



Schenectady County
Historical
Society

Newsletter

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General William North (1755–1836)

Portrait by Charles Willson Peale – 1785

Owned by Detroit Institute of Art

Gift of Dexter M. Ferry, Jr.

Photograph © 1986 - The Detroit Institute of Art

See profile of General North by David Vincent, on pages 6 & 7

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MONDAY-FRIDAY 9-5

SATURDAY 10-2

MABEE FARM

TUESDAY-SATURDAY 10-4

Letter from the President

This is an expanded issue whose extra four pages are needed just to thank the hundreds of you who joined the Society or renewed your membership for another year. When we did this piecemeal, some each issue, the list used to end “Without You We Are Nothing!” And this is still so very true.

This is also the issue in which we note the changes in staff and among our Board of Trustees. At a farewell luncheon on March 15, we said goodbye to long-time librarian Ginny Bolen. But she won’t be far away, having accepted a full-time position at that fabulous new Clifton Park-Half Moon Library on Moe Road, just a bit south of Route 146. And then, to balance this private to public transition, we welcome Katherine Chansky, most recently a public librarian at the Crandall Library in Glens Falls, who began work as Grems-Doolittle Librarian – Archivist on April 2. See her profile below, or better yet, stop in and meet the graceful person who has come to serve you. Her arrival enables our proud announcement that we now operate full-time, nine to five, Monday through Friday, with extra hours on Saturday, 10 to 2, to be staffed by volunteers and summer interns. We consider this a significant milestone—we’ll be buzzing, but no more buzzer!

Of our 24 Trustees, three were elected at the Annual Meeting of April 14 and two were named by the Board to fill vacancies during the fiscal year. Their profiles are on the facing page, and we welcome all of them. Last issue, we noted with great sadness the reason for one vacancy, namely, the death of Larry Rainey. Dick Whalen and Gary Hermanson resigned during the year, and we will miss them. Chris Hunter, archivist at the Schenectady Museum, chose not to seek another three-year term, but we are pleased that he will remain on our library committee. Similarly, Stan Lee, who did so much to get our Mabee Farm Historic Site up and running, chose to leave the Board but will still be active as a Walkabout Volunteer. To all of you, on behalf of our membership, thank you for your service and dedication to this venerable Society.

—Ed

Our New Librarian

Katherine Philip Chansky grew up in Manhattan, attended Smith College, graduated with a degree in history, and took a first job in Boston. It was another job that brought her to the Capital District, first as a paralegal for an Albany law firm, and later at Skidmore College as a counselor and library assistant. Her job at Skidmore’s Scribner Library gave her the opportunity to learn archives management and gain experience caring for a rare book collection. She then went back to school full time and earned her Masters in Library Science from the University at Albany in 2000. Katherine has been a reference librarian part time at Saratoga Springs Public Library and at the Crandall Public Library in Glens Falls. Over the past six years, she coordinated the Writers Series at Crandall. She has also worked as a consultant to arrange and catalog diverse manuscript collections: the Skidmore College Department of Nursing archives, a map collection and local history collections at Crandall Library, the records of the Washington County Historian’s Office, and a Civil War documents collection at The New York State Museum. When she isn’t reading about local history or continuing her research on her own family history, she is either out walking or driving around Schenectady County, getting acquainted with the area. She can be found on weekends working on her historic Greenfield Center home or working at the Philip family apple orchard in Columbia County. Katherine, whose daughter Allison attends Skidmore College, lives in Greenfield Center with her husband Jim, a Skidmore administrator, her teenage son Isaac, and two spoiled cats.



