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## GREENE COUNTY'S HORSE FERRIES

—Raymond Beecher

The Hudson was both a help and a hindrance in the rapid increase of commerce in the post-Revolutionary years. While it provided a natural water highway to and from the metropolitan areas, at the same time it was a barrier for man and property between its eastern and western shores. With the construction of the Susquehanna, the Schoharie and the Coxsackie Turnpikes at the opening of the nineteenth century, the problem of improved ferry service became acute. To meet this need, three horse powered ferries came into being between Greene and Columbia counties — at Catskill, at Loonenburg (Athens), and at Reed's Landing (Coxsackie). They supplanted the more primitive scows of sail and oar operated by Ephraim Bogardus at Coxsackie, by Conradt Flaack at Athens, and by Henry Van Gorden at Catskill.

The New York State legislature, to encourage adequate investment of funds, for the public's convenience, granted monopoly franchises for periods of years, usually within a two-mile stretch of the river shore. Both the Catskill and the Coxsackie runs attracted private operators but ferry service between Athens and Hudson became the responsibility of those municipal units of government.

A study of the records that have survived indicates none of the three sites in Greene County were particularly profitable. Owners and operators changed periodically. Building and maintaining ferry slips, horse ferry boats and supplying horse power all took capital. It was an inefficient operation at best. Progress in the form of the steam powered ferry spelled the horse ferry's doom, just as the building of the Rip Van Winkle Bridge in turn brought about the demise of the steam ferry runs.

Surviving descriptions of these horse powered ferry boats indicate there were three types used locally. The earliest had a center well wherein was contained a single paddle wheel; the horse moved on a circular track. Others had two tread mills, one on port and the other on starboard. Van Loon Ryder compared these to the early threshing machines with their treadmill units. While several horses were held available, three or four seems to have been the maximum number used at any one crossing.

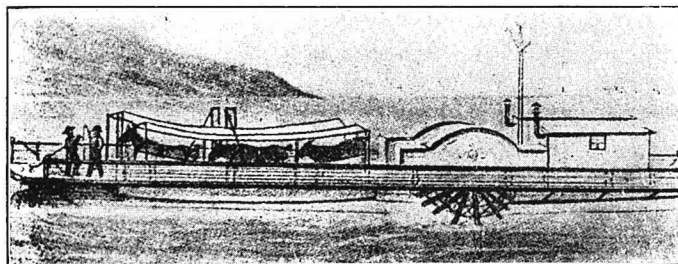
## THE ATHENS - HUDSON CROSSING

Conradt Flaack was the pioneer ferryman between these two more populated settlements on the west and the east shores; the date is a Revolutionary War period one — 1778. The charter of the city of Hudson "Incorporating the Inhabitants Within The

City and Liberties of Hudson" which was printed by Webster and Stoddard in 1785, recognized Conradt Flaack's efforts to establish a ferry crossing at this site and sought to reassure him with specific mention. This early document is in the archival collection of the Vedder Memorial Library and reads in part:

Be it therefore enacted by the Authority aforesaid That the Common Council of the said city for the time being, or the major part of them, from time to time and at all times forever hereafter, shall and may have full power and authority to settle, appoint, establish, order, direct and superintend, such and so many ferries, from the said City to the said opposite or western shore of the Hudson river, for the carrying and transporting people, horses, cattle, goods and chattels across the said river, in such manner as the Common Council of said City for the time being, or the major part of them, shall conceive to be most conducive for the public good Provided always, That nothing in this act contained shall extend or be confined to debar or deprive any of the citizens of this State of the property or the possession of the soil on the eastern or western shore of any right which now may or ought lawfully to enjoy or hereafter may obtain with respect to the privilege of ferriage, nor shall the act or anything therein contained, extend to or be deemed or construed to debar or deprive any of the citizens of this State of any other right or privilege (as to right of soil or ferriage) which any such citizen now has or may lawfully have or enjoy; nor shall be deemed or construed to debar or prevent Coenraett A. Flaack [Conradt Flaack] of or from conveying or carrying across the said river, to and from either side of the said river, with a ferry boat any person, horses, cattle, goods or chattels.

In 1805, by authority of the New York State Legislature, the trustees representing the freeholders of Athens, Esperanza and Loonenburgh were also empowered to "regulate ferries."



Ferryboat used between Athens and Hudson prior to 1850.

In the A.R.B. celebration book *Athens 1776 - 1976*, Samuel Van Aken provides a vivid description of this primitive Flaack ferry consisting of two canoe shaped boats with platform over both when wagons or carts were to be transported, and one canoe when only passengers paid for passage. Horses

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were tied with ropes and swam behind. For a period of a few years a Mr. Jenkins sought to provide Flaack with competition with a boat having both sail and leeboards. This in turn forced Flaack to build a small gunwhale scow which he used until the village of Athens took over the ferry operation at the time of its incorporation; Timothy Bunker than represented the village. To him was delegated the responsibility of operating the ferry "by rules and regulations laid down by the two municipalities."

The exact date of the arrival and operation of the horse ferry vessel is uncertain but is thought to be about 1816. It was the first of three such ferry boats. Again we defer to Samuel Van Aken.

The first horse boat was built by William Johnson at a cost of \$6,000. It was composed of two wooden hulls, spaced several feet apart. The hulls were secured together by a series of square beams, fastened to either hull, the beams were then decked over. In the center of the deck, a well was cut and a single paddle was installed, connected to the mechanism that operated it, by a shaft and a series of gears. Nine horses furnished the power to operate the mechanism. The horses traveled on a circular track built on the deck. The horses were protected from the elements by a round house built over the track. What accommodations for the protection of its passengers the boat boasted, history gives no record.

This boat continued operating until 1824 when she was sold by the Corporation and replaced by another horse boat built by one Alexander Coffin at a cost of \$3,000. This was a smaller boat, with paddle wheels on either side, the power being furnished by six horses. This boat operated until the early thirties, when it was replaced by a steam propelled boat. (Available records give no place of construction or description to this boat.) After operating for nearly five years the boat for unknown reasons was deemed unsatisfactory, and was replaced by a third horse boat, somewhat similar to the second horse boat that operated in 1824. Then came the steam propelled side-wheel ferry.

From its inception, this ferry crossing between Athens and Hudson was handicapped by the long Middle Ground or flat, requiring the ferry to make a longer trip around the southern end. If the Middle Ground could be breached it would be a major convenience for the public and thus might attract more traffic which would mean increased revenues.

