STOCKADE WALKABOUT & WATERFRONT FAIRE

Join the fun, enjoy the history and celebrate the river! It’s all happening at the Stockade Walkabout and Waterfront Faire on Saturday, September 24, 11 a.m. until 5 p.m. Take a scenic boat ride on the Mohawk River and then join in the activities including face painting in the YWCA Kids Zone. Take a charming carriage ride along the river’s edge and through the Stockade streets. As you travel through you can wave to Governor Yates (our Frank Taormina) or Arendt Van Curler, Symon Efner, or other colorful characters of yore. Watch an archaeological dig in process behind one of the oldest homes in the Stockade. Down by the river tap your toes to music while watching all kinds of boats sail by. Enjoy delicious food at the Food Fest. The great day ends with a big finale of a decorated yacht parade on the river.

Tickets are $15 in advance, $20 day of event, and can be ordered by credit card by calling the Schenectady County Historical Society, Mon. - Fri. 1:00 - 5:00 p.m. and Saturdays, 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. at 518-374-0263, or the Downtown Schenectady Improvement Corporation Mon. - Fri. 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. at 518-377-9430, 184 Jay Street. Prepaid tickets can be picked up on the day of the event at the “Will Call Table” in front of the Schenectady County Historical Society.

This event is presented by The Stockade Association, The Schenectady County Historical Society and The Downtown Schenectady Improvement Corporation with proceeds used for public improvements and historic preservation within the Stockade’s Historic District, and to support Downtown revitalization projects undertaken by the Downtown Schenectady Improvement Corporation.

So, gather your family, come a caretaker day, and enjoy one of our beautiful neighborhoods and the river.

*Notecards with sketches by June Griset of Stockade homes are for sale at the Society.

**UPCOMING EVENTS**

Oct. 8: Craft Fair – Mabee Farm
Oct. 8: Naturalization Records
John Woodward, Guest Speaker at SCHS – 1:30 p.m.
Oct. 14: Open House – Efner History Center 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.

The Schenectady County Historical Society, as a nonprofit organization, depends on its members for support. Members provide the means to conduct programs and plan exhibits that relate to the community and tell the story of Schenectady County. Welcome to our new members. We hope you will extend an invitation to your friends to join, so they too can take part in the upcoming Fall and Spring programs.

Please note the List of Contributors will be published yearly at the end of the fiscal year in the Society’s expanded Annual Report. The Society thanks each and every one of you for your continued support.
No institution wants to become static and if there is progress changes usually follow. Changes are necessary, things must be revised to adapt to our current world. More and more we are seeing changes on a daily basis. This is due to the support and generosity of First National Bank of Scotia, and Larry’s son Alan Hart and his family. The book should be for sale by mid August. We have had some very generous donations lately. Thank you all for keeping us in mind! By the time you receive this newsletter, we will have had our first Garden Family Tea in many years. I am crossing my fingers that the weather cooperated. Now for the Fall, we have the 46th annual Walkabout and Waterfront Faire on the 24th. I hope you all know that the committee works very hard to have different houses every year. We are also celebrating our waterfront and reminding everyone of it’s importance in our history. See you there!

Kim Mabee

FROM THE EDITOR’S DESK

No institution wants to become static and if there is progress changes usually follow. Changes are being made at the Society with progress being made in some areas. Some of the changes are for the good, others are being questioned. We are all for progress and improving the way we operate but let us not forget those who paved the way either financially or as tireless volunteers. When changes are made they should be made with discretion, sensitivity and consideration of the generosity of those who pre-ceded us.

Larry Hart
Reprint of Schenectady, Changing Times ON SALE NOW
Schenectady Country Historical Society Saturday $29.95 Until October 1st - $34.95 after October 1st plus tax
3-50 shopping and handling
Avoid shipping charges by picking up your copy at Society headquarters.
Reprint made possible through the generosity of First National Bank of Scotia and the family of the late Larry Hart.

