



Middletown Springs Historical Society NEWSLETTER

Vol. 35, No. 1

Celebrating Our Thirty-Fifth Year

March 2004

School Project Will Recreate 1904

Middletown Springs Elementary School students will research and recreate a pivotal period in the history of their town in this year's Living History program. In 1904 the new schoolhouse was being built (although students did not move in until the following spring), and at a ceremony on Memorial Day of that year, the gift of a

soldier's monument dedicated to veterans of the Civil War was accepted by the townspeople from Middletown Springs native and veteran, Capt. Francis Hoadley.

Middletown Springs students are beginning the third year of a six year cycle of the Living History Project, led by teacher Stuart Edge-Gerroll, Director of the Historical Legacy Project. (An article in the September 2003 issue of the Newsletter explained the program and highlighted last year's project.) Previous year's projects focused on an 1840's one room schoolhouse, and the economy of Middletown in the 1860's.

The early years of the 20th Century saw the end of an economic boom that had begun in the 1850's with the expansion of A.W. Gray's agricultural machinery factory and the development of the mineral springs, including the bottling of the water and construction of the Montvert Hotel resort in 1871. By 1904 the Montvert was about to close for good and Gray factory would produce horsepower treadmill, threshers, wood saws, and 'one-lung-er' gasoline engines for only another 13 years. Dairy farming, however, would remain strong for the next several decades.

In this year's Living History project beginning in late March, students will do historical research using newspapers on microfilm, photographs and other printed sources from the period, diaries and journals and oral history interviews with elders.



Students in grades k-3 will prepare exhibits on specific topics, like how the buildings around the town green looked in 1904, with community members and older students as coaches. Students in grades 4-6 will prepare documentaries, using Power Point and I-movie software, that tell historical fiction narratives about the lives of specific

Middletown Springs characters from 1904 through the 1930's. Workshops in drama, music and dance will help students prepare for the culmination of the project, a presentation to the public on Tuesday, May 25. Volunteers from the community, many of them Historical Society members, will be actively involved in all phases of the project.

Activities during the public presentation day, May 25, will include a re-creation of the 1905 ceremony where students walked from the old school building near the Mineral Springs Park to the new building on the hill. Later, a parade will lead to the cemetery where homemade hemlock wreaths will be laid on soldiers' graves. After a luncheon of period-inspired food and a time for old-fashioned summer games, the Soldiers Monument dedication ceremony will re-created, featuring poems and oratory from the original ceremony. Later a baseball game in period costume will pit a Middletown nine against an arch rival team. Other activities may include a dinner, a band concert and a dance. Exhibits prepared by the students will be on display all day in various town locations. Student re-enactors will also participate in Middletown Springs Memorial Day on the following Sunday, May 30. Contact Stuart at edgegerrol@aol.com.

Work on the 2004 Living History project will culminate with production of a Centennial Book to record the achievements of the students and community members who take part.

Grant Workshops Offer an Invitation to Participate

The Society is poised for a great leap forward in the care of its collection this summer when the process of returning the artifacts to the newly renovated Museum Storage Room begins. In a series of collections care workshops funded by a recent NEH grant (see article below) volunteers will learn how to prepare various types of objects for long term storage in the best possible environments.

For example, clothing and textiles will be carefully vacuumed, folded in acid free tissue paper and placed in modular acid free boxes that are systematically labeled and placed on custom made shelving. Large items might be hung on specially made padded hangers and covered with linen or tivek dust covers. A quilt, for instance, would be rolled on an acid free cylinder, covered with a dust cover and placed on a purpose-built rack.

Similar specialized treatment will be taught for

books, paper and photographic items, three dimensional objects (tools, furniture, glassware and ceramics, etc.), paintings and other two dimensional artworks. Fragile items and artifacts in poor condition might have supportive containers made for them—a custom made acid free box or folder for a diary with a broken binding, for instance.

An important part of the conservation process will be the photographing and accessioning of every object in the collection as it is processed and returned to its place in storage. Only a fraction of the entire collection will be completed in the course of the workshop. The Trustees hope that a core group will be inspired to continue the project over the following months and see the project through to completion.

