



ESSEX COMMUNITY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
ESSEX TOWN-EST.1763 ESSEX JCT.-EST1892 ESSEX COMM. HISTORICAL SOCIETY-EST.1991

CONTENTS

Saxon Hill Forest.....2
Short Stuff4
Essex & Essex Junction
Order Form5
Membership Form6
Harry Cooley Remembers7
Upcoming Events9
Board of Directors9
Calendar of Events.....10



The ECHO

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

Spring 2005
Edited by Richard
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



Essex Junction

Owing to the great amount of anchor ice floating down the river Friday the People's Electric Light and Power Company's plant was unable to operate after about ten o'clock that night and Saturday morning and the lights were shut off throughout the village. The river cleared so that the plant was running again Saturday night. The S.A. Brownell mills and the works of the Frary Novelty Company were closed Saturday for the same reason.

*Burlington Free Press,
Dec. 4, 1905, sec. 2, pg-
10, col. 6*

Essex Junction
**J.H. Ingersoll & Sons to
Open Canning
Establishment Here**

J.H. Ingersoll & Sons have rented of S.A. Brownell the building recently vacated by the Frary Novelty Company and are to soon begin canning beans, both the lima and baked. A boiler has been installed and the machinery is being placed. Large orders have already been received. Mr. Ingersoll, the senior member of the firm has had a wide experience in the canning business, as he has been employed at the Baxter Bros.' canning factory for some time and has been superintendent of the Baxter factory since its establishment here.

*Burlington Free Press, Dec. 9,
1905, pg. 5, col. 3*

*Editor's note:
Thank you to Jerry Fox for
sharing these bits of history.*

Saxon Hill Forest, Over 100 Years of Resource Management

by Richard Allen

Shortly after Essex Junction became a village in 1892 the search began for a reliable source of water. Allen Martin, a prominent town and village official and member of the Board of Water Commissioners, felt the natural springs in the Saxon Hill area would provide such a source. He was instrumental in the village's purchase of the land.

Before the area was purchased by the village it was described as an "unprofitable area made up of abandoned farms, light soil, windblows, and erosion." ¹ The first plot bought in 1900 for \$600 included 10 acres around the springs. The land acquisitions continued until 1933 when the total tract was about 862 acres.

Maintaining a clean water supply was not easy with what eventually became four reservoirs connected by thousands of feet of pipe. Some of the water was held back by earthen dams. Silt and debris had to be constantly cleared from the reservoirs.

From 1923 to 1955 over 500,000 trees were planted to control erosion and insure a steady supply of water. Most of the trees were Scotch pine, white pine, red pine, and white cedar. As the trees matured the forest was managed for timber growth and revenue for the village.

Forester William Hall said, "It has become a textbook case of good forest management, increasing the water supply in the reservoirs, realizing \$95,000 in revenues over the years for the village from the careful harvest of timber..." ²

Protection from fire was a concern and precautions were soon taken as revealed in the Essex Jct. Annual Report of 1927. "One of your (water) commissioners at his own expense has

constructed a look-out station from which to watch against forest fires. The state is willing to co-operate in the expense of a watchman, but in order for this project to be successful and of value to the patrons it is necessary for universal co-operation." The tower was built on top of Saxon Hill at an elevation of about 960 feet.

As late as 1967 there was a watchman on duty at the top of the hill. A lightning strike in June of that year destroyed the watchman's cabin at the foot of the fire tower.

Local pride, in what at times was called the Allen Martin Water Reservation, was great enough to suggest that interested sightseers could pick up keys to the gate from Mr. Martin himself at the town clerk's office on School Street. ³

The Saxon Hill area was well managed and was proudly displayed as a fine example of a municipal forest. In October of 1948 the Chittenden County Forest Festival Field Day was held at Saxon Hill with a speech by Perry Merrill, the Vermont state forester. He spoke of the value of planting trees on marginal land to insure a water source and future income from a timber stand.

The field day also included a tree chopping contest won by 17-year-old Raymond Reynolds of Westford who felled his tree in 2 minutes and 17 seconds. The pine trees were 10 to 12 inches in diameter.

