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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.

Spring 2012

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#### ANNIVERSARIES

What an honor to be part of ECHS at such an important time for anniversaries! Several of our members and Board of Directors have been participating in the 150th anniversary of the beginning of the American Civil War. We're blessed in Essex with a very complete history of all the soldiers who served, and several residents have shared stories and memorabilia from the great conflict. There will be more to come as we remember the great battles which forged our modern nation from 1861-1865.

2012 marks the 200th anniversary of the War of 1812, which drew Essex farmers to New York to fight the British once more at the Battle of Plattsburgh, and raised state's rights issues which are still relevant today. Colonel Samuel Page, of "Page's Corners," was a key figure in one of several skirmishes leading up to war involving illegal smuggling of goods to Canada.

And of course, 2013 will mark the 250th anniversary of the Essex Town Charter, granted by New Hampshire Royal Governor Benning Wentworth on June 7th, 1763. Planning has begun for a year-long series of events which will be both a birthday party and a chance to interest residents in our exciting and long local history. The Essex Select Board will convene a working group soon.

In my brief history on the Board, the best part has been working with the great people on the Board and uncovering Essex stories, which always seem to lead to connections to other stories...all of which are fascinating. As far as working with people, the Essex tree-lighting in December was an example of ECHS folks working hard to create community spirit.

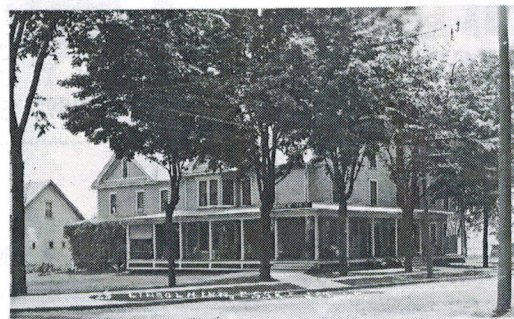
We hope you enjoy this edition of the ECHO. We're looking forward to spring and the opening of the Harriet Powell Museum. We hope everyone enjoyed the mild winter season this year! We also hope that if you live locally you will consider volunteering for the 250th Charter Anniversary planning group. Let's make it an anniversary to remember!!!

Tim Jerman, Co-President



## THE FIVE CORNERS

The Lincoln Inn began in 1914 when a group of Essex Junction leaders purchased the former Job Bates residence. It has held receptions, fine dining, and was a very popular lunchtime gathering place in addition to a traveler's hotel.



### THE LINCOLN INN

ESSEX JUNCTION, VERMONT

IS AN IDEAL HOME FOR  
SUMMER or WINTER  
IN EVERY WAY MODERN

Attractive Drawing Room  
Tap Room  
Lobby  
Dining Room

24 Guest Rooms  
All with hot and cold running water  
(also Private Baths)

Moderate Prices To All  
By the Day, Week or Season

Quiet and Secluded     ❖     Private Parties

★

### ATTRACTIONS

5½ miles to Lake Champlain  
Fishing — Boating — Swimming  
Adjacent to Mt. Mansfield Winter Sports Area

### THE LINCOLN INN

Essex Junction, Vermont

Most Accessible Hotel in Northern Vermont  
Via: Train, Plane or Bus

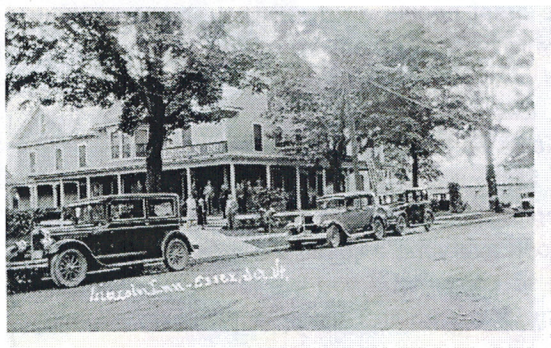
★

### THE LINCOLN INN IS

2 minutes walk from the C. V. Railway Station  
2 miles from Fort Ethan Allen Airbase  
6 miles from Burlington  
(Busses every 30 minutes)  
2½ miles from Burlington Air Port  
354 miles from New York City  
239 miles from Boston  
97 miles from Montreal

★

Telephone 8-3309



The Lincoln Inn—circa 1930.



The Lincoln Inn—May 1984



## DONATIONS

**Holly Powell:** Harriet Powell's flower painting on a canvas in a hooped wall hanging.

**Gus Nordstrom:** WWII books, and *The Original Military Atlas of the Civil War*.

**Eva Clough:** two Lincoln Inn postcards and a 1923 framed high school picture of the Prospect Street Essex Junction High School and students.

**John Duby:** three half pint milk bottles from Ethan Allen and Hood.

**Sally Fleury:** 10 family postcards c. 1920s sent to Isle la Motte before they moved to Essex.

**Sidney Lauber** (of Sidney, OH): Lincoln Inn letterhead order to Peerless Bread Machine Company from October 1930.

**Joan Alexander:** her father's photos of John Duby's old vertical plank house being remodeled in 1987.

**Clint Russell:** volunteering his time by entering the past year's Essex obituaries into a binder.

**William Parkinson:** a 1961 Essex Junction license plate for a bicycle.

**THANK YOU!!!**

## Detective Story (by Tim Jerman)

Here's a recent local detective story (short version). A local historian from Waterbury uncovered a photo of a WWII fighter pilot from Essex, shot down in Europe near the end of the war in 1945. Did we have any information on this pilot? A brief search revealed that the pilot's father, Dr. Matthew Hunter, is buried in the Village Cemetery, with a stone commemorating his son, Lt. William Hunter. Locals remember Dr. Hunter, but not William. A review of old Suburban Lists (the local paper then) and the Burlington Free Press turned up nothing, no mention at all of our local war hero! Why? It turns out Dr. Hunter's son had grown up in California; the local press completely missed the story. We hope to bring it to light around Memorial Day and bring Lt. Hunter's memory back to Essex. Without the inquiry from Waterbury, we'd have never known.

