



# Newsletter

Colchester Vermont Historical Society

Summer 2024

## Visit the Historic Log Schoolhouse This Summer



*Colchester's historic Log Schoolhouse (circa 1815)*

**Open all summer until Labor Day:  
Fridays – Mondays  
10 a.m. - 2 p.m.**

**Airport Park, 500 Colchester Point Road  
Free parking and admission**



The Colchester Log Schoolhouse is a lovely museum and information center for visitors of all ages. Enjoy a step back in time to the early days of education in the time before cellphones and computers.

Volunteer hosts are needed, and hours are very flexible. This is a great opportunity to enjoy and share part of Colchester's wonderful local history. Because it's located at Airport Park near the recreation path, you'll meet people from around the United States and the world. For more information and to volunteer, please reach out to Carol Reichard at [winchris65@comcast.net](mailto:winchris65@comcast.net).

## Recent Programs:



◆ To a packed room at the Meeting House in April, James "Jim" Jones spoke about the days of the **Rutland Railway's Island Line** that ran on the Colchester Causeway and up through to Alburgh. A life-long railroad enthusiast, Jim displayed an amazing collection of railroad photos and shared some great stories. Click [here](#) to visit his website. Jim has promised to return in April 2025 to present a program about early trolleys in our area. Stay tuned.

◆ "How Our Gardens Nurture Us" presenter Michelle Penca spoke to us about plants that were commonly found in old gardens and how their lore and history can be incorporated into our own gardens today. It was a lovely and well-received program.



*Blue iris (Photo courtesy of Michelle Penca)*

◆ The theme for our barbecue and annual meeting in June was "Happy Birthday, Dear Parsonage" as we celebrated the lovely historic building that serves as a museum and offices for the Colchester Historical Society. Located in Colchester Village, it was built in 1899 and served originally as the parsonage for the Baptist Church next door (now known as the Meeting



House). “Chef” Curt Taylor grilled the hot dogs and hamburgers, and other Historical Society members provided side dishes and beverages. We all enjoyed a lovely and delicious ice cream birthday cake donated by The Village Scoop, located in another historical building just down the street. The annual meeting consisted of committee reports, discussion of possible future programs, and the election of officers to our leadership team.



*The Parsonage back then, and more recently*



## Walkway Improvements at the Parsonage



*The uneven brick walkways were replaced this spring. These new concrete walkways help ensure a safer, more accessible entry to the Parsonage.*

## Recent Acquisitions

From the Colchester Fire Department station in the village, we recently received five large bins of historical documents and photographs, as well as the sign once posted on the original firehouse (now the Colchester Food Shelf).

We are eager for our volunteers to sort through and organize the records, videos, and photographs for historical safe-keeping.

Our membership hopes to soon visit both firehouses – the one in the village and the one in the Bay – to view additional items and to learn more about Colchester Fire Department's historical past.

## Thank You, Volunteers



*(photo courtesy of Pat Carman)*

◆ Volunteers Pat Carman and Michelle Penca selected and planted the beautiful flowers around our sign and around the Parsonage this spring. Additional volunteers will be helping throughout the summer and autumn months to keep the gardens watered, weeded, and deadheaded.

◆ Volunteers Inge Schaefer and Jack Penca represented the Colchester Historical Society at an event on June 2 with the Essex Community Historical Society. They enjoyed the opportunity to meet several visitors and to exchange experiences and ideas with other local historical society volunteers.

Since so many of local towns were chartered in June 1763, the theme of the event was “Happy 261st Birthday to Us.” And, there was cake.





*Jack Penca, vice president of the Colchester Historical Society, and Inge Schaefer, author of two Colchester history books and many articles, set up and hosted this informational table at the Essex event. (Photo courtesy of Ann Gray, Essex Community Historical Society)*

## CMS Students Study Local History

On June 11 and 12, Colchester Middle School hosted "CMS Days" featuring short courses that are outside of the school's regular curriculum. Several students signed up for "Do you know Colchester?" led by school librarian Rebecca Sofferman, and they delved into some of Colchester's local history.

The students began the first day with an educational tour of the Parsonage with Bonnie Potter, president of the Colchester Historical Society, and learned how the Parsonage was used and how it related to the church next door and the Colchester community.



