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A Moretown Sampler

The Moretown Historical Society takes great pleasure in sharing this glimpse into the history of our town. What we present in these pages is a work in progress, a preview of the first substantive book written on Moretown history, which is slated for publication in 2001. Our working title is simply *The Book*.

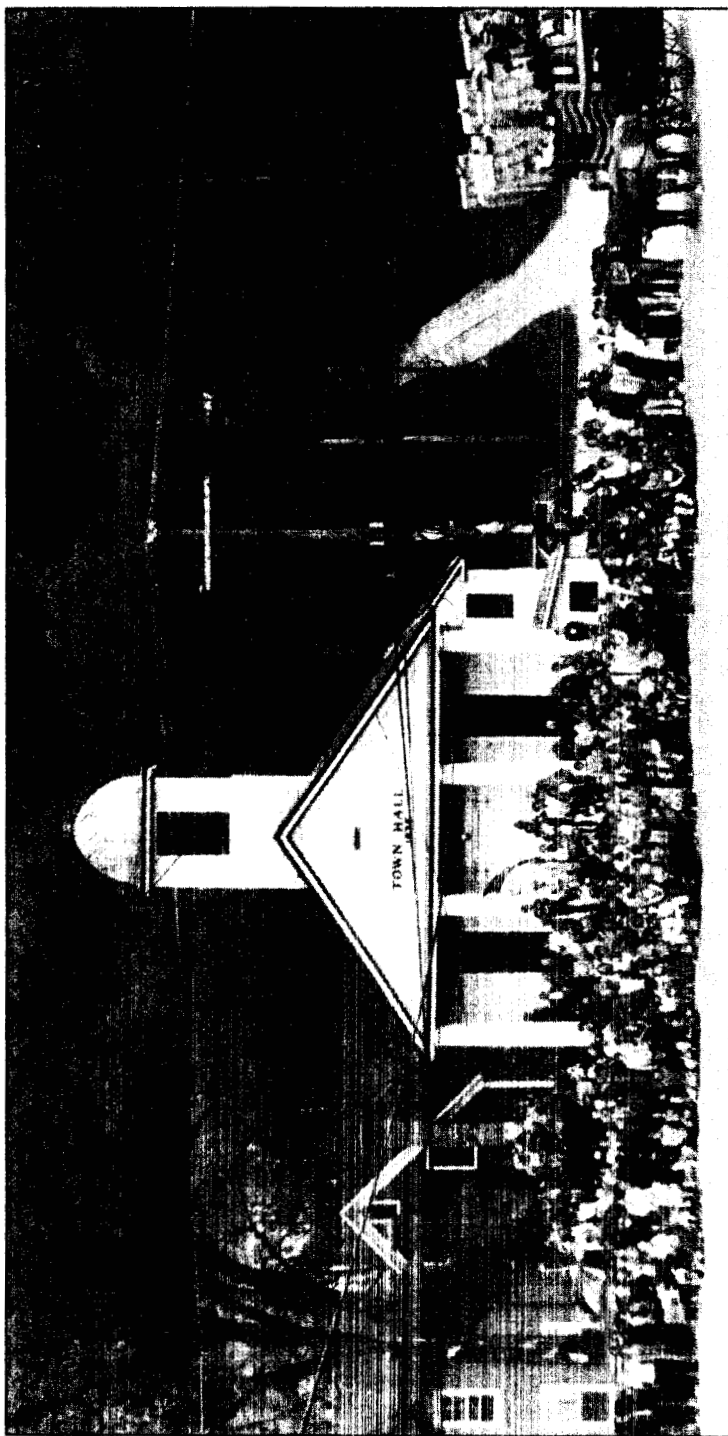
We are grateful to the authors of two brief histories that preceded ours: one in 1963 by Lydia Goss Billings and the other in 1982 by Mary Reagan. Both can be found in the Moretown Memorial Library.

While our focus is on the people who lived here before us and the industries that supported their livelihoods, we are making connections with life today. For example, as Moretown was turning on its 911 emergency calling system, we found the story of Nathan Wheeler, a five year old boy who was lost on his way home from school. Word of mouth pulled together a small army of local men who found the lad in Duxbury after a three day search. This was in 1820.

Moretown today is a blend of folks who have roots in our town and those who have recently chosen to come here to live. Many small businesses flourish in the village and outlying districts; many of our people commute to work in nearby towns and cities. We take pride in our community, a pride we hope is reflected in these pages.



Becky Goss Ciampi made this pen and ink drawing for the 1985 celebration of the 150th anniversary of the Town Hall, which was extensively renovated for the occasion.



Community photo taken at the 150th Birthday Celebration of the Town Hall in 1985.

Photo by Gary LeBoeuf. Gary took this shot from aloft in the town bucket loader.

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Introduction

Moretown is unique — the only one listed in atlases of the world. Perhaps we could claim a modern-day cousin not listed in the usual atlases — Motown, the nickname of Detroit derived from “Motor Town” as well as the name of a trend-setting pop record company founded there in 1960.

Close cousins that do appear in the atlases are two places named Moreton, one in England and one in Australia. And in the United States, there’s a Morehouse in Missouri and a Moreland in four states — Idaho, Arkansas, Georgia and Kentucky. North Dakota has a Mooreton, and both Michigan and New Jersey have a Moorestown.

Bradford, Vermont, was once Mooretown, named for Royal Governor Moore of New York. So Vermont had a Moretown and a Mooretown until 1788, when the residents of the latter town petitioned the Vermont Legislature for the new name in honor of the Governor of Massachusetts — Bradford.

No one knows for certain how Moretown got its name. There is the old story that when Washington County was being formed and maps drawn, a large parcel of land was left over, prompting the response, “My God, more town.” But this theory has a flaw. The town was named Moretown in the original grant back in 1763, when the quill pen of Royal Governor Benning Wentworth drew straight lines on a map and designated townships. This was before Vermont existed as a state and long before the state was surveyed. And in 1791 when Vermont did join the Union, our town was known as “Moretown in the County of Chittenden.”

A plausible explanation lies in the fact that two of the original proprietors were named Morehouse — Daniel and James. Other members of the Morehouse family were issued grants in neighboring towns about the same time: David Morehouse, land in Middlesex and Randolph; Sturgess Morehouse, land in Shelburne. Since Wentworth unabashedly bestowed favors upon his friends and family, it is likely that he chose the name Moretown to honor the Morehouse family — and Morehousetown was considered too unwieldy. (Later, we notice, early settlers in the west founded Morehouse, Missouri.)

Today our town population of more than 1600 people, 1246 of whom are registered voters, uses five phone exchanges (496, Waitsfield; 244, Waterbury; 485, Northfield and two Montpelier exchanges, 223 and 229) and five zip codes (our own post office, 05660, Montpelier, 05602, Waterbury, 05676, Northfield, 05663 and Northfield Falls, 05664.) Moretown borders on or touches seven other towns: Fayston, Waitsfield, Duxbury, Waterbury, Middlesex, Berlin and Northfield.

How did this come to be? Benning Wentworth, using the Winooski River as a northern boundary, drew three straight lines to create Moretown, without consideration of hills, valleys and waterways. And he created the scenario we live with today: our town, like others in Vermont, divided by geography into neighborhoods which over the years has prevented the development of a cohesive town center.

Settling a New Plantation

Between 1749 and 1764, Benning Wentworth, Royal Governor of New Hampshire, granted 135 townships in the territory destined to become Vermont. The first he named Bennington after himself. In each township he reserved 500 acres for himself. He amassed a considerable fortune by selling land and collecting fees from the proprietors.

The charter by which Moretown came into being is dated June 7, 1763. In magnificent flowing script it starts: "Province of New Hampshire. George the Third, by the Grace of God, of Great Britain, France, and Ireland, King and Defender of the Faith. To all Persons to whom these presents Shall Come, Greetings." (We added the punctuation, which is notably absent.) The charter continues, "... for the due encouragement of Settling a new plantation within our Said province by and with the advice of our trusty and well beloved Benning Wentworth Esq., our Governor and Commander in Chief of our Said Province of New Hampshire in New England . . ." Moretown's early settlers are "Our loving Subjects, Inhabitants of our Said province of New Hampshire." Then comes the vital part: a parcel of six square miles beginning and ending at a point on the Onion River "... is hereby incorporated into a township by the name of Moretown. . ." One feels a sense of awe reading this document that has survived 236 years, and hopefully will be here for many more to come.

By examining two maps in the Town Office — the old map showing lots granted to the original proprietors and the map of current Moretown — we can determine that the farm of Maurice and Nancy Brown and their family on the Winooski River near the Berlin town line was once part of Wentworth's original portion of Moretown. Ownership of this land in the Brown family goes back to 1918, and today collectively they still own 135 acres.

Map of Moretown Showing Original Proprietors

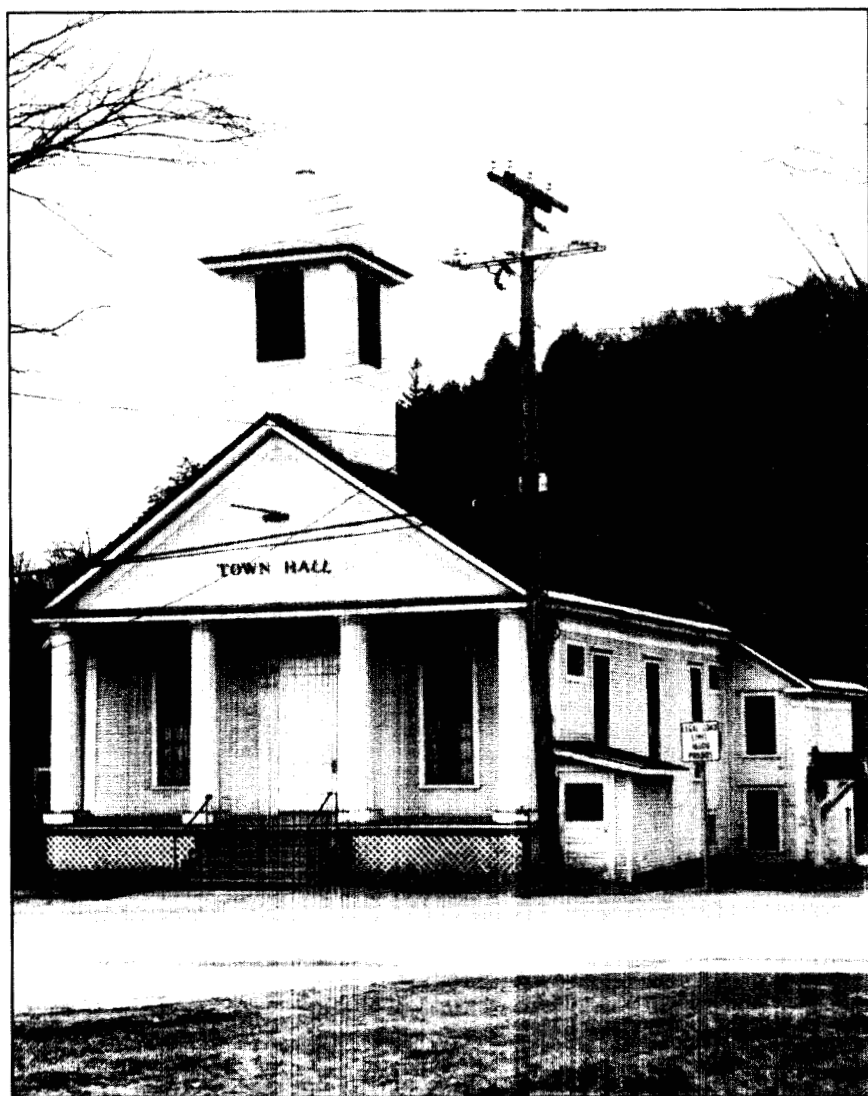
In the Town Office, on the wall to the left of the vault, is an old map showing a plan, all in straight parallel lines, of Moretown as it was designated to the original proprietors. In 1988, the Goodyear family had this historic map framed for display. A simple brass plate notes that it is dedicated to the memory of Tim Goodyear. The hand-written caption on the map tells us that "this plan and field book were legalized pursuant to an act of the legislature in the year 1804, Signed Abel Knapp, surveyor, from the original plan by James ____." We have not yet been able to decipher or research his last name.

