

ESSEX COMMUNITY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

ESSEX TOWN-EST.1763 ESSEX JCT.-EST1892 ESSEX COMM. HISTORICAL SOCIETY-EST.1991

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The Echo

The Newsletter of the Essex
Community Historical Society
Essex and Essex Junction, Vermont
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Essex Community Historical Society
3 Browns River Road
Essex Jct., Vermont 05452

Internet address:

www.essex.org/esxhs/esxhsindex.htm

A Message from the President

This year we had several accomplishments and adventures that made the year go by really fast. The Essex Classical Institute's 125th Anniversary celebration was very rewarding and exciting.

We have received several inquiries from around the nation: Where did Drury brick come from? Did Essex have an Underground Railroad station?

The Board of Directors decided to create an Archival Committee to respond to these inquiries. Their exchanges have been very enlightening.

A special thanks to Lucille and Richard Allen, and Tracey Brown of the Essex Technical Center for upgrading our newsletter. Richard has also maintained our web page. Thank you to Kay Helfrich for her help with collections and her high energy level in keeping the museum open during the summer.

We have some big challenges ahead. We hope to republish Frank Bent's book on the history of Essex, including an index. We would also like to secure a grant that would allow us to hire a person to write the next segment of our history from 1963 to the present.

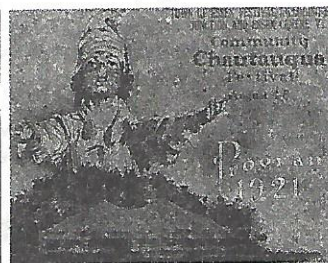
We will have several programs throughout the year and hope you can find the time to participate and enjoy them.

Sincerely,
George Clapp,
President ECHS

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The 125th Anniversary of the Essex Classical Institute and Essex (Center) High School Reunion

By George R. Clapp

Well, it's come and gone! But what a day we had. Approximately one hundred individuals attended the reunion. They came from California, Washington state, Florida, Pennsylvania, New York, Virginia, Wisconsin, Massachusetts, Kansas, Missouri, Connecticut, New Hampshire and Vermont. They came to meet fellow classmates, show their memorabilia and to share their stories.

The ECI Anniversary and Reunion committee (Barb Chapin, Christine Lawrence, John Duby and George Clapp) worked for 18 months to make August 28, 1999 a very successful day.

Twenty-four volunteers played a major role

in making the day a grand event. There were bus tours of the community, walking tours of the commons, school tours and interviews. These individuals came from the very families that helped shape the great foundation our community has today.

Some Facts

Two full graduating classes were in attendance:

1945: John Sleeper, John Whitcomb, Pauline Manning Bushey.

1950: Betty Decker Benedict, Janet Bushey Johnson, Harlow Desso.

From the class of 1948 there were six of the ten graduates, and from the class of 1944, five of the eight graduates.

The oldest graduate in attendance was Mary Weed Perry

Essex Classical Institute Anniversary and Reunion, August 28, 1999



Top row from left: Glenn Thompson, Harlow (Bud) Desso, Mary Landers St. Amour, Allen St. Amour, Donald Allen, Dan Marshall, Clarence Hubbard, Donald Bixby, Shirley Wool, Shirley LaFrance Tomlinson, Hollis Tomlinson, Joseph Boisvert, Doug Prior, Beverly Prior Mannings, Nancy Nichols Bartlett, Jean Fletcher Isham.

Second row from top, left- John Drinkwine, Betty Decker Benedict, Faith Duby Valyou, Monica Duby Lahaie, Nancy Whitcomb Kinney, Christine Deforge Lawrence, Mary Parker, Hazel Jones Somers, Iris Fletcher Willis, Ruth Matthews Bristol, Janice Guyette Gordon, Corinne Pouliot Catella, Bernard Catella.

Third row from top, left- Barbara Chapin, Joyce St. Amour Longway, Betty Duby Valyou, Floyd Sleeper, Bernie Hanley, John Duby, Robert Brown, Frances Woo' Daniels, Lenore McLaughlin Whitten, Helen Goodrich Henley, Virginia Mongeon Hempstead.

