



## Annual Report 2022-2023







## From the Executive Director

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Dear Members and Friends,

The last five years have brought a lot of change to SCHS. New leadership positions, professionalization, increased programming, and, of course, the pandemic. We've had to adapt our practices and change with the times. All along, we've had the phrase "keep moving forward" in the back of our minds.

And this year it finally felt like we were moving forward – significantly. We hit our stride this past year, and with no major obstacles to overcome, we were able to finally and fully focus on what we're here to do: share stories and preserve history. Our outreach and media initiatives blossomed, our programs and events were popular and well-received, our membership base grew, and the very special African American Historical Records project made great progress in connecting with the local Black community.

Much of this is thanks to our new Board President, [Mark Vermilyea](#). Mark is an engineer by training, but a humanitarian by nature. He brings with him to SCHS the vision and tools to look to the future, and to keep us on track in the present. Under his leadership, our board was very active this year discussing "big picture" questions, and defining their important role in the oversight of SCHS finances and strategy. We're fortunate to have Mark on the SCHS team, and if 2022-2023 is an example of what he's capable of, I can't wait for next year.

I also have to thank our outstanding staff here at SCHS for a terrific year. [Mary Treanor](#) continued her expert and friendly work as Administrative Officer. [Marietta Carr](#)'s professionalism and top-notch organizational skills as our Librarian/Archivist ensured that the installation of our new moveable shelving was a major success. [John Ackner](#), our Facilities Manager and resident farmer/blacksmith took the lead on vital buildings and grounds projects, ensuring our properties are in tiptop shape. And we promoted [Michael Diana](#) to the role of Historian and Director of Education, where he continued to work with visitors of all ages and lead expertly researched programs. Finally, we were joined in November by [Caroline Brown](#), our first Director of Development.

Above all, however, I must thank our volunteers and members. Everything we do is possible only through the ongoing support and zeal of our membership. SCHS members and volunteers are the soul of our organization, and we're fortunate to have such a passionate local history community in Schenectady County. We thank you for supporting SCHS and local history, and I hope you'll join us in making 2023-2024 an even better year for Schenectady history!

*-Mary Zawacki, Executive Director*

### **SCHS Mission**

The Schenectady County Historical Society shares stories, inspires dialogue and encourages understanding of the history, people, and cultures of Schenectady County.

### **SCHS Vision**

The Schenectady County Historical Society will strengthen our community and be an increasingly vital destination and resource for those who wish to explore history.

**For our listing of spring and summer programs, visit**

**[WWW.SCHENECTADYHISTORICAL.ORG](http://WWW.SCHENECTADYHISTORICAL.ORG)**



## From the President

The past year has been a busy and productive one for the Society. Led by our Executive Director Mary Zawacki, our amazing staff created and hosted dozens of well-attended programs both in-person and virtual, building on the uncommon opportunity that the pandemic created to explore new ways to reach those interested in history. The programs used all of our great facilities: The museum at 32 Washington Avenue, the adjacent Grems-Doolittle Library, the Mabee Farm site, and the Brouwer House at 14 N. Church St., where we've established an arts collective that sees thousands of visitors a year.

We are very grateful to the Kindl family, donors of the Brouwer House, for creating an endowment that will be used to maintain that facility going forward. Similar to the Franchere Trust, it will allow SCHS to reach more people interested in local history with a wide range of programs.

As I've mentioned in past newsletters, the Board revisited the 2018 Strategic Plan over the past year and has taken several carefully considered actions recommended in that plan. These include:

1. Revisiting the Committee structure of the Board, which we simplified by eliminating several that were no longer functioning or needed, and consolidating and renaming others to be more in line with nonprofit boards in New York and elsewhere.
2. Updating the size of the Board from the range of 17-24 in the existing bylaws to a new range of 14-19, to reflect our actual needs since hiring an Executive Director.

Another recommendation of the Strategic Plan was to continue a focus on Development, including increasing membership and working with the community to identify new supporting organizations. SCHS hired Caroline Brown as our new Director of Development, and the Board will work closely with staff to continue exploring options. Please take this opportunity to tell your friends about SCHS, why you're a member, and invite them to join as well!

Our Board of Trustees will have three new members this coming year. Angela Commito is an archaeology professor at Union College, and has had student groups work with the Society in the past. Bobby Mallozzi owns Villa Italia bakery in Schenectady and



has been a member of other local boards recently. Chris Marney is a Stockade resident who is restoring the historic Phyn and Ellice house, and works for the City. All are interested in local history and looking forward to bringing their knowledge and passion to the Board. We look forward to working with them on behalf of the Society to continue to explore new ways to serve the community.

