The Official Journal of the Organization

The Hoboken Historical Museum Newsletter

OF BY And FOR MuSeum MemberS.

SEPTEMBER 1990 HOBOKEN, NJ No. 41

Hoboken Terminal Festival Sept. 22

Hoboken T-shirts, maps, pictures and prints of Hoboken, memorabilia, souvenirs, and information will be offered by the Hoboken Historical Museum as part of the Tenth Annual Hoboken Terminal Festival at the Lackawanna Rail Road terminal on Saturday, September 22.

Among the events planned is distribution of a special souvenir journal. The Festival is sponsored by NJ Transit and runs from 11AM to 5PM. Modern and old-time rail-road and other transportation equipment will be on display, and rail buffs will find many vendors' tables loaded with scale model trains and railroadiana. Admission is free.

Share Your Hoboken Memories

Museum member Gloria Lambson informs us that Hoboken old-timers and others from many of our city's ethnic groups are planning to get together to share their reminiscences. They will gather at St. Matthew's-Trinity Hall on 8th Street, Hoboken, October through May, under guidance of pastor Paul Hagedorn of St. Matthew's-Trinity Church. The informal evenings are open to all. If you have a story you would like to tell, they would like to hear from you. Please call Gloria at 653-0681.

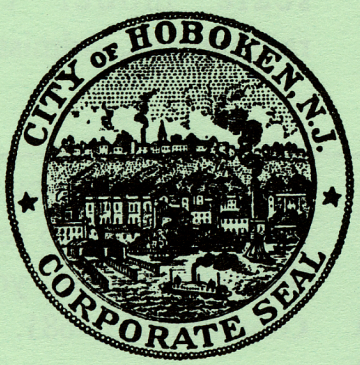
Recent Acquisitions

Twenty-six color photographs (with negatives) taken at last year's Train Festival have been donated to the Museum by member George M. Wilson of South Belmar, NJ. We have printed enlargements of several of them for sale at this year's Festival. We thank George

Acquisitions (continued)

for his thoughtfulness.

A souvenir medal commemorates the 300th anniversary of the purchase of the land of Hopoghan Hackingh that is now Hoboken from the Indians. On one side, it shows figures of Dutch settlers with land deed in hand, meeting the Indians. Nearby, a small sailing ship is anchored in the Hudson River. On the reverse, circling the corporate seal of the City of Hoboken (shown here), is the legend "Tercentenary Celebration, 1630-1930." We thank Rocco T. Laguardia of Hoboken for donating this medal to the Museum.



A signed etching by Herman Rose, titled "Waterfront," has been given to the Museum by member Anthony M. Jurvic of Town Bank, NJ. The artist's conception was inspired by the Hoboken waterfront and dates to about the 1960s. Anthony was born at 417 Adams Street. We thank him.

In his letter to us, Anthony recalled an old Hoboken song that was taught to him in 1949 by "Pickles" McCarthy, "whereabouts unknown." These words were recalled by Anthony's younger brother P. Paul Jurvic, who was born at 404 Adams Street:

I was born in Hoboken
H-O-B-O-K-E-N
Where the girls are the fairest
And the boys are the squarest
In H-O-B-O-K-E-N

Give my regards to Hoboken
Down where the fair winds blow,
In all sorts of weather,
You'll find us together
In H-O-B-O-K-E-N

This popular song, with words and music by Mathew White, was copyrighted in 1945. We now have copies of the original sheet music (with words slightly different from the above). These copies will be available at the Train Festival or by mail at $5.00 each postpaid.

An attractive little booklet of the old Hoboken Academy, a private school at the northeast corner of Fourth Street and Willow Avenue for many years, was donated by Museum member Ken Schultz.

The 1886 booklet is in German, the prevalent language in Hoboken at the time. Established in 1861, the Academy and its attractive brick building lasted well over 100 years. The structure was demolished in 1976. In its last days it was occupied by the Stevens Academy. We thank Ken for this addition to our holdings.

Two school class pictures have been donated: Graduating Class 113, School No. 1, June 1922 and Graduating Class 139, David E. Rue Junior High School, January 29, 1925. Both photos by W. Manewal of Hoboken, were taken on the steps of the then-new high school, now Demerest. We thank the Montelione family for giving these pictures to the Museum.

A large old, heavy metal Hoboken street sign from Monroe Street has been donated to the Museum by long-time Hoboken resident George Hall, whom we thank. The enamelled sign, of the kind that one may still see on a few corner buildings in town, has white letters on a blue background. It will fit well into our Frank Sinatra (born on Monroe Street) Exhibition which is being assembled for a future showing.

Two Members To Exhibit Art

Museum President Jim Hans and Trustee Luke Faust will exhibit their paintings, drawings, collages and assemblages created over a period of 25 years at the new Traders of Babylon Gallery, 259 First Street, Hoboken from October 12 through November 4.

Faust will show portraits and landscapes, one of the old floating Hoboken boat club docked at the foot of Fourth Street. Hans will exhibit "Time & Space" pieces and his little "Time Machines," plus, on opening night, a continuous showing of his 41-minute 1966 anti-war film, "The Hands of Time are Soon Defiled Eternity Will Turn Upon Itself." Opening night is Friday, October 12, 7:30 to 10.

