

# **Schenectady County Historical Society Newsletter**

**Volume 33 - Number 11-12 -- July-August 1997**

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

## **FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK - Bob Sager**

**You will be informed below of the dues increase passed by the Board and the Membership at our Annual Meeting. I hope this increase does not cause undue hardship for any of you and that it eliminates our current shortfall. I don't believe we are out of line with other similar organizations in our requirements.**

**On a happier note, I can report that the display throughout the first floor of pictures of the mothers of local prominent political leaders and TV and radio personalities was a great success. The culminating event was a reception for the mothers and families the evening prior to Mothers' Day. There was food and drink, plus informal tours of the building. A certain old time jazz piano player provided the music. Among the notables present were Congressman Mike McNulty and family, Assemblyman Paul Tonko and family, Assemblyman Jim Tedisco and family, and former Mayor Frank Duci and family.**

**I wish to congratulate Scott Haefner on the great job he is doing as caretaker of the Mabee Farm. He keeps the place in apple pie order, he is gracious to guests, and, as we know, his historical knowledge is unbeatable. He has made some much needed repairs. With the help of the Mabee Farm Committee members and others, the place should be eminently presentable when the Mabee family has their reunion at the farm in July. Any of you with a Mabee ancestor should plan to attend. The farm is also to be part of a tour of the Bradt family when they have their reunion, also in July.**

**Thank you to Don Keefer, Carolyn Keefer and Elsie Maddaus for getting us into the Stockade Association Sidewalk Sale and making over \$200 for the Society.**

**The last of my dad's boyhood tales will be in this issue. I hope you have enjoyed them, and I hope Dad knows he has been published!**

**A few more details: the uncle who gave him the bicycle was his Grandmother Putman's brother, Alonzo Shufelt. He and my father shared a room for a number of years. Alonzo had a drinking problem that resulted in the loss of his family and his holdings. As a result of what my Dad observed, he himself never drank.**

**Ending on a happy note. My son Clinton Sager II became the father of his first son on June 5, 1997. Garrett William Sager is named after the first of our family who came from Holland in the 1640's: Gerret Zeger. Little Garrett is the 12th generation in this country and the first to be born outside New York State (Milton, Mass). I hope he has a long and fruitful life.**

**Here's to a great summer for all of you.**

**Bob Sager**

## **CALENDAR OF EVENTS**

**Tuesday, July 15, 1997**

**7:30 PM**

**Board of Trustees Meeting**

**Saturday, July 19, 1997**

**1 P. M.**

**Mabee Family Reunion**

**At the Mabee Farm**

**Tuesday, August 19, 1997**

**7:30 P.M.**

**Board of Trustees Meeting**

**Society Hours - Monday-Friday 1:00 to 5:00 PM, Second Saturday each month 9:00 AM to 1:00 PM**

**Tours by appointment**

**Phone (518) 374-0263**

**The Newsletter is published six times a year. Deadlines are the second Monday of June, August, October, December, February, and April. Please submit material as early as possible.**

### **DUES RAISED AT MAY MEETING**

**Annual dues have been raised as of June 1 by a vote of the membership taken at the Annual Meeting on May 10. The new structure is as follows: Auxiliary, \$20; Individual Member, \$25; Family, \$35; Donor \$50; Sponsor, \$100; Patron, \$500; and Life, \$1000.**

**WE GET LETTERS . . .**

**[To Ruth Ann Evans]**

**Dear Ms. Evans:**

**I am pleased to enclose a GE Fund check in the amount of \$5,187.50. This gift from the GE Fund's 'More Gifts . . . More Givers' program matches contributions made during 1996 by GE employees and retirees. Eligible gifts made in 1997 will be matched by the GE Fund in May 1998.**

**We encourage you to announce this support within your community, and we hope to see copies of any press coverage.**

**Congratulations on your efforts that made this support possible.**

**Sincerely, Clifford V. Smith, Jr., President, GE Fund**

**(In a covering letter, Ms. Janice A. Smith announced that there will be an event soon celebrating "the nearly \$1.4 million dollars given to the Capital District community by GE employees, retirees and the GE Fund through the More Gifts, . . . More Givers Program. Incidentally, \$2,450 of this money goes to the Mabee Farm as it was generated by donors to that program.)**

### **MUSEUM NEWS**

**Jo Morecai, Coordinator of Exhibits**

**I don't know if anyone has noticed but if you walk through our house museum you will find all the clocks, large and small, ticking and chiming away. Since I started here nine years ago, this is a first, and it certainly gives the**

house a cosy, lived-in feeling.

