

Colchester History Connections Newsletter

June 2015, Colchester Historical Society, Box 112, Downsville, New York 13755

Volume 5, Issue 2 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

Displays

July 1-September 30, 2015—the display in Town Hall will feature Colchester's store, hotel and manufacturing Ledgers and Day Books. Some of items that will on display are: the Ira D. Lindsley Day Book, December 1884-March 1889, Meat and Grocery Dealer-Downsville; A.E. Peck's Downsville Newspaper Ledger, 1910; Barna Radeker Dry Goods Store Day Book, September 1848-May 1850-Colchester; Holmes Milling Co. Day Book 1890-91, and Holmes Family Expenses 1901-Downsville; Treyz Store Accounts, Acid Factory Accounts and McCaskey Lumber Account, 1921-1922-Cooks Falls and the Butternut Grove Beaverkill Valley Lodge, No. 803, Ledger and Minutes Book February 1884-March 1887. Stop in to take a look at the early business records of the Town of Colchester, as well as a glimpse of what people purchased.

Program—Metal Detecting

Christopher Altmann, editor of *From the Ground Up, Six County History*, online magazine will present a Power Point slide show featuring his metal detecting adventures in both the U.S. and England. Chris and his wife Kim are passionate about metal detecting and they will have artifacts and other metal detecting items on display. They also invite the audience to ask any questions they have about this hobby. Please join us for this free program on **Saturday, July 18, 2015 at 11 A.M.** at the Colchester Town Hall, 72 Tannery Road, Downsville, New York. For additional information or questions, please email: hampelk@colchesterhistoricalsociety.org or caltmann@aol.com

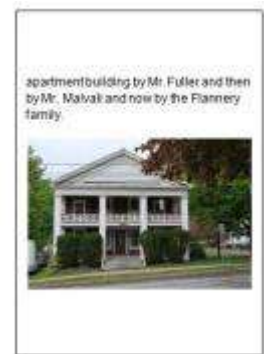
School Visit—On May 18, 2015 a dozen students from Mrs. Melissa Frisbee's second grade class, from Downsville Central School, visited the Colchester Historical Society. Her students are learning about their community in a variety of ways. Mrs. Frisbee's students had many questions about the history of their community. Guest speakers have visited the classroom and have told the class about their memories of growing up in Colchester and how the community has changed. Town Historian, Kay Parisi-Hampel showed the students artifacts and documents. They were particularly interested in the Downsville Main Street, what businesses were there, did the building look the same, how are the buildings being used now and what happened to the buildings if they are no longer on Main Street. These questions were answered when the class took a walking tour of Main Street on June 2nd. Each student was given a pack of 25 baseball card size cards that showed a picture of a Downsville building, some historical facts about the site and on the reverse of the card what exists there today.



Mrs. Frisbee's Second Grade class Historical Society Fieldtrip



22. Methodist Episcopal Church building.
First building used for the Methodist Episcopal Church built in 1850 on land donated by George W. Downs. Behind the church were rows of shacks where people could leave their homes and carriages. The building was sold in February of 1890 to Frederick Loeb for \$800 and was turned into apartments. The building was later run as an



apartment building by Mr. Fuller and then by Mr. Matvalk and now by the Flannery family.

Downsville Walking Tour Card

Colchester's Cigar Manufacturing—In 1845 cigar tobacco was first introduced in Onondaga County and elsewhere in New York, including Colchester. Almost every man smoked cigars, the Chemung County Historical Society Museum's *The Golden Age of the Cigar and the Cigar Box, 1880-1920*, states "In the forty years encompassing the Golden Age, American men smoked three hundred billion cigars." According to the Cigar History Museum, "the United States was home to a quarter million cigar factories and produced approximately 2,000,000 different brands of cigars, more factories and more brands than any other branded product in history."

