

# Schenectady County Historical Society Newsletter

Volume 35 - Number 1-2 September - October 1998

32 Washington Avenue, Schenectady, New York 12305 (518) 374-0263

<http://www.schist.org>

## FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

I want to pay tribute to one of our biggest contributors, Mandalay (Mandy) Grems who died June 13th. Although not from our immediate area, Mandy had lived in Schenectady for decades and was vitally interested in Genealogy and local history. Through her contributions our present Grems-Doolittle Library became a reality; although many others also assisted financially, she was the main contributor.

She gave of herself to the society in time and involvement in all ways. I believe the word may be "dedication". She was a big backer of our new kitchen. I was first involved with Mandy when she and I picked out furniture to go in front of the large library window facing the river. She was fun to work with, with definite ideas on wood, color, fabrics, and comfort.

One of her biggest interests was in youth, and she spoke to me often concerning getting children and young people involved in the society. I'm sure she was happy about the many children's groups touring our building, and our Education Committee providing history kits for local school districts.

Although serious in the many tasks she did for the society, Mandy always had a twinkle in her eye and was ready for a laugh. She will be sorely missed.

On a more personal note was the passing of my brother Doug on June 19th. I remember him coming home from Van Corlaer Junior High one day so weak he could barely carry his trombone. He had contracted diabetes to the point that he was not expect to live past 40 and required insulin shots four times a day. Through his own efforts, good medical care and excellent caretaking on the part of Mom and a loyal wife, he made it to 69. Doug was a musician as was our mother, an organist and piano teacher. After studying at the New England Conservatory, and with the Boston Symphony, and working with symphonies in Alabama and North Carolina, he returned to this area where he played with Albany and Schenectady Symphony Orchestras and instructed in various schools and colleges in the area. Rather than a formal funeral the family got together with old friends, with a five piece Dixieland band as a backdrop. It was great!

Mandy and Doug, I wish you the best, wherever you may be.

Back to the Society; we've had a successful summer with many people using the library. The Father's Day event at the Mabee farm was an enjoyable and profitable success. One of the Dutch barns is about to be erected. [And We Need Docents for the Stockade Walkabout on September 26th](#), so volunteer if you can.

We wish a speedy recovery to Don Keefer, one of the most active volunteers in our library,

who has been ill lately.

Come down and visit our facility and enjoys our ongoing exhibits (right now it's antique trading cards). Our grounds are looking great and can be visited even when we're not open. See you on September 12, at 1:30 in time for those fabulous refreshments.

- Bob Sager -

## MANDALAY DELORES GREMS

The memorial service for Mandalay Grems took place at the First Reformed Church on July 11. It was followed by a reception at the Society, attended by around sixty people including members of Mandy's family and a number of her friends from other times and other places. Dallas Boyle, Jim Pontius and Frances Gotcsik who had spoken in her memory at the church were present among others. It was a quiet, pleasant occasion and we enjoyed reminiscing about Mandy and sharing our thoughts and feelings. The ladies of the kitchen outdid themselves with a savory collation, punch, coffee and tea.

Since then we have begun to receive memorial gifts in Mandy's name. We wish especially to acknowledge a check from Mandy's roommate in Seattle, Margaret Berwaldt, who sent a check to be given to the Grems-Doolittle Library, as well as a check from Fran Gotcsik, Mandy's niece, who asked that her gift be directed to the Education Committee. Many thanks to both of those women for their generosity. Mrs. Gotcsik said in her note to the Society: "Last Saturday's reception and exhibit of photographs was beautiful and so well executed. Mandy would definitely have approved!"

*Mandy Grems has played such an important part in our lives that it seems impossible that she is gone. We only knew in her the last few years, actually since she gave up driving after having had a stroke. We knew her as a neat, elfin woman who was profoundly concerned about the Society and about what could be done to bring the obvious benefits of the Society's archival treasures to the educational world of Schenectady County. We are sure that it was Mandy's prodding that led to the revitalization of the Education Committee.*

*We intend to publish a series of Mandy essays. Rather than take up an entire issue of the Newsletter with a very long feature, we choose to publish a piece at a time, so that we can continue to savor Mandy's influence for an extended period.*

## Mandalay Delores Grems 1913 - 1998 by Elsa Church

I don't remember when I first met Mandy. She was one of many coming to the old library at the Schenectady County Historical Society to discover her ancestry. Though she knew a great deal about the Doolittles, through her mother, she never heard her father talk much about his relatives in the Mohawk Valley. Owner of a butcher shop in Canastota, New York, he had a large family to support, and perhaps he had no time, nor even interest, in an unprofitable past history. The early Grems (with various spellings of the surname) were Palatine settlers who

farmed the rich lands along the Mohawk River.

