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"TO STAY THE RAVAGES OF THE CHOLERA"

—Raymond Beecher

Unlike the 1854 plague, the cholera epidemic of 1832 has received short shrift from local historians. Beers' History of Greene County states the "Village [of Catskill] was visited by cholera in 1832 but we have failed to gather the details in regard to it." Robert Henry Van Bergen gives a few details for Coxsackie. And yet it was one of the severest epidemics ever to strike Greene County; the river towns were the hardest hit.

In 1976 as an American Revolution Bicentennial project to benefit the county, the Greene County Historical Society undertook the burdensome task of unfolding, cleaning, studying and cataloging an extensive pile of nineteenth century records dumped on the court house attic floor and slated for eventual destruction. From this Bicentennial effort, new information on life in Greene County has emerged. Among the papers were a number revealing the various towns' efforts to contain the spread of the cholera in 1832; these papers and issues of the Catskill Recorder are primary sources of information for this article.

Samuel Hopkins Adams in his historical novel Banners By the Wayside provides a study of the effect of the cholera on the villages and cities along the Erie Canal — they reeked of burning tar as barrels of it were set afire to purify the atmosphere; the horrors of one cholera hospital makes queasy reading. Doctors in Albany who prated the plague were denounced as "scareheads" since they were said to needlessly alarm the timid. "It was bad for business — theaters and stores were closed." On the national level Henry Clay called for a day of penance to stay the contagion.

Readers should remember indoor plumbing, garbage disposal service, sewerage treatment systems, pure drinking water, and higher standards of personal hygiene were still generations away. Medical knowledge, though growing, was still limited. Communication was by word of mouth, by printed newspapers and handbills. Rumors were quick to surface and not easily dispelled.

The Author

The Ammi Phillips oil portraits of two Greene County medical practitioners — Dr. Horatio Dewey of Leeds (courtesy Senate House Museum) and Dr. Levi King of Cairo, both of whom assisted the cholera victims, are presumed to have been painted about 1830.



Dr. Horatio Dewey



Dr. Levi King

It struck North America with a vengeance in the summer months of the year 1832; in New York the cities, villages and hamlets along the waterways were particularly hard hit. The disease was known to the medical profession as Cholera Morbus; to the layman it carried the name Asiatic or Indian Cholera — an acute, usually fatal infectious disease, characterized by profuse diarrhea, nausea and intestinal pain.

Common cholera had been known to the ancients but it was not until the year 1817 that the medical profession began to focus attention on its nature and control. From India, over the next decade, this more virulent strain of cholera spread to China, Persia, Asia Minor and Russia. By the early 1830's the disease was ravishing northern and central Europe; by 1831 numerous cases were being reported in both England and Ireland. In this pre-Civil War period of uncontrolled, unsupervised immigration, it was only a matter of months before the cholera crossed the Atlantic to reach Canada and the United States. New York State and its Greene County were to become major victims.

In the first week of June, 1832, the Catskill Recorder sought to reassure its readers there was little cause for alarm. It quoted as evidence the cholera statistics just received from France — the embarkation port of Le Havre had 59 stricken, the death toll stood at 29 but only 4 new cases had been reported for the week of May 3.

Two weeks later it was an entirely different story for Recorder readers: "CHOLERA! Asiatic cholera has at last found a foothold on our shores." While it might have been anticipated the disease would first strike in New York City and gradually spread upriver, the state government was more concerned with its northern neighbor. The newspapers were reporting the death of more than 50 immigrants on board ship while on the westward passage from Europe to Canada. Quebec and Montreal were flying yellow flags of warning at infected sites. New

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York civil authorities began demanding a cut-off of trade and passenger traffic with Canada. The *Albany Argus* reported attempts to stop canal barges from entering the city; three were tied up at the second lock north of the city for purposes of examining the crews and passengers. But that precaution was futile since many passengers jumped ship and walked the remaining distance into Albany.

In late June as more deaths were reported at Whitehall and at Fort Miller, Governor Enos T. Throp established a quarantine of sorts with Canada and local officials were empowered to enforce the same. By early July eleven deaths were reported at New York City, "five having the appearance of cholera." The *Commercial Advertiser* urged "Temperance, Cleanliness, Fortitude and Fearlessness. To fly from the city is folly."

The New York State legislature was quick to move in protection of the public's health; it passed emergency legislation on June 22. Among other actions it directed the formation of local Boards of Health in cities, towns and villages across the state. Each was to have a president, a secretary and a health officer. These boards were "to stay the ravages of the cholera" by adopting precautionary measures and by calling upon the inhabitants to pay the utmost attention to the purification and cleanliness of every part of their premises and the streets and alleys adjoining the same, and also to the cleanliness of their persons and above all to abstain from all excesses in eating and drinking during the prevailing epidemic. The inhabitants were also ordered to obey all reasonable orders and requirements of the Boards of Health, the health officers or their agents employed in correcting and removing nuisances.

Greene County towns and villages moved promptly to set up local boards; at least eleven were organized: Catskill township, Catskill village, Athens township, Athens village, Cossackie, New Baltimore, Cairo, Greenville, Durham, Windham and Lexington. Those areas nearest the Hudson River with their heavier concentrations of population were the most active; their residents also suffered the most from the cholera epidemic.

After organizing, the various Greene County Health Boards moved rapidly to prepare for an anticipated cholera epidemic. The major problem was providing hospital facilities to house cholera victims unable to care for themselves. On July 7 and 8 representatives of Athens, Catskill and Hudson met at the Columbia County courthouse. Would they agree to share a cholera hospital building and if so where should it be located? A study of surviving records indicates Athens and Hudson did agree to such a joint arrangement utilizing a site in the Hudson area; Catskill decided "to go it alone." Athens even utilized a sloop in the river as a temporary hospital during the height of the emergency.