Nothing exemplifies the spirit of Moretown more than our Town Hall, which has been lovingly restored by the diligent efforts of those who cherish this grand old lady. In 1985 Moretown celebrated the 150th anniversary of this landmark building, which had undergone a structure survey in 1978 prior to being placed on the register of the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation. In 1984 the Moretown Historical Society was formed, to raise funds for extensive renovations to the building and to organize the festive celebration.

The Moretown Historical Society produced a commemorative album, with many photos taken by Jesse J. Towle between 1893 and 1896 and reproduced by Gary LeBoeuf with the help of his wife Pauline. Other photos are of a more recent vintage. In flowing calligraphy, Gary pays tribute to Moretown's historic building. He writes: "It has been used throughout the years for Town Meetings where our forefathers gathered and shared their knowledge and wisdom. It is still used for that purpose today. It has been used for all sorts of gatherings from parties to church services, from weddings to fairs, from money raising events to school classrooms.

"Still ... if you listen quietly ... you can almost see and hear the voices of our citizens of yesterday. The sounds of the gavel are heard at the start of town meetings; children playing and laughing while attending the fairs; audiences applauding as a great play comes to an end; and even the smell of home cooking creeping up the stairway. Yes ... we are proud of our Town Hall and we have every right to be. And We hope and pray that she stands well into the future, for our children and their children to enjoy as much as we have."

Town Hall



This photo of Moretown's Town Hall was taken shortly before the start of extensive renovations which were underway in 1985. Only minor exterior changes can be seen between this and the post-renovation structure.

Photo by Gary LeBoeuf

Celebrating Our Rivers **the Mad & the Winooski**



A serene day on the placid Mad River.

This photo was taken before the 1927 flood which swept away the bridge. The barn on the left is the former Grandma's Restaurant, now a residence owned by Heather and Ray Gauthier.

Photo courtesy of the Moretown Historical Society

When the Moretown Historical Society was invited to participate in the 1999 Heritage Weekend on June 19 and 20, sponsored by Cabot Creamery and the Vermont Historical Society, we put our heads together. What makes our heritage special? We decided on the theme of celebrating the heritage of our two rivers, the Mad and the Winooski. We knew that our first settlers came to the banks of the Winooski, or Onion River, near the present WSI (Waste Systems International) landfill on Route 2. We knew that Moretown prospered along the Mad River in the present village area with several water-powered mills during the 19th century. We knew about the devastation of the 1927 flood in our town. We rolled up our sleeves and dug into our archives to find exciting accounts, photos, news clippings and so much more. We arranged with Green Mountain Power Corp. to open the

power house at the hydroelectric facility on the Winooski River, and we set up tables with historic displays. Our town hall and library held more treasures related to our rivers. And we learned a great deal more about our fascinating history.

THE FRENCH/ONION/WINOOSKI RIVER

Early Vermont historian Rowland E. Robinson tells us that during the latter part of the 17th century, when what is now Vermont was only known to English speaking people as The Wilderness, “hostile bands of English and French and their Indian allies carried on their murderous warfare to many an exposed settlement and kept all in constant dread of attack.” He described the routes followed by “the predatory bands” and wrote “the Winooski River was so frequently taken that the English named the stream the French River.”

On a map of the Province of New Hampshire, based on “actual surveys of all the inhabited part and the best information of what is uninhabited,” cartographers Reverend Joseph Blanchard and Colonel Samuel Langdon show the French River. They included a notation: “This way Captives have been carried from New Hampshire to Canada.” Historian J. Kevin Graffagnino wrote, “. . . as published in London in 1761, the Blanchard and Langdon map presented an impressive depiction of the Wentworth administration’s view of greater New Hampshire during the French and Indian War.”

The hand-written record dated 1763 granting township to Moretown contains a description of the area designated to the town: “Beginning at the Northeasterly corner of Duxbury on the South Side of Onion or French River.”

Historian Ralph Nading Hill wrote in 1949, “For hundreds, if not thousands of summers before white men saw New England, wine-skinned Algonquins canoed on the water trail of the Winooskie-Took, flowing northward across Vermont through the wilderness ridges and woods to the blue basin of Lake Champlain.” Hill also tells us that, by the time the Allen brothers and their cousin Remember Baker explored the river about 1772, the Indian name had been discarded for its English translation, Onion River. The Allens and Baker chose to call their land speculation venture the Onion River Land Company. Moretown was not a part of this grand scheme which ultimately did not succeed.

THE MAD RIVER



This view of the Mad River — with the Casey Bridge in the distance — is below the current Algonquin Power hydroelectric facility, formerly Moretown Hydro. The original hydroelectric facility was built here in 1910; this photo probably predates that.

Photo courtesy of Rick Hungerford

We researched the origin of the name Mad River. When we read about the raging floods of the past — and experienced a Mad River rampage in the summer of 1998 — we could better understand the name chosen by folks who lived here so many years ago.

“One wonders where Mad River got its name. William Strong, the surveyor of the town, called it by its present name in his field notes of 1788, and one guesses that his party gave the name because of some unhappy experience with its uncertain habits.”

- Matt Bushnell Jones, 1909, *History of Waitsfield, 1782-1908*

“Mad River received its name doubtless from the fact that — the mountains being so near and steep — the surplus water is almost immediately thrown off into the brooks, and by them poured out into the river; which of course rises like sudden anger overflowing its banks and devouring them at will.”

-Vermont Gazetteer, Abby Maria Hemenway, 1882

Well, we finally tracked down the real source of the name Mad River. We have it on good authority that the name actually originated in Moretown. At the Foolish Folks Fair — a unique Moretown happening in the Town Hall — there was a challenge. For one penny, you could enter a side show to find out why the nearby stream was called the Mad River. Inside was a doll cradle filled with rocks — and a sign which read: “If you had a bed of rocks, you’d be mad, too.”

Topography of Moretown

Those of us who live on the “outskirts” know first hand how long it can take to get from one part of Moretown to another. There are no direct routes across the mountains and rivers. Our town roads are still unpaved, and even with modern vehicles, travel has its challenging moments. Our roads crews do a great job keeping all of us connected.

Listen to voices of the past on this subject.

“Much of the township is mountainous, and incapable of being settled.”

Zadock Thompson, 1842

“Moretown is considerably broken in surface, but is romantic and affords much to please and profit the student of nature. Camel’s Hump is seen from various points and is only a few miles distant from Moretown.”

Rev. Seldon B. Currier, ca. 1858

“The topography of this town is such that the inhabitants of large portions of its territory can more conveniently attend church at Northfield, Montpelier, Middlesex and Waterbury than at Moretown village.”

Abby Maria Hemenway, ca 1870

“Owing to the mountainous condition of the township it is divided into several separate neighborhoods, which prevents building up any large village within its borders, and many of the farmers market their produce in Waterbury, Montpelier and Northfield.”

Hamilton Child, ca 1880

Population of Moretown

In Vermont, which is ranked 48th in population, just ahead of Alaska and Wyoming, we are fortunate to have a well-researched historic perspective on our state's population, *Two Hundred Years and Counting: Vermont Community Census Totals, 1791 to 1990*, compiled by a research team at the University of Vermont and updated in 1993. Getting closer to home, we can focus on Moretown and the fluctuations in population which tell a story of the general economic well-being of the time.

The first year in the record is 1791, when Moretown had 24 residents. In 1800, the number had grown to 191. This figure rose steadily until 1840, when our population stood at a high of 1410. A steady decline followed in all four Valley towns — Moretown, Fayston, Waitsfield, and Warren.

The 1960 Census showed that Moretown stood at an all-time low of 788. After a steady increase, the 1990 Census showed that Moretown surpassed the 1840 population figure — by only 5 people.

Projecting populations can be a risky business, but the best calculated projections show us a picture of continued growth in all four Valley towns. In 2015, it is likely that Fayston will have 1,971 people; Moretown, 1,819 people, Waitsfield 1,849 and Warren, 1,910. That would make Fayston, which has always trailed behind the other three towns, the most populous with a 132.98 per cent growth between 1990 and 2015. Only time will tell how accurate this projection is.



Wards' Upper Store was located on the river side of Main Street, in what is now the yard between the parsonage and the home of Lucille Tweedie, which appears in the photo. The population at this time was less than 900, just about the same as it was 100 years before this.

Photo courtesy of the Moretown Historical Society

Two Historic Figures as Early Moretown Landowners

IRA ALLEN

In 1772 Ira Allen was an ambitious twenty-one year old frontier entrepreneur who recognized that a knowledge of surveying was a valuable skill to support his ambitious land speculation schemes. His rudimentary training in the art included a week of study back home in Connecticut with a "master" surveyor. Part of the extensive land holdings Ira Allen was amassing, with more bravado than cash, included property on the Onion River in Moretown. Added to this was land in Bolton, Duxbury and Middlesex, with total holdings in the four towns of about thirty rights, or 10,000 acres. He preferred to sell these lands and reinvest his meager capital to increase his holdings near Lake Champlain. In 1773 Ira and his brothers, Ethan, Heman, Levi and Zimri along with their cousin Remember Baker, formed the Onion River Land

Company. Historian Esther Swift Munroe tells us that Moretown was not a part of this grandiose land speculation.

Although Moretown was chartered in 1763, the same year that the French and Indian War came to an end, it was not until 1790 that settlement of the town began. Moretown's handwritten land transfer records, which begin in 1792, contain references to Ira Allen selling off land he owned in Moretown.

Ira Allen died a pauper in Philadelphia in January, 1814, at the age of 63.

JUSTIN MORGAN

Vermonters of every age know that Justin Morgan was the owner of the legendary horse that carries his name. However, few of us in Moretown know the story of how Justin Morgan once owned 100 acres of land in our town.

When Justin Morgan died in 1798 at the age of 51, he left behind "no letters, diaries or statements which might document his activities except a few advertisements offering his horse 'Figure' for stud service." Faced with the challenge of uncovering sources for her work, Morgan's biographer, Dr. Betty Bandel, collected a wealth of material that shows her subject as "a man of many talents — composer, singing master, school teacher, horse breeder, frontiersman, and farmer."

In 1788, ten years before his death, Justin Morgan moved his family to Randolph, where he farmed and raised horses. His wife died at the age of thirty-eight, his children were placed with friends who could provide for them, he was in financial difficulty, and his health was failing from a lung infection.

How, then, does this legendary Vermont pioneer fit into the early years of Moretown? Historian Dr. Bandel discovered that "The inventory of Morgan's estate listed no horse but included one hundred acres of land in Moretown." Although the accounts of how and why Justin Morgan parted with Figure are conflicting, Dr. Bandel deduces the following:

"... Morgan sold his horse to Samuel Allen of Williston in exchange for land — the only real security he could leave his children. The land records show that these hundred acres, for which Morgan paid twenty pounds or about \$67, were sold in 1822 for \$700. While Morgan's estate was valued at a little over \$300, by the time it was settled, his debts had completely consumed it."

The Moretown Historical Society is still in the process of searching land records to determine the location of Morgan's property. We welcome any pertinent information.

Gathered Sketches: *Incidents of Olden Times*

“In those early days [1790s] the robust wives and daughters of the pioneers not only spun, wove and made the clothing for their families, but they also assisted in the field work. Mrs. Ebenezer Haseltine and Aunt Judith [Juda] Haseltine gathered sap on snow shoes and caught cart loads of trout from Onion River.”

