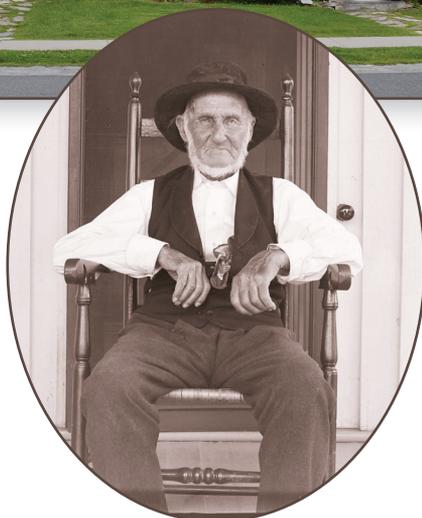


WALLOOMSACK REVIEW

BENNINGTON MUSEUM



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The *Walloomsack Review* is a publication of the Bennington Museum. Its purpose is to present a wide range of articles about the history and culture of Vermont and neighboring New York and Massachusetts. We invite submission of scholarly articles and of books to be reviewed. For author guidelines and submission deadlines please contact co-editor Tyler Resch at tresch@benningtonmuseum.org.

The *Walloomsack Review* is generously underwritten
by Robert and Cora May Howe

On the front cover:

Hiram Waters's house and carpentry shop on Monument Avenue in Old Bennington, 2014; and "Uncle Hi" Waters himself in a photograph taken by Mary Sanford about 1880.

Tracy Baker-White, and Bennington Museum collection

WALLOOMSACK REVIEW

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Editors' Notes

Fifteen bound volumes of typed transcripts of the Harwood Diaries constitute the most important special collection of the Bennington Museum's research library. Begun in 1805 by Benjamin Harwood (1762-1852), who was the first child born after Bennington's settlement, most of the diaries were written by his son Hiram (1788-1839). They reveal rich details of early nineteenth-century life, New England agriculture, family relationships, and pre-cash economy.

A few years ago a scholarly book was published about these diaries. *A Tale of New England: The Diaries of Hiram Harwood, Vermont Farmer, 1810-1837* by Robert E. Shalhope focuses somewhat on the difficult relationship between father and son. The author encountered the diaries at the library while he was researching *Bennington and the Green Mountain Boys*. Both books were published in the 1990s by Johns Hopkins University Press.

The Harwood Diaries have been consulted by many researchers but probably their most intensive use has been made by Tracy Baker-White, who wrote the article in this issue about Hiram Waters of Old Bennington, a builder and master craftsman. The close connection was that Hiram Waters married Diadamia, a sister of Hiram Harwood, and so the article is sprinkled with parenthetical dates that reference some of the hundreds of mentions of the builder's work amid good times and bad. Many houses in Bennington and vicinity trace to the work of "Uncle Hi" Waters either entirely or in part. A close read will take you back into the special world of this nineteenth-century artisan.

Two other articles in this issue tackle the history of familiar pathways. One is Vermont's famed Long Trail, the "footpath in the wilderness" from the Massachusetts border to Canada, which had its origins in the rights-of-way of three early logging railroads. The other marks the centennial of the Mohawk Trail, famed for its hairpin turn and Whitcomb Summit just south of the Vermont border. Authors of both articles are well qualified. Railroad buff Preston Bristow of Woodstock was president of the Green Mountain Club and Lauren Stevens is a Berkshire aficionado of long standing.

This issue contains a larger number of book reviews than usual. Two involve the legendary Ethan Allen and describe him in ways that challenge some of those legends. Authors John J. Duffy and W. Nicholas Muller III of *Inventing Ethan Allen* have collaborated previously and tap into their enormous store of knowledge of Vermont's historiography.

No better reviewer than Lea Newman could have been found to review the new book of the early correspondence of Robert Frost. Among many other credits, she is the author of a recent book on Frost subtitled "the people, places, and stories behind his New England poetry." Donald

Sheehy, one of the editors of Frost's correspondence, has been a board member of the Robert Frost Stone House Museum in Shaftsbury. The first of a series, this book ends in 1920, the year Frost moved into that stone house.

Our spring issue carried a favorable review of *Col. William Marsh: Vermont Patriot and Loyalist* by Jennifer S. H. Brown and Wilson B. Brown. The authors were in Vermont this past June to make presentations in Dorset, Manchester, and Bennington, and agreeably made themselves available to review two books in this issue: *Inventing Ethan Allen* and *A Few Lawless Vagabonds*.

Contributors

Tracy Baker-White is an artist and educator who lives in Williamstown, Mass. She has been curator of education and arts administrator at the San Antonio Museum of Art, the Southwest School of Art and Design, and the Corcoran College of Art and Design. She is a champion of unknown artists and has published several essays on the self-taught visionary artist Charles Dellschau.

Preston Bristow of Woodstock is a past president of the Green Mountain Club whose varied career includes implementing the land-protection effort of the Appalachian Trail in Vermont and directing the Vermont Land Trust's conservation easement stewardship program. He has a lifelong interest in all things rail.

Lauren R. Stevens, author of six books, formerly on the Williams College faculty, founder of *The Advocate Newsweekly* and the Hoosic River Watershed Association, is an environmentalist and writer who lives in Williamstown, Mass. He has a biweekly column in the *Berkshire Eagle* and his show, "Our River," is seen monthly on Northern Berkshire Community Television and Willinet.

Lea Newman is professor emerita of American literature at the Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts and is past president of both the Melville and Hawthorne societies. She is the author of books on Hawthorne, Melville, Frost, and most recently *Emily Dickinson: Virgin Recluse and Rebel*. She is vice president of the Friends of Robert Frost, a division of the Robert Frost Stone House Museum in Shaftsbury.

Noah Coburn is an anthropologist on the faculty at Bennington College who teaches courses in the overlap of politics, power, and culture. He is a graduate of Williams College and holds a master's degree in regional studies from Columbia and a doctorate in anthropology from Boston University. He is the author of *Bazaar Politics: Pottery and Power in an Afghan Market Town*. Recently he has been monitoring the presidential elections in Afghanistan with a team of Afghan researchers.

Jane Griswold Radocchia is an architect and historian in Bennington. She spends an inordinate amount of time exploring local vernacular architecture and the use of geometry in pre-industrial design and construction. In recent months she has been contributing articles on these subjects to the *Bennington Banner*.

Jennifer S. H. Brown is professor emeritus of history at the University of Winnipeg, holds a PhD. in anthropology from the University of Chicago, and has taught and written extensively on aboriginal people in North America. She and her husband Wilson enjoy retirement in Denver, Colorado, where she curates a rich mine of family records published and unpublished.

Wilson Brown holds a PhD. in international affairs from the Fletcher School at Tufts University and has taught economics and business at several universities, retiring from Winnipeg in 2004. He and his wife Jennifer are co-authors of *Col. William Marsh: Vermont Patriot & Loyalist*, which was reviewed in *Walloomsack Review* XIII, Spring 2014.

Tyler Resch, co-editor of this journal and research librarian at the Bennington Museum, reviews *The Vermont Difference* in this issue and has written a different review of the same book for *Vermont History*. A graduate of Amherst College, he holds a master's in journalism from Northwestern University. He is the author or editor of more than a dozen books of state or regional history.

Harwood Diaries reveal life and times of Hiram Waters of Old Bennington

Tracy Baker-White



Hiram Waters 1796-1890

Introduction

In December of 2012 my mother and her partner bought a summer home in Bennington, Vermont. After much deliberation they settled on a modest one-and-a-half story Cape duplex in the center of the historic district of Old Bennington. The house was bright inside -- with buttery, wide plank pine floors and a traditional Rumford fireplace with a beehive bake oven to one side. A hand-painted plaque in the garage said, intriguingly, "Hiram Waters' Carpenter Shop, c. 1820." Curious to find out more of the history of the house, I set out to learn who had built it, when it was built, and who had lived there during its nearly two-hundred-year history.

*In researching local sources I came across the remarkable Hiram Harwood diaries, written between 1805 and 1837 in the library collections of the Bennington Museum. In no time I discovered that Hiram Waters was a brother-in-law of Hiram Harwood, which made the diaries specially informative. It is rare to find a historical source that covers such a long period of time in detail. Robert Shalhoup's *A Tale of New England* provided a stepping stone into these diaries of a farmer in early Bennington, but I wanted to read the originals.*

What interested me in Harwood's diaries was the story of Hiram Waters. Buried in this farmer's daily ruminations on the weather and the milking of cows is the story of two families, Harwoods and Waters, who lived in close proximity in the Tanbrook neighborhood, a couple of miles south of Old Bennington on today's Monument Avenue. The diaries record their friendships, commercial transactions, marriages, and

deaths. Most early references are to Hiram Waters's father and siblings, who periodically performed carpentry and manual labor around the Harwood's farm. Over time, the bond between families shifted to Hiram Waters, youngest male of the Waters clan, who married Harwood's younger sister, Diadamia.

Harwood mentioned many of his brother-in-law's professional activities as a builder in addition to giving us a remarkably intimate view of his life. True to the period, the diaries convey little in the way of emotion on the part of the writer, but there are descriptive passages that offer a virtual window onto the past, full of evocative details. Most references in this essay are taken from the Harwood diaries (dates are shown in parentheses), corroborated by land and census records. Other resources from the period have been consulted.

Hiram Waters -- Young Rascal

By all accounts, Hiram Waters was a light hearted and agreeable fellow. "Uncle Hi," as he was known, had a reputation as a master builder in Bennington County as well as in Washington County, New York. Near neighbor John Van der Speigel Merrill (b. 1844) grew up in a house around the corner from the Waters. Remembering his childhood in the 1840s and '50s, he wrote, "How delighted we were if we could visit him [in his carpenter's shop] and watch him as he worked. Fresh and sweet was the odor of the long curly shavings that fell to the floor and later found their way into our basket. How interested we were in the stories he would tell us, for 'Uncle Hiram' was very amusing in a way peculiar to himself. Children instinctively gathered around him. He was fond of them and they seemed to know it. He was never harsh or impatient, but on the contrary was gentle and cheerful." (Henry Clay Day Papers, A 62, Bennington Museum.)

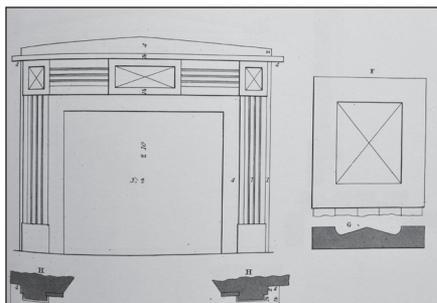
In 1881, Henry Clay Day, a Bennington merchant and collector of memorabilia, interviewed Waters as one of the oldest members of the community. Waters, then 88, told stories of his younger years, revealing a keen and devilish sense of humor. "Uncle Hi" told how he played a prank on Luther Bliss, then 70, by painting his "very fine pig, white . . . about 50 pounds" black with a white stripe on its face. Bliss went out to feed his animals the next morning and was "astonished to behold a black pig." Bliss swore someone had stolen his pretty white pig until neighbors let him in on the secret. Waters claimed it took two full days of scrubbing before that pig was white again and by then, Bliss's face was the one that was black!

Another tale involved Hiram and building partner Dave Ruttenbur.



The fireplace frame of Hiram Waters's own house follows quite precisely the plan drawn by Asher Benjamin in his *American Builder's Companion*.

The two were repairing the chimney of a house in Arlington when Ruttenbur suggested going out on the roof to rest, as the weather was excessively hot. While there, they heard the subdued conversation of two lovers below. Ruttenbur suggested that Hiram wriggle down the chimney to hear what the lovers were saying. As Hiram slowly descended the chimney, pieces of soot fell into smouldering embers below. The lovers remarked that there must be “a coming rain.” On his way back up, Hiram had nearly emerged when he put his hand on a loose brick at the top that gave way and tumbled into the fire below. The man visiting his beloved “supposing the devil had made his appearance dashed thro’ a window and it is said the sound of the horses hoofs could be heard for 15 minutes. Hiram broke his left wrist and was badly hurt.”



Variants of these stories are retold in Richard S. Bayhan's “Humorous Tales of Bennington-on-the-Hill,” published in 1918 (available online at openlibrary.org). The diaries of Hiram Harwood also corroborate the notion that Hiram Waters was a high-spirited youth, repeatedly calling him “lively,” and describing evenings when Waters danced and played music.

Harwood, who rarely commented on matters of fashion, confirmed Waters's flamboyant sense of style, noting in May of 1824, Waters “. . . arrived late in the day, with a pair of monstrously wide trousers on – light colored.” Later that year, on December 1, 1824, he was noted wearing a little round hat. And on November, 1, 1829, in the years he was courting Diadamia, Harwood writes: “In the evening H. Waters wore his best suit – had on a very superb ruffle shirt.” In spite of his outlandish clothing

and youthful indiscretions, Hiram Waters grew up to be an upstanding and respected member of the Bennington community for most of the nineteenth century.

The Waters Family, a Brady Bunch

Hiram Waters was born in 1797, the youngest child in a blended family of twelve children. His father, Captain Oliver Waters, came from a large family in Hoosick, New York, the second of four sons and two daughters born to Adam and Mary Waters. After Oliver's first wife, Theoda, died in 1784, leaving him with four children, he married Phebe Beebe Judd, a widow who also had previous offspring, and they produced four more children together. They were in Halifax, Vermont, and moved to Bennington sometime between 1784 and 1790. In 1798, Oliver purchased nine acres of land in Bennington from Levi Hathaway for \$75 and immediately mortgaged the property to Isaac Judd, one of his older step-sons. He sold the property six years later, in 1804. So it seems that resources were scarce.

The first of Oliver and Phebe's older boys, Oliver Junior, went west to Columbus, Ohio. A second son, Nathaniel, married Mary (Polly) Dewey of Bennington, then disappeared from historical sources between 1804 and 1811. Next were Adam and his younger brother Elisha, who worked together doing carpentry and joinery in Bennington. Adam was the older of the two but had bad luck in business. In January 1808 the brothers jointly purchased property in Bennington between Captain Elijah Dewey and Moses Robinson. Adam sold to his brother in a quitclaim on March 7, 1810, describing the property as "at the east corner of the shop now occupied by Adam Waters." This seems to indicate that they had a carpentry or joiner's shop in this center town location, according to town records. Two weeks later Adam was forced to flee to Swanton, Vermont, to escape creditors and died there a few months later. (3/20/10 and 11/24/10)

Elisha, the third son, continued to work at carpentry after his brother's misfortunes and purchased various properties in Old Bennington over many years. In 1805, the same year the Old First Church was built, he built a large and handsome 2½-story federal style home located south on what is now Monument Avenue. This home was later moved to the top of Elm Street around 1930.

