

WALLOOMSACK REVIEW

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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 cover:

An interior view of the H.E. Bradford & Co. knitting mill on East Main Street in Bennington, circa 1915. This is a silver gelatin print, photographer unknown, a gift in 1994 of Ronald R. Knapp.

On the back cover:

Lithographic views of the Bradford mill and the Bradford family home across the street from each other, from the *Illustrated and Historical Atlas of the State of Vermont*, printed by J. B. Beers & Co. Published in 1876 by H. W. Burgett & Co., a gift of Mrs. Daisy Bradford.

Both, Bennington Museum collection

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Editors' Notes

Three major articles in this issue deal with the theme of Bennington's time as a mill town as they portray a town and a society in ways that connect the prosperity of mill-owning families with respect for the workers who helped to create that wealth. Ruth Ekstrom describes a full century of activity of the H.E. Bradford & Company knitting mill from the 1850s to its demise in the 1950s. Jamie Franklin, fresh from assembling a new permanent museum gallery on the subject, offers a perceptive interpretation that links the many industrial firms of Bennington and the relatively opulent life of their owners with the factory workers and skilled laborers who produced the goods that generated the wealth.

To get specific about what it was really like working in a textile mill in the nineteenth century, Anne Bugbee relates the memoirs of mill girl Mary Palmer, who labored in North Bennington factories for many years. These recollections describe a time and place and conditions that can hardly be imagined in the twenty-first century.

Readers with an eye for accuracy may wince when they see Westminster described as the first town chartered in Vermont, in Jon Mathewson's review of a new book on that town's history. Well, it's a matter of definition. Bennington was unquestionably the first town chartered in today's Vermont, in 1749, by Governor Benning Wentworth of New Hampshire (who named it for himself). Westminster's claim is based on the fact that in 1735 Massachusetts, which then included today's New Hampshire, sold land on the west side of the Connecticut River and it was first called Township No. 1, also sometimes called New Taunton, to people from Taunton, Norton, and Easton in Bristol County, Massachusetts. According to Esther Monroe Swift's *Vermont Place-Names*, after the boundary between Massachusetts and New Hampshire was settled, Benning Wentworth granted the town now known as Westminster to a new group of proprietors in 1752. Jon Mathewson also reviews a new history of another Connecticut River town, Norwich.

Contributors

Ruth Burt Ekstrom is a past president of the Bennington Historical Society and a former trustee of the Bennington Museum. A native of Bennington, she is a graduate of Brown University and holds graduate degrees from Boston University and Rutgers. For many years she worked in the research division of Educational Testing Service where she retired as principal research scientist. She has been a contributor to *Vermont History* and *Vermont Genealogy*.

Jamie Franklin is the curator of the Bennington Museum, where he recently assembled permanent exhibits on Vermont's Gilded Age and Bennington Modernism, as well as an anniversary exhibit on Bennington in the Civil War. In his research and exhibitions he has a distinct interest in attempting to break down the often arbitrary boundaries between "fine," "decorative," and "folk" art. He is organizing an exhibition for next summer that will juxtapose portraits by the 19th-century itinerant portrait painter Erastus Salisbury Field with paintings of people by the 20th-century master Alice Neel.

Anne Bugbee is a retired educator. She is a past president of the Bennington Historical Society and a present board member of the Vermont Historical Society.

Jennifer S. H. Brown is professor emeritus at the University of Winnipeg and has published extensively in Canadian Aboriginal history. She is also a descendant (five times great-granddaughter) of Col. William Marsh. **Wilson B. Brown** retired from teaching economics at the University of Winnipeg, has published widely in international economics and business, and has long experience in family-history research. The article published here is a chapter from their forthcoming book *Col. William Marsh: Vermont Patriot and Loyalist*, to be published by Tiger Rock Press. They reside in Denver, Colorado, and may be reached at <wilson@professorsbrown.com>.

Jon Mathewson is curator of the Bley House Museum of the Dorset Historical Society and was formerly curator of the American Museum of Fly Fishing in Manchester. He has been collections manager at the Sheldon Museum in Middlebury and is a curatorial consultant in private practice. He lives in Middletown Springs.

Bill Budde is curator of the Dr. George A. Russell Collection in Arlington and was editor of the first two issues of the *Walloomsack Review*.



*An exterior view of the Bradford mill on East Main Street in Bennington with the workers lined up for a photograph, circa 1874.
Bennington Museum collection*

H.E. Bradford & Company: A century of knitting-mill heritage

Ruth Burt Ekstrom

The knitted goods industry that dominated Bennington, Vermont, during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century had its origin in January 1858 when Henry Edwards Bradford and his brother, George, established the first knitting mill in the community.¹

Henry Bradford bought the former Wills and Fairbanks mill property in 1853 and moved to Bennington in 1854. He had worked in woolen mills in Millbury and North Amherst, Massachusetts, and was eager to start his own business. For three years Henry made woven woolen “cassimeres” in this factory, but sales were slow.² (Cassimere was a cloth popular in the 1840s; it was lower priced than broadcloth and made on special looms that produced a subtle pattern on the cloth’s surface.)

George Sumner Bradford, Henry’s brother, came to Bennington in 1857 after fire destroyed a knitting mill he had owned. Before having his own mill George Bradford ran the Egberts and Bailey knitting mill in Cohoes, New York, which had the first water-powered knitting frames in the United States. The knitting industry was developing rapidly at this time,

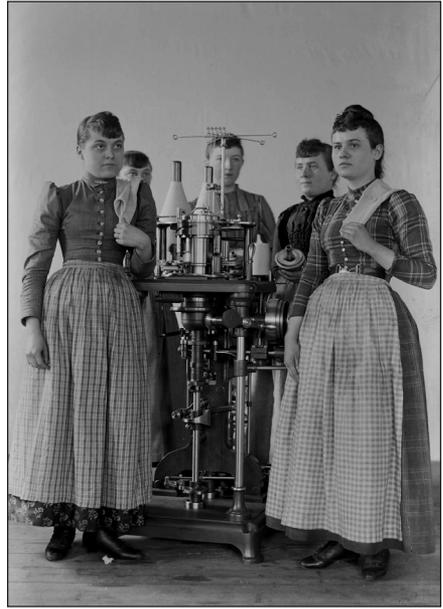
with growing demand for knitted goods, and so the brothers decided to change from woven to knitted goods. Although the business was a partnership, the firm was known as H.E. Bradford & Company.³

Bradford's differed from the larger mills in Lawrence and Lowell, which had absentee owners and boarding houses for workers. It was similar to many of the small mills in southern New England and rural Massachusetts.⁴ "In contrast to Boston's absentee owners, southern New England mill owners lived near their establishments and took a personal interest in them."⁵ About 1860, Henry and George Bradford developed behind the mill the street known as Bradford Place, where Henry built two tenements for his workers.⁶ He also built a duplex on Main Street, adjacent to the mill, as additional workers' housing.⁷ At the same time, Henry built his own elaborate Italianate villa on Main Street directly across the street from the mill. The house is considered to be an outstanding example of the residential architecture of the period. It and the nearby house built by George Bradford helped make this part of East Main Street a desirable neighborhood that reflected the early success of the textile industry in Bennington.⁸

In 1860 H.E. Bradford & Company employed 30 men and 60 women, who made 12,000 dozen knitted shirts, stockings and drawers that year.⁹ George Bradford set up his own mill in 1861; he left the partnership with his brother in 1863.¹⁰ Henry Bradford's brother-in-law, Lyman Abbott, become the new partner.

At this time part of the production of knitting garments was done outside the mills by local women in their homes as "piece work," which consisted of such tasks as finishing garments by sewing up seams. The sewing machine had been invented in 1846 and was being successfully manufactured by the early 1850s. As the new invention moved into the mills, the women and their finishing work came in with it.

The Civil War brought business to Henry Bradford as well as to many other knitting mills because the army wanted knitted underwear for the



*Bradford bobbin girls tend to a knitting machine in this circa 1899 glass negative.
Credit: Bennington Museum collection*



This large framed oval photograph, in the collection of the Bennington Museum, is dated September 1862, and shows 36 women who were associated with the Bradford mills. The group includes Henry Bradford's sister-in-law, Annice Abbott, George Bradford's daughter, Eudora, and George's wife, Sarah. The others pictured are identified as Maria Allen, Jane Ayers, Caroline Bennett, Mary Bugby, Kate Casey, Lizzie Cutler, Frances Danforth, Harriet Danforth, Sallie Dench, Elizabeth Downs, Helen Downs, Ellen Gregory, Libbie Gregory, Maria Harrington, Ellen Harwood, Lucy Houghton, Emmaliza Kendall, Erin Mathers, Sarah Mathers, Emerline Moon, Lucy Moon, Lotta Morrison, Eleanor Morse, Melissa Morse, Mona Moss, Lucinda Pike, Geneve Shaw, Laura Smith, Bournice Taft, Ruth Taft, Sarah Upham, Mary Van Kleet, and Louise Warren.

soldiers. In 1862 Henry Bradford received a contract from the U.S. Quartermaster to make 10,000 undershirts at \$1.12 ½ each.¹¹ With business booming in 1863, Henry acquired a second building known as the upper mill, and he asked John Kelso, another of his brothers-in-law, to become involved in the management. Civil War soldiers' experience with woolen undergarments is credited with changing the clothing habits of the country and stimulating the growth of woolen knitting mills in the following decades.¹²

An accident in January 1867 led to major changes for Henry Bradford's business. A kerosene lamp in the carding room of the lower mill exploded, reportedly when Caleb Mowrey, the head carder, turned the lamp wick down too low. Mowrey was badly burned and a large fire resulted that destroyed the building, with a loss estimated at \$25,000.¹³ (Carding is a kind of brushing action that removes most of the impurities and short or broken fibers in yarn. Carding may be done by a machine known as a card or can be done by hand using hand cards.)

A new mill was completed in the spring of 1868. Its description shows how the mill work was organized. The building was in the form of an H with a wide center section. The left, or eastern, part of the building was used to spin wool into yarn, wind it on spindles, and then knit the garments. The west wing contained the office and finishing department where seams were sewn and other hand work done. The basement space was used for scouring, cleaning, and drying the wool prior to carding. Dyeing was done in a separate building.¹⁴

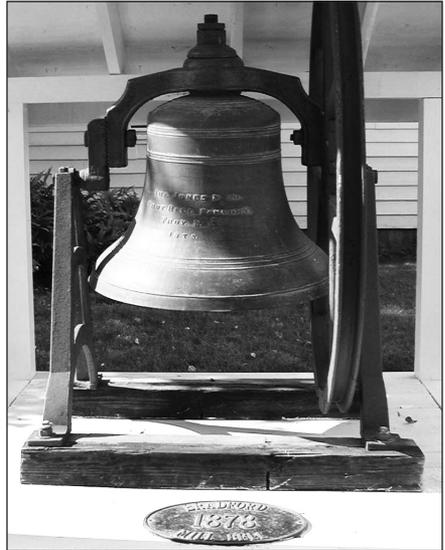
Fourteen knitting cylinders and four ribbing machines made the yarn into knitted fabric. H. E. Bradford and Company now had the capacity to make 18,000 dozen men's or women's undergarments each year.¹⁵

In 1870 Henry Bradford employed 20 men and 35 women. Although child labor was common in many small textile mills of this period, there were no children employed at Bradford's. The mill was reported to have produced that year 6,000 dozen vests with a value of \$55,000 and 6,500 dozen drawers with a value of \$63,000, using \$30,000 worth of cotton and \$12,000 worth of wool.¹⁶

On January 20, 1874, the new mill building was racked by a terrible explosion. It destroyed the west wing of the main building and the spinning and knitting room as well as the separate dye house. The explosion blew up the floor of the basement area, burst out the walls on the south end of the building and along each side, causing the roof to collapse.

The cause was determined to be "defective gas pipes leading from the 'Patent Underground Gas Works,' which furnished illumination for the mill. The gas ... had escaped in sufficient quantities to fill one of the lower rooms of the main buildings & had so impregnated the seaming room of the mill as to be plainly distinguishable and offensive to the smell."¹⁷ One report says that the pipes holding the gas were leaking in the boiler room and that a man was engaged in repairing them.¹⁸

"No sooner was consciousness restored to those who were the subjects



The Bradford bell, which called workers to the factory, is now located on grounds of the Bennington Museum. It was cast in 1878 by Jones & Co., Troy, New York.

of the shock and were picking their way out from underneath and fallen and falling roof, and the broken timbers, than they witnessed in the intervening spaces the play of lambent flames of fire of a peculiar bluish tinge. In a few moments the melancholy wreck was a blazing pile. The alarm, instantly given by the shock, was followed by the rallying cry of "fire!," the ringing of bells, the rumbling wheels of the Fire Department, and the assembling of the people. The questions of chiefest interest were: Who ... has made their escape? Who has not? Who are the wounded, and how badly, and what can be done for them?"¹⁹

J. H. Cushman, editor of the Bennington Banner, wrote: "The uninjured with remarkable promptitude, and in many instances with heroic determination attempted to assist, and if possible, save their more unfortunate companions. ... Sisters saw their sisters perishing; mothers alarmed for their daughters: friends frantic to save their friends, and only a fraction of a moment to do it. ... The houses of all the neighbors were thrown open to receive either the dead or the wounded. Drs. Goodall, E.N.S. Morgan, B.F. Morgan, Bennett, Potter, and S.W. Scott from Pownal, were soon in attendance. The burned victims, as soon as recovered, were taken to the mansion of H.E. Bradford, Esq."²⁰

