

Colchester History Connections Newsletter

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

Volume 8, Issue 3 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

Town Hall Display—May 30-July 31 Colchester Baseball The earliest photograph the Historical Society has for a town or village team is the 1892 Downsville Team. Colchester village and town teams have existed since the 1870's and spirited rivalries existed. Downsville's team was known as a hard-fighting skilled group. Stop in to learn more about Colchester's baseball teams, players and town ball history.

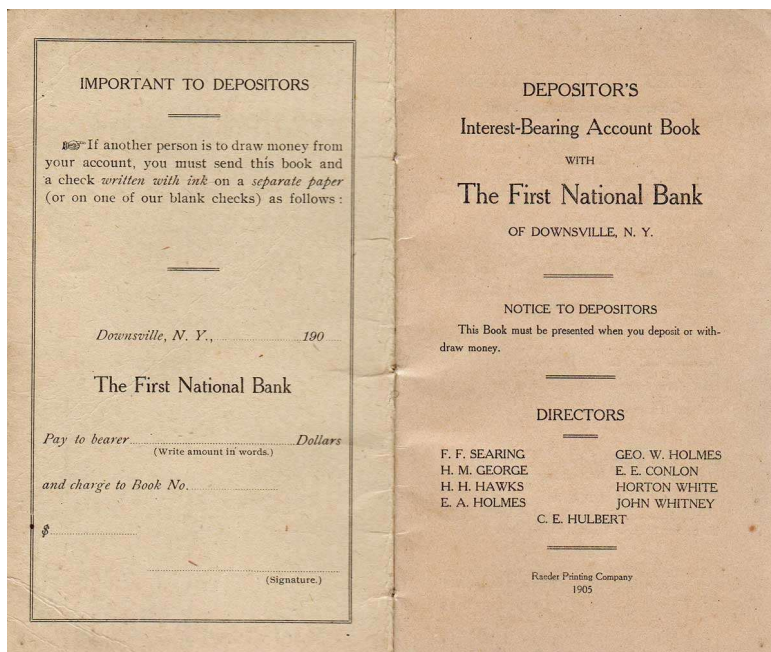
Save the Date: Sunday, August 26, 2018 at 2 PM

History of the Construction of the Cannonsville Reservoir. Slide program by Diane Galusha using photographs and information from the Board of Water Supply archives showing the construction of the Cannonsville Reservoir.

Colchester Banking History

Strong Leadership by Downsville First National Bank Presidents

The first president of the Downsville Bank was Charles E. Hulbert. Hulbert was born on Doe Brook, about one mile off Gregory Hollow. After completing college Hulbert began his career, not as a banker, but as a teacher in the one-room school on Morton Hill. After two terms he decided teaching was not for him and he opened a store at Delancey. This store operated for a year before he moved his store to the Main Street in Downsville. This business was very successful and in 1890 Hulbert was recruited to help secure a charter for the First National Bank of Walton. In 1906 Hulbert was selected to serve as president of that bank. After the failure of the Wilcox Bank and the start of the new Downsville First National Bank, Hulbert also helped in securing that charter. He took the position as president of the Downsville bank, serving in that capacity until his death in 1937. Hulbert also served as President and member of the board of directors for the Andes, Hancock and Sidney banks. At one time Hulbert owned over 100 farms in Delaware County while continuing to operate his Downsville department store until 1934.



