



The Schenectady County Historical Society, as a nonprofit 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 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) 305-0669



Schenectady County
Historical
Society

Newsletter

Volume 47 Number 1-2

January - February 2006

32 Washington Avenue, Schenectady, New York 12305

(518) 374-0263

Web site: <http://www.schist.org> • Editor email: ocurapp@aol.com

FAX: (518) 688-2825

Librarian email: librarian@schist.org • Curator email: curator@schist.org



FOOD IN ART, ART IN FOOD JANUARY 14TH - SCHS

Schenectadians have always enjoyed looking back to their early Dutch roots. What did the original settlement look like? What was the culture of the people who settled here from the Netherlands? What was their interaction with the local Mohawk communities? What were their daily lives like? Research can help answer some of these questions but most historians, both professional and amateur, are left wondering who these people were. Our desire to make a personal connection with our ancestors drives new research into what their daily lives were like, not just facts and events, but the human element that bridges the many centuries between the past and the present. Recent historians have begun to look at what were considered the more mundane aspects of history, not the extraordinary, but the ordinary. This new perspective on history offers a rare glimpse into the window of the past.

As part of this process, the Schenectady County Historical Society is proud to introduce PETER ROSE for a program this January 14. PETER ROSE, prominent culinary historian, has entertained audiences all along the northeast. Her unprecedented research into the Dutch colonial culinary heritage of New York has resulted in a series of articles, cookbooks, and the exhibit "Matters of Taste" for the Albany Institute of History and Art. Based on her expansive research into the diet of the inhabitants of colonial New York and how food reflected the culture of a people, she has created a series of lectures for the public. Her lecture "Food in Art, Art in Food" is based on the exhibit "Matters of Taste" which she co-curated for the Albany Institute of History and Art. This lecture looks at the connection between cuisine in the Netherlands (and their New World colonies) and the art of the period. Using a lusciously illustrated slideshow presentation, MS. ROSE will bring the world of the seventeenth-century Netherlands to life

To truly bring the cuisine of the seventeenth century to

life, samples of a variety of recipes will be available for visitors to try. PETER ROSE edited and translated the eye opening and mouth-watering cookbook "The Sensible Cook: Dutch Foodways in the Old and the New World." The original, printed in 1683, was part of a much larger volume "The Pleasurable Country Life." This book was familiar to Dutch settlers in New York and copies of it have survived in the area. Using her cookbook as a guide, a selection of traditional Dutch-American dishes will offer the unique opportunity not only to learn about the culinary history of this area but to actually taste the dishes the early residents of Schenectady ate.

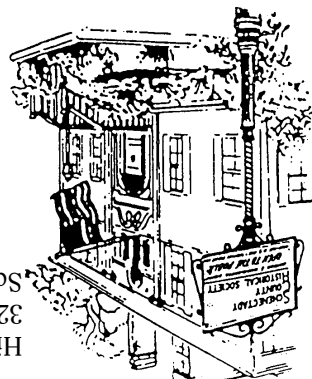
Copies of PETER ROSE'S various books (including "The Sensible Cook") will be available for purchase and she will be more than happy to autograph copies upon request. Containers for monetary donations will be located throughout the museum and if possible, a \$10.00 donation is requested to help offset the costs for the program. Pre-registration is required. If you have questions or would like to make a reservation, please do not hesitate to contact Kathryn Weller at 374-0263.



UPCOMING EVENTS

All events at SCHS 1:30 p.m. Lecture and Book Signing.

- Jan. 14th** PETER ROSE
Food in Art, Art in Food
- Feb. 4th** JOHN R. STEVENS
Dutch Vernacular Architecture in North America



Historical Society Newsletter
32 Washington Avenue
Schenectady, New York 12305

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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.

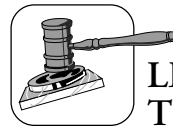
Saturday

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

MABEE FARM

Closed for the season.

Open by appointment.



LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Members,

This brings us to the close of our exciting Centennial year. It started with a wonderful evening at the Colonial dinner in February, the symposium in April, our barbeque in July at the farm, and the exhibit from March to November in the Vrooman Room. To be able to say that we have survived for 100 years is truly an amazing feat. As we look back on the history of the Society, it is the people who have kept the organization a viable operation – people who cared enough to give of their time and money.

