

# Schenectady County Historical Society



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## Schenectady's Relationship to Native America

by Mike Diana, Education & Programs Manager

### An Introduction

For many people, “American” history begins with European exploration of the continent. From there, the narrative invariably centers on the colonial perspective and, after 1776, the perspective of the United States. Consequently, the general public is generally uninformed about the Native American history that both predates the Pilgrims and persists to the present. And this article is by no means capable of addressing this broad historical issue. So let’s turn from this historical macrocosm to the microcosm of our own city, Schenectady.

For the first century and a half of its existence, Schenectady shared a unique relationship with its neighbors to the west, a people known colloquially as “the Iroquois.” In my interactions with the public, I find most people misunderstand that relationship. Some visitors tend to imagine the Iroquois as a nebulous threat to the European settlers of Schenectady. Other younger visitors might think of the Iroquois as victims of the inexorable colonial and American conquest of the continent. Both conceptions are too simplistic. And so, in this article I will try my hand at describing the connection between the Iroquois and Schenectady. I’ll begin with a very basic introduction to who the Iroquois are. I’ll proceed to show how our city started as a small trading town, the vital point of contact between the Iroquois and the British colonial world. We’ll see how Schenectadians of the time were intimately familiar with the Iroquois and vice-versa. Indeed,

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# Letter from the President

A recent post on the CNN website reminds us that “every year typically has a few defining moments, but the past year has contained so many world-changing, paradigm-shifting developments that it’s getting hard to believe we’re not in a simulation that’s running every possible scenario at once. But there’s no time to be exhausted: With a pandemic still raging, and waves of social change swelling around the globe...there’s still a lot of history left to be made....”

I’m sure we all agree that the past year has been both historic and exhausting everywhere—and certainly in Schenectady County, where the Schenectady County Historical Society became one of New York’s first historical organizations to recognize the seriousness of the developing coronavirus pandemic when we closed our doors to the public in March. Even so, we continued to actively serve the public online, and we introduced initiatives to document the public health crisis and the local Black Lives Matter movement. We also took advantage of the moment to undertake additional research projects, diversify our audiences, plan future programs, and maintain our collections and sites. Then, when the time came, we opened our facilities to the public while ensuring the safety of our visitors and staff. And all the while, we managed our finances professionally and responsibly, and we were able to get through the various crises confronting us without having to suffer any major losses or lay off any staff.

As for the coming year, it’s clear that we will all be facing a number of challenges. Will public officials be able to make vaccines available to the general public quickly and safely? Will social justice movements grow or dissipate? Will our environment continue to suffer from the ravages of climate change? And will a new president bring Americans together, or drive us further apart? No one knows.

But I am sure—based on our response to the challenges of the past year—that the Schenectady County Historical Society will rise to the occasion and continue doing its part to educate the public and maintain and improve the quality of life for Schenectady County residents and visitors alike.

There are many people responsible for making our organization the success that it is today: our staff, volunteers, members, and community supporters. I want to close, however, by recognizing the skill and wisdom of the people who oversee our operation: namely the members of our Board of Trustees. In particular, I want to recognize and thank the three Board members who have left the Board this year: Carolina Lazzari, who chaired our Investment Committee and helped ensure our financial stability; Laura Lee, who served on various committees and kept us updated on historical activities throughout the region; and Past President Kim Mabee, the keeper par excellence of our institutional memory. At the same time, I want to welcome our two new Trustees: educator David LeBlanc and accountant and photographer David Trestick. You’re both joining us at a unique moment, and we look forward to your helping us make some good history together.



Robert Weible, SCHS President





## A Conversation about Conservation

by Susanna Fout, Collections & Exhibitions Manager

I was introduced to Loppa on my first day of work at the Historical Society. Mary, the Executive Director, showed me to our office and workspace. As I sat down at my desk and took in the new digs, I noticed a strange object in the glass cabinet in front of me. "What the heck is that?" I thought out loud. Mary laughed and said, "Oh, that's our stuffed macaw. He belonged to the Nicholas' who owned a restaurant in Schenectady and was recently torn down. It was quite a scandal."

Well, with an intro like that, of course I needed a closer look! As I peered in the cabinet, Loppa's cold, beady-eyed gaze stared back at me. His once brightly colored feathers were darkened by soot, dirt, and time. Loppa's tail was askew, perhaps on the verge of completely detaching from his body, and it seemed as though he had lost several feathers over the years. I felt a pang of sadness come over me as I took in his appearance. Loppa reminded me of a once treasured stuffed animal, loved and cared for by an adoring owner, now outgrown and tossed aside. I wondered what he looked like long ago, where he came from, and what his story was. I was entranced by this strange creature; I knew this wouldn't be last I saw of old Loppa.

In early January 2020, as I prepared to install SCHS' latest exhibition, "Handcrafted: the Folk and their Art," a random conversation with John Ackner led me to uncover an extraordinary piece of folk art of which I was previously unaware.

"Have you seen the giant hand painted flag upstairs?" John asked.

"Wait. What flag?"

"You know, the one we think may have been painted by Ezra Ames. It's in pretty bad shape, but is probably from the early 1800s."

"Okay, you need to stop what you are doing right now and show me!" I joked, almost unable to contain my excitement.

Ezra Ames was a well known patroon painter in the early 19th century, and is one of New York State's best known folk artists. I had spent months of research and careful selection to bring together a range of early American folk art from the collection and was devastated that I had missed such an incredible piece.

John and I retrieved the large, six-foot-long flag from the attic and prepared a space to carefully unroll the delicate tapestry. My heart skipped a beat as the brightly painted forms began to slowly appear. It was beautiful. There stood ladies Liberty and Justice presenting a shield emblazoned with a Hudson Valley setting sun and embellished by an eagle and stately globe; a very early depiction of the New York State seal. It was definitely early 1800s, most likely commemorative of the War of 1812. A quintessential example of American folk art. But John was right, the flag was in bad shape. While the painting was still as bright as it was centuries ago, it had begun to chip and flake away. The linen body was brittle, with large sections cracked and fragmented. It was difficult to safely examine the flag, let alone display it. With assistance, a few pictures were taken and the flag was carefully rolled back up and returned to storage.

Loppa and the commemorative flag are not the only

bedraggled artifacts I have come across at SCHS. Both objects are typical examples of the struggle with conservation in small and mid-sized museums. SCHS has been fortunate over the years to make significant strides in the care and preservation of its 13,000+ object collection. Yet, there is a big difference between preservation and conservation, a difference which is often misunderstood by the general public. While both methods are used to maintain the state of the object, conservation is much more interventional and requires hands-on work with an object to preserve its condition for the future. Often this work is invasive and includes restorative treatments to enhance an object or return an object to its original state and appearance. Conservation work requires the expertise of a professional who spends years of training in their respective field and typically specializes in a class of materials, like paintings, furniture, paper, or textiles. It also requires specialized equipment and laboratories. If all of this leads you to believe that conservation treatment is expensive, you would be correct. On average, the conservation of a single object can cost thousands of dollars. In a dream world, every museum would have its own fully equipped conservation lab. The reality, however, is that most museums barely have the staff to document and preserve their collections.

In the past, SCHS has only sought conservation treatment for a handful of objects, choosing instead to prioritize preservation practices. Preservation is the non-invasive methods used to prevent damage to, and minimize deterioration of, an object. Such methods include the monitoring and recording of levels of environmental agents (e.g., light, humidity, temperature), inspecting and recording the condition of objects, establishing a housekeeping program, and practicing the proper handling of objects. Even the more mundane tasks such as cataloging objects, recording object locations, and conducting regular inventories are part of good preservation practice. Now, if you're thinking "that sounds like a lot of work!" you would be correct again. A lot of preservation work is a series of small baby steps, conducted over long periods of time, that improve the overall health of the collection. The preservation goals I have been able to accomplish with SCHS' collections in the last three years have only been possible due to the decades of small baby steps taken by SCHS curators and volunteers before me. As the museum industry continues to standardize methods and best practices for preservation, and as technologies and computer softwares continue to advance, it has become easier for small museums to gain intellectual control of their collections.

