



Schenectady County Historical Society

Newsletter

Volume 42 Number 1-2

January - February 2005

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THE SOCIETY IS ONE HUNDRED YEARS OLD

The Early Years



Portrait of Jonathan Pearson (1813-1887) Artist Samuel Sexton 1875. Collection of Union College. Photo from SCHS Archives.

Jonathan Pearson had a dream!! As far back as 1840 he noted in his journal the following: "It is a thing much to be desired that some Schenectadian would endeavor the history of this old town which has now been inhabited these more than two hundred years. Our antients are passing away fast, family records and traditions are also becoming scarce, and if the materials are not soon gathered, the beginnings of Dorp will soon be unsung."

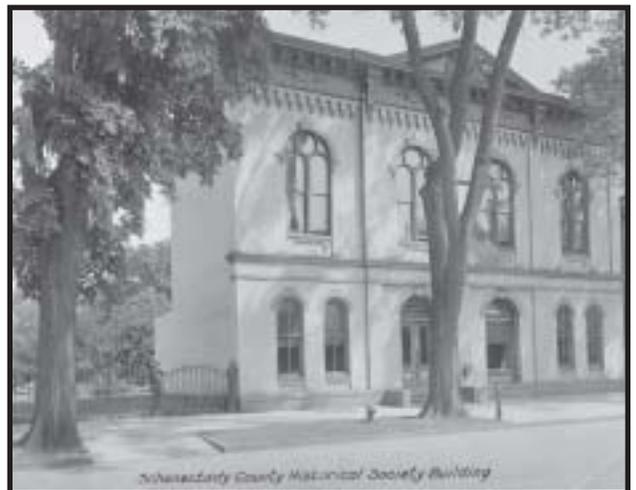
Various attempts were made to preserve Schenectady's history. One of the more significant was the formation of 1899 of The Netherlands Society of Schenectady whose purpose was "to collect and preserve information relating to the early history and

settlement of Schenectady and the Mohawk Valley, by the Dutch, and to collect and preserve all still existing documents etc. relating to their history and genealogy" *One had to be a direct male descendant of "Dutch national and linguistic stock"* in order to be a member. It did manage to preserve and collect historic documents which later were given to the Schenectady County Historical Society.

Six years later an exhibit was held at the Schenectady Public Library at which time plans were made for the formation of the Schenectady County Historical Society. Articles of incorporation were prepared by Judge Alonzo Strong and filed on June 30. The Society was established on July 14, 1905 under the membership Corporation Laws of the State of New York. The papers of Jonathan Pearson and E.Z. Carpenter were the nucleus of the Society's collections.

The Society's first home of its own was located at 13 Union Street. The Society signed a three year lease at \$100 a year. Membership dues were \$1 a year which made it difficult to pay the rent. The Society struggled along until 1958 when General Electric in an effort to advance the city's cultural and educational institutions deeded 32 Washington Ave., our present headquarters, to the Society.

13 Union Street
(now a parking lot)



UPCOMING CENTENNIAL EVENTS

JANUARY 8TH 1:30 P.M.
SOCIETY HEADQUARTERS
HISTORY OF SOCIETY

FEBRUARY 11TH 6:00 P.M.
DINNER AT
GLEN SANDERS MANSION
A FUND RAISER TO BENEFIT
THE SOCIETY – SEE PAGE 6

FEBRUARY 12TH 1:30 P.M.
SOCIETY HEADQUARTERS
ALLAN CROSS,
COLONIAL COIN MAKER

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Kim Mabee

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Vice President

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Jeff Parry

Eliess Riemer

Frank Taormina

Richard Whalen

Sally Van Schaick

STAFF

Virginia Bolen

Librarian

Kathryn Weller

Curator

Pat Barrot

Mabee Farm Site Manager

Johanna Woldring

Office Manager

Paul Gonsowski

Custodian

HOURS:

MUSEUM

Monday – Friday

1:00 to 5:00 p.m.

Saturday

10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

LIBRARY

Monday – Friday

1:00 to 5:00 p.m.

Saturday

9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

MABEE FARM

Closed for the season

Open by appointment.



LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Members:

Since our last newsletter we have had some highs and low lows. The Columbus weekend Craft Fair at The Farm was a big success, well organized and a fun place to shop! Thanks to Pat and Stan and all who worked. We have had some big losses from the end of October to the beginning of November. The passing of Trustee Ann Ross, one of our most prolific volunteers and ardent supporters will leave large shoes to fill. Her “can do” attitude and quiet persistence is already missed. Her star was front and center on the Society’s “Stars of Schenectady” Christmas tree she helped create for the Proctor Festival of Trees held in December at Proctor’s Theatre.

Thanks to all the generous friends and families who contributed in memory of our deceased members. We recently received a generous contribution to our endowment fund from the estate of Mrs. Beulah Terbush Hinkle who passed away last year. Also a bequest to the Mabee Farm from the estate of Aunt Marion and Uncle “Hap” Mabee who passed away 2002 and 2003 respectively

More sad news – our Mabee Farm benefactor, Mr. George Franchere passed away of a heart attack on Thanksgiving Day. George was a wonderful supporter of the family farm and was quite pleased with our progress through the years and especially with the school program. So we hope to keep fulfilling his high expectations of making the farm a great place for families to visit and learn.

We had a wonderful program at the Society on November 13 honoring the veterans. Capt. James Caulfield and Lt. Comdr. Chet Wilson, local president of the Navy League gave an enlightening talk on the USS Schenectady. We received good TV coverage on the exhibit especially since the ship was used for target practice in the Pacific a few days after the talk.

Did you see the Society’s float in the holiday parade on SAC TV? I believe it is the first time we have participated in many years.

I hope you all have had HAPPY HOLIDAYS.

Kim Mabee



FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

When you do your financial and estate planning the Society hopes you will give thought to including it in your plans. The Society as a non-profit depends, as all other non profits, on the generosity of members to preserve and maintain its collections, utilize these collections as a teaching tool for young and old alike, engage the entire community in its efforts to preserve the history of the region. It enables us to hire professionally trained personnel and

maintain professional standards which in turn makes us better equipped to be of service to the community. A recent generous bequest will enable us to hire our curator full time which will be a plus for the society and to the community it serves. We hope you will consider us in your plans. If you have questions or would like to talk to a member of the Society’s Finance Committee call Kim Mabee, our president, and she will direct you to the right person.

Ona Curran

GEORGE EUGENE FRANCHERE



George Eugene Franchere, 73, donor and benefactor of the Mabee Farm Historic Site in Rotterdam Junction was stricken on November 25th in Dunedin, Florida, while driving to a Thanksgiving Day appointment.

Born in Troy and raised in Altamont, George was the son of Harry B. Franchere, a doctor in the

State Health Service and his wife Edna. His grandparents were George A. Scrafford, Rotterdam business man and his wife Rachel F. Mabee. George, a graduate of Albany Academy, was in charge of IRS Special Services in the Detroit region when he inherited the Mabee Farm in 1973 with an understanding that it become a center for local history education.

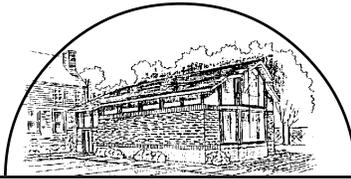
In 1980 George retired to Dunedin where he busied himself with a Florida Historical Society vice-presidency and several Dunedin charities. A descendant of Gabriel Franchere, fur trader in Astoria circa 1808 George became devoted to his country’s history as a child. His grandfather’s Inn, the Mabee House, adjacent to the railroad roadhouse in the Junction, stimulated a lifelong interest in the role of railroads in the nation’s history. He was a member

of the Dutch Reformed Church and an honorary life member of Benton Harbor Michigan Masonic Lodge.

George leaves no close relatives but a host of friends in Florida, Michigan and New York. His ashes will be interred in the family plot in Vale Cemetery where his father, mother and an only brother who died in infancy are buried. A committal service will be announced by the Schenectady County Historical Society at a later date.

NOTICE

THE SOCIETY WILL BE CLOSED
DECEMBER 31ST THROUGH
JANUARY 9TH BUT WILL BE
OPEN FOR THE MONTHLY
MEETING OF THE SOCIETY
ON THE 8TH AT 1:30 P.M.



