

## Sketch: The Smith – Evertson Wedding Story

compiled by Pamela Hutchison Garrett, 2018

from A Sketch of the Cotton Smith Family of Sharon, Connecticut: With Genealogical Notes; Bayard Tuckerman; 1915.

Governor John Cotton Smith married Margaret, daughter of Jacob Evertson, of Pleasant Valley, New York, in the autumn of 1786. Jacob Evertson was one of the so-called "Great Nine Partners" who owned over 140,000 acres, principally in Dutchess County. He was of Dutch descent, and his family still observed the customs of the Dutch settlers and preserved a connection with their relatives in Holland. Pleasant Valley, New York, and Sharon, Connecticut, although in different states, were within an easy journey on horseback. The state line was invisible and yet in those days it still meant much, for in separating New England from New York, it marked a notable difference of customs and ideas. Few colonial weddings have been so well described as that of Margaret Evertson to John Cotton Smith, and we owe the description of it to the bridegroom's sister Mary, who wrote an account to another sister, Elizabeth, wife of Dr. William Wheeler of Red Hook, N. Y, who was unable to be present. Here is Mary Smith's letter:

*Of course both Jack and Peggy looked very handsome, although if I didn't know that Jack is twenty one and Peggy only nineteen, I should say she was the oldest. He is so happy, I suppose that made him look so boyish. She is very happy too, but I think marriage seems a more serious matter to a woman. You will wish to know what they wore — most important subject. So listen: Place aux dames — Peggy first.*

*Item. A gown of exceeding glossy and rich satinn of a bluish white colour that would make a Fright of anyone else; but her complexion is so faire, that she can stand anything. It was trimmed around the Neck and Sleeves with exceeding rich Lace about five inches wide in double rows and very full gathered. There must be at least a dozen yards of it. Mr. Everston sent express to his relatives in Holland for it and the Satinn for the gown.*

*Item: a very large painted Fan with shepherds and sheperdesses painted on it.*

*Item: a paire of white Sattine Slippers.*

*Item: a paire of long white silk Mitts, reaching above the Elboughs. These were of our dear Mamma's finest Knitting.*

*Item: three very fine white Ostrich Plumes in her hair.*



*And now for Jack. His breeches and coat were of fine black velvet. His long white silk Stockings were Knitted by our dear Mamma. And he wore the Vest on which your own faire fingers spent so much time. His ruffles were the same lace as Pegg's. His handkerchief was of the very finest texture of Linnen, almost like a Cobweb, and your Humble Servant, madam, was the Spider that did the spinning of this Web! Likewise the hemstitching in three rows. It took old Johnny Barnet near a week to do the weaving it is so fine. As the handkerchief is near a yard square it took Time to get those three Rows around and I was fearful of not getting it ready for the Day, so Juliana spelled me a little toward the last, and our stitches are so much alike, that I don't believe even your Critical Eye could tell her work from mine. I am sure Pegg's cannot, for, (and I know you will not bruit it abroad) I fear the new Sister is not overly well skilled with the Needel, though in most other Housewife Arts she is well taught.*

*Well, there was a goodly gathering of gentry. Many had come from the River as far as from Albany down and from New York up. Phil L. was there and as conceited and impudent as ever. The young Patroon [Van Rensselaer] has grown a good deal since he and Jack were used to spout Lattin verses at our House, first one and then the other making believe he was a Roman Senator, with me for an admiring Audience. He seems to be as modest and agreeable as ever. His good mother has reason to be content with him.*

*Pegg's Great Aunts, Mrs. Bayard and Mrs. de Peyster, you know. (N.B. They took up no less Space than usual.) Almost the whole family of Livingstons from the Upper Manour was there. Pegg's uncle Bloom (brother of Mrs. Jacob Evertson) was not able to be present, but sent her a fine and useful gift of four young heifers with calf.*

*All the Tenantry had their Tables set in the biggest Barne, and of good eating there was no lack but rather an overabundance. It seemed to me, when after supper Mrs. Evertson took me into the Kitchen and Pantry, that there was more left untouched than had been used, and yet there had been no stint but rather Stuffing of the Guests, and many persons to be fed.*

