

CLASS OF 1824

JACOB MAUS SCHERMERHORN

Son of Maus and Catharine (Swits) Schermerhorn, was born in Schenectady, November 12, 1804 and died at Syracuse, February 23, 1890.

Married Louisa Anna Barber October 26, 1831. She was born June 2, 1810 and was the daughter of Jedediah Barber and Matilda Tuttle, of Homer, N. Y. She died January 18, 1899.

Jacob Maus Schermerhorn was graduated from Union College in 1824 with the degree of A. B. and was admitted to the bar in 1826 and in the same year went to Rochester where he practiced law until 1837. In that year he and his brother, Abraham, founded the Bank of Monroe in Rochester which was conducted by them until 1842, when Jacob M. moved to Homer, N. Y., which he made his home thereafter. In company with others he was instrumental in building the Syracuse and Binghamton R. R., and was President of the same for ten years, when he sold the majority of the stock to the Lackawanna. During his incumbency he made a contract for the transportation of coal, with the Lackawanna R. R., which has been maintained and in constant use for over fifty years.

Children: Matilda Barber
Catharine Elvina
Louisa
Anna Margaret
George J.
Jacob Maus

George J. attended Union College with the Class of 1866. He removed in later years to New York City where he practiced law until the time of his death.

FROM Schermerhorn Genealogy and Family Chronicles
Richard Schermerhorn
New York 1914.

JACOB M. SCHERMERHORN, '24, 9417'21
was born in Schenectady, November 12th, 1804. He studied law and removed to Rochester, N. Y., in 1828. He was for five years President of the Monroe County Bank. In 1841 he settled in Homer. For ten years he was President of the Syracuse and Binghamton Railroad. He retired from business some years before his death but retained interest in public affairs. His political sentiments were Republican. He was a Presbyterian and active in public charities. He died in Syracuse, February 23d, 1890, leaving a widow, two sons and two daughters.

JACOB M. SCHERMERHORN, Esq. A.M., 1824, or Rochester, N.Y., was a member of the Adelpbic Society. (Died: 1890)
Adelpbic Catalogue 1830

1824 JACOB MAUS SCHERMERHORN.

Married: Louisa Anna Barber, (1810-1899), 1831

Children: Matilda Barber Schermerhorn, 1832-1874
Catherine Elvenah Schermerhorn, 1834-1913;
m. 1856, Lewis Baker Henry, 1828-1892.
Anna Matilda Schermerhorn, 1840-1927; m. John W.
Fisher, 1845-1912.
George Jacob Schermerhorn, 1844-1904; m. Isabel
Schuyler.
Jacob Maus Schermerhorn, Jr., 1847-1927; m. Mary
E. Browne.

Jedediah Barber 1787-1876 p191
Herbert Barber Howe
Columbia University Press
1939

'24

Jacob M. Schemerhorn died in Syracuse Feb. 23, 1890. He was born in Schenectady, Nov. 12, 1804, of one of the oldest branches of the Schemerhorn family, which came to this country in 1638. Mr. Schemerhorn graduated from Union in the class of '24. In 1828 he moved to Rochester. For some time he was a lawyer, afterward prèsidant of Monroe County Bank, a position which he held for five years. He was identified with the Brick Presbyterian church, to which he was warmly attached. In 1841 he settled in Homer, N.Y., where he continued to live until the time of his death. He was president of the Syracuse and Binghamton road.....

He was married in 1841 to Miss Louisa A. Barber, daughter of the late Jedèdiah Barber of Homer, N.Y. His wife and two sons, George J., and J. Maus Schemerhorn of New York, and his two daughters, Mrs. Lewis B. Henry, of East Orange, N.J., and Mrs. John W. Fisher of Philadelphia, survive him.

C. Mar. 1890

Five children grew up in the Barber home. The oldest was Louisa Anna, who laid down the perfect pattern for well-brought-up Homer young people by graduating at the Cortland Academy in 1828 and uniting with the Congregational Church three years later. But the daughter of the merchant differed from some of the other young ladies of the community in that there was a sable sentinel at the Barber door who regarded herself as special guardian to discourage certain prospective suitors. Faithful Hannah, who was with the family from 1830 to 1867, looked with favor on a young Rochester man who seemed to enjoy Louisa Anna's company. Jacob M. Schermerhorn was a descendant of early settlers in the Mohawk Valley, having been born in Schenectady and graduated from Union College in 1824; he was then an attorney in Monroe County. The intense convictions which characterized his entire life were set forth in a letter to his Homer friend, "What abundant cause for gratitude as well as encouragement have you in the conversion of your sister. May the God of all grace make you useful and instrumental in bringing salvation on the whole of your father's house." However different this may be from the usual lover's letter in our times, it was a most sincere statement and as such must have appealed to all the Barbers. For the Cortland Observer of October 28, 1831, carried this brief notice---

MARRIED

In this village, on the 26th inst, by Rev. John Keep, Jacob Schermerhorn, Esq., of Rochester to Miss Louisa Anna Barber, daughter of Mr. Jedediah Barber.

