



# Spindle City Historic Society

Volume 10 Issue 3

Fall 2007

## HISTORIAN'S NOTEBOOK

### Milton Weinstein

Milton Weinstein was born in Cohoes in 1911. He began playing the piano at age 8 under the tutelage of Arthur Targett, supervisor of music in the Cohoes schools. Milton's parents moved to Troy and he attended Troy High School, where he and a few classmates formed a band. The group played at school dances and at summer resorts in the area. Following his graduation in 1928, Milton and his friends went to New York City. The others became discouraged and did not stay, but Milton found a job as a pianist at the New Chinese Restaurant at Broadway and 42<sup>nd</sup> Street. He then moved on to Greenwich Village, where he played at the Village Barn with the Furst Orchestra. He also played with Paul Speck's Band and at many resorts, including the Gross Hotel and Chenango Lodge. In his twenties, he began arranging music, and his talent was recognized by Richard Humber, whose orchestra was featured on the new medium of radio. Weinstein's arrangements became an important element in the orchestra's successful programs on the air from NBC and Columbia (CBS). Humber so admired Weinstein's talent that he arranged for him to have a full year of study at the best music schools. Milton gave up performing to concentrate on musical composition and arrangement. He remained loyal to his sponsor Humber and continued to work with his orchestra although he received numerous offers from other groups. Weinstein later worked on musical arrangements for television programs, including General Electric's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary show in 1957.

### The Eureka Drill Corps

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Cohoes had a prize-winning drill team called the Eureka Drill Corps. The group, consisting of two dozen young men in their late teens to early twenties, was formed around 1890. Under the direction of drill master Frank M. Hay, they trained weekly during the spring and early summer, performing intricate precision marches and formations. Practice sites included the depot yard off of Canvass Street, or Kelly's Field near Lancaster Street. They were featured performers at most social club gatherings in the city, and competed (and won) frequently at drill team competitions around the region. The group was first headquartered at Carter's Hall at 177 Congress Street and later at Remsen and Howard above Krause's saloon. The drill team got its name from the Eureka Hose Company, which sponsored the group. Around the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, volunteer fire companies in the region often sponsored drill teams, which competed against each other throughout eastern New York State and western New England. The Eureka Drill Corps were winning competitors in Saratoga, Mechanicville, Schuylerville, Kingston, Hudson, Syracuse and Pittsfield. Along with their precise marching, they were noted for their costumes, which included dark trousers with red shirts and belts, or blue and gold uniforms.

*Thanks to Joseph Cooley for information used in this article.*

## DID YOU KNOW

.... that Mrs. Anne Grant, who lived in Albany from 1757 to 1768, wrote about the Cohoes Falls in her *Memoirs of an American Lady*? Referring to the journeys of traders from Albany traveling into Indian territory, she wrote, "there commenced their toils and dangers at the famous waterfall called Cohoes, ten miles above Albany...This was the Rubicon they had to pass before they plunged into the pathless woods, ingulphing [sic] swamps and lakes. At the Cohoes on account of the obstruction formed by the torrent, they unloaded their canoes and carried them about a mile further on their shoulders, returning again for the cargoes which they were obliged to transport in the same manner."

....that on March 5, 1886, the Second Grand Social of the George W. Ring Baseball Association of Cohoes was held at Ring's Hall on Willow Street? The festivities included the dancing of gallops, Irish jigs, waltzes, heel and toe, polkas, schottisches, Virginia reels and quadrilles. With the Erie Canal still an active waterway and the mills employing thousands, Willow Street and the Harmony Hill area was a lively place.

....that in 1912, 68 Breslin Ave. was the home of the East Side Republican Club?

....that Benjamin Franklin visited the Cohoes Falls? On April 9, 1776, Benjamin Franklin, one of a group representing the Continental Congress, visited the Cohoes Falls on a trip from New York City. The group was headed to Canada to promote an alliance between the colonies and the people of Canada. Franklin had also visited the Falls on another occasion to meet with the Haudenosuane (Iroquois nation). He learned of their confederacy of nations and the Great Law of Peace, which brought their warring nations together. These ideas would be inspiration for creating the Constitution of the United States.