Boards of Health, particularly those in the Hudson River towns and villages were active in the removal of refuse, the drainage of stagnant waters and sewerage and the spreading of lime — all to improve sanitary conditions. The quarantine of strangers coming into the county was enforced as far as possible. But life went on for county residents notwithstanding. There is no indication religious services were ever curtailed; the courts met in scheduled sessions. What militia training continued was a matter for the higher authorities; the Attorney General did cancel all but the minimum required by law.

The *Recorder*, which had a wide circulation in Greene County and to the westward along the Susquehanna Turnpike, began to print precautionary measures to be taken against the cholera — cleanliness, temperance, regularity of habits, moderate eating and exercise, and exemption from all excesses. It quoted one Dr. William Tibbets of Mechanicville as to how a cholera victim could be identified by the layman — livid color of the skin, blueness of nails, cramps in the legs, alvine evacuation, the appearance of dirty water, nausea but no vomiting, violent pain at the pericardia, profuse cold sweat and breath giving a cold sensation to the hand.

To purify a dwelling house the *Recorder* quoted from the *New York Courier and Enquirer*. It was suggested house residents take four ounces of chloride of lime to clean sink drains once a week; that four ounces of lime with four ounces of sulphuric acid (oil of vitriol) placed in a saucer in the entry area of a house should be sufficient to purify it if the doors and windows were closed for a few minutes each time. This process was to be repeated two or three times the week.

Seamen were urged to ventilate clothing; ships and sloops should be prohibited from importing old rags (then used for the manufacture of paper). For personal use it was recommended an individual take a pint of strong spirits, add one ounce of powdered camphor, one of flour of mustard or bruised mustard seed, an ounce of ground pepper, a teaspoon of garlic, and lastly one-half ounce of powdered catharides.

Precautionary measures notwithstanding, the epidemic could not be halted. At Troy a large body of immigrants was "huttet and kept under strict surveillance by armed guards." The canal boats from Whitehall frequently refused to carry passengers; the stagecoaches from Saratoga Springs were taken off the line. Cholera raged at Sing Sing prison with 40 new cases by early August and 16 deaths. Two of the convicts, physicians, were in attendance on the sick. Albany was reporting more cases than New York City. The *Recorder* did little to reassure its readers fearful of sudden death when it printed such obituaries as: "Died in New York on the 22nd ult., of the Prevailing Epidemic, Mr. John Doane, age 65 years. He was seized in the morning and died at 2 o'clock P. M."

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By August the situation was out-of-control. The *Evening Post* reported over 100,000 persons of all occupations and classes were fleeing New York City; factories were shut down and the normal dense cloud of smoke over the city was reduced to a thin layer. Philadelphia was also hard hit, particularly its Arch Street prison. At Catskill Miss Palmer closed her Female Seminary "due to her indifferent health and the entreaties of her distant friends." The story relating to Apollos Cooke, Catskill merchant, bears repeating. Removing with his family to Windham to avoid the cholera plague, he was stricken by causes unspecified, fell from his horse and was dead within three hours. He had been a member of the Catskill town Board of Health.

It had long been the procedure for each township's Overseers of the Poor to provide the bare necessities of life to the indigent. In more normal times this consisted of limited amounts of food, some clothing and shelter and firewood if necessary. Destitute families or individuals desiring to move on to another town or county were cheerfully furnished transportation. But the handling of cholera victims in poor economic circumstances was a different problem. By the recently enacted state law medical attention, nursing services and other assistance was to be provided for those less fortunate; it was an early state mandate forced on local officials. The treasurer of Greene County was finally authorized to borrow from time to time on the credit of the county such sums as might be needed to be applied by the Overseers of the Poor and by Health Boards until the November 1 session of the Board of Supervisors. The top limit was set at \$2,500.

Cholera victims in more affluent economic circumstances or their estates if they did not survive, were expected to meet their own expenses. Thus Jacob C. Van Hoesen's estate was expected to meet doctor's bills, etc., the county rejecting the charges when settling accounts that November. For this reason there probably were many more cholera victims than indicated in county archives.

Athens as a river town was felt to be particularly susceptible to the epidemic; that proved to be the case. It took no chances, forming both a village and a town Board of Health by July 6; their activities to some extent intermingled.

The village Board of Health consisted of Messers William P. Alcott, Elijah Spencer, William Tolley (secretary) Henry White and James G. Foster; Dr. Eli Pierce was designated health officer. Meetings were held at intervals during the summer; attempts were made to improve village sanitation. Samuel Hamilton, town supervisor, spent a total of nine days working with Elijah Spencer, William Tolley and H. Wiele in "cleaning and removing filth and nuisances." The Fox and Clark Pottery firm lent "a team and two hands" to open a major drainage ditch through the village to

the river. Tan bark was drawn in and spread. Castle Seeley ordered 19 casks of lime from Jared Day which were spread about the village in spots likely to harbor infection.

Subcommittees traveled to Hudson on June 29 and later to Catskill on July 4 to agree upon a site for the two-county cholera hospital. Athens, as mentioned heretofore, never built its own but rather shared one with Hudson directly across the river. It did, however, resort to renting James Foster's sloop *Virginia* for an emergency facility at a charge of ten dollars.

Cholera medicine, both external and internal, for the prevention of the disease, was in demand. On July 12 the health officer was delivering bottles at the upper village. When a similar request came in to Dr. Pierce from Lime Street, he sent back two bottles. We even know the contents: spirits of turpentine, a pound of chloride of lime and ground mustard — certainly for external use. Cathartics were also deemed useful as were prescriptions for camphor spirits and for a type of pill. Vinegar was the old standby for killing germs.

Supplies of various types were requisitioned from Athens village merchants: duck for litters to transport the sick, rope for "getting coffins out of windows," candles and crackers for the poor.

When Doctors Pierce and Benton were not available medical services for Athens came from Doctors Ames, Williams and S. & G. White (the latter from Hudson). On at least two occasions James Brown was directed by the Health Board to cross the river during the night to secure doctors to attend cholera patients. When Ovid Goldsmith, a member of the village Board of Health was fatally stricken, Doctors S. & G. White were in attendance.

