



*Celebrating the Holiday  
Season at the Historical Society.  
Photos: Jim Eignor, Ann Aronson*



Schenectady County  
Historical  
Society

# Newsletter

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*The Jupiter*

*Photo: National Park Service*

## *ALCO and Schenectady: Hauling the World*

The origins of what later became the American Locomotive Company (ALCO) date to the 1840s when the Norris brothers, principally William and Septimus, agreed to build and operate a locomotive works in Schenectady similar to their successful Norris Locomotive Works of Philadelphia. The Schenectady Locomotive Engine Manufactory was begun in 1848 and began operation in 1849 on land purchased from Union College. Schenectady was chosen as the site for this industrial enterprise due to its proximity to several railroads and the Erie Canal, but the operation was closed by 1850 due to a countrywide economic

decline. In 1851 local investors John Ellis, Sebastian Bradt, Daniel Campbell, and Simon Groot formed a new company to take over the Norris property and renamed it the Schenectady Locomotive Works (SLW). Due to the innovative designs of Master Mechanic Walter McQueen and the leadership of President Ellis, the new company quickly became one of the largest producers of locomotives in the country. Well into the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Schenectady Locomotives were referred to as “McQueens,” and to this day there are many persons of surname McQueen living in Schenectady County.

With the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861, production at SLW increased in order to produce locomotives for the war effort. The extensive growth of the company during the war put SLW on a sure footing for the rest of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, despite the loss of President John Ellis in 1864 and a major fire in 1866 that destroyed a large portion of the factory. On May 10, 1869, SLW’s Central Pacific #60, the famous 4-4-0 “Jupiter,” met a locomotive of the Union Pacific Railroad at Promontory Point, Utah—cow catcher to cow catcher—to complete the Transcontinental Railroad. Leland Stanford, brother of Schenectady’s own Charles Stanford (a friend of Walter McQueen) helped to drive home the famous golden spike. (*See [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jupiter\\_\(locomotive\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jupiter_(locomotive)) for the Jupiter story that contains our cover picture.*)

In the 1880s, Walter McQueen was instrumental in bringing the Edison Machine Works to Schenectady, a company that later become part of General Electric. Investors had tried to lure him away from SLW to create a rival McQueen Locomotive Works. Suitable buildings were built in 1882 but never occupied by McQueen, who was persuaded to stay with SLW by the Ellis family. Those buildings would later become part of the Edison Machine Works.

*Continued on page 7*



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## HOURS

## MUSEUM & LIBRARY

MONDAY-FRIDAY 9-5

SATURDAY 10-2

## MABEE FARM

CLOSED FOR  
THE SEASON

## Letter from the President

Last issue, I told you about three key employees, our Curator, Librarian, and Mabee Farm Site Manager who provide the programmatic services to members and visitors that are central to the mission of the Society. But a fourth member of our professional staff performs equally vital functions. Someone must do the bookkeeping and banking, the mailing, the maintenance of membership records, the greeting of visitors, the sale of gift shop material, and the myriad other tasks essential to the daily functioning of the office. In a larger institution, it may take several people to provide these services, but at our Society someone must be the Jack or Jill of all trades who does all this.



Meet Mary Treanor, who joined us as Office Manager last November 1. Mary is a graduate of Canisius College in Buffalo where she graduated summa cum laude and earned successive B.S. degrees in Marketing and Accounting. Most recently, she worked for a development company in Clifton Park, but previously she had worked in Schenectady for Fred Kindl's engineering firm and the law firm of (Bill) Bates and (Rich) Lewis. Mary lives in Glenville with husband Michael, an engineer at the Knolls Atomic Power Laboratory, daughter Caitlin, a senior at Burnt Hills High School, and son Chris, who attends

SUNY at Geneseo. Consistent with her dedication to and proficiency in accounting, she likes all kinds of puzzles, both linguistic and mathematical, and starts most days with a daily Sudoku, cryptogram, crossword, or word-search challenge. Then, after this sharpening of deductive skills, Mary comes to work ready to resolve the sometimes puzzling challenges, accounting and otherwise, that keep us functioning. Please stop by to meet and welcome her.

