

# EAST MONTPELIER SIGNPOST

Volume 2, No. 3

January/February 1992

## ***SPICED WITH A DASH OF HUMOR: GEORGE F. SIBLEY***

It seems as though I have known George Foster Sibley all my life, as his Dad and Mother, Roy and Alice, took me in as a summer boarder when I was nine or ten years old. I must have been a real pest as he was fifteen years older than I and I tagged along after him wherever he went. I remember how well he did chores, how he took such pleasure in reaping the benefits of his hard labor - plowing, cultivating and sowing the seeds and the many hours needed to make feed for the milking cows. I also remember what a handsome man he was and still is. He enjoyed barn dancing and if you ever doubted the strength in a farmer's arms and body, just dance a few rounds with George.

George and his younger sister, Katherine, were born on that beautiful farm on Sibley Road - the long white house with the attached buff barn with the cupola with 1899 inscribed on it. I asked George if he remembered the raising of the barn and he looked at me with his characteristic twinkle in his eyes and said, "Hardly, I wasn't born until 1905." But he remembers his Dad telling about how his Mother cooked bountiful noon day meals for 18 workmen daily until the barn was up.

He and his late wife, Peg, raised two fine young men:



*George Sibley and his sister, Katherine*

Edwin, the older, and Jeff, so named because he was George F., Jr. and it seemed logical to call him by his initials G.F.

Edwin decided that farming was not for him, especially when his brother took to it as did his ancestors, who date back to the 1790's starting with Edwin Foster and Frederick Sibley.

You might think that farming and raising children would have been enough, but George is not your typical farmer. He has always felt committed to his community. He was a selectman for 18 years, served on the school board for 3 years, is still a cemetery commissioner, was a Mason in the Wyoming Lodge for 64 years, was Justice of the Peace for 5 years, Trustee and Treasurer of Washington Electric for 12 years, and Director and Treasurer of Northern Farms for 25 years. On the State level, he served in the House of Representatives in the early 50's and was chairman of the Agriculture Committee. And this bit of information I gathered while talking to George really impressed me - he has missed only one Town Meeting in 64 years and that was in 1927!

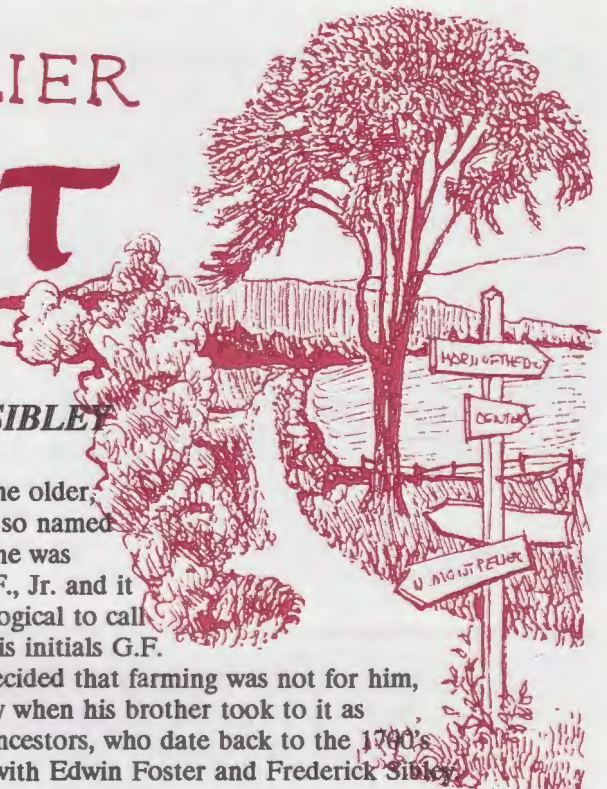
Upon talking with George, one gets the impression that he is a cautious man and indeed he is - after the first miscalculation, he NEVER straddles an electric fence without first turning off the current. He's also reluctant to commit himself until he knows all the facts, and he makes up his mind about a person after he has been tried and passes the test for honesty and performance.

George doesn't have his father's glee in playing practical jokes on flatlanders, but he certainly enjoys all the foibles of out-of-staters, and will be the first to laugh at himself.

George lives with his son Jeff and daughter-in-law Bonnie and their sons, Scott and Eric, in the home of his birth.