FROM THE COLLECTIONS

A SAMPLER’S MESSAGE
In 1764 young Anna Covand reached a milestone in her life, the completion of an intricate sampler. During the early eighteenth century it became common for young girls, age eight to twelve, to create their own tokens of their embroidery skills. These items became a source of great pride for a young girl and her family and, as evident in the numerous samplers that have survived, were passed on as heirlooms from one generation to the next. These framed “show” pieces replaced earlier samplers of the seventeenth century which were truly meant to be a notebook of various stitches the maker might need to refer back to or add to throughout her life.

Ten-year old Anna’s skill is evident in the tiny stitches that create an elaborate web of natural vines, flowers, leaves, and urns on a linen background. As with other samplers from the period, this is intended to herald the girl’s achievements in embroidery. Less obvious are its more ominous undertones. Besides the colorful flowers and delicate vines, the sampler displays a cross-stitched verse:

“I was born made what should we mind so much as immortality of being for a heaven designed but what a heaven our care should be”

Young Anna (or her instructor) not only wanted to display the quality of the girl’s embroidery but also to send a clear message. Time on earth was fleeting and therefore should be spent in preparation for the next world. A ten-year old instructed to focus on her own death may seem morbid to modern sensibilities but in a world of uncertainty it was a necessity. Children often witnessed the death of siblings or parents and were susceptible to death’s icy grip. Diaries describe the anguish of eighteenth-century parents who celebrated the birth of children only to bury them within a year. Youth could not afford the ignorance it is now possible to shelter children from the cruelty of death. As students learned their alphabets, they were reminded at the letter X that “Xerxes died, And so must I” or at the letter Y, “While youth do chear Death may be near.”

This last statement is particularly chilling because children especially were susceptible to death’s icy grip. Diaries describe the anguish of eighteenth-century parents who celebrated the birth of children only to bury them within a year. Youth could not afford the ignorance it is now awarded because at any time it could easily be snatched away. Parents also met untimely ends as Jean Adain’s epitaph states:

Five helpless children must I leave And pass into the silent Grave Great judge of all, thy ways are just Protect my babes when I am dust Although less gripping, many epitaphs still reminded the random passerby that “As you are now so once was I And as I am now so must you be.” The message again, was the same: everyone dies and must prepare for that inevitability. Anna Covand’s sampler was completed at the end of era. By the end of the eighteenth century attitudes about death quickly changed. People became more obsessed with the mourning process accompanied with death than with preparing their own souls for their passage. Epitaphs of the eighteenth century attested to this with things like “Here lies the remains of a gentleman whose virtue bespoke his being, whose probity his conduct, and whose life his memory.” The epitaphs are the most striking items on this sampler. We are reminded of being for a heaven designed but what a heaven our care should be.

Crunch was inspired by the works of Thomas Cole one of this country’s foremost landscape painters. The landscape school of painting came to the foreground following the Revolution when this country proved of its new independence assumed its own identity. It no longer looked to Europe for inspiration but painted with pride its own natural beauty.

Christopher Pease Crunch (1813-1892), a graduate of Harvard Divinity School served as a Unitarian minister until about 1840 when he gave up the ministry to become a painter.
MOURNING CUSTOMS
Exhibit Planned for Fall 2006

The mourning process provides a look into the social beliefs of a culture. Mourning culture in Schenectady has gone through various stages since the settlement of the city in 1664. Professor Robert Wells of Union College used Schenectady as the basis for his book, "Facing the 'King of Terrors': Death and Society in an American Community, 1750-1900." Wells' work examines all aspects of the death process throughout the history of Schenectady. "Facing the 'King of Terrors'" not only deals with causes of death and accompanying burial but with the grief practices of the area. Following the example of Robert Wells the Schenectady County Historical Society has begun working on an exhibit for the Schenectady History Museum that will follow mourning practices throughout the community.

