

Schenectady's Italian Fraternal Societies

By Robert R. Pascucci, Ph.D.

ABRUZZESE SOCIETY — EX-PRESIDENTS



Seated, left to right: Albino Ruscitti, Andrea Nicodemi. Standing, left to right: Mario Nicodemi, Pat Di Cristofaro, Hanibal Pardi, Oreste Daviero, Fred Grosso.

Souvenir Album: Golden Jubilee, 1912-1962

An era in the history of the Italians and Italian-Americans in Schenectady came to a close when the remaining ten members of the Abruzzese Society recently decided to disband the organization. The Societa` Abruzzese was formed in 1912 by Italian immigrants from Abruzzi-Molise, the rugged Italian region that lies among the Apennines and stretches along the coast of the Adriatic Sea. Today, Abruzzo and Molise are separate Italian regions.

Continued on pages 8 and 9.

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Mabee Farm: Tue-Sat, 10-4



Dear Members:

2016 has arrived with promise and plenty of plans for growth of the Society during the new year. To start, we have adopted a new logo for ourselves, and if you looked at this issue's masthead, our website, or received an email notice about an event, you have already seen it. The new symbol pulls together the different parts of Society into one cohesive unit that is the Schenectady County Historical Society: the Dora Jackson House, representing the Schenectady History Museum and the Grems-Doolittle Library, the 1705 Mabee Farmhouse, and the George E. Franchere Education Center. The blue color flowing around these sites represents the Mohawk River, which drew both the original indigenous peoples and the later Europeans to our beautiful river valley. Our seal, the former logo, will continue as our official seal, but we think the new logo allows people to instantly recognize our place in Schenectady County.

Another change in 2016 is the move to a quarterly newsletter. This year we will publish a January through March issue, followed by the April – June issue, July – September issue, and an October – December issue. With our staff firmly on board, we have been able to plan exhibits and events up to two years in advance. This means that you will be able to get upcoming activities on your calendar with plenty of time so you don't miss the things that interest you. It also saves a little of our budget, as will you, should you choose to receive our email edition rather than the print edition. (No pressure here, we do want you to receive either format that you desire!)

One thing has not changed: our Annual Meeting will be the second Saturday in April, April 9th, at 1:30PM. At 2:00PM our newest exhibit, "Exposed," will open with a lecture by the noted expert on colonial material culture, Marilyn Sassi. Mark your calendars now for an exciting afternoon!

With most of our "must do" building repairs completed, thanks, in part, to your generous contributions last year, we are now turning our attention to interpretation of the Mabee Farm Historic Site. We shall be looking at how best to showcase the treasure that is the Mabee farmhouse, bearing in mind that there are many different frames of reference for viewers: architecture, the people who lived there, and the events in history that shaped both. Our visitors also have different needs and expectations, from the fourth and seventh grade school children who come to our educational classes, to families of all ages, to both local and foreign adult visitors who come to learn about the history of this place we call home. As challenging as these concerns are, we will also need to address some of the physical needs of all the buildings on the site if we are to let it tell its story well into the next century. We hope you consider this a worthy cause and will stand with us by making a donation to the Historic Buildings Fund this year.

Thank you for all your support as members, and best wishes for a prosperous and fruitful year ahead.

Marianne



**Congratulations
to our Festival of
Trees Decoration
winners!**



**Most Creative: Mom's Sewing
Basket by Marianne Blanchard**

**Favorite Tree: Flamingo
Fantasy by Nancy Wasmund**

SCENECTADY DURING THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR

Presented by John Gearing
Saturday, January 16th at 2:00pm
at the Schenectady County Historical Society
32 Washington Ave, Schenectady
www.schenectadyhistorical.org

300 Years of Fashion

With Marilyn Sassi



February 20 2:00 PM 32 Washington Ave

Donations to the Historical Society & Mabee Farm October-November 2015:

Babette Faehmel
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Jeanne Kline
Marilyn Kohls

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Carolina & Livio Lazzari
Richard MacKinnon

Richard Rainey
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2015 was a great year for the Society. Thanks to your generous donations, our staff and volunteers were able to build toward meeting the Society's mission. Many donations helped support the Historic Building Preservation Fund, and we remind you that you may request your donation be used for a specific purpose which can be indicated on the form below.

Please consider making the most generous contribution you can, and remember it doesn't have to be painful if you spread the amount you wish to contribute over a twelve month period - a little can go a long way!

Donating by credit card is easy, green and saves you money and time too.

Please complete and mail the authorization below. For inquiries and assistance call 518-374-0263, option 5, or email office@schenectadyhistorical.org.

