

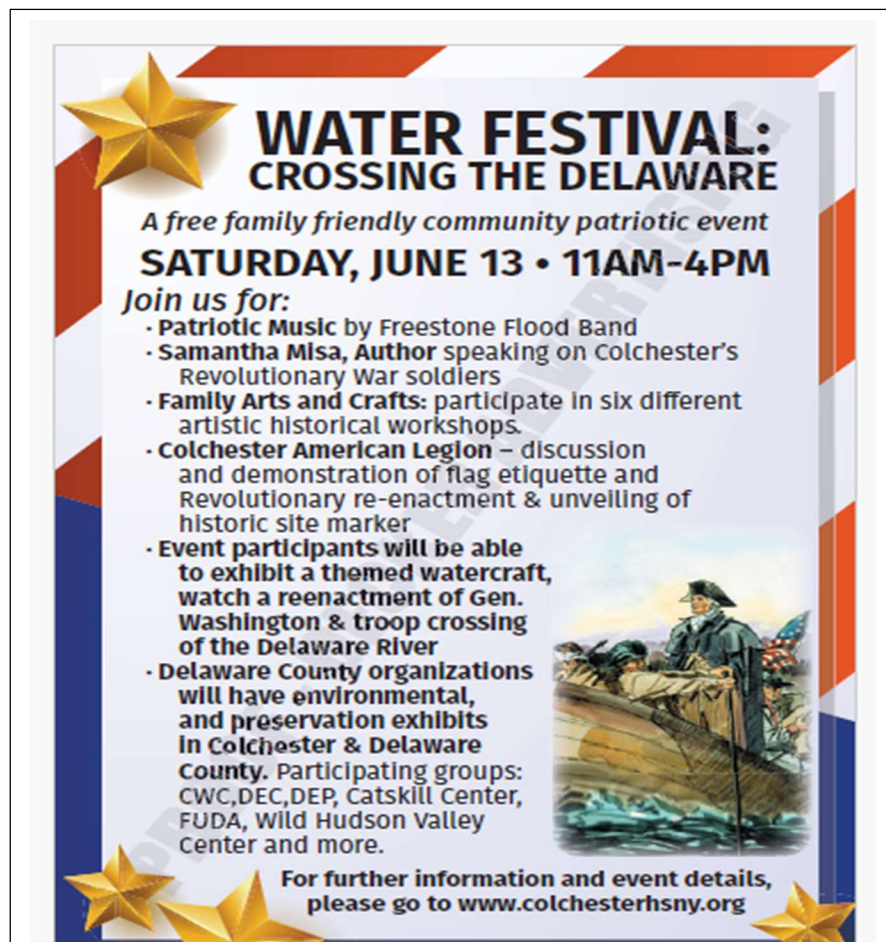
Colchester History Connections Newsletter

Winter/Spring 2026 Colchester Historical Society, Box 112, Downsville, New York 13755
Volume 16, Issue 1
Preserving the history of Downsville, Corbett, Shinhopple, Gregorytown, Horton, and Cooks Falls

Website: www.colchesterhsny.org Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/colchesternyhistorian/>
Historical Society Room, 72 Tannery Road, Downsville, New York
Open by appointment, please call Kay Parisi-Hampel, Town Historian: 607-363-7303

Celebrating the Nation's 250th Anniversary

The Colchester Historical Society and Colchester Community will host
Crossing the Delaware Water Festival




**WATER FESTIVAL:
CROSSING THE DELAWARE**

A free family friendly community patriotic event
SATURDAY, JUNE 13 • 11AM-4PM

Join us for:

- **Patriotic Music** by Freestone Flood Band
- **Samantha Misa, Author** speaking on Colchester's Revolutionary War soldiers
- **Family Arts and Crafts:** participate in six different artistic historical workshops.
- **Colchester American Legion** – discussion and demonstration of flag etiquette and Revolutionary re-enactment & unveiling of historic site marker
- **Event participants will be able to exhibit a themed watercraft, watch a reenactment of Gen. Washington & troop crossing of the Delaware River**
- **Delaware County organizations will have environmental, and preservation exhibits in Colchester & Delaware County.** Participating groups: CWC, DEC, DEP, Catskill Center, FUDA, Wild Hudson Valley Center and more.



