

Schenectady County Historical Society

Newsletter

Volume 41 Number 9-10

September-October 2004

32 Washington Avenue, Schenectady, New York 12305

(518) 374-0263

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Erie Canal Theme

for 45th Annual Stockade Walkabout & Waterfront Faire

Family Fun for Everyone! Saturday, September 18, 11a.m.–5 p.m.

Did you know that you can take a **boat ride** on the Mohawk River; enjoy seeing your kids or grandkids **ride a pony**, pet a baby rabbit, or have their face painted; take a charming **carriage ride** along the River's edge and through the Stockade streets, coming upon **Governor Yates** (our Frank Taormina) or Arendt Van Curler, Symon Schermerhorn or other illustrious Schenectadians; or watch a real live **archaeological dig** behind one of the oldest homes in the Stockade; or get your picture taken with one of the many **antique cars** on display at the car show; or tap your toes to bluegrass music or old canal songs, while eating fried dough or a steak sandwich, then winding it all up with a big finale of a decorated **yacht parade** on the River?

Well, all this is happening on Saturday, September 18 as part of the Walkabout & Waterfront Faire! If you haven't attended this event for several



years, you can see that it is a lot more than the wonderful historic house tour of years ago!

Highlights of the houses on tour this year are several homes with high Victorian features such as grand mantles, mirrors and marble fireplaces along with some very special 1700's antique furnishings. Several beautiful secret gardens are tucked behind the homes.

Dora Jackson (our Mary Liebers) will welcome you into her home, and as is their ever gracious tradition, the Society will be serving complimentary tea and cookies throughout the day.

To celebrate the Erie Canal theme this year, our new curator, Kate Weller, assisted by Jo Mordecai, have put together a wonderful exhibit in the Vrooman Room of old Erie Canal days. Also, our Bill Massoth will lead a talk and tour to the original Erie Canal site. And to celebrate the river, take a boat ride on a turn-of-the-century launch boat. Also, crew teams will demonstrate their skill, and, back by popular demand, the bateau the "DeSager" will cruise the river filled with colorful reenactors.

To make parking a dream there will be free parking in the SCCC parking lot with the Union College trolley taking you into the Stockade. Or park for free

in other Stockade lots. Walkabout Welcomers will greet you at all the main entry points and direct you.

Tickets are \$15 in advance, \$20 day of event and can be ordered by credit card by calling the Schenectady County Historical Society, Mon.-Fri., 1:00 - 5:00 PM and Saturdays, 10:00AM to 4:00 PM at 374-0263, or the Downtown Schenectady Improvement Corporation Mon-Fri. 9:30 AM to 4:30 PM at (518) 377-9430., 184 Jay St. Ticket booklets can be picked up at the above two locations ahead of time or on the day of the event at the Will Call table in front of the Schenectady County Historical Society.

This event is presented by The Stockade Association, The Schenectady County Historical Society and The Downtown Schenectady Improvement Corporation with proceeds used for

See Erie, continued on page 6



OTHER HAPPENINGS

FRIDAYS IN OCTOBER

Lecture and Lunch Series-Explore the Society's Collections *See page 7*
MABEE FARM EVENTS *See page 4*

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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Librarian

Kathryn Weller

Curator

Pat Barrot

Mabee Farm Site Manager

Johanna Woldring

Office Manager

Paul Gonsowski

Custodian

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

Tuesday – Saturday

10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Mabee Farm closes September 25th

Open by appointment year

'round.

Museum, Library and Mabee

Farm closed Labor Day,

September 6th



LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

The time has flown and summer is almost over already. Hope you all had a chance to enjoy some time off or away! Things have been going along at the Society at breakneck pace. Everyone has several projects to work on, from building repairs, to library grants for cataloging, the farm for the dock and exhibits, and of course our most exciting news of hiring our new museum curator. Her name is Kathryn Weller and a recent grad of the Cooperstown M.A. program. She is off to a fast start her first week with she and Pat Barrot, the farm manager, attending a workshop on museum standards. Due to our space and meeting room crunch we are fixing up the basement for a conference room. A good cleaning and lick of paint will make it workable. Thanks to Johanna, she has made the entryway more attractive with

flowers this summer. Thanks also to Paul for cleaning out the brush and debris from down on the lower terrace. It will make it more attractive and hopefully mosquito free if we care to use it.

