

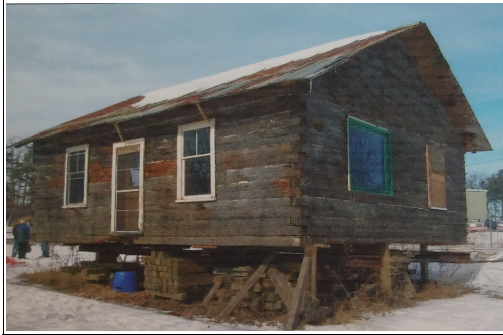


# Newsletter

Colchester Vermont Historical Society

Summer 2025

## Historic Schoolhouse Opens for Summer



This image shows part of the restoration process of the Colchester Log Schoolhouse. The structure was one of the earliest schoolhouses in Colchester, built circa 1815. The 24-foot by 28-foot building is made of square-hewn white pine measuring seven inches wide and up to 15 inches high. In 2001, the Colchester Historical Society formed a committee to save and renovate the building. Today, it functions as a lovely visitor information center and museum that showcases some of our Town's wonderful history and heritage.

Come visit this summer and take a lovely step back in time. New this year is an opportunity for visiting children to learn to craft a small vintage toy. The Colchester Log Schoolhouse is open to visitors all summer, Fridays-Mondays, 10 a.m.-2 p.m. It's located within Airport Park at 500 Colchester Point Road. Parking and admission are free, although donations are always appreciated to help with upkeep of the building.

We have a wonderful group of dedicated volunteer hosts, but a few more are very much needed. Hours are flexible. To learn more, please reach out to Carol Reichard at [winchris65@comcast.net](mailto:winchris65@comcast.net).



*The Colchester Log Schoolhouse today.*

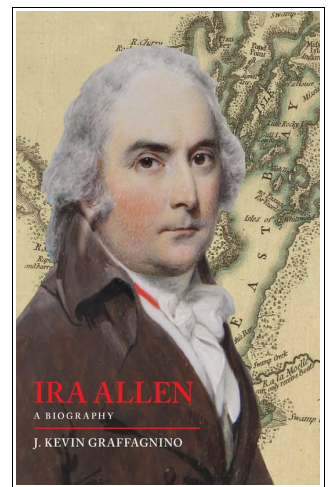
## Special Event: Mark Your Calendar

**October 13, 2025, 7 p.m.  
Colchester Recreation Center  
Activity Room, first floor  
80 Dick Mazza Drive**

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 our first 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.

In partnership with the Vermont Historical Society and the Town of Colchester, the Colchester Historical Society is excited and proud to host this special event. It is in celebration of Vermont's 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence.



*Author J. Kevin Graffagnino will discuss his biography about Ira Allen, an important historical figure in Colchester. (Photos courtesy of the Vermont Historical Society.)*

Everyone is cordially invited to this special event. Parking, admission, and refreshments are free of charge.

The author will have autographed copies of the book available for purchase at the event.

## Recent Programs and Events



(Left to right) Eileen Corcoran, director of service and outreach for the Vermont Historical Society, presented an Award of Merit from the League of Local Historical Societies and Museums to honor the 50th anniversary of the Colchester Historical Society. Original members Clinton and Carol Reichard hold the award signed by Steve Perkins, executive director of the Vermont Historical Society. Also pictured is Bonnie Potter, president, Colchester Historical Society. (Photo courtesy of James "Jim" Jones)

### - In June, the Colchester Historical Society held its annual meeting with a potluck barbecue.

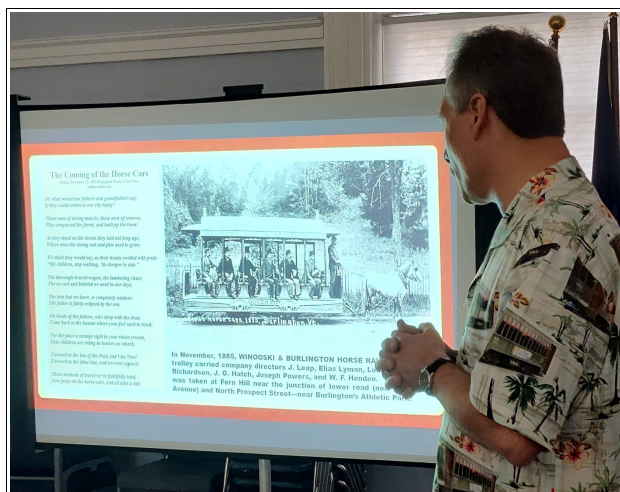
We were thrilled to accept an Award of Merit from the Vermont Historical Society, recognizing our 50th anniversary. We adopted updates to our organization's bylaws and constitution and elected a wonderful slate of board members and officers. The highlight of the occasion was a [presentation](#) by original members Clinton and Carol Reichard who spoke about our group's history, along with some entertaining anecdotes. Read the *Colchester Sun* article [here](#).

