

# Schenectady County Historical Society Newsletter

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## FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

It was a little over 50 years ago when I first came to Schenectady. I had a three month assignment to work in the General Engineering Laboratory in building 37 of the main plant of the General Electric Company. At that time the plant had about 40,000 employees. The GEL was later to become part of the company's Research and Development Laboratory.

In case you're not familiar with the GE plant, building 37 is the one with a large multi-light monograph sign. 48 years later I was retired and moonlighting in the same building. As might be expected, the floor plan had changed. The laboratory where I worked 50 years ago is now a lavatory. (Employment in the plant is now 4,000.)

At GE I worked for an office that developed control devices. My job was to check the response of servo-mechanisms. (An example is the device that opens the furnace gas line when the thermostat calls for more heat.) We plotted the servo movement versus time. If the response rate was wrong, we wound a new spring to put on the device. We weren't told where the servos were used but it probably had some military application related to the Korean War effort.

I took room-and-board with Sadie Bigelow on Parkwood Boulevard in the city. I was Sadie's only roomer, but she had several weekday boarders. There were about six of us who showed up for her dinners. The others apparently roomed in the area but ate dinner at Mrs. Bigelow's. She served us in the dining room. The first course was always her homemade broth soup which she made on her cast-iron, wood-burning range. Sadie was a diminutive 90-year-old who seemed to sustain herself on her thin soup and a roll. On weekends, when Sadie didn't offer meals, I ate my dinners at the Vendome Restaurant in the 400 block of State Street. When I had to work overtime, dinner was at the Silver Diner on Erie Boulevard.

I think I made Sadie's day when Ruth, my fiancée, came to visit for a weekend. For two or three Christmases after the visit, Sadie sent an embroidered handkerchief to Mrs. Dimpelfeld. Don't tell Ruth, but Sadie and I had a date one Saturday night. We went to the movies. It was n't much of a date; Sadie went into the Boulevard theater and I went across the lobby into the State theater.

-Bill Dimpelfeld

## Society Hours

Monday-Friday 1:00 to 5:00 PM, Saturday 9:00 AM to 12 Noon, Group 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, April. Please submit material as early as possible.

**JUNE EVENTS Mabee Farm open for Tours Wed-Sat, 10 to 4**

**June 14-15 Garden Tour in Stockade**

**Sunday, June 16,2002 Forefathers' Day at the Mabee Farm (See details below)**

**Tuesday, June 18, 2002 7:30 PM Board of Trustees**

**JULY: Mabee Farm Open for Tours: Wed-Sat 10-4**

**Tuesday, July 16,2002 7:30 PM Board of Trustees**

**AUGUST: Mabee Farm Open for Tours: Wed-Sat 10-4**

## MAY PROGRAM

Aren't we lucky to have Bill Massoth, creator of so many fascinating historical slide shows? This time it's George Featherstonehaugh, a Mariaville farmer. That's like saying George W. Bush has a cattle farm. Featherstonehaugh was also the first United States geologist, he was an explorer in the Mid-West, and even an ambassador to England. And according to my informant, his grandson founded the Historical Society. What more could we ask? (*Linguistic note: Apparently Featherstonehaugh pronounced his surname "Fenshaw." Now they tell us!*)

*Bill Massoth presenter.*

## GREEN'S CORNERS SCHOOL. . .

The Green's Corners One-Room School Museum, built ca. 1825, will be open for visitors weekends, 1-4 PM, starting July 6 and 7. The school will be open weekends July and August, the last weekend being August 31 - Sept. 1. The school will be open for groups by appointment only, September 2nd through October 15th. It's a great place to take your grandchildren to visit! The school is located in West Glenville on Potter Road near the intersection with Green's Corners Road. Call Mrs. R. Karis, 24 Windsor Drive, Scotia, for further information or to make appointments - 372 6314.

