



HISTORICALLY SPEAKING

NEWSLETTER &
ANNUAL REPORT
OF THE
MILTON
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY

2010-2011

MILTON'S HISTORY IN PERSON:

Grace McDonald by Allison Belisle Templeton

A large part of Milton's history comes from the people in the community. Through them we can learn the personal side of our town's history. This is the fourth article in a series of articles on long-time Milton residents.

Grace McDonald's friends label Grace "the oldest woman in the real West Milton." The real West Milton, as they see it, is the historic section that borders Colchester and surrounds U.S. Route 2, not what is currently viewed as West Milton along Lake Road. Grace has lived on what is now Gravelle Road, formerly the old Route 2, since 1939. Grace and her husband owned farm property on this road and raised their two sons here. From this property, they ran a successful fuel distribution business.

I went to visit Grace at her house, in this now very quiet little set-off from the busy Route 2 thoroughfare, next to the Lamoille River. An "outsider" like me had no idea of the hustle and bustle that used to exist down there when it was the "main drag" for traffic flowing to and from the Lake Champlain Islands and Canada. At first glance, a house

in this neighborhood looked like an old gas station, which did not make sense in this sleepy hollow. Once I was enlightened with the knowledge that this road was once active with speeding cars and heavy tractor-trailer traffic, the gas station made perfect sense.

Grace McDonald was born Grace Martell in South Hero on October 13, 1911. Grace's mother was Florence Dubuque from Plattsburgh and her father was Edward Martell from the islands. Some confusion over the spelling of the last name was exaggerated because Edward's brother spelled it with one "L."

Grace's heritage goes back to French speaking Quebec with her paternal great grandparents, who were born in Quebec in 1813. Both of Grace's parents spoke French but spoke it only to each other when they did not want the younger children to understand what they were discussing. Her older brother Joseph did learn the language, since he was an only child for many years, until Grace's brother Harold was born.

Grace's family lived on a small farm in South Hero in her early years, but then moved to a bigger farm in Grand Isle when she was 16. Grace went to school until eighth grade but was not able to go beyond that, since the islands did not have a high school, and still do not to this day. Grace helped her mother with housework. Being a girl, Grace did not help outside with the farm work. However, she does remember one time when she did drive her father's horses. The wagon broke as



Rick Stowell

Grace McDonald, in the kitchen of her home on Milton's Gravelle Road.

she was driving it, but she still managed to get the horses back to the barn. Grace admitted she was "not too brave around horses", but she did like to drive a car. When asked what car she drove, she replied, "Well, a Model-T, of course." Grace drove a car starting at age 14 and learned driving in a nearby gravel pit. She and her mother would push the car out of the garage before Grace got it started, to avoid any mishaps inside the garage. Grace drove for 81 years, stopping just 3 years ago at the age of 95.

Grace's father earned an income with his horses, often working on the town roads. In later years, he graduated to working on the roads using a truck. While he managed the horses on his own, he hired someone to drive the truck. As Grace says, "He was not a very good driver."

Grace attended elementary schools in the islands, in South Hero and Grand Isle. When looking at her school pictures from over 90 years ago, Grace was able to easily reel off most of the names of her classmates from the Donaldson School in Grand Isle. Some of the students' names were: Irene and Elsie Baker, Oscar Wells, and Edith Robyor.

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Grace and Henry's Route 2 property - Gas station in front, H.W. McDonald fuel tanks at top left, and McDonald farmhouse at top right.

McDonald family photo

The Society's purpose is to collect, preserve, promote, and present Milton's history to interested persons.

MILTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

TREASURING OUR HERITAGE SINCE 1978

Lorinda Henry *Museum Director* 893-7036

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Membership

Membership is open to the public. Annual dues are:

Individual	\$10.00
Family	\$20.00
Honorary (age 80 & over)	Free

Please send form & payment to:

Milton Historical Society
13 School Street
Milton, VT 05468

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Remember...

Our membership year begins in April, and you may join at any time. Please renew or begin your membership today!

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We appreciate your support!

Greetings from the Museum Director

by Lorinda Henry

The Milton Historical Museum is now on regular summer hours, and people are visiting regularly. We have had an energizing spring so far with a lot of input and requests. I feel energized because most times while I am helping someone, they are also giving me new information as well.

The beginning of 2010 has been a busy time and we have several exhibits and plans in the process of development. We are installing a youth computer; we have a new sectional on Milton Post Offices and Mail Carriers, curated by Dee Plouffe; and with the addition of a newly donated cupboard built by a Milton resident, we are planning to enlarge our general store exhibit. Preliminary planning is already in place for our annual December Open House.

The Vermont Automobile Enthusiasts had a statewide meeting at the museum and enjoyed their day as well as giving input on the one photo we have of an auto meet in Milton in 1911. Cub Scouts have visited in the process of getting badges in history and collecting. Duane Chase from Jeffersonville

brought us information on the several Milton establishments that turned out products in Milton embossed bottles. As always, people are looking for family ties, information on their older homes, and general history of the town.

We are having some of our old newspapers protected with the help of Nan Marotti. Recent acquisitions include a bound copy of the Village Records, a set of copies of early state papers including those of Thomas Chittenden, the above-mentioned hand built cupboard, and a few photographs.

All in all I am learning as much as I am teaching and am honored to have that experience.

I will need volunteers for the summer. So, if you are willing to come and learn more yourself and spend a few relaxing afternoons at the museum, please let me know. And if you have offered in the past, please call again. I can be reached at 893-7036 or via email at: artistlh@aol.com.

I want to say thank you to all who are making this an easy transition.

Thank you, Jane!

