



Middletown Springs Historical Society NEWSLETTER

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September 2012

Finding the Burnham Hollow Ski Area

By Jon Mathewson

Two years ago, I received a copy of Jeremy K. Davis' book, "Lost Ski Areas of Southern Vermont." That Christmas gift launched me on a year and a half long history adventure.

The book closely documents the ski areas which sprang up in Vermont's southern four counties from the 1930s through 1970s. These ranged from the large Snow Valley in Manchester to the small practice hill at Green Mountain College in Poultney. Their histories are all accompanied with photographs and reproductions of brochures and such.

Only a few were left undocumented, just listed at the beginning of each chapter. And there, on page 27, I read the following description of one of the truly lost of the lost ski areas: "Burnham Hollow, Middletown Springs: According to John Williams, who was a member of the Burnham Hollow Ski Club, this rope tow was started and operated by Charles and Katie Colvin in the 1950s. Williams remembers

that access came from a suspension bridge over the Poultney River." Since reading that, I have learned that some of that statement is true, and some is not.

Well, a few days later, I was at a New Year's Eve Party at Matt and Trish Peschl's place. They live in the Burnham Hollow area, and knowing they know the woods around their place very well, I asked Matt if he had ever come across signs of a ski area. A big smile came on his face, and he said, "Yes. You're standing on it." Turns out his house is on the slope, and he and Trish have come across remnants of the rope tow on the hill above their house.

Well, a few weeks later, I was having breakfast with Chuck Colvin at the weekly Poultney Rotary Club meeting, and I mentioned that I had been reading about him in a history book. Trust me: most people do not like being told they are in a history book! But Chuck thought for a while, and said, "Oh, yeah. That was a long time ago. I'd almost forgotten about that." *continued on page 2 . . .*

BURNHAM HOLLOW... Slope and Trails

Located in The Heart of Vermont's Winter Sports Area
IN THE TOWNSHIP OF MIDDLETOWN SPRINGS

The tow passes several stopping stations along its 1000 foot rise to the top at Burnham Hollow. Both the novice and expert will find just the right kind of skiing on this wide open slope or down the twisting wooded trails. At the base is the ever welcome sight of the Hollow's picturesque warming hut and lunch bar.

\$1 Daily Rates
Per Person

Burnham Hollow is located 6 miles east of Poultney, Vermont, on the Horace Greeley Highway and 18 miles south of Rutland, Vermont, on Route 3.

Restful accommodations may be had in Poultney and Middletown Springs, in a rural New England atmosphere.

Facilities for Tobogganing, Ski Joring and Sleigh Rides, available at the area.

for information address
ALBERT GREENE
Middletown Springs, Vermont

Follow These Routes

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Again I am pleased to share my thanks to all board members and volunteers for the efforts put into another exciting and fun Strawberry Festival this year. My thanks also goes out to the entire community of artisans that came for the event and of course all of our members and friends from the community who came to enjoy a beautiful afternoon in Middletown Springs.

The success of the Historical Society is partly due to the volunteer board members and activities such as Maple and Strawberry Festivals. More importantly is the participation of families and individuals in and out of our town as members. I invite all of you who have not had a chance to refer a new member to please do so

in the next couple of weeks.

With the Annual Meeting upon us I welcome your feedback on anything of interest or in need of improvement. I also would like to inform you that the MSHS website will be undergoing several changes to allow for better use of social network tools to get the word out on many activities for the Society. www.middletownspringshistoricalsociety.org

Enjoy the latter part of our summer in Vermont.
Regards,

Robert J. Gould
aftabrg@gmail.com

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To make a long story short, a year later, in May 2012, Matt, Trish, Chuck (Katie could not make it that day), David Wright and I walked the old ski area site, as Chuck told us about where things had been. Later, Mark Raymond, whose Norton family relatives lived across the street from the area, dug up an early brochure for the ski area.

So, over the last year and a half, we have been able to unearth artifacts, ephemera, and memories of an aspect of Middletown Springs that may otherwise have been lost. A small exhibit of Burnham Hollow Ski Area is now part of the Timeline exhibit in the Adams House auditorium

Here is some of what we now know:

The Burnham Hollow Ski Area operated between 1949 and 1954.

