



BILLINGS
FARM & MUSEUM

BULLETIN

January 19, 2022

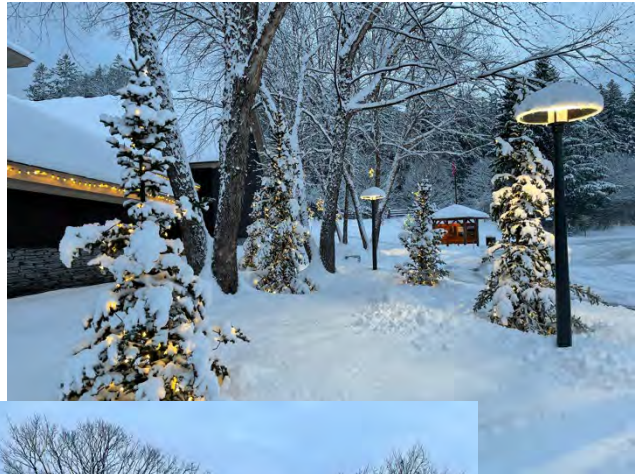
BF&M Mission: Inspiring and engaging generations through shared stories of Vermont's rural culture and our continued practice of responsible agriculture.

A Note from Michelle

We had a wonderful public snowshoe event on Friday, which 100 people attended on a cold winter night. It was a beautiful night, with the moon shining brightly and warm fires to enjoy. A good time was had by all. As a preview, employees enjoyed a stroll around the walking trail on Thursday night (see photos below). We enjoyed the scenic landscape. Thank you to Ben and the facilities team and the many other team members that worked in advance and during the Friday night event.

I hope you all stayed warm and enjoyed the beautiful snow on Monday. I could not help but capture some of the beauty on site and caught Ben on a quick stop in the new tractor, while cleaning up the site. Many thanks to Ben, Per and Grant for making the place look good, working together in their first snowstorm as a team.

Lastly, the employee intranet is another communication tool. You can find previous copies of the newsletter and other helpful forms and information. If you are having trouble logging on contact Jen Flaster at jflaster@billingsfarm.org. Is there something that you think should be included on the intranet or in the newsletter? If so, reach out to me and let me know at masomerville@billingsfarm.org. Have a great week.





Education & Interpretation News from Christine

I'm happy to give an update on the signs that will be installed on our walking trail in the spring. The first 5 look very nice and are almost finished. We received a grant for an additional 5 signs, at least 3 of which will also go on the walking trail. The plan is to get these fabricated and installed by Memorial Day, so our summer visitors can enjoy them. These will be large signs, a bit larger than 2 ft x 3 ft.

REGROWTH AND RENEWAL

Frederick Billings looked out on his home state of Vermont, a landscape he loved and cared for deeply. What he saw upset him. Lush hillsides had been harvested for lumber and over-grazed by sheep. Once-clear rivers had filled with dirt. **This land gave people what they needed: food, fuel to stay warm, materials for building, a way to make a living, but people had taken too much.**

Billings vowed to make a change. From the late 1800s into the early 1900s, workers on his farm and estate planted more than 10,000 trees on old pastures and bare hillsides. With Farm Manager George Aitken, Billings used new methods of scientific farming to restore the soil and pastures.

By the end of his life, he saw a glimpse of the future: young trees grew on the hills, and dairy cows—easier on the land than sheep—grazed on green pastures. After his death, **Billings' daughters Laura, Mary, and Elizabeth carried on his legacy by responsibly using the resources of the land, a legacy that continues to this day.**

Woodstock in 1870 looked much different from today. Over-grazing and over-grazing by sheep led to bare, rocky landscapes devoid of grass and food.

TREES PLEASE!

By the late 1800s, Vermont had lost 80% of its trees. Today, the opposite is true, with trees covering about 80% of the state. While people like the Billings helped by planting trees, most of the forests grew back on their own when sheep farmers left for greener pastures. Most of the forests you see in Vermont today are considered "young growth," 100 years old or less.

Young trees grow on the hillsides behind Billings Farm in 1900. Today, the hillsides is completely covered in forest.

