DeWitt Disses Dorp, Dorp Disses da Ditch

James M. Strosberg

The Erie Canal officially opened at 9:00 AM October 26, 1825 when Governor DeWitt Clinton embarked from Buffalo on the Seneca Chief pulled by four matching and decorated grey horses. Along the route, each city, town, and village paid tribute to the individual who was most responsible for this great engineering feat, which was about to geographically unite the young nation. The voyage eastwards was a well-deserved and continuous celebration with fireworks, parades, ox roasts, bands, illuminated balloons, cannon shots, and musketry.

But not in Schenectady. When the flotilla arrived here on November 1 at 3:00 PM the weather was gloomy and the guests were met with complete silence from the local spectators. Clinton and his Lt. Governor along with General Lafayette were escorted to a local hotel for dinner and returned to the Seneca Chief within the hour. They promptly continued their journey east to Albany where they were met by Chief Justice John Marshall and Secretary of State Henry Clay. This historic first passage through Schenectady was not even noted in the local newspapers, Schenectady Cabinet and Mohawk Sentinel. So why the hard feelings?

Continued on pages 8-9
Summer is in full swing at the Society with a new exhibit, “A Night on the Town in Schenectady 1850-1950: One Hundred Years of Fashion and Frivolity,” will be sure to put you in the summer party frame of mind! Also putting a skip in our step, the Grems-Doolittle Library is once again open full days, 9 to 5, Monday through Friday, thanks to the arrival of our new librarian, Mike Maloney. Summer means family fun outdoors, and for that we have the Canal Fest on July 25th.

Summertime tradition demands a stroll on the lawn under the trees at the Arts and Crafts Show, August 15, and would also not be complete without music in the barn or on the lawn at the Howlin’ series, July 2, July 31, and August 27. Ah, summertime!

The Education Program at the Mabee Farm Historic Site has hosted over 2200 students this spring, offering them a chance to explore what it was like to live and work on a farm in the eighteenth century. Our dedicated educators continue to make this possible each year, and we are very grateful to them. Assisting them are our summer interns, Lauren Souther and Josh Hoh, who seem to find ways to present the information so that it is fresh and exciting. Welcome Lauren and Josh!

Have a wonderful summer, make time for some fun and relax

-Marianne

Josh, a native of Albany, NY, is particularly interested in “the behind-the-scenes aspects of museum work, particularly special events and collections management.” He adds, “the Local Eats exhibit sounds cool, so I’m excited for that too!”

Lauren comes to SCHS from Louisiana by way of North Carolina, and is adjusting to life in New York. “I wanted hands-on experience, and I was looking for a place outside of Appalachia,” she says of the SCHS internship opportunity. Artifacts and education are Lauren’s main interests, and she particularly enjoys working with Mabee Farm’s fourth graders: “I think that’s a perfect age—not too young, not too old. I learn from them and they learn from me, so it’s a reciprocal relationship.” Going forward Lauren hopes to boost her skills in PastPerfect and gain more confidence as an emerging museum professional.

Next time you’re out at the Farm, or touring the History Museum, be sure to say hello to Lauren and Josh!

Mary Zawacki
Volunteer Spotlight: Donna Santora

If you’ve been to 32 Washington Avenue lately on a Tuesday afternoon, you may have been greeted by Donna Santora, a volunteer with the Historical Society since May 2014. Donna grew up in Schenectady and after adventuring around the country for several decades, returned to the area in 2006. Donna brings a positive energy to the museum every time she arrives and has an unequaled enthusiasm for Schenectady. She has served as a docent for the downtown museum, volunteered at special events, and helped organize the Festival of Trees. Most recently, Donna has been doing research for the newest exhibit, “A Night on the Town 1850-1950: One Hundred Years of Fashion & Frivolity.”

What Donna loves most about Schenectady is the history. As a former 7th grade history teacher, she was especially interested in the role Schenectady played in the founding of America. Donna’s favorite part about growing up in Schenectady was her school experience, which inspired her to teach. She has wonderful memories of Pleasant Valley Grammar School, McKinley Middle School, and Mont Pleasant High School. Donna says, “the teachers were wonderful and dedicated, and they inspired me to become a better person. They were not only teachers, but mentors, and provided a mental compass to live by.”

Donna thoroughly enjoys working as a volunteer and describes the SCHS as “a wonderful organization that does a lot for Schenectady.” She says, “I wish more people knew about it! Schenectady is not just a sleepy town but a place with a history to be proud of.” Donna says she likes giving back to her community and doing something productive and meaningful.

Not only is Donna a hard working volunteer, she has also become famous. She was recently interviewed for a documentary on downtown Schenectady by SUNY Albany film students and has even received fan mail at the museum’s address. We are thankful Donna is part of our volunteer community!

