



HISTORICALLY SPEAKING

THE
NEWSLETTER
OF THE
MILTON
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY

2003-2004

Historical Happenings, 2002-03 by Jane FitzGerald

*From the Museum Director's Report,
2002-03 Town Report*

The Milton Historical Society and Museum are approaching their third year in the renovated former Trinity Episcopal Church, and they continue to work on their mission to help their members, friends and people of all ages learn about Milton's history and its people.

Many people attended the special public events, one of which was the enjoyable and informative "Trash

or Treasure? Antique Appraisal Day" when three local collectors appraised our heirlooms. Over one hundred people enjoyed the Family Holiday Open House in December, featuring handmade decorations, children's activities, early toys and early Victorian gifts, music and refreshments.

The Fourth Grade Vermont History Contest was held in April, followed by the Junior Historians Awards Night held in May at the Milton Elementary School. Over 150 parents and friends enjoyed a program on "Milton's Changing Landscape" focusing on the Lamoille River. Thirty-three students were presented books for their honorable achievements.

In May at the League of Local Historical Societies Annual Meeting in St. Johnsbury, The Milton Historical Society received a Certificate of Excellence in the category of "Exhibits and Museum Techniques".

In June, we participated in Vermont History Expo 2002 in Tunbridge. Recognized as one of Vermont's Top Ten Summer Events, it gives small local historical societies the opportunity to cre-

tation of major events, changes, and a population graph depicting the growth over the past 220 years.

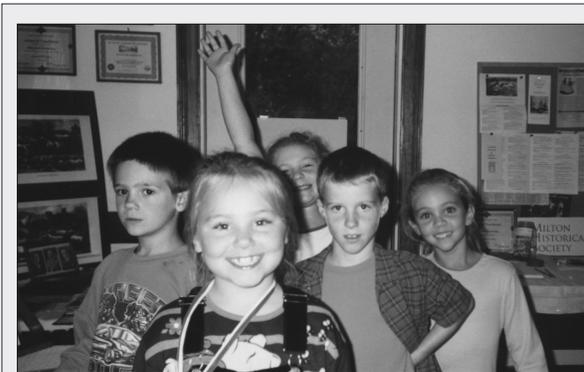
Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont sponsored workshops during the summer and visited the Museum with Elementary School teachers who participated in the FEED (Food Education Every Day) project. The program is intended to educate students about healthy food and Vermont's farm life and agricultural cycles, such as planting and harvesting. Many students from the primary grades have visited the Museum this year.

Other meeting programs during the past year included "The Town Photo-grapher", "The Life

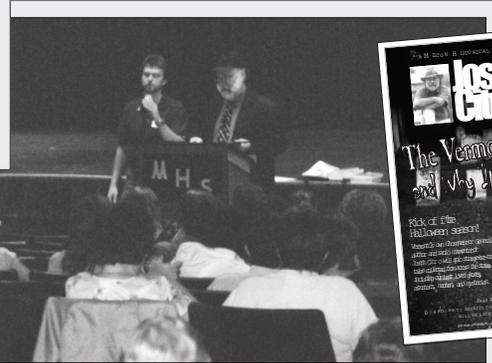
and Times of Snowflake Bentley", and "Remembering Our Own Asa Davis - An Early 1900s Singer of Irish Folk

Songs and English Ballads". In October we hosted author, radio commentator,

and Vermont's own "Ghostmaster General" Joe Citro before over 200 people at Milton High School, who spoke about "The Vermont Spirit and Why It Scares Us".



Mrs. Ladabouche's second grade class visited the Museum in October 2002.



Society President Jerry Learn introduces Joe Citro before a "spirited" crowd at MHS on October 2, 2002.



ate an exhibit showing something unique about their town. Our theme was "Over 100 Years of Dairy Farming in Milton" with a display of early dairy and farming implements. We also featured the newly-made 4' x 7' Milton History Timeline designed by Vice President Bill Kaigle, with pictures and documen-

Museum's Stained Glass Gets New Life by Jane FitzGerald & Bill Kaigle

We are happy to report that the large stained glass altar window has been repaired. Last spring a friend of our Society introduced us to stained glass artisan Clifford Dow, who she thought might repair the window. After examining it, Cliff agreed at a very reasonable price to restore the window for the Society and the Town of Milton. With his many years of experience he knew where to obtain the closest matching

replacement glass available. We want to publicly thank him for his truly outstanding work.

