

Schenectady County Historical Society Newsletter

Volume 41 - Number 7-8

May-June 2004

CALENDAR

Tuesday, May 4

Mabee Farm Opening Day

Tues - Sat, 10 AM - 4 PM

Saturday, May 8, 2004 1:30

Refreshments 2:00

Program: The Half Moon

Presenter: Chip Reynolds

Saturday, May 8, 2004

Mabee Farm

Leatherworking Exhibit opens

Wednesday, May 19, 2004

11:30 AM

Board of Trustees Meeting

Saturday - Sunday May 22-23

Mabee Farm Revolutionary War Reenactment and Barn Dance

Wednesday, June 16, 2004

11:30 AM Board of Trustees Meeting

Thursday, June 17, 2004

Mabee Farm Erie Canal Bike Tour

Sunday, June 20, 2004

Mabee Farm Forefathers' Day

Tuesday, June 22, 2004

Mabee Farm Boat Launch (Maritime Academy)

Society Hours

MUSEUM

Tuesday-Friday 1:00 to 5:00 PM

Saturday: 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM

LIBRARY

Monday-Friday 1:00-5:00

Saturday 9:00-12:00

MABEE FARM

Tuesday - Saturday 10:00-4:00 PM

Starting May 4

**Group tours by appointment
Phone (518) 374-0263**

**The Newsletter is published six
times a year. Next deadline is the
first of June, 2004**

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FROM THE CO-PRESIDENT'S DESK

Kim Mabee

As you can see by the new byline, Bill suggested I introduce myself to you. Even though I've been showing up off and on at the Society's door for the last 15 years now, and more regularly since we acquired the "farm", I really think this is a heck of a 50th birthday present to surprise me with. The nominating committee convinced Bill to stay on if he could have some support with the responsibilities. Our world has become so complex with paperwork, finance, personnel and facilities. Hopefully the job won't be so overwhelming if we can find a good balance between us, the old adage being, "two heads are better than one...."

I'm another transplant like Bill. Your basic American mutt, mostly Scots, so frugality is a given, then some Swedish, like my blond hair and height; then some German and French Canadian. But mostly I'm a Navy brat born in Puerto Rico. My dad, the Master Chief, came to the Scotia Depot in 1963 to rewrite the electronics correspondence courses. Then my parents planned retirement and found a spacious place in Galway on Jockey Street. My brother, Dan Daley, wanted to be one but grew too big and became a sulky driver instead.

I got my love of history and reading from my mom Alice, who just passed away in November. A lot of you that know me understand the caregiver life I have been leading the last few years. An aunt started me on the Genealogy obsession because of her eye disease, supposedly hereditary, but no sign of it yet. Then I had the good fortune to notice in the paper about the Society acquiring the "farm", so I called to volunteer my service on a more regular basis. And where I go the husband and family seem to follow. Even though Gary knew there was a house "over there", his family never seemed too interested in the past; only the future. His father never even knew his grandfather's first name was Levi until I found his stone and took Gary to Vale to see it.

So I did grow up learning somewhat how people lived a long time ago: lots of vegetable gardening, chickens, pigs and canning. My parents divorced my senior year so I went down to GE and got a job instead of using that Regents scholarship I had won. I met Gary about a month later and we got married about seven months after that. Four years later we had a daughter and a son and did all the school and athletic things that go along with kids. They did us proud with both the schooling and sports. Amanda is an OT and lives in Providence, Rhode Island, with her new husband, and Jonathan works for a financial firm in East Greenbush. Both still coach and play soccer. Maybe being that 1/100th native American helps a little bit. Each of them has worked and helped at the farm since 1993. Gary and I have had the privilege of being ambassadors for the Mabees from all over the world, even before the Society acquired the farm. I guess they can find you more easily if you still live on the same dirt your ancestors trod over 300 years before.

PROGRAM

We shall have Chip Reynolds for our May Program. He is the skipper of the Half Moon, a replica of the original Half Moon in which Henry Hudson explored the river named after him, in 1609. Some of the members of this society were part of the group which got together a decade or so ago to help raise money for the Half Moon (Halve Mann) project. It will be rewarding to hear the sequel.

CALL FOR PAPERS

Upstate New York Goes to War: War and the Home Front, 1775-2004
Symposium to be held at the Rensselaer County Historical Society, Troy NY
October 29-30, 2004

The Rensselaer County Historical Society (RCHS) in Troy, New York is presenting a call for papers to be delivered at its Fall 2004 symposium, *Upstate New York Goes to War: War and the Home Front, 1775-2004*, to be held Friday and Saturday, October 29 and 30, 2004. The goal of the symposium is to inspire renewed interest in this important area of New York State history and highlight recent scholarship. It is the third in a series of symposia that focus on upstate New York's particular history. Participants will be asked to prepare a half hour presentation preferably with visuals, on topics related to the themes noted below. Panel discussions are also encouraged.