The Schenectady County Historical Society, 32 Washington Avenue, Schenectady, NY 12305

Card to Bill (please circle): Visa MasterCard Discover

Credit Card Number: _____

Security Code (3 digits): _____ Expiration Date: _____

House Number: _____ Zip Code: _____

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

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

One-Time Contribution: \$25 \$50 \$75 \$100 other\$_____

Purpose (if other than general): _____

Signature: _____

In honor of _____

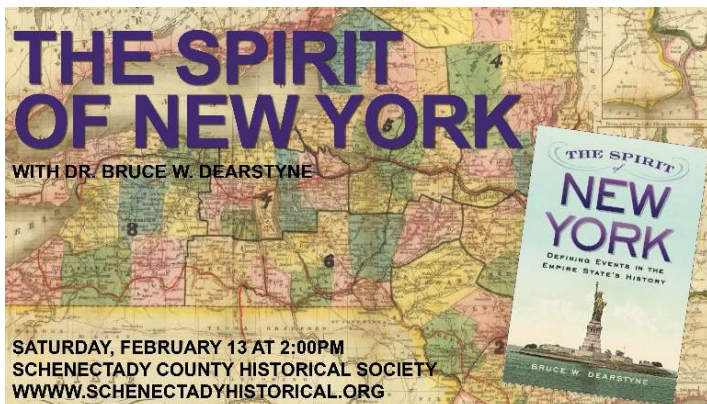
Moons of Wolves, Snow, and Worms: A Season of Howlin' at Mabee Farm Historic Site

Today, we measure them in 30s, or 31s, or sometimes 28. We count them off in weeks; they have names that herald Roman gods and emperors. Twelve (maybe thirteen) of them, each year, signaled by the waxing and waning of the moon.

Months. Our ancestors, too, knew them by the full moons; every culture on earth has traditions rooted in the lunar cycle. America's earliest settlers celebrated the months and their moons with names, borrowing from Native or European traditions. Here, in colonial Schenectady, the Wolf Moon for January, for wolf packs circling icy villages, howling, desperate for food. The Full Snow Moon for February, bitter with deep snows and scarce game. And, in March, the Worm Moon, the beginning of the thaw, and the reemergence of earthworms in the soil.

At Mabee Farm, we still celebrate the moon. Every month, when it shines brightest and fullest, we turn to our roots. With fiddles and guitars and banjos, we sing and dance. We make music. We howl at the moon. This year, come howl with us.

The 2016 *Howlin' at the Moon: Cabin Fever Concert* series will be the liveliest yet. We've got a full season lined up, starting with the first full moon of the year. On January 23rd, the 9th season of *Howlin'* kicks off with *Running the River* and *Rusticator*, two *Howlin'* favorites, bringing toe-tapping favorites and originals to Mabee Farm. So, join us for a night of bluegrass and folk. Join us in celebrating the Wolf Moon. Join the pack!



Vote Here! Vote Now!

2016 will be a big year for America – and Schenectady. We're electing a new president, choosing who will represent New York State in the Senate, and voting for county, town, and city representatives. We have a lot to think about: Where is our country headed? What changes do we want to see in our city? Which candidates can we trust to do their job?

Democracy – and with it, debate and dialogue – is the heart of America. One vote represents one voice, and with it, our civic duty to participate. The *Vote Here! Vote Now!* project explores just this. Through a series of interactive exhibits, programs, discussions, and concerts in 2016, *Vote Here! Vote Now!* will bring Schenectadians together to talk about issues – political, cultural, civic, and democratic; historical and current. Together with the community, we can build a space to reflect on our values, and to explore the values of others.

Starting March 12, with the opening of the *Vote Here! Vote Now!* exhibit, stop by SCHS to cast your vote for president, check out what others have to say on major issues, and design your own campaign. The exhibit looks at the American presidency, suffrage, campaign tactics and design, major political movements in Schenectady, and current issues. Let us know your thoughts and how you feel about what matters most!

Opening the exhibit is a presentation by Jami Floyd, the local host of *All Things Considered* for WNYC Radio, and a leading voice on the legal and political stories of the day. Floyd will present “Is Mr. Smith Dead? Media, Culture and the Constitution,” an interactive, discussion-based talk examining government, media, leadership, and imagery, and how all of this might affect the 2016 Presidential election.

Following the exhibit's opening, *Vote Here! Vote Now!* continues through 2016 with a full slate of dynamic programs, each aimed at helping the Schenectady community engage civically and politically. By understanding democracy, we understand the power of our voice. Of casting a ballot. Of going out, taking part, and VOTING on November 8, 2016.

Mary Zawacki

New Materials in the Library

BOOKS

Copy of Jonathan Pearson's *First Settlers of Schenectady Manuscript*. **Gift of Donald Keefer**
Preliminary Report of the City Planning Committee.