Gradually I began to realize that I was dealing with a professional woman, single and retired from General Electric Company, who had the time and passion to be a meticulous researcher, and who was by her own definition a workaholic. She carried on a heavy correspondence, and edited and financed her own newsletter. Her excitement increased as did mine because I knew how much our library had helped her.

Very gradually, and with great caution, we became friends. I liked her spunk, her honesty, her throaty laugh, her generosity, even her abrupt mannerisms. . . the way she was created. Yes, she was stubborn. Yes, she argued for her point of view. Her maxims, often repeated: "Have a goal." "Have a plan." "Put it on paper." "Come early so you can start on time." "You said it."

She had a softer side. Color was important to her. Even as a child, when her mother dressed her in red, she hated it and rebelled. To pick fabrics, design and sew some of her clothes was a joy. Gardening was another joy. Her postage-sized plot back of her apartment on Union Street faced the police headquarters. Her flowers and vegetables were never disturbed! The Society building became her second home and, weather permitting, a daily walk here and some needed weeding were part of her schedule.

I like to remember her the way she was at our family Thanksgiving dinner, 1996. It was after she stopped driving, and before she became so forgetful. We were nine at the table, including Mikaela, one, and Alexis, three. After our dinner with all the trimmings, we all sat around the fireplace in the family room and rested. Even Mikaela was willing to sit still in her father's lap. But not Alexis. She had found a deck of miniature playing cards and was throwing them all around. Mandy sized up the situation and said: "Do you want to play cards?" "I don't know how."

Drawing up a footstool for a table, Mandy suggested that they make two piles of black and red cards. Then a pile of all the picture cards with K, Q, and J marked on them. Then "let's look for 3's since you are three years old." and so it went on. For a long time . . .

Mandy, an 80-year-old stranger with red hair streaked with gray, and Alexis, a little girl with smooth black hair, had connected. Both in party dresses; both with bangs. A great performance to watch. That was Mandy for you, solving a problem with what was available.

*We'll have more reminiscences about Mandy in the next issue.*

## **SEPTEMBER PROGRAM**

Who better to do a program entitled "Genealogy for Beginners" than Jack Maybee (yes that's how he spells it!), scion of the family tree that gave our Society the Mabee House. To be a Mabee (Mebie, Maybee, Mabie, Mabile) is to be a walking Genealogy. We've watched Jack spend long hours in the Gremis-Doolittle library, only to stroll up the Mrs. Woldring's desk with a fistful of documents to be duplicated for his never ending search.

So here it is -- all you ever wanted to know about how to launch your genealogical search. September 12, 1:30 PM for goodies, 2:00 for program. See you there!

## **OCTOBER PROGRAM**

October 10 falls in National Archive Week and we will host you at our annual Archives Program. Elsie Maddaus never fails us and she has promised an interesting trip down Archive Lane.

## **WALKABOUT**

**Saturday, September 26, 10:00 AM - 4:00 PM**

**September wouldn't be September without the annual Stockade Walkabout. We are on the lookout for docents to act as hosts or hostesses in the various rooms. If you've never done it before, this is a great time to get the feel of being a docent. On this particular day your job would be to greet people and shepherd them through the room. You would not have to give a long and learned spiel. Jo Mordecai will provide you with a short list of a few items in the room to talk about. You'll love it; trust me!**

**And these are the houses on display.**

**Tickets \$10 (\$9 in advance)**

1. 12 North Ferry Street Lidia Pasamanick
2. 215 Green Street Emily Curtis
3. 230 Green Street Tom Kileen
4. 48 Washington Ave. Pat & George Marshall
5. 25 Front Street. Shirley and Cullen Burris
6. 21 Front Street (Hallway) Ron Chard
7. 17 Front Street Garden Gil Harlow, Priscilla & Bill Gocha
8. 203 Union Street Harold Schneiderwind
9. Union College Boathouse Front Street
10. Red Cross Building North Church Street (Now Civic Players)
11. Mohawk Club North Church Street

**And don't forget, we'll be serving goodies in the dining room.**

## PRINCETOWN CELEBRATION [PICTURE]

by Irma Mastrean, Princetown Town Historian

This year, Princetown, the smallest town in Schenectady County, will be celebrating its 200th anniversary. It was founded March 20, 1798, the same date as the city of Schenectady, by Scottish settlers in search of terrain similar to their homeland. Once known as Corry's Bush after William Corry who owned most of the town in 1737, it was renamed Princetown after John Prince, a member of the Assembly at that time.

