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Autumn leaves line brookside in Middlebury.

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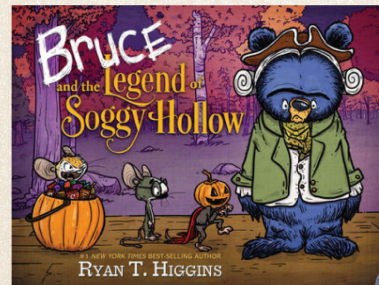
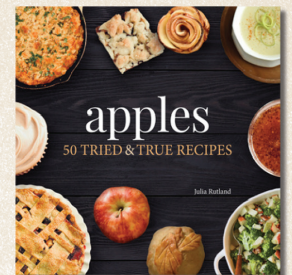
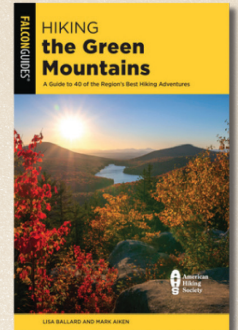
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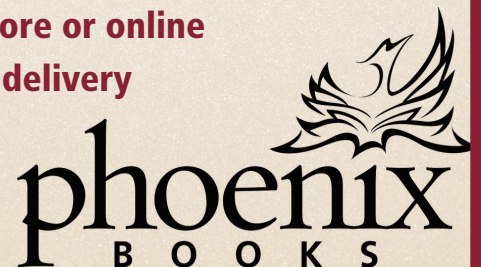
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CORN MAZES

are an autumn adventure

By Janelle Faignant

Atention! You are about to enter the 2nd half of the Big Maze” reads the sign at the Hathaway Farm & Corn Maze in Rutland Town. “Please be advised there are no early exits. Generally speaking, people find this half more challenging, it’s a good idea to have provisions with you ... especially water. How long does the 2nd half take you to complete, you ask? Could be a half hour. Could be 3 days!”

Oh, dear. It’s my first time in a corn

maze, on a beautiful September day with a sky of full sun, and I have an apple crisp latte in hand, ready to tackle the maze which I'm told usually takes about two hours to get through.

The first half was a breeze, wandering through narrow, funhouse-like hallways of green stalks, answering the trivia questions mounted along the way to help you through. You can choose from answers A, B or C, and the paths are marked A, B or C. The right answer moves you forward in the maze, the wrong answers dead end.

But now we are at the second half, where there are no more trivia questions, the dead ends are more frequent, the hills are hillier, and it's pretty steamy in the corn maze. Thankfully, there's a big sit down area with Adirondack chairs where you can stop and take a rest and get your bearings. I'm told there's a snack bar somewhere in the maze but we haven't made it that far yet.

If you've never been to one, it's a fun way to spend a fall day. Corn mazes became popular in the early 1990s and two different people are credited for creating them. The first is Earl Beal, for the first full-size corn maze in Annville, Pennsylvania, in 1993, inspired by his father's work designing mazes for Knoebels Amusement Park. The second, Don Frantz and Adrian Fisher, who are said to have built the first corn maze that same year in the United States.

It's also said that they originally started in the United Kingdom, where they're known as maize mazes. But in the U.S. they have become popular attractions and a great way for farms to generate tourist income. As they've evolved over the years they've gotten more creative — some tell stories, many have a theme, and you're not really in danger of getting too lost with a QR code and GPS to guide you through on your phone if you need it.

Heather Ruelke, 53, of Center Rutland, has been visiting corn mazes every year for the last 15 years with her husband around their anniversary in October.

"The first one I went to was the Danville one," she said. This was over a decade ago, and getting through the mazes was different then.

"The one at Hathaway's, when we first went through, didn't have (QR) codes," Ruelke said. "They



PHOTO BY JANELLE FAIGNANT

Hathaway corn maze visitor's map.



PROVIDED PHOTO

An aerial view of Gaines Farm corn maze in Guilford, VT.

have those now but they didn't have them back then. But I usually buy a postcard so I'm actually looking at the maze as I'm going through it."

This year Hathaway's theme is its 20th Anniversary and the maze was cut to spell out "Celebrating 20 years of Amazing Maze." They also have a barn with farm animals you can visit, including a very friendly goat, a shy sheep, and a mama and baby cow. A tractor pull runs every hour or so and there are usually families just outside the start of the maze having snacks under a tent.

It started as a small 3-acre maze at the farm at 741 Prospect Hill Road in Rutland Town, with the giant 1881 emblazoned in the roof of the barn. Today the 12-acre maze has several bridges and a snack shack inside and draws thousands of visitors every year, marked with a wide smattering of push pins on a map in the barn.

