MEMBERSHIP FORM
Schenectady County Historical Society

Please indicate one of the following for your membership:

- $25 Individual
- $40 Family
- $50 Donor
- $100 Sponsor
- $500 Patron
- $1000 Lifetime
- Check enclosed

Please mail this form with your check or credit card information to:
Schenectady County Historical Society
32 Washington Ave., Schenectady, NY 12305

Also enclosed is a gift of $_________ for special projects designated as follows:

Museum: Art Restoration ______ Acquisitions ______ Publications ______ Programs ______
Library: Equipment ______ Publications ______
Mabee Farm: Preservation ______ Education Building ______ Programs ______

Your tax-deductible membership can be matched by G.E. (800) 305-0669

THE JEWISH COMMUNITY IN SCHENECTADY

In March, the Schenectady County Historical Society will be proud to host an exhibit created by Elizabeth and Harvey Strum for Sage College. "Jewish History and Community in Schenectady" is part of a series of projects the Strums have created focused on aspects of Jewish history and experience. Their earlier projects and exhibits included "Jewish History and Community in Albany," "The Emma Goldman Exhibition," and "Beta Israel: The Jews of Ethiopia" as well as others. Although planned for Sage College's Opalka Gallery, the Strums along with Opalka Gallery Director, Jim Richard Wilson, were kind enough to allow the exhibit to come to the Schenectady County Historical Society after its completion at Opalka Gallery. This exhibit will focus on the history of the Jewish Community in Schenectady and how the community has contributed to Schenectady. The exhibit will run from March 12th through May 15th, 2006.

Although the history of the Jewish Community in Schenectady begins as early as the eighteenth century with Jewish traders who dealt with Sir William Johnson and other notable historic figures, this exhibit will focus more on the nineteenth century when Schenectady families really began to build their own diverse community. German-Jewish families who came during the first half of the century were followed by a dramatic increase of Jews from Russia, Austria and Hungary in the last decades of the century.

Schenectady was also a place of possibility for many Jewish immigrants and natives. Mordecai Myers, an American born Jewish veteran of the War of 1812, served as mayor in the 1850’s for two terms while other Jewish residents held offices in the city throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Jewish families established businesses that became mainstays not only in Schenectady but outside the community as well. Graubart closed its doors in 1982 after three generations ran the family business from the end of the nineteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth century. Price Chopper which the Golub family started in Schenectady as Central Market is now a regional powerhouse in the food industry.

Objects and images from a variety of museums, cultural institutions, businesses, synagogues and individuals will help illustrate the story of the generations that came to Schenectady to build a new home and a future for their families. They helped build Schenectady from a small community in the early nineteenth century to the “City that Lights and Hauls the World” in the twentieth century.

Join co-curator Dr. Harvey Strum at 1:30 pm on March 12th as he discusses the impetus for this exhibit and the history of the Jewish Community in Schenectady. Enjoy refreshments before the presentation from Mt. Pleasant Bakery, a sixty year Jewish owned bakery which recently changed hands and no longer Jewish owned but still operating in the Jewish tradition. After the presentation enjoy the exhibit.
Dear Members,
Here we are again, looking back on the last two months. The programs and activities were more successful than we thought they would be, so it felt very rewarding. In December we had the antique toys, children’s light bulb craft and for the first time in memory, an evening open house that was well received. January’s program with Peter Rose, author and food historian, was a success. I worry we made some folks mad in that we couldn’t accommodate all who came. So please apologize again, but hold that thought, we hope to have her back next December for another holiday event. Right now we are working on the February programs. They are a part of the Colonial Fest we celebrate every year to appreciate our ancestors, in that they decided to resettle Schenectady after the massacre. The March program and exhibit brings us the history of the Jewish people in Schenectady.

It is also the time for the nominating committee to meet in order to come up with people interested in joining our ‘team’. If you think you might be, and have some time to give, we would appreciate a call. The personnel committee has been working at finding a new part time office person/bookkeeper to help with all the accumulated tasks. The Society seems to be growing by leaps and bounds. There is always more than we can handle, however that is a good thing, in that it means we are attracting more attention, people, and activities to keep it a viable entity for today’s fast moving world.

