

Schenectady County Historical Society Newsletter

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32 Washington Avenue, Schenectady, New York 12305 (518) 374-0263

Web site: <http://www.schist.org>

Editor email: slbvs@earthlink.net

Librarian email: librarian@schist.org

FAX: (208) 361 5305

CALENDAR

Saturday, January 8, 2000

1:30 Refreshments

2:00 Program: *Percy Van Eps*

Presenter: Gary Barnhardt

Tuesday, January 18, 2000

Board of Trustees Meeting 7:30 PM

Wednesday, January 26, 2000

1:15 PM

Women's Auxiliary

Trials and Tribulations of a Colonial Housewife

Presenter: Jo Mordecai

Saturday, February 12, 2000

1:30 Refreshments

2:00 Program: *Portrait of a Woman*

in Mourning in the Civil War

Presenter: Maxine Getty

Tuesday, February 15, 2000

Board of Trustees Meeting 7:30 PM

Wednesday, February 23, 2000

1:15 PM

Women's Auxiliary

Washington in Colonial Schenectady

Presenter: Wayne Harvey

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

Have you read the novel *1984* by George Orwell? Sometime along the way I did. I think it must have been in high school. I remember for certain that while in college I read *Beowulf* twice, since I didn't understand it the first time through. Which isn't to say I understood it the second time.

But it turns out that *1984* was written in 1949, after I graduated from high school. *Beowulf*, by comparison, was written ca. 700. Well before I was in high school. Maybe someone has changed the copyright date on *1984*. (This is a little attempt at humor since the job of the main character in *1984* was to rewrite history.)

In *1984* Winston Smith sits in his small cubicle and receives instructions by pneumatic tube. (Orwell didn't anticipate E-mail or the Internet, but he did have interactive TV.) His instructions directs him to rewrite old newspaper articles. He "corrects" government predictions which turned out to be wrong, or just in general rewrites historical happenings to make the people in power look good. These are sent on, by pneumatic tube, to an unseen organization which prints up replacement copies for all the newspapers in library files.

What brought all this up? Well, it seems that in the article I wrote about replanting the "peace tree" in the society's back yard, I wrote that Lachine, Canada was raided (by New Yorkers) in retaliation for the raid on Schenectady. Right after our newsletter came out, my sister-in-law in Corpus Christi, Texas, sent me a copy of the book, *New York the Beautiful* by Wallace Nutting. Jean had picked this up in a recycling shop. On page 23 Nutting mentions that a group from Albany had retaliated for the Schenectady Massacre by raiding La Prairie, Canada. Uh-oh, shades of *1984*. Am I rewriting history?

So I spoke to long-time society member Wayne Harvey, who planted our first replacement tree. Wayne said our "peace tree", indeed, was planted by a delegation from Lachine. But the raid on Lachine had preceded the raid on Schenectady by six months. Let me paraphrase from an article Wayne wrote:

Lachine Celebrates their 300th Anniversary of Rebuilding

The base of the French and Indians who attacked and burned Schenectady on February 8/9, 1690, was Lachine near Montreal. Lachine's story of the massacre there, July 25/26 1689, is little known here.

In 1687 the French had invited fifty Iroquois sachems (leaders) to a peace conference at Fort Frontenac. On arrival the sachems were seized and sent to Marseilles, France, to serve in the galleys. In retaliation, 1500 Iroquois warriors made an attack on the outlying village of Lachine. Fifty-six of seventy-six dwellings were destroyed. Over 300 died in the attack and 130 men were taken prisoner.

And all of this was 65 years before the French and Indian War.

Please excuse all my past and future rewriting of history. I was an engineering major.

-- Bill Dimpelfeld --

NEW HOURS ON SATURDAYS

Members, students and others have been asking for Saturday hours. The word is out: there will be increased availability of the Grems-Doolittle library, starting on January 8, 2000.

What a wonderful way to start the last year of the old millennium!

Starting on January 8, the Grems-Doolittle library will be open every Saturday from nine AM until one PM. Mrs. LaGoy, our new librarian, has agreed to be available at that time. The museum will not be open at that time unless by special arrangement.

NEW SATURDAY HOURS!
GREMS-DOOLITTLE LIBRARY
TO BE OPEN
EVERY SATURDAY FROM
9:00 AM - 1:00 PM

As more and more people have discovered the rich treasures of the Grems-Doolittle Library, there have been increasing requests for the library to be open on Saturday mornings for the benefit of those who work until 5:00 and are unable to take advantage of our resources. As a result we have engaged Mrs. Virginia LaGoy to be available on Saturday mornings so that the library can become more available.

