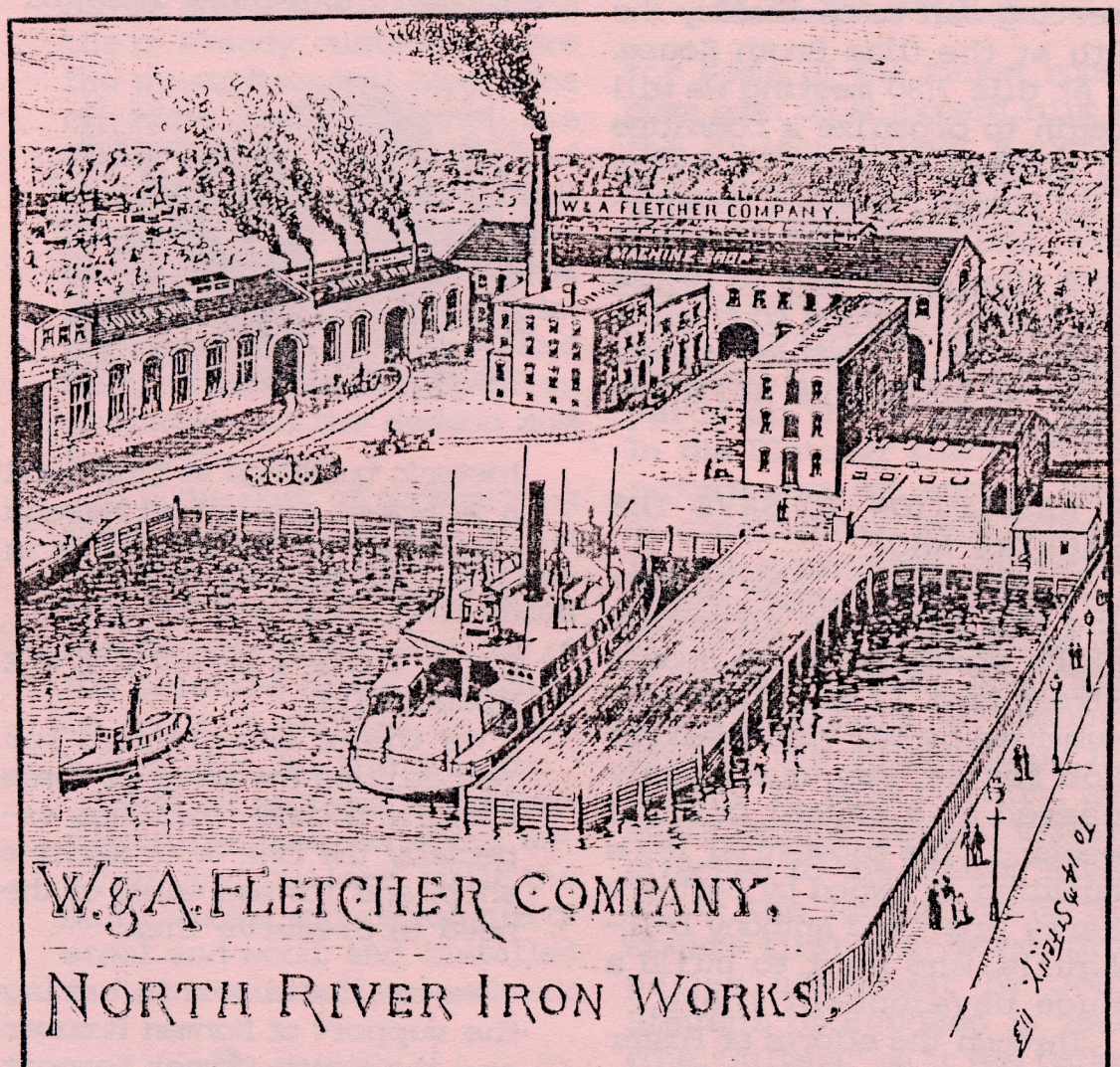
The Official Journal of the Organization

The Hoboken Historical Museum

Newsletter

OF BY And FOR MuSeum MemberS.

