

Issue 1

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Sept. 1974

This newsletter will be published twice annually to keep our membership up-to-date on the various projects.

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The Stephentown Historical Society meets once a month at the Town Hall at 8 p.m. We have some interesting meetings planned for the next few months and hope you will be able to attend.

Meetings are open to everyone!

**OCTOBER 11 Friday 8 P.M. Town Hall**

Mrs RuthAnne Brod, curator and registrar at the Rensselaer County Historical Society in Troy, will talk on American Pottery. She will show pottery from the collection of the Rensselaer County Historical Society and trace the history of pottery making in this country.

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**NOVEMBER 1 Friday 8 P.M. Town Hall**

Mr. Joe Salls, town historian of Lebanon, and a vice principal in the New Lebanon School District, will share with the group his long interest in Valley and Stephentown history. He was born in East Nassau and has been with the New Lebanon schools for 42 years. HERE IS A TALK you will not want to miss--Take it from ONE who know.

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**DECEMBER 6 Friday 8 P.M. (location to be announced)**

**AN EVENING OF FOLK MUSIC WITH GEORGE AND VAUGHN WARD**

The Wards are well known in the Capital District for their fine music, as well as for their many activities in promoting the collection and study of folklore. This year they are on leave from the Niskayuna School system and have grants from the National Endowment for the Arts and the New York State Council on the Arts. They will be conducting workshops and giving performances throughout the State.

Here will be a limited number of tickets available at the door.

If you want to be sure to have a ticket, Mail a check to the

Stephentown Historical Society, P.O. Box 39, Stephentown, N.Y.

Please enclose a stamped self-addressed envelope for the return

of the tickets. Tickets will be \$1.00 for adults--50¢ for children under 12.

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It is hard to believe that we held our very first meeting less than one year ago for in that short time we have begun work on many projects which are helping to preserve the History of our Town. See the following pages for on-going projects and DON'T FORGET to fill out a membership blank if you have not done so already.

## COLLECTION OF OLD PHOTOS

page two

Many residents have lent fine old photos of Stephentown to Mel Fitting who has made superb copies (sometimes better than the original) for our collection. These photos will now be carefully preserved and will be used in displays for the library, the local schools and possibly we will find other uses over the years to come. The original photo is always returned to the owner as promptly as possible. IF you have some photos (or fine old postcards) that you would be willing to let Mel borrow for a week ---PLEASE call him at 733-5817.

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## LIBRARY DISPLAY

If you have been in the Stephentown Library over the summer you have seen the first of our fine library displays dealing with aspects of the history of Stephentown. More of these will be appearing in the months ahead, according to the creator of the displays, Ross Coates.

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## ORAL HISTORY

Despite the fact that tape recorders have earned a rather bad name in our recent political history, we believe they can be put to good use in recording People's remembrances of times past. Donna Sidor, Edwin Cogen and Agnes Coates have been busy travelling around Stephentown collecting "MEMORIES ON TAPE". The New York State Historical Society at Cooperstown provides the tapes (free of charge) and in exchange we lend our completed tapes to them so that they may make copies for their archives. (These are used by people doing research into the history of our State) The original tape is returned to us, perhaps for use someday as part of a slide and tape show for local schools.

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## HISTORICAL SITE SURVEY

Susan Cooper is the person in charge of a long term, on-going project--A survey of the old buildings in all parts of Stephentown. This survey is being conducted in cooperation with the State Board for Historic Preservation. The aim of the survey is to identify and describe on a "blue sheet" (the form provided by the State Board) ALL the buildings in our town which are of historic importance. One copy of the "blue sheet" is sent to the State Board, and one copy is kept in our own files. With so many fine old buildings in Stephentown, this survey will take some years to complete. In fact, Susan may still be working on it in her OLD AGE, UNLESS some interested people call 733-5162 and offer their assistance.

Many people seem to think we are simply making a list of all the cemeteries in town. No indeed! We are actually recording the information on each and every gravestone in each and every cemetery--LARGE and small. You may have believed these records to be kept by cemetery associations, but in fact, they have not. And of course, UNLESS we find ways to keep our surveys up-to-date, all this hard work will be of little value in another 10 years.

The cemetery committee has been very active this summer and a report from Cynthia Pease, chairwoman, follows:

Though everything we deal with is dead (pun!!) our committee is alive and working diligently. One of our workers, Jack Manno is leaving us for a year to go to Oklahoma. Still hard at work are Frances Rathbun, Thelma Tomlinson, Lewis Griffin and Agnes Coates, who are almost finished with the Hillside Cemetery on Fire Tower Rd. Some questions they are asking are: Can we get the Cemetery Associations to start keeping records after we've done everything up to this summer?--How come there are many stones with birth dates but no death dates? (are the people buried here or elsewhere)--There are many names on the map we have, but when we get to the actual plot there's no marker, or stone.--Are the lots empty or are people buried there with no marker?