We have two gentlemen from East Glenville to thank for this; Mr. Smiley Lumpkin and Mr. Jack Russell have painstakingly taken the clocks home, repaired and cleaned and put them in tip-top working shape.

Mr. Lumpkin and Mr. Russell are retired former managers from GE Knolls Atomic Power Laboratory. Both are Senior Elfun in GE's Elfun Society and are members and officers of the National Association of Watch and Clock Collectors (NAWCC), in Columbia, PA.

Our appreciation and thanks, gentlemen, for a job well done.

### List of Repaired Clocks

1. Unsigned English Hall clock; circa 1770-1800, in front hall
2. Banjo Clock; circa 1810, in music room
3. Ansonia Clock, circa 1880, in alcove between dining room and study
4. Tall case clock; circa early 19th Century, in front parlor
5. Dorrick clock; circa 1880, in Victorian nook, second floor
6. Empire Pedestal Clock; mid 19th century, in front parlor

### From your House to Our House

Donor: Mrs. Dorothy White

delicate molded candlesticks – Victorian Era

Donor: Mrs. Gail Aggen

a black moire capelet, late 1880's

a black bombazine underskirt

a black net and tulle stole, late 1880's

a twin muskrat fur piece

Donor: Mrs. Adelle M. Smith

high school ring, 1915

nursing school pin, Ellis Hospital, 1918

both belonged to Della Edwards, stepmother to donor.

Donor: Mrs. Earl Brinkman

a boy doll, "Tommy", 25' tall, in perfect condition

it was given to her son David Brinkman in 1942.

Donor: Mrs. Sylvia Hosgood

a large chaiselonge antimacassar

a beaded bag.

Our thanks to these generous givers!

### Another Little Treasure

We have a new addition in the childrens' room -- a nearly life-size doll -- a little girl with bunched ringlets in a gingham dress. Blaine Johnston and Don Smith found her in their travels and presented her to us. Little Miss "What's her Name" is sitting at the corner desk, waiting for her name; Blaine and I could not make up our minds.

Thank you, Blaine and Don

The Historical Society has proposed a two-hour workshop whose purpose it is to share with teachers a description of the people and events through which this community became the place it is.. We have presented this proposal to the Niskayuna Central School District.

### SAGER SAGA [picture]

In this picture we see our young hero attending a family gathering in Ocean City, New Jersey. He's the one in first row center. The time is circa 1900.

My new acquaintance was a daily caller and we agreed on all points. That same spring my grandfather took down the picket fence in front of our house. The material from the fence afforded something for us to work with. Our first scheme was to build a railroad from the pig pen down to the brook. The pickets were used as ties and the rails from the fence for the rails of the track. We made the car out of an old soap box with small horse power wheels on it. The railroad was on quite a grade, therefore a brake was very necessary. Our plaything was glorious fun for about two months until one afternoon my friend was riding and the brake failed to work and he went headlong into the creek. He was so badly hurt that our parents found it out, and that put an end to our railroad.

Then a friend of mine gave me two rabbits, just the thing my playmate and I wanted. Grandfather said we could keep them in a little yard next to the smoke house. These rabbits had the best of care. We picked clover for them in the meadow. We thought ahead a little and planned for the winter, gathering a lot of clover and grass and drying it. Then we made a hay press out of the best lumber we could find. The worst calling down my grandfather ever gave me was for saving so much lumber up to make our hay press. He had planned to make several new gates out to the lumber. Shortly after that our rabbits were gone, not through any effort of my grandfather but through their own efforts. Rabbits like to burrow into the ground and those rabbits burrowed under the stone smokehouse, making such a large hole that part of the smoke house caved in and killed them.

Can you imagine two boys playing together without fighting? Well, we did for a long time. My friend was larger than I, and doubtless you think that was the reason. But our first fight and the only one was brought about by hired help. A lot of men who were around at threshing time set my playmate up to throw my hat into the loft. He did it a couple of times and I climbed down after it. Then I told him if he did it again I would pound him. It was not long before he did it and then there was trouble. He ran out into the field and I after him. We ran a mile or so and then he stopped and explained how the men had set him up to do it.

