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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 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.



Horse and wagon ride at AppleFest

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, 2022 VOL.16 No.2

SEPTEMBER SYMPOSIUM PONDER: LAND GRANT OR LAND GRAB?

The Friends of the Justin Morrill Homestead, together with the Vermont State Department of Historic Preservation and the Center for Justice Reform at Vermont Law and Graduate School, saw their year-long planning effort to design and host an event that would reframe the work and legacy of Sen. Justin Morrill culminate in a Symposium at Vermont Law and Graduate School on September 10, 2022. The program allowed virtual and in-person participation, where panels and speakers discussed a range of topics, including the legacy of Senator Morrill... the legislative context in which his Land-Grant Act was initially passed... and the legacy of its land divestiture mechanism for indigenous nations, past and present.

Audiencese wer welcomed by the new President of Vermont Law and Graduate School, Rodney Smolla, a new Strafford resident, and Co-Chief Shirly Hook, of the Koasek of the Koas Band of Abenaki people, on whose unceded ancestral lands the Morrill Homestead and Vermont Law and Graduate School operate today. Student members of the Native American Law Students Association at Vermont Law and Graduate School served as moderators and discussion facilitators. The event marked their first sponsored event of the 2022-2023 academic year.

Following contextual talks given by Tracey McFadden, Director of the Friends of the Morrill Homestead, and Hillary Hoffmann, Co-Director of the Bears Ears Intertribal Coalition and long-time law professor at Vermont Law and Graduate School, audience members heard from the keynote speakers, Prof. Robert Lee of Cambridge University and Tristan Ahtone, former Editor-in-Chief of the *Texas Observer* and Editor-at-Large at *Grist*.

Lee and Ahtone's talk centered on their groundbreaking research project published in *High Country News* in 2020, entitled "Land Grab Universities," which explored the

connections between historical land divestitures authorized by the Land-Grant Act and the institutions of higher education that benefitted from their sale or development. Funded by a grant from the Pulitzer Foundation, this research is encapsulated in a website that allows students, researchers, members of the public, and citizens of the many tribal nations affected, to find the parcels of land that were taken, sold, or used and developed for the benefit of specific institutions.

Later, Dr. Twyla Baker, President of Nueta Hidatsa Sahnish Tribal College, located on the lands of the Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara Nations, spoke on the land-grant act passed in the 1990's that created a funding structure to support tribal colleges and universities. Modeled after the Morrill Act, but not funded to the same extent, this statute has supported the development of tribal colleges and universities, although Dr. Baker's

presentation illustrated that there are large funding gaps yet to be addressed.

The symposium culminated with a panel discussion led by Tristan Ahtone, Robert Lee, and Rich Holschuh, Spokesperson for the Elnu Abenaki Tribe. The day's events left audience members facing the difficult question of – what's next? Although the Symposium began to lay the foundation for those discussions by contextualizing the Morrill Land Grant Acts, more conversations must continue if the future is to look different than the past.

In keeping with the spirit of the symposium, the Friends Board decided to donate all proceeds from the Symposium to Nueta Hidatsa Sahnish Tribal College.

*Hillary Hoffmann
Co-Director, Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition*

A BRIEF REPORT FROM THE STATE

Astute readers of the Morrill Homestead *Chronicle* will note the absence of a full "Report from the State of Vermont" in both of this year's issues. This has been occasioned by the departure in June of Tracy Martin, the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation's Historic Sites Section Chief. Tracy was a true partner for the Friends, and we wish only the best for her in retirement.

As this issue goes to press, a replacement is being sought by the Division. Meanwhile, we can report that the summer saw some exploratory work by University of Vermont's Consulting Archaeology Program (CAP) in advance of the drainage and water management improvements planned at the Homestead.

The design work for these improvements has not yet been fully completed. But

according to Jamie Duggan, Director of Preservation for the Vermont State Historic Sites, schematic plans call for sub-surface perimeter drains around the house, to help convey surface and ground water away from the building.

Due to the historical significance of the site, along with the proposed impacts of construction, UVM CAP excavated a number of test units around the house, with additional test trenches upland in the garden area, to help identify sub-surface features and the composition of the house foundation as constructed. This investigation yielded some interesting results, which will be shared in future issues. The hope is that construction on the new drainage system can begin in the Spring.

Stay tuned!



A WORD FROM OUR CHAIR...

Although I have been involved as a member of the board of the Friends of the Morrill Homestead for many years, and helped with events as a teacher at the Newton School, this has been my first year as Chair. And what a year it was! We were actually able to return to having large events open to the public! I'll carry with me a number of impressions from these events:

- * The faces of enthralled youngsters, as they watched the wonderful puppet show of "Jack and the Beanstalk" put on by No Strings Marionettes at our Open House.
- * The perfect weather and tasty hors d'oeuvres that were enjoyed by those attending the opening reception for this year's Gallery in the Garden in July.
- * The chance to visit with Tristan Ahtone and Bobby Lee, keynote speakers for the September Symposium, at an intimate reception on the Homestead grounds following that event.
- * The fortitude of nearly 400 people, who turned out on a rainy Sunday afternoon in late September to make cider, take carriage rides, enjoy a plethora of apple desserts, and take advantage of everything offered at AppleFest 2022.

