

Stephentown Historical Society Newsletter

Vol. II, Issue No. X

June 1990

A

GAZETTEER

OF THE

State of New-York :

1821.
EMBRACING

AN AMPLE SURVEY AND DESCRIPTION OF ITS

COUNTIES, TOWNS, CITIES, VILLAGES,

CANALS,

MOUNTAINS, LAKES, RIVERS, CREEKS, AND NATURAL TOPOGRAPHY.

ARRANGED IN ONE SERIES, ALPHABETICALLY:

WITH AN APPENDIX,

There are farmers in this Town, who make 8 or 10 tons of cheese every summer, keeping 20 to 40 milch cows. Persons, in the new Counties at the W., owning lands suitable for grazing, stock and dairy farming, would find it an excellent school to pay an occasional visit to these money-making dairy farmers. Hancock, is just by, and Cheshire, famous for cheese. I hope the time is not too distant when these people, who understand the stock and dairy business and how to make money by it, will have an "Agricultural School" and widely extend the benefits of their knowledge. There is a 'know how' in every thing, and we have to learn this of one another. I hope these suggestions may meet the eye of farmers in our western counties and that some of them will send a son to serve an apprenticeship.

It may not be amiss to add that the Stephentown farmers have gained knowledge from the Massachusetts farmers and neighbors just across the line in Adams, Hancock and Cheshire. (Spafford writes that he has worked 12 hours a day, for 2 years in completing this edition. He offers a copy of this edition to the first farmer's son, from any of the western counties of New York State, who would bring him evidence that they served an apprenticeship, in continued on pg. 2

FARMING AS IT WAS - Al Silvernail

In the years of 1930-1940, farming was quite different from today. Electric power came to the area in 1936 providing opportunities for year round electric coolers. Before that, milk was cooled in a milk house or spring. Ice was cut every winter from Nabby's pond (located opposite Valley View Motel on Route 22), and other ponds in the area. It was then stored in the ice house and covered with sawdust. The ice was carried to the milk house where cans of milk were kept until sent to the creamery, usually by train.

Tractors were readily available in the early 1940s. At that time, Montgomery Ward sold tractors and other farm equipment. In 1943, Al bought a "Little Allis Chalmers" tractor. It was an excellent tractor, although it was not a self starter. One time Al broke his arm trying to start it. Dealer's price was \$750.00 with all the equipment.

Disease, especially TB, caused the loss of many herds. Animals were tested and destroyed if TB was found. Another problem was Bangs disease, which caused spontaneous abortion in the cows. A vaccine was available to help solve the problem.

Cattle dealers were not noted for their ethics. If a farmer missed one payment the herd went back to the dealer and was sold again. Consequently, the dealers could sell the same herd two or three times.

Hired help was hard to find and hard to keep. Pay was \$1.50 a day plus dinner. The farmers were paid \$1.10 - \$1.25 for one hundred pounds of milk. The average farmer produced 2 - 3 cans per day or two to three hundred pounds.

A small income went farther in those days. Potatoes and apples sold for 50 cents a bushel, strawberries were \$2.25 a crate or about 7 cents a quart.

Al began farming at age 17 with 3 cows, a team of horses and chickens. This was the beginning of a long and satisfying life's work.

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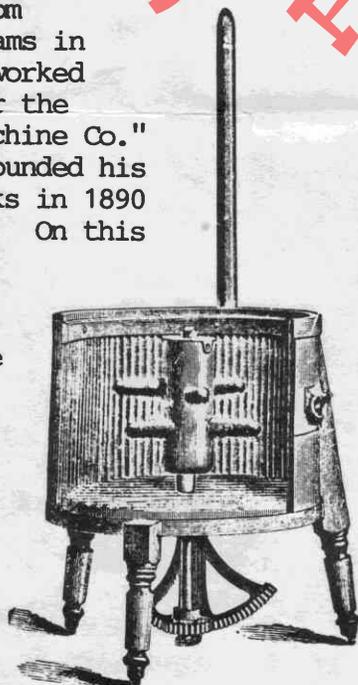
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PERFECT WASHING MACHINE
(in our collection)