If you know the country at all you know the farmer has a lot of things to fight against. One of the foes on my grandfather's farm was wild carrots. As my playmate and I were large enough to work a little my grandfather gave us fifteen cents a day to cut the wild carrots. We worked about a week and then we ran across a bee hive in an old stump. First we were afraid to tackle them, but soon pounded away on the stump with our hoes and the bees came out in great numbers. The next day we pounded the stump again until my playmate broke his hoe. Of course we lied and told my grandfather that the hoe was broken cutting the carrots. Two days later we broke another hoe but this time one of the hired help told about it, and my grandfather punished us by not paying us for our work.

And so farewell to Clinton Sager of nearly 100 years ago. And thanks for showing us that boys are eternal.

### THE MABEE FARM - by Barbara Wylie [picture]

This year the Friends of the Mabee Farm will join with the Maybee Society for a picnic and family reunion to be held on July 19th at the Mabee Farm. The farm buildings will be open for tours with docents on site to provide

information and answer questions. Some artifacts from the Farm collection will be on display. Robert Petito, an architect associated with John G. Waite Associates in Albany, will be on hand to answer questions and point out significant aspects of the buildings. In addition there will be a presentation on family Genealogy by Belva Maybee Perry and Jack Maybee. All SCHS members are invited to attend.

(See our ad in this issue.)

[ad]

**THE MAYBEE SOCIETY FAMILY REUNION**

**AND**

**THE FRIENDS OF THE MABEE FARM**

**ANNUAL PICNIC**

**SATURDAY, JULY 19, 1997**

**1 P.M.**

**JAN MABEE FARM**

**ROUTE 5S**

**LOWER ROTTERDAM JUNCTION, NY**

**\$15 PER PERSON**

**Reservations requested**

**Call the SCHS at (518) 374-0263**

**Pay at the door**

[end ad]

**LIBRARY POTPOURRI [picture]**

**by Elsie M. Maddaus, Archivist and Librarian**

**Exhibits in the Grems-Doolittle Library will feature two of Schenectady's early industries:**

- **June: Broom-making**
- **July: Boatbuilding**

**ETHNIC GROUPS IN SCHENECTADY COUNTY**

**Dutch, English and Scottish people were early settlers of Schenectady, following the Native Americans. Our library contains a good collection of facts about these nationalities. We also have Jonathan Pearson's two books, Contributions for the Genealogies of the Descendants of the First Settlers of the Patent and City of Schenectady from 1662-1800 and A History of the Schenectady Patent in the Dutch and English Times. Usually we can help researchers whose ancestors go back to these early families. We have more than 1800 [family record files](#).**

Later on people from continental Europe came: from Italy, Germany, Poland, France, etc. Such family research could be more difficult to pursue in our records, with some exceptions such as the Palatines and Huguenots. We may have the information but it requires more digging.

When descendants of these later settlers come to the library our first question is, "What surname are you searching?" If the name doesn't appear in our index to the family record files that means one of two things: 1) no one has donated the family records, or 2) that we haven't made a file from research we might have done over the years.

Years ago we had an Index to Ethnic Groups in our pamphlet files prepared by Janet Pasquarello, an intern in the library working on her master's degree. She identified many nationalities and races in our pamphlet files and indicated where to find them. They include: Afro-Americans and Negroes, British, Chinese, Czechs, Dutch, French and Huguenots, German and Palatines, Greeks, Indians (Native Americans), Irish, Italians, Japanese, Jews, Mennonites, Norwegians, Poles, Scots and Swedes.

Last year Robert Baldwin, also an intern, performed a similar task on our book collection. Section 1 of his index lists Genealogies by surname, ethnicity and nationality. Once into the collections Bob became so involved that he also identified other kinds of groups, religious, by locality, military and many others.

These two indexes help us to construct a family history, where none existed before. Sometimes, unfortunately, we just don't have anything. If I were to look in the files for Italians, for example, I would find holdings for such topics as Arts and Cultural Events, Biographies, Business, Customs, History, Organizations and Vital Statistics. I would also look under Churches, Historic Celebrations, Schools, and the Socialist Party.

