

HISTORY  
OF THE  
COUNTY OF SCHENECTADY,  
N. Y.,  
FROM 1662 TO 1886.

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WITH PORTRAITS, BIOGRAPHIES AND ILLUSTRATIONS.

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he succeeded to the office of president. This bank, one of the most flourishing financial organizations in the State, has a competent capital and also a surplus fund, and declares an average dividend of five per cent. semi-annually, clear of State and national taxes. Mr. Van Vorst is also vice-president of the Schenectady Savings Bank, a sound and prosperous institution. For nearly fifty years he has been connected with the vestry of St. George's Episcopal Church in Schenectady.

Though naturally averse to political preferment, Mr. Van Vorst has served as alderman for several terms, and as member of the County Democratic Committee, and was induced, through the persuasion of his party, to accept the nomination for mayor, to which important office he was elected, serving for the terms of 1853-54, 1869-70 and 1882-83. This responsibility he accepted very reluctantly, and only after the urgent appeal of his friends to his patriotism and his desire for the welfare of the community—those higher motives that influence men to the acceptance of public trusts. During the period of our civil war, Mr. Van Vorst was an active "war Democrat," upholding, by all the means in his power, the hands of the Government. He was for many years identified with the business interests of Schenectady, in which his thrifty and sterling habits made him a prominent mercantile character. Since 1862, his financial skill and conscientious management of monetary interests have been an important factor in the prosperity of that city. He was married in 1830 to Miss Amanda Hulbert, daughter of Dr. Hulbert, of Pennsylvania, who bore him one son and three daughters (all of whom are living), and died in 1880, six months after the celebration of their golden wedding. Mr. Van Vorst built his residence, No. 25 Liberty street, in 1835, and has lived there continuously since.

**CITY BANK.**—This bank was organized in June, 1874, with a capital of \$100,000, under the general banking laws. The first directors were: T. W. McCamus, Andrew Truax, William J. Van Horne, E. Nott Schermerhorn, William Johnson, C. Van Slyck, Charles G. Ellis, George Curtis, Abraham Gillespie, Garrett S. Veeder, Marcus N. Millard and O. S. Luffman. T. W. McCamus was elected president, and O. F. Luffman as cashier, and remained as such officers from the organization of the bank until they resigned in March, 1884. At this time Charles G. Ellis was chosen president, E. Nott Schermerhorn, cashier, and O. S. Luffman, assistant cashier.

December 15, 1884, it suspended, and John A. A. De Remer was appointed receiver.

James H. Davis, gentleman, is a well known and respected citizen of Schenectady.

#### SCHENECTADY WATER-WORKS.

During the latter part of the preceding century, a company was formed in this city to supply the town with water. Water was taken from a spring, which now in part supplies the cemetery pond. It

was conducted by wooden pipes through the main streets at that date. In 1835, this system of water supply seems to have become inadequate for the needs of the city, for in that year an act was passed by the Legislature, empowering the corporation of Schenectady to build a new water-works. Water at this time was obtained by means of a spring on Engine Hill. The pipes were simply logs, with a hole bored through them of a diameter of about two to three inches. For many years this system was in use. Even a small portion above the canal was in use a few years before the present works were constructed. During the excavation made for the present water system, the pipes of the first works were unearthed, and in many cases found to be in a comparatively preserved condition.

**THE SCHENECTADY WATER COMPANY.**—In 1865, an act was passed by the Legislature incorporating the present Schenectady Water Company. The first directors named in the act were: William Van Vranken, George G. Maxon, D. Cady Smith, John W. Veeder, Simon C. Groot, Benjamin F. Potter, and T. W. McCamus. The capital stock was limited to \$80,000. At a meeting of the directors, shortly after the passage of the act, William Van Vranken was elected President, T. W. McCamus, Vice-President, and D. Cady Smith, Treasurer and Secretary. This, and the following year, ineffectual efforts were made to secure sufficient capital to construct the works.

In 1867, a few of the citizens of Schenectady, believing that the city should own its own water-works, secured the passage of an act, which created William Van Vranken, William J. Van Horne, John C. Ellis, G. G. Maxon, and Andrew McMullen, Water Commissioners. These commissioners were empowered to consider all matters relative to supplying the city with water, to furnish estimates and plans for the construction of water-works to the Common Council; which plans, upon the approval of the Common Council, were to be submitted to the resident taxpayers for their approval or rejection.

The Water Commissioners did agree upon a plan of construction, which was submitted and approved by the Common Council; but when the subject came before the taxpayers some time in the following May, it was overwhelmingly voted down.

