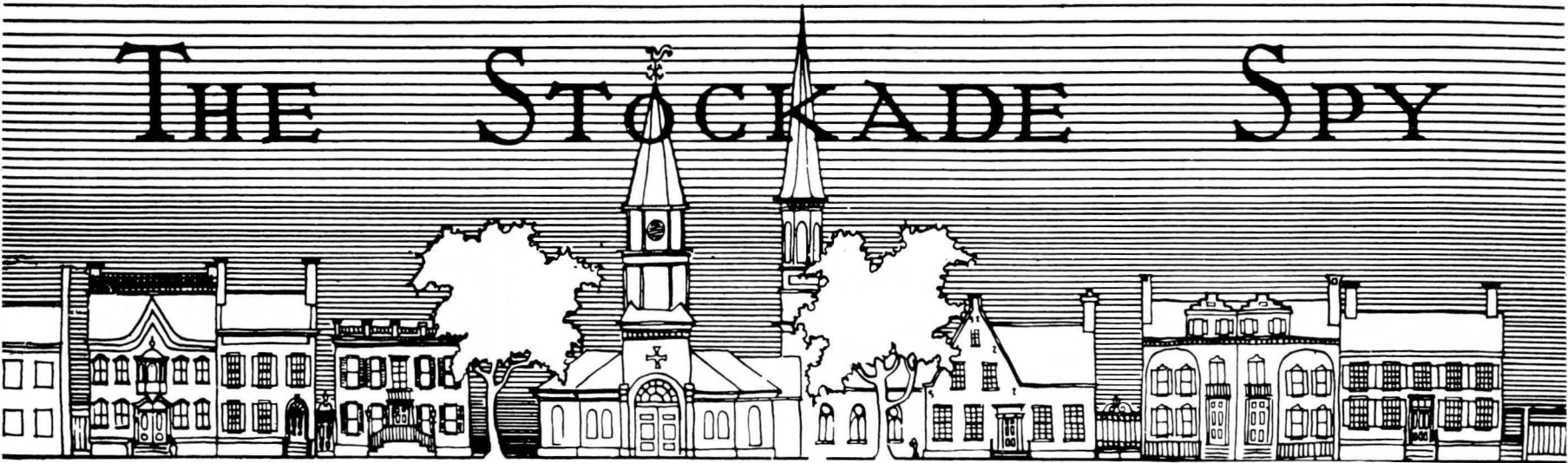


THE STOCKADE SPY



MARCH 1982

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The Schenectady County Historical Society - Part II

Last month was the first in a series of articles on the Schenectady County Historical Society. This month's issue is concerned with the Society's museum, volunteers and public services.

The museum's Curator, Marilyn Frietas, supervises the procurement, restoration and display of the museum's collections. Most of the collections are of local historical items and objects of the Hudson-Mohawk Valley Dutch period.

Once an object is procured by the museum, every attempt is made to restore it to its original condition. The Society is a member of the Federation of Historical Services, which provides guidelines for preservation. Major restoration services are provided by the Conservation of History and Artistic Works; part of the Cooperstown Graduate Studies program. At the Conservation, art history majors and trainees in the restoration process restore objects, documents and paintings. All restoration processes must be reversible so that newer methods can be used in the future. They charge only for their materials (many other restoration organizations charge up to \$25.00 per hour for their services).

It is the Society's principle to display as many objects as possible. Because of limited space, the displays are rotated periodically. Some displays are housed in mahogany and glass cases donated by the Bickleman Jewelry Company. These are circa the late 1800's and are an exhibit in themselves.

Paintings in the museum include those by Samuel Sexton, who lived at Ferry and Union Streets. He painted numerous portraits of leading Schenectady citizens, as well as local street scenes. Paintings by Ezra Ames, an Albany area artist, are also on display.

One room of the museum houses part of the Glen-Sanders collection. This room is set up as a Colonial bedroom. Original pieces from the Glen-Sanders home in Scotia are featured.

A collection of Shaker items is another interesting exhibit. It's value lies in that some of the items were signed by the Eldress of the Shaker community. They date back to 1910. One of the most valuable, is a card diagram showing different types of basket weaves. The card makes it possible to determine genuine Shaker items.

The museum also has a broad collection of
(Continued on page 4)

Bike Path

On Saturday, October 22, 1977, dedication ceremonies were held to celebrate the opening of the 7.5 mile stretch of the Rotterdam section of the bike and hike trail. This event culminated ten years of planning and cooperation among federal, state and local governmental agencies, the General Electric Company and citizens concerned with the development of the Mohawk waterfront for public use. (G.E. generously donated 38 acres of land to Rotterdam for the bike path.)

