



Schenectady County Historical Society

MUSEUM & LIBRARY 32 Washington Avenue, Schenectady NY 12305 / 518.374.0263
MABEE FARM HISTORIC SITE 1100 Main St, Rotterdam Junction, NY 12150 / 518.887.5073

NEWSLETTER October-November-December 2017 (V. 61, N. 10-11-12)

Schenectadyhistorical.org

William North Duane *1804-1871*

By James Strosberg



William Duane (1804-1871) comes from a very distinguished family of Americans dating back before the birth of our nation. His grandfather, James Duane was a representative from New York Colony to the Continental Congress in 1774 and a signer of the Articles of Confederation. He was also the first post-colonial Mayor of New York City appointed by Governor George Clinton, and the first Federal Judge of the District of New York appointed by President George Washington. William's mother and father also achieved notoriety during their lifetimes. His mother, Mary Livingston Duane, was actually the first dancing partner of George Washington at the first Inaugural Ball. His father James Chatham Duane was a member of the first graduating class of Columbia College whose other distinguished alumni included DeWitt Clinton and received his diploma from none other than President Washington. James became the first president of the Mohawk National Bank and was a Trustee of Union College for 38 years.

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HOURS

Library & Museum
Mon-Fri, 9-5 and Sat, 10-2

Mabee Farm
Tue-Sat, 10-4



President's Letter

There have been so many happenings at the Society since our last newsletter, only three months ago, that I can't think where to start!

First, fall has arrived, and with it our very popular candlelight tours will begin and run on several Friday nights in October. Be sure to sign up soon as they always fill up quickly. October is also genealogy month in the library. Librarian

Mike Maloney starts the month off with Lisa Dougherty's talk: "Understanding Your Ancestry DNA Test" on Saturday, Oct. 7 at 10AM. Following that Mike offers us a chance to research our local ancestors on Tuesday, Oct. 11, from 6PM-9PM, at "Night at the Library." Then Mike will lead us on a trip to the National Archives in NYC on Tuesday, Oct. 24, to do further research. Can't wait to follow the trail of those elusive ancestors!

Meanwhile, at the Mabee Farm the Fall Foliage Festival is free to all on Sunday, October 15, from 11AM-3PM. There will be music, hay and pony rides, birds of prey, a petting zoo, pumpkin painting, crafts, and more. Local food and drink will be offered for sale. All in all, a great opportunity to get out and enjoy the weather before November brings a sharp, cold drop in temperature and the inevitable four letter word: snow!

Before the snow flies, don't miss our new exhibit, "Beyond the Pines: Early Schenectady," opening this fall, complete with the unveiling of a very important and recently restored portrait from Schenectady's earliest times. Check our website for details - don't miss it!

Finally, don't miss the Festival of Trees this year, presented in partnership with the Schenectady YWCA. It will feature trees decorated by local clubs, schools, businesses, families and individuals. Consider decorating one yourself and get into the holiday spirit by sharing with the community. Coming in December, the Festival of Trees is the perfect way to celebrate the winter season!

Marianne

A poster for "A Night at the Library" event. The background is a dark, atmospheric image of a library interior with tall bookshelves and a wooden ladder leaning against them. The text is overlaid in a serif font.

**A Night at the
Library**

Wednesday, October 11
6-9pm

32 Washington Ave., Schenectady, NY 12305
Admission: \$5; Free for SCHS Members

Executive Director's Letter

Getting things ready for the fall issue of the SCHS newsletter I noted just how full things are looking. The programming calendar, for one. Our gardens, with pumpkins. And, most noticeably, the table at our weekly staff meetings.

Here's a behind-the-scenes secret about working at the SCHS: we meet each Wednesday as a team to strategize and devour breakfast. The weekly staff meeting has become a much-needed ritual. Our staff has grown this summer, alongside the number of historic properties we care for. So, to stay on track, and to catch up with colleagues, we sit down together and talk. And there's a few new people that have recently joined us.

I am excited to introduce to the SCHS membership Susanna Fout and Michael Diana, who both recently began working at SCHS as full-time employees. As Exhibitions and Collections Manager, Susanna will take over much of the curatorial duties at the Museum and Mabee Farm. Michael, our new Education and Programs manager is in charge of just that: creating vibrant programming that attracts diverse audiences to SCHS sites.



Michael grew up in Guilderland and has always felt at home in Schenectady. A graduate of Hamilton College with degrees in history and political science, Michael also studied abroad at University of Edinburgh. Michael began volunteering at SCHS in 2012, and has participated in SCHS programming in various ways since then. His curiosity for history leads him on many a modern adventure, camera always in hand. Looking forward, Michael is particularly excited to be working with our SCHS community of positive and knowledgeable people.



