SPRING/SUMMER 2026

# Heritage Colchester

**A non-profit organization dedicated to perserving the historical past of Colchester Centre**

**Heritage Colchester 195 Bagot St., Colchester, Ontario @heritagecolchester**

## A message from our President...

What a wonderful time to be a member of this wonderful group of people. We have just held our first in-person Heritage Week event, which has been described as a Living Museum by the Harrow News! We enjoyed sharing the stories of some of the people who helped shape Colchester in the past. We are looking for more people to help tell stories from the past, so if you love history and reenacting let us know. This year we will be hosting another Jane's Walk in April and our annual Colchester Markets will be back. Watch for announcements about our Summer Theatre. We've got an exciting year ahead!

We are always looking for photos and stories of the schoolhouse and have an archive of photos that are on our Facebook page under Albums. Our newest album is Historic Homes of Colchester. If you have before and after pics of a historic home please let us know. We would love to see your photos and hear your stories. I hope you join us, as either a visitor or new member.

**Thank you, Monica Carruthers**

## UPCOMING EVENTS

- **JANE'S WALK**
  **April 25 @ 9am**
- **STAYCATION EVENT**
  **April 24, 25**
- **CHIMNEY SWIFT COUNT**
  **May 16, 20, 24, 28 June 1st**
- **COLCHESTER VILLAGE COUNTRY MARKETS**
  **June 20, July 18, Aug 15, Sept 19**
- **SUMMER THEATRE**
  **July 16-19 & July 23-26**

**FOLLOW US on INSTAGRAM @heritagecolchester**



**Check out our newest historical addition!**

**A 1930s vintage teacher's desk and chair, a beautifully preserved piece of educational history, now graces our schoolhouse.**

**Read the full story on page 3**

## SAVE THE DATE

**ANNUAL GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING**
**MAY 13, 2026 @ 7pm**

Your continued support through membership dues is greatly appreciated.

**MEMBERSHIP DUES:**
**$20.00 Individual- Voting Right**
**$150.00 Lifetime- Voting Right**
**STUDENTS - FREE**

DUES CAN BE **PAID BY ETRANSFER**:
**treasurer.heritagecolchester@gmail.com**
OR **CHEQUE** PAYABLE TO "HERITAGE COLCHESTER"
Mail or drop off: 51 Sullivan Street, Harrow, Ontario N0R 1G0

WORK IN PROGRESS

WEBSITE UNDER CONSTRUCTION

**We thank you for your patience as we continue to enhance and improve our website. Stay tuned for more improvents as this project progresses.**

**New Members WELCOME**

# ONCE UPON A TIME IN COLCHESTER

Submitted by: Randy Cyr

Christ Church parish hall was the host location for 'Once Upon a Time in Colchester' on February 21st. The event displayed photographs and artifacts, featuring Heritage Colchester members dressed as notable characters from the village's past as narrators.

The afternoon also hosted Sandra Ellis, the local artist who created the water colour of the Schoolhouse and Church. Anne Marontate assumed the role of Mrs. Knapp, the Lighthouse-keeper's wife, Randy Cyr was Reverend Richard Pollard, Jenn Ridsdale was Miss Mildred Fotheringham teacher of the class of 1928 and Monica Carruthers was Forrest Toffelmire - (see article). And our own Sandra McKee was on hand to answer any other questions of a historical nature.

The event was part of the Town of Essex Heritage Week.

# Jane's Walk

Submitted by: Randy Cyr

Jane's Walk 2026....is named after Jane Jacobs, (1916 - 2006), an urban activist who championed communities v/s suburbs. Jane's Walks are volunteer-led excursions held in over 500 cities around the world on 6 continents. Heritage Colchester has been a proud participant, this our fourth year on Saturday, April 25th at 9:00 AM.

The tour of historic Colchester includes the waterfront, history of the lighthouse, harbour, Churchyard, Chapel, past and present Christ Churches, and SS#1 Schoolhouse.

Guest appearances include Mrs. John Knapp, the lonely lighthouse-keeper's wife, Reverend Richard Pollard, Miss Mildred Fotheringham, teacher of the class of 1928, James Bell, the school inspector and for the first time, Forrest Toffelmire, caretaker of the Church and Schoolhouse.

Since 2006, Jane's Walks are held the same weekend in her honour - we even share the weekend with Colchester England!

# Visit us at.....

## **Staycation Expo**, Windsor - Essex

## 24 - 25 April, Devonshire Mall

3100 Howard Avenue, Windsor

Tourism Windsor Essex Pelee Island

Discover amazing things to do in your own backyard this summer, sample local beverages, shop local artisans, and even get a chance to WIN a Devonshire Mall shopping spree!




# A "Swift" evening

The Chimney Swift is an amazing bird that can fly up to 8000 feet altitude and consume up to 1000 insects a day. It migrates between South and North American locations in spring and fall. Relying on old-growth hollow tree trunks or chimneys, some have chosen that of our schoolhouse to roost and make their nests.

Protected under Federal and Provincial Endangered Legislation, we are pleased to host, behold and record the spectacle of their spring migration. At dusk, these small, fast-flying birds congregate around the chimney, swirling in circular flight and literally pour down the opening - an amazing sight to behold.

