

Schenectady County Historical Society



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Schenectady and the Golden Spike

By Christopher Leonard, Schenectady City Historian

May 10th of this year marked the 150th anniversary of the driving of the Golden Spike, which symbolically joins the first United States Transcontinental Railroad. Begun in 1863, the “Pacific Railroad” or “Overland Route” was a joint, although competitive, endeavor between the Central Pacific Railroad (CPRR), moving east from San Francisco to meet the Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) which headed westward from Council Bluffs, Iowa. The two railroad lines finally met at Promontory Point, Utah in 1869 after workers laid 1,912 miles of contiguous track.

Unfortunately, aside from a Spectrum news report largely devoted to the return of ALCO Big Boy 4014 to the rails, this event received little coverage in Schenectady. The lack of local fanfare paid to the event is regrettable in that the meeting of the rails was something of a coming-out party for Schenectady, a city which, at the time, was mostly known for its broom production. Indeed, many aspects of the transcontinental railroad – from the locomotives involved, to the railroad magnates, to the governor of California – had strong connections to New York’s Capital District, and to Schenectady County in particular.

The Jupiter Locomotive and the Driving of the Golden Spike

The Jupiter locomotive is perhaps the most famous of Schenectady’s attendees at the driving of the Golden Spike. Manufactured by the Schenectady Locomotive Company (a forerunner of ALCO) in 1868, the 4-4-0 Jupiter was a wood-burning engine designed to travel 4’8.5” gauge track. After construction, the Jupiter (Schenectady Locomotive serial #505) was disassembled and shipped to California around Cape Horn. Joining the Jupiter on this voyage were three similar locomotives constructed by Schenectady Locomotive: Storm (SLW Central Pacific #61), Whirlwind

President's Letter

America beats on you so hard the whole time. You are constantly being pummeled by other people's rights and their sense of patriotism.

- Novelist Richard Ford

The Schenectady County Historical Society was founded in the early twentieth century (1905), a time when descendants of America's founders were establishing historical societies all across the country. To be sure, these were influential people who had inherited both considerable wealth and (in their minds) the right to serve as custodians and defenders of America's "true" heritage. They felt that this heritage—and the values upon which it was based—needed defending, because, with wave after wave of immigrants finding work in factory towns such as Schenectady, social unrest was on the rise, and America was becoming a place that they found troubling.

So...self-described patriots with the proper lineage influenced the historical consciousness of generations of Americans by commemorating the past. They did this not only by creating historical organizations, but by marking the graves of Revolutionary War veterans and erecting monuments and memorials that symbolized a fairly narrow understanding of American history. Still, people such as George Bernard Shaw were not persuaded. Shaw suggested to promoters of this view of the past reinforced by "patriotic" symbols that: "Patriotism is your conviction that this country is superior to all others because you were born in it."

This was a long time ago, of course, and much has changed since then. During the 1930s, the federal government hired research historians to write books in which common people were portrayed as historical actors. The federal government likewise employed architects and archaeologists to conduct research on buildings and sites not connected to famous men. And then, in the 1960s and 70s, history scholars continued, more than ever, to base their historical interpretations on researched facts instead of timeworn symbolism; grassroots movements promoted local heritage in community after community. Indeed, the meaning of patriotism had changed considerably from what it had been decades earlier, at least according to author and activist Barbara Ehrenreich: "Dissent, rebellion, and all-around hell-raising remain the true duty of patriots."

Today, Schenectady—like America—is becoming more and more diverse with each passing day, and the definition of patriotism remains as contested as ever. That's fine. After all, in our democracy, we are all history makers, and no one can claim the right to enforce their ideas and interpretations on anyone else.

Together, though, we can all become better twenty-first century patriots by educating each other about our responsibilities as citizens. And happily, organizations such as ours are uniquely qualified to develop historical programs—grounded in professional research—that stimulate thoughtful discussion among our many stakeholders. I'm happy to say, too, that this is the course we have set for ourselves in our recently adopted strategic plan.

So join the discussion. Tell us your ideas. Listen to others. And help make a difference.

- Robert Weible, PRESIDENT@SCHENECTADYHSITORICAL.ORG

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VISIT

Library & Museum | M-F 9-5; Sat 10-2
32 Washington Ave, Schenectady, NY

Mabee Farm | Tues-Sat, 11-4
Guided tours at 11am, 1:30pm, and 3pm
1100 Main St, Rotterdam Jct, NY

Brouwer House | by appointment
14 N Church St, Schenectady, NY

CONTACT

www.schenectadyhistorical.org

Welcome, New Staff!

We're pleased to welcome **Marietta Carr** and **Christopher Kirksey** to SCHS!



Marietta Carr began as SCHS' new Librarian/Archivist in early August. Boasting an impressive resumé, Marietta's last position was at Cuyahoga Community College in Cleveland, Ohio where she worked as an archivist. Her real passion, however, has been to work at a museum or historical society. When she read our mission statement, she realized that SCHS would be the perfect place to work, combining her love of history with library work. Marietta grew up in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania and received a Masters Degree in History from Northeastern University. She furthered her studies at the University of Pittsburgh where she attained a Masters Degree in Library Science. Marietta currently resides in Glenville where she has been exploring the area. In her free time, she enjoys walking

with her dog Fred. Her hobbies include knitting and watching movies both old and new, especially the film noir classics. Welcome, Marietta!



Christopher Kirksey is the Cornell Cooperative Extension gardener behind the amazing changes to the Brouwer House gardens. After attending art school, Christopher worked in New York City as a makeup artist before returning to our area. Back upstate, he began working in his mother's garden and found that he had a talent with plants and gardening. His work caught the attention of the director of horticulture for Cornell Cooperative Extension who urged him to take up gardening as a career. Christopher found that he had both the talent and the passion to be a master gardener and began working for Cornell and conducting workshops with area garden clubs, community garden groups, and school groups. For many area school children, Christopher's workshops were their

first experience with plants and maintaining a garden. Chris' transformation of the Brouwer House gardens began this spring, and has been nothing short of miraculous. If you've seen the garden lately you would know that Chris has more than a green thumb. He is an artist, and the Brouwer House gardens is his canvas. Looking ahead, Chris has some great ideas for the Brouwer House. We at SCHS, as well as the entire neighborhood near the Brouwer House, are fortunate that Christopher found his way to our garden.

