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A WOMAN'S WORK— J. V. V. VEDDER (1859-1952)

— Mabel P. Smith

In 1967, Mabel P. Smith researched and presented a lecture to the Catskill Monday Club based on the life and times of Jessie Van Vechten Vedder, first Greene County Historian. It had long been the intent of the JOURNAL staff to focus its readers' attention on the substantial contribution Mrs. Vedder made to local history; the availability of Mrs. Smith's biographical paper, to be published in two sections, fulfills a JOURNAL need. Researchers using the Vedder Memorial Library are reminded that the Society's facility is named for Jessie Van Vechten Vedder. This was a thoughtful decision by Charles E. Dornbusch who developed the library holdings into a working collection of major importance. *The Editor*

There once was a woman who lived in Leeds — and in Catskill. This is no fairy tale though sometimes it seems like one. There are few now to whom her name has more than a vaguely familiar ring. Nevertheless, she was a great lady in whom we, her fellow townsmen, might well take greater pride.

That lady was Jessie Van Vechten Vedder whose very names, by birthright and marriage, proclaim her of Catskill and Leeds (Old Katskill).



Jessie Van Vechten
in upstairs room of Van Bergen - Vedder Homestead at Leeds

EDWARD CLARK'S LEAN YEARS

— Raymond Beecher

One may read a short biographical account of his life and also study his likeness in Beers' *History of Greene County* (Athens section), for the simple reason he was born at Athens on December 19, 1811, a son of Nathan Clark, the potter. His brother, Nathan Junior, would remain in that village, master the potter's trade under his father, and become one of the major producers of stoneware in the United States. Edward, pursuing a college education, would be graduated from Williams College in 1830, study law under Ambrose Jordan of Hudson, marry Jordan's daughter, Caroline, and then set up a joint law partnership with his father-in-law. In 1838 that law firm removed to New York City sensing a more lucrative legal practice in that metropolitan area. In the course of events the firm secured Isaac Singer as a client, taking a share of Singer's sewing machine patent in lieu of legal fees. It was Edward Clark who defended the Singer patent and in the process established Singer & Company on a sound financial basis. The company's capital was eventually expanded to ten million dollars with four-fifths of the stock being retained by Isaac Singer and Edward Clark.



Edward Clark (1811 - 1882)
Beers' History of Greene County

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A WOMAN'S WORK

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In 1937, almost single-handed, Jessie Van Vechten Vedder, arrayed in dignity and armed with the unyielding resolution of her Dutch ancestry, stood off the mighty New York State Department of Public Works and defended and preserved the oldest public landmark and symbol of Leeds, its handsome and historic stone arch bridge, a landmark of far more than local acclaim.



The Old Stone Bridge at Leeds

The victory of 1937 was a dramatic, hair's-breadth achievement for which she has had scant recognition, now almost forgotten. The bridge itself seems to command little notice nowadays. It may be that its beauties are less conspicuous since the approaches were straightened. I hope it doesn't mean a lessening of sentiment, but I haven't heard of an artist painting it since its reconstruction, whereas for more than a century heretofore it had engaged the pencils and brushes of the masters . . . George Inness, C. H. Moore, Col. B. B. G. Stone and many others.

There were others than Jessie Van Vechten Vedder enlisted in the fight to save the bridge but Mrs. Vedder rallied, marshalled and led the defenders, all without organization or thought of it. She not only won the contest but won the respect of an imperious but gallant adversary, Col. Frederick Stuart Green, then State Highway Commissioner. Instead of a stark modern span of steel and concrete, those ancient arches were measured and charted and sketched to the minutest detail, their stones removed one by one, numbered and reconstructed in the closest possible resemblance of the bridge completed in 1792 and opened July 26 of that year. We have that date from a brief mention of the opening which appeared in the first issue of *The CATSKILL PACKET*, August 6, 1792. This replaced a structure of wood and stone frequently damaged by fire and flood. The two eastern arches dated from 1760, the pre-1937 western arches were of the 1792 construction. An excellent fording place lay just below the bridge site and until vehicular traffic became common on the roads — especially the enormous volume of traffic on the new Susquehanna Turnpike — a bridge was an uncommon luxury in rural areas.

After the Revolution, increasing migration to the western lands beyond the Catskills made an adequate span imperative and the bridge became an important link between the eastern seaboard and the "Western Wilderness" after inauguration of the Susquehanna Turnpike in 1800.

Of course, saving the bridge was not Jessie Vedder's only notable accomplishment. She had many, but Jessie Vedder might so easily have lived out her life in Leeds as housewife, mother, widow and local churchwoman. Whatever aspirations she might have had could have been well met by the distinction of having been a charter member of the Leeds Sewing Society, an institution of much broader import than its name implies; a founder, too, of the Leeds Friday Club whose studies and outreach, as disclosed by printed annual programs, might challenge any such women's organization today.

But this woman had the intellectual urge of the Van Vechtens in her. Her mother, Nancy Strong, had been a teacher, but as a family the Strongs were of that high-minded, durable company of the New England-Durham migration, intelligent, but frontiersmen necessarily more concerned with cultivation of the soil than of the intellect, whereas the Van Vechtens were always a more urban people, even when tillers of the soil. Among them were professional men in every generation, keepers of records: doctors, lawyers, ministers, military officers and civilian officials. In her generation the urge seems to have settled on the distaff side and the youngest member of her family at that. Late in her long life, looking back with considerable objectivity, modesty, and even humor, she seemed to see herself in proper perspective.

