

Colchester History Connections Newsletter

December 1, 2016, Colchester Historical Society, Box 112, Downsville, New York 13755
Volume 6, Issue 4 Preserving the history of Downsville, Corbett, Shinhopple,
Gregorytown, Horton and Cooks Falls

Website: www.colchesterhistoricalsociety.org Facebook:
<https://www.facebook.com/colchesternyhistorian/>

Historical Society Room, 72 Tannery Road, Downsville is open the third Saturday
of each month 11 A.M.-3 P.M. and by appointment, please call
Kay Parisi-Hampel, Town Historian at 607-363-7303

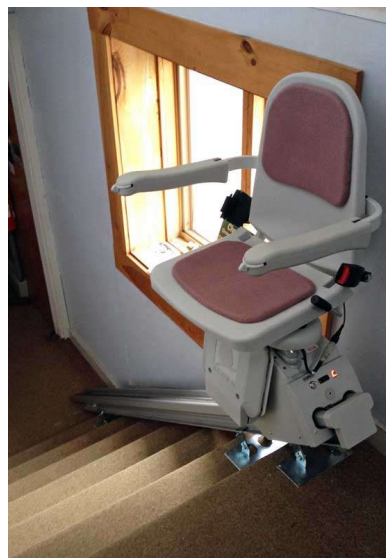
Thank You

Thank you to all the readers of Colchester History Connections Newsletter in 2016. It is wonderful to hear your comments on our articles, receive the information you share about Colchester's history, suggestions for future articles, thoughtful questions, edits/corrections and for generally keeping me on my historian toes. The launch of the Town of Colchester Historians Facebook page has been very successful and given us a much wider audience to share the wonderful photographs and history of Colchester. It has been a great experience to hear from so many people that used to live in Colchester, still have a great love and affection for the area and enjoy having a glimpse back at our history.

Annual Meeting

The Annual meeting for the Colchester Historical Society will be Tuesday, March 28, 2017 at 7 PM in the Historical Society Room on the basement level of the Colchester Town Hall. Election of Officers and Board members will take place at that meeting and a planning session for 2017 will also be on the agenda. We invite the public to become members and volunteer. We always have a variety of jobs and tasks and we can tailor them to your talents and skills. Please send us an email at: info@colchesterhistoricalsociety.org to volunteer. Please send your dues: Individual Membership - \$15.00 Senior-(over 55) \$10.00 Student-\$10.00. Download a Membership Application is available at: <http://www.colchesterhistoricalsociety.org/MemberApplication1.htm>

New Access to the Historical Society and Reading Rooms



The Town of Colchester has just installed a new chair lift to the lower level of Town Hall making the Historical Society and the Reading Room accessible to everyone. If you haven't been able to visit, please come in and we will be happy to show you how the chair works and take a safe ride down to the lower level of Town Hall.