This section of the trail-way is part of a larger concept. The legislature has endorsed a plan which calls for a Mohawk-Hudson Greenway from south of Albany to Lock 9 in Rotterdam Junction. Ultimately the system will encompass a trail-way with recreation sites from Albany to Buffalo.

The easiest access to the bike-path for the Stockader is from behind the Community College parking area near the athletic field oval. The trail can also be entered at Rice Road, several spots along 5S and Scrafford Lane at the end of Rotterdam Junction.

The benefits of the trail are many. It provides a terrific bike path to the people of the county. This is a completely separate travelway designed for the exclusive use of bikers and hikers. It's a place for safe exercise. The biker, jogger, walker, and even roller-skater can exercise with no fear of being put out of commission by a careless motorist. It's a pleasant place to be alone with your thoughts; to feel closer to nature. It's an escape from the noises and smells of the city.

In addition to these intangibles, the Rotterdam Bike Path makes for an extremely interesting walk. Much of Schenectady's history can be seen in those several miles.

At the start of the trail, while still on the college grounds, the Mohawk River and the Glen Sanders Mansion in Scotia can be seen through the cottonwoods. Towards the end of the summer, the field weeds seem to develop a mind of their own and steadily creep closer and closer to the trail.

About a mile or so along the trail, is the G.E. water pump road. Flapper valves have been placed along the bank to control the flood waters of the Mohawk. The valves close to prevent the river from flooding inland, but open to allow the inland to drain into the river.

Along one of the dips in the trail an attractive stone wall with metal gate can be found. This

tunnel opening goes under the roads from the trail to the G.E. plant. It's not used often, but it's there if needed.

Near the Campbell Road Interchange, the trail goes over the Aquifer. The importance of the Aquifer to the residents of Rotterdam, Schenectady and Niskayuna cannot be overstated. It's a nice feeling to know that the Aquifer is there; still safe, still pure. Along this stretch the water wells and pumping stations that bring the water from the Aquifer to the homes of the county can be seen. This was also the area of the "Great Flats". The early Stockaders had their homes in the fort, but they farmed the rich soil in the fields along the river.

About two miles down the path, just past a small picnic and parking spot, is the entrance to the part of the trail that runs along the old Erie Canal towpath. When plans were first made for the creation of the trail, the General Electric Company owned the former canal land. During that time, the canal and towpath were put to some interesting uses. Rails were laid along the towpath. G.E. used this as a test ground for its locomotives. When the time came to compact the ground here for the trail's black top surface, no compacting was necessary. Years of locomotive traffic had done the job.

G.E. also had a pumping station along the river that was used to pump water from the river to the canal bed. This water flowed through the canal and entered the works and was used to cool the steam generators. So, although this part of the canal was abandoned about 1915, it continued to serve the community for many more years.

The New York State Barge Canal System was completed in 1918. The sometimes turbulent Mohawk River was tamed by dams and locks. Lock 8 is the next sight to see along the river. Now is your chance to take a breather and watch the boats lock through the Barge Canal. It's also a good place to consider returning home or continuing along the way. You've now come about three miles.

The old G.E. pump house mentioned earlier has been converted to an overlook of the river. The platform that supported the building has been fenced and benches have been placed there. It looks down on the river traffic and to the west to Lock 8 of the Barge Canal.

The next couple of thousand feet of the trail cost more money and required more ingenuity than the rest of the trail combined. This is where an interchange for I-890 was constructed that
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THE STOCKADE SPY

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Call for Picnic Volunteers

It's not too early to begin thinking about the annual Memorial Day picnic. This year it will be held on Saturday, May 29th.

Volunteers are needed to work at the picnic and to help plan and organize. Richard Brown is again the picnic chairman. He would like to thank all those who helped with the preparations last year and thank in advance those who will volunteer this year. There are plenty of jobs available—cooking, serving, setting up and publicity.

Richard Brown can be contacted at home 370-5511.

Four Stockaders Cast in Empire State Youth Theater's "Fiddler on the Roof"

Four Stockade residents have been cast in the Empire State Youth Theater's production of *Fiddler on the Roof*.

Arnie DeMarco of 16 Washington Avenue, has been cast as the mysterious Fiddler; Edward Bee of 11 N. Church Street, will play Sasha; John Palasz, of 105 Front Street, has been double cast as a Jewish Bottle Dancer and a Russian dancer; William Gurr also of 105 Front Street, will be a Russian dancer.

