The Official Journal of the Organization

The Hoboken Historical Museum

Newsletter

OF BY And FOR MuSeum MemberS.

JUNE 1990 HOBOKEN, NJ No. 39

HOBOKEN HISTORICAL MUSEUM'S FIRST

FLEA MARKET

and ANTIQUES/CRAFTS SALE

SUNDAY JUNE 24
(Raindate Saturday June 30)
CHURCH SQ. PARK
(4TH & GARDEN)
10 AM - 6 PM



This is the final fund-raising event sponsored by the Museum this year to fund our activities, so please come to Church Square Park on Sunday, June 24 and stop at our table -- you may find something to buy that you can use. And we sure could use the funds. Your purchase will help support the Museum and help unclutter our office. If you can come early, please bring a saleable item or two to donate. Or drop them off at the office, 206 Third Street (653-7392) the Friday or Saturday before.

Table spaces for vendors still available. Phone Bob Foster, 656-2240.

IN MEMORIAM

To make way for the new Port Authority Hoboken waterfront project, the last vestige of our once-thriving port is vanishing.

As we go to press, the wrecking ball is hammering away at the old North German Lloyd steamship company buildings and piers along River Street at Fourth. They were so well constructed in 1902 that the demolition crew is not having an easy time tearing them down. There may be some regret in not saving at least a portion of this complex of historic structures.

The solid red-brick head-houses which later held the offices of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey remained deserted for years where once great floating palaces docked.

Established in Hoboken in 1863, the North German Lloyd Line for many years had more than 14 large vessels plying the Atlantic trade, each carrying from 1000 to 1400 passengers. The Company maintained a thrice-weekly service to and from Europe, and continually grew, until with the Hamburg-American Line (also established in Hoboken in 1863), its vessels were the largest in the world. A great many immigrants arrived here via these lines.

To these companies new steamers were constantly added until World War I when the two steamship lines were seized by the United States government. At this time Hoboken was turned into an armed camp and became the official Port of Embarkation for the American Expeditionary Force sent to France. More than one million military personnel embarked from Hoboken.

After World War II Hoboken's shipping industry gradually fell victim to modernization in the switch from general cargo to containerization. In 1976 the American Export Line Company, after 20 years in Hoboken, became the last to go.

OUR HOBOKEN, BELGIUM CONNECTION

Paul Callens, a citizen of Belgium, recently wrote to "Hoboken Postmaster, USA," inquiring as to how our city got its name and asking if there is any connection between Hoboken, New Jersey and Hoboken, Belgium. His letter was passed along to us and we told Mr. Callens how Hoboken got is name. He has since joined the Museum and ordered a couple of our T-shirts. One can imagine him in Hoboken, Belgium across the river Scheldt from Antwerp sporting a Hoboken T-shirt displaying the first baseball game. He would like to hear from anyone here with a connection to his Hoboken in Belgium.

Here is his address.



Paul Callens
Waterstraat 18
B-8870 Pittem-België
Tel.: 051/467 190



Docking a Liner, Hoboken. N. J.

In the old Hoboken view (top) can be seen the waterfront from Fourth Street. On the left is Hudson Square Park (now Stevens Park and Little League Field). A large liner is about to dock; nearby is the small boathouse that would later play an important role in the film "On the Waterfront." To the right is the North German Lloyd Line buildings now being demolished.

In the view below are the Lloyd piers as seen from the park looking south. In 1906, about when these pictures were taken, North German Lloyd employed 16 vessels. Passengers carried between Hoboken and foreign ports that year totalled 273,560.



Hoboken, N. J. North German Lloyd Piers

THE MUSEUM HAS A BALL

Recently donated to the Museum is a so-called "four or five chain" three-lb. cannon ball, believed to possibly date to the American Revolution (we're researching this). The rusted cast-iron sphere, which has a small hole drilled through it to accept a chain, was given to us by Stephen M. Earl of 25 Willow Terrace, where it was found four feet down in his back yard on April 28th.

