

# Spindle City Historic Society

Volume 8 Issue 2

Summer 2005

## DID YOU KNOW

...that the Cohoes chapter of the Salvation Army was started on November 30, 1884 in Egberts Hall?

...that Duffy's Funeral Parlor was located at the corner of Columbia Street and Simmons Avenue?

...that on Friday, September 2, 1904 Cohoes native Anthony "Chick" Robitaille made his National League debut with the Pittsburgh Pirates? He was credited with a "million dollar arm."

...that the Harmony Athletic Club baseball team was organized in 1910? Over the years the team provided semi-pro players for many leading teams. The 1910 team included the Potts boys – Edward, Harold, and William. They and most of the others on the team resided in the Willow, Vliet, and Summit Street area bordering the Harmony Mills and Erie Canal.

...that the Potts American Restaurant was located on Remsen Street during the years 1920-1938?

...that 2005 is the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the electric light bulb?

...that Archambeault's Bakery was located on Willow Street in the early 1900s? The bakery was opened in 1888 by Mathias Archambeault, and run by children Clair and Tancrede. It closed in 1932.

...that Timpane's Jewelers opened in 1888? Founded by T.C. Timpane, it was originally located at 57 Mohawk Street. The store, once the area's oldest family owned jewelers stayed in business until 1981.

...that the Beattie Manufacturing Company, located on Amity Street, produced machine gun parts during World War II?

...that Chester A. Arthur learned during a performance at the Cohoes Music Hall that he would be the 21<sup>st</sup> President of the United States? He succeeded to the office following the assassination of James Garfield.

## WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

The Spindle City Historic Society welcomes new members *Albany Engineering Corporation, Arthur Ballard, Carolyn Guresz, Anne & Tom Kiely, Charles Malloy, and Lynne Shultis.*

## HISTORIAN'S NOTEBOOK

### The Cohoes Company Dam and Head Gate House

The Cohoes Company, incorporated by the New York State Legislature in 1826, was the forerunner of modern utility companies. The company acquired all rights to the waterpower a half-mile above the Cohoes Falls and the same below. Through its act of incorporation, the company was granted the right to build a dam across the Mohawk, to construct canals directly from the river and connecting lateral canals, to erect "houses, factories, warehouses, wharves and other necessary buildings" and, perhaps most importantly, the right to lease and sell the waterpower as well as the land. The Cohoes Company constructed a wooden dam across the Mohawk above the falls in 1831. It was destroyed by ice the following winter but was soon restored. About 30 feet of the dam was washed away in 1839; it was replaced in 1840 with a timber dam filled in with stone and concrete masonry, 1500 feet long and nine feet high, at a cost of \$40,000.

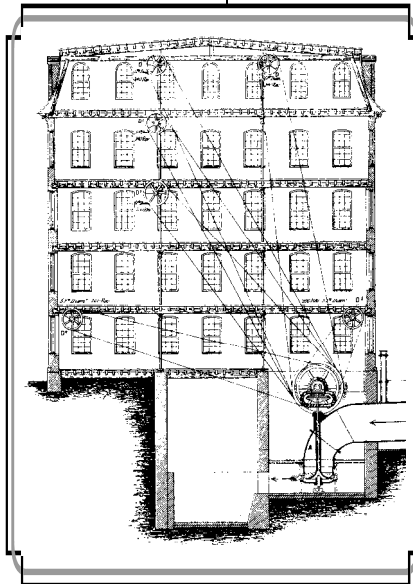
In 1865, a solid 1443-foot masonry dam was built directly below and in connection with the 1840 dam, thus creating a structure with additional strength. The Romanesque Revival gate house, built of brick and containing the headgates, was completed in 1866. David

Van Auken, the assistant engineer and architect for the gate house, was also the architect for Harmony Mill #3. The gate house was 218 feet long, and the main towers 43 feet high. The cost of the dam and gate house complex was \$180,000.



In later years, the square crenelated tower on the central part of the Gate House was removed, as were the hipped roofs of the side towers, which echoed the roofs on the towers of Harmony Mill #3. In 1911, when the power canal system was replaced by hydroelectric power transmission, a one story brick extension was added to the building to house additional gates to control water flow.

*Daniele Cherniak*



## Would You Like To See David's Etchings?

by Bob Addis

What caused the early twentieth century artist David C. Lithgow to create a series of etchings on Cohoes? Lithgow, who emigrated from Scotland in 1888 and set up a studio on North Pearl Street in Albany, arguably was the Capital District's most famous artist in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. He was especially noted for his murals of Native Americans and wildlife found in the State Museum (in the State Education Building), Cohoes Savings Bank, and many other nearby locations. His work also included sculpture, book illustrations, and historical dioramas. As recently as 2003, a mural suspected to have been done by Lithgow was discovered behind a wall in Troy's Proctor's Theater.