Fourth row from top, left- Russell Chase, Donna Smith Holmes, John Whitcomb, Pauline Manning Bushey, John Sleeper, Pearline Manning Learned, Janet Bushey Johnson, Dorothy Rich McLaughlin, Elwin McLaughlin, Virginia Bushey Merchant, Elaine Sheppard, Eleanor Roach McCormick.

Bottom row, left- Ruth Burgess, Joyce Lovely Berard, Mary Weed Perry, Eleanor Bixby Peterson, Alida Bixby Towers, Ruth Hanley Brass, Dorothy Mitchell Chase, Ramona Murray Torrey, Norene Bacon Lattrell, Barbara Wool Stewart.

Some Excerpts from Oral Histories from the ECI 125th Anniversary Celebration and Reunion

One of the highlights of the day was the chance to interview the attendees and gather some of their remembrances of their days at Essex (Center) High School.

Ruth Burgess:

Ruth: I was there in 1943. And then I came again in '49 '50 and '51, the last two years they had a high school. We lived right down here on Alder Lane, in the next to the last house on the left. It's still there; it's a little red house.

Q: So what were you teaching here?

Ruth: Home Ec... and English. One of the things we had to do in those days was to visit the home of every student and I think we had to go twice a year.

Q: Who's we; who do you mean?

Ruth: Oh, Home Ec... teachers throughout the state were expected to do that, to call on our students at their homes.

Q: Why?



125th Anniversary Celebration attendees gather around the wall covered with class photos and other memorabilia.

Ruth: To see the situation, to see what they came from. You see, there were many farms here when I first came. The Lang Farm, the two Lang girls, Ruth and Margaret Lang, took me to their barn and named every cow.

Ruth: In the big room upstairs in the Classical Institute at lunch time everybody would put their seats back. And Nancy Whitcomb, who's here today, Nancy Whitcomb Kinney, played the piano and everybody danced. Of course everything was very strict. At one o'clock, the seats would be back and classes would be going. It was a classroom, but it was a huge room, upstairs. Lunch hour. I imagine it went from twelve to one. They ate and then they had probably twenty minutes or a half an hour of dancing.

Ruth: I remember the principal, Ralph Mayo. Whenever there was a fire, he and all the older boys would go off to fight the fire always. He was a very small man but very respected. But if he did speak loudly, every kid and every teacher would, you know, come to command. But otherwise he was very easy. He set an easy atmosphere. The Mayos lived in the brick house that they are now fixing for the 1820 Coffeehouse going from here to Essex Junction on the left.



Alida Bixby Towers gets the crowd singing with her piano playing.

Ruth: Oh, I remember John Duby. He came from a bunch of sisters. I think he had three sisters and in his class he had seven girls. By the spring of '44, I was pregnant and beginning to show. It was a very different era, 1943, and the girls were all working at their desks one day. And John was working at the blackboard. (Oh, I taught math too.) He was working at the blackboard; And he turned around to me and said, "Mrs. Burgess, are you going to teach next year?" And I said, "No". And all the girls snickered. And then many minutes later — I don't know how much later — he turned around, was beet-red from here to here [neck to face] and said, "Why not?" You didn't talk about being pregnant in those days. It was cute. You know, as I said, all the girls were sitting there snickering. They thought that was a big joke.

Dan Marshall:

Dan: I was a teacher. I was here from September of 1937, till June of 1941, whereupon I went into the Marine Corps. I was teaching high school, and I taught Latin and French and seventh-grade arithmetic. — I'd had two years of French at the University of Vermont, but I was not fluent in French.

Q: And yet you were still teaching French class?

Dan: I was required to do it. And on Latin — I guess one can never be overqualified, but I majored in Latin.

Q: Oh, at UVM?

Dan: Yes, and jobs were very hard to get at that time. 1937 was my class at UVM, and I'm guessing about three hundred graduates; I don't really know. Either seven or eight of us had a job by commencement!

Dan: Teaching French in Essex was both interesting and harder because a large number of the families were farm families of Canadian descent.

Q: French-Canadian ancestry, right?

Dan: And they spoke French at home. One that I've seen since, one of those students — she was just complimented as having been a very good nurse — I think she told me that what she appreciated most was that I taught French. I was horrified!

She said, "Yes, but you taught me to read and write what I was talking every day." Now that's a different slant on it.

