

Greene County Historical Journal

A Publication of the Greene County Historical Society, Inc.

U.S. Route 9-W

Coxsackie, N.Y. 12051

Vol. 9, Issue 1

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Spring 1985

Roswell Reed's "Speculative Opportunities"

— Raymond Beecher

Introduction: Few residents of Greene County were more actively involved in the economic development of New York in the earlier decades of the nineteenth century than Roswell Reed (1769–1839) of Coxsackie. Yet, except for a few paragraphs in Robert Henry Van Bergen's *Ye Olden Times*, Reed has escaped the attention of regional historians.

At the time of Roswell Reed's death in 1839, his executors must have had to deal with an extensive collection of deeds, letters, promissory notes, and similar manuscript material. If such a body of papers survives, its whereabouts has yet to be discovered. A few relating to his Coxsackie homestead are at the Vedder Memorial Library at Bronck Museum, the gift of Reed's great-granddaughter, Margaret Fitch Hasbrouck of Stone Ridge, Ulster County. In the archives of the Van Dyck — Bronk law firm, also in the Vedder Memorial Library, are a number of business papers relating to land transactions in the various patents. The New York State Library has some from Epenetus Reed, Roswell's brother; they are informative since Epenetus and Roswell were jointly involved in a number of land ventures. But the primary resource material available has been a substantial collection of letters written by Roswell Reed to his son-in-law, Herman Cuyler Adams who was married to Reed's daughter Adeline. These letters are also in the Vedder Memorial Library, the gift of Mrs. Frances Adams in memory of her husband, Reed Adams, a direct descendant.

No oil portrait or other likeness of Roswell Reed or of his wife, Sally, has been located; it may be none were ever made. Nor have any late nineteenth or early twentieth century photographs of the Reed homestead turned up. The one held by the Greene County Historical Society was lost during a loan to the village of Coxsackie for a celebration.

Several houses connected with the Reed family have survived while others have been lost by fire or deterioration. The Roswell Reed cemetery survives in a reasonably well-maintained condition on the east side of Route 385, just south of Coxsackie village. It is almost opposite the site of the Roswell Reed mansion destroyed by fire during the Wheeler family ownership. — These Reeds who settled and helped develop the middle landing (Reed's Landing) at Coxsackie were of English stock, early settlers of New England. Roswell Reed's parents, Ezra (1740–1807) and Sarah (1742–1818) were among the restless tide of Yankees ever searching for more profitable locations of residence. Ezra Reed was the sixth son of Daniel Reed of Norwalk, Connecticut. At age twenty-three he married

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Colonel Pratt's Bank Clerk — Joseph Allen DuBois

— Raymond Beecher

Reaching the employable age of 18 years in 1844, Joseph Allen DuBois (1826–1863), oldest son of Samuel and Mary Allen DuBois, was prepared to accept any reasonable offer of employment. Not finding anything in the Catskill area to his liking, through his father's political connections with Colonel Zadock Pratt, an opportunity arose to learn the banking business in Prattsville. It meant rooming and boarding away from the Liberty Street home for the first time. The Prattsville Bank was relatively new, having been founded by Colonel Pratt only the previous year on October 30, 1843.



Val Kriele Photo

The Samuel and Mary Allen DuBois House, Liberty Street, Catskill

It was a period of turmoil in national and local politics. The local Democratic party was a strong one under Colonel Pratt's leadership. He chaired five Democratic Greene County conventions and was twice elected to the federal congress under that political banner. The Whig party provided keen opposition. Sheriff DuBois was a Democrat and equally involved in the political strife of the era.

In the fall of 1844 Joseph A. DuBois traveled to Prattsville, arranged for room and board, and began to earn his livelihood under Prattsville Bank cashier, John Hopkins. His correspondent at home was his sister, Mary Allen (later Mrs. Benjamin B. G. Stone); they exchanged letters at irregular intervals, she being away visiting her married sister in Schoharie part of the time. One senses a feeling of longing on his part for the Catskill scene and family life; Prattsville was "backwater." Yet Prattsville in this period was a

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Roswell Reed (continued from page 1)

Sarah, daughter of Epenetus Kellogg and a former Miss Roswell; the wedding date was May 22, 1763. Our Roswell Reed was named for his maternal grandmother's family. Ezra Reed⁴ and his brothers, Eliakim⁴, James and Abijah, eventually removed to Amenia, Dutchess County, but Ezra soon again removed to the city of Hudson where he rose rapidly in commercial circles, becoming one of the city's well-to-do men. In their final years of life, Ezra and Sarah Reed again changed places of residence, this time moving across the Hudson to the rapidly developing middle landing at Coxsackie. Like other Reeds, Ezra made extensive land purchases in the township as the Coxsackie Patent was being subdivided and sold off by the Van Bergen and Bronk heirs.