*There is no need for telling over all we had to you who know so well that all great Feasts are much alike, only I will say that everything was of the very best that Money could buy, as plentiful as if it cost nothing, and as well cooked and served as the very best of cooks and waiters can do under such a Director as Mr. Evertson.*



*Between you and me, all alone, I think it really Mr. E. who is the Director of all Things in and about his Home as well as in his business. You well know what a handsome Gentleman he is and so gracious and genial with everyone, seeming to think of nothing but their pleasure. Yet I observe that it is to him that all the Servants look for orders and all the Guests for entertainment. While old Lady Evertson, who is always fussing about with an anxious scowl on her wrinkled face (he hasn't a wrinkle, yet he is fifty two and that is several years older than she) seems to exercise no real Authority. She looks, when they stand up side by side, full ten years older than our Mamma, instead of looking what she is, which is ten years younger. She wore a very rich and stiff Dove-coloured Sattin Gown with a Kerchief and a close Cap of the finest of Linnen cambric; and our mamma wore the good black Sattin gown she got to wear at your wedding with the small Canton Shawl of white Crape that Uncle Worthington gave her.*

*I am glad that Peggy resembles her Father. Although her Mother is very good I don't think I should like to spend my life under her Roof. This is somewhat ungrateful in me, because she has always been very kind*

*to me and even on the day of the wedding gave me a beautiful Turkis Broach. I don't know if I spell it right but the Broach is of light blue stones set in Gold. I guess you will know the kind I mean. She said she heard that I am Betrothed and she wished me to wear it when I was married. I answered that it is true as she had heard but that my Husband-to-be is not yet in readiness to be married, and that, if he was, Papa & Mamma do not wish me to leave their Roof for at least two years yet, so that she had best keep the Broach for me until then. But she said No, that she might not be living when that time came and she wanted to feel that I should possess something of her's.*

*Several of Jack's college mates had been invited and those came who do not live too far away. Mr. James Kent came in from Poughkeepsie and made himself very agreeable to all the Young Ladies and particularly I thought to Peggy's sister Catherine, at which I thought her mother seemed not well pleased, as if she considered that one son-in-law with no prospects beyond his profession should be a plenty in one Family.*

*By the bye, Mr. Robert Livingston of Clermont Manour begged his best respects to you, and to tell you that he missed your always gracious Presence, and that he purposed soon to give himself the pleasure of calling upon you and your good Husband. He is not so handsome as Some others whom we both know, but his manners are exceedingly fine and gracious, and his figure is really superb. When the Minuett was danced no one carried it so well as he, but he seemed to prefer talking with papa and Mr. E. which indeed it is natural that he should. He is really too old for dancing though he does it so well.*

*What a Dinner and what a Supper, and what Dancing too, those had who were privileged to dance! Jack and Peggy footed it in grand Style. Of course we conducted the bride to her new Home. We made a fine Cavalcade coming over the Hills in the moonlight. Papa and Mamma in their gig; Uncle and Aunt Simeon in their coach, others of the older ladies on pillions behind their Husbands and some of the young ladies behind their Gallants. But the most of us, I am happy to say, were on side-saddles, which I find are far better. I never did like being fastened on behind a man like a big, uncomfortable Bundle.*

*Just before we all left Mr. Evertson's house, all the Slaves gathered in rows on each side of the flag-walk from the front door, shouting: 'Weddin giff, young Massa! Weddin giff, young Missy!' We New Englanders did not know what to make of this, but Jack had been told by Peggy, and they were both ready for what it seems is an old Dutch custom. Mister Evertson himself held an immense two handled basket full of Packages, while Master Reuters and John (Evertson) each held another big Basket full of nuts, sugar plums and raisins. From Mister E's basket, the Bride and her Groom handed to each slave one of the packages, while the Brothers from their baskets dipped out big cocoanut shells full of the Goodies. It was fun to see the Darkies grin as each clutched the packet he or she had just received under one arm, and held it tight while holding out both hands to be filled with the Goodies. Each woman and girl found in her packet a gay Kerchief and Store stuff for a new gown. Each man got a big red and yellow Handkerchief, a paire of warm Stockings and about two pounds of tobacco. Some of the eldest got other things besides.*