Another highlight of the day was the jeeps that took visitors to the new fire tower, completed just a month before. This tower replaced one that had been in service since 1926. ⁴

In 1963 the Vermont Bobsled Club and Joseph Suchecki, Essex Junction Recreation Director,

Note: Much of the material for the author's research was provided by former county forester William P. Hall. Mr. Hall also made his collection of photographs available. We are indebted to him for his generosity and interest in Essex history.

explored the area's potential as a youth bobsled run. The proposal soon expanded into a family winter recreation area with a ski slope, ice rink, and cross country ski trails. The concern of the Water Board was centered on possible contamination of the water source. This was alleviated by a ruling from the Bureau of Environmental Sanitation. Soon the Kiwanis Club stepped forward with a three year plan for the construction of rope tows and trails. The area was never developed as a winter recreation area.

After the village and town joined the Champlain Water District in 1973, studies were made to determine the best use of the land. Several proposals for recreational use came forward, including a rope tow or Poma lift on Saxon Hill for skiing and tobogganing.

Much of the land was sold to a local development corporation. A 1993 plan to build the regional landfill on 102 acres of the land was seriously considered. It never came to fruition.⁵

Now the area contains a large sand pit and several industries such as Brown's River Bindery, IBM, and Huber-Suhner, along Sand Hill Road, Allen Martin Drive and Thompson Drive. Some of the timber continues to be harvested. Around 662 acres remain open for passive recreation and nature study. The trails are accessible to the public.

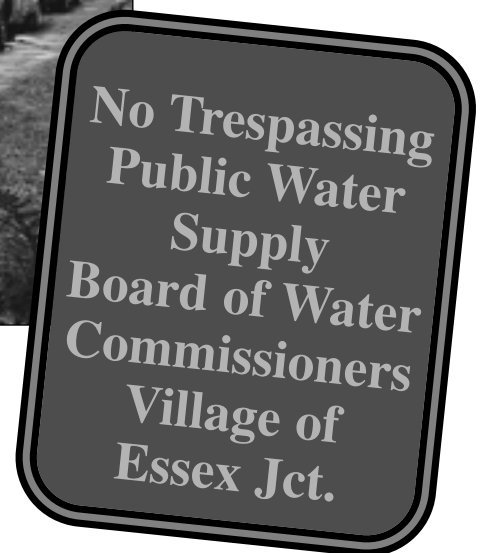
Ninety acres on Saxon Hill are presently owned by the Essex Junction School District and maintained by the town recreation department for biking and hiking.



A Saxon Hill Forest tour, September 28, 1968.
William P. Hall photo

So what is there to see that reveals the former uses of the land? The remains of the four reservoirs, the dams, the foundation of the burned out pump house, and some of the pipe are all visible along the trails. The footings of the fire tower are still on top of the Saxon Hill.

Also sharp eyed residents can still spy rusted signs along the edge of the former water reservation that proclaim:



**One mystery remains to be solved.
Who was Saxon Hill named after?**

FOOTNOTES

1. *Burlington Free Press*, October 7, 1948.
2. "For Sale," by Candace Herring, *Chittenden Magazine*, December 1973.
3. "Panorama, Your Guide to Burlington and Northern Vermont." January 1951.
4. *Burlington Free Press*, October 7, 1948.
5. *The Essex Reporter*, September 23, 1993.



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 of the policy is available upon request.

New **donations/exhibits**. Check out the display of items from the museum assembled by Ron Clapp and Eva Clough. The display is located in the lobby at the Essex Post Office.

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.

The Downtown Steering Committee of Essex Junction plans to have **historical interpretative signs** installed in four locations: the Five Corners, the Champlain Valley Expo, the train station, and Maple Street Park. The committee is working with the Lake Champlain Basin Program on this project. According to the LCBP the intent "is to develop and promote locally planned and managed networks of heritage trails... (which) provide unobtrusive and economical access to historic places, whether for walkers, cyclists, motorists, or boaters." The historical society has been consulted and involved in the planning for these signs. The committee has made use of our recently published *A Walking Tour of Essex Junction* pamphlet and a number of photographs in our collection.