The exact date of the Reed settlement at Coxsackie which came to carry the name Reed's Landing, had long been uncertain. *Ye Olden Times* merely states that one Eliakim Reed "bought of the Van Bergens, before the year 1800, a part of lot 48 and built a wharf and a small storehouse at the northeast corner of a ledge of rocks." Family notes in the possession of Fitch-Reed descendants in Middlebury, Connecticut, suggest this Eliakim Reed was at Amenia less than ten years, then came to Coxsackie in the footsteps of his uncle, Ezra Reed, before the year 1784. This family tradition appears to be in error since a recently located deed in the New York State Library refers to Ezra Reed as "of Hudson"; it carries the date of January 31, 1803. Furthermore, another indenture for land in that same library collection indicates Peter Van Bergen of Albany, on July 14, 1792, released to Eliakim Reed of the *County of Columbia*, for the consideration of 650 pounds, lands in the Coxsackie Patent, being Water Lot no. 48, containing 35 acres and Lot no. 25 containing 52½ acres. This latter deed would seem to set the date of the Reed's involvement at Coxsackie as about 1792. Ezra Reed appears to have followed, rather than preceded Eliakim Reed Jr. Some confusion may have occurred over the years with the name Eliakim. Both the Eliakim Reed of Coxsackie (later of Greenville) and his father of Amenia had the same first name but the son was never referred to as "Junior".

Within twelve years of purchase at Coxsackie, Eliakim Reed sold off part of his land holdings at Reed's Landing to Barker and Judson while dividing other holdings with his erstwhile partner, Roswell Reed, his son-in-law. The marriage of Sarah, daughter of Eliakim Reed and Rebecca Fitch, to her second cousin Roswell Reed, occurred in Greenville in 1793 when she was sixteen years of age. At least this is the family tradition.

Another manuscript in the State Library, a deed dated October 12, 1804, provides an added clue to the Eliakim Reed-Roswell Reed business relationship, and also a clue as to the termination of this partnership. The indenture divides three parcels of real property at Reed's Landing between the brothers Epenetus and Roswell and further notes "the three

foregoing pieces or parcels of land is meant to include the equal half part of all the land and appurtenances as the division was concluded between Eliakim Reed and Roswell Reed in April, eighteen hundred and four."

After their marriage in 1793, Roswell and Sally Reed are presumed to have lived in modest quarters in the Mansion Street area of Coxsackie. However, as he prospered and their family increased in size, a larger residence became a necessity. On 200 acres of land in the most northerly section of the Loonenburg Patent, "bounded on the east by the Hudson River, south by the land of Thomas Nelson, Leonard and Isaac Lampman and the road leading from the turnpike westerly to the house of Isaac Lampman; westerly by the lands of Isaac Lampman and John Campbell and John Spoor; and northerly by the land of John Spoor and John Ely," Roswell and Sally built their brick federal style mansion, an elaborate residence for the time. It survived until its destruction by fire in 1935 during the Wheeler ownership. There were many similarities with Simeon and Lydia Fitch's federal style brick mansion at West Coxsackie (later the Park Hotel); it is believed the same contractor built both residences. Simeon Fitch's wife, Lydia, was a sister of Roswell Reed.

And so while the exact date of the building of the Roswell Reed homestead structure is uncertain, it is known that the land purchase was made on June 2, 1804. Three related documents survive for this real property transaction. They indicate the purchase price for the 200 acres was \$1,500. The seller was Hester Roseboom of Albany whose ancestor, Jacob Roseboom, had shared in the 1750 division of the Abraham Staats share of the Loonenburg Patent. A bond and a mortgage accompanied the Roseboom-Reed land indenture, the latter witnessed by Garrit Bradt and Jacob Lansing of Albany. The donor of these three documents, Harriet Fitch Hasbrouck, noted on the envelope that they pertained to her great-grandfather's property at Coxsackie.

Periodic payments were made on the mortgage by purchaser Roswell Reed, he utilizing the services of local friends such as Obadiah King, Peter C. Adams, Dorrance Kirtland and a Mr. Judson to deliver the payments at Albany. The final mortgage payment was made on July 29, 1806, at which time the ever cautious Roswell Reed cut out his signature from the bond and mortgage documents. Reed's ability to pay off this debt of \$1,500 within a three year period indicates he was enjoying prosperity.

From his newly built brick mansion along the Albany and Greene Turnpike south of Coxsackie village, Roswell Reed directed a variety of commercial interests: lending money secured by mortgages, speculating in undeveloped tracts of state land, dealing in water powered mill sites, marketing wood products from logging operations, sawing marble, and even building a steamboat hull. At times Reed was overextended financially and hard pressed for funds,

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Roswell Reed *(continued from page 2)*

yet he, unlike many others, managed to survive the economic depressions of his lifetime. He both made and lost money in what he termed "speculative opportunities." The development of the Erie Canal and the opening of the vast acreage in central New York greatly increased the value of his extensive land holdings in that region.

Judge Leonard Bronk and other prominent individuals in the Cossackie area were impressed with Roswell Reed's business acumen. Not only was Reed one of the main incorporators of the Cossackie Turnpike in 1806 but his fellow stockholders elected him that corporation's first treasurer. In this same period he was both jointly involved in transaction with his brother, Epenetus, and also acted independently.

One of the first indications of Roswell Reed's interest in unsettled central and western New York State lands is found in his financial accommodation to David and Phebe Lane of Cossackie for the latter's purchase in 1810 of acreage "lying in the town of Gorham in the county of Ontario, known and distinguished as the north half of Lot number forty-three in town number nine in the second Range or tier of towns in Phelps and Gorham's purchase, reference being made to the original survey of Said Lot." By 1811 Reed was improving his title to more local landholdings on his homestead farm along the Hudson by securing a quit-claim deed from William Bartow, Jr.

