



# Newsletter

Colchester Vermont Historical Society

Autumn 2022

## And...We're Back!

It was so fun to be able to gather again after the long COVID-19 pandemic. The Colchester Historical Society was unable to hold any in-person meetings since February 2020. On September 12, however, we were finally able to gather to enjoy an old-fashioned ice cream social and offer tours of the historic Parsonage. At our Annual Meeting, we welcomed some new members who enjoyed the opportunity to learn about our committee activities, and we elected officers.

## Coming Events – Mark Your Calendars

### ◆50th Anniversary Celebration

Saturday, October 15, 10 a.m.  
St. Michael's College Fire & Rescue  
Robert E. Sutton Firehouse  
220 College Parkway, Colchester  
Free parking and admission (*Please note: accessible parking is very limited at the firehouse. If you are able, please park across the street.*)

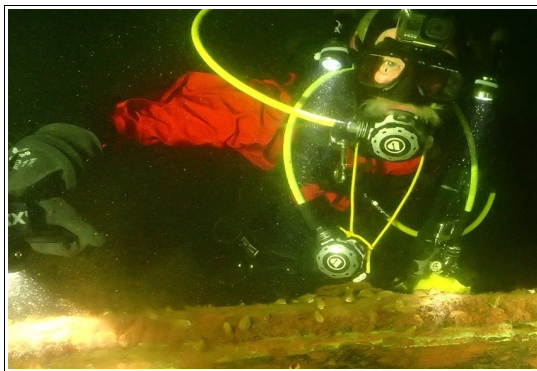


(Photo courtesy of SMC Fire & Rescue)

Join us as we celebrate Saint Michael's College Fire & Rescue's 50th Anniversary. Learn about this wonderful organization dedicated to providing professional fire and emergency medical services and education to the campus and to Colchester. [Saint Michael's Fire & Rescue](#) is proudly staffed and managed by members of the Saint Michael's College community. Come hear their stories and learn their history at this special gathering. We hope to see their recently restored original fire truck, a 1957 Ward LaFrance.

### ◆Beneath the Surface

Monday, November 14, 7 p.m.  
The Meeting House, 830 Main Street, Colchester  
Free parking and admission



(photo courtesy of Gary Lefebvre)

Local recreational diver Gary Lefebvre will present photos and information about his journeys beneath Lake Champlain. Please plan to attend this amazing program that includes his discovery of two paddle wheels from a 200-year-old shipwreck, the [steamboat Phoenix](#), located at the bottom of Lake Champlain near Colchester Point. What is the significance of this find? It's an intriguing story. Refreshments will follow Gary's presentation.

### ◆Choral Concert and Holiday Party

Tuesday, December 13, 7 p.m.  
United Church of Colchester  
900 Main Street, Colchester  
Free parking and admission



(photo by Bonnie L. Potter)

Welcome the holiday season with this fun and festive musical event featuring the beautiful voices of Colchester High School choral groups. Refreshments and fellowship will follow the concert in this lovely [historic building](#) that dates back to 1830.

### ◆“Twenty Questions”

This new event is co-hosted by the Colchester Historical Society and the Burnham Memorial Library. It's a sort of a scavenger hunt/trivia game that will run throughout the month of January. Details are still in the planning stages, so stay tuned for updates as they develop. We're excited about it and hope you'll play!

### ◆Other Upcoming Events

Stay tuned as plans for these events develop:

- February 11, 10 a.m. - To be announced.
- March 11, 10, a.m. - Vintage Clothing
- April 10, 7 p.m. - Old Coins
- May 15, 9 a.m. - Field trip to Birds of Vermont Museum in Huntington
- June 12, 6 p.m. - Annual Meeting and Barbecue

### Recent Acquisitions



*(photo courtesy of Bob Furst)*

Many thanks to Colchester resident Martha Mazza (pictured above) for donating these local historical treasures to the Colchester Historical Society.

The wooden cabinet and white faucet handles were salvaged from the remains of the 1964 fire that destroyed Clarey's Bayside Pavilion.

Also included in her donation are several items used by barbers, as well as a prayer book that dates back to 1867.

### Log Schoolhouse Marks 15th Anniversary

Thanks to the wonderful volunteers who donated their time and talents at the Log Schoolhouse at Airport Park, we had another busy and productive summer this year, greeting hundreds of visitors to our little museum and visitor center.

This year was the 15th Anniversary of the public opening of the Log Schoolhouse. It was in August 2000 that this little 1815 building was discovered inside a local home and saved for restoration. Once approved by the Colchester Select Board, project managers were appointed to oversee the restoration process. Funding from federal, state, and local grants, as well as some private donations, became available in 2005. Historical architects were brought on board to design the move from its location and to plan for the building's reconstruction. The following year, the foundation was built, and the schoolhouse was moved four miles to its current location. Finally, in May 2007, the building was opened to the public.

This historic milestone was covered in the August 8, 2022 issue of the [Colchester Sun](#), a local online news publication. Television station [WCAX](#) covered the story in its news broadcast on August 15 featuring museum curator Tom Mulcahy and host Emily Gennari, both long-time schoolhouse volunteers.

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

New this summer were fun and educational “make and take” children's classes offered by volunteer Michelle Penca (pictured below during an outdoor “Why Knot?” class). All materials were provided, and topics were linked to life and pastimes of the Log Schoolhouse time period.