So, if you happen to pass a tall, erect, silver haired man, wearing a checkered hat, striding briskly along the road, checking out fences or attending to the cows crossing the road, that will be George. Oh, he may not wave back, but he notices you -- he's just busy thinking.

*Marian B. Lord*



## COUNTING YOUR "LUCKY STARS!"

If the label on *your* issue of the *SIGNPOST* has a gold star on it, then you're one of the contributors who has helped our town newspaper come alive. We often receive comments from folks saying how much they like the paper, and you can share in that good feeling.

Sometimes it takes visitors a while to realize that there are no billboards along the roads. They appreciate the beauty unaware that Vermont decided natural beauty outweighed the advantages of billboards. At the *SIGNPOST*, we also decided that we'd have a nicer paper if we didn't fill it up with advertising. Of course, this means we are dependent upon contributions (plus a few subscriptions and a few ads for in-town businesses) to make pages meet.

So we invite you to join the other stars in town and help support, or renew your support, for our newspaper. (A red star means it has been a year since we heard from you!) Contributions of any amount are welcome, and may be sent to us at the address shown on the back page.



### OUR OVERWHELMING THANKS TO THE FOLLOWING CONTRIBUTORS TO THE SIGNPOST AUCTION.

Annis Acres Farm  
Joyce Bean Upholstery  
Ben & Jerry's  
Karen Blosser, Color Analysis  
Bragg Farm  
Carver Tree Farm  
Catamount Nursery  
Jean Cate, Paul Cate, Sandal Cate  
Bruce & Janet Chapell  
Andy Christiansen  
Ellie Clay, Graphic Design  
The Drawing Board  
Dudley's Store  
Fred Emigh, Attorney  
Nona Estrin  
Diana Fielder  
Bruce Fitch, Excavating  
Fitch Family  
Jim Goodall Christmas Tree Farm  
Hill's Auto Repair  
Jan's Beauty Boutique  
Land Care: Hawkins Family  
Larry Loso Vacuum Cleaner Sales & Service  
Lash Family  
Legare Farm Market  
Morse Farm  
Dede Robinson  
Mary Stone  
T & M Motor Sports  
Thistle Hill Potter: Jennifer Boyer  
Trout Lily Gardens  
Utton's Mufflers  
Vermont Business Equipment  
Video Box Office  
Jean Vissering  
Washington Electric Coop  
Wedgewood Racquet & Fitness Club  
Fran Weinbaum  
Winooski Valley Orchards: Merritt Family  
Wintergreen Nursery  
Merideth Wright

### FROM THE TOP OF THE SIGNPOST

*Like infants taking their first steps, we shriek with glee over each milestone in our growth. Here we are, starting a new year, and 1992 sounds as shiny new and exciting as each step ever felt to a child. We expect to greet you every two months of this year, providing a network of information and news about what's going on in town. We hope you are counting on us, learning from our pages, and rewarding us for our efforts with kind words and cash.*

*Since I last wrote in this space, I have been to the opposite side of the globe. May I tell you some of my thoughts about travel and about Thailand, where I spent most of October?*

► *It's too far away - the 17 hours of air travel were deadly!*

► *Thailand is really beautiful but warm and humid for a Vermonter.*

► *I found Thai people a delight - friendly, good natured, smiling, and quite willing to accommodate to the strange request of farang (foreigners).*

► *Thailand is an ancient and very proud country. (My generation called it Siam). Their benevolent and quite modern king with an impossible name has ruled for over 40 years, and the Thai people are devoted to him.*

► *Thailand hopes to become a bigger voice in the world. The World Bank held its annual meeting in Bangkok while I was there, with an estimated 25,000 visitors. The giant Queen Sirikit Convention Center was built for the occasion, in less than a year.*

► *On this trip I refined the Cate Travel Plan which is: never limit travels to prearranged tours or stay in American-style hotels if you can help it. We took the slow trains and buses, visited back country villages, slept in guest houses, mostly ate street food, and got a wonderful look at the real Thailand.*

► *East Montpelier and home never looked so good. Travel's fine, but it sure makes you appreciate the good life at home.*

