
Spindle City Historic Society

Volume 4 Issue 4

Winter 2001

DID YOU KNOW

...that

The Spindle City Historic Society has received many positive comments about our book *Images of America: Cohoes?* Here are a few:

"Images of America: Cohoes is an outstanding publication and should be entered into a literary competition!" – Fredda Rosenberg, Assistant Superintendent for Educational Services, Cohoes City School District

"It is really a gem. The pictures are so bright and clear and the contents are just fascinating. You have all done a terrific job and it shows." – Jean Olton, Town of Colonie Historian

"I could use a bale of paper to cover all my memories that this book jogged." – Charles Van Decar

"This book is a wonderful and endearing gift by the historical society to the Spindle City's residents of today." – *Times Union*, 9/20/2001

"Images of America: Cohoes captures the essence of this canal town that has been home to Revolutionary War heroes and early industrialists..." – *The Record*, 9/10/2001

"I got the book one evening, and my wife and I could not put it down. We stayed up until two the next morning reading and looking at the images." – Frank Galarneau

Several others mentioned reading the book into the wee hours, quite appropriate since some members of the committee put on the book's finishing touches in a session extending a few hours after midnight.

Thanks to all for their kind words. If you don't yet have a copy, see what you've been missing! The book can be obtained from the society at the RiverSpark Visitors Center or by calling 237-5618.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

The Spindle City Historic Society welcomes new members *Matthew Andrews, John & Marilyn Craner, Elaine P. Diller, Virginia M. Kehn, Janice Kehn, Lea M. Langlais, Joyce A. Neary, Hal & Pat Perry, Edward and Darcy Pilawski, John Rowan, Vincent St. Onge, Joseph Therien, and Edward T. Walsh*

HISTORIAN'S NOTEBOOK

The Yacht *Mohawk*

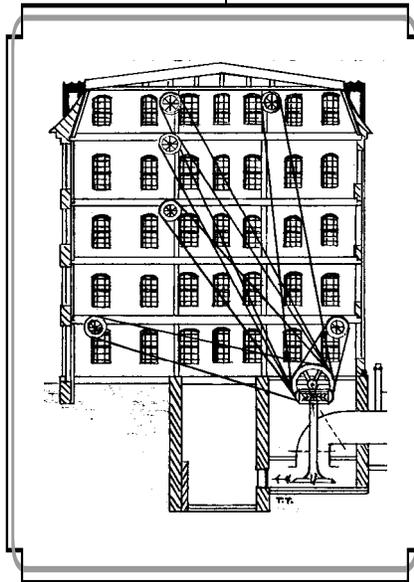
The "Mohawk" was christened on June 9, 1875 amid cheers, declarations and the traditional bottle of champagne. Designed and built for one of the founders of the New York Yacht Club, it was touted as the "largest and most luxuriously furnished yacht of its day." The Mohawk was built for William T. Garner, son of Thomas Garner, owner of Garner & Company. The Harmony Mills in Cohoes were a portion of the Garner holdings.

At 140 feet long and 40 feet at its beam, it carried 32,000 square feet of sail. Below deck, large and richly decorated quarters accommodated the owner, his guests and the Captain and crew of twelve men. Although splendid, the Mohawk had its critics. One assessment was that it was too slow. This was substantiated by a next-to-last place finish in the annual Cape May Regatta. A more crucial complaint was that it would capsize. This expert opinion was based on a lack of confidence in a design modification insisted upon by Garner. His reply to the criticism was "that it will create a new era in yacht building."

During the course of the darkening afternoon of July 20, 1876, the Mohawk was anchored 600 yards from the New York Yacht Club. Garner was to entertain a group of friends and relatives with an afternoon excursion. As the guests mingled on the deck, a storm seemed imminent, so Garner and his wife began to lead his guests below deck, out of the annoying weather. Suddenly, a violent gust of wind caught the Mohawk broadside, immediately capsizing the vessel.

