

# Today in Saratoga County History

## A Local Valentine From the Past

Submitted by John L. Scherer February 14, 2021

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*Sebastian Cragier*

*Catherine Fellows*

In America the sending of valentines appears to have begun shortly before the middle of the eighteenth century. These early valentines were hand-made, as valentines were not produced to any extent on a commercial basis until 1840. This was the beginning of the machine age, and while hand-made valentines were still produced, new styles appeared. While some were engraved or made from woodcuts and aquatints, most were lithographed and colored by hand.

A hand-made valentine with a hand-written message was treasured by its local recipient, and survives today in the Town of Clifton Park History Collection. It is addressed to Mr. Sebastian Cragier of Vischer Ferry, and is dated Valentine's Day, 1846:

*Vischers Ferry, Feb. 14, 1846*

*To Mr. Sebastian Cragere*

*I had my fortune, you must know,  
     Told on the cards some nights ago;  
 And what the woman said to me  
     I think I should repeat to thee.  
 She said that I should soon receive  
     A letter which would pleasure give.  
 Which letter she assured me, too,  
     A man would send of a fair hue.  
 A man what name I know I know of none  
     Except my friend, that's you, a hue.  
 But I forgot, oh precious thing  
     She said the man had bought a ring.  
 A ring--from this I understand  
     The gentleman will seek my hand.  
 Well, sir, I have it unto you  
     To tell me if the news be true.  
 Now is it true you have in mind  
     To take me for your valentine?*

This valentine was sent by Catherine Fellows, the 16 year old daughter of Laurence and Sarah Fellows. She lived with her parents and five brothers on Riverview Road just east of Vischer Ferry. Their home, which was later inherited by Catherine's brother Lewis, burned about 1879, when the present farmhouse and barn, formerly owned by Mr. and Mrs. Guy Howard Sr. was built on the site.

Across the road from Catherine lived her sweetheart, Sebastian Cragier. Sebastian, at age 24 was 8 years older than Catherine. He lived with his 73 year old father, Tunis Cragier, and his 44 year old sister, Dorcas. His mother, Ann, had died two years before at age 65. His brother, Garret, was a well-known figure who ran the Vischer Ferry Hotel.

Sebastian's father died a couple years later in 1848, and he and his sister continued to live on the farm until she married in 1855 at age 53 to Andrew Van Vranken. They lived on Riverview Road in Vischer Ferry in the home once occupied by the Gould family. Sebastian now lived alone in his big farmhouse.

Finally in 1860 love triumphed and Catherine's fortune came true. She and Sebastian were married at the Amity Reformed Church on July 16, 1860, just over one month after her father's death. Catherine was now 30 years old and Sebastian was 38. It was 14 years after the valentine prediction.

Sebastian and Catherine lived in the Cragier farmhouse, where their first and only child, Teunis, was born in 1861. Alas, marital bliss was short lived. Catherine died on July 18, 1866, just two days after her sixth wedding anniversary. She was only 36 years old. Sebastian and Catherine's son, Teunis, would also die young. He died on June 5, 1887 at Key West, Florida. He was only 26 years old.

Sebastian would never remarry. He lived alone in the large farmhouse called "Woodland," built by his father in 1811. He died at the ripe old age of 77 on September 23, 1899. The Cragier farmhouse did not long survive him. It burned to the ground in 1913.

All the principals of this story are at rest now in the cemetery on the hill in back of the Amity Reformed Church in Vischer Ferry. Sebastian Cragier must have truly treasured his valentine from Catherine Fellows as he preserved it during his lifetime so that we might enjoy this Valentine Day story today. HAPPY VALENTINES DAY!