



Schenectady County  
Historical  
Society

# Newsletter

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## *The Fires of Schenectady*

by Robert A. Petito Jr., AIA

**1819 Fire** The City of Schenectady is no stranger to fires. Every school child learns of the destruction of the fledgling village in February 1690 at the hands of the French and their Huron allies. And many know the story of the Great Fire of 1819 which started in a currying shop on Water Street, was spread by strong winds in a northeastern direction, and ultimately destroyed most of the buildings in the 18<sup>th</sup> century city west of Church Street from Water Street to the Mohawk River. But the Fire of 1861 marks a turning point in fire containment as the city's hose and ladder companies, assisted by fire crews and equipment from Albany, Troy, and Amsterdam, were able to stop the spread of the fire despite the incidence of sparks and embers landing on roofs throughout the city.



*Painting of Dutch Reformed Church on fire in 1861*

**1861 Fire** It all started innocently enough: boaters on the Mohawk River noticed wisps of smoke emanating from a pile of brush near the southwest corner of the large frame warehouse along the north side of West Front Street (Cucumber Alley) at 4 in the afternoon. Within minutes, the flames—fanned by “a tremendous gale”—spread rapidly to engulf the entire building and were moving toward the office located at the corner of Washington Avenue and Cucumber Alley. Clouds of black smoke filled the sky as flames rushed eastward with startling speed and power. By morning, the northwestern corner of the Stockade and several scattered structures lay in smoldering ruins. The lead story in the local news section of Schenectady's *Evening Standard and Times* for Wednesday, August 7, 1861, devoted two columns to “The Fire of Yesterday - A Deplorable Calamity - Fifteen Buildings Burned - The Old Dutch Church in Ruins.”

**Broom corn industry in Mohawk Valley** The growing of broom corn for and fabrication of brooms had been introduced to the Mohawk Valley in the early 1830s, and until c. 1880, Schenectady County grew almost half of the broom corn grown in New York State. Otis Smith became one of the leading manufacturers. His warehouse, factory and offices were located by the mid-1850s at the northwest corner of Washington Avenue and Cucumber Alley.

*Continued on pages 4 and 5*

## Letter from the President

### HAPPY NEW YEAR

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10 a.m. – 4 p.m.

The New Year to which I refer is, of course, the Society's 2011 Fiscal Year that began on April 1 (no fooling). We always look forward to the start of a new year of service, but more important, this is the annual expanded issue of our Newsletter in which we take time and space to thank our members for their generosity during the prior one; see pages 6-9. Also, there are always a few changes in the composition of the Board of Trustees to report, and sometimes in staffing. With profound thanks for their dedicated service to the Society, I note that **Paul Borisenko**, **Nancy Curran**, and **Brian Merriam** left the Board during the year, and **Phil Falconer** completed a 3-year term and declined reappointment. Additionally, we reported in an earlier issue that long-time Trustee and Past President **Stephanie Albers** died during the year.

We also suffered a loss of a different kind, the resignation of Grems-Doolittle Librarian / Archivist **Katherine Chansky**, who has left to join her husband Jim in Providence, Rhode Island, where he has taken a new position at Brown University. A grand farewell luncheon was held in Katherine's honor on April 14. She was loved, will be missed, and has promised to keep in touch and be back to visit and lead book discussions.

I am very pleased to report that Katherine's replacement will be **Melissa Tacke**, whose biographical profile follows this Letter. Melissa began her duties on May 2; please stop in to welcome her.

Part way through Fiscal Year 2010, and in accord with its By-laws, the SCHS Board of Trustees appointed **Robert Carney** and **Dr. James Strosberg** to fill vacancies. At the Annual Meeting of April 9, three additional nominees—**Deborah Crosby**, **Richard Lewis**, and **Laura Lee Linder**—were elected by our membership, bringing the Board back to the full strength reflected in the masthead at the left. Profiles of the five new Trustees are given on the facing page and their handsome photos grace the top of page 12.

