



Spindle City Historic Society

Volume 11 Issue 2

Summer 2008

HISTORIAN'S NOTEBOOK

History of the Central Avenue Firehouse

As the city prepares to construct a new firehouse on Ontario Street for the Van Schaick and Simmons Island sections of the city, it's worth a look back at the construction of the Central Avenue Firehouse.

The Central Avenue Firehouse stands atop portions of Lock 12 of the enlarged Erie Canal, near where the Weed Hotel once provided overnight lodging for travelers on the canals. In 1964, construction of a new firehouse and Civil Defense center on this site was unanimously approved by the Cohoes Common Council during the administration of James E. McDonald. This new building, at a cost of \$365,000, was to replace the "rat infested" fire headquarters on Oneida Street, which had served Cohoes for 97 years. Building of a new firehouse was one of the central issues of the 1963 mayoral and Common Council election campaigns.

Drawings for the proposed firehouse submitted by architect Robert L. Trudeau included a V-shaped structure with fire apparatus outlets on both sides and a basement which could be used as an emergency operations center in the event of a disaster. The design provided space on one side to house the hook and ladder truck, the fire chief's vehicle, an ambulance and rescue truck. Six pumpers could be housed on the other side. The center area would contain a control desk, which had electronic controls for the doors; the rear of the central section provided storage space and a work area for equipment repair. There was also a dayroom with a small terrace provided for the firefighters.

The basement level included dormitories for 20 firefighters, a dressing room and shower area, a first aid room and clinic, and offices for the fire chief and civil defense personnel. Under emergency conditions, 60 people could be accommodated on triple deck beds in the facility.

The firehouse was completed on February 14, 1967. Raymond LaMora, in charge of traffic and warning signals, noted that the state of the art transistorized control console replaced an entire roomful of signaling and control apparatus in City Hall, and that the mill sprinkler systems now had direct contact to the firehouse. The firehouse, named the Harold W. Grogan Memorial Firehouse, was dedicated on October 28, 1967. Dignitaries on hand for the dedication included General M.J. Ascensio, director of the State Civil defense Commission, George M. Proper, jr., director of the Division of Fire Safety of the State Office for Local Government, Anthony Mitrone of the State Permanent
(continued on p.7)

DID YOU KNOW

....that Mike Mazurki, character actor and wrestler, posthumously received the New York State Award from the Professional Wrestling Hall of Fame in 2005 to recognize his efforts in establishing the Cauliflower Alley Club for professional boxers, wrestlers, and members of the Screen Actors Guild? The award was donated to the Spindle City Historic Society, and is currently on loan to the Professional Wrestling Hall of Fame, located in Amsterdam, New York, where it is displayed with Mike Mazurki memorabilia.

.... that one of the 2008 presidential candidates has a Cohoes connection? See p. 2 of this issue for this story.

....that on July 4, 1850 Cohoes celebrated the 76th anniversary of American independence in grand style? The festivities were held at Dickey's Grove, south from Prospect Hill, and included a parade led by carriages containing members of the clergy, surviving heroes of the Revolution, teachers, and young scholars. They were followed by a large contingent on foot, which included more teachers and students and members of various civic societies. Among the participants were the pupils and teachers for the Sunday schools of the Baptist, Presbyterian, Dutch Reformed, and Catholic churches in Cohoes, the students of Mr. I.D.F. Lansing, and members of Fire Company No. 3. There was a program of speeches, hymns, and patriotic music, followed by refreshments and a display of fireworks. The day's events concluded with Dr. C.F. Goss launching a balloon after dark, later remarked upon as a rather unusual occurrence.

....that in April 1879 Miss Catherine Dunsbach, of Dunsbach Ferry, was murdered by a knife-wielding thief? The brutal slaying occurred when Miss Dunsbach surprised the thief, who was searching for a large sum of money that was collected that morning. The murderer, Elaire Latramouille, a Canadian residing in Cohoes, was apprehended by the Cohoes Police.