*Jack and Peggy are to live with Uncle and Aunt Simeon [Dr and Mrs Simeon Smith of Sharon, Connecticut] for awhile, that is until Uncle and Aunt get ready to go to Vermont to live, which they now expect to do as soon as the sleighing will permit, and then the young couple shall have Uncle's fine House for their own, he says. When we reached the House it was all a blaze of light from Cellar to Garret and a big Supper was waiting but none of us could do Justice to it and the last Guest in both our Houses was in bed before Midnight.*

*One thing I forgot to tell you about, & that is the Flowers & Berries & Leaves with [which] the Evertson House was dressed. I never saw anything Like it before, but am told that the Dutch always make great use of Flowers at Weddings. Of course it was pretty late in the season for many Blossoms, but such as still lingered were put in with branches of Autumn Leaves, Bitter-Sweet & Elder & Wax Berries tastefully combined into ornaments for the Cornice, Mantel Pieces &c. They have two fine Gilt Chandeliers holding 18 Wax Candles each, like the one in Uncle Simeon's South Parlor. I think they are new, for I don't remember seeing them before, and I am very sure I should have noticed them. Underneath each of them was laid a little Pot in which grows a little Vine & twines around the stem of the Chandelier very prettily.*

*I am writing all this in Bits as I can take the time from other things less pleasurable but more necessary, and if I get things mixed up you must not mind it. I know I shall forget some of the many messages that were [given] me for you, but sooner or later you shall have them all. For one thing, Mr. Simeon Baldwin, is as much in love with your Highness as ever. N .B. Don't tell my good Brother-in-Law.*

*Mr. Evertson gave to P. the Boy and Girl she has always called her own, Jack & Nancy by name. They were married by Papa [Rev Cotton Mather Smith] directly after our Jack & Peggy. (Papa says we must give up calling our Brother "Jack" now that he is married, that it is not seemly. But it will be strange to call him John.) Nancy is to be Cook and another wench, Sib, short for Sibella, is to be Housemaid. N.B. Jack's Practice will have to pay him well with so much Stile to support. Uncle will present him with three Slaves as he will have to do a great deal to keep up Uncle's fine Establishment.*

*Oh, but you should see all the Linnen and good household Stuffs in Pegg's chestes! I thought you had enough for any girl's portion, but Peggy has at least four times as much in quantity, and some of it is astonishing fine in quality. Besides feather beds, bouldsters and big and little Pillows for half a dozen Beds, there are beautiful fine wool Mattresses for three other Beds and everything else to correspond. One Bedstead has hangings of heavy white Dimity, trimmed with a broad white Linnen fringe of her Mother's spinning, and her own Knotting. One has hangings of a gay flowered Chintze, also trimmed with the same sort of Fringe, and a third has hangings of white and blue silk Damask. But you must wait till you can come over when the sleighing is good. Then Peggy will show them all to you, and you must be sure to praise them enough, or you will not please her; and yet not too much, or she will think you are not sincere. Some of the mahogany furniture is extremely handsome, as I am sure you will say when you see it.*



*I am not half through with what I have to tell you, but Mr. Gay has just sent in to say that he is to start for Po'Keepsie in the morning, and will take anything we have to send you and leave it at the Friends in Pleasant Valley as he passes. I hope you will get the Package safely and as speedily as may be. I put the Loaf of good Bride Cake which Mrs. Evertson gave me for you in the centre, so its rich odour should not tempt the Carrier who takes it on from P.V.*

Do you want to know more?

[Link to Juliana Mathews in database](#)

[Link to John Evertson in database](#)

About the photos: The wonderful photos here are the work of [Randolph Caldecott](#) (1846-1886), the English illustrator whose name is given to America's prestigious award for children's literature. They come from his series of books about the Great Panjandrum, and represent a time period slightly later than the 1786 Smith – Evertson Wedding.

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