



Schenectady County
Historical
Society

Newsletter

Volume 56 Number 5-6

May-June, 2013

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PRESIDENT CHESTER ALAN ARTHUR, SCHENECTADIAN by Frank Taormina



Chester Alan Arthur (1829-1886)

by sculptor George Edwin Bissell, erected in Madison Square Park in Manhattan on June 13, 1899

Yates Street in Schenectady runs north and south from Union Street to Liberty Street, from the Friendship Baptist Church on Union Street to the Katbird Shop at the corner of Liberty and Yates. In the late 1840s it was regularly traversed by the only former resident of Schenectady and the only graduate of Union College ever destined to occupy the office of President of the United States.

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Letter from the President

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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.

The month of April was Volunteer Service Awareness Month. The search for new members and volunteers is always a Society priority. We need many helping hands and we welcome all who have the time and interest to invest in our programs. We have created a "Volunteer College" to provide information about every section of the Society and the volunteer jobs needed to support them. We have close to 1500 students registered to visit the Mabee Farm Historic Site during May and June. We need help with visitor reception, gift shop and kitchen coverage, and service as program docents and demonstrators. Check the website calendar for dates, starting times, and speakers for the Volunteer College sessions and come and try one.

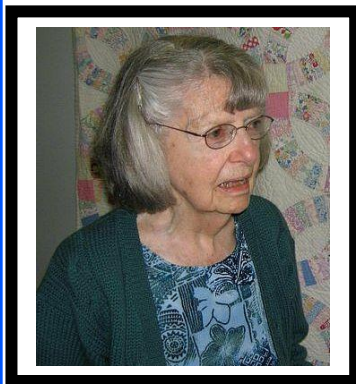
At this time I would like to honor and pay tribute to two individuals who have provided years of volunteer service to the Society. Sadly, we learned of the death of Sally van Schaick. Sally, as well as her late husband John, provided many years of service to the Society as both volunteers and Board members. Sally and John's guidance, direction, and hard work were invaluable in creation of the Mabee Farm Historic Site and the newly built George E. Franchere Education Center. The van Schaick family will hold a Memorial Service for Sally at the Mabee Farm on Sunday, August 4. We will provide more detailed information as it becomes available. Frank Taormina's personal remembrance of Sally follows this Letter.

Elsie Maddaus has had a long tenure with the Society in general and the Board of Trustees in particular. She began her association with us in 1992 as Librarian / Archivist, and remained in that capacity until 1999, at which time she retired and was elected Trustee. Elsie has now chosen to leave that position but will continue to serve as a volunteer in the Library and at events when needed. Thank you, Elsie, for your dedication and extensive service to the Society. At the Annual Meeting on April 9, Niskayuna Town Historian Kathleen Schoolcraft Historian was elected by membership to serve the remainder of Elsie's term as Trustee. Welcome Kathy!

We have many interesting programs, exhibits, and workshops coming up during the months of May and June. The "Howlin' at the Moon" music series begins on May 24th in the Dutch Barn at the Mabee Farm. Get ready to come and "Howl" with us as the full moon rises!

-Merritt

IN MEMORIAM — Sally van Schaick



The gifts we receive from other people come to us in many forms. Among the best are the warmth and acceptance in the greetings we experience from individuals we come in contact with – unstinting respect accompanied by smiles and good humor. Could any of us want anything more? When we add intelligence and a willingness to contribute time and energy to the causes we share an interest in, such grace and generosity cannot help but elicit our gratitude. Sally was a gift to all of us at the Historical Society. Her efforts as a volunteer in the Grems-Doolittle Library and her

service as Newsletter Editor helped to compile a record of Schenectady's history which, for many of us, is a source of endless fascination, and which, without the efforts of people like Sally, simply would not exist. Along with her husband John she played an important role in the Society's relationship with George Franchere and in the eventual acquisition of the Mabee Farm. Her willingness to extend herself to others in need and to use her time and energy for the benefit of others without claiming or expecting recognition for her efforts are other qualities which she brought to the community fortunate enough to have her as one of its members. Sally, the very first female graduate of Union College and twice honored as a Patroon of the City of Schenectady, will be missed by the entire community with which she so generously shared the abundance of her personal talents.

