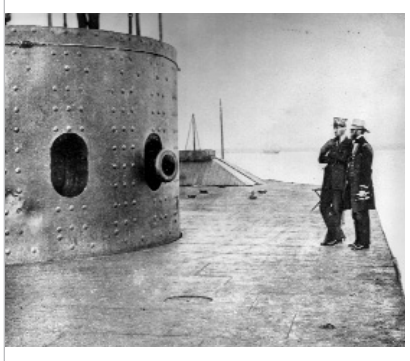
VOLUME I, ISSUE I
FALL 2005

A QUARTERLY REVIEW OF *Schenectady's History*

SKENECTADA

Got History? We Do!

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:



"THOSE WHO DON'T KNOW HISTORY ARE DESTINED TO REPEAT IT."

—EDMUND BURKE (1729-1797)

1661: Arent Van Curler applies for permission to purchase the necessary land from the Indians, and also appeals for a patent from the government, making Schenectady the westernmost settlement of New Netherland; **1690:** On the night of Feb. 8, the settlement of Schenectady was attacked by a force of French and Indians from the north. The people were slaughtered and the village burned. Sixty residents were killed and 27 made prisoners; **1792:** Western Inland Lock Navigation Company formed by General Philip Schuyler, first inland canal system; **1795:** Union College founded based on Dutch principles of Tolerance, first nondenominational college in America; **1798:** Schenectady becomes a chartered city; **1809:** Schenectady County formed March 7; **1810:** John Howard Payne, author of "Home, Sweet Home," graduates from Union College; **1825:** Erie Canal opens in Schenectady; **1826:** Mohawk & Hudson Railroad chartered, first passenger train in America; **1831:** Aug. 3, "DeWitt Clinton," the first steam locomotive, makes the initial trip over the first passenger line in the U.S. from Crane Street Hill (then known as Prospect Hill), Schenectady, to Lydius Street, Albany. The distance of twelve and a half miles was made in one hour and 45 minutes; **1851:** John Ellis and Norris Brothers begin the manufacture of locomotives in Schenectady (Schenectady Locomotive Works); **1862**: Clute Brothers builds parts for USS Monitor. Dr. Robert M. Fuller hailed by the medical fraternity of the world as the inventor of tablet forms of medicine, earning for himself the title of "Father of Tablet Triturates"; **1866:** George Westinghouse conceived the idea of stopping trains by means of an air brake, while riding from Schenectady to Troy, and invents the air brake; **1886**: Edison comes to Schenectady; **1892**: General Electric Company formed through a merger with the Edison Electric Light Company and Thomson-Houston Company with Schenectady being made headquarters; **1895**: Charles Steinmetz patents a "system of distribution by alternating current" (A/C power) on January 29. **1900:** First industrial laboratory for scientific research built in the U.S., in Charles Steinmetz's backyard; **1903:** Largest steam turbine built, a 5000 KW vertical shaft unit installed in Chicago by GE; **1906**: Christmas Eve, the world's first radio broadcast by GE engineer Ernst Alexanderson; **1909**: Alco's Harry Grant won The Vanderbilt Cup. GE's William Coolidge develops the ductile tungsten filament, the material still used today for light bulbs; **1901**: American Locomotive Company formed; **1902**: A. F. Knight of Schenectady invented the "Schenectady" golf putter; **1910**: First electric range manufactured, the GE Hotpoint electric. ALCO's 50,000th steam locomotive, a Pacific Type, was shipped. **Citizen**, George Lunn's socialist newspaper, begins. ALCO's Harry Grant wins the Vanderbilt Cup again; **1912**: Socialist George Lunn becomes mayor, then lieutenant governor in 1923 as a Democrat. An ALCO truck with five crew made the first transcontinental truck delivery carrying three tons of Parrot Brand Olive Silk Soap. The cross-country trip (4,145 miles) was made in 91 days, arriving at City Hall in San Francisco on Sept. 20, 1912. The start of this trip coincided with a big truck parade and display sponsored by the *Philadelphia Inquirer*. There were 509 commercial cars of 71 separate makes, ranging in size from mammoth trucks with 13,000-pound capacity down to light delivery of 500-pound capacity. Average speed on the trip was a fraction over 10 mph with 412 hours actually on the road and 776 hours total; **1913**: GE develops the hot-cathode high-vacuum X-ray tube; **1915**: GE's Irving Langmuir stabilizes tungsten filament in 1915 by twisting it and using gas in the bulbs (N, then Ar). GE invents Calrod, an electrically insulating heat conductor making electric stoves safer; **1918**: GE's Albert Hull invents magnetron, a key element in radar systems. GE's Sanford Moss and his supercharger leads to GE's development of first jet engine; **1920**: Dr. Elizabeth Gillette serves as first upstate women elected to NYS Legislature, during the "Red Scare." First college radio station was WRUC, Union College, which went on the air Oct. 14. Irving Langmuir develops thoriated tungsten filament for radio and power tubes. Steinmetz creates the Steinmetz Electric Car Company. GE develops portable X-ray machine; **1922**: Feb. 4, 1922, WGY Schenectady is licensed (goes on air Feb. 20), second commercial NY station. WGY was 2XI in 1912, 12th oldest in US (NYC WJX first in NYS in 1921). Oct. 7, 1922, first chain broadcast accomplished when WJZ and WGY transmitted a World Series game from the field. Ordinary telegraph lines from Newark and Schenectady connected with the polo grounds, where a single microphone connected to these lines completed the requirements. Graham McNamee was the announcer. Kolin Hager, program director and chief announcer at General Electric's station WGY, considered the Father of Radio Drama. In Sept. 1922, Hager gives a 40-minute weekly time slot on WGY to "The Masque," a troupe of community-theatre actors from nearby Troy, NY, headed by one Edward H. Smith. As the "WGY Players," Smith's company offers condensations of recent stage plays — 43 of them in the first season — and gains national attention for its efforts: the first regular dramatic series ever broadcast on American radio. Among the members of the group are a former stage technician named Frank Oliver: radio's first true sound effects man. The WGY Players are a fixture at the station for more than a decade, and in 1928 perform another historic first: the first play ever to be televised; **1923**: Charles Steinmetz dies, with nearly 200 patents; **1925**: ALCO, along with G.E., builds its first diesel electric locomotive. WGY airs Dr. C.W. Woodall's weekly show on first aid. GE introduces Monitor-top refrigerator, the first hermetically sealed domestic refrigerator, in Schenectady; **1927**: Alexanderson staged the first home reception of television at his own home in Schenectady using high-frequency neon lamps and a perforated scanning disc; **1928**: Jan. 13, Ernst Alexanderson demonstrates the GE system and announces the beginning of television broadcasting. The pictures were received on sets with 1.5 square inch screens in the homes of Alexanderson (1132 Adams Rd) and two board members in Schenectady. (Some consider this the first home reception of television in the U.S.) The picture, with 48 lines at 16 frames per second, was transmitted over 2XAF on 37.8 meters and the sound was transmitted over WGY. WRGB is born, May 11, 1928**.** GE begins first regular schedule of TV programming and the world's first news broadcast. Programs are transmitted Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday afternoons from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m., using 24 lines, August 1928. World's first remote TV news takes place on the steps of the Capitol in Albany as Governor Alfred E. Smith accepts the Democratic nomination for president. He becomes the first man in history whose picture was flashed to the public via the new medium. But the station's "public" at the time consisted of only four reception sets, one of which was in Dr. Alexanderson's home, September 11, 1928. The first dramatic program on TV, "The Queen's Messenger" by W. Somerset Maugham, broadcast to the four TV sets in existence in the Capital District by WRGB; **1930**: May 22, an audience at Proctor's Theatre in Schenectady becomes the first to see closed-circuit TV projected onto a 7-foot screen. GE puts out first room air conditioner. ALCO designs and manufactures the tunnel shields used for digging of the Holland and Lincoln Tunnels under the Hudson River, connecting New Jersey and Manhattan. GE places the first electric washing machine on the market; **1932**: Irving Langmuir wins Nobel Prize "for his discoveries and investigations in surface chemistry"; **1935:** The first radio tube to be made of metal announced in Schenectady. Alco builds the "Hiawatha," the first streamlined locomotive produced in America. It had a sustained speed of 100 MPH and a top speed of 120 MPH. First food waste disposer: the Disposall (GE). GE helps invent fluorescent lamp. E.W. Kestner's *Water Drops* photograph becomes part of the permanent collections of the Museum of Science and Industry in Chicago. Kestner lived at 204 Elmer and was president of the Schenectady Photographic Society. First major league night baseball game is played in Crosley Field, Cincinnati, Ohio, under GE Lighting Novalux lamps; **1936**: The GE Juice-o-Mat, "A-la-carte" table cooker, Portable Mixer, Hotpoint automatic roaster, and the Dorchester coffeemaker introduced into the home; **1939**: June, the arrival of the King and Queen of England, transmitted from New York to Schenectady, marks the first network TV broadcast. Nov. 10, WRGB starts broadcasting. **1940**: Nov. 20, W2XOY (FM) Schenectady (GE) begins transmitting on a regular schedule, according to an article in *FM*, Jan. 1941. NBC begins relaying telecasts to the GE station in Schenectady, thus forming TV's first "network." Feb. 1, TV's first quiz show, "Spelling Bee," on WRGB. Proctor's shows film "Edison the Man," starring Spencer Tracy. GE's Eugene Rochow invents direct process for making silicones. GE's Katharine Blodgett invents nonreflecting "invisible" glass, used today on almost all camera lenses and optical devices; **1941**: July 17, W47A Schenectady (first independent commercial FM station). Dec. 8, *Time* reports first FM net: W71NY New York, W2XMN Alpine, W53PH Philadelphia, W65H Hartford, W43B near Boston, W39B Mt. Washington, W47A Schenectady. GE invents first US jet engine, the I-A; **1942**: ALCO produces the M-7 Tank Killer; **1943**: Dec. 23, the first complete opera, "Hansel and Gretel," is telecast by WRGB. GE invents the autopilot; **1945**: GE demonstrates the first commercial use of radar; **1946**: The beginning of network television as WNBT begins feeding its programs to Philadelphia and Schenectady on a more or less regular basis. (Some programs were fed from New York to both cities as early as 1941). Vince Schaefer discovers cloud seeding; **1947**: Sept. 30, The opening game of the World Series is the first World Series game to be telecast, between the New York Yankees and the Brooklyn Dodgers at Yankee Stadium. The game was carried by WABD, WCBS-TV, and WNBT in New York, and was also telecast in Philadelphia, Schenectady, and Washington. The 1947 World Series brought in television's first mass audience, and was seen by an estimated 3.9 million people, mostly in bars; **1950**: Thousands of M-47 and M-48 (Patton) tanks and aircraft engine containers were built by ALCO for the Korean War. Independent moviemaker and novelist John Sayles born September 28th; **1954**: WRGB Broadcasts the first network color spectacular; **1955**: GE: First numerical control of machine tools, referred to as the "Greatest Innovation in Metalworking of the Century." GE makes artificial diamonds; **1957**: ALCO builds the APPR-1 (SM-1), first commercial nuclear reactor, at Fort Belvoir and used to train nuclear power plant operators. The SM-1 was a single-loop 10-megawatt thermal reactor. It could generate more than 1,700 kilowatts of electrical power (enough power for a small community) and was the first nuclear power reactor to provide electricity to a commercial power grid in the U.S. Hundreds of personnel were trained in nuclear reactor operations at the SM-1; **1961**: GE invents Lucalox lamp; **1962**: GE's Bob Hall invents the solid-state laser. Poet/playwright Eve Merriam writes poem titled "Schenectady"; **1963**: GE introduces the self-cleaning oven and gets 100 patents for it; **1965**: Alco produced the first domestic locomotive with an AC/DC transmission, the 3000 HP Century 630. Freddie Freihofer goes color on channel 6 WRGB (began in B&W in 1949). GE Aircraft Engines pioneers the high bypass turbojet engine, the type used on nearly all of today's commercial aircraft; **1970:** ALCO closes Schenectady doors. Union goes co-ed; **1973**: Ivar Giaever wins Nobel Prize "for experimental discoveries regarding tunneling phenomena in semiconductors and superconductors, respectively"; **1975**: Schenectady's cable access Channel 16 goes on the air; **1976**: Baruch S. Blumberg, former Union College student, wins Nobel Prize "for discoveries concerning new mechanisms for the origin and dissemination of infectious diseases"; **1978**: Schenectady is featured in Dr. Seuss' "I Can Read With My Eyes Shut." 1984: Barry Longyear's "It Came From Schenectady" published; **1995**: GE's Profile™ Washer (the "Largest Capacity Washer You Can Buy.") Also, first "smart" dishwasher (auto-sensing gauges soiled dishes). Martin Perl, former GE scientist and Union College student wins Noble Prize in Physics (GE and Union) "for the discovery of the tau lepton"; **1998**: Richard Scrimger and Linda Hendry's "The Way to Schenectady" published. **2000**: GE launches Profile Arctica™, the refrigerator with CustomCool™ technology. It was the first to provide consumers with speed-chilling and speed-thawing capabilities. GE Gem Technologies integrates high pressure/high temperature technology with knowledge of diamond structure to eliminate impurities and restore the color of rare high-purity diamonds. Researchers at GE R&D and GE Medical Systems introduce new technologies into superconducting magnets, enabling the launch of the OpenSpeed MRI – the first-to-market, high-field open magnetic resonance scanner: **2001**: GE releases new brighter bulb, the Reveal; **2002**: Jimmy Carter, former Union College student, wins Nobel Prize "for his decades of untiring effort to find peaceful solutions to international conflicts, to advance democracy and human rights, and to promote economic and social development"; **2005**: Schenectady is designated a "Preserve America Community" by the White House, only the 10th community in New York State to receive such a designation.

