



Spindle City Historic Society

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Fall 2008

HISTORIAN'S NOTEBOOK

The Cohoes American Cooking School

In February 1936, *The Cohoes American* newspaper sponsored a cooking school. The cooking school, held in the Keveny Memorial Academy cafeteria, began on the afternoon of Tuesday, February 11, 1936 and continued through Friday, February 14. The classes were conducted by Mrs. Edna Riggs Crabtree, a nationally regarded teacher and speaker on home cookery and other domestic activities. She had been an Associate Editor at the *Cohoes American* newspaper since 1934, with her column appearing in the once-weekly "Modern Home News" page edited by Mrs. Broebeck. In her presentations, Mrs. Crabtree offered advice on entertaining, menu planning, grocery shopping, and the use of new and unusual food products, along with kitchen tips, shortcuts, and advice.

In the Keveny cafeteria, Mrs. Crabtree cooked at a kitchen set up for her use on an elevated platform. The classes, offered free of charge, were very popular, with overflow crowds throughout the week. Cohoes merchants supported the program with donations of merchandise, which were given to attendees as prizes. Among the prizes were market baskets, cakes, pies, tarts, muffins, bread, sandwiches, salads, ham loaves, and non-food items including flowers, a heating pad, a hand iron, wallpaper, a desk lamp, a bedspread, dresses, and a free eye examination. Sponsoring merchants included Scotland and Munro, Inc., Jo Ann Dress Shops, Carroll's Cash Shoe Store, Carpenter the Florist, Smith Electric, Marra's Pharmacy, De Freest, Keller Baking Company, Imperial Dairy Products, Trombley Electric Service, Dr. T. Brandon Timpane, Carhart Motor Company, and Swatling Paint and Paper Company.

The recipes presented for Friday's program of the course were Ribbon Cake, Meat and Vegetable Pie with Biscuit Topping, Afternoon Tea Doughnuts, Quick Salmon Patties, Pineapple and Apricot Salad, Macaroni Stuffed Peppers, Mock Parker House Rolls, Banana Milk Shake, Luscious Dressing for Fruit Salad, and Graham Cracker Ice Cream. These were easy to prepare, economical recipes with advice for the home cook, valuable assistance in the midst of the Great Depression.

Those who attended the cooking school were pleased with the recipes and instruction Mrs. Crabtree offered, and requested that the cooking school be held again in the future. Mrs. Crabtree had high praise for the enthusiastic Cohoes audience, who even braved a snowstorm on February 14th to turn out in large numbers for the class.

JC/staff

Many thanks to Jeannine Nescot for information used in this article.

DID YOU KNOW

....that the names of several streets that were in existence in Cohoes in 1846 are now used in the city for streets in other locations? Willow Street was once located along the Mohawk River at the site of Peach Street, but now runs between Vliet and Garner Streets. Walnut Street was once located at the site of Ship Street (near Bridge Avenue), but today connects Columbia Street and McElwain Avenue. Devlin Street in the Orchard was once called Younglove Avenue; Younglove Avenue today runs from West End Park to High Street. Streets no longer in existence are Sue Street and Healy Road, adjacent to Columbia Street.

....that on September 2003, after 40 years after it was disbanded, the Schuyler Society for the Children of the American Revolution was reorganized and the Van Schaick Mansion was selected to serve as their headquarters? The society was first organized in February of 1903 and received its charter on March 30, 1907. The new charter members numbered 19 and range in age from infancy to 18. Membership in the society requires proof of relation to someone who served in the Revolutionary War or otherwise supported the cause of American Revolution.

.... that Frederick C. Malpass, Assistant Vice President of the Cohoes Savings Bank, worked at the bank for 45 years before retiring in 1968? Malpass was a graduate of the American Institute of Banking and served in the army during WW II. He was active in many community organizations, serving as vice chairman of the advisory board to the Salvation Army, trustee of the Cohoes Masonic Temple Association and chaplain of the Cohoes lodge, deacon of the First Baptist Church, and Chairman of the Christmas Seal campaign. He was also a member of the Cohoes Historical and Cultural Society, Rensselaer County Historical Society, Lansingburgh Historical Society and the Waterford Historical Museum and Cultural Center.