Gift of Charles Slavin

Haiga on the Mohawk and A Stockade September.

Gift of David Giacalone

DOCUMENTS AND PHOTOGRAPHS

Items relating to St. Clare's Hospital. **Gift of Ceil Mack and St. Clare's Family**

Manuscripts of Thura Colby Truax Hires. **Gift of Paul Truax**

Wayne Tucker Postcard Collection. **Gift of Wayne Tucker**

Abruzzese Society Documents. **Gift of Alex Stramenga**

BLOG POSTS YOU MAY HAVE MISSED:

The Grems-Doolittle Library Collections Blog (<http://www.gremsdoolittlelibrary.blogspot.com/>) is a great resource for learning more about Schenectady County's rich history. Here are some of the posts from the past couple months that you might have missed. All posts are by librarian Mike Maloney unless otherwise noted.

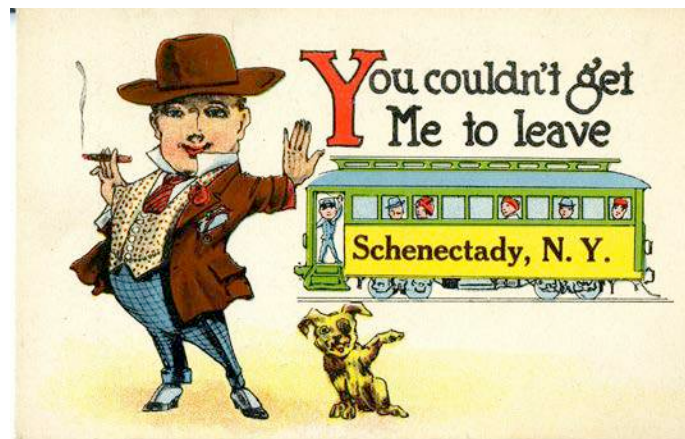
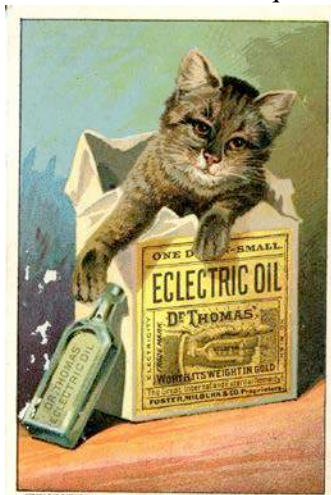
- "Fadeaways? Curves? Speed? We had 'em all": *The Illustrious Career of Pitcher Frank Mountain*. This post focuses on the career of Schenectady's Frank Mountain who played baseball during the late 1800s, and was known for developing the curve and spit ball.
- *Larry Hart News Negatives, Parts I and II*. Our volunteers recently finished scanning almost 5,000 negatives from our Larry Hart Collection. These posts feature some of the negatives that were scanned.
- *Brothers of the Brush and Sisters of the Belle*. For the Rotterdam Sesquicentennial, men were encouraged to grow mustaches and other "facial foliage," and women dressed in 1800s era clothing.

If you have any ideas for future blog posts, contact our librarian, Mike Maloney at librarian@schenectadyhistorical.org.

Wayne Tucker Postcard Collection



In November, the Grems-Doolittle Library received an extremely interesting collection of postcards relating to Schenectady. The collection was donated by SCHS member Wayne Tucker who passed away recently. Mr. Tucker was an avid collector of postcards and the collection comprises 19 binders filled with postcards, trade cards, and other ephemera. The collection is quite comprehensive and will often have postcards of the same place or landmark from different years, showing how it developed over time. Staff and volunteers have already started indexing the collection and the index should be on our website in the next few months. We would like to thank Mr. Tucker and his family for thinking of the Historical Society for this donation.



-Mike Maloney

Exhibits and Programs

For more information or to learn more about other upcoming exhibits and programs, 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. EXHIBITS and PROGRAMS are free for Society members; a \$5.00 charge for non-members applies unless otherwise noted.

On Exhibit at 32 Washington Avenue

***NEW* Vote Here! Vote Now!**

Opening March 12, 2016

Left or right? Conservative, liberal, or independent? "Vote Here! Vote Now!" explores democracy in Schenectady, and encourages visitors to consider and discuss political issues - historical and current. Discover Schenectady's political legacy by talking, touching, listening, feeling -- and learning learn how vital your voice is in the 2016 elections!

