



# Middletown Springs Historical Society NEWSLETTER

Vol. 45, No. 2

September 2014

## Timeline Exhibit Draws Near the Present

by Jon Mathewson

I began the timeline exhibit in 2002 to be an ongoing aspect of the Vermont Historical Society's annual History Expo. The idea was to have a large timeline exhibit: everyday events of each year would go along the top of the exhibit, while more important aspects of that period would be highlighted below. The first year's installment covered the years 1761 - 1791, the period of the original land-grants to the statehood of Vermont. Each year after, I expanded the exhibit by twenty years. The History Expo went bi-annual after 2010, and this year I completed the timeline with the 1952 - 1971 installment. The entire timeline now graces three walls of the auditorium on the second floor of the Middletown Springs Historical Society.

Most of the research involved in the timeline is original to this project. While I am indebted to the town histories written by Barnes Frisbie and Frances Krouse, I also delved deeply into town records, (deeds, reports and minutes), newspapers, court records, census data, diaries, letters and scrapbooks in the MSHS collections.

The exhibit for 1950-71 highlights the founding of the Fire Association, the closing of the High School, and unique businesses of the era. The timeline began with a large map of town as it was in 1784, the year of incorporation, and ends with a Rutland Regional Planning Commission map of town from 1969. Here are some of the highlights from the last installment:

### 1952

- Fire Association formed.
- Town continues to pay for care of Green.

### 1953

- Fire Association incorporated.
- Jewett and Donald Seamans hit by lightning in their barn on North Street.
- April 1: Perpetual Care now required on all new Pleasant View burials.
- Middletown Springs featured in *Vermont Life*.

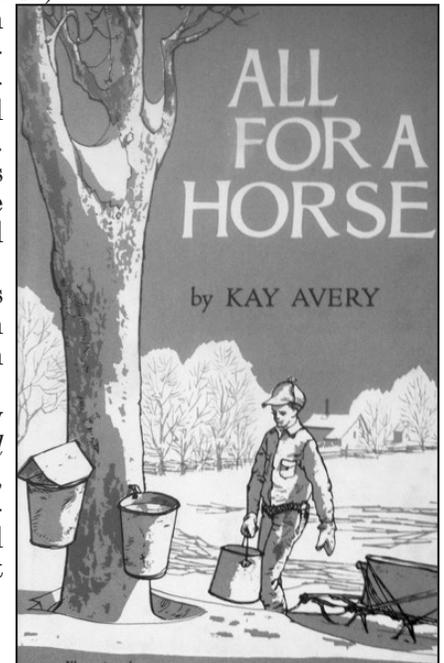
### 1954

- Ruth G. Seamans becomes Town Clerk.
- Baptist Church building sold to Edwin & Evelyn Farrell, who repurpose the building for potato storage.
- In order to combat White Pine Blister Rust, carrier currant and gooseberry plants need to

be eliminated. In 1954, 3,262 bushes were destroyed in the southwestern section of town.

### 1955

- 5,159 currant and gooseberry bushes destroyed.
- Polio vaccine administered for the first time: 13 are vaccinated.
- Ladies Aid Society annual fairs resume (stopped in 1949).
- Trinitarian Church Society and Congregational Church unite.
- Town votes to allow sale of beer and wine.
- Town pays \$47 for a sign destroyed on Halloween.
- Kay Avery publishes *All for a Horse*, about an unnamed small Vermont town.



### 1956

- 4,960 currant and gooseberry bushes destroyed. Victory is declared.
- Fred Gray's Sugar House torn down.
- The Baroness de Prazak, formerly Countess Geneva de Malroy, sells her estate on Buxton Avenue.
- School builds new classroom in the basement, with cement steps and covered exit.
- 107 in town receive polio vaccines.
- Explorer Scout Post started.
- Clyde Parker replaces his wooden garage with a concrete block garage.
- Kay Avery publishes *All for a Friend*, about an unnamed small Vermont town.

### 1957

- Kay Avery publishes *All for a Ghost*, about an unnamed small Vermont town.

(cont'd on page 3)

## PRESIDENT'S CORNER

### Timeline Exhibit Highlights Our History

Jon Mathewson, our volunteer Collections Manager and Trustee, has completed a long-term project bringing together the highlights of Middletown Springs History on the walls of the museum auditorium. Begun in 2002 with the years 1761-1791 and continuing in roughly two or three decade installments as exhibits for Vermont History Expo, the project has covered events into the early 1970s. Jon had to pick and choose, and dig into many sources — histories, newspaper accounts, diaries and memoirs, town reports and other records. Not all could be reported, only the most significant, to give a flavor to the times and a sense of where

times were going, profiling a few of the notable figures of each generation. Pictures being “worth a thousand words,” photographs really help to tell the story, when they become available in the 1850s, and select artifacts from the museum collection that accompany the exhibit add significantly to our “feel” for the stories they tell.