"Mrs. H. E. Bradford ... immediately opened her home to all comers, and placed the large resources of their elegant mansion at the disposal of the lost, the wounded and the bereaved. In her parlors, hall and pleasant rooms, we saw gathered the blackened corpses of the victims, wrapped in sheets and other hastily improvised ceremonies which she and others had provided. ... Other ladies in the vicinity ... offered every comfort possible. Mr. Jessie H. Fields [was] taken to William A. Kelso's residence, where he was kindly attended to; Mrs. Lyman Harwood, into whose house Miss A. Wood was taken; Mrs. James P. Sibley, to whose house Mrs. Rhodes was assisted, and whose sister, Ruth Taft, endeavored to rescue, but gave the task over to young George Sibley, manfully succeeded in saving her life – in fact all the neighbors gave everything and did everything that kind hearts and unremitting labor could offer to assuage pain or grief, or to assist the efforts of others. The night was cold, bleak and freezing. Coffee and refreshments were constantly furnished the firemen ... all of whom were drenched to their skins, and thoroughly sheeted with ice. During all the sad evening and the night that followed the explosion and conflagration, Mr. L. P. Abbot, one of the partners, devoted every possible effort to alleviating the sufferings of the wounded and

relieve or assuage the anxiety and the grief of the bereaved. His lady ... was quickly at the scene of suffering and throughout the entire evening and night, labored ceaselessly among the wounded, and in caring for the lost. ... Mrs. J.V. Carney, Miss Nye and many others ... labored as glorious hearted women only can labor, throughout that terrible night.”²¹

The Bennington Fire Department, by John V. Carney, performed with outstanding efficiency. “Within ten minutes after the explosion the firemen were on the ground, and continued their heroic and perilous exertions through the afternoon, evening, and until midnight; dividing their time between helping the wounded, suppressing the fire, and searching for the dead.”²²

The explosion killed nine women: Laura (Sonburger) Vaughn, Hannah (Waldron) Gould, Mary Rudd, Augusta Buss, Serina Moon, Fannie Wood, Elizabeth (Cummings) Cunningham, Eliza Garrity and Minnie Hurley. Seven others were injured: Eliza Bissell, Sarah (Taft) Rhodes, Carrie Northup, Harriet N. Morse, Addie Morse, Annette Wood, and Lizzie Granger. Thirteen Bradford employees who worked in the damaged section of the building escaped without injury. They were: Ruth A. Brooks, Julia Tuttle, Eleanor B. Houghton, Jennie H. Clark, Caroline L. Bennett, Mary C. Myers, Florence E. Rudd, Katie A. Smith, Olive F. Martin, Ruth Taft, Jennie Thompson, Walter P. Myers, and George M. Sibley. Three of the men who worked in the basement of the building, Jessie H. Fields, Herbert Moon, and William Morse, were injured; two other basement workers, Edward Kelley and Franklin Allen, escaped without injury.

Other individuals who were in the building and remained uninjured included proprietors Lyman F. Abbot and John Kelso, who were in the office at the time; Hiram Bingham, the traveling agent for Bradford’s company who was visiting the office; and Mrs. Con O’Keefe of North Bennington, who had been making purchases at the mill.

Each of the deaths brought its own special sadness. Augusta Buss, Minnie Hurley, Serena Moon, Mary Rudd, and Fanny Wood were all young women in their late teens or early 20s with their lives before them. But the stories of two older workers stand out as especially tragic. Laura Vaughn was the widow of John Vaughn, a sergeant in Company E. of the 14th Vermont Regiment, who had been killed at the Battle of Gettysburg on July 3, 1863. Her father, George Sonburger, had died on January 25, 1857, when a sand bank in Manchester caved in on him. Laura left a daughter and an aged mother with no financial support.

Elizabeth Cunningham's husband, along with three other men, had been killed in Bennington on August 27, 1867, in an explosion at the powder mill. "She was left with seven children, and with no means of support. Labor in the factory became her chief means of gaining a livelihood. One of the most heart-rending of all sights that appalled us on the day of the disaster, was to see her children, the oldest of whom was but 16, mingling with the crowd about the burning structure in tears and agony over their mother perishing in the flames".²³

The toll could have been much worse. Only a few weeks before the calamity a group of workers had been moved out of the wing where the explosion took place into another section of the building. On the day of the explosion, the seamers who worked in this section were all out, and others who worked in the area from time to time were not then employed.²⁴

Henry Bradford was out of town on a business trip on the day of the explosion. He returned to Bennington and began to cope with the tremendous loss, which was estimated as \$10,000 for the building, \$15,000 for goods and stock, and \$10,000 in machinery.²⁵ Insurance covered only about \$15,000 of the loss.²⁶ Meanwhile, the community organized a fund-raising campaign to assist those affected by the disaster and in need of financial assistance; it raised \$1,457.60.²⁷

By 1875 H. E Bradford & Company had a new "square plan" mill.²⁸ After Henry Bradford died in April 1878, Lyman Abbott took over the company, assisted by Henry's two sons, William Henry Bradford and Edward Walling Bradford. John Kelso left the firm about 1884.



*This decorative fence in front of the Bradford family home separated it from the factory across the street. It was a time when the company owners lived as close as possible to their manufactories.
Bennington Museum collection*

During the 1880s, knitted goods comprised nearly the whole of Bennington's cloth industry. There were four factories employing a total of 350 people.²⁹ By 1893, this had grown to nine knitting mills: the Aldine Knitting Company, Bennington Knitting Company, H.E. Bradford & Company, the William Campbell Company, Cooper Manufacturing Company, Lasher Stocking Company, George Rockwood and Company, Tiffany Brothers, and the Valentine Knitting Mill. H.E. Bradford employed about 150 men and women. It made 25 different styles of women's and men's underwear, producing about 25,000 dozen shirts and drawers each year. It also made all-wool half-hose and produced about 60 pairs each day.³⁰

Business began to falter with the depression that began in 1893. By 1896 it was reported that:

The knit goods industry is in a depressed condition in Bennington. In all the forty years during which the industry was started and broadened into proportions that gives the town the fourth rank in the country in importance in this line of goods, the business has seldom met with duller periods than at present.³¹

As the twentieth century began, other factors contributed to the decline of Bennington's knitting mills. Central heating made woolen underwear less of a necessity. New knitting mills were being built in the South, closer to the cotton they utilized.

William Bradford tried to develop related businesses. In 1885 he went into partnership with Frank Lasher to manufacture half-hose; that partnership ended in 1891.³² Their next partnership was the Bradford and Lasher company, which started in 1901 to manufacture spring needle ribbed knitting machinery. Charles Cooper, who also manufactured knitting machines in Bennington, brought litigation saying that Lasher and Bradford's machines infringed on his patents. The suit was settled in favor of Cooper's estate in 1910.³³

In 1903 Daniel B. Keeler came to Bennington to take the position of superintendent of H.E. Bradford & Company. During the next 43 years the story of the Bradford Company featured ownership by the Bradford family and management by the Keeler family. In 1905 overseers at Bradford's included James Keeler, carder; Joseph Venable, spinner; C. Evans, knitter; Mr. Hayes, silk knitter; George Wilcox, dyer; and Edward Cook, boarder.³⁴ By 1914-15, Bradford's had 225 employees using 20 spring needle and 20 flat needle knitting machines, 80 sewing machines, and four ribbers.³⁵ World War I brought the company several military contracts. The first, in July 1917, was for 30,000 pieces of underwear at \$1.26 each. The second in ear-

ly September of that year was for 60,000 pieces of underwear at \$1.39 each, while another one later that month was for 30,000 pieces at \$1.36 each.³⁶

The company was incorporated in 1918 after the death of Edward W. Bradford; William H. Bradford became its president. It had a capital stock of \$500,000 and an annual output exceeding \$1,000,000. Officers of the new corporation included as clerk Daniel J. Keeler, the son of Daniel B. Keeler, the superintendent of the company, who continued in that position. The other corporate officers were Lyman Abbott, vice president; and Earle C. Whittaker, treasurer.³⁷ In 1923 Henry E. Bradford, William's son and namesake of the founder, entered the business; he became president of the company after his father's death in 1929.³⁸

Fire continued to be a problem at the H.E. Bradford & Co. There were fires in 1902, 1907, 1911, 1913, 1919, 1920, and 1931.³⁹ While none of these caused as severe damage as those in the nineteenth century, they created problems for the company and its business. The major concern often was water damage caused by the mill's automatic sprinkler system. Workers did their best to cope with these disasters. One report describing the 1919 fire says the women operatives "worked like Amazons" during the fire to help save the stock stored in the mill.⁴⁰

The Bradford mill provided a variety of social activities for its employees during this period. There are stories of a sleigh ride followed by a supper and dance, and an outing for a clam bake followed by a baseball game.⁴¹ The 1924 Christmas party featured speeches by company officers and employees as well as an exchange of gifts; the elaborate menu included scalloped oysters, three kinds of salad, four kinds of pie, and three kinds of cake.⁴²

Despite these pleasant events, in the years during and immediately after World War I, the Bradford employees became increasingly concerned about wages and working hours. The company provided a wage increase in the latter part of 1917 and a 10 percent increase in April of 1918.⁴³ In June 1919 Bradford's was shut down by a disagreement between management and workers. The knitters asked for a 15 percent raise in wages claiming that the wage scale at Bradford's was not as high as at other knit goods factories. When the company refused and tried to hire other knitters to keep the factory going, the spinners and winders walked out.⁴⁴ H.E. Bradford re-opened in mid-July with the employees working a new schedule that consisted of ten hours of work five days a week with Saturdays off.⁴⁵ Unions arrived in the Bennington knitting mills shortly thereafter. There was a brief strike at Bradford's in 1920 because they had hired a spinner who was not a member of the United Textile Workers of American.⁴⁶

Other knitting mills in Bennington changed in the years after World

War I. Some no longer made knitted or textile products; others continued to make knitted goods but were sold to companies headquartered outside of Vermont. H. E. Bradford & Company was becoming unique as the only locally owned knitting mill in Bennington.

Unfortunately, the quality of Bradford mill underwear began to be questioned. In 1920 the Federal Trade Commission brought charges against the company, saying that the underwear they produced and said was wholly of wool, labeled as “Men’s merino shirts” and “Men’s natural wool union suits,” was composed partly of cotton.⁴⁷

The depression of the 1930s brought hard times to Bennington but Bradford’s did its best to keep its employees happy. Superintendent Daniel B. Keeler died in 1934 and he was succeeded in this position by his son, Daniel J. Keeler, who had been serving as secretary-treasurer of the Bradford corporation and then became vice-president. Evidence of management efforts can be found in a 1937 letter of thanks the Bradford employees wrote for publication in the local newspaper. “The bonus which we received last week was indeed a demonstration of good will and appreciation on the part of the company and our gratitude is extended to them. We will endeavor to carry on as in the past and bring to attention that this gift is only one of many favors which have been forthcoming during a number of years from the company.”⁴⁸

Things were not going as well in the other knitting mills in Bennington. One of the largest, owned by the Wisconsin-based Allen-A Company, closed in 1941. That building was then occupied by the E-Z Knitting Mills, a New York state firm.⁴⁹

Daniel J. Keeler, Bradford’s long-time manager and corporate officer, resigned in 1946. Henry Bradford wrote that Keeler “has done a wonderful job here, especially during the difficult war years.”⁵⁰ This was the end of more than 40 years of Keeler family participation in the management at Bradford’s. Daniel J. Keeler was succeeded as superintendent first by George N. Wentworth, later by Lewis H. Senecal.

The local economy did not improve in the recession years following World War II. By 1950 unemployment in Bennington was so bad that the state listed it as an emergency area.⁵¹ In June of that year, H.E. Bradford & Company informed their employees there would be a temporary shut-down for a few weeks.⁵² The firm reopened but business was slow. In 1951 the E-Z Knitting Mills announced that it was preparing for a textile slump, then moved from Bennington to Cartersville, Georgia, in May 1952.⁵³

By 1953 H.E. Bradford & Company in Bennington was acknowledged to be the oldest underwear mill in the United States. “When the firm was first started, its production consisted of ribbed wool spun shirts and

drawers and union suits. In the close to 100 years of its history no change was made ... it has, without interruption, continued to supply this product to farmers and also to lumberjacks.⁵⁴ But the end was near. On January 3, 1959, Henry E. Bradford sold the mill to the Norwegian-American Knitting Mill, ending three generations of family ownership. The mill continued as the Bradford-Norak Company, with only seven employees, until January 31, 1961, when it went into receivership and closed.⁵⁵ With that event the Bradford name disappeared from Bennington's industrial activities.

1 *Bennington Banner*, January 29, 1858

2 Information about Henry E. Bradford's life and business career is from Lewis Cass Aldrich (Ed.) *History of Bennington County, Vt.*, (Syracuse, N.Y., D. Mason & Co., Publishers, 1889), 65-66 unless otherwise noted.

3 *Bennington Banner*, "Knitting Business", October 27, 1870.

4 Jonathan Prude, *The Coming of Industrial Order: Town and Factory Life in Rural Massachusetts, 1810 – 1860* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1983).

5 Judith A. McGaw: *Most Wonderful Machine: Mechanization and Social Change in Berkshire Paper Making, 1801 – 1885* (Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1987), 35.

6 State of Vermont, Historic Sites and Structures Survey, Bennington, Bradford Place, 1987.

7 *Ibid.*, Main Street, p. 56.

8 *Ibid.*, Main Street, p. 56-58.

9 U.S. 1870 Census (Manufacturing), Bennington, Vermont.

10 Aldrich, *History of Bennington County*, 514.

11 *Bennington Banner*, August 26, 1862.

12 Richard M. Candee. "Socks and stockings, shirts, drawers, and sashes: Hand and machine knitting for the Union Army." *The Chronicle of the Early American Industries Association*, Vol. 55, No.4, December 2000, 145 – 155.

13 *Bennington Banner*, January 17, 1867.

14 *Bennington Banner*, "Knitting Business," November 3, 1870.

15 *Ibid.*

16 U.S. 1870 Census (Manufacturing), Bennington

17 Day Papers, Book M, 133; Bennington Museum Library.

18 *Daily Evening Traveller* (Boston, Massachusetts), January 22, 1874

19 Calvin B. Hulbert, *A Discourse Delivered in the Second Congregational Church, Bennington, Vt., on the Sabbath Following the Fatal Gasoline Explosion, January 25, 1854* (Bennington, Banner Steam Job Printing House, 1874), 23-24.