*See you in a couple of months.*

Jean Cate



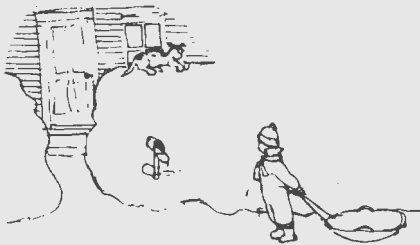
## CHURCH CHIMES

### Old Brick Church Old Meeting House

The Old Brick Church Club Vermont Bicentennial Fall Fair was held November 11, and was a financial success. Thanks and appreciation to the many townspeople who attended and supported this event. In line with our historical theme, we mention that this Fall Fair was started over fifty years ago in the village schoolhouse (Municipal Building), moved to the Town Hall, then to its present location.

The annual Community Christmas Tree lighting was held at the Old Brick Church on December 19th. Remembrance bells hung on the tree each represented a \$2 donation, and a total of \$257 was sent to the Onion River Foodshelf.

Services are held at 9:30 a.m. at the Old Meeting House and at 11:00 a.m. at the Old Brick Church. Sunday School is held at the same times.



### PRESCHOOLER IN YOUR FAMILY?

This is a reminder that the Elementary School preschool census is well under way. When complete it will include the names of all the kids in town who are not yet of kindergarten age. The list helps the school plan ahead and helps parents by notifying them of preschool screenings, play-school groups, and other activities for young children. Parents and teachers both recognize that children who are familiar with their school before they enter kindergarten do better later on. If you have a child too young for school, please call or write the school with the child's name, age and sex, and the parents' names, address and phone numbers. (School phone 223-7936, ask for Linda).



Norman C. Rice  
President  
(802) 229-1506

## DUNROVEN ASSOCIATES

RR 1 Box 110 East Montpelier, Vermont 05651

SURVEYING AND MAPPING  
SITE ENGINEERING

SOIL AND PERCOLATION TESTS  
SEPTIC SYSTEM DESIGN  
ENVIRONMENTAL PERMIT PROCESSING

## TRAIL MANNERS

Snow is beginning to fall in East Montpelier. Dust off your skis and snowshoes; tune up your snowmobile and look forward to getting out on the trails. But remember, use your neighbor's land with respect and courtesy. After all, you are only there through their good will and generosity. So please follow these common sense rules.

► Respect landowners' wishes--if land is posted against any activity--hunting, skiing, walking, whatever--find another place to do the activity.

► Stay on the marked trails--landowners have reasons why they have located the trails where they are. The landowner may be logging a particular area, attempting to protect a crop which is under the snow or an animal habitat or simply may not want you so close to his or her house or barn. If a trail is relocated, please use the new trail, not the one you used last year.

► Observe speed limits.

► Skiers and snowshoers, remember to yield the trail to snowmobilers. They have the right of way.

► Park where you have permission to park and be sure you are not blocking a road, intersection or driveway.

► Don't litter.

► Leave your dogs at home--many landowners will appreciate it.

Enjoy being outdoors in our beautiful town! Call us if you have any ideas or questions. Thanks from the Trails Group, Jody Brown 223-6007; Nona Estrin 223-7745; Madeleine Mongan 223-2579; Carolyn Shapiro 229-5676.

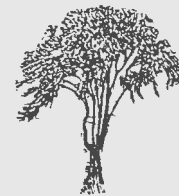
## TRAIL PLANNING REPORT

Remember last summer when the trails group circulated a survey to all townspeople? Well, 26 people responded, and here are the results.

There was a wide range of interests including walking, skiing, biking, running, riding horses, watching birds, canoeing, playing tennis, hiking, maintaining plant and animal habitats, and participating in group activities.

Some people mentioned particular areas where they would like to secure trails and recreational opportunities, which included the Town Forest, the old railroad bed, Long Meadow Hill and the area from Codling Road to U-32. Some had ideas on trail building and maintenance, suggesting that volunteers and school children could help make, sign, and maintain trails. Others recommended an outdoor education program focused on land stewardship and trail maintenance. The need for maps and signs were also noted. There were ideas for raising money, such as fundraisers and user fees, and securing trail accesses, such as obtaining 5-year permits from landowners and using town funds as long as taxes weren't raised.

We are very grateful to those who responded, especially to the people who volunteered their help. We urge any others interested in town trails to contact us. Thanks from the Trails Group!