Extant letters add but one fact: the attendants were "Miss Moulton and Mr. Miller." With Father Keep officiating, we well know that the young people were made man and wife in dignified but authoritative terms. The early portraits of Jedediah and Matilda Barber were undoubtedly part of the dowry that the daughter took with her to the new home in Rochester. The miniatures of the young couple were made in New York City within about a year of their marriage, on the occasion of Schermerhorn's leaving for an extended southern trip. Excessively worried about his health, for fear he would not return he had his likeness painted, and when his wife met him in New York (for the journey was successful), he had the same artist paint her portrait. Although he was in Charleston during the Nullification crisis, his voluminous letters to Homer (Louisa and the baby, Matilda, stayed at the Barber's during his absence) barely

mention that important event. The burden of his correspondence is religion. "And our dear Father Oh my wife is there anything in our power that we have not done or that we could do and that we leave undone to secure the salvation of his dear and precious soul;.. bid Hannah resist not the spirit." Yet on that trip he was careful to have the Albany Journal forwarded to him and he kept in touch with affairs as interpreted by Thurlow Weed. After a long horseback journey from Charleston, he reached Washington and wrote to Homer on May 2. 1833, "I shall not intrude upon the President (I have every facility for an introduction to Gen'l Jackson through Mr. Van Buren) but differing in politics as we do I cannot but say that I feel quite indifferent for an interview."

In 1841, on the score of its healthfulness, he decided on Homer as his place of residence. Tradition says that his wife demurred as to the plan. But the Caleb Ballard place on South Main Street---improved by Ellis Roberts----was purchased and developed into a beautiful estate, "The Hedges." The Barber and Schermerhorn gardens vied with each other for years; in fact, on the village wall map these are the two formal gardens platted. Schermerhorn became very prominent in Homer affairs. He was elected a trustee of the Cortland Academy in 1852 and six years later a deacon in the Congregational Church, to which he was a most liberal contributor. After the failure of the railroad he took on the task of directing the reorganization. He operated the line most ably. "Fifty of our very choice men here in Homer have enlisted," he reported to his wife, with the statement that he must go to Washington and visit the camp. The pass he used is preserved in the "Letters from the Hedges."

For three decades Schermerhorn worked indefatigably to build up his affairs: "My time has been so fully occupied between Banking, building and farming" (September 4, 1838). He soon became a shrewd investor in newly developing railway and telegraph properties. Traveling much of the time between Albany and Buffalo and favorably known in the business circles of every town and city in the state, he soon added New York, Boston, and Detroit to his itineraries. "In passing through Syracuse I felt like a doomed criminal unable to turn aside (home) even for a day," he wrote his wife January 15, 1845, and from the Delevan House in Albany--he was a persuasive lobbyist---some fifteen years later he wrote Louisa as to improvements in Homer, "Gas works contracted for church not yet hope it will be soon." Whatever the matter that kept him on the road, he always reported his activities and his plans to his wife. Even when Louisa spent months at a time,

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as she did each year, at Clifton Springs Water Cure in Ontario County, her husband's were as regular as ever. The report of the 1860 Thanksgiving dinner at the Barber home has a distinct note of longing both in the husband and in the father. Schermerhorn reported "I was seated at our old place on his left hand...one of Hannah's best dinners, got up in her best style and very much enjoyed by all...Father was quite lost without Louisa and showed it plainly," and the letter closed with a characteristic note, "I shall not be able to come up to Clifton to-morrow as a Plank Road meeting must be held in Cortland."

His party loyalty was expressed in a letter to his wife (October 26, 1863), "If it is the last vote I ever cast I must vote. If I had to go to the length of the states I would go if it cost my life. It is the best at this time I feel that I can do for my country." This has even heightened meaning when it is remembered that Schermerhorn's second daughter, Catherine, had married Louis B. Henry of Henrys, Smith & Townsend, important dry-goods factors of New York City, dealing in the South. By a strange coincidence, two of the Henry brothers had married in the Barber family: John T. Henry's wife was Jedediah Barber's daughter Elvenah, and his younger brother Lewis B. Henry in 1836 became the husband of Barber's granddaughter, Catherine Schermerhorn.

