

## ESSEX, VT COMMUNITY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



### President's Message

As we end our twenty-fourth year as the Harriet Farnsworth Powell Historical Museum and the Essex Community Historical Society plans are in the works for the upcoming twenty-fifth anniversary celebration. The Board is already making plans for new displays on Essex in the museum and an exciting series of public programs. Members will see details of the Anniversary Year celebrations in the Spring 2016 newsletter. As this is our Annual Giving Campaign newsletter issue, we invite you to support our Anniversary Year activities with a donation in any amount.

We had a busy year at the museum this year. We had the distinct honor of welcoming the Purple Heart of Bruce Baker delivered to us by Zachariah Fike of Purple Hearts Reunited, see story and pictures in this ECHO. Many thanks to Laurie Jordan for her continued support of the museum by her school tours both in Essex Center and Essex Junction. She gave tours to approximately 195 students and adults. We are happy to announce that we welcomed approximately 150 visitors to our museum; Harriet would be so pleased that her dream of educating more of our young people is growing. We also had a display at the Champlain Valley Fair.

Our Tales & Treasures of Essex public program series drew a total of around 200 people, with many of them attending for the first time. People who attended came from as far away as Barre, as well as from Burlington and South Burlington.

We want to thank the local businesses who made the 2015 Tales & Treasures of Essex series possible by their financial support. Our Major Sponsor was TD Bank, and the Series Sponsor was Fort Ethan Allen Industrial Park/Will Parkinson. Program Sponsors included Merchants Bank, Phoenix Bookstore and Sweet Clover Market. In Kind donors were Full Circle Gardens of Essex, Hannaford Essex Supermarket, Sam's Scoop Shop and West Meadow Farm Gluten Free Bakery.

We welcomed Art Cohn as our speaker at our annual meeting; he talked about Lake Champlain Shipwrecks & Salvage and honored Polly McEwing, Kathy Dodge and Laurie Jordan with Life Memberships. Polly is stepping down after serving several years on our board; she has generously agreed to continue entering our collection information into the computer, hoping that someone will step up and take over for her. Although Tim Jerman is stepping down from the board due to his very busy work schedule, he has graciously agreed to continue to write articles for the ECHO. Paula is stepping down as Co-President but will continue on the board and will still head up our programs. Denise is stepping down as Secretary and Jan Kilmer will take over that position. Denise is busy finishing up her last semester at St. Mike's so she can graduate in December while holding down a full time job. We welcomed new board member, Alan Luzzatto.

We are looking for new board members. Our board is decreasing and it is hard to find new people who are interested in learning more about our community and would like to help preserve our history and memorabilia. Please email me at [essexcommunityhistoricalsociety@myfairpoint.net](mailto:essexcommunityhistoricalsociety@myfairpoint.net) if you are interested. We meet the third Thursday of each month at the museum starting at 7:00 PM.

Thank you to Ruth Ann Beers who volunteered several times to help keep our museum open this summer and those that helped to make Family Day and Open House a success, your help was greatly appreciated.

Our final public events of the 2015 season are coming up The Annual Essex Tree Lighting & Sing-Along is Friday, December 4th. We thank our members for their support of the Harriet Farnsworth Powell Museum and hope to celebrate with you at our final events for 2015!

**Eva Clough, President**

# Arthur H. Packard Sr.

## One of the Most Influential Vermonters of the Twentieth Century

researched & written by Hubert Norton

While recovering in the hospital, after nearly losing his arm to blood poisoning due to a farming accident, Arthur Packard was told that he had been elected to become the second president of the Vermont Farm Bureau. The Vermont Farm Bureau had formed in 1918 to provide assistance for farmers by improving farm practices, develop marketing opportunities and extending other services to the Vermont agricultural community. Mr. Packard had been president of the Chittenden County Branch of the Farm Bureau for six years, and in 1928 he became the second president of the state wide Farm Bureau organization.