In the year 1818 Athens and Hudson agreed to finance such a canal through the Middle Ground, to be constructed with revenues raised by lottery ticket sales. (Readers will recall this was the time of the Era of Internal Improvements in the United States.) Two surviving contracts in the Vedder Memorial Library at Bronck Museum provide clues to this important undertaking. Contractors John R. Landon and Jonathan Carrington, both of Litchfield, Connecticut, for the sum of \$3,000, agreed to

dig out and remove the earth and mud in said canal between the said timbers or wharfs to be placed by said Witherell, Fosdick and Sheffield and the Said earth and mud is to be placed By us on and in the rear of Said

wharfs which are not to be more than Sixty feet apart and we the Said Landon and Carrington are to remove the earth and mud from Said canal across Said flats & Dig the Said five feet in depth from the Surface of the earth on Said flats or to be so Deep that there will be four feet in Depth of water in Said Canal at Low water in Said River. . .

In the meantime Timothy Witherell, Abijah Fosdick and Thomas Sheffield, all of Athens, were to cause to be constructed wharfs or docks on both sides of the cut

with timber on each side about six feet in height and to be faced with plank which are to be pinned or fastened to the timbers of said wharf or docks above the surface of the water and to extend about six feet into the earth . . . and will prepare and place the timber and plank for at least one Hundred feet on each side of said canal.

It appears that Witherell, Fosdick and Sheffield were operating as a committee and were not contractors in their own right. Guaranteeing payment to these Litchfield men (Landon and Carrington) were Gilbert Jenkins of Hudson and William Tolley, treasurer, of Athens. The canal may have shortened the route but it still did not bring in adequate revenues to cover expenses of operation. Yet a ferry was a necessity to both units of government. And so the horse ferry boat continued as the responsibility of both Athens and Hudson. To oversee its operation ferry committees from both were appointed.

The printed *Corporation Accounts for the Village of Athens for the Year 1826* (Kate Loomis Memorial Collection at Vedder Memorial Library) reveal that Samuel Waring of that village was employed as captain of the horse ferry boat; he earned \$30 the month for the 9½ month ferry season. The deck hand hired to manage the horses and provide other services was Simeon Bartley; he earned \$20 the month, working each and every day for the 9½ months except for the Fourth of July. A substitute was hired for that day, one John B. Coffin, for \$1.50.

Horses suitable for the ferry boat's treadmill which provided the horse power to move the paddles, required adequate feeding and housing. The Ferry Committee rented a barn on the Athens shore near the slip for \$20 the year. Benjamin Howland, Solomon Wilbur and David Shaw supplied hay and oats. The leather harnesses required periodic attention from both Caleb Coffin & Company and H. E. Bunker. In 1826 it was found necessary to replace one horse; it brought \$73 from Cyrus Shevelier. Castle Seeley, village official, advanced \$70 for its replacement. Shoeing and other blacksmith work was the responsibility of Casper Hallenbeck; he billed the committee \$62.14.

Tan bark was in continual demand during the ferry season to provide an improved footing for the horses on the treadmill. One year's supply of tan bark came from three men — Edward Austen, Isaac Ruckers and a G. Turner. Cartloads were delivered as

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needed between April 15 and December 8. The going rate was one shilling (12½ cents) the load.

Minor repairs to the horse ferry boat during the season were made as needed but major overhauling was a winter project. David Coleman, Abijah Fosdick and Leander Sheffield made the routine repairs while Thomas Sheffield was responsible for major work. He charged at the rate of 14 shillings the day.

The ferry and the canal docks, as well as the slips, continued to suffer from age and weather; they required periodic attention. The Athens committee turned to Thomas Sheffield in repairing the canal booms. Stone to reinforce the canal docks, at a cost of \$100, was delivered by Mr. Stratton. Castle Seeley was reimbursed on January 26, 1827 for sums of money advanced to pay off the various laborers working on the canal.

For emergency trips at odd hours or for one or two foot passengers, a scow propelled by oar and sail was the responsibility of Henry Signer; he also earned \$30 the month for this means of transportation. The ferry committee even paid for a new set of oars that year at a cost of \$2.62.

Claims for damage to persons or property were few in number but did exist. In 1827 Gerald G. Person put in a bill for "part of his wagon lost overboard from the horse ferry boat — \$14.00."

To alert the traveling public as to the availability of ferry service at this crossing, and the charges for the same, the committee turned to printer H. Wilber of Hudson. He supplied handbills at a cost of \$1.25.

Receipts from the ferry's operation for the 1826 season of 9½ months are recorded as follows:

Horse - boat 11 April — 23 Dec.	\$1505.00
Commutation tickets sold	35.50
Small boat 11 April — 23 Dec.	<u>353.75</u>
Total ferriage receipts	1894.25

To the above was added a slight profit from the sale and the purchase of ferry horses.

Expenses of operating the horse ferry boat and the oared scow exceeded income in the year 1826 by \$961.60. This required the village of Athens and the city of Hudson to share equally in the deficit.

Profitable or not, this communication link between Athens and Hudson continued with horse ferry boat and oared scow until Nathan E. Edmonds and William H. Morton contracted for the *John T. Waterman's* construction in an Athens' shipyard in the year 1858. This steam vessel's use ended the history of the horse ferry at Athens.

With increased traffic between Athens and Hudson shares of stock were eventually sold by the chartered Hudson and Athens Ferry Corporation, Limited; it was no longer a municipal operation. The Power family of Hudson was active in its affairs. After the opening of the Rip Van Winkle Bridge, this ferry company was dissolved. Notice of a third and

final dividend in its liquidation was mailed to stockholders under date of June 1, 1940.

## THE COXSACKIE - NEWTON HOOK CROSSING

In its last years it was advertised as a 3½ minute crossing, the shortest between New York and Albany; it was a much longer trip during its earliest years. In pre-Revolutionary eras and during the first half of the nineteenth century, the flow of commerce and passengers across the river between Coxsackie and the Kinderhook region was extensive. The Broncks, Van Dycks and Silvesters had numerous relatives in Columbia County opposite Greene; merchants and traders moved quantities of farm and forest products eastward to New England.