For further information and event details, please go to www.colchesterhsny.org



Battle of Downs Brook Historical Marker

Battle of Downs Brook – “The land that would eventually become Delaware County in 1797 did not see a conflict during the American Revolution on par with large, consequential engagements like the Battles of Bunker Hill or Yorktown. But in addition to raids and skirmishes involving frontier homesteaders, the area did witness at least one full-fledged battle. In 1778, members of the Ulster County militia stationed at Fort Lackawack near the present-day Rondout Reservoir were facing mounting threats from indigenous attacks. In September 1778, British-allied Native Americans had kidnapped two militiamen from the Fort to draw out a larger rescue party and ambush them. The rescue party consisted of thirteen soldiers led by Colonel John Graham. Historian James Eldridge Quinlan, writing about the incident in 1873, noted that when they left Fort Lackawack, “no rat ever walked more unconsciously into a trap than did the brave but rash Graham.” During the attack by an unnamed group of Native Americans, Graham and eleven of the militiamen were killed. According to one of the survivors who escaped and returned to Fort Lackawack, Graham’s body was later found “naked, and he had been scalped and disemboweled.” Captain Samuel Clark set out almost immediately with another patrol to seek revenge for the deaths of Graham and his men. This time, the group consisted of Clark and fifty-two militiamen. They pursued the attackers for more than 50 miles northwest to Downs Brook in present-day Downsville. On September 9th, 1778, Clark and his men caught up with the Native Americans led by a warrior known as Ben Shanks. Clark’s militia exchanged fire with Shanks’ men for over three hours. The Battle of Downs Brook was finally ended when it became too dark for either side to see the enemy. Around five men on each side were killed during the conflict, and all the fallen men were buried at the site of the battle, which took place near present-day Knox Avenue off Main Street (Route 206). Samuel Clark survived the war and later served in the War of 1812, eventually retiring from military service as a Brigadier General. Well into the 1880s, it was rumored that there was still evidence of the battle near the brook, and that there were even still some Indian wigwams in the vicinity where they had lived during the war and launched attacks against settlers. “Samantha **Misa, Educator, Delaware County Historical Assoc.**

The Delaware County Historical Association has generously provided a grant to purchase a historical marker commemorating the Battle of Downs Brook. The marker will be placed at the corner of Telford and Gregory Hollows. The battle took place on the flats along Downs Brook near that location and down the brook flats towards present-day Downsville. Installation will take place on June 13, 2026, during the Crossing the Delaware Water Festival.

2026 Lecture Series

The Esopus and Catskill Indians during the American Revolution, Revolutionary War soldiers and their contributions to the Development of Colchester, Catskill Tanneries, Witches of the Catskills, and other presentations are scheduled for the 2026 Colchester

Historical Society's series of historical lectures, starting in May and running through November. We hope you will join us for the full lecture series. The schedule list is at the end of this newsletter, and full details will be available on our website:

www.colchesterhsny.org

CHS Highlighted Achievements from 2025

Archives:

More than 350 items added to collection and digital database

Identified 20 Rev. War Veteran and Colchester burial sites

Exhibits:

Added six new display cases to CHS room

Rev. War Veterans-Shinhopple Mem.

Technology:

Website update:

www.colchesterhsny.org

Collaboration:

Expanded our programs, research, and funding with the following partners:

Town of Colchester

Shinhopple Memorial Center

Delaware County Historical Association

Roxbury Arts Group

Delaware County Economic Development and Tourism

Grants:

Roxbury Arts-Water Festival \$4,225

Del. Co. Tourism-Water Festival \$2,500

Del. Co. His. Assoc. -Old Covered Bridge Cemetery Restoration \$5,000

Programs:

Water Festival-Pepacton Paddle Park

Rev. War. Veterans -Shinhopple Memorial

Stonewall Building/Preservation-Old Covered Bridge Cemetery

Gravestone Cleaning Workshop-DCS Students

Old Covered Bridge Cemetery

Publicity:

Created various flyers, posters, and banners

Expanded our publicity through ads and press releases for publication in tri-county areas

Increased our email list

We invite everyone to join us in preserving Colchester's history. Now is the time to renew your membership or become a new member.

Membership Categories: Individual \$15.00, Senior (Over 55)

\$10.00. The membership form is available on our website.

