

ESSEX COMMUNITY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE • FALL 2021

This year on October 2, 2021 marked the 30th anniversary of the Essex Community Historical Society.

We were very excited to be able to open the museum even if it was for a few short weeks. We opened the museum on July 11, 2021 to a large amount of people young and old. The number of people attending has slowed down but it is always exciting to see who might walk through the door. We have been able to have our in-person meeting and include our board members that live in California and Georgia. We were able to do a good cleaning of the museum and change around some of our displays. We are all happy with how the museum looks this year.

Our annual meeting was October 5, 2021 at Memorial Hall in Essex Center. We try to alternate each year where we have our meetings, either in the Village or Essex Center. Next year our meeting will be in the Village. We are very fortunate to have some beautiful buildings in our community for our meetings. Attending the annual meeting were past presidents, Jerry Fox,

Ann Gray and Tim Jerman. Our speaker this year was Hubie Norton. His topic was that of Evolution of School Districts and General School History 1763 To 1867, Essex, Vermont. We'd like to thank Essex resident, Ken Signorello, for videotaping Hubie's presentation. It is on our website and our Facebook page.

We have a new board member, Shawn Bartlett. Shawn is the son of former board member and Charter member, Nancy Nichols Bartlett and her husband, John Bartlett. Feel free to contact any of the board members listed in our newsletter if you or someone you know might be interested in joining our board of directors for the Essex Community Historical Society. We are always looking for new board members and volunteers to help out at our museum.

I would like to thank our members, our board of directors and the Town of Essex for their continued support.

Eva C Clough, President



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

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Essex, Vermont 05451
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SWORD STORY ...2

BY TIM JERMAN

This sword story begins in Williston in 1872. It's a mystery, an odd tale with no apparent explanation, which includes several interesting characters from 19th century Essex and Williston, Vermont. Williston historian Richard Allen did most of the research used in this article but acknowledged that it would be up to the public to speculate about how the sword got to be buried in Williston. So, from the Essex side of the river, I will speculate on that question and invite others to weigh in!

Let's begin with the discovery. While fox hunting near his farm in Williston bordering the Winooski River, farmer Philetus Teachout found a 2.5-foot sword sticking out of the ground point-end up. Here's a semi-fictional account of the find by Richard H. Allen. (1)

"An Interesting Relic"

Philetus Teachout decided to go hunting out his back door one day in November of 1872. As he gathered his gun, coat, and packed a snack of cornbread, he told his wife, Margaret, that he would be back for supper. Margaret was busy looking after the four children, Thomas, 9, David, 8, Edward, 6, and Mary Elizabeth, 4.

As he stepped out of his house perched on a hill in Williston above Hubbell's Falls, he could hear the sound of the Winooski River as it flowed over the dam below. Some wagons were passing through the covered bridge that connected Essex Junction and Williston, the creak of the wheels and clomping of the horses' hooves was familiar to him. He did a quick check on the stock in his red barn, making sure they had water and enough to eat.

Hunting was one-way Philetus could escape the hectic scene of his homestead. The fox hunting, often with his partner Hyman Barber, was relaxing as well as profitable. He could bring in a few extra dollars with every pelt delivered in Burlington where it was used for trimmings on high fashion coats and wraps.

Philetus headed east through the cutover landscape to an area that had proven successful before. After about thirty minutes of hiking at down on a log to enjoy the scene and quiet. He did not often get the chance to be off by himself. At age 48, he was feeling the years of hard work as a farmer.

As he sat there his thoughts drifted back to the two years he had spent in California. A sizable number of Williston residents had also headed west, most to the San Francisco area. But it was not for him; he missed Vermont and was soon back in his home state.

Something caught his eye a bit to the right. He patiently waited until he had a view of a beautiful red fox with thick fur came trotting down the game trail. With one smooth motion Philetus raised his gun and fired. The fox was hit, he was sure, but it took off in a flash and Philetus cursed his poor aim.

He walked over to the spot and found some blood and was soon on the trail of the wounded animal. Down into the gully and closer to the banks of the Winooski he went, brushing aside weeds

and dried grasses. It was rough going with sharp chewed beaver stumps, slippery mud, and wet leaves to deal with.

The trail of blood was clear enough and Philetus had the experience to know that he would be successful in the end. As he came around a large pine log, he found the dead fox, so he sat down to catch his breath.