"Nobody's told me under two hours," Irene Hathaway said about how long it can take to get through the entire maze. "It can be three. It depends."

"I usually run out of steam at the



two-hour point,” Ruelke said. “It’s built on a hill so you have to know that going in, this is going to be a hike.”

Find more info at hathawayfarm.com.

Sam Mazza’s three-mile corn maze in Colchester at 277 Lavigne Road opened Sept. 8 and runs through Halloween. It has a new path design every year, cut by MazePlay, a design and GPS consultant firm from Idaho. An employee at Mazza’s said this year’s theme is dinosaurs.

Find more info at sammazzafarms.com.

The Great Vermont Corn Maze in Danville is actually the largest maze in New England. Located on a fifth-generation family farm at 1404 Wheelock Road in Danville, the maze covers 24 acres of “corn-fusion” with bridges, and an underground tunnel in a two-to-three hour hike lined with 10-foot walls of corn.

An emergency exit trail covers most of the maze, which gives visitors a chance to take a break, grab a snack or use the restrooms without having to start over from the beginning. There are also a lot of other family-friendly activities to do, including Barnyard Golf, the Scenic Maze — a 45-minute walk through the cornfield, using directions and special trails, and the

Hidenseek Maze, a new indoor addition.

Find more info at vermontcornmaze.com.

Percy Farm Corn Maze in Stowe has been open since the last week in July. “We try to stay open to the second or third week of October,” Lee Percy said.

There’s no theme to the maze, but Percy said, “My husband is an old Vermonter who gets on (the tractor) and just does his thing. He cuts it differently every year, he never cuts it the same way, he just makes it up as he goes.”

They also have goats and baby calves that visitors can feed, and they allow dogs on a leash. The website answers frequently asked questions such as what to wear — “Dress appropriately for the weather and wear good, comfortable walking shoes” — and insect repellent is always recommended.

Find more info at percyfarm.com.

Kingdom Corn Maze & Pumpkin Patch at Simpson Farm, located at 1350 Burke Road in Sutton in the Northeast Kingdom, also has sunflower picking, food trucks, face painting and pumpkin picking. The farm covers more than 20 acres with three different corn mazes,

including a mountain biking corn maze.

Find more info at kingdomcornmaze.com.

An online review of Gaines Farm at 6343 Calvin Coolidge Memorial Highway in Guilford said, “So much to do and much more affordable and fun than other local corn mazes. The food was surprisingly delicious and quick to order.”

In general, prices range from \$8 to \$20 and they all recommend bringing water and sturdy, comfortable shoes that you don’t mind getting a little dirty. Ruelke, who has visited mazes all over New England, said, “We’ve (also) gone at night, which is really fun. (They have) light up glow sticks.”

“(They’re) really nice because it’s outside, and if you just want to go for a quiet hike you can also do that,” she added. “If there’s not a lot of people there it’s quite pleasant because the breeze going through the corn rattles it and there’s birds in there and you can see different plants and flowers. It’s one of my favorite things to do. I would do them all year but we only get them in the fall so it’s a fun fall thing.”

A TASTE *of* VERMONT

Sugar & Spice shares state traditions



PHOTO BY SOPHIA BUCKLEY-CLEMENT
Sugar & Spice staff gather for a photo after a busy Saturday.

By Sophia Buckley-Clement

On a recent Saturday after the crowds had cleared, Maple Sugar & Vermont Spice staff tended to the last few tables while owners Walt and Lynn Manney chatted up a few lingering regulars.

Waitress Kelly Clifford bussed a table while she shared how she first came to work at the establishment and that she just surpassed 7 years of employment two days earlier.

She acknowledged how the friendly atmosphere and busyness of the job has kept her around, but more than that, how the business has become more than just a workplace.

“This place is my sanctuary. It’s my happy place,” Clifford said.

More commonly known as simply Sugar & Spice, the business is a combination restaurant, giftshop and sugar house and a home-away-from-home for locals and out-of-staters alike.

Owned by husband-and-wife Lynn and Walt Manney, the business is housed in a authentic sugar house nestled in a little patch of trees just off Route 4 in Mendon.

Once owned by Brigadier General Edward H. Ripley, commander of the first brigade of Rutland’s Light Guards during the Civil War, the property has a long history of traditional maple sugaring.

For many years, Ripley and his descendants made maple syrup in the old

sugar house that sits on the land to this day.

Sugar & Spice was an addition built close to 44 years ago by Phillip and Elizabeth Moore, who, according to Lynn, had built the business around their own passion for sugaring.

The Manneys purchased the property from the Moores close to 18 years ago and have largely kept the business the same as when it first opened its doors.

“(We wanted to) pretty much just leave it the way it was. It was a well-known institution functioning well as a business. You don’t want to come in and make a lot of changes to something like this. You want to keep it going,” Lynn said.

