

# *Stephentown Historical Society Newsletter*

Vol V, Issue II

July 2003

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## **Throwaway? No Way!**

“A View From The Hollow” By David J. Jacobs

Illustrated by William Jackson

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“Tell those daughters,” writes Martha E. Todd from Pittsfield, “to stop making fun of their mother for washing plastic glasses and utensils after parties. She’s simply being practical.”

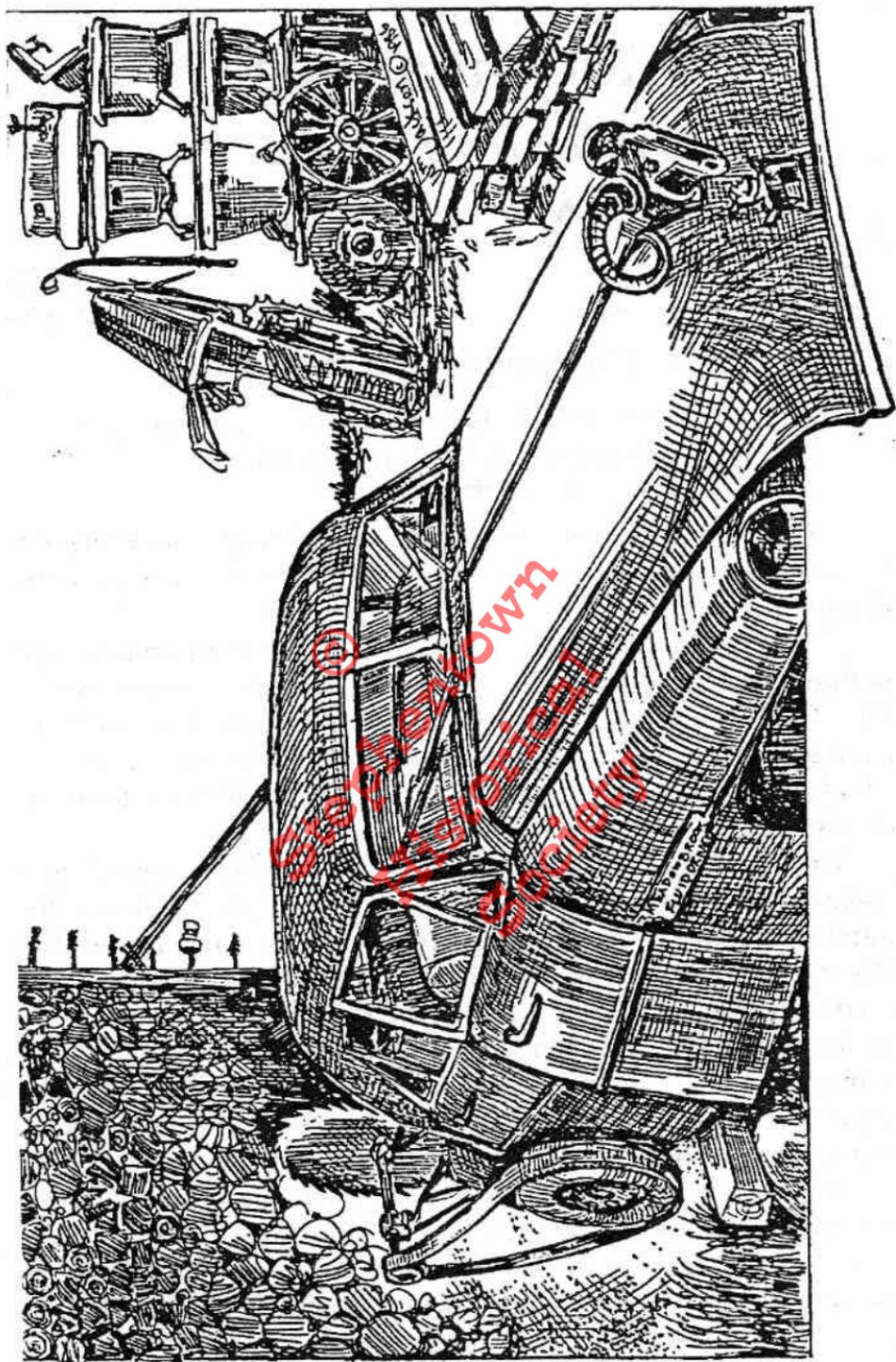
Ever since I reported how this certain person can’t bring herself to throw away a plastic cup, I’ve been hearing from those such as Mrs. Todd, a self-confessed “saver of jars, newspapers, plastic bags, large grocery bags and coffee cans (two just for baking bread) . . .” who lead me to believe America is not nearly as disposed to be the disposable society it’s supposed to be.

