On Wednesday, January 31, representatives of the Society, the Keepers of the Circle Native-American Cultural Center, and Schenectady County signed a historic agreement whereby the Society will purchase 26.4 acres of the County’s 29 acres immediately to the west of the current 9-acre Mabee Farm in Rotterdam Junction, nearly quadrupling its size. The Keepers of the Circle (KOC), by agreement, will receive 2.6 acres and its Bradt House for continuation of their American Indian cultural activities. The area immediately to the west of the current Mabee Farm and east of KOC will be the site for the new George E. Franchere Educational Center, named in posthumous honor for the person who gave the Farm to the Society and provided for its care through his will and trust agreement.

Signing for the Society were President Ed Reilly, Vice President Kim Mabee, and Trustee Merritt Glennon, Chair of the Society’s Mabee Farm Committee. Representing Schenectady County were Attorney Chris Gardner, Deputy County Attorney Don DeAngelis, and Steve Feeney of the County Planning Office. Seven members of its Executive Board signed for the Keepers of the Circle (see photos on page 8). The agreement was then embodied in the necessary enabling resolution which was passed by the County Legislature on February 13.

Now the County will proceed to survey the properties, seek subdivision approval from the Town of Rotterdam, and to set a closing date. The Mabee Farm’s Education Center subcommittee for Design and Fundraising is proceeding full-speed ahead, working with architect Keith Cramer to perfect the design and exact location of the Center. President Reilly, Vice President Mabee, and subcommittee chair John van Schaick, who proposed the construction and naming of the Center years ago, are busy doing a price comparison for shiny new shovels in preparation for a late spring groundbreaking.
Letter from the President

WITHOUT A TRACE

The big news this month is certainly the cover story about qualifying the size of the Mabee Farm. And I do hope that you will join us at our Annual Meeting of April 14 to celebrate, participate in the business session, and enjoy the historic bottle talk described elsewhere in this issue. Mr. Edison is excused, of course, but I do wish to tell you a bit about why he’s up above and looking at you.

As a downtown plaque attests, Thomas Edison came to Schenectady in 1886 to plant the flag of his Edison Electric company, but seldom came back to visit the one into which it morphed—General Electric. But he did make an auspicious return on October 18, 1922 to visit famous local GE scientists such as Whitney, Coolidge, and Langmuir and electrical wizard Charles Proteus Steinmetz. I was only minus ten at the time, but my Dad did introduce me to Irving Langmuir when he brought me to work one day in 1940 when I reached plus eight, 18-years too late for the celebration.

The preparation for the occasion was glowingly described in an issue of the GE Schenectady Works News of November 3, 1922 called to my attention by SCHS member Nancy Myers-Pardi. The star of the story was one Julius Pardi, the grandfather of Nancy’s husband Laurence. Julius was an employee of the GE Porcelain Department known for his artistry. He was asked to design and mold a commemorative plaque, the beautiful one shown in color above and in the photo below as mounted above the rear entrance to GE Building 5. In the picture, Edison and Steinmetz are readily identifiable, and Julius Pardi is standing on the first step at the lower right. The man with the pocket handkerchief just above Steinmetz’s legendary cigar is the first step at the lower right. The man with the pocket handkerchief just above Steinmetz’s legendary cigar is

During the course of his 47 year career at GE (1902-1949), my Grandfather, Julius Pardi, created hundreds of beautiful porcelain and ceramic objects. They were in the form of bas relief plaques (such as the Edison one atop the page), plates, vases, bowls, lamps, and statuettes. All were beautifully painted. Most were signed J. PARDI and dated. Many were commissioned at the request of GE and gifted to GE executives and others as a symbol of GE friendship and respect. If you own one of his works, could you be so kind as to send us a picture of the piece so we may include it in our family history album?—Laurence Pardi, (518) 861-8004; lapardi@nycap.rr.com.

In Memory of Larry Rainey

by Frank Taormina

Anyone who has an interest in history eventually becomes aware that the lives of human beings are marked with “passages,” from the first moment of infant awareness to the last sense of final departure. Each passage has its accompanying set of emotions – its joys and its sadness. Each challenges us to respond appropriately.

In this instance, the “passage” is the loss of a friend and a valued member of the community and the Schenectady County Historical Society, Laurence Rainey. His costumed presence will not be with us at the Walk-About next year, or at the Girl Scout River Walk. A list of all the ways he used his gifts and his talents to enrich the lives of all of us fortunate to share this community with him is offered with the trepidation that something that should have been included will be left out, because the list is so long! As a photographer, he was without a peer. His interest in cross-stitching so wonderfully presented in the piece illustrating Russian Orthodox Churches was entirely unique. As a teacher, his reputation was outstanding. His travels in Europe, especially in Holland and Russia, were pursued not just in the interests he shared with his wife Janet, but also to be shared with others. His interest in local history, especially in the history of Glenville, the history of the Johnson family, and many other aspects of the life and history of the Schenectady Community are crowned by the contribution he made of the History of St. John the Evangelist Church.

