



Newsletter

Colchester Vermont Historical Society

Summer 2022

New “Make-and-Take” Classes Offered

For the first time, “Make-and-Take” classes are being offered this summer for children ages 8-10. Classes are hosted by the Colchester Historical Society and held at the historic Log Schoolhouse located at Airport Park. All materials are provided, and the topics are linked to life and pastimes of the Log Schoolhouse time period.

The classes will be presented by Michelle Penca, a long-time volunteer teacher of art, gardening, literacy, and STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics). She has taught classes in five different states to learners of all ages. She has a passion for sharing the love of learning while making it fun and accessible.

Why Knot?

Saturday, July 23, 10–11 a.m.

Knot tying is a good life skill with many practical applications. Children in earlier times used knots in the home and on the farm. Participants will learn several basic knots and receive a knot sampler to take home. Square knots, clove hitches, half hitches, and bowline knots will be demonstrated. Ages 8 to 10. Class size is limited to 8 children.

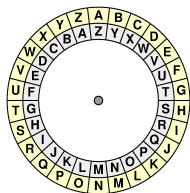


BOWLINE

Codes and Ciphers

Saturday, August 20, 10–11 a.m.

In use for thousands of years, codes and ciphers can be simple to amazingly complex. The class will focus on basic codes that children will use to code their name and maybe a secret message. The instructor will demonstrate Atbash, Grid, Caesar Cipher and Scytale. Each child will go home with cipher wheels and code sheets to continue to use the knowledge learned. This class, open to ages 8-10, is a nice STEM activity. Class size is limited to 8 children.



Advanced registration is required. The fee is \$5 per child per class. Register now with Carol Reichard at winchris65@comcast.net.

Visit the Log Schoolhouse This Summer



The historic Log School House at Airport Park is now open for the summer, Friday through Monday, 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. Bring the whole family for a fun and interesting step back in time at this little museum. Parking and admission are free.

Be sure to stop by to browse and consider the days before cell phones, computers, electricity and even indoor plumbing. Special thanks to the volunteer hosts and caretakers who help make this charming little museum a great success.

To view more photos of the Log Schoolhouse and to learn about its restoration, please visit our [website](#).

We're All Abloom



Pictured, from left, are: Bob Furst, Suzanne Furst, Clinton Reichard, Carol Reichard, Cara Tripodi Cunningham, Wanda Morin, and Andre Morin. Not available for the photo were: Annette Mulcahy, Pat Carman, Nancy Burke, and Bonnie Potter.

Special thanks to the wonderful volunteers who helped with the gardens on June 4 at the Historical Society building on Main Street. Wow! We weeded, fertilized, planted, edged, watered, and mulched -- all in record time and in perfect weather. Oh, and we drank lemonade and ate cookies, too.

The gardens look absolutely beautiful! Volunteers are pitching in throughout the summer months to ensure the gardens are watered and weeded.

Congratulations and Happy Anniversary



► **Saint Michael's Playhouse** is celebrating 75 years of live, professional summer theater. Be sure to check out its website to see what performances are being offered this summer. Tickets are already selling fast.

On its [website](#) there's also an interesting story about the theater's history and why it looks so different today.



► **Colchester Rescue** marks its 60th Anniversary and **Colchester Technical Rescue** its 33rd year. The first rescue call came in 1962. That year there were 20 calls, followed by 33 calls in 1963. Colchester's population at that time was less than 5,000 people.

[Read more](#) about the impressive history throughout the years of these two organizations and how they continue to serve us today.

Chimney Corners Home Demonstration Club (Circa 1944)



Pictured, in front, are: Myra Howard and Barbara (Horton) Howard and children Susan and Darwin. Left to right, standing, are: unknown, Dorothy (Howard) Curtis, Eva (Lavanway) Chapin, Laura (Buxton) Howard, unknown, Bertha (Eggleston) Chapin, Martha (Howard) Chapin, and unknown.

Home Demonstration Clubs, such as this one, above, evolved from a nationwide system of rural education. They were designed to assist people in rural areas to meet the issues of farm, home, and community and to help develop a more satisfying country life. The system was established by the federal government under the Smith-Lever Act of May 8, 1914, providing cooperation between the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the State land grant colleges. Funds were provided by federal, state, and county governments. Home Demonstration Agents (all female) led activities having to do with home, farm, and family living.

M. L. Wilson, Director of Extension Work, in the foreword to the U. S. Department of Agriculture's booklet, *The Home Demonstration Agent* (U.S. Government Printing Office, July 1951) stated: "The home demonstration agent is known not only for her interest in improved family living and her appreciation of it, but for certain personal characteristics as well. Honesty, courage, initiative, common sense, and good judgment have become associated with her position. If she is thus outstanding, it is because the people with whom she works expect her to be the kind of person she is..... All know she is a friend."

Meetings were typically held monthly in homes, schools, or churches where home demonstration

agents gave presentations on topics such as the study of foods and nutrition (growing, canning, and cooking, for example), clothing (sewing and knitting), home management, child care and family life, housing, health, citizenship, economics, government, and rural cultural arts.

Thanks to the U.S. Department of Agriculture for this background information about Home Demonstration Clubs. [Read more](#) about the history of home demonstration agents in USDA AIB38, July 1951.

Special thanks to Cyndy Newell Bell for this photograph that includes some of her family members. If you can identify any of the “unknowns” in the photo, please let us know.

Can You Help Solve This History Mystery?

Check out these beautiful, historic portraits! Donald Sargent recently contacted the Colchester Historical Society to inquire whether we could help identify the people who are portrayed.