Send your check to CHS, Box 115, Downsville, NY 13755 or pay online through our website: www.colchesterhsny.org



CHS Open House

Please join us on **Tuesday, April 28, 2026, at 6 PM, Colchester Town Hall, 72 Tannery Road, Downsville**, basement level, for our Open House. We invite you to see our newly renovated Historical Society Room, and to view some of the interesting Colchester items on display in our new showcases. Refreshments will be served.

Eagle Peter Jefferson-

“The eagle seen on early U.S. coins was a real creature with a surprisingly common name: Peter. In a rather patriotic confluence of events, none other than an eagle took residence at the U.S. Mint in the 1830s — roughly 50 years after the bald eagle was added to the national seal. The noble raptor would reportedly while away his days at the mint before being shooed away after working hours. As he and his human colleagues would eventually find out, however, industrial workplaces are no place for birds. Peter was mortally injured after his wing was caught in a coining press in 1836, and died a few days later despite workers’ best efforts to save him.

But his story does not end there. Peter’s friends and colleagues were not ready to say goodbye to him, as he’d become both a companion and mascot, so they hired a taxidermist and placed his stuffed remains on display in the building’s entrance; he still inhabits the current Philadelphia Mint. Historians believe the eagle featured on the silver dollar issued from 1836 to 1839 was based on the “magnificent specimen” that was Peter, as was the Flying Eagle one-cent piece issued in 1857 and 1858 — a fitting tribute to a bird who clearly inspired many.” Michael Nordine <https://historyfacts.com/us-history/fact/eagle-on-coins-named-peter>



This eagle, also known as Peter Jefferson, was the inspiration for U.S. coins as well as Valeska Monk’s eagle sculpture at the Pepacton Paddle Park and Boat Launch.

2026 CHS Meetings: Annual Meeting and Open House - April 28- 6 PM

**May 26- 10 AM June 23- 10 AM July 28-10 AM Aug. 25-10 AM
Sept. 22-10 AM Oct. 27-10 AM Nov. 17-10 AM Dec. 15-10 AM**

2026 HISTORICAL LECTURE SERIES

★ SPONSORED BY THE COLCHESTER HISTORICAL SOCIETY

• **May 2 @ 2 PM: Esopus and Catskill Indians during the American Revolution**, presented by Justin Wexler, Director of the Wild Hudson Valley Center. *Shinhopple Memorial Center.*

• **May 16 @ 2 PM: "Beneath Pepacton Waters and Echoes Along the Delaware"** presented by Alice and Robert Jacobson, authors. A talk on the Pepacton Valley before the construction of the Pepacton Reservoir and the aftereffects of the NYC Water system on the local culture and economy. *Shinhopple Memorial Center.*

• **June 13 @ 11:30: Colchester's Revolutionary War soldiers.** Dr. Samantha Misa, Educator-DCHA, will speak on and their contributions to the development of Colchester. *Pepacton Paddle Park.*

• **July 11 @ 2 PM: Local Bluestone History** presented by Jennifer Appley, Archivist at the Elk Brook Bluestone, formerly known as Johnston and Rhodes Bluestone. Learn about the local Bluestone industry and how it has developed from the turn of the century to its applications today in architectural design and as an art material for the modern artist. *Shinhopple Memorial Center.*

• **August 15 @ 2 PM: "The Catskill Tanneries: An Environmental Disaster with a Happy Ending."** Multi-media presentation by Paul Misko, Historian. The Colchester Historical Society will exhibit photographs and information on the Downsville Tannery. *Shinhopple Memorial Center.*

• **September 12 @ 2 PM: Witches of the Catskills.** Presentation of research by Dr. Samantha Misa, Educator-DCHA. *Shinhopple Memorial Center.*

• **October 17 @ 2 PM: Covered Bridges of New York State**, a multi-media program by Wayne Marshfield, President of the New York State Covered Bridge Society. Learn about covered bridges and the society's efforts to preserve and repair these bridges. *Shinhopple Memorial Center.*

• **November 7 @ 2 PM: Buried Treasures of Upstate New York.** Dr. Samantha Misa, Educator-DCHA, and the Delaware County Diggers will present tales and lore about buried treasures. The Delaware Diggers will demonstrate metal detecting, and participants will be invited to metal detect in an area around the *Shinhopple Memorial Center.*

FOR MORE INFORMATION GO TO:
WWW.COLCHESTERHSNY.ORG