New SCHS Trustees

Ann Aronson, a native of Albany, is a graduate of Boston College with a Bachelor of Science degree in Nursing. Her nursing practice includes Public Health, Public School nurse and Camp nurse. She owned and operated the Jiminy Cricket Nursery School in Scotia for 12 years before going to work for the Girl Scouts for 20 years as both a staff member and a volunteer. Ann is a professional photographer extensively published in Schenectady Magazine and American Photo. She also teaches workshops for the NYS Dept. of Environmental Conservation in a program entitled "Becoming an Outdoors Woman in New York State." She volunteers at the SCHS library cataloging photographs as well as co-editing the SCHS Newsletter. Her hobbies include kayaking on local rivers and lakes and skiing. She lives in Scotia, has two grown daughters and two grandchildren.

Jim Eignor is a triple graduate of Union College. There, he earned a BS in Civil Engineering with subsequent Masters degrees in Engineering and Computer Science. He has also held a professional engineer's license in a number of states including New York. Early in his career he designed bridges for the New York State Department of Transportation. Subsequently he worked for GE as a design engineer for power plants and power plant equipment, retiring at the end of 2002. He has been and will continue to be a member of the Society's Building and Grounds Committee, and as an engineer he is interested in following the progress of the Franchere Educational Center. His hobbies include gardening and photography, and he has put the latter skill to good use on behalf of Grems-Doolittle library projects. Jim and his wife Ann, also a volunteer at our library, live in Scotia.

Frank Gilmore is a principal in the Schenectady architectural firm of Stracher, Roth and Gilmore whose design projects have won many awards in the areas of urban design, historic preservation, adaptive re-use of existing structures, senior housing, and medical facilities. He has been the design architect for a number of projects in the Capital District including Proctor's Theatre, the new terminal at Albany Airport, the new train

station in Rensselaer, and is currently working on the Stockade Harbour project, a new waterfront community along East Front Street in Schenectady. After completion of two BA degrees from Cornell, one in Arts and Science and one in architecture, Frank earned the degree of Master of Urban Design from the City University of New York. He is currently a member of the Boards of Vale Cemetery, and the Downtown Schenectady BID. Mr. Gilmore resides in Schenectady's Stockade area..

Merritt Glennon is a native of Schenectady County. He is a graduate of SUNY New Paltz with a degree in History. He retired in 2001 after 33 years of service with the New York State Office of Mental Hygiene and the Office of Mental Retardation and Development Disabilities. His primary areas of responsibility were in revenue development, program development, documentation, and training. He has been the President of the Altamont Free Library, a member of the New York State Council on the Arts Decentralization Committee, President of the Guilderland Soccer Club, and a PTA unit president. He has been volunteering at the Mabee Farm since 2002 and succeeded co-chairs Kim Mabee and John Van Schaick as chair of the Mabee Farm Committee last November. He and his wife Patricia, who have three daughters, live in the Town of Guilderland.

Harry M. Steven, a native of Schenectady, is a graduate of Clarkson University and Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. He began his employment with GE at the General Engineering Laboratory and concluded it at the Knolls Atomic Laboratory where he assisted with the design and production of nuclear power reactors for the Navy. During World War II he served with the US Marine Corps as a Naval Aviator flight instructor. Since retirement in 1986, Harry has done volunteer work for a number of service organizations such as the American Red Cross, Habitat for Humanity, the Hall of History, and the ALCO Historical Photo Library. He has compiled genealogies of both his Scottish paternal ancestors and his German maternal ancestors. He is also an avid skier and bicyclist. Harry and his wife Sybil, who have three grown children, have lived in Niskayuna since 1950.

At the SCHS the exhibit entitled *Painting Schenectady: Samuel Sexton and His Works* continues through July. There is a charge of \$4 for adults. Exhibit is free for members and students.