Susanna has been working in museums for the past eight years. After receiving a Bachelor's degree from SUNY Oneonta and completing a Master's at the University of St Andrews (Scotland), Susanna has worked in everything from a Colonial-Revival house museum, to a modern sports museum and an ethnic heritage museum. While her background is primarily in collections management and preservation, she considers exhibitions to be her passion. Originally from Plattsburgh, Susanna has spent the last few years in Boston. Though she will miss the hustle and bustle of the city, she is happy to be back in NY and is excited to be a part of this wonderful community. Her two St Bernards, Appa and Bertha, are

also happy to be near the mountains again so they can get back to what they do best- hiking!

Please stop by our sites this fall for one of our programs, and meet our new staff!

- Mary Zawacki

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.

- ***The Impact of the Glorious Revolution on Schenectady* by Mike Maloney – June 23, 2017**

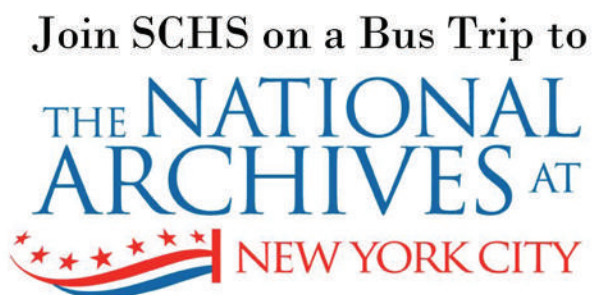
The political divisions in England during the late 1680s and the spread of Catholicism had a lasting effect on Schenectady. Find out what that effect was in this blog post.

- ***Schenectady's Colorful Canallers* by volunteer Diane Leone – July 7, 2017**

Library volunteer Diane Leone writes about some of the less savory aspects of the Erie Canal in Schenectady. Learn about brawls, boozing, bridges and bribery on the Canal in this blog post.

- ***The Mayor and the Aurora Borealis* by volunteer Bob Emery – August 2, 2017**

Volunteer Bob Emery has been transcribing Schenectady Mayor Samuel W. Jones' diary. Judging from his writings, his first passion was not politics, but astronomy. Instead of being filled with lurid political intrigue from Schenectady's City Hall, his diary has vivid descriptions of the "brilliant display of the aurora borealis."



Tuesday, October 24; \$65

Tickets at www.schenectadyhistorical.org/bustrip
Limit of 45 people for NARA Tour and Workshop

OCTOBER IS ARCHIVES AND FAMILY HISTORY MONTH!

Over at the Grems-Doolittle Library, we love everything about October. What's there not to love? There's peak leaf peeping, sweater weather, apple everything, pumpkin everything, and of course Family History and American Archives Month!

October is the best month to get started on your family's genealogy and our library is a great starting point. Whether you're just beginning, or have already done some research, the Grems-Doolittle Library has many resources to help you dig into your family's past. October also brings a few library programs that focus on genealogy and archives.

On **Saturday, October 7th at 10AM**, local genealogist Lisa Dougherty will be speaking about her experiences with the increasingly popular Ancestry DNA tests with ***Understanding your Ancestry DNA Test***. Lisa's talk will guide you through the steps of getting your DNA test and explain how to interpret those results. This will be a can't-miss program for anyone interested in DNA and genealogy.

Have you been trying to make it to the library, but find our 9-5 schedule conflicting with work or other obligations? Then join us on **Wednesday, October 11 from 6PM-8PM** to visit the **Library after hours**. Our librarian will give a presentation on ***Finding Your Schenectady County Ancestor*** starting at 6PM and will open up the library afterwards. Space is limited for library research, but if there's enough interest we may schedule another one. Call our librarian at 518-374-0263 ext 3 or email at librarian@schenectadyhistorical.org to sign up. Admission is \$5, free for SCHS members.

Our final genealogy and archives related event of the month will be a **bus trip to the National Archives and Records Administration in New York City on Tuesday, October 24th**. The trip includes a tour of NARA as well as a workshop where you will be introduced to their collections. The bus will depart from in front of the First Reformed Church at 7:30AM and will arrive back in Schenectady around 8:30PM.

Get a full itinerary and reserve a spot at <http://schenectadyhistorical.org/bustrip/>. The price for this trip is \$65.

Donations to the Historical Society & Mabee Farm June 2017 – August 2017

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Thank you for your continued support of the Society

Your generous gifts enable the Schenectady County Historical Society to tell the story of Schenectady through preservation and development of our historic sites and to educate the next generation about our history and its place in the growth of America. Your donations support our mission to share stories, inspire dialogue, and encourage understanding of the history, people, and cultures of Schenectady County. The Schenectady County Historical Society strengthens our community and is an increasingly vital destination and resource for those who wish to explore history.