In the meantime her name had appeared on the covers of several published works; she had performed monumental pioneer service, first as Town Historian and Village Historian for Catskill, and finally as one of this State's earliest County Historians; she had organized a local chapter of the DAR, organized Greene County Historical Society, and secured for posterity, in the name of that organization, the priceless heritage of the Bronck Homestead at Cox-sackie as a County museum. This is no small achievement for a woman who had no obligation to be more than obedient helpmate, dutiful mother, proper housewife and dedicated churchwoman.

But I would like to take you back to the 1840's when Teunis Van Vechten and his wife, Rachael Kiersted, were living in her family home in Jefferson Heights, a two-story frame house which stood where now is the entrance to Memorial Hospital. Their family included a son, Luke K. (for Kiersted), then about 27, when a new school teacher, Nancy Strong of Durham, was engaged to teach at the Jefferson school. Kate Kenyon, always joking with Luke, announced one day, "Luke, I've found a wife for you!" "Who is she?" asked the surprised bridegroom-elect. "The new school teacher", his scheming friend

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A WOMAN'S WORK

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disclosed, and Luke matched her audacity: "All right," he countered, "I'll marry her!"

Just how long it took Luke to persuade Nancy to make good his boast their daughter, Jessie, wasn't quite sure when she told the family story late in life, but Luke Van Vechten and Nancy Strong were married, February 22, 1848, in Durham after he had made his way twenty miles from Catskill in a blizzard. (Genealogical Record of the Van Vechten Family 1638 - 1896, by Peter Van Vechten, Jr., Milwaukee, 1896, P. 20). They lived first with his parents, Teunis and Rachael, at the former Kiersted home in Jefferson until Luke and brother, Jacob, purchased from their father what was known as Toll Gate Farm near Leeds for \$10,000. Teunis, who had chosen farming early in life over the classical education at Kingston Academy which had become something of a tradition with the Van Vechtens, had never been able to follow the farm vocation as a result of losing an arm in the explosion of a cannon in a Training Day accident in young manhood. He lived his last few years with Luke's family after the death of Rachael. That seems to have been the time when the property was transferred because Mrs. Vedder (who was born at the farm a little later) knew that her father had bought all of his father's household furnishings from the Jefferson home for \$200 and, for the most part, these were the familiar pieces with which she grew up. Jacob, Luke's joint owner, was soon caught in the epidemic of "western fever" and migrated to Wisconsin, his only regret for the rest of his life that he could not move the beautiful Catskill farm to Wisconsin.

At any rate, that is how Jessie Rachael Van Vechten happened to have been born to Luke and Nancy at Toll Gate Farm on the 29th of September 1859. And this, I might mention, is the last time we shall refer to the name "Rachael" with which she was christened. Although the name of her paternal grandmother, she never liked it and finally dropped it altogether in favor of the more euphonious and more distinctive "J. V. V. Vedder". However, she was never properly and officially named "Jessie", as she once explained to me, wryly: the absent-minded dominie who christened her in the old Dutch church at Leeds, even with the two given names in black and white on paper in his hand, nevertheless pronounced only the "Rachael"! Perhaps it was something of her mother's dismay which was transferred to her.

But, with all my talk of Toll Gate Farm, I have not located it for those who do not know where it was. It was on the precise site of the present home of George and Emily Carl (as of the original date of this writing, 4/17/67; still home of Emily, 5/25/1983). The house was built by Emily's father, the late Otto Margraf after he bought the property about 1930 after the death of Mrs. Vedder's youngest brother, Charles. Later, as many do know, Mr. Margraf built

his even more modern home directly across the road on the sloping site of the old Van Vechten barns. Mrs. Stewart Parks of Catskill, Mrs. Vedder's daughter, Mabel, showed me two small beautiful paintings of those barns — with Luke Van Vechten carrying a milk pail up the path — and of the farmhouse itself opposite, both by Mrs. Vedder's niece, Elizabeth Rouse.



(courtesy Kenneth Van Vechten Parks)

*Toll Gate Farm
as sketched by Elizabeth Rouse*

While my main thesis is Jessie Van Vechten Vedder, she herself could never isolate herself from the land and events and the people, known or unknown, which had shaped her life and interests, and when she looked backward late in life her own story was inextricably intertwined with the story, not just the description, of places and people and their times. So it was, when she identified her birthplace she told about Toll Gate Farm.

To those who are somehow surviving realignment of Route 23 through these years (the 1930's) of upheaval (!) and confusion it is like a warmed-over nightmare; the route had been just previously realigned in 1928. Among other improvements was elimination of a sharp curve at Toll Gate Farm "just where", as Mrs. Vedder said, "one gets the first glimpse of what was once called Madison" (Leeds). Route 23 originally followed the route (as far as Cairo) of the great Susquehanna Turnpike of 1800 and one of that highway's too numerous toll gates early in its operation had been at that turn just east of Madison. But, as Mrs. Vedder told it, the company soon found there was a limit to the number of barriers the traveling public would support or its patience endure.