Tuesday, August 9, 1988 Hoboken, N.J. Volume 2, No. 18



A RESOLUTION TO SAVE THE MACHINE SHOP

Bird's-eye view of the W. & A. Fletcher shipyards, showing the original buildings including the machine shop (basically unaltered) and the blacksmith shop (changed over the years). This excellent drawing was published a couple of years after the company moved to Hoboken in 1890, when the surrounding area was somewhat barren. Hudson Street would later be developed parallel with the machine shop. Continued

FROM THE EDITOR

We hope that you enjoy this issue of the Museum Newsletter, with its new format. We're back from a short vacation (the Museum holds no meeting in July, consequently no Newsletter either); the August meeting will be on Tuesday the 9th at the Clam Broth House.

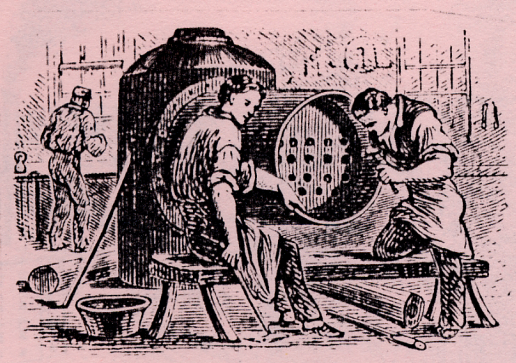
At this 7:30 meeting we will begin to organize a committee of Hoboken residents, including City Council members, developers, and architects, to deal with alternative ways to re-use the historic machine shop building on the old Bethlehem Steel site on Hoboken's northern waterfront.

A RESOLUTION TO SAVE THE MACHINE SHOP

A resolution in favor of saving the two-story structure, which stretches along Hudson Street from 12 to 14th Streets, submitted by our vice president Bob Foster, was unamimously passed at a recent Council meeting. The substantial 1890s building is owned by partners Harry Grant and Anthony Dell'-Aquila, who want to build a huge development there.

Through the efforts of Foster and permission of the developers, a large amount of important marine memorabilia was rescued from the various buildings at the former shipyard, such as the blacksmith and carpentry shops, all of which will be donated to the Hoboken Historical Museum and other museums.

Along with Bob, Norman Brouwer, Marine Historian and Curator of the South Street Seaport Museum in New York, and others searched through the old buildings. I was with them two of the days, and, despite the 90-plus heat, it was a pleasure to explore these old



historic buildings at first hand. A Hoboken Historical Museum inventory on the subject is in preparation.

HISTORIC VALUE RECOGNIZED

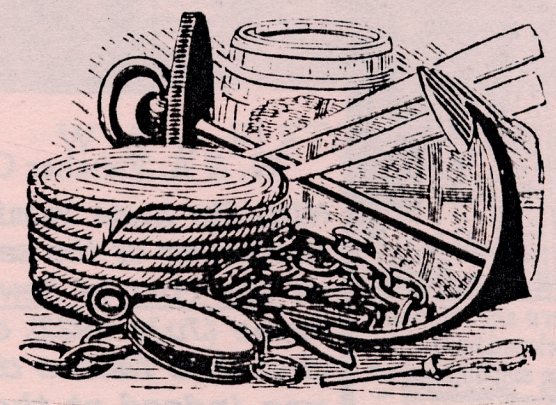
We thank the Council for recognizing the value of these historic Hoboken buildings, especially the fine brick machine shop, and its awareness of the need to preserve them.