Perfection is durability without repairs. Taking durability for granted, Harry R. Hamer promised \$1000. for a garment that would come equally clean in his "Perfect Washer" as if washed by hand. The mechanical principle of this early washer has not changed except for the power source. A back and forth movement of the handle engages its ratchet gear with the gear on the agitator shaft. - When your arm gets

tired, the wash is finished. H. R. Hamer came from England to North Adams in 1860 at age 4. He worked as general agent for the "Domestic Sewing Machine Co." for 15 years. He founded his washing machine works in 1890 on a 60 acre parcel. On this he built a home and also a barn as his first manufacturing site. Later, a large stone structure was erected for full scale production. The plant site is opposite 75 West Main Street, North Adams.



HAMER'S PERFECT WASHER.

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obtaining knowledge of the dairy business in either of the above towns, for as long as it has taken him to write this book.) Several of the best dairy farmers in those towns have told me, that when they can buy cows at 18 to 20 dollars, and sell cheese at 6 dollars a hundred, their business is the best they can follow, good enough.

Our widely extended commerce forbids the idea of overdoing this branch of business; for, aided by that wonder of the age, the Erie Canal, and the Champlain Canal, and our natural facilities, the surplus of our industry will be, floated from our doors to every clime, and "The World" will be our market".

Agriculture, is becoming a Science among us, though yet far from being such. To give it this dignity, importance and efficiency, must be the result of union and united efforts, -Science and Art putting their knowledge together, and reducing it to actual practice, in profitable Husbandry.

Stephentown Post-office is in the Hollow, 21 miles S.E. of Troy, 1 mile S. of which there is a small Village, of some 20 families, a store, inn, tannery, and 4 mills. There is a turnpike, into this Hollow, from Albany by Sand Lake, and there will be another from Sand Lake to Troy in 1824, opening good roads to the market towns of the Hudson. Population, 2592: 640 farmers, 107 mechanics, 5 traders; 15 free blacks, 3 slaves: Taxable property, \$323,653: 15 schools kept for 7 months in 12; public monies received for support in 1821 - \$405.68; children between 5 and 15 years of age 809; number taught that year 970; 505 electors, 16906 acres improved land, 3214 cattle, 507 horses, 6479 sheep; 29706 yards cloth; 2 grist mills, 10 saw mills, 3 fulling mills, 3 carding machines, 1 cotton and woollen factory, 1 distillery.

HERITAGE CENTER UPDATE

At the time you receive this Newsletter, work will have started on the Heritage Center addition. The addition will house a kitchen, storage area and bathroom. Included will be a ramp for the handicapped.

CRAFTFEST

Look for the bright blue banners on Saturday, July 28. It will be an exciting day on the Fire Company's Muster Field. We hope it will become the first of many art and craft shows. The Craftfest Committee will welcome volunteers and count on all of us to publicize this event. The proceeds will go toward restoration of the Heritage Center.

Entrants who are accepted to this juried show will sell and exhibit inside and just outside the pavilion. Throughout the day there will be activities for children, and demonstrations to be enjoyed by young and old alike. Picnic tables will be set up near the kitchen area and snack foods, ice cream and drinks will be sold all day.

The Historical Society will have its own booth with crafts made by members in addition to the usual sale items. A large quilt in the Flight of Geese pattern, made by Linda Holder, will go to a lucky raffle ticket holder. You will hear about this fair through the papers and on the radio, but please don't wait, put it on your calendar now. July 28, 10:00 to 5:00, rain or shine. No admission charge.