In Bob Baldwin's index we have only one surname listed as Italian. This is an area in which we need to do more work. After that we should do similar work on the Polish, German and other major ethnic groups in Schenectady. [Ed. Note: We obviously need more interns!]

**WE ALWAYS WELCOME DONATIONS OF RECORDS OF ANY FAMILY WHICH LIVED IN SCHENECTADY COUNTY OR ANY OF THE SURROUNDING COUNTIES.**

[same display ad as before]

**BEGINNING Genealogy WORKSHOP!**

**OFFERED BY**

**ELSIE MADDAUS, ARCHIVIST & LIBRARIAN**

**SCHENECTADY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

- You've always wanted to explore your family history but . . .
- You've always wondered how to get started
- You heard Genealogy was too expensive

**NOW IS THE TIME! JULY 8 THROUGH AUGUST 26.**

**NOW HEAR THIS!**

**The Library and Archives Committee offers an eight week workshop on BEGINNING Genealogy in the Grems-Doolittle Library from July 8 through August 26, 1997.**

The sessions will be held from 9:30 am to 11:30 am each Tuesday. The group is limited to twelve. There will be NO charge for the workshop but persons attending must be members of the Schenectady County Historical Society.

Membership levels are according to categories, from \$20 per year up to \$1000 for a Life Membership. Applications for membership will be sent on request. Contact Elsie M. Maddaus, Archivist and Librarian for details. (518) 374-0263.

[end display ad]

[another ad]

Want a copy of *Historic Views of the Electric City*? The Society has a few copies left at \$19.95. Call Johanna Woldring, our faithful office manager, or Elsie Maddaus, our intrepid librarian for details. (374 0263)

[end ad]

## **MEMBERS CONTRIBUTING DURING APRIL AND MAY**

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**Joan and Jason Terwilliger**

### **DONOR:**

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## **OTHER**

**Jason Terwilliger**

**Mrs. Norma T. Wissick**

## **SUCCESSFUL GRANT APPLICATION PROVIDES COPIER, MABEE FARM \$\$**

**In a brilliant stroke of grantsmanship, William H. Milton, III prepared the Society's request for monies to be matched by the Society for \$5000 and presented it to the Carilian Foundation. The Foundation has approved the**

grant and a number of faithful Society members responded to the challenge. The grant was to provide \$2500 toward a new copier, the old one being truly an old one, and \$2500 toward the matching funds required by the Mabee Farm to go toward matching their grant from the State. An anonymous donor has added sufficient money to upgrade the office computer and printer.

Thanks to the following contributors to this cause:

- **John and Stasia Berdy**
- **Miss Adele H. Brown**
- **Eleanor Buelke**
- **George and Anneke Bull**
- **Bernard M. Cain**
- **The Carlilian Foundation**
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- Sally and John van Schaick
- Mr. Charles S. Van Wormer
- Ann and Emile Walraven

## NOTABLE SCHENECTADIANS

(We continue the The Journal of Allen Heyer Jackson, 2G grandfather of notable Schenectadians Kitty Gibson and William H. Milton, III. We are publishing two week intervals of the narrative, and it will be a staple of this publication for several more issues. In this issue our hero leaves the bright lights of London for an arduous coach trip to Scotland. Enjoy!)

**N.E.C.House London Saturday August 1st 1818.**

A fine day . . .getting ready to leave . . .Monday Morning for Cambridge . . . I took a seat at the Office for Cambridge on Monday morning and I bought some small articles to take to America . . . Oh! My God Look at the Present fashion in London Girls with trowsers on Oh! we men will be ruined but I do know which are the greater fools for the FASHIONABLE Men are [wearing] featherbed neck cloths and Pillory-Capes none of the delightful creatures can be seen out without stays pinching the waists so tight so that the unhappy wearer resembles an hour glass in shape . . . Great coats with a waste 1½ Inch long. Shirt collars are high enough to draw together at top and serve as a night cap (they are called collars as most of them wear no shirts they cannot attach the name of a shirt to it) In short nothing can be too stiff at present in England. And every lad that goes into the fashionable World must have his neck tied up almost as tight as some lads that go out of it? All I wish is that the first ship that attempts to carry the present fashion to America may sink and every soul perish. I would rather see the Americans shot than killed with stays.