Lawrence Rainey 1937-2007

I end these brief remarks with a sense that for me, all his accomplishments notwithstanding, I will miss most his decency, his warmth, his good humor, and the conversations we shared at lunch and on the phone about our mutual interest in the history of our locality and in history in general.

On February 7, 2007, Schenectady Mayor Brian Stratton reenacted Schermerhorn’s ride to Albany of February 9, 1690.

-Ed Reilly

SEARCHING FOR JULIUS PARDI’S ART WORKS – CAN YOU HELP?

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**WORK DAY**
Saturday, April 4th from 10 am – 4 pm
Please join us for the Mabee Farm’s annual Spring Work Day. We will prepare the Farm for an exciting 2007 season. This will be a pot luck day so please bring a dish to share.

**VOLUNTEERS & DOCENT TRAINING**
Saturday, April 21 from 10 am – 1 pm
Mabee Farm will hold a Docent Training Day. The Mabee Farm Historic Site is looking for volunteers who are willing to assist at events. We are particularly interested in people willing to be docents or tour guides to explain the story of the Mabee Family throughout its 300 year ownership of the property, and farm life from the 17th through the 20th centuries. Light refreshments will be provided. If you are interested, please call (518) 887-5073.

**EARTH DAY**
Sunday, April 22
– Join us for a Celebration of EARTH DAY. Interested, please call (518) 887-5073.

**OPENING DAY**
Tuesday, May 1st
Mabee Farm Historic Site will open for the season. Regular hours will be Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10 am – 4 pm or by appointment.

**MOHAWK RIVER / ERIE CANAL - TRANSPORTATION AND RECREATION**
Saturday, May 5th, opening of exhibit about historic activities along the Mohawk River throughout the seasons and emphasizing the use of this important waterway by local people. Highlights will include swimming, boating (both recreational and competitive), fishing, ice skating, and ice boating.

**BLACKSMITH DEMONSTRATIONS**
Sunday, April 29th
11 am – 4 pm

**BLACKSMITH WORKSHOP (beginners)**
May 5–6 and May 19–20
John Ackner will teach two workshops in the lost art of Blacksmithing. Call 887-5073 for more information

**RE-ENACTMENT ACTIVITIES**
2-day event **note new date**
Saturday, June 2nd
9:30 am – 9:00 pm
Sunday, June 3rd
9:00 am – 4:00 pm:
Militia counter attacks by British troops and Indians; amphibious battles with period bateaux; land battles and skirmishes; Cavalry demonstrations with Sheldon’s Horse from Connecticut; camp tours; colonial artisans selling period items; and much more! In addition, on Saturday there will be a Barn Dance with live music beginning at 7:30 pm. On Sunday, a Church Service will be held at 10 am.

**EARTH DAY**
This annual event is an Earth Day celebration. We will offer environmental educational games, environmental exhibits, nature walks, storytelling, and featuring a collection of amphibians & reptiles and more! Route 5S, Rotterdam Junction, NY (518) 887-5073

**SCHENECTADY'S BOTTLE HISTORY**
April 14th   1:30 Refreshments    2:20 Program
Available records indicate, however, that Sexton was a native of Schenectady and lived in the city throughout his lifetime. He was born in 1813, the first son of Ezekial Sexton, who reportedly was born in Monmouth County, New Jersey, and his second wife, Henrietta Hayden, daughter of Samuel Hayden, a miller from Glenville, New York.

The above information was drawn from the book “Painted by S. H. Sexton” by Ona Curran and is used with her permission.

**SCHENECTADY'S BOTTLE HISTORY – with John Rudzinski, local collector and bottle historian.**
April 14th 1:30 Refreshments 2:20 Program
Bottles have a history and they have become an interesting collector’s item because they can reveal many things about the communities in which they were made and used. They were more than just containers; they also helped advertise their wares. Molded bottles could indicate the manufacturer, address, and type of product thus acting as a constant reminder of the contents until empty. Often discarded quickly, many bottles have survived in old trash pits to be discovered over a hundred years later. These discarded bottles are sometimes the only tangible evidence of long lost businesses and products once abundant in the Schenectady area. Join us for this fascinating look at the history to be found in old bottles discovered and recovered. Our speaker is an avid collector; many of his bottles date back to the years of the Erie Canal.

