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The ECHO

The Newsletter of the
 Essex Community Historical Society
 Essex and Essex Junction, Vermont
 Published twice a year, spring and fall.

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President's Message

I would like to thank Ann Gray for her time as president of the ECHS. She stepped in when our friend and past president, Ron Clapp, was unable to continue in that role. We will be honoring the accomplishments and memory of Ron this spring at our grand opening of the Harriet Farnsworth Powell Museum on June 7th, 2009.

Work is continuing on the 1805 schoolhouse thanks to Hubie Norton. See his report on page 7.

Many people are still enjoying the openings of the water tower at Fort Ethan Allen. We attract people who are just driving by, who see the display of our banners and advertisement in the local papers, and by word of mouth.

We had our last tag sale in June 2008. Many thanks to the people who donated their treasures to help support our museum and a special thank you to the Boy Scouts for their help. The tag sales were an important fundraiser for us.

Warm weather brings our monthly meeting of the Essex Community Historical Society, held the third Thursday of each month at 7:00 p.m., back to the museum; the public is invited to attend. The first Thursday of the month is work detail. Polly McEwing has been working on entering our collection information into the computer, and Sherry Norton continues cataloguing our collection.

The Buffalo Soldiers will have a reunion at Fort Ethan Allen on August 1, 2009. One of our board members, Will Parkinson, is on the committee. See page 2 for details.

We open our museum on Sundays, June to September, from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. and by appointment. Volunteers and board members make all this possible. Visitors have an opportunity to share Essex history with us by writing their remembrances in a journal kept in the museum. We continue to share some of our collection at the post office thanks to Laurie Jordan.

I served as treasurer for ECHS for 12 years. Now Ann Gray is doing a wonderful job as our new treasurer and I have big shoes to fill from our past presidents. I had Ron Clapp as a mentor for many years, never once thinking that I would be president. "Remember, we all have a part to play in keeping our history alive and passing it on to the next generation." (Ron Clapp Spring 2007 ECHO) Your help will be greatly appreciated.

Eva C. Clough, President



**ESSEX TOWN
 CELEBRATING 246 YEARS**

**SUNDAY, JUNE 7, 2009
 1:00 TO 4:00 P.M.**

**JOIN THE ESSEX COMMUNITY
 HISTORICAL SOCIETY
 AT THE 1805 SCHOOLHOUSE
 AND AT THE HARRIET POWELL MUSEUM
 ON THE GREEN
 ROUTE 15 IN ESSEX**

**WALKING TOURS
 CHILDREN'S ACTIVITIES**

**ADDITIONAL PARKING AT THE ESSEX
 CENTER UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**

Fort Ethan Allen Living History Day, the Buffalo Soldiers Return

By William Parkinson

This year marks the 100th anniversary of the famous Buffalo Soldiers, 10th Cavalry US, being posted to Fort Ethan Allen in 1909. Partly because of that anniversary the 9th and 10th Cavalry Association is holding its 143rd Annual Reunion in Burlington this summer.

A group of people working on the reunion decided it would be great to have a Fort Ethan Allen Living History Day to celebrate the history of the fort and to open it to both the 9th and 10th Cavalry and to the public. They invited local historical societies and others to join in the planning and execution of the celebration. The Essex Community Historical Society has been working with them to help make it a great day.

The festivities kick off with a parade at 11 a.m. on August 1, 2009, down Dalton Drive beside the fort parade grounds. One of the exciting elements of the parade will be up to 50 re-enactors on horseback in period costume. There will be historical addresses, walking tours of the fort, displays by several historical societies and groups, and musical entertainment on the parade grounds.