Jon has done a great job, on a shoestring budget, to produce an exhibit that will endure to enhance our overall understanding of Middletown Springs history and inspire further research into many of the topics and stories only briefly touched upon.

I can hardly wait for the next installment, in a decade or so!

*Robert J. Gould*  
*aftabrg@gmail.com*

### Strawberry Festival Warms a Cool Spring

Following a cool and late spring, pleasant weather and a Father's Day crowd of over 300 visitors spelled success for the 39th Annual Strawberry Festival. The delicious shortcake and beverages were only part of the fun.

Creativity abounded as Peter Huntoon skillfully rendered a watercolor painting during the two hour festival, while Nicholas Seidner magically produced several pottery planters on a portable wheel.

All enjoyed Winsome Moran's beautiful flower arrangements on the serving line and the dining tables.

Craft vendors included Solange Martineau with handmade note cards and photos; Deb Squires with whimsical garden art; Alan Grace and his carefully restored antique clocks; Heidi Hammell with colorful collages and Zentangle drawings; Ruth Reich and Nance Dean each with delicate handmade jewelry, and the Mahars and their family-made maple products.

Dietra Davis, assisted by girls from her after-school sewing circle, organized a doll raffle and provided a doll with a hand-sewn butterfly outfit. Several doll-sized dresses and a coat were raffled as well.



Photo by Emmett Francois

*Festively aproned servers prepare shortcake desserts at the 2014 Strawberry Festival*

Paul Morgan and Dan McKeen entertained with acoustic guitar music.

When the receipts for the event were counted, the festival provided a net income of \$1,975 for the Society treasury.

## RECENT ACQUISITIONS

*George Greene* donated a book of Copeland Church Fund records; and artifacts and background information relating to the Burnham Hollow Ski Area, started by his father, Albert Greene.

Ephemera artifacts from the *Norton and McLaughlin families* were purchased from a local antique dealer.

A poster for an Andrus auction for the Buxton family from the 1930s was donated by auctioneer *Rick Rudd*.

## Welcome! New Members

*Moses Cryer, Southington, Conn.*

*Merwyn Hedding, Sun Lakes, Ariz.*

*Ryan & Ann Marie Mahar, Middletown Springs*

*John & Tracy Weatherhogg, Middletown Springs*



(cont. from page 1)

- School puts together a baseball team.
- 167 people receive polio vaccine.
- Ida Mae Leffingwell purchases Spruce Knob Leathercraft.
- Middletown Springs featured in *Vermont Life*.

#### 1958

- June 6: new village speed limit of 35 mph takes effect.

#### 1959

- School creates a “projection room” for the showing of movies.
- School adds art class.
- Methodist Church torn down.

#### 1960

- Town population: 381
- October 7: Congregational Church members vote not to affiliate with United Church of Christ.
- Anna P. Moyer becomes Town Clerk.
- School adds homemaking and shop classes.
- United Farmers of New England take over Creamery operations.

#### 1961

- January: Record cold temperatures.
- February 28: Emma Hennings elected president of the newly formed Ladies’ Auxiliary of the Fire Association.
- PTA pays for a “lustrous, enameled cast iron lavatory.”
- Last official use of St. Margaret’s Chapel.
- Katherine Wood becomes minister of Community Church.
- New dumping rules:
  - Dumping only at Coy Hill dump
  - No carcass dumping
  - Dumping only in designated area at dump.

#### 1962

- February 17, 1962 - April 7, 1963 St. Anne’s Church completely renovated.
- Florence Pratt becomes Town Clerk.
- Town votes to lease land just north and east of Community House to Fire Association for 99 years.
- Dr. Sigmund Wysomerski & Chester Rostkowski open WyRo Maple Lane as a “scientific farming” operation. It is an 800-acre farm, made up from the Anson Cook, Arthur Cramton, and Justamere Farms.
- Town votes to keep High School open.
- Middletown Springs featured in *Vermont Life*.

#### 1963

- Fire Association has 19 active members, answers 13 calls.
- March 2: Town votes to close high school.
- April 22: Town votes to keep high school open.

- St Anne’s Church goes from Mission Church to Independent Church status.
- Kay Avery publishes *Goodbye Blue Jeans*, about a young girl who publishes a newspaper in a small, unnamed Vermont town.

#### 1964

- July 1: Big fire on Wescott Mountain.
- High School closes.
- Town allows sale of liquor.

#### 1965

- July: Carillon which can be heard throughout town, is installed in St Anne’s Church.
- Busing of Elementary School students living out of the village offered for the first time.

*To be continued in the Spring 2015 issue.*

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## Open House Lecture Will Show Restoration of Civil War Flags

The Museum Open House on Sunday, Oct. 5, 1-4 pm, will feature a slide lecture by textile conservator Michele Pagan on the conservation process that she used in a ten-year-long project to restore the Vermont State Civil War flag collection.

