

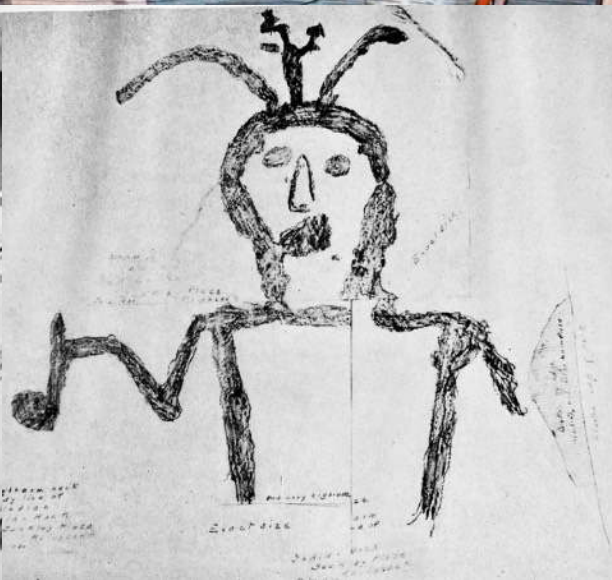


DUTCHESS COUNTY SCRAPBOOK

Notes & images from here and there in Dutchess County, New York.

A Dutchess County Historical Society publication.

Bill Jeffway , Executive Director & Melodye Moore, Chair, Collections.
Featuring Dutchess County Historical Society Collections.



Dutchess Scrapbook

Stories from here and there in Dutchess County.
Articles Published in the Northern & Southern Dutchess News.
By Bill Jeffway & Melody Moore.

Introduction

These articles were written and published between 2018 and 2021 in the Northern & Southern Dutchess News. They represent a wide range of topics and have been organized into general groupings, but of course overlap in topics. We hope you may find this the kind of book you can pick up now and again and enjoy over time. You will find more about these topics, including some exhibitions, at www.DCHSNY.org.

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- Lincoln Comes to Dutchess County
- Spring 1865, the Local View of National Mourning
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- How to Use Local History in Education

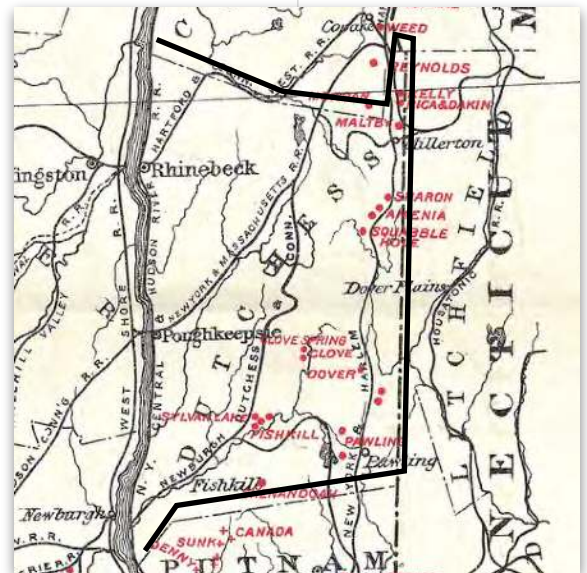
The Second Iron Age Comes to Dutchess County

While the *iron age* typically refers to the prehistoric period several thousand years ago, some leaders in architecture, design and engineering were calling the mid 1800s *the second iron age*. Many saw the construction of the US Capitol dome (1856 to 1866) as controversial and risky. But the success of the dome, and improvements in technology that were accelerated by the emergency of the Civil War, saw demand for iron explode from the wartime period until steel started to nudge iron aside in the 1880s.

The second iron age played out through three men and one woman in particular in Dutchess County. Edward Bech was a Danish immigrant who created massive smelting operations in Poughkeepsie. Vermont-born John Winslow, who had a river estate in north Poughkeepsie, and Irish immigrant John Roach, who had a large farm in the eastern part of the Town of Poughkeepsie, became titans of shipbuilding. It was through Roach's Aetna Ironworks that Poughkeepsie's widowed property owner Josephine Pardee, a woman of some means, engaged the building of the cast iron building at the corner of Main and Garden Streets in 1871 that stands today. It opened in May of 1872.