Kate is already working on an interactive exhibit on the Erie Canal for our Walkabout on September 18th, so be sure to mark it on your calendar!!!

Our assistance to the City History Center has been greatly appreciated. So far many volunteer hours have been put in by Cindy Seacord and lots of others.

Many thanks to the book group who are now awaiting the publication of the *Rotterdam Images of America* due out in August, so be sure to get your copy!!

So please come join us this fall to see all the exciting new things going on here!!

Kim Mabee



FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

The Society is moving ahead. The Museum now has a professionally trained curator. Meet Kate Weller (see p.6). Kate will plan interpretive exhibits that reflect Schenectady history. She will make sure the collections the Society has acquired over its one hundred year history are taken care of and she will plan programs that will make you want to return to the museum over and over again. There will be programs that appeal to all ages.

As a private non-profit organization we rely on your support. We thank you for

what you have done in the past and welcome your help in the future. In order to provide programs, plan educational events and interpret the area's history in a way that relates the past to the present, we need your continued support through memberships, donations, volunteer hours and participation. As much as we need your financial support, we also need your skills and expertise. Call Kate at 374-0263. She looks forward to talking with you about how we can put your talents to work for the Society.

Ona Curran

General Electric Matching Funds Program

The Schenectady County Historical Society is most appreciative of funds in the amount of \$7,486.16 recently received from the GE Foundation Community Matching Gifts Program for the year 2003. The GE program is a tremendous help to the Society as it provides much needed funds for exhibits and programs promoting the area's history. Thank you General Electric.

This is the 51st year in which GE sponsored the matching gifts program. If you are an employee or retiree of General Electric, your donation to the Society will be matched by the General Electric Foundation. Be sure to notify GE of your donation. The number to call is 800-305-0669.

Our Apology to Professor Edward H. Worthen

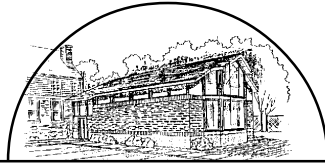
Professor Worthen kindly donated the following book to the Grems-Doolittle Library:

McKendree

The Life of McKendree Petty (1827-1887)

Edward H. Worthen

The donor's name was inadvertently omitted from the July-August Newsletter. The name of the donor is Edward H. Worthen, Professor Emeritus, SUNY Plattsburgh.



The Grems-Doolittle Library & Archives

ACQUISITIONS BY THE LIBRARY

Books:

The Genealogy of Jacob and Michael Van Wagoner, Jr. 1823-1984
by Philo Woodrow Van Wagoner

Early Records of the City and County of Albany and Colony of Rensselaerswyck, vol. 4

Saratoga Reader, Writing about an American Village, 1749-1900
by Field Horne

Reference Notes to Accompany the Encyclopedia of Union College History

The Van Voorhees Family in America: The Seventh and Eighth Generations, 2 volumes compiled and edited by Florence A. Christoph

The American Locomotive Company: A Centennial Remembrance
by Richard T. Steinbrenner

"Archival Anecdotes"—quarterly publication of the Friends of the Silvio W. Conte National Archives-8 issues from 2001-2004

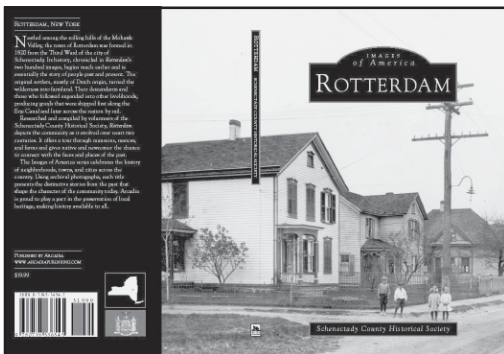
Index to U.S. Invalid Pension Records, 1801-1815 by Murtie June Clark

History of Schenectady County by C.W. Van Santvoord, C.S. Halsey and W.T. Becker

CDs:

New York Genealogical and Biographical Record: Disc 2: 1900-1915

Military Records: New York in the Revolution and the War of 1812



Now ready!