Dan: Mr. Mayo was the long-time principal, and he was very community-minded, and oftentimes there would be messages if a student was sick or something from a French home, or attendance or some communication had to take place. He would ask me, which was very difficult.

Q: And you would write those notices in French?

Dan: I could write them; I could write them, but that wasn't the problem. But on the telephone —

Q: That was difficult.

Dan: Oh, it was very difficult. So much so that, on a lighthearted moment, I said, "Mr. Mayo, do you realize I was hired to teach French, not to speak it?"

Dan: There was Elvira Pratt, who taught first grade, in a little school. The building still exists, next to the brook [Alder Brook] down there. She had the first and second grade and I think about sixty pupils. And she spoke French; she was bilingual. She did extremely well as a teacher of reading, particularly.



L to r, Monica Darby Lahair, Faith Duby Valyou, and Bette Duby Valyou share a laugh.

I probably have forgotten, but generally there were very few remedial reading problems in Essex High School, and I attributed it very much to the way they got started. She had a heart of gold, but every little child respected her.

Dan: One has to praise Mr. Mayo in that no one worked harder for the community than he did when they had a fire or to run the Champlain Valley Fair or any job in town — he was involved, working.

Editors note: The interviews were conducted by Elizabeth Allen.

P.S. The school cafeteria was humming with the swapping of stories of present lives, the sharing of memories past, the camaraderie of a common experience. As George Clapp approached me, I thought he was going to relay some logistical detail about the progress of the afternoon (as we had sat together on the organizing committee for this event.) Instead he said, You should go talk to that man over there; he was one of your uncle's teachers."

So I made a beeline to Mr. Marshall and introduced myself. Dan Marshall was only too happy to talk about my uncle. In Dan's years of teaching at the college level, Tufts University, he used the story of my uncle as an example of the quality of education one could receive at a small high school in a country town (which Essex certainly was in the 1930s).

It turns out that my uncle Bill (William T. Chapin), who left the farm after graduation from UVM and worked as an engineer in Syracuse, N.Y., was written up in Life magazine in the mid-1950s as one of a select group of engineers credited with taking the world into the Space Age.

The quality of the scientific work that Bill Chapin did was that high, and the degree of his modesty so great that I had never known about it.

What a surprise to learn that fact about my father's youngest brother at a time when he is 80 years old. It was a wonderful gift from the weekend.

Barbara Chapin

The Essex Community Chautauqua Festival, 1921

By Richard Allen

The Historical Society maintains a file of Essex ephemeral. A program for a Community Chautauqua caught my eye.

Tent Chautauqua's were traveling groups that operated in the United States from 1903 to 1930. The troupes moved from town to town giving lectures, concerts, and recitals in a tent. They were particularly active in rural areas. The increased popularity of radio was one factor in their demise.

The Community Chautauqua that presented this 1921 program listed their address as Church and Grove Streets in New Haven, Connecticut. An inquiry

with the Connecticut Historical Society and the New Haven Colony Historical Society was a dead end. They could find no listing in any of their catalogs, nor anything in their histories of New Haven. And worst of all, they were unable to locate any such organization in the old New Haven city directories. They did determine the corner of Church and Grove Streets would have been occupied by a number of office buildings at that time.

We would like to hear from anyone who remembers attending Chautauquas, either in Essex or elsewhere. Tell us what it was like. Would this Chautauqua have been held on the fair grounds?

See pages 9 & 10 for excerpts from the program

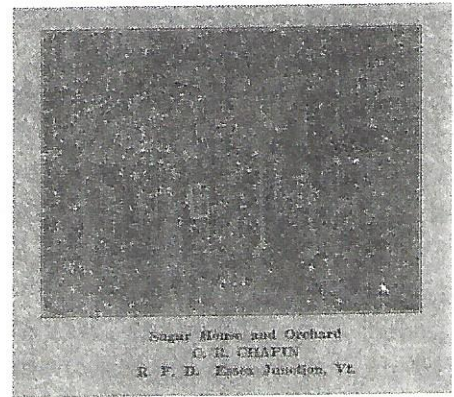
The Farm as an Integral Part Of the Community

By Barbara Chapin

At the height of its agricultural past, Essex was typical of farming communities throughout the state, with hundreds of family-owned farms dotting the countryside. The Chapin family of Essex is representative of any number of Vermont farm families, spanning over a century of time, farming a few hundred acres of land and at the same time serving their community. The following narration summarizes the five generations of Chapins in Essex, tracing the evolution of the agricultural pursuits as well as the families involvement in the community.