....that Cohoes Mayor Alfred LeRoy, who served from March 1882 to October 1885, is buried in Albany Rural Cemetery?

....that St. Joseph's Church celebrates its 140th anniversary this Fall? A celebratory dinner and Mass will be held on September 21, and a commemorative booklet on the history of the church is set to be published.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

The Spindle City Historic Society welcomes new members *Thomas & Laurie Carter, jr., Mr. & Mrs. Thomas Fitzpatrick, Dick & Diane Loeffel, Susan Vail, and Barbara Zavisky.*

The Week the Water Went Out

By Anne Marie Nadeau

My mother, Rhea Grandchamp Nadeau, had several dear friends who were much older than she was. When these elderly ladies visited our home, the conversations were always interesting and especially gossipy. Having all worked in the cotton mills at some time, they often spoke of “the good old days” in Cohoes. They discussed fellow workers and their bosses. These gatherings were really “hen parties.” One of these women was Malvina Payette, whom we fondly called “Viney.” During their reminiscences it was mentioned that, “Viney got married THE WEEK THE WATER WENT OUT.” Hmm. What did that mean?

Since no one at the Spindle City Historic Society knew what that expression meant, I decided to solve that mystery myself. My first step was to find “Viney’s” wedding date. Fortunately, in the French genealogy section of the Cohoes Library I found that “Viney” was married August 22, 1910. My next step was to read microfilm of an old Cohoes newspaper which was published at that time. The year 1910 was not available so I looked for August newspapers in the years before and after 1910. Local newspapers 100 years ago devoted much space to neighborhood news and personal items of interest to all. The following is a composite of local news of the day in the early days of the twentieth century.

The Cohoes Republican, August 19 to August 31, 1912

Next week (August 26 to September 3, 1912) will be vacation week in Cohoes, All of the mills of the city operated by water power will remain closed throughout this week and operations will be resumed the day after Labor Day (Tuesday, Sept. 3, 1912). This year marks the 32nd anniversary of Labor Day.

THE WATER WENT OUT for vacation time August 24th in 1888, 1889 and this year. The earliest date was July 4, 1879 for 10 days and the latest Sept. 8, 1883 for one week.



During the time the water is drawn from the canals, necessary repairs will be made to the plants and factories and other waterways. Sometimes new water wheels, which last for years, are to be put in some mills. This means a large expense and lots of trouble to repair the wheel.

Employees of the company who are not at their regular work in the mills have the preference of securing employment as there is a large amount of work to be done in repairing the canals of the water supply and in the mills themselves.

Earlier this month, The Cohoes Company filed an application with the State of New York for the land under the Mohawk River, below the Cohoes Falls, for the building of a big electric power station so that in the future

the mills will be able to operate at all times of the year with equal expediency and will never be obliged to shut down on account of low water.

These are some of the repairs that will be done in the mills this coming week:

New water wheels are being installed in the *Harmony Mills*, the *Cohoes Iron Foundry and Machine Works* and the old *Egbert Mill* on the corner of Remsen and Factory streets.

Tivoli Mill #1 will have a new slate roof.

Peerless Fibre Company has new machines and will renovate old ones.

At the *Enterprise Mill* on Courtland St., the interior of the mill is being remodeled and renovated. Workmen are also re-enforcing with concrete the east wall of the power canal at the side of the mill.

The *Hope Knitting Company* and *Fitwell Knitting* are both installing new boilers.

The *Granite Mill* is getting an entirely new heating system.

Fuld and Hatch is also undergoing alterations.

Other Activities During Vacation Week

A few weeks ago, local vacation savings clubs began to distribute the \$20,000.00 that had been saved up for the annual outing. As a result, a large number of employees of the mills will be enabled to spend a week or two at the seashore, mountains or country. All trains leaving this city Saturday and Sunday were well filled with Cohosiers bound on their annual vacations.