- John Angilletta

Schenectady's General Electric Realty Plot: A Review

Review by Martin Strosberg

The first home reception of a television signal occurred in 1927 at 1132 Adams Road, the residence of GE scientist and inventor Ernst Alexanderson. But his notable success would have been just one among the many great achievements credited to the extraordinary neighbors living in the GE Realty Plot (the "Plot"), the subject of Schenectady City Historian Chris Leonard's new book, *Schenectady's General Electric Realty Plot* (Images of America). Through historic black-and-white photos, well-integrated with text, Leonard compellingly tells the story of the GE Realty Plot, concentrating mostly on the period 1900 to 1950, arguably GE's golden age in Schenectady.

The Beginning

In 1899, Union College, strapped for cash, sold approximately 100 acres of undeveloped woods and fields east of the campus to GE. On behalf of GE, the Schenectady Realty Company was formed to develop and sell plots of land to GE executives so they could build their dream homes. But the plots were also used to attract and retain world-class scientists and inventors to advance the interests of GE's burgeoning industrial works in downtown Schenectady and throughout the country. Leonard states, "It is hard to imagine any community, planned or not, at any time in the world, that could match the sheer level of genius of those living in the GE Realty Plot from 1900-1950, except possibly some neighborhoods in Silicon Valley in the late 20th century." Charles Proteus Steinmetz, Nobel Laureate Irving Langmuir, the aforementioned Alexanderson, and William Coolidge, director of the research laboratory, were some of those geniuses.

The Schenectady Realty Company designed the Realty Plot's road configuration and set forth the general rules for the construction of the houses. The plot owners hired prominent architects to design their houses. By the end of the 1920s, mostly all of the Realty Plot's 135 structures were built in a variety of impressive architectural styles. But architecture is just one of the focal points of the book. Leonard, in pictures, documents the scientific, technical, industrial, and cultural history associated with the owners and their houses and by extension, Schenectady.

The Power Elite

In addition to GE's scientific superstars and managerial elite, including some GE presidents and many high-level executives, the Realty Plot was home to prominent business, governmental, and civic leaders. This was a time when Schenectady still had many locally-owned department stores, banks, factories, and other enterprises. Imagine the GE luminaries living in a neighborhood that at one time or another during our 50 year period included: the publisher of the Schenectady *Daily Gazette*, the president of Schenectady Trust Co., the founder of the Schenectady Varnish Co. (Schenectady International), the president of Barney's

Department Store, part of the founding family of Central Markets (Price Chopper), the national president of Girl Scouts of America, and Mayor George Lunn. In the 1960s, "Legs" DiCocco lived in the Realty Plot. Imagine the concentration of economic power and influence in one small geographical area! Historians and sociologists had ample fertile ground to explore. These days will never return.

The Fall and Rise of Historical Awareness

In the 1960s and 1970s, well past the halcyon days of GE and Schenectady, most Union College students living in fraternities on Lenox Road across the street from the GE Realty Plot had no idea there was such a thing as the Plot or what a remarkable historic neighborhood existed within a short walk. There were no historic markers, and there was no historic district. In part, it was a general lack of awareness that allowed the unfortunate demolition of some of the homes, including two owned by Union. To preserve the homes, as Leonard explains, it took neighborhood activists to form the GE Realty Plot Association in 1978 to lobby for Historic Neighborhood status and put the Plot "on the map." Also instrumental was Bruce Maston's 1984 book, *An Enclave of Elegance*, an appreciation of the Plot's great architecture. Chris Leonard's book is our most recent reminder of what a gem we have in our midst and why it must be preserved, and its people remembered. Incidentally, Chris is a resident of the Plot and its historian.

Chris Leonard, *Schenectady's General Electric Realty Plot* (Images of America), Arcadia Publishing, Charleston, South Carolina, 2019, 127 pages.



Dr. Ernst Alexanderson receiving the first television signal sent to a home, in 1927 (Courtesy SCHS).

From the Library

Note from The Librarian

I'm thrilled to take up the Librarian/Archivist position and start a new chapter here at SCHS. It was a slow summer in the library during this transition, but I'm looking forward to fall and winter. I hope you'll be able to stop by the library to say hello, or join us for Genealogy Day!

- Marietta Carr, Librarian/Archivist

Genealogy Day, Saturday, October 19, 9am – 2pm

9-10:15am: “Complex Evidence: Untangling Multiple, Same-Name Individuals” presented by Judith Herbert

You've found a John Smith in your ancestry and the question becomes, "Which of the possible John Smiths is my John Smith?" The lecture will provide tools and techniques for separating persons of the same name in an area, to ensure that researchers are locking on to the correct individual. Strategies for planning and conducting a surname study will be covered, as will tips for making sure all possible sources have been consulted, which could help to identify the right John Smith.

10:15-11:30am: “Patching Families Together Through Land Records” presented by Tina Post

When genealogists hit brick walls it's not fun. Land records can provide the clues necessary to put stymied research on track again. Tina Post will provide examples of how relationships can be gleaned using deeds, bounty lands, and land grants. In addition, platting will be discussed as a means of creating more leads to investigate.

11:30-12:45pm: “Gravestone Conservation for the Genealogist” presented by Christopher White

Have you ever seen that unreadable gravestone or that toppled monument and wondered "what can I do to address its condition?" There is a correct way and a wrong way to remedy that gravestone. Christopher White, a genealogist, historian, and gravestone conservator, will present a program on gravestone conservation including cleaning, repair, what to do, what not to do, when to do nothing, and when to seek a professional conservator.

