



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.



MEMBERSHIP FORM

Schenectady County Historical Society

Please indicate one of the following for your membership:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$25 Individual | Please mail this form with your check or credit card information to:
Schenectady County Historical Society
32 Washington Ave., Schenectady, NY 12305 |
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Museum: Art Restoration _____ Acquisitions _____ Publications _____ Programs _____
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Mabee Farm: Preservation _____ Education Building _____ Programs _____

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

Schenectady County
Historical
Society

Newsletter

Volume 48 Number 3-4

March - April 2006

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THE JEWISH COMMUNITY IN SCHENECTADY

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

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

Austria and Hungary in the last decades of the century. Schenectady was also a place of possibility for many Jewish immigrants and natives. Mordecai Myers, an American born Jewish veteran of the War of 1812, served as mayor in the 1850's for two terms while other Jewish residents held offices in the city throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Jewish families established businesses that became mainstays not only in Schenectady but outside the community as well. Graubart closed its doors in 2002 after three generations ran the family business from the end of the nineteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth century. Price Chopper which the Golub family started in Schenectady as Central Market is now a regional powerhouse in the food industry.

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

Join co-curator Dr. Harvey Strum at 1:30 pm on March 12th as he discusses the impetus for this exhibit and the history of the Jewish Community in Schenectady. Enjoy refreshments before the presentation from Mt. Pleasant Bakery, a sixty year Jewish owned bakery which recently changed hands and no longer Jewish owned but still operating in the Jewish tradition. After the presentation enjoy the exhibit.

UPCOMING EVENTS

All events at SCHS 1:30 p.m.

- | | |
|------------------|--|
| Mar. 12th | JEWISH HISTORY AND COMMUNITY IN SCHENECTADY
Professor Harvey Strum
Professor George Wise |
| April 8th | ANNUAL MEETING
OLD SCHENECTADY IN POST CARDS
Wayne Tucker |



The lamp is a Ner Tamid (Eternal Light) from the Congregation Gates of Heaven



Historical Society Newsletter
32 Washington Avenue
Schenectady, New York 12305

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- HOURS:**
- MUSEUM**
Monday – Friday
1:00 to 5:00 p.m.
Saturday
10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
- LIBRARY**
Monday – Friday
1:00 to 5:00 p.m.
Saturday
9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.
- MABEE FARM**
Closed for the season.
Open by appointment.

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Members,

Here we are again, looking back on the last two months. The programs and activities were more successful than we thought they would be, so it felt very rewarding. In December we had the antique toys, children's light bulb craft and for the first time in memory, an evening open house that was well received. January's program with Peter Rose, author and food historian, was such a success that I worry we made some folks mad in that we could not accommodate all who came. So please we apologize again, but hold that thought, we hope to have her back next December for another holiday event. Right now we are working on the February programs. They are a part of the Colonial Fest we celebrate every year to appreciate our ancestors, in

that they decided to resettle Schenectady after the massacre. The March program and exhibit brings us the history of the Jewish people in Schenectady.

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

Kim Mabee

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

As the Schenectady Museum moves into the 21st century, changes its name and pursues its mission of preserving the scientific history of the region, it is hoped that its paintings and decorative arts collections especially those that reflect Schenectady history will remain in Schenectady. It is important that the Schenectady Museum and the Schenectady County His-

torical Society work together to ensure that Schenectady historical artifacts currently in the museum's collection never leave Schenectady. Too many artifacts of importance to Schenectady history have been sold in the past and much of Schenectady history has been lost in the process.

Ora Curran

Larry Hart
Reprint of

Schenectady, Changing With The Times
ON SALE NOW

Schenectady County Historical Society
\$34.95 plus tax

\$3.50 shipping 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.

