



Schenectady County Historical Society

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NEWSLETTER July-August-September 2017 (. 61, N. 7-8-9)

Schenectadyhistorical.org

OPPENHEIMER AND THE A-BOMB: AN HISTORIC MEETING IN SCHENECTADY

By Martin A. Strosberg



J. Robert Oppenheimer

On October 21, 1941, 46 days before Pearl Harbor, The National Academy of Sciences Uranium Committee met in the office of Dr. William C. Coolidge, director of the GE Research Laboratory in Schenectady. This top-secret meeting was historic for two reasons. First, the Schenectady deliberations became the basis of the first U.S. governmental report unequivocally affirming the feasibility and urgency of producing an atomic bomb. At that time, U.S. and British scientists feared that Nazi Germany was working on the bomb. Second, the meeting marked the beginning of J. Robert Oppenheimer's high-level involvement in government efforts to develop an atomic bomb. Oppenheimer, of course, would later go on to lead the Manhattan Project's Los Alamos Laboratory in New Mexico that designed, constructed, and detonated the first atomic bomb.

Continued on pages 12 and 13

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President's Letter

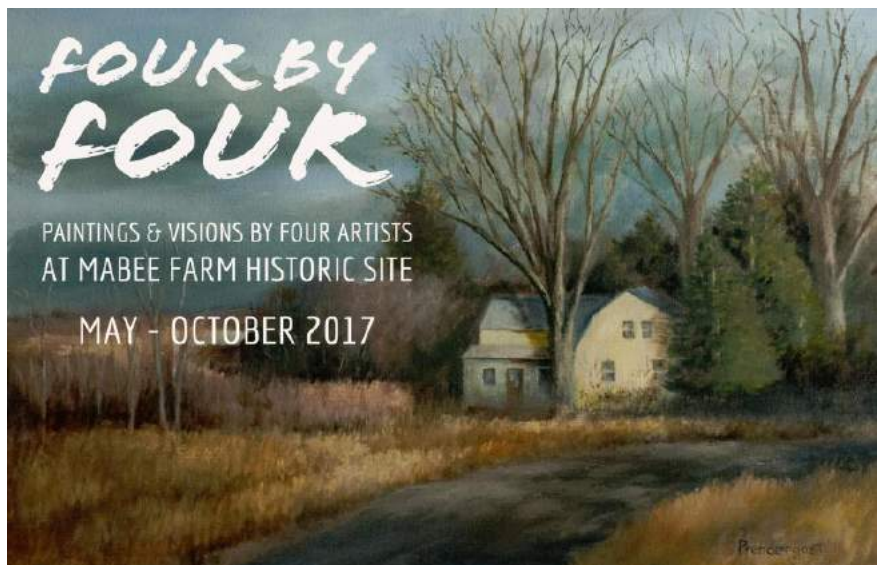
This summer has brought all kinds of excitement and change to us. As you will see on page 3, Curator Mary Zawacki is now Executive Director Mary Zawacki! We are delighted to have her assume this position, which is both new to us and her. Mary's knowledge of the Society and of Schenectady means that she already has a head start in leading us forward as we seek to expand and improve our operations. Mary immediately began a search for two additional employees, whom we hope to have on board by August when Hannah Miller, our former intern and current program assistant, will leave to pursue her master's degree. Hannah created and gave many of our new walking tours, which have been extremely popular. We will miss her, and wish her good luck at Cornell University this fall.

Besides new staff, we now have a new building. The Brouwer-Rosa House, at 14 North Church Street, was given to us by the Kindl Family Trust, fulfilling the wish of prior owner Katherine (Katy) Kindl. Katy and her husband, Fred, bought the house in 1969, and spent years restoring what is believed to be the second oldest house in Schenectady. Katy Kindl served on the Schenectady County Historical Society's Board of Trustees from 1982 to 2001, and she hoped we would continue to preserve this important early Dutch home. We can't thank Katy and the Kindl family enough for their generosity and faith in us. We are excited by and fully appreciate the responsibility we have to continue the work of Katy and Fred Kindl, preserving this home and making it an historic home of which Schenectady can be proud.

In April, two new trustees were elected by the membership: John Woodward, Schenectady County Clerk, and Tom Dunn, former Communications Director of the New York State Education Department. Both are now lending their expertise to the Society, and we thank them for their interest and support. (See page 14 for bios).

The other change, a new event, a performance by the Albany Symphony Orchestra at the Mabee Farm on Monday, July 3rd from 7-10pm. Their performance will be followed by fireworks over the Mohawk River. Please plan to join us and enjoy a beautiful start to the Fourth of July!

Marianne



SCHS Appoints First Executive Director

We're pleased to announce that the Board of Trustees of the Schenectady County Historical Society appointed Mary Zawacki to the newly created position of Executive Director. As a robust and growing institutional presence in the cultural affairs of New York's Capital Region, SCHS created this new position to provide professional leadership for the Society's expanding programs.

