents.

One interesting sidelight in this history of Lake Kiskatom was James Van Gelder's attempt to interest John D. Rockefeller. It was proposed to him that the Catskill Polytechnic Institute for higher education be established, and that those contributing for such an educational purpose be granted a bonus of one share of common stock for each bond sold to them at par. The school would offer a technical education, including scientific forestry, utilizing the land surrounding the proposed Lake Kiskatom. It was Van Gelder's hope, as expressed in a letter to Mr. Rockefeller, that the Catskill Polytechnic Institute would eventually control the water system and thus oversee the development of the Catskill and Cauterskill Creeks.

During the years 1902 and 1905, the promoters sought to interest the village of Athens in a purer water supply to come from the Lake Kiskatom project. Correspondence exists which indicates H. F. Dernelle considered such a possibility. The company was willing to bring piped water by gravity flow to a reservoir on a hill near Athens and sell water to the village trustees. If the latter preferred, the company was even willing to install a complete water system for the village of Athens at yearly costs no higher than those proposed for Catskill. The possibility of supplying the city of Hudson by pipes under the river also intrigued Mr. Harder and others from that eastern shore.

In its proposal to Catskill village in 1905, the price to be charged would be a rate based upon the population as determined by the federal census, said contract to operate for thirty years. The cost for water was to be one dollar per year for each inhabitant for the first decade, at the rate of ninety cents, and eighty cents respectively for the next two decades.

The right to supply railroads was reserved to the corporation, as was the privilege of manufacturing electrical power. Supplying water for fire protection,



for street sprinkling, for public buildings, and for stores, offices, shops and factories was to be liberally constructed in favor of the village of Catskill at a rate satisfactory to both the Water Commissioners and the corporation. The former would have the responsibility for preventing water wastage. Water to new industrial users would be charged at a low rate to induce their location at Catskill, the village receiving 5% of such special revenues for the use of its mains. The latter would be adequately protected in regard to construction deadlines and the renewal of contracts after the expiration of the thirty-year period.

Since the Board of Water Commissioners was not authorized by law to make contracts for a longer period than five years, the Lake Kiskatom proposal had to be submitted to the village taxpayers for approval. The evening before the vote, the court house was utilized as a public forum for taxpayer consideration of the village water works question. J. Henry Deane, president of the Businessmen's Association, was the chairman; Charles G. Coffin was chosen secretary. The first speaker was the president of the Lake Kiskatom company, James H. Van Gelder, who ably set forth his company's plans, the advantages of a gravity system, and other regulated information. General Wiley next explained legislative efforts to secure passage of the bill to provide for the purchase of watershed lands; he recommended support for the gravity plan.

W. E. Thorpe, on the other hand, reported that testing had found the Hudson River water free of disease germs and sewerage. Several, including Thorpe and Osborn, favored municipal ownership as having decided financial advantages. The *Examiner* reported all the speakers favored a pure water supply, but that many seemed dubious of the Lake Kiskatom plan, it being initially too expensive. Their views were reflected in the vote the next day, when, by 205 to 109, the gravity system as proposed by James Van Gelder was rejected by the Catskill taxpayers.

[continued on page 5]

## JAMES VAN GELDER'S LAKE KISKATOM

[continued from page 4]

The defeat of the Lake Kiskatom proposal did not deter James Van Gelder and his board of directors from continuing their efforts to build the necessary water system. Sooner or later, they reasoned, the village would face the problem of river pollution and abandon that source of water supply.

Annual meetings of the board of the Lake Kiskatom company were held either at Catskill or in New York City. George O. Ferguson, a financier from that financial center, eventually became a major stockholder in the company. Initially the firm had been capitalized at \$100,000 with par value of the stock set at \$100 the share. The state had set the limit for the issuance of stock at \$250,000 but had placed no such restrictions on the amount of bonded indebtedness. Either by cash subscription or in lieu of payment of services, money expended on behalf of the corporation, 287 shares were issued. The ownership of 279 shares can be identified from available records:

James Van Gelder (Catskill)	113
William S. C. Wiley (Catskill)	6
David M. Post (Catskill)	3
R. F. and F. Story (Catskill)	5
George O. Ferguson (New York)	75
Charles A. Wardle (Catskill)	77

Charles A. Wardle, son-in-law of James Van Gelder, was also active on behalf of the Lake Kiskatom company. Both in Buffalo and in New York City, he sought to interest private capital. At one time he almost succeeded. Ignaz Kornfeld of the latter financial center was willing to arrange financing for \$7,500 in cash and \$10,000 in stock; it was a proposition satisfactory to the board but one which never materialized.

