

MORETOWN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

Almost Spring 2017

Volume 1, Issue 11

THIS ISSUE- WHAT DOES SPRING BRING?

As we near winter's half way point, some of us start thinking of spring and what lies ahead. The days are getting a little longer and it is staying light a little later, which is a sure sign that spring will come. We have had or are in the middle of a January thaw, which is just a teaser to keep our spirits up and let us get through the rest of winter.

As we get to the end of January and the first part of February, we start thinking of Town Meeting Day. On the first Tuesday of every March most Vermont Towns hold a meeting to elect local officers, approve a budget for the following year and conduct other local business. The first Town Meeting day in Vermont was held in Bennington in 1762, which was 15 years before Vermont was created!

Moretown's Town Meetings began in 1792, when on March 9, Joseph Haseltine, Seth Munson, David Parcher and Ebenezer Haseltine, petitioned Richard Holden, a Justice of the Peace from Waterbury to call a meeting of the voters of Moretown to be held at the home of Joseph Haseltine for the purpose of electing officers for the town. The people met on March 22, 1792 and the following officers were elected: David Parcher, Moderator; Seth Munson, Town Clerk; Joseph Haseltine, David Parcher and John Heaton, Selectmen; Phillip Bartlett, Treasurer; Joseph Haseltine, Constable; John Heaton and Ebenezer Haseltine, Listers; Joseph Haseltine, Collector; and Joseph Parcher, Highway Surveyor.

Later meetings were held on Moretown Common, when the center of population seemed to have moved into that area. In 1832 it was voted to move the town meetings to the "hollow" or the present Moretown Village, where they continue to be held today.

Town Meetings in years gone by were taken very seriously and attended by many. There was no Australian Ballot voting and every article was discussed and voted on "from the floor" This took time and it was not uncommon for Town Meeting to last all day and at times, into the evening, if there was an article which was hotly controversial.

Town Meeting Day was usually a holiday from work and school for most. Kids would sometimes attend the meeting with the school assignment to attend and then write a report on what they had learned.

Town meeting lunch was a large undertaking and was much more than lunch, it was a large mid day meal. Most women in town were solicited to bring an item for the meal, a hot dish, salad or side dish, bread, or dessert. It took a great deal of nourishment to sustain those who were arguing the issues.

Some interesting facts from Town Meetings

From the March 2, 1937 Town Meeting warning:

Article 15. Shall license be granted for the sale of malt and vinous beverages in this town?

Article 16 Shall spirituous liquors be sold in this town?

These articles appeared in each Town Meeting Warning, from 1937 (the earliest year available at the time of research) to 1968. The March 4, 1969 Warning did not include an article pertaining to the sale of adult beverages.

Town Meeting, March 7, 1961

Article 17 To see if the town will vote to build a new fire station on the land donated to the town for that purpose, by Ward Lumber Co. If so voted, to raise money for same.

This is the vote to build the present fire station in Town.

What other gems are hidden in the pages of old Town reports?

Town meeting was more than a time to come together and vote on the issues in town, it was also used as a time marker. Many people who sugared would use town meeting day as a gauge to tap the maples. Some would swear that you needed to start your pea and tomato plants on town meeting day to get a good crop.

Sugaring is another spring time occurrence. While there were some commercial sugar makers in the area, many farmers and individuals would tap the maple trees around their property and make enough syrup for their own use. Small makeshift sugar shacks would be visible with steam rising and a wonderful sweet aroma floating on the air. Sugaring was not easy work. It involved tapping, collecting the buckets of sap, hauling the sap to the sugarhouse and then the long boiling process that might stretch into the night, this was often after a full day of work. The golden sweet syrup on your pancakes or ice cream was the reward. And don't forget the sugaring off parties at the end of the season, where friends and family might be invited over to enjoy some sugar on snow, eggs cooked in the boiling sap, pickles and raised donuts.



Another spring occurrence, and one that is not looked upon as a favorite spring event, but is no less memorable than Town Meeting or sugaring is.....Mud Season!! Imagine miles of brown, oozing, sticky mud, which will try to control the movement of your car, even though you have your hands firmly on the steering wheel, turning in the direction that you want to go. Mud that will suck your vehicle into its depths, up over the hubcaps, to bring you to a spinning, grinding halt. Then you have to get out of the vehicle in that slime that can go over the tops of your boots and leave your feet in cold soggy misery. Nothing short of a wrecker or 4-wheel drive tractor can pry your car loose of the mess and get you home, only to have to try and navigate the same stretch of road the next day. The hard-working road crew does it's best to keep the mud holes filled and the roads passable but the only thing that seems to work is some warm dry days to take the moisture out of the ground and release the grip of the monster mud!

One last event that we hope the spring of 2017 will bring is the completion of the Honan School project. As some of you may know, for many years the Honan School site has been on the back burner of Historical Society projects. This year Sophia Sharp, who lives on Honan Road, has come up with a design plan for the site. The Society has met with Sophia and her Dad, Steve, to go over what she envisions as the future for the parcel of land. We are beginning by doing some research on the black locus trees at the site and plan to meet as soon as weather permits to finish a clean up of brush and broken branches and to go over Sophia's plan. We hope to have this project finished this year. If anyone would like to help in the clean up, please contact any of the Historical Society members. Thanks to Sophia for her interest and design plan!



Sources: Town Meeting Day: A Vermont Tradition- 2003 Deborah L Markowitz
Brief History of Moretown 1963- Lydia Goss Billings
A Brief History of Moretown, Vermont 1982- Mary Reagan
Moretown Town Reports

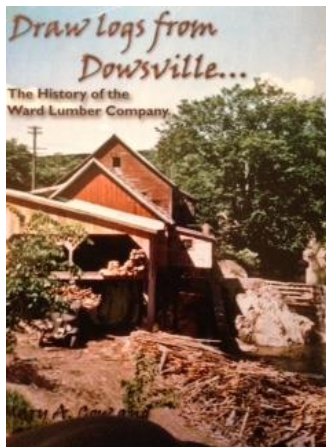
Moretown Historical Society
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Some of our offerings-

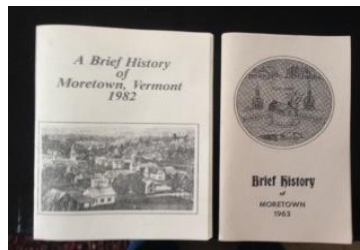
How about starting your day with coffee in a MORETOWN coffee mug? (\$20.00)



“Draw Logs from Dowsville” by Mary Gow and Kitty Werner which includes local history and many great pictures (\$30.00 or \$15.00)



We have two little booklets one written by Lydia Billings (1963) and one by Mary Reagan, (1982) which outline the history of MORETOWN (\$6.00)



Please contact Mary at the Moretown Historical Society for ordering or more information. 496-2901 or MMurphy917@aol.com

Are you doing some local research? Give us a call or drop a line, perhaps we can help!