



SCHENECTADY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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The Snubbing of Martin Van Buren

by Jack Adams

In the summer of 1839, President Martin Van Buren came to the city of Schenectady as part of a trip around New York and the Northeast. When Van Buren arrived in Schenectady, it is reported that he was met with a large crowd of Schenectadians who “tendered Mr. Van Buren a cordial reception.”¹ However, not all residents of Schenectady were involved in this reception. Diarist Samuel Jones wrote: “The procession passed the mayor’s house and all the shutters were closed except a window in the basement out of which two of his domestics were looking. He did not call on the President nor did any opposition member of the Common Council.”² It seems unusual that Mayor Linn and his fellow Whigs on the Common Council would be so dismissive of the President’s arrival. In attempting to find an explanation for the actions of the Schenectady Whigs, one must begin with the local origins of their party.

In the 1820s and 1830s, much of New York politics was dominated by the “Albany Regency” political machine, led by Martin Van Buren, and associated with the Democrats. Established in 1821, the Albany Regency was a loosely organized group of politicians with similar goals who controlled the nominating conventions and patronage of their party within New York State. They also exerted a powerful influence in national as well as state politics. Van Buren was a central and coalescing figure in the Albany Regency, giving him near complete control over the New York Democrats. When Van Buren left the New York Senate for the United States Senate in 1821, the Albany Regency continued to dominate New York politics, including controlling appointments to various positions³, like bank commissioners.

So, it is no surprise that in 1832, when the Schenectady Bank (located on the corner of State and Church streets) was founded, “the [bank] commissioners accepted subscriptions for stock, and chose the actual recipients and quantities of shares for each. The stockholders then elected a Board of Directors and officers, and appointed a cashier

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Dear Friends,

Happy fall! It's the busiest season of them all here at SCHS. Soon school programs at Mabee Farm will resume, as will **Candlelight Tours**. And not long after, our **Festival of Trees** will be up and sparkling throughout December. I hope you'll join us for these programs and more this autumn. As always, the details are at <https://schenectadyhistorical.org/events/>.

While we'll be mostly wrapping up the public programming component of our America250 project this year, work studying the American Revolution here in Schenectady will continue. I'm excited to announce that SCHS is the recipient of a \$163,433 grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities' *Rediscovering our Revolutionary Tradition* program. The grant will fund **Documenting Revolutionary Schenectady: New York's Gateway to the West**, a new archives project. Over the next two years, the grant will allow us to increase access to many documents in our collection that have significant research and artifactual value, and that were created during the Colonial and Early American periods.

We'll keep you posted on **Documenting Revolutionary Schenectady**, as well as all the other programs and projects we're working on. Wishing you the best, and I hope to see you soon!

Mary Zawacki Graves, SCHS Executive Director



SCHS has been very busy during the summer months when the warm weather provides so many opportunities for our outdoor programs like the Arts & Crafts Festival, July 4th on the 3rd, our weekly walking tours, and Kayak Through History among many other activities. Everything has been extra exciting this year with the celebration of our nation's 250th birthday. One of the highlights of my summer was meeting "Martha Washington" at the Mabee Farm.

However, as president of the Board of Trustees, the most important accomplishment of the season was the installation of a new slate of trustees at our annual meeting on June 12 at the Franchere Center. Needless to say, our board plays a vital role in managing the financial and strategic affairs of SCHS, and our board members are not only dedicated and conscientious, but also represent a diverse set of backgrounds, skills, and experience.

Thanks to our Governance Committee Chair, David Trestick, who is responsible for recruiting new board members, we elected five qualified new members who will contribute much to our board. I am thrilled to welcome **Denis Brennan**, **Ellen Fladger**, **Becky Hudak**, **Joseph Lueck**, and **Marion Porterfield** to the board. I also want to thank **Bob Sullivan**, **David Trestick** and **Christopher Marney** for agreeing to serve another three-year term. Most of all, I wish to thank all of the engaged SCHS members who took the time to attend the meeting or who sent in proxies. Your presence was essential to bringing our board up to date. Special thanks, too, to **Kiersten Marcil** who presented on the topic of the Hudson River during the American Revolution.

Finally, I want to thank **DJ LeBlanc**, **Sonia Sandoval**, and **Angela Commito** who rotated off the board this year. Many thanks to you for your contributions to SCHS over the years, and best wishes as you move on to new endeavors. The society itself is moving into Autumn and Winter, with lots of exciting activities and programs coming up. Be sure to follow us on social media and check out our website for the latest details!

Suzanne Unger, SCHS President

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and teller. All this should have been politically neutral ... [Instead], the commissioners selected were all Regency men or sympathizers."⁴ What appears to be a blatant case of corruption then unfolded.

When the commissioners distributed shares of stock, they went almost entirely to Regency loyalists. Despite 40 Schenectady merchants subscribing for a combined amount of \$80,000, they received only 12.5% of that amount in stock. The vast majority of the stock was instead allocated to Regency allies. Thus, as the Whig and Democrat parties solidified in Schenectady, the question of which party to join was primarily determined by opposition to or support of the Regency. Those who felt they had been frozen out following the formation of the bank followed Isaac Riggs – a printer and a friend of prominent Whig Thurlow Weed – into the Whigs. "As Schenectady entered its age of banks, railroads, and mass party politics, it was the controversy over bank and railroad shares that served as the local catalyst for creating local versions of two new political parties, the Democrats and the Whigs ... At Schenectady, it was not ideological preference on these national issues that drove people into one party or the other ... It was only after the local controversies catalyzed Regency versus anti-Regency party creation, and the parties assumed national ideologies, that the locals lined up on the "right" side of national issues⁵."

So, the Schenectady Whigs had been formed almost entirely out of the segment of Schenectady's leading citizens who had a personal issue with Van Buren and his political machine. It figures that they wouldn't want to engage in a big public demonstration when he came to town. But it wasn't just the Whigs of Schenectady that had a problem with Van Buren; the Common Council of Hudson had acted similarly in refusing to extend an invitation to Van Buren. And New York State Governor Seward had refused to attend Van Buren's reception in New York City. To expand on the statewide issue with Van Buren, and find a sufficient explanation for it, it is necessary to take a closer look at his visit to Schenectady and the events that led up to it. By looking at newspapers of the day, the story begins to unfold.

The **Whig Party** supported internal improvements and moral reforms, and desired gradual westward expansion in congruence with economic growth and modernization. They especially disliked Martin Van Buren.

