



Schenectady County
Historical
Society

Newsletter

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This 1916 photo shows the members of the Schenectady Newsboys' Association Fife and Drum Corps. The Corps was first organized in April 1916 with 35 boys from the Newsboys' Association. By the following year, the group had grown to 58. During World War I, the Fife and Drum Corps marched in uniform in patriotic and military parades.

Image from Larry Hart Collection.

“No Roughnecks Allowed:” The Schenectady Newsboys’ Association

By Melissa Tacke

Around the turn of the twentieth century, many local boys sold newspapers on city streets. In Schenectady, as in cities around the country, these boys and young men, known as “newsboys” or “newsies,” were among the main distributors of newspapers to the public. Newsboys did not work for one particular newspaper; they were independent agents who purchased newspapers from the publishers and sold them around the city. Since they were not allowed to return unsold papers, newsboys worked hard to sell all of their newspapers in order to make a profit. Boys protected their territories and competed vigorously, especially for the potential customers who headed to work at General Electric and the American Locomotive Company each day.

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LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

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MUSEUM & OFFICE

MONDAY-FRIDAY 9-5

LIBRARY M-F 1-5

& all three SATURDAY 9-2

MABEE FARM

TUESDAY-SATURDAY

10 a.m.-4 p.m.



Most people think of their local historical society as a place to research through dusty collections and faded paper records of previous generations. They always have some artifacts: slightly cracked crockery, square headed nails, maybe an arrowhead or two, perhaps a stuffed parrot with faded feathers and one wing. Small, odd, unrelated things with minimal provenance, hard to relate to in this day and age, not of much interest to the average Schenectadian, and definitely not high on the visitation list of tourists. Well, we aim to change that opinion!

The County and City of Schenectady are moving forward. Once the seat of "The City that Lights and Hauls the World," we are, with the help of City leaders, Metroplex, and their civic partners, rebuilding and attracting new technology and businesses. The Schenectady County Historical Society is definitely planning to keep up.

Over the past year at the George E. Franchere Education Center we have highlighted broom making and hops brewing, industries that were important in nineteenth century Schenectady County, and offered an eighteenth century living history weekend. The Grems-Doolittle Library featured writers and lectures on a variety of topics, such as European immigration with "Shtetl on the Mohawk" by Harvey Strum, and researching immigrant forbearers with "Finding Your Ancestors in Immigration and Naturalization Records" by Karen Weiner. The Museum of Schenectady History has focused on what and who made Schenectady the industrial powerhouse that it was in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, with the current exhibit "Boomtown: Immigration, Technology, and Urban Schenectady." If you haven't seen it, you are missing something! Our curators now incorporate hands-on elements into each exhibit for children to enjoy. Grants from the New York Council for the Humanities and the Schenectady County Initiative Program have helped us present several of these programs.

We intend to continue our growth by presenting dynamic and relevant programs along with exhibits that will tickle the imagination and invite more residents and visitors to experience Schenectady as it was, and as it is: the history of us, unfolding day by day and year by year. To that end, our Board of Directors has adopted these new mission and vision statements: Mission: "The Schenectady County Historical Society shares stories, inspires dialogue, and encourages understanding of the history, people, and cultures of Schenectady County." Vision: The Schenectady County Historical Society will strengthen our community and be an increasingly vital destination and resource for those who wish to explore history." We hope that, collectively, they embody a new definition of what a first-rate historical society should be!

