

CAMERON SPETH:

“SHE HAS THE CHARM TO TEASE THE LARD OUT OF A BISCUIT.”

The speaker, quoted in *Angels By The River: A Memoir* by James Gustave Speth, was Charles Council of Orangeburg, South Carolina, ... undoubtedly speaking with pride because he was talking about his daughter.

Cameron Council (“Cece”) Speth is a native of Orangeburg but says she has slowly been working her way north since finishing her education. Following her marriage to the aforementioned Gus Speth in 1965, the family has moved four times: first to Washington, DC, then to New York City, then to New Haven, Connecticut, and finally to Strafford in 2009. Along the way they raised a daughter and two sons, each now married with two children of their own, and all three strategically located so Cameron and Gus can visit during their yearly trips back to South Carolina.



AppleFest was the Speths' introduction to the Friends and the Morrill Homestead, about 2009 or '10. Cameron was invited to become a Friend shortly thereafter and hasn't looked back. Her tour of duty (which shows no signs of drawing to a close) has included “four or five” years as Chair. Visitors to AppleFest in 2021 will likely spot her at one of her usual posts, in the Ed. Center serving chili, or maybe at the apple tasting table.

“The site itself is a little jewel in a little town. It needs to be preserved and protected and enjoyed, and the Board works very hard to do that. Thanks to all the people who get the *Chronicle* who help us in all the ways they do.”

Asked to reveal something about herself that will surprise *Chronicle* readers, Cameron stops to think. “I’m raising chickens. We’ve raised a lot of chickens up here on our mountain. Meat birds for probably five or six seasons, and laying hens for now four, and even ducks.”

When the Speths left New Haven, looking for a place ultimately to retire, Strafford was not a specific destination they had in mind. “We were looking for land, we were looking for privacy, we were looking for being conveniently near a university...but what we didn’t know to look for was the community. The people and the community in Strafford and surrounding the Morrill Homestead were the bonus.” In other words, they have no plans to continue their northward migration.

*Chuck Ashton
Board Member, Friends of the Morrill Homestead*

A WORD FROM OUR BOARD CHAIR...

As I write this, the arrival of shorter and cooler days make clear that autumn and all of its colors will shortly be in full bloom in Vermont. This is normally a time that the

Friends of the Morrill Homestead would be busy preparing for one of our annual signature events, Applefest. For the past several years this celebration of autumn at the Homestead has been recognized as one of the Vermont Chamber of Commerce’s “top ten fall events” and has attracted consistently growing attendance from far and wide.

Yet, as we are all so aware, 2020 has proven to be far from normal and it is, indeed, far from normal that we will not be holding Applefest this year. We will certainly miss seeing so many neighbors, friends and visitors at the end of September but we look forward to planning this event again in 2021.

As the Homestead’s 2020 “season” draws to an end, we reflect that it has been, like so many other things this year, most unusual. While the majority of our larger events have had to be cancelled, our Director, Tracey McFadden, has remained busy planning and executing smaller outdoor programs that have continued to be well attended and successful.

Another of our signature events, Gallery in the Garden, typically held in early July, had to be cancelled. However our “mini auction” was held on-line and proved to be a terrific success. Great thanks go to Jon Stableford for his leadership in planning for this event!

So while many things have proven to be unusual and different for the Friends - and all of us - this year, one thing has remained constant. We are so grateful for the continued support and generosity of our neighbors, friends, contributors, sponsors and directors which has continued throughout 2020. We deeply appreciate your continued support and recognition of the importance of our work, along with the State of Vermont, to assure the continued vitality of Strafford’s Morrill Homestead! Please stay warm and safe!

*Peter Floeckher
Chair, Friends of the Morrill Homestead*

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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.



Photo by Michael

www.morrillhomestead.org

The MORRILL HOMESTEAD *Chronicle*

News and Information from Vermont’s First National Historic Landmark and State-Owned Historic Site
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COPING WITH CORONAVIRUS: HOW THE HOMESTEAD PERSEVERED.

As typical of each new year, January 2020 was a busy time for the staff of the State Historic Sites program. We anticipated hosting close to 80 special events and programs at the nine State Historic Sites that are open each season. We were also finalizing plans for several new brochure distribution programs, including one specifically for the Justin Morrill State Historic Site.