Turner A. Beal, 26 Broadway, New York, indicated he might be successful in getting a group of capitalists interested in financial backing; he went so far as to propose the terms of such an agreement. They were "steep"—50% of the stock and an option on placing the bonds, an amended charter to permit the sale of water anywhere in Greene and adjacent counties, and contracts of an assured nature from the potential consumers of power at a price of \$30 per horsepower of 10 hours per day. This offer was never approved by the Lake Kiskatom Board of Directors.

At the NYC meeting of the board on September 22, 1910, a second major effort was undertaken to sell the concept of a gravity system of water supply for Catskill. James Van Gelder waived certain claims against the corporation for which he received 15

shares of stock. George O. Ferguson and Charles A. Wardle were voted the unsold portion of the capital stock for the purpose of promoting and constructing the power plants. Additionally, an issue of \$300,000 first mortgage, 50-year, 6% gold bonds, was authorized.

Ferguson's next attempt was to approach Bachman & Company of Philadelphia as the possible holding company for a proposed issuance of one million preferred and one-half million dollars worth of common stock. He further arranged for J. G. White and Company (engineers and contractors), to evaluate the Lake Kiskatom Water Power Development Plan. Their favorable report was completed and submitted to the corporation on November 4, 1910.

But adequate financial backing never quite materialized; no further acquisition of land was made; no dams or reservoirs were ever constructed. The Lake Kiskatom Water Works and Electric Power Company eventually drifted out of existence during the great depression of the 1930's. Catskill did abandon the Hudson River as a source of its water supply, but utilized the watershed of the Potic Creek.

The *Catskill Daily Mail*, in January 1964, reported an Urban Renewal proposal from the firm of Brown and Anthony of New York to the Catskill Planning Board and the town board, calling for the damming of the Cauterskill Creek near the Sherman House. Such an effort would create a recreational lake of 735 acres with a shoreline of 18 miles but the plan was shelved due to the high cost. The Lake Kiskatom Company in 1905 had reported 1,200 acres could have been purchased at a cost of \$75,000 (assessed valuation \$33,775), including water rights and mill sites. Of the 1,200 acres, under 500 would have been flooded for water storage, leaving 700 acres for a park around the lake, or woodlands for building sites. Had the Lake Kiskatom plan succeeded, it would have changed geographical features of the town of Catskill. James Van Gelder's ideas would have provided pure water in vast quantities, major recreational facilities, and electrical power. It was simply a plan ahead of its time.

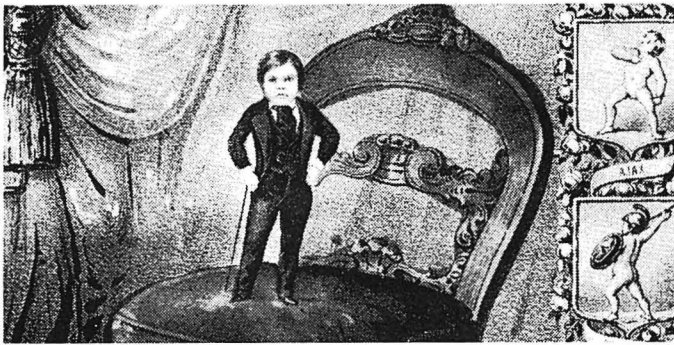
*Editor's Note: This article has been prepared from certain records of the Lake Kiskatom Waterworks and Electric Power Company as well as from personal papers of James Van Gelder to be found in the Van Gelder-Pine-Wardle-Fiero Memorial Collection at Bronck Museum. This major local history collection was the gift of Mrs. Winifred Wardle Fiero of Catskill, a granddaughter of James and Rebecca Pine Van Gelder.*