~Ed



**Melissa Tacke** is a native of Lawrence, Kansas. She moved to this area in 1999 to attend the University at Albany, where she earned a B.A. in Women's Studies and Africana Studies in 2003, an M.A. in Women's Studies in 2005, and an M.S. in Information Science in 2007, all with high honors. Melissa began her career as a Project Archivist at Bennington College, where she arranged, described, and preserved college records relevant to the documentation of its historic buildings. Her appointment coincided with Bennington's 75th anniversary, which provided her with opportunities to

create exhibits about the college's history, after which she served as a Digital Images Archivist. She has also worked as a Project Archivist at the Adirondack Museum, where she processed and cataloged the personal papers of two of the founders of the Adirondack Park Agency. She has also been a volunteer at the Efner City History Museum in Schenectady and an intern for the College of Saint Rose Archives and the Northeast Parent and Child Society. Most recently, she worked as a Library Assistant at the Albany Public Library's Main Library. Melissa enjoys writing, cooking, hiking, and reading. She lives in Albany's Pine Hills neighborhood with her partner, Evan, and her beloved cat, Simon.

## NEW TRUSTEES

**Robert M. Carney** grew up in Schenectady and Glenville, and is a third-generation Schenectadian. A graduate of Union College and Albany Law School, Bob has been Schenectady County's District Attorney since 1990. His office has embraced technology to fight crime and secured grant funds to enhance services to crime victims, combat domestic violence, expand alternatives to incarceration programs and establish a child advocacy center to assist child victims of crime. He served as president of the New York State District Attorneys' Association, and has been honored for his work by both the State and Schenectady County Bar associations. He is an avid Union College hockey and New York Yankees fan, and enjoys cooking and reading, particularly books about the American Revolution and Founding Fathers. He has four children. He and his wife, Janine Kava, were married in the front parlor of the Historical Society.

**Deborah Crosby** moved back to Schenectady after her retirement last year. Most of her family members live in the area. She is in the process of renovating the house she grew up in, one believed to have been built c. 1865 by Sebastian and Margaret (Waddell) Putman. She is related to some of those who settled here in the mid-1600s. Her Italian ancestors arrived more recently, but have now been established in Schenectady for a century. She attended Schalmont High School, Skidmore College, and earned an M.S. in Art Education from the College of New Rochelle. She has been an art teacher at Horace Greeley High School in Chappaqua, NY, and president of the Chappaqua Congress of Teachers. Her volunteer work has included the New Castle Historical Society, food pantries, and creation of educational displays for public libraries, museums, and schools. She is the author of *Victorian Pencils: Tools to Jewels* (Schiffer, 1998) and *Silver Novelties in the Gilded Age* (Schiffer, 2001).

**Richard W. Lewis**, a native of Gloversville and our first Education Coordinator at the Mabee Farm, is returning to the Board after having served as a Trustee for a 3-year term ending in 2006. Originally a chemistry major at Union College, he graduated in the humanities because of a greater interest in history. His first job was as a reporter for the *Schenectady Gazette*. In 1959, he covered our Sesquicentennial, the 150th anniversary of Schenectady County. He also spent time with city historian Bill Efner, a past president of SCHS who had founded the Efner City History Center, further stimulating his interest in local history. After his studies at SUNY Albany, he taught 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grades in Galway. Later, he spent four years at Scotia-Glenville and then took a position supervising student teachers at the campus school at SUNY Albany for

ten years. He then became head of the English Department at Shenendehowa, a position that he held for 22 years until he retired in June 1997. Richard and his wife Linda live in the old Dutch 1796 Jesse Van Patten house in Glenville.