Arthur Henry Packard Sr. was born on January 24, 1885 in Jericho, Vermont in the same house where his father was born and in the same town where his ancestors had been since the 1790's. He attended the Essex Classical Institute (ECI) in Essex Center only in the fall and winter terms in order to work on his father's farm during the rest of the year.

He graduated from ECI in 1904, rented the Jericho farm from his father in 1906, and was married in 1915 to Ruth Weidenbacker. Arthur and Ruth were married for 60 years and they had four children.

His first real introduction to the governmental process was from 1923 to 1924 when he served in the Vermont Legislature as the representative for the Town of Jericho. This set the stage for his lobbying efforts when he became the president of the Vermont Farm Bureau four years later. He was president for 25 years of the Vermont Farm Bureau and his influence brought "...significant change and progress..." Note 1 to the fledgling organization where he was often known as "Mr. Agriculture" Note 2 and "The second Will Rogers" Note 3. He was instrumental in making affordable insurance available to farmers, had a leading role in establishment of cooperatives within the State and was a driving force in Rural Electrification Administration (REA) expansion to rural areas in Vermont. He also served on the national board of the American Farm Bureau Federation for ten years. Dean Carrigan of the University of Vermont said, "He had the trust and respect of Vermont farmers, not so much because he is considered an authority on farm matters all over the country, as because he is one of them." Note 4. Recognizing him as a state and national leader of stature, the University of Vermont granted Mr. Packard an honorary Doctor of Laws degree. Note 3.

Although the Farm Bureau as an organization did not get involved in political activity, "Packard was directly or indirectly involved in many political battles." Note 1. He supported Governor George Aiken in State affairs, and later worked with Senator Aiken on national issues. In 1946 he "...was, in large part, responsible for a major political upset." Note 1 when he rallied the Farm Bureau members to support Ernest Gibson II for Governor which led to the unseating of Mortimer Proctor who had served only one term in office. His influence in State politics continued



for many years and former governor Deane Davis in his autobiography noted that Arthur Packard was "...perhaps the single most powerful political figure in the state." Note 5.

Mr. Packard wore many hats besides his position as the president of the Vermont Farm Bureau, all directed to providing benefits to farmers. He was the state agent for Nationwide Insurance Co. from 1928 until he retired in 1965, was one of ten representatives of the American Farm Bureau sent to Europe in 1948 and was a director in numerous organizations including; Eastern Region National Farm Bureau for 10 years, Production Credit for six years, Co-operative Insurance Co. of Middlebury and Eastern States Farmers Exchange.

Arthur Packard's connection to Essex goes beyond his graduation from the Essex Classical Institute as he was also a member of the Grange in Essex Center and was instrumental in sustaining an important business in Essex. *In 1926 the Vermont Maple Products Association of Essex Jct. got into*



debt...and was forced to close its doors... A contract was signed with the Carey Maple Sugar Co. of St. Johnsbury and Mr. Packard was asked to travel through Vermont selling farmers the idea of marketing their syrup under this contract. Mr. Packard helped organize Maple Sugar Festivals to raise money with final result that the members were able to reorganize in 1932 free of debt. Note 3. In 2006, in recognition of his contribution to the agricultural community, Mr. Packard was inducted posthumously into the Vermont Agricultural Hall of Fame at the Champlain Valley (Fair) Exposition.

Chris Graff, a reporter for the Associated Press in Vermont for more than 25 years, described his reporting on primarily the political issues of the times in his book "Dateline Vermont". At the end of the book Graff listed what he considered "The 10 Most Influential Vermonters of the 20th Century" Note 4. The list included such notables as George Aiken, Deane Davis, Phil Hoff, and Ernest Gibson II and at number 10, Arthur Packard.

Arthur H. Packard Sr. died in 1976 at the age of 91 and "At his funeral, the Reverend Lillian Gregory called Packard "a man who was very likely the most influential and powerful man of his time in the State, who never sought high office or power for himself, but rather, worked hard to help people." Note 1.

