

The MORRILL HOMESTEAD *Chronicle*

News and Information from Vermont's First National Historic Landmark
POST OFFICE BOX 98 · STRAFFORD, VERMONT 05072

SPRING 2007 · VOL. I NO.1
"All the news that fits, we print."



FRIENDS OF THE MORRILL HOMESTEAD

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Promoting an awareness of the life and legacy of Justin Morrill, father of the Land-Grant College Acts



The Barn Is Opening & You're Invited SAVE THE DATE FOR YOUR FRIENDS!

On June 30 at 2 pm, please join the Friends of the Morrill Homestead, the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation, Morrill family interpreters, and invited guests to celebrate the opening of our new, long-awaited Education Building. This year-round heated facility will provide space for educational programs, will afford visitors to Strafford a deeper experience with Morrill's legacy, and will showcase Morrill's valuable library collection, freeing up space in the Morrill Memorial and Harris Library to allow our library to better serve our community's needs. This building will be used not only to welcome visitors but also to host programs for the community, school children, focus groups such as Elderhostels, garden clubs, historic and horticultural symposiums, seminars, as well as a Teachers' Institute.

The Education Building's focus is to honor the legacy of Senator Justin Morrill, most remembered today as the chief author and sponsor of the Land-Grant College Acts, considered by many to be the most important pieces of educational legislation in the 19th century. The Land-Grant Acts created funding in each state for a college to provide a liberal and practical education for farmers, mechanics, artisans and laborers.

The Morrill Homestead was designated Vermont's first National Historic Landmark by the Secretary of the Interior in 1960. Designed and built by Morrill during a brief retirement before starting on a

new career in politics, the 17-room cottage incorporates much of the stone-like detail, actually rendered in wood, that is the hallmark of Gothic Revival style. Morrill borrowed and adapted the forms and details of the Gothic Revival to suit his own particular needs and vision.



The "horse barn" under construction this spring

The Education Building is a near-exact replica of the horse barn designed by Morrill himself, and stands in its original place in Morrill's 1850 master plan for his estate. The horse barn framed and defined Morrill's original landscape design, and its reconstruction will restore this design concept.

We are fortunate that the State of Vermont, which owns the Homestead, has funded the design and construction of the Education Building. The Friends group is responsible for providing tables, chairs, and office and education equipment, and for funding the construction of curatorial space for the Morrill family artifacts

The Friends always welcome volunteers and tax-deductible contributions are greatly needed. We have meetings with terrific snacks once a month. Please call Andersen Thorp at 765-4129 or email: **president@morrillhomestead.org** for information.

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GARDEN COMMITTEE REPORT

The Garden Committee was formed in Spring 2006. It's mission is to oversee restoration of the Morrill Homestead landscape, which includes the formal pleasure gardens, the Kitchen Garden, and the orchard. Finding Margie Carpenter, newly transplanted to Strafford from Connecticut where she worked on restoration of several major gardens, was key to the early success of our undertaking. Margie did graduate work at NY Botanical Gardens and at the Landscape Institute (formerly Radcliffe Seminars). As Head Gardener, Margie enlisted the support of Master Gardeners and community volunteers to begin the arduous task of clearing the Kitchen Garden of weed growth, laying out new paths, and planting. Justin Morrill used his Kitchen Garden as a nursery for shrubs, trees, and plants, often experimenting with exotic varieties to see if they would withstand the harsh Vermont climate. We invite you to come often to see the progress this group makes in transforming Morrill's gardens and landscape. And, if you are so inclined, come join the volunteers in the gardens.

The Garden Committee will be hosting a Victorian Tea at the Homestead, July 24, 3-5 pm. RSVP Mary Victor Giersch (802-763-2469) or mygiersch@aol.com.)



Above: Master Gardener volunteers prepare the Kitchen Garden

Below: FMH Vice President, Mary Victor Giersch and Shelburne Farms Director Marshall Webb discuss care and maintenance of a historic hedge.



