



NEWSLETTER

Glass Photographic Plates

Recent Acquisition – 1907 Photographic Plates

The Stephentown Historical Society archives increased this year with two exceptionally priceless sets of items.

The two items are the same but from two totally different sources. In March, Jeannine Tonetti from the Lebanon Valley Historical Society came to the Heritage Center bearing a gift of eighteen glass photographic plates in sleeves with the date of 1907 and labels of what each picture was – all from Stephentown. The following week the President and Secretary of the SHS were finally able to connect with a woman from Northampton, MA, who had approximately 50 glass plates of Stephentown that had been in her uncle's estate. She took the time and trouble to search us out to give them to the Society.

These plates also were from 1907, photographer unknown, but they had been printed by the uncle, who was a photographer himself, but were not identified completely. So we are printing copies of photographs of two girls named Ina and Ruth and an unknown man in the hope that perhaps some long-time resident or relative might recognize the face(s).

More familiar to most is the iconic Stephentown Center Baptist Church on Route 43 (a dirt road at that time). What a wonderful addition to our collection, especially since these are the first and only glass photographic plates of Stephentown in our collection.



Ruth, 1907



Ina and Ruth, 1907



Stephentown Center
Baptist Church, 1907



Unknown Man, 1907

Stephentown Heritage Center New Roof

Last fall the Heritage Center received a new roof. The old five-V crimp metal roof had served the Center well for many years, but it was rusting away around the edges. An assessment of the underlayment revealed additional issues.

On both sides of the main building there was no sheathing, only light ribbing. On the north side was a layer of wooden shakes under the metal, a leftover from decades ago. Kirk Mitchell of Property Management repainted the steeple in preparation for the roof replacement. Phelps Roofing of Nassau removed everything down to the rafters. They installed ribbing and 5/8-inch plywood sheathing on the main section of the building, snow-and-ice shield under the entire roof, and Architectural Sheetmetal Products (ASP) 24-gauge standing seam snap- shield roofing. All that remains is to install snow stops on the south side of the roof. That will be done this summer. The roof should now be secure for years to come.



Before



After The

Sayings & Customs from a Much Simpler Time

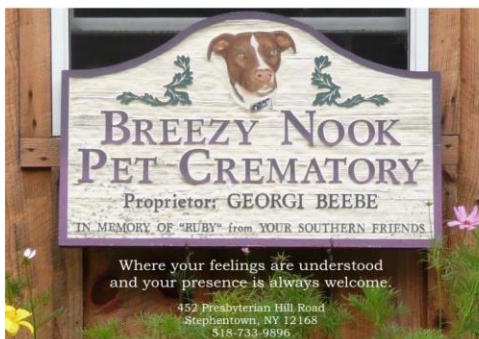
Wedding Bouquet: Most people got married in June because they took their yearly bath in May, and still smelled pretty good by June. However, since they were starting to smell, brides carried a bouquet of flowers to hide the body odor. Hence, the custom today of carrying a bouquet when getting married.

Raining Cats and Dogs: Houses had thatched roofs with thick straw-piled high and no wood underneath. It was the only place for animals to get warm, so all the cats and other small animals (mice, bugs) lived in the roof. When it rained, it became slippery and sometimes the animals would slip and fall off the roof, Hence the saying: "It's raining cats and dogs"

Thresh Hold: Only the wealthy had something other than a dirt floor. They had slate floors that would get slippery in the winter when wet, so they spread thresh (straw) on the floor to help keep their footing. As winter wore on, they added more thresh until when you opened the door, it would all start slipping outside. A piece of wood was placed in the entrance-way. Hence, A Thresh Hold.

Peas Porridge Hot, Peas Porridge Cold and Chew the Fat: In those old days, people cooked in the kitchen with a big kettle that always hung over the fire. Every day, they lit the fire and added things to the pot. They ate most vegetables and did not get much meat. They would eat the stew for dinner, leaving leftovers in the pot to get cold overnight and then start over again the next day. Sometimes stew had food in it that had been there for quite some time. Hence: The Rhyme - Peas porridge hot, peas porridge cold, peas porridge in the pot nine days old. Sometimes they could obtain pork, which made them feel quite special. When visitors came over, they would hang up their bacon to show off. It was a sign of wealth that a man could bring home the bacon. - They would cut off a little to share with guests, and would all sit around and "Chew the Fat"

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Wiring the Capital District, Berkshires,
Columbia & Rensselaer Counties
Since 1984

THE HERITAGE CENTER is open and staffed by the Stephentown Historical Society most **Fridays from 1 pm to 4 pm**. Visit to see the exhibitions and carefully cataloged artifacts from the local area. Alternate appointment times can be made with Curator Bev McClave at 733-5170.

