

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

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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**

**D**uring the last year, the historical society has continued to get our name out in the public. We participated in the Memorial Day Parade with a sign saying “Happy 245<sup>th</sup> Birthday to Essex”. In June we participated at the Vermont History Expo with an exhibit on the Drury Brickyard which was repeated in a limited fashion at the Essex Junction Block Party in July. Those manning the exhibit heard a lot of interesting stories about working at the Brickyard. The Fort Ethan Allen Tower was opened on two occasions – in the spring and in the fall – in conjunction with the opening of the Fort Ethan Allen Museum by owner and board member, Will Parkinson. Over 200 people climbed the steps to enjoy the view and tried to successfully complete our scavenger hunt for which they received wonderful prizes!!

Throughout the summer, the museum has been open on Thursday evenings and Sunday afternoons. At least on the days I was staffing the museum, there was an increase in visitors. Hopefully, this trend will continue next year. With more volunteers, the museum could be open more hours, for example, adding Saturday afternoons. Please consider volunteering next year as a museum docent – it would be a great help to the historical society, besides being fun.

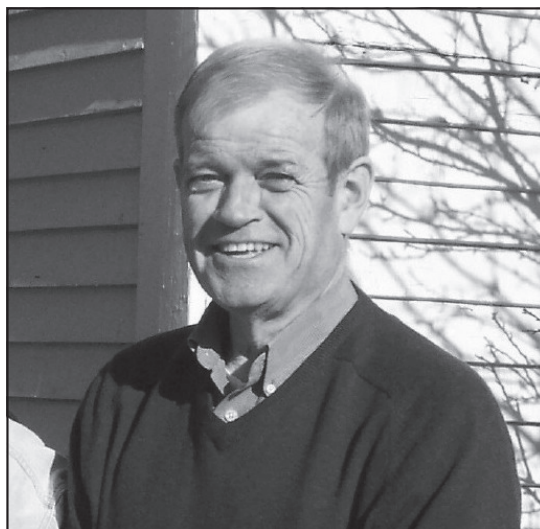
The board has started making plans for the celebration of the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the chartering of the Town of Essex in 2013. If you have ideas for the celebration or would like to serve on a planning committee, please contact a board member.

It has been a pleasure serving as your president for the last year. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity.

*Ann Gray, President of Essex Community Historical Society*

# George Ronald Wesley Clapp (1942-2008)

*Ron Clapp, long time Essex resident, educator, and local historian, died June 30, 2008. The following tribute was written by Ann Gray, president of the Essex Community Historical Society, and read at Ron's memorial service July 8, 2008 at the Essex Alliance Church.*



**R**on Clapp was many things – he was an administrator, a principal, and a teacher but first and foremost, he was a historian. Historian Ron often spilled over into all of the other “Rons”.

Historian Ron was a founding member and life member of the Essex Community Historical Society and worked very hard to preserve the history of the Town of Essex through our museum collections and recording oral histories. Administrator Ron served on the historical society board including three nonconsecutive terms as president. He was a vibrant member of the board and he was the glue that has held us together.

Historian Ron saw the Essex landscape, as we know it, disappearing. Historic buildings are being lost to old age and open spaces are being developed. And, he felt that we should capture these images while we still could. Administrator Ron worked with the Essex Art League and the Essex High School Arts Department to organize an art show and auction. Artists painted and drew Essex scenes. Photographers took pictures. These images of Essex were all on display at an art show before the auction. Individuals bought the images. The historical society acquired some for their museum collection and quite a few made their way across the river to Ron's home in Williston as Ron was the successful high bidder.

Administrator Ron thought it was important for the historical society to get our name out locally by participating in the Essex Junction Block Party and marching in the Memorial Day parade, and statewide through our display at the History Expo at the Tunbridge Fairgrounds every June. And, by doing so, Historian Ron felt we could spread the story of Essex.