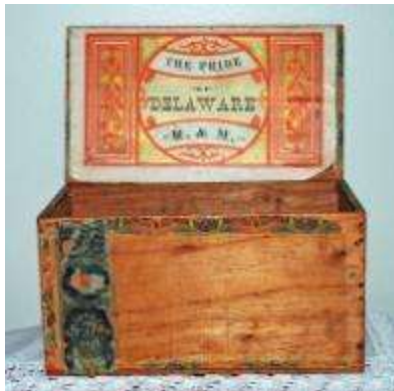
After the 1842 fire in the cigar factory district in Hamburg and the 1848 German "March Revolution " large numbers of experienced owners, managers and cigar rollers moved to New York and established cigar factories. One of the German immigrant cigar makers that moved to Colchester around 1850 was **Adam Heckroth**. He is listed in W.W. Munsell's, "A History of Delaware County," 1860, as a Downsville cigar maker and he is listed as a cigar maker in the 1880 U.S. Census. He was a small manufacturer of cigars; his brand was called North End. He moved his company to Middletown in 1890 and continued making cigars under the North End brand but introduced a new Ontario brand. This brand was named after Heckroth's Middletown Ontario Hose Company where he was a volunteer fireman. He had a picture of the Ontario Hose Company's fire truck placed on his cigar box label.

Another Colchester cigar maker was **William Stamm**. Stamm, the son of a German immigrant, was born in New York City and came to Downsville in 1875 and opened a cigar factory. This factory operated until the factory was expanded and moved to Middletown in 1890.

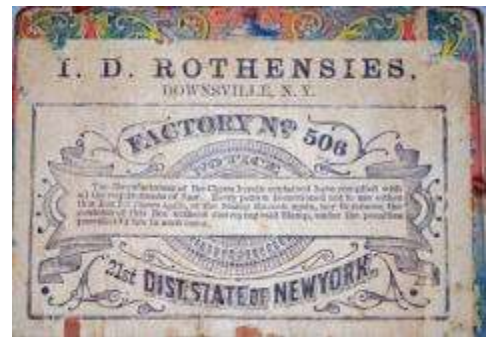
The most prominent cigar maker in Colchester was **David Rothensies**. Rothensies emigrated from Germany to the United States in 1855 and settled first in Meredith where he had a travelling dry goods mercantile business for eight years. In 1864 he opened a dry and fancy goods store in Downsville including a cigar shop. He operated this store until 1875 when he sold the dry goods stock and opened a cigar factory. He grew tobacco for that factory on the Cable Flats on Back River Road. He had several drying barns at that location and across the road on the Purdy property. The *Downsville News*, May 17, 1883, reported "Rothensies & Meinhold, cigar manufacturers, turn out from 800,000 to 1,000,000 cigars per year. They raise considerable tobacco and are making preparations for a larger amount this year than usual. They have one large house for curing purposes and will put up another on the Purdy place." His brand *Way Up* became very popular and he was the first of the Downsville cigar manufactures to expand his business into Orange County, moving to Middletown in 1889. Middletown gave the factory access to a greater number of skilled workers and rapid railroad shipping to quickly move his cigars to dealers. His expansion was very successful, but after two years his physicians advised him to move to a higher altitude to improve his health. In 1891 he moved his business to Walton where he opened a cigar factory on the corner of Delaware and Liberty Streets.



Way Up Cedar Cigar Box—Holds 50 Cigars



Pride of the Delaware—100 Cigars



New York State Tax Stamp

In addition to the Way Up and Pride of Delaware brands, Rothensies had a line of five cent cigars under the brands: Druggist Delight, Out Post, Diamond Chief, The Union, and The Star. He also had two ten cent cigars marketed to first class hotels and dealers under the brands Rothensies Bouquet and Luxury Row.

William R. Wright was born in Downsville in 1859, and learned the cigar maker's trade by apprenticing with the Rothensies and Meinhold factory. He later began his own cigar factory, starting with only three employees but as his brand "Golden Gem" became popular the factory expanded. Wright also opened a general grocery store in Downsville and that was a very successful business venture.



