



Schenectady County
Historical
Society

Newsletter

Volume 42 Number 5-6

May-June 2005

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Mabee Farm Historic Site

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STATUS REPORT OF FUND DRIVE FOR GEORGE E. FRANCHERE EDUCATION CENTER

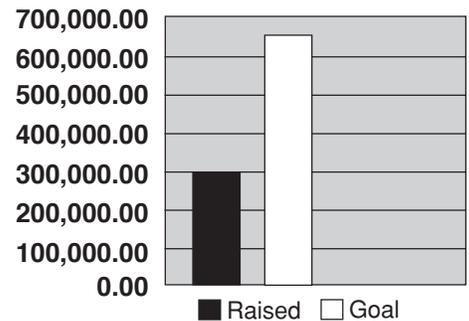
In the last newsletter we announced the public fund raising drive for the new George Franchere Education Center. It is the goal of this drive to raise enough money to ensure the completion of the first phase of the project, which is the construction of the building and an operational main floor. These costs are estimated at \$650,000. To date through our advanced efforts, we have raised and received pledges of \$330,000. We are half way there. Sources of pledges and funds to date are: the Trustees of the Society, Mabee Farm

Committee members, Assemblyman Paul Tonko, Senator Hugh Farley, the Carlilian Foundation, William Gundry Broughton Charitable Private Foundation, Inc., and the GE Foundation Matching Program.

The George Franchere Education Center will allow the Historic Site to be open year round, greatly improve its operations and programming and become a regional historic cultural center and a major attraction. It will also aid in developing the tourism industry in Schenectady, the Mohawk Valley and New York State.

Near the end of March you received a letter asking you to support this project. Your support is vital. Your contributions, as well as directly supporting this project, will be a gauge of community support, an essential element of our ability to be awarded grants from the larger foundations to complete this project. The number of people and the amount are both important. Remember an anonymous donor will match up to \$50,000.00 one dollar for every two you donate, and, if you are eligible, G.E. will match your donation dollar for dollar.

Giving as much as you are able, will make you an important part of the new Education Center. Your generous donation will make a tremendous impact on our community, it's culture, education and history. Please make your donation today.



Forefather's
Day
June 19th
1-5pm
Annual
Fundraiser

\$25 Individual



Full Colonial Meal
Colonial Demonstrators
Tours of historic site
Music
Colonial kids games

Mabee Farm
Historic Site
1080 Main St. (Rt. 5S)
Rotterdam Jct.

Reservations
Suggested

\$50 Family
\$40 Couple

MAY/JUNE CALENDAR MABEE FARM

MAY 3: MABEE FARM OPENS FOR THE SEASON

Tuesdays-Saturdays 10am-4pm

MAY 7: OPENING OF THE TRI-CENTENNIAL EXHIBIT "THE MABEE FARM - 300 YEARS"

Step back in time and join us for an exhibit that traces the Mabee family through 300 years of life in the Mohawk Valley - a celebration of the Farm's Tri-centennial. Light refreshments. Noon-3pm (Exhibit runs May 7-Sept. 24).

MAY 14-16: RE-ENACTMENT - REVOLUTIONARY WAR

For two days the Mabee Farm will transform itself into a 1700's military encampment alive with musters, drills, mock battles, a period church service and demonstrations of Colonial life. A Saturday night Barn Dance in the 1760 Dutch Barn highlights the weekend. Sat. 9am-10pm; Sun. 8:30am-5pm

JUNE 19: FOREFATHER'S DAY

Annual Fundraiser. A traditional Dutch afternoon dinner and deserts. Tour the 300 year old farm complex featuring colonial demonstrators, children's activities and live entertainment. Donation \$25.00 per individual; \$40.00 per couple; \$50.00 per family. 1pm-5pm

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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Johanna Woldring

Office Manager

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Custodian

HOURS:

MUSEUM

Monday – Friday

1:00 to 5:00 p.m.

Saturday

10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

LIBRARY

Monday – Friday

1:00 to 5:00 p.m.

Saturday

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

MABEE FARM

Tuesday-Saturday

10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.

SOCIETY ELECTS NEW MEMBERS

Elected at the annual meeting of the Society held April 9th the following new members of the Board of Trustees. Welcome to Lawrence Rainey, Robert Sullivan and Calvin Welch.