So why does conservation matter? Take our friend Loppa as an example. Loppa was brought to Schenectady from Guatemala in 1907 by Louis Nicholas. The macaw freely roamed the bar, the restaurant, and even the sidewalks until his death in 1936. Loppa was taxidermied and displayed inside the Nicholas' bar until the restaurant closed. Though it may be hard to fathom now, smoking of cigarettes and cigars was once a common practice in restaurants and bars. And there Loppa sat, for decades, absorbing smoke into his delicate feathers, permanently tarring his body. From a preservation standpoint, Loppa is a major challenge. Taxidermy, especially





old taxidermy, is volatile and dangerous because of the chemicals used. Add on top of that the smoke damage Loppa sustained, and the poor environment which was his home for decades, and Loppa is slowly deteriorating away, despite all our efforts to stabilize his surroundings. Without conservation to remove the tar and hazardous chemicals seeping from his body, Loppa will eventually deteriorate beyond the point of saving.

And the extraordinary commemorative flag? As it turns out, John had mentioned this flag to me before, though I still maintain that the delicately painted images which grace both sides of this flag, is a detail he forgot to mention. It has been a year since we rolled out the standard, and I can still see the brightly painted images in my mind. In-depth research and scouring of old files have revealed no clues to the origin story of this masterpiece. I am not the only curator to be haunted by this flag; others have tried to unravel its secrets. Former curator Kate Weller speculated that the opposing image — which depicts a mounted officer in a blue uniform, wearing a Belgic Shako and holding a sword— is Mordecai Myers, Schenectady's first Jewish mayor (1851-1854), and a veteran of the War of 1812 who served with distinction. It is also very possible that the flag was indeed painted by well known New York artist Ezra Ames. A prolific artist, in Ames' early career he was known to decorate everything from fire buckets to mirror frames, though few of these works remain. Only one thing, however, is certain: I have no idea where or when this flag came into SCHS' possession. Despite having no provenance information, this flag is an important and rare example of early New York folk art. Painted flags of this caliber and size are scarce, and without proper conservation, the identity of this flag and its artwork may never be discovered.

As I have grown into my curatorial position, and have become

more familiar with our collection, I have learned more about Schenectady's history, its people, its places, and its culture. Over the years, Loppa has become one of my favorite objects. I have featured him in exhibitions and wrote about him in blog posts. He was even featured in a Daily Gazette article when SCHS tried to raise funds to conserve him. Many people think Loppa is gross, creepy, or weird. They're not wrong — Loppa is all of those things. Yet underneath those layers of weird is a quirky story of a trouble-making pet bird who was taxidermied and became a mascot of sorts for a beloved local restaurant. A restaurant that no longer exists, housed in a building that was recently demolished, built alongside the now gone Erie Canal. Loppa is all that remains, and pulling those layers of feathers back even farther (yes, pun intended), are stories about immigration, the "canal days" and the Golden Era of Schenectady, business and industry, and a changing urban landscape. And though I only recently rediscovered the beautiful commemorative flag, it too has quickly become a favorite object.

Made and used by ordinary people, folk art is a reflection of human needs, values, concerns, and desires. It expresses the contrasts between the common and the elite, the urban and the rural, which characterize Schenectady's past. Now that SCHS has a better handle on preservation, we can begin to focus on conservation work. This will mean identifying our most at risk objects and implementing plans and fundraising strategies to protect Schenectady's stories for future generations.

*Image: Loppa can be viewed at the Schenectady History Museum, where he rests on his perch in the "Changing Downtown" exhibition.*

# From the Library

## A Note from the Librarian

October was American Archives Month, an opportunity to celebrate the work of archives, archivists, and archival volunteers. Institutions and archivists around the country highlighted the work that goes into preserving our documentary and photographic heritage and the variety and value of the materials in archival collections. Here at SCHS, we celebrated our archives with blog posts and Facebook posts, including a Facebook Livestream with genealogist Tina Post.

Since July, the library has been open for research appointments and donation drop-off. We've had a steady stream of researchers and donations, including the second half of the Schenectady Community Ministries collection.

Marietta Carr, Librarian/Archivist

## Recent Donations

**Mohawk Club Collection** – a collection of ledgers, minutes, inventories, and guest registers created between 1905 and 2003 by the Mohawk Club.

**Feibes and Schmitt Architectural Drawings and Blueprints Collection** – drawings, blueprints, and notes for buildings around the Stockade, Schenectady County, New York, Massachusetts, and Connecticut, created between 1950 and 2000 by Werner Feibes and James Schmitt, architects.

**Dr. Ron Kingsley Archeological Research Collection** – research files, notes, and publications created by the

late Dr. Ron Kingsley about the archeology and history of Schenectady County, New York, and Vermont.

## Recent Blog Posts

The Grems-Doolittle Library Collections Blog ([GREMSDOOLITTLELIBRARY.BLOGSPOT.COM](http://GREMSDOOLITTLELIBRARY.BLOGSPOT.COM)) is a great resource for discovering Schenectady County's history. Here are a few of our recent posts:

### **GE Engineer Catches the Influenza in 1918** **by Ellen Apperson Brown | June 24, 2020**

In 1918, John Apperson, an engineer at GE, contracted the dreaded influenza and fled to Lake George instead of staying in the hospital. Ellen Apperson Brown uses family documents to share her great-uncle's experience.

### **SCHS Reopening: Changes to Library Operations** **by Marietta Carr | July 2, 2020**

The library reopened to researchers in July. In this post, Marietta explains the changes she implemented to comply with the guidance from the state and experts.

### **Fall Photos** **by Marietta Carr | September 29, 2020**

Enjoy a selection of historic autumn photos from the Grems-Doolittle Library Photo Collection!

### **Marie Curie Visited GE** **by Marietta Carr | October 2, 2020**

A look at Madame Marie Curie's secretive visit to Schenectady in 1929.

### **American Cookery by Amelia Simmons** **by Chris Leonard | October 30, 2020**

City of Schenectady Historian Chris Leonard takes a look at the wealth of historical information included in the 1796 publication "American Cookery." Class relations, gender roles, trade, the fashions of the day, and the evolution of language and etymology can all be discerned -- along with recipes, of course!

### **Frost Papers - Examples from the Collection** **by Marietta Carr | December 4, 2020**

The James Frost Papers includes copies of survey sketches, maps, leases, receipts, legal documents, and other materials related to James Frost's surveying work in our area. This post highlights a few examples from the collection.

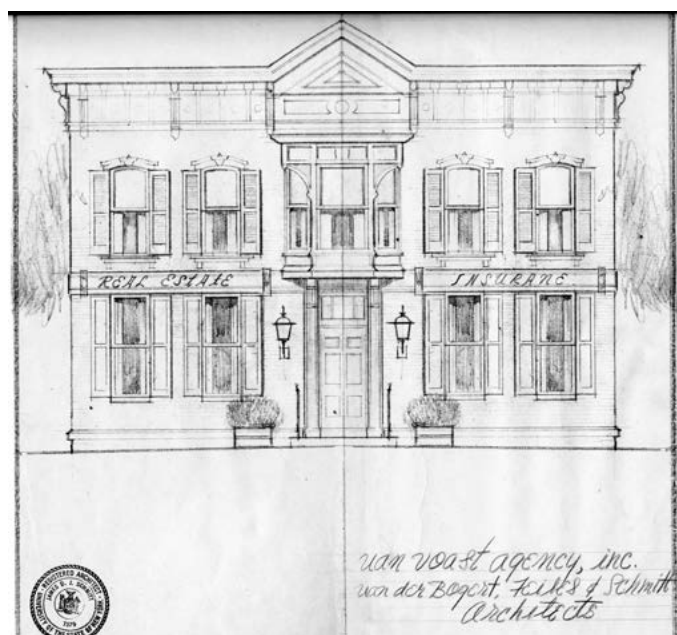


Image: "Van Voast Agency Inc. Architectural Drawing" from the Feibes and Schmitt Collection





## Volunteer Spotlight on Paul Contarino

by Marietta Carr, Librarian/Archivist

Paul Contarino will celebrate his tenth anniversary as a SCHS volunteer this January. Paul primarily works as a library volunteer, applying and building on the skills he acquired as part of his Masters of History and Information Science from SUNY Albany. His first project was organizing the society's institutional archives. In the past decade, Paul has expanded his repertoire to include digitization projects, collection processing, library programs, and groundskeeping. He is one of several volunteers who clean up the outside of 32 Washington Avenue in the spring and fall. Looking toward the future, Paul is eager to continue growing with SCHS. He says, "In the near future, I cannot wait for life to return to normal after the coronavirus. I am really open to whatever comes my way. I am always receptive to learning new things, and embrace any challenges presented."

