



HISTORICALLY SPEAKING

NEWSLETTER & ANNUAL REPORT OF THE MILTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

2017-2018

All Forerunners to Catamount!

by Bill Ladabouche

When you think racing in Milton, Vermont – you think Catamount Stadium. So how, in 1965, did Catamount come to be there, with its seemingly interminable practice sessions, all the officials wearing neckties, and its short supply of race cars? You have to look back, more than ten years, into the history of Chittenden County. In the earliest two years of the 1950's, the county featured six separate race tracks, many of which were operating simultaneously. By 1954, most were all gone; after 1959, all were gone.

It is believed the earliest track was called Sunset Speedway, and was replaced soon by the still-operating Sunset Drive-In, in Malletts Bay. Very little is known about this track. The other five came about in approximately the same time period: 1950 to 1951. The Malletts Bay Raceway [version 1] was located on now what is Belair Drive, across from the Clover House restaurant and behind the Catholic Church in Malletts Bay. It was another relatively short-lived, little-known operation.

Another somewhat obscure player in this story was the South Burlington Raceway, located approximately behind the elementary school next to McDonald's on Williston Road. A little bit more prominent was Harvey Moody's 5/8 mile Green Mountain Speedway, located on Williams Road in Colchester on what was then some of the Brigante truck farm land. Described by one veteran of those racing days, Green Mountain was "kind of a chicken wire deal".

Malletts Bay Raceway

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Ad for the first Malletts Bay Raceway.



Rollover Ronnie Farnsworth and Twin brother Ira look at the remains of one of his #13s. Ira lived in Milton for years.



Gordy Owen confers with a mechanic with the first Ralph Bushey car in 1951 at Harvey Moody's rustic 5/8 mile track on Williams Road in Colchester.



The Fightin' Trayah brothers, the Farnsworth twins, and Ed Charbonneau pose with an early car at Ivanhoe Smith's Colchester Raceway on US 2 near the Essex town line.

The second most successful of the old Chittenden County tracks was the Colchester Raceway of Ivanhoe Smith. The flamboyant Smitty, a Winooski used car dealer who was one of the first local businessmen to use television to boost his venture, had his track just inside the Colchester town lines, on US Route 2, near Essex Junction where the present-day Canyon Estates housing development sits.

Even the infamous Colchester Raceway took a back seat to Walter Barcomb's track out on Route 127, beside the Malletts Bay Drive-In and not far from Malletts Bay Salvage, the Barcomb family salvage yard.



A good-sized crowd, some in Sunday best, wait patiently in the hot sun for the next action at Malletts Bay Raceway, on Route 127 in Colchester.

Beginning as Malletts Bay Raceway, the track hosted races that attracted drivers from not only Chittenden County, but also from all over northern Vermont, New York, and even occasionally from New Hampshire. The final

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General Stannard House Update by Bill Kaigle

The General Stannard House Committee thanks the community for your support of the House restoration project, and what it can bring to our town when restored as a public Civil War Historic Site.

We continue to progress in what we hope are the final stages of seeking VT DHP and Act 250 approval, and in August we submitted our packet for DRB approval of our plans for stabilization, restoration and repurposing the House, currently awaiting our public hearing date.

Following a February presentation to the Vermont Senate Institutions Committee, we received word in June from Sen. Dick Mazza and author/historian Howard Coffin of our \$25,000 state award for the House restoration. Check signing and presentation will occur at the Statehouse, and we expect to hear more soon now that the new fiscal year is upon us. Sen. Carolyn Branagan also suggested an application for a \$10,000 grant for further development of the recently launched *Vermont in the Civil War Heritage Trail* from the state for next year.

We are putting together our application for the Medal of Honor for Gen. Stannard. This is being coordinated by author Liam McKone, Committee Co-Chair Kate Cadreact, and Town Historian Jim Ballard. We are asking Sen. Leahy for his sponsorship and submission of the application. We have received generous offers of help from St. Albans Museum Director Alex Lehning, VT Militia Museum and Library Marketing Director Jim Bergen (at Camp Johnson) and VT ANG Col. Michael Morgan, among others.

