



Schenectady County
Historical
Society

Newsletter

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July-August, 2013

32 Washington Avenue, Schenectady, NY 12305

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Mabee Farm Historical Site

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Seward Harbor, Anchorage, Alaska — by Ron Niebrugge

THE PERIPATETIC WILLIAM HENRY SEWARD

by Ed Reilly

When you feed “peripatetic” to Google, the definition returned is “Traveling from place to place, especially working or based in various places for relatively short periods.” This makes it the perfect adjective to describe the life and travels of William Henry Seward, our greatest Secretary of State. Seward was born on October 12, 1801, in the village of Florida in Orange County, six miles from the city of Goshen, NY, where he received a good part of his pre-college schooling; lived in Schenectady for parts of four years while attending Union College; interrupted those studies to teach and reside in rural Eatonton, Georgia for a few months; returned to Schenectady to graduate in 1820; moved to Auburn to practice law with Elijah H. Miller, who became his father in law in 1824; lived part time in Albany from 1831 to 1834 while a New York State Senator; part time again in Albany from 1839 to 1842 as our Governor; part time in Washington, D.C. from 1849 to 1861 while serving as a U.S. Senator from New York for 12 years followed by serving for successive four-year periods as Secretary of State to Abraham Lincoln and Andrew Johnson; and then retired to his home in Auburn and resumed extensive international travel to the point where, by the time he died in 1872, he had visited every continent on Earth except for the island continents, Australia and Antarctica.

continued on pages 4-5

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HOURS

MUSEUM & LIBRARY

Monday-Friday 9-5

Saturday 10-2

and Thursday 5-8
September-JUNE only

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

Letter from the President

Well, spring certainly was a washout! We look forward to warm sunny weather for the upcoming summer months for our many interesting programs and exhibits planned. The Society's First Annual Fundraising Gala will be held on Friday, July 12th, at the Franchere Center. There will be good food, libation, a silent auction, and dancing to Doc Spring's Rehabilitated Band! Mark your calendar and get your tickets now. I hope to see a lot of "Dad dancing"! This is a new phrase sanctioned by the Oxford English Dictionary folks. The definition reads: "An awkward, unfashionable, or unrestrained style of dancing to pop music as characteristically performed by middle-aged or older men."

For those Erie Canal enthusiasts, on July 20th there will be a program presenting "After Erie: The Impact of the Erie Canal on Mohawk Valley Agriculture," and there will be a volunteer Open House for those wishing to join us. There will be a "Howlin' at the Moon" music get together on July 22nd with Three Quarter North. Folks from radio station WGNA will be joining us for the evening's fun. The August 17th Howl will feature the Washington County Line Blue Grass band.

SCCC Professor Ron Kingsley will offer a Volunteer College session on archaeology on August 17th at the George E. Franchere Education Center. Keep an eye on our website for any upcoming additions and workshops. Once again we are registered as participating in the Blue Star Museums program that offers free admission to the Museum, Library, and Mabee Farm Historic Site to all active duty military personnel and their families from Memorial Day, May 27, through Labor Day, September 2, 2013. Be sure to stop by at both the Mabee Farm and HQ at 32 Washington Avenue for the excellent exhibits on display for the summer months; see page 3 of this issue or select the NEWS link on our website.

There is so much going on. On Sunday, August 4th, at 1 p.m. a Memorial Service for Sally van Schaick will be held at the Mabee Farm Historic Site in the John & Sally van Schaick Lecture Hall of the Franchere Center. Sally's family is hereby inviting all who attend to join them after the service for refreshments.

And just after summer's end, on Saturday, September 28, the Annual Stockade Walkabout will resume, bigger and better than ever. Please mark the date and keep your eyes on www.HistoricStockade.com for breaking details.

I received very sad news on June 18th! Our loving Mabee Farm ewe and resident Farm Ambassador, Badger, has passed away! Loved by hundreds of school children, visitors, volunteers, and staff, she will be dearly missed!

