



The Schenectady County Historical Society, as a nonprofit organization depends on its members for support. Members provide the means to conduct programs and plan exhibits that relate to the community and tell the story of Schenectady County. Welcome to our new members. We hope you will extend an invitation to your friends to join, so they too can take part in the upcoming Fall and Spring programs.

Please note the List of Contributors will be published yearly at the end of the fiscal year in the Society's expanded Annual Report. The Society thanks each and every one of you for your continued support.



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) 462-8244

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32 Washington Avenue
Schenectady, New York 12305



Schenectady County
Historical
Society

Newsletter

Volume 44 Number 9-10

September - October 2005

32 Washington Avenue, Schenectady, New York 12305

(518) 374-0263

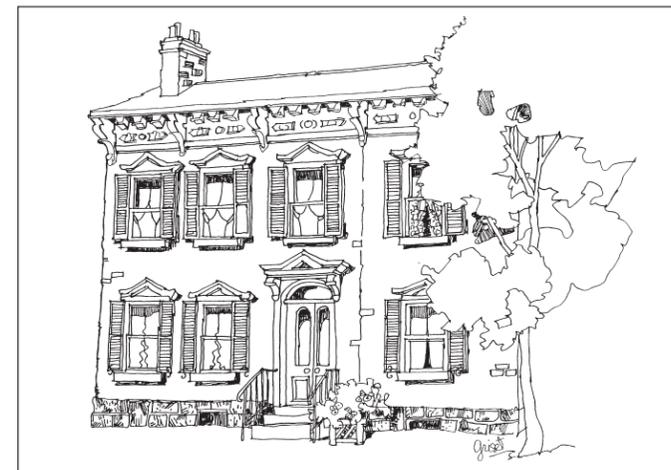
Web site: <http://www.schist.org> • Editor email: ocurapp@aol.com

FAX: (518) 688-2825

Librarian email: librarian@schist.org • Curator email: curator@schist.org

46TH ANNUAL STOCKADE WALKABOUT & WATERFRONT FAIRE

Family Fun for Everyone! Saturday, September 24, 11a.m.-5p.m.



**Sketch by June Griset of stockade home.*

Join the fun, enjoy the history and celebrate the river! It's all happening at the Stockade Walkabout and Waterfront Faire on Saturday, September 24, 11a.m. until 5p.m. Take a scenic boat ride on the Mohawk and then join in the activities including face painting in the YWCA Kids Zone. Take a charming carriage ride along the river's edge and through the Stockade streets. As you travel through you can wave to Governor Yates (our Frank Taormina) or Arendt Van Curler, Symon Schemerhorn or other colorful characters of yore. Watch an archaeological dig in process behind one of the oldest homes in the Stockade. Down by the river tap your toes to music while watching all kinds of boats sail by. Enjoy delicious food at the Food Fest. The great day ends with a big finale of a decorated yacht parade on the river.

If you haven't attended this event in several years, you can see how it has expanded with a lot more than the wonderful historic house tour of years ago!

The Stockade is where Dutch, Georgian and Victorian buildings stand happily side by side. Highlights of the homes on tour this year include: two homes that have been the recipient of the Schenectady Heritage Foundation Preservation Award, imaginatively restored by a local architect; a rare home that survived the Great Fire of 1819, now with a new garden room overlooking a lily and fish pond; a Federal style townhouse with a mysterious inscription in the window; a

Victorian home with elegant Victorian furnishings; a creative reuse of an historic home; and a beautiful restoration of a home with a charming garden – saved from the wrecking ball!

The Schenectady County Historical Society will welcome you to its History Museum where you will have a chance to see the Society's Centennial Exhibit "From Immigrant to Scientist; One Hundred Years of the Schenectady County Historical Society." Keeping with tradition, the Society will be serving complimentary tea and cookies throughout the day. Bill Massoth will lead a talk and tour to the original Erie Canal site, and to celebrate the river, take a boat ride on a turn-of-the-century launch boat, "The Sadie." Back by popular demand, the bateau, the "DeSager," will cruise the river, complete with reenactors.