Some of the families that really made a difference are the Pearson, Vrooman, Van Epps, Ter Bush Hinkle and Hart families, with several

generations, to name just a few!

We always try to keep moving forward as science and technology bring us better methods of preservation. In 30 years they will have found another way to take care of the past. We just hope that we have made their jobs a bit easier.

So, as we move into the New Year, the Society faces many challenges. Our staff and volunteers are working to come up with new ideas and connections to our community. If you have some time this coming year, think of us, volunteer and make a difference.

Kim Mabee



FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

The need for volunteers is great. There are many areas where volunteers can ease the burden of the staff. The Society would like to develop a travel program where participants can explore other museums and historical societies. The Society needs someone to organize these trips. There is one exhibit in New York City that merits a bus trip. The exhibit is "Slavery in New York." Yes, New York had slaves, quite a few in fact and more than most of the northern colonies. If anyone is interested in organizing a trip to the New York Historical Society

to see this exhibit call Ona Curran 875-6788 or Kate Weller at the Society. There are many other exciting places to visit such as the Shelburne Museum in Vermont, the Corning Glass Museum in Corning, NY, the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. Winterthur is always on top of everyone's list and if there was enough interest a trip to the British Isles and Holland could be arranged.

Would you like to be a travel coordinator?

Ona Curran

HELP! NEEDED!

Photos for a future Niskayuna Images of America book. If you have any old photographs of people, places, churches and groups located in the town, please bring them in and we will scan them and the accompanying information.

Larry Hart

Reprint of

Schenectady, Changing With The Times

ON SALE NOW

Schenectady County Historical Society

\$34.95 plus tax

\$3.50 shipping and handling

Avoid shipping charges by picking up your copy at Society headquarters.

Reprint made possible through the generosity of First National Bank of Scotia and the family of the late Larry Hart.

FROM THE COLLECTIONS

THE TASTE OF TRADITION

Kathryn Weller

No matter what the holiday or special occasion, food factored heavily into Dutch celebrations. From the beginning of December through Twelfth Night, special breads, cookies and deserts came out of the ovens throughout New Netherland. Wafers made in special irons, marzipan molded into shapes or diamond *duivekater*, graced both tables and children's shoes during the St. Nicholas celebrations. On Twelfth Night, the sixth day of January, a special cake helped settlers celebrate the end of the holiday season. A bean, baked inside the cake, when discovered decided who would "rule" for the evening. Into the nineteenth century, Dutch-American families held onto their recipes. The most treasured of these traditions were the New Year cookies or speculaas. Traditionally given to New Year's visitors, the hand-made wooden molds used to create the cookies were passed down from generation to generation. Later in the nineteenth century, mass-produced iron molds became popular.

Easily the largest and most impressive mold in the collection of the Schenectady County Historical Society, this cake mold dates to the early nineteenth century. It is a flat board which combines a large cake mold on one side and the other a variety of cookie molds. Its pointed oval designs, floral motifs, symmetry and high quality of craftsmanship help date it but as with many hand made wooden items, an exact date is next to impossible to establish.

Often professional bakers were trained as part of their apprenticeship to carve a diverse variety of molds for their own professional needs. Ranging from floral motifs and fanciful fruit to Punch and Judy, Native Americans and soldiers, these molds were very diverse



and unique. When mass-produced iron molds appeared in the nineteenth century, popular styles were copied for the public. New Year greetings, animals, fruit and flowers were some of the most common symbols.



SCHENECTADY TOWN
Late 17th Century
as painted by Len Tantillo 2005

Prints available at Schenectady
County Historical Society.



PETER ROSE LECTURE

The Society is most appreciative of the GLEN SANDERS MANSION for donating and preparing two recipes from the Peter Rose Cookbook "The Sensible Cook," which will be served at the lecture and book signing at SCHS on January 14th.

Below is a recipe from her book that you are welcome to try at home.

CARAWAY COOKIES

The recipe was adapted from the handwritten cookbook of Anna de Peyster which is in the archives of Historic Hudson Valley in Tarrytown, NY.

