



Newsletter

Colchester Vermont Historical Society

Autumn 2023

Upcoming Events!

Our Program Committee has put together a very nice schedule of interesting programs and events for the 2023-2024 season. All offer free parking, admission, and refreshments. Unless otherwise indicated, these events will be held at the Parsonage at 828 Main Street. Here's a quick preview:

- **October 16, 7 p.m.** – Evolution of Immigration Law presented by Jack Penca

- **November 13, 7 p.m.** – Harvest Time presented by Michelle Penca

- **December 12, 7 p.m.** – Holiday Concert at the historic United Church of Colchester, 900 Main Street, featuring Colchester school choral groups and tasty refreshments

- **January 8, 7 p.m.** – Colchester History Trivia Game via Zoom with Bonnie Potter and Michelle Penca

- **February 10, 10 a.m.** – Clark Sweeney will tell the history and evolution of Colchester Fire Department

- **March 9, 10 a.m.** – Women's History Month – Treatment of American Women by the Legal System presented by Jack Penca

- **April 10, 7 p.m.** – The Past and Present of the Rutland Railway's Island Line through historic photos, presented by James "Jim" Jones

- **May 13, 7 p.m.** – Learn how to incorporate the lore and history of historic gardens into your own garden, presented by Michelle Penca

- **June 10, 6 p.m.** – Annual Barbecue and Annual Meeting for members and special guests

Visit the [activity calendar](#) on our website for more details and updates as plans develop.

Recent Happenings

◆ Representatives of the Colchester Historical Society hosted a table at the **Autumnal Market** held Saturday, September 16, at Severance Corners. We had a great time chatting with local folks and visitors about Colchester's history and upcoming programs. We sold local history books, DVDs, and gained a few new memberships, too.



Representing the Colchester Historical Society at the Autumnal Market were (left to right) Patricia Brace Reed, Jack Penca, Bonnie Potter, and Inge Schaefer. Not available for this photo were volunteer table hosts Carol and Clinton Reichard, Bob and Suzanne Furst, and Curt Taylor. (Photo by David Eaton)

◆ Several of our members participated in the **"How to Clean Cemetery Monuments" workshop** hosted by the Town Clerk's Office on September 9 at the Munson Cemetery. A team from the [Vermont Old Cemetery Association](#) demonstrated how to clean gravestones without damaging them. "It was interesting to walk through the cemetery and look at the ages of some of the stones," said Bob Furst. "I noticed one from as early as 1813. Our local cemeteries are certainly full of history."



Carol and Clinton Reichard chat with Lisa Halvorsen as she gives gravestone cleaning a try. (Photo by Bob Furst)

◆ Colchester Historical Society was selected as the recipient of funds raised throughout the month of August from a program by Shaw's. We received \$1 for each reusable bag sold through [Shaw's GIVE BACK Reusable Bag Program](#) and gleaned a total of \$298. Program Manager Kimberly Monaco reported that we were the highest-earning nonprofit by more than \$100 and praised our promotional efforts to help make the campaign a success. Shaw's plans to offer the opportunity to us again in the near future. Thanks to all who participated in this fundraiser.



◆ The Town of Colchester is proud and honored to have received a **Vermont Roadside Historic Marker commemorating the First Special Service Force (FSSF)**. The unveiling of the marker and a special dedication event was held on August 12. In addition to speakers, the ceremony included a performance by a specially formed choir. The anthem, "Vermont is A State I Love", was specially composed by Gene Childers, representing the FSSF Association. The 40th Army Band played a lively march entitled "Frederick's Black Devils" by Paul Murtha. Attendees at the event included many FSSF Association members and families from around the United States and Canada, as well as an honor guard, bagpipers, a military chaplain, local citizens, and dignitaries. At the base of this new historic marker was an FSSF wreath, as well as vases of red, white and blue flowers, each bouquet honoring a specific FSSF-fallen veteran. "It was a very moving ceremony," said Bonnie Potter, President of the Colchester Historical Society. "I'll never forget it."

This historic marker stands tall on Dalton Avenue at Fort Ethan Allen Park. The text on the marker states: "The FSSF was formed in 1942 as the only joint U.S.-Canadian unit in World War II. Many Vermonters volunteered to serve. Led by U.S. Army Col. Robert T. Frederick, the FSSF trained rigorously in Montana, Virginia, and at Fort Ethan Allen. Known as the "Black Devils," the FSSF

distinguished itself during the Italian Campaign at Monte la Difensa and Anzio. It was the first unit deployed to southern France and later disbanded in 1944. It earned considerable honors from four nations for accomplishments during the war, including a U.S. Congressional Gold Medal. The FSSF is a predecessor to the modern special operations forces in service today."