Mapping a New World: Early Dutch

Maps of the Age of Exploration

by SCHS members Calvin and Carol Welch
May 12th 1:30 Refreshments 2:00 Program

During the age of exploration, our knowledge about the world's geography was steadily being updated. Explorers discovered new lands and recorded their findings about these previously unknown regions. While there had been earlier sailing ventures and modest record keeping, there was a great burst of exploratory activity in the seventeenth century. Mapmakers were instrumental in documenting these new discoveries, and provided amazingly accurate images about new lands that most Europeans would never see. These early maps were as much works of art as they were informative documents. They have become a great attraction for modern collectors and researchers. Join Schenectady County Historical Society members Cal and Carol Welch as they discuss their interest in antique maps. They have focused their collecting on early Dutch maps and mapmakers of the seventeenth century. They will talk about the significance of these maps and the great influence the Dutch, in particular, had on the age of exploration and mapmaking. Original examples of the mapmaker's craft will be displayed along with reference books.

THOMAS McILWORTH

Colonial New York Portrait Painter

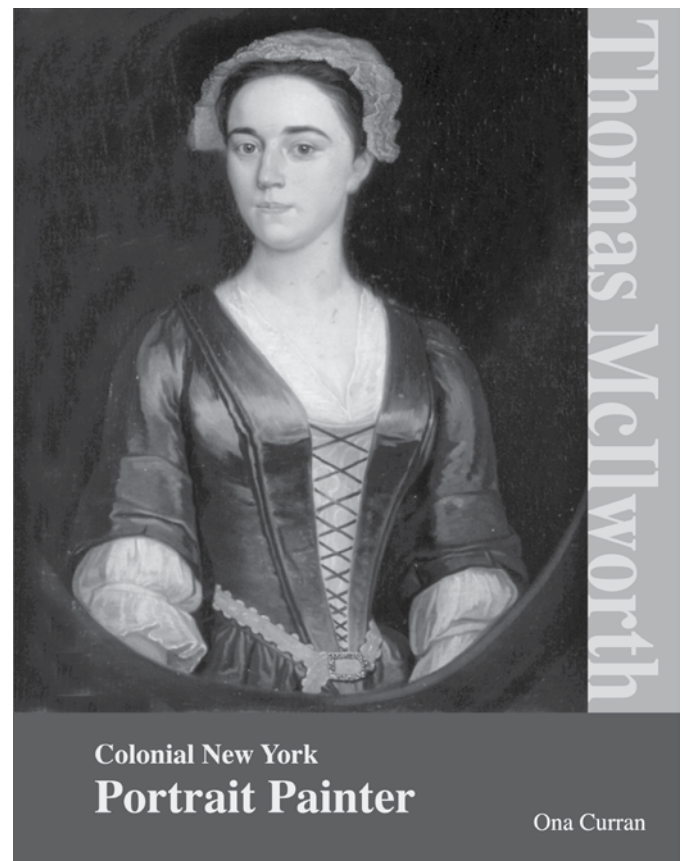
— by Ona Curran

According to the author, a long time member of the SCHS, Thomas McIlworth is an elusive artist whose work and life have been a mystery for years. The book, recently published, will soon be available at SCHS headquarters and the Mabee Farm. Ona Curran will give a lecture on this artist and sign copies of her book sometime during the month of June. The scheduling of this will depend on delivery of the book by the publisher

McIlworth of Scottish descent worked between 1758 and 1769 in the Province of New York and painted portraits of the Van Rensselaers, Van Cortlandts and Livingstons. Of interest to Schenectady residents are the portraits of Daniel Campbell, his wife Engeltie Bradt and John Duncan. He also painted Sir William Johnson and several of Johnson's children are believed to have been painted by McIlworth.

The book is well illustrated. His portraits put faces on the major players in the Hudson, Mohawk Valleys and all of the New York Province in the period between the French and Indian War and the Revolution.

Ona Curran is a graduate of Hofstra University and holds a Master of Arts degree in Museum Methodology from State University of New York at Cooperstown. She has served in a professional capacity at both the Schenectady Museum and the Schenectady County Historical Society and is a former member of the Board of Trustees of the historical society. She is currently an Antiques and Fine Arts appraiser as well as an art historian specializing in American paintings of the colonial period, post Revolution and early 19th century.



Cover of book by Ona Curran

The Mabee Farm opens for the season on May 1st.

