Middletown Springs Historical Society
NEWSLETTER
Vol. 39, No. 1 April 2008

Never Missed Town Meeting

by Kay Avery

Byron Cook Moyer hasn't missed a Town Meeting for sixty-six years. Sometimes it meant hitching a horse to a sleigh or trudging two miles through the March mud, but he always made it.

Born on a Vermont hill farm in 1888, Mr. Moyer has lived all his life in Middletown Springs (population 435) except for one year when he was ten and crossed the town line to attend a one-room schoolhouse.

A dairy farmer, he has been active in town affairs as Selectman, Trustee of Public Monies, and for thirty years a Member of the School Board, as attested by a plaque on the kitchen wall of the farmhouse where he has spent more than 53 years of married life. He has raised six children and currently enjoys 22 grandchildren.

Photo by Jeff Stansbury

A consistent Republican, he cast his first presidential ballot for Taft although he did take a circuitous trip involving eight miles by horse and buggy plus twenty by trolley to hear Teddy Roosevelt.

"Values today?" He shook his head, "Used to get a good teacher for $700, now they want $2,000!" Present teachers' salaries are beyond his ken.

When he was a lad he worked on adjoining farms for a nickel a day. As a teenager he dug a ditch for the school water system for 15 cents an hour. "Had to be in the ditch and ready to dig when the whistle blew at seven. Stopped at six. That was a full day."

It is difficult for Gramps, as he is called, to reconcile his early earnings with the wages collected by his grandchildren. But in those days, cheese sold for eight cents a pound. And there were other differences. The telephone came early in the century. You cranked the handle to get anyone and this was a party line and everyone listened in. Electricity came in the 40's. Before that you used a kerosene lamp for school work and a lantern for milking. Then there were more than 50 dairy herds in town, now there are six.

Moyer remembers the fire that destroyed the center of the village in 1920 and the bucket brigade and the neighbors who pitched in to save whatever they could; and the great flood of 1927 when the mail was carried on horseback to the railway depot eight miles away.

Recreation meant skating on the millpond. There were no movies. Occasionally traveling actors put on a one-night stand in the hall over the livery stable. And there was the first automobile.

Every morning Byron C. visits the great cow barn he built six years ago for his 80 head of cattle, heifers extra. He tends the hens and collects the eggs. Last spring was the first time he missed working in the maple sugar-bush where he once had 1200 taps.

Pressed to list his achievements, Mr. Moyer was modest. "But I did introduce the Australian ballot in Town Meeting," he acknowledged. "Before that, we just raised our hands."

When asked to cite his worst experience, he thought a moment. "Well, I did loose a pile of money last week, but then, money isn't everything." He took a long look at the sun slanting over the valley and nodded as if confirming some inner satisfaction.

Footnote by Shirley Moyer, Byron's daughter in law:

In early January 1977, Byron watched the family's big dairy barn blown to bits in a horrific wind storm. He saw most of the barn replacement built and was looking forward to Town Meeting and voting in March.

On March 1, 1977 Town Meeting was held at St. Anne's Community Hall. Byron's family took him down to vote. Katherine Kelly was working the polls that day. It was a beautiful sight to see those two together at the polls, as they represented so much of the Town's values. After voting Byron went back to the farm on Coy Hill happy that he had fulfilled his wish of voting on town affairs. He climbed the stairs one last time that evening, and died on Wednesday, March 2, 1977.

Kay Avery (1908–2005) authored six children's books and numerous stories and magazine articles. This profile of Byron Moyer was first published in the March 2008 issue of the Middletown Magnet.

