

Spindle City Historic Society

Volume 11 Issue 4

Winter 2008

HISTORIAN'S NOTEBOOK

The Frank B. Graves Company

Frank B. Graves established his business in 1882, and in 1912 it was incorporated as the Frank B. Graves Company. His company was a dealer in cotton and wool waste and shoddies, and a manufacturer of garnetted stock of all kinds. Graves first opened his business in Albany at a two-story building at 14 Bleecker Street. He soon moved to a more spacious location, a four-story building occupying an entire city block at 48-58 Broadway. In 1908, needing additional space, he moved the main part of the business to Church and Arch streets, reserving the Broadway location for a warehouse.

Around this time, the business was developing its manufacturing of cotton and wool substitutes, and increasing demand for these materials led to the establishment of a separate garnetting plant. In 1912, Frank Graves organized the Enterprise Garnetting Company of Cohoes, which would manufacture cotton, wool, silk and merino garnetted stocks solely for the Frank B. Graves Company. The Enterprise Company began with six 4-cylinder garnetting machines, but by 1922 this had increased to eighteen machines running 144 hours per week producing 8 million pounds of textiles a year. With increased production came the need for more storage near the Cohoes facility, and in 1918 the Commercial Storage Company of Cohoes was formed. This warehouse still stands at the foot of McElwain Avenue.

Corporate officers during this period were Walter J. Mooney, Vice President and Treasurer; he had worked with Graves since 1910 and was also assistant manager of all three corporations. E.B. Parkhurst was the Graves Corporation's secretary, and worked with Mr. Graves for 25 years. The officers of the Enterprise Company were Graves and Mooney, with James F. Kearney as secretary and George C. Angus as treasurer. Charles A. Van Wormer and Thomas S. Scanlon were secretary and treasurer, respectively, of the Commercial Storage Company.

During World War I, there was increased demand for absorbent and non-absorbent cotton materials for use in surgical dressings. By the time the United States entered the war, the Enterprise Garnetting Company was entirely dedicated to manufacturing these materials. Several million pounds were produced and provided to U.S. forces and allies.

After the First World War, the company continued to supply these cotton products to hospitals and for other general uses, but its primary business was dealing in mill waste from knitting, hosiery, underwear and woolen mills, and the manufacture of garnetted stocks in cotton, wool, (continued on p.7)

DID YOU KNOW

.....that on July 18, 1895 the Cohoes Railway System began running its six electric trolley cars? They were made in West Troy (now Watervliet) by the Jones Co., begun in 1894. Urban Weldon headed the list of investors in the company, and was later elected its president.

.... that in 1908 the *Cohoes Republican* was published Monday through Saturday? Here is a sampling of the news from those days, along with information about some of the local businesses, classified ads, and popular products ...

- John Bunti of Harmony Street stopped a runaway horse in front of Scotland and Munro's store on Remsen Street.

- Paymaster H.O. Folger, of Section One of the Champlain Canal, was riding his bicycle along the towpath and struck a stone, resulting in a headfirst plunge into the canal. Although he could not swim a stroke, he managed to reach a dock alongside the canal and called for assistance. Isaac Miniker and Irving Rhodes came to his rescue and took him home.

- Bernard Demers of Vliet Street extension was struck by an automobile while driving a wagon from Dunsbach Ferry. Mr. Demers was thrown from the wagon, the wagon was smashed and the horse badly cut and bruised. The owner of the automobile stopped and said that he would pay for all damages.

- The Golden Ball Department Store gave stamps and conducted a "removal" sale.

- The Harmony Hotel Café had "good drinks – the best wines and liquors sold in Albany County.

- Euchre tournaments were held by the Mulespinners' Association.

- Lydia Pinkham's was recommended for "female problems", and "positively cured thousands."

- Wanted for the U.S. Army for service in Cuba and the Philippines: Able bodied men 18-35, citizens of good character, single, temperate, and able to read and write English.

- The Rae Farm in Cohoes bred and raised registered horses for sale.

- Wanted: experienced paint maker who can make varnish.

- Father John's Medicine – a tonic and body builder – sold at R.E. Atwell, Druggist, Vliet Street.

- Good Tonic – Thomas E. Reed's, 63 Canvass Street, a wineglass of Burton or Philadelphia Ale before meals is a great appetizer and blood builder.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

The Spindle City Historic Society welcomes new members *Bob Glasheen, Gary Glasheen, Jack Glasheen, Colleen Kennedy, Bernice Matula, John Reavey, Johanna Shogan, Evelyn Slater, and the Van Schaick Mansion Project.*

The G. Upton Peltier House – A Personal View

by Rob Langley



At 76 Congress Street, just southeast of St. Joseph's Church and a block from the Cohoes Armory, stands the G. Upton Peltier House. This beautiful late Victorian house, with brick and stone foundation, was built circa 1895 by Dr. G. Upton Peltier. It was home to Dr. Peltier, his wife and their children. The basement of the house held a medical office where he saw his patients.

