

# Schenectady County Historical Society Newsletter

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32 Washington Avenue, Schenectady, NY 12305

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## FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

There were a few years in my mid-career when "the Company" provided me with an annual physical. Besides learning that I had what were referred to as bad veins, I also was informed that my uric acid level was too high. I just couldn't let that bit of information slide by without asking, "What does that mean?" And the answer was: "You're prone to have gout." Gout, the aristocrat of diseases, attributed to high living.

I viewed this pre-diagnosis with some amusement since I had no symptoms. But a few months later, after limping around for a couple days with a sore big toe, I remembered the prediction. And I knew. It was the gout. Along with the prescription for medicine, the doctor gave me a list of foods to avoid: anchovies and sardines (this was going to be a snap), liver (well, I did like liver), and alcohol (oh doom and gloom). I went for a couple weeks without my daily therapeutic dosage of beer and then broke down and called the doctor's office. Was the avoidance of alcohol really necessary? And the answer was that it was OK to imbibe in moderation.

The medicine prescribed for my gout was call *colchicine*. The pill was about the size and shape of a BB. One could pop the pill, swallow a drink of water and still find the BB hiding in a crevice. Since that time, some 30 years ago, the pill has been reshaped to a configuration which is less prone to get lost, but it's still small. Colchicine is extracted from the bulb or seed of the autumn crocus (meadow saffron). Its use for the gout goes back to the ancient Greeks who probably learned about it from the even more ancient Egyptians.

Before you start chewing on the seeds of your autumn crocus, please note that colchicum, the Latin name of the plant, means "poison root." It is one of the most violent purgatives known. In addition to its GI reactions, other responses include delirium and an imperceptible pulse. Even animals know instinctively to avoid this plant. Only a believer in homeopathic medicine (a little bit of a bad thing can be good for you) would have played with this one. The medical doctors of a couple hundred years ago were all practitioners of home-opathy. I think they still serve the British royal family. There are still a couple practitioners listed in the yellow pages of a current phone book.

I called up Society member Peter Spoor, retired instructor from the Albany College of Pharmacy. Peter did a thesis on *colchicine*. I asked how did anyone ever determine the ground-up autumn crocus was a cure for gout, and how would they have determined the dosage. Peter indicated that medicines like colchicine and digitalis (foxglove) were grandfathered in because they had been used successfully for so many years and any original experimentations were not known. Pharmaceutical companies are still looking for the unusual compounds that plants produce, usually to protect themselves from predators. The companies then run tests of these compounds on non-human "guinea pigs". You may have noticed that many new medicines introduced in this country have first been used successfully in Europe for several years. In essence this country allows the Europeans to be our human guinea pigs.

Well I've been limping around for the past couple weeks and my blood work indicates the uric acid level is high. I hate to do it, but maybe it's time to abandon the homeopathic *colchicine* for a more modern concoction.

## CALENDAR

Wednesday, July 9, 16, 23 Crazy Quilt class - Fee \$50 1-4 PM Ages 12 to adult. More info at [dee@deestark.com](mailto:dee@deestark.com)

Sat-Sun July 12 & 13, 19 & 20 Blacksmithing Class - 4 day course Fee \$150 includes morning coffee and lunch.  
Presenter: John Ackner

Sunday, July 13, 2003 Crazy Quilt Christmas Ornament Class 2-5 PM Cost \$20. Materials supplied Email [dee@deestark.com](mailto:dee@deestark.com) for details

July 14 - 18 and 21-25 Hands on History Class for Mohonasen students, grades 5 - 9. For more info Email Dale at [dwkeszey@yahoo.com](mailto:dwkeszey@yahoo.com)

Saturday, July 19, 2003 Adults Soap making class - Cost \$50 For details Email [soaplady@saratogasuds.com](mailto:soaplady@saratogasuds.com)

Sunday, July 20, 2003 Community Day Free admission to the entire Mabee Farm Tours from 1-5- Refreshments provided

July 21 - 15, 2003 Archeology Summer Camp for kids age 9-13 Cost \$125 - Call SCCC 381-1315 for more info or registration

July 26 & 27, August 2 & 3, 2003 4 day course in Timber framing Presenter: Ev Rau Fee \$150 includes morning coffee and lunch Call Mabee Farm to register: 887 5073

Saturday, August 9, 2003 Flint Knapping and related Primitive technologies. Food will be available.

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### Princetown Tidbits Irma Mastrean — Town Historian

#### High School in the 1900s

In 1904, when she was just sixteen, Edith Dougal was the only young person from the Scotch Church area attending high school. At that time, going to high school meant rising at 4 AM to be driven by horse and buggy the four miles from her home to Pattersonville, taking the ferry across the river to Hoffmans and running up the hill to catch the trolley into Schenectady. She had to remember to hold her long skirt out of the mud and clutch her hat and at the same time keep a firm grasp on her suitcase and books.