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## BRIEFLY

UVM has a website that includes a college student's project of statewide town sites, including Essex, which compares photos throughout history.

Old and new Essex recipes are being sought for a Town Recipe Book.

Hubie Norton and Sandy Packard continue to work on the 1805 Schoolhouse. They are gathering the needed materials to get a new roof on the building, and are searching for a mason to work on the chimney.



## RIDING AROUND THE CENTER: PART II

By John Duby and Laurie Jordan

The next time you drive by the green at Essex Center's Four Corners, imagine when "Route 15 was a lot smaller," said John. "I was pretty small....Cars parked on the green and there was a band concert. At the end of each musical selection the cars would blow their horns....I don't think they had a bandstand. I think they probably just set up maybe chairs for the band to play" by the old library at 5 Jericho Road.

### LOCAL SUPPLIES

John's uncle, Basil Farnsworth, owned stores at three different times, one which was next door in his own house at 3 Jericho Road. "The first one that I remember was in the old preventorium...The other one was [in]...the old Methodist parsonage" at 106 Center Road. His uncle Basil "ended up working for Tom as the butcher....After the end of World War II, Tom Rotunda made Lagranger's Garage [7 Jericho Road] into a grocery store." John worked at Rotunda's when he was 16.

"Actually the house right next to the [old] library was where the old telephone switchboard was," John explained. "That was run by my grandmother and her sister Stella [Farnsworth] Wool." Even when John was growing up, his neighbors needed service. So John used what was available to help. "The early part of World War II, my father worked at Fort Ethan Allen...building the [wooden] barracks...and he worked [at their] fire department...Then he used to bring a lot of stuff home—things like the crank telephones. I mentioned the telephone wire...Hardly west of Carmi Ryan's [89 Center Road], the Janes family [79 Center Road] moved into town...But they didn't have a phone. We had a lot of old phone wire. We had a couple of crank phones. So we hooked up a crank phone in our house. We ran wire along the fence line from our house back up of Ryan's to Janes' and hooked up a crank phone at their place. So people would call us for messages to relay to the Janes. And we would crank the phone and give them the message.

"Back in 1931, both my parents and my grandparents bought a brand new Chevrolet car....and later on one of the cars wore out; the other one kind of wore out. And they were stored in our barn, right across from the Price Chopper. So when I was 15 years old, I started working on them and I combined the two cars into one running car. So that I'd have a car when I got my license at age 16, which I did. And that just amazes me that at age 15, I could *combine two cars to make one* running well. One of them was a Chevrolet four-door. One was two-door. And I took the engine out of the four-door that had the accident. It had a good engine...and I put it in the two-door. And the two-door became my primary car.

"I got my license at age 16 when I would go and drive to Burlington and go to the movies." Before that, John "used to go the movies on my own....I used to hitchhike to Essex Junction and take the bus to Burlington to go to the movies...There was also a movie house in [the Jericho part of] Underhill at that time...where they had the green...that had second run movies. We used to go up there occasionally."

### SHARING TIMES

"I raised all my spending money from *mowing lawns and shoveling snow*...from the time I was ten years old....I used to mow Hall's lawn [an antique and sewing shop on the corner of Towers and Center Roads]. Another one was the house down at Butler's Corners" [Molloy-Delano house] and across the road at Twin Maples...And I had a *paper route* with the [Burlington] Daily News which was an evening paper. There was the GRIT which was a weekly paper...." John's longest job was raising rabbits...."We'd just sell the live rabbits and they did what they wanted to. A pet out of it, or eat it.

"One thing I didn't mention. After graduation in 1948, I got a job at the brickyard...My job was to drive an old dilapidated dump truck up in back of the sand pit and load it up with a hand shovel. And during the summer that was pretty hot. Up in the sand pit, I had too much of that and I joined the Navy....I was



Navy jet fighter plane mechanic...in the Korean War.

"My pet dog was Rover...and he died from loneliness when I went in the Navy....They gave it to me when I was in the second grade....We were inseparable all through my childhood." Rover and John played in his backyard "because there wasn't any kids nearby to play with, so we used to follow the cow paths....The deed said something like 24 acres more or less.

"On the edge of our woods we used to have these gray birch trees. And when I was probably the earlier pre-teens,...we used to climb as high as I could. And then the thing would bend over. Bend down to the grass and you'd end up on the ground. So that was some recreation. It was 'Riding the Gray Birch' trees from being upright to right down to the ground.

"I had never been fishing [at] Alder Brook....There wasn't much of a swimming hole there because the water wasn't deep enough. But this does bring up the real swimming holes, which was Browns River. There was one off Route 128 just downstream from the covered bridge...at the time. I used to get up in the top of it and suspend myself up in the rafters and watch the cars go underneath....I remember the Whitcomb bridge on Route 15...used to be another source of a swimming hole before they straightened the river." John and his sisters, Betty, Sis (Faith) and Monica "used to ride our bicycles up to either of the swimming holes.

#### BEST SLIDING IN TOWN

"And there was also the sliding hill. *Bixby Hill was the best sliding hill in town.* I think there is a travois up on the wall in the other room" of our museum.



"So Alice Tomilson's son, Hollis [who lived near the foot of Bixby Hill] used to have a travois. And it would seat, I don't know, half a dozen kids....We'd take that to the top of the hill along with every kid and his sled. We could hook our sleds onto that

and slide down the road. This is before they sanded roads. It was back when cars used chains to get up the icy roads. And we'd be going pretty fast and the sleds would start to whip around and usually the last sled would whip the kids off. Usually it was me. But if the sliding was really great, we'd end up going across the flats, past the old boarding house, down the hill across the railroad tracks, and down across the bridge near the school, and across there was a fire access road. You'd be barely moving but you could make the sharp corner down to the fire road down to the brook. It was right outside Godette's house [6 Browns River Road]. It was between the bridge and the house." John pointed out the Historical Society Museum window towards where he had winter fun.