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.

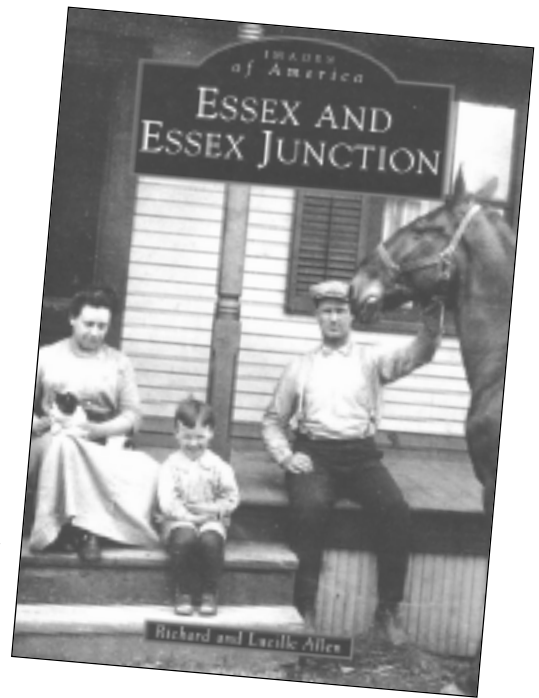
ESSEX AND ESSEX JUNCTION

by Richard and Lucille Allen

By purchasing this photographic history book through the historical society, you will support the work of the society in collecting, sharing and displaying Essex history. This is a major fund raiser for the society. *Thank you for your order.*

Check how you want to receive the book:

- Mail the book to me
- I will pick it up from a board member



Quantity	X	Cost of one book	=	Price
_____	X	\$19.99	=	_____
VT RESIDENTS ADD 6% SALES TAX				
(No tax if purchased by schools or libraries)				
(Tax per book is \$1.20)				
POSTAGE AND HANDLING				
(Charge for one book is \$2.50. For each additional book add \$.50)				
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Mail Orders to: Essex Community Historical Society
3 Browns River Road
Essex Junction, Vermont 05452

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.

Harry Cooley Remembers a Boyhood in Essex Junction from 1905 to 1910

The April 22, 1971 issue of the Suburban List carried this piece. It was introduced with this note:

The following reminiscences by Harry Cooley, who now lives in Randolph Center, will remind many readers of this village in the early days of the century. Mr. Cooley was Secretary of State during the Hoff administration, and afterwards served in the Peace Corps though he was in his seventies.

It is excerpted here.

When I entered school in "The Junction" it was as a seventh grader in the room on the North side of the old 'Park Street' school house. This building then housed both the Grammar School from 4th thru 8th grade on the lower level, and the High School and 9th grade on the second floor. This continued during the five years I attended school in Essex.

...The high school two principals, Mr. C. D. Howe and Mr. J. M. Tebbetts...were also expected to teach a full schedule and act as principal and superintendent for the high school and graded school. The principal had two lady assistant teachers in the high school... [with] about 50 students and usually graduated 4 to 7 students each year.

There were sometimes two and sometimes three courses: General English, College Prep or Classical, and Commercial. The main difference was that in College Prep you studied four years of Latin and in the Commercial you had Bookkeeping...Our school library consisted of 'the Big' Dictionary, a set of ancient encyclopedias, the *Vermont Cynic*, The Congressional Record and about 40 or 50...volumes of English literature.

Each room in the building was heated by a very large Stewart coal stove and the High School had, in addition, a wood chunk stove in the rear. I have reason to remember this heating plant since I took charge of it one January and February in 1908 when the janitor, Jim Douglas, was sick. Every day for three weeks I carried 10 to 15 hods of coal and many armfuls of hard wood from the basement up three flights of stairs besides emptying the ashes and sweeping the whole building (sometimes) twice a week. For this I received \$1.00 per

day, although Mr. Douglas, the janitor, thought it 'wasn't worth over 50 cents.'