HEAD GARDENER'S REPORT

After cleaning up the Kitchen Garden last summer, Master Gardeners and Community Garden Volunteers will begin to restore this garden to Senator Morrill's original vision. Perennials, herbs, shrubs, roses, semi-dwarf fruit and vegetables will be among the plant choices we will make from Morrill's long list of plant selections.

Of particular interest this year will be the decision to replace the buckthorn hedge along the east border of the garden. In the mid-nineteenth century, buckthorn was valued as a hedge; it's thorny branches kept livestock out of enclosures. Buckthorn, however, is highly invasive. We are confident that Morrill, a knowledgeable and sensitive horticulturist, would approve of our decision to replace buckthorn with another shrub from his list.

HOME SWEET WEB SITE

With many thanks to Rick Scully of Red Clover Design, The Friends of the Morrill Homestead have redesigned the Homestead's web site. Some of the new features include a photo gallery, a virtual tour of the gardens, and the ability to donate to the Friends securely online. In addition, the site has an interactive map to help visitors find places to stay, eat, and explore while visiting the area. The site is changing daily and more features are being added. Visit the site regularly at www.morrillhomestead.org.



HOMESTEAD PROGRAM OFFERINGS—2007

Sunday, June 10 · 2pm

A WALKING TOUR THROUGH JUSTIN MORRILL'S STRAFFORD

Take a walking tour through the historic Upper Village of Strafford with visits to Morrill's boyhood home, his general store, the Morrill Memorial Library, the Morrill Mausoleum, and a view inside the 1799 Strafford Townhouse, one of the most photographed town meeting houses in New England. Admission \$10. Rain or Shine.

Saturday, June 16 · 10am–5pm

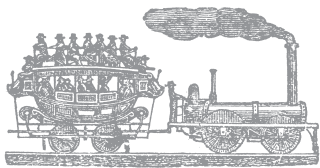
RUSTIC TRELLIS

In this one-day workshop at the Morrill Homestead you will take saplings and with simple joining techniques make an outdoor trellis. The trellis may be as simple or as intricate as you choose and time allows. No woodworking experience is necessary. Presented by Mark Ragonese and the League of NH Craftsmen to reserve a place please call 603-643-5384 or download a registration form from www.nhcrafts.org/hanover/fibers.html \$100. Materials included.

Sunday, June 17 · 10am–5 pm

RUSTIC FURNITURE

Rustic furniture is timeless and was incorporated into Justin Morrill's gardens. In this one-day workshop at the Morrill Homestead you will learn the basics of furniture design and an assortment of joinery techniques to create your own one-of-a-kind chair, bench or table from saplings. Seat finishing will be discussed. No woodworking experience is necessary. Presented by Mark Ragonese and the League of NH Craftsmen to reserve a place please call 603-643-5384 or download a registration form from www.nhcrafts.org/hanover/fibers.html \$100. Materials included.



Saturday & Sunday,
June 23 and 24 · 10am–5pm

VERMONT HISTORY EXPO 2007

Stop by the Friends' booth at the Tunbridge Fair Grounds and learn more about this year's Expo theme: Travel & Transportation: How Vermonters Got There from Here. Admission at the gate. Rain or shine.

Saturday, June 30 · 2pm

OPENING CEREMONY OF THE NEW EDUCATION CENTER

Join invited guests and Morrill family interpreters to celebrate the grand opening of the newly reconstructed horse barn and the return of Senator Morrill's library collection. All invited. Free.

Saturday, July 7 · 11am

THE MORRILLS CELEBRATE THE 4TH OF JULY

Join Morrill family interpreters at Strafford's Fourth of July celebration on the Common and for lemonade at the Homestead's new Education Center. Free

Sunday, July 8 · 2 pm

JUSTIN MORRILL'S VICTORIAN GARDENS AND FARM

Victorian Gentleman Justin Morrill was a serious student of landscape gardening. Join the Homestead's head gardener Margie Carpenter and walk back in time and discover hidden design elements, structures, plants, and walkways that surround the Homestead grounds in the best tradition of the Romantic Landscape Movement. Admission \$10. Rain or Shine.

Sunday, September 2 · 1–4 p.m.

