

ESSEX COMMUNITY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

ESSEX TOWN-EST.1763 ESSEX JCT.-EST.1892 ESSEX COMM. HISTORICAL SOCIETY-EST.1991

A Message from the President
May 2000

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The ECHO

The Newsletter of the Essex
Community Historical Society
Essex and Essex Junction, Vermont
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spring and fall.

Spring 2000

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Just when you feel you have witnessed everything that could possibly happen when learning about Essex's history, something unusual comes along that supports current beliefs or changes your views altogether.

Recently we received a phone call from a lady in Houston, Texas. She wanted to know who Norman Woodworth was. After some thought we realized his name appears in the granite stone above the door of Memorial Hall. The tablet has the names of 30 individuals who lost their lives during the War for the Preservation of the Union (1861-65).

At a local auction she had just acquired 10 diaries that Norman had written about his life. Why did she buy the diaries? How did they get to Houston, Texas? Well you are just going to have to wait for future editions of the ECHO for the details to unravel.

The historical society received a letter from California. On the envelope were the words, "Photos, Don't Bend." Inside were nine photographs of members of the 1881 graduating class of the Essex Classical Institute. The photos included the principal and his wife. What connection did this family who sent the photos have with Essex? How did the photos get to California?

Raymond Shackett from Colchester, Vermont sent in a class photograph which he believes was his first grade class (1928-29) at the White Schoolhouse (now the Harriet Powell Museum) in Essex Center. Raymond lived for about eight years in Essex, a short distance from the Common. While living on Jericho Road he remembers getting picked up by a barge (wagon and horses) and attending the school. Can you help identify anyone in the photo?

Did you know that a professional baseball player called Essex his home? Bert Abbey grew up on a family farm on Browns River Road. He started his career with the Washington Senators in 1892. Why did this family let their son leave the farm to get involved in such a sport in a large city?

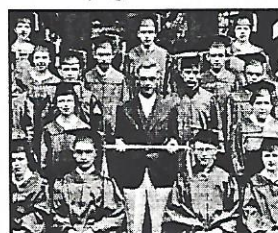
The reason for all the questions is to provoke your interest in Essex's history. One of our goals for this year is to increase our membership. This is extremely important for us to grow as an organization. Remember you can get involved at any level you desire. Please renew your membership and bring a neighbor or friend along with you.

We hope you visit the museum this summer and attend one of our events.

Enjoy the ECHO.

Respectfully,
George Clapp
President

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Upcoming
Events

Essex Junction High School in the 1930's

By Noah C. Thompson

Anyone coming back to Essex today after being gone for some sixty plus years would be amazed at the changes-especially in the High School that now graduates around 300 students each year, said to be the largest in the state.

When I entered the freshman class in September 1932 the high school was located in what is now the Thomas Fleming building on Prospect Street. There have been two location changes since, first to the Maple Street school (now A.D.Lawton Intermediate school) and then to the present location at the Educational Center.

In 1932 the high school students occupied the top floor of the Fleming building. Grades three through eight had the lower floor. The first and second grades were in the Park Street School building. This was the extent of the Essex Junction schools.

