

# Middlebury Community House News

Main Street . Middlebury, Vermont 05753

Fall/Winter 2011



Early sketch of the house Horatio Seymour built in 1816

## Mission Statement:

Partners for the Middlebury Community House was formed to promote financial support to assist with responsible caretaking and maintenance of the historic home belonging to the citizens of Middlebury.

## Reservations:

The Middlebury Community House is available for meetings, receptions services and private parties. Call Pat @ 388-2071 to discuss your needs.

See us on the web @ [www.middleburycommunityhouse.org](http://www.middleburycommunityhouse.org)

## "The House" - Yesterday & Today



"History isn't just something that is behind us. It is something that follows us." The house Horatio Seymour built in 1816, now known as the Middlebury Community House, retains a prominent place in the history of our region. Here is a quick review.

Horatio Seymour, a graduate from Yale arrived in Middlebury to study law in the office of the Hon. Daniel Chipman in 1799. Mr. Seymour was an extremely skilled lawyer who prospered by helping settle land grant disputes in the new state of Vermont.

1816 was the year Mother Nature turned a cold shoulder on New England; every month saw frost. Snow fell in June. Mr. Seymour wanted his house finished quickly. Local timber and brick from Addison County clay were used. Clay bricks need to cure for a year and then only the strongest are used in building, but because of Mr. Seymour's desire to finish building as soon as possible all available bricks were used and a buff color wash was applied. The house was and is elegant and enchanting with its interior design and many wonderful exterior architectural details not used after

1820. Throughout the house, hand turned woodwork on doorways arches, wainscoting and a central spiral staircase delight the eye. The house has ten hand-carved fireplaces which supplied heat to the home. Each mantel features a different design. Horatio Seymour and his wife Lucy Case Seymour had four children, three sons and a daughter. Their daughter Emma Seymour married Philip Battell.

Emma and Philip Battell began their married life in Ohio. They had two children, Emma and Joseph, before moving back into the family home in Middlebury. In the late 1870's Philip Battell modernized the house installing plumbing, updating the kitchen and adding decorative Victorian details. The Seymour house became know as the Battell house, the door knocker still bears the Battell name. The Battell children stayed in the area. Emma married John Stewart a self-made man who graduated from Middlebury College and went on to become Governor. Joseph, a bachelor dedicating his life to preserving our landscape.

All five of John and Emma Battell Stewart's children were born in the Battell house. In 1932 daughter Jessica Stewart Swift and her brother Philip Battell Stewart gave their family homestead to the people of Middlebury and vicinity to be used by the community. The Middlebury Community House was incorporated in 1938. Ten community members were appointed to oversee the use of the house and manage the endowment.

In 1960 the Community Cottage was added to the Seymour Street property to serve as additional meeting space due to the rising need. Eighty years of growth in our area has changed the way both properties are being used. As stewards of the house, we recognize that in preserving our past we must pay particular attention to what makes us unique. We have the honor of preserving a very special gift to Middlebury.

*Take a house tour and enjoy refreshments on Saturday, December 3rd. 2:00 - 4:00 PM  
See the house beautifully decorated for the holidays by the Middlebury Garden Club.*

## Summer of Grant work

A \$15,000 match grant was awarded from State of Vermont Historic Preservation in the spring. The Middlebury Community House began a first phase of work with Structural Energy Cooperation, Inc. In the basement; floors were removed, a vapor barrier was put in place, framework was replaced as needed, structural support was updated and a foam insulation was installed before the floors were again set. On the roof; the parapet caps between the chimneys were reconstructed helping to divert water from the brick walls. Drainage from the roof proved to be efficient thus downspouts and ground drainage was improved. There was more damage on the roof balustrades than anticipated when the original quote was given, so work on the balustrades was put on hold for this year. The match portion was supported by Partners' for the Middlebury Community House and with a portion of a \$1,000 grant for operational expenses from Vermont Community Foundation.

# Look Who is Helping at The House

Eight Middlebury College students and two community members volunteered for United Way's Days of Caring on Saturday, September 24th.