Nursing the sick and burying the dead were dangerous tasks during the epidemic, the chance of infection being ever present. From bills of \$38 later submitted by Sexton Amos H. Dunham for securing manpower "to help coffin up and bury the dead" and from doctors' bills for attending the victims, we have at least a partial list of Athens cholera fatalities; it was an extensive one for that river community:

an English girl	William Fraser and
Richard Poultney	wife Mary Eliza
Samuel Poultney	Lydia Williams
child of Russel Emmons	William Lee
Ovid Goldsmith	John (Jacob?) Couse
Seth Slawson and wife	Joe Thompson
Charles Stephens	Isabella Bailey
Polly Stephens	Lawrence Mulligan
Mrs. David Shaw	Adam Welch
W. D. Shaw	William Tiffany
Arthur McBride	Thomas Thompson
a colored woman at	William Hallenbeck's son and
John Van Loon's	a girl at his place
Thomas Lester	Peter Cole
Mrs. Allen	David Brandow (colored)
William Brayman	James Hill
Isaac Evarts	Jesse Emmons
David Knowles	William Patterson

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Jacob C. Van Hoesen
and wife
Robert Shepherd

Black Mink (colored?)
Charles Thornton

From time to time Fox and Clark, the potters, lent the village a horse "to go with the hearse." Dunham's bill finally totaled \$123.22 but some items were disallowed — the attendance on Mrs. D. Shaw, and Jacob Van Hoesen and wife since their estates were "supposed to be able to pay said charges."

Others assisting with the sick and dead in Athens included such individuals as Truman Freeman, Samuel Hamilton, Jacob Winnes, E. Schoonmaker, Abraham Melius, Moses Smith, Benjamin Leavens, Isaac McHawner, Arthur McBride, Thomas Thompson and Elijah Spencer. Some were to become cholera victims themselves. Spencer was active in advancing money to clean soiled bedding on account of Mrs. Fraser and others. Payment from special county appropriations was handled by William Tolley, Athens corporation treasurer.

Throughout the epidemic divine worship was held. This is proven by the fracas at the old Trinity Episcopal Church in the upper village on Sunday, September 16 during "an assemblage of persons for religious worship. James Hill [later cholera victim?] being present at said meeting did disturb the congregation by loud talking and other rude and indecent behavior within said church and after being put out a stone was thrown through the window." William Tolley issued a warrant on September 17 to apprehend this disturber of the peace; constable William Warren took James Hill into custody at a cost of \$2.50 to Greene County.

In addition to the Athens residents, Dr. Pierce as health officer was required to examine sloop passengers and crews stopping at that river port. On July 13 he was notified to go aboard the sloops *Ambassador* and *Robert Emmet* newly arrived. Fortunately no cholera cases were discovered although Dr. Pierce felt it advisable to fumigate the *Emmet's* cargo of animal hides.

Strangers passing through Athens were required to pass quarantine. John Palmer, an itinerant, must have become annoyed as he demanded a written "clean bill of health" to show at the next place.

Beyond the confines of the village, the Athens town Board of Health functioned; William Tolley also appears to have served as their secretary. Others, in addition to Tolley, were Samuel Hamilton (town supervisor), Garret W. Sager, Isaac C. Collyer, James Miller and Sylvester N. Nichols. Dr. Orange Benton provided some medical coverage for the town but it does not appear he was the official health officer. A bill later submitted by Dr. Benton totaled \$51.46; 17 cases of cholera are identified. Strangely, many of his individually listed charges are in such odd amounts as \$1.38, \$4.89 and \$2.13. This may have been a carry over from the habit of billing in pounds, shillings and pence.

The town had cholera cases but not as many as the village. Coffins were made by James Mullen, Jr. including one for a Mrs. Allen "found dead in the street." He made a standard charge of four dollars each for the pine boxes. Isaac C. Collyer was busy on August 16 meeting with the Health Board on the Mrs. Allen situation. He was directed to send a man after the coroner and also to have her grave dug promptly. He was firm believer in the use of liquor to ward off infectious diseases as on several occasions while tending patients and digging graves he saw fit to charge for pints and quarts of brandy. After William Tiffany was stricken and died, Collyer arranged to build a small shelter for the Tiffany family at a cost to the town of ten dollars plus one dollar and a half for cartage.

To bury the dead outside the village, William M. Coffin, Overseer of the Poor, usually approved the services of George Kirkland. That summer the latter earned ten dollars. Not only were the Athens, Coxsackie and Hudson medical profession called upon, but on October 18 Dr. Dewey was summoned from Leeds to attend three cases of the cholera.

Garret W. Sager's role was primarily one of attending town Health Board meetings which he did on at least three occasions.

Demands were made on Sylvester Nichol's time. He helped organize the town Health Board; he met with the village Board of Health members. He was on the subcommittee to go to Hudson to confer about the hospital site. On August 23 he was in the western part of the township to arrange for the burial of cholera victim William Tiffany. On October 1 he crossed the river "to settle accounts in Relation to the Hospital." On October 31 he spent a day examining the accounts of the town relative to the cholera.

NOW FOR THE CATSKILL SCENE. On July 26 the Catskill village Board of Health announced via the newspapers that it regretted the spread of unfounded rumors "which excited unnecessary alarm about the cholera." It assured the public strict precautionary measures were being taken and that no deaths or sickness had been reported by health officer, Thomas O'Hara Crosswell.

The Catskill preparations for the onslaught of the epidemic were also extensive in nature. As soon as the village's Board of Health was organized under the presidency of Francis Sayre with Orrin Day as treasurer and J. Greene as secretary, joint meetings were held with Athens and Hudson over the hospital question. Catskill concluded it might better construct its own.

