



Schenectady County  
Historical  
Society

# Newsletter

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## ***“We are sowing winter wheat.”:***

Elizabeth Cady Stanton in Schenectady, 1867

by

Neil B. Yetwin



*Elizabeth Cady Stanton*

On Thursday, March 14, 1867, the following announcement appeared on page 3 of the *Schenectady Democrat and Reflector*:

“EQUAL RIGHTS MEETING. – Our readers will bear in mind that Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony will address the citizens of Schenectady on the subject of ‘Universal Suffrage, the basis of just government’ at Anthony Hall on Wednesday evening (March 20<sup>th</sup>) at 7 ½ o’clock. Admission 25 cents.”

The same announcement appeared on the following Monday, March 18<sup>th</sup>, adding that “Mrs. Stanton will, we understand, reply to Prof. Tayler Lewis’s theories as to household representation, & c.”



*Susan B. Anthony*

Despite the growing influence of Stanton, Anthony, and the American women’s movement during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the issue of “female suffrage” was generally relegated to the back pages of newspapers around the country. And there probably would not have been any additional coverage of Stanton’s appearance had it not been for a group of Union College students whose behavior at her lecture precipitated a series of rancorous exchanges in the local press.

Stanton, a Johnstown native, was educated at the Johnstown Academy and the Troy Seminary (later the Emma Willard School) and after moving to Seneca Falls, NY in 1847, she helped organize the first Women’s Rights Convention, which convened at Seneca Falls on July 19, 1848. Stanton was subsequently labeled a “dangerous radical” and the women’s rights movement became, as one historian put it, “the object of ridicule from press and pulpit alike.” Beginning in 1851, she teamed up with Susan B. Anthony and for the next 50 years organized women’s conventions and spoke before local, state and national legislatures and congressional committees in the cause of women’s rights.

*Continued on p 4 & 5*

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*President's Letter*

I haven't been to Washington in April to see its cherry trees in years, but I couldn't resist the next best thing. Overnight, a day or so ago, the trees in front of the YWCA next door and our headquarters burst forth in full bloom. So I brought my trusty eight megapixel Canon to work this morning and fired it at an angle designed to capture all the elements of this evanescent annual scene that I treasure so much—the grand entrance to our House, two flags flapping in the breeze, and one of those glorious trees. It's cheery, not cherry, but that's close enough for (non) government work. Here's the result:

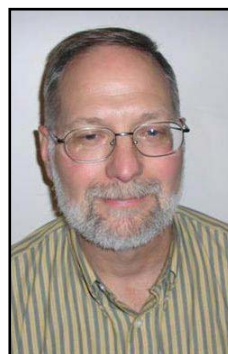


Now, I must confess that I chose a viewing angle to hide the sad fact that the tree directly in front of the building has not yet bloomed. I hate to think that it has died, so perhaps it just forgot to renew its membership in the society of its peers on either side and will pay its dues and bloom in May. You may see through where I'm going with this.

This is the annual issue of the Newsletter where we do our best to thank the many of you who have renewed Society membership during the fiscal year ending March 30. Compiling the list is something of a daunting task; I always fear that someone's name will be omitted due to a clerical error. Computers alone are too smart for this purpose; they have no judgment. We try our best to infuse some into the process.

It always hurts to lose members, so we do our level best to retain current members and recruit new ones. So when that renewal notice comes, I ask that you respond promptly and, if at all possible, do your own level best by moving up to a higher level. With your help, we'll get through this financially perilous 2009 just fine.

*- Ed*



Welcome to our newly appointed trustees, l to r:  
Nancy Johnsen Curran, Paul Borisenko, Marianne Blanchard, Brian Merriam.  
See page 3 for their biographies.

