



Schenectady County
Historical
Society

Newsletter

Volume 55 Number 7-8

July-August, 2012

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Mabee Farm Historic Site 1080 Main St Rotterdam Jct., NY 12150 (518) 887-5073



Painting by Thomas Birch

USS Constitution captures HMS Guerriere, August 19, 1812

THE WAR OF 1812 **and '13, '14, and a little bit of '15**

-by Ed Reilly

The War of 1812 is often called “America’s Second War of Independence,” but I prefer an extended title, that of Hugh Howard’s latest book, *Mr. and Mrs. Madison’s War—America’s First Couple and the Second War of Independence* (Bloomsbury Press, NY, January, 2012). Mrs. Madison was, of course, the incomparable Dolley Madison, wife of our 4th President, James Madison. Howard, in turn, is a historian and author who lives just down the road a piece, fifty miles to the southeast in East Chatham, NY. See his interesting website, www.hughhoward.com for what he calls a “bookish” personal biography and a synopsis of the book that was the principal source for this essay.

Continued on pages 4-5

Letter from the President

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HOURS

MUSEUM & LIBRARY
Monday-Friday 9-5
Saturday 10-2
and Thursday 5-8
September-JUNE only

MABEE FARM
Monday-SATURDAY
10 a.m. – 4 p.m.

It has been a very busy early summer season with the School program beginning in mid May. This year we will host 2000 students, teachers, chaperones and parents. Our staff, volunteers and demonstrators are working very hard to provide an informative, enjoyable experience for all groups. This is the largest number of schools to visit the Farm since the program began. Summer interns Chris Carney and David LeBlanc have been actively involved assisting with the school groups. Also, several new docents and demonstrators are in training and actively participating.

Once again, John Ackner, our resident blacksmith, has prepared and coordinated the Farm's vegetable garden. The 4H groups have assisted with the plantings. This year both yellow and white Patty Pan Squash has been planted. If the harvest is as prolific as last season, we will probably be able to provide all visitors with a squash to take home. The 4H, assisted by Keith Cramer and the Dutch Barn Society, are holding a multi-county workshop and presentation on Barn Owl conservation. The Owl nest boxes will be shown at this year's Altamont Fair. A school group from the Mohonasen Draper Middle School spent a day at the Farm mulching apple trees, planting veggies in the garden, and weeding areas around the George E. Franchere Education Center.

The Howlin' at the Moon musical series began on June 4 with a near full house crowd enjoying the music of Mark Baptiste, Mark Johnson, and the group Three Quarters North. The next Howls will occur on July 3rd and August 2.

Our Librarian, Melissa Tacke and her dedicated group of volunteers continue to assist an increasing number of visitors. The Library will again hold a Civilian Conservation Corp Reunion, collecting oral histories from former CCC members. Melissa will be recording oral histories of individuals from Rotterdam Junction, the City of Schenectady, and Schenectady County who were directly impacted by Hurricane Irene.

The Reading, 'Riting, 'Rithmetic Exhibit continues at the Franchere Center, and the new Smoke Eaters: Fire Fighting in the City of Schenectady display opened at 32 Washington Avenue. Both are well worth a visit.

Members are encouraged to check out the Society's web pages for upcoming events at the 32 Washington Ave Museum, the Grems-Doolittle Library, and the Mabee Farm, and to visit our online Gift Shop. In addition to the Society's sites, there are many other excellent, interesting museums and living history sites in the Mohawk and Hudson Valleys worthy of a visit this summer. Also, congratulations and best wishes are extended to our new neighbor, the ALCO Museum. Have a great summer!

—Merritt

Editorial Note: We much regret, and we apologize for the two spelling errors in the annual list of members in our May-June issue. The surname of Life Member Peter "Scanlon" therein should be "Scanlan," and that of Donor Carol "DeLamater" should be "DeLaMarter." The names have been corrected in the online May-June issue posted on our website.