On behalf of the Board, I want to thank our four departing Trustees for their long service and many contributions. Marianne Blanchard has been involved with SCHS for many years, and was a past Board president. She was instrumental in creating the Executive Director position, which positioned the Society for continued growth and professional leadership. She recently chaired the Investment Committee, ensuring that our endowment is handled well. Tom Dunn is a past Communications Director for the NYS Education Department, and brought his expertise in this field to the Society for his tenure. He always had good ideas and insightful questions at Board meetings. Dale Wade-Keszey was recently chair of the Buildings and Grounds Committee, leading the ongoing maintenance and planning for future improvements at the Society's many sites. He also created the popular Howlin' at the Moon concert series at the Mabee Farm, and we look forward to his continued participation there with his band, Everest Rising. John Woodward was a long-serving County Clerk in Schenectady, and has also served in the role of Historian for Rotterdam, and assistant Historian for the County. He chaired our Development Committee for several years.

I look forward to another year working with the Board and staff to keep our Society vibrant and engaged with the community.

*-Mark Vermilyea, President, 2022-Present*



# 2022 by the Numbers

Income

Operating Income:	\$873,657.76
Non-Operating Income:	\$556,712.69
Total Income:	\$1,430,370.45

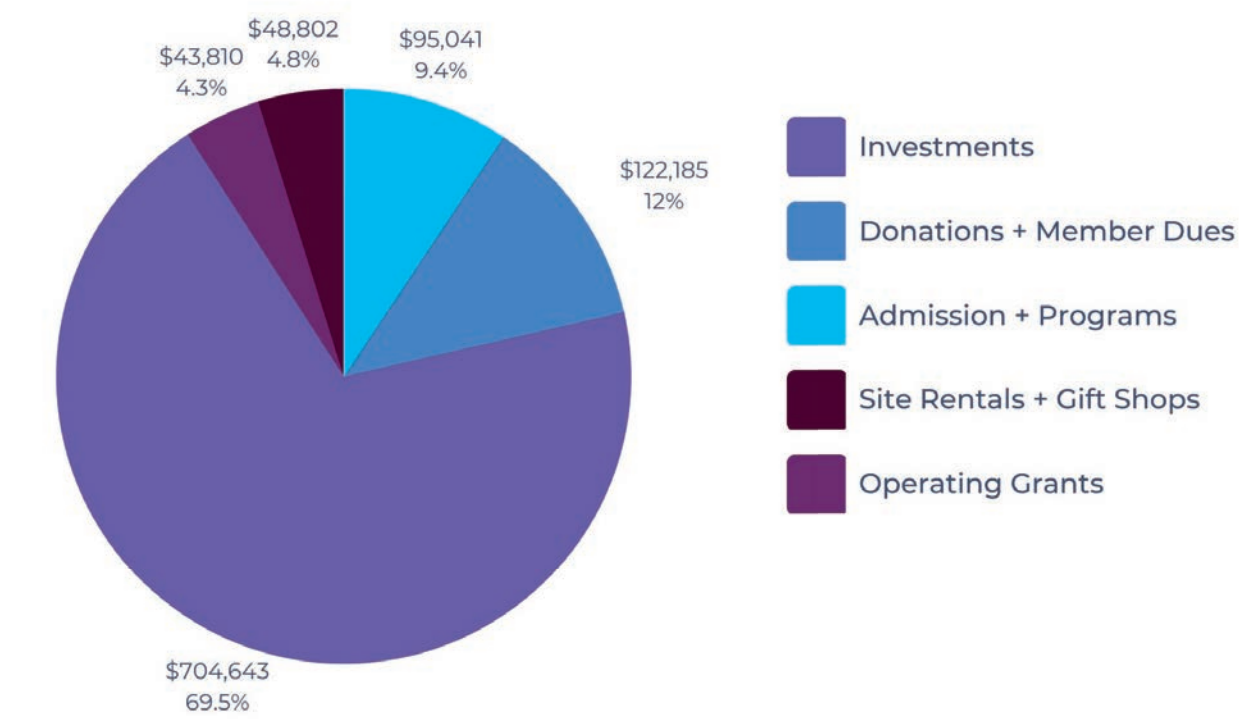
Expenses

Operating Expense:	\$691,491.57
Non-Operating Expense:	\$129,841.92
Total Expenses:	\$996,345.18