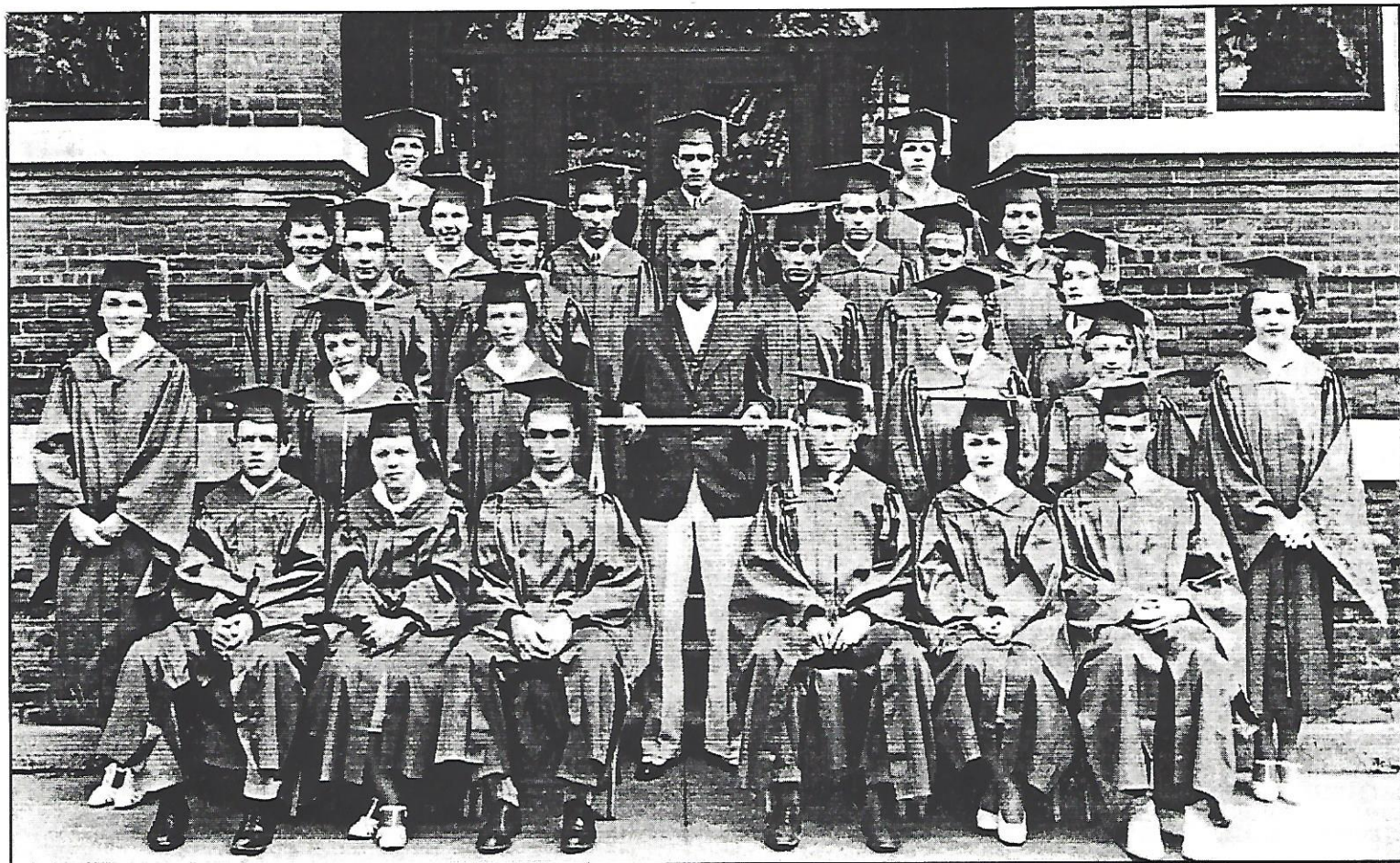
At that time the high school floor had a large study hall (home room) for all the students, freshmen in front, sophomores next, then the juniors and the seniors in the rear, a privileged priority system. The floor had several classrooms and a pint sized library. A small principal's office was located on the south landing halfway between the top and next lower floor. We had three different principals in the four years while I was there. A basement floor provided for the boys

and girls bathrooms as well as an area for typing and commercial classes.

The parking area for cars was in the back of the building but it didn't take much space. Only a few teachers and some out of town students came by car, 12 to 15 at the most. The rest walked to school. Not much like today when finding parking spaces present a major problem.