- Cup butter
- Cup sugar
- 2 eggs
- 2 cups flour
- Tablespoon caraway seeds, crushed with a rolling pin

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Cream the butter with the sugar. Add eggs one by one and mix thoroughly. Add caraway and flour a little at a time, stir well. Use two tablespoons to shape the cookies about the size of a nutmeg and "drop them in Lumps as big as nutmegs" on a buttered baking sheet. Bake about 15 minutes or until the rims are browned.

Makes 4 dozen.

JOHN R. STEVENS

Born in Toronto, at the age of nineteen the author wrote and illustrated his first book which described historic shipbuilding practice including Dutch ship construction of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This book is still used as a reference work in Europe and this country.

John Stevens is a graduate of the historic restoration and preservation program at the School of Architecture, Columbia University. He studied on-site restoration practice in England, France, the Netherlands and Belgium, sponsored by UNESCO.

In Canada, he was actively involved in the analysis of early buildings for the Federal Government, assessing structures in Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Nova Scotia. He worked with his wife-to-be on a survey of early Halifax buildings. This survey led to the establishment of the Canadian Inventory of Historic Buildings, the Canadian equivalent of HABS.

Subsequently, the author became Architectural Historian consultant to the Nassau County Museum, Long Island, New York. Here, while planning the restoration of the circa 1730 Minne Schenck house, he became particularly interested in Dutch-American buildings. This provided an opportunity for him to do on-site analysis and recording of structures throughout the area of early Dutch settlement in America and make comparisons with prototypes in Europe.

In addition to serving as consultant on numerous restoration projects, he has lectured widely on Dutch-American buildings and their precedents, e.g., at Columbia and Hofstra Universities; Sleepy Hollow Restorations (now Historic Hudson Valley); in the Netherlands; and other venues.

ALSO BY JOHN R. STEVENS:

An Account of the Construction and Embellishment of Old Time Ships, Toronto, Canada 1949.

The Derby Horse Railway and the World's First Electric Freight Locomotive, New Haven, CT 1987.

Pioneers of Electric Railroad. Their Story in Worlds and Pictures, New York, NY 1991.

The John Bowne House, a Preliminary Architectural Analysis Report, West Hurley, NY 2003.

Mabee Farm Historic Site

1080 Main Street (Rt. 5S), Rotterdam Jct., NY • (518) 887-5073

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



THE JACOB MABEE INN SIGN

Pat Barrot

Renewed interest in our inn sign sparked the start of a research project into this beautiful piece of folk art. While the artist remains unknown, many folk painters engaged in a number of artistic endeavors like sign painting, portrait painting, metal working etc. Some became itinerant painters traveling from place to place with ready made signs and placing the name of the inn on location. Travel and trade in early America grew and in the early 1800's turnpikes like the South Mohawk Turnpike were favorite locations for taverns/inns.

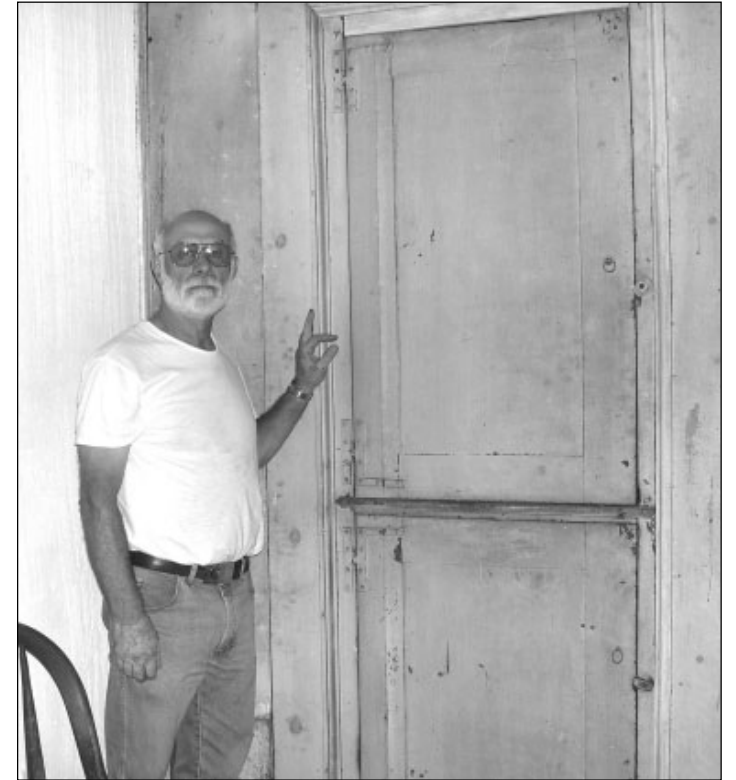
One side of the Mabee Inn sign is painted in the traditional folk art way with broad areas of color, flatness of form and skewed scale and proportion. The other side may have been repainted or at least touched up as it shows signs of uneven weathering caused by directional orientation. I recently spoke by email to staff members of the Connecticut Historical about the sign. The Society has done extensive research. They dated our sign from about 1815-1825. The date would put the sign in the time of Cornelius Mabee who died in 1823.