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When much of the traffic along the rutted artery consisted of farmers, or drovers, taking cattle and sheep to Catskill Landing for river transport to New York, the cost of getting a herd or flock through the many toll gates, even at pennies per head, added up to prohibitive levies, but to that was added the time-consuming aggravation of herding the animals through the big gate as they were counted. Like people, the animals seemed to resent the obstruction and, as Mrs. Vedder told it, "there was always a leader who would try to find a way around, even if it meant climbing a hill to get by". (I can't resist the temptation here to enlarge upon Mrs. Vedder's observations to add that that's the way shun-pikes were born — by the traveling public looping out around the toll gate or beating a path nearby to evade the levy, and that's how many an otherwise unexplained curve or parallel road began.) At any rate, that stand just east of Madison was abandoned early but the name of the farm lingered on down the century. Jessie's brother, Washington, married and built a house on the actual site of the toll gate "in the Centennial Year" of 1876. That is now (1967) the Charles Van Vechten house, next west of the Margraf, Carl house (right side of 23B going west).

There were a sister, Martha (who married a Rouse), and two brothers, Washington and Charles, in the family before the advent of Jessie, but between her and her next older brother two little Sarahs had died in infancy. As a result, Jessie thought herself "a spoiled child" which, she was quick to explain, did not mean "liberties" but that she became her father's constant companion on his frequent errands about the countryside, often to mills, even to the Bronck Mill at Coxsackie.

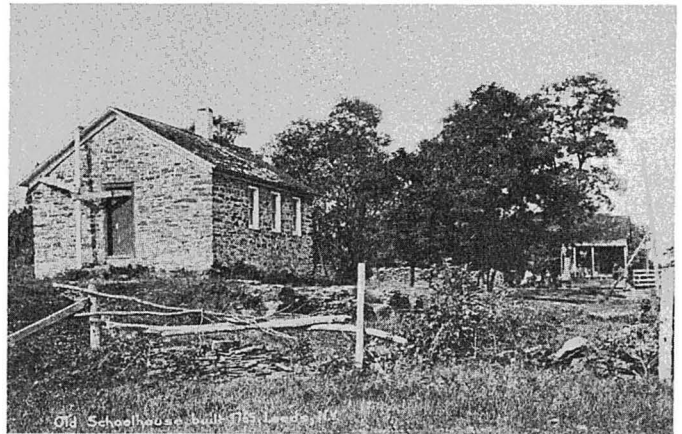
But the child grew to the age of schooling and she, at least, did not take happily to the interruption of this exclusive companionship but she went, unhappily, to the little private school of Gertrude Salisbury DuBois in Jefferson in what she described as "the upper room of the woodhouse". Something had to give, as we would say, and long, long afterwards she chuckled ruefully at the recollection of the older boy — Townsend Glover Jackson, later an Episcopal clergyman — who sat down solicitously beside her on the small bench only to find himself suddenly and rudely in a heap on the floor. His sister called her "an unruly child".

Next she went to classes with the elder Mrs. Fowks in the basement of the house at the "Leeds Plow Works" — now (1967) the Bartke nightclub, as you enter Leeds from the east. When she finally went to the Leeds Public School she knew her green-covered 3rd reader by heart but had a mental block about promiscuous examples in arithmetic . . . somewhere along the way she discovered that "there was a district library at Squire Van Vechten's little office near the bridge" where books could be borrowed. She

and her friend, Fanny Philips, went at noontime to see. There she found Cooper's works and read *The Deerslayer* again and again. She had no liking for Dickens.

At the public school, she said, the rooms were always crowded when the mills were running so that the advanced classes were not always called to the floor and, as she told it, "the pupils just plodded along in arithmetic, holding up a hand when an example was too much for them". There were no examinations. (Original JVVV sketch.)

She didn't remember how old she was when she was sent to Catskill Academy but, she said, "It was a great mistake." Much as she had despised arithmetic, she liked algebra and she liked English history and French, and even absorbed a smattering of Latin from hearing another class recite. For two years her father drove her the four miles to and from school and at the end of that time, secretly fearful that she would never be graduated, she told her father she was tired of school and he admitted he was tired of taking her . . . and Jessie Van Vechten became a high school dropout! But her school teacher mother had set her heart on her little girl following in her footsteps . . . "For which," she declared, "I was utterly unfitted!" However, she studied at home for a time then went half days to the Leeds village school again until she qualified for a 3rd grade certificate which, she said, "was easy to get". She promptly got a job teaching at the stone schoolhouse a mile west of Leeds and walked the two miles from Toll Gate Farm in pleasant weather or drove a horse in bad weather . . . and received six dollars a week.



Stone Schoolhouse West of Leeds

She said that the pupils were nearly all older girls with two colored boys taller than herself . . . They were all nice girls and boys, she said, but she "feared they did not learn much" because of what she called her own "stumbling blocks". She said she managed to keep ahead of them but that it was a constant worry to her . . . so the next year she took a school of younger children to Gayhead and came home only weekends. She said she could always manage the scholars "but was not a good teacher and knew it!"

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It was with a sigh of the greatest relief that she told a long life-time later that "it was a warm spring and I took a heavy cold which developed a spot on one lung" and she gave up the school.

