

Newsletter

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The Mabees, Revisited

By Hannah Miller, Jenna Peterson Riley, Nick Tarricone, and Mary Zawacki

Maybe, Mabee not. You've heard that phrase before if you've spent any time at all around Mabee Farm. We say it in jest, perhaps too often, but there is truth behind it. The Mabees lived here at the Farm for over 250 years, leaving a legacy of buildings, furniture, and stories. And sometimes we are not entirely sure what's fact and what's fiction. As we move forward with our Mabee Farm Reinterpretation Committee, we are keeping those Mabee mysteries in mind, and developing interpretation that will ask the visitor to consider many questions about the Mabees and their lives in Schenectady County of yore.

Currently, the Mabee Farm Historic Site offers the public a look into the Mohawk Valley's past through the lens of an 18th

century farmer of Dutch heritage. Yet, there is diversity among tours; each tour guide gives his or her own unique take on the structures and history of the site. This is valuable insight given from different perspectives, but what if we could combine these individual tours into one tour that covers a wide range of topics? That leads to myriad questions, including:

- Is there one unified story of the Mabee Farm?
- Is the Mabee Farm just the story of the Mabee family, or is it more than that?
- Is the site more than just a colonial farmhouse?
- How does the site fit in with the wider cultural, environmental, and political history of Schenectady County and the Mohawk Valley?
- And finally, how can we offer the public a new perspective on an old story?

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Library and Museum: Mon-Fri, 9-5; Sat, 10-2 Mabee Farm: Tue-Sat, 10-4; Sun, 10-3



President's Letter

Summer is upon us, the rye is growing tall, and the pattypan squash and broomcorn both show promise of excellent yields this fall. The orchard should produce a few apples and pears, but the cold snap this spring was hard on the blossoms, so we will wait and see. Our other labors are also bearing fruit, however, and we are excited about what is happening at the Society.

Our various walking tours have been very well received, with 150 people enjoying the colonial and religion tours, and 16 experiencing the Schenectady Armory tour, our newest addition. The spring education programs hosted 22 schools with 1,836 fourth and seventh grade students at the Mabee Farm, and 106 students at the Schenectady History Museum and Grems-Doolittle Library programs. Home School programs have been well attended, and our spring break activities were quite successful for this first year endeavor. Our experience shows that the public likes the interaction that comes with a guided tour, so we will work at expanding our catalogue of tours, using the streets and byways of Schenectady to tell the story of the people and events that have formed our county.

Summer brings two new interns to the Mabee Farm: Hannah Miller and Nicholas Tarricone, both welcome additions to our summertime staff. With their help, we are adding another day for visitors to enjoy the Mabee Farm. During the month of July until August 14th we will be open on Sundays from 10 AM to 3 PM, the perfect time to take a picnic, relax and delight in a return to the farm!

Summer means the start of a new Board of Trustees, and this year we welcome Al Ferradino, Ron Kingsley and Ceil Mack as new trustees. All three bring valuable experience and knowledge to the board, as you will see by their bios on page 10 of this issue. What great luck for us to have them as trustees!

Maríanne



Moving? Snowbird? Don't Miss An Issue Of Our Newsletter!

Please contact Mary Treanor at 518-374-0263 Ext 5 or office@schenectadyhistorical.org to update your address.

Donations to the Historical Society & Mabee Farm December 2015 - May 2016

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Thank You For Your Support!

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(in memory of Catherine Kindl)



Walking and Talking: Tours at SCHS!

World travelers know the most intimate way to explore a new city. It's a method simple and immersive; dynamic and eco-friendly. All you need is a pair of comfortable shoes, and some sunblock. Ok, and maybe a camera, and a friendly (and funny and knowledgeable) guide. Walking tours bring a neighborhood's landscape to life, and our local Stockade comes alive with our series of 2016 tours!

Join us this year, and watch as Stockade homes turn into repositories of stories. Cracks in Washington Avenue's pavement reveal forgotten mysteries. Characters from Union Street's past emerge from alleys and from behind gnarled trees. And, of course, there's the vibrancy of a neighborhood still lived in. Brightly painted houses, cats snoozing in windows, local cafes, street art, and flower gardens create a colorful atmosphere. Church spires tower overhead, and the remains of

18th century Stockade dwellers rest below, in churchyards. It all connects us to a rich local heritage. The Stockade is home to countless tales, secrets, and mysteries; discover them with our guides, this year!