The Grems-Doolittle Library & Archives

THE EFNER HISTORY RESEARCH LIBRARY

Things have been busy through the fall at the Efner History Research Library (City Archives/ City History Center). We have installed half of the metal bookcases gifted to us by the Schenectady Museum, and have the rest of them on stand-by, ready to be installed, once we complete some minor remodeling. We have removed all wooden book and map cases from the main room. The metal shelving and a wonderful map file from the Law Department take the place of the old cases. We are repainting, one wall or corner at a time, and will continue to paint as we move things around. We are making a nice map and blueprint area in one corner of the room. An Excel Spreadsheet has been created to help users find the maps they want to see from the over 1,000, so far, that have been entered into the spreadsheet. We

are going to tackle the blueprint collection next.

A good part of November was spent conducting a preliminary survey of the cubic footage of the holdings of the City Archives, and writing a grant application to the State Archives' Local Government Records Management Improvement Fund for a total inventory in 2005-6. We should know by March if the application was approved.

In October we had the Antiquestors come in for a talk and a tour of the City Archives. We thank them again for a donation they made towards supplies for the Archives.

Our most exciting news is our photocopy machine. An early Christmas present! Thank you, Kim and Gary, for delivering it!
Cindy Seacord, Acting Archivist.



Can anyone identify this picture?

NEW BOOK AVAILABLE!

at the Schenectady County Historical Society

DR. SUSAN STAFFA, Author

**Schenectady Genesis: How a Dutch Colonial Village Became an American City
Volume 1: The Colonial Crucible, 1661-1774**

Get one of the first available copies of this authoritative book on Schenectady

For sale at the Schenectady County Historical Society
32 Washington Avenue, Schenectady, NY

In the historic Stockade area

Price: \$30.00



The Vrooman Family Circa 1900 - The young boy is John J. Vrooman, historian. The Vrooman Room in Society Headquarters is dedicated to his memory. The Vroomans lived at 3 Washington Avenue and owned J.V. Vrooman and Sons hardware at 138-140 State Street.

ANN ROSS 1932-2004

Ann, a valued member of the Board of Trustees for many years passed away unexpectedly on November 12 of this year. She was an active member of the Library Committee and contributed her wisdom in all aspects of museum operation. She was chairman of the Board Nominating Committee, and advocate of professional museum standards and active in the selection of the museum's new curator. She was a life long resident of Schenectady and a graduate of Niagara College with a degree in art history. She was active in the Capital District Genealogical



Society and head of the New York State Genealogical Volunteers. Our sympathy goes to her husband John and her four daughters and their families. She will be missed.

We now accept credit cards—
MasterCard and VISA.





Mabee Farm Historic Site

Mabee Farm

1080 Main Street (Rt. 5S), Rotterdam Jct., NY • (518) 887-507

people to use local timber. The last few years Keith considers himself lucky building the best of both worlds. He is presently working with a barn builder to create a modular timber house based on a 1700's Dutch H bent frame house, with solar heating. This first 21st Century Dutch house is just being finished now which will be a very affordable package all done in local wood.

SPOTLIGHT ON KEITH CRAMER

As President of the Dutch Barn Preservation Society, Keith first became involved with the Mabee Farm when he helped move the Nilssen Dutch Barn from Johnstown to it's present site on the Farm. Little did he know that first day, he would become one of it's main players.

Thanks to Keith's efforts, the Dutch Barn Preservation Society has it's home at the Mabee Farm. When the Farm's new Education Center is built, the Society's collection of books and papers will be held for view at the new library. The Preservation Society is actively working on the 400th Anniversary of the Voyage of Henry Hudson in 2009 with a major project—a book inventorying all the remaining Dutch Farms left in New York and New Jersey.

Keith had always had an interest in farms growing up in Ballston Spa. He helped found the Regional Farm & Food Project which deals with new forms of farming and helping farms survive. His organization founded the Troy Farmers Market. He also turned a 19th century Dutch barn into the Slate Valley Museum.

Besides being a Mabee Farm Committee member and architect for our new Education Center, Keith does a lot of work in new and old timber frame buildings and encourages



TRI-CENTENNIAL OF THE MABEE FARM - JANUARY 29TH

January 29th marks 300 years since Jan Mabee signed the deed for the property on the third flat in Rotterdam Junction. We will celebrate this incredible anniversary with a talk on "Mabee Farm Documents" by Charles Ghering, a primary authority on Colonial Dutch history, Executive Director of the New Netherlands Institute and chief translator of the New Netherland Project on Saturday January 29th, 2004 – exactly 300 years to the day that the deed was signed. The original deed will be on display as well as other documents in both Dutch and English. Join us on January 29th from 1:30 – 3pm (refreshments at 1:30, talk at 2pm) at the Schenectady County Historical Society, 32 Washington Ave.