The doctor ordered fresh air and a glass of imported ale at mealtimes . . . and there was no more talk of teaching. Looking back, she said that she doubted that any of them knew that "it was just a case of nerves".

She had ridden horseback since she was 12 and now she rode Charley Colt nearly every day, side-saddle, garbed in flowing brown skirt and black jacket with brass buttons. She remembered riding cross-lots to the natural dam to see the first passenger train of the Catskill Mountain Railroad go by . . . which places the date, 1882.

Before we get too far beyond this idyllic, if uneasy, period of youth you might enjoy the glimpses she gave of social life hereabouts in her time, as a child, and later when she was teaching, and during her convalescence.

After she started school her father saved some of the rides for Saturdays but it was her mother who then did her part, taking her on Sunday School excursions up and down the river, to Kingston, Newburgh, West Point, Kelly's Grove (Coxsackie), and Albany, and visits to New York. Her sister Martha taught her to skate on a narrow stretch of ice by the side of the road where, when she told it, "Margraf's tea-room now stands" (Town & Country Restaurant).

By the time she was 11 she went with older boys and girls to Austin's Dam and the pond nearer home. Her mother and Fanny Jackson, she recalled fondly, were the best girl skaters on the creek and could cut all sorts of figures. She did not often go to the mill pond which, she said, "was black with skaters in the evening".

She learned to roller skate after she was married and said "we went every Saturday night for a few years to the Nelida rink in Catskill", later the Nelida Theatre, still later, and now, the Community Theatre.

But when she was teaching at the stone school-house and during her convalescence her next older brother, Charles, still unmarried, squired her around and she said "there were surprise parties, calico parties, masquerades, church socials, sleigh rides, Sunday School picnics at Gypsy Point, and summer afternoon visits to the Mountain House". Charles often took her to Catskill to church and to singing school.

In winter there was the donation at the parsonage and dances at homes which were large enough. She said the few dances were "not for church people" but when Warner's Hall (later Odd Fellows Hall, the first building on the east side of Green Lake Avenue) was built they sometimes went there and later to Newkirk's Hotel (the Elizabeth House) "when the bar was closed" . . . (All in Leeds).

Since her father's home had been in Jefferson, they were well acquainted there and she said that parties there took in the whole family — the older men playing cards (Hi-Lo-Jack), the women played dominoes and the children amused themselves as best they could, while cake, nuts, apples and popcorn were passed around.

She and Charles often spent an evening in Catskill with Granduncle Abram Van Vechten in the house which stood where now is little-known Pruyn Park along the creek bank where Water Street comes into upper Main Street. Uncle Abram, then in his 90's, had been born in the Van Vechten 1690 house on Snake Road (Suburban Way) and had seen the village grow from mere landing place. His tales captured the imagination and many of them stayed in the memory of the young girl who sat long evenings beside him before the fire.

The second half of Mabel P. Smith's article on the life and times of Jessie Van Vechten Vedder will be concluded in the Winter 1983 issue of the JOURNAL.

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EDWARD CLARK

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This substantial change of fortune meant more prosperous times for the Clark family — travel to Europe, extended summer vacations at their estate in Cooperstown and even memorials to the village of Edward's birth. Trinity Episcopal Church received a new bell and a marble baptismal font. The New York State Historical Association's museums at Cooperstown are a direct result of this Singer-Clark connection in that inherited wealth enabled subsequent generations to make generous gestures in land, buildings and estate furnishings.

But there is a different side to the story of struggling lawyer to financial tycoon. For the first decade in New York, the law firm of Jordan and Clark had great difficulty establishing itself and securing clients able to pay good fees, so much so that Ambrose Jordan was seriously considering a return to Hudson where he still owned a house and other real estate.

To prevent such a move on Jordan's part which would have dealt a death blow to the law firm, and also to move his wife, Caroline, and children out of rented quarters, Edward Clark wrote to his father, Nathan Sr. at Athens, attempting to persuade the latter to hold a first mortgage on a New York City home. The plan was to get Ambrose Jordan to exchange his Hudson property for the existing second mortgage on the New York house and both the Jordans and the Clarks share the place as a joint residence. It is obvious from the letters which have survived that Edward had no capital or credit; he was still a struggling young lawyer with a growing family to support. The first letter reads:

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EDWARD CLARK

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New York Jan. 5th 1841

My Dear Father—

When I last wrote to you by Nathan respecting loaning your credit to Charles Post, I remarked that I was far from being permanently or pleasantly situated myself, and that all the pecuniary favors you would be willing to grant would be as much required by me as any one. Mr. Jordan & myself are at present negotiating for the purchase of a house and I have little doubt we shall conclude the bargain. We are offered one in such a way that I am satisfied we should do well to take it as a speculation merely — but one object is to provide and secure a permanent family residence. The house is large and will accommodate both our families well, and it is below Canal St. in a good location & within about ten minutes walk to our office. It was sold several years ago at \$17500 and is now mortgaged for \$13000 — the oldest mortgage being for \$8000 & the other for \$5000.

The person having the younger mortgage will take Mr. Jordan's house & office & two lots in Hudson for his mortgage and the owner will convey to us subject to the \$8000 mortgage only making the house cost us \$13000, valuing the Hudson property at \$5000. The mortgage for \$8000 can remain a number of years if required. Now what I wish you to engage to do is to pay off and take an assignment of this \$8000 mortgage. It will be perfectly good security for the amount. This may be done gradually so as not to put you to inconvenience.

