



# Middletown Springs Historical Society, Inc.

## Middletown Springs, Vermont 05757

May, 1986

Dear Friends:

Since our last Newsletter we made plans for the entire year, and here is what has happened during the first quarter.

### OUR BUILDING

The first floor has been finished for some time and is in regular use for the Town Office, museum, meeting room, kitchen, and dining room. The latter room has been freshly painted.

### THE SPRINGS PARK

The Mineral Springs Park always has a large number of visitors during the warm months, and much work has been done here. The Springs House has been repainted, new hand rails on the bridge across North Brook, a renewed display case that carries pictures and information about the Springs, the Montvert Hotel, and the Gray Horsepower factory. New park benches will be set up in a few weeks.

The old elm tree near the entrance was dying and had to be cut down. The rings on the stump (almost six feet in diameter) show that the tree was about as old as the town itself!

### MUSIC FESTIVAL

Following the brief Trustee meeting on March 15, the well known musician, Tom MacKensie, put on a delightful program of traditional tunes and songs on the guitar, banjo and hammered dulcimer. The public was invited, and many children attended.

### SHOWCASE IN LIBRARY

With the cooperation of the librarian, Natalie Casco, the Historical Society put a glass case in the town library, where historic objects of interest particularly to children are displayed on a rotating basis. Elsie Norton is in charge for the Society.

Added to the permanent collection in the

museum room this summer is a huge red chemical fire extinguisher mounted for movement on two four-foot wheels. It is of uncertain age, but it became a relic when the local volunteer fire department came into existence. It may have been one of the two that were kept in the Gray Horsepower factory on South Street back in the 1800s

### COMING EVENTS

The annual Strawberry Festival is Sunday, June 29, at 2 p.m. on the Green. A trio from the Vermont Symphony Orchestra will provide a short musical program.

The Historical Society Museum will be open on the 21 Sunday afternoons from 2 to 4 from June 1 through October 19. There will be several special exhibits during the season, including earlier greeting cards, music boxes, gold-headed cane, pressed glass, personal diaries, a button collection, and others still to be scheduled. The next Newsletter will indicate the exact dates.

Memorial Day will be observed as usual this year with a parade and activities on the Green such as a memorial address, the decorated bicycle contest and the presentation of awards for various other tests. As this event occurs just as this issue goes to press, details will come in the next Newsletter.

At the next meeting of the Historical Society Trustees on July 10, a committee headed by Gwen Wilder will submit a list of candidates for new trustees at the annual meeting on Sept. 4. If you have any suggestions for candidates, please get in touch with Gwen Wilder by letter or phone. Her number is 235-2384. Candidates must be Society members...

The annual Flea Market will be held

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Please make checks payable to the M.S. Historical Society and send to Mrs. James Webber, South St, Middletown Springs, VT 05757. The dues are: Individual-\$4; Family-\$5; Contributing-\$10; Sustaining-\$50; and Life-\$100

Name

Address

Zip

Amount

Saturday afternoon, July 19, on the Green. Various organizations will have separate tables to display their offerings. The Historical Society will have at least one table, with Kay Avery, Gwen Wilder, and Elsie Norton assisting. If you have any articles that could be solemo help the Society, please get in touch with one of the above women. Last year the Society cleared over \$200. The Grange is in charge of the whole operation.

Two other dates to keep in mind are the two Sundays, October 19 and December 7, when the Apple Festival occurs in the Historical Society building, and the Christmas in the Park celebration will again have a large gathering of townspeople and visitors to sing carols around a big lighted spruce tree. A special exhibition and refreshments will follow this event.

#### 105th BIRTHDAY ON JUNE 9

In 1881 a youngster was born somewhat immature in Middletown. He weighed one pound 14 ounces. His grandfather, Dr. Oscar F. Thomas, used the only available medical technique to save the tiny infant: he placed him on a pillow in a preheated oven.

William Thomas survived and spent his early life in the period when the A.W. Gray horse-driven treadmill powered the threshers, saws and other farming tools, summer visitors flocked to the Montvert Hotel and partook of the famed Mineral Spring water.

He attended the Middletown school and at

age 9 and 10 he worked part-time at the Montvert making flower bouquets for the lady guests and was pin boy at the bowling alley down the hill toward the Mineral Springs.

As the "carriage trade" gradually dwindled toward the end of the 1800s and the invention of the gasoline engine put an end to the need for horsepowered machinery, the Thomas family moved to New York State, where "Willie" ran a successful dairy farm and carpenter business until he retired at 97 years of age.

He has always treasured the memory of his boyhood days, and each time he comes to Vermont, he says that he takes a deep breath as he crosses the border to "God's Country."

Willie attributes his longevity to a life of hard work and his daily childhood drink of Middletown Springs water. He is now living at the Traverse Community Care Group Home at 7 Allen Terrace, Poultney, VT.

#### MEMBERSHIPS

Many have renewed their Society memberships this year, but there are some that we haven't heard from yet. If so, please use the slip on the other side of the sheet.

To date our membership stands at 186, including 40 Life Members. 30% live in town, 22% in the rest of Vermont, 19% in New York or other New England states, and 28% in all other states

Herbert M. Davison, for the Trustees

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