THE NEW NETHERLAND INSTITUTE

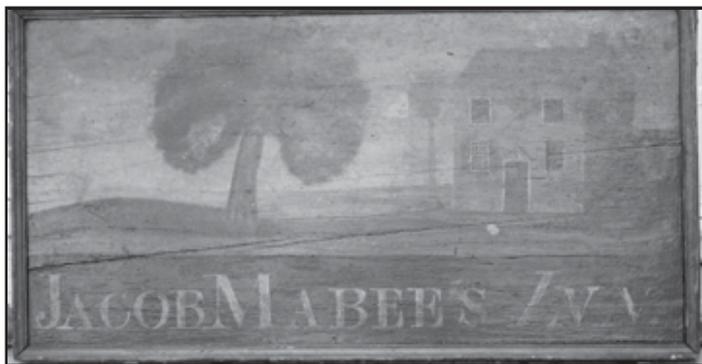
in conjunction with the State University of New York is planning an exhibition that will showcase the documentary history and artifacts of 17th and 18th century New Netherland with a focus on the Village of Beverwijck and surrounding agrarian communities. The exhibit will include artifacts from historical organizations in the area traditionally known as Rensselaerswijck which includes Albany, Rensselaer, Columbia and Schenectady counties as well as neighboring counties of Greene, Schoharie and Saratoga. Greta Wagle, coordinator of the exhibit has been to the Society checking out our collections for possible inclusion in the exhibit. Our portrait of Helena Van Epps Pieterse dated 1743, our biblical painting of the Annunciation circa 1740 and our 18th century Dutch tiles as well as early artifacts from the Mabee Farm are possibilities for the exhibit which will be held at the historic D&H Building in Albany. The D&H Building was modeled after the 13th century Flemish Cloth Hall in Ieper, Belgium. The exhibit is planned for May through October 2006.

m Historic Site

3 • Email: mabee@nycap.rr.com • Web: www.mabeefarm.org

“THE MABEE COLLECTION – 300 YEARS” EXHIBIT

As part of the 300 year celebration, the Mabee Farm will present an exhibit “The Mabee Collection – 300 Years” which will run from May 7 – September 24. This exhibit is a retrospective of items found on the Mabee Farm when the site was first donated by Mabee descendant, George Franchere. Many of those items have never been displayed before. Join us for the opening reception on Saturday, May 7 from 12-3. The original deed of 1705 will also be on display. Refreshments will be served.



Sign for Mabee Inn.

MABEE FARM WORKSHOPS 2005

The Farm has planned a series of workshops for the coming year. These include blacksmithing, timber framing, spinning, knitting and natural dyeing. The blacksmithing workshop will be held five times during the spring and fall. Others will be held during the summer. For further information call the Farm. Instructors will be Everett Rau, John Ackner and Pam Bucci.

Everett Rau who was not able to conduct a workshop last year will be back in July. Students will learn about layout, types of joining and how to make mortises and tenons. A complete small building will be timbered, assembled, sided and roofed. Classes will be held July 23, 24, 30 and 31 from 9am to 4pm. The fee is \$175. Ev's workshop is extremely popular with attendees coming from all over New York State. Sign up early.

Ev lives on the family farm “The Pleasantview” in Altamont which was originally owned by his mother's family, the Ogsburys, in the late 1700's. He is former president of the Dutch Barn Society, president of the Grange-Tri-County Fair Society, a member of the Altamont Fair museum committee. At 85 he shows no signs of slowing down and at the Mabee Farm he is one of our most competent and beloved volunteers.



Ev Rau flailing rye

WHAT A DONATION!

The Leffler/Quick family of Scotia made a huge donation to the Mabee Farm recently. On Fall Work Day it looked like a picture out of the Wild West. Sleighs, a two wheel sulky, runabouts, 23 wood planes, rockers, chairs, wooden washing machine and tons of farm equipment lay near the carriage shed while volunteers cleaned them up. We thank the Leffler/Quick family for their very generous donation.