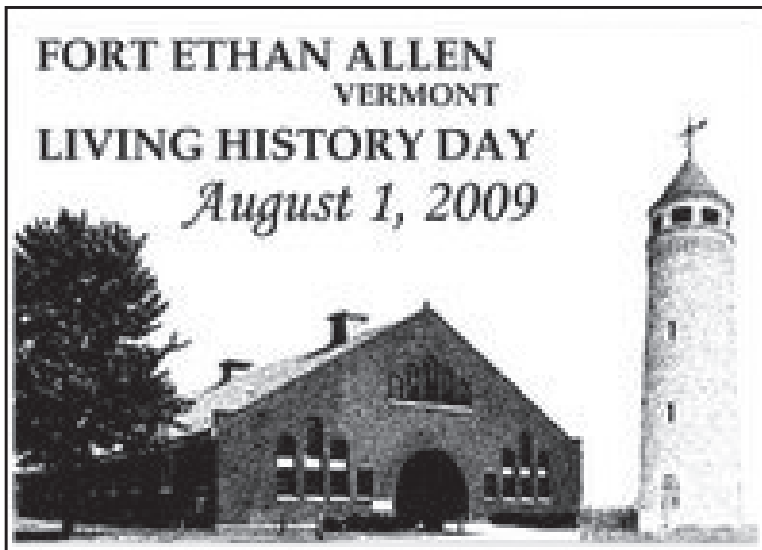
The Essex Community Historical Society will have the water tower and the Fort Ethan Allen Museum open. The Vermont National Guard Museum at Camp Johnson will be open. There will be food vendors on the green, so you can plan to come mid morning, watch the parade, have a fun lunch, listen to the talks and take the tours. It will be an exciting day for the family soaking up local history. All events (except lunch) are free and open to all.

Fort History and Buffalo Soldiers

Construction on the fort began in 1893 and the first troops to occupy the fort were the C,E,F,G Troops of the 3rd Cavalry arriving on September 18-29, 1894. Much of the brick used in the construction of the fort was manufactured at the Drury Brickyard in Essex Junction.

The fort went through several spurts of building and accelerated activity especially in the First and Second World War periods. The number of buildings increased steadily, and if you include the firing range in Underhill-Jericho-Bolton, the acreage of the base, which began as 600 acres, eventually exceeded 6,600 acres.

Many of the original buildings still stand and from the outside look remarkably similar to their original state.



The part of the fort in Essex extended from the beautiful stone water tower to about half of the hospital; the other half being in Colchester. The Essex end included the railhead where the Central Vermont Railroad had three spurs for unloading supplies coming into the fort. Passengers got off the train on the other side of Route 15 where the current tracks still are in use. The Essex side also had some of the officers' quarters on Dalton

Drive, Sergeants' Row, utility buildings and supply depot buildings, including a meat locker and a gun powder shed. Initially construction began on the Essex side where the railroad was, but eventually most of the buildings were in Colchester.

After the Civil War the U.S. government created several all black, segregated regiments; two cavalry, the 9th and 10th, and several infantry. The 10th Cavalry was activated on July 28, 1866 at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Many of the members of the all black regiment were freed slaves and veterans of the Civil War. In 1898 the 10th fought in the Spanish American War. They were with Teddy Roosevelt's Rough Riders in the charge up San Juan Hill in Cuba. It wasn't until July 26, 1948 that President Truman, by executive order, ended discrimination and segregation in the military.

The 10th Cavalry arrived in Essex in July of 1909. They had been stationed in the Philippines from 1907-1909. The cavalry arrived in New York City after spending time on the troop ship. After a few days in the city, they boarded the train for Burlington. Coming to Vermont would prove to be a culture shock for both the 10th Cavalry and the local population. As of the 1900 census the entire greater Burlington area had a population of 25,000 which included only 117 blacks. The 10th brought 750 black enlisted men but with them came families and a camp following perhaps doubling that number to 1,500 African Americans. There was considerable local fear and talk of

instituting Jim Crow rules and segregation; in a few cases saloons provided separate bars for the black troopers, and a few even refused to serve the troopers in uniform for a short period.



The 10th Cavalry at Fort Ethan Allen.

A small black business community evolved that catered almost exclusively to the black population but in general the community very quickly accepted the 10th and found them just as well behaved as any of the post's soldiers had been. For many of the soldiers this would be the coldest climate they had ever experienced. This was the first time U.S. Cavalry troops were stationed in New England. While here in Vermont the 10th, like other units stationed here before and after, participated in parades, field exercises, fairs, exhibitions, and sports events, especially baseball games with local and college teams. There was a band unit of the 10th that performed on all white horses.

