
Spindle City Historic Society

Volume 4 Issue 2

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DID YOU KNOW

...that, in 1901, the *Cohoes Republican* reported:

Nine distinguished Cohoesiers left on July 15th for a two-year trip around the world. Two brass bands headed the procession to see them off and there was a keg of beer on tap at every corner of Remsen Street.

On July 11th, announcement was made that the city was now clear of smallpox and of all the cases, not one death resulted.

For the first time on record, in the village of Waterford, women were allowed to vote for the appropriation of money to pay for village requirements. Of the five proposals, only one carried, and the women were blamed for that. The one that was passed was for \$4,000 to be raised for lighting the streets.

H. G. Calkins, 3 Adams Block, advertised books for 8 cents and up.

Willie Sheldon and several other boys were swimming in the Erie Canal near Lock #16 when the locktenders let a boat out of the lock. As the boy jumped into the water, the water rushed out on him. Locktender Charles Morreau grabbed him with a pike pole as he was going down. That made about 3 or 4 boys that Mr. Morreau had saved from drowning in the past 2 years.

In a prophecy of Cohoes, 2000, a "reincarnated" Cohoesier saw that the Cohoes Co.'s canal that ran past Ogden and Victor Mills was filled in and used as a motorcycle path. In addition, the Erie Canal (western end of Ontario St.) was a magnificent boulevard with a roadway, terraces, flowerbeds and fountains.

Miss Sadie Jackson, overlooker in Tivoli Mill #1, accidentally swallowed a needle and thread that she was holding in her mouth, nearly choking. Dr. Witbeck was called but the needle and thread had started too far upon their travels for him to call them back.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

The Spindle City Historic Society welcomes new members *Robert Arneault, James Catlin, Carl Cunniff, Sr., Albert Feldman, Dennis Magin, John T. McDonald, Marian Potter, Fr. Joseph Robitaille, Barbara Sipes, and James & Evelyn VanBuskirk.*

HISTORIAN'S NOTEBOOK

William Caw's House

William Caw arrived in Cohoes in 1846 to sell groceries. The place was booming with new industry but most important of all, lots of mill workers. With his partner, Isaac Quackenbush, they established their business on the corner of Remsen and Oneida Streets.

As he flourished commercially and socially, Caw's political star began rising. Between 1850 and 1864, he served as village trustee, bank officer and school board president in addition to other positions of public esteem and responsibility.

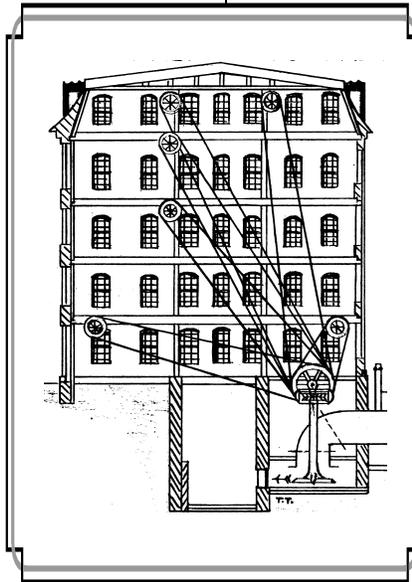
During 1859, William purchased a prime lot to build his dream home on the corner of Mohawk and Remsen Streets, a short walk from his store and in the best section of the village. The next year, 1860, saw his wife Regina, her brother William and his elder sister Elizabeth living comfortably in the new brick home.

On a mid-July day in 1864, William ingested something fatal. After two weeks of continuous dysentery, he died at 2:00AM on the first day of

August. Regina and the entire town were devastated.

During those days, becoming an early widow was common. Regina was better off than most because William had been a good provider. She did what she had to do. The stock in Caw and Quackenbush was liquidated, the furniture in the new brick home was auctioned off and the home was sold to the Presbyterian Church to be used as a parsonage, functioning as such until the church was closed. Finally, in 1998, it was demolished along with the rest of the Silliman Memorial structures.

Regina moved back with her family, never marrying again, but enjoying the companionship of this close knit group. Occasionally, she would baby-sit for or give sisterly advice to her younger brother, Chester Alan Arthur, 21st President of the United States.



