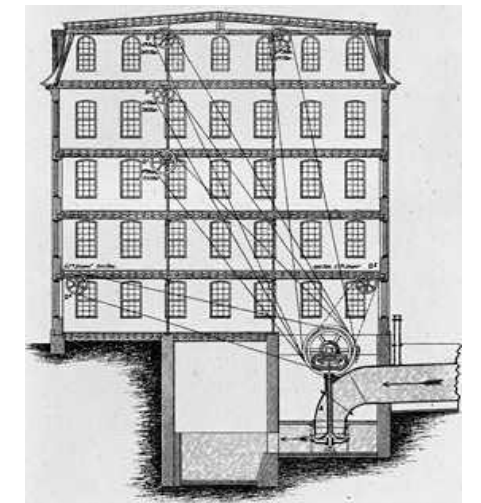


Historic Delaware Avenue

a self-guided tour



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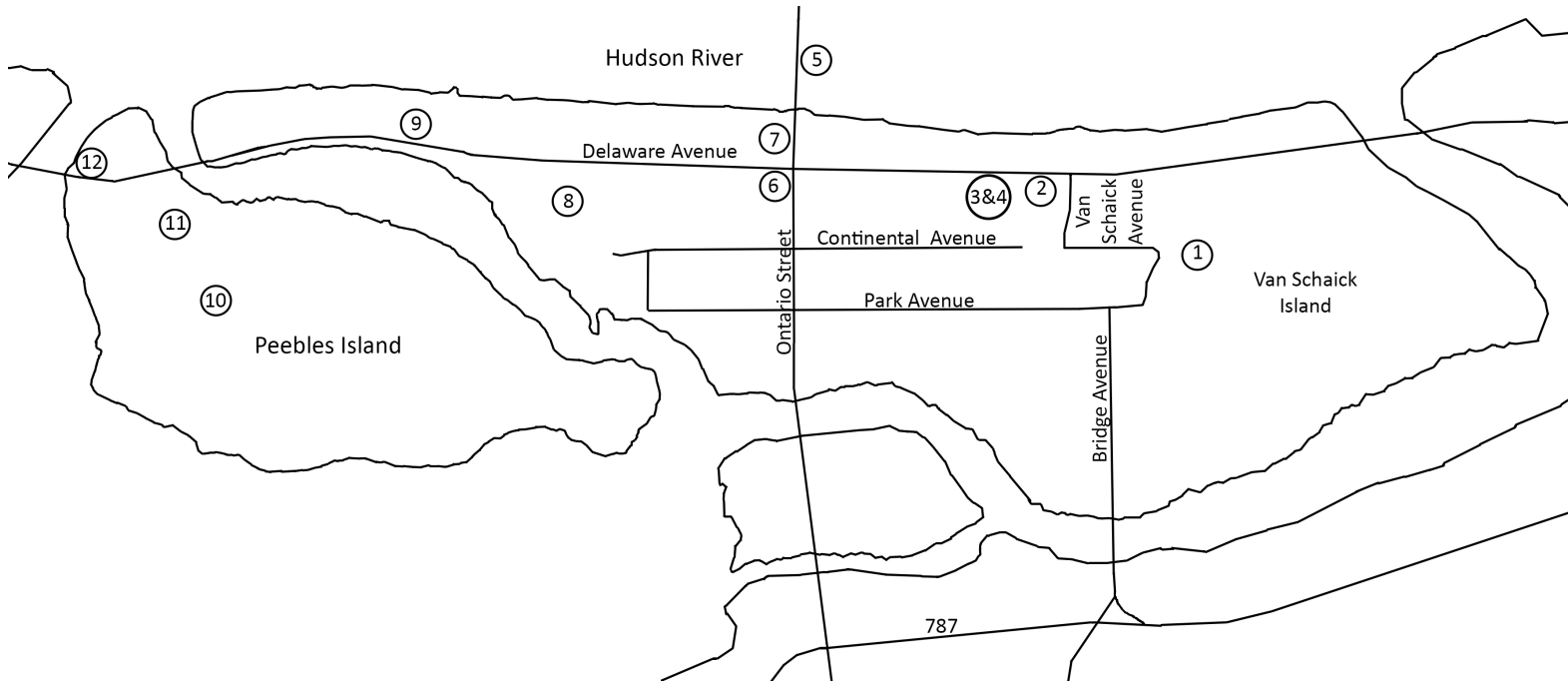
hardware store at the docking area. The oil tanks that were on the property were sold, and one of the tanks was converted to a restaurant/bar that was called Popeye's Porthole.