**Laura Lee Linder** (L<sup>3</sup> to us) came to Schenectady from Boonton, NJ in 1973 with training in archaeology, museum administration, and historic preservation. She had been excavating Dutch Colonial and Revolutionary War sites, cataloguing Native American artifacts and the collection of Thomas Edison's secretary, serving her hometown historical society as curator and president, and filling out forms for locks and sites along the Morris Canal to be listed on the National Register of Historic Sites. In Schenectady, her skills have been valued by the Archives and Historical Concerns Committee of the First Reformed Church, several local museums, SCHS, and the Historic District Commission. Laura has lived in Charlton since 1981. After raising two children and participating with them in Sunday school, PTSA, Cub Scouts, Girl Scouts, 4-H, and several sports, she was appointed as Charlton's Town Historian and returned to museum work. She is a member of the New York State Archaeological Association, New Netherland Institute, Schenectady/Nijkerk Council, Colonial Schenectady Project, Rotary, crew with the replica ship *Half Moon*, and is a Registered Historian with the Association of Public Historians of New York State.

**Jim Strosberg** is a graduate of Troy High School, Union College, and the SUNY Buffalo School of Medicine. He is past president of the Schenectady County Medical Society. He maintained an office at Sunnysview Hospital for 34 years during which time he served as President of the Medical-Dental Staff and Treasurer of the Sunnysview Foundation. He is a Past President of the Northeastern New York Chapter of the Arthritis Foundation and served as Chief of Medicine at Ellis Hospital. He held appointments to the clinical faculties of Dartmouth College, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, and Albany Medical College. Dr. Strosberg served two years with the U.S. Public Health Service on the Cheyenne River Sioux Reservation in South Dakota. He has lectured on "The Battle of Wounded Knee", "The Assassination of President McKinley", "Schenectady and the Spanish Flu of 1918," and "Civil War Medicine." He was the principal author of *Caring of the Community: A Bicentennial History of the Schenectady County Medical Society*. He and his wife Margo are the parents of five children and grandparents of fourteen. President Ed Reilly calls Jim "my favorite tuba player."

*Continued from page 1*

***Spread of fire and attempts to fight fire***

Intense heat from the fire set ablaze the houses then located on adjacent corners of Front Street and Washington Avenue. Chaos reigned. Accounts of the fire describe scenes of confusion as houses along the northern ends of Washington Avenue and Church Street and the western end of Front Street were being emptied of furniture and goods in anticipation of evacuation in advance of the flames. Panic stricken people stood around, paralyzed by terror, or were frantically running about looking for assistance to remove their personal possessions from their houses. In the confusion, thieves walked off with personal possessions that had been relocated to the street for safe keeping from burning houses, and pick-pockets worked their trade in the distracted crowds. Over all could be heard the hoarse cries of men shouting orders, the rattling of hoofs and fire engines upon the cobblestone-paved streets, and the deafening roar of the fire.

The fire proceeded to engulf houses along the western side of Washington Avenue north to the river and south to include buildings at the present addresses of Nos. 16 to 24. It jumped the street and spread to houses located on the eastern corners of Front Street and Washington Avenue, and to wood shingle roofs along Washington Avenue, Front and Church Streets. Along the west side of Ferry Street wood roofs were being drenched with pails of water by occupants. The roof of the home of William Chrisler at No. 25 Washington Avenue was saved from catching fire by the efforts of his neighbors in squelching cinders. On Front Street, the house next-west from the home of Stephen Daggett (at No. 5 Front St) and his barn were torn down. Daggett's house was soaked with water, thus effectively stopping the advance of the fire to the east. On the south side of Front Street, the barn of Stephen Y. Vedder had caught fire, but was torn down, thus stopping the fire in that direction.