The Victorian Era brought with it many changes in the culture of mourning. With the death of Queen Victoria's husband Albert and her subsequent forty year grieving period, mourning in America changed dramatically. The length of official mourning grew to two years for widows, one year for close relatives and six months for children. Clothing became the most obvious way to show grief for a loved one. The SCHS has an extensive collection of mourning dresses, gloves, shawls, and other articles to put on display. Victorian women also began expressing their grief through more material means. Jewelry was used to show remembrance for the departed but also as a way of extending official mourning periods. Numerous pieces of jewelry throughout the museum are related to mourning. Hair could be braided into bracelets or cut and pressed into keepsakes. Larger amounts of hair were used in doorways as wreaths. The hair would be cut, pressed, and knotted to build larger memorials.

Several needlework samplers in the museum’s collection illustrate the changing customs and attitudes toward death over a period from 1764 to mid 19th century.

City directories and newspapers are important resources for tracking the development of the grief process. In Colonial Schenectady funerals were small private affairs occurring shortly after death. The wake or calling hours were held the night after the death and the funeral was usually the next morning. Funeral directors and undertakers were not necessary and usually the local carpenter built the coffin. In the mid 1800’s undertakers had begun advertising in local directories. By the Civil War families wished to pay respects to departed soldiers and funerals were postponed for traveling of fellow family members and shipment of the deceased body. With the lengthening of the funerary process it became necessary to develop techniques in preservation. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the funeral process had become so large that funeral directing was a full time job.

Utilizing many important artifacts within the museum the exhibit will follow many of the themes of Robert Wells’ book. The exhibit is currently in the research and writing phase.
THE DOCK IS IN!

And what a dock it is! Hard work really paid off as visitors to the Farm are thrilled to see a new home for our bateaux.

MABE FARM UPDATE

John van Schaick, Mabee Farm Committee Chair

The Society is currently negotiating with Schenectady County for the possible purchase of a portion of the 29 acres that lie to the west of the Mabee Farm. Some of this land must be preserved as parkland, and some will be conveyed to the Native American Keepers of the Circle group whose meeting house is on that land, limiting the parcel prospectively available to us to nine or ten acres. The implication of this opportunity does mean, however, that the exact location and detailed design of the Franchere Education Center is now to be finalized. Our dock, however, is now complete and sits adjacent to the site of a second dock to be built by the County. To avoid confusion, an appropriate sign will be installed on our dock.

Specifications for the long-planned Dutch hay barric in the restored barnyard have been set and erection is tentatively set for 2006. Volunteers will do much of the work. The 19th century corncrib may go up this year after seasonal activities have ended. Another high priority item is to place packing sand over certain gravel-based farm roads and pathways to simulate 19th century surfaces and yet still serve 21st century public access needs.

Fund raising for the Schenectady Education Center now stands at $360,000 in pledges and money received, which is 55% of the first phase goal. That sum includes $1,000 just received from the Mabee Farm Foundation. Our anonymous donor who pledged to match gifts of individuals up to $1,000 received from the Mabee Family Foundation. Our anonymous donor who pledged to match gifts of individuals up to $1,000 has now paid a second $10,000 on the pledge, leaving room to match additional donations. Please send yours now and make an impact on our access needs.

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ANNUAL TOOL SWAP

The Hudson Mohawk Antique Tools & Trades Association’s Swap Meet will be held on Sunday, October 2nd from 12pm-2pm. The meet will be followed by the Association’s regular business meeting. The public is invited to attend.

DUTCH BARN PRESERVATION SOCIETY AND HOLLAND SOCIETY MEETING

On October 15, the Dutch Barn Preservation Society and the Holland Society will hold a meeting in the Dutch Barn at the Mabee Farm.

Schenectady County Historical Society and Mabee Farm Committee members are invited to attend.