10. Peebles Island State Park – Prior to the arrival of European settlers, Peebles Island was occupied by Native Americans. Pottery, flint tools, and other artifacts have been found on the island dating from 2500 B.C. to the mid-15th century. Hearths have also been uncovered that may have been used by Native people for drying fish to preserve for winter. The first known Europeans to arrive at the island were members of the crew of Henry Hudson's ship *Half Moon*. Dutch settlers came to the area later in the century, planting crops and grazing cattle on the island. In these early days, the island was called Hoppe Eyland (Hop Island), as Goosen Gerritsen Van Schaick, a brewer who acquired the island in 1664, may have grown hops there. It was later called Haver, or Oat Island, after another common crop grown there. It would retain this name until the 1860s.

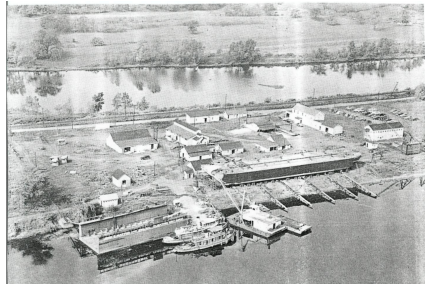
In 1783, George Washington visited the area and stayed at a tavern on Peebles Island. In the 19th century, greater development began on Peebles Island. By the 1860s, Anthony Augustus Peebles, a Van Schaick descendant, owned the island. Numerous houses and barns, occupied by his tenants, were built along the island's east side. Many island residents worked in nearby mills in Cohoes and Waterford.

11. Cluett-Peabody Bleachery - In 1909, Mary L. Peebles, wife of Anthony Augustus, sold the island to Cluett, Peabody & Company, a Troy-based manufacturer of men's collars and shirts. By 1911, they had developed a bleachery on the island. Two types of processes for treating cloth were performed in the building. The bleaching process involved prolonged soaking and pressure cooking. The multi-step process of finishing of the fabric took place on the upper floors. A patented process for treating fabric to minimize shrinkage from washing, was tested and refined at Peebles Island. The process, called sanforization, was invented by Sanford L. Cluett in 1928. By the 1940s, Cluett, Peabody & Co. had become the world's largest manufacturer of shirts. By the 1960s, advancements in technology and site size limitations made the bleachery obsolete; it was closed in 1972. The island was purchased by New York State in 1973, and now is a state park, with the bleachery complex housing the Bureau of Historic Sites for the NYS Department of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation.

12. Revolutionary Era Fortifications – These earthen fortifications were designed by Polish-born military engineer Thaddeus Kosciuszko in 1777. The fortifications on Peebles Island consisted of three batteries of cannon protected by the earthworks, connected by entrenchments for troops. Kosciuszko was encouraged by Benjamin Franklin to offer his talents to the American fight for liberty. Kosciuszko arrived in America in 1776, and was appointed engineer with the rank of Colonel by George Washington. He was assigned to serve under the command of General Schuyler, and came to the Van Schaick mansion on April 10, 1777.



Project. The workforce at the time was about 130 men. The first submarine chaser built at Matton Shipyard during World War II was launched on Sept. 18, 1942, with the second following in a week. One of the high points of activity occurred in 1943, with the presence of the Navy on the site. The shipyard



also built tugs for the Army, and during these war years only authorized personnel were permitted entry into the yard.

The end of the war brought a close to this flurry of activity, but work at the shipyard continued. On the edge of a new era in shipbuilding, an oil transfer barge was built in 1949. Following Ralph Matton's death, his wife Margaret became president of the firm. The last boats built by the Mattons carried their own names: the *Margaret Matton*, launched in 1962, and the 4th *John E. Matton* in 1964.