We ask you to share in this journey with us in any or all of several ways. First, be a member, attend the programs that interest you, and give us your feedback. Second, attend our Annual Meeting or send in your proxy. As a not-for-profit Member Organization, we are bound by New York State law to meet certain requirements. They include that notice of our Annual Meeting be sent to members at least ten days in advance, along with a proxy form to be returned naming either the Secretary or another adult expected to be present who may act on behalf of the absent member. Our quorum, which must be 100 or 10% of the membership of the Society, whichever is less, consists of all members present and the number of valid proxies received by the Secretary prior to the meeting. We really do need your help with this! If at all possible, please attend the meeting, which will be held at the George E. Franchere Education Center, 1100 Main St., Rotterdam Junction, on Saturday, April 11th at 1:30 PM. Please return your proxies to the Secretary prior to that date even if, as of now, you expect to attend. The notice and the proxy form will reach your mailbox by March 11th. The meeting will be short, refreshments will be plentiful, and it will be followed by a peek at a moment of twentieth century history, "Accidents in a Very Busy Place: Kurt Vonnegut in Schenectady" an address by K. A. Laity, Professor at the College of Saint Rose.

And so it goes! -Marianne

DONOR RECOGNITION AND APPEAL

As has been our practice for nine years, the list of all those who renewed their membership from April 1, 2014 through March 31, 2015 will be posted in the May-June issue of this Newsletter.

What follows is a list of those who made donations in response to special appeals from December 1, 2014 to January 31, 2015, and to them we offer our warmest thanks.

Don & Kay Ackerman	David Duglin	Margaret King	Robert Ringlee
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Germaine Doremus	Elizabeth Khasiev	Ed & Jean Reilly	

Your donations directly support our programs and mission. Please consider making affordable and convenient monthly gifts to the Society by automating donations by credit card. To enroll, please complete and mail the authorization form below, or for inquiries and assistance, call 518-374-0263, option 5, or send email to office@schenectadyhistorical.org.

Please provide the following information:

Card to Bill (please circle): Visa MasterCard Discover

Credit Card Number: _____

Security Code (3 digits): _____ Zip Code: _____

Expiration Date: _____ GE Employee/Retiree? Yes/No

Monthly Contribution Amount: \$15 \$25 \$50 \$75 \$ other

Month to Start: _____ (Card will be billed the 15th of the month)

OR Make a one-time donation \$ _____ (amount)

Signature: _____

NEW ARRIVALS AT THE MUSEUM OF SCHENECTADY HISTORY

We've recently made an exciting acquisition here at our Museum of Schenectady History. The components of the acquisition are not historical, but rather brand-new. These items will never be displayed by themselves, and when they are part of an exhibit, you'll barely see them. But they're going to play a pivotal role in the Museum. So what do you suppose are the items that comprise this mysterious acquisition?

.....Mannequins!



What we purchased were several new mannequins to display items from our extensive clothing collection, many of which were given to the Society several years ago when the former Schenectady Museum changed its focus and chose to become miSci, the Museum of Innovation and Science. The mannequins will first be used for gowns in our upcoming exhibit about nightlife in Schenectady from 1850 to 1950. These gowns look beautiful on their hangers, but they come to life only on mannequins. They were made to be worn on the body, and so to display a gown properly and safely it needs to be supported by a proper mannequin; just any mannequin won't do.

The mannequins in stores today reflect the ideal body of the 21st century: tall, lean, and athletic. Before the 20th century, the ideal female shape always had a few curves. The fashionable female silhouette changed drastically between 1850 and 1950. During much of this time period, women wore bustles, crinolines, and petticoats to emulate the trendy silhouette of the moment.

The Mann E. Quinn triplets

This is where the mannequins help make clothes come to life. The mannequins we purchased can be adapted to the time period of the dress through use of fabricated undergarments that support the gown according to its design. Once the garment is displayed on one of our new mannequins, it virtually disappears, leaving only the gown to be admired. Sometimes the most useful parts of an exhibit are those you cannot see!