The symposium will augment RCHS's temporary exhibitions entitled *Rensselaer County Goes to War: War and the Home Front, 1775-2003*, and *Letters Home/Remembrances*. These exhibits focus on issues that include evolving concepts of patriotism and national identity, the development of a formal US military structure during the 19th century, Abolition, Woman Suffrage, Anti-war/Pro-war movements, the technological and economic impacts of war, as well as societal impacts on people and organizations at home during times of war. In addition, the exhibit titled *Letters Home/Remembrances* looks at communication during wartime, what were considered to be appropriate mementos of war and how wartime experiences are perceived by individuals, often many years after the fact.

Submit a one-page description of your proposed session by June 15, 2004 to Stacy Pomeroy Draper, RCHS Curator (RCHS, 57 Second Street, Troy, NY 12180 or spdraper@rchsonline.org). Final decisions on the conference program will be made by July 15, 2004. Each participant will be asked to provide a paper for possible publication of symposium proceedings by RCHS at a later date. Any questions may be directed to Ms. Draper at spdraper@rchsonline.org or (518) 272-7232x14.

LARRY HART REVISITED

As you have no doubt noticed, the Daily Gazette has been running Larry's old columns, which is nice for those of us who missed them the first time.

Not to be outdone, your Society carries many of Larry's books in the office. In addition, we also have Larry Hart, *My Dad* by Alan Hart.

John Papp's *The Traveler's Pocket Directory* gives you details of Erie Canal travel and stage coach routes. We perceive the Directory as an enjoyable adjunct to a history lesson in American 19th century travel.

ARTISTS AND CRAFTERS WANTED

Looking for artists & craftspeople to exhibit at the Fall Arts & Crafts Festival at the Mabee Farm Historic Site on October 9, 2004. Call (518) 887-5073

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED AT MABEE FARM

The Mabee Farm School Program continues to grow--so much so that it's straining our group of dedicated and talented volunteers.

Field trip groups will be coming just about every day between May 19 and June 10 and we really could use some help! Programs run from about 9:30 AM to noon.

Consider volunteering to work with groups of about 15 or so delightful, well-behaved and chaperoned 4th graders at one of our rotating stations. Besides conducting guided tours of the residences, volunteers are needed to explain early agricultural methods in the Dutch barn (Eve Rau will gladly train prospective grain flailers!), demonstrate butter-making and explain early colonial foods, describe what life might have been like for a colonial farm family, and assist in helping kids enjoy a number of early colonial games.

If you're interested, contact Pat Barrot or Stan Lee at the farm (887-5073) or Richard Lewis (346-6809) and plan to attend our Volunteers' Day on Saturday morning, April 24th from 10 AM to noon. It's enjoyable and rewarding helping history come alive for our area young people.

AROUND THE COUNTY

Princetown Tidbits

Irma Mastrean -- Town Historian

Kelly's Station

The building of the Schenectady and Quaker Street branch of the Delaware and Hudson Railroad in 1873 made Kelly's Station a marked place in the county.

It was necessary to construct a culvert for Kelly Road and one for the Bonny Brook creek. The trestles were built in 1895 by the D&H Railway of cut limestone with a Roman arch. It is said that this entire branch of the railroad, 15 miles including the work at Kelly's Station, was done for a contract of \$150,000. It must have taken hundreds of tons of fill to make the grade; all done without the use of bulldozers. The hundreds of laborers who toiled there may have received one dollar a day!

The store at Kelly's Station was run by Andrew Kelly and later by Alfred Vedder who married Andrew's daughter, Jennie. It was the only store between Duanesburg and Schenectady. Jennie acted as post mistress there. She would pick up the mail daily at the rail road station across the road for sorting and distribution to customers. Jennie remembered when the old D&H was a busy passenger line nicknamed "The Skunk" because of its foul smell.

Scotia-Glenville

by

Elsie Maddaus

Percy Van Epps, early Glenville Town Historian, made a number of reports to the Town Board. In his fifth report on the early settlers of Glenville he listed Alexander Lindsey (who added Glen to his name), Haenson Toll, Van Epps, Vedder, Swarts, Brooks, Barhydt, De Graff, Haverly, Rector, Van Patten, Van Antwerp and Walton.