What to Expect:

No two tours are alike! We've tailored our tours to different themes, and incorporated a variety of pre- and post tour activities to fit the diverse needs of our visitors. Do you love design, and long lunches? Join us for SECRET STOCKADE, as we venture inside a private Stockade home, and linger over quiche at Arthur's Market. Are you fascinated by all things scary? Our October Candlelight Tours interpret the ghosts, ghouls, and demons of Schenectady. Plus, it's a great chance to explore the Stockade at twilight, lantern in hand! An after-work beer more your style? Schenectady Suds takes you down Brewer's Lane, and ends up at Mad Jack Brewery for local craft beer samples. No matter the specifics, our tours do share a commitment to storytelling and fun, an easy walking pace, and plenty of insider information on the Stockade!

What to Bring:

Yourself, and friends, of course! Comfortable shoes are also key, as is sun-protective gear for day tours (think sunscreen, sunglasses, maybe a hat), water, and good questions (our guides like being stumped – it gives them an excuse to dive back into research).

How to Register:

Visit us at <u>www.schenectadyhistorical.org/walking-tours</u> to choose which tours you'd like to sign up for. It's painless, we promise!

Whether planning a local stay-cation, or traveling through from out-of-town, we promise you'll have fun and learn lots on one of our walking tours! And – bonus – it's great exercise too! For more information, check our website, or give us a call at 518-374-0263. Until then, stay cool, and we'll see you on the streets!



Article and photos - Mary Zawacki

New Materials in the Library

DOCUMENTS AND PHOTOGRAPHS:

Elmer Avenue School Collection. **Gift of Monica Tryon**

1953 Fire District and 1955 Water District map of Carmen. **Gift of Sylvia Papa**

Photos and architectural drawings of 3 & 5
Washington Avenue. **Gift of David Marhafer**Collection of the Thursday Musical Club. **Gift of Bernadette LaGoy**

ALCO Locomotive Specification Books by Raymond J. Finch. **Gift of Margaret Greene**

BLOG POSTS YOU MAY HAVE MISSED:

The Grems-Doolittle Library Collections Blog (http://www.gremsdoolittlelibrary.blogspot.com/) is a great resource for learning more about Schenectady County's rich history. Here are a few of the posts from the past couple of months that you might have missed.

• Speaker of the Assembly, Ozzie Heck by library volunteer Hannah Yetwin – March 11, 2016
Oswald Heek held the post of Speaker of the New York

Oswald Heck held the post of Speaker of the New York State Assembly longer than anyone else. Heck helped enact important civil rights legislation by making a memorable speech in favor of the Ives-Quinn Anti-Discrimination Bill. Find out more about his life in this post.

• Strongmen of Schenectady by library volunteer Gail Denisoff – April 7, 2016

The King Brothers were billed as "Herculean Athletes" who performed balancing feats, contortion acts and "tumbling with a sensational finish." They performed in theaters from Spokane to Atlanta, and shared the stage with Will Rogers.

• Dirty Business: Campaigns and Elections in Schenectady by SCHS Curator Mary Zawac i- May 12, 2016

How do we tell the story of politics in Schenectady? That is the question our curator explored when setting up our newest exhibit at SCHS, *Vote Here! Vote Now!* Find out about how the exhibit was developed in this post.

• Schenectady Sluggers, Part I: Abe Feldman by librarian Mike Maloney – May 25, 2016

As a boy, Abe Feldman and his brother would fight in the streets of Schenectady while onlookers threw pennies from the window. Abe would go on to become a pro boxer fighting the likes of Tony Galento, Jim Braddock, and John Henry Lewis.

HOMETOWN HEROES 2017



Colonel Christopher Yates

The Schenectady County
Historical Society
nominated two veterans this
year, Colonel Christopher
Yates who fought in the
French and Indian War and
the Revolutionary War and
Captain Clinton Churchill
Brown, a veteran of the
Civil War. A special thanks
goes to SEFCU and the
Galesi Group for sponsoring
these two banners.

The Downtown
Schenectady Improvement
Corporation and the City
of Schenectady are once
again putting on the
Hometown Heroes Banner
Program. This program
honors Schenectady
veterans and active duty
servicepersons by putting
up banners recognizing
them along State Street in
Downtown Schenectady.



Captain Clinton Brown

More information about this program along with a map showing banner locations and bios of the veterans and active duty servicepersons can be found at http://downtownschenectady.org/.