In addition to exhibiting works of local artists and photographers, Gallery proprietor and manager Steve Kilnisan will offer a rental service of videos by local artists and film makers who have created personal or history-related works. If you have an extra copy of such a video tape to place on loan, bring it to Steve; he is an active member of the Museum and may be reached days at 659-0802.

The Stevens Family Shipyard

(First article of a series)

By Jim Hans

Shipyards in Hoboken date back to John Stevens, great engineer, inventor, and founder of Hoboken. At the turn of the 18th Century and later, he and his sons built and experimented with various water craft on their property in Hoboken.

The Stevens shipyard was for many years on the Hoboken waterfront between First and Second Streets where in its machine shop and shipyard the principle of the screw marine propeller was one of the mechanical contributions of the Stevens family. In fact, Colonel John Stevens had not gone far with his experiments in steam when he hit upon the idea of the tubular boiler, without which steam would never have attained its importance in power generation.

Seeing John Fitch's ill-fated steamboat in 1787, Stevens became interested in steam navigation, and experimented for nearly 30 years. As early as 1791 Stevens operated a steam-powered boring mill. By 1804 John Stevens had constructed in one of the nation's first shipyards the very first screw-propelled steamboat.

Robert L. Stevens, his son, who would later be called the "greatest engineer of his day," assisted in this project, and five years later, barely 21 years old, took the side-wheel steamer *Phoenix* to Philadelphia by sea. This vessel, built in Hoboken, was the first to navigate the ocean under steam. An illustration of the *Phoenix* recently appeared on a U.S. postage stamp.

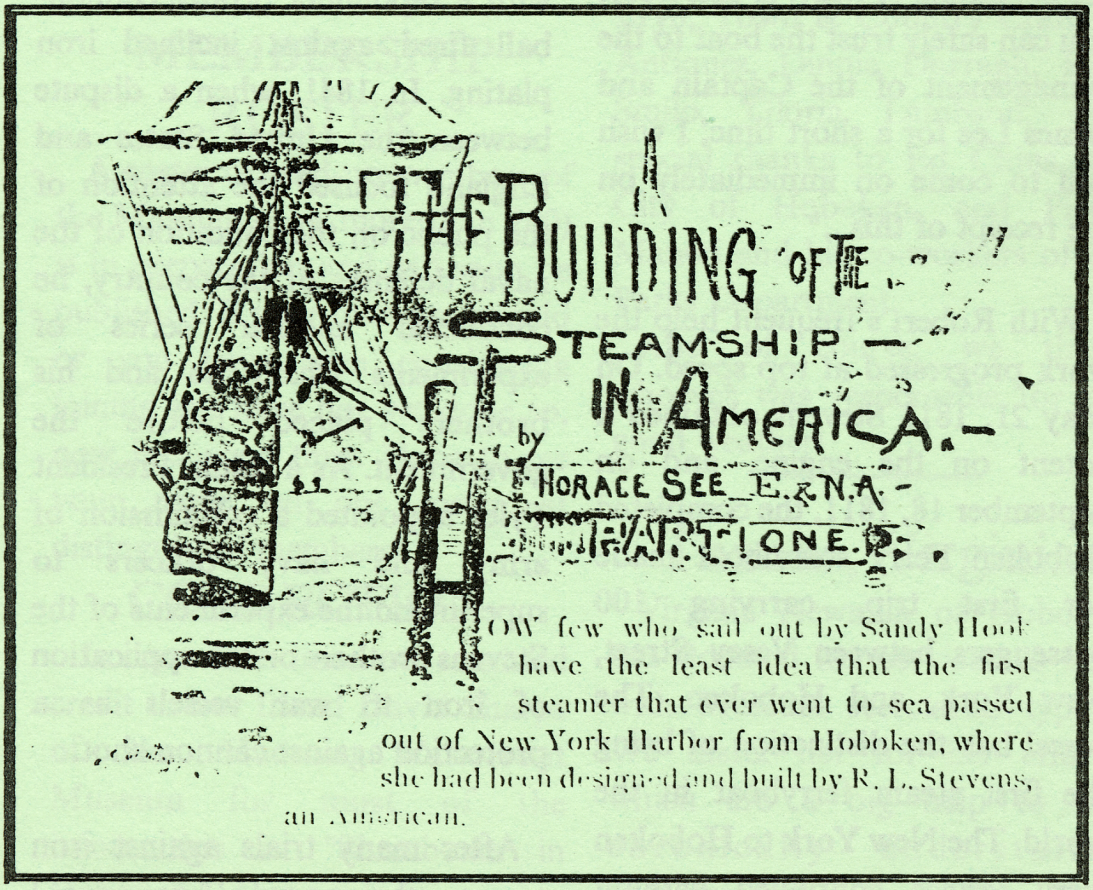
It was as a builder of steamships that Robert Stevens made himself famous. For a quarter of a century, and while he gave his chief attention to that line of work, he stood at the head of the engineering profession in this country; and his mechanical inventions and improvements up to 1840 were so many a mere catalog would fill pages.