Volunteers from the membership will staff the office desk on those mornings. Let us know if you would like to volunteer.

HOLIDAY PARTY

Our holiday parties grow better every year. This year for the third season in a row the refreshments were catered by the culinary classes of Schenectady High School under the guidance of their instructor Mrs. Sharon Greenfield. Students serving were Miss Heather Charboneau, Mr. William Johnson and Mr. Nasheen Springsteen.

In addition to the delectable food, Robert Sager took his place at the piano and played Christmas songs for those who still like to sing along. And after the singing and nibbling, Wayne Harvey gave one of his inimitable talks, this one on the tale of how the Glen-Sanders furniture went to Williamsburg, and how much of it came back. His talk was enhanced by a set of well-done slides.

JANUARY PROGRAM

We are indebted to such scholars as Jonathan Pearson, Percy Van Eps, and most recently Susan Staffa for building a coherent historic picture of the Schenectady of yesterday. We have much of the writings of Percy Van Eps in our archives. We are fortunate to have Gary Barnhardt as our speaker on the Van Eps writings at our January 8th program.

This should be an informative meeting for all of us and a "don't-miss-it" for the serious student.

FEBRUARY PROGRAM

Maxine Getty is a dramatic interpreter of moments of historic significance. On February 12 at our regular monthly meeting she will give a dramatic interpretation of a woman's response to her loss during the Civil War. We sometimes lose sight of the feelings of those left at home, when we are caught up in the clash and conflict of wartime. Ms Getty will help us regain the larger view.

MUSEUM NEWS

Jo Mordecai

The Christmas Exhibit this year, "A Century of Toys," was very well received. We welcomed 212 children from the following schools:

Glen Cliff School

The Brown School - two groups

The Christian School

St John the Evangelist - two groups

also small children from the following Nursery Schools:

Toddlers' Trail - two groups

Magic Kingdom - two groups

Care a Lot - two groups

Special Place for Children - two groups

All were well-behaved and loved the houseful of toys.

We were fortunate to be presented by Steve Scoville on Channel 13, 6 o'clock news. He did a wonderful job talking about all our old toys and traditions. We were also written up in the *Gazette* on "Life Styles" by Michael Santa Rita -- also a great job.

I would like to thank the members who generously allowed me to borrow some toys for the exhibit:

Dorothy White Her lovely dolls and gazebo

The van Schaicks The Boston Mailer (or is it a tractor?)

Elsie Maddaus Her sister Billie's Teddy bears

Ingo Maddaus The wooden train

Louise Waterman Her Dutch dolls

Bob Sager The great pony and trap belonging to his brother

Rose Dixon Her husband's Lionel train set

Stasia Berdy Her elegant candelabras

Now we look forward to the coming of a New Year and a New Century. May it be a good year for all of us, full of understanding, new ideas, and peace. My new year's toast to you all is one my half Irish grandmother used to say:

May the road rise to meet you;

May the wind be always at your back;

May the sun shine warm upon your face,

And rains fall soft on your fields.

And until we meet again

May God hold you

In the hollow of his hand.

Happy New Year

- Jo Morecai -

From Your House to Our House

Donor Mr. Robert Sager A framed collection of the obituaries of George Washington

Donor Mrs. Carol Harvey A turn-of-the-century cabbage slicer that had belonged to Dr. LeRoy C Brandt, once rector of the Delmar Reformed Church. Father of Carol Harvey

Donor Mrs Elsie Maddaus Collection of 12 small stuffed animals that once belonged to Elsie's sister Billie

LIBRARY POTPOURRI

by **Virginia LaGoy**

Watch for the new Library Brochure. It's arriving just in time for our new Saturday hours.