There’s a bit of the squirrel in every human being, but when it comes to putting things by, no one I know, not even Ed Scholz, the former junk junkie of Goodrich Hollow, keeps more things than Beverly Liebenow, who saves not only his own disposables, but everybody else’s. Even the fruit and vegetables canned at this house go into Hellman’s mayonnaise jars instead of regular canning jars, with the mayo jar screw-on lids serving as the tightening rings. The sealing lids, however, are new, a prudent decision based on a desire to avoid botulism.

“I’m a collector,” says Bev, “but not of antiques. I don’t care if it’s 100 minutes old or 100 years old. If it’s usable, I collect it.”

Consider the upright Majestic radio (circa 1939) sitting in the corner of his kitchen for more than 30 years. The veneer of its art

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## Throwaway? No Way! (Continued)

deco case is beyond restoring, the cloth over the speaker is in tatters, and the knobs tend to fly off their handles at the least provocation. No matter, says Bev, "as far as sound goes, you can't beat it."

"But what if you need a tube?" I asked.

"I have two bushel baskets of tubes around here somewhere, along with the Atwater Kents and the ear phones."

Bev, who has farmed all his life, now concentrates on pigs, chickens, maple syrup, and a home vegetable garden he cultivates with a team of ponies. He's also a country version of what big city apartment dwellers call a super, the resident fixer of all things. Bev makes his rounds superintending second homes, and is also on call from many of his neighbors for plumbing, heating and electrical jobs.

He rarely buys anything, relying on the boundless inventory of parts amassed over the years of scrounging, and stored down the cellar, around the yard and out back in a huge, galvanized metal shed alongside the chicken coops, the pig pens and the breeding shed where four sows were about to farrow the day I stopped by.

And he knows where to find everything in that glory of disarray: tables, shelves and benches in the cellar and shed spilling over with bags, boxes and trays of bits and pieces of appliances, machines and fittings; walls lined with shelves holding countless baby food jars and coffee tins filled with an infinite variety of nails, nuts, bolts, screws and other bits of hardware gleanings; a shelf full of stove bolts and machine screws bought at the tag sale Paul Sykes ran after he redid the hardware department in his general store; two shelves of brackets, hinges, and you-name-its picked up at a house auction; boxes of lag bolts and threadless nuts salvaged from the fire at John Whitman's store, and scattered around the yard amid mounds of cast-off cast iron radiators, tubs, sinks, pumps, toilet bowls and tanks, are the corpses of lawn mowers, snowmobiles, motor scooters, and automobiles in varying stages of decay.

"When I need a part to fix something," he says, "99 percent of the time I can find it around here. It may not always pay to repair

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## Throwaway? No Way! (Continued)

some things, but there are still a lot of times when all some \$200 item needs is a \$4 part. I usually have it, and I can put the equipment back in shape for small cost. Like furnace circulators. Sometimes the pump goes, sometimes the motor. I can usually fit it up with one or the other, and people are happy if it runs another two years."

Bev heats his own house with a wood-burning furnace he put together more than 20 years ago from salvaged components: "I picked up two furnaces from houses that switched over to oil. The bottom was no good on one, and the top was gone on the other. I fitted the two good parts together and I have a furnace that's half Montgomery Ward and half Sears."