* * * * *

IN MEMORIAM – JUDY KANE

Volunteer Judy Kane (mother of committee member Andrea Becker Pokines) passed away in October. Judy helped at many events with school programs, gift shop, Kid's Corner and particularly her yearly preparation of 20 pounds of cole slaw for the Farm's Forefather's Day fundraiser. Judy's smile and wonderful good nature will be missed.

FUNDRAISING FOR THE GEORGE E. FRANCHERE EDUCATION CENTER
 If you haven't already made a donation or pledge, please do so. Fundraising is still going on to build the much needed Education Center at the Mabee Farm. Please make your contribution today!



Mabee Farm Committee member Win Bigelow stands next to the cupboard he restored in the Inn.

SCHEDULE 2006

TAKE OUT YOUR PENS. HERE IS A LIST OF EVENTS SO FAR FOR 2006

- | | |
|-----------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| April 8 | Spring Work Day |
| April 22 | Earth Day (in cooperation with ECOS) |
| April 30 | Capital District Blacksmithing Demonstration |
| May 2 | Open for the season |
| May 20-21 | "Raid on the Valley" – this year we have added British troops and Indians. Amphibious and land battles, skirmishes, lots of action! |
| June 18 | Forefather's Day Fundraiser |
| July 8-9 | Canal Fest – this year a 2 day Music Festival! |
| July 22 | Erie Canal Bike Tour |
| August 5 | Primitive Technologies Day (Formerly Flint Knapping/Archaeology Day) |
| August 26 | Arts & Crafts Festival (moved from October) |
| September | TBA |

DUTCH VERNACULAR ARCHITECTURE IN NORTH AMERICA 1640-1830

John R. Stevens

\$50.00 plus shipping and handling

Now Available at SCHS. Mr. Stevens will be happy to sign your copy on Feb. 14th

Three Schenectady Houses e.g. The Glen Sanders Mansion, the Brouwer House, the Abraham Yates House and the Schermerhorn, Teller Barn are highlighted in the book.

CHRISTMAS EXHIBIT AT THE EFNER

A delightful collection of greeting cards and the contents of a bag of office Christmas decorations that mistakenly got stored in the Archives' storage room were combined to produce a simple but interesting Yuletide exhibit at the EFNER HISTORY CENTER AND RESEARCH LIBRARY. The exhibit will be on display throughout the 12 Days of Christmas to mid-January. Featured are some beautiful illustrative turn-of-the-century holiday postal cards, as well as cards from the 1920's through 1940's. There are several black and white "photo" Christmas cards from the 1950's and "mod" colored cards from the 1960's. Also on exhibit are a Christmas book from the early 1900's, and a box that once contained Grandma Moses Christmas cards, dating from the mid-1900's.

We also invite you to see our other exhibit that features publications from various branches of Schenectady government, as well as several photographs and unusual artifacts. Two photographs beg for identification, so please come take a look, and see if you can help us out Ralph Gasner, are SCHS member formerly from Schenectady, now from New Hampshire, who has done so well at identifying photos in the SCHS newsletter, came to the Efner Center in November and identified the unusual artifact we had put on display. It is a "dresser" for evening out the surface of grinding stones used for sharpening tools. We thank Mr. Gasner also for his help with our Schenectady Railway Company photographs and maps.