In the Fairmont Cemetery on Route 2, right next to Ted's Kar Kare, the gravestones of Abigail and Juda Haseltine are easily located, to the left of the gate. Abigail, the wife of Ebenezer Haseltine, died September 2, 1857, age 79; she was born in 1778. Juda, the wife of Abram Haseltine, died August 14, 1876, age 96; she was born in 1780.

“The attempt to establish the silk industry in Vermont is shown in a petition from inhabitants of Waitsfield, Duxbury and Moretown, ‘praying the Legislature to grant them assistance in raising mulberry trees.’” (Probably October, 1809)



This view of Main Street shows the Town Hall on the right and the old hotel on the left. The house now owned by Frena Cutler, with the venerable old pine tree that still stands today, can be seen on the corner.

Photo courtesy of the Moretown Historical Society

“Temperance societies were active in Vermont in 1830. The first annual report of the Washington county organization, made in September of that year, declared that during the past year sixteen thousand gallons of liquor had been sold in the seven stores of Montpelier. Enough had been sold in the towns of Calais, Moretown, Northfield, Plainfield, Stowe, Waitsfield and Waterbury to increase the total to 29,423 gallons.”

“In 1822 Simon Stevens commenced business as a merchant, and built a distillery and made whisky. His death, which occurred about two years later, was considered a loss to the town.” Mr. Stevens was described as “a very resolute business man, and died by taking a severe cold from overwork.”

“Up to 1832, the town meetings were held on Moretown Common. At that date an article in the ‘warning’ for town meeting called the voters together under great excitement. Much confusion prevailed, until it was ordered to call every voter into the house, and appoint a talisman to notice each man and record ‘yes’ or ‘no’ as he should pass out, voting on the article.

“The article was to see if the legal voters would remove the town meeting from the Common to the Hollow. The majority voted ‘yes.’ Since that date the town meetings have been held at the Hollow. The present town house was then started by subscription.”

“Statistics of 1840 - horses, 225; cattle, 1,408; sheep, 3,546; swine, 889; wheat, bush. 1,735; barley, 151; oats, 9,110; rye, 222; buckwheat, 810; Ind. corn, 4,105; potatoes, 38,848; hay, tons, 3,171; sugar, lbs. 28,791; wool, 6,570. Population 1,128.”

In the dwindling days of the 20th century, U.S. Census Bureau figures tell an amazing story about the aging of America. In 1900 4% of Americans, or one in 25, was 65 or older. In the 1990s 12% of the population is 65 or more, with predictions that that figure will rise to 21% by the year 2040. The United Nations has designated 1999 as the International Year of Older Persons. The American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) says that “the 20th century has been one of adding years to life. The 21st century will be one of adding life to years.”

Here’s the story of a remarkable Moretown resident who was about to attain the great age of 95 and could demonstrate that she had life in her years.

The mid-1880s account reads, “Mrs. Hopy Holt is the oldest person we have any record of now living in Moretown.” She was born in New Bedford, Massachusetts in 1787, three years before Moretown’s first settlers came here. Her parents were Abraham and Mary (White) Howland. Mrs. Holt was the wife of Amos Holt, who with his father Humphrey Holt made the shingles that covered the first state house. Amos and Hopy had 10 children.

Approaching 95, Hopy Holt “can drop down on her feet upon the hearth, at the fire-place, light her pipe sitting on her feet, and spring up lightly again without touching a hand down; a feat not half of the women of 40 can accomplish.”

The account continues: “Her present home is with her son, G.H. Holt of Moretown. We saw the mother of 94 and daughter of 74, together the past summer. It seemed quite a sight, a mother with a daughter of 74 years by her side; and the mother in appearance bid fair to outlive the daughter.”

Soon after this was written, Hopy Holt died. The end of her story reads: “Since the above was in type we have learned that Mrs. Hopy Holt died Dec. 12, 1881, aged 94 years 3 mos, 24 days.”

This portion of the Moretown section of the *Vermont Gazetteer* may have been written by Aaron Goss.

“... and so, well paid.”

This story about an incident that happened about 1820 came to our attention in November, 1998, as Vermont was turning on its 911 emergency calling system.

“Nearly 50 years since, Nathan Wheeler (I think his name was Nathan), 5 years old, son of Ira Wheeler, was lost on his way home from school. The news spread. The farmers left their hay down, and came from Waterbury, Northfield, Duxbury, Waitsfield, nearly 1500 men, and joined in the search for the boy. After a three days’ diligent hunt the boy was found in Duxbury. It rained very hard when he was found, and the little fellow was trudging on; he said he was going home. Capt. Barnard said if the boy should work hard all of his life and be prospered, he never could pay all for their trouble in finding him; but when we realize the sympathy and good feelings manifested, he felt that they were all well paid. The boy grew to be a man, became a good soldier and died for his country, and so, well paid.”

*Written in 1870 by an anonymous “lady of Moretown,”
in Vermont Gazetteer.*

Industries in Moretown

Past & Present

Early Moretown town reports note that “the industries are largely farming, logging, lumber manufacturing and generation of electrical power.” To some extent all four of these industries are still in operation today.

FARMING

“Moretown is quite a dairy town, some farmers having 20 or more cows, and many others 10 to 20.”

Vermont Gazetteer ca 1860

Today Moretown has three working dairy farms: the Howes Farm on the Common, the Maynard Farm at the junction of Routes 100 and 100B, and the Scribner Farm on the River Road.

The Howes Farm today has been in the family for seven generations, going back at least to Charles Howes who built the present house in 1868. Leo and Geneva Howes live in this farm house, which is on the register of the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation. The barn across the street, also on the Historic Register, is described as “a large gabled roof barn built in 1906.”

Three generations of the Howes family now live on the Common, nearby the family farm. This includes some of Leo and Geneva’s children and grandchildren. The farm affords a striking view of the surrounding fields and mountains and has appeared in professional as well as amateur photographs.

• • •

The Bis-May farm at the corner of Routes 100 and 100B is run by Everett and Ella Maynard, along with their youngest son Kendall and his wife Barb, and their young daughter Myranda. The prior generation of the Maynard family moved to the farm in 1946, and Ella joined the family in 1948 when she married Everett.

The farm was purchased from John and Bernice Bisbee — hence the name Bis-May Farm. Today the farm and land, about 250 acres, 18 of which are in Waitsfield, is in the Land Trust. The Maynard family also leases 45 acres of land. The farm has about 75 milkers and 65 head of young stock.

The Maynard farmhouse is on the register of the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation; it is listed as being built around 1880. The description reads in part, "It is an example of a classic cottage style farm house. The large wings and the detailed porch give this house additional character."

...

The Stanley and Catherine Scribner Family Farm on the River Road specializes in Registered Holsteins. For 41 years, Stanley and Catherine have run this farm that borders on the Winooski River, in recent years with the help of their son, Stephen, and their daughter, Mary Jo Davis. During the summer, their grandson Sven, a student at the University of Vermont, works on the farm. In the spring of 1999, the cow count on the Scribner family farm was about 330.

Catherine and Stanley bought the farm from a family who had run it for a short time — Howard and Margaret Farnsworth and their son Harold. Catherine tells us that Harold died recently, but that his mother Margaret, who now lives in Essex, Vermont, has attained the remarkable age of 103.



This classic old photo of by-gone days is described as the older upper mill; the men are unidentified.

Photo courtesy of the Moretown Historical Society



Although the Wimble Farm on the Common stopped shipping milk in 1997, Robert Wimble now keeps about 16 head of dairy heifers and beef cattle. The farm also sells hay, and some of the land is being logged. What is now the Wimble Farm was one of the early settlements on the Common. It was originally cleared by Abner Child, who came to Moretown in 1805 and was Captain of the militia and town clerk for many years. The house is listed with the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation as having been built in the 1860s; it has state level significance. The description reads, "[It] graces the Common and is one of the few structures which bears evidence of the Italianate influence in Moretown. The house is capped by a square belvedere. Attention has been paid to the details of construction, such as the molded trim on the wide fascia board and the decorative brackets."

LOGGING

At the height of its operation, the Ward Lumber Co.'s logging operation covered thousands of acres of timber in Moretown and other locations. The company's dedication to reforestation of the land won it enduring respect from foresters and conservationists. In 1969, the vast land holdings of the Ward family were sold to the Laird Co.

Today the Gary Brown Logging Co. keeps up a long-standing family tradition. Gary's mother, Nancy Brown, says, "Logging goes way, way back in this family." She explains that her husband Maurice's grandfather and his sons were in the lumber business, in the Jones Brook area a few miles from the present Brown family farm. At one time they owned a lumber mill across the road from the Jones Brook schoolhouse. Nancy tells us that some of the trees hand-planted by the Ward Lumber Co. many years ago are now being harvested. She adds that Gary brings in wood and that Maurice cuts it up for his firewood business. Maurice's picture was in the *Times Argus* in March, 1999, as he worked on a pile of snowy wood for use next year. The caption was headed "Wood Work."

Other Moretown loggers continue to ply their trade, clearing land and selling logs. Among them are Cedric Reagan, Kenny Winters, and Daryl Elwell.



This view of early Moretown shows the Common Road winding upward, the lumber mill a bustling industry, and the old hotel in lower right across from the lumber yard. Frena Cutler, who lives in the house by the pine tree, tells us that she has a treasured hand-painted version of this scene, created by Corky Griffith, her son-in-law.

Photo courtesy of the Moretown Historical Society

LUMBER MANUFACTURING

Hiram O. Ward, sometimes called H.O., started the Ward family lumber business in 1872, with a small water-powered mill on the Dowsville Road in So. Duxbury. Hiram soon purchased the grist mill which was located on the site of the present day Ward Clapboard Mill next to the Town Hall in Moretown Village. As Hiram's lumber operations continued to grow, Moretown remained the company's headquarters and soon the Ward Lumber Co. was the town's largest employer, owning thousands of acres of timber land and three active lumber mills on the Mad River. When Hiram's son Burton took over the family business, his headquarters became the general store and post office. Burton's son Merlin became postmaster and manager, and Merlin's wife Aline, helped to wait on customers in addition to being one of Vermont's first women legislators.



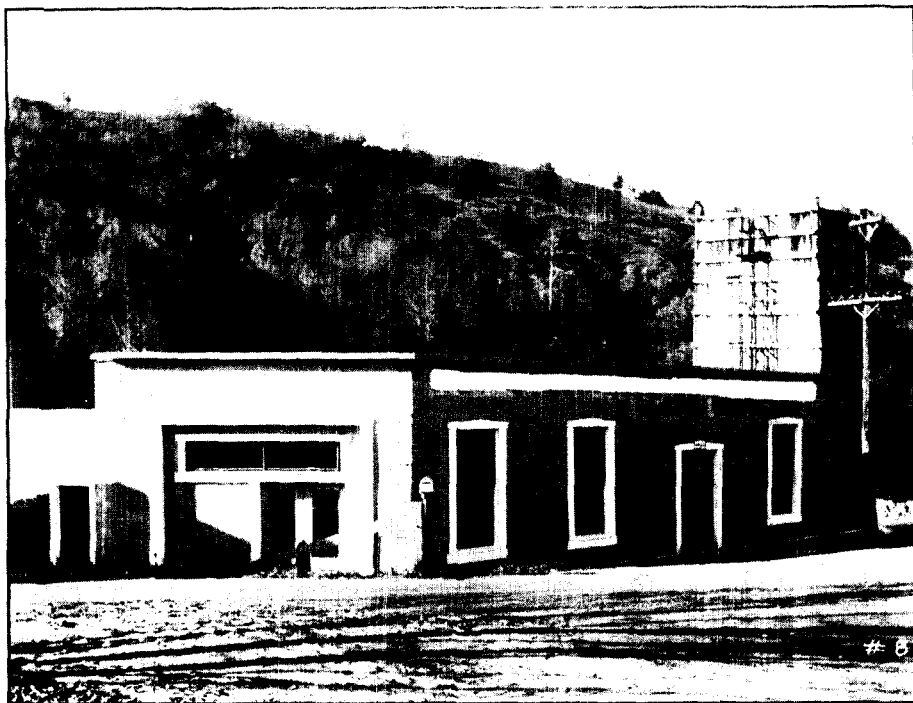
The Ward Clapboard Mill continues a family tradition, as well as being the representative of a long-time Moretown industry.