- Ed



Photos: Ann Aronson



Festival of Trees 2007 at the Society.

Continued from page 1



The RS-3 diesel-electric locomotive, used as a road switcher diesel. Photo: Ann Aronson

The Schenectady Locomotive Works was the largest and most modern of eight locomotive companies throughout the Eastern United States that united to form the American Locomotive Company in 1901 with the intent to compete with the Baldwin Locomotive Works in Philadelphia. The eight companies are named in much longer articles about Alco history that can be found on the Web. ([en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American\\_Locomotive\\_Company](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_Locomotive_Company), [schenectadyhistory.org/railroads/alcohistory/](http://schenectadyhistory.org/railroads/alcohistory/), and [tardis.union.edu/community/project95/ALCO/history.html](http://tardis.union.edu/community/project95/ALCO/history.html))

As times changed Alco diversified into new and sometimes different technologies. Alco manufactured everything from automobiles in the early 1900s (at its Rhode Island plant) to nuclear reactor parts in the 1960s. In the 1930s it would revolutionize engine design with the creation of the road switcher diesel (see picture), the basis of the locomotives used today. But to Alco, the diesel engine was a side project as it took steam locomotive technology to the limits with massive engines like the 4-8-8-4 "Big Boy" and the 4-6-6-4 "Challenger," two of the largest and most powerful steam locomotives ever built. Alco produced hundreds of locomotives for the home front and Europe in World War I and made an even greater contribution in World War II by producing thousands of tanks and armored vehicles.

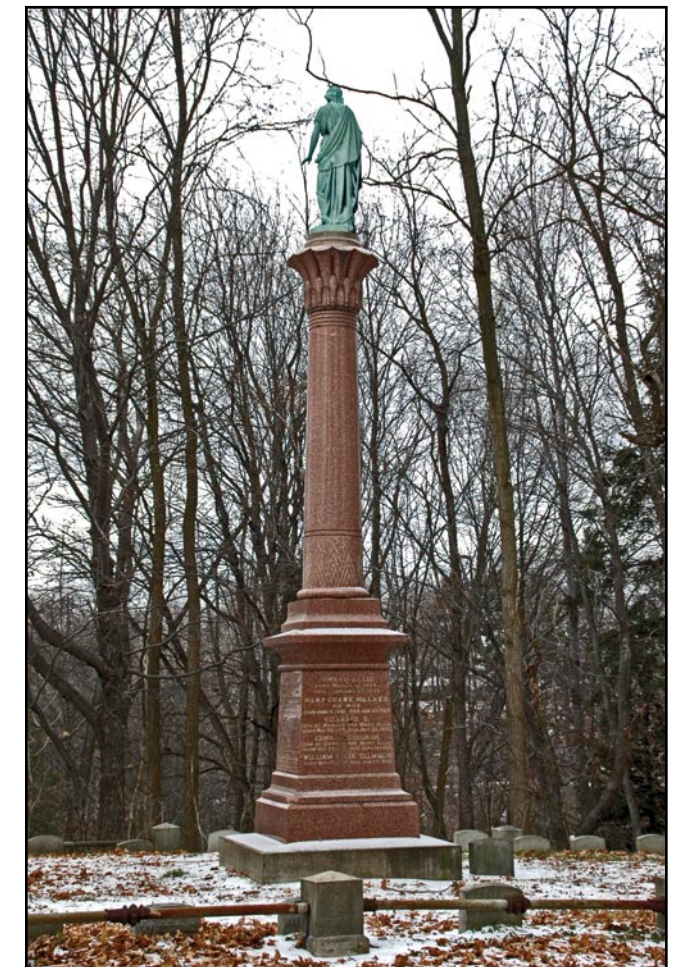
During the Korean War in the early 1950s, tank production continued to be a major portion of Alco's business and the company still employed hundreds of Schenectadians. But the late 1950s and the decade that followed would hold bitter disappointment for both Alco and Schenectady. Alco was not prepared for a substantial shift in the preferences of its industry and quickly fell to the number two locomotive manufacturer in the country behind the General Motors Electro-Motive Division (EMD).

