



Schenectady County
Historical
Society

Newsletter

Volume 54 Number 9-10

September-October 2011

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SCHENECTADY DURING THE CIVIL WAR

By Frank Taormina



A stroll along Washington Avenue in the middle of the last quarter of the 19th century, 1887 or 1888 perhaps, might have enabled you to encounter any one of several men who, if they had been so disposed, could have told you what the Civil War was really like. They had seen and heard and otherwise sensed the never to be forgotten violence done to one another by the Confederate and the Union Soldiers, who by 1888, had long since agreed to stack their arms and live together in peace.

The family of one such person, Alan Heyer Jackson, lived across the street from the site of what was to be occupied by a house at 32 Washington Avenue. You should recognize that address. It was destined to be built seven years later, in 1895, by his nephew, Jones Mumford Jackson, for his widowed mother, Dora Jackson (Mrs. Alonzo C. Jackson). Alan Heyer Jackson, whose remains now rest peacefully alongside his wife in Vale

Cemetery, is shown in the 1888 Schenectady City Directory at 27 Washington Avenue. "Colonel Jackson" is what we would have called him by virtue of his role as the commanding officer of the 134th Infantry Regiment, the military organization in which the largest number of men from Schenectady served during the Civil War. The Commander of the 134th Regiment in all its battles, he was highly regarded. He survived the war and died in August 1911. Standing by his gravesite at Vale Cemetery, I always wonder at the memories he must have had of the tumultuous times he lived through.

Continued on Pages 4-5

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JENNIFER HANSON
OFFICE MANAGER

HOURS
MUSEUM & LIBRARY
Monday-Friday 9-5
Additionally Thursday 5-8
Saturday 10-2

MABEE FARM
TUESDAY-SATURDAY
10 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Letter from the President

SEPTEMBER SONG

There is no more haunting melody, nor poignant philosophy, than the sentiments invoked by the title song. Yes, September is upon us, and so is the opening of the George E. Franchere Education Center at our Mabee Farm Historic Site. We always knew that completion of the Center would be an earthmoving experience, figuratively, of course,



George E. Franchere Education Center

but it might have become one literally. Two days ago as I write, I was driving toward the Farm from the east and, within sight of the new building, a now famous but rare northeastern earthquake struck. In the car I felt nothing, and, as I learned upon my arrival, neither did anyone in the building! The Center didn't move a millimeter. It is a fortress which, unless an asteroid strikes it, will be there for at least another six or seven hundred years.

So this, 2011, is year zero. The Center, though part of and adjacent to the historic part of the Mabee Farm, has a unique address, 1100 Main Street in Rotterdam Junction. (Decimal 1100, of course, not binary 12.) The first event held there, by invitation only of course, was our Annual Volunteer-Staff picnic, the first held under the solar panels on the roof of our new pavilion. Look upward over the heads of the happy celebrants below.

The first event open to the public will be an exhibition of over 40 of Len Tantillo's beautiful paintings of New York State historic scenes, 17th through the 20th century. See page 8 for three of them and page 3 for registration details. The event is a fundraiser; the building is paid for, so now our attention must turn to raising operational money that will enable us to develop and execute



historic programs commensurate with our mission and the magnificent setting in which to hold them. Len Tantillo, whom many of you know, at least by reputation, will be there, and the more you bid at the fun-filled silent auction, the higher the fund we'll raise. Enjoy the hors d'oeuvres and fruit-of-the-vine that cannot be the regular fare in our café. Next will come a ribbon cutting, late this month or early October, after which the Center will be fully open. We'll receive you into the gallery and welcome you into the gift shop.

-Ed



MUSEUM – Exhibit

Ongoing: *Through His Eyes: Charles Lewis and the Civil War*

The diary of Charles Lewis offers firsthand insight into the Civil War. The writing begins in August of 1863 as Lewis returns to the front lines after recuperating from the wounds that he received during the Battle of Chancellorsville. Using direct quotes from the diary, as well as supporting information, we gain a better understanding of the events Lewis is describing.

