

WALLOOMSACK REVIEW

BENNINGTON MUSEUM



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Robert Wolterstorff, executive director

Tyler Resch and Anthony Marro, editors

Bennington Museum Publication Committee
Jamie Franklin, Linda French, Anthony Marro,
Marianne Peters, Tyler Resch

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:

Jade River, oil on canvas, circa 1932,
by Arthur Gibbes Burton (1883-1969).

Richard Michelman collection. See Jamie Franklin's article on page 33.

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Editors' Notes

This issue offers readers some insights into an informative diversity of Vermont subjects, including the California Gold Rush, Vermont Impressionists, new interpretations about Calvin Coolidge and his politics, a rundown on early manufacturers, ruminations on Vermont jurisprudence, the remarkable restoration of a 159-year-old iron bridge, and a renowned innovative school of dance.

While author Eileen Scully's article focuses on ordinary Vermonters who went West in pursuit of gold, she also mentions in passing one of the more prominent citizens, Frederick Billings of Woodstock. This opens up a parenthetical story of a tangle of relationships among famous Vermonters who went to California in the mid-nineteenth century – none of them to pan for gold. In 1851 former Congressman Hiland Hall of North Bennington was selected by President Millard Fillmore as the federal land agent for California, which in 1850 had become a new state that found itself plagued with confusing land claims because of various jurisdictions. Hall was followed to California by his son-in-law, Trenor W. Park, an aggressive lawyer-businessman who undertook a series of deals that would earn him a vast fortune. (When he returned to Vermont in 1865 Park built the elegant mansion now known as the Park-McCullough House, was a legislator, and became involved in banking and railroads.) In San Francisco Park made connections with the law firm Halleck, Peachy & Billings, of which Frederick Billings was a partner. Park joined the firm briefly and it became Halleck, Peachy, Billings and Park until the latter two began to feud. Billings went on to make his own fortune as president of the Northern Pacific Railroad. Partner Henry Halleck became chief of staff to Lt. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant, and then general-in-chief of the Civil War.

Independently, Henry W. Putnam of Essex County, New York, followed the gold rush to California and developed a successful business selling much-needed bottled fresh water in San Francisco while it grew from dusty crossroads into a rough-and-tumble metropolis. Putnam perfected a way to keep his water bottles capped, a technique he brought to Bennington, where he settled after the Civil War and began manufacturing hardware items with a marketing base in New York City.

The story of the Moseley bridge is one of determination, skill, and sweat in which a pile of iron bars that had been rusting for decades near the town dump was transformed into a lovely and useful bridge. The result was historic preservation at its finest.

Contributors

Eileen Scully is on the faculty of Bennington College, where she teaches history and other interdisciplinary courses. She earned an MA (1983) and Ph.D (1994) from Georgetown University, and is completing a master of science degree in conflict studies through Champlain College. Her research for this article was originally presented at the Park-McCullough House in North Bennington, and also in a talk at the Marlboro Historical Society.

Bill Morgan is an author and former president of the Bennington Historical Society. His article is based on his research for a popular bus tour he organized that visited the sites or remnants or conversions of several of the town's manufactories. He contributed a major article in *Walloomsack Review* Vol. 11, summer 2013, on the home front at Bennington during the Civil War, and he is the author of *Bennington and the Civil War*, published by History Press.

Anthony Marro, co-editor of this journal, learned a great deal about the history of bridges while researching the Moseley bridge. He is working with Eric Peterson, artistic director of the Oldcastle Theater company, on a play about Bennington during World War II.

Jamie Franklin is the curator of the Bennington Museum, where he is organizing a summer exhibition that will juxtapose portraits by the 19th-century itinerant portrait painter Erastus Salisbury Field with paintings of people by Alice Neel. A catalog is available that will further interpret the three Vermont Impressionists he writes about here, Bayard, Burton, and Noyes, with many examples of their work.

Susan Sgorbati is a faculty member at Bennington College where she has taught dance improvisation and has been the dean of faculty. She began the study of dance at the Philadelphia Dance Academy with Nadia Chilkovsky, and then studied with Jane Dudley, Viola Farber, Judith Dunn, Jack Moore and Martha Wittman at Bennington College. She has helped students unearth many of the college's dance archives out of an attic where several of the photographs in Elizabeth McPherson's book were found.

R. Marshall Witten is an attorney in Manchester and a veteran of public service, having been Bennington County state's attorney and member of the Vermont House of Representatives, where he chaired the Ways and Means Committee. He was also a founding director of the Vermont Community Foundation and served for 23 years on the board of the Vermont State Colleges.

Paul Searls is a professor of history and music at Lyndon State College and the University of Vermont and the author of *Two Vermonts: Geography and Identity 1865-1910*. His article titled "When Alonzo B. Valentine sought to lure Swedes to Vermont" appeared in *Walloomsack Review* Vol. 10, spring 2013.

Tyler Resch, co-editor of this journal, finds that the book he reviews in this issue, an extended biography of Col. William Marsh, constitutes a vast expansion of the book he wrote on the history of Marsh's town of Dorset; indeed, it offers a new history of early Vermont.



"The independent gold hunter on his way to California: I neither borrow nor lend." A Currier lithograph circa 1835-56. Courtesy of Library of Congress

"Ah! sons of New England plodding in the great cities or scattered over the rich, vast levels and prairies of the West, from the Holland Purchase to the Platte and the Brassos--is it quite sure that we have well exchanged for these the green hills and sparkling brooks of our rugged native clime?"

Vermonters in the Gold Rush

Eileen Scully

In January of 1848, James Marshall - partner of the more famous John Sutter- spotted gold in the American River near Coloma, in the California territory. In his own words: "My eye was caught by something shining in the bottom of the ditch . . . I reached my hand down and picked it up; it made my heart thump, for I was certain it was gold . . . Then I saw another."²

As one traveler recalled, however: "few people in the country believed it at first, and but still fewer believed in the large quantities said to be found. Even . . . newspapers published in San Francisco, ridiculed the idea of men making \$16 per day with only pick, shovel, and pan."³ The first great wave of prospectors came only after the enterprising merchant Samuel Brannon carried gold samples through the streets of San Francisco, after first buying up all the pick-axes and shovels in the vicinity.

An estimated 11,000 Vermonters joined the California gold rush,⁴ although rather than "rushing," most of them proceeded hence with all due speed. Slowed by distance, transportation, finances, and just plain good sense, New Englanders were late to the game, and most arrived well in the wake of voyagers from Oregon, Mexico, Chile, Hawaii, South China, and Western Europe. There were not yet transcontinental telegraph wires or rail-

road lines, and indeed “the United States” was still spoken about in the plural, as in “the United States are annexing Texas and California.”

News from California was slow to arrive on the Atlantic coast. More than timing and technology, though, there was deeply engrained Yankee skepticism about so-called fields of gold and overnight fortunes. With so much at stake, and so little known, folks awaited “the receipt of [an] ocular (sic) demonstration of the truth of previous stories relative to the ease with which gold is to be acquired.”⁵ A close-enough attestation

came in early December 1848, from President James K. Polk, whose annual address to Congress included explicit assurances that he himself had seen gold samples and written confirmation sent to him by Colonel Richard Mason, California’s military governor.

Thus it was that after months of naysaying and dire warnings to “those who were hastily packing up their ‘duds’ for the gold region,” the Brattleboro *Semi-Weekly Eagle* ruefully conceded that “all IS gold that glitters.” Earlier stories that seemed exaggerations were quite true: “It is hardly possible, at this late day, for anybody, even the most skeptical, to doubt the existence of gold in California, and in quantities sufficiently large to satisfy the cupidity of money-loving and money-getting Americans. . . Even Vermont - staid, sober Vermont – is contributing her full quota of emigrants. . . Large numbers have already left, or are about leaving Bennington, Rutland, Vergennes, Burlington, Montpelier, Woodstock, Windsor, and several other places.”⁶

At that time, it was quicker and less arduous to sail from Hong Kong to California than to make the five-month voyage from New York to San Francisco, via Cape Horn at the tip of South America. The Panama shortcut – across the isthmus by foot, horseback and barge – was an option, but one that occasioned alarming mortality.

Some dreamed of an even shorter short-cut, via an aerial “balloon advertised to start from New-York. . .or San Francisco. . .[and then to] make exceedingly short passages between the two ports – (enabling devoted husbands to return to their families once a fortnight, without a very great loss of time in the pursuit of their search for gold).” Alas, according to the

MISCELLANY.

[From the Vermont Chronicle.]

“Vermont a Gold-bearing State.”

While so many thousands of the enterprising young men of New England are rushing to the Pacific in search of gold, it seems desirable that those who remain at home in the discharge of trusts and of regular industry, should be aware of what an inheritance remains with them. It may serve to relieve the chagrin of some at not being able to go, to learn that possibly a substantial reward may follow a search for gold, made in accordance with the following suggestions.

“Vermont is a gold-bearing state,” a headline in the Vermont Chronicle, reprinted from the semi-weekly Eagle, April 12, 1849.

