



Mabee Farm Historic Site History Mysteries Chaperone Packet

Thank you for volunteering to accompany your school group to Mabee Farm. Although this trip is aimed at the students, we hope that you enjoy yourself and to learn something at the same time. In order to make your experience as easy and enjoyable as possible, we've included some basic guidelines. These will help you not only enable the students in your charge to get the most out of their trip, but also to make things as stress-free as possible for yourself and for your teacher.

We know that you are giving valuable time to be here with these students, and that this trip would not be possible without you. Thank you in advance for your help, and please come back and visit us!

Some of the basics:

Your visit to Mabee Farm will begin and end at the George E. Franchere Education Center. There, students are broken into groups. These groups will rotate between stations out on the grounds. Please ensure that you and your students (10 or fewer per chaperone) stay together during your time at the museum.

Bathrooms are located in the George E. Franchere Education Center on the ground and first floors, and on the southeast side of the red English Barn. A drinking fountain is available on the first floor of the Education Center, near the bathrooms. If needed, first aid kits are located throughout the grounds. Please contact a museum staff member or volunteer if you or your students require medical assistance.

Make sure you know the time and place of your lunch and departure. Lunches will take place in the Edwin Reilly Jr. Solar Pavilion, or in instances of inclement weather in the basement of the George E. Franchere Education Center.

Student groups will be scheduled a time during lunch to visit the gift shop. Please ask students to visit the shop only during their allotted time. It is a small space, and too many students makes it difficult to browse.

Interacting with your students

Chaperones are responsible for the behavior of your charges on the grounds and should assist students in respecting the historic site, its artifacts, and its staff.

During your time at Mabee Farm, our staff and volunteers will work to engage your students in hands-on, interactive activities and in dialogue. Encouraging your students to participate, and joining in yourself are great ways to help make your experience a positive one. Please encourage students to come up with their own answers to questions or activities presented. This allows them to experiment and to learn while they are here. Some of the artifacts in our museum can be touched, but only with permission of the museum educators. These are not always easy to tell by sight, but we are happy to help you examine objects with assistance. At the end of this packet is a map of the Mabee Farm Historic Site. Please note where the bathrooms and first-aid kits are located, as well as where you and your students will be dropped off, picked up, and eat lunch.

Background Information

The Mabee Farm Historic Site is a special place where you can learn the story of one family across many generations. The story begins with a man named Jan Mabee. His parents were from The Netherlands, and immigrated to America. Jan was born in New Amsterdam in the year 1654, and moved north to Schenectady. There, he met a girl named Annjette, and around 1681, they married and started a family.

In 1705, Jan bought land from his old neighbor, Daniel Van Antwerpen, eight miles away from Schenectady along the Mohawk River. Daniel had a fur trading post, and sold Jan the western half of the property so he could build his family home. Jan built a house out of stones from the river, a home where his family would live for generations to come. From that point until the year 1999, when the Mabee family gave the land to the Schenectady County Historical Society, it never left the family.

During the years in between, the family built new buildings, tore down old ones, and made many changes to those they left standing. Today, if you walk through the 1705 stone house, you can see many of the changes the family made. These include things like holes for stovepipes, an indoor toilet, and even light bulbs. At the same time, you can still see what the house might have looked like when it was first built, because the beams and the floor are still the originals, and the big fireplace looks very similar to what it did in 1705.

Connected to the stone house by a 19th Century porch is the Inn the family built to attract customers traveling along the Mohawk River. It was built before the Erie Canal, and in fact, the men who helped plan out the canal, like Phillip Schuyler, even stayed in the Mabee Inn. Today you can see what the tavern room of the inn might have looked like around 1800.

Next to the stone house is the brick house. This building was used as a summer kitchen. This meant that you did not have to heat up your whole house during the summer when you cooked food over the fireplace. The upstairs was also a room for several different mother in laws of the family, after their sons married and moved into the stone house.

Across the site from the houses sits our big Dutch barn. It is not the original Mabee barn, but it is very similar to what the family used. The Nilsen family in Johnstown, New York, built it and we brought it here so visitors could see what the family's barn probably looked like. It has big beams called h-bents stretching across the middle, and has a wide-open floor. That is where the family would remove the kernels of wheat from the chaff, a process called threshing.

What is special about the Mabee Farm is that the Mabee family was just like most families today. They were not a big political family, they were not rich, and they were not anyone famous. They were just a regular family, much like the rest of us. Most homes that belonged to regular families from the early 1700's have not survived. If you were someone famous, people probably worked to save your home so future generations knew who you were. For regular people, that rarely happened. That is why this home is so special. It shows you what life for a regular family, a family like your family, was probably like over 300 years of American history.

When Jan Mabee purchased the land in 1705, he and his wife Annjette had ten children. Two of those children are the focus for the Colonial Kids tour; Abraham and Maria. In 1705, when the family moved from Schenectady to the land called Woestina, which means wilderness in Dutch, Abraham was 10 years old and Maria was 5. This program will give your students the chance to step into their shoes, try a hand at their chores, and learn more about the history of the area through the eyes of the Mabee children.

If at any point you have any questions about this material or your trip, please do not hesitate to call 518-887-5073 or email educator@schenectadyhistorical.org.



Pavilion (Lunch)

Program Start

Student Drop-Off

Bus & Chaperone Parking

Program Stations

Mabee Farm Historic Site

To Rotterdam Junction

River Rd

55

55

Main St to I-890/I-90