

Post Office Box 11
Stephentown, NY 12168
www.fairpoint.net/~shs/
E-mail: shs@fairpoint.net



Stephentown Historical Society



**Preserving our
history for the
benefit of future
generations**

Pride in our Past

When the Stephentown Historical Society was established in 1973, its founders were intent on preserving our town's rich history before it was lost to the ages. Knowledge of Stephentown's history, they believed, will encourage future generations to have pride in their past and develop a stronger feeling of community in today's fast-paced world.

Initial Focus on Cemeteries, Genealogy

Soon after incorporation, the Society established programs to record details about local history, area cemeteries and family genealogies. The Society published a calendar in 1976 to celebrate America's Bicentennial and since then has published a number of historical books, pamphlets and photo albums.

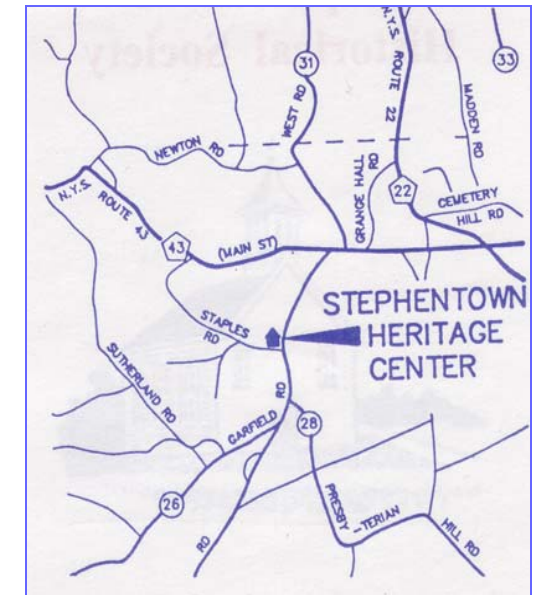
Stephentown Bicentennial

In the 1980's the Society collaborated with town government to sponsor the Stephentown Bicentennial Celebration, held August 9-12, 1984. A highlight was the burial of a time capsule by Stephentown's fifth grade students, who will be invited to open the capsule as part of the town's 250th Anniversary celebration in 2034.

The Bicentennial Steering Committee used excess funds from the 1984 celebration to purchase the "Jaws of Life" for the Stephentown Volunteer Fire Department and a bond to help finance the town's 250th Anniversary celebration.

Heritage Center Opens

On May 11, 1988, the Society acquired the 1870 Methodist Episcopal Church building. After renovation, it reopened in August 1988 as the Stephentown Heritage Center and now is a permanent home for the organization's acquisitions, records, meetings, exhibitions and other activities.



Society Programs

LIVING GRAVESTONES

The Society catalogued and mapped each of Stephentown's 79 cemeteries and made rubbings of the marble and slate gravestones threatened by acid rain. It maintains a cross-referenced genealogical database of 35,000 Stephentown residents, past and present. Member volunteers respond to more than 60 local and distant inquiries for genealogical information each year.

A GROWING COLLECTION

Generous friends and families have contributed more than 8,000 objects to the Society since it was founded. The Collections Committee has catalogued and stored each item, ensuring that historical documents are properly encapsulated in acid-free mylar.

HISTORICAL EXHIBITS

Although space permits display of only ten percent of the museum's collection at a time, there is a permanent exhibit in the walls of the Stephentown Heritage Center and a major exhibit highlighting an important aspect of the town's past is presented each spring.



SOCIETY ACTIVITIES

Throughout the year, the Society plans a field trip to a nearby historical site and organizes a variety of activities targeted to appeal to the entire community:

Historical Exhibit	Spring
Strawberry Festival	June
Tag Sale	August
Road Challenge	October

STEPHENTOWN HISTORY

Mostly farmers, Stephentown's early settlers began to arrive from Rhode Island and Connecticut 1766. Abundant water power and timber led to the building of grist- and sawmills, blacksmith shops, a brush factory, a satinet mill, flannel factories, a carding mill, a woolen mill, foundries and slaughterhouses.

'The Good Patroon'

The east district of the Manor of Rensselaerwyck was divided on March 29, 1784 forming the Stephentown District, named in honor of Stephen Van Rensselaer III, the Good Patroon. The district included today's towns of Berlin, Grafton, Nassau and parts of Petersburg, Poestenkill and Sand Lake.

Ninth Largest Town in US

The 1790 census listed Stephentown as the ninth largest town in the United States. The town was part of Albany County until Rensselaer County was formed in 1791. Over the years, the towns noted above were established in their own right until 1848, when the current boundaries of Stephentown were set.

In 1869, the Harlem Extension Railroad was established, connecting Chatham, Lebanon Springs, Stephentown and Bennington. A passenger line, freight was later added carrying milk and produce to New York City. Known by several names and plagued by frequent financial difficulties, the Rutland Railroad was abandoned in 1951.

**Stephentown Heritage
Center
Museum and Library
Open Fridays 1 – 4 pm and by
appointment**

'The Only Stephentown on Earth'

Nearly 250 years have elapsed since Stephentown was founded and many changes have occurred: a decline in agriculture, growth of small businesses and an increase in residential and vacation property development. One thing that has not changed is the feeling of community in 'The Only Stephentown on Earth'.

MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS

The public is invited to the monthly meetings of the Stephentown Historical Society, held on the first Monday evening of each month. Following the business meeting, a guest speaker usually presents a historical topic of local interest. Typical meeting topics have included the history of area railroads, the inns of Rensselaer County, Shaker style, the van Rensselaers and their tenants, and programs about music of the area.

For More Information:
Call: (518) 733 6070
www.fairpoint.net/~shs/
E-mail: shs@fairpoint.net