Further dimming Alco's prospects, GE abandoned its working relationship with the company in 1960 and started manufacturing its own locomotives. Alco's fortunes

then declined so markedly that it could not compete against the economic might of two of the largest companies in the world, GE and GM. Alco suffered a steady decline in its fortunes from 1955 until the company closed its doors in 1969 and sold its designs to the Montreal Locomotive Works in Canada.

Starting in January, SCHS will try to bring Alco back to life for new generations of Schenectadians and conjure fond memories for older generations. An exhibition about the history of Alco will run in the Vrooman Room from January 22 until April 30th. The exhibit will feature artifacts and photos relating to life and production at Alco. There will be photos, descriptions, and models of some of the most famous Alco designs from the Age of Steam and the Diesel Era. Videos featuring footage of working Alco engines will be shown as well as WMHT's production "The Iron Horse in Schenectady." The Society will also have a simple model railroad layout where children can have the chance to be the engineer of a model Alco engine. All Aboard !!

Matt Zembo and Ed Reilly



The tallest monument in the highest part of Vale Cemetery is the one for the Ellis Family which overlooks the ALCO plant down by the river – view obscured by trees over time.

Photo: Ann Aronson



*News from the library*

*Restored 1860 New York State Maps Returned to the Library*

Cal Welch, SCHS Vice-President and avid map collector, discovered four large wall maps of New York State in very poor condition in our library basement during an inventory. He saw in the old, torn maps both the historic value of the information and the potential for restoration. Cal found historic treasure in the old maps: “I appreciate the 19th century wall maps because of the incredible amount of detail and the auxiliary engravings on them.” He brought them to the Green Dragon Bindery in Shrewsbury, Massachusetts. Cal knows the bindery well, “They do all Harvard University’s work and are currently working on a very large project for the Emerson Collection at the Boston Public Library. They also restore atlases and wall maps for one of the major U.S. collectors.” The four maps were in such bad shape that it was necessary to use parts of the most damaged maps to re-create two good maps. Cal believes the maps, both very large, originally were used in classrooms. The restored maps are titled: *The State of New York from new and original surveys under the direction of J. H. French*, Robert Pearsall Smith, Publishers, Syracuse, NY 1860. The two maps are nearly identical; both have small inset maps of cities including a Geological and Land Patent Map showing the original land patents greater than 50,000 acres. You have to look closely to see the differences: one map has a Time Dial showing the time in each county seat when it is noon in Albany, and this map shows more detail in the inset maps of the larger cities. The maps are an impressive size, approximately 6 x 7 feet.

*Story Collecting – a workshop on interviewing for oral history.* - Thursday, February 21<sup>st</sup> at 2:00 PM in the Grems-Dolittle Library

Did you ever wish you had a tape recorder on hand to capture those wonderful stories that your grandmother told? Ellen McHale, Director of the New York State Folklore Society, 133 Jay Street in Schenectady, will visit the Grems-Doolittle Library on Thursday February 21, 2008 at 2:00PM to meet with individuals interested in learning to conduct oral history interviews. This informal workshop is geared towards those new to interviewing and is a good introduction to oral history. Some of the topics we will review are preparing for the interview, recommended equipment, and how to prepare a tape-log. Participants can register for the workshop by calling Katherine Chansky in the library and will receive a packet of information about oral history interviewing techniques.

Consider bringing a young person who is interested in interviewing relatives about family history, or who wants to start a history project for school. Come to *Story Collecting* at the library to learn more about collecting oral histories.

