

CHARLES ESSELTYN

Was the son of Cornelius and Clara Esseltyn, of pure Knickerbocker stock. He was born in Claverack, in this county in October, 1803, entered the freshman class of Union College in 1822, and graduated in the same class with Hon. Elias W. Leavenworth and Josiah Sutherland, both from this county.

He died at Hudson on December 21, 1868 in the sixty-sixth year of his age. He had been for more than forty years a practitioner, and for a considerable portion of that time a leading and successful one, at the Columbia bar. He studied law with Hon. Thomas Bay, and was for a time after his admission to the bar his law partner in the city of Hudson. He subsequently removed to the town of Livingston, and having married, in May, 1832 Sarah M., daughter of Rev. Herman Vedder, of Gallatin, he continued the practice of law at the village of Johnstown for about thirty years, first as the law partner of Killian Miller, Esq., and after Mr. Miller's removal to Hudson, of John M. Welch, Esq., and Seymour L. Stebbins, Esq.

While a resident of Livingston, he filled many offices of trust, was justice of the peace, superintendent of schools, and supervisor, and for several years was chairman of the Board of Supervisors of Columbia County.

In 1859 he was elected surrogate of the county, and in 1860 he removed to the city of Hudson, where he continued to reside to the period of his death. In 1863 he was re-elected surrogate by a flattering majority in a county hostile to him in politics. He discharged the delicate and important duties of this office with great acceptance to the people of the county and to all suitors in his court.

Mr. Esseltyn was never ambitious of public distinction, and rather declined than sought occasions to appear before the public. But for a constitutional diffidence he was well calculated to shine as an advocate in the courts.

Judge Henry Hogeboom, on the occasion of the death of Mr. Esseltyn, said, "I was his fellow-pupil at the Hudson Academy, and well remember the forensic promise of his early years, and how, in easy, flowing, and graceful elocution, he bade fair to outstrip all his youthful competitors, and he would very probably have done so, but for his native modesty and retiring disposition. He had many of the striking qualities and characteristics of a successful orator; a fine-shaped head, a full and expressive eye, great ease and flow of language, a happy address, quick apprehension, and perhaps more than all, a power of ready adaptation in conversation and manner, to the character, tastes and tone of his audience.

"He was eminently a man of the people, popular with all classes, but especially so with the great middle class, with whom he was proud to identify himself, and to whom he claimed to belong. Without a touch of aristocracy in his composition, all his feelings and associations and sympathies were with the masses of the people, and he was eminently beloved by them. No man probably ever went to his grave with fewer personal enemies.

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"He was also a great pacificator. His disposition and aim were to settle controversies and re-establish harmony among litigants in the courts, and those who had difficulties in private life. Hence, in his office of Surrogate, his mission was a most useful and successful one, and in his whole career of private and professional life he left hosts of friends, who look back with sentiments of grateful regard upon his successful efforts to harmonize and heal their troubles. He died such a death as such a man should die. Patient, resigned, and contented, he yielded himself without a murmur to the decrees of his heavenly father. Finding death invading the citadel of life with slow but certain step, he reconciled himself to his inevitable fate, making his peace as his friends have just reason to hope and believe, with his Maker and Redeemer, he awaited the summons to depart, and when it came sank away peacefully, and without convulsion or a groan, to his final rest."

NOTE:- A portrait of Mr. Esseltyn accompanies this sketch.

FROM History of Columbia County

Franklin Ellis

Everts & Ensign Philadelphia 1878.

CHARLES ESSELSTYNE, non-graduate of 1823, of Claverack, N.Y., was a member of the Philomathean Society. (Die: 1868)

Philomathean Catalogue 1830

Was a native of Claverack, born in October, 1803, and graduated from Union College in 1823. He studied law with Thomas Bay and for a time was his partner. He practiced successfully in the county more than 40 years, and about 30 of which were in the village of Johnstown, in the town of Livingston. In 1859 he was chosen surrogate and in the following years removed to Hudson where he resided until his death, December 21, 1868. He was re-elected surrogate in 1863. He is remembered as a pacificator, preferring to aid in settling controversies, rather than to litigate them. He merited and received the confidence and esteem of the community as a successful practitioner and a useful citizen. He was survived by two sons, one of whom, Cornelius is mentioned above as a partner of John Gaul, jr., and the other Herman V. was elected surrogate of the county in 1859. Both are now deceased.

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