The shipyard was sold by the Matton family in October of 1964, and became the Matton Shipyard Co., Inc. A separate corporation was established by the Turecamo Coastal and Harbor Towing Co., whose owner was Bart Turecamo. By 1980, a new tug was being built every 18 months, and between launchings the yard served the area's shipping lane as a convenient repair shop with crews that could be dispatched to the Port of Albany.

In 1977, the 340th boat built at the yard was the *Michael Turecamo*, which continued the tradition begun by the Mattons of naming tugs for family members, as did the *Joan Turecamo* in 1980, and the *Mary Turecamo*, christened in October 1982. Turecamo also built a pollution-control craft for the Army Corps of Engineers, sand and gravel barges, and police boats for New York City, along

with boats for Texaco and Mobil. The shipyard closed permanently in August 1983. Several factors contributed its closing, including a slump in the boatbuilding business, limited access to the site with its 15 ft. water depth, uncertainty about the 112th St. drawbridge's ability to lift to let newer large tugboats pass beneath, and inaccessibility of the shipyard in winter. New York State purchased the shipyard in 1989 as part of the Peebles Island State Park complex. Work is in progress restoring and interpreting the site to chronicle its important role in the history of shipbuilding.

Other Businesses Along the Corridor - The Delaware Avenue corridor was the location of numerous other businesses over the years. These included knitting mills (Globe, Pearl, Putnam, Kennedy), several ice houses, a rendering house, coal, coke, gas and oil companies, tile, concrete, and stone contractors, a dairy, a wholesale grocery warehouse, flour and lumber warehouses, a paper mill, paper board and box manufacturer, and a bleach company. The YMCA tennis grounds were located in the area in the early 1900s. In the 1950s, Military Company B 2nd Regiment 105 Infantry 27 Division was headquartered on Delaware Ave. After WWII, some of the warehouses along the southern section of Delaware Ave. were used as receiving centers for donated clothing and shoes to be shipped to Europe to assist refugees and others in need following the war. The donated clothing was baled, and shoes matched, tied together and boxed to prepare for shipping. In the 1970s, the Holly Shop, a store selling holiday décor, was located on Delaware Ave. Other Delaware Avenue businesses of the 1970s included W. J. Trombley Inc. electrical contractor, Cohoes Boat & Marine Supply, the Fort Orange Mfg. Co. Inc. [nurses' caps], and the Van Schaick Island Marina. All of the land that is now the Admiral's Walk condominiums was owned by G.F. Wertime, who had a large construction company. In the area along the southern end of Delaware Avenue, raw materials for the business were brought in by barge. In the 1970s, Wertime operated a

The present-day bike trail along Delaware Avenue follows the route of the **Rensselaer and Saratoga Railroad**. The railroad was the first to enter the boundaries of present-day Cohoes, with rails laid in 1835. This railroad bed is also one of the oldest in New York State, predated only by the original Mohawk and Hudson Railroad, which began service in 1831 between Albany and Schenectady. The Rensselaer and Saratoga Railroad stretched northward from Troy to Saratoga. The men primarily responsible for the building of the railroad were Richard Hart and Stephen Warren. Hart had amassed his fortune by investing in stagecoach lines from Troy to the Lake Champlain region. Warren was a premier maker of stoves. His business helped make Troy one of the top stove manufacturers in the country. Together they formed a partnership that raised the capital necessary to build the railroad.

Construction on the railroad began north of Waterford to Mechanicville and to Ballston Spa. Additional resources and time were needed to build the railroad from Green Island to Waterford, because bridges had to be built to span the outlets of the Mohawk River. This last section of the railroad was completed and opened for passengers on October 6, 1835. The Delaware and Hudson (D&H) absorbed the Rensselaer and Saratoga into its empire in 1871. The line through Van Schaick Island was thereafter referred to as the Green Island branch of the D&H.

After the 1871 merger, the branch through Van Schaick Island was relegated to secondary status, but freight service on it remained important. During the late 1800s and early 1900s, manufacturing facilities began to dot this area of Van Schaick Island. One of the early facilities that relied on the railroad for deliveries was the Matton Shipyard. A spur track was built into the yard to accept deliveries of raw materials.