Throughout his lifetime, Roswell Reed was attracted to the potential of water powered sites for fulling, grist, plaster and saw mills. One of his first purchases was in the town of Cossackie. In 1816 he contracted with Totten Marshall to build a fulling mill works. He acquired an old house frame of Stephen S. Benedict, had it taken down and reconstructed at or near a small coal pit site on land lately occupied by Richard Vandenberg. The work and labor for the reconstruction of the framework, siding, roofing, flooring, windows and stairs was set at \$55 and two gallons of rum for the workmen. Marshall and Reed agreed that should any of the old framework be deteriorated, Marshall would get an allowance for additional hewing and framing of the new timbers. Reed never operated his mills himself but either leased them out or worked them on shares. Archibald Callender ran the aforementioned fulling mill in 1816 and for part of the 1817 season. This fulling mill is known to have included dye vats, a needed convenience for local housewives and for professional weavers. In the year 1825, Reed's son-in-law, Robert I. Vandenberg, purchased this fulling mill. Reed would write in a letter; "Robt. I. Vanh — has bought the old fulling stand at \$850 — for what."

Roswell Reed was no stranger to legal disputes and had recourse to attorneys and the courts during his lifetime. Generally these were to foreclose mortgages long overdue or to clear title on lands secured at tax sales. The David and Phebe Lane mortgage of

1810 heretofore mentioned illustrates this; Reed turned to the Court of Chancery to settle his claim to that Ontario land. That mortgage was foreclosed by court order and the land ordered sold by Judge Alexander Fraser. The auction took place not in the county of Ontario but rather at the inn of Seberry Fish in the village of Cossackie. And, as to be expected, Roswell Reed was the successful bidder.

The development of the steam powered vessels on the Hudson River interested Roswell Reed; he saw the potential for profit if demand for vessels exceeded supply. On August 25, 1826 Roswell Reed noted in a letter: "I have undertaken to build a large steam boat and shall be pressed for funds to pay \$5000 down — the rest in six months after finished." The vessel was to be built on the ways of the Goodrich shipyard on South River Street along the Hudson at Cossackie. This Lower Landing ship facility was the second oldest in the vicinity and the first to build a steamboat. (The first yard was a smaller operation owned by Dr. John Ely of Greenville who rented of Molly Wells a plot of land in the year 1786 "on which to build vessels"). Subsequent to Goodrich's collapse, his shipyard was taken over and successfully operated by William Mayo. Sloops, barges and the horse ferryboat were earlier Goodrich shipyard products and Roswell Reed had every reason to be confident in Goodrich's ability to construct the steamboat hull.

But while Roswell Reed had the proverbial golden touch in many business contracts, it failed in dealings with Samuel Goodrich. As early as the spring of 1824, Samuel Goodrich and Alexander Mahan, operating the shipyard, had difficulty raising funds to finance operations. Roswell Reed lent money to cover their overdue notes written in favor of Abraham Van Bergen and on which they still owed Reed \$2550. In June of 1825 Reed would note that Goodrich had paid him less than \$1000 while Reed owed \$1800 on notes taken up at the Catskill Bank. It is entirely possible Reed became involved in the steamboat project as a means of securing reimbursement from Goodrich.

Ever the cautious businessman, Reed was a firm believer in fire insurance on his various properties. The steam vessel, in which he had an insurable interest, was only taking shape on the ways in the Goodrich yard when Roswell Reed arranged for protection on his investment. He dealt with the Albany Insurance Company. "I wish to get a policy of insurance on my new steam boat on the stocks at Cossackie Landing — distant on a southerly direction from the dwelling house formerly occupied by Samuel Goodrich and now the residence of Alva Hall — fifty feet, and from a barn on the premises of the said Goodrich in a northeasterly direction about fifty feet. I wish to put her in the policy at ten thousand dollars at a half percent with the privilege of working on board of her paying one other half percent if it should become necessary." These instructions were given by letter to his son-in-law, Herman Cuyler Adams.

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Val Kriele Photo



Courtesy Mrs. Reed Adams

Adaline Reed, daughter of Roswell and Sally Reed married to Herman Cuyler Adams.

Ten days later Reed had not yet received the requested insurance coverage and concluded he might have to insure at \$5500 out of one office (to share the risk) but hoped the Albany Insurance Company would go for seven or eight thousand dollars.

It was necessary to furnish a description of the vessel being built and this Reed did by forwarding pertinent information to his son-in-law, Herman C. Adams, then at Albany. Reed would write on December 16, 1826: "I am afraid I have not done the boat ample justice in saying her frames is Cedar except an occasional stick of white oak or white chestnut except the turn of the bilge — now there are a very small number above the bilge where more crook is necessary than cedar would make & as I are not positive about there being any — I should be much pleased to have them come down & examine — the draught of water S. Goodrich says will be 4½ when completed . . ." And two days later: "I said her frames were Cedar with an *occasional* Stick of white Chestnut or white oak now I are not positive there is any in her frame & if there is only very few & those only where the Cedar would not work with sufficient strength — except the turn of the bilge which is made from large timbers dug down so as to have natural crooks close to the ground — much stronger & better than short Cedar or locusts — This is about the description (viz) with Live Oak apron — transom, night heads, timber heads & stauncheons, locusts . . ."