Note 1: The Vermont Farm Bureau Story 1915 – 1985, Deacy F. Leonard

Note 2: Champlain Valley Exposition, Vermont Agricultural Hall of Fame

Note 3: Biography of Arthur Henry Packard, Rev. Lillian S. Gregory, Jericho, Vermont

Note 4: Dateline Vermont, Chris Graff, 2006

Note 5: Deane C. Davis: An Autobiography, Deane C. Davis with Nancy Price, 1991

Descendents of Arthur H. Packard have been long time residents of Essex and several members of the Packard family still reside in Essex in 2014. His family has donated his Essex Classical Institute diploma to the ECHS.

## WANTED: Information on Essex Vietnam Veterans

As part of the 50th Anniversary Commemoration of the Vietnam War, the Essex Community Historical Society, in collaboration with the Green Mountain Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, is putting together a tribute to the four Essex men who lost their lives in Vietnam. These men are Bruce Baker, Eugene Treadwell, Bernard Ritchie and Stewart Lavigne. We would like to hear from anyone who has memories or pictures of any of these four soldiers. In particular, we would like to hear from family members living in the area or hear from anyone who has contact information for family members



Memories of Bruce were shared at his Purple Heart return ceremony and afterwards; and Stewart's high school class has shared many memories, but more are welcome. We have not heard from anyone who knew Bernard or Eugene.

The remembrances will be part of an article in a future issue of the ECHO and in the Green Mountain Chapter DAR newsletter and will also be part of a memory book housed at the Harriet Farnsworth Powell

Please contact Ann Gray, 878-4088, or email [grayann8@aol.com](mailto:grayann8@aol.com) (indicate name of soldier in subject line) with memories or information about any of these four soldiers.

# Purple Heart Ceremony

By Ann Gray

This summer a ceremony was held at the Harriet Farnsworth Powell Museum for Purple Hearts Reunited to return PFC Bruce Baker's Purple Heart to the town where he lived as a child.

Purple Hearts Reunited is a non-profit organization that works to return last Purple Hearts to their owners or family members (for more information on Purple Hearts Reunited see their web page). PFC Baker's Purple Heart was given to Purple Hearts Reunited by Bruce's stepmother's second husband, Norman Thompson. Mr. Thompson had found the Purple Heart packed away in a box of his wife's things. In the box with the Purple Heart, were the telegram notifying the family of Bruce's death and a condolence letter from President Lyndon Johnson.

PFC Bruce Baker was a member of Lima Company, 3rd BN, 5th Marines (USMC) and on July 24, 1966, in Quang Tri Province, Vietnam, he sustained fragmentation wounds to the abdomen and chest while engaged in action against hostile forces. These injuries resulted in his death.

Purple Hearts Reunited searched for Bruce's family and found that both his parents were deceased and a younger brother, David, was killed in an auto accident in 1972. Since there were no surviving family, Captain Zachariah Fike, the founder of Purple Hearts Reunited, approached the Essex Community Historical Society about the possibility of returning his Purple Heart to us and the Board agreed to accept it.

The return ceremony was held on July 25, a day after the anniversary of Bruce's death. It was part of a day-long remembrance of Bruce Baker. The day started at the Vietnam Veterans' Memorial on I-89 in Sharon. After a short service, a Vietnam Veterans' Motorcycle group and Purple Hearts Reunited traveled up I-89 to Essex Center for the return ceremony at the Harriet Farnsworth Powell Museum. In addition to the Vietnam Veterans' Motorcycle Group and Purple Hearts Reunited, members of the Essex Community Historical Society and the Green Mountain Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution were in attendance. A beautifully framed Purple Heart was presented by Purple Hearts Reunited and accepted by the Essex Community Historical Society.