Researching our house (the Douw Fonda House, located at 154 Western Avenue in Cohoes) in the State Library Special Manuscripts and Archives, I came across these four images each labeled "Artist's Proof No. 2." This means for each, Lithgow probably drew the image, had it transferred to a metal etching plate, and from that the artist's proof was printed on paper. In the case of No. 2, this indicates a second revision or series of corrections. This all represents a fair amount of time and expense, and I'm guessing that a prominent artist would not work on the speculation that his art would sell. He would have been commissioned to do it. This is purely a guess on my part as I have no training or background in art. So why did Lithgow do etchings on Cohoes -- and are there any more subjects? Were the finished etchings sold? The main purpose of this article is to share my discoveries and to gain information. Specifically, Christa and I would really like to purchase a Lithgow etching of our house if it exists!

Any additional information that readers may have either about Lithgow or the Cohoes etchings would be greatly appreciated. Thank you.

*The Alexander Place (right), from an old photograph, is in the Archives.*



*The Douw Fonda House (left), from an old photograph, is in the Archives. This may have been taken by Neehen circa 1900, but more research is required to confirm this. The photo has been used in two books as "...a typical early Dutch farmhouse." This is our house at 154 Western Avenue, recently listed on the National Register of Historic Places.*

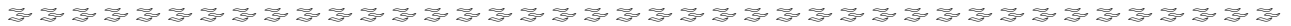




*Covered Bridge on the North Side, crossing the Mohawk between Cohoes and Waterford. The earliest bridge at this location dates from 1795.*



*The Cohoes Falls.*



### Lines Written at the Cohos, or Falls of the Mohawk River

*by Thomas Moore*

From the rise of morn till set of sun  
I have seen the mighty Mohawk run,  
And as I marked the woods of pine  
Along his mirror darkly shine,  
Like tall and gloomy forms that pass  
Before the wizard's midnight glass:  
And as I viewed the hurrying pace  
With which he ran his turbid race,  
Rushing, alike untir'd and wild,  
Through shades that frowned and flowers that smiled,  
Flying by every green recess  
That woo'd him to its calm caress,  
Yet, sometimes turning with the wind,  
As if to leave one look behind!  
Oh- I have thought, and thinking sigh'd -  
How like to thee, thou restless tide!  
May be the lot, the life of him,

Who roams along thy water's brim!  
Through what alternate shades of woe,  
And flowers of joy my path may go!  
How many a humble, still retreat  
May rise to court my weary feet,  
While still pursuing, still unblest,  
I wander on, nor dare to rest!  
But urgent as the doom that calls  
Thy water to its destined falls,  
I see the world's bewildering force  
Hurry my heart's devoted course  
From lapse to lapse, till life be done,  
And the last current cease to run!  
Oh, may my falls be bright as thine!  
May heaven's forgiving rainbow shine  
Upon the mist that circles me,  
As soft, as now it hangs o'er thee!

#### ***About the Poet***

*Thomas Moore was born in Dublin in 1779. He was a poet, satirist, and songwriter, and is considered Ireland's national poet. He studied at Trinity College and published his first book of poetry in 1801. Moore was a friend of Lord Byron and Percy Shelley, and a biographer of Byron. Moore traveled in the United States and Canada in the early years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This visit included a journey to the Cohoes Falls, which inspired the poem above, written in 1804.*



## Off the Top...

Summer has finally arrived and many will be taking day trips, long weekends and perhaps even weeks to travel. So, for this issue, instead of **Off the Top**, I should do **From the Back** and revisit past trips to Cohoes as told on the back of old postcards from my collection. The italics indicate the subject of the postcard, followed by the message and the date.

*First Presbyterian Church:* Don't let Frank knock me while I'm away! (1909)

*Mill No. 3, Harmony Co.:* When you come to Cohoes you can see this mill. (?)