In early August, the *Vermont In the Civil War Heritage Trail* was soft-launched and brochures were distributed to sites and stakeholders. We have worked hard to get to this step and are justly proud. The Trail will reveal and explain Vermont's largely unknown crucial contributions to the American Civil War. It features the geographic

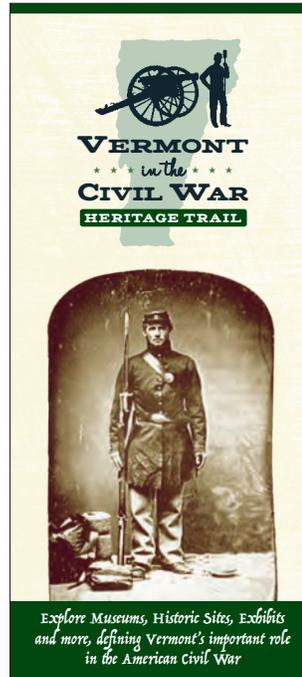
connection of major sites to US Route 7, South to North. For modest initial expense,

up to 20 sites will advertise, locate, and explain each other to the world. A simple website and Facebook page are live now, and will be continually developed and enriched. VT Tourism has added this new Vermont Civil War "itinerary" to their vast network of heritage offerings. Note that we are locally two years from full participation, but plan to function as a focal point of the Trail, with Gen. Stannard, hero of Gettysburg and Fort Harrison, at the core. There are additional sites being evaluated for inclusion in the future, as well as enriched content at sites, virtual reality tours and more.

Other successes in 2017 include:

- UVM archeological dig to ascertain archeological sites of value. They found none.
- Raising almost \$500 from a Book Fair at Barnes and Noble.
- Suggestions and offers of publicity, presentations, videos and programming for the Trail from LCATV and their associated public broadcasters.
- Jim Brangan (Champlain Valley National Heritage Partnership) and Dan Albrecht (Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission) encouraged our participation in their work. They are supportive of the Heritage Trail concept.

We continue our balancing act of physical progress, education, and development of this value for Milton's residents and visitors. We appreciate and look forward to your continued support, and we welcome questions or discussion at any time - call 802-734-0758, email generalstannardhouse@gmail.com or visit GeneralStannardHouse.org. And new members are always welcome!



Explore Museums, Historic Sites, Exhibits and more, defining Vermont's important role in the American Civil War

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Thank you for your support!

All Forerunners to Catamount! *continued from page 1*



Bob Mackey / Mike Watts, Sr.

This post-1957 shot, when the track was now called Colchester-Bayview Speedway under NASCAR sanction, shows how close it was to Malletts Bay Drive-In [which eventually acquired and destroyed it].

version of the track was called Colchester-Bayview Speedway and it attracted many of the same big names that were running at Airborne, across the lake. There are indications that high profile teams such as the red and white 11's of Hudson Falls' Henry Caputo raced at least some at the track. Legendary Sterling "Buck" Holliday of Waddington, NY [way over by Watertown] visited the track, as did future Hall of Fame race promoter C.J. Richards [who raced one of his only races there before deciding to participate from the other side of the track], and future hall of fame driver Vince Quenneville, Sr. – then fresh out of the Air Force.



Lloyd and Greg Gilbert

Milton resident Lloyd Gilbert would bring this car to the Malletts Bay Raceway weekly, with his number advertising the weekly special at his store [then in Burlington].

The influence of these old Chittenden County tracks, as well as Barre's Thunder Road International Speedbowl (which came in 1960) and Waltham, Vermont's Otter Creek Speedway (1961) all worked together to create the style and ideas of what came to be known as Catamount Stadium; and many of the drivers, owners, mechanics, and just plain track rats whom you would see at Catamount came right out of the history pages of those tracks.

When some Vermont racing visionaries saw the need for, and opportunity of, a race track in Vermont's most populous county, they settled upon a tract of land barely inside the southern boundary of Milton. The consortium of Ken Squier, Jack Dubrul, the



Chris Companion

Former Milton resident Pat McGrath was a driver at Malletts Bay, and he also managed to be a flagger and track official in his career, as well.

Cooley brothers of Barre, Milton resident John Campbell, Sr., and Gordon Fitzgerald moved quickly in the Spring of 1965, constructing a track and buildings while buying the bleachers from the Lyndon B. Johnson inaugural parade.



Bob Mackey / Cho Lee

This shot of a heat in the 1961 inaugural show at Otter Creek Speedway shows Milton's own Beaver Dragon in the all white car. The race is being flagged off by future Catamount Chief Pit Steward Archie Blackadar.

