

# Stephentown Historical Society Newsletter

Vol. II Issue No. III

June 1986

## THE STATUE OF LIBERTY

by April Alderman, Stephentown  
Elementary School

To honor one lady's birthday, New York and New Jersey will stage the world's largest fireworks display ever this July. It's no ordinary lady, and it's not just any birthday. The Statue of Liberty turns 100 this year. More than six years ago, government officials and private citizens realized that the Statue was in need of repairs. They began a project to restore this national treasure. The Statue will be cleaned up and ready to celebrate both on July 4th and on her real birthday in October.

The Statue of Liberty stands in New York's harbor, gazing out over Ellis Island. For many years, thousands of immigrants entered America through the immigration office on Ellis Island. The Statue, with her torch in one hand and law book in the other, stands for freedom in a new world.



## BIRTHPLACE-ELLIS ISLAND

Saturday, July 14, 1923 was a red letter day for the young couple from Finland. Elias and Fannie Park, with their 18 month old baby Astrid, and another on the way, had just arrived at Ellis Island to start a new life in America. Both had been born here, but at an early age had been taken back to Finland where they grew up, met and were married.

Now as they waited to be cleared through immigration, it became apparent to the customs official that the young mother would soon give birth to her second child. Not understanding English well enough, the young father stood by helplessly while his wife was whisked off to the Island's hospital maternity ward, while he was left to care for the older baby the best he could.

In a few hours his concern was changed to joy when the news was brought that afternoon of the birth of another daughter, the very day that their life long dream to "go back to America" came true. In honor of her birth place, the baby was named Ellen.

I, Ellen Esther Park Lewis, was that baby. Though million of immigrants were processed through Ellis Island from 1892 to 1943, not many had the unique distinction of being born there.

We are pleased to recognize new Members since our November Newsletter:

Eleanor Cosover  
Norman Cosover  
Robert Fraser  
Harold Hager  
Gladys Howe  
Eva Mayer  
Claire Watts  
Maynard Watts

**REMINDER**

\* \* \*

'86-'87 Membership Categories and Dues are as follows:

|                       |          |
|-----------------------|----------|
| Individual Member     | \$ 3.00  |
| Contributing Member   | \$ 15.00 |
| Business/Organization | \$ 25.00 |
| Life Member           | \$100.00 |

Dues will be payable annually each January as of January 1987. Treasurer: Rowland McClave, East Nassau, NY 12062.

\* \* \*

Meetings are held at the Town Hall on the first Monday evening of each month. Read The Echo for current information.

**ANCESTORS OF "MOORE HILL"**

John Moore removed from Pine Plains, Dutchess Co., to Stephentown, Rens. Co. around 1840. He was born in 1800, died in 1877. In 1820, he married Deborah Hicks (daughter of Joseph B. Hicks and Lucinda Germond). She died July 12, 1870, age 70 years and is buried in the Baptist Cemetery. His grandfather was Philip Moore, (married Catherine Fritz) who came from Holland and was an early settler in Chatham.

John Moore's son Walter S. Moore settled in Malden Bridge, NY. His sons John Bartlett and Levi Moore remained in Stephentown and settled on "Moore Hill."

...The Mount Lebanon Shaker Village (MLSV) at the Darrow School, opened its 1986 season in May with an exhibit in the Wash House and an outdoor walking tour. Other Shaker events include Friend's Day, June 29th, and a July lecture series. If you're interested in becoming a member, contact Lucia Scala at 794-7646.



RELIGIOUS SCENE--1858

Rev. Emerson Andrew, a traveling evangelist of the Baptist faith recorded briefly in his autobiography his visits to Hancock and Stephentown in 1858.

Hancock "--Elder Leland's old parish was all run down. We began our meeting in a cold, dark house, with three dozen hearers. I took up a collection to get lights and better fuel. Soon the house was full, and there was a mighty shaking and awakening ..."

Stephentown "--I began here with a cold church, in a muddy time. Brother Sweet the pastor, had been too indulgent, and taken only about one hundred dollars a year as a donation from his society. Soon our audiences were large and deeply affected. A daughter of a Pedobaptist, full of the Spirit, opposed by her bigoted, cruel father, walked some miles, lugging her extra clothes, to be immersed, and arrived just in season, as we were about leaving the river. She was so happy!"



**CONGRATULATIONS** to the Stephentown Baptist Church and Rev. Gary Stephens for the renovations of their church this past year.

In the year 1846, the building we now know as the First Baptist Church of Stephentown, was completed and dedicated. While it was under construction, a worker by the name of Mr. Glass reportedly fell off the roof and died. Years later, we are told, his widow was asked to make a donation to raise the church building so an added floor could be built. Her response was that she felt the church was high enough.

Old pictures of the church show a fence in front of the property. At that time, the house across the street from the church was an overnight boarding house for "drummers", better known as peddlers or traveling salesmen. For their convenience a bar was installed that was also available to the general public. This attracted individuals from Hancock and other neighboring towns. Too often these "out-of-towners" were unable to make their way home at night and it became a tradition to "sleep it off" on the Baptist Church front lawn. To cope with the problem, the church leaders built a fence along the front of the church property. It was a success in keeping overnight guests from sleeping on the lawn, but it did not hinder the visitors from depositing their empty bottles there.

The difficulty in getting caskets into the church brought about physical changes in the front of the church. Old pictures show an enclosed front entrance, similar to the one that was recently built. The old approach made it very difficult to carry caskets into the building, so in response to a request by Avery Hall, the enclosed entrance was torn down and open steps built. Because of the steep grade of the steps, this too made the handling of caskets very difficult. The exposed steps had to be constantly rebuilt due to rotting wood. Thus, the steps recently completed by Rev. Gary Stephens and his church trustees, were enclosed.

#### DO YOU RECALL?

Stephentown News--1940 ..  
(from the first issue of THE ECHO)

The Ladies Aid Society of the Methodist Church of Stephentown held their February meeting at the home of Mrs. Elvin Geerholt ... The business meeting was presided over by the President, Mrs. Edwin Lawless. A very encouraging report was read by the Treasurer, Mrs. Roland Peck. ---Refreshments were served by Mrs. Lawless and Mrs. Silvernail.

The United Stephentown Districts Parent Teachers' Association held their February meeting in the Grange Hall. The meeting was called to order by the President, Miss Ruth Thomson. The Secretary, Mrs. Edwin Lawless, gave a reading on Founder's Day. The meeting was then turned over to Mrs. Joseph Mittnight.

"Do you recall?" cont'd.

...From reporter Mrs. Emma L. McFeely:... Julian Howe, North Stephentown, lost a valuable horse Thursday. George Fitzgerald has returned from the House of Mercy Hospital. Raymond Thomas had the misfortune to injure his left hand while clearing away ice from the highway in North Stephentown.

For Constitution and Bylaw revisions, phone 733-5235 or 733-5716.

**STEPHENTOWN HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
EXECUTIVE BOARD 1986**

**Officers**

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

Editors: Virginia Atwater,  
Dick Lewis, & Laura Zwack



**FROM THE MUSEUM COMMITTEE**

It looked as if we were about to see a dream become a reality, but our inability to find an affordable piece of land has resulted in the loss of a house we had been offered.

Without the land, we could not make a commitment to the donors, so now the offer has been withdrawn.

We need at least an acre of land for the placement of a building (we have a school house available) or buildings and an area for parking. The property must be suitable for our use and not so remote that security would be a problem.

If anyone has land as a gift or at a reasonable price, contact the Chairman of the Museum Committee, Betty Feathers (733-5235) or any member of the Historical Society's Board of Directors.