- The Schenectady **Cabinet**: a local Whig newspaper
- The Albany **Evening Journal**: a Whig newspaper

The **Democrats** were the successors of Jeffersonian democracy, favoring localism and freedom from modern institutions such as banks, factories, and reform movements. They had a commitment to states' rights, a limited government, and an agrarian ideal. They believed in westward expansion by the acquisition of new territories. They supported Martin Van Buren.

- The Schenectady **Reflector**: a local Democrat newspaper

At a meeting of the Common Council of Schenectady in early July 1839, a proposal was brought forth to invite Van Buren to

the city. By this point, the Regency's control of New York State politics had significantly waned. The backlash over the Panic of 1837, and Van Buren's neutrality in the Patriot's War caused the Whigs to perform much better electorally than they had in previous years. William H. Seward had become New York's first Whig governor, and the Schenectady Common Council was also majority Whig. They shot down the presidential visit proposal. According to the local Whig paper, the Schenectady *Cabinet*, (edited by the aforementioned Isaac Riggs), the Democrat speaking in favor of the invitation claimed it would be necessary to spend \$500 on accommodating Van Buren.⁶ This was later corrected by the local Democratic paper, the *Reflector*, which pointed out that no money had been requested at the meeting. The Whigs then clarified that "our information was erroneous in terms; but in effect was true to the letter."⁷ They defended themselves with the fact that Van Buren's New York City hotel bill was over \$600, and footed by the city. The *Reflector* was not focused on the cost though; they were focused on why the Common Council did what they did.

In the July 5 issue of the *Reflector* – the first after the Common Council meeting – it stated that, "the Whig Common Council have obeyed the dictation of the editor of the Albany *Evening Journal*, and have refused, by a strict party vote, to invite the President."⁸ The editor of the *Evening Journal* was Whig Thurlow Weed, who spent decades as a major figure within New York politics. The next issue of the *Reflector* expands on Weed's connection to the actions of the Common Council. It claims that Schenectady Mayor A. Linn – who it refers to mockingly as "A. L-ittle Linn-et" – refused to extend an invitation to Van Buren because he wanted to be more prominent within the Whig party⁹ and aligning himself with Weed was a great way to do so. Weed had a great deal of influence on the New York Whigs, and he had Governor Seward's ear when it came to appointments. A few examples: In July of 1839, a letter was sent to Weed from William Kent, a lawyer who would later be appointed to a judgeship by Seward,¹⁰ discussing the appointment of a surrogate judge. Kent believed that Weed had significant political influence, opening the letter with the, "How I should like to see you now, Mr. Dictator! The whole state is on your shoulders."¹¹ In April of that same year, Millard Fillmore, future president of the United States, also wrote to Weed. Another judicial position, the vice-chancellorship, was open, and Fillmore wanted to fill the seat. He wrote to find some insight as to why the Governor was not considering him for the position. So, in 1839, as Van Buren was making his trip around New York, Weed had his finger on the pulse of New York politics, and wielded a lot of influence in Albany. For Mayor Linn, being on Weed's good side would be beneficial, especially given Linn's background in law, and the fact that so much of New York's patronage system at the time revolved around the courts.

But, just because the *Reflector*'s claims of puppet mastering make sense, they were not necessarily true. It is also possible that the Schenectady Whigs – along with the Hudson Common Council and Governor Seward, both of whom also refused to engage with Van Buren's trip in an official capacity – simply

agreed with the arguments being put forth in the *Evening Journal* on the basis of principle. Those arguments typically centered around the claim that Van Buren was traveling as a partisan and electioneer, and not as the President. Indeed, the objection many Whigs had to extending their hospitalities to Van Buren is most clearly stated in a resolution passed by the Common Council of Hudson. It states: “It is therefore plain,—beyond the power of argument to make it plainer, that Mr. Van Buren’s Tour, is one of a political and partisan character ... we do not feel bound by any considerations of justice, prudence, or hospitality, to expend the people’s money, or descend from the dignity of our official stations, for the purpose of aiding political partisans.”¹²

Even Hudson’s fire department refused to participate in Van Buren’s reception, voting 10 to 3 against. This attitude was reflected across the Whig press. The *Albany Evening Journal*, Weed’s paper, presented this position frequently throughout the summer. When Van Buren passed through York, Pennsylvania and addressed the people with a letter concerning his sub-treasury plan, the *Evening Journal* concluded that, “Mr. Van Buren is travelling upon an election tour for himself.”¹³

But Van Buren’s electioneering was not the only reason for the Whigs’ dissent. In a letter written by Governor Seward in response to an invitation from a committee of the New York City Common Council to join in the reception of Van Buren, he explained his refusal to attend; he cannot attend the reception because Van Buren and his administration have been too hostile to the policies of New York State, and that to participate in these processions would be inconsistent and insincere of him.¹⁴ But, later on, both Van Buren and Seward found themselves attending the Patriotic Festival on Staten Island, arranged by the Sabbath Schools of New York City.¹⁵ Both politicians were invited to board a ship called the Sandusky to get to Staten Island; Seward accepted the invitation but Van Buren did not, instead chartering his own steamer. Allegedly he left the Sabbath Schools with a \$400 bill.¹⁶ This incident would provide ammunition for another line of attack from the press against Van Buren, portraying him as aristocratic, detached from the masses, and with aspirations towards monarchy. In the article covering the incident, they refer to Van Buren as “His Majesty, Martin the First” and “his Republican Majesty.” An article in the *Evening Journal* declared that “Everything connected with [Van Buren’s]

movements shows that he is imitating Royalty.” While this rhetoric was used in connection to Van Buren’s tour, it was an argument that both parties would frequently make against each other. Historian George Wise writes, “each faction depicted its rival as aristocratic federalists, corrupt monopolists, and cosmopolitan big spenders, while depicting itself as “true republican.”¹⁷

Whatever the reason for the Schenectady Common Council’s refusal to extend an invitation to Van Buren – whether due to Mayor Linn’s pursuit of power, or out of ideology and principle – it led the Democrats of Schenectady to form their own committee to welcome Van Buren. On July 20, 1839, they held a meeting, and even the *Cabinet* admitted it had good attendance.¹⁸

Samuel Jones, the chairman of the committee and former mayor¹⁹, described it as being a nonpartisan committee.²⁰ In truth, it wasn’t explicitly partisan, but it was dominated quite thoroughly by Democrats. The *Reflector* says that a good number of Whigs, disgusted by the conduct of the Common Council, took part in the preparations for Van Buren’s arrival.²¹ According to the *Cabinet*, the names of a few Whigs appear on the committee, and one in a subcommittee. But the *Cabinet* additionally claims that the Whigs who are listed in these proceedings in reality were not serving in the positions they had been assigned.²² The state of the partisan press at the time makes it difficult to determine the complete truth of the situation. To whatever extent a few Whigs did participate, the arrangements seem to have been managed primarily by Democrats.

