

A WORD FROM OUR BOARD CHAIR...

and grandfather were blacksmiths and wheelwrights in Strafford village and Morrill wanted badly to attend Dartmouth, but there were no resources for higher education. His formal education ended in Strafford's grammar school at age 15. Still, he became a successful businessman and served four, highly productive decades in the US Congress.

What explains the metamorphosis of a village storekeeper into the great statesman he became? One of the oldest in a family of ten children, young Morrill displayed an intellectual appetite that was insatiable, and he possessed a powerful, focused drive for self-transformation. In an insightful lecture delivered at UVM in 1962, Harvard professor Wilbur Jordan, summed up the roots of Morrill's transformation as follows:

"Then most clearly, there was thrusting this man forward all his long life an almost obsessive urge for education, for the education of himself. . . . All his life long he was completing the process of his own education. The key to this man, I have come to believe, is to be found in his private library, now preserved in Strafford. It is the library of a most highly cultivated gentleman. It consists of history, biography, letters, fine arts, landscape architecture, and political economy. But, above all, it is a library which has been read and annotated. From the quarry of these materials the man had wrested an education for himself. . . ."

After his schooling, Morrill went to work for Jedediah Harris, who owned the local store. Harris was a man of substance in the community and possessed a small but excellent private library. Morrill devoured it. A half century later Morrill built and endowed a public library in Strafford, which today still serves as a memorial to Jedediah Harris and Morrill himself.

Morrill acquired the store at the age of 24. He was an astute and successful businessman and sold the store at the age of 38, retiring with a comfortable sum of money. One of his ambitions was to establish himself as "a landed gentleman and as a scientific farmer," according to Jordan. From his reading he had acquired an admiration for the landed English gentry, and he wished to emulate their way of life.

A decade later at the age of 44, a political career of profound importance for the nation blossomed. In 1854 he was elected by a very thin margin of 59 votes. In 1866 he was elected to the Senate and never left the Congress after that until his death in 1898. Jordan reports that he was generally regarded as the ablest man in the Senate, and he was without doubt the best-informed on fiscal policy.

Morrill's obsessive urge for education may have stemmed partly from his own inability to complete the formal education which he so much wanted. "This may well explain his stubborn persistence in forcing the Land Grant Act through a somewhat reluctant Congress," Jordan notes. "He passionately wished for the generous extension of the possibility of higher education for all those who wished it and who were qualified to receive it."

The Morrill Act transformed higher education in America. Who knows, maybe a young Justin Morrill is now attending the Newton School.

*Cameron Speth
Chair, Friends of the Morrill Homestead*



*Ever truly yours,
Justin S. Morrill.*

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The Justin Morrill Historic Site, one of eight State-Owned Historic Sites and National Historic Landmark, is maintained and operated by the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation, which encourages the discovery and appreciation of the state's rich heritage through the stewardship and interpretation of the historic sites by evoking an authentic sense of time and place.

In partnership with the Division for Historic Preservation, the Friends of the Morrill Homestead fosters an awareness of the life and legacy of Sen. Justin Morrill with programs, events, and public outreach to enhance the visitor experience.



Photo by Susan Theiloz

Jane Malcomson and her fairy house at the Fairy House Festival on July 22nd.

www.morrillhomestead.org

The MORRILL HOMESTEAD *Chronicle*

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

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REAPING THE FRUITS OF TIME: THE RESTORATION OF MORRILL'S ORCHARD

While working to restore Morrill's historic orchard... hosting workshops on pruning and grafting... and producing an exhibit on heirloom apples, we have discovered that everyone likes apples: growing them, eating them and learning more about them.

Apples first arrived in the Americas in the 1600s and were grown to make everything from cider, sauce, and pies to apple butter. By the early 1800s, farmers in the United States were producing some 15,000 different kinds of apples. Over time, however, larger commercial orchards emerged that produced fewer varieties; eventually, 80 percent of our "heirloom" apples stood on the brink of extinction.

Heirloom apples are now experiencing a renaissance as more commercial orchards are planting traditional varieties to preserve their genetic heritage. The Friends of the Morrill Homestead and the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation are now completing the second year of restoring Morrill's historic orchard, thanks to assistance from our orchardist, Matthew Perry, and help from the Homestead's summer gardeners. To date, we have planted 18 young trees that represent 14 different varieties of heirloom apples (and one kind of pear), including Esopus Spitzenburg, Fameuse, King of Tompkins County, Lady, Mother, Northern Spy, Golden Reinette, Pound Sweet, Rhode Island Greening, Ribston Pippin, Seckel Pear, Swaar, Tolman Sweet and Yellow Bellflower.