We also received a four finger “bow” cradle from Fred Thompson of Niskayuna. Thanks so much Fred.



Kim Bianco and Dave Ogsbury cleaning up 2 wheel sulky

GROUP TOUR

The Schenectady Chamber of Commerce recently brought a group tour to the Mabee Farm from Rome, NY to show group leaders what a great destination Schenectady is to bring their tours. We hope to see some traffic here in the coming months from Rome, NY.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR SCHOOL PROGRAMS

Thanks to Richard Lewis's tremendous efforts, the farm has already registered 1,853 students for school programs in the spring. This number is very close to our total of last year. Consequently, we need some more volunteers to help out in many capacities such as soap making, schooling in the 17th century and chaperoning. The classes are held from the end of May to June. Don't worry – we will teach you what to do. Call 887-5073 if you have a few hours to give.

Museum News



CENTENNIAL EXHIBIT

IT ALL HAPPENED IN ONE HUNDRED YEARS!

This year, help the Schenectady County Historical Society celebrate its centennial with a new exhibit that explores the origins of our museum and the community that created it. Schenectady County in 1905 was a county on the cusp of radical changes. General Electric was still a fledgling company although it had already built a name for itself in the community as both employer and producer. The old city saw itself change in other ways with an influx of immigrants into the region creating an increasingly diverse community. Restaurants like the Nicholas' German restaurant served fare that represented these new groups of people. Although residents watched many things change over the early years of this century, there were a number of standards kept. The Erie Canal, once a threat to the city of Schenectady, became a prosperous addition to the area. Even after the introduction of railroads, the canals served both purposes of business and pleasure with boats like the Kitty West along side the traditional barges. Through both change and consistency, Schenectady County residents began to see an urgent need to preserve the history of their historic community. During the



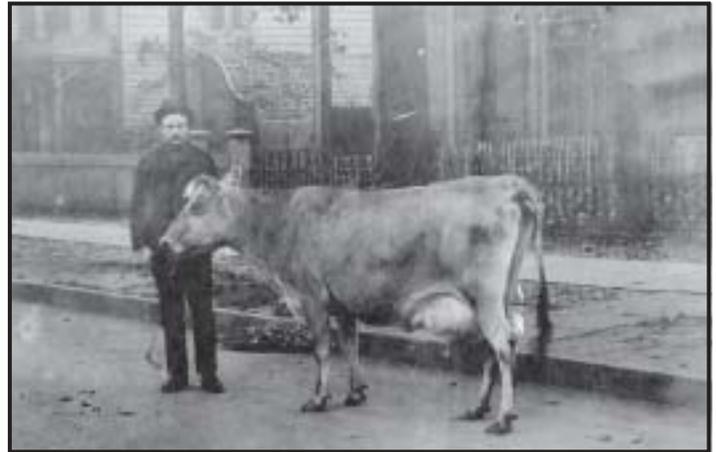
nineteenth century, "modern" buildings replaced many historic homes; some built by the original inhabitants. A new fear of permanent loss of history and respect for the past brought many residents to action to help preserve what became a collective history for the whole community. This coupled

with the centennial of the American Revolution and its emphasis on the past gave rise to the Schenectady County Historical Society and the development of its mission "To disseminate a greater knowledge of the history of the State of New York and particularly of Schenectady County."

PLAN TO VISIT THE EXHIBIT. IT OPENS FEBRUARY 15TH AND WILL RUN THROUGH THE END OF NOVEMBER.

IT'S OFFICIAL

Don Ritner has been appointed Schenectady County Historian by the Schenectady County Legislature. Mr. Rittner replaces the late Larry Hart. More on this appointment in the next issue.



"Dorpien" leading his cow home from Union College pasture. A few things have changed.

ALLAN CROSS, COLONIAL COIN MAKER – FEBRUARY 12 AT 1:30

The Spanish silver dollar was a world currency, legal in the colonies and later in the United States until 1857 according to Allan Cross, a revolutionary War re-enactor and guest lecturer for our February meeting. Mr. Cross has been casting reproduction silver coins for the past fifteen years as a means of teaching children about their heritage. Spain had ample supplies of gold and silver for coinage. Britons forbade sending English money for trade. The colonists had to depend on barter, the beaver, tobacco or Indian shell wampum. Most Revolutionary War paper currency was valued in the Spanish milled dollar according to Mr. Cross. He tells a fascinating story of early colonial coinage.