Kaitlin Morton-Bentley

Donations to the Historical Society & Mabee Farm:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual/Group</th>
<th>Individual/Group</th>
<th>Individual/Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>William Bronk</td>
<td>John &amp; Lucy Halstead</td>
<td>Elizabeth Pieper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joan Wemple Burns</td>
<td>Randall Karl</td>
<td>Kathleen Secker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandra Mabee Caldeira</td>
<td>Kevin Kesby</td>
<td>Ken Simpson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert Carney &amp; Janine Kava</td>
<td>Michael Kokernak</td>
<td>Patricia Somerscales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles Currey</td>
<td>Livio &amp; Carolina Lazzari</td>
<td>St. Gabriel's Women's Club</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gail Denison</td>
<td>Dominick &amp; Christine Macherone</td>
<td>Fred &amp; Virginia Thompson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ellen Pladger &amp; Arden Rauch</td>
<td>Brian Maybee</td>
<td>Lois Troup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christina Friskey-Davies</td>
<td>Barbara Palmer</td>
<td>Victorian Social Club</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Memory of Merritt Glennon:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual/Group</th>
<th>Individual/Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ruth Bergeron</td>
<td>Jennifer Halcomb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florence Bigelow</td>
<td>Paul &amp; Mary Lou Harris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David &amp; Marianne Blanchard</td>
<td>Katherine Hummelt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard &amp; Marian Clowe</td>
<td>Livio &amp; Carolina Lazzari</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beverly &amp; David Cornelius</td>
<td>Carol V. Lewis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert &amp; Marcia Drake</td>
<td>Alexandra Lombardi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James &amp; Ann Egnor</td>
<td>Bernice Lukas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don &amp; Ann Flaws</td>
<td>Gerald &amp; Lynda Lukas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dianne J. Gade</td>
<td>Everett &amp; Margaret Rau</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please consider the value of using your credit card for one-time or monthly contributions; less paper and bookkeeping for you, neatly itemized transactions on the year-end summary reduce your tax preparation time and fewer trees are felled!

To donate please complete and mail the authorization below or for inquiries and assistance, call 518-374-0263, option 5, or email office@schenectadyhistorical.org.

Your generosity and support is greatly appreciated and essential to the continuing success of the Society. Thank you!

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: ____________________________
GE Employee/Retiree (Yes/No) ____________________________

Monthly Contribution Amount: $15 $25 $50 $75 other $______
Month to Start: ____________________________
(Will be billed the 15th) or
One-Time Contribution: $25 $50 $75 $100 other $______

Signature: ______________________________________

In honor of ______________________________________

Three generations of Santoras working at General Electric in 1952. Donna’s father, John Edward Santora, is on the far right.
Mabee Farm School Program

What do you get when you combine a 300 year old farm, butter makers, a blacksmith, Native American history, colonial militia, and a snowy sheep named YaYah with a group of excited fourth and fifth graders? The answer is the Mabee Farm School Program.

The program, now in its fourteenth year, has grown from a handful of schools and a few hundred students to the 2015 version where we have educated over 2000 students from over twenty local elementary schools.

The current program was designed by Educator Jenna Peterson Riley, blacksmith John Ackner, wool and spinning expert Pam Bucci with input from both teachers and students. One young girl commented on how excited she was to be standing on the same floor that the Mabee kids stood on over 300 years ago. A young boy wrote that he had wanted to be a pilot when he grew up, but now wanted to be a blacksmith because they are “wicked cool.” YaYah and Pam are so popular that they could have a fan club in the area, and the butter making continues to be a favorite with students, teachers, and chaperones. A sure sign of the program’s success is that many of the kids have returned to the farm with their parents and relatives for our special events.

Speaking as a volunteer educator, I assure you that the school program is as popular with us as it is with the kids and is something that I eagerly look forward to every spring.

John Angilletta

In addition to touring the original Mabee home, the children learn how to churn butter, card and spin wool, and even see nails being made in the blacksmith shop. They are also taught about Native American life in colonial times as well as how the colonial militia operated.

The reaction to the program has been overwhelmingly positive as evidenced by the positive feedback from students during the tours and the letters sent to our Educator from both teachers and students. One young girl commented on how excited she was to be standing on the same floor that the Mabee kids stood on over 300 years ago. A young boy wrote that he had wanted to be a pilot when he grew up, but now wanted to be a blacksmith because they are “wicked cool.” YaYah and Pam are so popular that they could have a fan club in the area, and the butter making continues to be a favorite with students, teachers, and chaperones. A sure sign of the program’s success is that many of the kids have returned to the farm with their parents and relatives for our special events.

Speaking as a volunteer educator, I assure you that the school program is as popular with us as it is with the kids and is something that I eagerly look forward to every spring.

John Angilletta

The original route of the canal had been planned to be close to the Mohawk River transversing what was then downtown Schenectady, passing between the Binnenkil and Washington Ave. In fact, the ditch was already being dug near the Mohawk. But unfortunately at that very time the Canal Commission along with the Chief Engineer were on an inspection trip the Mohawk flooded and overflowed into the ditch of the future canal. Because of this, the route was relocated eastward to (present day Erie Boulevard), which was then in the outskirts of the city. This change infuriated the merchants of the business district who now were unable to take financial advantage of the location of their warehouses and stores.

Adding fuel to the fire, the commissioners and the engineer spent that night at the Givens Hotel which was located adjacent to the re-routed canal near State Street, the present Erie Boulevard. The owner, Mr. Resolved Givens, was an advocate for the canal to be located near his hotel and was ecstatic that the Mohawk had flooded when it did. Mr. Givens and his hotel prospered while Schenectady businesses near the original site slumped.

The Schenectady Cabinet Editorial on Dec. 14, 1825 stated “the completion of the Eastern section of the canal struck a deathblow to the ...interests of this place.”

In conclusion, Dewitt’s Dis of Dorp Didn’t make a Difference, and neither Did Dorp’s Dis of Da Ditch.


Primary Sources are the Schenectady Cabinet and the diaries of DeWitt Clinton and Thomas Eddy. The Eddy diary is at the New York Public Library.
Continued from p1
In 1810 the New York State Legislature appointed a commission to travel through the Mohawk Valley and report on the potential for building a canal. In addition to Clinton, the commission members included well known landowners Stephen Van Rensselaer and Gouverneur Morris and Company Treasurer Thomas Eddy among others. The Mohawk River already had improvements such as locks and wing dams (through which boats could be towed or poled by men) made by the Eastern Inland Lock and Navigation Company. Durham boats, which were manufactured in Schenectady, could carry up to 20 tons of cargo and were propelled by oars and sails.