Curious as to whether these names are still current, I consulted the Scotia-Glenville Telephone Directory for 2003-2004. I found listings in the 12302 area for: Lindsey 1, Glen 4, Toll 0, Van Epps 3, Vedder 2, Swarts 0, Rector 0, Van Patten 7, Van Antwerp 0 and Walton 0.

A few of the above family names were used for the names of streets and roads: Barhydt, De Graff, Glen, Rector and Toll.

Ed. note: Those Van Pattens are a sturdy lot! Our congratulations to all those apples that haven't fallen far from

the tree.

THANK YOU ONE AND ALL

We gratefully acknowledge the receipt of a check for \$1,000 from Larry Hart's estate. Larry was a president of the Society and was in charge at the time of the building of the Vrooman room. He is best remembered for his years of reporting local history for the Schenectady Gazette/Daily Gazette, and the shelf full of books on local history

OOPS! DEPARTMENT . . . OR, I DIDN'T KNOW THAT!

Dear Bill Dimpelfeld,

. . . I would like to call your attention to the correct spelling of the name of the Mohican Indians. .
. Their name is sometimes spelled "Mahican," as that is the way the Dutch heard it, but never as "Mohegan."
The Mohegans were a separate tribe, an offshoot of the Pequots who lived in southeastern Connecticut. . .

I enjoy your columns.

Sincerely,

Shirley Dunn`

LIBRARY POTPOURRI

Virginia Bolen

One of our favorite benefactors, A. Nonymous, has donated \$2,500 (to be matched by the GE Gifts program, to be used to enhance the technical support in the library. Many thanks! We are always grateful for such donations; we are doubly grateful when they are matched by GE.

New on our website: Index to the Poorhouse records for Schenectady County, prepared by volunteer Cynthia Seacord. Covers 1900-1920. Look under "Genealogy". Request a search using our "look-up" form.

New for sale: Alan Hart's book about his father, Larry Hart, longtime city and county historian for Schenectady. Available from the Society for \$14 plus \$3 shipping and handling.

Coming later this year: A new version of the popular Images of America series by Arcadia Publications is being published by the Society this year. It will cover the Town of Rotterdam. Watch for an announcement in the next newsletter.

OOPS! Christmas has come and gone but we still appreciate the work done by volunteer Beth Pfaffenbach in creating decorations for our tree at Proctor's. She was accidentally omitted from the list of participants.

Volunteers make it happen! Here at the Grems-Doolittle Library we are very fortunate to have a large number of hard-working and talented volunteers. Some just "stopped by" for a look-see and became permanent fixtures. Others were invited in by current volunteers and couldn't resist joining the happy crew. Still others stop by to pick up a project, take it home and a short time later return with the finished product. Another gifted volunteer has begun updating and revising our website. I'd like you to meet these great people and I invite you to come see us. Perhaps you will find a place here too. There is something for everyone!

Volunteers -- We Appreciate you!

Ann Eignor

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Can you help us identify this picture? Let us know if you recognize the school or any of the students. If we get the answer, we'll let you know in the next newsletter. [attach photo]

This is a photo of the grist mills at the corner of Villa Road and South Center Street in the spring of 1911. It is now the intersection of Broadway and Crane Streets. Note the almost completed St. Adalbert's Roman Catholic Church (Polish). [attach photo]

And now for an exciting announcement--The Schenectady County Historical Society has offered its services to the City of Schenectady to reopen and manage the Efner City History Center located in the attic of City Hall. Target date for re-opening is June 1st. This 50-year-old collection is a real asset to the city and county of Schenectady. Look for the announcement of its re-opening in our next newsletter.

MUSEUM NEWS

Jo Mordecai

Along the Bridal Path from 1838 ~ 1976 [photo]

The new House Museum exhibit features some of our antique wedding gowns. Each of the gowns will display the name of the bride, her groom and the wedding date.

Each gown is carefully stored when not on display. Each is packed in acid free tissue and gently packed into its own large box. With some of the gowns we have little extras; for example, with Auguste Delbam's gown (circa 1903) we have her underwear, lisle stockings, shoes, blue garter, and what is left of her cherished bouquet.

Bridal gowns have changed greatly through the years. Brides used not to wear white. Often a new gown was made for that special day, but was probably worn for a number of years as a Sunday going to church dress, and later might have been part of a family quilt. The materials used for wedding dresses in the Victorian era could be beautiful. Anna Moore's dress is made of dimity, a delicate cotton fabric alternating sheer and solid woven stripes. For many years cotton was considered a luxury fabric very few people could afford.

