

The New York Times

Arts & LEISURE

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 26, 2010

THE WEEK AHEAD

Dec. 26 — Jan. 1



Cooper Union Library Archives.

Peter Cooper, the 19th-century industrialist and polymath, is the subject of a documentary on PBS.

Television **Ginia Bellafante**

PBS is paying tribute to the 19th-century multitasker and polymath Peter Cooper with the Gardner Documentary Group's **"MECHANIC TO MILLIONAIRE: THE PETER COOPER STORY."**

The documentary (check local listings) chronicles Cooper's ascent from poverty to become the industrialist responsible for building the first American steam locomotive. He also played a significant role in laying the first trans-Atlantic cable, and if that wasn't impressive enough, he invented a precursor to Jell-O and founded Cooper Union, the Manhattan college that is a tuition-free training ground for architects, artists and engineers. Oh, and by the way, Cooper also ran for president at the age of 84.