With help and advice from another well-known local orchardist, Mike Hebb, we have also grafted scion wood from the seven surviving historic trees that are still growing in Morrill's orchard. Visitors can now see these young "graftlings" growing in a row along the south edge of the Homestead's kitchen garden. In early 2018 we will plant one

of each variety of grafting back in Morrill's orchard near its parent tree. The other young historic trees will be auctioned off to raise funds to support the orchard and to disseminate the historic trees to those who plant them in their own backyards.

Meanwhile, the 2017 visitor season offers an ongoing opportunity for heirloom apple aficionados and budding orchardists who want to learn how to restore the ancient apple trees on their own property. This exhibit, "The Fruits of Time: Heirloom Apples, Then and Now," will continue through October 15 in the Morrill Carriage Barn,



every Wednesday through Sunday from 11:00am-5:00pm. Photographs, illustrations, historical interpretation and compelling narratives explore the story of heirloom apples and show how you can bring your old trees back into production.

The exhibit also displays stunning images of 15 watercolor paintings of heirloom apples from the USDA's historic collection of pomology watercolor images, including all 14 varieties that have been planted to

date during the orchard restoration.

This exhibit, like the ongoing restoration of Justin Morrill's orchard, is a collaborative effort between the Friends of the Morrill Homestead and the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation. We would also like to thank the Exhibit Patron, Mascoma Savings Bank, and the Exhibit Underwriters, Dead River Company and E.C. Brown's Nursery, whose support made the exhibit possible.

*Michael Caduto
Director, Friends of the
Morrill Homestead*

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TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THIS CHANCE TO TELL US WHAT YOU THINK

The editors of the Morrill Homestead *Chronicle* are looking for input on our newsletter, and we've determined that there's no better source than our readers themselves. So we're asking you to take a few moments to tell us what you think.

Rather than supplying a questionnaire, we're giving you free rein to provide as much information as you wish. Do you read every issue? Do you find it to be interesting and informative? Or would you rather be removed from our mailing list? Does the newsletter provide a sense of Morrill... the man? What

about the balance between historical and contemporary articles: is it about right? Or would you prefer to see more of one versus the other?

Any comments you can provide will be helpful as we plan future issues. You can use the postage-paid bangtail envelope enclosed with this issue to send us your thoughts. And if you haven't already done so, you can include a tax deductible donation to the Friends, to help support our efforts to foster an awareness of Senator Morrill's life and legacy. Thanks in advance for your help!

Friends of the Morrill Homestead

State-Owned Site and National Historic Landmark

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REPORT FROM THE STATE OF VERMONT

The 2017 season has been one of continued collaboration in programming at the Justin Morrill State Historic Site.

On June 11, the Friends and the Division co-hosted the annual Open House as part of Vermont Days, planned in conjunction with Vermont State Parks and the state's Department of Tourism & Marketing. The event featured music, ice cream from the Strafford Organic Creamery, kids' activities, and free tours of the house.

Two months later, the Division and the Strafford Historical Society brought Middlebury College professor emeritus Glenn Andres to the Strafford Town House to present a program on *Justin Morrill and the Gothic Revival in Vermont* at the Society's annual meeting on August 13. After the program, attendees reconvened at the Historic Site for a reception and ribbon-cutting for the new Homestead Gallery.

The inaugural exhibit in the Homestead Gallery

entitled, *A Cultivated Mind in the Country: The Gothic Revival Vision of Justin Smith Morrill*, explores the English origins of the Gothic Revival style, its proponents in the United States, and Justin Morrill's personal expression of the style at his home in Strafford. Exhibits in this gallery are intended to run for two seasons.

This year, the Division is fortunate to have Adriene Katz working with us in the position of Historic Sites Program Assistant. Adriene received her MA in Museum Studies from the University of Leicester and has worked at several museums in New England and around the country. Her professional experience in Collections Management has been a great asset. Much of Adriene's time has been spent on an inventory project with condition assessments and recommendations for the future care of the books currently in Justin Morrill's library.

Tracy Martin
Historic Sites Section Chief
Vermont Division for Historic Preservation

2017 APPLEFEST IS ALMOST HERE!

Autumn in Vermont brings a classic harvest gathering—the Morrill Homestead's 19th Century Apple & Cheese Harvest Festival and Apple Pie Contest, which will take place this year from 11am-3pm on Sunday, September 24.

Chosen as a "Top 10 Fall Event" by the Vermont Chamber of Commerce for the second year in a row, this celebration of Johnny Applesseed's birthday is perfect for the whole family, featuring face-painting, live music by Out on a Limb and an apple pie contest with prizes that include gift certificates from popular local businesses.



The lure of so many types of apples is almost too much for these young attendees of an earlier AppleFest.