### TUBEX = BABY ELM

Have you spotted those tan colored pipes sticking a few feet out of the ground here and there around town? They are the Tubex guards which provide protection for the disease-resistant elm trees which the Forest Committee got for our town. Three trees were given away on Rally Day, 34 trees were bought and planted by individuals, while the committee planted another three on the school grounds. More are expected next year.



**BOARD OF SELECTMEN**  
*Weston Cate, Allan Couch, Austin Cleaves*

**October 8, 1991**

- ▶ Discussed results of Landfill Advisory vote. Selectman Cleaves indicated his intent to resign as the town's representative to the CVSWMD Board as he could not go against the clear feelings of the voters but could not cast the Town's veto in good conscience. Voted to instruct the representative to the CVSWMD Board to vote no on the siting of a landfill in East Montpelier. Voted to accept the resignation of Austin Cleaves as town representative to CV Board. Selectman Couch will attend the next meeting of the District but prefers not to serve as the Town's representative on an ongoing basis.
- ▶ Met with State Representatives Peter Youngbaer and Andrew Christiansen to discuss state issues of interest to the town.
- ▶ Monthly bills were reviewed and signed.

**October 23, 1991**

- ▶ Met with Calais Selectmen and EM Fire Department to discuss formalizing the relationship between the towns. Agreed to appoint a study committee to look at ways to best meet needs of towns. Wes Cate agreed to serve as East Montpelier's representative.
- ▶ Received request that the Town accept the DeRonde Development Road off Barnes Road as there are now three residences on the road. Will request the AOT to make a site inspection before final acceptance.
- ▶ Tom Brazier discussed upcoming budget work for the Ambulance Advisory Board. Tom has been the Town's representative since 1984 and the Selectmen asked that he continue in this capacity. The new budget will see a fee increase of 45% to \$7.37 per capita. Medicare reimbursements do not cover actual costs and represent about 38% of calls.
- ▶ Discussion of Brazier Road relative to its status as a Class 4 Road and in regard to its use for the proposed gravel pit.

▶ Road Department completed road repairs to Fair Road. Voted to send repair bill to Mr. Hedges.

**November 13, 1991**

- ▶ Voted to relocate the road department radio to the Town Clerk's Office from the Fire Station for easier communication with the road crew.
- ▶ Heard from Tom Brazier regarding a recently filed application by Crystal Springs Water System for increased wellhead protection area under the terms of rules adopted by the Groundwater Division of the Agency of Natural Resources. This could severely limit use of the farm and no provision is made for compensation for taking the land. Voted to send a letter to the Groundwater Division asking for information and requesting copies of correspondence.
- ▶ Voted to increase the size of the Conservation Committee from five to seven members at committee's request and agreed to authorize advertising to warn of committee meetings.
- ▶ Voted to officially adopt the Zoning Enforcement Policy as written in 1987.
- ▶ Authorized the Town Attorney to take further steps to enforce the zoning violation of Dennis Carver (failure to get a permit).
- ▶ Voted to list town and school employee compensation in the Town Report.

**November 26, 1991**

- ▶ Appointment with Richard Davis, Jr. and Clyde and Evelyn Holt re: Holt v. East Montpelier. Continued discussion re drainage on the Holts' property. Agreed to visit the site with Town Attorney.
- ▶ Voted to appoint Jonathan Lash as the Town's representative to the CVSWMD Board to fill the unexpired term of Austin Cleaves.
- ▶ Voted to accept the Planning Commission recommendations to establish a policy whereby application fees are not refundable.
- ▶ Due to a complaint by the *Times*

*Argus*, Selectmen reconsidered the fees set to sell the Grand list. Voted to charge a fee of \$.05 per name for copies of the voter checklist.

- ▶ Discussion of Irene Cook's sewage and zoning violations. Found no new information and expect sewage system to be installed by July 1 as per court order.
- ▶ Heard from Norma Raymond, Delinquent Tax Collector, who reported that the delinquent list is about the same as 1990 in terms of total dollars. However, the list has many more names owing smaller amounts.
- ▶ Mr. Couch reported that the AOT has awarded the contract for the Towne Hill Road Project to Earth Construction of Groton. Denied request by Earth for overweight vehicle permit to use Towne Hill, Cherry Tree Hill and Quaker Roads for construction vehicles as they prefer State Highways be used.
- ▶ Authorized Town Attorney to begin condemnation proceedings on Betty Campbell trailer on Lyle Young Rd.



