



Schenectady County
Historical
Society

Newsletter

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Photo: Pat Barrot

The Mabee House - A Witness to History

by Frank Taormina

For nearly 300 years 12 successive generations of the Mabee family resided in this house, built by the first generation of the family to live here shortly before or after 1700, working, creating the wherewithal to nurture and sustain themselves; and enjoying the gifts or experiencing the pain a whimsical Mother Nature chose (and still chooses!) to bestow.

Borne up by the wings of imagination and sustained by the dusty records of history, can we picture in our mind's eye a series of conversations with successive occupants in which they recall what they heard and saw as they paused from their labors to watch the persons appearing, pausing briefly to exchange a greeting, then passing on.

Who was it who saw that first German Palatine bearing his (or her!) bushel of grain on the way to the mill in Schenectady? How many of our interviewees could recall for us the passage of Native Americans from Fort Hunter, or Canajoharie on their way east or returning on the westward trek home? Surely there will be among them recollections

of Sir William Johnson long before he assumed the identity of being anyone but Admiral Peter Warren's nephew, who took over, in 1746, from the Livingstons the arduous task of moving those endless bateaux full of supplies westward to Oswego. As the middle of the 18th century approached, the conflict they had not experienced since the days of King William and Queen Anne began again. Which of the Maabees will tell us of the day they first heard of the terrible events across the river, the massacre at Beukendaal? And of the use of Jan Mabee's barn on Church Street to house the bodies of the twenty-four men killed on that sad occasion?

Will it be a clamorous conversation with many members of the family wanting to tell us their memories of the troops led by Colonel John Bradstreet on their way to Oswego and returning? How many will want to share their experience of seeing the Army led by Sir Geoffrey Amherst on its way to Lake Ontario and eventually to Montreal?

Continued on page 5

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MUSEUM & LIBRARY

MONDAY-FRIDAY 9-5

SATURDAY 10-2

MABEE FARM

OPEN MAY 1ST
FOR THE SEASON

Letter from the President



One of the most precious books in our Grems-Doolittle Library is a 420-page genealogy of the prolific Schermerhorn family compiled by Richard Schermerhorn Jr. and published in New York City in 1914. Its relevance to the present is that the Society has now acquired its third major parcel of real property, a large historic home on 2.3 acres at 71-73 Schermerhorn Road in Rotterdam. The home, which was built in 1887 by Simon J. Schermerhorn (1827-1901) comes to us through the generosity of Marjorie L. Schmid of that town. The much earlier Symon Schermerhorn (1658-1696) known to all Schenectadians was, of course the intrepid soul of the famous ride of 1690 to warn Fort Orange (Albany) that French and Indians had ransacked our Stockade and were headed their way.



1887



1997

Once, the adjacent Teller-Schermerhorn cemetery with its 18th century graves was part of this parcel, and we are exploring with the Town of Rotterdam the strong possibility that it will be deeded back, along with another larger parcel of over an acre. Then, the plan is to form a historic district that includes the Simon Schermerhorn house and a cluster of nearby homes that are even older than Simon's.

After climatization, the new home and some of the outbuildings could provide some badly needed storage for the overflow of artifacts from our Mabee Farm and our downtown museum, and when renovated and furnished in the grand Victorian manner will some day be opened to the public on a limited basis. That might be years away, however; our current priorities for fund raising are those for the Franchere Education Center at the Mabee Farm and for enhancing the environmental climate of our headquarters museum.

It is my hope that members and other readers who have Victorian era antiques and furniture would like to see them given a home of the same provenance. Grand piano, anyone? Volunteers who would like to advise as to what the interior should look like? Take a look, here and on the back page, at what this grand old house looked like in 1887 and 1997 and what it looks like today. Needs work, but it will be a labor of love.