....that a building once located at 57 Remsen Street was called the Bret Harte house? Harte, best known for his writing about the pioneering and Gold Rush days in California, was born in Albany and well acquainted with Cohoes. Legend has it that a saloon once located at this address was notorious for its "wild west" atmosphere and clientele.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

The Spindle City Historic Society welcomes new members *Donald & Ellen Frederickson*.

Senator Hillary R. Clinton's Cohoes Ancestors

by Paul R. Huey

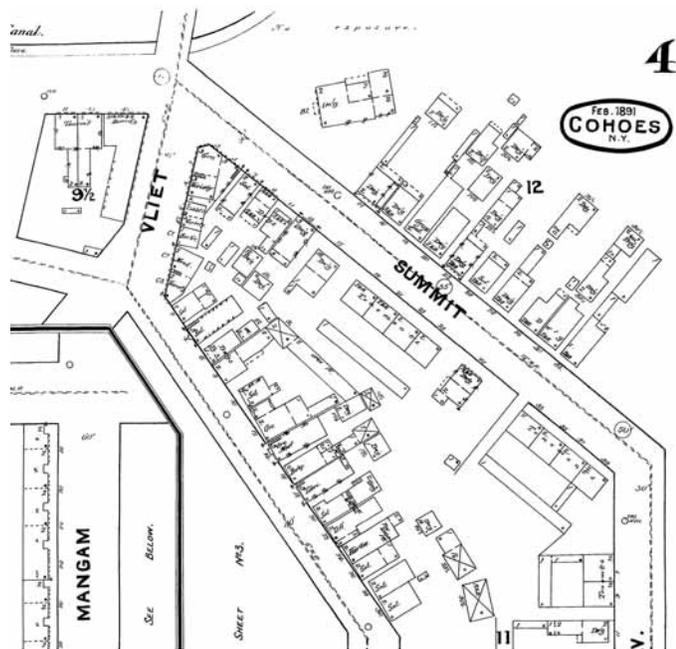
According to the genealogy of Senator Hillary Clinton compiled by genealogist William Addams Reitwiesner and posted on the Web at www.wargs.com/political/rodham.html, two of Senator Clinton's great-great-grandparents lived in Cohoes in the 19th century. The genealogy is titled "The Ancestors of Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton (b. 1947)," and the writer warns that it "should not be considered either exhaustive or definitive, but rather as a first draft." Further research has provided some interesting details about these Cohoes great-great-grandparents of Senator Clinton and is consistent with what has been provided by William Reitwiesner. The following is compiled from this genealogy and from additional on-line resources.

Senator Clinton's two great-great-grandparents in Cohoes were Thomas Monk and his wife, Harriet (Hinton) Monk. Both were born in 1809 in Warwickshire, England, and were baptized in Coventry, England. Thomas was a ribbon weaver who arrived in New York City from Liverpool in October 1834 on the ship *Great Britain*. His wife, Harriet, arrived at New York the following June from Liverpool on the ship *Helah*. Their sons George and John were born about 1836 and in 1838, respectively. A daughter, Jane, was born about 1841, followed by the births of Oliver about 1843, Edward about 1846, Emma about 1847, and Harriet in 1849. Thomas Monk, with his growing family, leased property in Cohoes from Hugh White. The lease was extended in 1857. Thomas was listed as a draper in 1850, but in 1860 he was listed as a merchant.

Oliver Monk enlisted in Company A of the 22nd New York Volunteers in May 1861 to serve in the Civil War. This regiment of infantry was organized in Troy and became part of the Army of the Potomac. John Monk enlisted in October 1862 in the 10th New York Infantry in Albany. He had left home by 1860, worked as a cigar maker, and was living in a boarding house in Albany. John enlisted to serve nine months and mustered in as a corporal in Company F. He mustered out with his company in Albany in September 1863. George Monk, the oldest son, joined the 24th New York Volunteer Cavalry, which was organized in 1863. He served as a private until the

end of the war, and died ten years later, in May 1875, age 39. Edward, the youngest son, enlisted in the 12th New York Cavalry in September 1864 in Albany. He was a private in Company L and was captured at Goldsboro, North Carolina, but he mustered out in 1865 at Annapolis, Maryland.

