



L. Greg Haymes, of Ramblin Jug Stomp plays the washboard at Mabee Farm festivities.

Photo by Pat Barrott



R. Michelle Henry, narrator of life as "Captain Kelsey," a barge owner, on the Erie Canal – Canal Fest, July 15th at SCHS.

Photo by Ann Aronson



Mabee Farm Bateau on the Mohawk River, 2007.

Photo: Ann Aronson



Schenectady County
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Newsletter

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Nishan Alexander Pashayan: Schenectady's First Psychiatrist

By Neil B. Yetwin



*Dr. Nishan A. Pashayan, about 1930.
Photo courtesy of Ellis Hospital
Medical Society*

By the middle of the 20th century, New York State had become home to about 40,000 Armenians, many of whom had settled in Albany, Troy, Watervliet and Schenectady. Their numbers included survivors or children of survivors of the 1915 Armenian Genocide during which nearly 2 million Armenians were exterminated at the hands of the Ottoman Turks. Once in the United States, the new immigrants established themselves in the arts, sciences and professions. One of them, Nishan Alexander Pashayan, enjoyed a life and career that were notable in two distinct ways: already a prominent neurologist and family physician, Pashayan was also Schenectady's first practicing psychiatrist. And unknown to all but a few close friends, he was also a refugee, not from the 1915 Genocide but from the events that precipitated the often-forgotten Armenian massacres of 1896.

Pashayan was born on December 28, 1872 to an Armenian Protestant family in the ancient Hittite city of Aintab, Turkey on the west bank of the Euphrates River. He entered Central Turkey College at Aintab in 1889 and after graduating in 1893 looked forward to the practice of medicine in his hometown.

Continued on p4 and 5.



*The Pashayan home and office at
611 Union St., Schenectady, NY
Photo: Ann Aronson*



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HOURS

MUSEUM
& LIBRARY
MONDAY-FRIDAY 9-5
SATURDAY 10-2

MABEE FARM
TUESDAY-SATURDAY 10-4

Letter from the President

THE STATE OF OUR MEMBERS

It has been quite some time since we included our membership form in the Newsletter, but note that there is one on page 6. Of course, most who read this are already members of the Society, and it is to those enlightened lovers of local history that I address this essay on membership.

Membership dues and associated GE and other matches account for 10% of our annual budget, and interest and dividends from our endowment about 65%. Admissions to downtown or to our Mabee Farm and "other income" make up the remaining 25%.

But it is people and events that are the essence of history, and it is people who create the events that add to history every day of their lives. Most of those who visit our very busy Grems-Doolittle Library come to research the genealogy of their families or something about their home or neighborhood, and office manager Nicki Sitterly is very good at convincing many of them that, in the long run, there are financial advantages to joining the Society rather than paying a succession of daily visitor fees.

Retention of members is quite high, but since we all reach a state where we are unable to create new history, we must give constant attention to the recruitment of new members. Those reading this who are not members are encouraged to use a photocopy of the form. (Surely you would not want our editors to hear you snip the Newsletter they work so hard to make for you!)

But here's what I ask of our current members: (1) Think hard about friends whom you know have an interest in history, send copies of the form to them, and ask them to join. (2) When you receive our reminder that the anniversary of your joining is imminent, consider stepping up your level of support—individual to family, family to donor, donor to sponsor, etc.

Of course, we conduct an annual membership drive too. Through the leadership of Trustee Earl Brinkman, chair of our membership committee, 56 persons responded to our letter of solicitation over the last year, and almost as many "gave at the office."

As would be expected from the geographic area that we serve, most of our members live in Schenectady County, with Niskayuna, Scotia/Glenville, and City zip 12308 leading the way. I haven't computed this, but anecdotally it seems that the Duanesburg / Princetown area has the highest percentage of their population who join, which is befitting their roots that go back hundreds of years. But we have many members who live elsewhere in New York State, others who live in a total of 33 other states, including Alaska, a province of Canada, and, talking Turkey, even one in Istanbul.

Everyone into the pool!

Ed



NYS Canal Corp. Director *Carmella Mantello* (center) spoke recently at our Mabee Farm Historic Site: "The idea is to do it all in one weekend and really show that the Erie Canal is booming. The Canal is alive. The Canal is breathing. We have a sleeping giant in our backyards."

