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# Spindle City Historic Society

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## DO YOU REMEMBER.....

....your high school days? The Cohoes High School classes of 1950 through 1959 are having a "Fabulous Fifties Reunion" in October. The CO-HI-SE-AN was the name of the school's yearbook and its theme in 1954 was "Television, One Symbol of a Changing World".

....Grace Reavy of Cohoes who died in 1959 at age 81? She was prominent in the women's suffrage campaign and was the first woman in NY State to hold municipal office: President of the State Civil Service Commission and Deputy Secretary of State.

....when the Cohoes Tigers won the Eastern B Baseball Championship? It was in 1957, the first time since 1937.

....what Amendment to the U.S. Constitution became law in February 1951? The 22<sup>nd</sup>, which limited the length of time that anyone may serve as President.

....that the first bingo license to be issued by the City of Cohoes was to the Holy Name Society of St. Bernard's Church in 1959?

....that Eva "Evita" Peron, wife of the Argentine president, died in 1952?

....when Cohoes Mayor Roulier proclaimed June 30, 1959 as "Mike Mazurki Day"? Cohoesier, athlete and star of stage and screen, Mike was appearing in "Li'l Abner" at the Colonie Musical Theater.

....that Cohoes sustained a record high fire loss of \$291,040 in 1957?

The Spindle City Historic Society gratefully acknowledges the donation of a file cabinet by Shirley Halls, Manager of the Business Center, NYS Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation. It was greatly needed and will be put to good use.

## LOCK 15 CLEAN-UP, A WORK IN PROGRESS

Beginning on July 10<sup>th</sup>, a group of Spindle City Historic Society members and friends began the cleanup of the Erie Canal Lock 15 area. The section adjacent to the north end of the lock was cleared of brush, saplings and garbage, as were portions of the path at the entrance from Vliet Street. Thanks to all, including the Kiwanis members who brought lunch to our group during our initial foray into the overgrown lock. Thank you, also, to the **Cohoes Beautification Program** for the Community Service Award presented to the SCHS for our efforts.

This will be an on-going project – the length of time required dependent on the extent of the help we can recruit. Please watch for notices of future cleanup dates.

## HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

The Village of Menands, incorporated in 1924, celebrated its 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in August. The village took its name from Louis Menand, a native of Burgundy, France, who opened a nursery and florist in the 1840's near the Albany Rural Cemetery.

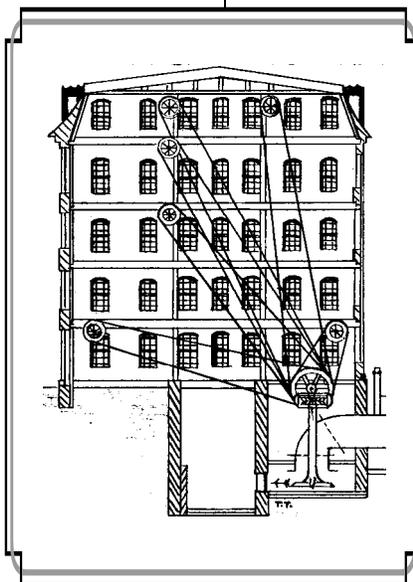
Part of Menands' past are Montgomery Ward, Hawkins Stadium, and Mid-City Amusement Park. However, enterprises including Albany International, Empire Monument, International Harvester, Albany Steel, Tougher Industries, Simmons Machine Tool, and the Capital District Regional Market still call Menands home.

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## WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

The Spindle City Historic Society welcomes new members *Eunice Antonucci, Frances Coughlin, Marie Gennett, Francis X. Houle, Phebe Carpenter Scoles, and Barbara Seguin.*



## THE WILLIAM J. DICKEY HOUSE



“W. J. Dickey, superintendent of the Egbert Woolen Mill, moved into his new house on Imperial Avenue a few days ago. Last night he was surprised by a visit from a large party of his friends, who, after wishing himself and his wife many years of health to enjoy their new home, presented them with a handsome hanging lamp. The presentation speech was made by Mr. John Stiles and was suitably responded to by Mr. Dickey. Although the visit was a complete surprise, Mr. & Mrs. Dickey were equal to the occasion and a bounteous repast was soon in readiness for the visitors. Mr. M. A. Metcalf was among the guests and sang several choice selections. The evening was a most enjoyable one.” Thus read the article that appeared in the Personal & Society News section of *The Cohoes Daily News* on March 1, 1890. Now known as the William J. Dickey House, it was placed on both the State and National Registers of Historic Places in 1998 and will be 110 years old in March 2000.

