

# PRESIDENTS' PAGE

*A few of the Friends' many accomplishments this year...*

What a successful year this has been! The Friends have much to be proud of:

- We hired our first consultant director, Kate Willis, who holds a Masters Degree in Preservation Studies from Tulane University's School of Architecture.
- We received three generous grants:
  - The Strafford Historical Society funded a week-long residency in the Newton Elementary School. Kate Willis, our consultant director, spearheaded this program.
  - A grant from The Woodbury Foundation has funded the creation of "Justin's Traveling Trunk," a history kit to introduce Morrill to elementary school students, either to orient them to Morrill's life and legacy before a visit to the Homestead, or to allow students who cannot make a visit to learn about this remarkable man.
  - The Windham Foundation Grant offers Operating Support to create new programs to complement current events and programming and to plan a successful Sesquicentennial Celebration of the Morrill Land-Grant College Act of 1862.
- Resolutions were read in the Vermont and Nebraska State Legislatures honoring Justin Smith Morrill on the anniversary of his 200th birthday. Members of the FMH Board attended the reading of the Vermont Resolution H.C.R. 275. The Nebraska Resolution was spearheaded by Professor Edwin Harvey, Director of the Justin Smith Morrill Scholars Program at University of Nebraska-Lincoln.
- In addition to these honors, Justin Morrill was named to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Hall of Heroes recognizing "those that have had a lasting impact on agriculture and related programs."
- Other successful events included:
  - A 200th birthday party in April where local children decorated cupcakes and enjoyed a variety of activities.
  - Rethinking Your Backyard: Creating Outdoor Spaces presented by well-known landscape architect Janet Cavanaugh.
  - Pruning for the Home Landscape, led by horticulturalist and designer Michael Dathe, was well-received again this year.



Photo: Donna Hollinger

In 2011, we will turn our energies toward planning for the Sesquicentennial Celebration, commemorating Morrill's extraordinary vision for his country in 1862. We will also be seeking to fund several important initiatives to enhance the Homestead site, including interpretive signage enabling visitors to experience a self-directed tour of the grounds during hours when the House is not open... restoration of the greenhouse... and creation of a traveling exhibit on Morrill's life and legacy.

The Friends of the Morrill Homestead cannot be successful in their efforts without the generous support of the community we serve. We encourage you to volunteer your time at one of our events... and to consider a tax-deductible contribution. Even a few hours or a few dollars can help make a difference. Please use the enclosed reply envelope, and thank you in advance for your generous support.

*Mary Victor Giersch and Marie Ricketts  
Co-Presidents, Friends of the Morrill Homestead*

## TRANSITIONS . . .

It is with a mixture of joy and sadness that we announce that our consulting director, Kate Willis, will be leaving the Morrill Homestead for an exciting new position as an architectural historian with a firm in Augusta, Maine. We are thrilled for her, but will miss the organizational skills and historical background she brought to the Morrill organization.

Kate coordinated an educational outreach program for the Newton School, and organized a series of board retreats with Anne Peyton which helped focus our future direction. We are very lucky to have had Kate for as long as we did, and wish her the best with her new position.

## Friends of the Morrill Homestead

*National Historic Site*

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*Ever truly yours,  
Justin S. Morrill.*

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Friends of the  
**MORRILL HOMESTEAD**  
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# The MORRILL HOMESTEAD *Chronicle*

News and Information from Vermont's First National Historic Landmark  
POST OFFICE BOX 98 • STRAFFORD, VERMONT • 05072

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*"All the news that fits, we print."*

## SENATOR MORRILL RETURNS TO THE CLASSROOM

Last Spring, the Friends of the Morrill Homestead partnered with Strafford's Newton Elementary School and the Strafford Historical Society to create a two-week study period focusing on Justin Morrill and his impact on the town and the nation.

FMH Treasurer David McWilliams kicked the project off by visiting each grade impersonating Senator Morrill. Students had the opportunity to ask the senator questions; some gems included "Why are you famous?" and "What did you think when President Lincoln was assassinated?"

The K, 1st, 2nd grade and 3rd, 4th, 5th grade clusters worked with Director Kate Willis to create two different coloring books that explore the reasons why Justin Morrill is important. The first step was to examine artifacts that referenced Morrill's life and legacy, such as a horseshoe, a slate board, and the USPS stamp featuring Morrill, issued in 1999.

Paired up and armed with more knowledge of Morrill, students spent two days creating images to accompany the captions and dates that stood out as important to them.

Some examples from the K, 1st, 2nd grade cluster are: "He got a medal for making the law for the Land Grant colleges."

"As a child he was waiting to see President Monroe in Strafford and his hat got ruined."

"He designed his house in the Gothic Revival style because he read a book."

Some examples from the 3rd, 4th, 5th grade cluster are:

"Beginning in 1828 Justin works at stores in Portland Maine. While he is doing this he is 18. He reads all night."

