



Theodore A. Schultz

by Cynthia M. Koch

Theodore A. Schultz lived only 24 years (1838–1862), but left a legacy of enduring value to this community. In his will Theodore bequeathed the land and monies necessary to build the meeting hall for the Masonic Warren Lodge No. 32 and the nearby First Christian (now Christian Alliance) Church and burial ground, both in Schultzville.

The Masonic Lodge was acquired by the historical society in 1999 and preserved and restored. Subsequently in 2010 it was sold to the Town of Clinton and moved to its present site near Town Hall, where it houses town offices. The Masons continue to use the meeting hall on the second floor, which is also available to community groups.

The second floor meeting hall is a remarkable space. Its ceiling is a barrel vault comprised of finely fitted narrow-tongue-and-groove paneling that resembles the hull of a wooden ship. Within that hall Theodore

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Schultz's nearly life-sized 4½ x 6½ foot portrait has presided over the room for as long as anyone can remember.

Young Mr. Schultz died from tuberculosis on January 22, 1862. His father Daniel H. Schultz had died only four years earlier, leaving Theodore a large inheritance. Daniel was one of a group of gentlemen who, in 1846, invited a minister from the nondenominational Christian Church to preach regularly in the lecture room over his general store in Schultzville.

Theodore Schultz was close to both the church and the Warren Lodge. After his bequest of 2½ acres and \$3,000, the church was first organized in 1863 and the building completed in 1866. A devoted member of the Lodge, his bequest of \$2,000 to the Masons—combined with the contributions of members—provided for the construction of the Lodge building in 1864.

By the fall of 2012, the Theodore Schultz portrait was much in need of conservation. The paint was cracked and flaking. It had suffered a tear and was very dirty and coming loose from its stretcher. The historical society, which owns the painting, hired conservator Hallie Halpern to thoroughly restore the portrait. It is unsigned and very likely dates from about 1865. After Ms. Halpern's work, which took about forty hours, it is clean, reinforced, and consolidated. It should last another century or more. Ms. Halpern's photos of the finished work are seen here. The painting is now once again hanging in the Masonic Lodge.

But who was this handsome young man? In my search of old sources, I could not find much about him—although the mere fact that we have his portrait provides more information than

we know about most Clinton residents of his time.

Theodore was obviously a young man of means; the drapery and fine furnishings, his fashionable clothing, and the very fact that his portrait was painted indicate his high social status. The view of the Hudson River in the background ties him to our region. We know that he was a member of the Schultz family, who were (according to

William McDermott's *Clinton: A History of a Town**) among the largest landholders in the town in 1830. And we know from historical sources that the Schultz family once owned most of the land in the hamlet that bears their name. Theodore's only mention in town records is that he succeeded his father Daniel as postmaster; serving from 1858 to 1862.

He was buried in the church cemetery in Schultzville, but his body was moved to Rhinebeck in 1920.

The Schultz family had three or more individual heads of household listed as real estate taxpayers in 1830, with a combined total of approximately 1,300 acres for the extended family—making them, along with the Traver family, the largest landholders in Clinton. Theodore's father Daniel was an important businessman in Clinton. He operated a sawmill, gristmill, general store, and the post office, as well as a cider mill, blacksmith shop, and a large farm.

The Schultz homestead still stands, proudly, in the heart of Schultzville as the home of CHS Vice President Craig Marshall and his wife Mary. How satisfying that the historical society was able to restore the Theodore Schultz portrait, giving us a reason to reflect on our local history and the ties that bind us all in place over time.



**Clinton: A History of a Town* is available for purchase from the Historical Society.