–Frank Taormina

Calendar of Exhibits and Programs: at 32 Washington Avenue, Schenectady (HQ) or at the George E. Franchere Education Center (FEC) on the Mabee Farm in Rotterdam Junction

For more information about all the events occurring at **32 Washington Avenue**, or at the **Mabee Farm Site** or at its **George E. Franchere Education Center (FEC)**, please check the Historical Society's website at www.schist.org or call the Historical Society at **(518) 374-0263** and listen for the option describing Programs. Call **(518) 887-5073** regarding programs at the Mabee Farm, or at the 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:

(now through May) ***The Mohawk Colored Giants*** – a baseball team founded in 1913. Over its history, with the help of outstanding players like superstar William “Buck” Ewing, the Mohawk Colored Giants became the most successful independent black team in the eastern New York area. The exhibit is based on Frank Keetz's recently donated extensive collection of memorabilia.

(opening in June) ***Underlying Structures: What Shaped the Victorian Woman?*** – Come see some of the newest additions to the Society's costume collection and view an in-depth look at Victorian era material culture.

(SCHS 2nd floor) ***Barney's, Bickelman's, and Businesses of Yore*** – Step back in time and view the stores of Schenectady at the beginning of the 20th century. Local jewelers, department stores, and more will be featured.

(opening in May) ***Discovering a Community's History in a Backyard: Archeology at 32 Front Street*** – this is an exhibit mounted by the class titled *Introduction into Museum Exhibits* offered through the SCCC Community Archeology Program. The focus is on the first phase of the dig at 32 Front Street. See fascinating artifacts and discover why things may not always be what they seem.

@ The Mabee Farm – George E. Franchere Education Center (FEC)

(now through June) ***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 the site and lays out the evolution of the buildings at this

historic site. A highlight of this exhibit is the newest painting titled *Legacy* by the artist Len Tantillo.

(downstairs gallery at the FEC) Month of May: ***The Art of Frank Gilmore, Ann Norsworthy-Rigley, and Ralph Rosenthal***. Month of June: Art works from the ***Southern Saratoga Artists' Society***

PROGRAMS

@Mabee Farm – FEC

Saturday, May 4th at 2:00 PM – Public unveiling of the newly commissioned Len Tantillo painting *Legacy* featuring the Mabee Farm. Lecture – ***Dutch Vernacular Architecture in North America*** – presented by John Stevens, an expert on Dutch architecture in America

@ 32 Washington Avenue

Saturday, May 11, at 2:00 PM
Black Jacks, White Sails, and Shipmates
presented by David Dziewulski

Join us for a presentation by David Dziewulski on African-American Sailors during the Civil War. Included in the presentation will be information on the black sailors' numbers, roles, perceptions, attitudes and equality in the integrated Union Navy.

Saturday, June 22nd at 2:00 PM – Book Talk ***The Mysterious Black Migration, 1810-1820: The Van Vrankens and other Families of African Descent in Washington County, New York*** – Speaker: L. Lloyd Stewart

Saturday, June 29th at 2:00 PM – ***Preserving Family Photographs and Documents*** – Speaker: Grems-Doolittle Librarian / Archivist Melissa Tacke



Chester Alan Arthur

Chester Alan Arthur was born in Fairfield, Vermont on October 5, 1829, the son of William Arthur and Malvina Stone. He moved often in his youth with his father, a Baptist minister, whose last church still stands beside Route 9 in Newtonville, now serving as the Post Office for that community, not far from the house he and his family occupied, and from their final resting place. William Arthur, his relatives, including his son Chester, all rest together at the Albany Rural Cemetery at a grave site marked by the statue of an angel whose presence summons the attention of all who fall within sight of her.

Chester Arthur was admitted to Union College at age 15 in 1844 and graduated at age 19 in 1848. He taught school briefly in several localities not far from his family's home, attended law school in Ballston Spa, and wound up as a lawyer in the office of Erastus Colvin in New York City in 1854. Colvin, like Chester's father William, was an abolitionist. Under these influences it is not surprising to learn that Chester Arthur became an abolitionist as well. In 1854, Arthur's entry into a career as a lawyer coincided with the founding of the Republican Party, which he joined and served as a member until his death in 1886.