Paul's projects have had significant impacts on library operations and collections. He digitized the Wayne Tucker Postcard collection, one of our most popular NY Heritage collections, and filled a key role in organizing the library's 25th anniversary celebration. Paul recalls, "John Gearing personally thanked me for assisting him with uncovering images for his book Schenectady Genesis II. I remember scanning a photo of a batteau we had in the Mabee farm materials I organized back in December 2018. It was a serendipitous moment then. It proves SCHS is a good resource."

While Paul has enjoyed all of the projects he has worked on, his most recently completed project is the one he sees as the most impactful. A professor from Siena College contacted the library to set up a virtual service-learning project for her History of New York class. Paul digitized a large selection of deeds and legal documents from our Historic Manuscripts Collection so the students could transcribe them. The project was an unmitigated success. "I am hoping to digitize more of the Historic Manuscripts Collection and make it available online," Paul says. "I am hoping this will give further visibility to SCHS as a critical historical repository. There has certainly been an even bigger push to make things available virtually since the start of the pandemic."

Paul works full-time at the NY Department of Health and volunteers at SCHS and other Schenectady institutions on the weekends. Paul credits SCHS with introducing him to other volunteer opportunities: "Due to my involvement with SCHS, I ended up volunteering my time archiving the records at Vale Cemetery and working on collaborative ventures with the First Reformed Church." His work at the First Reformed Church included digitizing indenture books, arranging a collection on George Westinghouse, and computerizing their vault index cards. Volunteering is Paul's main activity outside of work, and the pandemic significantly impacted his work-life balance. "This year marked the biggest stretch of Saturdays I missed due to the lockdown," Paul explains. "As a DOH employee, it has been very busy since Governor Cuomo made his first press conference regarding the pandemic. The most intense months were arguably March and April with the purchase of lab equipment and testing supplies, ventilators and PPE as well as the Javits Center buildout."

*Our thanks to Paul for his many contributions to SCHS!*

# Around the County

## by Bill Buell, County Historian

In 41 years as a journalist you get to meet a lot of wonderful people, and sometimes they say incredibly fascinating things.

Like this gem from back in 2004, when I asked union activist Helen Quirini about her time at the General Electric Company and her experience with the McCarthy Senate Hearings in 1954.

"I went to my first union meeting waiting to see somebody show up in a beard and start talking about communism, but I never heard anything like that at all," said Quirini, a long-time General Electric worker who was secretary of the union at the time. "At first, I was a little concerned about communists, but then people started pointing fingers at me. I thought, 'If people think I'm a communist, how many other people is McCarthy trying to smear.' He ruined lives. I don't like to use the word hate, but I can say I hated what that man was doing to the country."

As we celebrate the 100th year since the passage of the 19th Amendment granting women the right to vote, I have been trying to shine a light on some of Schenectady County's most memorable females. There are too many to mention in this space, but I will take the opportunity to single out four that I talked to myself, and they were conversations I treasure to this day. Along with Quirini, who passed away in 2010 at the age of 90, I had enlightening chats with Mary Gebhardt, Midge Hayden, and Maxine Lunn.

Quirini, Hayden and Lunn I all got to know pretty well, having met with them in person on more than one occasion along with several phone conversations. My chats with Gebhardt consisted of just two phone calls because in 1954 the British native was deported back to England after coming to the U.S. in 1946 as a war bride. The U.S. government was convinced that Gebhardt and her husband, Schenectady native Joe Gebhardt, were communists.

"The immigration official in Albany took me out to lunch to scold me, and told me that American taxpayers were paying for my hamburger," Gebhardt told me in 2004. "I told him I had been paying taxes since I came here, and that at my job we were building machines for NATO. That always struck me as congruous. Joe served in World War II, and I was in the British Army and was there when the bombs were being dropped. But he was worried about communists. So he gave me a lecture. He was so bloody stupid I thought he was a Nazi."

It was fascinating to hear people talk about and relive events that happened so long ago, stuff that for me seemed right out of a historical novel or a Hollywood movie.

As for Hayden and Lunn, it was special to have the opportunity to sit and talk with them about their famous relatives. Hayden was the adopted granddaughter of GE scientist Charles Steinmetz, and Lunn was the daughter-in-law of former Schenectady mayor George Lunn. Both women were in their 90s when I met them for the first time, and both passed away in 2006; Hayden at the age of 97, and Lunn at 95.

"He was a perfect dear, and I really can't say enough about him," Hayden said of Steinmetz. "Whatever we wanted, he got for us. We were completely spoiled by him."

There were limits, however, to his patience.

"We could play where we wanted to, but if he was busy and we got in the way, he'd tell us to get out," said Hayden. "But he left most of the discipline to my father. I know he never hit me, and I don't think he ever hit my brothers. He just wasn't that way."

It was also great to get insight into our only Socialist mayor from his daughter-in-law.

"He was very interested in the education of young people, and very interested in doing things for the poor," said Lunn. "He was a great public speaker, and he was great to just sit down and talk to. We'd have dinner at their house every Sunday night and it was wonderful. He was such a handsome man. Even when he got older, he never got fat and paunchy. He was always tall and slender, and very charming."

Quirini, Gebhardt, Hayden, and Lunn were four wonderful women, and while I hold them all in high esteem, it was Quirini whose exploits in Schenectady County make her one of the most important figures in our history.

She started working for GE in 1941 and retired in 1980. She had always been a staunch supporter of equal rights for women, minorities and the underprivileged, in and out of the work place, and that didn't stop when she retired. She never married, but had several adoring nieces and nephews. She was a tireless record-keeper, and her home in Rotterdam was filled with papers, many of which she donated to the collection at the Grems-Doolittle Library in 2009. Katherine Chansky, librarian-archivist at the historical society



*Image: Helen Quirini, late 1930s.  
Photograph from the Helen Quirini  
Collection at the Grems-Doolittle  
Library*



at the time, told me, “Helen's always been interested in history, so she gave us a number of items she has saved over the years, including old newspapers and family letters she scooped up off the floor of the Campbell Mansion just before it was demolished.”

Quirini also spoke up at GE stockholder meetings, always trying to get more money for pensioners. In 2017, when I was doing a series on the role of women in GE history, another long-time GE employee and union supporter, Carman DePoalo, told me that “Helen was an amazing woman and we have to be thankful for people like her. What she did for

the union, her fellow workers and the whole community was incredible. She had a lot of love to go around, and the union was her first love.”

Also, along with it being the 100th anniversary of universal women's suffrage, 2020 also marks the year that Quirini would have turned 100. Coincidence? Maybe, but I can't think of a better way to wind up this series on important women in Schenectady's history than by paying homage to the life and work of Helen Quirini.