Pittsfield Sun, the balloon “did not sail on the day advertised, and there is probably some doubt whether the machine will accomplish at present what was so confidently predicted.”⁷

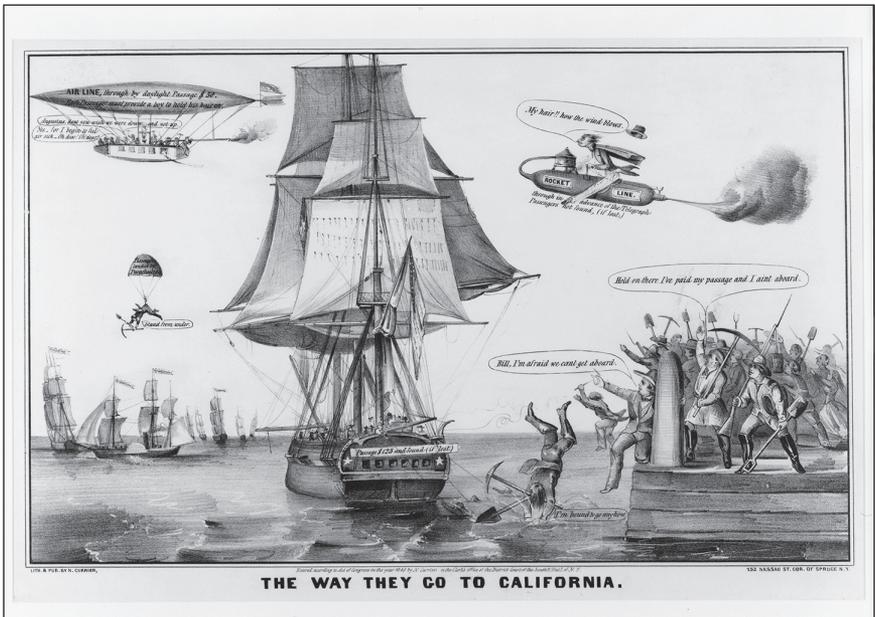
No matter how Easterners might get themselves to California in 1849-50, by then enterprising stay-at-homes had come up with an array of “must-have” gold rush-related knick-knacks and gizmos, such as:

*California Gold Grease, a salve, \$10 a box: instructions were for the prospector to rub all over his body, roll down a mountain, jump in a tub, and scoop up the gold.*⁸

*Signor D’Alvear’s Goldometer! A new magnetic instrument supposedly designed by the famed Spanish geologist who discovered gold in California.*⁹

*The Bed Bug and Cockroach Exterminator, designed by S. Killder Jr. of Lowell, Massachusetts: “Persons going to California will find their journey and residence there much more comfortable” by taking this along.*¹⁰

One had to have money to make a fortune. As editors at the *Farmers’ Cabinet* pointed out: “The class of citizens which is leaving us for El Dorado is of the better sort, well-educated, industrious, and respectable, such as we regret to part with. The rowdies, whom we could well spare, cannot as a



“The way they go to California,” a lithograph-cartoon created by N. Currier in 1849. Courtesy of Library of Congress

general thing, fit themselves out for so long a voyage.”¹¹

Like other folks throughout the eastern United States, friends and neighbors in towns and villages across New England met these challenges with fortitude and ingenuity. In short, they went into business with each other, pooling their resources into mutual protection associations and joint stock companies.

These collaborations came in all shapes and sizes, as suggested by examples from the *Farmers' Cabinet* [Amherst NH], of February 1, 1849:

Leading men of Concord, New Hampshire, gathered to establish a company; attendees adopted a code of laws, and elected a president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer, and nine directors; it was proposed to secure fifty associates, each to put in \$1,000.

The Berkshire Company, from North Adams, 20 individuals, each pays in \$300, and the company takes out a freight of lumber.

From Connecticut, a company of twenty-five employees of Colt's pistol factory, with an experienced miner and assayer both on retainer.

Residents of Danvers, Massachusetts, subscribed \$10 each to support an agent who is to go instead of the company.

Woodstock native Captain Bezer Simmons (1810 VT-1850 CA) was one of the few Vermonters who had actually been in California before the gold rush. A long-time trader on the lower California coast, Simmons was especially well situated to get rich without actually panning for gold, because in late 1846, he had purchased for \$1,000 a large Mexican land grant from the original holder, a tract that included “the island or Peninsula in the Port of San Diego.”¹²

Simmons returned east before 1848, and when news from California arrived, his first-hand experiences on the Pacific coast and reputation for probity made him a valuable source of information and reliable business partner. In early February of 1849, he and his wife Laura Billings Simmons (1829 VT-1849 CA) left New York for the Panama isthmus, in company with other “Vermont Adventurers,” including brother Benjamin Simmons, with the latter’s wife; and brothers-in-law Frederick and Franklin Billings.

As observers noted at the time, these “Vermont Adventurers” were “not a party of gold hunters; probably none of them will go into the diggings.”¹³ Instead, like many New Englanders late to the gold rush, they went as skilled professionals: merchants, lawyers, architects, engineers, clerks, arti-

sans, store-keepers, hoteliers, and blacksmiths.

New Englanders carried westward the sturdy habits and practices of local government and public education. In gold rush California, their shared roots and connections opened the way for mutual trust and cooperation, especially among individuals who actually did pan and mine for gold. For example, the 1852 census for California shows William H. Cleveland (1831 VT-1914 OK), age 22, as a miner in Tuolumne County. His brother Stephen D. Cleveland (1829 VT-1917 VT), age 23, also a miner, was working elsewhere in the same county. Both brothers were with or near friends and neighbors from their hometown of Georgia, Franklin County, Vermont.

Vermont roots and connections had other, more intangible benefits, as suggested by the fate of Captain Simmons, mentioned above. Soon after arriving in San Francisco, his world came tumbling down. In that one epic year, 1849, he lost his wife, his mother, and a brother.¹⁴ In January of 1850, he returned to Woodstock to bury his wife's remains. Returning to San Francisco a few months later, he found his commission house on the brink of bankruptcy. This latest disaster broke his health, and he died on September 26, 1850. San Francisco papers reported that: "On the occasion of the death of the late Capt. Simmons, a meeting of citizens from Vermont, residing in California, was called to take appropriate steps to express their regard and esteem for the deceased, and to attend his funeral . . ." ¹⁵

Across Vermont, the gold rush felt to many like a mass evacuation, the acceleration of an outmigration that was already diminishing the state's delegation in the U.S. House of Representatives from four to three Congressional districts. Indeed, the 1850 census confirmed what many feared: "the sons and daughters of Vermont residing in Vermont numbered less than 228,941, and the children of Vermont residing in other states mainly at the west numbered nearly 146,000. In other words, about 39 percent of Vermont's native born population had emigrated from it elsewhere."¹⁶

At mid-century, the mainstays of Vermont's economy were sheep, wool, cotton, and iron.¹⁷ Annually generating more than 3.4 million pounds of wool from some 920,000 sheep, Vermont was New England's "greatest sheep-growing and wool-raising state."¹⁸ But trouble was on the horizon. Vermont's competitive advantage was slipping. Other states and regions were catching up and overtaking it.¹⁹

And . . . then . . . just in time . . . gold was discovered in Vermont! In a lengthy article widely republished during April and May of 1849, the *Vermont Chronicle* undertook "to exhibit to the people of Vermont what is at their own doors, – to present those facts that go to show that Vermont is a gold bearing State and has a gold formation extending from her Southern to her Northern border."²⁰

The news was meant to “relieve the chagrin of some at not being able to go” to California, by showing “that possibly a substantial reward may follow a search for gold” nearer to hand.²¹ In short, Vermont’s mineral riches were more advantageous in the long run, compared to California’s, which “cost too much in the loss of life, wreck of health and dissipation of money and morals.”²²

The *Vermont Chronicle’s* gambit soon after prompted a tongue-in-cheek report in the *Montpelier Watchman* that “two superb pieces of Vermont gold were found in Barre and brought to this village, and exchanged for cash . . . The two pieces weighed 4000 pounds, and were nearly of the same size – 2000 pounds each!” The supposed finders were William and Amos Bradford, who sold the lumps for \$200 each, cheap at the price, but “then the gold was of a different quality from the California article,” i.e. the two nuggets were a pair of oxen.²³

The California gold rush was an ambiguous experience for Vermont, and for New England writ large. Ruminating on the larger lessons of California gold, the *New York Herald* suggested in 1854 that: “New England, the land of the Puritans, has much to learn in matters relating to a wise practical economy . . . The forsaking of the farm for more supposed lucrative and genteel employments . . . [was] leading to unwise and unsafe investments and speculations; extravagance and show; and expenditures in folly. . . [which] are still evils abounding among us . . . [that] must stand severely reprimanded by these hard times.”²⁴

The California gold rush accelerated out-migration from Vermont, but individual and family fortunes were brought back East, and funneled into banks, new enterprises and civic projects. Indeed, by 1860, many Vermonters who had gone off to California were back in their native towns and villages, well in time to be counted in that year’s census. Telltale signs of their round-trip journey included paid-off mortgages, sizable assets, and California-born toddlers in their households. □

¹ “Vermont. East of the Mountains,” *Semi-Weekly Eagle* [Brattleboro VT], 3 September 1849: 2.

² “Early California History: An Overview.”
<<http://memory.loc.gov:8081/ammem/cbhtml/cbintro.html>>

³ John A. Swan (1817-1896). “A trip to the gold mines of California in 1848”. Edited by John A. Hussey (San Francisco: Book Club of California, 1960).

⁴ “Ghostly walk marks Peacham’s 4th,” *Times Argus*, 5 July 2006.

⁵ *Pittsfield Sun*, 26 April 1849: 2, quoting the Washington Union correspondent writing from NYC.

- ⁶ “Progress of the ‘Yellow Fever,’” *Semi-Weekly Eagle*, 29 January 1849: 2; “The California ‘Gold,’” *Farmers’ Cabinet*, 12 October 1848: 3; “The Rush for California,” *Farmers’ Cabinet* [Amherst NH], 1 February 1849: 2.
- ⁷ “The Gold Mania, &c.,” *Pittsfield Sun*, 26 April 1849: 2.
- ⁸ *Semi-Weekly Eagle*, 22 January 1849: 3.
Barre Patriot, 29 December 1848: 2.
- ⁹ *Barre Patriot*, 12 April 1849: 3.
- ¹⁰ “The Rush for California,” *Farmers’ Cabinet*, 1 February 1849: 2.
- ¹¹ *Semi-Weekly Eagle*, 11 November 1850.
- ¹² “Vermont Adventurers,” *The Semi-Weekly Eagle*, 25 January 1849: 2, from the *Woodstock Mercury*.
- ¹³ “Death of Capt. Bezer Simmons,” *Semi-Weekly Eagle*, 14 November 1850: 2.
- ¹⁴ “Tribune of Respect. To The Late Capt. Bezer Simmons, of Vermont,” *Daily Alta California*, 28 September 1850: 2.
- ¹⁵ *Pittsfield Sun*, 31 May 1855: 1.
- ¹⁶ “Vermont Industry,” *Semi-Weekly Eagle*, 22 December 1851: 2.
- ¹⁷ “Sheep and Wool,” *Semi-Weekly Eagle*, 28 June 1852: 2; “Sheep and Wool,” *Barre Gazette*, 2 July 1852: 1.
- ¹⁸ “A Word to the Farmers...,” *Semi-Weekly Eagle*, 20 August 1849: 2, from the *Vermont Watchman*.
- ¹⁹ “Vermont—a Gold-bearing State,” *Semi-Weekly Eagle*, 12 April 1849: 1, reprinted from the *Vermont Chronicle*.
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*
- ²¹ “Geological Survey of Vermont,” *Semi-Weekly Eagle*, 17 May 1849: 1, from the *Woodstock Mercury*.
- ²² “Vermont Gold,” *New Hampshire Gazette*, 3 May 1849, from the *Montpelier Watchman*.
- ²³ *Farmers’ Cabinet*, 7 September 1854: 2.

