



FALL 1998 Vol 12

From the President's Desk

Welcome to our second newsletter of 1998, put together by Kathy Dodge.

Since our last newsletter the historical society has held a very successful fund raiser. In early June the tag sale and raffle brought \$588 to our treasury. Thank you to all who donated items, especially John Kay, and Joy Longe of Welcome Home Wallcoverings for the raffle donations.

The Internet web site continues its expansion. We now have some photos from years past and soon should add more short descriptions of interesting pieces of Essex history.

In this issue of the ECHO you will read some of the delightful reminiscences of George Tougas and his early years in Essex Center. George reminds us all that history does not belong to just the

famous, but can also be instructive and entertaining from the everyday happenings point of view.

Also board member Derek Bratek details the Roscoe Printing Company, and some former third graders describe Essex history from their perspective.

Could you help us identify other Essex Center and Essex Junction residents past and present who could share their recollections as George has done? Please pass along any ideas to any member of the board, or call me at 878-3853.

A special thank you to Kay Helfrich who has made great progress on cataloging our collections and who organized the volunteers for the museum this season.

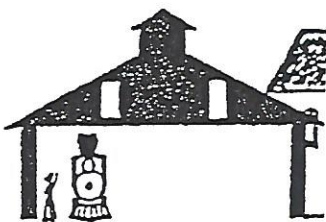
Thank you to Alicia Shanks for serving on the board and keeping the membership list up to date. Barbara Chapin has also served the society well as Vice President and Secretary. Betty

Tucker and Jim Overfield are also leaving the board and we thank them for their contributions. Betty is putting her artistic talent to work on our new hours sign.

Dennis Lutz of the Public Works Department has been most cooperative in getting a contractor to maintain our slate roof and deal with the leaks.

This marks the end of my term as President, but I will continue my involvement with the web page and the newsletter.

Richard Allen,
President



The annual meeting for the Essex Community Historical Society is Tuesday, October 6 at 7:00pm in Lincoln Hall, located at the Five Corners in Essex Junction. Author Tim Brooks is our guest speaker. His topic is "*Commuting Through Essex, A Writing Project.*" All interested people are welcome. A short business meeting with election of officers and board members will also take place. We hope to see you there.

THE TOWN OF ESSEX CENTER

**excerpted from *Picturing
the Past: A Schoolchild's
History of Chittenden
County 1760-1900***

**and written by third
grade students from
Founders Memorial
School. This section
about Essex Town was
written by Lauren Dube,
Dawn Doney, Bradley
Noth, Amanda Bruno, and
Dan Szafir.**

Essex Center was
chartered on June 7, 1763, by
Governor Benning Wentworth
of New Hampshire.

There are stories about
how different areas of Essex
were named. The Lost Nation
section of Essex near
Colchester got its name when
someone got lost there. When
he was found he announced
he was in Lost Nation. Alder
Brook got its name from the
alder trees around it. Two hills
in town, Brigham Hill and Saxon
Hill, still carry the names of
early settlers. Pages Corners
was named after Samuel Page
in 1812. He had a tavern, a
blacksmith shop, and a shop

where he made carriages and
sleighs.

Samuel Smith was one of
the first settlers in Essex. He
built a log cabin behind the
Bushey farm. He purchased
land from Ira Allen in 1775.

The first building
erected near the "Center" as it
is now called stood on the
southeast corner of the
common. It was built before
1800 by Samuel Pelton.

In 1804 a sawmill was
built on the bank of Alder Creek
by Samuel Pelton. Mr. Pelton's
reservoir and dam were carried
away in the disastrous freshet,
or flood, in 1830. Another
sawmill was built in Essex
Center by Oliver Bliss. It was
also on Alder Creek.

In 1794 in a meeting of
the people of Essex, it was
decided that they should have a
cemetery. They put it in the
center of Essex. It is still used
today as a cemetery.