*Recent Gifts to the Grems-Doolittle Library Fall, 2007*

**Gift Books:**

*The Cole/Van Alstyne Story: Jacques Hertel, his life, wives and children* compiled by Carolyn J. P. Rock, gift of the author. *The Conde Family -- Schenectady and Glenville, NY*, compiled by Phillip M. O’Shea, gift of the author. *The Schenectady Love Letters of Bertha Platt and Joseph Clements*, 1906- edited by Elinore Schumacher. *A History of St. George’s Church in the City of Schenectady* by Willis T. Hanson, gift of Alan and Donna Vrooman. *I Drove Mules on the C and O Canal* by George Hooper Wolfe, gift of Brenda Demaray, Tucson, AZ. *Joseph Ramee: International architect of the Revolutionary era* by Paul V. Turner, gift of the author.

**Documents donated to the library:**

- A Eulogy given in 1806 for The Reverend John H. Meier of the First Reformed Church of Schenectady, gift of Minnie Bolster, Saratoga Springs
- Historic photos of Schenectady and Rotterdam, gift of Ralph Gasner, Milford, NH.
- Pamphlets, brochures, booklets and news articles on Schenectady history, gift of Lucille Fudger, Schenectady, NY
- Rosa Family history papers along with architectural drawings of, “The Brouwer House,” at 14 N. Church Street (formerly known as the Rosa House), gift of Roberta Loach, Kensington, California.
- World War II ephemera, two separate gifts -- John MacQueen, Charlton, NY and Susanne Jeseen, Winnetka, IL.
- WGY 21<sup>st</sup> Anniversary Book on Farm Broadcasting, gift of Al Finke, Rexford, NY
- Yearbooks for Schenectady High School and GE memorabilia, gift of Wayne Collins.

*SCHS – lectures, events, and activities*

*ALCO’s Transition from Steam to Diesel*  
Saturday, January 12 – author’s lecture  
1:30 Refreshments      2:00 Program

The lecture by Richard Steinbrenner will be based on his book *The American Locomotive Company: A Centennial Remembrance*. First there were steam locomotives and then there were diesel locomotives. The City of Schenectady was very much a part of this history. Join us for the author’s discussion of this important period in Schenectady. This will be a prelude to the SCHS exhibit on the American Locomotive Company.

*Exhibit – Hauling the World: ALCO & Schenectady*  
January 22 – April 30

*This exhibit was designed and mounted through the combined effort of Kate Weller, SCHS curator, and her husband, Matt Zembo, Assistant Professor of History at Hudson Valley Community College.* This exhibit is funded in part by the New York Council for the Humanities, a state affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities and will focus on ALCO’s history from its beginning to its demise. See our lead article in this Newsletter for more information. *NOTE:* Any views, findings, conclusions or recommendations expressed in this exhibition do not necessarily represent those of the New York Council for the Humanities or National Endowment for the Humanities

*ALCO – Roundtable Discussion on ALCO’s history*  
Sunday - January 27  
1:30 Refreshments    2:00 Program

Join us for this spirited discussion by the following participants: Richard Steinbrenner, author of “The American Locomotive Company,” Len Kilian, author of “Trackside with Mr. Alco,” Chris MacDermot, a former ALCO employee, and Matthew Zembo, Assistant Professor of History at HVCC as they discuss the factors that led to the rise and fall of ALCO during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. They will answer questions from the audience about the many aspects of this important company in Schenectady.

*Bread: Staff of Dutch Life in the Old and the New World with Peter Rose*  
Saturday - February 2  
1:30 Refreshments      2:00 Program

Join us for a return visit by this popular lecturer. Bread was the mainstay of the Dutch diet in the seventeenth

century. The talk explores bread ingredients, their sources, and the bread consumption by the poor, working class, and affluent citizens. It also covers the bakers’ guilds, as well as pertinent government regulations and their enforcement. Slides of 17th century Dutch art illustrate methods of preparation and the final products.