Between July 7 and August 4 Peter Shaurand could be observed hauling planks, boards and shingles to the designated hospital site (still unidentified). Next came stone, bricks, a door, window sash, hardware and loads of dirt fill. Shaurand's bill on August 4, including labor, totaled \$149.95; he requested prompt payment for which he was willing to deduct

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\$4.95. Francis Sayre authorized Orrin Day to pay the bill. A Mr. Stratton earned \$1.13 for three loads of gravel hauled to the hospital site and Shaurand an extra \$7 for stone, additional dirt and brick. Shaurand also built the hospital backhouse.

The hospital was heated with a type of stove furnace rather than by a fireplace. Shaurand constructed a table but McKinstry and Day furnished almost all the remainder — wash basin, oak barrel (for water), sheets, towels, bundles of straw for bedding, dishes, kettle and tea pot. That same firm also provided such supplies as a broom, matches, candles, rope, tar, muslin, and as patients commenced to arrive, molasses, tea, codfish, milk, potatoes and meat. McKinstry and Day also advanced funds “to pay Hallenbeck for 18¼ barrels of lime, and to J. W. Gleason for bill for digging graves and interring a person dead of cholera \$5,” as well as for emergency nursing services.

The Board of Health ordered ordinances published in local newspapers and on hand bills; N. G. Elliott and Ira DuBois earned those printing fees.

Based on the NYS statute of June 22, all vessels arriving at Catskill Point from infected districts, having sick persons aboard, were required to undergo a 15-day quarantine period “unless the Health Officer directed otherwise.” That individual was authorized to examine all persons coming into the town from infected places and was required to report cholera victims; unless otherwise provided for, they were to be furnished with medical attention, nursing, etc.

As late as the middle of August the Catskill Board of Health was reporting “no cases of cholera as yet.” They felt their health ordinances were effective. But like all well-sounding regulations theirs were difficult to enforce. Patrick Schully [Scully?], his wife and two children came down direct from Troy on August 14 via the steamboat *New London*; they appeared to be in good health. Not finding employment in Catskill the family walked to Athens where they were equally unsuccessful. Returning to Catskill they sought shelter in a damp, deserted cellar kitchen. Here cholera struck down Mrs. Schully necessitating the removal of the entire family to the newly constructed hospital. Mrs. Schully lingered for a few days and then passed on. This was the report of Dr. Thomas O’Hara Croswell who had provided medical services for the destitute Schully family. Cholera was now at Catskill!

Other cases began to appear and were treated by Dr. Croswell including a family from New York quarantined “on board a vessel — 6 days, \$6;” for attendance on a transient group of Haines adults and children he also earned another \$6. Acting as health officer for three months (July through September) his bill to the town and county was \$20. For 3½ days attendance on William McGlasheen who succumbed to cholera and for supplying him with lights, fire-

wood and sundries Croswell put in a bill of \$10.

On August 22 and 23 Dr. C. C. Hoagland was directed to provide medical attention for cholera patients now at the hospital. Dr. Croswell apparently had some medical assistance.

Both individually and with hired hands Solomon C. Woodruff that summer sought to improve the village’s sanitary situation. He removed filth, carted and scattered lime in gutters and primitive sewers and gave special attention to cleaning the sewer in front of Widow Abeel’s (Hill Street?). George Layman was employed to dig dry vaults (for privies?), to fix the spring which supplied drinking water, and for “cleaning and liming Mrs. Stewart’s cellar.” William Schuneman Jr. of Leeds provided 30 bushels of lime at one shilling sixpence each.

Beyond the village confines the township’s Board of Health was also active after its organization on June 26. Joel Bellamy was elected president, Luke Kiersted served as secretary and Dr. Casparus Benham as health officer. Additional members were Isaac J. DuBois, Apollos Cooke (until his death) and Jacob Haight (town supervisor). Any member was empowered to call a meeting and any member could cause any nuisance deemed as such to be removed and abated.

In ordinary times bringing paupers into the county was against public policy; in the summer of 1832 with the cholera raging it was an even more serious matter. Justice Van Deusen was called upon to issue a warrant against one John Zee “for bringing in the Shute family of paupers from Troy.”

This Catskill town Board of Health also distributed its resolutions and ordinances. Whiting Rice was authorized to write up copies and when finished post them in public places; ordinances were also subsequently printed and distributed.

When Mrs. Couse was taken with the cholera Dr. A. Diboll attended her from August 23 to August 29 when she died and was buried. For Olive Lampman he charged from August 26 to September 6. Included were the costs of removing filth and arrangements for Mrs. Couse’s burial and the burning of her effects. For these two cases Dr. Diboll charged \$70.

Luke Kiersted, town justice, had several tasks that summer. On August 20 he was busy removing animal hides piled on a street in Jefferson, hides and rags being suspect. He was also involved in selecting the site for the cholera hospital. On August 1 he was busy issuing warrants “for the eleven rioters.” It is implied but not certain this was in relation to the quarantine enforcement.

The cholera almost bypassed Cairo even though that town was prepared to handle the situation by the formation of a Board of Health. Here Dr. Levi King was designated health officer. It is known he had one or more cholera patients around the August 30 period for whose medical attention he charged \$3.50. He also spent time obtaining a house to use as a temporary cholera hospital should the need

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arise; he was also present at two meetings of the town's Board of Health. From August 30 to September 10 the firm of King and Smith was ordered to provide intensive care for a Mrs. Hallenbeck near Gayhead; that cost the county \$70 which included nursing service by Phebe Hallenbeck and cleaning the house. With the death of the patient these doctors arranged for her prompt burial.

Cairo's Health Board met at least three times that summer as indicated by Daniel Lennon's bill.

Coxsackie's first cholera victim in 1832 (as identified in *Ye Olden Times*) was Mr. French, the brickmaker: "In the town of Coxsackie everyone attacked, died, except Dr. Livingstone under the care of Dr. A. D. Spoor."

The Coxsackie township's Board of Health included Supervisor Benjamin N. Burroughs, Justices Moses H. Powell, Tallmadge Fairchild, John Brandow, Henry Wolf and Robert W. Vandenberg. The latter two men were appointed a subcommittee "to procure a hospital for the sick, attending them and burying the dead and providing physicians and attendance to take care of the sick" For building an emergency structure to serve as a Coxsackie hospital, Wolf and Vandenberg charged \$65.41. Their other services to help the cholera victims amounted to \$103.50.