President's Corner *Mission & Vision*

Following up on the adoption of a Mission Statement in July 2007, the Board of Trustees has established a Strategic Planning Committee. Work of the committee will continue for the coming year, beginning with drafting a Vision Statement. While a mission statement declares the purpose, values and work of the organization, a vision statement describes the organization's desired future, what it would be like if it accomplished its mission. The vision statement should define the organization's audience, geographic scope and expectation of growth within a projected period. Strategic planning follows, devising the concrete steps to be taken to realize the vision and achieve the mission in the areas of Collections Care and Management; Buildings and Grounds; Development (fundraising, membership, grants); Exhibits and Programming (education-school programs and public education programs); Audience Development; Community Relations; and Governance (board policies, planning and fiscal responsibility).

Change is constantly occurring in the Society. We are not the same organization we were in 1970 or even in 2000, and only a handful of charter members are still alive. As our community and our world have changed, so have we. New techniques and technologies have revolutionized the museum field and we have endeavored to keep up. Economic challenges in maintaining, heating and insuring our property have proved more daunting in recent years with no let-up in sight. A major hurdle looms on the horizon as the Town pursues a much needed move of the Town Office to larger quarters, resulting in a loss of rental income to the Society.

We must plan for an uncertain future rather than simply reacting to change. The Society has as its history a remarkable record of accomplishment. There can be no doubt that we are up to the challenges that our "visioning" reveals to us.

— *David Wright*

News Briefs

Recent Donations

Andrea Varney of Proctor gave a collection of tinsmithing tools and work bench used by her relative, F.T. Lewry (Frank T. L'heureux) of Middle Granville, N.Y.

Robert Gray of Pottersville, N.Y. gave a family Bible which dated back to his great grandfather William N. Gray (1819 -1903). The center pages of the Bible contain family genealogy records.

Parker's Service Station Burns

Fired destroyed Norm Parker's service station under blue skies on Saturday, March 22. Fire companies from all neighboring towns and as far away as Granville, N. Y. assisted the Middletown Springs fire fighters in putting out the stubborn blaze, with no injuries. The concrete block building was constructed in the Fifties by Norm's father, Clyde Parker, who had sold gas and repaired vehicles there since the Twenties.