Parking will be easy with free parking in the Schenectady County Community College parking lot. Then the Union College trolley will transport you to the Stockade or park for free in other Stockade lots.

Tickets are \$15 in advance, \$20 day of event, and can be ordered by credit card by calling the Schenectady County Historical Society, Mon. - Fri. 1:00 - 5:00 p.m. and Saturdays, 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. at 374-0263, or the Downtown Schenectady Improvement Corporation Mon. - Fri. 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. at (518) 377-9430, 184 Jay Street. Prepaid tickets can be picked up on the day of the event at the "Will Call Table" in front of the Schenectady County Historical Society.

This event is presented by The Stockade Association, The Schenectady County Historical Society and The Downtown Schenectady Improvement Corporation with proceeds used for public improvements and historic preservation within the Stockade's Historic District, and to support downtown revitalization projects undertaken by the Downtown Schenectady Improvement Corporation.

So, gather your family, come have a carefree day, and enjoy one of our beautiful neighborhoods and the river.

**Notecards with sketches by June Griset of Stockade homes are for sale at the Society.*

UPCOMING EVENTS

Oct. 8: Craft Fair – Mabee Farm

Oct. 8: Naturalization Records

John Woodward, Guest Speaker at SCHS – 1:30 p.m.

Oct. 14: Open House – Efner History Center 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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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.

Closes Sept. 24th

By Appt. All Year.



LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Members,

I hope you noticed the wonderful press the Society has recently received in the *Gazette* and *Times Union*. Things are moving at such a fast pace and we have so many exciting and positive success stories to tell you about. In case you missed the articles, here are some of the things we've been working on:

- Our Centennial Celebration concluded with a successful stamp cancellation, arranged by life member Ron Ratchford, and then a barbecue at the farm.
- The Lock 7-12 CanalFest was a hit. Over 1,200 people visited the farm for the musical entertainment!
- The dock has also been installed out at the farm, so the bateaux now have their own moorings.
- The Education Center fund drive is coming along on schedule. We have been having conversations with the county on the possible purchase on some land next to us – we will keep you updated.
- The museum is working on a rearrangement of the Ter Bush Hinkle Gallery, to tell more of Schenectady's story in a chronological order.



FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

No institution wants to become static and if there is to be progress changes usually follow. Changes are being made at the Society with progress being made in some areas. Some of the changes are for the good, others are being questioned. We are all for progress and improving the way we operate but let us not

forget those who paved the way either financially or as tireless volunteers. When changes are made they should be made with discretion, sensitivity and consideration of the generosity of those who preceded us.

Ona Curran

- Cindy Seacord, our volunteer at the City History Center, has received a large grant for more work there.
- The library volunteers at the Society have sent a Scotia-Glenville (Images of America) book to the publisher. It should be available for purchase around the beginning of September.
- We have been chosen as beneficiary of sales of a reprint of Larry Hart's book, "Schenectady, Changing Times." This is due to the support and generosity of First National Bank of Scotia, and Larry's son Alan Hart and his family. The book should be for sale by mid August.

We have had some very generous donations lately. Thank you all for keeping us in mind! By the time you receive this newsletter, we will have had our first Garden Family Tea in many years. I am crossing my fingers that the weather cooperated. Now for the Fall, we have the 46th annual Walkabout and Waterfront Faire on the 24th. I hope you all know that the committee works very hard to have different houses every year. We are also celebrating our waterfront and reminding everyone of its importance in our history. See you there!

Kim Mabee

Larry Hart Reprint of Schenectady, Changing Times ON SALE NOW

Schenectady County Historical Society

\$29.95 Until October 1st - \$34.95 after October 1st

plus tax

\$3.50 shipping and handling

Avoid shipping charges by picking up your copy at Society headquarters.

