

## MEET OUR SPONSORS

The Friends of the Morrill Homestead are lucky to have wonderful local businesses sponsoring each of our events. As many of this season's programs have been canceled or postponed, we are especially appreciative of the flexibility and commitment of our business sponsors. In addition to supporting community events at the Homestead, our sponsors provide valuable services to Strafford and neighboring towns. We want you to know who they are!

The majority of our business sponsors come from Strafford. **M.C. Autoworks** specializes in automotive and small engine repair. **Agatha's Resale Shop** is a high quality thrift boutique store offering women's and children's clothing, shoes, jewelry, and small home goods. Kate Cassidy at **Four Seasons-Sotheby's Realty** is dedicated to guiding you through the process of purchasing or selling your home with ease. **Athena Advocacy** offers professional fiduciary, guardianship, and care advocacy services. **Coburn's General Store** is the cornerstone of the Strafford community and has been especially indispensable as we isolate at home. **Eric Thorp Diversified** takes care of our brush hogging, excavating, earth-moving, landscaping, sanding, and snowplowing needs. **Janet Cavanagh Landscape Architect** provides site analysis and planning, garden design, planting plans, and construction supervision. **Strafford Village Farm** is committed to the practice of growing great tasty food for the local community, nourishing and building healthy soil, and contributing to the well-being of the community. It is particularly appropriate that **Stone**

**Soup Restaurant** sponsors historical walking tours of Morrill's Strafford village because it occupies the former store where 15-year-old Justin Morrill was given his first job, working as a clerk.

We are also supported by many local businesses outside of Strafford. **Dr. Alicia Willette DDS** in East Thetford is committed to helping patients keep their teeth in maximum comfort, health, function, and esthetics for a lifetime. Also in East Thetford, **Bushway Insurance Agency** can insure your home, auto, farm, or business. **Chippers Inc.** of Woodstock is a team of professional arborists and horticulturalists bringing beauty and health to the green and growing world. **Flint, Blake, & Boles Roofing** out of Sharon are contractors with a great reputation specializing in metal standing seam roofs. At **E. C. Browns' Nursery** in Thetford Center, you'll find top quality hardy plants and unsurpassed landscaping services. **Norwich Knits**, purveyors of yarn and fiber from local sheep and dyers, offers classes, workshops, and a comfy place to sit and knit.

Lastly, we'd like to express gratitude to **Mascoma Bank** for underwriting our two biggest events each season, the Gallery in the Garden and the Apple & Cheese Harvest Festival.

Please join us in thanking these wonderfully generous businesses for making all that we do at the Homestead possible!

Tracy McFadden  
Director, Friends of the Morrill Homestead

## A WORD FROM OUR BOARD CHAIR...

As I write this message, I keep reflecting on the outstanding year the Friends enjoyed in 2019.

Under the leadership of our Director, Tracy McFadden, who experienced her first season in that role, we were blessed with wonderful weather for virtually all of our programs and events which added to record attendance and participation during the season. Our working relationship with the State, as we partnered together on programs and projects to enhance the Justin S. Morrill State Historic Site, became even stronger and, by almost every measure, 2019 was a terrific success.



But now, as we attempt to plan for and look forward to our 2020 season, we find ourselves – along with the State and our nation – in a period of unprecedented uncertainty. As Vermont's governor has extended the current Coronavirus stay-at-home order through May 15, the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation has pushed back the opening date of the Homestead from late May to July 3. Consequently, as described elsewhere in this issue, the Friends had to postpone or cancel many of our programs and events.

At this point, so many questions still remain! Will the stay-at-home order be extended even further? Even if it isn't, how quickly will any of us feel comfortable about once again gathering in groups of more than 10 people? Along with the state, we will continue to monitor this situation closely and will make prudent and appropriate decisions regarding all of our planned programs and events for the 2020 season.

The past and future success of the Friends' efforts to "foster an awareness of the life and legacy of Senator Justin Morrill" is unquestionably the result of the support we receive from so many, including our volunteers, our donors, our Board, our Director, and the State. My ask at this point is that all continue to lend that support in whatever way possible so that we can weather this storm and continue our work. You are greatly needed and deeply appreciated!

