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The ECHO

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

Layout by Sue Storey

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 Essex Jct., Vermont 05452
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www.essex.org/esxhs/esxhsfindex.htm

**14th Annual Meeting
 Features Fort Ethan Allen
 by Richard Allen**

On Tuesday, October 4, about thirty-five people gathered in the old pump house of Fort Ethan Allen for a presentation by Doug Slaybaugh on Fort Ethan Allen. Doug used his collection of post cards to illustrate his talk. Doug, an American history professor at St. Michael's College, outlined the development of the fort with references to the larger historical context.

In addition we were treated to a fascinating display of William Parkinson's collection of fort memorabilia: post cards, uniforms, photographs, posters, and souvenirs. Will owns the pump house and it has been restored through many hours of work. Will told us about some of the challenges of restoring a building taken over by raccoons and that was once home to heavy water pumps. We are indebted to Will and Ann Parkinson for hosting our annual meeting. It was a perfect setting to recount the history of Fort Ethan Allen.

Outgoing president Clinton Russell detailed his recent projects and the historical society's progress over the last three years. Incoming president Ron Clapp outlined some upcoming challenges: our growing collection and limited space in the museum, the possible merger of the village and town and its impact on the society, the 250th anniversary of the town in eight years, maintaining adequate insurance on the collection, and public relations.

There was a positive vote for the slate of officers for 2005-2006 and new board members presented by Jerry Fox.

- President-Ron Clapp
- Vice President-Ann Gray
- Secretary-Lucille Allen
- Treasurer-Eva Clough
- Starting another term
- Ann Gray
- Lucille Allen
- Eva Clough
- Katherine Reynolds

Eva Cough, on behalf of the society, acknowledged retiring president Clinton Russell. His name has been added to the presidents' plaque. Thank you to Doug Slaybaugh and Will Parkinson for adding greatly to our annual meeting.

Grace Naylor Still Lives There

Interviewed by Laurie Jordan

May 18, 2005

Grace Naylor can look out over Whitcomb's old farm fields, up towards Saxon Hill, or over the bank to the Brown's River. She lives in the only house on Naylor Road—what was once Schoolhouse No. 9. Grace (Pecor) Naylor started her childhood on a farm where Simon's Store is now on Route 15. It was a sandy Route 15 with a railroad crossing. Imagine what it was like eighty years ago in Essex!

"We liked to see the train. It was just kind of exciting to have a train come through because we hardly ever saw a car. They were just coming out with cars when I was a little kid. When a car would go by, you would get all excited. Everybody would run to the window and they'd run out on the porch and watch the car go by. The train was the same way...I remember it was very noisy. It was

close by. The Burlington and Lamoille Railroad crossed right next to my Grandma St. Amour's house, which was later where the King's white house was [on Route 15]. My mother, Pearl (St. Amour) Pecor, was very skeptical about letting us walk on that railroad track, because you never knew when a train would be coming along. And she was scared that we might meet a train. We were not allowed to walk on that track.

"Yes, the Brown's River was near too, but my mother was again kind of scared to let us go swimming alone. We used to play down there, though. My backyard was a sand blow, and we used to go down to



the ditch near the river bank and find Indian arrowheads. We walked down the back hill to the spring for drinking water to fill little pails. I had one sister, Delvine, who was older than I was and another sister who was two years younger. My brothers and

sisters, we were all about two years apart.

"My father, Claude Pecor, was a good provider. We had a big family but we never went hungry. There were eight to ten apple trees. He had a little farm—about a ten or twelve cow farm. He didn't get enough income you know, just with what few cows we had. He worked in the [Drury] brickyard in the daytime; then he'd come home and milk the cows again like he had in the morning. Weekends he did haying and mowing. Living right near my grandfather, they helped each

other a lot with the haying and getting work done.

"My grandfather used to have us pick choke cherries for him in the summertime when they were ripe. He said, 'I'll give you five cents if you fill this little pail full of choke cherries for me.' He made choke cherry wine. We thought five cents was a **lot** of money, you know. For five cents we worked like heck to get a pail full of choke cherries.