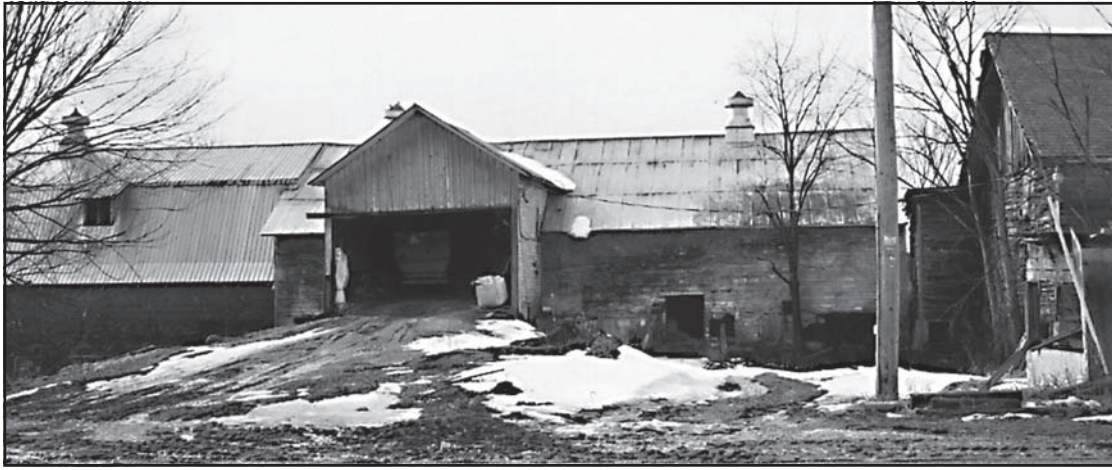
Ron loved to give the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade students at Essex

Elementary School a walking tour of the Common and Alder Lane to Towers Road and then bring the students into the museum to give them a history lesson of what the various items in the museum were. Historian Ron thought the board should also participate in this lesson – how else could we tell others about our history if we didn't know it ourselves? So there we were on a Thursday night, with eager faces, although nowhere near as young faces as his normal students, listening to Teacher Ron

tell us about his beloved Essex.

Just before Christmas this past year, I got a call from Administrator Ron saying “After the holidays, the board should get together for a cup of coffee and do some long range planning for the society.” The cup of coffee grew into a board retreat – which was actually brunch at the Lincoln Inn on a Saturday morning. Ron was there, with eyes sparkling, as we all discussed our future plans along with many digressions into talks about the history of our community. Short term plans were our display on the Drury Brick Yard at this year's History Expo. Long term plans included a discussion of what the society would do to celebrate the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2013 of the chartering of the Town of Essex. It was determined that I, as the current president of the society, should go to a town selectboard meeting to let that board know what our board was planning for the celebration. When I last saw Ron in mid-June, he asked me what happened at the selectboard meeting. I suddenly found myself back in fifth grade desperately searching for excuses why I hadn't done my homework. Finally, I had to confess that I had not gotten around to getting there, but it was on my to-do list. Principal Ron admonished me with, “We really need to get that done.” Well, Ron you would be happy to know that I got it done. I'm on the agenda for next Monday's selectboard meeting.

We are so thankful to all the “Rons” for their insight and perseverance to get the knowledge out there. We will greatly miss all of you. Please continue to help us preserve our history. And we know you will be there for the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration in 2013.



*The Earle Matthews' barn on Chapin Road, 2008.*

## The Neighboring Farms of Chapin Road

### Remembrances of Earle Matthews and Barbara Chapin, Part II

By Laurie Jordan

*Editor's note: In the Spring 2008 issue we presented Part I of this interview where the participants discussed taking milk to the creamery, pigs, selling eggs, making maple syrup, and their ancestors.*

Barb said that what the farmer's day consisted of, "Basically was the house to the barn path—and then the fields to get the cows to bring them in." Her Uncle June (Claude Jr.) and father planned to have had a two person farm, but June was killed in the war. So Chapin's single operation "had about fifty milkers and thirty or forty young cattle. But never—it wasn't quite as big as the Matthews."