During the years when Chester Arthur was most politically active, the leading figures in Republican Politics were Ulysses S. Grant, President of the United States from 1869 to 1877, Roscoe Conkling, First Republican Senator from New York State, 1867 to 1881, and Thurlow Weed, never an elected official, but a power in Whig and Republican Politics for much of the 19th century. All of these men operated in a political system characterized as the "Spoils System," clearly understood by all political participants to mean that if you won the political race you had the power to choose who got which government job and the salary to be paid for it. With

a degree of frequency that was increasingly disturbing, it turned out that quite often the person who got the job and the pay did not show up for work and could not do the job when they did show up! But, no matter, as long as the job holder understood that he had to give back a percentage of his pay to the party that elected him, and so long as he did so, he could keep his job.

Chester Arthur, a capable person, made his earliest connection with the spoils system when he, apparently through his acquaintance with Thurlow Weed, got to know Edwin D. Morgan, who had been elected Governor of New York in 1858. Morgan liked Arthur and in 1861, when the Civil War broke out, appointed Arthur Quartermaster of New York State, with responsibility to organize logistical support for all the men from New York who were going into the Union Army. This was a very big job which Arthur carried out in a creditable fashion. Governor Morgan was reelected to a second two-year term in 1860 but not reelected in 1862, so Arthur, in accord with the standard Spoils rule, lost that role to Democrat S. V. (Sebastian Visscher) Talcott as of January 1, 1863. Talcott, after a short time in the position, was unsparing in his praise of the way Arthur had organized and carried out his responsibility as Quartermaster General.



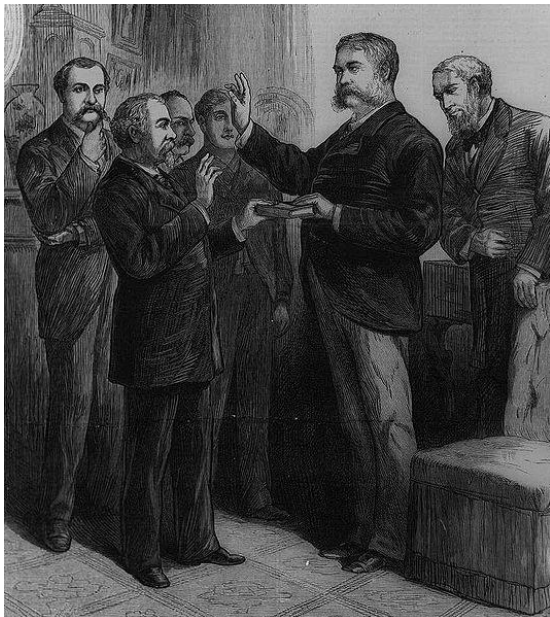
Ellen Lewis Herndon Arthur

In October 1859, before the outbreak of the Civil War, Arthur had married a beautiful young woman, Ellen Lewis Herndon of Virginia, in October 1859. Ellen Herndon Arthur had a brother who later served in the Confederate Army. In addition, one of Arthur's sisters married a friend of Arthur's who also served in the Confederate Army. These personal connections may have played a role in Arthur's decision not to go on active military duty during the conflict but to remain in New York City where he

lived, continue his law practice, resume political activity, and nurture and increase his “connections,” a way of life at which he excelled. Through this process he developed a relationship with Roscoe Conkling, Senator from Utica, and, at this time one of the dominant figures in Republican politics in New York. Conkling, a staunch supporter of Ulysses S. Grant during and after Grant’s presidency, was the most important figure in a segment of the Republican Party called “Stalwarts,” and Chester Arthur became one. The term denoted strong support for and loyalty to President Grant.

In 1871, as a reward for his loyalty and hard work in support of the Republican Party, and through the influence of Conkling, President Grant appointed Chester Arthur “Collector of the Port of New York.” This was the plumpest, the sweetest plum of all the fruits available for distribution to the party faithful during this period of American History. An important part of Arthur’s career, it became the subject of controversy when he lost the job after Grant’s term ended and another President decided to use it to reward one of his loyal followers.