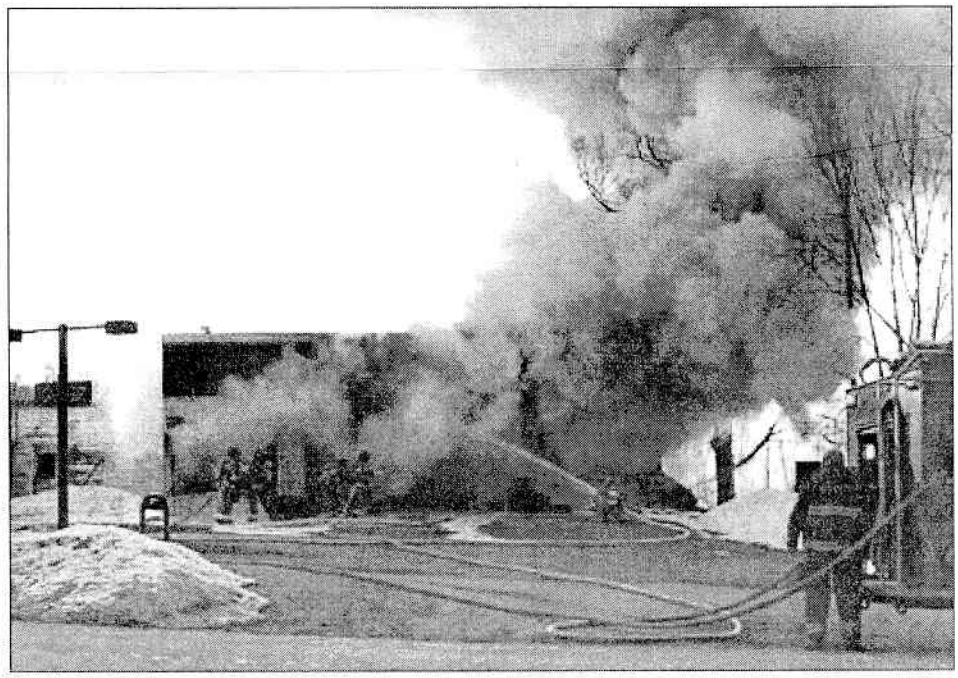


Photo by Richard Alberty

2008 Maple Festival is a Winner
— thanks to our members and friends!

The very first Maple Festival in 1990 was declared a success with proceeds of $160. But success was more about the response of visitors to the mix of delicious maple treats, historic demonstration of old-fashioned sugar-making technique, interpretation of a fine collection of maple artifacts, and the celebration of the season. And so it has continued for year after year, with the main variable being the weather — sometimes fair and spring-like and sometimes downright wintery.

The Maple Festival has grown and this year's event scored well in all categories — weather, turnout, good spirits and financial success, with net proceeds topping $2,000!

Photo by David Wright

Bill Clark regales Maple Festival goers with maple sugaring stories, history, and folklore.

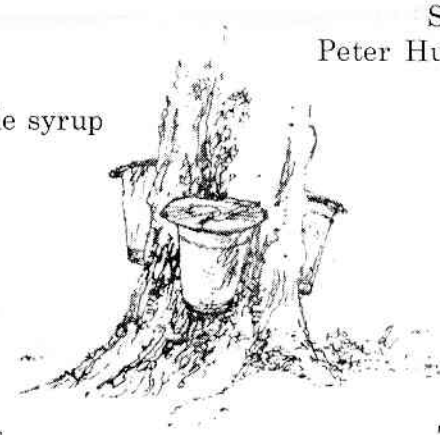
Photo by David Wright

Doug Freilich, Julie Sperling, and Fred Bradley watch sap boiling in a more traditional manner.

We can attribute the overflowing coffers to the growth of the Maple Raffle, with over 50 great prizes from area businesses and friends of the Society, and with the generous support of our members and friends who bought the raffle tickets. While we are sorry you could not all be winners, we want you to know how grateful we are that you "took a chance"!

Credit goes especially to our raffle prize donors. You can thank them again and again by patronizing their business in the coming year.

Aldermans Chevrolet
Annie's Bookstore
Ben & Jerry's
Fred Bradley & Marilyn Trapeni, maple syrup
Castleton Village Store
Bill & Sue Clark, maple products
Clarendon Hardwood Bowls
Lois Dansereau
Dietra Davis, bulbs and perennials
Dorset Inn
Durfee's Sugar Lane Maple
Grant's Village Store
Pam & Richard Green, maple products
Green Mountain Coffee Roasters
Fair Haven Inn
Hannaford
Pat & Don Hemenway, hardware products



Sarah Horne, hand made hats
Peter Huntoon, water color paintings
LaValley's Building Supply
Perry Lowell Maple Syrup
Original Vermont Store
Porch of Locks
Rising Meadow Pottery
Slate Valley Museum
S. E. Smith Feed Store
Solarfest
Stewarts Ice Cream
Trolley Barn Restaurant
Twin Mountain Farms B & B
Vermont Fitness
Vermont Sweetwater
Wells Country Store
Williams Hardware

Thank you to 2007 Annual Fund Donors!