**N.E.C.House LONDON Sunday August 2nd 1818.**

Last night I attended the English Oppera battles &c between the natives and whites . . . take a view of the interiour of a Theatre and see the ladies when they enter the house they go in the dressing room where they leave their hats and put on a dashy head dress they then enter their box with the importance of a Lord then up with their Opera Glass and spy out some decent Lady for criticism then it is "How her hair looks, look at her head dress, all one side He! ha!" Damb there Pride I wish they would undertake to criticise upon my dress and I could hear them I would give them an American blow up, it is Likewise fashionable to have bad eyes so as to wear Glasses and short sighted so as to have a Glass hanging at your side.

**SUN HOTELL (Mills) Cambridge Monday August 3rd**

A fine day after breakfast I . . . bid Mr. Davies good bie. . . I got on the Coach royal Telegraph. bid London farewell at 9 AM and Proceeded to Cambridge. . . Arrived at (the Sun Hotell Mr.Mills) Cambridge 4 PM 50 miles from London. . . I visited the Colleges which form a grand Institution . . . the Colleges themselves would form quite a City . . . the Library is verry extensive. the Chapple is antient and has some beautiful painting. The College Walks are extensive and beautiful the Cambridge River runs through them which makes them Pleasant however I must give Oxford the Preference for beauty and Pleasure Cambridge is no Place of business . . .the Colleges form the place- there are 400 Students in the Institution.

**Tontine Coffee house (Batty) Sheffield Wednesday Aug.5th.**

A Pleasant day left Leicester for Sheffield on the Coach Duke of Wellington 8 AM. Passed Loughboro, Nottingham, . . . where I had a quarrel with a bandy leged ch (?) to death french man for the box seat which I had

all day, at Nottingham we chanced to change coaches, he was a Passenger from Nottingham he got on the box before me. I told him he had my seat "No I beg your pardon Monsur this is another coach it is quite a diferent concern. I asked the guard he told me I was entitled to the seat. I went up again with the determination of getting the seat after jawing a time I clinched him and down we both came on the pavement I jumped upon the box and told him I would knock him down as often as he came up. The Guard interferred the poor frenchman had to go in the basket and I rode upon the box thus ended the quarrel.

**HOTELL (S Greaves) Leeds Thursday August 6th 1818.**

A fine day Sheffield is up to smoke which is the case of all Manufacturing towns I visited the town. . . the Manufactories are all in the hardware line cutlery &c . . . left Sheffield for Leeds on the coach Express 2 PM bid the smoke farewell . . . Arrived at Leeds 1/2 past 8 PM (at the Leeds Hotell Sarah Greaves) 30 Miles from Sheffield today is different from yesterday quite cold so that I wore my sertoot all day - We broke down again today = . . . Leeds quite a large Manufacturing town of broad cloths of the coarser kind. The Cuntry is fine in Yorkshire the harvest not as forward as at the South. Afternoon I visited the Kings Mills for the purpose of grinding their grain for the Inhabitants they and there heirs are bound for ever to have the the grain ground at that Mill and none other. there are a few excluded from that and certain other Laws . . . this Afternoon I saw Mr. Urquhart a Merchant from New York . . . I engaged to dine with him tomorrow at his Mothers in this Place.

**WHITE SWAN (Hardcastle) York Saturday August 8th.**

Went upon the rail way where I saw them carrying coal in wagons without horses. they were impelled by steam a great curiosity. Steam is applied to all uses here. Dined with Mr. Urquart he starts tomorrow for N. York after dinner. Took me leave of him and his Mother . . . got on the Coach Prince Blucher 1/2 past 3 PM left Leeds for York soon after I started it began to rain. . . Arrived at (the White Swan W Hardcastle) city of York 1/2 past 7 PM 25 Miles from Leeds.

**WHITE SWAN York Sunday August 9th 1818.**

A cloudy day with little rain--I attended service in the morning at the Cathedrial. . . it is a Monstrous Pile. the service is a little inclined to what I call P-o-p-e-r-y . after dinner I engaged a person to go and show me the diferent appartments. I was certainly surprised at the beauty of the work the arches for windows and doors were all Gothic excepting a few of the Modern . . . we were shown several antient curiosities stone coffins found 20 feet under ground bones in them. supposed to have been put there by the Romans . . . Visited some of the most antient Churches which are from 1200 to 2000 years old thence to the ruins of St. Marys Abbey . . . the walls are all grown over with bushes and the interiour is used as a farm yard. The Walls that enclose the City are in ruins . . .

