

# THE STOCKADE SPY

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The Mabee Farm



## STOCKADE SPY

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## Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor,

Recent events in the Stockade Historic District have reminded me of Oliver Goldsmith's bicentennial and of his poem, "The Deserted Village," from which the six lines below become somewhat modernized:

"How fares the Zone, to other ills aprey,  
Where rules accumulate and sites decay?  
Commissioners are asked, and may be prone  
To micromanage what they cannot own,  
But a home-owner base, that wrought with pride,  
When once dispersed, is nowhere resupplied."

Notes:

For "other ills": see Mrs. Sauer's letter in the September Spy. For "sites": see 254 Union Street or 108 Front Street for examples. "Micromanage": you must now apply for permission to cut down a tree in your own backyard. "Dispersed": there are 18 "For Sale" signs within a block of my home now.

John Bradshaw

Dear Editor,

A large "Bravo" should be given to Barbara Penetta for her letter to you in the September '94 issue of The Stockade Spy. Barbara has finally said what many of us have felt for a long time. We need to reclaim our Historic neighborhood.

All of us who live here, whether we be homeowners or renters, are here because we want to live in one of the most unique neighborhoods in the Capital District.. We all have an obligation to this neighborhood in maintaining its integrity for the future as others have done for us. I have lived in the Stockade for over thirteen years, first as a renter and now as a homeowner. Renters generally live in the Stockade for short periods of time, yet they too have an obligation to the Stockade, to help maintain their living space, which is especially important if their landlords are absentee. This however does not allow them to change the appearance of the properties without the Historic District Commission permission's., Which brings up another question: Where is the policing of our neighborhood by the Historic District officers?

Renters also need to be considerate of other homeowners property. Parking on the sidewalk (you know who you all are ) is not only against the law and a public safety hazard, but a true detriment to the look of the Stockade. This is not to mention the harm it does to the Stockade's infrastructure. Many homeowners have experienced water main breaks because of the lack of curbs (that's another story) in front of their properties. Also, cars and trucks are pulling up off the road onto the side walk area, and using these areas as their own personal driveways.

## Walkabout Success

A continuing success best describes the 35th Annual Walkabout. Approximately 600 tickets were sold, down from last year but bringing in enough funds to help us through the year. A lot of positive energy exists on this special day in our neighborhood. We hope it shows those who spend too much time focusing on negative trends that there is something positive to be a part of. A special thanks to all the volunteers, notably the home owners, doscents, and ticket sellers who should all be proud of their efforts. Unlike Woodstock, it doesn't rain on our parade.

Homes and volunteers are now being solicited for 1995, with a tentative tour date of either the 23rd or 30th of September. Write or visit Anne and Joe Bernat at 216 1/2 Union Street.

The Walkabout Committee

## Au Revoir

Starting in the late forties, with gracious hospitality, stellar dining and an intimate and respectful jazz club favored by world class artists, the Van Dyke bestowed a legacy of unmatched quality to Schenectady for many years.

The Grande Dame of Union Street is no longer with us except in an aura of recollection. After an invitation-only party for loyal patrons and staff the "Open" sign was removed from the sidewalk canopy and windows were darkened.

The soft glow of lamps through panes of glass always suggested warmth and camaraderie during winter storms as the after-work-for-a-drink crowd drifted in like the snow itself. It was evocative of a bygone elegance when those same statuesque bronze lamps and crystal chandeliers lit rooms where the presentation of a martini, salt roll or jazz was as critically essential as wearing a jacket and tie.

As a standard of excellence and intrinsic component of Union Street, the Van Dyke was sadly caught in the cross current of changing times. With inherent dignity, it closed its doors.

Diane Buckley

Homeowners as well as renters have to become more conscious of when garbage is picked up and what hours it should be put out. Seeing garbage on the street 24 hours prior to pick up is really another ugly reminder which shows that people are forgetting this is a Historic District. Also the garbage picking that takes place after many of us are asleep is atrocious. I am not talking about homeless people either. If you think your 5 cent bottle or can is going to someone who needs it, you're wrong ! Save them and bring them to Schenectady High School which is having a returnable drive right now.

Whether it be crime, the enactment of multi-social service agencies and programs, the traffic, lack of involvement by homeowners and renters, or the absentee landlords not keeping their properties presentable, I am concerned about the city father's attention to this fragile part of Schenectady. I am concerned about the future of our neighborhood. It is time for the Stockade Association and its elected Board to keep their main focus of their agent, to the preservation of this Historic District at all costs and to address all of the above mentioned concerns before it is too late.