## The Mabee Farm Presents

### A Timber Framing Class

July 27, 28 and August 3,4 to be taught by Everett Rau Dutch Barn Authority

An opportunity to learn by hands-on experience the ancient art of timber framing. Learn by using old and new tools, under the guidance of a Master builder. Cost: \$100

Coffee and doughnuts as well as lunch provided each day. Questions? Call 887-5073 now for details

## DUTCH LETTERS SETTLE MABEE Genealogy

Letters directed in early 1700's Dutch to Jan Pieterse Mabee of Schenectady from his siblings have settled an 80-year question over lines of descent from Pieter Caspersen van Naerden and his wife Aechtje Jans van Norden of New Amsterdam, Jan's parents. The letters are part of a trove of ancient documents given the Society by George E. Franchere of Dunedin, Florida, in 1992 in connection with his gift to the Society of the Mabee farm. In 1907 Catherine T.R. Matthews had traced Pieter and Aechtje's son Jan to Fort Orange and Schenectady, but in 1921 Sarah A. Mabie had claimed that Jan had founded the Van Norden family of Hackensack, New Jersey. Each article had been published in the Record of the New York Genealogical and Biographical Society, which has now settled the matter with a three-page article in the Record of January 2002, "Mabie Family Update" by Stephen W. Mabie of San Antonio, Texas. The letters, translated by this editor's spouse for the Mabee farm committee, had been instantly recognized by our friend and member Jack Maybee, president of the Maybee Society, as answering the long-standing question about lines of descent. Jack provided the letters to Stephen Mabie.

This Society's genealogical and local history library holds issues of the Record dating back to the 1870s. It must have pleased our friend Harry Macy, Jr., the Record's editor, to be able to publish this latest Mabie article. Harry works conscientiously and he hates loose ends.

^^^

## WE GET LETTERS . . .

To Members of the Schenectady Historical Society: We are planning to sell our book business, and here are the basic facts:

1. Our five books are: *Manners and Morals of Yesterday, the Sea Chain, Sam Turtle's Picture Book of Old Connecticut, Sam Turtle's Picture Book of Old Massachusetts, and Early American Cookery.*

2. The total number of books is approximately 8250.
3. Our sales price to dealers is about \$16,000, or roughly \$2.00 per book.
4. For members of the Schenectady Historical Society, we will sell all the books for a thousand dollars less, or \$15,000.
5. Upon payment of the \$15,000, we will donate \$1,500 to the Historical Society.
6. I suggest that the business is best operated by any couple who has an interest in books.
7. The books themselves are filled with old lithographs. We would furnish negatives, flyers, etc. and make every effort to have the buyer succeed.

For the present, this offer is open only to members of the Schenectady County Historical Society.

Cordially, (signed) John & Susan Duncan

## Fall Festival

The date for the Fall Festival has been changed from September 15 to September 22.

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**Museum News** -Jo Mordecai Coordinator of Exhibits

## From Your House to Our House

Donor: Mrs. Sylvia Horwitz

Victorian dressmaking items — ca. 1880 — 1900 Two black jet beaded girdles One jabot of black beaded circles One beaded wristlet Two handmade cotton lace collars: one black; one white

Donor: Mrs. Dolph G. Ebeling

Six handmade Colonial costumes used for decent wear at the Glen Sanders mansion for tours. These will certainly be used by our docents in the future.

Thank you both for your generosity.

## Hail Britannia!

The new exhibit is now up in the Vrooman Room: "The Royal Commemoratives of England."

These colorful items have always been made for special occasions in the life of the English Royal family. Some of the first were made in the reign of George II for his elaborate coronation and the birth of his first child, the Prince of Wales. On display we have mugs, cups and saucers, plates, cookie jars, cigarette boxes, ash trays, little perfume bottles, and would you believe two bottles of Coronation beer, made in 1977 for Queen Elizabeth's Silver Jubilee! Starting from Queen Victoria, Edward VII and his Alexandra, George V and his Mary, then we have some coronation items made for the man who would have been Edward VIII but abdicated to marry Wallis Simpson and became the Duke of Windsor. There were not many of these as the coronation never took place. Next came George VI and his Elizabeth (the good old Queen Mum) who passed away recently, greatly loved. Last but not least we have the reign of Elizabeth II, from her coronation to her Silver Jubilee; of course 2002 is being celebrated all over the British Isles as her Golden Jubilee. So from this side of the big pond we have our small tribute. Hope to see some of you during the summer months.

[Did You Know? . . .](#)

Mrs. Dolph G. Ebeling recently donated two hand tinted photographs done by Wallace Nutting. These were given in memory of the late Wayne Harvey who cared so much for our Society — especially the House Museum. The two photographs are framed and now a part of the Glen Sanders bedroom.