CANCEAL FEST

Despite threatening clouds and gloomy weather predictions, over 1,200 people came out for the July 9th Music Festival for Canal Fest 2005. Those here were treated to the sweet sounds of the Riverview Ramblers, Skuttlebury, Jane’s Gang, Howard Lyons, Susan Trust, and Gary Van Slyke. The younger crowd took part in playing colonial games, making musical instruments at Andrea’s Kids Corner, and writing songs with Gary Van Slyke. The public also got its first glimpse of our newly-installed dock, at which the Dutch historic barge Golden Re’al was docked. Wagon rides, house tours, and an evening barn dance capped off this great community-building day.

ERIE CANAL BIKE TOUR

The Farm once again served as a rest stop on the Historic Erie Canal Bike Tour. Over 400 cyclists dropped in along their journey, some for tours of our historic buildings and the Golden Re’al and others for refreshments and rejuvenation along the Mohawk. The cyclists were gearing up for the final leg of their 300+ mile trek the following day and were clearly eased by the history and welcoming nature of our site.

COMMUNITY DAY/MABEE REUNION/CENTENNIAL PICNIC

Our three-tiered event was a great success! With over fifty Mabee and many community families in attendance and with Ginger’s BBQ and complimentary Stewart’s Ice Cream on the menu, a fun-filled day was had by all. Tours of our historic buildings were once again very popular. Kids enjoyed the enchanting music of Gary Van Slyke and bead animal making at the Kids’ Corner. This was yet another fabulous family day.

THE LOOM HAS ARRIVED!

The barn frame loom is finally here! Thanks to Kate Weller and Dave Ogsbury, who transported it to the Farm, the much-talked about loom arrived at its new home on July 28th. Transfer of ownership from the Herkimer State Historic Site to the Mabee Farm Foundation. Our anonymous donor who pledged to match gifts of individuals up to $1,000 has now paid a second $10,000 on the pledge, leaving room to match additional donations. Please send yours now and make your gift worth twice as much.

ANTIQUE OUTBOARD MOTOR SWAP MEET

On Saturday, August 27th, the Farm will host the 1st Antique Outboard Motor Informal Swap meet from 9am-3pm. The event is sponsored by the Mohawk Hudson Chapter of the Antique Outboard Club. See antique motor displays; buy, sell or trade motors and parts; get advice on your old motor, identify your motor and find sources for parts & service. For more information, call Michael Glenn at (518) 505-3558.

PEN PALS MEET AT MABEE FARM

Sheldon Carpenter, a 4th grader at Ballard Elementary School in South Glens Falls, and Casie Frady, a Glendale Elementary 4th grader in the Scotia-Glenville School District, were pen pals throughout this past school year. They met in person for the first time and got to have lunch together when their classes both came to the Mabee Farm Historic Site this past spring. The trip was arranged by Lynn Stallmer, a 4th grade teacher at Glenal, whose son-in-law, Anthony Kenney, just happens to be the Ballard 4th grade teacher. The teachers have been coordinating the language arts activity for the past two years and plan to continue combining it with an experience of real-life early colonial history at the Mabee Farm.

ARCHAEOLOGY CAMP

The farm was abuzz with aspiring archaeologists the week of July 18th, when we hosted our Summer Kids Archaeology Camp. Led by Louise Basa, the kids applied lessons learned to hands-on digs in the yard. A celebratory picnic capped off the week, at which Ed Baker, SCCC’s Dean of Continuing Education, presented each student with a junior archaeologist certificate.

Despite the fact that the Kids’ Camp is long-passed, Louise Basa, Andrea Dellavochio, and Dina Ariemma are currently negotiating with Schenectady County for the possible purchase of a portion of the 29 acres that lie to the west of the Mabee Farm. Some of this land must be preserved as parkland, and some will be conveyed to the Native American Keepers of the Circle group whose meeting house is on that land, limiting the parcel prospectively available to us to nine or ten acres. The implication of this opportunity does mean, however, that the exact location and detailed design of the Franchere Education Center is now to be finalized. Our dock, however, is now complete and sits adjacent to the site of a second dock to be built by the County. To avoid confusion, an appropriate sign will be installed on our dock.

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