The Waters and Harwoods, Near Neighbors

Elisha Waters was a friend and near neighbor of Hiram Harwood in the Tanbrook neighborhood. As such, the two families socialized

with one another, and Elisha Waters often worked on carpentry projects for Harwood. He did tasks such as: worked on Harwood's barn and whitewashed in the house (5/29/09); made doors for the horse stable (11/20/09); mended the plow (4/23/10); drew stones for the cellar wall (5/3/10); moved Harwood's barn (12/11/10); started an addition to the barn (5/27/11); had his man Ruttenbur take down a partition in the house (11/7/14). Elisha sometimes sent his younger brother Hiram, who worked for him during the middle 1810s. Elisha built and repaired parts of Harwood's home and barns as well as other properties. He was well respected by Harwood, who characterized him as ". . . a quick workman . . . guided by judgment in his plans. – His price is a dollar a day if not paid in cash . . ." And he gave a discount of one shilling if paid in cash. (12/7/08)

Elisha is described as the "master workman" at the Hinman raising in May of 1810 (5/29/10), working on the Clarks' house (4/29/15), building his shop on Captain Moses Robinson's land (4/3/17), and framing a barn for John Van Der Spiegel (7/21/17). Elisha raised a "respectable two story house" at Van Der Spiegel's on May 14, 1822, while the boys played in the meadow behind the house. Elisha was also involved in the making of furniture. Harwood wrote, "My father bargained with Elisha Waters this evening for a bureau." (3/15/16)

Elisha's half-brother, Hiram, was thirteen years his junior and worked for him as an apprentice at the same time as his good friend Dave Ruttenbur. Like the other young "hands," Hiram probably lived with Elisha. But in 1816, at the age of around 20, Hiram Waters "abruptly quitted" his brother Elisha. (1/22/16) Two months later in March his colleague Dave Ruttenbur then also "eloped" from Elisha to his father's. (3/15/16)

Elisha may have been a difficult taskmaster. His own father, Captain Oliver Waters, secured a "peace warrant" against him in February 1821. (2/17/21) Then in October 1827 Harwood wrote, "There was considerable difficulty between Capt. W. and his two apprentices Ben Sears and Hen. Robinson, who as they alleged, by mutual consent had quitted his service." Sears and Robinson left Elisha to work for the younger Hiram Waters, who after leaving the employ of his brother had gone out on his own as a carpenter-joiner.

In December 1829 Harwood wrote an entry that recounted a conflict with Elisha over unpaid accounts from two years previous. Elisha claimed poverty and couldn't pay the sum. In the spring of 1831, after the tragic death of Elisha's fifth daughter Sophia, age 10, he sold his house and orchard to Samuel H. Brown for \$1,000 and moved his family to Troy. (4/17/31)

Hiram Waters – Bachelor and Builder, 1820-1830

After leaving his brother's service, Hiram Waters established himself as a builder on his own. He also became close to the Harwood clan, spending many evenings at the farm playing music with Hiram Harwood and eventually courting Harwood's sister Diadamia. Harwood's diaries record many of Hiram Waters's projects in and around Bennington. Some of these include: an "important job" for J.H. Hicks, who had recently become owner of Elijah Dewey's tavern (later known as the Walloomsac Inn) and a barnraising for Dr. Swift on May 27, 1820.

When he was 24, Waters left his tools with Hiram Harwood and walked one hundred fifty miles to Boston with his apprentice, Holland Blackmer. (3/20/22) He evidently stayed in Boston for ten months, returning in January 1823. (1/17/23) Blackmer relocated in Boston, becoming an established "housewright," according to the Boston City Directory of 1831. The Day Papers reported that, "Mr. Blackmer became one of the most skillful stair builders in Boston, accumulated a handsome property and died leaving several children."

Hiram Waters returned to Bennington where he and Dave Ruttenbur worked on the Blackmers' family house on February 12, 1824, and by the end of that year, Waters had established a shop of his own. Harwood writes that he "Called at Dr. Swift's old office, now occupied by H. Waters as a joiner's shop." (12/18/24) Soon thereafter Hiram Harwood recounts that he "walked with H. Waters who carried in his arms a number of new augur handles that his friend Hyde had turned for him as he was returning to Dexter's, his place of abode." (1/1/25)

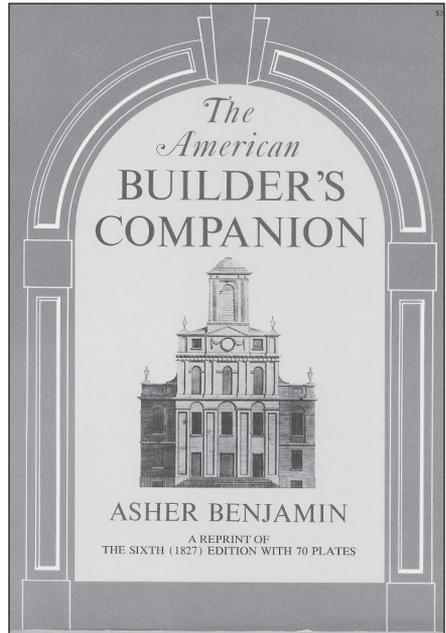
In October 1825, Seth Hunt, prominent businessman and proprietor of the Old Furnace, decided to establish a large saltworks near Mobile, Alabama. "Hiram Waters, Esq., of Bennington Center, had charge of the erection of these works and took with him from Bennington to Alabama quite a list of our citizen carpenters and mechanics to assist in erecting the buildings required by Mr. Hunt," it was reported in the weekly *Bennington Banner*. Harwood confirms: "Hiram Waters, Norman Edgerton, Charles Thatcher . . . with others left town early this morning for the saltworks in Alabama under a contract with Gov. Seth Hunt for six months service." (10/8/25) While in Alabama, Waters sent a letter back to Harwood "penned by Norman Edgerton." (3/25/26) Over the years, Harwood mentions frequently that he wrote and kept accounts for Waters. This, in conjunction with the mention that Norman Edgerton "penned" a letter for him suggests that Hiram Waters may have been able to read but relied on Harwood to write letters and contracts, and keep his bills.

Returning from Alabama in July 1826, Hiram Waters re-established his carpentry and joinery business, and seems to have been successful. On May 10, 1827, he purchased his first lot of land, in the center of Old Bennington, from Dr. Heman Swift in two separate parcels for \$100. He immediately took out a mortgage for \$1,000 from Edward H. Swift, the doctor's nephew. This appears to have been the financial mechanism that allowed the construction of his new home and adjacent joiner's shop.

In 1829 Waters was working on the schoolhouse windows. Harwood wrote: "I dined with H. then taking glass, putty, nails and clapboards drove to the schoolhouse where the sashes were taken out

and all vacancies filled, tinned and puttied in by H.W. amounting to 21 panes . . ." (11/1/29) In late November 1829 Waters was moving in at the Harwoods' farm, but still working out of his shop in town. He had been boarding at Dexter's, but now there was "great expectation of sleeping in his new bed which was now about finished by our ladies." (11/29/29) Several days later, Harwood wrote, "walked with H. Waters to his shop where a short time was spent in looking at his buildings, writing a little, &c. . . ." It would appear that although Waters's shop was done, the house was not finished and while it was being completed he boarded at Harwood's farm.

Waters had a job at Norman Norton's in early January 1830 (1/4/30) and in February Harwood noted, "For H. Waters wrote a billet to David Wilcox to inform him upon what terms the former would undertake to build a house for the latter. . ." A week later, "H. Waters & B. Sears came down and dictated a Bill of Materials for the construction of a house for David Wilcox, Hoosick Four Corners, NY, which I drew for them." (2/15/30) Waters was concurrently working on the timber part of a brick house for Mr. J. C. Andrews (2/14/30) and built houses for a Mr. Richmond of Hoosick and J. Starin of West Bennington that same year. (6/13/30 and 11/17/30)



The cover of Asher Benjamin's sixth edition, published in 1827.

Hiram Waters Settles Down – 1830-1834

The beginning of 1831 seems to have been an especially productive time for Hiram Waters. His friend Harwood wrote about his soon-to-be brother-in-law almost daily, and the two families became even closer. On February 1, 1831, Hiram Waters married Harwood's younger sister Diadamia. The description of the wedding day was full of detail:

The ladies of this house were diligently employed most of the day cooking, cleaning house, cleaning old furniture &c &c. In the eve'g according to previous arrangement, the family having dressed and otherwise duly prepared themselves, Mr. J. Rogers appeared about sunset with older Teesdell whom he introduced to the heads of the family – They were invited into what we commonly term “The North Room”. A short pause ensued when Mr. Bridegroom, H. Waters & Miss Bride, D. Harwood were notified that the priest was ready to receive them and were conducted to the stand by B. Sears and Miss M.A. Waters, who officiated as waiters on the occasion. Mr. T. immediately taking a chair in his hand stepped into the center of the room, and supporting himself on his chair with his face to the north, went on in very handsome style with the ceremony -- pronouncing them at the conclusion “Husband & Wife” – closing with a short and very appropriate Address to the Throne of Grace. The cake and wine were pretty liberally distributed by fr'd S. & his associate of which Mr. T. and friend R. partook. Staid a short time and then departed. The comp'y afterwards tho' small indulged themselves in kissing & running round the chimney at no moderate rate. On the whole it turned out to be just such a wedding as we wished it to be. Those attending who were not exactly members of the family and whose names have not already been inserted -- were J. Ambrose Wight, G.P. Harwood and S.W. Daniels . . . (2/1/31)

A week later, February 8, Hiram Waters and his new bride “started for Troy in Hicks' small elegant cutter – drawn by the Indian pony – in fine harness & bells” to purchase furniture for their new house. After the wedding, Hiram and Diadamia continued to live at the Harwood farm until May 5, 1831, when Harwood recorded, “H. Waters, lady and effect were this day removed to the dwelling of s'd Waters, all in prime order – there were two loads choice articles.”

That spring, Waters was involved in several projects. Harwood wrote that he “visited the shop of H. Waters – saw the painter lettering a sign

– Say Mr. Fairfield. Wrote some for Waters.” (3/17/31) In April, Waters was working for a mill owner named Walbridge, and again, Harwood wrote “Performed writing for H. Waters.” References to paint indicate that Waters provided a variety of building services in addition to joinery.

By May 1831 Hiram Waters at age 34 was the last male member of his nuclear family left in Bennington. His father Oliver had died ten years before and his older brothers, Adam, Oliver, and Worthy had all passed away. Brother Nathaniel had died before 1811 and brother Elisha, the successful businessman and carpenter, had moved his family to Troy in the spring of 1831. Hiram had a good shop, his own dwelling house, a wife and later in the year, his first child, Lydia Sophie.

After the time of Waters’s marriage to Diadamia Harwood, the two families became one extended family. They saw one another almost daily. After the birth of the Waters’s first child, Harwood’s unmarried sister Lydia lived with Diadamia and Hiram as a nursemaid. Harwood’s daughter Adeline also stayed at the Waters home during months she was in school at the old Academy. And Hiram Harwood, on his daily rounds of the center village selling cheese and keeping accounts, regularly parked his wagon and horses in Waters’s barn and walked from shop to shop. Social visits were most frequent in the winter months, somewhat less so during the summer when there was a great amount of work to do on the farm.

Many evenings were spent together, playing music and socializing. This pleasant description of a winter’s evening on December 7, 1832, is particularly full of detail:

In the eve’g went with wife and son to H. Waters’ where a fine visit was had – Cous. Marg’t & Adeline went there early P.M. The company of cous. Emily, Edwin & Amanda Robinson & Miss Eliza Smedley was highly enjoyed. Discoursed with old Mrs. Waters, now 75 years of age, respecting the old Tory Episcopal Clergyman – Peters of Hebron, Conn., who she said she well knew.... Mr. Chapin, the accomplished painter, came in by request with his pipes & entertained the company with very soft, pretty music – never heard such before excepting at Burlington, Vt., 1812, when I had no opportunity to view the inst. H.W. laid aside his tools, sent for a flute on which I performed – but pretty drily – could not recollect my pieces. The likeness of little L.S. [baby Lydia Sophie] Waters playing with a kitten, drawn by Mr. C., was exhibited – much to the pleasure & satisfaction of the comp’y. By invitation walked over to Mr. C.’s, formerly I. Hendryx Tailor Shop & viewed portraits of upwards of 20 persons – among whom were those of S.C. Raymond,

wife, son & daughter, Gov. Tichenor, large as life, in gilt frame – eminently majestic & exact. W.S. Southworth, Sam'l S. Scott, S. Nicholls & lady, &c. Saw the rough of a grand Scriptural Piece – the taking down of the dead body of our Saviour from the cross by Joseph of Arimathea & others – A labor of many months and days to the artist. Late in the evening all hands returned home – extremely rough waggon'ng . . .

The painter, Alpheus Chapin, and his wife were renting the house next door to the Waters. In January 1832 there was a “terrible E blow attended with snow, hail and rain” and “Hiram Waters' sign was blown off with part of the chimney against which it was placed.” (1/30/32) One can envision Waters's successful carpentry shop with its sign up on the roof, and the dwelling house attached at the left.

The House and Shop Burn

All was going well when two weeks after the birth of the Waters's second child, in the raw month of March 1834, a terrible fire completely destroyed Hiram Waters's shop and seriously damaged his house. After this devastating event, 175 men from Bennington contributed sums from 50 cents to \$50 to a fund to help him rebuild. They collected a total of \$878 to help the Waters family offset the extensive damage to the structure, contents, and tools inside. The best description of the fire and its causes is given in a hand-written subscription book, transcribed by Harwood, now in the collection of the Bennington Museum:

. . . Hiram Waters of Bennington . . . suffered a very heavy loss by fire on the morning of March 27, 1834, between the hours of 6 & 9 O'Clock a.m. in the destruction of a fine 3 story building & the rear part of his dwelling, but recently & very conveniently fitted up & occupied as a kitchen with other apartments: nothing escaping but the low front containing but a single spacious room which though affording no very inconsiderable accommodation, was but a sorry remnant of the valuable property thus destroyed. The first mentioned building – 2d & 3r stories were occupied as a joiner's shop & at the time of the fire contained an unusual supply of tools of every description suited to the wants of the carpenter & joiner – also many panel doors, window sashes &c&c – purposely finished for the large new house he was then engaged in erecting at Arlington, for J.B. Lathrop – Innkeeper. Every exertion was made for the suppression

of the flames by the good people of all ages & sexes assembled from all parts of the town, & so far successful as to prevent their spreading over the village, by means of an excellent engine which was very skillfully managed. All the household furniture, bedding, wearing apparel &c with trifling exceptions were saved almost without injury. His loss was, to one in his circumstance very great, but never could be accurately known – was however estimated in round numbers at \$3000 – This accident happened by a spark, as was supposed, or, small coal of fire taking among shavings in the 2d story of the shop escaping from a boxstove while the hands were at breakfast – No one ever knew how the fire did take for the whole apartment was in a blaze at the first alarm. We the undersigned hereby obligate ourselves to pay to Hiram Waters in consideration of the loss this day sustained by him, by the burning of his house, shop &c, the sums affixed to our names respectively. Bennington, March 27, 1834.

