Middletown Springs Historical Society
NEWSLETTER
Vol. 34, No. 2 September 2003

What Is Living History?

By Stuart Edge-Gerrol

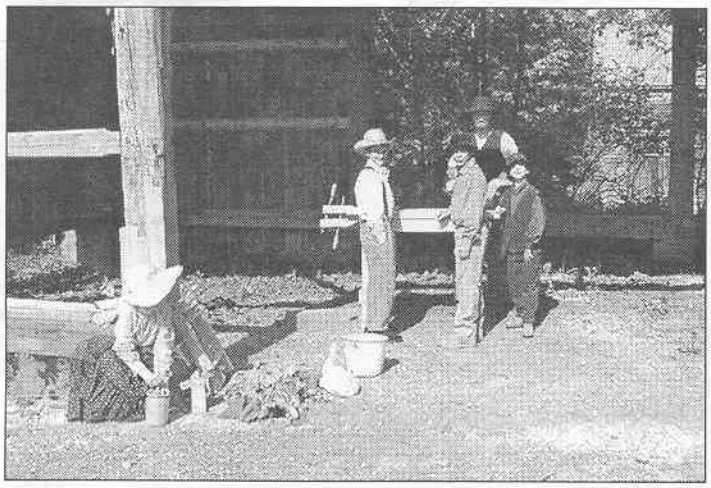
Unlike science, mathematics and other disciplines, history is typically restricted to the pages of books and the stories of major political figures and events. Understanding the reality of life in the past is difficult and often fails to reach those with different learning styles. The pictures of people in the past are in black and white; however, their reality was just as colorful as ours is today. Thus, it is crucial that the past be viewed as a living thing. Living history is an exciting and highly effective way to get students and adults excited and engaged in learning about our past.

Living history is exactly what its name implies. The re-creation of the past for the purposes of education has been an increasingly popular hobby for history buffs around the world. Only recently have museums and historical sites begun to use re-creations of the past to illustrate historical eras to their visitors.

Living History is many academic disciplines at work at once. Before a living history event, students utilize skills and knowledge in reading, writing, mathematics and occasionally science. During the event, students use their knowledge to perform what is essentially a drama activity.

An ancient proverb states, "Tell me, I'll forget. Teach me, I'll remember. Involve me, I'll understand!" Living history involves students by asking them to use all of their acquired knowledge to re-create a person from the past. The re-creation of a past era serves as an assessment of learning as well as a rich learning experience in its own right.

Dr. Haynes, portrayed by Rev. Mitcheson, and his family clean up after treating an injured farmer.



The Coy children help their father make a wheel barrow to trade at the store for credit. Young Miss Coy also works making butter that the family sells to the Vail's store.

How do students in the Living History Project learn?

Children involved in the Living History Project will experience a different living history event each year. A six year cycle of themes exposes students to six different historical focuses or eras. Instruction and learning activities that occur before each year's event will prepare each child to play his/her role as best as he/she can. The focus and purpose of the instruction will differ from grade to grade. As children go through each year of the cycle, they will become increasingly aware of differences in each historical era. This constructivist approach, so commonly used in popular standards based programs, will allow children to build their historical knowledge by relating to prior experiences. The content knowledge that students gain will be compatible with most local district curriculums and with the Vermont Framework of Standards. Nearly all of the content and skills set forth in the Framework of Standards will be met by this curriculum.

The Historical Legacy Association is a group of

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President's Corner

Emmett Francois

Since September 2001 I have seen the progress brought on by those who have served with me on the Board of Trustees. Some like Jere Berger, Diane Rosenmiller, Jon Mathewson have served well and continue in their interest in the Middletown Springs Historical Society. It has been a challenge to serve as the President and, as with all community service opportunities, it has had its rewards. One of them was to honor Frances Krouse after her passing. Fran left her mark on the Society as well as those who she taught during her life. I was there for her memorial service as well as her burial in Middletown Springs. Those of us who are left to continue her work are privileged to do so. Any organization has members who have dozens of things vying for their free time. Fran Krouse's dedication of so much of her life to the town's history was a selfless act not unlike the recording of the earlier town history by the Hon. Barnes Frisbie. The families who continue to live here have a historical legacy that is built on these two books.

Another reward was to see some of the residents who were selfless in their giving. Vera Blakely donated a 18th Century clock that once belonged to Eugene Gray and came down in the family. Hazel Grover remembered the clock as a child. Kay Avery donated a historical document initialed by none other then Napoleon Bonaparte. The proceeds from the sale went to support the maintenance of the Mineral Springs Park.

Progress abounds in the efforts taken to restore and rebuild the museum's storage room. Hiring people to do the replastering, painting, electrical work, carpentry, and moving the entire collection are just of few of the accomplishments now in progress. Much of the effort arre due to the many volunteers from within and without the organization. The community support to maintain the Society's building and Springs Park comes from may sources. A large measure of thanks is due to the members of the Middletown Springs Garden Club for the attractive flower boxes they place on the Historical Society building every year.