Mabee Farm Upcoming Events



Schenectady East Rotary Presents



Patriots Day

Antique/Classic Car Show

Sunday, Sept 9th from 10 am—4 pm
to benefit the Mabee Farm Historic Site

Classics, antiques, hotrods, muscle cars, trucks and motorcycles



Free Admission



Spectators Choice

Family fun!
Music, food, vendors,
50/50 raffle & more!

Dash plaques to the first 100 vehicles!

Judging at 1 pm for pre-1987 vehicles only!

Trophies presented at 3 pm.

For more info call Mike Boehne (518) 378-6072

MABEE FARM HISTORIC SITE

Route 5S, Rotterdam Jct. (Exit 1A off I-890)
(518) 887-5073

Free

History Fair

Educational

Sat., September 15 from 10 am—4 pm



Historians, Museums, Historical Sites, Historical Societies, Historical Authors come together to share their stories & experiences!



► *Independent scholar, Lion Miles* discusses the controversial portrait in Stockbridge that he believes is Sir William Johnson.



► *Don Rittner Schenectady County & City Historian*, will record memories of Seniors in Schenectady County



► *Art historian Ona Curran* talks about her new book "Thomas McIlworth, Colonial NY Portrait Painter".

► *Emily Tarbell* from Kanatsiohareke, the Mohawk Community in Canajoharie, discusses the history of the Mohawk people.

► *Historian Al Sterling* of the Herkimer Home State Historic Site discusses his research and books on the Battle of Oriskany, "French Raids on Burnettsfield 1757 & 1758" and more!

Mabee Farm
Historic Site
Rt 5S
Rotterdam Jct
(518) 887-5073

The County of Schenectady Presents



Farm & Foliage Day

Free Admission

Sat, Oct 13th
11 am—4 pm



Scarecrow making
Pumpkin painting
Hay rides
"Badger" the sheep
Donkeys



Music
by the
Riverview
Ramblers



Mabee Farm Historic Site

Route 5S, Rotterdam Junction (518) 887-5073

2007 New York State Barn Coalition Conference

"Surveying and Recording Barns in New York State"

October 19 -21, 2007

Hosted by the Dutch Barn Preservation Society
at the Mabee Farm Historic Site, Rotterdam Junction, NY

Friday, October 19:

Opening reception at the Schenectady County Historical Society 32 Washington Ave, in the Historic Schenectady Stockade with a walking tour of the Stockade neighborhood.

Saturday, October 20

Workshops:

Keynote speaker - Lauren Stiles of Ithaca on "Framing of Shaker Barns"

Lecture by Mike Woodford of the National Barn Alliance on "Creating a Nationwide Barn Preservation Organization" and other speakers.

Saturday & Sunday – barn raising at Ev Rau's barn.

Sunday, October 21:

Barn bus tour through Schenectady County. Contact Keith Cramer at (518) 438-8352 for more information.

"Partial funding for this project made possible by a grant from the Schenectady County Legislature's County Initiative Program"

MEMBERSHIP FORM I want to become a member of the Schenectady County Historical Society. Enclosed is a check for my dues. Please complete this Form and mail it to: Schenectady County Historical Society, 32 Washington Avenue, Schenectady, NY 12305.

_____ \$1,000 – Life Membership	_____ \$ 50 – Donor
_____ 500 – Patron	_____ 40 – Family Membership
_____ 100 – Sponsor	_____ 25 – Individual Membership
_____ Additional contribution for:	
Unrestricted use _____ Museum _____ Library _____ Mabee Farm _____	

TOTAL enclosed: _____

NAME(s)_____

STREET:_____

City, State, Zip _____

Telephone Number _____ E-Mail address _____

_____ I am eligible for a GE Match and have called the gift center at 1-800-305-0669 or reported my contribution to the GE Foundation website.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Historical Society is grateful to the **Sgarlata family** that operates **River Stone Manor** on Route 5 in Glenville for the generous donation of food for our *Taste of the Erie Canal Era* that accompanied our Canal Fest program on Sunday, July 15th devoted to a reenactment by “Captain Kelsey” as an owner of a pair of grain barges that operated between Buffalo and New York City.