In an 1891 magazine article (partially reproduced here) he gets

first mention and all the credit for the steamboat *Phoenix*.

The nearby forests owned by John Stevens supplied the timber and lumber for the hull of the *Phoenix* which was built at the Hoboken yard under the supervision of John Floyd, a well-known shipwright The mammoth steam engine and boiler set in brick in the bottom of the hull was built by Stevens; and in addition to steam power, the 110-foot *Phoenix* was rigged with two masts and sails. With the possible exception of the 1804 twin-screw steamer later called the *Little Juliana*, also built at Hoboken, the *Phoenix* was the first all American-built steam vessel. (The machinery for Fulton's earlier *Clermont* was imported from England.)

In a letter to Robert Fulton of February 28, 1811, John Stevens tells Fulton; "I have obtained a lease from the [City of New York] Corporation for the Hoboken Ferry for the term of 14 years on



THE BUILDING OF THE STEAMSHIP — IN AMERICA.—

by HORACE SEE, E. & N.A.—

PART ONE.

OW few who sail out by Sandy Hook have the least idea that the first steamer that ever went to sea passed out of New York Harbor from Hoboken, where she had been designed and built by R. L. Stevens, an American.

Engineering, May 1891

condition of putting a steamboat on the ferry in two years..."

In this connection, Stevens wrote to his son Robert who was away from Hoboken at the time manning the *Phoenix*: "I am at present in great want of your assistance here; before I proceed too far with the engine for the ferryboat, I wish to have your advice about the arrangement of the machinery. The keel, stem, stern, and floor timbers are already laid and the boat builder promises to have her finished by the beginning of May. If therefore, you can safely trust the boat to the management of the Captain and James Lee for a short time, I wish you to come on immediately on the receipt of this..."

With Robert's frequent help the work progressed at top speed. On May 21, 1811 Stevens obtained a patent on the engine, and on September 18, 1811, the completed Hoboken Ferry steamboat made her first trip, carrying 100 passengers between Vesey Street, New York, and Hoboken. The vessel has the distinction of being the first steam ferryboat in the world. The New York to Hoboken ferry service continued without interruption until 1967, and has recently been successfully revived.

A SHIP MADE OF IRON

Although ships at this time were made entirely of wood, John Stevens of Hoboken envisioned a ship made of iron. In 1813 he designed an ironclad ship which fully embodied the *Monitor* concept and was the first ever worked out for construction.

In 1814 the Colonel's son Edwin, then 19 years old, under his father's direction had experimented with a 6-pounder bronze cannon-ball fired against inclined iron plating. In 1841, when a dispute between the United States and England focused the attention of the public on the condition of the naval defenses of the country, he conducted another series of experiments which he and his brothers placed before the government. As a result, President Tyler appointed a commission of army and navy officers to superintend the experiments of the Stevens brothers on the application of iron to war vessels as a protection against cannon shot.

After many trials against iron targets, the commission reported

that iron $4^1/_2$-inches thick resisted effectively the impact of a 68-lb shot fired at it from a distance of 30 yards with battering charges. On April 14, 1842, Congress passed an act authorizing the Secretary of the Navy to make a contract with the Stevens brothers for the construction of an ironclad vessel. The dry-dock for this vessel was begun immediately and was finished within a year, and construction began.

[Continued in our next issue]

MEMBERSHIP ROSTER

A roster of paid-up members of the Museum (now more than 200) is in preparation and will soon be published. If your dues are unpaid or you have been considering joining but have not yet done so, now is a good time. Hope to see your name on our roster of distinguished members!

CORRECTION

In our last issue we omitted credit to our friend David Sharps of the Hudson Waterfront Museum for most of the information in "Showboats in Hoboken." Our apology.

Flea Market Credit

The success of the Museum flea market in Church Square park on June 24th was reported in our last issue. But space did not permit us to thank those who helped make it such a great success:

Besides Bob Foster, who organized and managed the event, others who helped in so many ways include Jim Hans, Steve Kilnisan, John DePalma, Barbara Lippman, Nancy Wenner, and Hugh Kilmer. Among others who donated their time or merchandise to be sold are Holly Metz, Ray Bryn, Town & Country Crafts & Antiques, Dinnia Darragh, Rico Smilo, Gloria Lambson, plus special thanks to Ed Chius, the City of Hoboken, and Pierre Maneri and his co-workers of the Parks Department.

And of course, we thank whoever was responsible for the good weather!

Thanks, Virginia

Virginia Newman of Hoboken has donated her services to help with Museum secretarial typing. We thank her for her efforts, which are a big help to our chronically understaffed organization.

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CITY HALL

WASHINGTON AND FIRST STS. HOBOKEN, N.J.

MEETING NOTICE

Our next meeting is MONDAY, September 17 at 7:30PM in the Clam Broth House on Newark Street, Hoboken. All members and non-members are invited to attend and be amazed at our proceedings without obligation.

MUSEUM NEWSLETTER

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Lifetime Membership: $100.00

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