## Our Four Newest Trustees

### MARIANNE BLANCHARD

Marianne Blanchard has had a 30-year career in banking. She is currently a branch manager for Capital Bank in Albany after previous service with the Ballston Spa National Bank and Trustco. Marianne was a long-time volunteer for the Mohawk Pathways Girl Scout Council. Over the years she served as a Leader, Association Chair, Board member, and Board Chair. She was also an active member of the Scotia Glenville Lincoln School PTA board, and was a co-chair of the Scotia Glenville Junior High PTA. Marianne joined Schenectady Rotary in 1992, transferred to Glenville Rotary in 1995, and now serves as its Deputy Secretary. She is a member of the Southern Saratoga, Colonie, and Albany-Colonie Chambers of Commerce and a member of the Hope House 2009 Golf committee. Growing up on Schermerhorn Road in Rotterdam where so many historic homes still stand instilled in Marianne a strong interest in local history. She began service to SCHS as a volunteer in the Grem-Doolittle Library. She was appointed to a vacancy on our Board last year, and the membership extended her term at the Annual Meeting. Marianne lives in Glenville with her husband David, and their two daughters have given them three grandsons.

### NANCY JOHNSEN CURRAN

Nancy Johnsen Curran brings to the Society expertise in two professions: genealogy research and public relations. Her career in public relations and journalism includes local news and music columns, as well as working in New York for American Heritage. She earned her bachelor's degree in communications from Empire State College, having received academic credit for earlier studies at Skidmore College, as well as for her experience as a music reviewer and columnist for the *Schenectady Gazette* and her work as producer and host of "Dimensions," a public affairs talk show on WGY. She worked as public relations officer for the nontraditional Regents External Degree Program, now called Excelsior College, and as an adjunct faculty member teaching journalism and public relations at the Sage Colleges. Later Nancy was a public relations professional at the State University of New York central administration, acting as liaison for 64 campuses and originating press releases and reports for the SUNY system. She has also been a member of the board of governors of the Friends of the New York State Library, and now serves on the board of trustees of the New Netherland Project, which translates and publishes documents of the Dutch colonial period.

### PAUL BORISENKO

Shortly after attending a Stockade Walkabout in 1980, Glenville resident Paul Borisenko and his wife Sara purchased a home built in 1790 in the hamlet of Charlton. Owning their own building and remodeling business, they spent the next quarter century working on it, raising their two children, and becoming part of that community. As a member of the local Historical Society, Paul served in almost every capacity from chair of building and grounds to president. He chaired a group that restored the old one-room schoolhouse that now serves as that Society's meeting place, and co-chaired the annual Founders Day parade for over 15 years. He was a member of the Charlton Planning Board and Chairman of its Historic District Commission. In 2004 Paul and Sara decided it was time for a change. They built their "retirement" home in the Glenville hills—all on one floor, maintenance free, tilt-in windows. But shortly thereafter, Paul changed his mind and career and began work as Building Inspector for the Town of Glenville. So he will once again be part of a Building and Grounds committee, this time for our Historical Society, and he and Sara will still have time to enjoy their two grandchildren.

### BRIAN MERRIAM

Brian Merriam is a lifelong resident of Schenectady County. He attended Niskayuna High School and earned a B.A. degree in Political Science from Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan. He returned to Schenectady to work with his father in their family-owned, 114-year-old insurance agency. Brian has since gone on to obtain three post-graduate professional degrees and teaches insurance and risk management topics around the United States. As the current president of the Merriam Insurance Agency, he presides over a staff of 15 at offices in Schenectady and North Creek, NY. His past community activities include service as vice president of the Schenectady City Mission, Ambassador of the Schenectady Chamber of Commerce, a deacon of the First Presbyterian Church, president of the Schenectady Rotary Club, and a fund raiser for Ellis Hospital. He has also held memberships in Gideons International, Birthright of Schenectady, the Hamilton Hill Neighborhood Association, the College Park Neighborhood Association, and the Boy Scouts of America. He is also a past chairman of the Center City Sports Complex and the current chairman of the National Federation of Independent Businesses Leadership Counsel. Brian and his wife Judi and their three children live in Schenectady.

As the Civil War approached, Stanton used her platform to link women suffrage with abolitionism, but in the aftermath of the war the newly-formed American Equal Rights Association within the suffrage movement set aside its original agenda in favor of black voting rights. Undeterred, Stanton turned her attention to the New York State Constitution and addressed the State Senate's Judiciary Committee. She insisted that women were citizens governed by the New York State Constitution, and therefore had a right to vote for delegates empowered to change that document. "Women and negroes, being seven-twelfths of the people, are a majority," she told the Committee on January 23<sup>rd</sup>; "And according to our republican theory, are the rightful rulers of the nation." The motion was defeated, but Stanton, Anthony and colleague Lucy Stone were granted permission to speak at the convention the following summer. In the interim, Stanton and Anthony promoted their cause on the lecture circuit and in the process gathered 20,000 signatures from women around the state. Their local itinerary would take them to Amsterdam, Fultonville, Gloversville and Johnstown, but their first stop was at Schenectady's Anthony Hall, which stood at the northeast corner of Liberty and Ferry Streets.

