

# EDMUND WILSON

## His Talcottville Mansion and Talcottville Relations



Edmund Wilson

2012 marks the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the passing of the renowned author and literary critic Edmund Wilson. His classic book *Upstate* is partially a diary describing time spent at his summer home in Talcottville, NY. The time frame he writes about extends from the early 1950's, just after inheriting the house from his mother, to 1970, shortly before his death two years later. *Upstate* also includes a brief history of Talcottville and its settlement from the late 1790's by Edmund Wilson's ancestors and near relations: the Bakers, the Kimballs, the Talcotts, the Collins, the Loomises and the Munns.

*Upstate* is peopled throughout with both past and contemporary family members who Edmund Wilson describes with fondness and sometimes with a touch of humor. While many connections between aunts and uncles, grandparents, and cousins are partially explained, confusion abounds. Using facts gleaned from *Upstate*, local cemetery records, Hough's 1883 *History of Lewis County*, and Cutter's 1912 *Genealogy of Northern New York Families* I have tried to piece together Edmund Wilson's Talcottville family. Included are photographs of various family members, particularly the Talcotts, from the collection of the Lewis County Historical Society.

## The Talcotts and the Stone House

Hezekiah Talcott was a Tory in the Revolutionary War. After the war he bought 1600 acres in what is now Talcottville, Leyden Township. From Hartford, Connecticut Hezekiah moved his family in 1798 to Leyden. With his sons Jesse and Johnson, he



built a mill and log house and started the construction of the stone Georgian house. It is reported that the house took four or five years to build, with stone hauled by oxen-team from the Sugar River nearby. A memorial service for George Washington was held in the winter of 1800 and a meeting was held here to decide the dividing line between Lewis and Oneida Counties. The pantry between the dining room and kitchen

served as the Leyden Post Office where people would collect their mail.

Jesse Talcott was unmarried and the house was left to his brother Johnson when he passed away in 1846. A few years later Johnson passed away and the house was inherited by Johnson's unmarried daughter, Sophronia Barinthia Talcott. In 1851 she became the second wife of Thomas Baker who used the house as an inn for many years.

The house came into the Wilson family when Edmund's father bought the house from Thomas Baker Jr. around 1920 for Edmund's mother who was Thomas Baker's granddaughter and native of Talcottville. Upon his mother's death, Edmund took possession of the house and used it only in the summertime to work on his books. In 1972 the house passed to his daughter Rosalind Wilson who sold the property to Michael and Mary Hearn of Virginia. This was the first time that the house belonged to someone other than Edmund's Talcottville relations.

The house was added to the list of historic places in 1973.



North East and North West parlors about 1910

Edmund Wilson was not a direct descendent of Hezekiah Talcott, but through the various intermarriage of the Talcotts, especially Johnson's children, with other local families, Edmund was related to just about everyone of his generation.

Johnson Talcott had eight children, the first son Ralph dying when only 4 months old. The first, Sally Cooley Talcott, married Jonathan Collin Jr. Jonathan was the son of Jonathan Collins Sr. a prominent lawyer and Judge in the early days of Lewis County.



Sally Talcott



Jonathin Collins Jr.

The second daughter, Sophronia Barinthia Talcott married Thomas Baker Sr. as his second wife.



Sophronia Barinthia Talcott



Thomas Baker Sr.

A third daughter Adeline Talcott married Hannibal Howard Kimball who was Edmund Wilson's Great uncle.



Adeline Talcott



Hannibal Howard Kimball

The next daughter to marry was Jannett Talcott to Howard Daniels.



Jannett Talcott



Howard Daniels

The first marriageable son was Jesse Talcott who married Jane W. Baker, Thomas Baker's daughter.



Jesse Talcott



Jane W. Baker

Jonathan Talcott married Cornelia Dayan, oldest daughter of the Honorable Charles Dayan of Lowville.



Jonathan Talcott



Cornelia Dayan

Finally, Lodemia A. Talcott married Chester J. Munn Sr. The Munns were another prominent family in Talcottville (see below).



Lodemia A. Talcott



Chester J. Munn Sr.

## Thomas Baker Family

Thomas Baker was born at Hoosick, Rensselaer County, NY Dec. 10, 1799. He came to the town of Warren, Herkimer county, NY with his parents when a boy. Thomas' father died a few years later and he removed to Russia, NY where he was a merchant for several years. He married Laura Shaw, daughter of Uriah Shaw of Trenton, NY. In 1825 he came to Talcottville and established a general store. After five years he sold out and engaged in the business of cattle dealing. He also owned a slaughter house, and shipped beef in barrels to Troy, NY. In the financial panic of 1857 he suffered large losses through the failure of the Troy firm that handled his meats and did not resume business afterward.