The final hurdle, a week before the opening date, was the lack of a water source. NASCAR official Archie Blackadar persuaded Campbell, a dowser, to search for water and he was very successful. Catamount Stadium began shows that summer, armed with a mascot named Nas-Cat and UVM student Melissa Hetzel as Miss Catamount. Promotions notwithstanding, the new track plodded through the first season with two divisions – the sportsman coupes and the late model Flying Tigers. It was short on cars for both classes all season long. The first feature

ever at Catamount was won by Canadian Jean-Paul Cabana.



Ladabouche collection

An aerial view of Catamount Stadium and grounds around the time of its opening programs in 1965.



Cho Lee

This shot is said to be Jean-Paul Cabana, after winning Catamount's first feature.

By the next year though, Catamount would go on to become an important cog in the hugely successful Northeast modified racing world, fitting into a schedule of sorts with Albany-Saratoga Speedway in Malta, NY and with Airborne Park Speedway.

The track would be important enough in the modified world to be regularly attracting the likes of future multi-time national champion Jerry Cook, as well as Bugs Stevens, Leo Cleary, and Don MacTavish. When the hugely-prestigious All-Star Stock Car Racing League was founded in 1967, Catamount did not receive a team. Ironically, by 1968, the modifieds would be phased out at Catamount; yet, in 1970, with no mods running there, Catamount got its All-Star League team.

The track would then enter into a commitment to late model racing that would extend until the end of its life. In 1970, the Flying Tigers were upgraded to limited sportsman cars. The following season, along with Thunder Road and Airborne, the track went with full-fledged late model sportsman cars. This began to attract high level competitors from Massachusetts, Quebec, New York, and New Hampshire to run against those established Catamount regulars who could afford to remain.

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Will This Be Our Loss?

by Terry Richards

Things change. Paper does not last unless protected and preserved. Electrons can be scrambled or corrupted. Structures “built to last” don’t. Things, faces, memories so familiar to us in everyday life just seem to melt away. If we do not make a conscious effort to maintain, to preserve what is important to us, it can be gone when we are. This seems to not be a good way to run a civilization.

Webster’s 11th Collegiate Dictionary defines “History” first as “inquiry, learned, knowing” from the Greek. Then, “A chronological recording of significant events often including an explanation of their causes.” Then, “An established record.”

We can continue from these starting points to include what we call “personal history” or “family history.” These might seem to be easy to record and maintain. They are not. We can be too involved with our everyday lives to properly tend to our preserving and illuminating our experienced history. As we age, we begin to get some dim notion of how difficult it is to record what we call “History.” Things go wrong, too many opportunities slip away from us. We forget.

We, as a civilization, are living in a time of enormous, widespread and often violent change. That change can be instantaneous. Computers, Artificial Intelligence, and the Internet offer huge opportunities and challenges for what we can do for “History” each day. Our task of knowing, understanding and recording history gets harder each day. The act of ensuring our experiences and what we have learned get passed along is an important part of each of our lives.

We need to understand that History is “flexible.” What we understand to be fact or “what actually happened and why” can be found incorrect at a later date. This happens for various reasons: errors in reporting, bias, neglecting some facts, additional information discovered, errors in recording and passing along facts, etc. Simply put, History can be what we choose it to be. This does not make for good or accurate recording of the past. We are human. We have weaknesses and faults. Please keep this in mind when thinking “History”. Be skeptical.

The researching, recording, and preserving of our own history, at the very least, is important. Personal and family history needs

to be saved for future generations. It must also be documented and supported, with sources cited. When a story or event is retold, do we maintain strict accuracy? Any distortions cheapen or destroy history. And, to make it tougher, how do we reconcile the facts of what should be preserved and what let go? Some buildings or locations have immense meaning and importance for the future.... Who chooses and how do we accept that new things sometimes must be built over older ones. There are so many people and so many needs. How do we preserve the memories and facts and context of the past? How often do we hear “You can’t save everything...”? What do we do about that?

It is easy for too many different points of view, or differing opinions to interfere with our record of history. Our passing along of memories, experiences, facts, lessons learned is endangered. This is not just our loss. It is a loss affecting future generations. We should verify and document what we pass along as History. This is a critical requirement, fighting for accuracy and truth. It can be next to impossible to get right and even tougher being able to prove or document it.