BLACK HISTORY DAY AT SCHS SEPTEMBER 17, 2016 @ 1 PM 32 WASHINGTON AVE. SCHENECTADY, NY 12305

Join us as we celebrate the area's African-American history. This event will include a living history performance of Schenectady slave Anthony Allen by Donald Hyman. Anthony Allen escaped slavery in Schenectady and ended up sailing to Hawaii to open up one of the earliest known resorts in Waikiki. It will also include a walking tour of the Stockade focusing on African-American residents of Schenectady and more! Pre-Registration required.

EXHIBITS and PROGRAMS

For more information or to learn more about other upcoming exhibits and programs, please check our website, <u>schenectadyhistorical.org</u>, or call us at **(518) 374-0263** and listen for the option describing programs. Please call **(518) 887-5073** regarding specific programs at the Mabee Farm.

On Exhibit at 32 Washington Avenue

Through November 2016:

Vote Here! Vote Now!

Ongoing:

The Schenectady Municipal Golf Course 1935-2015: 80 Years and Counting

Boomtown: Immigration, Technology, and Urban Schenectady

Hops & Hogsheads: Beer from Colonial to Craft Brew

On Exhibit at Franchere Education Center

Opening July 7th at 5:30 PM:

In Whom We Trust: at the Crossroads of Faith & Community

Through photography by Michael Diana and oral histories, this project explores the religious diversity that enriches Schenectady County and the underlying humanity that unites us all.

Through September 2016:

Local Eats: What Does Your Food Say About You?



Program Calendar

Wednesday, July 6 – 11:30 AM Secret Stockade: A Historic Tour and Lunch

@ 32 Washington Ave; \$20 (lunch included) A walking tour of the Stockade, a peek inside a private 1820s house, a visit to our History Museum, and lunch at Arthur's Market. Preregistration required.

Thursday, July 7 – 5:30 PM In Whom We Trust Exhibit Opening

@ Mabee Farm; \$5, free for SCHS Members Through photography by Michael Diana and oral histories, this project explores the religious diversity that enriches Schenectady County and the underlying humanity that unites us all.

Friday, July 8 – 10AM

Story and Craft Time for Kids: Colonial Days

@ 32 Washington Ave; \$5, free for SCHS Members

Come listen to Colonial stories, learn about Colonial Schenectady, and make a mob cap or a tricorn hat! Ages 5 to 9, children must be accompanied by an adult. Pre-registration requested.



Wednesday, July 13 – 1:30 PM - 3:30 PM Homeschool Days: Gateway to the West - The Mohawk & The Erie Canal

@ Lock 8, Rice Road in Rotterdam; \$5 per student, pre-registration is required.
Open to homeschool families and geared for grades 2nd-6th, explore Schenectady's significance as a transportation hub from the 17th-19th Centuries. Join our curators for a walking tour along the bike trail and see first-hand the Mohawk River and the Erie Canal. This program will take place rain or shine!

Saturday, July 16 – 11 AM - 3 PM Mabee Farm CanalFest

@ Mabee Farm; FREE!

Join us for a day of FREE fun, family activities as we celebrate the Erie Canalway! The CanalFest will include live music, canalthemed crafts, blacksmithing and cooking demonstrations inspired by the Erie Canal, and bicycle tours down the old towpath. Our Mohawk River bateaux will also be on site!

Tuesday, July 19 – 7 PM - 9 PM Howlin' at the Moon Concert with Three Quarter North & 2Late

@ Mabee Farm Historic Site; \$5
Celebrate the "Thunder Moon," named for July's frequent thunderstorms, with a great night of music. We'll kick things off with 2Late before turning the stage over to Three Quarter North!

Wednesday, August 3 – 10 AM and 11:30 AM Secret Stockade: A Historic Tour and Lunch

@ 32 Washington Ave; \$20, lunch included A walking tour of the Stockade, a peek inside a private 1820s house, a visit to our History Museum, and lunch at Arthur's Market. Preregistration required.

Saturday, August 13 – 2 PM - 4 PM Finding the History of Your House

@ 32 Washington Ave; \$5, free for SCHS Members

Join us and discover the resources in our library available for researching the history of your home, neighborhood, and the people who lived there. This workshop will also include time to conduct research in the library. Preregistration required.

Wednesday, August 17 – 1:30 PM - 3:30 PM Homeschool Days: Spin, Weave, & Sew

@ Mabee Farm; \$5 per student, pre-registration required

Open to homeschool families and geared for grades 2nd-6th, meet Yayah & Goat Girl, the Mabee Farm Historic Site's resident sheep and goat. Students will learn about the basics of spinning and weaving, and examine textile artifacts from the Historical Society's collection.