1907 Bank book.



1907 C.E. Hulbert Department Store postcard

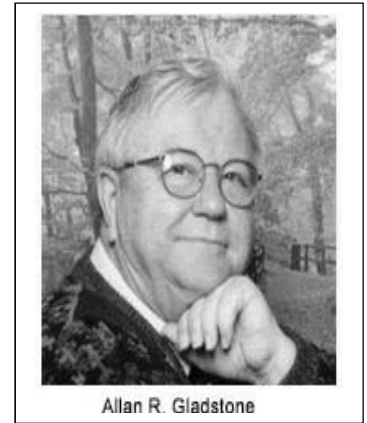
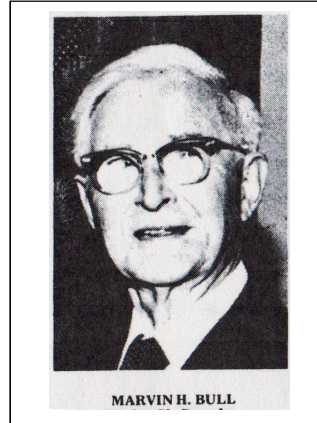
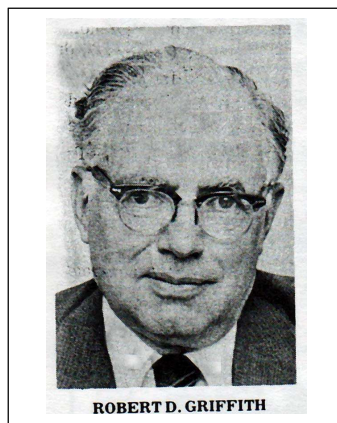
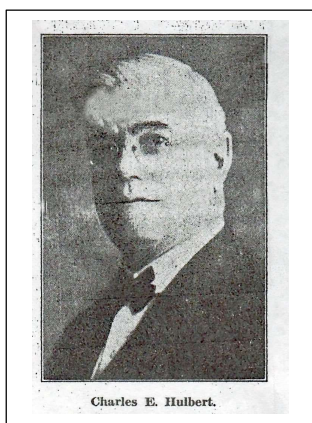
Hulbert was succeeded as Downsville Bank president, by his son-in-law, Alfred H. Griffith, who married Hulbert's daughter Cora. Griffith was born in Coburg, Ontario, Canada, and attended Potsdam

Normal College. He taught school for several years in one-room schools before coming to Downsville in 1906 as a civil engineer with the Delaware and Northern railroad. He started working as an assistant cashier, moved up to cashier and became president in 1938. A. H Griffith served on the Downsville Board of Education for more than 30 years. Mr. Griffith was one of the sponsors and took an active part in developing Myers field as a community ballpark and playground. Griffith served as president of the Downsville First National Bank until his death in December of 1945.

One of the longest serving presidents of the Downsville First National Bank was Marvin H. Bull. Bull joined the bank as a cashier at age 19 in 1918. "I didn't finish high school," he says, "I was caught up in the fever of the First World War and tried to enlist. I was either a junior or senior when I went to work."

Walton Reporter, April 26, 1978. Bull worked in every capacity at the bank and succeeded Alfred H. Griffith as president in 1945. Bull worked sixty years for the Downsville First National Bank, holding the office of bank president until his death in 1978. Mr. Bull was very active in the community, working with the Boy Scouts, he was the Community Church treasurer, a member of the Masons, and the Delaware County Men's Choir. Mr. Bull also served on the Delaware Valley Hospital and Downsville Central School boards.

The next Bank president, Alan R. Gladstone, graduated from Downsville Central School as Valedictorian of the class of 1947. After a tryout with the Brooklyn Dodgers baseball team, he worked at the bank until he enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1948 and was stationed in Germany until 1952. After his discharge from the Army, Gladstone returned to Downsville and worked at the bank, eventually becoming President and CEO in 1979. He worked through the reorganization of the bank in September of 1986 and continued as president until his retirement on October 1, 1991.



Downsville First National Bank Presidents

The Downsville First National Bank was merged into and operated as part of the Wilber National Bank in Oneonta, New York on January 1, 2001, ending the 96 years of operations of the Downsville bank. The Wilbur National Bank was again merged into the Community Bank, National Association in Canton, New York on April 4, 2011.

Bank Buildings

Rooms were rented in the Hulbert Department Store building when the Downsville First National Bank began serving Colchester. The bank moved to the new Opera House block building as soon as construction was finished in November of 1906 and remained there until fire destroyed the "fire proof" building on January 22, 1949. The Downsville Bank returned again to the lower half of the Paternoster building until December 1949, when they moved to their new modern bank building on lower Main Street.

Mourns Loss of Building

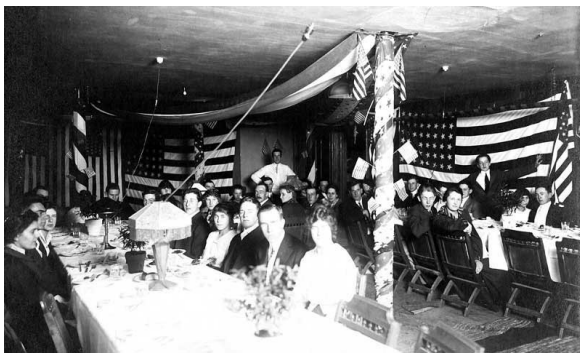
October 13, 1950-Catskill Mountain News. "The groups who have felt that the old opera house or concrete block was a disgrace to the community are gratified the debris has been cleared away, the

excavation filled with dirt and leveled off. Grass seed has been sowed so that next spring an old eyesore will be a spot of beauty.

