

Colchester History Connections Newsletter

September 1, 2019 *Colchester Historical Society*, Box 112, Downsville, New York 13755

Volume 10, 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

2020 Historical Society Calendar

If you haven't purchased your CHS 2020 calendar, we still have a few copies available. This 33-page

Colchester Historical Society 2020 Calendar

Colchester's Civic and Social Clubs



Celebrating 100 years of the James S Moore, Post 167
American Legion

calendar features black and white photographs of Colchester's Civic and Social Clubs and features a special page celebrating the 100th anniversary of the James S. Moore Post 167 American Legion and a Photo Name Key. Calendars are \$15 and available at Colchester Town Hall, The Downsville Diner, and on-line through the Historical Society website. Proceeds from the calendar will be used to conserve the artifacts and documents of the Historical Society and educational programming.

Deer Hunting Reports from 75 years ago.

Downsville Jottings from the *Downsville News*, December 7, 1944

"Here is something out of the ordinary. After many years spent in hunting, Sterling Butler has at last shot a deer. The event occurred last Thursday, the last day of the season. Sterling's friends say that when he saw the deer coming, he loudly yelled, "Whoa!" and the animal obediently stopped. So, he shot it. Another of his friends affirms that the deer had 12 points and weighed just 103 ½ lbs."

Another article in the same issue continued the hunting story:

"With election a thing of the past and the deer season at an end, we are all looking for the Christmastide.

A sorry lot were the Binghamton hunters this year. In years past they've come to the East Branch section and "gathered in" some of the best animals, then returned home and exultantly exhibited their trophies; but this year they have nothing to relate except "what we saw." It was reserved for the Colchester hunters to show the proofs of their skill, and this they did with much pleasures and enthusiasm. Two "lucky" hunters of the township remarked after they had brought down fine specimens: "It isn't all luck, for we had taken pains to find out the preferred retreats of the deer family. Tables loaded with the choicest venison for many days. My! We have lived high this fall."

Researching your House and Property History

The Historical Society has received many requests for Colchester properties and house histories. We do have a limited amount of house histories for houses, mainly in Downsville. We are still gathering information and researching other homes. The following resources will give you a pathway to find information on your properties and clues for dating your homes.

One of the first places for researching your property and house will be in your deed. A legal description of the property will give you the chain of title on the property and all the successive transfer of title which will give important dates and biographical information on the owners of your property. Mechanics Liens are sometimes filed and can give clues about when a house was constructed with dates and description of the contracted work. These were filed to ensure that a contractor is properly paid for his work. Liens will list the contracting parties, give a detailed description of the work to be performed as well as listing the amounts due and addresses of the land owner and contractor. Land Records for Delaware County can be found at the County Clerk's Office, 607-832-5700, Court House Square, PO Box 426, Delhi, NY 13753.

Once the chain of ownership is determined you can flesh out the histories of the occupants. Where did they live or operate their businesses before moving to the present property? Where did they move to after selling the property? Checking the State and Federal Census records can list if extended family members were living under one roof. Census materials are available at the Colchester Historical Society and online at: <https://www.archives.gov/research/genealogy/census>

The Delaware County Historical Association has a large archive of genealogical, historical research and photographs. These materials are available at the Museum library located at 46549 State Highway 10, Delhi, New York 13753. <http://www.dcha-ny.org/>

The Delaware County NY Genealogy and History Site can also be a useful source for biographical information on former owners of your home, <https://www.dcnhistory.org/>

Another source of Delaware County history is Gabrielle Pierce, Delaware County Historian at 1 Court House Square, Suite #6, Delhi, New York 13753, (607) 746-8660. <http://www.co.delaware.ny.us/departments/hist/hist.htm>

A number of deeds, wills, probate, bible and old letters can be found at: <http://www.dcnhistory.org/deedwillsbibleltrs.html>

Obituary files at the Colchester Historical Society can also give clues about the families that resided in your home. Tracking down ancestors may lead to photographs, house plans, or interesting stories about their relatives.

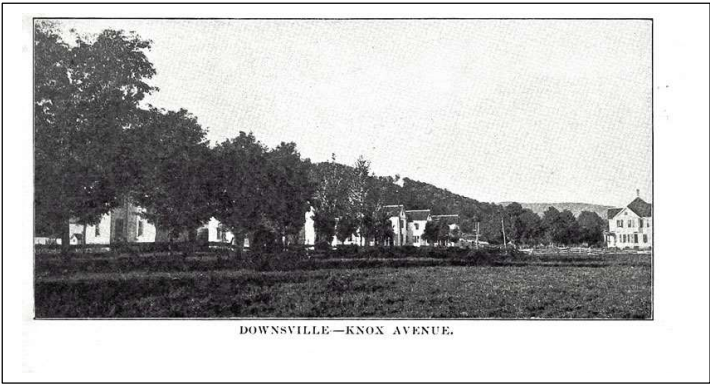
Photographs can be a great source of information on the exterior of your house and the original appearance of the building. Check with the previous owners, neighbors and at the local and county historical societies to see if they have photos of your street where you can compare the look of your home at the date of the photograph compared to the present look of your home. In 1948 hundreds of men came to Colchester to work on the construction of the Pepacton reservoir; a 48-bed bunkhouse was built by the Walsh-Perini company, but that left hundreds of single men and some whole families looking for housing in the Colchester area. This housing shortage led many of the houses in Downsville and surrounding areas to be renovated, modified or updated during this time period. Exterior photographs and the dates on those photographs can give good clues to when renovations and additions were added to area houses. Newspapers can help you narrow down construction dates and builders of your home.