By the end of March, however, COVID-19 arrived to change everything! In a matter of weeks, our focus shifted from working out the finer points of specific programs... to attempting to answer the big question: *would we be able to open the State Historic Sites at all?*

During the spring months, we gathered information and consulted with other professionals in the fields of museum and cultural resource management, both in Vermont and across the country. We made use of resources provided by the Vermont Arts Council, Vermont State Parks, Vermont Curators Group, New England Museum Association, Association for State and Local History, National Park Service, and National Center for Preservation Technology and Training. We participated in a variety of webinars and online conversations, and read numerous articles exploring how to reopen cultural facilities while addressing the safety issues specific to our types of institutions.



Special signage and a 6-foot long antique wheelbarrow help visitors visualize what constitutes a safe social distance at the Morrill Carriage Barn.

Using what we learned, we drafted a detailed reopening guidance document for the State Historic Sites and a two-page set of COVID-19 cleaning protocols. An array of special supplies was required to safely operate the sites, and tracking down PPE (masks, gloves, and safety glasses) was challenging. We even worked with our partners at the Department of Buildings and General Services to secure free bulk hand sanitizer!

Thanks to the work of our intrepid staff, six of our State Historic Sites opened to the public during the first week of July. Although most events were postponed or cancelled and limits set on tour group sizes and building occupancy, the response from the public has been overwhelmingly positive. Visitors seem grateful to have access to these special places where they can soak up a bit of history and a beautiful view at the same time. Nowhere has that response been more evident than at the Sen. Justin Morrill State Historic Site, despite the significant changes that had to be introduced.

For starters, days of operation had to be cut: instead of Wednesday through Sunday, the Homestead was opened for tours from Friday through Sunday. But our manpower needs actually increased; the social distancing protocols required that two tour guides be on hand during opening hours.

Masks were, of course, required, and tours themselves were limited to four people (plus the tour guide). Because of the close quarters, the second floor of the house had to be closed to visitors. New procedures were introduced for cleaning and sanitizing restrooms and other locations frequented by the public. And we also instituted a one-way traffic flow in the carriage barn to facilitate social distancing.



Photo by Scott Miller

Despite it all, visitors from near and far continued to enjoy the Homestead and its historic gardens, grounds and trails throughout the summer.

We continue to be deeply appreciative of the remarkable partnership that we enjoy with the Friends of the Morrill Homestead. We know that this has been a challenging season all-around but we look forward to working together under simpler circumstances next season.

*Tracy Martin
Historic Sites Section Chief
Vermont Division for Historic Preservation*

ON-LINE “MINI” AUCTION RAISES OVER \$7,000

Every not-for-profit organization has a story to tell about the adjustments they had to make during the Covid-19 pandemic. If they are lucky, the story will include a discovery that can be carried forward when they're able to return to “normal” to improve the effectiveness and productivity of the organization's work.

For more than a decade now, the Friends of the Morrill Homestead have hosted a community party we call “The Gallery in the Garden” (GIG) to kick off a two-week art show in the Carriage Barn and to raise money for educational programs through a live auction of 4”x4” mini paintings donated by local artists. We began serious planning for this event in mid-December before any of us had even

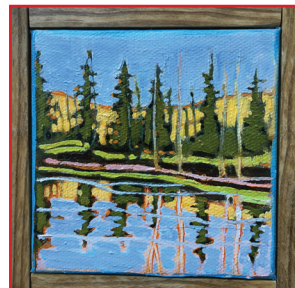


Beth Preston

the slightest notion 2020 would unfold as it did on Planet Earth, and throughout a good part of the spring, we held out hope that mitigation efforts against the spread of the virus would allow us to proceed with our scheduled kickoff on the 4th of July weekend. When it became clear that we would have to cancel (along with nearly all programs straight through to Fall), we rebounded with an idea we had been floating in an only-theoretical stage for the past three years: *an online auction.*

In a normal year, the GIG committee solicits minis from the 14-16 artists who participate in the Carriage Barn Show and a few others from known sources, but the agents for the majority of the minis are a pair of volunteers – Therese

Linehan and Jessica Tidman. This year we followed the same procedure, but for an online auction, and the response was heartening and enthusiastic. When we opened the auction, bidders could see images of 62 mini paintings, more than we had ever offered in a live auction.



Jean Gerber

At the heart of this enterprise was the tireless work of Tracey McFadden, Director of The Friends of the Morrill Homestead, who researched auction sites and chose Bidding Owl, then photographed each mini as it arrived and mounted the image on the bidding platform. Before and then during the auction, people could browse on-line or even view the minis under safe and carefully-regulated conditions in person at the Education Center over a period of five days. 91 visitors saw the minis in person.