As a member and supporter, you can now take advantage of a convenient and meaningful way to make a monthly contribution. Automatic donations by credit card or PayPal provide the Society with a regular stream of income and the flexibility to adjust to sudden economic changes without the loss of programs. And for some of us, it is easier to make small, monthly gifts rather than larger, one time gifts. Will you consider joining our monthly giving program at whatever level you are comfortable with?

I would like to make a MONTHLY GIFT OF:

\$5/month \$10/month \$15/month \$25/month Other \$____/month (Please circle)

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For PayPal, go to our website: www.schenectadyhistorical.org, click Donate

**Mail to: Schenectady County Historical Society, 32 Washington Avenue, Schenectady, NY 12305
OR call 518-374-0263 Ext 5.**

EXHIBITS and PROGRAMS

For more information or to purchase tickets please visit schenectadyhistorical.org. Programs are \$5 and free for members, unless otherwise noted.

On Exhibit at 32 Washington Avenue:

NEW: Festival of Trees

December 1 – December 17

Celebrate the season as we fill our galleries with lighted fir trees! Decorated from classic to kooky Christmas styles, the trees glow with the enchantment of the holidays. Join us for a shimmering, festive season.

NEW: Beyond the Pines: Early Schenectady

Opening this fall

By popular demand, we're adding a gallery focused entirely on early Schenectady: its founding, its people, and the world they inhabited. Join us this fall to explore how Schenectady was formed, and what life was like in early Schenectady.

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 reshaped, completely.

On Exhibit at Franchere Education Center:

NEW: Life on the Canal Then by Artists Now

Opens October 15

An exhibition of artwork by 17 contemporary artists curated by Virginia Creighton.

NEW: In Harm's Way: Community Responses to Hurricane Irene and Tropical Storm Lee

Opens October 28

A partnership with the New York Folklore Society, this timely exhibition explores local responses to hurricanes, the devastating impact natural disasters have on communities, and the resiliency of our neighbors.

Program Calendar:

Secret Stockade: A Historic Tour & Lunch

Wednesday, October 4 – 11:00 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 Dyer Switch

Wednesday, October 4 – 7 PM @ Mabee Farm; \$5

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

Family Program: A Day on the Farm

Saturday, October 7 – 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 during harvest season.

Understanding Your Ancestry DNA Test with Lisa Dougherty

Saturday, October 7 – 10 AM @ 32 Washington

Learn how to make the most of your DNA test and join professional genealogist Lisa Dougherty for an informative session that will guide you through the fundamentals of DNA tests. Topics covered will include DNA basics, interpreting ethnicity estimates, dealing with all those cousin matches, and incorporating the results into your genealogy research.

Power of Song Concert, Hosted by Sonny Ochs

Sunday, October 8 – 2 PM @ Mabee Farm; \$10

Join us for an afternoon of music as we celebrate the power of song. Reggie Harris and Charlie King -- with host Sonny Ochs -- will take the stage in Mabee Farm's Dutch Barn for gutsy, rocking topical songs that show just how strong the power of song truly is!

Schenectady in WWI with Dr. Jim Strosberg

Tuesday, October 10 – 6:30 PM @ 32 Washington Ave

World War I changed our world entirely and redefined modernity. Now, 100 years later, Dr. Jim Strosberg has delved deeply into local resources, exploring the Great War's effect on Schenectady and its people.

A Night at the Library

Wednesday, October 11 – 6-9 PM @ 32 Washington Ave
Ever wanted to do some research at the Schenectady County Historical Society, but just couldn't find a convenient time to visit us? Then this may be the program for you! Join us starting at 6 PM for "Finding Your Schenectady County Ancestor" presented by our librarian/archivist, then stay late for your own research projects. *Please register in advance if you plan to research!*

Votes for Women Discussion Group with Dr. Andrea Foroughi

Thursday, October 12 – 6:30 PM @ 32 Washington Ave; free, pre-registration required
A reading and discussion group focused on women's suffrage, and led by Union College Professor Andrea Foroughi. This group will meet for five additional Thursdays following the initial discussion. Please contact director@schenectadyhistorical.org for more information, or to register. *Sponsored by Humanities New York.*

Candlelight Walking Tours

Friday, October 13 – 7 & 7:30 PM @ 32 Washington Ave; \$12, pre-registration required
Join us as we explore the historic Stockade after dark and discover the neighborhood's haunting past! Tickets include refreshments and live music after the tour.

Fall Foliage Festival at Mabee Farm

Sunday, October 15 – 11 AM to 3 PM @ Mabee Farm; free
A celebration of all things fall! Join us for a FREE community festival featuring live music, hayrides, pony rides, petting zoo and more!