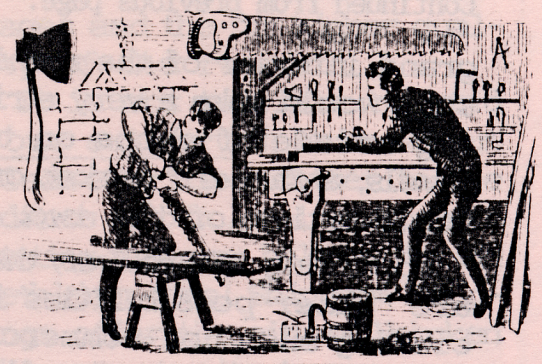
We are fortunate in having the support of Norman Brouwer and the South Street Seaport Museum, and the Society for Industrial Archeology in our efforts to preserve a significant piece of Hoboken's historic waterfront. Mr. Brouwer reminds us that the original founders of the shipyard, W. & A. Fletcher & Company, which was in business from 1853 to 1928, "had the highest reputation of any firm in the country involved in the construction of steamboats and steam engines."

In his letter of support for the preservation resolution, Brouwer pointed out to the Mayor and Council that "Among their steady customers were the prestigious Fall River Line on Long Island Sound, the Hudson River Day Line, and the Hudson River Night Line, and leading steamboat companies operating on Lake Erie, Lake George, Lake Champlain, and Masschusetts Bay, and many ferryboat companies operating on the Hudson and East rivers.

"All the work of constructing their steamers was done in the Hoboken yard, except fabrication of the basic hull which was usually launched at one of the Delaware River shipyards or by T. S. Marvel in Newburgh, N.Y. on the Hudson.

"Skilled artisans in Hoboken crated the complex steam engines and boilers, built the multi-storied superstructures of steel and wood, and installed the ornate interior woodwork





for some of the finest rooms ever seen on shipboard...built in the Hudson Street machine shop [were] the first steam turbines used in American vessels."

This company had one of the most complete and best-equipped shipbuilding and repair yards on the Atlantic coast. In the Fletcher plant notable records were set, unusual feats of construction were accomplished, experiments and developments were carried out which attracted the attention of the shipping fraternity, intensified the atmosphere of romance around the shipbuilding industry in this country, and sustained the historic interest attached to the Hudson River since the launching of the world's first twin-screw propeller steamboat by John Stevens of Hoboken in 1804. (The "Juliana," as it was called, preceeded Robert Fulton's "Claremont" by three years.)

SUITABLE FOR RE-USE

Apart from their outstanding historic value, the original Fletcher shipyard buildings are eminently suitable for imaginative adaptive re-use. The

Continued from previous page.

grand interior of the machine shop would make a very striking arcade of shops on two levels, a farmers' market, or a combination of the two.

According to Brouwer, there are "other possibilities including such non-commercial uses as a museum, art gallery or library." Here at the Hoboken Historical Museum we agree with that and would like to see encouragement of those possibilities!

In another letter supporting the saving of the machine shop, the Society for Industrial Archeology wrote that it wishes to add its voice "to those calling for the preservation of the building in some form, preferably by adaptive re-use."

We quote the letter in part "the building is strong and distinctive architecturally, presenting a bold and masculine façade that is yet in keeping with the scale of the residential buildings nearby. It takes little imagination to see its interior as a potentially magnificent space with handsome wooden beams already in place. It would be prohibitively expensive at the present time to build with such integrity and craftsmanship—witness the pallid imitations in the current 'post modernist' style. This building stands ready to be re-used, at far less cost."

