

Colchester History Connections Newsletter

January 1, 2018, Colchester Historical Society, Box 112, Downsville, New York 13755

Volume 8, Issue 1 Preserving the history of Downsville, Corbett, Shinhopple,
Gregorytown, Horton and Cooks Falls

Website: www.colchesterhistoricalsociety.org

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/colchesternyhistorian/>

Historical Society Room, 72 Tannery Road, Downsville, New York is open
by appointment, please call

Kay Parisi-Hampel, Town Historian at 607-363-7303

Annual Meeting—March 27 at 10 AM

Please join us for our Annual Meeting. The Historical Society Room is located on the basement level of the Colchester Town Hall. Election of Officers and Board members will take place at that meeting and a planning session for 2018 will also be on the agenda. We invite the public to become members and volunteer. We always have a variety of jobs and tasks and we can tailor them to your talents and skills. Please send us an email at: info@colchesterhistoricalsociety.org to volunteer. **Please renew your membership by the Annual Meeting, Students and Seniors over 55, \$10, Individuals \$15 to: Colchester Historical Society, Box 112, Downsville, New York 13755.**

Historical Programs

Delaware County Historical Association—DCHA is located on Rt. 10, 3 miles NE of Delhi, NY. Saturday, February 10 ~ "The History of the Delaware County Poorhouse" ~ 2pm

Illustrated talk by County Historian Gabrielle Pierce. "The History of the Delaware County Poorhouse" will reflect on lives lived (and lost) during the years that the Home existed, c. 1828-1965. **Free admission.**

Saturday, March 17 ~ Genealogy in Delaware County: Caring for Your Family Heirlooms and Papers ~ 2pm

The third in a series of genealogical workshops conducted by DCHA Archivist Ray LaFever. Learn how to save papers and objects from your family's history, ensuring that family letters, diaries and other written materials are around for future generations. How to deal with family heirlooms? These can be just about anything, including clothing, toys, medals and trophies, or any other object. *Registration required by March 12. Cost: \$10 per person. Call DCHA at 607-746-3849 or e-mail dcha@delhi.net to register.*

Displays—February 15-April 30 Colchester Millinery and Hatpin Hair Jewelry

Women's hats have moved in and out of fashion, from the late 1800's up until the beginning of WWII, most women would not go out in public without a proper hat. Early hats were simply a piece of cloth or lace which evolved into bonnets that were tied with strings under the chin to hold them on. Early suffragettes wanted to free themselves of bonnet strings as a symbol of declaring their right for equality with men. Hats without strings required pins to hold the hats in place.

In the 1890's the height of hair styles rose and three to six hatpins were required to balance hats onto these new hair styles. Hats were decorated with beads, flowers, osprey, ostrich, egret and other exotic bird feathers, as well as whole stuffed birds. Actresses Lillian Russell and Lillian Langtry made large elaborately decorated hats popular in the early 1900's, these hats required long hatpins to hold their hats in place. Originally hatpins were all made by hand, often jeweled and very expensive. In 1832 the first pin-making machine was invented bringing the price of hatpins down so that even working-class women could afford simple hatpins to hold their hats in place. These "working girl" mass-produced pins were made of brass or silver pins with simple black or white bead ends.

In the early 1900's some states enacted laws that limited the length of hatpins to 9 inches, making women take out permits to possess longer pins. The longer pins were considered deadly weapons. Stories spread about women using their hatpins to defend themselves against "mashers".

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/hatpin-peril>.

Colchester supported three women who owned and ran millinery shops in Downsville: J.E. Thomson Clothing and Millinery Shop, Mrs. Charles Hulbert Millinery and Jardine Jackson's Clothing and Millinery stores, all located on Main Street.

Stop in to Town Hall to see photos of Colchester women wearing hats made by these Colchester milliners and examples of hatpins that would have adorned these fashions.



Hatpin Warning poster



Katie Meinhold, Downsville, 1903



J.E. Thomson hat, 1914



1918 Influenza Epidemic

World War I claimed an estimated 16 million lives. The U.S. archives records show that the influenza epidemic that swept the world in 1918 killed an estimated 50 million people. Within months, it had killed more people than any other illness in recorded history.

In late spring of 1918, the first phase of this pandemic known as the "three-day fever," or Spanish flu appeared without warning. March 8, 1918, the first reported case of influenza appeared among soldiers at Camp Funston, Kansas. Scientists, doctors, and health officials could not identify this disease. Some victims died within hours of their first symptoms. The 1918 pandemic virus infected cells in the upper respiratory tract, transmitting easily, but also deep in the lungs, damaging tissue and often leading to viral as well as bacterial pneumonias.

Young adults, usually unaffected by these types of infectious diseases, were among the hardest hit groups along with the elderly and young children. The 1918 epidemic affected over 25 percent of the U.S. population. In one year, the average life expectancy in the United States dropped by 12 years.