Mr. Jordan also offers to do this — to purchase the house here turning out his Hudson property in part payment, and that if you will pay off \$5000 of the \$8000 mortgage and I pay the balance \$3000 out of the proceeds of my business, the house shall belong to me — or in other words, he will give me \$5000 if you will give me an equal amount. This is undoubtedly very liberal on his part and I hope you will think proper to consent to the arrangement. I would not ask you to do anything that I supposed would embarrass or trouble you in a pecuniary way, and I do not think this would, as you would have several years to make the advances. Whatever of property you have more than you wish to employ for your own purposes, your children have the best claim to ask of you, and your principal object and most anxious wish undoubtedly is to see Nathan & myself permanently & respectably settled in life. I am not so settled, but the arrangement I propose would go very far toward making me so.

It is highly important to me that we should have a convenient & permanent place of residence for another reason. Mr. Jordan frequently entertains the idea of giving up business entirely & going back to Hudson to live, which if carried into effect would be ruinous to my prospects. If we make this bargain I shall get rid of this apprehension.

Be good enough to write to me & let me know what you think of the proposition I have made, and whether you will assist me in the way referred to.

It is now & has been for several days past most intensely cold for New York, with good sleighing in the Streets. New Years day it rained & snowed altogether, so that those who had a great number of calls to make had a most uncomfortable time of it. I being rather unwell remained at home. Caroline & the children are quite well. Mr. Jordan's health is pretty good & improving.

I will conclude by wishing you all "a happy New Year" —

Yours Truly —
/s/ Edwd. Clark

Although the letter written by Edward to his father was persuasive, it apparently did not convince papa since in 1846 Edward was trying to borrow money from his father to pay his rent.

The law firm continued to provide a meager livelihood to the Clark family; for the next several years it was "touch and go." In desperation Caroline Jordan Clark in 1845 tried her luck with the Athens in-laws. She began her letter with concern for Edward's leaving the Episcopal Church (Nathan Clark Sr. was a strong supporter of Trinity, Athens).

Dear Sir

It will doubtless appear strange, that I should again trouble you, after having met with a refusal on one occasion — when in consequence of the pecuniary embarrassment of my husband and the necessity of providing comfortable winter clothing for myself and children — I was induced to request of you the favor of a small loan. But another and much more serious reason compels me to address you once more. I allude to Edward's having declared his intention of becoming a permanent pewholder in the Unitarian Church. I expostulated with him when he first spoke of going to that church — his answer was the "he could not afford to go to the Episcopal church — and had taken the pew for a year only — at the expiration of which he would if possible hire one that would suit me." He now tells me he intends to keep the one he has.

Although making no profession of religion myself, it grieves me to think of my children being brought up in a faith which I consider little better than infidelity. The impressions they receive in early life will be lasting — and although their Father may at some future day regret having abandoned the church in which he was reared I greatly fear it will be too late to convince his children that the Unitarian is not the true church.

My reason for writing is to ascertain whether you will give me the means to obtain a pew for myself and children in one of the Episcopal churches. It may occur to you that my Father has a pew and that we should go with him — True he has a pew in St. Mark's church — but even if it were large enough to contain both families and the distance was no objection I would be unwilling to tax his generosity any farther. When the subject comes to be considered, you will perceive that on him we are dependent for our daily bread. I may say — and I think without exaggeration — that all the office business is obtained through his influence. It is true Edward attends to the business required of him — but something more than that is necessary to make a partner valuable in the city of New York — Influential friends — or money sufficient to court the society of merchants and other men of business are requisite to the establishment of a young lawyer — neither of which has Edward proposed — consequently the supporting of his family has depended entirely on my Father's favors which have been most willingly granted for my sake.

Another reason you may urge for not complying with my request — and which I have good cause to believe has been talked over by some of the members of your family is — my extravagance in dress — To this I have only to say — that I have never dressed beyond what is considered barely decent by those with whom I associate. In the whole seven years we have lived in New York I have been deprived of almost every pleasure enjoyed by persons of my age and station for the very reason that I could not afford the requisite dress. And now that I am on the subject of society I am desirous of making a few

EDWARD CLARK

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remarks — which though foreign to the subject first introduced — I feel it is a duty to mention. As I mentioned before, the want of money — over and above what was necessary to maintain his family — having prevented Edward's making or keeping such acquaintances — as would probably have given him much valuable business and intellectual and refined amusements — the consequence is, he is now associating with those who will never promote his interest or welfare in any possible manner. The members of the "New York Cricket Club" composed principally I understand, of Editors of the Sunday papers and sporting magazines (some of whom are Englishmen) are as far as I can ascertain his boon companions and I tremble at what may follow if there is no inducement offered him to give them up. I leave it to your own judgment and to the interest which you must naturally feel in your son to decide whether you consider it necessary or proper to interfere.

I have not the slightest objection to your sending a copy of this letter to Edward if you feel inclined to do so.

Your early answer will relieve me of much anxiety.