In the midst of all this bedlam, smoke was noticed to be pouring from the latticed windows of the steeple of the old Dutch Reformed Church at the corner of Union and Church Streets, and that flames encircled the tower's clock. Fire engines positioned down by the river could not be repositioned in time to attack the fire in the church. People rushed in to remove cushions,

books, papers, the chandelier, carpets, the old Bible, and even the pulpit. But the fire could not be stopped, and onlookers watched helplessly as first the steeple collapsed in on the roof, the bell crashed down through the tower floors, and the old church was gutted within its masonry walls. In the process, heat from the fire set ablaze the house next door at No. 105 Union Street, the home of Mrs. Riggs, now part of the present church lawn, and would have spread to the next house at No. 107 Union Street, the home of a Mr. Barringer, except for the efforts in drenching the roof and sidewalls by firefighters.

Embers from the fire were dropping on roofs across the downtown and as far away as Albany Hill (in the vicinity of the present Veterans' Park at State St. and Nott Terrace/Veeder Avenue. It became apparent to local authorities that local fire fighting forces were inadequate to stop the spread. Messages were sent by telegraph to Troy, Albany, and Amsterdam for assistance in fighting the fire. Crews and equipment began to arrive from surrounding towns and assisted in putting down the last of the fire. Most impressive was the performance of the *Hugh Rankin*, a steam pumper from Troy, which was positioned at the foot of Governor's Lane and pumped a strong stream of water through 15,000 feet of hose up the Lane, down Front Street and around the corner to Washington Avenue.

***Extent of Destruction*** The fire which had started in Otis Smith's broom factory had destroyed the warehouse and broom factory, dry house, store house, sheds, 70 tons of stored materials, 3,000 dozen brooms, machinery, wagons, harness and related equipment, and a house. Damage to the factory operations was estimated at \$22,000 and the house at \$1,000. Smith carried only \$8,000 in insurance.

The old Dutch church and consistory were destroyed by the fire. The loss included furniture, the church organ, and gas fixtures. Fortunately, the church was insured, and site clearance and removal of rubble had started by early October. The consistory selected architect Edward Tuckerman Potter of New York City to design the new (fifth) building, which was completed by 1862. Potter, a Schenectady native, known for his design of the Nott Memorial for Union College and the Mark Twain House in West Hartford, CT,

designed the new church building in High Victorian Gothic Revival style, setting the building back from the street fronts in a picturesque composition that encloses the bell tower in a corner formed by the church fronting on Union Street and the consistory room facing Church Street. This building was itself a victim of fire in February 1948 when it was destroyed by a winter fire, although the church was rebuilt within the surviving stone walls.

Garret W. Vedder suffered one of the larger losses. Vedder owned a row of brick tenements on the west side of Washington Avenue that included the sites of the present day nos. 18-24. They were completely destroyed. Also destroyed, were a frame dwelling on the north side of Front Street, as well as two two-story frame houses on the east side of Washington Avenue. In 1865, Vedder put up for auction the property on the west side of Washington Avenue at the corner of Cucumber Alley which was purchased by Nicholas Cain who constructed the present brick townhouses as rental property after he took title in 1867.

A house on the west side of Washington Avenue, then owned by John Barhydt (present No. 26), was severely damaged by the fire. Barhydt rebuilt but "modernized" the house in the then fashionable Italianate townhouse style. On the east side of Washington Avenue, a frame house at the corner owned by the estate of Stephen Y. Vedder was damaged, the brick-fronted frame house of a Mrs. Brower was destroyed, and a row of brick Federal style rental houses owned by Daniel D. Campbell were damaged but subsequently rehabilitated and "modernized."

**Aftermath** Otis Smith sought to rebuild the broom factory on his property at the northwest corner of Washington Avenue and Cucumber Alley. However, an October 10, 1861 editorial in the *Evening Star and Times* noted that "citizens" in the vicinity of Smith's broom factory had begun to protest the erection of another factory at that site. The editorial went on to suggest:

*Some of you solid men of Dorp, that live in the west end, just buy Mr. Smith's lot there, and give it to the city for a park...*

Smith didn't live to rebuild his broom factory. It was reported in the March 24, 1862 issue of the *Evening Star and Times* that he had died on the

22<sup>nd</sup> of March at the age of 51 years. His funeral was conducted from his home at 21 Front Street. Nothing seems to have come of the proposal to turn the site at the confluence of the Mohawk and Binnekill into a public park. Subsequently houses and a new broom factory, later owned by Charles L. Whitmyre, were constructed on the property.