Here's what we know so far: Mr. Sargent's home on East Road once served as the parsonage for the Congregational Church on Main Street in Colchester. The first home was brick and unfortunately burned to the ground in 1887. A new home was built the following year on the same site. These portraits, obviously, were not in the fire as all was lost, so we know the portraits were created after that. The current home owner, Mr. Sargent, found these lovely, but fragile, portraits in the attic and is eager to learn the identities of the subjects. His hunch is that they are portraits of one of the former church pastors and his wife. Interestingly, the portraits are mounted, back-to-back on a piece

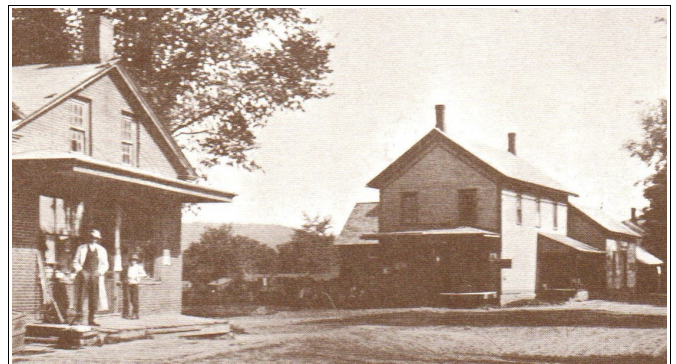
of wood, and tacked around the edges. Why, we are uncertain; this would have made the portraits rather awkward to display.

Through research, Mr. Sargent learned the names of the pastors of that church, from 1888 through the early 1900s. So, the portraits *could be* any of the following people: Amos Holbrook, Clarence J. Harris, Calvin J. Hastings, Charles B. Atwood, George Skinner, Wesley W. Smith, or Stephen Smith.

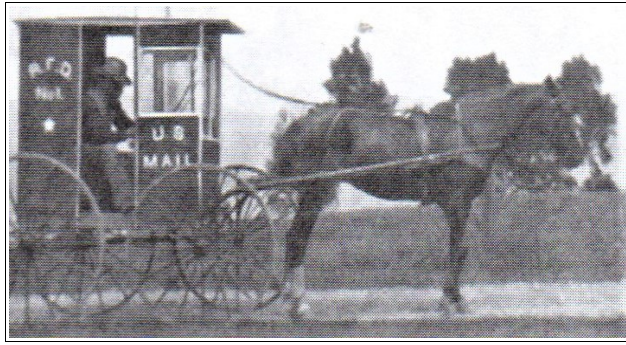
Can you help us solve this history mystery? If you have any thoughts, ideas, or knowledge about these portraits, please contact Mr. Sargent at dbsargent@comcast.net.

Colchester's Postal Service History

By 1791, post offices began to appear in Vermont. The earliest were located in Brattleboro, Rutland, and West Bennington. In 1813, a post office was established in Colchester Village in a local store on the corner of Main Street and East Road. A stagecoach operated from Rutland to Highgate, passing through Colchester at least twice per week to drop off mail and passengers.



The post office moved from the old red brick store to a frame building with store and upstairs living quarters on the corner of East Road and briefly to John Lyon's house on Main Street, just east of East Road. It later moved back to the brick store where it remained for three decades. Mail was inserted into pigeon-hole shelves on top of the counter next to the candy case. When mail didn't come on the morning train, it was brought to the post office via the Highway Post Office bus. Over the years, the store business and post office bounced from owner to owner, with each successive store owner serving as mail handler and/or postmaster.



Rural Free Delivery, known familiarly as R.F.D., offered mail delivery services to residents outside the village. The mail carrier also sold stamps.

Electricity reached Colchester Village in 1921 and by 1939, the building was shared by the town clerk and the post office. Then the population boom of 1940-1959 changed the town forever. The arrival of electricity and automobiles, in addition to industrial jobs and service businesses, resulted in an increase of 1,700 new residents during that time period. In 1961, the post office was relocated to a building owned by Henry Sweeney on Main Street.



This particular structure style was popular in many towns throughout Vermont for use as post offices. Located in Colchester Village at 428 Main Street, the building was later used as a Chittenden Bank and featured a drive-up teller window on the left-hand side. It currently houses offices for a water company. Around the back is a lovely one-mile walking trail loop.

In 1976, the post office moved once again, this time to its current location on Malletts Bay Avenue, pictured here.



Added note: A second post office was located at Fort Ethan Allen in 1902. It became a military post office for the Fort in 1917 and was discontinued in 1959.

A detailed history of the U.S. Postal Service is available [here](#). It includes many photos and covers topics such as various delivery methods over the years, postage stamps, postcards, and, indeed, even mailing children.

Sources:

- *Colchester Vermont From Ice-Cap to Interstate* by Ruth Wright (Queen City Printers, Inc., 1963)
- *Images of America – Colchester* by Inge Schaefer (Arcadia Publishing, 2003)
- *Colchester Center – The Evolution of a Village* by Kenneth A. Degree (Queen City Printers, Inc., 2000)
- R.F.D. photo courtesy of Greg Dirmaier as published in *Chronicles of Colchester* by Inge Schaefer (The History Press, 2009).
- 428 Main Street photo from Bob Blanchard, *Burlington Area History* on Facebook.

***“One benefit of summer
was that each day we had
more light to read by.”***

– Jeanette Walls
American author

News and Updates at Your Fingertips

On Facebook, be sure to “Like” [Colchester Vermont Historical Society](#). We recently achieved a milestone of over 1,000 followers.

And, be sure to visit the Colchester Historical Society's [website](#) to stay up to date on news and programs and to view some fabulous vintage photographs.

Colchester Historical Society Officers 2021-2022

President: Nancy Burke
Vice President: Bonnie Potter
Treasurer/Director/Webmaster: Bob Furst
Secretary: (vacancy)
Director: Carol Reichard
Newsletter and Facebook page by Bonnie Potter