SKENECTADA

A QUARTERLY REVIEW OF
Schenectady's History

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Some images supplied by the Efner Archives and Schenectady Museum as noted. Thanks to Cynthia Seacord, Chris Hunter, and Dave Hanson.

Please support the advertisers who made this issue possible. A special thanks go to Angelo Mazzone, John Samatulski, Anneke Bull, Susan Mancini, Nick Barber, Cliff Stoodley, John Gearing, and Barbara Blanchard.

Schenectady

Although I've been to Kankakee
And Kalamazoo and Kokomo,
The place I've always wanted to go,
The city I've always wanted to see
Is Schenectady.
Schenectady, Schenectady,
Though it's hard to pronounce correctly,
I plan to go there directly.
Schenectady, Schenectady,
Yes, I want to connect with Schenectady,
The town I select is Schenectady,
I elect to go to Schenectady,
I'll take any trek to Schenectady,
Even wash my neck for Schenectady,
So expect me next at Schenectady,
Check and double check
Schenectady!

From JAMBOREE Rhymes for All Times by Eve Merriam. Copyright © 1962, 1964, 1966, 1973, 1984 by Eve Merriam.

Got History?

BY DON RITTNER

The importance of history depends on whom you talk to, or so it seems. When I was much younger, I was asked to give a couple from Munich, Germany, a tour of downtown Troy, a city not unlike Schenectady, agreeably one full of history. As we passed by a drugstore on Fourth Street, I stopped and pointed out a sign hanging over the door that said serving the public since 1952. I noted with pride that this establishment was indeed a historic site. Both of my guests broke out in laughter and since I knew I didn't crack a joke, I asked them what was so funny? The German fellow uttered in a matter-of-fact tone: "Well, yes, we have a similar drugstore on one of our corners in Munich and it too has a sign over the door, which reads serving the public since 1399."

Both of us were right, of course. I was impressed that my drugstore lasted so long considering that Troy at the time was less than 200 years old. My visitor was proud of his city's history as well.

You are more likely to know the history of your neighborhood than the date of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. History can be a very selective endeavor, and yet the old saying by British statesman and philosopher Edmund Burke (1729-1797) rings true: "Those who don't know history are destined to repeat it."

You use history every day of your life even if you don't realize it. You celebrate your birthday each year. It's that special day in the past. The same goes for anniversaries. When you visit the doctor, he or she checks your past history to compare it to your present health condition. The doctor knows the importance of history. You carry around photos of loved ones that were taken in the past. Governments keep records, newspapers are archived, and so on. Libraries keep books, receptacles of words written long ago, the collective wisdom of history. You cannot move into the future without establishing its past. You wouldn't fly in an airplane if the pilot didn't "remember" how to fly, would you? So we all agree that history is important!