"This reminds me of there used to be a skating rink up there in the winter" where the school building is now. "Back in the ECI minutes, the ECI trustees designated \$25.00 for the recreational fund for the skating rink....My father had the job of flooding it, which he would ask me to do....I'd have to wait in the school where it was warm for the [50 gallon drum] to fill up and then move the hose over to the next barrel. Let that fill up and keep track of them....Then we tipped them all over at the same time....That was another one of my jobs."

#### SCHOOL DAYS

The old Essex Classical Institute changed to Essex High School at the foot of Bixby Hill Road "Sometimes we'd be out there for recess when the train came through. And well it must have given the engineer fits because some kids would try to run back and forth across the track. See how many times they could do it before the train got there....We put a penny on the track and it got about the size of a quarter after the train got through running over it.

"A couple of times we had out-of-school activities. One was picking corn at the Chapin Farm because I guess it was canning season and they didn't have enough people to pick corn. So we had school kids picking corn....The cannery was in Essex Junction....Then another time we picked potatoes at the Seigrist Farm at the foot of Sand Hill....They got that thing that went through and



and got out the potatoes and we went along behind it and picked them up.

"The Memorial Hall was always used for Memorial Day exercises as well as basketball games..There was a woodstove there with a stovepipe. It ran the length of the building, which was probably 20-30 feet, something like that, and held up by wires. So what the guys tried to do would be to hit the stovepipe with the basketball. So that would stop the game. And there was always guys running around trying to put the pipe back together so we didn't get suffocated.

"But on Memorial Day...everybody marched down the sides [of the road]. That was usually a time for lilacs, too....So the place would be festooned with lilacs and flags and then there'd be a speaker, which was usually the students. [This] also brings up a prize speaking. It was an activity that usually took place in the Memorial Hall, too....They gave probably half a dozen prizes to students who did the best speech. And they had teachers that would be the judges." Graduation exercises were also held there.

#### A SENIOR TRADITION

"The tradition was every Halloween the senior boys would break into the school and mix things up. One year I heard they brought a calf up and tied it to the principal's desk. He used to have his desk right there in front of the study hall" on the second floor.

The tradition in John's senior year was carried out by him, " a couple of girls and I guess Jack Whitcomb also. He had already graduated but was familiar with the tradition. Christine DeForge and Nancy Whitcomb. And Christine lived right next door to the old church anyway (present library). That was a vacant church which had a cupola and a bell in it...and the bell was in the high school, too. The principal at the time was Fay Whitcomb. And he was determined that nobody was going to break into the school. He lived beside of the school, at the old Ladd place (the home by the swamp on Route 128). [He] had this deputy sheriff. They were going to stake out the school—make sure nobody got in there. Well, previous to this, I had made my plans on the hill in advance. And I had gone up into the belfry of the old church, hooked a wire onto the wheel that you turn the rope to ring the bell, threw the wire outside and into the evergreens next to Christine's house. So then came Halloween night. We got right into the school and the principal and the deputy sheriff had gone to the principal's house for coffee. So we saw them go. We went into the school and moved things around. And the last thing we did was ring the bell. And then hurried down to Christine's house. And I ran into the church and while I was up there, they thought they were going to catch us in the belfry of the school, but they didn't. While they were there, from the outside I rang the bell in the church. And then we hid in Christine's house. And they came looking for us. But they didn't find us. Christine's grandmother said, 'I haven't seen them.'"

#### THE ESSEX HIGH SCHOOL

"I graduated in the Class of '48. There was ten of us, which was the largest class in 22 years....But—I was the only boy because at the 11th grade, the other three boys in the class, [Edwin Cusson, Clarence Hubbard, and Lyman Desso] preferred to get a job rather than finishing school.... Christine DeForge, Shirley Wool, Nancy Whitcomb, and Ruth Lang. Those four and I went up from 1st grade right on through. We started 1st grade in this [museum] building here....Marjorie Bixby had 28 in 1st grade....We had 3rd and 4th graders in the other half of it....The 2nd grade was in the annex up on the [back] side of the ECI building....because it was all full down here."

*(Photo: The ECI was built in 1874 and became Essex Center High School until students started attending Essex Junction High School in the early 50s. The grades and junior high school building was torn down in 1972. The 2nd grade annex can be seen in the back.)*





"5th and 6th were in one room in the 1st floor of the ECI building. And then...7th through 12th were in the rest of the school. Different rooms were for particular subjects.... Usually there was two rooms on the 1st floor where World History or Geography or whatever it was. Plus there was a Home Ec. room, And then on the 2nd floor was the main study hall plus Elaine Anderson's room. She was...the English and French teacher. The library was on the 2nd floor" as well as Ralph Mayo's desk, who "was the principal of the high school....He taught Agriculture classes to the boys and showed us how to graft tree branches." He retired after WWII.

"The thing about the study hall, was that it was a big room with tables all around the perimeter....During the summer of World War II, the ladies in town used to get together and have quilting bees. And they also made mattresses in the big study hall there, because it was the only big room, big open room around....My mother and my grandmother" helped them.

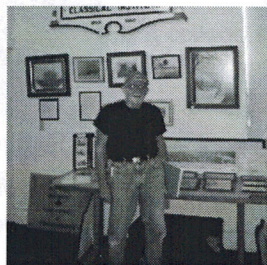
"We had hot lunch down in the Home Ec. room. Ladies of the village got together their own system, and I guess they got some government surplus food....They had salmon wiggle...and Spanish rice. Those were my two favorite dishes....