George Greene created the ski area, and after few years turned it over to Chuck and Katie Colvin of Poultney, who ran the area for two years.

The area was open on weekends, and attracted an average of 100 skiers per day. Skiers parked their cars in the pasture at the base of Norton Road, walked across Route 133 and crossed the Poultney River on a pedestrian suspension bridge. A warming hut greeted visitors with offers of hot dogs, soda, coffee, hot chocolate and candy. That was also where skiers bought their \$1 per day tow passes.

The thousand-foot-long rope tow ran to the top of the ski trails on the north face of Barker Mountain.



RECENT ACQUISITIONS

A **Model Menu Printer**, possibly from the Montvert Hotel, donated by Patty McWilliams.

Strawberry Festival was a Huge Success



The beautiful weather, great publicity, and large crowd combined to make it the most successful Strawberry Festival ever! Volunteers served generous portions of strawberry shortcake. We extend our appreciation to the crafters, musicians, volunteers, and all those that donated to make this a financial success.

Music was provided by Paul Morgan and Friends.

Vendors included: Alan Grace, antique clocks; Barbie Carr, signs; David & Jennie Munyak, treenware and bowls; Debbie Squier, garden whimsy; Ellen Moyer, rugs; Emmett Francois, photography; Kerry Furlani, bas relief carving in slate; Nancy Edmunds, handcrafted bears; Marilyn Parker, Peter Huntoon, and Mareva Mil-larc, paintings.

Donations from Best Moon Catering, Grant's Village Store, and Historical Society Board Members.

Volunteers from the community and beyond generously helped, and we are grateful for each and every one that gave of their time to make this so successful!

Society Promotes Historic Preservation Values in New Town Office design

Society trustees have advocated for historic preservation guidelines in the design of the Town Office, proposed for a crucial site on the south side of the Town Green. Voters at Town Meeting approved money for the purchase of the former Parker gas station lot at the corner of South and East Streets.

At the suggestion of Society trustees, the Town Office Building Committee applied, on behalf of the Town, to Preservation Trust of Vermont for a grant to fund a study of the historic character of the buildings (past and present) surrounding the Green, and its influence on the design of the future building.

The location of the Parker property on the green at the four corners is tremendously significant since it is in the heart of both the village and the Middletown Springs Historic District. The National Register Nomination Form, filed in 1985, which established the Historic District notes that "Only on the south side of East Street, along the southern end of the green, is there a significant gap in the (historic) district, where a fire cleared several buildings in 1920....". With the purchase of this property and the siting of an appropriate structure, the Town has the opportunity to restore some of the visual integrity that was lost in that fire by creating a building that will enhance the character of the green for decades to come.

The Preservation Trust grant, which requires a \$500 match, was arranged by the Building Committee and approved by the Selectboard. The matching funds were provided by the Historical Society, which has solicited and received pledges from members and friends for that purpose.

Historic preservation architect Thomas Keefe of Middlebury conducted a site visit on July 3. He viewed numerous historic photographs from the Historical Society's collection and received digital copies of those photos for reference. He discussed the project with members of the Historical Society and Building Committee, looked over the town green and Parker's Service Station site, and took photos and notes to assist him in the project.

Mr. Keefe analyzed these documents and other published references and wrote a report and recommendations to the town. The report will be used by the project architects and Building Committee during the design process to assist them in creating a building that blends harmoniously with the others on the green.

While Mr. Keefe's proposal listed the cost for his services at \$1,900, he generously offered to cap his fees at \$1,000, which is the combined total of the PTV grant and the matching funds provided by the Society. Thanks to Mr. Keefe for his generous donation to the project and for his excellent report!