The brand-new *Images of America Rotterdam* book has been printed and will be here soon. Order your copies today. Send us a check for \$19.95 for each book ordered along with your name and address. Free mailing to all orders outside the Schenectady area. Books can also be picked up at the Society headquarters at 32 Washington Avenue as soon as they arrive here. Over 200 pictures of Rotterdam people and places.

Celebrate our 100th anniversary with our new 2005 calendar. Illustrated with photographs from our collection. This year's calendar gives us a look at the year 1905, our founding year. Calendars will be available in mid-September. Watch our web site for news.

The Efner History Research Library Re-Opens at Schenectady City Hall, With a Little Help from its Society Friends

by Cynthia Seacord

Taking over the management of the Schenectady City History Center, (also known as the Efner History Research Library) by the Historical Society was the brainchild of the Grems-Doolittle librarian Virginia Bolen, for whom I have been doing volunteer work for a number of years. Before approaching the Board, Ginny asked me if I'd be interested in heading up the project, and I gratefully accepted. In March, with the backing of the Historical Society's board, Ms. Bolen approached Mayor Brian U. Stratton about having the Historical Society re-open and assume the management of the long-closed Efner History Research Library in City Hall. The Mayor and his staff were delighted, and accepted the proposal, without hesitation.

On April 1st, Ginny and I, and other staff and volunteers from SCHS, went to the "attic" at City Hall to assess our task and set some reachable goals. We certainly had our work cut out for us, for this facility had generally been unavailable to the public for almost a year. We spent 160 hours in April and May exploring every corner of the Center and its storeroom and working to get it organized.

By the end of May, we determined that the Center would be in good enough shape to re-open to the public in June. We picked Flag Day, June 14th, for the grand re-opening. Coincidentally, the German Turnverein of Schenectady had recently located their 100+ year old time capsule, and approached City Hall about it. Maureen Gebert from the City's Development Office, aware of the re-opening plans, arranged to have the Efner re-opening coincide with the opening of the Turnverein time capsule at a special ceremony in the City Council chambers that day.

Over 20 Turnverein members witnessed the opening of the time capsule by the organization's president, August Schlensker, and his wife, Lisa. Inside the capsule was a 1903 German newspaper, several Turnverein pamphlets, an 1883 dime, a handwritten list of over 300 original members from 1903, and, also handwritten in German, a history of the Schenectady organization. After the ceremony, visitors were welcomed at an Open House up at the Efner Center, where the Turnverein time capsule and contents are now on display through September.

Thank you to volunteers who have identified prints from our extensive photo collection and to Carol Lewis, Ginny

See Efner, continued on page 7

We now accept credit cards—
MasterCard and VISA.





Mabee Farm Historic Site

COMMITTEE MEMBER & VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Dale Wade-Keszey

This issue, we would like to highlight our committed volunteer and Mabee Farm Committee member, Dale Wade-Keszey, who has been involved in the Mabee Farm for four years.

Dale grew up in Schenectady and attended Mount Pleasant High School. He earned a degree in horticulture from SUNY Delhi and owned a landscaping business for several years. He also worked as an electrician and as Event Coordinator for Clifton Park Convention Services before pursuing his longtime interests in teaching and history. He earned a second degree from SUNY Empire State College and recently received his master's from Excelsior College. His master's thesis was about the Mabee Family and the life of a farm family in the Mohawk Valley. Dale teaches American history at Draper Middle School in the Mohonasen School District.

Dale is married and has a 19-year-old son who attends SUNY Oswego. He is presently working with his father to restore the rowing skiff, which they will donate to the Mabee Farm.

Yet Dale still finds time to remain active in the Mabee Farm. With him, it's not only a question of giving time, but of what he receives in return. "I'm pretty frugal with my time," he says, "I wouldn't come here if I didn't get something out of it. It's a great group of people to be around . . . as a group, I feel we're greater than the sum of our parts."