The Historical Society is grateful to the **Schenectady County Sheriff’s Department** for providing traffic control at the Mabee Farm in the Town of Rotterdam during the celebration of Canal Splash during the weekend of August 11th and 12th.

FESTIVAL OF TREES

What brings Christmas to mind more than a beautifully decorated Christmas Tree? Since the *Illustrated London News* depicted Queen Victorian and Prince Albert with their family celebrating the Christmas season around a small, decorated tree in 1848, the Christmas tree has become a time honored holiday tradition in America and England. Celebrate this traditional symbol of the Christmas season this year at the Schenectady County Historical Society and YWCA of Schenectady from November 17 through January 2. Organizations from around Schenectady County will decorate a variety of trees for display at both Washington Ave. locations. Ten trees will be up for a silent auction, all beautifully decorated and ready to complement your holiday decorations. Proceeds from the auction will benefit both the Society and the YWCA. To add to the beauty of the Christmas Trees, the Society is again inviting the Hugh Platt Garden Club to decorate its museum with beautiful live greens! The SCHS has also invited local Christmas ornament collector Robert Halley to decorate one special tree in antique Christmas ornaments from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. This beautiful tree will gracefully sit in our Victorian Study with our collection of antique toys awaiting some lucky children and the young at heart! Throughout the months of November and December, enjoy an open house, a Christmas Tea, and the annual SCHS Christmas party. Please come and join us.

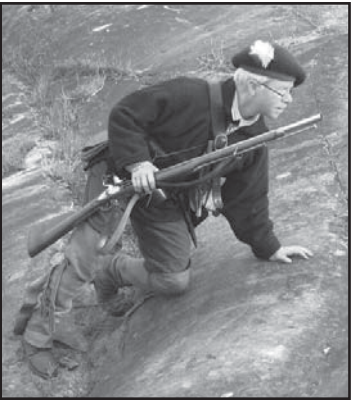
48th Annual Stockade Walkabout
Saturday, September 29th – 11:00 AM – 5:00 PM
Walkabout Tickets may be purchased at the Historical Society, 32 Washington Avenue.

Enjoy a day in the Historic Stockade district of Schenectady. Settled in 1662, Schenectady’s Stockade district was the home to the first hearty settlers looking for a home in the New World. Even after the 1690 Massacre by the French and their Indian allies that virtually destroyed the community, the survivors returned and rebuilt their village. Selected homes and buildings will be open for viewing, and docents will explain each building’s unique history. Bring the whole family and enjoy the Waterfront Faire along the bank of the Mohawk and in Riverside Park. See craftspeople create and demonstrate traditional items from Schenectady’s past. Speak with one of the many historic “visitors” and hear in their own words the events that created the colorful history of Schenectady. Watch one of the historic bateaux as it sails along the Mohawk much like the originals did over 200 years ago. Take a break in your walking about to enjoy a free tour of the Schenectady County Historical Society building, once the home of Dora Mumford Jackson. See exhibits that illustrate the complex history of Schenectady County while enjoying delicious complimentary refreshments. **Continuing exhibits: *Painting Schenectady: Samuel Sexton and His Works*, and *Schenectady: The First 200 Years***

A newly mounted exhibit: *The Stockade Association: 50 Years of Preserving Schenectady’s History*, celebrates the Stockade Association’s 50th anniversary. The Stockade District in Schenectady was the first federally recognized Historic District to be created in New York State. The Stockade Association’s intent was to preserve and protect the historic structures within its boundaries. It has fostered a strong sense of community and helped educate the public through events like the annual Walkabout.

Witness to History: A Reenactment - Douglas McKenna’s Memories of Schenectady in the 18th Century.
Saturday, October 13th Refreshments 1:30
Program 2:00 PM
Cost – free; donations accepted
Kyle Jenks from American Heritage Living History Productions introduces himself as Douglas McKenna, a historically inspired fictional character born in 1732 near Schenectady, NY. He will set the scene

of eighteenth-century Schenectady and then conduct, in character, a narration that chronicles Douglas McKenna’s life. The story takes place in Schenectady, which was referred to as the Western Frontier. McKenna will delve into his dealings with the diverse cultures present in upstate New York. As a Schenectady resident McKenna would meet and trade with the Dutch, French, Scottish, Irish, English, Palatine Germans and members of



Kyle Jenks in re-enactment uniform.