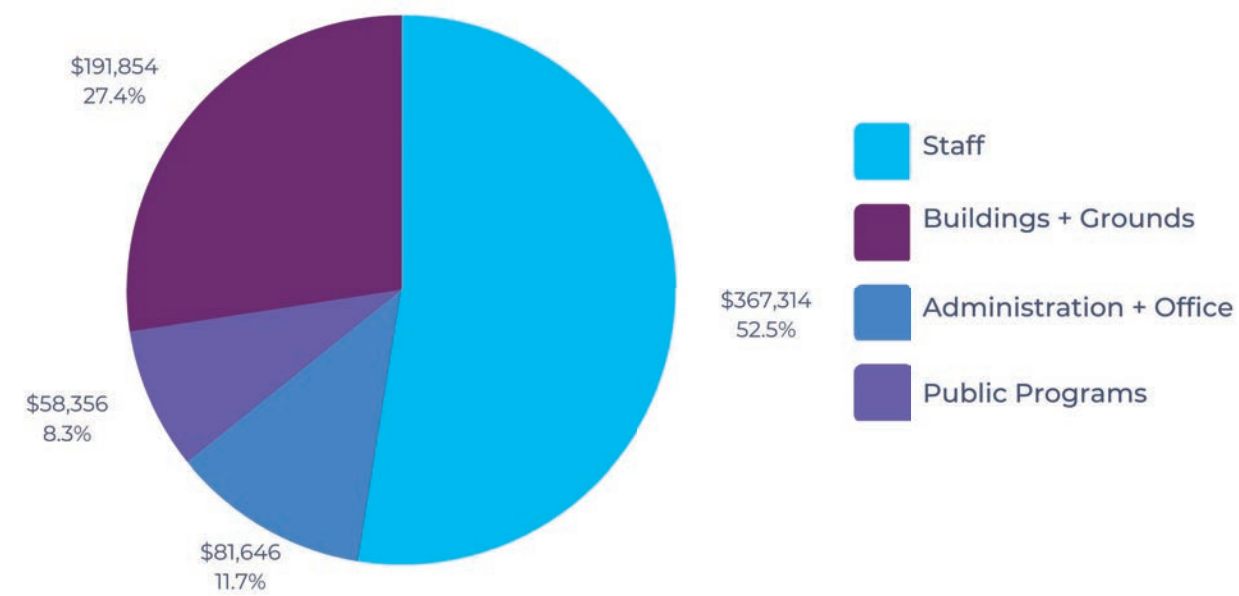
The full Profit & Loss Statement and Balance Sheet for fiscal year 2022/23 are available upon request.



# 2022 Operating Income



# 2022 Operating Expense







## Year in Review

### Exhibits and Interpretation

Our longtime Exhibitions & Collections Manager, Suzy Fout, departed SCHS this year. While we will miss her, we wish her the very best. Before departing, Suzy curated her final SCHS exhibit, [From Hobby to History: The Collections of Schenectady County](#). The exhibit ran from April to November of 2022 and examined the cultural and psychological impulses of collecting. Richly illustrated by both museum and private collections, it dove into the world of collecting and explored how objects, art, and other ephemera inform historical perspectives, build community memory, and create a meaningful sense of place.

Throughout the year, we hosted three art exhibitions featuring art by Linda Finch, Tina Johnston, and the Schenectady Art Society. We also constructed a viewing platform for our barn loom in the downstairs of the Franchere Education Center. The loom, along with other weaving artifacts, will be on permanent display in an exhibition [Weaving the Mohawk Valley](#), which will also feature hands-on demonstrations.

### Programs and Special Events

We hosted 130 public programs this past year, with an exceptional variety. We are proud that we can offer such a robust schedule year-round. Programs range from large-scale events with thousands of visitors to live music to intimate craft workshops. Many programs are geared towards adults, while others specifically target families. Some highlights include:

#### Tours

We led more than 30 walking tours for over 1,000 visitors, mostly in the Stockade. This included general walking tours covering a wide variety of historical subjects, [Candlelight Tours](#), and the return of the [Secret Stockade](#) tour in cooperation with neighbor Sylvie Briber and Arthur's Market. We also led private walking tours upon the request of groups such as MVP, Schenectady public workers, and Union College.