Necessity dictated a primitive ferry arrangement until Ephraim Bogardus petitioned the New York State Legislature in the year 1800 for a monopoly for the operation of a ferry from Coxsackie's Upper Landing to the opposite river shore. Robert Henry Van Bergen in *Ye Olden Times* identifies the ferry run as "between what is now known as Wells Island and Rattlesnake Island to a landing on the eastern shore almost directly opposite." The legislature reacted favorably to Ephraim Bogardus's request but required the posting of a type of bond known as a recognizance. This manuscript exists today in the Vedder Memorial Library archives and reads:

The conditions of the above Recognizance is such that the above named Ephraim Bogardus shall well and faithfully keep and attend a Ferry for the Space of one year from the Western Shore of Hudson's River near the dwelling house of the said Ephraim Bogardus situated in Coxsackie aforesaid across the said River and for the keeping of the said Ferry shall apply with a sufficient and safe Boat or with such as so many sufficient and safe Boats, and so many men to work the same as shall be deemed necessary, together with sufficient implements for the said Ferry during the several Hours in each and at the several Rates as the Court of Common Pleas in said County of Greene have ordered directed and determined. . .

Again Van Bergen states that Isaac Wells ran this ferry as late as 1819, "using a scow and propelled by oars in the hands of himself and his sons, but only when the weather was fair and the wind was slack."

In 1820 William Judson, Andrew Witbeck and John L. Sharp were granted a franchise by the New York State legislature for a ferry across the Hudson River between Coxsackie Landing (Reed's Landing) and Nutten Hook (Newton Hook), together with certain additional privileges, for a term of 12 years commencing from September 1, 1820. This franchise was again renewed for 12 years in 1829. The Judson franchise of 1820 signalled the decline of the Upper Landing and the rise of the Middle Landing.

A horse powered treadmill ferry boat was placed in service by the Judson, Witbeck and Sharp concern by 1820. It was built in the shipyard of Samuel Goodrich located along the river's edge on lower South River Street. Tunis Cochran, a skilled

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carpenter, worked on the vessel as it took shape during the late winter of 1819 and into the early summer of 1820. Some of the timber came from Hendrick Hotaling's woods. The Tunis Cochran bill for the several month's labor is labeled: "For Samuel Goodrich on the horse boat". William Judson was responsible for the Coxsackie Horse Ferry Company's operations; numerous bills survive indicating he contracted for labor and supplies, furnished horses, had the ferry scow cut out of the ice in the colder weather and generally kept the boat in good repair. As late as 1821, his bills were being figured in pounds, shillings and pence after the English colonial system. The horse treadmill was carefully watched; new poles were frequently installed to protect the horse teams against injury. At times William Judson and a helper (sometimes Tunis Cochran) operated the ferry for which they charged 9 shillings the day. At other times Judson hired Arthur Beattie and Richard Moore. Improved access to the ferry was made available in 1821 when Judson had 408 loads of stone hauled in for a ferry stairs and dock at a cost of 20 pounds, 8 shillings. That same season, his partners from the eastern shore billed the firm for feeding the horses, and providing lodging and board for ferry boat workers, including Aaron Wells.

In time another generation of owners took over the ferry monopoly rights. Edward B. Judson succeeded William Judson and Henry L. Sharp replaced John L. Sharp. The residence of Edward B. Judson is listed as at Stockport and that of Henry Sharp as at Stuyvesant. Unfortunately, like its counterparts, this ferry's operation did not yield the income anticipated. By contract dated March 7, 1834, Judson and Sharp leased to George Fuller of Coxsackie, "the right and privilege of keeping the Ferry between Coxsackie, Reed's Landing, and the South Point of Nutten Hook". Included in the lease was the barn attached to the ferry on this side of the river, the horse boat, and the small boat worked with oars. Additionally, George Fuller was to take the ferriage which the law had authorized. This lease was to run for one year at a contract price of \$312. For his share, Judson was to receive \$225, while Henry Sharp was due the remainder, all to be paid by September 1834.

One interesting part of this lease is the provision for the Judson - Sharp interest to arrange for the construction of a new horse ferry vessel, to be equipped with rigging and tackle necessary to be used in running her, by the tenth of May, 1834, or before that time if the builder could finish her. (While the name of the shipyard owner is not identified, it is fairly certain it was William Mayo who took over the Goodrich shipyard along South River Street, Coxsackie.) A small boat was also to be supplied to George Fuller, one equipped with oars, in place of the old one then at the ferry slip. Judson and Sharp

further agreed to remove the machinery from the old horse ferry boat and have it installed in the new one under construction. While the horse ferry boat (either old or new) was not available "for the convenience of the public", George Fuller was to run the small boat to protect the franchise rights.

The Fuller contract called for his keeping the wheel (paddle wheel - treadmill) of the new boat with good stepping plank after the first set was worn out so that deteriorated plank did not injure the horses. He was also to provide sufficient manpower to propel the boats and to provide good and substantial horses. As a minor appendage to the contract, William Judson claimed the horse manure which was to be left at the ferry barn.

The new ferry boat required improved wharfage which both Judson and Sharp agreed to provide. The existing docks on either side of the river were to be extended out into the river "so the horse boat will not lie aground at usual low water". Fuller was required to have the horse boat and the small boat ready to run at all reasonable hours according to the spirit of the law granting the monopoly franchise rights.

Other contracts still in existence cover the mid and the late 1830's when George Fuller took on a partner, Marvin Marshall. In February of 1835, Henry Sharp sold out his 1/2 in the ferry rights and his 1/4 interest in the ferry boat, to Fuller and Marshall for \$1,800. In March of that same year Judson leased his full rights to the ferry interests on the Coxsackie side, his 1/2 interest on the Columbia County side, and his 3/4 claim to the horse boat and the oared scow. His rental fee was to be \$40 the year.

While this leasing and selling was in process, the Andrew Witbeck heirs (he was one of the grantees of 1820) surfaced, resulting in legal confusion over the ferry rights. However, by contract dated January 30, 1835, John A. Witbeck and William A. Witbeck sold to Edward B. Judson their 1/6 of 1/2 interest in these ferry rights and similar fractional shares to the land and to the "small stone house, barn, stables, hog pen and other out houses on the ferry lot at Nutten Hook". Judson paid them \$71.33 for this nuisance claim.

The next available clue as to the ferry's operation comes with the petition of George Reed, Silas Holbrook and Attorney Peter H. Silvester to the New York State legislature in the spring of 1844. This effort on their part was an attempt to renew the ferry franchise which was due to expire. The petitioners represented that they had become owners of the ferry property on the west and the east sides of the river "as the same was occupied by William Judson, Aaron Witbeck and John L. Sharp". (The spelling of the last two names does not quite agree with the original petition to the legislature.) These three men further stated that between 1842 and 1844

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they had expended about \$1,000 to repair the ferry docks and that they intended to build a new horse boat during the winter of 1843. They sought the ferry rights for a new 12-year term commencing in September, 1844. This petition appears to have been successful, Peter H. Silvester being an attorney with extensive political connections.