SCHENECTADY HERITAGE WEEKEND - September 23rd – 24th

FRANCHERE CENTER – Exhibit and Fundraiser at our Mabee Farm Historic Site:

OPENING EXHIBIT RECEPTION

Friday - September 23rd 6-9 PM

A Journey Through History: The Artistic Works of Len Tantillo **Cost- \$25 per person**

Come join us for a night with artist Len Tantillo. This exhibit will feature over forty pieces of original artwork, including some of Len's most recent pieces that were just completed within the past year. Do not miss this special chance to see all these original paintings in one location. In 2009, Len Tantillo's work was featured internationally at the Westfries Museum in Hoorn, The Netherlands and was attended by over 10,000 visitors. Len's work has appeared in national exhibitions, books, periodicals, and television documentaries in the United States, the Netherlands, Belgium, Austria, and New Zealand. His paintings were also the subject of a 2004 documentary produced for Public Television entitled, "Hudson River Journeys." Highlights of the evening will include brief remarks by the artist, a Silent Auction, live music, and light refreshments. The proceeds raised from this event will go to preserving the collections of the Schenectady County Historical Society at the Mabee Farm Historic Site.

52nd ANNUAL STOCKADE WALKABOUT

Saturday - September 24th 11 AM – 5 PM

Schenectady's Stockade, A Walk Through History 1661-1795

Cost: Adult September 1-15: \$15; September 16-23: \$20; Day of event: \$25; **Children** 6 - 16: \$10; age five and under: Free

Meet Schenectady's early farmers, businessmen and women, and leaders in the community, as they guide you through historic sites and events of their lives on the frontier. Learn about Schenectady's history narrated and acted just for you.

Saturday - **September 24th** 8:30 AM-5PM

SEMINAR - New Interpretations- Schenectady 1661-1715

Venue: The First Reformed Church – located at the corner of Church and Union Streets in the Stockade

Cost: through September 15: \$60; after September 15: \$70

Join us to learn all about early Schenectady. From presentations by Len Tantillo and Brenda Safer on early maps and mapmakers, to new arguments on what structures were actually located in Schenectady at the time of the Massacre, to interpreting material culture during this time period. This seminar will open your eyes like no other to early Schenectady history. The seminar also includes a special Stockade tour, lunch, and a roundtable discussion to finish the day. See the colorful Stockade Association website: www.historicstockade.com or contact SCHS at (518) 374-0263. **NOTE:** the Seminar's tour of the Stockade is separate from the general Stockade Walkabout and is limited to Seminar participants.

Saturday - **October 15th** - 2 PM

Library - Schenectady Historical Society

How to Research your Civil War Ancestor

Presented by Lance Ingmire

Free to members, \$2 for non-members

Learn how to trace your ancestors who participated in the Civil War. Join Lance Ingmire, the Chair of the New York Civil War Sesquicentennial Committee, in discovering how to research your Civil War ancestor. Bring information on your own ancestor, and Lance can help you jumpstart your own research.

Continued from Page 1

After a courteous exchange of remarks with Colonel Jackson, we continue our stroll toward the bridge which spans the Mohawk River. At the end of Washington Avenue we find, still standing, 1 Washington Avenue. The occupant of this building, Judge Austin Yates, could tell us as much as any man living about the Civil War and especially about the participation of Schenectady's citizens in it. He demonstrates this in his 1902 book, *Schenectady County, New York: Its History to the Close of the Nineteenth Century*, which contains a chapter listing of all 1100 men of Schenectady who served in the Union Army. Captain Austin Yates was wounded at the Battle of Chancellorsville and went on to become the commander of the Company in Washington D. C. which had the grisly task of hanging the persons who conspired to end the lives of Lincoln and Seward.