Mary Zawacki's appointment follows a nationwide search. She joined the SCHS in 2014 as Curator. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in History and French from SUNY New Paltz and a Master of Arts in Cultural Heritage Studies from Newcastle University, United Kingdom. During her three years as curator, Mary has raised public awareness of the Schenectady County Historical Society through new innovative programs, brought a new level of professionalism to exhibits, and increased connections with partners and the community.

When asked to comment, Jeff McDonald, Schenectady County Legislator and President of the Schenectady County Convention and Visitors Bureau congratulated Mary on her appointment, adding, "I know that Mary will continue to be a tremendous asset to the Historical Society and the community as she takes on this new role leading the society and helping to make Schenectady County a true tourism destination."

Professor Melinda Lawson, Director of the Public History Program at Union College noted that SCHS is "dedicated to engaging the community" and believes that as Executive Director Mary "will bring talent, energy and experience to that commitment."

Mary is excited about the transition, and the current growth period of both SCHS and Schenectady County. "Our region is a historic treasure, and I am excited to work with the SCHS board, staff and the local community to advance a vision of Schenectady as a vibrant cultural destination to live in and visit. Schenectady can be a leader in the field of heritage tourism, and it is an honor to be here working to make that a reality."



Photo credit @ Michael Diana

-Tom Dunn, SCHS Board of Trustees

Got ideas about what could make SCHS great? Mary is seeking input from members about what they love (or don't love) about SCHS. Feel free to reach out to her at director@schenectadyhistorical.org, and look out for a new column by Mary in upcoming issues of the Schenectady County Historical Society newsletter.

New Materials in the Library

DOCUMENTS AND PHOTOGRAPHS:

Carley House Register. Gift of Walter Wheeler

Tierney Family Collection. Gift of Tiffanie

Cheng

Blueprint of ALCO engine. Gift of Werner Feibes

Civil War Documents of Peter van Heusen. Gift of

Marian Clowe

BOOKS:

The Best of New York Archives: Selections from the

Magazine, 2001-2011. Gift of Bill Buell

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 a few of the posts from the past couple months that you might have missed.

- ***Riding in Style: The Campbells and their Chariot* by Mike Maloney – December 16, 2016**

The Campbells were one of the most prominent families in Schenectady during the late 1700s. The lavish coach that Daniel Campbell built for his wife Angelica would have been quite a sight going down State Street. Their chariot can be found today at the Henry Ford Museum but you can learn more about it in this blog post.

- ***A Murder Most Foul: The Killing of Etta Demascek* by volunteer Gail Denisoff – April 12, 2017**

On June 14, 1892, Etta Demascek was murdered in her home on Rotterdam Street in Schenectady. A 12-year old girl heard a scream and saw a man run out of the house, past a group of men to escape. Find out who killed (or at least who was convicted of killing) Etta Demascek in this blog post.

- ***Odors of the Erie in Schenectady* by Mike Maloney – May 3, 2017**

Who had the dirtiest jobs on the Erie Canal? Probably the men known as dock rats. Dock rats would clear out the drained Erie Canal of any debris that accumulated over time. This often meant shoveling all sorts of waste onto Dock Street and waiting a few days until the canal was filled so a boat could tow the debris away. So you can probably take a guess at how it smelled.

The Hank Caputo Baseball Collection



Hank Caputo (in white) and the Schenectady Mohawks

We recently received an addition to our baseball collections at the Grems-Doolittle Library and Archives, the Hank Caputo Baseball Collection. This collection was donated by Toniann Boilard, the daughter of Hank Caputo.

Hank Caputo was a well-known figure in the Capital Region sports world especially for his involvement in amateur baseball. In the 1970s, he played an important role in reviving the Schenectady Connie Mack League. Later, he founded the Schenectady Baseball Club, a team for college-age players which would eventually become the Schenectady Mohawks. Thanks to his contacts, several players on the Mohawks were signed to professional contracts.

Money for the team's budget came largely from bingo games that Hank, his family and friends ran on Saturday nights for many years. Hank also organized a yearly mid-winter baseball awards and hall of fame dinner with major league players, managers and executives as guest speakers.

The collection contains video of these hall of fame dinners, as well as programs, newspaper clippings, photos, citations, and awards related to the Schenectady Mohawks and Hank Caputo's involvement with the team.