I have purchased the historic Peltier House with one goal in mind, and that is to restore it to its original grandeur. The Peltier House was converted to five apartments in the 1960's, and later fell into a state of neglect. But the house's fine woodwork and much of its original wallpaper survived those years. In 2002, Charles Szymanski, an energetic young man, purchased the neglected house and began to rehabilitate it and restore its appearance, highlighting the house's most captivating features. He shares the inspiration and enthusiasm that I and many other admirers of the Peltier house have. I have always been

intrigued by this historic house, so I made an offer to Mr. Szymanski to purchase it and did so on June 25th, 2008.

To date, the house is completely restored to a single family home. Fortunately, the original features of the house were not damaged or removed when it was divided into apartments, so there is little sign that this had ever taken place. The house now has a new electrical system, a refurbished heating system using the original radiators, a new roof, exterior detailed paintwork and plaster and woodwork restoration.

During the renovations, several items were found throughout the house in the floorboards and walls. These included a family photo album dating back to the 1800s, a large framed photograph, and an old medicine bottle with liquid in it (most likely something that had been prescribed by Dr. Peltier). An unused bundle of roofing slate, stored under the porch and left untouched for over 100 years, was also discovered.

I look forward to continuing the rehabilitation and appreciate the interest that has been shown in the house and these restoration efforts. I also plan to apply to have the house listed on the State and National Registers of Historic Places. The house is open to all those interested in seeing its interior and watching the restoration progress. For inquiries, photos, or general questions, please feel free to email me at PeltierHouse1@aol.com



An early 20th century view of Congress Street during a parade for the feast of St. Jean Baptiste. The Peltier House is in the background.

Le Docteur Peltier

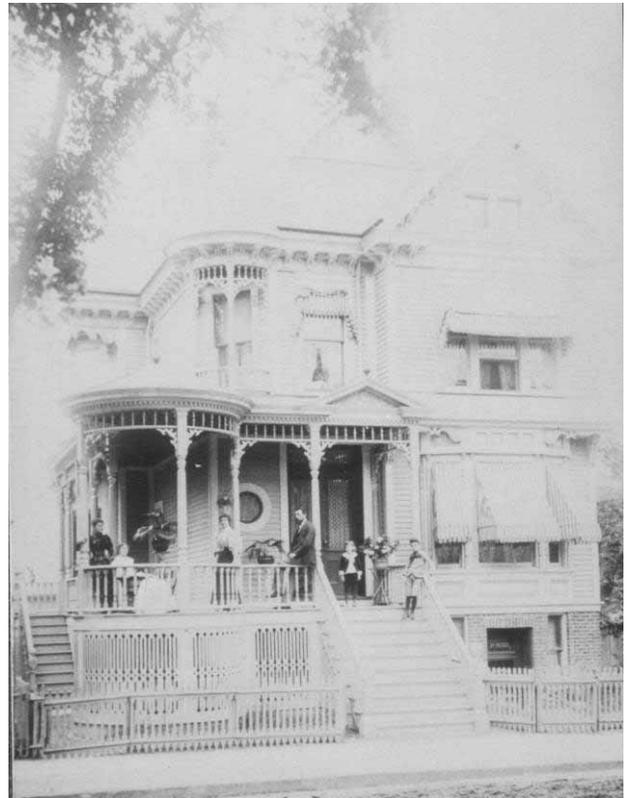
by Anne Marie Nadeau

The Victorian home at 76 Congress Street is owned by Rob Langley. The house has “nice bones.” It sits cater-corner from the rectory of St. Joseph’s church. I was told that the house had once belonged to a Doctor Peltier. Who? Physicians’ names with which I was familiar were Mossey, McDonald, Mitchell, Breault, McGarrahan and Van Dercar. No wonder I never heard of Dr. Peltier. He died in 1916!

Gaspard Upton Peltier was born in 1849 in St. Guillaume d’Upton, Yamaska County, Quebec, Canada. He was from a large family that didn’t have much in the way of worldly possessions. He worked to pay his tuition at McGill University in Montreal from which he received his medical degree in 1873. Shortly thereafter he came to Cohoes and opened his practice at 20 White Street. (The building no longer exists.) As a French-speaking physician, he would have had a ready-made patient list because of the many French-Canadians who had come to Cohoes to work in the cotton mills. For many Quebecois, working in the mills was much easier than the never-ending work on a farm.