It is clear from these descriptions of the fire that the shop was “joined up to his dwelling” and “the kitchen which had been erected about 18 months since at great expense, was also destroyed, but the principal part of his front building was saved, roof greatly damaged, leaving it in so ruinous a condition as to render it almost unfit for repairs.”

Waters had worked on this new kitchen addition in the summer of 1832, and in October of that year did some work for Dr. Heman Swift “for which rec’d in paym’t an elegant Franklin stove, &c.” (10/11/32) Before the fire, Waters had many men working for him and his average annual income was estimated at \$1,700; by comparison to Harwood, the dairy farmer, whose income was around \$900 the previous year. Waters not only did building projects, but also had a 60-acre woodlot and an interest in a herd of cattle. His projects ranged from building houses, to work on the school buildings in town (the Bennington Academy and the Seminary) and building mills and factories for community leaders Walbridge, Hinsdill, and Doolittle. His biggest project in 1834 was building a mansion for innkeeper J.B. Lathrop in Arlington.

Rebuilding the House: 1834-1836

After the fire, Hiram and Diadamia Waters moved back to the Harwood farm with a toddler, newborn infant, nurse, maid, and three hired men and remained there throughout the summer of 1834. (3/28/34) Waters must have burned his coat while attempting to extinguish the flames, for even though he had lost everything he owned, he immediately

ordered another to be made by a local seamstress, Betsey Street. (4/3/34)

It was eight months before the family could move into their own house, but Waters immediately got back to work. Within days of the fire, he left for New York City to purchase new tools to replace those lost in the burned shop. (4/9/34) During that summer, Diadamia and the children stayed with the Harwoods while Hiram Waters went back and forth between Arlington and Bennington, working on his job for Lathrop. He spent the weeknights at the job site, and came back to Bennington on either Saturday or Sunday each week. By the end of the summer, he was also thinking of working on his own house – in July and August he ordered lumber from Lyon’s mill in Woodford. (7/14/34 and 8/4/34)

The family briefly visited Hiram’s mother in Warrensburg, New York, on October 15, then Hiram returned to start working on the cellar and well of his own house. “H. Waters appeared to be highly pleased in forwarding his cellar and well digging . . .” (10/22/34) The next day Harwood stopped by and noted “. . . made another halt at the ruins of H. Waters – team employed in scraping out cellar – well sunk, say 9 feet to water – lumber & timber on hand and more coming on . . .” (10/23/34) The Waters were still living at the Harwood’s during this time. Harwood wrote “H. Waters came home in fine spirits – everything moving about right – teams bringing in stone from old walls given him by Dr. H. Swift, for filling up trenches, stoning well, &c, &c.”

Finally in mid-October the house was in a livable condition, though the shop was not yet reconstructed. “H. Waters having come down with Isaac Allen & team to get a load of household goods, . . . – Soon after drove off with his load in triumph.” By October 13 Hiram, Diadamia, and the two babies had moved in, with Aunt Lydia in tow to help with the children. Waters was back at work in the “service of Dea’c Hinsdill” by early December, (12/6/34) and on the ninth of that month, Harwood notes that “H. Waters hands were employed at house framing.”

Although the Waters home was quite full of people, Harwood’s daughter Adeline was also preparing to move up to live with them in town for the academic term. “Adeline packed her things, books inclusive, for H. Waters’ intending there to reside while attending school the present term.” (12/10/34.) Harwood stopped the next day to check on her and wrote “on being invited to sup made some sport for my sister & daughter by refusing the offer under the plea of disliking her cooking . . .” (12/11/34/)

After the move, the extended family fell back into a regular routine of visiting back and forth between the Harwood farm and the Waters house. Harwood commented every few days about where Waters was and what he was doing. Waters’s house in town continued to be the stopping

place where Harwood stabled his horses and walked from store to store conducting daily business rounds. He could also check in on his daughter Adeline on a regular basis and often took a meal with her there. More than once, Harwood called the Waters home the family's "headquarters" for Sunday worship. (12/28/34)

With his shop still in ruins, Waters apparently rented another space a few doors up the street. Several references are made to this temporary relocation of the business next to Dr. Heman Swift's property. On his daily rounds Harwood notes: "Made the first call at H. Waters' all right there & at his shop – late Canfield's law office – in Dr. M.[H] Swift's old store building – formerly occupied by capt. Moses Robinson as a store, but since his time altered a good deal in being hoisted another story & c." (2/14/35) Ten days later, "Arrived in the Street & rested, and talked with H. Waters at his new shop near Dr. H. Swift's – G. Robinson was with him making sashes." (2/24/35) Yet another description of this temporary shop was: "Visited the shop of H. Waters – Dr. H. Swift's old store – where saw a new lot of bitt. stock & all the fine things thereunto belonging – tools so tempered as to appear as if made of brass – Geo, Robinson & Russell Judd were at work there." It would appear that Waters may have sold or displayed fine tools in the shop in addition to performing carpentry work.

An entertaining tale recounted in Richard Bayhan's book "Humourous Tales of Bennington-on-the-Hill" involved a description of Hiram Waters's extensive tools. On April Fool's Day, Waters hoisted a white calf in the belfry of the First Church -- "In the morning the calf was still there and singing sweetly, and as Uncle Hi was the only carpenter in town, and possessed the only apparatus for hoisting or lowering articles, the neighbors were finally compelled to pay him \$10 to take the animal down." Waters was not the only carpenter but may have been the only one with the rigging to perform these kinds of tasks.

In late 1834 and early 1835, Waters's biggest client seems to have been Deacon Stephen Hinsdill, considered to be the wealthiest man in Bennington based on earnings from his cotton mills along Paran Creek. He founded the Bennington Seminary with his son-in-law James Ballard, and built the New Stone Church in the neighborhood of the mills, known as Hinsdillville. Waters's relationship with Hinsdill had gone back to at least 1831 when he did a large project for him costing \$500 (1/15/32) -- a price comparable to building a house. He and Benjamin Sears then built the Hinsdill store for the deacon's nephew and business partner in 1832, (4/5/32) and Waters built a 36-foot addition to the boarding house of Hinsdill's Seminary in 1833. (6/19/33) The winter of 1835 included projects such as working on a new bridge: "Deacon Hinsdill was so

bejuggled about his bridge concern as to send a man to H. Waters post haste to come down to assist in raising it – extremity of weather – ice & every other obstacle to the contrary notwithstanding.” Ben Sears was also involved in this bridge project. (2/27/35 and 2/28/35)

Waters worked on his own house in between other jobs – a year after the fire in March our diarist notes that “Hiram and hands snugly employed in framing his new house – shortly to be raised” (3/26/35), but the raising wasn’t actually accomplished until nearly two months later at the end of May. Harwood’s farmhand George was busy picking up stones in the southwest meadow on May 22 but the “. . . business was left unfinished to go to the raising of H. Water’s house . . .” (5/22/35) At the same time, Waters was building a “fine house” around the corner for the Hon. Hiland Hall, “attached to his former dwelling.” (5/29/35) Soon thereafter he was at work raising the frame of a new blacksmith shop for Samuel Chandler. (6/6/35) In June Waters was back at Hiland Hall’s property when Harwood wrote, “Father being at H. Hall’s where H.W. was at work repairing house – the latter slipped into the wagon the sash of the circular gable end window to be conveyed to his shop. . .” (6/18/35) Waters and Ben Sears were repairing the dam and flume for Hinsdill in November. (9/28/35) Then Waters injured himself while “assisting at the removal of the old David merchant store lately occupied by J. Hicks, Esq. as a saddle shop . . . B.R. Sears removed it on his own premises, being the lawful possessor of the same.” (12/19/35)

In December, Harwood wrote accounts for his brother-in-law -- “that against S. Hinsdill being \$745.40! Another against Jo. Ogden – Dr. & Cr. And a third against Hiram Blackmer – Tot’l \$990.” (12/25/35) By the beginning of the New Year there were rumors that Hinsdill, clearly one of Waters’s most important clients, was financially insolvent: “Deac. S. Hinsdill . . . was rather indignant at the recent report of his failure. On ground lately purchased of Ed’w M. Welling, having the county surveyor J.N. Hinsdill with him, plotted for a store at N. Bennington of large dimensions which he contemplated building with all possible dispatch. H.W. [Hiram Waters] assisted at surveying said ground.”

In March 1836, Harwood was up at Waters’s house in town. They settled accounts then they “Dined – pres’t Hiram, wife & children, D. Ruttenbur, J. Godby, Geo. Robinson & black Charley – . . . H. got Chandler’s horse & cutter to go to Deac. Hinsdill’s – I accepted an invitation to go with him. D. Ruttenbur rode up to L.P. & Co. [Lyman Patchin’s?] with an elegant fan light window lately made at H.’s. Saw him put it in its place W. gable front of new brick store – making a very appropriate appearance . . . Waters having walked up the hill thus far with

B.R. Sears – seated himself by my side, and proceeding down Court House hill, by Montague’s and New Road – Soon arrived at H.’s [Hinsdill’s] where the first compliment was that Deacon wanted H. [Hiram] to undertake a small job at finishing or some way fashioning inside of meeting house. It was readily taken.” (3/1/36) This reference to Hinsdill’s meetinghouse refers to the inside of the new [Presbyterian] Stone Church built by Hinsdill for the paper mill community.

Notes on the business of building

Various references in Harwood’s writings demonstrate that Waters raised houses, built bridges, finished interiors, painted rugs, floors and signs, and made various repairs on existing structures. He may have had a specialty in building sashes, fine windows and panel doors, built in his shop then moved to on-site locations. Big jobs started at the woodlot, selecting trees to be used, taking lumber to a mill and then delivering materials to the job.

Waters had a continuing interest in current trends in architecture. In October 1826 he asked Harwood, who was going to Troy, to pick up a copy of Asher Benjamin’s “latest edition” for him. Waters most likely meant Asher Benjamin’s popular guide *The American Builder’s Companion*, which was in its fifth edition in 1826, but he actually referred to it as “Benjamin’s Architecture.” This clearly indicated that he had previous knowledge of Benjamin’s guides and knew that there was a recent edition. In fact, the fireplace design in the front ell of Waters’s home is taken directly from Benjamin’s 1833 book *The Practice of Architecture*.

Altogether, between 1831 and 1837 Harwood mentions more than twenty men who helped Waters with various building tasks. Some were probably short-term day laborers who worked on the heaviest jobs, like hauling wood from the woodlot. He also employed both apprentice-level “hands” and independent “journeymen” carpenters. The younger hands probably worked under contracts for a specified length of time or indenture, and the more experienced may have worked on shorter contracts. Some of Waters’s apprentices were from the oldest Bennington families, including the Fays and Robinsons. Waters dismissed one apprentice named W. Ault for improper conduct (4/19/34) and ended up in a lawsuit with another, George Robinson, over missed days of work. (2/17/37)

A few men stand out as frequent working partners with Waters. In particular, Dave Ruttenbur and Holland Blackmer appear often in the years soon after his split with Elisha. Later, Benjamin R. Sears became Waters’s usual building partner, and Harwood wrote several contracts for the two

together to perform work for local clients. Benjamin Sears and Hiram Waters were obviously close, but it is unclear whether Sears worked at a journeyman level for Waters, or as equal partners, or if they simply worked independently and collaborated on jobs. Waters was almost ten years older than Sears, but they were also personal friends – Sears married Waters's niece Mary Ann Waters, and Benjamin and Mary Ann were the only attendants at Hiram Waters's wedding to Diadamia. Sears and Waters worked together, socialized together, and raised their children as neighbors during the same years in the center of Old Bennington.

Like busy contractors today, Waters often had to juggle more than one project at a time. When he was supervising the lumbering of his woodlot in Bennington, he had to send a man with directions to his hand Samuel Fay, working on a project in Arlington. (11/22/33) And when he contracted to make a new factory for Isaac Doolittle, he hired Elijah Atkins to do the roofing and set the windows in the 80-foot building. Harwood mentions, "H. felt very well respecting it & resolved to get the whole building jobbed off in like manner." (3/14/32)

In some cases, Waters had to compete for work. March 3, 1836, he received a letter from Garrett Van Hoosen inviting him to bid on a new building for the Mapletown Liberal Religious Society, an abolitionist church in Hoosick. Van Hoosen wanted him to meet with a committee about the details. Waters was ambivalent about working by committee, and was ultimately underbid by Edward Welling of North Bennington. (3/3/36 and 3/12/36)

Recession, 1836-1837

At the end of April 1836, two full years after the fire, Harwood writes: "Hiram Waters' new house nearly finished." (4/28/36) In May, the "hands [were] very industriously finishing new house." At the end of the month, Harwood's farmhand George went to the "raising of Hiram Waters' shop." (5/21/36 and 5/23/36)

That June, Harwood was at Waters's house in town writing accounts. "Having finished writing – he [Waters] took me all over his new house & cellar to let me see how convenient & well furnished it was. Cellar faithfully flagged – walls smoothly finished in good durable style – in NW quarter of which stood a capacious reservoir built of bricks closely cemented -- furnished with copper pump &c – to contain a large supply of rain water – at present however —so cracked could not contain any – must be repaired." (6/11/36)

The year was busy for Hiram Waters. Summer found him building a boarding house near Hinsdill's mill with Sam Judd Junior. (8/26/36). In

August, another of Waters's men, Mr. Shaw, was seriously ill and needed a relative to come and take care of him. (8/27/36) The end of 1836 also brought a third child to the Waters household on Christmas day. In February of 1837, rumors of Stephen Hinsdill's insolvency were confirmed. Harwood reports that his neighbor Mr. Root "informed me of the Failure of Deac. S. Hinsdill which was announced last evening! Subsequently learned that the amount for which he was supposed to have failed was about \$130,000!!! It was an event that was looked for by many as inevitable. . . ." But liquidation of debts were given priority by the court so Waters was protected from Hinsdill's losses.

Harwood's diaries in the spring and summer of 1837 reflected the national economic decline. On a June visit to Elisha Waters in Troy, Harwood heard that there was much "stagnation in business of all kinds. Poor people in great distress for want of employment." Hiram Waters owed Harwood \$100 from a loan in the fall of 1836, and in June Harwood wrote: "Rec'd call from H. Waters -- Some complaint of hard times & bad debts -- all however met manfully -- very little grumbling."