12:45-4pm: Research in the Library

Blog Posts You May Have Missed

The Grems-Doolittle Library Collections Blog (WWW.GREMSDOOLITTLELIBRARY.BLOGSPOT.COM) is a great resource for learning more about Schenectady County's rich history. Here are a few of the posts from the past couple of months that you might have missed.

Farewell from Librarian Mike Maloney by Mike Maloney, May 22, 2019

After four years with SCHS, Mike Maloney accepted a new position at the New York State Archives. In this post, Mike reflected on his time at SCHS and the work he and the library volunteers accomplished.

Postcards! by Mary Zawacki, June 12, 2019

The postcard collection is growing! Through the efforts of Mark Vermilyea, the library accepted digital copies of over 500 postcards from Bill Davis' collection. Mary has been posting some of her favorites to Facebook, but you can learn more about the collection in this post.

Hello from the New Librarian by Marietta Carr, August 29, 2019

Our new librarian, Marietta Carr, started in August. In this post, Marietta introduced herself.

Current Library Projects

A lot of effort goes into making the library's collection discoverable and accessible. Fortunately, we have a great team of volunteers working steadily to make our materials easier to find and use. Here are a few of the projects currently underway:

- Digitizing the Larry Hart photo collection
- Digitizing the cookbooks of Schenectady
- Digitizing the Laura Brown slide collection
- Expanding the index to the newspaper vital records
- Transcribing birth and marriage records
- Copying and rehousing deteriorating city directories

The library couldn't run without our volunteers. We appreciate all of the time and energy they devote to our collection. If you'd like to get involved as a library volunteer, please contact Marietta.

What's Happening?

NEW EXHIBITIONS

Rural Modern

Opens October 12 @ Mabee Farm

Rural life and farming – and with it, the hard work, the understanding of the land, and the stories of those who farm it – is at the heart of Schenectady County. Today, after centuries of fields and flocks, we have created a rural landscape that is fruitful, beautiful, and largely misunderstood by those who live in cities or suburbs. This exhibit explores the stories of Schenectady's rural farmers.

Farming the Valley

Opens October 12 @ Mabee Farm

The transformation of Mabee Farm from a colonial homestead into a prosperous farm, and now a dynamic historic site, is the culmination of generations of hard work, daring, and change. This exhibition delves into the history and legacy of Mabee Farm, and showcases some of the Farm's most significant antiques!

Farm to Canvas: Works by the Schenectady Art Society

Opens October 12 @ Mabee Farm

Works by local artists, inspired by our rural landscape.

TOURS AND TRIPS

Pre-registration is required for most programs.

Candlelight Tours

Fridays, Oct 11, 18 & 25 at 7 & 7:30pm @ 32 Washington Ave

\$12, includes refreshments and live music

We're back with new spooky tales for 2019! Join us as we explore the historic Stockade after dark and discover the neighborhood's haunting past! Includes entry to museum, and refreshments and live music after the tour. Your choice of "Colonial Hauntings" or "Ghostly Victorian" tour. Co-sponsored by the Schenectady Heritage Foundation.

The Great Schenectady Farm Tour

Saturday, Oct 12 at 8am @ Mabee Farm • \$30

Our bus will stop at six local farms, including the Hungy Chicken Apple Orchard, Lansing's Farm Market, The Saratoga Therapeutic Equestrian Program, BioSoil, The Schenectady Distillery, and Riverside Maple Farms. MADE POSSIBLE BY A GRANT FROM HUMANITIES NEW YORK.

Bus Trip to the American Museum of Natural History

Wednesday, February 12 • \$85

The AMNH is the world's largest natural history museum, packed with exciting exhibits. Explore the AMNH's dinosaurs, planetarium, giant whale, Hall of Biodiversity, fossils, gems, and striking animal dioramas!

Bus Trip to the Metropolitan Museum of Art

Wednesday, March 18 • \$85

With collections spanning more than 5,000 years of culture, from prehistory to the present, the Metropolitan is a journey through the world's greatest art.

PERFORMANCES

A Stockade Seance

Oct 19 @ 7 & 9pm • Oct 20 @ 7pm • Oct 26 @ 7 & 9pm

Oct 27 @ 7pm • Oct 31 @ 7 & 9pm • Brouwer House • \$20

Gather with the spirits of the season as we partner once again with NorthEast Theatre Ensemble to bring their special brand of site-specific theater to life! Join our hostesses for a Victorian Halloween séance, as mediums guide us through gruesome and ghostly tales from the region. Please purchase in advance at [HTTPS://ASTOCKADESEANCE.SIMPLETIX.COM/E/47130](https://ASTOCKADESEANCE.SIMPLETIX.COM/E/47130)

The Glass Menagerie

Nov 15, 16, 17, 22, 23, & 24 @ 7 & 9pm • Brouwer House • \$ TBD

The Glass Menagerie is Tennessee William's classic tale of family love, frustration, longing and abandonment. Join NorthEast Theatre Ensemble as we visit 1937 and live one of William's most beloved memory plays in an immersive theatre experience.

TALKS, WORKSHOPS, AND MORE

Campfire at Mabee Farm

Wednesday, Oct 9 - 6pm @ Mabee Farm • \$8; free for members

Join us for a fine fall evening around the campfire! Come share share ghost stories and other local tall tales with us. We'll have s'mores and warm apple cider readily available.

Reception: A Trifecta of Exhibitions

Saturday, Oct 12 - 2:30pm @ Mabee Farm • \$5, free for members

Join us for a trifecta of exhibition openings at Mabee Farm, including the unveiling of a brand new gallery! Each exhibit is focused on different aspects of rural life in the Mohawk Valley. This series of openings will feature gallery talks with the exhibits' curators and contributing artists. Refreshments served.