20 *Bennington Banner*, January 22, 1874

21 *Bennington Banner*, January 29, 1874

23 Hulbert, *Discourse*, 40

24 Hulbert, *Discourse*, 24

25 Hulbert, *Discourse*, 48.

26 *Daily Evening Traveller* (Boston, Massachusetts), January 22, 1874

27 Hulbert, *Discourse*, 47.

28 Warsaw, Barlow Insurance Plan #3655

29 Rush Welter, *Bennington, Vermont: An Industrial History*. (New York, New York: Columbia University School of Library Service, 1959), 18.

30 *Bennington Directory 1893-94* (Albany, NY: R.S. Dillon & Co, Publishers, 1893), 47.

31 *Troy (New York) Times*, December 21, 1896.

32 Hiram Carleton (Ed.), *Genealogical and Family History of the State of Vermont*. (New York, N.Y.: Lewis Publishing Company, 1903), 227.

- 33 History of the Patent Litigation between Charles Cooper and Bradford and Lasher on Spring Needle Rib Knitting Machines, Bennington Museum Archives, 1983. 70. 56.
- 34 *American Wool and Cotton Reporter*, January 12, 1905, 42.
- 35 *American Directory of Knitting Mills in the United States and Canada*, 1915.
- 36 War Department Hearings before the Committee on Military Affairs, Second Section, Part 2, December 18-29, 1917.
- 37 *Bennington Banner*, June 2, 1918.
- 38 Arthur F. Stone, *The Vermont of Today, Vol. II* (New York, NY: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, Inc., 1929), 786-87.
- 39 *Bennington Banner*, October 15, 1902; April 16, 1907; February 2, 1911; February 11, 1913; April 28, 1919; April 22, 1931
- 40 *Bennington Banner*, April 23, 1919
- 41 *Bennington Banner*, February 3, 1912; August 27, 1919.
- 42 *Bennington Banner*, December 26, 1924.
- 43 *Bennington Banner*, April 20, 1918.
- 44 *Bennington Banner*, June 26, 1919.
- 45 *Bennington Banner*, July 17, 1919.
- 46 *Bennington Banner*, January 7, 1920; January 9, 1920.
- 47 Federal Trade Commission v. the H.E. Bradford Co, Inc.; Docket 34C – January 29, 1920.
- 48 *Bennington Banner*, December 28, 1937.
- 49 *Bennington Banner*, September 23, 1941.
- 50 *Bennington Banner*, May 28, 1946.
- 51 *Bennington Banner*, March 13, 1950.
- 52 *Bennington Banner*, June 14, 1950.
- 53 *Bennington Banner*, July 18, 1951; May 20, 1952.
- 54 *Hosiery and Underwear Review*, May 1953.
- 55 *Bennington Banner*, February 14, 1961.



The lighting fixture and cast plaster ceiling decoration in the reception parlor of the H.E. Bradford house as it looks today. Closely related fixtures are seen in the Park-McCullough House in North Bennington. Photographs by the author.



Fireplace and overmantle mirror in the formal parlor of the H.E. Bradford house today. The mirror and other woodwork match the parlor furniture now in the Bennington Museum's collection.

The Bradford family and aesthetic taste in Gilded-Age Vermont

Jamie Franklin

The Bradford Mill, more formally H. E. Bradford & Company, though one of the best remembered of Bennington's manufacturing companies from the mid to late 1800s, was just one of dozens of factories operating in the town during that time. In fact, Bennington was a leading industrial hub in northern New England from the mid to late 1800s. At its height around 1890 the town was home to nearly three dozen individual mills along a two-mile stretch of the Walloomsac River, which provided a ready and renewable power source. Companies based in Bennington manufactured everything from woolen underwear, paisley shawls,

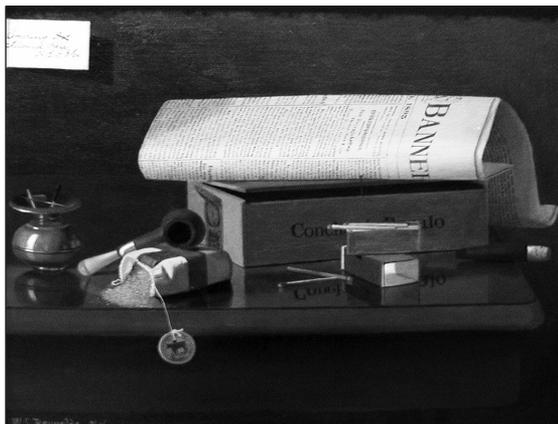
sewing needles, carpenter's squares, and furniture, to paper, pottery, precision mechanical parts, stereographs and automobiles.

With this industrial boom came economic prosperity. Owners of the mills, including the Bradfords, built glorious homes, often a stone's throw from their factories, and filled them with beautiful art, furniture, and decorative objects. Further wealth poured into the town during this era via summer residents, many from the Troy and Albany, New York, area, who built new summer "cottages" or refurbished existing, often historically significant, homes. A new permanent gallery at the Bennington Museum, Gilded Age Vermont, opened on July 20, 2013, highlighting the industrial and cultural innovation of this region's "Gilded Age" — a phrase coined by Mark Twain in 1873 for the period after the Civil War — through objects that were either made or owned in Bennington and the surrounding region or created by artists with connections to the area.

One of the highlights of the new gallery is a vignette of art and furniture originally owned by the Bradford family. The group of Bradford-owned objects in the new gallery is anchored by an exquisitely carved and upholstered sofa and a large marble-topped table. These are highlights of a larger suite of parlor furniture, of which the museum owns two side chairs, two armchairs, and a smaller marble-topped side table. The suite is believed to have been purchased by Henry E. Bradford (1819-1878) as original furnishings of his new home, which was built in 1861 and is still standing on the corner of East Main Street and Bradford Street, directly across from the Bradford Mill. The furniture, designed in the Renaissance Revival style popular at the time, is top of the line for the period, featuring dramatic, expertly



*Portrait of William H. Bradford in a horse-drawn sleigh painted by William Van Zandt (1863-1937), a gift of Henry Edward Bradford.
Bennington Museum collection*



The Banner, an oil painting circa 1895 by William S. Reynolds (d. 1903).

Bennington Museum collection

executed carving and delicate incised designs embellished with gilding. The suite was likely purchased from a furniture maker in either Boston or New York, who created matching woodwork throughout the house, including mirrors, valences and moldings, much of which still survives. With the introduction of the railroads to Bennington in the 1850s, the town's wealthiest residents typically purchased luxury goods manufactured or retailed in these large metropolitan cities, as transportation became fairly easy and there were few artists or craftsmen who could design or produce objects of this caliber in Vermont.

The Bradford suite bears similarities to furniture made by John A. Ellis (d. 1869), who owned and operated a large furniture factory in East Cambridge, Massachusetts, just across the Charles River from Boston, from the early 1850s until his death in 1869. Ellis is known to have designed and manufactured whole housefuls of custom furniture and woodwork such as the Bradfords. While a definite attribution of the Bradford furniture and interior woodwork to Ellis is not possible at this time, it is interesting to note that another prominent Bennington family, the Parks, are believed to have purchased furniture from Ellis for their mansion in North Bennington, now known as the Park-McCullough House, built in 1864-1865. Furthermore, the Park and Bradford homes also share matching light fixtures. It was not uncommon during this period for furniture makers such as Ellis to work with designers and other manufacturers to outfit an entire home in a matching decorative scheme.

Hanging above the sofa in the new gallery are three paintings commissioned and owned by William H. Bradford (1854-1929), who took over ownership of the mill after his father's death. The paintings include a pair of highly personalized still lifes by William S. Reynolds (d. 1903), dating to about 1895, and a portrait of William H. Bradford by William Van Zandt



*A view of the Bradford sofa and paintings as they look in the Bennington Museum's permanent Gilded Age Vermont gallery.
Photograph by the author*

(1857-1942), dated 1894.

Not much is known about William S. Reynolds, but Bradford's still life paintings seem to indicate the strong influence of American artists William Harnett (1848-1892) and John Peto (1854-1907). Both Harnett and Peto specialized in *trompe l'oeil* (fool the eye) paintings that featured highly detailed depictions of objects from everyday life, such as the smoking and drinking accoutrements in the pair by Reynolds, and objects that appear to project out of the canvas, such as nails, string or folded pieces of paper. The still lifes were clearly commissioned directly from the artist by Bradford, as they have multiple personal references. *The Banner* features a depiction of the *Bennington Banner*, the March 19, 1895 issue, set amidst a plethora of smoking paraphernalia. In the upper left hand corner, seemingly tucked between the image and the frame, is depicted a piece of paper inscribed "Smoking Not/Allowed Here/H.E.B. & Co," the "Not" having been crossed out and the "H.E.B. & Co." obviously referencing the mill. The other painting in the pair has a similar piece of paper inscribed "The Battlefield" tucked into its upper left corner. *Trompe l'oeil* paintings of this type often included witty visual or written puns or double meanings, and while the latter inscription may refer to the painting's depiction of a disheveled array of broken glass, spent matches and used cigars, it may also refer to Bennington's famed eponymous battle.

William Van Zandt and his father, Thomas Kirby Van Zandt (1814-1886), were renowned animal painters from the Albany, New York, area. In addition to portraits of horses and other livestock owned by New York's

upper crust, they were both well-known for paintings of their wealthy patrons pulled by horse-drawn sleighs. In addition to the portrait of William H. Bradford pulled through a snow-filled landscape by William Van Zandt, the museum has in its collection a painting of Captain Hamilton Leroy Shields (1823-1889), a native of Troy, New York, who owned homes in Bennington, by Thomas Kirby Van Zandt. These images epitomize Vermont's Gilded Age in their depiction of Bennington's wealthy industrialists and part-time residents dressed to the nines as they elegantly float through wintry landscapes behind their beautiful equine companions, seemingly frozen in time.

Stickle Quilt Discovery

Pam Weeks's article in the Summer 2013 issue of the *Walloomsack Review* is the most comprehensive study of the Bennington Museum's famed Jane Stickle quilt to date. In preparations for the quilt's 150th anniversary exhibition, August 31 through October 14, 2013, I discovered a new piece to the Stickle puzzle. A news item headlined "The County Fair" in the October 1, 1863, issue of the *Bennington Banner*, with its narrative account of highlights from the 1863 Bennington County Agricultural Fair, provides us with new insight into the origins of Mrs. Stickle's famed quilt:

Mrs. J. B. Smith of Manchester, Mrs. Taft and Mrs. Stickles presented each a very extra bed quilt. Mrs. Stickles is an invalid lady, having been for a long time confined to her bed, but her ambition to do something to kill the time induced her to piece this quilt. It contains many thousand different pieces of cloth, no two of which are exactly alike. Upon one corner is marked in plain letters, "made in the war of 1863."

Knowing that Jane Stickle was bedridden helps us to understand better how a middle-aged farm wife at the prime of her life would have had the time and inspiration to undertake such an elaborate, time-consuming project. The fact of Mrs. Stickle's invalidity also helps us to better understand why she and her husband, despite starting with respectable financial means, became bankrupt. The economic contributions of women to their households in rural America during the nineteenth century were significant, and it is probable that Jane Stickle's ailment contributed to their financial woes.

A week later later, on October 8, the *Bennington Banner* published a list of premiums awarded at the fair. In the "Ladies Section" it is noted that the "Best patched quilt" was awarded to "Mrs. W. P. Stickles" with a prize of \$2, equivalent to about \$40 in today's money. Though this prize is modest in comparison to her remarkable accomplishment, it is nice to know that Mrs. Stickle's quilt was recognized by her contemporaries, just as it continues to inspire museum visitors to this day.

- Jamie Franklin



This photograph of a “doffer girl” was taken about 1915 in the Pacific Mills in Lawrence, Massachusetts. Doffer girls removed sets of bobbins from a machine and put on new empty bobbins. This kind of work would be given to girls considered too young to run a spinning frame or similar device.

Courtesy of the American Textile History Museum, Lowell, Massachusetts.

Recollections of a mill worker

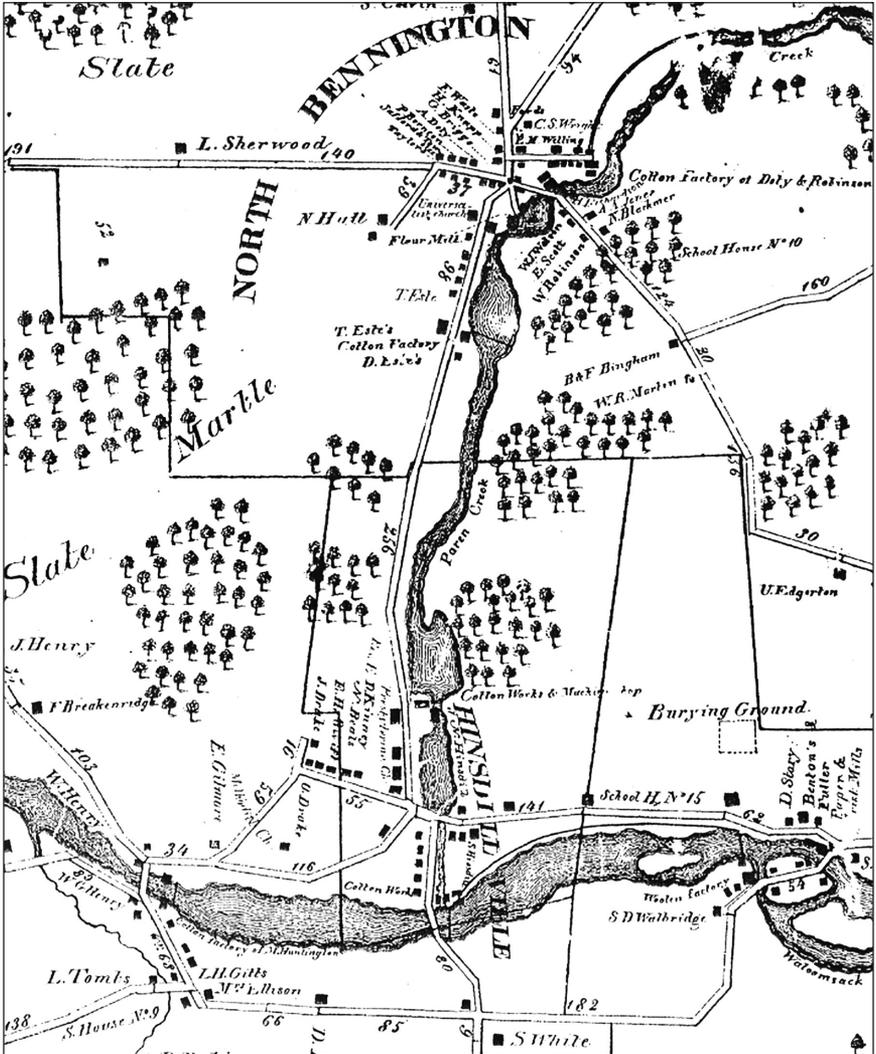
Anne Bugbee

Several years ago a small photocopied booklet fell into my hands, with the overwhelming title: *Recollections of a Mill Worker: An Interesting and Comprehensive Review of the Cotton and Woolen Industry of New England for a Period of Nearly Fifty Years, Showing the Development and Growth of these Important Factors in Our History -also- Facts and Figures Relating to Hours of Labor, Wages. Cost of Living, etc., of Factory Operatives Since 1859 – compiled and Written by One Who Has Had Practical Experience as a Mill Worker from Childhood.* There was no author listed but scrawled in pencil on the top of the title page was: *Written by my great Grandmother, Mary Palmer.*

Published in 1906, *Recollections of a Mill Worker* is a first-person account of a girl who worked in the mills of North Bennington, where she also lived. In the beginning life in the mills was not so bad – there was a sense of freedom and of mutual respect between owner and laborer. But that all changed in the early 1860s, even in North Bennington, when the mills were no longer locally owned. “Increase production and make more money”

was the new motto, and Mary Palmer does not hesitate to express her opinion on the changes she sees. Her voice is strong and clear.