Flush toilets were installed in the basement about 1907. Before that there were dry toilets. The girls' was on the North side and fairly near the building. The boys' was at a distance, just outside the railway right of way on the South.

The railroad was very much a part of our school life, three times a day; 8 a.m., 10:40 a.m. and 5 p.m. Three or four passenger trains met there and the rest of the day the 'switcher' and crew worked in the railway yard sorting cars and making up trains. All of the engines burned soft coal and frequently all the school house windows had to be closed tightly to keep out cinders and smoke...recitations had to be halted on account of the noise made by passing engines.

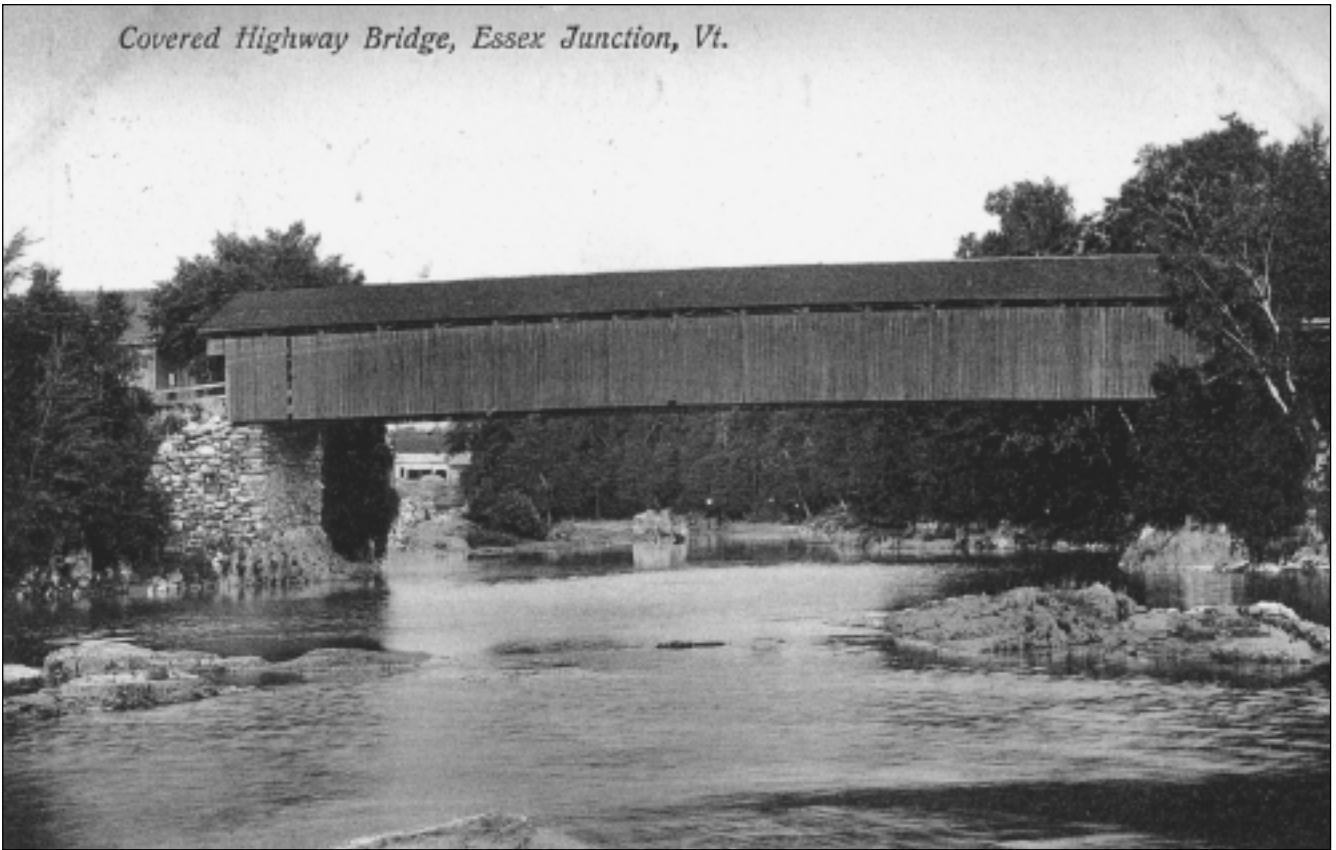
Our playground paralleled the railroad tracks and in the winter the brakemen working in the yard were frequent targets of snowballs. This was a somewhat risky pastime as they often retaliated with chunks of coal, stones, or cinders.

