

Newsletter – Summer 2019



**West Fairlee Center
Congregational Church**
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West Fairlee Center Congregational Church on the corner of Bear Notch and Middlebrook Road offers a simple space for worship, ceremony, contemplation, meditation and private prayer.

ANNUAL CHURCH MEETING

The Annual Meeting of the voting members (Regular and Associate) has been held every year since it was established in 1809. This year's meeting will be held on **July 14, 2019 at 2:30** in the Church Sanctuary.

SUMMER EVENTS - 2019

Blessing of the Animals will be held on July 14 at 4:00 PM. Bring your pet, farm animal, photograph of your pet or a stuff animal to be blessed by Reverend Brigid Farrell. Started 2002, this tradition has been continued each summer. Serenata will supply the music.

Ice Cream Social at 3:30 - Before the Blessing of the Animals, the West Fairlee Community Club will host an Old Fashion Ice Cream Social in the Clubhouse. It is a wonderful opportunity to get together to socialize and taste ice cream sundaes with some delicious homemade sauces.

Serenata Concert on August 11 at 4:00 PM

Serenata is a trio of singers who also play soprano, alto, and tenor recorders, harp, and piano for a variety of music.

There will be some additional special events scheduled for this year and if you would like to be notified by email, send your address to church.wfc@gmail.com

Since 2016, the community has lost four great women, Mary Jane Smith, Barbara Slack, Ginnie Southworth and Doris Honig. They were all committed to helping their neighbors, taking care of the Church and Clubhouse, and dedicated to preserving the inherent natural beauty of the landscape. Mary Jane may well have held the longevity record for membership in both the Church and Club. They were our living connection between the past and present. This newsletter is dedicated to them.

Mary Jane Smith - 4/17/1921-3/18/2019

Mary Jane touched so many lives and her passing brought tears but also a sense of pride for having known her. She lived by example the 4-H motto of Heads-Heart-Hands-Health. She was never afraid of work and perhaps the best example was the cemetery project.

By the 1970s, many of the cemeteries in West Fairlee had long been neglected and in very bad shape. There were few or no records of the people who had been buried there. When Mary Jane volunteered to serve on the cemetery commission, she changed all that. She purchased, out of her own pocket, any material that would get her started. She then proceeded to draw out maps from that information and personal visits to the cemeteries. This work took her 11 years to map all of the cemeteries.

To get an understanding of the scope of the project, there are eight cemeteries in West Fairlee dating back to 1790. The Town's website lists all the individual plots. She also included history of the cemeteries and families involved in their inception. All of the cemetery plot maps were drawn by her, with much research into the family histories to gather missing information.

There are many stories about Mary Jane's generosity when a family needed help to bury a loved one. She always made sure that every Veteran was recognized with a flag holder and flag. She also spent many years working a table at the West Fairlee Day to raise money for the cemeteries.

Mary Jane served on the commission until 2010. She was always meticulous about all the records. If it were not for all her hours of dedication, West Fairlee cemetery records and properties would be in a sad state of affairs.

Barbara Slack - 3/29/1918-11/14/2018

Barbara lived to be 100 and was the holder of the West Fairlee cane for many years, symbolizing the town's oldest resident. She and her husband, Alfred, bought their Middlebrook home in 1969 and moved there on his retirement in 1973. For decades Barbara volunteered at the local election polls, church and community suppers and was a supporter of Camp Billings that extended over 60 years.

Barbara was a keen observer of nature and had extensive knowledge of all things outdoors. No tree, shrub or flower went unnamed, no bird unrecognized by sight or sound, no mammal unfamiliar. She recorded every year when the ice melted on Lake Fairlee.

Doris Honig – 4/27/1920-4/22/2016

Doris was active in West Fairlee town affairs. She served as an election worker at the polls and as Justice of the Peace. She was an active member in the West Fairlee Center Community Club and helped establish the recycling program in West Fairlee and neighboring towns. Doris was a member of the Society of Friends in Hanover, NH, and the West Fairlee Center Church.

Doris was the Church Moderator for many years and President of the West Fairlee Center Community Club. During that time, an application was submitted to the National Historic Society to be a National Historic Site and was approved in 2002. Over the years, Doris would reach many people through her eloquent writing. One memorable note was when she talked of the people of the previous generation who had worked to restore the buildings that were much-loved shelters, filled with memories and associations of all sorts. The list started with Margaret Eaton, moving spirit, and Mo and Rick; Dorothy Cook, Leonard Russ, Dwight and Vena Beebe, Henry and Marjorie Graves, Bob Adams, Buster Bates, and so many more. She went on to write "let's hope we may be able to pass on some sense of these roots to the coming generations."

Virginia (Ginnie) Southworth - 1/28/1922-1/2/2016

Ginnie was born in East Thetford and graduated from Thetford Academy in 1942. She married Ken in 1951 and together became farmers and stewards of some of the most beautiful farmland along the lower

Middle Brook. It was inspiring to see their devotion to each other as they worked side by side the long hours that farmers must put in. Throughout the summer, it was an anticipation of each vegetable season topping it off with the very best sweet corn. Ginnie would always greet folks with a big wave, a wonderful smile, and the welcoming words of "what can I get for you today?"

In her later years, Ginnie became a Justice of the Peace which she took great pride in and officiated in several weddings.

If anyone would like to post a tribute, photos, share a personal story or some thoughts on these women or other men and women who have lived in valleys on the People website page (www.wfcenterchurch.org), send an email to church.wfc@gmail.com.

Mary Jane was well known for her artistic abilities and would make covered doorstops out of bricks which she would sell and donate the money to the Church. She also made hats for people. The following poem was composed by Cleo Kearns for Mary Jane some time ago.

Mary Jane Makes Knitted Hats by Cleo Kearns
For Mary Jane Smith

Mary Jane makes knitted hats,
A lot of them – she keeps the stats!
She gives them out to all and sundry,
The rich, the poor, and people hungry
For more than just a hat to wear,
For love and comfort and human care.

And be apprized: these hats are *clever!*
There's "his 'n hers" (for love forever),
And some have flowers beside the ear,
That lend a little note of cheer,
So you wear a blossom upon your head
In colors of yellow and pink and red.

Others strike a more serious note,
Your go-to hat for a town meeting vote;
A trip to the store for something you need,
like a brand new truck or a pack of seed,
Or a long-planned date with a cross-cut saw
When there's no guarantee of a nice little thaw.

Yes, Mary Jane's hats are crafty and fun.
If you're in luck, she may give you one!
And if you wear it for work or for play,
You might turn out *like* Mary Jane some day:
Full of love and humor and joy in giving,
And very well versed in the art of living.