Candlelight Walking Tours

Friday, October 20 – 7 & 7:30 PM @ 32 Washington Ave; \$12, pre-registration required
Join us as we explore the historic Stockade after dark and discover the neighborhood's haunting past! Tickets include refreshments and live music after the tour.

A Spirit of Sacrifice: New York in the First World War with Aaron Noble, NYS Museum Curator

Saturday, October 21 – 2 PM @ 32 Washington Ave
Aaron Noble, curator of the NYS Museum's exhibition on WW1, will discuss the critical role New York State and its citizens played during World War I. Both on the battlefield and on the home front, through industrial production as well as civic participation and debate, New Yorkers had a significant impact on the shaping of these events. By the end of the war, the Empire State would lead in the number of soldiers, tonnage of supplies, and money raised to support America's efforts.

Bus Trip to the National Archives at NYC

Tuesday, October 24 – 7:30 AM @ see website for details; \$65, pre-registration required
With historically significant records of Federal agencies and courts in NY, NJ, Puerto Rico, the National Archives at New York City (NARA) is a great place to visit for genealogy research. With this bus trip, you will receive a tour of the National Archives at NYC as well as an orientation workshop to help get you started. Please contact librarian@schenectadyhistorical.org for more information or to register.

The Capital District Jewish Community and WWI with Professor Harvey Strum

Thursday, October 26 – 7 PM @ 32 Washington Ave
Join us for a talk discussing the impact of WWI on the Jewish communities of the Capital District, including war relief campaigns, the growth of Zionism and Americanism, and changes in the Jewish community.

Candlelight Walking Tours

Friday, October 27 – 7 & 7:30 PM @ 32 Washington Ave; \$12, pre-registration required
Join us as we explore the historic Stockade after dark and discover the neighborhood's haunting past! Tickets include refreshments and live music after the tour.

WORKSHOP: Beaded Wall Basket

Saturday, October 28 – 8:30 AM @ Mabee Farm; \$85 + \$30 materials fee, pre-registration required
Weave a basket with great appeal and eclectic design. Hang this beauty on your front porch for mail, in your bathroom for hand towels, or, well you get the idea!

Exhibition Opening Reception for In Harm's Way

Saturday, October 28 – 2 PM @ Mabee Farm
Join us for small bites and drinks as we celebrate the opening of Mabee Farm's new exhibition, developed in partnership with the New York Folklore Society.

An Introduction to the Tarot

Monday, October 30 – 7 PM @ The Brouwer House, 14 N Church St, Schenectady; \$50
Embrace the esoteric and join us inside one of Schenectady's oldest homes as instructor Jeannie Thomma introduces us to the Tarot. We'll discuss the history of Tarot, try a few exercises and discover how the ancient cards can inspire self-reflection.

WORKSHOP: Heart Basket

Saturday, November 4 – 8:30 AM @ Mabee Farm; \$85 + \$25 materials fee, pre-registration required
Weave a sweet, cleverly woven basket that can be finished with a wrapped reed handle or a pop of color with sturdy Shaker Tape. Students will be able to play with color and pattern to personalize their own basket. Just in time to decorate your door for the holidays!

Howlin' at the Moon with Banjo Bob and the Crabgrass Boys

Sunday, November 5 – 7 PM @ Mabee Farm; \$5
Great Americana tunes guaranteed. Refreshments -- including beer and wine -- served.

WORKSHOP: Double Shuttle Basket

Saturdays, November 11 & 18 – 8:30 AM @ Mabee Farm; \$170 + \$45 materials fee, pre-registration required
Weave a multi-level basket that traces its roots to early America. Originally designed for holding shuttles for the loom weaving trade, some were woven with additional “pockets” attached to the main baskets. Students will have an opportunity to add dyed reed for patterning or finish simply with wood stain.

Night of Lights and Festival of Trees Sneak Preview

Friday, December 1 – 7 PM @ 32 Washington Ave; \$15
Our Festival of Trees is back, lighting up Schenectady! This year, we're kicking off the season with the Night of Lights, a special evening of radiant fir trees, live music, great food & cocktails and more.

Festival of Trees

Saturday, December 2 through Sunday, December 17
10 AM to 5 PM @ 32 Washington Ave; \$6, under 12 free
Celebrate the season as we fill our galleries with lighted fir trees! Decorated from classic to kooky Christmas styles, the trees glow with the enchantment of the holidays. Join us for a shimmering, festive season.

An American Girl Tea with Samantha Parkington

Saturday, December 9 – 2 PM @ 32 Washington Ave; \$8
Join us for an extra special American Girl Tea as we celebrate the season. Step back in time to explore Victorian holiday traditions, while enjoying tea and goodies and making a Christmas tree craft. All dolls are welcome! Pre-registration required.