COMING SHS PROGRAMS

July	2	SHC	"History and Etiquette of the American Flag"
Aug.	4	SHC	Tour and Picnic
Sept.	10	SHC	"Pompeii"
Oct.		TH	
Nov.		TH	
Dec.		TH	Potluck Supper and Holiday Party

TH - Town Hall

SHC - Stephentown Heritage Center

ARMCHAIR SHOPPING

Look to your roots America! A careful survey of our past will focus on the role that Sears Roebuck and Montgomery Ward played in the catalog business. Farmers found catalog stores the only affordable source for much needed home and farm supplies.

The struggling farmers were pretty much at the mercy of the Yankee peddlers or the local merchants who were often over priced. The farmers formed Granges to combat the high prices. To these Granges Montgomery Ward and then Sears Roebuck sent their catalogs, hoping to gain the rural trade.

Aaron Montgomery Ward, "the father of the mail order business", came on the scene as a young salesman who roamed the Midwest with his horse and buggy. Ward was convinced he could do business with the Granges, and thought he could sell them quality goods at a fair price. In 1872 he sent a one-page price list to the Grangers---the world's first general merchandise mail order catalog, and the start of the mail order industry.

Sears Roebuck and Co. got its start in 1889. Richard Sears sold coal and whatever else he could to the people of North Redwood, Minn., while working as a station agent for the St. Louis Railway.

When a jeweler failed to pay for a shipment of some watches, Sears bought them. He sent off a one page memo to the station agents along

the railroad listing the watches. The watches were soon sold out and Sears offered other merchandise at reasonable prices through his expanding catalogs. Mindful of Montgomery Ward's great success with the Grangers, Sears decided to try for a share of the business.

Over the years the catalog business had to adapt to socio-economic changes. Sears is still in the forefront but Montgomery Ward discontinued its catalog business in 1985.

The early catalogs served a multiple purpose. For rural America they were the first shopping malls, as well as a source of entertainment for both adults and children.



Is there a nicer way to usher in the summer than a STRAWBERRY FESTIVAL? Ours will be held Sunday, July 1 (tentatively), at Zema's Nursery on Rt. 22. This event was first held in 1984, the year of our Bicentennial. Now we don our costumes each year and continue to treat the public to the biggest and best shortcakes in the vicinity. (The berries will come from Shadowbrook Farm on Goodrich Hollow Road.)

The Co-Chairmen are Claire Watts and Esther Koepp. They remind you to watch the papers for a firm date. The date depends on the strawberries not the Historical Society.

TAG SALE - Edith Strobl, Chairman of the annual Tag Sale, is announcing a change in date from Columbus Day weekend to Labor Day weekend. (You guessed it. We're tired of being cold.)

This is a reminder to save your collectibles and throw-aways. We can pick up and store large items, if need be. Phone Edith at 733-5552.

BLOODMOBILE - Our first cooperative venture with the Rensselaer County Chapter of the American Red Cross was so successful that we agreed once again to host the Bloodmobile Drive in Stephentown. The summer date will be July 16 at the Fire Hall (Vanderbilt House), 3:00 to 6:00. The SHS members who worked in January are invited to volunteer again.

ARE YOU A 1990 MEMBER OF THE STEPHENTOWN HISTORICAL SOCIETY?

1990 membership categories and dues are as follows:

Individual Member	\$ 5.00
Contributing Member	\$ 15.00
Business/Organization	\$ 25.00
Life Member	\$100.00

Dues are payable each January.

Checks payable to S.H.S., c/o Ruth Leab, RR1, Box 179, Stephentown, NY 12168.

\$ \$ \$ FOR HERITAGE CENTER - There will be a 1991 calender. The design for each month will focus on the 1880 period in this area. Sylvester's History of Columbia and Rensselaer Counties will provide beautiful illustrations of old residences and structures.

Etta Jacobs, daughter of Dave Jacobs who is handling this money-raising project, is the designer of the calender. It will be titled "Once Upon a Year" and you will want one for yourself and at least one or more for friends.

For fall fun, mark this date on your calender - October 14.

The SHS and Zema's Nursery on Rt. 22 are collaborating again with a pumpkin judging contest and bake sale.