**Queenshead (Dodsworth) New Castle Wednesday Aug. 12th, 1818**

A cloudy and cold day - I visited the Cathedrial a[n] old and beautiful building outside. the inside is rather awkward the Pillars are massy, heavy and badly done the Arches are Roman I believe- its situation is superiour to any other but the building is not to be compared to York. (they were digging a grave in the yard when they struck upon the Skeliton of Joseph Abbot buried Aug. 1st 1718 so says the Stone the bones were perfect from the circumstance of its being under ground 100 years. I broke and secured a piece of the Skull as a curiosity) .

A smoky day--this morning at breakfast I acquainted with Mr. Mathews a young Gentleman from Philadelphia who is traveling through Schotland and Ireland upon the same rout and upon the same business that I am, viz; curiosity. We agreed to travel together and I have at last met an American Companion he appears to be a real Gentleman, but I will tell you what he is in the cours of a week - We visited the Colleries. one Place they carry the coal down the river on an inclined railway so that the loaded wagon draws back the empty one - another Place

they carry the coal 12 Miles by steam Wagons on an Iron railway the Pitts, Machinery &c are indiscribable. .

**Grapes Inn (Holmes) Carlile Friday August 14, 1818.**

A cloudy day but no rain Mr. Mathews and myself visited the Glass Manufactory where we saw the process of blowing Grinding and Engraving the white Glass it was the finest Glass Manufactory in England I saw a Pair of Decanters that they asked \$50. for they were beautifully cut and engraved all the turning stones &c were done by Steam After which we took our seat in the Mail stage for Carlile I was obliged to get inside as there was no room out . . .

**Kings Arm Inn (Kitching) Dumphreys SCOTLAND Saturday Aug. 15th.**

A fine Morning. We visited the Old Castle a large and antient fortification . . . no date of its Erection . . . supposed to have been built with the Cathedral and City walls about the 6th Century . . . now in ruins-we visited the apartments in which the Queen Mary of Scotts was confined (before her Execution) in the Castle. . . some part of the old City Walls are standing, next the Cathedral Court houses and Gingham Manufactorys . . . where they offered 1st Quality Gingham @ 1/3 beautiful silk do @ 2/ all 6/4 wide Cambrick 12 yards in the Pc @ 16-6/4 wide. Check @ 1/2.6/4. visited the weaving rooms verry buisy . . . -it is a buisy City

. . . Gretna Green stands on the line between England and Scotland it is celebrated for Weddings . . . Entered into Scotland 4 PM. . . I had a letter from James Tweedie of Florida to his brothers Thos. I T. who live in the Parish I wrote to them to call up on me in the morning. We rode on the bank. . . had views of the Irish sea passed Great tracts of turf they have no coal. Arrived at Kings Arms (Mr. Kitching) Dumphreys ½ past 8 PM 36 Miles from Carlile.

**THE LITTLE ONE-ROOM SCHOOL HOUSE [picture]**

by Irma Mastrean -- Historian, Town of Princetown

The one-room school was the primary form of rural education as late as the mid-1900's. It was a unique education which allowed for a small student-teacher ration and a multi-grade approach.

The Green's Corners School, on Potter Road in West Glenville, is probably the oldest known unaltered one-room house in the area. Students attended the school from 1825 to 1946, grades one through eight. When Thomas Jones taught there he was 18 years old and some of his students were 16!

Mrs. Katheryn Dybase Popielarz taught in the Green's Corner's School from 1907 to 1913. She said they started school with a prayer or the teacher would read from the Bible. Exercises were done after prayers. Then they saluted the flag. Sometimes they had a class of crocheting or sewing. On Fridays they made fudge on the stove. On the last day of school they recited poetry and the parents were invited. The school has a recitation bench.

There was always a shortage of teachers for the rural schools. As soon as you had enough credits in high school, you were allowed to teach for two years. It was necessary to attend Teachers' Training Class for one year. At the end of that time you were granted a certificate for three years and as long as you kept teaching your certificate would be renewed. The teacher was hired by the trustee of the school district, who was elected at the annual school meeting. Very often the teacher who was hired was a friend of the trustee, ability sometimes did not enter into the picture. In some districts teachers were not allowed to drink, smoke, chew, swear, dance, paint their faces or lips, bob their hair or marry.