Jane FitzGerald's dedication to the Society and her work in making the Milton Historical Museum a reality has been amazing. Thank you Jane, for serving as our Museum Director for the past 8 years. She was instrumental in the establishment and operation of both the first Milton Museum at the Clark Memorial Building and the current museum on School Street which opened in 2001.

In this year's Town Report, Jane says, "Thank you to the community and the voters who have supported our endeavors to preserve Milton's history over the past 30 years. At a special vote in November 1978, the Milton voters overwhelmingly approved the article to provide use of one room in the Clark Memorial Building (Milton's Town Office from 1916 to 2004) for Milton's first Museum. In 1999, the Milton voters approved a bond vote to purchase the vacant Trinity Episcopal Church and make the necessary structural repairs to house the Milton Museum. In 2004, the voters approved relocating the Civil War Soldiers' Monument to the museum grounds. All of these important events would not have been possible without the support of the great people of Milton."

The Society wishes to publicly thank Jane for her for incredible dedication, talent, and for sharing her pride in Milton's hometown heritage.





Milton Grange Farmers' Market

Saturdays June - October 9:30-1:30
Space Available - Call 893-7734

Milton's History In Person: Grace McDonald *continued from page 1*

A couple of the students pictured at right were classmates as well as relatives: Eileen and Harold Martell. Her teacher was Miss Helen Tobias.

During the Spanish Flu epidemic of 1917-1918, Grace's family was very sick, all at the same time. Grace remembers them all being out of commission for many days and others having to come to their farmhouse to take care of the animals for them.

In the winter, Grace's family would often cross the frozen lake, in a horse-drawn sleigh, to travel to Plattsburgh

to visit her mother's family. To keep warm on the journey, they would put baked potatoes in their gloves to keep their hands warm and heated bricks in a bag for their feet. The frozen lake provided an easy byway for them. While trips to Plattsburgh were common, they rarely went to Burlington. The ice provided a much easier passage than the winter roads leading to Burlington.

Grace met Henry McDonald at the dances at the South Hero Community Hall. Henry was originally from Connecticut but had moved to Milton a number of years earlier. Grace and Henry married on June 16, 1930 at the St. Rose Catholic Church in South Hero. She and Henry moved around between Burlington and Milton for a number of years and then settled on their farm on Route 2 in 1939. Henry worked for Mobil Oil as a distributor, H.W. McDonald Distributor. He distributed oil, kerosene, and gasoline. They also owned a gas station. Both the distribution business and the gas station operated from their Route 2 property.

Grace and Henry had two sons, Robert and William, born in 1931 and 1933. Grace gave birth at home with the help of a doctor and her cousin, who was a nurse. A family friend who was also a bootlegger gave her a bottle of liquor to help her with the birth. Unfortunately, her cousin the nurse drank most of it, leaving little to help Grace.

Bootleggers were common on Route 2 since it was a direct path to and from Canada. Grace was even accused of doing some bootlegging herself. She drove an old Dodge, which sat low to the ground. This made her look

suspicious to a federal agent who thought that she must have been



Grace (fourth from right) and her classmates at the Donaldson School in South Hero.

carrying something heavy and possibly illegal. One day this agent followed her home and demanded she open her trunk. Grace tells this story with a smile on her face because to the agent's dismay, and likely embarrassment, all he found was a sack of potatoes.

Grace would sometimes attend the dances that were held in the old hangar at the former Schill Airport in Milton (*former site of B&M Motors, where Sears now sits*). As a young married woman attending these dances, she did not participate as much as she had at the dances in South Hero; partially because she was pregnant. Although not attending them herself, she did recall that often there were very popular dance marathons held at the hangar.

Similar to Grace's experience in South Hero, Grace's sons attended a one-room schoolhouse. The schoolhouse they attended was on what is now called Jasper Mine Road. Her sons also learned how to drive in a sand gravel pit, like Grace. Grace learned in her local South Hero gravel pit while her sons learned in the pit that was behind their house on Route 2.

The family had a Welsh pony named Paint. Grace only got on it once and she felt like she was "a mile high"; still not comfortable around horses. Her son Robert was so comfortable he would jump on the horse's bare back and easily ride it to bring the cows back from the upper meadow. Her other son, William, did not have as much luck since all the pony did was chase him around the field.

Life living next to Route 2 was busy and hectic. The road was particularly dangerous at this point with all its bends and curves. Speeding cars, tractor-trailers and accidents were common. At one of the sharp bends, there was a bridge spanning the Lamoille. The flood of 1927 destroyed this bridge causing the residents to have to seek alternative routes while it was being replaced. The detour, Fox Hill, now a lost road, took the driver from Route 2 to Bear Trap Road as a bypass. While Grace did not live near the bridge during this time, her father took her to see the rebuilding of the bridge. She remembers seeing her future husband Henry, who was working on the bridge, standing on the "island" of initial bridge supports in the middle of the river.

Grace would often drive the Route 2 causeway to the islands, to see her mother. She recalls how different the road was then, compared to how it is now. She explains that it used to be a one-lane dirt road, with "turn-outs", to allow oncoming traffic to pass.

In addition to the traffic, this area of Route 2 was also busy with other activity. Across the road from Grace's house was a campground with cabins and boats for rent, and later a snack bar. The original Lamoille Terrace View Tourist Cabins was purchased by Ed Mullen in 1954 and renamed the Cove Colony Tourist Cabins. Ed added the Cove Snack Bar. Neighbors, the Lamphere family, took tourists fishing on the Lamoille for sturgeon. Pictures of these fish show them being held for measurement and exceeding the height of the measuring tool, a yardstick.