Over the past nine years the house has been returned to as close to original condition as possible. The kitchen was “modernized” in 1941 and the original back porch was deepened and screened in. The main bath, in the kitchen area, was refitted and made smaller allowing the addition of a small rear hall, and a second bath was added on the second floor. Otherwise, the house is as it was for Mr. and Mrs. Dickey’s surprise housewarming.

In the 1980’s, the house was covered by vinyl siding which has been removed to reveal the architectural features that make it a Stick Victorian. The Stick style appeared in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century and lasted until the turn of the century. The style is characterized by angularity, verticality and asymmetry. The Dickey House has a roof composed of steep intersecting gables. The front wraparound porch is simple with diagonal braces. The stickwork is evident in the series of intersecting boards at right angles, and the boards are used to show the inner structure of the house through exterior decoration. The house is painted in historic colors as well: Dove Grey, Union Gray and Regatta Rose.

Approximately 30 individual residences in the City of Cohoes were identified as meeting the requirements for Historic Register status in 1984, but the nominations were never completed. In 1997, Walter Lipka, City Historian, approached the current owners of these houses but only three agreed to pursue Historic Register nomination, one of them being the William J. Dickey House. Listing on the National Register recognizes the importance of these properties to the history of our country and provides them with a measure of protection.

The benefits of listing include: registered properties receive a measure of protection from the effects of a federal and/or state sponsored, licensed or assisted project through notice, review and consultation process; owners of historic properties may take a 20% federal income tax credit for the costs of substantial rehabilitation; municipalities and not-for-profit organizations may apply for 50% matching grants-in-aid for preservation work and registered properties receive priority consideration from federal and state agencies in space rental and leasing. The register includes buildings, structures, districts, sites and objects which demonstrate significance on the national, state and local levels.

The procedure for obtaining State and/or National Register Listing is straightforward. Sponsors submit an application to the State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation containing detailed historical/architectural information which can be used to evaluate a property’s eligibility for listing. If the property appears to meet the eligibility criteria, applicants will be advised on how to prepare the nomination. The Historic Preservation Office will then seek comments of the owner(s) and local officials and arrange for an official review by the State Board of Historic Preservation. Once approved by the Commissioner of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, the property is listed on the State Historic Register and forwarded on to the National Register for consideration.

Being listed on either Register does not limit the homeowner in any way. Rumors exist that you must get paint colors approved, cannot install energy efficient windows, or must allow for open houses; none of these are true. Legislation exists that allows for funding to individuals who have properties on the Registers, but there is currently no funding for these programs. The Register does provide some protection for the individual homeowner: i.e., protection from right-of-way changes in public street planning and disruption of properties from changes in public utilities.

The City of Cohoes has an impressive history. Getting more of Cohoes’ properties on the Historic Registers can be an important step in preserving that history, to be enjoyed by present and future city residents and visitors.



## Echoes From The '50's

The Freshman Class entering Cohoes High School in September of 1946 – the future class of 1950 – witnessed the horrific cultural shudder of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. War ended, peace descended, things were looking good. During graduation year the North Koreans crossed the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel into South Korea. The nation's war machinery was revved up including the dreaded draft. Not a good beginning for the decade of the 50's.

A peace accord was reached in 1953 ending the Korean conflict but marked the beginning of a standoff among the world's military titans. Far from Cohoes High School during 1954, with little immediate concern, the French were crushed in Vietnam. Another decade would host the next conflict of horror and inequity that still haunts the American psyche.

In the middle of the decade, 1955, the nation was prospering with wages rising including a boost of the minimum wage to a dollar an hour. Disneyland opened in California and the Brooklyn Dodgers won the World Series in seven games. The all pervasive howl of "You Ain't Nuthin But A Hound Dog", in 1956, altered teenagers and the economy for the rest of the millennium. The Soviets launched Sputnik; we countered with Explorer I and flying saucers seemed to invade the earth.