On May 5th an exhibit will open on *The Mohawk River and the Erie Canal: Transportation and Recreation*.

This will include pictorial records of historic activities along the Mohawk River throughout the seasons and emphasize the use of this important waterway by local people for travel, the transport of goods as well as its enjoyment for swimming, boating (both recreational and competitive), fishing, ice skating and ice boating.



BLACKSMITH WORKSHOPS (*beginners*)

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

MABEE FARM ENCAMPMENT

June 2nd & 3rd

Experience what life was like in the 1700s here in Schenectady County at the historic Mabee Farm's Revolutionary War Encampment, Saturday & Sunday, June 2 & 3. Over 100 people in period dress will turn the site into a military encampment with colonial militia, British Loyalists, Indians, local settlers, and sutlers selling period items. The weekend will be full of action with amphibious battles in period Bateaux. Always a crowd pleaser Sheldon's Horse from Connecticut will perform spectacular cavalry demonstrations. There will also be: camp tours, camp fire cooking, battles, historic house tours, children's activities, a fun barn dance on Saturday night with caller Gail Griffith and her band, and a Church Service on Sunday morning. This is a great way to combine fun and education. Thanks to a generous grant from the County of Schenectady, admission is free.

"Funding for this project made possible in part by a grant from the Schenectady County Legislature through its County Initiative Program"

**MABEE FARM HISTORIC SITE, 1080 Main St. (Route 5S), Rotterdam Junction, N.Y. (518) 887-5073 www.mabeefarm.org
mabee@nycap.rr.com**

William North—General, Senator, and Town Supervisor

by David Vincent

Born into a military family in 1755, it is not surprising that William North would be among the very first young men of his generation to take up arms in support of the independence of his native and nascent country. North was the son of Captain John North, commander of Fort Frederick, Pemaquid Point, Maine. At the age of ten, following his father's death, North moved to Boston with his mother, Elizabeth Pitson North. Thus he was at the very center of a series of events that would culminate in the birth of the United States.



North Family Coat of Arms

Commissioned a 2nd lieutenant, his service began in 1775 shortly after the British seized Boston. North served in a number of Massachusetts's regiments, spent the winter of 1787-88 in Valley Forge, PA, and as a Captain in 1788, led his company in the battle of Monmouth, NJ. In 1779 he was appointed Aide de Camp to the General Baron Von Steuben, whom he served

throughout the remainder of the war, primarily in the Virginia campaign. North was present at the surrender of Cornwallis in Yorktown, VA in 1781.

Following the official end of the Revolution in 1783, North was brevetted, by act of Congress, a Major in the 2nd US Regiment, and served as Inspector of the Army through June 1788. Among his duties in that capacity were an involvement in the response to Shays' Rebellion in western Massachusetts, and later, while inspecting defenses on the Ohio River, the founding of Fort Steuben, Steubenville, Ohio.

North lived in New York City, where he met and courted Mary Duane, the eldest daughter of the Hon. James Duane, Mayor of New York. The two were married in October of 1787, and in 1788 took possession of the 1,000-acre wilderness estate in Duanesburg given to them by James Duane. Duane was the founder and proprietor of the town's entire 1.8 million acres, which had been formally erected as a Township in 1765.

The North's struggled to make a home and family in the 18th century wilderness, returning during many winters to family in New York City. Nevertheless, the family and farm gradually took shape, and North was again called into service. He was elected to the NY Assembly in 1792 and 1794 and was selected Speaker in both 1795 and 1796, when New York City was the state capital.

Not to diminish in any way William North's considerable personal qualities and achievements, but by marrying into the Duane family, North joined one of the most influential and powerful extended families in 18th century America. James Duane's wife was Mary Livingston, eldest daughter of Robert Livingston, 3rd Lord of Livingston Manor. The extended Livingston family, connected by marriage, included the names Van Rensselaer, Schuyler, Hamilton and Jay. The Livingstons were members of an elite group of wealthy and influential landed gentry whose considerable estates were located along New York's Hudson River valley. These landowners practiced a unique perpetual

rent system that left their tenant farmers liable for payment of an annual rent in perpetuity, a practice that lasted into the latter half of the 19th century.