—Kaitlin Morton-Bentley

New Materials in the Library

BOOKS

Altamont (Images of America) by Lee & McEneny
Architects in Albany by Walter Richard Wheeler
Asian American Genealogical Sourcebook by Paula K. Byers
Atlas of American Migration by Stephen A. Flanders
Bat, Ball & Bible: Baseball and Sunday Observance in New York by Charles Demotte
The Best They Can Be: The Wildwood Story by Rossuck & Cohen
Black Genesis: A Resource Book for African-American Genealogy by James M. Rose
Capital Region Motorcycling by Mark A. Supley
Capital Region Radio by Kelly & Gabriel
Chinese American Names by Emma Woo Louie
Circle of Vines: The Story of New York Wine by Richard Figiel
Cry...If You Can: A True Story by Leo Winokur Winn
Delicious December: How the Dutch Brought Us Santa, Presents, and Treats by Peter G. Rose
Denizations, Naturalizations, and Oaths of Allegiance in Colonial New York by Kenneth Scott
A Discourse Containing the History of the Presbyterian Church, Schenectady, During Its First Century by J. Trumbull Backus
Divine Kosher Cuisine: Catering to Family and Friends by Routenberg & Wasser
Duanesburg, Land of Mills by Warren Liddle
EE at Union, 1895-1995 by Edward J. Craig
Electric City: A Novel by Elizabeth Rosner
The Empire State at War: World War II by Karl Hartzell
Encyclopedia of Jewish Genealogy: Sources in the U.S. and Canada by Miriam Weiner
Excess Emotional Baggage: An Amazing, Semi-True, Post-Industrial, Pulp-Fiction, Adventure Tale of Schenectady by Peter Huston
The Family Tree Guidebook to Europe by Allison Dolan
Finding Our Fathers: A Guidebook to Jewish Genealogy by Dan Rottenberg
Finding Your Hispanic Roots by George R. Ryskamp
From Blind Obedience to a Responsible Faith: The Memoir of a Cradle Catholic by Donald F. Fausel
From Vision to Action, Volume II by Ruby Payne
A Genealogist's Guide to Discovering Your African-American Ancestors by Smith & Croom
Going Home: A Guide to Polish-American Family History Research by Jonathan D. Shea
Gravity by Elizabeth Rosner
Hispanic American Genealogical Sourcebook by Paula K. Byers
The Homeless Transient in the Great Depression: New York State, 1929-1941 by Joan M. Crouse
Huguenot Refugees in Colonial New York: Becoming American in the Hudson Valley by Paula Wheeler Carlo
An Irrepressible Conflict: The Empire State in the Civil War by Weible & Lemak

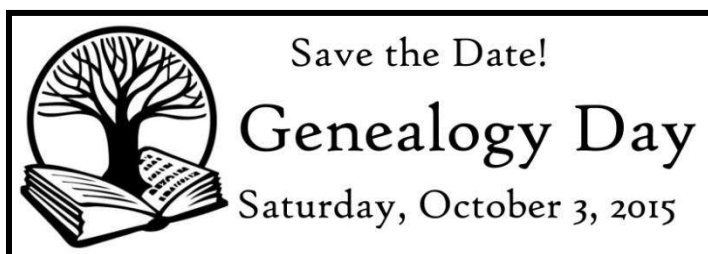
Is the Coffee Fresh? by Marc Renson
J'aime New York, 2nd Edition: A Bilingual Guide to the French Heritage of New York State by Eloise A. Briere
Kindergarten Kids by Ellen B. Senisi
The Last Amateur: The Life of William J. Stillman by Stephen L. Dyson
Let It Be a Dance: My Life Story by Frank Calabria
Lily of the Mohawks: The Story of St. Kateri by Emily Cavins
Locating Lost Family Members & Friends by Kathleen W. Hinckley
The Making of African America: The Four Great Migrations by Ira Berlin
Map Guide to the U.S. Federal Censuses, 1790-1920 by Thorndale & Dollarhide
A Moment Past: L. F. Tantillo Paints New York History by Len Tantillo
New York Capital Region Sports Memories, 1900-2013: Volume 1 by Michael Meola
Now Is the Time: A History of the Parsons Child and Family Center, 1829-2004 by Paul Grondahl
Our Italian Surnames by Joseph Guerin Fucilla
Polish Surnames: Origins and Meanings by Wm. Hoffman
Seven Decades of Milk: A History of New York's Dairy Industry by John J. Dillon
Socialist Cities: Municipal Politics and the Grass Roots of American Socialism by Richard W. Judd
Southern Life, Northern City: The History of Albany's Rapp Road Community by Jennifer A. Lemak
Souvenir Book: Golden Jubilee of St. Joseph's Parish [Scotia], 1907-1957, gift of Anne Christman
They Also Served: New Yorkers on the Home Front: Guide to Records of the NYS War Council Held in the NYS Archives
Thirty Years in the Life of a College by C. William Huntley
This Vet Has Tales by Jack Brennan
Upstream 4: A Mohawk Valley Journal by Daniel T. Weaver
Wampum, War & Trade Goods West of the Hudson by Gilbert W. Hagerty