In this time of extreme partisan politics, it is easy to gloss over, exaggerate, or totally disregard facts. Our newspapers and other media reports are all subject to doubt and question, from the Left and the Right. Media reports become not History, but gossip or argument. When we reach the point where many citizens no longer trust what anyone says, writes or does, our Republic is in peril.

If we can, with a straight face, say “Alternative Facts”, how do we have any chance to protect, preserve and transmit the stories of our lives, our surroundings, our nation? Quite simply, who can trust us? Who, in the future, will be able to determine just what went on in the 21st century world? All it now takes to issue “news reports” is an Internet connection and phone or keyboard. Millions of readers/

followers can receive communications that look enticing but are absolutely false. And other “media outlets” prosper by passing along these “news items” as facts.

“Fake news” is not new. Politicians do not always tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. Dictatorships come about in one of two ways: violent takeover/coup or what we might call “extreme persuasion of the citizenry.” This second method is characterized by making self-serving statements (true or not), keep repeating them, don’t back down, say it louder. When someone questions or disagrees, attack them. Eventually, the populace will believe and support you. This has worked for at least two millennia.

In March of 2017 there appeared a full-page advertisement in the New York Times, written by the Editorial Board of The New York Times. Whether your politics are left, right or in the middle, The Times is regarded worldwide as one of the best news organizations on the planet. The advertisement was a bold, mostly blank page with a column of 19 brief statements.

A few: “The truth is hard.” “The truth must be pursued.” “The truth can’t be manufactured.” “The truth is under attack.” “The truth requires taking a stand.” “The truth is more important now than ever.”

When stacked top to bottom, these sentences are powerful. And necessary.

This article is a commentary and opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect the position of the Milton Historical Society.



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How to Honor Those Who Have Served Milton by James Ballard

Many of us have a few items that have been handed down from our parents and grandparents. Many items like my grandmother's sideboard has practical and sentimental importance. There are a couple items from my grandparents that have connections to WWII, a washboard that has printed on it "made with materials not needed for the war effort." Another item is a knickknack of an American colonial coupled with the words printed underneath, "made in Occupied Japan."

We are surrounded by memories of wars through the displaying of memorials, monuments, and flags. Flags honoring our veterans in our cemeteries are small reminders of those men and woman who served, protected and defended our nation using their time, talents and in all too many cases made the ultimate sacrifice.

We also can honor our veterans and others who have served the community in other ways, by naming a road or street after them.

We have roads, streets and avenues with names honoring long time families or events

or geographical areas. Earlier this year Milton Planning Director Jake Hemmerick asked the Milton Historical Society to offer names for future town roads, streets, or avenues.

Below are some suggested categories where we place suggested names: Milton firsts, Milton's outstanding public servants, distinguished military men and woman, local

individual home owners usually suggest names to the Planning Department with the select board having the final decision. Once a list is approved by the Historical Board of Directors it will be sent to Planning Department. Names can be added and some names may fit more than one category. A list of the categories with names to be suggested will be posted at the museum in June for examination and suggestions.

We have various sections of Milton that make up the town as Katherine Jackson described in *The Story of Milton*. These various areas generally do not have their exact boundaries marked, but ask any longtime resident and they can tell you

roughly each area give or take a few miles or hills. The Old Village generally the Milton Falls area, Sopertown, Miltonboro, Checkerberry, Hardscrabble, the Plains, Marrs Hollow and West Milton. As Milton's population continues to grow it seems logical that different sections and their boundaries should be recognized at least within a mile or two.



writers, artists, educators, sports, inventors, medical personnel, local organizations, Catamount Stadium and Milton Speedway drivers or support personnel. Perhaps the names of past businesses may be an option or the individual acts of heroism by individuals or by a group based on a historical event.

The historical list will not replace the present practice where contractors and

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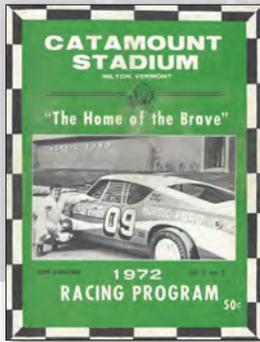
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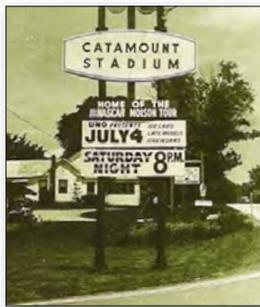
2017-18 CALENDAR *of* EVENTS

Meetings are held at the Museum, 13 School Street, unless otherwise noted. Monthly meetings begin at 7 pm. Free refreshments are served after program meetings. Business meetings are for all members, and everyone is encouraged to attend. There is no regular monthly meeting on July 5, 2017. For further information call 363-2598 or email: miltonhistorical@yahoo.com.