Chapins Arrive In Essex, 1860s Dairy Farm Is Established

Albert Franklin (A. F.) Chapin, born in 1825 in Jericho, was both a farmer and a schoolteacher there. In the 1860s he bought a farm in Essex (on what is now Old Stage Rd.) and lived there with his wife, Sarah Ann Palmer. Sometime between 1869 and 1871, he bought additional land on what is now Chapin Rd., built a house and barn, and continued farming until his death in 1888. The major income was from dairy products milk, butter, and cheese.



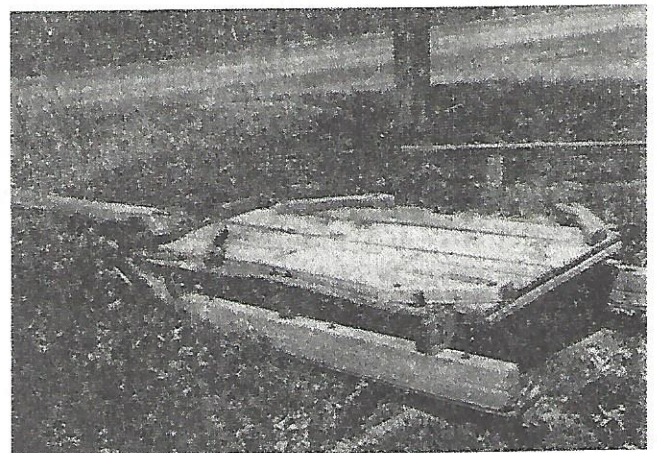
The Chapin Sugar House in the 1930's

Making Maple Syrup

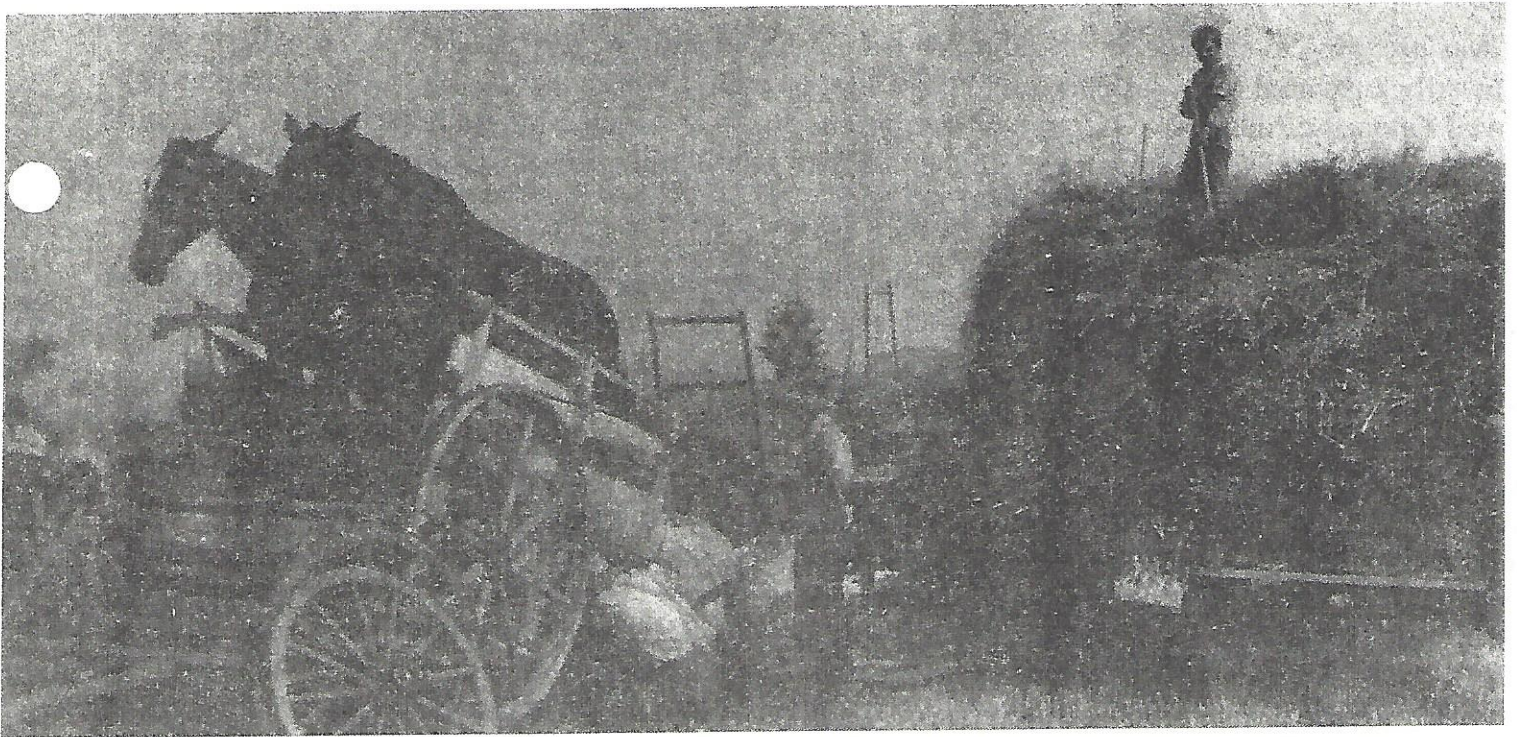
Although the dairy aspect of the farm was always the most demanding, A. F. Chapin (like his father) tapped the maple sugar trees and marketed maple syrup. These same sugar maples continue to be tapped over 135 years later. The sugarbush has recovered from the serious setback suffered in the 1938 hurricane. The methods of tapping and gathering the maple sap from the trees on those glorious sunny February or March days have changed over the years, i.e., from collecting onto horse-drawn sleds (still housed on the Chapin land) to using plastic tubing to bring the sap to the sugaring house to be boiled into the famous Vermont maple syrup. What remains the same is the ratio of anywhere from twenty-five to forty gallons of sap boiling down to one gallon of syrup.