Earle's father and uncle had a two-brother operation which was one of the largest dairy farms in Essex. "We had mostly Holsteins," said Earle. Last fall, before milking time around 4:00 in the afternoon, Earle's mixed herd walked on a cow path from the field over the hill into the pasture across from his present house on 278 Chapin Road. "They come pretty much, you know. . . We got some Jerseys, some Brown Swiss, and . . . I got my red and white [Holsteins] now like we used to have" once in a while. When Earle was growing up, the two brothers had almost as large a herd as Earle has now—over a hundred cows.

"Well, we make more milk than we used to . . . Usually it is around 4,000 [pounds] a day." A bulk tank truck hauls the raw milk to a St. Albans' creamery. "It comes down from Davis' [on Cilley Hill Road] up in Jericho and it goes to Tucker's over on Rollin Irish Road [close to Chapin Road in

Westford]." Earle described how the amount of milk production varies. Right now he gets about half as much as before. "The thing so bad about last year was the weather was so wet. The cows didn't get bred as soon as they should have. But hopefully next year we'll be back up again." The best hay with more protein for the cows wasn't available; it was too wet to cut in June last year. He went on to describe his usual work day. "You let the cows in. And you milk them and feed them. And then come around at four you have to do it again. That's what we did."

"We know we didn't put our feet up in between," Barb added. Chores included "cleaning up the equipment afterwards [milk time] and making sure the cows had water, and grain, and hay. . . . And because you were dealing with volume [of feed] to the animals, the feed and the straw and the bedding would be stored often in a different level of the barn. So some of the time would be involved with just getting it from one place to another."

Earle explained, "We'd probably either be getting wood . . . or fixing stuff [machinery]. Sometimes you were out there haying and [getting] feed for the cows. . . . You'd grow them silage in the summer time." Then he had to pitch it out of the silo and out of the heap nearby. "Like the hay. . . You'd put the hay down [in the chutes] in the morning. Fill the chutes up so that at night they wouldn't have to stop and get it." You could just pull the hay down.

The two work horses pulled hay wagons and machinery in earlier days. "To do all the grass, we'd [usually] get together" with the Preveys. "We used

to have two teams together.” Earle informed us that, “Of course we . . . never used to start haying ‘til the 4<sup>th</sup> of July. Now if you aren’t done by the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, you’re in big trouble.” If you miss the first of three cuts in June, you miss the hay with the most protein and energy for the cows and then they won’t produce as much milk.

Barb said, “Tractors were here in the ‘30s.” The hay baler was later. “The sequence would be pitching it by fork—the loose hay up. And then there would be a hay loader.”

“We used to bring the hay right up . . . on the wagon and drive it in the barn. I can remember the barn being full of hay . . . of loose hay.” Earle reminisced, “We used to play in the hay barn. . . . We jumped out into the hay.”

Barb agreed, “Yeah. If there was a truck of hay underneath, we’d jump into it.” Besides walking on the beams, she told how, “We attached a big rope from the rafters and had fun swinging on it.” Earle thinks Barb’s father bought a baler about 1950. “The twine used to keep breaking,” she said.

“Well they wouldn’t tie,” Earle added. “We bought a baler in 1948. . . . If the baler part missed a bale once in a hundred bales, that was doing good. The old balers. Now they miss one in . . . pretty near ten thousand—they don’t tie.” Today, Earle hays his 250 tillable acres on both sides of the road and up on the hill. “We do it three times” throughout the spring, summer, and fall. He “baled some and picked some up, and put some in the silo.”

Barb explained, “I think families differed in terms of how much they had their children involved in the farm chores” in the 50s. She did some. “We did shell beans. . . . That was a big deal for me because sometimes above the garage there, I would jump into . . . this pile of beans. They hadn’t been taken out of their pods yet.” There were no vegetable stands on the road then. “Everyone did their own vegetable thing.” The Chapins did produce and sell sweet corn along with the apples, dairy, and maple syrup.

“We never sold beans. Your dad did though,” Earle remembered. He “used to sell sweet corn. . . .