He draws logs out of the woods in small loads with the ponies who are also trained as twitch horses. And he cuts up the house wood on an old buzz saw he runs off a belt around the tire of one of the rear wheels of his father's '47 Dodge. The car is up on blocks, its body rusting, and its interior rotting away, but its engine is still full of life. Useful life. - April 26, 1986

\* \* \* *In Memoriam* \* \* \*

Maynard C. Watts  
5/23/1925 - 1/9/2003

Thelma Olsen Tomlinson  
5/15/1929 - 2/8/2003

Beverly Liebenow  
12/17/1941 - 3/15/2003

\* \* \* \* \*

**Stephentown Heritage Center  
Hours of Operation  
Friday, 1:00 - 4:00  
And by Appointment**

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Program Chairperson **Pat Bowman** continues to inspire us with outstanding programs in a wide variety of historical fields. **Meredith Rhindress** and **Isabel Krebs** help Pat in her continuing searches for outstanding talent in our own and neighboring towns. All programs and events are held at the Stephentown Heritage Center on the first Monday of the month and begin at **7:30 pm** unless otherwise specified.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Program</u>	<u>Provider</u>
July 16 11:00 am	Field Trip to Retreat at Pease Farm	Bring PicnicLunch
August 4	Violin Making	Ross Sterantino
September 8	Rutland Railroad	Keith Steltz
October 6	Troy's Irish History	Jack Casey
November 3	Restoring Old Glass, Ceramics, Metal	Heidi Miksch
December 1 6:30 pm	Christmas Potluck Supper and Party Kitty Hawk Centennial	Bring a Dish to Share Airplane Stories – Audience Participation
January 5	Nursing's Legacy at Albany Medical Center: 1897 - 2003	Mary French

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### SPECIAL EVENTS THIS YEAR

**August 2**      **14th Annual Juried Craftfest –**  
**Fire Department Muster Field & Pavilion**  
**Grange Hall Road**      **10 am – 4 pm**

High-quality craftspersons and discriminating shoppers make the Craftfest a special event Shop early for Christmas

**Aug 30**      **Tag Sale –**  
 (Rain Date      **Gardner's Field**  
 Sept 1)      **Route 22**      **9 am – 3 pm**

Start the weekend off right. Exchange your castoffs for someone else's treasures – or vice versa

**Fri & Sat -**      **Exhibit – The Rutland Railroad Corkscrew Division**  
**9/20 – 10/25**      **Heritage Center**  
**Fridays & Saturdays**      **Garfield & Staples Road**      **1 – 4 pm**  
 Revisit Stephentown's and this area's Rutland Railroad heritage

## When I'm an Old Lady and Live with My Kids

When I'm an old lady, I'll live with each kid,  
And bring so much happiness . . . just as they did.  
I want to pay back all the joy they've provided,  
Returning each deed. Oh, they'll be so excited!  
(When I'm an old lady and live with my kids)

I'll write on the wall with reds, whites and blues,  
And bounce on the furniture wearing my shoes.  
I'll drink from the carton and then leave it out.  
I'll stuff all the toilets and oh, how they'll shout!  
(When I'm an old lady and live with my kids)

When they're on the phone and just out of reach,  
I'll get into things like sugar and bleach.  
Oh, they'll snap their fingers and then shake their head,  
And when that is done I'll hide under the bed!  
(When I'm an old lady and live with my kids)

When they cook dinner and call me to eat,  
I'll not eat my green beans or salad or meat.  
I'll gag on my okra, spill milk on the table,  
And when they get angry I'll run . . . if I'm able!  
(When I'm an old lady and live with my kids)

I'll sit close to the TV, through the channels I'll click,  
I'll cross both my eyes just to see if they stick.  
I'll take off my socks and throw one away,  
And play in the mud 'til the end of the day!  
(When I'm an old lady and live with my kids)