-Ed

NEW TRUSTEES: *Photo on page 11*

Ruth E. Bergeron, an editor of the SCHS newsletter, holds the B.A. and M. Sc. in biology from Brown University and paralegal certification from the College of Saint Rose and the Center for Advanced Paralegal Studies in Philadelphia. She has been a research assistant at Cornell, a science teacher at Linton High School, deputy city clerk for the city of Schenectady and a real property paralegal in that city's law department, a board member of the Annie Schaffer Senior Services Center, a trustee and volunteer office manager of the Vale Cemetery Association. Currently, she is a board member and secretary of the Schenectady Heritage Foundation, a board member for Schaffer Heights (senior housing) and a member of the Schenectady Board of Assessment Review. She is the mother of 3 sons: Marc, Paul and Andre who are scattered from New England to Minnesota. Ruth lives in the Stockade, a few steps from Society headquarters.

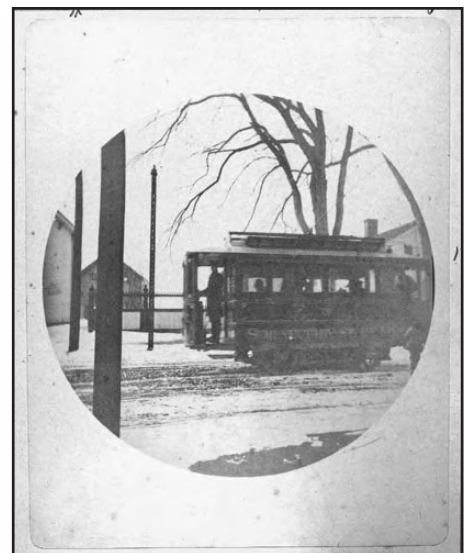
Phillip D. Falconer is a consulting meteorologist and owner of the Falconer Weather Information Service, LLC in Scotia, New York. He has been actively involved in the field of meteorology since 1975, having worked in the federal government and at the Atmospheric Sciences Research Center at SUNY Albany before establishing a private sector meteorological consulting practice in 1980. As a consultant, he has provided forensic meteorological services to the legal profession and insurance industry, and has provided university-level meteorology instruction at several colleges. Mr. Falconer is both a Certified Consulting Meteorologist and a Fellow of the American Meteorological Society, and is member, past President, and current Treasurer of the National Council of Industrial Meteorologists. He is a volunteer at the Schenectady County Historical Society, serves on the Science Advisory Board of the Schenectady Museum, and is a member of the Greater Consistory of the First Reformed Church of Schenectady. Phil and his wife Jane live in East Glenville.

Carolina Minetto Lazzari is a long-time member of both SCHS and the Dutch Barn Preservation Society. She holds a BS from Simmons College and a Master of Social Work from New York University. After a successful career in social work, she entered the financial realm in 1987 and qualified as a certified financial planner and an accredited investment fiduciary with a practice in Schenectady. In the community, she has served as councilwoman in the Town of Rotterdam, as a Schenectady County Legislator, and as a member of the Rotterdam Business Association and the Board of Managers of the Boys and Girls Club of Schenectady. Carolina and her husband Lee live in Rotterdam. Their children Lillian, Luke, and Jordan have flown the nest in which they were raised, but she and Lee are busily engaged in the ongoing restoration of their historic home and the 18th century Dellemont–Wemple barn on their property.

SCHS LIBRARY NEWS - Recent addition to the library

Stockade Photo Album 1892

One of the library treasures re-discovered by our volunteers is the Stockade Photograph Album of 1892. Often referred to as the "Judge Hahn" photos (over 250), this collection of small black and white pictures of streets, house fronts, and people in the Stockade is invaluable for the information contained in the captions for each picture. Careful research by library volunteers indicates that Judge Hahn made a gift of this album to the Historical Society. We believe Edward Winslow Paige (1844 - 1918) to be the photographer because all captions are in the same handwriting, and one caption refers to "my office at 10 Union Avenue." This address in 1892 showed an office for Edward Winslow Paige. He was a son of Harriet Mumford Paige, and a cousin of Dora Mumford Jackson whose home became the present SCHS. The photos document some houses which are no longer standing including Dora Jackson's earlier home on Washington Avenue prior to the present version at 32 Washington Avenue. The pictures show street fronts of buildings, some backyards, and views of the Mohawk River. Street scenes in the album depict trolley cars and various storefronts. The library staff is very grateful to volunteers Carol Lewis and Ann Aronson for their research and production of a preservation copy now available for study by visitors to the library.