GIFTS TO THE LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES

Donor Doris McKee Booklet: *German Day in Schenectady*

1905 Mt. Pleasant High School Commencement

Donor Ruth Hand Various cemetery records

Donor Don Hulett *My Enemy - My Friend; A Pocket Full of History; Schenectady Out of the Ashes*

Donor Joan Bradt Wood *Journey to a New Land; A Bradt Family in History*

Donor Derek Sayers *Early Memories and a Diary from World War II*

Donor Peter Ten Eyck A framed Schenectady Clearing House certificate (scrip)

Donor Laurence C Rainey *The Hudson Valley Dutch and Their Houses*

Donor Albany Colony *Mayflower Families through Five Generations*

Mayflower Society

Donor Chris Hunter *Life and Character of James A Garfield*

Proceedings of the Legislature of the State of New York

On the Life and Public Services of Martin H Glynn

New Acquisitions: Periodical: *New Netherland Connections*

Microfilm: Schenectady County Census: 1865, 1875, 1892, 1905, 1915, 1925

Schenectady County Marriage Records: 1908 - 1920

Declarations of Intention: 1830 - 1930

Naturalization Petitions: 1906 - 1929

Naturalization Index: 1835 - 1913

STROLLING THROUGH THE ARCHIVES ON A RAINY DAY . . .

We are working on indexing the files of Legal Matters, some 4000 of them. We've gotten to #285 and are beginning to realize that there were at least two people named Ryer Schermerhorn, or else there was one and he lived for over a hundred years, keeping his spirits up by suing people or being sued. (Actually there were two in the 18th century; grandfather and grandson, and if we're lucky Frank Taormina or somebody will write up the whole gory story.) However, I enclose a couple of tidbits, giving the flavor of the times. Those were the days when one could address an envelope "Ryer Schermerhorn, New York" and it would get to him.

10 February 1750

"I would have made a demand upon Jacomintie Viele but she hid herself so that I could not speak to her. . ." - Ryer Schermerhorn - (From Legal Matters #210)

and

From his lawyer Thomas Smith to Ryer Schermerhorn and John Glen, 21 June 1773:

". . . your answer had been delayed so long that it was impossible to bring on the trial as there was no judge in town before whom we could have the jury . . . as the Chief Justice was gone to _____, Mr. Jones lay ill at his house in Queen's County, Mr. Livingston was in Dutchess, and Mr. Ludlow had set out on the River Circuit and was then attending the Court in Orange, and Mr. William Livingston, the defendant's attorney to whom the Notice for striking the Jury for the View must be given had removed to Elizabeth Town, so that it was impossible to bring on the trial were we in every other respect prepared." (From Legal Matters #199)

MABEE FARM PROJECT

Progress on the Dutch barn is slow but now shows signs of speeding up. The damaged timbers have been repaired, delivered on-site, and pressure-washed preparatory to assembly and erection. The three-inch thick planks of the threshing floor are in place, providing a heavy-duty work surface. Once the "bents" have been assembled, a crane will lift them in place, perhaps before year-end.

Volunteers led by Everett Rau have placed two new sills under the 20x26 foot English barn next door, jacked the Southwest corner to straighten it on its footings and stabilized it for the winter. Come spring, two more new sills will be inserted and tied in place to ready the barn for moving to the Mabee barnyard where the archaeologists have made place for it.

Rob Petito of Waite Associates has submitted specifications for restoration of the slave quarters, and Bill Dimpelfeld is getting ready to let bids for the work.

(Ed. note: we're sure the work done and to be done is lots more than the above account makes it sound like!)

On December 21 the Mabee Farm Committee held its December meeting and Christmas year-end celebration in the 300-plus-year-old Mabee farmhouse with Scott Haefner, the site manager acting as host. Society President Dimpelfeld and Mabee Committee Chair Bob Sager noted the substantial contributions everyone made in putting on the second annual Forefathers Day and September Fest celebrations led by Anneke Bull and Kim Mabee; the work of Mary Kuykendall and John van Schaick in fund raising and Bill Milton in financial accounting; Keith Cramer and Everett Rau in directing the barn work; Louise Basa and Ron Kingsley in archeological investigations (*and we mustn't forget Ron's students busily removing stumps on a cold windy day!*); Frank O'Connor in coordinating governmental relations; and all the work that these volunteers and others (like the staff at 32 Washington Avenue) have performed in various ways throughout the year.

GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY NEWS

The Schenectady Interest Group of the Capital District Genealogical Society will not meet during January and February. The next meeting will be Saturday, March 11, 2000 at 10 AM in the Vrooman Room. Members to date include Ann Ross, Carolyn Veeder, Dorothy White, Beryl Grant, Joanne Blake, Marge McConnell, Muriel DeSorbo, Lueva Brinkman, Ralph Colson, Shirley and Charles Milbert and Elsie Maddaus. All interested persons are welcome.