Repairing and replacing the glass is just one part of the job - removing the window and putting it back in place was quite another undertaking. Rick Hamilton, his helpers, and the town crew worked together when the window needed to be moved. The Society would like to thank everyone who helped to see that this proj-

ect was accomplished. A Memorial Gift from the families of Frances (Cormia) Lafayette, Maurice Mears and Velma Powers helped to fund this project, which also includes a safeguarding layer of Lexan on the outside of the window. The Lexan was installed, unveiling the beautifully restored window in early April 2003, just as Museum opens for its regular April through October hours. Come and check it out!

MILTON
HISTORICAL SOCIETY
ESTABLISHED 1978

Officers

Jane FitzGerald *Museum Director*
 Bill Kaigle *President*
 Stan Henry *Vice President*
 Beverly Quebec *Secretary*
 Doris Mears *Treasurer*
 Mary Skapski *Historian*

Directors

Jerry Learn *3 years*
 Richard Stowell *2 years*
 Linda Ballard *1 year*

Membership

Membership is open to the public. Annual dues are:

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

Please send payment to:

Milton Historical Society
 P.O. Box 2

Milton, VT 05468

HISTORICALLY SPEAKING

VOLUME 3, NUMBER 1

2003-2004

Bill Kaigle *Editor/Design*

Views of Milton
PAST & PRESENT

Have you picked up your Historic 2003 Calendar featuring past & present views of Milton? There are still a limited number available at the Museum and Town Clerk's Office.

Great Collector's Item!

Monetary donations
to benefit the
Milton Historical Museum
may be sent to:

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

Celebrating 25 Years of Service!

by Lorinda Henry

Twenty-five years ago a group of interested citizens of the Milton area formed the Milton Historical Society. Interest in the past, creativity, and a very short shoestring were the materials the group had to work with.

The first speakers and entertainment were provided by the members themselves and their friends and relations. Stan Henry, Odessa Cary, Gertrude and James Manley shared their interests in antique tools, folk dancing and the early presence on Native Americans during the organization's first year.

Over the years many projects, interests, and traditions have evolved. Historic homes tours, harvest suppers, holiday entertainment were some of the first offerings. Long time members will recall Pie Night, when each family brought a pie, and shared in the tasting of as many as possible.

Major accomplishments have included the Milton Quilt project, the acquiring of community support for the Milton Town Museum (now in its second location), and the spearheading of the Vermont Bicentennial celebration in Milton, in 1991.

In the early 80's cemetery restorations were done under the leadership of Bob Hooker, then President of the Society. Other projects of the early years included getting a grant to help file and store the many old photos the Society has been given, as well as oral history interviews.

Always the collecting and maintenance of Milton's historical treasures has been a main function of the Society. Now that the collection has a new home in the Museum on School Street, the work of the Milton Historical Society has not ended, but has only just begun.

Remembering Ruth Ryan

by Jane FitzGerald

Ruth (Keeler) Ryan, wife of the late Archie Ryan, passed away on February 12, 2003. A lifelong Milton resident, Ruth was one of Milton's most dedicated and valuable historians. She participated in, witnessed and recorded events and major changes in her much-loved community.

For almost thirty-five years during the mid-1900s she was a reporter for several local newspapers – *The Suburban List*, *Burlington Daily News*, *Enosburg Courier*, and *The Burlington Free Press*. Her reporting expertise portrayed Milton as one of the social centers in Chittenden County. Prior to Milton's Bicentennial Celebration in 1963, Ruth wrote a summary of Milton's history, entitled "Looking Back" in the weekly *Suburban List*.

In 1965 Ruth accepted the position of Librarian of the Milton Public Library, at the Clark Memorial Building. She was instrumental in creating a town library with the additional space, larger volume of books, increased circulation, and greater visibility that was much-needed in the fast-growing community. With the help of the Vermont

Free Public Library Service, local Trustees and the Women's Club, these improvements were accomplished.

Ruth was a Charter Member of the Milton Historical Society. She served as Curator of the original Milton Museum (also in the Clark Building) and the Society's Historian for over twenty years. During this time her dedication and participation were exemplary.

She was also an active member of the Social Union, United Church, Arrowhead Mountain Home Demonstration club, Rebekkah Lodge, Women's Hospital Auxiliary and the Women's Club.

As we recall the life of Ruth Ryan we need to remember her

as a remarkable citizen whose initials reflect her character – reader, researcher, recorder, reporter, responsible, resourceful, reserved, respectful, reliable and always ready to help. Ruth's enthusiasm and love for Milton and its history will live on, not only through her historical research but through a generous financial contribution she left behind for the Milton Historical Society. We thank her.