-Mike Maloney

Donations to the Historical Society & Mabee Farm December 2016 – May 2017

John & Diana Ackner	Rudolph Dehn	Janet Hollocher	Michael & Nancy Ottati
James & Cindy Albright	Gail Denisoff	Don & Anne Hotaling	Jenny Overeynder
Charlene Aldi	Michael & Lillian	Evelyn Incitti	Barbara Palmer
Norman Aldrich	DePetrillo	Michael & Gisela Jakubowski	David Pecoraro
Philip & Linda Arony	Albert Di Nicola	Hugh Jenkins	Mary Pedone
Monica Barrett	Gary Dilallo	Betty Ann Jennings	Patrick Perkins
Elmer & Olga Bertsch	Alden & Gay Doolittle	Emily Ann Jensvold	Elizabeth Pieper
David & Marianne Blanchard	David & Susan Duglin	Randall & Donna Karl	Carol Reid
Carol Borthwick	Sharon Dunlap	Phil Kennicott & Mary Gray	Michael Rinaldi
David & Karen Bradley	James & Ann Eignor	Kevin Kesby	(in memory of Katy Restifo)
Robert & Sylvia Briber	Joy Favretti	Michael Kokernak	James Rothrock &
Sally Brillon	Werner Feibes	Dolores Kwolek	Michele De Angelus
William Bronk	Ellen Fladger &	Carolina & Livio Lazzari	Sonia Rubenstein
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Lou & Judy Buhmaster	Dianne Gade	Gary & Kim Mabee	Kathleen Secker
Sandra Mabie Caldeira	Deborah Gatoff	John & June Mabee	Ann Marie Smart
Katherine Chansky	Donald Gavin	Paul Mabie	John & Donna Spring
Kenneth Chase	Norman & Mildred	Robert Mabie	James & Margo Strosberg
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Richard & Marian Clowe	Constance Glasgow	Brian Maybee	Paul Tocker
David Connelly, Jr. &	Neil & Jane Golub	Charles & Debra McCambridge	Lois Troup
Michol Murphy	Mary Gray	Carole McCarthy	Mark Vermilyea
Paulyn Cox	Jean Gwynn	Jane McCloskey	Ann Walraven
Keith & Syma Cramer	John & Lucy Halstead	Barbara Hayes Muhlfelder	Robert & Brigitte Weible
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Dan & Sue Dayton	Scott Hicks	Patricia O'Clair	George Wise
Penelope de la Rocha			

Thank you for your continued support of the Society



Summer Family Programs at the Mabee Farm. Go to schenectadyhistorical.org/families/ for more information.

EXHIBITS and PROGRAMS

For more information or to purchase tickets please visit schenectadyhistorical.org.

On Exhibit at 32 Washington Avenue:

NEW: The Erie Canal: America's First School of Engineering

Ongoing

We're marking the Erie Canal's bicentennial with a look at how its construction spurred stunning advancements in technological innovation and inspired one of America's first engineering schools: Union College!

This exhibition was curated by Union College Museum Theory and Practice students.

Together Until the End: Schenectady in WWI

Through November

Devastating, morbid, and totally unprecedented, World War I changed our world entirely and redefined modernity. Now, 100 years later, we're exploring the Great War's effect on Schenectady and the people who lived here: the soldiers who fought, the nurses who cared, and everyone at home whose world was completely reshaped.

On Exhibit at Franchere Education Center:

NEW: Erie Canal Reimagined

Opens July 15, runs through October

Artist Dana Hatchett's industrial landscapes capture the feel of 20th century America. His drawings and paintings feature renderings of the Erie Canal, bounded by the edifices of the time period -- grain mills, boats, and warehouses. The result is an evocative journey through the world of industrial America.

NEW: Four by Four

Through October

The creative vision of four artists (Deborah Angilletta, John Morrette, Tim Prendergast and Maureen Sausa) comes through in four sets of four paintings, each based on a photograph. The resulting exhibition of watercolor, oil and acrylic landscape paintings showcases each artist's individuality by using an ordinary photograph as the point of departure for their work, changing the images and making them uniquely their own.

Program Calendar:

Water Music New York with the Albany Symphony Orchestra

Monday, July 3 – 7 to 10 PM @ Mabee Farm; Free!

A unique musical experience two centuries in the making! Enjoy an amazing fireworks display to end the night while the Albany Symphony plays Americana favorites.

Secret Stockade: Historic Tour & Lunch

Wednesday, July 5 – 10 AM and 11:30 AM @ 32

Washington Ave; \$20, pre-registration required

A walking tour of the Stockade, a peek inside a private 1820s house, a visit to our History Museum, and lunch at Arthur's Market.

Family Program: A Day on the Farm

Thursday, July 6 – 10 AM @ Mabee Farm; \$7/child, pre-registration required

Get ready to get dirty and work hard! In this hands-on program, kids will experience life on a small Mohawk Valley farm. Activities will include planting veggies, harvesting our very own summer rye, and baking a fresh loaf of bread. Perfect for ages 5 to 10 but all are welcome.