Dale Wade-Keszey teaching history to children along the banks of the Mohawk River.



Mabee Farm

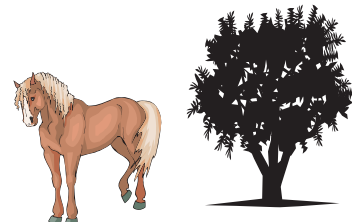
1080 Main Street (Rt. 5S), Rotterdam Jct., NY • (518) 887-5073

SUNDAE ON THE FARM

Sunday, September 19th, 12-4 p.m.

Free admission • Free ice cream sundaes

- Live animals
- Crafts & demos
- Children's games
- Farmer's market
- Chicken barbecue



Learn first-hand how the products you eat come from working farms!

Mabee Farm Historic Site

1080 Main St. (Route 5S)
Rotterdam Jct., NY (518) 887-5073

MABEE FARM CALENDAR OF EVENTS

September 19	Sundae on the Farm
September 25	Close for the season
October 2	Tool Swap
October 9	Fall Arts & Crafts Festival

Note: The Farm is open for tours by appointment year 'round.



Volunteers with Louise Basa for the "Hands on Archaeology Course" for children.

EXPANDING OUR FLEET

The Mabee Farm has been given an additional bateau. Dr. Pamela Clements of Siena College purchased it for use at a conference on October 8-10. After this conference, it will be donated to the Mabee Farm. Also, Dale Wade-Keszey has donated an 1890 rowing skiff. It is somewhat deeper and longer than the bateau, and will be on view at the Mabee Farm once the dock is completed.

Historic Site

73 • Email: mabee@nycap.rr.com • Web: www.mabeefarm.org



Erie Canal Bike Tour at the Mabees Farm.

400 MILES ON THE ERIE CANAL

On Saturday, July 17, over 500 cyclists from 43 states and group volunteers stopped to rest at the Mabees Farm. The cyclists were participating in the Erie Canal Bike Tour, a 400-mile, eight-day journey from Buffalo to Albany. The cyclists toured the house and grounds, watched demonstrations and relaxed before heading off to the final leg of their tour.

GRANT FROM SCHENECTADY COUNTY

The Mabees Farm has received a grant for the Inn from Schenectady County for \$1,400 to be used for interpretive signage when restoration is complete. Anyone who has suitable furniture or furnishings to complement the mid-18th Century Inn and would like to donate them, please call 877-5073.

THANK YOU!

Thank you to Mabees descendant Ruthanna Glenn for her donation of over 30 items, including antique farming tools, a large collection of sadirons and flatirons, and a Windsor chair that was once in the Mabees house. Thanks to Bill Dimplefeld, for his donation of a stoneware jug and a grindstone with mortise-and-tenon stand.



Students from Union College's STEP program logging information on their archaeological finds.

FOREFATHER'S DAY

The Mabees Farm's annual fundraiser was a huge success! Over 100 people turned out for the occasion, which featured a traditional Dutch dinner cooked by our volunteers, demonstrations by artisans and craftspeople, traditional music by George Ward and pony rides. Thanks to our many volunteers who donated their time, expertise and culinary skills to make Forefather's Day a success!

DIGGING EVEN DEEPER . . .

The second annual Hands-On Archaeology Course commenced on July 19th. SCCC partnered with the Mabees Farm to offer this week-long course to children ages nine to thirteen. The students were taught about archaeological methods and gained hands-on experience in digging, processing and identifying artifacts. Lectures by Mabees Farm volunteers on genealogy, history and butter making supplemented this popular course.

NEW HIGHWAY SIGNS ARE UP!

Visitors traveling on I-890 will have an easier time finding the Mabees Farm Historic Site, thanks to our new highway signs, placed both eastbound and westbound. Thanks to Andrea Becker for her assistance in getting these in place!

COME ONE, COME ALL . . .

Despite stormy weather, our annual Community Day was well attended, with 130 visitors from all over the region. Our tireless demonstrators, John Ackner, Win Bigelow, Pam Bucci, Connie Carter, and Charlie Long, were once again on hand for this event. Stewart's Shops donated ice cream. It is a testament to everyone's efforts that although admission was free, we received over \$100 in donations from our neighbors on this day.