COCKTAILS AND DINNER

GLEN SANDERS MANSION, FEBRUARY 11TH

◆◆◆ COCKTAILS AT 6PM ◆◆◆

IN CONJUNCTION WITH SCHENECTADY HERITAGE AREA
TO BENEFIT THE SCHENECTADY COUNTY HISTORICAL
SOCIETY CENTENNIAL EXHIBIT

TICKETS \$50 PER PERSON ◆ CASH BAR

ALL FRIENDS OF THE SOCIETY WELCOME,

RESERVATIONS REQUESTED BY FEBRUARY 7TH

CALL (518) 372-7145

TER BUSH/HINKLE BEQUEST

The Society has received a very generous bequest from the estate of the late Beulah (Terry) Hinkle. This will go a long way in enhancing the society's professionalism and the means to provide programs and exhibits that the Society can offer the public. As a non-profit institute the community's financial help is extremely important. We are most grateful.

Mrs. Hinkle, the daughter of the late David A. Ter Bush has always been a generous supporter of the Society's activities. David Ter Bush was born in Westerloo New York and a descendant of an early Dutch family. He studied to be a teacher but found insurance more to his liking. He was innovative in his approach and was the originator of group health insurance. He was the founder of Ter Bush and Powell and died in 1954 at the age of 77. As a result of this bequest, the Society has been able to employ our curator Kate Weller on a full time basis. In recognition of this bequest and the family's generosity over the years, her title will be the Ter Bush/Hinkle Curator of the Arts.

We hope you will consider the Society when you do your estate planning.



David A. Ter Bush

Thank you to Jim Eigner for photographing our collection of paintings. We now have records for our files. Photos will also be available to researchers according to Society policy and regulations.

TRAINING SESSION FOR VOLUNTEERS

The next training session will be at 9 a.m. on January 24th. Kate Weller, our curator will introduce you to the Museum collections and tell you about the many ways in which you can help. You can be a guide, you can do research of the collections, you can write articles on what is in the collections, you can help install exhibits. There are many things you can do. Come join the excitement of working with the Society's expanding programs and activities. Call Kate to sign up for the session.

IT'S AN ADVERTISEMENT!



It is a jug but not used to pour apple cider.

It stands 19 1/2" high and occupied a goodly amount of space in George Ohlen's store at 47 State Street. It served as a promotion tool to encourage sales. According to the Schenectady City Directory of 1841-42. Ohlen was a wholesale and retail dealer in China, Glass and Earthenware along with Looking Glasses, Astral and Hanging Lamps, Britannia and plated ware, Cutlery and a general assortment of Gentlemen's, Ladies' and Children's Boots and Shoes. Although the piece is unmarked, it is English transfer printed ware with pink lustre decoration which was brought to this country in large numbers about 1830 and later. Also listed in the same directory is John Ohlen of 73 State Street who dealt in similar merchandise but china and earthenware were not mentioned.





The Schenectady County Historical Society, as a non-profit organization depends on its members for support. Members provide the means to conduct programs and plan exhibits that relate to the community and tell the story of Schenectady County. Welcome to our new members. We hope you will extend an invitation to your friends to join, so they too can take part in the upcoming Fall and Spring programs.

Please note the List of Contributors as previously listed in each issue will be published yearly at the end of the fiscal year in the Society's expanded Annual Report. The Society thanks each and every one of you for your continued support.



MEMBERSHIP FORM

Schenectady County Historical Society

Please indicate one of the following for your membership:

- \$25 Individual
- \$40 Family
- \$50 Donor
- \$100 Sponsor
- \$500 Patron
- \$1000 Lifetime

Please mail this form with your check or credit card information to:
 Schenectady County Historical Society
 32 Washington Ave., Schenectady, NY 12305

Your Name _____

Street _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Check enclosed

Please charge my credit card: MasterCard VISA

Acct # _____ Exp. Date _____

Signature _____

Also enclosed is a gift of \$ _____ for special projects designated as follows:

Museum: Art Restoration _____ Acquisitions _____ Publications _____ Programs _____

Library: Equipment _____ Publications _____

Mabee Farm: Preservation _____ Education Building _____ Programs _____

Your tax-deductible membership can be matched by G.E. (800) 462-8244



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