Come meet live farm animals—the kind that Justin Morrill would have had on his small 19th-century farm. Make your own cider in an antique press. Taste heirloom apples, fine artisan Vermont Cheeses, Vermont ice cream, and homemade apple pie. Play period games, hike the lookout trail, and play Valley Quest. Take in the gardens, exhibits, the icehouse, ice pond and, of course, Justin Morrill's historic Gothic Revival home decorated with gingerbread designs.

This final major event on our 2017 calendar is sponsored by Bushway Insurance Agency; Flint, Blake & Boles Roofing; Lake Sunapee Bank; Kate Cassidy of Four Seasons-Sotheby's International Realty. And the admission charge -- \$10 adults, \$5.00 under 15 -- includes lunch, which will be served from 12:00noon-2:00pm.

Hope to see you there!

WILL YOU BE A WINNER AT THE APPLE PIE CONTEST?

Any member of the general public may enter an apple pie. Pastry crust pies accepted. (No crumb crust pies, please). Pies must be room temperature and brought to the Morrill Homestead (214 Justin Morrill Memorial Highway in Strafford) for judging by 10:30 am on Sunday, September 24. In order to assure objective judging, please write the entrant's name clearly on the outside of the pie container, but not on the dish or plate itself. For further information, please contact Donna Hollinger: (802) 765-4242; pdeotnenra@comcast.net

GARDEN REPORT - THANKS TO OUR VOLUNTEERS!

It has been a wonderful, lush growing season for the Homestead gardens, although I hear we have had persistent free range nibblers who have enjoyed the annual beds. Hard to feel 'live and let live' when they feast on the annuals, leaving nothing behind.

I want to use this issue to highlight the folks who tend the gardens throughout the season. The gardens have always been an important part of the Justin Morrill Homestead narrative. Morrill was an avid horticulturist in the mid-nineteenth century, at the height of plant exploration between the US, Europe, and Asia, and used his gardens for trialing plants: perennials, herbs, berry bushes, and fruit trees for cold hardiness. (Remember: this was a time before "cold hardiness zones" existed.) The 'kitchen garden'



behind the house was his laboratory for these trials.

The decorative beds in front of the house were planted with colorful annuals, plants introduced from more temperate climates that needed to be started in greenhouses. Morrill had a hot house next to the gardens designed to start these tender plants.

At the request of the Friends, I started reconstructing the gardens in 2006, using Morrill's hand drawn planting plan hanging in the front hall of his home. Plants in the kitchen garden are taken from his lists in garden books, and some are recent trial plants from the past Director of the UVM Extension Service.

Master Gardener Martha Cain became a regular garden volunteer, and three years ago she

stepped in as our onsite head gardener. A debt of gratitude also goes to her merry band of garden volunteers: AJ Zwickelmaier, Susan Tiholiz, Shelly Davis, Jennifer Neumann, and Paula Duprat.

The photos shown here chronicle the garden from the mid-19th century (immediate left)... to its new beginnings in 2006 (lower left)... followed by a mature garden today (below).

If you haven't been in awhile, do stop by for a visit.

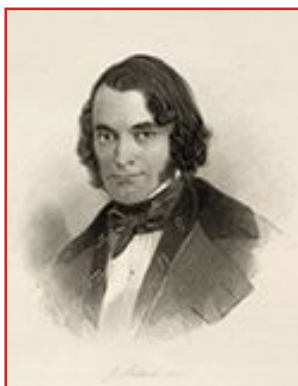
Margie Carpenter
Board Member, Friends of the Morrill Homestead



A.J. DOWNING: MENTOR TO MORRILL?

The influence of Andrew Jackson Downing on Justin Morrill's approach to architectural and agricultural design is well-documented. A horticulturalist and landscape gardener from Newburgh, New York, Downing was just five years younger than Morrill, and his writings on architecture and landscape were widely read. According to Downing's entry in American National Biography Online,

"So great was his influence that novelist Catharine Sedgwick reported that 'nobody, whether he be rich or poor, builds a house or lays out a garden without consulting Downing's works.'"¹*



He also published the *Horticulturalist*, a monthly magazine. Morrill's library contains works by Downing, including his *Cottage Residences* published in 1842. When Morrill began construction of his house in 1848, it drew heavily on Downing's design for a "Cottage in the Old English Style." Morrill also annotated his copy of the book with lists of varieties of plants and fruits he had planted or intended to plant on his housesite.

But Downing's influence on Morrill's thinking may have extended beyond his plan for the Homestead; it may also have been part of the genesis of the Land-Grant College Act. Biographer Coy Cross notes that others had conceived of 'workingmen's colleges before Morrill; in 1819 the Surveyor-General of New York had proposed an "Agricultural College" and in 1826, New York's Lieutenant Governor had recommended a "School of Agricultural Mechanics and Useful Arts." Norwich University's Alden Partridge had petitioned Congress with similar ideas, and Cross says Morrill had to be familiar with Partridge's thinking.