Ruth Ryan
1912-2003

The Mears Farm and Family

by Loren Sanderson

John Mears (1766 - 1861) came to Milton from Poultney, Vermont in 1791, about the time that Vermont became the fourteenth state in the union, and bought the land on which the Mears family still lives today. John married and had a family of which two were sons, Elias (1807-1904) and Milo (1809-1861). As time went on he purchased more and more land until the farm consisted of several hundred acres, stretching from the western boundary that still exists eastward through the property now owned by the Welsh family to land across the Lamoille River. In the early 1900s Elias, who was then in his nineties, told his grandchildren that in 1814 his mother Nancy took he and his brother Milo to the far end of the meadow behind the house and the high point of the farm where they could hear the cannonfire and see the smoke

where the battle of Plattsburg was raging. This was nearly the end of what was known as the War of 1812 with Britain. The Americans won this battle and drove the British out of our part of Lake Champlain; this was a decisive factor in ending this war with victory for the Americans.

Sometime about 1830 Elias and Milo had become young men and married, and it was the decision of the family that the farm be divided. John and his younger son Milo kept the western part of the land while Elias took the eastern part beginning just below the Crowfoot Spring. The descendants of Elias kept this farm for about a century.

Milo married a young woman by the name of Submit Williams and had several children, the oldest being named Rodney (1835 - 1919). Before the Civil War Rodney left for Iowa where he got a job teaching school, then married Lenore Dubois. In 1861 Submit wrote Rodney and asked him to come home because the whole family was very sick and he was needed here desperately. By the time the letter reached him and he and his new wife could pack and get here by

rail, his father Milo, his grandfather the old patriarch and first settler John aged 95 had died of typhoid fever that they had acquired from their drinking water.

Rodney and Lenore then went on to have their family, one son Hoyt (1878-1939) married Jenny Phelps from Sopertown and carried on the farm while raising their chil-

Thomas, Steven, Gary, and Philip - and a daughter, Martha. Thomas married Cindy Walsh and their daughter Judy was born in 1971.

Doris and Paul are now the owners of most of the land that John Mears bought in 1791 and share the unique position of both being great-great-great-grandchildren of this same John Mears.

Doris traces her ancestry back to Elias Mears while Paul traces his back to Milo Mears. Another Society member, Jane Fitzgerald, can trace her background back to John Mears through her mother Gertrude Mears Manley, who was a daughter of Hoyt and Jenny Mears.

Judy Mears married Paul Ellis from Oregon, and their first few years were spent in Alaska where their two children Brittany and

Nathaniel were born. October 24, 1998 was the Golden Wedding Anniversary celebration for Paul and Doris, the highlight of the festivities being the arrival of Paul and Judy Ellis with their children, Paul and Doris' great-grandchildren whom they had not yet met. Brittany and Nathaniel are the ninth generation to walk on the farm that John Mears bought 212 years ago.

This family history was written in 1998. Since then, Paul and Doris have three new grandchildren—Caroline Coleman, Asa Mears and Dorothy Mears.



This photograph taken in 1901 features three Mears generations in front of the original family farmhouse, which stood until 1946 when it was consumed by fire. Standing are Rodney and Hoyt Mears; Seated are Lenora, Maurice, and Jennie Mears.

dren which were Maurice, Max, Janice, and Gertrude.

Maurice (1900-1969) married Martha Thompson of Checkerberry in 1919. After the death of their first son they adopted Henry or "Bud", as he has always been called. In 1927 another son Paul was born. After the death of Jenny in 1949, Maurice and family returned to the family farm. By this time, Paul had married Doris Lafayette from the village, who quickly learned to be a farm wife. Four sons were born to them -

WHERE WAS I?

We need your help identifying the location of this picture. We do know that "the Bunch" were photographed at the Willow Bay House in Milton around the turn of the century by J.K. Smith. But where was it?

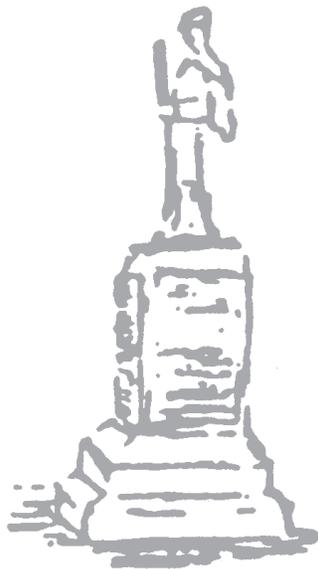




Rick Stowell is working on obtaining a computer for the Society through his employer, IBM.....**Allen Beaupre** has completed a Historical Farm Map. Listed by location and alphabetically, it highlights the 100-plus farms (10 cows or more) that were in operation in Milton around 1950. It will soon be on display at the Museum! Much

thanks to **John Cushing** for his help.....During the 2003 season, The Vermont Museum and Gallery Alliance is offering **Free Admission** to all Vermont State Historic Sites if you volunteer at your local Historical Society. Come to the Museum for more information.....If you need assistance on a genealogy project, contact **Bob Sibley** at 527-0906.....If you have photographs or other items you would like to contribute to the Milton Historical Society, please contact **Jane FitzGerald** at 893-2340.