The workshops will be an extraordinary opportunity for anyone with a personal collection of family artifacts or collectibles to learn the best, inexpensive ways to store and conserve just about anything—family photos, a wedding dress, great grandmother's quilt or hand woven shawl.

We hope many of our members and friends will come forward to learn and to help the Society.

Historical Society Awarded Another NEH Grant

Trustees learned in late December that the Society has received a 2003 Preservation Assistance grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities for \$5,000 for collections care, including a workshop in the Summer of 2004 which will train volunteers in conserving and re-housing artifacts as part of the process of returning them to the newly renovated Museum Storage Room.

The award is a follow-up to the 2002 NEH Preservation Assistance Grant of \$4,870 to construct storage shelves and other furnishings as part of the \$12,000 renovation of the Museum Storage Room.

The workshops, to be led by a professional conservator from the Vermont Collections Care Program (VCCP) of the Vermont Museum and Gallery Alliance (VMGA), will be scheduled for this summer. Historical Society members as well as others in the community are invited to participate in the training, which will involve working with actual objects in the Historical Society collection. Also to be invited are members of other local historical societies interested in learning conservation techniques relevant to their own collections.

A portion of the grant award will fund installation of digital equipment to monitor and record temperature and humidity in different areas of the Historical Society building. Data will stored and later downloaded to a computer with software capable of generating graphs and tables that show the history of climate conditions in areas where

artifacts are displayed or stored. Information thus collected will be used to manage storage conditions and locations for various types of artifacts.

Only two other 2003 Preservation Assistance Grants were awarded in Vermont—one to the Precision Museum in Windsor, the other to the Calvin Coolidge Memorial Foundation in Plymouth. Society President David Wright acknowledged important assistance and encouragement from MJ Davis, VCCP Director, in writing the grant.



Emmett Francois

The porte cochere entrance to the Historical Society building received a new slate roof with copper flashing in November, thanks to the generous donation of five squares of slate by a local slate dealer who prefers to remain anonymous. Goldenbrook Construction of Poultney installed the slate. Society Trustees had stripped off the old asphalt shingles and applied a waterproof underlayment, donated by Scott Fontaine.

Many Thanks To These Annual Fund Donors

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Antiques Discovery Workshop



Emmett Francois

Among the highlights of the 8th Annual Antiques Discovery Workshop on January 17 was a set of doll clothing in

the original box. Also, a framed painting found in the basement of a newly purchased home was valued at between \$5,000 to \$20,000.

2004 EVENTS

Sunday, March 21	Maple Festival
Sunday, May 30	Memorial Day Parade
Sunday, June 20	Strawberry Festival
Sunday, Sept. 19	Annual Meeting
Sunday, Oct. TBA	A Fall Event

In Memoriam

BEATRICE C. GRAY, 85, died January 25 in Ticonderoga, New York. She was born in Arlington, New Jersey and was graduated from Tenafly High School. She attended the School of Business Practice and Speech, Pace Institute, and Columbia University, all of New York City.



Bea married Durand "Bill" Gray in 1945. He was the grandson of William S. Gray whose farmhouse on Spruce Knob Road is now owned by Karen and Kevin Rooney. Bill died in 1966.

Bea was a licensed insurance solicitor in New Jersey and owned Gray Typing Service. The Grays served as house parents on the Winnebago Indian Reservation in Nebraska for several years.

Bea retired to Schroon Lake, N. Y., where she served as a certified New York State ombudsman, assigned to a Ticonderoga, N. Y. nursing home. She also served on the Aging Services Committee of the New York State Office of Aging, and on the Advisory Council of Essex County Office for the Aging; the Council of Retired Seniors Volunteer Program; and as Client Representative on the Board of the North Country Legal Services.

Bea Gray was a member of the Middletown Springs Historical Society for many years and took an active interest in the town of her husband's ancestors.

Survivors include Durand Gray and family of Phoenix, Ariz.; Robert Gray and family of Pottersville, N.Y.; Harry Gray and family of Lemars, Iowa; and Deborah Hope Gray and family of Hinton, Iowa.