President Van Buren arrived in Schenectady on July 31. He was met by a large procession of citizens, many on horseback and carriages, and others on foot. Additionally, the Albany Republican Artillery and Schenectady Governor’s Guards took part. The procession traveled through the city before stopping at College Park, where Samuel Jones addressed Van Buren, and Van Buren gave a speech in response.²³ This is all from the *Reflector*; in the weeks after Van Buren’s visit, the *Cabinet* did not report on the story. The only mention of Van Buren’s arrival in Schenectady in the issue following his time here is an excerpt from another newspaper, squeezed in between a story about a rabid dog in Otsego County and a hog race.²⁴ The *Cabinet* was likely following the advice given to the Whig papers of NYC by the *Albany Argus* the month prior, “leave to the *Evening Post* and *New Era*, the exclusive privilege of chronicling Mr. Van

Buren’s movements. He is making a political campaign, and we cannot for the life of us understand why those who feel that his election was a calamity, and who know that his reelection would be a curse, are willing to play into his hands. Why not leave him to the embraces of Loco Focoism?”²⁵

From the diary of Samuel Jones, we learn a bit more about how Van Buren spent his time in town. After his speech at College Park, he stayed at the house of Alonzo Paige, a judge and leading local Democrat. Many visitors came to speak with him there. The next morning, Van Buren visited several acquaintances in Schenectady, including Samuel Jones, and then gave a speech to the Young Men’s Association. After that, Van Buren left for Saratoga,²⁶ where he faced some embarrassment. First, he was publicly snubbed by the widow of Governor Dewitt Clinton.²⁷ Soon after, his longtime political rival, Henry Clay, enjoyed a much warmer reception in the same place.²⁸

Van Buren’s visit to Schenectady and the drama surrounding it provides some insight into the political party system of the era, and how Schenectady politicians took part in that system. It is easy to come away from this story viewing the politics of the time cynically, or to see it as just a bunch of political posturers, running around trying to win elections so that they can be part of various patronage networks and political machines. And that wouldn’t be entirely untrue. But it would be unwise to assume that everyone involved was just in it for their own personal gain. Despite the frequently similar rhetoric, there were real distinctions between the parties on issues of importance, including policy towards the Erie Canal, and the banking system. And all of the electioneering, posturing, and partisanship, especially in the press, played a big role in deciding how those issues would be approached by local, state, and national government.

¹ *Reflector and Schenectady Democrat*, August 2nd, 1839

² Samuel W. Jones Diary Transcription, 111

³ Remini, Robert v. "The Albany Regency." *New York History* 39, no. 4 (1958): 341–55. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23154073>

⁴ George Wise, *Edison’s Decision*, 56

⁵ George Wise, *Edison’s Decision*, 58

⁶ *The Schenectady Cabinet / Freedom’s Sentinel*, 9th July, 1839

⁷ *The Schenectady Cabinet / Freedom’s Sentinel*, 23rd July, 1839

⁸ *The Reflector and Schenectady Democrat*, 19th July, 1839

⁹ *The Reflector and Schenectady Democrat*, 13th July, 1839

¹⁰ Kent Family Papers, 1785-1901, Biographical/ historical, <https://findingaids.library.columbia.edu/archives/cul-4078978>

¹¹ Thurlow Weed Barnes, *Life of Thurlow Weed Vol. 2*, 72

¹² *The Evening Post*, 16th July, 1839

¹³ *Albany Evening Journal*, 6th July, 1839

¹⁴ *The Schenectady Cabinet / Freedom’s Sentinel*, 20th August, 1839

¹⁵ *The Albany Argus*, 10th July, 1839

¹⁶ *Chenango Telegraph*, 24th July, 1839

¹⁷ George Wise, *Edison’s Decision*, 52

¹⁸ *The Schenectady Cabinet / Freedom’s Sentinel*, 30th July, 1839

¹⁹ George Rogers Howell and John Munsell, *History of the County of Schenectady, N.Y., from 1662 to 1886*, W.W. Munsell & Co. Publishers, 68

²⁰ Samuel W. Jones Diary Transcription, 109-110

²¹ *The Reflector and Schenectady Democrat*, 2nd August, 1839

²² *The Schenectady Cabinet / Freedom’s Sentinel*, 30th July, 1839

²³ *The Reflector and Schenectady Democrat*, 2nd August, 1839

²⁴ *The Schenectady Cabinet / Freedom’s Sentinel*, 6th August, 1839

²⁵ *Albany Evening Journal*, 24th June, 1839

²⁶ Samuel W. Jones Diary Transcription, 110

²⁷ *Auburn Journal and Advertiser*, 14th August, 1839

²⁸ *The Schenectady Cabinet / Freedom’s Sentinel*, 20th August, 1839

Image, cover: *Martin Van Buren c. 1855–1858*, by Mathew Benjamin Brady. From the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Image, left: The author and Dr. Jim Strosberg at Lindenwald, Martin Van Buren National Historic Site earlier this year.



The 1661 Society, named for the year Schenectady was settled, recognizes the generous individuals who are leaving a lasting legacy to SCHS through a planned gift. By including SCHS in your estate plans, you ensure that SCHS can continue to enrich lives for generations to come.

Joining **The 1661 Society** is an exceptional way to contribute to the preservation of local history. A planned gift also offers many advantages, including the fulfillment of philanthropic goals and a reduction or elimination of estate tax liability.

Becoming a member of **The 1661 Society** is as simple as designating SCHS as a beneficiary of a percentage or dollar amount of your retirement plan, life insurance policy, or bank account; there is no need to change your will!

Will you support the long term sustainability of the Schenectady County Historical Society by joining **The 1661 Society**? Please contact Audrey Jones at OFFICE@SCHENECTADYHISTORICAL.ORG to make your pledge.

