

ECHO

The Newsletter of the Essex Community Historical Society Spring 1996 Vol 7

Champlain Valley Fair Celebrates 75th Anniversary
by Ron Clapp

The Chittenden County Fair had some early roots. In the late 1800's, there was such an event held in Burlington, Vermont. With the turn of the century, a civic organization located in Essex Center decided to host a fair. Grange #155, in the summer of 1913 discussed and then established a Fair Committee. Mr. and Mrs. C. H. Nichols, Mr. and Mrs. Harvey, Mr. and Mrs. Ayers, and Mr. McAlister (chair) were asked to serve on this committee.

The first fair was to be a one-day event. They decided to use the Town Hall (Memorial Hall) to exhibit fruit, vegetables, and fancy work. The local horsemen laid out a half-mile track on a large field located near the Center on Towers Road. Space was provided near the track to exhibit cattle. Yes, and there was horse racing. Besides horse racing on the day of the fair, some afternoon matinees were sponsored on consecutive Sunday afternoons. The first fair was held in 1914 and made a profit of \$286.58.

The following year (1915), the Grange rented the land from C.F. Chapin at a cost of \$100.00. The fair expanded to two days, and buildings were erected near the track. This fair was so successful that the State Lecturer (Grange) awarded the local chapter a \$10.00 gold piece for their excellent performance.

Each year the event became more sophisticated and organized. In 1917, the Grange went from a Fair Committee to establishing "Officers of the Chittenden County Fair." There was a president, vice president, secretary, treasurer, and five directors.

The local Grange continued to host the fair until 1921. Many factors played a role in the decision to stop the great event. The fair was getting too large, soil conditions (clay) were poor, and the location of the fair presented barriers because it was not centrally located.

The Champlain Valley Fair Exposition was conceived, and the Grange gave up its involvement. Sixty-eight shares were purchased by the local Grange in the new venture, some later to be sold to individual members. The CVFE worked very hard to have the fair on their site, now located in Essex Junction. However, the race track couldn't be finished in time, so they decided to host the fair one more year in the Center. In 1922, Essex Center witnessed for the last time this great event.

From 1923 until our present day, the fair has been held on its current site in Essex Junction.

NOTE: Special thanks to Harold Cross and Grange #155 for sharing their minutes so I could write this piece.

Harriet Powell Historical Museum opens Saturday, June 1. The Museum will be open each weekend through the summer on Saturdays and Sundays from 1:00 to 4:00.

However, we need volunteers . Please call Kathy Dodge at 878-4272 if you can help us out.

ESSEX ECHOES
Something From the Past
by Kathy Dodge

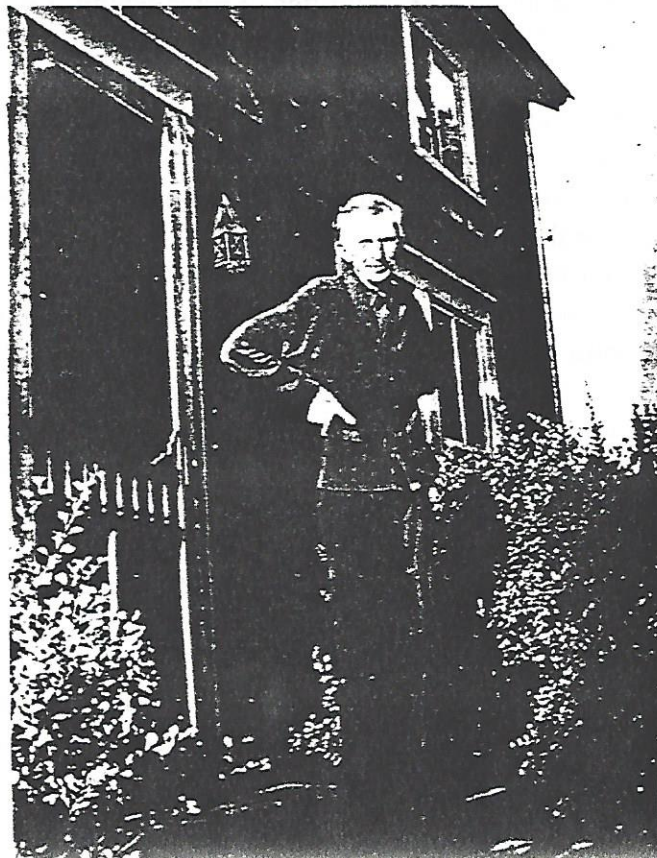
There are about 38 acres constituting the Lamell Development in Essex Center. In the 1920's, they all belonged to Leslie and Emma Tucker, who came from Shelburne with their son, Lloyd, and began farming the land that is now Lamell. There was a house and a hay barn. There were some cows, "about five", says Lloyd, and close to 500 hens. All those hens meant lots of steady egg customers, and the cows meant young Lloyd, beginning at age 12 and continuing through high school, had a Saturday and an early morning-before-school job delivering milk to costumers around town for ten cents a quart. Dixie the horse led the buggy in the summer and the sleigh in the winter, with rattling milk bottles protected from winter weather by an old buffalo robe.