SCHS – exhibits and programs

Exhibit – Quilts of Schenectady: A Community's History in Textiles

This exhibit opens on **Saturday, May 10 and will continue through the month of June.** Hours for viewing the collection will be Monday – Friday 1:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.; and Saturday 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m., excluding holidays.

The Society has recently completed a year-long inventory of its textile collection with particular emphasis on its quilt collection. They date primarily from the nineteenth century and are lovely in their variety and level of craftsmanship. We hope you will find this exhibit beautiful and informative.

Throughout history textiles have served both utilitarian and artistic purposes. They also illustrate historic elements of a culture. Quilts form an important aspect of textile history in places as disparate as Europe, Asia and America. In their most basic form they incorporate two layers of fabric with a filler all held together by elaborate stitching. The combination provides strength, durability and warmth. Over time this has led to the production of items from the most utilitarian to examples of great beauty and decoration. American quilts made great use of pieces of fabric combined to produce a complex top and to make maximum use of small pieces of rare or limited fabric.

Revolutionary War Records at the National Archives - genealogy research - by Jean Nudd **Saturday – June 28**

1:30 p.m. Refreshments 2:00 p.m. Program

Jean Nudd is an archivist with the National Archives and Records Administration in Pittsfield, Massachusetts where she manages the microfilm reading room as well as the volunteer and outreach programs. Ms. Nudd writes quarterly columns for *Archival Anecdotes*, the publication of the Friends

A Tour of the Stockade

Are you interested in a personally conducted Tour of the Stockade in Schenectady? Frank Taormina, a Society Trustee, is volunteering to take a group or an individual on such a tour. Call the Historical Society, 374-0263 or call Frank Taormina directly, 864-5061 to schedule one at a mutually convenient time.

The Dating Game – with Kris Driessen

Saturday – May 10

1:30 p.m. Refreshments 2:00 p.m. Program

How can you tell when a quilt was made? This lecture will help you learn the basics about how to date quilts by their design, fabrics, colors, construction and patterns. Learn by hands-on experience with actual textiles. You are welcome to bring items from your own collection for class discussion.

Repair, Restore, Conserve - with Kris Driessen

Saturday – May 17

1:30 p.m. Refreshments 2:00 p.m. Program

What do you do with a damaged quilt, and how do you repair it. Bring your quilts to this lecture for suggestions and helpful information.

Exhibit – Roses on Display - beauty of form, color and variety - Schenectady Rose Society

Saturday – June 14

10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

The exhibit is free and open to the public as part of the *Stockade Secret Garden Tour*. The Schenectady Rose Society (SRC) will present a selection of beautiful roses from the Rose Garden in Schenectady's Central Park. The SRC is a nonprofit organization affiliated with the American Rose Society, a national organization, and has been active in the Rose Garden restoration. Founded in 1958, it is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year.

of the National Archives. Her columns describe Federal records as well as providing advice on what information can be found in them for genealogists and historians. She's a member of the New England Historic Genealogical Society, the New Hampshire Historical Society, Berkshire Family History Association, and numerous local historical and genealogical societies.

Sylvia Ryder Ebeling

We note with sadness the passing of Sylvia Ryder Ebeling on March 26, 2008. She led a long and active life of community service including serving briefly as vice-president of the Society in 1975. She also served as a volunteer at the Society during 1974 and 1975.

No doubt, some of the same people, older now, will want to share their memories of the Revolution – of the movement of men and supplies to Fort Stanwix, of the American Army led by Benedict Arnold to relieve the siege at Fort Stanwix – “as numerous as the leaves on trees”, and later, of the news about the raids on Cobleskill, Cherry Valley, and Johnstown and the persons who wandered past this house, bereft of home and property, seeking refuge from the brutality of Tory and Indian raids. And later still, recalling the day the numberless bateaux from Schenectady that passed on the river on their way to Canajoharie in 1779. These trips were led by General James Clinton. And the next year, 1780, there were the Native Americans, the Oneidas, driven from their homes by Joseph Brandt; they were on their way to Schenectady, and eventually to Woodlawn.

