

## MAJOR FUNDERS

Woodbury Foundation  
Vermont Humanities Council  
Jack & Dorothy Byrne Foundation

## UNDERWRITERS

Mascoma Bank  
Norwich University  
Hotel Coolidge

## SPONSORS

Agatha's Resale Shop  
Alicia Willette, DDS  
Bonnie Bergeron at Martha Diebold Realty  
Bushway Insurance Agency  
Coburns' General Store  
EC Browns' Nursery  
EC Fiber  
Eric Thorp Diversified  
Flint, Blake, & Boles Roofing  
Janet Cavanaugh, Landscape Architect  
Kate Cassidy at Four Seasons-Sotheby's  
Kumon Math & Reading  
MC Autoworks  
Old City Tree Service  
Stone Soup  
Strafford Village Farm

## Friends of the Morrill Homestead

State-Owned Site and National Historic Landmark

POST OFFICE BOX 98 • STRAFFORD, VERMONT • 05072

## ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

PRESORTED STANDARD  
U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
PERMIT NO. 6  
STRAFFORD, VERMONT  
05072



Em. truly yours,  
Justin S. Morrill.

## FRIENDS OF THE MORRILL HOMESTEAD

Ingrid Webb  
*Chair*

Chuck Ashton  
*Vice-Chair*

John Dumville  
*Secretary*

John Reese  
*Treasurer*

Mark Black  
Mergie Carpenter  
Jameson Davis  
John Echternach  
Peter Floeckher  
John Hart  
Emily Howe  
Cameron Speth  
Jon Stableford  
Roger Walke

*Ex-Officio*

Tracey McFadden

Laura Trieschmann

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 Will Cooney

[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

Spring 2022: VOL. 16 No. 1

## MORRILL'S ROLE IN THE CAPITOL GROUNDS' DESIGN

The U.S. Capitol grounds, as we see them now, were designed in the late 19th century by Frederick Law Olmsted. Many people know that Justin Morrill was important in Olmsted's landscaping of the Capitol grounds. But what exactly did Senator Morrill do?

First, Senator Morrill set the stage for a new landscape design for the Capitol grounds. Second, he recruited Frederick Law Olmsted – and only Olmsted – to be designer of the new Capitol grounds. Third, he got Congress to create the job and to employ Olmsted – and only Olmsted – to create the design and first direct its realization. Fourth, each year for 19 years he led the effort in the Senate to ensure Congress funded Olmsted's plan to its completion.

Here's how it all came about!

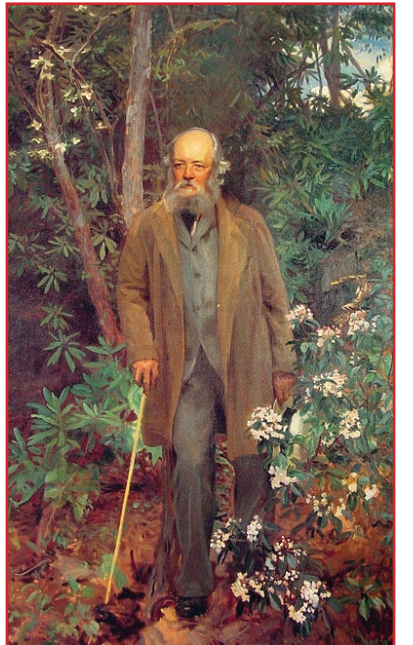
The Capitol grounds have not always been the neat near-rectangle we know. In 1872, they didn't include the northeast and southeast corners. Multiple bills to enlarge the grounds had failed to pass. Morrill, chair of the Senate buildings and grounds committee, took a new tack. He added Capitol grounds enlargement to an annual appropriations bill. It worked. Congress approved the Capitol grounds enlargement in 1872. By early 1873 the Capitol grounds were enlarged. Morrill had set the stage.

Next, on May 6, 1873, Morrill wrote to Frederick Law Olmsted. "The additions to the grounds of the Capitol make it important that they should be laid out with proper skill.... I hope you may feel sufficient interest in this rather national object – not to have it botched – to be at the trouble of a flying trip here." Olmsted, ill for much of 1873, eventually visited Washington in January 1874, then wrote Morrill a long analysis of what was needed. Olmsted was recruited.

Now Morrill had to create the job and make sure Olmsted got it. On January 22, 1874, he introduced a bill, with appropriations, directing the Senate and House committees on buildings and grounds to procure a survey of the Capitol grounds and to employ Olmsted, specifically, to plan their improvement. The bill passed March 21, 1874. Six days later Morrill and the chair of the House committee agreed to Olmsted's terms for the job. Olmsted now had the job, with funding, to design the Capitol grounds.