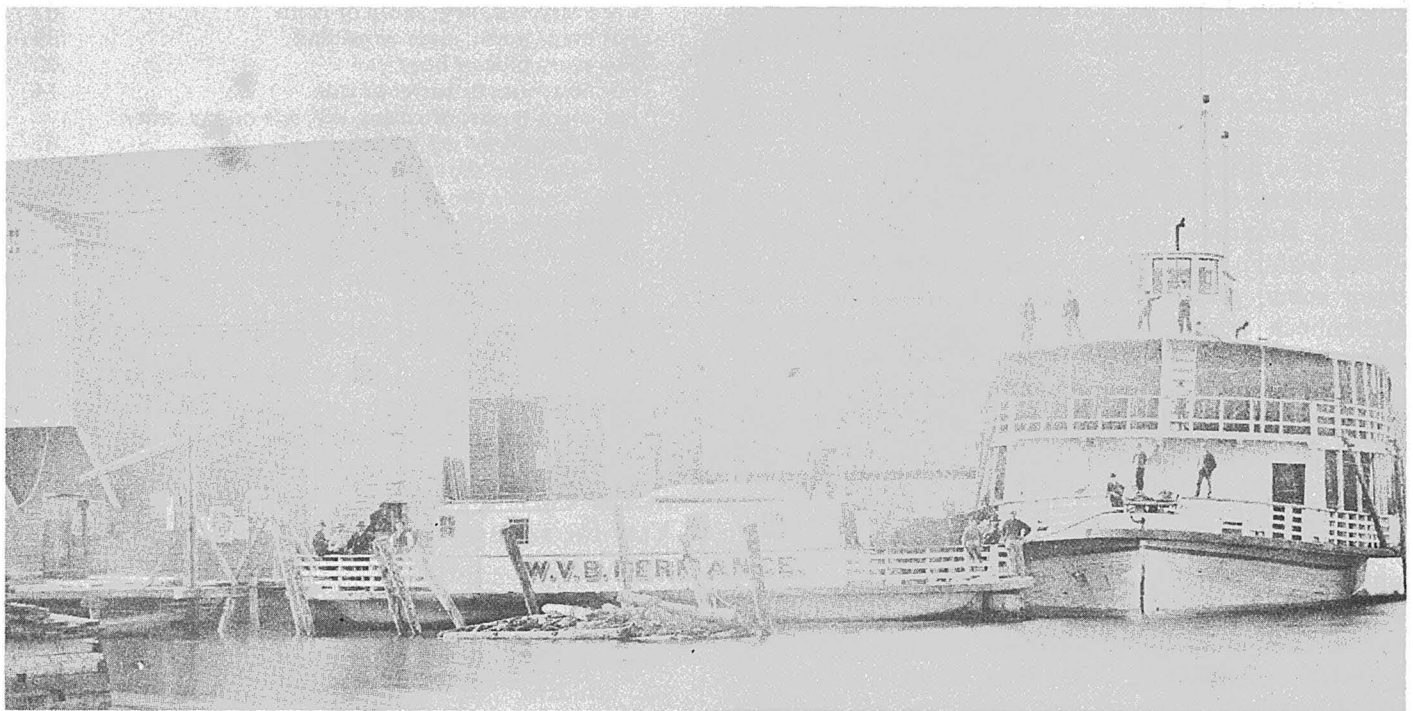
The power to set the rate of ferriage for these franchise monopolies was vested in the Greene County Court of Common Pleas. In 1842 the court approved the following rates of toll for the Cossackie run.

Be it Known that the Court of Common Pleas for the County of Greene at the February Term of Said Court in 1842 have fixed and established the following rates of ferriage to be received and taken by George Reed, Silas Holbrook and Peter H. Silvester at the Ferry across the Hudson River from Cossackie to Columbia County, at Nutten Hook in the town of Stuyvesant, to wit:

1 foot passenger	12½ cents
If more than one	6¼ cents
1 Waggon, 2 horses and driver loaded	37½ cents
1 Waggon, 2 horses and driver empty	31 cents
Chair and Waggon with one horse and driver	25 cents
Man and horse	18 cents
Additional horses and men	12½ cents
1 Yoke of oxen, cart or waggon & driver loaded	37½ cents
1 Yoke of oxen, cart or waggon & driver empty	31¼ cents

1 Yoke of oxen and driver	25 cents
All neat cattle per head	12½ cents
If more than two, each	9 cents
Sheep to the number of 20 per head, each	2 cents
If more than 20, each	1 cent
Calves and swine per head	3 cents
All single horses or mules, each	10 cents
All hogsheads and cases filled, each	12½ cents
All hogsheads and cases empty, each	3 cents
All barrels filled, each	6 cents
All barrels empty, each	1 cent
All articles measured by the bushel	1 cent
Shingles per 1000	6 cents
Board and other lumber per 1000 ft.	37½ cents

The last horse powered ferry, according to F. Van Loon Ryder, was the W. V. B. Hermance. This boat was named for William Van Bergen Heermance, the first president of the Cossackie Bank which he helped organize in 1852. The vessel proudly carried the name painted "W. V. B. Hermance," the second "e" being omitted. Mr. Heermance was the father of Miss Eleanor Heermance whose legacy endowed the family home for the village library. By the 1870's the Hermance was an old, outmoded ferry. The New Baltimore shipyard in 1878 turned out a new vessel named the *Cossackie*; it was delivered to its new owner, William H. Thomas whose family was long connected with the later ferry operation at the landing. The *Hermance* was tied up at the dock and held for a reserve boat but it was never used again on the Cossackie - Newton Hook crossing.



Rare C. C. Wells photo of Cossackie's W. V. B. Hermance ferryboat believed to have been eventually converted from horse to steam power.

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### THE CATSKILL – OAK HILL CROSSING:

No narrative of the early years of the ferry at Femmen Hook (Catskill Point) can be written without mention of Henry Van Garden (Van Gorden, Van Gordon). These Van Gordens had resided near the conjunction of the Hudson River and Catskill Creek since Johannes Van Garden, the grandfather of Henry, leased land at the Point in the year 1777. His son, Abraham, and eventually his grandson, Henry, took over these interests. One can readily understand the Van Gorden connection with this ferry crossing.