These are some of the destinations of the vacationers: Sacandaga Park, Lake George, Saratoga Lake, Glens Falls, Snyder's Lake, Friends Lake, Elizabethtown, Sylvan Beach (near Syracuse), Atlantic City and Brighton Beach.

(Compiler's note: There were no French names listed as going out of town.)

For those not leaving town, there are many day trips being sponsored by various organizations. Fourth Ward Republicans are having a clam bake at Murray's Grove. St. John's Church has an excursion to Ondawa Park. Sacred Heart church has a picnic excursion to Averill Park. Cohoes Lodge R.A.M. has an excursion to Sylvan Beach. Painters and Decorators are having a festival at Larkin Hall. By far, the most popular excursion leaving Cohoes during vacation week is the Knights of Columbus excursion to Sacandaga Park at the low fare of \$1.25 for adults and 75 cents for children. Excursion trains leaving N.Y.C. & H.R.R.R. depot, Cohoes, at 7:45 and 8:00 a.m. Monday, August 26th.

(Compiler's note: 1,645 people took that train ride in 1912 which was 425 more than in 1911.)

Others planned a different type of vacation. In the neighborhood of 100 people left for the hop fields of Schoharie County. Many Cohosiers take their vacation in this manner each year, going to the same place to help in gathering the hop crop and enjoy the pleasure attendant upon the work. *(Hops are used in brewing beer.)*



This article came to be because of a wedding that took place THE WEEK THE WATER WENT OUT in 1910. Following are some of the weddings that took place that week in 1912 on Sunday, Monday and Tuesday.

The wedding of Charles Surprenant and Addie St. Esprit was solemnized yesterday in St. Joseph's church by Msgr. Dugas, the pastor. Paul St. Esprit and Zephirin Surprenant were the witnesses. The couple is receiving the well wishes of mutual friends throughout the city.

Francis Fontaine and Samilia Robert, both of Cohoes, were married at St. Joseph's church this morning by Rev. Father J.B.P. LeFebvre, assistant pastor. Theophile Fontaine and Amable Robert were the witnesses. Both of the contracting parties are well known in the city and they are being generally congratulated.

The marriage of Walter J. Duffy, very well known in this city and vicinity as a young business man of ability, and Miss Mary Shields was solemnized at 10 o'clock this morning at St. Bernard's church by Rev. Father Francis A. Roach, assistant pastor, in the presence of many friends and relatives. The bridesmaid was Miss Sarah Shields a sister of the bride, and the groomsman William

O'Neill. The bride was attired in a traveling suit of blue with hat to match and the bridesmaid wore a handsome dress of light colored material. After the ceremony Mr. and Mrs. Duffy left immediately for Atlantic City and other ports south. They will reside on Main street on their return to the city.

Compilers note: For another couple, a reception was held at the bride's home. A couple who were married in St. Patrick's church took a short wedding trip and were the recipients of a large number of handsome and valuable gifts.

I hope you enjoyed reading about life in Cohoes 96 years ago as much as I did writing about it.



Off the Top...

As a teacher, it is hard not to measure years by an academic calendar. Student success is measured through achievement and sometimes progress is overlooked. The measurable achievements of the Spindle City Historic Society in the past are many.

Here is the short list of achievements in the past 12 months:

- Mastodon exhibit at "Arts Friday Night" at Harmony Mill #3. (8/17/07)
- Opening reception for "A Gentler World - Finding The Way Back" – photographs by Paula Symanski. (9/8/07)
- "Cohoes as a Company Town" - Tour co-sponsored with the Hudson-Mohawk Industrial Gateway. (9/23/07)
- Trade card exhibit. November – December 2007.
- Opening reception for an exhibit of Cohoes photographs by Mike Carey. (12/9/07)
- "History of a Cohoes Quilt" presentation by Lynne Shultis. (1/20/08)
- Presentation by Bernie Ouimet on immigrant groups of Cohoes. (6/20/08)
- Opening reception for an exhibit of Spanish American War artifacts. Co-sponsored with the Sons of the Spanish American War. (2/16/08)
- The Hudson-Fulton Celebration - What happened in 1909 and what is planned for 2009 - a Presentation by Assemblyman John McEneny. (2/28/08)
- Pizza party and Cohoes High School art show reception. (4/23/08)
- Women in the Military - A Retrospective. Exhibit opening/media event (6/2/08); Cohoes school group visit (6/3/08); Evening reception (6/5/08). Co-sponsored with Cohoes Remembers Vets.
- Visitor's Center open house/Cohoes Treasure Hunt. Co-sponsored with the City of Cohoes. (6/7/08)
- A Presentation about Albany Rural Cemetery by Peter Hess. Co-sponsored with the Harmony House Marketplace. (6/8/08)
- Profiting Through Preservation. Co-sponsored with the City of Cohoes. (6/19/08)