YEARBOOKS

Mont Pleasant High School (1963, 1964), gift of **Anne Christman**
 Scotia-Glenville High School (1976, 1999), gift of **Pat MacKinnon**

DOCUMENTS AND PHOTOGRAPHS

Notebooks of Dr. Alexander Ennis, a physician who practiced medicine in Princetown and vicinity.
 Notebooks dated 1887, 1890-1901, 1904-1906. Gift of **Irma Mastrean**.



Exhibits and Programs – March-April 2015

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

On Exhibit at 32 Washington Avenue

Boomtown: Immigration, Technology, and Urban Schenectady* *Through June 30*

Humans are always on the move. We seek new opportunities and face challenges as we adapt to the world around us. For thousands of immigrants, Schenectady County offered its own opportunities and challenges. This exhibit explores why people immigrate, and the unprecedented impact of immigration and technology on urban Schenectady.

On Exhibit at Franchere Education Center

Hops & Hogsheads: Beer from Colonial to Craft Brew *Continuing through March 13*

This exhibit explores the impact beer has had in the area from the early Dutch settlers, and winding through history to today's two Schenectady County breweries.

It Came from Schenectady: Science Fiction & Fantasy in the Capital Region *Opens March 21*

What if you had a superpower? What if you could travel through time? What if machines overtook Schenectady? "What if" questions inspire writers, artists, and filmmakers to create new worlds and imagine alternate realities. *It Came from Schenectady* invites you to discover the "what ifs" that inspired the creations of local science fiction innovators, including Kurt Vonnegut, Ray Nelson, and Glendora. Join us as we explore the legacy of science fiction and fantasy in Schenectady County!

Second Look: Oil Paintings by Lisa David *Through May 9*

What many of us pass by in our daily lives, Lisa David paints with her brush. *Second Look: Paintings by Lisa David* features scenes David deems worthy of a "second look." Inspired by what others neglect to see, David captures the essence of a moment by focusing on subtle differences in light.

Program Calendar

Friday, March 6 – 7:00-9:00 p.m.

Howlin' at the Moon Concert*

Performers: Shadowland

Location: Franchere Education Center

Join us for a night of great Irish music as we celebrate Irish Heritage in Schenectady.

Program Calendar - continued

Saturday, March 7 – 2:00 p.m.

American Girl Doll Tea featuring Rebecca Rubin*

Location: 32 Washington Avenue

Cost: \$5.00 each for children and adults

Join us for this children's event as we explore immigration at the turn of the century through the eyes of American Girl doll Rebecca Rubin. Children are invited to bring their own American Girl dolls as we talk about historical artifacts, complete a craft activity, and enjoy refreshments. Each child must be accompanied by at least one adult.

Pre-registration is requested; call 518-374-0263.

Saturday, March 21 – 2:00 p.m.