The inventory project at the Efner Center is progressing nicely. Once our bookcases were assembled and all books in the storage room had been identified through the inventory process, we were able to move the books back into the library. We found that many of the storage boxes were only partially full. By consolidating the contents of many of the boxes, and getting books back in the library, we were able to free up a considerable amount of storage room space that can now be used as a "staging area" for our inventory of the blueprint collection.

Grant money funded a new computer that will be installed before the end of 2005. The new system will allow us to begin to create a database of our holdings. In addition, we recently received two pieces of good, used equipment - a scanner and color laserjet printer - that will allow us to provide customers with copies of photographs and to use scanning as a means for conserving and preserving our more fragile documents.

History teachers who have students interested in either doing research, or volunteering their services after-school at the Efner Center on Tuesdays, Thursdays or Fridays should contact Mrs. Seacord, managing archivist, at 382-5088 or by e-mail at HsCenter@nycap.rr.com for further information.



The Grems-Doolittle Library & Archives



Capital District Genealogical Society

Box 2175, Empire State Plaza Station
Albany, New York 12220

Schenectady County Historical Society
32 Washington Avenue
Schenectady, New York 12305

As you know the current New York State Public Health Law enables the NYS Department of Health to charge \$22. for each requested certificate of birth, death or marriage without regard to the use of the records. This has created a considerable hardship for genealogical researchers in New York and elsewhere when they acquire NYS vital records.

We recently learned that Assemblyman Craig Kolb of Geneva has introduced Assembly Bill A 7209 which amends the Public Health Law so as to permit current members of genealogical societies to obtain vital record information and copies at much reduced cost or at no cost. Please note the details on the attached copy of A7209. As of Nov. 29 the bill was in committee.

We are asking you to join with us in asking your Assembly person to bring this bill to a vote and for that Assembly person to vote in favor of A7209. Also call the bill to the attention of your NYS Senator and ask for his/her support to amend S4174.

David A. Marsh, Co-president, writing for the Officers, Board of Trustees, and Membership of the Capital District Genealogical Society

Corresponding Secretary
Shirley Milbert

A7209 Kolb (MS)
No Same as Public Health Law
TITLE....Relates to the cost of review and copying of vital records for genealogical purposes
04/08/05 referred to health

KOLB; M-S: Crouch, McDonough
Amd S4174, Pub Health L
Relates to the cost of review and copying of vital records for genealogical purposes; reduces current cost by half: also provides that for applicants who show current membership in a genealogical society, such applicants may review vital records at no charge; also provides that all copies of files and records secured under this subdivision shall be stamped, "For Genealogical Purposes Only".

**NEW YORK STATE ASSEMBLY MEMORANDUM
IN SUPPORT OF LEGISLATION
submitted in accordance with
Assembly Rule III, Sec 1(e)**

BILL NUMBER: A7209

SPONSOR: Kolb (MS)

TITLE OF BILL: An act to amend the public health law, in relation to the cost of review and copying of vital records for genealogical purposes

PURPOSE OR GENERAL IDEA OF BILL:
Relates to the cost of review and copying of vital records for genealogical purposes.

SUMMARY OF SPECIFIC PROVISIONS:
Section 1. Subdivision 3 of section 4174 of the public health law, as amended section 2 of part W2 of chapter 62 of the laws of 2003, is amended to read as follows:

For any search of the files and records conducted for authorized genealogical or research purposes, the commissioner or any person authorized by him or her shall be entitled to, and the applicant shall pay, a fee of



This photo was found in an attic in a house across the street from Elmer Ave. school on Eastern Ave. Can anyone identify it?

(twenty) ten dollars for each hour or fractional part of an hour of time of search; except where an applicant provides evidence that he or she is a current member of a genealogical society, such applicant shall be allowed to review at no charge all vital records which they are entitled to review pursuant to law. A fee of (two dollars) one dollar for each uncertified copy or abstract of such record requested by the applicant or for a certification that search discloses no record. All copies of files and records secured under this subdivision shall be stamped, "For Genealogical Purposes Only".

JUSTIFICATION: "The fear that has been voiced that vital records could provide information which could lead to identity theft is unfounded. In a recent survey of 500 victims of identity theft, not one was due to information gleaned from vital records."



Unidentified Photo - does anyone know who they are?

We now accept credit cards—
MasterCard and VISA.

