



# Newsletter

Colchester Vermont Historical Society

Winter 2025

## Recent Events

*This interesting vintage wooden cabbage slicer was brought and demonstrated by Michelle Penca.*



*CHS student musical talent*



Gosh, we had fun at the antique/vintage show-and-tell event in October. Attendees brought their favorite antique/vintage items and shared what they know about them.



*U.S. Army veteran Joseph Smith*

In recognition of Veteran's Day in November, our speaker was Joseph Smith, who presented insightful and thought-provoking information about historical accuracy in military movies and books.

In December, our annual holiday concert and party was held at Colchester's oldest church, the United Church of Colchester, and featured the musical stylings of Colchester High School choral groups under the leadership of music teacher Melissa Towle. The event was co-hosted by the church and the Colchester Historical Society. Following the concert, everyone enjoyed food and fellowship.

## Upcoming Events

Unless otherwise indicated, programs will be held at the Parsonage on Main Street. Parking, admission, and refreshments are free. Donations are always appreciated.

**January 27, 7 p.m. via videoconference.** Don't miss our 2025 Colchester History Trivia Game. Members, watch your email for your invitation and link.

**February 8, 10 a.m.** - A presentation by Paul Goldman about Vermont's oldest (100 years) radio station, WVMT.

**March 8, 10 a.m.** - Workshop to update our governing documents, expand project teams, learn about a new cataloging database for our collections, and information about updating the book *From Ice-Cap to Interstate*.

**April 14, 7 p.m.**, at the Meeting House, 830 Main Street. James "Jim" Jones will present the history of trolleys in the greater Burlington area.

**May 10, 1-2 p.m.** - Michelle Penca will present information, food samples, and recipes from the Depression Era and 1930s at this open house event. Tours of the Parsonage will be available.

**June 9, 6 p.m.** - We'll celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Colchester Historical Society. Carol and Clinton Reichard will entertain us with stories about the early days of our organization. Annual Meeting and barbecue.

## Vermont's 250th Anniversary of the Declaration of Independence – Come Celebrate With Us

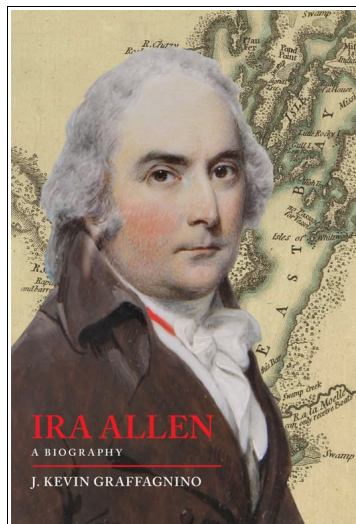
In partnership with the Vermont Historical Society and the Town of Colchester, the Colchester Historical Society will offer a special presentation later this year. This event is in celebration of Vermont's 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence.

As many folks are 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 written a new biography of Ira Allen. A review by the Vermont Historical Society indicates the book shines a new light on Ira Allen and his prominent role in our area's formative years.

We are very excited to be a part of this important celebration of Vermont's history and proud to host the book's author at this special event. Stay tuned for details as plans develop.



*Author J. Kevin Graffagnino will discuss his biography about Ira Allen, an important historical figure in Colchester.*



*(Images courtesy of the Vermont Historical Society)*

## Log Schoolhouse Volunteers Honored at Popular "Soup Supper"

We appreciate our volunteers who host visitors at the historic Log Schoolhouse on weekends throughout the summer months. At the close of the season, Carol and Clinton Reichard honored the volunteers' dedication with the always-popular "soup supper" in their home.



*Standing (left to right) are: Craig Graham, Jack Pence, Bob Furst, Tom Mulcahy, and Clinton Richard. Seated (left to right) are: Susan Hartman, Inge Schaefer, Carol Reichard, and Jeanette Berry. Behind the camera was Tom Berry. Not available for the photo were: Jerry Allyn, Maureen Dakin, Betsy Lawrence, Michelle Pence, Sonya Pinkerton, Wendy Simpers, Patricia Brace Reed, Pat and Bob Carman, and Suzanne Furst.*

Colchester's historic (circa 1815) Log Schoolhouse serves as a visitor information center, an interpretive venue for school children, and a museum for displaying the history of Colchester. It's a lovely step back in time that shows the early days of education before cell phones, computers, and other modern-day conveniences. It is centrally located at Airport Park on Colchester Point Road.

Hosting visitors at the [Log Schoolhouse](#) is a fun opportunity to welcome visitors and share Colchester's history with them. New volunteers are encouraged to join us. Hours are flexible. Please contact [Carol Reichard](#) for more information.



## Recent Acquisitions

### - Images of *Storm King*



*The ice yacht Storm King*  
(Photo courtesy of Lake Champlain Maritime Museum)

A special thank you is extended to the [Lake Champlain Maritime Museum](#) (LCMM) for wonderful digital photographs of *Storm King* and especially for access to the one-of-a-kind video that shows this amazing ice yacht in action on Malletts Bay.