Photo by Patty Moulton

The Ward Clapboard Mill is still owned by the family and run by Hiram Ward's great-grandson, Holly. The mill produces fine quality clapboards renowned for their distinctive craftsmanship.

Generation of Electrical Power

Moretown was a leader in the early development of hydroelectric power in Vermont. Two of Moretown's three hydroelectric facilities are still in operation. The privately owned Algonquin Power, formerly Moretown Hydroelectric Plant on the Mad River, known as the #8, was first built in 1910 and rebuilt for current use in 1988. The Middlesex plant, the #2, was first built in 1895 on the Winooski River as the J. S. Viles Electric Plant and is still operated by Green Mountain Power Corp. The plant is actually in Moretown, but the name comes from the fact that it is built in the Middlesex Gorge. The ill fated Lovers Lane facility on the Mad River, the #7, went online in 1904 and was destroyed beyond repair in the 1927 flood. Damage to the two other plants was extensive, but both of them were rebuilt. The numbers, assigned by GMP to identify the stations, are in the order in which they were built.



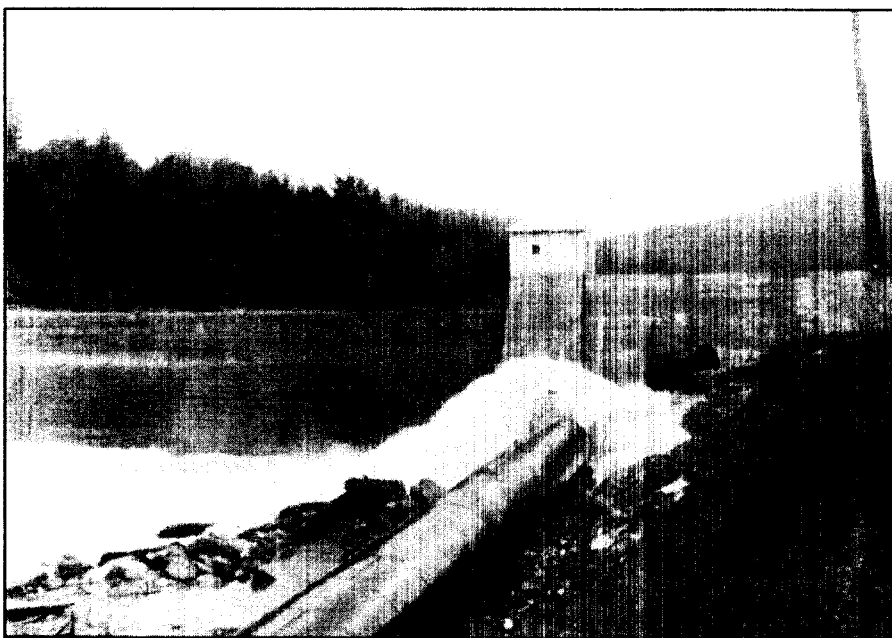
Once owned by Green Mountain Power Corp, this facility was known as the #8 and was originally built in 1910. This power house was located downstream of the present Algonquin Power dam.

Photo courtesy of Green Mountain Power Corp.



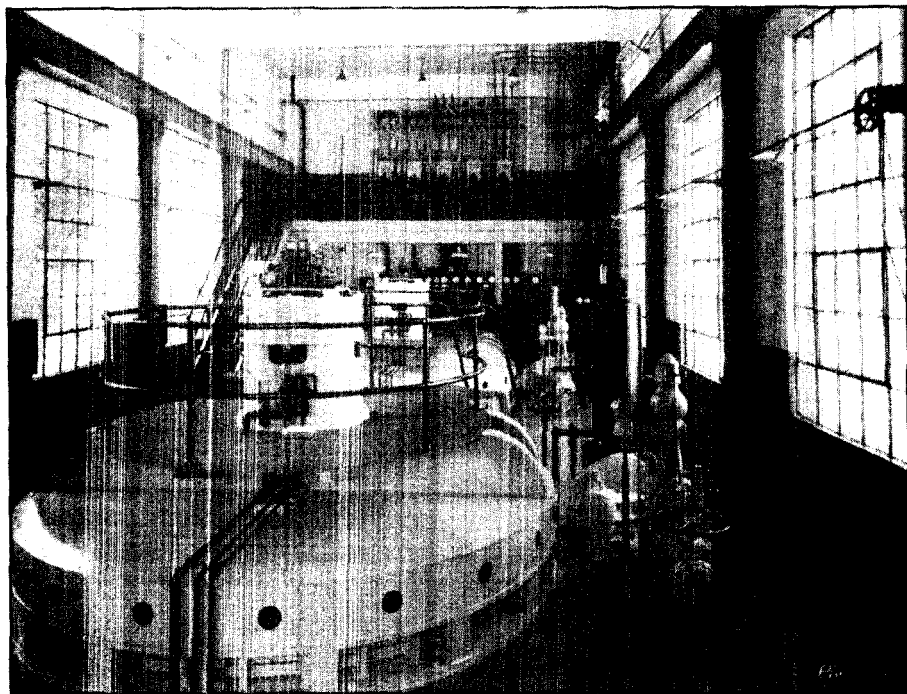
The remains of the old #8 power house today. The dam, now owned by Algonquin Power, can be seen in the upper left.

Photo by John Gallagher



A break in the #8 dam resulted in an emergency cut in the penstock, May, 1929. The 1927 flood caused extensive damage, but the facility was rebuilt.

Photo courtesy of Green Mountain Power Corp.



This view of the interior of the #2, or Middlesex Hydroelectric Plant, shows the new facility as it appeared after reconstruction following the 1927 flood. The present day interior looks much the same.

Photo courtesy of Green Mountain Power Corp.

On a summer day, crew leader John Haggett took time from his busy schedule of overseeing the Middlesex plant, as well as four other Green Mountain Power hydroelectric stations in the area, to talk about this remarkable facility. He knows every nook and cranny and every piece of equipment in this post 1927-flood station, and he clearly has a special admiration for the engineering skills of the builders, the C.T. Main Co. "They knew what they were doing," Haggett says. He explains that because of modern automation, with monitoring done at the company's Colchester Dispatch Center, it is no longer necessary to have a full time person on site.

Although river-run plants like the Middlesex one are "tough" to maintain, Haggett smiles and says, "It's an exciting job." He expects the Green Mountain Power hydroelectric plants, like the historic Middlesex one, to continue to operate for a long time yet to come. He says, "Hydropower is good clean energy."

19th Century Mills in Moretown

Martin L. Lovell and Francis Liscomb built a starch factory in 1833, and operated it about five years. It was then converted into a tannery by Jesse Johnson and burned three or four years later.

In 1842, historian Zadock Thompson wrote: "There are in town two fulling mills, three grist mills, and six saw mills, one store, and one tavern."

(A fulling mill, we discovered, is one in which woolen fabric is shrunk and thickened to make felt.)

Around 1860, the following two pieces were written for the Vermont Gazetteer.

"The Mad River affords some of the best water privileges found in the state, and should the inhabitants of Moretown induce some moneyed firm to put in a large manufacturing house here, thus utilizing more of the water power, and urge the building of a contemplated railroad, which has already been surveyed through the town, it would greatly develop the resources of and build up our town."

"There are now 2 stores, 3 blacksmith shops, two saw-mills 2 clapboard, 2 shingle and 2 planing-machines in the village; also 1 hotel, 1 harness shop, employing several workmen, 2 carriage and sleigh shops, 1 grist mill, 1 sash, door and blind-shop, near by a dressmaker, 2 milliners, 1 goldsmith and 1 tinman."

The following profile of late 19th century mills in Moretown is taken largely, though not exclusively, from Hamilton Child's *Washington County Gazetteer*, 1889. At the time the nearest railroad station for the transportation of goods was at Middlesex.

I.D. Robinson & Son's grist-mill in the village was built by Charles Howe in 1831. It has four runs of stones and does custom work. In connection with the grist-mill the proprietors run a saw-mill, built in 1874.

Messrs. Parker & Gillett's saw mills in the village were built by Charles Howe. Mr. Parker purchased the property in 1873 and in 1875 Mr. Gillett became his partner.

Lovejoy & Towle own the carriage and undertaking shops in the village built by Calvin Foster in 1850. This firm also manufactures wagons and sleighs and does general repairing.



The old Tripp and Tennant Mill which predates the Ward Lumber Company. This view shows the dam with the bridge in the background — the forerunner of the so-called Grandma's Bridge that spans the Mad River today near the Town Hall.

Photo courtesy of the Moretown Historical Society

H.O. Ward's box factory and grist mill in the village on Mad River. An old mill was burned here May 15, 1887, and J.B. Farrell and his wife, who lived in one part of it, perished in the flames. Mr. Ward's mill was built in the ensuing fall. Charles H. Dale operates the grist-mill. Mr. Ward resides in Duxbury.

Joseph M. Brown & Son's saw-mill and planing mill on road 33 are run by water-power and a forty-horse power steam engine.

G.S. & P.A. Chapman's saw-mill is located on road 33, in the eastern part of town.

"The first mills sawed and ground only for local trade, as did all the mills scattered wherever a farmer could find water power."

-Matt Bushnell Jones

The Talc Industry in Moretown

Once a major industry in Moretown, the Eastern Magnesia Talc Co. made the Rock Bridge area of Moretown on Route 2 a thriving neighborhood. The Rock Bridge school had so many pupils many of them were tuitioned out to Duxbury and Waterbury.

The current Moretown Town Report carries a cover photo of the Eastern Magnesia Talc Co. mill, with a short article on the inside front cover, written by Lorraine Fava, who also supplied the photo. Maurice Eastman, who was the EMTC superintendent, was Lorraine's father. Here is Lorraine's article and photo.

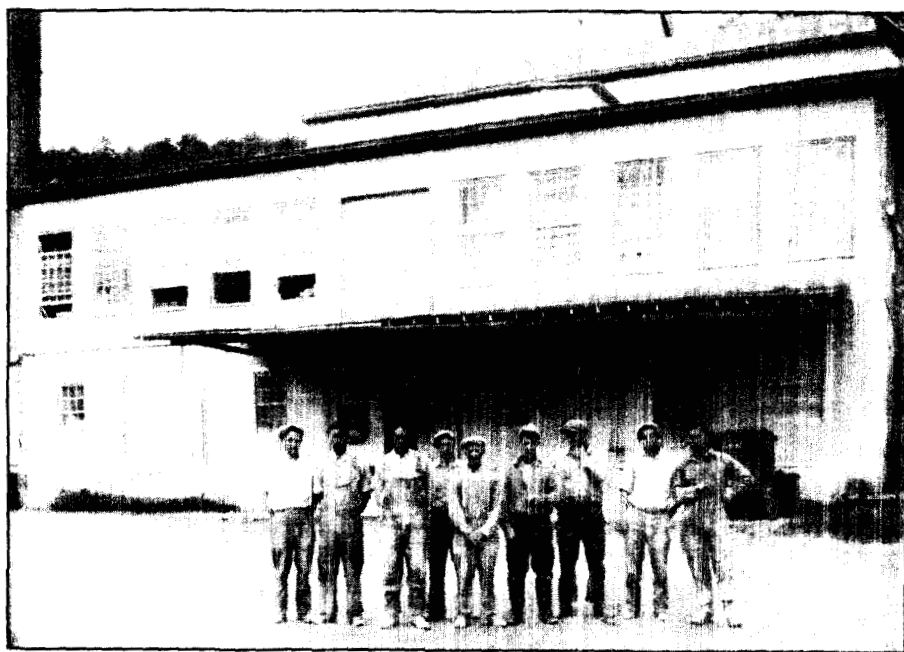
EASTERN MAGNESIA TALC CO. MILL 1913-1961

In 1913 Eastern Magnesia Talc Co. purchased 125 acres in the Rock Bridge area of North Moretown. A five story building was erected to process the talc. The company employed from 20-50 people in the mine and mill. The talc was transported to a railroad siding on Batchelder St. in Waterbury for shipment.