Lloyd has stories about Dixie. "She had a notion of her own. Saturday mornings folks would invite me in for hot chocolate or coffee. Dixie would wait for a while, then just take off to the next customer." Lloyd would have to hurry down the road after her.

We thought you would like to see a picture of Lloyd's dad, Leslie, on the steps of the farmhouse. Maybe you remember it. Maybe you remember Dixie. And maybe you remember the farm that is now Lamell Development. We'd love to hear from you, if you do.

We would also like your stories. If you have some reminiscing you would be willing to do with us, let us know. We'll come to you! Call Kathy Dodge at 878-4272.

Leslie Carol Tucker in
1942 or 1943 at his home
on Jericho Road in
Essex Center



Essex Elementary Kids Study Local History
by Nancy Nye and Emily Tyl

Ms. Tyl and Mrs. Nye's second grade classes have been fascinated by stories of haunted houses, cobbler shops of a hundred years ago, and wagon wheels fixed in the old wheelwright's shop. This was just a sampling of interesting information they learned about the Essex of long ago.

The children created timelines that documented the history of many of the oldest buildings in Essex Center. This information was shared through a class newspaper which Mr. Rose organized. This task could not have been completed without the expertise of many local people: Ron Clapp, Harry Landon, Gil Myers, Dawn Francis, Lloyd and Betty Tucker, John Dubey, Mrs. Lawrence, Steve Jurnak, Ray Reynolds, Lester Pelkey, Thomas Tailer, Jerry Fox, and Susan Overfield.

Through this study of Essex, the children take with them a new enthusiasm for the history of our town. We feel fortunate that the children were able to use the Harriet Powell Museum, which is supported through the efforts of the Historical Society.

The following is excerpted from the newspaper published by the children in Emily Tyl's and Nancy Nye's second grade classes.

TRAIN STATION COMES TO ESSEX
by Kayla, Ayla, Cory, Sean, Alex, and Matt G.

The train station was built in 1877 so trains could come to our town. In the years between 1913 and 1921 the land became the County Fair Grounds. In 1938 the train station became a warehouse for the town of Essex. In 1996 the train station is currently being used as a private home. When we went to visit the buildings that were the train station, we were very surprised at the changes that were made.

Editor's Note: Museum board member Jerry Fox was interviewed by the children.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION: THE MUSEUM PHONE NUMBER IS 878-1354

Notes From Our Many Activities
by Ron Clapp

Collections

On April 9th at the 122nd Essex Classical Institute Annual Meeting, the trustees approved a \$500.00 expenditure for the museum. The generous gift is for the Collections Committee to create some new displays. We are very grateful.

Buildings and Grounds

New shades will be installed in the museum for opening day, June 1st. It is critical that the amount of light inside the museum is controlled. Too much light for too long a time could damage the collection.

Contractors are providing bids so minor repairs can be done, and the museum painted.

An Eagle Scout project will result in the museum receiving some much needed shelving for the basement of the building.

Historical Society Hosts Quiltsearch
by Richard Allen

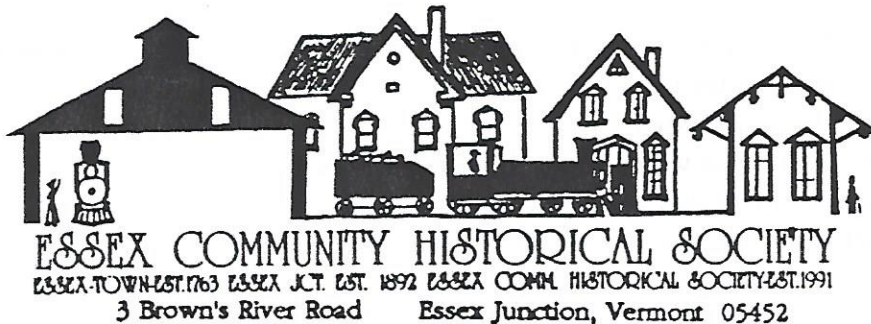
On Saturday, May 4, the Essex Community Historical Society hosted a Quilt Documentation Day at the Essex Elementary School. The Vermont Quiltsearch is "a statewide project to locate and identify quilts made in Vermont from pioneer times through 1960 before they deteriorate with age and their oral history is forgotten."

Richard Cleveland, chairman of The Vermont Quilt Festival, brought along all the equipment and expertise necessary to measure, photograph, discuss the quilt's condition, pattern, and materials, and estimate the age of each quilt. As much information as possible was gathered about the maker of each quilt. Each owner received a copy of the completed documentation form, along with a photograph.

The Quiltsearch has documented close to 5000 quilts since its inception. The event on May 4 added 54 quilts to that total. Cleveland was impressed by the variety and workmanship of the quilts documented.

Members of the Historical Society and others provided much of the needed help in measuring, handling, hanging of each quilt. Ron Clapp, Richard Allen, Tom and Beth Tailer, Betty Tucker, Faye Soderberg, Sharon Damkot, Ginny Cox, Janet Bowker, Jenky Dugan, Linda Bogardus, Harry and Jodi Landon were all on hand to assist in the effort.

It was a very successful event and plans are underway to host another quilt documentation day this fall.



Museum Flea Market on
the Green June 1, 10-2.
Call 878-5288 to make
donations.