



Spindle City Historic Society

Volume 12 Issue 4

Winter 2009

HISTORIAN'S NOTEBOOK

Dotterville

Dyke Avenue in the heyday of the Erie Canal in Cohoes was known as Dotterville. In 1934, John Dotter, a descendant of the founder of Dotterville, christened the steam roller used in making the road over "the Prairie" and celebrated this history with a bottle of crystal clear water from the old Champlain Canal. On the banks of the long-quiet canal still stood the "Old Dotter Homestead". This building housed the first grocery store in Cohoes, started by the Dotter family.

In 1825 Gov. De Witt Clinton officially opened the canals to commerce at Juncta (near the present intersection of Saratoga Street and Dyke Avenue) symbolically uniting the Erie and Champlain canals by emptying a keg of water from Lake Erie into the Champlain Canal. This was an important impetus to what would come to be called Cohoes. For years Dotterville was thriving and Solomon Dotter held significant political power in the state and the Albany Democratic Party. He was in the wholesale and retail ice business and was one of the contractors who worked on the enlargement of the Erie Canal from 1835-43. The Dotter ice fields at the Dyke provided winter employment to a number of men, many of whom worked in seasonal occupations like farming or on the canals, who harvested the ice crop on the sixth sprout of the Mohawk River.

Among other successful Dotterville residents were William Carroll, owner of Carroll Dry Docks and ice houses at Crescent and at one time the largest coal dealer in Cohoes; William Woods, contractor for the Boston water works and a section of the NY Central Railroad from Albany to Schenectady and inventor for the Campbell & Clute knitting frame that revolutionized the knitting industry [the last remnant of the Campbell & Clute machine shop, the portion of the Cohoes Commons with historic façade on Mohawk St., was demolished this fall]; and Jacob Grass, who with Woods started a small knitting mill on the Dyke. Grass was a prominent Republican leader in Albany County and superintendent of Section #1 of the Erie and Champlain Canals; in his day he was considered the best superintendent on the canal system.

Dotterville was one of the best maintained sections of Cohoes, with well tended homes, gardens and orchards. The new "improved" road over the Prairie provided an alternate route from Cohoes to Troy, but it washed away several times over the years. Many descendants of the Dotters stayed on in Cohoes, including Mary Dotter, a librarian at Cohoes High School during the 1940s, and Vincent Dotter, a Cohoes High School coach who also taught Physical Education. A nephew, Warren Broderick, is a well known and respected historian in the area.

June Cherniak

DID YOU KNOW

If you read the *Cohoes Republican* newspaper in 1909, you would know that...

...carpets should be beaten on the wrong side first and then more gently on the right.

...salt keeps down the dust on a carpet and makes it look much fresher.

...carpets may be cleaned without removing from the floor by sprinkling heavily over them corn meal which has been saturated in gasoline. Care must be taken in lighting matches and windows should be opened to air the rooms.

...you should save your leftover coffee and tea and mix them with your stove blacking. It will give a bright lasting polish to your stove or range.

...to clean iron sinks, rub them well with a cloth wet with kerosene.

...a few drops of alcohol rubbed on the inside of lamp chimneys will remove all traces of greasy smoke when water alone is of no avail.

...copper may be cleaned by scouring it with a cut lemon dipped in salt. When clean rinse in pure hot water and polish with a soft cloth.

...a little kerosene added to wash water is said to make clothes extra white.

...starch should be mixed with soapy water for thus the linen will have a more glossy appearance and be less likely to stick to the iron.

...oxalic acid and javelle water are excellent for removing ink stains.

...when starching children's pinafores, add a small piece of sugar to the boiled starch. This will make them iron more easily and leave a beautiful gloss on them.

...a faint scent of violets is imparted to handkerchiefs by adding a small piece of orris root to the water in which they are boiled.

...all lard to fry fritters and doughnuts must be very hot before putting in the batter.

...in making fruit pies, when they boil over, sprinkle salt in the oven and it will not smell.

...fresh meat may be kept for several days by sprinkling a little salt on it and then wrapping it in a cloth dipped in vinegar.

...cold water should not be taken during any meal.

...when a cut will not heal, saturate a piece of cotton with coal oil and bind on.

...in hot weather, do not consume alcohol with the idea that it will make you cool. It won't, although it may lead you to the cooler.