Reprint made possible through the generosity of First National Bank of Scotia and the family of the late Larry Hart.

FROM THE COLLECTIONS

A SAMPLER'S MESSAGE

In 1764 young Ann Covand reached a milestone in her life, the completion of an intricate sampler. During the early eighteenth century, it became common for young girls, age eight to twelve, to create textile documents of their embroidery skills. These items became a source of great pride for a young girl and her family and, as evident

in the numerous samplers that have survived, were passed on as heirlooms from one generation to the next. These framed "show" pieces replaced earlier samplers of the seventeenth century which were truly meant to be a notebook of various stitches the maker might need to refer back to or add to throughout her life.

Ten-year old Ann's skill is evident in the tiny stitches that create an elaborate web of natural vines, flowers, leaves, and urns on a linen background. As with other samplers from the period, this was intended to herald the girl's achievements in embroidery. Less obvious are its more ominous undertones. Besides the colorful flowers and delicate vines, the sampler displays a cross-stitched verse:

Immortal made what should we mind
so much as immortality
of being for a heaven designed
what but a heaven our care should be"

Young Ann (or her instructor) not only wanted to display the quality of the girl's embroidery but also to send a clear message. Time on earth was fleeting and therefore should be spent in preparation for the next world.

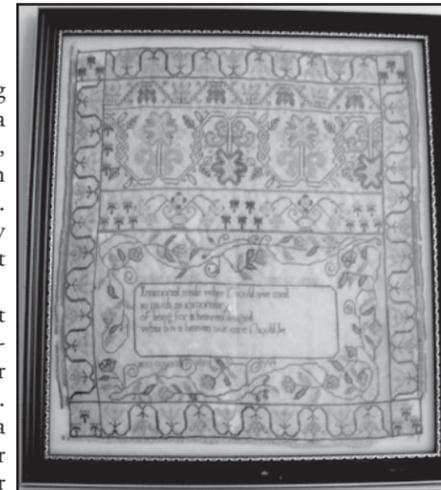
A ten-year old instructed to focus on her own death may seem morbid to modern sensibilities but in a world of uncertainty it was a necessity. Children often witnessed the death of siblings or parents and definitely grandparents before reaching maturity. *The New England Primer* the text so often associated with education in early America did not shelter children from the cruelty of death. As students learned their alphabets, they were reminded at the letter X that "Xerxes did die, And so must I" or at the letter Y, "While youth do cheer Death may be near."

This last statement is particularly chilling because children especially were susceptible to death's icy grip. Diaries describe the anguish of eighteenth-century parents who celebrated the birth of children only to bury them within a year. Youth could not afford the ignorance it is now awarded because at any time it could easily be snatched away. Parents also met untimely ends as Jean Adair's epithet states:

Five helpless children must I leave
And pass into the silent Grave
Great judge of all, thy ways are just
Protect my babes when I am dust

Although less gripping, many epithets still reminded the random passerby that "As you are now so once was I And as I am now so must you be." The message again clear, everyone dies and must prepare for that inevitability.

Ann Covand's sampler was completed at the end of era. By the end of the eighteenth century attitudes about death quickly changed. People became more obsessed with the mourning process accompanied with death than with preparing their own souls for their passage. Epitaphs moved from reminding people of their own frailties and the looming



death surrounding them to messages from the living to the dead of their own regrets on their passing. The society of death changed forever as formal "rules" dictated the role of the living and dying, and nineteenth-century romantic ideals clouded the stark realities of death that guided eighteenth-century mourners.