**PLANNING COMMISSION**  
*Chair: Johanna DeMartino*

**October 3, 1991**

- ▶ Approved a sign application from Larry Benoit for three signs on one frame at the former Chadwick BaRoss Building on Route 2.
- ▶ Denied application of Warren and Mary Noyes for sign to advertise gasoline pump as it exceeded square footage requirements.
- ▶ Denied sign application of Paul and Emma Grant, Sr. and Dean Hedges because it did not meet set-back requirements.
- ▶ Town Plan: John Riley shared some comments received and noted that Cynthia Hartnett has expressed an interest in editing the town plan.

## BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT

Chair: Earle Ellingwood

October 14, 1991

- ▶ Voted to approve a zoning variance to Patrick Sikora for construction of a garage on his property on Sanders Circle.
- ▶ Voted to approve application of Christopher Lyford for an addition to his home on County Road.
- ▶ Continued discussion of Brazier application for proposed gravel pit. Read letter from Mr. Brazier regarding an alternative offer to the original proposal to reduce extraction rate to 15,000 cubic yards per year, allow crushing to upgrade material, installation of radar back up alarm on Brazier loader, change in hours of operation and direct traffic in safest and most direct route.
- ▶ Read letter from Water Supply Division who determined that based on current information the proposed gravel pit does not appear to impose significant risk to springs of Crystal Springs water supply.
- ▶ Heard other general comments.

▶ Voted to recess until 10/28

October 28, 1991

- ▶ Denied dimensional variance for a swimming pool for Mr. and Mrs. Nist on Barnes Road.
- ▶ Approved permit for the Spooner farm supply store providing septic system is okay for project.
- ▶ Continued Brazier gravel pit hearing with several more letters from townspeople and engineers.
- ▶ The Zoning Board then went through each criteria and discussed in detail. Voted to refuse the application with 5 members agreeing and 3 dissenting.

## CONSERVATION FUND ADVISORY COMMITTEE

October 15, 1991

- ▶ Recommended addition of 2 more members due to difficulty of all members attending each meeting.
- ▶ Considered application of Dexter and Susan Merritt for a \$15,000 zero

interest loan to be repaid in the event the land changes use. Need more information so no decision was made.

November 19, 1991

- ▶ Continued discussion of Merritt application. While project would encourage ag diversification, it would not permanently protect ag land or the town's rural character. Voted to recommend to the Selectmen that a \$7,500 secured zero interest loan be awarded to the Merritts to be repaid in three years.



## FOUR CORNERS SCHOOLHOUSE ASSOCIATION President: Don Donnelly

Would you believe, a standing room only policy would not accommodate all the children and their parents who attended the Halloween party on October 31st. There were pumpkins to paint, pennies to pitch, popcorn and cider, and a marvelous Spook House on the stage. Ginny Burley and her family, and Ruth Frost and their helpers surely staged a good time for our children.

On November 10th Nancy Bisson, elementary school art teacher, set up a display of art, designing a section for each grade, kindergarten through sixth grade. There was also a musical program in the afternoon.

We are ready to work on the water system and bathroom facilities, as soon as money and labor are available. A fund raising letter is now being sent to area businesses; and we just received word that we have been granted \$1750, as a matching grant, from the Vermont Historical Society.

## RECREATION NEWS

By the time you receive the *Signpost* basketball will be underway. About 90 students in grades 3-6 are participating. These programs would not be possible without many volunteers.

We had a fun-filled soccer season with 90 3-6 grade players plus some 1st and 2nd graders who learned some fundamentals. The teams participated in several tournaments and brought

home some trophies. Thanks go to all the coaches and other parents who helped out.

The recreation committee would like to give special thanks to Don Hawkins and Rich Atkinson who designed and made new soccer goals for the recreation field. These goals will be used for years to come. We also purchased new nets for the goals at the school for next year.