"It Came from Schenectady" Exhibit Opening and selected readings with author Barry B. Longyear

Speaker: Barry B. Longyear

Location: Franchere Education Center

Join us for the exhibit opening reception, and for selected readings with award-winning science fiction author Barry B. Longyear. Longyear is the first writer to win the prestigious science fiction Hugo, Nebula, and John W. Campbell Award for Best New Writer all in the same year. In addition to his acclaimed *Enemy Mine* series, his works include the *Circus World* and *Infinity Hold* series, *Sea of Glass*, *It Came from Schenectady*, other SF & fantasy novels, recovery works such as *Saint Mary Blue* and *Yesterday's Tomorrow*, and writing instruction works, like *The Write Stuff*, as well as numerous short stories.

Thursday, April 2 – 7:00-9:00 p.m.

Howlin' at the Moon Concert

Performers: Dyer Switch with Mark Poupolopolus

Location: Franchere Education Center

Cost: \$5.00

Join us for an evening of live bluegrass and folk music in a rustic setting.

Saturday, March 28 – 2:00 p.m.

Electric City Immigrants: Italians and Poles of Schenectady, 1880-1930*

Speaker: Dr. Robert Pascucci

Location: 32 Washington Avenue

Dr. Pascucci's presentation will focus on the two largest immigrant groups, Italian and Polish, that settled in Schenectady during its period of rapid economic growth that was fueled largely by General Electric and the American Locomotive Company.

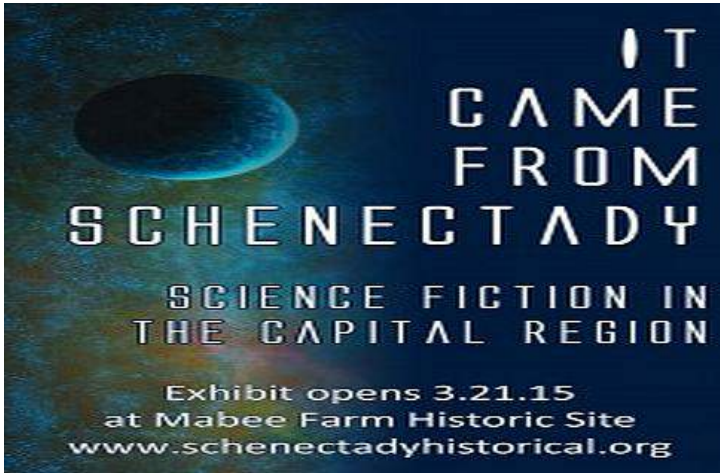
Calendar, continued

Saturday, April 11 – 1:30 p.m.

Annual Membership Meeting at Franchere Center

1:30 Business and Refreshments, 2:00 Program

***Accidents in a Very Busy Place: Kurt Vonnegut in Schenectady* – Speaker: Kate Laity**



Saturday, April 25 – 2:00 p.m.

***From the “Art” to the “Science” of Management at General Electric* Speaker: Lisa Kannenberg**

Location: 32 Washington Avenue

Ralph Cordiner became President of the General Electric Company in 1950 and proceeded to usher in one of the most tumultuous periods in the corporation’s history. Cordiner initiated the decentralization of G.E. that eventually ended the Schenectady Works’ central role as the “incubator” of new products and ultimately drained the plant of product lines and jobs. The result transformed G.E. culture and had a powerful impact on the company and, even more significantly, on Schenectady—city and county— and on the New York State Capital District in general.

Transfer Where? SCHS Ceramics on the Move!

If you’ve visited our Museum recently, you may have noticed changes in the dining room. With the new glass doors installed, the ceramics shelving has a fresh look. The space will continue to improve thanks to the help of Marilyn Sassi, a local ceramics expert and former curator at SCHS. She is working with staff to identify key examples of ceramics used by local families in the 1700s and 1800s. A key component of the new ceramics exhibit will be a historic *Schenectady on the Mohawk River* red transferware plate (part of a set), dating to circa 1835. Transferware ceramics use transfer printing, a decorative technique developed in the Staffordshire region of England in the mid-1800s. Produced by John & Job Jackson in the Staffordshire region, the lustrous *Schenectady on the Mohawk River* set was designed specifically for the American market as part of the *Jackson’s American Scenery Series*.