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## WHEN "GENERAL TOM THUMB" CAME TO CATSKILL

—Editor's Research

Catskill's Main Street has witnessed a number of unusual events but few caused as much stir and bustle as the promenade of Tom Thumb's chariot and horses on August 8, 1848. It was part of a superb effort in showmanship which caused him to be ranked as one of the celebrities of the age. Billed as the miniature equipage given to General Tom Thumb by Her Majesty, Queen Victoria, the horses were among the smallest available in the world. In elaborate liveries, his coachman and his footman were part of this street procession, preliminary to the performance itself at the courthouse.



At the age of nine years, in 1842, Charles S. Stratton, known as "General Tom Thumb" and his mother met with P. T. Barnum, proprietor of "the greatest show on earth." In a business arrangement, Barnum taught Stratton to act, sing and dance. This small boy soon caught the fancy of the public; numerous lithographs, cartes de visite, fans, dolls and a wide variety of other souvenir items were produced and sold. Today they are collectors' items.

From 1844 to 1847, Tom toured Europe for the first time, earning an enviable record of travel and recognition. He capitalized on his diminutive but perfectly proportioned stature; his pleasing personality further enhanced his public image. Invitations came from the major crowned heads of Europe—Queen Victoria, the King and Queen of France, Czar Nicholas of the Russias, as well as from much of the European nobility and the wealthier classes.

This one-day stand in the county seat, Catskill, had three performances which were dignified as levees. Lest the courthouse be too crowded, ladies, families and children were urged to visit either in the morning or afternoon—it was only 25 cents for 1½ hours of entertainment (children under 10 years of age, half price). The program consisted of songs, dances, the portrayal of Grecian statues and the impersonations of Napoleon Bonaparte and Frederick the Great. Those attending had an opportunity to see Tom Thumb in his elegant court dress worn before Queen Victoria, and also his colorful Scot's costume.

Two additional exhibits were open to the public at no additional charge. The first was the aforementioned coach and horses which Tom termed his chariot. The second was his impressive collection of costly gifts from European royalty—medals, jewelry and other mementos.

Just how many Catskillians satisfied their curiosity by putting in an appearance at these courthouse levees is unknown. But the *Catskill Messenger* editor reporting the following week wrote: "General Tom Thumb—On Tuesday last, three levees were given by the General, at the Courthouse. We had the pleasure of attending and can truly say that he was all we anticipated. He was, as usual, good humored and pleasant. The room was well filled during the day and crowded in the evening. We don't think Tom a much greater curiosity than the horses which accompanied him. They were correspondingly small, and commanded as much attention as the General himself. His coach and equipage were also of the most diminutive proportions."

At age 15, about the time he visited Catskill, Tom began to mature physically. At his death in 1883, historians tell us he had reached a height of thirty-one inches and weighed seventy pounds.

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## VEDDER LIBRARY NOTES

Palenville, astride the Kaaterskill Clove, has an almost unique history for a small community. The Vedder Library is very appreciative of the Jean Hervey gift of account books, hotel registers and day books relating to that region. These cover the Pine Grove House, the Elijah Trumbour General Store, and the activities of John W. Dedrick and Jeremiah Bogart. From a preliminary study of this bound manuscript material, one can see the extensive trading carried on with residents from the top of the Clove at Haines Falls, including some of the Haynes family. The gift is grist for subsequent *Journal* articles.

Marion Britt and Harry and Betty Miller have been helpful this past season at the library and museum. Mrs. Miller is working on the card catalogue file while inventorying the main stacks.

Almost lost to Greene County but saved by a last-minute purchase, is the record book of the village of Catskill from the 1850's to the 1870's.

The Schenectady and Catskill Railroad prospectus, dating from the early 1850's, is now in the library's manuscript files.

Other printed material catalogued for reader use includes: *Arts and Crafts Industry of the Catskills*, Swain's *First Black Festival*, and the *Catskill Song Book*.