Genealogy Day

Saturday, Oct 19 - 9am-2pm @ 32 W • \$8, free for members

Genealogy Day returns with three speakers:

- 9-10:15am: "Complex Evidence: Untangling Multiple, Same-Name Individuals" presented by Judith Herbert, Certified Genealogist®

- 10:15-11:30am: "Patching Families Together Through Land Records" presented by Tina Post

- 11:30-12:45pm: "Gravestone Conservation for the Genealogist" presented by Christopher White

Museum Association of NY Workshop & Meetup

Thursday, Oct 24 - 9:30am-6:30pm @ Mabee Farm • \$35/free

MANY will present a workshop that enables museum professionals to learn from leaders in the field. Presentations include "Exclusive and Inclusive: Behind the Scenes Collections Tours for the 21st Century" and "Expanding Visitor Experiences: Engaging Tour Ideas for Historic Sites." Join us for the free meetup after the workshop to meet and connect with museum professionals

from around the region. Light refreshments served.

Workshop: An Introduction to the Tarot

Tuesday, Oct 29 - 7pm @ Brouwer House • \$50

Embrace the esoteric this Halloween inside Schenectady's oldest home as instructor Jeannie Thomma delves into the Secrets of Tarot. The Tarot is full of imagery, symbolism, and secrets that can help you to find answers to your most pressing questions. Seasonal refreshments served.

Book Talk & Signing: "Tributaries: A Lazy Academic's Look at some Streams, Creeks, and Kills around Schenectady Way"

Saturday, Nov 9 - 2pm @ Mabee Farm • \$5; free for members

Author Dale Wade-Keszey will discuss his recently published book that looks at the history, legends, and lore of our region's waterways.

Book Talk & Signing: "George Lunn: The 1912 Socialist Victory in Schenectady"

Saturday, Nov 16 - 2pm @ 32 W • \$5; free for members

Journalist and County Historian Bill Buell will discuss his new book that details the life of George Lunn, the popular Socialist mayor of Schenectady. Buell won numerous awards for his work at the *Daily Gazette*, including a New York Press Association Award.

FOR FAMILIES

A Very Mabee Thanksgiving

Saturday, Nov 16 - 2pm @ Mabee Farm • \$8; free for members

What did Schenectadians of yore do for Thanksgiving? This family program will explore the reasons and ways in which people gave thanks, from the Colonial to Victorian era. We'll even sample some period recipes!

Build a Bauble

Saturday, Dec 7 - 12pm @ 32 W • \$5/ornament

We'll provide the materials to make your very own tree ornament, plus plenty of historic ornaments on display for inspiration. When done, kids can take their crafts home, and admire them throughout the holiday season.

American Girl Tea

Saturday, Dec 14 - 2pm @ 32 W • \$8

Join us for an elegant holiday tea party! Our Festival of Trees will be in full swing, making a glittering holiday backdrop for the occasion. We'll have baked goods and stories to share, and make a wintry craft to take home.

A Very Mabee Christmas

Saturday, Dec 21 - 1pm @ Mabee Farm • \$8/child

Zalig Kerstmas! This program welcomes all families to share in Dutch holiday traditions. Our historic house will be warm, cozy and decked for the season. With riddles and clues to guide them, kids will hunt for small gifts to take home. Of course, we'll enjoy some Dutch sweets.

FOOD AND DRINK

Drink the Seasons: Autumn Cocktails

Thursday, Oct 3 - 6pm @ Brouwer House • \$25

Led by historian John Gearing, we'll sample a variety of seasonal libations, made with locally grown ingredients. Get cozy in Schenectady's oldest home as we welcome fall!

Mabee Farm to Fork

Saturday, Oct 5 - 5pm @ Mabee Farm • \$50

Join us for a pastoral evening in the Barn at Mabee Farm, as we celebrate the farm-to-table tradition. Our four-course meal features locally-grown foods served alongside craft beverages, and live music by the Arch Stanton Quartet.

A Night at the Inn

Friday, Nov 22 - 7pm @ Mabee Farm • \$12

Night may fall early and the wind may blow, but our Colonial Inn is bright, warm and open for business! All weary travelers are invited to stop by for games, adult libations, and good company.

Night of Lights

Friday, Dec 6 - 6pm @ 32 W • \$20

Come celebrate the beginning of wintertide enchantment with the Night of Lights, an exclusive evening of radiant fir trees, live music at SCHS and the YWCA, great food, special cocktails (included!) and more!

Drink the Seasons: Christmas Cocktails

Thursday, Dec 12 - 6pm @ 32 W • \$25

The halls of SCHS will be decked as we celebrate winter with a few rounds of drinks amidst holiday splendor.

Wintertide Tours

Saturdays, Dec 14 & 21 - 10am @ Mabee Farm • \$10

Enjoy the spectacularly decorated Mabee House this season. It's, warm, cozy, and will be filled with good cheer, hot cider, and sweets.

FESTIVALS AND MUSIC

Schenectady County FallFest

Sunday, Oct 13, 11am - 4pm @ Mabee Farm

A FREE festival featuring live music, hay rides, pony rides, petting zoo, hot cider, dog-herding demonstrations, live birds of prey, pumpkin painting, craft fair, beer, and more!
SPONSORED BY FIRST NY FEDERAL CREDIT UNION.

Festival of Trees

Dec 7 - 22, 10am - 5pm @ 32 W & YWCA • \$8

Celebrate the season as we fill our galleries with lighted fir trees! Decorated from classic to kooky Christmas styles, the trees glow with the enchantment of the holidays. Co-presented with the YWCA NorthEastern NY. Consider sponsoring a tree: SCHENECTADYHISTORICAL.ORG/TREES.