Until 1950 the company owned 10 houses and added another one in the 1950s. Employees not living near the mill and mine were transported from Waterbury by horse-drawn vehicles. Later, 1920 vintage Mack trucks carried the workers. In the *Waterbury Record* EMTC advertised in late 1920 for 90 men to work on road improvement from Waterbury to the mine/mill.

Talc from this mine/mill was used in the manufacture of paint, rubber, powdered insecticides and roofing materials. When insecticides went to spray the market was lost, leading to the plant's closing.

Former Town Clerk Bernadette Ferris reported that according to the grand list in 1960 the Talc Co. was the fourth largest taxpayer in town with the real estate assessed at \$80,000 and personal property at \$3,000 with taxes of \$5,810.



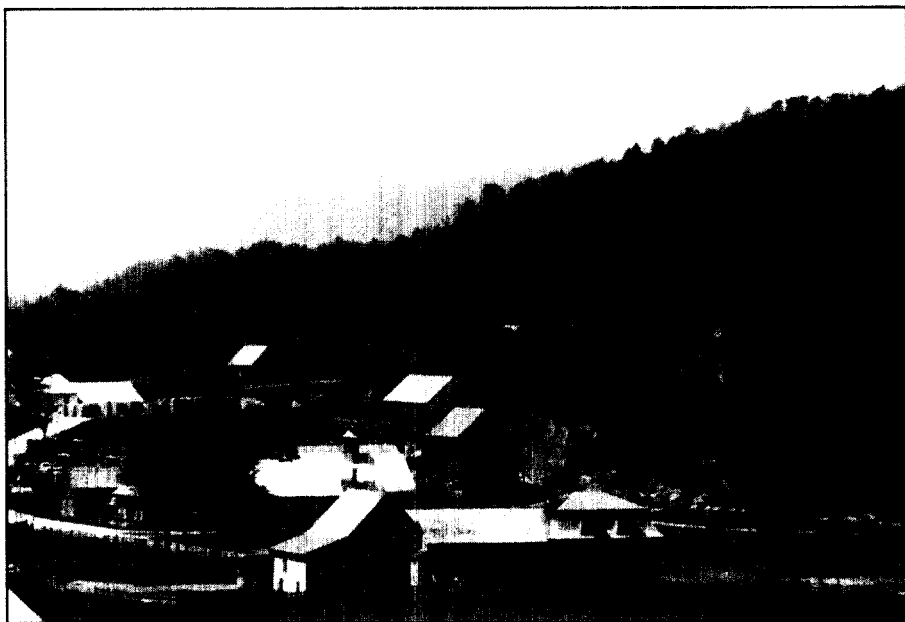
Pictured from left to right are: Maurice Eastman, Jesse Willard, Mr. Sherman, Harold Eastman, "Wick" Woodard, John Clark, Lucius Lemery, Raymond Pario and Gilbert Nutbrown.

Photo ca 1929, courtesy of Lorraine Fava.



This mill pond was in the Village behind Ozzie and Evelyn Goss's house and the Town Hall.

Photo courtesy the Moretown Historical Society



The house in the foreground is the present home of Bob and Audry Mays. The ledges, from which many old photos of the Village were taken, are prominent in center right. Also seen is the old Tripp and Tennant Mill.

Photo courtesy the Moretown Historical Society

Matthew Carpenter

A Celebrated Son

Decatur Merritt Hammond Carpenter was born in Moretown in 1824. As a young man he moved west and became a distinguished senator from Wisconsin. Throughout his illustrious career, he was known as Matthew Hale Carpenter. How did this name change come to be? As a young lawyer eloquently arguing a case in court, Carpenter was likened to Sir Matthew Hale, a renowned 17th century barrister, one of the great scholars of English law. An impressed associate declared that Merritt Carpenter, as he was then known, should be called Matthew Hale Carpenter. And it was done.

Merritt Carpenter, the eldest son of Ira and Anne Carpenter, grew up in Moretown. Both his father and his grandfather, Cephas Carpenter, were “versed in the law and attained considerable local distinction in their profession.” After his mother died, the young Merritt Carpenter was adopted into the home of Paul Dillingham of Waterbury, a successful lawyer destined to become governor of Vermont. Here the teenage Carpenter prospered in his studies, and in due course was admitted to the bar at Montpelier. He also became the son-in-law of his mentor. In 1848, an ambitious 24 year old aspiring lawyer, Carpenter “turned his footsteps westward, to seek honor and fame among the pioneers of Wisconsin.”

During the Civil War, Carpenter was “one of the most active Union Democrats, exhausting his brilliant eloquence in fervent appeals for the maintenance of an undivided country, an indissoluble Union of the States.” Subsequently he “entered the Senate in March, 1869 and almost immediately acquired prominence and leadership in that grave and conservative part of our National Legislature.” He served in this capacity for eight years, two of them as President pro tempore of the Senate. Matthew Carpenter died in Washington, D.C. in 1881.

This account was taken from *Memorial Addresses of the Life and Character of Matthew H. Carpenter*, Government Printing Office, Washington, 1882. A copy of this commemorative book is in the Moretown Memorial Library.

Lettie Carpenter Conrad, who lives on Route 100B north of the Village, is a direct descendent of Cephas Carpenter, one of Moretown's early settlers and Matt Carpenter's grandfather. She remembers this story about Matt Carpenter. When he was a student at West Point, he was home during a vacation. One of the nearby schools in Waitsfield needed a substitute teacher, and Matt volunteered for the job. He had a bit of a discipline problem — he couldn't control the students and they walked out on him.



This view of early Moretown from the ledges shows the hilly terrain surrounding the Village. Some of the structures shown here are extant and now listed on the register of the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation.

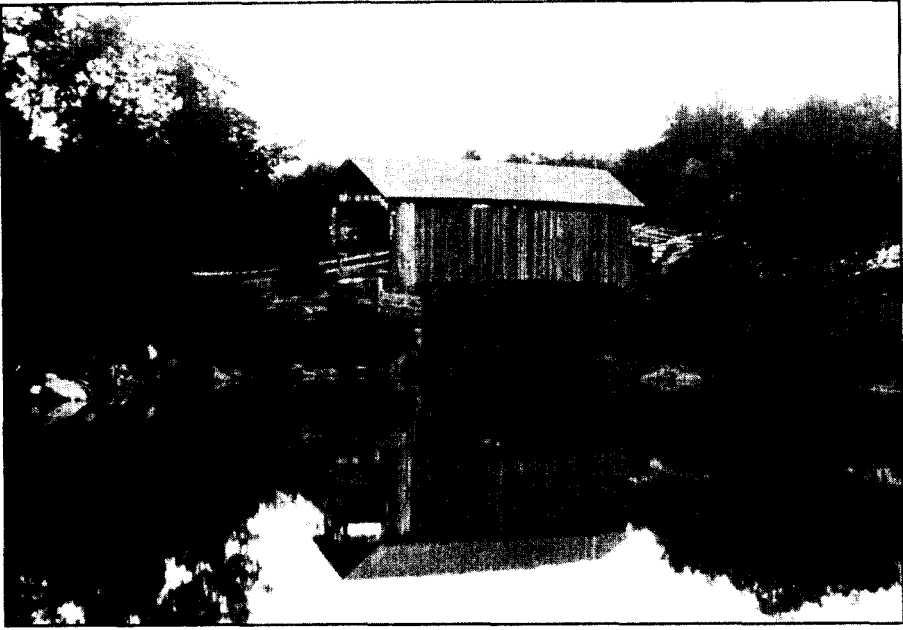
Photo courtesy of the Moretown Historical Society

Floods

“A very serious calamity occurred in 1830 — the greatest freshet ever known in Mad River Valley. It raised the river until nearly all the street [in Moretown village] was covered.

“Henry Carpenter, residing further down the river [from the Village], started with his wife and boy, the boy walking between them, with hands in theirs, to go to a neighbor’s. They intended to keep to the road, wading through the water; but coming to deeper water Mrs. Carpenter let go the boy’s hand and probably became strangled. Mr. C. called in the darkness but no voice replied. The boy swam back to the house. The father in sadness rallied some neighbors, and the next day the mother and wife was found on the meadow below, cold in death.”

Vermont Gazetteer



Looking at this scene of the old covered bridge at the upper mill and its peaceful reflection in the Mad River, it is hard to imagine the devastating floods that have ravaged our town throughout the years.

THE FLOOD OF 1927

The following is a condensed version of a personal account of the Great Flood as told by Aline Ward.

They sat looking out of the big picture window on the second floor of the large rambling house; Aline, a young mother, imminently expecting another baby, holding her three year old Richard on her lap. Sitting beside the two was her mother in-law, Annie Ward.

The date was November 3, 1927. The "Village" was a small section of Moretown, extending for a mile along the scenic Route 100. Bridges spanned the Mad River at the north and south ends. There was a lumber mill at each bridge; water of the Mad River furnished the power to run the mills. Hills rose in back of the Village to the east, and there were farms and homes there, but the front of the town was the river. The elementary school, two churches, two stores and the town clerk's office were in this narrow way.

The house where the little group sat was the home of the Ward family who operated the mills of the town. It was raining; it had been raining all morning and the night before. The Mad River was normally a lazy stream, flowing placidly through the Green Mountains to join the Winooski River at

Middlesex. Time dragged along. It was now 2 o'clock in the afternoon. It continued to rain. Annie said, "I do believe the river is over the bank, and beginning to crawl over the field." This was a vacant lot, a flood plain about a quarter of a mile wide. There were houses on the river side of the road, but the Big House was on slightly higher ground.

Jokingly, Aline said, "I hope I don't have to go to the hospital tonight to have the baby." There was no doctor in Moretown; Aline had to travel 12 miles to Montpelier, using one bridge at the north end of the village and another, much wider, at Middlesex, six miles away.

The men of the family, Burton, the senior, and Merlin, the young father, checked in the house —everything OK? Burton was going from mill to mill, watching the mill machinery. The dams were a raging torrent. Merlin was at the family-owned general store, getting the stock of heavy boots and shoes moved out of the cellar. The store was on the river side of the village and water was close to seeping in.

At 3:30 pm the men hurried home to barricade their cellars. And it still rained. School was dismissed at 4:00 pm — but there was a problem. The ends of the village were lower than the center; water was over the road, a foot deep. The children could not get through.

The Big House was the only place for the children to go. Thirty-seven children were herded into the house, some of them noisy with the thrill of adventure, but more of them frightened that they could not get home. The phone began a continuous ringing as anxious parents wanted to know about their children. But in half an hour the phone went dead. The line was down. Annie and Aline were concerned about how they could feed so many, and there loomed the possibility the children would need to stay overnight! Burton and Merlin checked in again, but struggled out to chain down machinery. The river was raging through the mill yards.

Five o'clock and still it rained. Entire families from the homes in the lower sections of the village came floundering into the Big House, bringing their tiny children or invalid older family members. At 6:00 pm Merlin and Burton, exhausted and defeated, came in to say that the upper dam had collapsed, as well as the bridge. They could no longer reach the lower mill; the water was 6 feet deep there.