Blacksmith Class
July 7 & 8th

Watching the hot glowing metal take shape under the pounding force of your hammer is a powerful experience!

Register: 887-5073

Mabee Farm Historic Site
Route 5S, Rotterdam Jct.

Schenectady East Rotary Presents
Patriots Day Car Show
Sunday, Sept 2nd
(rain date Sept 3rd)
10 am - 3:30 pm

Music, food, fun, vendors, 50/50 raffle

Vote for your favorite! Classics, antiques, hotrods, muscle cars, trucks & motorcycles

Judging - 12:30 pm for pre -1990 only
Fun for the whole family!

MABEE FARM HISTORIC SITE
Route 5S, Rotterdam Junction
(518) 887-5073

Exhibits and Programs

For more detailed information about Society events at 32 Washington Avenue or at the Mabee Farm Historic Site in Rotterdam Junction, please check www.schenectadyhistory.net. Or, call the Historical Society at (518) 374-0263 and select option 2. For information on programming at the Mabee Farm Historic Site, call (518) 887-5073 or go directly to the Mabee Farm section of www.schist.org via www.mabeefarm.org.

EXHIBITS – currently on display:

@ 32 Washington Avenue: ***Smoke Eaters: History of Firefighting in the City of Schenectady***

@ the Mabee Farm's George E. Franchere Education Center (FEC): ***Reading, 'Riting, 'Rithmetic: School Days of Yore in Schenectady County***

EVENTS @ the Mabee Farm

Wags & Whiskers Day by the SPCA – July 15 (see ad, page 8)

Early Technologies Day – Saturday, August 6; 10:00 AM – 4:00 PM; (see ad, page 8); no admission charge.

A Midsummer Night's Celebration! (Co-sponsored by Schenectady County Public Library) -Wednesday, August 15th, 5:30 – 8:30 PM; no admission charge.

Barns of New York: Rural Architecture of the Empire State – Cynthia Falk, lecture & book signing - Saturday, August 18 – 2:00 PM at the FEC; free to members, \$5 for non-members.

9th Annual Arts & Crafts Festival – Sunday, August 25, 10:00 AM – 5:00 PM (see ad, page 8)

Schenectady County Remembers (co-sponsored by Schenectady County Public Library and Flood Recovery Coalition). Wednesday, August 29, 4:00 – 9:00 PM at the Franchere Center, no admission charge.

Patriot's Day Car Show – presented by the Schenectady East Rotary – (see ad, page 2) Sunday, September 2 (Rain date September 3) - This is always a big event yearly; no admission charge.

CLASSES @ the Mabee Farm

Beginning Blacksmith Class –Saturday & Sunday, July 7 and 8, 9:00 AM – 1:00 PM in the blacksmith shop. Instructor: John Ackner. Cost: \$150 including materials (see ad, page 2).

Adirondack Pack Basket – Make your own on Saturday & Sunday, July 7 and 8; 8:30 AM – 5:30 PM; Instructor: Beverly Cornelius; tuition is \$150 plus \$75 for materials Bring your own lunch.

Hands-On Archaeology Camp for Kids - Monday – Friday, July 16 – 20, 9:00 AM - 2:30 PM, \$250. For description of this program, applicants must register through the Schenectady County Community College:

www.sunysccc.edu/academic/acadser/webreg.htm#kids

Drop Spindle Class – Saturday, July 21, 9:00 – noon. Instructor: Pam Bucci. Tuition: \$50 plus \$5 for materials

Beginning Tinsmith Class – Saturday, August 18, 9:30 AM – 3:00 PM in the Dutch barn. Instructor: Olof Jansson; Tuition: \$120, plus \$10 for materials. Bring your own lunch.