Marie C. Eoff



## Two Union Street

### An Opportunity and a Challenge

On August twelfth the Boy Scouts Council of Schenectady held a public auction of its building at Two Union Street. No bidder came forward, hence, the auction ended without a sale.

Immediately after the auction, two residents, representing more than one hundred and thirty neighbors with a signed petition, met with the Boy Scouts leadership to discuss the residents concerns. The Boy Scouts leadership, after hearing some of the issues, were extremely understanding and most willing to work with us.

The main concern is the possibility of Two Union Street eventually turning into a group home for perhaps drug rehab or felons, etc. This is certainly alarming and should be a concern to all in the Stockade, or any neighborhood for that matter.

Do not misunderstand! The group home concept is generally a good one, however, in light of the overall situation in the Stockade, consider facts:

1) The City of Schenectady currently has at least fifty five group homes, far exceeding the number per capita versus the rest of Schenectady County (Mayor Jennings of Albany recently stated that his city has sixty nine percent of the group homes but represents only thirty four percent of the County population. "It's time for suburbs to do their share.") Schenectady probably has an even greater share of the county group homes and this number will almost certainly increase!

2) Within one and one half blocks of Two Union Street there are currently two hundred and seventy single room occupancies, (SRO). . . and a higher number is a definite possibility!

3) Effective January 1, 1995 the O. D. Heck facility will be closing. Where will these people go? Will it be Schenectady? Will it be the Stockade that already has a "saturation"?

4) With almost all group homes, the town or city or county loses tax revenues. With fifty five group homes in Schenectady, it is estimated that the city loses half million dollars in tax revenues each year! With what is happening in our city, can we afford this kind of loss? It should be noted that the suburbs benefit tremendously when the group homes are in the city. The suburbs do not experience any of the tax revenue loss and do not risk any erosion of property values since a group home is in the city and "NOT IN MY BACKYARD".

5) On May 23, 1994 the Stockade Association passed a resolution "to oppose expansion of SRO's or subsidized housing facilities". While the Schenectady 2000 project is designed to adopt a plan "to preserve and enhance the essential qualities of the area which the residents want to maintain." In addition, Section 264-11B-2 zoning of the Stockade Historic Residential District states "the purpose is intended to promote, maintain and enhance the historic Stockade neighborhood where specialized standards and requirements are necessary to protect the areas distinctive quality and the architectural significance of the structures therein."

We all, of course have an obligation to society; to provide an opportunity for housing the unfortunate, to provide social services to many segments of our society but at the same time our city, our neighborhood has done more than our share. Let us have some balance in the system.

This brings us back now to the dilemma of Two Union Street. The Boy Scouts have an empty building. An empty building is no good for anyone and should be sold. "But to whom? And for what purpose?"

We, the residents of The Stockade, now have both an opportunity and a challenge. Can we help them to direct a sale? Can we help ourselves to direct the future of this building in the spirit of Schenectady 2000 project and the great history of the Stockade? On both questions, I believe we can!

George Marshall



## Tidings

Fall is in the air aplenty. Time to batten down the hatches, stoke the fires and bake, bake, bake...