Cover Image: Mohawk “squaw,” watercolor, Native American Civilization. Source: United States, 18th century / De Agostini Picture Library / G. Dagli Orti / Bridgeman Images

Above Image: Detail of a certificate distributed by Sir William Johnson c. 1770, showing a treaty negotiation. The symbolic “Chain of Friendship” is shown in the background. Source: The Fort Pitt Museum.

the economic and military alliance forged between these two parties lasted through the 1600s and early 1700s. Lastly I’ll discuss how, by the second half of the 1700s, the Iroquois-British alliance shifted to favor the latter group. Schenectady inevitably served as a staging ground for demographic and military movements that broke the power of the Iroquois Confederacy by the end of the American Revolution.

### Part One: Who are the Iroquois?

To avoid any later confusion, let us begin with the most basic description of who the “Iroquois” are, and the various groups that might fall under that label. Today, it’s most common to hear of the “Iroquois” as a political entity. This definition of the term refers to a specific confederacy of five native nations that lived in what is now Upstate New York. The Mohawks were the easternmost of these nations, and lived just west of where Schenectady is today. Not only were they one of the most influential and powerful nations, they were also the most directly involved in the history of Schenectady. Moving westward past the Mohawks were, in order, the Oneida, the

Onondaga, the Cayuga and the Seneca. Archaeologists still debate exactly when these various nations came to the lands with which we now associate them. It is even a matter of controversy as to when the Confederacy itself was founded. Many scholars argue a date in the mid 15th century, but I’ve seen arguments for as early as the 12th or even as late as the 16th. Whenever the Confederacy was created, it had been long established by the time Schenectady was founded by Europeans in 1661. The five member nations would send delegates known as *hoyenah* to a common council fire kept by the centrally located Onondaga. This council dealt with issues affecting the entire Confederacy. This grand council would only take concrete actions if all delegates could come to a unanimous agreement. As such, the confederate council functioned less like a unitary government and more as a peaceful means to resolve disputes and direct diplomacy beyond the member nations. Individual Iroquois nations enjoyed a large degree of autonomy in their internal affairs and kept their own national councils as well. Ultimately, daily life would be coordinated by local village leaders like chiefs and clan mothers without direct oversight from the national



or confederate councils. With its unique and adaptable system of government, the Iroquois Confederacy established itself as one of the most powerful political forces in 17th century North America.

However, we can also understand the term “Iroquoian” to have a linguistic and cultural definition. As a cultural label, Iroquoian refers to several groups of people living in North America prior to and contemporary with the first European explorations of the continent. Of course, the Five Nations of the Confederacy are part of this linguistic and cultural group. However, there were other Iroquoian nations living around the Great Lakes that never joined the Confederacy. These groups include the Wyandot (Huron), Laurentian, Erie, Menro, and a group known to history only as the Neutral nation. Furthermore, there were several Iroquoian peoples living to the south. These include the Susquehannock in modern Pennsylvania, the Nottoway in modern Virginia, as well as the Tuscarora, Meherren, and Cherokee in modern North Carolina. On the one hand, there were broad similarities in the cultures of these different peoples, a subject we won’t explore too deeply in this article. But we can, at least, observe that when the English drove the Tuscarora from their homes in North Carolina, the Five Nations recognized a shared heritage with these new refugees. In 1722, the Tuscarora were officially adopted into the Confederacy and the Five Nations became the Six Nations. That all being said, we must also acknowledge that cultural and linguistic differences existed between all Iroquoian peoples, even amongst the Five Nations themselves. As for political differences, there were many of those as well. In many cases, the people of the Confederacy would come into direct conflict with their Iroquoian cousins.

With all that potential for confusion, I’d like to clearly define the terms I’ll be using through this article. Firstly, we must acknowledge that the word “Iroquois” is of dubious historical origin. There are various theories as to where the name originates. None of them are flattering. As a token of respect, when speaking about the “Iroquois” as the political entity described above, I will use terms like “the Confederacy,” “the Five Nations,” or “the Six Nations” after 1722. I might also use the term, Haudenosaunee, which means “people who build a [long]house.” This is the default way in which members of the Six Nations refer to their Confederacy today, and I encourage you to adopt the term yourself. The extended family, living together in a longhouse, served as the basic building block of Iroquoian society. If I use the term “Iroquoian,” by the way, I use it strictly in the cultural or linguistic definition described above. I’d like to further acknowledge that the names I use for the Five Nations are Anglicized terms, often bearing little resemblance to how the individual nations referred to themselves. The Mohawk, for instance, historically referred to themselves as Kanienkehaka, “the people of the flint.” I’m using these names only as an editorial decision meant to make this article more accessible. Just know that we’re only scratching the surface of a culture with immediate significance to the history of our area. I strongly encourage you to seek more information on your own.

## Part Two: The Covenant Chain

The Haudenosaunee, the Mohawks in particular, received an abrupt introduction to the European world in the person of Samuel de Champlain. As “keepers of the eastern door” to the metaphorical longhouse that was the Confederacy, the Mohawks were no strangers to conflict. The diplomatic breakdowns involved here may be lost to history, but, at the turn of the 17th century, the Mohawks were at war with their northern Wyandot neighbors, and eastern Algonquin neighbors. In 1609, Champlain intervened on behalf of the latter combatants and, with a sudden flash and roar, French firearms forever changed warfare on the American continent. Champlain’s bullets pierced the wooden armor worn by the Mohawks, and contributed to their defeat in these first violent encounters. The Mohawks wouldn’t forgive the French for another century, and must have realized right away that they would need to adapt to survive.

By the 1620s, the Dutch were building trading posts along the river which now bears Henry Hudson’s name. The English, meanwhile, were establishing themselves in Massachusetts Bay and along the Connecticut River. Even the Swedish established a small colony on the Delaware River which was promptly taken over by the Dutch. These European powers were lured here not by promises of gold or exotic spices, for there were none of those to be found. Instead, they came for beavers. Essentially extinct in Europe, a beaver pelt could fetch an incredibly high price on the continent to produce fashionable hats and coats. A new trans-Atlantic trade regime was quickly established. Native nations competed amongst themselves to supply furs to European trade posts while the European merchants vied amongst themselves to be the dominant supplier back in Europe.

As early as 1613, the Haudenosaunee entered into a covenant with some Dutch traders, an agreement that served as the foundation for all subsequent relations with colonial powers. Haudenosaunee tradition formalized such agreements with belts of wampum made from seashell beads. In this case, the Two Row Belt was designed to symbolize Five Nations’ understanding of this new relationship. Two purple lines run across a background of white, representing both the native canoe and the European ship. The lines run parallel and do not interfere with one another, just as the Five Nations hoped their culture might coexist with that of the newcomers. For more than a century thereafter, that arrangement remained perfectly plausible.

But why would the Confederacy want any dealings with Europeans in the first place? Well, for starters, traditional Iroquoian methods of producing material goods were time and labor intensive. It was a more practical option to simply trap beavers and exchange them for a greater value in European textiles and ironware. And certainly, the Five Nations were keen to acquire as many firearms as possible to fight off both their traditional rivals and the new French threat. Thus every year from the 1620s through the 1650s, the Five Nations funnelled tens of thousands of pelts through their

territory to the Dutch at Beverwyck. As they depleted the furs of their own territory, the Confederacy sent war parties against neighboring native nations to establish control over new hunting grounds. This series of conflicts is known today as the Beaver Wars. In a sort of imperialist cycle, the wealth brought about by the fur trade both enabled and demanded further expansion of the Confederacy's territory. By the end of the 1600s, the Five Nations effectively cornered the fur market from the St. Lawrence River to the Potomac River, and from the Hudson River to the shores of Lake Erie. The Haudenosaunee were the preeminent political and military power in the Native American world, perfectly able to hold their own against their European neighbors.