Also the owners of Jones’ Donuts and



PHOTO BY SOPHIA BUCKLEY-CLEMENT

During sugaring season in the springtime, Sugar & Spice boils sap in-house using its evaporator located on the ground floor of the building.

Bakery in Rutland City, the Manneys said it took close to a year for them to officially decide to purchase the business, but added that all these years later, they are still having fun.

“I always wanted to be in the food business. I always liked what this place did. And it sits in the area I hunted in when I was a kid,” Walt said. “We’re pretty fortunate to have what we have.”

A Vermont tradition

Though the original sugarhouse has been swapped for an in-house evaporator, many of the older traditions of maple sugaring are still alive and well at Sugar & Spice. According to Lynn, they still tap on-site, hang buckets and boil with a wood flame.

“We get people from all over that come here to experience some Vermont traditions,” Lynn said. “Making maple



PHOTO BY SOPHIA BUCKLEY-CLEMENT

Owners Walt and Lynn Manney smile behind the front counter of Sugar & Spice.

syrup the way we do here, that's more of a tradition than a modern (operation). ... It's nice to be able to show people how things were done — how they're still done.”

In addition to the age-old production of classic syrup during sugaring season each spring, the Manneys also use their operation to make homemade maple candies and maple ice cream. Visitors can watch the candy-making process when it takes place once or twice a week.

Aligned with their passion for offering a traditional Vermont experience is their goal of serving quality food, which finds a welcome home on the restaurant's Vermont-centric menu.

A glance over the menu showcases a classic assortment of breakfast foods and sandwiches, but their homestyle cooking makes the restaurant a standout, according to staff.

Walt noted that his favorite menu item, which is also one of the most popular meals, are the iconic Sugar & Spice pancakes that are baked with a special blend of cinnamon and maple sugar.

Kristi Newton, a Sugar & Spice waitress of 19 years, said though there are clearly a few favorites, Sugar & Spice has a way of providing a special experience with much of its menu.

“With our sausage gravy we make here, a lot of people (say), ‘Oh, this is the best gravy ever’ — even the people from down south,” Newton said. “Everybody oohs and ahs for our hot chocolate because it’s a cup (full) of whipped cream. So, we have a few things that are a little bit different from the average restaurant you go to.”

A place where memories are made

Now entering the fall season, Sugar & Spice and its staff are preparing for the weekend of Indigenous Peoples' Day, which the Manneys said is the busiest time of year.

But according to Walt, traffic is fairly steady all year, in part thanks to the brand Sugar & Spice has built.

Though already well-established prior to their purchase of the property, the Manneys said traffic has only increased over the years with both local and out-of-state customers making a point to visit frequently.

“It's just kind of neat to see (how) this place has kind of been advertised all over the map without us advertising it,” Walt said.

Above all, both Walt and Lynn said one of the best parts of running Sugar & Spice is knowing it is a place where people make memories.

From watching people who grew up in the area share a piece of their childhood with their own families, to seeing new families make new traditions at Sugar & Spice, to catching up with the loyal regulars, Lynn, Walt and staff said they value being a part of the experience.

“It always makes you feel good knowing people these people that left the area think to come here. It's a nice feeling,” Walt said. “Just like Lynn said, this place is kind of memorabilia. It's a unique situation. It's not just a restaurant, it's got other things tied to it. That's what makes this place the way it is.”

Sugar & Spice is open daily from 7 a.m. to 2 p.m., excluding Christmas.



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Finding presidential history at the

COOLIDGE HOMESTEAD



PROVIDED PHOTOS

At right, the building where President Calvin Coolidge was born. Left, white building, is the back of the general store.



Guide Carl Malikowski in the Coolidge Homestead.

By Peter Cobb

Two days rise to the top each year at the Coolidge Homestead in Plymouth: Aug. 3, when then-vice president (John) Calvin Coolidge took the presidential oath of office in the parlor of the family home from his father, John Calvin Coolidge Sr., and July 4, Calvin Coolidge's birthday.

Coolidge is the only president so far born on Independence Day.

The Coolidge Homestead, however, is more than just two days of celebrations, it's a walk into the past, almost as if visitors use a time machine to get there.

The Coolidge site is about the outside environment as much as it is about the preserved interiors of the historic buildings. "Plymouth Notch is a picture-perfect location. Our guests enjoy photography through the changing seasons or else many come for plein air painting (open air). Families enjoy playing with our croquet set, taking a picnic, and petting the sheep. Wildlife such



The school room.

as turkeys abound, too. Thanks to the changing seasons, it's a wonderful fresh-air space to explore, especially for younger guests," said Rejoice Scherry, historic sites regional administrator for the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation.