AVIS SWINYER, 88, died February 11 in Salt Lake City, Utah. She was a registered nurse who worked with her husband, Dr. Emory J. Swinyer, in his medical practice in Poultney for many years. The Swinyers made their home and saw patients in the historic Merritt Clark house, which was later the Stone Bridge Inn, in Poultney. The Town of Poultney acquired the building after a disastrous fire and intends to restore it for public use.

Mrs. Swinyer was active in the Poultney Women's Club and was a Red Cross volunteer for more than 50 years. Dr. Swinyer died in April 2003. Dr. and Mrs. Swinyer are survived by two sons, Leonard of Salt Lake City and Bruce of Bakersfield, Calif.; a daughter, Elaine Swinyer of San Francisco, Calif.; five grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

The Swinyers were long-time members of the Historical Society.

Membership Information

Membership dues for 2004 were due in January.
Check your mailing label for current status.

Dues (Check one):

Individual	\$8.00	Contributing	\$25.00
Family	\$12.00	Individual Life	\$125.00
Business	\$50.00	Family Life	\$150.00

Send to: Joel Pliner, *Treasurer*
Middletown Springs Historical Society
P.O. Box 1126
Middletown Springs, VT 05757

- Frisbie's *History of Middletown* CD-ROM \$20, post paid.
- Lampshades featuring 12 historic postcard views of Middletown Springs, \$48, plus shipping.
- *Historic Architecture of Middletown Springs* pamphlet, \$3, post paid.
- *Views Through Time: Driving through the Rutland Region* brochure, \$2.50, post paid.
- *A Gem in the Hills*, by Frances Krouse, \$25.00, post paid.

Donations to MSHS, a 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization, are tax deductible.

www.members.tripod.com/MiddletownSpringsHS

Business Members

Thanks to local businesses that have joined MSHS under our "Business" membership category:

Archideck—Sarah Grimm
Estelle Ellis—Business Image, Inc.
William Emberley—Antique Bottles & Collectibles
Green Mountain Timber Frames—Dan McKeen
LaValley Building Supply
Jim Marquis—Antiques Appraiser
Southview Arts—Digital Recording Studio
Stewarts Dairy
Williams Hardware, Poultney—Bob Williams

The MSHS Newsletter is published as many as four times a year for members and friends of the Society. Comments and manuscripts on subjects of interest are encouraged and should be sent c/o David Wright, editor.

Middletown Springs Historical Society
P.O. Box 1126
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Return Service Requested

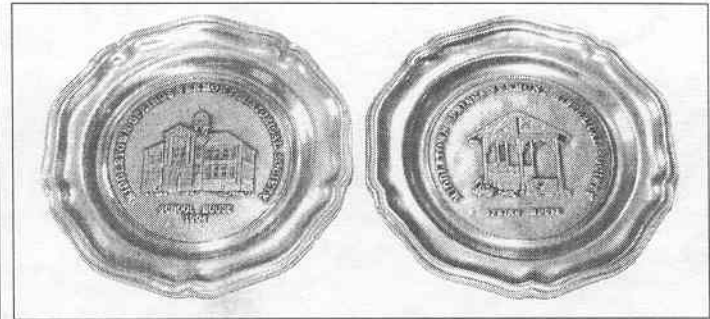
Vermont History Expo 2004

by Jon Mathewson

Once again, the Middletown Springs Historical Society will exhibit at the Vermont History Expo in Tunbridge.

This year's exhibit will be a continuation of the previous two installations, which showed overviews of Middletown history from 1761 - 1811. The new installation will follow the twenty tumultuous years which followed the Flood of 1811, and will give special emphasis to some of the personal journals and business ledgers which survive from that period.

This year's History Expo promises to be the largest one yet, with already 103 exhibitors from around the state signed up. The Expo is hosted by the Vermont Historical Society, and will be at the Tunbridge World's Fair grounds June 26 and 27. The Middletown Springs Historical Society exhibit will be in the Industrial Building.



Pewter Plates for Sale—Produced by the Society as part of a series of five in the 1970's, these two pewter plates commemorating the Middletown Springs School and the Mineral Spring House are available for a \$25 donation each, both for \$45 (including postage).

Welcome! New Members

ANNUAL MEMBER

Diane Rae Schroeder, Long Beach, CA

