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for a very busy gardening crew. Fortunately, two local students, Simone Prescott and Andrew North, joined the staff, and we also began the summer with four Master Gardener Interns. Although we have always had variable numbers of volunteers throughout the season, we have managed to persevere with what needed doing.



Photo by Wolfgang

took out 11 fruit trees that were no longer productive; seven new fruit trees (sand cherries and chokeberries) were planted in the amended spots. The entrance to the kitchen garden was widened by moving one gray dogwood shrub back, to screen the compost pile. Compost, soil, and mulch were repositioned in the same area with the help of a tractor, and the hope is to someday produce more of our own compost.

What did that entail besides the usual garden tasks of weeding, dividing and transplanting, deadheading, mulching, watering, spraying weeded paths, and dealing with the effects of plant disease, climate change, and crawling, flying, and four legged pests?

It entailed a lot!  
On Wake Up the Garden Day, we



Photo by Maddie

## UPDATE FROM MORRILL'S GARDENS

The 2021 season at JMH focused on fixing and updating the gardens and grounds. That

challenge meant

Arborist Matt Perry pruned the original and grafted magnolias along with shrubs and trees throughout the front and kitchen garden. We've also begun to use layering to help with soil health and weed control.

Last but not least, dealing with "invasive plants" is a constant. Senator Morrill planted buckthorn by the orchard and near the summerhouse because it was a fast grower and would help screen those areas. Unfortunately buckthorn is also a prolific spreader - particularly in any area where birds perch or fly over. We have it showing up in every shrub, bed and field. And buckthorn is not the only invader on the grounds. We are monitoring and minimizing knotweed, goatweed, chervil, wild parsnip, burning bush, and barberry!

We have made some progress by moving native plants to the edges of beds, thereby stopping some spreading by invasives. In addition, several solarizing stations have been set up to dry out any that are cut or pulled, preventing them from rooting. However, the battle against invasives will remain a constant part of gardening here.

Indeed, it's been a busy, busy year. But as the season draws to a close, the garden crew sends a heartfelt "thank you" to all who have contributed to keeping Justin Morrill's gardens a beautiful historic refuge from the changing world.

AJ Zwickelmaier, EMG  
Head Gardener

## A WORD FROM OUR CHAIR...

On the upside, the Homestead experienced good numbers of visitors to the site. In addition, our Sunday afternoon Speaker series and the numerous camps and workshops conducted by the Friends were well attended, and our online auction of "Morrill Minis" was again a great success.

On the downside, our annual Gallery in the Garden art show in July and AppleFest in September had to be cancelled. The latter was particularly disappointing, but not totally unexpected.

By Labor Day, other sites maintained by the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation had eliminated plans for any food to be distributed at their fall events. But AppleFest is literally centered on apples, cider, cheese, ice cream, and desserts. How could we hold it without food? But if food were offered, how could we expect attendees to mask up? How would we social distance - for example, when closely supervising, for safety reasons, the children taking turns at operating the cider press? And if we were somehow able to hold AppleFest in the face of these concerns and the upsurge in infections were to continue, would anyone attend?

Questions like these led us to reluctantly but unanimously decide to cancel. But we expect to be back with full vigor in 2022. You can count on it!

To close this "up and down" year on a more positive note, I want to point out once again that the Friends' ability to remain healthy as an organization, particularly over the past several years, has been due to the tremendous level of loyal support we receive. That support comes from those who *fund* the work (the major funders listed above, the underwriters and sponsors of our events, and the many individuals who respond so faithfully to our annual appeals) and those who *do* the work (our Director, Tracey McFadden, our dedicated Board of Directors, and our many volunteers). Hats off to you all! We really can't thank you enough!

Peter Floeckher  
Chair, Friends of the Morrill Homestead

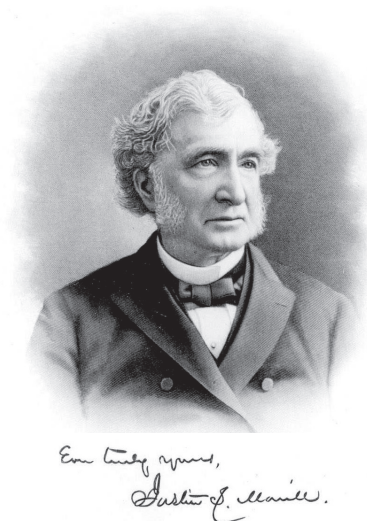
## Friends of the Morrill Homestead

State-Owned Site and National Historic Landmark

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Tracy Martin

(Vermont Division for Historic Preservation)

*The Justin Morrill Historic Site, one of ten 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 Lyle

[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

Fall 2021: VOL. 15 No. 2

## A SUMMER OF HAPPENINGS AT THE HOMESTEAD

Although we had to operate under the challenges of Covid, the Friends of the Morrill Homestead were able to safely provide a full and varied program of events in 2021.