"For the 2023 season, we introduced a working 1913 Victrola phonograph. This machine is a wonderful way to talk about a number of topics in American history of the 1920s," Scherry said.

"We explore the history of recorded sound and radio, and the songs that we play feature popular culture topics such as flappers, slang or the effects of World War I. We additionally discuss economics of the period because phonographs were among the luxury items purchased on credit and contributed to financial woes at the end of the decade. Our adventurous guests enjoy dancing to the tunes in the hall above the Cilley Store," Scherry said.

The homestead also this season added silent movies on Friday nights in the Wilder Barn.

"The guests enjoy watching a Buster Keaton western while surrounded by original wagons and agricultural implements that resembled what they are seeing on the screen. Feedback from the event was very positive, so I plan to continue Friday night movies next year, too. I think this is a tradition in the making," Scherry said.

This summer marked the 100th anniversary of Coolidge's taking the oath of office following the death of President Warren G. Harding.

"We don't normally do events at night, so it was a pleasure to see the village lit up for our reenactment at 2:47 a.m. on Aug. 3, the exact centennial of Coolidge's oath of office. We had café style lights lining the street and turned on the interior lights of the historic buildings. It was a homey atmosphere, and 150 people came despite it being a very chilly early morning hour," Scherry said.

Members of the Coolidge family and former Vermont governor Jim Douglas, of Middlebury, portrayed key characters to act out what took place that fateful night in 1923. The next morning, the homestead staff portrayed Plymouth residents reacting to the news and demonstrated what life in the village may have looked like at that time.

The annual Fall Festival, scheduled



The Wilder Barn.



The wagons inside the Wilder Barn.



President Calvin Coolidge Homestead.

The State Historic Site sign. The Plymouth Cheese Factory in the background is not part of the homestead but part of the draw to the site.



President Calvin Coolidge Homestead.



Inside the President Calvin Coolidge Homestead.

for Oct. 7, will include hayrides, apple tastings, cider pressing and craft demonstrations.

“With luck, the maples growing across the 360-degree hills surrounding Plymouth Notch will be at their brightest. It’s our way of celebrating the local land and people before the snows of winter arrive,” Scherry said.

“Visitors enjoy exploring rural Vermont life and learning about Coolidge’s boyhood, but I want them to also learn about what life looked like for average

Americans in a really pivotal period between the world wars,” Scherry said.

Hours of operation are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily. Admission is \$12 for adults and \$4 for children; \$30 for families. The homestead closes for the season Sunday, Oct. 22, but does reopen briefly on Saturday Dec. 2 from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. for a free Holiday Open House event.

“We will show off festive holiday greenery, have a tree lighting ceremony, invite local artists to show off their creations and demonstrate crafts, and

host a carol sing in the village church,” Scherry said

“Coolidge once said, ‘Not to know and appreciate the many excellent qualities of our own country constitutes an intellectual poverty.’ At the Calvin Coolidge State Historic Site, we tell the story of the only instance in American history when a father had the authority to elevate his son into the presidency,” Scherry said.

For more: historicsites.vermont.gov/calvin-coolidge.

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MAKING WINE, VERMONT-STYLE

By Peter Cobb

Operating a vineyard and winery in Vermont isn't for the faint of heart. Just ask Douglas Becker, the owner of Montpelier Vineyards, or John McCann, owner of North Branch Vineyards, also in Montpelier.

This season has been especially challenging with a late spring frost, too much rain, too little sun and very hungry animals.

McCann, who owns the Montpelier winery, a 5-acre vineyard on Portal Road in Middlesex, and a small vineyard in St. Johnsbury, with his wife Katherine, a teacher at U-32 Junior Senior High School, said the mid-May frost damaged 80% of his Middlesex crop and hungry deer damaged an additional 15%.

He said he had hoped to produce several thousand bottles of wine this fall from his Middlesex vineyard but probably will produce just 400 bottles, forcing him to buy grapes from other Vermont vineyards. This season would have been his first year producing wine from his Portal Road vineyard.

"If the deer find a food source they like, they are very determined to get it," McCann said. One night he counted 35



PHOTOS BY PETER COBB

Top, Douglas Becker, the owner of Montpelier Vineyards. Bottom, grape vines at Montpelier Vineyards.



Douglas Becker displays stock from Montpelier Vineyards.

deer munching his grape leaves. Earlier this summer, he spent \$20,000 on an 8-foot fence around the perimeter of the vineyard, which so far has worked.

Becker's small vineyard along Route 12 also was clobbered by the killer frost. The hungry culprits at his vineyard are raccoons who crawl under his electric fence and tear through the nylon mesh that protects his vines. This fall, he plans to expand the electric fence so that it runs nearly flush to the ground and is too high for the raccoons to hop over.