Just Listed!

by John Gearing

New to the market, a charming Dutch Colonial located in the most historic section of town. Sitting on a large, fully landscaped lot of nearly one quarter of an acre (quite large for downtown) this 2,800 square foot house features three fireplaces. The kitchen is enormous: 24' by 26'! That's 624 square feet devoted to "the heart of the home!" Think of the possibilities! The kitchen has its own fireplace and is conveniently located in the finished basement, cleverly designed to stay cool in those hot Schenectady summers. The adjacent summer walk-in cellar/pantry is large enough, at 14' by 24,' to store a year's worth of food for a family. Beneath the floor, a stone-lined chamber in which the temperature never falls below freezing is perfect for keeping food during the winter.

On the ground floor there are two large rooms, each 24' by 20,' connected by a door, each with its own fireplace. These spaces provide a palette for the homeowner to configure in any manner that best suits. Above is a full length garret, with a garret-loft below the rafters. The seller reports that the loft can easily store 1500 bushels of wheat, if not more.

And that's not all this lovely property has to offer! The garden, about 8000 square feet and reached via the alley between the house and the house next door, is home to a fruit orchard of mature apple, pear, and sour cherry trees, an arbor of genuine Holland grapes, a large vegetable garden, and numerous flower beds. There is even a stable for two or three cows. A well in the garden provides pure, sweet water from a natural spring that never runs dry.

The house is built of local wood and boasts a stylish brick facade for easy maintenance. Built in 1725, the seller has added several upgrades during his tenancy. A five minute walk is all it takes to go to church, the shops, the mill, or to one of the several taverns in the neighborhood, which is home to Schenectady's leading families.

Offers in the range of 300 Sterling will be considered. Interested parties are encouraged to act quickly, for none other than William Johnson of Mount Johnson in Mohawks, the fur trade merchant and manager of Sir Peter Warren's estate west of Schenectady, is said to have made inquiries.



Author's note: the above is a slightly modernized description of the Schenectady property offered to William Johnson in 1748 by owner Pieter Felink, a schoolmaster. The dimensions given above are those in the letter, as is the description of the garden, and the layout of the house and grounds. Interested readers can find a transcription of the letter in both Dutch (original) and a modern English translation on pages 201-204 of Volume 1 of the "Papers of Sir Wiliam Johnson" available without charge online at either: www.archive.org or babel.hathitrust.org.

Although it is not clear whether Johnson purchased this property, it was not long after this that he mentioned in a letter his purchase of a house in Schenectady. The editors of the Johnson Papers placed this house's probable location as the north side of State Street, between Ferry and Church Streets. Daniel Campbell, who established his dry goods and fur trading business in Schenectady in about 1752, lived in the large house (still standing) on the north side of State Street, on the corner of Church Street. Campbell was a friend of Johnson and the Johnson family. William Johnson's son, Sir John Johnson, fathered two children, a boy and a girl, by Clarissa Putnam of Tribes Hill. Clarissa and the children lived in a house in Schenectady, near enough to Daniel Campbell that he could visit them often and keep Sir John, in Montreal, apprised of the children's progress in education. Perhaps they were living in the very house described above. Surely there was plenty of room.

Image: From *George Merwanjee White's Etchings of Old Houses and Places of Interest in and about Salem*, 1886

Volunteer Spotlight on Ian Geisler

by John Angilletta



For over a year now the animals at the Mabee Farm have been fortunate that Ian Geisler and his mother, Jolene Nethaway are regular volunteers.

Ian, from Fultonville, became interested in the Mabee Farm after he and his mom visited us during our 2024 FallFest event. Education Director

Mike Diana introduced him to the Mabee Farm menagerie, and Ian bonded immediately with our miniature goats Abbie and Ellie, our sheep Annie and Finn, and our adorable miniature donkeys, Cooper and Dusty.

A few months later, Ian and Jolene began coming to the farm on a weekly basis to help Farmer John and the staff with

caring for the animals and general work at the farm. They also began grooming and working with the donkeys and taking them out of their corral to walk around the farm. Both Ian and Jolene enjoy being outdoors and especially being around animals.

Ian is a homeschooled high-schooler who has accomplished much in his young life and has bigger goals for the future. He currently participates in historical reenactments at Fort Klock, Fort Johnson and the Old Stone Fort in Schoharie. He is also the head of the Johnstown Youth Historical Society. As if that weren't enough, Ian is also involved as a volunteer fire fighter and in EMS training. When he does have some precious free time he enjoys baking, birdwatching, and board and video games.

During the summer months, Ian joined the Mabee Farm staff on a temporary basis, assisting with general operations around the farm as well as continuing his work with Cooper and Dusty. Looking ahead, he also plans on receiving some blacksmith training from our resident expert.

Intern Spotlight on Jack Adams

by Mary Zawacki Graves



This summer, we welcomed Jack Adams of Glenville, NY, to SCHS as our summer intern. A History Education major at SUNY Brockport, with a minor in philosophy, Jack brought a thoughtful approach to his work at SCHS, both in working with the public and in researching and

writing this issue's feature story on Martin Van Buren's visit to Schenectady.

Jack was inspired to study history after learning from some "great history teachers in middle and high school." He's particularly passionate about early American history, and enjoys researching that time period: "there's a lot of interesting characters and vast changes in society going on, even after the Revolution." His passion for the period and

meticulous research skills really shine through in his feature article. Jack dug deep into the archives, requested microfilms, and even took a field trip to Martin Vam Buren's homestead to inform his piece.

While at SCHS, Jack had myriad duties outside of research, including leading adult walking tours, helping with big events, and working with 4th graders. He says his experience at SCHS has helped him improve as a speaker in front of groups, while also gaining more knowledge about both state and local history. "My favorite part about working at SCHS is that it's given me the opportunity to have many interesting conversations about history with both my colleagues and the general public. I feel like I'm learning new things pretty regularly, and that's always good."

Outside of work and studies, Jack likes working on cars and is an avid reader. His love of books and learning will certainly be an asset on his career path; he hopes to pursue a doctorate and eventually become a university professor. We appreciate all the good work Jack has done during his summer internship, and look forward to welcoming him back in 2027!



From the Library

Documentary Heritage Program Grant Update

Last fall, SCHS was awarded a Documentary Heritage Program grant from the NYS Archives to process and preserve the Hill Butler Womanist Leadership Collection, created by Dr. Deidre Hill Butler, a sociologist and professor at Union College.

