

**THE HISTORY OF COHOES,
NEW YORK, FROM
ITS EARLIEST SETTLEMENT
TO THE PRESENT TIME**

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The History of Cohoes, New York, from Its Earliest Settlement to the Present Time by Arthur H. Masten

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ARTHUR H. MASTEN

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ALBANY:
JOEL MUNSELL.

1877.

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INTRODUCTION.

The preparation of a sketch of the history of Cohoes was commenced by the writer at the request of the Hon. D. J. Johnston, mayor of the city, made in accordance with a proclamation issued by the president, calling attention to the following resolution passed by Congress, May 13, 1876 :

“ It is hereby recommended to the people of the several states that they assemble in their several counties or towns on the approaching Centennial Anniversary of our National Independence, and that they cause to have delivered on such day an historical sketch of said county or town from its formation, and that a copy of said sketch be filed, in print or manuscript, in the clerk's office of said county, and an additional copy, in print or manuscript, be filed in the office of the librarian of congress, to the intent that a complete record may thus be obtained of the progress of our institutions during the first centennial of their existence.”

The understanding was that the sketch should be published in one of the city papers in case it was not completed by July 4th. It was found, however, after

some progress had been made, that if limited to the length suitable for production in the manner proposed, the history would in many particulars be incomplete and unsatisfactory, and it was accordingly decided to enlarge it to the form in which it now appears.

As the manufacturing interests of Cohoes have always been its most important feature, their history forms in a great measure that of the place and consequently occupies a large share of the following pages.

An effort has been made to relate in addition the principal facts in the early history of this locality, and to describe the general progress of the place since the first steps were taken, fifty years ago, towards the development of its resources, giving accounts of its various institutions and of the most important local events.

Great care has been taken to insure accuracy in all respects—especially in regard to names and dates, though in a work of this sort, abounding in details, it is of course impossible to avoid a certain number of errors. Whenever it has been necessary to depend for data upon the memory of individuals, the information thus obtained has been verified, if possible, by a comparison of the versions given by different persons, and by reference to such records as are in existence. Except in the case of chapters I and VIII, an arrangement of facts in their chronological order rather than according to subject has been adopted, in the belief

that a better idea would thus be afforded of the general growth and progress of the place. Although this method makes the narrative at times disconnected, it appears preferable on the whole, since its disadvantages have been obviated as far as possible by foot notes and the full index at the close of the volume.

The materials used in the preparation of the book, aside from those obtained from private sources, have been for the greater part furnished by the files of the *Cohoes Cataract*, *Cohoes Daily News*, *Troy Times*, and *Troy Press*. Many facts have also been taken from the valuable publications of Mr. Joel Munsell concerning the history of Albany.

The writer would here express his obligations to the many friends who have assisted him in his labors, particularly to his father, James H. Masten, to whom he is indebted for constant aid and advice. Among others to whom acknowledgments are especially due may be mentioned Messrs. Joshua R. Clarke, Lucien Fitts, Henry D. Fuller and Nicholas En Earl of Cohoes; Miss E. Howe and Mr. Isaac I. Fonda of Waterford; Mr. Timothy Bailey of Ballston; Mr. Evert Van Der Mark of Lansingburg, Mr. Oliver C. Hubbard of West Troy and Mr. Chas. A. Olmsted of Lockport, N. Y., who have furnished much valuable information which could not otherwise have been obtained.

The writer is also indebted to Messrs. T. G. Younglove, D. J. Johnston and Harvey Clute of Cohoes; Mrs.

Hugh White of Waterford, Mr. A. A. Peebles of Lansingburg, and Mr. Charles Van Zandt of the Van Rensselaer office, Albany, for access to important documents, and to Mr. A. J. Weise of Troy for the use of the cut of the Van Schaick House and other favors.

ARTHUR H. MASTEN.

Cohoes, December, 1876.

HISTORY OF COHOES.

I.

EARLY ACCOUNTS OF THIS LOCALITY, FROM THE WRITINGS OF VISITORS TO THE FALLS.

IT is well known that the word *Cohoes* is of Indian origin, and has been the designation (with varied orthography) of this locality from the earliest times. Its exact derivation and meaning, however, have not been agreed upon. The different versions of Indian legends all have as their most prominent feature, a canoe carried over the Falls by the current, and this fact has furnished the derivation generally accepted. The signification — “a canoe falling” — has been given by almost every writer on the subject since Spafford, who wrote in 1813: “The name is of indiginal origin, and like the most such, has an appropriate allusion. Cah-hoos or Ca-hoos, a canoe falling, as explained by the late learned Indian sachem, Brandt, of illustrious memory.” In Morgan’s *League of the Ho-de-sau-nee or Iroquois* is a list of the settlements in the different territories, and under the head of Ga-ne-a-ga-o-no-ga or Mohawk territory, the author gives “Cohoes Falls: In Mohawk dialect *Ga-ha-oosc*, meaning the ship-wrecked canoe.” Many persons, on the contrary, whose knowledge of the Indian dialects entitles their opinion to respect, give another interpretation to the word, which is stated as follows in an article published in the *Schenectady Reflector*, in 1857: “The term in question is in the Mohegan language; its signification we cannot express without circumlocution, unless we use the word pitch or plunge, or coin a new substantive, *overshoot*. The