In short, it has been extremely gratifying to be able to welcome so many of you back for our 2022 season. Also extremely gratifying has been the financial support we have received not only from our neighbors here in the Upper Valley, but from "Friends of the Morrill Homestead" all over the country who bid on minis, bought raffle tickets, attended events via Zoom, and responded to our appeals.

Thank you one and all!

*Ingrid Webb
Chair, Friends of the Morrill Homestead*



A BUSY SEASON AT THE HOMESTEAD

The Friends were thrilled to host a full season of events at the Homestead after two years of cutting back programs due to Covid. Starting in the early spring with Mike Hebb's Pruning & Grafting workshops and ending with Putting the Garden To Bed in October, the Homestead was a busy place!



Scott with his photography campers

We hosted some exciting new programs as well. Beautiful creations were made in Tracy Gillespie's Printmaking Workshop and Dona Nazarenko's Basket-making Workshop.



Micki leading a moss walk

The June Open House welcomed visitors with a delightful marionette puppet show. John Freitag led his ever-popular Walking Tours of Morrill's Strafford Village every month and Jennifer Brown returned to teach Watercolor Camp for kids and evening Workshops for adults. Photography Camp with Scott Miller was also back.



Dona's Basket-making Workshop

On educational Nature Walks around the Homestead grounds, we learned about trees from Dave Paganelli, and Micki Colbeck taught us about mosses.

The Gallery in the Garden Gala began the 4th of July weekend with an exhibit opening for "The Other American Dream" showing fine art by 16 area artists and a kick off of the



Gallery in the Garden Opening Night

to fulfill our mission "to educate ourselves and others.... we will strive for historical accuracy that includes the good that Morrill's vision produced, as well as the truth about injustices...." we partnered with Vermont Law and Graduate School to host a symposium on "The Morrill Land-Grant Acts and Tribal Lands: What Happened, What's Next."

Later in the month, despite less than perfect weather, we were able to welcome a record-breaking crowd to



Just too many apple pie choices

"Minis for Morrill" painting auction.

We partnered with *Olmsted200* to celebrate Landscape Architect Frederick Law Olmsted by hosting a talk with Rolf Diamant on the Morrill-Olmsted connections and a presentation by Margie Carpenter on Morrill's Landscape Design.



Fresh-Pressed Cider for Sale!

celebrate the 19th Century Apple & Cheese Harvest Festival in fine Friends-of-the-Morrill-Homestead style.

And now it's time to start planning for summer 2023! See you at the Homestead!

Tracey McFadden
Director,
Friends of the Morrill Homestead

REMEMBERING STRAFFORD'S FAVORITE SON

The wonderful and uniquely preserved Morrill Homestead is complemented by the equally wonderful and uniquely preserved village which holds the story of his life. Morrill's biographer William Belmont Parker wrote:

"Morrill transferred to the larger scene the experience and motives of the smaller one he left, projecting into national affairs the habits and principles learned in the village. We should probably understand him better if we think of him as applying to the great affairs of the nation the lessons of his general store, his farm, his house."

Walking tours of Morrill's Strafford -- that include his birthplace, his father's blacksmith shop, his mentor's home, the first store he worked at and his main store, the two libraires associated with him, his caretaker's home, the Town House, and the mausoleum he designed which holds the final remains of his family -- are currently given once a month during the season, by yours truly.

In 1998 as part of a symposium held on the 100th anniversary of Morrill's passing, the Rev. William Sloane Coffin Jr., who lived in Strafford village just steps away from the Homestead, gave a eulogy at the Morrill mausoleum. The final part of his remarks now serves as a fitting end to each walking tour and a reminder of all the best of Morrill and how his life can inspire us today. They are:

"At least three things make the memory of Senator Morrill so important to our village. The first and most obvious is a lifetime of integrity. Morrill set a standard for the life all of us should lead. Any transparent sham, any self righteous ignorance with a desire to censor, cruelty of any kind -- all of these in our village would represent a reproach to Morrill's memory."

"Likewise in the affairs of state, while compromise has integrity, selling out has none. Morrill never sold out, and today would be appalled at the me-first political climate which leaves little room for larger considerations of the common good."



John Freitag in front of Senator Morrill's mausoleum

"Secondly, Senator Morrill recognized the importance of roots and the point of roots is to put forth branches. Today there are so many cosmopolitan, sophisticated people who have branches but no roots. And then there are those with deep roots in native soil who have never grown branches. Morrill showed us how roots and branches combine."

"Think of the farm tools in his barn and the paintings in his house, not to mention the architecture itself. Think of his love of learning and love of learners. As noted, his own education was thwarted in childhood, but not for a minute forsaken. And precisely because he had to leave the school so early, he wanted others to have the formal education he was denied. Hence his interest in two libraries, the one in Strafford, the other the Library of Congress."