Perhaps the most unique tour we offer, [Kayak Through History](#), continued to grow. This year, we offered tours of both Schenectady and through the locks of Waterford. We held 10 such tours this past year, most being sold-out with 20 guests. We even fulfilled requests for private kayak tours from various local groups.

#### Howlin' at the Moon + Music

The [Howlin' at the Moon Concert Series](#) remained a popular offering during the warm months of 2022. As opposed to the voluntary donation model of the previous summer, this year we returned to a standard paid entry for guests. More than 750 people attended our five concerts. It's safe to say that Howlin' has survived the disruption of the pandemic. In addition to Howlin' at the Moon, we were pleased to offer a handful of other concerts inside the Barn, including [Gongs Along the Mohawk](#), an immersion sound bath; the debut of songcycle, [Voices of the Valley](#); and two performances by the experimental group [Earth's Children](#).





### Earth Night + Nature Trail Walks

We ramped up our use of the nature trails and outdoor spaces by presenting a new event, [Earth Night](#), in April. We also continued to develop our [Full Moon Walk](#) series, which invites people to explore the candlelit trails after dark. Despite the often cold temperatures, our nature trail programs regularly attract more than 50 people each time.

### Farm, Food, and Family Workshops

Throughout the year, SCHS hosted numerous family and adult programs at both the Mabee Farm and the Historical Society. One of the main offerings during the summer was [Colonial Kids Day](#), an adaptation of our public school program format, but open to the general public. Also popular were a number of food, drink, and craft workshops, including the new [Schenectady Wine Society](#) tasting event. Staff is continually working to develop and refine new hands-on history programs that will attract new audiences and retain current audiences.

### Winter Speaker Series

Following the successful format for the previous years, we designated the cold months for a series of expert talks with historians. Some were virtual and others were in person, for a total of 15 talks.

### Special Events

We hosted five major special events this year, including:

[Schenectady County Independence Day Celebration](#), in partnership with Schenectady County

[Mabee Farm Arts + Crafts Festival](#)

[Stockade Walkabout](#), in partnership with the Stockade Association

[FallFest](#), in partnership with Schenectady County

[Candlelight Tours](#), in partnership with Schenectady Heritage Foundation

[Festival of Trees](#), in partnership with YWCA

## Education and Community Outreach

### School Programs

The last year has seen the robust return of School Programs at our sites, especially the Mabee Farm. We saw more than 1,800 public school students visiting our sites since May of 2022, from more than 30 different schools. This is remarkable considering that many schools were still prevented from taking field trips due to Covid restrictions.

Integral to the success of our programs last year was a \$5,000 grant from the William Gundry Broughton Charitable Private Foundation. This money was used to secure buses and enable



more than 650 4th grade students from the Schenectady City School District to attend our programs.

### Summer Enrichment Programs

Likely owing to the success of our spring field trips, we were able to work with the Schenectady City School District to plan an extensive series of summer enrichment programs. This involved both in-class presentations and field trips to our site. These programs served more than 450 students multiple times throughout July and August.

### Community Outreach

We served more than 500 people this past year, again a happy result of easing Covid restrictions. Most of these outreach programs cater to senior living homes, allowing us to reach an audience who largely cannot visit us at our various sites. Church groups and other non-profit organizations were also reached through these programs, fulfilling our role as a community organization.

## Collections

With our long term inventory project complete, we were finally able to hire a professional appraiser and have our entire historic artifact collection appraised. This process took several months, and staff worked closely with our appraiser. The result is a comprehensive analysis of our 12,000 artifacts and their value. Appraisal is a vital step for any museum and its completion moves us towards our goal of accreditation.

Our collections staff and volunteers then focused their time on continuing to photograph every item in the collection for PastPerfect and working to identify and clean up any duplicate records that have been added over time. This project should be completed in 1-2 years. With the installation of new moveable shelving in our collections storage area, we were also able to safely rehouse our entire painting collection.

In 2022-2023, SCHS received several donations of historic artifacts. We also renewed long term loans, and our artifacts can be spotted out in the community at the Capital Region welcome center off I-87, at the new Schenectady Train Station, and at the NYS Capitol.

## Technology

Our new online ticketing system was up and running this year. We also made some essential updates to our website. A grant from the Museum Association of New York allowed us to install Wi-Fi in the Mabee House and Red Barn.





