



Newsletter

Colchester Vermont Historical Society

Spring 2023

Coming Events – Mark Your Calendars



- April 10, 7 p.m. - Old Coins

828 Main Street, Colchester (back entrance).

Presenter Rick Heh will provide coin-collecting tips and show us some of his collection. If you wish, please bring a few coins from your collection, too. Free parking and admission. All are welcome.

- May 15, 9 a.m. - Field trip to Birds of Vermont Museum in Huntington (members only). Details will be available soon in your email.

- June 12, 6 p.m. - Annual Meeting and Barbecue.

828 Main Street, Colchester (back entrance).

We'll also celebrate Colchester's 260th anniversary. More details to come as the date nears.

Recent Programs

◆ In January, we partnered with the Burnham Memorial Library to bring you a Colchester History Trivia Game called "Twenty Questions." It was offered on our website, and paper copies were available at the library and town offices. If you missed it, you can still access it [here](#). And, in case you don't know all the answers, you can find them [here](#). We hope you enjoyed it!

◆ Town Manager Aaron Frank met with us in February to discuss the history and importance of Colchester's recreational opportunities. From the days of Clarey's Bayside Pavilion to the long-planned new Recreation Center, it was a well-received program. Learn more about it [here](#).



Town Manager Aaron Frank explained the layout of the new Recreation Center.

◆ Oh, we had fun at the Show & Tell Vintage Clothing program in March! We viewed an array of fashions including fine-gauge wool bathing suits, crepe-de-chine bridal gowns, party dresses, a variety of hats, shoes, and even silky lingerie. Thanks to our members who brought and shared their collections and to Jean MacBride of the *Colchester Sun* for attending. Her article about the event and photo gallery are [here](#). Following the program, refreshments were served and several attendees enjoyed a tour of the Parsonage.



Carmen Brunelle shared some of her vintage clothing collection, including this tiny-waisted wedding bodice. The coordinating skirt is pictured on the left.

These items and several more from her collection were shown by Suzanne Furst. Displayed in the photo at right are swimsuits, and the white dresses are baptismal gowns.



Carol Reichard, one of the Colchester Historical Society's founding members, arrived beautifully styled in vintage attire.

Recent Acquisitions

Thank you to William Parkinson, Curator and Executive Director of the [Fort Ethan Allen Museum](#), for this nice collection of postcards.



Also, thanks to Inge Schaefer for donating this collection of photographs from the days when she owned and published the *Colchester Sun* and the *Colchester News Magazine*. We're still sorting through them!



Historic Log Schoolhouse Museum

Yes! The historic Colchester Log Schoolhouse will be opening again for summer visitors in early June. If you've never been – or even if you have – be sure to stop by.

Located at Airport Park on Colchester Point Road, It will be open all summer, Fridays – Mondays, 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. Parking and admission are free.



The display of books, bonnets, and lunch pails at the Log Schoolhouse

The Colchester Historical Society is very grateful for the very dedicated volunteers who serve as hosts at the Log Schoolhouse during the summer. And, more volunteers are much needed. To learn more and to volunteer, please contact Carol Reichard via email at winchris65@comcast.net or phone 802-497-3036.



This lovely little building was originally constructed around 1800 and was the fourth of several district schools in Colchester. It continued to be used as a schoolhouse until 1929. The undersized and outdated building was sold and relocated for use as part of a summer camp.

In 2000, when the owners of the building discovered the log structure during renovations, the building was acquired by the Colchester Historical Society and moved to town property for the renovation process. See more about this on our [website](#).

More Volunteer Opportunities



In addition to volunteers needed to host visitors at the Log Schoolhouse, there are several other areas where we would appreciate volunteers:

- **Gardeners.** Each spring, we tidy up and revitalize the gardens around the Parsonage building on Main Street. During the summer, we need folks to water, weed, and deadhead. In the fall, we get the flower beds ready for winter.

- **Handy person.** We could use someone around the Parsonage and Log Schoolhouse to help with various fix-it jobs that need doing from time to time. Examples are hanging up a cabinet and some clocks, changing batteries in smoke detectors, re-installing the flag holder, etc.

- **Cleaning helper.** Although our buildings don't get a lot of wear and tear, we surely would appreciate someone willing and able to help in the spring and fall with vacuuming, mopping, dusting, and washing windows.

Hours are very flexible. If you can help us out with any of these tasks, please reach out to any member of our Board of Directors.

Do You Have An Antique Sampler?



(Image courtesy of Ellen Thompson)

The Vermont Sampler Initiative is working to locate, photograph, and document samplers from the 17th-19th centuries for inclusion in the Sampler Archive, an online, searchable database of American schoolgirl needlework. The group also hopes to host an exhibition and publish a book.