*These CMS students examined the details of this vintage photograph to discuss and determine the subject of the picture.*

Afterwards, the students visited the Burnham Memorial Library for an introductory class with Meg Malone, young adult services and inter-library loan librarian, about genealogy research. Following a picnic lunch break, they toured the Colchester Village Cemetery with town clerk/treasurer Julie Graeter and learned how to clean stone memorials.

On the following day, the students visited Colchester's historic Log Schoolhouse with Historical Society volunteer Michelle Penca and participated in some educational games and history trivia. Then they headed out on their bicycles to the Colchester Causeway for a lovely day of riding and learning about the Island Line Railroad.

"When asked to reflect on their experiences, several students said their favorite part was visiting the cemeteries," said Ms. Sofferman. "They are actually eager to borrow kits from the town clerk to clean more headstones in Colchester with their families," she added.



*Rebecca Sofferman, second from right, discussed information about the Colchester Log Schoolhouse with the CMS students. (photos courtesy of Rebecca Sofferman)*

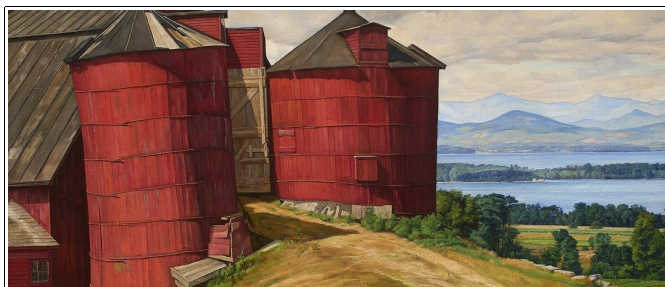


*Two of the students had fun looking at reading selections from the early days of education. (photo courtesy of Michelle Penca)*

## "For the Love of Vermont" Exhibition

The Vermont Historical Society is excited to present a major exhibition of paintings, prints, and drawings titled "For the Love of Vermont: The Lyman Orton Collection." It is a selection from the largest private collection of 20th-century artwork by Vermont artists, collected over the past 45 years by Lyman Orton, best known as the proprietor of The Vermont Country Store.

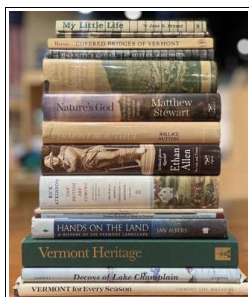
The artwork will be displayed at the Vermont History Museum at 109 State Street in Montpelier from early July through the end of this year, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. To celebrate the opening of this exhibition, admission to the Vermont History Museum in Montpelier will be by donation.



*"Pillars of Vermont" by Luigi Lucioni  
(image courtesy of the Vermont Historical Society)*

This remarkable exhibition at the Pavilion Building is the first showing of works from The Orton Collection in central Vermont. Co-curated by the Vermont Historical Society, Lyman Orton, and Donnel Barnum, who is the curator of The Lyman Orton Collection, "For the Love of Vermont" features more than 80 works of Vermont scenes created between 1910 and 1970. Among the 50 artists in the exhibition are Luigi Lucioni, Walton Blodgett, Francis Colburn, Cecil Bell, Rockwell Kent, Emile Gruppe, Ruth Mould, Mitzi Goward, and Paul Sample.

## Summer Reading Recommendations

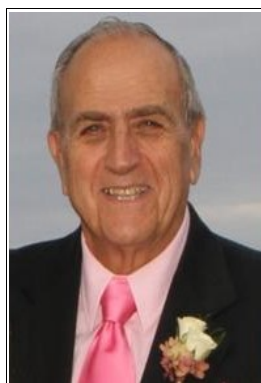


Get some bargain prices on used books about Vermont's history, including books about the his-

tory of Ethan Allen, the American Revolution, and quite a few more. Take a look at what the Vermont Historical Society has available [here](#). (image courtesy of the Vermont Historical Society)

And, just a reminder that, locally, books about Colchester's history may be purchased at the Burnham Memorial Library or at the Town Clerk's Office.

## In Memoriam



*(photo courtesy of the Mazza family)*

Flags were flown at half mast on May 30 in honor of **Richard Mazza** who passed away on May 25. Dick was a well-known and beloved local family man, store owner, and state senator, as well as a generous supporter of several Colchester organizations, including the Colchester Historical Society. He will forever be an important part of our town's memory and history and will be sorely missed. See his full obituary [here](#).

In November 2022, Dick spoke to our group about his life. View the video [here](#).

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## 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 1,370 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 2024-2025

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