All of these household hints were from Hortense, the Heloise of her day. Some, while undoubtedly practical in those times, may seem rather hazardous to today's readers.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

The Spindle City Historic Society welcomes new members *Thomas & Laurie Carter, Robert Chapman, Catherine Chard, Maureen Cooley, Richard Giordano, Marion Guerin, Walter Hollien, Mariana Rabideau, Mr. & Mrs. John Ryan, Lucille & Bill West, and Sandra Zerillo.*

Cohoes in 1909

by Anne Marie Nadeau

In 2009 certain places in New York State celebrated the Hudson-Fulton-Champlain Quadracentennial. It was somewhat of a low-key affair. In 1909 there was great hoopla for a Hudson-Fulton Tercentennial from New York City to Cohoes. Champlain was “on his own.” With all these renowned anniversaries being celebrated, it seemed an appropriate time for another history lesson — Cohoes 100 years ago.

I don't read the daily *Times Union* as carefully as I read the entire year of 1909 of *The Cohoes Republican*, the city's major newspaper at that time, on microfilm. I must agree with Ecclesiastes who, thousands of years ago, coined the phrase, “Nothing is new under the sun.” Technology has changed but man is always the same....

In 1909, Cohoes, as a city, was only 39 years old (like Jack Benny). City government consisted of a mayor who was paid the princely sum of \$1,200 a year, a Board of Aldermen and miscellaneous officials whom we would find on a visit to the city hall today. Also located in city hall was the Board of Education which was responsible for 14 school buildings including Egbert's Institute (the high school), a training school and a truancy school. Kids working in the mills did not go to high school. High school seemed to be only for the well-to-do, as several members of the class of 1909 would pursue higher education at various colleges and universities such as RPI, Union, Colgate, Columbia or Syracuse. The dreaded Regents Exams were already in existence. Truancy cases were heard in City Court by Recorder Israel Belanger. If you didn't do as the judge ordered and go to school, you could end up at the Industrial School in Rochester!

There were approximately 75 teachers and principals. The teachers asked the Board of Education for a new scale of wages and were told that it would be taken under advisement. Teachers were to be trained not only to teach academic subjects but also to teach health and report any cases of measles, German measles, scarlet fever, diphtheria, tonsillitis, simple sore throat, influenza or grippe, whooping cough, smallpox, chicken pox and other diseases. Sick school children were given a physical exam at school and a list of homework and sent home. The school nurse would visit the home to see that the child was seen by a physician. If the family was too poor to afford any of the 24 doctors in town, a list of free clinics was listed on the back of the card that was sent home. It was not only a matter of educating the children in sanitation, educating the public was also necessary because Cohoes had one of the highest death rates from tuberculosis, then called the “great white plague,” in the entire state. As a result, there was a tuberculosis committee which, along with the mayor, wanted to improve sanitation conditions in the face of T.B. Especially important was limiting expectoration in public streets, buildings and conveyances. They proposed a systematic effort to evaluate ventilation and sanitation conditions in the mills because the millworkers were confined more closely than at any other workplace. The tuberculosis committee established a dispensary in the basement of city hall but had difficulty raising \$300 to obtain equipment and the services of a nurse to administer the dispensary. At Christmastime, the Red Cross sold stamps in the fight against that disease. (Today the seals are sold by the Lung Association.)

In 1909 the members of the Fire Department were already paid employees rather than a volunteer force. There were 9 fire stations and 42 call boxes. (Remember those little red boxes attached to poles on corners?) Steamer #3 on Johnston Avenue was still a firehouse in 1950. One hundred years ago all those steam fire engines were horse-drawn and the Board of Fire Commissioners was responsible for purchasing new horses. The fire stations usually kept a cat on the premises because it was not unusual for a fireman to be bitten in his sleep by a rat. At that time the department headquarters had a cat named Dolly who had just had four kittens. She established a rigid control over the rat and mouse population and any canine that happened on the scene. Her kittens had a better life than some of the children in Cohoes.