Dr. John Ely gave extensive amounts of time to cholera patients, generally to no avail. His extant bill is a long one.

Charges later submitted by officials in the township of New Baltimore indicated Francis O'Connor spent time attending sick paupers. Henry Williams was paid \$2.00 for keeping Samuel Hicks who himself had attended the sick at an earlier date. Other cholera expenses for New Baltimore included a dollar each to Francis O'Connor, Henry L. McKinney and Elisha Powell. Doctor B. B. Fredenburgh earned \$2.50 as health officer while James Sudderly as justice of the peace received \$4.00. One concludes, unlike Coxsackie, Athens and Catskill, New Baltimore was spared the heavy hand of the cholera epidemic that year.

Greenville organized a town Board of Health with Amos Botsford, supervisor, handling its affairs. No cases of cholera are known for that town.

Windham utilized the services of Nicholas L. Decker who was then serving as town justice of the peace. It took him just one day to form the Health Board for which he charged one dollar. Its members are not listed on his bill.

Not much more is known about Lexington's efforts other than that Jacob Miller and Henry Goslee are known to have been involved. Aaron Bushnell may also have been useful for that section of Greene County.

By October 1, with the advent of cooler weather, the cholera epidemic was easing up. The *Recorder*

was printing notices calling upon all creditors of the various Boards of Health to submit their bills. A study of many of these indicates the cost of goods and services was still quoted individually in shillings and pence while the extensions were in dollars and cents.

The Greene County Board of Supervisors on December 4 authorized the various Boards of Health to dispose of those hospital facilities no longer deemed necessary. Catskill delayed such disposition for almost two years.

Cholera continued to fell its victims in subsequent years. The 1834 account book of Overseer of the Poor Charles Lisk, town of New Baltimore, researched by Frances and Walter Dietz, contains several entries for helping the cholera victims in the colored section of the hamlet.

On a national level the American Tract Society publishing *An Appeal on the Subject of Cholera*; a copy is in the Vedder Memorial Library; it is a religious publication.

In 1849 Greene County had a minor outbreak of cholera cases; in the hot dry summer of 1854 when the Catskill Creek was being dredged and the silt was being dumped along its shores, the pestilence again raged with many local deaths — 53 were recorded. Fortunately by that time the *Catskill Recorder* could stress that progress in medical science had saved more than 60 lives.

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STANTON HILL IN THE 1870'S — THE MOSES BEDELL DIARIES (Part 3)

Frances Dietz
& Raymond Beecher

Using primary source material the authors have drawn upon one man's diaries to study life at Stanton Hill, town of New Baltimore, in the earlier years of the last quarter of the nineteenth century. While dramatic events make more exciting reading, the day-to-day lifestyle of the average family is just as much a part of local history. These vignettes cut across a broad spectrum of rural life at a time when farming was on the decline in Greene County. This is the third in a four-part series. Again the Society expresses its appreciation to Walter E. Burke, Jr. for his making available his great-grandfather's diaries for study and research.

VENDUES were occasioned by death, removal from the area, foreclosure of a mortgage, or simply the need for ready cash. The auctions were likely to be held any month of the year and afforded social as well as business contacts; only the men of the community attended them. Moses usually found time to be present and was an occasional bidder. On February 24, 1875 he noted "a vendue near Brunk's Mills today." A year later he persuaded George L. Coonley to drive with him to John VanDerzee's sale on the Frank Matthews place: "Farm sold for \$15,000. Other things sold very well — oats 38¢

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THE MOSES BEDELL DIARIES

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[bushel] corn 35¢ on the ear by measure.” This was probably the stone house farm on Route 144 near the West Shore RR tracks which is now owned by Louis Ritz.

A set of whiffletrees, a box of bolts and miscellaneous hardware were bid in by Moses for \$1.37 at the James Nelson auction near Luman Miller’s place on April 3, 1879. Luman Miller was the owner of the stone house on Route 9-W now the property of Mr. and Mrs. James Warren.

Late in April of that year Moses was at the Mortimer Wheeler vendue beyond Medway. For \$1.70 he secured a wagon jack, clevis, hog hook, 7 hinge eyes, and a garden seed sower. The site of this sale was probably where Silver Lake Inn is today.

In March of 1881, Moses’ next older brother Jacob had to give up his farm; apparently it bordered on Moses’ property. On March 9 Moses took time out to draft an auction notice for Jacob’s personal property. The following day Moses drove to Coxsackie to have 50 handbills printed for \$2.00; these were posted at Dean’s Mills and other public meeting places. The sale was held on March 24. Moses took some of his own surplus to be auctioned off as well — a fanning mill, cultivator, and a cider press. The first two sold for \$9.10 but no bidders came forth for the cider press. Jacob’s personal property brought over \$1,100 at the sale and Moses was pleased at the large turnout. In settling up he paid the auctioneer \$11.50 for the afternoon’s work.

Later Jacob’s farm was offered at auction at Coxsackie’s Eagle Hotel; the auctioneer was Attorney J. Bronk; Moses was the successful bidder, adding to his land acreage.

PHOTOGRAPHS for the numerous Victorian plush albums were deemed a social nicety during the late nineteenth century. For rural residents it meant a visit to a photographer’s gallery in a more populated area such as Coxsackie, Catskill or Hudson. Moses usually combined such errands with business trips, favoring F. Forshew in the city of Hudson. This photographer provided six small likenesses for \$2. At Hudson there was always a bed at Uncle Caleb

Bedell’s house. If not convenient to return for the finished product, Forshew usually found a way to send it by informal courier, John Possons being one.