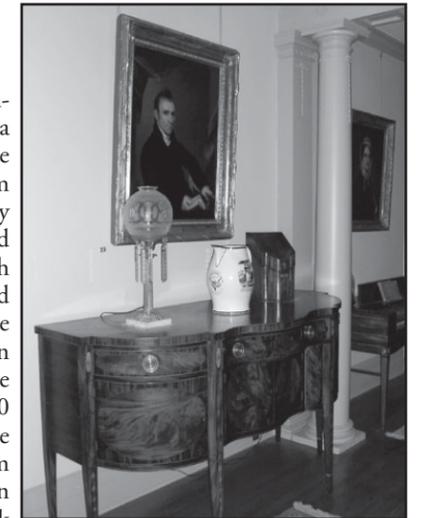
Ann Covand's sampler, an amazing testament to the sewing abilities of this young girl, is also a reminder of how our lives and mindsets have changed over two hundred years. On display at the Schenectady County Historical Society, enjoy the skill employed to create it but also think of the meaning or warning of the words deftly embroidered on its surface.

FEDERAL SIDEBOARD

Circa 1795

*Originally in the
Glen Sanders Mansion*

This Mahogany serpentine front sideboard is a superb example of the cabinetry of William Whitehead, a New York City cabinetmaker. It was crafted in the Hepplewhite style with square tapered legs, satinwood striping and inlay. The Federal period in America ran from the end of the Revolution to about 1810 when the Neo classical style began to flourish. William Whitehead worked between 1792 and 1800 in New York City at 75 Pearl Street.



HUDSON RIVER LANDSCAPE

Oil on Canvas – Signed C.P. Cranch 1845

Cranch was inspired by the works of Thomas Cole one of this country's foremost landscape painters. The landscape school of painting came to the foreground following the Revolution when this country proud of its new independence assumed its own identity. It no longer looked to Europe for inspiration but painted with pride its own natural beauty.

Christopher Pearse Cranch (1813-1892), a graduate of Harvard Divinity School served as a Unitarian minister until about 1840 when he gave up the ministry to become a painter.



COLLECTIONS ASSESSMENT GRANT

Kathryn Weller,
Curator

After months of planning, before and after receiving notification that the Institute of Museum and Library Services' awarded the Schenectady County Historical Society their prestigious Collections Assessment Grant



John and Gwen

(CAP), the grant is coming to fruition. The CAP grant provided for two assessors, Marilyn Kaplan and Gwen Spicer, to visit the Schenectady County Historical Society both at the museum and the Mabee Farm for two days and then write comprehensive reports on their findings. Both assessors have completed on-site tours of the facilities and are starting the report writing phase, each focusing on a different element of the organization.

Gwen Spicer, textile conservator, looked at the overall condition of the collections. She and Kathryn Weller, spent a long day looking through the collections of SCHS and addressing their needs along with solutions to improve the overburdened storage facilities. Gwen suggested many short-term and long-term solutions while focusing on the future need for a larger storage facility. Her second day was spent at the Mabee Farm. With Site Manager Pat Barrot and Board Member Stan Lee joining Kate and Gwen, proper storage of everything from wagons to textiles was discussed. Impressed with the Society's important collection, Gwen stressed the need to protect it. Implemented in the coming weeks, Gwen's recommendations will steer the direction of SCHS' collections storage over the next few years.

Focusing on 32 Washington Avenue, the 110 year old home of SCHS, Marilyn's visit stressed the needs of SCHS headquarters, something never done before. Her assessment treated 32 Washington Avenue not as a museum or library but as a historic artifact needing protection just like anything else in the collection. She had the opportunity to speak with Paul Gonsowski, head of our maintenance department, about the many changes to the house during his tenure. He was able to lead her around as she assessed the building as a historic structure. Speaking with both Paul and Kate, Marilyn got an overall impression of the organization and documented the many changes that the building has gone through during SCHS tenure. Throughout her visit Mrailyn gave advice and recommendations to make sure the building survives another 110 years!

SCHS received sage advice from both Marilyn and Gwen on the future needs of artifacts, structures and what to look for in a new storage facility. Their combined recommendations, organized into two reports, will help guide SCHS in its future decisions about both the collection and the historic buildings. These reports will prioritize projects and justify future grant requests concerning the collection.