Goodrich continued to suffer financial reverses and removed himself and his family to Hyde Park in the late spring of 1826. Reed was concerned about this and about the shipyard dry dock's availability but he concluded the vessel hull could not be floated northward, "the Troy dam and the inclined plane is against him." The purchase of the Goodrich land was suggested by Reed but there is no evidence Reed ever

made the purchase. William Mayo eventually took over the shipyard and was more successful than Goodrich. In a warning to his son-in-law Adams, Reed mentioned in a letter "be careful not to sow your money to the wind like Samuel Goodrich."

During the later stages of the construction of the vessel, Roswell Reed felt he could not travel away from Coxsackie even though his other business interests demanded attention. On October 22, 1827, he would state in a letter: "I would go myself were I not now caulking the steam boat in order to send it to New York — a bad and precarious market — and my attention is indispensable in order to get her away."

Before the ship's hull was completed Reed began to seek out a potential buyer; he never intended to operate the vessel on the Hudson River. The construction had tied up much of his surplus capital and with two of his debtors under execution for debt, Goodrich and Thurlow, he would write: "It makes me sleep uneasy."

During the latter months of 1827 and the earlier ones of 1828 Roswell Reed had Captain Wiswall, Adams, and others on the alert for a potential buyer. A generous commission was offered. At one time Reed thought the Victory Company was interested and he priced the vessel at \$25 the ton. "I feel disposed to close her at \$8000 and if not better at \$22½ per tunn."

Still no purchaser! On January 16, 1828, Reed modified his selling price to \$6000 cash or short credit and the remainder in stock. Nine days later he wanted Captain Wiswall to sell the boat enough over \$7000 to pay him his commission. Reed stated that if he had to take stock as part of the selling price he would sell the stock as soon as possible at whatever discount. He expressed concern about the individual liability of stockholders (probably from steamboat explosions and injury to passengers).

By late March of 1828, Reed was again short of working capital and attempted to borrow \$1,000 from his cousin in New York, Luman Reed (Thomas Cole's patron), but found out money was very scarce in that city. Neither had Obadiah King or Reuben Rundle of Greenville township paid him anything that spring. Reed concluded in a letter: "My stomach is too strong to ask Luman [Reed] to be a surety in New York for a loan."

Adams, the son-in-law, had no success in selling the boat in Albany so Roswell Reed sent his son, Ezra, to that place with instructions to seek out a buyer at \$20 the ton "as she was." In early April Reed conceived a plan to sell the vessel at public auction but failed to get a single bid.

Donald Ringwald, the noted authority on Hudson River boats, states that Reed, strapped for money, finally had the hull decked over and towed to New York and later up river to Wilbur where, in 1831, it was finally sold to the Delaware & Hudson Canal Company. That firm enrolled it under the name

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Roswell Reed (continued from page 4)

Lackawanna and used it to haul coal from Rondout to New York. This is partially verified by Reed's correspondence of June 1828: "My steam boat is in New York with about 750 bundles of hay under deck and I hope to say 'sold' in my next letter."

In Reed's lifetime he had seen steam transportation come into its own on the Hudson River. He occasionally made reference to that progress in his letters as on March 14, 1831 when he wrote: "The ice is running here. Steam will soon be the order of traveling."

The difficulties encountered by Reed in this "speculative opportunity" in steamboat construction discouraged him from attempting to build a second hull. There was more profit to be made in undeveloped land.

(Part II of this mini-biography of Roswell Reed will appear in the Summer 1985 *Quarterly Journal*.)

REED GENEALOGY

John Reed¹

John Reed²

Daniel Reed³ of Norwalk, Conn.
Father of 9 children, two of whom
were Eliakim⁴ and Ezra⁴.

Eliakim⁴ (1725-1810)
married Sarah Richards
(1727-1795). Seven
children of this mar-
riage, one of whom
was Eliakim⁵.

Eliakim⁵ (1752-1830)
married Rebecca Fitch
in year 1772. They
lived in Amenia, in
Coxsackie and later re-
located at Greenville,
New York. Seven chil-
dren identified:

Lydia born 1774, mar-
ried Sylvester Ford.

Lavina (Vina) born
1775, married Jona-
than Sherrill, tannery
owner at Greenville.
She died 1845.

Jane born 1779, married
Epenetus Reed, her
second cousin. They
lived at Coxsackie.

Ezra⁴ (1740-1807)
married Sarah Kellogg
May 26, 1763. They
lived at Amenia, in
Hudson and later at
Coxsackie. There were
eleven offspring of this
marriage, one of whom
was Roswell Reed,
subject of this mini-
biography.

Sarah (1765-1765)

Sarah (1766-1834),
married Elias Butler.
Resided at Upper
Landing, Coxsackie.

Lois (1767-1843)

Roswell (1769-1839)
married his second
cousin Sally Reed of
Greenville in year
1793.

Aaron (1771-1850),
married Catharine
Ostrander.

Sally (Sarah?) born
1782, married Roswell
Reed, her second cou-
sin. They lived at
Coxsackie.

Abijah born 1782, mar-
ried Sally Ford. He
was a leading citizen
of Greenville.

Margaret born 1784.

Luman born 1787, mar-
ried Mary Barker of
Coxsackie. He became
a wealthy NYC mer-
chant, patron of the
arts and friend of
Thomas Cole.

Jemina (1773-1784)

Epenetus (1773-1847),
married his second
cousin Jane Reed of
Greenville. His brother
Roswell married her
sister Sally.

Lodema (1775-1780).

Lydia (1777-1838),
married Coxsackie mer-
chant Simeon Fitch.