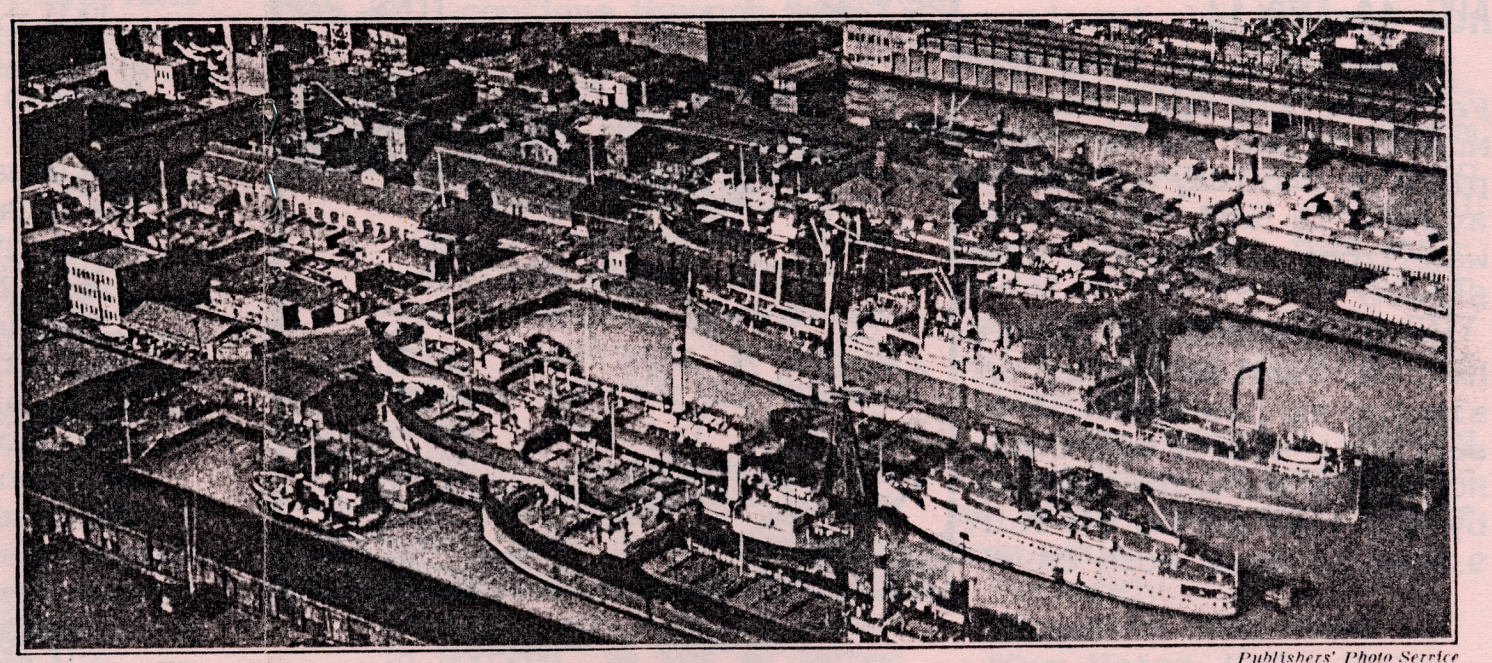
The inspiring observations are from Thomas Flagg, Immediate Past President, and Gerry Weinstein, Vice President, of the Society's Roebling Chapter, the Greater New York Area.

The letter continues: "Our Society has been encouraging adaptive re-use of historic industrial buildings since its founding 15 years ago, and in that time has seen much progress in the area, including the introduction of tax incentives for such re-use. It is now customary for progressive developers to re-use fine buildings instead of destroying them and building anew, as they recognize the financial advantages and the far higher quality of the result."

It is not too late to lend your support in this matter. Please write a letter to the editors of our local newspapers stating that you believe the old Bethlehem Steel Shipyard buildings offer the city of Hoboken the opportunity to preserve a visible link with an important chapter in its history, while creating a fine commercial or public space that will be not only a credit to our community, but a substantial contribution to our quality of life.

For further information on this important issue call Bob Foster at 656-2240.





Publishers' Photo Service

W. & A. Fletcher Company

With its name looming large on the cover of the seventh issue of The Port of New York magazine (July 1922), one realizes that this famous old shipyard was indeed at the very top.

W. & A. FLETCHER COMPANY,

Marine Engines, Boilers and Machinery,

Hudson, 12th to 14th Sts. HOBOKEN, N. J.