Surveying his surroundings, he noticed a strange, shaped stump that seemed out of place. It was narrow and sharp at the end. Philetus was curious enough to investigate and as he approached it, he could see it was not a tree stump at all."

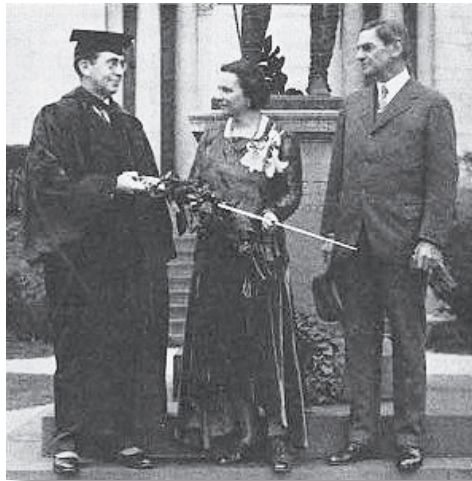
The sword found by Philetus Teachout currently resides in UVM's Fleming Museum, but not on public display. It got there

in 1880 as a donation from the estate of Honorable A.B. Halbert of Essex. Halbert was a very prominent citizen and descendant of Samuel Bradley, Essex pioneer and Revolutionary War soldier. Halbert was an avid collector of Native American artifacts, but also a probate judge, state senator, Justice of the Peace, and teacher. (2) We do not know if Philetus gave Halbert the sword or if he sold it, but it was part of a large collection that went to UVM when Halbert died in 1884.

Fortunately, the sword itself has yielded up lots of clues as to its origin. It is inscribed with the maker's name... Peter Tesh (also spelled Tesch). It also has a Mohrenkopf (Moor's head) mark; a human head with negroid features. Experts believe this is a likeness of St. Maurice,

the patron saint of soldiers, swordsmiths, armies, and infantrymen. Two weapons experts believe the sword was made by Heinrich Peter Tesch in the early 1600's! Tesch was a prominent swordsmith from Solingen, Germany who worked from about 1580-1660. The Tesch family made swords for almost three centuries (1550-1865). Donald LaRocca, Curator Arms and Armor at the NY Metropolitan Museum of Art opined: "In general I think it is safe to say that your blade probably dates from about the middle of the seventeenth century and has seen a very hard life. The short cross guard associated with it is a later addition or a sign of a late working life adaptation, as is the fact that the tang has been shortened by at least two-thirds and looks like it has been squared off as if it would be inserted in a socket of some sort (and not practical for use as an actual weapon)". (3)

The Moor's mark on the sword is an interesting sidebar which could be a separate book on its own. St. Maurice was an African born in A.D. 250 in Egypt. He became a soldier in the Roman army, and according to legend became leader of the 6,000 strong Theban legion, an acknowledged Christian at a time when early Christianity was considered a threat to the Roman empire. Long story short, Maurice's regiment was sent to Gaul (now Switzerland) to clear opposition to Emperor Maximus. When he refused to kill fellow Christians, his men and he were systematically killed in retaliation by the emperor. His martyrdom and legend grew to the point of Sainthood, and St. Maurice became a patron saint. This explains



why his features appear on a German sword made 1300 years after his death!

For interested readers, a Google search of St. Maurice will yield a trove of interesting history, including a school of thought that argues he and other Christian martyrs were a complete fabrication (4).

So, how did this fascinating relic show up by the river in Williston in 1872? Experts agree that the sword would have been obsolete as a battle weapon even in the French and Indian War (1755-60) much less the American Revolution (1775-1783). Donald LaRocca, curator of arms and armor at the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art, speculated "It is not impossible that the sword was brought here by an English (or other European) colonist as early as the mid to late 17th century, or that it might have been acquired by one of the local Native American tribes as a trade good. There is a significant group of 17th century Dutch gun locks excavated in upstate New York in Indian settlements that have been published by a Dutch scholar and seem fairly certain to have been traded by the Dutch to the Indians" (5).