Wallace Nutting was the first person to introduce hand painted photographs for sale to the public, and from 1897 to the 1930's over 10,000 photographs were taken. Of these only 2,000 were hand tinted and sold commercially. Generally they were scenes of family life with titles such as "An Afternoon Tea", "By the Fireside,", and "Garden Scenes." The two now in our possession are titled "Knickerbocker Days" and "An 18th Century Porch." We decided to show them in the Glen Sanders bedroom, because Mrs. Ebeling, who once owned the Glen Sanders Mansion, recognized both photographs to be of the old house.

It is interesting to know that Wallace Nutting was once a priest but because of ill health he left the church and later became America's foremost photographer. Between 1900 and his death in 1941 he sold literally millions of hand colored pictures, copies of his photographs, many to grace front parlors of people who were unable to afford water colors and oil paintings. Thank you, Sylvia Ebeling.

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## Walkabout 2002 September 28 Famous People of Olde Schenectady

Back by popular demand are carriage rides through the quaint Stockade streets, and an Antique Car Show, recreating the atmosphere of days gone by. "Famous People of Olde Schenectady," such as Arent Van Curler, Governor Joseph Yates, and Eliphalet Nott, will come alive and tell their stories.

Proceeds from the Walkabout will be used for Historical Society painting restoration, Lawrence the Indian restoration, and Downtown Schenectady improvements.

Kim Mabee is co-chair of the event, representing the Historical Society this year along with board member and Stockade resident Sylvie Briber and Stockade resident Lyn Gordon, representing the Stockade Association. John Samatulski and Gil Kehn from the Downtown Schenectady Improvement Corporation join the Walkabout team.

If you would like to be a decent at the Historical Society, sell tickets, or volunteer in general, please call the office (374 0263). Or if you own or know someone who owns a car that predates 1970 and would like to exhibit, please call Harold or Debbie Schneiderwind at 346-1711. (Watch for fuller details in the next issue of the Historical Society News Letter.)

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**POSTCARD OF THE MOMENT** *Here's another of our famous postcard collection: this is a view of the Erie Canal at Dock Street, looking toward G. E. Ca. 1907. [See this and the others in the set elsewhere on our Website.]*

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### **MABEE FARM PROJECT**

[The Reenactment . . .](#)

"Life is what happens while you are making plans!" That was the watchword for the extraordinary weather whirling in from the north on May 18th, the first day of our carefully planned reenactment program. The

snowstorm set a record for the latest snowstorm in over two hundred years, but the gang from Mabee carried on, the reenactors were undaunted, and it was a good event in spite of the weather.

Kathy Nellegar sent us this letter from a participant: "For a wonderful weekend . . . despite the weather. "I personally want to thank all of you folks who worked so hard at this event. You folks are terrific!!

"The site was beautiful and the buildings are truly a treasure. I hope you have continued success in all your endeavors. And I hope that the BVMA will be invited back again next year.

"I can't say enough about your volunteers. They are wonderful people. The early morning coffee and goodies were wonderful. And the hay was nice and dry and the wood split too!!!! What more can we say!! "It's a pleasure to go to sites where we feel like we are truly welcomed. Plus it gives us a chance to refine our crafts and interpretations for our hobby. Keep up the great work and good luck.

"It was a lovely way to spend a... well...um... Spring? Weekend. Ah well. . . life in Upstate New York.

"Thanks again, Nora Smith, 4th Tryon County Militia/Rangers "

Thanks, everybody . . .

Here is a list, hopefully complete, of the volunteers without whom the event would have been a disaster: Alan Fairbanks, Elaine Fairbanks, Nancy Howenstein, Bill Massoth, Scott Haefner, Kim and Gary Mabee, Mary Kuykendal-Weber, Lenora and William Terwilliger, Ray Mackney, John Ackner, Derek Say-ers, Andrea Becker, Terry Lee, John van Schaick, Chris Paul, Dale Wade. Meredith Anker, Jeanne Mastrianni, Jonathan Mabee, Cindy Cramer, Tony Caster, Sally van Schaick. We apologize for any errors in spelling or otherwise identification. Please, all of you, continue to add to our community, so we can have more great days.

### **Other Mabee News - Stanley Lee, Co-chair**

Colonial Exhibit awaits fourth, seventh graders.