Judy Cookson



## FIRE DEPARTMENT

In the past few months the EMFD has been very busy with emergency calls expected to be over 150 by year end. A heavy drilling schedule is being maintained as well as training and classroom work involving hazardous material identification and snowmobile rescue. The EMFD would like to thank Mr. and Mrs. Roger Chapell for allowing the Department to install a dry hydrant in their pond. This will be used to refill water tanks after a fire call and for water supply should it be needed in that area.

The EMFD welcomes three new members: James, Robert and Larry Brown. Larry brings with him many years of fire fighting and emergency medical experience from the Lancaster, MA Fire Department.

With the weather turning colder, we urge people to have their heating systems checked and cleaned by qualified individuals. Unfortunately, the Fire Department is unable to clean chimneys as in the past but guides to proper wood stove and chimney installation are available by calling any member of the EMFD or at local stores.

Need an idea for an inexpensive gift that could save the life of a loved one? **Give a smoke detector.**

Best wishes for a safe and joyous new year from the East Montpelier Fire Department, Fast Squad and Auxiliary.



# MOOSE LIPS



\* *Ellen Hill and Christine Comi recently changed the window scene in the display case at the Town Clerk's Office. They have used many miniature figures depicting an ice skating party. Other items displayed are old stuffed animals, dolls, Christmas cards, a Santa with sleigh and 8 tiny reindeer. Ellen and Christine regularly change the display box for the Historical Society. Be sure to stop by and see it!*

\* *The East Montpelier 1990 Town Report has won the James P. Taylor Memorial Award for Outstanding Achievement in Vermont. Bravo to those who put this report together.*

\* *Rally Day auction winners are redeeming their bids one by one. Have you seen the impressive list of donors who contributed items to benefit the Signpost? You'll find it elsewhere in this issue.*

\* *If you'd like to see slides of Jean Cate's trip to Thailand, they'll be shown at the Four Corners Schoolhouse January 13 at 7 p.m. (Jan. 14 if weather is bad). All welcome.*

\* *Town Clerk reports that catering permits are needed only when alcohol is sold at a function.*

\* *Listers will soon begin visiting each property for 1992 Grand List determination.*

\* *Co-op Play Group: There is a cooperative preschool play group that meets on Wednesday mornings from 9:00 to 11:00 at the Old Brick Church. The only cost is your help. You are cordially invited to share in the fun with other East Montpelier parents and children. Drop by or call Robyn Hall at 223-3308.*

\* *Remember that the school is available for residents to use at any time. If you'd like to use the building for meetings, classes, sporting events or whatever, all you need to do is fill out a simple form so you can be scheduled into an appropriate space. (P.S. There's volleyball on Tuesday nights @ 7:15.)*

\* *A young man who grew up in East Montpelier and who lived near the Municipal Building is on his way to climb Mt. Everest, the highest mountain*

*in the world. Bill Pelkey, now of Jericho and a member of the U.S. National Guard, was the only American chosen to join the British team. During high school, Bill worked on a local farm.*

\* *The Town Clerk's office was festively decorated this holiday season thanks to the generosity of the Bragg Farm, Carver Tree Farm and Morse's Sugar Shack.*

\* *Parents and friends were treated to a joyous concert at the Elementary School, where they were also treated to a hitherto unknown musical resource: the Faculty Band.*

\* *By the way, AOT = Agency of Transportation.*

## MILESTONES

(Received by the Town Clerk by Dec. 1)

## BIRTHS

♥ *Jennifer Vivian Stone born August 22, 1991 to Lisa Jean and Brian Joseph Stone, Jr.*

♥ *Ryan Henry, born 4:36 P.M., Kari Mae, born 4:37 P.M., and Eric Paul, born 4:38 P.M. on September 25, 1991 to Mary Chappas and Henry Arthur Schnaars*

## MARRIAGES

♥ *Jean Joseph Gaston Lessard and Amy Beth Schoolcraft on October 26, 1991.*

♥ *Charles William Harman and Ida Mae Watson on October 29, 1991.*

## PASSINGS

*Earl Phillip Porter, Sr. passed away on October 19, 1991, father of William and Phillip Porter.*

*Joseph A. Tofani passed away September 29, 1991, husband to Edna Tofani.*

## LAND TRANSFERS

(Received between August 23 and December 1)

*1.6 acres on Fair Road from Wayne and Sandra Fair to Theodore G. Hedges & Sons.*