*Freedom for All? Slavery in Colonial America*  
Saturday - February 9  
1:30 Refreshments.      2:00 Program

Our speaker will be re-enactor Clifford Oliver Mealey. The Mabee Farm presents a first person account of Jack, one of the Mabee Farm slaves (ca. 1755), portrayed by Clifford Oliver Mealey. A well known area photographer, Mr. Mealey will also exhibit images of portrayals he has done of blacks in Colonial America. He is the recipient of a NYS Council on the Arts Grant, and he has shown his work at the Fenimore Art Museum, the NYS Museum and is a regular presenter at the Annual Underground Railroad Conference of the Capital District.

*A Victorian Tea and you can be the guest!*  
Wednesday - February 13  
with Sue McLane, *The Victorian Lady*  
**6:15– 9:15PM**

**There is a fee of \$25 per person for materials and a class fee of \$16 per person for this Museum Class – TOTAL: \$41.** Come and have tea with *The Victorian Lady*, Sue McLane. Reservations required, please call 374-0263 no later than Friday, February 8. This will be an interactive program with hands on experience. Learn the history of tea drinking, how to conduct a tea party and demonstrate polite tea manners. There will be instructions on how to create invitations, prepare a menu, manage the proper table setting, prepare authentic tea foods, and learn the proper way to brew fabulous tea!

*Story Collecting – a workshop on interviewing for oral history.*  
Thursday, February 21 – at 2:00 PM in the Grems-Doolittle Library (for details, see Page 6)

**NOTICE:**  
*The Yates Dollhouse Legacy –*  
March 8 & 9  
If you have a dollhouse you would like to display, please call 374-0263.

*The Families of Marble Alley* –  
Francis R. Taormina

No, there is no such place in Schenectady called Marble Alley, but it could be a term used to describe a portion of State Street across from Vale Cemetery (which opened in 1857) where two famous Schenectady families located their monument making businesses, or marble works. One was the McMullen family and the other was the Gardner family. In this issue we will tell about the McMullen family. In the next issue we will talk about the Gardner family. – Editor.



Lower State Street about 1880 showing Bradt House (McMullen's Marble Works) said to have survived 1690 Massacre.

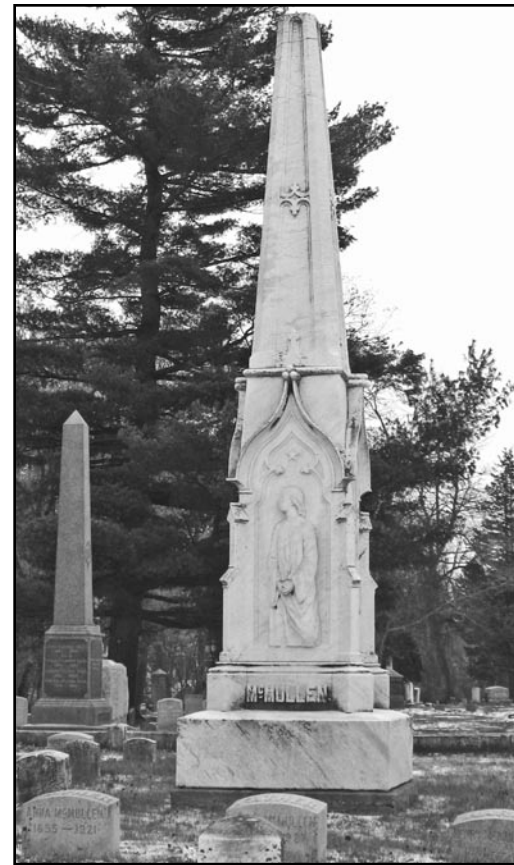
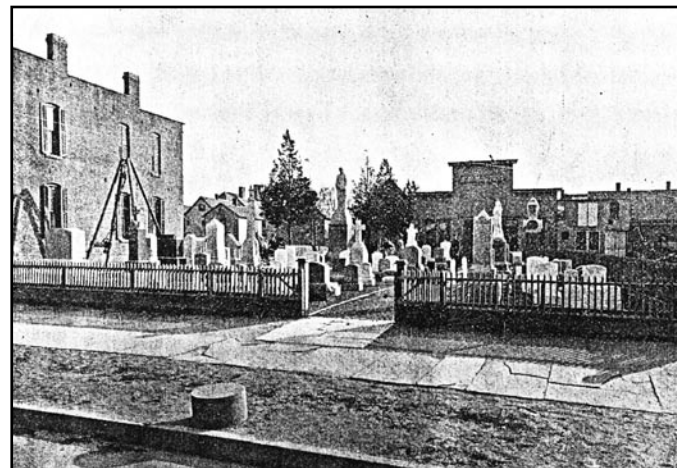
Part of what it means to be human has to do with telling one another about ourselves. Even after we have made our departure from this earthly sojourn we call “life,” we find ways of calling attention to ourselves in our final resting place, usually a cemetery. Certainly this is true in Vale Cemetery, our local example of the nineteenth century Rural Cemetery Movement. Everywhere we look at Vale we feel the silent witness of human beings who used their imagination and called on the skills of others to bear witness to themselves and their families, silently expressing remembrance of the lives they once shared with one another.