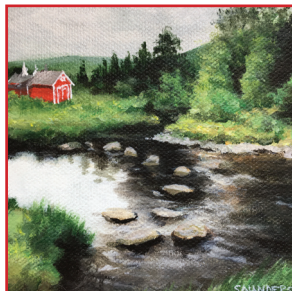


David Macaulay

The auction ran for eight days, and during that period 84 people made a total of 400 bids. In the end, the 62 minis went to 33 bidders, over half of them with winning bids on more than one

painting. The bottom line was startling: after subtracting Bidding Owl's commission, we had raised over \$7,000 dollars -- about \$2,000 more than ever before. While on-line bidding allowed people to bid from far beyond the Upper Valley, in the end, most of the successful bidders were local. Only 12 minis required mailing.

What we have learned, going forward, is that when it is safe to once again host a live Gallery in the Garden, we will also have an online dimension to our auction. People have told us that they appreciated being able to bid from the privacy of their homes and having a full week to do so. Moreover, we know that those unable to attend the GIG in person will appreciate an opportunity to participate in the auction. The precise shape of next year remains a mystery, but it is our hope to hang the Carriage Barn art show we had intended for this July: “Farms and Barns, Roads and Rivers.”



Lindsey Saunders

The Friends, and particularly the GIG committee, would like to thank our sponsors for this event... the professional and amateur artists who contributed minis (some of them more than one!)... and everyone who made bids in this very successful auction.

Jonathan Stableford
Board Member, Friends of the Morrill Homestead

COVID CAN'T CURTAIL PHOTO & VIDEO STORY CAMP



Wearing masks and social distancing didn't deter eight teens from throwing their enthusiasm and creativity into Photo & Video Story Camp at the Homestead! Led by Scott and Lindsay McClure Miller of World Story Exchange, the campers learned photography techniques such as bracing and perspective. They also took guided tours of Morrill's home and village to better understand the childhood, interests, and influences of Justin Morrill. Then they explored the Homestead and Stafford Village on their own to practice their new photography skills.

Each camper filmed and edited a short multi-media documentary including interviews and drone footage. Although all the videos focused on Justin Morrill and his homestead, they were each as varied and unique as the personalities who created them! Their topics include Gothic Revival architecture, Morrill's legacy, his gardens, and the science he used to build the Homestead. There is even a Justin Morrill ghost story!



Photo by Daniel



Photo by Esme

While researching and filming their projects, campers engaged community members from a variety of organizations including the Stafford Historical Society, the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation, the Morrill Memorial & Harris Library, and the Friends of the Morrill Homestead. The week culminated with a photography show in the

Stafford Post Office (formerly Justin Morrill's store). What a wonderful way to combine technology, history, and community!

A few of the fabulous photos taken by the campers can be found throughout this newsletter, and on the top of our website homepage (morrillhomestead.org) you will find a link to the Story Camp Videos. Enjoy!

2020 SEASON HIGHLIGHTS

All was not lost in 2020! Coronavirus may have canceled many of our most popular events, but by moving other programs outdoors and limiting the number of participants, we were still able to host several key programs.

Jennifer Brown taught multiple “Painting Botanicals” evening and afternoon workshops under tents set up in the garden. The garden's ever-changing palette of colors was perfect for practicing watercolor techniques.

Our Guided Walk through Whitman Brook Orchard was in the spirit of Justin Morrill's love of learning and experimental horticulture. Terry Dorman, owner/manager of this 100 year old restored apple orchard, shared his knowledge of a multitude of apple varieties along with pruning and grafting practices. So many people were interested in touring the orchard, we added a second walk to safely accommodate everyone.



Former FMH director, Michael Caduto returned to the Homestead this September to lead “Fiddleheads, Lamb's Quarters, Nettles and Nuts: Wild Edible, Medicinal, and Poisonous Plants.” Michael's nature walk was also so popular, we added a second walk and still had a lengthy waitlist. It fell on a perfect fall day for exploring the grounds and woods of the Homestead while learning about the many uses of wild plants.

The highlight of my summer was getting to work with an enthusiastic group of teens at our Photo & Video Story Camp.

The Homestead may not have been the site of our usual large community events, but it felt good to still be a place for visitors to find serenity in the blooming gardens and to explore history closer to home.

Tracey McFadden
Director, Friends of the Morrill Homestead

SPOTLIGHTING MORRILL'S ANTI-SLAVERY AND RACIAL EQUALITY LEGACY

Many readers of the Morrill Homestead *Chronicle* may not realize that Justin Smith Morrill played a significant role in winning the Civil War... ending slavery... and trying to guarantee civil and political rights for Blacks and everyone else. His signature legislation, the Land-Grant College Act, led Frederick Douglass to write him in 1880, “I see no great or happy future for my race or for the Republic outside general education and it seems to me that you, dear sir, can do no better work for the nation than to press this idea upon the nation's heart and mind.”