Although Hinsdill's businesses had failed, Waters still found work, this time on the Truman Estes factory on Paran Creek in North Bennington: "Called to view Estes Factory -- walls of which were finished -- commenced plating [plastering] interior. Hiram Waters & hands employed on steeple -- perhaps had but one with him -- very generously shewed father & me all over. Well guarded against fire. Went up on deck of steeple -- hand engaged in painting outside that thing in imitation of stone wo'k where it rises from roof. Rec'd from hand of s'd Hiram twenty five dollars to be endorsed on \$100 note." (6/26/37) An additional twenty five was paid three days later, and the balance of the loan was paid in August. (8/14/37)

The economy continued to falter. In August, Harwood received a letter from Caleb Brown, who had bought his production of cheese in previous years, indicating that he might not be able to buy in the current season. Harwood writes, ". . . whether he would want much cheese again could not say . . . Hoped I passed through the Squall without much loss. If so -- had need to be thankful, for almost everyone had shared in the general ruin of the country." (8/15/37).

Conclusions

Hiram Harwood continued his diary through October of 1837. Waters's activities are mentioned almost daily as they had been since his marriage to Diadamia. But then Harwood became progressively more debilitated by a mysterious illness, having nervous anxiety attacks and pains

in various parts of his body. The diarist mentioned suicides and deaths in the community as he fell into a deep depression. Waters, Diadamia, and other family members tried to cheer and encourage him, but as Robert Shalhope has made clear in his *A Tale of New England*, Harwood fell into a bout of mental illness that ended with his commitment to the insane asylum, today's Brattleboro Retreat. Ultimately, two years later, Hiram Harwood hung himself in the barn that Hiram Waters had built for him. Shalhope theorizes that Harwood's depression and illness may have been the result of a serious head injury sustained falling out of the wagon.

Hiram Harwood's death was surely a serious shock to both families. The friendship that began with making music and playing the flute had evolved over years into a deep family bond, and Waters relied on Harwood as an older male in the family to help with his business. Yet after Harwood's death, the family soldiered on. Harwood's wife Sally, sister Lydia, and his elderly father Benjamin pulled together to run the farm. Ultimately, the job passed to Harwood's son Hopkins, who continued operations for fifty years until he lost the farm to debt in 1889, as reported by Shalhope.

Waters's carpentry business continued successfully for many years, but one wonders if the link between the two families was diminished after Hiram Harwood's death. The women would certainly have remained close – Diadamia and her sister Lydia were particularly supportive of one another throughout the years. Harwood's daughter Adeline, too, would have continued to remain close having spent so much of her time in the Waters home.

For purposes of research, the Harwood diaries provide detailed proof of when the Hiram Waters home on Monument Avenue was built, and the date of its reconstruction after the fire. The original dwelling was started by 1829, and it was occupied several months after Waters's marriage to Diadamia Harwood in 1831. Hiram Waters continued to work on the kitchen of the house in 1832, and the original structure -- saved from the 1834 fire -- was renovated, and perhaps expanded, between 1834 and 1836. The carpentry shop was re-erected in early 1836, and presumably finished within a year or two of its raising.

The great bonus of reading the Harwood diaries was getting to know Hiram Waters himself. After the death of Hiram Harwood, knowledge of the family continues but only through public records, which are far less intimate. The 1840s were apparently a booming time for Waters's business. The census that year discloses that ten people were living in the house and shop -- Hiram, Diadamia, 1 girl between 15 and 19 (probably a young housemaid), the three Waters girls and 4 additional men between 15 and 29. Five of these people were said to be engaged in manufacture or



Hiram Waters's elaborate cornice also followed Benjamin's plan.

trade – presumably Hiram and 4 apprentices or journeymen.

The 1850s, by contrast, seem to have been leaner times. The census shows that the house was inhabited by the Waters family plus one 20-year-old apprentice, Dewey Dunham. The Bennington town clerk's records show that Waters mortgaged his land in 1850 to Isaac McDaniels, then sold properties to Henry Root in 1852 and S.H. Blackmer in 1853 and 1854. He mortgaged the house and joinery shop to Alvin Benedict in 1853-55 and paid off this debt in 1860. It is not known if these financial stresses were due to economic conditions leading to the nationwide financial panic of 1857, or some other

financial duress.

According to property records, the house was legally divided into two dwellings in 1856-57 when Waters sold the shop side of the double structure to Mrs. Mary F. Fassett, a dressmaker, who lived there with her daughter Catherine and son-in-law William Haswell. This may have been when the left front room was added to the original structure. This room may have served as Hiram's new shop with its own separate front door, or it is possible that Waters used one of his outbuildings as a shop.

Diadamia lived until 1864. Daughters Lydia, Adeline, and Mary Jane grew up to lead productive lives. Two remained unmarried – Lydia kept house and Adeline became a music teacher. Mary Jane married a young missionary, Frederick Hicks, but was soon widowed. She moved back into the family home with her infant son, to live with her two sisters and elderly father and became a school teacher. Mary Jane's child, Frederick, spent



The Uel Robinson house on Monument Avenue, Old Bennington, is one of several extant houses attributed to Hiram Waters.

his childhood in the house and then died of appendicitis while studying at Williams College. The oldest daughter, Lydia, died in 1884.

Hiram Waters's contribution to the visual landscape of Old Bennington was enormous. Unfortunately, his brother-in-law's diaries provide only about fifteen years of data, but if these are any indication, Waters was a prolific architect and builder. When Harwood died, Waters was at the prime of his career. Subsequent census records confirm that his business continued to thrive for many years. As the town's most experienced master carpenter, he must have been the architect of many of Bennington's Greek Revival structures well into the 1840s, '50s, and even '60s. Hiram Waters lived until 1890 at the age of 94 and is buried in the Bennington Center Cemetery beside Diadamia. □



A section gang building the Lye Brook Railroad near Bourne Pond in a remote section of the Bennington County town of Winhall.

William Gove Collection, Vermont Historical Society

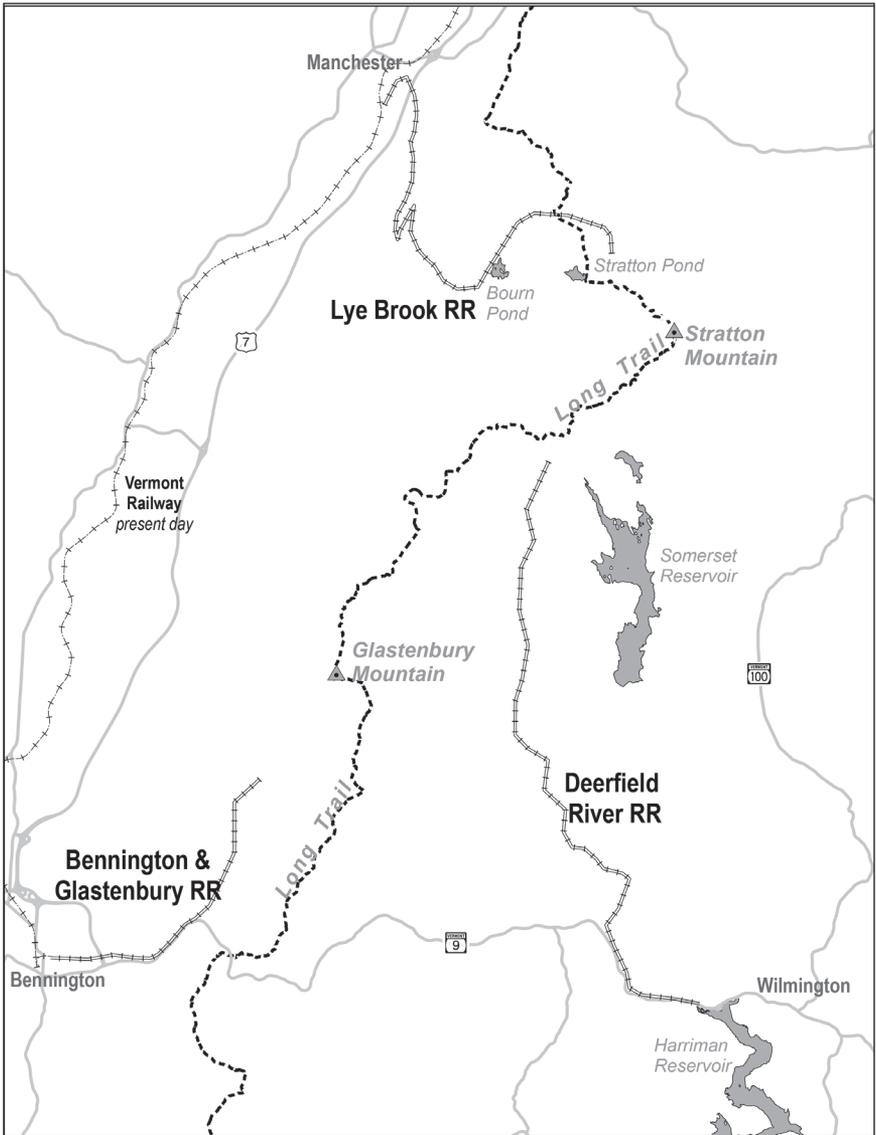
Vermont's Long Trail and logging railroads

Preston Bristow

Vermont's logging railroads lacked the sheer scale of those in New York's Adirondack Mountains, where no less than twenty-two logging railroads reached deep to extract its old-growth forests. Vermont also lacked villainous timber barons like New Hampshire's J.E. Henry, the "wood butcher" and legendary railway logger of the White Mountains, who was famously quoted as saying, "I never see the tree yit that didn't mean a damned sight more to me goin' under the saw than it did standin' on a mountain."

Yet the Green Mountains were plied by logging railroads, and three of them are intertwined in the history of Vermont's Long Trail. The Long Trail is the creation of the Green Mountain Club (GMC), which was established in 1910 with a mission "to make the mountains of Vermont play a larger part in the life of the people." The GMC set out immediately to establish the "footpath in the wilderness," which extends the length of the Green Mountains from the Massachusetts line to the Canadian border, some 265 miles. In 1971 the Vermont General Assembly recognized the GMC as "the founder, sponsor, defender and protector" of the Long Trail system.

Considered to be the first long-distance hiking trail in the nation, the Long Trail was the inspiration for the Appalachian Trail, a 2,175-mile footpath from Maine to Georgia. In fact, the founders of both the Long



Map shows locations of the three logging railroad lines that became part of Vermont's original Long Trail or Catamount ski trail. Shown for comparison are the modern Route 7 and present-day Vermont Railway between Bennington and Manchester.

Trail (James P. Taylor) and the Appalachian Trail (Benton MacKaye) credit a hike up Stratton Mountain in southern Vermont as the place where they received their inspiration. The Appalachian Trail coincides with the Long Trail from the Massachusetts line to "Maine Junction" at a point just north of US Route 4 near Killington.

In the early days, the challenge before GMC volunteers was to quickly

cut and blaze as many miles of trail as possible. With the northern sections of the Long Trail laid out first, the GMC's slogan in 1914 was "Killington to Massachusetts" and the Club's Bennington Section, or chapter, took up the challenge. Much of the initial Long Trail south of Killington was hastily routed over boggy and deeply rutted logging roads that did not offer a pleasant hiking experience. Logging railways offered a better hiking experience, and because these railways were abandoned they came to be increasingly used. The GMC has published two official histories, *Green Mountain Adventure, Vermont's Long Trail* in 1985 and *A Century in the Mountains, Celebrating Vermont's Long Trail* in 2009 and neither makes mention of logging railroads. But their use is indisputable following a review of early editions of the GMC's Long Trail Guide.



The train crew poses at the Deerfield River across White Barn Flats.
William Gove Collection, Vermont Historical Society

The Bennington & Glastenbury Railroad

The first abandoned logging railroad grade to be utilized by the Long Trail was the Bennington & Glastenbury, which is chronicled by Tyler Resch in *Glastenbury: The History of a Vermont Ghost Town*, published in 2008. This rail line extended nine miles from Bennington through Woodford Hollow and up Bolles Brook to "the Forks," a fork in Bolles Brook and the one-time logging village of South Glastenbury.

The venerable first edition of the Long Trail Guide published in 1917 describes an "optional route" of the Long Trail as follows: "The optional route from G.M.C. camp at Hell Hollow follows Glastenbury stream about 1½ miles then along old railroad track to Old Glastenbury, 1½ miles further. (Look out for bad holes in track.)" This "optional route" is maintained until the sixth edition (1924) of the Guide when it is

downgraded to a side trail. Then, in the eighth edition (1930) of the Guide, following a major relocation, it becomes the main route of the Long Trail and it remained as the main route until the twentieth edition (1971) of the Guide, after which it was abandoned following another major relocation. All told, this 1½-mile stretch of railroad bed served for seven years as an optional route, six years as a side trail, and 41 years as the main route of the Long Trail!

The Bennington & Glastenbury Railroad has a fascinating story. It was established in 1873 as a logging railroad and continued for 22 years until 1889, when the trees were gone. Then, in 1895 it was resurrected as a trolley line by the Bennington & Woodford Electric Railway Company. The logging village of South Glastenbury at the end of the line was transformed for only one summer into an upscale resort with hotel, clubhouse, dance hall, dining room, and casino. Alas, the trolley line was irreparably damaged in the “freshet” or flood that fall and the resort was abandoned, no doubt resulting in great financial loss to its investors.

The 17th edition (1963) of the Long Trail Guide refers to this conversion from logging railroad to trolley when it describes the trail as following “the grade of a former lumber railroad (later a trolley line) which extended from Bennington into this valley.” The railway had been abandoned for 16 years when this route of the Long Trail was first blazed in 1914.

The Deerfield River Railroad

The second abandoned logging railroad grade to be utilized by the Long Trail was the Deerfield River Railroad. *The Coming of the Train, Volume I*, published in 2008 by Brian Donelson, chronicles the Hoosac Tunnel & Wilmington Railroad and includes a chapter on the Deerfield River Railroad, a logging line that extended from Wilmington 23 miles north through Searsburg and Somerset and into the town of Stratton. Donelson’s sequel, *The Coming of the Train, Volume II*, published in 2011, has much more on the Deerfield River Railroad.

The original route of the Long Trail, which followed “practically level country” along woods roads from the Somerset Dam to Grout Job (near Grout Pond), and the abandonment of the northernmost portion of the Deerfield River Railroad in 1919, offered a more interesting route along the Deerfield River. The 2nd edition (1920) has the Long Trail following a three-mile stretch of the newly abandoned railway where it remained for 10 years until the 8th edition (1930) of the Guide when a major relocation moved the trail to its present ridgeline route north of Glastenbury Mountain.