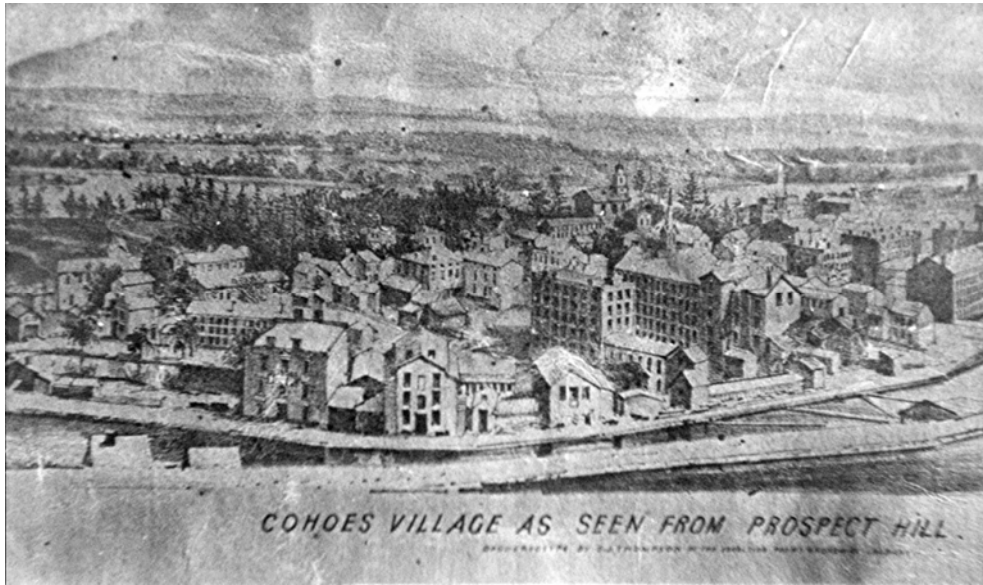
....that fifty years ago, Willow Street was the home of many neighborhood groceries, including Waz, Farah's, Guzek's, and Burke's?

....that on February 23, 1918, a fire destroyed the Island Club at 67 Breslin Ave.? It was previously the site of the Costine Motion Picture Theater, dancehall and clubrooms.

### WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

The Spindle City Historic Society welcomes new members *David Clement, Donna Clement, Barbara Smith Lynch, Julienne Jacques, and Mike Popowsky.*

## The Making of a Village

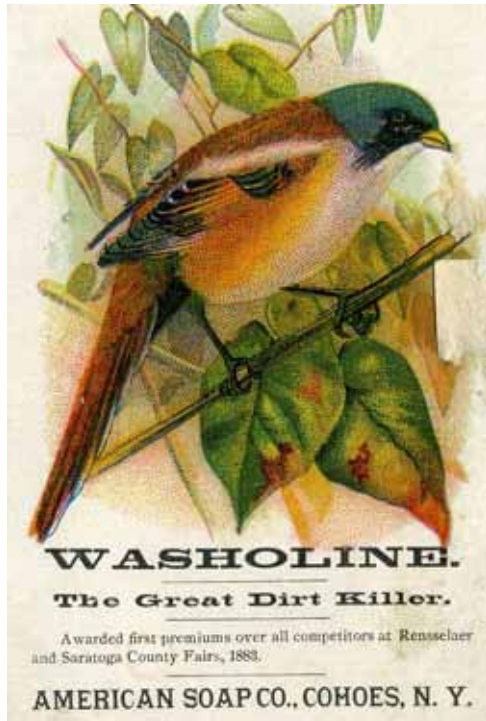


The campaign to incorporate the fast-growing hamlet of Cohoes as a village began in April of 1847, when an application for charter was filed. Numerous public debates were held to consider the wisdom of this action. The decision to incorporate was made, and on February 3, 1848 a community meeting was held in the Cohoes Hotel. Attorney John Van Santvoord was commissioned to draft a charter. On April 15, 1848 John Steenberg drew a map of the territory to be incorporated into the village, an area of 160.22 acres. On June 5 the State Court of Sessions ruled in favor of the incorporation and on July 1 the citizens of Cohoes voted 846-26 to incorporate. The next week, the first charter election in the village of Cohoes was held at the Cohoes Hotel. Five trustees, three assessors, a treasurer, a collector, clerk and poundmaster were elected to office. The first meeting of the newly-elected trustees was held on August 1 at the Van Santvoord law office on Remsen Street. At the meeting, they adopted a list of laws to govern the village:

1. Grog shops and groceries shall be closed on the Sabbath Day.
2. Four fire wardens shall be elected, and a fine of \$5 shall be imposed for disobeying the wardens.
3. Refusal by villagers to admit firemen to their residences at the proper time will result in a \$5 fine for each and every offense.
4. Chimney, flue, and ash barrel fire hazards must be eliminated.
5. Pens for swine and other animals must be removed from village streets and alleys.
6. A penalty of \$10 will be imposed for willfully injuring and damaging shade trees in the village. A person tying an animal to a tree that subsequently is damaged shall be deemed guilty of the damage.
7. It shall be illegal to drive or ride an animal through the streets at an improper or immoderate speed. Riding or driving horses on the sidewalk is forbidden.
8. Dead animals or stagnant water shall not be permitted on any property for more than 10 hours. Placing any nuisance in alleys or yards as to cause offense to neighbors is illegal.
9. A fine of \$3 will be imposed for causing damage to the burial grounds.
10. It shall be illegal to damage a public pump or hydrant or to water animals within 5 feet of the pump or hydrant.

Much has changed since the adoption of these laws of a simpler time, but the intent and purpose of many of them remain important today – protecting public health and safety, discouraging crime, and making Cohoes a more pleasant place to live. From this humble beginning, the village of Cohoes went on to become a city on May 19, 1869. This May date is now celebrated as Founders' Day.

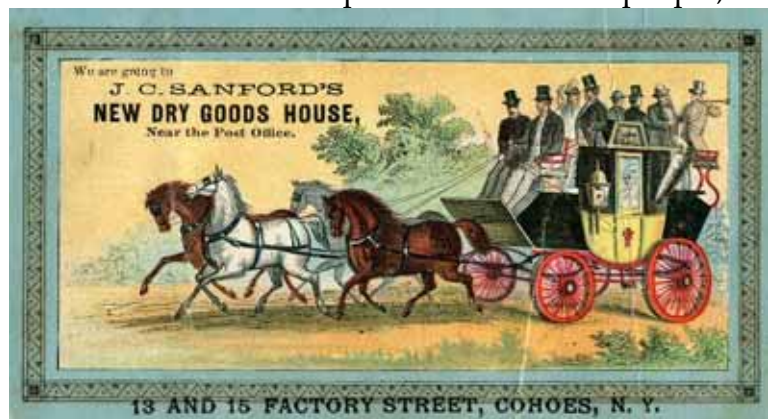
## Trade Cards of Cohoes



Trade cards were once a very common way of advertising. Similar to the baseball cards found in packs of gum, trade cards were often included in product packages. The cards, generally smaller in size than postcards, were also handed out like business cards are today. Trade cards evolved from cards used by tradesmen of the late 18<sup>th</sup> century to advertise their services. However, it was not until the spread of color lithography in the 1870s that trade cards became plentiful. Collecting trade cards was a popular pastime during the Victorian era; they are once again today very collectable items. Some of the products most commonly advertised on trade cards were medicine, food, tobacco, clothing, household items, sewing machines, stoves, and farm equipment. Trade cards were also used by dentists, optometrists, undertakers, and other service providers to promote their businesses. The

popularity of trade cards peaked around 1890; they almost completely disappeared by the early 1900s when other forms of color print advertising (such as magazines and postcards) became more cost effective to produce and distribute.

The Spindle City Historic Society has enlarged many of these brightly-colored advertising cards and will display them for your viewing enjoyment at the Visitor Center in October and November. Some of these cards date from the 1860s, when Cohoes was a growing village. Many of the trade cards are from businesses on Remsen and Factory Streets, near the present location of the Visitor Center. Factory Street, now named Cayuga Street, was once a busy place. The area bustled with activity, and these bright advertisements speak to us from that lively time. Many of the men and women who offered these cards started as clerks and became prominent businesspeople, bankers, civic leaders, and heads of the various social and fraternal organizations of Cohoes. Among the trade cards on display are those from the American Soap Company; A.T. Calkins, undertaker and furniture maker; William G. Carpenter, confectioner; J.C. Sanford, purveyor of dry goods; J. Farrow and Son, painters; and Browne & Ten Eyck, druggists.