And later in bed, I'll lay back and sigh.  
I'll thank God in prayer and then close my eyes.  
My kids will look down with a smile slowly creeping,  
And say with a groan. "She's so sweet . . . when she's sleeping!"  
(When I'm an old lady and live with my kids)

~ Author Unknown ~

14<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL JURIED

# CRAFTFEST

**Saturday, August 2**

**10 am ~ 4 pm**

**Free Admission**

**Delicious Food**

**Entertainment**

**Craft Demonstrations**

**Rain or Shine**

**Fire Hall & Muster Field**

**Grange Hall Road Between Routes 22 & 43**

**Handicapped Accessible & Air-Conditioned**

**Stephentown, New York**

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### Officers:

President	Bill Zimmerman	794-8430
Vice-President	Sylvia Leibensperger	733-5716
Recording Secretary	Bonnie Buddenhagen	733-9295
Corresponding Secretary	Isabel Krebs	733-5935
Treasurer	Neil Krebs	733-5935

### Trustees:

Patricia Flint	733-5871
Robert Gorman	733-9661
Bill Jennings	733-5923
Beverley McClave	733-5170
Judith Pierson	733-0196
Dale Riggs	733-6772

### Committee Chairpersons:

Cemeteries	Help Wanted	
Collections	Help Still Needed	
Fundraising	Help Wanted	
Genealogy	Virginia Atwater	733-5136
Heritage Center	Beverley McClave	733-5170
Landscaping	Millie Smith	658-2605
Membership	Sylvia Leibensperger	733-5716
Nominating	Help Wanted	
Newsletter	Bill Zimmerman	794-8430
Program	Pat Bowman	(413) 738-5420
Refreshments	Alice Mather	733-5668

## MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

### Membership categories and dues (January 1 - December 31):

Individual Member	\$ 5.00
Contributing Member	15.00
Business/Organizational Member	25.00
Life Member	100.00

*Contributing, Life, and Individual memberships, are for individuals, not couples. Annual memberships run from January 1 through December 31.*

Please join us this year. Make your tax-deductible check payable to:

**Stephentown Historical Society**  
**P.O. Box 11**  
**Stephentown, NY 12168**

## RECENT PROGRAMS

### January 6 – Currier & Ives

Program Chair Pat Bowman described and illustrated with slides the history of the famous prints. Lithographs were made from grease crayon drawings on porous slate 4 to 6 inches thick, a process begun in Bavaria in 1795. Nathaniel Currier sold prints in his shop at 1 Wall Street in 1835, when he was only 22. A fire destroyed his business, but he recovered quickly and expanded. Fanny Palmer, a versatile artist, joined the firm. Prints were done in black and white, then colored by hand. Charles Parsons did marine scenes. Louis Maurer specialized in horses. The firm specialized in hunting scenes, sailing ships, sulky races, fires, pastoral scenes, and landscapes. James Merit Ives, 11 years Currier's junior, joined the firm in 1852 as an accountant. He had a good eye for what would sell. Bridges, locomotives, and winter scenes were added to the list of wares. Currier retired in 1880 and died in 1888. Currier's sons took over the business, but it closed in 1907. Most of the stones were sold off by the pound. Since they had been repeatedly reused in the process, few if any survived.

### February 3 – Baby and Child Pictures

Members brought photographs of themselves as babies or children. After a quick display of all of the photographs, the audience attempted in a more thorough review to identify each of the protagonists. Children were relatively easy. Babies were another story. By childhood the eyes, nose, or mouth often gives away the identity. Not so with babies. Do they really all look alike? Certainly not to mothers. Women in the audience were decidedly better at identifying the individuals than men were. Perhaps there is a lesson here somewhere. In any case we had great fun guessing identities and marveling at some of the infants' and toddlers' clothing styles.