In the navy, "chain-shot" was composed of two balls of identical size linked by a chain. Early on, it was particularly effective against masts and rigging.

The discovery and donation give us a happy excuse to write about Willow Terrace. Its two small streets run from Willow Avenue to Clinton Street in the block bounded by 6th and 7th.

They are lined by a picturesque group of 80 modest brick row houses, unlike other rows in Hoboken. They face each other across narrow mews-like Willow Terrace, North and South, paved with Belgian Blocks, which are squared-off cobblestones, and the streets are still private. Most of the tiny houses have been modified over the years, but a few still display their original brick facades. At the Willow Avenue corner of Willow Terrace South can still be seen a large sign shaped like a key, probably denoting a one-time locksmith's shop at that location.

Raymond M. Pepi, curator of an exhibit about Willow Terrace shown in 1978, spoke of it as, "although small, Willow Terrace is nearly a private community, which belies its humble origins, and compensates somewhat for the stunted proportions of its houses."

History of the Site

Willow Terrace is nearly in the center of Hoboken, but was originally built (in the mid-1880s) at what was then the outer edge of the city, on former marshland.

The Bailey & Ward map of 1881 indicates that the south terrace (which includes the rear yard of No. 25, where the cannon ball was found) is on the original site of Mansfield & Fagen's Iron Works, which appears to have been in business when the map



was drawn. Many a coal-chute cover in Hoboken has the Mansfield and Fagen name cast into it. We can suppose that the cannon ball is a foundry discard.

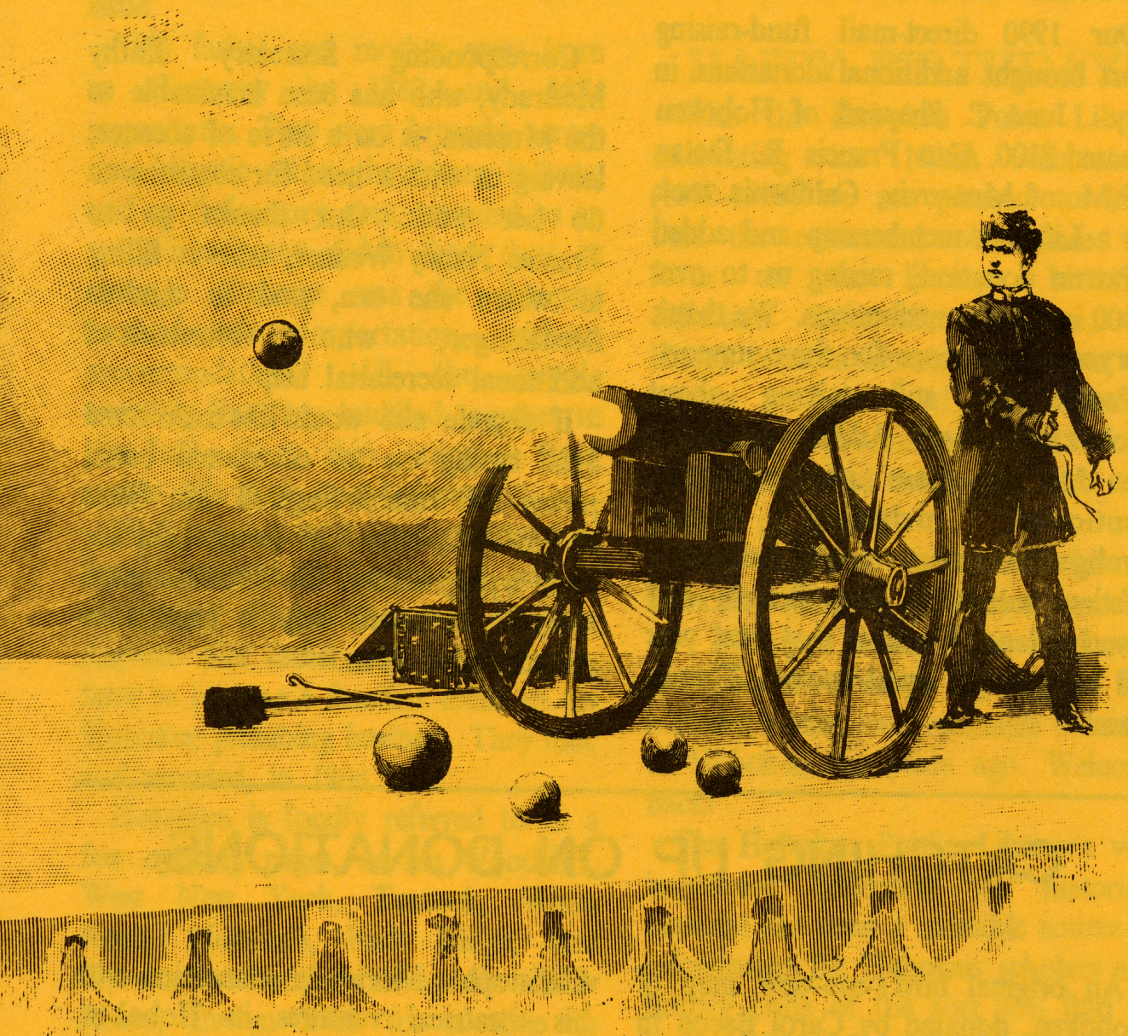
According to Mr. Pepi, the original Willow houses were about 12 feet wide and 25 feet deep, occupying half the depth of their lots. "They were two rooms deep, with cobblestoned streets in front, and brick alleys in the rear. The alleys have been partitioned between the houses, but originally they may have been a throughway for rubbish collecting and coal delivery."