In December 1865, Harriet Monk, the wife of Thomas, acquired property on the west side of Summit Street in Cohoes. It was a lot that probably was the location of their home at 15 Summit Street, a building that has been remodeled but is still standing. Both Emma and Edward in 1868 were students in the New York State Normal School in Albany. In 1870, Thomas Monk was listed as a "Carpet Weaver," and his household still included daughters Jane, Emma, and Harriet. Emma, now about 22 years old, was a



Section of an 1891 Sanborn insurance map showing Summit Street.

schoolteacher. From 1870 to 1881 she was principal of the Cohoes public schools. Edward Monk was married by 1870, had his own home in Cohoes, and was working as a printer. He became editor and proprietor of the Cohoes *Daily News*, the first issue of which appeared on September 22, 1873. In 1874 Samuel Sault joined him as a partner in the publication, and in 1876 Edward was elected an alderman for the Third Ward in Cohoes. In 1878 Edward lived at 65 Howard Street, near Remsen, but in 1880 Edward and his wife were living in the same house with his parents and sisters Emma and Harriet. Both sisters taught in the "Pleasure Ground School." Their father was perhaps ill and soon died. Edward moved out, leaving behind his widowed mother and sister Harriet at 15 Summit Street. He died in 1914. Harriet (Edward's sister) was still a teacher in the Pleasure Ground School in 1883, but Emma had also moved out. Oliver Monk, reappeared in Cohoes as a cigar maker in 1883. Harriet, the widow of Thomas, died in 1889. Edward's sister Harriet continued to live at 15 Summit Street and became principal of the ward school and of School 6.

Edward's sister Emma had moved to Arizona. From 1882 to 1885 she was vice-principal of the Tucson Public School, and from 1885 to 1887 she was principal of the public schools in Florence, Arizona. She married William E. Guild, a widower with two young children who ran the telegraph office in Florence. In 1890 she was an instructor in the "Sub-Collegiate Department" of the University of Arizona at Tucson. She became a widow in 1893 but continued in her department at the University, teaching English and mathematics. In 1920 she lived in Phoenix and served as alternate delegate to the Republican National Convention from Arizona. In 1922 she was a Republican candidate for U.S. Representative at-large from Arizona and ran against Carl Hayden. She lost the election, and Hayden later became a U.S. Senator, holding the record for the longest service in the United States Congress.

John Monk, the great-grandfather of Hillary Clinton and also known as John H. Monk, returned to Albany after the Civil War. He set up business as a cigar maker at 536 Broadway. He married and by 1880 had moved to Detroit, Michigan. His wife, Sarah Abbs, was born in England; John continued working as a "cigar packer" in Detroit. They had a daughter, Emma J., born in Canada in 1874, and a son, John E., born in 1879. Between 1884 and 1888 they moved to Elgin, Illinois, where they lived on Adams Street. John E. worked as a machinist there in 1900 while his father continued making cigars. John H. Monk was admitted to the Illinois Soldiers' Home in 1907, where he died.

The daughter, Emma J. Monk, married Edwin J. Howell about 1895. Howell was born in Bristol, England, and he came to America in 1887. He and Emma lived in Elgin, Illinois, where he worked as a machinist in the watch factory. Their son, Edwin J. Howell, Jr., was born in 1897. In 1920 Edwin, Sr., and Emma lived in a Chicago, Illinois, boarding house on Indiana Avenue, while Edwin, Jr., lived with his wife and daughter in a boarding house on Michigan Avenue in Chicago. Edwin, Jr., was a fireman. Eventually he moved to California, where he died in 1946. Dorothy Howell, a daughter of Della and Edwin J. Howell, Jr., was born in Chicago in 1919 and married Hugh E. Rodham in 1942. Hillary Diane Rodham, daughter of Hugh and Dorothy (Howell) Rodham, married William Jefferson Blythe IV, better known as William Jefferson Clinton, in 1975.

Sources: All sources for this article are available on the World Wide Web, with the exception of directories for Cohoes and the published index volumes for Albany County deeds. The basic outline provided by "The Ancestors of Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton (b. 1947)" compiled by William Addams Reitwiesner has been followed.