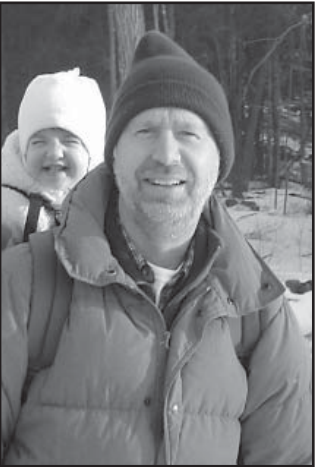
the five nations that made up the Iroquois Confederacy. The story will follow his journey into manhood as he participates in the French and Indian War as a member of Roger’s Rangers. His next endeavor was to join the patriot cause during the American Revolution. Enjoy this unique opportunity

to learn about the history of Schenectady in an entertaining and informative way!

Save the date!

Adirondack Fire Towers: Illustrated Lecture by author Marty Podskoch
Saturday, November 10th Refreshments 1:30
Program 2:00 PM

The lecture will be based on his book *Adirondack Fire Towers: their history and lore, the Southern Districts*. This past June he collaborated with the well-known graphic artist and comic book illustrator, Sam Glanzman, to produce his latest publication titled *Adirondack Stories, Historical Sketches*. His books will be available for purchase and he has agreed to sign them.



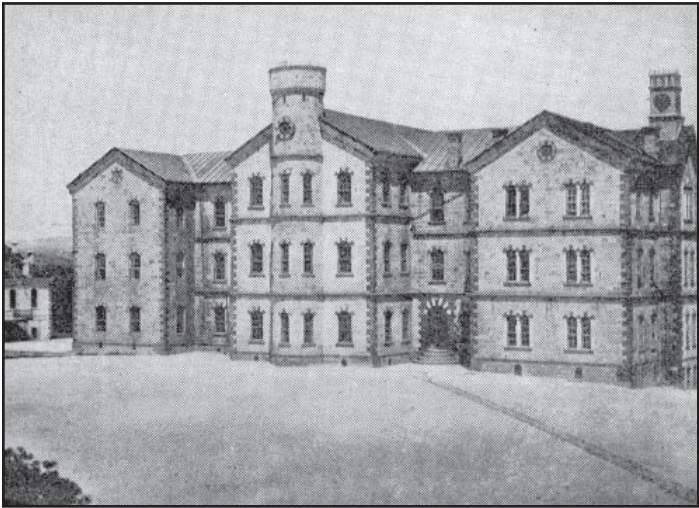
Marty Podskoch and grand-daughter Kira winter hiking.

But Central Turkey College had been established as an American Institution that came to be seen by the Ottoman authorities as a symbol of Western imperialism. When the Armenians protested against a punitive tax levied upon them in 1894, Sultan Abdul Hamid ordered retaliatory strikes against them. British diplomat H.S. Shipley reported that for three weeks “the Armenians were absolutely hunted down like wild beasts, being killed wherever they were met.”

Thousands were burned alive in their churches and drowned at ports along the Black Sea coast. The 21-year-old Pashayan, relieved that the violence had not yet reached Aintab, remained there with his family. But as the violence spread he came to see that as an educated Armenian Protestant, he personified precisely what the Ottomans saw as undue foreign influence in their empire; and he joined approximately 5,000 fellow Armenians who sought refuge in America.

Pashayan entered Albany Medical College (AMC) on August 14, 1895 and went on to study internal medicine, general pathology and his eventual specialty, neurology. On May 1, 1901 he and 27 others received their medical degrees from Union College President Andrew Van Vranken Raymond at Albany’s Odd Fellows Hall. Pashayan also earned honorable mention for high scores on the final examinations and received the Daggett Prize for “the best deportment irrespective of scholarship.”