Once the teacher arrived at school her first duties were probably janitorial. She usually got there early enough to start the fire before the students came. The School Laws of New York State for 1889 state: "A teacher is not

entitled to extra pay for building fires, sweeping, etc., unless a contract to that effect is made." Teachers usually boarded around with area families. One teacher said she was paid \$10. per week to teach and \$2. a week for board and room. In 1875, male teacher were paid #30. a month, female teachers were paid \$20.

Schools were usually situated so students seldom walked more than two miles. There were no indoor bathrooms; everyone used the outside privies. Water was carried in from the well; the students all drank from the same dipper. The potbelly stove in the center of the room provided the heat. Students either froze or roasted, depending on their proximity to the stove. Boys often came to school with bare feet in warm weather in order to save their only pair of shoes. ecaades have passed since the clear ring of a hand bell called students to classes in these little buildings.

The Green's Corners School was restored in 1976 by the Bicentennial Committee, Town of Glenville. Adrienne Karis of Scotia was the force behind the restoration. It is open from 1 to 4 PM, Saturday and Sunday during July and August.

It's a great place to visit if you want to take a step back in time. It's also a nice field trip for children who want to learn more about yesterday's schools. It is open for visitors weekends, 1-4 PM, starting July 5-6. The school will be open weekends only for the months of July and August, the last weekend being August 30-31. The school will be open for groups by appointment September through October 15. The school is located in West Glenville on Potter Road near the intersection with Greens Corners Road. Call Mrs. R. Karis, 24 Windsor Drive, Scotia, for further information or to make appointments. 372-6314

## **CEMENT AND THE ERIE CANAL**

by Bill Massoth

We have all heard the story about how Canvass White, a brilliant young engineer from New York who walked 2000 (200?)miles of English and Scottish Canals, saw hydraulic cement or water lime as it was called in Britain and Scotland and how he made it and demonstrated it in a tavern.

There is a folk tale about cement, Portland cement as we call it today, the ingredient that causes concrete to set, and it happened nearby.

It seems that the men working on the original Erie Canal worked six days a week and took Sunday off. One Sunday, three boys went fishing in the Mohawk River at Pattersonville. They caught a nce mess of fish, cleaned them, and wrapped them in clay that they found nearby. The boys had also brought some potatoes with them that they also wrapped in clay.

Next the boys made a fireplace from some stones that were all cut and fitted for a nearby lock at Pattersonville. They built a roaring big fire in the fire place and allowed it to burn down to a bed of coals. Then they buried their clay-wrapped potatoes and fish in the coals. Later they cracked the hardbaked clay and enjoyed a meal of baked potatoes and baked fish.

Well, kids being kids, they pulverized some of the burnt stone that the fireplace was made of and mixed it with the clay left over from their culinary arts project.

The next morning, the foreman came to work and he was not the least bit happy about finding his cut and fitted stones destroyed. He saw the pile of clay mixed with pulverized burnt stone and gave it a mighty kick. Now if you have ever seen concrete that has set over night you realize it looks like mud but it is indeed hard.

I will not repeat what the foreman said when he kicked this "mud". However, he realized he had found cement.

After much searching he found out who the boys were. After much more talking he finally convinced them that he meant no harm to them, but he wanted to know what they had mixed together to make the cement.

Believe this story or not, the fact is that John Van Epps, who fought at the battle of Oriskany in the Revolutionary War, and his sons built a cement plant across the river from Pattersonville on the Montgomery-Schenectady county line, right where Route 5 now goes.

This plant opened in July of 1825, three months before the opening of the Erie Canal! It operated for several years and made cement of the highest quality.

Think of the impact this invention has had on the entire world and it came from the Erie Canal.

## **OCTAGONAL HOUSES**

Your editor is in a dilemma, trying to pack in all the good information about things to do during the summer when those friends from the south become our houseguests, taking advantage of our cooler climate. One such item is a long piece of research Bill Massoth has done on Octagonal Houses. We'll run bits of it, and the original will be in the library, but right now we want to give a little nibble of it, in case you want to journey out to Duanesburg or Delanson on a hot day. Bill says: "Duanesburg was blessed with not just one but two octagonal houses, both of which are still standing and have been beautifully restored by their owners. These were built by the master carpenter Alexander Delos Jones." One house is located on McGuire School Road, and the other is in Delanson.