-Merritt



*All things bright and beautiful,
All creatures great and small,
All things wise and wonderful,
The Lord God made them all.*

-Anglican hymn

Exhibits and Programs – July and August 2013

For more information about our events, please check our website, www.schenectadyhistory.net, or call the Historical Society at (518) 374-0263 and listen for the option describing Programs. Please call (518) 887-5073 regarding programs at the Mabee Farm, or at its George E. Franchere Education Center (FEC).

All **EXHIBITS** and **PROGRAMS** are free for Society members and students, and \$5.00 for non-members unless otherwise indicated.

EXHIBITS

@32 Washington Avenue:

(Vrooman Room; now through October) ***Underlying Structures: What Shaped the Victorian Woman?*** From fashion to faith and weddings to funerals, *Underlying Structures* takes an in-depth look at the life of women during the Victorian era. Included in the display are eight dresses from the era, jewelry and personal effects, and objects related to mourning practices.

@ The Mabee Farm

(FEC upstairs; now through August) ***Building on the Farm: A Legacy of Architecture at the Mabee Farm*** From the stone house to the inn, from the brick house to the barn, the Mabee Farm is home to a number of interesting architectural gems. The exhibit focuses on the unique architectural aspects of the current buildings on site and tells the story of the evolution of the buildings at the Mabee Farm. Also included in this exhibit is Len Tantillo's newest painting, *Legacy*.

(FEC downstairs) ***Prominent Players: From Conflict to Independence in and around the Mohawk Valley - 1754-1784***. Opening July 13 at 2:00 p.m. This series is a collaborative effort between the artist, Ruth Major, and historical experts working together to produce accurate historical imagery. The online process of developing and refining these paintings has resulted in more accurate portrayals of historical figures based on current research.

(Nilsen Dutch Barn) ***The Erie Impact: Changing Agriculture in the Mohawk River Valley***. This exhibit highlights the changes that occurred on farms along the Mohawk after the construction of the Erie Canal. The Mabees and their neighbors shifted from cash crops like corn and wheat to specialized products like dairy, orchard fruits, and vegetables. This is a chance to see some of the wonderful agricultural and cooking tools found in the Mabee Farm collection.

PROGRAMS

Friday, July 12 – Golden Era Gala

Cash bar at 6:00 p.m.; Dinner at 7:00 p.m.
Featuring Doc Spring's Rehabilitated Dixieland Band
Location: Mabee Farm Historic Site
Cost: \$75.00 per person; must register by July 3.

Saturday, July 13, 2013, 12:00 noon - 7:00 p.m.

Two Row Wampum Festival

Location: Mabee Farm Historic Site

Cost: Free

Saturday, July 13, at 2:00 p.m.

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Reunion of Alumni, Family and Friends

Speakers: Marty Podskoch & CCC Alumni

Location: 32 Washington Avenue

Cost: Free and open to the public

Saturday, July 20, 10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.

After Erie: The Impact of the Erie Canal on Mohawk Valley Agriculture

Joint event with an open house Volunteer College session (begins 10:30 a.m.)

Location: Mabee Farm Historic Site

Monday, July 22 at 7:00 p.m.

Howlin' at the Moon Concert Series

Musical Act: Three Quarter North

Location: Mabee Farm Historic Site

Cost: \$5.00

Saturday, August 3, 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Wags and Whiskers Family Fun Day

Location: Mabee Farm Historic Site

Cost: \$5.00 donation per car; all proceeds benefit the Schenectady County SPCA

Saturday, August 17 at 10:30 a.m.

Volunteer College: Archaeology, Part 2

Speaker: Ron Kingsley

Location: Mabee Farm Historic Site

Cost: Free; for current and prospective volunteers

Wednesday, August 21 at 7:00 p.m.

