



Schenectady County
Historical
Society

Newsletter

Volume 57 Number 9-10

September-October 2014

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*Photo by Hal Smith for his article "Savoring New York's hop trail"
at <http://draftmag.com/features/savoring-new-yorks-hop-trail/>*

Hop Season and Other Highlights of Nineteenth Century Farming

by Richard W. Lewis

For each day of 1880, Lina Josephine Baldwin, an 11-year-old schoolgirl who lived and worked on her family's farm near Cooperstown, kept a fascinating diary. On May 24 of that year, her entry closed with:

"...we went to school, but the teacher did not come. She gave up teaching because she was love sick."

"The diary was discovered by Robert Baldwin of Rotterdam, a retired business teacher, from among over 1,500 primary documents he researched in assembling his family's genealogy. It is truly a remarkable document which, besides providing a snapshot of Lina and her family's lives, also gives the 21st century reader a glimpse of what life must have been like on a farm anywhere in the Northeast over 130 years ago when hops were, unlike today, an important cash crop. Smith's article, cited in the caption, explains why they may be once again.

continued on pages 4-5

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HOURS

MUSEUM & LIBRARY
Monday-Friday 9-5
Saturday 10-2;
see page 6 for
summer hours

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

Letter from the President



Summer is now history, just as it was in the days when your new teacher would say, "Write an essay on what you did last summer!," and you knew that your vacation was over. Happily, the Society had many events, activities, and adventures for our hypothetical essay! June ended with our highest ever school program attendance at the Mabee Farm Historic Site: over 2,000 fourth and seventh graders attended lessons in life on an 18th century farm and the skills needed to survive.

Our Museum of Schenectady History and Grems-Doolittle Library hosted three groups of students for visits tailored to their interests, ranging from a tour of the Stockade for elementary students, to map reading, to a group from the Schenectady County Library who are writing fiction and visited our Library and Museum to spark their imaginations. Many thanks to our volunteer educators for a terrific season! And to any of you out there who are interested in history and would enjoy sharing your interest with adults or children, there is a job waiting for you as an educator or tour guide at either the Farm or our Museum. Our curators Mary, Kaitlin, and Jenna will be happy to teach you everything you need to know.

The Society has received a "Get Ready" grant from the Museum Association of New York, which provided us with a facilitator to help us review our mission and begin planning the development of a long-range plan for the Society. We last did this in 2006, so it is time to revisit our goals and strategies for growth and continued service to our members and fans of Schenectady history. We met in July and expect to have results by December.

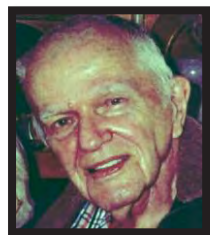
The August "super-moon" brought record attendance to the "Howlin' at the Moon" concert. These concerts have been quite a success, featuring local groups and singer-songwriters in a variety of styles. Come out and join us this fall as we move to a year-round schedule, moving from the Dutch barn into the George E. Franchere Education Center as temperatures drop. The next three are September 8th, October 8th, and November 6th.

—Marianne

Donald A. Keefer

IN MEMORIAM

— by Kim Mabee



Donald A. Keefer of West Glenville died at age 88 on June 28, just eight months after the passing of his wife Carolyn. Don was a very special person. The Society was most fortunate to have been the recipient of his historical efforts. His work on the history of our area and its people for over 75 years was a dedication beyond comprehension. He told me that he started doing genealogical research at age 13 in honor of his grandparents, and it turned into a lifelong labor of love. Along the way, the community at large became the recipients of his care. Don served at various times as the County, Town of Glenville, and Village of Scotia Historian, as well as a Trustee of the Historical Society. Don was descended from almost all of the early settlers of Albany and Schenectady. He and my husband Gary were cousins many times over, but more important, he and Carolyn were our close friends. Society librarian Melissa Tacke has noted that his donations are very valuable resources, particularly the materials he compiled on the history of Glenville, genealogies of dozens of local families, and his work in transcribing area church records, work that is used on a daily basis in our Grems-Doolittle Library. His legacy will live on for all of us to share. He loved being able to assist researchers and help pass on that spirit of giving. It was an important part of him. We are happy that he just happened to live right here among us!