There was no gym in the Fleming building as there is today, just a bare bones school. These were the Depression years when money was in short supply. Music, art and special activities were at a minimum. Boys and girls basketball and boys baseball were the only organized sports-no football. Basketball practice and games were held at the Park Street School gym. It was most inadequate, a square ban-box, no showers or dressing facilities. Opposing teams didn't like to play there and seldom did, so most of the games were played away. Baseball practice and games were held at the Champlain Valley Fair Grounds. The players would change into their uniforms at the high school, then follow the path over the hill to the fairgrounds. The Junior Prom was held upstairs in the west end of Lincoln Hall, the Village (and Town at that time) Office Building.

I graduated in the Class of 1936. We had 25 graduates, only 17 from Essex Junction. The rest were from surrounding towns with no high School: Colchester, Westford and Williston.



*Essex Junction High School
Class of 1936*

*Front row, l. to r. Robert Redmond, Dorothy Bartemy, Noah Thompson, Robert Smith, Margaret Dorr, Robert Irish
Standing: Class Marshal, Harris McKenzie, Class of 1937
2nd row, Ila Goodyear, Eldora Lawrence, Irma Nichols, Eula Prescott, Margaret Miles, Lois Dorr
3rd row, Roland Thompson, Sylvester Thompson, Herbert Leach, Charles Hawkins, Beatrice Prescott
4th row, Vivian Fleming, Laura Duclos, Maurice Thayer, Raymond Germain, unknown
Top row, Elsie Jane Johnson, Wellington Perry, Beatrice Center*

Essex Town had its own high school in the Essex Classical Institute building in Essex Center.

We may have been the only class that never had a class reunion or informal get-together. Where are they now? A few still live in the area, several have passed away and others gone to parts unknown, but not forgotten.

By today's standards our school would have been called a disaster, inadequate studying and learning conditions,

too few reference and research guides and a lack of extracurricular activities. There were no guidance counselors, no school nurse, no bussing, not much of anything extra that cost money. This was a low point in our nation's history, four of the lowest years in the depth of the Great Depression. However we had a great class, coped with whatever hardships that came along, got an education and thought life was great. It was a memorable period in our lives.

HOW ESSEX JUNCTION GOT ITS NAME!

At one time, Essex Junction was referred to as Hubbels Falls. First the name only applied to the natural falls themselves. As industry gathered around the falls, the homes encompassed them. With the coming of the railroad workers, who were racing to construct Governor Charles Paine's line from Northfield to Burlington, people began to refer to the area as Painesville. When the area became an actual station on the railroad in 1850, the name was formally adopted in honor of the Governor.

The Vermont and Canada railroads junctioned its line in 1853 with Vermont Central in Essex. By the end of the year, six railroads were making junction ties in Essex. Conductors on these lines were calling "Essex Junction" indicating to passengers the necessity to transfer at this point.

Governor Paine had met with financial disaster and had left the state. His Vermont Central had been taken over by other moneyed interests. The new owners were not interested in perpetuating their predecessor's name. The new railroad station, which was built in 1862 on the site of the present station, displayed a station name board "Essex Junction." On November 15, 1892 the General Assembly of the State of Vermont approved the incorporation of the Village of Essex Junction.

Source: Town of Essex Bicentennial, 1763-1963

From the May, 1997 Village News.

Thank you to Charles Safford, Village of Essex Jct Manager, for this contribution.

Rails of Yesterday

By T.J. Sheehey
(date unknown)

No agent waits for passengers
Though the station stands here still
By the crossing, once a station stop
That was called North Underhill.

I stand on the line of the right-of-way
On the route of the old B & L
And I listen in vain for the whistle's blast
Or the sound of the engine's bell.

For the rails are gone from the rotting ties
Where the noisy wheels have run
And the cindery bed gives grudging life
To wild blooms in the sun.

No private cars or streamlined trains
This branch line ever saw
Or Pullman cars with lovely names
Like Teneriffe or Talaqu ah.
But local trains for local folk
Their schedule kept each day
For travelers both old and young
On errands grave or gay.

And sturdy freight cars in those years
Yon weed-grown siding knew
With names of seas and states and towns
The whole wide country through.