## Brouwer House Creative

The site continued to operate as five artist studios and Sweet Sprig's retail shop. We are very grateful to the Kindl family for providing funds that enable us to preserve and share Schenectady's oldest house.

## Volunteers

Volunteers are an extraordinary asset to SCHS and help us accomplish a variety of projects at our sites, including special events, library research, and buildings and grounds improvements. SCHS enjoys a reputation as a friendly and fun place to volunteer due to the welcoming, positive attitude of our volunteers. The board and staff at SCHS are grateful to our volunteers.

## Internships

SCHS is pleased to offer internships to students in the community. This year we had a record number of interns at our sites in the summer, leading tours, working in collections, and writing newsletter articles.

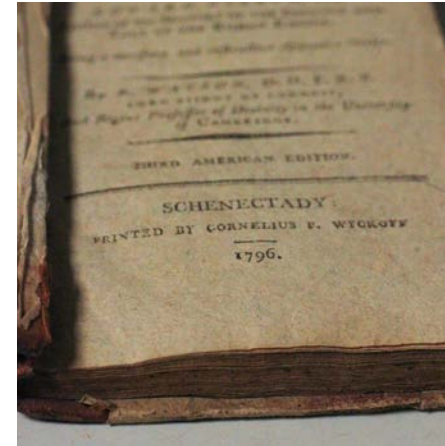
## Development

In November 2022, SCHS hired Caroline Brown as the Director of Development. In her role, she is working to bolster the Historical Society's strong financial foundation so that it can thrive into the future. Caroline is originally from Schenectady County and is thrilled to be serving her home community and the dynamic Historical Society that stewards its history.

### Foundation Support

We received a total of \$41,710 in foundation gifts this fiscal year:

Mabee Family Foundation: \$1,500  
Golub Foundation: \$500  
The Fred H. & Catherine Q. Kindl Family Fund: \$20,000  
GE Foundation (Match): \$3,230  
Carlilian Foundation: \$16,480



### Grants

We received a total of \$121,080 in grants this fiscal year, a 312% increase from the previous year:

New York State Council on the Arts: \$20,000  
Museum Association of New York: \$5,000  
Capital District Library Council: \$10,600  
New York State Archives Partnership Trust: \$2,000  
County of Schenectady: \$54,000  
Preservation League of New York State: \$13,000

### Fundraisers

Arts & Crafts Festival: \$9,755  
Festival of Trees: \$4,612  
Stockade Walkabout: \$3,667

### Donations

The Schenectady County Historical Society received 327 individual donations for a total of \$50,137. Thank you!

### Business Sponsorships

SCHS has increased promotion of its Business Sponsor program, the membership program for local businesses and organizations. As a result this program has grown to 8 Business Sponsors in this fiscal year.

### Lockkeepers

Our monthly donor program has a new name: The Lockkeepers. An homage to Schenectady's canal heritage, Lockkeepers safeguard SCHS through the ebbs and flows of economic change through consistent, monthly giving. At the end of this fiscal year, there are seven individuals or families who comprise the Lockkeepers.

### 1661 Society

The 1661 Society, named for the year Schenectady was settled, recognizes those generous individuals who are leaving a future legacy to SCHS. We acknowledge a bequest intention or planned gifts of any size with membership in the 1661 Society. This year, SCHS received a \$50,000 bequest from the estate of Ann Bish.





## Library and Archives

Visitors: 174

Research questions: 183

Library blog pageviews: 35,151

New York Heritage Digital Collections pageviews: 5,953

PastPerfect Catalog pageviews: 8,163

### Grant Funded Projects

**Samuel Jones Family Letters Collection:** funded by the Capital District Library Council to digitize items written by Samuel Jones and his friends and family from the library's Historic Manuscripts Collection. The collection is available on our New York Heritage site.

**African American Historical Records Project:** a public history and archival documentation project which seeks to identify, catalog, and preserve historic materials created by African Americans in Schenectady County. With funding from the Schenectady County Legislature and the Institute of Museum and Library Services, we launched the community survey phase of the project.

**NYS Consider the Source Diversity and Collaborative Knowledge Program:** SCHS served as one of the regional hubs for the program. With our grant partners, SCHS helped organize the Capital Region's Knowledge and Diversity Collaborative Institute last April which brought educators, librarians, archivists, and historians together to discuss ways of bringing primary sources into K-12 classrooms. We contributed digitized materials to the Consider the Source NY database for future use by local educators.