For three or four years after her death, Moses felt the need for a visual memento of his first wife, Sarah. Although oils and pastels in portrait form had given way to photographs, he did arrange for a pastel likeness now in the possession of Walter E. Burke, Jr. On November 4, 1876 Moses would record: “Davis called with Sarah’s picture. It was not natural — the’re going to try again.” Eugene Simmons called on November 15, 1877 to sell Moses on the idea of a portrait of Sarah and himself. The price was set at \$40. Moses gave Simmons the order — possibly the surviving portrait. In the spring of 1881 this artist called back again to show Moses the likenesses of Jesse Green and wife; two life size portraits at \$200 each or two smaller ones at \$50 each. Moses does not record the placement of any order.

Moses and his 18-year old niece, Josie Garrett, went to the Hudson Fair on September 27, 1877. While in Hudson Josie had her picture taken at Forshew’s. Today, Forshew photos of that era are noted for their excellence.

PEDDLERS, either with a regular rural route or of the more itinerant variety, came through Stanton Hill. Some purchases were for cash and others paid for by trading.

Each spring one could expect the fish peddler; the Bedells were good customers; it was a means of providing variety to the diet. On a day in May, 1875, Moses “bo’t of fish peddler 7 herring and 2 shad.”

The tin peddler was a rural fixture and could be expected to accept rags for tinware. At one time he exchanged 24 pounds of Bedell rags for two basins and a tin plate.

Overnight accommodations were available at the Moses Bedell residence, some peddlers utilizing crude quarters in the wagon house. Over the several years we read such entries as: “There is a Russian peddler staying here all night;” “tin peddler here tonight, Mr. Boughten by name.”

The scissor grinders came through infrequently. Two organ grinders asked for and were given overnight quarters, staying in the wagon house.

(continued on page 8)



Ceylon Bedell, (1879 - 1941)
son of Moses Bedell & Emma Crane
Bedell. Married Helen Martin, 1 child
Fredrick Bedell 1914-



Chester S. Bedell, (1882 - 1940)
2nd son of Moses Bedell & Emma
Crane Bedell. Never Married



Ralph Bedell, (1885 - 1947)
3rd son of Moses Bedell & Emma
Crane Bedell. Married Edna Compton
1 Child Almata Bedell Leonard (Mrs.
John P.) Selkirk, N. Y.

THE MOSES BEDELL DIARIES

(continued from page 7)

Many peddlers traveled afoot while others had a horse and cart. Oats to feed the horse could always be purchased from a farmer — on December 17, 1875 Moses sold 2 bushels to peddler Niffen (Kniffen?).

Jim McCann came through, usually in the spring and again in the fall; he sold notions to the members of the household. Moses was wont to lecture him on the use of tobacco.

On Friday, September 14, 1877: "Stephen Davenport is staying here overnight. He peddles extracts." The next day: "Stephen Davenport gave some lemond [lemon] extract for staying. I gave him a receipt [recipe] for linament." For decades Mr. Davenport was well known throughout the area as an extract peddler, being familiarly called "Doctor Davenport." He lived in Indian Fields.

ICE HARVESTING for farm and household use was another Stanton Hill cooperative effort. Moses was one of the land owners who had his own farm ice house, probably a crude structure of rough boards which could be insulated with sawdust. Ice came from the Dean's Mill pond on the Hannacroix; it was cut, hauled out and stored during the coldest months of the year for the next summer's use. There are numerous ice harvesting entries in the Bedell diaries:

January 21, 1875: Phillip and I sawed ice on Dean's Mill Pond. Jacob [Bedell] helped saw awhile.

Drawed 3 loads and Edward [Garrett] one.

January 22, 1875: Ben Garrett and A. A. Palmer came and helped me put in ice. Philip hurt his big toe with a cake of ice. Ben Garrett worked one day — 50¢.

January 29, 1877: I broke a road to the ice house and drawed 2 loads this afternoon — 20 cakes. Got stuck and had to throw off 3 cakes. Smith Powell drawed 5 loads and Dill Smith's son [Dilwyn Powell] drawed 9 cakes. The ice is about 1½ ft. thick . . . A. Palmer drawed one load of ice with his team.

January 30: Father drawed 4 loads of ice. Albert's team 2 loads. Jacob drawed 3 loads. George's [Coonley] team drawed 3 loads. Ben and Abram [Tuttle] and A. Palmer sawed. I shoveled the sawdust out of the ice house and helped unload the ice. I felt pretty tired when night came.

January 31, 1877: E. E. Carhart came here this morning to help in Ben's place. A. A. Palmer and Jacob came and helped put in the ice. We put in 4 layerings. Titus Ellsworth came here to help a little. Ben and Al sawed some this afternoon and A. drawed 1 load. Father drawed 4 loads. E. Carhart got hurt on the face with the ice hook.

February 1, 1877: Ben came again this morning and helped put the sawdust on the ice.

Some Stanton Hill men earned a cash income by working on the Hudson River ice fields, but not Moses. He did note however that on Christmas Day, 1876, S. P. Eaton and C. Ellsworth came to borrow his cutter to go to work on the Hudson ice fields. A few days later Moses noted: "they have struck for more wages on the ice." Sometimes Moses was paid for small amounts of butter, meat, or eggs with "ice

notes," which was the form in which the workers were paid.

ROAD REPAIRS were accomplished in the 19th century by the corvée system. Each resident along the town road was assessed "days of labor" specified by road warrants distributed by the Overseers of Highways. Draft horses and oxen were supplied by the local residents but large machinery such as road scrapers was provided by the township and stored in convenient locations about the area.

Muddy roads with washouts were the customary "spring headache." But as the land dried up the warrants would be distributed. In May 1876 Joseph Bedell delivered the Stanton Hill ones to Jacob Bedell who had the responsibility of notifying the land owners of their days' assessments for road work. The simple bridges might require new planking or a complete rebuilding. Moses would write in his diary one June day "took up bridge above Jacob's and fixed it." And on a March day in 1879 "the new bridge is finished at the [Dean's] Mill. Will Posson first to drive over it." That bridge was contracted out, the New Baltimore Town Board Minutes for May 1, 1879 record: "\$647.50 authorized for building a bridge across the Hannacroix Creek near Dean's Mills to New York Bridge Co. ." This iron bridge remained in use until the 1950's when it was replaced by a concrete span.

