



# Newsletter

Colchester Vermont Historical Society

Autumn 2024

## Recent Events:

### - Info Display at 2024 Autumnal Market



*Longtime Historical Society volunteers Suzanne and Bob Furst chatted with a young history fan and her dad at the Colchester Autumnal Market held September 14 at Severance Corners. It was a perfect day and a wonderful opportunity to chat with folks about our local history.*

### - A Great Summer at the Log Schoolhouse



The [Log Schoolhouse](#) was open on weekends all summer. "It was another great season," said Director Carol Reichard. "Hundreds of visitors enjoyed the opportunity to explore interesting aspects of a local one-room schoolhouse from the 1800s. The Schoolhouse is closed for the fall and winter and will reopen in early June 2025. We have a wonderful, solid group of volunteer hosts but could use a few more next summer. It's a fun opportunity to welcome visitors and share our history with them." Please contact [Carol](#) for more information and to volunteer.

## Upcoming Events!

Our program committee is in the active planning stages for upcoming monthly programs for this fall and winter as well as for the spring of 2025. Unless otherwise indicated, programs will be held at the Parsonage on Main Street. While we have not yet fully established solid dates for some events, here are the plans so far:

**October 14, 7 p.m.** – Antique/Vintage Show and Tell. Bring one or two of your favorite antique/vintage items and share what you know about it.

**November 11, 7 p.m.** – A military program in recognition of Veterans Day.

**December 10, 7 p.m. at the historic brick church on Main Street** – a festive holiday concert featuring the Colchester High School chorus.

**January** – 2025 Annual Colchester History Trivia Game. It's fun and educational. Some of the answers may surprise you.

**February 8, 10 a.m.** – A presentation about Vermont's oldest (100 years) radio station, WVMT, located here in Colchester.

**March 14** – Colchester family farms presentation.

**April** – James "Jim" Jones – a presentation about trolleys that once ran in our area.

**May 17, 1 p.m.** – A springtime open house with tea, featuring Depression Era recipes. Tours offered.

**June 9, 6 p.m.** Annual Meeting and celebration of the Colchester Historical Society's 50th anniversary. Speakers will be original founders Carol and Clinton Reichard. And, there will be cake!

Stay tuned for details of these events as plans develop. Watch our website, Facebook page, Front Porch Forum, and the *Colchester Sun* for updates. All are welcome to attend and participate. Parking and admission are always free. Come join the fun! And the refreshments never disappoint.

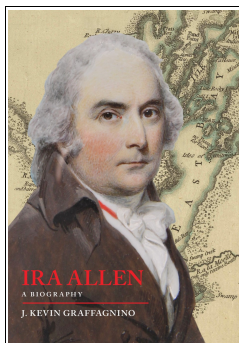


## Dues are Now Due



We value and appreciate our members and volunteers. Thank you for your continued support. If you're already a member of the Colchester Historical Society, please know it's time to renew your membership. If you're not yet a member, now is the time to join. Everyone is welcome. Annual dues are only \$15 per person and \$25 per family. Membership dues, book sales, and donations help support our mission in the work we do to preserve and share Colchester's wonderful local history. Please see our membership form [here](#). We hope to see you soon!

## Ira Allen Biography Now Available



*(Image courtesy of the Vermont Historical Society)*

As many folks are already aware, Ethan Allen's brother Ira was once the owner of a great deal of property in Colchester. He also served as town clerk and treasurer. While there is already much information out there about Ira Allen, Vermont author J. Kevin Graffagnino has a new book available, *Ira Allen: A Biography*. A [review by the Vermont Historical Society](#) indicates that the book shines a new light on Ira Allen and his prominent role in our area's formative years.

Learn more about the book and the author in an article by Ella Ruehsen of the [Colchester Sun](#).

The book was released in mid-September, and you can order a copy for \$24.95 through the [Vermont Historical Society](#), or check with your favorite bookstore.

As part of Colchester's celebration of Vermont's 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence next year, we hope to invite Mr. Graffagnino as a speaker for a special event. Stay tuned.