- Wed. May 3, 2017 7pm **Opening Reception: The History of Racing in Milton** Over the winter we have been very busy putting together an exciting new exhibit called *The History of Racing in Milton*. Join us to celebrate the opening of this exhibit primarily funded by a grant from The Vermont Humanities Council. Take a stroll down memory lane when Milton was the hot spot for stock car racing in Chittenden County. Light refreshments will be served.
- Wed. June 7, 2017 7pm **The History of Catamount Stadium with Bill Ladabouche** Milton became very closely identified with the sport of auto racing, with its Milton Speedway drag strip and the Catamount Stadium stock car oval. Not always treated kindly in local media, the sport of racing gave the community a source of pride and was a rallying point for many of its citizens. Former Milton Elementary School teacher Bill Ladabouche will make a presentation on the history of Catamount. **Refreshments: Wendell & Mary Noble**
- Wed. June 14, 2017 7pm **Business Meeting**
- Wed. July 19, 2017 7pm **Board Meeting**
- Wed. Aug. 2, 2017 6pm
Arrowhead Eagles Club
42 Centre Drive, Milton **Celebrating Milton's Racing History** Join us for an evening of reflection and living history as we bring together Milton's racing insiders for a celebration of Milton's Catamount Stadium and Milton Speedway. Enjoy some food and drink while listening and sharing your own memories and stories from Milton's heyday of racing.
- August 19 2017 10 - 2
Catamount Stadium Site **Catamount Stadium Track Walk of Memories**
- Wed. Sept. 6, 2017 7pm **Searching for Vermont Schoolhouses** Milton resident Charlie Farrell will describe his decade-long search for Vermont's old schools. His search began in the library but now he travels the back roads to document the existing buildings. Many of the schools have unique stories that will be shared. **Refreshments: Sandy & Stanley Richards**
- Wed. Sept. 13, 2017 7pm **Business Meeting**
- Wed. Oct. 4, 2017 7pm **An Archeologist's View of a Graveyard** Brennan Gauthier hosts a discussion on graveyards in Vermont. As the Vermont Agency of Transportation's archaeologist, Brennan and his team are called in to evaluate each new VTrans project for impacts to cultural resources in the surrounding area. **Refreshments: Nan Marotti**
- Wed. Oct. 18, 2017 7pm **Board Meeting**
- Wed. Nov. 1, 2017 7pm **Catching People's Stories with Jane Beck** Vermont Folklife Center founder Jane Beck has used the recorded interview as her major source of material for exhibits, media and written materials throughout her career. This technique puts the focus on people, personal history, family stories, experiences, values and attitudes—ordinary people often doing extraordinary things. Join us for this discussion on why people tell stories, what they mean to an individual, and examples of how they are used. **Refreshments: Rosalie Larose**
- Wed. Dec. 6, 2017 7pm **Come & Help Us Decorate for the Holiday Open House!**
- Sun. Dec. 10, 2017
11am-2pm **Holiday Open House Luncheon** Join us for a holiday lunch, festive treats and sounds of the season. Bring the whole family; with activities for the kids and vintage toys, there is something for everyone.
- Wed. Jan. 3, 2018 7pm **Board Meeting**
- Wed. Feb. 7, 2018 7pm **Business Meeting**
- March 7, 2018 6pm **Dinner and a Movie: A Green Mountain Journey** Join us for a summertime-themed pot luck dinner followed by the movie *A Green Mountain Journey* to remind us of those summer road trips and picnics that seem so far away during the cold weather. **The dinner bell rings at 6pm.**
- Sat. March 17, 2018 1-4pm
Arrowhead Senior Center
46 Middle Road, Milton **Sugar-on-Snow Party** Join us for some old-fashioned fun: live music, maple treats and of course, sugar on snow!
- Wed. April 4, 2018 7pm **Annual Meeting**



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BRING HOME A SOUVENIR OF MILTON'S RACING HISTORY!