The City Directory for 1909 lists commercial enterprises from A to W — architect to wool. (What's a City Directory? It's like a phone book before phones were invented.) On that list there were, among many others, 15 bakers and 35 barbers, most of who were on Mohawk, Remsen and Ontario Streets, and 36 cobblers. Kids today don't know who a cobbler is or what he does. He repaired shoes and boots of genuine leather. (I would not have had 32 pairs in my closet back then. I probably would not even have had a closet.) There were many dressmakers, 4 florists (Carpenter the Florist was in business then), and 7 druggists who could dispense cocaine and carbolic acid. (Drinking carbolic acid was a popular way to commit suicide.) Druggists also carried Lydia Pinkham's Compound which was *de rigueur* for any “female problems” in that era, and Father John's Medicine, which was touted as a cure-all for everything from acne to tuberculosis. One could buy Kickapoo Oil at Calkins Pharmacy to rub on sore muscles. The 14 coal dealers could place bids with the Board of Education for “400 tons of coal, more or less, Pea, Egg and Stove sizes, well-screened and free from all impurities to be delivered at such times as directed by the clerk, and weighed on the scales of the Cohoes Rolling



Mill.” There were 15 milliners where you could have your hat custom-made. (First aid to a woman’s heartbreak is a new hat.) There was only one veterinarian to take care of all those horses. The knitting mills were the main business in town which is why we were once known as “The Spindle City.” The mills employed approximately 4,000 people, with the largest employer the Harmony Mills. A new child-labor law went into effect at that time prohibiting children under 16 from working on certain machinery such as pickers, planers, stamping machines and rolling mill machinery. It also prohibited using children from adjusting belts on machinery. Girls under 16 were not to be employed in a capacity where they must stand constantly.

There were many accidents in the mills and other industries. Here are some examples of injuries: accidentally ran a needle into the sole of his foot; needle pierces bone of finger while in charge of button machine; got too close to the furnace in the pipe shop and his apron caught fire resulting in painful burns to both hands; severely scalded while working on a boiler; blade in setting-up machine severs right index finger at first joint; toes crushed working on an engine at the barge canal; overcome by terrific heat at rolling mill, now in serious condition; fingers crushed in gearing work of a knitting machine; an employee of Dotter Ice Co. had a toe amputated after slicing through his shoe with a steel bar while trying to dislodge ice cakes in preparation to loading the ice wagon; died from injuries sustained at work, he was the sole support of his widowed mother; captain of canal boat killed when he fell into the canal and was crushed to death between his boat and the granite wall of the canal.

In the hatched, matched and dispatched department, births were usually listed as “increasing the census.” Brides-to-be were already being feted at miscellaneous, kitchen, agate (speckled enameled cookware), linen and tin showers at which “dainty refreshments were served”. There was no wedding page but a careful search would reveal wedding announcements under, “the crowning of love,” “the marriage altar,” “the wedding ring,” “wedded lives,” and “orange blossom,” detailing the attire of the bride, the flowers, and what was served at the reception at her home. If the cad backed out after proposing, he could be sued for breach of promise. In one instance, the “heel” was charged with seduction under the promise of marriage!

There were 11 undertakers for when your time came and you were laid out at home. Boivin, Looby and Stanton were still around when I was a kid. (One undertaker’s name I especially liked was Angus MacAffer.) There was no obituary page as we know it. Deaths were scattered throughout the paper under different headings—In Memoriam, At Rest, Obituary or Died. Obituaries were written in a very flowery language, for example, “in the autumn of a well-lived life,” “she mourned not because of her failing health but for her family.” The funeral write-up had detailed descriptions of the service, including songs, flowers, and who the bearers were. One particular funeral was described as a “five priest Mass, with three priests at the main altar and one priest at each side altar saying Masses at the same time.” (I don’t know when this practice died out, but when my grandfather died in 1955, he had a five priest Mass). People with French names were usually buried “in the family plot” in St. Joseph’s Cemetery. All deaths were not natural. Some were the result of drowning in the canal. Others were very tragic accidents. One particular suicide was by an old gentleman who did not want to go to The Old Man’s Home even though he had no one to care for him. He jumped in the canal and was found several days later frozen in the ice. One particularly gruesome incident was when a man shot his wife three times. She survived her injuries but he ran down Howard Street and drank carbolic acid.