I remain yours with respect

CJC

It is doubtful that Caroline Jordan Clark's letter succeeded in having funds sent from Athens to New York. The next surviving letter was written by Edward to his father and continues to refer to financial problems:

New York August 4, 1846
235 Broadway

Dear Father,

You will recollect that last April I wrote you that I should probably want the \$150, which I expected to receive then, but which I contrived to get along without till the month of August. The result is as I supposed — I have succeeded in paying my rent for the last quarter, but in doing so have left unpaid some small debts, which must speedily be met somehow. The finances of my firm, in consequence of Mr. Jordan's absences, are low, and I do not expect to get any thing in that way soon.

Now I shall be at Athens the last of next week, say about the 13th or 14th inst. and wish you would by getting a discount or otherwise manage to let me have that \$150 at that time. Please bear this in mind.

The weather is most delightful here just now and I presume favorable to your farming operations in the country. My health is good, and business tolerably fair for the dull season. Tell Bron he must sit down at once and write me a letter and inform me how he & Ned are as regards health — whether they have seen the baby & how he is — How the boat sails — how often they have been to the farm — whether the corn is eatable yet, and anything else he may think worth mentioning.

Yours truly
/s/ Edward Clark

Two years later, in 1848, Isaac Singer came into Edward Clark's life. The lean years were almost at an end!

Author's Comments: The Clark home in Athens was on the east side of Washington Street at the top of the hill. The structure was built by Thomas Jenkins, one of the early post-revolutionary settlers on the Van Loon patent then being divided up into building

lots by Isaac Northrup. The potter, Nathan Clark Senior, married Julia, daughter of John Nichols. The two sons of this union were Edward and Nathan. As indicated in the foregoing material, Edward married Caroline Jordan of Hudson; his brother, Nathan Junior, married Sarah, daughter of Castle Seeley. Three children were the offspring of this Seeley — Clark marriage. Daughter Julia died at age 25 years; Nathan E. carried on the pottery for much of the remainder of the nineteenth century; the third sibling, Ogden Clark, was the father of Julia Clark Post of Catskill.

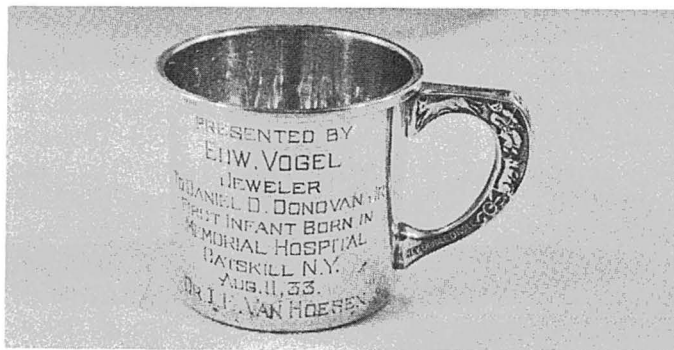
According to Ogden Clark's biographical sketch in Beers' History of Greene County, of the four children of Edward and Caroline, only one was living in 1884. Edward's wife, Caroline, died June 27, 1874; Edward outlived her by eight years, dying at Cooperstown on October 14, 1882. It is through their son, Alfred C. Clark, that the family's connection with Cooperstown was maintained.

A few other letters survive in the Kate Loomis Memorial Collection in the Vedder Library at Bronck Museum — letters written by Edward Clark to his father and brother at Athens. Some relate to the financial debacle in the business affairs of his uncle, Castle Seeley, while others concern visits to the family and the latter's involvement in the affairs of Trinity Episcopal Church in that village. The letters all date from Edward Clark's early married life.

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GREENE COUNTY'S HOSPITAL — HALF A CENTURY OF SERVICE — Raymond Beecher

The Memorial Hospital of Greene County (now known as the Greene County Memorial Hospital) received its first patient on August 10, 1933, half a century ago — she was Mrs. Lena Legacy, 73 Bushnell Avenue, Catskill. The first operation was performed that same day upon Frederick Bucle of Middle Village, Long Island, a vacationer at Kiskatom. The following day Agnes Monahan Donovan was delivered of a son, Daniel, an event to be memorialized by the gift of a silver baby cup from Catskill jeweler Edward Vogel.



Daniel Donovan's Presentation Cup
(Photo courtesy Donovan family)

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VEDDER LIBRARY NOTES

□◇ Cloan Powell of California, in exchange for information on Dr. Eli Pierce of Athens (1832 cholera physician), has furnished a wealth of Pierce genealogical material as well as photographic and biographical information on Dr. Pierce..

□◇ From Mildred Gurney of the Barnwell Health Facility of Valatie has come the original Society of Friends Joseph Gurney Bible record, town of New Baltimore. The dates are recorded in the Quaker manner.

□◇ Malcolm C. Spensely of NYC has deposited a substantial body of genealogical material on Lockwood, Cole and related families. He is an indefatigable researcher.

□◇ And Kenneth Van Vechten Parks has shared more Timmerman genealogical information with us. Researchers using the Vedder Library still consult the 3 x 5 cards he filled in under his grandmother's direction many years ago. She was Jessie Van Vechten Vedder for whom this library is named.

□◇ Augmenting earlier gifts of Thomson—Cole manuscript material as well as items relating to the area's history, Mrs. Edith Cole Silberstein has given six more record books. Among them is the Jeremiah Day letterbook for the years 1849 - 1854. They are catalogued under the Florence Cole Vincent Memorial designation.