Howlin' at the Moon with TBD

Tuesday, January 2 – 7 PM @ Mabee Farm; \$5
Great Americana tunes guaranteed. Refreshments -- including beer and wine -- served.

A vertical poster for the Festival of Trees. The top section has a black background with white text: "SCHENECTADY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY AND YWCA", "FESTIVAL OF TREES" (with "OF" in script), "DECEMBER 1 TO DECEMBER 17", and "SCHENECTADYHISTORICAL.ORG". Below this is a silhouette of a winter village with houses, a church, and trees. The middle section has a white background with black text: "AT 32 AND 44 WASHINGTON AVE. SCHENECTADY", "\$6 ADULTS • UNDER 12 FREE", and "DAILY: 10AM - 5PM". The bottom section has a gold background with black text: "OPENS WITH THE NIGHT OF LIGHTS SOIREE" and "DEC 1 AT 7PM • \$15 WITH FOOD, MUSIC, COCKTAILS".

SCHENECTADY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY AND YWCA

FESTIVAL OF TREES

DECEMBER 1 TO DECEMBER 17
SCHENECTADYHISTORICAL.ORG

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DEC 1 AT 7PM • \$15 WITH FOOD, MUSIC, COCKTAILS

The Mabee Farm to Fork



Photograph by Mary Zawacki



Farmer John with Assemblyman Angelo Santabarbara. Photograph by William Wolfram

It's tempting to think of the Mabee Farm as just a *historic* site- a glimpse into a time and lifestyle long past. While visitors to our site are almost always impressed by our history, I fear that all too often they leave without realizing how the skills and techniques of yesterday can be applied to today. Indeed, the Mabee Farm is a living, working site- every year its fields yield hundreds of pounds of fresh produce. The culmination of this year's harvest was September's Farm to Fork, the second such event produced through a partnership with the Electric City Food Coop.

At face value, the event was a beautiful fundraiser. The Nielsen Barn was bedecked in full rustic splendor. Lights twinkled from its ancient beams, its tables draped in crisp clean linens and live music filtered in through the barn doors. Children frolicked in the lawn while adults flocked to the fields. Dinner was served in three courses and featured food grown locally, much of it taken directly from our site. Rye grown and threshed here made for lovely loaves of bread while pumpkins and eggs raised here provided a delicious dessert of custard. Chicken, potatoes and mixed greens prepared by the expert chefs of the food coop proved a hit with the more than 70 guests who joined us that evening. The diligent service of SCHS volunteers ensured the evening ran as smoothly as could be.

But one person's contributions stood out. That of course, is our very own farmer-in-chief John Ackner who almost single-handedly continues the legacy of farming on the Mabee's old farmstead. Farmer John has done this for years, though until now his work has perhaps not received the recognition it deserves. That Saturday, however, there was recognition aplenty as Farmer John became the very first recipient of the Schenectady Farm and Food Award. Going forward, this new award will encourage and celebrate those who support the local farm-to-fork movement: bringing healthy, sustainable and delicious food to the people of our county.

This has long been the goal of the Electric City Food Coop while the SCHS, in my opinion, is well equipped to do the same. Programs and tours at the Mabee Farm have underutilized the farm itself as a place of learning. Schenectady County has more than three and a half centuries of agricultural history. The Mabees were there for nearly all of that and make excellent examples for inspiring future generations. While this year's Farm to Fork event was a great place to start, we can do more to show that the farming techniques of yore can be both fun and practical. Learning *about* the Mabees is interesting but learning *from* them can be delicious.

- Michael Diana,
Programs & Education Manager

New Library Research Article Series - *The GE Research and Development Center: Stories of Innovation from the Front Line*



The Schenectady County Historical Society presents an ongoing series of articles written by GE Research and Development Center scientists and engineers who helped pioneer some of the remarkable innovations which changed the course of the 20th century and whose impact continues to be felt in the 21st. The series, *The GE Research and Development Center: Stories of Innovation from the Front Line*, can be found on our website at <http://schenectadyhistorical.org/library/the-ge-research-and-development-center-stories-of-innovation-from-the-front-line/>.