We matched our schedule with the state's delayed opening and began our summer programming in July with a successful *Minis For Morrill* online auction followed by three weeks of arts camps. Jennifer Brown returned to lead *Drawing & Watercolor Camp*. Campers explored the grounds and gardens with art journals and watercolor sets in hand, painting and sketching the flowers, pollinators, and architecture of the Homestead. Young photographers arrived the



Multi-Media campers film an interview with *Historical Walking Tours* leader John Freitag

next week to learn and practice new camera skills and ways of seeing in Scott Miller's *Photography Camp*. They proudly displayed some of their original, imaginative photographs in an exhibit in the Strafford Post Office. You can find some of their photos sprinkled throughout this newsletter. For the final week of camps, Scott led a small group of middle schoolers in creating short videos about Justin Morrill, his homestead, and his town. The



Drawing & Watercolor artist shares her pop-up painting

filmmakers used cameras, drones, and audio and video recording equipment to document topics including *Morrill's Barns*, *Ice & Water at the Homestead*, and *Morrill's Self-Taught Education*. The camp instructors also shared their talents with adults in Scott's *Technical & Creative Photography* classes and Jennifer's *Painting Botanicals* series.

John Freitag was back this summer leading monthly *Historical Walking Tours of Morrill's Strafford Village*.

It's amazing how little Morrill's hometown has changed since he was a young man in the 1800's!

In August, the Friends also sponsored a *Guided Walk of Whitman Brook Orchard*. Participants got a close-up look at the reclamation and restoration of a 100-year-old abandoned hillside orchard and learned about the history, characteristics, and uses of many heirloom apple varieties.



Photo by Mila



Fiber-Dyeing Workshop with Justin Squizzero

New this season was *Fiber-Dyeing Using Natural Materials* with Justin Squizzero, creator of handspun, naturally-dyed, hand-woven textiles using methods and equipment from the 18th and 19th centuries. Participants in this workshop learned the basics of natural dyeing using plants, minerals, and insects.

September was busier than ever at the Homestead! Former Director Michael Caduto returned to lead his popular nature walk, *Fiddleheads, Lamb's Quarters, Nettles, and Nuts: Wild Edible, Medicinal, and Poisonous*

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REPORT FROM THE STATE...

The 2021 season at the Sen. Justin Morrill State Historic Site began with cautious optimism. Staff from the Montpelier office of the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation (VDHP) once again traveled to Stafford to help clean the house and set up the rooms for “receiving company.”

Special attention was paid to the second floor of the house which been closed to the public last season. The small size of those rooms made safe social distancing impossible. Additionally, selected pieces of furniture from the first floor had to be stored upstairs in 2020, to allow for a smooth flow of foot traffic downstairs. This necessary shuffling of furniture gave us the opportunity to rethink some of the tighter spaces in the house and to make permanent adjustments accordingly.

VDHP staff took special pleasure in resetting the dining room table for the current season using even more pieces of the lovely china donated to the historic site by descendants of Justin Morrill in 2020. In the Morrill house this year, it was perpetually time for dinner.

Opening day 2021 was delayed for a month, so that the season began auspiciously on the weekend of July 4th. Visitation was high for opening weekend and stayed strong throughout the summer. Tours of the house have only been offered on Saturdays and Sundays this season, but it is interesting to note that the number of visitors touring the house on weekends in July was up 20% over those touring the house on weekends in July 2019.

This summer, we were excited to welcome visitors

who found our site in the new Vermont African American Heritage Trail brochure. The site’s inclusion on the trail stems from Justin Morrill’s second Land Grant College Act, which was the impetus for the establishment of several of our nation’s historically black colleges, sometimes referred to as the 1890 schools. For more information on the Vermont African American History Trail, we encourage readers to visit [vermontvacation.com](http://vermontvacation.com).