*Whitmyre & Co Broom Factory after fire - circa 1870*

The cause of the fire was never determined to anyone's satisfaction. Some claimed that it was caused by the carelessness of roofers tinning the roof on the north side of the building, but that was countered with the accounts of many who were sure that the fire appeared to have started at the southwest corner of the building. The *Evening Standard and Times* concluded its initial article about the fire with the following thought:

*In the few hours on Tuesday, more wretchedness has been condensed, than in any year since 1837. Such a scene of terror is not often witnessed anywhere, and we trust that it will be long before another such a desolating spectacle shall visit the banks of the Mohawk.*

Sources: For Fire Reports:

Schenectady *Evening Standard and Times*, Aug. 7, 8 and 9, 1861;

Schenectady *Evening Star and Times*, August 7, 12, and 15; Sept. 4 and 17; Oct. 10, 1861.

For Broom Corn Industry:

Howell, George Rogers and John H. Munsell, *History of the county of Schenectady, N.Y., from 1662 to 1886*. New York: W. W. Munsell & Co., Publishers (1886) p. 147-149



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Theresa Early  
Elizabeth Ehrcke  
Lydia Eis  
James Elbrecht  
Rev Wendell Elmendorf  
Constance Emery  
Mona Evenden  
Carol Farrell  
Joy Favretti  
Hazel Feiker  
Robert Felthousen  
Susan Felthousen  
Pamela Felton  
Darryl Ferguson  
Linda Finkle  
Arnold Fisher  
Brian Flahive  
Martha Foland  
Margaret Foley  
Barbara Foti  
Arlene Frederick  
J. Stuart Freeman, Jr  
T. Cartter Frierson, Sr  
George Gamble  
Janet Gardner  
Ralph Gasner  
John Gearing  
Charles Gelarden  
Carl George  
Matthew. George  
Jeannette. Gerlaugh  
Donald Gleason  
Patricia Goins  
Gary Grandy  
Beryl Grant  
Hershel Graubart  
Marion Grimes  
Emmeline Grubb

Elaine Bradshaw Guidice  
Jean Gwynn  
Catherine Haag  
Nancy Hagedorn  
Shelle Hamil  
Ruth Hand  
Susannah Hand  
Jayne Hanson  
Diane Harper  
Gretchel Hathaway  
Naomi Haughey  
Janet Hawkes  
Clifford Hayes  
Gerald Helgeson  
Jody Henry  
Karen Hess  
Phyllis Hill  
James Holmblad  
Paul Hooker  
Sylvia Hosegood  
Sarah Howes  
Glenn Hunger  
Carolyn Huston  
Ellenberger  
Janet Hutchison  
JoAnne Ivory  
Bernice Izzo  
Barbara Jeffries  
Hugh Jenkins  
Ann Jensvold  
Gwendolyn Johnson  
Heather Johnson  
Kathryn Johnson  
Timothy Johnson  
Marietta Jones  
Steve Jones  
Sharon Jordan  
Marianne Josefiak  
Gerald Kammerman  
Ann Karl  
Randall Karl  
Francis Karwowski  
Jean Katz  
Deborah Kellis  
Dottie Kennison  
Kevin Kesby  
Wayne Kimball  
Sharlene King  
Ron Kingsley  
Gloria Kishton  
Millie Kling  
Marilyn Kohls  
Mary Korkosz  
Bonnie Kotary  
Janet Kristel  
Mary Kuykendall-Webber  
Christine LaBar-VanBuren  
Donna Lagone  
Ted LaMontagne  
Rita Lancefield