Laura died in 1848 and three years later Thomas married Sophronia Talcott, daughter of Johnson and Altamira (Cooley) Talcott. After his second marriage, Mr. Baker and his wife moved into the Stone House and conducted a hotel successfully, being associated for some years with his son, Thomas, in this business. He also operated a gray limestone quarry, the stone from which was shipped to market by way of the canal. It was one of the largest industries of its kind in this section, employing some twenty-five hands. He also owned and operated a farm, and was a citizen of high standing and large influence in the community. He was active in public affairs and was elected to various offices of trust and honor. He was, for many years, town clerk and supervisor of the town of Leyden, and during the twelve years during which he was a member of the board of supervisors he became one of the best known and most popular men in public life in the county. He represented this district, Lewis County, in the assembly in 1844. He died April 7, 1883, at Leyden.

## Kimball Family

Edmund Wilson's Great Great Grandfather, Rev. Reuel Kimball, was born in Marlboro, VT and was married to Hannah Mather, a decedent of Cotton Mather of Witch Trial fame. He was a Presbyterian minister and his charges were in Marlboro, VT, until 1804, then in Leroy, NY, until 1816, and then in Leyden, NY. In the collection of the Historical Society is Reuel Kimball's 1816 copy of the Book of Common Prayer used at the beginning of his ministry in Leyden. An inscription on the flyleaf reads "The property of Reuel Kimball presented to him by Reverend William Rogers, minister of the Protestant Episcopal Church in Turin"



Reuel's grandson Walter Scott Kimball married Thomas Baker's daughter Helen Matilda Baker, Edmund Wilson's grandmother. The Kimball's moved to New Jersey where their daughter, Helen Baker Kimball, met and married Edmund's father Edmund Wilson Sr.

To add to the confusion, Walter's cousin Hannibal Kimball married Sophrania's sister Adeline Talcott who was the mother of Helen Grace Kimball Reed. Helen Reed played a big part in Edmund's childhood.

Helen Matilda Baker Wilson  
Edmund Wilson's Grandmother

## Chester Munn Family

Otis, son of Seth Munn, was born at Gill, formerly Greenfield, MA September 28, 1784. He married Malenda (?) and had a daughter, Sophia S., who died April 8, 1810, aged twenty-two months. He then married Permelia Jennings, of Greenfield, April 15, 1815. Soon after his marriage, he removed to Rochester, New York, where he purchased a large tract of land near Carthage Landing. He was there but a short time when he removed to Greig. He followed his trade as carpenter and bridge builder many years. He sold his farm at Greig and removed to Leyden about 1839, and bought another farm there, which he cultivated for forty years afterward. He died Aug. 31, 1880; his wife Parmelia, died May 5, 1876.

Otis's second oldest son Chester J. Munn Sr. married Lodema A. Talcott sister to Sophronia Baker and Adeline Kimball. Otis's fourth oldest son Thaddeus Eugene Munn Sr. married Adeline Shurrell Baker who was Thomas Baker's daughter and Sophronia's step-daughter.



Munn House in Talcottville



# Edmund Wilson's Family

1. **Thomas Baker** (b. Dec. 10, 1799 Hoosick, NY - d. April 7, 1883 Leyden, NY) m. (1)Laura Shaw (b. Jan 13, 1804 Trenton, NY – d. Nov 3, 1848 Leyden, NY)
2. **Helen Matilda Baker** (b. July 17, 1833 Leyden, NY – d.?) m. Walter Scott Kimball (b.1828 Leyden, NY – d.1890)
3. **Helen Mather Kimball** (b. April 20, 1865 – d. Feb. 5, 1951) m. 1892 Edmund Wilson Sr. (b. Dec.15, 1863 Shrewsbury, NJ – d. May 15, 1923 Red Bank, NJ)
4. **Edmund Wilson Jr.** (b. May 6, 1895 Red Bank, NJ – d. June 12, 1972 Leyden, NY)

m. (1) Feb 14, 1923 Mary Blair (b.1895 – d.1947)

**Rosalind Baker Wilson** (b. Sept 19, 1923 - d. Oct. 30, 2000)

m. (2) May 9, 1930 Margaret Canby (nee Waterman) (b. 1895 – d. Sept 30, 1932 Santa Barbara, CA)

m. (3) 1938 Mary McCarthy (b. June 21, 1912 Seattle, WA – d. Oct 25, 1989 New York, NY)

**Reuel Wilson** (b. Dec 25, 1938)

m. (4) 1946 Helene-Martha (Elena) von Mumm Thornton

**Helen Miranda Wilson** (b. Feb 19, 1948 Boston, MA)