The case usually carried her clothes for the week, as going to high school in those days meant rooming with one of the families living near the school who took in students from the outlying areas. The Hoffmans ferry crossings were treacherous at times of flood or when clocks of floating ice surrounded the ferry. One wintry morning, on one of those crossings, a gust of wind blew off Edith's new beaver hat. The ferryman, used to such occurrences, retrieved it from the river with his paddles, shook it out and handed it back to her, little worse for the ducking!

#### West Glenville -Adrienne Karis

The Greens Corners One-Room School Museum, built ca. 1825, will be open for visitors weekends, 1-4 PM, starting July 5 and 6. The school will be open weekends July and August, the last weekend being August 30-31. The school will be open for groups by appointment only, September 2 through October 15. 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 Greens Corners Road. Call Mrs. R. Karis, 24 Windsor Drive, Scotia, for further information or to make appointments - 372-6314

## **Scotia-Glenville Churches - Elsie Maddaus**

**First Baptist Church of Scotia, 132 Mohawk Ave.; organized in 1840**

**St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Church, First St.; began as a mission of St. John the Baptist in Schenectady; opened in 1909**

**Church of the Immaculate Conception, 400 Saratoga Rd.; organized in 1957**

**East Glenville Community Church, 335 Saratoga Rd.; began in 1945; organized in 1947 as an independent congregation**

**St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, 52 Sacandaga Rd.; organized in 1909 as a mission of St. George's in Schenectady**

**Evangelical Church of the Good Shepherd (Lutheran), 547 Saratoga Rd.; organized in 1955**

**Our Redeemer Lutheran Church, Reynolds St.; organized in 1925**

**Alplaus Union United Methodist Church, Brookside Ave. and Riverside Pl.; organized in 1914**

**Scotia United Methodist Church, N. Ten Broeck and Catherine Sts.; organized in 1902**

**West Glenville Methodist Episcopal Society, organized in 1822 on Touerema Rd.; moved to West Glenville in 1842; dissolved in 1903. (Currently a Grange hall)**

**Centre Glenville United Methodist Church, Sacandaga and Bolt Rd; organized 1838**

**Trinity United Presbyterian Church, Swaggertown Rd; Formerly a mission of the First Presbyterian Church, Schenectady in 1903, located in Glenville in 1960**

**First Reformed church of Glenville, West Glenville Rd.; originally named the First Reformed Dutch church in the 4th ward of the city and county of Schenectady; organized in 1810**

**First Reformed Church of Scotia, 224 N. Ballston Ave.; originally called the North Branch of the Protestant Dutch Church in the city of Schenectady; organized 1814**

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## **Museum Activity - Bellevue Hospital - Jo Mordecai, Coordinator of Exhibits**

**In 2003 many hospitals are in trouble: emergency rooms close as do some hospitals; nurses are overworked and young women have lost the desire to nurse the sick, being underpaid for long hours. Here in Schenectady we still have Bellevue Woman's Hospital, a place where women may safely give birth and receive careful nurturing.**

**During the Depression babies were often delivered in the mother's bed or on the kitchen table. Complications could arise and often did. But Schenectady had a nurse named Grace Jorgensen. She was a wife and mother of two and she cared. This plucky woman saw the need for an affordable facility for expectant mothers and their doctors. Her family doctor was a general practitioner name William F. Nealson. One day she went to Dr. Nealson's office with a plan. After discussing the plan for hours, they sought and eventually found a large empty house nearby — the old rectory for Bellevue's Catholic church, Immaculate Conception. Dr. Nealson promised to send her patients and recommended the hospital to other doctors.**

The Jorgensens lived on the first floor, maternity patients on the second. There was a small alcove for one patient in front. There were two nurses: one for day named Cull and one at night named Hill. Mrs. Jorgensen carefully checked everything herself and always gave patients advice. Mr. Elmer Jorgensen did most of the maintenance and cooked breakfast each morning. The charge was \$5 per day, there was no medication given, but the support and caring were wonderful. And it still is today. The hospital has had two other homes, each larger than the preceding one. Bellevue lives up to what Nurse Grace Jorgensen dreamed it would many years ago under the guidance of Grace Jorgensen's daughter, Dr. Grace Jorgensen.

For the exhibit of August, September and October I plan "Bellevue - the story of a hospital," showing its homes and all the doctors, nurses and babies who were part of Bellevue from 1931-2003. Were you, or did you have a Bellevue baby? If so I would like to borrow photographs of babies born there and who they are today. Please contact Jo Mordecai, Coordinator of Exhibits, Tel: 374-0263. The photographs will all be returned.