Off the Top

The Spindle City Historic Society strives to make the members of our community, and other communities, more knowledgeable about Cohoes' glorious past so that we can be more confident in the future of our area. Our organization is starting to plan for the Hudson-Fulton Celebration 100 years after the 1909 celebration. It will be the Hudson-Fulton Celebration of 2009. In 1909, the Honorable Merritt D. Hanson made the following statement about the 1909 Hudson-Fulton Celebration:

"The Celebration of yesterday is on a par with, if not surpasses, any other Celebration in the history of our city, and the festivities, participated in by all our citizens in honor of the discovery of the Hudson River and the application of steam to navigation, are such as will never be forgotten."

"I desire on behalf of the city to thank the members of the various committees who were untiring in their efforts to make the Celebration a success, and their efforts will always, I trust, be appreciated and remembered by the citizens of Cohoes. That their efforts were not in vain is demonstrated by the great result."

"The river demonstration surpassed anything and any festivity ever held on the waters about our city. This scene was one beautiful to behold and one, I trust, that will never be forgotten. Its beauty and grandeur were such as will impress themselves upon the minds of our citizens for years to come."

"In commemorating the great events of the discovery of the Hudson and the application of steam to navigation, Cohoes did herself proud and has placed herself upon a par with the sister cities of the State."

"This great demonstration and commemorating festivities are not the results of any one mind or of any one effort, but are the result of combined efforts of all our citizens generally and demonstrate that combined effort and civic pride will do much to put our city upon the pinnacle where she belongs."

Charles E Hughes, on October 7, 1910, regarding The Hudson-Fulton Celebration of 1909 stated: "The money that has been spent on this celebration has not been wasted. We have too few opportunities in this country to come together when there are no partisan questions to be discussed, when there is no individual prejudices to be incurred, when there are no candidacies to be fostered; but we are all united, emphasizing our unity and sinking our differences, in order that America may be great because the people are inspired to justice and to appreciation of the ideals of the great Republic... I say to you, my friends, it has all been worth while, and we are altogether in this great State of New York better equipped for our duties as citizens, knowing more about our glorious past, more confident of the future, than we would have been if we had not worked so hard to give an adequate representation to the joy in our progress."

Join us in planning this 2009 remembrance and participate in our other events so that each of us can be more knowledgeable about Cohoes' glorious past. Let's look forward to recalling that our combined efforts in the words of Charles E. Hughes "put our city upon the pinnacle where she belongs."

Paul Dunleavy
President

The Hudson-Fulton Celebration - What happened in 1909 and what is planned for 2009 a Presentation by Assemblyman John McEneny



On February 28, SCHS hosted a presentation by Assemblyman John McEneny, former Albany County Historian, and a well-known teacher, writer and speaker on local history. McEneny described the events of 1909 held in communities along the Hudson River to commemorate the 1609 explorations by Henry Hudson and Samuel de Champlain, and Robert Fulton's 1807 steamboat travel up the Hudson River. Events included parades on land and water, historical re-enactments, banquets, dedications of parks and monuments, musical performances, exhibits of art, technology and history, and aeronautical exhibitions. Replicas of Henry Hudson's *Half Moon*, a gift from the people of Holland, and Robert Fulton's *Clermont* were built. The *Half Moon* replica was sent to the Palisades Park Commission in 1910 following the celebration, and it was anchored in the Hudson River. The ship later resided in Cohoes.



*The Half Moon afloat in New York Harbor, 1909.
From the Fourth Annual Report of the Hudson-Fulton Celebration Commission, 1910.*

Assemblyman McEneny underscored the importance of remembering and preserving our history, and outlined some of the plans underway for the quadricentennial Hudson-Fulton-Champlain celebration next year. McEneny encouraged attendees to participate in and plan for events in their own communities.

Sixth Annual Cohoes High School Art Show



From April 1 to May 9, SCHS hosted the sixth annual Cohoes High School Art show in the Cohoes Visitor's Center. The multi-media display included drawings, paintings, photographs, collage, and sculpture. SCHS held an after-school pizza party on April 23 for the student artists.