Austin Yates, a great grandson of Christopher Yates, "the best informed patriot in the Mohawk Valley" during the American Revolution, served in the same army as a cousin, John B. Yates, another great grandson of the same Christopher Yates. Let us read the testimony to the service of John B. Yates by



John B. Yates

William Tecumseh Sherman upon the occasion of Yates' death in 1899:

"I well remember the First Michigan Engineers and its Colonel, [John B.] Yates. That regiment not only had to make its marches with the army, but very often had to work breaking up railroads and building

bridges all day and catch up at night. Its journal of operations during the campaign in Georgia and the Carolinas, would illustrate the absolute limit of man for physical labor. I have sometimes reproached myself for cruelty in imposing, or allowing to be imposed, on it such hard and constant labors, and now desire to endorse this paper with an emphasis that will show that I was conscious of the fact. I will be much pleased if

Col. Yates can be suitably rewarded for his past most valuable services." (signed)

WILLIAM T. SHERMAN, "Commanding"

And, while we will never have a chance to speak with

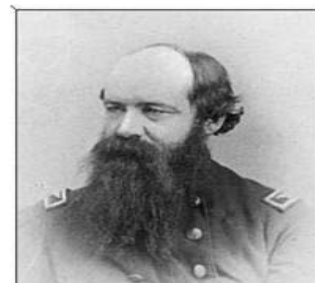
William Horsfall, his memory lives on in the honor conferred upon him by his fellow Schenectady Civil War Veterans when they named the local Chapter of the Grand Army of the Republic after him, the Horsfall GAR. He was killed just before the Battle of Antietam, the Union victory which enabled President Lincoln



William Horsfall

to announce the Emancipation Proclamation. Army records note that "William Horsfall was killed September 14, 1862 at Crampton's Pass, Maryland. At the time of his death, he held the rank of Captain." He, too, rests at Vale Cemetery.

And perhaps we might have run into another well known Schenectadian, one bearing the name of "Duane," General James Chatham Duane. He was an engineering officer in the Union Army who had the distinction of being the first person in this role to build a pontoon bridge across the Potomac, and later, to build the longest pontoon bridge built across the James River by anyone during the Civil War. He also had the dis-



James Chatham Duane

inction of commanding the company of soldiers which guarded President Lincoln during his first inauguration in 1861. James Chatham Duane was the great-grandson of the James Duane who founded Duanesburg. A graduate of both Union College (in 1844) and West Point (in 1848), he also served as an Engineering Instructor at West Point while Robert E. Lee was its Commandant.

A scant mile east of Washington Avenue, above open fields still not occupied by the houses eventually to be built there, we come to Union College. Precisely 522 men who had attended Union College served in the Civil War on the side of the Union, 499 in the Army, 23 in the Navy. And 46 men affiliated with Union College served in the Confederate Army. Sixty-one men serving the Union lost their lives, as did six Union College men who served in the Confederate Armed Forces. Five Union College men who served in the Union Army received the Congressional Medal of Honor for behaving with “conspicuous valor.”

No doubt, well remembered among the Union men who served in the Civil War would be Elias Peissner and his young brother-in-law, Charles F. Lewis. Peissner, a Professor at Union, lost his life at the intensely fought Battle of Chancellorsville. Lewis

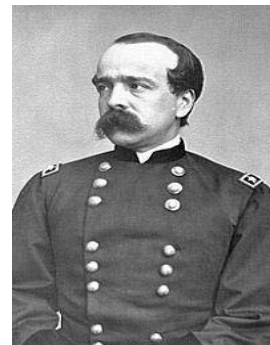


Elias Peissner

was wounded in the same battle. He went on to leave us his memories of the war and of his recollection of the assassination of President Lincoln which he witnessed in a diary he kept which forms, in large part, the basis for a display on the Civil War currently in the Vrooman Room of the Schenectady County Historical Society.

Perhaps, as you visit the Society to see the Charles Lewis display, you might recall the sound of “Taps,” a bugle call originally composed by General Daniel Adams Butterfield (1831-1901), another graduate of Union College. Butterfield joined the Army as a first sergeant in early 1861 and was quickly promoted to Brigadier General within the same year. He was wounded by shrapnel on July 3, 1863, at the Battle of Gettysburg, and later received the Medal of Honor

for his Civil War service. After the War, Daniel Butterfield went on to work for American Express, a company his father helped found. In 1869, President U.S. Grant appointed Butterfield Assistant Secretary of the Treasury. At the time of his death, Butterfield’s wife made a gift to Union that is still with us in the form of Butterfield Hall. While he was alive, Butterfield contributed to Union College in 1892 by sponsoring a series of lectures that included, among others, talks by Charles A. Dana and Andrew Carnegie



Daniel Butterfield

Finally, it seems fitting to end this brief discourse with a recollection of the longest lived Union Army veteran, Irving Eaton, who died here in Schenectady on October 15, 1941 at the age of 98 at his home on 325 Division Street. He is buried in Most Holy Redeemer Cemetery in Niskayuna. Eaton served in the Union Army alongside his father, who enlisted at age 57 and took with him his 14 year old son Irving! Our Grems-Doolittle blog contains some neat photos of Eaton; See <http://gremsdoolittlelibrary.blogspot.com/2011/08/irving-eaton-last-surviving-civil-war.html>.