KADDISH FOR PRESIDENT GARFIELD

Professor Harvey Strum

The Jewish Community Did its Part Over the Years

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

Public service and war also provided an opportunity for Jews to demonstrate their loyalty to this country. Mordecai Myers, a state Assemblyman from New York City, got elected mayor of Schenectady twice in the 1850s, 1851 and 54. Fifty years later, Louis M. King, became City Clerk from 1899-1902 and later served as the Counsel to the State Excise Department from 1911-16. Another prominent Jewish resident of the time, Henry Heilbronner served on the Schenectady School Board and on the board of Ellis Hospital. During World War I, Samuel Stein also served on the school board. Several Jews, like S. Levy, got elected to the city council. Ellsworth Cohen, won appointment as City Manager in 1952 and continued until he resigned in 1964. Bernard Cohen was on the City Planning Commission in the 1960s, and became chair from 1965-68. These were just a few of the many local residents who contributed to public service. In 1970 Congregation Gates of Heaven started a service program to encourage its members to give back to the community. Philanthropy as public service goes back one hundred years in the Schenectady Jewish community. A few names, include Henry Schaffer, who gave to Jewish causes, such as the Jewish Community Center and Gates of Heaven, and to community functions, like the Schenectady Museum and the Schaffer Library at Union College. The Golub family, owners of the Price Chopper Supermarket chain, became synonymous with public service and philanthropy in the local community, William Golub won the

honor as "Citizen of the Century" in 1990 from the Celebrating Schenectady 300 Committee for his contributions to improving civic life in the city including the establishment of the Golub Foundation in 1980.

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

FROM THE COLLECTIONS



PORTRAIT OF HENRY C. SEELEY 1826-1862
Gift of Alan Hart and Family in memory of Larry Hart

Henry Seeley enlisted for three years in Schenectady August 24, 1861. He was mustered in as a private September 16, 1861 in Company G, 43rd Infantry Regiment (Manhattan Rifles). He was wounded in

action June 7, 1862 at Gaines Mills Va and died October 3, 1862 at a hospital in Washington D.C.



PETER ROSE BREAKS ATTENDANCE RECORDS

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

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

Along with an amazing program that fed the mind, visitors were able to actually taste items from "The Sensible Cook" a seventeenth-century cookbook that early Dutch settlers brought with them from the Netherlands. Translated by Peter Rose, this cookbook offers a wide array of dishes popular in the Netherlands and New Netherland. Recipes adapted for the modern kitchen are also available in the cookbook. With a generous donation from the Glen Sanders Mansion in Scotia (home of the Glen family who settled Scotia) of two dishes, along with our talented and dedicated volunteer staff, a wide variety of historic dishes, appetizers, deserts, and breads, were available for visitors to actually "taste" history. Items from Beef Hutspot to Pear Tarts tempted guests along with more traditional favorites like home made applesauce and mashed potatoes. From the exotic to the everyday, something for every appetite was available!

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

DUTCH VERNACULAR ARCHITECTURE

Few places retain their early character the way that Schenectady does. Walking down the historic streets in Schenectady's famous "Stockade District," visitors have a chance to walk in the same footsteps as Schenectady's earliest residents. These were the streets that Arent Van Curler helped plan and where on that fateful night in February, 1960, many residents were awakened by invading French troops and their Native American allies. Although little survives from the earliest period of Schenectady's history, many of the buildings constructed by the children of that first generation have survived into the twentieth century and some, although often altered, still survive today.

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

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

Besides for simply documenting existing Dutch buildings and their original appearance, Stevens was able to offer insight into the reasoning behind many of the architectural features we have come to associate with Dutch architecture. The practicality of a stepped gable or the reason many Dutch buildings, even private homes, required a second story pulley system and the various ways hay barracks worked in New Netherland was all explained through many interesting slides and through Stevens' own expert narrative.



Teller, Schermerhorn Barn

Mabee Farm Historic Site

1080 Main Street (Rt. 5S), Rotterdam Jct., NY • (518) 887-5073 Email: mabee@nycap.rr.com • Web: www.mabeefarm.org

APRIL 2006 SCHEDULE

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

WORKSHOPS 2006

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

**BLACKSMITH DEMONSTRATION
APRIL 30TH FROM 11AM-4PM**

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

WE ARE STILL FUNDRAISING FOR THE GEORGE E. FRANCHERE EDUCATION CENTER. Please make your donation today!

MAY 2: MABEE FARM OPENS FOR THE SEASON
Tues. - Sat. 10am - 4pm

Historical Society Members
CELEBRATE EARTH DAY
Sat. April 22 11 am—3 pm



Nature walks, kids environmental games,
Don Darmer & Carol Connelly Story Telling,
live reptile & amphibian animals, ECOS
Yard Sale, geocaching, fun run, cell phone
recycling and much much more!

