



Newsletter

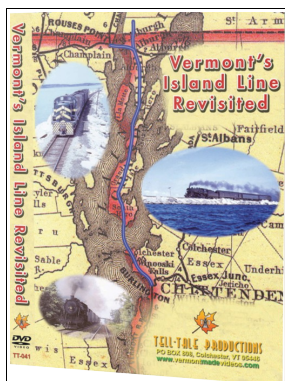
Colchester Vermont Historical Society

Spring 2024

Upcoming Programs and Events

Here are our spring/summer upcoming programs. 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:

◆ **April 15, 7 p.m. at the Meeting House, 830 Main Street** – The Past and Present of the Rutland Railway's Island Line through historic photos presented by James "Jim" Jones. Signed copies of his book will be available for sale.



◆ **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.** – Barbecue and Annual Meeting for members and special guests. Please visit the [activity calendar](#) on our website for more details and updates as plans develop.

Recent Programs:

◆ We hosted a Colchester History Trivia Game in January, first via videoconferencing, followed by paper copies made available at the town clerk's office and at the Burnham Memorial Library. It's also available on our website. See the questions [here](#) and the answers [here](#).

◆ Our February program featured the history of firefighting in Colchester. Clark Sweeney and Colby Delaire shared some amazing photos and stories. To learn more about the Colchester Fire Department, click [here](#). This photo is from 1956, the department's early days.



Standing, left to right: Douglas Wright, unknown, George Magoon, Moulton Clark, Ray White, unknown, Luther Heath, Robert Montgomery, and Alwyn Button. Front row, left to right: unknown, Earl Martin, Marcus Washburn, Howard Smith, Bud Monta, Edmund Stowe, and Gerald Sweeney. (Photo courtesy of Colby Delaire)

◆ March was Women's History Month. Members and guests enjoyed a fascinating presentation by Jack Penca entitled "The Treatment of Women by the Legal System." His examples and stories inspired memories and experiences of our own. Ella Ruehsen of the *Colchester Sun* attended the presentation and published a nice article about it [here](#).

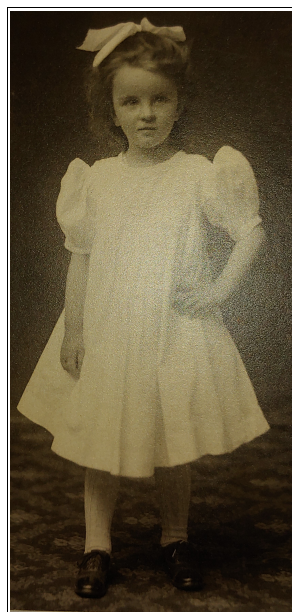


Jack Penca presented information about historical firsts and a timeline pertaining to American women and the law throughout history.

Remembering Dr. Ruth Etta Wright

This Women's History Month, the Colchester Historical Society was proud to honor and remember Dr. Ruth Etta Wright. Ruth was the author of *Colchester Vermont*

From Ice-Cap to Interstate (Bicentennial Edition, Queen City Printers, 1963), a valuable and detailed history book about the Town of Colchester.



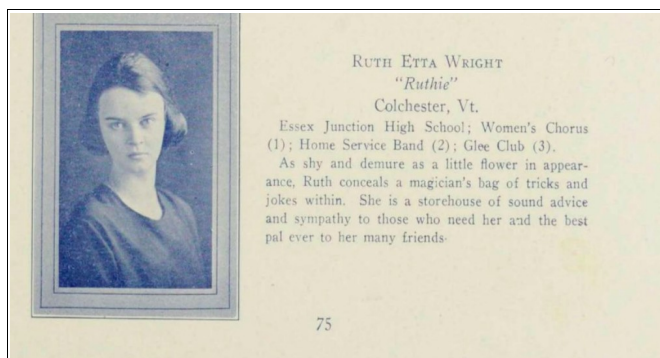
*Ruth E. Wright
as a child*

Ruth was born here in Colchester, daughter of Rolla and Della (Cook) Wright. She attended Essex Junction High School, then graduated from Middlebury College in 1923 with a Bachelor of Arts degree. She received a master's degree from Columbia University in 1929 and a professional doctorate from American University in Washington D.C. in 1933.

"Dr. Wright led an interesting life and certainly served our town well," said Bonnie Potter, president of the Colchester Historical Society, "and her book continues to be a very important tool for local historians. It's definitely our go-to resource for



Dr. Ruth E. Wright (1903-1971)



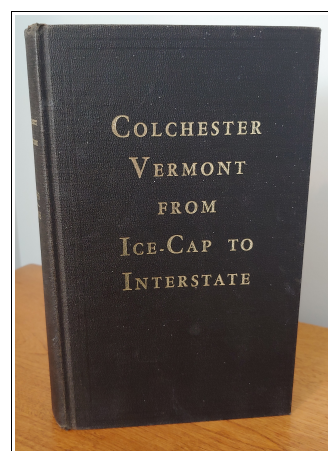
Yearbook entry, courtesy of Middlebury College

Ruth taught at the University of Vermont, 1923-1924; then in 1927, she became a research instructor for the U.S. government in Washington, D.C. From 1936-1940 she worked as a law clerk for a Burlington firm.