Graton used to get all the neighbors to help. . . . It was in August.” They used to come even from the Center. “They picked the sweet corn in bushel baskets and dumped them in the truck.” Chapin’s and Matthews’ trucks “would haul a bunch of the corn . . . to take it down to the canning factory,” where the Five Corners



*The Earle Matthews’ farm house, Chapin Road, 2008.*

Antiques is now. At the H. C. Baxter and Brother factory corn was unloaded by hand. Several local women went every day for three or four weeks to work at a conveyor belt that fed a corn husking machine. Earle’s mother (Glenna), his aunt (Hazel Whitten), Mrs. Prevey, and Earle’s sister (Ruth Bristol) were some of the women. By the late 50s “Chapins

used to have a picker . . . [but] we always picked by hand,” said Earle. His family always had cow corn and today he still grows 35 acres of it.

“My brother and I used to love to play in the corn stalks. We’d play hide and seek,” Barb reflected on the times she would spend outside of chores. Although the farm families had similar interests, they didn’t get together much other than for farming. She does remember a neighbor, Cheryl Fisher who was a cousin of the Cheneys, and “the stone wall that divides the end of our property. We thought it was quite exciting to leave little notes. So we had our own postal system with the neighbors. So we would go every day and check this little nook that we had—to see if we had been left a letter, a note.”

Earle remembered, “We used to play ball a lot, in the pasture.” The team included his cousins, Bernard, Donald, Raymond, and Richard (Whitten) who lived between the Matthews and Chapin farms. Earle’s other cousins, Ralph Jr. and Robert (Matthews) shared the duplex farmhouse with Earle’s family. His three sisters were Ruth, Florence, and Eleanor. Although Elmer’s and Ralph’s children helped with chores, both the Matthews and Chapin farms also had hired hands. So most of the farm work was still kept within each of their farm families.

“Only if it was a crisis or an emergency,” Barb explained. “I mean we knew we could always count on the Matthews.” Apple picking time. “There’s an

example.” And the Chapin water supply needed some help from the Matthews’ springs.

“Well, it was an effort. . . . I think we had adequate [water] for the farm. But we had a deep well for the house. . . . And then we had a cistern [that collected water from the eaves] in the cellar that we used for washing ourselves or the dishes. But the deep well was just for drinking, because as Earle said, we didn’t get very much. . . . So for a while, I guess my dad collected rain water too—for the farm. Then eventually he dug a pond up with Perry Cheney on what used to be the Whitten land. . . . We piped it down for the cows.”

Meanwhile, Ralph and Elmer Matthews had a spring for their cows right next to the barn. “Well, there was another spring for the house . . . right across the road,” Earle added. “About two hundred feet from the other one. . . . We got three—right there.” So one year in the early ‘50s, before a pond was dug, there was a drought and there was “water in the milk house.” Earle’s father would run his spring water right into three fifty-five gallon drums located there. “It started in September and he drew [water] way into February.” That’s when Graton would return from

delivering the families’ milk in cans in his truck and proceed to put his 150 gallon sap gathering tank on the back of it. After filling the tank with water from the Matthews’ drums, he trucked it up to his farm. It was pumped into a watering trough in the barnyard for his heifers. “Sometimes he’d get two loads a day.”

“You knew you could always count on your neighbor,” Barb affirmed. Today, she lives with her husband on part of her old farm land. Barb and John Egan operate a Christmas Tree farm close to her old sugar orchard. The Chapin Apple Orchard is now owned and carried on by another family. Earle is still Barb’s neighbor, and his present helpers are his children. He has four sons and two daughters. His farm is the last operating dairy farm in Essex. He still hays the fields and collects sap during the seasons. But each and every day, he tends to his chores to feed, milk, and care for his cows as he maintains a flavor of the Essex farming history.

*Author’s note: A special thank you to Earle Mathews, Barb Chapin and Donald Whitten who made the research enjoyable.*

## Family Honors Soldier of Revolutionary War

By Hannah Crowley

*From the August 13, 2007 Burlington Free Press, page 2B*

Descendents of Revolutionary War soldier Simon Tubbs came from across the United States this weekend to participate in a grave marking ceremony. Members of the Brigham family honored the patriot ancestor Sunday morning with a medal to commemorate his service. Tubbs is buried in the Village Cemetery in Essex Junction.