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### ***THANK YOU, GE... AND CONTRIBUTORS***

From Bill Dimpelfeld's mailbox . . . Dear Mr. Dimpelfeld:

I am pleased to enclose a GE Foundation (formerly the GE Fund) check in the amount of \$6,768.00. This gift from the GE 'More Gifts . . . More Givers' program matches contributions made during 2002 by GE employees and retirees. Eligible gifts made in 2003 will be matched by the GE Foundation in May 2004. . . .

Congratulations on your efforts that made this support possible. Sincerely, Mark J. Saperstein

Mr. Saperstein informed us that 2003 marks the 50th year of GE's giving. "Driven by the knowledge that a quality education ushers in a lifetime of opportunities, our foundation drives programs that enable students to expand and achieve their dreams."

Those of us who remember Mandy Grems will note how the above statement fits in with her wishes for the work of the Schenectady County Historical Society.

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### ***WE GET LETTERS . . .***

This one is from our former librarian, Elsa Church, to Elsie Maddaus, to be shared with her old friends at SCHS.

. . . When I moved so far south (my three children all live south: two in South Carolina and one in Maryland), I decided to make the last part of my life count. This adult home is about six miles from my oldest son, 240 miles from my youngest son, and ironically, farther away from my daughter than before! But they all have computers and I know more details about their life than before...

...I keep busy mornings writing small personal "pieces". We have a quarterly here which I contribute to, and I use my lifetime remembrances, etc., to send to friends. . . . I am not computer literate, but with my shaky handwriting am glad I can type.

. . . by now I know many of the residents here. . . mostly southerners who either have lived here all their lives, or who have returned to their roots. I guess I will always be the lady from New York.

Writing and relatives are my salvation. I have a large clan to keep track of: Eight grands, and, so far, five great-grands. Not bad for an only child, right! Sincerely and with best wishes to all in SCHC. Elsa

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# **AMONG OURSELVES: STASIA BERDY/BOB SAGER**

We're trying to get used to two empty places at the SCHS table, two gaping holes in our awareness where Stasia and Bob should be: Stasia, ever straight, every hair in place, her seductive voice stating clearly what is needed, what comes next; Bob, thoughtful, deliberate, with a way of summing up the sense of a discussion, and such a permanent fixture at the public library that they are dedicating a chair in his name.

Each played many parts in the Society —volunteers, board members, committee stalwarts: Stasia with the house committee and the auxiliary, working side by side with Ann Karl in the kitchen whose existence they had fought for; thanks to Stasia and Ann Karl (and now Ann Coggeshall) we've had goodies at our monthly meetings long after the demise of the auxiliary.

Bob worked most notably with the Mabee Farm project and as past president of the Society, picking up the reins of leadership after Mason Harter's untimely death, carrying on for four tumultuous years, presiding over the board and seeking money and volunteers for the never-ending struggles of the infant Mabee Farm project.

The Schenectady County Historical Society has been enhanced by the contributions of Stasia and Bob and others of the same mettle. We extend our sympathy and concern to John Berdy and Claire Sager - and an invitation to join us actively here at the Society — lots of good things are going on here and Stasia and Bob were part of the process.

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## **THE-MABEE-FARM**

Our spring school-visiting program was very well received, considering many schools have been reluctant to sign up for a new and unknown program. Each new group expresses how well they like our program and that they will return next year. We are now getting requests from teacher groups to preview our program. We have two tours left on the spring schedule which will bring the number of students to 600; with teachers and advisors counted it will be over 650. A letter announcing our fall schedule has just been sent out to over 300 4th, 5th and 7th grade area teachers. One class has already signed on.

Eight "sites" exist as teaching locations: 1. the stone house; 2 the brick house; 3. the blacksmith; 4. Indian crafts; 5. spinning and weaving; 6 butter making; 7 flailing grain; 8. Colonial soldiers (re-enactors).

This will be a busy summer for the Mabee Farm. We are offering two new summer children's programs. Both are designed for middle school students, one on Colonial history the other an archeology workshop. Other classes include timber-framing, blacksmithing, redwork (classic embroidery), crazy quilting and soap making.

Our Community Open House will be held on Sunday July 20th, 1:00 to 5:00 PM. Light refreshments will be served and it is free.

A new event on August 9th — Flint-Knapping Day — is being expanded to include exhibits on local archeology and precontact Native Americans. This will be a different event for us and is designed to attract and new group of visitors to the Farm.

