

Middletown Springs Historical Society NEWSLETTER

Vol. 38, No. 2

September 2007

Middletown Through the Decades

For the sixth year in a row, Jon Mathewson has put together an exhibit showing an overview of Middletown during twenty years. This year's exhibit covered the exciting period from 1872 to 1891.

During those two decades, the A.W. Gray & Sons factory was producing at an all-time high, the Montvert Hotel enlivened summer life in town, and the school system went from a collection of one-room school houses to a single school in the village. Farmers completed the transition from sheep and wool production to cows and milk. Two cheese factories operated in town at the time.

The exhibit is currently on display, along with the exhibits on Middletown's history from 1761- 1891, at the Historical Society.

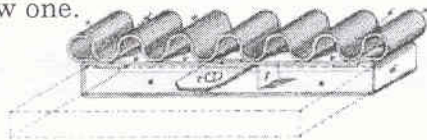
As in the past, Jon has included a timeline with the exhibit, tracing what was happening in each year.

1872

New road proposed from Danby to Poultney, through Middletown.

Voters authorize Selectmen to repair old Town Hearse, or buy a new one.

A. W. Gray patents a "Machine for Corrugating Metal Plates."



1873

The Adams House opens as a hotel on the green.

A.W. Gray & Sons factory changes from water power to steam power.

In a contentious decision, voters drop the School District system in favor of a single village school, but vote to retain the sixteen highway districts.

A.W. Gray patents "Links of Endless Chains for Horse-powers."

1875

April 29: Post Office changes name from "Middletown" to "Middletown Springs."

Ladies Library Association founded.

Voters authorize Selectmen to buy a new hearse for \$250.

Ninety petitioners ask Selectmen to "forbid

the playing of Billiards and all other games," in the Springs Bottling House.

1876

Foreclosure proceedings against the Middletown Springs Company.

Spring Valley Cheese Company opens.

1877

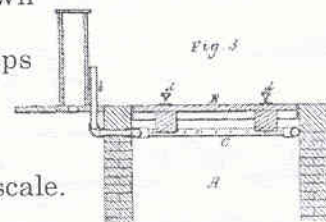
M.E. Vail sells his General Store to Fred Barrett.

Arrest warrant made out against Dr. Oscar F. Thomas for performing an abortion.

School Board purchases Springs Bottling Plant for \$1,200 to serve as the town school.

Croquet craze sweeps town.

Local resident, Hiram T. Lawton, patents improvements to platform scale.



1878

Potato bug devastates crops.

E. Leffingwell opens a tinshop.

"Lightening Rods" installed on many houses and barns by traveling salesmen.

Town votes to return to the School District system.

Montvert Hotel is put up for auction, no one buys it, and it ceases operations.

1879

January 1: Alonzo & Mary Gates arrested for selling "intoxicating liquors" at the Valley Hotel.

Middletown Telegraph Company in operation.

Seven schools in session.

Second Advent Church organized by Elder C. Kingsley.

1880

Middletown Population: 823

Montvert Hotel sold to the Montvert Hotel Co., Ltd., of New York City, and re-opens.

1881

March 15: All three listers resign.

March 28: New listers elected.

(cont. on pg. 3)

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Quite a bit has been going on at the Middletown Springs Historical Society in recent months.

In the Mineral Springs Park, volunteers from the Historical Society and the Middletown Springs Conservation Commission have gathered to pull, yank, and otherwise uproot invasive species. At first we concentrated on garlic mustard, a small aromatic plant that has popped up everywhere, crowding out other wildflowers. Next, we yanked out mounds of honeysuckle from all corners of the Park, sometimes with the help of a special six-foot root wrench, which nearly effortlessly pulls up large rootstock. A good, hardworking time was had by all.

Inside the historic Adams House, volunteers have been repainting the dining room, which serves

as a meeting place for a wide variety of organizations. The last time the room was painted, we believe, was about a quarter of a century ago. As of this writing, the first coat of the new colors have been painted, and oh boy, does it look great.

Many thanks to all who have taken time out of their busy summer schedules to help with these projects.

A good time to see the newly painted room will be at the Annual Meeting, a dessert potluck, on September 23, beginning at 7:00 p.m.

Personally, I can hardly wait for the colder months, when we will concentrate on collections care again!

