



Newsletter

Colchester Vermont Historical Society

Spring 2025

Upcoming Events

These events are open to the public with free parking, admission, and refreshments.



- April 12, 10 a.m.-2 p.m., Arrowhead Senior Center, 26 Middle Road, Milton. “Making Connections – Local Historical Society and Museum Showcase.” Find out about several historical societies and museums, and get ready for the summer museum season. Hosted by the Milton Historical Society.

- April 14, 7 p.m., at the Meeting House, 830 Main Street on the historic Village Green. All aboard! Local author James “Jim” Jones will present the history of trolleys in our local area. A discount will be offered on sales of his book, *Trolley Wires to Rubber Tires*.



Electric trolleys served users of Fanny Allen Hospital in the early 1900s.

- May 10, 1-2 p.m. Tea Party at the Parsonage, 828 Main Street on the historic Village Green. 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 6, 10 a.m. - The Colchester Log Schoolhouse (circa 1815) opens for the summer.



Located at Airport Park, 500 Colchester Point Road, this lovely [museum and visitor center](#) is a wonderful opportunity for folks of all ages to take a step back in time to the early days of education in a one-room schoolhouse. It is open Fridays – Mondays, 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. until Labor Day. Volunteer hosts are needed, and hours are flexible. For more information and to volunteer, please contact Director [Carol Reichard](#).

- Gardens at the Parsonage, 828 Main Street



Enjoy gardening? Volunteers are needed to maintain the beautiful summer gardens around the Parsonage building this summer. This involves weeding, watering, deadheading, pruning, and maybe some transplanting. In the fall, volunteers will “put the gardens to bed” for the winter. Hours are very flexible. Raise your hand to organize and lead this volunteer team. Contact any Board member for more information.

- June 9, 6 p.m. Annual Meeting and Barbecue, 828 Main Street on the historic Village Green. Please bring a side dish to share. We'll celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Colchester Historical Society, and there will be cake! Clinton and Carol Reichard will entertain us with stories about the early days. Michelle Penca will lead us through an exercise to help us plan into the future of our organization.

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

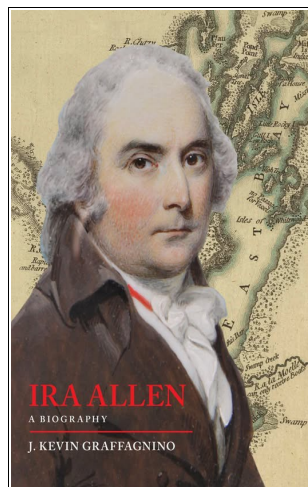
In partnership with the Vermont Historical Society and the Town of Colchester, the Colchester Historical Society will offer a special presentation later this year. This event is in celebration of Vermont's 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence.

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.

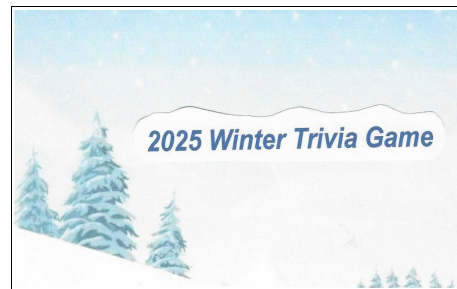


Author J. Kevin Graffagnino will discuss his biography about Ira Allen, an important historical figure in Colchester.



(Images courtesy of the Vermont Historical Society)

Recent Events



- **January** brought our **Annual Colchester History Trivia Game** via teleconference so that we could enjoy it from the warmth of our own homes. In case you missed it, catch the Trivia Game questions [here](#); and, when you're ready for the answers, find them [here](#). Have fun testing your knowledge of local history – some of the answers may surprise you.

- In **February**, we celebrated the **100th anniversary of Vermont's oldest radio station, WVMT**, located here in Colchester. Long-time former owner Paul Goldman shared the station's history and some wonderful stories.



Paul Goldman, former long-time owner of WVMT. His passion for the business and his career in radio sales radiated throughout his presentation.

- We gathered in **March** to work on updating our governing documents – **the bylaws and constitution** – which are now fifty years old. The plan is to get them finalized in time for our Annual Meeting and 50th anniversary celebration in June. In honor of Women's History Month, the men provided refreshments.

Historic Site Marker Being Sought

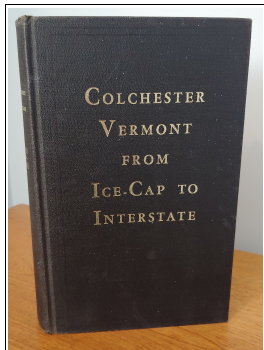
Agriculture has played a significant role in the history of Colchester and in the State of Vermont. A team of local citizens has been formed to apply for an Historic Site Marker to honor our local farmers.