On May 27, 1878 Moses went to Joseph Thorn's to secure the road scraper. He then worked the road the whole length east — "cut sticks for the bridge. P. M. Took lumber down — dug up the bridge this side of J. Beach's and put in one. Plowed and hauled in some dirt."

The neighbors usually worked together — Henry Hardin, Moses Bedell, Jacob Bedell and Smith Powell. Moses was careful to make note in his diary of the time to be credited against his personal road assessment, usually about 12 days the year. At times he utilized the help of his hired man.

Gravel and shale were hauled from a bank by the schoolhouse. Blasting was necessary to bring down a section of the gravel bank, a process handled by Jacob Bedell. The blasting was known to scatter rock on the schoolhouse and break panes of glass. On May 28, 1878, enough was brought down in a blast to make 20 loads. "I drawed this way [west] and the rest drawed the other way [east] from the school lane.

On June 2, 1876 Moses "went and warned all west of me on the road. I went as soon as I got up and came from J. Thorns. John and I went on with our team. Jacob and A [Albert] Palmer built a new bridge in the woods. The rest drawed gravel through the woods." On June 12 it was necessary to warn George L. Coonley "to come and work his time on the road. A. A. Palmer the other side of the School lane."

Four days later "Father and I took the team and got Henry Hardin and went and helped Henry

◇□ Mrs. Mabel Story Brokaw has, from time to time, contributed several items of historical interest. Her latest gift includes two attractive children's publications: *Flowers for a Juvenile Garland* and the American Tract Society's *The Picture Alphabet in Prose and Verse*. The woodcuts in the first volume are of special interest.

◇□ And from Kingston has come more Cossackie material from Mrs. Edith Betts: a 1917 printed program for an event at the Dolan Opera House and a printed religious program for the Second Reformed Church.

◇□ Alvar Losee Jump was born on the Bronck Farm when her parents, the Obadiah Losees, were employed by Leonard Bronk Lampman. Now in her memory her son William Jump of Hudson has donated a Cossackie assessor's workbook useful to genealogists.

◇□ Added to the F. Van Loon Ryder Collection are photocopies of Van's scaled drawings of the *Armenia* and the *Mary Powell*. These came from Donald Mambert of Cossackie.

◇□ A copy of Seaman Miller's speech delivered during the launching of the *Kaaterskill* at Athens in 1882 is now at the library, provided by Mrs. Helen G. Henderson of Germantown, New York.

◇□ *Along the Hudson; Sketches of Childhood Life in a Catskill Town* is an out-of-print book authored by Loretta E. Brooks, a native of Athens. The library now has a copy thanks to Mabel P. Smith. In that same package were special editions of the *Catskill Daily Mail*, the *Chatham Courier*; *Ulster County in the Revolution*, and *Proceedings of the New Jersey Historical Society* (January 1953).

◇□ The Friends of Clermont reprint of the 1798 map of the towns of Livingston, Clermont and Germantown locates many early family residences. John Wigram, the surveyor, was active at the time in Federal politics; several of his letters are in the Bronck Family archives. A copy of this reprint map has been catalogued, courtesy of Mrs. Elaine Liepschutz.

◇□ Four preCivil War military appointments for Peter Grant, signed by various governors and other New York State officials, and mentioned in the published Grant genealogy, arrived from Marjory Brandow of Mesa, Arizona.

◇□ A hardcover volume *The Broncks and Their House, Cossackie, New York* represents research completed by Joseph Hammond in partial fulfillment of the requirements for his M. A. degree. The thesis is 62 pages in length, is illustrated and covers both the history of the family and the architectural aspects of these Dutch-English Hudson Valley structures.

◇□ An anecdotal record of the Carman family in America who came ten years after the Pilgrims and gradually followed the migration westward is the gift of Carrol Carman Hall. The volume, privately printed, carries the title: *The Carman Family 1631 - 1981*.

Greene County has several Carman Family branches.

◇□ Winifred Wardle Fiero keeps supplementing her substantial gift of Van Gelder, Pine, Wardle and Fiero manuscript items. The latest to arrive is the January 6, 1860 issue of the Saugerties *Telegraph* which contains an article by James H. Van Gelder, then a student at the Ashland Seminary. It is entitled "Visit to Thomas Cole's." In that same issue William M. Van Gelder has his advertisement for art instruction; he was a brother of James and for a time was on the faculty of the Ashland Seminary.

◇□ The Society's trustee, Florence Hunter, has shared with the library several photographic views of Austin's Glen, the mills at Leeds and the Catskill Creek.

◇□ Detailed genealogies of the Cheseboroughs, the Kniffens, Wrigleys, Whitbecks and Weeks families as they related to Mr. Thomas Wrigley of Arden, North Carolina, are now in the appropriate surname files.

Early 20th century decorative printed invitations for social functions at Greenville's Vanderbilt Opera House as well as at Lawyer's Hall.

◇□ Reed descendants from the midwest, researching the Hubbell (Hubble) families of Cossackie, were kind enough to share a wealth of genealogical material relating to the forebears and descendants of Shadrack Hubbell of Jacksonville (Earlton).

◇□ Library purchases include the following:
Lutheran Church in New York and New Jersey, 1722 - 1760

Quaker History and Genealogy

Pinckney's *Sketches of Catskill* (reprint)

Cazden, et. al. — *Folk songs of the Catskills*.

◇□ Researched and compiled by Evalyn Huxford Brokaw, Leesburg, Florida, is a well organized folder, *John Huxford Lineage in Greene County, New York*. She previously sent other genealogical material. John and Polly Huxford were married in the Greenville Presbyterian Church on May 17, 1799. Their one son, Thomas, married Hannah Smith of Westchester County; she was a daughter of Joseph Smith (1752-1840) and Hannah Powell (1756-1809).