It was a period of peace for the country, sandwiched between the Spanish American War and World War I, and there was no war-time duty for the soldiers in these years. Even in peace time the troopers worked and trained hard. In 1912 the 10th participated in war games put on by the War Department simulating an attack on New York City in which 15,000 guardsmen and 3,000 regulars attacked the city defended by 20,000 soldiers.

In a typical day a cavalryman would spend two or more hours feeding and cleaning horses, and two to four hours more riding his mount either on duty or to exercise the horse. He also had pistol, rifle and saber practice both mounted, unmounted and in combat drills.

In 1912 the average contract price for a cavalry horse was \$166.76. At that time a cavalry sergeant earned \$30 a month, a private \$15 a month. The officers in the 10th at the fort were white. A captain would have earned \$2,400 a year, and a colonel \$4,000.

There was a separate building for the bakery but no large mess hall, it was cavalry custom that each troop ate together and so each of the large barracks buildings had its own dining hall. There was an Officers' Club for the officers on Dalton Drive.

In 1913 the 10th was relieved of duty at Fort Ethan Allen and replaced by the 2nd Cavalry. The 10th moved on to Fort Huachuca in Arizona where they remained for 18 years. The 2nd Cavalry remained with us until 1918.

At one point in 1918 in the midst of World War I there were 6,000 men stationed at the fort. In 1919 the 3rd Cavalry returned to the post, units of which would stay until 1940.

World War II brought another

burst of activity and the fort was used for training and mobilization. It was declared inactive in 1944 at the end of World War II. In its last use as a military post it was the Ethan Allen Air Force Base from 1952 to 1960. Then in 1964 the U.S. General Services Administration sold off or gave away the remaining land and buildings at the fort. The parade grounds are now the property of the towns of Essex and Colchester. Many of the buildings went to the University of Vermont and St. Michael's College. The Vermont Highway Department got a large lot and several buildings.

Camp Johnson and the Vermont National Guard now occupy much of the original fort property in Colchester. Officers' Row on Dalton Drive is now private residential condominiums, having been property of UVM for a while after the government left. Several of the original barracks are now apartment buildings and most of the stables are now occupied by privately owned businesses. A few new buildings have been added after the military left, but in large part the fort still maintains the look and character of the post as it was back when the Buffalo Soldiers and their horses practiced, patrolled and paraded on the streets.

Weather permitting the Essex Community Historical Society will be opening the stone water tower on May 16th from 10 a.m. until 2 p.m. for area residents to climb the 105 steps to the observation deck to enjoy the view. The water tower built in 1893-4 was one of the first structures completed at the fort. It is about eighty feet tall and held 50,000 gallons of water, said to be sufficient to supply 8,500 men and 1,800 horses. It cost \$19,065.55 to build; wells were drilled on site capable of providing 125,000 gallons of water a day. When viewing the tower and surrounding buildings it is hard to imagine all this was built before electricity came to the area. It wasn't until 1905-7 that most of the buildings at the fort had electricity.

You can look up Fort Ethan Allen Living History Day on the web at: <http://www.uvm.edu/~vtbufalo/>

Thrown From Wagon

George Beecher of Essex Centre Seriously Injured in a Runaway

From *Burlington Clipper*, August 26, 1899, page 5.

George Beecher of Essex, the managing director of the poor farm, met with a severe accident Tuesday afternoon.

While on his way from Underhill his team became frightened at the cars about one mile above the Center and ran. The wagon struck a water bar in the road and Mr. Beecher was thrown several feet in the air. He struck the ground on his head and shoulder and when picked up was unconscious. The team continued to run and became freed from the wagon by colliding with a tree.

He was discovered by Edward Nailor, near whose house the accident occurred.

Dr. C.W. Styles and Dr. Hawley of Burlington were summoned. They found the shoulder blade had been torn from the breast bone and that severe injury had been inflicted to the head. It has not been determined whether there is a fracture of the skull.