"Once they get into the vineyard, they

have a regular party," Becker said.

The wet ground also hasn't helped, Becker said. In addition, he lost business this summer when Yankee Spirits in Montpelier, one of the main sellers of his wines, closed due to the July flooding.

Challenging times are not new to Vermont vineyards and wineries.

In 2021, Fresh Tracks Farm Vineyard & Winery in Montpelier closed, Boyden Valley Winery & Spirits in Cambridge ceased production of its wines and ciders and shifted to liqueurs and mulled, spiced wine, and Lincoln Peak Vineyard in New

Haven sold to Shelburne Vineyard.

Despite all the problems, both Becker and McCann are convinced Central Vermont is a good place to craft quality wines.

"When you taste my Petite Pearl, a wonderful red wine, you'll know why it's worth it," Becker said.

Becker, who retired from a career at New England Culinary Institute in Montpelier and the Green Mountain Technology and Career Center in Hyde Park, runs his micro winery with his wife Susan, a nurse educator at Central



PHOTOS BY PETER COBB
North Branch Vineyards, in Montpelier.



PHOTOS BY PETER COBB

John McCann, owner of North Branch Vineyards.

Vermont Medical Center, and their son Andrew, who is expanding the operation in the town of Washington. Andrew is in charge of producing mead, an alcoholic beverage made by fermenting honey mixed with water, and fruits, spices, grains or hops.

Not every year is like this season, Becker said. “2021 was a perfect year to grow grapes in Vermont. A warm, dry spring and a hot summer led to a record yield,” he said.

The Becker family started making organic wine in 1992 on their small backyard vineyard in Port Huron, Michigan.

“The first grapes from those vines were crushed by the feet of my infant son Christopher. We moved to Vermont in 1997 and started establishing an organic vineyard. Our goal is to produce small-batch, organically farmed wines by hand. We believe that good wine begins in the vineyard, and that with healthy soil and vigorous vines we can create spirited wines,” Becker said.

McCann said he is hopeful for the future. Next year he plans to build a center for weddings and other events and a tasting room at the Portal Road vineyard.

Prior to running his Vermont winery, McCann, a native Vermonter originally from Brandon, was working as an aerospace engineer in Northern California. Land prices in California wine country — as high as \$1 million an acre — made establishing a vineyard and winery there prohibitively expensive.

North Branch has been family-owned and operated since 2007. Frontenac Gris, Frontenac Blanc, Frontenac Noir and Marquette grapes are the prime focus at the Middlesex vineyard and Saint Croix and Sabervois at the vineyard in St. Johnsbury.

McCann said he started the business with grapes purchased from the Finger Lakes Region of New York. Today, North Branch uses only cold-hardy grapes grown in Vermont, either from its own vineyards or purchased from other growers in the state. The wine is fermented and bottled in the basement of his home on Trillium Hill Road, off Route 12.

For more information about the two wineries, go to www.northbranchvineyards.com and www.montpeliervineyards.com.

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PITTSFORD VILLAGE FARM

PHOTO COURTESY PITTSFORD VILLAGE FARM

A big piece of the town's future

By Tom Haley

Pittsford was a very different place in the 1950s. The town had its own high school and the fans rooted passionately for the Pittsford Panthers.

Like so many communities, the town saw Pittsford High School's doors close, yielding to a union school. The last chapter for those who cheered on the green clad Panthers came with the school year of 1960-61.

Pittsford had not had a wealth of success in athletics so that final year became magical when the Panthers won the state championship in boys basketball in 1961, a midnight hour title that became a wonderful slice of Pittsford's history.

It was a story made for a movie script. Not only did the Panthers deliver their fans at state crown in the final chance for one, but every member of the starting five had lost a parent by the time the season rolled around, either to cancer, a heart attack or an accident.

Royal Barnard, a member of that last senior class, said that the state championship trophy was discovered in a landfill about 18 years ago by classmate Ed Wheeler. It was restored and



sits in the Pittsford Historical Society's building today.

The old high school and the trophy are treasures — memories of Pittsford's past.

Today, Pittsford people root for the Otter Valley Union High School athletic teams. They do it with all of that same passion that was once bestowed on the Panthers.

Only a short stroll from the old Pittsford High, a monument to the town's past, is another building that will likely become the centerpiece of Pittsford's vibrant future.

The Village Farm was purchased by Baird and Betsy Morgan in 2017 for preservation. A committee has designs on fashioning the 18th-century farmhouse into a multifaceted community center.

The farmhouse, barn and recently constructed pavilion have already hosted numerous exciting events, but the big splash will come later.