Of the many monuments that attract us at Vale, one in particular engaged my attention. What is it about this monument that is so intriguing? Four-sided, each of its sides bears a symbol which seems to be telling something: the *praying figure* of a man or woman, long haired, wearing a lengthy robe and with hands folded in what appears to be prayer; an ancient musical instrument, *a lyre*, harkening back to Greek mythology; *an anchor*, seemingly mounted

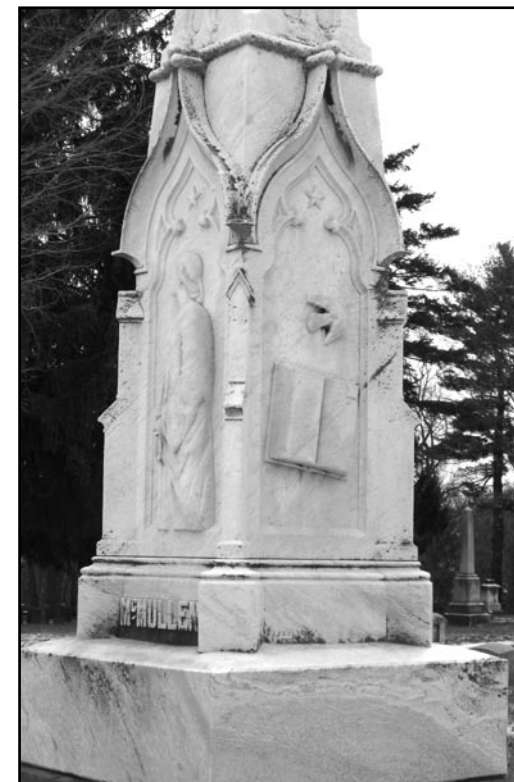
on an anvil made of stone; and *a book*, its pages open before us, with the corner of one page folded, as is to mark a special place or particular interest. What does it all mean? The monument bears the name “McMullen.” It marks the family plot of Andrew McMullen. The Civil War was in its last year, 1864-1865, when Andrew McMullen’s name first appeared in the Schenectady directories as the proprietor of a coal and wood yard at 93 Union Street and, simultaneously, as the freight agent for the New York Central Railroad. Andrew McMullen also served as the Mayor of Schenectady from 1865 – through 1868. Later, in addition to coal and wood, he became a person from whom you could buy “broom Manufacturing supplies” if you should happen to be in that business, as many Schenectadians were in the 1870s. Andrew apparently continued in this business until 1888, appearing thereafter simply as the resident of 414 Union Street. The Vale records indicate his demise on the date June 2, 1899 at the age of 84 at 1 Yates Street, an address very close to 414 Union.