Kim Mabee

FROM THE EDITOR’S DESK

As the Schenectady Museum moves into the 21st century, changes in its name and purposes its mission of preserving the scientific history of the region, it is hoped that its paintings and decorative arts collections especially those that reflect Schenectady history will remain in Schenectady. It is important that the Schenectady Museum and the Schenectady County Historical Society work together to ensure that Schenectady historical artifacts currently in the museum’s collection never leave Schenectady. Too many artifacts of importance to Schenectady history have been sold in the past and much of Schenectady history has been lost in the process.

One Corwin

RADDISH FOR PRESIDENT GARFIELD

The Jewish Community Did Its Part Over the Years

Throughout American history Jewish immigrants sought to identify with their new homeland and sought acceptance as Americans. In times of national tragedies, Jews showed their loyalty as Americans. When Charles Guiteau killed President James Garfield in 1881, Schenectady’s Jews held a special service to pray for the wounded president at their congregation (Gates of Heaven) on Ferry Street. When Garfield died, Jews comforted with their fellow citizens in mourning his death, and owners of businesses on State Street, like Isaac I. Levy, wholesale liquor dealer, and Lewis Behz, tailor, draped their shops and stores in black and white for the fallen president. Similarly, Jews in neighboring communities of Albany and Troy did the same. Twenty years later, when another assassin, Leon Czolgosz, mortally wounded President William McKinley, hundreds of synagogues on the Lower East Side of New York City, full because of the Jewish High Holidays, prayed for the President. Special services were held in the Capital District and when the President died, Jews gathered for a memorial service at Congregations Gates of Heaven, now known as the Jewish temple on College Street, on September 19, 1901. Similarly, when President Warren G. Harding died of natural causes in 1923, all the congregations in the city gathered at Agudat Achim, the local press called the Nest Terrace synagogue, for a joint service in honor of the late American leader. Rabbi I. Levin of Agudat Achim officiated.

Public service and war also provided an opportunity for Jews to demonstrate their loyalty to their country. Mordecai Myers, a state Assemblyman from New York City, got elected mayor of Schenectady twice in the 1850s, 1851 and 1854. Fifty years later, Louis M. King, became City Clerk from 1899-1902 and later served as the Counsel to the State Ex- cuise Department from 1911-16. Another prominent Jewish resident of the time, Henry Heilbronner served on the Schenectady School Board and on the board of Ellis Hospital. During World War I, Samuel Stein also served on the school board. Several Jews, like S. Levy, got elected to the city council. Ellsworth Cohen, won appointment as City Manager in 1912 and continued until he resigned in 1964. Bernard Cohen was on the City Planning Commission in the 1960s, and became chair from 1965-68. These were just a few of the many local residents who contributed to public service in Schenectady. In 1970 Congregations Gates of Heaven started a service program to encourage its members to give back to the community. Philanthropy as public service becomes doubly important to a community in mourning or in celebration. The Jewish Community Center and Gates of Heaven, and to community functions, like the Schenectady Museum and the Schaffer Library at Union College. The Golub family, owners of the Price Chopper Supermarket chain, became synonymous with public service and philanthropy in the local community. William Golub won the honor as “Citizen of the Century” in 1990 from the Celebrating Schenectady 300 Committee for his contributions to improving civic life in the city including the establishment of the Golub Foundation in 1980.