The current project undertaken by the group is to identify and update information on ethnic groups for the Grems-Doolittle Library. Particularly, the name of the society, the name of the contact person (president or chairperson) and a phone number is desired. For example, Scottish; Clan MacRae and Lady MacRae Daughters of Scotia; Alex MacKay - 355-4328.

There has been a great number of such societies in Schenectady County over the years. The library's records show them alphabetically from British to Welsh. Some have gone out of existence. Since they seldom appear in the telephone book under the listing of the society's name, it is difficult to discover if a particular group is still active.

Therefore, we would appreciate the assistance of the members of the Schenectady County Historical Society in gathering this information so that the library will be able to help researchers more adequately. Send to Elsie M. Maddaus, 818 Riverside Avenue, Scotia, NY 12302, phone (518) 346-8981; E-mail: EMMaddaus@aol.com

TIME CAPSULE

Here's a list of items that Wayne Harvey contributed to the *Daily Gazette* millennium time capsule.

One gentleman's mother-of-pearl stick pin

One GE Quarter Century Club lapel pin

One clock key

One bone-sided pocket knife

One blue and white glass marble

One Union College Pennant sticker

One Heinz pickle charm (a small green pickle shape with "Heinz" embossed on it

One Schenectady Railway token

One "Celebrating Schenectady" Lapel Pin

One Pan American Exposition - 1901 - Lapel Pin from Buffalo World's Fair

One Red Cross Service Lapel Pin

One Hess's Department Store box

DEDICATION FOR OUR NEXT DOOR NEIGHBORS

Several members of the Society witnessed a Native American dedication ceremony at the Bradt Farm just west of the Mabee Farm, now the location of the Keepers of the Circle. Tom Porter, shaman , and a group of 25 Native Americans and

interested folks from Schenectady County participated in a blessing of the earth. Afterwards Frank Potter and Vince Dwyer welcomed guests and introduced visiting dignitaries.

AMOS (AMIE) CLAYTON by Bill Massoth

Amie Clayton could be seen wandering through the towns of Duaneburg, Esperance, Charleston and Amsterdam and even into Schoharie. People described him as a tall man with black hair and high cheek bones. Some thought that he was part Indian. He was a grotesque-looking character with large feet. He scared many children, and housewives, too; Wherever a crowd would gather, you would see Amie. For a few pennies he would do a little dance or grind out a tune on his music box. I often wondered what his music box was.

Early on, Amie had a small accordion-like instrument, probably a concertina, that he would push in and out and make sounds on -- he couldn't play a tune. later he bought a brand new Columbia portable phonograph and paid for it all with nickels and dimes. He carried that from place to place. Do you know how heavy those things were?

Although limited mentally, Amie was nobody's fool. In fact he was quite witty. He was an individualist: independent and self-supporting, supporting himself at a time when others more fortunate than he didn't support themselves. He was a peddler and he would peddle pins and needles, shoe laces, toothpaste, tape, thread, pills and White Cloverine Salve. Let's not forget White Cloverine Salve -- that was his most important product --the cure-all for all ailments. In the spring he would also sell packages of garden seeds.

As I said before, Amie was somewhat witty; one time a farmer who bought some seeds from him asked, "Amie, how deep do you plant these seeds?"

"Well," he replied, "If you plant 'em too deep they wouldn't come up and if you don't plant 'em deep enough the chickens'll scratch 'm out."

Another time he had some old newspapers that he was trying to sell. Somebody looked at them and said, "Why, Amie, these are no good, they're old."

"Yeah," he said, "but there's a lot of good readin' in them, just the same."

Amie dressed the same winter and summer, wearing a long overcoat and a scarf, a scarf that his mother had made for him and one that he treasured throughout his life. He also wore rubber boots. Rubber boots in the winter, can you imagine how cold they were? In fact Amie's rubber boots led to his death. He froze his feet and got gangrene and subsequently died.

(As we read this we couldn't help contrasting Amos Clayton with today's homeless people who all seem anonymous. That may be just because Schenectady is so much bigger than the towns Amos frequented, or it may have something to do with the pace at which we live.)

ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH AND INTERPRETATION

Once again Dr. Ronald Kingsley, instructor in the course Historical Archaeology and Field Study, and a researcher in archaeology and American history, will provide the student with basic skills in the process of fact-finding and report writing.

The course is offered at Schenectady County Community College on Tuesdays from 6 pm - 9 PM from February 29 through April 18th, 2000: 24 sessions hours (Eight classes).