Raising Morgan Horses

A. F.'s son, Willis Fremont (W.F.) Chapin (1857-1932) was a well-educated farmer, continuing the specialization in dairy products. In 1878, W.F. was married, at age 21, to Ellen Andrews from Huntington, Vermont. In addition to the dairy and maple syrup, he also raised and trained Morgan horses. Horses were used on the farm for chores; they were especially important for work in the woods, whether sugaring or logging, or other farm chores. W. F. served as Selectman for four years, held the position of Town Clerk for three years, was Justice of the Peace, and represented the town of Essex in the State Legislature in 1898. He was well known for talking at length about the importance of education. He was a notary public, served as president of the Board of Trustees of the Essex Classical Institute, and as a commissioner of the cemetery.



Sled used for maple sap gathering on the Chapin farm, late 1800's.



Threshing oats with horsepower on the Chapin farm. W.F. Chapin's son, Claude, as a young man, bending under the equipment, appears to be fixing it, early 1900's.

The Chapin Orchard is Planted, 1929

The third generation Chapin in Essex to continue on the farm was Claude Raymond (C.R.) Chapin (1880-1955). In addition to continuing with the dairy, maple sugaring, and raising Morgan horses, C.R., (with his son, Claude Jr. or June) planted an apple orchard in 1929. The original orchard remains as part of the current Chapin Orchard, although now owned and operated by Nick and Bridget Meyer.

Claude, like his father before him, extolled the virtues of education. He taught school in Essex, served in the state legislature in 1921, was Town Clerk, Moderator, Treasurer, and a member of the Eastern States Farm Exchange. He was involved in the formation of the Champlain Valley Exposition; Claude's father rented out his land between Old Stage Rd. and Towers Rd. for the charter event, where the old railroad station still stands.

Caroline Chapin Church, Age 95, Reminisces

Claude's sister, Caroline Chapin Church (1888-1988), who died three weeks before her 100th birthday, also reflected the Chapin tradition of service. She is remembered for her many faithful years of teaching in a Moscow, Vermont church and her generous part in establishing a new church there. She lived the last two decades of her life in Essex, two miles from the farm where she grew up.

At the early age of three years Caroline attended Schoolhouse #7 on Chapin Rd. and later Schoolhouse #4 on Page's Corner. At age 10, her responsibility was to open the school and start the wood fire. Her older brother, Claude, took her there every morning before he went to his school teaching post at Schoolhouse #5.