Vermont History Detective Looks for the Oldest Chair



Textile conservator Michele Pagan presented a glimpse into her work as a textile expert at a meeting of the Middletown Springs Historical Society on Sunday afternoon, August 12

In 2006 the Shelburne Museum commissioned Ms Pagan as a "history detective" to determine the age of a wing back chair in their collection, which a furniture historian had suggested might be the oldest such example in the United States. Shelburne Museum curators also wanted to know what the chair had originally looked like, what upholstery fabric was originally used, and what it would cost to restore it authentically. Michele's resulting research report was accepted for presentation at the 2007 International Conference of Museums annual meeting in Krakow, Poland. Michele recreated this presentation before the Middletown Springs fascinated audience.

Michele Pietryka Pagan is a native Vermonter and a textile conservator in private practice, conserving historic and vintage textiles in Washington, D.C. and Brookfield. She served as director of the Vermont Collections Care Program for the Vermont Museum and Gallery Alliance, and was a chief conservator with the Vermont Painted Theater Curtain Project. She has directed conservation projects for the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, the Smithsonian Institution, and the U.S. Department of State.

The Vermont Quiltsearch

Learn from the experts about those quilts made before 1960 that are stored in chests, closets or attics. Quilts, tied quilts and quilt tops are eligible and documentation is free. Optional appraisals are available at \$40 per quilt. Archival boxes for storing quilts will be available for sale. Refreshments will be served.

It will be held at Middletown Springs Historical Society, Saturday, September 22, 11am to 4pm, and is sponsored jointly by the Vermont Quiltsearch and the Historical Society.

Call Donna Bister for more information 802-658-4562.

Items for Sale

- Copies of Historical Society Newsletters, \$1 post paid.
- *History of Middletown*, by Barnes Frisbee, CD-ROM or photocopy, \$20, post paid.
- Historic photo notecards of Middletown Springs, box of 8, \$12 post paid.
- *Searching for Ichabod*, by Julie Van Camp, \$18, post paid.
- *A Gem in the Hills*, by Frances Krouse, \$25, post paid.
- Antique Mineral Springs Water bottles, prices start at \$60.

Membership Information

Membership dues for 2012 were due in January.
Check your mailing label for current status.

Dues (Check one):

Individual	\$10.00	Business	\$50.00
Family	\$15.00	Sustaining	\$100.00
Contributing	\$25.00		

Send to: Pat Hemenway, *Treasurer*
Middletown Springs Historical Society
P.O. Box 1121
Middletown Springs, VT 05757

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

Visit our website:

www.MiddletownSpringsHistoricalSociety.org

Business Members

Blue Cat Bistro, John Rehlen
Gabe Friedman, Web Designer,
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Green Mountain Timber Frames, Dan McKeen
Johnson Energy, Tom & Eileen Johnson
LaValley Building Supply
Jim Marquis, Antiques Appraiser
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Professional Tile Installation, Jerry Hansen
Southview Arts / Foolish Records
Stewarts Dairy
Twin Mountain Farm B&B, Annie & Walt Pepperman
Williams Hardware, Poultney, Bob Williams

The MSHS Newsletter is published twice 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.

Notice of Annual Meeting

The 43rd Annual Meeting of the Middletown Springs Historical Society will be held on Sunday, September 23, at the Historical Society Building.

Agenda

- 7:00 p.m. Dessert Buffet
7:15 p.m. Business Meeting and Election of Trustees
7:45 p.m. **Program:** Vermont Music Sampler by William Tortolano, St. Michaels Professor Emeritus of Fine Arts. Vermont has a significant and fascinating musical folklore and the program will include a lecture, slide presentation and taped examples of music illustrating Vermont's musical heritage. The program is sponsored by the Vermont Humanities Council under a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Welcome! New Members

Robert & Jennie Saxton, Niantic, CT
Alice Hoisington, Middletown Springs

2012 COMING EVENTS

- Saturday, Sept. 22 **Vermont Quilt Search,**
11 am to 4 pm
- Sunday, Sept. 23 **Annual Meeting,**
doors open at 6:30 pm
- Sunday, Oct. 7 **Museum Open House
& Donor Celebration**
1-4 p.m.

Middletown Springs Historical Society
P.O. Box 1121
Middletown Springs, VT 05757

Address Service Requested

ANNUAL MEETING
SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 23RD
(see above for more information)