The easiest way to join SCHS or renew a membership is to go to www.schist.org/shop. But if you prefer paper, just photocopy and mail to 32 Washington Ave., Schenectady, NY 12305

_____ \$1,000 Life Membership

_____ 500 Patron
_____ 250 Benefactor
_____ 100 Sponsor

_____ 75 Donor
_____ 50 Family
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First Lady Dolley Payne Todd Madison

The War of 1812 began on June 18, 1812, when President Madison signed a declaration of war which began: “*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That war be and is hereby declared to exist between the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland and the dependencies thereof, and the United States of America and their territories.*”

The causes of the War are quite clear. England had been brazenly “impressing” seamen from American ships and weren’t too careful to be sure that those whom they took back to England were British rather than American citizens. The pragmatic reason was that the seamen were desperately needed to man the steadily increasing number of ships needed to maintain British control of the seas during the Napoleonic wars that raged from 1803 through early 1815. There had been a steady defection of English sailors to American ships because the pay was better. And Napoleon had assembled a *Grande Armée* of 600,000 troops, poised in western France and threatening a cross-channel invasion of England. From their viewpoint, something had to be done. By 1812, Great Britain had abducted over 6,000 men from U.S. merchant ships.

Just nine years before the time in question, 1803, President Madison’s friend, mentor, and predecessor Thomas Jefferson had doubled the size of the country through the Louisiana Purchase at the rock bottom price of 15 million dollars, funds that helped Napoleon and thus angered the British. The land purchased, 828,000 square miles at a cost of 3 cents per acre (about 42 cents per acre in 2012 dollars) lay in a swath that ran down the center of the country from the Canadian border to New Orleans. And the British weren’t happy about that because they wanted the port of New Orleans for themselves. The issue was still festering in 1812.

Our country had war aims too. Many Americans, and to some extent even President Madison and Dolley believed that our “Manifest Destiny” was to encompass all of North America. Thus the early fighting began along the Canadian border and on the Great Lakes, Lake Champlain, and the St. Lawrence River. American ships won their share of engagements, but seven forays into Canada intended to gain control of forts and land areas were all repulsed. One of these briefly held York, Ontario—the later Toronto—and did some damage but couldn’t hold it. Brigadier General Zebulon Pike was killed in the raid and is buried in Sackets Harbor.

America had been ill-prepared for such warfare, whether on land or sea. At the onset, military strength was just 7,000 men, all paid volunteers. Great Britain was not much better off because the bulk of British forces were then heavily engaged in Spain and in the Mediterranean. The total of British Regulars stationed in Canada was 6,034 men and in the Maritimes (including Bermuda), there were 3,743 British Regulars. As to a navy, we started the war with 17 fighting ships arrayed against over 500 British vessels. But by early 1815 when fighting ceased, U.S. forces had risen to almost 36,000 deployed against only slightly greater British forces.

Hugh Howard covers the War’s naval battles quite well, but the classic work in that regard, a free E-book easily found on the Web, has the prodigious title *The Naval War of 1812 Or The History of the United States Navy during the Last War with Great Britain to Which Is Appended an Account of the Battle of New Orleans*, one of the 40 publications of Theodore Roosevelt, our 26th President. The prose in this book, written when the author was only 23 but already an Assemblyman, is nothing short of astonishing.

The *USS Constitution*’s victory over the *HMS Guerriere* of August 19, 1812, was a great morale booster for America. Called “Old Ironsides” because cannonballs bounced off of its oak hull, the ship, noted for an unbroken string of victories, was almost scrapped in 1930. But protests from students versed in the famous poem by Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr. resulted in its becoming a floating museum in Boston Harbor and remains the oldest fully commissioned ship in the world.

During the War the Mohawk River was largely used for transporting military ordnance supplies, with Schenectady as the embarkation point while the soldiers marched westward over the Mohawk Turnpike (essentially, the current State Route 5). A campground in nearby Scotia became the base of General Winfield Scott, aka “Old Fuss and Feathers.”