This is a joint project with Union College Special Collections and Archives, and a part of the African American Historical Records Project. We hired Maggie Zehr as the project archivist to process the collection and create a finding aid to help researchers discover and use the collection. The collection comprises materials created and collected by Dr. Hill Butler throughout her career and community work, including photographs, oral histories, speeches, letters, flyers, minutes, course syllabi, and exhibit materials. These materials document Hill Butler's research and tenure at Union College as well as her involvement with Black-led and women-focused organizations in the Capital Region. Materials documenting Dr. Hill Butler's community work and research will be preserved in the Schenectady County Historical Society Library, and materials documenting Dr. Hill Butler's academic career have been deposited in the Union College Special Collections and Archives. The collection description and finding aid are now available at https://www.empireadc.org/search/catalog/nschchi_5990.

Recent Additions to SCHS Collections

Thank you to the generous donors who contributed to the preservation of Schenectady County's history by donating their archival materials and research to the SCHS Library!

New in the Archives

- Additions to the Photo Collections donated by: Mary Ann Coffey, Janet Schlansker, Susan Crawford, John Busino, A. DeVito
- Additions to the Family Documents Collection donated by: Peter Ten Eyck, Brenda Morrow
- Compilation of land agreements donated by Alan Vrooman
- Mae and Eddie Russell Collection donated by Nancy Flanders

New Books in the Library

- *Fanshaw* by James Featherstonhaugh
- *The Ancient House: Constructing community in the seventeenth-century New York borderlands* by Erin B. Kramer
- *Empire and Frontier: Colonel Peter Schuyler and the Valiant Iroquois in King William's War, 1689-1701*, by Samuel Marquis

Image: *Schenectady Italian Band*, c. 1940s, SCHS collection

REVIEW: *Clearing Iroquoia: New York's Land Grab in the 1779 Campaigns of the American Revolution*

by Martin Strosberg

"Land Grab" is the key take-away in Travis M. Bowman and Matthew A. Zebro's eye-opening history, *Clearing Iroquoia: New York's Land Grab in the 1779 Campaigns of the American Revolution*. In a nutshell, early on in the Revolution, New Yorkers were intent on pushing the Haudenosaunee off their land (much of it fertile) to make room for land speculators and settlers. In the process of expanding New York's territory, the western boundary of the New York State map as we now know it was established.

Bowman and Zembo do not mince words:

The American armies that marched into Iroquoia in 1779 were one step along the continuum of a process of violent western expansion into Indigenous lands that started at Jamestown and ended at Wounded Knee. The 1779 campaigns adhere to a long-established pattern of calling out a transgression against the colonists (or a perceived one) by native peoples, dehumanizing and classifying them as enemies, and finally justifying military action to be unleashed upon villages and non-combatants in pursuit of total victory.

Prior to the Revolution, the western boundary of the Province of New York extended to Fort Stanwix in Rome, New York. To the west stretched the territory of the Six Nations of the Haudenosaunee (Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, Seneca, and Tuscarora) which is part of what is called Iroquoia. Through the efforts of Sir William Johnson, Indian agent extraordinaire for the Crown, the British had managed to keep the Haudenosaunee as allies in the French and Indian War. But Johnson died in 1774. When America declared its independence, the Continental Congress gave the Haudenosaunee the ultimatum to join the side of the rebels; neutrality was not an option. The authors' case is that regardless of whether the Haudenosaunee were pro-British, neutral, or pro-American, the Americans wanted the Haudenosaunee land. Some tried to remain neutral or even pro-American. Many sided with the British, their traditional allies.

Notable in the history of our region is the 1778 Cherry Creek Massacre which sent shock waves throughout the Mohawk Valley. From a strategic perspective, it was clear the Americans could not defend the territory west of Schenectady from British and Haudenosaunee raids. The only answer was to mount a major military campaign against the Haudenosaunee population.

The campaign was launched in 1779, with General John Sullivan leading one of the largest offensive movements of the war. Sullivan's scorched earth campaign, centered mostly in central New York, concentrated on burning villages and crops with the goal of displacing the population. And it largely succeeded. But the 1779 campaign did not fully stop British and Haudenosaunee raids into the Mohawk Valley.

Advocating for the military conquest of the Haudenosaunee were the political and economic elite of New York: Governor George Clinton, Robert Livingston, James Duane, John Jay, and above all, Phillip Schuyler, Major General and Commissioner of Indian Affairs for the Northern District. The authors argue that their underlying objective was not primarily the subjugation of the population and the elimination of the threats to the frontier. They wanted the land. Land grants could be used to compensate the Revolutionary War soldiers. But undeniably the opportunity for private profit and personal benefit through land speculation was an important motive. The authors single out Phillip Schuyler as one who stood to benefit greatly from the seizure of Haudenosaunee land, and who perhaps did more personally than anyone else to remove them from their land. The authors point out that Schuyler (appointed Surveyor General of New York State, 1781-1784) was quick to capitalize on an opportunity to construct a navigable waterway connection between Albany and Oswego that ran right through the heart of Haudenosaunee territory. In 1792, his idea would become the Western Inland Lock Navigation Company.

Who had claim to the dispossessed Haudenosaunee land: New York State or the United States? After the war, New York agreed to give up its claim to parts of the Ohio River Valley, and the United States agreed to accept the western boundary of New York State at Ft. Niagara on Lake Erie.

The authors' thought-provoking and disturbing book, amply documented with voluminous footnotes, describes in perhaps too much detail the behind-the-scenes maneuvering and decision-making of American, Haudenosaunee, and British political, military, and diplomatic leaders. Not unexpectedly, there are numerous accounts of battles and skirmishes, the burning of villages and crops, plundered artifacts, and yes, atrocities (on both sides). If there is a major shortcoming of the book it is the lack of maps.

Travis M. Bowman and Matthew A. Zembo, Clearing Iroquoia: New York's Land Grab in the 1779 Campaigns of the American Revolution, Lexington Books, Lanham, 2025.

Schenectady’s Prodigal Grandson: John Elmer “Bud” Ellis

by Madeline Olesky

The Gilded Age has been on people’s minds in the Capital Region. While you may associate the term with the hit HBO show (which filmed in Schenectady’s Stockade District this summer), it is also the name of an actual time period spanning from the 1870s through the early 1900s. And whenever a history topic enters the public consciousness, it is a ripe time for a historical society like us to encourage people to learn about the real stories behind the hype.