The first school house
was a log cabin. The first
school master was John Finch,
an Englishman. The children
sat on rude slab benches and
the desks were made out of the
same material. In 1805 there
were 320 students in town
between four and eighteen
years of age.

The first school in town was built on the Brown's River near the Jericho line. The school children were transported to Essex Center School by horse-drawn barge or wagon. In the winter, the barge box was placed on a set of sleds. In the winter when the barge went in to a snowbank, the students leaned on the low side tipping the snow barge into the deeper snow. This made them very, very late for school, if they arrived at all! In November, 1853, the Chittenden County Institute was chartered by the legislature. The Essex Academy was built in 1855. The structure stood on the property where an elementary school is today! This academy was destroyed by fire in February 14, 1869.

Lots of people traveled through Essex in order to reach their destination. A tavern belonging to Joel Woodworth was probably the first tavern in town used by travelers. It was on what was the Harold Whitcomb Farm, near Brown's River. This tavern became the site of Brown's Tavern in 1865. As early as 1786 there were ferries across the Winooski River where the bridges are now. Around 1788,

there was a post road from Vergennes to St Albans. Essex had a post office by 1790. In 1828 the stage had a station for freight that needed to cross the Winooski River. The Vermont Central Railroad connected to Essex Junction in the year 1848. In 1865, the Painesville section of Essex became the village of Essex Junction.

**In the next issue
read about the history of
the Junction.**

*Volunteers at the museum
for the summer were:*

*Betty Tucker, Richard and
Lucille Allen, Nancy
Bartlett, Diane DiGennaro,
Kay Helfrich, Lorraine
Marshall, George
Cunningham, Judy McDonald,
DeeDee Cemel, Gil Marshall,
Jerry Fox, Harry Landon,
Barb Chapin, Bobbi
Mudgett, Kathy Dodge, Ellen
Wolonzinski, Russell and Elna
Prior, Sally Wright, Eva
Clough, Jim Overfield,
Sherrie Norton, and
Margaret Smith.*

Thank you all!



Roscoe Printing Company
by Derek Bratek

This spring the Essex Community Historical Society installed a new exhibit at the museum. What remains of the Roscoe Printing Company is on display to the public with hands on machines and printed products that the company made while in the Essex area. The Roscoe Printing Company was a large company that served a wide area of Vermont and New England from the late 19th to mid 20th century. It produced such items as labels, annual reports, newsletters, posters, and games. It was a common place to have advertising printed for business needs. Located behind what is now McDonalds, it was a three story brick building that stored all sorts of printing machines and equipment. Unfortunately, that building no longer remains. During the past 20 years, the building was neglected, the equipment was in disrepair and was outdated because of advances in printing by competitors. Before Roscoe's was torn down in the 90's, the Essex Community Historical Society was allowed access to the building to

remove what could be kept as a reminder of the business's part in Essex history.

Among the items collected for display are many examples of the company's printing from over the years, an apron used by Mr Roscoe, letters written to Mr Roscoe, engraving plates, printed paper advertising, and various printing equipment including a working hand cart elevator that would send messages from the first floor to the third. Also collected, but not on display yet, is a large device used by Roscoe's to create ledger paper. This machine is made out of wood and is quite a piece of craftsmanship. We hope to find a spot in our museum to display this unique, and very large item.

So stop in and visit this piece of Essex history.

As a supplement to the book YESTERDAY IN ESSEX by Harriet Farnsworth Powell, Mr. George Tougas of Colchester has compiled some of his memories of growing up in Essex. We are printing excerpts from that writing over

the next two issues of the ECHO.

Mr. Tougas' father's name was Joe and his mother's name was Rita.

"In 1929 my father Joe bought the hotel better known later as the Country Store, and the connecting shed or building which joined the garage which was a blacksmith shop in its heyday. I, George, was born in the front room of the hotel which then was our home....My father had a thriving business which was composed of apartments over our living quarters, a grocery store, a wood business, an ice business, a general garage, and wrecker service, all on the same property--the "corner" as it was called. Although the great stock market crash of 1929 came along in the fall my father, just having bought the "Corner" as a young man,...did not get discouraged. He was a man of determination."