On February 9, 1874 he married Mary Nancy Forbes in St. Joseph’s Church. I was quite surprised to learn that he had married someone WITHOUT a French name. Back then you married “your own kind”! However, two of the Forbes witnesses at the wedding (all men, of course) had French first names. (A Forbes ancestor first shows up in Quebec after 1763. He was from Ireland! After a generation or so they were all speaking French.) I have found evidence that the doctor and his wife had at least eight children of whom only four survived to adulthood. Nancy Forbes died in 1914.

According to very old city directories, “le bon docteur” moved to the “swell house” on Congress Street in 1895. His office was also in that building. He was also on the staff of the old Cohoes Hospital. (The Cohoes Price Chopper now occupies the site of the old hospital.) In 1914 he was the city physician. He also was active in the Conseil LaSalle of L’Union St. Jean Baptiste d’Amerique, a Franco-American social-fraternal organization.



The Peltier family on the porch of their house. Dr. Peltier is in the center of the photo.



Dr. Peltier died of edema of the lungs (pneumonia). He was so well-known and respected in this city that his obituary was on the FRONT PAGE of *The Cohoes Republican* on March 2, 1916. His write-up states that he is a communicant of St. Joseph’s church and a member of the Union of Prayer. (At one time in the French churches of Cohoes, dues were paid to “L’Union de Priere” once a year. These funds were used to pay for your funeral Mass.) Several groups attended his funeral in a body: the doctors from the Cohoes Hospital, The Joliet Modern Woodmen Camp, a Canadian group for which he was also the physician; and the Royal Neighbors, which was the Ladies Auxiliary of the Modern Woodmen. His funeral was a solemn requiem three-priest Mass celebrated by Rev. L.A.

Lavigne, with Rev. Ernest Perrin as deacon and Rev. Paul LeDuc as sub-deacon. Seated in the sanctuary were Rev. George Gagne, pastor of St. Marie’s Church (now Holy Trinity), and Rev. Vincent de Paul Archambeault of the Troy Catholic Male Orphan Asylum. The bearers were Dr. C.E. Daunais, Dr. R. Hebert, Dr. J. F. McGarrahan, John C. Blais, Anthony Dussault and Israel Molleur. Interment was in St. Joseph’s Cemetery in Waterford.



Off the Top...

In the June issue of this newsletter I quoted the statement that the Honorable Merritt D. Hanson made about the 1909 Hudson-Fulton Celebration in Cohoes. I did this because the Spindle City Historic Society strives to make the members of our community, and other communities, more knowledgeable about Cohoes' glorious past so that we can be more confident in the future of our area. Over this past summer, our organization started to plan for the Hudson-Fulton-Champlain Celebration of 2009.

During that time we were contacted by Johanna Shogan who is the Regent of the General Peter Gansevoort Chapter of The National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution. Their home is at the Van Schaick Mansion. Members of both the SCHS and the DAR decided to meet in September and kick around some ideas for the Hudson-Fulton-Champlain Quadricentennial celebration. Together we have now formed the Quadricentennial Committee.

Each meeting brings more members from both organizations and we are now getting other organizations and participants from the community. The meetings have been fast paced and productive. All of the members of the Quadricentennial Committee are enjoying their efforts. However, we still have a lot of planning and work ahead of us.

Join us in planning for the 2009 Hudson-Fulton-Champlain Quadricentennial Celebration and participate in our other events so that each of us can be more knowledgeable about Cohoes' glorious past and preserve this history for the future.

As we move into 2009, I ask you to do something to preserve and share the memories of Cohoes. Bring us a photograph for copying or an artifact for display; write about your recollections of Cohoes' past; share your time and ideas at a meeting; contact a trustee or officer with an idea or suggestion; or, volunteer to make just one thing happen to preserve or share Cohoes' history.

May each of you have a joyous holiday season and a wonderful New Year.

Paul Dunleavy
President

The Historic Armories of New York State – A Presentation by Nancy Todd

On October 29, Nancy Todd, architectural historian and Program Analyst at the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, presented a lecture based on her book, *New York's Historic Armories: An Illustrated History*. She discussed the history of armory building types, showing examples from throughout the state, and explained how these evolved over time to reflect different uses, development of building technology and tastes for various architectural styles. She also focused on some of the architects who were prominent in the design of New York State Armories, among them Isaac Perry, who designed many upstate armories including the structure in Cohoes. She also spoke about the National Guard and their role in American history, from domestic peacekeeping and disaster relief to overseas military service.