Ruth Larson  
Gloria Lasher  
Pat Lawson  
Edward Le Viness  
Allison Lee  
Stan Lee  
Jerry Leonardo  
Sally Sutliff Lester  
Carol Lewis  
Thomas Locke  
Edward Kruesi Lorraine  
Victor Lou  
Elizabeth Loveland  
Chad Loveland  
Katharine Lowe  
Jonathan Mabee  
Robert Mabee  
Catharine Mabie  
George W. Mabie  
Robert Mabie  
Ralph Maclachlan  
Alan Maddaus  
Elsie Maddaus  
John Maddaus  
Gertrude Mallan  
Karen Mallia  
Jim Mancuso  
David Manthey  
Doris Marcellus  
David Marhafer  
Joseph Markey  
Richard. Martin  
Joan Marzitelli-Brooks  
Linda Masotti  
Irma Mastrean  
Brian Maybee  
Mary Maybee  
Patricia McAllister  
Bob McCalley  
Carole McCarthy  
Bill McColl  
Nancy McNabb  
Susan Spring Meggs  
Jo Ann Menzer  
Ellen Messick  
Betsy Meyer  
Marion Miller  
Peter Modley  
Eleanor Monlea  
Martha Mooney  
Pauline Moran  
Barbara Muhlfelder  
Avis Mulholland  
Keith Munro  
Harriet. Murphy  
Malinda Myers  
Perry Ann Myslivy  
Althea Nelson  
Janet Nelson  
Christie Noble

Jane Meader Nye  
Ida Nystrom  
Patrick O'Brian  
Patricia O'Claire  
Francis O'Connor  
David Ogsbury  
Tracy Olsen  
Mildred Olson  
Deborah Ormon  
Elaine Orsini  
Gerald Ouderkirk  
Jenny Overeynder  
Dorothy Packard  
Caleb Paine  
Barbara. Palmer  
Christine Pangburn  
Edward Pangburn  
Nancy Papish  
David Pecoraro  
Mary Pedone  
Linda Perregaux  
Ann Perry  
Sean Peterson  
Rob Petito  
Marilyn Pfaltz  
Joan Pflieger  
Betty Pieper  
Del Pierce  
Barbara Piper  
Teresa Pistolessi  
Henry Polgreen  
Charlene Pomichter  
Janet Rainey  
Robin Ramos  
Carol Raphael  
Ev Rau  
Sharon Reed  
Deborah Regimbald  
Deborah Ann Reid  
James Richmond  
Ellie Riemer  
Arnold Ritterband  
Shirley Rivest  
Caroline Roberts  
Ellen Robertson  
Beryl Rockwell  
Kathie Rockwell  
Patricia Rodriguez  
Lillian Roe  
Herb Roes  
Nancy Ross  
William "Rip" Rowan  
Sonia Rubenstein  
Mary Ann Ruscitto  
Jack Ruthberg  
Paul Ryan  
John Salamida  
Angelo Santabarbara  
Kandie Jones Sawyer  
Gordon Schaufelberg



## **Individual** - Continued

Heidi-Maria Schilling  
Shirley Schleier  
Robert Schmidt  
Sadie Schneider  
Elinore Schumacher  
Jane Scrafford  
Kathleen Scutt  
Pilar Seacord  
Kathleen Secker  
Paula Shafer  
Robert Sheehan  
Susanna Sherwood  
Earl Shirkey  
Janet Shook  
Chandra Singh  
Peter Sisario  
Charles Slavin  
Henrietta Slosek  
Louvina Slurff  
Don Smith  
Betty Jane Somers  
Wayne Somers  
Pat Somerscales  
Elaine Springsted  
Dave St. Louis  
Ellen Steele  
Paul Stephens  
Fred Stevens  
Katherine Stevens  
Jim Steward