After 28-year old U.S. Navy Captain Oliver Hazard Perry defeated the British navy at the Battle of Lake Erie on September 10, 1813, he sat down to compose a message to his commanding officer, U.S. Army General William Henry Harrison. Eschewing “Mission

Accomplished,” he became famous for choosing “We have met the enemy and they are ours.” Then, early in 1814, he journeyed eastward, his progress marked by a series of triumphant ovations. At Utica, Perry embarked on a Mohawk packet and sailed down the River past the Mabee Farm to Schenectady where he was greeted by a patriotic committee of city burghers, one of whom welcomed him in Dutch.

U.S. volunteers recruited for action anywhere in New York State began their training at a “Military Cantonment” in Greenbush (“Greene Bosch” in Dutch), about 24 miles to the southeast of Schenectady. The Cantonment was the headquarters and assembly point for the Northern Army of the United States. In the *Daily Gazette* of October 1, 2000, Schenectady High School history teacher Neil B. Yetwin wrote:

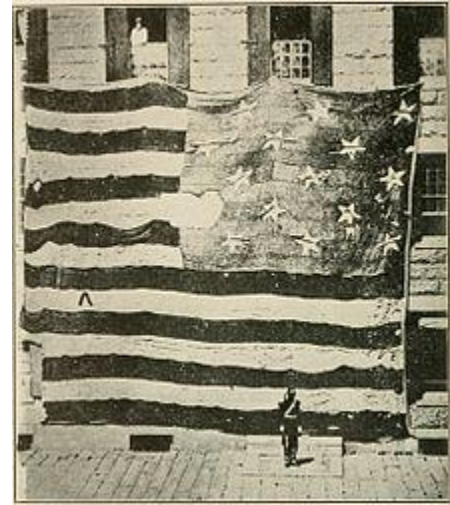
“On September 16, 1812, 4,000 officers and men under General Henry Dearborn moved out of the Greenbush Military Cantonment, ferried across the Hudson to Albany, and commenced marching down the Military Turnpike (Albany Street) toward Schenectady. From there they would begin a 300-mile trek to the Niagara Frontier to engage the British in what came to be known as the War of 1812.”

General Dearborn was a Revolutionary War hero for whom, much later of course, both Dearborn, Michigan and Dearborn, Missouri were named. Further along in his essay, Yetwin continues:

“Like most New Yorkers, Schenectadians were deeply divided about the war’s effect on trade with Canada.....Hundreds lined the streets on the late afternoon of September 18 and watched nervously as the troops came rumbling down State Street hill. Among the soldiers were Lt. Winfield Scott, Lt. John Keyes Paige (later Schenectady County’s first District Attorney), and Captain Mordecai Myers, who was getting his first look at the city he would serve as mayor 40 years later.”

A portrait of Mordecai Myers appears on the cover of our March-April 2011 Newsletter to illustrate the featured Yetwin story titled “Albon Man, the Physician Who Saved the Life of Schenectady Mayor Mordecai Myers” [during the War of 1812 when he was Captain Myers].

By serendipity, it just so happened that my friend Frank Wicks, a professor of EE at Union College, handed me a copy of *his* article on the War of 1812, one that appeared in the *St. Lawrence Plain Dealer* in Canton, NY on June 19. He is a native of Canton, which was close to much of the action in the War. In it, he mentions that the Union College campus was designed during the War, in 1813, by the French architect Joseph Jacques Ramée, who also designed the David Parish House in Ogdensburg, now the site of the Frederic Remington Art Museum.



The enormous size of the 15-star, 15-stripe Fort McHenry flag can be grasped by comparing its height to that of the soldier on the ground. The flag, of much reduced width, is on display at the Smithsonian.

The signature events of the War were the British burning of our White House and Capitol on August 24, 1814; the composition of our national anthem by Francis Scott Key during the bombardment of Fort McHenry in Baltimore Harbor on September 13-14, 1814, and General and future President Andrew Jackson’s victory at the Battle of New Orleans on January 8, 1815, two weeks *after* the signing of the Treaty of Ghent in Belgium on December 24, 1814, the formal end of the War. Sailing ships needed at least two weeks to cross the Atlantic, and ponies can run only so fast.