Local Jews served in war from the Civil War to the present and during wartime demonstrated their loyalty by supporting the troops and by engaging in civilian related activities. For example, during World War I, local Jewish newspaper printed the listings of every resident who volunteered or got drafted for service. A Jewish Welfare Board was organized to provide support for Jewish soldiers from the area and also to aid Jewish soldiers from outside of Schenectady stationed in South Schenectady during the war. The Jewish Welfare Board kept up correspondence with local boys in arms in the United States, and those stationed in France. Boys from Schenectady missed the competitions with their Albany co-religionists in baseball games sponsored by local YMHCAs. A local Jewish newspaper, the Tri-City Jewish Chronicle, reported when the boys left for service and when they came home on leave. Synagogues put up service flags to represent men from their Congregations in service during the war. The Jewish Welfare Board arranged send offs for men called up – and “bid our boys goodbye.” At the end of the war, it documented the local men who lost their lives in service of the country. At the request of President Woodrow Wilson, all of the congregations in the city joined in a national day of thanksgiving for the end of the war. They held the service at Agudat Achim with Rabbi Zarch Bickley from the Orthodox Ohab Sholom congregation leading the memorial prayer for the men who died in battle, and Rabbi Joseph Jasin of Reform Congregation Gates of Heaven giving the sermon. In 1935, veterans formed a chapter of the Jewish War Veterans, as each of the tri-city communities formed chapters to honor returning veterans, fight local anti-Semitism, and show the patriotism of the local Jewish community.

FROM THE COLLECTIONS

PORTRAIT OF HENRY C. SEELEY 1826-1862
Gift of Alan Hart and Family in memory of Larry Hart
Henry Seeley enlisted for three years in Schenectady August 24, 1861. He was mustered in as a private September 16, 1861 in Company G, 43rd Infantry Regiment (Manhattan Rifles). He was wounded in action June 7, 1862 at Gaines Mills Va and died October 5, 1862 at a hospital in Washington D.C.
Peter Rose Breaks Attendance Records

On January 14, the Schenectady County Historical Society offered a rare and unique opportunity for visitors. Acclaimed culinary historian and author Peter Rose presented her popular program “Art in Food and Food in Art” to a record breaking audience of over 135 people. Sponsored by the New York Council for the Humanities’ Speakers in the Humanities Program, Rose’s program focused on the intersection between art, food, and culture in both the Netherlands and in New Netherland. This program, which is only one of many Rose has presented at museums ranging from Plymouth Plantation to the Smithsonian Institution, was based on her revolutionary exhibit “Tastes of Taste” at the Albany Institute of History and Art.

Visitors were entertained by “a lusciously illustrated slide-talk” of the seventeenth-century Dutch Masters and their relevance to the American kitchen today. Using paintings from the seventeenth-century Netherlands, Rose explored the use of food in the old world and how many of these foodways came to America with the original settlers and were transformed over the next two hundred years. Slides of over 40 paintings from artists like Jan Steen and Adriaen Coorte, helped bring the seventeenth century to life and truly made it a mouth water experience. Along with a wide area of beautiful paintings, Rose explored recipes from America that both showed the continuation of Dutch culinary traditions and their adaptation by generations of “Americanized” Dutch descendants. Peter Rose explored how even food items we take for granted today like cookies, doughnuts, or pretzels have their Dutch predecessors to thank for their existence.

Along with an amazing program that fed the mind, visitors were able to actually taste items from “The Sensible Cook”, a seventeenth-century cookbook that early Dutch settlers brought with them from the Netherlands. Translated by Peter Rose, this cookbook offers a glimpse into the food ways of the seventeenth-century Dutch settlers in both the Netherlands and New Netherland. Recipes adapted for the modern kitchen are also available in the cookbook. A unique educational experience not to be missed, FREE.

Dutch Vernacular Architecture

Few plans remain that truly capture the way that Schenectady does. Walking down the historic streets in Schenectady’s famous “Stockade District”, visitors have a chance to walk in the same footsteps as Schenectady’s earliest residents. These were the streets that Arent Van Curlier helped plan and where on that fateful night in February, 1660, many residents were awakened by invading French troops and their Native American allies. Although little-survives from the earliest period of Schenectady’s history, many of the buildings constructed by the children of that first generation have survived into the twentieth century and some, although often altered, still survive today.