—Jon Mathewson

Trustees Adopt Mission Statement

A committee of Trustees met in July to discuss the mission of the Society and to draft a Mission Statement. At their August 2nd meeting, the Board of Trustees voted unanimously to adopt the following statement:

The mission of the Middletown Springs Historical Society is to promote the understanding and appreciation of the changing history of Middletown Springs, and to encourage local historic preservation. The Society realizes its mission by researching, interpreting, and publishing facts and stories of the town's history and genealogy; by collecting, conserving, and exhibiting local artifacts; by acquiring and preserving significant historic places; and by engaging the public through educational programs and collaborations with local, state, and national institutions.

The Board will work during the coming year on a long range plan based on the vision expressed in the Mission Statement.

Recent Donations

A wooden churn manufactured by Eugene W. Gray was purchased recently thanks to a donation by Margaret Fowler, earmarked for "acquisition of historic artifacts related to Middletown Springs."

Coming Events

- | | | |
|----------------|------------|---------------------------------------|
| Sun., Sept. 23 | 7 p.m. | Annual Meeting |
| Sun., Oct. 21 | 1 – 4 p.m. | Museum Open House & Donor Celebration |

In Memoriam

MARY D. GETTEL, 93, died July 15 in Rutland. Born in New York City, Mary was graduated from Barnard College in 1934 and from Katherine Gibbs School in 1935.

She married William Dabney Gettel in 1941. He died in 2006.

Mary worked as an administrator in the music department of the City College of New York, where her husband taught. They retired to Middletown Springs in the early Nineteen Seventies.

Mary was a deacon and secretary at Middletown Springs Community Church, volunteered at the library and at Hildene and was a member of the Middletown Springs Historical Society.

Survivors include a son, Coutland Gettel; a granddaughter and grandson.

GARDNER HOPWOOD, 83, died August 28 in Colchester, Vermont. "Hoppy" was born in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and grew up in Middletown Springs. He attended Rutland High School and Norwich University, class of 1945. He served in the U.S. Army in the Philippines during WWII and attained the rank of 1st Lieutenant. He married Beverly Daniels in 1944 and later earned his B.S. in mechanical engineering from both Norwich and the University of Vermont.

In 1949 Hoppy purchased a small telephone company in Alburg and over the next 20 years acquired several other independent telephone companies in Vermont. After these were sold to Continental Telephone Co., he stayed on as state manager for several years.

In 1967, Gardner, with Howard Delano, co-founded Pine Ridge School in Williston, where he served as executive director and headmaster until his

(cont. on pg. 3)

(cont. from pg. 1)

Voters decide to continue the School District system, and to hire a highway crew at 20¢ per hour.

After several people injured driving off banks, town decides to build fences on the south side of East & West Streets.

Leonidas & A.Y. Gray patent a threshing machine.

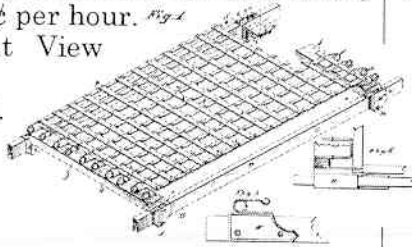
1882

Voters decide to buy a safe for Town Records, and to pay road crew 25¢ per hour.

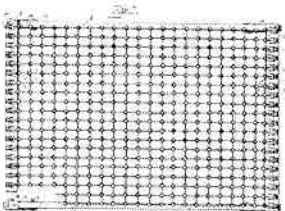
Land for Pleasant View Cemetery is purchased.

Middletowner, C.H.

Fitch, patents a bed bottom.



1883



The Grays, along with others, sue the towns of Middletown, Poultney, Ira and Tinmouth to improve their roads.

C. H. Fitch patents an improvement to his spring bed.

1884

Alfred Norton & C.W. Strobell open separate medical practices.

June 27: Women's Christian Temperance Union of Middletown formed.

November 19: Vermont General Assembly re-names town "Middletown Springs."

1885

Gray National Bank opens, with capital of \$50,000.

Fred Barrett moves his store to Poultney.

March 3: Town Voters ratify the change of the town name to Middletown Springs.

St. Anne's Catholic Church dedicated.

October 27: A.W. Gray dies at 75.

1886

Dances regularly held at the Valley Hotel, Adams House and Spring Valley Hall.

Wallace Spaulding captures an eagle with a seven foot wingspan.

Cornet Band very active.

A.Y. Gray sells several building lots along Buxton Avenue.

Whooping Cough epidemic hits town.

Middletown baseball team, the Montverts, finish their season 2 - 3.

1887

Town buys a new "road machine" for \$250, and voters again approve buying a safe.