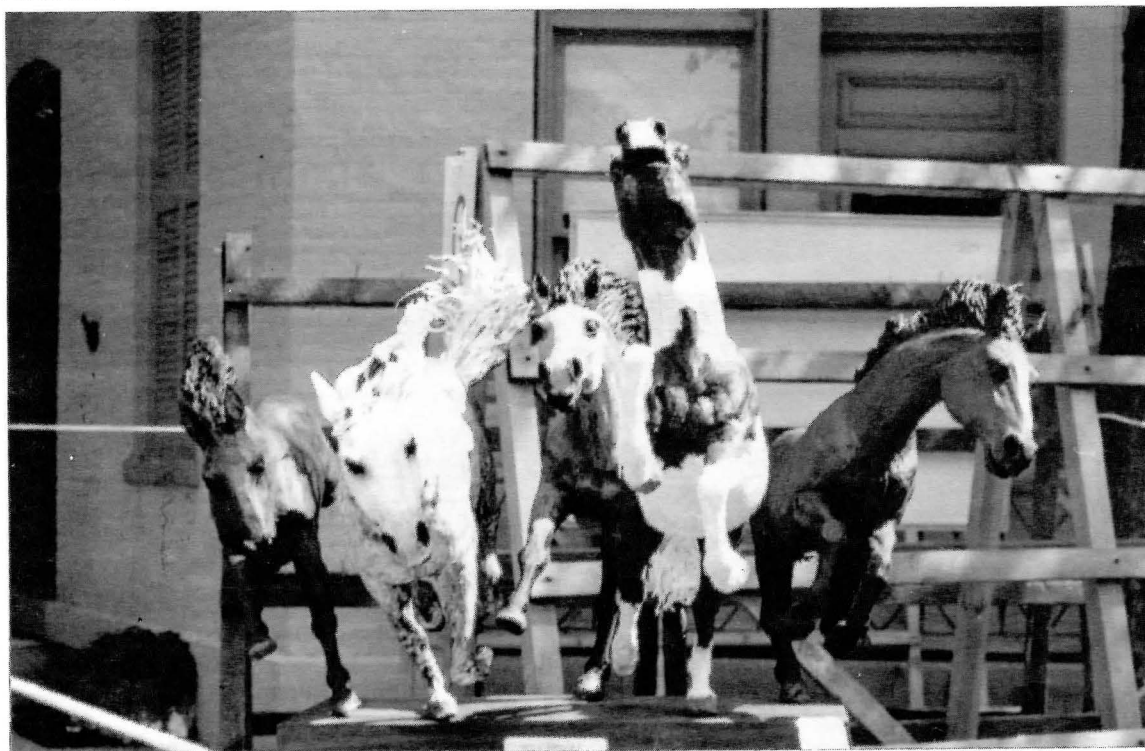
A memorial tribute was held at First Reformed Church last month for Phyllis Marmein who passed away in June. Miss Marmein was a longtime Stockade resident, ballet teacher and choreographer. Performances were presented by Ann Marie Barker, violinist with the Albany Symphony Orchestra and the St. Cecilia Orchestra, soprano Laura Dike, a former Schenectadian, and Judy Fitzner Atkinson, an area composer and dance company accompanist. All were former students of Miss Marmein. Also performing were Dr. David Swartz, a pianist who is a resident physician at Albany Medical Center and area actor Bill Hickman. Quite a tribute; Phyllis would have been proud.

Recovering wonderfully at home is George Marshall of Washington Ave. George had surgery in August. He and his wife, Pat will be hosting a fund raiser for the 34 people who are visiting Schenectady from the city of Nijkerk in the Netherlands. Nijkerk is Schenectady's sister city. Sure hope George has recovered by then! And speaking of Pat, did you know that Mrs. Marshall was the head of Proctor's Gala which was held on October 1st with Proctor's opening performance by Bernadette Peters?

Congratulations to Jim and Betty Lane of Front Street who celebrated the wedding of their daughter, Erin, on August 6th at the First Reformed Church. Erin married Dr. Donald Marozas. A rehearsal dinner and reception were held at the Glen Sanders Mansion. The bride is a first grade teacher at Livonia Primary School in Livonia, NY. Don is a professor of Education and assistant director of the School of Education at SUNY Geneseo. The couple have built a house in Livonia where they will live with their golden retriever, Meshka.

On Washington Ave, Marilyn and Jim Fisher hosted a combination Stockade Volleyball end of season party/birthday party. The birthday celebration was for Joe Bernat of Union St., indispensable V.B. player and vice president of the Stockade Association. Happy 40th Mr. Vice President!

As you stroll in the crisp autumn air you will notice many improvements happening around the Stockade. Homeowners giving their houses a boost, new sidewalks, driveways repaved - - just a few of the many changes that keep our neighborhood alive! Until next month . . .



Art Show exhibit - Jim Gartin's "Wild Horses"

## The Mabee Farm - Planning Its Fourth Century SYMPOSIUM - OCTOBER 29, 1994

As the picture on the cover of the Spy shows our area is blessed with a rare and distinguished treasure. Just seven miles west of the Stockade on Route 5S lies the Mabee Farm, the oldest home in the Mohawk River Valley. It is clearly a nationally significant example of an early Dutch farmhouse. The property, purchased by Jan Pieterse Mabee on January 20, 1706 from Daniel Janse Van Antwerpen, has been in the protective hands of the Mabee family until last year when it was donated to The Schenectady County Historical Society by his descendant, George Franchere.

Along with the gift of the property itself, money to maintain the property for a three year period was also donated. During this time the Mabee committee, co-chaired by Cris Harter and Dr. Derek Sayers, is responsible for establishing a plan for restoration and use of the property. As with any historic property, the first step was to produce an Historic Structure Report. Howard Bliss headed this up and a considerable piece of work it has been to compile, evaluate and write this document. We are nearing publication and will use it as a base for restoration and funding.