Views of Cohoes Across 50 Years – The Photographs of Bernard T. Shaw



From mid-September through late November, the Spindle City Historic Society exhibited a selection of photos of Cohoes taken by Bernard T. Shaw, a longtime SCHS member and trustee who passed away in 2005. The photographs, dating from the late 1940s through the early years of the 21st century, include street scenes, aerial shots, and images of fires and other major city events, providing a glimpse of the changes in Cohoes over the past half-century. Another of Bernie's interests was painting, and a few of his landscape paintings were included in the exhibit, along with two of the cameras he used over the years. The opening reception was held on September 17th, and a special showing of the exhibit for the Cohoes-Waterford Elks took place November

12, honoring Bernie's long service and membership in this organization.



Mrs. Ruth Shaw at the exhibit opening

Tour of the Harmony Mills Historic District

On September 13, the Spindle City Historic Society and the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation co-sponsored a tour of the Harmony Mills Historic District. The tour included stops at the interpretive exhibits at Power Canal Park, with an introduction to the Harmony Mills Historic District, followed by visits to the Boyden Turbines in Harmony Mill #3 and the Cohoes Falls.



The State Historic Preservation Office held its annual open house on Peebles Island the same afternoon, and SCHS members staffed a table. SCHS also hosted an open house that morning at the Cohoes Visitor's Center for participants in the Cohoes High School – Keveny Academy reunion of all classes held that weekend.

First Day of School Block Party at Van Schaick School and Cub Scout Educational Program

Van Schaick Grade School held its first annual block party to open the school year this September. The event was designed to be fun and educational, with dancing, games, and participation by a variety of

organizations, including members of the Cohoes High School Band and Siena College women's softball team, and a representative from the Albany County Sheriff's Office with police dog Mac. Members of the Spindle City Historic Society were also on hand to share a bit of Cohoes history with the students. In another educational outreach event this fall, June Cherniak spoke about Cohoes history and the oldest and best known resident of Cohoes, the Mastodon, to a group of Cub Scouts.

Feats of "Ledgerdeman"

The Spindle City Historic Society acquired a set of bank ledgers from the former Cohoes Savings Bank dating back to the early years of the institution. Over one hundred of these historic ledgers were moved to our new storage space in the basement of the Cohoes Library. Many thanks to Cohoes Department of Public Works director Ken Radliff and his crew for assistance with the move, and to the SCHS members and friends who helped out – David and Anne Marie Koschnick, Walter Lipka, Bernie Ouimet, Dennis Rivage, Greg Stroyen, Walter, June, and Daniele Cherniak. Thanks too to Bernie Ouimet for arranging our use of the temporary storage space at St. Joseph's, and to the City of Cohoes for providing us with the new space at the Library.

Trade Cards – Creations by Cohoes Students Inspired by History

Historic trade cards dating from the 1860s through the early 20th century that advertised Cohoes businesses located along



Remsen and Cayuga Streets have inspired Cohoes students. Students in grades four through twelve studied examples of historic trade cards and created their own cards, using elements from the historic cards and architectural features of Cohoes' historic buildings. The cards, paired with images of historic trade cards from the SCHS collection, are on display in the Visitor's Center from late November through the end of January. The grand opening of the exhibit took place on Saturday, November 29 just prior to the city's Christmas tree lighting ceremony.

The Musical History of the Slater Family

George Slater Sr. (1862-1940) lived at 48 McElwain Avenue and was a prominent Cohoes musician for over 50 years. George played with the old Maskie Band, later known as the Troy Cadet Band and Troy City Band. He also played with the Nollers and Doring Bands and served as president of the Troy Musical Union. He was a member of the Cohoes Masonic Lodge, the Fellowcraft Club of Cohoes, and St. John's Episcopal Church. In addition to his musical skills, in his youth he was an accomplished athlete. He held records for both the pole vault jump and the run, hitch and kick, capturing the latter title from the Canadian record holder. He traveled widely to compete at many events, including the Caledonian Games.



The Doring Band. From Historic Photos of Troy's Little Italy. www.lh6.ggpht.com

His son George Holt Slater (1887-1964), a virtuoso trombone and baritone horn player, was well known beyond the region. He was a feature soloist with the Arthur Pryor Band in the early 1920s. He was also at one time a member of the John Philip Sousa Band, performed in and directed Troy's Doring Band, and was an honorary member of the Miami (FL) Drum and Bugle Corps. In the 1930s and 1940s, he was a music teacher and band director for the Bennington (VT) schools. He directed his own band in the Capital Region of New York in the 1950s and 1960s. George Holt Slater died while directing the band at the opening of the Cohoes Little League season in May of 1964.