Stop in and have a look at the exhibit this fall. You may find some ancestors' names among the cards on display, and learn of the products and services offered in Cohoes' past.

*Donna Riley/staff*

*Additional information for this article was obtained from "A Brief History of Trade Cards" by Ben Crane (<http://www.tradecards.com/articles/history/history.html>)*



## Off the Top...

Another summer has passed with school in session and fall weather fast approaching. In August we had our Trustees meeting (thanks to the Cherniaks) and the last of our 6 pm (during July and August only) monthly Spindle City Historic Society meetings. At the trustees meeting, several issues were discussed which all boiled down to one basic premise. Spindle City Historic Society is at a crossroads; we are too small to be big and too big to be small.

Right now, what we do, we do well. Do a lot of people know what we do? No. Are a lot of our members doing good things? Yes. We are very fortunate in terms of member involvement than many other organizations, and are looking at reinventing how we market what we do.

How do we start rethinking things? How would we improve on what we do and increase our audiences? What else could be added to polish the achievements we have already attained? What would happen if additional people with other ideas and/or expertise got involved in this development? I don't have one answer, but I have one request.

If you are reading this newsletter, but haven't attended a monthly meeting, make it a point to attend and share your ideas with us soon. If you can't attend a monthly meeting, share your ideas with one of the officers or members. If you regularly attend, bring a new face with you. If you are a member who has not attended in a while, please come to a meeting; we'll consider you a new face and welcome you back. Your participation will help us improve and expand upon what we already do.

Our next meeting is on September 26<sup>th</sup> at 7 pm in the Cohoes Visitors Center at 58 Remsen Street.

I look forward to meeting you and seeing you soon!

Paul D. Dunleavy  
President

## Profile of an SCHS Member – Walter Cherniak

*The profile in this issue of the newsletter features Walter Cherniak, a longtime member and trustee of SCHS. Walter is a perennial volunteer and frequent photographer at SCHS events, and is the organizer of lock cleanups and other SCHS beautification efforts around the city. He also assists with SCHS publicity, and worked with Carolyn Guresz in obtaining 501(c)(3) status for SCHS.*



### **What is your occupation and background?**

I have lived in the city of Cohoes for over 75 years. I have been a practicing licensed pharmacist for over 50 years, working as a hospital pharmacist at the Veterans Administration Hospital in Albany, in retail pharmacy, and as a consultant to the NYS Department of Health. During the 1950s, I spent two years in the US Army, serving overseas. I am presently retired.

### **How did you learn about and become involved in SCHS?**

I was a member of the group "Friends of Historic Cohoes" that formed in an attempt to save the Silliman Memorial Church from demolition. Our efforts to save the historic church were not successful, but we were able to keep the group together and become what is now the Spindle City Historic Society. I became a trustee of the organization when it was officially incorporated, and have served in that capacity since.

### **What are your hobbies and other interests?**

I have many hobbies and interests, including gardening, golfing, bowling, woodworking, traveling and reading.

### **What aspects of Cohoes history most interest you?**

The history of Cohoes is so varied and rich that singling out its most interesting aspects is very difficult. Some of the most significant are the Cohoes Falls, the Harmony Mills, the groups of millworkers and their neighborhoods, the Van Schaick Mansion, and the Music Hall.

### **What SCHS activities and events do you enjoy the most?**

The events and activities SCHS offers are informative and educational, and I enjoy them all. I only wish more people could see the value of learning about Cohoes and its history – it would help them appreciate our city far more.

### **Please include any other information about yourself you would like to share.**

I sometimes regret that I did not get interested in history and historic preservation earlier. I remember many of the beautiful buildings that Cohoes once had that have been lost.