The story becomes one of political conflict as Stalwarts struggle with another faction called “Half-breeds” for control of the Republican Party and the Presidency, and hence the “Spoils.” In the midst of this turmoil, Ellen Arthur loses her life in January, 1880 while her husband is attending a political meeting in Albany, a very sad chapter in Arthur’s life. Later in that year, 1880, Stalwart Arthur is offered the opportunity to run for the vice-presidency by James Garfield, a “Half-breed.” Against the advice of his friend Roscoe Conkling, Arthur accepts the nomination, and goes on with Garfield to win the election of 1880.



Arthur taking the oath as President of the United States on September 19, 1882.

After Garfield and Arthur are inaugurated in March of 1881, a struggle ensues between the Stalwarts and the Half-breeds over issues directly related to the Spoils System, with each faction of the party insisting on its right to control the spoils. Then, in a manner no one could have predicted, events take one surprising turn after another. First, Roscoe Conkling resigns his Senate seat, thinking he will be quickly re-elected by the New York State Legislature in recognition of his awesome power. But to his consternation, the Legislature does *not* re-elect him.

Then, shortly after that, while on his way to attend an event at his Alma Mater, Williams College, President Garfield is shot by Charles J. Guiteau. After a little more than two and a half months, Garfield dies of his wounds, Chester Arthur is sworn in as President on September 19, 1882, and, as a political cartoon of the day shows, courageously faces the skeptical cabinet that he has inherited



Arthur himself was apprehensive. For him, this series of events is, to say the least, unsettling. He did not want to be President, and, many of Arthur’s associates who saw him as the ultimate “Spoils-Man” were repelled at the idea of having him occupy the presidency and use the office as a means to cede the Spoils to his political allies.

For many, the story took an unexpected turn when Arthur, acting in what is often characterized as “a dignified and responsible” manner did not do any of the things his political enemies feared that he would do. All of his biographers quote observers to the effect that everything in his administration of the presidential office turned out to be much better than anyone would have expected it to be. The accomplishment most often cited is his January 1883 signature on the Pendleton Civil Service Reform Act which, however ironically, was the first step in putting an end to the Spoils System.

Sadly, while he was in office, Arthur’s health deteriorated. Knowing that he suffered from Bright’s disease, he did not seriously contend for nomination to a second term in 1884. He returned to his home in New York City in 1885 where he died on November 19th, 1886. He is interred next to his wife and other members of his family in the Albany Rural Cemetery.

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Patricia MacKinnon

Elsie Maddaus
John Maddaus
Linda Malgieri
Gertrude Mallan
Susan Mallory
Anne Mancuso
Barbara Markey
Richard Martin
Joan Marzitelli-Brooks
Linda Masotti
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Reba Mehan
Dr. Dominick Mele
Jo Ann Menzer
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Ellen Messick
Peter Modley
Eleanor Monlea
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Jenny Overeynder
Dorothy Packard
Barbara Palmer
Christine Pangburn
Edward Pangburn
Jonathan Peace
Dave Peck
David Pecoraro
Mary Pedone
Linda Perregaux
Ann Perry
Sean Peterson
Rob Petito, Jr.
Terry Phillips
Maryellen Piche
Betty Pieper
Barbara Piper
Teresa Pistolessi
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John Putnam
Josephine Quinn
Janet Rainey
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Rebecca Rector
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James Richmond
Steven Rider
Dr. Arnold Ritterband
Shirley Rivest
Kathie Rockwell
Lillian Roe
Herb Roes
Paul Rosenberg
Betty Rowland
Sonia Rubenstein
Mary Jane Rubinski
Mary Ann Ruscitto
Paul Ryan
Tracy Salvage
Angelo Santabarbara
Chandra Santiago

Gale Clements Savage
Gordon Schaufelberg
John Scherer
Martha Scherer
Shirley Schleier
Alexandra Schmidt
Elinore Schumacher
Bridget Schwabrow
Jane Scrafford
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Kathleen Secker
Catherine Sentz
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Susanna Sherwood
Earl James Shirkey
Patricia Shoemaker
Peter Sisario
Henrietta Slosek
Patricia Smith
Donald Smith
Joanne Snell
Maryann Snow
Pat Somerscales
Elaine Springstead
Dave St. Louis
Ellen Steele
Paul Stephens
Harry Steven
Katherine Stevens
Richard Stewart
Amanda Stewart
Cheryl Stier
Frank Strauss
Dr. Denise Stringer
Harvey Strum
Robert Sullivan
Dr. Naomi Surgi
Sally Swantz
Daniel Swarts
Elizabeth Taft
Donna Tansey
Lee Teal
Raffele Tedeschi
Peter Ten Eyck
Alice Buff Tepper