Most of the guests and crew were saved after being swept overboard, but Garner, his wife, her sister, and two crew members were drowned. Surviving the Garners were their three little girls. The eldest was 8-year-old Florence. Shortly after the funeral, the children were sent abroad for a European education. Garner's estate was estimated at \$26,000,000, held in trust for the girls until they became of age. Eventually, Florence became the wife of Sir William Gordon Cummings. The others married royalty as well. By 1912, the value of Garner's estate had diminished to \$68,432 and was divided equally among his daughters.

Walter Lipka, Historian



A Russian Orthodox Christmas

The Christmas Eve holy supper begins when the first star appears in the evening sky. The traditional date, according to the Julian calendar, was January 6, with Christmas on the 7th. The table is set with a white tablecloth, which represents the swaddling clothes of baby Jesus, with hay placed under the cloth as reminder of the manger. The centerpiece on the table is a round bread to represent Christ, with a single candle in its center to signify the Star of Bethlehem.

The meal is begun with a prayer and the greeting “Христос Раждается Славите Его!” (“Christ is born – let us glorify him!”) It consists of twelve courses to represent the twelve apostles Jesus chose to preach the gospel. All of the courses are prepared without meat or dairy products, but vary from family to family depending on the traditions and customs of ancestors. The following dishes are a sampling:

- ✦ kutya – wheat or barley, with nuts, poppy seed, and honey. This is the ritual beginning of the meal, served only at Christmas. It dates to wheat cultivation and harvest in pre-Christian times.
- ✦ pickled herring, jellied fish, or baked stuffed fish, in memory of early Christians.
- ✦ borsch – sour cabbage or pea soup
- ✦ varenyky – dough filled with potatoes, sauerkraut, or prunes, then boiled
- ✦ holubusti – rolled cabbage leaves stuffed with rice or buckwheat and mushrooms
- ✦ mushroom sauce
- ✦ Christmas kapusta - sauerkraut and beans, or sauerkraut with peas
- ✦ buckwheat kasha – buckwheat with onions, mushrooms, and egg, baked
- ✦ nalysnyky – wafer-thin griddle cakes, rolled, folded, or layered
- ✦ compote of fruit – as many as 20 varieties of dried and fresh fruit are stewed with sugar and lemon or cinnamon.
- ✦ pastry – pampushky: a yeast dough with egg and sugar, rolled out, cut and fried in oil; medivnyk and khrusty: dough rolled, cut in strips and knotted, then fried in oil and dusted with confectioners’ sugar
- ✦ bread – kolach: a braided ring-shaped bread, symbolizing eternity and general welfare

Following the meal, the faithful attend a church service and Christmas songs are sung. A liturgy is held on Christmas day. Many families celebrate afterward with a traditional Christmas feast of turkey or other meats. Another Christmas tradition is the visiting of parish homes by groups of carolers who sing standard carols (“Silent Night”, “Jingle Bells”, and others) in Russian. The itinerant carolers are greeted with snacks and drinks at the houses they

visit, and those in residence join in the singing. Parishioners from out of town are also visited; in earlier times when even short trips were uncommon the carolers vied to be among those chosen for the journey.

Today, most Russian Orthodox parishes have shifted their Christmas celebrations to December 25 to accommodate typical holiday schedules, but many of the traditions are still preserved and cherished.

Thanks to Nadja Stroyen for her contribution to this article.



The Saturday Club of Cohoes

In 1898 a group of fifteen prominent women in Cohoes decided to form a Women’s Club and on February 9, 1899 The Saturday Club was formally organized. Membership was limited to 35 members, 30 active and 5 honorary. There was an initiation fee of 25¢ and dues were \$5.00 per year. Regular meetings were held every Saturday from October to May. The Constitution and by-laws were adopted on April 27, 1899 and took effect immediately stating, “...the object of this society shall be to promote through organized effort, the social, ethical and intellectual culture of women.”