Pepi and others believe that the quaint cottages were built to house laborers, tradesmen, and their families working for the Stevens family of Castle Point.

Martha Stevens and the Building of Willow Terrace

"Martha [Bayard] Stevens appears,

(Continued on page 6)



The old cannon ball recently found in Hoboken is a small one like the one pictured above being fired at a theatrical strong-man who is about to catch it in his gloved hands. We do not know what our cannon ball was used for, but this is as good a guess as any. Engraving dates to 1895.

from an inspection of her account books, to have been a very capable businesswoman," writes Mr. Pepi, "who managed the formidable estate left by her husband Edwin Augustus Stevens [1795-1868]." (Edwin Stevens was the founder of Stevens Institute.)

"The costs for the construction of Willow Terrace are recorded in the day-book of Martha Stevens for May 29, 1886: 'To 80 house a/c 1/2 net expense of erecting said building ...$57,898.70.'

"The first rents collected for 'the 80 houses' are also noted in the same account book for June 1886, and averaged $12.00 per month."

The Hoboken Historical Museum thanks Mr. Earl for the donation of the cannon ball.

CAMPAIGN FINAL

Our 1990 direct-mail fund-raising effort brought additional donations in May. June C. Shepard of Hoboken donated $100. Also Francis R. Dolan D.P.M. of Monrovia, California took out a Lifetime membership and added a Patron donation, raising us to over $4000 in total contributions. We thank everyone once more for their support.

People are still talking about "Hoboken Follies." Additional thanks are due to those not previously mentioned, including George Kirchgessner (who recently became a Lifetime member), Ron Bezich, and Beverly Hans. We trust that next year will bring us an equal success. Thanks again!

ACTING MUSEUM SECRETARY

Corresponding Secretary Kathy McBrady, who has been invaluable to the Museum, is on a leave of absence, leaving us with a need for someone to do her work. Our thanks go to Trustee Nancy Wenner, who is filling in where she can, and to Andrea Sernatinger, who volunteeered additional secretarial help.

If anyone else would like to do some light typing on an occasional basis, please call fumble-fingered Jim Hans at 653-7392, who will be grateful for your typing ability. We find that even sporadic keyboard help is enough to get the work done.