The transfer view of Schenectady featured on the plate is based on the engraving at the right, which depicts meandering paths, the Mohawk River, and a bucolic Schenectady on the horizon. The roofs and spires of the town convey a sense of progress and civic accomplishment in the new republic. The engraving, and later, the transferware, would have appealed to Schenectady’s inhabitants and inspired great pride in their city. Other historical transferware views in *Jackson’s American Scenery Series* include *View of the Catskill Mountain House, N.Y.*; *View of the Canal, Little Falls, Mohawk River*; *The President’s House, Washington*; and *Boston State House*. Each view was based on a painting, engraving, or drawing, including some by Thomas Cole. The new exhibit will be completed this spring and will feature other ceramics owned and used by Schenectadians throughout the years.



*A Distant View of Schenectady
on the Mohawk River,
created by James Archer and William
Guy Wall*



A small group of Schenectady newsboys selling papers after school hours in February 1910. Photograph by Lewis Wickes Hine. Image from the records of the National Child Labor Committee, in the collections of the Library of Congress.

Maria Giacchini, whose father was a newsboy in Schenectady, shared her recollections of her father's stories of his newsboy days: "I recall his telling of early morning routine, rising at 4:00 a.m. trying not to disturb the rest of the family while getting ready to leave the house to sell papers in the streets. When he sold all his papers, the highlight of the morning was to use some of the profit he had earned from the half-cent per paper return and stop at the baker shop for a piece of pie or a doughnut ... He gave the rest of his earnings to his mother, but she would always check his pockets to be sure he didn't forget to give it all to her."

In 1910, in the city of Schenectady, boys as young as 10 years of age were permitted to sell papers during the day. Teenage boys age 14 and older were allowed to sell newspapers at night. Girls under the age of 16 were barred from selling newspapers altogether. Each newsboy under the age of 14 was required to register with the Schenectady Superintendent of Schools and wear a badge proving he was registered. The law changed in January 1914, raising the minimum age for newsboys to 12 and permitting only boys age 14 and older to sell papers before 6:00 a.m. or after 8:00 p.m. Regardless of the law, some local boys were as young as 8 when they began to sell newspapers on the streets. In 1914, the Secretary of the Schenectady's Board of Education reported that there were nearly 1,000 registered newsboys in the city.

The loud calls of the newsies advertising papers for sale could be heard throughout Schenectady at all hours. It was a feature of city life that often prompted complaints. An article dated December 14, 1911 in the

Schenectady Gazette reported, "a number of complaints have been received of the many boys who [at late hours] are on the streets at night selling newspapers. They gather about the waiting room [of the downtown trolley station] and other public places and cause considerable annoyance to pedestrians and persons waiting for cars." Other articles in local newspapers noted the complaints of Schenectadians about the newsboys' shouts on Sunday mornings in particular.

Although on the whole newsboys were simply hard-working young people trying to help their families survive, they were characterized nationwide in the public mind as loud, ill-behaved, unruly boys who caused trouble, fought, and stole. Max Hutten, who at age 95 recalled his days as a turn-of-the-century newsboy, allowed that this characterization was not entirely off-base. "In those days, the newsboys were pretty rough," Hutten told *Daily Gazette* reporter Patrick Kurp in 1996. "We were kind of a gang, but we just fought with our fists. We didn't fight with guns like they do today."



Portrait of John J. McMullen, the local judge who was instrumental in the founding of the Schenectady Newsboys' Association. Image from History of the Mohawk Valley: Gateway to the West, 1614-1925, Nelson Greene, Editor. Image accessed via the Schenectady Digital History Archive.