Thursday, August 18 – 7 PM - 9 PM Howlin' at the Moon Concert with Everest Rising & Mark Baptiste

@ Mabee Farm Historic Site; \$5 Get ready for a great evening of live music that will set your toes-a-tapping! Kicking off the night is Mark Baptiste, whose music is sure to delight. He'll turn the stage over to Everest Rising, whose innovative instrumental arrangements and thoughtful lyrics take the listener up less-traveled routes.

Saturday, August 27 – 10 AM - 3 PM 13th Annual Arts & Crafts Festival

@ Mabee Farm; \$5, free for children Featuring the best in regional arts and crafts, the festival includes handmade pottery, wood crafting, handwovens, candles, jewelry, fine arts, painted furniture and much more.

Wednesday, September 7 –11:00 AM Secret Stockade: A Historic Tour and Lunch

@ 32 Washington Ave; \$20 (lunch included) A walking tour of the Stockade, a peek inside a private 1820s house, a visit to our History Museum, and lunch at Arthur's Market. Preregistration required.

Thursday, September 15 – 7 PM - 9 PM Howlin' at the Moon Concert with The Nellies & Flood Road

@ Mabee Farm Historic Site; \$5 September's full moon is known as the "Harvest Moon," and we're looking forward to reaping the benefits of a long season of great music. Join Flood Road at 7:00 before they kick it over to The Nellies in what is sure to be an evening that of toe-tapping fun.

Friday, September 16 – 7 PM - 9 PM Power of Song Concert

with **Magpie** and **Emma's Revolution**Hosted by **Sonny Ochs**

@ Mabee Farm Historic Site; \$5
Discover the political power of song with a musical event hosted by Sonny Ochs. Tap your toes as we celebrate democracy through music!

Wednesday, September 21 - 1:30 PM - 3:30 PM Homeschool Days: Mohawk River Bateaux

@ Mabee Farm; \$5 per student, pre-registration is required.

Open to homeschool families and geared for grades 2nd-6th, explore the boats that once sailed along the Mohawk River. Did you know it took 2 ½ weeks to get to Niagara Falls from Schenectady, but only a week and a half to come home? Learn all about the adventurous life of a Schenectady bateauman!

Saturday, October 1 – 2 PM George Lunn with Bill Buell

@ 32 Washington Ave; \$5, free for SCHS Members

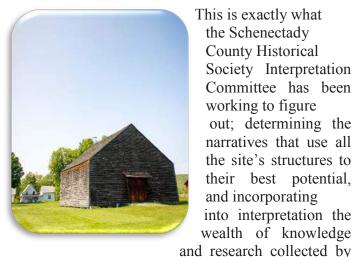
Fridays October 14, 21, and 28 - Times TBD Candlelight Walking Tours

@ 32 Washington Ave; \$10

Come join us to explore the Stockade after dark and learn about its haunted past! Tours include a visit to the museum afterwards and cider and treats. Advanced purchase required.



Continued from page 1



This is exactly what the Schenectady County Historical Society Interpretation Committee has been working to figure out; determining the narratives that use all the site's structures to their best potential, and incorporating into interpretation the wealth of knowledge

our dedicated volunteers. Over the next year, the committee will develop and execute a plan to use all of the site's spaces in telling a cohesive, captivating, and inclusive story about Mabee Farm and the Mohawk Valley.

New York's history goes back countless generations, and Mabee Farm – as the oldest extant home in the Mohawk Valley – has the ability to tell the story of

our region through



its centuries of change. We can hyper-focus on the people who lived, worked, and visited Mabee Farm. Or, we can zoom out, and use the site to examine major historical topics and themes define that our and region our nation. This gives us a remarkable opportunity to see

the big picture – and the small details – on one site. We can switch between – or better yet, tie together – themes like vernacular architecture or cultural influences to individual stories that help make history relatable to modern audiences. For example, in discussing the implications of slavery in New York, we can bring in the true-life story of Cato. An enslaved man, Cato is vividly described in a



runaway notice dated June 6, 1798. According to the notice, Cato spoke both English and Dutch and had "a curious way of showing the whites of his eyes, especially when things do not suit him." This visceral description of eve-roll an immediately recognizable and relatable to all of us. bridging a 200+ year gap between modern visitors and the world of Cato. We

can further the connection to Cato by digging into details of his eventual recapture, and seeing him at work plowing the fields in Len Tantillo's painting, Mahee Farm.