Evelyn Thode
Brenda Thomas
Doug Thorpe
Paul Tocker
Tulloch Townsend
Lois Troup
Lois Truax
Wayne Tucker
Betty Tung
Linda Turner
Eugene Van Dyke, Jr.
Kathy Van Flue
Timothy Van Heest
John Van Laak
Holly Van Schaick
Gloria Vassolas
Carolyn Veeder
Patricia Voorhis
Doris Vrooman
David Vrooman, Jr.
Nancy Walden
Donna Wallace
Anita Walther
Nancy Wasmund
Barbara Watt
John G. Wemple, Jr.
Charles Warner Wendell
George Westinghouse IV
Walter Wheeler
George White
Marshall B. Williamson
Hazel Wilson
George Wise
Johanna Woldring
Robert Woods
Fred Woodward
Col. William T. Yates
Neil Yetwin
A. Howard Young
Bill Yunick
Frank Yunker
Bill Zautner
James Zayicek
Jean Zegger

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New Materials in the Library

BOOKS AND CDS

Abstracts of Wills of Columbia County by Gertrude Barber, gift of **Donald Keefer**
Abstracts of Wills of Schoharie County by Gertrude Barber, gift of **Donald Keefer**
The Anti-Rent Era in New York Law and Politics, 1839-1865 by Charles W. McCurdy
Celebrating Johnstown: A Community Looks Back on 250 Years, gift of **Anonymous**
Controversy and Courage: Upper Hudson Planned Parenthood from 1934 to 2004 by Mary Kahl
Destiny's Darlings: a World Championship Little League Team Twenty Years After by Martin Ralbovsky
Dutchess County Census of 1810, gift of **Donald Keefer**
Herkimer County Census 1800-1810-1820, gift of **Donald Keefer**
A History of Golf in New York's Capital Region by Douglas Lonnstrom
The Hotel Van Curler: A Pictorial Review, 1925-1985, gift of **Schenectady County Community College**
CD: *If the Portraits Could Speak, the Stories They'd Tell*, gift of **Joe Doolittle**
Image Worlds: Corporate Identities at General Electric, 1890-1930 by David E. Nye
In the Eyes of the Law: Women, Marriage, and Property in 19th-Century New York by Norma Basch
The Iroquois by Barbara Graymont, gift of **Cindy Seacord**
Keefer Family Newsletter, vols. 1-25, gift of **Donald Keefer**
Keepers of the Revolution: New Yorkers at Work in the Early Republic by Gilje and Rock
Land and Freedom: Rural Society, Popular Protest, and Party Politics in Antebellum New York by Reeve Huston
Landlord and Tenant in Colonial New York: Manorial Society, 1664-1775 by Sung Bok Kim
The Law Merchant and Negotiable Instruments in Colonial New York, 1664 to 1730 by Herbert Alan Johnson
Mohawk Region Waterfall Guide by Russell Dunn
Muskets to Microwaves (2 vols.)
Natural History of the Albany Pine Bush, Albany and Schenectady Counties, New York by Jeffrey K. Barnes
The Nature of New York: An Environmental History of the Empire State by David Stradling
Norwegian Pioneers, gift of **Bradt Family Society**
Pine Bush: Albany's Last Frontier by Don Rittner, gift of **Anonymous**

Possessing Albany, 1630-1710: the Dutch and English Experiences by Donna Merwick
Provisions: One Hundred Nine Great Places to Shop for Food in the Capital District by Peter Zaas
Raymond Family History, gift of **Elsie Maddaus**
Reluctant Rebel by Don E. Phelps, gift of **Anonymous**
The Rude Hand of Innovation: Religion and Social Order in Albany, New York, 1652-1836 by David G. Hackett
Steel Drumming at the Apollo: The Road to Super Top Dog by Trish Marx
Sweet and Alien Land by Henri & Barbara Van der Zee
Those Who Walk with Fire by John R. Daubney
Transcript of the Federal Census of Schoharie County (1800-1840) by Virginia Partridge, gift of **Donald Keefer**
Ulster County Will Abstracts, gift of **Donald Keefer**
Unexceptional Women: Female Proprietors in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Albany, New York, 1830-1885 by Susan Ingalls Lewis
Union College Class of 1963 50th ReUnion Yearbook, gift of **Union College Class of 1963**
Wicked Albany: Lawlessness and Liquor in the Prohibition Era by Frankie Y. Bailey