◇□ Nadine Korotev, Green Bay, Wisconsin is trying to trace the line of Aaron Hallenbeck (1815-1892). Aaron married Catherine, daughter of Elizabeth and John Spoor.

◇□ The early New Englanders who settled Catskill Landing are the subject of on going research, probably for an eventual journal article. Mrs. Katherine Scriven Hall of Stockton, California has been helpful in sharing her work on the Lyman Hall family. Her latest gift is an excellent photograph of Lyman Hall (1774 - 1816) from a miniature portrait.

◇□ The Vedder Memorial Library is outgrowing its allotted space. Much is going into secondary storage. The answer lies in a new library structure — fire resistant, with climate control and heated for winter use. Here is an opportunity for an affluent family or an individual to provide funds for such a facility,

either by outright gift or by legacy. We can only plant the idea!

□ □ □ □ □

MOSES BEDELL DIARIES

(continued from page 8)

Powell work the hill beyond the bridge.”

Snow removal was not the winter project as required today. When the going got difficult the sleighs could be brought out and put to use. But deep drifts were another matter. On the last day of December 1876 Moses was busy helping to “break out the road” — the other men called were Henry and William Harden, Jacob Bedell, Abram Tuttle, A. A. Palmer and C. Ellsworth. Nowhere in the Bedell diaries is there a mention of using a roller to pack down the snow as was done in the Coxsackie township and elsewhere in New Baltimore.

BARTER or selling for cash or credit was all part of the economic system by which the Stanton Hill farmers eked out a livelihood. By today’s standards the sums involved were pitifully small. Each farmer had one or more specialties which helped. Moses made up brooms from his broom corn — they brought an occasional fifty cents each. One June day in 1875 we find him at Coxsackie trading off three barrels of his vinegar to a merchant in exchange for a barrel of flour. When the porkers were killed, he was known to drive to the hamlet of New Baltimore or to Coxsackie to peddle the meat and head cheese.

The trips to the Albany public market, usually undertaken by Moses every two to three weeks, were a source of cash income for those at Stanton Hill who had eggs, chickens, turkeys, apples, butter, vinegar and sheepskins to sell. It meant getting up, even in the winter months, by 2 a. m. in order to leave at 4 a. m. and be at the market by daylight.

On December 23, 1875 Moses summed up one such trip to Albany:

Left at 4 o’clock — got there at sunrise — took 25 (dressed) chickens, 3 turkeys, 2 sheepskins, 6 doz. eggs, jug of vinegar. Got 30¢ doz. eggs, birds 15¢ lb., 7/6 [7 shillings and 6 pence] for sheepskins. Purchased cloth for mittens, candy for children, a diary for 1876, 20 lb. sugar, 2 lb. coffee — bought a mustache cup and a blood tester.

At times Moses brought down merchandise for the village and hamlet merchants — Gurney or Church and Powell.

On October 17, 1879 when hauling loads of pressed hay to the river Moses sold W. R. Gay nine pumpkins at 5¢ each. “Got of him 10 pounds granulated sugar — he is to take the rest out in pumpkins.”

Sometimes months after the borrowing, users would call at the Bedell home and pay Moses small amounts for an item’s use:

October 22, 1879: E. R. Thorn paid me \$1.00 for use of saw.

October 24, 1879: Dewitt Stephen paid me \$2.00 for use of my grater.

As mentioned elsewhere, Hudson River ice company checks (I.O.U’s given to workmen) were a form of local currency and freely accepted. “Vine and Charley bought wood — then paid me in ice checks \$4.00.”

Other entries indicate constant efforts to sell farm produce either for cash or credit or by trading:

May 27, 1875: Father took load of bailed straw to Coeymans.

March 16, 1876: Cut stalks and then went to Coxsackie. Got the colt shod .80. Bo’t 2 boards \$1.75, hat .75, brush .30, and 10 lb. sugar .95 and cheese .40, onions .15. Had my picture taken .25. Garden seeds .40, bolts .10, candlewick .08, and essence .20. Got a package from the Express office for Jacob. Paid .60 and got Ella’s pictures. Settled with Arthur [Powell]. He paid me interest on \$500, note of Church and Powell \$35 and \$199.50 on Mary Jane’s [Mary Jane Gurney]. He gave me a check for \$177.50 and \$53.50 in money. He gave me 3 lbs. tea. I bo’t some hair oil for Mary Jane. Jacob had bill to go to the mill with. I carried the mail bag to Isaac Beach’s. Wind in the northeast and began to snow about 3½ o’clock. Smith Powell came home with me. Got home about 7½.

June 13, 1876: Took tub of butter to Coeymans and got 200 ash hoops \$1.75.

July 7, 1879: Went to New Baltimore with box of eggs 23½ doz. and traded them for tea, pepper, mustard and the rest in sugar at Mr. Gay’s.

June 20, 1879: Took the old iron stove and a lot of old iron 498 pounds to Coxsackie. Sold for 12¢ per lb. Copper boiler 5 pounds at .09 per lb. and 45 pounds rags at .02 per lb.

July 8, 1879: Emma [second wife] and I went to Coxsackie to do some trading. Bo’t grain cradle \$3.00, tin slop pail and tin bed [room] set \$2.25; several other things of Arthur [Powell] \$3.95.

September 3, 1879: Got postal from Otis [see Journal, Winter 1981] for bbl. vinegar.

September 4,: Drawed off bbl. vinegar (943½ gal.) .16 gallon, \$6.96. Filled the big cask again. Took vinegar to New Baltimore and sent it to Otis T. Bedell, No. 6 Front, Street, N. Y.

October 4, 1879: Picked 3 bbls. apples — the best of the windfalls and took to Coxsackie to the canning factory, Mr. Lounsberry — .75 per bbl. — overall \$2.25 on account.

At times even selling on credit was not easy. On June 1, 1876 Moses took a barrel of vinegar to Coxsackie but “could not sell it — put it in Reed and Powell’s storehouse.”

(To be completed in Summer Issue)

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Greene County Historical Society
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