Huldah (1780-1858),
married Henry Dibble.

Ezra (1783-1858), mar-
ried Eliza Thurston.

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Colonel Pratt's Bank Clerk (continued from page 1)

busy place. Besides Pratt's tannery which employed about 300 men, there was an India Rubber factory, a foundry and machine shop, a planing mill and a tin shop. Others found employment at the furniture, match, tobacco, glove or oil cloth factories. Social life centered around the various churches, the Academy and the boarding houses.

The first surviving letter written by Joseph DuBois to his sister, Mary, at Catskill, is dated September 20, 1844. The Julia Pratt mentioned was Colonel Pratt's daughter. (At her coming of age in 1853 she received a gift of \$50,000 and a half interest in his Aldenville tannery). The Prattsville Academy where Miss McDaniel was teaching, was built just two years earlier in 1842, Colonel Pratt generously contributing the land and fifty percent of the building's cost. The humorous remarks about Mrs. Peckham, comparing her to Ann Lee, reflect Mother Ann Lee's Shaker leadership. The Pratt's Rocks are still a tourist attraction to this day and are preserved as a local historical site.

Prattsville Sept 20/44

Dear Sister

Your short and sweet favour was handed me by Mr. Fitch yesterday, for which except my thanks, Julia Pratt and Helen Tuttle are neither of them in town. Julia is at school in Albany and Helen is home I think. Tell Father I expect him out here in October to the Democratic Mass Meeting at Gilboa. Miss McDaniel has inquired very often about you, she is the teacher in the

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Colonel Pratt's Bank Clerk (continued from page 5)

Academy. I board at same house with her. There are five Ladies besides her boarding at the same place. So you see I have plenty of company and talking at the table. Mrs. Peckham, Mr. Pratt's aunt — I suppose you are acquainted with her — is a regular Anne Lee all the time talking. She asked me about two hundred questions in five minutes. She is the most lively old woman I ever saw. Mr. Pratt is having his bust cut in the rocks on the high hill back of his house. Tell Father I have not seen a Whig in so long that I will forget how they look. If one comes in town he is looked at so hard that he generally leaves by the first chance. Give my love to Eliza Catharine Amelia. Tell Ma my flannel shirts must be forthcoming for it is twice as cold here as it is in Catskill. Give my love to All, especially Barrent.

Yours
J A DuBois

I understand you are going to have a fair in Catskill this month some time. Please tell me all the proceedings. I had almost forgotten my cousins remember me kindly to them.

J. A. DuBois

As mentioned heretofore, the Democratic Party was very active in Greene County during this period, influenced by Colonel Pratt. The latter carried considerable weight at the various political conventions; the following year at Syracuse he made a respectable showing for nomination as governor. The *Catskill Democrat* under the operation of Joseph Joesbury, had taken on an improved format. It continued to exhort its readers to turn the county, state and nation away from the hands of federalism and Whiggery. The notion that Van Buren, Benton and other distinguished members of the Democratic party were feuding with Mr. Polk and his administration was ridiculed. It reported James Buchanan, of Pennsylvania, would secure the appointment as Secretary of State, R. J. Walker of Mississippi that of Secretary of the Treasury, with W. L. Marcy of New York heading the War Department, George Bancroft, of Massachusetts, the Navy and Cave Johnson, of Tennessee, controlling the Postal Service as Postmaster General. It had only kind words for Messers Sager and Hervey, both farmers in Greene County, then serving the district in the legislature.

Prattville Bank
Nov 14th 1844

Dear Sister

I received your letter some time since and have deferred answering, in expectation

of going home but have been disappointed. We have chances of getting our money nearly every week so that there is no use of sending expressly after it. Monday the Democrats had a Free dinner at the tavern in this place. In the evening they had a torch light procession they made a Grand appearance. I suppose you have had plenty of them this last week. The Whigs here are all down, especially those who rec'd the Hudson River money. How are Catharine Eliza & Amelia give my love to them when you see them again. How does Mother like her new stove. Tell her my feet are getting along first rate — My thick stockings I don't think will do me much good. I tried to wear them the other day but they made my feet itch so that I had to take them off again. I wish in your next letter you would tell me where to direct a letter to Uncle Barent. Give my love to Father Mother Barent & all not forgetting AE and except a generous portion for yourself.

Your affect. brother
J A Dubois

Grace Episcopal parish was organized as a legal entity of the Protestant Episcopal Church at a meeting held at the Prattville Academy on June 10, 1844, chaired by the Reverend Thomas S. Judd. Involved among others were the Prattville bank cashier, John Hopkins, and attorney F. James Fitch. In subsequent months Nelson Finch was appointed to construct a Gothic style religious structure. DuBois mentions this plan of building in his letter of March 26. The Allens of Catskill were long connected with St. Luke's Episcopal Church in that village.

The Anti-Rent War was culminating in violence, particularly next door in Delaware County; Prattville was not far away. In September of 1845 Thomas Deray 2nd, an Anti-Renter, of Dry Brook, Ulster County, was apprehended and arrested at Scienceville (Ashland) by Uriah Griffen. The *Catskill Democrat* urged the New York State Legislature to take action to remedy the evils under which tenants of the Van Rensselaers' and other landlords had labored to enhance the value of these Royal Patents. But that action was still in the future. Law and order had first priority.