The Open House includes tours of the Society’s collection storage areas and demonstrations of how the artifacts are conserved, accessioned, stored and maintained. Refreshments will be served before Michele’s 2:00 pm presentation.

The Civil War flag collection, owned by the State of Vermont, has been exhibited in a glass display case in the State Capitol building in Montpelier for about a hundred years. Damage done over this period by light, humidity, insects and poor display practice was significant. Michele will be recounting the process of removing these flags from exhibit, their conservation treatment, and their transfer to a new storage facility at the Vermont Historical Society History Center in Barre.

Michele is a native Vermonter, who grew up in Bennington and Rutland. She began her career working at the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, then successively worked for the U.S. Department of State, the Vermont Museum & Gallery Alliance (VMGA), the Bishop Museum in Honolulu, and the Smithsonian’s Museum of American History. She presently holds a Research Associate affiliation at the Smithsonian’s Museum Conservation Institute, researching the use of microfiber cloths for cleaning fragile artifact surfaces.

She is a textile conservator in private practice, working in both Washington, D.C. and Brookfield Vt., where she and her husband, John, have homes.

She first became acquainted with the Middletown Springs Historical Society in the mid-1990s, when she gave collections care workshops and trainings here for volunteers from MSHS and other area historical societies.

## Items for Sale

- Copies of Historical Society Newsletters, \$1 post paid.
- *History of Middletown*, by Barnes Frisbie, CD-ROM or photocopy, \$20, post paid.
- Historic photo notecards of Middletown Springs, box of 8, \$12 post paid.
- *Searching for Ichabod*, by Julie Van Camp, \$18, post paid.
- *A Gem in the Hills*, by Frances Krouse, \$25, post paid.
- Antique Mineral Springs Water bottles, prices start at \$60.

## Membership Information

Membership dues for 2014 were due in January.  
Check your mailing label for current status.

**Dues** (Check one):

Individual	\$10.00	Business	\$50.00
Family	\$15.00	Sustaining	\$100.00
Contributing	\$25.00		

Send to: Linda Hurcomb, *Treasurer*  
Middletown Springs Historical Society  
P.O. Box 1121  
Middletown Springs, VT 05757

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

Visit our website:

[www.MiddletownSpringsHistoricalSociety.org](http://www.MiddletownSpringsHistoricalSociety.org)

### Business Members

*Blue Cat Bistro, John Rehlen*  
*Farmer Mould & Machinery, Jim Gilmour*  
*Gabe Friedman, Web Designer,*  
*Goldenbrook Construction, Dick Gray*  
*Green Mountain Timber Frames, Dan McKeen*  
*Johnson Energy, Tom & Eileen Johnson*  
*LaValley Building Supply*  
*Jim Marquis, Antiques Appraiser*  
*Morgan Mountain Organic Gardeners*  
*Professional Tile Installation, Jerry Hansen*  
*Stewarts Dairy*  
*Twin Mountain Farm 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 manuscripts on subjects of interest are encouraged and should be sent c/o David Wright, editor, or e-mailed to [montvert@vermontel.net](mailto:montvert@vermontel.net).

Middletown Springs Historical Society  
P.O. Box 1121  
Middletown Springs, VT 05757

**Address Service Requested**

**ANNUAL MEETING**  
**SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 21<sup>ST</sup>**  
(see above for more information)

## Notice of Annual Meeting

At the 45th Annual Meeting of the Middletown Springs Historical Society on Sunday, Sept. 21 at the Historical Society Building, Civil War historian Don Wickman will recount the history of the Ninth Vermont Regiment in the Civil War.

The meeting will begin at 7:00 p.m. with a desert buffet, followed at 7:15 p.m. by a brief business meeting and election of Trustees.

At 7:45 p.m. Don Wickman will tell the story of the Ninth Vermont.

From guarding Confederate prisoners incarcerated at Camp Douglas, Illinois, to the woods of coastal North Carolina and, finally, to the gates of Richmond, the Ninth Vermont earned a reputation for being well-disciplined and steadfast under fire. Although lacking the renown of other Vermont units, it represented the state well throughout its history.

Wickman's talk is highlighted by the stories of some of the 1,878 Vermonters who comprised the Ninth, as it became one of the most traveled regiments in the Federal army.

Don Wickman is a Vermont historian who is recognized as an expert on Mount Independence in Orwell and Vermont's Civil War flags. He is a published author and his historical articles are regularly printed in the Rutland Herald. Presently he is the director of the Kent-Delord House Museum in Plattsburgh, N.Y.

The program is made possible by support from the Vermont Council of the Humanities through its Speakers Bureau program. The meeting is free and accessible to people with disabilities.

## 2014 COMING EVENTS

Sunday, Sept. 21      **Annual Meeting**  
7-9 p.m.

Sunday, Oct. 5      **Museum Open House  
& Donor Celebration**  
1-4 p.m.