Peter Floeckher  
Chair, Friends of the Morrill Homestead

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Stone Soup  
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## Friends of the Morrill Homestead

State-Owned Site and National Historic Landmark  
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*The Justin Morrill Historic Site, one of nine State-Owned Historic Sites and National Historic Landmarks, 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. In partnership with the Division, 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.*



[www.morrillhomestead.org](http://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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## 2020 "HAPPENINGS AT THE HOMESTEAD" TAKE A HIT

Who could have imagined it? In just a few weeks' time in March and April, the Friends of the Morrill Homestead's 2020 Season, once so promising, was brought to a standstill.

As stay-home orders took effect and social distancing became the "new normal," the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation closed all its historic sites, including the Ed Center at the Homestead. As a result, cancelled entirely were Mike Hebb's popular Pruning and Grafting Fruit Trees Workshops on March 21 and 28... and a Beginning Beekeeping Class on March 22.

Outdoor events weren't spared either. The Guided Walk at the Whitman Brook Orchard (more pruning and grafting) on April 18... the annual Wake Up the Garden "dig-fest" on May 16... the Open House Celebration on June 14... and the first of four walking tours of Morrill's Strafford Village on June 20... were all cancelled as well. Refunds of more than \$1,000 had to be sent out on March 20 to those who had signed up for the cancelled events.

In perhaps its most disheartening decisions, the Board recognized that there was little chance for large gatherings to be once again permissible by even late September, much less early July, and reluctantly voted to cancel the Gallery in the Garden celebration on July 3... the Art Show ("Farms & Barns, Roads & Rivers") scheduled for the following two weeks in the Carriage Barn... and the 19th Century Apple & Cheese Harvest Festival on September 27.

While we will miss seeing everyone at AppleFest and the G.I.G. this summer, we are excited that the silent auction of "Minis for Morrill" will be held online for the first time! Be sure to check the Friends' website, [www.morrillhomestead.org](http://www.morrillhomestead.org), for details on how you can view and bid on 4"x4" miniature paintings by talented artists from Strafford and beyond.

What about the rest of the Season? As of this writing, the VDHP has delayed opening their historic sites (including the Homestead) until July 3. This, of course, may change as the situation unfolds. However, we are still hopeful that, if appropriate, come late summer, we may be able to provide some form of our art workshops, youth camps, and historical and nature walks.

Please visit our website for the latest updates to our 2020 events calendar. And if you're looking for new ideas for local walks, you are always welcome to enjoy the Homestead grounds, even when the buildings are not open. The Friends and the VDHP invite you to explore the Victorian gardens of Senator Morrill's home... hike up the Coburn Trail to look over the village... or stroll through the heirloom apple orchard.

Although the Friends of the Morrill Homestead were sorry to cancel so many of our events, we are determined that when the Coronavirus crisis is over, we will still be here for our community, providing as broad an array of cultural activities and events as we can. The Morrill Homestead is fortunate to have so many dedicated supporters and volunteers to care for and preserve it through these uncertain times and into the future. Our thanks go out to all who contribute!

## MORRILL MINIS MOVE ONLINE



Mini painted by Andy Newman

What a wonderful way to enjoy works from area artists while supporting future programming at the Homestead... all without leaving home!



Mini painted by Gail Boyajian



Who's Who on the Board\*...

## ROGER WALKE: A VERMONT IN EVERY WAY BUT MAILING ADDRESS

Like all the Friends of the Morrill Homestead's Board members, Roger Walke has a keen interest in many aspects of American history, particularly Strafford history. But there is one fact of his life that none of his fellow members share: He has never been a resident of Vermont. In fact, in his ten or so years on the Board, he says he thinks he has attended two meetings in person. The rest have been by speakerphone from his home in Alexandria, Virginia.

So what's the connection to Strafford and the Homestead? In his youth, Roger's family moved several times due to his father's teaching (and later, preaching) careers. However, his grandfather had built a house in South Strafford in the 1930's, and the family retreated there every summer. By the time he left for college, "We were going up to Vermont for anywhere from half the summer to the full summer, which embedded Vermont in the minds and hearts of all three of us [siblings], specifically South Strafford. Since we were moving around so much, this was the place that really felt like home."