Donations and New Equipment at the Historical Society

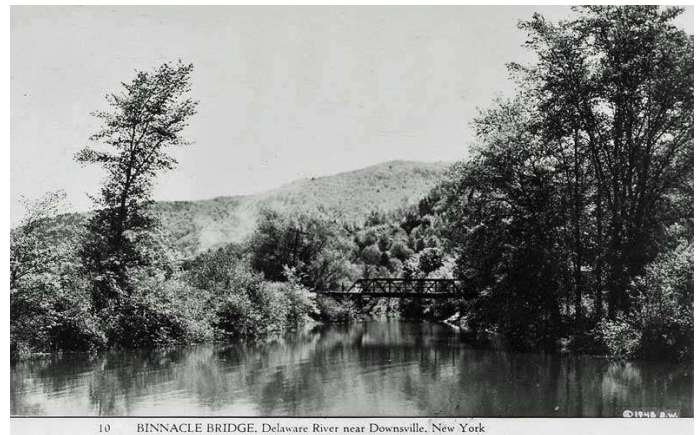
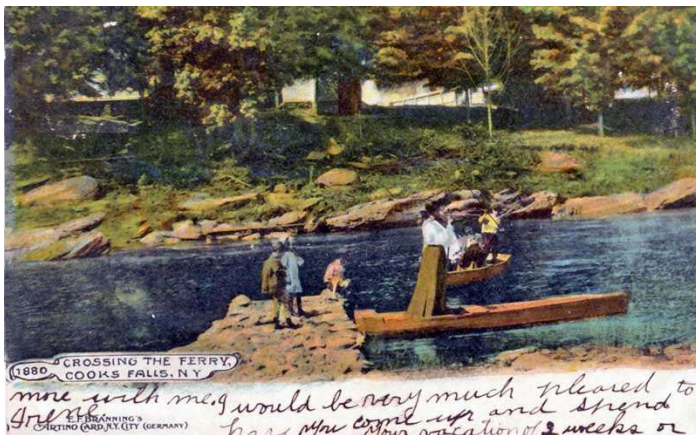
We have received many wonderful additions to our collection during 2016. Antique quilts, historical maps and atlases, hundreds of photographs, documents, books and artifacts have all been added to the collection. During our History Harvest program in November; over 65 virtual photographs from Colchester Township were added to our collection and will be shared in upcoming newsletters and Facebook posts. Thank you to Fran and Sharon Barnes, Judie Smith and Gary Becker for sharing their photographs and postcards.

Your generous donations have allowed us to purchase a high-speed document scanner and a new high resolution photo scanner that will help the Historical Society scan and share family photographs and documents. The Town of Colchester purchased a new self-draining dehumidifier for the Historical Society room, creating a safer environment for preserving our collection. Donations were also used to purchase acid-free storage boxes, photo sleeves and preservation supplies to safely maintain our collection.



Gary Becker donates family photos to the Historical Society Collection.

Colchester Ferries



This postcard shows a boat that ferried people across the Beaverkill River at Cooks Falls in the 1880's. We have learned that the fare was one cent, but we are not sure of the exact location of the ferry landings or why the ferry was necessary as the Cooks Falls Covered Bridge was built in 1868.

There was another temporary ferry across the binnekill to the "Brooklyn" side of Downsville in 1920. A *Downsville News* article in March 1920 reported, "Since the binnekill bridge was undermined and taken from its foundations by ice and high water, Preston Hodge and sister ferried passengers across the binnekill in a boat, at 10 cents each, and made from \$5 to \$6 a day." In that same March 25 issue it was reported "at the

meeting of the Town Board on Thursday of last week the town superintendent of highways was authorized to put a temporary bridge across the binnekill at this place until arrangements can be made to repair the iron bridge undermined by the flood or purchase a new one ." The ferry did not have a long life but would have provided the only access to the Downsville Covered Bridge, which was the only bridge into Downsville during that time period. Anyone needing to go to the D & N train station, make milk deliveries to the creamery or travel to the houses on Back River Road and Depot Street would have to cross the binnekill bridge; if they could not easily cross the binnekill by the Hodge ferry, they would have to take a longer route down the river to the Colchester Covered Bridge and back up River Road.

Future Plans

The Historical Society is making plans to host a house tour fundraiser of Colchester homes. Does your house have an interesting historical story, architectural features or a unique story of someone who lived in your house? Would you be willing to participate in the tour by having your house listed in a driving tour or by opening the interior of your home for display? Please email the Historical Society at: info@colchesterhistoricalsociety.org , if you would be willing to participate.

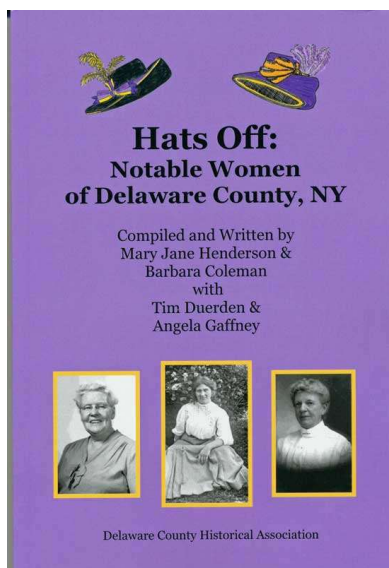
New Publication- *Hats Off: Notable Women of Delaware County, NY*