World War II: Young Man Answers the Call

Of Claude's three sons who survived past childhood, the second son, Claude Jr. (June) must be remembered for serving his country and his fellow man. Growing up, he thoroughly enjoyed farming

and was planning to share with his older brother Graton in running the Chapin Farm. In 1942 he voluntarily answered his country's call to fight against evil in World War II. He never returned to his beloved fields and hills and his dream of sharing the challenge of farming with his brother. He would never have the opportunity to appreciate the fact that people throughout Chittenden County to this day continue to visit and enjoy Chapin Orchard.

He was killed in action on January 4, 1945 in Belgium at the Battle of the Bulge and was subsequently awarded the Purple Heart for his courage and valor.

Post -War Years: 1940s -1980

The fourth generation son to operate the Chapin Farm was June's older brother, Graton Andrews (G.A.) Chapin (1910-1982). The primary agricultural pursuit continued to be the dairy operation; Graton also produced maple syrup, did some logging; grew, harvested, and sold apples; and kept bees and sold honey. As well, he continued the Chapin tradition of service to his community, by serving on the Essex Classical Institute Board for decades, serving on various committees at the Essex Center Methodist Church, and serving as Commissioner for Mountain View Cemetery in Essex.

The youngest fourth generation son, William T. Chapin, who today lives near Syracuse, N.Y. left the farm in 1943 to seek his future elsewhere, as had several of his aunts and uncles. The general consensus among them was that wherever they went, they found no place more charming than Essex.

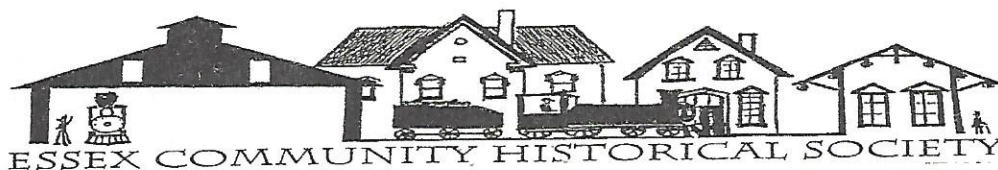
Chapin Farm Today: 1999

One century and three decades later, all that remains today of the original Chapin Farm is the current Chapin Orchard, an agricultural landmark in Chittenden County, frequented by many hundreds of people each fall. The dairy operation, which was the mainstay of the farm for over 100 years, is no longer in existence. Of the total 420 acres of land, the Meyer's own Chapin Orchard; the other 300 acres is divided among Graton and Jessie's children. (See accompanying article on Jessie Chapin.)

Of the fifth generation Chapins, the two daughters live on the land, on Chapin Rd. (In the 1950s, street names in Essex were renamed after the family that had lived the longest on a particular road.) Sylvia and her husband have operated a small Christmas tree farm. I maintain a small flower and herb garden and rent a hayfield to a local farmer. We both rent the sugarbush to a local sugar maker. Graton's son, Dan, who lives in Maine, also rents a large hayfield to provide feed for a local dairy herd.

Sylvia and I have remained active in community service, including agricultural, educational, and historic organizations. Sylvia has served as secretary in a Farm Bureau organization. I am the 4th generation Chapin to serve on the Board of the Essex Classical Institute. I am a teacher of 15 years in the Essex Town Schools, which are the continuation of the Essex Classical Institute. This is where our father Graton met our mother, Jessie Swann, during Jessie's first year of teaching in 1941-1942. I have also served as vice president and secretary for the Essex Community Historical Society.

Editors note: For a more complete visual record of the Chapins in Essex our readers are encouraged to visit the accompanying display in the Harriet Powell Historical Museum. The Chittenden County Historical Society provided financial backing for this project.