Walter Lipka

H.B. SILLIMAN'S LEGACY

Early this year, Joseph T. Raymond of Silliman University in the Philippines accessed our webpage on the Internet. He contacted SCHS member and webpage designer Rob Langley requesting an exchange of information on the university's namesake and benefactor, Dr. Horace Silliman. The school was founded in 1901 by Protestant missionaries and began as an elementary school for boys. In 1938, it won full recognition as a university and celebrates its centennial year beginning in August. Therefore, it seems an ideal time to recall the life of one of Cohoes' exemplary citizens.

Horace Brinsmade Silliman was born to Levi and Clarissa Silliman in 1825. He was the only one of their six children to survive to adulthood. Horace was educated at Albany Academy and graduated from Union College in 1846, a member of Phi Beta Kappa. Later, Silliman received honorary degrees from Union and Hamilton Colleges; Hamilton, at one time, offered him its presidency, but he declined.

Following graduation from Union, Horace became a druggist, opening a shop on Remsen St. in Cohoes. His interest in business was shared by his father whose local business ventures included the Simmons Axe Factory and Rathbone & Silliman, makers of iron furnaces. In 1849, Horace and Stephen C. Miller purchased a newspaper from Chauncey Stow & Co., and established the *Cohoes Cataract*; Silliman was publisher until 1851. Through his business acumen and executive ability, Horace accumulated a large fortune in the halcyon days of the Industrial Revolution. He was a stockholder in several mills in Cohoes and served on a committee to consider water usage by the mills, resulting in the construction of a new reservoir in 1857 and a reliable water system.

Throughout his life, Silliman generously gave of his time and wealth to Cohoes, the community he resided in and loved. He was a leader in organizing a school district in Cohoes in 1849. He worked to improve the community cemetery grounds and participated in efforts to distribute relief to the poor and establish a soup kitchen. He was elected first president of the Cohoes chapter of the YMCA in 1858, and later served as vice-president.

During the Civil War, Dr. Silliman took a prominent role in meetings discussing the community's contribution to the war effort and in the raising of troops. He was active in the work of soldiers' relief during and after the war, and gave the welcoming address for volunteers returning from the war.

Silliman worked with the Harmony Co. in coordinating the purchase of a fire engine and was chosen as first president of the C. H. Adams Steamer Co. He introduced a bill to obtain water for additional industrial power, and became Trustee of the Waterworks Sinking Fund and one of its first officials

in 1870. He served on a committee to establish the Cohoes Hospital, and in later years, his generosity permitted the hospital to construct two large additions.

Silliman also served on the committee responsible for procuring funding and directing construction of Cohoes City Hall, a handsome edifice that still stands. He was selected to deliver the address at the dedication in 1895, and in his speech, gave this advice to Cohoes citizens, still of value today:

1. Cultivate a spirit of patriotism toward your city.
2. Make sacrifices for it.
3. Have the courage to support the good and antagonize the bad.
4. Subordinate in city affairs party spirit and affiliation.
5. Do not support the fortunes of reigning leaders.
6. Insist upon enforcement of the law.
7. Let it be understood that obtaining money from the public money, without an equivalent, is stealing, and everyone who assists in the transaction is a party of crime.
8. Watch out for leaving debts to posterity.

Horace Silliman lived these ideals as a great community leader, contributing to Cohoes both financially and through good works. He dedicated his life to promoting pride in his city and making it a better place to live for those of his and future generations. His greatest monument and gift to the citizens of Cohoes was the Silliman Memorial Church, constructed in 1896 in memory of his parents, who were instrumental in organizing a Presbyterian Church in Cohoes. Horace was also quite active in the church, and served in 1876 as superintendent of the Presbyterian Church Sunday School. Church services were first held in the Silliman home on Saratoga St. until a church was erected on the corner of Remsen and Factory Sts. However, Horace was determined to create a grander house of worship, and did so when he made his fortune. The Romanesque revival church stood proudly on the corner of Mohawk and Ontario Sts. for nearly 100 years; sadly, it was needlessly demolished in 1998. That it did not endure for many more generations was a sign of greater loss, that of the values of civic virtue and public responsibility that Dr. Silliman espoused and lived.