Ned Pratt, display designer, has completed the work for the exhibit portraying life in the colonial period in this region. Thanks to a generous grant from the Lally family, Pratt has established a mini-museum along the north side of the interior of the Dutch barn. We strongly urge fourth and seventh grade teachers to acquaint themselves with this display which includes ancient tools and other artifacts, enhanced by attractive explanatory panels. A field trip to the Mabee farm while teaching the colonial unit in fourth and seventh grade social studies would be a great motivator — and a lot of fun!

A workbook that complements the display is in process. It has been written according to the NY State social studies syllabus, with rich inputs from the work of the New Netherland Project.

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**Timber Framing Class** This will take place for four days: July 27 -28 and August 3-4. It will be taught by Everett Rau, will cost \$100, and food will be served each day. A great one-of-a-kind opportunity to learn an age-old skill using both old and modern tools. See our ad for details.

**Decent Class a Success** Our recent decent class has produced 10 or 12 new docents which will make all the difference in the world as we plunge into our second season. The energetic Kim Mabee will be the decent coordinator.

Thank you, Flower people! Our ever-living thanks to the Harlow Garden Club whose efforts are beautifying the farm site. Particular thanks are due for their donation of a shade tree.

Thanks too, to the Hill and Dale Garden Club in particular for their contributing substantially to our acquisition of another tree. Efforts like those of these two groups contribute not only in a material way, but in the growing sense of community and involvement that working together produces.

Forefathers' Day Celebration at the Mabee Farm Historic Site! You are invited to spend Fathers' Day, Sunday, June 16th, 2002, from 1:30 to 5:00 PM at this historic site for a Special Fathers' Day event! This year's event will include demonstrations in tin smithing, timber framing, forging, barrel making and molding planing. Pony rides and a small petting zoo will be available from 2 to 4. "In Good Company" will perform at 1:30 and 2:30

The 300-year-old Mabee Farmhouse and Inn will be open for tours. Also see our pre-Revolutionary Dutch barn and enjoy homemade specialties including Dutch Rusk and poffertjes. A full colonial meal will be served. Advance reservations are requested but not required. \$25 Individual, \$40 Couple, \$50 Family (2 adults/ 2 children under 18) \$100 Patron

This is our annual pre-season fund-raiser. Please help us start the new season. The Mabee farm opened for its regular hours on May 28: Wednesday through Saturday, 1-4 PM

## **ROUND THE COUNTY**

### *The Spencer Moore home.*

Bellevue -Bob Sager

(Continued) In a way it was strange that Mrs. George Westinghouse Sr. didn't opt to live in Bellevue. Further down Guilderland Avenue (now six houses away) was the old N. I. Schermerhorn farmhouse, where her daughter Catherine's family lived. The son-in-law, Spencer Moore, was an officer in her husband's Westinghouse Agricultural Co. Across Guilderland Avenue at the corner of Broadway and Westinghouse Place was a "temperance" hotel run by her sons John and Jay. This is now the Key Bank location. The whole family seems to have been very civic minded, active in good works of a philanthropic nature. They were founders of the church in Bellevue, now Bellevue Reformed. Opposite the temperance hotel on Broadway was a grocery run by the Vedders, who were close friends of Mrs. Westinghouse. *(To be continued.)*

Scotia-Glenville -Elsie Maddaus

Alexander Lindsay grew up in Inverness, Scotland, in a section that was called Glen. When he came to what is now Scotia, he added Glen to his name. He purchased corn fields from the Indian owners, built a house and called the area Nova Scotia after his native land, Scotland. The family name continued as Glen and when the 4th ward of Schenectady became a town in 1820, it was named Glenville. Many localities have included the name "Glen" in their titles. There are roads called Glen Avenue, Glen Terrace, Glen View Road, Glenbrook Road, Glendale Road, Glenhill Road, and Glenwood Drive. Schools include Glendaal, Glen-Worden and Glenville Cooperative Nursery School. Also, the Glendale Nursing Home, Glen Hills Club, Glenridge Grange and a number of businesses, automobile, health and veterinary, funeral, sports, building supplies, a restaurant and an inn which incorporate Glen or Glenville in their names.

Duanesburg -Richard Lewis

*We return to Richard Lewis' marvel-ous list of ladies 'names gleaned from cemeteries in the Duanesburgh area. Keep this list—you may need it some day!*

Adora, Altana, Desire, Elida, Frebon, Grizzley (really!), Hyla, Jemima, Lovina, Mordica, Orpha, Salome, Sophronia, and Vesta.