□◇ George Bogardus of Fort Lauderdale, Florida has sent a handsome volume written in 1930 by Willis T. Gridley; it bears the title *Trinity! Break Ye My Commandments?* and seeks to establish the Bogardus title to NYC Trinity Church lands. That dispute lasted for years. The volume contains numerous illustrations pertaining to the state's history.

□◇ A diversified collection of printed material relating to the Catskill Mountains and the Hudson River has come from Joan A. Wright of Norwalk, Connecticut, as a memorial to her aunt the late Esther H. Dunn of Haines Falls and New York City. In addition the memorial gift includes Esther Dunn's extensive reference card file maintained in her scholastic research. The 43 post cards of mountain scenic views include several not heretofore in the Society's collection, i. e. *District School at East Windham, A Cabin in Twilight Park, The Vista at Haines Falls and Saw Mill and Barrel Factory at Cornwallville*. A variety of printed pamphlet material includes a Hotel Kaaterskill promotional brochure, B. Howard's *A Native Descendent*, pre WW II Twilight Park promotional booklet, Hudson River Day Line magazines, Van Loan's *Catskill Mountain Guides*, Harper's *A Gateway to the Catskills* magazine article and also other travel guides and books. During her lifetime Esther H. Dunn had given other regional material including an oil painting, by Samuel Scott, of the Haines Saw Mill.

□◇ Elizabeth Gustafson, a member of the Society's Board of Trustees, has contributed the *Annual Circular* of the Coxsackie High School 1898 - 1899.

Printed in Albany by Brandow Printing Company, its 16 pages contain both references to the elegant new building on Mansion Street as well as the educational courses offered. The copy was originally owned by Helen T. Bogardus of Oak Hill, a student attending the Coxsackie High School at the time.

□◇ Researching the history of Athens for a social education project, Matthew McLoughlin did a commendable piece of work. We are always impressed by such scholarly efforts by young students. Matthew's telephone calls and the final "thank you" reflect parental guidance as well as school direction.

□◇ The Greene County Inter-Racial Council, also known as the Catskill Interracial Council, has deposited its records for the year 1972 - 1979 with the Vedder Library. The collection is housed in Manuscript Box 91 in the library's vault. Mrs. Augustine feels the records are an important part of the area's history with which this librarian concurs.

□◇ The library's collection of weekly county newspapers is extensive, dating from the first issue of the *Catskill Packet* in 1792. Additions are constantly being made. Special celebration issues are frequently used by researchers; duplicate copies are desirable. From Mrs. Harriet Saxe have come issues of the *Catskill Daily Mail* covering the Sesquicentennial of 1956; as well as copies of the *Examiner-Recorder*.

□◇ As a volunteer project of community service, in addition to his other scouting activities, Paul Caswell, Jr. of Coeymans Hollow has been working on occasional Tuesdays at the library this summer, filing genealogical materials, working with manuscripts and studying glass negative plates for classification.

□◇ The family of Mary Ellen Smith has donated a number of turn-of-the-century glass negative plates of the Story family of Catskill as well as scenic and industrial views of the area. The ones of the Catskill brickyards are of particular interest. In her lifetime Mrs. Smith had augmented the photograph collection with other similar plates.

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MURIEL H. WOOSTER — A FINAL TRIBUTE

It was History A, B, and C in those days (Ancient and Medieval, European, and American) for students enrolled in those high school courses at the Greenville Free Academy (later Greenville Central Rural School); Muriel Wooster in her earlier teaching years held forth in the academy building, upstairs in the south room. She shared that floor with the library and the combined classroom, study hall and auditorium.

No student, interested in history, had cause to regret the quality of her instruction. She was in total control of the classroom: learning was an enjoyable experience. Even the several required book reports seemed less of a chore under her tutelage. Your *JOURNAL* editor was one of her students.

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GREENE COUNTY'S HOSPITAL

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The staff of eight – seven females and one male – were on active duty. Alice E. LeGallais, R.N. of Albany, was serving as Superintendent of the new medical facility. R.N.'s Sallie A. Scott, Marjorie McDonough and Anna Jones provided patient nursing care; the latter was on evening duty. The office details were the responsibility of Mabel Beare (Conine); food preparation was delegated to Mrs. Thomas Walsh. Geraldine Saxe provided the maid service while Roy Walton was given the title of dayman. It was anticipated that a night man would be employed at a later date.

Since May 20, 1926, a not-for-profit corporation – Memorial Hospital of Greene County, Inc. had been in existence holding in trust legacies from the estates of Alice Bonestel, Frances Mann and Margaret V. Austin for a public general hospital for the village of Catskill. (One reads recognition of this financial assistance on the bronze plaques near the public elevator in the main lobby.) But that corporation was the first to admit its funds were totally inadequate for the construction and operation of a general hospital. The literal compliance with the wills' terms was "impractical and impossible".

At the Board of Supervisors meeting on Wednesday, December 10, 1930, a meeting chaired by William S. Borthwick, several local men were granted the privilege of the floor – George W. Irwin, J. F. Lackey, Dr. William M. Rapp, R. A. Austin, Addison P. Jones and Howard Smith. "The gentlemen addressed the members of the Board on the subject of a hospital for Greene County, requesting the cooperation of the Board of Supervisors."