"And lastly, I think of Morrill's faith. It was not so much a religious faith, although for the last 30 years he attended a Unitarian church in Washington. Rather his primary faith was in the basic goodness he sensed in the U.S., the citizens of the United States. It was a faith he never lost, not during the dark days of the Civil War, nor during the corrupt times that followed. He kept his faith despite the evidence, knowing that only in so doing did the evidence have any chance of changing. His deepest desire was that we not sell ourselves short."

John Freitag
Historian, Strafford Historical Society

GARDEN REPORT

It was a season of new faces at Justin Morrill's gardens. The new garden managers, Barbara Paulson and Ehrin Lingeman, both started in May, bringing broad gardening experience with them. Garden Helpers Simone, Hannah, Avry, and Ira joined the team at various times over the summer.

All faced the challenges of monitoring for pests, invasives, and diseases affecting our perennials, annuals, shrubs and fruits... and then figuring out solutions. Watering and weeding is always needed to keep the beds clean and healthy. Simone and Hannah spent much of their time pulling invasive plants (Japanese knotweed, chervil, wild parsnip, goutweed and buckthorn) and placing them on pallets to dry, thus preventing them from spreading through the gardens and at the borders of the grounds.

Other activities included:

*Cleaning up the garden aisles with Avry and Ira's help and laying and mulching new landscape fabric to prevent weeds and unwanted spreading of plants.

*Defending the edges of the gardens with shrub pruning and care.

*Trying to keep deer, woodchucks, and squirrels at bay using offensive odors and a meter to deter underground critters.

*Keeping fungal diseases -- such as rust on the hollyhocks and powdery mildew on phlox -- from spreading by removing the offenders.

*Dealing with rose chafers and Japanese beetles and spraying aphids on the beach plum with insect soap

Despite such challenges, those who worked in the Homestead's gardens and those who visited them enjoyed the experience. If you have been there, come back and visit; if you haven't, come and check them out or even volunteer. If you would like to volunteer and aren't on the list serve, please get in touch to get your name on the list. Volunteers are always scarce and always truly appreciated.

Alma (AJ) Zwikelmaier
Board Member, Friends of the Morrill Homestead

Who's Who on the Board...

PETER FLOECKHER NO STRANGER TO CHALLENGES

Peter Floeckher has a reputation for being a steady hand on the tiller. Now a resident of Sharon, Vermont, Floeckher is a Connecticut native who first fell in love with Vermont as a young camper at Camp Lanakila on Lake Morey in Fairlee.

After graduating from Georgetown University (go Hoyas!), he accepted a position in banking in Baltimore. He anticipated staying there for three years, which ultimately turned into 33 years and included running a community bank located between Baltimore and Washington, D.C. Thirty years ago he and his wife Jeanne purchased land in Sharon and built a vacation home there: in 2011 they retired, and it became their



full-time home and a magnet for their three sons and (as of 2022) eight grandchildren.

Peter joined the Friends of the Morrill Homestead in 2012. In 2019 he became its Chair, and the challenges began immediately: at his first Board meeting as Chair, the Director of the Friends announced he was leaving to take another job. This began the search which led to the hiring of current director Tracey McFadden. Crisis averted.

In early 2020, like the rest of the country, the Friends faced the very real threat of the Covid-19 pandemic. Meetings were cobbled together on Zoom, programs were cancelled or never scheduled, and major events including the Gallery in the Garden and AppleFest were cancelled. Peter's

response was for the Friends to adapt and proceed. "We tried to simplify the things that we do, because we often have the same people volunteering. We tried to simplify the roles, and it's worked out quite well."

Peter's other main accomplishment as Chair was in strengthening the Friends' relationship with the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation, which owns and administers the Homestead. The stronger bond, in the form of greater communication and collaboration, should serve well as the state now searches for a new Historic Sites Section Chief.

Peter says it was a real honor to serve as the Friends' Chair and he looks forward to continuing to support their fine work in the future.

Chuck Ashton
Board Member, Friends of the Morrill Homestead

MORRILL'S OLD TREE PAYS BIG DIVIDENDS!

In 2019 the forester at the Homestead suggested taking down a large ash tree that grew on the front lawn of the property and was probably planted by Justin Morrill himself, over a century ago. Two local artisans jumped at the opportunity to ensure the wood would live on in works created in memory of Strafford's famous native son. We are fortunate that both of these artisans each made a gift of his craft to be raffled off as a fundraiser for us.



Wood turner David McWilliams of Yellow Dog Wooden Bowls, creates large bowls from Vermont trees. The bowl he made from Morrill's ash tree is strikingly beautiful with very interesting grain.

Jeffrey Gale has been a full-time traditional basket maker for more than 25 years. The basket that

he made using wood from Morrill's ash is a traditional Apple Gathering Basket, an item to be admired and used!

Raffle tickets were sold in person and on line a month prior to the drawing, which was held during the closing moments of AppleFest.

Winning tickets were held by Peter Scheve for the bowl, and Mary Price for the basket. But the biggest winners were the Friends, who received nearly \$4,000 to support our educational programs and community events. Huge thanks go out to everyone who participated!



Jeffrey Gale with his baskets at AppleFest

Cameron Speth
Board Member, Friends of the Morrill Homestead