The Mills of Bennington



This view of a row of identical two-story housing for workers at the Holden-Leonard "big mill" was taken in May 1909 by Lewis W. Hine, famed for his photographs that exposed abusive child labor conditions. Rents ranged from \$6 to \$8 a month. Several of these houses still exist along Belmont Avenue.

What Bennington Made -- Made Bennington The Mills of Bennington

Bill Morgan

Bennington is typical of small nineteenth-century New England industrial towns, though it was fortunate to not have the tremendous boom-and-bust experienced by larger mill towns like Lowell and Lawrence, Massachusetts. It was also spared some of the labor unrest and mass unemployment that came to larger cities when their economic base vanished. The potential growth of Bennington industries was limited by four factors: the extent of waterpower available, the difficulty of transporting goods to larger markets, a small population, and a lack of monetary capital.

The problems Bennington faced a century years ago when mills closed and jobs went to other states were not so different than today's situation on a national level where jobs and manufacturing have gone to other parts of the globe.

Bennington's first settlers came from southern



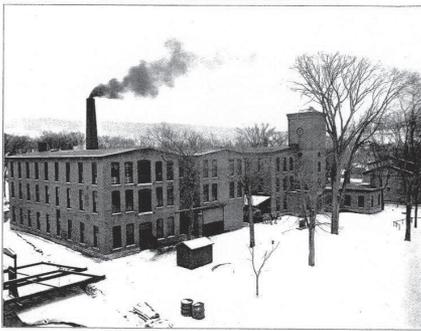
Made when Bennington was "an underwear town," this long ladies underwear shirt, or chemise, bears the label "Cooper's Spring Needle Knit Gauzeribs, Bennington, Vt."

*All images from the Bennington Museum collection
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5. Valentine home



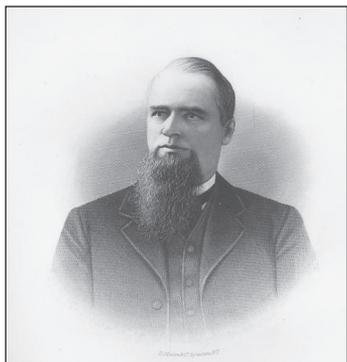
6. Valentine Knitting Co.



Twin images of the Joel Valentine home and his Valentine mills, both located on Bennington's Pleasant Street. Several Valentine mill buildings once employed several hundred workers.

New England in the early 1760s, searching for a place where they could have freedom to practice their own religion without interference. They selected Bennington because the land was available, cheap, and plentiful. At first the settlers relied on farming for a livelihood and made use of natural resources for their survival. They arrived in time to take part in the greatest transition in American social history, for it was during the early 1800s that America's economy shifted from rural to urban. In a rural economy, the lives of most people are measured by the four seasons. As people moved into towns and cities their lives came to be governed by the time clock and the factory whistle. Their work became routine and was the same day after day the whole year round. There was also a shift in labor demographics as more and more women and children became part of the workforce. An ad in the *Vermont Gazette* from 1821 read:

"Wanted. At the Bennington Cotton Factory. Several Families that can furnish a number of children each. To such constant employ will be given, and wages paid according to the ability of the children, by Benjamin Peck."



Olin Scott 1832-1913

Another change came later in the nineteenth century when American industries shifted from waterpower to more dependable steam engines. That shift had a dramatic effect on Bennington's mills, too.

It was because of the change in elevation of the Walloomsac River that Bennington was able to become an important industrial center. Without the natural drop in the river there would have been no industry in Bennington. The early mills were never established at altitudes higher than 740 feet above

sea level, which gave them sufficient water pressure to drive powerful waterwheels. This is also why there were no mills in Old Bennington, whose altitude is nearly 200 feet higher. Due to the river's fluctuations caused by summer droughts and spring floods, the mill owners soon realized that they needed to control the flow of water year-round to assure a sufficient supply of power.

In the early years of the nineteenth century they began to build a complex system of canals or flumes, with dams to hold and channel the water around the village. Giles Olin Jr. was the first to build a series of these channels when he connected the Roaring Branch with the Walloomsac River east of town. The waterways changed the early landscape and dictated where mills would be built, and hence where people working in those mills would live. In the beginning, the mill owners closed the sluiceways at night to build up enough water pressure for the next day's work. Eventually, when proper lighting came along, the mills began to run 24 hours a day, which put increased demands on the town's limited water supply.

A survivor of the earliest industrial era is this Greek Revival mill at 169 North Street, built as the Brown & Gage Foundry about 1842 to process pig iron mined along the Walloomsac River. Today it houses the Council on Aging.





A stereoscopic view of a sparsely populated Bennington neighborhood focuses on Olin Scott's foundry in the center. The photographer was Calvin Dart, circa 1870.

First Stage: 1762-1852

Stage one of Bennington's industrial period began shortly after the founding of the town and lasted nearly a century, until 1852. During this period, local entrepreneurs built mills for local use. Two early settlers, Joseph Safford and Samuel Robinson, joined to build the first grist mill and saw mill in Bennington in 1762, only a year after the earliest settlers arrived. Their mills were located on east Main Street near today's intersection with Beech Street. Because Bennington was originally a farming community and boasted excellent soil for grains and grasses, the farmers needed a grist mill to convert their crops to flour. And because the town was growing, there was a need for a saw mill to cut timbers into boards. These were basic but important businesses for the local economy. Area entrepreneurs worked with the resources they had. They did not import materials and they did not export their finished products, which were for local consumption only.

Following the lumber and grist mills, a few other small mills provided goods for the local population. In 1784 a fulling mill was established in North Bennington to make pleated garments for local merchants. In 1792 a second fulling mill was set up in Bennington itself, then in 1795 a tannery and a shoe-making mill were established. Other early mills carded wool, made paper, and produced cast iron. In 1793 John Norton, a farmer living south of town, began to make redware jugs and crocks for local farmers' products. During the next century Norton's business moved downtown to Pleasant Street and grew into Bennington's famous pottery industry. By 1810 the first cotton mill had been set up to produce cloth and was called the Bennington Cotton and Woolen Manufacturing Company. These mills

were followed by other small mills that grew up along the banks of the Walloomsac River and Paran Creek, but by the time of the Panic of 1837 when monetary capital dried up they were mostly gone. During this early period the population of Bennington grew to about 4,000, with nearly three quarters of them still dependent upon agriculture for their livelihoods.

As the early network of roads improved, Bennington became a commercial center. Major roads led north to Rutland and Burlington, and extended east to west from Brattleboro to Troy. With better roads the mill owners were able to ship their products to markets farther and farther away, and as natural resources were depleted locally, they also began to bring in raw materials.

Second Stage: 1852-1890

Finally, in 1852 railroads arrived in Bennington, and this was to herald the beginning of the second stage of economic development. The area mills grew to their peak of production and continued to expand well into the 1890s. This was the period when men named Bradford, Cooper, Tiffany, Holden, and others came to Bennington to open mills. Typically they brought money with them to invest and were able to establish larger mills than those set up by the original settlers. Many times, these out-of-town-ers continued a formula of success that they had practiced in other parts of New England. Many settled in Bennington, oversaw their factories in person, and became part of the local community, often becoming active in political and civic organizations. The arrival of the railroad actually caused a decline in the agricultural importance of Bennington because fresh food could be shipped to town cheaply, making the region less dependent on local crops. Farmers could switch to the production of wool for the local mills and abandon food crops.

In 1854 Henry Bradford arrived from Massachusetts and converted an existing woolen mill to the manufacture of knit cotton underwear and hosiery. For several decades afterwards the manufacture of underwear became the major industry in town. By the 1880s, industrialists had built several relatively large knitting facto-



An advertisement for Cushman Colonial furniture included this smoker's stand that featured a drawer offering a choice of cigarette brands for the discriminating smoker.

ries and Bennington's mills were able to enjoy a nationwide market for their goods. With farming on the wane, industry began to dominate the town's economy and politics, and a majority of the population became dependent upon manufacturing.

As factories grew larger they became less flexible and produced more and more specialized products. The manufacture of the carpenter's square is a good example. Bennington area inventors secured patents to produce steel squares that were a marked improvement over the wooden ones used earlier by the building trades. An entire industry grew up in North Bennington and Shaftsbury. Indeed, the old Eagle Square buildings in Shaftsbury were used to manufacture squares and other tools for more than a hundred years.

Specialized products and larger mills became the formula for success throughout the later decades of the nineteenth century and the smaller mills vanished one by one. At their peak, Bennington's knitting mills were the largest producers in Vermont and the fourth largest in the nation.

Third Stage: 1890s-1938

After a period of economic prosperity the mills reached their peak of production and by the turn of the century the local economy began to slow. The average lifespan of mills that opened in the late nineteenth century was only nine years, and no new mills were established between 1899 and 1914. Throughout this period knit goods remained the dominant product but specialty items continued to be manufactured. When mills went out of business it became more and more difficult to find new tenants for aging buildings. As early as 1890 the town began to offer tax exemptions and other incentives to bring new industries to town.

Several factors, mostly beyond the control of factory owners, contributed to Bennington's industrial decline. A major reason was simply that fashions changed and demand for knit woolen ware fell off. Competition grew, both domestic and foreign, and Bennington's aging mills couldn't compete. The monetary crisis of 1896-97 made it difficult to raise capital, which didn't help at a time when the mills needed money to modernize to survive. Bennington also suffered because of the declining quality of affordable transportation. Modern roads were not yet constructed and railroads suffered some major setbacks. Railroad shipments became more expensive and unreliable due to local disputes with connecting railroad lines, so goods could not get to other markets easily.

Another long-term problem was that the mills that still managed to stay in business grew even larger. Although that might not sound like a problem, it meant that when one of those mills went out of business, a larger percentage of the population became unemployed. In the early days, the

town's economy suffered if one grist mill closed, putting a few people out of work, but it was able to weather that downturn. In the early twentieth century, when Cooper Manufacturing went out of business, seven hundred people lost their jobs, and these closures put a tremendous strain on a small town.