[continued on page 8]

## SIMEON SCRIPTURE'S FULLING MILL

[from page 1]

About 1812, Eleazer Knowles divided this acreage into two sections, using the creek as a natural boundary. Francis Hickok purchased the eastern half in that year and shortly thereafter Simeon Scripture took title to one-half acre of the lower part of the Hickok purchase. (The Scripture Bridge is named for this individual). The west side of the Knowles land went to his daughter who later sold her section to Francis Hickok.

It was Mr. Scripture who, on his adjacent acreage, had by the late summer of 1807 constructed a crude dam, built a house, a fulling mill and its necessary sluiceways. From the mill pond, a combination of shallow canal and wood troughs led water to the fulling mill. In later years local residents rated the site as only "fair" for water power potential, there being no natural fall of water and with work restricted to spring and autumn. This may have been why the turnover of ownership was so rapid.

In any event, Scripture transferred ownership to a Mr. Kellogg who, within a few months, resold to Josiah Bidwell. From Simeon Scripture's time, the water had been used with the verbal permission of Major Prevost. Scripture had remarked that Augustine once offered him a lease of the water rights for 100 years at one dollar the year but Scripture was unwilling to commit himself for more than one year at that price!

When Josiah Bidwell, in 1814, agreed to sell the fulling mill property to Morehouse and Roe, the latter partners insisted on a written understanding wherein Josiah Bidwell would lease the water rights for twenty years at \$20 the year rental. The lease was to include the right to erect a dam near the fulling mill (no mention was made of the existing dam). Once Bidwell had the water lease from Prevost, he could then accept the offer of Morehouse and Roe, an action he took later that year for \$1,300.

The Morehouse and Roe partnership was short-lived, Elijah Roe soon selling his half interest to his partner, John Morehouse. The water lease had passed from Bidwell to Morehouse but was not specifically assigned in law. Morehouse operated the fulling mill and carding machines for the next six years, paying Augustine Prevost the reduced water rent of ten dollars the year, instead of the twenty as the Bidwell lease specified. During this period Alexander Calder was employed at the fulling mill in an apprenticeship capacity.

On November 18, in the year 1819, Alexander Calder, now an adult, went into the fulling and carding cloth business for himself by purchasing his master's interest in the Scripture fulling mill. The

price agreed upon was \$800; Morehouse had purchased for \$1,300. From available information, it appears Calder was successful in earning a modest livelihood from this mill. If Calder knew of Morehouse's arrangement with Augustine Prevost for the water rent, he ignored any such liability. Yet the Prevosts had not forgotten!

In his will, dated November 20, 1816, Augustine Prevost bequeathed to his wife, Anna Bogardus, the water rights on the Basic by the following: "I give and devise to my wife Anna all the privileges retained of the water rights of the Basic Creek, which runs through my patents, that is, what may not have been alienated [sold] at the time of my decease." Shortly after Augustine's death in 1821, his executors took charge of the estate. At the insistence of Samuel W. Dexter, one of the latter and also son-in-law of Augustine, attempts were made to collect the unpaid water rent from Alexander Calder, but to no avail. Anna Prevost was finally convinced she must bring legal action to establish her title to the water. This she did in 1825. Attorneys McKinstry and Tallmudge of Hudson were engaged in her behalf while Van Dyck and Bronk of Coxsackie represented Calder. A second lawsuit, Calder vs. Bidwell was also an outcome of this water rights dispute.

Van Dyck and Bronk presented a clever defense for Calder. They stressed the fact that the site was not a natural mill seat, that there was no fall of water; that such reservation of an artificial site was against public policy and that the courts did not favor such restrictions. They further pointed out that Augustine did sell the land under the water, making his restrictions in the deed to Eleazer Knowles vague and uncertain. They also attempted to prove that this restriction was intended only for Prevost's lifetime and it terminated at his death. That law firm pointed out the Bidwell lease could be interpreted to mean the building of a new dam closer to the fulling mill rather than referring to the old mill dam built by Mr. Scripture. Finally, they argued that the Josiah Bidwell lease was not specifically willed to Anna Prevost.