Thus far we have become aware of the resting places of 94 Civil War Veterans in Vale Cemetery. We know that at least 140 men who had an association with Schenectady lost their lives while they were serving in the Union Army—to say nothing of all those who were injured. The observation of these facts makes us aware of the human cost of creating and preserving the community we live in. Perhaps, as well, it may cause us to consider with respect and admiration all those people who served and risked the personal discomfort and sacrifice required to create and maintain this community.

-Frank Taormina

Library Events

Saturday, October 29th – 9:00 a.m.- 4:00 p.m. Genealogy Day

Schedule:

9:00 a.m. – 9:45 a.m.

“Pieces of Me” by Phyllis Budka

10:00 a.m. – 10:45 a.m.

“Research in Southern Poland and Hints for You in
Doing Research in Poland” by Alan Horbal

11:00 a.m. – 11:45 a.m.

“Vital Records in New York State” by Nancy
Curran

12:00 p.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Lunch Break – Please bring your own bag lunch;
drinks and desserts will be provided.

12:45 p.m. – 1:15 p.m.

“Using the GE Archives for Genealogy Research”
by Chris Hunter

1:30 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Q&A in the Library and open research time with
Library volunteers

Admission is \$5.00; Free for Society members.

Pre-registration is suggested. Contact Melissa Tacke,
Librarian/Archivist at the Schenectady County
Historical Society, by phone at 518-374-0263, option
“3”, or by email at librarian@schist.org.

New Materials in the Library

BOOKS

Putman House: Artifacts and Architectural Details by
Deborah Crosby; gift of **Deborah Crosby**

Settlers of the Beekman Patent, Vol. 10 by Frank J.
Doherty

*Surviving Against the Odds: A Bomber Pilot's
Memories from World War II in the Solomons and
Elsewhere* by John H. van Schaick; gift of **Saratoga
Springs Public Library**

*A Symphony of Soloists: The Story of Wakefern and
ShopRite* by Jeffrey L. Rodengen; gift of **ShopRite
Supermarkets, Inc.**

Tales of My Life and Family by Philip L. Alger; gift of
Harry Steven

The Valentine Miller Papers by Reuben M. Brockway;
gift of **Erika Scott**

*Waterways of War: The Struggle for Empire, 1754-
1763* by Steve Benson and Ron Toelke

CHURCH RECORDS

Immaculate Conception baptisms, 1904-2006; burials,
1905-2005; marriages, 1904-2006

St. Anthony baptisms, 1912-2007; burials, 1916-2007;
marriages, 1903-2006

St. John the Baptist burials, 1886-2009; baptisms,
1845-2009; marriages, 1845-2009

St. Joseph baptisms, 1862-2005; burials, 1862-2005

St. Luke baptisms, 1916-2003; burials 1916-2003;
marriages, 1917-2003

HISTORIC DOCUMENTS AND PHOTOGRAPHS

Otyokwa Club publications, 1953-1958, gifts of

Florance Devine Bigelow

Oneida School yearbook (Jan. 1938), Mont Pleasant

H.S. yearbook (Jan. 1941), and school report by

Robert W. MacDonald, gifts of **Marilyn Bisgrove**

Photographs and documents related to Stock family of
Schenectady, 1892-1893, gifts of **Karen Bruhn**

Glen Sanders Mansion, Llenroc, and Ellis Hospital
publications, gifts of **Anne Christman**

Glenville sesquicentennial booklet and Schenectady
County Tennis Association booklet, gifts of **James
D. Livingston**