How many events did you attend (or help to organize)?

This does not include the countless hours members spent at regular meetings, producing this newsletter, organizing the collection, designing historical signage, staffing tables at such events as the Farmers' Market, and taking specific requests from the public for information. This is the very short list, there is so much more. I know I am biased, but I would have to give the organization a documentable A (not an A+, because there is always room for improvement. That room for improvement is you! We can't go much further on the resources we have, but an A isn't bad!)

Donations of photographs, memorabilia and artifacts keep coming in for our growing collection. The SCHS is grateful for these contributions. Our regular meetings are the last Wednesday of the month at 7 p.m. in the Cohoes Visitor's Center at 58 Remsen Street (the ground floor of the historic Cohoes Music Hall). I hope to see each one of you at an event. Let's keep memories and history of Cohoes alive!

Paul D. Dunleavy
President

Profile of a Member of SCHS – Donna Riley



This issue features a profile of longtime SCHS member and trustee Donna Riley. Donna has great enthusiasm for historical research, and the results of her efforts appear frequently in our newsletter and other

publications. She is a volunteer at SCHS events throughout the year and regularly staffs the SCHS table at the Cohoes Farmers' Market.

What is your occupation and background?

I enjoyed teaching elementary school in the Cohoes City School District for 32 years until I retired in 2002. I'd been raised in the Clinton Park area of East Greenbush, but moved to Cohoes when I started my career here.

How did you learn about and become involved in SCHS?

In 1999, a coworker, Elin "Connie" Riley asked if I would go to a meeting with her to see what the group was all about. The SCHS meetings were held at the Cohoes Community Center then. I've been attending ever since.

What are your hobbies and other interests?

Flower gardening is probably my favorite pastime. I enjoy researching things in libraries and archives. I collect old postcards and novelty teapots.

What aspects of Cohoes history most interest you?

The nice thing about being part of SCHS is that someone else tells me about an area of Cohoes history and I find myself exploring another avenue I hadn't expected to be interested in. Right now, I'm finding information on the Hudson-Fulton Celebration of 1909. You'd be surprised to learn what an important part Cohoes played in that celebration.

What SCHS activities and events do you enjoy the most?

Working on the two books the group wrote was fun and I'm looking forward to the next book project.

Please include any other information about yourself you would like to share.

I moved to Clifton Park when I retired but am still involved in Cohoes. We have many members who do not live in Cohoes but are connected to Cohoes. A person shouldn't hesitate to join and participate just because they don't reside in the City. It is a good place to meet other people. Hope to see you at the next meeting or event.

The People of Albany Rural Cemetery – A Presentation by Peter Hess



On June 8, Peter Hess, President of Albany Rural Cemetery, spoke about the history of the cemetery and some of the many of the notables buried there. The cemetery is the final resting place of political figures, industrialists, artists, explorers, writers, inventors and many others who

shaped the history of the region and beyond. Mr. Hess' talk included stories of survivors of the *Titanic*, as well as those with Cohoes connections, among them President Chester Alan Arthur.

Profiting Through Preservation

Historic preservation provides many benefits to our community. Historic buildings lend character to Cohoes, and preserve our city's unique identity and connection to its remarkable past. But historic preservation can also promote a healthy economy and high quality of life, creating thriving downtowns that are good places to do business, with attractive housing in livable, walkable neighborhoods. In a presentation on June 19, Erin Tobin, Regional Director for Technical and Grant Programs at the Preservation League of New York State, described some of the ways in which preservation enriches communities, offering examples of cities and towns around the state that have been revitalized through a commitment to historic preservation. She also outlined some of the programs and resources that can be of assistance in both residential and commercial preservation projects, from tax credits and grants to technical advice.