And it continued to rain! The men who were marooned in the house gathered on the front porch, some 25 or more of them. Every 15 minutes they measured the water off the porch step. If it reached 12 inches they would have to evacuate the house by climbing the hill in back, a Herculean task for those with tiny children and older folks, not to mention Aline expecting a baby. A few of the families had brought food and milk, and every child had been fed. They were now sitting around the two large living rooms, on chairs or the floor. A few of the little children were asleep.

At 9:00 pm a shout went up from the porch. It had stopped raining. Another half hour and a pale moon was trying to break through. The water about the house was waist deep. There was a foot of water in the cellar. The Mad River deluge was still rushing down through the village and continued unabated until 2:00 am as it gathered force through the narrow mountain valley. But it did not rise further and by 2:30 there was a slight drop in the level. By 4:00 am a few hardy fathers struggled down the hillside in back of the house to gather their children.

At daybreak people slogged their way through the water and debris to go to their homes to see destruction and devastation, in some cases reaching to the second floor. Both bridges were gone, the mill yards were a shambles of battered lumber and logs. The bridge at Middlesex had been washed away. Moretown was completely isolated. Now Aline and her family were indeed worried that the baby would come. Swaying foot bridges connected Moretown village with Route 100, but to get to Montpelier and the hospital there was still that wide span at Middlesex. On November 10, Merlin took Aline by car over the hill in back of the town, on the Moretown Common Road. This was normally a fair gravel road, but now a mass of mud that scraped the bottom of the car. Arriving at the Winooski River, they left the car, struggled down a ladder to the river bed, up a ladder to the top of the rock in the middle, down and up two more ladders to reach the Middlesex side. Here Merlin prevailed upon a man to let him have a car to go on to Montpelier.

Montpelier was a scene of devastation, under military guard. There Merlin got a room for Aline. The phones were still out. Merlin left to struggle back to Moretown to the gigantic problems of salvaging a business and homes.

On November 30, the need to go to the hospital became urgent. Aline called a taxi, and before long Lois Evans Ward was born. Merlin was called on the then functioning phone and informed that he had a daughter. Survival was complete!

The Great Flood of November 3, 1927 was a landmark date for this family — a day of destruction and loss, but one that brought out great courage and fortitude to endure.

Told by Aline Ward, to Patty Moulton,
Denise Gabaree and Cheryl Rousseau, 1984

Note: What is now Route 100B was then a part of Route 100.

The following is an excerpt from an account of the Great Flood, written on November 9, 1927 in a letter by Edward H. Jones, Commissioner of Agriculture, who lived in Waitsfield, to his son Clyde E. Jones, then residing in Boston. Mr. Jones described the arduous trek getting from Burlington to his home in Waitsfield.

“Passes had to be obtained to approach Waterbury and no gasoline could be purchased without a permit. As I approached Waterbury on foot, I began to see evidence of the flood. The water was within two feet of the top of the hill in front of Smith and Somerville store and at the foot of Bank Hill I encountered a large house standing directly cross-wise in the street. As I proceeded towards the lower end of the village, trouble and confusion increased. Houses were lifted off their foundations, carried across the street and deposited on other peoples’ lawns and wedged in between other houses. Dwellings were overturned, lying on their ridge poles with sills in the air, lying on their sides or ends. The new steel bridge across the river at Duxbury Corners was lying several roads down stream and covered with thousands of feet of Burton Ward’s lumber from Moretown. Having made my way from Burlington through the hill towns, this was the first real devastation I had seen and you can imagine I was getting very, very anxious to know what had happened at home.”

The account continues after Mr. Jones arrived safely at his home in Waitsfield.

“I remained at home Monday long enough to get a line on conditions there and be satisfied that they could handle their own situation. A messenger arrived from Montpelier with the information that the Governor was calling his heads of departments together on Tuesday morning to promulgate relief measures. He stayed over night and we made our way here Tuesday morning over Moretown Common, noting as we came that the covered bridges above and below Moretown Village were gone, together with all of Burton Ward’s manufactured lumber. His dams are out and his mills undermined and greatly damaged. He has discharged his help and calls himself a ruined man. At Middlesex we could go no further by car. The iron bridge at the entrance of the village stands firm on its abutments with yawning chasms at each end fifty to one hundred feet wide and from thirty to fifty feet deep. The dam is gone and the river down in the bottom of the gorge. We clambered down the rocks to the bottom of the chasm and up onto the bridge by means of two ladders crossing the bridge and then repeating the process at the Middlesex end. Standing at the end of this bridge and looking up the river, one would never know he had seen the place before. The Miles Store, the Bigelow Creamery and all houses on that side of the street are gone, not even a vestige of them remains and furthermore, the earth on which they stood has been

washed away down to bare bed rock and this location is now nothing but a part of the river channel. In the village square near the hay scales is a washout large enough to hold two or three ordinary sized houses."

In the aftermath of the 1927 flood Luther B. Johnson wrote: "Moretown suffered heavily, losing nearly 20 bridges and much highway. In Moretown village three houses with barns and shop were lost. Ward's upper mill was practically destroyed and the dam washed out at his lower mill and about a million feet of lumber, including a large amount of dressed clapboards, floated away. The lower part of nearly every house in the village was filled with mud and water. Both of the bridges across Mad River above and below the village went out. One side of the dam at the power plant on the road to Middlesex succumbed. The Lane plant and dam and the Middlesex dam and plant all went."

1938 HURRICANE AND FLOOD

From a newspaper clipping in late September, 1938. The actual hurricane was on September 21st.

Moretown residents suffered great losses in the flood and hurricane last week. The swollen Mad River rose to nearly the 1927 height, flooding several homes in the village. Families began to leave their homes and move to safer sections at an early hour in the evening. The men of the village worked most of the night moving furniture, cars and other property, and assisting occupants to leave their homes in some cases where they had waited too long before attempting to leave. The homes badly flooded with water, varying from one to five feet, were: S.E. Atkins, Mrs. Blanche Griffith, Ralph Wimble, Perley Farnham, Sidney Turner, Samuel Farnsworth, Mrs. Hattie Bates, Mrs. Ella Shea, William Blair, Mrs. Lillian Booth, E.E. Chouinard and Mr. Audelbert.

Kingsbury's Blacksmith Shop and Joslyn's Garage were also flooded, as was St. Patrick's Church. Many other homes had the basements filled with water. The home of Merrill Reagan was badly damaged by a falling tree. Several other large trees in the village fell, with no damage to buildings.

The Ward Lumber Company lost thousands of dollars worth of wood and lumber, but their mills and bridges remained intact.

The southern approach to the bridge at the upper end of the village was washed out for a distance of about 60 feet. Farmers suffered severe losses in corn and sugar trees. E.E. Chouinard lost several head of young cattle and a large number of chickens.

Most of the people involved had been through similar experiences in the 1927 flood and for the second time went to work Thursday morning with pitiful courage, scraping the mud from water-soaked floors and furniture, drying rugs, curtains and bedding and pumping out cellars.

Remembering the Great Depression

This is one representative account; there will be more in The Book.

On a day when brilliant sun brought record-setting low temperatures up to zero, Ralph Wimble of Moretown looked out his farmhouse window, turned back and said with a smile, "It was just as cold in the 30s as it is now." He doesn't get out in this very cold weather. "If I had my druthers I'd head for Florida," he said with a twinkle in his eye.

Ralph reminisced on those by-gone dark days. "The Depression taught us what it was to be content with less even though it was hard," he said. He recalled that in the failure of a Montpelier bank, depositors, he among them, were able to recoup only 30¢ on the dollar.

Born in Underhill on November 9, 1903, Ralph lived in Milton before coming to Moretown in 1928 to marry Myrtie Belle Whitney. The Wimble family lived in the house next to the fire station in the village, moving in 1945 to their farm on the Common where they have lived ever since. Myrtie Wimble died in 1964.

Ralph considers his family to have been more fortunate than many others during the Depression. He was able to work most of the time for Wards' sawmill, where his wife was a bookkeeper. Their combined salaries made the lean Depression years easier than they were for some of their neighbors. Ralph recalls his salary of \$2.70 a day for a 9 hour day, no overtime. The Wards had three sawmill locations, one near the Middlesex line, one in the village, and one in the upper village; he worked at all three.

Ralph remembers a Moretown family with 17 children. "Large families suffered during the Depression," he said. How did people cope with such hard conditions? Ralph replied, "People helped each other more then."

Looking back to his early years in Moretown, Ralph told about the terrible mess left by the 1927 flood. He helped his future wife's family to clean up and repair their home. "I scraped myself into matrimony," he smiled.

This is a condensed version of an article in the *Times Argus /Country Courier* in March, 1994. Ralph Wimble died in 1995.

The Last Tamarack in Moretown

When Margaret Booth wrote this article in 1992 she had lived in Moretown Village for 65 years. She remembered the row of tamaracks next door to her house, where the Schultz family lives now. This is her account of the demise of the "noble old tree." Margaret Booth died in March, 1996.

It was the Fourth of July, a Saturday. It had rained, and there was a little wind — not a heavy wind. I was eating my breakfast when I heard this boom. I looked out and there was the old tamarack — down on the ground. It had been leaning, but I never thought it would go down — such a big tree.

I was very lucky that it didn't hit my house. It took my telephone line down, and that meant the cable television, too.

The Schultz family — John, Annette, and their daughters Megan and Katie — were away at the time. Adrian Ferris, Jr., who works for the Waitsfield Fayston Telephone Company, came along and saw what had happened, and he sent a repair man. When the man came, he climbed the pole and hollered down to me, "What did you do?" I said, "It was leaning so I pushed it over."

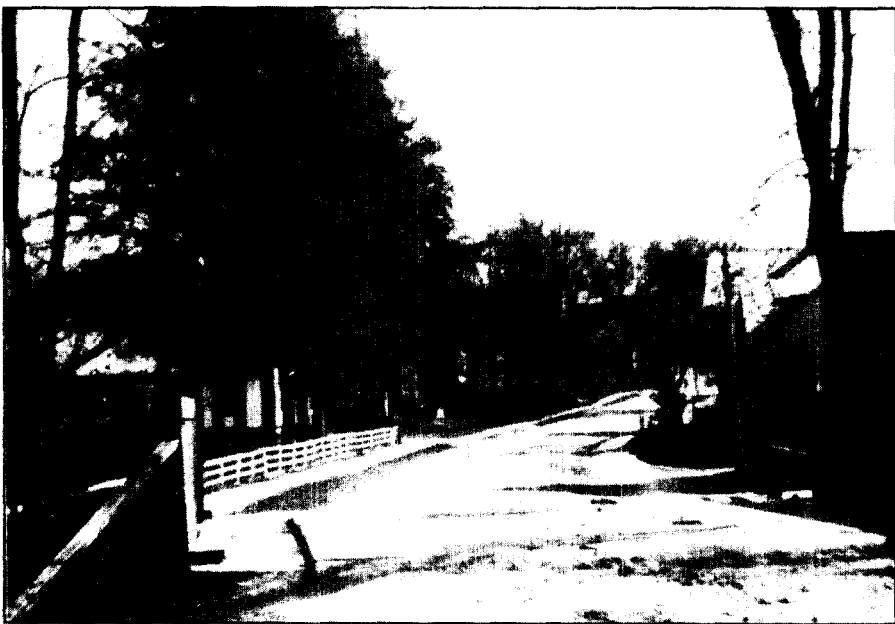
The first time the state workers came to clear it away, they got the small stuff. Then they came with heavy equipment to lift the heavy part, and they put chains on it. I held my breath, hoping it wouldn't slip.

After the tamarack went down, I looked at it closely. What I could see was rotten, but toward the bottom, the lower part was solid. When they cut it up, Annette Schultz got a slice, a cross section, of the solid part.