Howlin' at the Moon Concert Series

Musical Act: Washington County Line Bluegrass

Location: Mabee Farm Historic Site

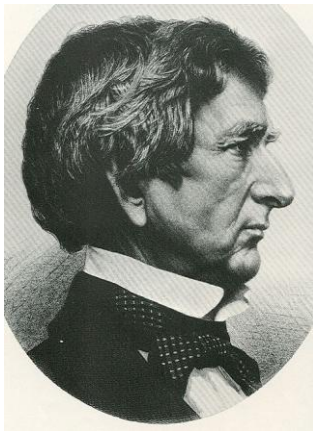
Cost: \$5.00

Saturday, August 24, 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Arts and Crafts Festival

Location: Mabee Farm Historic Site

Cost: Adults \$4; Seniors/Children \$3; Carload \$10



William Henry Seward, 1863, by Mathew Brady

The Goshen school's higher grades were essentially equivalent to current day high school and prepared Seward well for college. When he was admitted to Union in 1816 at age 15, he was examined by Professor Francis Wayland and placed in the sophomore class. After one semester, Seward approached college president Eliphalet Nott and asked to be advanced to the junior class. Nott refused, but the two formed a strong bond that continued until Nott died.

At Union, Henry excelled as a student, joined its Adelpic Society, became active in student government, and successfully urged the founding of a chapter of Phi Beta Kappa, to which he was elected in his junior year. But he was not above student pranks and sometimes clashed with professorial authority. Seward's father, Samuel Sweezy Seward, though wealthy, provided rather meager financial support to him. When Henry sensed that fellow students may have disdained his country clothes, he commissioned more fashionable ones from Schenectady tailors. When the bills reached his father, he refused to pay them, prompting Henry to leave school and go to Georgia to teach. He returned at his parents' request, but the hiatus delayed his graduation to 1820, at age 19, rather than 18 as first planned.

After graduation, Seward read law in Goshen for over a year in the law office of Ogden Hoffman, continued training in New York City, and was admitted to the bar in October, 1922.

Seward met his future wife, Frances Adeline Miller, through his sister Cornelia, Frances's classmate at the Troy Female Seminary, renamed the Emma Willard School in 1895 in honor of its founder. From Frances or perhaps indirectly from Cornelia, Henry learned that Frances's father, retired judge Elijah Miller, had an opening for a law partner in Auburn, NY, about 150 miles west of Schenectady. Henry's application for the position was accepted and he joined Miller in 1822, the year of his admission to the New York State bar. When, two years later, he asked Miller, a widower, for the hand of Frances in marriage, Miller agreed provided that the

couple agreed to live with him in his mansion in Auburn. The agreement made, the couple married on October 20, 1824 at St. Peter's Episcopal Church in Auburn.

Frances gave birth to five children: Augustus Henry (1826-1876), Frederick William (1830-1915), Cornelia (1835-1836), William Henry Jr. (1839-1920) and Frances Adeline "Fanny" Seward (1844-1866).

Both the Miller and Samuel Seward family owned slaves; slavery was not abolished in New York until 1827. But Samuel sent his slave children to school along with his biological children. Young Seward spent much time in contact with the family servants and later claimed to prefer "the conviviality of the slave kitchen to the severe decorum of his father's front parlor."

Young attorney Seward quickly developed an interest in politics, probably inspired by his father, who had been appointed postmaster of Florida village by Thomas Jefferson. Seward entered politics with the help of his friend Thurlow Weed, whom he had met by chance after a stagecoach accident in 1824. Weed, a native of Cairo in Greene County, NY and a veteran of the War of 1812, was elected to the New York State Assembly in 1824 and became editor of the *Albany Evening Journal* in 1830. In that same year, with the strong support of Weed, Seward was elected to a four-year term in the State Senate, serving from 1831 to 1834 as senator from the district that included his own Cayuga County.

In 1836, Seward was nominated as the Whig candidate for Governor of New York, but he lost to the incumbent Democrat William L. Marcy. But in 1838, he challenged him again, and was elected Governor and reelected in 1840.



Statue of William H. Seward at Madison Square Park in New York created by Randolph Rogers and erected in 1876.