"SCHENECTADY IS A SPECIAL PLACE WHERE GREAT MINDS CAME TOGETHER AT A CRITICAL TIME IN AMERICA'S INFANCY."

Those of us living in the Capital District are spoiled with history. We live in the region where American history planted its roots. Add to that the rich Native American legacy and we live in perhaps the most historic region in the country, yet few know it.

Schenectady is a special place where great minds came together at a critical time in America's infancy. If you read Susan Staffa's book Schenectady Genesis, you will learn that it took a robust and brave lot to establish the westernmost outpost of 17th century New Netherland (and paid a dear price for it in 1690 when most of its inhabitants were massacred).

Over the last 30 years, we have suffered from a collective low esteem about our region. Populations dwindled, buildings were boarded up or demolished, and industry and jobs moved away. But our history remains. At a recent planning session for the upcoming city comprehensive plan, some members of the audience talked about Schenectady's poor image. Let me try to present a different one.

Three hundred and forty-four years ago, a small group of men, women, and children packed up their belongings, left the protective stockade village of Albany, and eked their way across a small sandy trail 16 miles through the Pine Bush to found Schenectady. These early Dutch families laid the foundation for the following: the first passenger railroad in America and the invention of the air brake that stops most trains; the largest trains in the world, including 75,000 steam engines built before 1950; the tungsten filament that lights most lightbulbs in the world, the development of alternating current that drives those bulbs, and the largest turbines to produce the necessary electricity; the first industrial research laboratory in America; the development of radio, television, radar, X-ray tubes, the air conditioner, and the microwave oven; the first hermetically sealed refrigerator and the electric range; the M-7 tank killer that sent Rommel running in WW II; the solid-state laser; the first jet engine; the use of cloud seeding to produce rain; and five Nobel Prize winners that worked or were educated here. The list goes on.

There is a lot of talk lately about developing the Capital District into a "Tech Valley." Dear readers, we are the original Tech Valley.

During the coming months, this publication will illuminate these early contributions made by people living and working in Schenectady County.

Schenectady is a Native American word that means "Beyond the Pine Plains." The city and county have lived up to that name, since the multitude of contributions made by Schenectadians have had an impact on the lives of people way beyond its borders.

The bottom-line motivation for this newspaper is to ensure that each Schenectadian becomes a living and walking encyclopedia of Schenectady County history so that he or she can fire off a 10-minute welcome to any visitor of our region. After all, Schenectady is unique in its name and in its people, and the more folks we educate about this impressive history the better!

Schenectady is a Nobel City

BY DON RITTNER

Many people know that Schenectady is a city of inventors, but few realize that five men who either worked or were educated here went on to win the Nobel Prize during their careers. The Nobel Prize is one of the world's most prestigious awards.

1932 IRVING LANGMUIR
For his discoveries and investigations in surface chemistry

1973 IVAR GIAEVER
For experimental discoveries regarding tunneling phenomena in semiconductors and superconductors, respectively

1976 BARUCH S. BLUMBERG
For discoveries concerning new mechanisms for the origin and dissemination of infectious diseases

1995 MARTIN L. PERL
For pioneering experimental contributions to lepton physics
For the discovery of the tau lepton

2002 JIMMY CARTER
For his decades of untiring effort to find peaceful solutions to international conflicts, to advance democracy and human rights, and to promote economic and social development

Calendar of Events

To list your events, send to Don Rittner at drittner@aol.com.

- **HISTORIC MABEE FARM EVENTS**
  http://schist.org/events.htm
- **MOHAWK TOWPATH SCENIC BYWAY EVENTS**
  http://www.mohawktowpath.homestead.com/events.html
- **PRESERVATION LEAGUE OF NEW YORK STATE EVENTS**
  http://www.preservenys.org/calendar.html
- **SCHENECTADY COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY EVENTS**
  http://www.eventkeeper.com/code/events.cfm?curOrg=SCNY
- **SCHENECTADY MUSEUM EVENTS**
  http://www.schenectadymuseum.org/calendar/calendar.html

Do *You* Have a Dutch Barn?

BY ALLAN DEITZ

CHARACTERISTIC "TONGUE" PROTRUDING IN THE H-FRAME OF A DUTCH BARN. PHOTO COURTESY OF HABS.

The first Dutch barns in America were built in the 1600s by the Dutch settlers of Fort Orange (Albany) and New Amsterdam (Manhattan). In New York State, they were built mostly in the Hudson Valley, the Schoharie Valley, and the eastern Mohawk Valley. Vincent Schaefer, a former president of the Dutch Barn Preservation Society, wrote in 1988:

There were many Dutch Barns in the general region of Schenectady. Settled in 1661, its original proprietors were each assigned two farms on the Great Flats adjacent to and west of Schenectady on the south side of the Mohawk River. In addition to these farms there was other rich arable land for these early settlers. In general, the families whose names still persist at the present time developed from the pioneer settlers. These persons such as the Vedders, the VanSlycks, the Tellers, the Van Guyslings, the Wemps, the Bradts, the Vroomans, the Mebies, the Swarts, the Van Epps, the Glens, the Schermerhorns, and such were mostly born in the Netherlands, or Sweden between 1620 and 1640. After joining Arent Van Curler at Albany to form the new village of Schenectady at the northwesterly edge of the Pine Plains they established families on the farmsteads of the Great Flats or the other Flats adjoining the Mohawk River upstream of Schenectady.

The classic Dutch barn, before it was altered or added to, is most often rectangular in shape. Most all-Dutch barns are wider than they are long, with a three-aisle design that includes a large center aisle (often 25 feet wide) for use as a threshing floor, and two 10-foot side aisles for animal stalls. Look inside for the key feature of all Dutch barns: the H-frames that support the steep sloping shingle roof that comes down from the ridge often to about 14 feet above the ground. Each H-frame has a horizontal anchor beam and a post at each end to make it look like a capital letter H. The number of H-frames differs with each barn. The typical Dutch barn, which is of varying length, has three or four bays, determining the amount of hay storage available.

The front and back barn walls, called gable walls, contain a set of vertical wagon doors to allow hay wagons to enter and exit the threshing floor. They are usually centered in the gable walls. Some barns have wagon doors in only one gable wall. Hay and grain are stored in the hayloft on poles laid between the barn's anchor beams. Usually one of the two wagon doors is a Dutch door, which in earlier years was needed to help control the wind flow through the barn. This was important to the early method of threshing grain on the large center-threshing floor. The wind would separate the heavier grain from the shaft. Smaller doors at each side of the front gable wall provide entrances for milk cows and horses to the animal stalls.

The barns were made all of wood, usually from oak or pine trees found on the farm. The only other building material used was stone to elevate the wooden barn from direct contact with the ground. The original siding was horizontal unpainted clapboards.

Inside many Dutch barns, a granary room with several bins was built in the full side aisle of the last bay next to the rear gable wall. Originally, wooden stanchions secured the milk cows in the stalls of the two side aisles so they faced the threshing floor in the center aisle to keep it clean. Look for two or three "martin holes" above the front gable wall wagon doors that allow birds and air to enter the Dutch barn peak.

In about 1933, Vincent Schaefer purchased the Teller/Schermerhorn Barn that stood on Schermerhorn Road in Schonowe as a fine example of an original Dutch barn. It was built, he believed, by Johannes Teller in 1701. Schaefer took many photos and made many sketches of it before he had to dismantle it in the 1940s due to deterioration. Today we can visit a fine Dutch barn at the Schenectady County Historical Society's Mabee Farm Site, recently brought from Montgomery County to replace the lost original Mabee barn.

For more information on Dutch barns, I recommend The New World Dutch Barn, by John Fitchen and updated recently by Gregory Huber, which was a reference book for this article.

Allan Deitz grew up in Rotterdam, attended Mont Pleasant H.S., and majored in history at Hope College in Michigan. He now lives in Guilderland and enjoys historical research.

Dutch Barn Survey

BY DON RITTNER

The Dutch Barn Preservation Society and Hudson Valley Vernacular Architecture have begun a regional survey of surviving Dutch barns. The area surveyed encompasses the original boundaries of New Netherland (NYS and parts of NJ, CT, DE, and PA). If you own a Dutch barn, please let us know so it can be catalogued.