C.E. Hulbert Houses Knox Avenue Downsville News, September 8, 1898. "Workmen are cementing the bottoms of the cellars of the C.E. Hulbert cottages on Knox Avenue." Six houses were built under contract for C.E. Hulbert on Knox Avenue. All the houses were built with same floor plans, but with the groups of two houses with mirror images, corner porches facing each other." At the time that these houses were built they faced a large open field. The first Firemen's Field Day was held on this field in 1907.

Homes on Knox Avenue, Downsville



Early postcard view of Knox Avenue houses

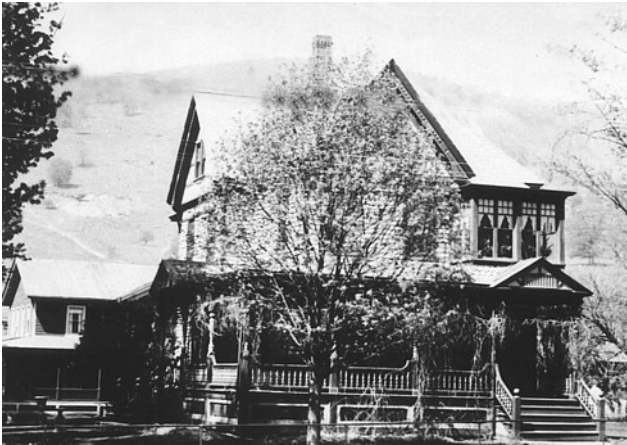


1907 postcard view of Firemen's Field and houses

Current view of Knox Avenue homes



Three different time period photographs for the Downs Homestead on Main Street, Downsville.



Downs Homestead home owned by CE Hulbert



Owned by Archie Campbell



Modern view of LaTourette home on Main Street, Downsville.

Making a physical examination of the building to determine the building techniques, molding profiles, types of glass, types of materials and finishes all give clues to the house's age. Ornamental details, roof lines also help to identify a house's style and help pinpoint a time frame for the building's construction. If the physical evidence does not agree with the documents connected to the building and the tax rolls do not show a building on the site then the building was most likely moved to the site. Some whole or parts of buildings were moved to different locations within the village of Downsville. During the construction of the Pepacton Reservoir some houses were moved from Pepacton to locations within Downsville and the surrounding villages.

Tax Assessment Rolls can also be used to trace the valuation increase and/or decreases over time. A jump in valuation from one year to the next might indicate new construction or an addition. Tax Assessment records can be found at the Colchester Assessor Office, Colchester Town Hall, 72 Tannery Road, Downsville, NY 607-363-2175. Delaware County Tax Assessments online at: <http://www.co.delaware.ny.us/departments/tax/rolls.htm>

Plat maps (a plat is a descriptive map of a piece of property with the actual or proposed features of the property) for Delaware County showing property lines and land lines are also online at: <https://www.acrevalue.com>okat-map>NY>Delaware>

Architect and Real Estate Appraisers records are rare in Colchester except for newer homes. Blueprints created by architects can be useful if the original owners have held on to these documents. Occasionally these documents are donated to the county and local historical societies.

County histories and atlases may include photos or drawings of certain houses in the County. Most often these are the homes of the wealthy, but occasionally smaller homes or businesses appear. Maps like the Jay Gould, Map of Delaware County, New York are available at the Colchester Historical Society and online at: [Jay Giould Map: https://www.loc.gov/item/2012593655/](http://www.loc.gov/item/2012593655/)

Several good resources for determining the style of your house:

- *American House Styles, A Concise Guide*, by John Milnes Baker, NY: WW Norton, 1994.
- *The Abrams Guide to American House Styles* by William Moran, NY, Abrams, 2004.
- *A Field Guide to American Houses* by Virginia Savage and Lee McAlester, NY, Random House, 2015.

Tracing the history of your property and house will be like a good detective story, leading you down many paths, some will be dead ends, but others will lead you to interesting clues giving you a more complete picture of the history locked in the walls of your home. We would love to hear about any history that you find.

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 Rd, Downsville, NY

2020 Historical Society Meetings:

January 14 at 10 AM, March 31 at 7 PM, April 28 at 10 AM, May 19 at 7 PM, June 30 at 10 AM, July 28 at 7 PM, Aug. 25 at 10 AM, Sept. 29 at 7 PM, Oct. 27 at 10 AM, Nov. 24 at 10 AM, Dec. 22 at 10 AM