There were numerous societies. Some names are still known today, for example the Masons, Odd Fellows, Ancient Order of Hibernians, Order of the Eastern Star and the Knights of Columbus. Then there were 52 smaller groups ranging from jacksknappers and mulespinners (positions held in textile mills pertaining to weaving), paperhangers and plasterers to L’Union St. Jean Baptiste, the Franco-American group which in that year established a women’s group known as the Conseil Jeanne Mance. (The first secretary of that group was Ernestine Marion, who taught kindergarten at St. Marie’s school for decades. She was my teacher.) The liquor dealers had a club, as did the Women’s Christian Temperance Union. Each group had its own slate of officers. Invariably, at some time during the year, said group held a euchre party (euchre is a card game) at which “everyone had a fine time and refreshments were served.” Every card party, before and after, was duly noted in the local paper much like *The Record* used to do years ago in giving the scores of the weekly pinochle game at the Knights of Columbus.

At one time known as the “city of many churches,” in 1909 Cohoes had 19 places of worship of which 8 were Catholic, one Baptist (the building is still there on Mohawk at the end of White), Presbyterian, Methodist, Episcopal, Reformed, Lutheran and a few other Protestant denominations. Every Saturday edition of the paper included a column entitled “Sunday in the Churches” listing times of services for every church in town. Every church had a ladies group that did various things to help the church, mainly sponsoring church suppers; among the offerings were turkey, roast beef, roast pig, and clam chowder suppers. At one chicken pot pie supper, the *piece de resistance* was strawberry shortcake for dessert. (Rest assured that the strawberries were served on handmade baking powder biscuits and not those mushy shells.)

Crime and punishment -- Many of the cases brought before Recorder Belanger had to do with the use of alcohol. Drunks were sent to the Cohoes jail to get “straightened out.” Instead of sending you to jail, the judge could have you “sign the pledge for a year” and if you relapsed in that time you were immediately sent to jail without benefit of a trial.

(continued on p. 6)



Off the Top...

The remains of this year's Thanksgiving Day celebration are quickly becoming a memory and the boxes of memories are starting to come out of storage to celebrate all the events of the winter season. More dinners will be shared, cards will be written and family celebrations will be held in so many other ways. Soon, all the celebrations of this holiday season will also become just a memory.

Please make sure to take the time during these holiday celebrations to collect your own family history and the histories of others you celebrate with this season. I worked hard at gathering as much of my family's history as I could. But I still have a lot of unanswered questions, and those answers would have led to even more questions. The family (on the history end) is becoming smaller and more distant-- and on the family's future side, less and less is being remembered and celebrated. Make sure you collect your family's history and if it has to do with the history of Cohoes, please celebrate it even more by sharing it with the Spindle City Historic Society.

Now for the shameless plug...during this season of celebration please remember that the Spindle City Historic Society has celebrated Cohoes with two books containing historic photographs of Cohoes. The first book, *Images of America: Cohoes*, was released in 2001 and covered the history of Cohoes by grouping topics by subject. These topics included transportation, industry, business, worship, education, public service, leisure, people, and street views.

Images of America: Cohoes Revisited was our second publication. This time the history of Cohoes was presented chronologically, and the story was told by a series of letters from one sister who stayed in Cohoes, to one who left. If you have someone on your shopping list who would enjoy either of these (or even better, a gift for yourself), please contact us on 518-237-5618 to purchase one.

The point of this President's Message: **CELEBRATE!** As time goes on we are losing a lot of the history of Cohoes because people are too busy or they don't think anyone really cares. The Spindle Historic Society cares very much and we can give a forum to share your piece of Cohoes history. Please contact us in person, by mail, or electronically, but contact us and celebrate your piece of Cohoes' history.

Paul D. Dunleavy
President



Hudson-Fulton-Champlain Quadracentennial Events

The final events sponsored by the Cohoes 400 – Hudson-Fulton

Celebration Committee were held on the weekend of September 18 and 19. On the evening of September 18, the Van Schaick Mansion hosted NYS Assemblyman, author and historian John McEneny, who spoke about the influence of the Dutch on the history of the Capital Region. McEneny's lively and wide-ranging talk included discussion of Dutch architecture, cuisine and customs, cultural clashes between Dutch and English residents of Albany, old city burial grounds, and the Patroon system and the region's "rent wars" of the mid-19th century.



