

Colchester History Connections Newsletter

December, 2015, Colchester Historical Society, Box 112, Downsville, New York 13755
Volume 5, Issue 4 Preserving the history of Downsville, Corbett, Shinhopple,
Gregorytown, Horton and Cooks Falls

Website: www.colchesterhistoricalsociety.org

Historical Society Room, 72 Tannery Road, Downsville is open the third Saturday
of each month 11 A.M.-3 P.M. and by appointment, please call
Kay Parisi-Hampel, Town Historian at 607-363-7303

2016 Calendar



Our new 2016 calendar is still on sale. This calendar has 34 pages of color and b/w photos of school buildings and student groups from the Historical Society's collection. The history of our thirty, one-room school houses is revealed through memories of students and teachers, information from District School Clerk ledgers, and New York State Education reports. A special end page shows how some of these school buildings are being used today. This will make a wonderful holiday gift! Calendars will be on sale at the Town Clerk's Office, Historical Society, Downsville Diner and Poppy. Calendars are \$20 with a special holiday price of 2 for \$35. The Society will be at the Women's Club Christmas Bazaar on December 5, 2015 at the Downsville Fire Hall. Purchase yours soon and help make this fundraiser a success.

Development of Colchester's Sports Hunting Tradition

"The advance of the white settlers into the wilderness was accompanied by changes which profoundly affected the wildlife. Trees were felled for the construction of homes, and more were cut and burned in order to clear land for crop; and pasturage. A thriving trade developed in the export of lumber to Europe. The opening of the forest canopy caused by these activities resulted in excellent conditions for game. Encouraged by the sunlight, berry bushes, shrubs, and tree reproduction flourished except where kept down by farming operations and burning. The deer responded and were plentiful about the edges of the clearings. In this connection, it is interesting to note a colonial law of 1741 which prohibited the killing of deer from January through May, but permitted farmers to shoot deer in their cornfields (New York State, 1894). Another factor which presumably affected the deer population was the gradual extermination of wolves and panthers by the settlers.

*Deer had been exterminated from this part of the State (Central Catskills) by the 1860's, and did not begin to reappear until about 1910. Repopulation seems to have been a result of expansion from Pennsylvania... Small permanent populations became established between 1915 and 1935. This did not occur as the result of long migrations by individual deer. Rather the expansion was gradual. Thus, by the mid-1930's, deer had spread throughout most of the region. Beginning in 1938 hunting for antlered deer has been permitted annually." **History of the White-Tailed Deer In New York; C.W. Severinghaus and C.P. Brown, NY Conservation Department, 1956.***

"Early journalists and authors, after visiting the Adirondacks and Catskills, wrote of the seemingly infinite supply of sport that could be had in those areas. Stories of catching 120 pounds of trout in two hours, of shooting five deer in one month, or of catching a 19-pound trout were not uncommon and were no doubt true, because there were no laws prohibiting such excessive harvest of fish and game. Tales such as these brought hunters and fishermen to the mountains in droves with the inevitable result that...by 1822 the wolf, the moose, elk and panther disappeared. Hotels and spas sprang up in what forest were left, serviced by extensive new railroads, and by 1850 America's first wilderness was no more."

History of the Catskill Park and Forest Preserve by Norm Van Valkenbergh.

By the late 1800's sportsmen's groups were pushing for a system of game laws and management and individuals started buying large tracts of land to form hunting and fishing clubs. The establishment of the Catskill Park in 1904 allowed wildlife to reestablish in this area. Increased numbers of deer and bear led New York State to open Delaware County for Black Bear season in 1923 and White-tail Deer in 1927. Sports hunting drew large numbers of hunters to this area. The Town of Colchester was full of sportsmen and Downsville's Main Street was awash with red plaid clad hunters on Opening Day of each hunting season. Hunters filled every available hotel/motel room, restaurants were full and local merchants welcomed the extra income that the hunters spent during deer season. Many local families also opened their homes to hunters, providing rooms and board during deer season.

White-tail deer and bear hanging from the front porch of Downsville's Eagle Hotel were familiar sights from the 1930's until the Hotel burned in 1988. Hunting has always been a popular sport in Colchester, and a means of stocking the larder supplementing the meat supplies of local residents.



Bob Wyer postcards from the 1960's



Eagle Hotel early 1960's.



Fred Odwell and Gideon Gregory with large bucks.

(Fred Odwell played professional baseball for the Cincinnati Reds and led the League with nine homeruns in 1905.)



A group of 1913 Colchester hunters with an impressive variety of game.



Deer Camps

In 1927, the New York State Department of Conservation reported that 96 deer were taken in all of Delaware County and the 2014 DEC report shows that in the Township of Colchester 519 deer were taken and nine black bears.

Deer Hunting Time Is Here Again - Poem by Kathleen West

*Deer hunting time is here again
And many hunters take to the woods
After months of planning with family and friends
They gather in common brotherhood*

*It's a freedom that fills the soul of a man
With the peace of God's nature all around
Lessons that have been taught since time began
And lifelong memories and friendships are found*

*Hunting is taught by tradition still yet
Knowledge passed on from man to man
And you'll learn things that you'll never forget
And respect nature more, our wildlife, and our land*

*So all you hunters enjoy this time
May you be skilled and have lots of luck
May God bless you as you hunt today
And may you bag that ten point buck! !*

Gravestone Cleaning Workshop

Mark your calendars for our **May 14, 2016** workshop with Marianne Greenfield, owner of Gravestone Cleaning Service and trustee of the Association for Gravestone Studies. A brief talk about the types of gravestone materials, procedures for cleaning the stones and historical practices of local cemeteries will be presented before going to Downsville's Paige Cemetery for a demonstration and hands-on practice of proper gravestone techniques. We will be using a biological, biodegradable, non-toxic cleaning solution D-2, which is safe on all masonry gravestones and monuments and recommended by the National Parks service. The Historical Society will also have a quantity of D-2 cleaning solution for sale for people who are interested in cleaning their family gravestones. **The fee for the workshop is \$25**, which will include tools and supplies needed for the hands-on practice. Workshop space is limited; please call Town Historian, Kay Parisi-Hampel at 607-363-7303 or email hampelk@colchesterhistoricalsociety.org to make a reservation and for further information.

Thank You

The Society would like to thank all its members and community for their support in 2015. We have received many wonderful additions for our collection which include an 1869 F.W. Beers Atlas of Delaware County, 1895 Biographical Review of Leading Citizens of Delaware County, Holmes Milling Co. ledgers, Lupean family films and photographs, Hezekiah Elwood's 1831 Day Register, Pepacton Reservoir construction contracts and photographs, one-room school information and artifacts, as well as many other items relating to the history of Colchester. Donations from family and community members help us to fulfill our goal of preserving Colchester's history for future generations. Our collection has helped us to answer dozens of genealogy inquiries, give information to other historians doing research, share photographs and other information for historical displays, media articles, television and radio broadcasts as well as sharing the history of Colchester with local students and community members.



For other glimpses into the past life in Colchester, please join our monthly meetings. Meetings are generally held the last Tuesday of the month at the Colchester Town Hall, 72 Tannery Road, Downsville, New York 13755.

Meeting Dates 2016:

Annual Meeting March 29, 2016 at 7 PM

April 26, 2016 at 10 AM May 31, 2016 at 7 PM

June 28, 2016 at 10 AM July 26, 2016 at 7 PM

August 30, 2015 at 10 AM September 27, 2016 at 7 PM

October 25, 2016 at 10 AM November 29, 2016 at 7 PM

December 27, 2016 at 10 AM