The play has a cast of 45 and will be performed March 27-April 3 at the Egg in Albany. The show will also be at Proctor's in Schenectady April 6 and 7.

Schenectady Civic Playhouse

The Schenectady Civic Playhouse was organized by a group from Union College in 1929. Fifty three years later, the Playhouse stands as a major entertainment resource in the community.

A volunteer group of 160 members stage five productions a year in a renovated Messianic temple on 12 S. Church Street.

Currently, William Saroyan's American classic, *The Time of Your Life*, is being performed. It will run through March 27.

Stockade resident, Joseph Fava is the President of the Playhouse. He is serving a two

The next Stockade Association meeting will be held at the Schenectady Historical Society on Washington Avenue, Monday, March 29 at 8:00 P.M.

year term. According to Fava, theater has taken a new shape in the Capital District during the past 5 years. "More and more community theater groups are organizing themselves. This increased community participation is working towards the overall betterment of theater in the Capital District."

Ticket information may be obtained by calling 382-9051.

Hats Off, To the Beaver

Beaver colonies usually consist of family units. The units are comprised of the adult pair, the year's litter and the previous year's litter. When the young beavers reach their second year, they are cast out of their home lodges to seek their fortunes elsewhere.

The pioneering young beavers usually locate and dam small streams. Sites with hardwood make excellent locations as these woods provide both building material and food. The dams are packed down with mud, gravel and stones. Prehensile front paws and flat tails are well suited for the dam construction.

The lodges are built of mostly sticks and mud. Living compartments and food storage rooms are built within the lodges.

Instinct tells the beavers they are safe and snug in these fortresses.

The beaver once thrived in great numbers throughout most of North America and parts of Europe and Asia. However, pressures were placed on beaver populations by expanding European settlements and a European passion for stylish beaver hats.

The well dressed lords and ladies of the 1600's topped off their wardrobes with felt hats made of beaver hair mixed with other fibers. The soft inner hair of the beaver pelt was ideal for the felt, which in turn was shaped into the hat styles of the day. The "Beaver" was a comfortable, warm, dry hat that retained its shape during many years of use.

It was a dignified hat; Quakers thought so much of them that they wouldn't take them off to anyone. Soldiers went to war wearing iron replicas of the "Beaver". The hats could be dyed a variety of colors and decorated according to taste, social rank or religious affiliation.

By the time every European and his brother has a "Beaver", not a beaver had a brother. The beaver populations in Europe became nearly extinct, shifting huge demands towards the beaver populations in North America.

Before the European demand, the beaver held no particular significance to the Indian of North America. The beaver is edible, but to many had to be caught to feed a large tribe. It was more efficient to go after deer, moose or elk. Several beaver skins could be sewn together to make a cozy winter robe; although, the Wood Bisons were still around and could better fit the bill. All in all, the beaver was nice but not in great demand.

When the Indian culture collided with the European culture, the Indians were exposed to and intrigued by the European's materials, tools, devices and other goodies. When it was learned that the white man would exchange these marvels of the modern world for beaver skins, the Indians nourished a new interest for beaver hunting.

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In the Stockade

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Continued from page 2)
 alleys and to satisfy their own desires for the products from Europe, the Iroquois first hunted the beaver in their own territory. Things went fine until the supply of local beavers was either killed off or moved to more inaccessible places. By then, the Iroquois were addicted to one and hooked on most of the Dutch and English trade goods. So what were they to do? One answer was to go farther and farther afield from the council fires in search of the newly valued beaver.

Early in the Fall, parties of Iroquois would range as far as 1,000 miles in search of the beaver. After finding a promising beaver site, camp would be set up and the round-up would begin. Even though a beaver weighs about 70 pounds and has teeth strong enough to bite through trees they were easy prey because of their mellow temperament.

The beavers' dams were broken, the water levels in the stream pools would lower, the lodges were broken into and the beavers would be clubbed as they were trapped in their lodges or as they fled. So much for beaver instinct and safe and snug fortresses.

After skinning, the beaver pelts were stretched on circular frames and stacked to await the long trek home. A return trip of up to 1,000 miles through ice-bound streams and snow up to the breechcloths seemed a difficult path to tread. When the ice melted, the Iroquois would begin the 40 mile plus trip to Albany or later to Schenectady to trade with the Dutchmen. It was a tough way for someone to enjoy the finer things in life.