A LIVING LEGACY

Billings' vision of using the land sustainably continues today. On the farm, we use responsible farming practices like growing and feeding hay to our dairy cows and making local products. On the estate, now the Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park, the forests are still sustainably harvested for lumber.

Farmer's harvest hay to feed the farm's dairy herd.

A FAMILY AFFAIR

The Billings daughters planted trees on the property and studied farming, forestry, and botany. Laura Billings helped run the farm for years, Mary hosted talks on gardening, and Elizabeth collected and researched over 1,000 samples of native plants within a 6-mile radius of the estate.

Mary Manning Billings French prepares trees for planting c. 1887.

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Latest draft of walking trail sign

Speaking of signs, last week Gabi completed and hung new chalkboard signs with interpretive education in the Small Animal Barn. They look fantastic and have lots of great information including the different breeds of chickens and the colors of eggs they lay, the names and breeds of each goat, and more!



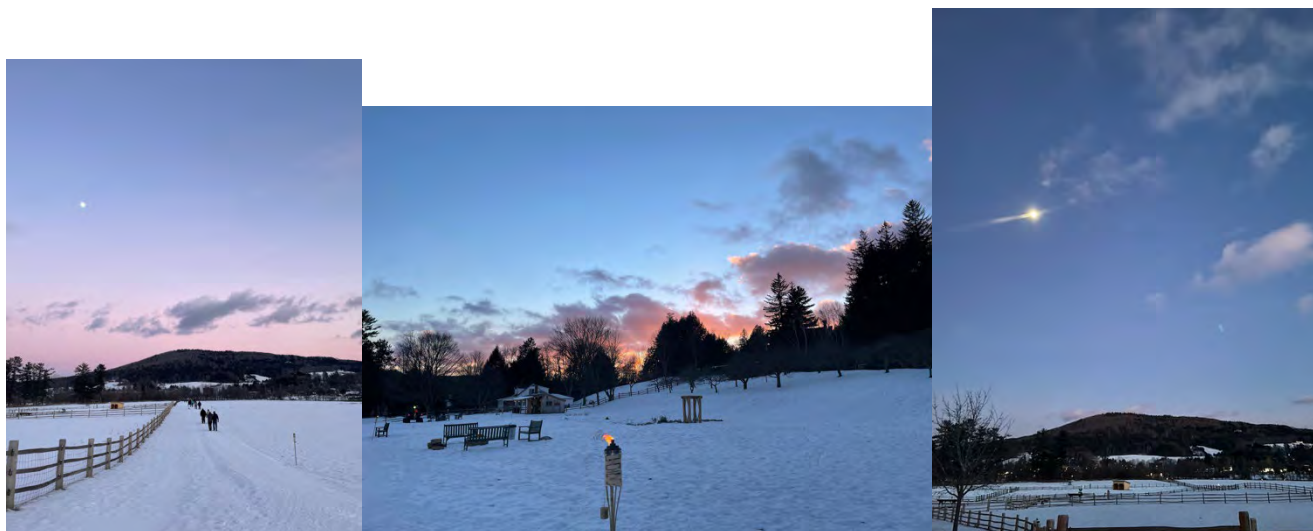
We had a great meeting with Ben Pauly last week about the exciting plans for the garden next year. We will start that project as soon as the ground thaws with the hope of having at least a soft opening early in June. As the theme of this newsletter section seems to be signage, I'll mention that Gabi and I will also be working on permanent signage for the new garden that explains each thematic section.

All of this seems like a good *sign* for the year ahead!

Operations Update from Anna

Thanks to all of the interpreters who have already filled out the survey about your plans for the upcoming season. This survey will help us to know our staffing needs for next year as we add new members to our team. The survey is anonymous unless you choose to sign your name, and the answers are not a commitment, just giving us a sense of things. If you haven't yet filled out the survey, please do so no later than Sunday, January 23rd here: <https://forms.gle/wTEDEhD92F8iKr3n7>. We appreciate your help!