Family Program: Campfire at Mabee Farm

Friday, July 7 – 7 PM @ Mabee Farm; \$7/child, pre-registration required

Gather 'round the fire under the stars! This program invites kids to unplug for the evening and tune in to the real world instead. We'll enjoy hot cider, s'mores, and of course, ghost stories! This activity is weather dependent.

Howlin' at the Moon with Three Quarter North

Sunday, July 9 – 7 PM @ Mabee Farm; \$5

Hot days, deep sunsets, and a night of howlin' with Three Quarter North. Great Americana tunes guaranteed. Refreshments -- including beer and wine -- available.

Family Program: The Apprentice

Wednesday, July 12 – 10 AM @ Mabee Farm; \$25/child, pre-registration required

Calling all aspiring apprentices! Join us and learn the basic skills of Mohawk Valley artisans. Featuring blacksmithing lessons with John Ackner, and woodworking lessons with carpenter Don Rexford. This program is for kids ages 10+.

Jewish Schenectady: A Walking Tour

Thursday, July 13 – 6 PM @ 32 Washington Ave; \$8, pre-registration required

Discover the origins of the Jewish Diaspora in Schenectady, learn the stories of notable Jewish community members, and the history of Jewish congregations in the region.

CanalFest at Mabee Farm

Saturday, July 15 – 11 AM to 3 PM @ Mabee Farm; FREE!

Celebrate the vibrant canalway culture of Schenectady County with us! Featuring live music, pony rides, petting zoo, and more!

Family Program: Campfire at Mabee Farm

Friday, July 21 – 7 PM @ Mabee Farm; \$7/child, pre-registration required

Gather 'round the fire under the stars! This program invites kids to unplug for the evening and tune in to the real world instead. We'll enjoy hot cider, s'mores, and of course, ghost stories! This activity is weather dependent.

Family Program: A Day in the Life...

Saturday, July 22 – 10 AM @ Mabee Farm; \$7/child, pre-registration required

A true living history experience, we'll spend the day living as a Mabee kid would have, 200 years ago. Spoiler- it's a lot of work! We'll do farm house chores like fetching water and washing clothes, making candles, and making butter.

At Home in the American Barn: New Photography by Geoffrey Gross

Saturday, July 22 – 2 PM @ Mabee Farm; \$5; free for SCHS and DBPS members

Join us for an illustrated talk with photographer Geoffrey Gross as he presents images from his new book, which examines the fascinating possibilities for living and adaptive reuse provided by traditional barns. Sponsored by the Dutch Barn Preservation Society.

An American Girl Tea with Caroline Abbott

*Thursday, July 27 – 2 PM
and Friday, August 4 – 2 PM*

@ Mabee Farm; \$8/child, pre-registration required

Join us as we enjoy the outdoors at Mabee Farm! We'll discuss Caroline's experience growing up on Lake Ontario during the War of 1812 and talk about farm life, traveling by water, and see our own boats in the Mohawk River. Then, we'll make a craft and enjoy iced tea and goodies.

Rowing the River

Sunday, July 30 – 10 AM @ Mabee Farm; \$25 adults/\$15 kids; pre-registration required

Spend the day on the beautiful and historic Mohawk river as we retrace the path of America's first westward settlers. Led by some of our veteran crewmen, we'll row the 18th century reproduction bateaux on a 2 hour round trip tour of the Mohawk. Perfect for families! Please note, this activity is both weather dependent and involves sustained physical activity - please be prepared for both.

Secret Stockade: Historic Tour & Lunch

Wednesday, August 2 – 10 AM and 11:30 AM

@ 32 Washington Ave; \$20, pre-registration required

A walking tour of the Stockade, a peek inside a private 1820s house, a visit to our History Museum, and lunch at Arthur's Market.

WORKSHOP: Sapling Bow and Arrow

Saturday, August 5 – 9 AM @ Mabee Farm; \$35 + \$15 materials fee, pre-registration required

Native educator Dave Cornelius will lead the class into the woods to find and cut saplings for bows. Dogwood arrow shafts, and feathers will be provided. You will need a STRONG whittling knife.

Family Program: Campfire at Mabee Farm

Saturday, August 5 – 7 PM @ Mabee Farm; \$7/child, pre-registration required

Gather 'round the fire under the stars! This program invites kids to unplug for the evening and tune in to the real world instead. We'll enjoy hot cider, s'mores, and of course, ghost stories! This activity is weather dependent.

Howlin' at the Moon with Running the River

Sunday, August 6 – 7 PM @ Mabee Farm; \$5

Great Americana tunes guaranteed. Refreshments -- including beer and wine -- available.

Family Program: The Fur Trade Experience

Tuesday, August 8 – 10 AM @ Mabee Farm; \$7/child, pre-registration required

We're going back to the wild west! Mabee Farm was once a hub of trade between the Dutch and Mohawk peoples, and we'll discover their trading adventures. Join us as we explore the nature trail, river, and historic boats, learning the many ways humans have used the natural world to make a living.