That old tamarack was quite a tree, a beautiful tree. The foliage was feathery green, not like a pine. How could that tree be so green when it was so rotten inside? It could easily be over a hundred years old.

When I came here in 1927 there was a row of twelve tamaracks in front of the house next door to me. That was the last one. I'd walk to the post office, and I'd think, noble old tree, you're still standing. I never dreamed it would go down.

This is a condensed version of Margaret's story, which first appeared in the Winter 1992 issue of *Central Vermont Magazine*. It is used with permission of the Central Vermont Chamber of Commerce.



The original row of tamaracks in front of what is now the Schultz house.

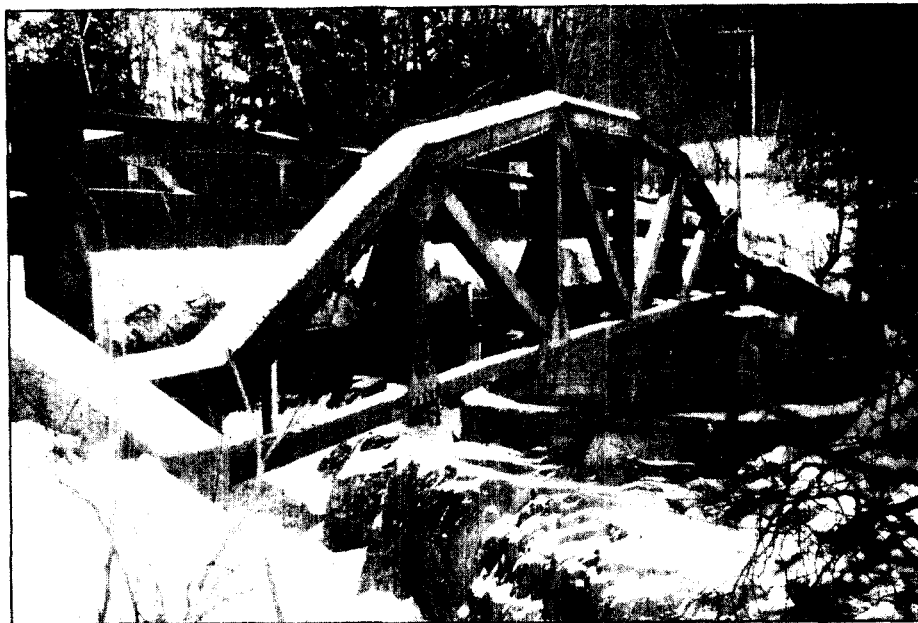
Photo courtesy of the Moretown Historical Society

Moretown's Historic Structures

Within Moretown there is a wealth of historic structures. Many of us live in them; we work or shop in them. Some of our historic buildings are still used for their original purposes, and some are used for purposes that would greatly surprise the folks who built them.

Moretown has a total of 98 structures listed on the register of the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation. Among them are residences and barns, our two old churches, three bridges, six schoolhouses, and the gem of Moretown, our Town Hall. Moretown is part of the Mad River Valley Rural area on the National Register of Historic Districts, along with neighboring Waitsfield.

Three town-owned steel bridges are listed on the state register: The Lovers Lane bridge, the so-called Munn bridge and the bridge near the Town Hall, known to some of us as Grandma's Bridge, since it led to the former Grandma's Restaurant popular in the 1960s and early 70s. Both the Lovers Lane and the Munn bridge are examples of bridges built after the devastation of the 1927 flood, in what is described as "an engineering effort of heroic proportions." The bridge by the Town Hall was built in 1920.



From this 1928 vintage bridge, much of the historic remains of the Lovers Lane hydroelectric facility can be seen, including the penstock cradles and one remaining dam abutment. This bridge is listed on the Vermont State Register of Historic Structures.

Photo by Ed Schwartzreich

Six of Moretown's old schools are listed on the register of the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation; the structure surveys on these buildings were done in 1978. Only one, the Village School, is still used for its original purpose. Three are used as residences, the Jones Brook School, the Rock Bridge School and the Common School. The Taplin School is owned by Green Mountain Power Corp and is used for storage. The Honan School succumbed to decay in 1997.

District #1 Schoolhouse is known locally as the Rock Bridge School and is located on Route 2. It was built in the 1860s and is listed as having local significance. The structure has been extensively remodeled and perhaps little remains of the original structure. It is used today as a residence.

District #3 Schoolhouse is known locally as the Common School. It is listed as having state significance. Its belfry is a distinguishing feature. No date is given for the present structure.

District #8 Schoolhouse is known locally as the Taplin School, located near the hydroelectric facility on the Winooski River. It was built in the 1860s and takes its name from the Taplin family who lived next door. The present owner is Green Mountain Power Corporation; present use is storage. The school is a very plain, vernacular structure.

District #9 Schoolhouse is known locally as the Jones Brook School. It was built around 1880. The level of significance is local. It is used today as a part-time residence.

District #12 Schoolhouse was known locally as the Honan School. The date of construction was not listed; the level of significance was local. In 1978 it was listed as "in extremely poor repair. The town of Moretown used it as a storage shed.

The building was beyond saving when the Moretown Fire Department burned the remains in 1997. Members of the Moretown Historical Society photographed the crumbled building and rescued key timbers for preservation before the remaining rubble was burned. Currently the Society is working to complete cleaning the area to develop a picnic site in this peaceful and scenic location on the Moretown Common Road.

The Village Schoolhouse was built in the early 1930s and is listed as having state significance. In 1960, a new brick school was built behind the existing two-room wood-sided school, and all the outlying one-room schools were closed. Subsequent renovation projects at the Village School site led to the present structure in which our town is justly proud to educate its elementary age children into the 21st century. The classic 1930s schoolhouse still fronts on Main Street, in keeping with the historic character of our town, and the 1990s addition extends behind, with expanded parking and access to the upgraded recreation area.

Spotlight on the Taplin School

Their names conjure up images of lovely turn-of-the-century ladies, the kind who carried parasols and wore long flowing dresses. There's Lizzie Rooney, Leslie Cameron, Mabel Ryle, Rilla Galusha, Lillian Phelps, Josie Lewis, Carlottie Williams, Elizabeth Blake, and Hattie Somerville.

In reality these young women were poorly paid rural school teachers who undertook the daunting task of teaching neighborhood pupils, grades one through eight, in a wood-heated one room school with an outhouse. They all served as teachers at the Taplin School, Moretown's District #8 School, and are listed in town reports spanning five years around the turn of the century. Their salary was \$50 a term, and some earned an extra \$2 by taking on the duties of janitor. Elizabeth Blake, who came in mid-year, was paid an extra \$7 for carfare.

The Taplin School, now owned by Green Mountain Power Corp. and used for storage, is on Route 100B in Moretown near the hydroelectric plant on the Winooski River. Built around 1860, it is on the registry of the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation as an historic building of state-wide significance. The structure survey indicates that the building is in good condition; there is no threat to the structure, which has a stone foundation and clapboard siding. The report reads, "The school is a very plain, vernacular structure."

One of four extant one-room schools in Moretown, the Taplin Schoolhouse is the only one not used as a dwelling. Additionally, unlike most of the others, the building retains much of its original character. The Moretown Historical Society is highly interested in acquiring and preserving this old school with its rich cultural heritage, and negotiations are now underway with Green Mountain Power Corp. toward this end.

At this stage in research, members of our local Society have gathered information from the Vermont Department for Historic Preservation, the Vermont Historical Society, and town records. They are in the process of gathering oral histories from people who attended Taplin School, had children who went there or were connected with the school in some other way.

Records at the Division for Historic Preservation indicate that the Taplin School was built sometime in the 1860s. According to town reports, the Taplin School was closed and reopened during the 1930s, as the student population fluctuated, and children were transported down the road to the Flanagan School. As an economy measure during World War II, the Taplin School was closed in 1943 and students again transported to the Flanagan School. In 1947, superintendent Fremont Fiske reported, "The Taplin School was opened after being closed for several years. This has proved satisfactory as there is a thriving school of 15 pupils."



The Taplin School today. In correspondence with the Moretown Historical Society, noted Vermont historian and author Winn Taplin writes, "It is remarkable that there is a one-room school remaining that has not become a residence, camp, or some such and that has remained structurally sound."

Photo by Mike Strojny

Along with all the other one room schools, the Taplin School closed its doors forever to local pupils in 1960, when the new brick school opened as a separate building behind the existing two-room Village School.

The town report for the 1939-40 school year reads: "Flanagan and Taplin Schools continue in one school, the Flanagan. Ken Austin daily transports 10 pupils from Taplin; the student count at Flanagan stands at 18." The Flanagan School is long gone. It was by the Mad River on what is now Route 100B; it was the only school building to suffer damage during the 1927 flood.

Interviewed by telephone on a wintry March day sixty years later, Kenneth Austin recalls the year that he transported children from the Taplin School to the Flanagan School. He had a "big Buick car" and somehow managed to fit in all the children. He remembers that there were usually 6 or 7 of them. In those days of one-room schools, the student population spanned grades one through eight. Kenneth remembers making two trips a day, one in the morning and another in the afternoon.

What memory does he have of this year of transporting children? “I remember the time we got pushed off the bank by the Lovers Lane turn,” Kenneth says. What is now Rt 100B was then “an old dirt road.” The Buick, with its load of school-bound children, had to get pulled out of the ditch. No one was hurt. Did he drive in the winter? “Oh yes, we drove all winter. The roads were plowed then.”

Kenneth and Norma Austin celebrated their 50th anniversary on April 8, 1999, with cards, flowers, a cake, and greetings from many well-wishers.

Three generations of Billie Hayes’ family attended Taplin School: her father, Paul Bigelow, herself, and her two sons, Blain and Jeffrey Harvey. Paul’s older sister Mildred Bigelow also went to the Taplin School. Billie said that Blain was the smartest kid in first grade — then laughed and said that he was the only one.

Billie was in the car with Ken Austin the day they went into the ditch by Lovers Lane. She was just a young child at the time; she does not remember being crowded in the car.

Marian Merchant’s son Stephen went to the Taplin School for first grade. That was the last year that Taplin was open. The centralized Village School opened in 1960, and all the one-room schools were closed. Mrs. Florence Hall was the Taplin School teacher; she was a colorful person who did wonderful art projects with the children. Marian remembers the exciting Halloween parties for which the children dressed up.

The Merchants’ home was just less than a mile from the school, so they had to pay the town to have their son transported in the school bus, driven by Ernest Elwell.

Mystery Photo



This Mystery Photo appeared in the first issue of *Moretown Matters*, our new Community Newspaper; it was subsequently identified as Ruth Cutler Reagan's school picture, when she was in first grade in 1914, at the Village School. (Some students were in upper grades.)

Thanks go to Ruth Reagan and her granddaughter Denise Reagan Gabaree.

Front row, left to right:

Bruce Palmer, George Sawyer, Ruth Cutler (Reagan), Irene Berno, Dorothy Griffith

Second row:

Leo Reagan, Alice Reagan, Ella Tanner, Bea Long, Kingdom Booth (spelling questionable), Brian Palmer

Third row:

Ina Pickett, Eva Tanner, Annette Battles, Evelyn Griffith, Mildred Newton

Fourth row:

Merrill Reagan, Ralph Pickett, Miss Foss (teacher), Lydia Goss, Esther Hathaway

Photo courtesy of the Moretown Historical Society

"There are 14 school districts in town now, and we had three schools in the village last winter (1869), and for several years we have had a select school every spring and fall. Our population in 1860 was a little over 1400. There has not been any state prison candidate from this place to date -- 1870."

A writer identified only as a "lady of Moretown."

Members of the Moretown Historical Society are researching to find out what a "select school" is. Can a reader help?

Speaking Plainly

"There is one matter that I think every superintendent should speak plainly on, and that is the condition of the out-houses.