Andrew’s tombstone engages our attention even more when we discover in our search that another McMullen, John W., some ten years after Andrew went into business, became the proprietor of “The Marble Works” at the corner of State Street and Washington Avenue. We enjoy the advantage of having a picture of this establishment, located in what was once reputed to be the oldest surviving house in Schenectady (after the Massacre in 1690) the Bradt house.

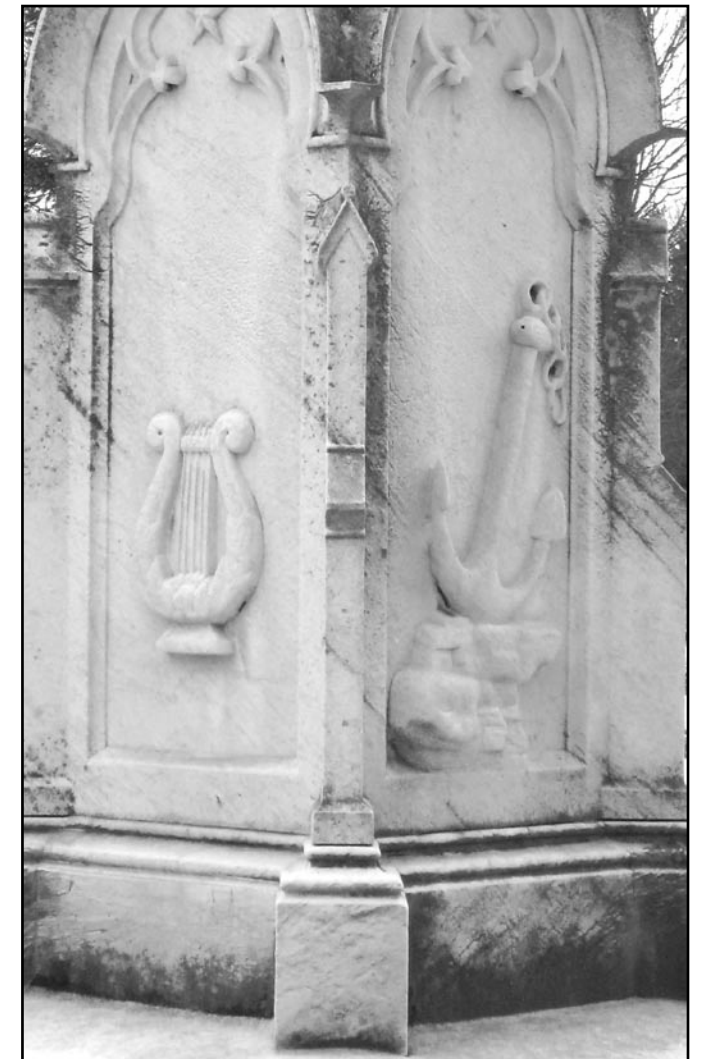
The “Marble Works” persisted at this address until 1897 or 1888 when the directories reveal that the business in 1888 had been moved to 906-908 State Street and had become “McMullen Brothers” Its location could hardly



have been more fortuitously located for that kind of enterprise: directly opposite from the main gate to Vale Cemetery. The McMullen brothers were John W., the original founder of the business, and his brother, James H. By 1890 the brothers lived a short distance up State Street



from their business – James H. at 935 State and John W. almost directly across the street at 946 State Street. The business, of which we have a picture in our files, persisted until 1916 under the direction of John McMullen, apparently until the time of his demise. James H. had apparently departed the scene between 1897 and 1900. Just about the time that James H. made his departure, his sons, who had been listed as “students living at 935 State Street” began their careers: Dr. Charles G. McMullen, who became a noted surgeon and, according to what we read, a highly respected person in Schenectady’s medical community, and Judge John J. McMullen whose descriptions in the local press matched his brother’s as a highly respected Jurist.



The story of the McMullen family is indeed an interesting one – even though it leaves us no closer to understanding the meaning of the way they decorated their family monument – which attracted my attention to them in the first place!

*Photos: Ruth Bergeron*