## Happy Anniversary to...

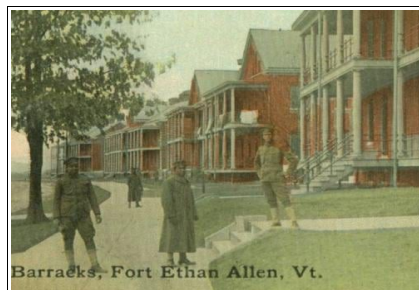
- [WVMT Radio](#), celebrating 100 years! Located here in Colchester at Fort Ethan Allen, it's Vermont's oldest radio station. If you haven't already seen it, check out Ella Ruehsen's in-depth story about it in the [Colchester Sun](#).



*Music lives on in this building at Fort Ethan Allen that once served as home to the military band and is now the home and musical offerings of WVMT.*

- [Colchester High School](#), celebrating 50 years! Plans are currently underway by the school district to install a hall of fame to honor former Lakers. Read more about this in the [Colchester Sun](#).

## 10th Cavalry Housing Renovation Underway

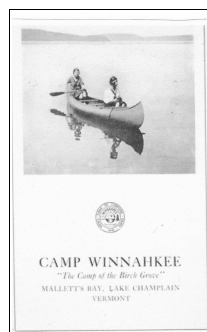


Former military barracks at Fort Ethan Allen that once housed members of the 10th Cavalry, known as the "Buffalo Soldiers" are currently being renovated and modernized. These buildings were constructed in 1894 at a cost of \$37,600.55 and were designed to hold 200 men each. For those 200 men, there were 12 toilets, 8 urinals, and 12 bathtubs. In 1910, the buildings were upgraded to include four showers/baths. Until 1905, mineral oil provided light, and heat was provided by steam. The Fort was eventually decommissioned and closed in 1944. In more recent years, these buildings were purchased by St. Michael's College and were adapted to serve as student housing and offices.

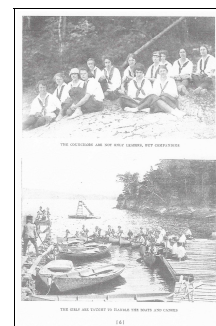
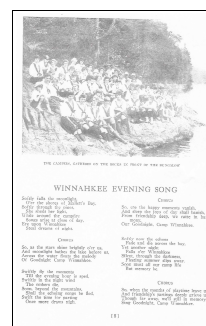
For background information about this new project, please visit the Champlain Housing Trust [website](#). For information about renting one of the new units, please click [here](#).

Special thanks to William L. Parkinson, Executive Director of the Fort Ethan Allen Museum, for the buildings' historical information as presented in his book, *Fort Ethan Allen -- Step By Step: A Walking History Tour* (2017).

pamphlet for Camp Winnahkee, once located on Coates Island. "Winnahkee" is a Native American word meaning "Camp of the Birch Grove." The camp for young women cost \$300 for the season. The 1916 brochure states: "Cost of a girl's summer in camp should be considered an investment, not an expense, for the benefit she receives there is one which will continue with her throughout her life." The booklet contains several pages of photographs, song lyrics, poetry, and camp rules of conduct.



Cover and page samples from the camp booklet



## Recent Acquisitions



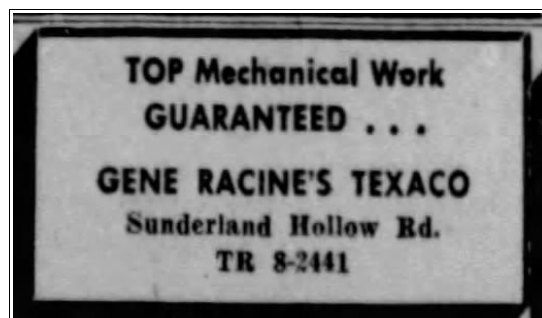
Special thanks to Elizabeth Healey Killbride who donated these portraits of Adrian Elliott Nay and Sarah Eva Austin Nay, who once lived in Colchester village. Adrian Nay served in the Civil War and married Sarah in 1865. They had two children, Millicent who married John Gravelle in 1927, and Ada, who never married and lived in the Nay Home on Main Street until her death at age 92 in 1963.

We also extend special thanks to Shelby Losier Keene for sharing with us a digital copy of the

## A Look Back at Gene Racine's Texaco

Gene Racine's Texaco station was once located at the top of Sunny Hollow at the corner of Blakely Road and Routes 2 and 7.