Toward the end of the Spring term the river water was warm enough for swimming and we made...trips down Park Street to the covered bridge. The good swimmers stopped at the bridge, climbed down on the rocks underneath and jumped or dove into 20 feet of water. There was also a large rope hanging from the stringers to a few feet above the water which could be swung so that an adventurous youth could jump from the rocks, catch it and swing back and forth...before letting go and dropping into deep water.

The young boys and poor swimmers crossed the bridge and went upstream through the pasture to reach a point just about where the power dam is now. ... there was a rocky island with a sand bar reaching part way to it and the beginners waded out on the bar and swam diagonally across to the shore which was a low cliff. We taught each other how to swim. I never saw an older person there nor did I ever know of a drowning...

Nobody wore trunks. It was thought that some of the girls frequented the opposite shore (which was forested) when there was a group of boys in the river. I suppose the river was polluted then since the towns above all discharged their sewage untreated, but the water looked and tasted O.K. to us.

Covered Highway Bridge, Essex Junction, Vt.



The covered bridge that spanned the Winooski River, site of skinny dipping in Harry Cooley's time.

After we had enough of swimming we strolled back through Brownell's mill yard where there were apt to be 'slippery elm' logs. The bark of this 'red elm' has a mucus-like, slightly sweet substance and this was chewed, not because it was good, but because it was the thing to do... It might have some narcotic effect. I know on a hot May or June day after a mile walk down, 2 hours in the water and a mile walk back chewing slippery elm, a fifteen year old's ambition was gone for the rest of the day.

Much of our social life centered about church, especially the Congregational, where Reverend C. C. Adams, a popular young minister, and his wife, organized boys' and girls' clubs and managed to get good attendance of young people at the evening meetings on Sunday and Wednesday.

My family attended the struggling Baptist church which was somewhat envious of the Congos with their larger resources and slightly broader approach to social life...both Baptist and Methodist congregations of that period were still in the hands of a much more rigid discipline than now prevails. A good church member

did not dance, play cards, smoke, chew, or swear and always went to church at least twice a week.

The young people of the town occasionally organized a dramatic club and 'put on' a play...in the Lincoln Hall...It was usually followed by several hours of social dancing, but on one occasion when we had been entertained by the Fisk University Jubilee Quartette under the auspices of the High School, our innocent suggestion of a 'little dance' was sternly forbidden by the High School Principal, a staunch Methodist. He said it was completely inappropriate to hold a 'kitchen tunk' after such a high class entertainment.

I have written this for my own amusement and with the hope that some of our modern youth will read it and realize that it was possible to have a reasonably normal life without all the modern necessities. I am certainly not advocating a return to the 'old days' even if it were possible. Today's youngsters are too knowledgeable (perhaps the word is sophisticated) to be content with such austerity.

*This was copied from Lenore Whitten's collection of news clippings.
Thank you to Mrs. Whitten for sharing her material with the historical society.*

UPCOMING EVENTS

TOWER OPENING, May 21, 2005 at the water tower at Fort Ethan Allen. 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Weather permitting. Come view the surrounding vistas and learn about the history of the fort. Doug Slaybaugh will lead a walking tour of the Fort, starting at 11:00. Meet at the water tower for this. Will Parkinson will have the pump house at the Fort open, as well, with Fort memorabilia on display. Please watch for further information in the Essex Reporter on this Essex Community Historical Society sponsored event. This is a great way to get a bird's eye view of the surrounding area. Thank you to Doug and Will for helping out with this event.