Michael Beattie & Leslie Silver
Josie & Jere Berger
Phil & May Biondi
Bernie & Marcia Bischoff
Bill & Barbara Bloom
Marilyn Bobseine
Lois & Paul Dansereau
Estelle Ellis
Truman & Marilyn Esau
Kathy & Pat Feeley
John & Gail Franz
Fred Gardner
Stan & Maxine Garfinkel
Nan Gilmour
Elmer Gombosi
Randy Gray
George Hadwen
Manson Hall
Alfred & Yolanda Hansen
Jerry & Rita Hansen
Dick & Cheryl Hanson
Vannilu Harrison & Sharen Underwood
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Bruce Hirschon
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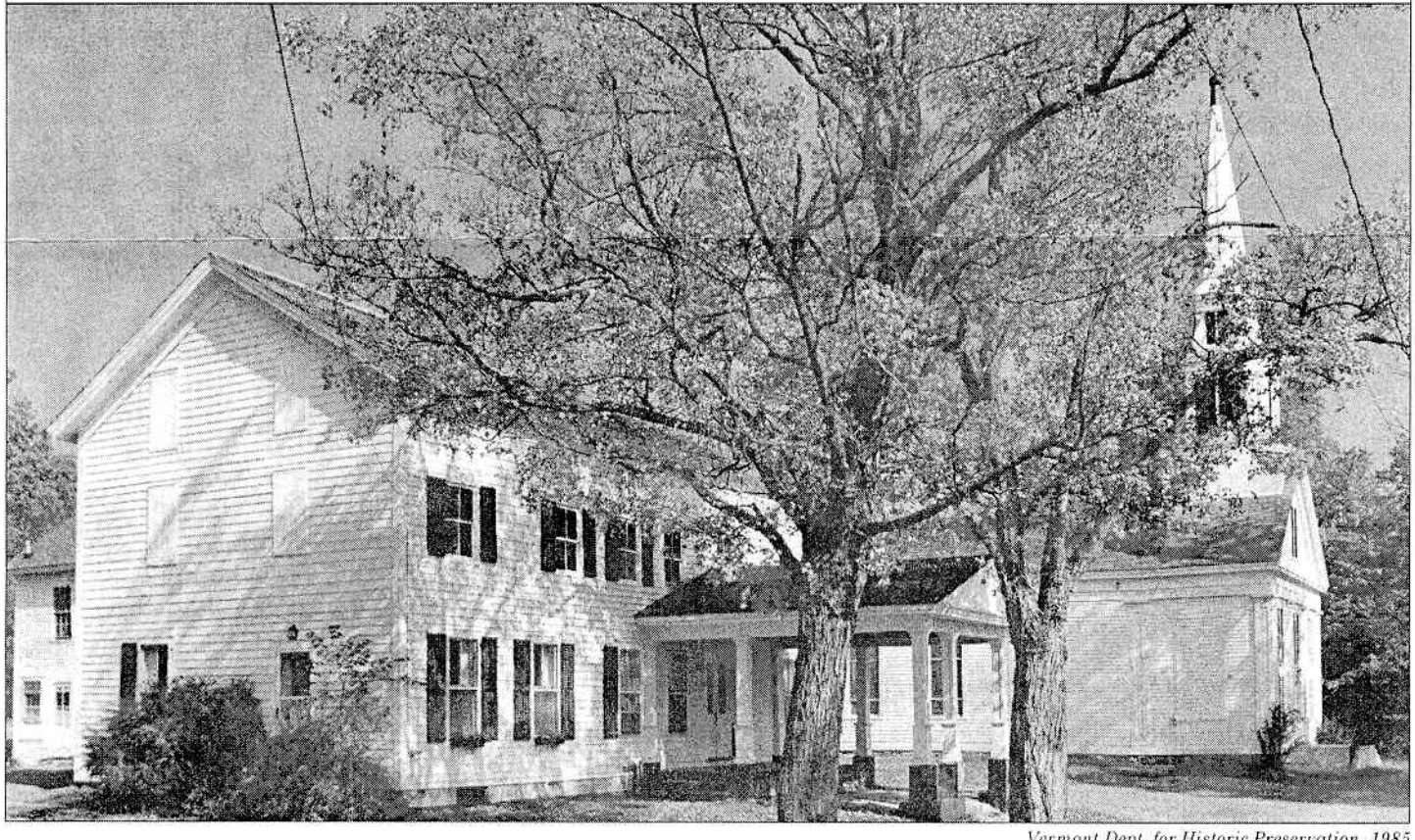
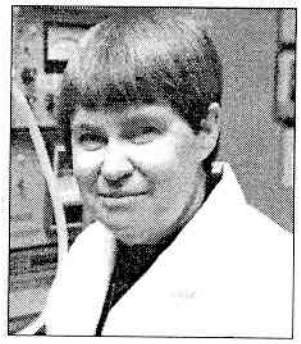
Eileen & Tom Johnson
Patty & Matt Kenyon
Beryl Kirschman
Karen & Leslie Klami
Alice Marsh
Jon & Kimberly Mathewson
Dorothy Miner
Shirley Moyer
Joann Nichols
Evelyn & Larry Ritchie
William & Andina Roberts
Howard & Judy Robinson
Joan & John Roche
Diane Rosenmiller & Nick Seidner
Diane Schroeder
Charlie & Marilyn Schubert
Joan & Doug Shaw
Ursula Smith & Linda Peavy
Nancy Spencer
Aileen & Peter Stevenson
Edna Wiggins
Gwen Wilder
Kathleen Williams
Bob Williams
Tom & Shannon Winkopp
Mary Lou Willits & David Wright