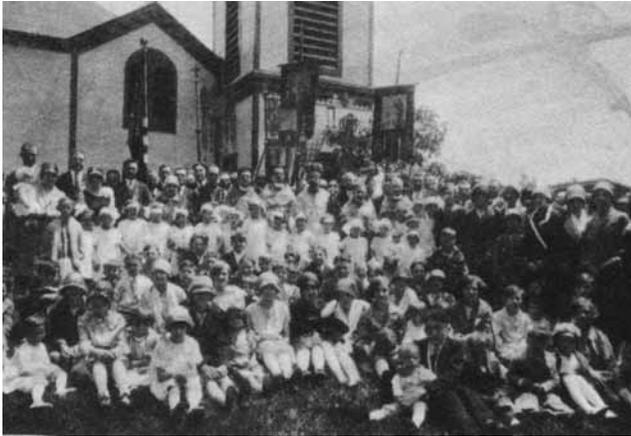
In reviewing some of the Club’s annual programs, the topics included were very diverse. In the 1950s, they ranged from discussions of “Women in Democracy”, “Implications of the Atomic Bomb” and “International Relations – The UN” to “Modern Design in Our Homes”, Broadway shows, and a one act play.

Their 60th Anniversary celebration in February 1959 was held in the parlor of the Silliman Memorial Presbyterian Church. The program presented was 60 years of fashion and songs, the first song being “After the Ball is Over” right through to rock and roll.

1977-78 was the Club’s International Year with presentations on Germany, Russia, Switzerland, China, and Pakistan. Local history, including Cohoes and the “Historic Hudson” were topics of their meetings over the years, along with book reviews, variety and hobby shows and poetry readings.

Presently, meetings are held from September through December and March through May. The members have every expectation that this group will continue to flourish and remain a part of the Cohoes community for many years to come.

St. Nicholas Russian Orthodox Church



A photo of the dedication of the church hall, 1926

In 1908, a group of Russian immigrants living in Cohoes formed a branch of the Russian Brotherhood Association of America. In 1910, a Reading Society was organized, independent of the Brotherhood; members of the Reading Society organized into the Brotherhood of St. Archdeacon Stephen in 1913. The two societies, along with the Brotherhood of St. Basil the Great, united to form the parish of St. Nicholas. The first liturgy was celebrated by Father Peter Kohanik in January 1914 in the hall of the Manufacturers' Bank on Remsen Street (the building is now the RiverSpark Visitor's Center and the historical society's home). Father Paul Filipovsky was appointed pastor to the congregation. A hall in the Buchanan Building where services could be conducted was rented. Later that year, the parish purchased property on the northern section of Saratoga Street; construction on a church was begun in spring of 1915 and completed in July. Services in the new church were conducted by Father Peter Karel. The church was dedicated the next year by Archbishop Evdokim.

A church hall was constructed in 1925 with funding from the Carpatho Russian Club. In 1928, the parish acquired a cemetery on Route 9 near Boght Corners, and later constructed a chapel on this site. A Russian Youth Club was organized at St. Nicholas in 1930. It became affiliated with the Federated Russian Orthodox Clubs, known as the "R" Club. "R" club members involved themselves in many church and social activities. A junior division of the group was established in 1948.

A fund-raising effort to construct a new and larger church was begun in 1935. In 1941, the old church was dismantled, with the parishioners doing most of the work themselves. Partway through construction of the new church, the building contractor for the job went bankrupt, leaving the members of the church to finish the project. The

shortage of building materials due to World War II added to their difficulties, but the church was completed, and stands today. It is constructed of yellow tapestry brick, with five cupolas. Stained glass windows, with images of icons of Russian style, were donated by church organizations and individual parishioners and their families. A new iconostas was also needed by the church (an iconostas is a high screen decorated with icons that separates the bema and sacristy from the rest of the church). One was obtained through the generosity of a parish in Yonkers. They were installing a new iconostas, and donated their old one to St. Nicholas. While the church was under construction, services were held at the G&G Potato Chip Company on the corner of Ontario and Saratoga Streets. The first Divine Liturgy was celebrated in the new church on Thanksgiving Day 1943.