Exhibits and Programs – September and October 2014

For more information, please check our website, www.schenectadyhistorical.org or call (518) 374-0263 and listen for the option describing Programs. Please call (518) 887-5073 regarding programs at the Mabee Farm or at the George E. Franchere Education Center. **EXHIBITS** and **PROGRAMS** are free for Society members; a \$5.00 charge for non-members applies unless otherwise noted.

EXHIBITS

@ 32 Washington Avenue

Through November 16 – *Canals & Railroads*

A traveling exhibit developed by the ALCO Technical and Historical Society exploring the beginnings of the canal era and New York State's early railroads.

@ Franchere Education Center, Mabee Farm

Continuing through October 11 – *The Story of Shoes*

August 20 – November 1, downstairs – *Where Fires Once Burned*, photographs by Michael Diana.

Opening October 18 – *Hops & Hogsheads: Beer from Colonial to Craft Brew*

The exhibit explores the impact beer has had in the area, from the early Dutch settlers and winding through history to the two Schenectady County microbreweries of today. From the moment beer first entered New York in 1609 aboard Henry Hudson's *Haelve Maen*, it has shaped our history, our laws, our culture, and changed many lives!

PROGRAMS

Saturday, September 6 – 2:00 p.m.

The Transportation Revolution in New York State

Speaker: David Hochfelder

Location: 32 Washington Avenue

Monday, September 8 – 7:00-9:00 p.m.

Howlin' at the Moon Concert

Performers: Washington County Line Bluegrass

Location: Dutch Barn, Mabee Farm Historic Site

Cost: \$5.00

Saturday, September 13 – 9:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

Canals & Railroads Bicycle Tour

Participants must have their own bicycle & helmet, and be able to comfortably ride the 7.5 miles to complete the tour.

Pre-registration required; call 518-887-5073.

Location: Mabee Farm Historic Site

Saturday, September 20 – 2:00 p.m.

The Fundamentals of Book Conservation

Speaker: Samantha Couture, Flyleaf Bindery

Location: 32 Washington Avenue

Saturday, September 27 – 11:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.

54th Annual Stockade Walkabout

Tickets available at 32 Washington Avenue.

PROGRAMS - continued

Saturday, October 4 – 9:30 a.m.-4:00 p.m.

Genealogy Day

9:30-10:15 – *Using University Archives and Special Collections for doing Genealogical Research*

10:30-11:15 – *Tips & Tricks for Using Ancestry.com*

11:30-12:15 – *Genealogical Resources at SCPL*

12:30-1:30 – **Break for lunch on your own**

1:30-2:15 p.m. – *Genealogy Resources in the Grems-Doolittle Library*

2:30-4:00 p.m. – **Open research time in the Library**

Location: 32 Washington Avenue

Wednesday, October 8 – 7:00-9:00 p.m.

Howlin' at the Moon Concert

Performers: The Nellies

Location: Dutch Barn, Mabee Farm Historic Site

Cost: \$5.00

Thursday, October 9 – 6:00 p.m.

Erie Canal Tourism: Yesterday and Today

Speaker: Lori Solomon

Location: 32 Washington Avenue

Friday, October 10 – 7:00 p.m. & 7:30 p.m. and

Friday, October 17 – 7:00 p.m. & 7:30 p.m.

Stockade Candlelight Tours

Location: 32 Washington Avenue **Cost:** \$10.00

Saturday, October 18 – 2:00 p.m.

Hops & Hogsheads Exhibit Opening Reception

Location: Franchere Education Center, Mabee Farm

Friday, October 24 – 7:00 p.m. & 7:30 p.m.