At its December 18th meeting representatives from the hospital committee, the Medical Society, the State Health Department, et. al. explained the need for a hospital in connection with the County Health unit. A third session was held on December 29 at which time a formal resolution was adopted by the Board to establish a committee to secure "complete and accurate information as to the manner of erection, maintenance and operation of said proposed hospital." Chairman Borthwick appointed Supervisors Travis, Fromer, and Peloubet to that committee.

A year's diligent effort ensued with consultation on both local and state levels. And it was at the December 29, 1931 Board of Supervisors meeting that the clerk read the two-page agreement, dated December 15, 1931, between the Memorial Hospital of Greene County, Inc. and the County of Greene to proceed to erect and operate a hospital facility "in or near said Village of Catskill". William S. Borthwick signed for the Board of Supervisors and George W. Irwin for the not-for-profit hospital corporation. William S. Borthwick's personal diary makes brief mention of that event:

Left [Cornwallville] for Catskill after 11 a.m. Saw Geo. Irwin who talked to me as to Hospital appointment . . . Session at 8 p.m. . . . Committee appointed to Hospital Managers and also appropriated \$50,000 of will money toward hospital."

The hospital was not without county opposition. At that same December 29th session, the Catskill Taxpayers Association had addressed the Board asking for a reduction of the budget. Mrs. Howard Muller recalls her husband remarking in later years that some local residents felt the proposed general hospital was a needless luxury, that patients could just as well be taken to Hudson, Kingston or Albany.

It was estimated the total cost of the hospital would amount to \$100,000 with 50% coming from the state. Broken down into land costs, construction, and equipment, the amounts were \$10,000, \$75,000, and \$15,000. The Board of Supervisors was successful in purchasing the old Grant House site at Jefferson Heights at the \$10,000 figure but contractors' acceptable bids for construction went to \$81,742.50. The equipment costs were pared to the bone; even with the matching \$7,500 appropriation, the hospital had to appeal for the loan of an adding machine for office work when the facility first opened.

The hospital's Board of Managers consisting of President George W. Irwin of Catskill, Vice President J. Frank Lackey of Tannersville, Secretary O. Gates Porter of Athens (shortly to be replaced by Howard C. Muller), Howard Smith of Catskill and Harold Moore of Windham were empowered to select the architect, award the construction contracts and provide for hospital equipment. From a study of the Board of Supervisors minutes it was obvious they were fearful of losing control to the hospital corporation; a compromise of sorts was reached.

Architect George E. Lowe of Kingston had designed a brick and cast stone, three-story building of Georgian style. The general contractor selected was James J. Finn and Son of Albany. The plumbing, heating, gas fitting, water service, incineration and vacuum cleaning systems were installed by Day and Holt of Catskill under the supervision of Philip Reilly. The electrical work which included the elevator connections, fire alarm system, nurses' call stations and electric clocks was installed by the Stearns Electrical Construction Company of Albany (the elevator itself being a contract with the Otis Elevator Company). The sanitary disposal plant was the responsibility of the Nustone Corporation of Kingston.

And so the hospital was constructed; the public followed its progress with keen interest. And although the facility opened on August 10th for its first patient, the dedication was delayed until November 2 (1933). A large crowd put in an appearance; Dr. Thomas Farren, Jr., State Health Commissioner, was the principal speaker. The Catskill Band opened the Pastor Robert L. Ross of Catskill's Methodist Church asked a divine blessing for the hospital's success. The

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*Jessie Van
Vechten Vedder
at Bronck Museum
in 1943
She was then
84 years
of age.*

GREENE COUNTY'S HOSPITAL

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welcoming remarks were the responsibility of President George W. Irwin of the Board of Managers. He stressed the need for the facility and the steps taken to produce the same. Dr. Lyle B. Honeyford, heading the local Medical Society, and Dr. George L. Branch, chairman of the Medical Board, gave short addresses appropriate to the occasion.

At the completion of the ceremonies, the public was invited to tour the building – administration offices, patient rooms and wards, operating suite, x-ray department, out-patient area, emergency operating room, food services, the morgue and the mechanical heating plant.

Greene County finally had its general hospital; the dedication soon became a matter of history. But the local weekly newspapers continued to view the hospital as a source of news. Surgery was reported as when “Dr. Edgar A. VanderVeer of Albany performed an operation at the Memorial Hospital of Greene County on Wednesday.” Mention was made of incoming donations of farm produce and home canned goods from county residents.

Built at a cost of about \$100,000, operated initially with a staff of eight, with a capacity of twenty-four patients, it offered convenient, affordable medical care at a period when the American dollar had far more purchasing power, a time when medical science was far less complex. Few county residents could anticipate that in a few decades the hospital plant itself would be completely outmoded, that major

additions would almost hide the 1933 building and that a nursing home would further overshadow the original structure. Now once again with operating costs soaring, particularly for the nursing home, the 1930-31 debate as to whether or not Greene County could afford a general hospital facility is once again receiving public attention in the press. History has a way of repeating itself.

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Greene County Historical Society
Raymond Beecher, Editor
R.D.
COXSACKIE, NEW YORK 12051

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