"We expect to break ground in the spring of 2024," the project's Outreach Coordinator Samantha Stone said.

The \$2.8 million plan will include a Community Room for meetings, a child care center for about 28 infants and toddlers, two apartments and a commercial café in the 6,000-square-foot building.

The Community Room will be a small gathering space where groups such as book clubs can meet. It will include a kitchen.

The Pittsford Village Farm's 22 acres link to 350 acres of a trail network.

"During the fall, that is our biggest asset," Stone said of the trails.

The trails are one of the birding hot spots in Vermont.

Stone assumed the title of outreach coordinator when it was deemed by the all-volunteer board that all aspects of the PVF needed to be funneled through one person.

Shortly after she took over last year, the pavilion was built.

Near the pavilion is a sandbox filled with toys where children can play.

The Pittsford Village Farm is a terrific concert venue, appreciated by performers

and fans for its bucolic setting.

Proctor-native Caitlin Canty, a singer/songwriter, who recently moved back to Vermont from Nashville, savors the memory of performing at Pittsford Village Farm.

"We could not have had a more perfect night playing with the (Vermont Symphony Orchestra) strings at Pittsford Village Farm," Canty said.

She added, "The sunset was sublime and gave us a new background for each song. ... It was so special to play my songs on the knoll overlooking the mountains. ... We spend a lot of afternoons there at the sandbox with our little one (Arthur.)"

The summer concert series are on





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Tuesdays and is billed as "Tuesdays."

Another event this past summer was the Artifact Road Show where people could bring treasures found in attics, garages or elsewhere to have them appraised by Elly and Matt Moriarty, archaeologists at Vermont State University Castleton.

There has also been space allotted for Community Gardens, and a number of people took advantage of those plots managed by Cindy White over the summer.

They also served as a place for workshops, one of which was on transplanting perennials.

Otter Valley Union High School students refurbished the pathways between the gardens during the school's Volunteer Day.

One nice feature of Pittsford Village Farm is that there is plenty of parking on the grounds for large events like the concerts. This means that the event will not infringe on space elsewhere in the village.

"We never want to be a nuisance or burden to the town," Stone said.

The PVF has also partnered with other organizations, a major one being Rutland's Paramount Theatre. Concerts can be moved to that facility in the event of rain.

It has been an active summer at Pittsford Village Farm, but the change in seasons does not mean the farm becomes dormant.

Far from it. Fall and winter activities will be held on the grounds as the anxiously awaited groundbreaking in the spring awaits.

Sometime after Thanksgiving, there will be a lighting of a Christmas tree constructed from sap buckets.

There is a similar event in Maine that features the lighting of a tree made out of lobster traps. Vermont's perfect answer: Maple sap buckets.

"We did it in the snow last year," Stone said.

Later in the winter, the Village Farm will combine efforts with the Pittsford Recreation Department for the Winter Carnival.

No need to wait for the tree lighting to experience the euphoria one can get at Pittsford Village Farm by walking the trails as they explode into nature's red, yellow, gold and orange masterpiece.

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APPLE PIE

is baked into Vermont's identity

By Janelle Fagnant

There's a scene in the movie "When Harry Met Sally" when Sally orders apple pie at a diner. "I'd like the pie heated," she says, "and I don't want the ice cream on top, I want it on the side, and I'd like strawberry instead of vanilla if you have it. If not, then no ice cream, just whipped cream but only if it's real if it's out of a can, then nothing." The waitress: "Not even the pie?" Sally: "No, just the pie, but then not heated."

It's arguably the moment when, wide-eyed and incredulous, Harry falls in love with her. And it turns out lots of people can be pretty picky when it comes to their apple pie.

Sally was definitely not in Wisconsin, where it is actually illegal to serve apple pie in public restaurants without a slice of cheese on top. And here in Vermont, the tradition of apple pie and manner of serving it is taken pretty seriously, too.

An apple pie à la mode with whipped cream or ice cream is usually a crowd pleaser, but Vermont law requires "a good faith effort to serve the state pie with a glass of milk, a scoop of ice cream, or a slice of cheddar weighing at least 1/2 oz."

In 1999, House Bill 302 proposed that apple pie be declared the official pie of Vermont and the apple the official fruit, according to The Vermont Legislative Bill Tracking System. The bill was approved and signed into law by the governor.

There is also official Vermont legislation on the best way to serve it, taking a page from Sally's book — "the



milk should be cold, the cheese must weigh at least half an ounce, the scoop of ice cream should be large."

Apple pie has been a staple in America and part of family traditions for centuries, but just like English muffins aren't really English, apple pie isn't really American, although it became the ultimate symbol of American prosperity and wholesomeness.