## “The Houses that Harmony Built” -- Worker Housing in Cohoes



On Saturday, June 9, SCHS member Mary DeRose gave a presentation on the worker housing of Cohoes, titled “The Houses that Harmony Built.” The first worker housing in Cohoes, built in the late 1830s, was constructed for workers at the original Harmony Mill. As the Harmony Company’s operations grew, additional housing was built by the falls, and up Harmony Hill on Vliet, Garner, Willow and other streets in the area. Many of these houses, of sturdy construction, have been in continuous use as residences since the time they were built. Look for the release this fall of a new self-guided tour brochure of these neighborhoods.

### ExpErience

On the afternoon of July 10, SCHS hosted a group of secondary school teachers participating in ExpErience, a week-long workshop sponsored by the New York Geographic Alliance. Workshop participants explored canal sites across the state, where they learned of the history of the canal system in preparation for sharing this knowledge with students and colleagues. While in Cohoes, the group visited Harmony Mill #3 and its turbine room; Lock 18 of the enlarged Erie Canal, the Cohoes Falls and other sites in the Harmony Mills Historic District. They enjoyed their visit, and were enthusiastic about the rich history and potential of Cohoes for heritage tourism.

### Farmers’ Market

The city of Cohoes began hosting a weekly farmers’ market on Remsen Street in June. SCHS has participated on several of these Friday afternoons, selling brownie sundaes and candy one week, and on other weeks selling books, distributing tour brochures, and talking with people about Cohoes history. The hit of the July 20 farmers’ market was



Bernie Ouimet’s potato candy, adapted from a traditional French-Canadian recipe. For those of you who missed this treat at the farmers’

market (it sold out fast!), the recipe is below.

### Potato Candy

Boil a small potato in unsalted water. When potato is cooked, immediately drain and mash. Add confectioners’ sugar gradually to the mashed potato, stirring with each addition, until sugar-potato mixture is about the consistency of pie crust dough. Roll dough out with a rolling pin to ¼” thickness (sprinkle confectioners’ sugar on dough and rolling pin before rolling out). Spread creamy-style peanut butter on the rolled out potato dough. Roll up peanut-butter coated dough like a jelly roll. Cut roll in slices and refrigerate for at least one hour before serving.

Do you have a traditional recipe, perhaps handed down through generations, something you still make and cherish as remembrance of family or immigrant ancestors? The foods people prepare and serve are an important part of culture and history, so these recipes have stories to tell. If you have any you’d like to share, please let us know.

### Arts Friday Night at Harmony Mill #3



Friday, August 17 was the first “Mill Town Friday Night” at Harmony Mill #3. The event included an exhibit of paintings of Cohoes by several local artists, displayed in the common areas of the mill building. There were also cooking demonstrations and wine tastings. SCHS provided an exhibit on the Cohoes mastodont and its discovery during construction of Mill #3.

## Cohoes Elks Lodge

The Cohoes Lodge of Elks, No. 1317, was first chartered on September 16, 1914, with 49 charter members. The group leased a building from the Harmony Company on the square at 93 Oneida Street, where the E.T. Ruane American Legion Post is now located. In 1915, the Cohoes lodge, the newest in the state, took first prize for best appearing lodge in line at the Elks state convention held in Troy, first prize for best appearing organization at the Albany convention, and first prize for best degree team at the Syracuse convention.

By 1922, the lodge had 1000 members. To accommodate the growing membership, they constructed a new building on the corner of Oneida and Mohawk Streets, on the site of the Andrew Root residence. The cornerstone was laid on June 15, 1922.

Participants in the celebration included more than 2000 Elks from other lodges. The building was designed to exact Grand Lodge specifications, and was deemed an architectural



masterpiece. By the late 1920s, membership rose to 2,020, but financial obstacles over the decades and rising energy costs eventually led to the sale of the property to the city of Cohoes in 1977. The building was demolished in August 1978 and replaced with a nondescript brick structure that now houses offices of the First Niagara Bank. A new lodge site, once the location of the Strong Mill, was purchased on North Mohawk Street. The site has a commanding view of the Cohoes Falls, but the present structure lacks the architectural distinction of the old lodge. In 1982, the lodge incorporated its membership with Waterford, and was officially renamed the Cohoes-Waterford Lodge of Elks #1317.