A Night on the Town in Schenectady 1850-1950: 100 Years of Fashion and Frivolity

Through March 5, 2016

The Schenectady Municipal Golf Course 1935-2015: 80 Years and Counting

Boomtown: Immigration, Technology, and Urban Schenectady

Hops & Hogsheads: Beer from Colonial to Craft Brew

On Exhibit at Franchere Education Center

***NEW* - Enigmatic Shapes by Todd J. Greive**

Opening January 7, 2016

Todd's sculpture walks the line of ambiguity. Intriguing shapes and forms combine with the viewer's imagination to create individual experiences.

Local Eats: What Does Your Food Say About You?

Through April 2016

Program Calendar

Thursday, January 7 – 6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

Enigmatic Shapes Exhibit Opening

Location: Mabee Farm Historic Site

Join local artist Todd G. Greive for the opening of our newest exhibit, "Enigmatic Shapes" in the Van Shaick gallery at the Franchere Center.

Saturday, January 9 – 2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Guns & Butter: How the World Wars Shaped the Dairy Industry

Presenter: Dr. Kendra Smith-Howard

Location: Mabee Farm Historic Site

Join University of Albany History Professor Dr. Kendra Smith-Howard as she discusses our dairy habit and the changes to our culture over time. This talk is part of the *Local Eats* exhibit series, running through April 2016.

Saturday, January 16 – 2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Schenectady During the Revolutionary War

Presenter: John Gearing

Location: 32 Washington Avenue

Join us as historian and author John Gearing explores how the American Revolution affected Schenectady. Mr. Gearing is currently writing Volume 2 of *Schenectady Genesis: How a Dutch Colonial Village Became an American City*, which focuses on the late 18th century development of Schenectady.

Saturday, January 23 – 7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.

Howlin' at the Moon Concert

Performers: Running the River & Rusticator

Location: Mabee Farm Historic Site

Cost: \$5.00

Help kick off the 9th year of Howlin' at the Moon Concerts with not one, but two great bands. Both Running the River and Rusticator will grace the Howlin' stage for a great night of toe-tapping music! *Please check our website regarding weather updates.*

Saturday, January 30 – 2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

A Taste of Upstate New York

Presenter: Chuck D'Imperio

Location: Mabee Farm Historic Site

After a year of eating his way across Upstate New York seeking out the stories of so many iconic foods, Chuck D'Imperio now shares the stories of iconic foods that we have come to love! This talk is part of the *Local Eats* exhibit series, running through April 2016.

Saturday, February 6 – 1:00 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.
Can Schenectady Be A Home For Peregrine Falcons?

Presenter: Mathew Perry

Location: Mabee Farm Historic Site

Mathew Perry of the Utica Peregrine Falcon Project will share his work fostering pairs of Peregrine Falcons to nest and fledge young in Utica. Two falcons have been observed flying above Schenectady recently and one used the Parker Inn to perch and hunt during 2015.

Saturday, February 13 – 2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.
The Spirit of New York: Defining Events in the Empire State's History

Presenter: Dr. Bruce W. Dearstyne

Location: 32 Washington Avenue

Historian Bruce W. Dearstyne will discuss sixteen key events in New York history, from the promulgation of the first state constitution in April 1777 through the resilience of the Fire Department of the City of New York during and after 9/11.

Saturdays, February 13 & 20 – 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.
Stained Glass Mosaic Workshop

Location: Mabee Farm Historic Site

Cost: \$80 + \$20 materials fee

In this two-day workshop, create your own glimmering mosaic masterpiece out of stained glass! *Pre-registration required; info at schenectadyhistorical.org/workshops*

Monday, February 15 – 1:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.
Wednesday, February 17 – 1:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.
American Girl Doll Tea with Samantha Parkington

Location: 32 Washington Avenue

Cost: \$8.00

Join us for an American Girl Doll Tea with Samantha Parkington as we learn about Edwardian culture. We will make a craft and enjoy tea and goodies. All children must be accompanied by an adult. All dolls welcome!

Advance purchase required; buy tickets at schenectadyhistorical.org/American-girl-tea

Saturday, February 20 – 2:00 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.
300 Years of Fashion

Presenter: Marilyn Sassi

Location: 32 Washington Avenue

Sassi will explore major discrepancies in men's and women's fashion, drawing on differences in class and time period, with an emphasis on the Mohawk and Hudson Valleys.

Sunday, February 21 – 7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.
Howlin' at the Moon Concert

Performers: The Nellies

Location: Mabee Farm Historic Site

Cost: \$5.00

Join The Nellies as they return to the Howlin' stage for a wonderful evening in the Franchere Center. *Please check our website regarding weather updates.*

Saturday, February 27 – 7:30 a.m. – 8:00 p.m.
Bus Trip to the American Museum of Natural History

Location: 32 Washington Avenue

Cost: \$85.00 includes bus and AMNH admission

Hop aboard our luxury coach and head into Manhattan for a day of discovery. *Pre-registration required; purchase tickets at schenectadyhistorical.org/bustrip*

Saturday, March 5 – 2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.
Rexford's Coney Island

Presenter: John Scherer

Location: 32 Washington Avenue

Join us as Scherer explores the legacy of Luna Park, Rexford's original amusement park, that flourished and thrilled Schenectadians through the early 1900s.