In July 1915, Police Justice John J. McMullen founded the Schenectady Newsboys' Association to curb the city's youth street gangs. The police and city officials hoped to redirect these young men and give them more positive outlets for their energy. A July 19, 1915 editorial in the *Schenectady Gazette* posited that the organization was an excellent idea: "It should at the very

least have a strong influence toward preventing various petty misdemeanors among the boys. As a means of keeping the members out of trouble it is by no means as unimportant as it may seem at first thought.” The writer of the editorial further asserted that in running the organization themselves, the boys would also learn “citizenship on a small scale.”

The Schenectady Newsboys’ Association began formally on July 23, 1915, with 28 boys. The 15-year-old President of the organization, Joseph Guarnier, remarked upon the creation of the group, “We will try to show that boys can rule themselves as well as grown people, and perhaps better ... We are going to cut out all gambling, swearing, cheating, and slang, and show the grown-ups how to act.”



*The first Christmas Dinner of the Schenectady Newsboys’ Association, held in December 1915.
Image from Larry Hart Collection.*

The initial slogan of the organization was reported as being “No Roughnecks Allowed,” it would soon change to “Honesty – Honor.” Within one week after the Association was formed, its membership had swelled to 91, and would rise to 125 by mid-September. At its peak in 1917, the organization had 225 members.

In its earliest months, the organization met in the State Street clubrooms of the Women’s Political Union, a local women’s suffrage group, who also sponsored parties and entertainment for the boys. In September 1915, members of the local Carpenters’ Union stepped in to create space for the boys in the basement of the YMCA building, which was then at the corner of State and Ferry Streets. Over the years, the boys added a Victrola, pool table, punching bag, and other amusements. The building remained the meeting place and lounge for the Newsboys’ Association members until 1921, when the YMCA moved to its lower State Street location and the Newsboys’ Association lost its meeting space. Having no regular place to meet, the group soon disbanded.

In the weeks following the establishment of the Newsboys’ Association in 1915, articles began to appear

in local newspapers citing the integrity of the newsboys in returning lost items to their owners and in breaking up fights. Newsboys were also reported as standing up for their rights. When a customer rudely snatched a paper from a newsboy and tossed a penny to the ground for payment, a fellow newsboy stood in the path of the customer, looked him in the eye, and said, “I beg your pardon.” The customer picked up the penny, handed it to the newsboy he had treated poorly, and apologized to him.

In another case, members of the Schenectady Newsboys’ Association chased down a newsboy who had stolen a customer’s change and forced him to return it. “We won’t stand for any crooks among the newsboys of this city,” said the organization’s Vice-President, Julius Goldstein, to a *Gazette* reporter following the incident. “Almost all the boys are honest, but any of them who tries any underhanded work is going to be punished. Every newsboy in the city has got to give the people a square deal or there will be trouble.”

The organization also established a peer court to address mischief and petty crimes among the newsboy ranks. One year after the formation of the group, an article in the *Schenectady Gazette* reflected on the first year of the existence of the Newsboys’ Association: “through help given by the members of the association, Police Judge McMullen has been enabled to break up several gangs of unruly boys, who had in the past consistently committed various acts of vandalism, and now the city can boast of having one of the finest lot of newsboys of any city in the state.” In addition to regulating the behavior of the newsboys, the Schenectady Newsboys’ Association also provided a means for fun and recreation. The Newsboys’ Association held numerous sports events, picnics, dinners, and camping trips, and visited local amusement parks. They participated in local parades and celebrations. The organization also created its own Fife and Drum Corps.

When Judge John McMullen died in March 1944, his obituary in the *Schenectady Gazette* highlighted his work in establishing the Schenectady Newsboys’ Association. Articles claimed that the Newsboys’ Association was “instrumental in the lowering of the juvenile delinquency rate in the city.” The newspaper went on to say that the newsboys “of the original club,” who had since grown into men, “now hold important positions in the professions and in business and industry.” All of the pallbearers chosen to carry the casket during McMullen’s funeral were former members of the Newsboys’ Association. Although the organization lasted less than ten years, it shaped the lives of hundreds of Schenectady’s boys as they grew into adulthood.