Howlin' at the Moon

Sponsored by Wolf Hollow Brewing Company

Upcoming concerts at Mabee Farm include:

Hot Tuesday

Oct 17 at 7pm • \$6

Red Haired Strangers

Nov 12 at 7pm • \$6

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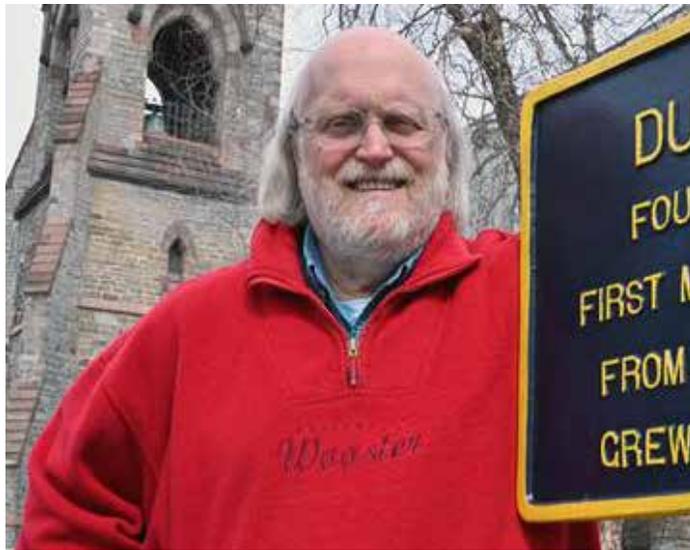
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Around the County with the Schenectady County Historian

An introduction from Bill Buell, the newly appointed Schenectady County Historian. We welcome Bill to the SCHS Newsletter!



On November 18, 1952, William Efner, a former newspaperman who was then the city historian, created the Efner History Center on the third floor of Schenectady's City Hall. The very next day, November 19, 1952, I was born.

Coincidence? Yes, but I always enjoyed that loose connection to one of our county's finest depositories of history. After 41 years as a newspaperman at the Schenectady *Gazette*, I am now the Schenectady County Historian, and as I work my way into the position, I keep being reminded of how important it is to honor the memory and work of men and women who came before me, like Efner.

Efner worked for both the *Gazette* and the *Union-Star*, as did another Schenectady City and County Historian, Larry Hart; their newspaper background makes them particularly interesting to me. I also shudder when I think about the huge gaps we would have in our community's history without the enormous input of those two men.

It's amazing to think that many of the items in the Efner History Center – it was actually named after Efner in 1988 – were first saved and stored in the third floor of his home on Front Street in the Stockade. Thanks to the Schenectady County Historical Society and volunteer Cindy Seacord – who began cataloging, classifying and

categorizing the collection in 2004 – finding your way around the place and accessing all the information is much easier than it used to be. And Chris Leonard, named City Historian last year, is also keeping regular hours there, making a visit to the Efner History Center a priority for all local history buffs.

I never had the opportunity to meet Efner, and while I did know Hart, and considered him a friend and a colleague, I didn't really work with him in his capacity as our city and county historian during my time as a feature writer at the *Gazette*. But we did talk informally, and he would tell me stories about Efner and other historians such as Francis Poulin, Percy Van Eps, Lloyd Brinkman and Millicent Veeder, to name just a few. I hope to revisit those names and take a closer look at the work they did in the months to come.

For now, let me say that as a history major at the University at Albany, getting to know historians in my role as a reporter for the *Gazette* has been one of the real perks of the job. Sometimes, you get to know them well enough that you can call them friends.

In my case, visiting the homes of Don Keefer (Glenville), Art Willis (Duanesburg), and Irma Mastrean (Princeton), was such a treat. I maneuvered my way into their homes on more than one occasion. Keefer told me all about John Isaac DeGraff and his girlfriend, as well as their illegitimate daughter. Willis talked about James Duane's big plans for Duanesburg. And, Mastrean made me appreciate more the link between history and art. Keefer and Willis have passed away, sadly, but I'm happy to say Mastrean is doing well and that she and her husband Steve are celebrating their 70th anniversary this year.

My experience with these historians will help make me a better county historian, and there are plenty of others whose broad knowledge of local history has been a valuable asset to me and my learning process. Frank Taormina, a former high school history teacher at Niskayuna and a past president of the Schenectady County Historical Society, and George Wise, who worked for 26 years in the communication department at General Electric, have been, and continue to be great sources of information – as well as good friends. Another person I might call to answer a question, if I came up empty with Frank and George, would be Chris Hunter at miSci, or any of the three wonderful librarians I've worked with (Katherine Chansky, Melissa Tacke and Mike Maloney) at the Schenectady County Historical Society.

Part of my job description now is to help educate the citizens of Schenectady County about their history, and to help them celebrate that history. For this Glenville native and life-long Schenectady County resident, I can't imagine a more enjoyable job.

The Fascinating Life of Jeanne Robert Foster: Poet, Journalist and Founder of the Schenectady Senior Center

By James O'Toole

There is a poem by the English occultist and self-proclaimed prophet Aleister Crowley simply titled "Jeanne." On first read, it might be passed off as sentimental doggerel, typical of the period:

I laid mine ear against your heart,
Jeanne
A masterpiece of nature turned
A masterpiece of art,
With your blanched Egyptian beauty foiled
By the hungry eyes, and the red mouth soiled
By the honey of mine that your greed has spoiled,
Jeanne
The body a corpse and the soul inurned

The poem ends ruefully:

Jeanne
For the end of love and the end of art
Is just --- my ear against your heart

Who was this Jeanne? Aleister Crowley's followers – "Thelemites," who embraced his mystery religion – knew her as Crowley's "Scarlet Woman."

She was born Julia Elizabeth Oliver in 1879 to a lumberjack father and a teacher mother who chose the rugged trail to the North Country. The family homesteaded on the unyielding, rocky terrain formed by the Ice Age. Jeanne spent her formative years in and around Chestertown, New York, in the Adirondack State Park which, even today, has a population straining to reach 700. Though Jeanne's long and cosmopolitan life was saturated in poetry and magick, she eventually found her way to Schenectady, a city to which she dedicated her talents.