You are invited to bring your sampler to one of these upcoming Sampler ID Days:

**April 21 & 22, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.,
Shelburne Museum, Shelburne, VT
and**

**May 12 & 13, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.,
Vermont Historical Society, Barre, VT.**

Visit <http://samplerarchive.org> or contact Ellen Thompson at samplersvt@gmail.com for more information.

“Ahoy” or “Hello”?



This is an example of an oak wall-mounted crank telephone from the early 1900s. The tag on the front reads “Chicago Telephone Supply Company, Elkhart, Indiana, U.S.A.”

Alexander Graham Bell invented the telephone (beating Elisha Gray by a matter of hours) in 1876. He had come from Scotland to the U.S. as a teacher of the hearing impaired, and came up with the idea of an “electrical speech machine” while visiting his hearing-impaired mother in Canada. This inspired him to invent the microphone, and then the telephone.

By 1877, the first permanent outdoor telephone wire was completed, stretching a distance of three miles. This was closely followed by the world's first commercial telephone service. In 1911, the American Telephone and Telegraph (AT&T) acquired the Western Union Telegraph Company and the two companies eventually merged. Estimates indicate that by 1918, approximately ten million telephones were in service throughout the United States.

Here in Colchester, the first telephone poles and wires were erected around 1901 along highway rights of way. New England Telephone, four years later, strung lines along the old Milton Road and Malletts Bay Avenue. In 1909, the Malletts Bay Avenue lines were further extended, and lines went up along the Porter's Point Road and into Fort Ethan Allen. Later, lines were added into Colchester Center and Clay Point Road.

Perhaps our earliest childhood memory of a telephone is two empty aluminum cans attached with a string. But then came along the styles of manual crank, candlestick, dial, push button, wall, phone booths, princess, and others. Remember party lines? Switchboard operators?

Of course, amazing and expanded advances in microelectronic technology over the last few decades have enabled the development of cellular phones to advance at an astonishing rate. Cell phones are everywhere now, popular for business and personal use in communication. More than just a telephone these days, modern cell phone devices serve as a camera, computer, clock, calendar, flashlight, health monitoring aid, video and movie viewer, language translator, and much more. If only Alexander Graham Bell could see us now as we go about our days, often busily absorbed in our own personal "electrical speech machines!"

For an interesting timeline about the evolution of the telephone, please visit the Independent Telecommunications Pioneer Association's [website](#).

Additional source: *Colchester, Vermont From Ice-Cap to Interstate* by Ruth Wright (Queen City Printers, 1963).

"If Alexander Graham Bell had had a teenager at home, he would never have had a chance to test the telephone."
— Author unknown

Telephone trivia: Alexander Graham Bell proposed "ahoy" as a standard telephone greeting before Thomas Edison popularized the use of "hello."

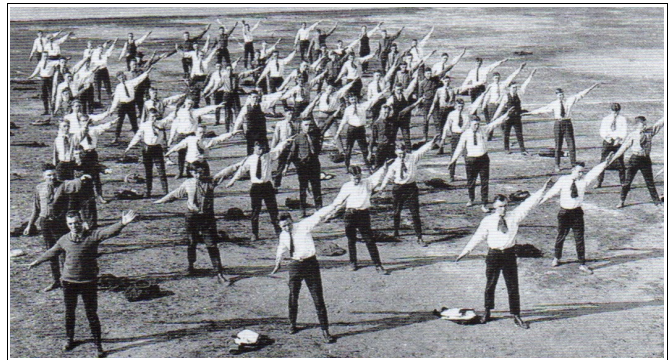
Source: <https://www.sciencemuseum.org.uk>

Cabin Fever Reliever

Remember to take advantage of the Colchester Historical Society's award-winning Self-Guided Historical Driving Tour. Got company coming? Take them for a ride! These tours around town are free of charge and may be done on your own time, at your own pace, with no waiting lines. Simply pick and choose your desired route.

Get started on your tour [here](#).

Spring Exercise Program at SMC



Military personnel from Fort Ethan Allen instructed St. Michael's College students, often referred to as "Michaelmen" in physical education. This photo is from the 1920s, when it was still an all-male college. Women were accepted into the school in 1970.

Photo courtesy of St. Michael's College, as featured in *Images of America – Colchester*, by Inge Schaefer (Arcadia Publishing, 2003).

News and Updates at Your Fingertips

On Facebook, be sure to "Like" [Colchester Vermont Historical Society](#). It's a popular spot; we have 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 Carman

Director: Carol Reichard

Newsletter and Facebook page by Bonnie Potter