Inside Cigar Box Label



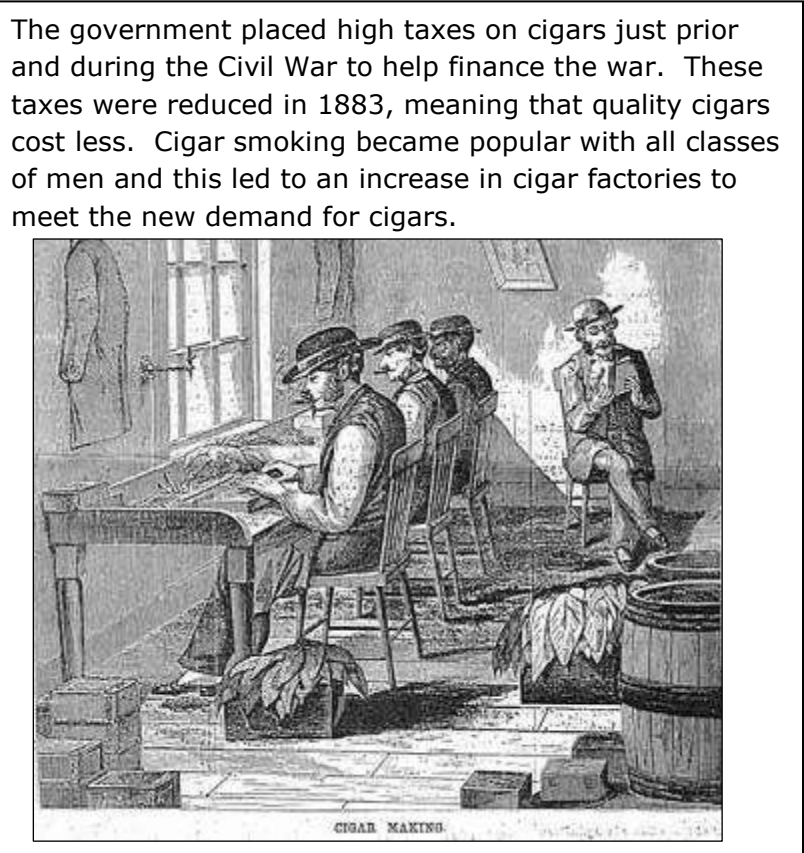
Cigar Maker



The cigar manufacturing business declined during World War I when cigarettes were introduced to the soldiers. Machine made cigarettes reduced the prices of cigarettes; soon cigar manufacturers followed and began making their cigars by machines. The cigar's status continued to decline through the 1920's and the Depression made it financially impossible for most men to spend time smoking with their cronies at the local cigar store. Today there are less than fifty cigar factories in the United States.



1890's W.H.Shelley photo-Downsville men in straw boaters, smoking their "twofers" cigars. Twofers were small cigars that sold for two for a cent.



The government placed high taxes on cigars just prior and during the Civil War to help finance the war. These taxes were reduced in 1883, meaning that quality cigars cost less. Cigar smoking became popular with all classes of men and this led to an increase in cigar factories to meet the new demand for cigars.

Summer Time—Downsville News, August 4, 1932:

“The craze for camping along the picturesque Delaware in the vicinity of Shinhopple has become so strong and is affecting such a large number of Downsvilleites, that the lower part of the village has a deserted appearance. The stranger approaching the eastern end of the village may well wonder if the place is slowly dying, hardly any signs of life being noticeable. But camping life doesn’t seem to please all. A Downsville lady said she tried it, but that the obsessive solitariness of the unchanging environment was disturbed only by the croaking of the leaping amphibians.”



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 2015:

June 30--10 A.M.

July 28--7 P.M.

August 25--10 A.M.

September 29--7 P.M.

October 27--10 A.M.

November 24--10 A.M.

December 29--10 A.M.