Arthur C. Mack of Columbia County, who wrote numerous historical articles, maintained that Henry Van Gorden was operating a ferry at Catskill Point almost two decades before the granting of the 1804 monopoly franchise. He further maintained the very first ferry landing was up Catskill Creek almost opposite Hop-O-Nose. Even at the early date of 1788 we find the ferry being leased out for operation to John B. Hollenbeck for 2 pounds, 10 shillings the year. Mr. Mack also mentions Thompson (Thomson?) and Grant as owners in 1797. Thomson could very well have been Dr. Thomas Thomson whose sons eventually became deeply involved in its operation.

In any event, with the passage of the Catskill Ferry Act of 1804 which granted a 20-year monopoly to operate a two-mile horse ferry on the west side of the Hudson River at Catskill Landing, Henry Van Gorden and his partner, Garret Abeel, were firmly in control.

Pinckney's *Sketches of Catskill* mentions the terminus of this ferry as being at the mouth of the creek at a point of land. Obviously this was before the building of the Long Dock connecting the mainland to Bompie's Hook (a small rock ledge partially above water). For several years the ferry boat was an open scow, powered by sail and oar. "Black" Ben Hallenbeck was the skipper, collecting sixpence per passenger. Again Pinckney: "Black Ben continued to navigate between Greene and Columbia Counties from the proprietorship of John Hallenbeck and Hank Van Gorden down to the days of Nathaniel Jacobs. I think he died before the administration of Tom Newbury (or Black Hawk) or that of Capt. Barhydt". Ben was a character in his own right, an operator of the ferry but never an owner.

The ferry boat was described in the 1924 edition of the *Daily Mail* by Mrs. Hill as "an open scow with wide falls at each end, with a mast stepped at one side which was balanced on the other by a huge wing called a leeboard tho it was usually on the windward side of the vessel. When the wind blew, the boat was propelled by means of a large main-sail and calm weather by a pair of long oars or sweeps". Mrs. Hill drew upon Henry Brace for her information.

The Long Dock which moved the ferry landing out into deeper water, proved to be totally inad-

quate, being subject to flooding at high tides. To enhance ferry revenues and at the same time to secure a much longer franchise, Henry Van Gorden, Garret Abeel and Samuel Van Vechten successfully sought from the New York State legislature a 150-year ferry monopoly in return for agreeing to raise the Long Dock at least three feet in height. This act, dated March 18, 1808, was entitled: "An Act supplementary to the Act entitled 'An Act granting to Henry Van Garden, the exclusive right to ferry on the West side of the Hudson river at the village of Catskill.' " The legislature stipulated the raising of the Long Dock must be completed within three years, and when the same was accomplished to the satisfaction of the Judges of the Greene County Court of Common Pleas or a majority of them, then the 150-year monopoly franchise would take effect.

During this period the Court of Common Pleas also set rates authorizing Henry Van Gorden to collect the following:

For every loaded wagon with two horses and driver	.50
For every empty wagon with two horses and driver	.40
For every riding chair with horse and driver	.25
For every horse chaise and driver	.25
For every man and horse	.15
For every footman (man walking)	.06
For every loaded cart with one yoke of oxen and driver	.50
For every empty cart with one yoke of oxen and driver	.40
For every yoke of oxen and driver	.19
For all neat cattle per head	.06
For every calf, hog, sheep or lamb	.02
For every horse, mare or gelding	.09
For every pipe or hogshead	.02
For every empty barrel or cask	.14
For every bushel of wheat, rye, salt or any other article sold by the bushel	.01
For every one thousand shingles	.12½
For every one thousand feet of joist or scantling	.50
For every one thousand feet of board	.50
For every barrel of flour, cider or spirits, etc.	.05
For every hogshead of cider, spirits, etc.	.19
For every four-wheeled carriage	.31
For every two-wheeled carriage	.19

With the raising of the Long Dock to the satisfaction of the Court of Common Pleas, Van Gorden and Abeel continued to operate the ferry with hired help. However, by the year 1814 they were advertising in the *Catskill Recorder* indicating a willingness to lease the same to any responsible party. "None other need apply."

In the year 1815, Thomas T. Thomson, son of Dr. Thomas Thomson of Catskill Landing, returned to his native village a wealthy capitalist. In addition to building his country seat, Cedar Grove (the Thomas Cole Estate), he sought out other business opportunities. For \$7,125, including interest, he acquired six of the eight ferry shares outstanding. He purchased four from Garret Abeel and two from Henry Van Gorden. About the same time Thomas T. Thomson was also busy purchasing land from Henry

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Van Gorden and Garret Abeel as well as from John Livingston. At least part of these transactions appears to relate to the ferry site.

In his will, probated in 1821, Thomas T. Thomson named his brother, John Alexander Thomson, his executor; this brother was also a major legatee. Part of the Thomas T. Thomson estate was the 3/4 interest in the Catskill Ferry. Thus Henry Van Gorden acquired a new partner. This Thomson control was further strengthened in August of 1821 when Henry Van Gorden, desperately in need of cash to settle court judgments (\$319.68 to James Pinckney, \$1086.38 to Tertullus Luddington, and \$116.87 to the law firm of Powers and Adams), mortgaged his quarter interest in the horse ferry and the Long Dock to John A. Thomson. That mortgage was to run for three years but when it came due in 1824, Van Gorden successfully sought a year's extension. From a study of available records, it appears Van Gorden's interest was eventually turned over to John A. Thomson.

Even before the death of Thomas T. Thomson, he and his brother were interested in an improved horse ferry boat. They turned to two Troy men — Isaac Lovejoy and Amos Allen. By Letters Patent dated June 15, 1819, Barnabas and John C. Langdon of Troy had been granted a patent "for the full and exclusive right and liberty of making, constructing, using and vending to others, to be used, a new and useful improvement in the Horse Boat. For the sum of \$350 the use of this patent at Catskill was transferred to Lovejoy and Allen on March 29, 1820. John R. Hallenbeck of Hudson and John A. Thomson of Catskill paid \$225 for the Allen and Lovejoy rights. This gave the latter two men the "full and exclusive right and liberty of making, constructing and using the said Horse Boat, across the Hudson River at the village of Catskill at or near the present ferry and up and down said River, and for no other ferries and at no other places whatsoever. This contract reads:

Know all men by these Presents that whereas a Mr. Langdon lately invented or discovered a new team boat or horse boat which is now used at Troy & elsewhere & patented to said Langdon & whereas said Langdon the inventor hath sold to & granted to us the exclusive right of using & selling to others to use & sell & make said boat at the place now used for the ferry in Catskill in Green[e] County across the Hudson River for the distance of one mile — north and south from said ferrying place & whereas we are desirous of selling said privilege & whole of it and for divers good considerations as thereunto moving, we, having authorized Nathaniel Jacobs Junior of Catskill to sell & transfer the said right for the sum of two hundred twenty-five dollars to us paid by John A. Thompson [Thomson]. Henry Van Gordon [Gorden] of Catskill and John R. Hallenbeck of Hudson . . . during the time and period that is limited in the patent . . .

