

Nellie T. Peck, National Bank President



Above right: The bank occupied this building from 1903 until 1971, when it moved to new quarters.

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Far right: The local newspaper carried this article on April 25, 1900, about the founding of the National Bank, noting Nellie T. Peck as the president.

NELLIE T. (CLARK) PECK WAS A NATIVE OF PULASKI, NY, a village in central New York about 40 miles north of Syracuse. She was born there on March 4, 1857, to a banking family. Her father, James A. Clark, was the founding cashier (1865) of the Pulaski National Bank and was its president at the time of his death in 1887. Her mother, Helen A. Clark, then succeeded to the presidency and served until her death in 1893. She was one of the first woman National Bank presidents.

Then Nellie's sister-in-law, Ella Clark, became president of the Pulaski bank, serving for about a decade before Nellie's brother, Louis J. Clark, assumed the presidency of this family owned bank which closed in 1932 during the depression.

When in her early 20s, Nellie Clark married Charles A. Peck of Mexico, NY. Mexico, also in Oswego County, is about 10 miles southwest of Pulaski. Both Nellie and her husband were directors of the Pulaski NB by the 1890s.

Charles was in the mercantile business in Mexico and in 1895 (some sources say 1898) he organized a private bank in the village, Charles A. Peck and Company. When that bank evolved into the First National Bank of Mexico, charter #5293, in the spring of 1900, Nellie became its president and Charles the cashier.

For the early years of her presidency, her sister-in-law was president of the Pulaski National Bank. Thus these nearby national banks each had a woman president. A local newspaper in 1902 noted this, saying, "Both institutions are flourishing, and justly proud of their women officers."

Nellie served as bank

Mexico's National Bank.

The First National Bank of Mexico has been incorporated and has received authority from the Comptroller of the Currency to begin business. The capital is \$25,000 and the first issue of currency will \$7,000. The Banking Association is the successor to Charles A. Peck & Company, private bankers, who began business about a year ago, and is the first bank ever incorporated in this village. A large amount of banking business is transacted here in proportion to the population and there is no good reason why a national bank, properly run, should not make money.

The directors are Nellie T. Peck, Charles A. Peck, Henry A. Peck, L. G. Ballard and Ida T. Ballard. Nellie T. Peck is president and Charles A. Peck cashier.

A Series 1882 \$20 Date Back, one of 1,620 issued by the bank, with Nellie T. Peck's faded signature as president. (Courtesy Heritage Numismatic Auctions)



Enlargements of the signatures on the note of Charles A. Peck as cashier and Nellie T. Peck as president. (Courtesy Heritage Numismatic Auctions)



president until 1909 or 1910, when she was succeeded by George H. Wilson, a local businessman. Charles continued as cashier until the early 1920s when he became president of the bank. A few years later, when he was about 70 years old, he retired.

From the present vantage point, it is hard to know how active a president Nellie was. Because Charles, as cashier, was certainly a more prominent public figure at the bank, his obituary in 1935 credited him with being the president of the bank from its founding in 1900 until his retirement in the mid-1920s.

Nellie's obituary the following year made no mention of her decade as president of the bank, but mentioned her church work, membership in the local DAR chapter, and noted she "always had the welfare of the village in her heart and will be missed by all citizens of the village."

The bank they founded in the village over a century ago still serves the community as a branch of KeyBank.

Sources and acknowledgements

The building today serves as the Town of Mexico, NY offices. The bank itself continues to serve the community as a branch of KeyBank.



Names of presidents and length of their presidencies for both the Pulaski and Mexico, NY banks can be found by consulting the Comptroller of the Currency annual reports. Nellie T. Peck's relationship to the Clark family in Pulaski is found in the obituaries for her mother and sister-in-law, which appeared in the *Pulaski Democrat* in late July 1893 (exact date not on clipping) and July 29, 1931. Obituaries for Charles A. Peck, who died March 25, 1935, and Nellie T. (Clark) Peck, who died May 1, 1936, are in the Town of Mexico, NY Historian's Office scrapbook collection. Brief overview histories of the bank are found in *Mexico, Mother of Towns* (1949), p. 270-271 and "Banking in Mexico," the [Mexico, NY] *Independent Mirror*, July 15, 1992, section four, p. 14. Special thanks to Bonnie Shumway, Town of Mexico Historian, for her help with this article. ❖