Family Program: Build-a-Broom Workshop

Thursday, August 17 – 10 AM @ Mabee Farm; \$7/child, pre-registration required

A program of sweeping proportions (hehe)! The broom making industry was once a staple of the Mohawk Valley economy. In this workshop we'll rekindle that spirit by learning about growing broom corn and seeing a live broom-making demo. Then we'll get down to work, fashioning our own pot-scrubbers to take home.

Family Program: A Day in the Life...

Sunday, August 20 – 10 AM @ Mabee Farm; \$7/child, pre-registration required

A true living history experience, we'll spend the day living as a Mabee kid would have, 200 years ago. Spoiler- it's a lot of work! We'll do farm house chores like fetching water and washing clothes, making candles, and making butter.

Arts and Crafts Festival

Saturday, August 26 – 10 AM to 3 PM @ Mabee Farm; \$5
We're bringing together the very best of the Capital Region's handcrafted goods! Join us as over 40 artists and crafters fill Mabee Farm with eclectic, unique, and beautifully handcrafted items including jewelry, soap, pottery, wood carvings, textiles, and more!

Secret Stockade: Historic Tour & Lunch

Wednesday, September 6 – 11 AM @ 32 Washington Ave; \$20, pre-registration required

A walking tour of the Stockade, a peek inside a private 1820s house, a visit to our History Museum, and lunch at Arthur's Market.

Howlin' at the Moon with Washington County Line Bluegrass

Wednesday, September 6 – 7 PM @ Mabee Farm; \$5
Great Americana tunes guaranteed. Refreshments -- including beer and wine -- available.

Crafting your Family History with Susan Luccini

Saturday, September 9 - 2 PM @ 32 Washington Ave; \$5; Free for SCHS Members

Join us for a talk on writing and editing your family history and memoirs with Susan Luccini of SML Publishing.

BronxZoo Bus Trip

Tuesday, September 12 – 7:30 AM @ see website for details; \$85, pre-registration required

Get face to face with gorillas, marvel at the diversity of species, and discover a world of strange and unique wildlife. Fall is the best time to visit the Bronx Zoo, and with our bus trip, it couldn't be easier to get there! Join us for a day exploring one of the largest zoos in America, featuring over 4,000 animals!

Mabee Farm to Fork

Saturday, September 16 – 5 PM @ Mabee Farm; \$50, pre-registration required

Savor the harvest with us this season as we present Mabee Farm to Fork, a celebration of local foods! We're teaming up with the Electric City Food Co-op to bring our community an evening of local food tastings and live music inside our historic Dutch Barn. We are even sourcing some ingredients from Mabee Farm's own fields!

Stockade Walkabout

Saturday, September 23 – 11 AM to 5 PM @ 32 Washington Ave; \$20 advance, \$25 day of

Join us for the Stockade's signature event that invites you to explore the streets and private homes of New York State's first Historic District.

Rowing the River

Saturday, September 23 – 10 AM @ Mabee Farm; \$25 adults/\$15 kids; pre-registration required

Spend the day on the beautiful and historic Mohawk river as we retrace the path of America's first westward settlers. Led by some of our veteran crewmen, we'll row the 18th century reproduction bateaux on a 2 hour round trip tour of the Mohawk. Perfect for families! Please note, this activity is both weather dependent and involves sustained physical activity - please be prepared for both.



Fear and Hope in the First World War: the Diary of Dr. Frank Hurst

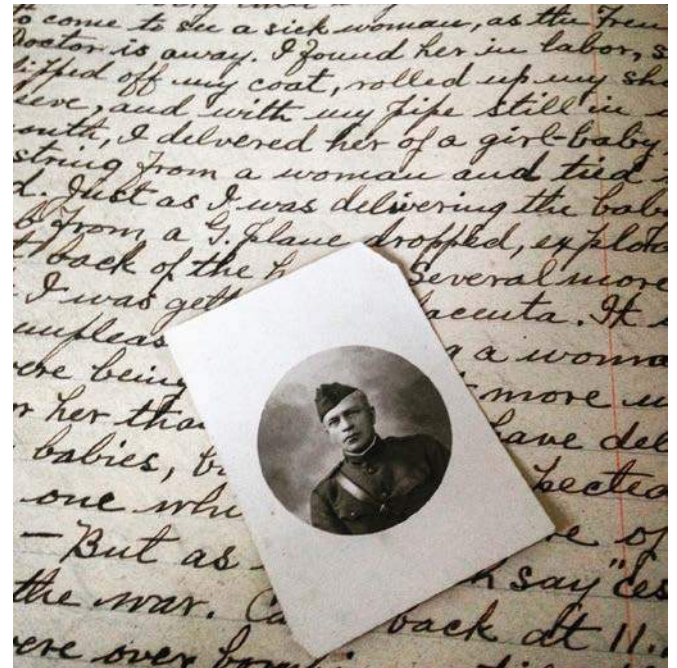
For many of us, thoughts of spring evoke vitality and the promise of growth, but in the spring of both 1917 and 1918, fear and concern clouded Americans' minds as loved ones fought overseas during the First World War. One Schenectadian, Dr. Frank Hurst, found himself in northeastern France, where as a medic he treated and healed people in the thick of war. Dr. Hurst kept a journal during his service in World War One, which today helps us step into the reality of an American medic and see World War One France through his eyes.