**THE 1918 SPANISH FLU IN SCHENECTADY**
- with Dr. James Strosberg
March 10th 1:30 Refreshments 2:00 Program

Epidemics by definition threaten whole communities. Schenectady was no exception when the Spanish Flu affected the area in 1918. The Spanish Flu derived it name because its effect initially was so widespread in Spain although it went on to affect other countries around the world. World wide it killed as many as 25 million people in the first 25 weeks of being identified. The Spanish Flu became a dreaded disease for soldiers and civilians alike during World War One. The mobility of troops and civilian conditions in times of war were also aggravating conditions in the spread of this disease.

The Schenectady County Historical Society has an ongoing exhibit Facing the King of Terrors: Death and Society in Schenectady, so the subject of the Spanish Flu and its death toll is very germane to the history of Schenectady. We are pleased to have this dynamic local physician, Dr. James Strosberg, who will speak about how this deadly disease affected Schenectady when it hit in 1918.

**PRACTICAL SCIENCE** 2007
April 21st, 9:00 am – 3:00 pm
Mabee Farm Historic Site will open for the season. Regular hours will be Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10 am – 4 pm or by appointment.

**Renaissance Faire**
Saturday, May 5th and May 19th
This annual event is an Earth Day celebration. We will offer environmental educational games, environmental exhibits, nature walks, storytelling, and featuring a collection of amphibians & reptiles and more! Route 5S, Rotterdam Junction, NY (518) 887-5073

**MABEE FARM - CALENDAR for 2007**
- with John Rudzinski, local collector and bottle historian. April 14th 1:30 Refreshments 2:20 Program
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**Painting Schenectady: Samuel Sexton and His Works**
Exhibit opens: Monday, April 16th; there is a charge of $4.00 for adults. Exhibit is free for members and students.

**MIGHTY WATERWAY**
Saturday, May 5th, opening of exhibit about historic activities along the Mohawk River throughout the seasons and emphasizing the use of this important waterway by local people. Highlights will include swimming, boating (both recreational and competitive), fishing, ice skating, and ice boating.

**MABEE FARM HISTORIC SITE**
Route 5S, Rotterdam Junction, NY (518) 887-5073

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May 5–6 and May 19–20
John Ackner will teach two workshops in the lost art of Blacksmithing. Call 887-5073 for more information

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**BLACKSMITH DEMONSTRATIONS**
Sunday, April 29th
11 am – 4 pm

Sunday, April 22nd - 11 am— 3 pm
Sponsored by ECOS
**KIDS ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATIONAL GAMES**
- Storytelling
- Nature walks
- Environmental Exhibits
- Amphibians & reptiles and more!

**CAPITAL DISTRICT BLACKSMITHING ASSOCIATION - DEMONSTRATION**
Sunday, April 29 – Come and see the lost art of blacksmithing. (See ad)
The office of County Clerk is of historic importance to every citizen of Schenectady County. County Clerks wear many different hats: Clerk of the Supreme and County Courts; Registrar of Deeds; County Commissioner of Motor Vehicles; County Filing Officer; Chief Notary, and elected County Officer. The Clerk’s office provides a wide array of services that involve the federal, state and local government; and it is the chief depository of important records and documents that reflect important milestones in life such as buying a home, registering a car, suing someone in court, or filing papers to begin a new business.

In Schenectady County, our first County Clerk was Peter Veeder appointed by Governor Daniel Tompkins on March 11th, 1809. County Clerks were appointed by the Governor until 1822 when they became directly elected by the voters. Our early County Clerks were from prominent families with names such as Veeder, Fonda, Vrooman, Campbell, individuals clearly reflective of Schenectady’s Dutch heritage. In most cases, they were “gentlemen farmers” who often did their recording work in the evenings. There are examples of old deeds from the 1830s that were logged in at 7 pm at night.

Bradt’s successor was Carroll “Pink” Gardner who served in office for 33 years from 1936-1969. Gardner, the former sheriff and World Wrestling Champion, was completing his 11th term when he died in 1969. His tenure stretched from the middle of the Great Depression to the time of the first moon landing. His father-in-law was George R. Lunn, Schenectady’s socialist Mayor and former Congressman and Lt. Governor.

All Photos courtesy of John Woodward, County Clerk

Merritt C. Willey succeeded Gardner as Clerk and spent 25 years in office. Willey, many Schenectady residents will remember, ran a bakery on Union Street and was very involved in numerous community activities. Gardner and Willey were excellent public servants who advanced the office and served the public well for a combined 58 years!

The history of the individuals who held the office in the 20th century is particularly interesting to me.

George T. Bradt served as Clerk from 1917 through 1936. Bradt was removed from office by Governor Herbert Lehman because his employees stole $22,000 in public funds—a staggering sum in its time. Bradt served time in state prison for the theft.

Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting of the Society will be held on Saturday, April 14 in the Vrooman Room

1:30PM Refreshments
2:00PM Business
2:20PM Program (see page 3)

Business will include distribution of the Annual Report and the election of Trustees and Officers.