After college and a graduate degree in anthropology, Roger was recruited by a consulting firm

to research and write the local history chapters of cultural resources survey reports, thereby sparking his curiosity about Strafford's history. His professional career eventually led to 26 years



with the Congressional Research Service at the Library of Congress, researching and answering Congressional inquiries relating to American Indian policy and programs.

Roger retired in 2010, about the time his sister Martha joined the Friends' Board, and she soon

recruited him to join as well, in spite of the challenges of attending meetings in Strafford (solved only imperfectly by the speakerphone). Ever the researcher and with convenient and experienced access to the Library of Congress and the National Archives, he did the bulk of the primary research for *And Justice For All: Justin Morrill and the Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution*, the Friends' 2018 exhibit at the Homestead.

Both of his sisters are now Vermont residents, so when can we expect Roger to pull up stakes and join them here? When someone figures out how to have all of the resources of the Library of Congress and the National Archives available here in the Green Mountain State. ZOOM video conferencing has solved the speakerphone problem ("I'll actually be able to hear more than one or two people per meeting") but moving to Vermont is not imminent, although the annual visits continue.

*Chuck Ashton*

*Board Member, Friends of the Morrill Homestead*

\*This is the first in a planned series of articles profiling Board members of The Friends.

## GARDEN REPORT

The world as we know it has temporarily stalled, but the gardens don't know that. They are more likely to be impacted by a changing climate: too much heat, too much rain, not enough rain. And although the schedule for the historic site will change this summer, the gardens will keep growing and needing our care.



When Justin Morrill laid out his landscape/gardens in the mid-nineteenth century, America was going through another sort of transformation. Victorians of the day wanted highly designed and colorful garden beds, featuring new exotic plants sent here from all over the world. Many would not grow in our climate. Greenhouses, with perfect growing conditions, proliferated, so Morrill built a "hot house" to grow tender plants for what he termed his "pleasure ground" - decorative arabesque flower beds, laid out along serpentine walkways in front of his house. Because so much was

unknown about growing conditions of plants from far away, Morrill also created a garden laboratory, strangely called the 'kitchen garden,' behind the house. This space allowed him to test new perennials, herbs, berry bushes and fruit trees for adaptability and cold hardiness. Beds were set out as blocks and paths for easy access. When we started our reconstruction of Morrill's gardens, we followed his hand-drawn map, which today hangs in the front hall of the house, and chose plants that were on lists he wrote in the margins of his gardening books.

Today, the gardens are mature, and with tweaking - plants do not stay put - we can present a fine example of a mid-nineteenth century Victorian ornamental farm. . . in Vermont.

What was not a problem in Morrill's day, but is now an all-consuming concern for gardeners? INVASIVES! We all have them, we all know they are capable of taking over our garden beds (not to mention our roadways and surrounding



fields). Typically, invasives are not native plants. Might our invasives of today have once been considered "cherished" new plants from other parts of the world?

AJ Zwikelmaier, our onsite head gardener, has tasked herself with tackling this problem at the Homestead. She's been focused on it for several growing seasons. It's ongoing.

As I write this, we do not have a garden maintenance plan for going forward this summer. But we will have some additional help; two young ladies from Strafford - Charlotte and Laila Reimanis - will be assisting AJ throughout the season. Because, of course, gardening must go on! Besides, it's fun, a diversion, a bit of fresh air, and with proper distancing in place, gardening is social.

Stay tuned.

*Margie Carpenter*

*Board Member and Head Gardener, 'Emerita'*

## UPDATE: WE'RE MEETING OUR GOALS WITH YOUR HELP!

Back in 1998, when the Friends of the Morrill Homestead received our 501(c)(3) non-profit status, the goal of the organization was stated thusly: *To foster the awareness of the life and legacy of Senator Justin Morrill and to preserve and restore the Morrill Homestead, in partnership with the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation.*

A worthy and ambitious goal, to be sure. But some may wonder how, specifically, we're working to achieve it.

Not surprisingly, the answers involve both time and money.

Start with the hundreds of volunteer hours spent not only by the Board, but also the "Friends" themselves -- members of the Strafford community and beyond, who every year work to plan and execute our programs, events and exhibits, from concept to clean-up.

In 2019, over 2,000 people from near and far visited the Homestead to attend those programs, events and exhibits. And helping to spur this attendance was a schedule of over \$4,500 worth of paid advertising purchased by the Friends in local and state-wide media.