The failure of the people's consent to the construction of a city water-works, again brought into active existence the company formed in 1865. In 1869, this company, which had not forfeited its corporate rights, reorganized, by the election of Charles Stanford, President, and William Van Vranken, Treasurer and Secretary. At the reorganization all of the capital stock was subscribed, and the construction of the works commenced the following year, and was completed in 1871. The system adopted is known as the Holley system. The pumping-house is situated at the lower end of Ferry street, adjoining the river. The water is pumped from a large cistern or well, 114 x 6 feet, built under the ground near the margin of the river. The walls of this well are dry, permitting the filtering

of water from the river into the well, while over the top is an arched covering composed of brick and cement. Around the walls is a course of gravel and sand, which has a tendency to purify the water before it reaches the well. A conductor pipe, three feet square and one hundred feet long, extends from the well, along and under the bed, out into the middle of the river. The end of this pipe is protected by a perforated sheet of iron.

In 1872 the works were in active operation, and have been ever since. During 1872, a contract was made by this company, with the city, to furnish water for the extinguishment of fires. Since the adoption of this system, much valuable property has been saved and no fire has extended beyond the building in which it originated, and the losses by fire have been proportionately less than at any other corresponding period of the city's history.

In 1871 only nine miles of pipe and 100 fire hydrants were constructed; at present over fourteen miles of pipe have been laid and 140 hydrants furnished.

The capital of this company was increased to \$100,000 in 1871.

The present officers are: Charles Stanford, President and Treasurer; Charles Stanford, Jr., Secretary. Directors: Charles Stanford, G. G. Maxon, Charles G. Ellis, John McEncroe, Wm. Van Vranken, Edward Ellis, and Charles Stanford, Jr.

#### GAS-WORKS.

In 1852, a company, composed entirely of capitalists outside of this city, built the first gas-works ever constructed in Schenectady. This company subsequently sold the concern to Abell Smith and James R. Craig. Afterwards it was sold at public auction to Gershom Banker, who conducted it until 1872, when two-thirds interest in it was purchased by Charles Stanford and William Van Vranken. Shortly after, Mr. Banker's interest was sold to John McEncroe. The works have since been operated and controlled by these three gentlemen.

The capital of the company is \$100,000, and the works are capable of producing yearly, 11,000,000 cubic feet of gas.

ROBERT CLEMENT, who for over thirty years was superintendent of the gas-works, was born in Belfast, Ireland, in 1824. He died in 1883. Mr. Clement was a citizen widely known and esteemed, being a progressive, intelligent and exemplary man. He was largely interested in real estate in this city, and did much to promote the business interests of Schenectady. He was so long and intimately connected with the gas-works in Schenectady, that he may almost be said to have been its real founder; certain it is, that to his intelligent work, much of its present prosperity can be justly attributed.

JOSEPH H. CLEMENT, son of Robert, was born in New York in 1849. He received his education in the public schools. In 1860 he became connected with the Schenectady gas-works and has remained with this company ever since. At present he is superintendent of the works.

#### CASPER PRATT HOAG.

CASPER PRATT HOAG was born in Troy, N. Y., September 24, 1810. His father was a vessel owner and he was early inured to the dangers and hardships of a seafaring life, which were then many times greater than they are now. Before attaining to his majority he had at times taken charge of his father's vessel, and had made some progress in the acquisition of a practical knowledge of navigation. Soon after that time he accepted a proposition from a merchant who had built a brig for sea service, to take an interest in the vessel and assume the command. He made two voyages to the Gulf of Mexico, and two to Europe, Madeira and the Canary Islands. After Mr. Hoag's return to New York from the last of these, he and his partner leased the brig to the Brazilian Government to make a voyage to South America, from which she returned in due time newly rigged and in excellent order, having lost her masts, rigging and sails in a tornado, and been refitted at the Isle of St. Thomas at an expense of about \$9,000.

In the meantime, Mr. Hoag had married the youngest daughter of Peter I. Clute, of Schenectady, and had determined to abandon the sea and engage in business at Schenectady in partnership with his brother-in-law. His partner in the ownership of the brig consented to a proposition looking to this end very reluctantly, and after many vain endeavors to persuade Mr. Hoag to reconsider his determination.

The brig was sold to the Brazilian Government, and Mr. Hoag relinquished forever an avocation which had been the means of his visiting many remote and interesting portions of the world, which had many charms for him, and in which he had met many appalling dangers which, if we had space to relate them, would form one of the most interesting portions of this volume. In partnership with C. C. Clute, he purchased five lots in Schenectady and erected a mill, thus establishing a business which the two owned and managed co-jointly for three years, at the expiration of which time, by purchase of his brother-in-law's interest, Mr. Hoag became sole proprietor. He continued the business with considerable success, gradually increasing it until 1845, when, on July 25th, the mill was destroyed by fire. Mr. Hoag's energy is no better evidenced than by the fact that within six months he had erected a brick foundry on his property, and began work therein during the following April. This enterprise Mr. Hoag made a success, as he invariably did such enterprises as he connected himself with, continuing its active personal management until 1860, when his health had failed in so marked a degree that his physician advised him to relinquish his confining business entirely, and take a necessary season of rest and recreation. He leased his foundry to a company of Albany men for five years, and devoted himself to the care of his garden, pleasurable pursuits and such gentle exercise as was most conducive to good health, with such results that his physical condition was vastly improved.