Residents and town officials are hoping to shed some light on Princetown's history through events planned to the year. A daylong celebration will be held on October 3 at the Tree Farm Restaurant, featuring displays, antiques, spinning and weaving, broom corn making, antique cars and contests. Fireworks and square dancing are planned for the evening, and a turkey dinner will be served.

## SUMMER EXHIBIT [picture]

Coordinator of Exhibits: Jo Mordecai

### Cards, Cards, Cards!

The summer exhibit in the Vrooman room shows an interesting collection of trading cards. Today, youngsters -- mostly boys -- think in terms of the baseball, football, and various other sports cards, glorifying the stars of the games. This was not always so; back in the 1880's the first manufacturing cards were distributed by makers of cough medicine, liniment, spools of cotton, breakfast cocoa, etc. These were sometimes known as "advertising cards"; many of them were charming and amusing. Most were printed and lithographed cards, calling attention to all sorts of things such as dentifrices, coffee, thread, dye, stove polish, corsets, organs, soap, cologne and cleaning fluids such as Pearline, also advertised in *The Ladies' Home Journal* of the 1890's.

These cards were often a series of scenes, animals, people or the like, and were issued for one product or by one firm. Often these cards were used by young girls of late Victorian times, collected and pasted attractively in their scrap books. Today these scrapbooks can be a gold mine; many hold fascinating clippings of events, disasters and observances of the time. The paste was homemade of flour and water -- quite often lumpy. A scrapbook can be an "iffy" find; some may leaf through it in hopes of finding a long lost article or a small Currier and Ives print; maybe if you are a collector of fashion plates you will find some from *Godey's Ladies' Book*, one of the first magazines for women.

But often they are filled with different series of advertising cards. The thing I find interesting about these old cards is the wealth of information given about the subject. One fascinating series put out by Duke's Cameo Cigarettes in 1888 shows the three-fold cards of all the governors of the United States. Not only do they show the governor's portrait but the state

flag, the state motto, detailed map of information about the industries and people of that state. Other cards put out by Sweet Caporal are of famous people of the time, fish and captains of the sea.

The 1900's brought us the chewing tobacco and cigarette cards featuring the ladies of the stage, including one we have on display: Mrs. Lily Langtry.

Other popular series before World War I were butterflies and the early beauties of society. The 1920's gave us some of the first bathing beauties -- rather heavily clad!

During World War II detailed card series were distributed by the bubble gum companies. The exhibit shows the Uncle Sam Series of "The Lives of an American Marine (sailor, G. I. , airman), also the series of "The Men and Women of World War II"; these are cards from the private collection of Mr. Donald Ardell, a member of the Society, who collect the cards when he was young, not by purchasing bubble gum, but by flipping for them -- a popular pastime of young boys then.

The exhibit will be up until mid September. I hope many of you will take time to wander through. The old three-fold 1888 cards were featured on the TV show The Antique Show, Channel 17, a few weeks ago.

Enjoy the rest of your summer.

## **MABEE FARM EVENTS**

### **THANK YOU! THANK YOU!**

Thank you to the Schenectady Foundation which has granted us \$50,000 to assist in bringing the Nilson barn from Johnstown to Schenectady. This gives us a big boost in our plans for the Mabee Farm.

We had a wonderful event on Forefathers' Day: Kat y n'Seil, the charming song and instrumental group from the Netherlands, sang and danced for us at the Mabee farm, and managed to get a number of the guests dancing too. Our thanks for all the helpers and for Hannaford which supplied tableware for us.

Meanwhile the Mabee Farm Project goes forward. Right now we are working on actually, physically moving the Nilson barn from Johnstown to the farm. We will keep you informed.

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

Ms. Ruth Evans  
Schenectady County Historical Society. . .

Dear Ms. Evans:

I am pleased to enclose a GE Fund check in the amount of \$8,148.00. This gift from the GE Fund's "More Gifts...More Givers" program matches contributions made during 1997 by GE employees and retirees. Eligible gifts made in 1998 will be matched by the GE Fund in May 1999...

Congratulations on your efforts that made this support possible.

Sincerely, (signed)

Dolores E. Cross

And from George Franchere in Dunedin, Florida . . .

It is hotter than Dutch love here! Daily heat . . . 105-110 degrees.