Richard Stewart  
Robyn Stewart  
Carole Strong  
Robert Sullivan  
Sally Swantz  
Elizabeth Taft  
Edward Tebbenhoff  
Diane Telford  
Peter Ten Eyck  
Alice Buff Tepper  
Clifford Tepper  
Evelyn Thode  
Paul Tocker  
Helen Tognetti  
Jean Tomlinson  
Julia Topka  
Paul Tracy  
Lois Troup  
Lois Truax  
Kristin Tucker  
Jack Underwood  
Eugene Van Dyke  
Kathryn Van Flue  
John Van Laak  
Holly van Schaick  
Gary Van Slyke  
Gloria Vassolas  
Diana Vaughn  
Carolyn Veeder  
Wendy Voelker  
Harold Vroman  
Doris Vrooman

Dale Wade-Keszey  
Nancy Waldron  
Anita Walther  
Nancy Wasmund  
Louise Watrous  
Barbara Watt  
Linda Weisel  
Charles Warner Wendell  
George Westinghouse IV  
Richard Whalen  
Maureen Wheeler  
Walter Wheeler  
George White  
Joanne Wiedman  
Henry Williams  
Judith Willis  
Malcolm Willison  
Hazel Wilson  
Thomas Wixon  
Johanna Woldring  
Robert Woods  
Fred Woodward  
Leigh Woznick  
Lionel Wyld  
William Yates  
Neil Yetwin  
Howard Young  
Bill Yunick  
James Zayicek  
Jean Zegger

## **Sustaining**

Adirondack Trust Co.  
Bomber's Burrito  
Carlilian Foundation  
of Schenectady  
Felthousen's Florist  
George E. Franchere  
Trust  
Golub Foundation  
Hartgen Archeological  
Associates  
Logic Technology, Inc.  
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Open Door Bookstore  
Pedone Business  
Enterprises  
Price Chopper Foundation  
St. George's Council of  
Cryptic Masons  
Schenectady D.A.R.  
Schenectady Foundation  
Schenectady Museum  
Senator Hugh T. Farley  
Slick's Restaurant &  
Tavern  
Stewart's Shops  
W.G. Broughton  
Foundation  
Wright Family Foundation



## Revolutionary War Re-enactment & Voorjaar Fest

**May 14 & 15**







**Battles with cannons & period boats**  
**Voorjaar (Spring) Fest - period goods**  
**Sunday church service - Sunday**  
**Committee of Safety Meeting**  
**Punch & Judy Show - Sunday**  
**Kids musket drill**  
**Drill demos**  
**Camp tours**  
**Experience how the troops were fed.**



**\$3. adults**  
**\$2. kids & Srs**  
**\$10 a carload**  
*Includes house tour!*

**Saturday night period barn dance at 7 pm**  
*Public welcome*

**MABEE FARM HISTORIC SITE**  
**Route 5S, Rotterdam Jct.**  
**(518) 887-5073**  
[www.mabefarm.org](http://www.mabefarm.org)    [mabee@nycap.rr.com](mailto:mabee@nycap.rr.com)



## *Howlin' at the Moon*

### *Music Series*

**Tues, May 17th 7 - 9 pm**

*Showcasing:*  
**Everest Rising**  
*with singer songwriters:*  
**Courtney Blackwell**  
**Mark Baptiste**

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**Wed, June 15th 7 - 9 pm**

*Showcasing:*  
**Fairview Avenue Bluegrass**  
*with singer songwriters:*  
**Dan Johnson**  
**Kyle Miller**

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*Sponsored in part by:*  
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**MABEE FARM HISTORIC SITE**  
**Route 5S, Rotterdam Jct. 887-5073**

## MUSEUM Exhibits & Lectures

### EXHIBITS

*The Art in Cartography: Highlighting the Collection of the Schenectady County Historical Society.* This exhibit continues **through May 14<sup>th</sup>**. Using maps from the collection of the Schenectady County Historical Society, this exhibit focuses on the evolution of cartography as well as the cartographers. See the stunning artwork from the hand drawn maps of James Frost to the engravings included on the maps of John Calvin Smith which is visually exciting.