Students create origami pieces and other paper art during the reception.

Students, their families and friends enjoyed pizza and soda, voted on their favorite works in the show and had the opportunity to create origami and other paper art during the reception. School officials and

city school board members were also invited to view the artwork and meet the artists.

Thanks to art teacher Joann Johnson and the artists, and to all the students, city school officials, school board members, families and friends who attended.



Art show award winners – From left to right: Jenna Deo, Best 2-d; Nina Curtain, Best 3-d; Lindsey Grudecki, People's Choice; Vanessa Bressette, People's Choice

Memorial Day Parade

The City of Cohoes held its annual Memorial Day parade on May 22. The SCHS contingent included a group of marchers, a 1929 Chevrolet Imperial, and a mastodon.

At a ceremony at the conclusion of the parade, SCHS trustee Walter Cherniak was presented with the Robert Craner medal, awarded to citizens of Cohoes who have honorably served in the United States military.

And the Winner Is...



Mortimer! The results of the "Name the Moose" contest are in, and the name receiving the most votes was "Mortimer," followed by "Chocolate."

Toby Tyler Smith and Her Legacy

by Judy Smith Williams



Toby Tyler Smith
(Photo courtesy of Judy Smith Williams)

Some people knew her as "Toby Tyler", some as Mrs. Smith, some as Aunt Toby, some as Mom - she was all the same person.

Toby Tyler was one of the top entertainers in the Capital District. In the years 1947 to 1955, she entertained at the Village Inn, Davies Inn, Otto's, the Bowl-O-Torium, Chicks, Victor's, the Hawaiian Club, the Harmony Hotel and many others. She was known as "The Blond Bombshell!"

While she entertained at the piano bar, her husband Ed Smith played saxophone in the local big bands - the Dominos, the Charlie Randall Band, and the best-known of these, the Toby Middlebrook Band. As a couple they entertained every weekend and although they didn't get home until 4:00 a.m., they woke their three children, Ginny, Tyler and Judy, every Sunday morning and went to church and Sunday school at the Dutch Reformed Church on Mohawk Street. Both parents were very active in the church. Ed was an elder, and superintendent of the Sunday school for many years. Toby

played piano for the Sunday school, and organized dinners, benefits and other events. Toby also worked for the Cancer Fund, Red Cross, Heart Fund, and the PTA and held an office in the YWCA. Ed lived to be 89 years old and Toby lived to be 94.

Their son Tyler took after his parents. He played trumpet in Cohoes High School, and played in Bud Elliot's band "The Musical Escorts," which included Bud Elliot, Henry Friedel and Jim Calkins on sax, Tyler Smith and Warren Harple on trumpet, Ed Van Valkenburgh on piano and Harold Van Dusen on drums. Their first performance was in the Sunday school rooms at the Dutch Reformed Church. They played for the school dances for the classes of 1945-1946.

Tyler took up saxophone after that, and became a well-known sax player in the area. Many a practice session and family gathering around the piano went on at that house on Lincoln Avenue. Tyler played sax with the Bob Walthers Big Band in 1947-1951, the Earl Kent Quintet in 1955-1956, the Mello Tones and the Tom Ford Quartet. The Bob Walthers Big Band included Bob Walthers on piano, Tyler Smith, Henry Deitcher, and Dick Zandri on trumpet, Henry Friedel, Jim Van Buskirk, and Bob Senecal on sax, and Jack Walthers on drums. The Earl Kent Quintet featured Earl Kent on drums, Bob Walthers on piano, Tyler Smith on sax, and Jim Matthews on trumpet. The players for the Mello Tones included Dave Vadney on piano, Frank Mastandrea on bass, Tyler Smith on sax, and Ray Staring on drums. The Mello Tones played in many clubs over the years, among them Duke's, the Siena Tavern, the Crystal Lounge, the Cat and the Fiddle, Mario's, and Raphael's. The Tom Ford Quartet members were Tom Ford on bass, Bill Burns on piano, Pat Capello on trumpet, and Tyler Smith on sax. They were featured performers at the Circle Inn and the Crooked Lake Hotel.