Here is her story, much of which had to be researched anew because



Six cotton mills can be counted on this map of North Bennington, a detail from the 1835 Joseph Hinsdill map of the town of Bennington. The map's cartographer prominently labeled his own neighborhood, Hinsdillville. The "burying ground" at lower right is also called the Hinsdillville Cemetery and adjoins the campus of today's Bennington College.

her written account is often oblique and she made few references to herself and her family.

Mary Palmer was born in Ireland about 1846. Her maiden name was

Dundon, which was discovered only from the record of her marriage in Bennington to William Palmer in 1866. The 1880 census discloses that they had three children: John, 13, Willie, 10, and Nellie, 7. At some point Mary and William moved from North Bennington to Pittsfield, Mass., where they were buried.

Throughout her narrative Mary Palmer never mentions the names of the mills in which she worked. She does dedicate her "Recollections" to five of her former employers: Truman Estes, who built and ran the Stone Mill on Paran Creek; P.L. Robinson, treasurer and principal of the Vermont Mills at the headwaters of Paran Creek; Irving Jackson, Nathaniel and Henry Hall, also on Paran Creek below the Stone Mill; and Jeremiah Essex at Irish Corners. All these mills made print cloth and were in North Bennington.

Mary Palmer came to North Bennington with her parents in 1859 and at about the age of 13 she began work in the North Bennington cotton mills. Her parents may have responded to an ad like the one that appeared in the *Vermont Gazette* on October 13, 1821:

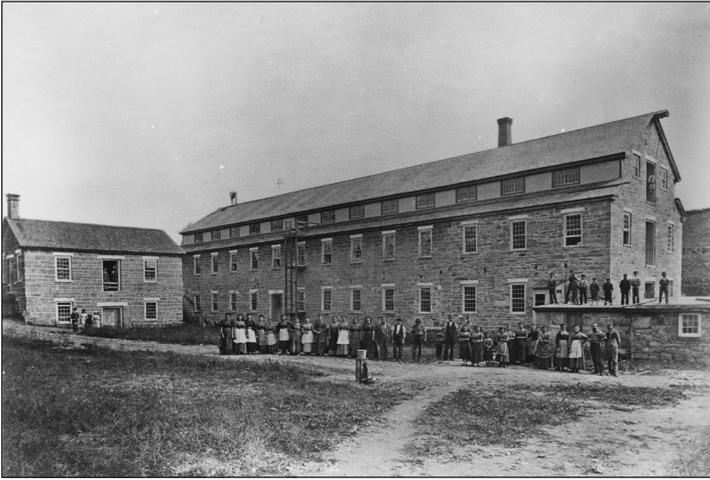
Wanted in the Bennington Cotton Factory several families that can furnish a number of children each. To such constant employ will be given wages paid to the ability of the children.

Children were needed to do the easy unskilled work, and by employing whole families the parents would see to it that the youngsters were diligent and that there was no nonsense. Children could start as young as 6 but the average starting age was 8.

Their hours were 5 a.m. to 6 p.m. At 4:35 a.m. the first bell rang to awaken the workers. The next bell at 5 a.m. called them inside the factory door. At 7 a.m. the bell rang for breakfast, often consisting of bread, molasses, and water. The workers went home to eat and returned at 7:35. At noon the dinner bell rang and the workers went home, to return at 12:35. The last bell rang at 6 p.m. for dismissal, or 7 p.m. in the summer. If these hours sound grueling, remember that most of these workers grew up on farms where the hours were just as long, the work just as hard; but now they were getting paid. This was important, especially for the women and girls who, perhaps for the first and only time in their lives, earned their own money and could spend it as they wished.

Mary's first job was as a spooler. This meant that she tended a spooling machine that wound the spun thread around the bobbin. It usually took 2 1/2 hours. The spooler started the thread on the bobbin and her job was to make sure it was winding smoothly and evenly.

The girls who did the spooling, each had to spool the yarn spun



This stone mill in North Bennington was originally that of Truman Estes (seen as T. Este's Cotton Factory on the map on page 24, where mill girl Mary Palmer worked. Later it became the H. T. Cushman furniture factory, where this photo was taken in 1898, with workers assembled, including several children. Note the water faucet and pail in the center. This is a copy of an older picture. Bennington Museum collection

by a certain number of frames. It would take two and one half hours to fill the bobbins, and if the girl spooler was expert she could spool it in one hour and a half. She then had one hour to herself and could go out and do as she pleased. There was no asking the boss, either; but when her work was done she was free. . . We read books, wrote letters, crocheted, sewed, tied fringe etc., while at our work. The overseer sometimes spoke to us about it, but if we were good workers, we paid no attention to him.

After a couple of days of learning, Mary was on her own. She was paid \$2.75 a week. All the girls in the carding and spinning room were paid the same. The young men who were piecers on mules and card strippers were paid \$4 to \$4.50 per week. The weaving in a cotton mill was done by older girls and women, who ran four looms and averaged \$1 per loom a week. Sometimes if a pair of looms next to them was vacant they would run them during the weaver's absence.

The weavers were looked upon with admiration by everyone in the mill as it was considered astonishing for a girl to earn a \$1 a day.

The mills would shut down on the least occasion. If a holiday occurred on a Thursday they would close for the rest of the week. If the circus came to town the mill would close, mainly because the workers would

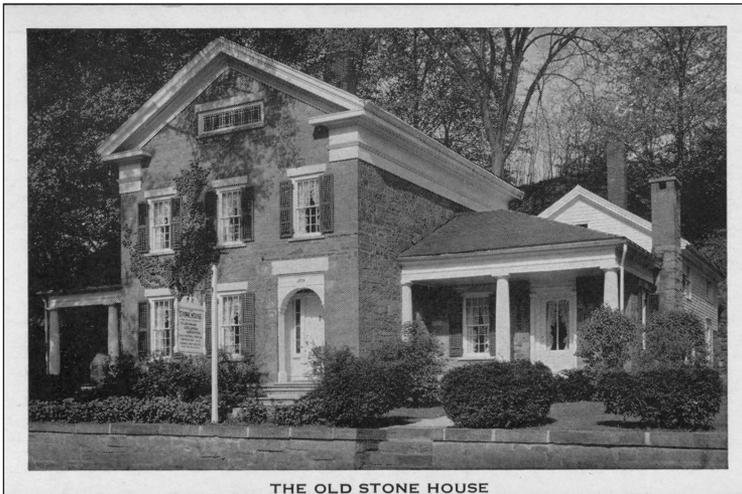
take off anyway and there were not enough hands to run it. If a long-time employee died the owner was expected to close and if he didn't he was called "in the language of the help an Old Hog." The mills always closed for two or three days for a cattle show or county fair. If the owner did not close on the first day then the adult workers would "take him by storm" and demand the time until he gave in, Mary wrote.

We did not appoint a committee, as is done now to ahem and aha and then bear all of the blame. But all of us went and made a demand for what we wanted, and usually got it.

Mary remembers many times after the bell had called them to work the girls and boys would go coasting on the hill or slide on the mill pond. In summer they would take off for the fields or go rowing on the pond. They were never discharged for any of those pranks.

In fact it would have to be something very serious, such as willfully breaking machinery, or destroying the stock or public immorality that a fairly good worker or family of workers would be discharged for.

In spite of the hard work and low wages the workers were, in Mary's words, treated with humanity. If it snowed 5 or 6 inches then the factory team of horses was hitched and the women and children were taken to their homes. The workers were not expected to come in after a heavy snowfall until after the roads had been plowed (rolled). It was seldom that a man with



This postcard view shows the Old Stone House, originally the residence of Truman Estes (1798-1864), located across the road from Estes's stone mill. During the era of Cushman furniture manufacture, the stone house became a showplace for the Cushman Colonial style, and each room was decorated with sales in mind.
Bennington Museum collection

a family of small children or a homeless man would be dismissed in winter time. If a worker needed time off they just took it and did not need to ask permission

In another Mill where I was employed both members of the firm were non-residents, but one of them was there three or four days every week and knew the circumstances of every family employed in the mill. It was a first class, well-equipped cotton mill, containing, I think, nearly 200 looms. He was very particular with families living on his ground; would not permit drunken, immoral or low families to live there if he knew of it. While he was not at all familiar with the help he was always willing to assist an honest, struggling family – especially where there was an invalid father or widow who had small children. I have personal knowledge of his going to the overseer where the children were employed and telling him at the first opportunity to advance those children to some work in order that they could earn more money.

Mary stresses the honesty and fairness of her employer:

In those days the overseer could not send to the Old Country for his relatives to put them on to the pet jobs. Neither could he work his sister-in-law, his brother-in-law, his cousins, his uncles and his aunts into all of the good paying easy jobs. The mill owner gave the preferences to his old, faithful, employees if they were capable.

Mary was fully aware that mill workers of the present day (1906) will say that the situations she describes may have been true in one or two mills but Mary insists that it was true in all mills at that time prior to 1859 and until 1862, especially small mills in small towns. The manufacturer was interested in his employees and treated them as equals. He was satisfied with reasonable profit and didn't need the luxuries that are desired today.

. . . the manufacturers and businessmen of today are ambitious to become multimillionaires – own yachts, maintain one or two lady friends in luxury and buy husbands for their daughters from the dissipated, debauched nobility of Europe. Their “ambitions” in other directions do not allow them time to become interested in their employees, who have and are creating all their wealth. If we express dissatisfaction, why, we are told that labor is noble, and man was made to earn his bread by the sweat of his brow. That is, of course, the working people who have to do so. It surely has no reference to them.

It is not only the change in the mill owners' attitudes that Mary decries but it is the change she sees in the attitude of the workers themselves. When she started in the mills in 1859 the workers were proud of their work and skills but by 1906 the workers lost that pride and felt inferior.

By the way, what has become of that good class of people – the old time Yankee who cringed to no man because he happened to have more money than he had? He, of course, had to give his strength or skill in exchange for money, but he considered it a fair deal and never for a moment looked upon himself as an inferior. . . . I find none of that class of people in the mills at the present day. . . . The writer is not surprised at their absence, as they were too independent to submit to the tyranny that is practiced in the mills now.

Mary Palmer's narrative does not concentrate only on life in the mills. In great detail she discusses how the workers lived comfortably in spite of small wages. A single man or woman, without family, boarded out with local families. They were provided with board, washing and supper. The men paid \$2.25 per week and the women paid \$1.50, both including washing. Mary does not say why the women paid less but perhaps they were expected to help serve the supper or help with the washing up. The mill owners built small houses on their "grounds" which they rented to the workers.

The houses for working people were not built to ape the houses of the wealthy that can afford servants to keep them in order – with parlor, sitting room, dining room all opening on from each other and a large useless hall and it takes a small fortune to keep them warm and comfortable in winter time.

The workers' houses, in the 1850s, were single dwellings one and a half or two and a half stories. They were solidly built with the front door opening into a living room or sometimes a small hall called an entry. The living room provided plenty of light and measured about 15 by 18 feet:

It was used as a kitchen in winter with stove pipe going through upstairs, which would contain three or perhaps four good size rooms. They were comfortably warmed from the kitchen stove. Every house had a summer or back kitchen, with shed attached. The stove was placed in the back kitchen during the summer, and the front room was kept cool for dining, sitting and general living room. The floor was always painted with good, durable paint and with a braided rug or two on it. I assure you it was very comfortable and nice looking. On one side was a stairway and

cellarway and one or nearly always two rooms opening from the other side, which were used as bedrooms.

If there were grownup children in the house, the front room was used as a parlor to allow them to entertain suitors in privacy. It was simply furnished with a rag rug, a table displaying the family's treasured books, the Bible center stage, a couple of rocking chairs and maybe one or two pictures on the wall. Mary states that people in 1910 would find such a house very poor looking. But you could get the whole inside whitewashed for \$1. The mother would wash the windows and floor and the house would be clean.

There were no carpets or lumbering upholstered furniture for the house mother to be obliged to take outside and beat the dust out of every few weeks.

The mother of a family of workers is far more overworked now than she was then. With all their big wages and stylish furnishings of the present day I find none, or very few of the working people who can afford a servant to assist their mother in her declining days.