Another industry located on the railroad was the Rensselaer Manufacturing Company, one of the larger valve manufacturing facilities in the Capital District. These manufacturing facilities closed during the 1970s and 1980s. The last Cohoes business to utilize the railroad was the John L. English wholesale grocery warehouse on Delaware Avenue. The warehouse closed in the mid-1980s, leaving no revenue-producing activity on the branch. Until the rails were removed in the mid-1980s,



there were approximately 3 freights per week using the line, serving the General Electric silicone plant in Waterford and the adjacent Grand Union food warehouse. Freight was also moved on the branch

to the Ford Motor Company plant as well as other industries in Green Island, including the Manning Paper Company. Although the rails are now gone, the beautiful old bridges built by the American Bridge Company in the early 1900s

remain. The bridge from Green Island to the southern end of Van Schaick Island (the “black bridge”) is still there, as are the two bridges connecting Peebles Island to Cohoes and to the village of Waterford. Another long-term effect of the railroad passing through this corridor was on the Van Schaick Mansion. The Mansion, originally roofed with cedar shakes, replaced them with a slate roof to reduce the risk of fire being ignited by sparks from the passing trains.

1. Van Schaick Country Club – The country club was founded in 1895 at Bridge and Park Avenues, and had only two holes on its golf course. Its original name was the Island Golf Club. The Van Schaick Island Golf Course is believed to be the oldest area golf club that has continued in existence at the



same site. In early days, the course also served as a harness racing track, and remnants of this can be seen at the first and second holes. Racing aficionados from Lansingburgh crossed the Hudson River by rowboat to bet on the horses. By 1917, the golf course expanded to six holes; the present nine-hole configuration was completed in the 1920s. The first clubhouse was an abandoned barn behind the Van Schaick Mansion on Continental Ave. It burned in 1900. The site on which the present clubhouse sits was purchased from the owners of the Mansion, and a new clubhouse was built in 1901. Much of that building was destroyed by fire in 1936. It was rebuilt in 1937 and enlarged to accommodate larger groups and events, and is still in use today.

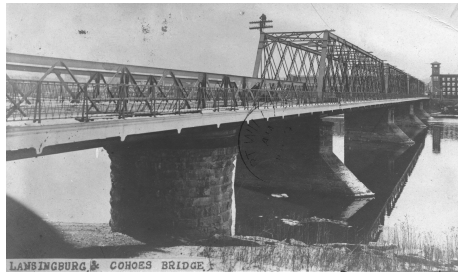
2. Van Schaick Mansion—The Van Schaick Mansion was built sometime around 1755 by Anthony Van Schaick. The 15-room house overlooking the Hudson River was constructed using materials imported from Holland and bricks made on Van Schaick Island. The Van Schaick family was involved in commerce, using its site near the Hudson River to facilitate transport of goods. The Mansion is best known for its key role during the Revolutionary War. It was the army headquarters of the Continental Army, Northern Department, from June to October, 1777. The first Battle of Saratoga was planned here by Major-General Philip Schuyler and his aides. Schuyler's main army camped on Van Schaick Island, just behind the house. George Washington visited the Mansion twice. In August 1777, Gov. George Clinton consulted with military leaders and remained three days at the mansion; during this period the Van Schaick mansion was considered the state capitol. It is the only place in New York where the Governor's official flag can be unfurled when the Governor himself is not present.

3. Van Schaick Cemetery— In his will, Anthony Van Schaick stipulated that a cemetery be established just north of the Mansion. This cemetery became the final resting place for more than 50 members of the Van Schaick family. In the 1960s, students in the Cohoes High School Yorkers

Club spearheaded a project to clean up the cemetery. In subsequent years, the cemetery fell into disrepair. When the Gen. Peter Gansevoort Chapter of the DAR purchased the Van Schaick Mansion, they undertook a project to restore the cemetery, working with Eagle Scouts, other volunteers, and Grave Stone Matters to repair the gravestones.