Both as a state senator and governor, Seward promoted progressive political policies including prison reform and increased spending on education. He supported state funding for religious schools, including Catholic parochial schools, a policy that was greatly resented by a segment of Seward's constituency that despised Irish immigrants.

Six years after finishing his second term as Governor, Seward was elected a U.S. Senator from New York by its state legislature; election of U.S. Senators by popular vote was not effectuated until passage and ratification of the 17th Amendment in 1913. He served two six-year terms, 1849 to March 3, 1861, the eve of Lincoln's inauguration.

Senator Seward was much in demand as a public speaker. In his maiden speech on March 11, 1850, he caused a furor among pro-slavery citizens by saying that slavery must be abolished because there is a "higher law" than that of the Constitution. His use of the term can be traced to use of the same concept by Eliphalet Nott. In another famous speech in Rochester, NY on October 27, 1858, "The Irrepressible Conflict," Seward said that the mixture of slave and free states posed such a conflict that eventually one policy or the other would eventually prevail, and left no doubt as to which he favored.

At the Republican National Convention of 1860 in Chicago, there were five main candidates for nomination for President, William H. Seward of New York, Samuel P. Chase of Ohio, Edward Bates of Missouri, Simon Cameron of Pennsylvania, and Abraham Lincoln of Illinois. Seward was the favorite and led for the first two ballots, but Lincoln was nominated when four delegates changed their vote at the end of the third. In her Pulitzer-prize-winning book of 2005, *Team of Rivals*, Doris Kearns Goodwin praises Lincoln for appointing each of his four rivals to cabinet positions.

As predicted by many, the inauguration of Lincoln resulted in the secession of several southern states and the consequent Civil War. For six months early in his tenure as Secretary of State, Union College graduate Seward's opposite number serving the Confederacy was Union Graduate Robert Augustus Toombs, class of 1828.

Seward supported Lincoln's decision to issue the Emancipation Proclamation, helped draft its language, and was a signer of the document. Next came the challenging but successful effort to persuade Congress to pass the 13th Amendment, so well described in *Team of Rivals* and depicted in the recent popular movie *Lincoln*.

On April 5, 1865, a month after Lincoln's second inauguration, Seward was severely injured in a carriage accident. His right arm was broken, his right shoulder dislocated, and his jaw fractured, requiring an elaborate jaw splint. Fortunately, the accident saved his life. Nine days later, April 14, as John Wilkes Booth was shooting Lincoln, Seward was attacked by fellow conspirator Lewis Powell, whose knife slashes would have severed his jugular vein had they not been blocked by the jaw splint.

Two months after the death of Lincoln, Seward's wife Frances died of a heart attack. A year later, 1866, his beloved daughter Fanny died of tuberculosis at age 22 and his lifelong friend Eliphalet Nott died at age 92.



Lincoln, Gideon Welles, and Seward are the central figures at first reading of the Emancipation Proclamation.

During his eight years as Secretary of State, Seward was a strong proponent of expanding the country in all possible ways, unrestricted immigration with citizenship conferred after reasonable time; construction of the Transcontinental Railroad; and acquisition of additional territory. His greatest triumph in that last regard was, of course, the purchase of Alaska in 1868 for \$7.2 million in gold, about two cents per acre. At the time, the only one who called this a "folly" was Horace Greeley. And, in keeping with Seward's philosophy, the Treaty of Cession with Russia spelled out that the Russian-American Alaskans "be admitted to the enjoyment of all the rights, advantages, and immunities of citizens of the United States."

During the last four years of his life, Seward traveled the world, dictating his observations and his political philosophy to Olive Risley, the daughter of a long-time friend. Olive was born in 1844, the same year as daughter Fanny and hence was 43 years younger than Seward. So to quiet the raised eyebrows, Seward adopted her while traveling in China and changed his will to treat her on a par with his surviving children.

Olive Risley Seward became the editor of the magnificent 1873 book *William H. Seward's Travels around the World*, published by D. Appleton & Co. It is now a free E-book illustrated with 200 beautiful lithographs of places visited, mostly in China and Japan.