It is only with this context in mind that we can understand the founding of Schenectady itself. In July of 1661, we know the three Mohawk men, chiefs Cantuquo, Sonareetsie, and Aidane, sold the great flat that would become our town to Arent Van Curler. Much has been written as to why Van Curler would be inclined to purchase the land, but the more important consideration is why the Mohawks would be inclined to "sell" it in the first place. Make no mistake, the Dutch were in no position to deceive or pressure the Mohawks into selling against their will. While the Dutch had previously fought brutal wars against the Lenape and Esopus of the mid-Hudson, the Five Nations were likely strong enough in the mid-1600s to drive the Dutch from the Hudson River altogether. Instead, we might consider that Schenectady was able to be founded only because the Haudenosaunee, the Mohawks in particular, found it convenient. The Haudenosaunee moved furs through their territory via navigable waterways. For them, the Mohawk River was a key gateway east, which ran nearly to the stockade gates of Beverwyck (the Dutch name for Albany). But alas, the Mohawk River becomes unnavigable east of the "Great Flat" where Schenectady now sits. And so the last leg of the long journey east was an 18 mile one-way hike through the sandy, hilly Pine Bush forest. A round trip would take at least two days. It would be far easier for the Mohawks if the Dutch had a depot in the "place beyond the pines" where trade might happen, without the excessive overland journey.

We might also consider that, although Schenectady was built in territory nominally belonging to the Mohawks, this land parcel was not vital living space for them. I have seen it suggested that there was a Mohawk settlement where Schenectady now stands, but I must argue against this idea. To be fair, Iroquoian peoples relocated their villages every ten to twenty years and it can be hard to keep track of all of that movement. But I would argue that in the mid 1600s, the heartland of the Mohawks -- where their people actually lived -- would be closer to modern day Fonda. For instance, our archive contains a fascinating 1635 description of Mohawk territory written by a Dutch trader named Harmen Meynderts van der Bogaert. While his account is certainly filled with cultural misinterpretations of what he sees, I believe his geographical notes are worth taking seriously. On his journey, he finds nothing more than a hunting cabin at the great flat and doesn't see a substantial settlement until he has walked more than 20 miles above it. Crucially, he notes that the

easternmost structures he saw were burned ruins, a village that had fallen victim to a recent Algonquin attack.

Indeed, the land between the Mohawk and Hudson rivers was still being contested between the Five Nations and Algonquins to the east. As late as 1669, the Algonquins attacked the Mohawks again, besieging their easternmost settlement which, at that point, was still 20 miles above Schenectady. The Mohawks defeated the invaders at Wolf Hollow and finally settled the question as to whose territory this was. But, this was eight years after Schenectady was "sold" to the Dutch. So while it's technically possible the Mohawks had built something on the great flat between these two dates, I'm disinclined to believe that they would. Such a village would be far removed from their base of strength and vulnerable to attack. Instead, it seems to me the Mohawks bartered away land to which they had only a tenuous claim in 1661. The easier access to European trade might be motivation enough, but the generous quantities of wampum, cloth, lead, and gunpowder that they received must have surely sweetened the deal. Interestingly, more Mohawks would live at the great flat after Schenectady was built than they ever did before.

Thus, Schenectady was founded as a vital point of contact between the Haudenosaunee and European worlds. This role only gained increased importance as the Dutch colony fell into British hands in 1664. The Five Nations were happy to continue trading with the people of Schenectady and Albany, who remained much the same even with the transfer of power. The British, meanwhile, recognized the strength of the Five Nations and eagerly sought an alliance with them against the French and Indian populations of Canada. This alliance became known as the Covenant Chain, a metaphorical bond that linked the Confederacy to the English colonies.

For the first century of its existence, Schenectady maintained crucial economic ties to the Confederacy, and to the Mohawks in particular. The logistics of the fur trade ensured there was an almost constant Mohawk presence camped in and around the town; dozens of men at time. Even as Albany merchants sought to keep early Schenectadians out of the fur trade, these frontier folk were hardly dissuaded and had the easiest access to the trade. Furthermore, it was not uncommon for Mohawk women to marry Dutch men in Schenectady. For both natives and Europeans, having family ties to the other culture provided a valuable advantage in securing favorable deals. The Dutch Church here commonly baptised Mohawks interested in Christianity. In 1710, a native delegation of chiefs traveled to London in a much-publicized diplomatic mission. One of those chiefs, Hendrick Tejonihokarawa, was a member of the Schenectady church. Whenever English authorities needed interpreters or agents to work among the Five Nations, the natives asked for Schenectady men they had learned to trust.

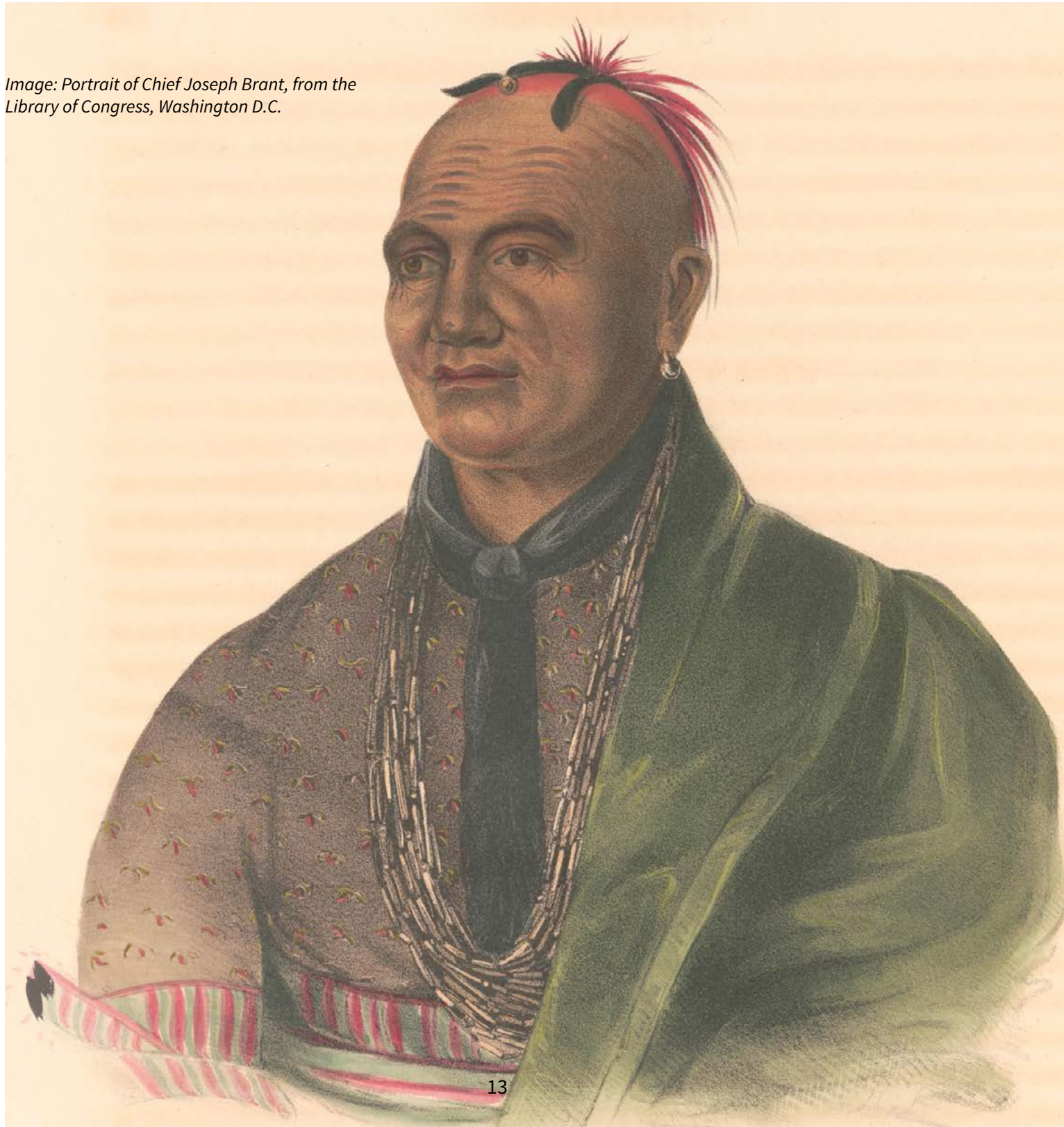
Let us also consider that Mohawk men and women were at the heart of the most famous event in Schenectady's history, the 1690 Massacre. This story is so often bandied about our historical society, and yet the Mohawks are erased from most



tellings. In fact, the year prior, the Mohawks had destroyed the Canadian town of Lachine as part of their long standing feud with the French. The French and Indian expedition that marched on Schenectady was very much motivated by a desire for revenge. But, rather than counterattack the Mohawks in their villages, and further antagonize them, the Canadians hoped that an assault against the English colony would intimidate the Five Nations to cease hostilities. Indeed, there were twenty Mohawk people in Schenectady on the

fateful night it was destroyed. All twenty were spared. The morning after the attack, as the embers of the Stockade smoldered against the winter skies, Mohawks staying in Albany went to see the damage. This party, including the now-famous "Lawrence," were apparently greatly affected by the destruction of this town and the slaughter of so many people they knew so well. Couriers were sent upriver to raise the alarm and gather warriors, while Lawrence and 140 of his kinsmen pursued the retreating Canadians, killing nineteen