The commissioners were stranded in Schenectady on July 4 1810 waiting for their itineraries to be prepared for their voyage west on the Mohawk. Clinton wrote in his diary about “...the dullness of this place. Imagine yourself in a large county village, without any particular acquaintance, destitute of books and you will appreciate our situation. Schenectady, although dignified with the name of a city, does little business... It does not appear pleasant, and we endeavored to fill up the gloomy interval between this time and our departure.”

Clinton’s observations in his diary are surprising. “Old Dorp” was not as dreary as he implied. The Schenectady Bookstore had the latest from New York and Philadelphia on law, physics, history, divinity and classics as well as the new musical treatise “Music Student’s Assistant”. And the same store offered writing paper, water colors and India ink. Or he could have borrowed some books from William M’Cartee’s circulating library on State Street. For his trip west he could have ordered a new suit of clothes from R.Cooke, Merchant Tailor, and some boots and a belt from Henry Teller’s New Leather Store on Church Street. He could have purchased supplies from C. Groot, Dry Goods, and nails manufactured in Schenectady to make any repairs on his boat.

DeWitt could have deposited his money in the Mohawk Bank chartered by New York State in 1807 - (at that time New York City could boast of only two chartered banks.) And for entertainment he could have attended the reception for boarding students at the Schenectady Female Seminary or watched the drill of the Horse Cavalry Militia. If he became ill there were 34 physicians who in June of that year formed the Schenectady County Medical Society. If he died he could have been buried from any of four Protestant churches. And then there was Union College founded in 1795 at which DeWitt would deliver a 30 page lecture to the Alpha Chapter of the Phi Beta Kappa Society in 1823.

It is most surprising that a man who ran for Mayor of New York City, Governor of New York State, and President of the United States (he lost to James Madison) would find himself “without any particular acquaintance”. There were several hundred potential voters, and this seasoned politician surely was experienced in greeting strangers.

Commissioner Thomas Eddy also kept a diary and agreed with DeWitt. “We unanimously resolved that (Schenectady) was the most dull and inanimate place we had visited.” However he goes on to write that after the women and children swept the streets clean with brooms, the DUTCHMEN formed a procession and a (July 4) oration was given followed by military maneuvers. Thereafter a large number of citizens accompanied the Commissioners to the wharf to see them off with three cheers.

Although DeWitt’s (1810) diary definitely disses Dorp, the Schenectadians of 1825 had no access to his writing. There are at least two other possible explanations for the rude behavior of our historical ancestors.

New Materials in the Library

BOOKS

Memoirs of an American Lady by Anne MacVicar Grant, gift of Martha Leonard
The Spirit of New York: Defining Events in the Empire State’s History by Bruce Dearstyn
A Fitting Memorial: The Epic Lives of Leland and Jane Stanford and the Founding of Stanford University by Garrett Hermanson
500 War-Time Saving Secrets by the Diamond Crystal Salt Company and General Foods Company
Santa Claus the Dutch Way by the Albany Hague Holland

DOCUMENTS AND PHOTOGRAPHS

500 Recipes and Food Facts by the New York Herald Tribune Institute, gift of Adrienne Moore
Genealogical Material and Chart relating to the Leavitt family gift of Joan Spicer
Schenectady Postcards gift of Paul Brisson
S&H Green Stamp Book with Stamps
Papers of Edward Chesnel gift of Sharon Urban Various Photographs of Schenectady gift of Bill Buell
F.C. Ham Radio Card gift of Alvin Schaut

YEARBOOKS

A correction to the March/April Newsletter: Mont Pleasant High School (1963, 1964) was a gift of Linda Rolfe, not Anne Christian.

The Blog is Back!
After a brief hiatus, the Grems-Doolittle Library Blog is up and running. See the latest posts at http://www.gremsdoolittlelibrary.blogspot.com/ and “like” the Schenectady County Historical Society Facebook page for more updates.

Captain William Horsfall

Back in April 2015, the Downtown Schenectady Improvement Corporation put out a call for nominations for an event they were organizing called the Hometown Heroes Banner Program. This program honors veterans and active duty service persons from Schenectady by installing banners of veterans and active duty servicepersons along the city’s streets. These banners are a great addition to downtown and a map showing the banners, along with short biographies of each serviceperson or veteran can be found on the Downtown Schenectady Improvement Corporation’s website.

The Schenectady County Historical Society decided to nominate Captain William Horsfall for the program. At the outbreak of the Civil War, William enlisted in the service of the Union in what would become Company E of the 18th New York Volunteer Infantry.

William initially received commission as a first lieutenant, but was quickly promoted to regimental quartermaster. In December of 1861, he became Captain of Company E. Led by Captain Horsfall, Company E would fight in many key battles of the Civil War.

During the fighting at Crampton’s Gap, the 18th Regiment drove Confederate forces from their defenses. After capturing a Confederate artillery battery, Captain Horsfall was shot and killed instantly. His body was returned to Schenectady and he was buried in Vale Cemetery. After the war, members of Company E honored their captain’s memory by naming the local chapter of the Grand Army of the Republic the “Horsfall Post.” Captain Horsfall’s banner can be seen on the corner of Liberty and Franklin Street, right near City Hall.