Click [here](#) for the story in the *Colchester Sun*. For more information about the FSSF, please click [here](#).

This marker has been added to our award-winning [Colchester Historical Self-Guided Driving Tour](#).



Left to right, Bonnie Potter, President of the Colchester Historical Society; Laura Trieschmann, Vermont Division of Historic Preservation; and Gene Childers representing the FSSF Association. (Photo by Carol Reichard)



Logo image courtesy of the FSSF Association

Another Busy Summer at Colchester's Historic Log Schoolhouse



Volunteer Jack Penca assists student Forrester DiRiggiero during a fun class about codes and ciphers. (Photo by Michelle Penca)

The summer of 2023 did not disappoint. A total of 1,282 people enjoyed visiting the [Colchester Log Schoolhouse](#), many of whom were local residents who had never seen it before. Others were from all around the United States and several foreign countries.

During the month of June, Michelle and Jack Penca offered fun and educational “Make and Take” classes for children ages seven to ten. The class topics were “Codes and Ciphers,” “Old Time Toys,” and “Math Games.” The students were excited and proud about their new expertise and to take home their projects.

Also this summer, some much-needed repairs and upgrades were made to the Log Schoolhouse building. An anonymous donor generously provided funds to repair water damage, and a new accessible ramp was constructed at the entryway.

Our fabulous host volunteers did a wonderful job of ensuring that the Log Schoolhouse was open each weekend. They will be treated to Carol Reichard's popular “Soup Supper” one evening this fall.

The Log Schoolhouse is located at Airport Park on Colchester Point Road and is open throughout the summer, Fridays – Mondays, 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. This lovely little museum showcases our town's history and heritage. It takes visitors back in time to an early Colchester one-room school, before computers, cell phones, and even before indoor

plumbing! Volunteer hosts are always needed on the summer weekends, and hours are very flexible.



The newly constructed accessible ramp at the Log Schoolhouse entryway. (Photo by Bonnie Potter)

Congratulations to:

◆ [Colchester Lions Club](#), celebrating its 60th anniversary. Lions help meet the needs of local communities every day because they share a core belief -- to serve their community. Founded in 1917, Lions Club International is best known for fighting blindness, but members also volunteer for many different kinds of community projects, including caring for the environment, feeding the hungry, and aiding seniors and the disabled. To learn more about how they help Colchester, please visit their [Facebook](#) page.

◆ [Mike's Auto Parts](#), celebrating its 35th anniversary. This locally owned and operated business first opened on September 12, 1988, and has been in business ever since. Located at 794 West Lakeshore Drive, Mike's Auto Parts is proud to serve the Colchester community. The business generously supports several local worthwhile causes, including, of course, the Colchester Historical Society.

◆ [Vermont Nut Free Chocolates](#), celebrating its 25th anniversary. Started by the mother of a boy with a life-threatening allergy, Vermont Nut Free Chocolates has been providing gourmet quality confections since 1998. The company is committed

to providing quality chocolates and safe treats for those with tree nut and peanut allergies.

The Vermont Nut Free Chocolates' factory is located at 146 Brentwood Drive. Its facility includes multiple candy kitchens, a warehouse, and a factory storefront. A couple of years ago, the owners gave a presentation to our members about the history of chocolate-making and their business. They even brought along some tasty product samples for us to try.

It's the Largest – But is it the Oldest?



Colchester is home to Vermont's largest tree, but is it the oldest? Well, no one knows for sure, but it surely is part of our historical landscape. It's an Eastern Cottonwood, and the [Vermont Big Tree Program](#) has been monitoring the tree since 1984. This photo, taken with Tree Warden Kris Dulmer, provides an inkling of its scale. This story recently was featured on WCAX's *Across the Fence* program. If you missed it, view it [here](#). (Photo courtesy of Gwen Kozlowski, Vermont Urban and Community Forestry Program)

Dues Are Now Due



If you're already a member of the Colchester Historical Society, please know it's time to renew your membership. If you're not yet a member, now is the time to join. Everyone is welcome. Annual fees are only \$15 per person and \$25 per family. Membership fees and donations help support our mission in the

work we do to share Colchester's wonderful local history. Please see our membership form [here](#).

Recent Acquisitions



Thank you to James Osborne for sharing several digital photographs of former Camp Tara located on Thayer Beach Road. James served as the residential summer camp director for 20 years.



Also, thank you to Jace Sheppard for sharing several digital photographs of the former Camp Holy Cross. Jace is a local citizen who attended the camp as a youngster for several years. This building served as the chapel.

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 over 1,250 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 2023-2024

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