Larry Naylor

Continued from page 1)

obliterated part of Rt. 5S and pushed the embankment of the interchange to the edge of the river. The bike trail had to be cut into the embankment and, somehow made to stay there. A two-thousand year old method developed by those master road builders, the Romans, was employed. This part of the trail is built on abutments—wire mesh cages, filled with rocks and fastened to the hillside.

There are still some bugs to be worked out. Whatever the reasons, that section of the trail had problems and had to be temporarily closed during the past summer.

Wherever the Erie Canal crossed streams, aqueducts had to be built. Such an aqueduct and towpath bridge was constructed over the Plotterkill. The aqueduct, the canal bed part that crossed the stream, came down when construction work was done on 5S in 1939, but the towpath bridge still stands. The bridge is triple arched and made of stone beautiful in its simplicity. Nearby, is another picnic area. The Plotterkill Bridge is just short of five miles out.

After crossing Rt. 5S, the trail leaves the river and the road. There are no more buildings and the sounds of traffic fade. From here to the end of the trail, it's just the path, the old canal and your imagination.

The trail abounds with wildflowers and small animal life. It's everywhere, if you take your time and listen and look. It contains along its path much of our local history. Isn't it nice that so many people worked together to give the bike trail to us. From all of us, to all of them, Thank you".

Larry Naylor

DINING IN THE STOCKADE

One advantage of Stockade living is our option to walk to numerous good restaurants. This article highlights some of these community assets.

The Stockade 104 State Street

Since the Stockade is near the bus terminal, it's probably the first door opened by many visitors to Schenectady—which is good for our city's image, due to the friendly atmosphere of this restaurant, plus the good food and service offered seven days a week.

Owners Jim and Anne DeCrosta, with Jim's son Richard as chef, his wife Patty as a waitress, son Gerard just learning the business, along with other long-term people, all enjoy doing whatever's needed to please a guest. According to Anne, the cuisine is basically Italian, with some American dishes. Richard can be adventurous with innovative daily specials, fresh fish dishes on weekends, and other items selected to help broaden the Italian fare. An example of his efforts: on a recent Saturday, scallops were featured—fried, broiled or baked.

The Stockade is a home for local pro football fans, with men's and women's clubs, and frequent trips to New England Patriot games.

Anne DeCrosta says that their ability to stay in business for 17 years is in large part the result of a menu catering to all tastes, at fair prices.

John Ronayne

Van Dyck Restaurant 237 Union Street

In April, the Van Dyck will mark its 35th year, making it the oldest restaurant in the Stockade. Owner Marvin Friedman cites many reasons for this unusual longevity.

Among them: a menu, service and atmosphere which compare favorably to fine restaurants in any metropolis; Sunday brunch, by now a community institution; senior citizen specials, with full-course dinners at \$6.50; an early bird special dinner; name entertainers, and several rooms available for business and civic groups, weddings and large parties, all with the Van Dyck service.

Most of Marvin's 50-person staff are long term. In 35 years, he's had only three or four chefs. One waitress (Evelyn) has been on the staff for 34 years. "Our people are part of a family", says Marvin, who is proud that employees bring personal problems to him.

The Van Dyck cuisine is basically American, with German accents. Pot roast, the first dish offered, is still a staple. Specials include the exotic, such as Seafood Jamaïque.

Marvin exerts effort and ingenuity to keep prices fair. "I serve full-course dinners for what some others charge for their entrees." And he puts the same type of effort into community service, including being President of the Schenectady Museum, plus membership on the boards of the Schenectady Symphony and Proctor's.

John H. Ronayne

(Continued on page 4)

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(Continued from page 1)

guns and antiques dating from the Revolutionary War through World War II.

Several pieces from the museum are currently part of a folk art exhibit, organized by the Institute for North Country Folk Art. A painting of the Veeder homestead painted by Ferguson Veeder at age 15 is in the exhibit along with a six foot tall, iron and tin, Sunburst weathervane.

The Historical Society would not be able to work as smoothly as it does without its many volunteers. There are sixteen people currently volunteering at the Society. Some of these people are students, who come from SUNYA, Skidmore, and St. Rose. They receive college credit for their work and use primary reference materials for special assignments.

Mrs. Francis Miller is a professional working exclusively with the Steinmetz collection. Mrs. Marion Ham, a librarian, has catalogued the entire library contents.

Volunteers also assist with displays and organizing the storage of collections. They guide tours, work in the gift shop and do housekeeping.