Morrill then had to make sure federal appropriations continued. He amended an upcoming appropriations bill, adding funds "For improvement of Capitol grounds, according to the plans and under the general direction of Fred. Law Olmsted." Enacted June 23, 1874, the bill was the first of some 20 appropriation bills that Morrill helped shepherd through Congress to complete Olmsted's Capitol grounds design.

The Friends of the Morrill Homestead are partnering with Olmsted 200 to celebrate Olmsted's achievements – and to honor Justin Morrill's role making possible one of Olmsted's great works.



Frederick Law Olmsted, 1895  
by John Singer Sargent

## GALLERY IN THE GARDEN RETURNS

After all the pandemic has stolen from us in the past two years, here is an invitation to normality. On Friday July 1 at 5:00, the Friends of the Morrill Homestead will open the doors to our first Carriage Barn art show since 2019, and we will pop a few corks in celebration. 17 artists are contributing to this year's show entitled "The Other American Dream," and the stunning work of our two featured artists - Matt Brown and Jo Levasseur – will fill the upper display space.



"Ascutney Afternoon"  
by Matt Brown

At 5:30 the full party will begin, and guests will be able to stroll through the Education Center to view an array of mini paintings contributed by generous artists for our annual auction. This year as we return to "normal," we will retain the online auction we had to resort to for the past two years, simply because it worked so well. Mini paintings can be viewed in advance at: [biddingowl.com/JustinMorrillHomestead](http://biddingowl.com/JustinMorrillHomestead), and those who will be unable to attend the party can join in the fun by taking a virtual tour of the minis in real time. Bidding will

begin at 7:00 pm on July 1 at the same site and conclude one week later at 7:00 pm on July 8.

The art show will run for two weeks on the days the Homestead is open to the public – 10:00 am -5:00 pm, Fridays through Sundays – until Sunday, July 17. During this time people will have the opportunity to buy paintings from the show at prices listed on a handout available at the door.

The money raised by the auction and by the small commissions that are part of the show painting prices helps to fund the programs that the Friends of the Morrill Homestead run throughout the year. (You can find a schedule for these programs at [morrillhomestead.org](http://morrillhomestead.org).) But equally important as being a fund-raiser, the Gallery in the Garden is a social and aesthetic event where friends can gather in a beautiful and historic setting and be uplifted by the glory of art!



"March Crescent Moon"  
by Jo Levasseur

Jon Stableford  
*Board Member, Friends of the Morrill Homestead*

## A WORD FROM OUR CHAIR...

Greetings! I would like to introduce myself as the new Board Chair of the Friends of the Morrill Homestead. For those who don't know me, I'm a long time Upper Valley resident who taught at the Newton School for many years and brought classes to learn about Senator Morrill and take a tour of his home. I also taught art and brought the middle school students to the Homestead to draw the house. It is quite challenging to draw all the angles of the place in proper perspective. If you don't believe me, come and try it!

As you will read elsewhere in this issue, we have a full schedule of events planned for the 2022 season and I am looking forward to welcoming you back to the Morrill Homestead. Why not start with the Open House on June 12?

I am also hoping to see a resurgence in the financial support that makes possible everything that the Friends do. The fact is, as you read this issue of the Morrill Homestead *Chronicle*, the odds are only one in three that you've ever made a donation to the Friends.

If you've supported us in the past, you have my sincere thanks. And if you believe in our mission, but have yet to donate, I hope you will seriously consider doing so at this time. You can safely make a gift online at our web site ([morrillhomestead.org](http://morrillhomestead.org)), or mail a check to P.O. Box 98, Strafford, Vermont 05072. All donations are, of course, tax-deductible.

Let's make 2022 a banner year for the Friends and for the Homestead!

Ingrid Webb  
*Chair, Friends of the Morrill Homestead*

Roger Walke  
*Board Member, Friends of the Morrill Homestead*



## A FULL SEASON OF HAPPENINGS AT THE HOMESTEAD IS BACK!

After two years of having to drastically scale back our schedule, the Friends of the Morrill Homestead are especially excited to be offering a full calendar of programs this summer, including our most popular community events.

We welcome friends and neighbors, both old and new to an *Open House* on Sunday afternoon, June 12. Come enjoy guided house tours, a puppet show by No Strings Marionettes, and a Strafford Organic Ice Cream social. This free event is for all ages.

Also in June, are two *Nature Walks*: one will be led by naturalist Micki Colbeck, exploring the amazing variety of mosses found on the Homestead property; the other, with Orange County Forester Dave Paganelli, will look at unusual trees Morrill planted on the grounds and native trees along the forest edge. The Friends are also sponsoring a Guided Orchard Walk in August at Whitman Brook Orchard, a restored 100-year-old apple orchard in Quechee, VT.