"There was a boy's stairway and a girl's stairway...going up to the 2nd floor....Then you got to the top of the stairs on the 2nd floor, and there was all these open cubby holes where you kept your books and stuff like that. The boys on the boy's side of the stairs and the girls on the girl's side of the stairs....Boys and girls coat rooms."

John's high school, previously ECI, became a graded and junior high school until it was torn down in 1972. Its bell still hangs over the entry to the "School on the Hill." Filled with memories, John still rides down Route 128 from his Westford home through the Center.

The End

(photo: John Duby at the Harriet Powell Museum.)



## SHARING ESSEX HISTORY

By Laurie Jordan

The second graders at Essex Elementary School continued to take in the history of the Four Corners with Laurie Jordan in October and March. This spring, Ms. Snedeker's and Ms. Bellen's first graders visited the museum with the help of Laurie, Sherry Norton, and Polly McEwing. The students expanded on their own family and town history experiences by sharing follow-up class projects with their families at school. Another museum tour was given to Essex Cub Scout Troop Den 10, Pack 635. Throughout the year, ECHS board members are pleased to respond to more research requests, including from the Edge Academy students.

The Essex Junction Prospect Street School, now the Fleming School, is celebrating its 100th anniversary during this spring. The principal, Dan Ryan, welcomes any Prospect Street School stories, memorabilia, and alumni presence at the events. The alumni ranges back to high school days, junior high, and grades school students.

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## HARDTACK

*Courtesy of the National Park Service*

Hardtack was a biscuit issued to Union soldiers throughout the [Civil] war. The crackers made up a large portion of a soldier's daily ration....Usually, the hardtack did not get to the soldiers until months after it had been made. By that time, they were very hard, so hard that the soldiers called them "tooth dullers" and "sheet iron crackers".....Soldiers would crumble them into coffee or soften them in water and fry the hardtack with some bacon grease....

2 cups flour

1/2 to 3/4 cup of water

1 tablespoon Crisco or vegetable fat

6 pinches of salt

Mix the ingredients together into a stiff batter, knead several times, and spread the dough out flat to a thickness of 1/2" on a non-greased cookie sheet. Bake for 1/2 hour at 400 degrees. Remove from oven, cut dough into 3" squares, and punch 4 rows of holes, 4 holes per row into the dough. Turn the dough over, return to the oven and bake another 1/2 hour. Turn oven off and leave door closed. Leave the hardtack in the oven until cool. Remove and enjoy!

*"Tis the song of the soldier, weary, hungry and faint,  
Hard crackers, hard crackers, come again no more;  
Many days have I chewed you and uttered no complaint,  
Hard crackers, hard crackers, come again no more!"*

~ from a soldier's parable called *Hard Times*



## Page's Corners and the War of 1812.....200 Years Ago

By Tim Jerman

The War of 1812 had deep Vermont roots and locally can be traced through the experiences of Colonel Samuel Page. He was born in Rindge, New Hampshire in 1788, but he grew up in Pownal, Vermont. In 1807, Page joined the Vermont militia and was stationed at Windmill Point in Swanton as "Lighthouse Keeper," or customs official, to guard against illegal smuggling of goods to British Canada. He was enforcing the federal Embargo Act, a law intended to force Great Britain and France to stop harassing American ships and interfering with free trade.

Young Ensign Page (19) gained a measure of notoriety when he and nine others discovered a large boat headed for Canada under a full sail with a cargo of potash. Page ordered the boat to "heave to" and it did; his men took control but were fully prepared for a bloody encounter with smugglers trying to retake their cargo. Fortunately, orders came to remove the seized vessel to Burlington, and there was no further incident. This was not always the case. Two militia were killed and others wounded in a similar smuggling incident dubbed the "Black Snake Affair" on the Winooski River in 1808. The ultimate failure of the Embargo Act to influence Britain led to the War of 1812 five years later.

Colonel Page, like many Vermonters, served only briefly in the War of 1812 to augment the New York troops in Plattsburgh. Vermonters were deeply divided. Most were torn between supporting the government against Britain, but opposing the embargo which was devastating to a profitable trade in lumber, potash, and other goods with Montreal to the north. Potash was supplied near Page's Corners.

Perhaps this conflict even played out at Page's Corners. A tavern there, Adinijah Brooks' "Public House," was rumored to be a meeting place for smugglers. The roads north and west from there were good back roads to avoid detection. The two taverns might have had very different conversations! Colonel Page was a well-respected businessman and always was so well-dressed that he earned the nickname "Colonel Slicky."

Page settled in Essex by 1810 and opened another tavern at Page's Corners. Later he added a blacksmith shop and wheelwright shop. The early business center included a sawmill, store, school, and post office. Town meetings were held there from 1805-1821, when Butler's Corners matured to become the new center. Today, only Page's 1822 brick house on the corner of Brigham Hill Road and Old Stage Road remains to remind us of the bustling community at Page's Corners.

### References:

*The History of Essex*, Frank Bent, 1963.

*Lake Champlain Maritime Museum Newsletter*, August 2005.

*Rootsweb*, Internet article, John Schumacher-Hardy, May 2007

(note: Mr. Schumacher-Hardy is Col. Page's great-great-great grandson.)



Col. Samuel Page (Reproduced from old tin type).



Above: The Page home at Page's Corners.

Col. Page built this home around 1828.

This was also the home of Dr. L. C. Butler

Photo, left: Col. Page.



## ESSEX COMMUNITY HISTORICAL SOCIETY BOARD MEMBERS

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(denotes year of term expiration)*

## ESSEX COMMUNITY HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP FORM

Please print

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/Town \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Circle relevant Annual Membership Category or Lifetime:

Individual \$10

Family \$15

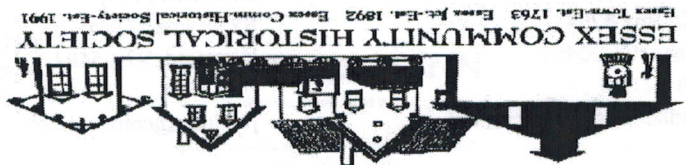
Senior (65 and older) \$5

Lifetime (individual, married, civil union) \$100

\_\_\_\_ Yes! I would like to volunteer at the museum or other event.