Andy Carleton, formerly of Colchester, told us that Gene and Melenda Racine were his wife's "Pepe and Meme". They were the parents of his father-in-law: Ray Racine (from Goss Dodge), Willy Racine, (once the Jeep dealer on Shelburne Road), and grandparents of former Lieutenant Governor Doug Racine.



Ad for the gas station (from newspapers.com)

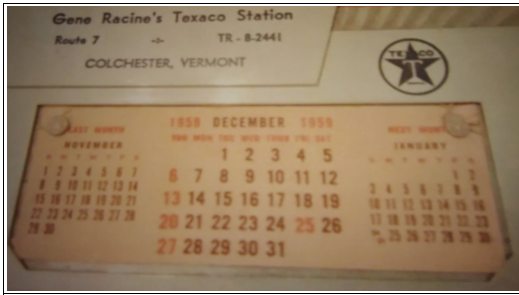
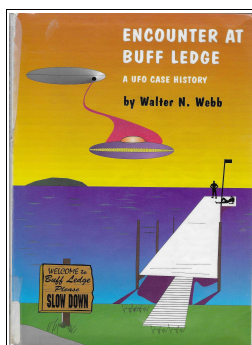


Image of a 1959 desktop calendar – probably a holiday gift for customers

Some folks remember this building in later years as a gift shop, and most recently as a chiropractor's office. As of 2024, the building still stands, and the property is currently for sale.



## Local UFO Abduction – Believe It or Not?

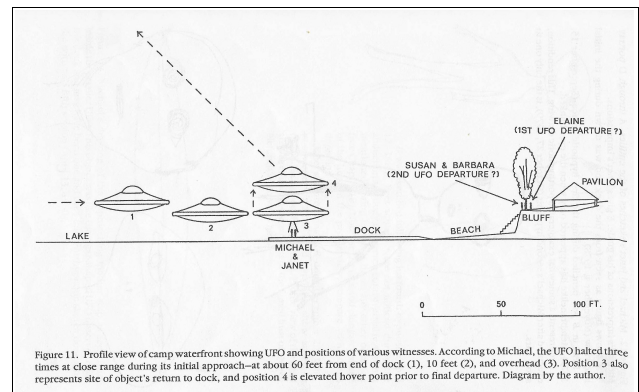


UFO/astronomy consultant Walter N. Webb published a book in 1994, *Encounter at Buff Ledge – A UFO Case History*. It details an intensive study about an alleged UFO sighting and abduction that occurred in 1968 on the dock at Buff Ledge Camp (off Clay Point Road) here in Colchester. The subjects of the study were eye-witnesses/victims who were teenage camp counselors enjoying a quiet evening on the dock when they noticed

strange lights in the sky. For years, the two did not discuss their experience. However, the young man, known in the book as Michael, remembered many of the unsettling details, and ten years later reported the incident. He and the other witness/victim, Janet, underwent a series of hypnosis sessions in an effort to further explore what had happened.

Believable or not, it's an intriguing story to discover. Did it really happen? Decide for yourself. Read the details, look at the images, and check out the author's evaluation and conclusion. The book is available for loan at the [Brownell Library](#) in Essex Junction, and copies of the book may be purchased (\$14 including postage and handling) from the publisher by check payable to [Center for UFO Studies](#) (CUFOS), P. O. Box 32335, Chicago, IL 60631, Attn: Mark Rodeghier, Ph.D., Scientific Director.

The camp no longer exists. The property is now under different ownership and operates as Big Foot Stables.



Images and information courtesy of CUFOS, with permission from its scientific director

## News and Updates at Your Fingertips

On Facebook, be sure to follow [Colchester Vermont Historical Society](#). It's a popular spot; we have achieved a milestone of over 1,400 followers. Also, visit our [website](#) to stay up to date on news and programs and to view some fabulous vintage photographs.

## Colchester Historical Society Officers 2024-2025

President: Bonnie Potter  
Vice President: Jack Penca  
Treasurer/Director/Webmaster: Bob Furst  
Secretary: Pat Carman  
Director: Carol Reichard  
Newsletter and Facebook page by Bonnie Potter