Chris Fox, Curator of Collections at Fort Ticonderoga, opined "How the sword came to be lost in Williston will probably always remain a mystery. Any number of explanations are possible ranging from use/loss by an early Indian to children losing it while playing in the woods. Because of the age of the sword, I would have significant doubts about it being lost by a Revolutionary soldier. Regular soldiers in the revolution did not carry swords, and it would have been much too out of date/fashion for an officer to potentially have been carrying it. This would also have been true for the French and Indian War." (6)

This writer thinks there is a simpler explanation, based on local knowledge of the Williston-Essex area and the early families who lived there. Philetus Teachout's father was Henry Tichout. There are several spellings of Teachout, which was a Dutch name derived from Titsoort. An extensive family history says the Titsoorts were Walloon Dutch who were early New York settlers in the 1600's; a branch of the family later making its way to Vermont through Highgate. (7) Henry Tichout moved to Essex in the early 1800's to study surveying under the renowned John Johnson, Vermont's third Surveyor-General. The young Johnson was in the early years of an amazing career as surveyor, engineer, bridge-builder, designer (UVM's Old Mill is an example). He built an early sawmill at Hubbell's Falls in Essex Junction, and young Henry Tichout became a dam builder as well as surveyor.

Tichout had the good fortune to marry Clarissa Stevens, the daughter of Abram and Lucy Stevens, the first prominent citizens/founders of what is now Essex Junction. Stevens worked closely with Ira Allen and came to Essex to cut timber for Allen's sawmill operations in what is now Winooski. The "History of Essex" by Frank Bent (1963) reports that the first dam was built by Abram Stevens in 1798 but it and several others were destroyed by floods:" In 1814 the sawmills burned, and the dam was destroyed. Around 1815 a second dam had been built on the site. It was built by Henry Teachout (Tichout)." All this preceded the disastrous freshet of 1830, which wiped out everything on the river [including John Johnson's beautiful toll bridge, built only 5 years earlier] but the dam was rebuilt by Henry Tichout immediately. Doctors later reported that Mr. Tichout's health was seriously impaired because his body was submerged in the water for long periods of time while rebuilding the dam." (7)

Fortunately, Henry survived and lived into his seventies. Philetus, one of three children (8), was born in February 1824. The Tichout/Teachout discussion above is presented to support my theory that the Peter Tesh sword was left in the ground near the river by Henry Tichout sometime between 1815-1830. I think it is very possible that the sword had been in the Tichout/Titsoort family for generations, probably brought to the U.S. by a family member who came from Holland and purchased the sword in Europe before emigrating to New York. We know the sword was not in good condition when found. It may have been lying around rusting for years when Henry needed a stake to set a sightline for his dam project. We do not know the exact spot where the blade was found, but it was near the river, and near the upper dam site, which was incidentally right near Henry Tichout's Essex property on the river (1807 map). The upper dam on the Winooski River serviced the sawmill operated by the Brownell family on the south side of the river, east of the bridge river crossing. Might Henry have needed a marker which would survive the ravages of winter better than a wooden stick or pole as part of his frequent dam building/repair? It would also have made sense to bury the sword hilt-down for added stability.

If this theory is plausible, that a useless family relic was repurposed in a classic example of Yankee ingenuity, there is obvious irony to the story. Philetus would have been no more than six years old when his father buried the sword; he would never have known as it would be unlikely Henry would have considered it worth mentioning to anyone. Another irony is that the sword was not originally buried on Teachout land. Joshua Haynes, who had a successful carding mill on the river, owned the property (9); Philetus purchased it much later.

We can only guess what collector A.B. Halbert might have discussed with Philetus upon taking possession of the sword. Philetus certainly would not have known he was giving away a discarded family treasure and Halbert likely had some educated guesses, but they weren't recorded. Fortunately, he and his wife had the foresight to donate the relic to the Fleming Museum and keep it in Vermont.

So that is the simple theory of one interested history sleuth. If anyone has a more plausible explanation of how a German sword came to be buried on a Vermont farmer's land, the Essex and Williston Historical Societies would love to hear it!

