



HISTORICALLY SPEAKING

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE MILTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

SPRING/SUMMER 2001

We've Got A Home!

by Jane FitzGerald

It is with much enthusiasm that I make this announcement -- the Milton Historical Society and Museum have recently moved into our new home, the historic former Trinity Episcopal Church on School Street. As we enter the new millennium, more people are reflecting on the past and realizing the importance of recording and preserving history for future generations. Long-standing Milton residents have witnessed extensive growth and major changes during the past fifty years.

Our main function is to preserve Milton's past and interpret our local history. We hope to help members of the community learn about their past, understand the present and plan for the future. As time passes, much of our past will be lost and traditions will disappear. Many small historical societies appear to some people as private clubs, run by volunteers who focus on the "good old days". We need to change that image by reaching out and attracting young people and other organizations through more public programs. We need to collaborate with our schools on projects that help young people connect to a larger world and build a sense of responsibility and belonging. We need to change our mission to include activities that go forward and use our local history to help make changes and choices in our community.

The establishment of the Milton Historical Museum in our new location is an important milestone in our history. Some of you will remember when, in 1978, the town of Milton designated one room in the Clark Memorial Building as our Museum, to be supervised by



The new Milton Historical Museum, at 13 School Street.

the then newly organized Milton Historical Society.

As our collections grew, it was clear that the one room was not sufficient space for collect-

ing, exhibiting, preserving and storing our collections. In the early 1990s other locations were considered, including the possibility of more space in the Clark Memorial Building. None of these locations were feasible, so in January 1997 we were forced to move our collections into a local storage unit. The following April, the voters of Milton approved a \$100,000 bond vote to purchase the Trinity Episcopal Church and make the necessary structural repairs. We appreciate the interest and support of the governing body and the townspeople. The restoration project has been the successful result of community involvement, with many individuals contributing time and expertise. A special thank you goes to Rick Hamilton, whose experience and information concerning the church were instrumental in accomplishing this project. Thanks also to Bill Kaigle for designing, painting, and erecting the attractive sign identifying the Museum. Regular hours will be posted on the sign when they have been determined.

Organizing the museum is an enormous challenge which includes compiling a general survey, cataloging, and setting up and labeling exhibits. Some of our planned perma-

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Our cemeteries – Much accomplished, still more to be done!

by Jerry Learn

Have you ever driven by an old cemetery, overgrown and neglected, headstones leaning and broken, stone walls toppling? Have you wondered who is buried there, or who their descendants are? Does anyone care anymore?

Many people just like you *do* care. Cemeteries are not merely a place to lay our loved ones to rest, but can be a valuable resource to explore our roots and

understand our town's history. They are real-life links to our past that are worth preserving.

Last year, our Cemetery Committee applied for and received a \$500 grant from the Vermont Old Cemetery Association to rehabilitate the West Milton Cemetery on Bear Trap Road. With many hours of hard work from volunteers, headstones

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MILTON
HISTORICAL SOCIETY
ESTABLISHED 1978

Officers

Jane FitzGerald *Museum Director*
Jerry Learn *President*
Bill Kaigle *Vice President*
Beverly Quebec *Secretary*
Doris Mears *Treasurer*
Gwen Brown *Historian*
Jane Lafayette *Scrapbook*

Directors

Lorinda Henry *3 years*
Linda Ballard *2 years*
Gordon Thom *1 year*

Membership

Membership is open to the public. Annual dues are:

Individual \$5.00
Family \$7.50
Honorary (age 80 & over) \$1.00

Please send payment to:

Milton Historical Society
P.O. Box 2
Milton, VT 05468

HISTORICALLY SPEAKING

VOLUME 1, NUMBER 1

SPRING 2001

Bill Kaigle *Editor*

Message from the President

by Jerry Learn

What an honor it is to be recently elected as the president of the Milton Historical Society! I'm very grateful to be a part of this exciting time both in our town and in the history of the Society itself. We're very pleased to have moved our collections out of storage (finally!) and into the beautiful renovated building that was home to the Trinity Episcopal Church on School Street. Our town's new Historical Museum will be an invaluable resource for our residents and visitors for a long time to come. The collections are still being organized, and "loose ends" still need to be tied, but our Grand Opening will hopefully be happening toward the end of May. Watch the *Milton*

Independent for a date and details!