Currently, the portico roof is being redone with the generous gift of slate from a local slate dealer who wishes to remain anonymous. There are always so many more to thanks due during the two years of effort put out by the Trustees and those who volunteer so generously. It has been my privilege to serve with a fine group of dedicated people.

Emmett retires as president at the Annual Meeting.

The Strawberry Festival— a Classic Event

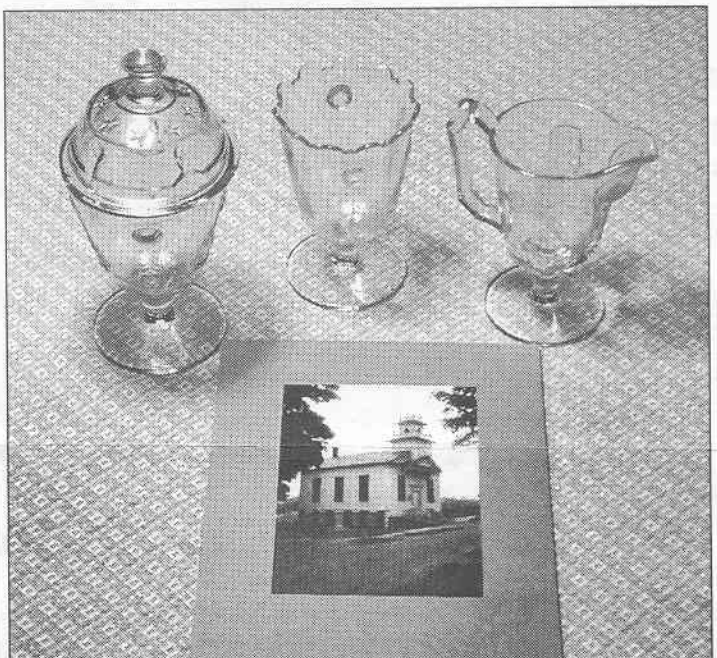
Visitors to the 28th Annual Strawberry Festival enjoyed their delicious desserts with a warm breeze under a sunny sky. Perfect Vermont berries from Dutton's Farmstand accompanied delicious biscuits baked by Priscilla Lane, Stewart's vanilla ice cream and Thomas Dairy whipped cream.

Brendan Taeffe, accompanying himself on guitar and fiddle, entertained with original compositions and traditional Irish tunes. Thanks to Jim Gilmour of Southview Arts, where Brendan recorded his recent album, for providing the sound system.

In the Museum Room Jon Mathewson was on hand to introduce a new exhibit of recent research about the early settlers of Middletown and vicinity, which he prepared for Vermont History Expo 2003, held earlier in June. On display in the exhibit is a ceremonial braided sash worn by Eastus Barker of Tinmouth when he was Sheriff of Rutland County from 1813 to 1820. Research has shown that the sash was likely made in Quebec, Canada before 1800.

Thanks again to Bill Clark for finding the best strawberries in Vermont and to Priscilla Lane for creating the freshest, tastiest baking powder biscuits. And thanks to all the volunteers who helped transport and prepare the berries and who served the short cake and beverages.

Profits from this year's festival set a new record of $1,125.00.

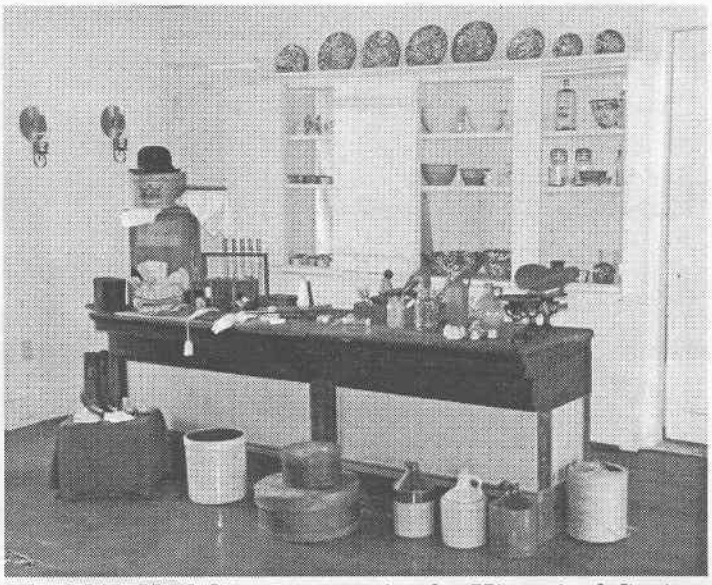


Emmett Francois

Recent Donation

The communion vessels used in the Middletown Methodist Episcopal Church were recently donated to the Society by the estate of Francis Bean, who was principal of the Middletown Springs High School in the 1930s and died in April 2003. The church, which was located at the intersection of West and South Streets in the corner of the Old Cemetery, was demolished in the 1950s.

The Schollar girls help their mother sew and make hats for customers in town.



The M.E. Vail Store, set up in the Historical Society dining room.