So much to remember! Will there be among them persons who recollect the passage of General George Washington and Governor George Clinton on their way west in 1783, when Washington, perhaps without meaning to, made the remark which led to New York being called “The Empire State.” With the war over, how many Mabees were there who would remember the Yankees – those fighters who had seen the riches of the Genesee Valley and western New York during their participation in the Sullivan-Clinton campaign. These Yankees were going west in the Mohawk Valley leaving their stony New England farms for the more easily cultivated lands of Western New York State. How

many among them can tell us about the Durham boats which replaced the bateaux at the end of the 18th century? And the night that General Philip Schuyler spent at the Mabee farm while traveling to examine the sites of the improvements his company, *The Western Inland Lock Navigation Company*, was going to propose. No doubt there were among the inhabitants of this house those who can share their recollection of the construction of the Erie Canal. And then there was that October day in 1825 when the distant booming of the cannon announced that that same Dewitt Clinton, whom they had seen sail by their house in 1810 to survey the route of a possible canal, had started that historic voyage which would take him and his party from Lake Erie to the Atlantic Ocean on the canal which 15 years earlier had existed only in their imaginations! No doubt, there were, among the older members of the family many who could remember not only the canal, but may even complain now about the sound of the railroad and the changes which it had wrought in the once bucolic, undisturbed countryside.

This house, emerging from the labor and skill of its inhabitants using the products of the very land we still walk on today has indeed been a “witness to history”. You and I, as we look at it, experience visually the same sight which greeted all those people, including George Washington, Philip Schuyler and Dewitt Clinton, who saw it in their passage as we see it in ours.

NEW EXHIBIT - *STONEWARE: crocks, jugs, and pots on the farm.*



Opening on Saturday, May 10 at 10 a.m., “STONEWARE: Crocks, jugs, and pots on the farm” will feature many items of pottery, particularly salt glazed stoneware left on the property when George Franchere donated the Mabee Farm to the Schenectady County Historical Society in 1993. Some “makers marks” can be found on the crockery and some even indicate their purchaser’s name such as a beautiful 3 gallon jug (see photo) with handle which is impressed: A.P. Peters, No. 1 Rotterdam St., Schenectady. Beautiful stems of flowers encase the year 1874, in marvelous cobalt blue. We believe that upon his father’s death, Alexis P. Peters who was a retail liquor merchant turned his father’s general retail business into a liquor, wine, tobacco and cigar shop. Perhaps this jug stood in the window of his shop on the corner of State and Washington Avenues.

The exhibited stoneware is from various parts of New York State including Fort Edward, Troy, West Troy (Watervliet), Albany, and Lyons (between Syracuse and Rochester). The exhibit is open from Saturday, May 10 to Saturday September 27, Tuesdays to Saturdays from 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. at the Mabee Farm on Route 5S in Rotterdam Junction.

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Financial Statement for FY2007: April 1, 2007 – March 31, 2008

Copies of the Society's Balance Sheet and Profit & Loss Statement (Budget vs. Actual) were part of the Annual Report distributed to members at the Annual Meeting of April 12, 2008 and will be mailed to any member upon request. Our records will now be reviewed by our auditor and his report will be available in July.

Balance Sheet Summary

Current Assets	
Mabee Farm Historic Site	\$816,289
Headquarters (Museum, Library, Office)	54,626
Fixed Assets	
Mabee Farm	706,261
Headquarters	565,197
Other Assets	3,647,863
Total Assets	\$5,790,255

	Profit & Loss Summary	% of FY2007 Budget
Restricted Income	\$929,328	
Unrestricted Income	368,313	98.6
Expense	371,420	102.8

Richard M. Clowe, Treasurer

MABEE FARM OPENS FOR SEASON

Join us on Tuesday, May 6, 2008 for the opening of the 2008 season! We have lots of exciting events this year:

Mabee Farm Historic Site	
Free Admission	Re-enactment June 14 & 15
<i>Join in the excitement as British, Militia and Natives battle it out at one of the oldest farms in NY!</i>	
	BATTLES: cannon fire, musket fire, cavalry demonstrations, 18th century cricket match, Committee of Safety Meeting, Kid's musket drills, speed firing contest and more!
	HRS: Sat: 9am—8 pm/Sun: 9am—3:30pm
	Barn dance Sat. at 6:30 pm
	Route 5S, Rotterdam Junction (518) 887-5073
THE GAZETTE	

June 14-15 REVOLUTIONARY WAR RE-ENACTMENT

Celebrate Father's Day weekend with cannon fire, land and amphibious battles, camp tours, drill demonstrations, children's musket drills, period dance on Saturday night. Step back in time! Lots of thrills for all!

July 12-13 CANALFEST LOCKS 7-12

A 2 day music festival featuring Jay Ungar & Molly Mason, Little Toby Walker, Roy Hurd, Susan Trump, Yarn, Riverview Ramblers and the Landfill Mountain Boys. Rounding out the day are workshops, hay rides, artisans, animals, historic boat rides on the Wofford, house tours and more!

August 9 EARLY TECHNOLOGIES DAY/CANALSPLASH

Join the Mabee Farm and the Native American Institute of the Hudson River Valley in presenting flint knapping, atlatl throwing, fire starting, blacksmithing, brain tanned leather, tin-smithing, cordage and much more. Native American artifact

identification with the NY State Archaeology Association (Van Epps Hartley Chapter) and much more!

August 23 ARTS & CRAFTS FESTIVAL

The festival will feature the best in local area arts including pottery, wood crafting, folk art, jams, handwovens, floor cloths, candles, jewelry, fine arts, painted furniture, artisan demonstrations and so much more. Great music and food!

September 14 HISTORY FAIR (Sunday)

Historians, Museums, Historical Sites, Historical Societies, Historical Authors come together to share their stories and experiences with the public and each other! Enjoy boat tours on the Wofford.

Historic Boat Tours at the Mabee Farm	
	
Take a guided boat tour on the Wofford and learn about our historic Mohawk River!	
SCHEDULE:	
Sat & Sun: July 12 & 13 for Canalfest	
Sat. August 23 for Arts & Crafts Festival	
Sun. Sept 14 for History Day	
Sat., Oct 18 for Farm & Foliage Day	
Also available for private functions & school groups	
Cost: \$10.00 per person/1 hour tour	
Call or email for reservations:	
(518) 887-5073	mabee@nycap.rr.com

October 18 FARM & FOLIAGE DAY

Pumpkins, scarecrows, pies and lots of fun! Celebrate the beautiful fall with pumpkin painting, scarecrow making, hay rides, and more in cooperation with the County of Schenectady.

WORKSHOP DAY – June 21st

Spend a leisurely Saturday along the Mohawk River learning about various colonial trades. Choose from tinsmithing, broom making, rope making, drop spindle weaving, and more. Want to do two or maybe three workshops? It's possible! Each 2 hour class costs \$25.00. Call (518) 887-5073 for more information.



New Trustees: Carolina Lazzari, Phillip Falconer, Ruth Bergeron.



Mozart dollhouse - an example of a box dollhouse - from lecture on march 8



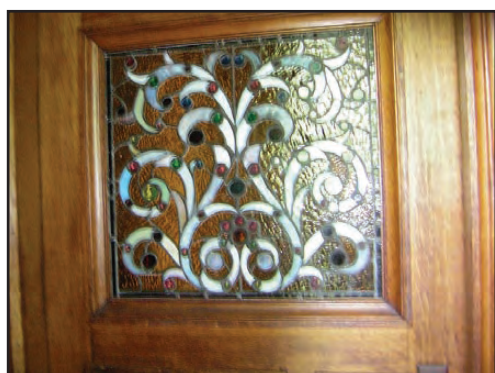
Roses on Display - from lecture on April 12



*Sections from
Crazy Quilts in
SCHS collection
on exhibit during
May & June*



Inside and outside the Simon Schermerhorn House (See page 2.)



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