Tubbs was remembered with a military Color Guard, a recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance and prayers. A reproduction Revolutionary War musket, much like the one Tubbs would have used, was fired by a relative wearing the traditional rifleman’s attire.

Tubbs was a member of the Connecticut Regiment and was appointed to George Washington’s personal guard at Valley Forge. He was one of only 300 men throughout eight years who served in Washington’s personal guard. After this prestigious posting and a long hard winter at Valley Forge, Tubbs went on to participate in battles at Germantown, Pa, and Monmouth, N.J., two pivotal battles of the war.

Tubbs was one of the first three families to settle Burlington and one of the founders of Essex, where he moved when he retired. Once in Essex, Tubbs served as a representative to the first assembly in Montpelier and aided in planning the village green.

The Brigham Family has conducted extensive research on their ancestry and are active members of the Daughters of the American Revolution and Sons of the American Revolution.

## The Collection Corner

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

- Donation in his father's name, by Robert Beecher Wood
- Donation of a collection of scanned photographs depicting high school commencements and events from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century until 1950s, by John Dubie
- Purchase of three postcards of Essex
- Donation of two Alder Brook Valley Farm bottle caps and an unidentified glass bottle from the Whitten house on Old Stage Road, by Clint Russell
- Donation of several Drury Brickyard ledgers of letters and records, by Drury family
- Purchase of a Junction Pharmacy bottle
- Donations in memory of Ron Clapp
- Donation of an 1857 school map of Chittenden County, by Donald Whitten
- Donation of items found in buildings at 2 Lamoille Street and 50 East Street: petition books, a letter, and a doll bonnet, by Judith Rooney
- Donation of a Drury milk bottle, by Phyllis Drury

*Thank you to these people.*

## Upcoming Events

**Friday December 5,**  
**Tree lighting and sing-a-long**  
on the Town Common in Essex Center. Meet at 6:15 p.m. at Essex Elementary School. We will then proceed to the Town Common to light the tree and sing holiday songs. Refreshments will be served afterwards at the Elementary School.

**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.

## Landscaping at the Museum

by Kathy Dodge

The Harriet Powell Museum has been beautifully landscaped by Sara Salantino of Full Circle Gardens. Sarah has planted a garden both in the front of the museum and along the road side of the building. She was able to salvage many of the plants that were there, and has put in some additional plants that she knew to be favorites of Harriet Powell. The two gardens enhance the traditional architecture of the building. We encourage you to come by for a look. There is still a lot of color and plants have fared well this first season.

Our plan for the future is to plant a purple lilac in honor and in memory of Alicia Shanks, as that was a favorite of hers.

If you would like to see a list of the plants, or a map of the garden design, come visit the museum. We would love to show you the master plan.

# 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

Kevin Lavery (09)  
68 Osgood Hill Road  
338-6455

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



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



*Board members (L. to r.) Sherry Norton, Eva Clough, and Laurie Jordan march in the May 24, 2008 Memorial Day Parade.*

## 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.

**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.

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.

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.

## UPDATES:

Come see the new 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.

•  
About twenty people attended the EBPA Mixer/ECHS Open House held at the museum May 8.

•  
The spring tag sale on June 7 netted about \$236.

•  
The museum open house was held on Sunday, June 15. At this time the board of directors remembered and honored Alicia Shanks, former board member, who died August 24, 2006 in the Essex Elementary School shootings. See Spring 2007 issue for an article about Alicia.

•  
The water tower was open in September. About 140 people came by to have a bird's eye view of the surrounding area. *The Essex Reporter* had a nice review of the event, including photos.