*Soldier's Monument and Park:* Arlene went to summer camp and since then Hattie and I have been enjoying every minute. (1929)

*Strong Mill:* I am in the ten cent store know [sic]. I am having a fine time. (1909)

*The Cohoes Company's Canal:* No more parties for a while. (1917)

*Public School No. 6 Egbert's High School:* This is the School Eva goes to 7th Grade. (1909)

*112<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge:* Went to Schenectady last night for those ice cream cones. (1935)

*Harmony Mill #3:* Here is the "Big" boy. (1906)

*Silliman Memorial Church:* This is one of our "Best." "Brown Stone" (1905)

*Presbyterian Church:* Just notice the good pavements we have here. (1906)

*View of the River Bed, Dry Cohoes Falls:* How would you like to swim here? Poor river. (1919)

*Cohoes Falls:* The Falls make a pretty picture. (1908)

*St. Joseph's:* Be good. (1914)

*Manufacturer's Bank:* This is where I put all my money. (1909)

*City Hall:* Have a dandy cold now. Can hardly see or speak. (1913)

*Van Schaick Manor:* How do you like this place? This is over by the Half-Moon. (1930)

And, lastly, my personal favorite:

*City Hospital:* They "kill-im-quick" here. (1906)

So have a great summer and visit some historic places! And if you are still in Cohoes, don't forget, some of those places are in your own backyard. We hope to see each one of you at a meeting or presentation. If you can't join us, be sure to drop us a postcard. Let's keep Cohoes' memories and history alive.

Paul D. Dunleavy  
President

## Historic Hydropower Projects on the Hudson and Mohawk Rivers

On March 12, James Besha, President of the Albany Engineering Corporation, gave a presentation on historic hydropower plants along the Hudson and Mohawk Rivers. He described the careful restoration of the 1897 Mechanicville plant on the Hudson River, originally designed by famed General Electric engineer Charles Proteus Steinmetz.



*The restored Mechanicville hydropower plant, still generating electricity after more than 100 years.*

Mr. Besha, who has over three decades of experience working on hydrologic projects and a great enthusiasm for the technology of historic hydropower facilities, also discussed the power plant on School Street, near the Cohoes Falls on the Mohawk River. The site is of great importance because the Falls are a magnificent natural resource with cultural and historic significance to the City of Cohoes. Plans for



*James Besha explains details of power generation at the Falls to April Kennedy.*

upgrading the power generating plant, if enacted, will restore the splendor of the site by returning consistent and substantial water flow over the Falls, increasing recreational opportunities and tourism, and advancing preservation and adaptive reuse of the 1911 power plant buildings.

## Cohoes High School Art Show and Reception



Artists Carrie Burns (left) and Daniel Pertierra (right) with teacher JoAnn Johnson.

A reception was held on the evening of April 30 for a show of artwork by Cohoes High School students. The exhibit in the Visitor's Center included 125 pieces of art, including drawings, paintings in watercolor, acrylic and oil, photographs, computer graphics, and sculptures. Sixty-five student artists contributed work to the show.

This was the third annual art show sponsored by SCHS featuring work by Cohoes High School students. The exhibit was up in the Visitor's Center from early April through the first week of May.



Thanks to the student artists, Cohoes High School art teacher JoAnn Johnson, and family, friends and other supporters of the artists who attended the reception.

## Dutch Houses in Cohoes and the Town of Colonie



Wally Wheeler shows an architectural example of Dutch design.

Another April event featured a talk by Wally Wheeler on Dutch houses in Cohoes and adjacent areas in the town of Colonie. Wheeler, an architectural historian with Hartgen Archaeological Associates, showed examples of these structures, including the Douw Fonda House, recently named to the National Register of Historic Places (see page 2 of this issue for Bob Addis' account of the discovery of etchings of this house drawn by noted muralist David Lithgow). Wheeler also described the design and structural details that can assist in identification of these early examples of regional architecture. This is very much a work in progress, as there are likely many more Dutch houses in the area waiting to be discovered, some obscured beneath layers of later renovation.

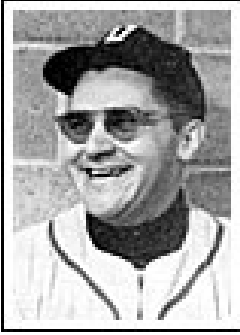
## Glen Eddy Tour

On March 31, SCHS hosted residents of the Glen Eddy retirement community in Niskayuna for a tour of Cohoes. The day included a stop to view the exhibits and the film "A Day in the Life of Cohoes" in the Visitor's Center,



followed by a guided tour of the Harmony Mills Historic District led by Walter Lipka. The events concluded at St. Joseph's Church, where Bernie Ouimet gave a tour of the church and a lively presentation on the history and culture of French-Canadians in Cohoes.