The diminutive (5'3") Stanton began her Anthony Hall address by maintaining that "because men and women are the complement of one another, we need women's thought in national affairs to make a safe and stable government. If the civilization of the age calls for the extension of the suffrage, surely a government of the most virtuous men and women would better represent and whole and protect the interests of all than could the representation of either sex alone." An additional excerpt from Stanton's speech was reported in the *Daily Evening Star* and the *Schenectady Republican* over the following days:

"How humiliating! For women to be thrust aside with infamous criminals – and worse than all, with those who bet on elections. Prisoners in our public prisons, paupers in our alms house, students, etc. vote wherever they are. Just imagine the motley crew from the ten thousand dens of poverty and vice in our large cities, limping, raving, cringing, staggering up to the polls."

The *Evening Star's* editorial response was patronizing but not harsh. One writer claimed that I would be humiliating for "educated, refined, Christian women" to mingle "with just such a class of men as Mrs. Stanton

has described." Only a minority of women would ever choose to vote if allowed, he went on, and suggested that women can only improve society by avoiding the ballot box and "pursuing her duties as wife and mother at home, instilling into the minds of her dear children principles of virtue, warning them against the evils to which they are exposed.... We agree with Mrs. Stanton that woman has a great mission to perform in this country, but it is only as a moral agent – her aim must be to develop the child for God and country."

But the *Evening Star* also reported the arrival of some Union College students at Anthony Hall (the exact number is unknown), some of whom were allegedly inebriated when they began to exhibit "scandalous behavior" by attacking "an unprotected woman, addressing a public audience in a commendable and able manner" in the form of the "hissing, squawking, stamping, laughing noises of a pack of conceited asses. Some of you may have been told by your mothers to keep your mouth shut for a time that no one would know you was a fool. Follow her advice... Judging from the conduct of a number of students of Union College at the Equal Rights Meeting, the finest specimens and the richest varieties of educated fools are to be found in that institution of learning." The writer then issued a stern warning: "If any of you again disturb *our* peace in a public meeting, we propose to dispose of you in a more summary manner than this."

"A Student" responded in the March 25<sup>th</sup> *Evening Star* that "No disrespect for 'an unprotected female' was intended by any student at the meeting of which you speak. But when we hear one of our most honored Professors directly or indirectly assailed, rest assured that we shall resent the injury at once." Mrs. Stanton, it was reported, had stated that "had the women the right to choose between Henry Ward Beecher and Prof. Lewis to represent them they would prefer the former" (Beecher, a well-known abolitionist and social reformer, was an advocate of woman suffrage, while Union Professor Talyer Lewis wrote that "women already had the vote; their husbands were their representatives.")). The *Star's* editor responded with undisguised sarcasm to the letters: "If we really knew that it was the brightest effort of the 'smartest' student in Union College we would lay down our pen and bedew the paper on which we are writing with tears."

Other respondents were more benevolent. One insisted that most of the said students conducted themselves

in a “commendable manner” and were “urbane and dignified.” Another, signing himself as “Fair Play”, dismissed the “hissing dispute” as “much ado about a trivial matter.” While not a “student worshipper”, he wrote, it is sometimes necessary to refrain from “hostility and malice towards students as a class” who “now and then abuse the principles bestowed” by civil society.

The impact of Stanton’s message on her Schenectady audience may never be known. But eleven weeks later, an article entitled “Schenectady Female Suffrage and the Water Question” appeared in the May 25<sup>th</sup> *Daily Evening Star* which stated that “on the question whether public water works should or should not be erected at municipal expense, nearly one-sixth of the seven hundred odd votes cast were deposited by women. The conservative tendencies of the sex were made proudly manifest in the fact that of their quota of votes nearly all were cast against the proposed innovation.” Susan B. Anthony kept a copy of the article in her records as evidence that American women did indeed want the right to vote.