John Freitag returns on the third Saturday of each month to lead *Village Walking Tours* stopping at the many sites connected to Sen. Morrill's childhood and legacy in Strafford.

Be sure not to miss the *Gallery In The Garden Gala* on July 1! This festive event includes an opening reception for “*The*

*Other American Dream*,” an exhibit of works by seventeen artists, and the kickoff of the “*Minis For Morrill*” auction. Miniature paintings by dozens of local artists will be on display in the Ed Center and available for bidding online.

The Friends are inviting young campers back to attend *Photography Camp* with Scott Miller and *Drawing & Watercolor Camp* with Jennifer Brown. The Homestead's ornate Gothic architecture and colorful Victorian Gardens provide the perfect setting

to inspire young artists. But adults will also be able to draw inspiration from Morrill's gardens in Jennifer's late-summer *Watercolor Workshops*.

We are hosting two new workshops for aspiring crafters. Participants in Dona Nazarenko's *Basket Making* workshop in July will choose from two 19th century designs. The following month, Tracy Gillespie will teach basic design, carving, and printing techniques in her *Block Printmaking* class.

As part of our partnership with Olmsted 200, a celebration of visionary American landscape artist Frederick Law Olmsted, we

are hosting two intriguing talks on Morrill's connection to Olmsted and landscape architecture both at the nation's capital and here at his Homestead. Olmsted Historian Rolf Diamant will present “*From Yosemite's Half Dome to the Capitol Dome: The Intersecting Lives of Frederick Law Olmsted and Justin Morrill*.” Margie Carpenter, Landscape

Historian and Master Gardener will discuss “*Morrill's Landscape Design: Bringing an Historic Garden Back To Life*.”

Not to be outdone by the summer months, September will host our two largest events! First will be “*The Morrill Land-grant Acts and Tribal Lands: What Happened, What's Next*”- a symposium in conjunction with Vermont Law School to make good on our mission to educate ourselves and others on the whole story behind the Morrill Acts. The Homestead season will finish off with the return of our *19th Century Apple & Cheese Harvest Festival*. Come to AppleFest and enjoy cider pressing, apple and cheese tasting, live music, period games, farm animals, homemade apple desserts with Vermont ice cream, and more!

Check out our full calendar of events at [morrillhomestead.org](http://morrillhomestead.org) for all the details. None of the programs we offer would be possible without the generosity of our volunteers, donors, business sponsors, and supporting foundations. We are especially grateful for your support during the past two challenging years and are excited to welcome you back to the Homestead this season.



Printmaking Tools



Photography Camp



Options for Basketmaking Workshop

### Who's Who on the Board...

## JONATHAN STABLEFORD GIG MASTER AND MORE!

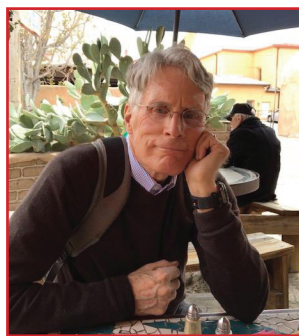
Jon Stableford is known to the artistic community in the Upper Valley as the long-time chair of the Friends' annual Gallery in the Garden, which this year will include the opening-night reception... an online auction of “*Minis for Morrill*”... and an art exhibition. Jon recalled, “the GIG was my first committee assignment when I joined the board in 2011.” Shortly thereafter, he became the leader of the annual event.

But taken alone, this would paint a misleadingly two-dimensional portrait. A South Dakotan by birth, raised in Easton, Pennsylvania, Jon became a lifelong educator. He taught secondary

school English for 43 years, 34 of them at Phillips Academy in Andover, Massachusetts. He was also track and cross-country coach during that time, which meshed with his own running career. Fun fact: Jon competed in the Boston Marathon for 25 consecutive years, and the Mount Washington Road Race for 15 years.

He has also taught two classes a year at OSHER at Dartmouth since 2011, on authors including Henry David Thoreau, Louise Erdrich and

Haruki Murakami. “The part that I like about teaching at OSHER is that I don't have to grade people...and I don't have to spend time reading papers.”



Jon has what he calls a “deep love of motorcycling.” In his youth, he spent a summer touring Europe on his motorcycle, but not the one you occasionally see him riding these days (that one belongs to his son). Following his retirement from full-time teaching, Jon and his wife Cindy moved to the house in South Strafford they had built in 1978. Originally used as a second home, with some upgrades in 2010 it was ready to become a year-round retirement home (heated by the wood Jon harvests). One last fun fact: “When we moved up here for good in 2010, almost the first thing I did was sell my motorcycle and buy a wood splitter with the money—that tells you more about who I am.”