All these have gone.
And railroad crews no more the trains
attend
Through Essex, Jericho, and Underhill
To Cambridge round the bend.

It has been said, somewhere I've heard
Not all the powers unseen
Can make that which has occurred
As if it had not been.

Yet here it seems that Nature strives
To sink in Vermont's soil
The least small sign of what was once
The Burlington and Lamoille.

The Burlington & Lamoille Railroad

The Burlington and Lamoille Railroad was first proposed in 1867. Construction was started in 1875 and was completed in 1877.

The line ran from Burlington, through South Burlington, Essex, Jericho, Underhill, Westford, Fairfax, to Cambridge, where it connected with the Vermont division of the Portland & Ogdensburg Railroad.

At one time the line ran three passenger trains a day in each direction. It took 2 hours to travel from Burlington to Cambridge with stops. The fare was \$1.15.

Freight included lumber and dairy products, coal, firewood, granite, grain, potatoes, eggs, oysters, ice, and livestock.

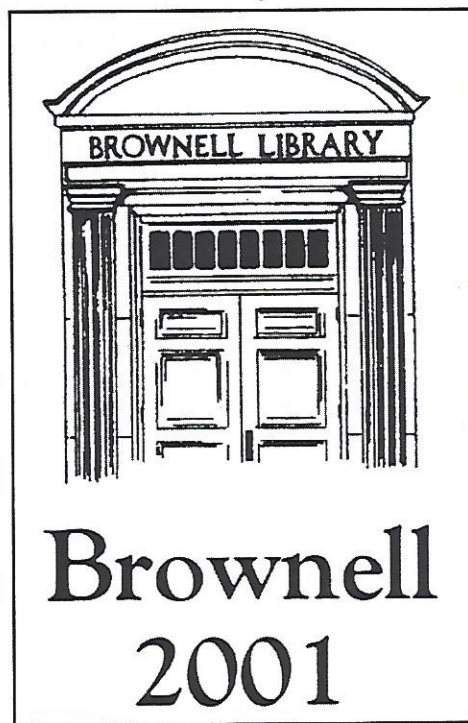
The B & L ran excursion trains to the Chittenden County Fair in Burlington and the Lamoille County Fair in Morrisville. There were also tourist excursions to Mt. Mansfield and the White Mountains.

In 1880 the line between Burlington and Essex was abandoned.

The downfall of the line came with general economic decay in the area, the Depression, the Flood of 1927, and the onset of autos and trucks.

The line was abandoned in 1938. The last train ran on June 16.

Source: "Optimism Derailed: The Economic Impact of the Burlington & Lamoille Railroad"
by Gerald Fox, M.A. Thesis, UVM, May 1993.



THE BROWNELL LIBRARY

The older section of the library facing Lincoln Street (Route 2A) was a gift from Samuel A. Brownell to the Village of Essex Junction in 1926. The library was the fruit of seven years of study and planning. Frank L. Austin of Burlington drew up the blueprints to conform to the Vermont location.

The benefactor described the building thus: "It is colonial in design, built of brick from the Drury Brick and Tile Company of Essex Junction; the foundation is of Lake Champlain red stone; the roof of fadeless black slate; the water tables, window sills and entrance columns are of white marble from the Vermont Marble Company; the trim of interior, including the bookshelves, was made by Morgan Brothers of Burlington. You see, it is in every sense a Vermont building."

The total cost of the building and its furnishings, exclusive of the site, came to \$20,000.

Through the years, the basic structure of the library remained unaltered. In 1962, the Essex Junction Lions Club finished off the basement. In June of 1968, Village voters approved a \$250,000 bond for an addition to the facilities. Freeman, French and Freeman of Burlington was selected as the architect, and the construction contract was awarded to Leo Spear Contracting Company of Vermont. Designed to harmonize with the architecture of the older building, the addition, which was completed in 1970, more than doubled the space.

The librarian's annual report of 1927, the first full year's use of the Brownell Library, listed a collection of some 3,000 volumes with an average monthly circulation of 925. The population of the Village at that time was 1,410.