FOOTNOTES:

1. "An Interesting Relic," Richard Allen, Williston Historical Society Newsletter, 2013
2. William S. Rann, History of Chittenden County, D. Mason and Company, 1886, pp52-53
3. Email letter from Donald LaRocca, Curator of Arms and Armor, Metropolitan Museum of Art, NYC, 5/2/2013 (to Richard Allen)
4. "Saint Maurice" Wikipedia history
5. Email Letter from Donald La Rocca, ibid.
6. Email letter from Chris Fox, Curator of Collections, Fort Ticonderoga, NY., 1/14/2013(to Richard Allen)
7. Teachout Family Genealogy, by Mrs. James A. Grow
8. "The History of Essex, Frank Bent, Essex Bicentennial, 1963, pp 48
9. Essex News, Burlington Free Press, 5/7/1886
10. Walling Map of Williston, Vt. 1857

SAXON HILL FOREST

BY LAURIE JORDAN

I am looking out the window at my back yard after the snow has covered the large sloped lawn surrounded by the tall pine and hemlock trees. Long branches laden with heavy snow bend down to form a tall cone to the peaks. I am gazing up to see the tips against a cloudy sky and hope that the majestic monsters don't break in half across our lawn or house. We lost one more beautiful pine tree this summer that fell sideways onto the cliff instead. I walk daily and often choose my own back yard. But just beyond, there are also plentiful paths at Saxon Hill Forest.

Our land borders an old Saxon Hill Road that used to connect my River Road (Route 117) to the Jericho Road (Route 15). When I walk up that old road, I wonder where the old houses had been but see no signs of foundations. The Jericho side of the road is still in use and dead ends at a parking lot at the foot of Saxon's Hill. It takes me about an hour round trip to climb up to where the fire tower used to be. Now multiple paths for bicycles and hikers replace an old road way to the tower. It is very eroded but brings back my memories as a sixth grader.

The school bus dropped our class off at the bottom of the road in what used to be the Essex Junction Reservoir Forest. Many fire roads crossed amongst the planted rows of tall red pines between Sand Hill Road and Jericho Road. I can still see the tower's four cement bases and where the cabin used to be on our field trip. There's still an old rusty gate and sign beyond the parking road entrance. Our family had skied and biked up our back lawn to the forest many times and even over the Hill to Skunk Hollow Road. So the roads becoming trails bring back my good times in childhood and in my own children's lives. Now I can still enjoy the area not just to walk but to think of the history.

My Jericho and Essex research has not revealed its name, but I think that probably Saxon evolved from the name of a very old English group. I learned that native Americans had settled on the river side of the hill and early Essex settlers probably used the old Saxon Hill Road which was close to the North Williston Road across the Winooski River.

Imagine if you can, who traveled or used that field and hill, before the trees were planted on the sand blow. Imagine if you can, the immense forest of tall trees

crossed by narrow fire roads, without Allen Martin Drive dividing it up and the cleared industrial parks with huge flat roofed buildings and parking lots. I experienced it all as I grew up and stayed in Essex with the forest beyond my back yard. Some logging areas became several giant sand pits hidden in the pines then later filled in for businesses. The topsoil piles became climbing hills for our children if they hiked through our bordering woods and hill. Sounds of motorcycles and target shooting came from that clearing up back. Berry picking areas and fields of daisies and black-eyed-susans were overcome by young pines. The multi-use connecting sand pit bordering our land became a solar panel field in the past two years. Now I have to walk the old road or drive to a new Thompson Drive parking area to take in the forest.

Fortunately much of the forest is maintained for public use and the town still owns quite a few gullies and the Hill. Fellowship of the Wheel created bike trails. Al Senecal (Omega Construction) has phases planned for more industrial growth. Although there are many bikers and hikers, Saxon Hill Forest offers a wide variety of terrain, paths, and some of the remaining old dirt fire roads. So I can still find solitude and nature's beauty at any time on any day. I can choose to reminisce at the corner where the gully was on our bike hike. I can pick berries along the old road where the power line is now. I have yet to follow our ski trip down to the old grown in reservoir. In the fall, a colorful climb to the tower can take me on the newer bike jump trails or the boardwalks at the foot of the Hill. My walks vary in distance due to all the new bike loops to choose from.

So the new snow in my back yard beckons me to the forest to take the path among heavy long branches of snow. Walk under them or shake them off. Stop to look up. Turn around to take in the blanketed trees and walkway. Then I come back to the present where a small clearing has younger five foot pines with the dusting of snow. I can't help but to puff at the soft new snow on those branches to watch the flakes float gently into the air then down to my feet. The old Saxon Hill Reservoir and Hill has changed but I am thankful that I can still think about what used to be and know that my favorite choice for daily walks is close enough to my own back yard in any season.

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN OLD STUFF?