CATCHING UP ON DONATIONS

An original bird's-eye-view map of Hoboken, donated by Carol Bacon in its original envelope is an artifact we hope to frame and place on display soon. It was published in 1929 by noted theatrical and literary figure Christopher Morley in connection with his theatrical ventures in Hoboken.

An attractive old bar-room decoration was recently found at 123 Washington Street by Matthew Muzio while preparing to open his new

store, The Shirt Shack. The hand-made ornament is a miniature tavern with windows that once lighted. More on this later.

A copy of a book written by Evelyn E. Mullins entitled "Working at Love" has been donated to the Museum. Evelyn, now of Acton, Maine, was born in Hoboken. Her fine and informative book is quoted here and relates to our comments on the old German steamship lines in this issue:

"My father and mother were born in Germany in 1882 and 1884 respectively. They were brought across the Atlantic when they were infants, and as their story goes, traveled as so many immigrants did in those days, in steerage. Steerage was the cheapest method of transportation, without accommodations. All the people traveling this class huddled together in the hull of a ship carrying them across this dark body of water."

Evelyn goes on to write "...the two families settled in the seaport city of Hoboken." Her mother was Augusta Asplint. Her father was Louis Fuchs, later to become a familiar name in the Hoboken plumbing business. They met, and married, in 1904.

Hoboken is fondly referred to in a few opening pages, as are Woodcliff, West New York, Teaneck, White Rock, Montvale, Park Ridge, and Norwood. Besides living in New Jersey, Evelyn lived for a time in Irving, Texas, and now Acton, Maine, where her book can be purchased by mail at this address:
P.O. Box 139, Acton, Maine, 04001.

OUT-OF-STATE MEMBERS

Another distant member of the Museum is Louise M. Vezzetti Camp, twin sister of the late Mayor, Thomas F. Vezzetti. She lives in Puerto Rico. Another international member has recently joined: John L. Block, an ardent Frank Sinatra fan in Quebec, Canada. We have a total of 13 states from Maine to California on our membership rolls, apart from New Jersey.

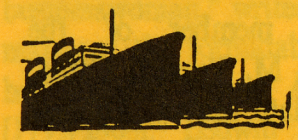
HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

With the Hoboken Pubic Library celebrating its 100th Anniversary (1890-1990) we are pleased to learn that the centennial observance will focus on the library's historical collection. Like the Museum, the library receives letters, some from the remote corners of the world, requesting information about this special place and the people who were part of its history.

We welcome the new Library Director, Richard A. Burke, a native of Michigan who has extensive professional library experience that includes a stint as a reference librarian in Hoboken ten years ago. Welcome back!

The Hoboken Public Library's very impressive collection of historical material has been a valuable source of information for Hoboken scholars and history buffs of the sort you find on in the Museum's membership and we are all grateful to this valuable asset to our work and the Library's preservation program.

Hoboken Historical Museum
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THE HOBOKEN HISTORICAL MUSEUM

CITY HALL

WASHINGTON AND FIRST STS. HOBOKEN, N.J.

OUR NEXT MEETING

Our next meeting (open to the public) will be on Monday, June 18, at 7:30 PM in the small private dining room of the Clam Broth House. This is our last meeting until August, so we hope many of you will be able to attend. No obligation, no fund-raising at the meeting!

As is our usual summer custom, there will be no newsletter in July. The next one will be in August.

BASEBALL DAY

Tuesday, June 19 is Baseball Day in Hoboken: a parade on Washington St., a celebration and game at Stevens Park's Little League Field at 7:30 PM, followed by fireworks.

FLEA MARKET

Sunday, June 24 (rain date Saturday, June 30) Hoboken Flea Market/Antiques/Collectibles Sale, Church Square Park, 4th and Garden Streets, 10 AM to 6 PM.

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Office Phone (201) 653-7392
Subscription free to Museum members.
Membership $15 a year.

Cheerfulness Is The Atmosphere In Which All Things Thrive.