The Treaty, not ratified until February 15, largely restored relations between the warring nations to the *status quo ante bellum*, with not a single acre of land changing hands. It did not specify the mandatory end of impressment, but it stopped abruptly because no longer needed. In response to a threat from the east in 1812, Napoleon had pulled his 600,000-man *Grande Armée* from his western front and marched them toward Moscow in the winter. Fewer than 30,000 returned, a disaster that ultimately led to Waterloo on 18 June 1815.

The official U.S. military history of the War of 1812 states: “The United States entered the war with confused objectives and divided loyalties and made peace without settling any of the issues that had induced the nation to go to war.”

A less harsh assessment was given by Edward Rothstein in his June 26, 2012 *New York Times* story “A Legacy Far Beyond the National Anthem.” He claims that, directly or indirectly, the War gave us the Erie Canal ; Uncle Sam; four Presidents; The Star Spangled Banner; the westward expansion of the United States; and the growth of New England manufacturing.”

Not bad for government work.

New Materials in the Library

BOOKS

Bond of Union: Building the Erie Canal and the American Empire by Gerard Koepfel
Community Builders: A Tale of Neighborhood Mobilization in Two Cities by Gordana Rabrenovic
Cregier family in America by Ellsworth Banks Cregier, gift of **Efner City History Center**
Discovering the History of Your House: And Your Neighborhood by Betsy J. Green
Early Railroads of New York's Capital District by Timothy Starr
The Faithful Mohawks by John Wolfe Lydekker
Food, Drink and Celebrations of the Hudson Valley Dutch by Peter G. Rose
Frontier Style: Culture at the Edge of Empire, Mohawk Valley, NY, 1700-1800 (2011 Western Frontier Symposium)
Great Graves of Upstate New York: Final Resting Places of 70 True American Legends by Chuck D'Imperio
Lake George Shipwrecks and Sunken History by Joseph Zarzynski, **gift of the author**
Schenectady ... the 1950s by Alan Hart
Schenectady's Best: One Hundred Athletes in One Hundred Years by Barry Mandell
Statutes of the State of New York Relating to Common Schools (1841), gift of **Rose E. Dixon**
The Story of German Doll Making, 1530-2000 by Mary Krombholz, gift of **Deb Crosby**
Thank You For My Children by Rick Pepe
The Underground Railroad in the Adirondack Region by Tom Calarco
The Underground Railroad in New York and New Jersey by William J. Switala
Upstate New York: History Happened Here by Chuck D'Imperio
Upstate New York in 100 Words or Less by Chuck D'Imperio

DONALD KEEFER COLLECTION

All materials gifts of **Donald A. Keefer**
Brown Family; DeGraff Family; Glenville Farms (Barhydt, Simon P. Van Patten, Haverly-Rector); *On the Evolution of a Small Place: Legends and History of Scotia* (by Fannie Mollicone); *Report of Trial of Susanna, a Coloured Woman*; *Robert Fulton and the Clermont* (by Alice Crary Sutcliffe); Seaman Family; Seeley Family and Farm; Swart Tavern, John and Jannetje Van Epps; Van Hoesen and Van Loon Families; Vosburgh Family.

PERIODICALS

East Glenville Weekly #183, gift of **Deb Crosby**

HISTORIC DOCUMENTS AND RECORDS

Prints from H.S. Barney Collection of Original Pen Drawings, gift of **J. Ann and Ernie Tetrault**
Bond Funeral Home hollow memory book containing material related to Niels C. Peterson family of Rotterdam Junction, gift of **Debora K. Carter**
Charles E. Mills memorial program, Mohawk Theatre advertisements, Van Curler Opera House programs, gift of **Mary Ann Ruscitto**
Transcribed World War II letters of Pvt. Dale M. Jennings, gift of **Shirley Thomas**
Photograph of Schenectady High School Commercial Club (1929), gift of **Marian Smith Peek**
Photographs of Schenectady Union-Star offices and plant, gift of **John Friguletto, Jr.**
Nott Terrace High School diploma of Genevieve Elizabeth Stebbins, gift of **Robert De Mello**
Hotel Mohawk and Hotel Van Curler stationery, gift of **Stephen Lauber**