The series is spearheaded by Walter L. Robb, Director of the Center from 1986 - 1992. Walt initiated the series in a SCHS Newsletter article (V, 61, Jan. – Mar., 2017) entitled *X-Ray Machines, CT Scanners, MRIs: The Pivotal Role of the GE Research and Development Center*, and is reproduced as part of this series at <http://schenectadyhistorical.org/admin/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Walter-L.-Robb.pdf>

Contributors to the Library Research Article series are:

Kirby Vosburgh, PhD, [*How GE Research Developed MRI \(Magnetic Resonance Imaging\) - Guided Surgery*](#)

Dale M. Brown, PhD, [*Silicon to Silicon Carbide Electronics - 50 Years of Progress*](#)

Martin A. Strosberg, [*Oppenheimer and the A-Bomb: An Historic Meeting in Schenectady*](#)

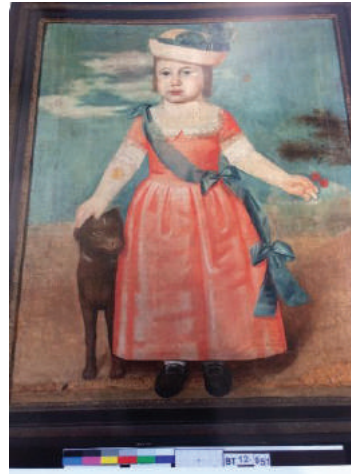
New contributions by former GE scientists and engineers will be posted periodically.

The *Portrait of a Boy* Returns Home

Before the camera, artists were the eyes of historians, capturing details about our past that could never be explained in words. Historians rely on documents and objects to tell a story and use artwork to create a visual image of what our world looked like. Historical portraiture is often an overlooked genre of art because it can be hard for viewers to connect to the unknown figures in paintings. But in using portraits, historians can combine their knowledge from other resources to paint a broader picture of history, helping others to connect more deeply to our past.

In 2009, SCHS received an important collection from the Van Der Volgen family, including two portraits which had been in the family for over 300 years. The portraits *Lauren Claese Van Der Volgen* and *Portrait of a Boy*, help to tell the story of that family. Much has been written about Schenectady history, but not many know what our founders looked like. As human beings, we associate emotion with images and can better connect to a time or place through visual imagery. Laurens Van Der Volgen was a legendary interpreter between the Native Americans and Schenectady's colonists. As a young boy, Laurens was taken captive by Native Americans during the burning of the Schenectady in 1690. He lived with his captives for almost 10 years, learning the language and adapting to their culture. When he returned to Schenectady, he used his knowledge of both communities to bridge the gap between these two peoples. Viewing his portrait makes his life story more poignant and helps us relate to his challenges.

Though the child in *Portrait of a Boy* remains a mystery, he is still as important as his storied ancestor. Only twenty one portraits of early Schenectadians are known to have survived, many of which are in other collections. This portrait is one of the few depictions remaining in Schenectady of an 18th century resident, and the only known portrait of a child. The painting features a young boy, wearing a traditional frock, standing somberly with his left hand on the head of a dog. For wealthy families, portraiture reflected the wealth and status of that family and portraits were passed down through generations as a sign of accumulated wealth. So surely this young child must be a descendent of



Laurens Claese Van Der Volgen, but *who is he?*

There are several clues we can use to determine the identity of the child. By comparing the style of the portrait to other identified works, art historians have attributed the portrait to John

Heaton, a prominent painter in the Hudson Valley region who worked during the early – mid 1700s. We can further date the painting by looking at the style of clothing. Though the boy's dress may seem peculiar to the modern viewer, during the 1700s it was common for young children of both sexes to wear dresses, or frocks. Using these clues, we can determine the young boy to be one of Van Der Volgen's three sons. Because portraits were reserved only for those deemed important enough, and since no other portraits of Van Der Volgen's other ten children exist, the painting is thought to be a portrait of Van Der Volgen's first son, also named Laurens.

SCHS recently worked with the Williamstown Art Conservation Center to conserve and reframe this important piece. This autumn will mark the first time *Portrait of a Boy* has ever been on display. The portrait will be featured in our upcoming exhibition "Beyond the Pines."

By preserving portraits, we can help people today create meaningful connections with the past. The region's early colonial history is highly popular for our visitors, yet we have few artifacts that represent this time period, and even fewer images of the people who lived during this era. As a result, this sole painting of a child is of vital significance, and is a cornerstone of our collection. By showing our visitors a rare example of how people looked and dressed, we can inspire them to dig deeper into history, and develop a keener understanding of local history.

- Susanna Fout and Audrey Humphrey

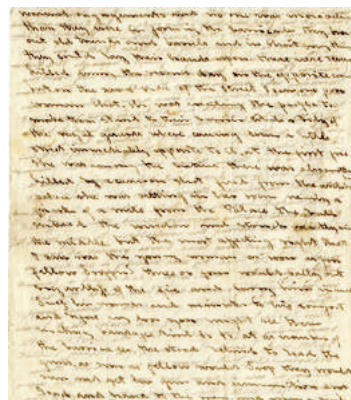
Continued from page 1

William's nephew, General James Chatham Duane II, was a graduate of both Union College and West Point. General Duane was a Civil War hero who later became Chief of Engineers of the United State Army.