This course examines primary and secondary documents used in archaeology. Sources, methods, locations, and interpretation of a variety of documents used for research, proposals and publications in archaeology are addressed. Visitations to depositories, lectures, discussions and hands-on activities are among the methods employed.

This is a non-credit course. There is a certificate awarded for hours attended. Hours are applicable to community archaeology at SCCC.

Texts and fees: two books (approximately \$35); Fee, To be determined. There is not at this writing an assigned registration number.

AMONG OURSELVES

(In recent months we have lost two of our outstanding members, women who by their commitment to the community were exemplars for all of us. We are fortunate to have known and to have had with us Mary Easton van der Bogert and Emily Rickey Phelps both of whom had long and valuable lives. We extend the sympathy of the society to their families.)

Mary van der Bogert

Mary van der Bogert was a long time member of the society, and a leading member of the Stockade Community. Those of us who have been around a long time remember that she and her husband, Giles van der Bogert, were among the leaders of the group that decided the Stockade was worth saving right after World War II when there was a housing shortage and some people wanted to tear down the decaying old dwellings and start over. We owe this exquisite neighborhood to the efforts of people like Mary and Giles.

Never one to rest on her laurels, Mary continued her intense community activity to the end of her long and fruitful life. We have her to thank along with Peg Lordi and Eleanor Brown for the Bike path which we now take for granted but which took ten years of devoted lobbying and seeking easements to put into effect. We understand that Mary carried this spirit to Evanston when she moved to be near son, Giles, Jr. and his family. In addition to Giles, she is survived by her sons Frans and Edward and their children.

In her memory, friends from the Heritage Foundation, the Stockade Association and the Historical Society held a memorial gathering here at the society. About fifty people attended, including Mary's son, Giles, who came with other family members from as far away as North Carolina and Illinois. People took turns recalling their experiences with Mary, a truly beloved person. The gathering was a happy occasion; memories of Mary gave us all a glow of appreciation for having had her for a friend.

Emily Phelps

Emily Phelps was another long-time Stockade and Historic Society member. She was the granddaughter of Judson Landon, Acting President of Union College, 1884-1888, and daughter of Walter Rickey and Elizabeth Landon. She graduated from Cambridge University, England, where she had moved with her family; later she did graduate work in public health at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Most of the past forty years she devoted to the care of her husband who had suffered a stroke early in their marriage. Mr. Phelps died in 1996. In spite of the difficulties of providing constant care for an invalid, Emily found time to involve herself with the activities of the community, and often attended events at the society. She was a member of the Fortnightly Club (founded by her grandfather and mother in the 1890's), the Schenectady Garden Club, and the Schenectady County Historical Society. She was a parishioner of St. George's Episcopal church. She also did much work with the Boys and Girls Club.

She is survived by son Walter Rickey Phelps, daughter Rosemary Mylchreest Murphy, three grandsons, a granddaughter, two great-grandchildren; and a brother, the sculptor George Rickey.

A memorial service is planned in the spring.

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING DEPARTMENT

Wanted! Copies of Family Bible Records for our Family Files. You could FAX them to us!

P.S. We don't really want whole Bibles! We'd also like more family histories. These can be a few pages or a whole book.

Wanted!

Someone to do filing in the library. Our librarian can never catch up.

Great opening for volunteer with unsatisfied clerical lust! Call librarian at 374-0263

Wanted!

Someone to do data entry on one of our wonderful computers. You do not have to be a computer geek; you just need enthusiasm for the work of the society plus the ability to follow directions. Call librarian at 374-0263

Wanted!

A real extrovert to organize boat and bus trips. There are wonderful places to go around here, but all the board members are maxed out and we need fresh blood, verve, muscle and know-how to plan trips. Call office at 374-0263

Wanted!

A grant writer. We know the grants are out there; we just need that certain person with the time to ferret out where the grants are hidden so we can continue to enhance the work of the Society. Call President or office manager at 374-0263

Wanted!

Docents. A docent is a tour guide. We're running out of docents and we want fresh troops. Come now: you know that you've always secretly wanted to show people around the Museum. Follow Jo or Sally or Wayne or Ann a time or two and you'll get the hang of it. Call Jo Mordecai at 374-926 for further information.

NEW ADVERTISEMENT!

Wanted!

Occasional people to act as receptionists on Saturday mornings as we go into our new Saturday morning program. We envision rotating volunteers on a once-a-month basis for Saturday AM duty either at receptionists or museum docents or both. Speak to the office manager at 374-0263

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