4. Indian Spring - Water source used from the time of Native American habitation of Van Schaick Island.

5. Bridges Over the Hudson - In 1872, Thomas Knickerbocker constructed a covered bridge at the end of Ontario St., spanning the Hudson River between Cohoes and Lansingburgh. It was replaced with an iron, double intersection Warren Truss bridge, which was opened on



May 18, 1880. It was initially a toll bridge, but it became free to

cross in 1914. The bridge was owned by the Troy and Cohoes Bridge Company, which also owned the Waterford and Congress St. bridges over the Hudson. On March 4, 1920, the bridge deck caught fire from sparks from a trolley and collapsed. A temporary suspension bridge was constructed using the first three piers of the old bridge. This bridge was used for three years until a replacement bridge could be built. The replacement bridge was a bascule bridge, or drawbridge, with concrete approach spans. The bridge was opened on October 23, 1923. It was extensively ornamented, with decorative light stanchions and graceful open spandrel concrete arches. The Chicago-based engineering firm of Joseph



B. Strauss, the engineer for the Golden Gate Bridge, constructed the 200-foot bascule span, which could be lifted to allow boats through, including those from the nearby Matton Shipyard.

The bridge, designed by B. H. Davies of the NYS Department of Public Works, was 803 feet long. A plaque from the 1880 bridge was set into concrete on the Cohoes side of the new bridge. In 1998 the bridge was replaced by a steel multi-girder bridge designed and built by Harrison & Burrows. Design elements in the new structure echo the earlier bascule bridge.

6. Corliss, Coon & Co. - The company, a manufacturer of men's linen collars and cuffs, began in Troy in 1838. In 1904, the company became Corliss, Coon & Co., and relocated in 1905 to 31 Ontario St. in Cohoes, where they remained until 1942. In Cohoes, they produced linen collars and cuffs for both men and women. The popularity of their products was so widespread that they had salesrooms in Chicago, Baltimore, St. Louis, Boston, and New York City. After the shirt-collar business moved out of the area, the

building was purchased by LaRose and Associates, a company that produced special heating equipment sold to plastics manufacturers. After the company was sold, building space was rented to small manufacturers. The building has now been converted into apartments.



7. Rensselaer Valve - The Rensselaer Valve Works was founded in 1853 by P. Southwick. The company began manufacturing valves in 1879 at a plant in Lansingburgh, and settled in Cohoes at 1 Ontario St. in 1887, induced to move by tax exemptions offered by the city. The initial factory complex was built in 1888, and other sections were



added in 1908 and 1937. The company had patents for fire hydrants and was the sole producer of the Corey Fire hydrant in the U.S. It was one of the firms that made the region a nationally re-

garded center for the manufacture of valves and fire hydrants. Rensselaer Valve merged with the Troy-based Ludlow Manufacturing Company in 1954. The Weglarz Machine Shop later occupied this location on the northeast corner of Ontario Street. The site is now the Riverwalk Apartment complex.

8. Lenihan's Field – This area was the site of many events, including fairs, carnivals and the traveling circus. The close proximity to the railroad permitted easy access to the site for circus crew, performers, animals and equipment. The site is now the Waters View apartments.

9. Matton Shipyard - The Matton Shipyard on Van Schaick Island was built in 1916. Shipbuilder John Matton's business had previously been located in Waterford. The new site in Cohoes permitted service for boats traveling on both the Erie and Champlain divisions of the New York State Barge Canal. Ralph E. Matton, John's son, also worked at the shipyard, serving as superintendent. The original configuration of the shipyard included an office, storage buildings, and a carpenter shop.

Shipbuilding activity associated with WWI played a big role in the shipyard's early success. In 1917, the shipyard had a staff of 45 men, building about 15 barges per year. While many of the barges were slated for war service, some were built to navigate the Barge Canal. Construction of wooden barges continued at Matton into the 1930s, when steel tugboats began to supersede wooden vessels. Matton Shipyard was the first in the Capital District to build steel vessels.

The period of WWII was the most active time for the shipyard. Even before war was declared, the government had commissioned a boat from Matton for its National Defense