As part of our "History of Racing in Milton" exhibit and events, we asked Mr. Tom Curley and the ACT Office earlier this year for permission to reproduce the wonderful Catamount History booklet they published in 1987, the track's final season. They were pleased to honor this request and help keep this history alive. These 30th Anniversary booklets are now available at the museum for \$10 each. All proceeds from the sales of this souvenir 48-page booklet benefit the Milton Historical Society, a charitable non-profit organization. We also offer shipping for \$3 additional – call 802-893-1604, email miltonhistorical@yahoo.com or contact us in our Facebook page.

We're honored to have made this contact with Mr. Curley, former GM of Catamount, before he passed away May 5, 2017. Godspeed, sir...local short track racing is alive and well in thanks to you and today's ACT staff.



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All Forerunners to Catamount! *continued from page 3*



Rich Palmer

Milton's own Bob Dragon tells of how he lent this '57 Chevy Tiger to All-Star League regular Joe Kelly of New Jersey in one of Catamount's League shows.



Rich Palmer

The next time, Dragon brought in his modified, a Devil's Bowl entry, and ran the League show himself.

This division would evolve through various phases, always upgrading the quality of the cars and incorporating chassis builders from the South and the Midwest into the mix. By the 1980's, the track had added better grandstands and luxury viewing boxes above the frontstretch stands. The track would phase through a few All-Star League races, a NASCAR Grand Touring division race, and the establishment of the season-ending New England 300 race, which would encompass an entire weekend usually in early October.

Along the way, various support classes came and went. The automatic transmission Hurricane division came in 1970, developing stars of its own, some of whom became prominent late model stars later. The Mini Stock class was added next, which lasted for at

least eight seasons. Eventually, the Hurricanes morphed into a six-cylinder Grand American class, which featured some very sophisticated pony cars such as Mustangs, Camaros, Javelins, and more. The final two classes were the street stocks, and finally the New Tigers, a class that seemed to come from the Grand Americans and street stocks.



Cyr family photo

The thundering early Hurricanes had their first star, Milton's Norm Cyr, who may not have actually lost a feature he finished in 1970.



Ladabouche collection

Milton's Jim Barton was a prime figure in the Limited Sportsman, Grand American, and New Tigers divisions.

After the 1985 season, a huge rift with many causes forged a split between track manager Tom Curley and NASCAR. The track had gone from weekly programs to a number of big programs per year, sharing its cars in a tour situation with many other Northeast tracks. The 1986 season went simply as "The Coors Tour", and the following year saw the creation of the American-Canadian Tour which still exists

today. With the ACT came the plastic-bodied cars that were popular in the South and the Midwest. These, along with the New Tigers, closed out the life of the track in 1987. Poetically, it was also Cabana who won the final race. The final program, sadly, was an enduro.



Rich Palmer

Beaver Dragon successfully ran this home-built Chevella during the hectic 1973 Northern NASCAR season. Miltonian crew members Randy Cary and Doug McLeod are seen in the middle, in the background.

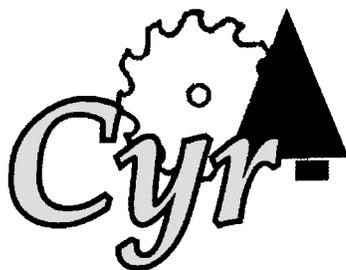


Ladabouche collection

George McRae, with a former Bob Dragon car, was another Milton resident who tried his hand at the highly competitive circuit that included Catamount.

Sometime around 1982, thinking the sport was in decline, track management sold the land under the track to the Greater Burlington Industrial Corporation and obtained a five-year lease. When things picked up in subsequent years, GBIC refused to extend the lease. One week after the final program, the track surface was torn up, the towers were used for Milton Fire Department hose practice, and the venue was soon razed beyond recognition. Today, people who loved

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The Gilberts

Lloyd, Sandy, Greg,
Betty, Patrick and Nick

the track still visit the site, which bears the contours of the banking.



Mike Cain

Fans walk around the track at Catamount before the start of the final stock car program.



Steve Pecor

This stark photo shows a torn-up frontstretch, with a new industrial development road cutting right through. The wall, still brightly painted, hadn't been destroyed yet.

Some time before Catamount was constructed, back further into Milton, salvage yard operators Bud McCormick and Maurice Bousquet (who had already built B&M Auto Parts on the East/West runway of the old Schill Airport) decided to convert the North/South runway into a dragstrip. Milton Speedway was up and operating before Catamount Stadium



Milton Speedway Facebook page

A classic shot from the Milton Speedway. Somebody's potent AMC against another guy's Mustang. The checkerboard stand ended up at Catamount.