Danger surrounded soldiers on the European front, requiring constant vigilance and the ability to move at a moment's notice. As a medic, Dr. Hurst took the responsibility of his patients' safety into his hands, a responsibility that weighed heavily on his mind: "...as you sit waiting for the convoy to come for your patients, knowing if it does not succeed in getting in you are bound to face death from a bullet or shell, or escaping that, to be made a prisoner of war."

Dr. Hurst and other American soldiers confronted not only the incessant barrage from the skies but also the thoughts of "what ifs?" – equally daunting. These thoughts lingered in soldiers' and the French peoples' minds, for the French civilians faced the same bombs and gun fire as the soldiers sent to their defense.

Dr. Hurst discovered resilience within these French civilians caught in the crosshairs of war. He provided services for several French civilians with one in particular standing out: "It was very unpleasant delivering a woman as we were being bombed; but more unpleasant for her than for me... But as the French say 'C'est le guerre'[It is the war]." French civilians discovered war on their doorsteps and they could not just pause and restart their lives once the war concluded. They needed to find the strength to face the unexpected day by day.

The close contact with the locals in the French villages brought comfort to Dr. Hurst as he found himself away from his friends and loved ones in Schenectady. He frequently spent time in fellowship with the French in their homes, whether conversing, dining or playing cards with



Thank you to Dr. John Spring for loaning the diary to us for our exhibition, *Together Until the End: Schenectady in World War One*, on display at 32 Washington through November.

his hosts. Solace did not come easily during the war, but spending a few hours with the locals meant a small bit of normalcy for Dr. Hurst. His account of the war demonstrates that even in times of immense destruction, hope can be found if you are willing to search and fight for it.

Even though a collective memory of WWI in many ways no longer exists within American culture, Dr. Hurst's words allow us to retrieve fragments of it, transporting the reader into France one hundred years ago. We may not fully grasp the magnitude of fighting in a war, but we can understand the feelings of fear, comfort and simple joys which Dr. Hurst conveys through his experiences. His words highlight the humanity which war can often diminish; diminish but not conquer.

- Audrey Humphrey, Visitor Services Assistant

Bringing History to Life at the Mabee Farm

“I was so impressed. I never thought that a historical society could do programs like these.”

So spoke one of the parents from April's *Day on the Farm* program. She had watched with pride and amusement as her son and daughter, ages 7 and 10, planted their own veggies, threshed their own rye, and used flour that they milled themselves to bake a small loaf of bread. At the end of a three hour program, the reward for their efforts seemed small: a simple bread bun with freshly whipped butter. The kids, however, were thrilled.

“This is the best bread ever!” proclaimed one of our students. And while kids are prone to hyperbole, I think there's a clear lesson here. One of the most effective ways to present history is to live it.



Planting seeds at the Day on the Farm program, developed by Michael Diana. Mike is a former SCHS intern who just can't stay away from Mabee Farm! He rejoined us this spring to coordinate school and family programs. Photo credit @ Mary Zawacki.

As the coordinator for the 2017 spring school programs I've seen the power of interactivity time and time again. I make it a point to take surveys of the students as they're eating lunch, asking them which parts of the tour they liked best. The consistent favorites are making butter, visiting the blacksmith, and petting Yayah, our sheep. What's the common thread between these three parts of the school program? They're all compelling, multi-sensory demonstrations of history. I also ask the students one thing they've learned from their visit. The children rarely recall specific facts about the Mabee family or Dutch settlement in general. And, at the end of the day, I'm totally okay with that. Instead, they gush about the experiences they had with the forge, with butter, with the wool. I believe the most important lesson we can impart to children is that history can be fun and it *certainly* isn't confined to the past.

It was this principle that guided the design of this summer's Family Programs. We hope to make this the busiest and most heavily trafficked summer the SCHS has ever had. Each program is designed around a certain activity which will create a lasting memory for attendees of all ages. Highlights include bateaux tours on the Mohawk, blacksmithing and carpentry classes for kids, as well as baking and broom making. In addition to the very popular tea parties, we will be hosting evening campfires where we'll share local folktales and warm cider. By adopting more living history principles, the SCHS can greatly increase its relevance in the community and reach wider audiences than ever before.