The survey will publish its results in several forms, including newsletters and publications of all partner organizations and participating historic societies.

The immediate goal of the project is to produce several publications before 2009 to raise awareness of the coming quadricentennial celebration, which will then be sold at the events and participating historic sites.

The long-term goal is for all of the information collected to be made available to the public, with portions of the data put online. It is also expected that the survey will generate additional research and publications.

The main goal is for the survey to be used to inspire the preservation of Dutch buildings and farms. For more information go to http://threeriversshms.com//dbpsnewnetherlandsurvey.htm on the Web. Don Rittner, Schenectady County Historian, is the contact for Schenectady County and can be reached at drittner@aol.com.

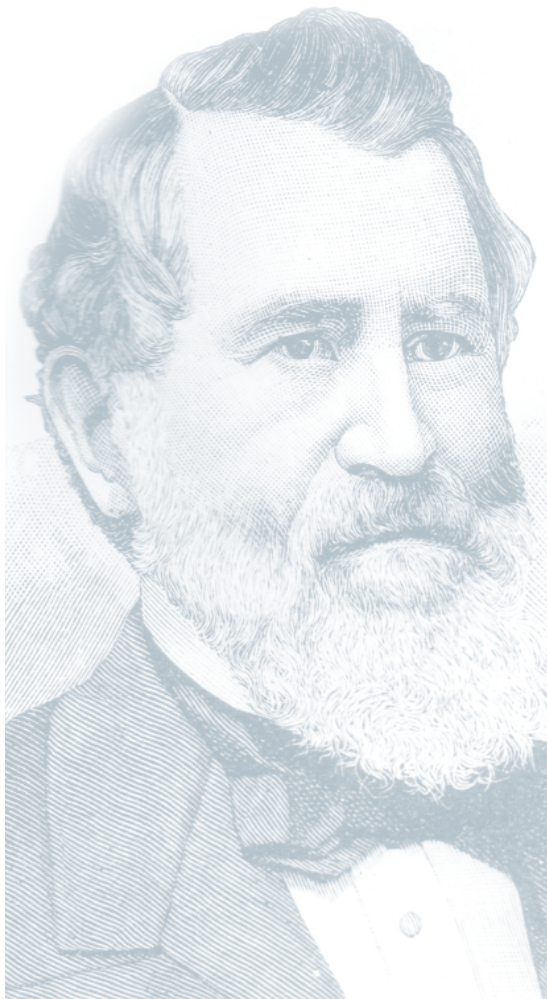
The Dutch Barn Preservation Society will award up to $500 annually to encourage and assist owners of Dutch barns in the repair of their barns.

In the fall of 1996, Governor George Pataki signed into law the Farmer's Protection and Farm Preservation Act, designed in part to preserve historic barns, including Dutch Barns. You can qualify for an income tax credit equal to 25% of the cost of rehabbing your Dutch barn. For more information, go to http://nysparks.state.ny.us/shpo/technical/hisbarns.htm. The National Park Service has a Historic Barn Preservation document available at http://www.cr.nps.gov/hps/tps/briefs/brief20.htm.

Did you know?

IN 1832, A STEAM RAILROAD BETWEEN SCHENECTADY AND SARATOGA WAS OPENED, WITH A TERMINUS AT STATE, WATER, AND RAILROAD STREETS. TRAIN CARS WERE DRAWN BY HORSES, THROUGH A SERIES OF SUBWAYS UNDER STATE STREET, UNION STREET, AND FRONT STREET, AND ACROSS THE BRIDGE TO THE GLENVILLE SIDE, WHERE STEAM LOCOMOTIVES WAITED TO TAKE THE TRAIN TO SARATOGA. CAN YOU FIND THESE TUNNELS TODAY?

FEATURE STORY: BY DON RITTNER



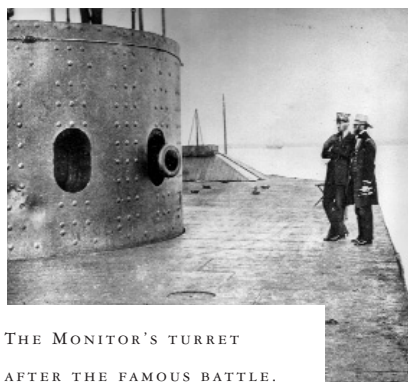
AN IRONCLAD FOR SCHENEC

CLUTE BROTHERS FOUNDRY HELPED TURN

ON MARCH 9, 1862, THE MOST FAMOUS NAVAL BATTLE IN AMERICAN HISTORY TOOK PLACE ALMOST 600 MILES FROM THE CAPITAL DISTRICT. YET, THIS 143-YEAR-OLD EVENT HAD SCHENECTADY AND TROY STAMPED ALL OVER IT WHEN A SMALL FLOATING "CHEESEBOX ON A RAFT" HELPED TURN THE WAR OF THE REBELLION AGAINST THE SOUTH. THIS IS THE FAMOUS STORYBOOK BATTLE BETWEEN THE NORTHERN IRONCLAD *U.S.S. MONITOR* AND ITS SOUTHERN COUNTERPART THE *C.S.S. VIRGINIA*, OR (FORMERLY U.S.S.) *MERRIMAC* DURING THE CIVIL WAR.

Courtesy of Efner Research Library

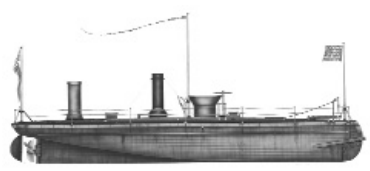
CLUTE BROTHERS EMPLOYEE GROUP PHOTO, C. 1860'S.



Courtesy of Efner Research Library.

THE MONITOR'S TURRET AFTER THE FAMOUS BATTLE.

"IF IT HAD NOT WORKED, THE WAR MAY HAVE HAD A DIFFERENT OUTCOME."



THE SPUYTEN DEVIL.

Colored print can be ordered from https://store.primediamags.com/shop/thehistorynet/

On the afternoon of March 8, the Union Navy was not faring well. The clearly outnumbered sole Confederate ironclad *Virginia (Merrimac)* steamed its way down the Elizabeth River into Hampton Roads in Virginia and attacked the wooden-sided Northern blockading fleet anchored there. This was no small blockade. It comprised several ships armed with 204 guns and aided by land batteries. Fortress Monroe, under the command of Troy's General John Wool, was nearby and in sight of the action.

By six o'clock, the lonely *Virginia* had sunk the *Cumberland*, burned the *Congress*, forced the *Minnesota* ashore, and forced the *St. Lawrence* and the *Roanoke* to seek shelter under the guns of Fort Monroe. The Union fleet was in shambles and the *Virginia* planned on returning the next day to finish them off.

However, an unexpected guest—the *Monitor*—greeted the *Virginia* the next morning. It had slipped in the previous night under fog. The *Monitor*, more heavily armored, and with a revolving gun turret (a first) was also speedier and more agile in the water due to the inventive genius of its designer John Ericsson.

While eight foundries were responsible for making the *Monitor*, the primary work for iron plate, castings, and fittings was contracted out to three New York rolling mills. Holdane & Co. (NYC) produced 125 tons of plate, and the Albany Ironworks and Rensselaer Ironworks of Troy manufactured hundreds of additional tons of hull plate and castings. H. Abbott & Sons of Baltimore rolled the 1-inch-thick iron plates for the turret that was then shipped to Novelty Ironworks in New York for assembly. Delmater Ironworks (NYC) and Clute Brothers Foundry of Schenectady cast and assembled most of the components of the ship's machinery. Niagara Steam Forge of Buffalo made the Turret's port stoppers and flaps for the cannon's firing openings on the turret. Clute Brothers also made the gun carriages.

The ship was 124 feet long, and 34 feet broad at the top. While in water, all that was visible was the turret, for the most part; only 18 inches of the deck was visible above the water line. The ship was launched on January 30, 1861, 18 days past the 100 days Ericsson promised it would take to deliver it to the government.

The Clute Brothers Foundry, at the corner of Liberty and Wall Streets (now a parking lot), founded in 1840, already had a relationship with Ericsson as one of the builders of his famous patented Ericsson Caloric Steam Engine. They also prided themselves on producing marine engines, boilers, and scientific instruments. It was the donkey engines they fabricated that moved the gears of the turret, and naval historians agree that it was the rotating turret that changed the course of naval warfare forever. If it had not worked, the war may have had a different outcome.