Remember the Fall Festival has been moved ahead one week to Sept. 14th as has the Stockade Walkabout (September 20th). Watch for announcement of a new event the day after the Walkabout. It will make a second event on Sunday and will encourage people to stay over for the weekend. We will get some support for publicity from the Schenectady County Tourist Bureau, the new tourist website and a tie-in with the Walkabout.

## **LIBRARY DOINGS -Virginia Bolen, Librarian**

**THE STREET WHERE YOU LIVE...** Contact Virginia Bolen at the Historical Society, 374-0263 or Frank Taormina at 374-9655. Tell us how your street got its name.

### **Research your own family!**

Would your group like to be introduced to the fun of Genealogy? The Grems-Doolittle Library of the Schenectady County Historical Society invites you to make an appointment with the librarian to bring a group from your organization to find out how to get started on family history. You will be introduced to our fine collection of local and New York State resources as well as how to use other sources such as the Federal Census. If you are interested in finding out more about this opportunity, call the librarian, Virginia Bolen, at 374-0263. Offered for Sale [part of library report]

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The following copies of portraits and prints in our collection are now for sale:

Helena Van Eps Pieterse 1743 Artist unknown 8x10 black & white photograph, \$30 plus \$5 shipping & handling

Jonathan Walton and Margaret Thatcher Walton

1830-1835 Ezra Ames 8x10 black & white photograph Each \$30 plus \$5 shipping & handling

Schenectady Harbor 1814 Tantillo 1992 signed, limited edition print, image size 8 x 10, sheet 12 3/8 x 14

\$65 plus \$10 shipping & handling

Lawrence the Maquase I. Joseph 1986 Depiction of the Lawrence statue in the Schenectady Stockade, signed, limited edition, image size 19 x 25 in., sheet 22 x 28 in. \$75 plus \$12 shipping and handling.

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### **EDUCATION COMMITTEE REPORT**

The Education committee of the Schenectady County Historical Society announces a new film program which is available for use. It is called "Colonial Life in the Mohawk Valley." The script was written by Sally van Schaick and the photos and tape were the work of William Massoth. For details regarding the program's availability, please contact committee chair, Elsie M. Maddaus, 346-8981

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### **THE WALTONS TRAVEL TO CANADA -Ona Curran, Protector of the paintings**

Two of the society's portraits, Jonathan and Margaret Walton, in the form of full sized photographs in color, were shipped to the Port Hope Historical Society in Ontario, Canada. Port Hope celebrated the 210th anniversary of its founding on June 7th and 8th. As Jonathan was one of the founders of Port Hope, the pictures of Jonathan and his wife were a focal point of the celebration. These paintings are the only known portraits of the pair, which added to the excitement of the event. Ezra Ames painted the Waltons circa 1825.

Port Hope had its beginnings in 1793 when Jonathan Walton and his associate Elias Smith of Montreal were granted the entire Hope Township in Upper Canada if they could entice forty people to pioneer the wilderness on the north shore of lake Ontario. The first settlers arrived June 8, 1793, aboard the tall ship the Mississauga. A tall ship reenactment high lighted the event.

Jonathan did not stay in Port Hope. He traveled to Pennsylvania and thence to Schenectady where he lived a long life and became a prosperous member of the community. He was a merchant with extensive holdings along the Mohawk and built a palatial home on Union Street. The main street in Port Hope's historic district is named Walton Street after Jonathan. His brother Nathan settled in Port Hope, and his descendants are still there.

The portraits of Jonathan Walton and his wife Margaret Thatcher Walton came to the Schenectady County Historical Society from the estate of Helen de Lancey Watkins, a descendant of the Waltons. The SCHS is proud to share part of its collections with our Canadian neighbor and glad we could be part of Port Hope's celebration.

*Jonathan Walton, c. 1825 by Ezra Ames*

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**Wanted!**

Someone to do filing in the library. Our librarian can never catch up. Great opening for volunteer with unsatisfied clerical lust! Call librarian at 374-0263

**Wanted!**

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

**Wanted!**

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

**Wanted!**

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

**Wanted!**

Docents. A decent is a tour guide. We're running out of docents and we want fresh troops. Come now: you know that you've always secretly wanted to show people around the Museum. Follow Jo or Sally or Ann a time or two and you'll get the hang of it. Call Jo Mordecai at 374-0263 for further information.

**LITERACY VOLUNTEERS IS LOOKING FOR YOU...**

Did you know that 27 million Americans don't know how to read? Did you know that more than 60,000 adults in Albany and Schenectady counties cannot read this message? Help lower these numbers; call Literacy Volunteers at 372-9819.

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*Once a year we like to list our life members in honor of their continuing generosity. Thank you, one and all!*

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