A Salute to Farm Women

By Barbara Chapin

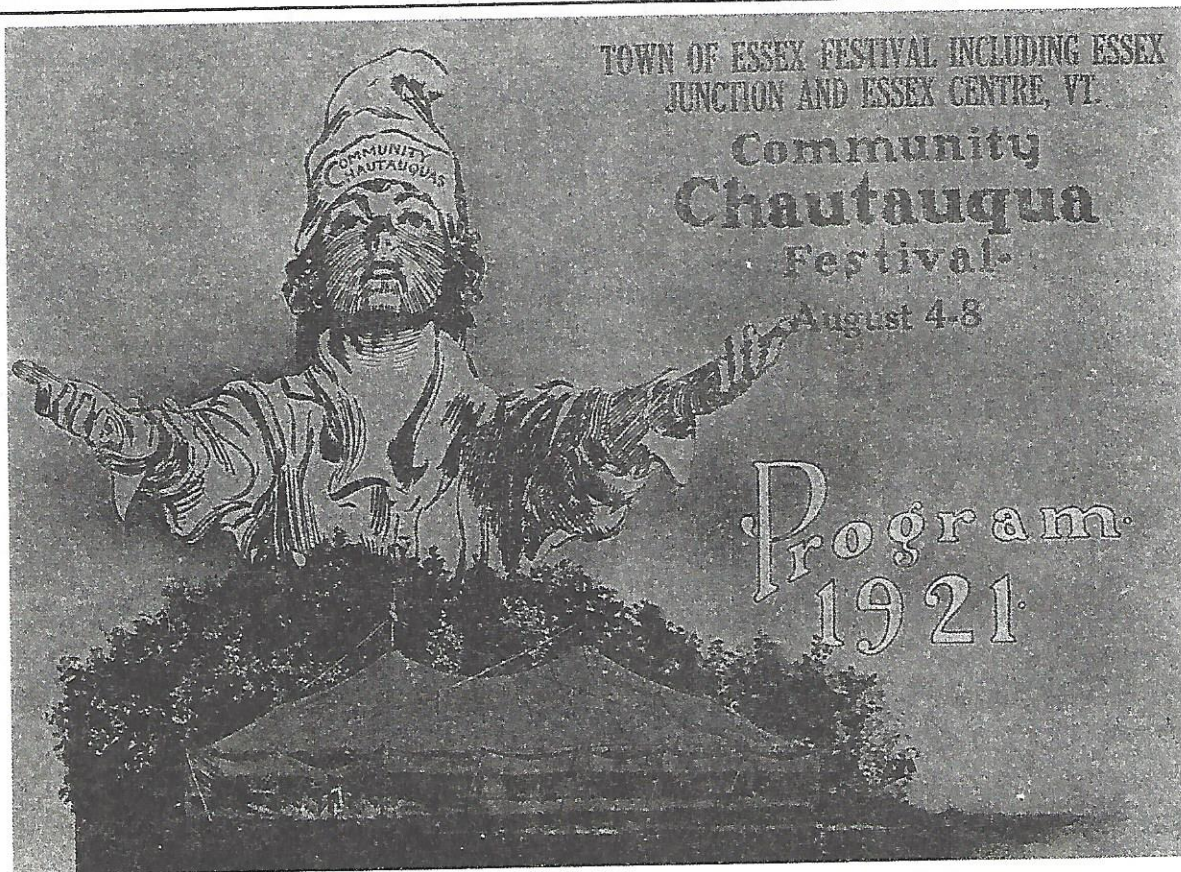
My mother, Jessie Swann Chapin (1920-1994), who with her husband Graton ran the Chapin Farm for 40 years, reflected with great grace and dignity the essential role farm wives played in keeping the whole operation running smoothly. Jessie brought to this role a keen intelligence, an alacrity for learning new skills, and an openness to a different way of life, actually a different culture from her childhood in suburban Boston.

A typical day for Jessie might include: arising at 5:30 a.m. to see her husband off for the barn; six days a week preparing a hearty breakfast for the men, husband and hired man, after they finished milking the cows; getting the young children up and ready for school; baking the families breads and pastries, fresh apple pies daily in the fall; continuing with other morning chores: laundry; depending on the season, gardening, canning, freezing; preparing a hearty lunch for the men; afternoon chores could include helping sort apples in season or dealing with apple or maple syrup

customers or answering phone calls related to the business.

The afternoon might include playing the piano at the local school for a concert or doing a practice session on the organ at her church. Evening chores continued with supper preparation for just the family (no hired man); sewing, knitting, mending; family time and always a bedtime story for the children.

