

# BECH FAMILY HISTORY



## Bech Family History

Edward Bech was born May 4, 1812 in Denmark. His father, Jorgen, a friend of Crown Prince Frederik, was a successful merchant. Edward was educated at the University of Copenhagen and later went to the Hanseatic city of Lubeck for a commercial education. He arrived in New York in 1838. After working for others he formed his own trading firm in 1842 which continued for 47 years until the death of his son George. Also in 1838 he became the Danish Consul in New York, a position that he held until 1858. He was knighted by the Danish king on Oct. 5, 1854.

In addition to his own funds he inherited large sums of money from his father. He moved to Poughkeepsie in 1851 and lived at 57 Market St., Poughkeepsie, for about 10 years. He became involved with the "pig iron" trade and started the Tuckerman and Bech Iron Company, a thriving riverfront industry that prospered with the advent of the Delaware and Hudson Canal and Railroad. He was also a partner in the Cunard Steamship Company.

In 1863 Bech purchased Hickory Grove, a 65 acre farm along the Hudson River which he named "Rosenlund." He hired Detlef, Lienau a prominent architect and fellow countryman, to design the estate. The "Hickory Grove" main house was still useable so Lienau drew up the plans for a mansion, barn, carriage house and gatehouse. The service buildings had been constructed when Bech died in 1873 terminating the project. The mansion was never built, but the drawings, displayed in the architectural drawing section of this web site, are part of the Avery Collection at Columbia University. At his death Edward Beck left an estate valued at \$1,837,342. His son George continued managing his businesses until his death in 1890. His widow kept Rosenlund until her death in 1900. In 1908 the property was sold to the Marist Brothers who later founded Marist College.

The three service buildings now known as Greystone, St. Peter's and the Kieran Gate House were listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1991.

Edward Bech's contribution was his vision of building up the iron industry in the city of Poughkeepsie. He saw Poughkeepsie as the center, the hub of a four spoked industry

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with coal coming in from the West, iron ore from the North, both economically transported via water, with the processing done in New York, Brooklyn, New England and Boston. It was to accomplish this dream that a great railroad bridge was built in Poughkeepsie. The bridge has not been used since 1974 when it was badly damaged by fire.

**\*click on any image to enlarge\***

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# Project Directors

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**John Patrick Noone**

**From the beginning, Marist Heritage has been a collaborative effort.**

We appreciate the contributions of the Marist Brothers and the Marists All community, who by supplying information and personal memories, have given vitality, scope and depth to this project

Under the guidance and direction of Dr. Brian Henry Desilets, the initial web pages were designed and created by the following Marist College students: Michele van Brero (Hermitage, St. Peter's, Kieran Gate House, Greystone, Marist Brothers Builders, Our Lady Seat of Wisdom Chapel).....Tage Haun (Bech Homestead, Marian, Donnelly).....Fang Fang Xu (Boat House, Byrne House, Kirk House).....Courtney Gutt (Bech Family History).....Vij lyer (Cemetery).....Rahkee Chopra (Fontaine Hall).

All the final Marist Heritage web pages were either created, revised, rewritten and/or reshaped by John Patrick Noone, who is solely responsible for any errors contained therein.

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***John Patrick Noone, editor***  
***November 15, 2002***

**\*this page is printer ready**

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