"We weren't old enough at that time to help out much, except to weed my mother's garden. She had a big garden and took care of it a lot, as well as doing the canning after. And we would go across the road to pick



Top: Grace Naylor's house on Naylor Road in 2005.
Bottom: Grace Naylor at home in 2005.

blueberries. That was all sand too. Trees were planted there [to protect the Essex Junction water source in Saxon Hill] about when I was in first grade.”

Saxon Hill Road used to go through the mostly pine forest to Route 117; according to a map of Essex in 1862, about ten families lived on the road. “That was before my time. The first I remember was Charlie Holley living up in that first house. Everybody would say ‘Charlie Holley Road’, because he lived on it. A step cousin, Nelson Pecor, lived in the next house up at the foot of Saxon Hill; that’s where the old part of the road was closed. I remember walking on top of Saxon Hill quite a few times with my aunt. She would take us up to the tower. The warden was always up there to watch for fires. He lived there until the winters and some people would bring up food to him. There was a good path up there where a lot of people used to walk. Of course you could look all over the village when you got up to the top.

“We didn’t even have cars in those days, so we’d only go as far as you could walk and that would be it. I never got out of the town of Essex when I was growing up. That was a big thing when my uncle bought his first car. He took us for a ride, and my gosh, I couldn’t get over it. We just probably rode down as far as Essex Junction and we thought that was great.

“The kids on Harold Whitcomb’s farm—on the corner of Naylor Road and Route 15—could ride the school barge with horses to the White School in the Center. I was born in 1918 and I started school there when I was six. We had to walk all the way down to the four corners, where the historical museum is now. [The] Whitcombs could ride the barge because they were more than one-and-a-half miles away but we didn’t live far enough from school. Sometimes my sister Delvine and I used to stop at the home of Moses and Mary Adams on our walk home. They lived in the house that’s still there (at 41 Jericho Road). They were very old and couldn’t see well, so we would read them their mail and write letters for them.

“Later, in fifth or sixth grade, we moved far enough away that we could then ride the school bus. We moved near Indian Brook and I think we rode the first **new bus**. It was something like a bakery truck with seats on each side. We lived at that farm probably about a year before it burned down. The area didn’t have any reservoir yet. There was just a good little trout brook then: There was a bank down from behind the house. Then another bank went right up again—into the pasture where my father put his cows. The good trout stream ran right down through that valley. And I can remember going there to catch fish when I was about ten. We used to catch some good trout and we’d bring them up. We would dress them ourselves. Then we

would ask our mother if we could have a little frying pan and a little bit of fat in it, and a little bit of flour. And we had a place where she used to let us make a little campfire—where there was no danger of fire [spreading.] She used to warn us to be **‘awful careful!’** So we’d build this little fireplace. And we’d cook our own fish and eat it. Make believe we were playing house... I’d be the mother and Delvine would be the father and all the younger kids would be our kids. We used to have fun doing that.

“We didn’t have to ever look for anything to do. We lived at the farm on the corner of Weed Road and Naylor Road by the time I was twelve. My mother died a month after childbirth when she caught pneumonia, so Grandma watched the baby. I was thirteen years old and Delvine was fifteen. She [Delvine] could quit school, but I had to be fourteen or through the eighth grade so I finished out the eighth grade. There were twin boys that were thirteen months old and Allen was two. There were five boys and five girls. We had all the work to do for ten children. We grew up awful fast.

“We took care of the household. We did all the cooking. And I learned how to cook. I got out a cookbook and I could make cakes and pies and donuts. They would come and say, ‘My goodness, that little girl, she can make better cookies and cakes and pies now than I can!’ We thought it was fun, you know? We seemed to work together and play together. My older sister did most of the washing and we shared the other cleaning chores. Of course it wasn’t much fun after my mother died...but we got used to it. Gosh, we made kind of a game of it, really. You know, when you’re young you think nothing of it and just go ahead and do it.

“We would all go out and play; we’d get our work done and we’d play with the younger ones. There were enough of us to play ball. We used to love to play ball in the summertime. In the wintertime we would slide down the hill. Anywhere we could find a hill, we’d slide. There were no radios or televisions. There was always plenty to do.