Mr Tougas has some good stories to tell. The following he calls The Saw Blade Mystery.

"I don't remember the exact year, but as hired men were sawing wood for my father, the saw blade which was about 3 ft. in diameter, developed a crack around the

hub, or "center" and broke off. The saw went airborne, missed two men on each side of the saw, picked up some altitude, headed south over the town and buried itself in a gravel pile that the town put there for road repairs on the corner of Route 15 and Alder Lane. Well, news got around fast about town, and everyone was asking where did the saw blade go. Well, the mystery did not get solved until about a month later when a town worker went to the pile of gravel to load his truck. While scooping up gravel, he unburied the saw blade and the mystery was solved. The blade had traveled about a quarter of a mile away."

Another memory is about a canning factory.

"The Canning Factory, which was located near the tracks behind the Lincoln Inn, was owned and operated by the Baxter Brother Company of Maine. George Mills was General Manager. He was also from Maine. The factory ran about 40 years and closed down in the early 60's. During the canning time, the whole town could smell the aroma of fresh corn. It made you hungry and you could not mistake that it was fall canning time. They

hired a lot of people, but of course it was mostly part time when corn was being processed. They made just one kind of corn, "Cream Style Corn." After the corn was canned, it was stacked in large wire baskets and then put into steam cookers. After it was cooked, it was put on a long conveyor belt that ran through a water trough, submerged, to cool the cans down. When it came out of the water, it came to a wrapping machine and was labeled. Then it was stored and shipped. I worked there myself for a few seasons. Bob Whitcomb was the largest producer of corn for the factory. He had a corn picking machine. Most of the corn was shipped by rail. The farmers loaded their wagons and trucks with the corn cobs...after running the cobs through the corn blower, it was used for cattle feed."

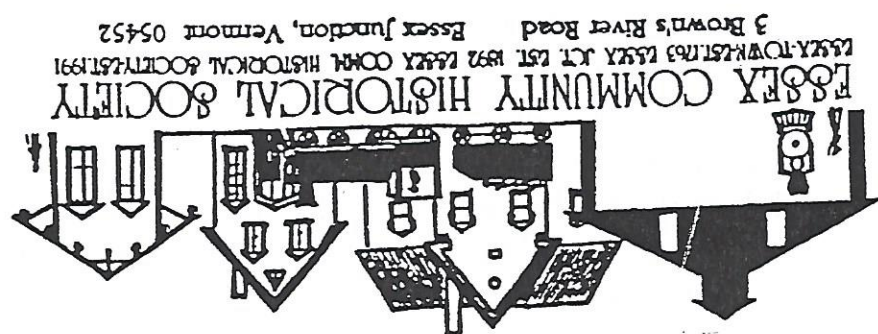
**And Watch out for
The Big Boom on the
fourth of July! Mr
Tougas remembers...**

"On or about the 4th of July in '40 or '41, three local boys thought they would do something different to wake up the town for the 4th of July. So the town got the biggest boom it ever got in history.

Well, it went like this. Winnie Ravelin, Lester Guyette, and I am not sure of the other men, borrowed two large anvils from a local blacksmith shop. I think they were 300 pounders and just before dark they put one anvil in the middle of the green, and then put a stick and half of dynamite on top of the first one, ran a couple of wires over around the back of the church, and connected the wires to a battery. Then came the big boom. Many people thought that the war had reached the town! Well, the first story tells of 68 panes of glass, but I think it blew out over a 100. You could hear glass tinkling down to the ground for about 10 minutes. Well, the boys were busy for the next 2 or 3 weeks, you guessed it, replacing panes of glass. Things were pretty quiet around town for a while after the experiment. It sort of closed a chapter."

And a newsletter. Thank you, Mr. Tougas, for sharing your stories.





THE ECHO

NEWSLETTER OF THE ESSEX HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Fall 1998

edited by Kathy Dodge