"1848 - Justin sells his stores located throughout New England. He then becomes a gentleman farmer."

"In 1867, Justin was elected to the US Senate. He was the first person to be elected from Strafford, Vermont."

We hope to use these coloring books for fundraising in the future.

## APPLEFEST CAPS A SUCCESSFUL SEASON



Photo: Donna Hollinger

As always, cider pressing took center stage; under the direction of FMH volunteers, visitors manned the antique cider press, on loan from Paul Kristensen, to press 25 bushels of apples from Scott farm in Dummerston, Vermont -- specialists in heirloom varieties. The triple-filtered product, in distinctive Morrill Homestead bottles, was eagerly snapped up by purchasers at the merchandise tent, where notecards and other items were also on sale.

Volunteer musicians, playing period tunes, provided a fitting backdrop for the afternoon's activities, and visitors were encouraged to dance. Food sales were so popular, most items were sold out by 2:00pm. The scavenger hunt, apple bob, scarecrow making, sack races, and other games kept the kids busy. And the tasting stand, where more heirloom apples were available for sampling and purchasing, was another popular venue.

Clear skies, splendid fall foliage and an enthusiastic crowd helped make AppleFest 2010, held on Sunday, October 10, a rousing success. The Homestead grounds were bustling as 135 adult visitors and more than 100 children vigorously engaged in a daylong program of wide-ranging activities.

All in all, AppleFest 2010, a Morrill Homestead tradition and a "must-do" event for the town of Strafford, crowned a successful year of Friends-sponsored activities and marked a fitting conclusion to Senator Morrill's 200th birthday year.

## MASTER GARDENER'S REPORT

In keeping with the mission of Justin Morrill's interest in testing for plant hardiness, Leonard Perry, Extension Professor at UVM, has expanded our list of roses and perennials for the kitchen garden at the Morrill Homestead.

In 2009, at Professor Perry's recommendation, we planted a dozen heirloom roses - all with French names: Gallica, Bourbon, Alba, and Damask - that are doing quite well. They survived the winter with little additional winter protection and have produced flowers for us during the summer. Success, so far.

In the spring of this year, Professor Perry brought down varieties of 10 different perennials that he is trialling in Burlington. As one Master Gardener commented, "it's an icebox in Strafford, compared to Burlington's temperate climate." The perennials are all names you'd recognize: Achillea, Carex, Coreopsis, Dendranthema, Echinacea, Heuchera... but are new varieties and colors being tested for the market. Professor Perry will test the temperature of our soil from time to time.

We are thrilled to be part of this study. We do have ideal growing conditions in the Kitchen Garden at the Homestead: perfect, rich, loamy soil, lots of sun and good drainage.

Master Gardener and community gardener volunteers have been largely responsible for the 'growing' success of this historic garden. In addition to the perennial and rose trials, we have planted several varieties of fruit bushes and fruit trees. Morrill's garden was heavily planted with apple whips and berry bushes. In an era of sustainability, we intend to devote more space to edible plants.

And the next big project is to convert a crumbling foundation into a working greenhouse, in order to extend our growing season.

Come see us soon.

*Margie Carpenter, Master Gardener*



Photo: Donna Hollinger

## REPORT FROM THE STATE OF VERMONT

The Morrill Homestead received a magnificent donation just as the site closed for the 2009 season. John Hemenway of Strafford donated a Renaissance Revival period bedroom set which originally belonged to Senator Morrill. When Louise Swan, half sister to Mrs. Justin Morrill, died she donated to the Congregational Church of Strafford "the furniture in the chamber occupied by the late Senator Morrill and Mrs. Morrill at #1 Thomas Circle, Washington, D.C." Eventually, the Church decided the furnishings did not fit in their parsonage and donated the collection to Mr. Hemenway's father-in-law who owned the house where Justin Morrill is said to have grown up.

In 1963 Dr. Channing Swan donated to the Homestead a collection of photographs of the house at Thomas Circle. One of the photographs is of a bedroom with the suite of furniture donated to the Homestead by Mr. Hemenway.

In the letter accompanying the photograph, Dr. Swan wrote: "I cannot positively identify this as being the bedroom used by my great aunt,



A mirrored dresser, one of the pieces from Sen. Morrill's Washington, DC home, and recently donated to the Homestead.

Louise S. Swan. The senator and Mrs. Morrill died when I was but a few months old, but I used to visit the house with my parents for a week or two almost every year when I was a teenager. I cannot say, "The Senator Slept Here."

So there is some confusion as to whether this furniture was the actual bedroom suite used by the Senator. We know the furnishings were in the Washington house and then at some point arrived in Strafford. Perhaps the church discovered the much larger bedroom set with the high headboard that has been in the Homestead for years would not fit in the parsonage, so instead, the church took the set with the lower headboard. It is a puzzle to ponder and perhaps we'll never know the whole story. But what we do know is the donation by Mr. Hemenway is an important addition to the Justin Morrill State Historic Site. Thank you Mr. Hemenway!