Justin Morrill was elected to the House of Representatives in 1854 as an anti-slavery Whig but had become a Republican (and helped found the state Republican party) by the time he took his seat a year later. The Republican Party opposed slavery, but at the time saw no federal power under the Constitution, legislative or executive, to abolish it in the states where it existed. So Republicans campaigned to prohibit new “slave states” and keep slavery out of U.S. territories – slavery confined would eventually wither away, was the strategy. (The South knew this was Republicans' strategy. When Republicans won the 1860 elections, the South seceded.)

Morrill became a House leader during the 1855-60 struggle to prevent the admission of Kansas

as a slave state, part of the Republicans' strategy. His “maiden speech” in 1856 urged Congress to admit Kansas under the anti-slavery “Topeka” constitution, and in 1858 Republicans chose him as their senior minority member on the special House committee considering admitting Kansas under the pro-slavery “Lecompton” constitution. (Kansas was not admitted then.)

Morrill's tariff bill of 1859-60 – the “Morrill Tariff” – was excoriated by southern congressmen and didn't pass, but helped win Lincoln the presidency, and Republicans the Congress, in 1860. The Morrill Tariff passed in the next Congress, in 1861.

But it was the War itself that saw Justin Morrill's greatest achievements to end slavery. Morrill wrote the House taxation bills that funded the government and that paid for the loans that financed the Union's armies and navy. Morrill had no staff. He wrote the tariff bills himself, wrote the internal revenue bills – including excise taxes and the first income tax in American history – that funded the United States to victory. Moreover, his 1862 tax bill created the Commissioner of Internal Revenue and inspired the basic legal machinery behind today's IRS and its tax-collecting powers.

Teamed with Thaddeus Stevens, Morrill became a master at getting his taxation bills through the House. Fellow House members considered him indispensable. Rep. Samuel Cox (D-OH) said his “skill in tariff calculations never flagged during the excitements of the war.” Rep. Henry Winter Davis (MD) wrote to Morrill, “There is no one who will prepare such a [tariff] bill as yourself in the [House] ...; for there is no one who has your experience and preparation and very few have your knowledge of the business of the country in detail.”

Biographer Randall Hoyer observed, “Without Morrill's adept handling of his duties on the [House] Ways and Means Committee during an unprecedented financial crisis, the war effort and the government could have collapsed.” The congressional history of the House Ways and Means Committee summarizes, “Tax expert Justin Morrill headed the Ways and Means subcommittee on taxation and brought his genius for finance to bear on the problem of funding the Union's Civil War effort.”

Roger Walke
Board Member, Friends of the Morrill Homestead

Note: This is the first of two articles exploring Justin Morrill's anti-slavery and racial equality legacy. The second will appear in the Spring 2021 issue.

COVID AND THE GARDENS

What better place is there to visit or work in during the Pandemic than a garden with a history. The gardens at the Justin Morrill Homestead have masks, distancing, nature, ever-changing flowers, colors, sights and sounds, and a sense of another time. Many people have commented on how peaceful and enjoyable it is to be there, whether gardening or just visiting.



Photo by Joss

This year's garden crew included Laila and Charlotte Reimanis, EMG Intern Lenora Kimball, and a number of other volunteers, in addition to myself. We've all been busy keeping the landscape as healthy as possible, given the challenges the 2020 season has sent our way. The weather has been so variable and



inconsistent, with hot days, drought conditions, or downpours... all of which stress plants in many ways!

The season started early and so did the pests that fly, hatch out, chew, and wander through the garden. Plants, by nature, just keep growing whether wanted in the garden or not. Some areas in the garden have changed: old plants or shrubs are gone, different varieties grace the annual beds, and some Victorian features are

reappearing. Many of these factors are always encountered in gardening, but this season's time line and intensity feel different.

Come and wander through and see if you notice changes; or, just enjoy a wonderful spot in these challenging times. The Garden is always open, even if the house is not! We would love to hear from you and would appreciate any questions or comments.

A.J. Zwickelmaier,
EMG
Head Gardener

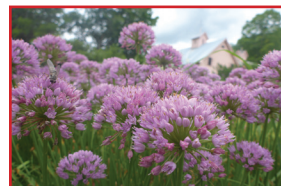


Photo by Ivy



Photo by Ezra