Still another factor that affected Bennington's industries in the late nineteenth century was inadequate waterpower. The quantity of power that could be harnessed from the Walloomsac and Paran Creeks was finite and unreliable, prompting most companies to switch to steam engines. But that was expensive, requiring coal and the means of transportation to bring coal to the mills. In 1910 only two factories accounted for 1,100 of the town's 1,450 workers, the Cooper plant and the E-Z Waist Co. As these old mills and equipment began to age and break down, new capital was constantly needed for repairs and to upgrade machinery to stay competitive.

Bennington's decline after the 1890s was also due to the trend for more industries to become part of larger corporations without local management or owners. As a result these new corporations had little loyalty to the community and when times got tough they moved elsewhere. Following the Great Depression, which began in 1929, things never returned to normal. The few remaining factories either failed or moved away and unused buildings fell into disrepair. In the end some factories burned, some were torn down, and a few were converted for other uses. Only the Holden-Leonard Big Mill, Cushman, and E-Z Waist Company buildings remained in use into the second half of the twentieth century.

The Survivors

Haviland's Privilege. Fortunately, several mills still remain in Bennington as reminders of the earlier economic history. Although no mills remain completely intact from the eighteenth century, some fragments can still be found. As mentioned, Safford and Robinson built the first grist and lumber mills near the intersection of Main and Beech streets in 1762, and no trace of those two mills remains. But in the 1770s an English Loyalist named Joseph Haviland secured the water rights to a portion of Paran Creek in the center of North Bennington. There he constructed a stone grist mill. He abandoned the property to his son-in-law, Moses Sage, who took over the mill during the American Revolution. It is said that Sage, very much on the colonists' side during the war, ground cornmeal at this mill for the troops at the Battle of Bennington.

Although the building that is now called Haviland's Privilege was not constructed until 1833 by Edward Welling, it rests on the stone foundation of Haviland's original grist mill. In an effort to save some money

Welling cut the millstones from the grist mill in half and used them as lintels over some of the windows of his new building. Throughout the first half of the nineteenth century the building was used as a saw mill, grist mill, and starch mill. Then in 1852 it was converted into a paper mill owned by the Stark Paper Company. It functioned in that capacity until 1925 and has now been converted into residential apartments.

While looking at the early mills in North Bennington, the houses along Sage Street should be noted. Most were built for the town's mill workers in 1811 and a few more were added to the row during the 1850s. They stand as the oldest complex of mill housing in Vermont. Until the 1950s they remained under common corporate ownership at which time they were sold to individual buyers.

Brown and Gage Foundry. Another survivor from the first stage of Bennington's industrial era is the stone Greek Revival mill at 169 North Street. It was built as the Brown and Gage Foundry around 1842 by Samuel H. Brown and his brother-in-law Gay Sanford to process the pig iron that was being mined along the Walloomsac River. Within a decade it had been converted into a grist mill for grinding wheat, corn, and buckwheat, and operated in that capacity until 1938. Later the building was used as an automobile repair shop and now holds offices. It is typical of early mill construction with large open work areas, an interior stairway, and large exterior doors on all floors for moving supplies and finished products.

Eagle Iron Works. Another group of factory buildings stands directly across the street west of the Brown and Gage Foundry at 190 North Street. These were built around 1845, just a few years after the stone foundry, and were known as the Eagle Iron Works. The property stretches from North Street to Depot Street with several brick mills and a gabled office dotting the lot. Here, Lemuel Grover manufactured stoves, plows, and a variety of water wheels and was joined in partnership by his foreman, Olin Scott, in 1858. In 1865 Scott bought out Grover and began producing heavy machinery to manufacture gunpowder. By 1867, Scott had moved to Pleasant Street, and Henry W. Putnam, one of Bennington's most prominent industrialists, took over the mill buildings to produce waterwheel governors, bottle stoppers, clothes wringers, and various light hardware and wire goods such as barbed wire. During the twentieth century these buildings housed the Bennington Brush Company before being converted to retail space.

Bennington Machine Works. When Olin Scott took over the Eagle Iron Works in 1865 he changed its name to the Bennington Machine Works. Immediately he relocated to new quarters he built at 330 Pleasant Street.

Several of those buildings remain today including the brick factory with a roof monitor used for ventilation purposes. Scott was a good example of a local man who made his fortune in Bennington through hard work and inventiveness. He fabricated heavy equipment and at one time could boast that all the machinery used in the United States to make gunpowder came from his factory. The machine works also built derricks, water turbines, and steam engines.

Olin Scott was also typical of local industrialists who built their homes close to their factories. It was a practical matter because they could oversee the day-to-day operations. Scott's house at 324 Pleasant Street was an elaborate Italianate stick-style residence he built in 1887 with all the conveniences then available. More recently it has been divided into apartments. Scott also was philanthropic, and profits from his industrial complex funded many local community projects.

Valentine Mills. On the same street as Scott's machine works once stood the Valentine Mills. It is hard to believe that behind the white house at 300 Pleasant Street once stood one of the largest factory complexes in town. This was the site of Joel Valentine's mills, which he established in 1824. He took over an existing woolen mill to manufacture cloth; the mill burned in 1836 and he rebuilt it. In 1865 his son, Major Alonzo B. Valentine, returned from the Civil War and took over the mills after his father died the following year. Major Valentine and his wife lived in the house, which had been a wedding gift to the bride and groom upon their marriage in 1863. At that time the *Bennington Banner* wrote that the house was "one of the pleasantest residences in our village, the site itself being a beautiful one." At their peak the Valentine Mills employed hundreds of workers in several large three-story structures that even sported a tall clock tower and a bell that struck the hours. In the early days of the twentieth century Coy-Babcock took over these buildings and manufactured waxed paper here, but eventually the factory closed and the buildings were all torn down. Only the house remains.

The Big Mill. The best example of the second stage of industrial development in Bennington is the Holden-Leonard Mill, known locally as "the Big Mill." It was built of brick in 1865 by Seth Hunt and the Tillinghast Company. Originally it was meant to produce paisley shawls, all the rage during the Civil War, but that was merely a fad and within a few years Hunt sold the business to new owners to manufacture other products. In 1889 John Holden and Charles Leonard bought the mill for a million dollars and started the Bennington Woolen Mills, which operated until 1938. The structure is 113 feet long and four stories high. It is a good example of a modern mill because it incorporated safety features intended to prevent

the fires that destroyed so many of the early mills. A prime example is the exterior tower built to house the stairway. Before this development, stairs were located inside the mills themselves and if a fire broke out the stairway would act as a flue that carried the fire from floor to floor. Placing stairs in a separate structure provided a little more time to fight any fire that might break out.

At one time the big mill boasted 144 looms and produced a half million yards of material per year. The looms were powered by both steam and water, providing a steady source of energy. The Holden-Leonard mill was one of the first to employ traveling salesmen to sell their merchandise instead of going through a commission house. When the mill closed in 1938 it put 800 people out of work, one fourth of the town's workers. Other firms tried to revitalize the factory and they continued to make woolen goods there until 1949. In 1990 the Big Mill was rehabilitated for use by a dozen different businesses, which continue to use it today.

Nearby on Benmont Avenue, formerly called Mill Street, are several wooden houses built by the Holden-Leonard Mill to provide affordable housing for the workers. The company owned them and charged rent, increasing their profits. Several have been restored recently to their original appearance. A company store was located in the brick building at the corner of Benmont and River streets, where employees could buy items they needed on credit, which also increased company profits.

Brick Row. Another distinctive example of housing built for mill workers is that of the brick houses, known as Brick Row, located in North Bennington on Greenwich Street. In 1868 the North Bennington Boot and Shoe Company built nine double houses for their workers, five of which are still standing. The Boot and Shoe Company itself had a short and unfortunate history. The president of the company was Charles Hall, one of Governor Hiland Hall's six sons. In 1867 he built a factory where the present John G. McCullough Library now stands, the year before he built Brick Row. Hall decided to market shoes directly to the public in Chicago and opened a large wholesale store in that city. On November 8, 1871, the Great Chicago Fire destroyed his store and all its inventory, causing a severe financial setback. Then in 1884 the factory in North Bennington burned to the ground, putting the company out of business for good. Only the mill houses remain.

Bradford Mill. Henry E. Bradford is another of Bennington's industrial giants who came to town with enough capital to set up his business. He built his mansion directly across the street from his mill at 751 Main Street. In 1857 Bradford established the Green Mountain Mills, but the original

structure burned in 1865 and he rebuilt it the same year. Although the mill is currently underutilized, the family's house has been brought back to life.

At one time Bradford's knitting mills employed hundreds of workers and made 18,000 dozen pairs of underwear a year. On January 17, 1874, one of the worst accidents in Bennington's history occurred at the Bradford mill. A tank of gasoline that was used for generating gas lighting sprang a leak. When an employee inadvertently struck a match, a terrific explosion blew part of the building to pieces. Nine people were killed, four of them teen-age girls. Many more were injured. The injured and dead were taken into the Bradford mansion and treated until they could be transported elsewhere. (A detailed article on H. E. Bradford & Company appeared in the *Walloomsack Review*, Vol. 12, autumn 2013.)



H. C. White Company workers sort stereoscopic photographs in the North Bennington factory. These views of famous sites all over the world, which provide a kind of three-dimensional image, were popular before moving pictures came along.

H.C. White Company. The H.C. White Company mill was built around

A modern view of the Holden-Leonard "Big Mill," which has been adapted for many contemporary purposes.



1881 on Water Street in North Bennington. It rests on the foundation of the earlier washing works of the Burden Iron Company after a fire destroyed that building. White became one of the leading manufacturers of stereoscopes, an entertaining form of 3-D photography popular in the late nineteenth century. The new factory was equipped with automatic fire sprinklers and a large pump to suppress fires quickly.

When stereoscopes went out of fashion White branched out into other products including the wooden Kiddie Kar, which was invented here in 1915 for one of his children. These proved to be immensely popular and became a source of income for the next decade. By 1919 more than one and a quarter million Kiddie Kars were being manufactured here each year.