*Trivia note: the younger sister in "The Five Little Peppers and how They Grew" was named "Sophronia," but they called her "Phronsie."*

**Princeton Tidbits -Irma Mastrean — Town Historian Princeton: A Matter of Temperance Narrative from the Princeton Presbyterian Church records continually talked of the problem of intemperance. "When intemperance prevails owing to the proximity to a great city (Schenectady) where liquor is as plenty as water," it stated, "many temptations are placed in the way of the young."**

**In 1855, a parishioner from the church was called before the Session for having served a young man intoxicating drinks and keeping a house of revelry. He was suspended from the sacraments of the church until he gave repentance for the offense. (She showed no signs of sorrow or repentance). In the late 1800s, a hotel was located on the line between the "dry" town of Princeton and Rotterdam (which was not). When inspectors paid a visit, the booze was moved from the dry side of the hotel to the wet side.**

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## Library Potpourri

**LIBRARY DOINGS** -Virginia LaGoy, Librarian

**Coming soon! The Library and Archives committee of the Society will soon have available for sale the newly revised version of the Duaneburgh Memorial Census. The original work by Clarence Foote has been retyped and the index has been reformatted to make it easier to use. The new edition also includes the cemeteries of Princeton and a new map for locating all the listed cemeteries. The new book will be titled *The Cemeteries of Duaneburg and Princeton*. Pre-publication orders are now being accepted. If you would like to reserve a copy, send your order with your name and address along with a check for the total amount, OR see our website for an order form. The pre-publication price is \$13. Post publication price will be \$15.**

### **The Wish List**

**The library is currently looking for the following items. Contact the librarian if you can help. Back issues of De Halve Maen Telephone books from the 1970s Three-ring notebooks**

### **What's New?**

**Our map collection is being cataloged and are housed in a very large brand new map cabinet. We were able to purchase the cabinet through the generous donation of one of our members. His gift was matched by his former employer, General Electric. We greatly appreciate both gifts. All our members and friends are encouraged to check with their employers for a similar matching program.**

### **Acquisitions, donations, and finds Books**

*Ellis Island: Tracing your family history through America's gateway*

*The Wuerttemberg Emigration Index, vols. 5-8 New York State Scrip and Private Issues The Descendants of Hans Jacob Moak - gift of the author, Michael W. Moak*

*Even More Palatine Families - Henry Z. Jones In Search of Your German Roots - Angus Baxter Biography of Winifred Notman Prince - gift of George Prince lan Mabee Farm: historic structure report. (Available to sale for \$12 at Society) CDs*

**1880 United States Census Microfilm**

**On Order — 1930 United States Census - Schenectady, Albany, Schoharie, Saratoga, Rensselaer, Columbia, and Montgomery counties.**

**(Thanks for the following, Ginny!)**

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## **BE ACCOUNTABLE AS A SOCIETY MEMBER**

**Juliana Smith is the editor of the "Ancestry Daily News" and author of *The Ancestry Family Historian's Address Book*. She has written for "Ancestry" Magazine and "Genealogical Computing." Juliana can be reached by e-mail at: <mailto:editor@ancestry-inc.com>, but regrets that she is unable to assist with personal research. She offers the following reflections on how to go about your own genealogical research.**

**One of the best ways (and the most fun!) is to join a society. When you are on a society membership list, you are countable as someone with an interest in family history. When legislation arises, these membership numbers can be used to exert influence over those we vote into (or out of) office.**

**In addition there are many other wonderful benefits in belonging to a society. With you membership, you typically will receive periodicals, access to society holding, and sometimes, exclusive access to on-line databases. As with the case of library "friend" organizations, your membership dollars go to preservation, special projects, education workshops and meetings, and additions to the organization's collections.**

**Genealogical and historical societies form a solid foundation upon which the genealogical community rests. But in many cases, this foundation is crumbling. Many societies are suffering from declining memberships and a crippling lack of volunteers. If these institutions that have given us so much are to survive, they need your support on both a local and national level. By helping societies, you are, in essence, helping yourself.**

**REDUCED!!**

**2002 calendars with photos of Schenectady's past from our files. Buy a few—just \$5 each.**

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**Contributions During April-May 2002 *Without you we are nothing!***

### **FOUNDATIONS**

**R.& R. Evans Foundation Rotary Club of Schenectady Foundation**

**Schenectady Foundation**

**Walter S. Quinlan Foundation**

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