*John Dumville,  
Vermont Department of Historic Preservation*



## BIRTHDAY HONORS FOR SENATOR MORRILL

April 14, 2010 was the 200th anniversary of the birth of Justin Smith Morrill at Strafford, Vermont. In a fitting tribute to Vermont's longest-serving member of Congress, he was honored by the Vermont Legislature with the passage of a resolution commemorating his birthday, and in a surprise twist, the Senator was actually present in the State House for the public reading of the resolution!

At the request of the Friends of the Morrill Homestead, what would become House Concurrent Resolution 275 was jointly introduced by Orange County Sen. Mark MacDonald and Reps. Margaret Cheney of Norwich and James Masland of Thetford. After its passage, it was read on the floor of the House on March 30. Rep. Cheney arranged for the Friends to be present for the reading (and seated in the guests' chairs at the front of the chamber, no less).

Some of the Representatives seemed to be taken aback at the sight of an older gentleman with mutton-chop sideburns wearing a finely tailored but clearly out-of-fashion suit who was



Photo: Donna Hollinger

Vermont State Representative Margaret Chaney escorts Senator Morrill (aka. David McWilliams) through the Vermont State House this past April.

seated with the Friends. This was none other than Senator Morrill himself, portrayed by David McWilliams, a member of the Friends of the Morrill Homestead Board. The Senator concluded his visit to Montpelier by posing for photographs with the oil portrait of the real Justin Morrill that hangs in the Pavilion Building, next door to the State House.

A similar resolution was introduced in the Nebraska legislature, where it was adopted on March 23 and signed by the Speaker, coincidentally also on March 30. Meanwhile, in Washington, Vermont's sole Congressman, Peter Welch, introduced a commemorative resolution (H. Res. 1253) which is pending before the Committee on House Administration.

The Herald of Randolph (Vermont) took note of these goings-on, editorializing in its April 8 edition that Justin Morrill's 200th birthday was "...a day well worth celebrating" and calling Morrill's signature Land-Grant College Act "an idea... [that] has transformed our world."

*Chuck Ashton, FMH Board Member*

### WANTED: A FEW GOOD MEN (AND WOMEN!)

Would **YOU** like to help make history come alive, here in Strafford...? To honor a giant of the 19th Century born in this village over 200 years ago...? To play a key part in a broad array of educational and entertaining events... And to have a lot of fun doing it?

The Friends of the Morrill Homestead are seeking new volunteers to help stage our programs and events for 2011. Spend a few hours of your time with your neighbors, on the kinds of exciting projects described in this issue of the Morrill Homestead Chronicle! Use your talents and imagination to help preserve and promote Morrill's legacy for future generations! No experience is required; and any time you can spend will be deeply appreciated.

For further information on volunteering, simply complete the reply form enclosed with this issue, email [director@morrillhomestead.org](mailto:director@morrillhomestead.org) or call 802-765-4288 and follow the instructions on the answering machine.

We look forward to welcoming **YOU** to the team!

#### Making a List

*We are compiling an e-mail list.*

*If you would like to be on it,*

*please send your e-mail address to*

[president@morrillhomestead.org](mailto:president@morrillhomestead.org)

## UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA STUDENTS MAKE ANNUAL STRAFFORD PILGRIMAGE

Though Senator Justin Smith Morrill passed away more than 100 years ago, his legacy is still alive and well, especially for a group of college students from Nebraska.

Over Labor Day weekend, seven students and six adult chaperones from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln visited Strafford, Vermont as part of their involvement with the Justin Smith Morrill Scholars Program. Created about five years ago, the group's purpose is to follow Morrill's example by focusing on community service and leadership, all while making the most of their education at a land-grant university, an institution made possible as a part of Morrill's landmark legislation.

For the third year in a row, members of the group toured Morrill's hometown and homestead, learning about Morrill's past and humble upbringing. Students got to "dig" up a little history themselves by excavating a failed irrigation canal at the homestead. They also plotted an area for the future site of a Nebraska garden, which will include native Nebraska plants and grasses.

While in Strafford, students had the chance to get to know the local community, attending social functions and a supper at the Stone Soup with

Friends of the Morrill Homestead, the students' host families and other Morrill supporters.

When the group wasn't busy digging up dirt or socializing with the locals, they were experiencing the surrounding areas, going on a narrated cruise



on Lake Champlain, hiking at Quechee Gorge and touring the Calvin Coolidge historical site.

The five-day trip was a great learning experience for everyone, including Morgan Meyer.

"I really liked to learn the history live and in-person instead of reading it in a book," Meyer said.

The Scholars really enjoyed their time in Vermont, and hope to return for many years to come.