Milton Speedway Facebook page

Internationally famous Shirley "Cha Cha" Muldowney waits as husband Jack works on her car at Milton.

was yet a gleam in anyone's eye. Many future names in the history of Catamount would first perform at the strip.

Beaver and Bob Dragon, Rene LaBerge, Frank Woodward, John Casey, John Keefer, and Jack Dubrul were just a few who raced on the short, eighth-mile strip with a harrowingly short shut-down lane. The strip, whose trademark checkerboard officials' tower would be transferred to Catamount upon its closing,



Frank Woodward

John Keefer (right) pushes his Vermonster dragster at Milton Speedway. Notice the man in the crowd bothered by the alcohol fumes.

had its regulars who raced in everything from the family car to specially constructed altered, gassers, rail jobs, and more.

Milton Speedway had its occasional brushes with greatness. The legendary Don Garlits made an appearance there with one of his Swamp Rat rail jobs. Shirley "Cha Cha" Muldowney, for years the most famous woman in drag racing, began her career with husband Jack as mechanic, at Milton. Art Arfons demonstrated his jet-powered car there, and regional stars like Larry LaCaillade and his Border Jumper were frequently in action.

The drag strip did not survive much beyond 1970 or so. Much like the South Glens Falls dragstrip, its relatively short life was probably due to the host community complaining about the noise, or perhaps the owners lost interest. Today, the strip is still visible, whereas McCormick and Bousquet's huge salvage operation is long gone, replaced by retail space and green lawns. I remember stopping at the Lure, a 15-cent hamburger joint in South Burlington, one Sunday evening and seeing the Abominable Slowman, a well-known stock dragster. I always wanted to see a drag race, but then there was always Catamount demanding my time.



Dragon family photo

Milton's native son Beaver Dragon drove the family Pontiac at the strip.

Today, Milton stock car drivers and teams are stars at places like Thunder Road, Airborne, Devil's Bowl, and maybe even Bear Ridge Speedway. A few folks drag race – particularly in Canada. But, racing in Milton is now a memory.



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2016-17 YEAR IN

The Milton Historical Museum continued with its vibrant program schedule and events throughout 2016-17. The year started in March with our community Sugar on Snow Party and on to May with students from Milton High School presenting their National History Day presentations. We went into the summer with an outdoor event on gold panning geared toward kids, which drew a record crowd of attendees old and young alike, from many parts of Vermont with great interest in the subject. The fall was filled with programs about our local history and geography. The museum was continuously open during the season between April and October, staffed by our volunteers. During the open weekends, we drew in Milton residents, people from other towns as well as

tourists visiting the area. Our town historian, Jim Ballard, continued his diligent work responding to inquiries sent to us for local historical information as well as the many genealogical requests that come to us via email and social media. Jim has also continued his series of *Burlington Free Press* History Space articles that began in 2014, sharing the great story of our town, using research from the museum archives, bolstered with pictures from the museum's collection.

We continued to receive artifact donations to add to our collection from Society members, local residents and neighboring historical societies. We were particularly excited to receive two antique quilts from the Grand Isle Historical Society on behalf of Bev Austin.

GIHS donated them to us because the quilts' history lies with former Milton residents. One is an intricate applique design that neither the donor nor Lorinda have ever seen before. At the end of the year, we were gifted with a medical account ledger sent to us from Indiana. The ledger belonged to Dr. Jesse Page Carpenter who served residents in Milton and Colchester from 1804 through 1820.

In summer 2016, we attended an auction at the Henry O. Clark home on East Road. Under the advisement of auctioneer Duane Merrill and staff, we purchased some important pieces, pictures and memorabilia. A special acquisition fund within our budget allowed us to afford these pieces along with generous financial support from Duane Merrill himself. Among the pieces we acquired were some



Milton High School Instagram page

MHS students William Devers, Trevor McDonald, John Waligory, Hannah St. Onge, and Cody Hyldborg, represented Vermont (and Milton) at National History Day. On June 12, 2017, they took some time to visit the United States Capitol.



Bill Kaiale

Randy Archer teaches about gold panning techniques and the Vermont Gold Rush of 1855 at this August 2016 outdoor program.



