

5 Luquers Contributed to the Development of Bedford

Oldest Member of Group Was Rector for 53 Years

By MARY C. SCHURMAN

"How did the Luquer family happen to come to Bedford?" we asked Col. Thatcher Taylor Payne Luquer, distinguished soldier, civil engineer, octogenarian, and last scion of one of Bedford's most beloved and influential families.

"Father came to help at St. Matthew's for the Summer of 1866. He liked it here; and, since his parishioners liked him, he became their rector and stayed for 53 years."

And so chance or destiny—choose which you will—brought Dr. Lea Luquer to Bedford where, with his beloved wife, he practiced a wise and kindly ministry that extended far beyond St. Matthew's parish and that was almost a beneficent reign for half a century.

When asked how his father got his wisdom, Col. Luquer told us: "Father was a lawyer. He passed the bar examinations in 1855 and practiced law for several years. Indeed, he intended to make it his life work, but on a Sunday afternoon in Manhasset where he was visiting his father, he was asked by the rector of the Episcopal Church to read the service. He did so and was so deeply affected and impressed that he felt an urgent call to become a minister. He studied, and was ordained in 1864.

"His first call was to the Church of the Atonement in Brooklyn, a young parish, newly organized and trying hard to build its own church. Dr. Luquer threw himself into this and other parish work with a zeal that tax-

ed his health and he had to resign.

"It was about this time that the call came from St. Matthew's. As this was a smaller parish in the country, he decided to try it. In 1860 he had married Eloise Elizabeth, daughter of Thatcher T. Payne, and now had two children: one daughter Elise Payne and a son Lea McIlvaine. I was born here in Bedford at St. Matthew's Rectory. We loved it here and Father always felt that Bedford brought back his health."

Courageous Leader

No one can list all that the Luquers brought Bedford.

Dr. Luquer was a courageous leader with an incisive mind. His faith, his hope, and his love enriched his spirit as perhaps the law disciplined his mind, thus he was accepted by all sorts and conditions of men without particular emphasis on the church to which they belonged.

Also, since lawyers were scarce in those days, he drew on his legal learning to help people with their wills and to act as arbitrator when local differences of opinion stirred emotions to a white heat. Thus an uproar arose in the community when some of the residents began to play golf on Sundays. To the amazement of many, Dr. Luquer approved this new custom because business men had only Sunday in which to relax (Saturday was a work-day then) and he felt and said everyone could attend church Sunday morning.

To his wisdom, farsightedness, and influence, Mrs. Luquer add-



DISTINGUISHED soldier, civil engineer and octogenarian is Col. Thatcher T. P. Luquer of Bedford.

ed a warmhearted, tireless devotion that made her beloved by all Bedford. She had an "unwearied interest in all good works"; and many think that her daughter Eloise inherited this sensitiveness to the needs of others and gave it expression by visiting most of the homes in Bedford and, with her lifelong friend Miss Delia Marble, founding the District Nursing Association and the Woman's Auxiliary of St. Matthew's Church, both of which serve our community today.

Although there was only one daughter in the family, there were two sons and each studied engineering. Lea, the older, became associate professor of mineralogy at Columbia University. Much of our present knowledge

of the rock formations in Bedford came from him. Thatcher, now Colonel Luquer, served with distinction in World War I and was awarded the Silver Star for gallantry in action. His civilian career is engineering. He has given generously of his talents to Bedford. Thus he is the author of an historical sketch of Bedford and of St. Matthew's Church. But he has supplemented the written word with action. He has helped the authorities on proper road designation, and many institutions, such as the Bedford Hills Community House, owe their present health in no small degree to his long and excellent service.

By their devotion, service, and public spirit, all five Luquers contributed generously to the spiritual and social development of Bedford.

But the daughter, Eloise Payne Luquer was chosen by destiny to carry her influence far beyond our boundaries. For her talent as a botanist and artist brought her national recognition in 1939 when she was awarded the Achievement Medal of the Garden Club of America.

As a girl, Miss Luquer became interested in painting through her mother. Both her father and mother came from families of tradition, culture, and means, and so it was the Eloise grew up in an atmosphere of classical literature, music (a forbear had brought the first opera to this country) and art. Here her interest was especially keen and it ranged from her mother's landscapes and china to portraits by well-known artists. Many of these we admired when we called on Colonel Luquer recently at his Bedford Hills estate, "Rockmeadow."

Eloise loved to drive her fa-

ther on parish calls. This meant travel over country roads at a speed of about four miles an hour which gave her every chance to study and admire wildflowers. Their beauty excited her attention and as she studied them closely the intricacy of their patterns fascinated her interest and challenged her skill, and so she put aside painting landscapes and china and devoted her talents to capturing in water colors some of the wonders of nature. She was handicapped by her lack of botanical and other knowledge but corrected this by becoming an accomplished student of botany and a master technician in water-color. She wanted to paint every wildflower in Westchester and when she died in 1947 she left over 400 exquisite paintings in water color of our native wildflowers. Also she came to learn that you cannot love one part of Nature without an embracing love for it all. This led her to stimulate in others a love and understanding of Nature. And so she became one of the founding members of the Bedford Garden Club which, in turn, helped to start the Garden Club of America. She also started, with Delia West Marble, the Nature Trail and Museum at the Pound Ridge Reservation.

Memory Honored

In some of her hundreds of lectures, given all over the country, she showed selections from her wild flower paintings. These have been exhibited, among other places, at the Audubon Society in New York and at the Garden Club of American headquarters. She has fittingly been called "The Audubon of Wild Flowers."

The Bedford Garden Club established a Medal in 1949 to honor the memory of its beloved



WITH HER FRIEND, Miss Luquer started the Nature Trail and Museum at the Pound Ridge Reservation.

Eloise Payne Luquer and presented it to the Garden Club of America to award annually for

Old Question Came Up Again In Sept., 1945

"How is the grade crossing elimination progressing?" asked the late Samuel Olim at a meeting of the Village Board when Mayor Potter called for new business and no one even attempted to throw him out.

Mr. Olim contended that the growth of the entire village is now being held up until the Public Service Commissioner decides just which method of elimination it is going to order for Mount Kisco's crossings. He said none of the West Main Street merchants could make improvements or do any new building. Most of the business men in the block are making arrangements to move from the street. Fox & Sutherland have purchased property on South Moger Avenue; Thomas Briccetti owns a new store on East Main Street and Doyle's Radio Shop is moving to the corner of East Main Street and South Moger Avenue, Oct. 1. All these merchants, the Village Board and the Towns of New Castle and Bedford are in favor of Exhibit 58, Intermediate Scheme, which will carry the tracks underground, north and south between Kisco Avenue and the present tracks.

Mayor Potter told Mr. Olim that the Public Service Commission had promised to hand out a decision, soon after Labor Day

or Education—the interpretation to be elastic and imaginative as was the life work of Miss Luquer."