WILD MUSHROOM HUNT: A MOREL SENSATION

Autumn is the perfect time to hunt for edible mushrooms. Join mycologist Faith Hunt, who will teach which mushrooms can be eaten and which are better left on the forest floor. Afterwards, enjoy a "mycophagy"—an opportunity to taste a variety of cooked wild mushrooms.

\$25. Rain or shine. Limited enrollment. Reservations required. Call 802-765-4129.



Participants in last year's mushroom hunt. This event is so popular, we are presenting it twice. Reserve a spot early.



Kids and adults alike get a charge out of learning amazing apple facts from Johnny Appleseed at the Apple and Harvest Festival in October.

Sunday, October 8 · 11am–4pm

19TH CENTURY APPLE AND HARVEST FESTIVAL

Press cider in an antique press, taste heirloom apple varieties, meet John Chapman (Johnny Appleseed), make a scarecrow, ride the horse drawn wagon, sample hard and sweet cider, play period games, tour our new Education Center and the replanted orchard. Vermont-grown apples, apple treats and pumpkins from our garden, heirloom flower bulbs, and our fresh pressed cider will be on sale. Rain or shine.

Admission \$5 · Under 12 free · Family \$12.



Along with varieties of apples and vegetables, one of the hot sellers at the Apple Festival is our special, fresh-pressed, limited edition apple cider.

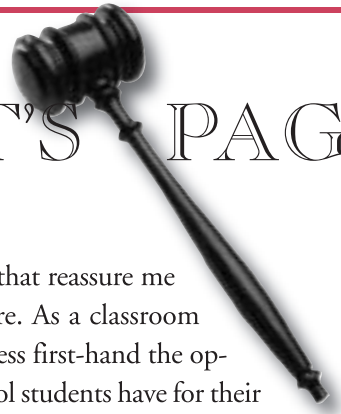
Sunday, October 21 · 1–4 pm

WILD MUSHROOM HUNT: A MOREL SENSATION

Autumn is the perfect time to hunt for edible mushrooms. Join mycologist Faith Hunt, who will teach which mushrooms can be eaten and which are better left on the forest floor. Afterwards, enjoy a "mycophagy"—an opportunity to taste a variety of cooked wild mushrooms. \$25. Rain or shine.

Limited enrollment. Reservations required, please call 802-765-4129.

These programs are presented by the Friends of the Morrill Homestead in partnership with the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation.



PRESIDENT'S PAGE

A democratic society is an educated society.

I am fortunate to have a career and interests that reassure me with positive affirmations of America's future. As a classroom teacher of 24 years, my colleagues and I witness first-hand the optimism, drive and hope most of our high school students have for their futures.

Justin Morrill's vision of higher education for generations of America's working people began on July 2, 1862 and has evolved into the system of land-grant colleges that remains vital to the hopes and opportunities of so many American citizens today.

To honor Justin Morrill's vision and his commitment to public higher education, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources has developed a four-year program for students in interdisciplinary learning. Those students in turn commit themselves to using the knowledge acquired during their time at UNL and throughout their lives to advance the public good through civic responsibility, engagement and leadership.

I had the honor of speaking at the UNL's Justin Morrill Scholars Program reception on April 15. It was inspiring to look upon the UNL students who've chosen to participate in a life-long mission to promote ideals that will help make our country and world a better place.

The fruits of Morrill's contributions to public education are widely recognized throughout the country. Dr. Roger Lawrence recently wrote to me from Iowa State University: "The Morrill Act and the GI Bill were certainly the two main reasons that the educational opportunities existed for most citizens and an educated populace is the reason for the progress of this country and its citizens."

After nearly a decade of hard work by the Friends of the Morrill Homestead and the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation, the new Education Building at the Morrill Homestead will be officially opened on June 30th at 2 pm. This year-round heated facility will provide space for educational programs and will afford visitors to Strafford a deeper experience with Morrill's life and legacy. I hope you will join us in this celebration.

Andersen Thorp

President, Friends of the Morrill Homestead

We are compiling an e-mailing list. If you would like to be on it, please send your email address to president@morrillhomestead.org



Friends of the Morrill Homestead

National Historic Site

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