Susan Cooper has completed the Eddy Cemetery on Turner Hill Road and the Leonard Cemetery in Atwater Hollow.

Edwin Cogan will do the Boardman Cogan Cemetery located above his home. He states that the oldest stone there is 1770.

W.W. Lewis and Esther Maynard have done the Carpenter-Ellis Cemetery located behind Elmer Stuart's home.

Stewart Pease is doing the cemetery located next to the Berverly Liebenon home.

Susan Cooper, Cynthia Pease, Ginny and Jean Atwater are doing the Presbyterian Hill Cemetery. (Ginny Atwater did this years ago.)

Tisha Hespeline is doing the Cranston Hill Cemetery.

Other cemeteries already completed are The Old Ben Hayes Farm Cemetery on Bert Hagers Rd., The Tayer Farm Cemetery on Tayer Rd., Greenman Hill Cemetery located on Murray Property, The Turner Cemetery at Hoag's Corners, The Bailey Cemetery located on Gentile Rd., behind the Strauss house, The Strait Cemetery on Garfield Rd., The Huntington Cemetery off the Garfield Rd., on an old coach road on the Stewart estate.

Mrs. Lauretta Harris of East Nassau was kind enough to send us a copy of the East Nassau Cemetery and many others.

Perhaps our most industrious and certainly our most ardent graveyard delver is Patricia Davis, whose report I found so interesting that I am not editing it but including it entirely.

On top of a breezy hill, overlooking the Taconic Valley Range, with Stephentown snuggled in its hills and valleys, lies the resting place of some 682 people of all creeds. Pine trees, rich green shrubbery and carefully trimmed grass surround the flower adorned graves. Commonly known as the Baptist Cemetery, this cemetery became incorporated in 1905, when Stephentown acquired more land. Since then it's official name has been The Stephentown Cemetery, Inc.

The original Baptist Church of Stephentown was built within its boundaries. The graves of the deacons, elders and their families were placed near the church. They faced eastward toward the rising sun to await their risen Son and God. Some of the first settlers of Stephentown were buried there before the turn of the 18th century. As the Baptist membership flourished in the 19th century, one will note that the majority of stones represented followers of the Baptist faith. Most first names were Biblical, such as Rachel, Isaiah, Exekiel, Martha, Esther, Rebecca and Benjamin. There is an exception in a Thankful and a Patience. Well known last names are Gardner, Sheldon, Douglas, Sweet, Rose, Brown, Goodrich, Chittenden, Carr, Hall, Pesse, Carpenter, Osgood, and Lapp.

A few more interesting observations were made while visiting this historical site. Marriages were within the pioneer families of Stephentown. One deacon named Edward Carr contributed singularly to this as he had four wives. Infant and maternal deaths were common during the 19th century and one cannot but wonder the causes of these and other young deaths. Yet, longevity was not an exception. One of the Sheldon plots, consisting of nine graves, was transferred from Sheldon Hill in 1955.

A cruel fire devastated the Wheeler farm in 1933 and took with it the cemetery's only records. Twenty-two years later Mr. Clarence Carpenter and Mr. Amery Hall saw this cemetery as a jungle and began their devoted project of restoring the grounds. Some work must yet be done as several stones are overturned or earth sunken. Unfortunately, many other stones are weather eroded making it impossible to read the inscriptions.

It is the aim of the Stephentown Historical Society and the hopes of other interested persons, that the records now being made be kept updated and that the restoration be continued.

The officers for the present year are:

page five

- President -- Mrs. Agnes Coates
- Vice President - Mrs. Cynthia Pease
- Recording Secretary -- Mrs. Letitia Hesperlein
- Corresponding Secretary -- Mrs. Frances Rathbun
- Treasurer -- Miss Janet Atwater
- Student co-ordinator -- Mrs. Susan Cooper

Trustees are:

- Mr. Allan Brown
- Mrs. Thelma Tomlinson
- Mr. Ross Coates
- Mr. Calvin Kenyon
- Mr. Albert Silvernail

Have we WHETTED YOUR APPETITE and there is still more to come!  
 If so--please complete our membership application and mail it  
 to Pat Davis----SOON

-----tear along dotted line-----

Individual Member (over 18 years)	\$1.00
Individual Member (under 17 years)	.50
Contributing Member	5.00
Organization Member	15.00
Sustaining Member	10.00
Life Member	100.00

©  
 Stephentown  
 Historical  
 Society

NAME (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

Mail Address \_\_\_\_\_ zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Hobbies, collections, interests: \_\_\_\_\_

clip along dotted line and mail to: Mrs. Pat Davis  
 P.O. Box 66, Stephentown  
 N.Y. 12168