William Henry Seward died in Auburn on October 10, 1872. A few hours before the inevitable end, daughter-in-law Janet Seward asked him what message he wished to leave for the family. He answered, "Love one another."

New Materials in the Library

BOOKS

Amsterdam Recorder: Deaths and Marriages, 1858-1861, gift of **Donald Keefer**
Civil War in Pictures by Fletcher Pratt, gift of **Patricia Lawson**
Conquered into Liberty: Two Centuries of Battles along the Great Warpath that Made the American Way of War by Eliot A. Cohen
The Destroyers by E.R. Eastman, gift of **Anonymous**
Draft Environmental Impact Statement for proposed Schenectady YWCA expansion, 1992, gift of **Rob Petito**
Everyday Nature: Knowledge of the Natural World in Colonial New York by Sara Stidstone Gronim
First Reformed Church Directory (2009), gift of **First Reformed Church**
Generous Enemies: Patriots and Loyalists in Revolutionary New York by Judith L. Van Buskirk
The Glorious Revolution in America by David S. Lovejoy
The Grand Design: Joseph Ramée's Drawings for the Union College Campus by Paul V. Turner, gift of **Union College**
A Guide to Buying Farm Fresh: Eating Well and Safely in Upstate New York by Julie Cushine-Rigg
Helderberg Hilltowns by Elberfeld and McLean
In the Erie Canal Days by Wallace Hamilton Campbell, gift of **Anne Van Dyke**
Long Hammering: Essays on the Forging of an African American Presence in the Hudson River Valley to the Early 20th Century by A.J. Williams-Myers
Mohawk Region Waterfall Guide by Russell Dunn
Montgomery County Marriages and Deaths, 1855-1874, gift of **Donald Keefer**
Ornamental Ironwork: Two Centuries of Craftsmanship in Albany and Troy, New York by Diana S. Waite
Philip Vedder's Ledger Book, 1791-1835, gift of **Donald Keefer**
A Place in History: Albany in the Age of Revolution, 1775-1825 by Warren Roberts
The Settlers by E.R. Eastman, gift of **Anonymous**
Those Who Walk With Fire by John Daubney
Traders and Gentlefolk: The Livingstons of New York, 1675-1790 by Cynthia A. Kierner
Uncovering the Underground Railroad, Abolitionism, and African American Life in Montgomery County, New York, 1820-1890 by Wellman & Yacobucci
Van Vranken Family Genealogy by Shirley Milbert, gift of **Shirley Milbert**

YEARBOOKS

Draper High School (1942, 1943, 1944, 1946), gift of **Ernie and Ann Tetrault**
Scotia High School (1938, 1940, 1942, 1966, 1967, 1968, 1969), gift of **Gail Girvin**
Scotia High School (1958), gift of **Shauneen Kuczek**

HISTORIC DOCUMENTS AND PHOTOS

Schenectady City School District Records, gift of **Schenectady City School District**. Includes photographs, publications and reports, histories, and administrative records.
Ellis Hospital materials, gift of **Ellis Hospital, MacMillan Library**. Includes *Elliscope* newsletters, photographs, register of patients (ledger, 1893-1906), scrapbooks, histories.
Maps: *Bedrock Geology of the Central Mohawk Valley* (1980) and *Aerial View of New York, Pennsylvania, and Adjacent Area: A Side-Looking Airborne Radar (SLAR) Image* (1996), gifts of **Deb Crosby**
Glass plate negatives of Schenectady and surrounding area, gift of **David Fulton**
Photographs and ephemera related to WWII service, Graubart Jewelers, Nott Terrace H. S., Schenectady Auxiliary Police, gift of **Hershel Graubart**
Photograph of Backus House in Bellevue (Hillhurst), gift of **Ann Hughes**
Caledonian Society ephemera, gift of **David Hyslop**
Groot Family Bible, gift of **Donald Keefer**
Glass slides of Schenectady area, ca. 1920s, gift of **Ginny LeJuene**
Documents related to Dr. Charles Wiedenmann, Olivia (Tracey) Wiedenmann, and Wiedenmann family, gift of **Nancy Wiedenman Lester**

Are You Familiar with Schenectady's Public Schools? We Need Your Help!