Prattville Bank
March 26, 1845

Dear Sister

You will pardon me for not writing before, when I tell you that I have been so very busy since Col. Pratt has been home, that I hardly had time to turn around. He started for New York this morning, so I will

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have a respite. We are a going to have an Episcopal Church built here this summer. The Anti-Renters have been cutting up all Kinds of capers out here. The posse from Delhi went to make another haul. They arrested six day before yesterday. We have the Books and accts. of E I Burhans, who deposited them here for safe Keeping. We have beautiful weather at present. The sun rises out here about 8 o'clock and is out of sight at 2½ foine place. How are all the folks up in Jefferson. Give my love to them all and remember me very kindly to Father Mother Barrent and all and believe me.

Your affect Brother
J A DuBois

Miss Mary A DuBois
"Excuse this brevity"

The Wreck of the *Swallow* off Athens filled pages of the area's newspapers. Loss of life and the rescue drama of other passengers made avid reading. Lurid lithographs of the scene were rushed to market; today they are collectors' items. It was also a period of time when General Tom Thumb (Charles S. Stratton) was touring Europe for the first time. The marriage of diminutive Miss Hatch was a news item to strike DuBois' interest.

Prattsville April 9th 1845

Dear Sister

I recd your favour of 7th inst by Mr. Hopkins. I wish you would drop that silly fashion of beginning your letter half down the page. It leaves no room to write a common letter. I saw an account of the dreadful accident aboard the *Swallow*. Also very appropos the marriage of the tiny Miss Hatch. Julia Pratt is at Albany. For a few days past we have been blessed with beautiful weather! Sun rise about 9 o'clock. Squalls of rain & snow over head and under feet - nice and soft mud about six inches deep. Oh! it is a foine place.

You will be remembered in my next to Charley. What about buying the Church. How does Mr. King flourish. Has Mag gone aboard the Hope. Give my love to all.

Your affect. Brother
J Allen DuBois

Miss Mary A Dubois

I rec'd those Sheriff sales from Father and posted them.

Costs of postage were reduced substantially, primarily through the effort of Colonel Zadock Pratt. He had moved a resolution on March 19, 1838, in the House of Representatives, in favor of the reduction of postage costs from 25 cents downward to reflect the true costs. On July 1, 1845, postage was finally reduced to five cents for the average letter.

Prattsville Bank
July 1st 1845

Dear Sister

Your favour of last week was duly received. To day the new postage law goes into effect and I hope you and "A.E." will write oftener. You ask "who is to be our minister." I believe they have not engaged any yet. Mr. Judd is to officiate for the next six months. I suppose you have heard that the Schoharie Court house was burned last week. There is a "camp meeting" a few miles from here. I am going out to it Thursday, if Mr. Hopkins returns. You and "Ann Ela" had better come out and go with me. Glorious times! What fine weather we have now-days, Rain & mud for the last three weeks have all the go. Be pleased to tell Barent to be at the Post Office on Thursday 3d July night as there will be a letter for him. Remember me to all.

Your affect. Brother
J Allen DuBois

Tell "AE" to write me, for I want to hear some news JA DB

Training day was a long established practice. By law, men between the ages of 16 and 60, unless exempt, were expected to assemble periodically for military drill as a part of the citizens' army. As the years passed, the simply dressed militiamen in homespun and leather, with their own rifles, powder horns and hatchets, gave way to elaborately uniformed militia who paraded and engaged in mock battles to the delight of the observing public and the female sex.

Prattsville Bank
September 1st 1845

Dear Sister

Your letter of 29th inst was duly rec'd To-day is "training day" and all the "sodgers" are out in full dress. Col. Pratt & Mr. Hopkins have gone away and I am all alone with the exception of Aunty Peckham who runs in about every hour. I have had a very bad cold but am getting over it as fast as possible. We have had some very cold wea-

(continued on page 9)

VEDDER LIBRARY NOTES

□◇ A large, hard covered volume of use to genealogists is *A Collection of Fiero Family Histories and Genealogies*. Compiled by Catherine F. Gair of Alaska, it contains 436 pages pertaining to that early Palatine Fiero family. The book is the thoughtful gift of Mrs. Bernice Weir, Lloyd Harbor, New York, a frequent visitor to this Greene County area with genealogical ties to the region.

□◇ An original Bronk Bible record, beginning with the year 1762 and terminating with the date 1864, has come from Mrs. Edward Sherman of New Baltimore. This particular Bronk line of Pieter Coeymans Bronk and Elizabeth Van Wie goes back five generations to Pieter Bronck, the patentee of Cocksackie. It also ties in with the stone house just north of Hannacroix Creek between New Baltimore and Coeymans.

□◇ The life of Henry Ashley, tanner and Congressman, is of interest to individuals researching his career. An exchange of information is helping to build up a substantial file on this important Catskill resident.

Hope Farm Press reports *Out to Greenville and Beyond* is now out of print. Hold on to your copy!

□◇ Another interesting contribution, one of many over the years, has come from Mrs. Edith Betts of Kingston. It is the printed program for the *Exhibition by the Students of the Cocksackie Academy* held on Monday Evening, December 24, 1877. A Journal article is in the research stage for this early Cocksackie educational facility.

□◇ Mrs. Frances Dietz has provided the library with a photograph of the early motorized Greenville to Earlton bus line.

□◇ Maps, maps, maps! Mrs. Jane Van Loan Erickson, Jr. has contributed numerous maps including two travel guides of special interest covering geographical and historical points in New York.