In an effort to preserve Russian culture and heritage among its parishioners, St. Nicholas established a Russian School in 1949, where young people were given religious instruction and taught the Russian language. During this time, Father Eugene Serebrennikoff promoted many other activities that added to the life of the parish. He was an experienced choirmaster with a great appreciation of Russian choral music and enthusiastically devoted many hours to practice with members of the church choir. Father Eugene and his wife helped to organize the Ladies Altar Guild, which raised funds and donated many gifts to the church, including vestments for the priest and altar boys, and a processional cross. A Sunday School was established for the children in the parish in 1952. The church published its first bulletin in 1956, through the efforts of Father Eugene, Peter A. Geleta, and Nadja Stroyen.

In the early 1950s, a group of parishioners formed an organization, later incorporated as the O.C.A., or Orthodox Christian Association. Many church social functions and other events were conducted at the O.C.A. club facility while it was in existence at the corner of Ontario and Saratoga Streets. The old parish hall and home were torn down in the early 1960s and replaced by a new residence for the priest and family on Saratoga St., adjacent to the church.

The church stands today at the same location, with services held every Sunday and on religious holidays. Members of the church continue in their efforts to maintain elements of the Russian Orthodox culture and traditions. Some services are still conducted in the Russian language, and the parish offers assistance to Russian immigrants in the region, welcome to Russian visitors, and humanitarian aid to groups in Russia.

President's Message

Off the Top...

This newsletter brings the close to another busy and exciting year for the Spindle City Historic Society. As time passes, things change. You hold in your hands the latest change - our expanded newsletter. Our newsletter has always been praised for its informative content about the history and people of Cohoes. Now, so much is going on in the society, we need to bring you information about our recent past and our future.

Two very exciting things have happened recently. Our book *Images of America: Cohoes*, has been a wonderful success. I hope you each own your own copy. If you do not, we only have a few remaining, so get them early for holiday giving. If reading the book invokes any memories or stories that you would like to share, please share them with us so we can preserve them for future generations. Contact us by mail at P.O. Box 375, Cohoes, NY 12047, or by attending one of our meetings held at 7 p.m. the third Wednesday of every month in the Cohoes RiverSpark Visitors Center, at 58 Remsen St. (except this month, due to the holidays).

We also found a new, accessible home this year, thanks to the City, in the Visitors Center. Our meetings and events now have a central location and a place to collect and display information about our wonderful city's past and present. If you have ideas or things to share, please contact us, the society is only as strong as its members.

Many of our meetings contain a short program provided by one of our members or a guest speaker. Starting in January, we will offer additional programs on the second Saturday of the month. We will use these opportunities to copy and document photographs and other memorabilia the people of Cohoes are willing to share with us. Please spread the word and look for the topic and time of our presentations on the back page of this newsletter. January will focus on the canals and rumor has it that Abraham Lincoln will be joining us in February.

All of our wishes go out to you for a memorable holiday and a healthy New Year.

Hope to see you soon,

Paul D. Dunleavy
President

Open House - Book Signing

The society held an open house on September 22nd to welcome everyone to our new home, the RiverSpark visitors Center in Cohoes Music Hall, and to celebrate the publication of our first book, a pictorial history of Cohoes.



A copy of the book was presented to Mayor John McDonald for the city by Tor Shekerjian and Daniele Cherniak.



Another copy was given to the Cohoes Public Library, accepted by Steve Lackmann of Friends of the Library.

Those in attendance viewed the displays and exhibits in the Visitors Center, learned about the society's current activities and future plans, and enjoyed a slide show featuring images from the book and their modern counterparts.



Cohoes History and Victorian Fashion

Our group joined with the Capital District's Victorian Cultural League and Victorian Social Club on October 14 to sponsor the program *Hidden Treasures: Cohoes and Victorian Fashion from 1874-1905*.



The afternoon featured a talk by Paul Dunleavy and accompanying slide show on Cohoes history during the Victorian Era, highlighting the history of the Music Hall and its noted performers, as well as other Cohoesiers of the time, including Eva Tanguay, Adelaide Dickey, and James A. Hearn.

Susan McLane (on the left in photo), an expert in 19th century fashion history, gave a presentation on fashion and fabrics of the period, and the complexity of Victorian attire. With corsets and multiple layers of petticoats, just getting dressed for the day seems a daunting task.