There are three structures remaining on the farm. Early photographs show that many other buildings existed at one time. Most of these were destroyed by a fire in 1883 and there was another fire in 1906. The house is the most dominant structure remaining with its striking, steeply pitched roof. There are two main rooms on the first floor. Each originally had a freestanding Dutch fireplace on each end wall. Pieces of the ceiling molding of one of these fireplaces remain for restoration. Curiously, the basement foundation is six feet short of the west wall of the house which lends credence to the legend of a tunnel on the property. The second floor, which originally would have been a storage and sleeping loft has been divided into four rooms which are accessed by a steep staircase complete with its original hatchway in the upstairs floor.

The building to the right of the house is called the Inn. It is one and one half stories high with a full basement. Each floor is one room and the fireplace with Victorian decoration still exists on the main floor. It is of eighteenth century construction and was used to accommodate the huge increase in demand for overnight accommodations during and after the building of the Erie Canal which passed nearby. It is now connected to the house by a small storage area and the glassed in porch.

The other building you see is commonly referred to as the slave quarters. Examination of this brick building shows that it is much more than a simple outbuilding. It appears to be of eighteenth century construction with exceptional interior ornamentation and architectural appeal.

Our examination of the buildings has raised many questions which remain to be answered. Was the house built in the late 1600's or the early 1700's? Was it built in one or two stages? Was the brick building constructed first or the house? Why is the basement six feet short of the foundation wall? Where was the Dutch bed located? These are only some of the questions that continued research will hopefully answer. Luckily, the Mabee family kept many family records which have also been donated with the property. Some need to be interpreted from early Dutch and all have to be scrutinized for clues to the past.

Although the property remained in the hands of the Mabee family until 1993, it was turned over to tenant farmers in 1905. At that time household belongings were placed in storage in the Inn and the brick building. The committee has been working this summer to accession the artifacts and place them in storage.

There are many other jobs that need to be done in a variety of areas such as landscaping, fundraising, publicity, rehabilitation and maintenance. If you are interested in becoming involved please call Kathy Johnson at 377-3189. A project of this magnitude needs volunteers in great numbers with all levels of experience and expertise. Please join us in this interesting and exciting historical challenge!

There will be a symposium on Saturday October 29, 1994 which will discuss the family history, architectural significance, and the importance of the farms history in the Mohawk Valley. Discussion of the ultimate use of the property will also be on the agenda along with a tour of the property. If you are interested in attending please call the Historical Society for a reservation (374-0263). (Individual tours are available by appointment only as a caretaker lives on the premises.) We hope to see you there!

*The Mabee Farm Committee*



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## TOM JARDAS ANTIQUES

*I'm looking for objects, books, posters, photos, pamphlets, autographs - anything related to the following subjects:*

AMERICAN WEST - PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGNS  
WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE - SOCIALIST PARTY  
RELIGIOUS SECTS - SLAVERY - TEMPERANCE  
LABOR MOVEMENT - GUNS - MEDICAL - MAGIC  
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374-4931

## Excerpts from the Stockade Association General Meeting Minutes - 9/20/94

Guest speakers were Schenectady County legislators, Joseph Pangione and Tina Panetta-Zaza, who spoke and then answered questions from the floor. David Tessitore could not attend.

Points made in response to questions:

**Q:** It has been said that Schenectady is the only county, among the surrounding counties that does not have a residency requirement for obtaining social services. Is this a fact?

**A:** The Commissioner of Social Services would know. \*

**Q:** When/where does the County Legislature meet?

**A:** County legislature meets the first Monday and second Tuesday of the month at 7 p.m., in the County Office Building, 620 State Street, sixth floor chambers. Meetings are open to the public.

**Q:** What does the County legislature have an interest in or control of that affects the economic development within the inner city?

**A:** The County Legislature works through George Robertson, President of Schenectady Economic Development Corporation, who acts on behalf of the County, and works with City Development Director, Kay Ackerman, on economic development with the City.

**Q:** How does the County budget process work?

**A:** Budget review begins October 3. Fiscal year begins January 1.

**Q:** What is the County doing to foster economic growth within the City?

**A:** The County and City, working together, obtained a NYS grant providing funding to approved Economic Development Zones within the city for zonewide planning, startup and support of new businesses.

**Q:** Who can the City work with to develop a long range plan for the economic growth of the City?

**A:** George Robertson is president of Schenectady County Economic Development Corp; David Atkins is County Planner.

**Q:** Where are County Statistics kept? Is this public information?

**A:** In the County Planning Office. Yes. Some successful county programs were reviewed: recycling program, library, new County Health Department. County goals: consolidation of services.

*\*Editor's note: The guest speakers promised to find out and inform the Association.*

## Call for Submissions

As always we are happy to receive your comments, news, literary works, etc. Without them the **Spy** is dead!. Just a few reminders, along with my thanks.