*Image: Portrait of Chief Joseph Brant, from the Library of Congress, Washington D.C.*



of them. Only a few weeks later the Mohawks met with the leaders of Albany, assuring the English that “we Esteem this evil as if done to ourselves being all in one Covenant Chain.” The Mohawks went on to offer their full military support and encouraged the people of Schenectady to rebuild. The Five Nations and English would fight this war, known as King William’s War, side by side until its end in 1697. This represents perhaps the zenith of the relations and mutual co-dependence between the Mohawks and the European colonists.

### Part Three: Breaking the Chain

While it may have begun as mutually beneficial, the relationship between the Haudenosaunee and British would begin to favor the latter by the middle of the 1700s. It should be noted here that, dating back to the Two Row Belt, the Five Nations had always thought of themselves as equal partners in their dealings with Europeans. The English had other ideas. This dissonance can be surmised by a meeting of the allies in 1692: “You [the English] say that you are our father and I am your son...” noted a representative of the Confederacy. “We will not be like Father and Son, but like Brothers.”

However, as the fur trade depleted beaver populations, the Five Nations had to travel ever westward and assert control over new hunting grounds. More than a century of warfare over the precious pelts, combined with periodic outbreaks of European disease, had sapped the manpower of the Confederacy. The English colonies, however, only grew in population and economic strength. The colonists still valued their military alliance with the Confederacy, but could be increasingly exploitative in their dealings. The Mohawks were particularly incensed as new generations of colonists penetrated deeper into their territory through fraudulent land deals, west of Schenectady. By 1753, the Six Nations would no longer tolerate these trespasses, and announced the dissolution of the Covenant Chain. Mohawk Chief Hendricks broke the news to the English governor of New York.

”Brother when we came here to relate our Grievances about our Lands, we expected to have something done for us, and we have told you that the Covenant Chain of our Forefathers was like to be broken, and brother you tell us that we shall be redressed at Albany, but we know them so well, we will not trust them, for they are no people but Devils.”

At least one man from Schenectady, Arent Stevens, seems to be included in the ranks of “Albany Devils.” Hendricks specifically mentioned Stevens buying a piece of land from the Mohawks, only to have two separate surveyors measure out tracts far larger than what was negotiated. Sir William Johnson, the superintendent of Indian Affairs, was barely able to paper over this diplomatic rift by the time the French and Indian War erupted. But at this point, the Six Nations knew to treat their eastern neighbors with apprehension.

Native grievances simmered until the American Revolution brought the Five Nations into open conflict with colonial New York for the first and only time. While the Council of the Six

Nations tried to remain neutral at the start of the war, many individual warriors elected to join British loyalist militias in fighting the American rebels. The lands west of Schenectady quickly devolved into an ugly series of raids and reprisals. While Schenectady itself was never a battlefield, there were many occasions in which the fires of war were literally visible from the Stockade. In a party of loyalists, as Seneca and Mohawk warriors massacred the rebel settlement at Cherry Valley, even George Washington took notice. He responded in the most severe manner possible, sending a punitive expedition of 3,000 troops under James Clinton and John Sullivan. As always, Schenectady was the gateway to the west, and Clinton’s brigade began its march here in 1779. Our town furnished 100 batteaux to carry Clinton’s troops, and the Schenectady militia cleared the way for Continental troops up to Lake Otsego. The Clinton-Sullivan campaign burned its way through the entirety of the Confederacy, destroying at least 44 villages. Thousands of Haudenosaunee civilians were forced to flee to British lines in Niagara. There is no record of how many of these people died of hunger or exposure, but we can assume the casualties were staggering. Indeed, it’s hard to be proud of Schenectady’s contribution to this episode in American military history.

The wanton destruction by the Clinton-Sullivan campaign had succeeded mainly in causing human misery, but it also drove most of the Six Nations to declare open support for the British cause. Even at this late date, the Oneida retained close ties to patriot settlements and chose to side with them. Considering this an act of treason, Mohawk leader Joseph Brant drove 406 Oneida men, women, and children from their village. In 1780, these people arrived at Schenectady, not as the proud traders of previous decades, but as desperate refugees. With nowhere to go, they were quartered in the Schenectady barracks alongside Continental troops. It was an unhappy cohabitation inside the dangerously crowded barracks and the unarmed Oneida could do little to defend themselves. Phillip Schuyler noted that at least one Oneida was murdered and several others assaulted and wounded by the garrison. And so the Oneida were sent to the woods at the outskirts of town where they built a ramshackle camp for themselves. They would remain there in destitute conditions for the rest of the war.

When the Revolutionary war ended, the Haudenosaunee found themselves at the mercy of the new American government. They were politically and demographically devastated, with many of their people, including most of the Mohawks, removing themselves permanently to British Canada. In 1794, representatives from the Six Nations met with Timothy Pickering, acting on behalf of President George Washington. There, they worked out the terms of the Canandaigua Treaty, which promised perpetual friendship between the two peoples. The American government would recognize reservations for the Seneca, Oneida, Onondaga, and Cayuga, and the United States “will never claim the same.” Another belt of wampum was created to formalize this agreement. The George Washington Belt, as it’s known, is massive at six feet long. It features fifteen humans holding hands in friendship, echoing still the imagery of the Covenant





*Images: Hiawatha Belt (top) and Two Row Wampum or Gä•sweñta' (bottom), both from the Onondaga Nation.*

Chain. The thirteen larger figures represent the thirteen original states, while two small figures represent George Washington and Tadodaho, the name given to the ceremonial leader of the Confederacy. At the heart of the belt is a time-honored image of a longhouse, to represent the Confederacy. Alas, it's hard to say the United States has lived up to its end of the bargain. State and federal agents were continually involved in land purchases that reduced the reservations to fractions of their former size.

At our historical sites, we often celebrate Schenectady as “the gateway to the west.” In the years after the Revolution, new generations of Americans would indeed set out from our town to start new lives for themselves in the west. Perhaps they traveled by Durham boat along the Mohawk, or later by packet boat along the Erie Canal. Or perhaps they traveled via the

great railroads and powerful locomotives that steamed west in the middle of the 19th century. But no matter how or why they moved west, we mustn't forget their land of opportunity was someone else's lost homeland. And ultimately, Schenectady participated in and profited from a process that gradually pushed the Haudenosaunee to the margins of New York State.

## Conclusion

You simply cannot know Schenectady's history without a basic understanding of the Haudenosaunee, and their role in our region's past. And yet, if you look through our archives, you'll find nothing written by them. If you look through our city streets, you'll find no monument to them having ever been here at all. Sure, you might see “Lawrence the Indian” standing watch on Front Street, but that's not actually a likeness of





*Image: Onondaga leaders Tadodaho Sidney Hill and Faithkeeper Oren Lyons carrying the George Washington Belt in protest.*

him. It's not even a plausible depiction of a Mohawk man. In truth, as you may already know, it's a Native American caricature mass produced by a New York foundry in the 1870s to be placed outside tobacco shops. You might see a sign at the intersection of State and Church Streets. Its gold lettering welcomes you to Schenectady, but, if you ever care to look above, a fictitious scene from the Schenectady Massacre is depicted with all the nuance of a spaghetti western. Dutch men and women desperately try to fight off a horde of native warriors as flames consume the town. It's a scene of civilization besieged by savagery. It probably made perfect sense in 1925 when it was made. If our options here are misrepresentation or no representation at all, it's no wonder we are often ignorant of this part of our history.