To visit the Schenectady County Historical Society had a special treat on February 4 with the lecture by historian and author John Stevens, based on his new book “Dutch Vernacular Architecture in North America, 1640-1830.” An avid historian, Stevens has written books on historic ship building, studied early buildings in the Canadian Maritimes, was Architectural Historian for Old Bethpage Village Historic Restoration, is a longtime member of the Dutch Barn Preservation Society and is a tutor of Hudson Valley Vernacular Architecture. His newest project focused on the evolution of Dutch architecture from the Netherlands to New Netherland.

Architecture is one of the few tangible remnants left by the original Dutch settlers in this area. John Stevens expertly capitalized on this by providing photographs, historic paintings and sketches, and conceptualized drawings of some of the original buildings built by various generations of Dutch settlers. Many of the buildings he spoke of no longer exist and many that did survive into the twentieth century and especially to the modern day did not retain their original appearance and form making his work especially important. Stevens was able to explain the evolution of these buildings from their original construction to their modern appearance. This research is the most recent and most comprehensive look at Dutch vernacular architecture in the New World.

Besides for simply documenting existing Dutch buildings and their original appearance, Stevens was able to offer insight into the reasoning behind many of the architectural features we have come to associate with Dutch architecture. The practicality of a stepped gable or the reason many Dutch buildings, even private homes, required a second story pulley system and the various ways hay barracks worked are all available to interested persons from high school age and older.

Peter Rose’s program proved such an overwhelming success and generated so much interest in the community that it is the focus of the Schenectady County Historical Society to have her visit again either late this year or early in 2007. For those interested in reading up on Dutch Culinary traditions in New Netherland, the Society’s new book “The Sensible Cook” are available at the Schenectady County Historical Society for $19.95. Rose’s first book “Foods of the Mohawks” which looks at both traditional and modern recipes, is available for $16.95.

April 9: Work Day (“Note new date) Help to preserve the Farm for the busy 2006 season.
April 22: Earth Day (with Environmental Clearing house)
April 30: Capital District Blacksmith Demonstration

Workshops 2006

Blacksmith Workshop May 6-7; June 3-4; Sept. 23-24
Timberframing Workshop: June 17-18 & 24-25 (4 days)
Learn How to Knit a Hat: Sept. 16
Make Your Own Fashion Scarf: Sept. 23
Call 887-5073 for more information

Blacksmith Demonstration

April 30th from 11-4PM
Come enjoy Celtic Re-enactors “Clans of the Dragon” who will set up a 5th Century AD Irish forge and the 11th century “Wolves of Wodan” viking reenactors from the Capital District Blacksmith Association. A unique educational experience not to be missed. FREE.

We Are Still Fundraising For The George E. Franchere Education Center. Please make your donation today!

May 2: Mabee Farm Opens for the Season
Tues. - Sat. 10am - 4pm

HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEMBERS
Celebrate Earth Day
Sat. April 22
11am - 3pm

Mabee Farm Historic Site
1080 Main Street (Rt. SS), Rotterdam, NY • (518) 887-5073
Email: mabee@nycap.com • Web: www.mabeefarm.org

April 2006 Schedule

Mabee Farm Historic Site
Route 15, Rotterdam, NY
Sponsored by EOS—INFO AT 794-4125

Historical Society Members
Celebrate Earth Day

Sat. April 22
11am - 3pm

Nature walks: Kids environmental games.
Don Dame & Carmel Council On Talling, live inside amphibian animals. EOS
Yard sale, pancake breakfast, run, cell phone recycling and much, much more

BECO—INFO AT 794-4125

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HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEMBERS

CELEBRATE EARTH DAY

SAT. APRIL 22
11AM - 3PM

NATURAL WALKS: KIDS ENVIRONMENTAL GAMES.
DON DAME & CARMEL COUNCIL ON TALLING, LIVE INSIDE AMPHIBIAN ANIMALS. EOS
YARD SALE, PANCAKE BREAKFAST, RUN, CELL PHONE RECYCLING AND MUCH, MUCH MORE