Thus, our Gilded Age walking tour was born. And after a few years of running it, I found myself in the library with Director of Education Mike Diana and Librarian/Archivist Marietta Carr researching new stories to beef up the script. We were looking into the Ellis family, so we had something new to add to our tour script when standing in front of the beautiful Ellis Mansions at 215 and 217 Union Street. We found newspaper articles about “Bud” Ellis, and we were so fascinated by his story it became our new favorite stop on the tour.

A Golden Youth in Schenectady

John Elmer Ellis (from now on referred to by his nickname “Bud”) was born in Schenectady in 1865. He was the only son of John Ellis Jr., who was in turn the oldest son of John Ellis Sr., the railroad baron who saved the Schenectady Locomotive Works. The Ellis family was the premier example of fashionable Gilded Age households in Schenectady. They oversaw Schenectady Locomotive Works until its merger to form the American Locomotive Works in 1901, accruing massive amounts of wealth in the process. They were also well known for their charitable acts for the Schenectady community, the most famous example being the donation from Charles Ellis that helped found Ellis Hospital, which was named after his father, John Sr. The fact that Ellis was also

Charles’ last name was surely a coincidence.

Unfortunately, not every descendant of the Ellis family felt this charitable spirit; they instead leaned on the side of indulging in the excess and vices of the turn of the century. Bud was certainly in this latter category. He grew up in Schenectady, and was doted on as the only son of his father. He owned a stable of horses and often got into arguments with John Jr.

about who was the better rider. As a teenager, he actually raced his father and beat him fair and square during the county fair, which earned him a wager paid out of his father’s pocket. As he reached young adulthood, he quickly outgrew what he perceived as a too small town. After brief stints living in Albany and Utica, he moved to New York City.

“A Prince of Tenderloin”

Bud took an instant liking to the “Tenderloin” of NYC, the rough and tumble red light district that centered around Broadway. The \$400,000 fortune he inherited from his father was tied up in trusts and was slowly doled out to him, as “it was generally understood that while [Bud] Ellis

remained in New York he would draw a substantial income, but that if he returned to Schenectady his income would be cut off.” His allowance was around \$500, which he spent liberally on “wine, women, and song,” all of which were in abundance in the Tenderloin.

Around 1894, Bud eloped with Miss Eva Long, an actress outside of his social class, and a childhood friend that he had reconnected with in Utica. Though they lived in New York City together, they were separated by 1897, with Bud paying Eva a regular allowance.



“BUD” ELLIS.

Things probably did not work out with Eva due to Bud’s well-known womanizing ways. A story from around the Tenderloin was that he took a group of four women up the Hudson Valley on a day trip before abandoning them at a roadhouse while he returned to the city. They eventually got home safely, and Bud gifted each woman a \$750 diamond ring as an apology. So perhaps things worked out in their favor in the long run. He had one mistress named Mrs. Mary Webb Peacock with whom he spent most of his later years, including during an intense bout of pneumonia that brought him to death’s door in 1897. One tumultuous memory between them was the time that Mary stole Bud’s two prized trotter horses and took them on a joyride while Bud was passed out from a night of drinking. After hunting around the city with the police, the horses were spotted and rounded up. Bud chose not to press charges since the animals were not harmed, and he viewed the whole thing as a practical joke from Mary.



Around 1899 Bud became very ill and "succeeded in keeping his whereabouts from those who knew him best. When he recovered he was still a familiar figure in his old haunts; he had changed greatly and spent much of his time in driving with his coachman and valet, Thomas Gernon, who for years had been always at his side." It was reported that at the end of his life, Bud’s daily breakfast consisted of “three glasses of frozen absinthe and a pint of wine,” so it comes as no surprise that he passed away in 1901 due to complications from alcoholism, heart failure, and pneumonia. He is buried in Schenectady.

A Legacy Back Home: Elmer Avenue

The story does not end with Bud’s death. In his will, he did

not leave a cent of his estate to his widow Eva, so she sued the family for being left out. This suit dragged on for years. Plus, when his cousin Edward Ellis died a few years after him, Bud’s name came up, as comparisons were drawn between their lifestyles – a habit that had sprung up while the men were alive, due to the fact that they both married women from a lower class without the permission of their families, and because they were known for drinking and carousing to excess. Both stories contribute to a messy public legacy that Bud left behind.

But Bud’s legacy does also include some charity. His will left \$75,000 in total to the First Presbyterian Church of Schenectady, the Schenectady Free Public Library Association, the YMCA, the Children’s Home Society of Schenectady, and the Hospital Association of Schenectady. In today’s dollars that’s nearly \$3 million dollars. The rest of Bud’s inheritance

was left to his mother, who went on to become “one of Schenectady’s noblest and most charitable women.” Along with the other resources at her disposal, she used the Ellis money to fund numerous causes around Schenectady. Most notable to our story, she was involved in the development of a neighborhood along Elmer Avenue, with the eponymous Elmer Avenue School built to educate the

children in the area for decades to come. While we cannot find any hard evidence to support this idea, it’s possible the avenue and school were named in honor of her only son.

So, while Schenectady’s prodigal grandson never returned home during his lifetime, in a way Bud’s legacy did come back. And when it did, it was associated not with the drinking and debauchery of the Tenderloin, but with the school and community of his grieving mother’s generous heart.

Image, left: Sketch of “Bud” Ellis from the Chicago newspaper *The Broad Ax*, Sept. 13, 1901.

Image, above: A photo from 1973 of Elmer Avenue School.



Lockkeepers: Securing Stability

by Audrey Jones

Travel west along the Mohawk River in Schenectady County, and you will quickly see evidence of the enduring influence of the Erie Canal. An engineering feat of its day, the canal allowed boat captains to safely navigate their vessels, passengers, and wares along the dangerous riverway waterfalls sprinkled across the state from Albany to Buffalo. While the ingenuity of the canal is often celebrated, the lockkeepers' oversight of the system cannot be discounted. These crucial workers ensured the overall impact and success of the Erie Canal. Similarly, Schenectady County Historical Society's monthly donors, known as the Lockkeepers, ensure that our organization and mission continue to operate smoothly month to month fiscally, contributing to our yearly accomplishments.

Historically, lockkeepers oversaw the daily operation of a canal lock's gates. The direction in which any given vessel was traveling on the Erie Canal determined the elevation change and, in turn, the water level needed within the lock to bridge the gap. To reach a higher elevation, the boat captain navigated into the lock and the lockkeeper closed the gate behind it. Valves from the opposite gate were opened, allowing water in, and raising the boat to the necessary water level to continue travel along the Mohawk, securing passage to their final destination.