"As farmland continues to be lost to development, it is important to recognize this legacy and the families who made it so," said Historical Society member John Devino who is spearheading this effort. "About a century ago, a group of Italian families (Brigante, Mazza, Lomartire, and Leo), came to Malletts Bay and established one of the largest vegetable-growing areas in the State of Vermont. These families and their descendants helped mold the character of Colchester that we know today," he added.

The plan is to ask the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation to create and install an historic site marker on Malletts Bay Avenue in honor of this local agricultural legacy. If the application is approved, the marker will be funded, created, installed, and maintained by the State of Vermont. It will join more than 300 cast-aluminum green markers, crested with the distinctive gold state seal, that are placed throughout Vermont to provide fascinating glimpses into the past and insights into the present.

Learn more about Vermont Historic Site Markers [here](#). To assist in this effort, please contact [John Devino](#). Historical Society members Carol Reichard and Inge Schaefer also serve on this team.

From Ice-Cap to Interstate History Book – Reformatting Project Underway



Historical Society member Curt Taylor has volunteered to take on a large reformatting project involving one of Colchester's history books,

Colchester Vermont: From Ice-Cap to Interstate. The book dates back to the early 1960s when Ruth Wright of Colchester, a graduate student at the University of Vermont, took on a research project on the history of Colchester as part of her thesis work. The result was *Colchester Vermont: From Ice-Cap to Interstate*, a 250-page hardcover book published around 1963.

"The amount of research that went into the book is incredible," said Curt. "The topics covered are extensive and fascinating. However, the book is now out of print, and over time, copies of it have become scarce. The text, while extremely valuable, has some issues that need attention," he added.

According to historical accounts, the author originally provided a draft to the then-selectboard with the expectation that it might undergo review and revision prior to publication. However, the book was sent to press as-is, leaving it with grammatical and typographical errors. It is also lacking many photographs, an index, and may possibly have some factual inconsistencies. Additionally, since its publication, sixty years of history have passed, and several Historical Society members have expressed an interest in seeing the book updated and republished.

Curt's reformatting project for the book does not involve any expense or adding any new historical content at this stage. One major and recent improvement to the book is the addition of an index of names compiled by Historical Society member Lisa Halvorsen, along with a subject index. Having the book in a new electronic format will mean that if future additions, corrections, and images are needed, they can be much more easily incorporated into the book without disrupting the layout. The footnotes, page numbers, and indices will update automatically.

The proposed reformatting process is time-consuming, and Curt's goal is to complete one chapter per month over the course of a year. Once finished, the revised edition can be made available either as a professionally printed book or as a downloadable electronic file. "Ultimately, this reformatting effort will help preserve Colchester's historical record while making it more accessible to future generations," said Curt.

Stay tuned for updates as this project develops. Meanwhile, to view a copy of the book, some are available at the [Burnham Memorial Library](#).

Collections Database Acquisition

Since our start in 1975, items purchased by and donated to the Colchester Historical Society have been meticulously recorded and cataloged manually by several volunteers. Our collection includes papers, maps, books, photographs, journals, and an array of artifacts that are all important to preserve as pieces of Colchester history.



Examples of Historical Society artifacts

Recently, volunteer board member Bob Furst purchased and donated a computer database program to enable a searchable, electronic record of the entire Historical Society's collection. Bob is leading a team of members that includes Carol Reichard and Suzanne Furst, as well as a student intern, Allison Gregory, who is currently working on her master's degree in information science, focusing on archives and collections management, through the University at Albany. Allison's work for us is focused on several bins of documents and photographs donated last year by the Colchester Fire Department.

This project is an intensive one, and will take some time, but has already proven valuable in helping us reorganize several materials in our collection, enabling us to quickly search for items or information when needed. At our work meeting in March, Bob provided an impressive demonstration of the database's capabilities.

Will We Win This Award?

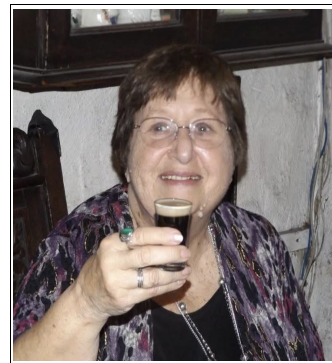
In honor of our 50th anniversary, the Colchester Historical Society has been nominated for a League of Local Historical Societies and Museums Award through the Vermont Historical Society.



This nomination is in recognition of our extended and purposeful service to a community heritage organization and the advancement and study of local history. Letters of support came in from Colchester Town Manager Aaron Frank; Select-board Chair Pam Loranger; State Representative Sarita Austin; historian Inge Schaefer; and Burnham Memorial Library Director Kelly McCagg.

We should learn of the judging panel's decision very soon. We'll let you know.

In Memoriam



Nancy Burke, 1938-2025

The Colchester Historical Society mourns the loss of Nancy Burke who passed away in February. Nancy was a long-time member of our organization, a former president of our board of directors, and a volunteer host at the Colchester Log Schoolhouse for over 15 years. Our heartfelt condolences go out to her beloved family members. View her obituary [here](#).

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 1,465 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