The Society thanks departing board members Bill Dimplefeld, Jeff Parry and Barbara McEvoy for their years of service to the Society. Cindy Seacord is replacing Ann Karl as secretary. Ann has served as secretary over twelve years and the Society is most appreciative of her efforts.



The Brick House

There are a number of things we know about the BRICK HOUSE at the Mabee Farm. It was occupied by Eva Mabee in the mid-1800's, after she turned the main house over to her son Simon. It's made of brick (or at least partly). It's there. Okay, maybe there are just three things we know about the Brick House. Or at least, that's about all that historical documentation can tell us.

Archaeology has been able to tell us more. When it was conducted in advance of building repairs in 2001, it produced artifacts that dated the foundation trenches, tentatively, between 1740 and 1760. The types of artifacts implied no difference in function from other dwellings on the property.

This was informative, but it left unanswered our most basic question: What was the house doing there?

Archaeology was called upon again last summer. It was decided to kill two birds with one stone: to perform a badly needed clearing and

SECRETS BURIED IN THE BASEMENT

Steve Jones

leveling of the basement floor, which was buried in dirt and debris; and to look for the original basement floor, which might tell us more about the building's dates and functions.

The project was led by two professional archaeologists, Louise Basa and myself, and assisted by a number of budding professionals, many of them graduates of SCCC's Community Archaeology Program. The selfless volunteers were Pat Barrot, Kim Bianco, Andrea Della Vecchio, Jim Eignor, Eileen Finn, Carol Lewis, Jim Sparks, Carolyn Weatherwax and Jessica Wilson.

Excavation took place over two weeks, and more than 120 hours were put in by the volunteers alone. Roughly 40% of the floor was uncovered, some of it down to the natural glacial subsoil.

Much was learned. And much was not.

What we discovered were two layers of uneven but deliberately set stones, resting on top of a natural glacial layer. Toward the fireplace the stones actually covered a layer of metallic garbage, most likely dating to the 1830s – and therefore dating the stone layer to the same time. The fireplace itself seems to have been lined with bricks at about the same time, though now it is just a stack of bare burnt stones on

baked glacial subsoil.

What we *didn't* discover were any floors or layers predating Eva's occupation.

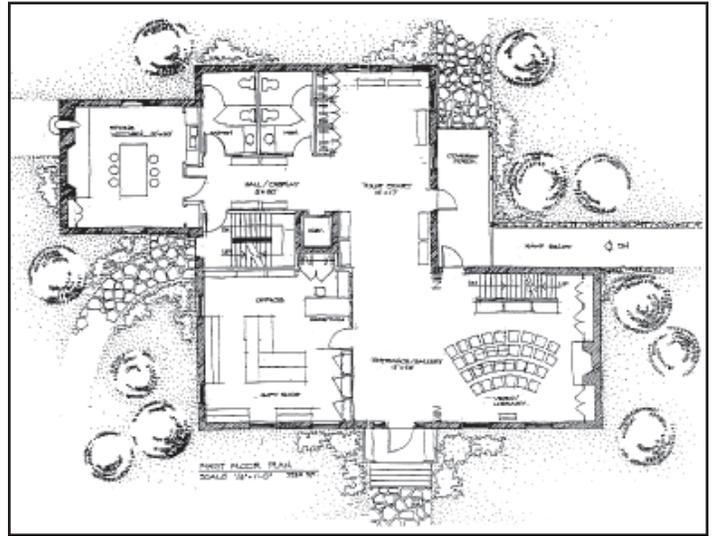
This is all rather strange, seeing as the house is 100 years older than Eva's occupation. The best guess is that the original flooring (whatever it was) got wet, got scooped out, and was replaced and waterproofed by the two layers of stones, which either fortified a dirt floor or supported a plank one. As to the house's function, its artifacts still show both household and "industrial" items, so there's nothing to indicate that the house or its basement had a special role as a special workshop or storage unit or guesthouse. There's also nothing to support that it had been set aside for slaves, as had been rumored. But then, there's not enough information yet to counter anybody's theory. The majority of artifacts – and all of the intact ones – came from the surface, or from the dense pile in the fireplace. The basement had been used as a dump probably in the early 20th century.