Join us for the annual 'count', roughly 1/2 hour prior to sunset. Official count dates are May 16, 20, 24 28 and June 1. **This event is free and family -friendly - everyone is welcome.**

Submitted by: Randy Cyr



# Next on the calendar...

## Colchester Village Country Markets




## SPRING/SUMMER 2026 Summer Theatre




### The Teacher's Desk and Chair - continued from Page 1

In late November of 2025 Heritage Colchester was contacted by Mr. D. Fretter, whose late wife is Pamela Tofflemire Fretter. He explained that he had a teacher's desk and chair that were original to the schoolhouse dating back to the early 1930s. He wondered if we would like to have them for the schoolhouse and we were very eager to have them 'come home'.

The desk was 'rescued', we estimate, in the mid 1930's when the SS#2 was to get a new teacher's desk and chair. Albert Tofflemire (1855-1930) of Colchester was the caretaker at Christ Church, Erie Cemetery and often did maintenance at the schoolhouse for many years.

Albert taught his son, Forrest Henry Tofflemire (1887-1984), the ways of woodworking and fixing things, and he also did some maintenance work on the schoolhouse from time to time. As the story was told, he was asked to take the desk and chair out of the schoolhouse to make way for the new ones. The desk and chair were moved to the Tofflemire house at the corner of Bagot and County Road 50, the Colchester Front, where they remained until 1984. Forrest Tofflemire inherited his father's house (including the desk and chair) when his father passed. The Tofflemire house still stands on that corner.

The desk is called The Arnold 3-in-1 Library Table manufactured by the Auglaize Furniture Co. in New Bremen, Ohio. The table was introduced prior to WWI in the mid to late 1915 era and out of production by the end of the War era (1919).

It is called a 3-in-1 because it is a table and also has bookcases on the sides and a unique drawer system that pulls out into an organizing system with a pop-up design. This was designed and patented by Herman Lietz who was employed as the superintendent at the Auglaize Furniture Co.

The chair is from the Sikes Co. Inc. of Buffalo N.Y. and built during the same period as the desk. It is a banker's chair. Both pieces are of the Mission/Arts and Crafts movement, know for its emphasis on simple lines, sturdy construction and integrity. Now they sit, in their original place, on the teacher's walk at the schoolhouse.

Submitted by: Monica Carruthers

### Do you love local history?

Do you have any skills or knowledge about heritage projects? Would you like to join a very enthusiastic group of people who are working to share the story of SS#2, our beautiful one room schoolhouse and restore it to it's 1881 glory? We need more hands and minds working together. Please consider becoming a member. Contact us at **membership.heritagecolchester@gmail.com**

## We are a Registered Charity

As a registered charity we can offer tax receipts for any donations over $20. If you are looking to make a donationation in memory of a loved one, make a legacy donation, corporate donation or just looking to support our project, please send an email to **heritage.colchester@gmail.com**

# HERITAGE COLCHESTER : BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Each year during Black History month, Heritage Colchester highlights an individual in the Colchester/Harrow area of African-Canadian heritage. In our community, over the years, many wonderful individuals and families have been profiled and shared within the community.

This year we clebrate a long time resident of Colchester, Mr. Bill Harris. Bill has lived on Sullivan Street in Colchester for years. Calling the little yellow house next to the Wreck at Colchester Harbour home.

Father of six children, Grandfather, Great Grandfather, a widower twice; Linda (Taylor) and Norma “the Newfie” his second wife and a colourful character passed some ten years ago and is missed by our community. Sadly Bill also lost a son Tim in July 2023.

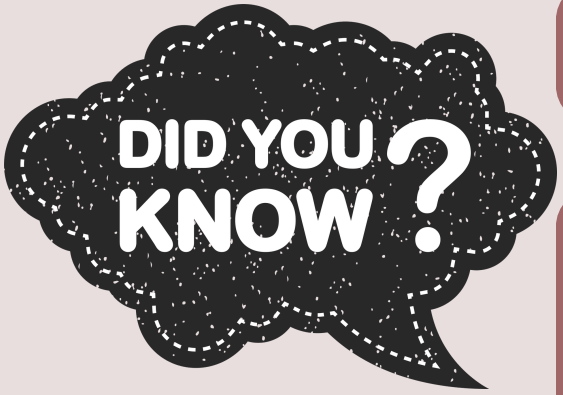
Due to turn 84 in July, Bill remembers attending the Colchester school from Grade 3 to Grade 8. He then moved away with his family from the Colchester/Harrow area and graduated High School in the Toronto Metro Area.

Bill worked in several factories and industrial facilities over the years in the Southern Ontario area, Metro Toronto, Cambridge, Windsor. His area of expertise was operating a forklift with great dexterity and skill. He was the “go to” guy in those warehouse/loading dock situations that called for care and expertise.

If one strolls down Sullivan Street in Colchester, one can find a 1966 Ford Thunderbird in mint condition parked in his driveway. It is Bill’s pride and joy. In good weather he can be found under the shade of his umbrella enjoying the view and warm breeze of Lake Erie.

Submitted by: Andrew Fanta




**New Vendors are always welcome at our Markets**
**Contact us at colchestermarkets@gmail.com**

**Historic Walking Tours during take place during our summer market. Tour times to be determined.**
**Be sure to step inside and explore the historic Schoolhouse while you’re there.**

**Join our group -**
**where a great cause brings great people together**