According to numerous sources, apple pie originated in England as early as 1390. In fact, it's said that apple trees weren't even native to North America until the Europeans arrived.

"It's funny, we think of it as such an American thing and it's really not," said food blogger and photographer Steve Peters. "But I think, like we do here, we made it our own. And I think that's OK."

Thanks to advertising, news and war, a narrative began that claimed apple

pie as a national symbol. In 1902, a New York Times editorial argued that the pie had become "the American synonym for prosperity," and the iconic phrase "as American as apple pie" was born.

Another quirky detail: Vermont farmers produce roughly 1 million bushels of apples, according to the Vermont Tree Fruit Growers Association, but it's actually China who produces the world's largest number of apples, a country not associated at all with the fruit or the pie.

Peters, 36, of Rutland, is the voice behind 'What Steve Eats,' where you can find creative recipes like chamomile cookies and a ginger rhubarb gin cocktail. In the cheddar vs. ice cream/whipped cream debate, he falls firmly on the ice cream side.

"Definitely an ice cream guy," he said. Originally from Connecticut, he added, "(I think) cheese and apple



pie is more of a Vermont thing.”

An employee at Apple Barn Country Bake Shop in Bennington, which was named one of the 20 Best Bakeries in Vermont by New England Cities, said that apple pies are a popular seller year round there, but there’s an influx of orders during this time of year. “We sell apple pies all the time but towards fall it’s always apple, pumpkin, pecan. In spring and summer it’s strawberry, rhubarb, blueberry, peach,” she said.

“I would say (we sell) probably triple the amount,” said baker Silas Albright. “Typically during the slow season I’ll have four to six apple pies in the window, but during the winter I’ve got to have an oven full pretty much all the time.”

How many fit in the oven, you ask?

“Sixteen at a time per oven, and I have three ovens,” Albright said. “Last Thanksgiving I did just over 700 pies in two days.”

Beth Charles at Mendon Mountain Orchard (1894 Route 4, Mendon) said they, too, sell apple pies year round but fall and Thanksgiving are huge.

“On a busy week, we could probably bake 20 apple pies in a day,” she said. “Last Thanksgiving we sold 234 just apple pies. This morning I’ve already sold four — just this morning, on a quiet day,” she laughed. “They are definitely popular year round, it’s our number one selling pie out of all the pies that we make.”

Whether you’re having it with cheese or ice cream, on the side or not heated, there’s a recipe for that. Some call for baking cheese into the crust, and some add it right to the apple mixture. Many traditional recipes use no cheese at all, and in some cases no sugar. Whatever your preference, there are lots of ways to enjoy the season’s most popular produce.

“(Every year) I’m used to going to (an) orchard, getting apples and finding something to bake with them,” Peters said. “Applesauce is also really easy to make and really good, too. I don’t think that’s something people make a lot at home but it’s really simple and much better than store bought. Apple butter, too. Not to get away from pie, but there’s so many different things you can do.”

HILDENE

is a historic trip back in time

Photos courtesy of Hildene.

By Peter Cobb

Hildene, the former summer home of President Abraham Lincoln's son Robert Todd Lincoln and his wife Mary Harlan Lincoln, has a new director of marketing, a new exhibit and is building a new 14,000-square-foot, \$5.7 million events center in Manchester.

Paul Slater, originally from the United Kingdom, is the newly hired director of communications and marketing at Hildene. Slater, who started in June, has an extensive resume in marketing, brand development and creative consulting.

The Robert Todd Lincoln home, the main draw at the site, is furnished with furniture and items personal to the Lincoln family who lived there from 1905 to 1975. The site also includes a fully restored 1903 Pullman railcar, featuring the history of the Pullman porters.

The newest exhibit at Hildene includes items from the life of Peggy Beckwith, President Lincoln's great-granddaughter, the last descendant to live at Hildene year-





round, from 1935 until her death here in 1975.

“She led a productive and eclectic life and is fondly remembered by many in this community. She was, amongst other things, a passionate farmer, and is the spiritual catalyst behind our farming and agricultural practices at Hildene,” Slater said.

When completed, the new building, Lincoln Hall, will replace the three-season tent where weddings and events have been held. Scheduled to open in May 2024, the facility will add food services capability, as well as space for educational and community events.

Fall activities at Hildene include Sunday wagon rides and tours of the farm that features sheep, chickens, cows, alpacas and other animals. In addition to

“The views are spectacular at any time of year, especially during foliage. With the Green Mountains on one side and the Taconic Range on the other.”

the variety of animals, guests learn about Hildene’s regenerative farming practices and other measures to enhance and protect pollinator habitats.