H.T. Cushman Company. The stone buildings originally known as the Estes Mill were erected along Water Street, North Bennington, in the early 1840s. Estes manufactured cotton goods like so many of Bennington's mills at the middle of the nineteenth century. Then in 1892 it was taken over by the H.T. Cushman Company for the manufacture of furniture and wooden novelties. The mill owner's house across the street predates the current mill, it being built in 1838. After the death of Henry Cushman in 1922 the house was remodeled and used as the display room for the line of Cushman Colonial furniture. It is now a private residence. □

Suggestions for further reading

Rush Welter, *Bennington, Vermont, An Industrial History*, School of Library Science, Columbia University, 1959, also available at www.questria.com.

Bennington Souvenirs of 1904 and 1914, annotated and indexed copies available at the Bennington Museum library.

Yankeetown: A Study of Community Decision-Making Processes, by Harry M. Scoble, Yale University Ph.D thesis, 1957. "Yankeetown" was a pseudonym for Bennington.

Tyler Resch, ed., *The Shires of Bennington: A pictorial history of a Vermont county*, Bennington Museum, 1975, contains a chapter on industry and commerce by Joseph Parks.

"H.E. Bradford & Company: A century of knitting-mill heritage," by Ruth Burt Ekstrom, in *Walloomsack Review* Vol. 12, Autumn 2013.

The Moseley Bridge

From rusting in the weeds to restored Civil War-era relic



Strands of rusting wrought-iron components of the 1857 Moseley bridge near the Bennington town dump posed a massive challenge for those who sought to reconstruct the bridge.

Anthony Marro

For roughly a century it spanned an arm of the Walloomsac River near Bennington's Paper Mill Village. It was used at first by pedestrians, horses, farm carts and sleighs, and at its end by people driving the large "chrome-mobiles" of the late 1950s, with their massive tail fins, artillery-shell taillights, and elaborate grill work. It was removed in 1958 and for fifty-five years it was disassembled and left rusting in the weeds, first at the edge of the Bennington Museum's wood lot and later at town property next to the landfill. And now – carefully restored and reduced to footbridge width – the 49-foot, 8-inch wrought-iron Moseley Bridge spans a small stream in the Mile-Around Woods property behind the Park-McCullough House in North Bennington. The new site is appropriate because the bridge and the house were built at about the same time.

"We have to say 'about' because we don't know for sure just when it was built or when it was put in place," says Bob Howe, who headed the small and informal group of people, mostly from North Bennington, who rescued and restored the bridge. "And we don't know how it was brought here. Presumably it was shipped in sections by train and then assembled at the site."

The bridge is modest in size but attractive in design and historic in fact. It is one of the last of its kind in the country – a Moseley Iron Bridge Company "bowstring" wrought-iron truss bridge from the Civil War era held together by rivets and locked into place by shoe and arch footings. There are many other historic iron bridges that remain, particularly the stronger steel bridges that came into use in the late 1800s. But David

Kelso, another of the group involved in the project, says that if you combine the terms “Moseley,” “wrought iron,” and “bowstring,” the Bennington bridge and the Upper Pacific Mills Bridge are the only two still in use. That last is 96 feet long, almost twice the length of the Bennington bridge, and originally it carried Pacific Mills workers and materials across a canal in Lawrence, Massachusetts. It partially collapsed in the 1980s but was restored and moved to the campus of Merrimack College in Andover, Massachusetts. Claremont, New Hampshire, claims a third, which workers at Monadock Mills No. 6 used to cross the Sugar River. The bowstring structure still exists but has no planking and no longer functions as a bridge.

Trenor W. Park and his family moved into their new 38-room Second Empire “house” on Christmas Day 1865. Information in files at the Bennington Museum suggests that the Moseley bridge was installed over the Walloomsac River in 1869. In fact there were several new bridges erected in Bennington then because of a serious flood in October that damaged or totally destroyed many. But it’s not clear where that 1869 date comes from, and Robert McCullough, a University of Vermont historian and the author of a book about Vermont’s iron bridges, thinks it may have been earlier. “Vermont’s first iron truss bridge was probably erected in Bennington sometime before 1866 and possibly as early as 1857,” he wrote. He said he concluded that mainly because Thomas Moseley modified his patent in 1866 and the Paper Mill bridge still has a plate for the 1857 patent attached to it. Bob Howe notes that the Bennington bridge is different in several ways from the design shown in the original 1857 patent, which stayed in effect until 1866. It’s possible that Moseley kept using the date of his original patent on his bridges even after obtaining new patents for improved designs, and that the bridge didn’t arrive in Bennington until 1869 despite its 1857 patent plate. Whatever the case, the bridge is both historic and very rare, and probably a testament to Bennington’s industrial wealth at the time.

For a period of about thirty years during and after the Civil War, Bennington’s mills – which produced woolens, cotton, knitted fabrics, needles, gunpowder and other things – were particularly robust, creating many jobs and great individual wealth. David Kelso believes that the fact that Bennington had at least three Moseley bridges by 1870 – at a time when most other communities still had bridges of wood – was a reflection both of the pride it was taking in its industrial base and also of its commitment to progress. When the new Renaissance-style Bennington Graded School, with its towering Mansard roof, opened in 1874, for example, it was considered one of the largest, most modern, and most impressive schools in the state. While it was called the “Graded School,” it also was the high school and included a “Normal School” to train high school graduates, mostly women,

to become teachers. It had a large and ornate cast-iron fountain in the front yard that had been donated by Alonzo B. Valentine, the owner of a nearby mill. A sketch of the school from the time shows not only the fountain but also what seems to be a small Moseley bridge (or at least a Moseley-type bowstring bridge) over the Walloomsac, which flowed just to the south. Combined with the Paper Mill Village bridge and two other Moseley bridges – one said to have been on Benmont Avenue (then called Mill Street) and a small one over Furnace Brook near the present site of the Molly Stark School – that sketch indicates that sometime around 1874 Bennington may have had at least four of them. An old photograph and a 1905 hand-drawn map done by the Burligh Co. of Troy show what appears to be yet another Moseley-type bowstring bridge on Main Street, between Morgan and Beach Streets.

Author Richard Sanders Allen, whose specialty was covered bridges, wrote in the Winter 1963 issue of *Vermont Life* magazine that there were few iron bridges of any sort in nineteenth-century Vermont, which made Bennington unusual. “The state had adequate timber resources, and simply had no real need for metal bridges . . .,” he wrote. “Isolated exceptions became objects of curiosity, for most Vermont bridge builders considered any claims of iron’s superiority over wood to be highly questionable.” Even in Bennington, new bridges continued to be built out of wood. The Paper Mill covered bridge, which still spans another arm of the Walloomsac just a few yards from where the Moseley bridge stood on Murphy Road, was built by Charles F. Sears in 1889, about 20 years after the wrought-iron Moseley bridge was put in place.

The Moseley bridge creator was Thomas W.H.H. (for William Henry Harrison) Moseley, who was born at Mount Sterling, Kentucky, in 1813 and served as an apprentice at the first iron furnace ever built on the Ohio River, in Irontown, Ohio. He became a civil engineer and sometimes was

This postcard view of the former Bennington Graded School on North Street includes a bridge over the Walloomsac River that closely resembles a Moseley bridge.



Blannington
12/29/88
Dear Uncle Alonzo
He received
the quilt
which you
sent and
wish to thank
you all for
them the
holders will
come in good
use and the
profits are
rather
mother's address
is 204 Safford
St. the all
took place
with us xmas
we had 15.
with love
Bessie

called “General Moseley” because he had served as Adjutant General for Ohio during the Mexican War. While others had been building cast-iron and wrought-iron bridges for years before he did, Moseley is credited with being the first American to use wrought-iron boiler plate to produce a tube – in his case, one that was triangular in cross section – for the curved arches needed in the bowstring design. His 1857 patent was the first granted in America for a tubular wrought-iron bowstring truss bridge.



The original location of the Moseley bridge connected an island behind the Paper Mill covered bridge. Photograph was taken before its removal in 1957.

The combination of wrought-iron boiler plate and a bowstring design were keys to Moseley’s success. Cast iron, which had been used for early iron bridges, was more brittle, less strong and less malleable than wrought iron, and tended to crack in cold temperatures. Because of its low carbon content, wrought iron was stronger – the most famous example of a wrought-iron structure is the Eiffel Tower, erected in 1889 – and at the same time the bowstring design was lighter than most bridge designs and thus less costly to manufacture. It also allowed for standardized, prefabricated parts that could be shipped separately and assembled at the bridge site.

Moseley began his operation in Cincinnati but was approached by a group of Boston investors who persuaded him to move there in 1861. That coincided with the loss of many of Cincinnati’s commercial ties to the South at the start of the Civil War, and for a time the Moseley Iron Bridge and Roof Company prospered in Boston. A Moseley Company pamphlet published in 1870 claimed to have built 206 bridges since 1857, several in Kentucky and Texas, but most in the Northeast or Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Illinois. The caveat is that the Moseley Company counted every span erected as an independent bridge, which meant that a three-span bridge would be counted as three separate bridges. His New England bridge career ended with a massive Broadway Bridge project in Boston that he started in 1869 and was called “the greatest iron bridge ever undertaken in New England.” But that proved more than Moseley could handle and it led to the firm’s bankruptcy. He was still faced with major debts when he died of pneumonia in Scranton, Pennsylvania, on March 16, 1880.

Over time the Bennington bridges disappeared. It’s not known what happened to those on Benmont Avenue or School Street, but the small Moseley Bridge over Furnace Brook (near where the “Y” swimming pool used

to be and close to the Molly Stark Elementary School) was replaced sometime around 1956. Bennington Public Works Commissioner Paul Kelly had his work crew put a chain around it and winched it off its base, destroying it. In 1958, the town decided to replace the Paper Mill Village bridge, but by this point it was understood to be historic enough that it shouldn't be ripped apart. For a time in the spring of 1958 it looked as though the Smithsonian Institution wanted it, particularly because it was small enough to be placed in a hall of engineering that was planned to open in 1960. But the Smithsonian backed out and the town then offered it to the Bennington Museum.