## The Strong Mill



The Strong Mill was built in the latter part of 1846 by William M. Chadwick. The brick building had three stories and a basement. It housed 2,700 spindles, which supplied yarn for 80 looms. The mill consumed nearly 300 bales of cotton per year and employed 69 people. A fire on July 8, 1854 destroyed much of the mill. One person was killed and several others injured by the collapse of a wall during the blaze. The Strong Mill, rebuilt within a year after the fire, was purchased by the Harmony Company in 1865. It then underwent extensive alterations, including an enlargement, and remodeling of the roof in the Italianate style with a mansard and an imposing tower to complement the

other structures in the Harmony Mill complex. The mill was often referred to as Harmony Mill #5. It was demolished during a wave of “urban renewal” during the 1970s.

## From the SCHS Collection

The Spindle City Historic Society was given a collection of photographs of Cohoes taken by Bernard T. Shaw, a longtime SCHS member and trustee who passed away in May 2005. Mr. Shaw's photographs document the extensive changes in Cohoes during the last half century, providing a valuable record of the city's recent past. SCHS plans to mount an exhibit of Bernie's photos at the Visitor Center so more people can appreciate his work. We sincerely thank Mrs. Ruth Shaw for this generous donation.



\*\*\*\*\*

### ***Spindle City Historic Society Membership Application***

[www.timesunion.com/communities/spindlecity](http://www.timesunion.com/communities/spindlecity)

[www.spindlecity.net](http://www.spindlecity.net)

President - Paul Dunleavy

First Vice President - Daniele Cherniak      Second Vice President - Tor Shekerjian

Secretary - Linda C. Christopher      Treasurer - June Cherniak

<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		

*We have great things planned in our home in the Cohoes Visitor's Center!*

*Please help if you can with a tax-deductible donation to support our upcoming programs:*

\$5.00     \$10.00     other

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP CODE \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Mail completed form with membership fee, payable to Spindle City Historic Society, to:  
June Cherniak, Treasurer, 415 Vliet Boulevard, Cohoes, NY 12047

## SCHS Annual Raffle

This year's raffle item is a carved wooden mastodont created by Glenn Durlacher. It is 18 ½" tall, 22" long (tail to tusk) and 12" wide. The mastodont is stained brown. SCHS members were sent a mailing in August with raffle tickets; tickets can also be obtained at SCHS events and meetings, or by calling 518-237-5618. Raffle tickets are \$1.00 each, or 6 for \$5.00. The raffle drawing will be at the Cohoes Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony the weekend after Thanksgiving.



### UPCOMING EVENTS

**Saturday, September 8** - A Gentler World – Finding the Way Back. Opening reception for an exhibit of photographs by Paula Symanski. 7 p.m., Cohoes Visitor's Center. The exhibit will be up in the Cohoes Visitor's Center through October.

**Sunday, September 23** - Cohoes as a Company Town – A guided tour of the Harmony Mills Historic District, 1 p.m. Meet at Cohoes Visitor's Center. Co-sponsored by the Hudson-Mohawk Industrial Gateway. Reservations required. Call 518-274-5267 or e-mail: carroll@rpi.edu.

**Wednesday, September 26** - Spindle City Historic Society meeting. 7 p.m., Cohoes Visitor's Center.

**Tuesday, October 30** - Spindle City Historic Society meeting. 7 p.m., Cohoes Visitor's Center. Please note Tuesday meeting day for October only. We will resume Wednesday evening meetings in November.

**Wednesday, November 28** - Spindle City Historic Society meeting. 7 p.m., Cohoes Visitor's Center. Last monthly meeting of 2007.

**Sunday, December 9** - Opening reception for an exhibit of photographs by Mike Carey. 1 p.m., Cohoes Visitor's Center. The exhibit will be up in the Cohoes Visitor's Center through January.

**Wednesday, January 30** - Spindle City Historic Society meeting. 7 p.m., Cohoes Visitor's Center.

*Photo credits this issue: Walter Cherniak, Tom Donnelly*

SCHS Newsletter Staff

Daniele Cherniak ~ June Cherniak ~ Linda Christopher ~ Dennis Rivage  
Editorial Assistance: Tor Shekerjian ~ Columnists: Paul Dunleavy, Walter Lipka

Spindle City Historic Society

P.O. Box 375

Cohoes, New York 12047