MOURNING CUSTOMS Exhibit Planned for Fall 2006

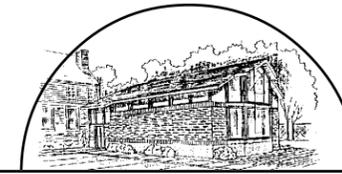
The mourning process provides a look into the social beliefs of a culture. Mourning culture in Schenectady has gone through various stages since the settlement of the city in 1664. Professor Robert Wells of Union College used Schenectady as the basis for his book, "Facing the 'King of Terrors' Death and Society in an American Community, 1750-1990." Wells' work examines all aspects of the death process throughout the history of Schenectady. "Facing the 'King of Terrors'" not only deals with causes of death and accompanying burial but with the grief practices of the area. Following the example of Robert Wells the Schenectady County Historical Society has begun working on an exhibit for the Schenectady History Museum that will follow mourning culture within the community.

The Victorian Era brought with it many changes in the culture of mourning. With the death of Queen Victoria's husband Albert and her subsequent forty year grieving period, mourning in America changed dramatically. The length of official mourning grew to two years for widows, one year for close relatives and six months for children. Clothing became the most obvious way to show grieving for a loved one. The SCHS has an extensive collection of mourning dresses, gloves, shawls, and other articles to put on display. Victorians also began expressing their grief through more material means. Jewelry was used to show remembrance for the departed but also as a way of extending official mourning periods. Numerous pieces of jewelry throughout the museum are related to mourning. Hair could be braided into bracelets or cut and pressed into keepsakes. Larger amounts of hair were used in doorways as wreaths. The hair would be cut, pressed, and knotted to build larger memorials.

Several needlework samplers in the museum's collection illustrate the changing customs and attitudes toward death over a period from 1764 to mid 19th century.

City directories and newspapers are important resources for tracking the development of the grief process. In Colonial Schenectady funerals were small private affairs occurring shortly after death. The wake or calling hours were held the night after the death and the funeral was usually the next morning. Funeral directors and undertakers were not necessary and usually the local carpenter built the coffin. In the mid 1800's undertakers had begun advertising in local directories. By the Civil War families wished to pay respects to departed soldiers and funerals were postponed for traveling of fellow family members and shipment of the deceased body. With the lengthening of the funerary process it became necessary to develop techniques in preservation. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the funeral process had become so large that funeral directing was a full time job.

Utilizing many important artifacts within the museum the exhibit will follow many of the themes of Robert Wells' book. The exhibit is currently in the research and writing phase.



The Grems-Doolittle Library & Archives

EFNER HISTORY CENTER

Cynthia Seacord, Historical Society volunteer, board member and acting archivist at SCHS managed Efner History Center and Research Library at City Hall was notified on July 27 via a congratulatory letter from Senator Hugh Farley, that the City of Schenectady has been awarded a Local Government Records Management Improvement Fund grant for \$25,755. Seacord had applied for a grant of nearly \$39,000 to conduct a thorough inventory of the holdings of the City Archives at the Efner Center. According to Farley's letter, she should be hearing directly from the NYS Archives in the near future as to the specific details of the award.

The Local Government Records Management Improvement Fund is an important program that provides needed funding to assist municipalities, schools and non-profit groups in preserving historical records and documents. Seacord expects it will take nearly a year to conduct the inventory and create user-friendly finding aids from the data collected during the inventory that will make the Efner collections more accessible to researchers.

Seacord is also working on a program at the Efner in celebration of Archives Week that runs the week of October 9th, after the Columbus Day holiday. An open house is planned for Friday, October 14th from 9-5.

Note: An official awards letter from the NYS Archives has been received.



House located on the Southeast corner of Church and Union streets.
Photo is undated.