George Holt Slater's son Kenneth Burton Slater (1917-2005) was raised in Cohoes, and began his musical education studying the cornet under the direction of his father. He attended the New York Military Academy at Cornwall-on-Hudson and upon his graduation in 1937 accepted a position as cornetist with the U.S. Marine Band. He performed with the band for many years in concerts at the U.S. Capitol and the White House, at state dinners and other ceremonial events, and on radio broadcasts. As a cornet soloist with the U.S. Army Field Band, he toured the United States, Mexico and Europe; while in Paris he received the Gold Medal given by the French Grand Republic Band. In the 1950s, he conducted the Almas Temple Shrine Band in Washington, DC, which won the National Shrine Band competition in 1955. Over his long career, he was conductor for the Hagerstown, MD Municipal Band in the 1960s and 1970s, directed the Shippensburg, PA City Band, and was a frequent guest conductor for the Virginia Grand Military Band in Arlington. He served as president of the Pennsylvania Bandmasters Association, was a member of the American Bandmasters Association and a charter member of the Shrine Bandmasters Association. Kenneth Slater is listed in the *Heritage Encyclopedia of Band Music, Composers and Their Music*. Among his musical compositions are "Mohawk View" for cornet and band, and the march "Almas on Parade."



Kenneth Burton Slater. Courtesy University of Maryland Libraries. www.lib.umd.edu

The Slater and Holt family plots are located in Oakwood Cemetery in Troy.

Many thanks to Evelyn Slater for providing information used in this article.

Historian's Notebook (continued from p.1):
 and cotton-wool mixtures for all lines of textiles.

The Enterprise Garnetting Company was in operation at 36 Courtland Street until 1958. After its closure, the building was sold to George C. Spalt and used for storage until 1970. It was destroyed by fire in 1973. Commercial Storage operated at 3 McElwain Avenue until 1965. In 1973 the Frank Graves Company moved to 3 McElwain Avenue, becoming Frank Graves Co. Textile Processing; the business remained there until 1975. In 1976, the building was occupied by Madden Motors, and moving and storage companies later used the space. Part of the building is still in use for storage and also houses other businesses, including a baseball skills training facility and a photographic studio.

Information for this article obtained from The History of American Textiles, compiled by the American Wool and Cotton Reporter, 1922.



*View of the Commercial Storage Co. building in 1992.
 Bernard T. Shaw collection.*



Don't it always seem to go
 That you don't know what you've got 'til it's gone?
 They paved heritage and put up a parking lot.
 - with credit to "Big Yellow Taxi", by Joni Mitchell



Photo credits this issue – Daniele Cherniak, Walter Cherniak, Rob Langley, Anne Marie Nadeau, Bernard T. Shaw



Spindle City Historic Society Membership Application

www.spindlecit.net

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

gift membership

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

Farmers' Market

Nearly every Friday from June through October, SCHS members have staffed a table at the Cohoes Farmers' Market, giving out brochures and fliers, selling books, notecards and raffle tickets, and sharing information about Cohoes history. Many thanks to the Farmers' Market regulars - Tom Donnelly, Donna Riley and Pat McDonough. For the winter months, the Farmers' Market moves indoors to the Harmony House Marketplace, with Anne Marie Koschnick joining the Farmers' Market crew.

Coming in 2009 - The Hudson-Fulton-Champlain Quadricentennial!

The year 2009 marks the 400th anniversary of the exploratory journeys of Henry Hudson and Samuel De Champlain, and the 200th anniversary (plus two years) of Robert Fulton's steam-powered sail on the Hudson River. SCHS is partnering with the Peter Gansevoort chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution (based at the Van Schaick Mansion) to plan a series of events throughout 2009 to celebrate these anniversaries. Cohoes was a major participant in the 300th anniversary celebration in 1909, and we hope to bring this excitement to the 400th. Look for more information and details soon.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Saturday, December 13 - Historic Christmas - what was it like back then? Presentation by Tom Allison. 3 p.m., Cohoes Visitor's Center. Co-sponsored by the Victorian Cultural League.

Wednesday, January 28, 2009 - Spindle City Historic Society meeting. 7 p.m., Cohoes Visitor's Center.

Wednesday, February 25 - Spindle City Historic Society meeting. 7 p.m., Cohoes Visitor's Center.

Wednesday, March 25 - Spindle City Historic Society meeting. 7 p.m., Cohoes Visitor's Center.

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

☞ SCHS Newsletter Staff ☞

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Spindle City Historic Society

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