The state game reserve also borders this area. In these years, state employees who managed the reserve lived on the property. For many years, state game warden Bob Rooks and state farm

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2010-11 CALENDAR of EVENTS

Meetings of the Milton Historical Society are held on the first Wednesday of each month at the Museum, 13 School Street, at 7:30 pm unless otherwise noted. We have an entertaining program, business meeting and refreshments. All are welcome to attend. Special and related events are also listed. Schedule subject to change.

Thank You to this year's Program Series Sponsors:

Building Home Center ■ Century 21 Jack Associates ■ Four Seasons Real Estate ■ McRae Truck & Auto

and our Society Sponsors:

Tim Brisson / Northeast Planning Associates ■ Mansfield Heliflight ■ Milton Diner ■ Sampler House B & B

Wed. May 5, 2010 7:30pm

Business Meeting

Wed. June 2, 2010 7:30pm

Refreshments & Beverage: Dee & Ron Plouffe, John & Phyllis Mayville

"Understanding the Great Flood of 1927" Presented by Nicolas Clifford, Middlebury College professor. The Flood of 1927 is remembered as the greatest natural disaster to ever strike Vermont, and stories of loss, tragedy and heroism abound. Yet, it is far more than an episode restricted to the history of a single state. An examination of the flood reconstruction helps shed light on important facets of our national history, and helps us better understand America's passage through the often anxious and difficult years of the 1920's.



Wed. June 26-27, 2010
10am - 5pm

Vermont History Expo 2010 Tunbridge Fair Grounds, Tunbridge, VT. For more information, call (802) 479-8500 or visit www.vermonthistory.org/expo

Summer date TBD

Refreshments: All furnish (for sale)

Summer date TBD

Refreshments: All furnish

Antiques Fair Location to be determined and announced.

Summer Picnic Location to be determined and announced.

Wed. August 4, 2010 7:30pm

Refreshments & Beverage: Jim & Lorraine Manley, Jack & Barb Campbell

"The Civil War" Jim Fouts, retired St. Albans high school teacher and curator of the St. Albans Historical Museum's military room and St. Albans Raid Display. Jim brings to us his knowledge of the Civil War, tracing the unfolding of sectional tensions that led to the commencement of war between Northern and Southern states in 1861. Jim examines how real and perceived differences between north and south developed during the antebellum years, and how the expansion into new Federal territories in the west created friction between the north and south. We'll also look at significant events in our Nation's history prior to 1861 that helped precipitate the sectional crisis.



Wed. Sept. 1, 2010 7:30pm

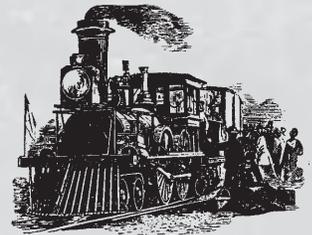
Refreshments & Beverage: Beverly Quebec & Lorinda Henry

Business Meeting

Wed. Oct. 6, 2010 7:30pm

Refreshments & Beverage: Gordon & Perry Thom, Bill & Jen Kaigle

"Trains & Railroads" Presented by train engineer and author Bob Jones. Bob shares his experiences and knowledge about trains and railroads throughout the country, including family railroad history, his early work with trains, the various types of trains and train experiences through the years. Show and tell and question and answer session - *Bring your favorite train stories or model train!*



Wed. Nov. 3, 2010 7:30pm

Refreshments & Beverage: Rick & Peggy Stowell, Allison Templeton & David VonHolden

"The History of the Town Photographer" Photographer and local historian Forrest Holzapfel discusses the role of the village photographer in nineteenth-century Vermont and demonstrates how his work continues that tradition to create a body of contemporary photographs depicting the people and landscapes of his hometown, Marlboro, Vermont. He offers suggestions to those who would like to undertake similar documentation of their own towns. *A Vermont Humanities Council presentation.*

Wed. Dec. 1, 2010 7:30pm

Refreshments & Beverage: Shirley Sweeney, Jane Lafayette

Business Meeting / Preparation for Holiday Open House

Sun. Dec. 5, 2010 1 - 4pm

Refreshments: All members furnish; Beverage: Refreshment Committee

Holiday Open House Special live holiday music, exhibits and treats!

January 2011

Winter Break - No Meeting

Wed. Feb. 2, 2011 6:00 pm

Bring a dish to share; Beverage: Refreshment Committee

Picnic & Movie Night Share your picnic memories or travels to your favorite drive-in eatery at our indoor picnic. We will be serving hot dogs, salads and root beer followed by the movie *A Hot Dog Program*. Enjoy an all-American celebration of what may be the country's most popular fast food. From Connecticut to South Carolina to California, Rick Sebak visits some of the nation's coolest hot dog places, taking viewers inside a giant hot dog-shaped building, stopping at some crazy late-night stands, and looking at how hot dogs are made. Wonder how and when hot dogs became so popular-or what toppings are tops these days? Tune in and find out. *Please note the earlier 6pm start time for this event.*



March 2, 2011 7:30pm

Refreshments & Beverage: Jeannette Adams, Sandy Richards

Business Meeting

March 27, 2011 1 - 4pm

Refreshments: Everyone furnish; Beverage: Refreshment Committee

Sugar-on-Snow Party at the Milton Grange Hall. Live music, outstanding maple treats, family activities.

Wed. April 6, 2011 7:30pm

Refreshments & Beverage: Peter Martin & Deborah Dolby

Annual Meeting

For further information, call 893-4546 or 363-2598, or email: miltonhistorical@yahoo.com

The West Meeting House

by Loren Sanderson

In the 1820s there was a feeling of need among the people of West Milton and its surrounding area for a place of worship, a place for families to come together on the Sabbath to honor God as near to the manner they were accustomed to as possible. Some of these settlers had moved here

from southern New England, where churches had been established much earlier. Others were sons and daughters of these who had come before, and still others without church ties shared the feeling that a Covenant be drawn up and a Meeting House be built to serve this purpose.