Michael Maloney
Exhibits and Programs

For more information or to learn more about other upcoming exhibits and programs, please check our website, www.schenectadymuseum.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
A Night on the Town in Schenectady 1850-1950: 100 Years of Fashion and Frivolity Through 2016
From the Victorian Age through World War II, Schenectady was the place to be. Hotels, theaters, and restaurants downtown were frequented by socialites wearing the latest fashions. This exhibit showcases evening gowns from our collection and explores the nightlife of yore.

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

Hops & Hogsheads: Beer from Colonial to Craft Brew
Now at 32 Washington Avenue
This exhibit explores the impact beer has had in the area from the early Dutch settlers and winding through history to today’s two Schenectady County breweries.

On Exhibit at Franchere Education Center
unLocked: Discovering the Erie Canal in Schenectady
Opening July 25 during the Mabee Farm CanalFest
Once America’s great route west, the Erie Canal today is a place of recreation, exploration, and sometimes neglect. Through photographs new and old, “unLocked” captures the mystery and beauty of the Erie Canal in Schenectady.

#schenectadyoosnuck
Opening Thursday, September 10 at 5:30 p.m.
See Schenectady come to life through the lens of the popular local Instagram account @schenectadyoosnuck. Join us at the opening for a one-night installation in the Dutch barn before the exhibit moves to the Van Schaick gallery.

**It Came from Schenectady: Science Fiction & the Capital Region**
Through September
Discover the inspiration behind creations of local science fiction innovators, including Kurt Vonnegut, P. Schuyler Miller, and Glendaora. Journey through time and space as we explore the legacy of science fiction in Schenectady County!

**Witness to Assassination: President Lincoln and the Schenectady Connection**
Through July 31
A bandage soaked in President Lincoln’s blood. Ink blots in the diary of Charles Lewis, telling of the fatal moment at Ford’s Theatre. These and other artifacts capture the shock and sadness of America in April 1865, and reveal Schenectady’s connection to the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln.

Program Calendar
Wednesday, July 1 – 7:00 – 9:00 p.m. Howlin’ at the Moon Concert
Performers: Running the River
Location: Mabee Farm
Cost: $5.00
Join us for a great evening of toe-tapping music with John & Orion Kribs and featuring Howlin’ regulars Running the River inside of our historic 1760s Dutch Barn!

Saturday, July 11 – 10:00 a.m.
History of Schenectady Faith: Walking Tour of the Stockade
Location: 32 Washington Avenue
Cost: $5.00
This walking tour will discuss the historic importance of religion in the Stockade and will include stops at Stockade churches. The tour meets at the Schenectady County Historical Society. Join us afterwards for a visit to the Schenectady History Museum.

American Girl Doll Tea with Caroline Abbott
Location: Mabee Farm
Cost: $5.00
Caroline Abbott grew up on Lake Ontario during the 1800s and 1912. Enjoy iced tea, goodnies, and a craft while learning about life on a farm, traveling by water, and take a look at our historic Mohawk bateau. Each child should bring an adult, and dolls are welcome too! Pre-registration is required.

Saturday, July 25 – 11:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.
Mabee Farm CanalFest
Location: Mabee Farm
Cost: FREE!
Discover the impact the Erie Canal has had on our region’s culture and heritage and explore the recreational opportunities along the Canalway today. There will be storytelling, canal-themed crafts, blacksmithing and cooking demonstrations and the exhibit “unlocked.” Our Mohawk River bateau will also be on site! The Mabee Farm CanalFest is sponsored in part by the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, the NYS Canal Corporation, Stewart’s Shops, and Bath Fitter.

Friday, July 31 – 7:00 – 9:00 p.m.
Howlin’ at the Moon Concert
Performers: The Nellies
Location: Mabee Farm
Cost: $5.00
We’re bringing The Nellies back to the Howlin’ stage for July’s special Blue Moon Howlin’ concert. It will be a great night with great music, so make sure you come by!

Saturday, August 1 – 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.
Make Your Own Comic Book Workshop
Location: Mabee Farm
Cost: $10.00
Love superheroes? Here is your chance to create one of your own. Register for our workshop and learn the basics of drawing your own character, as well as the building blocks of creating your own story. After the workshop, stop by our exhibit “It Came From Schenectady: Science Fiction and the Capital Region.” Children are welcome with adult company. Pre-registration is required.

Saturday, August 21
– 9:00 p.m.
Howlin’ at the Moon Concert
Performers: Everest Rising
Location: Mabee Farm
Cost: $5.00
It will be a special night in the 1760’s Dutch barn as we’re joined by Howlin’ veterans Everest Rising. Come by for a great night of music in a beautiful historic setting!

Saturday, August 29 – 2:00 – 4:00 p.m.
Pelts & Prosperity: Schenectady’s Fur Merchants, 1730-1776
Speaker: Nolan Cool
Location: Mabee Farm
Join Utica College senior Nolan Cool for a presentation of his senior thesis. Several Schenectady residents bartered in furs during the 18th century. However, only an elite class of merchants prospered from their involvement in the trade. Learn more about how businessmen adopted and adapted their economic position to find success in the fur trade from New York’s western frontier.

Thursday, September 10 – 5:30 – 7:30 p.m.
#schenectadyoosnuck Exhibit Opening
Location: Mabee Farm
Join us in the Dutch Barn for a one-night showcase of the exhibit before it moves to the Franchere Center. Sponsored in part by Cabot Creamery.