□◇ Prior to their permanent removal to Florida last fall, Mr. and Mrs. Stanley Greene, Four Mile Point, Cocksackie, deposited historical photographs, the D. Geroe Greene house plans (Mansion Street site), and other useful material. One photograph taken by W. P. Franklin, shows D. Geroe Greene "leading on the rail" at the Cocksackie race track. That racing spot was approximately north of the present Grand Union store on Mansion Street.

□◇ Two sermons preached by the Reverend Ezekiel D. Van Dyck, Pastor at the Greenville Presbyterian Church from 1893 to 1928, and printed in booklet form by P. Winne of Hudson, have been catalogued. The booklet cover carries the likeness of the Reverend Van Dyck. One sermon was preached for Thanksgiving 1927 while the other was his farewell given on February 26, 1928.

□◇ And from Professor William Rhoads of New Paltz comes Charles A. Beach's copy of Peter Bullions' *An Analytical and Practical Grammar of the English Language*, dated 1849. It was sold by Catskill bookseller J. H. Van Gorden to Charles A. Beach, who in later years, operated the stage to the Catskill Mountain House.

□◇ To replace a missing copy, Barbara Roe Simpkins has contributed *Hudson River Families: A Jonas Bronck Line*.

Several individuals have contributed copies of their genealogical research. Among these are Harold Wrigley of North Carolina, John S. Rowe of Pennsylvania, the Reverend Gavin Reilly of Massachusetts, and Kenneth Van Vechten Parks of New York.

□◇ Mary E. Martin's teaching certificate, dated January 13, 1896, has come from Mrs. Bruce Martin of Massachusetts.

□◇ After reading the Horse Ferries article in an earlier issue, Donald Ringwald of Loudonville sent an issue of *Focs'le News* in which he mentions the Knickerbocker which was used at Kingston Point crossing in 1842. It proved inadequate and was sold to Catskill interests where it appears to have been equally unsuccessful.

□◇ The Society holds an extensive collection of land survey maps. Alex. Wiltse, Jr., attorney at Catskill, has deposited a number made by Mr. Goetchius.

□◇ Over the years Mrs. Ethel C. Tompkins of Albany has remembered the Society with historical material. The latest is the Daily School Register for School District No. 2, Town of Prattsville, for the school year 1888-1889. These provide clues for genealogical researchers, the registers giving the names and ages of students enrolled in the districts. A Barnes' *Complete Geography* used by Edna Raeder and Disbrow children in the Red Falls area was included in the latest gift.

□◇ Recent acquisitions from Hope Farm Bookshop: van der Zee's *A Sweet and Alien Land, The Story of Dutch New York*; Marks' *Literature of the Mid Hudson Valley*; Hedrick's *A History of Agriculture in the State of New York*; Greene County Council on the Arts' *Literary Supplement* (First Annual Issue); and as part of the area's ongoing history, *The Lost Treasure of Rip Van Winkle*.


□◇ A family history of the Van Slyke family of New Baltimore has been compiled by Suzanne Mullane of Elkins, West Virginia. It contains a wealth of local history; we have three copies. She has also placed one on file with the NSDAR Library in Washington, D.C.

□◇ The Reverend George A. Howard was pastor of Christ Church in Catskill for many years. A forty page booklet, which includes a sermon preached on the 25th year of his installation, has been acquired by the Library; it is dated 1875. In addition to the sermon there is a wealth of information concerning aspects of that Presbyterian Church's history. The acquisition was made through McDonalds Book Ends.



Memorial Funds Received

A substantial check from Lucy and Harold Abramson, Park Avenue, New York, New York, in memory of Dr. Bernard S. Kahn, a friend and supporter of this Society.



Colonel Pratt's Bank Clerk (continued from page 7)

ther for two or three days past but to-day it is quite comfortable with a small fire. Thermometer about 50°. Give my best respects to all, and except my kind wishes for yourself.

Yours truly
J. Allen DuBois

Miss Mary A DuBois
"Did you go to Mary Hill's "Levee" "

Flooding in Prattsville remains a problem to this day. The fears of freshets, with resulting damage, were not idle ones in 1846.

Prattsville Jan 31. 1846

Dear Sister

Your kind favour of 26th inst has just come to hand. I suppose by this time you are home & therefore direct my letter to Catskill. I did intend visiting you at S. but the weather & time were such, that, I could not very well leave. Col. Pratt & Julia returned last night from New York. Julia being unwell. It is raining a living stream, great fears are entertained of having a heavy freshet. Tell Father "I rec'd his Note of 24th inst, & that Col Watson is in N.Y. & will not return before the 10th Feb. but Mr. Scudder says he will look around for a good young & fast horse" for him. Tell also that the Sheriffs bills will be collected as soon as possible. Mr. Menzie as usual always out of money. Remember me to all. Tell Mother she has about as many true friends here as any one. All have been boarders.

Yours truly
J A Dubois

M A Dubois

Prattsville Bank
June 17, 1846

Dear Sister

I do not see that you are even a going to write me again, so I will write you a few lines. I have a present for you that I purchased last week for a "Sixpence". You will be much surprised to see it. What do you think it is. It is not very pretty. I will bring it down for you when I come. I called on Mrs. Ten Broeck last week. She enquired in particular about AE. By the By how does AE flourish this hot weather. Talking

of hot weather there is every appearance of a frost here tonight. Remember me to all and believe me.