This simple house had plenty of living and sleeping space for a family of eight adults, all heated with one stove. The rent for such a house would be from \$2.50 to \$3 a month, and smaller homes rented for \$1.50 a month. Mary assures the reader that she is not quoting the prices for one town but for all country towns. Wood was the chief fuel and could be bought for \$1 to \$3 a cord for the best. Doctor's fees were 50 cents a visit, including medicine that he carried in his valise. In 1906 the patient goes to the drug store and pays \$1 for the prescription and another \$1 for the medicine.

I cannot see but we were doctored and cured, too, as well as we are now. At any rate, we were and are as healthy and strong as people of the present generation. We did not imagine we must have a trained nurse, but nursed our families through typhoid fever or any other sickness. There was always kind neighbors who were perfectly willing to assist and would feel offended if offered anything in payment for their services, as we were supposed to reciprocate when affliction came to our neighbors' homes.

A death in the family would bring relatives and neighbors to prepare the body. Only then would the undertaker be called to measure the body for a coffin, which would be lined in mull cotton or silk. A burial plot large enough for four or five graves could be purchased for \$10 or \$15. The family would ride in carriages (\$2 each) to the cemetery and the rest of the mourners in wagons. If the deceased was a long-time and respected resident

of the town or long employee of a mill, the owners and merchants would provide and pay for the carriages for the mourners. Funeral expenses were the responsibility of the family, there were no insurance agencies or benevolent societies. Only in extreme cases, like the death of the bread winner, would a collection be taken up by the mill workers to help the family.

Quite in contrast to the present time [1906] when with comparatively good wages it is not unusual to take up a collection to assist the household at this time. It is certainly astonishing to see the nicely furnished homes where the parlor furniture alone cost perhaps \$200 so illy prepared to meet the expenses of sickness and death.

In those days clothing was made to last. In summer women wore shoes called "Congress gaiters," high-heeled soft leather with elastic inserts at the ankles. In winter and wet weather morocco leather high-laced shoes were worn. Both types of shoes would last at least two seasons and cost \$1.25. Boys and girls went barefoot in the summer, and in the winter wore durable calfskin shoes, with heavy hand-knit wool socks. These shoes shed water if walking in the rain or snow. With a little mending, the shoes were expected to last two or three years or were passed on to the next child to wear. They cost \$1.50. For warmth, double shawls, costing between \$5 to \$10, took the place of coats. In the summer silk shawls or mantillas were the vogue. These cost between \$3 and \$5 and with care would last many years.

Clothing was more expensive than now, but styles did not change so often and when a good article was purchased it lasted for years if properly cared for. A heavy silk cost \$4 per yard or more, still I knew several mill girls that would save their wages and buy a silk dress at that price. Then by having a nice hat or bonnet occasionally, she was a well dressed girl for the next five years at least.

Children under 14 wore simple dresses. Boys had sturdy pants from material purchased at the mill by the yard and made at home, with a blouse-like top. Mothers also made the little girls' dresses – no trim, which was expensive – out of cotton. Both boys and girls whose parents could afford the cost of education wore large gingham aprons with sleeves to school. At the age of 8 when they went into the mills these aprons were shed. Boys did not wear vests or jackets until they were 17.

Small girls went to church in white sun bonnets or flats that were somewhat like the sailor hat of today [1906], but a larger brim to shade them from the sun. There was no trimming on the hat and a narrow band encircled the crown. . . Ladies wore bonnets

for church or social gatherings. In those days they were expensive, too, costing from \$2 to \$10, but they were annually cleaned and retrimmed and were as good as new at little expense. The author is unable to quote prices on men's clothing, but knows that the sterner sex had respectable suits for Sunday and holiday occasions; in fact it was a matter of note that mill workers were better dressed than were persons employed in other pursuits at that time.

The cost of provisions was, Mary admitted, not something she paid attention to because she was too young. She quotes the prices of only those things she can remember:

Flour could be bought for \$4 or \$4.50 per barrel. Potatoes sold from 20 to 35 cents per bushel. Good butter was obtained for from 16 to 35 cents per pound. Eggs ranged in prices from 12 to 18 cents per dozen. Beef could be bought for \$3 per hundred weight, either by the carcass or quarter, which was the usual way of buying meat for the families use during the winter. . . .I know that our family always had plenty of good wholesome food and my parents were able to save a little money each year out of our wages.

There was plenty for the young people to do. Kitchen dances were often held. The young people would gather at a house, the kitchen table would be removed and dancing would commence, the music provided by a local fiddler. The boys would pay the fiddler any amount from 50 cents to \$1 for the evening. Dances ended before midnight because the workers had to be at the mill at 5 a.m. the next morning. Public balls were attended by young men and their "best girls." Tickets were \$1 and supper was included. To invite a young woman to a ball meant that the young man's intentions were serious.

We attended picnics, festivals and the county fair, but they were not expensive. Sleigh ride expenses were always borne by our employer, besides being treated to free lectures, and having a debating club or lyceum at the academy. Many thriving towns maintained a free library.

Weddings were very simple. The bride had a new outfit but it was serviceable so she could wear it many times for Sunday best and other important occasions. Mary finds fault with:

"the expensive and flimsy wedding gown that nearly all brides of today expect to have costing \$50 or more and entirely useless

after the wedding except to wear to a ball, which she seldom attends after becoming a wife.”

The minister came to the bride's house and her family and one or two close friends witnessed the ceremony. After the ceremony the cake, made by the bride or her mother, was passed around. Wedding guests did not bring presents nor were they expected. There were no presents except from the parents. The bride's parents would give bedding and the groom's a cook stove and kitchen utensils. Household furniture was purchased piece by piece as they could afford it:

Some there were who had not saved money enough to furnish their new homes, but there was no installment houses and they had to get along with little until they could pay for things.

If there was a honeymoon, it was spent at a friend's house. Get married on Saturday and go back to work on Monday was the usual course of events. No one wanted to lose a day's pay.

Such was the mode of living of all mill workers and laboring people in general in 1861, the beginning of the great Civil War. I was a mill worker then and have thus been employed at intervals since I am a mill worker still. I often ask myself the question: Is our condition much improved? I am fully aware that there are more educational advantages for young men and women in the country than there was then. I know that labor's hours are shorter, too. I also know that in order to keep our work and make a living wage we are in a perpetual grind from the time we begin in the morning until the mill closes at night.

The outbreak of the Civil War in 1861 made life difficult for the mill workers in North Bennington. Some of the mills closed when the call went out for troops and others ran out of what stock they had on hand and had to close. Wages dropped and the workers were forced either to look for jobs on farms, and by autumn:

Many of them were compelled to enlist in order to maintain their families. In the town where I lived . . . the First Vermont Cavalry was composed of many of these men, several of whom deserved promotion for bravery, but they had no education to fit them for it, having worked in the mills since they were children.

By December of 1861 many of the mills reopened. Because of the war the manufacturers anticipated a demand for woolen and cotton goods to outfit the Union Army. The increased demand, however, did not benefit the

workers. Wages were cut and were at their lowest. Cotton weavers who formerly were paid 15 to 25 cents per cut of 45 yards were paid 8 to 10 cents for cuts of 50 or more yards.

Labor was cheap. I think it was in the winter of 1863-4 that we realized that we were not getting our share, as we had been working for starvation wages during the past two years. The manufacturer was getting rich out of our toil, so our pay was gradually increased. In 1864-5 a good weaver could earn from \$36 to \$55 per month . . . ordinary laborers \$2 or more a day.

Wages were good in the mid-1860s but the hours were still long and the manufacturers made a great deal of money. In 1864-5 the workers in the Massachusetts mills of Andover, Lawrence, and Lowell agitated for fewer hours and the 11-hour day came into being. But this was a double edged sword. The hours were shorter and the amount of work doubled.

For instance: Weavers were compelled to operate each others' looms during the dinner hour; that is, a four or six loom weaver would have to run the next weaver's four or six looms while she took her dinner or half hour off. When she returned she had to do the same, in order to give the other weaver her time for dinner.

The humanitarianism of the mill owner toward his workers was gone. The mills were owned by strangers who did not live in the towns where their mills were located. They did not know their workers nor did they care how they lived. These owners did not become involved in the running of the mills, that was left to the supervisor. Most of the mills ran until 9 or 10 o'clock at night. Young children had to stay as well. Overtime was paid, which circumvented the 11-hour day rule and kept within the law. But the overtime pay was minimal and not the time and a half of the twenty-first century.

If an employee refused to work, discharge followed. As wages had been high for some time, emigrants from other countries came flocking to the United States. Skilled and unskilled labor from England, Scotland and Wales, Ireland and Germany, to say nothing of the influx that came from Canada, in order to get a slice of the big wages (which they had a right to do) made help plenty.

During the Civil War years and for several years afterwards the manufacture of cotton was so profitable that many factories were built in the

hopes of getting in on the boom. It was just a matter of time for the market to glut and mills closed and wages dropped. But the price of rent, food, and fuel did not decline.

There was no other way for the mill worker to make living wage except operating more machines, cotton weavers on print cloth running from six to eight to ten looms, where formerly they had earned a good living operating but four. Warper-tenders who for the past few years had received \$5.00 or more per week for running one warper, was now obliged to run two for \$6.00 or \$6.50 per week. It was the same for spoolers, spinners, piecers and all operatives.

Mary Palmer ends her narrative by placing the blame for the low pay and poor working conditions squarely on the mill owners' shoulders. The new breed of owners were, she says, out for profit and get-rich-quick ideas. If they found they were running out of money their solution was to reduce wages and increase production. As a result, skilled workers left the mills and looked for jobs in more remunerative fields. It is little wonder that the textile workers and skilled mechanics of all kinds, formed unions to protect their well being and rights.

William Marsh, ‘a rather shadowy figure,’ crossed boundaries both national and political

Vermont holds a unique but little-known place in eighteenth-century American and Canadian history. During the 1770s William Marsh and many others who had migrated from Connecticut and Massachusetts to take up lands granted by New Hampshire Governor Benning Wentworth, faced severe challenges to their land titles because New York also claimed the area between the Connecticut and Hudson rivers, known as “the New Hampshire Grants.” New York’s aggressive pursuit of its claims generated strong political tensions and animosity. When the American Revolution began, the settlers on the Grants joined the patriot cause, expecting that a new national regime would counter New York and recognize their titles.

During the war the American Continental Congress declined to deal with the New Hampshire settlers’ claims. When the Grants settlers then proposed to become a state separate from New York, the Congress denied them separate status. As a consequence, the New Hampshire grantees declared independence in 1777 and in 1778 constituted themselves as an independent republic named Vermont, which existed until 1791 when it became the 14th state in the American Union.

Most of the creators of Vermont played out their roles, and their lives ended in obscurity. Americans remember Ethan Allen and his Green Mountain Boys and their military actions early in the Revolution. But Allen was a British captive during the critical years of Vermont’s formation, 1775-1778. A few others, some of them later Loyalists, laid the foundations for Vermont’s recognition and stability. One of those was William Marsh (1738-1816).

Marsh crossed boundaries both national and political. His first loyalty was to the communities on the New Hampshire Grants. As a militia colonel in Manchester, Vermont, he supported the Green Mountain Boys as they repulsed the New York sheriffs and agents who were trying to dispossess the New Hampshire settlers and enforce New York claims and control. When the Revolution broke out, many Vermonters quickly supported it; “the boys” seized Fort Ticonderoga in May 1775 and joined the American attack on Quebec, expecting that their actions would lead to Continental Congress support. On the political front, Marsh and a few other Vermont leaders mobilized energetically the towns on the Grants to unite and declare themselves a state in the new union. But the Continental Congress rejected them, and as General John Burgoyne advanced along Lake Champlain and the upper Hudson, Marsh found Vermont’s prospects with

the Americans dismal. Seeing the British as Vermont's best hope, he changed sides in July of 1777.

In 1780, the strains with the Continental Congress reached a peak, and the British proposed to the Vermonters that they become a separate colony in British Canada, with land rights guaranteed. Cornwallis's defeat at Yorktown in the fall of 1781 canceled that option. Meantime, Marsh and a good many other Vermonters had given up on American recognition of their titles and cast their lot with the British.

Marsh was captured with Burgoyne at Saratoga in October 1777 and forced into exile. He then worked as an intelligence agent for the British, played a key role in aiding communications and negotiations with Vermont's leaders in the final years of the war, and later helped with prisoner exchanges and resettlement of Loyalist refugees from Vermont and eastern New York. While he never held a British military rank, the British rewarded his valued services with substantial land grants to him and his children in the Bay of Quinte area on Lake Ontario. After a few years, however, he returned to Dorset, Vermont, the home community to which he remained closely attached.

Jennifer S.H. Brown and Wilson B. Brown

William Marsh was described as “a rather shadowy figure” by Gavin Watt, writing about the British army in Canada during the American Revolution.¹ The phrase is apt. Marsh is scarcely mentioned in Vermont or other regional writings about the American Revolution.² Ian Pemberton's biography of Justus Sherwood and Willard S. Randall's recent biography of Ethan Allen mention Marsh only briefly as a Green Mountain Boy who became a loyalist.³ Kevin Graffagnino, in his research on Ira and Ethan Allen's papers, found no mention there of Marsh's role as an agent and communications link with Vermont, yet ample evidence survives of his being in periodic contact with Ethan Allen and other Vermonters whom he had known for years, in regard to bringing Vermont over to the British side.

Marsh's work in both Vermont and Canada advanced political and diplomatic negotiations and the search for solutions on behalf of Vermont and in support of the loyalists in the 1780s; he never made history on public platforms or as hero or villain in military or paramilitary actions before or during the war. His transborder story also does not fit easily into nation-based historical narratives. On a practical side, the Frederick Haldimand correspondence, which has proved essential for uncovering his story, was so difficult to access before its microfilming in the 1960s that much of its content lay undiscovered.