Bond Clothes notepad / calendar, gift of **Rutland
Historical Society**

Article on Edison Machine Works (1997) and
photocopy of Niskayuna Fire District No. 1

photograph (1937), gifts of **Harry Steven**

Binder of information about Dr. Daniel J. Toll,
compiled by Donald Keefer, gift of **Dr. James M.
Strosberg**

MANUSCRIPT COLLECTIONS AND FAMILY PAPERS

Materials related to Lillian and Florence Slater and the
Slater Charitable Trust, gift of **Donald W. Krauter**

FINDING AIDS for the following collections have
been added to [www.schenectadyhistory.net](http://www.schenectadyhistory.net/library/collections)
/library/collections:

Almshouse records; Bibles; Broadside; Family files;
Wills; Yearbooks; Grems-Doolittle Library Photograph
Collection; Godfrey Family Collection; Willis T. Hanson,
Jr. Collection; Heitkamp Collection; Mabee Family Papers;
Edward E. Oliver Collection; Charles P. Steinmetz Papers;
Emma T. Yates Collection; Carl Company Collection;
Freedom Forum Records; Duane Grange Collection;
Heritage Home for Women Collection; Schenectady City
School District Scrapbooks.

Please visit <http://gremsdoolittlelibrary.blogspot.com>
for more information about our collections.

Schenectady East Rotary Presents

Antique/Classic Car Show
Sunday, September 5th
10 am - 3:30 pm (Rain Date: September 6)

Vote for your Favorite!

Music, food, fun, vendors
Classics, antiques,
hotrods, muscle cars,
trucks & motorcycles!



MABEE FARM HISTORIC SITE
Route 5S, Rotterdam Junction
(518) 887-5073

1st Annual Fiber Fair
Saturday, October 1st ~ 10 am - 4 pm

Fiber art of all kinds!
Featuring: weaving, knitting,
spinning, rug hooking,
quilting, felting, fiber art,
alpacas, llamas
and
much
much
MORE!



Mabee Farm Historic Site
Route 5S, Rotterdam Jct., NY
(Exit 1A off I-890) (518)887-5073
www.mabeefarm.org

Around the Society



*Photos: Pat Barrot,
Heather Cunningham,
Ryan Mahoney, Ann
Aronson*



Schenectady County Historical Society

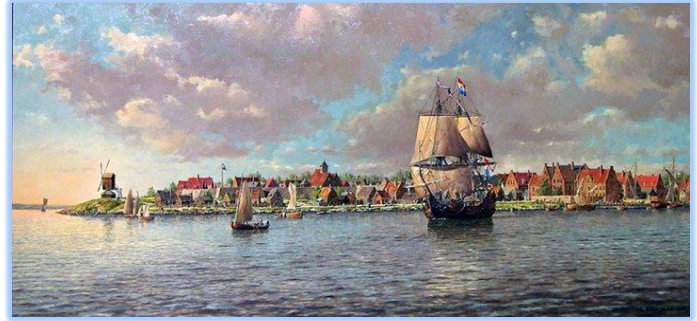
A Taste of Tantiillo:



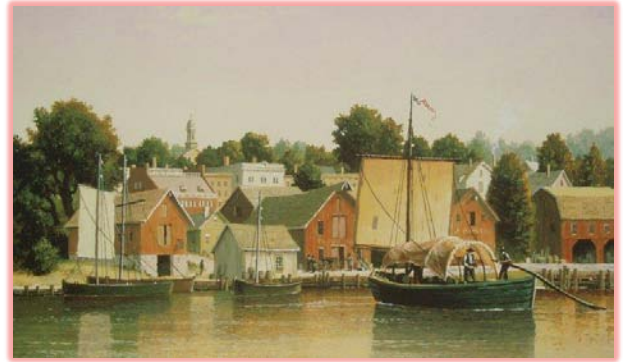
Albany Union Depot, 1879

*A Journey through History: The Artistic Works of
Len Tantiillo Exhibit Opening: Friday, September
23rd, 6 p.m. at the George E. Franchere Education
Center located at the Mabee Farm Historic Site.*

See Page 3 for details.



Manhattan, 1660



Schenectady Harbor, 1814

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Historical Society Newsletter
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