On January 16, 1830, A.G. Whittemore's Milton office was the scene of the first meeting and discussion of the task at hand. The next meeting was held February 4 at 1:00 pm. The first order of business was the nomination of Timothy P. Phelps for President and Albert G. Whittemore for Secretary. They were then appointed to those positions. The President then called the meeting to order and the following constitution was proposed and adopted, quoting the original Covenant:

"Article 1. The meeting house shall be called the West Meeting House and shall be occupied 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, each to take their turn in the following order: on the first Sabbath after the house shall be dedicated it shall be used by the Congregational Church and Society; on the second Sabbath thereafter, by the Methodist Church and Society; on the third Sabbath thereafter by the Congregational Church and



Society; and on the fourth Sabbath thereafter by the Baptist Church and Society and thereafter in the same rotation and succession forever.

Article 2. This constitution shall never be subject in any event to alteration, amendment or abrogation.

Article 3. This constitution shall be authenticated by the signature of the President, and by the countersignature of the Secretary - at A.G. Whittemore's office in Milton on this 4th day of February, 1830 at three o'clock in the afternoon."

It was duly signed by A.G. Whittemore, Secretary, and Timothy P. Phelps, President of the meeting.

In the next few months these interested people held several more planning meetings. A committee was formed comprised of Joseph Clark, Ephraim Herrick and John Jackson to superintend the construction of the meeting house. It was further decided that the meeting house would be built following the circular plan exhibited by Emerald Mason, Esq. Levi Sanderson suggested that the steeple be positioned on the front side of the building in a southerly direction. The church stood in this position until 1943.

On February 12th, 1830, people interested in buying pews at the office of A.G. Whittemore, where 44 numbered pews were auctioned off to bidders for a total

of \$2615.00. (There is a complete list of purchasers at the museum.)

It was then decided to sell the remainder of the pews to any person or persons who would furnish a bell weighing 600 pounds and bell rope to hang this bell. Payment for the pews would be made in cattle and grain, half in the month of October 1830 and the other half in 1831.

The meeting house was built and the services conducted in the manner that had been agreed upon. The West Meeting House became a flourishing church with very high attendance. It was served by itinerant ministers and circuit riders much of the time during the rest of the nineteenth century. Sunday Services sometimes went on all day. There were morning and afternoon services. People came to morning service, ate picnic lunches that they had brought and sometimes stayed for what was likely the same service again in the afternoon. Those from farther away would come in the afternoon. Sunday school sessions were held for those of all ages. In the 1930s, Charles L. Sanderson (1858-1939), a grandson of church co-founder Levi Sanderson, spoke about his parents attending every Sunday with their sons, a practice he and his wife carried into the twentieth century. He also spoke about people coming to church from as far away as Georgia, Vermont by oxcart. Not long after the church was built, "church sheds" were constructed for people to put their horses or oxen during the services. They were used until about 1930.

It must be realized that much of the success and high attendance of this church was due to the population of West Milton, which was much higher in the 1820s onward through most of the nineteenth century than the that of Milton Falls, later known as Milton Village. It has been handed down through the Sanderson family that in 1829, when Charles P. Sanderson was five years old, the teachers of the West Milton School requested that he be allowed to come to school with his older brothers so as to make a student body of 100 children. A century later the student population a quarter of that size in this same district. In the middle of the nineteenth century, West Milton boasted of two blacksmith shops, a dock on the river at which barges from New York landed with goods and left with lumber etc., a post office and two stores, the last of which went out of business after the flood of 1927.

In the early 1900s the West Meeting House began to be called the West Milton Church. Soon after, the attendance began to decline. Perhaps in the latter part of the nineteenth

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Milton's History In Person: Grace McDonald *continued from page 3*

manager, Neil King had residences on the reserve. A barn used for relocating wild animals can still be seen off Route 2 today. Grace remembers when a small bear escaped from its enclosure on the state land and was wandering near her house.

There was also a Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) camp down the road from Grace's house, located off what is now called Access Road. The only remnant of these residence cabins is the beautiful stone fireplace buried in the woods. Grace remembers CCC camp members using her fields for recreation. In the winter, they would come and skate when the fields were frozen from snow melt. The CCC members worked in the rock gravel pit off Route 2 near Fox Hill. One of their projects visible to this day is the beautiful stone bath house at Sand Bar State Park. The purpose of the CCC was to provide work, particularly manual labor. These campers worked very hard. As an example, for the Sand Bar bath house, they sometimes hauled the stone in wheelbarrows from the gravel pit all the way up Route 2 to the site of the bath house. Since manual work was the focus, the campers were not supposed to have cars. Despite that, some still did. To hide their



H.W. McDonald's fuel oil and kerosene distribution each had its own separate truck.



McDonald family photos

cars, these campers would park them behind Grace's barn.

Grace and Henry built a house for Grace's mother around the corner from their farm house. Unfortunately, her mother only

lived there for two years before she passed away. Henry died in 1968 and Grace moved into this house herself in 1970.

In 1980, when the new Route 2 opened, it diverted traffic on both sides of the Lamoille River. When that happened the road outside of Grace's house was suddenly peaceful and quiet. A neighborhood was created out of this once chaotic thoroughfare. The people who lived in this area barely knew each other since crossing the road was such a hazard. It was transformed into a sleepy hollow where children could now cross the road to play with their new friends. The neighbors even had a block party to celebrate their newfound solace.