That period was the height of the second iron age. By the time of the 1886 to 1889 construction of the great Poughkeepsie Railroad Bridge (now the Walkway over the Hudson), the era of steel had emerged. While the entry ramps of the bridge are made of iron, the vast bridge itself is made of steel.

From the earliest days of our county's settlement, iron mines and small furnaces appeared in the eastern portion of our county. But as the Civil War approached and demand for iron grew, an improved process emerged that did not use locally available charcoal (from burning trees), but instead used coal that had to be imported. Suddenly the business of forging iron started to coalesce into larger operations like the *Poughkeepsie Iron Company* and



Above: 1880 map showing iron mines & furnaces in Dutchess County. Below: Dover Iron Works.





Above:

the *Fallkill Iron Works*. They were launched in the 1850s by **Edward Bech**.

Bech was able to take advantage of improved transportation offered by canals and railroads, allowing him to import coal from Pennsylvania and import much better quality ore from Lake Champlain, rather than from local mines. With coal from the west, and ore from the north, the furnaces in Poughkeepsie were located right on the waterfront to more easily ship products south to New York City and east to Boston.

After living on Market Street for some time, Bech bought what he called Rosenlund in the north of Poughkeepsie in 1863, on land that is now part of Marist College. It had a highly cultivated 65 acres. Bech died in 1873, but his widow maintained Rosenlund and it remained in the family until the death of Bech's daughter in 1935.



John Flack Winslow was said to have had an uncanny knack for figuring out iron's potential. He knew what to do with the iron people like Bech produced.

By age 21 he was working in the iron industry. Through his own skill and connections he came to own the Rensselaer and Albany Iron Works. During the Civil War, he had been unsuccessful in lobbying the Navy to build the first iron-clad Navy vessel, *the Monitor*. Winslow was persistent and was able to get a personal meeting with President Lincoln through his friend, Secretary of State Seward. Lincoln was impressed and effectively forced his subordinates to engage in a contract.

It turns out the Confederate States had also been building an iron-clad ship, *the Merrimack*, and the Monitor ended up playing a decisive role in the first battle between armored ships in March of 1862.

Winslow purchased “Wood Cliff” in 1867, a large river property just north of Bech’s Rosenlund. Both estates are now part of the Marist College campus. Winslow lived there until his death in 1892. His widow lived there and it remained in the family until 1927 when it was sold and converted to an amusement park.



Winslow was very active in his later years at the estate. He became Director of the Poughkeepsie and Eastern Railroad, the railroad that emerged with an east/west orientation. He was an active, and successful lobbyist for the building of the Poughkeepsie Railroad Bridge in the 1880s.

John Roach was another man who knew what to do with iron. Born in Ireland in 1813, he arrived in New York in 1829 and was involved with iron by 1832, at the age of 19. His business acquisitions in shipbuilding were large. In 1852 he purchased the Aetna Ironworks, based in New York City, and during the Civil War turned it into a major manufacturer of marine engines.



In 1857 John Roach bought his first parcel of land in the Town of Poughkeepsie, on today’s Vassar Road, and added parcels over several decades, while primarily residing elsewhere.

In 1867 he purchased Morgan Ironworks and in 1871 made his biggest purchase, the Delaware River Iron Shipbuilding and Engine Works. 1871 was the same year that the Aetna Iron Works was engaged by Josephine Pardee, a widowed major property owner in Poughkeepsie, to build the fashionable and historic cast iron building that stands today at Main and Garden Streets. A large, devastating fire had taken out a whole set of buildings on the site the prior year.

Roach became the largest shipbuilder in the US. But changing political winds turned tragic for Roach. When Democrat Grover Cleveland replaced a long string of Republican US Presidents, his administration nullified contracts with Roach, driving the company into



receivership in 1885. Roach died in January 1887. Roach's sons were able to resurrect the business to some degree and maintained the farmland in Poughkeepsie into the early 20th century.

These three men and one woman of Dutchess County beautifully illustrate the efforts and effects of *the second iron age*: one created the material, two manufactured on a massive scale, and one woman in particular took the risk to make a bold statement on Main Street that endures