On September 19 at the Visitor's Center, Dave Nilson recounted stories of construction of the Dutch replica ship *Orrust* and the ship's travels up the Hudson as part of the Hudson-Fulton Celebration and its use as an educational vessel. The original ship, built in 1614, was the first decked vessel to be constructed in America and was used to map out an area from the present Mid-Atlantic States up into New England; much of this region would become the colony of New Netherland. Nilson, a woodworker and two-year volunteer on the *Orrust* project, described the combination of old and new technologies used in building the replica of the 17th century ship, researching the history and locating suitable materials for the project, and the crew's experiences with the ship under sail. The 3-year effort to build the ship involved hundreds of volunteers and support from numerous local officials and organizations, as well as the Dutch government and New York State. The construction team worked with a maritime museum curator from the Netherlands, and did extensive original research

to recreate the shipbuilding methods and materials used in the early 17th century.



The Onrust on the Hudson. www.theonrust.com.

On the same afternoon at the Van Schaick Mansion, Janny Venema, Associate Director of the New Netherland Institute, gave a presentation about the New Netherland Project. The project focuses on translation, transcription and publication of 17th century Dutch documents related to the colony of New Netherland. The Dutch presence in the region began with Henry Hudson's arrival in 1609; the colony of New Netherland was established in the next decade and lasted until it was relinquished to the English by treaty in 1674. This research, which has involved translation and transcription of documents including official government records, legal papers, registers, and correspondence, has helped to highlight Dutch contributions to American history and culture. Information uncovered through the New Netherland project is shared with other scholars, students, educators and the general public. More information on the Project, and a virtual tour of New Netherland, can be found at www.nnp.org.

Thanks to all who attended our Hudson-Fulton events during the year, and to the members of the Cohoes 400 – Hudson-Fulton Celebration Committee. SCHS looks forward to collaborations with the Gen. Peter Gansevoort chapter of the DAR on future programs and events.

Dedication of Van Schaick Island Sign

On the morning of September 19, the Gen. Peter Gansevoort chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution dedicated a sign near the corner of Ontario St. and Delaware Avenue that recognizes the historical significance of Van Schaick Island in the Revolutionary War period. In 1777, the grounds of the Van Schaick Mansion became an encampment for several thousand Continental soldiers, and plans for the Battle of Saratoga, the

turning point of the American Revolution, were developed at the Mansion. Many thanks to the Gen. Peter Gansevoort chapter of the DAR for their commemoration of this important aspect of our city's history.



Johanna Shogan, Sandy Zerillo, and Mayor John McDonald unveil the sign.

Visitors from Nijkerk

On September 23, SCHS gave a tour of Cohoes sites to Visitors from Nijkerk, a city in the Netherlands. Nijkerk is the "sister city" of Schenectady, and every year the Nijkerk/Schenectady Foundation sponsors an adult exchange program where citizens of Nijkerk visit Schenectady and the surrounding area, and Schenectady-area residents travel to Nijkerk and other places in the Netherlands. This year the choice of Capital Region sites for the tour group to visit included those associated with Henry Hudson's voyage up the Hudson and later development of the area's waterways. The stop in Cohoes featured a view of the Falls and a walk through Lock 18 of the enlarged Erie Canal and a presentation on the canal and industrial history of Cohoes and the cultural and historical significance of the Cohoes Falls.

Christmas Tree Lighting – Raffle Drawing



The winner of the 2009 SCHS annual raffle prize, a fabric wall hanging commemorating the Hudson-Fulton quadricentennial, was Paula Brewer. The raffle drawing was held at the Cohoes Christmas Tree lighting on November 28.

Thanks to all who participated in the raffle, and to SCHS raffle coordinator Lorraine Okeson. Look for news of the 2010 raffle prize in the coming months.

Cohoes in 1909 (continued from p. 3):

Women were not immune to “demon rum.” One particular homeless female drunk was sent to the House of the Good Shepherd in Albany for 6 months. Still others were sent to the Albany Penitentiary for being “professional boxcar tourists on a charge of vagrancy.” Disorderly conduct usually resulted in the choice of a fine or jail -- \$10 or ten days. Chicken stealing, which was common, could result in a trip to Dannemora to the Clinton prison. Another prevalent crime at that time, especially in winter, was that “certain classes of foreigners (namely Polanders and Russians) think nothing of climbing up on a coal car and throwing off coal in large quantities to be carried off in bags and aprons. This practice MUST STOP.” The culprits were usually women who had been arrested by D&H detectives. One particularly sad case before the court was that of a woman with 6 illegitimate children living in abject poverty. She was sentenced to 6 months at the Good Shepherd Home in Albany and the kids were sent to St. Colman’s Home.