Saturday, March 12 – 2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.
Is Mr. Smith Dead? Media, Culture & the Constitution and opening for Vote Here! Vote Now!

Presenter: Jamie Floyd

Location: 32 Washington Avenue

As a former White House insider turned journalist, WNYC's Jami Floyd is armed with political experience. This interactive multimedia talk grows out of that experience, as Floyd examines the interplay between the U.S. Constitution, Congress, and the American media; the nature of leadership; the role of imagery in politics; and how all of this might affect the 2016 Presidential election.

Wednesday, March 23 – 7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.
Howlin' at the Moon Concert

Performers: Everest Rising

Location: Mabee Farm Historic Site

Cost: \$5.00

Infected with cabin fever? Break out of the winter rut and join Everest Rising as they shake off the winter blues with a great night of toe-tapping music. *Please check our website regarding weather updates.*

Saturday, March 26 – 2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.
Schooling the Children of Schenectady's Italian and Polish Immigrants, 1900-1930

Presenter: Robert R. Pascucci, Ph.D.

Location: 32 Washington Avenue

Dr. Pascucci will discuss the impact that the influx of Italian and Polish families had on Schenectady schools; examine the extent to which the schools helped assimilate the children; and analyze the achievements and failures of the educational system.

Continued from p1.

The Abruzzese Society was a typical Italian fraternal or mutual aid society that drew its membership from among immigrants who shared a common local origin in Italy. It has often been said that the immigrants only became Italians after their arrival in the United States. Because Italy as a united country was not created until the mid-nineteenth century, Italians more readily identified with their villages, provinces or regions of origin rather than with their nation as a whole. Schenectady Italians referred to themselves as *Calabresi* (Calabrians), *Siciliani* (Sicilians), *Napoletani* (Campanians), etc. Furthermore, these immigrants would have expressed themselves in related local dialects which further reinforced a sense of localism. The dialects that were found in one area of the peninsula were often not well understood by those living in another. Former pastor of St. Anthony's Church, Father Michael Bianco, was assisted in the 1920s by a priest who came from northern Italy. The parishioners, who were largely from southern Italy, loudly complained to Father Bianco that they couldn't understand the assistant!

In the earliest years of Italian immigration to Schenectady there were too few individuals to organize a society whose membership could trace its origin to a specific locality in Italy. Consequently, in 1892 the Societa' Unione Fratellanza was formed.



Abruzzese banquet held in the 1930s

This first Italian society, known simply as the Fratellanza, was open to all Italians regardless of origin. The membership, however, consisted mainly of small businessmen and skilled workmen, such as banker-barber, Pasquale DeMarco; storekeeper, Anthony Della Rocca; and grocer-banker, Albert Lenta. Stephen Abba was elected its first president. Abba was a skilled machinist at

General Electric and would be the grandfather of Schenectady Superintendent of Schools, Charles Abba.

During the first decade of the twentieth century the Italian community in Schenectady grew rapidly, and thus permitted the formation of societies based on place of origin. Italians from northern Italy were first to organize. However, there were never enough to form a provincial or regional society. In 1902, "The Benevolent Brotherhood for the Sons of Northern Italy" welcomed all regardless of their place of birth in the North of Italy. Known as the "Alta Italia" society, its founding members included Stephen Abba and Albert Lenta who both continued their membership in the older Fratellanza.

Although the majority came from Campania, the region around the city of Naples, no regional or even provincial society was ever formed by the so-called Neapolitans. Interestingly, there did develop a concentration of individuals from the Campanian town of Alvignano, located in the province of Caserta. Probably the most prominent, certainly one of the most financially successful, founding members of "The Society of Laboring Men of Alvignano" was Pasquale DeMarco. Believed to be the first Italian permanent settler in Schenectady, DeMarco arrived in the city in 1882 as part of a railroad track gang, but remained behind when the crew continued laying track westward. And of course, it should be noted that the first pastor of St. Anthony's Church, Rev. Giovanni Bencivenga also came from Alvignano. It was said that Father Bencivenga came to Schenectady at the behest of his fellow townsman, Pasquale DeMarco. In later years an Alvignano women's society was also added.

