
Spindle City Historic Society

Volume 1 Issue 1

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DO YOU KNOW.....

....that the Van Schaick Mansion served as the State Capitol from August 22-25, 1777 while the Battle of Saratoga was being planned?

....that the old power canal tunnel under Ontario Street is large enough to hold a parade of dump trucks?

....whose bronze statue looks out from the Central Tower of the Harmony Mills?

....that Cohoes was once a major producer of axes and edge tools that were shipped worldwide to places as distant as Australia?

....that a whale was stranded and died off Van Schaick Island 350 years ago and its odor could be detected for two miles?

....that there were nineteen successive locks of the Erie Canal between the northern and southern boundaries of the city?

....that the first water-powered knitting machine was invented here by Timothy Bailey?

....that The Cataract House, located at the Cohoes Falls, enjoyed a national reputation as a resort?

....that "Clinton's Ditch", the original Erie Canal, followed a path which is now Main Street across Ontario Street to behind the Community Center to No. Mohawk Street, following the river to Crescent?

....that a full size replica of Henry Hudson's ship, Halfmoon, was given to the City of Cohoes in 1909. In 1931, as it rested in the Van Schaick Island Park, it was burned by vandals?

....that there is a Spindle City Historic Society? Read on to learn about our group. **Come join us!**

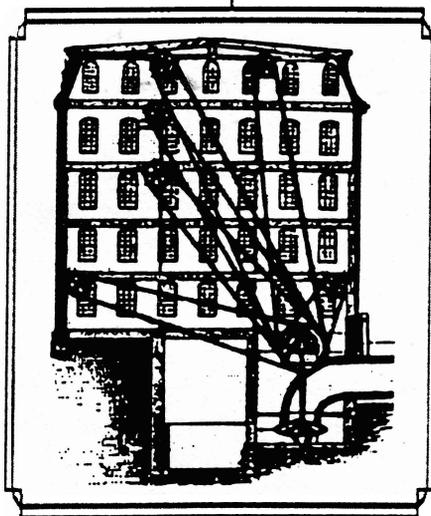
IN SEARCH OF MEMORIES.....

In June 1848, Cohoes received its Village Charter- this year marks its 150th Anniversary. As part of the commemoration of this event, we would like to

hear stories you remember or have been told about "early Cohoes". Did you have family or friends that worked in the Harmony Mills, were policemen or firemen, or worked on the Erie Canal? We are also interested in memories of Cohoes' historic churches, the D&H and New York Central Railroads and local politics.

What do you remember that you would like to pass along to other, newer Cohoes residents? In future issues of this newsletter, we can help you share that history of our city. Jog your memory and that of friends and neighbors.

You can write to us at P.O.Box 375, Cohoes 12047 or contact Janice Treacy - Telephone 235-5762.

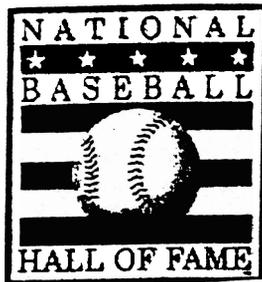


OUR AMERICAN HERITAGE RIVER

In July, U.S. Representative, Michael McNulty announced the Clinton Administration's designation of the Hudson River as an American Heritage River, one of ten rivers nationwide.

Representative McNulty explained that this designation will enhance the delivery of federal programs and services related to the river. The hope is to help create new waterfront businesses and foster support for local preservation efforts.

GEORGE STACEY DAVIS



George Stacey Davis was enshrined in the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, NY on Sunday, July 26, 1998. He is the 20th shortstop so honored. Many experts consider him to be the best professional athlete ever generated from the Capital Region. Congratulations to Walter Lipka, City Historian and Spindle City Historic Society Member, who was instrumental in the effort to bring Davis' great baseball achievements to the attention of the Veterans Committee of the Hall of Fame.

COHOES FIRE DEPARTMENT

Once the hamlet of Cohoes became a village, the first official act of the trustees was the creation of the Cohoes Fire Department. The first fire engine in Cohoes was a small hand rotary engine, called Excelsior No. 1, which was purchased by subscription in 1835; the next, a hand engine in 1847, from the Albany Fire Department which had discarded it as unfit for use. Thus were formed the first fire companies: Parmelee Engine Company and the Cataract Engine Company.

The first fire station to be built was the Campbell Hose Company, erected in 1848 on what is now Newcomb Street; this building stands today as part of the Table & Chairs furniture business. The first Chief Engineer of the Department was Luke Bemis.

One hundred and fifty years after our inception, our reason for being has never changed, only the methods of fighting fires. The work is more complex but our purpose is to serve the people of the Cohoes community to the best of our ability.

Robert Loiselle, Sr., Fire Department Historian

"SAVE AMERICA'S TREASURES"



KATE MULLANY HOUSE
350 8TH ST. TROY NY

Congratulations and thanks to Rachel Bliven, local historian, researcher and member of the Spindle City Historic Society. Rachel's research efforts and documentation of the Kate Mullany story helped to get the recognition which culminated in the Kate Mullany House being designated a National Historic Landmark. Kate Mullany was the founder of the first women's labor union, the Collar Laundry Union, in the 1860's. First Lady, Hillary Rodham Clinton visited the Troy landmark and dedicated the commemorative plaque on July 15, 1998 as part of her tour to "Save America's Treasures". The purpose of the tour is to call attention to those sites, documents and art which are deteriorating and stimulate new private efforts to preserve them.

COHOES DAY

Cohoes Day was celebrated on Saturday, June 13th. The Spindle City Historic Society and Hudson Mohawk Industrial Gateway jointly sponsored a tour of the Harmony Mills district. Tours of Niagara Mohawk's power plant were given by Superintendent Jamie Veitch. Many thanks to Jayne Counterman for coordinating these activities.