Here is my memory of stores on State Street: Carl's, Wallace's, Barney's, DiJimas Brothers, Donahue's Mens Clothing, two Kresge's (no tip was complete without Kresge's donuts), W. T. Grant's, Planter's Peanuts, Pinkham's (under the bridge), Proctor's, State Theater, Votis Pipe Shop, Morris Plan Bank, Mohjawk National Bank, Lyon't Camera Shoop, Mahoney's Hardware, Unmion Books Store, White Studio, James' Restaurant, the store that redeemed soap coupons, Western Auto, Nicholaus' Restaurant, and the Miss Schenectady Diner on Erie Boulevard. I forgot Woolworth's. What was the music store below Barney's? What was the furniture store just below Erie Boulevard? None of them still there! Well, almost. The GE provided many lunch crowds for State Street. . .

***What about the old Vendome Restaurant? Ed. note.***

## **ANNUAL REPORT**

New members may receive copies of the Society's Annual Report from the office upon request.

## **AROUND THE COUNTY**

**by Elsie M. Maddaus**

**DELANSON:** A man named Delos washed windows for different people in the village. Someone asked him how he knew they were clean. "Oh, that's easy. You just let water drip down over them. If the water is clear, then the windows are clean." This became known as Delo's test for clean windows.

**DUANESBURG:** Across the road from Clarence Foote's home, there is a marker (still standing) which reads: "A Tory Tree Site. During the Revolution, a Tory stuck his poplar

walking stick in hasty escape from capture by Continental surprise." Four poplar trees grew on the site.

**GLENVILLE:** The "battle" or skirmish of the Beukendaal (Beechdale) was the last conflict between the hostile Canadian Indians and the people of Schenectady. Likewise it was the greatest loss of life that Schenectady had suffered since the Massacre of 1690. The skirmish was associated with the old French War and occurred on July 18, 1747, on the Sacandaga Road in what is now Glenville.

**NISKAYUNA:** An early settler of Schenectady, Hilletje van Slyck, was given islands in the Mohawk River in Niskayuna because she was a good interpreter for the Indians. She also interpreted for the dominie of the Albany Church and, with him, converted a great number of nearby Mohawks to Christianity in the Dutch Reformed Church. She was the daughter of Cornelius Antonisen van Slyck and Otstocks, a full-blooded Mohawk.

**PRINCETOWN:** Several Rynex families settled near the Rotterdam town line and this settlement became known as Rynex Corners. The north-south road that runs to Pattersonville is called the Rynex Corners-Pattersonville Road. James A. Rynex was a prominent farmer that lived on this road. He was Justice of the Peace in Princetown as well as a teacher and carpenter. He was the grandfather of the present Town Historian, Irma Mastrean.

**ROTTERDAM:** In 1894, *The Rotterdam News*, a four-page newspaper published in Rotterdam Junction by the late S.W. Frost, editor, kept the area residents informed of happenings of local and national import. It was printed on over-sized sheets with wide margins and wider columns than seen in newspapers today. For that reason, there were only seven columns on a page, two devoted to news, the remainder to advertising. The print was very fine, except in the advertisements.

**SCHENECTADY:** Tomlinson's Wind Mill. In 1819 or 20, work was begun on the Erie Canal and it soon became evident that the land on which Clute and Bailey's shop stood was needed. Nearly opposite to them stood a large stone windmill with a tall tower owned by David Tomlinson who ground most of the cereals brought to this city from the surrounding country. Clute and Bailey bought Mr. Tomlinson's mill and went into manufacturing various kinds of machinery. They altered the building, enlarging it, and each year, as their business increased, they made improvements, leaving little of the original windmill.

**SCOTIA:** The first Scotia schoolmaster was John Hetherington (1757-1803) who was educated at Oxford. He taught at Maalwyck School (Scotia) from 1782-95 with alternate days at the Bouwland School (Rotterdam). A brief interruption was his employment at a school at Ticonderoga from 1791-93 where he also preached in a church. He never married and died at 46 years of age.

## EDUCATION COMMITTEE

In what is becoming a tradition, the Education Committee will be exhibiting its Iroquois "kit" at the annual Riverwalk held by the Mohawk Pathways Girls Scouts on the bike path at the

Community College on October 4, 1998.

**MEMBERS CONTRIBUTING DURING JUNE AND JULY**

(Last issue's list of contributors should have been attributed to April and May)  
! Without you we would be nothing!