All contributions must be received by **Friday, October 14** for publication in the **November 1994** issue. Please be sure they are typed, double spaced, signed with the **writer's name, address, and phone included**. You may mail materials to **Riverside Condos, 137 Front Street, #105**, clearly marked for the **Spy** editor, or leave them in the **SPY** basket in the open foyer in back of the building. Thank you for your cooperation. In case of undue hardship in getting information typed, we will consider clearly written letters (not articles). If you've entered the computer age, we would appreciate finding your submission on an **MS-DOS** disk in **WordPerfect** or **ASCII** format, so we don't have to typeset. Disks and any original material will be **returned upon request**; otherwise no responsibility for them is taken by the **Spy** staff.

## A Place to Call Home

About 25 years ago, I made my first trip to Schenectady. I was a senior in high school dating a freshman in college - - - a very big deal. He invited me home to meet his family just before the holidays. I remember riding the bus up from New Jersey, nervously anticipating meeting his family.

Schenectady was decked out in its Christmas finery - all lights and color and greenery. The streets were busy and people were everywhere. My friend took me on a Cook's tour of the city and we even did a little Christmas shopping downtown. I'm quite sure my father still has the tie I bought for him from the Squire Shop.

Most of all that weekend, I remember my first visit to the Stockade. Coming from an area of the country in which real estate value has more sway than historical significance, I marveled at all the well-preserved houses. Back home, an area rich in Revolutionary War history, houses from that era were routinely razed to make way for stony condominiums. Here, I felt the living presence of history.

The Stockade was no Williamsburg recreation or ersatz Sturbridge Village. Here, real people lived in the same houses as possibly their ancestors who founded the district - 300 years of continual occupation and upkeep. I envied these people who were connected to history.

I never anticipated coming back to Schenectady. But time and its course has a way of altering events and charting ironic routes in life.

I moved to West Glenville a little more than 13 years ago. I loved country living and couldn't imagine what circumstances could ever force me to live in the city again. But I always said, if I ever had to live in the city, the Stockade would be the only place I would even consider.

When I first saw my current apartment on Front Street, it truly "spoke" to me. The wide plank floors, high tinned ceilings, pocket doors, and the majestic 200-year-old poplar tree in the backyard. If only that tree could talk, telling the story of its long life and what it had witnessed over the centuries.

Comparatively, I feel safer here on the streets. The people seem friendlier. I never tire of walking around, reading the historical plaques and noting the clever creative touches in the architecture, such as the bas-relief wrought iron sculpture incorporated in a stair rail. The district is still as alive and fresh and interesting as it was when I first saw it more than 25 years ago. There is a special ambience here unlike any other part of the city.

I've never been a joiner but I sent my membership into the Stockade Association within a month after settling in. I'm looking forward to being an active participant in the community and to sharing in the spirit and pride that abounds here.

Monica Finch

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## October Waste Collection Dates

October 4	Tuesday
October 12	Wednesday
October 19	Wednesday
October 26	Wednesday
November 2	Wednesday

\*Waste Collection Pickup Starts at 6:30 a.m.

\*Don't put waste on the curb before 7:00 p.m. the night before.

### Remember to recycle:

Green, clear and brown bottles and jars; plastic bottles with necks and metal cans, should be placed into a recycling container marked "**Container Product**."\* Separate magazines, newspaper, brown paper (grocery bags), and corrugated cardboard and place into a recycling container marked "**Paper Product**."\*

\*Note: As of July 15, 1994, clean Drink Boxes & Juice/Milk Cartons are now recyclable, just add them to the bin marked "Container Product".

Junk Mail, Catalogs and Telephone Books are now recyclable, just place in paper bag and add them to the bin marked for "Paper Product".

For answers to recycling questions call the **Recycling Hotline 382-5060**.

### Recycling Centers

Weaver Street Transfer Station - Schenectady

Hours: 9 a.m. - 2 p.m. Saturdays

Accepts: Tin cans, plastic containers, glass bottles

Sofco Inc. - 702 Corporation Park, Scotia

Hours: 7:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. weekdays

Accepts: magazines, telephone books, circulars & third class mail

### And the Winners Are . . .

The winners of The 43rd Annual Stockade Art Show awards were:

1st place: Phyllis Kulmatiske, "Untitled"  
2nd place: Doris Roberts, "Filling Vase"  
3rd place: Brande Arno, "The Hiding Place"

Honorable mention honors went to:

Elizabeth Apgar-Smith, "Secrets"  
Peggy Reid, Self Portrait With Cactus  
Jim Gartin, "Wild Horses"  
Elaine Koehler, "Adirondack Stream"  
Deborah Geurtze, "The Bearers"  
Crystal Daigle, "Anniversary Still Life"

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