There is a sadness connected with the passing of an old landmark where much of the community activities were held. Many of the native born can recall with pride happy memories of the dances, home talent plays, and the like once held there."



Opera House and Downsville National Bank building gutted by fire. In 1954 the Downsville Fire Department purchased the vacant lot and built their new Fire House.



Memorial Day Dinner at Opera House



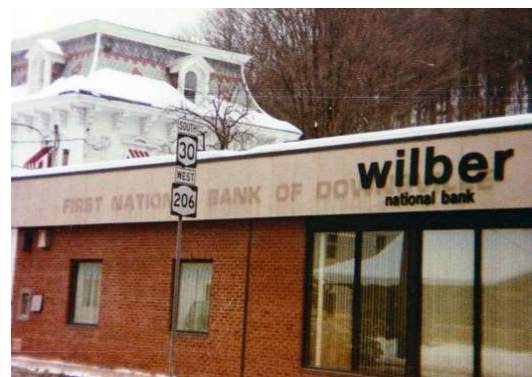
Play Cast in Opera House Theatre



First National Bank of Downsville on left and Opera House Pharmacy on right.



1949 new First National Bank of Downsville building.



After expansion and merger with Wilber National Bank.

New York Heritage Tree, the American Chestnut

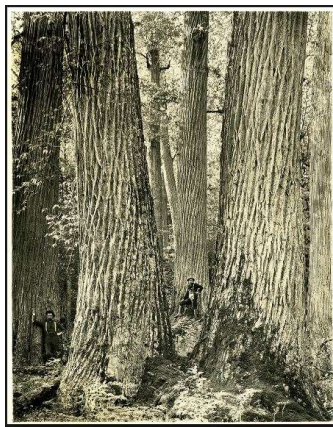
The American Chestnut was the dominate hardwood at the beginning of Colchester Township. In August of 1871, Horatio N. Beach, editor of the Brockport Republic traveled through the area, reporting that, "The timber was mostly chestnut, and their white blossoms added greatly to the beauty and grandeur of the scene." ***Delaware Gazette.***

Chestnut was used for its strength and rot-resistance, and was the preferred timber used for log cabins, especially along the bottom sills of cabins and also for posts, poles, flooring and furniture. Once forest areas were cleared for farms, chestnut was used for fence posts because of the large amounts of tannic acid in the wood that kept it from rotting for a long time. Chestnuts were also an important food source for people and livestock, as well as a cash crop.

In 1904 *Cryphonectria parasitica* or chestnut blight was introduced into the United States from the Asian chestnut trees on the grounds of the New York Zoological Gardens in the Bronx. This fungus spread by wind and rain entering cracks or wounds on the tree bark and then spreading to the inner portions of the tree girdling and killing the trees within two to ten years. A decade later this blight had spread throughout New York killing most of the chestnut timber in the state. Unlike most species, the dead American chestnut could stand for decades in the forests. Virginia Tech: <http://dendro.cnre.vt.edu/>

Chief Forester, Robert Reed, at the Shinhopple Game Refuge, reported in the December 10, 1937 issue of the ***Catskill Mountain News***, "the Shinhopple Game Refuge will have for sale before winter is over 5,000 cords of 4-foot wood, which the Federal Farm Security branch of the U.S. Department of Agriculture will offer for sale to the highest bidder. We have 53 men on the payroll, said Mr. Reed, "Where we are making sild-life slashing, we have to cut a lot of trees. The woodcutters at Shinhopple are engaged for the present in the novel task of converting standing dead Chestnut trees into hewn timber for Adirondacks shelters. These shelters have three closed-in sides and roofs, with one open side. Mr. Reed says that there is a lot of dead Chestnut in Shinhopple that can be used for shelters. The trees have been dead for 25 years, perhaps, but the wood is sound and usable. Our men will hew the sticks to certain dimensions, and later on, the sticks will be shipped to the Adirondacks. Mr. Reed says he expects the work at Shinhopple, with 53 men on the payroll, will be continued till June 30, the end of the fiscal year at which time the Shinhopple project will be turned over to the State Conservation Department."

Several Colchester residents are working with the NY Chapter of the American Chestnut Foundation restoration program to reintroduce blight resistant American Chestnuts in the Town of Colchester.



American Chestnut trees



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

Historical Society Meeting Dates:

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 7 PM

December 18, 2018 at 10 AM