Early in the day Mr. Beecher went to the poor farm to make arrangements for the burial of Harry Vancor, an inmate of the farm for some years, who died Monday from a shock of apoplexy. He drove to the junction, but finding Undertaker Sawyer absent went to Underhill to procure a coffin. He was returning with the casket when the accident happened.

The coffin was thrown from the wagon when it struck the water bar and was somewhat damaged.

Mr. Beecher is over 60 years of age. He is conscious for brief (sic) periods and has given a fairly concise story of the accident. He heard the approach of a train and hurried the horses over the crossing. The noise of the oncoming train frightened the animals and he was unsuccessful in checking their speed.

The body of Harry Vancor was taken from the farm Wednesday by his son of Hinesburgh. Burial was in that place.



George Beecher was born in Germany in 1836 and arrived in Essex in 1848. He married Rebecca Fletcher in 1859 and had three children. The Beecher family lived on Osgood Hill Road and later sold their farm and moved to Essex Junction.

George Beecher was a farmer and apiarist (bee keeper) most of his life. He was an active member of the community, serving the town since 1880, including the select board, and acted as overseer of the poor. He also served on the Board of the Essex Classical Institute and held the office of president for a time.

George enlisted in the US Army during the Civil War in August, 1864. He was assigned to Company I, 6th Regiment, Vermont. He participated in the battles of Winchester, Fisher's Hill, Cedar Creek and the Richmond Campaign. He was honorably discharged in June, 1865.

(Family information and photo courtesy of Robert Wood.)

Where was the Essex Poor Farm?

By Richard Allen

The 1885 Williston Town Report contains several pages on the Report of the Poor Farm Association serving the towns of Essex, Williston, Jericho, Hinesburgh (sic), and Shelburn (sic). The poor farm that served Essex was located in Williston. The 1869 *Beers Atlas* Williston map marks the location in the northwest part of the town on what is now River Cove Road, off of Route 2A.

The 1885 report of the Poor Farm Association was very detailed and reflected the high degree of involvement of the respective towns. Residents of the poor farm were referred to by name and called inmates. The inventory of the farm included 17 cows, 4 sheep, 3 swine, and 2 horses plus the amount of hay, oats, coal, corn, pork, beef, and lard on hand. Expenditures for such things as groceries, clothing, farm supplies, physicians, extra help, graves and coffins were enumerated. The cost of the “insane poor at Brattleboro” was just over \$500. Money came in from the sale of butter, veal, potatoes, hides, chickens, eggs, grain, and wool, among other things.

Poor farms were established by a 1797 state law requiring each town to care for their poor. The overseer of the poor was a town officer charged with providing assistance to those in need. George Beecher served in this capacity for Essex and was on duty when he had his wagon accident.

The importance of poor farms decreased in the 1930s with the increased role of the state government in welfare and New Deal programs such as Social Security. Poor farms were officially ended in the state in 1967 and the office of overseer of the poor was no more.

(Source: The Vermont Encyclopedia, edited by John J. Duffy, Samuel B. Hand, and Ralph H. Orth, page 237. Lebanon, NH: University Press of New England, 2003.)

Genevieve Rusterholtz Morgan

By Barbara Mudgett-Russell

Nearly a century ago a lady was born who, with her husband, would put Essex Junction “on the map” with a business by the name of “Al’s French Frys” (yes, it was spelled that way). Genevieve Rusterholtz Morgan, and her husband Al, opened their snack bar, which was attached to their house, on Main Street in the same location where A.J.’s Kitchen stands today. Gen came up with the name and spelling of frys because as she would say, “I thought it would be appealing and different. And I was never a conformist.”

The business moved to Williston Road in South Burlington. The first structure burned, but with the encouragement of the community and help from their loyal employees and friends it was rebuilt better than ever.

Genevieve was interviewed for the 1996 *Vermont Memories II: Into the ‘50s* video and had this to say about their business, “We bought a huge kettle and we were in business. Peeling and slicing all potatoes by hand. Trying to make French fries from little or nothing...Ours was a home style affair, we had no gimmicks. We put out good food, courteous service, and decent prices. Nothing flashy, just down-to-earth, home style.”