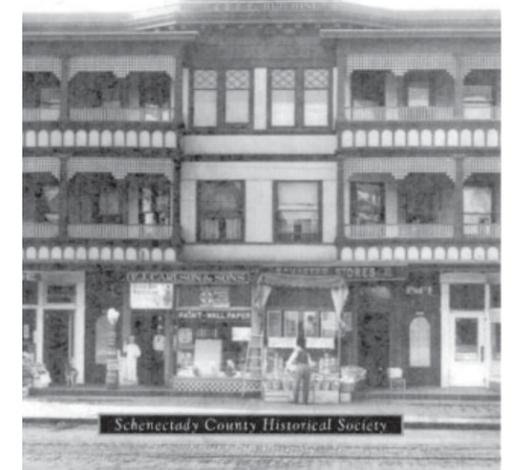
Do you know who these folks are? Photograph is undated.

We now accept credit cards—
MasterCard and VISA.



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\$19.99

plus tax, shipping and handling.

To avoid shipping charges (\$2.50) pick up your copy at
Schenectady County Historical Society Headquarters.



THE DOCK IS IN!

And what a dock it is! Hard work really paid off as visitors to the Farm are thrilled to see a new home for our bateaux.

MABEE FARM UPDATE

John van Schaick, Mabee Farm Committee Chair

The Society is currently negotiating with Schenectady County for the possible purchase of a portion of the 29 acres that lie to the west of the Mabee Farm. Some of this land must be preserved as parkland, and some will be conveyed to the Native-American Keepers of the Circle group whose meeting house is on that land, limiting the parcel prospectively available to us to nine or ten acres. The implication of this opportunity does mean, however, that the exact location and detailed design of the Franchere Education Center is yet to be finalized. Our dock, however, is now complete and sits adjacent to the site of a second dock to be built by the County. To avoid confusion, an appropriate sign will be installed on our dock.

Specifications for the long-planned Dutch hay barrack in the restored barnyard have been set and erection is tentatively set for 2006. Volunteers will do much of the work. The 19th century corncrib may go up this year after seasonal activities have ended. Another high priority item is to place packing sand over certain gravel-based farm roads and pathways to simulate 17th century surfaces and yet still serve 21st century public access needs.

Fund raising for the Franchere Education Center now stands at \$360,000 in pledges and money received, which is 55% of the first phase goal. That sum includes \$1,000 just received from the Mabee Family Foundation. Our anonymous donor who pledged to match gifts of individuals up to \$1,000 has now paid a second \$10,000 on the pledge, leaving room to match additional donations. Please send yours now and make your gift worth twice as much.

ANNUAL TOOL SWAP

The Hudson Mohawk Antique Tools & Trades Association's Swap Meet will be held on Sunday, October 2nd from 12pm-2pm. The meet will be followed by the Association's regular business meeting. The public is invited to attend.

DUTCH BARN PRESERVATION SOCIETY AND HOLLAND SOCIETY MEETING

On October 15, the Dutch Barn Preservation Society and the Holland Society will hold a meeting in the Dutch Barn at the Mabee Farm.

Schenectady County Historical Society and Mabee Farm Committee members are invited to attend.

Mabee Farm Historic Site

1080 Main Street (Rt. 5S), Rotterdam Jct., NY • (518) 887-5073

Email: mabee@nycap.rr.com • Web: www.mabefarm.org



The Riverview Ramblers during Canal Fest 2005

CANAL FEST

Despite threatening clouds and gloomy weather predictions, over 1,200 people came out for the July 9th Music Festival for Canal Fest 2005. Those here were treated to the sweet sounds of the Riverview Ramblers, Skuttlebutt, Jane's Gang, Howard Lyons, Susan Trump, and Gary Van Slyke. The younger crowd took part in playing colonial games, making musical instruments at Andrea's Kids Corner, and writing songs with Gary Van Slyke. The public also got its first glimpse of our newly-installed dock, at which the Dutch historic barge Golden Re'al was docked. Wagon rides, house tours, and an evening barn dance capped off this great community-building day.