In 1972 the library served a Village of 6,511 inhabitants. The collection numbered more than 16,000 volumes with an average circulation of nearly 6,500 each month. (Source: Look Around Chittenden County, VT.)

Today, the Village of Essex Junction has a population of 8,500 residents, and the Library's collection totals 62,569 volumes with an average monthly circulation of 13,281.

September, 1999 issue of the Essex Junction News

Thank you to Charles Safford, Village of Essex Jct. Manager, for this contribution.



Class photo from 1928-1929. Taken at the White Schoolhouse in Essex Center. Raymond Shackett, now of Colchester, is standing in the front row on the left wearing knickers. Can anyone help identify the teacher or the other students? Please contact George Clapp at the Historical Society if you can help.

The Historical Society Needs You

We need volunteers at the Harriet F. Powell Museum this summer, to act as a host for visitors. The museum will be open on Saturdays and Sundays from June 3rd to October 15th for three hours each day, 1-4 p.m. Please call any board member to volunteer at the museum. There will be a training session for volunteers on Saturday June 3, at 11 a.m. at the museum.

We are always looking for interesting remembrances of Essex and Essex Jct. to publish in our newsletter and on our web page. It could be about your youth here, an historical site, or some unusual happening in the past. Contact Richard or Lucille Allen at 878-3853.

We are also interested in artifacts, publications, and ephemera that reflect on Essex's past. Feel free to bring anything of this nature to the attention of any board member.

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

Lucille Allen, Secretary (02)
3 Oakwood Ln.
878-3853

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

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

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

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

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

George Tougas (00)
248 Village Drive
Colchester 05446
878-4114

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

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

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

Barbara Mudgett (00)
58 Main St.
878-5887

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) _____

Mailing address

Street _____

City, state, zip code _____

Phone number _____

___ Individual membership \$5.00

___ Family membership \$10.00

___ Senior membership (60 and over) \$3.00

___ Student membership (full time) \$3.00

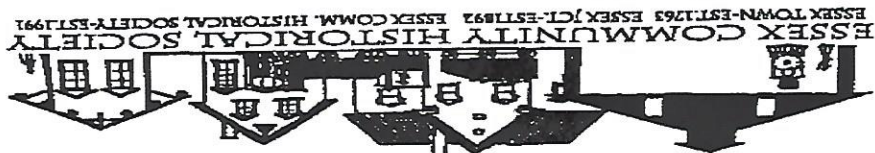
___ Individual-lifetime \$100.00

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

ECHO, Spring 2000

Dave and Eva Clough
42 Brigham Hill Road
Essex Junction VT 05452

Essex Jct., Vermont 05452
3 Browns River Rd.



Historical Baseball Presentation, May 31

The Vermont Historical Society has just opened a brand new exhibit called "Baseball in Vermont: An Enduring Love of the Game." It shows the history of the game as it evolved over time, telling the stories of the teams at the local, college, and professional level and of the fans and the communities that supported them, according to the VHS.

In the new book Green Mountain Boys of Summer by Tom Simon, there is a chapter on Bert Abbey, a major league baseball player from Essex, Vermont. Essex resident Pat O'Connor, who researched and wrote the chapter, will present on **Wednesday, May 31, at 7:00 p.m. at the Essex Elementary School.** This presentation is sponsored by the Essex Community Historical Society.

The public is invited. Please attend and support the ECHS and its programs.

Essex Community Historical Society Tag Sale

Saturday June 3, 2000
9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Please consider donating your unwanted items to our tag sale. We need items in good condition: furniture, dishes, household items, toys, etc. Please no clothes, books, tires, mattresses, or plants.

Call either of the following people to arrange a pick up of your items:

George Clapp, 879-0619
Dave Clough, 879-0849

Or items can be dropped off at the museum on Thursday, June 1 from 6:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

This is our biggest fundraiser of the year. Please help us out.