Town earns money selling plots and hay from Pleasant View Cemetery.

Montvert Hotel has busiest season to date. Guests names are printed in the Poultney Journal.

C.H. Fitch patents further improvements to his Spring Bed Bottom.

1888

February & March: Measles Scare.

November 14: Frank Hubbard shoots and eagle with a 6 ½ foot wingspan.

1889

Local WCTU chapter complains of "whiskey being brought into town by a private family and redistributed to those who had ordered it."

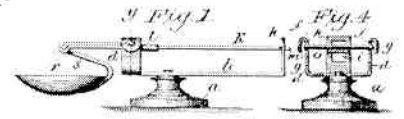
Dana Carpenter opens a drugstore.

1890

Middletown Springs Population: 786.

Leonidas & A. Y. Gray patent "Brake for Horse Powers or Speed Regulators."

C.H. Fitch patents prescription scales.



1891

Town votes not to build a Town Hall.

Sixteen highway districts folded into five districts.

D.A. Barker paid \$10 for shoveling snow from sidewalks.

Voters charge Selectmen with buying snow runners for town hearse.

(In Memoriam, cont. from pg. 2)

retirement in 1991. During this time he also obtained his Master of Education degree from UVM.

He was a member of the Middletown Springs Historical Society.

Gardner Hopwood is survived by his wife, Beverly; his daughter Susan May; and his sons Christopher, Bob, and Dick.

ROBERT FUNKHOUSER, 50, died August 10 in Middletown Springs. He was born in Berkeley, California, and was graduated from high school at Burr & Burton Seminary in Manchester. A builder and restorer, he resided in Middletown Springs and in Norwood, Colorado.

Rob was president of the Western Slope No-Fee Coalition, a group dedicated to preserving access to public lands. He was a volunteer at the Middletown Springs Historical Society.

He is survived by three sisters: Judy Carr, Sara Purrington, and Nancy Leary; several nieces and nephews; and by his life partner, Dietra Davis. His father, Paul Funkhouser, died in 1984.

Membership Information

Membership dues for 2008 are due in January.
Check your mailing label for current status.

Dues (Check one):

Individual	\$10.00	Contributing	\$25.00
Family	\$15.00	Business	\$50.00

Send to: Middletown Springs Historical Society
P.O. Box 1126
Middletown Springs, VT 05757

- Frisbie's *History of Middletown* CD-ROM or photocopy, \$20, post paid.
- Eight notecards with historic photos of Middletown Springs, \$12 postpaid.
- *Historic Architecture of Middletown Springs* pamphlet photocopy, \$1, 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.

Visit our NEW website:
www.MiddletownSpringsHistoricalSociety.org
or Google Middletown Springs Historical Society

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
Friends in Adoption—Dawn Smith Pliner
Green Mountain Timber Frames — Dan McKeen
LaValley Building Supply
Jim Marquis—Antiques Appraiser
Southview Arts—Digital Recording Studio
Stewarts Dairy
Twin Mountain Farms B&B—Annie & Walt Pepperman
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, or e-mailed to montvert@vermontel.net.

Middletown Springs Historical Society
P.O. Box 1126
Middletown Springs, VT 05757

Address Service Requested

Strawberry Festival



Musicians Jenny Munyak, Meredith and Paul Morgan entertain at the 32nd Annual Strawberry Festival in June.

Welcome! New Members

NEW INDIVIDUAL MEMBERSHIPS

David Ault, *Seattle, Wash.*
Marilisa H. Prevatt, *Fenton, Mich.*

NEW CONTRIBUTING MEMBERSHIP

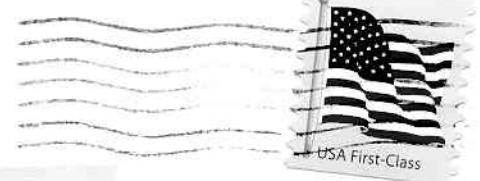
Peveril F. Peake, *Bristol*

2007 ANNUAL MEETING

The 38th Annual Meeting of the Middletown Springs Historical Society will be held on Sunday, Sept. 23, at the Historical Society Building.

Agenda

- 7 p.m. Dessert Buffet
- 7:15 p.m. Business Meeting and Election of Trustees
- 7:45 p.m. *Vermont Mineral Springs Resorts and the Montvert Hotel*, a slide lecture by David Wright



Annual Meeting
Sept. 23rd, 7 p.m.