On September 12, 1958, the wrought-iron parts of the bridge, but not the wood flooring, were lifted by a crane onto a flatbed truck and brought to the Bennington Museum, which accepted an unconditional offer of ownership from the town that gave it "full powers of disposal." That meant that if the museum couldn't erect the bridge on museum property it had the right to negotiate for its placement elsewhere. For a time there was some thought that the bridge could be erected near the entrance to the Hadwen Woods, which abuts the museum. But – mainly for a lack of funds to restore it – it remained for close to fifty years stacked in pieces at the far end of the museum parking lot. Correspondence in museum files indicates that officials later wished that the smaller, 25-foot Furnace Brook bridge had been saved, because that one would have been easier to reassemble on museum grounds. And while the museum clearly owned the Paper Mill Village bridge, it never accessioned it. That was because if it had, the museum either would have had to find an indoor facility large enough to house it or set it up outside the museum as a carefully maintained outdoor sculpture. As a museum official noted in a 1998 memorandum, "It would be negligent of the museum to leave an accessioned museum collection object lying in the woods since this would violate established museum standards of security and collections care."

As recently as 2004 the Moseley bridge was still at the museum but by the summer of 2006 it had been moved to town property adjacent to the dump. That's where Bob Howe was shown it by Stephen Perkins, then the museum director, who told him that the museum had been looking to find a way of restoring it and moving it to a public place. Howe became interested and began talking with John Shanahan at the Better Bennington Corporation and others about possible sites in the village or back near Paper Mill Village, none of which proved feasible. After several years of discussing options that went nowhere, Kelso recalls that Howe finally said: "Why can't we find a spot and just do it? We don't need to raise a gazillion dollars. We should just do it."

While Perkins had told Howe that the museum hoped to restore the bridge, Howe says that he was never told that the museum itself owned it. Howe's understanding was that the town did, and when he asked Stuart Hurd, the town manager, about restoring it, Hurd told him to just take it and do whatever he wanted with it. Howe took Joe McGovern, a friend and fellow board member of the Fund for North Bennington, to see the disassembled bridge, and McGovern's first impression was that it was a lost cause because so many parts had been cracked or broken or lost in the various moves. "I was pretty discouraged when I saw it," he said. "It was twisted and rusted and broken. Sumac was growing up through it." But when McGovern then brought people from L & G Fabricators to see it, they said "This is great! We can do this."

"How much will it cost?," McGovern asked.

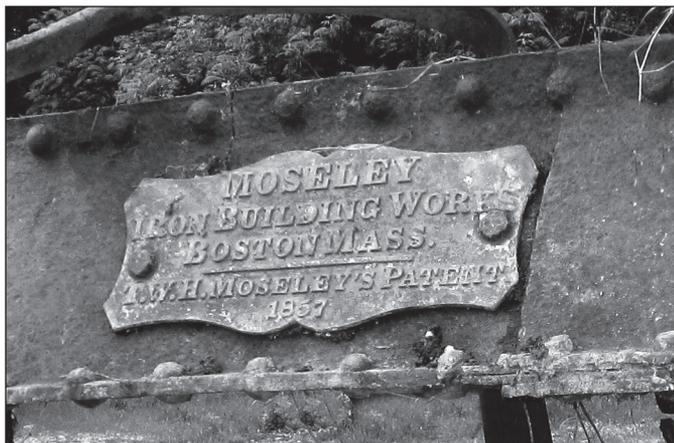
"An arm and a leg," he was told.

In the end, it was less than that. "Maybe an arm, but not a leg," McGovern said. The restorers are tight-lipped about the precise cost, but it seems to have been in the area of \$12,000. According to Rob Woolmington, head of the Fund for North Bennington, which provided the site, Howe was key to raising the money. "He was the captain of that ship," Woolmington said. The Fund for North Bennington is a non-profit organization dedicated to preserving historic structures, conserving open land, and expanding public recreation; the new site for the bridge is next to a popular hiking trail the fund maintains, and near two historic farm structures being restored.

In addition to contributions from various sources and the site offered by the Fund, the Dailey Company of Shaftsbury donated a truck and the town donated a forklift loader to transport the sections. The bulk of actual work was done by L & G Fabricators and the Phil Harrington Construction Corp. of Shaftsbury. In keeping with the original construction, all restoration was done without welding.

It wasn't until the bridge was restored, set in place, and a story about it appeared in the Bennington Banner that Howe, Woolmington, and the others learned that the museum still owned it and that the museum learned what had happened to it. Howe said he was surprised to learn that the museum owned it, and museum officials said they were surprised to learn that it had been renovated and placed in a new setting. But everyone came together in the end.

"Complicated story, easy ending," said Robert Wolterstorff, the museum's current executive director. He said that the complicated story is that Howe was encouraged by previous museum officials to look for ways of restoring the bridge, but "tying up the loose ends of ownership was never



The bridge's original logo plate forms an important part of its provenance.

taken care of.” The easy ending is that the museum intends to transfer ownership to the Fund for North Bennington, which Woolmington says intends to accept it.

And so now – after a half century of rusting in the weeds – a handsome relic of the Civil War era has been salvaged and restored in a pleasant setting near a much-used hiking trail, thanks to a small group of people who decided to side-step all the formal planning, fund-raising, bureaucratic maneuvering, and consensus-building that bogs down many such projects. They just got it done.

For more about the history of other Vermont bridges, see Robert McCullough, *Crossings: A History of Vermont Bridges*, published in 2005 by the Vermont Historical Society. It describes a long history of innovative bridges in the state, a nationally recognized bridge preservation program, and offers some 300 never-published-before pictures. □

Consultations were frequent as the bridge was reassembled near the community gardens in North Bennington. Seen here from right are Bob Howe, whose interest sparked the project; Joe McGovern, stone mason, and Frank Griggs, who had rebuilt a Moseley bridge in Lowell, Mass.





Arthur B. Wilder 1857-1945. *Calvin Coolidge Birthplace*, 1924.
Bennington Museum Collection, gift of Arthur B. Wilder in memory of his father, Jonas Wilder.

From France to the Green Mountains: Impressionism in Vermont

Jamie Franklin

France and Vermont, though separated by an ocean, are within a few degrees of latitude of one another and have comparable geographic, agricultural, and gastronomic profiles. More surprising, perhaps, is the seemingly disproportionate role artists with Vermont connections played both in Impressionism's journey from France to America during the nineteenth century, and in its evolution during the early twentieth century into one of the country's most widely embraced aesthetic strategies. *Three Vermont Impressionists*, an exhibition at the Bennington Museum, April 12 through June 17, 2014, shines a much-deserved light on three of these artists – George Loftus Noyes (1864-1954), Arthur Gibbes Burton (1883-1969), and Clifford Adams Bayard (1892-1965) – whose paintings, while highly regarded during their own day, for various reasons have received little recognition in the sixty-plus years since they stopped creating.¹

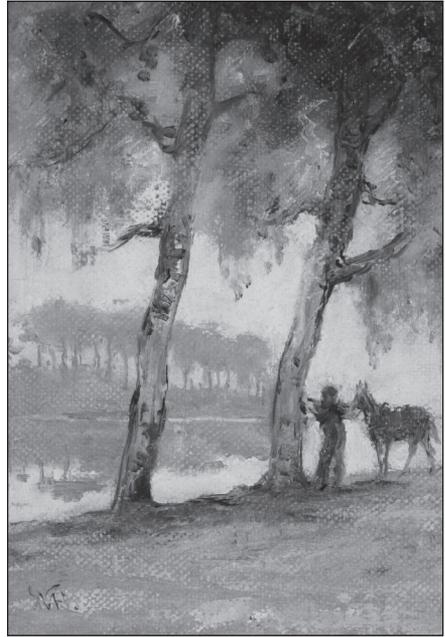
To understand better the role these three artists played in the larger picture of Impressionism, it is helpful to examine the historical roots of the style and its journey from France to America, particularly Boston, and eventually Vermont. William Morris Hunt (1824-1879), a native of Brattleboro, was pivotal in bringing progressive French painting to America

in the mid-nineteenth century.²

During the early 1850s, Hunt studied with Jean-François Millet in the French village of Barbizon, home to a group of artists who eschewed the academic artistic conventions of edifying subject matter and technical polish. The Barbizon artists painted the rural landscape, often peopled with peasants, and focused on capturing the scene before them with a naturalness and spontaneity that was unprecedented.

After returning to America, Hunt became a respected artist and teacher in Boston, influencing a generation of younger artists. His late landscapes from the 1870s might be seen as some of America's earliest paintings in an "impressionist" mode. Hunt's ability to capture the overall essence of a scene with a loose natural touch is especially evident in paintings such as *Banks of St. Johns River* (1873-74), executed during a trip to Florida. Works like this proved highly influential, serving as an important early precursor to Impressionism in America and preparing the ground for its acceptance, especially in Boston.

The first opportunity for the American public to see Impressionist paintings en masse was an exhibition, *Works in Oil and Pastel by the Impressionists of Paris*, composed of three hundred paintings organized by the French dealer Paul Durand-Ruel that opened at the New York Art Association on April 10, 1886, and then moved to the National Academy of Design on May 25.³ The 1886 exhibition not only had a profound impact on artists, affording many of them their first opportunity to see Impressionist works in the flesh, but it also opened the floodgates to adventurous American collectors, who started buying up pictures in the new style. Among these early patrons was Desmond FitzGerald (1868-1930), an engineer turned art collector and critic from Boston, who formed a large collection of Impressionist paintings and wrote regularly on Monet. FitzGerald noted, of Boston's love for the French master, "there are nowhere in the world more devoted admirers of the works of Monet than are found in this puritan city



William Morris Hunt 1824-1879.
Banks of St. Johns River, 1873-74.
Bennington Museum collection.

of New England.”⁴

Theodore Robinson (1852-1896), born in Irasburg, Vermont, was one of the earliest and most significant American artists to embrace Impressionism.⁵ Beginning in the late 1880s, many Americans gravitated toward the small French village of Giverny, northwest of Paris, drawn by the presence of Monet. Robinson arrived in Giverny around 1888 and came to be one of the few Americans the French master considered a friend. As a neighbor of Monet for more than four years, Robinson absorbed and adapted the Impressionist mode in his own work — his already painterly brushwork loosened further and his color palette brightened. Robinson returned to America in 1892 and immediately set out teaching and espousing the ideals of the Impressionist style, noting in an article on Monet in *The Century Magazine*, “To my mind no one has yet painted the out of doors quite so truly. He is a realist, believing that nature and our own day give us abundant and beautiful material for pictures; that rightly seen and rendered, there is as much charm . . . in a landscape of sunlit meadows or river-bank, as in the Lefebvre nymph with her rather dreary setting of a ‘classical landscape.’”⁶ In 1895 Robinson returned to the state of his birth for a summer of painting and teaching, resulting in what are undoubtedly the earliest Impressionist paintings of the Green Mountains, including a fresh, spontaneous *plein air* sketch *Jamaica, Vermont*.