The Grems-Doolittle Library recently received a donation of materials from the Schenectady City School District, including a number of photographs that are currently unidentified. If you would like to help identify them, we would appreciate your help! The Efner City History Center also needs help for a similar task. Prospective volunteers are asked to call Librarian/Archivist Melissa Tacke at 518-374-0263, option 3, or email her at librarian@schist.org.

Thursday Hours for July and August

During July and August, the Library will close on Thursdays at 5 p.m. and return to 8 p.m. September 5.

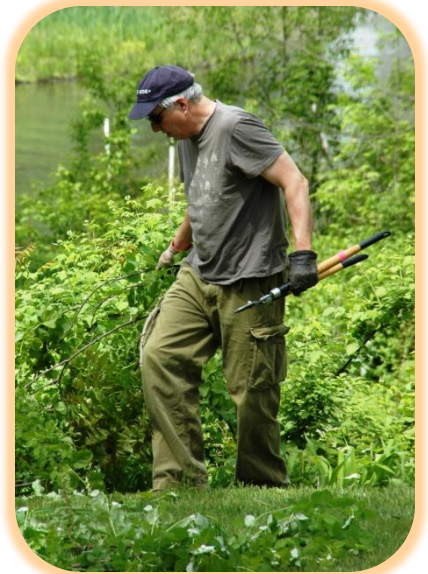
Around the Society



*David Dziewlski Program:
Black Jacks, White Sails,
Shipmates.*



*Jim Eignor: Cleanup
Day at Headquarters*



*John Gearing: Clean-up Day at
Headquarters*



*Underlying Structures Exhibit in the
Vrooman Room*



Mabee Farm School Program

Photos: Ann Aronson



John Ackner, blacksmith

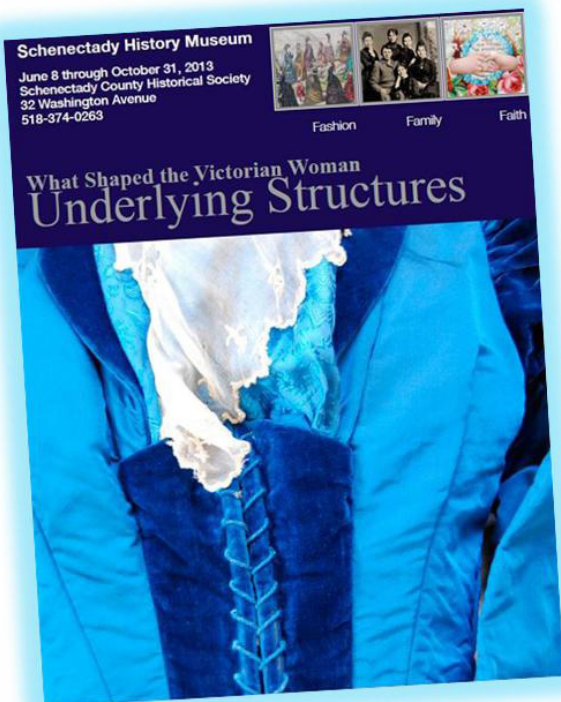


Historical Society Newsletter
32 Washington Avenue
Schenectady, New York 12305

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Schenectady County Historical Society



The Golden Era



Friday, July 12

Doc Spring's Rehabilitated

Dixieland Band

6 pm hors d'oeuvres & cash bar

7 pm dinner



Experience the Roaring 20s with dancing,
silent auction, antique cars and a roaring good time!
A fundraiser for the Schenectady County Historical Society

Tickets: \$75.

Hope to see you there!

Taking place at the Mabee Farm Historic Site
Route 5s, Rotterdam Junction, NY
Call (518) 887-5073 for tickets