Grace saw four name changes to this road over the years from Island Road, to Route 2, to Old Route 2 to what is now Gravelle Road. When asked about the biggest change she has seen over her lifetime, Grace replied without hesitation that it was the change to Route 2 and that it was definitely a good thing.

Grace has generously donated many pictures of this fascinating area to the Milton Historical Society. We encourage people to visit the museum to see and learn more.

Wish List

The Milton Historical Society is always in need of items we could use to support our mission, whether it's monetary or a volunteer of assistance. If you're able to help with anything listed here, we'd greatly appreciate it. Call 893-1604 or email miltonhistorical@yahoo.com to donate, or with any questions. Thank you!

- Staples Gift Card for Office Supplies
- Volunteer Museum Guides
- Volunteer to Grind 3 Tree Stumps on museum grounds (this will allow us to move forward on some landscaping projects)
- Claussen's or Mazza's Greenhouses Gift Certificate
- Copy of the Adjutant General's roster of Vermonters in WWI, Korea, and Vietnam for the museum. *Anyone cleaning their attic?*
- 3-ring binders
- Wooden Picnic Table

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Timothy J. Brisson
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Museum Projects 'n More by Bill Kaigle

It was a busy year in 2009-10 for preservation and museum maintenance projects.

Early in the year, Dustin Keelty and the town building & grounds crew replaced the storm door to the museum meeting room. In August, Ernie Turner and Kyle St. Amour stained the main entrance deck and ramp, and the meeting room exit deck.

Throughout the year, Jim Watson carefully removed broken stained glass window panes and replaced them with closely matching stained glass. He also glazed, repaired and reinforced frames, and painted and replaced them. Jim's workmanship is excellent, and we appreciate the discount he gave us. All the windows are now back in place and more beautiful than ever. In 2003, the Powers and Mears families donated for the complete restoration of the large altar stained glass window. We're proud to now have all the stained glass in the building restored.

Last year, we reported on progress of the reconstruction of the former West Milton Bridge over the Missisquoi River in Swanton. The project was completed in early July, and on July 30, 2009, several Milton Historical Society members were in attendance on a beautiful summer day for the dedication ceremony. Former museum director Jane FitzGerald was honored by helping with the ribbon-cutting. We applaud Ron Kilburn, president of the Swanton Historical Society, and his local supporters for spearheading this project in what is a wonderful re-use of a historic



Ron Kilburn

Former museum director Jane FitzGerald (third from right) joins Governor Jim Douglas and Swanton officials in the ribbon-cutting ceremony at the dedication of the former West Milton Bridge July 30, 2009. The bridge has been restored in Swanton as a recreation passage connecting the village to their museum.



Bill Kaigle

Town of Milton Buildings & Grounds Superintendent Dustin Keelty and Jamie Cameron set the new front steps in place at the Museum on October 23, 2009.



Rick Stowell

Jim Watson of Watson Glass works on reglazing the stained glass windows on the museum's meeting room door. He worked throughout 2009 on repairing all the stained glass windows in the building.

Milton structure. Without their tenacity and perseverance, this large project would never have become a reality. The bridge extends other recreation paths in the Swanton area and provides an outstanding link to cultural and recreational opportunities for Swanton residents and visitors. It is a great fit and fills a need for their community, and we recommend checking it out when you're in that area. There is an interpretive sign near the bridge entrance describing its Milton heritage. We also visited the bridge and Swanton's wonderful transportation museum again in September for our annual picnic.

At our spring cleanup day at the museum, we removed the old and decayed front entrance steps, and they were replaced in October by the Town of Milton with an attractive set of precast concrete stairs. Local slate and copper roofing contractor Dick Read also replaced several pieces of slate on the museum roof late last summer.

The museum renovations in 2000 included extensive replacement of trim boards on the bell tower. This spring, the bell tower and louvered vent dormers will receive a long-awaited painting by Top Dog Painters.

You may have also noticed that this year's newsletter is no longer coming to you from "P.O. Box 2" in Milton. That's because after many years at that address we've voted to close our post office box as a cost-saving and convenience measure for our volunteers. Rick Stowell has installed the new box just in time for this mailing.

A big thank you goes to everyone involved with museum improvements this past year. Your help elevates the pride we share in our town's history!

Buy into a piece of history

STAINED GLASS WINDOW FUNDRAISER

This project helps pay for the stained glass work done last year and rebuild our maintenance budget. For \$175 per sash or \$350 for a full window, your name will be emblazoned on a brass plate on a window of your choice, showing your support. Call 893-1604 or email miltonhistorical@yahoo.com for more information.

2009-10 Year in Review, and a Look Ahead

by Bill Kaigle

During 2009-10 several of the historical society's activities and special museum exhibits were related to the region-wide Lake Champlain Quadracentennial celebration. The theme of the fourth grade history contest included all phases and features of Lake Champlain. Interpreter Don Thompson gave a first-person account of Samuel de Champlain as he stepped into character and entertained the large group of parents and students attending the 28th annual Junior Historians Awards Night on May 6, 2009. Forty-five worthy students were honored for their efforts.

Special exhibits included a native American display, as well as one showing the camping facilities and spacious inns that existed from 1869 to 1950 on the Milton's shores of Lake Champlain, attracting tourists from all parts of the country. Our Fourth of July Parade float featured a group of campers with their guide in authentic dress enjoying the view and scenery across the lake. For the month of August we participated in the Chittenden County Historical Society's "History Mystery" Quadracentennial event, which included 18 towns in the county. Participants received a map and brochure of riddles and clues leading them to a specific landmark in each town. At the League of Local Historical Societies Annual Meeting in November, this event received an achievement award in the category of education and outreach. Each town received an award of merit.