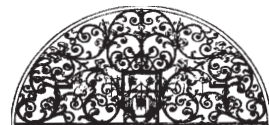
CALL FOR ARTISTS & CRAFTSPEOPLE

This is your last chance to sign up to exhibit & sell at the Fall Arts & Crafts Festival. So far, our exhibitors include: fine art, pottery, stained glass, jewelry, wood, furniture, fibers & more. Call (518) 887-5073 for more information.

FALL ARTS & CRAFTS FESTIVAL

Sat., October 9, 2004

9 am – 5 pm



The Mabees Farm Historic Site proudly presents juried artists and craftspeople in a spectacular setting along the Mohawk River. Pottery, fine art, wood, glass, furniture, jewelry, weavers and more!

Featuring colonial demonstrators & traditional music

Mabees Farm Historic Site

1080 Main St., Rotterdam Jct., NY

(518) 887-5073

Museum News



Kate Weller – The Museum's New Curator

Kate holds a Master of Arts degree in Museum Studies from the Cooperstown Graduate Program (SUNY). She is well trained in museum methodology and historical interpretation. She has exciting plans for upcoming exhibits and programs. The Society is glad to have her expertise.

Would you like to be part of the excitement? Would you like to help with research, writing, artwork, exhibit construction? Do you have computer skills? Do you like to work with a digital camera? Would you like to learn more about antiques? Do you have specialized knowledge in a subject that would be helpful to the society? College students and students of all ages are welcome. Call Kate at the Society 374-0263.



A Note from Kate—Volunteers Needed!

We are looking for a few (well actually more than a few) good men and women to volunteer at the Schenectady County Historical Society! Our museum is in dire need of docents to help give guided tours of the museum and for special events.

Anyone with an interest in our local history and a desire to help educate the public is welcome. Please feel free to contact me about the possible volunteer opportunities, including giving guided tours and other projects at the Historical

Society (374-0263). This may be a great opportunity for the scholar in all of us!

Do you have an extra room-size oriental rug or two, possibly a Serapi or a Heriz that you would like to donate for the parlor of the Museum? Call Kate @ 374-0263.
Also needed - flat panel doors for exhibit props.

FROM THE SOCIETY'S COLLECTIONS



7 Dock Street
Oil on canvas
Unknown artist circa 1870
23½" x 34½"
Gift of William G. Helmer 1914

The Erie Canal played a major role in Schenectady's history for a major part of the 19th century. This painting which depicts the ship chandlery of William H. Helmer (1825-1899) ran alongside the canal. The canal is

now Erie Boulevard. This was the only ship chandlery in Schenectady and the largest west of Albany. The chandlery did a tremendous amount of business supplying the local area and the canal boats passing through with flour, feed and groceries.

William H. Helmer was born in German Flats (now Herkimer) and arrived in Schenectady via packet boat in 1845. He worked for Marvin Strong (1805-1881-2), the

original owner, became a partner in 1855 and sole owner in 1866. His son William G. Helmer joined him in 1880 but because of competition from the railroads, the business was forced to close in 1889.

VISIT THE ERIE CANAL EXHIBIT
at Society Headquarters
Opening Early September

SOCIETY MONTHLY MEETING
October 9 at 1:30 p.m.
Topic – ERIE CANAL

Erie, from page 1

public improvements and historic preservation within the Stockade's Historic district, and to support downtown revitalization projects undertaken by the Downtown Schenectady Improvement Corporation. This year's Society's proceeds will go towards the Society's 2005 Centennial Celebration!

This expanded event is made possible through the generous support of MVP, Time Warner Cable, I Love NY, Bank of America, Union College, SCCC, The Chamber of Schenectady County, NYS Canal Corp., Eastern Office Supply, Gazette Newspapers and many others. The Historical Society, The Stockade Association and The Downtown Schenectady Improvement Corp. are the presenting organizations of this event.

So, pack up your family, and come and have a fun carefree day, enjoying the beautiful neighborhood and the River.