TOWN HISTORIAN'S CORNER

110 Years Ago In America *Patricia Flint*

The average life expectancy in the U.S. was 47 years.
 Only 14 percent of the homes in the U.S. had a bathtub.
 People spent one-third of their income on food.
 Only 8 % of the homes had a telephone. 3% had refrigerators, 20% had a cook stove.
 There were only 8,000 cars in the U.S., and only 144 miles of paved roads.
 The maximum speed limit in most cities was 10 mph.
 Children didn't leave home until they were married.
 The tallest structure in the world was the Eiffel Tower.
 The average wage in the U.S. was 22 cents per hour.
 The average U.S. worker made between \$200.00 and \$400.00 per year.
 Mortgages were no more than \$75,000 in today's dollars and 50% was a required down payment.
 More than 95 percent of all births in the U.S. took place at home.
 Sugar cost four cents a pound.
 Eggs were fourteen cents a dozen.
 Coffee was fifteen cents a pound.
 Canada passed a law that prohibited poor people from entering into their country for any reason.
 The American flag had 45 stars.
 Men wore suits, women wore skirts in varied lengths.
 The population of Las Vegas, Nevada, was only 30.
 Not many divorces and widows/widowers moved in with their adult children.
 Women had on average more than 3 children, to work on the farms.
 Infant deaths were extremely high.
 The most popular media product might have been a player piano or phonograph.
 The five leading causes of death in the U.S. were:

1. Pneumonia and Influenza
2. Tuberculosis
3. Diarrhea
4. Heart disease
5. Stroke

There was no Mother's Day or Father's Day.
 They would wrap their sandwiches in a dry towel, covered with another towel that had been soaked in hot water, to keep them moist.
 They ate larger amounts of lard compared to chicken and sugar intake was far less than today.
 Marijuana, heroin, and morphine were all available over the counter at the local corner drugstores. Back then druggists believed that: Heroin clears the complexion, gives buoyancy to the mind, regulates the stomach and bowels, and is, in fact, a perfect guardian of health.

"Sayings" continued from page 2

Upper Crusted: Bread was divided according to status. Workers got the burnt bottom of the loaf, the family got the middle, and guests got the top, or the "Upper Crust"

PROGRAMS FOR THE
 STEPHENTOWN HISTORICAL SOCIETY
 AUGUST -DECEMBER 2017

August 7 – 7:30 – The Story of Garlic, Suzy King

September 11 – 7:30 – Our Farming Heritage,
 IOKA Farm, the Leab Family, Hancock, MA

October 2 – 7:30 – Architecture Worth Saving in
 Rensselaer County, 50 Years Later, Kathy
 Sheehan

DAY AND TIME CHANGE FOR WINTER MONTHS

November 5 – 2:00 – The Gardner Farm, Neil
 Gardner

December 3 – 2:00 – Christmas Party Covered
 Dish Supper

"Sayings" continued

Wake: Lead cups were used to drink ale or whisky. The combination would sometimes knock the imbibers out for a couple of days. Someone walking along the road would take them for dead and prepare them for burial. The person was laid out on the kitchen table for a couple of days and the family would gather around and eat and drink waiting to see if they would wake up. Hence: The custom for holding a wake.

Saved by the Bell, Graveyard Shift or a Dead Ringer: In some old small villages, local folks started running out of places to bury people. So, they would dig up coffins and would take the bones to a bone-house and reuse the grave space. When reopening these coffins, 1 out of 25 coffins were found to have scratch marks on the inside. After realizing that they had been burying people alive, they came up with a solution. They would tie a string on the wrist of the corpse, lead it through the coffin and up through the ground and tie it to a bell. Someone would have to sit out in the graveyard all night (The Graveyard Shift) to listen for the bell. Hence, someone could be Saved by the Bell or was considered a Dead Ringer.

Piss Poor: People used urine to tan animal skins, so families used to all pee in a pot. Once a day it was taken and sold to the tannery. If you had to do this to survive, you were considered: Piss Poor. Worse than that were the really poor folks who couldn't even afford to buy a pot. They didn't have a Pot to Piss in.

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STEPHENTOWN

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The Heritage Center is open from 1 to 4 p.m. on Fridays and by appointment. It will be closed for the following dates in 2017: Martin Luther King Day - January 13, Presidents' Day - February 17, Good Friday - April 14, Memorial Day - May 26, Strawberry Festival - June 23, Tag Sale - August 19, Labor Day - September 1, Columbus Day - October 6, Veteran's Day - November 10, Thanksgiving - November 24, Closed for the Month of December.

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