Another special exhibit commemorating President Lincoln's 200th birthday was the theme of the Society's open house during the Milton Winter Festival. It was also carried over as part of the 100th anniversary of the original 1909 dedication of the Civil War Monument on September 6, 2009. Society members gathered to commemorate the original event and honor the many men who gave their lives or served in the Civil War.

The Swanton Historic Bridge over the Missisquoi River was dedicated on July 30, 2009. Former museum director Jane FitzGerald was honored to participate in the ribbon-cutting since this Pennsylvania Truss bridge had originally spanned the Lamoille River in West Milton. It was a vital town passage for over 90 years and part of the landscape from 1902 to 2003.

Other happenings in 2009-10 were Rick Stowell's cemetery workshop, and our Holiday Open House with music provided by Jane Nesbitt and members of the Vermont Fiddle Orchestra. A variety of programs at our monthly meetings included: The History of Town Meeting Day in Vermont; Restoration



Samuel de Champlain interpreter Don Thompson describes what life was like 400 years ago on the lake that bears his name, with the help of his trusty fourth-grade assistants on May 6, 2009. Special thanks to Deborah Dolby and Peter Martin of the Sampler House for donating lodging that evening for Don and his wife.



The Village Trustees presented the Society with a beautifully bound volume of all Village meeting minutes on January 7, 2010. L-R - Betty Thompson, Bob Lombard, Bill Kaigle, Jack Lindsay.

of Old Cemeteries; The 150 Year Anniversary of St. Ann's Church; Joe Citro's *Spiritualism in America* and an enjoyable discussion on Vermont anecdotes with Milton's own author Steve Delaney. In November, short-track racing history enthusiast and career-long Milton educator Bill Ladabouche gave us a fascinating history lesson on all the racetracks that have existed in Vermont, which included our own Catamount Stadium from 1965 to 1987. Bill's biography of Milton racing legend Harmon "Beaver" Dragon, *To Beat the Beaver*, has very been popular with local race fans.

On January 1, 2010, Jane FitzGerald resigned as museum director. She was instrumental in the establishment and operation of both the first Milton Museum at the Clark Memorial Building and the current museum on School Street, which opened in

2001. The Society thanks her for dedication, talent, and for sharing her pride in Milton's hometown heritage.

On March 28th, the Society and the Milton Grange sponsored their annual Sugar-on-Snow Party at the Grange Hall. An ever-growing crowd of people enjoyed the rural tradition with sugar on snow, homemade desserts, kids' activities and live music.

In late 2009, the Joseph J. Marotti Co. donated their restoration services on two very early Milton maps - one of the original Plan of Milton, the other of the Original Surveys of Lots of Land. Here's the interesting part: they were delivered for a price estimate in 1990 - 20 years ago - and were left but not ordered to perform the work after receiving the \$700 estimate. Joe and Nan retired in 2009, and one of their last projects was to close the loop on that project, which the Society had overlooked. They performed the work and then donated the restored maps to the Milton Historical Society. We are forever grateful.

On January 7, 2010, the former Village trustees donated a beautifully bound copy of all the meeting minutes of The Village of Milton, from its 1903 inception to the 2005 merger with the town. In an effort to dissolve the Village by using remaining funds for projects that honor the Village, the Society has been approached to present possible museum projects in that vein, which we've done and a couple of them will be considered in 2010, including a granite "memory bench". Stay tuned.

Monthly meetings are held the first Wednesday of the month at 7:30 p.m. at the Museum. Watch the local newspaper for special events or changes. Museum hours are the first full weekend and third weekend, April through October, from 1-4 p.m. During November through March, call 893-1604 to visit by appointment.

Everyone is invited to our programs the first Wednesday of most months at 7:30 pm at the Museum. Watch for details in *The Milton Independent* and other local media.

Portions of this article were contributed by Jane FitzGerald and published in the 2009 Milton Town Report.

TRIVIA TIME

What were the names of these early Milton schoolhouses, and where were they located? Come to the Museum or email miltonhistorical@yahoo.com for the answer!



New Mailing Address

Please note that our NEW mailing address is: Milton Historical Society, 13 School Street, Milton, VT 05468.

Artifact Donations & Loan

Do you have photographs or other items you'd like to contribute or loan to the Milton Historical Museum for exhibit? Contact museum director Lorinda Henry at 893-1604 or artistlh@aol.com. All donations are tax-deductible.

Thank You...

...to Dustin Keelty and the Town of Milton for everything they do to keep the museum building and grounds looking and working great.

...to Jim Manley, for pulling our July 4th parade float and letting us adorn his hay wagon however we see fit each year!

...to Jim Watson for his wonderful job in completing the renovation of the Museum stained glass windows.

...to our wonderful volunteers!

Monetary Donations

Your tax-deductible donations to benefit the Milton Historical Society & Museum are crucial to its ongoing success in serving our community. They may be sent to: Milton Historical Society, 13 School Street, Milton, VT 05468. Thank you!

Genealogy

We are working on updating and expanding our system for handling genealogy requests. Call or email the Society, or historian Jim Ballard at 893-7734 / jamesbmilton@comcast.net for information. We also ask anyone who has done a family history or genealogy of Milton folks to consider donating a copy to the museum for our collection.

Bylaws Vote

As was warned in a letter to members last month, we will be voting on bylaws updates at our June 2, 2010 meeting.

Getting Involved

There are many ways that you can get involved to benefit you and YOUR Historical Society and Museum, and it's fun! There are current committee openings, call 893-1604 for details.

Programs

To suggest a historical program that you'd like the Society to host, call Rick Stowell at 893-4546.