In many ways, the Mohawk River's elevation changes parallel the operational needs of museums and other non-profit organizations throughout the year. While SCHS' board and staff seek to diligently prepare each year for projects related to capital improvements, programming, and exhibits, unexpected "waterfalls" can appear any given month of the year. With the consistent support of SCHS Lockkeepers, unexpected expenses or potential revenue shortfalls don't impede us from pursuing our yearly goals or maintaining a

steady forward motion in our organization's mission.

Lockkeepers secure the overall success of our organization and assist us in the ability to tackle preservation projects, develop new exhibits, and offer engaging programming within our community, just as Erie Canal workers contributed to the boom in transportation and commerce of New York during the 1800s. Of course, motivation is a key distinction between the historic lockkeepers' role and those of SCHS. Generosity, love for one's community, and a belief in the historical society's overall mission forms the cornerstone of many donors' decisions to become a SCHS Lockkeeper.

Mark Vermilyea is a current SCHS board member and Lockkeeper. His immediate family's involvement with our organization in part informs his monthly giving. Mark fondly remembers his grandmother Lois volunteering for the historical society when he was a teenager, and even enjoyed the fruits of her volunteer work at SCHS in 2016 while researching the Schenectady armory. Additionally, his lifelong residency within Schenectady County and his post-grad years spent living in the Stockade give him a strong connection to the area's history. Mark ultimately believes community impact makes being a Lockkeeper worthwhile, "The Society helps our community be stronger by providing many innovative and instructional programs for adults and children. Making a sustaining contribution to such an important organization is a wonderful way to keep the home fires burning."

Will you consider helping SCHS navigate the future by becoming a Lockkeeper? Contributions may begin at just \$5 a month! You can sign up for credit card payments on our website at schenectadyhistorical.org/donate or reach out to Audrey Jones at office@schenectadyhistorical.org for more information.

Women in the Legal System: A New Collection on NY Heritage

by Marietta Carr

One of the most significant collections in the SCHS Archives is the Historic Manuscripts Collection. Composed of several thousand documents dating from 1670 to the mid-1900s, this collection has served as the foundation of many of our exhibits, programs, and research efforts. How exactly all of these items ended up in the SCHS archives is unknown, but we have good reason to believe that most of them were passed down through families and then given to local historians such as Jonathan Pearson, E.Z. Carpenter, and Alonzo Walton for their research. Those historians later donated or bequeathed them to SCHS. The collection is organized into series by document type: Accounts, Banking & Financial Documents, Bonds, BroadSides, Commissions, Deeds, Letters, Legal Matters, Military Documents, Political Documents, and Wills. While these categories help to navigate the collection, perusing the document descriptions can be daunting for researchers.

The Legal Matters Series, in particular, is extensive and wide-ranging; it consists of about 5,500 documents related to legal transactions and disputes, dating from 1670 to 1972 (most documents in the collection date from the 19th century), including land agreements and leases, affidavits, petitions, judgments in civil and criminal suits, notices, promissory notes, licenses, bills of sale, contracts, and bonds. The documents were created by the courts of the City of Schenectady, the County of Schenectady, and NY State, attorneys, and residents of Schenectady County. Thus, we've been steadily reviewing this series to identify documents that share common themes or relate to specific events and people. We then create digital collections that will increase access and ease of use, and ensure these historic and sometimes fragile

documents will be available to a wide variety of researchers while reducing the risk of deterioration due to handling.

Thanks to a grant from the Capital District Library Council, we digitized a set of 190 documents that capture important information about the treatment and condition of women in 18th and 19th century society, particularly their pursuit of justice and rights within the court system. These items present widows and mothers fighting for financial support and protections for themselves and their children, women pursuing justice after assault and rape, criminal cases of prostitution and disorderly conduct, and the aftermath of breaches of contract, insolvency, and abandonment. The collection illustrates differences in legal status for women under Dutch tradition compared to women under English and American law, as well as the communication between women and the men acting as their legal representatives. The digital collection is now publicly and freely available online as part of our New York Heritage site: <https://nyheritage.org/collections/women-legal-system>.

As we continue working with the Historic Manuscripts Collection, we will add more relevant items and information to this digital collection. Projects like this are not possible without the support of grant funding and local volunteers. Thanks to Josie Culbertson, our digitization assistant, and library volunteers Robert Baldwin, Pat Gosda, and Dave Gosda for their work on bringing this project to fruition. Library volunteers are working on transcribing the documents to further increase discovery and use, particularly for K-12 students and educators, and we could use more help! If you are interested in working on transcribing historical documents such as these, please contact the Librarian, Marietta Carr.

Crossroads of the Revolution

November 7, 2026



with

Russell Shorto

Claire Bellerjeau

Don Johnson John Gearing

Sean Kelleher Kiersten Marcil



schenectadyhistorical.org/event/crossroads

Schenectady's Curious Case for Colonization

by Michael Diana

In the early 19th century, the young American republic still wrestled with the fundamental contradiction between the lofty ideals of the American Revolution, and the harsh realities of slavery which still existed in many states. In New York State, the institution would come to a painfully gradual end in 1827. However, many people in New York specifically, and America more generally, assumed that freed Black people could not possibly be integrated into broader White society. To address this ill-founded concern, a radical solution was pursued: that free Black Americans should be sent to colonize Africa.

This Colonization Movement became a significant social cause. Many organizations and even state governments would adopt this mission, but the most influential was known simply as the American Colonization Society, which was founded in 1816 and (for some strange reason) dissolved in 1964. Proponents of colonization argued that since America's enslaved population had originated in the continent of Africa, it was only natural and beneficial that they should return there. Colonies of resettled freed slaves could build new societies for themselves, free at last from the discrimination they faced in America. Of course this also served to relieve White Americans who did not want to live amongst free Black people.

The west coast of Africa was the target of convenience for these efforts, often against the opposition of Africans who were living there. The modern nation of Liberia traces its origins to Black American pioneers, resettled in Africa by the American Colonization Society. However, it should be noted that many Black Americans were uninterested in the prospect of colonization. They were so many generations removed from Africa that colonization would feel more like an exile than a homecoming.