But now the floor has been cleared, and its construction has been revealed. And both the floor and the house await further archaeological exploration. There's still a lot of information buried in the basement.

PUBLIC STATEMENT – FRANCHERE TRUST

The Schenectady County Historical Society has been named a principal beneficiary of The George E. Franchere Trust Fund. George Franchere, who died Thanksgiving Day last year, was the direct descendent of Jan Pieterse Mabee, original family owner (1705) of the Mabee Farm. Mr. Franchere donated the Mabee Farm to the Society in 1993 and has supported it annually since then.

This Trust Fund will be administered by the Pinellas County Community Foundation with the Bank of America as Trustee. Under the terms of the trust, the farm's share of the distributed income is anticipated to be about \$300,000 annually. This will be given to the Society (non-profit 501/3C Corp.) for the benefit of the Mabee Farm starting in 2006. This is a substantial amount of money when compared to the Farm's annual budget of \$52,000.00 in the 04-05 fiscal year. This income will allow the Farm to properly address many long standing problems, improve operations and expand programming. Annual budgets have always been limited to the anticipated funds available to be spent, not on the needs of the site. One of the major problems we would now be able to address is collection storage. All but the most important pieces are stored in the attics or barns which do not have heat or air conditioning. The temperatures fluctuate from freezing cold in



the winter to hot and humid in the summer. The Farm never had the funds to restore, preserve or store those artifacts properly. Further, the three early buildings have serious humidity problems. Boards and beams are actually wet to the touch. The Farm has done much to restore the stability of the early buildings, however, there is still a great deal of work ahead. The income from the Trust fund will also ensure that the Farm will be able to meet the increased expenses for maintenance, staffing and programming at the soon to be built Franchere Education Center.

The Mabee Farm Committee recognizes the commitment and generosity of George Franchere to the Mabee Farm. The Committee also supports and pledges to respect his vision of developing the farm into an educational institution and a first class regional historic center.

RE-ENACTMENT

MAY 14-15

SATURDAY 9:00AM-10:00PM

SUNDAY 8:30AM-5:00PM



Bateau Exercises - Mock Battles
 Kids Drill with Wooden Muskets
 Trial - Court Martial
 Barn Dance - Saturday at 7:30 pm

MABEE FARM HISTORIC SITE

Route 5S, Rotterdam Junction
 (518) 887-5073

AMERICAN FURNITURE 2004

Published by the Chipstone Foundation

Edited by Luke Beckerdite

\$55 (10% discount to members)

This important publication features the architecture of the Glen Sanders Mansion and the Mabee Farm along with other early 18th century houses in the Albany area. It explores the relationship between the moldings in the houses and the furniture; in particular the Kast that was usually included in every household. Three Kasts that were originally in the Glen Sanders Mansion are described in the article. One is in the collection of the SCHS, one is in the collection of the Schenectady Museum and the third is in Winterthur.

This is an important read for all interested in early Schenectady architecture and furniture. It is available at Society headquarters and at the Mabee Farm.

We now accept credit cards—
 MasterCard and VISA.



MEMBERSHIP FORM

Schenectady County Historical Society

Please indicate one of the following for your membership:

- \$25 Individual
- \$40 Family
- \$50 Donor
- \$100 Sponsor
- \$500 Patron
- \$1000 Lifetime

Please mail this form with your check or credit card information to:
 Schenectady County Historical Society
 32 Washington Ave., Schenectady, NY 12305

Your Name _____

Street _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Check enclosed Please charge my credit card: MasterCard VISA

Acct # _____ Exp. Date _____

Signature _____

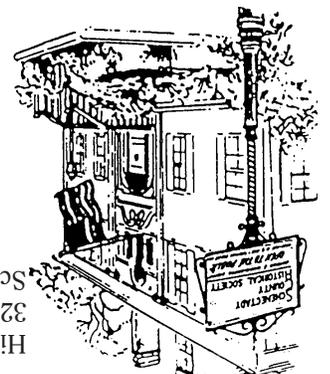
Also enclosed is a gift of \$ _____ for special projects designated as follows:

Museum: Art Restoration _____ Acquisitions _____ Publications _____ Programs _____

Library: Equipment _____ Publications _____

Mabee Farm: Preservation _____ Education Building _____ Programs _____

Your tax-deductible membership can be matched by G.E. (800) 305-0669



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