If you are interested in learning about Milton's past and the major changes of the past fifty years, plan to visit the Milton Historical Museum.



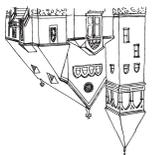
MUSEUM HOURS

April through October 1st & 3rd weekend, 1:00 - 4:00 pm
Year-Round By Appointment (call 893-2340)

We would also like to invite you to join the Society. Annual Membership begins in April each year. Please return the membership form attached to the enclosed Events Calendar, noting your specific interests.

M a r k Y o u r C a l e n d a r !
 — M a y 26th, 2003 11:00 - 4:00 —
 25th Anniversary of the Milton Historical Society
 & 2nd Anniversary of the opening of the new
 Milton Historical Museum!
 Special Exhibits ~ Refreshments ~ Short Afternoon Program

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



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. Special and related events are also listed.

- May 7, 2003 **Junior Historians Award Night** Milton Elementary School, Herrick Ave.
Topic: "Early Farming – Work, Family, Food & Fun"
- May 26, 2003 **Milton Historical Society 25th Anniversary Celebration** Milton Historical Museum, 11:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. Special exhibits, refreshments, and short morning program following the Memorial Day Service
- June 4, 2003 **Preparation for Vermont History Expo**
- June 21 & 22, 2003 **Vermont History Expo 2003** Tunbridge World's Fairground, VT
Great Exhibits, Presentations, & Entertainment
Vermont Chamber of Commerce Top Ten Summer Event
- June 23, 2003 **"Make a Simple Journal or Scrapbook" Workshop** Milton Historical Museum, 10:30 a.m. To sign up, call Lori Henry at 893-7036.
- July 3, 2003 **Business Meeting** Prepare for July 4th Parade
- July 13, 2003 Hosting **Chittenden County Historical Society Annual Meeting**
Milton Historical Museum, 11:00 a.m. Picnic, Business Meeting, Tour of Museum
- August 2, 2003 **Native American Craft Workshop** for children 10 years & older. Look for details in *The Milton Independent*. To sign up, call Lori Henry at 893-7036.
- August 10, 2003 **Sunday Picnic at the Old Red Mill** in Jericho. Meet at the Milton Museum at 11:00 a.m.
- September 3, 2003 **The Underground Railroad** Speaker to be announced.
- October 1, 2003 **"The Abenaki of Vermont – A Living Culture"** Speaker to be announced.
A Vermont Folklife Center Presentation
- November 5, 2003 **"Hidden Secrets of Ephemera"** by Eleanor Brodeur of the Vermont Ephemera and Postcard Society
- December 3, 2003 **Business Meeting/Holiday Open House preparation**
- December 7, 2003 **Holiday Open House** at the Milton Historical Museum, 1 - 4 p.m.
- January 8, 2004 **"Remembering Vermont Rural Life"** Excerpts from Dan Cady's four volumes of poetry, presented by Stan Henry. Cady was born in Windsor in the early 1900s, served as a lawyer in New York City, and died in Burlington.
- February 4, 2004 **Work Meeting**
- March 3, 2004 **"Celebrating Maple Sugaring"** Audience Participation – Share your stories!
- April 7, 2004 **Annual Meeting & Membership Month**

For further information, please call 893-7387 or 893-2340.

MEMBERSHIP FORM

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Date _____

I am interested in (check all that apply):

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Attending monthly historical programs | <input type="checkbox"/> Caring for Historical Museum collections |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Guiding visitors at the Historical Museum | <input type="checkbox"/> Assisting with genealogical research |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Helping to restore Milton's cemeteries | <input type="checkbox"/> Community outreach/public relations/fundraising |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ | |

The Milton Historical Society meets the first Wednesday of each month at the Milton Historical Museum, at 7:30 p.m. Categories of membership are: Individual - \$5.00, Family - \$7.50, Honorary (age 80 and over) - Free

Membership dues and form may be mailed to: Milton Historical Society, P.O. Box 2, Milton, VT 05468