At the end of the decade, war, it seemed, was almost a thing of the past. Alaska and Hawaii became our 49<sup>th</sup> and 50<sup>th</sup> States in 1959 and we were on the verge of a "New Frontier", part of a "Great Society" with prosperity everywhere. At least on the surface. The makeup and outlook of Cohoes High School adolescents changed dramatically throughout the decade of the 50's. Each one, as seniors today, carries bits and pieces and memories of the wonderful formative time.

Although impossible to encapsulate an entire generation within this essay, the following list will trigger a chain reaction of "echoes" that will flood your memory with ghosts from that fabulous time. Hurray to all who were a part of it!!

Annual UN Trip	Hawkins Stadium	"On The Street Where You Live"
Amateur Hour	Dan Heslin	On The Road
American Bandstand	Miss Hickey	Ozzie and Harriet
Ashley's	Nigh Noon	"Peggy Sue"
"April Love"	Hilltop Hotel	Peyton Place
Andy Williams	Hokey Pokey	Pilgrims Prance
Blackboard Jungle	Hometown	Dean Poinsel
Bonanza	Howard's	"Que Sera Sera"
Born Yesterday	"How Much Is That Doggie	Quo Vadis
Boyer's	In The Window?"	Rawhide
Candyland	I Love Lucy	Rebel Without A Cause
The Canteen	"If I Knew You Were	"Rock Around the Clock"
Carlson's	Commin I'da Baked A	Prof Shehen
Chick's IGA	Cake"	Shane
"The Chipmunk Song"	Jarvis'	"Sh Boom"
Dean Lillian Dibble	Juliette Shop	Supercrisp
Danny's	Kresge's	The Shack
Dave Denny's	Konyk's	The Shadow
Donna Reed	La Dolce Vita	This Is Your Life
Dragnet	Lassie	"Too Young"
Duck & Cover	Lavign's Grill	Twilight Zone
East of Eden	Let's Pretend	Dean Taylor
Empire Market	Lux Presents	Dean Tessier
Father Knows Best	Mack The Knife	Uncle Milty
The F.B.I.	Ma Perkins	Vertigo
The Fight Before Xmas	Marra's	Video Rangers
The Flora Dora Chorus	Mayby's	"Volare"
Dean Frament	Mayor Roullier	"Wake Up Little Susie"
Frankie Lane	Mayor Santsprece	Walt's Tavern
Friday Night Fights	McCarthyism	Dean Will
George Gobel	"Mona Lisa"	Wheel of Fortune
Grand Central Station	Monkey Wards	WPTR
Dean Gillman	Dean Myresko	WTRY
Gunsmoke	Name That Tune	"You Belong To Me"
Guptill's	Nassar's	You Bet Your Life
Hag's	Nick Pucci's Car	Your Hit Parade
Have Gun Will Travel		

## COHOES BUSINESSES – THEN & NOW

### BROUILLETTE'S BAKERY



Situated at 9 Charles Street is the former location of the business and home of Honore and Delphine Brouillette, their three sons and six daughters. **Brouillette's Bakery** was opened in the mid-1880's and served the area until about 1912. The house today looks much as it did in the early part of the century when the bakery was downstairs and family's quarters were upstairs.

Born in Vercheres, Quebec in 1859, Honore emigrated from Canada at age 6; his wife, Delphine Archambault, also came from Canada as a child. Their granddaughter, Marie Gennett, is the Town of Chazy Historian and has shared both stories and pictures of her family with the Spindle City Historic Society.

Work in the bakery started at 2:00 AM, and Mr. Brouillette would often bring one of his younger children downstairs with him as a sort of comforting presence. The child would sleep there in a makeshift bed until the baker finished his work, whereupon he or she would be transferred back upstairs to bed. Marie's mother, Clara, remembered many of these trips.

Bread sold for 7 cents a loaf and 20 loaves for a dollar. At holiday time, after the baking was finished for the afternoon, Mr. Brouillette would roast meat for friends and neighbors who would pick up their pigs, geese or turkeys in time for the holiday meal.