Many of our visitors took guided tours of the historic house conducted by VDHP docents... and strolled through the elegant grounds and

gardens. Of course, if they came on a Wednesday, Thursday or Friday, there's a good chance that their tours were made possible by a donation from the Friends. You see, several years ago, when budgetary pressures forced the State to reduce the days on which the Homestead was open for tours from five (Wednesday-Sunday) to only two (Saturday and Sunday), the Friends urged that the five-day schedule be restored. We also made an ongoing commitment to reimburse the State for any amount by which the costs of having docents on hand exceeded the revenue gained through



the tours they conducted. In some years, there has been no shortfall for us to make up. In 2019, however, it exceeded \$3,800 due primarily to the fact that the State was unable to renew a similar grant from another source.

And speaking of the gardens and grounds, since our inception, the Friends have shouldered the lion's share of the cost for maintaining the Homestead's gardens and restoring Morrill's historic apple orchard. Our head gardeners - from Margie Carpenter to Martha Cain to AJ Zwikelmaier - and a crew of volunteers have devoted untold hours working to bring the site closer to Senator Morrill's vision. But plants and garden supplies don't come free of charge. In 2019, we spent nearly \$4,500 making the site more attractive.



Apart from the ongoing commitments noted above, the Friends from time to time welcome the opportunity to assist the State with special projects. And 2019 provided two such occasions: Some readers may recall that the last issue of the Morrill Homestead *Chronicle* featured a story about an unexpected gift of monogrammed china donated to the State by Morrill's great-great-grand niece and nephew. Recognizing that the costs of packing and shipping the collection from the West Coast to Vermont would be significant, the Board voted to donate \$2,000 to help defray the expense.

The Board also voted to donate \$5,000 toward the cost of Marble Valley Engineering's drainage study of the property, including maps of existing historic and modern drainage systems and other key features. Using this study, VDHP is developing a water management plan that will mitigate the groundwater issues and better preserve the Homestead and the art and artifacts it contains.

Of course, none of this would be possible without the generosity of our loyal donors, our corporate sponsors, and the foundations that support our work. If you fall into one of these categories, you have earned our heartfelt THANKS!

*John Reese*

*Treasurer, Friends of the Morrill Homestead*

## REPORT FROM THE STATE OF VERMONT

This spring, staff at the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation have been working to develop plans for operation of our Historic Sites during the COVID-19 crisis. The public health concerns stemming from this crisis present unique challenges for the management of cultural, historic, and recreational resources across the country. At the time of this writing, we anticipate delayed openings with the closure of some buildings and sites. Appropriate social distancing will be required, and group sizes will be limited according to the recommendations of the Vermont Department of Health and executive orders of Governor Scott.

As is true of many of life's challenges, this situation has caused us to look at things in fresh ways. Most importantly, we have a renewed appreciation for the beautiful landscapes that surround all the State Historic Sites, and how precious those gardens, grounds, and trails are for the nearby communities. During this stressful time, we plan to redouble our efforts to maintain those features of the sites so as to provide restorative places for our neighbors to enjoy. As a



result of Senator Morrill's passion for landscape design, the Justin Morrill State Historic Site is an especially beautiful place to take a walk or have a picnic. Through the dedication and hard work of the Friends of the Morrill Homestead, the site's gardens provide a sensory experience that never fails to lift the spirits.

This season, staff from VDHP will be working closely with the Friends to improve garden pathways on the lower lawn and to tackle

invasives growing on the south side of the property. Additionally, we will work to clean up along the front fence where three oversized trees were removed last year and will be cutting brush that has grown up around the orchard. Work to repair the front fence, restore deteriorating building elements, and fabricate new wellhead houses in the upper woods is also planned.

Finally, VDHP staff will continue the professional investigation and analysis of the site and building drainage concerns we have identified in recent studies and will be looking to develop a substantial scope of work to address these concerns.

Even with many unknowns still before us, we look forward with confidence to another productive season at the Morrill site, working with our friends and neighbors to preserve Justin Morrill's home and farmstead as a gift to the broader community.

*Tracy Martin*

*Historic Sites Section Chief  
Vermont Division for Historic Preservation*