During the early decades of the twentieth century Impressionism was widely adopted as the de facto style used to represent the Vermont landscape. Large numbers of painters began to explore the beauty and grandeur of the Green Mountains through the Impressionist lens. Arthur Wilder



Theodore Robinson 1852-1896. *Jamaica, Vermont*, April 10, 1895. *Private collection.*

(1857–1945), one of the more important Vermont artists of this generation, was exposed to Impressionism around 1900 through his patron Desmond FitzGerald, the eminent Boston collector of French Impressionist art and early advocate of Monet.⁷ Wilder soon adopted the Impressionists’ colorful palette, loose brushwork, and practice of painting outdoors, richly evident in *Calvin Coolidge Birthplace* (1924). Most of Wilder’s paintings depict the hills and pastures in and around his beloved Woodstock, where from 1891 on he lived and managed the Woodstock Inn.

Horace Brown (1876–1949), who settled in Springfield, Vermont, around 1916, was a student of Willard Metcalf – one of America’s most acclaimed Impressionists, who created his own significant body of work in Vermont between 1909 and the early 1920s – and became one of the famed artist’s closest friends.⁸ In addition to being a painter, Brown was also a state legislator in Vermont, and his love of the Green Mountain State’s bucolic landscape is evidenced not only by his paintings – such as *Old Lime Kilns* (c. 1930) – but also by the fact that he spearheaded legislation which, twenty years after his death, banned the use of roadside billboards. As chairman of the Vermont Association for Billboard Restriction – one facet of a large marketing campaign during the 1930s known as “Unspoiled Vermont” – Brown actively worked to preserve his state’s natural beauty for future generations of artists, tourists, and residents.⁹

The connection was strong between tourism and the choices of subject matter made by many Vermont artists, especially bucolic, rural landscapes



Horace Brown 1876-1949. *Old Lime Kilns*, c. 1930. Bennington Museum collection.

and sites with historical or regional appeal such as churches, covered bridges, barns, and sugar houses. Artistic tourism also became commonplace, as artists based in Boston and New York made their way to Vermont in search of new scenery. George Loftus Noyes was one of these, painting in the Manchester area starting in the early 1910s, undoubtedly influenced by his familial roots in the state, while other prominent artists, such as John Carlson (1875–1947) and Aldro Hibbard (1886–1972), teacher and friend, respectively, to Arthur Burton, were drawn to Vermont in the 1910s by the sheer beauty of the landscape. In the early 1920s, to increase winter patronage for his hotel, Arthur Wilder promoted all kinds of winter sports, helping Woodstock become an early ski center. While many city-based painters made summertime excursions to rural locations, Vermont was unusual in attracting artists during the winter months, when the state's hills and valleys are covered with luxurious blankets of snow.

Arthur Gibbes Burton and Clifford Adams Bayard both arrived in Vermont in the late 1920s already accomplished painters. Their quintessential images of Vermont's largely unspoiled natural scenery relate to Brown's early efforts to preserve the state's visual landscape, while simultaneously taking part in the public's seemingly insatiable desire to own a few square feet of the state's landscape in the form of a painting they could take home. By 1933 Noyes, too, had moved to Vermont year-round. His images at this time are evocations of the local, often showing simple vernacular buildings nestled among the Vermont trees and hills. The widespread embrace of the local landscape by Vermont's resident painters accorded with the widely held belief, espoused by the American critic Hamlin Garland, that "Art, to be vital, must be local in its subject matter."¹⁰

The last Impressionist exhibition was held in Paris in 1886, the same year as the first major exhibition of Impressionist paintings in America. Yet Impressionism did not find its way to Vermont for another decade and then held sway through the 1930s and 1940s. All the while, artists such as Noyes, Burton, and Bayard pushed the originally radical new approach to painting into new territories. In bringing together the work of these three artists, we not only draw attention to their individual accomplishments, but also paint a richer picture of Vermont's vibrant artistic community during the first half of the twentieth century. ❖

Notes

1. The limited recognition of these artists can be attributed to several reasons: the Impressionist style fell out of favor while they were still alive; during their lifetimes, they sold many of their best paintings, which remain hidden away in private collections; and though each of the three artists left behind a large trove of art and archival material, in each case that material has remained largely unknown to scholars until now. This article is drawn from the introductory essay in the catalogue that accompanies *Three Vermont Impressionists*. That catalogue also features essays devoted to Noyes, Burton, and Bayard.

2. Sally Webster, *William Morris Hunt* (Cambridge, Mass.: Cambridge University Press, 1991). Webster's monograph provides the most complete analysis of Hunt's career and influence.

3. Frances Weitzenhoffer, *The Havemeyers: Impressionism Comes to America* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1986). Weitzenhoffer provides a detailed account of French Impressionism's early reception in America

4. Desmond FitzGerald, "Claude Monet—Master of Impressionism," *Brush and Pencil* 15 (March 1905): 194.

5. Sona Johnston, *In Monet's Light: Theodore Robinson at Giverny* (New York: Philip Wilson Publishers, 2004).

6. Theodore Robinson, "Claude Monet," *The Century Magazine* 44 (September 1892): 698.

7. Lyle Pearsons, "Biography for Arthur Wilder," AskART, <http://www.askart.com/AskART/artists/biography.aspx?searchtype=BIO&artist=100327>, accessed February 28, 2014.

8. Elizabeth De Veer and Richard J. Boyle, *Sunlight and Shadow: The Life and Art of Willard L. Metcalf* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1987), 149.

9. Horace Brown Papers, Vermont Artist Files, Bennington Museum.

10. Sarah E. Kelly, "'Local in Its Subject': American Impressionists and the Countryside," in *The Age of American Impressionism*, Judith A. Barter, ed., (Chicago and New Haven: The Art Institute of Chicago and Yale University Press, 2011), 103, citing Hamlin Garland, *Crumbling Idols: Twelve Essays on Art, Dealing Chiefly with Literature, Painting and the Drama*, John Harvard Library (1894; reprint Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1960), 104.

Book Reviews

The quest to beatify Silent Cal

Reviewed by Paul Searls

American historians have tended to consider Calvin Coolidge a rather mediocre president. Those specializing in Vermont history tend to have a soft spot for him, anyway. His presidency came along at a special time in the state's past. The rapidity of change in 1920s America caused many to look to rural places, and to perceived rural values, as antidotes to the complexity of modern life. Coolidge's fame as president, and the image carefully constructed for him by political advisors, directed attention toward Vermont. Even as Vermont, too, changed in a myriad of ways, Coolidge was seen as typifying a state that seemed firmly rooted in ancient virtues. As the authors of the authoritative *Freedom and Unity: A History of Vermont* write, "Coolidge's upright, austere bearing and thrifty ways endeared him to many Americans as the idealized embodiment of his home state's character — an example of the value and strength of Vermont ways."

Vermont historians take at least some interest in how a portion of those on the political right have sought ardently to redeem Coolidge's general reputation. Over the last thirty years, a number of conservative writers have put Coolidge at the center of his era. They seek to vindicate his economic agenda of low taxes, diminished government spending, and deregulation of business. Thomas Silver's *Coolidge and the Historians* accused other historians in 1983 of distorting Coolidge's accomplishments out of liberal bias, and several books extolling Coolidge's record and legacy have appeared subsequently.

There are two new additions to this genre. The first is *Coolidge* by Amity Shlaes, who directs the Four Percent Growth Project at the George W. Bush Presidential Center. It is a long book that quite comprehensively documents both Coolidge's private and public lives. Shlaes has done a great deal of research, and at times presents a balanced portrait of Coolidge. Her admiration is unconcealed, however. She calls Coolidge "a rare kind of hero" who was "a minimalist president, an economic general of budgeting and tax cuts." Shlaes sees Coolidge's presidency as a triumphant success, with the top income tax rate halved to 25 percent, federal budgets that ran surpluses, low unemployment, and rapid economic growth.

Additionally, Shlaes sees Coolidge as having many further sanguine influences on American culture. "Under Coolidge," she writes, "religious faith found its modern context." In seeking to burnish Coolidge's image, Shlaes has written a passionately argued book that convincingly establishes, for example, that Coolidge's maneuvering to win the 1924 Republican nomination was clever and canny politics. Shlaes's eagerness to glorify Coolidge leads her often to credit him with more than he deserves. She writes, in just

one example, that during Coolidge's presidency "Ku Klux Klan membership dropped by millions." The Klan's membership peaked in 1924, after Coolidge had taken office, but the truth is that Coolidge deserves neither blame for the Klan's growth nor (as Shlaes's book actually makes clear) credit for its decline. Shlaes writes that Coolidge "ended a period of corruption," but his opposition to regulation led to rampant speculation by banks, insider trading by brokers, and a host of other devious practices that would be regulated or outlawed within a few years. Ultimately, her quest to beatify Coolidge hinges on absolving him of responsibility for the Great Depression. Shlaes argues that the Depression not only was not his fault, but was in fact caused by "a divergence" from his policies by subsequent presidents, whose intervention in the economy turned a mild "correction" into a catastrophe. Shlaes makes no coherent defense of this quite extraordinary account of the Depression's causation.

The second new book is *Why Coolidge Matters* by Charles C. Johnson, a young journalist and former fellow at the conservative Claremont Institute. Johnson's book is organized topically, with chapters focused on themes such as "The Political Service and Practice of Calvin Coolidge" and "How Progressive Political Thought Undermined America's Defense."

Johnson's Coolidge is essentially flawless, a man of great faith with classically conservative views on the role of government, and on the place of the individual in society. For Johnson, Coolidge was even a champion of the rights of women and minorities. This requires some mental gymnastics: Coolidge's support for the restrictive Immigration Act of 1924, for example, was merely "a means of helping immigrants who were already here." Johnson is as eager as Shlaes to give Coolidge credit for more than the man himself would probably have considered appropriate; he writes that Coolidge "forged the Roaring Twenties from the wreckage of America's greatest economic depression to date."