Al Rusterholtz retired and moved to Florida living in a house constructed by Genevieve. He died in 1988. Gen, when she retired, lived a separate life in Essex Center.

Genevieve stayed active and involved in life and business matters until recent times. Antique cars and all things historical interested her. She owned property next to our home for several years, and one of her former employees and friends, Sherman Williams, still helped her with many tasks.

I was told by one of her caretakers, when Gen reached the age of 96 some recent event might be forgotten, but never did she forget any details pertaining to financial matters.

Unfortunately, Genevieve Rusterholtz Morgan passed away in February. When she met Saint Peter at the Pearly Gates, hopefully he did not ask her age because that fact she never would reveal.

(Source *Vermont Memories II: Into the ‘50s*. Vermont ETV, 1996, VHS video tape.)

A History Mystery Sponsored by the Chittenden County Historical Society

The Chittenden County Historical Society is joining with the other historical societies in Chittenden County to create a "History Mystery." It will take place throughout the month of August as a Quadri-centennial event. A clue in riddle form will be entered for every city or town in Chittenden County, plus Buel's Gore. The goal is not only to create an all-ages fun event for the Quad, but also to impart information about, and spark interest in the history of the cities and towns in Chittenden County.

The clues will lead to sites of historic importance. The clue answers will require going to the town. They will not be found by Googling. Those wishing to be "history detectives" can do it on their own or in groups. They can ride, hike, or bike, and there will be no fee to participate.

In July posters and media coverage will announce the "History Mystery." Information will indicate when and where history detectives in each town can sign up and pick up the "History Mystery" brochures which will have the clues. Completed brochures will be due by Tuesday, September 1st. All those with correct answers will be entered in a drawing for prizes. The drawing will be held in late September -- date, time, place and number of prizes to be determined.

The Chittenden County History Mystery is modeled on the Vermont History Mystery created for the 2008 Vermont History Expo by Valley Quest.

Updates

Come see the display at the Essex Post Office assembled by board member Laurie Jordan. The display features some big and small family businesses, a capsule summary of our Drury Brickyard exhibit from the History Expo 2008, and information about the Vermont Toy Farm.

Approximately 250 people attended the sing-a-long in December 2008. Carol Baker led the singing at the tree. Cookies were donated by local Girl Scout troops.

Ron Clapp Memorial Fund/Trading Cards. Ron Clapp's vision for celebrating Essex's 250th anniversary of its charter in 2013 was to promote Essex history, geared to school aged residents, through the use of pictures and facts. The board of directors, with input from Ron's family, has talked about ways to fulfill this vision. One thought is to

have trading cards made up with a photo(s) on one side and facts on the other along with the historical society logo. One excellent source of images would be the society's collection of postcards. We will keep you posted on this endeavor.

Vermont History Expo for this June has been suspended. See the Vermont Historical Society web site for more details. www.vermonthistory.org.

Board members Laurie Jordan and Barb Chapin gave several museum and walking tours last October. Six Essex Elementary School second grade classes went on the walking tour in the center of the town. Fourth graders from Founders Memorial School had a museum tour.

Board members Sherry Norton and Polly McEwing have continued documenting the items in the museum, getting them catalogued and entered into the computer.

The Collection Corner

New Donations/acquisitions. The following items were either donated or acquired:

- Donation of Holland Smith's *Clarion* yearbooks, score books, and Essex photos (ECI, the Essex Common/Corners, and a fairground reproduction), by his daughter Nancy Tracy. Holland Smith was a teacher at the high school.
- Donation of a DVD of Ron Clapp's Memorial service, by Clinton Russell, Jr.
- Donation of a cross-section of a maple tree with spout scars from the Chapin Orchard, by Laurie and Joe Jordan.

Thank you to these people.

Brief update on the 1805 school house project by Hubie Norton

The general philosophy used for the restoration of this building has been to utilize local materials and workforce wherever possible, as was likely done when the building was originally built. To that end the clapboards have been ordered from a Vermont mill that has been making clapboards since 1857. Local merchants have made contributions of paint and paint supplies.