CHURCH RECORDS

St. Gabriel the Archangel Church (Rotterdam): baptisms, marriages, and deaths, 1957-2006

DONALD KEEFER COLLECTION

Genealogies of local families: Ball; Bolt; Brown; Britten; Calkins; Carroll; Clute; Chamberlain; Conde; Conde, Adam; Cramer; Dellemont; DeWitt; Dodds; Eglin; Fonda; Glen; Glen-Sanders Families; Historical Report on Glen-Sanders Mansion; Gillespie; Hallenbeck; Hamlin; Harmon; Hogan; Keefer; Kile, Kircher & Ulrich; Kinsella; Knapp; Knights; Lassen/Lawson/Lassing; Levey, French, Hoffman & Dorn; Lovett; Low; McLachlan; Marlett; Mead; Ostrom; Peek; Potter; Rees; Reynolds; Riley; Rynex; St. John; Shelly; Smith; Staley; Stevens; Swart; Teller; Van Antwerp; VanHoesen / VanLoon; VanSlyck; VanVranken; VanWormer; Viele; Vosburgh; Weatherwax; Wessels; Yates; Misc. Family & Bible Records; Information about local baseball teams, gifts of **Donald Keefer**

Gift Shop Sale!

The Schenectady County Historical Society's gift shops are holding a 50%-off sale on all books written by Larry Hart and Alan Hart. SCHS members save an additional 10% off the sale price. Stop in at 32 Washington Avenue or at the Mabee Farm or call 518-374-0263, option 5, for details.

Around the Society



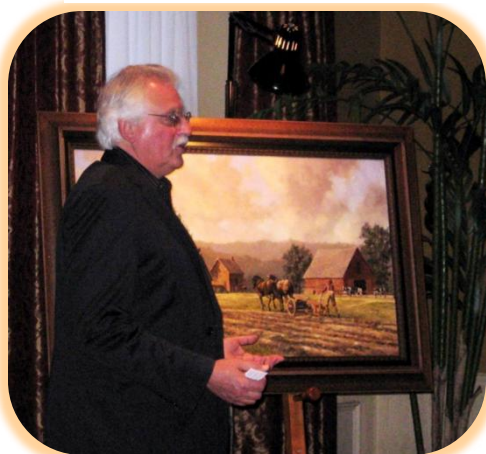
Schenectady High School Grade 11 U.S. History Class, along with Mayor Gary McCarthy (center) stop by the Historical Society as part of their city tour.



Deb Crosby presents a mounted photo of "Medicine on the Mohawk" exhibition to Dr. John Spring at the Annual Meeting of the Society on April 9.



Annual Meeting program: Dr. William Starna, "Of Different Worlds."



Sneak Peek of the new Len Tantillo painting of the Mabee Farm Historic Site "The Legacy"



Leonard Tantillo and his Legacy Counter Clockwise: Jim & Margo Strosberg, Ed Reilly, Carolyn Keefer



Tom Clack with Tim & Heather Mabee

Photos: Jennifer Hanson, Ann Aronson, Ruth Bergeron, Pat Barrot.



Historical Society Newsletter
32 Washington Avenue
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Schenectady County Historical Society

Black Jacks, White Sails and Shipmates
presented by
David Dziewulski
Saturday, May 11 @ 2PM
32 Washington Ave. Schenectady NY



PUBLIC UNVEILING
*of the new Painting of the Mabee Farm Historic Site
by Renowned Historic Painter*

Len F. Tantillo

Saturday May 4, 2013

with a lecture by

John Stevens at 2 pm

Author of Dutch Vernacular Architecture in North America

Opening of the new Exhibit:
Building on the Farm:
A Legacy of Architecture on the Mabee Farm

MABEE FARM HISTORIC SITE

1100 Main St, Rte 5s, Rotterdam Jct.