For young Jeanne, the Adirondacks were a place of natural beauty, but nature often proved indifferent to the plight of the families. Boys might grow up to become farmers, lumberjacks, or work the mills along the streams. Prospects for a poor mountain girl were far more limited. Jeanne was told only that she might make a fine washerwoman for a wealthy family. In her verse, she described the rarity of "love" marriages and describes the plight of women:

Raised on Mormon Hill, where they count women
Less than fat cattle. They used to trade them
Till the government stepped in and stopped it.
("Silence Davis," *Neighbors of Yesterday*)

To escape this bleak future, Jeanne married at eighteen, to the much older Matlack Foster. Foster saw to it that Jeanne was able to obtain an education, experience city life, and explore rewarding opportunities in modeling, acting, and writing. Jeanne's career and Matlack's worsening health gave Jeanne the freedom to align herself with some of the most influential men of her day, sometimes romantically.

Jeanne grew up in a time when some educated people (like her mother), embraced alternative spirituality in a revolt against the strict Calvinism of their Yankee upbringing. Jeanne's mother was a follower of the Transcendentalists, thus sparking Jeanne's interest in Theosophy (any of a number of philosophies maintaining that a knowledge of God may be achieved through spiritual ecstasy or direct intuition).

Jeanne's fascination with the darker side of magick began in her youth. One of her family homes was said to have been hexed by its previous resident after he was set out by the landlord. In 1906, Jeanne's lifelong interest in esoterica inspired her to join the New York chapter of Theosophical Society. Her fascination with the occult perhaps made Jeanne susceptible to the charms of Aleister Crowley, British poet and adventurer with a bad reputation and worsening drug habit. Jeanne struck up a friendship with him, despite warnings from her friend, John Butler Yeats, the painter and father of poet William. When Jeanne met Crowley, he had already become the sworn enemy of William Butler Yeats. The two poet-magickians were on opposite sides of the legendary civil war inside the Order of the Golden Dawn, a secret occult society.

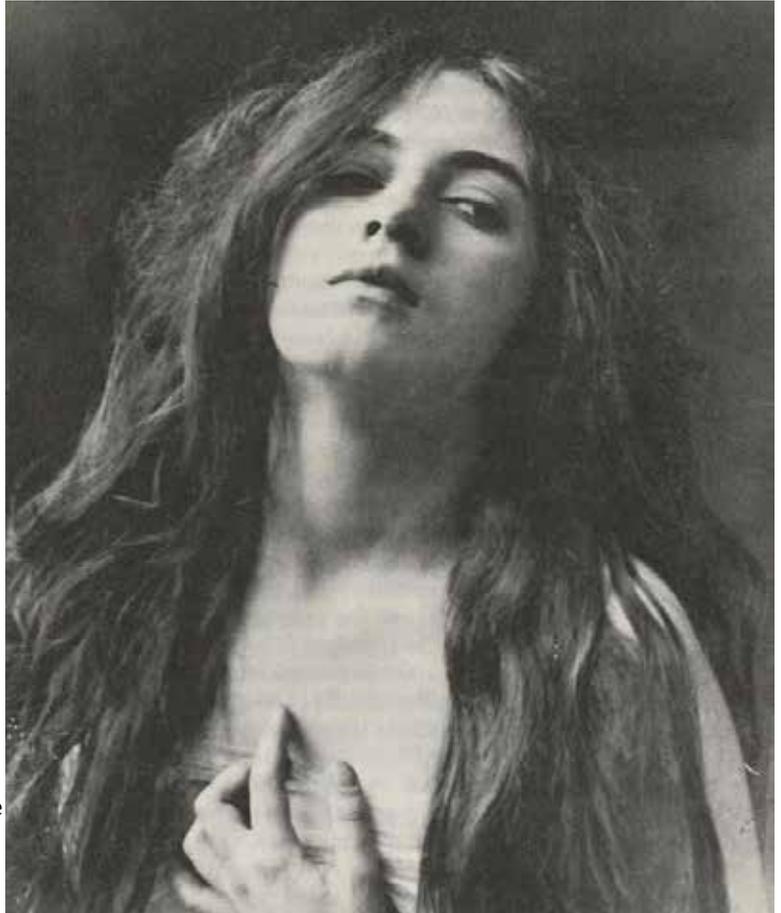
When Jeanne met Crowley, she was enjoying a career as a world-traveling New York City based journalist, influential literary editor, and had published her first collection of poetry, *Wild Apples*. Crowley was a prolific and respected poet; his writing often appeared in the sophisticated *Vanity Fair*, which had employed young Jeanne as a fashion model.

Jeanne was a faithful letter-writer and diarist, dutifully recording conversations with famous friends. Her romances and adventures were also chronicled in detail, betraying the public image of the respectable wife. Although Crowley idealized her as his "Scarlet Woman," Jeanne did not share his vision of reality, and recorded little of their affair. Indeed, while Crowley made many claims of their love, Jeanne's writing reveals almost no

details about Crowley.

Jeanne appears in several of Crowley's diary entries and sonnets, described as his starry-eyed fantasy woman. Dante had his unrequited love with Beatrice; Yeats his Maud Gonne. Crowley, not to be left out, found and lost his muse in Jeanne. Among the many sonnets published in *Vanity Fair*, was an erotic sonnet "In the Red Room of Rose Croix" which alludes to his certainty that Jeanne was his Scarlet Woman.

Crowley attempted to persuade Jeanne to leave her career to work for him. Unimpressed that the position he offered was little more than a glorified secretary, Jeanne turned down the offer. Frightened of Crowley's unpredictable behavior and obsessive love for her, which he splashed shamelessly across the pages of a well-read magazine, Jeanne became disenchanted. Breaking it to Crowley that their affair was over proved more difficult. He refused to accept her choice, and made a physical threat of violence against Jeanne's mother. Jeanne was unsure of how Crowley had known that her mother was visiting from the North Country. Sufficiently terrified, Jeanne demanded that her mother spend the night in her bed. Jeanne would later relate that they were visited that evening by the figure of a menacing demon, which she cast out using white magick.