*(photo by Bonnie L. Potter)*



## Wanted: Your Memories and Stories



*1601 West Lakeshore Drive as it appeared in 2019.  
(photo courtesy of Lori Barg)*

Does anyone remember dancing to Dixieland jazz at “Sonny’s” at what is now 1601 West Lakeshore Drive? The current property owner, Lori Barg, has been told that “Sonny Longe personally watched the door and served reasonable food.” With a big bar and dance hall, apparently it was *the* place to be in the 1960s.

Prior to that, perhaps as early as the 1930s, it was a very rustic restaurant with live jazz and dancing. In the 1940s, a New York pianist by the name of Delano played there in a jazz band that was larger than a trio but smaller than a big band. A couple named Jean and Allan from Burlington recalled dancing there after World War II in the 1940s and 1950s. “Great music and dancing and food,” one of them recalled.

Lori also has been told that in the late 1970s and through the 1980s and 1990s, the restaurant/bar was called Finney’s Fine Foods and featured, creemees, lemonade, and roast beef sandwiches as well as draft beer and dart games.

Lori is seeking more historical information about her property, which she believes was most likely built as a house around 1927.

Do you know anyone who danced, ate, or played music here? Do you have photos or memories about this place? If you can help fill in the blanks, please contact Lori Barg at 802-454 8458 (cell) or [watrberry@gmail.com](mailto:watrberry@gmail.com). Thank you.



## Veterans Day is November 11

Veterans Day, once known as “Armistice Day,” is observed on November 11 regardless of the day of the week on which it happens to fall. Veterans Day is considered to be a celebration to honor America’s veterans for their patriotism, love of country, and willingness to serve and sacrifice for the common good. For details about the history of Veterans Day, please visit the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs [website](#).



*(photo by Bonnie L. Potter)*

The photograph above depicts a portion of the Vermont National Guard Fallen Heroes Memorial at the [Vermont National Guard Museum and Library](#) here in Colchester. A plaque at the entrance states “Welcome to the VTNG Fallen Heroes Memorial, a place for solemn reflection and remembrance of those who made the ultimate sacrifice in service to our state and nation. Please respect this hallowed place and ensure all conduct during your visit is respectful to their memory.”



The Vermont National Guard Museum and Library is just one of over 40 local historical sites available to visit on the Colchester Historical Society’s Self-Guided Driving Tour. There are no lines, no waiting, no fees; just go and explore the sites on the tour that interest you on your own time, at your own pace. The four general areas of the tour are Colchester Village, Malletts Bay, Airport Park, and Fort Ethan Allen. In addition, there are six local cemeteries featured. Learn more and begin your tour [here](#). This tour recently was nominated for an achievement award from the Vermont League of Local Historical Societies and Museums.

## Coates Island Celebrates 150 Years



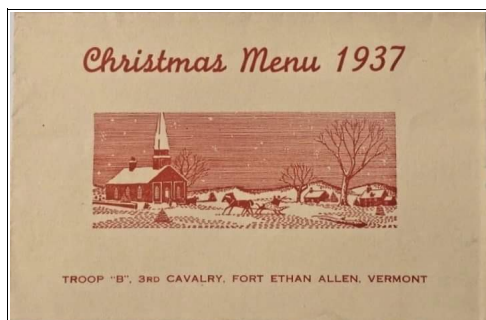
*(photo courtesy of the Coates family)*

Congratulations to the Coates family celebrating 150 years of Coates Island. This lovely and historic 80-acre peninsula is located just off West Lakeshore Drive. Originally known as Mather's Head, the property also has been previously known as Brownell Island, Newton's Point, and Munson's Island. In 1872, it was purchased from the Munson family by William I. Coates, Sr., and has remained with the family ever since.

Colchester Historical Society members Carol and Clinton Reichard, Nancy Burke, and Inge Schaefer attended the celebration event in the meadow at the Coates farmhouse on July 22.

For more photos and history about Coates Island, read an article written five years ago by local historian Inge Schaefer for the [Burlington Free Press](#).

## Christmas at Fort Ethan Allen, 1937



Inside this invitation, the menu included oyster stew, celery, sweet pickles, stuffed olives, roast Vermont turkey, oyster dressing, cranberry sauce, giblet gravy, candied sweet potatoes, and creamed June peas. Dessert featured chocolate layer cake, blackberry pie, ribbon candy, ice cream, beer, coffee, cigars, and cigarettes.

## Membership Dues are Due



Annual membership dues for the Colchester Historical Society are now due. Please download and fill out the [membership form](#) and mail your payment to Treasurer Bob Furst at the address provided. Note that at our recent Annual Meeting, members voted to raise the dues to \$15 per person and \$25 per family.

Funds from dues and additional donations help pay for our program expenses and minor expenditures for general maintenance operations of the Historical Society, its collections, and the Parsonage building. We have no paid staff; all services are performed by dedicated volunteers. Your support is very much appreciated and will help ensure that the work we do to discover, learn about, and share Colchester's significant local history will continue.



*Interior of the Parsonage, built in 1899  
(Photo by Bonnie L. Potter)*

## News and Updates at Your Fingertips

On Facebook, be sure to "Like" [Colchester Vermont Historical Society](#). It's a popular spot; we recently achieved a milestone of over 1,000 followers.

And 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 2022-2023

President: Bonnie Potter

Vice President: Nancy Burke

Treasurer/Director/Webmaster: Bob Furst

Secretary: Pat Boucher Carman

Director: Carol Reichard

Newsletter and Facebook page by Bonnie Potter