The Deerfield River Railroad, although primarily a logging railroad, was chartered by the state of Vermont as a common carrier. Its founder, Amos Blanton, had visions of his railroad extending all the way to Manchester and continuing to carry freight and passengers after the logging was done. But the Deerfield River Railroad was to succumb to the growing need for electric power. In 1920 it was purchased by a subsidiary of the New England Power Company and railway operations ceased in 1921. By 1923 the railroad's base of operations at Mountain Mills was submerged under the power company's new reservoir, called Lake Whitingham, later to be named for utility executive Henry I. Harriman.

The Deerfield River Railroad does have one claim to fame, however. Between its 23-mile main line and its many extensive branch lines, it is considered by some to be the largest logging railroad in the northeast. No one is quite sure of the Deerfield River Railroad's end point. An early document called for the northern terminus to be "a point at or near the east bank of Bourn Pond," but it appears that the rail line never reached quite as far as the Stratton-Arlington Road, also known as the Kelly Stand Road.

The Rich Lumber Company's Lye Brook Railroad

The third abandoned logging railroad grade to be utilized by the Long Trail was the Lye Brook Railroad, of the Rich Lumber Company. Its 16-mile Lye Brook line climbed an incredible grade out of Manchester up Lye Brook Hollow to Bourn Pond and east into the town of Winhall, to the north of



Holding back a heavy load on the Lye Brook Railroad switchback on Manchester's East Mountain.

William Gove Collection, Vermont Historical Society



View looks west along tracks of the Deerfield River Railroad in Wilmington toward Mountain Mills, a company town that was fully submerged in 1923 by the rising waters of Lake Whitingham, later called the Harriman Reservoir, part of a major hydroelectric project.

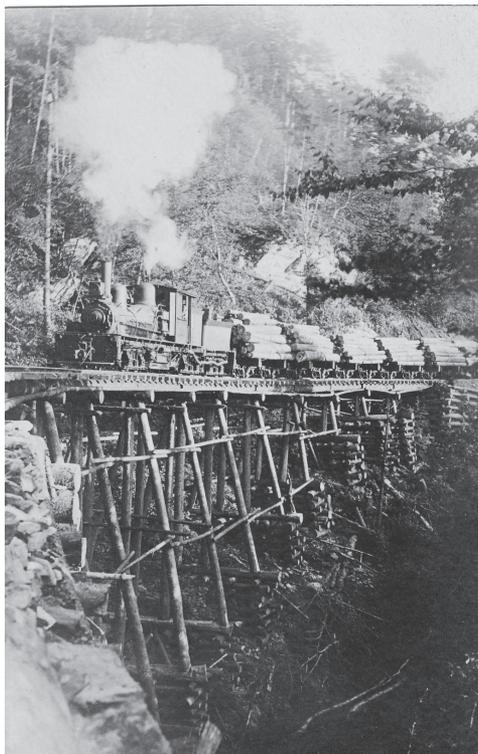
UVM Center for Digital Initiatives

Stratton Pond. The company and its shortline railroad are documented in a chapter by William Gove in *Rails of the North Woods* published in 1978.

Originally the Long Trail extended north directly from Stratton Mountain to Prospect Rock and bypassed Stratton and Bourn Ponds altogether. The 4th (1922) edition of the Long Trail Guide, however, offers this tantalizing alternative: “The [Long] Trail emerges from dense second growth to a large clearing with the remains of a railroad. This may be followed west (not marked) to Bourn Pond by always following uphill; the roadbed makes many wide serpentine curves and crosses some ravines by bridges of huge logs.”

By the 6th (1924) edition of the Guide the Long Trail was routed by both Bourn and Stratton ponds. The Trail’s route north of Bourn Pond followed three miles of a different branch of the Lye Brook Railroad than the one described above. The Long Trail remained in this route along a branch of the Lye Brook Railroad for 54 years until the 21st (1978) edition of the Guide when a major relocation took Bourn Pond off the Long Trail.

Flush from a successful railway logging operation in the Cranberry Lake area of New York’s Adirondacks, the Rich Lumber Company purchased the standing timber on what they thought was a 12,000-acre tract atop the East Mountain plateau (where Bourn and Stratton Ponds are located) and built a sawmill in Manchester, Vermont. To access the plateau they had to build a logging railroad up through Lye Brook Hollow. Immigrant workers literally carved the rail bed into the side of the Hollow, and to avoid a grade that exceeded six percent required a switchback about half-way up. The railroad



A trainload of logs on the Lye Brook high trestle.
William Gove Collection, Vermont Historical Society

began operations in 1914 and by 1919 the timber supply had run out. The 12,000 acres turned out to be 7,500 acres and the rail operation came to a premature end. The Rich Lumber Company was liquidated in 1920.

Portions of the rail bed of the Lye Brook Railroad can be walked today. The former three-mile stretch of the Long Trail that followed a branch of the Lye Brook Railroad from Bourn Pond north to William B. Douglas Shelter is now the Branch Pond Trail. The base of the Lye Brook Trail and the spur at 2.3 miles up the Lye Brook Trail that leads to a high waterfall also follows the main line of the old Lye Brook Railroad.

Portions of the rail bed of the Deerfield River Railroad can also be followed in winter on cross-country skis. The Catamount Trail is a wintertime counterpart to the Long Trail, a cross-country trail extending the length of Vermont from the Massachusetts line to the Canadian border. The Catamount Trail Association was founded in 1984 and its trail was finished in 2007. About three miles of the Catamount Trail from the north end of Harriman Reservoir to a point north of the Searsburg Reservoir follow the Deerfield River Railroad. In addition, the first 13 miles of the Catamount Trail north of the Massachusetts line follow the abandoned Hoosac Tunnel & Wilmington Railroad (aka Hoot, Toot & Whistle), the Deerfield River Railroad's connecting railroad.

Was the Green Mountain Club's early use of abandoned logging railways the first blazed and maintained "rail-trail" in the nation? The Robbins Trail in Pennsylvania's Susquehanna Valley, although barely one mile long, appears to hold that record. The line was converted to a bicycle path in the 1890s, making it the oldest documented rail-trail in the country. Even among hiking trails, the Long Trail's use of logging railroads falls short.

According to the 1st (1907) edition of New Hampshire's White Mountain Guide, a trail into Zealand Notch following the abandoned Zealand Valley Railroad was blazed by the Appalachian Mountain Club in 1906, some eight years before the abandoned Bennington & Glastenbury Railroad was blazed by the GMC in 1914.

It may seem incongruous at first that something as massive and industrial as a railroad would be located in designated Wilderness areas throughout the northeast. Yet it does make sense. Only the most remote areas that could not be feasibly accessed by any other means were logged by rail. About nineteen logging railroads operated in the White Mountains, eight in the Green Mountains, twenty-two in the Adirondacks, and a handful in the Catskills, but virtually none is found in the Berkshires or elsewhere in the southern New England states. The hills of southern New England were more accessible and less wild.

Today, these logging railways have left little trace. In the construction of rail lines through forested land it was much easier to construct a log trestle or bridge to span ravines and swampy areas than to cut and fill, and so the many log trestles that were built are long gone. The rails and spikes were also mostly pulled when the lines were abandoned. I have traced some of these railroad lines and found them difficult to follow.

The public hue and cry surrounding logging railroads stripping the White Mountains led to passage of the Weeks Act in 1911 establishing national forests in the eastern United States; and the advent of the logging railroad led to the creation of New York's Adirondack and Catskill state parks. Vermont's logging railroads seemed more benign. One gets the sense in reading the early Long Trail Guide descriptions that the GMC trail blazers stumbled upon these abandoned rail lines without knowing much about them or being much concerned by them. Vermont's logging railroads may have lacked the sheer scale of Adirondack lumber railroads or the villainy of the White Mountain timber barons, but they are a colorful part of the Long Trail's history worthy of documentation. □

Suggestions for further reading

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Early tourist postcards of the Mohawk Trail feature “the wigwam,” the Whitcomb Summit, and famous Hairpin Turn on the way down to North Adams.

Heydays along the Mohawk Trail

Lauren R. Stevens

Engineering that was remarkable for its day in 1914 created automobile passage over the forbidding Hoosac Mountains, second in these parts only to boring a railroad tunnel through the same rock some four decades earlier. But my interest is more in the context of the construction. When you set out for an automobile ride, is it the trip itself, seeing the sights and stopping occasionally for snacks and gifts? Or is it your goal to avoid towns and get to your destination as soon as possible? The centennial of the Mohawk Trail automobile road defines that issue.

Nowadays traffic on Route 2, the Mohawk Trail, only faintly approximates what it must have been like for 40 busy years after one of the first scenic highways in the United States opened. The trail, which officially winds 65 miles between Williamstown and Orange, in Massachusetts, was dedicated 100 years ago, on October 22, 1914, setting off, I trust, suitable celebration this year—but maybe not a pageant.

My initial interest in the Mohawk Trail was an effort to recreate the 100-mile-long Indian footpaths that joined the Connecticut and Hudson valleys by following the Deerfield and Hoosic rivers. This route opened up a major way to Canada via the Owl Kill and Lake Champlain. It was used by Indians, eighteenth-century white warriors like Ethan Allen, Benedict Arnold, and Henry David Thoreau, among others.

The footpath recreation project began when Michael Linde of the National Park Service, who was working with the Deerfield and Hoosic watershed associations, noted that it appeared such a trail could be created. I then taught a Winter Study at Williams College, sending students out to explore a route on a relatively snowless January 1992. They came back enthusiastic, noting that the section along the Deerfield River already existed, although overgrown. Maps drawn by David Costello, one of the

highway engineers, showed the original Indian trace, which mostly followed the path that the class proposed. Then the two watershed associations worked with several not-for-profit and government entities to get it on the ground. Other groups, notably the Manice Center, Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, the Student Conservation Association, and Berkshire Natural Resources Council later became driving forces. I'm happy to report that with only two short breaks you can walk off-road from the town of Deerfield to North Adams, with more to come. Call it the Mahican-Mohawk Trail to honor both tribes.

The Mohawk Trail was a product of the love affair Americans have had with the automobile since Henry Ford made it popular. The trail defined an era when roads connected towns and encouraged leisurely travel with the opportunity to stop here and there to savor the local scene. Those days ended for the Mohawk Trail in 1957 with completion of the Massachusetts Turnpike, which drew traffic away from Route 2 and signaled locally that highways were to avoid towns and get drivers to their destinations as quickly as possible, as the Interstate system does.

In Colonial days, almost all European arrivals in Berkshire County came from the south, so former residents of Connecticut settled most of the towns. Williams College's original ties, presidents and tutors, were not with Harvard but with Yale. A few of Dutch descent trickled in from the west, as did Indians, but the Hoosac Mountain was a barrier to the east, surmounted in Colonial and early Republic days only by a narrow, steep, twisting carting trail that followed an Indian trace. Indeed, someone's oxen fell to its death in the section passing through what's now Mohawk Trail State Forest.

Originally the Mohawk Trail was a state road project to get automobiles 16 miles over the Hoosac Mountain, connecting North Adams with Charlemont in a



The "Improved Order of Red Men" erected this "Hail to the Sunrise" statue in Charlemont in 1932 "in memory of the Mohawk Indian," who, incidentally, would not have been admitted to their order.



An imaginative font incorporated various views of the trail in this postcard.

Tripadvisor

dramatic way. Contrary to instinct, the section runs more north-to-south than west-to-east. It includes the six miles along Cold River that Tropical Storm Irene washed out in late August 2011.

The state did not intend to create a historic icon, as Robert I. Quay explained in his 2004 Williams College thesis, “Mohawks, Model Ts, and Monuments.” The Indian association seems to have sprung from a pageant director’s notion, based perhaps on the phrase “old Mohawk war-path” in Arthur Latham Perry’s *Origins in Williamstown* (1894). It is hard to know for sure what Perry meant by the phrase, though.

If you happen to take a stroll in the Hopper on the western side of Mount Greylock, you will cross a bridge near the beginning of the Money Brook Trail. And if you look closely you will see a small plaque dedicating it to Quay, who was active with the Williams Outing Club. Quay’s plans immediately after graduation were to take an extended bike ride in the southwestern United States. Unfortunately for this promising young historian, an automobile struck him—a sad end for someone who added so much to the history of our highway.

That highway follows ancient Indian paths, although not as closely as the foot path. The Hudson Valley was Mahican homeland, however, and the Berkshire area through which the trail passed was Mahican hunting grounds—or possibly even the site of more permanent dwellings. During the Colonial period, the Mahicans—defined to Anglo history in large part by their opposition to the Mohawks who made the Mohawk River their base—went from being the dominant presence along the Hudson to a position subordinate to the Mohawks, who dispersed, departing almost

completely from there by the nineteenth century.

So, then, how was it that the Indian path became the “Mohawk Trail”? Although Mohawks occasionally passed over the Hoosac Mountains, they really had little connection with the area. The answer derives from who named it. That probably had something to do with a seventeenth-century Mohawk raid on the Pocumtucks in the Connecticut Valley, which removed the Indian presence from the Deerfield area in timely fashion for the arrival of settlers of European extraction. They took over the farming fields the Pocumtuck had cleared in some of the richest alluvial soil in New England. Although early on the Mohawks were seen as more friendly to the Dutch and English settlers, it was the Mahicans who, in their reduced state, settled at Stockbridge, fought for the British against the French and later against the British on the side of the would-be Americans.

Perhaps Perry misspoke. Yet even if you read James Fenimore Cooper’s *The Last of the Mohicans*, which sides with the Mahicans, you have a sense that the Mohawks in general had better public relations, or at least were more exciting than their rivals. They did win, temporarily, after all. So the name Perry dropped was appealing to those who organized a massive “Pageant of the Old Mohawk Trail,” celebrating the opening of the automobile highway.

Although the state had no idea of titling the road, a historian of the time, Judge John Aiken, contributed by describing an “immemorial pathway” and C.Q. Richmond, a prominent North Adams businessman, may have been the first to call the improved road “The Mohawk Trail.” His idea was that the pageant should raise enough money to create and install a very large statue of an Indian on one of the summits of the Hoosacs. He contacted Margaret MacLaren Eager, of Deerfield, who was a professional pageant director.

Such community pageants were popular early in the 20th century. They tended to follow largely the same themes, all the while asserting the unique history and privileged nature of a town—a paradox indeed. The pageant program tells the story, in case the thousands in attendance can’t hear the unamplified spoken lines. The pageant started with the receding waters of the glacial Lake Bascom, personified by young girls as the Spirits of the Waves. The First Indian, played by prominent Adams resident Theodore Plunkett, paddled across an (actual) pond. The sun rose. The Spirit of the Pines pointed out the trail, which Plunkett ascended. Indeed, the “old trail” was tied into virtually every scene.