Exhibits by environmental organizations
MABEE FARM HISTORIC SITE
Route 5S, Rotterdam Junction
Sponsored by ECOS—INFO AT 370-4125

REPLICA 1614 SHIP TO BE BUILT AT OUR OWN MABEE FARM!

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

AWARD

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

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

EFNER HISTORY CENTER AND RESEARCH LIBRARY

The inventory project at the City Archives (City History Center and Research Library) is progressing nicely. As of the end of January we are at the half-way point in the project and feel we have enough hours, money and stamina remaining to see our way to completion. Recent discoveries include editions of early newspapers from Albany and Schenectady (late 18th - early 19th century), other than the Mohawk Mercury, that appear to have been collected by Earl Devendorf. Devendorf additionally provided the Efner History Center with a fine collection of almanacs from the 19th century.

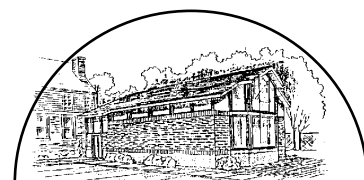
Right now our focus is on inventorying the blueprint and map collections. We have made major headway with the blueprints since becoming able to remove some of the non-archival "junk" from the storage area. Freeing up some space has allowed us to begin to stage the most difficult part of the inventory: venturing into "no man's land" or the back of the storage area where most of the maps and blueprints from the latter half of the 20th century are located. We also found that a number of blueprints made their way into the main room; these were returned to storage. Everything is being neatly stored for easy retrieval. All maps and blueprints that are regularly used by the building inspector will be moved to the active records room where new steel shelving is being installed. The building inspector, Keith Lamp, is working to

DUTCH VERNACULAR ARCHITECTURE IN NORTH AMERICA 1640-1830

John R. Stevens

Available in hard & soft cover

Three Schenectady Houses e.g. The Glen Sanders Mansion, the Brouwer House, the Abraham Yates House and the Teller, Schermerhorn Barn are highlighted in the book.



The Grems-Doolittle Library & Archives

ensure that we have some sort of indexes to work with for the maps and blueprints from 1975 to present; currently, such a document is not available to the History Center.

Should this newsletter arrive prior to the end of February, we strongly encourage people to take in the Jewish Community of Schenectady exhibit at the Opalka Gallery on New Scotland Avenue. Part of this exhibit will eventually be travelling to the Historical Society later on in 2006. It includes many photographs and documents from both the Efner History Center and Grems-Doolittle Library photo collections. Virginia Bolen and Cynthia Seacord are proud to have been of help to Professor and Mrs. Strum as they conducted research for the exhibit.

On exhibit at the City Archives from February into March will be greeting cards from the late 1800s to early 1900s for Valentine's Day, St. Patrick's Day, Spring and Easter, as well as exhibits in honor of Presidents' Day and Black and Women's History months. Please come and see us! We are open Monday, Wednesday and Friday between 9 and 1, or feel free to schedule an appointment by calling 382-5088.

ALSO BY JOHN R. STEVENS:

An Account of the Construction and Embellishment of Old Time Ships, Toronto, Canada 1949.

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

Pioneers of Electric Railroading. Their Story in Worlds and Pictures, New York, NY 1991.

The John Bowne House, a Preliminary Architectural Analysis Report, West Hurley, NY 2003.

ANN ROSS MEMORIAL FUND

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

SPRING CLEANING REMINDER –

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

GOT PICTURES?

The Niskayuna book committee is seeking pictures of every type for their next project, *Images of America, Niskayuna*.

Pictures from the past which include people are especially desirable. Contact the library at 374-0263 if you can help. Photographs will be copied and returned. The library also accepts donations of photographs.

We now accept credit cards— MasterCard and VISA.



G.E. Building 23 around 1902.
Note searchlight on top of Building 23, also lumber yards along Dock Street, gatehouse and landscaped grounds.



This photo is unidentified. Does anyone know if it is local?

GRANT AWARD

The library has been awarded a grant from the New York State Discretionary Grant Program in the amount of \$2410. The grant will be used to have a professional preservation survey of the entire library and archives done this Spring. The survey will evaluate the current state of the library and archives and make specific recommendations for areas that need some improvement. We look forward to getting our "report card."