

# History's homecoming

□ **MERIS MORRISON**

"What caused the American Revolution? This is indeed a rhetorical question that for many years historians have begun chapters with. As well they should. For the American Revolution is without doubt the single most important historical event ever to occur in this nation except of course for Super Bowl III. (Jets 16, Colts 7. Dave Barry won \$35.)"

This quotation by Dave Barry is from his sort of history of the United States, "Dave Barry Slept Here" (Random House, 1989), a recent acquisition at Brooks Memorial Library.

Barry writes for the Miami Herald and is syndicated in about 150 newspapers. He won the Pulitzer Prize for commentary in 1988 and lives in Florida.

His tongue-in-cheek book is history without the dull parts and an upbeat introduction to events we didn't have any control over when the nation was forming.

With all the interest in the Vermont 1991 Bicentennial of our statehood, this book won't put anything in perspective, but it will be fun reading. For example he explains unfair "acts" established by the English Parliament as a direct reaction to the Boston Tea Party.

"First there was the Stamp Act, under which every time the colonists made a purchase, the cashier would give them some stamps and they had to paste these into books, which was more boring than churning butter."

"When the colonists had acquired a certain number of stamps, they were required to go down to the Royal Redemption Center and exchange them for cheap cookware or tacky folding card tables," writes Barry.

"Then the enraged King (who had the political savvy of a croissant) ordered Parliament to pass the Irritation Acts, whose entire purpose was to make life in the colonies even more miserable. These included:

1. The Sneeze Shield Act, requiring that all colonial salad bars had to have shields suspended over them, allegedly for "sanitary" purposes, but actually intended to make it difficult for short colonists to reach the chick peas.

2. The Pill Blockade, requiring that colonial aspirin bottles had to come with wads of cotton stuffed in

the top, making the aspirin virtually inaccessible, especially to colonists with hangovers.

3. The Eternal Container Act, requiring that colonists who purchased appliances had to save the original packing cartons forever and ever, passing them down through the generations, or else they would void their warranties."

The 200th birthday of Vermont's statehood is an opportunity for many of us, in the broadest sense, to come home. The Bicentennial Commission has selected the "Coming Home" theme to encourage Vermonters and out-of-staters to return to their original hometown; become acquainted with friends and neighbors of their childhood; meet, learn from and inform their local historical societies. They are promoting the large kind of family reunions in 1991 that were so prevalent during the depression, when people came from all over to celebrate the family.

Bill Schubart, chairperson of "Coming Home," says, "This is a homecoming that exists in us all. It is a chance to consider what makes us comfortable within ourselves. It is an opportunity to celebrate our diverse values and traditions; our crafts, our heritage, our homes and architecture, our forests and parks, our trout streams and wildlife; our commerce and enterprise, our culture and folklife, our communities and our religious and political traditions."

The Brattleboro Historical Society is helping to form a committee of interested community members who'd like to be part of the planning process for our local BiCentennial celebration. Anyone who is interested is encouraged to step forth and become part of the planning team. Call the Brattleboro Historical Society's program chairman, John Carnahan, (254-8398) for more information or to enlist and join with us. Help us celebrate. Come home in 1991.

"Against all odds," says Dave Barry (remember him?), the colonists won the war against England; now they faced an even greater task: planning the victory party. Who should be invited? Where would they put their coats? These were just two of the questions confronting the leaders of the fledgling nation. Also, extreme factions in several states felt that there should be some kind of government." Hmmmm, things haven't changed all that much in 200 years.

Meris Morrison is the director of Brooks Memorial Library.