“I remember when I was in the seventh or eighth grade; I walked to Christmas plays and parties at the Essex Classical Institute. We had to walk down Weed Road and on Route 128. Coming home at night, we were scared to death to go through that covered bridge over the Brown’s River on Route 128 when it was so dark. We were afraid there would be a skunk or something in there.

“My father wanted to move to Jericho Center, so he sold that same farm to my husband Harold and me

Grace Naylor continued on page 4.



Stephen Hayes (See story on page 6.) gave the post card to the far left to the historical society when he visited us in September. This early 1900s scene shows the C. W. Rice Store at the corner of Route 15 and 128 in Essex Center. The store passed from C. W. Rice to the Goddette brothers in 1915, and to Stanley Fiske in 1947. The photograph on the right, by Betsy (Thrasher) Melvin, was taken in 1966 after the building was upgraded for the post office. The building dates from c. 1819 and still stands.

Grace Naylor Still Lives There... *continued from page 3.*

soon after we were first married in 1934. When that farm burned out in 1941, it was May and the cows could still be in the pasture. James Kennedy let us use his barn right next to us to milk the cows. He had been planning to move, so we bought that farm right beside of us from him. You know, that land, added to our first home, made a pretty good-sized farm—three hundred and sixty some odd acres. My husband remodeled the inside of the red schoolhouse on Naylor Road for our tenant house.” Later, the Naylor’s sold what they call the ‘Warner House’ to Harold (Bub) Whitcomb—the son of Harold Whitcomb who lived on Route 15 by Naylor Road. “We remodeled the 1838 schoolhouse a lot more after that with an upstairs with dormers and a garage. We kept it and we moved right **here**.

“When we first bought this there was nothing done on it at all. The town sold it to us.” It was School No. 9 for the Essex District No. 9. “The shape of it is just the same as it always was. We never enlarged it except for the garage and second story. There was just one great big door in the front and two tall, wide windows with the tiny panes of glass. On the back side there were no windows. ... You’d come in the front door and on the right-hand side was the girls’ cloak room and on the left side was the boys’ cloak room. You kept your dinner pail on the shelf right around it. And you’d hang up your clothes and put your boots down on the floor underneath. There was a partition right here with a door that went into the main part.

“From here over was all one room with probably two rows of desks on one side and two on the other. There were maybe five desks in the whole row—room for up to twenty students. But most of the time the schools had about twelve children. They faced the teacher’s desk next to the stove with a chimney right in

the middle of that back wall. There was a blackboard on each side of the stove. The boys had to go out into the woodshed and get wood. And there was an old outdoor toilet that you had to go to.” So Grace’s dining and living room were in the cloak room area and the room between her house and garage would have been the woodshed.

Grace’s backyard still has a gentle slope to the Brown’s River. She has a long row of six foot tall blueberry bushes. She enjoys working in her gardens with vegetables and beautiful flowers every summer. “After Pearl and Joan [her daughters] were grown up, I worked at Lorraine Canavan’s Wool Shop down on Shelburne Road for about five years. I started making braided rugs. When I went there for my wool and rug material, she said, ‘You wouldn’t be interested in coming to work for me would you?’ So we started making rugs, and giving lessons and sewing rug rolls. We sold all kinds of wool for clothes and wool by the pound, piece, or yards; you name it.

“You know, my father’s mother used to work in Williston as a dressmaker too. I remember my father said, ‘You know my mother made that dress she’s wearing in that picture. You remind me a lot of your grandmother.’ Because I liked to sew and made all my own clothes and everything.

“I last worked in the kitchenware area at Aubuchon’s Hardware in Essex Junction for five years. You know, I was the first woman ever hired by Aubuchon’s in all their stores. And then after that they always hired one woman in every store.” Grace Naylor has certainly been a part of many of Essex Town’s beginnings—including her home at one of three remaining schoolhouses in Essex.