Our New Board Members



Al Ferradino was born and raised in Schenectady, educated primarily at local schools, and received his higher education at HVCC, Syracuse University and the College of St. Rose. He began his professional career directly after college, securing a position in the construction industry- structural steel and miscellaneous fabrications, working in all phases of the profession from shop hand to designer to project management. Currently he has his own business and is partnered with MRH Engineering. Married to his wife Maureen for 48 years, Al has three adult children and five grandchildren. Al's interests are many, and include baseball, college football and basketball, pre- Revolution American history and early aviation history, photography, and "old" movies.

Ceil Wichinsky Mack is a graduate of the State University College at Buffalo with a degree in English and a marketing certificate from Union College. She is the former director of corporate communications at St. Clare's Hospital, a post she held for nearly 30 years and has also served as director of public relations and marketing for New York Oncology Hematology. At present, she is the director of marketing at Ingersoll Place Assisted Living. Throughout her career, Ceil has been a frequent speaker at area high schools and colleges as well as regional and national conferences. In recent years, she added a new public speaking persona as "the bagel baker's daughter," sharing stories about her father, an inventor, and her hometown of Hurleyville, NY. Ceil is a member of the Schenectady County Community College Foundation Board of Directors and served previously on the boards of the Schenectady Free Health Clinic and Schenectady Day Nursery. Ceil and her husband, Jim, live in Niskayuna with their mixed-breed German Shepherd, Leroy Brown.

Ron Kingsley was born and raised in Schenectady, and grew up with an interest in finding the meaning behind the human and natural world. Ron majored in biology and chemistry at Middlebury College, attended New York Medical College, and pursued school psychology and special education in the graduate college at Syracuse University. He took a joint position with the State of Ohio Education Department and Kent State University's College of Education where he taught, conducted research, published many articles in psychology, delinquency, special education, and assisted in community services programs, before retiring as an Emeritus Professor. Returning to Schenectady, he was a school psychologist in the Scotia schools, taught at Union College, and developed the Community Archaeology at Schenectady County Community College. Ron has served on the Mabee Farm Committee since 1996. Most recently he left SCCC tp assist the Historical Society and the Mabee Farm with their archaeological educational and research efforts.





Every year we rummage through storage for a fresh pair of orange t-shirts. Last week that moment arrived, and we bestowed our brightly colored summer uniform upon new interns, **Nick Tarricone** and **Hannah Miller!** Both Hannah and Nick are recent history graduates; Hannah just returned to the Capital Region after completing a BA in Classics and History at Goucher College, in Maryland and Nick's studies earned him a BA in History and Archaeology from SUNY Potsdam, and an MA in Public History from UAlbany. The two interns bring to SCHS innovation and and enthusiasm for making history fun!

Nick, from Brunswick, NY, is excited to gain experience working with children, and looks forward to conveying "the history of Schenectady County to a younger generation." He adds, "I love seeing how John, Pam, and the other educators bring history to life!" Beyond school programs and tours, Nick is a collections management wizard and is eager to complete major inventory projects at 32 Washington Ave.

A Latham, NY native and historic preservation enthusiast, Hannah looks forward to new learning experiences this summer. Mabee Farm's Brick House and its re-interpretation have already made an impact on Hannah. "I'd love to break down the fireplace in the Brick House...we could do so much more with that space," she explains. Beyond preservation and interpretation projects, Hannah is working on leading and developing tours of the Stockade.

Both Nick and Hannah have already immersed themselves in the hodgepodge of summer activities at SCHS, and are busy leading school programs, guiding tours, and conducting original research. Stop by either of our sites and say hi!

Around the Society



Andrea Foroughi presents "The Political Gymnasium" program at the Museum.



Mary Zawackí, SCHS Curator, releases a rehabilitated red-tailed hawk at the Mabee Farm program Migration Celebration.



Michael Maloney, SCHS Librarian, shows Kyle and Emma how to explore their genealogy at the library Spring Break Program.

Spring Break Program at Mabee Farm.



With Richard Lewis on tour of farm.



With John Ackner planting corn and chaffing wheat.

Celtic Heritage Day at Mabee Farm



YaYa gets her spring cut.



Braemar Highland Dancer



Grant Cottage demonstration to Emily & Emma.

Photos - Ann Aronson



Schenectady County Historical Society 32 Washington Avenue Schenectady, NY 12305

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Schenectady County Historical Society