**FOUNDATIONS:**

The Walter S. Quinlan Foundation Carlilian Foundation

**BUSINESS SPONSOR:**

MVP Health Plan Trustco BankCorp County of Schenectady

Pattersonville Telephone Company

**BUSINESS: SUPPORTING:**

Bell Atlantic of New York

**SPONSOR:**

Mrs. Barbara Spain Dobbins Mr. & Mrs. Emile Walraven Marvin and Vera Weiss

**DONOR:**

Mrs. Leslie Benedict Mr. & Mrs. Patrick J Bingham Mr. & Mrs. W. W. Borthwick

Daniel and Patricia Bradt Mr. and Mrs. James R. Buhrmaster Mr. & Mrs. John A Collins

Mr. & Mrs. Burton B Delack Mr. & Mrs. Thomas A Della Sala Ms. Lonnie Edelheit

The Golub Foundation Mrs. Emmeline A Grubb Mr. & Mrs. Israel Jacobs

Mr. V A Jakway Mr. David A Kendall Mr. William A Kitchen

Mr. & Mrs. Robert Kristel Mr. Paul Mabie Mr. & Mrs. Donald E Matthews

Mrs. Marianne C Pashler Ms. Jean B Purdy Mr. & Mrs. Robert J Ringlee

Mr. & Mrs. C William Scutt Mrs. Erwin T Warner

**FAMILY:**

Donald and Kay Ackerman Mr. & Mrs. George R Angus Mr. & Mrs. Maurice Braunstein

Nicholas & Conololo Colangelo Mr. & Mrs. Ralph Colson Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Cozine

**Mr. & Mrs. Kent J. Gebert Howard and Jeanette Gerlaugh Dr. & Mrs. John J Gorman  
Mr. & Mrs. Philip B Hawkes Mr. & Mrs. Russell A Horth Jr. Mr. Richard J Huether  
Mr. & Mrs. Darius Kirstein Mr. & Mrs. Kenneth T Lally Mr. & Mrs. C Langley  
David & Kathryn Lasher/Thomas Mr. and Mrs. Livio Lazzari Mr. & Mrs. John Mangan  
Mr. & Mrs. Edward M Meagher Mr. & Mrs. Edward B Murray Mr. & Mrs. Oliver Murray  
Mr. & Mrs. Hugh Nevin Mrs. Hosmer Norris Mr. & Mrs. Ronald Pinkerton  
Mr. & Mrs. Everett Rau Mr. & Mrs. Edward F Ritz Jr. Mr. & Mrs. Everett L Rivest  
Mr. & Mrs. Ryk P Spoor Mr. & Mrs. Paul G Stephens Mr. & Mrs. James R Stewart  
Dr. & Mrs. Jack L Underwood Mr & Mrs. George M Vroman Mr. William White  
Mrs. Kathleen Kniskern**

**INDIVIDUAL:**

**Mrs. Michael S Adler Ms. Marilyn S Anderson Mr. David Archibald  
Mr. William Aninger Mr. Donald F Ardell Mrs. Audrey H Bain  
Mrs. Dorothea T Brown Ms Miriam W Butzel Ms Sandra M Caldeira  
Mrs. Linda M Champagne Mrs. Joan Chiverton Mr. Robert J Coan Esq.  
Cornell University Library Mrs. Jocelyn F Creech Dr. James F Cunningham  
Mrs. Charleen DeLorenzo Mr. James Elbrecht Mrs. Michaela French  
Mrs. Geraldine Gallagher-Lopez Mrs. Ruth A Glenn Mrs. Stanley Ham  
Miss Cynthia W Hamilton Mr. John D Harnden Jr. Mr. Paul F Hooker  
Mr. Chris Hunter Mr. Blaine H Johnston Mr. Norman H Jones  
Mrs. Ann L Karl Mrs. Georgeina W Kellam Ms Margaret C King  
Dr. Ronald F Kingsley Mr. R Ned Landon Mrs. Kathryn V Lirio  
Mr. Orville L Mabee Ms Jane McCloskey Ms Sue McLane  
Mrs. Carol M McNamara Mr. Louis S Meyer Mrs. Anne Gates Miller  
Mr. William F Mooney Ms Pauline M Moran Ms Lucille G Noyes  
Mr. Francis E O'Connor Mr. Edward Pangburn Ms Mary Pedone**

**Mrs. Edith Pilcher Ms Rebecca Rector Mrs. Susan Rosenthal**

**Mrs. Margaret A Sager Mrs. Ronald Salvador M Jeffrey Sauter**

**Miss Jeanette A Shaw Mr. Jeff Smith Ms Ann B Speanburg**

**Mrs. Katherine C Stevens Mr. Edward H Tebbenhoff Mr. George Terwilliger**

**Dr. Jon Tobiessen Mr. John L Weihing Mr. John H Williams**

**Mr. William T Yates**

## **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 Mission Statement**

**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.**