Stockade Candlelight Tours

Location: 32 Washington Avenue

Cost: \$10.00

Saturday, October 25 – 1 p.m.-5:30 p.m.

Fall Foliage Festival

Location: Mabee Farm Historic Site

Free to all

Saturday, October 25 – 10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.

Stockade Candlelight Tour

Location: 32 Washington Avenue **Cost:** \$7.00

Thursday, November 6 – 7:00-9:00 p.m.

Howlin' at the Moon Concert

Performers: Everest Rising

Location: Dutch Barn, Mabee Farm Historic Site

Cost: \$5.00

How many 11-year-olds do much work around a house, or even a farm, these days? Here's a sample of what 70-pound Lina Baldwin did in a typical year as described in the terminology of her diary. In early January of 1880, at her family's farm in Westford, NY near Cooperstown, she goes "coon hunting" with her "Pa" and later helps him skin three of them. In March, she spends all day piling wood and, later in the month, gathering and boiling sap, making her "rather tired."



The rigors of maple syrup production

Maple syrup production was an important part of the family's income, and Lina and other family members work in their sugar bush throughout March and April, boiling, sugaring off, sometimes all night into the early morning. As a reward, Lina gets to have some homemade "Jax-wax," maple syrup converted into candy through hardening over snow.

Other work outside the home includes piling up wood all day, milking cows, putting up potatoes at Grandpa's, and planting and covering their own potato crop.

By May, it's "hop season," and Lina helps tie up hops plants through early June. On May 3, she wrote "I went to school. Al Angela and his father came here and bought hop roots [for] two dollars a bushel. Pa plowed the garden."

Lina and her sister also help a neighbor skim milk and wash milk cans. By mid-summer, she's cutting sprouts off rows of potatoes and "bugging" them in the forenoon. In late August the family picks the hops and digs the potatoes. They finally finish picking hops by torchlight at about 10:30 p.m. in early September.



Picking hops is a family endeavor.

In the fall, Lina and other family members go "a-chestnutting." They have been "berrying" all summer. She is sick on September 25, but still picks potatoes. By October, the family gathers winter apples, about 60 bushels at Grandma's, and picks their own cider apples and takes them to the mill. That month, Lina also pulls a load of turnips, peels three bushels of apples, and helps cut the hops off the stalks. On one December night, she helps Pa pack the pork from the hog he has killed the previous day.

Lina also has work to do within the home, including scrubbing the "chamber," by which she must mean what we now call a bathroom. She also takes care of younger children, her siblings and some of her neighbors'. She and her sister also help make their own dresses and aprons. There is no mention of buying new clothing although Ma does go to town to buy trimmings for her dress and hat. Pa takes their shoes to town to get fixed. In June, she helps as the family cleans the upstairs bedrooms and moves back the beds that had been downstairs during the cold weather.

Of course, a young girl in 1880 does go to school although attendance seems arbitrary at best. We think of our present school calendar, having summers “off,” as a carry-over from an earlier agrarian time, but that’s not quite true in Lina’s case. The May 3rd entry cited earlier also says that school “commenced” that day, and that August 20th will be the last day. Lina doesn’t mention when school resumed, but it’s obvious she went back to school in mid-autumn and continued to attend well into the winter. Another “last day” is noted on February 25th when Pa buys a silk handkerchief for Lina to give to her teacher. Lina also writes about having “spelling schools” (spelling bees?) that are sometimes held in the evening.

A new teacher begins on June 6th to replace the “lovesick” one, and Lina does well, noting twice that she was at the head of her class. She even goes to school “afoot” in deep snow in February although Pa sometimes picks them up with the cutter. The teacher actually comes home with Lina in July, stays all night, is there again the next day, and comes again in August. It appears to be common for visitors to stay overnight, especially in the winter months, and members of the family also stay over at neighbors’ houses. Men who come to help with major farm chores often stay for a period of time.