On June 27<sup>th</sup>, at the conclusion of their local lecture tour, Stanton and Anthony went on to address the Suffrage Subcommittee of the State Constitutional Convention and deliver their petition but were defeated once again. From 1868 to 1880, Stanton spent 8 months of each year lecturing from Maine to Texas under the auspices of the New York Lyceum Bureau, speaking about women’s issues as well as education and prison reform.

Elizabeth Cady Stanton continued to write, lecture and lobby for women’s rights until the end of her life, but came to accept that American women would likely not vote in her lifetime. “*We are sowing winter wheat,*” she wrote on her 78<sup>th</sup> birthday, “which the coming spring will see sprout and which hands other than ours will reap and enjoy.” When she died in New York City on October 26, 1902 at age 87, the *Evening Star* published an article, “Tales of Mrs. Stanton: Early Experiences of Famous Woman Suffragette” that included amusing extracts from her autobiography but nothing substantive on her social and political impact. Yet throughout her lifetime, Elizabeth Cady Stanton developed a rich legacy of activism for women who still struggle to breach the perpetual “glass ceiling.”



*Anthony Hall, northeast corner of Liberty and Ferry Streets, Schenectady, NY*

### *MABEE FARM – news and events*

Mabee Farm 2009 season opens Saturday, May 9 and will operate through September 26. It is open to the public Tuesdays through Saturdays 10 am – 4 pm and at other times by appointment. Please call (518) 887-5073.

### **EXHIBIT** opening on May 16: **The French and Indian War: “Civilian Efforts in the Logistics of War”**

Many books and articles have been written about this war - its military leaders and the issues leading to the conflict. But what is seldom discussed is the monumental task in the mid 1700’s of getting supplies to the troops. This exhibit examines the enormous effort of the ordinary people and slaves to carry out the task. The Mabee Farm is proud to have received a Dickinson Sponsorship Grant from the *French and Indian War 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Commission* for this exhibit.

### **DOCENT and TOUR GUIDE Training Day**

A Training Day for Tour Guides and Docents will be held on Saturday, May 9<sup>th</sup> from 10 am – 12 pm. Learn about the Mabee Family and life at this site from the 17<sup>th</sup> through the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Find out how you can assist with programs and events. Light refreshments will be provided. For additional information, and to register please call (518) 887-5073

### **CEMETERY DAY**

The Mabee Family Cemetery needs some TLC and we need a small army to help us. Please join us on Saturday May 16<sup>th</sup> from 9 am – 1 pm as we survey the cemetery, tidy it up, and make repairs.

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Clifford Hayes  
Gerald Helgeson  
Garrett Hermanson  
Gale Hock  
Robert Hoffman

Paul Hooker  
Douglass Horstman  
Sylvia Hosegood  
Dr. Marvin A. Humphrey  
Glenn Hunger  
JoAnne Ivory  
Bernice Izzo  
Barbara Jeffries  
Hugh Jenkins  
Timothy Johnson  
Blaine Johnston  
Marietta Jones  
Leonard Josefiak  
Gerald Kammerman  
Rev. James Kane  
Raymond Karis  
Ann Karl  
Randall Karl  
Francis Karwowski  
Jean Katz  
Ms. B. J. Kelly  
Dottie Kennison  
Sharlene King  
Ron Kingsley  
Millie Kling  
Bonnie Kotary  
Donna Kuba  
Florence LaMontagne  
Rita Lancefield  
Anne LaRoche  
Stan Lee  
Sally Lester  
Richard W. Lewis Jr.  
Carol Lewis  
Victor Lou  
Katharine Lowe  
Robert Mabie  
Catharine Mabie  
Mrs. Sylvester Mabie  
George Mabie  
Betty Jean Maclachlan  
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Gertrude Mallan  
Jim Mancuso  
David Manthey  
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Richard Martin  
Joan Marzitelli-Brooks  
Irma Mastrean  
Brian Maybee  
Patricia McAllister  
Robert McCalley Jr.  
Carole McCarthy  
Nancy McNabb  
Jo Ann Menzer