Your affect. Brother
J Allen DuBois

Prattsville August 12th 1846

Dear Sister

Not hearing anything from you very lately I begin to think that you are unwell, or have forgotten that I am still numbered among the living. I was in Catskill a few days since and expected to find you home and bring you out with me. Julia Pratt has asked me several times to bring you. How long do you intend staying in Schoharie. I thought some of coming out this week, but Mr. Hopkins goes to Catskill tomorrow & I will be unable to leave, may possibly come as far as Middleburgh next week some time. Nothing new in Catskill. Write soon.

Your affectionally
J A Dubois

Prattsville Aug 19, 1846

Dear Sister

I have your letter of 18th inst I am coming down to Catskill Sunday, to spend a couple of days. Charley Ashley will also be there. You must boil some green corn if you have any, & have some cold at night. Give my love to all.

Yours truly
J A Dubois

How soon, after the last surviving letter from Prattsville was written, Joseph DuBois left the bank is uncertain. For a time he was at Brocketts Bridge, Fulton County, and then removed to northern Pennsylvania with the tanning industry. The next change of employment came when he shipped aboard a New Bedford whaling ship. The whaling letters will be part of a forthcoming article about whaling and Greene County tars. Death came in 1863 during the Civil War.

These letters are in the Katharine Decker Memorial Collection, Vedder Library, GCHS.

□ □ □ □ □

Have You PAID Your 1985 DUES to
Barbara Van Orden
Catskill, NY 12414?

“Bits and Pieces” of Hotaling History

— Faith Jenkins

My grandmother, Helena Day Inglis, passed on to us several aspects of family history connected with the Hotalings and the Van Slykes; I recall a few. I use the Hotaling spelling although there are variations (Houghtaling, Hoghtaling, Houghtailing).

Our Hotaling ancestors were among the early Dutch residents in the colony of New Netherland; in the year 1697 Matthias and his son-in-law, Rykert Van Den Berg, secured a patent of land of about 3400 acres in the district of Cocksackie. The patent was issued by the then colonial governor, Benjamin Fletcher, under royal warrant. This Hotaling land is now shared between the townships of New Baltimore and Cocksackie. In addition to supporting their wives and offspring by farming, these Hotalings were among the first to operate lime kilns, having an abundance of lime rock on their hilly lime ridge farms.

Another ancestor who married into the Hotaling family was Dr. Tyler of Virginia, thought to be a relative of President Tyler. He had come north for reason of health after earning his medical degree with a specialty in pulmonary medicine. His research in tuberculosis was thought to have caused the death of four of his children, including Tiffany Tyler, my great-great-grandfather (two surviving children migrated to the west). After Tiffany Tyler's death as a young married adult, leaving his widow, Helena Hotaling and a young baby, she married John R. Day of Cocksackie.

It was my grandmother, Helena Day Inglis, who told us about the old stone house near Cocksackie (actually town of New Baltimore) which some of our Hotaling ancestors had built. So my mother and I paid a visit to the site a few years ago, a place then owned by Dr. and Mrs. Kosich. The latter gave us a tour; we viewed the old stone house with its fireplaces, mantel, wide floor boards, and the date stone with the incised initials PHT and JHT (the HT standing for Hotaling), as well as the date of building, June 23, 1794. Some of these features are illustrated in the book *Heritage of New Baltimore*. The limekiln remains are still in evidence on that property.

Other family recollections and traditions include an early Van Slyke (related by marriage to the Hotalings) marrying a Mohawk Indian female, a fact which might explain the dark eyes of my Aunt Irene and those of my great-grandmother.

I remember my great-grandmother telling me about the famous Van Slyke Bible, one of the earliest printed, and brought from Europe. It is still undiscovered, having been taken to the mid-west by a Van Slyke descendant. I have also found out that Conrad, the oldest son of Matthias Hotaling, married Tryntje Van Slyke about the year 1688.

The Hotalings and the Van Slykes were among the signers of the Cocksackie Association's Protest of 1775 to the King of Great Britain. Thomas Hotaling later became a captain of the local militia during

the Revolutionary War. Peter Van Slyke was allegedly appointed a brigadier general in that same military group, but possibly after the peace.

Through another branch of the family connection, the Bogarduses, there is a descent from the Prince of Orange. It is fun researching one's family tree and finding relatives heretofore unknown. Since many of my closer relatives are deceased, I decided to advertise for descendants of Peter and Thomas Hotaling; *Yankee* magazine was one place where I made contact. I found two cousins from this effort — Mrs. Kenneth Koner and Mrs. Kenneth Miller.

Few Hotaling keepsakes remain in the family. My grandmother had inherited a set of spoons made from silver coin. Each of her children received some. My uncle Robert got two and my mother four. On each from that set are the initials PHT and THT.

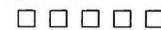
At one time my great-grandmother heard some of the Hotaling family acreage, with its ancient stone house, was up for sale. But my parents already had a summer place, a cottage at Port Jervis, so they were not anxious to take on another financial burden. Thus we missed the opportunity to regain our Hotaling homestead. But there is satisfaction in knowing it is in good hands at this writing, Mr. Lee Adler, continuing the restoration work begun by the Kosichs.



Val Kriele Photo

Courtesy Lee Adler

The “PHT-THT” Hotaling Homestead



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