YEARBOOKS

Delanson High School (1935), gift of **Vaughn Nevin**
Schenectady High School (1930) and NY 27th Infantry Division (1948), gift of **John Friguletto, Jr.**
Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake High School, 1956 and 1957, gift of **Lori Liebert**
Schenectady High School, January and June 1929, gift of **Marian Smith Peek**
Nott Terrace High School, 1937-1938, gift of **Robert De Mello**

FINDING AIDS for the following collections have been added to www.schenectadyhistory.net/library/collections/:

Historic manuscripts collection - Military; City Directories (list for Schenectady County); Dialogue Coffee House Records; Eleanor Jaeger School Photograph Collection; Rev. J. Philip B. Pendleton Diaries; Underground Railroad and Anti-Slavery Movement in Schenectady [research guide]

Reduction of Thursday Hours during July and August

Grems-Doolittle Library will remain open on Thursday evenings through 8:00 p.m. through Thursday, June 28; during the months of July and August, the Library will close on Thursdays at 5:00 p.m. Thursday evening hours will resume on September 6.

Interested in Legacy Genealogy Software?

Connect with other Society members about this genealogy software to share tips and strategies. Contact Librarian Melissa Tacke for details. Call 518-374-0263, option 3, or email librarian@schist.org.

Around the Society



Those who serve as the “Crew” on the Mabee Farm Bateau have had an interesting time this season experimenting with the use of a very special sail – a hand sewn, period style, “square” sail created by David Manthey in 2004. He is the captain of the bateau *DeSager*, a replica of a 1792, flat-bottomed river craft. Since the bateau was first built and obtained by the [Schenectady County Historical Society](http://www.thebiggrow.com/?page_id=451), he has been gradually fitting it out in a manner to match its looks and provenance. Construction of this sail turned out to be a monumental project, which is why Manthey felt it was worth creating a web page about it. For details about the history and construction of this very special sail, please visit the following website: http://www.thebiggrow.com/?page_id=451 Based on archeological research, one member of the “Crew” has been wondering if different and still documented sail design

might yield more information, so Kim Mabee and other members of the “crew” have been getting a new lug rigged sail prepared for the current season. We hope to give the new sail a shakeout in the next few weeks. We will report back our findings. Keep an eye out for us on the Mohawk River.



Photos: Kevin Richard-Morrow, David Manthey, Ann Aronson

Smoke-Eaters Exhibit:



Preserving the Whalen Collection:



Schenectady County Historical Society

Early Technologies Day

Saturday, August 4th from 10 am - 4 pm



Co-sponsored by the Native American Institute of the Hudson River Valley

Flint Knapping with Barry Keegan
Atlatl Throwing
Native American artifact display
Brain tanned leather -
Blacksmithing
Birds of prey
Basket Making
Fire Starting

Public participation encouraged!

Bring your Native artifacts for identification by members of the Van Epps Hartley Chapter of the NYS Archaeological Association

Mabee Farm Historic Site
Route 5s, Rotterdam Jct. NY
887-5073

Wags & Whiskers Family Fun Fair

Shows



Music

Vendors



Sunday, July 15 - 11am to 4pm
Mabee Farm Historic Site

ARTS and CRAFTS Festival

Saturday,
August 25th
10 am - 5 pm



The 9th Annual Festival features the best in local area fine arts and crafts such as pottery, fine art, handwovens, candles, jewelry, baskets, wood, soaps, etc



Mabee Farm Historic Site

www.mabeefarm.org

mabeefarm@gmail.com

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