Supporting our Community

MANSFIELD 
HELIFLIGHT

159 Catamount Drive, Milton, VT 05468
802-893-1003

Sponsorship Opportunities by Allison Templeton

In 2010, the Society reached out to the Milton business community for their support for our 2010-2011 program series. The outreach was done in the form of sponsorship opportunities at different levels. We're very excited about the response and support. Most of those contacted were happy to hear from us and many extolled the work that we do. Given the positive results of the drive, we plan to make this an annual appeal.

The levels of sponsorship opportunities are at right. If your business is interested in either of these, please contact us at

miltonhistorical@yahoo.com or by calling (802) 893-1604.

Series Sponsor: \$50

Your company name will be included on promotional materials and listings throughout the year for all programs.

Society Sponsor: \$75

You will have an ad in our annual newsletter and your company name will be included on promotional materials and listings throughout the year for all programs.

The following businesses have joined us in our inaugural year of this program:

Society Sponsors:

Tim Brisson / Northeast Planning Associates
Mansfield Heliflight
Milton Diner
Sampler House B & B

Series Sponsors:

Building Home Center
Century 21 Jack Associates
Four Seasons Real Estate
McRae Truck & Auto

Thank you for your support!



One of our plans is to be able to help people in town identify their "what's it" – an older item that interests you, but you just can't figure out what the heck its purpose was (or is). If you have such an item, contact us! We'll see if we can help. Likewise, let us know if you have any collectors books for our small "identification library" that you would like to donate.

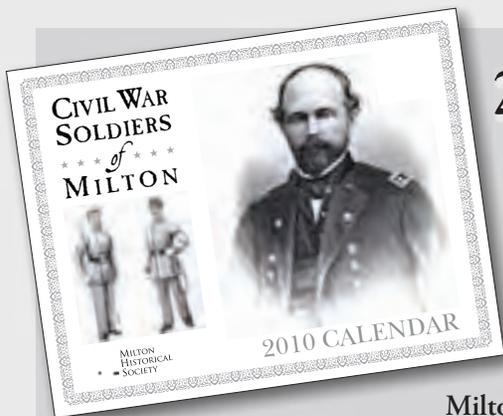
History Contest Update by Allison Templeton

After 28 successful years of working with the Milton Elementary School on the annual fourth grade history contest, we are taking this next year to rebuild and develop our strategic plan. It is within that light that we have decided to suspend this program. It was not a decision that was made easily, given the long and successful tradition of the program.

It is our goal to continue to work in conjunction with the school to develop a

relationship that fosters the love and respect of our local history within the children of our community. During this next year of reorganization, we would like to encourage an open line of communication for new ideas on how to partner with the school. We want to continue to welcome classes to the town's museum. It

is our hope that we can develop a new program that works with all of our strengths, both teachers and the Society together, to continue our partnership into the future.



**2010
Calendars
Still
Available!**

The 2010 Milton Historical Society Calendar provides a snapshot of the story of our town's involvement in the Great Conflict. A limited supply of these keepsake calendars is still available for \$5.00 each and may be purchased at the Museum, the Town Clerk's office, or by calling 893-1604.

All proceeds benefit the Milton Historical Museum.



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The West Meeting House *continued from page 5*

century there had been somewhat of a decline in membership caused by the exodus from many old West Milton families of their young men and women for the West. Some had left before the Civil War, many more departed for Chicago, Michigan, Wisconsin and other states in the years following the war. This couldn't help but cut down the population of West Milton. In 1804 the Congregational Church was formed in what is now Milton Village, a year later the Methodist, Roman Catholic and Episcopal churches became established, and a Methodist church had also been built in Milton Boro which had regular services well into the twentieth century. Many families who lived nearer to these newer churches predictably began attending church closer to where they lived. One must remember that in those days many people had to walk to church, and a few miles made all the difference. In the last years that regular services were held, they were conducted much of the time by the clergy from the Congregational or Methodist churches in Milton Village. By the 1920s many West Milton families owned automobiles and attended church in town, regular services ceased and the building was used only for an occasional funeral during the 1930s.

My earliest memories of this church have always been pride mixed with sadness. Pride because from the beginning I had realized from listening to my parents and grandparents that four generations before me had been a part of this church. Sadness because this church had been a part of my grandparents' life, and its closing was difficult for them. They always blamed "the motor cars" that caused the younger people to go down to church, then on Sunday drives – which may have held some truth. In the first half of the 1930s during the summer months my grandparents, Charlie and Katie Sanderson – then in their seventies – each Sunday would change their clothes, and he would hitch a driving horse to a buggy and the three of us would set out for the first cemetery where she would place fresh flowers on the graves of their three sons who had died in the diphtheria epidemic of 1890. He would point out to me the graves of his parents and grandparents, instilling in me an interest that has remained for my entire life. We would then walk over to the church and go in, as it was never locked. In those days no person in the area would violate or steal anything pertaining to the church. The first thing that might be noticed upon entering the sanctuary were the black cast iron stoves on each side of the building. Stovepipes were attached to the stoves and went straight

up to a few feet from the ceiling then went over the pews to the far end of the church and into the chimney. On each side of the door was a small table with a bible on it. The pulpit had a very large bible laying open to where the last preacher had left it, giving the area the feel that services were about to start. My grandfather would then point out the pews that the Sandersons sat in and other familiar families had used. These are impressions that have been with me for a lifetime. In later years after I had become a teenager, Sundays would find me on horseback, tying my horse to the cemetery fence as I had seen my grandfather do. My grandparents were here now with those who had gone before; the inside of the church was still the same, only dust and cobwebs had accumulated. It was plain to see that something had to be done.