The last part of the remembrance was a trip to Bruce's grave in Fairview Cemetery where after a few words were said and the Marine Corps hymn was sung, each member of the Vietnam Veterans Motorcycle Group, one-by-one, gave PFC Bruce Baker a final salute.

Bruce's Purple Heart is currently displayed, and will continue to be displayed, at the Harriet Farnsworth Powell Museum alongside the World War II Purple Heart belonging to Claude Chapin. The Essex Community

Historical Society is honored that Purple Hearts Reunited and the Chapin family felt we would be good custodians for the Purple Hearts of two Essex soldiers who made the ultimate sacrifice for their county.

# The Essex Community Historical Society's 2015 Donors

## Abram Steven's Gravestone Restoration Fund

Maureen Labenski

Tim Jerman

Dan Cole

Ann Gray

Mary Finn

R. Ryan Kunkel

Alan Finn

Nancy Lewis

Thomas Houghton

Jonathan Wood

Andreita Pullis

Deborah Finn

Carol Kunkel

Harmony Cism

Amanda Kelly

Susan Pringle

Peg Hamlin

John Willey

Vermont State Society Daughters of the American Revolution

## 2014 Annual Fund Donors

### Founders' Circle

James Barrett

Bruce and Ruth Ann Beers

Malcolm Levanway *In memory of his parents*

Peg Hamlin

Alan Luzzatto

Nancy and John Bartlett

Patricia Bixby *In memory of Donald Earle Bixby, Jr*  
4/29/21925 – 10/25/2012

### Historians' Circle

Harnish Family

Joyce Tubbs

Kathleen Linde

Robert Wood *In memory of his grandfather, George Beecher*

James Cutler

George 'Ron' Clapp Circle

Ellen and Thad Wolosinski

Art and Jan Kilmer *In memory of Ron Clapp*

Ann Gray

Dave and June Keenan *In memory of Ed and Ione Keenan*

William Parkinson

L. Royce Griffin

Max and Alison Levy *In honor of Town of Essex staff*

### Harriet Powell Circle

Holly and Lynne Powell *In memory of Harriet Powell*





## ECHS Members Came Through in 2014!

ECHS members may have been surprised to see financial pie charts in the spring, 2015, newsletter. The charts, done by ECHS Treasurer Ann Gray, expressed a commitment by the Board to increase our financial transparency. Accompanying the charts were the names of thirty-nine donors who generously responded to our first ever Annual Giving Campaign in 2014.

A total of \$1255 from twenty-six donors went into undesignated general funds. Donations designated for the Abram Stevens Gravestone Restoration Fund totaled \$670 from thirteen donors.

In this newsletter, members will see charts showing types and amounts of expenditures for the ECHS fiscal year October 1, 2014 to September 30, 2015. Our major expense in 2015, the new roof put on the 1805 School House on the Essex Common, was paid for out of the Schoolhouse Fund. The Ron Clapp Memorial Fund retained its standing balance. The Town Fund and General Fund were used to pay expenses. And the Tales & Treasures of Essex Fund, made up of designated donations from sponsors for our public program series, ended with a small balance.