Marsh and those with whom he dealt in the 1780s necessarily hid many of their activities. Their attempts to get Vermont to defect to the British came so close to success that the British did not want to advertise the proposition, while the Americans involved could not risk exposing their patriotism to suspicion. Marsh himself, perhaps like his grandfather Marsh with his Royalist ties, was unlikely to reveal much to Vermont neighbors who would not have appreciated his work with the British in Canada. Nor would his Canadian associates have approved of his earlier role in abetting the American Revolution. Now it is possible to cast some light into the shadows, even if much remains subject to conjecture.

With the British: What Marsh Said He Did

Marsh's service with the British is reasonably well documented from August of 1780 onward, but his activities during his first years of exile from late 1777 to 1780 are unknown. Classed as an officer at the Saratoga surrender, he was forbidden by the terms of his parole to join a military force engaged in hostilities against the United States. In compliance with the convention signed at Saratoga, General Haldimand specified in January of 1778 that his regiments should include no one who had surrendered under its terms.⁴ Marsh could not serve in combat (which did not appear much to his taste in any case), but significantly, the British eventually compensated him for his services at the levels of first a lieutenant (1780-82), and later a captain despite his non-regimental status.

In 1786, when Marsh applied for compensation for his losses in Vermont and to reward his service to the Crown, he listed the following activities to support his case.⁵

1. Was taken prisoner with Burgoyne at Battle of Saratoga. "Had under the Convention leave to go to Canada and accordingly he went."
2. Has resided in Canada chiefly since.⁶
3. Was frequently employed by Gen. Haldimand.
4. Was placed on the Subsistence List, for which he recd. Lieutenants pay [and later captain's pay. Marsh did not, however, explain why he received it.]
5. Assisted Sir John Johnson, Superintendent of the Loyalists, in distributing pay to the Loyalists.

Although he could not reveal his specific activities, senior officers who were privy to his work and that of other agents such as Justus Sherwood and George Smyth could well have told the commissioners that he and his colleagues had performed valuable service.

Frederick Haldimand and Secret Service in Canada

During the years of Marsh's service with the British, Sir Frederick Haldimand (1718-1791), a Swiss-born general whose military and diplomatic skills had earned him a high rank despite his foreign origins, had command of the British forces in the north. Haldimand's first language was French. He had learned German while serving in Germany, and was comfortable in English. He was a good fit for someone headquartered in Quebec with English and German-speaking officers under his command. Haldimand arrived at Quebec in the spring of 1778, a few months after Saratoga, to take up his royal appointment as governor of "our Province of Quebec in America" and commander-in-chief of the northern forces including the loyalist units.⁷

Under Haldimand's direction, John Johnson, the English-educated son of Sir William Johnson (d. 1774), British superintendent of Indian affairs for the region, had command of several loyalist military units. Sir William had held a large estate in northern New York and was closely tied to the Mohawks in the region. After his death, his son took over his position, and also commanded the King's Royal Regiment of New York. After the battles of Bennington and Saratoga, what was left of two other loyalist regiments also came under Johnson's command. These were John Peter's Queen's Loyal Rangers and Ebenezer and Edward Jessup's King's Loyal Americans.⁸ Johnson, like Haldimand, was an important figure in William Marsh's life in the 1780s.

Haldimand's principal concern was to defend Quebec against the threat of American and French invasion along the coast and by means of the St. Lawrence River. His secondary duties were to weaken the American forces and divert their activities away from the New York City area, Pennsylvania, and the American South. Tactics included launching aggressive raids to destroy crops and livestock that would otherwise supply rebel forces. The raids, directed mainly into northern New York, forced the Americans along the border to use their precious resources to prevent attacks, or more often to pursue the invaders, draining their treasuries, and demoralizing their soldiers and residents. Throughout the summer of 1781 in particular, Haldimand sent raiding parties into the Mohawk Valley and even the Susquehanna Valley, burning, looting, kidnapping, killing, and taking prisoners. The New York militia could not respond effectively. Their base at Fort Stanwix, which St. Leger had failed to capture in 1777 (keeping him from joining Burgoyne at Saratoga), was isolated, became short on supplies, and fell into poor condition. When it suffered a severe fire in May 1781 the Americans abandoned it, leaving no troops stationed on the upper Mohawk.⁹ Even the

towns close to the Hudson River, such as Poughkeepsie and Schenectady, felt threatened.

Unknown to the Americans, Haldimand never had the troops, supplies, or instructions to launch a major attack.¹⁰ When his raiding parties attacked, American troops would pursue them. The raiders would strategically withdraw, and the Americans would claim victory or British cowardice, for which Haldimand was sometimes criticized. But he had to protect Quebec from attack and could not tie up a large force in New York or northern New England. Britain had already lost one army at Saratoga, and Haldimand was not prepared to risk the loss of another.

The Secret Service under Haldimand provided military intelligence about defenses and possible attacks, but it also tried to gauge the attitudes of the Americans – their willingness to take up arms and their views of their leaders. The British were also interested in knowing which American leaders might support compromise, or might even defect. Marsh, with his knowledge of Vermont politics, was well placed to assess conditions through interviews of refugees, clandestine or officially sanctioned meetings with Vermonters, and careful observation.

Marsh served under his fellow Vermont loyalist, Justus Sherwood. At first, Sherwood's superior was Major John Peters, commander of the Queen's Loyal Rangers, and later Edward Jessup whose units absorbed the Rangers, but in practice Sherwood generally reported directly to headquarters, writing either to Major Robert Mathews, General Haldimand's trusted secretary,¹¹ or to Haldimand himself. Mathews had a major role in drafting the general's correspondence. Letters from Haldimand were usually in Mathews's hand. Haldimand signed some of them while Mathews signed others on the general's behalf.

Sherwood's experience as a scout and his intelligence skills led to his being placed in charge of the Secret Service scouts and agents. "Scouts" served not only to watch military movements, but also to "scout" political activities and analyze them – in short, they gathered intelligence.¹² In the first years of the revolution the Secret Service was principally interested in military intelligence, but as the war dragged on, political information became increasingly important.

Robert Mathews described Sherwood's role in a letter of January 1, 1781, informing a colleague that Haldimand had sent Sherwood to reside at St. John's (now St-Jean sur Richelieu, a few miles north of Lake Champlain) to look after the affairs of the loyalists who had fled there, and "to provide from the several Corps of Loyalists intelligent and fit men for Scouts." Sherwood, he added, was "Well acquainted with [the] abilities & Sentiments of those People."¹³ He did not say when Sherwood was appointed to

this position. But Ian Pemberton, Sherwood's biographer, placed him at St. John's as early as 1777. By the summer of 1778, Sherwood "was involved in collecting and evaluating intelligence reports at St. Johns . . . [and] concerned with finding reliable couriers who could go safely back and forth to Albany and the Connecticut Valley, and with establishing contacts behind the rebel lines with bona fide 'friends of government'."¹⁴ William Marsh had begun his service with Sherwood by 1780 and quite likely earlier. In June of 1781, Sherwood got a second officer to assist him: Doctor George Smyth, of whom more later.

At first, British efforts to probe New York and Vermont were based at St. John's and at Isle aux Noix near the outlet of the lake. Since ships coming up the Richelieu River were stopped by the shallows near St. John's and had to unload their cargoes there for transport farther upriver, it was a natural defensive site. From the summer of 1781 on, Sherwood's base was mainly at Dutchman's Point on Long Isle (now North Hero Island) on Lake Champlain between today's St. Albans, Vermont, and Plattsburgh, New York. There, the British built a fort that they named "the Loyal Blockhouse."¹⁵ Throughout the war, the British controlled most of Lake Champlain, being perfectly secure as far down as Crown Point. They had largely abandoned Fort Ticonderoga in favor of smaller, more modern forts and maintained the area around the Loyal Blockhouse as safe territory.¹⁶

Marsh, Vermont, and the Haldimand Affair

Tracking Marsh's early activities is difficult. On February 15, 1782, Marsh wrote to Haldimand that he had been at St. John's for nineteen months, which puts his arrival there in July of 1780.¹⁷ But some of his duties started earlier. Late in 1779 or early in 1780, he and two others, on behalf of Haldimand, carried a letter from Brigadier Henry Watson Powell to the governor of New York at Albany concerning an exchange of prisoners. Colonel Goose Van Schaick, officer at Albany and an ardent supporter of the revolution,¹⁸ accepted the letter and passed it on, but he took a dim view of Marsh and his two companions, William Moffat and a man named Tuttle, and considered detaining them. Writing to Powell, Van Schaick complained of his visitors:

Mr. Tuttle, Mr. Moffet, and Mr. Marsh who I am informed were intrusted with your dispatches are persons in such a predicament as do not intitle them to the benefit of that Law of Nations which they might otherwise claim as the bearers of your letter and nothing but the dictates of humanity can justify me with my superiors for not de-

taining them. You will therefore please on any such future occasions not to Employ persons of their complexion.¹⁹

During 1779-1780 it appears likely that Marsh was quietly based at St. John's, assisting Justus Sherwood and sharing his knowledge and observations. Lacking both fame and notoriety, he may have made himself useful as Haldimand and his officers and their colleague, General Henry Clinton in New York City, explored means of opening negotiations with Ethan Allen and the new Vermont government through secret and sometimes failed communications. The intricacies of the Haldimand affair, or conspiracy as some called it, lie beyond William Marsh's story and may be followed in such works as Jellison's and Randall's biographies of Ethan Allen. One set of incidents, however, serves to give the flavor of the whole.

As Jellison recounts, one day in late July 1780, while Ethan Allen was walking in Arlington, Vermont, "he was approached by a British courier, dressed in the clothing of a frontier farmer" who handed him a letter from Beverley Robinson, a New York landowner previously involved in land disputes on the Oblong and elsewhere. Robinson had become a loyalist and was instrumental in Benedict Arnold's "conversion" to the British cause. The letter's delivery was belated. On March 30, Robinson had written to Allen that he had "often been informed" that Allen and most other Vermonters were "opposed to ye wild & chimerical Skeme of ye Americans" to separate from Great Britain, and that Allen "would willingly assist in uniting America again to Great Britain." If Vermont joined the British "in favor of the crown of England," Robinson held out the promise that "you may obtain a separate Government under the King & Constitution of England."²⁰

Ethan Allen showed this and another Robinson letter and one from General Clinton in New York to trusted associates – his brother Ira, Vermont Governor Thomas Chittenden, and a few others. Over the next year, they entered into a series of secret negotiations. Biographer Charles Jellison argued that in this undertaking, which could indeed be called treasonous, Allen was moved "mainly by a genuine concern for the future of Vermont." While he surely had other motives as well, not all so exalted, "the welfare of the Republic appeared uppermost in his mind. Pressured from all sides and harassed by enemies within, Vermont seemed headed for disaster, and a détente with the British appeared to offer a chance to ward off the worst of it – possibly the only chance."²¹

General Haldimand was skeptical about Allen, and wrote to General Henry Clinton on August 13, 1780, that he thought no dependence could be placed on Allen's word, yet he remained open to possibilities.²² By the end of the summer, new approaches were being made. Governor Chitten-

den proposed to Haldimand a truce to facilitate the exchange of prisoners; the proposal, actually written by Allen, would open the way for discussion of other matters of substance.²³ Coincidentally, Haldimand received that letter at almost the same time as he received a letter from William Marsh written from St. John's on October 10 or 11, 1780—the first Marsh letter that is preserved in the Haldimand papers. On his own, Marsh offered an outline of Vermont's recent history and suggested that he could help in pursuing contacts.

Marsh at the time was acting in Sherwood's stead in his superior's absence. His letter reveals considerable familiarity with secret service activity, an indication that he had been there for some time. He clearly knew about the British-Vermont negotiation efforts — and their difficulties. Marsh proposed “a Way to open a Correspondence” with key Vermont leaders, “as they are of my acquaintance.”²⁴ (He may already have gone to Vermont as well as Albany, as noted earlier — and in fact, the next month he conveyed a letter to Ethan Allen.²⁵ Records show that he was in the American-controlled areas of Vermont, and sometimes New York, in every year from 1780 to 1784.)

Marsh's letter enclosed some “Intelligence” he had just received, reviewed the conflicts that had led to the creation of Vermont, and made some proposals for fostering contacts and possibly winning the allegiance of its people (his spelling is retained here):

May it Plese your Excellency yesterdai arived Hear a Number of Familys – 73 Pearsons, Mostly Women and Children Whose Husbands are Chiefly in his Majesties Searvis amoungst Whome is the Revernd Mr. John Bryan a Clergyman and Mr. Sammuel Wright By Whome I have the Inclosed Inteligence.

Your Exellency Will Be Plesed to observe that this Inhabitant [i.e. political entity] Called the State of Vermont alis: [alias] the New Hampshire Grants has had a Long and Spirited Contest With the Province of New York Relative to the Title of Lands as Well as Jurisdiction Which has ocationed a Great Animosity Between the Two Inhabitants. I Shall not Enter into a Long Detail of the Cause of Thire Dispute your Excellency Having a Previous Knowledge of The Same. Thire Case in Short is this. When the Congress Declared the Colonys Independent This Inhabitant Declared Themselves an In-dependant State also Chose Themselves a Governor and Counsell &c and Set up Government. Whereupon the Members of Congriss for the Province of New York Represented in Congress That this Inhabitent Ware Disobedent Fractious Rioutous and Rebellious To the United States of America: and Did obtain an order in Congress:

Directing Them to Dessist in the administration of thire Govern-
ment Which Gave Grate Umbrage to these Inhabitance of this New
State upon Which they Petitioned Congress for a Rehearing Which
the Congress has Put of[f] from time to Time all Which has Greatly
Disaffected these Inhabitance Towards Congress. I have Great reason
to Believe That This Pople may be Brought to Thire Allegince in
Case your Excellency Should be Plesed to Promis them a Seperate
Colony & Promote Some of Thire Leaders: Should your Excellency
Think this Worthy of your Notis I Can Propose a Way to open a
Correspondence With thire General Allen and thire Governor Chit-
tenden With Safty as they are of my acquaintance.