Through connections in the publishing world, Jeanne was instrumental in the fame achieved on our side of the Atlantic by T.S. Eliot, Ford Maddox Ford, and Ezra Pound. Jeanne can be remembered as a champion of Modernism. Jeanne aged gracefully, balancing the intellectual life with humility and service to others. She saw her unselfish service to the poor and arts & letters as an expression of her love of the divine.

Jeanne had always been interested in housing rights, a subject on which she had written extensively as an investigative journalist. In 1938, at age 55, she obtained a position with the housing authority in Schenectady, NY. Once in Schenectady, Jeanne kept her occult beliefs under wraps, instead choosing to channel it through good works. She would live out the balance of her years at 1762 Albany Street, a modest home still standing today on what was once her family's farmland.

Jeanne established Schenectady's first senior center, which now provides services to this author's own parents. While Jeanne may have never achieved the lasting fame her best poems deserved, she remained worthy of the title "poet" until the end, sharing her talents with poetry classes taught to Schenectady's seniors. For her selfless service to the community she was honored with the Patroon Award, reserved for the city's finest. Shortly after receiving an

honorary doctorate at Union College in 1970, Jeanne left her earthly body at the age of 86.

Jeanne was laid to rest under the pines, between her husband Matlack, and her friend John Butler Yeats, in the historic rural cemetery off Route 9 in Chestertown. Her unassuming marble grave marker bears the modest inscription: "Jean Robert Wife of Matt Foster 1970." Jeanne, the cosmopolitan intellectual, once heralded as an "international playgirl," returned, quite literally, to her roots:

I heard the wild loon and the catbird cry
Over Sagamore Lake, and I knew that I
Heard the ancient call of race
Bidding me to my own place.

....

I am the root of the yellow willow,
The stem of the lily leaf;
There cannot come to my marsh-grass pillow
The cry of a human grief.

This article first appeared in its original form, with footnotes, on 12-12-18 at [HTTPS://HEATHENHARVEST.ORG/2018/12/12/POETRY-OF-THE-RELUCTANT-A-SENSIBLE-LOOK-AT-JEANNE-ROBERT-FOSTER-AS-CROWLEYS-SCARLET-WOMAN](https://heathenharvest.org/2018/12/12/poetry-of-the-reluctant-a-sensible-look-at-jeanne-robert-foster-as-crowleys-scarlet-woman).



Above: East and West Shaking Hands at the Laying of Last Rail - Andrew J. Russell - Yale University Libraries, public domain.
Right: Leland Stanford, 1870s, public domain.

(continued from page 1) (#62), and Leviathan (#63). Jupiter was put into service on March 20, 1869, as SLW Central Pacific #60.

The Jupiter's fame is derived from its participation in the Golden Spike ceremony, and for carrying California Governor and Central Pacific President Leland Stanford to the event. Otherwise, there was nothing special about the engine. Its fame was unintended as it was not supposed to be the locomotive to carry Governor Stanford. Another locomotive, the Antelope, was meant to bear this honor. However, tragedy struck as the two trains made their way to Promontory Point, Utah.

Jupiter led the way on the trip to Utah with Antelope following a moment behind. As Jupiter made its way through a construction camp, workers either missed or misread the flags posted on the locomotive that noted another locomotive was following behind. Believing the track to be clear, the workers rolled a large log down a hill and onto the track, which struck the Antelope broadside. While no one was seriously injured, Antelope was knocked out of commission, leading to the Jupiter's big moment. Governor Stanford and his staff changed trains and continued to Promontory Point, Utah.

After a collection of speeches, four ceremonial spikes cast of gold were driven into the completed track to symbolize both the joining of east and west, and the wealth and prosperity it would bring to the country. As president of the Central Pacific Railroad, Stanford was given the honor

of driving in the fourth and final golden spike. Once the ceremony was completed, engineers drove forward the Jupiter and Locomotive #119 cowcatcher to cowcatcher, as shown in the photo East Meets West.

It should be noted that Locomotive #119 was manufactured by the Rogers Locomotive and Machine Company in 1868. In 1905, Rogers would become a part of the American Locomotive Company (ALCO) headquartered in Schenectady. The Rogers Company stayed in the ALCO family as a parts warehouse and storage facility into the 1920s.

The Jupiter and Locomotive #119 are just two pieces of the tale that link back to Schenectady and the Capital District. The presidents of both the Central Pacific and Union Pacific Railroads have local ties.

The Stanford Family and the Railroad

Amasa Leland Stanford, the 8th governor of California (1862-83), and a president of the Central Pacific Railroad was born in the town of Watervliet in 1824. His involvement with the railroad started early; his father, Josiah, was involved in the construction of the Albany and Schenectady Railroad. It's not hard to imagine seven-year-old Leland's mind being fired by the trailblazing trip of the DeWitt-Clinton locomotive in its inaugural run from Albany to Schenectady. And, this was not young Leland's only brush with the railroad. In 1844, the Mohawk and Hudson Railroad was ceded land that had been part of

Elm Grove, the family farm in Roessleville, New York. When returning home, Leland would have heard train whistles passing by his house.

The Stanford family connection to Schenectady was expanded in March 1859 when Josiah purchased the Locust Grove Estate. Locust Grove, bordering what is now Route 5 and Balltown Road in Niskayuna, had previously been owned by luminaries including John Duncan, General Phillip Schuyler, and John I. Vrooman. Although quite rural at the time, the property has since been transformed into Mansion Square, a commercial shopping center. The Schuyler-Stanford Mansion is now a Berkshire Bank.