“We have also added to our line of

Hildene farm products more varieties of goat milk soap, all made with soap, flowers, and herbs on property. For example, every year our skeins of yarn vary in natural colors, according to the shades of fiber sheered. Guests especially love the soft alpaca-wool-Angora mix,” Slater said.

Hildene also hosts guided nature walks through mid-October.

Some practical advice when visiting Hildene.

“Plan as much time as you can to tour all our 412 acres to learn about history, native plant gardening, food production and regenerative farming practices. Wear comfortable shoes and bring a picnic lunch to enjoy at one of our several picnicking areas. And bring a camera,” Slater said.





“The views are spectacular at any time of year, especially during foliage. With the Green Mountains on one side and the Taconic Range on the other, we are always blessed with spectacular views of natural beauty at Hildene. Our award-winning cheeses, crafted here using milk from our Nubian goat herd, change occasionally and guests are delighted by the taste and quality,” Slater said.

Hildene, located at 1005 Hildene Road in Manchester, has been listed on the National Register of Historic Places since 1978. The homesite is open Thursdays through Mondays from 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Admission is free for members and children under 6; \$23 for adults; \$6 for youth 6-16.

For more information, visit hildene.org.

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ECHO GETS RIGHT INTO LAKE CHAMPLAIN



Photos courtesy of ECHO.

By Peter Cobb

The ECHO Leahy Center for Lake Champlain in Burlington is set for a very busy fall and winter.

In addition to the standard 100 interactive family experiences, and 70 live species of fish, reptiles and amphibians, special events include an exhibit inspired by Mister Rogers and another inspired by NASA.

ECHO currently welcomes more than 167,000 visitors annually into its 34,500-square foot, award-winning LEED-certified (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) facility.

In the last few years, ECHO has opened two permanent and highly interactive science exhibits, Awesome Forces and Engineer It. In these spaces, visitors tackle daily engineering challenges at the center's tinkering bench and test zones, as well as discovering the processes that have shaped the Lake Champlain Basin and the Earth.

People Make Things: Inspired by the



Mister Rogers' Factory Tours, will run through Jan. 7, 2024. In this exhibit, visitors watch Fred Rogers visit real manufacturing factories in vintage pictures and videos from the original "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood" series. Hands-on activities include: cutting wax using different sculpting tools, and experience three-dimensional cutting by hand; deforming a wire by taking a straight wire into a spring shape by winding it around the metal shaft; molding spoons using real melted wax and assemble a trolley; and testing skills on the testing track.

"Every object in our world has a story of how it is made. How People Make Things tells that story by bringing the manufacturing experience to life and showing you the ways in which familiar childhood objects are made," said Nicole Bova, ECHO's interim director of development.

Animal demos are held twice a day (11 a.m. and 2 p.m.), and 3D science and nature films are featured in the Northfield Savings Bank Theater.

Mission Aerospace is set to open Jan. 20. The exhibit, which will be open into May, will include experiments with thrust, lift and gyroscopes. "Visitors will explore the history of flight, navigation, and NASA in this immersive maze-themed exhibit," Bova said.

Vermont Public Kids Day: Meet Daniel Tiger Saturday will be held Oct.



7, from 10 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. "We'll have fun crafts and activities, a Daniel Tiger read along, a chance to win a Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood prize pack and bring your camera for an opportunity to take photos with Daniel Tiger Read along and photos," Bova said.

Partial Solar Eclipse Viewing with ECHO and the University of Vermont Society of Physics Students is Saturday, Oct. 14. Visitors will safely view the partial solar eclipse, which will take place from 12:12 to 2:26 p.m. Personal eclipse glasses available with admission (pay-what-you-can, suggested donation

of \$3 each). Glasses can be reused for the Total Solar Eclipse taking place in Vermont on April 8, 2024. The exhibit is sponsored by Chroma Optics.

Additionally, guests have the option of booking a back-of-house animal tour and discovering what goes on behind the scenes in the world of animal care at ECHO. "This is an exciting opportunity for visitors to get a personal hands-on animal tour and learn about the work that goes into maintaining the health of the animals and the quality of their habitats. With seven different options to choose from, guests can pick the tour that most suits their interests or do them all," Bova said

ECHO also has opened The Tinkering Turtle, at 210 College St., Burlington's newest toy store and teddy bear design studio. The Tinkering Turtle toy store provides a unique selection of hands-on STEM toys, pretend play games, puzzles, books, plush, and signature brands like Vermont Teddy Bear, Fat Brain, and Melissa & Doug.

"ECHO invites families of all ages to come together for hands-on learning. For guests not familiar with the museum, it generally takes about one to two hours to go through the exhibits. We aim to make the museum accessible to everyone by reducing the financial barrier to entry," Bova said.

For more information: <https://www.echovermont.org>.



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