- Michael Diana, Program Assistant (Education)

Past Exhibits and Programs in Photos:



Doll and Household Object Exhibit - 1949



First Stockade Walkabout - 1954



Dutch Festival - 1959



*Hanging Portrait of Mayor John I. DeGraff
1959*

Photos: Grems-Doolittle Library Collection.



*Planting the Star Magnolia Tree on Earth Day
1971*

Continued from page 1

The National Academy of Sciences Committee Members

The Committee chair was Nobel Laureate Dr. Arthur Compton from the University of Chicago. Compton was appointed by Vannevar Bush, President Roosevelt's science advisor. There was question whether it was feasible to produce a nuclear fission bomb in time to make a difference in World War II. The National Academy of Sciences, a most prestigious body, was ideally suited to be the final arbiter of such scientific questions and to appraise the military value of nuclear energy. The Committee, formed in April 1941, had met several times and had issued two previous reports. This was to be the last meeting and the final report of the Committee.



William C. Coolidge

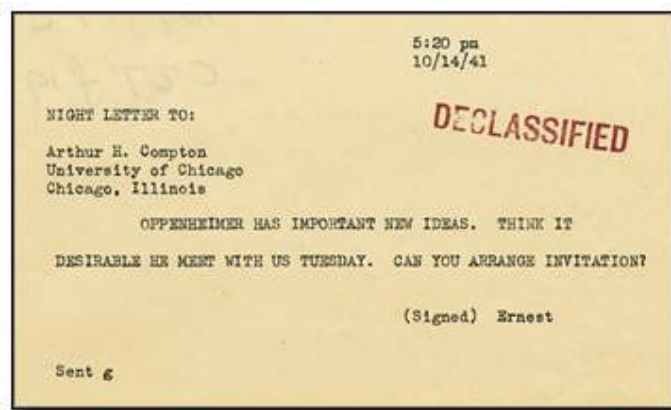
The vice-chair of the Committee was Dr. Coolidge, a physical chemist. Under Coolidge's leadership, GE had gained considerable experience in nuclear research. In fact, GE had expressed to Compton willingness to make a nuclear reactor for producing plutonium on an experimental basis. Prominent GE scientists included Dr. Kenneth H. Kingdon and Dr. Herbert C. Pollock, who both would go on to work for the Manhattan Project at the Berkeley Radiation Lab.

Arguably the most famous member of the Committee was University of California physicist Ernest Lawrence, recipient of the Nobel Prize for the invention and application of the cyclotron at his Berkeley Radiation Lab. On September 21, 1941, he was visited in Berkeley by British physicist Marc Oliphant who described promising research related

to the feasibility of making an atom bomb. (After his Berkeley meeting, Oliphant also visited Dr. Coolidge in Schenectady where he briefed him on the British research program). Britain, locked in a life and death struggle with Germany, desperately needed the U.S. to join the scientific race. Lawrence, convinced of the urgency of the task, brought his Berkeley colleague, theoretical physicist Robert Oppenheimer, into the Oliphant meeting with its secret revelations. Lawrence was apparently indiscreet in involving Oppenheimer because Oppenheimer did not have security clearance. Furthermore, Lawrence felt that the National Academy of Sciences Committee needed the expertise of somebody of Oppenheimer's caliber and prevailed upon chairman Compton to bring him to the Schenectady meeting as an "invited consultant."

Other members of the elite Committee included: G. B. Kistiakowsky, Harvard chemist and explosives expert; W. K. Lewis, MIT chemical engineer; R.G. Mulliken, University of Chicago chemist; J.C. Slater, MIT physicist; J.H. Van Vleck, Harvard physicist and future Nobel Laureate. Also added to the Committee were engineering experts O. E. Buckley, Bell Telephone Labs and L. W. Chubb, Westinghouse Electrical and Manufacturing.

Dr. Coolidge offered to accommodate everyone at the Mohawk Club on lower Union Street.



Telegram from Lawrence to Compton

The Committee Meeting and the Report

In light of the British progress in their atomic bomb program and other related developments in the U.S., the meeting of the National Academy Committee was called to determine the cost, development time, and potential destructiveness of an atomic bomb. The minutes of the meeting were taken by Lawrence and are archived at the U.C. Berkeley Bancroft Library.



GE nuclear scientists H.C. Pollock and K.H. Kingdon in lab, 1940.

The meeting exposed Oppenheimer for the first time to the latest research from U.S. and British scientists. His major contribution at the meeting was to estimate how much uranium -235 would be required to make the bomb. For the final report, he helped estimate the destructiveness of an atomic bomb explosion.