## Ed Kalski, Cohoes Baseball Legend



Ed Kalski was born on the "Island" in Cohoes in 1926. He attended St. Michael's School, and then went on to Cohoes High School, graduating in 1944. It was at Cohoes High where he first attracted wide attention for his baseball skills. In one notable game, he took the mound and struck out nineteen batters. This so impressed his coach that he reported this feat to a magazine specializing in coverage of high schoolers' achievements, where it was published. This was evidence of the promise of a great career in baseball, and Ed was on his way. He worked his way up through the ranks in the Cincinnati Reds farm system to their Syracuse Triple A team, but an arm injury curtailed his pitching and shortened his professional career. While at Syracuse, he did have the satisfaction of pitching a brilliant game against the Reds in spring training.

Although his climb to the majors was stalled, Ed kept his positive attitude and enthusiasm for the game, and played for the Albany Senators from 1948 to 1953. He was known for his knuckle ball pitches. During his first season with the Senators, he was guest of honor at "Kalski Night" on August 17 at Hawkins Stadium. It was an appreciation day for his performance over the season, during which he won five games for the Senators. The genial Cohoesier was presented with a traveling bag from Cohoes admirers, a check for \$100 from the Tobin Packing Company, a gift from the Van Schaick Baseball Club, and recognition from his teammates on the Senators club. During his nearly five years with the Senators, Kalski compiled a record of 35 wins against 13 losses; 14 of those victories were in the 1949 season, when he was a key player in the Senators' win of the Eastern League championship title. The Senators ended that season at 93-47, the best showing by any Albany-based team since 1879. That same year, future Baseball Hall of Famer Whitey Ford won 16 games for Binghamton in the Eastern League. In the match of ace pitchers Ford and Kalski that season, Kalski and his Senators emerged victorious.



*The 1956 Lloyminster Meridians. Ed Kalski is third from the right in the last row.*

After leaving the Senators, Ed played baseball in Watertown in 1954 in the South Dakota Developmental League. Other players there at the time included Dick Hauser, later a major league manager, Ron Perranoski, who went on to be an ace relief pitcher for the Los Angeles Dodgers, and respected pitching coach Dick Radaty. In 1956, Ed played for the Lloydminster Meridians of the Western Canada Baseball League. He also worked as a professional scout for the Cincinnati Reds and several other organizations.

Following his baseball career, Ed shared his knowledge and love of athletics with young people, working as a physical education instructor for 25 years at St. Augustine's Elementary School in Lansingburgh. He also coached basketball at the school, and at the Lansingburgh Boys and Girls Club, where he served as a program director. He guided youth athletic programs at the CYO Center, and at one time supervised the pool facility at the Van Schaick Island Country Club. Ed was also trained as a sports official, refereeing high school basketball and soccer games as well as college basketball.

On May 13, 2000, a testimonial dinner was held at St. Augustine's Hall to honor Ed Kalski and recognize his many achievements and contributions over the years in helping the area's youth. Funds raised at the event were used to replace the stage curtains at St. Augustine's Hall.

In his later years, Ed suffered the effects of a debilitating stroke, and passed away on April 2, 2005. His accomplishments will be remembered by baseball enthusiasts in Cohoes and beyond, and his many years of teaching and coaching young people is a legacy that will long endure.

*JC/Staff*



## ***Spindle City Historic Society Membership Application***

[www.timesunion.com/communities/spindlecity](http://www.timesunion.com/communities/spindlecity)

[www.spindlecity.org](http://www.spindlecity.org)

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

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

*WANTED – Contributions to the Newsletter! If you have a story about people, places, or events in Cohoes history, we want to hear from you. The newsletter staff welcomes written articles, as well as information that could be used in newsletter articles. Contributors will be acknowledged. Please contact us at 237-5618 or 237-9146 if you have a story to share.*



**Wednesday, June 29** - Spindle City Historic Society monthly meeting, 7 p.m., Cohoes Visitor's Center.

**Wednesday, July 27** - Spindle City Historic Society monthly meeting, 6 p.m., Cohoes Visitor's Center. Note special meeting time for July and August only.

**Wednesday, August 31** - Spindle City Historic Society monthly meeting, 6 p.m., Cohoes Visitor's Center.

**Saturday, September 10** - Opening reception for an exhibit of paintings by Robert Moylan. 7 p.m., Cohoes Visitor's Center.

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

**Saturday, October 8** - Guided tour of historic churches in Cohoes. Time TBA.

**Wednesday, October 26** - Spindle City Historic Society monthly meeting, 7 p.m., Cohoes Visitor's Center.

*Photo credits this issue: Bob Addis, Walter Cherniak, Tom Donnelly, Paul Dunleavy, Tor Shekerjian*

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