- **Sweet Treats for Hard Times** was the theme of our May tea party event, hosted by Historical Society member Michelle Penca. She provided a wonderful presentation about cooking and baking during the Depression Era. In addition, Michelle and her family members served homemade treats that included Cry Baby Cookies and Depression Cake.



Depression-era treats researched, prepared, and served by member Michelle Penca were enjoyed by all.

- **Trolley Wires to Rubber Tires** is the history of local public transportation from 1885 to present. Historical Society member Jim Jones's informal lecture in April included rare photographs, maps, and some great stories about the early days of horse-drawn trolley cars to modern-day buses in our local area. Jim's book and other publications are available for sale on his [website](#).



This image showed passengers in an 1885 horse-drawn trolley car in the Burlington area.

- **Making Connections**, also held in April, was hosted by the Milton Historical Society. In addition to the Colchester Historical Society, the event featured several other local historical societies and museums. It was very well attended and provided a wonderful opportunity for like-minded organizations to network and exchange ideas in preparation for the upcoming summer season.



(Left to right:) Volunteers Michelle and Jack Penca, and Carol and Clinton Reichard enjoyed the Making Connections event and the opportunity to focus on the historic 1815 Colchester Log Schoolhouse, now open on weekends throughout the summer. (Photo courtesy of Milton Historical Society)



## Recent Acquisitions



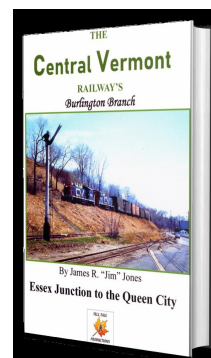
- The Colchester Historical Society is very happy to have recently received this **collection of rare photographs of Camp Norfleet**, circa 1931. It was a fine arts camp located off Clay Point Road and run by siblings Abram Leeper Norfleet (1901-1973), cellist; Catharine Marie Norfleet (1893-1955), violinist; and Helen Lucille Norfleet (1891-1974), pianist. According to Helen's obituary, the camp attracted international staff and campers.

Helen had made her concert debut with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra at the young age of 14. She also founded the Norfleet School of Individual Studies in New York City. Helen published several books of folk songs and music of Vermont, according to the obituary. At the time of her death, she had resided on Spear Street in South Burlington.

The Norfleet Trio was featured on national radio programs and performed chamber music throughout the United States and Canada. At some point in time, Camp Norfleet was located at Allenwood in South Burlington for several years, though we are uncertain of the exact dates. The Norfleet Camp in Colchester eventually became Buff Ledge Camp, and today the site operates as a privately owned horse farm. A quick internet search indicates the Norfleets also operated The Norfleet Trio Camp in Peterborough, New Hampshire, around 1935.

We extend our thanks to Mary E. Starke of Peru, New York, for donating these wonderful photographs, and to Historical Society member Lisa Halvorsen for the insightful research discoveries.

For a better viewing of the individual photographs, please visit the May 26 posting on our [Facebook](#) page.



(Image courtesy of Tell-Tale Productions, LLC)

- Thank you to Historical Society member James "Jim" Jones for generously donating an auto-graphed copy of his latest book, ***The Central Vermont Railway's Burlington Branch - Essex Junction to the Queen City*** (Tell-Tale Productions, LLC, 2025). The book makes several references, along with wonderful photographs, to the lime kiln in Colchester. Copies of this book are available for sale at a special rate on his [website](#).

## Local Historical Site Updates

- **Colchester's oldest church, built in 1838, has a newly renovated steeple.** Now known as the United Church of Colchester, its [Save Our Steeple](#) campaign raised approximately \$75,000, and the project was completed this spring. In addition, new steps with safety handrails were added to the front doors, steps to the front door of the parish house were replaced, and repairs were made to the sidewalk that leads from the driveway and parking lot to the front door.



*The original steeple and the renovated one.*



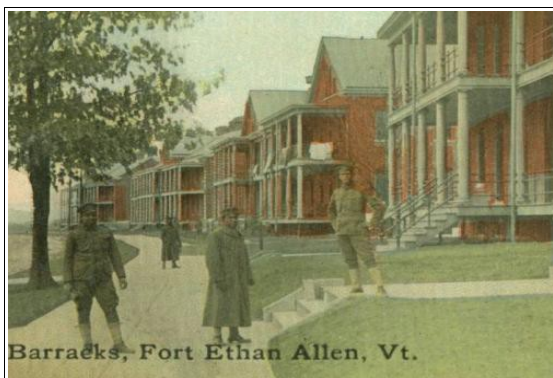
- **American Legion Post 91 added a Blue Star Memorial Marker and garden at a well-attended dedication ceremony on May 27.** The marker honors those who have served in the Armed Forces in defending the United States of America with courage and dedication. This type of marker became a prominent symbol during World War II

when it was seen on flags and banners in homes. The Federated Garden Clubs of Vermont helped raise the \$3,000 for the marker located at the Post at 3650 Roosevelt Highway. [WCAX-TV](#) and the [Colchester Sun](#) covered the story.