On December 6, 1918 the Catskill Mountain News reported, "Between 300,000 and 350,000 deaths from influenza and pneumonia have occurred among the civilian population of the United States since September 15." Colchester's population in 1918 was approximately 3100 people, Death Certificates for that year show 31 residents died from influenza, 11 of those certificates noted that pneumonia was a contributing factor. "In the winter of 1918-19, Walton and East Branch and vicinity had perhaps a larger number of cases than any section of the county, and the number of deaths occurring in the two places

above named was some weeks frightfully large. Consternation prevailed among the residents of some localities in consequence of the dreadful ravages of the "flu," and physicians seemed positively baffled by the rapid progress of the disease." *Downsville News, February 2, 1920.*

Catskill Mt. News, October 11, 1918

No Pictures Saturday or Tuesday

The Margaretville Opera House will not run pictures tomorrow, Saturday, or the coming Tuesday because of the scare over the Influenza. The proprietor of the Opera House does not believe there is a danger of an epidemic here but we desire to do all in our power to keep from having one. We hope to run pictures next week as usual. Instead of going to the movies Saturday and Tuesday spend time in buying Liberty Bonds.



TREASURY DEPARTMENT
UNITED STATES PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE

INFLUENZA

Spread by Droplets sprayed from Nose and Throat

Cover each COUGH and SNEEZE with handkerchief.

Spread by contact.

AVOID CROWDS.

If possible, **WALK TO WORK.**

Do not spit on floor or sidewalk.

Do not use common drinking cups and common towels.

Avoid excessive fatigue.

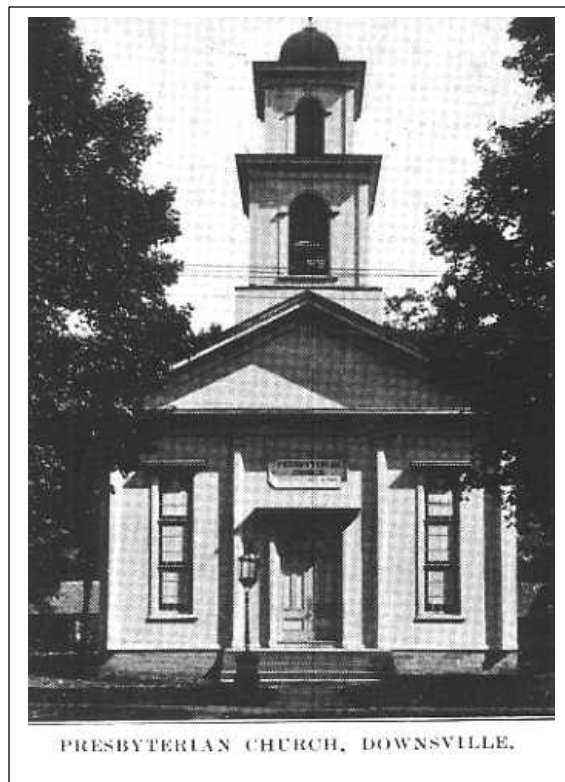
If taken ill, go to bed and send for a doctor.

The above applies also to colds, bronchitis, pneumonia, and tuberculosis.

Lighting the Streets in Downsville— Early Electrical Service

The first street lights in Downsville were placed along Main Street in 1870. J.D. Schlafer, a barber who opened his shop at the Anderson Hotel, purchased large square cast iron oil lanterns mounted on tall iron standards. He made agreements with families along Main Street that they would clean and fill the lanterns with oil each day. Mr. Schlafer hired a man to light every lamp at twilight and he would extinguish those lamps before he went to bed each night. These street lanterns remained until electricity was brought to Main Street by the Holmes Milling Company.

Schlafer lantern in front of the Presbyterian Church on Main Street, Downsville.



In 1903 the Holmes Milling Company on Tannery Road installed a new Delco Hydro Electric Plant and generated enough electricity to power the mill and to provide electricity for the homes along Main Street of Downsville. On December 30, 1903 the Delaware Gazette reported, *"Owing to the requests of those who wish to have their buildings lighted by electricity, the Holmes Milling Company, Downsville, will as soon as spring opens put in a new dynamo with the voltage capacity of 2,200."* Light poles were installed along Main Street and houses were wired for electricity. It wasn't until 1905 that Downsville electric street lights were installed. *"On Saturday evening, April 1st, after many weeks of hard work and a great deal of opposition, Mrs. V.M. Terry, president of the Ladies Improvement Society, pressed the button which turned on the current lighting the street of Downsville by electricity, amid the applause of friends gathered to witness."* Downsville News April 12, 1905.

The Federal Rural Electrification Act of 1935 brought electricity to other areas of Colchester. With the dissolution of the Village of Downsville on March 21, 1950 the following September the New York State Assembly gave its approval to establish the Downsville Lighting District.

Colchester is now assessing the Downsville Lighting District and investigating new cost and energy reducing LED streetlight assets from NYSEG and solar options for lighting the streets of Downsville.



1905 postcard of Main St., Downsville with new electric poles.

For other glimpses into the past life in Colchester, please join our monthly meetings. Meetings are generally held the last Tuesday of the month at the Colchester Town Hall, 72 Tannery Road, Downsville, New York 13755

2018 Historical Society Meetings:

ANNUAL MEETING—Public Welcome: March 27, 2018 at 10 AM

April 24, 2018 at 7 PM	May 29, 2018 at 7 PM
June 26, 2018 at 10 AM	July 31, 2018 at 7 PM
August 28, 2018 at 10 AM	September 25, 2018 at 7 PM
October 30, 2018 at 10 AM	November 27, 2018 at 10 AM
December 18, 2018 at 10 AM	