The days were filled with long hours of chores. Other than 3-4 major holidays and minor concessions on Sundays, the routine was the same 365 days a year. Farm wives seldom had any time to relax or enough resources for luxuries. It was a way of life, perhaps a calling. The contributions from these women enabled farms to survive, even flourish. As well, the farm wives were an integral part of the community; they volunteered their time/skills in the schools; they ran church-related meetings and suppers; they organized 4-H clubs and other activities for the children; they participated in numerous other civic organizations. The parts they played in both farm and community life remain of inestimable value.



See article on page 5

**Essex Community Historical
Society
Board of Directors
1999-2000**
(denotes year of term expiration)

George R. Clapp, President (01)
18 Sage Circle
879-0619

Diane DiGennaro, Vice President (02)
47 Brigham Hill Rd.
878-0276

Eva Clough, Treasurer (01)
42 Brigham Hill Rd.
879-0849

Lucille Allen, Secretary (02)
3 Oakwood Ln.
878-5887

Ray Reynolds (02)
88 Park St.
878-2193, 878-2294

Barbara Mudgett (00)
58 Main St.
878-3853

Nancy Nye (01)
12 Saxon Hollow Dr.
879-7442

Tobe Zalinger (01)
6 Browns River Rd.
879-1249

David Clough (00)
42 Brigham Hill Rd.
879-0849

Judge Edward Cashman (01)
29 Lamaille Street
872-0615

George Tougas (00)
22 Village Drive
Colchester
878-4114

Kay Helfrich (02)
2 Mohawk Ave.
878-4417

Ann Yandow (02)
203 Main St.
878-5529

Missing Photographs

The Essex Classical Institute is putting together a folder that will have all the graduation photos from the Essex (Center) High School. This would include the years from 1920 to 1951. The collection will eventually be housed in the Harriet Powell Museum.

We have a copy of all the classes from 1928 through the last class of 1951, except for the classes of 1936 and 1929. We don't have a roster for 1929. However, we do for 1936: Emily Bixby, Hilda Phelps, Tom McAvoy and Melvin Lucia. We are also missing the class photos from 1920 to 1927. (The class of 1926 may have included Alvin Duby.)

The class roster for 1927 included Mary Weed, Ron Desso, Marjorie McNall, Dorothy Deacon and Charlene Macia.

If you know of any relatives or others who might know the location of these class photos, please contact John Duby, 62 Learned Drive, Westford, VT 05494 (802-879-1841).



*One part of the Chautaugua program presented in Essex
in August 1921.*

See article on page 5

Essex Community Historical Society
3 Browns River Road
Essex Jct., Vermont 05452



Membership Form

Please consider becoming a member or renewing your membership at this time. Or you can pass this on to someone who would like to become a member.

Your dues will help us add to our collection of Essex memorabilia, maintain the museum, publish the Echo, and sponsor historical programs.

+++++

_____ New member

_____ Renewal of membership

Name(s) _____

Street _____

City, state, zip code _____

___ Individual membership	\$5.00
___ Family membership	\$10.00
___ Senior membership (60 and over)	\$3.00
___ Student membership (full time)	\$3.00
___ Sustained membership (lifetime)	\$100.00

Make checks payable to the Essex Community Historical Society.
Thank You.

Echo, Fall 1999

Join us for our annual holiday sing along sponsored by the Essex Community Historical Society. We will meet at 6:30 p.m. for songs by candlelight and then move across the street to the Memorial Hall for refreshments.

Holiday Sing Along
Place: the Essex Commons
Friday, December 3, 1999
6:30p.m.

Over the past several years Tim has been working on a series of essays detailing what he has learned about his route from Chapin Road to Burlington. Come hear about Essex then and now through the eyes of an English born and educated writer and journalist. An Essex resident since 1995, Tim teaches writing and cricket at UVM.

November Evening Program
Tim Brookes will speak on
"Observations of a Radical Commuter"
Place: Essex Elementary School
Thursday, November 11, 1999 7:00 p.m.



3 Browns River Rd.
Essex Jct., Vermont 05452

Ron Clapp
18 Sage Circle
Essex Junction, VT 05452

Mellow Memories
by Mary Tracy
Brownell

Stories and remembrances about the Brownell family in and around Essex Jct.

Copies available at the Brownell Library (878-6955) \$5.00

UP COMING EVENTS

