Colchester History Connections Newsletter

January 1,2019 *Colchester Historical Society*, Box 112, Downsville, New York 13755
Volume 9, 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

Thank you for your support during 2018. Please send your annual dues renewals by the Annual Meeting to Colchester Historical Society, Box 112, Downsville, NY 13755.

Colchester Town Hall Display February-April Antique Tools

Stop in to see a variety of tools used by Colchester residents to do carpentry, farm, quarry and home jobs. Several "whatiss" from our collection will be displayed with the hope that someone can identify these tools and tell us how they were used.

Calling Cards

Envelope and Calling Card-C. Emory Hotchkiss

Hidden Name Calling Card-Ernest W. Baxter

The Historical Society has a collection of Victorian calling cards, a paper ephemera used by Colchester residents. Popular in the second half of the 19th Century, cards were printed with a person's name. One of the most popular styles were the "hidden name card," where the name was hidden beneath a nosegay pasted onto the card at one of its ends. The unattached side of the design could be lifted up to reveal the name underneath. Victorian symbols of a woman's hand and flowers, were used to convey the message of friendship. Hearts, doves, birds, scrolls, urns, cupids, forget me nots, roses, and women's hands were common calling card themes. Visitors carried these cards when visiting friends' homes and were also included in letters.

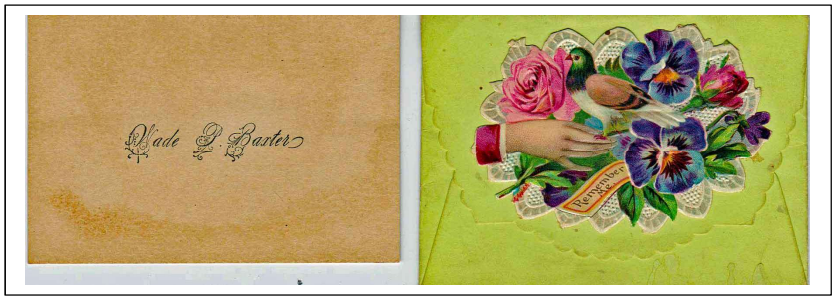
In the 1850's these cards played an important part in the local social scene. Cards were sold by the dozen; cards designed with a person's name and a dove and clasped hands sold for 15 cents a dozen. People generally carried their cards in small ivory, tortoiseshell, leather or silver cases. Both women and men carried these cards and an elaborate etiquette was observed around the giving of these cards. Men's cards were just as fancily designed as women's cards. Women never left cards for men; if the left corner was turned down, this indicated that a whole family had called. Cards were left for each member of the family visited. Cards were left on silver upright holders, silver trays or urns on an entry hall table. Displaying your calling cards was like the "social media" of the day, the more cards on your tray would show how socially powerful and popular you were in the community. It was also customary to put the more popular and powerful person's card toward the top of your tray to show your importance.

Victorian rules for visiting or "calls" were limited and usually restricted to the afternoon after three o'clock. Visits were also usually limited to certain days of the week. The acceptable rule was to only stay fifteen

minutes on the first call unless your hostess invited you to stay longer. Tea was usually served and if the room became crowded it was expected the earliest arrivals would depart and relinquish their seats nearest the hostess. After a person's first visit they would be expected to call again within a week and they would then be considered an "acquaintance" who could be invited for more informal occasions at the hostess' home. Men did not generally visit during the work week but limited their visits to Sunday afternoons. Formal visiting among married men was never done at their houses, but generally at their office or club. Rules also followed for acceptable clothing, colors and when and where to place your coat, hat and cane.

Calling cards show us the style of early lithography, printing, fonts and typefaces and also gives us the surnames of the families living in Colchester in the Victorian era which is helpful while doing genealogy research.

James Miller -standing, Wade P. Baxter-seated.



Wade P. Baxter calling card and envelope

Ada B. Fuller -Hidden Name Calling Card with fancy pink silk fringe.

A View into the Operations of the George I. Treyz Chemical Company

A report made on December 31, 1934 was found in the Roscoe local history archives and details the operation and working conditions of the Treyz Chemical Company in 1934. The report may have been part of the WPA industrial chemical plant reports or the W.R.A. (Weapons Release Authority) from that time period, no author or government agency is listed on the report, it does give us a good picture of the operations of this company.

Report on Factory Visit

This company is owned and operated by Mr. George I. Treyz. There is a foreman who has charge of the plant and the men who work under him. The workers do not belong to any union but are all hired individually.

This chemical plant is located in the Catskill Mountains at Horton, New York; a small village of less than 100 inhabitants, so small that the company had to build its own power plant to furnish electricity with which to run the acid factory. A little brook dammed up so that it has a

30-foot drop furnishes 70 horsepower. The weight of the water falling a huge wheel 27 feet in diameter (said to be the largest in the State of New York) generates power which turns three huge wheels which in turn generate all the power and electricity necessary for running this factory; the power plant is built of hollow tile to cut the overhead. One wheel is attached by a belt to another wheel and this series together tie up with a wheel which turns 1600 revolutions per minute. There are 57 consumers who use the electricity from this line thus helping to pay for the cost of operating. This power plant which is so necessary to the acid factory is a $25,000 corporation with stocks and bonds owned by the Treyz Company.