We are grateful to the Friends of the Morrill Homestead for navigating the uncertainty of this season along with us. The engaging public programs they have provided were well received, and along with the upbeat energy that participants brought to the site, they were welcome signs that we are moving ever closer to normal operations.

Tracy Martin  
Historic Sites Section Chief  
Vermont Division for Historic Preservation

2021 MINI AUCTION

Ah, second-guessing! When July arrived with what looked like the pandemic in retreat, the Friends naturally wondered if we had been overly cautious in December when we canceled our traditional Gallery in the Garden and opted for another on-line auction of mini paintings. The 2020 version had been a huge success, but we missed the party, the art show, and the live auction. Weeks after the event our extreme caution now seems wise.

By all measures the 2021 auction was a success, raising a little over \$5,000 to help fund the Friends’ educational programs. That is less than last year’s outlier success, but right there with our best years previous to 2020. Once again, bidders who lived in the area were able to see the minis in-person over the week-long auction, and for an even longer period, anyone could take a virtual tour of photographic images.

A total of 138 people came to view the minis live; many of them eventually became winning bidders, although a few of our winners saw their prizes only



Painting the Sky by Gerry Bergstein

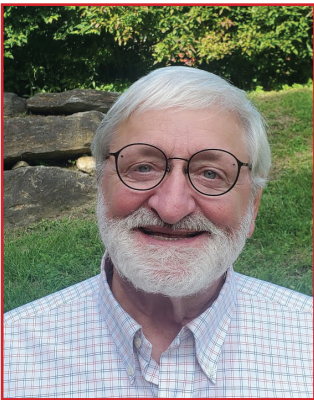
remotely. The overwhelming response from those who were able to see the minis both ways: “They are so much more dynamic in person!”

It’s not clear when our culture will “return to normal,” nor clear what that normal will look like, but the Gallery in the Garden committee has a clear vision of how we would like our event to unfold in 2022. An exciting art show in the Carriage Barn will open and run for two weeks. There will be a huge party on site where friends of the Friends can stroll leisurely through the show and meet the artists. At the party everyone will be able to see the minis live inside the Education Center and then on-line when bidding begins after the party and lasts for a week. For this vision to become real, we will need better control over the pandemic, but the committee is hopeful.

Back to our second guessing: on July 2, the rainiest July in Vermont history began precisely at the moment we would have been welcoming guests if we had opted for a traditional Gallery in the Garden.

Jonathan Stableford  
Board Member, Friends of the Morrill Homestead

Who’s Who on the Board...



JOHN DUMVILLE  
HE AND THE HOMESTEAD GO “WAY BACK!”

Life-long Vermonter John Dumville is not only the Chair of the Friends of the Vermont State House... Treasurer of the 251 Club of Vermont... a member of the Royalton Selectboard...and Secretary of the Friends of the Morrill Homestead Board: he is also the only Board member who was already very familiar with the Morrill house before it came into State ownership in 1969.

“It used to be the local ‘illegal’ party site at night for kids. We all knew which window opened.”

In 1938 John’s father moved from New Jersey to a farm on Waterman Road in Royalton, because he hated working in Manhattan and wanted to be a farmer. John’s mother arrived in 1947 following their marriage. The Dumville family was raised in that house, and today it is the home of his sister. After graduating from South Royalton High School and Lyndon State College, John was a member of the first class to earn a Master’s degree in Historic Preservation from the University of Vermont.

In 1978 he went to work for the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation as a field architectural surveyor. In 1979, still with the Division, he became Historic Sites Operations Chief, with responsibility for about 10 state-owned historic sites, including the Morrill Homestead, a position he held until his retirement in 2014.

One part of his job with the Division was managing the familiar green-and-gold roadside historic site markers (one of which graces the Morrill Homestead). John estimates that he was responsible for the installation of about 143 of them during his tenure.

Another part of the job was representing the Division at meetings of the Friends, so he was well-known to the Board over the years. Shortly after he retired, he was invited to become a full-fledged board member, partly because of his deep knowledge of the history of the property. Besides, as he says reflecting back to those parties in the ‘60s, “I always loved the Morrill Homestead.”

Vermonters and visitors to the Homestead today are fortunate that those ‘60s parties were so well-behaved.

