

# Stephentown Historical Society Newsletter

Vol. II Issue No. 1

June 1985

## OUR DREAM

Since the beginning of the S.H.S. the dream has been to someday have a museum. Today we are closer than ever to achieving that goal. There is an active committee, consisting of Betty Feathers as Chairwoman, Bill Jackson and Charlsetta Carpenter, Betty McClave as curator cares for our large collection of artifacts.

Over the years people in town have given the Society numerous articles which tell the story of life in earlier days. Anyone who has not searched their attic or old trunk may find a treasure of yesteryear to share with us.

The Museum Committee is exploring possibilities for a site to house our collections. If anyone has a thought on a piece of property in town or a possible building for our use, contact a member of the committee.

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## SUMMER TOUR OF CHURCHES

S.H.S. members and friends will spend Saturday afternoon, August 10, visiting the five churches. We will talk about its history, its unique features and of course, interesting stories.

Exact times, carpooling and further information will be published closer to the date.

## THIS OLD HOUSE...

Ever wonder, "How old is my house" or "Who lived here before us"? The dramas of everyday life are reflected in old maps, deeds, wills, diaries, sketches and inventories. Pride and neglect leave their marks on the body of the old house itself. Sometimes added sections and cosmetic layers hide its original style. Now the house has become a mystery, a puzzler. PEDIGREED HOUSES is a Committee of S.H.S. set up to help you solve the puzzle.

If your house is one hundred plus years, plan to attend a July 1st meeting in the Town Hall at 7:30 p.m. and participate in "Talking Houses" a dialogue calculated to fascinate the Romantic Nostalgia Buffs or the Curious. Maybe you can bring a photo of your house or that of a neighbor. - Further information, phone 733-5122.

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## DID YOU KNOW ---

That the first electricity in town was installed in 1923 at the saw mill in Garfield owned and operated by William Henry Atwater?

That Nassau was formed from Stephentown, Petersburg, and Schodack in 1806 and originally called Phillipstown-named for Philip Van Rensselaer?

STEPHENTOWN HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
EXECUTIVE BOARD 1985/1986

Officers

President: Sylvia Leibensperger  
Vice President: Edward Fox  
Recording Secy: Betty Feathers  
Corresponding Secy: Dick Lewis  
Treasurer: Rowland McClave  
Educational Coordinator: Victor Lewin

Trustees: Kay Hoffman, Kenneth  
Knobloch, Howard Leibensperger,  
Ini Prior, Donna Sidor.

Town Historian: Anna Bayba  
Ex Officio

Committee Chairpersons:

Cemetary/Living Gravestones:  
Betty McClave  
Historic Site/Pedigreed Houses:  
Ini Prior  
Museum: Betty Feathers, Ch.  
Betty McClave, Curator  
Newsletter: Virginia Atwater,  
Dick Lewis, Susan Schultz and  
Laura Zwack.  
Nominating: Albert Silvernail  
Refreshments: Alice Mather

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The Stephentown Historical Society  
was founded in 1973 and chartered  
by the Regents of the State of New  
York in 1977.

New members are always welcomed.

Active Member (Adult)	\$ 2.00
Active Member (Junior)	\$ 1.00
Contributing Member	\$ 5.00
Sustaining Member	\$ 15.00
Life Member (1 payment)	\$100.00

Dues are payable annually in April.

Treasurer: Rowland McClave  
The Lair  
East Nassau, NY 12062

Meetings are held at the Town Hall  
on the first Monday evening of each  
month except November, January and  
February, the winter months, when  
no meetings are scheduled. Read  
The Echo for complete information.

Toll gates were free if you  
were on the way to Troy for  
Jury duty. 21 October 1847,  
as per George Holcomb.

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STEPHENTOWN

by Sadie Williams  
5th Grade

Stephentown Elementary School

Living in Stephentown in 1985  
is alot of fun. It has three  
stores and another one start-  
ed, five churches, one post  
office, one bar room, one  
funeral home and a town  
library. It also has one  
special school. The school is  
special because it has the  
right teachers. It has six  
grade teachers and an art,  
gym, music and library teach-  
er.