Receipts from John R. Hallenbeck indicate he was operating the ferry during the summer and early fall of 1829, sharing a portion of the proceeds with the Thomas heirs.

For many years the eastern terminus of the Catskill Ferry was at Oak Hill landing owned by the Livingston family. In 1831 Herman Livingston was informed the Thomson ferry shares were on the market; John A. Thomson was faced with court settlements relating to his brother Thomas T. Thomson's estate. Additionally he was caught in the Panic of the 1830's. Mark Spencer, brother-in-law of John Alexander Thomson, wrote from New York to Robert Dorlon, attorney at Catskill, indicating Spencer had no objections to John A. Thomson's meeting with Mr. Livingston about the ferry and expressed the hope Mr. Livingston would purchase the franchise to enable John A. Thomson to meet pressing interest payments.

The shares were not purchased by the Livingstons but the latter appear to have backed Thomas Newbury in his lease of the Catskill ferry. In the *Catskill Messenger*, under date of October 8, 1831, we read:

CATSKILL FERRY. — The subscribers having become proprietors of the Catskill Ferry, have furnished themselves with a new TEAM BOAT, of the most appropriate construction, by which they will be enabled to accommodate with as much facility as at any Ferry on the River. The Boat is of sufficient capacity to carry at one trip with ease, 8 two horse wagons, 50 oxens or six hundred sheep. They are improving and will keep in repair the roads leading to the same, and will by personal attention to its management endeavor to merit the approbation and the patronage of the public. The local situation is such as to give it decided advantages over any other Ferry on the river, particularly to Drovers, they having erected a yard on the east side of the river to secure cattle and sheep as they land.

During the 1830's and 1840's the Livingstons of Oak Hill were actively engaged in the shipment of hay, grain and other agricultural products to metropolitan New York; additionally they transported livestock. This trade continued to expand and by 1838 the firm of Livingston and Brothers was advertising:

The proprietors of the Tow Boat Constellation have reduced the fare of stock from the west side of the river, viz. Horses \$1.50, Cattle 75 cts, Cows and Calves \$1.00, Sheep 6¼ cts. Ferriage free across the river . . . Passengers from Catskill will find good accommodations on Board the Barge. Fare \$1.00.

The prices quoted were for the trip to New York City.

Just how early John A. Thomson and Herman Livingston came to a mutual understanding over the ferry's operation is uncertain. One lease dating from April 30, 1845 survives among the Thomson papers. It reads:

(continued on page 18)

## GREENE COUNTY'S HORSE FERRIES

(continued from page 17)

This Agreement made this 30th Day of April One Thousand Eight Hundred and Forty five Between John A. Thomson of Catskill, in the County of Greene, of the first part, & Herman Livingston of the Town of Livingston in the County of Columbia, of the second part — Witnesseth that the said John, in consideration of the Rent and Covenants to be Paid, Kept & performed, on the part of the said Herman, and Hereinafter mentioned, Hath Demised & let, to the said Herman Livingston, His Executors & administrators & assigns, from the date Hereof, until the first day of January one thousand Eight Hundred & fifty The Catskill Ferry with the appurtenances, upon the West Side of Hudsons River, Including the Use of the Barn or Stable on the Long Dock owned by the same John, yielding & paying Therefor to the said John, His Executors, administrators or assigns on Saturday of Every Week During said Term one Half of all the Monies Received for Ferriage of Every Description upon the West Side of said River at said ferry & also the Whole of Every Tax & Assessment Imposed or assessed upon said Ferry or Dock, During said Term Including the present year; And the said John, Doth Hereby covenant to & with the said Herman His Executors, Administrators & assigns, that He will During said Term Keep the said long Dock in Good Order or Repair; And the said Herman for Himself, His Heirs, Executors, administrators, & assigns, In Considerations of said premises, Doth Hereby covenant, to & with the said John His Executors, Administrators & assigns That He will Keep a Good & Substantial four Horse ferry Boat at all times, at said ferry, for the Public Accommodation & use, During said Term, for that Purpose & will also Keep & use at said Ferry During said Term four Good Horses & Every Thing Necessary or appurtenances, with the proper number of men, Tenders & Things for said ferry to accommodate & please the Public, so far as is Reasonable & Profitable & Tend the said ferry in the Best & Safest Manner with as little Delay as is Necessary, under the Circumstances of Each Case, & will pay to the said John, His Executors, administrators, or assigns, one Half of all the Monies Received for Ferriage of Every Description at said ferry upon the West Side of said River on Saturday, of Every Week During said Term, & the whole of all the Taxes & assessments Imposed or Assessed upon said long Dock or Ferry, During said Term Including the present year, & That He will Keep & Provide During said Term in a Suitable manner a Book, or Books, at said ferry in which shall be Entered an accurate Account or Statement of Every Thing, Subject to Pay Ferriage, Which Crosses the said ferry from the West to the East Side, thereof; Which said Book or Books shall be open at all Reasonable Times for Inspection or copying by the said John or His Representatives & That He will Keep in Good Order & Repair the Present Road, with proper Sluices, & Bridges, from the Ferry Stairs upon the East Side of said River, to the House of the late John R. Hallenbeck Dec'd. & will make use of all proper & Reasonable Exertions to advance the Reputation of said ferry & Promote the Interest, of the said John & his representatives, & at the Expiration of said Term will quietly yield up the possession of said Ferry with the appurtenances & Barn or Stable in Good Order, to the said John or his Representatives; And the said Herman Livingston Hereby Covenants with the said John A. Thomson & His Representatives, That if He, the said Herman, Desires to Under let the said Ferry & appurtenances at any Time During this Lease He will Give for the said John & His Representatives, the

first offer. & also the Refusal to take the same, Himself, if He, the said John or His Representatives, are so inclined, & will also Give to Him, or them, forty eight hours, after such Notice, to make up His conclusion, as to such Offer, or Proposition; To Have & To Hold the same, with the appurtenances to the said Herman Livingston & His Representatives, administrators & assigns, That He will Keep a Good & Substantial four Horse ferry Boat, at all times at said ferry for [ . . . ] and his representatives, for & During the term aforesaid, without interruption from the said John or his Representatives. In Witness Whereof, The said Parties, Have Hereunto Set Their Hands & Seals.