The two 1880's gowns are made of heavy silk faille and oyster satin with lace trim, one accented with tiny artificial lilies of the valley. These gowns would only have been worn by brides from wealthy families.

Since May, June and July are the popular wedding months, these gowns once again can be shown in all their glory.

From Your House to Our House

Donor Mrs. Elsie Maddaus
One glass commemorative tumbler - Glenville Sesquicentennial
1820-1970

Donor Mrs. Kim Mabee
Commemorative Plate
The Abraham Glen House
Golden Jubilee 1904-1954

Donor Mrs Cynthia Seacord
Commemorative Serving Dish
Tow Path Historic America
The Erie Canal

ETTORE MANCUSO'S WORLD WAR I EXPERIENCES

(A year or so ago the Grems-Doolittle library received a gift of the papers of Ettore Mancuso, the child of Italian immigrants. Among the papers was a letter dated Jan. 15, 1924, addressed to "Dear Miss Root" and signed "Ettore" and a reply dated Aug. 24, 1924, from Mabel V. Root who was living in Catskill, New York, at the time. Their relationship seemed to be that of former teacher and pupil. Ettore's letter is on the letterhead of Ettore Mancuso and Hannibal Pardi, Attorneys-at-law, 428 State Street, Schenectady, N. Y. and the subject is his experiences in the 2nd Pioneers, an army service and construction battalion. Here is the final installment of that letter. We are pleased to publish it as representative of the rich cultural variety that is our Schenectady heritage.)

Part III

On January 13th a major . . . notified me that my release had been ordered at Washington, and they transferred me to the 13th Infantry, which was the regiment doing guard duty over my fellow-prisoners of the day before. Isn't that irony? All the while I was seeing majors and colonels and captains about my discharge from the army, until finally I was sent to Camp Merritt for my mustering out. Once discharged and paid off in full, I made for the first train for home, and I was in Schenectady on the night of Jan. 24th, 1920, twenty months to a day since I had left for camp.

. . . I was interviewed by several reporters. . . who desired me to make long statements about my experiences, but I declined, because I thought that to give the matter more publicity now that the last of the 2nd Pioneers was home would and could serve no further purpose, so I limited myself to a brief statement to the Schenectady Gazette, merely for the purpose of denying certain falsehoods which had been circulated about me by my former captain upon his arrival in the city for the purpose of justifying himself of all the charges I had made against him. Thus ended for me the Great Adventure.

After . . . a couple of weeks I obtained employment . . . until September, when law school reopened and I resumed my studies. Two years more rolled by and I finished my course in June 1922. In October I opened up an office at my present address together with the partner whose name you see above, who had graduated in June 1921, and ahead of me because he was exempted from military service, while I lost two years on account of it.

And now I am in the full swing of things. Of course I am handicapped, as all Italians must be in the United

States, by reason of unjust race prejudice. Still I cannot give up, and I cannot turn back after having gone so far. I must fight my battle of life just as I used to fight my battle with the English language a few years ago
. . . I have been married for several months She hailed from Gloversville, N. Y. Her maiden name was Jane Mauro. Armando expects to finish this June. He dropped engineering after two and a half years at Union College and turned to law. He seems to like it and . . . enjoy it.

Schenectady is the same as ever; perhaps a little more on the map on account of being the hometown of the Lieutenant-Governor of the Empire State and account of W. G. Y. Have you a radio in your home? Oh yes, another thing that is putting Schenectady on the map is the sermons which are transmitted by the W. G. Y. broadcasting station every Sunday. A sort of voice in the wilderness.

Well, I hope I have kept my promise for this time. Just one request now, please since you burn all letters you receive after you have answered them. I ask that you spare this one and send it back to me as it contains the only complete narrative of my war experiences, in brief of course, and I would like to keep it.

With my best regards & good wishes, I am

(signed: Ettore)

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

Grems-Doolittle Library

The Grems-Doolittle library is a historical, biographical, and genealogical 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.

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING DEPARTMENT

Wanted!

Someone to do filing and sorting in the library. Our librarian can never catch up.
Great opening for volunteer with unsatisfied clerical lust! Call librarian 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 docent 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 374-926 for further information.

Transcriptionist needed. The library needs someone to extract and transcribe obituaries and death notices from the newspapers of the 1930's. There is currently no index to the 1930's deaths, so this is very important work. If you are a meticulous, detail-oriented person, this job is for you! Work at your own pace and on your own schedule. Call our librarian at 374-0263

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 County counties cannot read this message? Help lower these numbers; call Literacy Volunteers at 372-9819.

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