Marion Miller  
Peter Modley  
Martha Mooney  
Andrew James Morris  
Malinda Myers  
Perry Ann Myslivy  
Beverly Neadle  
Janet Nelson  
Nancy Niefeld  
George Nigriny  
Christie Noble  
Jane Meader Nye  
Francis O'Connor  
Elaine Orsini  
Caleb Paine  
Barbara Palmer  
Nancy Papish  
Cheryl Parkhurst  
Mary Pedone  
Linda Perregaux  
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Robert A. Petito Jr  
Julia Pfaffenbach  
Betty Pieper  
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Teresa Pistolessi  
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Gabrielle Reals  
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Patricia Ritrovato  
Mary Ann Ruscitto  
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Paul Ryan  
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Judith Schultz  
Elinore Schumacher  
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### **Supporting**

Adirondack Trust Co.  
Baptist Health System  
Bellamy Construction  
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C. T. Male Engineering  
Edison Exploratorium  
Ellis Hospital  
Felthousen Florists  
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Gazette Newspapers  
General Electric Company  
George E. Franchere Trust  
Glen Sanders Mansion  
Golub Foundation  
JM MacDonald Foundation  
Knolls Atomic Power Laboratory  
Lange's Pharmacy  
Lower Hudson Conference  
Mabee Family Foundation  
Matthew Bender  
Media Well Done  
Mohawk Ambulance  
Northeastern Fine Jewelry  
NYS Council for the Humanities  
NYS Quadricentennial  
Commission  
Pattersonville Furniture  
Preisman Realty  
Schenectady County  
Schenectady D.A.R.  
Schenectady Museum  
Senator Hugh T. Farley  
Starbucks  
Stockade Inn  
Slick's Restaurant & Tavern  
T. A. Predel & Co. Inc  
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Vincy's Printing

## *Library News*

### ***New books and historic documents in the library:***

*\*Beck, Boorshoom, Brouwer, Castle, Coonley, DeGraaf, Peek, Race, Trieux, Truax, Van Benthuyzen, Van Santvoord, Van Slyck, Vedder, Wallard* - genealogies compiled by James M. Spencer for numerous families from Schenectady

\*The Nelson Lee Dawson family bible, gift of Gary and Kim Mabee

\**And Grandma Said... Iroquois Teachings* by Tom Porter

\*Deed dated 1787 Duanesburg (site of the Quaker Street School) scanned copy, provided by Robert Sullivan. (Original deed is housed in the school building)

### ***The Robert J. Mielke Collection***

The library has cataloged and shelved a local history collection donated by Evelyn Thode in the memory of Robert J. Mielke who passed away on May 28, 2007. Bob was a long-time member and supporter of the Historical Society. He

had collected important studies of New York State history from Colonial days through the 19<sup>th</sup> century relating to Schenectady history from Dutch barn architecture to Colonial agrarian studies; local education (Schenectady public education, Union College); biographies; and Native American studies. This collection

also reflects his professional interests: librarian, educator, and a founding member of UCALL, Union College's adult education non-degree program.

Bob was a lifelong area resident, born in Schenectady in 1938, the son of William and Ethel Yates Mielke, and a graduate of Nott Terrace High School, Class of 1956. He earned his B.A. from Union College, a masters degree in History from the University of Pennsylvania, and a second masters degree in Library Science from SUNY Albany School of Library Science. Later he earned a certificate in accounting from Siena College.

In addition to books, Evelyn Thode donated a music rack which is labeled, "William Mielke, Musical Director, Schenectady," and belonged to Bob's father who played

the violin and had a career at GE retiring in 1968. At this point we do not know which musical group William Mielke directed, but plan to research this over the summer.

Bob was especially interested in the Mabee Farm and for that reason Evelyn Thode donated an antique cider press to the farm from his estate. Pat Barrot, site manager for the Mabee Farm, has discovered in the farm history that cider was made with similar presses by the Mabee family. This press will be used to demonstrate to farm visitors how cider was made by hand.