The opening of the Historical Museum brings in a new era of the Historical Society – we feel re-energized now that we have a permanent home. It's more important than ever that we strive to serve the community in the best way that we can. As always, we are looking for folks who care about our town and its heritage to help us in our endeavors. Our most pressing needs are for help in organizing and staffing Milton's new Historical Museum, and for building our membership program. If you or anyone you know has an interest in lending us a hand, contact me at 893-8311 or ask any Society member how you can help!

...Home! *continued from page 1*

new exhibits are the historic bell (originally from the West Milton Church) and the Bicentennial Quilt made in 1982 by members of our Society to commemorate the arrival of the first five settlers in 1782. The quilt depicts Milton's first fifty years of history, with squares representing people, places, and events during these early years. Other exhibits will change

periodically.

Definite hours for the Museum have not yet been determined. Watch for the Open sign or stop by anytime to see our work-in-progress! You may call 893-2340 or 893-7036 for an appointment. An Open House is being planned for the end of May. More details to come!

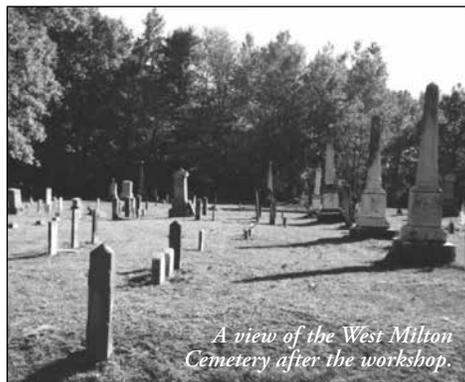
Cemeteries... *continued from page 1*

were straightened and repaired, and much-overgrown shrubbery was trimmed. There is a great improvement in the appearance of the cemetery from the road, and it is much more pleasant to visit. It is even more useful, because many stones that were unreadable due to being broken or laying face-down in the dirt were righted and can now be read more easily.

This year, we hope to begin work on the

Checkerberry Cemetery on Route 7 South at the intersection of West Milton Road. The rail fence around the cemetery has recently been repaired, but many stones need to be straightened and the beautiful sign at the entrance needs re-painting.

If you would like to help us restore our town's valuable cemeteries or would simply like more information, call Jerry Learn at 893-8311.



A view of the West Milton Cemetery after the workshop.

From the Editor

Greetings one and all! Well, what can I say except that it's been a while since the Society has had a regular newsletter. With the upcoming opening of the Milton Historical Museum, we are all excited about getting organized in our new home and once again raising awareness and interest in the Society and local history as a whole. A large part of that process involves reaching out to the community

and keeping in touch with our members. This has been challenging in recent years, without having a permanent home and meeting place to display and discuss our collections. I look forward to meeting the many Miltonians who share our common interest in history and who hold interesting information about Milton and how we've grown into the town we are today. I'm very happy to present the first of what hopefully will be at least a twice-annual newsletter for the society. Its purpose is to present interesting information, timely notification of events, and serve as a public forum for those people interested in history, particularly that of Milton, Vermont.

I welcome all thoughts, contributions, and feedback from members and non-members alike regarding how we can make *Historically Speaking* a valuable and entertaining resource for our readers. Feel free to contact me at 893-7387 with any comments or concerns.



The Bell

by Loren Sanderson



It might seem that the bell that used to hang in the former Trinity Episcopal Church had hung there a long time, when it had only hung there a little more than a third of its life. To learn more about the origins of this bell we must go back to the year 1830.