Another volunteer, Mrs. Pat Binzer, is developing an educational program for 4th-graders in the area. This "Local History" program started March 10th and includes information about county history and tours of the Historical Society.

Volunteers also take part in public speaking and lecture engagements that provide a large part of the Society's public outreach. Speakers, filmstrips, and slideshows are available to groups on a donation basis. Topics include genealogy, county history, home decorative art, railroads, and even the history of Westinghouse in Schenectady.

The public is invited to visit the Historical Society and observe firsthand all it has to offer. Donations of local artifacts, as well as historical documents and local memorabilia are always needed. New volunteers are always welcome.

Membership in the Society is another way to support its work.

Diane S. Zuraw

(Continued from page 3)

Saint Martin's Cafe One Mill Lane

One of the newest restaurants in the Stockade, Saint Martin's Cafe, claims to be the coziest and it is.

Nestled on the ground floor of a 135 year old building on Mill Lane, Saint Martin's Cafe provides a comfortable escape from the rigors of the day.

Len and Jeannette St. Martin own the restaurant and have been operating it for seven weeks. Len commented, while preparing a tray of imported cheeses for the evening's happy hour, that there will be a "get acquainted" open house for Stockade residents Wednesday, March 31 from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. at which, complimentary wines and cheeses will be served. "This restaurant is for the people of the Stockade. We're having the open house because we want to get to know our neighbors. We're not the type of place where hoards of people come in, quickly eat and leave. Saint Martin's Cafe is here to offer a relaxed atmosphere where quality food and drinks are served."

The Saint Martin's Cafe menu consists of a wide variety of soups, sandwiches and special platters. One sandwich is even named "The Stockade".

The St. Martin's have future plans to build an outdoor patio where lunches and dinners can be served during the summer and to offer a horse and carriage shuttle to and from Proctor's before and after the shows.

Saint Martin's Cafe's hours are Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday 11:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. and Thursday, Friday and Saturday 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 a.m.

The Oxbow Inn 10 State Street

This article was taken in part from a story written by Robie Booth in the March 9, 1982 issue of Metroland Magazine.

The Oxbow is the result of the commitment of Ted Barnes, the restaurant's sole owner, who works more than 100 hours during his seven-day week.

Barnes was in the right place when the opportunity and his ambition meshed. "This is something I had always wanted to do." He was with Boulton Realty when it occupied the second floor of the present building. "Here it was, and I felt ten years in the real estate business was enough. I wanted a late-hours restaurant. While I was growing up there was always one restaurant, Cornell's on Van Vranken Avenue, open till 1 a.m. and that impressed me."

Today, Cornell's has some strong competition. The Oxbow is a full service restaurant open from 4:30 p.m. till 1 a.m. They offer two menus giving a choice of more than 90 items.

The Oxbow is also one of the first restaurants in Schenectady to serve Newman's Pale Ale, a new ale brewed only in Albany. It will be served at 52 degrees with no filterization or pasteurization.

The Wittenberg Shop 215 State Street

During the week The Wittenberg Shop, a new cafe and jazz club, is a quiet place for intimate lunch and dinner. The Shop comes alive on weekend nights with area jazz musicians. It opened last March and is owned and run by George Heigle.

The building itself was built circa 1860, and was originally the site of Schenectady's first pharmacy. Since then, it's been an import business, a jewelers and an antique business. The shop was purchased by Mr. Heigle in 1979. He renovated for 8 months, leaving mirrored walls for a back bar and obtaining an antique bartop for a very pleasant look.

The Wittenberg is open daily from 11:30 for brunch, lunch and a cafe-style dinner. Hours are Monday through Wednesday till midnight, Thursday through Saturday till 3:00 am, and Sunday till 4:00 pm. The menu features German sandwiches including the beleibtesbrot, a stacked sandwich of liverwurst, salami, roast beef, and swiss cheese. Quiches, salads, and soups are also on the menu. With a reservation, the Wittenberg can accommodate luncheons up to 20 people.

Jazz is featured every Friday and Saturday night and there is no cover charge or minimum.

Diane S. Zuraw



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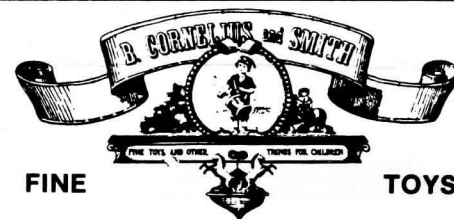
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