### *MUSEUM – lectures, exhibits*

#### ***“The Most Beautiful Land”: Schenectady County’s History – A Bicentennial Exhibit***

will continue in the Society's Vrooman Room until September. This is an exceptional exhibit you do not want to miss. It looks at Schenectady County's history from its beginnings as a frontier trading community to becoming an industrial center with the city of Schenectady known as the city that “lights and hauls” the world, and to the changes in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

***Message from the Curator*** – The Society is the recipient of three substantial grants from the *New York State Council for the Humanities* (NYSCH). One underwrote our February 14<sup>th</sup> program “Traveling the African American Experience in New York City.” Another paid for most of the construction, printing, and other costs associated with the mounting of our ambitious Bicentennial Exhibit. The third will underwrite our November program on “St. Nicholas, the Saint Who Became Santa Claus” featuring the culinary expert and Dutch historian, Peter Rose. The *Lower Hudson Conference* grant paid for the cleaning and conservation by the Williamstown Art Conservation Laboratory of the “Jacob Mabee Inn” sign featured in our current exhibit; and finally, the Institute of *Museum*

and Library Services (IMLS) paid for the purchase of movable shelving to be installed in the vault in the History Museum.

The Society survives and thrives on the efforts of its many volunteers in almost every aspect of our Museum operations. Our docent staff includes Bill Buell, Faye Tischler, and Mary Liebers. For the past three years volunteers have inventoried our collections: David Waytho, Ann-Marie Rutkowski, Phil Falconer, Mona Graves, and Allan Shartrand. There are also the countless other volunteers who have helped with construction, editing, cleaning, painting, or helping to host events: Bill Ackner, Kim Mabee, Ann Aronson, Ann Karl, Rita Brinkman, Vaughn Nevin, Ruth Bergeron, Theresa Pistolessi, Edwin Reilly, Jim Eignor, Ann Eignor, Cynthia Seacord, Merritt Glennon, Carol Lewis, Gary Mabee, Neil Yetwin, and Matthew Zembo.

**"A Store on the Erie Canal"** – a fictional account - by storyteller Kate Dudding


**Saturday – May 9**

1:30 Refreshments                      2:00 Program

Kate Dudding is a well known local storyteller who will tell the tale of the fictional Van Heusen family and its 50 years of ownership of a store alongside the Erie Canal in Schenectady. The story opens in 1817. Come and hear all about 50 years of retail and family life along the Erie Canal.







7 Dock Street, Schenectady, NY




## French & Indian War Re-enactment & Market Fair

### June 6 - 7



- Battles with cannons & period boats
- Cavalry demonstrations
- Market Fair with period goods
- Kids musket drill
- Portrayal of Jack, the Mabee slave
- Sunday church service
- Punch & Judy Show
- Drill demos
- Camp tours

FREE  
Admission

**Saturday night period barn dance at 6:30 pm**  
*Public welcome*

**MABEE FARM HISTORIC SITE**  
Route 5S, Rotterdam Jct.  
(518) 887-5073  
[www.mabeefarm.org](http://www.mabeefarm.org)    [mabee@nycap.rr.com](mailto:mabee@nycap.rr.com)

## *Howlin' at the Moon*



### *Music Series*

***Come howl with us for our Singer/Songwriters Showcase performances that take place each full moon from 6:30 pm - 9:30 pm from June - September in our barn.***

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**June 5th** - 6:30pm - 8 pm: *Singer Songwriters*  
8pm - 9 pm: Showcase group: *Riverview Ramblers*

**July 7th** - 6:30pm - 8 pm: *Singer Songwriters*  
8 pm - 9 pm: Showcase Group: *2Late*

**August 6th and September 4th to be announced**

RK

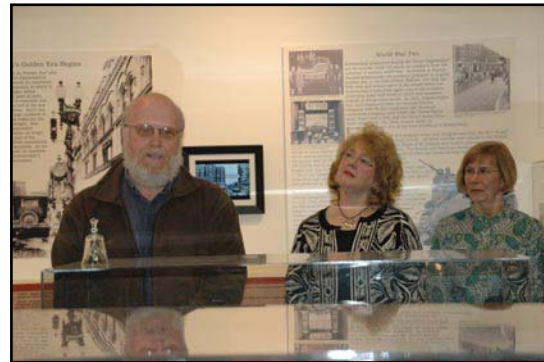
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# SCHENECTADY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

*The Opening of A Most Beautiful Land...*



Photos: Ann Aronson

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