*House and 1.6 acres on Fair Road from Wayne and Sandra Fair to Deane F. & Raelene Hedges.*

*.77 acres off Paul Square from Richard Casavant to Alec J. and Cheryl B. Baker.*

*House and 1 acre on North Street from Norman Kelley and Douglas Schaefer to Lilli Lenz.*

*1/2 acre and dwelling on Factory Street from Mary Beth Schulz Vereline to Robert Clark.*

*Dwelling and .55 acres on Route 14, North Montpelier from Doris Gallison and Lucille Cerutti to Silvio Cerutti and Lucille Cerutti.*

*.92 acres and mobile home on Country Club Road from Michael P. Vereline and Mark T. Perry, dba L & Partners to Stephen D. and Alice C. Nichols.*

*4 acres on Cherry Tree Hill from Eugene Troia to Jeanie Crosby.*

*House and 1 acre on Upper North Street from Frank S. Whidden Jr. to Garey G. and Ann B. Kreis.*


*Mobile home in Sandy Pines from Richard & Mary Tousignant to Elaine Douglas.*

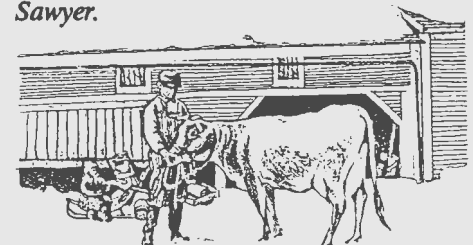
*Mobile home in Sandy Pines from P & G Sales dba Ray's Homes to Caroline Roy.*

*Mobile home in Sandy Pines from Glenn Newell to Julie L. & Brian D. Moody.*

*Mobile home and 1.5 acres on Route 2 from Messier House Moving to Norman & Carla Messier.*

*Mobile home in Sandy Pines from Daniel D. and Betty Boutot to Barbara Sawyer.*

DENNIS R. HAWKINS 223-3994		HUGH M. HAWKINS 229-0114
Driveway and Lawn Construction Mowing, Bush Hogging Snow Plowing Sanding	229-4166	Top Soil Bark Mulch Sawdust, Hay Lime, Gravel Field Reseeding
WHOLESALE - RETAIL		



## BLUE AND WHITE: BOYER

If you've been to a Vermont crafts fair in the last decade or so, you've no doubt admired her work. Her trademark blue and white designs are found in some of the finest craft galleries in the state. Few of her clientele are satisfied with just one example of her work. Most have built an entire collection. In fact, since much of her creative output is acquired as gifts for others, you may unknowingly be the fortunate owner of a Jennifer Flagg Boyer original.

Is it art? Unquestionably. A form of sculpture, you might say. Jennifer Boyer, you see, is the proprietor of Thistle Hill Pottery and the creator of a distinctive line of stoneware hand-crafted with the functional tradition of the old folk potteries in mind. Vases, lamps, cooking pots, and a full line of dinnerware are Thistle Hill's stock in trade. Each piece is individually shaped on the potter's wheel, hand-decorated with a cobalt wash using only a bamboo brush, and then fire-hardened at 2,200° F.

Thistle Hill Pottery is one of a growing number of small Vermont businesses operated successfully out of the home. And if that's a trend, Jennifer Boyer is one of those who helped show the way. She established Thistle Hill Pottery in 1975 in a studio at her home in Cabot. Jennifer and husband Tony Klein moved home, business, and family (Timmy, age 7, and Jessie, age 15) to East Montpelier in 1986. "During the early days, I was such a tiny operation," she recalls. "I made flower pots at first and sold them at the small local craft fairs." Over time, though, the fledgling business grew steadily, and Jennifer found that she was beginning to develop something of a following. "I experimented with different glazes, colors, and textures," she says, "but the white glaze with the blue brush work was what I kept returning to. I found that people were building sets around that design, and they wanted a whole range of pieces with that basic look and feel. So the blue and white has become a kind of signature for me."

Jennifer learned her craft at Goddard College, graduating in 1973. She went to what she calls a "regular college" for a year after high school and was "miserable," she recalls ruefully. When she visited Goddard with a friend, she recognized that this might be a place that offered the creative freedom she needed. Midway through her first year she discovered the potter's wheel and worked at it "eight hours a day from then on." Jennifer spent her junior year as an apprentice to a production potter in New York, an experience she credits with giving her valuable insights into the day-to-day realities of running a studio as a business. "My senior year, I had my own little studio in a shed behind the school's pottery studio. I was totally absorbed."