Pashayan’s entrance into the medical profession coincided with New York State’s “Era of the Asylum.” Influenced by progressive reformers and the Mental Hygiene Movement, 13 psychiatric hospitals had been established throughout the state. Pashayan was first employed as an assistant physician at St. Lawrence State Hospital; then as a junior physician at Long Island State Hospital. After that he took a similar post in 1904 at Manhattan State Hospital under the direction of Dr. Adolf Meyer, who had coined the term “mental hygiene” and introduced Freudian psychoanalytic techniques into the asylum system with some success.



Central Turkey College at Aintab.

The introduction of Freudian psychoanalysis into American psychiatric circles made it possible for practitioners like Pashayan to leave the asylum system and enter private practice. He resigned from Manhattan State Hospital in 1907 and on August 31st of that year married schoolteacher Charlotte Hume at her parents’ home in Warsaw, New York. The *Western New Yorker*, Warsaw’s local paper, reported on September 2nd that, “Dr. and Mrs. Pashayan left Saturday evening for a trip to the Adirondacks and after about three weeks will be at home to their friends in Schenectady.” Pashayan opened his first office at 1104 State Street and moved soon afterward to 785-787 State Street at the corner of Hulett.

When Pashayan arrived in Schenectady in 1907, the city was enjoying an economic boom and a population of nearly 73,000 that included a well-established medical community of 95 physicians. He gave his first presentation in the Capital District on “*The Clinical Types of Alcoholic Insanity*” before the Rensselaer County Medical Society on November 12, 1907, followed by the publication of a paper on “*Two Cases of Korsakow’s Syndrome Without Polyneuritis*” in the AMC Annals. Pashayan also contributed reviews on current medical literature for the AMC Annals in 1908, and reviewed books on mental diseases, respiratory and circulatory disorders, obstetrics, sexually transmitted diseases, dermatology, and hospital training for nurses.

In addition, he joined Ellis Hospital’s staff that year as a “neuropsychiatrist” and began conducting bi-weekly TB testing at the Schenectady City Hall Annex.

Pashayan expressed some of his own views on psychiatric treatment when he spoke before the Schenectady County Medical Society for the first time on January 19, 1910. In his talk entitled “What Is Psychotherapy?” he lamented the fact that so many physicians of the time discounted psychotherapy because “it is synonymous with hypnotism or some modification of it” and suggested that Freud’s “contributions to psychology have been of more than usual value, and one has to read at least one of his works to appreciate his standpoint.” Despite his admiration for Freud’s originality, however, Pashayan was not uncritical of the “father of psychoanalysis:” “Invaluable as Freud’s methods of psychoanalysis have been, there is a grave danger lurking in the over-enthusiasm of his pupils,” he cautioned. “Libido is not the sole determinant to all psychoneurotic states. We cannot all subscribe to his Oedipus complex.”



Tragedy struck the Pashayan family when their infant daughter Helen passed away suddenly on May 27, 1910. By 1914 the doctor had recovered sufficiently and built up a large enough practice to permit him to purchase a new home and office at 611 Union Street. Over the next 20 years he served as Vice-Chairman of the Ellis Hospital Medical Board (1931-33) and one term as President of the Schenectady County Medical Society. Dr. Pashayan pursued interests outside of medicine as well: in

1938 he joined the Schenectady Torch Club, an organization of professional and community leaders which meets monthly to discuss global, cultural and intellectual issues. On April 8, 1943 he gave an address before the Torch Club entitled “The Near East;” unfortunately, no copy of the address has yet surfaced, leaving us to imagine what Pashayan may have said about a region with which he was so familiar.

Pashayan continued to maintain a busy family practice in addition to treating his psychiatric patients. His 1941 Chrysler sedan became a familiar sight as he responded to house calls throughout the city. At 7:20 on the evening of Friday, October 28, 1949, the 76-year-old Pashayan suffered a fatal heart attack while examining a patient in his office. Even as his own health declined, Dr. Pashayan chose to treat his patients until the very end of his life, and his contributions were detailed extensively in the *Schenectady Gazette*, the *Knickerbocker News*, and the *Journal of the American Medical Association*. The October 29th issue of the *Times Union* called him “a pioneer of psychiatry in Schenectady.”

Charlotte Pashayan sold the Union Street property in 1950 and bought a home at 1555 Regal Avenue. She passed away on March 17, 1963 at age 80. The Pashayans and their infant daughter Helen are buried together in a plot in Vale Cemetery.