William N Duane (1804-1871) had a lot to live up to and he certainly did. After graduating Union College in 1824 he attended Fairfield Medical School in Herkimer County. This eminent institution played a key role in early American medical education from the time it opened in 1812 as the 11th medical school in the country. It closed in 1840 after graduating over 600 physicians. Its graduates became teachers at 18 other medical schools.

After finishing Fairfield, William moved to New York City for more training and graduated Columbia University Medical School. After graduating from Columbia, like over 15,000 other 19th Century physicians (including several from Schenectady), William moved to Europe for even more training. In Paris, there were three large teaching hospitals each with over 1,000 beds, where professors conducted daily bedside teaching rounds attending by medical students and physicians from around the world. A doctor could experience more "pathology" in a few months of making rounds in Paris then he would see in his entire professional lifetime back home. Another advantage of France was the opportunity to treat female patients and perform pelvic exams.

Aside from training and developing his skills as a physician William also was involved in one of the biggest events of the 19th century. William was present on the barricades in Paris during the July Revolution of 1830 and in a letter written to his sister vividly describes the battle in graphic detail and refutes the rumor that he was killed in the fighting. The original document was uncovered by local historian John Gearing in the archives of the Historical Society and is available for reading in the Grems-Doolittle Library.



Upon his return from France, William began a very successful professional career in Schenectady although little is known about his private medical practice. Ellis Hospital didn't open until 15 years

after Duane's death and there are few records on file to review. He maintained his home and office in the Romeyn House at 41 Union Street. This large house could accommodate Duane's extended family which included his wife's niece, his brother John (an attorney), his brother-in-law and sister-in-law, occasionally his son Walton, and 4 servants. The 1860 Census valued the house at \$20,000. In addition, William maintained a summer home "the Gingerbread House" on Balltown Road near the present location of the Korean Methodist Church.

In addition to his medical practice William was very active in local civic affairs. He was elected Treasurer of the Schenectady County Medical Society in 1838 and served as vestryman for St. George's Episcopal Church from 1863-1871. He was a Founder of the Schenectady County Reference Library in 1845 and the Schenectady County Agricultural Society and a Commissioner for Schenectady Common Schools.

Although little was known of his private practice we do know of at least one very famous patient of Dr. Duane and that information comes from the diary of that famous patient. In August 1843 the Hon. John Quincy Adams, Congressman from Massachusetts and 6th President of the United States (1825-1829), was returning home to Boston from a trip to Canada and western New York. He stayed overnight in Utica where he gave a speech at the dedication of a women's seminary.

The Mayor of Schenectady and the Common Council invited Adams to our city and appropriated funds for a welcoming reception and dinner in his honor. A delegation was sent to Utica to accompany the former president here. At Adams's request, his train stopped in Amsterdam so he could tour the home of Sir William Johnson. Upon arriving in Schenectady, Adams was welcomed by ringing church bells and the sound of artillery cannon. He was escorted by mounted guards to the Temperance House on State Street for the dinner.

John Quincy Adams suffered from chronically inflamed eyes. In 1815 while serving as Ambassador to England, his eyes swelled completely shut. A physician applied leeches which gave him relief. On occasion, he had to be confined to a dark room with severe eye pain, unable to read or write. It is easy to understand the angst and anguish President Adams suffered which he recorded in his own diary:

About an hour before we reached Schenectady, the wind raised by the rapid motion of the car lodged on the ball of my left eye, beneath the under lid, a small sharp-angled pebble, of the entrance of which I was not conscious when it happened, but which fretted the eye to torture, produced considerable inflammation, and made it impossible for me to look in the face of those whom I was to address. A sumptuous dinner had been prepared for us at Schenectady. was in anguish unutterable. I retired to a private chamber and washed the eye in cold water without relief. Dr. Duane, who had observed my suffering, followed me to the chamber, examined the eye, discovered the offensive pebble, wiped it out with the corner of a towel, and I was well.

Thanks to the speedy and effective treatment by Dr. Duane, President Adams presumably enjoyed both his dinner and the speech, which was given from Prof. Thomas C Reed, Union College Professor of Political Economy and Intellectual Philosophy and Latin, who happened to be Dr. Duane's brother-in-law!

After dinner, Adams was taken to the Young Men's Association to socialize with some of the prominent local men and women from the city and then put on a train to Albany. There were three trains daily between Albany and Schenectady at that time.