Several women from the Victorian Cultural League and Victorian Social Club modeled historic and reproduction clothing in the Music Hall. From left to right: Sylvie Briber, Pat Gallagher, Karen York, and Phyllis Ochs.

Clean-up at the Old Erie Canal

The Spindle City Historic Society has been working to beautify and revitalize the area around Lock 15 (part of the Erie Canal in its 1840s expansion) for the past three years. We have been fortunate this fall to have others working with us on this project. On October 13th, a group of students from RPI who are pledging the Pi Kappa Alpha fraternity came to Cohoes for an afternoon of clearing brush and cutting trees at the Lock 15 site. Two weeks later, Andy Wolfe and Dennis Foley of Union College joined us at Lock 18 (on the National Register of Historic Places). Andy, a civil engineer, and Dennis, an anthropologist, were instrumental in restoring Lock 23 of the old Erie Canal in Rotterdam and are interested in continuing research and working with us on restoration of the locks in Cohoes.



June Cherniak, Helena Keilen, And Daniele Cherniak at Lock 18



The gang takes a break by Lock 18. From left to right: Walter Cherniak, Linda Christopher, Donna Riley, Helena Keilen, Tor Shekerjian, June Cherniak, Dennis Foley, and Andy Wolfe. The dog in the foreground is unidentified.



Before
and
after
photos
show



progress made by the end of the afternoon

Lock 15 Discoveries

For the Cohoes Beautification Project, started in Spring 1999, the Spindle City Historic Society selected the Erie Canal Lock 15 site (part of the 1840s expansion of the canal), off of Vliet Street, as its clean-up project, an immensely overgrown and littered area. The Society received the Community Service Award, Municipal Category, at the Lansing Park Festival in September 1999. However, the clean-up remains a work in progress and what follows is an itemization of some of the "treasures" revealed.

- 50 miles of unyielding wild grapevines and many years' accumulation of leaves.
- Two critter residences formerly called sofas.
- A set of unmatched kitchen utensils, pots, pans and a bucket.
- 4,298 pieces of broken glass.
- Rusty shovels and other retired garden tools.
- Useless, discarded sunglasses poised under a canopy of trees and a blanket of leaves.
- Tires whose rubber no longer met the road.
- One lonesome door knob.
- Soiled, wet garments and underwear.
- Scrap metal of varied former purposes.
- A collection of current, obsolete, and questionable food/snack wrappers, bags and other containers.
- Dozens of flat, wet, and disgusting plastic bags.
- A screen door that shut out its last fly years ago.
- A metal bed frame that can no longer provide comport and support.
- A swing set whose owner must now be in mid-life crisis.
- Discarded bicycles and bicycle parts.
- Abstract sculpture in the form of automobile mufflers.
- An abandoned shopping cart no longer able to deliver.
- Several sneakers without their mates.
- A firearm, fortunately only plastic
- Five golf balls from an unknown golf course and one lonely outlawed Jart.
- 671 bottles and cans.
- Metal sled runners relieved of duty by Mother Nature from their rotted wood sled.
- A basket without a tisket or even a tasket.
- Bones too small to be a mastodon.
- One hundred plus bags which we filled with gathered paper, plastic shreds, soggy cardboard,

and styrofoam pieces plus a decade (at least) of leaves.

- Too many trees allowed to grow for too long.
- A wall revealed once the out of control trees were cut or trimmed.
- Volunteers who endured spiders, bees, various other bugs, poison ivy and oak, heat, humidity, aching backs, tired feet, parched lips and sweat filled eyes
- Dedicated DPW workers who hauled away these fruits of our labor.
- Immense satisfaction for a job well done.

Our goal is that this piece of Cohoes history will eventually be an attractive area for all to enjoy.

Potato Chips in Cohoes

Potato chips were once made commercially in Cohoes, and were for a time considered among the finest in the region.

The Potato Chip Manufacturing Co. was begun in 1925 by Alexander P. Grega and John H. Guba. Their business was located at 92 Oneida St. , and moved to 74 Oneida St. in 1929; in 1930 it became the G & G Potato Chip Co. By 1931 the business had outgrown the space on Oneida St. and moved to 91 Saratoga St. (on the corner of Ontario), where it remained until 1951.