Saturday, September 12 – 9:45 a.m. – 9:15 p.m.
Bus Trip to Old Sturbridge Village
Location: Departs from 32 Washington Avenue
Cost: $75.00
Hop aboard our coach and travel in style with SCHS to Old Sturbridge Village for a private, guided tour with a costumed interpreter. Afterwards, grab a bite to eat, explore the Village’s antique buildings, mills, heirloom gardens, heritage breed animals, working farm, and vibrant exhibitions, and enjoy New England in the late summer! Pre-registration is required.

* = Part of our Exploring Schenectady County’s Immigrant Past project, made possible by grants from the New York Council for the Humanities and the Schenectady County Initiative Program.
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) 374-6763 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
A Night on the Town in Schenectady 1850-1950: 100 Years of Fashion and Frivolity Through 2016
From the Victorian Age through World War II, Schenectady was the place to be. Hotels, theaters, and restaurants downtown were frequented by socialites wearing the latest fashions. This exhibit showcases evening gowns from our collection and explores the nightlife of yore.

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

Hops & Hogheads: Beer from Colonial to Craft Brew
Now at 32 Washington Avenue
This exhibit explores the impact beer has had in the area from the early Dutch settlers, and winding through history to today’s two Schenectady County breweries.

On Exhibit at Franchere Education Center
unLocked: Discovering the Erie Canal in Schenectady
Opening July 25 during the Mabee Farm CanalFest
Once America’s great route west, the Erie Canal today is a place of recreation, exploration, and sometimes neglect. Through photographs new and old, “unLocked” captures the mystery and beauty of the Erie Canal in Schenectady.

#schenectadydoesntsuck
Opening Thursday, September 10 at 5:30 p.m.
See Schenectady come to life through the lens of the popular local Instagram account @schenectadydoesntsuck. Join us at the opening for a one-night installation in the Dutch barn before the exhibit moves to the Van Schaick gallery.

It Came from Schenectady: Science Fiction & the Capital Region
Through September
Discover the inspiration behind creations of local science fiction innovators, including Kurt Vonnegut, P. Schuyler Miller, and Glendora. Journey through time and space as we explore the legacy of science fiction in Schenectady County!

Witness to Assassination: President Lincoln and the Schenectady Connection
Through July 31
A bandage soaked in President Lincoln’s blood. Ink blots in the diary of Charles Lewis, telling of the fatal moment at Ford’s Theatre. These and other artifacts capture the shock and sadness of America’s bloodiest day. The exhibit explores the history of Schenectady’s connection to the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln.

Program Calendar
Wednesday, July 1 – 7:00 – 9:00 p.m.
Howlin’ at the Moon Concert
Performers: Running the River
Location: Mabee Farm
Cost: $5.00
Join us for a great evening of toe-tapping music with John & Orion Kribs and featuring Howlin’ regulars Running the River inside of our historic 1760’s Dutch Barn!

Saturday, July 11 – 10:00 a.m.
History of Schenectady Faith: Walking Tour of the Stockade
Location: 32 Washington Avenue
Cost: $5.00
This walking tour will discuss the historic importance of religion in the Stockade and will include stops at Stockade churches. The tour meets at the Schenectady County Historical Society. Join us afterwards for a visit to the Schenectady History Museum.

Wednesday, July 22 – 2:00 p.m.
Wednesday, July 22 – 2:00 p.m.
American Girl Doll Tea with Caroline Abbott
Location: Mabee Farm Cost: $5.00
Caroline Abbott grew up on Lake Ontario during the War of 1812. Enjoy iced tea, goodies, and a craft while learning about life on a farm, traveling by water, and take a look at our historic Mohawk bateaux. Each child should bring an adult, and dolls are welcome too! Pre-registration is required.

Saturday, July 25 – 11:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.
Mabee Farm CanalFest
Location: Mabee Farm
Cost: FREE!
Discover the impact the Erie Canal has had on our region’s culture and heritage and explore the recreational opportunities along the Canailey today. There will be storytelling, canal-themed crafts, blacksmithing and cooking demonstrations, and the exhibit “unLocked.” Our Mohawk River bateaux will also be on site! The Mabee Farm CanalFest is sponsored in part by the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, the NYS Canal Corporation, Stewart’s Shops, and Bath Fitter.

Friday, July 31 – 7:00 – 9:00 p.m.
Howlin’ at the Moon Concert
Performers: The Nellies
Location: Mabee Farm
Cost: $5.00
We’re bringing The Nellies back to the Howlin’ stage for July’s special Blue Moon Howlin’ concert. It will be a great night with great music, so make sure you come by!

Saturday, August 1 – 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.
Make Your Own Comic Book Workshop
Location: Mabee Farm
Cost: $10.00
Love superheroes? Here is your chance to create one of your own. Register for our workshop and learn the basics of drawing your own character, as well as the building blocks of creating your own story. After the workshop, stop by our exhibit “It Came From Schenectady: Science Fiction and the Capital Region.” Children are welcome with adult company. Pre-registration is required.

Saturday, August 21 – 10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.
12th Annual Arts & Crafts Festival
Location: Mabee Farm
Cost: $5.00 for adults, free for students & children

 Wednesday, July 22 – 2:00 p.m.
American Girl Doll Tea with Caroline Abbott
Location: Mabee Farm Cost: $5.00
Caroline Abbott grew up on Lake Ontario during the War of 1812. Enjoy iced tea, goodies, and a craft while learning about life on a farm, traveling by water, and take a look at our historic Mohawk bateaux. Each child should bring an adult, and dolls are welcome too! Pre-registration is required.