I Inclose the Naritive of the Reverrend Mr. John Bryan in Whome
I Place the Greatest Confidence also Mr. Samuel Wright Declares the
Same to Be the Truth.

I was Directed by Captn Sherwood in Case that any Information
of this Nature Should Come to my Knowledge in his absence to
Transmit the Same To your Excellency at the same Time Enjoynd
Secrecy. I Shall Wait your Excellencys farther Direction and am With
all Due Respect your Excellencys Most Obedient and Humble Ser-
vant.

William Marsh²⁶

I enclosed The Narrative of The Returners
Mr. John Bryan in Whome I Place the
Greatest Confidence also Mr. Samuel Wright
Declares the Same To Be the Truth —
I Was Directed by Captn. Sherwood in Case
that any Information of This Nature Should
Come to my Knowledge in his absence To Trans-
mit the Same To your Excellency at the same
Time Enjoynd Secrecy: I Shall Wait your
Excellencys farther Direction and am With
all Due respect your Excellency, Most obedient
and Humble Servant.

William Marsh

This letter from William Marsh to General Halidman obsequiously offers a bit of gossip.

Haldimand replied from Quebec almost right away, on October 16, 1780:

I have received your Letter of the 11th Inst. enclosing Intelligence brought by the Reverend Mr Bryan, the Subject of these being of Moment as well to the Interests of Government, in the present Contest, as to the happiness of so great a Branch of the deluded Community, it demands reflection, and requires that whatever Steps are undertaken to effect the desired purpose should be done with Caution, the greatest Secrecy and a good Prospect of Success. I shall therefore consider the matter until the Return of Captain Sherwood . . . communicate to him my determination, in the mean Time as Mr. Sherwood has in his Absence committed to your Management whatever might occur in the affair, You will of course procure for him every Information relative to it you can possibly collect and make such necessary Preparations towards Negotiating, as your knowledge of the People & other Circumstances may suggest to You, in order that no Time may be lost after Captain Sherwood's Arrival whose injunctions to Secrecy you will punctually observe.²⁷

Haldimand's instructions to Marsh assigned him an important role. In order to make the "Preparation towards Negotiating," Marsh was to compile information that would serve Sherwood in meeting with the Allens, collaborating with him to help devise concrete proposals that would be attractive to the Vermonters. Sherwood could not have been far away because Haldimand immediately appointed him to handle the delicate task of opening negotiations with the Vermont government. Haldimand thought highly of Sherwood and his negotiating skills, and remained supportive even when circumstances later made it impossible to carry out the plan. Sherwood, doubtless with Marsh's help, quickly arranged to meet with the Vermonters at the end of October in Castleton, a town in Vermont-controlled territory well inland from the south end of Lake Champlain, where Ethan Allen and his council had their headquarters. There, Sherwood met with Ethan and Ira Allen, Joseph Fay, and others.²⁸ William Marsh was not present. But soon thereafter, following upon Sherwood's trip, he himself traveled south as an emissary.

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1. Gavin Watt, *A dirty, trifling, piece of business*, vol. 1, *The Revolutionary War as Waged from Canada in 1781* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2009), 111.
 2. Matt Bushnell Jones, while he emphasized Marsh's importance in the founding of Vermont, did not follow his trail once he went into exile (Jones's study did not go beyond the founding of Vermont).
 3. Pemberton, "Justus Sherwood," 22-23; Randall, *Ethan Allen*, 353.
 4. Wilbur H. Siebert, "The American Loyalists in the Eastern Seigniories and Townships of the Prov-

- ince of Quebec” (*Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada*, third series, 1913, vol. 7), 12.
5. See appendix 1.
 6. Marsh made visits to Dorset, Vermont in 1782-84 with Haldimand’s permission and resided there after his work with the British ended. He was there in 1786 when he traveled to Halifax, Nova Scotia, to apply for loyalist compensation.
 7. Stuart R.J. Sutherland, Pierre Tousignant, and Madeleine Dionne-Tousignant. “Haldimand, Sir Frederick.” *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 5 (1983), 400-401.
 8. P. Arthur Bowler, “Jessup, Edward.” *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 5 (1983), 454-55.
 9. Watt, *A dirty trifling*, 126, tells of the fire, and the same chapter recounts the morale and supply problems facing the New York forces.
 10. Watt in *A dirty trifling*, 29-37 and 410n describes Haldimand’s situation.
 11. Mathews served as military secretary to Haldimand during most of his governorship. Stuart R.J. Sutherland described his duties: “He was to receive all incoming correspondence dealing with military matters inside the province, advise the governor on concerns that required his response, prepare letters for his signature...and deal with business that did not require Haldimand’s attention. Haldimand soon gave Mathews increasing responsibility, evidence of the rapport that developed between the two men. . . . An uncomplaining and intensely loyal subordinate, Mathews was among the few close friends of the normally reserved governor.” Mathews left Canada with Haldimand in 1785, then returned to serve Sir Guy Carleton as aide-de-camp. He continued his military career in Britain and died in 1814. Sutherland, “Mathews, Robert” (*Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 5, 1983), 585-86.
 12. Thanks to Gavin Watt for help in explaining this term as used at the time.
 13. Haldimand Papers, Batch 163, SN 163056, 70, Robert Mathews to Major John Nairne, 1 January 1781. (See preface re citation format for the Haldimand Papers. For an index to the papers see <http://haldimand-collection.ca/> -- a site still under development by Mario Lemoine.)
 14. Pemberton, *Justus Sherwood*, 62-63. Sherwood was away in the early winter of 1780 and returned in late December, as indicated in the Mathews letters noted above.
 15. Watt, *A dirty trifling*, map, 63; 225, 433n21. In 2005 we looked for the Loyal Blockhouse on North Hero Island and found a “Blockhouse Road” and “Blockhouse Point,” but no blockhouse or marker appeared at the end of the road, just a pleasant view of the lake. The island lies about thirty-five miles south of St. John’s. See “America’s Historic Lakes: The Lake Champlain and Lake George Historical Site” for its location: <http://www.historiclakes.org/explore/Exploring.html>, accessed 30 March 2012.
 16. Pemberton, *Justus Sherwood*, 76.
 17. Haldimand Papers, Batch 161, SN 161190, 400, Marsh to Haldimand, 15 February 1782.
 18. The nickname of “Goose” derived from the Anglicization of his name, Goosen. The double o in Dutch is properly pronounced as in “oh”, but “Goose” stuck in the records of the time. Van Schaick (1736-1789) had considerable military experience in the French and Indian War. Stefan Bielinski, *New York Biographies*, <http://www.nysm.nysed.gov/albany/bios/vs/gvs.html>, accessed 28 February 2012.
 19. Haldimand Papers, Batch 175, SN 175003, 4, 23 February 1780, Van Schaick to Powell. Loyalist lists show only one Moffat (William), but Tuttles are too numerous to identify. On Powell, see Watt, *A dirty trifling*, 422.
 20. Watt, *A dirty trifling*, 38-39.
 21. Jellison, *Ethan Allen*, 245-51; his quoted text is on 251.
 22. Haldimand feared the arming of troops from an untrustworthy “ally” who might then use them for his own purposes. Haldimand Papers, Batch 147, SN 147083, 221. See also Thompson, *Independent Vermont*, 420-21.
 23. Jellison, *Ethan Allen*, 254.
 24. Marsh to Haldimand, 10 or 11 October 1780 (the letter date is indexed as the 10th but the writing is unclear and its cover gives the date as the 11th). Haldimand Papers, Letters from Officers of the Loyalists, 1776-1782, Batch 161, SN 161073, 150.
 25. Haldimand Papers, Batch 133, SN 133172, 288, 15 November 1780: “Marsh has been sent off with a letter to Brig. Allen.”

26. Haldimand Papers, Letters from Officers of the Loyalists, 1776-1782, Batch 161, SN 161073, 150. (John Bryan was the husband of Glorianna French, a sister of Marsh's wife, so Marsh did indeed know him.)
27. Haldimand Papers, Batch 163, SN 163036, 48.
28. Watt, *A dirty, trifling*, 49-50.

Bibliographic note

Because this article on William Marsh is a chapter from a forthcoming book, several footnotes refer to sources that are only explained in the book itself. Here are books not otherwise fully cited in the footnotes:

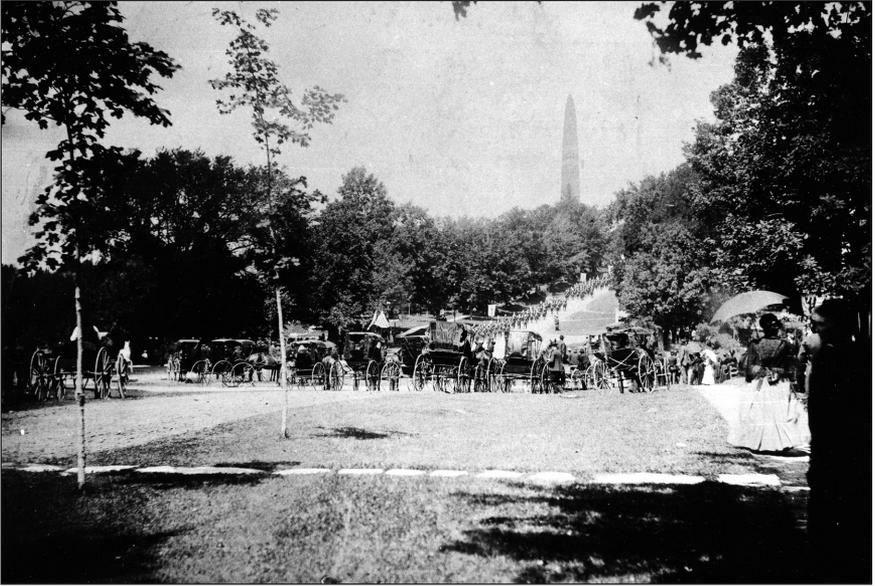
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Mystery Photo



Is this the only photograph of the 1891 double celebration that dedicated the Battle Monument and Vermont's centennial?

This may be the only known photograph of the famous double ceremony on August 16, 1891, that marked the dedication of the Bennington Battle Monument and the centennial of the state of Vermont. The very number of carriages and their formation approaching the monument along the Old Bennington village green appear to tell the story. The photograph was taken from the approximate location of the marker that now says, "Ethan Allen lived here." The photo's provenance is unknown; it came to the Bennington Museum as a single 35 mm. negative on a strip of film on a different subject and was almost overlooked. It is a picture of a picture. If anyone can confirm or dispute this information, please contact museum librarian Tyler Resch at <tresch@benningtonmuseum.org>.

The largest celebration and assemblage in Bennington's history took place to mark the dual commemoration of the centennial of Vermont statehood coupled with the dedication of the 306-foot "massive and lofty" Bennington Battle Monument, which had been completed in November of 1889. Its dedication awaited the week-long event that was marked by lengthy parades and a multitude of orations by notables of the day. These

included President Benjamin Harrison and members of his cabinet. Strangely, though many photographs were taken of the ceremonial arch over Putnam Square, no pictures have apparently survived of President Harrison.

A book, "1791 Vermont Centennial 1891" was published later that included the complete line of march, the text of all orations, and numerous formal portraits of major participants. It led off with this summary from the *St. Albans Messenger*:

The events at Bennington have furnished to the newspapers of the country abundant material to fill their columns with, topics for reviews of a century or more, and comparisons; which opportunities have been utilized. These things, brought together, constitute the 'Alpha and Omega' of Vermont, so far as the present is concerned; starting out from Bennington and focussing again at the same point. The history of Bennington is more largely the history of the State than that of any other town. It was the first town organized, and the independent and courageous spirit there developed, gave direction to the Commonwealth. The full story, when once entered upon, is a task for books and books, far beyond the capacity of any newspaper published, and especially is beyond the limits of any State paper. Some papers have gone more into details than others; yet, in the comparison, the most elaborate publications have been brief.



Photographer Sipperly of Hoosick Falls was one of many who took pictures of the ceremonial arch that spanned West Main Street for the big 1891 double celebration. The mystery is why more photographs of other events have not come to light.

Bennington Museum collection

Book Reviews

New Norwich history becomes larger than a sum of its parts

Reviewed by Jon Mathewson

This is a book written by committee. Eight able local historians joined together and wrote chapters within their areas of expertise. There are a million ways a project like this could have failed, yet the result is a well-edited book with a consistent tone.

The richly illustrated chapters tell the stories of different aspects of the town's history: geology, farming, business, education, civic life, social life, arts, the public library, religion, wars, first respond-

ers, cemeteries, lost villages, roads, railroads -- the usual suspects of local Vermont history. Within each chapter, the stories are organized into general histories and sidebars that highlight a particular business, person, or event. To unify the book visually there is a gray timeline bar running across the bottom of most pages. Each timeline begins with a 1761 survey of the town and ends 250 years later with the infamous Tropical Storm Irene of 2011.

For me, the most haunting and, in a way, embarrassing chapter is "Looking for Lewiston," written by Elizabeth Nelson. My personal connection to Norwich is limited: I have enjoyed many hours at the Montshire Museum, have even taken the "Polar Express" from White River Junction to Norwich, driven across the Connecticut River on the Ledyard Bridge numerous times and yet, I have done all of those things without looking at that area of Norwich with the eyes of a historian. So it came as a complete surprise to learn that an active village was situated in that part of Norwich from 1765 until 1967.

The village of Lewiston was created by the ferry traffic across the river and later by the railroad station and numerous mills and tanneries and such.



This 1890s overview of Norwich, taken by photographer Henry H. Barrett, is featured in the new history of the town reviewed here.

While some of those buildings remain, most were demolished in 1967 to make way for Interstate 91. On the one hand, I am embarrassed that I never saw the existing signs of a village there. On the other, I am grateful for being able to learn about it in this book. Local histories help us to connect to the places we live. In this case I feel more connected to a place I visit from time to time.