According to the U.S.S. Monitor Center (Mariner's Museum): *The most innovative feature of the Monitor and the one that became her distinguishing characteristic was her revolving turret. Though other designers had toyed with the idea of developing turrets for warships, Ericsson's Monitor was the first warship to use the invention successfully. The turret rested amidships of the vessel and was furnished with a separate steam engine that propelled the turret in a complete rotation. It measured 20 feet in diameter and 9 feet in height, and its armored walls were made of eight layers of 1-inch armor plate. Two massive 11-inch Dahlgren smoothbore cannon, capable of firing solid shot weighing 180 pounds, were installed inside the turret. Though the Monitor would go into battle with only two cannon, she had a distinct advantage even over an opponent with ten cannon. This was because the revolving turret would allow her to fire and aim her guns rapidly in any direction regardless of the direction in which the ironclad might be steaming. All other ships of her time were forced to aim their guns in part by steering the vessel into a position where the guns, mounted in broadside arrangement, could be brought to bear on the enemy.*

The turret bulkhead was opened only where two gun ports for the two 11-inch Dahlgren guns were located. The open ports could be covered from within by huge iron pendulums that were swung in or out of position as needed. The flooring in the turret was four-inch thick wood, supported by an iron ring running around the inside base of the turret. The turret was rotated by two Clute Brothers-made steam engines operating a crank that rotated four gears. During battle, three officers and 16 sailors composed the gun crews and would have been in the turret, along with the massive Dahlgren guns.

Troy's John Griswold (then Congressman) and John F. Winslow, owner of the Albany Iron Works, financed the deal, along with John Ericsson who designed the *Monitor.*

For about five hours the two ironclads battled it out with both ships retreating, each of their captains thinking they had won. In effect, the North did win since it halted the further destruction of the fleet and sent the *Virginia* running.

In the annual report of the Secretary of the Navy for 1862, the following was written about the epic battle between the *Monitor* and *Virginia (Merrimac)*:

The fierce conflict between these two ironclads lasted for several hours. It was in appearance an unequal conflict, for the Merrimac was a large and noble structure, and the Monitor was in comparison almost diminutive. But the Monitor was strong in her armor, in the ingenious novelty of her construction, in the large caliber of her two guns, and the valor and skill with which she was handled. After several hours' fighting the Merrimac found herself overmatched, and, leaving the Monitor, sought to renew the attack on the Minnesota; but the Monitor again placed herself between the two vessels and reopened her fire upon her adversary. At noon the Merrimac, seriously damaged, abandoned the contest and, with her companions, retreated toward Norfolk.

Thus terminated the most remarkable naval combat of modern times, perhaps of any age. The fiercest and most formidable naval assault upon the power of the Union which has ever been made by the insurgents was heroically repelled, and a new era was opened in the history of maritime warfare.

Ironically, it was the forces of nature that sunk the *Monitor*, 20 miles off Cape Hatteras, when it was being towed back on a stormy New Year's Eve in 1862. Several sailors went down with the ship.

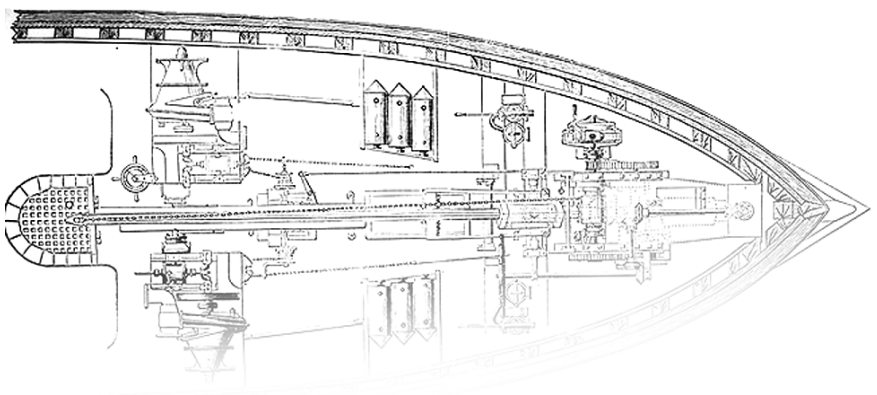
The *Monitor* rested in the deep for 111 years before it was relocated in 1973, and then designated the *Monitor* National Marine Sanctuary. It is managed by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). The purpose of the *Monitor* National Marine Sanctuary is to preserve the historic record of this significant vessel and to interpret her role in shaping U.S. naval history. Over the past several years NOAA has made extensive surveys of the wreck site and recovered over 250 artifacts from the *Monitor*.

A Navy-funded, $6.5 million project last year was the last major recovery effort of the *Monitor* since surveys in the mid-1990s showed that corrosion of the vessel was accelerating. The eight-inch thick iron turret still contained the two 11-inch Dahlgren cannons, many smaller artifacts, and the remains of some of the crewmen who went down with the ship—along with Seaman Francis Butts' black cat—the mascot that was stuffed into the barrel of one of the cannons to keep it dry as the ship bounced around the rough sea. Underwater archaeologists and Navy divers recovered the 150-ton turret (the "cheesebox"), along with the remains of two crewmembers on August 5, 2002.

Today, Museum visitors can stand just feet away from the *Monitor's* two 11-inch Dahlgren cannons, unique screw propeller, and the construction site for the

VICTORY TADY

THE CIVIL WAR IN FAVOR OF THE NORTH



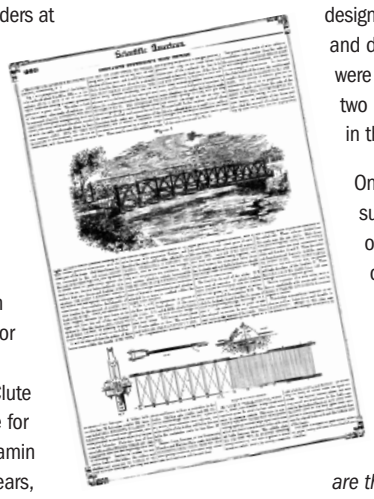
ENGINEER'S DRAWINGS OF THE SPUYTEN'S SHIP'S INTERIOR PLAN OF THE SHIP'S "TORPEDO" MACHINERY, WHICH WAS DESIGNED BY CHIEF ENGINEER WILLIAM W.W. WOOD, USN. FROM THE ENGLISH MAGAZINE "ENGINEERING", 26 OCTOBER 1866, PAGE 320. *Courtesy of the Navy Department Library, Washington, D.C. U.S. Naval Historical Center Photograph.*

$30 million U.S.S. Monitor Center, which is scheduled to open on March 9, 2007.

The Clute Brothers assisted in the production of parts for other ships during the war as well. For example, they built the propeller wheel for the U.S.S. Picket Boat #3, a screw steamer on March 3, 1865, for which they were paid $47.50.

Ericsson went on to build other Monitor Class warships for the army: *U.S.S. Passaic* (launched Aug. 30, 1862), *U.S.S. Patapsco* (launched Sept. 27, 1862), *U.S.S. Montauk* (launched Oct. 9, 1862), *U.S.S. Sangamon* (launched Oct. 27, 1862), *U.S.S. Catskill* (launched Dec. 16, 1862), *U.S.S. Lehigh* (launched June 17, 1863), *U.S.S. Dictator* (launched Dec. 26, 1863), and the *U.S.S. Puritan* (launched July 2, 1864). The *Montauk* and *Patapsco* were damaged or sunk by Confederate torpedoes.

The Clute Brothers Foundry and Machine Shop, also known as the Schenectady Iron Foundry and Machine Shop, was founded in the 1840s by Cadwallader C. Clute, originally as Clute & Bailey, stove makers. Clute also owned a hardware store at 142 State Street. Later he formed the Clute Brothers Steam Engine and Tool Builders at 49 & 51 Liberty Street with John B. Clute and Jethrow W. Clute.



Clute Brothers also built bridges that spanned the Erie Canal. In an 1862 *Scientific American* article, George Heath, the inventor and patentee of a new iron truss bridge was featured for his new improved design, which Clute built for him. Clute also built a cast iron bridge for Schenectady inventor Benjamin Severson. Finally, in later years, they built sawmills complete with boilers and water wheels of various designs.

