

Colchester History Connections Newsletter

July 4, 2014 Colchester Historical Society, Box 112, Downsville, New York 13755
Volume 4, Issue 3 Preserving the history of Downsville, Corbett, Shinhopple,
Gregorytown, Horton and Cooks Falls

Website: www.colchesterhistoricalsociety.org

Historical Society Room, 72 Tannery Road, Downsville is open the third Saturday
of each month 11 A.M.-3 P.M. and by appointment, please call
Kay Parisi-Hampel, Town Historian at 607-363-7303

Displays and Programs

In **July-August** the display in the Town Hall features photographs, news articles and information on the construction of the **Pepacton Reservoir and the lost town of Pepacton**. An illustrated talk by Diane Galusha on the construction of the Pepacton Reservoir and its impact on displaced communities and the region around will be delivered **Saturday, July 26 at 10:30 A.M. at the Colchester Town Hall, Downsville**.

Diane Galusha, author of *Liquid Assets, A History of New York City's Water System*, will be the guest of the Colchester Historical Society. She will explain the City's 20th-century search for reliable sources of water, the damming of the East Branch of the Delaware River to create the largest reservoir in the City's supply, and the repercussions to 1,000 people in four communities who were forced to leave their homes, farms, and businesses.

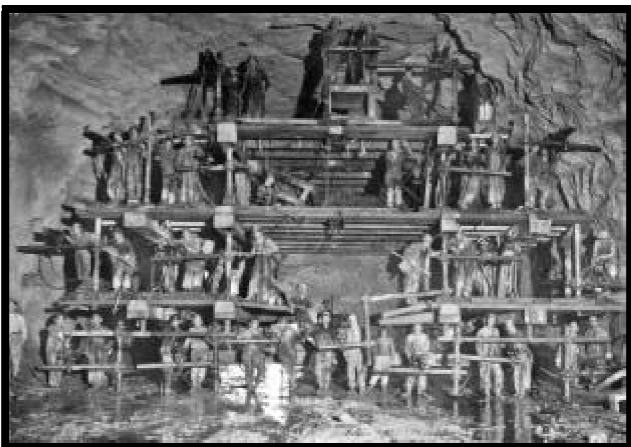
Special focus will be given to the lost hamlet of Pepacton in the Town of Colchester, and to the construction boom town that was Downsville, where the dam was built and where the NYC Board of Water Supply had offices during the 1940s and '50s. People are invited to bring photographs and memories of reservoir towns to share. We would also like to invite anyone who worked on the construction of the reservoir to share their work experience during the construction of the Pepacton.



Aerial view of Pepacton Village 1930's



Goodsirs Store-Pepacton Village



Jumbo Diversion Tunnel with Drill Crew



Aerial view of Dam and Spillway

The Redmen: Pepacton Tribe, No. 112

Colchester had an organization called the Redmen. Members dressed as Indians and had meetings around the campfire. At each meeting the braves paid twenty-five cents dues. This money was used to provide for the funeral expenses of members and other Redmen activities. Each member wore a ribbon with a badge for parades. When a person died, the ribbon and badge were reversed so that the black ribbon on the back was displayed. The group met over the Hulbert Store or Redmen Hall. The fraternity operated until the late 1930's. When the Pappas building was razed, the Redmen's costumes were found and used for dress-up games.



First row: Edward McDonald, Warren Golden, Emmerson Shaver. Second row: George Tingue, Ken Miller, Frank Wilson, Lloyd Hathaway, Harry Doyle. Third row: Gus Little, Reginald Wood, William Shields, Charles A. McDonald, Marvin Wynkoop, Hilton Fitch, Homer Gladstone, unknown. Fourth row: Robert Bradley, John Thompson, Fred Banuat, unknown. Photo taken in 1925.



Redmen's uniform hat, parade badge and rulebook.



Redmen's Hall 1910.

Who Are The Red Men?

The fraternity traces its origins back to 1765 and is descended from the Sons of Liberty. These patriots concealed their identities and worked "underground" to help establish freedom and liberty in the early Colonies. They patterned themselves after the great Iroquois Confederacy and its democratic governing body. Their system, with elected representatives to govern tribal councils, had been in existence for several centuries.

After the War of 1812 the name was changed to the Society of Red Men and in 1834 to the Improved Order of Red Men. They kept the customs and terminology of Native Americans as a basic part of the fraternity. Some of the words and terms may sound strange, but they soon become a familiar part of the language for every member. The Improved Order of Red Men (IORM) is similar in many ways to other major fraternal organizations in the United States.

The Improved Order of Red Men is still in existence and is a national fraternal organization. Legally, The Improved Order of Red Men is a patriotic fraternity chartered by Congress. It is a non-profit organization devoted to inspiring a greater love for the United States of America and the principles of American Liberty.