The North Adams Lodge, Loyal Order of the Moose, a fraternal organization that had been formed recently and was limited to Caucasian men, played most of the Indians. The actors wore dark-colored long

underwear to indicate skin color. In no case did Indians play Indians, although descendants of early settlers often played their ancestors. For instance, John Rice, sixth-generation descendant of first Charlemont settler Moses Rice, played his ancestor. The next scene depicted the treachery of the Pocumtucks, which drew the Mohawk over the trail for revenge. The building and capture of Fort Massachusetts followed. And then came early settlers, and so forth, the area getting better and better through the stages of agriculture, industrialization, immigration and modern times, ending with a depiction of peace.

The clear pattern, as with most such New England town pageants, was an almost straight line of improvement from savagery to civilization, with all the benefits appertaining thereto. The pageants credited the Indians with starting the process and did not dramatize the violence. It was not as though Europeans drove out the original inhabitants; rather both peoples were simply playing their parts in a manifest destiny, thus serving as a balm to any spectators whose consciences might have been tender.

This historical interpretation was compounded, when the highway opened, by the fascination Americans held for a time of romantic visions of Western Indians and the closing of the American frontier. “Wyoming Bill’s Wild West Show,” which insisted on historical accuracy, had wowed a North Adams audience a week before the pageant. After the 1890 declaration from the Census Bureau that the United States no longer had a Western frontier, Frederick Jackson Turner declared (in 1893) that up until that point the entire history of the country was that of colonizing westward. First the newly arrived European found himself inadequately prepared, then he mastered Indian skills, then gradually he transformed the wilderness—not to reclaim Europe, but to create something new, informed by wilderness and Indian roots. Something American.

Western expansion fascinated the country precisely because it seemed to be over. The pageant picked up the theme: that somehow the settling and civilizing of western Massachusetts were of the same nature, only earlier, as the settling and civilizing of the West were all part of the grand scheme of this country’s destiny. If we were to sum up the colonial adventure in the greater Hudson Valley in one word, it would be “Beaver,” yet a quite different creature might depict settlement of the West. There were similarities, of course: Indians were driven out everywhere and modern highways often seemed to follow ancient Indian paths, simply proving, once again, how the country needed to move from the crudeness of Indian days to the marvels of 20th century engineering.

Thus in the pursuit of glorifying the local area, the Indian portion of the massive “Pageant of the Old Mohawk Trail,” which played to more

than 10,000 spectators on four occasions at Hoosac Valley Park, near Hodges Cross Road in North Adams, in June of 1914, gave the wrong tribe a starring role and confused area history with westward expansion. The Mohawk name stuck and the account inspired entrepreneurs, like Charles Canedy, who established themselves along the Trail. Canedy, a photographer for *The North Adams Transcript*, built a gift shop and cabins at Whitcomb Summit and at the present Golden Eagle site on the Hairpin Turn.

Quay's thesis rightly cautions against making fun of the dozens of funky tourist stops, based on his experience of interviewing descendants of some of the people involved in establishing the Indian-themed restaurants, cabins, and gift shops along the trail. In a combination the entrepreneurs attempted to make a living by serving the public. They created enjoyable holiday outings for people unlikely to own a great camp in the Adirondacks or waterfront property in Manchester-by-the-Sea.

As the brochure writers saw it, automobile drivers could educate themselves by recapitulating the pioneer experience. They drove west up and into the wilderness of Hoosac Mountain in the town of Florida and descended into the civilization of North Adams. Although there was no overall plan, individual entrepreneurs established a linear, Western-theme-park of Indian-made souvenirs along the way. They even considered asking real Indians from Maine to set up camp along side the trail during the tourist season to manufacture the ornaments, moccasins and headdresses. Apparently the real Indians declined.

Concerned about the proliferation of billboards and perhaps of shops along the scenic route, efforts soon began to maintain the view shed. This led in 1921 to the state legislature establishing the Mohawk Trail State Forest along both sides of the Cold River and the trail. The Civilian Conservation Corps augmented the original campground there with cabins in the 1930s.

Another trend of the times is encapsulated in the title of a series of guidebooks called *See American First*. A combination of nationalism and anti-Europeanism, facilitated by the coming of World War One, the sentiment swept the country that America had as much or more to offer than Europe anyway. This popularized the driving adventure from Boston west 125 miles over a road that while much-improved contained steep slopes, sharp turns, and was not paved with asphalt nor plowed until 1929—finally giving Floridians a break from shoveling the highway in the winter. Automobiles of the day provided their own sense of adventure, given the tendencies of radiators to boil over, tires to flatten, and engines to sputter.

The pageant's expenses tamped down the proceeds and, for that

matter, bookkeeping seems not to have been careful, so Richmond's large Indian statue at, say, Whitcomb Summit, was never built. But in a way, it was. The Indian theme culminated, as Quay points out, with the erection of a 28-foot Indian, in Plains-style garb, that in 1954 gave the name Big Indian to a souvenir shop in Shelburne—accompanied by a Western Indian tepee and a fake horse pulling a fake wagon presumably across the Western plains. Quay suggests that an Indian inappropriate to this area was not the result of ignorance; rather it was a deliberate attempt to capitalize on the dramatic and immediate Western story, with the Mohawk Trail as prologue. The Indian statue arose, however, shortly before the MassPike opened, so the shop, which recently changed its name to Native Views, “with special respect for the Native American people,” joins the pageant as bookends to the heydays of the Trail.

Other anomalies abound. The Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks erected “The Elk on the Trail” in 1923 which, if not Indian-themed, to the casual passerby might represent a wilder day in the Wild West—although the model for the animal itself dwelled in the Bronx Zoo. In Charlemont stands “Hail to the Sunrise,” the statue of a Mohawk Indian erected in 1932 by the Improved Order of Red Men, a fraternal organization limited to white men—Indians need not apply. The group has not been able to substantiate its claim to descent from the disguised patriots who dumped tea into Boston Harbor. In 1961 they placed Indian busts on the Mohawk Bridge over the Deerfield River.

The pageant featured the Indian and French attacks on Fort Massachusetts. The current memorial to that fort, an outpost on the Indian trail, is located adjacent to the Price Chopper supermarket in North Adams. A tree is a replacement for the one, felled by Dutch elm disease, planted by historian Perry to commemorate the fort. The chimney is left over from a replica of the fort, erected in 1933 as part of a trail-inspired historic revival.

So the so-called Mohawk Trail may not be a satisfactory reminder of the Indians and Colonial days, but it serves as an apt reminder of the days when driving was, well, more enjoyable. The late Fred Stocking, a colleague in the Williams College English department, remembered driving the trail with his father. The most powerful gear in the family Model T was reverse, so he and his father would climb from North Adams to the Western Summit—backwards. Now that's fun! □

Bob Quay was kind enough to acknowledge my assistance with his thesis, but its assistance in this paper dwarfs any help I may have given him. LRS

Book Reviews

Robert Frost's correspondence: the early years

Reviewed by Lea Newman

Celebrated poet and international icon Robert Frost was a neighbor of ours in the greater Bennington community from 1920 to 1938 when he made his home in South Shaftsbury – and he returned here on a more permanent basis in 1963 when his ashes were buried in the Bennington Center Cemetery near the Old First Congregational Church and directly behind the Bennington Museum. It is therefore most appropriate that the long-awaited publication of the first volume of the definitive edition of the collected letters of Robert Frost should warrant a review in this journal, published by the museum and designed to showcase articles of interest to the museum's region.



Robert Frost and his writing board.
Courtesy of Robert Frost Stone House Museum

The letters collected in this first volume were written between 1886 and the early months of 1920, ending before Frost purchased the Peleg Cole house later that year and moved his family into the building that is now the Robert Frost Stone House Museum at 121 Route 7A in Shaftsbury. Readers will have to wait for the second volume of this series to see the letters written during his time among us, but this first volume offers essential insights into the formative years that made him the quintessential New England poet who would become known around the world.

What these letters reveal above all is Frost's determination to become a published poet in the face of overwhelming odds. Nowhere is this more clear than in the lengthy correspondence he maintained with Susan Hayes Ward, the poetry editor of the New York *Independent*, who in 1894 published the first poem Frost ever placed as a paid poet. In his first letter to

her, in reference to his difficulty in getting his poems accepted, he asserts an amazing confidence in himself as a poet. He claims: “even in my failures I find all the promise I require to justify the astonishing magnitude of my ambition.” The fact that his first book of poetry did not get published until twenty years later – and that he had to go to England to find a publisher – attests to the dedication he maintained during those two decades of disappointment and frustration.

This first volume covers those twenty years of failure and the fourteen subsequent years of success during which he saw the publication of three well-received books of poetry and the appointment to a teaching post at prestigious Amherst College. As a result these letters present a cornucopia of immense variety. At one extreme we have his first letter to Harriet Monroe, the editor of *Poetry* magazine, sent to her from England in 1913, when he was so little known that he felt compelled “to say that I am an American and not an Englishman, for fear being the latter might be a bar to your consideration.” At the other extreme is the letter he sent to the Amherst College Alumni Association in 1920, in which he announces his decision “to leave teaching and go back to farming and writing.” It turned out to be a temporary resignation because he returned to Amherst College repeatedly, but at this point he was an established poet and confident enough of his ability to support his family primarily through his poetry that he could boldly assert his independence.

To fully appreciate this meticulously documented volume, however, readers would benefit mightily from a close reading of its preface and introduction before embarking on the journey through the letters. Here the editors state their main goal. They intend to clarify the context of each letter by taking into account to whom Frost is writing and the situation that prompts the correspondence. To assist the reader on both counts, they provide headnotes and footnotes to accompany the individual letters as well as a “Biographical Glossary of Correspondents” and an objective and detailed chronology that covers the years the letters were written. For readers unfamiliar with the details of Frost’s life story, the chronology will aid in grasping the full significance of many of the letters.

For more experienced Frost readers, this edition of Frost’s letters will provide a corrective perspective to the edition that preceded it, Lawrance Thompson’s 1964 *Selected Letters of Robert Frost*. In his introduction Thompson describes the letters in shockingly negative terms. According to him, they reveal Frost’s persistent “gloom, jealousies, obsessive resentments, sulking, displays of temper, nervous rages and vindictive retaliations.” In contrast to this biased pejorative approach, the editors of the current edition allow the letters to speak for themselves, enabling readers to come to know

Frost on his own terms. Few will find evidence of the monstrous traits that Thompson projected onto Frost.

For example, the many letters Frost wrote to his daughter Lesley (signed “Papa”) show a caring and supportive father. I was surprised to find no letters to Elinor White, his high-school sweetheart who became his wife in 1893. I queried Don Sheehy, one of the editors of the letters, about this. His reply was, “In all likelihood, a great many were written during the period covered in Vol 1, especially during the years she was away at St. Lawrence and later when school and lecturing took him away from home. If any have survived, however, their existence has never been confirmed and they have never been made available.” The letters Frost wrote to others are filled with constant positive references to his wife, attesting to the major supportive role she played in his life, but it is a pity we don’t have the letters he wrote to her.

Letters to his friends abound. Among them are the fun ones he wrote to his “witty and articulate” editor Louis Untermeyer; the instructive ones to his former prize student John Bartlett, filled with advice on writing poetry, revealing many of Frost’s own poetic principles; and the philosophical ones to Sidney Cox with whom he discussed ideas and compared insights into their shared teaching experiences and love of literature. The letters to Edward Thomas, his close friend from his years in England, are especially poignant in light of Thomas’s subsequent death on the battlefield of the first world war.

For those of us interested in Frost’s connection with our region, one letter in this volume gives us a taste of what we have to look forward to when the second book of the four-volume series is published. Frost wrote this letter in August 1919 in Franconia, New Hampshire. In it, he is looking forward to a reading he will be giving the following month in Arlington for the Poetry Society of Southern Vermont. He expresses the hope that he will get to see his friend and fellow writer Dorothy Canfield Fisher. The letters that will follow in the next book will reflect the significant role Fisher played in encouraging Frost to buy a farm in this area and how much she did to make him and his family welcome when they did become our neighbors in this southwest corner of Vermont. □

The Letters of Robert Frost: Volume I, 1880 -1920. Edited by Donald Sheehy, Mark Richardson, and Robert Faggen. Harvard University Press, 2014.

Harvey Amani Whitfield's The Problem of Slavery in Early Vermont

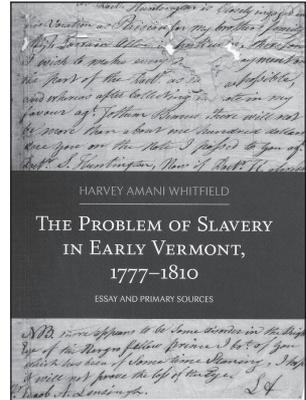
Reviewed by Noah Coburn

Harvey Amani Whitfield's *The Problem of Slavery in Early Vermont, 1777-1810*, which includes an essay and series of primary sources, complicates traditional histories of slavery in Vermont while simultaneously raising questions about the intersection of legal code, social practice and political thought that far exceeds the rather narrow title of the volume.

Whitfield's primary aim is to upend the way in which Vermont's abolition of slavery in most historical accounts "fits into a grand narrative of American abolitionism, true republicanism, and the happy result of the recognition of human rights" (p. 8) and to replace this with, what is in fact, "a deeper, more contested reality" (p. 7).

The first half of the book focuses on the common assumption that the Vermont Constitution of 1777 outlawed slavery. In fact, the article excluded minors, who could remain enslaved, and, more interestingly, left the language vague ("no male person . . . ought to be holden by law, to serve another person," as opposed to saying "shall") and provided no actual instructions for enforcement. Moreover, Whitfield argues, the ambiguity cannot be simply explained away as due to haste; there were numerous opportunities for the article to be amended. Instead, Whitfield explains, the provision left open the continual enslavement of many Afro-Vermonters and demonstrated some of the challenges that abolition would face over the next century across the United States.

The 1786 Sale and Transportation Act attempted to prevent re-enslavement, but still did not address issues such as the sale of minors outside of the state. Intertwined with the issue of slavery were concerns about the social and economic burdens that towns bore to support the destitute. The failed 1791 Negro and Molatto Act would have permitted the capture of fugitives within Vermont, but support seemed actually to be driven by concerns about funds that were going to support the poor more generally. As Whitfield points out, the need for the 1786 act and the failure of Vermonters to legally protect fugitive slaves underscores the continued



practice of slavery and legal discrimination within the state after 1777.

Whitfield makes his case by compiling an impressive array of 31 primary documents. These range from the federal census of Vermont (1791) to bills of sales of slaves after 1777 and excerpts from the minute book of Bennington's Friendly Society, which considered the morality of interfering with attempts to recapture escaped slaves. These various sources provide rich context for the study and give evidence of Whitfield's thorough approach. One of the few complaints the reader is likely to have is that these documents could have been better integrated into the text – instead one must flip back and forth between documents. Also, several would have been easier to access if more magnified and with better resolution.