If you missed the presentation and would like more information about the Preservation League and its programs, they can be found on the web at www.preservenys.org

“Women in the Military – A Retrospective”

The Spindle City Historic Society of Cohoes and Cohoes Remembers Vets opened *Women In The Military – A Retrospective* at the Cohoes Visitor's Center on June 3, 2008. The exhibit was up throughout the month of July and was visited by many groups of people.

This special exhibition showed the opportunities afforded to women in the military and revealed their unheralded yet tremendous contributions made as camp followers in the 18th and 19th centuries, and through military service in the Army and Navy Nurse Corps, National Guard and Women's Air Force Service Pilots (WASPS). The photographs themselves told their own story!

This retrospective highlighted women who served from Cohoes and Evelyn Pinkert “Pinky” Brier, the first woman flight instructor for WWII fighter pilots. Pinky's story is a very compelling testimonial to the silent service that women gave to this country. After reading her story, it's hard to imagine what her male trainees must have thought when they met their flight instructor on day one. Pinky also served with the WASPS flying planes from the factory to locations overseas through enemy skies.



During this retrospective, students from Cohoes Schools met with active duty women in military service at the Cohoes Visitor's Center and looked at and read the stories on exhibit about women in the military throughout history. The Visitor's Center was packed to capacity and the students gained valuable insight into how women's roles in the military and society have changed over time.

The media were also given a special interview day during which they spoke with women in the military about their various roles and how military service had provided them with many opportunities for career advancement. There was also an evening showing of the exhibit on June 5.

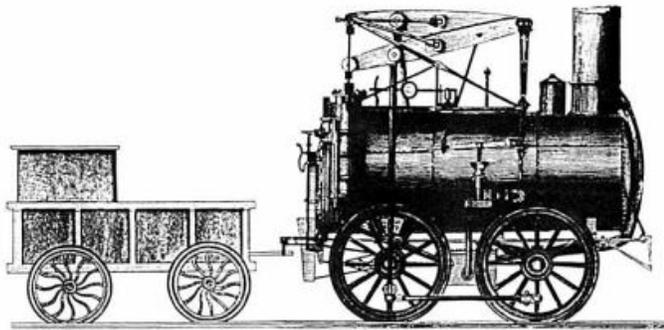
The exhibition team included Curator Gertrude B. Hutchinson, MA, RN, Archivist for the Foundation of NYS Nurses and Contributors Tor Shekerjian, 2nd Vice President of the Spindle City Historic Society, Master Sergeant Corine Lombardo, NYS National Guard, LTC Kim Terpening, 109th airlift and Cohoes Remembers Vets.

The Stourbridge “Lion” and Other Recollections from the Colonie Railroad Yards

Many Cohoesiers were employed over the years at the Colonie railroad yards, once located just outside of Watervliet near Route 155 and the Arsenal. The yards, built in 1912, were conceived and designed by railroad innovator and D&H President L.F. Loree. The Colonie yard had the first self-contained back shop for maintenance, construction, and research and development. The site included a roundhouse, powerhouse, car shop, planning mill, truck shop and other structures in addition to the enormous locomotive shop. Several important technical advances were developed at the Colonie yards, including the first welded locomotive boiler, the first roller-bearing rods for locomotives, experimental concrete rail cross ties, and uniflow design cylinder castings that permitted high-pressure operation.

At its peak of operation in the 1920s, the rail yards employed more than 2,500 people. The boiler shop in 1934 consisted of three boilermaker’s foremen, two boiler inspectors, one layer-out, two flue welders, forty-three boilermakers, fifty advanced workers and helpers, thirteen boiler welders and acetylene burners, and two rivet heaters. In 1923 the pay for the boilermaker welder and inspector was 45 cents per hour, initially paid monthly. In time this increased to three days per month, then two days, and finally a weekly paycheck was earned. By 1952 a changeover from steam to diesel resulted in many employee lay-offs. The work force was cut to fourteen boilermakers, then eight, and finally one, with one boilermaker welder. The 150 ton cranes no longer required for working on the trains were dismantled, and during the 1930s and 1940s all of the camelback (double) cabs were converted to singles.