Where I live in Stephentown,  
it is very quiet. I live on  
George Hunt Road. One day we  
walked up way beyond our house  
where we found a family grave  
yard from the late 1700's to  
the early 1800's. There were  
Justus Leonard who was 81,  
Catherine who was 81 and  
another Catherine who was 18.  
We found where their house  
was. This summer we are going  
camping up there. I think it  
will be fun.

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Did you know that the oldest  
house in Stephentown is on  
Presbyterian Hill? It was  
built by a man named Gordon,  
later occupied by Dr. Pardee  
and then Bryan Kneeland. In  
early years, it was spoken of  
as the "Kneeland Place". It  
is now owned and occupied by  
Richard and Peg Pysar.

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## THEY REMEMBER WHEN...

One can hardly imagine Stephentown without a fire department. However, prior to March 1939 the local community had to depend on its much appreciated neighbors in Berlin & Hancock for their fire protection. One major fire permanently changed this arrangement. On a below zero night in March 1939 a fire broke out that destroyed the McClintock Garage & Chevrolet dealership across the street from the present post office and a complex of near by buildings.

According to Raymond Carpenter, who shared these memories, this fire set the stage for an organized fire fighting force. A community census was taken and this led to a referendum on a ballot that passed.

With the budgeted \$4,000 a Chevy Sanford Pumper Truck was purchased and kept in service until 1979. Today it is jealously guarded in the local fire station.

In the early days the insurance laws limited the members to 22. If a member missed too many fires or meetings he was dropped so others could join.

Ray Carpenter paid tribute to Sykes Store for all the donated paid hours given to employees while they fought fires. Six or seven men would leave the store and be gone for hours or even all day to fight a fire. This tradition is still carried on.

The first fire house was the garage in back of the present day post office. In 1945, the fire department purchased the Vanderbilt House which had a barn that was converted into a two truck station. The hotel itself was converted into a firemen's hall.

Carpenter claims that the department from its earliest days has made many a good "save".

CONGRATULATIONS to Andrew and Stacy Stall from the Stephentown Historical Society. The Stalls purchased the house on the corner of Garfield Road and Presbyterian Hill Road which was formerly owned by Douglas & Edith Williams, Andy's grandparents. The Stalls took the vacant and neglected structure and made it a credit to the community and their grandparents.

The history of this landmark goes back to the early 1800s. Tradition says Jeremiah Vary (1807-1900) and his wife Elizabeth kept a store here. When he died, his son Charles, inherited the business.

Charles H. Vary operated a store in this house around 1895 and probably a few years earlier. This store also housed a post office when Vary was appointed post master June 12, 1889.

C. H. Vary married Lucretia Sherman and they ran the store until he passed on. Upon his death, their daughter Rose Vary Lapp and her husband Henry continued the business until the middle 1920's. The building remained vacant and in 1930 the Lapps rented it to Orson and Minnie Patterson Holt. For the next few years it was rented to Doris Hall. The Lapp's sold the house to Douglas and Edith Williams.

In recent months the property has been sold to Mr. and Mrs. Richard Nobman who continue to improve the property.

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Did you know that Prattsville, Green Co., NY was named for the Honorable Zadock Pratt, a native of Stephentown? He was a member of Congress from Green Co. from 1837-39 and 1843-1845.

On Stephentown 1917 tax list the Second Field Hospital Farm, Inc. (exempt) was listed as having 360 acres, value \$5,500. This was in WWI. In a 1983 interview Mr. Al Silvernail remembers he hearing of this called the Soldier's Farm on East Road.

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We wish to extend our sympathy to the family of Ralph Barrett. Ralph and Hazel Barrett have been faithful members of the Historical Society and have donated many articles to the future museum. One item in particular is a diary written by Ralph's grandfather Fisher A. Green (1884-1920) while he was a hospital steward during the Civil War.

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For Historical publications, send order and check to Sylvia Leibensperger, West Rd. Stephentown, NY 12168.

Bicentennial Album	\$ 6.00
Album I	\$ 4.00
Stephen van Rensselaer	\$ 12.00

Please add \$1.00 for mailing costs. The two albums may be purchased locally at Crossroads General Store, Dave's Market or Sykes Store.

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We hope you enjoyed reading this, our first newsletter. If so, tell us and we will do another for the fall. Ginny, Dick, Susan and Laura.



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Stephentown  
Historical  
Society