Ruth served Colchester in many capacities. She was town auditor from 1933-1969 and a member of Opportunity Circle, King's Daughters, and the Vermont Library Association. She belonged to the Colchester United Church and the Colchester Grange. Ruth served as a Vermont legislator for Colchester in 1943, 1947, and 1951. She served as a library trustee for 25 years and was treasurer of the Cemetery Association for many years.

Ruth passed away in 1971 at her Colchester home at the age of 68 and is buried in the Colchester Village Cemetery.

information about the town's history that, many times, is not detailed in such a comprehensive manner anywhere else. We are extremely grateful for her energy and efforts in researching, collecting, and recording the information in this valuable historical publication; otherwise, it may have been lost, possibly forever."



Now out-of-print and considered rare, a few copies of Ruth Wright's book are available for sale (\$50) at the town clerk's office and at the Burnham Memorial

Library. All proceeds from these sales benefit the Colchester Historical Society.

For more information about *Ice-Cap to Interstate* and its indexes, please visit the Colchester Historical Society's [website](#).

The Colchester Historical Society plans to nominate Dr. Wright for inclusion in the Vermont Women's History Database administered by the Vermont Historical Society.

This History Mystery Has Been Solved

Thanks to the research efforts of Historical Society member Lisa Halvorsen and Facebook follower Louis Mossey, III, the mystery of this amazing photograph has been solved. They discovered this event was a fun-loving baseball competition held at Thompson's Point in June 1919 between hack drivers and taxi drivers. The hackmen won the game with a score of 14 to 4. Additional athletic events provided entertainment for the 200-300 observers, and small cash prizes were awarded.



The event was captured on film by Burlington photographer L. L. McAllister. He was well-known for his panoramic photographs of teams, classes, clubs, family portraits, and construction projects.

The photograph in its original frame has been carefully restored and is now on display at the Historical Society's Parsonage building.

Congratulations!

[Dick Mazza's General Store](#) is celebrating its 70th year in business. It's been family-owned and operated since 1954. Local folks and visitors know it as the go-to place to stop for groceries, beverages, newspapers, lunches, snacks, Vermont products, even toys – and especially their pies.

In case you missed his presentation to the Historical Society in November of 2022, watch it [here](#).



*Dick Mazza's General Store established in 1954
(Photo courtesy of Dick Mazza)*

Log Schoolhouse Hosts Needed



The [Log Schoolhouse](#) (circa 1815) is located at Airport Park and is open throughout the summer, Fridays – Mondays, 10 a.m.–2 p.m. It is one of Colchester's oldest-known structures in Malletts Bay.

This lovely little building today functions as a visitor information center as well as a museum. It showcases our town's history and takes visitors back in time to an early one-room school, before computers, cell phones, and even indoor plumbing.

Volunteer hosts are always needed, and hours are very flexible. For more information or to volunteer, please contact Carol Reichard at winchris65@comcast.

Happy Birthday, Dear Parsonage

This year marks the 125th birthday of the Parsonage in Colchester Village. Built in 1899, this lovely house was affiliated with the building next door, which was then the Baptist Church, and is now known as the Meeting House. Over the years, the Parsonage served as the residence for several pastors and their families. A small barn and simple horse stables originally stood in the backyard area. Today, this lovely building serves as a museum and office for the Colchester Historical Society.



To view a virtual tour of the Parsonage, please visit [this article and photographs](#) recently published by Ella Ruehsen in the *Colchester Sun*. Personal tours of the Parsonage are available by appointment; simply contact any member of the Historical Society's board of directors to make arrangements.

Recent Acquisition

The Colchester Historical Society was excited and proud to accept a recent donation from the Colchester Fire Department. Colby Delaire delivered this wonderful vintage firefighting attire and spoke with members of our leadership team about it. This new acquisition is now on display at the Parsonage.

The coat, circa 1950-1960, is made of rubber material. The heavy leather helmet was made by Cairns & Brothers of Clifton, New Jersey. The pewter badge was handcrafted by long-time Colchester Village Fire Chief Edmund Stowe. It reads "Colchester Center VFC."

Thank you, Colchester Fire Department, for all you do for this community, and for this wonderful donation to our historical collection.



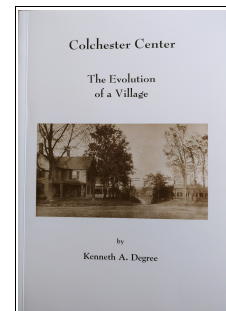
Historical Society president Bonnie Potter gratefully accepted this vintage local firefighting attire from Colby Delaire who served 24 years with the Colchester Fire Department.

In Memoriam

Ken Degree, author of *Colchester Center: The Evolution of a Village* (Queen City Printers, Inc. 2000) and past president of the Colchester Historical Society, passed away January 14, 2024. His full obituary can be found [here](#).



*Kenneth Allen Degree
(1957–2024)*



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 1,300 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: Jack Penca
Treasurer/Director/Webmaster: Bob Furst
Secretary: Pat Carman
Director: Carol Reichard
Newsletter and Facebook page by Bonnie Potter