CLUTE AND THE LAY TORPEDO

The word "Torpedo" was first used by American inventor David Bushnell during the 18th century. Torpedo is from the animal family, genus *Torpedinidae*, the electric ray. The "Shock and awe" of a torpedo was aptly named.

Bushnell first used the term for a mine attached to the hull of a ship and detonated. He completed this by using a boat that he designed that was manually pedal-powered and was submerged, perhaps the first submarine. During the 18th and 19th centuries, however, all types of water bound explosive devices, i.e., floating mines, floating barrels of burning pitch (carried to the target by the water current), and spar torpedoes (approximately 60lb charge was fixed on the end of a 25 foot pole, was exploded below the waterline) were called torpedoes.

Robert Fulton developed Bushnell's submarine into a more workable type, which he named *Nautilus*. With this boat he sank several ships during demonstrations, but was unable to sell his submarine to the American Navy.

Throughout the century, many attempts were made to develop torpedoes and during the Civil War, the "Spar" type was popular. This consisted of a steam launch having an explosive charge mounted at the end of a long pole projecting ahead of the boat. Unfortunately, the aggressor had to get pretty close to the enemy boat although the Confederates used it successfully.

After the war, in 1870, a *"Torpedo Test Station"* was set up at Rhode Island for research on spar torpedoes, but a year later the first "automobile" torpedo was tested. Instead of adopting the successful torpedoes of British inventor Robert Whitehead, the U.S. government set about building under the supervision of J. L. Lay, an officer in the U.S. Navy, a series of unusual and unreliable weapons.

Clute Brothers in Schenectady was contracted to make some of Lay's first torpedoes from designs from M. Hubbe, a marine architect and draughtsman who worked for Lay. They were tested in the Mohawk River between two bridges at the foot of Governors Lane in the present Stockade.

On October 11, 1872, the first successful test was made with 300 onlookers, including several Navy officials at the Schenectady location. After the event, Rear Admiral A. Ludlow Case made a toast to Lay: *"We congratulate him on the perfect success of his Torpedo. It moved with ease and is under perfect control, both of which are the great and essential points."*

Unfortunately, with Lay's design, most of his weapons floated and could not strike at any depth at an enemy ship. The Lay torpedoes floated with only a few inches of hull showing and were controlled by an operator using electrical impulses sent down a wire. The power unit was a gas engine driven by compressed carbon dioxide and the steering impulses transmitted down the wire operated electromagnetic relays on the rudder. The position of the weapon was indicated by two flags or discs. A later form used liquefied carbon dioxide as the power source with the liquid warmed in pipes external to the weapon.

These weapons were unreliable and vulnerable to destruction by gunfire. In a trial carried out off the British coast for the Royal Navy, the Lay weapon heeled over badly so that the propeller was located only half under the surface.

Two Lay torpedoes were sold to the Peruvian Government for use in their war against Chile. In 1879, a Lay weapon was fired from the Peruvian ironclad *Huascar* at a Chilean ship. When it reached halfway to the target, the weapon turned around and headed back at 15 knots to the mother ship, despite the frantic and much-surprised knob twiddling of the operator. The ship was saved only by the quick thinking and heroic action of a ship's officer who dove in the water and swam out to intercept the weapon and deflect it. The captain took the two weapons to a local graveyard where they were buried. Ironically, they were later exhumed by the Chilean rebels! The Lay weapon was also exported to Russia for harbor defense work, but only in small quantities. It wasn't until 1896 that the Austrian naval officer Ludwig Obry invented the gyroscope, making the torpedo a reliably stable weapon.

CLUTES AND THE SPUYTEN DUYVIL

The Clute Brothers were also instrumental in building the first torpedo ship for the Navy known as the *Spuyten Duyvil.*

The torpedo boat *Spuyten Duyvil,* which in Dutch means "In Spite of the Devil," was built in early 1865, just before the fall of Richmond. Naval constructor Samuel H. Pook designed the hull, ut the torpedo-laying machinery was designed by Captain William W. W. Wood, Chief Engineer, U.S.N., and constructed by the Clute Brothers of Schenectady. The ship was constructed at Fairhaven, Connecticut, in only three months. It was completed under the name *Stromboli*, in October 1864, but was renamed a month later.

After the ship's arrival at Hampton Roads, Virginia, in early December 1864, the same place as the earlier *Monitor* battle two years previous, *Spuyten Duyvil* was sent to operate on the James River. On January 23-24, 1865, it took part in the battle at Trent's Reach, after Confederate ironclads attempted to attack federal forces on the lower James.

As the Civil War drew to a close in early April 1865, *Spuyten Duyvil* used its unique torpedo-placing mechanism to clear obstructions on the river, which allowed President Abraham Lincoln to go up the James River to visit Richmond, the former Confederate capital city.

The ship continued clearing the river's obstruction even after the fighting ended, and at the end of its career was sent to the New York Navy Yard, where it was decommissioned, later used for experiments, and then sold in 1880.

The vessel was propelled by a single four-bladed screw, and the engines for working the propeller were constructed at Mystic, Connecticut, by Mallory and Co.

For working the vessel and torpedo machinery nine persons were required, the total number of the staff on board.

Civil War Ships Named for Local Regions

U.S.S. ADIRONDACK

Screw steamer, sloop. Built in 1862. Wrecked on Aug. 23, 1862, NE point Little Bahama Bank, Abaco, Bahama Islands, by the Man of War Cay.

U.S.S. ALBANY

Screw steamer, sloop. Built by the government Dec 3, 1864. Name changed from Contoocook to Albany, May 15, 1869. Commissioned March 14, 1868.

U.S.S. SARATOGA

Sloop of War. Built by the government at Kittery, ME, launched July 26, 1842. Commissioned on Nov. 5, 1860 and June 24, 1863, at Philadelphia Navy Yard for African Squadron and South Atlantic station.

U.S.S. CATSKILL

Single turret monitor. Built under contract with J. Ericsson. Launched Dec. 16, 1862 at NY. On June 15, 1869, name changed to Goliath; Aug 10, 1869, changed to Catskill; delivered to NY Navy Yard on February 19, 1863.

U.S.S. COHOES

Light draft monitor. Built by contract by M.F. Merritt. Broken up in 1875 at NY by John Roach, paid $3,684. Name changed to Charybdix from Cohoes; Aug. 10, 1869, renamed the Cohoes.

U.S.S. HENDRICK HUDSON

Screw steamer, 2-masted schooner. Purchased Sept. 20, 1862, from the Philadelphia prize court by the Navy department. Sold at auction to Samuel C. Cook for $28,500 on Sept. 12, 1865. Name changed from Florida, its original name, to Hendrick Hudson. Captured April 6, 1862, by the U.S.S. Pursuit. Commissioned at Philadelphia Dec. 20, 1862; out of commission Aug. 8, 1865. Vessel had a round stern, light spar deck fore and aft, and house on top.

U.S.S. MOHAWK

Screw steamer purchased on June 14, 1869 as the Caledonia, sold July 12, 1864, at Philadelphia. Name changed to Mohawk on date of purchase. Chartered in 1858 for Paraguay Expedition. Commissioned on Sept. 19, 1859, at Brooklyn Navy Yard.

U.S.S. MOHICAN

Screw steamer, launched Feb. 15, 1859. Built at Navy yard at Portsmouth NH; rebuilt in 1885 at Mare Island Navy Yard, in service as a tender for torpedo fleet Asiatic station. Commissioned on Nov. 29, 1859, at Portsmouth; out of commission on Apr. 26, 1865, at Boston Navy Yard.

Ironic that the two cities that produced the first Monitor, Troy and Schenectady, didn't have a Monitor named in their honor!