### March 3 – Other People's Garbage

David Buddenhagen's father introduced him to "treasure hunting" over 30 years ago. He soon began to specialize in bottle collecting, the most popular collecting hobby next to stamp

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## RECENT PROGRAMS (Continued)

collecting, and he shared many of his prized bottles with us. In Jamestown in 1609 bottles were the first product of the colonies. The raw materials of sand, soda ash, and lime were readily available, and the process was relatively simple. It took up to a month to build the mold. Pours were done over 24-hour, 10-day shifts. Color choices were limited to olive green and clear. It wasn't until the 1820's that blown glass came into production, followed by figure bottles. Beer and soda bottles of the 1930's, -40's, and -50's are highly collectible. The New Lebanon Glass Company was an active local manufacturer from 1878 through 1881. For more information visit the National Bottle Museum in Ballston Spa.

### April 7 – **Beads and Furs**

Ken Kullman teaches art at Averill Park High School. He is not a reenactor or a true mountain man, but he had most of us fooled. He appeared in period costume based on that of Mark Marshall, a Stephentown mountain man who lived with the Mohawks as a bead trader circa 1815. Glass beads, a cheap, efficient trading medium, replaced porcupine quills in the fur trade. The dress of the mountain man was unique. Ken had a knife whose handle was made from a bear jaw. His breeches were a 6-foot cloth worn front to back under a belt. He wore an apron and an Iroquois bag. He carried a Hawkins (flintlock) rifle and wore a 54th Infantry (Boston) coat over a vest and long shirt. Trade silver armbands adorned his sleeves. He carried a turtleshell rattle spoon, medicine wheels (nose/ear rings to ward off evil spirits), a powder horn (don't boil horns/hooves indoors), and a medicine pouch. His Canadian style hat was ringed with fur. He had numerous necklaces for storing beads and wampum. He was dressed to attend one of the 16 rendezvous held west of here between 1740 and 1840 or perhaps the July 4 Glens Falls Town Park Powwow or the Cooperstown Farmers' Museum.

### May 3 – **Bent and Broken Rocks with Dirt on Top**

Reinhard "Bud" Wobus, Professor of Geology at Williams College, entertained and informed us about the earth in general and

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## RECENT PROGRAMS (Continued)

our area in particular. Our 4.5-billion-year-old earth was relatively inactive until 500 to 450 million years ago, when significant geologic activity occurred, followed by erosion until the glacial period 20,000 to 10,000 years ago. In terms of a 24-hour clock, that's activity from 9 to 10 p.m., with man appearing within the last half second before midnight. That should put man's pride somewhat in perspective. Professor Wobus described the mountains and valleys around us, the structurally displaced Mt. Greylock, the quartzite of Pine Cobble, the phyllite and schist of the Taconic Range, the granite of the Green Mountains, and the limestone and dolomite of the valleys. The area around Williamstown was under warm water 500 million years ago. As east-over-west subduction occurred, Lake Bascom formed, spilling over into the Housatonic and Kinderhook valleys. Even today that subduction continues at a rate of 4 centimeters per year. Bye, bye, Europe. Hello, Asia.

### June 2 **Ropemaking in America**

*The Civil War Times* offered a free ad to new subscribers. As a joke Mike Speranza advertised himself and a friend as ropemakers. Forty quick responses later, he learned that there was no information in the library. So he became a self-taught ropemaker. Close behind the harnessing of fire and the invention of the wheel, ropemaking has been a critical part of the human economy for over 3500 years. In 1781 there were more ropemakers in Boston than any other tradesman. Why? Because of the 18 miles of rope on a sailing ship that had to be replaced every 3 years. While the Americas were being exploited for gold and silver, Jamestown had an abundance of other resources: timber, fish, and hemp (linseed oil and flax fiber for clothing and rope). Most rope was three stranded, manufactured on a ropewalk so that the strands could be uniformly tightened as the strands were twisted. America's first ropewalk began in 1632 in Salem, MA. Its last closed in 1947. When ropes were tarred, the tar had to be above 200 degrees but below the 215-degree flash point, which explains the scarcity of ropewalks. Today you can order rope from Chatham, England, which has been in business since 1632, but you'll have to wait at least 6 months. Or you can call Mike.