

# The Vassar Brothers Hospital Collection

## Repository

*Dutchess County Historical Society*  
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## Date Completed

2013 April 3

## Creators

Vassar Brothers Hospital

## Extent

3 linear ft

## Dates

Inclusive: 1895 – 1981

## Conditions Governing Access

No Restrictions

## Languages

English

## Scope and Content

The collection consists of contracts, historical narratives, administrative correspondence and other documentation concerning the administration of Vassar Brothers Hospital and the demolition of Old Vassar.

The historical society may hold assorted more historical and administrative documents pertaining to Vassar Brother Hospital. Included may be listings of employees and graduated nurses, historical narratives and annual reports. However, this material has yet to be located.

## Historical Note

James Vassar emigrated to the United States from France via London in 1796 and settled near Manchester Bridge. He started a farm and a brewery with the help of his two sons John Guy and Matthew (the founder of Vassar College). John Guy Vassar married a daughter of Baltus Van Kleeck and had two sons also named John Guy and Matthew. Matthew Vassar (the younger) was born in 1809 in the old Van Kleeck house of his mother's family that was built in 1702 – the first permanent building in Poughkeepsie on the south side of Mill street between Washington street and Vassar street. The original brewery built by James Vassar burned in 1811 in a disaster that cost the life of John Guy Vassar (the elder). The elder Matthew Vassar would rebuild the business after 1814. The younger Matthew ran his uncle's brewery and served as a trustee of his uncle and namesake's Vassar College. When he died on August 10, 1881, the younger Matthew Vassar's will allocated a portion of his estate for the incorporation of a hospital. The will stated that the institution would be called Vassar Brothers Hospital if his brother John Guy Vassar (the younger) was willing to participate. Unlike his brother, John Guy Vassar (the younger) had not been involved in local affairs. His tenuous health led him to travel for his health while he built an investment fortune.

The hospital opened on April 11<sup>th</sup>, 1887 and received its first patient, Minna A. Maxiner on April 27<sup>th</sup>. The hospital leaders also consisted of Matthew's widow, Irene B. Vassar and a number of Poughkeepsie magnates including Oliver H. Booth, James H. Weeks, Joseph M. Cleveland, Edward Van Kleeck, and William S. Johnson. A nurse training school was established and gave out its first certifications on October 1, 1890. It seems that criticism of the staff was common around the turn of the century. In 1906, Dr. Henry G. Bugbee became the new superintendent and began a reorganization of staff and a broadening of policy. In 1910 Dr. Bugbee resigned and original trustee Benjamin M. Fowler took his place. His tenure was one of great expansion. The number of patients increased over 200% from 1903 to 1913 and new buildings and wards were added. The babies department was added in 1916 and the year witnessed 15 births at the hospital. At first the lack of adequate facilities meant that maternity patients were admitted only on a charitable basis if they could not give birth at home. Funding became more of a problem as the original endowment made in Matthew Vassar's will continued to dwindle. During the hospital's first 33 years charity patients outnumbered pay patients two to one.

1921 witnessed the beginning of major expansion and policy changes for the hospital. A new wing doubled the number of beds and allowed the original building to be used for patients to be treated by their own local doctors. The enlargement of the staff met professional standards of American College of Surgeons and the American Hospital Association. A campaign to replenish the depleted endowment in 1924 raised over \$660,000. The 1920s witnessed more fundraising campaigns and the end of a closed body of permanent trustees. The governing body became the Vassar Brothers Hospital Association in 1929 which consisted of all contributors and elected trustees. In 1932 funds from the estate of Joseph T. Tower enabled the construction of a new nurses' home. In 1936 the hospital grew to hold 3,944 patients.

## Provenance

The Collection was donated to the Dutchess County Historical Society by Vassar Brothers Hospital on February 14, 1984. A second donation was made on June 16, 1984.

## Subject Headings

Vassar Brothers Hospital; Historic preservation

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## Container List

### Box 1

Item	Contents	Date
File 1	Historic Trust	1981 – 1982
File 2	Histories	1936 – 1976
File 3	“The Vassar Family” in Poughkeepsie Bicentennial Forum	1976
File 4	Administrative correspondence and other manuscript material	1895 – 1952
File 5	Clippings, photographic prints and negatives of Old Vassar	circa 1981
File 6	Correspondence concerning demolition	circa 1981
File 7	Environmental study	1980 – 1982
File 8	“Vassar Hospital, Poughkeepsie Tests the Wonders of the X-ray” in the <i>Sunday Courier</i>	1914 November 15

### Box 2

Item	Contents	Date
File 1	Bound books of photographs of Old Vassar Hospital	undated

### Box 3

Item	Contents	Date
Item 1	One bed pan with cover	undated
Item 2	Three enamel pans with half-covers	undated

**Container List from accession (may not reflect current holdings)**

Item	Contents	Date
Item 1	Miscellaneous architectural plans for Vassar Brother Hospital; some by Frederick C. Withers, architect	undated
Item 2	Framed registration certificate for Vassar Brothers Hospital, Training School for Nurses	undated
Item 3	"Twenty Years Around the World," John Guy Vassar	1891
Item 4	By-laws, rules, and regulations of Vassar Brothers' Hospital	1892
Item 5	1 <sup>st</sup> Annual report of the Vassar Brothers' Hospital	1887 – 1888
Item 6	Annual report of Vassar Brothers Hospital	1929
Item 7	Poughkeepsie city directory	1897
Item 8	Vassar Brothers Hospital, Account of Securities, securities received from Executors of M. Vassar, Jr.	1886 June 21
Item 9	Vassar Brothers Hospital, A History	1887 – 1967
Item 10	Miscellaneous newspaper articles	undated
Item 11	Miscellaneous historical information	undated
Item 12	Miscellaneous historical information	undated
Item 13	Material concerning the demolition of Old Vassar	undated
Item 14	Material concerning the demolition of Old Vassar	undated
Item 15	Material concerning the demolition of Old Vassar	undated
Item 16	Documentation on architectural elements that were removed	undated
Item 17	Photo album of Vassar Brothers Hospital and environs	1901
Item 18	14 photo reprints from album negatives	1901
Item 19	Postcard of Vassar Hospital entrance	undated
Item 20	Page from book showing Vassar Brothers Hospital and the proposed private pavilion	undated
Item 21	Promotional lay-out	undated
Item 22	List of nurses graduated at Vassar Brothers Hospital, up to October 1897	1897 October
Item 23	Copy of last will and testament and codicil thereto of John Guy Vassar	1888
Item 24	List of Employees at Vassar Brothers Hospital	1897
Item 25	Number of patients treated at Vassar Brothers Hospital from April , 1888 – October 27, 1897	1888 – 1897
Item 26	List of architects, contractors, and inspectors	undated