Lina records a number of visits by outsiders. A paper rag peddler comes in March, “bone pickers” come in May, and in June “a man comes and gets our names and ages. It was the sence man” (who came for the 1880 census). Later that month, a neighbor comes after “some coon oil for the baby,” and a wool buyer comes in July, offering 35 cents a pound. “He didn’t get it,” Lina writes tersely. A Mrs. Brown visits to fit the girls’ dresses, and Dr. Palmer comes and “finishes pulling Ma’s teeth.”

Of course, Lina’s life is not all work and no play. In February, she goes skating on the mill pond and sledding on the hill. In May, “I made me a ball,”

which she plays with at school the next day. Pa puts up a swing for the children in July, and the family attends a fireworks display. “It was splendid!” They all attend a labor union picnic in August and have several other gatherings at relatives and neighbors. One night, the family plays dominoes.

Although Lina seems to be a happy young lady, very little emotion is expressed in her diary. Imagine the contrast with the diary or Facebook entry of a pre-teen today! The entry for May 28th is simply, “Grandpa dies.” On September 12th, Lina notes, “It was my birthday.” There is no mention of a party or gifts. In mid-November, “Pa killed Rover,” (probably their dog). And, on Christmas, Lina actually attends school on the 24th where “Old Santy Claus brought me a necklace and some candy.” In fact, the only emotion expressed in the entire diary is an entry on June 9th: “...our poor little black piggy dies, poor thing. I pities him.” In contrast with the penchant of today’s girls for cosmetics, Lina writes in April, “I commenced to wash my face with buttermilk to take off the freckles and tan.” According to the Baldwin family genealogist, the lack of expression of celebration or emotion is characteristic of a family such as Lina’s who worshiped as Baptist Fundamentalists.

Lina’s diary is great fun to read, and a transcript of her diary is included in the book *Ancestors and Descendents of Edith Carrie Sperry Delello, Robert Alan Baldwin, Julia Campbell Germond, and their Peripheral Families*, compiled by Robert A. Baldwin and Edith C. S. Delello. A copy is available for reading in the Society’s Grems-Doolittle Library.

Lina Josephine Baldwin was born on 12 September, 1868, married Grover William Saxton at age 19 on 15 November, 1887, and died at age 89 in Jamestown, NY on 30 November, 1957. As far as is known, 1880 was the only year of her life that she kept a diary.

—Richard W. Lewis

New Materials in the Library

BOOKS

Early African American Presence in the City and County of Schenectady by Marsha Mortimore, gift of **Marsha Mortimore**
Erie Canal Museum: Photos From the Collection, gift of **Deborah LaMontagne**
Grave Beauty: Cemeteries in the Schenectady Stockade; Jamming on the Mohawk; and Valentine Flamingos in the Schenectady Stockade by David Giacalone, gifts of **David Giacalone**
Indian Ladder: A History of life in the Helderbergs by Gary Donhardt, gift of **Deborah LaMontagne**
Mayor Erastus Corning by Paul Grondahl, gift of **Deborah LaMontagne**
Pre-Revolutionary Dutch Houses by Rosalie Fellows Bailey, gift of **Deborah LaMontagne**
Riding the Wave of Electrification: The Life of Edward Folger Peck by Edward H. Abbe, gift of **Edward H. Abbe**
The Search for the Underground Railroad in Upstate New York by **Tom Calarco**

DONALD KEEFER COLLECTION

Abstract of Wills of Rensselaer County, 1787-1850;
Assessment Rolls of the Town of Glenville, 1821, 1822, 1828; Atomic Power Lab & Navy Depot;
Battle at the Kinaquariones; Bishop Family; Bridges & Ferries; Changes Time has Brought to Mohawk Avenue; Dividing Glenville into Two Towns; East Glenville; Fire Departments; Folklore in Scotia-Glenville; Frank M. Bishop, Engineer; Glenville Roads; History of Glenville; History of Scotia; Hoffmans & Vicinity; Lockwood Family; Lovett Family; Maps of Scotia-Glenville; Milroy Family; Private Cemeteries of Scotia & Glenville; Property Searches of West Glenville Village and Vicinity; Railroads in Glenville; Russell Family; West Glenville; Wildlife in Glenville; Wolf Hollow;
All gifts of **Donald Keefer**