*Storm King* is a 36-foot gaff-rigged sloop of Hudson River “stern-steered” design for competition in the racing Class A of a 250- to 350-square-foot sail area. It was built by George Buckhout of Poughkeepsie, New York, circa 1895-1903. It was made with signature Buckhout hollow backbone and spars, curly maple runners with cast iron inserts, twin-aft cockpit baskets with velour cushions, and white-painted backbone and runner plank, and bears a bronze Buckhout builder’s plaque.

Patricia Reid, Director of Collections at LCMM, tells us, “Ice yachts like these were innovative and consistent choices for a select Hudson River group at the turn of the 20th century, for whom cost was not a concern, and this boat is built of the highest quality.” She added, “Today, the craft is well-preserved, with new sails and cockpit cushions. The backbone has been reinforced with fiberglass cloth. These, along with a coat of paint on the backbone, make up the only deviations from the original construction.”

*Storm King* was donated to Lake Champlain Maritime Museum in 2003 by R. William and Dawn Hazelett. The well-known donors from Colchester had acquired the vessel in the early 1950s after discovering it in storage in an apple barn. A couple who owned a Vermont orchard, the Tresslers, had removed *Storm King* from a Hudson River Valley estate in the 1930s. The name *Storm King* is taken from the commanding Hudson River peak at Cornwall-on-Hudson, New York.

To view the video of *Storm King* in action on Mallett's Bay, visit YouTube [here](#). You'll see that it took a few men to set up the ice yacht. Those of you who may have known Bill Hazelett will recognize him in the navy blue jacket and pompom hat. Note there is no audio.

*Storm King* is on display in the Hazelett Small Watercraft Exhibit on the campus of the Lake Champlain Maritime Museum. The seasonal museum is open May-October, and admission is free. When you visit, be sure to check out this amazing ice yacht that once cruised Malletts Bay.

### - The Shaw Journals



*Tyson Moulton displays the handwritten journals of Dennis and Myron Shaw.*

The Colchester Historical Society is pleased to have received the donation of handwritten journals of [Dennis Shaw](#) (1813-1895) and [Myron Shaw](#) (1854-1927), formerly of Colchester. Donor Tyson Moulton, also with historical connections to Colchester, believes his father may have acquired them at an estate sale and was happy to know the journals have a permanent home with us. Anyone wishing to browse these journals is welcome to do so; simply contact us to make an appointment.

**March is Women's History Month:  
Remembering  
Joyce Severance Sweeney**



*Joyce Severance Sweeney  
1928 – 2016*

This March for Women's History Month, the Colchester Historical Society is proud to honor the memory of Joyce Severance Sweeney.

Joyce was born in Colchester at the Thompson farm on Middle Road in 1928. She was raised and lived in Colchester all of her life. In 1950, she married her childhood sweetheart Gerald "Jerry" Sweeney, and they raised three children together.

In recollecting some of her childhood memories to local historian Inge Schaefer several years ago, Joyce told her, "I was able to ride my horse in the mid-1940s down Lost Nation, Bay, Depot, and Blakely Roads, all of which were dirt roads at the time. If we wanted to go to Essex Junction, we'd go through the village or through the woods (the current location of Westbury Village). We also used to ski on Sunderland Hollow. It was all pasture halfway down the hill," she added.

Joyce was a lifelong member of the United Church of Colchester, sang in the choir, and was one of the original members of the Colchester Community Chorus. Additional volunteer activities included the Colchester Historical Society and Meals on Wheels. Her years of dedicated efforts to the Colchester community were admired and much appreciated.

For more than 50 years, Joyce worked for the Town of Colchester in many capacities, including auditor, lister, cemetery commissioner, assessor, and town clerk, and as a justice of the peace. The Town of Colchester's 93rd Annual Report was dedicated to Joyce Sweeney in recognition of her continual and faithful service. Joyce also served in the Vermont House of Representatives.



*Siblings Malcolm Severance and Joyce Sweeney  
hold a painting of the Severance home in Colchester.  
(Photos courtesy of the Sweeney family)*

"Her energy seemed boundless," said Inge. "She would show up for a property inspection with a huge measuring tape in hand, along with a notebook and property-related documents. No property was too steep, rocky, wet, or dense for Joyce not to thoroughly inspect it. We would watch in amazement as she measured questionable building dimensions or walked out the four sides of a property until she was satisfied she had all the required information," said Inge. She added, "I smile every time I think of Joyce. She was an inspiration to me, and I think to anyone who knew her."

Joyce passed away in 2016 at the age of 88. Her name continues to pop up now and then around town, and she is still very missed. A room at the Historical Society's Parsonage building has been named in her honor.