Much to the frustration of Compton and Lawrence, the engineers and chemists on the Committee refused to give an estimate of the cost and time necessary to process uranium and turn it into a bomb, the very purpose for which the meeting was called. There simply was not enough data. Therefore, Compton relied on his own rough estimate: 3 to 5 years and a total cost of several hundreds of millions of dollars. As it turned out, it took 3 years and eight months to detonate the first bomb (August, 1945). The final cost was \$1.5B but this involved using multiple methods of making fissionable material.

The Final Report, written over the next few weeks by Compton with input from Committee members and Oppenheimer, recommended that *full effort toward making atomic bombs is essential to the safety of the nation and of the free world... A fission bomb of superlatively destructive power will result from bringing together a sufficient mass of element U-235.* The Report was presented to Vannevar Bush on November 6 and to President Roosevelt on November 27. On December 7, 1941, Japan declared war on the United States. Germany followed suit on December 11.

Oppenheimer and his Legacy

The following year Robert Oppenheimer was chosen by General Leslie Groves (born in Albany), director of the Manhattan Project, to lead the extraordinary scientists and engineers of the Los Alamos Laboratory in the complex task of making the first atomic bomb. The stakes and time pressures were incredibly high. In many ways, Oppenheimer was an unusual choice. He had no management experience at all and he had been connected to persons in various left-wing groups deemed to be subversive. Nevertheless, Oppenheimer proved to be an excellent choice and deserved the accolade, Father of the Atomic Bomb. The meeting in Schenectady, mentioned prominently in many histories of the atomic bomb, was an important milestone in his personal story as well as the nation's quest for the atomic bomb.



GE Buildings 5 and 37, home to the R & D Center

Sources

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Richard Rhodes, *The Making of the Atomic Bomb*, New York, Simon and Schuster, 1987.

Voices of the Manhattan Project, *J. Robert Oppenheimer's Interview*, 1965,
<http://manhattanprojectvoices.org/oral-histories/j-robert-oppenheimers-interview>.

Our new Board Members:



Tom Dunn is principal for EdComm NY, creating communications solutions for the education community. He develops long-term communications strategy and also writes, produces and executes media content. Tom is an educator recently retired as Communications Director for the New York State Education Department. He has a BA in English from Hamilton College and a MS in Educational Communications from SUNY Albany.



John J. Woodward has served the last 23 years as Schenectady County Clerk. John was appointed to office by Governor Mario M. Cuomo in 1994 and is serving his 7th term. He recently was appointed by the Rotterdam Town Board as Town Historian where he will assist in the town's 200th anniversary celebration in 2020. John has also served as a member of the Board of Trustees of Schenectady County Community College; spent 3 terms on the Mohonasen Board of Education and was the Town of Rotterdam Receiver of Taxes from 1985-1994. He is a graduate of SUNY's Empire State College and is particularly interested in American history.

Volunteer Spotlight: Dave Connelly

Dave Connelly lights up when I mention beer.

"There's a big world of beer out there. Sometimes I brew my own," he tells me, before delving into the pros and cons of Schenectady's breweries. Libations come up as Dave and I chat about his time volunteering at SCHS. He's been leading tours of the Mabee Farm for two years, and recently started guiding visitors through the Stockade. Dave's still learning the history, and this autumn he hopes to add brewing and ghost tours to his repertoire. "I'm learning a lot," Dave explains. "I never was a history buff, but being able to research what I'm doing has created something new for me."

Born and raised in Schenectady, Dave came to SCHS to "fill the void" after retirement. His professional background is impressive: personnel security supervisor, technical writer, voice actor. Dave is also heavily involved in the Schenectady East Rotary and the local Ancient Order of Hibernians. One transferable skill from the AOH? His unmatched bartending talents. You'll find Dave out in the Mabee Farm pavilion tapping kegs and cracking jokes at our festivals.

Outside of SCHS, Dave spends time with his wife, Michol, their children and grandchildren, and a five-month old shih-tzu named Toby-Wan Kenobi. "I didn't think at this point in my life I'd be training a dog," Dave tells me. Jedi powers or not, Dave, we're excited to see Toby (and you!) out on the farm this summer!



- Mary Zawacki, Executive Director

Around the Society



L.-Congratulations to new Eagle Scouts Erik Tomlinson and Kyle Jerrold and thank you both for your enhancements to the Mabee Farm.

R.-Glenville Town Supervisor Christopher Koetzle congratulates Erik Tomlinson on his recent Eagle award.



L-r: Mike Diana, Program Assistant, Ron Kingsley, Archeologist, show Dr. Michael Lucas, Curator of Historical Archeology, NYS Museum one of our archeology records.



Woods and Water Day at the Mabee Farm



L-r: John Morrette, Deb Angilletta, Maureen Sausa, Tim Prendergast, artists - Four by Four Exhibit at the Mabee Farm.



Four by Four exhibit at the Franchere Center, Mabee Farm.

Photos: Ann Aronson



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Historic Stockade of Schenectady