Jennifer embodies a rare combination of artistic sensibility, hands-on mechanical ability, and no-nonsense business savvy. It's one thing to be able to conceive of the delicately elegant designs that adorn her varied stoneware. But she also "throws" and hand-decorates each piece individually, and "fires" them in a 37-cubic-foot gas kiln she built herself, along with the shelves, tables, and display racks that make up the potter's studio in her Powder Horn Glen Road home. "If the wiring or the gas line needs repairs, I do them myself," she smiles, with deserved self-satisfaction.

"That's part of the fun of owning a business to me." "Fun" to Jennifer also encompasses the marketing and management sides of business, which she handles with equal aplomb. "I listen to my customers," she explains



*Jennifer Flagg Boyer*

matter-of-factly. "Yes, I'm doing what I do to please myself, but also to please the people who are buying my work. So I'm always listening at the fairs, when people come back to me, to hear how various pieces worked from a design and functional point of view. That toothbrush holder may have been pretty, but I also need to know that it worked." She's also sensitive to public environmental and health concerns about products these days, and stresses that her pieces are 100% safe for daily cooking and serving, contain no lead or other toxic substances, are ovenproof, and can be used in microwave ovens and dishwashers.

This flair for business showed itself early on, when Jennifer was one of a group of local crafts people to found their own retail outlet, The Artisan's Hand, now located on State Street in downtown Montpelier. "The cooperative has been a wonderful place for the local crafts community, not just from a sales standpoint, but as a point of contact where people have a sense of joining in a creative process together. Being a crafts person can be a pretty isolated existence. It's a good lifestyle for someone like me because I can work at home, and that fits well around family life." But The Artisan's Hand also puts her in almost daily contact with people that share a love for crafts and can support each other in a number of ways, whether it be business or creative.

Jennifer's work can be found at Frog Hollow in Middlebury and at the Champlain Mill Craft Center in Winooski. You can also stop by her studio on Powder Horn Glen Road where visitors are always welcome (you might want to call first - 223-8926). Look for the sign about a mile north of Morse Farm on County Road. For the budget-minded, there's a "Seconds and Bargains" section at the studio, as well as a selection of Jennifer's latest creations. If you don't find what you're looking for, ask her about custom-designing something just for you. (The most unusual request has been a funeral urn.) "More than once I've had people dash in for a wedding present on the way to the ceremony," she laughs.

*Jay Goyette*

## COMMITTEE MEETING CALENDAR

Selectmen	2nd & 4th Wednesday	7:00	Town Office
Planning Commission	1st, 3rd, 4th Thursday	7:30	"
Zoning Board of Adjustment	2nd & 4th Monday	7:30	"
Conservation Fund Advisory Comm.	3rd Tuesday	7:00	"
Volunteer Fire Department	Every Tuesday	7:00	Fire Station, Templeton Rd.
U-32 School Board	2nd & 4th Tuesday	7:30	U-32
Elementary School Board	1st Thursday	7:30	Elementary School
Town Clerk's Office Hours	Monday-Thursday: 9-5, Friday: 9-12		Town Office
Zoning Administrator	Tuesday & Thursday	1:00-2:30,	Town Office

Meeting times are subject to change

## EVENTS CALENDAR

Monday, January 13: 7:00 p.m.	Jean Cate's slides of Thailand	Four Corners School
Thursday, January 23	Last day to petition Warning Articles	Town Office
Monday, January 27	Last day to file petitions for elected town offices	Town Office
Sunday, February 2	Look For Your Local Woodchuck	
Saturday, February 22	Deadline for mailing Town Reports	
Thursday, February 27, 7:30	Town Forum	Elementary School
Tuesday, March 3	Town Meeting Day	Elementary School



## SIGNPOST STAFF

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<i>Fred Tubbs, Copy Editor, 454-8462</i>		<i>Sylvia Tosi, Town Records, 223-3240</i>
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Printed on Recycled Paper with Soybased Ink

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Volume 2, No. 3

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