Thirty different Delaware County women spanning four centuries are featured in this new book giving recognition of the centennial of women winning the right to vote in New York State in 1917. Colchester's Nina Sutherland Purdy is one of the women featured. Nina was the daughter of Perry and Jesse Merritt Purdy. Nina was part of the first class to graduate from the Union Free High School and she studied journalism at NY University with dual Master's degrees in journalism and English. She wrote adult and children's books, short stories, biographical sketches and serials for American Mercury, Everybody's Magazine and Saturday Evening Post. Her 30-minute radio serial soap opera *Benson Hollow*, ran from 1930 to 1933 and was based loosely on Downsville and her experience living on the Purdy farm in Gregory Hollow. Her most popular series, Mandy, was published in Woman's World in the early 1900's and gave tips to young women on how to make farm life more appealing.

Nina split her time between New York City and the Purdy farm in Downsville, NY; she died on June 18, 1952 and her ashes were spread on the hill overlooking the Purdy farm.

Hats Off is available at DCHA: <http://www.dcha-ny.org/> 46549 State Hwy 10, Delhi, New York 13753.

Purdy Farm on the corner of Gregory and Telford Hollows



Down and Out at the Delaware County Poorhouse

The Delaware County Poorhouse was located on Arbor Hill Road in Delhi, NY (on the property that is now the SUNY farm and golf course), it existed from 1828 to 1965 and provided shelter for the homeless, poor and indigent families and adults. It also provided a place for the "feeble and insane" as well as those patients that needed to be held in isolation because of communicable diseases such as tuberculosis.

Unmarried pregnant women and women whose husbands had deserted them, lived at the Poorhouse with their children, many living their whole lives at the home. In later years' families, would often seek shelter on the farm if their homes had inadequate heat to survive the winter weather.

The County Poor House was built in 1828 and ran as a self-supporting farm, where able bodied residents were expected to work and contribute to their support. The original facility burned in 1862 and was rebuilt the following year and continued to operate until 1963 when the new County infirmary was built and Social Services took over the programs.

Before 1828 each Town within Delaware County took care of their own elderly, infirmed and poor residents by placing them in the homes of others within their towns. Colchester paid a stipend to individual caretakers for the care of the children and adults that were unable to care for themselves. Town Poor Master ledgers record the amounts paid and the items that were purchased for those individuals. After 1828 the County Government assessed each Town for the number of residents that were cared for at the County Poorhouse. Records are not complete, but we do know that from 1883 to 1929 thirty adults from Colchester spent from two weeks to ten years at the County Poorhouse, six adults were sent to the Utica, Willard and Middletown Asylums, one person to the New York City Deaf & Dumb Institute and two orphans to the Cooperstown Children's Home.

The County Poorhouse also had a Cemetery or "Potter's Field," for any individuals that were not claimed by their towns or family members. Three hundred and seventy-seven people are buried in this cemetery, ranging in age from four months to 107 years old. This cemetery fell into poor condition after the property was sold to SUNY. County Historian Gabrielle Pierce has been researching the Poorhouse and its cemetery. Lists of the persons in the cemetery has been compiled, although some of the logbooks were lost due to flooding. Preservation work continues but a plaque was placed at site to memorialize those buried in the County Home Cemetery.

A free program will be presented by Gabrielle Pierce, County Historian, "Down and Out at the Delaware County Poorhouse," on February 18, 2017 at 2 PM at the Delaware County Historical Association, Route 10, Delhi, NY. Her presentation will utilize narration, photographs and interviews with individuals who lived and grew up at the Home, and will also cover the cemetery at the site.



COUNTY FARM, DELHI, NY



For other glimpses into the past life in Colchester, please join our monthly meetings.

Meetings are generally held the last Tuesday of the month at the Colchester Town Hall, 72 Tannery Road, Downsville, New York 13755

2016 Historical Society Meetings:

December 27, 2016 at 10 AM

2017 Annual Meeting March 28, 2017 at 7 PM