Transportation -- Many people in the area took the train to go to work at GE and American Locomotive in Schenectady. One day the conductor fell asleep, the train was late reaching Cohoes and employees were an hour and a half late for work. The conductor was suspended. (Does this sound familiar?) Having your baggage mangled by your carrier due to rough handling of bags on trains resulted in handlers being told they must be more careful. If the paper reported that so-and-so was “hit by a car”, it was a trolley car belonging to the United Traction Company. (You know it as CDTA.) The trolleys didn’t only hit people. Many a draft horse had to be shot because it had suffered a broken leg in an accident. There were several incidents where someone was hit by a train because the gates for the crossing were broken or the gatekeeper was not at his post. (I remember one of those little houses where the tracks cross Columbia Street.)

One item that affected everyone in town was the ice dealers doubling the price of ice due to a shortage of that product. The necessary cold snap for the ice harvest did not occur that year except at the Dotter Ice Co. down on the Dyke. Ice dealers said they were out for the money just the same as in any other business.

As far back as 1880 the city had been looking for a way to provide clean, pure water to the citizens, instead of contaminated, muddy conditions experienced at frequent intervals during the year. Several plans were tried but Cohoes, by reason of its location and surroundings, was cut off from any supply of water that could naturally be adapted to its needs. Mechanical filtration was the only solution to the pure water problem in the city. The contract for the work at the Vliet Street site was awarded to the New York Continental Filter Co. for a bid of \$137,250.

The Soldiers and Sailors Monument on Columbia Street at the end of West End Park cost \$10,000. The city gave \$5,000 toward the purchase and a committee was to raise the balance. Raising that money was like “pulling hen’s teeth.” Even after a huge field day *cum* fundraiser, they were still short and the statue would not be delivered until every cent was paid. I don’t have that answer yet.

For recreation people went to vaudeville shows at Proctor’s on Remsen Street. That card changed three times weekly. Proctor’s also showed motion pictures, which were changed every day. The police gave orders that aisles and corridors were to remain free for ingress and egress and to not oversell tickets because in a densely packed theatre “there lurk the possibilities of fire, stampede and death.” Cohoesiers could also go on excursions. You could take the D&H to Lake George and there board a steamer for Lake Champlain and Plattsburgh. Or you could take the night boat to New York City. They were also “into” sports -- basketball, hockey, baseball (the Albany Senators were already a baseball team) but it seems that the favorite sport was pugilism! (Jack Johnson was the hero of the time.)

In 1909 it is estimated that there were 2,400 dogs in the city. The Common Council’s “new licensing law may prove instrumental in disposing of worthless dangerous curs while not interfering with valuable dogs. License tags must be obtained from the city clerk for \$1 which anyone wishing to keep a dog can easily pay. Any dog found running, or about the public thoroughfares without a tag on will be captured and taken to a public pound. After 72 hours if the dog is not claimed it can be put out of existence.” The city clerk asked that dog owners leave the dog at home when coming to buy the license. The mayor asked that dogs also be muzzled because at one point, two children had to undergo the Pasteur treatment (a painful series of rabies shots) after being bitten by a dog that had also bitten twelve other dogs. The “biter” died and a local physician removed that dog’s brain and sent it to Cornell for testing. That dog was rabid. The dogcatcher was hard at work! From 1907 to 1909 there were more cases of rabies than ever before in the history of the state. Deaths of children, horses, cows, sheep and dogs resulted from bites of diseased animals.

And that’s the way it was in our fair city a century ago.

What was it like reading 100 year old news? I had a great time even though I was almost cross-eyed after about 50 hours at the microfilm machine. The front page of the paper displayed international and national news. Pages 3, 4 and 5 were where I gathered most of my information, which was written in the style of the day. There were columns that amounted to neighborhood doings -- who had a baby; who is visiting whom out of town and vice-versa; who is sick and getting better or getting worse; who is going into, is in or came out of the Cohoes Hospital.