However, The Friends of the Morrill Homestead's eagle-eyed Director, Michael Caduto, while researching the apple varieties Morrill had cultivated (as part of the Friends' orchard restoration

project), recently noticed this observation in the Downing entry in the American National Biography Online quoted earlier:

"Because he realized that farmers were wastefully extracting nutrients from the soil and in older settled areas were experiencing declines in productivity, Downing became one of the earliest advocates of

public agricultural education. In 1849, he was appointed one of eight commissioners to develop a plan for an agricultural college and experimental farm in New York, and the following year he and Alexander Jackson Davis prepared a design for such an institution. In the commission's report and in a leader in the *Horticulturalist*, Downing advocated that the curriculum of the school teach both practical farming and its scientific underpinnings... Although nothing came of his proposal at this time, a decade later, Congress enacted the Morrill (or Land Grant Colleges) Act to provide for agricultural and industrial education."

In Cross' account of how Morrill came to craft the Act, he says, "Shortly after taking office in December 1855, [Morrill] noticed that... productivity of eastern and northern land was rapidly decreasing, while English soil, under more scientific cultivation, maintained its productivity." Morrill would have been aware of Downing's views through his subscription to the *Horticulturalist*, so while we rightfully think of Justin Morrill as the "Father of the Land-Grant College Act," it is not unreasonable to add A. J. Downing to the list of the Act's "grandfathers." Sadly, Downing did not live to see his recommendations bear fruit; he was killed in a steamboat explosion on the Hudson River in 1852.

Chuck Ashton
Board Vice Chair, Friends of the Morrill Homestead

*David Schuyler, "Downing, Andrew Jackson"; <http://www.anb.org/articles/17/17-00235.html>; American National Biography Online Feb 2000.

A COOL IDEA THAT SNOWBALLED!

Back in 1993, I was serving as a Homestead docent and was asked by fellow Strafford resident John Freitag, "What can we do to raise community awareness of the Homestead?" As the ice house had recently been restored, I naively replied "Hold an ice harvest this winter, and in the spring host an ice cream social." The idea was presented to the Strafford Historical Society who sponsored the events and the rest, well...is history.

The outcomes were astounding: the forming of the Friends, and Phyl Harmon's enduring documentary, "Cold Harvest: The Natural Ice Business in Rural Vermont." The film, copies of which are available from the Society, captured the event, and included interviews with local men who harvested ice in Strafford in the 1920s and '30s.

Though these men have passed away, their ice harvesting stories live on. There's still time to visit the Homestead this season to view a revised exhibit in the Ice House of Harmon's heartwarming black and white photographs accompanied with text of the men and their memories of New England's ice industry in the pre-electricity days gone by.

Andersen Thorp
Board Member, Friends of the Morrill Homestead

GALLERY IN THE GARDEN THE CALM BEFORE THE STORM!

On Friday, June 30, to kick off Strafford's 4th of July celebration, The Friends welcomed guests to the Homestead for a party... an art show... and a silent auction of mini canvases generously painted and donated by scores of local artists. After months of planning, what could possibly go wrong? The weather, of course, at the end of a rainy week in a rainy month. But we were prepared -- with five tents, a cheerful patience, and the comfort of a hopeful mantra: "The weather couldn't possibly be as bad as last year's."

The 2017 show, titled "The Land and People," was the largest in a decade: 12 artists and 53 paintings, 33 of them the work of our featured artist, George Lawrence. The drizzle at 5:00 was a blessing of sorts, filling the Carriage Barn with artists and guests for a toast and an advance look at the paintings that would be on display for the next two weeks. Meanwhile, 40 mini paintings arranged on miniature easels sat on tables in the Education Center ready for the doors to open and the

bidding to begin. Under a sweep of tents, a bar and a line of tables with plates of hors d'oeuvres awaited the art-loving attendees.

At 5:30 the party officially began. Would we have preferred sun and puffy clouds, a quiet evening on the cusp between spring and summer? Of course! But it turned out that we were lucky to get our event in before the hard rain that on Saturday dampened or cancelled most July 4th celebrations and washed out roads throughout the state, particularly in Orange and Windsor counties.

The auction raised \$4,695 to help pay for the Friends' cultural and educational programs, and over the two weeks of the Carriage Barn show, 11 paintings were sold. More importantly, the beauty of the art and the novelty of the minis gathered friends and supporters at the Homestead for a community celebration.

Jonathan Stableford
Board Member, Friends of the Morrill Homestead



A Morrill Mini painted by George Lawrence, this year's featured artist.