Although it seems unlikely that the original building was ever painted it seems prudent to paint the restored building to be in keeping with its current setting and to minimize future maintenance.

Volunteers are waiting for the right weather to begin the painting and installation of these Vermont made clapboards as well as the door previously built.

Essex Community Historical Society Board of Directors 2008-2009 (denotes year of term expiration)

Eva Clough, President (11)
42 Brigham Hill Road
879-0849

Sherry Norton, Vice President (10)
9 Maplelawn Drive
879-7334

Laurie Jordan, Secretary (10)
259 River Road
879-6467

Ann Gray, Treasurer (11)
28 Rosewood Lane
878-4088

Barbara Mudgett-Russell, Jr. (10)
58 Main Street
878-5887

Barb Chapin (11)
129 Chapin Road
879-1145

Clint Russell, Jr. (09)
58 Main Street
878-5887

Polly McEwing (09)
5 Doubleday Lane
879-6862

Katherine Reynolds (11)
88 Park Street
878-2193

William Parkinson (09)
P.O. Box 40
Hinesburg, VT 05461
482-3113

Kathy Dodge (10)
PO Box 8264
Essex, VT 05451
878-4272

John Duby (11)
62 Learned Drive
Westford, VT 05494
879-1841



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.

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 P.O. Box 8388, Essex, Vermont 05451. Or contact Richard and Lucille Allen at 878-3853.

Wish list. Digital camera, dress forms, Essex High School yearbooks, town reports.

Copies of the *Essex and Essex Junction* by Richard and Lucille Allen can be purchased at Five Corners Antiques, 11 Maple Street, Essex Junction. Buying your books here also benefits the historical society. Thank you to David and Nancy Booth at Five Corners Antiques.

Consider giving a **membership to the historical society as a gift**. Use the enclosed form to do so.

The first Thursday of each month, except during the winter, is a **work session** at the museum, from 7 to 8:30 p.m.

Upcoming Events

Saturday May 16, Water tower at Fort Ethan Allen will be open to the public, 10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m. Come get a bird's eye view of the surrounding landscape.

Sunday June 7, **Celebration of the town's 246th birthday (from the date of the charter of the town), and the opening of the museum for the summer.** The festivities will take place at the 1805 school house and the museum, located on the green in Essex Center. 1:00 p.m.-4:00 p.m. There will be children's activities, and walking tours.

Saturday July 18, **Essex Junction Block Party.** Held in Essex Junction on Railroad Avenue from 4:00 p.m.-9:00 p.m. There will be a display about Essex Civil War soldiers and tours of the cemetery where several Civil War veterans are buried. The Civil War Sites Committee will be helping the historical society with these.

Saturday August 1, **Fort Ethan Allen Living History Day/Buffalo Soldiers Celebration.** Ongoing events taking place at Fort Ethan Allen as part of the gathering of the Buffalo Soldiers. 10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. The water tower will be open, as will board member William Parkinson's museum of fort memorabilia in the pump house. Other events include speakers, Buffalo Soldier reunion, parade at 11:00 a.m.

August. **Chittenden County History Mystery.** Throughout the month. Details inside this issue.

Ongoing throughout 2009, **The Quadri-centennial Year for the Exploration of Lake Champlain.** The region's environmental and cultural history will be celebrated with special events, and lectures. Many of the various museums in the Champlain Valley will have displays that tie into this theme. Check the website for the list of events. www.champlain400.com

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

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 _____

___ 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.**



Calendar of Events *(See inside for more details)*

Saturday May 16:

Water tower at Fort Ethan Allen open for the day.

Sunday June 7:

Celebration of the town's 246th birthday, and the opening of the museum for the summer.

Saturday July 18:

Essex Junction Block Party.

Saturday August 1:

Fort Ethan Allen Living History Day/Buffalo Soldiers Celebration.

August.

Chittenden County History Mystery.

Ongoing throughout 2009:

The Quadri-centennial Year for the Exploration of Lake Champlain.