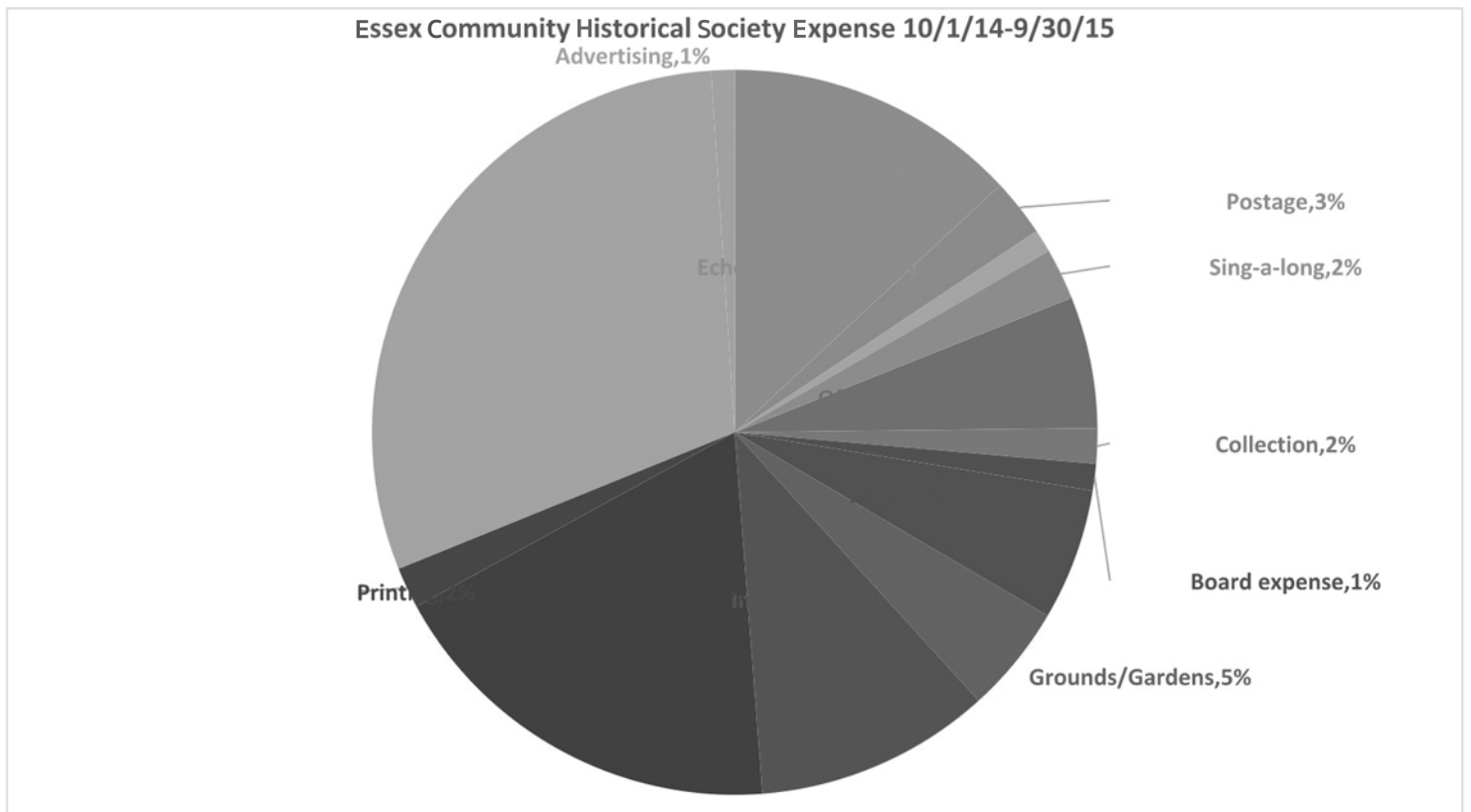
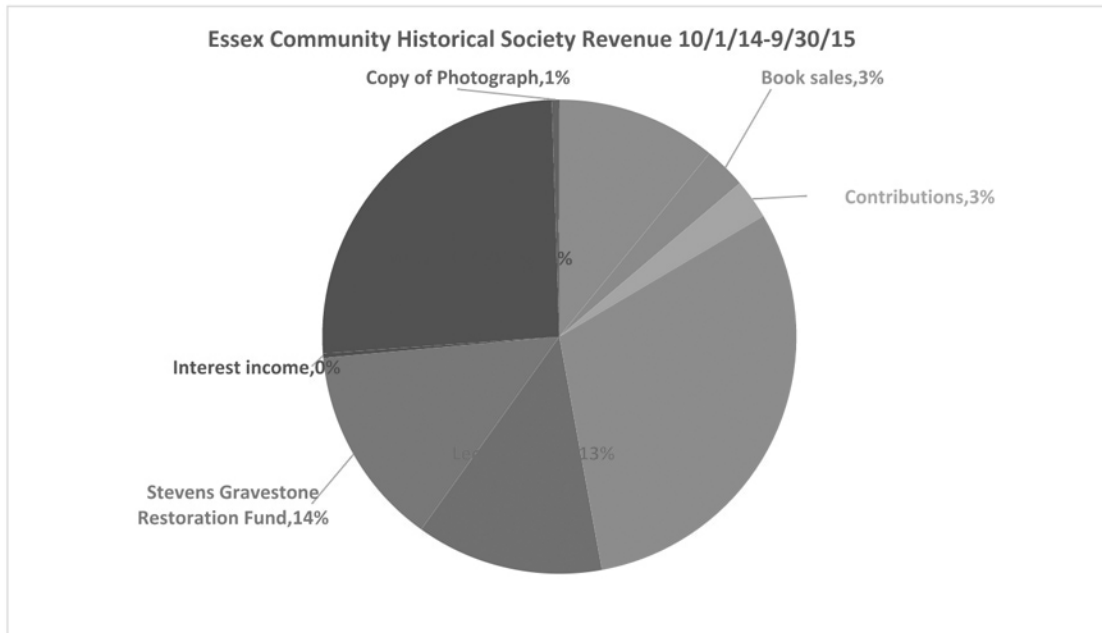
In this newsletter, members will find a donation envelope for our 2015-16 Annual Giving Campaign. **And the year 2016 is going to be BIG – it's the Essex Community Historical Society 25th Anniversary Year! The ECHS Board has plans well under way for an even bigger series of public programs, as well as a summer long advertising campaign to invite Essex residents into both new museum displays on Essex and new programs.**