"As a general rule they are unsanitary, dangerous to the health of the children, and the cause of more immorality in the school life than any other one thing I know. I do not believe that it is necessary for me to describe them for everyone can see the little box affair with its doors wide open, or off the hinges and blown full of snow."

W.B. Lance, District Superintendent 1916

Looking Back 70 Years

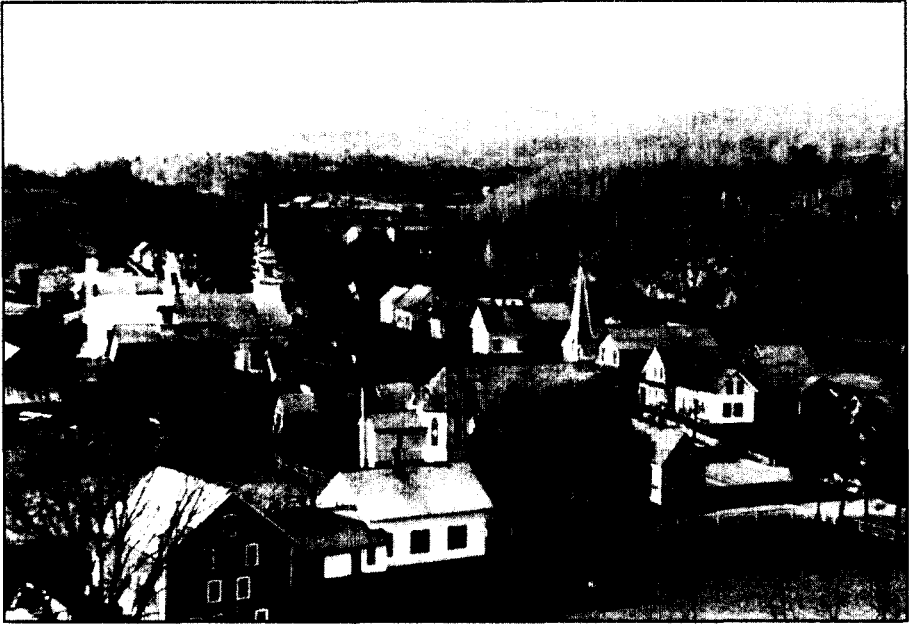
The two room school in the Village serves primary and grammar students. There are six one room schools: Cox Brook, Jones Brook, Taplin, Flanagan, Common, and Rock Bridge. Merle H. Willis, superintendent of Washington West, reported that The Vermont Tuberculosis Association provides nurses at the rate of \$8 per day, to conduct examinations of school children. He recommends, since it would take only two or three days to examine all the children in town, "that this expense be provided for by the town that the work may be done."

Mary Herrick, who lived in the village and taught school for 39 years, remembered Merle Willis as a superintendent who cared about people. Mr. Willis served as superintendent for almost 20 years, retiring about 1940. In a Vermont Folklife Center oral history, Mary told the following story. Mary Herrick died in 1992.

"If you ever had any problems, he was ready to talk it over. I had a little boy [in school] who had whooping cough. And oh, he was so sick. I sent a note home to his mother and told her he had whooping cough. She sent back word that he didn't have whooping cough. Well, Mr. Willis came one morning and the little boy was by a tree out there in the yard. He had to throw up. Mr. Willis came in with the little fellow and said to him, 'You and I are going home to see your mother.' So they went and he told her, 'That little fellow's got whooping cough, so you'd better keep him home.' And the mother did."

Churches

Today Moretown has three thriving and active churches: The Moretown Methodist Church, St. Patrick's Catholic Church, and the Church of the Crucified One. The first two have historic roots in Moretown and are listed on the register of the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation. The latter is a relative newcomer to serving the spiritual needs of our residents.



In the foreground is the residence of Dr. Haylett, now the home of the Schultz family. Moretown's two historic churches can be seen; right of center is St. Patrick's Church, left of center is the Methodist Church.

Photo courtesy of the Moretown Historical Society

The first religious society organized in Moretown was a Congregational Church which met in the first log school house. This church continued as a separate organization until some time between 1836 and 1840, when the membership was so small that the church dissolved and merged with the Congregational Church in South Duxbury.

The Rev. Amasa Cole was probably the first Methodist preacher in Moretown. He lived near Middlesex, and to conduct services, he walked from his home to the Common, where the first meeting-house was built in 1832. In the winter this trek must have been quite challenging especially when he had to break his own pathway through knee-deep snow. The building on the

Common was used until 1854, when the present church building was erected in the village. In 1922, services were held in the Town Hall while extensive repairs were made, new pews installed and new areas for the choir. Lumber for the remodeling came from birch trees on the Ward Lumber Company land in town. Today, the Methodist Church is served by Rev. Jan Rathbun.

Most of the early Catholic families who settled in Moretown were Irish immigrants who came here in the mid-1800s and settled on South Hill, sometimes called Paddy Hill. This is where the first Catholic Church was built in 1857, in the area of St. Patrick's Cemetery where a cross now stands. The original steps to the church can still be seen. Shortly afterwards, the present St. Patrick's church in the village was built to serve the Catholic community in Moretown, South Duxbury, Fayston, Waitsfield and Warren. In 1965, Our Lady of the Snows in Waitsfield was built to serve people in that region. The present altar in St. Patrick's Church came from the von Trapp family. Mr. and Mrs. Werner von Trapp were married at this altar, when it was in the Trapp family chapel in Stowe. Father Donald Ritchie serves as pastor of St. Patrick's Church.

Records at the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation in Montpelier describe the Methodist Church, erected in 1854, as a "fine example of the vernacular Greek Revival style." This type of architecture was in widespread use in Vermont from the 1830s through the 1870s. The records tell that St. Patrick's Church was built on its present site in 1882. It is described as having "elements of Gothic Revival style" often used in construction of churches of that period.

The Church of the Crucified One on Route 100 near the Waitsfield town line is a branch of a larger Community that began in Homestead, Pennsylvania, near Pittsburgh. The Community has been in existence about 27 years. It is an independent Franciscan Order — "A Monastery without walls." The Community is proceeding to go world-wide.

The Congregation began in Warren in 1977 and moved to Moretown in 1984 when a larger facility was needed for the growing number of followers. The Community has just opened a church-based school in Kenya which serves over 300 children.

In addition to church services, the Congregation also provides a preschool, youth program, and vacation Bible School. It also runs Juniper Fare restaurant in Waitsfield. The church leaders are Father Paul Stewart and Brother Stephen Young.

Moretown Memorial Library

The Moretown Memorial Library, a two-story, white clapboard building on VT Route 100B, is located high above the Mad River. Built as a private home and known as the Palmer house, it was purchased for \$450 in 1923 and converted for library use. The Moretown Library Association, the first in town, started in May 1904 with \$250 in subscription money. It was followed by the Moretown Public Library, organized on March 7, 1905 under the law of 1894, which entitled the library to receive 124 books from the state a year later.

In March 1916, when the association sold its books to the newly-formed Moretown Free Library for \$19.09, the public library was discontinued. Florence Haylett kept the new library in her home until she resigned in 1919. In 1921-22 the library was open for a time, but it needed new quarters. Consequently, on October 24, 1923, the trustees met to discuss buying the Palmer house. Letters that they sent out requesting money for repair, upkeep, and the purchase of books brought responses from 28 former residents, three townspeople, the Community Club, and the Dramatic Club.

The late Greek Revival house with porch, side lights, and curved lintels over the windows was much larger in 1923 than it is today. The flood of 1927 washed away all but what remains: one large room with a children's alcove and two upstairs rooms used by the Moretown Historical Society. The library, closed for repairs until September 1929, has since stayed open with town support. Recently the foundation was worked on with assistance from Vermont Historic Preservation and the upstairs rooms were cleaned and put to use. Although open only a few hours each week, Moretown's library continues to serve a population of about 1400.

From Where the Books Are by Patricia W. Belding; 1996. Used with permission.



Before the 1927 flood, what is now the Moretown Memorial Library was a larger structure once known as the Palmer house. The Library is listed on the register of the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation.

Photo courtesy of the Moretown Memorial Library.

Julie Kitchell, who lives on Cobb Hill, digitally restored this old photograph, which was in poor condition.

Moretown Historical Society

The History Book Committee

This Sampler of Moretown History will grow over the next 18 months, and by the time of The Book's publication, we'll also have more material about our town's more recent history. The story of the Fire Department, for example, will cover Haz-Mat training, which would amaze our forebears. (That's hazardous material.) Our ancestors would be surprised at our present day highway system — and stunned to hear that people from Moretown work in Burlington. Those who have gone before us would be pleased to know about our current project to care for and upgrade our cemeteries. And we'll have history of the buildings that have housed our town clerk's office over the years, first in someone's home, then in the present office building in the Village.

We have work yet to do! We welcome suggestions, additional information, and corrections. Members of the committee are listed below.

Earline Marsh

Freelance writing is her retirement career. Among her past and current projects are six history sections for Waitsfield and Champlain Valley Telecom, editor/publisher of *Snow News*, editor/writer for *Central Vermont Magazine*, writer of several articles for *Country Courier*, and first issue editor/writer for the new town newspaper *Moretown Matters*. Earline is serving as coordinator of the History Book project.

Denise Gabaree

Her family heritage in Moretown, through her father Cedric Reagan, goes back to 1906, when Reagans first settled in the South Hill area, also called Paddy Hill because of the large number of Irish immigrants who settled there. Denise and her husband Joe Gabaree now live on South Hill Road less than a mile from where her ancestors settled. During a short time between jobs, Denise did a great deal of the local research for this project.

Dolly Reagan

Her name is really Joyce, but we all know her as Dolly. She was born in Winooski, grew up in Burlington, and moved to Moretown when she was 15. It was here that she met her husband, Cedric Reagan. Over the years Dolly has been active in many town activities; she has a wealth of information about the early days of our town. Denise is her daughter.

Patty Moulton

She was born in Montpelier and has lived in Moretown all of her life. Patty went to Moretown Elementary School and graduated from Harwood Union High School. Patty is the unofficial manager of Moretown's historic archives, and what she doesn't know about them she can quickly find out. Patty is also one of the mainstays of the Moretown Fire Department, assisting her husband George, who is the fire chief.

Evelyn Goss

She grew up in North Moretown and now lives in the Village. Evelyn has always lived in Moretown but has never gone to school here. Like so many other children in the Rock Bridge School area, she was tuitioned to Duxbury because of overcrowding in the local school. Evelyn says that the parents of many children preferred to have them attend the nearby Duxbury School rather than walk on the road to get to Rock Bridge School. Evelyn has taken the lead in compiling the history of St. Patrick's Church and the St. Patrick's Cemetery. Patty is her daughter.

Denise, Dolly, Patty and Evelyn are all original members of the Moretown Historical Society, which was organized in 1984 to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the Town Hall with historic renovation of the building and a huge community birthday party.

Evelyn, Dolly, and Patty are also trustees of the Moretown Memorial Library.

The Moretown Historical Society works closely with our local school when the children are studying about our town. One result of this liaison is an informative map, *The Wonderful World of Moretown*, a walking tour guide which was the culmination of a unit on Historic Moretown. Copies are available for one dollar; please call Evelyn Goss at 496-3601.

Please contact any member of the Moretown Historical Society history committee to reserve your copy of The History Book: Earline Marsh, 223-6777; Denise Gabaree, 496-2090; Dolly Reagan, 496-2379; Patty Moulton, 496-3364; and Evelyn Goss, 496-3601.

Spring, 1999

Waitsfield Telecom would like to thank Mary Gow for her research and contribution on the history section written by Mary, entitled "A Century of Change in the Mad River Valley". We are looking forward to featuring this information in Waitsfield Telecom's 2000 - 2001 telephone directory. Thank you Mary!