Unfortunately, Duane and Adams also shared family histories rife with cases of both mental illness and alcoholism. Duane's brother in-law Thomas Reed was fired from the Union College faculty in 1851 for alcoholism and spent a year in the State Lunatic Asylum in Utica. Upon release, Reed founded a boys school in Geneva, NY with the help of a \$1000 loan from Union College President Elipheht Nott. Nott apparently was a big believer in giving people second chances. Duane's only child Walton Duane was somewhat of a disappointment to the family. Walton attended Geneva Medical College and may have practiced with his father for a brief period. He suffered from alcoholism and depression. He deserted his wife and three children and was declared incompetent by a court in Michigan, where he worked as a plumber. He had at least 2 hospital admissions to the State Lunatic Asylum in Utica, (the same institution where his Uncle Thomas Reed was treated) and died there in 1880 at age 44.

Ironically Dr. Duane's patient John Quincy Adams also experienced sorrow with two of his offspring. His older sons also suffered from alcoholism and died at ages of 28 and 31, one by suicide. However, his youngest son Charles Francis Adams Sr. (1807-1886) represented Massachusetts in Congress, served as President Lincoln's Ambassador to England during the Civil War, and was candidate for Vice-President for Martin Van Buren on the Free Soil party in 1848.

Sadly, for Dr. Duane and his wife, they never had any other children to redeem the family name following Walton's problems. However, everything that William accomplished in his amazing lifetime earned him a prominent place in the history of Schenectady and New York State.

A Conversation with John McEncroe

A 1917 Gazette article titled *When Streets Were Lanes* called Schenectadian John McEncroe “one of the most interesting men in Schenectady and at all times a delightful conversationalist.” The article reports Mr. McEncroe’s recollections of his life in Schenectady with much of the focus on Jay Street before it became a cross-town thoroughfare. McEncroe, who was born in 1833, started his apprenticeship as a mason and bricklayer in 1852.



Jay street from the 1850 Dripps Map of Schenectady

his childhood (probably 1830s-1840s). This is seen in the 1850 Dripps map of Schenectady and while you can see some development towards North Jay, there was not much development closer to State Street. He remembered that the corner of Jay and Franklin (currently City Hall) was a lumber yard and much of the land between Jay and Clinton was a dump.

McEncroe also remembers a bit of controversy regarding an organ being placed in First Presbyterian. Scotsman Judge McQueen was greatly opposed to the organ as it “was directly contrary to his established religious ideas.” McQueen refused to go to 1st Pres and decided to build his own personal church for his family on Jay Street.

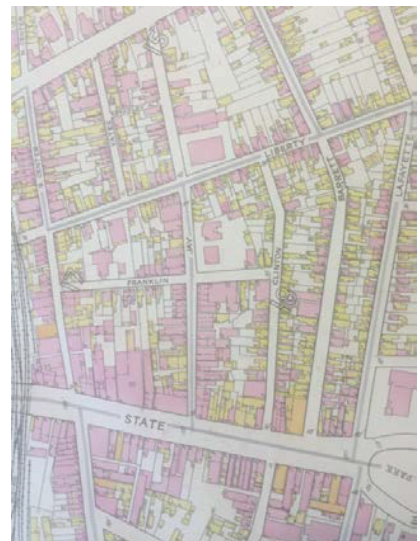
Besides his recollections of Jay Street, McEncroe was alive to see Maiden Lane (currently Broadway) as a lane used to drive cows to and from the poor pasture. McEncroe’s reminiscences give an interesting view of Schenectady as it developed from a small city with cow paths running through it to an industrial center with a population of almost 90,000 in 1917.

-Michael Maloney

McEncroe would often visit John Swits’ tannery on Jay Street where he would buy cow hair to make mortar. Swits’ tannery had a sign in front of the shop which read “Mason’s hair for sale.” McEncroe tells a story about meeting Peter Doty outside of Swits’ tannery. Doty was prominent in the Masonic Order, and coincidentally, completely bald. One day when McEncroe passed Doty in front of Swits’ tannery, he stopped and said to Doty, “Well, Pete, I know now where John Swits gets his masons’ hair.”

McEncroe’s work as a contractor in Schenectady led him to many places where tanneries had been located. As he was excavating, he would sometimes find vats and other traces of former tanneries including one on Washington Avenue which may have been the first in the area, and one on Lafayette where First Methodist now stands.

As for his memories of Jay Street, Mr. McEncroe states that there were “very few buildings” on the street during



The same area in the 1920s

Around the Society



Front stair repair at 32 Washington Ave.



Albany Symphony Orchestra at the Mabee Farm



Mabee Farm - Arts and Crafts Festival



Al Ferradino giving a tour of the White House



Fall Harvest – Mabee Farm

Photos: Ann Aronson, John Ackner, Nancy Wasmund



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