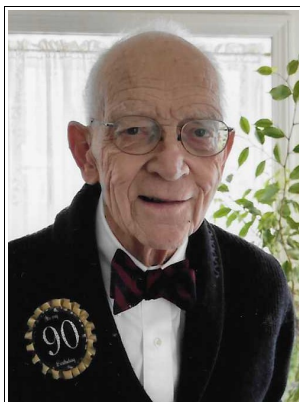


## Recent Milestone Celebrations



*(Photo courtesy of UVM)*

- Colchester's well-known native son **Malcolm Severance** turned 100 this past autumn. He was honored by the University of Vermont (UVM) for his connection to UVM which spans nearly 80 years. "Professor Severance played an instrumental role in the creation of the School of Business Administration, with his living legacy extending to the establishment of the Malcolm and Gladys Severance Graduate Excellence Fund in 2015, supporting outstanding students in UVM's Master of Business Administration program," reported Kevin Morgenstein Fuerst of the UVM Foundation.



*(Photo courtesy of Carol Reichard)*

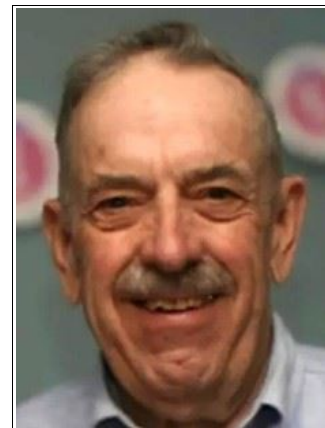
- In December, local and much-admired retired veterinarian **Clinton Reichard** celebrated his 90th birthday. Clinton has been a very dedicated Rotarian for many years, as well as a long-time active member and past-president of the Colchester Historical Society. In addition to a wonderful celebration at home with family and friends, the Colchester-Milton Rotary Club honored him with a fun celebration. See photos [here](#).



- Congratulations and happy 30th anniversary to [Lake Champlain Access Television](#) (LCATV). The nonprofit public, educational, and government access media facility is committed to serving the needs of its member communities by providing a free forum for the expression and exchange of ideas and information, a link to local government and schools, and a resource for education and training. LCATV is viewable in the Towns of Colchester, Milton, Georgia, Fairfax, Westford, South Hero, Grand Isle, and North Hero on Comcast Cable Channels 1075, 1085, and 1095.

LCATV is located at 63 Creek Farm Plaza, Suite 3.

## In Memoriam



*(Photo courtesy of the Wolcott family)*

We share this sad loss and send our heartfelt condolences to the family of **Eben Wolcott** who passed away on September 15, 2024. Eben was a military veteran as well as a long-time member and former president of the Colchester Historical Society. He was a key person in the preservation of the historic Log Schoolhouse. Eben worked with his brother Elwin to establish the Wolcott Family Natural Area in Colchester, used by many today. View his obituary [here](#).



## Colchester Reef Lighthouse Featured in Winter Lights Display



*(Photograph courtesy of Sondra Lawrence, Green Mountain Galavanting, December 2024)*

In 1869, when lumber transportation was at its peak on Lake Champlain, the U.S. Lighthouse Board recommended the construction of a lighthouse on Colchester Reef, southwest of South Hero Island, to mark a group of three dangerous shoals.

This lighthouse, designed by Albert R. Dow, an engineering graduate from the University of Vermont, was constructed by Luther Whitney in 1870-1871 at a cost of \$24,500 – the most expensive lighthouse built on Lake Champlain.

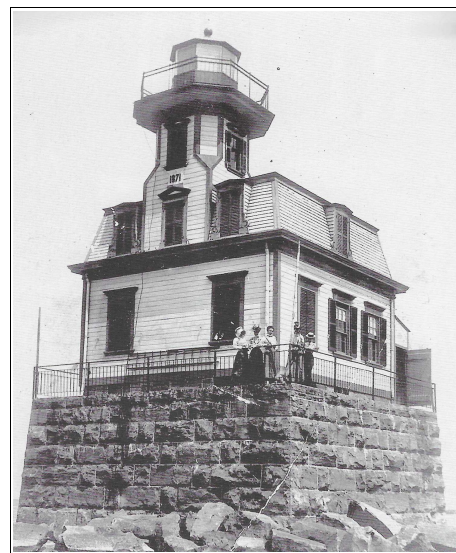
The lighthouse served as the home and workplace of 11 successive keepers and their families. At least one baby was born there. The first floor was divided into a living room and kitchen and the second floor into four bedrooms. Coal stoves provided heat, while large pumps retrieved water from the lake. The keepers used Hogback Island, a nearby island to the north, as farmland.

In 1933, the lighthouse was decommissioned and sat abandoned for several years. But, in 1952, thanks to the efforts of Electra Havemeyer Webb, the lighthouse was painstakingly dismantled from

its site on the lake and reconstructed at Shelburne Museum.

Today, this relocated and restored lighthouse serves as a welcoming sanctuary near the center of the Shelburne Museum's campus. For the past few years, it has been beautifully featured as part of the museum's [Winter Lights Display](#).

The Colchester Reef, where the lighthouse was once situated, is located approximately a mile offshore from Colchester Point and roughly seven miles northwest of Burlington.



*The lighthouse, pictured as it once stood at Colchester Reef and as featured in the book Images of America – Colchester by Inge Schaefer. Arcadia Publishing (2003)*

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## 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 1,450 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