Jonathan Ackrins

The Society presented its first scholarship, a \$500 award to Adrianna Desranleau, in June 2016.



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REVIEW

by Allison Belisle & Lorinda Henry

photos of the Lamoille River prior to the dam, assorted papers related to the history of Milton and the historic homeowners, as well as a table which is attributed to the work of Nathan Burnell, a famous and celebrated furniture maker on Main Street in Milton in the 1800s. We have the table on display, so please be sure to stop by the museum to check it out.

The Technology Committee continued into its fourth year with weekly visits to the museum by Karen Brigham and Pam Heald. Together they faithfully and meticulously work to digitally record the details and photographs of our collection. Organization of the collection has been bolstered by the volunteer work of member Nan Marotti, a documents and archivist expert.

In 2016, the Society funded 100% of the exterior painting of the building and repairs and improvements to our front ramp



Bill Kaigle

The museum saw several improvements in 2016, including a freshly painted exterior and repairs to the front entrance ramp.

and deck. The beloved old church looks spiffy with its fresh coat of paint and beefed up ramp and deck.

We also presented our first, of what we hope to be annual, scholarship to a deserving Milton High School student to help further their higher educational goals in 2016. The \$500 award was given to Adrianna Desranleau, who began attending UVM that fall. Please consider donating toward this fund to help us continue honoring a student in future years and possibly increasing the annual scholarship amount. We have added an option on the enclosed membership form to add an additional gift in support of this fund.

Recognizing the important history of stock car racing in Milton, the Society applied for and received a grant from the Vermont Humanities Council for a new exhibit called *The History of Racing in Milton*. Working with a preparator of exhibits from the Shelburne Museum, the new

exhibit was installed early this spring, and our opening reception in May 2017 was attended by our largest crowd ever to come into the museum. Over 100 former racers, crew and fans attended the exciting event. We even had the honor of hosting the original Vermonster long-rail dragster on the front lawn. A series of events throughout 2017 continued the excitement, honoring this important piece of Milton's history. We look forward to sharing a full report on these events, with photos, in our next newsletter.

Portions of this article were published in the 2016 Milton Town Report.

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Remember...

Our membership year begins in April,
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 Renew or begin your membership today!

We appreciate your support!

Interested in the formation of the *Friends of Milton Cemeteries?*

by James Ballard

Thoughts from Gravewords, a grave caretaker online group:

"A lot of cemeteries offer perpetual care (sometimes known as endowed or permanent care) – in fact, some state regulations require it. However, the idea of perpetual care is often misunderstood and it's important to know what is and is not covered when you purchase your lot. Or niche. Or crypt. Or mausoleum. There'll be something to suit your needs no matter what you're interested in!"

Simply put, perpetual care funds are used for general maintenance and repair of cemetery grounds. For example, mowing and lawn care during the growing season would fall under perpetual care, as would upkeep of roads, paths and signage. Some cemeteries may use funds to repair fallen headstones or raise sunken grave markers but this is not common practice. The family is responsible for the headstone and for keeping the gravesite clean and neat."

The Purpose of the Friends of Milton Town Cemeteries is to accept donations to



be used for projects that are not covered by Perpetual Care in Milton cemeteries. The upkeep of a cemetery fence or signage and of course stone cleaning or repair may not be covered by perpetual care. In older cemeteries, family members may no longer be available or around to care for their family stones. Many

of Milton's cemeteries are receiving good and adequate care but there are stones are broken or have toppled over, some of which are veterans' stones.

The Friends of Milton Cemeteries will seek to come under the umbrella of the Milton Society, where gifts would be tax-deductible.

All projects would have to be given approval by the Town Advisory Board as appointed by the Select Board, Cemetery Board or through the Sexton of the Town Cemeteries.

Remember, perpetual care funds are used for general maintenance and repair of cemetery grounds. Roads should still be covered but so many helpful projects and education on Milton's Historic Cemeteries will need a combination of volunteerism and funds.

Our cemeteries are places of respect and should be welcoming to all who visit. They are also museums that tell the story of generations of a community.

Each year, people from all over Vermont, the United States and Canada visit our cemeteries. Let us help improve the care, provide educational information, and provide an opportunity for them to offer donations and join the Friends. Anyone interested in the formation of the Friends of Milton Cemeteries, please contact Jim Ballard at 893-7734 or jamesbmilton@comcast.net.