## **PRUYN HOUSE IN COLONIE**

We assume of course that you are taking your house guests to our own Museum and to the Mabee Farm first of all. But suppose they're here for a week? Consider the Pruyne House at 207 Old Niskayuna Road, Newtonville, NY 12128 (518-783-1435). They have a Cultural Center, "creating a flavor of yesterday for visitors." The site includes the Casparus F. Pruyne House, the Buhrmaster Barn, and the Verdoy Schoolhouse. They also accommodate weddings and other formal gatherings at stipulated prices.

## **THANK YOU, FRIEND**

We don't often get a chance to thank our friends in the media who help out with our public relations. So it is with pleasure that we let you know that Dianne Scoville, the wife of Steve Scoville who has covered our activities for Channel 13 so often, has a nature shop on Route 9 in Clifton Park called "Backyard Birds." Her number is 383-4048.

## **MORE THANKS**

Thank you, John and Susan Duncan for preparing a 985 count mailing to potential new members. Those of us who have "done mailings" know the effort that goes into compiling lists, sorting zip codes, labeling and stamping. Kudos to Stasia Berdy, too, for getting it all mailed.

## **STILL MORE THANKS**

Thanks to the following persons for the delicious cookies provided by them for the two last Society membership meetings: Anastasia Berdy, Annette Billmyer, Ruth Anne Evans, Rosemary Harrigan, Ann Karl, Catherine Kindl, and Sally van Schaick

## **ON A MORE SERIOUS NOTE:**

Wayne Harvey sent us the following which he attributes to the Merced County Genealogical Society, PO Box

**"Have a short paragraph added to your will, leaving no doubt as to your wishes regarding both your personal library and the product of your research - the family history (ies) you have compiled, but have not had published. The following paragraph is an example; or your attorney can quickly modify it to be in compliance with local laws:**

**"I direct my executor/executrix to box the following genealogical publications and compilations for donation to the ---(insert your favorite genealogical library/society here) for appropriate disposition/retention by that library/society for the benefit of family history researchers. (A family member or other person could be substituted as the recipient of your materials.)**

**"() All family history materials of which I die possessed.**

**"() Only my library of printed reference books and materials.**

**"() The unpublished family history manuscript materials on which I was working.**

**"() Other (specify):**

**"The address of my intended recipient is:"**

#### **EXPERTS IN IDENTIFICATION WANTED**

**The house committee has started its survey/inventory in the gun room. Now they need knowledgeable people to assist them in identifying and describing the items in each room.**

**They think they have an expert to help in the gun room, but they foresee problems with identification of pottery, china, glass, Native American material, etc.**

**They say: "We are hoping to find members or friends with specific knowledge but with no present professional connections, and with the time to spend on the project."**

**Call Ruth Anne Evans at the Historical Society or on her home phone, 393-0701.**

#### **HANDICAPPED ACCESS**

**There is an elevator between the entrance vestibule at the back entrance, and the main floor. If you are on wheels, walker, or cane, enter through the parking space entrance and our staff will be happy to help you with the elevator**

#### **Mission Statement: Grems-Doolittle Library**

**The Grems-Doolittle library is a reference library whose purpose is "To gather, preserve, display and make available for study, books, manuscripts, papers, photographs and other records and materials relating to the early and current history of Schenectady County and of the surrounding area." The collection includes many histories and genealogies.**

**Because it is a reference library, none of the material is permitted to leave the building so that it will be accessible to researchers at all times.**

#### **OFFICERS**

**President - Robert Sager**

**Vice President - Derek Sayers**

**Secretary - Ann Karl**

**Treasurer - Frank Taormina**

**Assistant Treasurer - Ruth Ann Evans**

## **STAFF**

**Museum Exhibits - Jo Mordecai**

**Archivist & Librarian - Elsie Maddaus**

**Office Manager - Johanna Woldring**

## **EDITOR**

**Sally van Schaick**

**Historical material and comments, including letters to the editor, are welcome and may be submitted to the editor, care of the society.**

**This page updated 5/12/98**