Essex Historical Connection Made During Portugal Trip



Mr. Stephen Hayes of New York City met Ruth Ann and Bruce Beers of Essex on a recent trip to Portugal. During their conversations they discovered they had an Essex connection. Mr. Hayes' ancestors lived in Essex in the Warner house on Weed Road near the intersection with Naylor Road. Mr. Hayes offered to donate a framed oil painting of the house to the Essex Community Historical Society. On September 10 the historical society accepted the painting from Mr. Hayes, along with several photographs taken on Weed Road well over 100 years ago. The historical society is very grateful to Mr. Hayes for his generosity.



Left to right, front: Bruce Beers, Ruth Ann Beers, Stephen Hayes, historical society president Clinton Russell, Jr., board member Ann Gray. Back row, l. to r; board members Kathy Dodge, Laurie Jordan, Lucille Allen, and Barbara Mudgett-Russell.

The Warner House, on the north side of Weed Road near the Naylor Road intersection, c. 1895-1900. Stephen Hayes identifies the people as Harriet Amanda Spencer Warner, his maternal great-grandmother, and Elizabeth (Lizzie) Warner, his great aunt. Photo courtesy of Stephen Hayes.

Adding to the Historic Record of Structures in Essex

by Clinton Russell

During 2001, my first year on the board, I made the suggestion that we identify homes and buildings at least 100 years old and give recognition to them, in the form of a plaque on the front of each building. The recognition and plaque have not been accomplished yet, due to lack of funds.

For my part, last fall and through the winter as I walked about the village, I took pictures of houses I thought were at least a century old and then down loaded them to my computer and printed the pictures on separate pages with:

- Location of the building
- Location on the tax map
- The parcel number
- The year it was built

Other notations found on each page are the present owner, the design of the building, its use now or in the past, and any points of interest. These other notations need more work in the future.

The second step of this project consisted of going to the town assessor's office to determine the current owners. I noted the volume and page of the land records where the properties could be found. I then researched each property and followed it back through the volumes to the earliest date to locate its first owner or the date it was built.

I have divided my work into three parts:

- Part one contains the largest portion of the study, *Historic Structures Still Standing*
- The second part is *Present Structures Where Former Historical Structures Once Existed*
- The third part is *Buildings of Note but not Necessarily Old*

I am still working on the last two. At this point there are over 150 properties in this study and I expect at least 40 to 50 more to be added in the near future. I would say my project has taken me about 300 plus hours.

Most recently, my concentration this spring has been recording pictures of all gravestones with their GPS (global positioning system) identifications, at Fairview Cemetery. I found over 600 stones and personal markers there. The information will be on the historical society's website for all to view.

In the Village Cemetery each stone has been identified with a number, so my job has been much easier because all I needed to do was put the number on each picture before I printed it. At the present time there are about 1200 pictures. I have enjoyed these projects and hopefully will do others in the future. The above cemetery projects will be given to the town clerk for the archives and to the village cemetery commission.

Other projects that I have worked on over the last two years have been establishing picture portfolios of the history of the Lincoln Inn, AJ's Kitchen, the Allen Sugar House, Ethan Allen Water Tower, Maplehurst Florists (one of the few business still in the same place where it was started), Muncy's Diner, and Vermont Toy Farm.

I have also put together portfolios on *The History of Essex Junction* by Allen Martin, the History of Essex Junction Police, the Downtown Essex Junction Commercial Historical District and the 1820 Coffee House.





1805 School House Update

By Hubie Norton

Progress is being made on the preservation/restoration of the school house that is currently located on the Town Common in Essex Center. The building was donated to the historical society and moved to its latest resting spot in the fall of 2000. In 2004 the preservation/restoration work began as reported in the fall 2004 issue of this newsletter. Initially the building was stabilized by replacing a couple of deteriorated sill beams, adding missing knee braces and fixing other rotted structural pieces.

Efforts are being made during the restoration to replicate building materials of the early 1800's using local products where practical.

One of the replacement sill beams is a hand hewed beam very similar to the one removed and another sill beam comes from a local saw mill. The new knee braces have been made from four by fours taken out of an old barn and the braces have been secured using wooden pins.