During the 1930s, Alvignano society members joined with Schenectady Italians who came from the neighboring Italian village of Dragoni to form a committee to celebrate the feast of San Ferdinando, the patron saint of both Italian communities. Every year on the saint's name day in June, the *fešta* began with a mass at St. Anthony's followed by a street fair on North Jay Street. Although the San Ferdinando *fešta* ended years ago in Schenectady, it continues to be celebrated in both Alvignano and Dragoni.

The Abruzzese Society was the first to be organized among Schenectady Italians that drew its membership from a single region of Italy. Founded in 1912, membership grew quickly. By the time of its twenty-fifth anniversary in 1937, the society reported in its anniversary booklet a membership of nearly one hundred as well as a women's auxiliary. During these years, approximately sixty percent of Schenectady Italians from this region came from the single province of Chieti and another thirty percent from the province of Campobasso,

which today is located in the region of Molise. Among the newcomers from Abruzzo, John Nicodemi and several other ceramic workers found work at General Electric and became instrumental in the development of its porcelain department. Julius Pardi, a fellow ceramic worker from Castelli, in the Abruzzo province of Teramo, became a foreman in this department. His creation of a ceramic portrait medallion of Thomas Edison done in honor of the famous inventor's 1922 visit to Schenectady was described in the March-April, 2007 issue of the SCHS Newsletter.

Other regionally-based societies soon followed the Abruzzese. During the 1920s, both Schenectady Calabrians and Sicilians formed regional societies as did those from Lazio (Società Laziale), the region in which Rome is located.

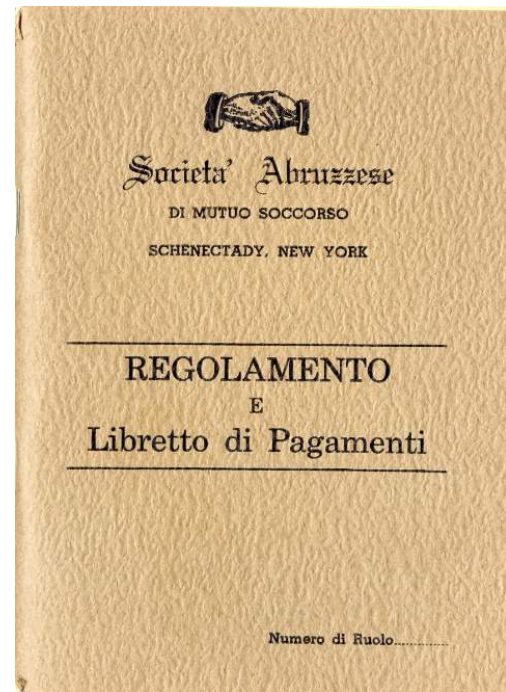
The largest of all the societies, however, was the Order of Sons of Italy (*Figli d'Italia*). Several lodges of this national organization were formed in Schenectady, including a woman's lodge, the Pietà D'Amore. Over time, however, the lodges dwindled to one, the Gabriele D'Annunzio #321. This century-old lodge (founded in 1915) has since relocated to Rotterdam.

A host of other fraternal organizations also arose, such as the Giuseppe Garibaldi, the Christopher Columbus, the Theodore Roosevelt and others. These societies provided the membership some financial support in times of need, familiar surroundings to help cope with the new American environment, and with a vehicle for exercising political influence in the city and county.

During the earliest years, the members of a mutual aid society, such as that of the Abruzzese, paid monthly dues of fifty cents which entitled them to a payment of six dollars a week, for a maximum of twelve weeks, during an illness; in the event of death, fifty dollars would be paid to the family of the deceased member. However, since most members at this time were relatively young, the early records of the Abruzzese Society show few mortuary benefit expenditures. More typically, one finds the listing of such expenses as ten dollars for a wreath and fifteen dollars for the rental of a carriage in which representatives of the society rode in the funeral procession on the occasion of the death of a member's child. When a member did die, the society as a whole was required to attend the funeral. Failure to do so brought a five dollar fine.

The Abruzzese records further show the periodic payments made to Dr. Arnaldo Samorini for providing physical examinations to applicants to the society and for making house calls to sick members. To avoid a devastating drain on the mortuary fund, no applicants to the society would be accepted who were over the age of

forty-five. Furthermore, physical examinations were required to determine that applicants were in good health. The society also stipulated that no payments would be made for illness or death resulting from a fight, drunkenness, or venereal disease!



Member's handbook and dues record

The records of the Abruzzese Society provide a window on the many events that the group organized as well as their participation in the activities of other societies, including Italian societies of neighboring towns and cities. Among the society's expenditures, there is a listing of expenses related to the frequent organizing of dances, banquets, parades and other festivities.