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



# 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

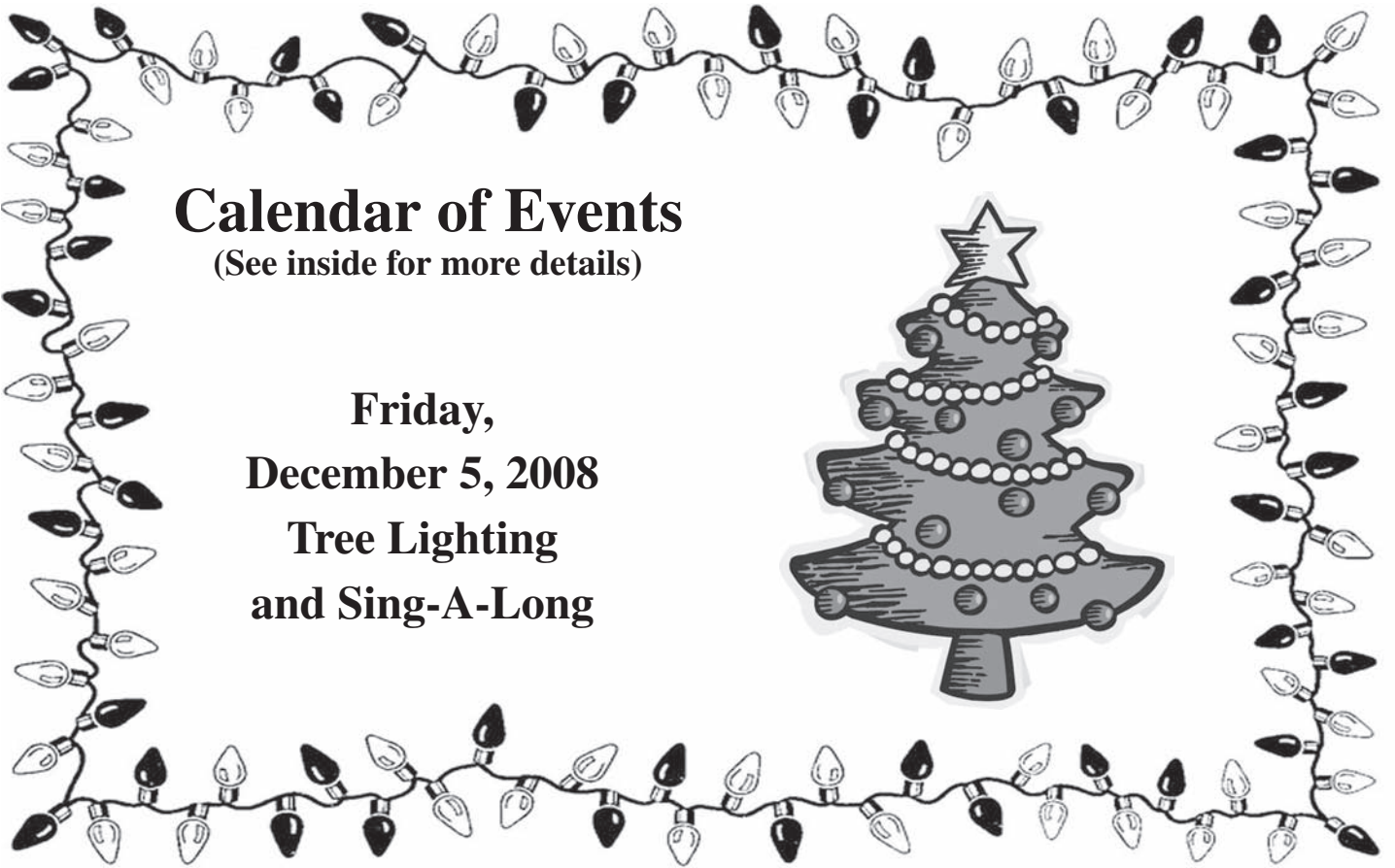
\_\_\_ Family membership \$15.00

\_\_\_ 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.

Essex, Vermont 05451  
P.O. Box 8388  
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ESSEX COMMUNITY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



# Calendar of Events

(See inside for more details)

**Friday,  
December 5, 2008  
Tree Lighting  
and Sing-A-Long**