Make checks payable to: Essex Community Historical Society, P.O. Box 8388,  
Essex, Vermont 05451





Essex, VT 05451

P.O. Box 8388

### UPCOMING EVENTS!

**Memorial Day Parade:** May 26 at 10:00.



### **Museum Opening and Volunteer Reception :**

Sunday June 3, 1:00—4:00.

Summer hours will be:

Sunday afternoons 1:00—4:00 (until October 7th) and,

Thursday evenings 6:30—8:00 (until August 30th).

**Vermont History Expo:** ECHS's booth will have a Civil War theme. June 16 and 17, 10:00—5:00 in Tunbridge, VT.

**Block Party:** July 24, 4:00—9:00.

ECHS booth will be on Railroad Ave in Essex Junction.





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In my brief history on the Board, the best part has been working with the great people on the Board and uncovering Essex stories, which always seem to lead to connections to other stories...all of which are fascinating. As far as working with people, the Essex tree-lighting in December was an example of ECHS folks working hard to create community spirit.

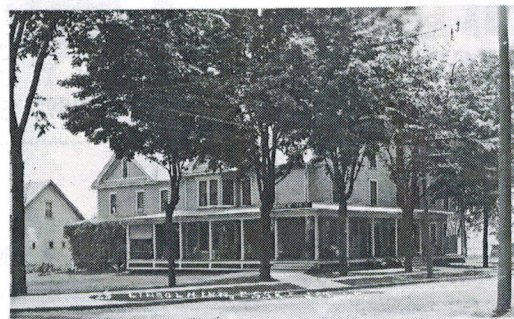
We hope you enjoy this edition of the ECHO. We're looking forward to spring and the opening of the Harriet Powell Museum. We hope everyone enjoyed the mild winter season this year! We also hope that if you live locally you will consider volunteering for the 250th Charter Anniversary planning group. Let's make it an anniversary to remember!!!

Tim Jerman, Co-President



## THE FIVE CORNERS

The Lincoln Inn began in 1914 when a group of Essex Junction leaders purchased the former Job Bates residence. It has held receptions, fine dining, and was a very popular lunchtime gathering place in addition to a traveler's hotel.



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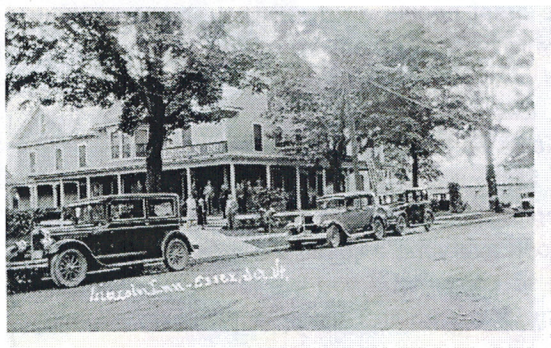
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Telephone 8-3309



The Lincoln Inn—circa 1930.



The Lincoln Inn—May 1984



## DONATIONS

**Holly Powell:** Harriet Powell's flower painting on a canvas in a hooped wall hanging.

**Gus Nordstrom:** WWII books, and *The Original Military Atlas of the Civil War*.

**Eva Clough:** two Lincoln Inn postcards and a 1923 framed high school picture of the Prospect Street Essex Junction High School and students.

**John Duby:** three half pint milk bottles from Ethan Allen and Hood.

**Sally Fleury:** 10 family postcards c. 1920s sent to Isle la Motte before they moved to Essex.

**Sidney Lauber** (of Sidney, OH): Lincoln Inn letterhead order to Peerless Bread Machine Company from October 1930.

**Joan Alexander:** her father's photos of John Duby's old vertical plank house being remodeled in 1987.

**Clint Russell:** volunteering his time by entering the past year's Essex obituaries into a binder.

**William Parkinson:** a 1961 Essex Junction license plate for a bicycle.

**THANK YOU!!!**

## Detective Story (by Tim Jerman)

Here's a recent local detective story (short version). A local historian from Waterbury uncovered a photo of a WWII fighter pilot from Essex, shot down in Europe near the end of the war in 1945. Did we have any information on this pilot? A brief search revealed that the pilot's father, Dr. Matthew Hunter, is buried in the Village Cemetery, with a stone commemorating his son, Lt. William Hunter. Locals remember Dr. Hunter, but not William. A review of old Suburban Lists (the local paper then) and the Burlington Free Press turned up nothing, no mention at all of our local war hero! Why? It turns out Dr. Hunter's son had grown up in California; the local press completely missed the story. We hope to bring it to light around Memorial Day and bring Lt. Hunter's memory back to Essex. Without the inquiry from Waterbury, we'd have never known.

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## BRIEFLY

UVM has a website that includes a college student's project of statewide town sites, including Essex, which compares photos throughout history.

Old and new Essex recipes are being sought for a Town Recipe Book.

Hubie Norton and Sandy Packard continue to work on the 1805 Schoolhouse. They are gathering the needed materials to get a new roof on the building, and are searching for a mason to work on the chimney.



## RIDING AROUND THE CENTER: PART II

By John Duby and Laurie Jordan

The next time you drive by the green at Essex Center's Four Corners, imagine when "Route 15 was a lot smaller," said John. "I was pretty small....Cars parked on the green and there was a band concert. At the end of each musical selection the cars would blow their horns....I don't think they had a bandstand. I think they probably just set up maybe chairs for the band to play" by the old library at 5 Jericho Road.