The ECHS has lots of OLD STUFF that needs to be sorted, organized, cared for, possibly researched and, perhaps, even set to rights. I am planning to hold a Collections Committee meeting between our October Annual Meeting and the November Board meeting. If enjoying old stuff interests you, please contact me at jfoxvt@gmail.com

Please be sure to like us on Facebook,
<https://www.facebook.com/EssexCommunityHistoricalSociety/>
and visit our webpage:
<http://essexcommunityhistoricalsociety.org>

On Saturday, June 19, 2021, the Green Mountain Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution awarded the Essex Cemetery Commission a Historic Preservation Recognition Award for their work in restoring the Essex Common Burial Ground. The work was done in 2020 and the award was for 2020 but the presentation was postponed until 2021 due to the pandemic.

The Daughters of the American Revolution Historic Preservation Recognition Award is designed to recognize worthy local individuals and groups for outstanding achievement in all areas of historic preservation. This award recognizes and honors an individual or group that had done recent remarkable volunteer work at the community level. The recipients are expected to have contributed to their community in an outstanding volunteer manner.

The Essex Cemetery Commission recognized that the scope

of work needed in the Burial Ground far exceeded their capacity as a volunteer entity, and they formulated a plan that would repair, restore and clean all of the stones in the historic cemetery. After researching possible funding, they applied

for and were awarded a \$25,000 preservation grant made possible by a partnership between the Freeman Foundation and the Preservation Trust of Vermont to clean and repair all of the old stones. The contract for the restoration work was awarded to Bianchi Stone Crafters. The Cemetery Commission continued to monitor the progress of the restoration until it was complete. The Green Mountain DAR Chapter

learned what the Cemetery Commission had done, and they felt they were deserving of the Historic Preservation Recognition Award. The Chapter submitted the Cemetery Commission's nomination to the National Society Daughters of the American Revolution where it was approved by the National Historic Preservation Committee Chair.



WE ARE EXCITED TO OFFER OUR 2022 CALENDAR, JUST IN TIME FOR CHRISTMAS!

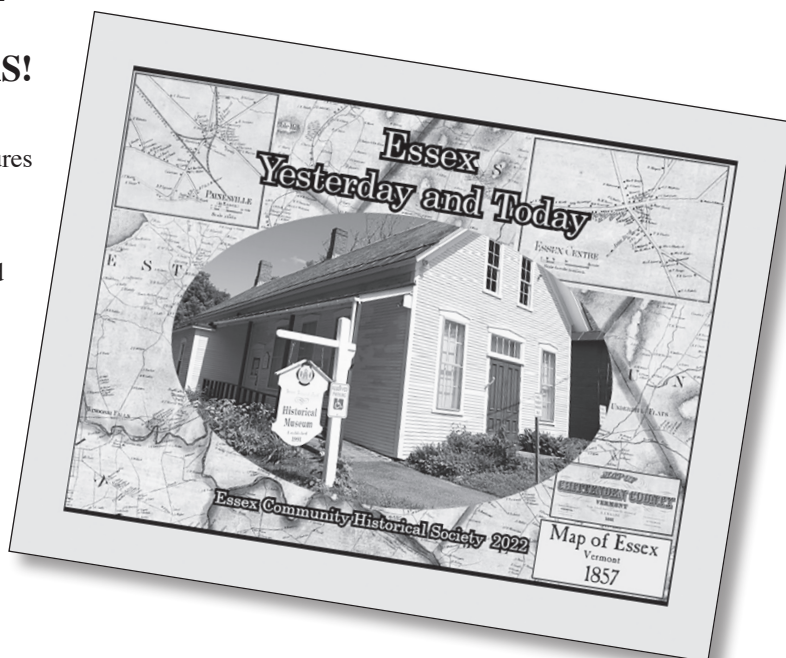
The topic is "Essex Yesterday and Today." It features twelve historic buildings from Essex Center and Essex Junction with a brief historical description.

You can purchase the calendar for \$15.00 each and if needed shipping is \$3.00 per calendar. Checks made payable to The Essex Community Historical Society and mailed to P.O. Box 8388 Essex VT. 05451.

Or you can visit us the Essex Junction Congregational Church craft fair on Saturday, November 13th from 9 to 3.

You can also email us at echsvt@gmail.com to pick one up at the Harriet Farnsworth Powell Museum by appointment.