The “place” described in *Norwich, Vermont: A History* expands beyond the town boundaries. Logging, to the north along the Connecticut River, caused spring log jams around the Ledyard Bridge; and the Wilder Dam, just south on the river, flooded parts of Norwich. East of the Connecticut River sits Dartmouth College in Hanover, New Hampshire, which has provided employment for generations of Norwich residents. Sixty miles west and north of Norwich is Norwich University, which also played an important role in town from 1819-1866. Each is discussed extensively in the book.

The cover of the book sports a painting from 1944 of the Norwich public pool, and the story of the pool is described as a truly community-wide place to go during the summertime. The last entry on the timeline mentions the destruction of the dam at the pool.

Of course, not everything or everyone can be mentioned in a book, but one does wonder why there was no mention of Joseph Bean of West Norwich. He was a farmer and a mechanic who, over several years, received three patents for his inventions including a 1906 improved spittoon. For that matter, none of Norwich’s numerous other inventors, like Ancil Stickney, Joseph Lord, Charles Carlise, George Ames, or others, is mentioned. The mechanical ingenuity displayed by these innovators could surely be included in a history of their town, at least to inspire invention. Innovators and creative people of other stripes are covered, from furniture makers to photographers to painters, from musicians in the cornet band to the Norwich Young People’s Dramatic Club, to the poets and their poems.

In all, among the committee of eight who put together *Norwich, Vermont: A History* each shows us a different aspect and gives us a sense of what has happened and where it has happened in town over a 250-year span of time. The book is well organized and can be read and enjoyed in long sittings or just opened at random to serve up a concise tidbit of the past. Made up of small parts, this history becomes much larger than just a sum of its parts.

Norwich, Vermont: A History, The Norwich History Book Committee, Norwich, Vermont: The Norwich Historical Society, 2012, paperback, 318 pp., \$29.95.

A new history of a town that claims 'first chartered' in Vermont: 1735

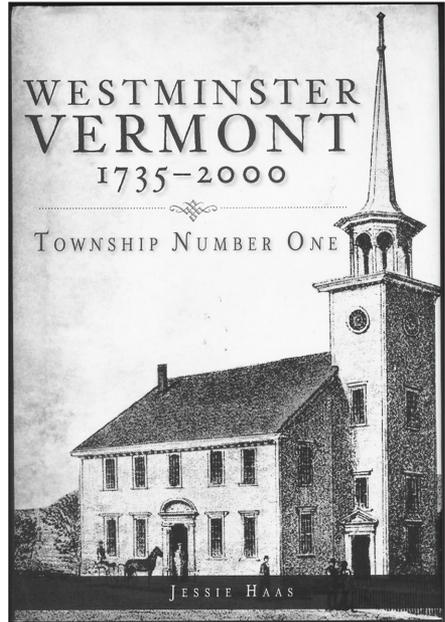
Reviewed by Jon Mathewson

Local histories often do not hold much appeal outside their locality, catering mostly to residents and genealogists. As the first chartered township in Vermont, and as a town that has played an important part in Vermont's history, from the formation of the state to the founding of the Northeast Organic Farming Association, Jessie Haas's *Westminster, Vermont 1735-2000: Township Number One* rates a statewide audience. As the home of Fannie Allen, Stephen Row Bradley, Horace Wells, and Harriett Holton Noyes, Westminster is also of interest on a national level.

For references, Haas uses a vast archive of deeds, letters, legal documents, and diaries that would make many other local historians envious. After Westminster lawyer William Czar Bradley passed away in 1867 his office was locked and not reopened until 1998. Much information in the early chapters of the book relates to the doings of the Bradley family, and one wonders if many of the resources came from that building.

Haas does go deeper into local history than many historians. She traces the proprietors back to Taunton, Massachusetts, and reviews minutes of the early meetings before settlement began. This is the type of "backstory" that has been missing from Vermont histories, and it is certainly refreshing here. Also, because Westminster was chartered in 1735, Haas explains why the town was originally a Massachusetts grant (in brief, New Hampshire received independence from Massachusetts in 1740).

One problem with writing general local histories is how to organize the information. One way is to organize the chapters into descriptions of 200 years of church history, followed by 200 years of political history, followed by a section of biographies of remembered persons. Haas eschews this



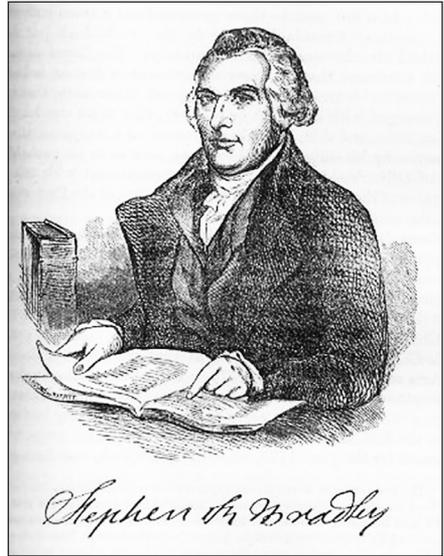
method by creating long chapters on historic epochs, telling the stories of what happened, in business, agriculture, politics, religion, and family history, during each of those time. The result is a chronology that rolls along the stream of time; the result is a compendium of Westminister tales all written in chronological order.

While the story of Westminister follows the basic story of Vermont towns (initial growth, decline, sheep, Civil War, dairy, industrial growth, more decline, recent renewal), there are so many local details here to keep anyone's interest, and to set the town apart from other towns.

Interesting characters abound. From Ethan Allen's father-in-law; to Irish Tory attorney Crean Brush; to the author of the 12th amendment and U.S. Senate President Pro Tempore Stephen Bradley; to Horace Wells, the first dentist to use successfully nitrous oxide as an anesthetic; to Harriett Holton Noyes, "Mother Noyes" of the Oneida Community; to violin maker Sydney Gage; to Horace Goodhue, who founded what is now Carleton College in Northfield, Minnesota; to current Vermont Governor Peter Shumlin; to Academy Award-winning actress Melissa Leo; and many others, the list of characters is long.

Haas also writes extensively on the various businesses in town, from factories to discount houses, as well as interesting things that set Westminister apart, like its public water system, in constant operation since 1788; the large migration from Cape Cod in the 1790s; the attempts at creating silk and tobacco farms; the Baxter Brothers' canned-corn factory; the creation and various phases of the Kurn Hattin home for children; and the Westminister Institute, a public recreational facility that opened in 1924. Even today these would be the envy of many communities.

This book, however, does lack a few things. For instance, there is no mention of the many patents awarded to the inventors of Westminister. One interesting patent was a "machine for cutting vegetables," granted to H.A. Willard in 1857. An interesting side note is that there were two notable



Stephen Row Bradley of Westminister. A sketch by Larkin G. Mead. Bradley and Moses Robinson were Vermont's first U.S. Senators, appointed in 1791.

From History of Eastern Vermont by Benjamin H. Hall, published by D. Appleton & Co., New York, 1858.

H.A. Willards connected to Westminster during this era. One Henry A. Willard of Westminster was successfully running the famous Willard Hotel in Washington, D.C., in 1857. The other H.A. Willard, a wheelwright, moved to Westminster West in 1849 and then moved to East Parish in 1857 where he worked as a contractor, most notably on the new town hall, built in 1890. Other inventors, like Fred Newell, are also absent from the book.

More lacunae are found in agriculture. Some odd agricultural history is included, such as the silk and tobacco farms, and the businesses spun off from agriculture, like the corn cannery and the Valley Creamery. The introduction of Merino sheep is mentioned, but nary a word on the agricultural tectonic shift after the Civil War that made the creamery possible, and no mention of the everyday crops grown by the farmers, from vegetables to flax and oats. How the average farmer -- that is to say, the majority of the citizens of Westminster -- spent their time farming is certainly important to an understanding of the town's past. Recent changes in agriculture do get mentioned: the rise of diversified organic agriculture is well represented in this book, including the tale of the founding in Westminster West of NOFA in 1971.

Haas does not shy away, as many historians do, from exploring the recent past. Political turmoils of the 1990s, the current arts community, the Twelve Tribes religious community, and even the devastating Tropical Storm Irene of 2011 are explored.

So in brief, if not everything is mentioned in 546 pages of text, this monumental collection of a town's tales in one place is impressive and eminently readable. We need more books like it.

Westminster Vermont 1735-2000: Township Number One, by Jessie Haas; Charleston, S.C., The History Press, 2012: cloth, 574 pp., \$39.99.

Lean in, and listen to a story

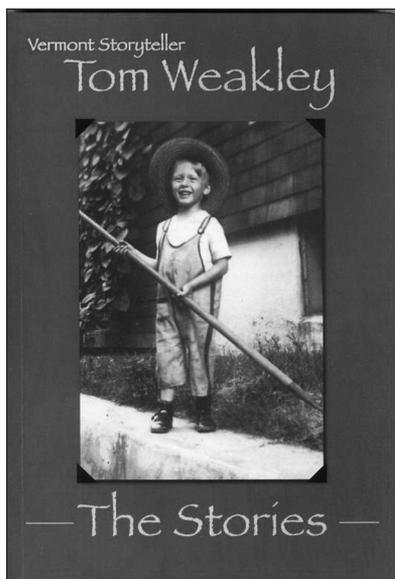
Reviewed by Bill Budde

Tom Weakley has been well known in Bennington County for his Candle Mill Village, which started in 1958, a main attraction in East Arlington along with the Village Peddler. In 1981 Weakley began to move from the retail business interests of his life toward a second career as a writer and storyteller. He has now issued six CDs of his recorded story-telling performances, but *The Stories* is the first published work, a collection of twenty delightful stories.

It is not always easy to put oral stories into written form and convey the nuances of a live performance, but this collection successfully shows the talents of an accomplished teller of tales. I found myself visualizing Tom presenting the stories as if I were a member of an audience. At times I imagined him leaning in toward the audience, lowering his voice, and giving me the feeling that he was sharing something intimate, or a bit of information that one of the characters in the tale wouldn't want me to know.

In the author's preface Weakley writes, "I quickly learned that the written word is a different animal from the spoken word. In performance I was free to pace the stage, lean forward in confidence, whisper asides, laugh, scratch myself, and give in to all kinds of buffoonery." He concludes by writing, "These 20 stories vary in length and in spirit, demonstrating, I hope, the range of emotions a good story can bring us."

Subject matter varies from pickpockets to the Vietnam war and from ghosts to infidelity. Overall, I found three main themes: families, generations of families, and an emotional ending that was either sad or joyous. "Pickpockets" and "Sleeping outside Eden" are two good examples of generations. "Pickpockets" is a story of true love and the hope that the future will be brighter and better for the child of two talented pickpockets. Well-crafted and paced, the story has a surprise twist at the end, leaving the reader with hope and a smile. "Sleeping outside Eden" is another family story



about three generations of men -- fathers and sons. I found this story about a son killed in Vietnam deeply moving. The soldier's father and grandfather visit the Vietnam Veterans Memorial at the urging of the grandfather on the day that would have been the grandson's fortieth birthday. In the end, the story is about our hoped that those closest and dearest to us know, or knew, how much we cared for or loved them, and the promise we sometimes make to our selves to let the other know that.

"Deer eyes: a drama" is similar to "Sleeping outside Eden." This story shares the relationship between a developmentally delayed son and his dead father. The disabled son wants his father to be proud of him, even though he was apparently ashamed of the son while alive. It is the story of a son who wanted to be loved by his father, and hope that somehow this might still happen between them and that even in death the father will return and "give him the lesson on life" he forgot to pass on.

Many of Weakley's stories have a familiar ring even though he assures us names and places have been changed to protect the innocent. "Directions" is one of the stories I found hard not to populate with local Arlington images. Humorous, and very much a Vermont tourist tale, we read about familiar southwestern Vermont names, like Bennington, Hemmings, Candle Mill, and East Arlington. All the same, the situation and events are surprisingly familiar no matter where the reader calls home. Other local descriptions occur in stories like "Esther" or "Deer eyes: a drama," with mention of the Roaring Branch, Mt. Equinox, Red Mountain, Sunderland, and the lumber sheds along the railroad tracks on Chittenden Road in Arlington. "Esther" is the longest (56 pages), most developed, and leisurely story in the book. A classic ghost story, it takes place within a stone's throw of my house along the railroad tracks.

Other stories include coming-of-age themes and life changes ("Do you love me, Mary Olson?"); the iconic scary neighbor ("Mr. Furlong"); heaven is closer than we realize ("The man who clung to earth.") where God visits a former (i.e., deceased) Vermonter who just can't let go of his farm; growing up ("Phaeton: learning to drive"); and two humorous yarns about a man who decides he wants to be an undertaker ("The baked beans" and "The good looking suit").

If you like a good yarn well told, this is the book for you and your Vermont friends.

The Stories, by Tom Weakley, Highland Publications, Arlington, VT, 2012, paperback, 199 pp.

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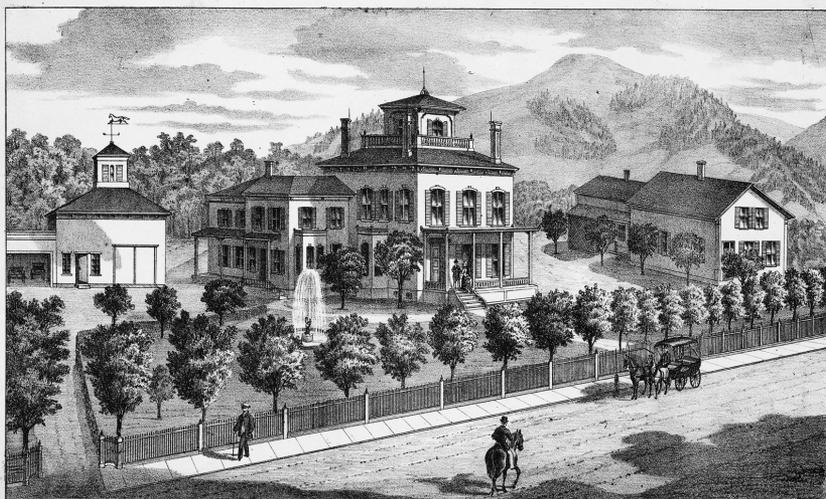
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