Helping out are Johanna Murphy, a community member, and Kelsey Geguen, Santy Barrera, Guadalupe Barajas, Victoria Chiang, Ana Villarreal, Rachel Kogan, Stephanie Pons, Dana Monsees all college students.



Jared Moats of Structural Energy Cooperation, Inc. gave the volunteers a quick lesson on how to paint before we began our project. Jared shown with daughter, Evelyn.

The Days of Caring project was to paint the basement that looked as if it hadn't been painted since the 1950's.

Thanks to **Distinctive Paints and Interiors**, who donated 7 gallons of paint, we have a fresh current look.



The painting continues. . .

Part of the day was not enough time to finish painting the basement.

Kindness has brought us Doug Newton, a professional painter and his side kick Donna Sargent. The two of them generously donated their time and talent to complete the unfinished basement. Another step in the right direction! We appreciate volunteers!



The Middlebury Garden Club gave \$2000 to secure our stairway banister. New support rails were added at various points along the banister to assure its beauty while adding strength. The balance of the donation was used to build and install a new coat rack on the wall opposite the stairway. This update opens the view of the reverse spiral staircase.



19th Century French Porcelain Mantel Clock, once owned by Emma Battell Stewart, Jessica Swift's mother was gifted back to the House. Jessica had given the clock to the Walter Swift family. Walter's children Laurel and Jim Swift donated the clock to the Community House in honor of their brother Bill.

**Generosity continues in so many ways.  
We thank you one and all!**

A new project just completed was supported by the Christian Science Society. They provided money to have the rooms on the main level of the house carpeted. The Christian Scientists have used the House for more than 40 years. Throughout the years they have generously funded tuning for our piano, cleaning of our carpets and work to keep our interior shutters maintained. The new carpet has made the house much more enjoyable to view and use.



**Partners Memberships** Partners for the Middlebury Community House was organized to promote financial support to assist with responsible caretaking and maintenance of the historic home that belongs to the citizens. Partners receive two newsletters a year with information about how the house is being used, history of the founding families, and how your support is benefiting the house. Donors of \$50/\$250 or more will have the added benefit of being invited to a cocktail party with a program being presented by a guest speaker. All Partners membership donations go directly towards our maintenance projects. Your support is needed and appreciated. **Please take the time now to join the Partners**

## Member Board 2011

Barbara Blodgett  
Member at Large

Ray Churchill  
Honorary Member at Large

Donna Donahue  
Member at Large

Richard Emilo, Clerk  
Member at Large \*

Jessica Liebowitz  
Rep. President Middlebury College

John MacIntyre  
Member at Large

Nancy Merolle  
Rep. President Woman's Club

Kevin Newton, Bldg. / Gds.  
Member at Large \*

G. Kenneth Perine, Finance  
President National Bank of Middlebury \*

Lynda Rheume, President  
Member at Large \*

James Swift, Esq.  
Rep. Swift/Stewart Family \*

Staff:

Patricia Hornbeck  
House Director

Jamison Kimberly  
Treasurer

Nanci Ackland  
Housekeeper

Norm Grenier  
Maintenance \* Trustees

**In Memory of Phyllis Cunningham.** Phyllis served on our Member Board for many years representing the DAR. She helped keep history alive and worked to gain gifts for the house. She will be solely missed.

I/We wish to become a Partner for the MCH for 2011-2012  
Please join at a level that best fits your giving plan.

- \$20 Stone Terrace Foundation  
2 newsletters a year with updates and information
- \$50 Ogival Hood Entrance  
newsletters plus an invitation to cocktail party w/guest speaker
- \$100 Long & Short Picket Fence  
above benefits plus discount for house use
- \$250 White Roof Balustrades  
all the above & the satisfaction that your contribution is making a real difference

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Make checks payable to: Middlebury Community House Partners  
Mail to: 6 Main Street, Middlebury, VT 05753

We love volunteers; learn more by calling 388-2071

Middlebury Community House is a 501-C 3 organization.  
Your donation is tax deductible in accordance with the law.