TV CREW VISITS COHOES

The Regional Educational Television Network (RETN) of Burlington, Vermont was in our area to film locations for their upcoming production of the life and times of President Chester A. Arthur. They were briefed and then taken on a tour of a series of sites in Cohoes and Waterford by Dennis Rivage, Waterford Town & Village Historian and Walter Lipka, City of Cohoes Historian.

1998 MARKS THE ONE HUNDRED FIFTIETH BIRTHDAY FOR COHOES

One hundred and fifty years ago the citizenry of this burgeoning and vibrant settlement, situated on the Erie Canal and at the confluence of the Hudson and Mohawk Rivers, voted to incorporate as a village. With their new Board of Trustees they could legislate the collection of funds necessary to address the mounting issues of the day.

The threat of accidental fire was a major concern of this mostly wooden village. Spilled oil lamps, cooking grease, deteriorating chimneys and spontaneous combustion of lint in the textile mills were all potential disasters. Acting swiftly, the new Trustees purchased a fire engine and a parcel of land, on what today is Newcomb Street. There they built a small brick building to house their new engine. Cataract Hose Company #3 was its name and the upstairs floor included a meeting room for the Village Trustees where they confronted all of the problems of those rustic early years. The building is still standing - Cohoes' first municipal building.

A police force, in the form of constables, quelled revelers, disorderly persons, or stealthy garden, poultry or even laundry thieves that were an early nuisance. Rickety bridges, spanning crude canal ditches that occasionally surprised their users with a sudden plunge, also needed attention. Plank crosswalks placed over muddy street corners, roaming pigs or other backyard livestock, water delivered in pipes rather than buckets of thick water scooped from the dirty canals were additional concerns. Little by little, as early issues were confronted, then resolved, more complex ones took their place as Cohoes grew from a town to a city.

In retrospect, optimistic innocence seemed to characterize early Cohoes. Unknowingly, in 1848, on the threshold of a great period of prosperity, its infant cotton, knitting and iron industries would ultimately generate wealth and world renown. Within this milieu, presidents and legislators, millionaire industrialists and glittering personalities would pass through to grace these environs that were built on the souls and sweat of common people. Slowly, over the next century, the shift in supply and demand quietly diminished this once proud industrial town. The Great Depression and the explosion called "suburbia" drained much more of the remaining legacy of the Industrial Age.

Now, Cohoes, situated on the abandoned Erie Canal and the confluence of the Hudson and Mohawk Rivers, is poised on a new threshold, somewhat cynical, insecure and threatened by the future.

Currently, the confluence of the Hudson and Mohawk Rivers is experiencing a new focus of vitality as we approach the 21st Century. Perhaps for us, here in Cohoes, a renewal of prosperity lies in the past. Maybe it would be wise to reinvest in our remaining legacy by capitalizing in its ever increasing value as a fragment of history that cannot ever be replaced.

Walter Lipka, Historian, City of Cohoes

National Register of Historic Places

The following sites in Cohoes are now listed on the National Register of Historic Places:

Delaware & Hudson Railroad Terminal at 116 Saratoga Avenue

William Dickey House at 16 Imperial Avenue

J. Leonard Lackman House at 28 Imperial Avenue

All three properties were recognized for their architecture and the D&H Terminal as a historic industrial site.

In the Winter Issue - The 175th Anniversary of the D&H and NY Central Railroads

Spindle City Historic Society

OUR MISSION

We are a group of individuals who are interested in helping to promote and encourage original historical research; to encourage a greater understanding of the history of the State of New York, particularly of Cohoes and its surrounding area; to gather, preserve, display and make available for study artifacts, relics, books manuscripts, papers, photographs, and other records and material relating to the history of the State of New York, particularly of Cohoes and the surrounding area; to encourage the suitable marking of places of historic interest; and to promote the maintenance of a historical atmosphere in Cohoes by encouraging preservation and restoration of its physical structures.

OUR HISTORY

The organization had its origins in 1994, when a group of citizens, concerned about plans to demolish the Silliman Memorial Church, began meeting to develop strategies in an attempt to avert the demolition. This group, which soon began to call itself Friends of Historic Cohoes, recognized the plight of the Silliman as only a symptom of the neglect of the city's historical resources and lack of appreciation for the city's past and its role in benefiting the community's present and future. The group began to undertake efforts to educate and acquaint people with the rich history of Cohoes, and to promote interest in historic preservation among citizens and public officials, so that no other historic structures would meet the Silliman's fate, and that Cohoesiers would see the city's storied past as a source of pride and an asset for its future. With these goals still paramount, the group adopted its present name, the Spindle City Historic Society, in 1996 and was granted official status as a non-profit organization by the State Education Department in 1997. During its brief existence, the organization has sponsored lectures on the city's history and other topics, organized walking tours, begun gathering oral histories from citizens, undertaken historical research, and participated in civic events.

If you are interested in these goals and would like to become a member, or if you are already a member and wish to renew your membership, please fill out the form below.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

| | | | |
|----------------------------------------------------|---------|---------------------------------------------------|---------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual Membership | \$10.00 | <input type="checkbox"/> Institutional Membership | \$25.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Senior Citizen Membership | \$ 5.00 | <input type="checkbox"/> Contributing Membership | \$35.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Student Membership | \$ 5.00 | <input type="checkbox"/> Sustaining Membership | \$50.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family Membership | \$15.00 | <input type="checkbox"/> Tax-Deductible Donation | _____ |

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY, STATE, ZIP CODE _____

TELEPHONE _____

Mail completed form with membership fee, payable to Spindle City Historic Society, to:

June Cherniak, Treasurer, 415 Vliet Boulevard, Cohoes, NY 12047