~ Save Fridays in October ~

EXPLORE AND DISCOVER THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY'S RICH COLLECTIONS

Followed by Buffet Lunch at the Stockade Inn

- October 1st - Furniture - The Glen Sanders Collection
- October 8th - Portraits and Portrait Painters
- October 15th - Ceramics - Delft, Chinese Export, Staffordshire
- October 22nd - Folk Art and Landscape Painters
- October 29th - The Child's World - Schoolgirl Samplers,
Toys and the Yates Doll House

LECTURE and LUNCH \$40 - *Members, \$36*

SERIES of FIVE LECTURES \$185 - *Members \$165*

Ona Curran, an art historian, antiques and fine arts appraiser as well as a trustee of the Society, and Kate Weller, our very competent curator will conduct you through the Museum at 32 Washington Avenue. Lectures will start at 10:30 a.m. Luncheon at 12:15 p.m. The Stockade Inn is at the corner of Church and Union Streets. *Space is limited, so sign up early.*

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Member _____ Non Member _____

If you would like to become a member see form on page 8 of Newsletter or call 518-374-0263

I wish to attend all of the lectures _____ or

I will attend the following lectures: Oct. 1 _____ Oct. 8 _____ Oct. 15 _____ Oct. 22 _____ Oct. 29 _____

Enclosed is check payable to SCHS. Mail to 32 Washington Ave., Schenectady, NY 12305

Around the County

Duanesburg and James Duane

James Duane, jurist, was born February 6, 1733 in New York, NY, son of Anthony and Althea Ketaltas. James was educated for the law in the office of James Alexander and was admitted to the Bar August 3, 1754. He married in 1759 Mary Livingston, eldest daughter of Robert Livingston III of Livingston Manor. He inherited from his father valuable property including a tract of 6,000 acres of land in the wilderness west of Albany afterwards known as Duanesburg. He was a member of the Continental Congress from 1774-1784. He signed the Articles of Confederation for New York in 1771. He was elected a State Senator serving 1782-1785 and 1789-1790. He was appointed District Judge of New York by President Washington in 1789. He began the building of his home in Duanesburg but did not live to see it completed. He died in Schenectady, NY in February 1797.



TOWN OF DUANESBURG

A LOOK AT ITS PAST

Compiled by William Tiffany Avery
Published by Duanesburg Historical Society 2004
William Avery's 185-page written collection in its published form is available for purchase for \$22.00 per copy. Proceeds to benefit the Duanesburg Historical Society.

Name _____

Address _____

of copies _____ @ \$22.00 per book = \$ _____

Add \$2.00 shipping/handling per book = \$ _____

Total enclosed \$ _____

Make checks payable to: Duanesburg Historical Society c/o Pat Van Buren
P.O. Box 114, Delanson, New York 12053

Efner, from page 3

Bolen and Scott Haefner, who have worked with and for me at the Center.

GOT TIME?

VOLUNTEER! Contact me at 382-5088 or at HsCenter@nycap.rr.com for information on the projects you can help us with!

The Efner History Research

Library is open to the public from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, with the exception of major holidays. Other hours may be available by appointment. Come visit us at Schenectady's best kept secret in the "awesome attic" at City Hall!



The Schenectady County Historical Society, as a non-profit 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 as previously listed in each issue 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:

- ☐ \$25 Individual
☐ \$40 Family
☐ \$50 Donor
☐ \$100 Sponsor
☐ \$500 Patron
☐ \$1000 Lifetime

Please mail this form with your check or credit card information to:
Schenectady County Historical Society
32 Washington Ave., Schenectady, NY 12305

Your Name _____

Street _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

☐ Check enclosed

☐ Please charge my credit card: ☐ MasterCard ☐ VISA

Acct # _____ Exp. Date _____

Signature _____

Also enclosed is a gift of \$ _____ for special projects designated as follows:

Museum: Art Restoration _____ Acquisitions _____ Publications _____ Programs _____

Library: Equipment _____ Publications _____

Mabee Farm: Preservation _____ Education Building _____ Programs _____

Your tax-deductible membership can be matched by G.E. (800) 462-8244

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