Saturday, July 25 – 11:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.
Mabee Farm CanalFest
Location: Mabee Farm
Cost: FREE!
Discover the impact the Erie Canal has had on our region’s culture and heritage and explore the recreational opportunities along the Canailey today. There will be storytelling, canal-themed crafts, blacksmithing and cooking demonstrations, and the exhibit “unLocked.” Our Mohawk River bateaux will also be on site! The Mabee Farm CanalFest is sponsored in part by the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, the NYS Canal Corporation, Stewart’s Shops, and Bath Fitter.

Friday, July 31 – 7:00 – 9:00 p.m.
Howlin’ at the Moon Concert
Performers: The Nellies
Location: Mabee Farm
Cost: $5.00
We’re bringing The Nellies back to the Howlin’ stage for July’s special Blue Moon Howlin’ concert. It will be a great night with great music, so make sure you come by!

Saturday, August 1 – 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.
Make Your Own Comic Book Workshop
Location: Mabee Farm
Cost: $10.00
Love superheroes? Here is your chance to create one of your own. Register for our workshop and learn the basics of drawing your own character, as well as the building blocks of creating your own story. After the workshop, stop by our exhibit “It Came From Schenectady: Science Fiction and the Capital Region.” Children are welcome with adult company. Pre-registration is required.

Saturday, August 21 – 10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.
12th Annual Arts & Crafts Festival
Location: Mabee Farm
Cost: $5.00 for adults, free for students & children

Featuring the best in regional arts and crafts, the festival includes handmade pottery, wood crafting, handwovens, candles, jewelry, fine arts, painted furniture, and much more.

Thursday, August 27 – 7:00 – 9:00 p.m.
Howlin’ at the Moon Concert
Performers: Everest Rising
Location: Mabee Farm
Cost: $5.00
It will be a special night in the 1760’s Dutch barn as we’re joined by Howlin’ veterans Everest Rising. Come by for a great night of music in a beautiful historic setting!

Saturday, August 29 – 2:00 – 4:00pm
Pelts & Prosperity: Schenectady’s Fur Merchants, 1730-1776
Speaker: Nolan Cool
Location: Mabee Farm
Join Utica College senior Nolan Cool for a presentation of his senior thesis. Several Schenectady residents bartered in furs during the 18th century. However, only an elite class of merchants prospered from their involvement in the trade. Learn more about how businessmen adopted and adapted their economic position to find success in the fur trade from New York’s western frontier.

Thursday, September 10 – 5:30 – 7:30 p.m.
#schenectadydoesntsuck Exhibit Opening
Location: Mabee Farm
Join us in the Dutch Barn for a one-night showcase of the exhibit before it moves to the Franchere Center. Sponsored in part by Cabot Creamery.

Saturday, September 12 – 7:30 a.m. – 9:15 p.m.
Bus Trip to Old Starbridge Village
Location: Departs from 32 Washington Avenue
Cost: $75.00
Hop aboard our coach and travel in style with SCHS to Old Starbridge Village for a privately guided tour with a costumed interpreter. Afterwards, grab a bite to eat, explore the Village’s antique buildings, mills, heirloom gardens, heritage breed animals, working farm, and vibrant exhibitions, and enjoy New England in the late summer! Pre-registration is required.

* = Part of our Exploring Schenectady County’s Immigrant Past project, made possible by grants from the New York Council for the Humanities and the Schenectady County Initiative Program.
In 1810 the New York State Legislature appointed a commission to travel through the Mohawk Valley and report on the potential for building a canal. In addition to Clinton, the commission members included well known landowners Stephen Van Rensselaer and Gouverneur Morris and Eastern Inland Lock and Navigation Company Treasurer Thomas Eddy among others. The Mohawk River already had improvements such as locks and wing dams (through which boats could be towed or poled by men) made by the Navigation Company. Durham boats, which were manufactured in Schenectady, could carry up to 20 tons of cargo and were propelled by oars and sails.

The commissioners were stranded in Schenectady on July 4 1810 waiting for their itineraries to be prepared for their voyage west on the Mohawk. Clinton wrote in his diary about “...the dullness of this place. Imagine yourself in a large county village, without any particular acquaintance, destitute of books and you will appreciate our situation. Schenectady, although dignified with the name of a city, does little business....it does not appear pleasing, and we endeavored to fill up the gloomy interval between this time and our departure.”

Clinton’s observations in his diary are surprising. “Old Dorp” was not as dreary as he implied. The Schenectady Bookstore had the latest from New York and Philadelphia on law, physics, history, divinity, and classics as well as the new musical treatise “Music Student’s Assistant.” And the same addition to Clinton, the commission members found the latest from New York Herald Tribune Institute, gift of Adrienne Moore. Genealogical Material and Chart relating to the Leavitt family gift of Joan Spicer. Schenectady Postcards gift of Paul Brison. S&H Green Stamp Book with Stamps. Papers of Edward Chesnol gift of Sharon Urban. Various Photographs of Schenectady gift of Bill Buell. F.C.C. Ham Radio Card gift of Alvin Schaut.

YEARSBOOKS
A correction to the March/April Newsletter: Mont Pleasant High School (1963, 1964) was a gift of Linda Rolfe, not Anne Christian.

New Materials in the Library

BOOKS

DOCUMENTS AND PHOTOGRAPHS

The Blog is Back!
After a brief hiatus, the Grem's-Doolittle Library Blog is up and running. See the latest posts at http://www.gremsdoolittlelibrary.blogspot.com/!

Captain William Horsfall
Back in April 2015, the Downtown Schenectady Improvement Corporation put out a call for nominations for an event they were organizing called the Hometown Heroes Banner Program. This program honors veterans and active duty service persons from Schenectady by installing banners of veterans and active duty servicepersons along the city’s streets. These banners are a great addition to downtown and a map showing the banners, along with short biographies of each serviceperson or veteran can be found on the Downtown Schenectady Improvement Corporation’s website.