Horace Silliman's personal life was marked by tragedy. His first wife died after 10 years of marriage, and daughter Clara shortly thereafter. Horace remarried and their daughter, Laura, died at 19 followed soon after by his second wife. But he was never without the regard of the citizens of Cohoes. He died on May 4, 1910 at 84, leaving an impressive legacy which extended well beyond Cohoes. His philanthropy included funding additions to Hamilton College, building the Silliman Lodge in New Jersey, a home for invalid girls, and, as mentioned, establishing Silliman University in Dumaguete City, Philippines.

The Railroads of Cohoes: The Delaware & Hudson

by Steve Lackmann

In previous articles we described both the Troy and Schenectady and Rensselaer and Saratoga railroads and their impact. The final article in this series will deal with the only line remaining in use today, the St. Lawrence and Hudson Division of the Canadian Pacific Railway.

This line is probably best known as the Delaware & Hudson. But before the D&H owned the line, it was known as the Albany Northern. The Rensselaer and Saratoga and the Troy and Schenectady railroads were doing well in the early 1850s. However, businessmen in the city of Troy had primary control of these railroads. Albany businessmen were feeling left out of the prosperity that was beginning to arrive with the opening of the northeastern part of New York State and western Vermont to industry and settlement. As a result, Albany merchants sought to build a railroad north from Albany that would tap into these opportunities. Merchants and settlers were also looking for an outlet to the Hudson Valley and New York City and didn't want to be tied to a sole outlet through Troy.

On February 20th, 1851 the Albany Northern Rail Road was chartered to build north from the city of Albany, through West Troy (present-day Watervliet), through Cohoes, Waterford, Schaghticoke, Buskirk, and Eagle Bridge. At Eagle Bridge, the railroad was to connect with the Troy and Rutland and Rutland and Washington railroads. The line to Cohoes was built and opened for business on April 11th, 1853. The line was extended to Waterford approximately one month later and on July 15th, 1853 the first train arrived in Eagle Bridge. The railroad was not a success and quickly went from one financial crisis to another, culminating in the sale of the road in October 1856. The line limped along until 1860 when the competing Rensselaer and Saratoga bought the majority of the stock. After the R&S purchased the Albany Northern, the line from Waterford to Eagle Bridge was soon abandoned since the R&S already owned a competing route. Eventually the R&S extended their railroad north from Waterford to Mechanicville and the railroad has retained this route to the present day.

While the Rensselaer and Saratoga was growing in power and mileage during the 1860s, the Delaware and Hudson Canal Company was expanding into the railroad business. In 1870 the D&H began to look northward to the Capital District of New York as well as Canada for markets for their Pennsylvania anthracite coal. The R&S was a likely "takeover" target, not unlike the takeovers so common in business today. As a result, the D&H leased, "in perpetuity", the entire Rensselaer and Saratoga Railroad. In one sweep, the D&H railroad now extended from Pennsylvania to Whitehall, New York. The railroad was soon to build north from Whitehall to finally end in Montreal. So, by the early winter of 1875, it was possible to travel entirely by train from New York City to Montreal in the then unheard of time of approximately one day!

As a result of this extension of the D&H, it was now possible for Cohoesiers to travel from Cohoes to Montreal, New York City, Buffalo, and other points with speed that was unimaginable just 10 years previously when only the T&S and R&S served the city. This meant expanded markets for the Harmony Company's products as well as for the other manufacturers in the city. Railroads were taking a proportionately larger share of the transportation needs in Cohoes. No longer was the city's economic growth based solely on the Erie Canal. The D&H also meant that it was easier for immigrants to come to Cohoes from New York City and Canada. The population of Cohoes was growing rapidly during the period from 1870 to 1895. This was due to more businesses coming in as a direct result of the prosperity brought about by the textile industry in general and the Harmony Company in particular. The D&H thus provided valuable transportation services to the city and its citizens.

Most new arrivals to the city arrived through the D&H passenger station. Located on Pine Street, the station still shows the original "D&HC Co" (Delaware and Hudson Canal Company) inscription over the main entrance. The station saw many departures and arrivals from the beginning of passenger service in 1875 until the railroad abandoned most local passenger service in 1963. After 1963, the only regularly

scheduled passenger trains through Cohoes were the *Laurentian*, *Montreal Limited*, and a short-lived commuter train from Saratoga Springs to Albany. None of these trains stopped here.