Beech, birch, maple and any other hard woods are used to make charcoal, wood alcohol and acetates. This company owns 17,000 acres of woodland; 6,000 acres are in one tract. The woodcutters and teamsters are under one superintendent. A good man cuts 2 cord of wood a day and a cord in the yard is worth $4.00 to the company. The cutter gets $1.25 a cord. All these men are under the code and can only work 48 hours a week. Teamsters who haul the wood to the plant are excluded under this code because there are so few men who can drive a team today. This plant has 9 teams, 18 horses, and this cutting and hauling is a continual year around process. Sleds are used in the winter and wagons the balance of the year. All the wood has to come down from the mountains by teams. There has to be enough wood for two years ahead for the cut wood has to age for two years. About 10,000 cords a year are burned at this Horton plant. Now the company is operating about 67% of its capacity or two-thirds.

After two and half years of aging when the wood is well dried out it is put on small iron cards six feet high called cages and run on tracks electrically to the retorts. Each cage holds two cord of wood and three of these cages or six cords of wood are put in each retort. There are six large iron retorts and each retort has two coolers where the cages of charcoal are cooled. Cut wood is put into the first cooler which is an iron box into which the iron cages are run. Then it goes into a second cooler for another 24 hours and finally is left out in the open for 48 hours. Then it is dumped into box-cars for shipment by railroad. As this charcoal is dumped into the freight cards it goes over a shifting screen and the smaller pieces go through and are made up into six different sizes of small charcoal; some is even ground into very fine powder. These screenings which would otherwise be used as fuel in the plant or else are a waste, become a paying by-product.

The hardest work is taking the charcoal out of the retorts and putting it into the coolers. They call this process "drawing the ovens". Four men are needed for moving one full oven. As the door of the retort is opened all the charcoal which has been thus heated in air tight containers gets oxygen and burst into flame. It is necessary to run a steady stream of water on it for the fire is terrific. The cages are pulled out by electric power. In the coolers the heat is smothered out of the charcoal. To operate this factory the cut wood inventory is $44,000. This plant had1,118,588 pounds of acetate in storage ready for shipment. Today's price is two cents a pound. There were also 39,6t21 gallons of raw wood alcohol, not refined.

The largest product is the large charcoal which is shipped by the car load, 32 cars a month, and which sells for $20.00 a ton delivered in New York City, but the most profitable products are the small sizes of charcoal which bring about $26.00 a ton. This is the only plant in the country which makes such small sizes of charcoal. The separating and running of this section are all done by one man. Labor saving means much here. This type of charcoal is used in hot houses for fertilizer; also, for chick and chicken feed, canary feed, hot feed, and the powder size is used in iron foundries to keep the clay from sticking to the forms and in drugs. Bags of charcoal have to be kept for thirty days in the open before shipping because of spontaneous combustion. The law allows 15 ton in a car.

The six retorts which are air tight are heated by six oven which burn 18 tons of soft coal a day. The flames are covered by a perforated steel arch 48 inches below the retorts so that the wood will not burn but will be heated to a white heat. Because of the danger of fire, the plant is built entirely of hollow tile and concrete. Also, a twelve-inch water main runs through the factory.

While the charcoal is being heated the gases and smoke given off are liquified and alcohol, methane, acetic acid and wood tars and oils are run off and separated by distillation all on a gravity system. The two largest products are acetate and alcohol. These two come off together and it is necessary to mix lime with them to get alcohol and acetate separately. The acetate is boiled in tanks for twelve hours and then dried over the ovens on the floor above and sifted into bags. It is then sent to DuPont and the United Chemical Company to be used in rayon and paints. Copper condensers are used for distillation and these are run by boilers which are kept going by tar, one of the by-products. The plan is efficiently managed and laid out. Cold water is added to the liquified gases from the retorts to make distillation possible. The alcohol which comes out between 2-87% pure is stored in tanks and then shipped when needed. The acetate brings about $700 a car and one cord of wood produces about 10 ½ gallons of alcohol. This wood alcohol which is used as an anti-freeze, in paints and in bombs brings fifteen cents a gallon now but in war times brought $2.55 a gallon. Without the water system and water power the cost of production in this factory would be materially higher.

This industry works under the Chemical Code with 48 hours the maximum working hours per week. It is difficult for a small individual plant to operate under the same code as the DuPont and United Chemical Company for these plants form such large communities or are in such large cities that the costs of living are higher for their workers. The Treyz Chemical Plants pays wages of $14.40 a week plus giving the workers a house to live in. The Codes have been only a disadvantage to this plant and as Mr. Treyz said, "The biggest damage" for fuel costs have gone up $23.00 more a day besides the labor cost under N.R.A. Production control is regulated only thru the hours of workers but prices in this industry have been cut under the Codes. The major difficulties have been the costs were raised and income decreased. As an example, horse feed which went from 80 cents up to $1.25 was cited.

The starling thing to me was that this large sized plant took only 5 men to run and these men were all hired individually. No Unions. This number does not include the wood cutters or the teamsters. Efficiency which reduces labor and thus the greatest costs is the keynote of this plant. Everything was used from the condensed steam for heating to the liquefied smoke as fuel.

Trey-Zone Anti-Freeze ad

Treyz Chemical Company

Tipple Building

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
2019 Historical Society Meetings:

Annual Meeting: March 26, at 7 PM

April 30 at 10 AM	**May 28 at 7 PM**	**June 25 at 10 AM**
July 30 at 7 PM	**August 27 at 10 AM**	**September 24 at 7 PM**
October 29 at 10 AM	**November 26 at 7 PM**	**December 17 at 10 AM**