Volunteer Spotlight on Ann-Marie Rutkowski and Phil Falconer

Eight years ago, Ann-Marie Rutkowski and Phil Falconer answered an ad in the Daily Gazette calling for “inventory volunteers.” They’ve been hooked ever since. As two of the historical society’s most dedicated volunteers, the duo works together to meticulously inventory the 10,000+ artifacts in the SCHS collection.



Ann-Marie and Phil pose in front of the newly inventoried collections storage area in the Franchere Education Center.

Ann-Marie and Phil began the inventory process at 32 Washington Avenue, measuring, describing, photographing and boxing artifacts that had been stowed in closets and under eaves. Along the way, they made some interesting discoveries. Says Phil, “It’s fascinating to see what [SCHS] has held in storage and out of view of the public. Much of it was uncovered for the first time when we started the inventory process. Artifacts like quilts, flags, and antique gowns were ‘begging to be inventoried’ ” he added.

Ann-Marie—a retiree from the New York State Department of Taxation and Finance—considers herself the organizer in the inventory process. “We try to group like items together, keep numbers sequential, and determine how to place them in storage,” she explains. Phil—a retired meteorologist—specializes in object photography and creates digital records for each object. Now based at the Mabee Farm, Ann-Marie and Phil work together on labeling, wrapping, and boxing artifacts for storage.

With no particular expertise in artifact history, it is the duo’s interest and passion for history that drives their impeccable work. Says Ann-Marie, “I’ve always loved antiques, so to be surrounded by old things and see things I’ve never seen before...it’s pretty cool.” The Florence L. Cohen Lace Collection is a favorite of both Phil and Ann-Marie. “Some of the things we were looking over were early 6th century Coptic or Egyptian lace that [Cohen] had featured in her book,” notes Phil.

The inventory process has been an eye-opening experience for Ann-Marie and Phil. Both share an interest in understanding other museums’ labels and processes. Explains Phil, “now, when I go into a museum, and see acquisition numbers and object IDs I think about the reason they’re there, and what it means. It’s fascinating to see what level of detail people put into descriptions in a museum.”

Going forward, Ann-Marie and Phil hope to stay involved with SCHS and see the inventory process through to the end. “We want to do it right, and do it in a way that makes it the easiest for others to access the materials,” explains Ann-Marie. She adds, “I find it really interesting. I love being surrounded by this, and want to help in any way in terms of the collection’s organization and spreading the word.” “I’ll miss this if we come to an end,” Phil agrees.

Ann-Marie and Phil are an integral part of the SCHS team, and the staff deeply appreciates their time and commitment to the inventory process. Their work plays a vital role in making the collection organized and accessible to the public, and has helped bring SCHS into the 21st century.

—Mary Zawacki



Around the Society



Boomtown: Immigration, Technology, and Urban Schenectady exhibit continues at 32 Washington Ave until June.



Our Mabee Farm animals in their new home and a special visitor to 32 Washington Ave in the library yard.



Howlin' at the Moon with Thirteen Feet of Bluegrass and Cosby Gibson at Mabee Farm.




An American Girl Doll Tea with Rebecca Rubin

Presented at
Schenectady County
Historical Society
32 Washington Ave
Schenectady, NY 12305

Saturday, March 7
2:00 p.m.

\$5.00 each for adults and children




*Photos: Ann Aronson, John Ackner,
Kaitlin Morton-Bentley, Mary Zawacki.*



Schenectady County Historical Society
32 Washington Avenue
Schenectady, New York 12305

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Schenectady County Historical Society

HUGO, NEBULA, AND JOHN W. CAMPBELL AWARD WINNER

BARRY LONGYEAR **IT CAME FROM SCHENECTADY**



Book talk and signing with author
Barry Longyear
March 21, 2:00 p.m.
Mabee Farm Historic Site



Basket Weaving Workshop

Make a large,
drop-handle
storage basket

Saturday, March 28
8:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.
Mabee Farm Historic Site
Fee: \$100