Chuck Ashton

Board Member, Friends of the Morrill Homestead

## SPECIAL ART AUCTION BENEFITS THE FRIENDS

If you meet your future spouse at a wedding contradance, you're supposed to celebrate your wedding with a contradance. That's exactly what Micki Colbeck and Carl Yirka did at Barrett Hall after their wedding. And that is what brought Micki and her young daughter to Strafford.

Micki was an art teacher in Missouri and Carl was the law librarian at Vermont Law School. They met at a wedding in Missouri and danced... and danced some more. Next, Micki and her young daughter started visiting Carl in Vermont. On a snowy winter's day, they were walking around Strafford village and met John Linehan and some of his family. Micki felt immediately that Strafford was a different and magical place. She had grown up in a farm community and as a little girl had spent much time alone, painting. She also felt a strong attraction for the land. That emotional pull later fostered a desire to understand natural science and led Micki back to school to become a naturalist and conservationist. (Indeed, in her *Valley News* articles, she thinks of herself as a science writer who writes for the non-scientist.)

After Carl died in 2020, Micki realized that she wanted to “take care of her own stuff” and not leave that burden to future



Behind The Carriage Barns

generations. I would be the last person to call her art “a burden,” but she did have a studio full of it that she wanted to disperse. Her daughter suggested that she donate some of her paintings to something she loves. And she loves the Justin Morrill Homestead. She says she has visited the Homestead almost daily for the last 25

years. It's a short walk from her house and is a wonderful place of quiet and peace. She has found her “happy place” behind the Carriage Barn. And she has also discovered an uncommon and ancient plant growing on the rocks around Morrill's ice pond: *Selaginella apoda*, a lycopod.

And so it came to pass that Micki made a gift of twelve glorious paintings to the Friends of the Morrill Homestead, with the aim to have them auctioned for the benefit of the Homestead. Phenomenal! The bidding which took place in early December was spirited, with 32 people participating. The last three minutes were especially frenetic!

There were eight very fortunate winners: three paintings were bought by young people who had grown up in Strafford but moved away; one was purchased by a longtime summer resident, and the others went to Straffordites. It was a very successful fundraiser for the Friends. We are all grateful to Micki for her generosity and love of the Homestead and Strafford community.

Cameron Speth

Board Member, Friends of the Morrill Homestead

### A September Symposium

## THE MORRILL LAND-GRANT ACTS AND TRIBAL LANDS: WHAT HAPPENED, WHAT'S NEXT

For many years The Friends' mission has been to foster a greater awareness of the life and legacy of Justin Morrill, often emphasizing his Land-Grant Acts which provided the foundation for Land-Grant Colleges and Universities in every state.

In 2020 as our nation was grappling with an acknowledgement of past injustices, “Land-Grab Universities,” an extensively researched article in the publication *High Country News*, brought to light the fact that the land-grant university system had, in large part, been founded on land expropriated from indigenous people. And we came to realize that we have not been telling the whole story behind Morrill's Land-Grant Acts. (There is even a long-standing exhibit in the Carriage Barn on Sen. Morrill's work in D.C. that describes the federal lands as “uninhabited!”)

As a result, the board of the Friends voted to add the following paragraph to our mission statement:

*“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.”*

To put action to our words, the Friends are partnering with Vermont Law School and NALSA (Native American Law Students Association) to host a symposium titled, “The Morrill Land-Grant Acts and Tribal Lands: What Happened, What's Next” Our aim is to focus on the early life of Justin Morrill covering events that influenced his passion for education... the background and context of federal land acquisitions at the time... the far-reaching effects of the Land-Grant Acts on higher Education in America... and the symposium's primary focus, the acquisition of lands specifically used for Land-Grant Colleges. The all-day symposium will also include a discussion facilitated by the VLS Restorative Justice Panel, focusing on the “What's Next.”

Keynote speakers will be the co-authors of “Land-Grab Universities” - Dr. Robert Lee, lecturer in American History at the

University of Cambridge, and Tristan Ahtone, past president of the Native American Journalists Association and member of the Kiowa Tribe. Also speaking will be Hillary Hoffmann, Professor of Law at VLS with expertise in Native American Law and Natural Resource Law, and Twyla Baker, President of Nueta Hadatsa Sahnish College and Chair of the North Dakota Association of Tribal Colleges.

The symposium will be held at Vermont Law School in South Royalton on September 10 and will be open, both in person and virtually, to faculty and students, as well as community members, educators, lawyers, and history buffs. The Friends will also be hosting a reception that evening here at the Homestead for the attendees of the symposium.

Our goal is to provide a forum for different voices to share their perspectives on the history of Morrill's Land-Grant Acts and to engage in a dialog of how justice might be served going forward. We hope you will join us as we strive to become better educated about the Morrill Acts and their complex place in our country's history.

Tracey McFadden

Director, Friends of the Morrill Homestead