*The Blue Star Memorial at Post 91, Colchester*

- The barracks at Fort Ethan Allen that once served as living quarters for the famous Buffalo Soldiers now provide modernized housing. The renovation project was a collaboration between

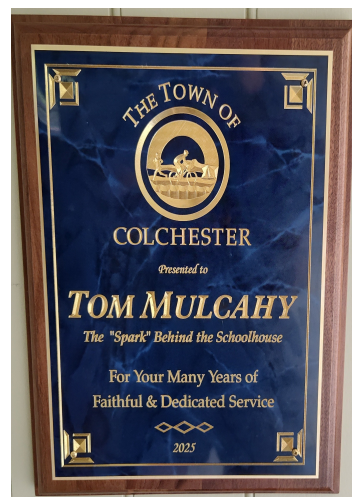


Champlain Housing Trust and Evernorth, resulting in 65 one-bedroom and studio apartments that currently rent for an average of \$1,200 per month including heat and hot water. Read the full story and view the photographs in the [Colchester Sun](#). To view a quick video about the Buffalo Soldiers, visit the Vermont Historical Society website [here](#).

## Thanks and Congratulations

- Tom Mulcahy served for many years on the Colchester Select Board and was awarded this plaque in May to honor his faithful and dedicated service. The Resolution of Appreciation from the Select Board stated, in part: "Tom

spearheaded the efforts of the Colchester Historical Society to reclaim a long-forgotten 1815 schoolhouse discovered by the MacDonald family in 2000, moving the schoolhouse to a temporary location, raising money to move it to Airport Park, and restoring it with input from experts based on historical photographs and physical evidence, saving the oldest-known structure in Malletts Bay." As volunteer project manager, Tom played a major role in making the [Colchester Log Schoolhouse](#) the success it is today as a popular local museum and visitor center.



*This plaque is now on display in the entryway of the Colchester Log Schoolhouse.*

- The Colchester Community Chorus celebrated "40 Springs of Singing" on May 9.



*(Image courtesy of Colchester Community Chorus)*

Carol Reichard, founder and conductor, was presented with a Certificate of Distinguished Service from the Vermont chapter of the American Choral Directors Association for her leadership and vision. View the concert as recorded by Lake Champlain Access Television [here](#).



Colchester Community Chorus has approximately 45 members from Colchester and neighboring towns. The group usually performs two concerts each year, one at holiday time and the other in the spring. Follow them on [Facebook](#) for updates.

## Colchester Students Learn Local History



*Future historians? Only time will tell.*

A fun group of Colchester Middle School students in Grades 6-8 recently toured the Parsonage with Historical Society president Bonnie Potter and the Colchester Log Schoolhouse with director Carol Reichard. The students were participating in a "Colchester treasure hunt," one of the short courses offered at the school for end-of-year studies. School librarian Rebecca Sofferman coordinated the effort to help the students learn a little about Colchester history. Helping out were Bill Crowley, special education teacher, and Kairie Murray, paraeducator.

The middle schoolers also learned how to perform genealogy research at the Burnham Memorial Library with librarian Meg Malone, visited the Village Cemetery to find the grave sites of notable local people, and had a hands-on lesson in cleaning headstones from town clerk Julie Graeter. The students were impressed by a visit to the Vermont National Guard Museum and Library, as well as a walking tour of Fort Ethan Allen where they had the opportunity to tour Vermont's oldest

radio station, WVMT, now housed in an historical building at the fort that once served as the barracks for the military band. It was a very busy and productive couple of days.

"They asked some great questions," said Bonnie Potter, Historical Society president, "and hopefully will be inspired to continue their own studies of Colchester's local history. Perhaps some of them will decide to participate in Vermont History Day in the spring," she added.

## Colchester High School Reaches 50th Year

Congratulations to [Colchester High School](#) on its 50th graduation. And, all best wishes to the 2025 graduates. View photographs and the story in the [Colchester Sun](#).

## In Memoriam

We mourn the loss of dear **Georgene Raub** who passed away on April 21. She was well-known as Georgie and had been active with the Colchester Historical Society for many years. We extend our heartfelt sympathies to her husband Tom and to family members and friends. Her full obituary may be viewed [here](#).

And, on June 10, we lost long-time active member **Annette Mulcahy**. Annette was the leading force behind the gardening committee at the Parsonage. She joyfully ensured the gardens were beautiful and well tended. Our heartfelt sympathies are extended to her husband Tom as well as her family and friends. Annette's obituary may be viewed [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 1,500 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 2025-2026

President: Bonnie Potter  
Vice President: Jack Penca  
Treasurer/Director/Webmaster: Bob Furst  
Secretary: Pat Carman  
Directors: Clinton Reichard, Curt Taylor, and Fran Bailey  
Newsletter and Facebook page by Bonnie Potter