Honore Brouillette died at the young age of 48. He was remembered as a warm-hearted and conscientious member of the community who was active in many local organizations. He was Trustee of St. Joseph's Church, Chancellor of Montcalm Council C.B.L. and Financial Secretary of Court Cohoes, to name a few. After his death, the bakery continued to operate for several more years under the guidance of his children, Harry, Rita, and Lena.

Marie remembers visiting Memere Delphine, who had a pet Pekinese with a habit of nipping the young granddaughter whenever it had the chance. Our many thanks to Marie for the information that she has passed on to us to share with our readers.

### MARRA'S PHARMACY

**Marra's Pharmacy**, a family enterprise and fixture in the city, meets the definition of "...businesses, both then & now. Its history begins with the arrival in the 1880's of young Joseph Marra. He had grown up in a small, remote town high in the Apennine Mountains, which form the backbone of Italy.

Marra first headed west from New York City to Wyoming, where he worked on the rail lines that were nearing completion, eventually returning east where he selected Cohoes as his home. He had an eye and a taste for quality, a flair for selling and he knew how to buy, so he built himself a fruit store in a town that already had four. Joseph's store was built on impeccable standards of quality and he carried some of the world's finest produce – fresh and canned. Many of the fruits he sold were unheard of by most people in Cohoes in those days and they were not widely available regionally.

People came not only for the fruit, which seemed to spill out in colorful, neatly terraced rows from the front of the Remsen Street store, but also for the warmth, conversation, laughter and camaraderie that was an integral part of the operation run by Joseph and his wife, Annunciata. Their eleven children all pitched in to help at the store, doing everything from washing floors to delivering orders.

In 1931, one of the sons, James, a newly licensed pharmacist, opened a pharmacy next to his father's fruit store. The first ten years were difficult due to both the Depression and competition from several other pharmacies in Cohoes. However, with the help of family and the beginning of World War II, the business moved along. Jim was an innovator like his father, and learned how to display his products and deliver better service. He packaged his own pharmaceutical products and underpriced the competition, but perhaps, most of all, customers loved the attention they received when they went to Marra's.

Marra's Pharmacy operates today in much the same spirit as it did during its founding days, continuing the tradition of friendly neighborhood service and a commitment to the downtown shopping district. Jim's daughter, Barbara, took over the store upon her father's death in 1971. She received her professional training at the University of Connecticut College of Pharmacy, her father's alma mater, and began working in the pharmacy after her graduation in 1958. She, her husband John McDonald, and their six sons have all worked in the store throughout the years to keep it prospering. It remains an integral part of the business community and a familiar presence in the city of Cohoes.

# Spindle City Historic Society

## OFFICERS

Linda C. Christopher, President  
Craig Bock/Helena Keilen, Secretary  
June Cherniak, Treasurer  
Daniele Cherniak, First Vice President  
Dennis Rivage, Second Vice President

## UPCOMING EVENTS

Arcadia Book Project – Pictorial History of Cohoes –  
Photograph Collection Days  
**10/16** Cohoes Music Hall, 10am – 4pm  
**10/12** Cohoes Library, 10am – 3pm  
For information call Daniele Cherniak at 237-5618

**10/30** American Magic Lantern Theater production  
of *A Victorian Halloween* at the Cohoes Music  
Hall. Sponsored by the Cohoes Caretakers.

For information call 237-7999

Waterford Historical Museum & Cultural Center, in  
association with the NY Council for the Humanities,  
presents

**10/18** “The Resort and the Canal Town: Connections  
between Saratoga Springs and Waterford”

**11/7** “From Presidents to Cowboys: Heroes in  
American Art in the Nineteenth Century”

For information call 238-0809

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## MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

___ Individual Membership	\$10.00	___ Institutional Membership	\$25.00
___ Senior Citizen Membership	\$ 5.00	___ Contributing Membership	\$35.00
___ Student Membership	\$ 5.00	___ Sustaining Membership	\$50.00
___ Family Membership	\$15.00	___ Donation	_____

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

Spindle City Historic Society

P.O. Box 375

Cohoes, New York 12047