The 1940s came, the church appeared to be standing as staunchly as ever but the wood shingled roof was leaking badly. Harry Costello, with the help of Orlow Sanderson, had patched the roof some years before but now it was evident that more than patching had to be done if the building was going to be

saved. By this time most of the former members had either died or become affiliated with one of the churches in the village. Nevertheless, representatives from many of the old church families got together, probably instigated by Harry Costello who led the meeting. Harry was a short, very quick and energetic man then about 70. He milked his own cows until he was about 90 and lived to be 99. Those involved were the Granger family, including Charlie and Rosalie Bullock, Floyd and Orlow Sanderson and Jennie, Maurice and Max Mears. There may have been others that I don't remember. After facing the facts, they decided that services would not be held there again. The upkeep of the building would undoubtedly fall on those present so they came to the conclusion that the building would have to be sold. It was sold to Mr. Harlie Perry, a carpenter from Milton village. The bell was removed and installed at Milton's Trinity Episcopal Church. The church items that were not to be sold were divided between those present; the original agreement or Covenant was given to Floyd Sanderson, he being a great-great grandson of Levi Sanderson, one of the original signers. Being his nephew, Floyd passed this on to me, before he died in 1966. The pews were sold to Mr. S. Fascitelli for \$20.00 on December 8, 1942. Harlie Perry paid \$80.00 for the church on April 7, 1943. The money received went to the West Milton Cemetery Fund. One of the reasons they sold to Harlie Perry was that after tearing it down he planned to recycle the lumber in his other building projects. In those days lumber from old buildings was almost always used again, a practice we have gone away from but which is starting to return to for historic structures.

One day in 1943, Raymond Sweeney and I were working with a pair of horses on a wagon about a mile south of the farm when we heard some strange noises coming from the area of the church. We headed the team in that direction and got there in time to see the whole front of the church come tumbling down. It was not a joyful sight but we realized that this seemed to be an inevitable thing and we had to accept it. A half-century later the historic preservation organizations probably would have done their utmost to preserve it.

In the 1990s Michael and Diane Morgan of West Milton purchased the land that the church had been on and built a home for their family very near where the church sheds once stood. It is gratifying to drive by and notice the attractive rock garden near the front of their yard and know that it is fashioned around stones that once were part of the foundation of the West Meeting House.

We'll Miss You, Loren

On March 19, 2010 we lost our dear friend and valued historian Loren Sanderson. Loren's quick wit and magnetic personality gave him a way of making everyone around him feel like a lifelong friend, and he loved inviting anyone into his interesting stories. The West Milton Church bell that Loren mentions here is on display at the museum, along with this and other articles he authored on Milton's history.

Loren telling stories with Sandy Richards and Gwen Brown, ready to greet visitors to the Society's 30th anniversary celebration in 2008.



Rick Stowell

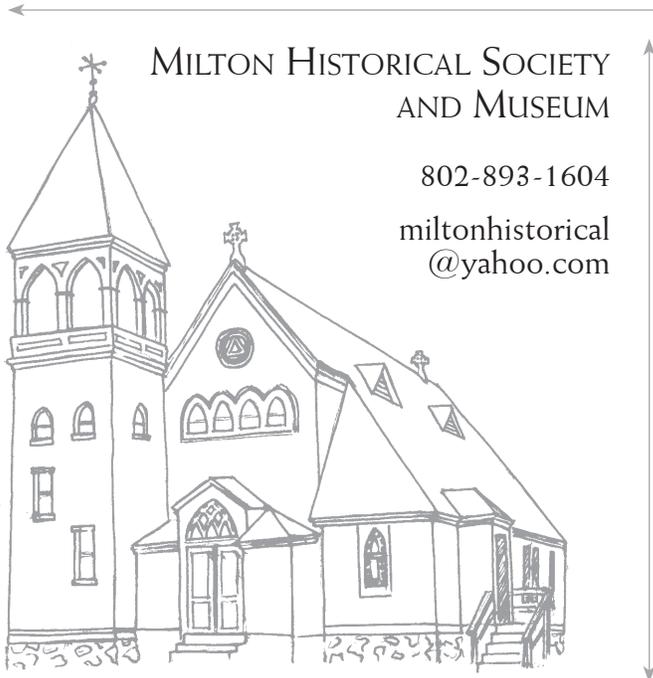


Kathleen Raupach

Loren with close friend and former Society president Jerry Learn, at the Learn family homestead in Pennsylvania in 2008.

Come see these recent additions to the Museum collections!

- A beautifully bound copy of all the **Meeting Minutes of The Village of Milton**, from its 1903 inception to the 2005 merger with the town, donated by the Village Trustees.
- **Catamount Stadium Trophy, Photo and Checkered Flag**, donated by Bobby Dragon from his September 22, 1968 feature victory in the Vermont 100.
- **Antique Cupboard** with drawer boxes made from antique wood cereal boxes. Donated by former Milton resident Joy Kipp, it will be a nice addition to our general store exhibit.
- **1930's Supplemental School Curriculum** donated by Mary Lou Lombard and an **Antique School Desk**, donated by Allison Templeton. Both will be a great accent to our school exhibits.
- Hardcopy **Vermont State Papers** books, donated by John Cushing. Says museum director Lorinda Henry, "They are really interesting, and you all are going to need to help with cataloging, because I keep stopping to read."
- Two **Original Pre-1800 Town Land Maps**, with preservation work donated by Joe and Nan Marotti.



If you are interested in learning about Milton's past and its many events and personalities of the past 150 years, plan to visit the Milton Historical Museum at 13 School Street.

MUSEUM HOURS

April - October | 1st full & 3rd weekend, 1 - 4 pm
Year-Round | By Appointment - call 893-1604

We would also like to invite you to join the Society. Annual Membership begins in April each year, and you may join at any time. Please return the enclosed membership form, noting your specific interests. We hope to see you soon!

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