TAG SALE, June 4, 2005 at the museum. 9:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m. Please consider donating your "valuable" items to our tag sale. We need things in good condition: furniture, dishes, household items, toys, etc. Please no clothes, books, mattresses, or plants. Call any board member to arrange a pick up of your items. Items can be dropped off at the museum on Thursday, June 2 from 6:30-7:30 p.m. This is a big fund raiser for us. Please help us out.

VERMONT HISTORY EXPO, June 25 & 26, 2005 at Tunbridge fairgrounds, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. daily. Essex schools will be the focus of our display.

Experience Vermont's living history in this statewide celebration that spans generations. The 6th Annual Vermont History Expo, presented by the Vermont Historical Society, features distinctive exhibits from the collections of 145 local historical societies, museums, and heritage attractions; music and dance performances; traditional craft and historic preservation demonstrations; quilt and antique appraisals; children's games and heirloom animals; historical talks and book signings; Saturday's History-on-Parade; Sunday's Box Lunch Auction; a Genealogy Resource Center, Revolutionary, Civil, and Korean Wars encampments; 19th-century one-room schoolhouse, blacksmith and printing shops; vintage agricultural equipment exhibits; and Food Court.

ESSEX JUNCTION BLOCK PARTY, July 16, 2005 at Railroad Avenue, Essex Junction, 3:00 to 7:00 p.m.

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 Board of Directors • 2004-2005

(denotes year of term expiration)

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

Tobe Zalinger (07)
6 Browns River Road
879-1249

Eva Clough, Treasurer (05)
42 Brigham Hill Road
879-0849

Kathy Dodge (07)
PO Box 8264
Essex, VT 05451
878-4272

Lucille Allen, Secretary (05)
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878-3853

Laurie Jordan (07)
259 River Road
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Sherry Norton (07)
9 Maplelawn Drive
879-7334

Barbara Mudgett-Russell, Jr. (07)
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29 Maple Street
878-6766

Polly McEwing (06)
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Katherine Reynolds (05)
88 Park Street
878-2193

Ann Gray, Vice President (05)
28 Rosewood Lane
878-4088

William Parkinson (06)
P.O. Box 40
Hinesburg 05461
482-3113

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



Calendar of Events

(SEE INSIDE FOR MORE DETAILS)

May 21, 2005, Saturday. Water tower open at Fort Ethan Allen, 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Weather permitting.

June 4, 2005, Saturday. Tag sale at the museum, 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

June 25-26, 2005, Saturday and Sunday. Vermont History Expo at Tunbridge Fairgrounds, 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

July 16, 2005, Saturday. Essex Junction Block Party on Railroad Avenue, 3:00 to 7:00 p.m.

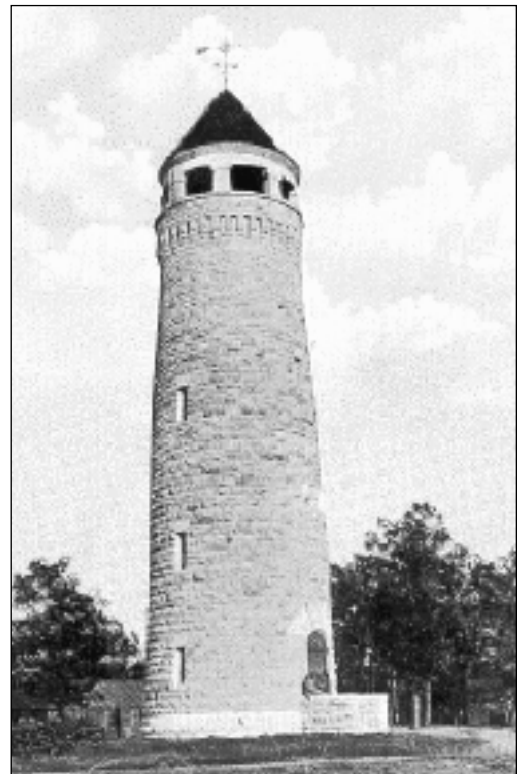


Photo from the collection of Sherry Mahady.

Water Tower at Fort Ethan Allen