SPECIAL COMMITTEE

Aside from helping to form a committee of Hoboken residents to deal with ways to re-use the historic machine shop building, it has been suggested that the Musuem form its own committee, a different special group to compile a list of other sites and structures around Hoboken that should be preserved. This important matter will be discussed at our meeting on August 9. For more information, or if you wish to help, contact Bob Foster.

ROBERT KELLY

Robert Kelly, a local historian who had helped create the Hoboken Historical Museum, died at the age of 65 on June 21 after collapsing on the main concourse of the World Trade Center Plaza.

The officers, trustees, and members of the Museum extend to his family our condolences. He was a fine man and will be missed.

RIVER CITY FAIR, AUG. 13 AND 14

Hoboken's annual River City Fair will once again include Museum tables. The Fair takes place on Saturday and Sunday, August 13 and 14 on the waterfront at the foot of Fifth Street.

Members wishing to lend a helping hand at setting up, signing up new members, or selling t-shirts and other Hoboken memorabilia, may stop by any time during the Fair, 9:30am to dusk both days.

The primary goal of the Fair has remained the same, establishing a public waterfront park and swimming pool for Hoboken's people. We wish the Fair every success and hope to see you there!



MUSEUM T-SHIRTS

Above: Our Museum T-shirt depicting the first organized game of baseball will be available at the River City Fair. The original design is by Hoboken artist Kevin McCloskey.

NOTICE TO MUSICIANS

Because their length has made them difficult to edit, videotapes of last year's musical event at Maxwell's, which took place on June 27 and 28, are now being made available to the performers in unedited form. The various groups and individuals who performed in that fund-raiser may call Jim Hans at 653-7392 to borrow the cassettes for viewing and duplication of their segments.



MUSIC IN CHURCH SQUARE PARK

About 1936

Free band concerts every Wednesday evening at the Fourth Street Park, sponsored by the Sixth Ward Block Association, will continue through Sept. 7. Museum information and T-shirts will be available there at our table.

A CALIFORNIA MEMBER WRITES

One of our members, Elizabeth Leddy Roake, while recently renewing her membership, added the following request and bit of information.

"Would you please correct your next roster to show my maiden name (which is Leddy) as well as my married name because I was born and raised in Hoboken, as was my father before me. My grandfather, Martin A. Leddy, Sr. arrived in Hoboken in April 1874 and his name is on a big bronze placque in Our Lady of Grace R.C. Church on the south wall, towards the rear, as one of the early benefactors. My father, John Leddy, was a prominent businesman in Hoboken all his lifetime.

"I thoroughly enjoy receiving 'our' monthly Museum Newsletter and would like to congratulate you wonderful people for doing this much-needed service and recognition for our historic little city which always retains its village flavor.

"Looking forward to visiting the exhibits, or partaking in an affair when next I come home again.

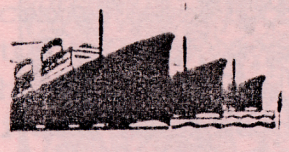
"Sincerely,

"Elizabeth Leddy Roake

"San Mateo, Ca."

We thank Elizabeth for writing and have included her maiden name on the Museum's current Membership Roster which has been updated as of July 1.

Hoboken Historical Museum
P.O. Box M-1220
Hoboken NJ 07030



MUSEUM HOURS
9 a.m. - 4 p.m.
weekdays
6:30 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.
Wednesday evenings

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HOBOKEN, NJ

THE HOBOKEN HISTORICAL MUSEUM

CITY HALL

WASHINGTON AND FIRST STS. HOBOKEN, N.J.

PLEASE Take Notice

Our next meeting is Tuesday, August 9 at 7:30pm in the Clam Broth House on Newark Street in Hoboken. All members are invited, and potential new members and guests are always welcome to sit in without obligation.

MUSEUM NEWSLETTER

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