### Library Resources Online

#### **New York Heritage Digital Collections**

[HTTPS://NYHERITAGE.ORG/ORGANIZATIONS/SCHENECTADY-COUNTY-HISTORICAL-SOCIETY](https://nyheritage.org/organizations/schenectady-county-historical-society)

is a free research portal to access primary sources and archival materials about the people, places, and institutions of New York State. We currently have thirteen collections on our NY Heritage site, including one new collection added this year: Samuel Jones Family Letters Collection (1821-1855). This year we revived our partnership with Ellis Hospital to digitize their historic records, including newsletters and hospital publications, which will be added to our Ellis Hospital Collection on NY Heritage. Our most used collections this year were Schenectady Street Scenes and Schenectady County Deeds.

We continued to add posts on the **Grems-Doolittle Library Collections Blog**, which can be found at [HTTP://GREMSDOOLITTLELIBRARY.BLOGSPOT.COM](http://GREMSDOOLITTLELIBRARY.BLOGSPOT.COM). The blog highlights materials from our library and archive collections as well as interesting pieces of local history. Some of the most popular posts this year include *A Brief History of the Abruzzese Society and Italian American Fraternal Organizations in Schenectady*, *What's in the Box? Opening the County Home Time Capsules*, and *The Carl Company*.





### **New Library Resources, Donated and Purchased**

The library added over 90 accessions of donated and purchased books, maps, photographs, genealogy research, ephemera and collections of personal/family papers and organizational records. The new materials in our collection include GE Alumni Association Photograph Collection, the Schenectady County Tax Roll Microfilm Collection, and additions to the Yearbooks Collection, Documents Collection, and Family Documents Collection.

### **Library-Sponsored Programs and Outreach Activities**

The library sponsored several great programs and participated in several outreach events throughout the year. Library programs included speaker series talks by Jane Wilcox and Rev. Allistair Morrison and Steve Shrade. In February, we hosted a Facebook event for the African American Historical Records Project highlighting Black educators. Marietta worked with the Union outreach archivist to teach a unit on archives for Prof. Ken Aslakson's Fall Intro to Public History class. Marietta partnered with Professor Jenn Dorsey to introduce Siena College's Intro to Public History students to archival practices.

### **Volunteers**

Our volunteers are vital to the library and we appreciate their time and effort this past year! Our volunteers contributed 3,676 hours to the library and four new volunteers joined our team. The library hosted three interns: Elizabeth MacNeil from Smith College, Lola Sheeran from College of St. Rose, and Brynn Marion from Simmons University. Our interns worked on answering remote research requests, processing archival collections, digitizing materials, transcribing documents, and creating metadata. Some of the projects completed by volunteers this year include: preparing for the new shelving installation, processing newly accessioned collections, rehousing archival materials, digitizing materials for Consider the Source NY, researching and writing blog posts, and assisting with answering research questions.

### **Collection Care & Preservation**

Our most pressing priority in preserving the archival collections this year was increasing our storage capacity so that the materials could be properly housed and stored for generations to come. To address this need, we purchased and installed additional compact and mobile shelves and art racks. We now have 65% more capacity for archival materials and our art collection has museum-quality storage! Thank you to the volunteers from MVP, Boy Scout Troop 3072, the Schenectady Kiwanis Club, and the SCHS volunteers who helped move the collections and prepare the basement storage area for the shelving installation.

The library has continued to make progress in preserving and processing collections in our archives. Processing includes arrangement, description, and rehousing. The new shelving project spurred our focus on rehousing, labeling and stabilizing materials so they could be moved. This year we've completed processing on the following collections: Becker Family Collection, the Slater Family Collection, the Greenhouse and Indoor Plant Association Society Collection, Union Presbyterian Church Collection, and the Blueprint Collection.

Digitization is an important component of the library's operations. Digitizing materials contributes to collection care and preservation by reducing the need for physical handling of materials, increasing the metadata and description for individual items, and increasing access through our online resources. Collections and materials digitized during this year include the Glass Plate Negative Collection, the Laura Brown Slide Collection, the Broad sides Collection, and items from the Historic Manuscripts Collection, the General Photograph Collection and the Family Photograph Collection.





## Membership

During the past fiscal year, the Schenectady County Historical Society added 146 new memberships, resulting in a total of 790 memberships. Gift memberships were purchased for 10 people.