### LOCAL SUPPLIES

John's uncle, Basil Farnsworth, owned stores at three different times, one which was next door in his own house at 3 Jericho Road. "The first one that I remember was in the old preventorium...The other one was [in]...the old Methodist parsonage" at 106 Center Road. His uncle Basil "ended up working for Tom as the butcher....After the end of World War II, Tom Rotunda made Lagranger's Garage [7 Jericho Road] into a grocery store." John worked at Rotunda's when he was 16.

"Actually the house right next to the [old] library was where the old telephone switchboard was," John explained. "That was run by my grandmother and her sister Stella [Farnsworth] Wool." Even when John was growing up, his neighbors needed service. So John used what was available to help. "The early part of World War II, my father worked at Fort Ethan Allen...building the [wooden] barracks...and he worked [at their] fire department...Then he used to bring a lot of stuff home—things like the crank telephones. I mentioned the telephone wire...Hardly west of Carmi Ryan's [89 Center Road], the Janes family [79 Center Road] moved into town...But they didn't have a phone. We had a lot of old phone wire. We had a couple of crank phones. So we hooked up a crank phone in our house. We ran wire along the fence line from our house back up of Ryan's to Janes' and hooked up a crank phone at their place. So people would call us for messages to relay to the Janes. And we would crank the phone and give them the message.

"Back in 1931, both my parents and my grandparents bought a brand new Chevrolet car....and later on one of the cars wore out; the other one kind of wore out. And they were stored in our barn, right across from the Price Chopper. So when I was 15 years old, I started working on them and I combined the two cars into one running car. So that I'd have a car when I got my license at age 16, which I did. And that just amazes me that at age 15, I could *combine two cars to make one* running well. One of them was a Chevrolet four-door. One was two-door. And I took the engine out of the four-door that had the accident. It had a good engine...and I put it in the two-door. And the two-door became my primary car.

"I got my license at age 16 when I would go and drive to Burlington and go to the movies." Before that, John "used to go the movies on my own....I used to hitchhike to Essex Junction and take the bus to Burlington to go to the movies...There was also a movie house in [the Jericho part of] Underhill at that time...where they had the green...that had second run movies. We used to go up there occasionally."

### SHARING TIMES

"I raised all my spending money from *mowing lawns and shoveling snow*...from the time I was ten years old....I used to mow Hall's lawn [an antique and sewing shop on the corner of Towers and Center Roads]. Another one was the house down at Butler's Corners" [Molloy-Delano house] and across the road at Twin Maples...And I had a *paper route* with the [Burlington] Daily News which was an evening paper. There was the GRIT which was a weekly paper...." John's longest job was raising rabbits...."We'd just sell the live rabbits and they did what they wanted to. A pet out of it, or eat it.

"One thing I didn't mention. After graduation in 1948, I got a job at the brickyard...My job was to drive an old dilapidated dump truck up in back of the sand pit and load it up with a hand shovel. And during the summer that was pretty hot. Up in the sand pit, I had too much of that and I joined the Navy....I was



Navy jet fighter plane mechanic...in the Korean War.

"My pet dog was Rover...and he died from loneliness when I went in the Navy....They gave it to me when I was in the second grade....We were inseparable all through my childhood." Rover and John played in his backyard "because there wasn't any kids nearby to play with, so we used to follow the cow paths....The deed said something like 24 acres more or less.

"On the edge of our woods we used to have these gray birch trees. And when I was probably the earlier pre-teens,...we used to climb as high as I could. And then the thing would bend over. Bend down to the grass and you'd end up on the ground. So that was some recreation. It was 'Riding the Gray Birch' trees from being upright to right down to the ground.

"I had never been fishing [at] Alder Brook....There wasn't much of a swimming hole there because the water wasn't deep enough. But this does bring up the real swimming holes, which was Browns River. There was one off Route 128 just downstream from the covered bridge...at the time. I used to get up in the top of it and suspend myself up in the rafters and watch the cars go underneath....I remember the Whitcomb bridge on Route 15...used to be another source of a swimming hole before they straightened the river." John and his sisters, Betty, Sis (Faith) and Monica "used to ride our bicycles up to either of the swimming holes.

#### BEST SLIDING IN TOWN

"And there was also the sliding hill. *Bixby Hill was the best sliding hill in town.* I think there is a travois up on the wall in the other room" of our museum.



"So Alice Tomilson's son, Hollis [who lived near the foot of Bixby Hill] used to have a travois. And it would seat, I don't know, half a dozen kids....We'd take that to the top of the hill along with every kid and his sled. We could hook our sleds onto that

and slide down the road. This is before they sanded roads. It was back when cars used chains to get up the icy roads. And we'd be going pretty fast and the sleds would start to whip around and usually the last sled would whip the kids off. Usually it was me. But if the sliding was really great, we'd end up going across the flats, past the old boarding house, down the hill across the railroad tracks, and down across the bridge near the school, and across there was a fire access road. You'd be barely moving but you could make the sharp corner down to the fire road down to the brook. It was right outside Godette's house [6 Browns River Road]. It was between the bridge and the house." John pointed out the Historical Society Museum window towards where he had winter fun.

"This reminds me of there used to be a skating rink up there in the winter" where the school building is now. "Back in the ECI minutes, the ECI trustees designated \$25.00 for the recreational fund for the skating rink....My father had the job of flooding it, which he would ask me to do....I'd have to wait in the school where it was warm for the [50 gallon drum] to fill up and then move the hose over to the next barrel. Let that fill up and keep track of them....Then we tipped them all over at the same time....That was another one of my jobs."

#### SCHOOL DAYS

The old Essex Classical Institute changed to Essex High School at the foot of Bixby Hill Road "Sometimes we'd be out there for recess when the train came through. And well it must have given the engineer fits because some kids would try to run back and forth across the track. See how many times they could do it before the train got there....We put a penny on the track and it got about the size of a quarter after the train got through running over it.