Extra tidbits for 1909 -- Eva Tanguay arrested for wearing tights on a Sunday at a performance in Rockaway Beach...The Black Hand is a myth...Geronimo dies...Henry Ford’s Model T starts production...Who was first at the North Pole, Peary or Cook? (we now know it was probably neither).

History of the Dufresne Funeral Home - 100 years and four generations of service

On September 1, 1909, Arthur Dufresne opened the Dufresne Funeral Home at the corner of Hart and Main Streets. in Cohoes. At a time when most visitations and funerals were held in the family home, they began a century of "Service to All," which was Arthur's motivating principle and has been the family's legacy ever since.

In 1925, the funeral home was moved to 111 Mann Avenue and in 1949 to its present location at 216 Columbia Street. These moves provided much needed space, as changing times and customs saw more services held from the funeral home. In July 1940, the expanding business also acquired much needed staff when Arthur's two sons Arthur E. and Ernest joined the company, becoming the second generation working in the family business.

By 1959, Arthur E., then manager of the funeral home, realized the continuing need for additional space and improved facilities. He added a large room that could hold more than 175 people, a casket selection room and a state-of-the-art preparation room. He continued to upgrade the facility and its technology until his death in 1967. By this time, the third generation of Dufresnes was in the business. Arthur E.'s son, Arthur V., was the director of the funeral home and remained in that position until his brother David E. became the licensed manager of the business in 1972. The business continued to expand and upgrade under David and his wife Evelyn Benoit Dufresne; among the additions were a large parking lot and rear entrance with a ramp and full accessibility.

The fourth generation of the family entered the business in 1991, when David's son Mark joined his mother and father. In 1993 Mark showed his commitment to improving the business by adding a computerized system and assisting in the development of a remodeled casket selection room which made selection of caskets, vaults, urns and clothing much easier and more convenient. David and Mark also instituted a policy of upgrading company vehicles every three years to ensure that families would have the quality they deserve in a difficult time.

Mark is married to Melissa Lawlor Dufresne and they have two sons, Matthew and Joshua, who may become the next generation of Dufresnes to continue the family business as it enters its second century of service to the families of Cohoes and surrounding communities. The Dufresnes have built the trust of the community and their customers over their first hundred years of business, and as they start the next century they remain dedicated to their mission – "Our family serving yours."

Many thanks to the Dufresne family for providing information used in this article.

Spindle City Historic Society Membership Application

www.spindlecit.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

Wanted - Historic Postcards

The Spindle City Historic Society is beginning work on its next book, a collection of historic postcards of Cohoes. If you have historic postcards you would like to share for the book, please contact us at cohoes90@nycap.rr.com or at 518-237-5618. Postcards will be scanned and returned to their owners unless they wish to donate them to SCHS.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Wednesday, December 2 - Spindle City Historic Society meeting. 7 p.m., Cohoes Visitor's Center. Note this special date for the combined November/December meeting. In January, we will return to our usual meeting date on the last Wednesday of the month.

December 8 - February 26 - The Musical History of the Slater Family. This exhibit of photographs and memorabilia will highlight the history of three generations of the Slater family of Cohoes and their careers in music. The exhibit can be viewed during regular Visitor's Center hours - Tuesday through Friday from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., or on the evenings of Wednesday, January 27 and February 24.

Wednesday, January 27, 2010 - Presentation on historic water powered mills by Walter Hollien, a preservation architect and authority on restoration of historic water and wind powered mills. The presentation will follow a brief Spindle City Historic Society meeting. 7 p.m., Cohoes Visitor's Center.

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

Wednesday, March 31 - Spindle City Historic Society meeting. 7 p.m., Cohoes Visitor's Center.

Wednesday, April 28 - Spindle City Historic Society meeting. 7 p.m., Cohoes Visitor's Center.

Photo credits this issue - Walter Cherniak, Johanna Shogan

☞ SCHS Newsletter Staff ☞

Daniele Cherniak ~ June Cherniak ~ Linda Christopher ~ Anne Marie Nadeau ~ Dennis Rivage
Editorial Assistance: Tor Shekerjian ~ Columnist: Paul Dunleavy

Spindle City Historic Society

P.O. Box 375

Cohoes, New York 12047