In 1937, Peter Grega replaced John Guba as the G & G Company treasurer. John opened a hotel/restaurant in Schenectady, but returned to Cohoes in 1939 to form the Super Crisp Potato Chip Company, locating again at 74 Oneida St. Both companies flourished for a time. In 1943, Anna Grega became Vice President/Treasurer at G & G, as women took on nontraditional roles during wartime. Mary Mulcahy and Olga Hodges would become Secretary and Treasurer, respectively, in 1946. Super Crisp, idle between 1945 and 1947, re-opened under the direction of John and Harry Guba at the same Oneida St. location as before.

In 1951, G & G was sold to Arthur and Roger Hamilton. They ran the business for a year, then sold the site to the Orthodox Christian Association (O.C.A.) The group converted the building to a private club, adding a bar, restaurant, and upstairs banquet hall. The facility was opened to the public after a few years.

The Super Crisp Company was forced to relocate to 72 Oneida St. due to a fire in 1953, and remained there until 1959 when the company moved to 71 Columbia St. The business closed in 1966, leaving Cohoes potato chips only a memory.

Cohoes' Post Offices

The first post office in Cohoes was established on February 23, 1832 and was located in Postmaster Frederio Y. Waterman's store near the junction of the Erie and Champlain Canals. It served about 150 residents. The following year, Hezekiah Howe was appointed Postmaster and he moved the post office to his new store on the canal bank near the Jute Mill. A Cohoes resident, Wright Mallery, who had a bakery in West Troy, carried the mail. Daily, he made his trips to the stores along the line of the canal bringing the Cohoes mail in his bread cart since there were usually no more than one or two letters to deliver.

Three more moves later, in 1861, the post office resided in Izrahiah W. Chesebro's drug store. It was the practice at that time to appoint local businessmen as Postmaster and locate the post office at their places of business.

By 1894, city delivery extended to the rural sections and across the Mohawk River to most of the village of Waterford, locally referred to as Northside. Northside was transferred to the Waterford Post Office in 1957. To better serve the Van Schaick and Adam's Island residents, US Postal Substation #1 was established in Kennedy's Drugstore in 1914.

In 1922, the former mayor Dr. James E. McDonald Sr. became postmaster. During his tenure, the first federally owned building housing the Cohoes Post Office was erected in 1924 at the site it still occupies on the southeast corner of Ontario and Mohawk Streets. On file there are some of the different spellings used to designate the city. Among some of the more unique ones are:

Coohoos	Cookahoves	Cowhewes
Kachooze	Kahahouse	Kohos



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		

We have great plans in our new home in the RiverSpark Visitors Center!

Please help if you can with an additional donation to support our upcoming programs:

___ \$5.00 ___ \$10.00 ___ other

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND UPCOMING EVENTS

Be a Part of History – Again! On the second Saturday of the month in both January and February, the historical society will be collecting photos and other memorabilia for future publications and its archives. Photos will be reproduced on site and will be returned immediately unless their owners wish to donate them to the society. These events will be held from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. on **January 12** and **February 9** in the RiverSpark Visitors Center. The slide show “A Virtual Tour of the Old Erie Canal in Cohoes” will be presented on January 12. The February 9 session will be immediately followed by a special program: “A Visit from Abraham Lincoln”, featuring Phil Jessen

January 30, 2002 – **“Franco-American Immigration and Culture in Cohoes”** Presentation by **Bernie Ouimet**. 7 p.m., RiverSpark Visitors Center

February 9 –**A Visit from Abraham Lincoln. Phil Jessen**, noted around the region for his portrayal of Lincoln, brings the 16th president of the United States to life in a special appearance in Cohoes. 1 p.m., RiverSpark Visitors Center

April 21 – **“The Van Schaick Mansion: 1735 to the 21st Century”** Presentations by **Peggy Gifford**, Daughters of the American Revolution, General Peter Gansevoort Chapter, and **John Bonafide**, New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation. 2 p.m., RiverSpark Visitors Center

Spindle City Historic Society

P.O. Box 375

Cohoes, New York 12047