Francis Hickok, Elizar Kirtland, Abijah Reed and others were called as witnesses. The case went up through the local justice's court to the New York Supreme Court. At least three times the final pleadings were delayed at the request of and for the convenience of the lawyers. At the final hearing in Albany, Attorney Abraham Van Vechten earned a fee of \$25 for an opinion; his signed receipt dated October 21, 1828, is included with the manuscripts.

Although Alexander Calder and his attorneys, Van Dyck and Bronk, put up a strong defense for the

[continued on page 8]

## VEDDER LIBRARY NOTES

[continued from page 6]

The library's holdings relating to the tanning industry in Greene County are further strengthened by the acquisition of *The Merchants' Magazine* (August, 1847). The detailed article on the Prattsville Tannery supplies needed background for ongoing research on this topic.

Mabel P. Smith, county and society historian, has deposited an extensive collection of Greene County material once owned by Jessie Van Vechten Vedder for whom this library is memorialized.

A seemingly inexhaustible amount of Van Gelder-Pine-Wardle-Fiero manuscript material keeps arriving at the library from Mrs. Winifred Fiero of Catskill. As she sorts out the generations' accumulation, she finds material of lasting research value. Needless to say, we welcome her gifts.

With the price of manuscript material listed in dealers' catalogues constantly increasing, it is difficult to stretch the modest library budget to cover normal library supplies as well as manuscript and book acquisitions. For this reason, gifts and legacies for library use are most appreciated. Even a small legacy of a few thousand dollars would provide yearly revenue. It is a nice way to be remembered. Think about it when you are updating your wills.

The history of the Bethel Church, Coxsackie, has been the subject of research at the Vedder Memorial Library by the Reverend Isabel M. Johnson, Pastor. She has special ties to this church; her great-grandfather, a former slave and a Civil War veteran, was one of the original trustees.

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## SIMEON SCRIPTURE'S FULLING MILL

[from page 7]

"free flow of water in its natural state," the final court decision favored Mrs. Anna Prevost. She was awarded \$71.21 to cover rent of water rights and interest from February 10, 1821 to February 20, 1824. Court costs with interest amounted to \$101.80. Attorney Tallmadge writing to Van Dyck and Bronk stressed the suit fees were "lean enough." It was an expensive experience in water rights for Alexander Calder.

Among the manuscripts are a few relating to the Calder-Bidwell suit but unfortunately we do not have the jury's decision. Jurors named in that related case were Ezekiel Stuart, Ebenezer Knowles, Jacob Waring, Abraham Adams, Ebenezer Carter, Spencer Palmer, Thaddeus Stevens, Martin Rockwell, Jonathan L. Raymond, Morris Hallock, Elkanah Baker and Joseph Picket. Their names may be of interest to genealogists.

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## THE VILLAGE OF WINDHAM IN 1848

[continued from page 2]

"There are in this place 2 blacksmith shops with wages from \$1.12 to \$1.25 per day; 1 wagon maker's shop; 1 carpenter's shop; 5 shoe shops; 1 harness maker's shop; 1 tin and sheet-iron shop; 2 tailor shops; 1 cabinet ware manufactory.

"In addition to these, there is one Mill for the manufacture of straw paper, employing six hands. It expends about \$100 per week in material and labor, which produces about 500 reams of paper at 25 or 30 cents per ream. Also, one Ladies' Satchel Manufactory, employing over 20 females, conducted by Mathews & Hunt. Also, one Wooden Comb Factory, which consumes 1700 feet of hard Maple timber per week, making 550 gross of combs. Six males and six females are employed in the concern who are paid according to the department in which they labor. Females average about 7 shillings per week and board. Some of them are small girls which makes the average come rather low. The amount of capital employed in this establishment, including material used, is about \$2,000. The expense of building and machinery was about \$3,000. This is the only establishment of the kind in operation in Greene County, if not in the State. A new one is about to be started near here. The business is rather dull, affording but a very small profit on the articles manufactured. It is but two or three years since it was commenced, and was then much better than now. It is conducted by J. S. Mathews & Company.

"Windham Centre, on the whole, is quite a busy place, and has tolerable facilities for manufacture. Its advantage in this respect cannot long remain unimproved.

H. B. G., Industrial Agent  
To Editor, *Catskill Messenger*

□□□□

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