"A couple of times we had out-of-school activities. One was picking corn at the Chapin Farm because I guess it was canning season and they didn't have enough people to pick corn. So we had school kids picking corn....The cannery was in Essex Junction....Then another time we picked potatoes at the Seigrist Farm at the foot of Sand Hill....They got that thing that went through and



and got out the potatoes and we went along behind it and picked them up.

"The Memorial Hall was always used for Memorial Day exercises as well as basketball games..There was a woodstove there with a stovepipe. It ran the length of the building, which was probably 20-30 feet, something like that, and held up by wires. So what the guys tried to do would be to hit the stovepipe with the basketball. So that would stop the game. And there was always guys running around trying to put the pipe back together so we didn't get suffocated.

"But on Memorial Day...everybody marched down the sides [of the road]. That was usually a time for lilacs, too....So the place would be festooned with lilacs and flags and then there'd be a speaker, which was usually the students. [This] also brings up a prize speaking. It was an activity that usually took place in the Memorial Hall, too....They gave probably half a dozen prizes to students who did the best speech. And they had teachers that would be the judges." Graduation exercises were also held there.

#### A SENIOR TRADITION

"The tradition was every Halloween the senior boys would break into the school and mix things up. One year I heard they brought a calf up and tied it to the principal's desk. He used to have his desk right there in front of the study hall" on the second floor.

The tradition in John's senior year was carried out by him, " a couple of girls and I guess Jack Whitcomb also. He had already graduated but was familiar with the tradition. Christine DeForge and Nancy Whitcomb. And Christine lived right next door to the old church anyway (present library). That was a vacant church which had a cupola and a bell in it...and the bell was in the high school, too. The principal at the time was Fay Whitcomb. And he was determined that nobody was going to break into the school. He lived beside of the school, at the old Ladd place (the home by the swamp on Route 128). [He] had this deputy sheriff. They were going to stake out the school—make sure nobody got in there. Well, previous to this, I had made my plans on the hill in advance. And I had gone up into the belfry of the old church, hooked a wire onto the wheel that you turn the rope to ring the bell, threw the wire outside and into the evergreens next to Christine's house. So then came Halloween night. We got right into the school and the principal and the deputy sheriff had gone to the principal's house for coffee. So we saw them go. We went into the school and moved things around. And the last thing we did was ring the bell. And then hurried down to Christine's house. And I ran into the church and while I was up there, they thought they were going to catch us in the belfry of the school, but they didn't. While they were there, from the outside I rang the bell in the church. And then we hid in Christine's house. And they came looking for us. But they didn't find us. Christine's grandmother said, 'I haven't seen them.'"

#### THE ESSEX HIGH SCHOOL

"I graduated in the Class of '48. There was ten of us, which was the largest class in 22 years....But—I was the only boy because at the 11th grade, the other three boys in the class, [Edwin Cusson, Clarence Hubbard, and Lyman Desso] preferred to get a job rather than finishing school.... Christine DeForge, Shirley Wool, Nancy Whitcomb, and Ruth Lang. Those four and I went up from 1st grade right on through. We started 1st grade in this [museum] building here....Marjorie Bixby had 28 in 1st grade....We had 3rd and 4th graders in the other half of it....The 2nd grade was in the annex up on the [back] side of the ECI building....because it was all full down here."

*(Photo: The ECI was built in 1874 and became Essex Center High School until students started attending Essex Junction High School in the early 50s. The grades and junior high school building was torn down in 1972. The 2nd grade annex can be seen in the back.)*





"5th and 6th were in one room in the 1st floor of the ECI building. And then...7th through 12th were in the rest of the school. Different rooms were for particular subjects.... Usually there was two rooms on the 1st floor where World History or Geography or whatever it was. Plus there was a Home Ec. room, And then on the 2nd floor was the main study hall plus Elaine Anderson's room. She was...the English and French teacher. The library was on the 2nd floor" as well as Ralph Mayo's desk, who "was the principal of the high school....He taught Agriculture classes to the boys and showed us how to graft tree branches." He retired after WWII.

"The thing about the study hall, was that it was a big room with tables all around the perimeter....During the summer of World War II, the ladies in town used to get together and have quilting bees. And they also made mattresses in the big study hall there, because it was the only big room, big open room around....My mother and my grandmother" helped them.

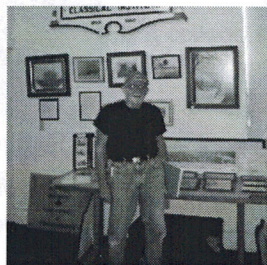
"We had hot lunch down in the Home Ec. room. Ladies of the village got together their own system, and I guess they got some government surplus food....They had salmon wiggle...and Spanish rice. Those were my two favorite dishes....

"There was a boy's stairway and a girl's stairway...going up to the 2nd floor....Then you got to the top of the stairs on the 2nd floor, and there was all these open cubby holes where you kept your books and stuff like that. The boys on the boy's side of the stairs and the girls on the girl's side of the stairs....Boys and girls coat rooms."

John's high school, previously ECI, became a graded and junior high school until it was torn down in 1972. Its bell still hangs over the entry to the "School on the Hill." Filled with memories, John still rides down Route 128 from his Westford home through the Center.

The End

(photo: John Duby at the Harriet Powell Museum.)



## SHARING ESSEX HISTORY

By Laurie Jordan

The second graders at Essex Elementary School continued to take in the history of the Four Corners with Laurie Jordan in October and March. This spring, Ms. Snedeker's and Ms. Bellen's first graders visited the museum with the help of Laurie, Sherry Norton, and Polly McEwing. The students expanded on their own family and town history experiences by sharing follow-up class projects with their families at school. Another museum tour was given to Essex Cub Scout Troop Den 10, Pack 635. Throughout the year, ECHS board members are pleased to respond to more research requests, including from the Edge Academy students.