/s/ Herman Livingston

/s/ John A. Thomson

Within a few years of his death, John A. Thomson's business affairs became increasingly dismal and we find him assigning the Livingston ferry lease over to Thomas Cole (the artist) and husband of Thomson's niece, Maria) and to Ezra Hawley. These men were to pay from the lease income interest owed by John A. Thomson to the Catskill Bank and, if possible, something on the principal upon a mortgage on Cedar Grove assigned to an insurance company by Amos Cornwall of Catskill.

In 1846 John Alexander Thomson died, leaving his estate to his four nieces, one of whom was Mrs. Thomas Cole. As joint executors Thomas Cole and Ezra Hawley found themselves with the Catskill ferry responsibility. With Cole's unexpected death in 1848, the entire burden rested with Ezra Hawley. He was to counsel Maria Bartow Cole and her three sisters through a web of financial estate entanglements. The horse ferry monopoly was being challenged in the New York State Supreme Court, improved service with a steam powered ferry being long overdue at Catskill Point. Such a ferry replacement was beyond the financial capability of Maria Cole and her sisters. They did however, arrange for Beach and Van Gorden to improve the ferry landing by deepening the ferry slip with the removal of accumulated silt, pounding in new pilings, etc.

Now Joseph Joesbury of Catskill enters the picture. He believed he could secure a steam vessel to operate in place of the horse ferry and thus still the public outcry. At Roundout, on June 3, 1853, Thomas Cornell acknowledged in writing the receipt of \$1,500 in cash from Joseph Joesbury and a one-year note for \$800: "Being for the purchase money of the Steam Boat *Knickerbocker* for which we are to give him a Bill of Sale." The \$800 note had originally been made by Joseph Joesbury payable to Maria Cole and was endorsed by her and Ezra Hawley to aid Joesbury in the *Knickerbocker's* purchase.

But Joseph Joesbury's finances proved unequal to the demands of this new venture, forcing his creditors to secure an assignment of the Steam Boat *Knickerbocker's* engine - the assignees were Danforth K. Olney and Martin L. Rickerson. They in turn sold their claim against the vessel to the Thomson heirs, requesting payment of \$600 "Being the amount of

(continued on page 20)



## VEDDER LIBRARY NOTES

- ◇ Friends of the Society living away from Greene County are numerous but no one follows the progress of the Society more than Mrs. M. Bruce Wayman of Tappahannock, Virginia. Her father, Orin Q. Flint, was its first president. To add to the archives detailing the establishment of the Society in 1929, she has contributed the February 8, 1929 edition of the *Catskill Daily Mail*.
- ◇ The Library staff has been busy this past winter season indexing Federal political party lists, the Greene County Loan Commissioners' records, and the county assessment roll for 1813. A new card catalogue will soon be a necessity. This would be a useful memorial gift from some well-wisher.
- ◇ Mr. Douglas Thomson of Oak Hill has been doing an excellent piece of research to identify the Civil War careers of men from Greene County. In the process he discovered the county's one Congressional Medal of Honor winner.
- ◇ A useful collection of genealogical information in three well organized and indexed folders has come from the Meeting House Hill Chapter, NSDAR, through Mrs. Earl L. Simpkins of Greenville, Regent of that patriotic society. The material is copied from the Minor and Vaughn family Bibles and also from the 1900 Cairo Tax Assessment Roll.
- ◇ Greene County's first official historian, Jessie Van Vechten Vedder, left numerous informal notes relating to aspects of county history. A number of them have been transcribed to 3 x 5 file cards. One of her more interesting notes relates to the Benjamin-Austin Paper Mill on Catskill Creek at Jefferson Heights. "Over the doorway of Austin's paper Mill was the legend: 'Built in Faith, Hope and Charity - 1808,'" This may well tie in with the rebuilding of the mill after the disastrous fire.
- ◇ It eventually came to us! Mr. and Mrs. Walter M. Kinn of Coeymans Hollow, New York presented the Vedder Memorial Library with a nineteenth century photograph of the First Reformed Church's second building in West Coxsackie. They had acquired it at a sale. On the reverse someone had written: "This church was across from what is now Wilber Van Schaack's home. This is to be given to the Bronck House."
- ◇ Jaques Cattell Press, a division of R. R. Bowker Company, is publishing a revised and greatly expanded edition of its directory of *Special Collections (Subject Collections)*, last published in 1978. The Vedder Memorial Library has been requested to update its original listing.
- ◇ Don't forget the Van Valkenburgh Association needs genealogy assistants in Greene, Albany and other New York counties. For details, contact Dr. Fred R. Van Valkenburg, 2332 Elm, Billings, MT 59101 if you are a VV or related to a Van Valkenburg.
- ◇ Two important early 19th century maps have been preserved, having been mounted on old linen cloth. The first is by John Cantine and is entitled: "A Map whereon is designated the LINE Run by Agreement between the Hardenburgh Patent and the Patent of Blenheim A. D. 1800. Among the settlers listed are Joshua Jones, I. S. Bredford, H. Fellows, Jno. Van Loan, Widow Fraser, the Rightmyers as well as the Simmons Mill and Stanley's Tavern. The other map, the work of John Kiersted in the year 1810, is labeled: "A Map of a Tract Land Granted to Sir Henry Seton on the North side of the Catskill in the Town of Durham." Among the 30 lot owners are Jacob Roggen, Richard Benjamin, Michael Pearce, Jacob Moore, Philip Moore, the James family, William Barker, Eliakim Stanard, C. Tremper, David Morse, Henry Strope, Joel Stone, Cornelius Egbertson and several Wrights. These maps were part of the Pulver, Stiefel and predecessors gift of a few years ago.
- ◇ As a sequel to Mrs. Shirley A. Mearns gleaning of some 1840's issues of the *Ulster Republican*, the library has added approximately 100 cards for names and events relating to Greene County which appeared in that neighboring county's newspaper.
- ◇ Mr. Ralph Gosse of Albany has been in contact with us in trying to accumulate more information about the photographers for stereographs as related to the Catskill Mountains. A check of the Catskill Mountain House registers for the years in question failed to reveal Thomas C. Roche, chief photographer for the firm of E. & H. T. Anthony, registered at that resort while taking numerous photographs of the surrounding scenery. The search continues.
- ◇ The centennial booklet for Saugerties Trinity Episcopal Church, has been catalogued. It is of interest to the Society since Thomas Cole II was a rector of that church for a period of years. His photograph and biographical information are contained therein.
- ◇ From the Bard College Center comes a copy of *Meeting the Future on Purpose: Papers in Honor of Lewis Mumford*. Two subject cards result (1) Environmental Conservation - Hudson Valley and (2) Hudson River Valley Commission.
- ◇ The Greene County Planning Department has supplied its recent publication *Greene County Data Book - 1980; Population Characteristics*. Such publications add to the economic and social history of the county and make good reference sources.
- ◇ To study archival efforts in other geographical areas, the Vedder Library has secured Dorothy Pollock's *Guide to the Archives of the Town of Amherst, N. Y.*
- ◇ John Slenzo of Coxsackie has contributed a miscellaneous assortment of newspaper material relating to the Coxsackie Rescue Squad, the local fire companies and the Water Works. Other items include souvenirs of local celebrations. The gift is in memory of William Van Valkenburg who accumulated the material.