Vermont Dept. for Historic Preservation, 1985

In Memoriam

Mary Hickox Mandels, 90, died February 17 in Natick, Mass. She was born in Middletown Springs, the daughter of Sherman G. and Mary Elizabeth (Bolger) Hickox and grew up in Waterbury, Conn. She earned a BS and PhD degrees at Cornell University. There she met and married fellow scientist Gabriel Mandels.



Both Mary and Gabe worked for many years at the U.S. Army Natick Laboratories in Massachusetts where Mary, along with Dr. Elwin Reese, headed a bioengineering group that developed a process for manufacturing ethanol, a liquid fuel first used as supplement to gasoline during the 1970s oil embargo. Mary published more than 80 scientific papers and book chapters, presented at numerous scientific meetings in the U. S. and abroad, and received a number of awards. She retired in 1984 and remained active in the field until 1994

Mary is survived by her son, Peter Mandels; her daughter Joan Roche; grandchildren Susan Roche and Stephen Roche; sisters Alice Selzer and Eleanor Hickox. Her husband, Gabe, her brother, Sherman Hickox, and sister, Corinne Vaughn, died earlier.

Mary was a member of the Society since 1986.

Dora Lovancha Parker, 93, died March 17, 2008 in Middletown Springs. She was born February 1, 1915, the daughter of William G. and Calista (Spaulding) Harrington. She was a graduate of the Middletown Springs High School with the class of 1934.

Dora was a member of the Middletown Springs Community Church, the Ladies Aid Society, the Fortnightly Club, and was one of the original members of the Ladies Auxiliary of the Middletown Springs Volunteer Fire Department. Dora was an early member of the Historical Society and served as a trustee from 1973 - 1976.

She is survived by her ten children: Dorothy Reed; Jane Dorr; Charlotte Baker, Sylvia Parker, Nancy Bealmear; Earl Parker, Charles Parker, Paul Parker, William Parker, and Robert Parker, She is also survived by two stepchildren, Harriet Boyce and Richard Parker; 25 grandchildren, 40 great-grandchildren and 10 great-great-grand-children.

Her husband, Elmer John Parker, died in1968; and her infant daughter, Pauline Alice Parker, died in 1941. Her stepchildren, Donald Parker, Alton Parker, Edward Parker, Marion Bixby, Agnes Pennock and Carrie Kelly also died before her.

Dora's great-great-great-grandfather, Joseph Spaulding, was one of the original founders of the town of Middletown Springs in 1784.

Peveril Field. Peake, 79, died Nov. 10, 2007, in Rutland, Vt. Mr. Peake was a lifelong Bristol resident, born Dec. 3, 1927, the son of Royal Whitman Peake, and Kate Gardener Field. He was graduated from Bristol High School in 1945. He attended Manlius Military Academy in his youth. Mr. Peake worked for many years at G.E. Lakeside, Burlington, as a quality control expert. For the past few years he had resided at the home of Nancy Dike, a longtime family friend in Bristol.