All proceeds from the calendar sales will go to The Fort Ethan Allen water tower restoration fund.



**ESSEX COMMUNITY HISTORICAL
SOCIETY
STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES
October 2020-September 2021**

REVENUE

Dues	210.00
Book sales	180.00
Contributions	206.00
Town of Essex FY22 Budget	3600.00
Tales and Treasures	0.00
Interest income	6.40
Deaccession	0.00
Water Tower	407.58
Calendar	880.00
Other – T-shirt	10.00
Total Revenue	5499.98

EXPENSE

Echo Newsletter	533.72
Postage/PO Box	485.00
Vermont Historical Society Dues	50.00
Web page	49.80
Sing-a-long	0.00
Office supplies	92.57
Collection	816.00
Exhibits	42.04
Insurance	682.00
Tales and Treasures	0.00
Printing	0.00
Calendar	741.58
Books	0.00
Comcast	1139.67
PastPerfect software	78.00
Preservation Collection	635.00
Donation	100.00
Total Expenses	5445.38

ACCOUNT BALANCES 9/30/21

General Accounts	
Checking	5082.27
Savings	656.58
Restricted Accounts	
Collection insurance (checking)	750.00
Echo (checking)	350.00
Postage (checking)	84.00
Comcast (checking)	630.00
Tales and Treasures (checking)	1300.96
CD -- TD Bank (separate)	4799.97
1805 Schoolhouse Fund (savings)	577.00
Water Tower (separate)	20378.16
Calendar profit	139.00
Total Cash on Hand	34,747.94

At the 2021 Champlain Valley Fair, former ECHS Board member, Polly

Whitcomb McEwing, was honored as a 2021 Lifetime Achievement inductee into the Vermont Agricultural Hall of Fame. The Champlain Valley Fair program notes the following reasons for Polly's nomination: "Polly Whitcomb McEwing of Essex spent the last 50 years dedicated to her family's dairy farm in Williston where she can do any task within operation. Polly was the first Agricultural Director for the Vermont Land Trust and worked to make the program accessible to farmers. Polly also co-founded the Dairy Center at the Champlain Valley Fair in the early 1960's which is still one of the most popular attractions at the Fair each year putting a positive face on dairy while educating consumers". Congratulations, Polly. It is an honor well deserved.



**WELCOME TO
THE BLOOMIN' 4 GOOD
PROGRAM!**

*A Program to Benefit The Essex Community
Historical Society
Supporting Our Local Community.
One Bouquet at a Time.*



We are thrilled to announce the Bloomin' 4 Good Program, a program from Hannaford that works to give back in our local communities. In this program, every \$12.00 Bloomin' 4 Good Bouquet sold sends a \$1 donation to a non-profit local to the store in which it was purchased.

For the month of December 2021, The Essex Community Historical Society has been selected to receive a \$1 donation for every \$12.00 Bloomin' 4 Good Bouquet with the red circle sticker (pictured right) sold at the store located at 21A Essex Way, Essex Junction VT.



ESSEX COMMUNITY HISTORICAL SOCIETY BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2022

President: Eva Clough (2020-2022)
Vice President: Tim Jerman (2020-2022)
Secretary: Jan Kilmer (2020-2022)
Treasurer: Ann Gray (2022-2024)
Shawn Bartlett (2022-2024)
Jerry Fox (2022-2024)
Dylan Giambastista (2021-2023)
Denise Groll (2021-2023)
Chuck Willard (2021-2023)
Thad Wolosinski (2021-2023)

Please take a look at your address label. The expiration date of your membership is noted. You can use the form below to update your membership.



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.**

**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 _____

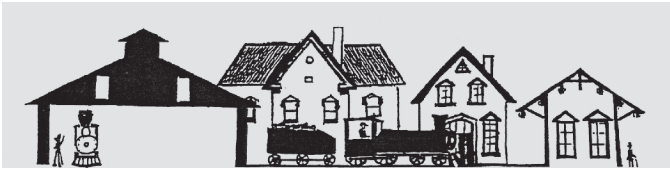
City, State, Zip Code _____

Phone Number _____ Email _____

___ 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 COMMUNITY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P.O.Box 8388

Essex, Vermont 05451

**Unfortunately,
we will not be
holding our
annual
sing-a-long and
tree lighting
again this year.**

**We wish you all
a Happy Holiday
season.**