BECO—INFO AT 794-4125

MABEE FARM HISTORIC SITE
ROUTE 15, ROTTERDAM, NY
SPONSORED BY EOS—INFO AT 794-4125

REPLICA 1614 SHIP TO BE BUILT AT OUR OWN MABEE FARM

During the months of May to October 2006, the public will be able to watch the beginning of the construction of a replica of the first Dutch ship built in America in 1614 - the Oruitz (Dutch for Restless), at the Mabee Farm. This replica will be built using original 17th century Dutch building techniques. Gerald de Weerdt, Director of the Maritime Museum in the Netherlands and former director of the National Institute of Ship Archaeology in Leelystadt, will be supervising the construction of the Oruitz. He is also an expert on 17th century Dutch boat building. Don Rattray, Schenectady County Historian, and Greta Wagle, Content Director for the upcom- ing Legacy of New Netherland Exhibit sponsored under the auspices of the New Netherland Institute and SUNY Central Administration, are also founding members. The public can get involved by purchasing a piece of the Oruitz in their name. Contact Greta Wagle, gwagle@nycap.com.

AWARD

The SCCC Community Archaeology Program (CAP) received the James C. Hall, Jr. Award at the Continuing Education Council of New York’s annual meeting held at West Point on October 26-27, 2005. Membership in the organization includes colleges and universities in New York State that offer both credit and non-credit continuing education programs. The competitive award recognizes SCCC’s commitment to its achievements in creativity, success, and innovation in a non-credit program. Honored at the award ceremony were SCCC’s Professor Maria Kontar, Director of the Center for Continuing Education; Gail Basa and Ronald Kingsley, Adjunct Faculty in the program, SCCC Continuing Education Dean Edward Baker is credited for his support of the SCCC’s CAP.

SCCC offers a non-credit Certificate of Proficiency in Archaeology that is recognized by the New York Archaeological Council (NYAC). The six courses and supervised volunteer field experience program are available to interested persons from high school age and older. CAP offers participants basic knowledge and skills needed to volunteer in professionally supervised archaeological projects in the community and, for some, an opportunity to explore and to possibly pursue degree programs. During the year additional topics courses are offered to address special interests and for enrichment. In the summer, a field and lab program is available for middle school age children in cooperation with the Historic Mabee Farm and the Schenectady County Historical Society. Current CAP students and volunteers are engaged in on-going research at two sites: the Mabee Farm (Rotterdam Junction) and the background of the ca. 1725 Robert Yates House (Stockade District, 109 Union Street, Schenectady).
The Grems-Doolittle Library & Archives

The library recently purchased two new desktop computers and a digital camera with funds donated to the Ann Ross Memorial Fund. These purchases will allow the library volunteers to accomplish even more projects than they were able to with the aging “dinosaurs” they had been using. In particular, the library is moving towards an automated catalog and the new equipment will make that transition much easier. The camera will be used for documenting events and places important to the Society and the history of Schenectady County.

SPRING CLEANING REMINDER – Are you cleaning out your house or someone else’s? Do you wonder what to do with all the interesting old papers you’ve found? If you think you have something that might be of use to us here at the library, please give us a call to discuss it. Your trash just might be our treasure!

GOT PICTURES? The Niskayuna book committee is seeking pictures of every type for their next project, *Images of America, Niskayuna.* Pictures from the past which include people are especially desirable. Contact the library at 374-0263 if you can help. Photographs will be copied and returned. The library also accepts donations of photographs.

ANN ROSS MEMORIAL FUND

The library has been awarded a grant from the New York State Discretionary Grant Program in the amount of $2610. The grant will be used to have a professional preservation survey of the entire library and archives done this Spring. The survey will evaluate the current state of the library and archives and make specific recommendations for areas that need some improvement. We look forward to getting our “report card.”

DUTCH VERNACULAR ARCHITECTURE IN NORTH AMERICA 1640-1830

John R. Stevens

Available in hard & soft cover

Three Schenectady Houses e.g.

The Glen Sanders Mansion, the Brouwer House, the Abraham Yates House and the Teller, Schenmerhorn Barn are highlighted in the book.

Also by John R. Stevens:


The Derby Horse Railway and the World’s First Electric Freight Locomotive, New Haven, CT 1987.