The Essex Junction Prospect Street School, now the Fleming School, is celebrating its 100th anniversary during this spring. The principal, Dan Ryan, welcomes any Prospect Street School stories, memorabilia, and alumni presence at the events. The alumni ranges back to high school days, junior high, and grades school students.

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## HARDTACK

*Courtesy of the National Park Service*

Hardtack was a biscuit issued to Union soldiers throughout the [Civil] war. The crackers made up a large portion of a soldier's daily ration....Usually, the hardtack did not get to the soldiers until months after it had been made. By that time, they were very hard, so hard that the soldiers called them "tooth dullers" and "sheet iron crackers".....Soldiers would crumble them into coffee or soften them in water and fry the hardtack with some bacon grease....

2 cups flour

1/2 to 3/4 cup of water

1 tablespoon Crisco or vegetable fat

6 pinches of salt

Mix the ingredients together into a stiff batter, knead several times, and spread the dough out flat to a thickness of 1/2" on a non-greased cookie sheet. Bake for 1/2 hour at 400 degrees. Remove from oven, cut dough into 3" squares, and punch 4 rows of holes, 4 holes per row into the dough. Turn the dough over, return to the oven and bake another 1/2 hour. Turn oven off and leave door closed. Leave the hardtack in the oven until cool. Remove and enjoy!

*"Tis the song of the soldier, weary, hungry and faint,  
Hard crackers, hard crackers, come again no more;  
Many days have I chewed you and uttered no complaint,  
Hard crackers, hard crackers, come again no more!"*

~ from a soldier's parable called *Hard Times*



## Page's Corners and the War of 1812.....200 Years Ago

By Tim Jerman

The War of 1812 had deep Vermont roots and locally can be traced through the experiences of Colonel Samuel Page. He was born in Rindge, New Hampshire in 1788, but he grew up in Pownal, Vermont. In 1807, Page joined the Vermont militia and was stationed at Windmill Point in Swanton as "Lighthouse Keeper," or customs official, to guard against illegal smuggling of goods to British Canada. He was enforcing the federal Embargo Act, a law intended to force Great Britain and France to stop harassing American ships and interfering with free trade.

Young Ensign Page (19) gained a measure of notoriety when he and nine others discovered a large boat headed for Canada under a full sail with a cargo of potash. Page ordered the boat to "heave to" and it did; his men took control but were fully prepared for a bloody encounter with smugglers trying to retake their cargo. Fortunately, orders came to remove the seized vessel to Burlington, and there was no further incident. This was not always the case. Two militia were killed and others wounded in a similar smuggling incident dubbed the "Black Snake Affair" on the Winooski River in 1808. The ultimate failure of the Embargo Act to influence Britain led to the War of 1812 five years later.

Colonel Page, like many Vermonters, served only briefly in the War of 1812 to augment the New York troops in Plattsburgh. Vermonters were deeply divided. Most were torn between supporting the government against Britain, but opposing the embargo which was devastating to a profitable trade in lumber, potash, and other goods with Montreal to the north. Potash was supplied near Page's Corners.

Perhaps this conflict even played out at Page's Corners. A tavern there, Adinijah Brooks' "Public House," was rumored to be a meeting place for smugglers. The roads north and west from there were good back roads to avoid detection. The two taverns might have had very different conversations! Colonel Page was a well-respected businessman and always was so well-dressed that he earned the nickname "Colonel Slicky."

Page settled in Essex by 1810 and opened another tavern at Page's Corners. Later he added a blacksmith shop and wheelwright shop. The early business center included a sawmill, store, school, and post office. Town meetings were held there from 1805-1821, when Butler's Corners matured to become the new center. Today, only Page's 1822 brick house on the corner of Brigham Hill Road and Old Stage Road remains to remind us of the bustling community at Page's Corners.

### References:

*The History of Essex*, Frank Bent, 1963.

*Lake Champlain Maritime Museum Newsletter*, August 2005.

*Rootsweb*, Internet article, John Schumacher-Hardy, May 2007

(note: Mr. Schumacher-Hardy is Col. Page's great-great-great grandson.)



Col. Samuel Page (Reproduced from old tin type).



Above: The Page home at Page's Corners.

Col. Page built this home around 1828.

This was also the home of Dr. L. C. Butler

Photo, left: Col. Page.



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Circle relevant Annual Membership Category or Lifetime:

Individual \$10

Family \$15

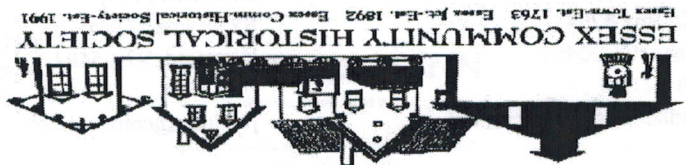
Senior (65 and older) \$5

Lifetime (individual, married, civil union) \$100

\_\_\_\_ Yes! I would like to volunteer at the museum or other event.

Make checks payable to: Essex Community Historical Society, P.O. Box 8388,  
Essex, Vermont 05451





Essex, VT 05451

P.O. Box 8388

### UPCOMING EVENTS!

**Memorial Day Parade:** May 26 at 10:00.



### **Museum Opening and Volunteer Reception :**

Sunday June 3, 1:00—4:00.

Summer hours will be:

Sunday afternoons 1:00—4:00 (until October 7th) and,

Thursday evenings 6:30—8:00 (until August 30th).

**Vermont History Expo:** ECHS's booth will have a Civil War theme. June 16 and 17, 10:00—5:00 in Tunbridge, VT.

**Block Party:** July 24, 4:00—9:00.

ECHS booth will be on Railroad Ave in Essex Junction.