And our ignorance of Native American history incurs a cost; mostly for Native Americans themselves. This might take the form of oil pipelines running through the land of sovereign nations. Or it might look like an American president invoking our Manifest Destiny during a July 4th celebration held at a site sacred to native people. You might even find these issues alive and well in the State of New York. The Haudenosaunee are still here, by the way, they're still our neighbors. Many of them are currently seeking legal redress for what they allege were fraudulent land deals in the wake of the Treaty of Canandaigua. Do you know enough to have an informed opinion on that issue? I certainly don't. I'm not saying we have a moral responsibility to become academic authorities on all of the diverse native cultures and histories of this continent. Obviously, that's an impossible standard. But we do have an obligation to try to learn more. How else can we deal fairly with our fellow Americans?

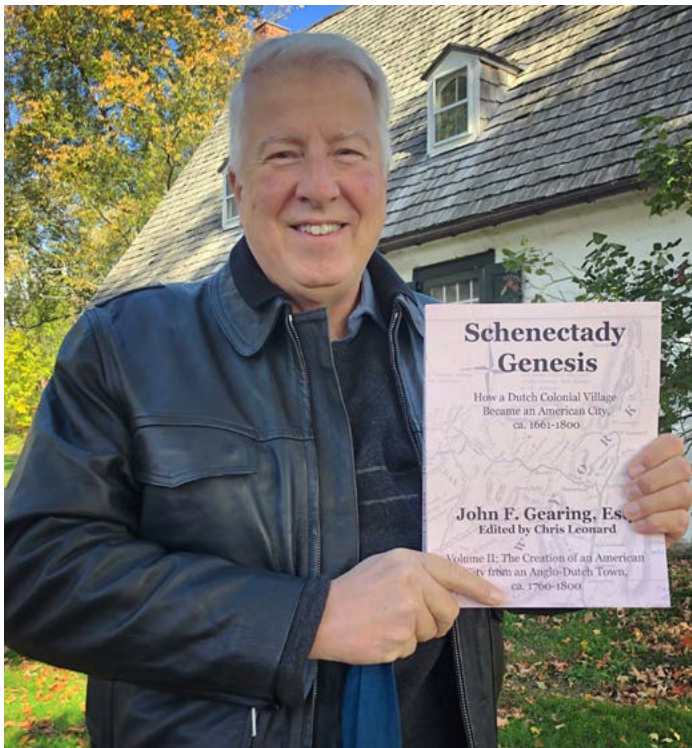
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# Around the Society

Images: Visitors to the Fall Craft Market; the Festival of Trees at SCHS; a new roof on the Mabee House Inn; a guest on a Kayak Through History Tour; and author John Gearing, posing with his newly published book, *Schenectady Genesis II*.





# YOU ARE ON

# LAND



USDAC.us/nativeland  
#HonorNativeLand

Artwork by Bunky Echo-Hawk (Pawnee-Yakama)  
www.bunkeyechohawk.com



Image: From the #HonorNativeLand Art collection at [HTTPS://USDAC.US/NATIVELAND](https://USDAC.US/NATIVELAND)

## A Call to Create a Land Acknowledgement Statement for the SCHS

Opinion piece by Denis Brennan, Niskayuna Town Historian

Across Canada, the school day, public meetings, cultural organizations, as well as musical or theatrical productions regularly begin with a statement acknowledging the traditional Indigenous occupants of the land on which those institutions now stand. These statements honor the territory from which Native Peoples have been willfully and often cruelly dispossessed. In Australia and New Zealand, similar declarations are common. Furthermore, acknowledgement is a practice rooted in indigenous tradition, and is

commonplace among Native American nations across North American as well as Indigenous Peoples across history and around the globe.

The practice has been adopted by some cultural and educational institutions in the U.S., including the University of Maine, the Brooklyn Museum, Chicago's Newberry Library, and many performing arts spaces in NYC. However it has certainly not become widespread in this country.

While land acknowledgements could be dismissed as paternalistic or patronizing, as an insincere gesture, or as "too-little-too-late," I believe it can represent a first effort toward honoring forgotten truths and pursuing reconciliation in the light of undeniable duplicity. Land acknowledgements are important for many reasons, not the least of which is to respond to a fearsome question that deserves – if not an honest answer – at least an honest consideration: "Whose land do we occupy?"

Although there are near countless examples of mendacity, cruelty, abuse, broken treaties, greed, and arrogance in Euro-American interactions with Native Americans, a Land Acknowledgement Statement is not about assigning blame or assuaging guilt. Rather, it is about respectfully recognizing the truth in the often-silenced memories of American history. Land acknowledgements also humbly seek reconciliation through engagement, establishing meaningful relationships, and advocating joint actions that demonstrate reverence for a shared land that requires a shared commitment to respect and protect that land.

The U.S. Department of Arts and Culture's "Call to Acknowledge" defines a Land Acknowledgement Statement as "a formal statement that recognizes the unique and enduring relationship that exists between Indigenous Peoples and their traditional territories." Therefore, the first step in the local process would be to identify the traditional inhabitants in what we now call Schenectady County, before Europeans' arrival. Those Peoples, the Mohawk and Mohican, must be consulted and engaged in a dialogue that from the beginning of the process respects their wishes and desires about Acknowledgement.

As part of the dialogue, a simple statement can be formulated, such as: "We acknowledge that we are on the traditional lands of the \_\_\_\_\_ People." As the process matures, the statement can grow to recognize a mutual

commitment to careful stewardship of the land and respect for the cultural and social practices of the Indigenous Peoples.

Most importantly, the Acknowledge Statement itself represents only a beginning. Words have power only fully revealed in action. Words alone present a danger that they become a gesture routinely spoken as a procedural introduction at the beginning of a meeting. Authentic acknowledgments bind us to an obligation for collaborative, conscientious, and continuous interaction with our local Indigenous communities.

Cultural institutions, such as the Schenectady County Historical Society, are distinctly positioned to promote and organize the Land Acknowledgement process. As principled organizations, cultural institutions recognize their obligation to honestly educate and factually represent history, society, and culture for all members of the communities they represent. SCHS's mission statement clearly stipulates this: "[the] Historical Society shares stories, inspires dialogue, and encourages understanding of the history, people, and cultures of Schenectady County."

Some of those "cultures" existed long before the Dutch or the English arrived.

In keeping with that mission, in recognition of its role as an educational leader, and in the interest of truth and reconciliation, the SCHS has an opportunity (and perhaps an obligation) to use its voice to lead in creating our own Land Acknowledgement Statement for Schenectady County.

I invite anyone who agrees or has comments to contact me at [DBRENNAN@NISKAYUNA.ORG](mailto:DBRENNAN@NISKAYUNA.ORG); hopefully Land Acknowledgement can become a reality.

*Comments may also be sent to [DIRECTOR@SCHENECTADYHISTORICAL.ORG](mailto:DIRECTOR@SCHENECTADYHISTORICAL.ORG)*

“ We  
acknowledge  
that we are on the  
traditional lands of  
the Mohawk and  
Mohican Peoples.”



# What's Happening

## A Note from the Executive Director

With hope, the Schenectady County Historical Society looks to 2021. Though challenged by the pandemic, we responded to the crisis with innovative practices that will take us into the future. And as we look ahead, we know that whether digitally or in-person, we'll be here for you. We are committed to our mission, to our members, and to local history.