Schenectady's Gastronomical History

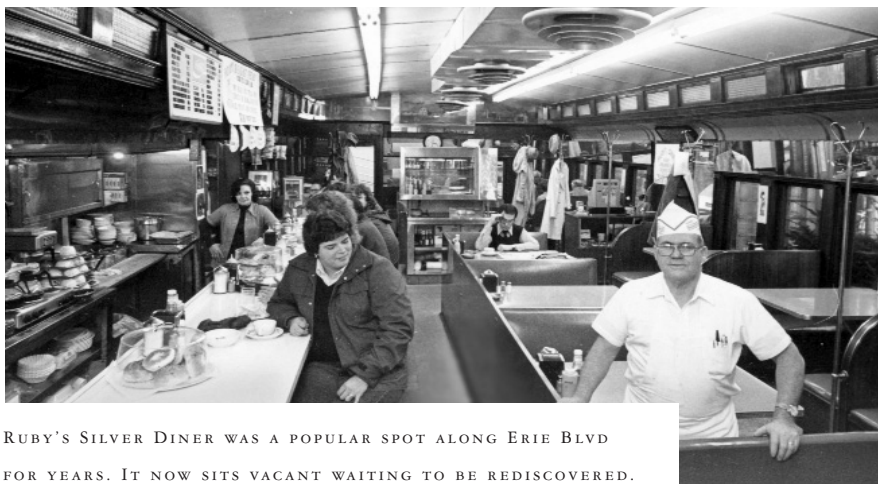
BY MIKE ENGLE

About three years ago the Mont Pleasant Diner reopened due to the efforts of former Voorheesville native Mark Gillenwalters. One day, I happened to run into the former Schenectady mayor Al Jurczynksi. I mentioned to him that the Mont Pleasant and the Silver diners were the last ones left in Schenectady. The Mayor replied, "No, we have the Farmer Boy, Brandywine, and the Blue Ribbon." The reason for our different views is easy to understand. I'm approaching it from a more historical, prefabricated, "silver" diner approach, while the former mayor probably was thinking of restaurants that call themselves "diners." Regardless, Schenectady has had more than its share of historic eating establishments.

Wil Anderson's book *Lost Diners of the Northeast* has an 1895 Union College yearbook advertisement for Clarence Bothem's lunch wagon. Lunch wagons were the precursor to the diner and were started in 19th-century industrial New England, namely Providence and Worcester. In New England most lunch wagons were nighttime businesses, serving the employees who needed a meal at night.

Elmer Ellsworth Howenstein was one person who filled that need in Schenectady from 1903 to 1913. He stored his lunch wagons at 145 Lafayette Street and took them to popular locations at night. This same practice of storing lunch wagons during the day, at the site of a central kitchen, was also done in Amsterdam and Johnstown.

Eventually lunch wagons became stationary. Mr. Howenstein followed this trend by placing one of his wagons at 174 Jay St. The others, it is believed, were sold to one of his employees, Ira Van Schoich (or Schaack) and placed at 516 Liberty. Dyer Todd took over the lunch wagon at 174 Jay after a few other gentlemen gave the business a try. By 1922, he had picked up a partner, Ralph Lee, and a new lunch car. This $7,000 lunch car was built by the O'Mahony Company of Bayonne, NJ, a company that sported the motto: "In our line, we lead the world." If you want to see what an O'Mahony diner looked like in the 1920s, check out Dan's Place II on Washington Avenue in Albany and the Gloversville Palace Diner on South Main Street. But if you really want to see an O'Mahony at its best, drive up NY Route 30 towards Northville and stop at the Northampton Diner.



Courtesy of Schenectady Museum Archives.

RUBY'S SILVER DINER WAS A POPULAR SPOT ALONG ERIE BLVD FOR YEARS. IT NOW SITS VACANT WAITING TO BE REDISCOVERED.

Partners Glass and Kingsberry brought the next lunch car to Schenectady around July of 1926. They purchased an $8,000 Tierney Diner, which they called the Oven and Griddle Diner. The Tierney Company was O'Mahony's main competition up to 1929 when the company closed shop. Around this time, both were making almost a diner a day!

From the period of 1926 to 1940, countless diners were moved into town, slowly but surely, replacing the smaller lunch wagon. A few of the names you might remember are: the Van Curler on Water Street; the Victory and Tick Tock on Edison, the Modern, State, Midway, Woodlawn, and Cross Town on State Streets; Miss Schenectady on Albany St.; and McDonald's, Ladd's, and the Silver Diner on Erie Blvd. These diners ranged in original cost from $4,500 for the State Diner, a Bixler Company style, up to $15,000 for the Miss Schenectady, a Brill Company style.

Bixler was a diner manufacturer in Norwalk, Ohio, who built diners in four-foot sections, just like a loaf of bread, and put them together on site. They made diners in Norwalk from 1932 to 1937. You can see a Bixler diner by going to another Schenectady County location, the Duanesburg Diner. There was also a Bixler formerly situated near the corner of Routes 146 and US 20 in Guilderland, and another was placed a few miles west of Scotia on Route 5.

Brill was a well-known railcar and trolley car builder that began making boxy-looking diners around 1927. The Miss Troy Diner is a Brill, as were the original seven diners of the defunct Miss Albany chain. Jack's Diner on Central Ave in Albany is the only spot that still has a diner. Brill bowed out of the diner building business in 1932. The current Miss Albany Diner on Broadway has no relation to the original chain called the Miss Albany Diners.

While there are only two vintage diners left in the city of Schenectady, there are several more left in the county. In Rotterdam, the current Topps Diner is a classic environmental-styled diner. The stainless steel of this classic diner was replaced with large windows and a stone facade. If you look close enough, you will notice that the dining room on the right side does not totally match the diner. This is because Paramount added the dining room at a later date. Before Topps Diner existed, there was a diner called the Sodium Diner on or near the same location. If you have pictures, please contact Don Rittner, Schenectady County Historian (drittner@aol.com).

Going farther west on Route 7, you will find the Duanesburg Diner and Gibby's Diner in Quaker Street. The aforementioned Duanesburg Diner has been on the same spot since the 1930s. Their placemats contain some of the colorful history of the diner. This Bixler diner never had stainless steel, as Bixlers were around before stainless steel became a popular option for diners. To modernize the Duanesburg Diner, the former owners went with a mansard roof and a stone facade. This also made their dining room addition look like it had always been there.

In Quaker Street, Gibby's Diner has been a beacon to people traveling on Route 7 since 1952. Business has been so good that they have had to enlarge the place three times. Inside this small diner, right above the door, you can find a tag proclaiming this diner to be a Mountain View Diner, built in Singac, NJ. In Roadside Magazine, Gibby Wolfe was asked about the effect of I-88 on business. He mused to a customer, "I wonder when they'll open the highway." "It opened today," was the reply, noting it didn't bother him at all. The charm of this diner and its owners made Gibby's Diner a favorite stop on the 1997 Diner-Rama hosted by the American Diner Museum, and it continues to be a popular place even for downtown Schenectadians.

We'll finish this little trip down diner lane with a little-known story about diners in Schenectady County. Around 1984, a diner was moved to Hoffman's on Route 5. This 1930s O'Mahony style was going to be opened up as an eating establishment. Unfortunately, due to health issues of the owner, the diner never opened and was sold to a party who moved the diner to Atlanta. The rumor is that the diner came from Rotterdam Junction, but no one has been able to verify it.

Mike Engle is a math teacher and a diner historian. His website www.nydiners.com attempts to document past and present diners in upstate New York. His new book titled New York (Upstate) in 1905, is a 204-page collection of articles and stories that were printed in newspapers 100 years ago in upstate New York. Some stories are whimsical, like the playing of water baseball on Java Lake. Others were more historical in nature, like the centennial of the First Congregational Church in Eaton. Still others contained the talk of the day, like the meeting at the Edison Hotel in Schenectady to discuss a trolley line from Schenectady to Stamford. The book is available for $19.95 by contacting the author at speigletown@hotmail.com.

Building New Netherlands' First Ship— The *Onrust* Project

BY DON RITTNER

During the months of May to October 2006, the public will be able to watch the beginning of the construction of the first Dutch ship built in America in 1614—the *Onrust* (Dutch for *Restless*). This replica will be built using original 17th-century Dutch building techniques, and this unique project is being undertaken under the auspices of a new nonprofit organization called New Netherland Routes, Inc. Gerald de Weerdt, Director of the Maritime Museum in the Netherlands will be supervising the reconstruction of the Onrust and is an expert on 17th century Dutch boat building. The project hopes to have the ship completed locally and act as a floating ambassador for the Hudson and Mohawk Valleys, and our Dutch history. Discussions with local historical organizations are being held to become the official home of the *Onrust*. Mr. de Weerdt has just completed building a small 17th-century craft.