Ginny and Judy were often heard to laugh and say many times that they both played the radio and that Tyler had gotten all the talent, and though that was true, both Ginny and Judy sang in the high school choruses and glee club and in the choir at church.

The talent has continued on through Ginny's two sons, Howard and Peter Charbonneau. They both play in bands in the Saratoga area, Howie in the Rockin' Horse Band and Peter in a band called Boomers. Judy's son plays drums, but mainly for his own pleasure.

Now that Toby's children have grandchildren, they are hoping that the talent will continue on through the generations.

Historian's Notebook (continued from p.1):

Firemen's Association, Joseph R. Garrett, retired Commissioner of Public Safety in Cohoes, Robert Curran, President of the Cohoes Common Council, John Kielb, Cohoes Police Chief, and Lloyd J. Flavin, president of the Cohoes Paid Firemen's Association. A telegram was received from Robert F. Kennedy, U.S. Attorney General, expressing his regrets at being unable to attend, and sending best wishes for Cohoes, an "All America City."

The dedication began with an invocation given by Rev. Edward Leroux of St. Joseph's Church, who served as Catholic chaplain for the Police and Fire Departments. The Rev. J. Alan de Pretoro of St. John's Episcopal Church, Episcopal chaplain for the Cohoes Police and Fire Departments, offered a blessing. The Keveny Memorial Academy band played the National Anthem and Mayor James McDonald offered remarks. Other speakers included Mrs. Margaret Lynch, sister of late fire chief Grogan, Fire Chief E. Harry Green, and Lt. Colonel Grant J. McGill, director of Cohoes Civil Defense and deputy director of Albany County Civil Defense. The construction of the city's firehouse on Central Avenue is considered one of the major achievements for the Cohoes Citizens Party and Mayor James McDonald.



Construction of the Central Avenue Firehouse, June 1966. Bernard T. Shaw Collection.

Donna Riley/staff

Photo credits this issue – Walter Cherniak, Bernard T. Shaw

Spindle City Historic Society Membership Application

www.timesunion.com/communities/spindlecity

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 an additional donation to support our upcoming programs:

\$5.00 \$10.00 other

gift membership

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

UPCOMING EVENTS

June 3 - June 27 - "Women in the Military - A Retrospective". An exhibit showing the importance of women throughout history, highlighting women in the military from Cohoes and Evelyn Pinkert "Pinky" Brier, first woman flight instructor for WWII fighter pilots. "Pinky's" story is a very compelling testimonial to the silent service that women gave to this country. Co-sponsored by Cohoes Remembers Vets. Cohoes Visitor's Center, regular hours 11 a.m. - 4 p.m. Tuesday - Friday.



Thursday, June 19 - "Profiting Through Preservation". Erin Tobin of the Preservation League of New York State will discuss the economic benefits of historic preservation and the ways in which it improves the quality of life in communities, with examples of success stories. Co-sponsored by the City of Cohoes. 7 p.m., Cohoes Music Hall, 58 Remsen Street.

Wednesday, June 25 - Spindle City Historic Society meeting. 7 p.m., Cohoes Visitor's Center.

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

Wednesday, August 27 - Spindle City Historic Society meeting. 7 p.m., Cohoes Visitor's Center.

Saturday, September 13 - Walking tour of the Harmony Mills Historic District. The tour begins in Power Canal Park on North Mohawk Street and will include visits to the Boyden turbine room inside Harmony Mill #3 and the Cohoes Falls. Sponsored by the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, the City of Cohoes, and the Spindle City Historic Society. 11:30 a.m. - 1 p.m. Call 518-237-8643 for reservations.

Wednesday, September 24 - Spindle City Historic Society meeting. 7 p.m., Cohoes Visitor's Center.

Wednesday, October 29 - Presentation on New York State Armories by Nancy Todd, author of *New York's Historic Armories: An Illustrated History*. 7 p.m., Cohoes Visitor's Center.



Coming this Fall to the Visitor's Center -
Cohoes Photographs of Bernard T. Shaw - A Retrospective
Trade Cards of Cohoes - A collaborative project with the Cohoes City Schools

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