Goals of the Red Men

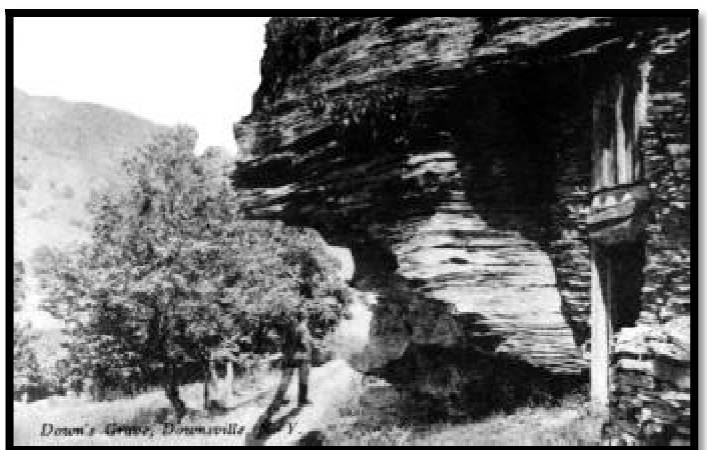
The Redmen's major goal is to promote patriotism and the American Way of Life, to provide social activities for the members, and support various charitable programs. The club sponsors a Flag Recognition Program, maintains the Faith of Our Fathers Chapel at Valley Forge, hosts an annual ceremony, Red Men's Day at Arlington National Cemetery and Red Men's Week, the week of December 16th which commemorates the Boston Tea Party. Their charitable work includes supporting programs that work with children with cognitive, intellectual and developmental disabilities, supporting ARC and the Special Olympics. Since 1991 the group has also supported Alzheimer's research.

Downs Grave Trail

Sarah Hood from *Head to Toe Fitness* and Dr. Kathryn Mattson, sponsors of the Best Dam 5K Color Run/Walk Benefit, are currently working with the Historical Society to fund another Historical Interpretative Sign and the development of a trail to Downs Point. (Trail is on the mountainside behind the Colchester Methodist Church and Downsville Diner) This Interpretative sign will explain the naming of Downsville, the Downs family and the unique gravesite of George W. Downs. For over 150 years Downs Point has elicited the interest and curiosity of nearly every visitor in Downsville and many have climbed the mountain to view the picturesque river valley. Did George W. Downs place his grave site here because he predicted that a reservoir would be built in Downsville, thus saving his resting place from being moved or did he want to look down on the Downs House Hotel porch where he used to light his cigars with \$10 bills? Perhaps it was just a place to keep track of his family home and the village he helped to create. We anticipate that the sign will be installed before the next Best Dam 5K Color Run/Walk Benefit on October 4, 2014 and we will keep you posted on the trail development so you can plan your hike up the mountain to see the view for yourself.



George W. Downs Gravesite



1910 Postcard of path to Downs Point

Grange History -- Pepacton Grange No. 1407



Front L-R: Margaret Turnbull, Mabel Becker, Ruth Guttridge, Elsie Simonson, Gale Spoor, Maggie Banuat, Cora Shaw Linnea Mattson.
Back: Irv Guttridge, Rosebud Gray, Theo Baldwin, James Stanton, Mabel Neff, Idabelle Tait, Bill Bouw, Margery Salton, Pangburn Gray, Fred Banuat, Wendal Salton, J.Perry Champlin, Howard Tait, Alton Neff.

"The Patrons of Husbandry, or the Grange, was founded in 1867 to advance methods of agriculture, as well as to promote the social and economic needs of farmers in the United States. The financial crisis of 1873, along with falling crop prices, increases in railroad fees to ship crops, and Congress's reduction of paper money in favor of gold and silver devastated farmers' livelihoods and caused a surge in Grange membership in the mid-1870s. Both at the state and national level, Grangers gave their support to reform minded groups such as the Greenback Party, the Populist Party, and, eventually, the Progressives." The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History

According to the Agriculture Department, the farm population peaked in 1916 at 32.5 million, or 32% of the U.S. population. Despite a downward trend since World War I, the farm population has a few short surges, including one in 1933 when it grew to 31.2 million of the U.S. population and then again in the "Back to the Land" movement in 1983. The Pepacton Grange activities reflected these trends.

The Pepacton Grange was organized on Monday, November 30, 1916 with twenty-six charter members. The meetings were held over Barnhart's Store in the village of Pepacton., for which they paid a \$10 per month rental fee. The Grange was very successful through the 1920's but declined with the approach of the Depression. No meetings were held from November 1929 to June of 1935. In May of 1935 the Grange was reorganized to promote the Grange spirit and the group purchased the Pepacton one-room school house which served as their meeting place until they were forced to vacate the property for the construction of the Pepacton Reservoir in 1948. The Grange purchased a building lot on Tannery Road for \$500 (the current Town Hall) and built a new Grange Hall which was completed on February 7, 1952. The Grange was very active in community service projects, working with the school to supply dental care, blankets for kindergarten nap-time, summer camp scholarships and planting the row of Crabapple trees along the road to the Town swimming pool. The Grange continued as an active organization until 1988 when it was decided that with the advancing age of the members, dwindling numbers of members and family farms plus the cost of building maintenance, that they would sell the building to Al and Clara Mae Gladstone; who later sold the building to the First National Bank of Downsville. Meetings were held in homes of Grange members until they decided to join with the Walton Grange in 1979.

Meeting Dates 2014

July 29 at 7 P.M. Aug. 26 at 10 A.M. Sept. 30 at 7 P.M. Oct. 28 at 10 A.M. Nov. 25 at 7 P.M. Dec. 23 at 10 A.M.

**Meetings are held in the Historical Society Room, basement level of the Colchester Town Hall, 72 Tannery Road
Downsville, New York 13755.**

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