This year, SCHS became a part of the Empire State Museums Reciprocal Program, enabling SCHS members to access over 30 museums, art galleries, historic sites, and other institutions across New York State at no charge. Because of this exciting new benefit available to SCHS members at all levels, the Individual membership price increased from \$25 to \$35, and the Family membership price increased from \$50 to \$65.

Our board, staff, and volunteers are continuously recruiting new members amongst the patrons and visitors to our many programs, both on site and at various community outreach events.

- Caroline Brown, Director of Development  
 - Marietta Carr, Librarian & Archivist  
 - Michael Diana, Historian & Director of Education  
 - Mary Zawacki, Executive Director & Curator



## Buildings and Grounds

The Buildings and Grounds Committee oversaw the completion of several important projects over the past year. Some of the highlights include:

### Mabee Farm Historic Site

Reconstructed Inn chimney - now useable  
 Renovated Red Barn bathrooms  
 Installed new picnic tables and benches  
 Installed garden fencing  
 Built loom platform inside FEC  
 Installed wi-fi to outbuildings  
 Hosted 16 weddings

### Brower House Creative

Installed new garage door  
 All five artist studios rented

### 32 Washington Avenue

Installed new roof and gutters  
 Installed rolling archival and painting storage  
 Installed new storage shed  
 Installed new LED gallery lighting  
 Painted upstairs office - will become exhibit gallery

- Dale Wade-Keszey, B&G Chair

## Finance

The Profit & Loss Statement and Balance Sheet for fiscal year 2022/23 are available upon request. After our annual audit, final figures will form the basis for our IRS 990 form to be filed in August. Visit and register for the free website [www.guidestar.org](http://www.guidestar.org) to see our last 990 form or ones for any other not-for-profit organization in the United States.

- John Halstead, Treasurer





## Minutes

### Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Schenectady County Historical Society May 5, 2022

President Bob Weible opened the annual meeting of the Schenectady County Historical Society at 6:31 p. m. at 32 Washington Avenue. Trustees in attendance were: Marianne Blanchard, Tracey Chance, Sarah Kirby, DJ Leblanc, Sheri Lullo, Hannah Miller, Kevin Richard-Morrow, Robert Sullivan, Dave Trestick, Mark Vermilyea, Dale Wade-Keszey and Robert Weible. Mary Zawacki also attended.

Bob Weible referred to the lengthy speech Chauncey DePew gave introducing William Howard Taft. He discussed the great job done by the Nominating Committee. Officers for the next year will be Mark Vermilyea as president, Hannah Miller as vice president, John Halstead as treasurer and Bob Sullivan as secretary.

Two trustees are returning: Mark Vermilyea and Philip Fields. Two other seats will be filled by district attorney and former board member Bob Carney and Tracey Chance, lawyer, historian and educator. Kevin Richard-Morrow moved to approve the slate of trustees and DJ Leblanc seconded; passed unanimously. Secretary Bob Sullivan asked if anyone had corrections to the minutes of the 2021 meeting. Mark Vermilyea moved to approve the minutes and DJ Leblanc seconded; passed unanimously.

Bob Weible noted that attorney, author and historian John Gearing has served his third consecutive term and is required to leave the board for at least a year. He has been a great presence for many years and we will miss him. The other person is Bob Weible, and he thanked everyone for allowing him to serve. The level of professionalism in the organization has improved greatly, our facilities are in great condition and our money is rock solid. With the leadership just elected by the members of the society, the future is bright.

Executive Director Mary Zawacki thanked Bob Weible for his leadership over the past seven years. She said it was hard to think of another time in our 117-year history when we have made such great strides. We have strengthened, professionalized and diversified our board and it has made us an award-winning organization and opened the door to over a dozen community partnerships. Mary presented Bob with a plaque offering the board's gratitude for his years of service on the board of trustees and as vice president and president.

The business portion of the meeting concluded at 6:43.

Terry McMaster alerted those in attendance that he would be discussing the history of the Scots Irish in the Town of Princetown on May 16th at 7:00 p. m. at the Duanesburg Historical Society. Educator Mike Diana introduced the evening's speaker. John Scherer, town historian for Clifton Park and resident of Rexford, presented a program, "Through the Stereoscope: Time Machine to the 19th Century." He discussed his collection of stereo views and viewers. After the talk, incoming President Mark Vermilyea briefly discussed his background and interest in history.

*Minutes respectfully submitted by Secretary Robert Sullivan*



SCHENECTADY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
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