It was his love and never ending interest in antique cars for which he will be most remembered. By his account he owned over 1200 antique and vintage automobiles, during his lifetime. He was a founding member of the Vermont Automobile Enthusiasts, (VAE) and belonged to many other car clubs worldwide. Peveril was often called upon to inspect the "original condition" of an antique vehicle — no one could fool him there. His vast knowledge of the early cars, and the most minute details, was clearly amazing. Many friends will also remember his car searching trips, and the huge "Falstaffian" meals that followed.

Peveril was a Society member for many years.

New Trustees Elected at Annual Meeting

At the Society's Annual Meeting on September 23, five Trustees were elected to two year terms: Sarah Horne, Patty Kenyon, Karen Klami, Shane Thornton and David Wright. They join incumbents Lois Dansereau, Dietra Davis, Theron Krouse, Maureen McCormack and Annie Pepperman. Retiring from the Board with sincere thanks from those attending the meeting were Toyo Biddle, Jon Mathewson, James Montoro, and Judy Robinson.

At their October meeting Board members elected David Wright, president; Lois Dansereau, vice president; Maureen McCormack, secretary; and Patty Kenyon, treasurer.

Membership Information

Membership dues for 2008 were due in January. Check your mailing label for current status.

Dues (Check one):

Individual	$10.00	Contributing	$25.00
Family	$15.00	Business	$50.00

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

- Frisbie's *History of Middletown* CD-ROM or photocopy, $20, post paid.
- Eight notecards with historic photos of Middletown Springs, $12 postpaid.
- *Historic Architecture of Middletown Springs* pamphlet, photocopy $1, post paid.
- *A Gem in the Hills,* by Frances Krouse, $25, post paid.

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

Visit our NEW website:
www.MiddletownSpringsHistoricalSociety.org

Business Members

Archideck, Sarah Grimm
Blue Cat Bistro, John Rehlen
Estelle Ellis, Business Image, Inc.
William Emberley, Antique Bottles & Collectibles
Friends in Adoption, Dawn Smith Pliner
Green Mountain Timber Frames, Dan McKeen
Sarah Horne Interior Design
Johnson Energy, Tom & Eileen Johnson
LaValley Building Supply
Jim Marquis, Antiques Appraiser
Montvert Real Estate, Nan Gilmour
Professional Tile Installation, Jerry Hansen
Round Barn Theatre, Karen & Leslie Klami
Stewarts Dairy
Twin Mountain Farms B&B, Annie & Walt Pepperman
Williams Hardware, Poultney, Bob Williams

The MSHS Newsletter is published twice 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, or e-mailed to montvert@vermontel.net.

Welcome! New Members

NEW FAMILY MEMBERSHIP

Joan & John Roche, *Suffield, Conn.*

NEW CONTRIBUTING MEMBERSHIP

Linda Gardner, *Lexington, Mass.*

NEW BUSINESS MEMBERSHIPS

Blue Cat Bistro, John Rehlen, *Castleton*

Johnson Energy, Tom & Eileen Johnson, *Center Rutland*

Sarah Horne Interior Design, *Middletown Springs*

Montvert Real Estate, Nan Gilmour, *Middletown Springs*

Professional Tile Installation, Jerry Hansen, *Middletown Springs*

Round Barn Theatre, Karen & Leslie Klami, *Middletown Springs*

2008 COMING EVENTS

Thursday, **May 22**	**Antiques Discovery Appraisals** with Jim Marquis, 6:30 pm
Saturday, **May 24**	**Silent Movie Night** with Leslie Klami, piano, 7 pm
Sunday, **May 25**	**Memorial Day Parade** 3 pm
Sunday, **Sept. 21**	**Annual Meeting**, 7 pm
Sunday, **Oct. 19**	**Museum Open House**, 1-4 p.m.

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P.O. Box 1126
Middletown Springs, VT 05757

Address Service Requested