ERIE CANAL BIKE TOUR

The Farm once again served as a rest stop on the Historic Erie Canal Bike Tour. Over 400 cyclists dropped in along their journey, some for tours of our historic buildings and the Golden Re'al and others for refreshments and rejuvenation along the Mohawk. The cyclists were gearing up for the final leg of their 300+ mile trek the following day and were clearly eased by the history and welcoming nature of our site.

COMMUNITY DAY/MABEE REUNION/CENTENNIAL PICNIC

Our three-tiered event was a great success! With over fifty Mabees and many community families in attendance and with Giffy's BBQ and complimentary Stewart's Ice Cream on the menu, a fun-filled day was had by all. Tours of our historic buildings were once again very popular. Kids enjoyed the enchanting music of Gary Van Slyke and bead animal making at the Kids' Corner. This was yet another fabulous family day.

THE LOOM HAS ARRIVED!

The barn frame loom is finally here! Thanks to Kate Weller and Dave Ogsbury, who transported it to the Farm, the much-talked about loom arrived at its new home on July 28th. Transfer of ownership from the Herkimer State Historic Site to the Society will follow.



Some of the participants of Archaeology camp

ARCHAEOLOGY CAMP

The farm was abuzz with aspiring archaeologists the week of July 18th, when we hosted our Summer Kids Archaeology Camp. Led by Louise Basa, the kids applied lessons learned to hands-on digs in the yard. A celebratory picnic capped off the week, at which Ed Baker, SCCC's Dean of Continuing Education, presented each student with a junior archaeologist certificate.

Despite the fact that the Kids' Camp is long-passed, Louise Basa, Andrea Dellavcchio, and Dina Ariemma are weekly fixtures at the farm. The three are cleaning and recording artifacts found at last years' dig on the First Reformed Church foundations. They hope to complete the project soon.



Louise Basa, Andrea Dellavcchio and Din Ariemma cleaning artifacts.

CALLING ALL ARTISTS & CRAFTS PEOPLE

The 300 year old Mabee Farm Historic Site in Rotterdam Junction, NY is looking for Artists and Crafts people to exhibit at their second annual Fall Arts & Crafts Festival on October 8th from 10am-5pm. The 9 1/2 acre site is a perfect venue for local talent to showcase and sell their creative work in a picturesque and historic setting along the Mohawk River. Call (518) 887-5073 or e-mail mabee@nycap.rr.com for an application.



Pen Pals, Sheldon Carpenter and Casie Fraley.

PEN PALS MEET AT MABEE FARM

Sheldon Carpenter, a 4th grader at Ballard Elementary School in South Glens Falls, and Casie Fraley, a Glendaal Elementary 4th grader in the Scotia-Glenville School District, were pen pals throughout this past school year. They met in person for the first time and got to have lunch together when their classes both came to the Mabee Farm Historic Site this past spring. The trip was arranged by Lynn Stallmer, a 4th grade teacher at Glendaal, whose son-in-law, Anthony Kenney, just happens to be the Ballard 4th grade teacher. The teachers have been coordinating the language arts activity for the past two years and plan to continue combining it with an experience of real-life early colonial history at the Mabee Farm.

ANTIQUe OUTBOARD MOTOR SWAP MEET

On Saturday, August 27th, the Farm hosts the 1st Antique Outboard Motor Informal Swap meet from 9am-3pm. The event is sponsored by the Mohawk Hudson Chapter of the Antique Outboard Club. See antique motor displays; buy, sell or trade motors and parts; get advice on your old motor, identify your motor and find sources for parts & service. For more information, call Michael Glenn at (518) 505-3558.



FALL ARTS & CRAFTS FESTIVAL

Saturday, October 8th
10am-5pm

Artists & Craftspeople
Demonstrators, Farmers Market
Music by Fiddlebuskers

Mabee Farm Historic Site
Route 5S, Rotterdam Junction
(518) 887-5073