There were several “special” trains that traveled through Cohoes. Ulysses S. Grant’s funeral train passed through on Tuesday, August 4th, 1885 at approximately 3:20 P.M. on the way to New York City. The other “special occurred sixteen years later. During the early morning of September 13, 1901, Theodore Roosevelt raced through Cohoes on his way to Washington on a special train the D&H had provided due to the death of President William McKinley. Roosevelt had been vacationing near Tahawus in the Adirondacks when McKinley was shot. Since the D&H was the only means of delivering Roosevelt quickly to Washington, a train was dispatched to North Creek to pick up the new President.

The D&H has served, and continues to serve, many industries in Cohoes. The major freight house owned by the railroad was located at Pine and Saratoga Streets. Several spur tracks ran to this freight house, which most likely saw the shipment of product from the textile mills as well as the arrival of raw materials for the mills and other industries. Those tracks are now gone and the many spur tracks are torn up. Remains of the rails and ties can still be seen in the immediate vicinity of the freight house.

In more recent times, the Star Woolen Company, G. H. Wertime, Mohawk Paper, and Norlite Industries had spur tracks to supply their businesses. The only active spurs left are located at Mohawk Paper and Norlite. The spurs for Star Woolen and Wertime were eliminated in the late 1960s and early 1970s. One local freight line continues to serve these industries on a daily basis. The railroad itself sees up to four freight trains during daylight hours and up to three during the night. No passenger trains currently run through the city. But in coming years, a commuter train may be run from Saratoga County through Cohoes to Albany to help ease traffic congestion on the Northway. Maybe the old commuter service that ended in the early 1960s wasn’t such a bad idea after all!

The D&H endures even though the name no longer legally exists. Since the Canadian Pacific Railway now owns the railroad, the D&H name is no longer used. Instead, the railroad is referred to as the St. Lawrence and Hudson subsidiary of the Canadian Pacific. But no matter which name the railway bears, it has and hopefully will continue to play an important role in the economic life of the city of Cohoes.

Many thanks to Jim Shaughnessy, author of *Delaware and Hudson*, the Bridge Line Historical Society, and the Mohawk and Hudson Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society for help in the preparation of this article.



Van Schaick Island Country Club

Founded in 1895 at Bridge and Park Avenues with only two holes, The Van Schaick Island Golf Course is believed to be the oldest area golf club that has continued to exist at the same site. Its original name was the Island Golf Club. The course also served as a harness racing track, remnants of which still 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 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 by the owners of the Mansion, and the clubhouse shown in the photograph was built in 1901. Much of the 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.



Spindle City Historic Society Membership Application

President - Paul Dunleavy

First Vice President - Linda C. Christopher

Second Vice President - Daniele Cherniak

Secretary - Helena Keilen

Treasurer - June Cherniak

___ 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 _____

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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

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Images of America: Cohoes soon to be Published: We have just finished work on a pictorial history of Cohoes for Arcadia Publishing's "Images of America" series. The book is expected to be available in early September but you can reserve your copies now by contacting the historical society. The cost is \$19.95.

Get your own Cohoes Music Hall! The Society is selling reproductions of the Cohoes Music Hall from the Cat's Meow Village™. The painted woodblock Music Hall miniatures are 5"x4" and can be obtained for \$13.50. Please contact June Cherniak (237-5618) if you would like to purchase one.

New Website Address: The Spindle City Historic Society has a new website address. You can now find us in cyberspace at www.preserve.org/spindle/homepage.htm

Raffles: We are raffling off a 23" Victorian doll and an afghan. The doll is dressed in handmade, beautifully detailed period clothing in teal with black lace trim. Second prize for the raffle is a handmade pastel striped afghan. Chances for the raffle are \$1.00 each. The drawing for the raffle will be held at the Christmas Tree Lighting in Canal Square in late November.

Upcoming Events

August 5 – First Annual Cohoes High School Alumni Association picnic, Lanthiers Grove. Contact Bill Reu (235-1402, R37P42@aol.com) or Barbara McDonald (237-2110, MARRARX@earthlink.net), or visit the Alumni Association website at timesunion.com/communities/chsaa

September 7-9 – Tugboat Roundup, Waterford Harbor

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