

Colchester History Connections Newsletter

December 29, 2013 Colchester Historical Society, Box 112, Downsville, New York 13755

Volume 3, Issue 4 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.

Year End Review

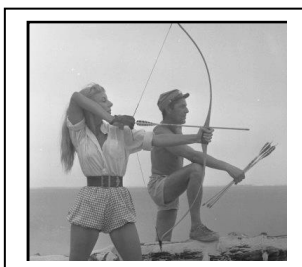
In 2013 a Historical Tour project with the installation of twelve Interpretive Signs highlighting the rich heritage of the towns that make up Colchester was completed. This project was funded by an O'Connor Grant, Town of Colchester, Historical Society and individual donations. Driving tour maps and brochures are available for this 50 mile tour at Town Hall and on our website. We also compiled and published a 2014 calendar featuring over 50 historic photographs from our collection. Preserving items within the collection is an on-going project, as well as cataloging donations, and expanding our Genealogy Surname files. Several traveling local history exhibits were prepared and presented to the community during the Memorial Day and Maple Leaf festivities. CHS continues to update our website, and offer local history programs. We also continue our efforts to reach our ultimate goal of purchasing a building to preserve our local history collection, provide research space and a larger museum space to exhibit our artifacts collections. The Society is fortunate to have volunteers that donate their time and talents to promote and preserve the rich heritage of our town. We would like to take this opportunity to thank our members for their generous support this year and hope that you will continue to support our Society.

Displays

The January-February display in Town Hall will feature photographs and information on the late Blaine Wright and his sister Dare Wright. Blaine lived in Downsville and is credited with the invention of the Phoebe fishing lure. Many local fishermen have had great success catching trout with Wright's Phoebe which is described by New York Times writer Peter Kaminsky as a "reliable wobbling spoon with side markings like a Paleolithic cave painting." Blaine's sister Dare often visited him in Downsville and many of the photographs for her children's books series *Edith and Little Bear* were taken in the area.



Pencil sketch of Blaine



Phoebe lure



Edith and the Bears

Winter memories



1914 sleighs going down Main Street after snow storm.



October 1959 snow storm Main St.

Pangburn and Rosebud Gray were Downsville farmers for over fifty years and told of their youthful bobsledding adventures in Colchester. Pang reminisced about bobsledding down Tub Mill Road on an eight foot sled. After a big snowfall and when the snow was packed by the sleighs going into town, the children of the village would head out on the hills to enjoy riding down the local hill roads and the brave would challenge Tub Mill's hill. "You would have the older boys in front and back of the bob with the younger boys and girls packed in the center of the sled. The older boy in the back would push with all his might and the sled would start to fly down Tub Mill as he hopped on. We would all hold on for dear life as we flew down Tub Mill and if we made the turn on to Main Street, and that was a big if, because we usually crashed, but if we made it, boy what a ride we would have! We would speed all the way down Main Street and right up and over the Downsville Covered Bridge and clear to the Brooklyn side of the river. What a thrilling ride!"

History of a House

Pat Francisco, a former Binghamton resident, shared this information on her family's home, "The Chateau". Although she is not sure of the exact construction date, she knows that James Addison Francisco built the house and that he lived there with his wife, Elizabeth Ann Gee Francisco and two sons Ralph Gee and George Emerson, from 1910-1915.



The Chateau postcard circa 1911

Pat's father, Ralph Addison and his sister Anita Francisco Rustyn were both born in the cottage (converted from a detached garage) that was built next to the house. In the 1950's Joseph and Matilda Schmitt were



James Addison Francisco

owners of the house. Additional renovations were done in the 1970's and the house changed hands several times through the next thirty years falling into disrepair and finally to foreclosure.



The Chateau after 1950's renovations.



Joseph and Matilda Schmitt

The Chateau was purchased last year by Frank and Laurie Battaglino as a vacation home. The house had fallen into very poor condition, but Laurie looked beyond the obvious debris and saw the potential of this grand old home. The past year was spent completing a major restoration of the house and property. The Battaglino's have taken great care and attention to the character of this house and have successfully brought this house back to its former beauty. The Battaglino family just celebrated their first Christmas in "The Chateau."



Do you own an older home in Colchester? If you know the history of your home, we would love to hear from you. Please email us at hampelk@colchesterhistoricalsociety.org or call Kay Parisi-Hampel, Town Historian at 607-363-7303.

Home Remedies

Recipes for home remedies are often found in our collection of Day Diaries. Local residents depended on their herbal and home remedies to try cure a variety of ailments. While not recommending these treatments, it is interesting to see what was used from the local woods and gardens, and to think about what time and talent it took to identify, gather and store these ingredients. These recipes (or receipts as they were often labeled) give us a glimpse into the daily chores of our residents and what it took to survive in early Colchester. They certainly thought that these recipes were valuable enough to write down in their diaries. The following is a cough syrup remedy that was found in Gregorytown resident, Odgen W. Gregory's 1895 diary:

Murphy's Cough Syrup

This combination is especially useful for Asthma, Hoarseness and Coughs:

1 oz. Blood Root	1 oz. Colts Foot	2 oz. Spikeward Root	1 to 2 oz. Comfrey Root
1 to 2 oz. Poplar Bark	1 gill Molasses	1 oz. Slippery Elm Bark	1 oz. Elecampane
2 oz. White Root	2 oz. Snake Root	1 to 2 oz. Horehound	1 quart water
1 pint Holland Gin.			

Mix all together excepting the gin, let simmer for 2 hours. When cool strain and add gin.

Dose: 1 Tablespoon every hour or 3 Tablespoons three times a day.

The gill is a unit of measurement for a volume equal to a quarter of a pint.

2014 Calendars

Colchester Historical Society
2014 Calendar



Boating under the Downsville Covered Bridge, 1890's

We still have a few copies of our 2014 Colchester Historical Society calendar available for sale-- \$15.

This striking black and white calendar is 8 ½ x 11 inches with a spiral binding and tab for hanging; it contains fifteen pages with 58 photographs and postcards of Colchester Township. Copies will be available at the Colchester Town Hall, at the Downsville Diner and through mail order. Please check our website's Publication Page for an order form.

Annual Meeting

The Colchester Historical Society will hold its Annual Meeting with election of officers and Board members on Tuesday, March 25, 2014 at 10 A.M. in the Historical Society Room in the basement level of the Colchester Town Hall 72 Tannery Road, Downsville, New York. We invite all our members or anyone interested in becoming a member to join us and help plan our activities for 2014.

Our membership renewal letters will go out the first week in January for 2014, please send in your dues to arrive by our Annual Meeting in March. Dues are now \$15 for individuals, \$10 for seniors (over age 55) and \$10 for Student members.

Meeting Dates 2014

March 25 at 10 A.M. (Annual Meeting)
May 27 at 7 P.M.
July 29 at 7 P.M.
September 30 at 7 P.M.
November 25 at 7 P.M.

No meetings in January and February.

April 29 at 10 A.M.
June 24 at 10 A.M.
August 26 at 10 A.M.
October 28 at 10 A.M.
December 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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