This year volunteers have hauled local stone and a dry stone foundation has been built around the entire building. Gable end vents have been made and installed on each end of the building. These vents were constructed using old lumber and painted with homemade milk paint.

The south end of the building has been completely re-boarded and a temporary door has been installed. Replacement of deteriorated vertical siding is continuing with the expectation that trim boards and corner boards will soon be installed to give the building further definition. Windows and clapboards are next on the agenda with inside work and roof restoration coming later. The old gem is starting to emerge!

Essex Community Historical Society Board of Directors 2005-2006

(denotes year of term expiration)

Ron Clapp, President (07)
290 Whitewater Circle
Williston, VT 05495
879-0619

Katherine Reynolds (08)
88 Park Street
878-2193

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William Parkinson (06)
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482-3113

Lucille Allen, Secretary
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Tobe Zalinger (07)
6 Browns River Road
879-1249

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878-4272

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879-6467

Sherry Norton (07)
9 Maplelawn Drive
879-7334

Clinton Russell, Jr. (06)
58 Main Street
878-5887

Polly McEwing (06)
5 Doubleday Lane
879-6862

All addresses are
Essex Junction, VT
05452, except
where noted.



Short Stuff

Please take a close look at your **address label**. The expiration date of your membership is noted. Three stars denote a life membership. You can use the form in this newsletter to update your membership.

We are now **charging for any research** that we do for people who request such assistance. For simple research we suggest a donation of \$10 to the historical society. If the research requires more time, is more detailed, and within our capacity, we will charge \$25 per hour.

Your editors are always looking for **interesting information and photographs** on Essex and Essex Junction history for our newsletter. We can scan original photographs and return them to the owners. Look through your old photographs. We welcome your contributions. Material can be mailed to the Essex Community Historical Society at 3 Browns River Road, Essex Jct., Vermont 05452. Or contact Richard and Lucille Allen at 878-3853.

The board of directors has recently approved a policy and fee schedule for the **reproduction of photographs** in the ECHS collection. A copy is available upon request.

New **donations/exhibits**. Check out the display of Essex native Evans Knapp's photographs in the lobby of the Essex Post Office as well as images of the fair and Essex schools. This display was put together by Eva Clough and Laurie Jordan.

Wish list. Printer for the PC computer at the museum. Mannequins or dress forms so that we can display clothing.

Copies of the *Essex and Essex Junction* book can be purchased at the Lincoln Inn in Essex Junction and All About Hair at 7 Jericho Road in Essex Center. Buying your books at these places also benefits the Historical Society. Thank you to Alex and Robert McEwing at the Lincoln Inn and Lisa Russin at All About Hair.

We have several used copies of **Frank Bent's book, *The History of Essex, Vermont*** (copyright 1963) for sale at the museum for \$30 "as is." Most of these copies are missing the maps that came with the book. Contact any board member if you are interested in buying one.

We are looking for people who can **help us catalogue** our burgeoning collection. If you have an hour or more a week that you can spend helping us, please contact any board member.

We are looking for donations of past **copies of town and village reports**.

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Upcoming Events

Tree lighting ceremony and sing-a-long, Friday December 2, 2005 at 6:30 p.m. Come join members of the historical society and the Town Parks and Recreation Department as we usher in the holiday season. Meet at the Essex Elementary School and we will walk to the gazebo at the Essex Free Library. From there we will watch as the staff from the Essex Parks and Recreation Department light the tree on the Common. After the ceremony there will be refreshments served at the Essex Elementary School. If you need transportation, please phone any board member.

Board of directors meetings are at 7:00 p.m. on the third Thursday of each month, except December. The meetings are open to the public, so feel free to come. We meet at the museum, except during the winter. Call any board member for up to date information on the next meeting.

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 \$ 10.00
- Family membership \$ 15.00
- Senior membership (60 and over) \$ 5.00
- Individual-lifetime \$100.00

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



Calendar of Events

(See inside for more details)

December 2, 2005, Friday.
Tree lighting and sing-a-long on the town
common in Essex Center, 6:30 p.m.