This letter to Louisa Schermerhorn from her son-in-law is a careful statement of the New York businessman, September 17, 1860:

"The political pot is beginning to boil briskly in this city. A large Republican Demonstration is announced for October 3rd, which will call out plenty of money and enthusiasm. A Mass Meeting of all parties opposed to Republicanism will take place at Cooper Institute this evening at which Joshua (Henry) has today been invited to preside and is expected to do so. Unrestricted Negro Suffrage is openly advocated, and is to be submitted to the people at the coming Election--but so radical a measure finds little favor in this city. My own ideas are these---I think the times call for able men at the head of the Nation, and for moderation in public measures. I am opposed to extremists both North and South. My decided choice is for Bell and Everett over all other candidates, as eminently National and Conservative men. But I would prefer the election of Douglas or Breckenridge at this juncture to that of Lincoln, or any man pledged to "the irrepressible conflict" of Republicanism. These are my views and in accordance with them I expect to vote."

The strong pro-Republicanism ~~exhibited~~ of Schermerhorn clashed with this conservative view. Clearly the philosophy of the Henry brothers restrained Jedediah Barber's feelings, but no such result was apparent in Jacob Schermerhorn's case. Yet to both homes at Homer the daughters who had married merchants in southern trade returned during the war years.

As there was a difference in politics, so was there difference in religious views. The Henrys were Episcopalians, and their wives, although they had been brought up in the Congregational Church in Homer, went with their husbands to the Church of the Ascension.

But for Jacob Schermerhorn to have a daughter discuss the possibility of changing from the traditional evangelical church to that of formal prayer book was alarming. The matter was broached carefully and the forms and creeds were minutely explained in detail over a long period of time before the parental permission was reluctantly given. Finally a letter of dismissal was obtained from the Homer church and the statement of the rector in New York was returned.

Schermerhorn's income in 1865 was over \$43,000, as reported in the statement released by the Cortland County Republican in July, 1865. This was by far the largest income in the county. ...the latter (Schermerhorn) was a keen investor in the growing American corporations of the entire North.

Schermerhorn died in Syracuse February 23, 1890, and was buried in the family plot at Mount Hope in Rochester. On January 19, 1899, the Homer Republican published this obituary:

"Last Thursday afternoon occurred the death of Mrs. Jacob M. Schermerhorn at her late residence on South Main Street, in this village.....She was the daughter of Jedediah Barber, one of the leading citizens and merchants of Homer fifty years ago, when Homer was the most important business center in this county. She was born at Tully, June 2, 1810 and married October 26, 1831. After their marriage they went to Rochester where Mr. Schermerhorn practiced law, and engaged in banking and other business enterprises. In 1842 they came to Homer where they maintained their residence for the remainder of their lives. They first resided in the Carpenter house, the second house south of the fine old residence which they purchased a few years after coming here. In 1847 Mr. and Mrs. Schermerhorn united with the Presbyterian Church of this village.
pp. 142-148.

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The reorganization of February 13, 1856 (of the Syracuse and Binghamton R.R.), produced a new name, the Syracuse and Southern, and the needed leadership. Barber's son-in-law, Jacob M. Schermerhorn, had been a resident of Homer for about twenty years. He was a shrewd investor and had acquired a host of friends in the financial circles of New York.He had loyally supported the railroad project and had invested to the extent of about \$20,000 as the list of stockholders in 1860 revealed. Facing the loss of his original investment, Schermerhorn took the lead in the reorganization. Tradition says that he sent his son, George, all through the section buying up stock certificates from the farmers for fifteen cents on the dollar. At all events the fact remains that he soon had a controlling interest in the Syracuse ~~Binghamton~~ and Southern and immediately changed its name a second time to the Syracuse, Binghamton and New York Railroad. A modest newspaper paragraph announced the beginning of this change of control: "we learn from the Cortland County Republican that J. M. Schermerhorn Esq. is the Superintendent and President of the S.B. and N.Y. Railroad."

The new president's work was good...and the road went through to Lake Ontario. And within a few years there was a customer for the property. Successful operation of the 110 miles enabled the president to sell it to the Delaware, Lackawanna & Western R.R., under whose control it is still operated.

Schermerhorn had done a fine piece of work in putting the railroad through Homer and Cortland on its feet.

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Portraits of Mr. & Mrs. Schermerhorn face page 142. Also one of "The Hedges."

Jedediah Barber 1787-1876.
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