I recently discovered the local influence of the Colonization Society in an advertisement solicited in the Schenectady *Cabinet* on January 20, 1824. This document announces an inaugural meeting at the Dutch Reformed Church to organize a local auxiliary of the American Colonization Society. The organizers of Schenectady's Colonization Society conceived of their mission as a benevolent one. "The time has arrived," they argue, "when no reflecting citizen can doubt not only that something ought but that something must be done to meliorate the condition of our colored population." The writers paint a grim picture of the newly freed population as beset by vices, legal troubles, and increasingly swelling the prison population of the State. The modern reader can immediately spot how this Society's "benevolence" is predicated on racist assumptions that were widespread and

largely unchallenged in early 18th century America. And from there, one can easily understand that the end of slavery was by no means the beginning of equality for Schenectady's Black population.

For the subscribers of this *Cabinet* advertisement, a free Black population was fundamentally incompatible with a free White population. "We may talk of abolition," they muse, "but are we prepared to turn loose upon society more than one million of men who are regardless of the restraints of religion or laws?" Again, here the modern reader might question the writer's assumptions on religion and laws. Enslaved people had long since adopted the Christian religion of their enslavers. Their names appear in Schenectady baptismal records as far back as the 17th century. By 1824, free Black people were even organizing their own Christian churches throughout America and would do so in Schenectady in 1837. We might further note that both enslaved and recently freed people would have particular regard for the laws of the land when those laws apply particularly harshly to them. But to the organizers of the Colonization Society, such arguments would probably be unheeded. "We may talk of education," they lament, "but when will those beings whose Ethiopian skins have condemned them to our perpetual scorn, learn to appreciate its blessings?" Indeed, the Society argues that the best course for educating free Black people would be to remove them entirely to Africa where the "consciousness of inferiority shall be extinguished."

Today, we might wonder how many of Schenectady's citizens heeded this call to assemble on January 20 of 1824. We might further wonder how many lent their time and resources to support the American Colonization Society. This advertisement was the first I've encountered in Schenectady's periodical records. With just a cursory search, I've found a variety of promotions for the Colonization Society across a variety of Schenectady's newspapers spanning into the 1830s. So, clearly the movement had some traction in our city for some time at least.

However, we should not assume that the sentiments expressed above were unanimous in Schenectady's White population. For example, as early as 1812, White Schenectadians paid "toward the support of a suitable person to instruct the people of color in this place." Instead we might treat the ideas of the American Colonization Society as a useful litmus test. If their ideas and proposals were seen as reasonable enough for public discussion, what does it tell us about Schenectady in the early 19th century? I invite you to read the advertisement for yourself and draw your own conclusions.

Colonization Society. COMMUNICATION.

☞ The citizens of Schenectady, are invited to convene at the Dutch Church Consistory-Room, **THIS EVENING**, at six o'clock, to devise measures for forming a Society auxiliary to the American Society for colonizing *free people* of colour in the United States.

We feel assured, that scarcely a word is necessary in recommendation of the object for which this meeting is called. The time has arrived, when no reflecting citizen can doubt not only that something *ought*, but that something *must* be done to meliorate the condition of our coloured population. When they are found flocking to every haunt of profanity and vice; when they are seen arraigned in increasing numbers before our courts, and swelling, year after year in greater proportion, the train of our convicts, it is no time to doubt that some measure for their improvement, is imperiously demanded by every consideration of public order and public morals — More especially, will this be our conviction if we recollect the situation of our Southern brethren. Only a few years can elapse before the blacks in those states will outnumber the whites, and burning, as they do, under a sense of their wrongs, and ready, as most of them will be for any deed of violence, something must be immediately done if we would avert the most dreadful catastrophes. ~~But what can be done? We may talk of abolition; but are we prepared to turn loose upon society more than one million of men who are regardless of the restraints of religion or of laws? We may talk of Education; but when will those beings, whose Ethiopian skins have condemned them to our perpetual scorn, learn to appreciate its blessings? If we would, indeed, imbue them with the virtues of social life; if we would, indeed, enrich them with the treasures of learning, and instruct them in the hope of the gospel; we must take them where this consciousness of inferiority shall be extinguished: We must colonize them. Let our citizens assemble then, *This Evening*. As they love the country of their forefathers—as they prize the religion of their master—as they have hearts that can feel even for a Negro's wants, let them assemble *this evening* and lift their voice in behalf of a wretched and degraded people.~~

Image:
The Schenectady
Cabinet, 20 January,
1824

Animals in the Archives: a New Exhibition at Mabee Farm

by Mary Zawacki Graves

For the last few years, the exhibits we've developed and presented at our sites have been very research-heavy. Tackling themes like the American Revolution, colonial Schenectady, and the early Republic involves a lot of sifting through both primary and secondary sources. For each of these exhibitions, I delved into countless sources and ended up with dozens of pages of research notes. Needless to say, taking a tome of raw research and condensing it into 6-8 short exhibition panels is challenging. Another challenge with these exhibitions was the relative lack of material culture (i.e. artifacts). The SCHS museum collection is over 12,000 objects, but most of them are from the late 19th and 20th centuries. Relatively few objects date from the colonial period, and even less are directly related to the American Revolution. Together, these two challenges meant that our recent exhibitions, though rich in historical detail, do not display much of our vast collection.

I wanted to reverse that for my next exhibition: develop an exhibition that put objects first. The richness in our collection deserves to be highlighted, and, selfishly, I needed a small break from deciphering 18th century handwriting. The answer was the animal kingdom.

SCHS has over 100 objects in its collection that depict animals. Most of these artifacts have never been on display. Why not unite them into our own "menagerie" and explore how the animal kingdom is so entrenched in our material culture. Indeed, animals can represent facets of ourselves, help tell creation stories, and symbolize kinship. They're central to how we relate to, understand, and reflect the world around us.

Animals are also fun. I hesitate to use that word

in a professional museum environment, but it's true. From the very first cave paintings to the present day, animals are an enduring and lively component of art. They engage us by pulling us in, asking us to examine aspects of ourselves and our world.

So, for the first time ever, this year, the "animals in the archives" have been united. Creatures from Schenectady's far and recent past have been brought out from storage to showcase the myriad ways animals inspire and characterize us.

A great thing about this exhibition is that it (mostly) lets the objects speak for themselves. Some historical context is provided, but for the most part visitors are asked to simply view the objects and reflect on them. From faith to fantasy; from childhood to companionship; and especially on what wild animals symbolize as facets of ourselves.

The Menagerie: Animals in the Archives" will be open through next summer at Mabee Farm Historic Site. I hope you'll take the time to come meet our menagerie, and discover the mark animals have left on our region's material culture.

All images of exhibition objects.



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