The winter of 1830 found several of the residents of West Milton gathered together at the office of A.G. Whittemore (who was a lawyer) for the purpose of erecting a meeting house or church for the purpose of coming together to worship God in the manner they felt appropriate. Because there were three denominations involved, it was decided that the services would be conducted one half of the time by the Congregational Church and Society, one quarter of the time by the Methodist Church and Society, and one quarter of the time by the Baptist Church and Society, and would be known as a Union Church. To raise the money to build the building a meeting was called for the purpose of auctioning pews. Pews were sold to 46 families and it was decided to sell

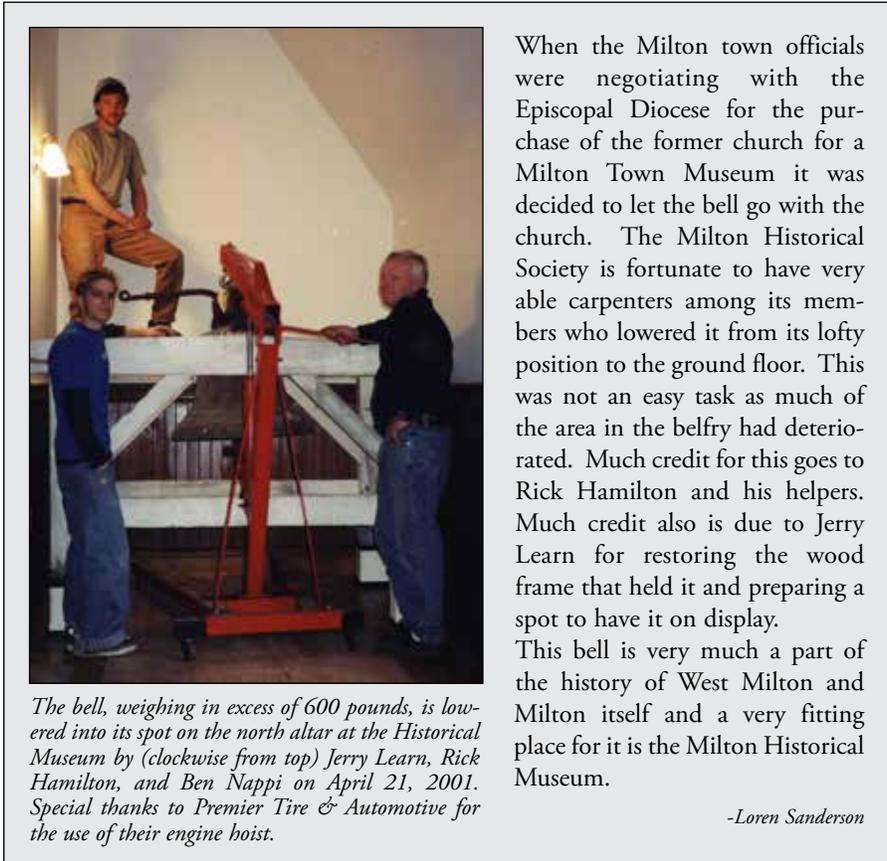
the remainder of the pews to a person or persons who would furnish a bell weighing 600 pounds, a bell rope, and who would hang this bell in the place designated for it. For nearly a century this bell called the people of West Milton to worship.

This church was very well attended throughout the rest of the century, with morning and afternoon services much of the time. There was Sunday School for people of all ages. The last half of the century found many sons and daughters of the old families

moving to western states, which was a trend of the times. The church held services until about 1920 or perhaps a few years later. In the 1920's many families had automobiles and started attending and becoming affiliated with churches in Milton Village, hence the decline of the West Milton Church. In the 1930's the church was used only for an occasional funeral and by the 1940's the

were sold to Mr. S. Fascitelli on December 8, 1942, and the church itself was sold to Mr. Harley Perry on April 7, 1943. It was thought that Harley Perry probably sold the bell to Trinity Episcopal Church but after some thought this writer remembers that the bell was installed in the Episcopal Church in 1941 or 1942 while I was still in high school. This was at least a year before Harley Perry

bought the whole church. I remember well being in English class, which was on the north side of the school, and hearing the bell ring. Those installing it must have felt a feat accomplished because they rang it for the whole world to hear. I remember it probably because my family knew this was going to happen and I was aware that this bell had been heard by four generations before me. After giving this more thought I have come to the conclusion that Harley Perry probably had little to do with selling the bell to Trinity Episcopal Church as the bell moved there a year or two before he bought the West Milton Church, and more thought leads me to believe that Harry Costello probably had



The bell, weighing in excess of 600 pounds, is lowered into its spot on the north altar at the Historical Museum by (clockwise from top) Jerry Learn, Rick Hamilton, and Ben Nappi on April 21, 2001. Special thanks to Premier Tire & Automotive for the use of their engine hoist.