Leland Stanford, Governor, and Railroad President

After graduating from the Clinton Liberal Institute in 1841 and attending the Cazenovia Seminary, Leland was admitted to the New York Bar in 1848. He moved west to Port Washington, Wisconsin, in 1851, where he set up a law office, which was lost in a fire the following year. The next year, Leland moved further west to Cold Spring, California, a gold rush town, where he ran a general store. This venture failed as well when the mines petered out. Leland moved yet again, setting up shop in another mining town called Michigan Bluff. There, he ran a general store and was named justice of the peace by the board of supervisors.

It was in Michigan Bluff that Stanford joined the Republican Party of California. He ascended its ranks quickly, and served as the party's nominee for governor of California in 1859 – ultimately losing the contest. Leland ran again in 1861, this time successfully. He became friends with Collis P. Huntington through his involvement with the Republican Party of California, as well as William Seward. His dealings with Huntington led to his part in the creation of the Central Pacific Railroad, with Stanford as president, and Huntington as vice president.

It must be noted that Thomas Durant, Stanford's counterpart in the Union Pacific Railroad, also had Capital District roots, having graduated from Albany Medical School. Durant retired to Blue Mountain Lake, New York after the Crédit Mobilier scandal ended his involvement with the Union Pacific Railroad.



After the Golden Spike

Leland Stanford served as Governor of California for just two years (1862-63) and served part of two terms as a US Senator (1885-1893). He remained president of the Central Pacific and Southern Pacific Railroads until his passing in 1893. His only son, Leland Stanford, Jr. died tragically of typhoid fever while traveling in Italy. Leland Jr. was just shy of his 16th birthday. In 1887, on what would have been Leland Jr.'s 19th birthday, Governor Stanford and his wife Jane Lathrop dedicated Leland Stanford Junior University. The Stanfords donated \$40 million to the cause and brought in Frederick Law Olmstead to lay out the campus. Olmstead had Schenectady ties as well having designed Schenectady's Central Park, as well as Central Park in New York City, Albany's Washington Park, and Congress Park in Saratoga.

So, what became of the Jupiter after its role in the Golden Spike ceremony?

It stayed in service with Central Pacific until 1891, when it was sold to the Southern Pacific Railroad and numbered 195. It was then acquired by the Gila Valley, Globe and Northern Railway (GVG & N) in 1893, where it became locomotive #1 and was converted into a coal engine. It returned to the Southern Pacific fold in 1901 when they bought GVG & N. In 1909 it was consigned to scrappers.

In 1974, the National Park Service contracted with O'Connor Engineering Labs of Costa Mesa, California, to build a nearly exact replica of the Jupiter. Completed in 1979, the new Jupiter is on permanent display at Golden Spike National Historical Park at Promontory Point, Utah, and took the seminal role of the original in the 150th anniversary celebration.

Chris Leonard is the Schenectady City Historian, a trustee of the Schenectady County Historical Society and a volunteer in the Gremms-Doolittle Library.

Spotlight: Bill Buell

By Mike Diana, Educator

History is kept alive not by the objects and documents of the past but by the people who celebrate them. And indeed, every once in a while, it's only fair to celebrate those people as well. Anyone who's spent time at SCHS would be familiar with our subject here. You might know him by his jovial bearded face, his amusing antics, or perhaps his unmistakable passion for a certain socialist mayor. I'm writing, of course, about our very own Bill Buell. And what a time to celebrate his contributions!

This May, Bill was appointed the official Schenectady County Historian. I had the pleasure of sitting with Bill a few weeks back and he was kind enough to tell me how he came to hold such a position. "Journalist"-to- (real) journalist, I promised to keep secret the most scandalous points of our conversation. You'll just have to ask him about those yourself.

Bill has long called Schenectady his home. Born in Glenville, he attended Burnt Hills-Balston Lake Senior High School. A fascination with the Civil War was his lead into history, which he studied at both SCCC and the University of Albany. Bill made a career out of a longstanding fixture of Schenectady's *Daily Gazette*. For 21 years he covered sports, before becoming a feature writer, allowing him to write more about local history. At the *Gazette*, Bill met and spoke often with the former county historian Larry Hart. Bill's passion and knowledge must have shown through, because, even ten years ago, he was offered the position of County Historian by Schenectady's late mayor, Karen Johnson. At that point, he demurred, as he still had a busy workload at the newspaper. However, with the recent passing of Historian Ed Riley, Bill knew it was time to take the mantle himself. As County Historian, Bill sees his role as educating the public in all aspects of Schenectady's past. If he cannot provide the answers you're looking for, he can almost certainly point you in the right direction.

For those who don't see the utility in studying our county, Bill can set them straight with characteristic wit. "We have a wonderful Indian massacre," he insists. "There aren't really that many good ones." But in Schenectady history, Bill's favorite era is the progressive years from 1890 to 1920. In fact, Bill is sure to celebrate the birthday of George Lunn, the aforementioned socialist mayor, by bringing cake to SCHS. He brings to his position not only remarkable academic knowledge, but personal recollections as well. He told me of how he would visit Schenectady as a boy, when the GE and ALCO factories still fumed at a fever pitch. "Everyone's father seemed to work at GE. The downtown bustled and brimmed with energy." When asked about Schenectady's renaissance, he seemed genuinely optimistic and credited much of the newfound vitality to Proctors. On the subject of more recent projects, he was perhaps less optimistic. "The casino can't hurt," he said. And from someone who knows Schenectady better than most, a man who's lived, and studied, and written here for decades, I think cautious optimism is a good sign, indeed.

From top left: Our Independence Day Celebration at M... and the Arts & Crafts Festival; Our incredible special eve...



Around the Society

Mabee Farm, featuring live music and fireworks; guests to the Mabee Farm enjoying some of this summer's special events, like CanalFest
nts volunteers, Bill Switts, Colleen Switts, and Kathy Van Flue.



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