The Schenectady County Historical Society decided to nominate Captain William Horsfall for the program. At the outbreak of the Civil War, William enlisted in the service of the Union in which would become Company E of the 18th New York Volunteer Infantry.

William initially received commission as a first lieutenant, but was quickly promoted to regimental quartermaster. In December of 1861, he became Captain of Company E. Led by Captain Horsfall, Company E would fight in many key battles of the Civil War.

During the fighting at Crampton’s Gap, the 18th Regiment, drove Confederate forces from their defenses. After capturing a Confederate artillery battery, Captain Horsfall was shot and killed instantly. His body was returned to Schenectady and he was buried in Vale Cemetery. After the war, members of Company E honored their captain’s memory by placing the local chapter of the Grand Army of the Republic the “Horsfall Post”. Captain Horsfall’s banner can be seen on the corner of Liberty and Franklin Street, right near City Hall.

Michael Maloney
Mabee Farm School Program

What do you get when you combine a 300 year old farm, butter makers, a blacksmith, Native American history, colonial militia, and a sassy sheep named YaYah with a group of excited fourth and fifth graders? The answer is the Mabee Farm School Program.

The program, now in its fourteenth year, has grown from a handful of schools and a few hundred students to the 2015 version where we have educated over 2000 students from over twenty local elementary schools.

In addition to touring the original Mabee home, the children learn how to churn butter, card and spin wool, and even see nails being made in the blacksmith shop. They are also taught about Native American life in colonial times as well as how the colonial militia operated.

The reaction to the program has been overwhelmingly positive as evidenced by the positive feedback from students during the tours and the letters sent to our Educator from both teachers and students. One young girl commented on how excited she was to be standing on the same floor that the Mabee kids stood on over 300 years ago. A young boy wrote that he had wanted to be a pilot when he grew up, but now wanted to be a blacksmith because they are “wicked cool”. YaYah and Pam are so popular that they could have a fan club in the area, and the butter making continues to be a favorite with students, teachers and chaperones. A sure sign of the program’s success is that many of the kids have returned to the farm with their parents and relatives for our special events.

Speaking as a volunteer educator, I assure you that the school program is as popular with us as it is with the kids and is something that I eagerly look forward to every spring.

John Angilletta

The original route of the canal had been planned to be close to the Mohawk River transversing what was then downtown Schenectady, passing between the Binnenkill and Washington Ave. In fact, the ditch was already being dug near the Mohawk. But unfortunately, at the very time the Canal Commission along with the Chief Engineer were on an inspection trip, the Mohawk flooded and overflowed into the ditch of the future canal. Because of this, the route was relocated eastward to (present day Erie Boulevard), which was then in the outskirts of the city. This change infuriated the merchants of the business district who now were unable to take financial advantage of the location of their warehouses and stores.

Adding fuel to the fire, the commissioners and the engineer spent that night at the Givens Hotel which was located adjacent to the re-routed canal near State Street, the present Erie Boulevard. The owner, Mr. Resolved Givens, was an advocate for the canal to be located near his hotel and was ecstatic that the Mohawk had flooded when it did. Mr. Givens and his hotel prospered while Schenectady businesses near the original site slumped.

The Schenectady Cabinet Editorial on Dec. 14, 1825 stated “the completion of the Eastern section of the canal struck a deathblow to the ...interests of this place.”

Those originally opposed to the canal could not deny the success of the canal. And they tried to use it to their advantage claiming (with some validity) that there would be so many canal boats that the traffic would jam. At a December 1825 meeting, they petitioned the State to improve navigation on the Mohawk with multiple dams and locks of 3 feet height over the rapids until Utica. Thus there would be no need for additional bridges or tow paths. The boats could be sailed or even powered by steam. The western canal thawed in the spring about the same time as the Mohawk. However, a large traffic jam would occur near Utica because the eastern canal would still be frozen. If the canal boats could navigate into the Mohawk at Utica, traffic would arrive about three weeks earlier.

Another reason for Schenectadians’ hostility to the canal was that compensation to local landowners whose property was taken by the State of New York had not yet occurred at the time of the canal opening. A meeting of landowners was held at Veder’s Coffee Shop, and a resolution was passed accusing the commissioners of violating the 5th Amendment to the US Constitution by taking land without payment. There was even talk of seizing the canal and collecting tolls.

However, within a short time businesses started making money and everyone was appeased. After the canal began operation, within four miles of Schenectady there were 20 mills and factories producing cotton goods, yarn, paper, carpets, oil, rakes, iron, leather, and spirits. Freight rates dropped from $100 a ton by wagon to $10 a ton by canal.

Not only did Old Dorp begin to prosper but so did the state and nation. Shoemakers in New York City provided shoes to pioneers in Ohio. Midwestern farmers sent millions of bushels of wheat eastward, much of it sent across the Atlantic to England. Immigrants moved westward in droves. The Port of New York shipped more tonnage than Boston, Baltimore, and New Orleans combined. And within nine years the state recouped its $7 million construction cost.

In conclusion, Dewitt’s Dis of Dorp Didn’t make a Difference, and neither Did Dorp’s Dis of Da Ditch.

Secondary sources used include Beirenstein, Michael, Wedding of the Waters, W.W. Norton, 2006; Naylor, Lawrence, The Effects of the Erie Canal On Schenectady, 1982; Neisuler, Jeannette, When Schenectady and the Erie Canal Were Young Together, 1954. All are available at the Grems-Dootlittle Library.