In 1798 North served as a Federalist in the US Senate, occupying the seat first held by General Philip Schuyler and held today by Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton. At that time Philadelphia was the nation's capital and North traveled there to fulfill his Senatorial duties. The matters of consequence that he is known to have supported were the Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798, adopted in June and July of that year.

The same fear of war caused Congress to order the establishment of a "Provisional" army. On July 19, 1798, President John Adams appointed William North to the post of Adjutant General in the Provisional Army with the rank of Brigadier General under Major General Alexander Hamilton, with George Washington as Commanding General. North served in this capacity through June 14, 1800, when the threat of war was resolved through diplomacy.

North was Duanesburg's first supervisor to represent the town on the newly formed Schenectady County Board of Supervisors in 1809 (the year Schenectady County was carved from Albany County), and was elected that board's first moderator (chairman). The following year he was again elected to the NY State Assembly and was again chosen Speaker of that body.

North was an investor in the Great Western Turnpike, and he served many years as one of seven commissioners on the NY State Western Canals Commission, charged with laying out the routes to early New York State canals, which ultimately became the Erie Canal. Following the construction of the covered bridge over the Schoharie Creek (the first State bridge) in 1793, North purchased in 1806 the land on the western shore, where he founded and named the Village of Esperance (French for hope).

William North's daughter Mary died in 1812 at the age of 22, and his wife Mary died in 1813. Both were buried in the Duane family crypt at Christ Episcopal Church, Duanesburg. Consequently, North retired to New York City

in 1816, surrendering ownership of the Duanesburg estate to his son, William Augustus Steuben North (1793-1845). William A.S. North had graduated from Union College in 1812 and studied Law at Columbia University in New York, where his grandfather, James Duane, had served many years as chairman of the board of trustees, and his uncle, James Chatham Duane, had graduated second in his class in 1789. The younger North took possession of the Duanesburg property, where he distinguished himself in the pursuit of agriculture.



The North Mansion today, Duanesburg, NY

General William North died in New York in 1836 and was interred in the family crypt in Duanesburg. He left behind a considerable legacy of sacrifice, hardship, devotion to family and country, and the fruits of an indomitable American spirit.

NOTE: SCHS member David Vincent lives in the North Mansion in Duanesburg. He is also the author of a more extensive paper on General North and his Mansion. There is a copy in the North family file at the Society and copies will soon be available in our gift shop.

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SCHS thanks all of its members and contributors for their support. We greatly appreciate all that you have done.

Financial Status for fiscal year FY2006, April 1, 2006 - March 31, 2007

Copies of the Society's detailed Balance Sheet and Profit & Loss Statement (Budget vs. Actual) were part of the Annual Report distributed to attendees at the Annual Meeting of April 14 and will be mailed to any member of the Society upon request. Our records will now be audited by our CPA and his report will be available some time in mid-2007.

Richard M. Clowe, Treasurer

Balance Sheet Summary

Mabee Farm Historic Site	\$753,807
Headquarters (Museum, Library, Office)	75,257
Fixed Assets	
Mabee Farm	299,515
Headquarters	533,588
Other Assets	3,265,107
Total Assets	\$4,927,274

Profit & Loss Summary

% of FY2006 budget

Restricted income	\$629,440	
Unrestricted income	345,745	118.4
Expense	314,048	107.7
Income added to reserves	31,697	



New SCHS Trustees stand with Schenectady's Bottle History program presenter John Rudzinski after the Annual Meeting. L-R Harry Steven, Jim Eignor, Ann Aronson, John Rudzinski and Merritt Glennon.
Photo: Ann Aronson Photography



Historical Society Newsletter
 32 Washington Avenue
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