Many of these Italian mutual benefit and fraternal societies continued to exist well past the mid-twentieth century, but with the exception of the Sons of Italy lodge, they gradually disappeared leaving only the Abruzzese Society. Of all those who belonged to the Abruzzese Society, which existed for more than a century, the last were: Angelo Defilippo, Ernesto Dicesare, Joseph Dicristofaro, Richard Dicristofaro, Domenico Distefano, Carmine Pantalone, Mario Schiavone, Massimo Spezzaferro, Alex Stramenga (president), and Steve Zaurek.

The Abruzzese Society has donated boxes of their records to the Schenectady County Historical Society. Researchers in family history will be pleased to find much useful information among the membership applications, the anniversary publications, and the voluminous descriptions of expenditures.

Volunteer Spotlight – Bill Buell

For the past eleven years, Bill Buell has been greeting Saturday morning visitors at the museum with much more than a friendly face. A Glenville native, Bill has volunteered with the Schenectady County Historical Society since 2004. In that time, he has become somewhat of an expert on Schenectady's history, sharing his knowledge and enthusiasm about the past with anyone fortunate enough to meet him.

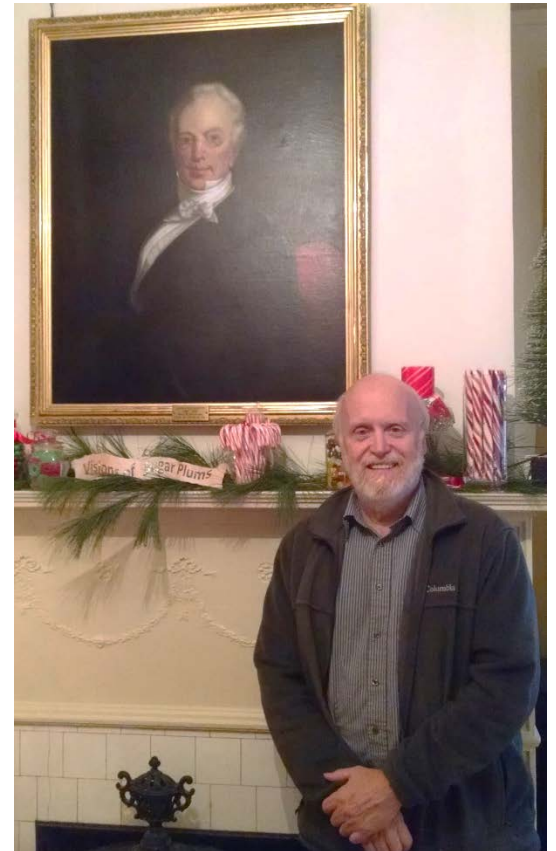
Bill first came to the SCHS looking to do research in the library for a paper he was writing about the Schenectady Massacre for a class at SUNY Albany. After moving next door to the SCHS in the Stockade, Bill decided to become a regular volunteer. He started covering the museum on Saturdays when Jo Mordecai, whom he describes as a mentor, was retiring.

Volunteering “gives me the opportunity to talk about history, especially Schenectady history, which is amazing,” Bill explains. His interest in history began with the Civil War era and expanded to include colonial New York. His current era of research is the Progressive Era. Of Schenectady, Bill says “there’s a lot of history to delve into and immerse yourself into... The area is rich with history.”

Bill recounted a meaningful encounter with a visitor from Rochester on his way to a Romeyn family reunion in New York City. The visitor had stopped by the museum to see the painting of one of his ancestors, John Broodhead Romeyn, which at the time was hanging in the Terbush Gallery. Upon seeing the painting, Bill describes the visitor as “visibly moved,” seeing a strong family resemblance. “It was great to share that moment with him,” Bill remarks. “People are always amazed at what we have here.”