Primary Sources are the Schenectady Cabinet and the diaries of DeWitt Clinton and Thomas Eddy. The Eddy diary is at the New York Public Library.
Volunteer Spotlight: Donna Santora

If you’ve been to 32 Washington Avenue lately on a Tuesday afternoon, you may have been greeted by Donna Santora, a volunteer with the Historical Society since May 2014. Donna grew up in Schenectady and after adventuring around the country for several decades, returned to the area in 2006. Donna brings a positive energy to the museum every time she arrives and has an unequalled enthusiasm for Schenectady. She has served as a docent for the downtown museum, volunteered at special events, and helped organize the Festival of Trees. Most recently, Donna has been doing research for the newest exhibit, “A Night on the Town 1850-1950: One Hundred Years of Fashion & Frivolity.”

What Donna loves most about Schenectady is the history. As a former 7th grade history teacher, she was especially interested in the role Schenectady played in the founding of America. Donna’s favorite part about growing up in Schenectady was her school experience, which inspired her to teach. She has wonderful memories of Pleasant Valley Grammar School, McKinley Middle School, and Mont Pleasant High School. Donna says, “the teachers were wonderful and dedicated, and they inspired me to become a better person. They were not only teachers, but mentors, and provided a mental compass to live by.”

Donna thoroughly enjoys working as a volunteer and describes the SCHS as “a wonderful organization that does a lot for Schenectady.” She says, “I wish more people knew about it! Schenectady is not just a sleepy town but a place with a history to be proud of.” Donna says she likes giving back to her community and doing something productive and meaningful.

Not only is Donna a hard working volunteer, she has also become famous. She was recently interviewed for a documentary on downtown Schenectady by SUNY Albany film students and has even received fan mail at the museum’s address. We are thankful Donna is part of our volunteer community!

Kaitlin Morton-Bentley

Three generations of Santoras working at General Electric in 1952. Donna’s father, John Edward Santora, is on the far right.
Summer is in full swing at the Society with a new exhibit, “A Night on the Town in Schenectady 1850-1950: One Hundred Years of Fashion and Frivolity”, sure to put you in the summer party frame of mind! Also putting a skip in our step, the Grems-Doolittle Library is once again open full days, 9 to 5, Monday through Friday, thanks to the arrival of our new librarian, Mike Maloney. Summer means family fun outdoors, and for that we have the Canal Fest on July 25th. Summertime tradition demands a stroll on the lawn under the trees at the Arts and Crafts Show, August 15, and would also not be complete without music in the barn or on the lawn at the Howlin series, July 2, July 31, and August 27. Ah, summertime!

The Education Program at the Mabee Farm Historic Site has hosted over 2200 students this spring, offering them a chance to explore what it was like to live and work on a farm in the eighteenth century. Our dedicated educators continue to make this possible each year, and we are very grateful to them. Assisting them are our summer interns, Lauren Souther and Josh Hoh, who seem to find ways to present the information so that it is fresh and exciting. Welcome Lauren and Josh!

Have a wonderful summer, make time for some fun and relax

-Marianne

Festivals, fireflies, and fourth graders. Yes, summer has arrived at SCHS, and with it, two new summer interns! Joining us this year at both the Schenectady History Museum and Mabee Farm Historic Site are collections interns Joshua Hoh and Lauren Souther. Josh and Lauren are both recent history graduates. Josh completed his BA in history at Gettysburg College in 2014, and Lauren graduated from the Appalachian State history MA program just a few weeks before arriving in Schenectady. The two interns bring to SCHS a love for learning, enthusiasm for the job, and fresh perspectives on local history.

Josh, a native of Albany, NY, is particularly interested in “the behind-the-scenes aspects of museum work, particularly special events and collections management.” He adds, “the Local Eats exhibit sounds cool, so I’m excited for that too!”

Lauren comes to SCHS from Louisiana by way of North Carolina, and is adjusting to life in New York. “I wanted hands-on experience, and I was looking for a place outside of Appalachia,” she says of the SCHS internship opportunity. Artifacts and education are Lauren’s main interests, and she particularly enjoys working with Mabee Farm’s fourth graders: “I think that’s a perfect age—not too young, not too old. I learn from them and they learn from me, so it’s a reciprocal relationship.” Going forward Lauren hopes to boost her skills in PastPerfect and gain more confidence as an emerging museum professional.

Next time you’re out at the Farm, or touring the History Museum, be sure to say hello to Lauren and Josh!

Mary Zawacki
DeWitt Disses Dorp, Dorp Disses da Ditch

James M Strosberg

The Erie Canal officially opened at 9:00 AM October 26, 1825 when Governor DeWitt Clinton embarked from Buffalo on the Seneca Chief pulled by four matching and decorated grey horses. Along the route, each city, town and village paid tribute to the individual who was most responsible for this great engineering feat which was about to geographically unite the young nation. The voyage eastwards was a well-deserved and continuous celebration with fireworks, parades, ox roasts, bands, illuminated balloons, cannon shots and musketry.

But not in Schenectady. When the flotilla arrived here on November 1 at 3:00PM the weather was gloomy and the guests were met with complete silence from the local spectators. Clinton and his Lt. Governor along with General LaFayette were escorted to a local hotel for dinner and returned to the Seneca Chief within the hour. They promptly continued their journey east to Albany where they were met by Chief Justice John Marshall and Secretary of State Henry Clay. This historic first passage thru Schenectady was not even noted in the local newspapers, Schenectady Cabinet and Mohawk Sentinel. So why the hard feelings?

Continued on pages 8-9