### May 18<sup>th</sup> - July 1<sup>st</sup>

*A Fine Romance: Jewish Songwriters, American Songs, 1910-1965*

There will be an **Opening Reception** - Thursday May 19, 6:00 -8:00 PM

**NOTE:** During the Reception, Harvey Strum will give an illustrated presentation on the history of the Jewish community in Schenectady.

“A Fine Romance” tells the story of the many Jewish composers, such as Irving Berlin, Jerome Kern and George Gershwin. They created the great American songbook from 1910-1965. The best composers of this period combined a genius for melody, a talent for finding the perfect words, and an ability to connect with a wide audience. A large number of them were Jewish, and came from families that immigrated to America in the 1800s to flee persecution in Europe. “A Fine Romance” tells their story.

**NOTE:** The exhibit was created by Nextbook, a Jewish cultural organization, and the American Library Association Public Programs Office. The national tour was made possible by the Charles H. Revson Foundation, the Righteous Persons Foundation, the David Berg Foundation, an anonymous donor, and *Tablet: A New Read on Jewish Life*.

### LECTURES

#### Saturday May 21

2:00 PM Lecture

*The Two Worlds of Major Mordecai Myers: A Jewish-American Hero*

Presented by Neil Yetwin

Major Mordecai Myers lived the most compelling life of any Jewish-American of his day. Born to impoverished immigrant parents, he spent his formative years in New York City and, as a child of Loyalists during the Revolution, four years in the Nova Scotian wilderness. Upon the family’s return to New

York City in 1787, Myers embarked on several careers: military service (severely wounded in the War of 1812); state politics (the first Jew to serve in the New York State Legislature); local politics (the only Jewish mayor of both Kinderhook and Schenectady); national politics; and New York State’s Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Freemasons. Along the way, Myers made and lost two fortunes and would outlive his wife and six of his ten children.

**NOTE:** This program, which is free and open to the public, is made possible through the support of the New York Council for the Humanities’ *Speakers in the Humanities* program.

#### Saturday June 4

2:00 PM Lecture

*From Music Halls to Movie Palaces: Popular Entertainment in New York 1850-1930*

Presented by John Scherer

John Scherer, retired Curator from the New York State Museum, will speak on the history of theaters and popular entertainment in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century throughout the State of New York. Topics such as melodrama, vaudeville, burlesque, musical revues, and silent films will all be discussed. The program is illustrated with period posters and theater memorabilia from the State Museum and State Library Collections.

### MABEE FARM

#### CLASSES

#### Basket Making May 21–Saturday 8:30 AM–5:30 PM

Classic Basket – Strap it on your bike or use it as a backpack. In a one day workshop, students will learn to hand shape this reed basket. This class is appropriate for all skill levels. Approximate finished size: 8” x 11” x 9”. Instructor: Beverly Cornelius. Class fee: \$100. Materials fee - \$25. 8:30 AM- 5:30 PM Minimum class size: 5. Please bring your lunch. To register: please call (518) 887-5073.

#### Beginning Tinsmith Class June 18<sup>th</sup> Saturday 9:30 AM -3 PM

This class will introduce the history, tools, and techniques of the tinsmith. Learn the basic processes: cutting, bending, forming, wiring, and soldering by constructing simple, historically accurate examples of early tinware. Instructor: Olof Jansson. Class fee: \$100.00 Materials fee: \$15.00 Please bring your lunch. Class size: Minimum of 3, Maximum of 5. To register: please call (518) 887-5073.

## *Civil War Living History Day at the Mabee Farm*



*Private Matt George tells his Civil War story.*



*Photos: Ann Aronson,  
Jennifer Hanson*





# *Schenectady County Historical Society*

## *New Board Trustees*

*See page 3*



*Debra Crosby*



*Bob Carney*



*Laura Lee Linder*



*Richard Lewis*



*Jim Strosberg*

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