That's not to say it's been an easy year! On-site visitation was limited, and we had to cancel some of our annual fundraisers. It means this year, your support as a member has been more important than ever. So, I **thank you** for your support, and for your interest in local history.

Because of you, we were able to complete some key preservation projects at our historic sites. Stage I of the Mabee House roof replacement is now finished, with Stage II scheduled for this summer. We also replaced the deteriorated slate roof of the Brouwer House (just in time before the snowstorm!). Throughout the past year we've continued to digitize our collections, and made key exhibitions available online. Your support also enabled us to offer virtual programming to tens of thousands of people during the pandemic. Plus, we safely hosted socially-distant history programs such as walking tours and kayak trips. All of this was possible because of you. Again, my deepest thanks for sticking with SCHS.

I hope that however you've engaged with us in 2020 has been fulfilling, and that you'll continue to be a part of SCHS in 2021. We have some exciting projects in the works, such as the African American Historical Records Project (funded by a New York State Archives Documentary Heritage Program grant). The project aims to build a more comprehensive and equitable documentation of Schenectady's history and culture by identifying, surveying, collecting, and making available records that relate to Schenectady's African American heritage.

If you have any feedback about what we've been up to, or suggestions for the future, I'd love to hear it. Otherwise, I hope you'll stay connected to SCHS through the winter, as we continue to present virtual programs on a wide range of topics.

Thanks again, and happy New Year! May this one be the best yet.



Mary Zawacki, DIRECTOR@SCHENECTADYHISTORICAL.ORG

## Programs and Events

As COVID-19 restrictions continue to change, our plans for winter programming are in flux. **Please check our online calendar** at [SCHENECTADYHISTORICAL.ORG/EVENTS](https://SCHENECTADYHISTORICAL.ORG/EVENTS) for up-to-date information on what we're doing. If you don't have online access, you can always give us a call at 518-374-0263.

### **SCHS on Facebook Live:**

[FACEBOOK.COM/SCHENECTADYHISTORICAL/LIVE\\_VIDEOS](https://FACEBOOK.COM/SCHENECTADYHISTORICAL/LIVE_VIDEOS)

### **SCHS on Youtube:**

[YOUTUBE.COM/CHANNEL/UCVCVAZG9KIRRK0YJK3TKHUA](https://YOUTUBE.COM/CHANNEL/UCVCVAZG9KIRRK0YJK3TKHUA)

## Exhibitions

### **Virtual Exhibitions**

During the quarantine, we digitized some exhibitions, and created new ones! Check them all out at [SCHENECTADYHISTORICAL.ORG/EXHIBITS/VIRTUAL-EXHIBITS](https://SCHENECTADYHISTORICAL.ORG/EXHIBITS/VIRTUAL-EXHIBITS)

### **Handcrafted: The Folk and Their Art Through mid-April @ 32 W**

Journey with us through our region's folk art! *Handcrafted* features over fifty carefully selected pieces, most of which have never been displayed.

### **Rural Modern**

#### **Through 2021 @ Mabee Farm**

Today, after centuries of fields and flocks, we have created a rural landscape that is fruitful, beautiful, and largely misunderstood. This exhibit explores the stories of Schenectady's rural farmers.

### **Farming the Valley**

#### **Ongoing @ Mabee Farm**

This exhibition delves into the history and transformation of Mabee Farm, and highlights some of the Farm's most significant artifacts!

### **Beyond the Pines: Early Schenectady**

#### **Ongoing @ 32 W**

Explore Schenectady's beginnings: its founding, its people, and what life was like for early Schenectadians.

### **Mapping Schenectady**

#### **Ongoing @ 32 W**

A selection of our most interesting maps. Soon to be available online!



# Welcome New Trustees!

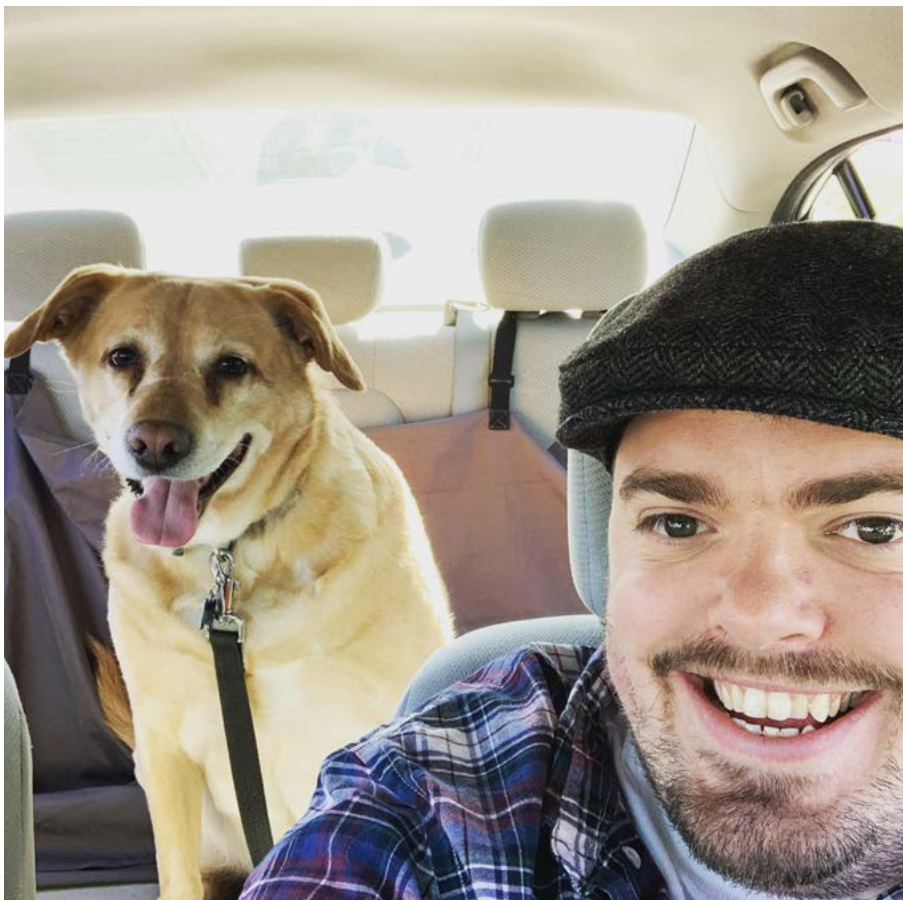
by John Angilletta, Volunteer

Two new members of the board of Trustees were elected at our recent annual meeting of the Schenectady County Historical Society. Both of our new trustees are eager to assume their new positions with SCHS.

Our first new Trustee, **David Trestick**, comes to us from the Office of the New York State Comptroller where he is employed as an accountant. David has always had a keen interest in local history so he will be a good fit with SCHS. His background in accounting will make him an invaluable member of our Finance Committee. When he has any free time, David can usually be found in the Adirondacks scaling one of the high peaks. In fact, David is a member of the ADK's 46ers, hikers who have climbed all 46 of the Adirondack's highest mountains. David makes his home in Rotterdam where he enjoys spending time with family and his three cats.

Our second new Trustee, **DJ LeBlanc**, is an old friend of SCHS and the Mabee Farm. DJ, an educator, was an intern at the Mabee Farm from 2012-2014 where he assisted with our school programs and the everyday running of the Farm. He even served as event coordinator prior to leaving in 2014 to complete his college degree. Upon graduation, DJ taught in the Mohanasen school district before landing his current job as director of 7 th and 8 th grade teachers for the Albany City Charter Schools. He said that the COVID 19 pandemic has made the roles of educators particularly challenging. DJ makes his home in Scotia with his wife Erin. His free time is spent with frequent walks with his dog Rookie and "any and every" outdoor activity.

We are fortunate to have these two fine people join our ranks and hope for a long association with both of them.





# Thanks to Our Members, July-November

## **PATRON**

Roger Sheffer

## **BENEFACTOR**

Carol Borthwick  
David & Patricia Gosda  
Thomas & Jane Hanley  
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