These documents serve to enliven a series of in-depth studies. They include the case of Pastor David Avery, who moved to Bennington in 1780 and brought with him a female slave. This fact and complaints about his preaching led to his eventual removal in 1783. The tale leaves many unanswered questions about why certain parishioners supported Avery, why others opposed him, and how the role of his slave ownership played in his eventual removal. Yet the three years in between tell an important story about local tensions, uneven enforcement, ambiguity in state statutes, and the reality of slavery's slow demise in Vermont.

What makes this essay more than simply a correction in the traditional histories of Vermont, however, is the way in which the author complicates notions of slavery, freedom, and liberty. He notes how in the decades following the Constitution of 1777, censuses reveal numerous Afro-Vermonters living in white homes. Usually listed as “freed blacks,” in cases such as Moses Sage, there is clear evidence that these individuals were in fact, far from free. Instead, the ambiguous records demonstrate the blurred lines between free men, indentured servants, domesticated laborers, and slaves. Much of the census data from that time and the triumphant historiography of abolition in Vermont ultimately, in Whitfield's words, “obscures the continued reality of coerced labor and unfreedom imposed on Afro-Vermonters” (p. 29).

These ambiguities also demonstrate the problems with some of our assumptions about definitions by exploring the rhetorical dichotomy that Ethan Allen used to mark the difference between slavery and freedom. Allen and others of his time found Afro-Vermonters undeserving of this political freedom. Whitfield argues convincingly that when Allen and others spoke of freedom, much of this was done with the constant fear of encroachment of New York, New Hampshire, or the British. Vermonters, with land titles whose legality might not be recognized by these threatening neighbors, needed to mark themselves as distinct and worthy of this freedom.

Whitfield's analysis takes the reader far beyond simple questions of *de facto* and *de jure* slavery in Vermont and the United States more generally. It raises questions about how freedom might have been experienced in the challenging economic and social world that early Afro-Vermonters lived in. Freedom is not simply a legal status handed out by a legal body, but demands local, social recognition, something that was clearly denied to many Afro-Vermonters in the early decades of statehood.

Many of the documents, such as the manumission of a slave woman and her daughter by Ebenezer Allen, remind the reader why Vermonters should be proud of their place in the early history of abolition in the United State. This rich and complex volume, however, also argues that social and legal changes rarely occur in neat, clear patterns and that we should rethink many of our assumptions about the “end” of slavery in early Vermont. □

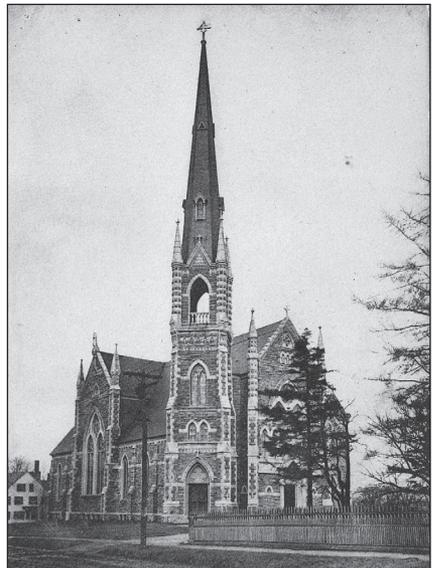
The Problem of Slavery in Early Vermont, 1777-1810: Essay and Primary Sources, by Harvey Amani Whitfield. Barre, Vermont, Vermont Historical Society, 2014; 140 pp, paperback.

Rediscovering a prolific Vermont architect

Reviewed by Jane Griswold Radocchia

The prolific Vermont architect George H. Guernsey was almost forgotten until members of the Bethel Historical Society decided to restore their Victorian town hall. Once they learned his name they set about on a quest to learn more about him and other buildings he might have designed.

The society members found historic postcards and pictures, then photographed all the existing 45 buildings and bridges that can be attributed to Guernsey. They uncovered letters and recollections that brought back his basic life story. They then organized the biographical material for easy reference, starting



George Guernsey designed St. Francis de Sales Church to be visible from Bennington's downtown, a view now blocked by a motel and a store. The high steeple was removed in the 1920s after it was threatened by high winds.

Bennington Museum Collection

with his work in Montpelier, where he designed at least eleven buildings of the capital city's downtown district. Then they listed his work by towns, making the book convenient to use.

No architectural historian seems to have critiqued the material, so as I describe Guernsey's work I have added my understanding as both an architect and historian.

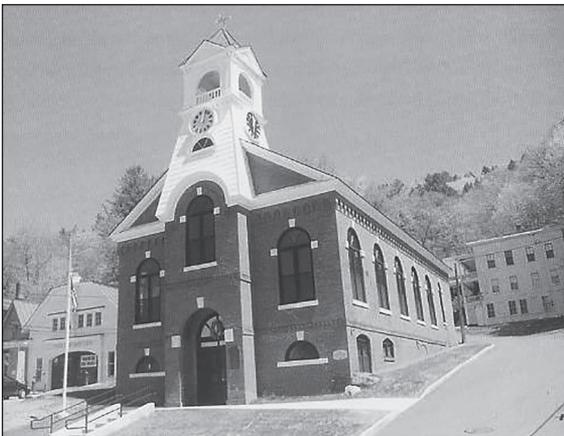
In a stretch of only 25 years, from 1875 until his death in 1900, Guernsey designed at least twenty-one churches as well as two town halls, two schools, eleven business blocks, six houses, and one library – most of them in Vermont. He also served on local boards and one term as Montpelier's mayor, in 1897.

Born in Calais in 1839, Guernsey apprenticed as a carpenter with his father, Gilman Guernsey. After serving in the Civil War, he began work as a builder, and like many Victorian builders evolved into an architect.

Guernsey's designs were in the language of the time. The broad entrances, tall towers, and skinny spires of his churches were the expected church form all over the United States. The massing, the stained glass windows, and carved stone were inspired by medieval European cathedrals. His brick business blocks have the expected glass fronts and decorative brick corbelling. His city halls have the usual grand entrances and bell towers. His houses followed the latest fashions: stick, Queen Anne, and a German hunting lodge in the case of "Redstone," a mansion in Montpelier.

He was not a trend setter but he was prolific and well respected. I wanted to see what he built. With the book as a guide I set off to see the town hall in Bethel. I drove along Main Street, Route 12, hemmed in on both sides by two- and three-story buildings. The road curved, and right

there – where it can be seen from both directions and from across the river, red brick with arched windows, a white tower and a clock – was the town hall! Just the right size for this town, not too plain nor too gussied up, stepped back and up from the street far enough to create a small park, it was dignified and welcoming – a hall for a town.



The Bethel Town Hall building, as pictured in the book on George Guernsey's architecture.

I knew how in Bennington the doors of St. Francis de Sales Church face down Main Street toward Putnam Square, the center of town. (The view from the church to the center of town and from town to church is now blocked by a motel and a store.) In Rutland I had stood on the porch of the Church of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, on the very edge of a steep hill, and looked out across the city. Guernsey was skilled at siting his buildings, and especially his entrances. Symbolically and visually, he connected his buildings to the community while also creating space for gathering inside and out.

Now a copy of “Vermont’s Elusive Architect” lives in my car, for reference the next time I am in a town with one of his buildings. Here is what I will be checking out:

How did he handle each building?

I spotted the spire of St. Charles Catholic Church as I drove in to Bellows Falls from the north. It is sited much like Immaculate Heart of Mary in Rutland. In South Royalton I sat across the park from the business block enjoying the variety and unity. I saw how the Methodist Church and the Schoolhouse look across the open yard to each other, creating a common, space for community, between them.

How did he use materials?

Guernsey began as a builder and grew to be a designer. He knew brick, stone, wood. So I watch how he creates light and shadow and pattern with brick, how he spans a window with an arch or a lintel. He knows what brick can do. As I walked toward Immaculate Heart of Mary Church, I felt the strength of the ashlar stone banding the wall at my shoulder’s height. I looked up. Terracotta flowers were set as corner blocks at the tops of the stained glass windows, stopping my eye momentarily. At the top of the wall? The sky and that impossibly tall steeple.

The wood churches and houses and the Schoolhouse (now the Vermont Law School) in South Royalton are not so dramatic but designed with just as much pleasure. I like especially the tower on the Schoolhouse, a design Guernsey also uses at the Woods School in Bradford. It is not a scaled-down steeple but a playful tower for children.

Guernsey’s use of circles or half-circles is almost the only design element I feel is truly his, not part of the general Victorian ethos. These are circular windows and cave-like entrances draw the eye, as curves always do, and say: Look here! Come in here! They are places to see and be seen, to watch and wait. He placed the windows in his town halls to flood the spaces with light from above, to make an indoor place public. Chester’s Whiting Library has half-round windows that bring light into the stacks. The horseshoe-shaped

window, a friendly shape, lights the reading room.

The book is delightful, full of histories of Guernsey's buildings in Vermont towns written by people who love them both. The last page sums up this pride and thanks people "who assisted in the search." I also thank the Bethel Historical Society and the editors, Janet Hayward Burnham and Heidi Boepple Nikolaidis, for persevering and sharing George Guernsey with us after all these years. □

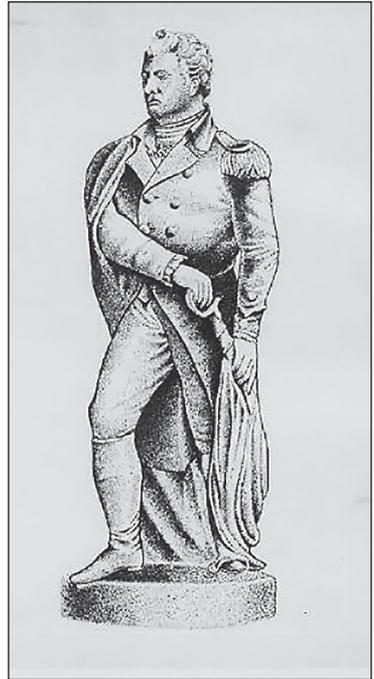
Vermont's Elusive Architect: George H. Guernsey, compiled by the Bethel Historical Society, 2013; paperback, 124 pp.

Inventing and reinterpreting Ethan Allen

Reviewed by Jennifer S.H. Brown

Inventing *Ethan Allen*, co-authored by accomplished Vermont historians John J. Duffy and H. Nicholas Muller III, adds significantly to our understanding of Ethan Allen and of the histories and tales that have surrounded him ever since he himself began constructing them in the 1770s. Its new data, critical analyses, and provocative hypotheses bring the hero down from his pedestals, both marble and literary, even as the book assures his continued public visibility.

The authors set the stage in Chapter 1 by delving into the numerous "Confused Accounts of Ethan Allen's Death." Here, as throughout Allen's life (and afterlife), seekers of truth are confounded by mixed evidence or its lack, excesses of interpretation, and sometimes wild surmise—a theme that runs through the book. Allen, after inauspicious beginnings in Connecticut, discovered cheap New Hampshire lands as the key to wealth, leading to his mobilization of attacks (more violent than usually portrayed) on their New York claimants. His capture of Ticonderoga in May 1775 was no battle at all, and Allen's and others' literary glorifications of the



One of the most obscure of many representations of Ethan Allen, this "heroic" sculpture was carved in wood by Benjamin H. Kinney in 1851 and has been lost to history.

event also omitted mention of the victors' drunken mob scene the next morning. Allen's failed attempt to take the British fort at St. John, his failure to gain leadership of the Green Mountain regiment, his aborted attack on Montreal, and his capture in a nearby swamp were all glossed over in his *Narrative* and other writings, as he "deliberately, even shamelessly, used his pen to present himself as he wished others to regard him." A British captive for nearly three years, 1775-78, Allen, despite legend, "played no direct role in establishing the State of Vermont" (pp. 62, 60).

Chapter IV provides a fine overview of the mass of academic and popular writings that from the 1830s on enhanced and later sometimes tarnished Allen's reputation as hero. The litmus test was the Allens' involvement in negotiations with British General Frederick Haldimand regarding a supposed alliance or even the (re)entry of Vermont into the British empire. Defenders of the Allens, notably Zadock Thompson (1842), having strong preconceptions and little knowledge of the British side, saw the Vermont negotiators as "patriotic, committed apostles of Vermont liberty and independence." The elements of self-interest or opportunism in the Allens' doings rarely drew attention as the historians of the next six decades "all sang in unison" (pp. 85, 87).

Chapters V and VI turn to dramatic representations of Allen in fiction, statuary, and popular imagery, and in anecdotes and legends—moving tales of Allen as patriot and seeker of lost children, and of his romantic second marriage—to a woman whose identity as a Loyalist widow and heiress to land was overlooked. The hyperboles recall to this reviewer the songs of Davy Crockett ("Kilt him a b'ar when he was only three . . . the man who don't know fear . . . Itchin' for fightin' and rightin' a wrong") and Daniel Boone from the mid-1900s. (The full texts of these songs are readily found on Google.) John Greenleaf Whittier's "Song of the Vermonters," 1833 (Duffy and Muller, p. 79) never attained their fame. Allen is not unique as an American idol.

Chapter VII, "Silence and Exclusion: Murder, Slaveholding, and Plagiarism," vigorously stirs the pot. Did Allen possibly kill Crean Brush, principal author of New York's "Bloody Act," in 1778? (He had motives and probably means and opportunity.) Did the Allens own slaves even under Vermont's constitutional prohibition? (probably, in some times and places). Did Allen plagiarize much of his "Reason, the Only Oracle of Man" (1785) from writings of his mentor, Dr. Thomas Young? The authors offer convincing evidence of at least heavy borrowing.

Finally, the authors review Allen historiography of the last century. Revisionism gained ground from the 1920s onward, with Clarence W. Rife's Yale dissertation, the histories by Henry S. Wardner (1927), Matt Bushnell

Jones (1939), Chilton Williamson (1949), and the authors' own recent work. But in the 1990s, traditionalists (notably Michael Bellesiles, 1993, and Robert Shalhope, 1996, followed by Willard Sterne Randall, 2011) retook the stage. Allen, larger than life, "remained in the popular mind and ultimately emerged triumphant" in these works. Duffy and Muller show that with close research, "the real Ethan Allen does stand up." Nonetheless, "few have seen him," and "when it came to the Haldimand negotiations [and other matters too], the real Ethan Allen did not wish to stand up" (pp. 208, 167).