Chuck Ashton  
Vice Chair, Friends of the Morrill Homestead

Continued from page 1

MORE HAPPENINGS AT THE HOMESTEAD



Young Photographers in the Carriage Barn

**Plants.** Beekeeper Sheri Englert made her first appearance at the Homestead to teach *Beginner Beekeeping Class* giving participants all they needed to know to start their beekeeping journey.

The Friends were especially excited to host *The Abenaki Experience: Prehistory to Present*, a Sunday afternoon speakers series, to bring about an understanding of the long and complicated history of the indigenous people of this area, looking not only at the conflict and misunderstandings of the past but also the vibrancy of the Abenaki community today. The series started with “*Archaeological History of the CT River Valley*” with Jess Robinson, followed



Joseph Bruchac speaks on The Abenaki Experience

by “*The Vermont Abenakis: Un-writing History*” with Fred Wiseman, and ended with “*We Are Still Here*” with Joseph and Jesse Bruchac of the Nulhegan Abenaki Nation. The Bruchacs also led *Our Stories Remember*, an engaging story time



Jennifer Brown teaching Painting Botanicals

for families. Using drum, flute, rattle, and vocals, the father and son duo shared Abenaki stories at this free outdoor event. It was the perfect way to wrap up our 2021 season.

Our programs are supported through the generosity of our donors and local business sponsors. I would also like to thank our presenters and participants for being both flexible and thoughtful of everyone’s safety during this pandemic. You all made this remarkable season possible!

Tracey McFadden  
Director, Friends of the Morrill Homestead

CRAFTING  
A NEW MISSION STATEMENT

In the Summer of 2020, during the re-emergence of the historic, chronic racial issues facing our country, the Friends of the Morrill Homestead undertook a review of our Mission Statement. We felt it necessary to see whether the issue of racism had been addressed and, if not, how the Friends could play a part in confronting systemic racism.

From our inception, our Mission Statement directed us to “foster a greater awareness of the life and legacy of Justin Morrill.” So we took this occasion to ask ourselves, “How well have our efforts and events over the years met with this obligation? Have the Friends addressed the issues that Justin Morrill addressed in his political endeavors? Did Justin Morrill’s political work offer improvement and solutions? Did he bring to light blatant injustices? Did some of his political endeavors possibly become a part of the obvious inequalities that have been woven into our nation’s origin?”

As a Senator, Justin Morrill’s legislative efforts repeatedly reflected his commitment to combating racism and promoting equality. His major accomplishment in fighting inequality was his role as the architect of the Fourteenth Amendment, which granted equal protection and rights to freed slaves. Additionally, he used his political position to endorse a broader

educational structure across the nation to foster agriculture and higher learning. He developed legislation to create the “Morrill Land-Grant College Act,” which resulted in a “state university” in every state of the Union primarily to support these educational efforts.

But, to create these institutions, land was needed. The underlying truth of this particular effort was the often forceful and inequitable acquisition of native and indigenous lands.

In the quest for truth and fairness, the Friends have decided to shine a light on this failing. We have revised the Mission Statement to read as it appears here. In addition, some of the historical displays at the Homestead site and their accompanying dialogue will be revised. We have also created a lecture series to examine the local Native Culture and expose injustices suffered by these people.

Justin Morrill was a very powerful force in growing a country that claimed to reflect equality and fairness. Despite his best intentions, the fact remains that some of his efforts perfectly illustrate what systemic racism is and how “innocently” it has been incorporated into this country’s culture.

John Echternach  
Board Member, Friends of the Morrill Homestead



Photo by Teo

OUR  
NEW  
MISSION  
STATEMENT

The mission of The Friends of the Morrill Homestead is to work closely with the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation (VDHP) to foster a greater awareness of the life and legacy of Justin Morrill and to preserve and maintain this National Historic Landmark and State Historic Site.

As we celebrate Morrill’s work toward universal education, the dismantling of slavery, and ensuring equal rights and justice for all citizens, we are morally obligated to educate ourselves and others about the shortcomings and unfulfilled promises of some aspects of his work and to acknowledge that the lands awarded to states for the creation of the Morrill Land-Grant College Act were originally seized from Native Americans. In our work with the VDHP and in the design and implementation of our educational programs, we will strive for historical accuracy that includes the good that Morrill’s vision has produced, as well as the truth about injustices and unfulfilled promises.