The *Onrust* was a Dutch ship built by Adriaen Block and the crew of the *Tyger*, which had been destroyed by fire in 1614 at the tip of Manhattan. The ship, a yacht, was the first decked vessel to be built entirely in America. The construction, with help from the Lenape Indians, took one winter. The ship was 44½ feet length, 11 ½ feet beam and 16 tons.

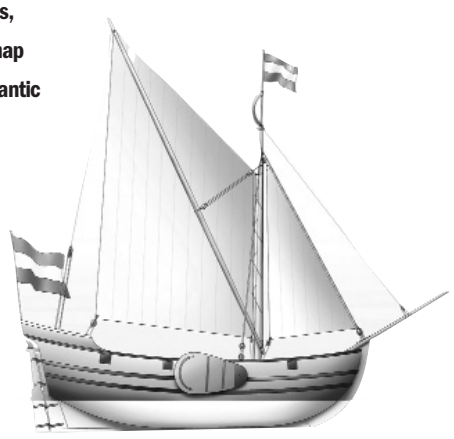
The *Onrust* was launched into Upper New York Bay in April 1614. The ship sailed through the treacherous passage called Helle-gat (Hell Gate) in the East River and later became the first American-built vessel to sail in Long Island Sound ('T Groot Baai). Block had earlier explored it with the *Tyger.* Block explored the harbors of Long Island and Connecticut discovering the Housatonic and Thames Rivers, and sailed up the Connecticut (de Versche Rivier) River past the site of Hartford. The *Onrust* continued on to Narragansett and Buzzards Bays, and Cape Cod.

In his honor, Block was immortalized with a small island, named Block Island. On the basis of this voyage, the Dutch laid claim to the territory of New Netherland, a territory that included Long Island (and all of New York), Connecticut, Delaware, New Jersey, and parts of Pennsylvania.

The last historical account of the Onrust describes her 1616 expedition down the coast of New Jersey to explore the New River (Delaware River) under the command of Captain Cornelius Hendrickson. No one knows the final disposition of the ship since it was too small to travel over the ocean. It is believe to have been abandoned.

Block was also the first European to venture up the Connecticut River. He managed to get as far as the Enfield rapids, about 60 miles up the river. He is credited for the map of his voyage on which many features of the mid-Atlantic region appear for the first time, and on which the term *New Netherland* is first applied to the region.

The *Onrust* will bring attention to the Capital District and its importance during the early founding of America, but also as a major ship-building community during the 19th century. This floating museum will provide students and the public with a perspective on 17th-century life and the early explorations of the country.



CONCEPTUAL VIEW OF THE ONRUST TO BE BUILT IN 2006. *Drawing courtesy of Gerald DeWeerdt.*

WORD SCRAMBLE

Schenectady Inventors

BY DON RITTNER

N	R	D	L	S	A	X	O	E	E	N	A
S	I	E	T	Z	N	M	T	E			
O	W	E	E	G	T	N	U	I	H	S	S
D	O	O	E	C	L	I	G				
A	I	L	M	U	R	N	G				

SOLVE THE PUZZLE:

Hint: In Common, They All Were " _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ "

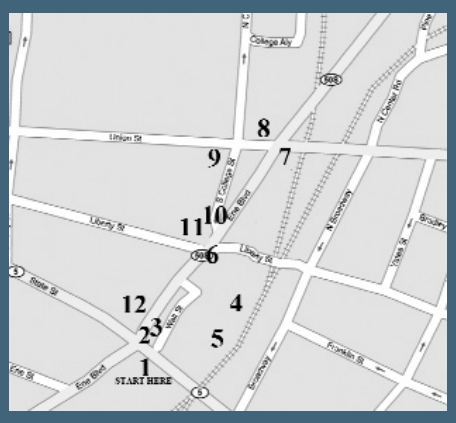
Did you know?

SCHENECTADY IS OF NATIVE ORIGIN, MEANING CITY...

A: OF MANY SKINS B: SITTING ON THE FLATS C: BEYOND THE PINE PLAINS D: WITH PEOPLE OF SKINNY NECKS

THE WAY WE WERE!

TAKE A LUNCHTIME SELF-GUIDED TOUR TO SCHENECTADY'S HISTORY



FED UP WITH FAST FOOD FOR LUNCH? WHY NOT TAKE A SELF-GUIDED TOUR AND LEARN ABOUT SCHENECTADY'S WONDERFUL HISTORY? LOSE CALORIES AND GAIN KNOWLEDGE, AND IT'S SO MUCH BETTER FOR YOU. PUT ON YOUR WALKING SHOES AND TAKE THIS 30-MINUTE TRIP TO THE PAST.

YOUR TOUR WILL TAKE YOU DOWN A TWO-BLOCK AREA FROM STATE TO UNION AND BACK ON BOTH SIDES OF ERIE BLVD. FOLLOW THE MAP.

PHOTO 1: Start at "The Old Corner," the NE corner of State and Erie. State was originally cobblestone (glacial pebbles) before paved with Belgian blocks around 1890. A bridge spanned the Erie Canal allowing trolleys to cross. From this corner, walk north up Erie Blvd.

PHOTO 2: The Erie Canal (now Blvd) looking north from State to Liberty Street Bridge. Starting around 1917, It took several years to fill in the canal. All of the buildings to the right are gone and now is a parking lot.

PHOTO 2A: Taken from the State Street Bridge, c. 1890, seeing the canal in use. The toe path is on the left with a canal boat visible past the Liberty Street Bridge.

PHOTO 3: A closer view of the Canal looking to the Liberty Street Bridge. On the left of the bridge, the white house is Liberty Hall, 233 Liberty Street, home of GE Scientist Charles Steinmetz. Today this is the location of Burger King.

PHOTO 4: Schenectady's third train station in 1882. This is the second station here and is close to the present Amtrak station. The Mohawk and Hudson Railroad was the first passenger train in America when it took its maiden trip in 1831.

PHOTO 5: The fourth station (third at this location), built in 1908. Many old timers will remember this station and its grand hall. The present Amtrak station sits to the left of here.

PHOTO 6: View from Liberty Street Bridge to the Union Street Bridge. Building to the right is Clute Brothers Foundry (see center page story). To the left is Elbow Street, present S. College. The canal is being filled in, c. 1925. The Railroad Bridge still exists.

PHOTO 7: On the Union Street Bridge and looking towards State, c. 1890. Cross Erie Blvd and begin walking back towards State on the opposite side. The two buildings at the far end to the right still stand.

The Liberty Street Bridge is in the foreground. The houses to the right are now a parking lot. On Liberty nearby is where Helen "Nellie" Brown began Brown School in 1893 in her home at 237 Liberty.

PHOTO 8: West College (Union College) on Union Street, now Van Dyke parking lot. When the college moved to upper Union, this building became a public school. Union was the first non-denominational college in America (1795), and first college chartered by the Board of Regents of NYS.

PHOTO 9: Home of Dr. Elizabeth Gillette, first woman surgeon in Schenectady County, and first woman from Upstate elected to the NYS Assembly in 1919. She could write law but not vote in the general election. Women didn't get the vote until 1920. Building to the left was a firehouse (Hose 24). Dr. Gillette's house is being renovated for a city visitor's center.

PHOTO 10: View near Liberty Street showing the bridge and the canal being filled. You are standing on the towpath, c.1925. Ornate building to the left is the Crown Hotel, built in 1906, destroyed in 1971.

PHOTO 11: Burger King lot. During the 19th century this was home and laboratory of Charles Steinmetz. This is a view of his carriage house, which GE retrofitted as the first industrial laboratory in the United States.

PHOTO 11A: The 19th-early 20th century home of GE Genius Charles Steinmetz on 233 Liberty Street, next to Helen Brown, and now part of the Burger King parking lot.

PHOTO 12: Only building on the tour that survives. Notice the horse drawn wagon on the canal toe path. Tenants included the Fitzgerald Shorthand and Business School, and E.E. Yelvert Insurance co. at the time of photo, c.1890. Compare to the present condition.

This ends the tour.

All photos with the exception of 10 and 11 (Schenectady Museum Archives), 9 (Don Rittner) are courtesy of the Efner History Center at City Hall.