Allen's "clandestine stance," as stated, "served all of the interpretations that followed" (p. 194). One rarely mentioned aspect of this stance—his link with Freemasonry—might also be explored. Ethan and Ira Allen, Thomas Chittenden, Jonas Fay, and numerous other Vermont leaders were Masons, as were Loyalists Sir John Johnson, James Rogers, William Marsh, and others on the British side. Fellow Masons privately recognized and aided one another as brothers, and their secret cross-cutting ties may have carried some weight. In May 1788 a Vermont group petitioned Johnson, then provincial Grand Master of Quebec, for a lodge in Vergennes, south of Burlington. Johnson named the lodge, warranted in 1791, after Guy Carleton, Lord Dorchester, governor in chief of the Canadian provinces, who was well regarded by Governor Chittenden for his free-trade measures. Masonic ties could have facilitated quiet communications across borders during the American Revolution as well as thereafter; they may merit further attention.

The book is well turned out, although a map would benefit non-specialist readers. Use of footnotes instead of endnotes would ease reference-tracking; going from note number to endnote to bibliography (while seeking elsewhere for the list of abbreviations) is tedious. The text sometimes refers to Allen's biographers without naming them; and journal citations in the bibliography lack their years of publication.

Inventing Ethan Allen, however, is much more than just another book about Allen. Paradoxically, the book keeps him in the public eye while other worthy "fathers" of Vermont who lacked his self-promoting skills linger in obscurity. Nonetheless, it is an outstanding and much needed contribution. □

Inventing Ethan Allen, by John J. Duffy and H. Nicholas Muller III, published 2014 by University Press of New England, Hanover, New Hampshire, paperback, 285 pp.

Ethan Allen and General Haldimand: A new viewpoint

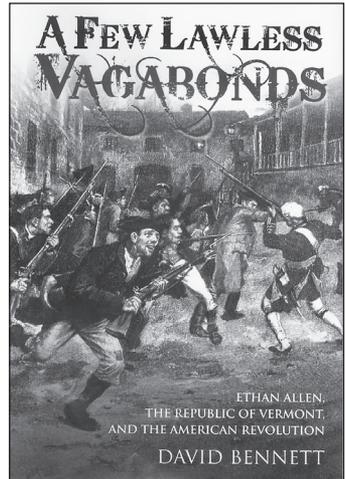
Reviewed by Wilson B. Brown

David Bennett's *A Few Lawless Vagabonds* – a phrase that the British General Haldimand used to describe the early Green Mountain boys – is the most thorough and heavily researched book on the subject to date. No one will be able to write, give a presentation, or casually pontificate on Ethan Allen without using Bennett's book. Its primary source research is most extensive, including the papers of Ethan Allen, and British generals Frederick Haldimand and Henry Clinton, and the multitudinous collections of New York and Vermont official papers and correspondence. The writing is good, though a good copyeditor could have made it better. The conclusions are striking and largely convincing.

The book comes at a good time for Vermont historiography, as the Allen brothers' role in the creation and protection of Vermont, and the mythical representations of Ethan Allen as rebel, revolutionary, and military hero have faced increasing scrutiny. *Inventing Ethan Allen* (Duffy and Muller, reviewed elsewhere here), and *Col. William Marsh: Vermont Patriot and Loyalist* (reviewed in *Walloomsack Review* 13, 2014, 46-48), has each newly assessed Allen from some different angles.

Scholars familiar with early Vermont will find Bennett substantiating some of their earlier suspicions, some of which had lacked convincing proof. As examples: the taking of Fort Ticonderoga was not Ethan's idea to start with; reunion with Great Britain was quite acceptable to the Allens, not just a ruse to get Congress to recognize Vermont; Ethan was far too impulsive to be a military leader, ignoring good advice and his orders; and he was not "betrayed" by others who failed to support his attack on Montreal.

Bennett also, however, places some older assumptions in serious question. He argues that the Vermont settlers in fact had good legal reasons for their belief that their grants were valid. He finds that the Allens were



This book's cover offers an imaginary view of Green Mountain Boys in close combat with British Redcoats, an event that never happened.

hardly democratic when they were running Vermont with a small group of people. Further, he sounds a fresh note by pointing out that neither Haldimand nor Allen had the authority to implement any proposal to have Vermont join Great Britain. Later he praises Ethan for his ability to steer the Republic through very difficult waters, as New York, Connecticut, and Massachusetts, supported by small groups of Vermonters, promoted their claims on the lands. Bennett offers excellent military history (his specialty) when discussing the major battles, and in his coverage of the foredoomed Burgoyne campaign and of Ethan Allen's unapproved, unwise, and disastrous attempt to take Montreal. The claim that the British "won" the battle of Hubbardton, however, is and has been subject to debate. Seth Warner's troops were rear guards and would be expected to retreat, and the Americans effectively regrouped to join the Battle of Bennington.

Bennett's comments on personal relationships are not always well substantiated. The statement that Seth Warner "hated" Ethan Allen lacks evidence. Certainly the two men disagreed, but the fact that Warner would directly confront Allen on his dealings with General Haldimand, rather than use political means to discredit Allen, shows some respect and a degree of comradeship, however fading. At another point, Bennett describes Col. William Marsh as Ethan's "nemesis," based on Marsh's successful role in helping to prevent Ethan from becoming the leader of the Vermont Green Mountain regiment in the attack on Quebec; but many of Ethan's supporters also decided to vote against him because they rightly saw him as a poor military commander. Marsh had known Ethan since they were young. They found common ground in their adherence to Freemasonry, and if we accept Bennett's argument regarding Ethan's private views, they both saw the value of Vermont's joining the British. Marsh and the Vermont Loyalist negotiator in the Haldimand affair, Justus Sherwood, worked together during the negotiations, and Marsh was at hand when those meetings took place in British-held territory. If we accept Bennett's analysis, Allen, at least for a time, shared the Vermont Loyalists' goal, or hope, of securing their land claims with British support. In the late fall of 1780, Sherwood was delayed in returning to St. Johns from Castleton where he had been negotiating with the Allens. Haldimand sent Marsh to discover what had happened to him, and further to carry letters to Ethan Allen, an assignment he could not have accomplished if they were enemies.

The book, while most rewarding in substance, is not an easy read. As a scholarly work, it assumes its readers' basic familiarity with writings on Ethan Allen and early Vermont. It is also very dense, possibly a sign that the publisher requested the shortening of a longer manuscript. Sharp changes of subject sometimes occur, and characters or events identified early on may

not be reintroduced until many pages after the initial discussion. A number of sentences could be read in a different way from what Bennett probably meant, requiring some rereading to determine their gist. There are a few accidental errors; Jonas Fay's tavern was in Bennington, not Burlington; and the former governor who authored a history of Vermont was Hiland Hall, not Hiland Hill.

Bennett and his readers could have been better served by his publisher. The endnotes have no running heads indicating what pages the notes cover, requiring readers to back up and find the chapter in which a given note number occurs. (Footnotes would have been much more convenient.) The book cover displays a late nineteenth-century illustrator's picture that shows the Green Mountain Boys attacking uniformed British soldiers—a ludicrous image, given that the book itself states that the attack was a complete surprise and came at night when all but a sentry were in their beds.

Despite these quibbles, the book is still an outstanding work, a major contribution to early Vermont history and a must-read for anyone seriously interested in the latest research on Ethan Allen and his associates. □

A Few Lawless Vagabonds by David Bennett, published 2014 by Casemate Publishers, Philadelphia, PA; hardbound, 276 pages.

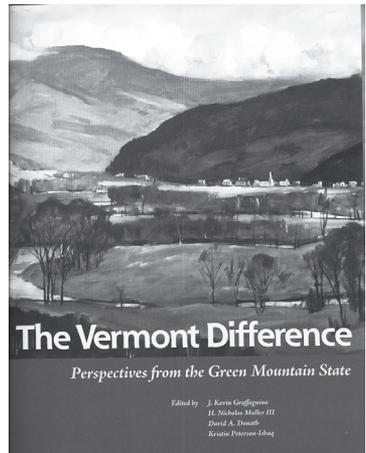
Eighteen essays define ‘the new Vermont’

Reviewed by Tyler Resch

Twenty prominent players in the political, economic, and cultural life of a state have combined to produce an important book of eighteen essays that analyze and extol what can be accurately called “the new Vermont.” The title is “The Vermont Difference: Perspectives from the Green Mountain State,” published jointly by the Vermont Historical Society and Woodstock Foundation.

It is a heavy book, printed on coated stock so the paperback weighs in at three and a half pounds, with an adroit selection of color photographs.

The new Vermont is a state that honors and thrives on its sense of place as it blends



Book cover shows a detail of Cambridge, circa 1955, oil on canvas by Alden Bryan, from the State Art Collection.

tradition with innovation. In his introduction, Nick Muller describes the essayists as mostly new Vermonters who “have made a large footprint in their adopted state.” He concludes that, “The continuing effort to define a Vermonter has taken on more of an amusing than a substantive quality.”

The germ of *The Vermont Difference*, Muller explains, was planted when J. Kevin Graffagnino was asked a few years ago to present a “Vermont 101” to a group of university presidents at a Stowe convention. He made the case that aside from the state’s legendary reputation for taciturnity and scenic landscapes, “Vermont had developed and nurtured ideas, structures, programs, and institutions that made important contributions well beyond the state’s borders.” He said there is no claim to exceptionalism, rather to see Vermont as a birthplace, an incubator, a model. Here are a few samples.

Some writers in this book like Frank Bryan contend that Vermont’s very tough topography and harsh winters have served to stiffen spines and produce inhabitants of special character.

Peter Gilbert of the state humanities council writes of the remarkable history and growth of literacy and education of all kinds, and about the duality of Vermonters who combine brains and brawn. Paul Bruhn describes how historic preservation has been used as a vital tool to boost the economy by avoiding sprawl and parcelization.

Art Cohn of the Champlain Maritime Museum in Ferrisburg patiently traces his program that has explored, retrieved, studied, and reproduced vessels from the bottom of Lake Champlain dating to the American Revolution. His has been an enriching enterprise, to say the least, with an intense focus on a particularly fascinating place. The point is made here and also consistently in these essays that sense of place is paramount in the new Vermont.

Sam Hemingway of the *Free Press* profiles the state’s major political figures ever since Philip H. Hoff in 1962 became the first Democratic governor in more than 100 years and he gives the subject a favorable gloss of civility and nonpartisanship. Madeleine Kunin, the only woman governor in America to be elected to three terms, chooses to follow the lives of several Vermont women who have demonstrated political leadership over many years.

Tom Slayton, the veteran *Vermont Life* editor, reviews two hundred years of Vermont literature and concludes that the state has a transformative effect on writers. He concludes, “If Vermont’s rural traditions are lost, can Vermont’s distinctive literature survive?”

Jim Douglas, a Republican governor who served four terms in a Democratic state, nicely documents a tradition of bipartisanship and civility, attributes that seem in short supply these days in the nation’s capital.

Douglas salts his commentary with some memorable historical anecdotes. Another former governor, Tom Salmon, presents an informative treatise on the state's history of higher education, public and private, starting with the launching of the University of Vermont, Middlebury, and Norwich in the 1790s.

Some essayists focus on the Vermont brand, or its packaging and marketing as a foundation of "the Vermont difference." An articulate exponent of this concept is David Donath, one of the book's four editors, who looks back to the launching of *Vermont Life* in the autumn of 1946, and how it "projected a well-crafted, brilliantly photographed, and engagingly written image of the state to subscribers all across the Northeast and beyond." The most dynamic marketer-essayist is Roberta MacDonald, whom Gov. Kunin named the state's first marketing director and who now holds that position at the Cabot Creamery. "Our state is known nationally and internationally as a naturally pristine destination," she writes. "We need to appreciate that the great outdoors is the crux of our brand."

Ben Rose, founder of the end-to-end Catamount cross-country ski trail, who moved as a teen-ager with his family to Vermont from Long Island, describes how he adapted his entire lifestyle to this great outdoors.

Ellen McCulloch-Lovell, the president of Marlboro College – and one of the few essayists representing southern Vermont – evokes the state's creative spirit as seen in arts and artist organizations. In one of the few factual errors noted in this book, she has David and Gloria Gil starting their Bennington pottery in 1964, when it was in fact 1948.

To a reader already saturated in state history who has lived here for more than fifty years, it is tempting to recall some attributes of the old Vermont, say, of the early 1960s, and reflect on the considerable progress. In the Vermont of the early 1960s, for example, it was a rare town that offered kindergarten, let alone public pre-school. Few towns had zoning and there were no regional planning commissions. Junk cars were more often seen in rural areas and billboards cluttered the major byways. Laws dealing with "the environment" were unheard of. Weird "blue laws" held back tourism. Tolls for intrastate phone calls were outrageous, discouraging liaison with state government, and also, one might say, the sense of freedom and unity. Among some denizens there was a suspicion of outsiders, or "flatlanders," a holdover from the 1950s when fears of fellow travelers held sway and new people who drove "little foreign cars" were looked upon with curiosity. Among others, of course, Vermont's reputation for civil rights held firm.

During the past half century the political contrast has been dramatic as Vermont has transitioned from arguably the most conservative to the

most progressive of states – thanks largely to legislative reapportionment, development of the Interstate highways, and an infusion of fresh population. It has been a fascinating half-century. *The Vermont Difference* can be seen as the documentation of the maturation of a state. □

The Vermont Difference: Perspectives from the Green Mountain State, edited by J. Kevin Graffagnino, H. Nicholas Muller III, David A. Donath, and Kristin Peterson-Ishaq. Vermont Historical Society and Woodstock Foundation. \$39.95; paper, \$27.95

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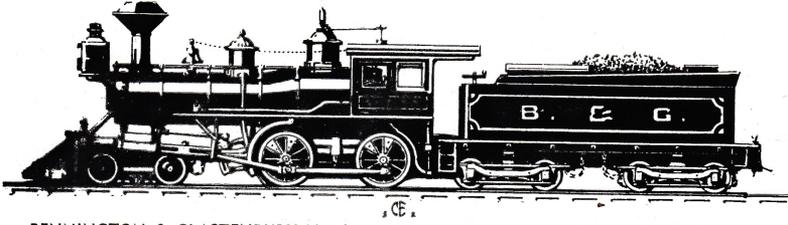
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BENNINGTON & GLASTENBURY No. 3 as sketched from various references by C. O. Egerton



—[Photo from Collection of Charles C. Holt

BENNINGTON & WOODFORD electric car No. 3 poses by some of the abandoned furnaces along the line which were a reminder of a bygone era even as the trolley line was something new in the 1890's.

Also in This Issue:

**Connecticut Electric Railway Association Annual Report for 1951
Seashore Electric Railway Annual and Special Reports**

A 1952 Transportation newsletter cover featured a sketch (top) of Engine No. 3 and coal car of the Bennington & Glastenbury, when it was hauling logs. The photo beneath it illustrates the most picturesque site along the line of the Bennington & Woodford, when it was a trolley designed for tourists and powered by electricity. *Bennington Museum Collection, courtesy of Preston Bristow*

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