(Living History, cont. from page 1)

Vermont teachers, historians and interested community members engaged in using Living History techniques to help people understand the past in a powerful and meaningful way. Current and future projects of the Association include: The Living History Curriculum Project, developing an elementary school curriculum with a teacher's guide, student texts and materials that couple living history with multi-disciplinary and developmentally appropriate instruction; a support network of materials and personnel available to schools and communities wishing to participate in the Living History Project; professional development opportunities for teachers interested learning to use the Living History Curriculum; development of living history projects at the high school and college level; and establishment of a Living History Museum.

Stuart Edge-Gerrol, Director of the Historical Legacy Project, is a MSES teacher and a Middletown Springs Historical Society Trustee

Jeff Nerney

Bud Krouse (in backhoe), Joel Pliner, and Dan McKeen install new drainage pipe at the Mineral Springs Park. Other volunteers where Jeff Nerney, Nora Rubinstein, Tony Torcasio, and David Wright

Notice of Annual Meeting

The 34th Annual Meeting of the Middletown Springs Historical Society will be held on Sunday, Sept. 21 at the Historical Society Building.

Agenda

6:00 p.m. Pot Luck Supper

7:00 p.m. Business Meeting & Election of Trustees

7:30 p.m. "Buy, Bargain and Barter—The 2003 Living History Program at the Middletown Springs Elementary School," presented by Stuart Edge-Gerrol, MSES teacher and Director of the Historical Legacy Project, and students form MSES.

Welcome! New Members

Annual Members

Warren Bartlett
Shirley Bartlett Wisse & Michael Wisse, *Middletown Springs*

New Contributing Members

Ruth N. Denney, *Honolulu, HI*
Kathleen & Patrick Feeley, *Middletown Springs*
Rev. Norman Guilbert, *Stamford, CT*
Bob, Maria & Devin Riley, *Middletown Springs*

New Family Life Members

Alan & Winnie Grace, *Middletown Springs*

Membership Information

Membership dues for 2003 were due in January. Check your mailing label for current status.

Dues (Check one):

Individual	$8.00	Contributing	$25.00
Family	$12.00	Individual Life	$125.00
Business	$50.00	Family Life	$150.00

Send to: Joel Pliner, *Treasurer*
Middletown Springs Historical Society
P.O. Box 1126
Middletown Springs, VT 05757

- Frisbie's *History of Middletown* CD-ROM $20, post paid.
- Lampshades featuring 12 historic postcard views of Middletown Springs, $48, plus shipping.
- *Historic Architecture of Middletown Springs* pamphlet, $3, post paid.
- *Views Through Time: Driving through the Rutland Region* brochure, $2.50, post paid.
- *A Gem in the Hills,* by Frances Krouse, $25.00, post paid.

Donations to MSHS, a 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization, are tax deductible.

www.members.tripod.com/MiddletownSpringsHS

Business Members

Thanks to local businesses that have joined MSHS under our "Business" membership category:

Archideck—Sarah Grimm
Estelle Ellis—Business Image, Inc.
William Emberley—Antique Bottles & Collectibles
Green Mountain Timber Frames — Dan McKeen
LaValley Building Supply
Jim Marquis—Antiques Appraiser
Southview Arts—Digital Recording Studio
Stewarts Dairy
Williams Hardware, Poultney—Bob Williams

The MSHS Newsletter is published as many as four times a year for members and friends of the Society. Comments and manuscipts on subjects of interest are encouraged and should be sent c/o David Wright, editor.

In Memoriam

Shirley E. Brown, 85 died May 28 in Rutland after a long illness. She was born in Middletown Springs, the daughter of Emory and Grace (Coy) McLaughlin. She was a graduate of Middletown Springs High School and Castleton Normal School and continued her studies at UVM, Tufts University and Harvard University. Shirley began her teaching career in Granville, Vt., taught in Middletown Springs and continued to teach for many years in Melrose, Mass. until her retirement.

She married Ronald Brown in 1951. Ronald died in January 2003.

Survivors include her sister, Elsie Norton of Middletown Springs; and three nieces, Mary Hughes of Clearwater, Fla., Marlene Collins of Burlington and Jean Ann Reynolds of Middletown Springs.

Shirley was very active in the Melrose community where she was a member of the Methodist Church. She was a Grange member and a long time member of the Middletown Springs Historical Society.

Emory J. Swinyer, 93, died April 8 at his home in Salt Lake City, Utah. Dr. Swinyer was graduated from UVM's College of Medicine and practiced for many years in Poultney. He is survived by his wife, Avis Simpson Swinyer, whom he married in 1939; two sons, Dr. Leonard Swinyer of Salt Lake City and Dr. Bruce Swinyer of Bakersfield, Calif.; a daughter, Elaine Swinyer; and a sister, Irene Haupert of Salt Lake City.

2003 Events

Sunday, Sept. 21	6 p.m.	Annual Meeting
Sunday, Oct. 5	1 - 4 p.m.	Apple Festival held in conjunction with the Middletown Springs Fire Department's Pig Roast.

Middletown Springs Historical Society
P.O. Box 1126
Middletown Springs, VT 05757

Return Service Requested

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You're Invited to MSHS' 34th Annual Meeting September 21, 2003.
See page 3 for more details.