Our first Torchlight Snowshoe event of the year was a great success, despite the very cold temperatures! Thank you to the National Park rangers who bundled up and stationed themselves along the walking trail. Guests loved learning more about the land and the connection between Billings and the National Park. Many guests we spoke with were at Billings for the first time and had come specifically for the event, which was very cool to see. Here are a couple of photos from the evening. The cold temperatures cleared all the clouds from the sky, leaving us with a beautiful sunset and moon rise.



We look forward to our member Torchlight Snowshoe on January 29 and then our second paid, public Torchlight Snowshoe on February 24.

Farm to Table with Emery

I would like to give everyone a fun challenge this week. No, it is not homework, but more a creative thinking game. Here at the farm, we have our wonderful Dairy Bar where guests and staff alike can enjoy delicious ice cream and other snacks and drinks. Being familiar with the property as a staff member, you know what the Dairy Bar is. For a first-time visitor, however, that might not always be clear. So, my question to you is, what would you call the Dairy Bar if you had the chance? I am looking for suggestions that are clear in explaining what the Dairy Bar is, fun, and creative. No answer is a wrong answer. If you have an idea for a name, please email me at egrays@billingsfarm.org. I am looking forward to seeing what you all suggest!

Barn Brief by the Deome Family

Very quiet and cold week here in the barns. So far we were able to get through our first test of extreme cold last weekend without much issue, as well as finally getting dug out from Mondays storm! While its cold outside, our cows are more than comfy inside and happy as can be! Looking like cold temps are here to stay for a while, stay warm everyone!

Archive and Curatorial News from Marianne & Emily

We hope you all managed to stay warm this past weekend! The ice-cutting display went up in the nick of time. With January and February, the coldest months, ice harvesting traditionally happens at this time of year. Ice needs to be five inches thick to support the horses, equipment, and ice harvesters, but the ideal ice thickness is twelve to fourteen inches. The display in Barn 4 has examples of tools used during a harvest, including Pike Poles, Ice Shaver, Auger, Ice Tongs, and a Jack Grapple. Christine, Gabi, and Emily even hauled an ice cake from the *Farm Life Exhibits*; luckily, it doesn't weigh 300 pounds! With the *Window to the Past: The Icehouse* and ice-cutting video from 1940, the display is well-rounded, encompassing all parts of a harvest. Check it out if you are in Barn 4; it will be up through the first weekend of February.



Many guesses came in for the last round of "What is it?" Gabi B., Adele B., Lynn D., Norine H., and Marian K. entered guesses. Lynn, the out-of-the-box thinker, tossed out a guess of a bed warmer or something used for thawing. While not correct, I like the thinking that was applied. Gabi, Adele, Norine, and Marian all guessed correctly. This little lamb is a **Cake Mold**. Marian thought perhaps one used around Easter, which is part of the original marketing plan. The key to filling this type of pan is to fill the front half, in this case, the half with the lamb's face. The back piece is then fitted, and the whole mold is tied together. The mold is baked face down, and as the cake rises, it fills both halves. Norine wondered at the knobs under the lamb's legs and their purpose; they are there to level the mold and, subsequently, the batter while baking. The back piece has venting holes. Don't worry about having to chop the head off as serving time; unless supported well from the inside, the heads tended to break and roll off on their own.



Our next “What is it?” was found while surveying the toy collection. As you can see, she is a doll, but do you know her background story? Hint: She is from the mid-20th Century. Send you guesses to ekoetsier@billingsfarm.org by Monday, January 24. This little lady’s story will be shared in the February 2nd newsletter.



Upcoming film previews:

Tuesday, January 25th at 4:30 [Storm Lake](#)

Tuesday, February 1st at 4:30 [The Ants and the Grasshopper](#)

Staff friends and family are invited, masks are required during previews.

Sharing the Billings Farm Story from PR

ANNUAL REPORT 2021 – BETTER TOGETHER!

As we look back on 2021, we will be featuring an overall report theme of BETTER TOGETHER! We had a record year, in which we celebrated the 150th Anniversary of Billings Farm and raised the bar in so many ways. We served more people, provided new and innovative programming for youth and adults, expanded our markets for cheese, and most importantly collaborated with partners to benefit our guests and our community. It was a collective effort beginning with the hard working BFM staff, supported by our members, volunteers and guests.