□ □ □ □ □

## GREENE COUNTY'S HORSE FERRIES

(continued from page 18)

the Sale of the Steam Boat *Knickerbocker* and engine by us to you." Two days later Maria Cole and her sisters sold the *Knickerbocker* to Charles L. Beach of Catskill. The Cole - Joesbury and the People vs. Maria Cole, et. al. lawsuits were discontinued by all parties. The decades of the Catskill Horse Ferry were at an end. The Beach family was now involved in steam powered ferriage at Catskill Landing.

□ □ □ □ □

## GENEALOGICAL CORNER

Statement of Federal Voters in Town of Coxsackie – Particularly in 1815 for the town Election.

Ackerly, Samuel	Cottle, Joseph B.
Austin, Nathaniel	Cottle, Peter
	Cure, William
Baker, James	Cuyler, Jacob
Bartow, Joseph	Cuyler, John H.
Bartow, Peter	
Batchelor, Isaac	Davis, Jonathan
Bates, Calvin	Davis, William
Beatty, Arthur	Dean, Jeremiah
Beaumis, George	Dederick, Frederick
Benedict, Stephen L.	Dederick, John F.
Billingham, William	Dederick, William
Bogardus, Derck	Delamater, Robert
Bogardus, Jacob R.	Deming, Andries
Bogardus, John E.	Deming, Dudley
Bogardus, Peter	Deming, Henry
Bogardus, Peter J.	Dickinson, Henry
Botsford, David	Dies, John
Brandow, William (I. or J.)	Dodge, (blacksmith)
Bronk, Casper	Driskell, Timothy
Bronk, John L.	Driskell, Timothy (Jr.)
Bronk, Jonas	
Bronk, Leonard	Edwards, William
Brown, John	Evertson, Peter
Burns, John	
Burroughs, Benjamin N.	Fairchild, Talmadge
Burroughs, Nathan	Field, William H. (?)
Burroughs, William	Finch,
	Fish, Seberry
Campbell, John	Fitch, Simeon
Canada (Kennedy), Duncan	Flansburg, John
Caniff, Abraham	Foot, Isaac
Case, John F.?	Fosdick, Henry
Chamberlin,	Freleigh, John
Chapman, William	
Chase, George	Garner, James
Chichester, James	Gay, Barnet
Clapper, John C.	Gay, William
Clark, John	Gibbs, Israel
Clow, Casper (Jr.)	Gibbs, Phinehas
Clow, John C.	Godfrey, Ensign
Cochran, Teunis	Godfrey, Joseph
Cock, John	Goes, John
Cole, Perry C.	Goes, John
Colyer, Casper	Goes, Jonathan
Conine, John C.	Goes, Matthias
Conine, Peter C.	Goes, William (Jr.)
Conine, Philip	Golden, James
Conine, Philip (Jr.)	Goodrich, Samuel
Cornwell, Henry	Goodrich, William
Cornwell, Jacob	Green, Henry
Cornwell, Samuel	Green, Timothy

Hallenbeck, Casper C.  
Hallenbeck, Casper M.  
Hallenbeck, Cornelius  
Hallenbeck, Francis  
Hallenbeck, Martin  
Hallenbeck, Mattice R.  
Hallenbeck, William  
Hallenbeck, William C.  
Hollister, Timoth  
Houghtaling,  
Houghtaling, Abraham (Jr.)  
Houghtaling, Henry  
Houghtaling, John S.  
Houghtaling, Mattice  
Hovey (possibly Hervey), Daniel  
Hoyt, Jonah  
Hubbel, Minor  
Hubbel, Nathan  
Huntly, Capt.  
Hunson, Abraham

I None

J None

Kinnicut, Elijah  
Kniffen, David

Lampher, Daniel  
Lampher, David  
Lampher, Oliver  
Lampman, Henry  
Lampman, Leonard  
Lampman, Nicholas  
Lane, Joseph  
Lantman, Johannis  
Lantman, Philip  
L'Homiedieu, Henry  
Lusk, Jason

Mansfield, Isaac  
Mapes, Timothy  
Marshall, Totten  
McKinney, Alexander  
McVickar, James  
Meed, Daniel H.  
Meed, David  
Mead, William  
Miller, John  
Moore, Benjamin  
Myers, Gilbert M.

Norbury, John

Ostrander, John J.  
Oudt, Jeremiah  
Oudt, John

Paddock, Laban  
Palmer, Joel  
Palmer, John  
Palmer, Jonathan  
Palmer, Solomon  
Parks, Wayne  
Parslow, Anthony  
Pier, Benjamin  
Powell, Jacob  
Powell, James  
Powell, Thomas E.

Q None

Rea, James  
Reed, Epenetus  
Reed, George  
Reed, Roswell  
Robbins, John  
Roderick, James  
Rosa, John  
Rosa, Storm

Sanford, Austin  
Schepmoes, Richard  
Schoonmaker, Henry  
Schoonmaker, Hezekiah  
Scott, William  
Scram, Clement  
Sharp, Jacob  
Simpson, Robert  
Skeel, Theron  
Smith, Amos  
Smith, Daniel  
Smith, Gregory  
Smith, Nathaniel  
Smith, Zebediah  
Spoor, Casper C.  
Spoor, Isaac  
Spoor, Johannis  
Spoor, John I.  
Spring, Barney  
Stewart, William (Jr.)  
Street, Walton

To be continued in the Fall 1984 Issue.

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