The support of our members is what will make this celebration the most exciting year since the museum opening in 1991! Members may donate to either the General Fund or the Tales & Treasures of Essex Fund, which will support both programs and advertising for the Anniversary Year. Donations may also be designated to the Abram Stevens Gravestone Restoration Fund or the Schoolhouse Fund.

The Board sincerely thanks the ECHS members who came through for us in 2014-15. We invite all of our members who look forward to our exciting 25th Anniversary Year to consider a donation in support of our work for the Harriet Farnsworth Powell Historical Museum in 2016.



## ECHS Fall 2015 Financial Report



## Tales & Treasures of Essex Spring 2015 Photo Recap!

We opened the museum this year with live music by Derek Burkins of Jericho, face painting, checkers, yoyo demonstrations, weaving and museum tours followed by cake and ice cream. Fun was had by all!



**Like us on Facebook!**

[www.facebook.com/EssexCommunityHistoricalSociety](http://www.facebook.com/EssexCommunityHistoricalSociety)





## ECHS 2015 Board Members

**Eva Clough, President 802-879-0849**

**Thad Wolosinski, Vice President**

**Jan Kilmer, Secretary**

**Ann Gray, Treasurer**

**Paula DeMichele**

**Denise Groll**

**Alan Luzzatto**

**essexcommunityhistoricalsociety@myfairpoint.net**



## Essex Community Historical Society

P.O. Box 8388 Essex, Vermont 05451

### 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.

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 \$10.00

\_\_\_ Family membership \$15.00

\_\_\_ Senior membership (60 and over) \$5.00

\_\_\_ Lifetime: individual, married, civil union \$100.00

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





ESSEX, VT COMMUNITY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P.O. Box 8388

Essex, VT 05451



JOIN US FOR A  
**SING-A-LONG**  
**FRIDAY, DECEMBER 4TH 6:15 PM**

Starting at the Essex Elementary School and  
walking down to the common to sing with  
students, friends and family and the  
Founders Memorial Chorus.  
Everyone is welcome.

*Refreshments will follow back at the school.*