There were once many regular and excursion trains running in and out of the Colonie yards. The main passenger routes were from Wilkes-Barre and Scranton, Pennsylvania to Montreal, Canada. Once-common milk trains were discontinued and over time six transfer jobs were cut to two and all steam locomotives were transformed to diesels. The Horatio Allen locomotive No. 1400 was dedicated and christened in 1924. This powerful engine carried 350 pounds of boiler pressure as compared with the 225-250 pounds for the 1500-1600 type class. The 1401 and 1402 models carried 400 pounds of steam pressure. These were followed by the 1403, called the Mallet (Brute), the first in the railroad world to carry 500 pounds of steam pressure. In 1973, in commemoration of the 150th anniversary of the Delaware and Hudson Railroad Corporation, a display train toured the area powered by the two largest and newest diesels.



The Stourbridge Lion. Image courtesy of Wayne County (PA) Historical Society.

A replica of the Stourbridge Lion, the first steam locomotive operated on a commercial line in the United States, was once on display at the east gate of the Colonie railroad yards. The original was built in 1828 and designed in Stourbridge, England. The replica, which resembled a giant grasshopper, was rebuilt by the men at the Colonie D&H boiler shops for the D&H Exhibit at Chicago’s Century of Progress Exposition in 1933. The “Lion” (so named because the original locomotive had a lion’s head painted on the front) had wooden wheels and spokes with an iron band around the wheels that was riveted on. It took from 16 to 24 hours to drive

the rivets, which had to be replaced when they burned into the wood. After many years, the “Lion” was sold for junk, but the Lindsay and Earl Foundry yard recognized its value and sent it to the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C.

The railroad was an important factor in our country’s industrial growth following the Erie Canal and it was regrettable to see its prominence fade. Unfortunately, the Colonie railyard fell victim to neglect and decline, as the long-abandoned site was devastated by fires in 2001 and 2004 and much was lost despite efforts by railroad historians to preserve this important piece of transportation history.

This article was excerpted from information provided by Michael Piterniak, a former acetylene cutter in the Colonie yards and member of the Cohoes Moose Lodge 1332.



The Photographs of Bernard T. Shaw - Views of Cohoes Across 50 years

Longtime Spindle City Historic Society member and trustee Bernard T. Shaw was born in Green Island and lived there and in Troy before moving to Cohoes in 1970. He served in the U.S. Navy, and worked as a printer at Samaritan Hospital, retiring in 1982. Bernie was an active member of the Cohoes-Waterford Elks for 20 years, and was an amateur Ham Radio operator.

Bernie's interests also included painting and photography. He took photographs of Cohoes from the late 1940s through the early years of the 21st century, capturing aerial views, streetscapes, and city events. Mr. Shaw's photographs document the extensive changes in Cohoes during the last half century, providing a valuable record of the city's recent past.

Bernard T. Shaw passed away on May 27, 2005. His wife Ruth generously donated Bernie's photographs of Cohoes and the surrounding area to the Spindle City Historic Society. A selection of these photographs will be exhibited from mid-September through early November in the Cohoes Visitor's Center. The opening reception for the exhibit will be held on Wednesday, September 17 at 7 p.m.



Photo credits this issue – Walter Cherniak, Bernard T. Shaw, Tor Shekerjian

Spindle City Historic Society Membership Application

www.spindlecity.net

President - Paul Dunleavy

First Vice President - Daniele Cherniak Second Vice President - Tor Shekerjian

Secretary - Linda C. Christopher Treasurer - June Cherniak

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|--|---------|---|---------|
| <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

gift membership

NAME _____

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Mail completed form with membership fee, payable to Spindle City Historic Society, to:
June Cherniak, Treasurer, 415 Vliet Boulevard, Cohoes, NY 12047