DOCUMENTS AND PHOTOGRAPHS

Records of Greenhouse and Indoor Plant Association, including photographs, meeting minutes, and news clippings, gift of **Lillian Roe**
Records of Fortnightly Club, including announcement cards, meeting minutes, and news clippings, gift of **Frances Luborsky**
Materials related to RN Club of Schenectady, gift of **Anne Christman**
Photograph of unidentified girls taken at C. Burgess & Co. Studio, Schenectady, gift of **Olga Delorey**

YEARBOOKS

Schenectady County Community College (1970, 1971, 1976, 1987), gift of **Schenectady County Community College**

Thursday Evening Hours Resume

Now that fall is here, Thursday evening hours have resumed for the Library and Museum at 32 Washington Avenue. Join us from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. beginning on Thursday, September 4, 2014.

Library Storage Accessibility

Materials held in our Library's storage area (including all archival materials, some periodicals, and many photograph collections) will not be available to researchers until October 1. Our storage area will not be accessible due to the installation of compact shelving in the storage area. Materials held in the Library's reading room (including books, microfilm, clipping and surname files, and our General Photograph Collection) will remain accessible to researchers. Questions or concerns? If so, please contact Librarian/Archivist, Melissa Tacke, at 518-374-0263, option 3, or via email to her at librarian@schenectadyhistorical.org. There will be more information about the library's new compact shelving, donated by Legere Restorations, in our November/December 2014 newsletter.

Genealogy Day



Saturday, October 4, 2014

9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

See page 3 for details!

Around the Society



Tom Calarco presents the Underground Railroad in Upstate NY program.



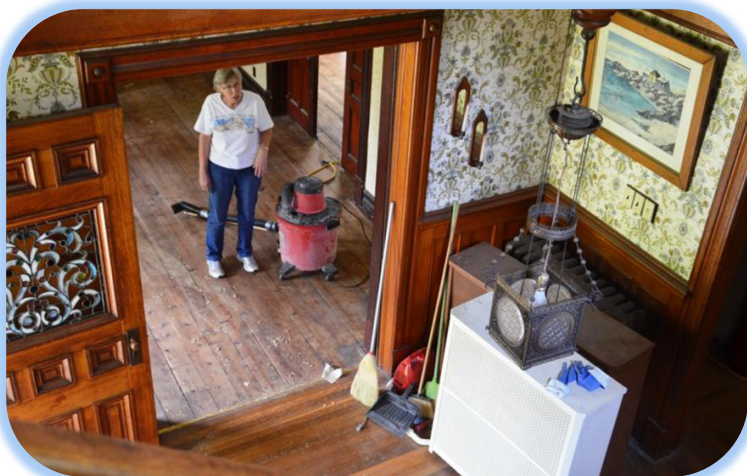
Robert Arnold III talks about Perfectionism in Antebellum New York



Congressman Paul Tonko joins Society Curators, Mary Zawacki and Kaitlin Morton-Bentley for exhibit opening.



Weddings at the Mabee Farm



Cleaning up our Schermerhorn House on Schermerhorn Road in Rotterdam



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Schenectady County Historical Society

Old Schenectady Invites
You To The
54th Annual *Stockade Walkabout*
2014


We welcome you to this
54th Stockade Walkabout
celebrating three centuries
of history. Tour our fine
homes and spaces that grace
our unique neighborhood.

Saturday,
September 27, 2014
11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Advance Tickets \$20
Day of Event \$25

For more information please visit:
www.historicstockade.com

Stockade Historic District, Schenectady, NY 12305



Schenectady County
**Fall
Foliage
Festival**

October 25
1 - 5:30pm

Mabee Farm
Historic Site

Free!