In last year's report, we featured a fun section we called 2020 At A Glance. We highlighted different facts and figures, including scoops of ice cream and doughnuts sold. **We are looking for fun ideas to highlight from 2021** in a similar way. Was there something in 2021 that stood out to you? Send an email to Jen with your ideas! jflaster@billingsfarm.org

REGISTRATION OPEN FOR WINTER & SUMMER CAMPS

*Don't forget to take advantage of the staff discount for camps. This discount is an additional \$50 off the member rate listed for each camp. This includes children and grandchildren of Billings employees.



Winter & Summer Camps at Billings Farm

Now Open for Registration

WOODSTOCK, VERMONT... Step into the shoes of a farmer, listen to farm stories, meet Billings' Farm animals and enjoy the thrill of the farm in winter. Billings Farm & Museum has four camp offerings which all provide engaging, hands-on activities and explorations of the farm and the local landscape.

Winter Wonders Camp, Feb. 14 - 18, 9 am - 12:30 pm. Ages 6-8. Winter Wonders Camp offers "fun"tastic winter activities, including outdoor explorations, sledding and winter crafts. Learn about animals in winter and go on a scavenger hunt with National Park Rangers. Meet the Billings Farm animals and find out what they do in wintertime. Warm up while cooking popcorn and hot cocoa over an open fire. Bake sugar cookies and learn to make marshmallows, wassail punch and cinnamon sugar snowflakes in the Billings learning kitchen. Craft a

paper snowflake, decorate a fleece scarf, experiment with Oobleck and make a bird feeder. And of course, enjoy lots of outdoor playtime! Space is limited. Visit our website to reserve a spot www.billingsfarm.org/winter-wonders-camp/

Billings Bookworms Camp, June 27-July 1, 9 am – 12:30 pm. Ages 6-8 (entering grades 1-3). Listen to fun stories about farming, nature and animals then meet our calves, sheep, goats and learn the basics of caring for each animal through hands-on activities. www.billingsfarm.org/billings-bookworms/

Junior Farmer Camp, offered in four sessions, on June 20-24, July 11-15, July 25-29 & August 15-19, 9 am – 4 pm. Ages 7-10 (entering grades 2-5). Have you ever wondered what it takes to be a farmer? Get up close and personal with the farm's cows, horses, chickens, and sheep while learning the work that goes into the food we eat. In addition to daily farm chores and activities, we will explore different farming topics like dairy, gardening, tractors, and draft animals. www.billingsfarm.org/junior-farmer-camp/

Farm Discovery Camp, offered in two sessions, on July 18-22 & August 1-5, 9 am – 4 pm. Ages 11-14 (entering grades 6-9). What does it mean to be part of a farming community? Farm Discovery Camp is a hands-on program for young people, who want a deeper understanding of farming and all that it encompasses. www.billingsfarm.org/farm-discovery-camp/



Photo from Friday's Torchlight Snowshoe Event

Billings Farm in the Press

[AARP](#) highlighted Billings Farm and Museum in their article about winter road trips in Vermont.

[TripAdvisor](#) featured an article about Woodstock, VT, in their blog The WeekENDER. The story highlighted Billings Farm and Museum's sleigh rides.

[New England Today](#) featured Woodstock, VT, in an article about things to do in New England this winter, highlighting Billings Farm and Museum. [New England Today](#) also included Billings Farm and Museum in their list of 10 best New England winter getaways.

[Seven Days](#) included The Woodstock Film Series at Billings Farm and Museum in their list of things to do in Vermont from December 29 - January 11. *The Lonliest Whale* at Billings Farm and Museum's Woodstock Film Series was highlighted in [Seven Days](#) list of things to do in Vermont from January 12 to January 18.

[Mountain Times](#) featured *The Lonliest Whale* in an article about the Billings Farm and Museum Woodstock Film Series.

Billings Farm's Social Media, Marketing and Press

<https://billingsfarm.org/billings-farm-at-home/>

<https://www.facebook.com/BillingsFarmMuseum/>

<https://www.instagram.com/billingsfarm/>