When the Milton town officials were negotiating with the Episcopal Diocese for the purchase of the former church for a Milton Town Museum it was decided to let the bell go with the church. The Milton Historical Society is fortunate to have very able carpenters among its members who lowered it from its lofty position to the ground floor. This was not an easy task as much of the area in the belfry had deteriorated. Much credit for this goes to Rick Hamilton and his helpers. Much credit also is due to Jerry Learn for restoring the wood frame that held it and preparing a spot to have it on display. This bell is very much a part of the history of West Milton and Milton itself and a very fitting place for it is the Milton Historical Museum.

-Loren Sanderson

church looked as solid as ever but the roof was leaking badly. Something had to be done.

Harry Costello got representatives of some of the old families together about the year 1941 or 1942. These families, along with Harry Costello, were: Grangers, Bullocks, Sandersons, Mears and perhaps others, who decided the church would have to be sold. The articles not to be sold were divided between those present, the pews

much to do with moving it there. Harry Costello grew up attending the West Milton Church, but somewhere along the way had been confirmed Episcopalian and always considered himself a member of that denomination until he died at the age of 99. Probably he felt a close tie to both of these churches and seeing that the West Milton Church no longer needed a bell, felt that a fitting place for it would be Trinity Episcopal.

Thank You, Ruth....

We would like to take this opportunity to publicly thank **Ruth Ryan**, Past Curator of the Milton Museum, for her twenty years of devoted service. Her knowledge of Milton's history and genealogical information has been a very valuable contribution.

CALENDAR

SCHEDULED PROGRAMS

The monthly meeting of the Milton Historical Society is held on the first Wednesday of each month at the Museum at 7:30 p.m. unless otherwise noted. We have an entertaining program, a business meeting, and refreshments. All are welcome to attend.

- May 2, 2001 **Junior Historians Award Night** at Milton Elementary School, Herrick Ave.
- June 6, 2001 **“History of Milton through Postcards - Who, What, When, Where?”** Audience Participation
Presentation by Peter Mallet
- July 8, 2001 **Sunday Picnic Trip to Chester A. Arthur Birthplace** Fairfield, VT
- August 1, 2001 **“The St. Albans Raid”**
Presentation by Donald Miner, Director of the St. Albans Museum, covering the northern-most activity during the Civil War, which occurred on October 19, 1864.
- September 5, 2001 **“Ballads of Vermont”** written by Albert Leddy and performed by his grandson, Chris Abair
- October 3, 2001 To be Announced
- November 7, 2001 **“First Come, First Served”**
Proverbial Wisdom From the World of the Mills and Millers

RELATED EVENTS

- May 5, 2001 **Annual Meeting of the League of Local Historical Societies**
Rutland, VT
“Interpreting the 20th Century”
Speaker, 2 Workshop Sessions, Awards
Sponsored by the Vermont Historical Society
- May 19, 2001 **George Washington Presents**
Parade starting at 11:00 am, with Community Performance at noon at the United Church on Main St. in Milton
Bob Lemons 893-6535
Sponsored by PTA, Midtown Mobil & Little A Floors
- May 28, 2001 **GRAND OPENING**
Milton Historical Museum
- June 23 & 24, 2001 **The Vermont History Expo**
10 am - 5 pm
Tunbridge World’s Fairground, VT
Great Exhibits, Presentations, & Entertainment
Vermont Chamber of Commerce Top Ten Summer Event



MEMBER

Special thanks to Paw Print Offset/Digital in So. Burlington, VT for donation of supplies for this newsletter.

If you have photographs or other items you would like to contribute to the Milton Historical Society, please contact Jane FitzGerald at 893-2340.

MILTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY
P.O. BOX 2
MILTON, VERMONT 05468