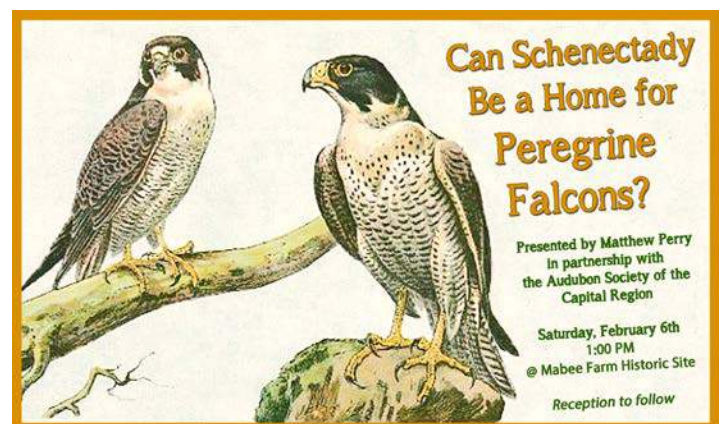
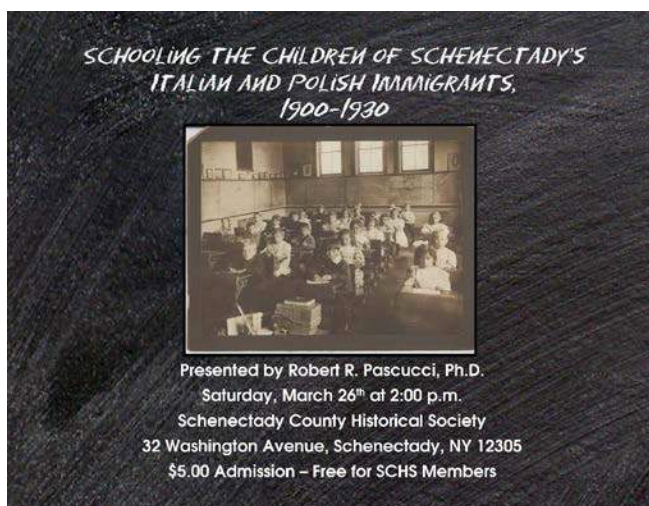
When asked about his favorite part to talk about during tours, Bill replied immediately, “Joseph Yates and John Isaac DeGraff... Both genuine, honest people, both mayors of Schenectady, with interesting personal lives.” Though Bill is a fount of knowledge, he is always looking to learn more. He says he is always “struck by the wealth of information in the library,” and always finds something new to discover.

The Schenectady County Historical Society is lucky to have such a knowledgeable and diligent volunteer on board!



*Bill with one of his favorite subjects,
John Isaac DeGraff.*

Kaitlin Morton-Bentley



Around the Society



Phil Lord - Schenectady 200 - World Class Port program at Mabee Farm.



Peter G. Rose, Saint Nicholas, the Saint Who Became Santa program at Mabee Farm.



American Girl Doll Tea with Felicity Merriman— photo: Kyle Adams, Daily Gazette

Festival of Trees



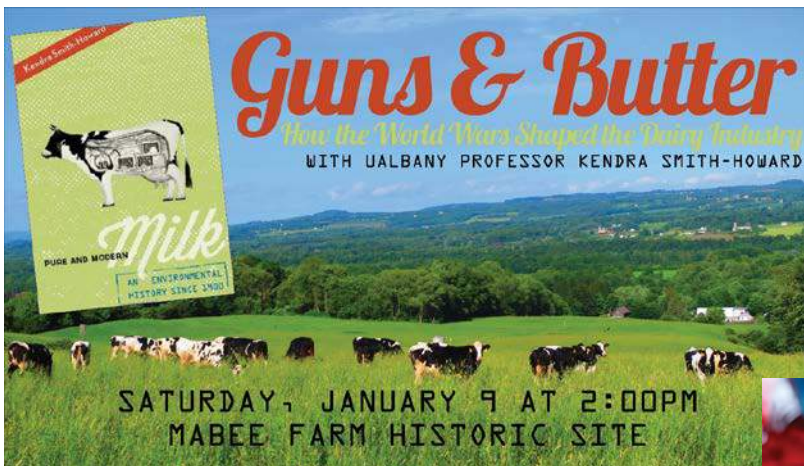
Photos: (other than noted) Ann Aronson



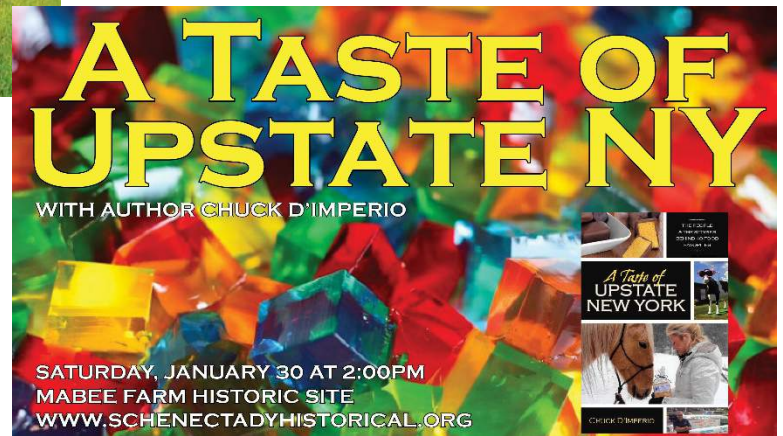
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SATURDAY, JANUARY 9 AT 2:00PM
MABEE FARM HISTORIC SITE



SATURDAY, JANUARY 30 AT 2:00PM
MABEE FARM HISTORIC SITE
WWW.SCHENECTADYHISTORICAL.ORG