But Johnson's book is much less a historical examination of Coolidge than it is an effort to argue for low taxes, decreased regulation of business, and further limitations on unions. In that way, Johnson's book interestingly inserts itself into the long-running struggle within the Republican Party, of which Coolidge was once a part, between its progressive wing that has seen government as able to do good, and the opponents in the party who believe government is the problem rather than the solution. The ultimate lesson Johnson believes we must learn from Coolidge's era is that in those days, "The benefits of prosperity came from toil, not out of government coffers." Hardly everyone who benefits from government programs today does not work, of course. And the millions of Americans who lost their jobs during the Great Depression probably took little consolation from Coolidge when he wrote sometime in the early 1930s (the quote is uncited by Johnson) that "We may well be thankful that it is not worse."

Readers of the *Walloomsack Review* probably will be interested mainly in what these two books have to say about Vermont, both as a place and as a

molding force in the creation of Coolidge's identity. Shlaes depicts late nineteenth-century Vermont as a simple society of independent-minded citizens who worked hard, feared debt, and for whom "Church and church meetings filled any time that remained in their day." The section on Coolidge's background in Vermont has a number of unnecessary errors. Shlaes writes that an important day to young Coolidge was the anniversary of the first Battle of Bull Run, at which "the state had given many men." Exactly two members of Vermont units died at first Bull Run. Johnson describes the youthful Coolidge as living a "Toquevillian existence." Johnson describes an adolescent Coolidge as a humble boy who was cheerfully willing to be among those who "pitched the hay with everyone else." As is frequently the case, Johnson's point is not to capture the real Coolidge, but rather to cast aspersions on his present-day foes — in this case, to unnamed "current leaders" who "tend to bemoan the fact that they worked as children." As for Coolidge's relationship with Vermont after ascending to the presidency, Shlaes fairly recounts how Coolidge and the state became alienated from each other, in part because Coolidge chose to summer in South Dakota, in part because of his seemingly indifferent response to the Flood of 1927. On the flood, Shlaes notes the anger of many state residents because Coolidge "watched Vermont struggle from a distance." Whatever else might be true, it is hard to disagree with Shlaes that Coolidge was consistent in the application of his principles.

Readers interested in Coolidge should probably begin with David Greenberg's biography, *Calvin Coolidge*. Sympathetic in many ways to Coolidge, Greenberg makes an effort to give proper perspective to the successes and failures of his administration, including his inaction on civil rights issues and his relative culpability for the Great Depression. Shlaes's biography is a worthwhile read if her open assertions of ideological bias are kept in mind, and if the book is put in the context of a much broader historiographical understanding of the 1920s. Johnson's book will interest those who would like to see how a young conservative can use Coolidge's words and actions to advocate for neo-liberal economic policies. □

Coolidge, by Amity Shlaes, New York, Harper Collins, 2013, and *Why Coolidge Matters: Leadership Lessons from America's Most Underrated President*, by Charles C. Johnson, New York, Encounter Books, 2013.

Ruminations on Vermont's legal history

Reviewed by R. Marshall Witten

Uncommon Law, Ancient Roads, and Other Ruminations on Vermont Legal History is a collection of articles published in the *Vermont Bar Journal* spanning the period 1993-2013. It's a potpourri of subjects that interested the historically inquisitive mind of their lawyer-author, Paul S. Gillies, Esq.

The essays are relatively short and suitable for perusing on your nightstand and falling asleep without losing the thread of what you were reading. Gillies' style is easy and he clearly enjoys his topics. The book is extensively footnoted for those who want to go deeper into any of the subjects. The articles are divided into four general categories broadly titled Law, Litigation, Luminaries, and Limits.

In the Law section, Gillies explains that after Vermont declared its independence, its first law was a 1778 statute adopting the common law as it was practiced and understood in the New England states. The common law takes judicial decisions and applies the facts and reasoning to similar but new fact patterns as they arise. Gillies then discusses treatises (like Blackstone) where the commentator compiled decided cases on a subject and expounded on what legal principle he thought should be drawn from the line of cases. Other articles deal with why judges wear robes, why the law uses Latin phrases, and dissenting judicial opinions.

The first chapter in the Litigation section discusses the need for gristmills in the 1700s, their scarcity, engineering complexity, flowage rights, the difficulty of travel to and from the mill, and the cut the miller took for grinding grist. The latter issue led to legislation in 1779: the miller could keep two quarts of the 32 in a bushel.

The next chapter deals with the lot for the first minister to settle in town, a part of lands set aside by Benning Wentworth, the governor of New Hampshire, in the towns he chartered in Vermont. The lot was to lure a minister to the town and promote community and stability of settlements. There were five other set-asides: for the Church of England, Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, college, school, and county grammar school. Except for the minister's lot, all were lease lands for "as long as water runs and grass grows." The annual rentals had no cost of living adjustments and the rents are nominal today. The rents are a nuisance to the fee owner and there is a concerted effort to sell the reversionary interest to the lessee. This topic is intricate and full of early church-state legal conflict in Vermont.

There is a chapter on how the law of buying and selling a horse in Vermont developed that evokes the modern law and practice of negotiating for a car. No book on Vermont laws would be complete without a chapter on fence law, a part of boundary law generally. You will probably want to re-read Frost's poem before you are done with this chapter. Finally, the Litigation section takes up the development of the law requiring the owner to fence his or her animals and the liability of a ram or bull owners when the lusty beast gets out and visits his neighbor's ewes or cows.

The Luminaries section discusses the lives and contributions of eight distinguished Vermont lawyers and jurists from Nathaniel Chipman in the late 18th century through F. Ray Keyser Sr., who died in 2001. With perhaps the exception of Judge Keyser (father of F. Ray Keyser Jr., who was governor in 1961-63) few if any of the other seven lawyers and

jurists granted a chapter will be familiar to most readers, including this reviewer. The choices seem to be based as much on the human-interest stories surrounding the choices as their contribution to Vermont's legal history. Judge Keyser is an exception to this observation because his career exemplifies small-town, distinguished, humble, 33-year service on the Vermont bench. Judge Keyser's keenness and courtesy always made it a pleasure to appear before him.

One Luminary who I thought deserves attention is Jeffrey Amestoy, who became the 38th chief justice of the Supreme Court of Vermont on January 31, 1997, appointed by Governor Howard Dean. In 1999 Amestoy was author of the Vermont Supreme Court's unanimous opinion in *Baker v. State*, which held that same-sex couples were entitled under the Vermont Constitution's Common Benefit Clause – which antedates the Equal Protection Clause of the U.S. Constitution – to the rights and benefits of marriage. The court ordered the Vermont Legislature to craft a law that would satisfy the ruling, either by legalizing gay marriage or by creating an equivalent partnership structure. It was one of the first judicial affirmations of the right of same-sex couples to treatment equivalent to that afforded different-sex couples. By deciding the case under the Vermont Constitution, Amestoy's opinion put the ruling out of reach of a conservative and hostile U.S. Supreme Court.

I was surprised that James L. Oakes, Vermont attorney general, gubernatorial candidate, Federal District Judge, Second Circuit Court of Appeals Judge – one of the most distinguished courts in the nation – was not accorded a chapter.

Governor Deane C. Davis is given recognition in the chapter on Act 250, but he also is an example of the best of the Vermont bar in public service and character.

The Limits section takes up boundaries – state, town, and private – ancient roads, the law of railroad crossings, bridges on the Connecticut River, and a review of Act 250. The ancient roads chapter will be of special interest to anyone who owns land where there are old trails, “logging roads,” and other evidence that someone passed that way once. Old roads never die until they are given up by the town. What roads were established, when and where, can be a murky subject depending on where you are in Vermont. Feelings can run high if a land owner finds out that the quaint trail running past his bedroom is alive with snowmobiles at 2 a.m. some cold morning and filled with the buzz of trail bikes and ATVs in the summer. The legislature sought to lay the matter to rest with legislation in 2005-6. The courts have made common law on the matter as well. There are winners and losers in the legislative compromise.

Gillies's chapter on Act 250, Vermont's landmark development-regulation statute, will interest many Vermonters who have some understanding of the purpose and scope of the act. The small lots and failing septic systems at the Chimney Hill development in Wilmington in 1969 were enough to

dramatize the need and give Governor Davis the public support and political momentum to spearhead the drafting and adoption of Act 250. The chapter describes the history and conflicting political and economic forces that led to the adoption of Act 250 and a scorecard as a result of 40 years of legal struggle by proponents and opponents. □

Uncommon Law, Ancient Roads, and Other Ruminations on Vermont Legal History, by Paul S. Gillies, Montpelier, Vermont, Vermont Historical Society, 2013, \$24.95

Cultivating modernism through dance in a most unlikely place

Reviewed by Susan Sgorbati

Looking back on history, in hindsight, we observe those times where all of the major factors in a culture converge to present unusual opportunities for innovation and change. In a most unlikely place, a small rural town called Bennington, Vermont, one of these important events gave birth to an authentic, artistic, indigenous American movement: the modern dance. Elizabeth McPherson, in her important new book, *The Bennington School of the Dance: A History in Writings and Interviews*, gives new insight into the years of this fledgling movement in dance.

Through interviews, writings and responses from the directors of the school (Martha Hill and Mary Josephine Shelley), the “Big Four” artists and teachers (Martha Graham, Doris Humphrey, Charles Weidman, Hanya Holm), former students who became major artists and educators in their own right (Alwin Nikolais, Anna Halprin, Bessie Schonberg), musicians and composers (Louis Horst, Norman Lloyd, Otto Luening), we get important new information as to how this hotbed of experimental activity occurred. Many more artists, students, and teachers associated with the program went on to make major contributions to the teaching, performing, and dissemination of information about modern dance around the world,

McPherson provides us with new and unique insights into what contributed to such an important movement. This legacy has inspired a generation of artists and resulted in a tremendous outpouring of creative energy in the past and present decades. To read the biographies of all of the participants in her book is to understand the family tree of Modern Dance and all who followed, this reviewer being one of them. (With the important note that Katherine Dunham and Helen Tamiris were not a part of The Bennington School, but had essential roles in other lineages of the American Modern Dance and all who followed them. The role of African-Americans in modern dance is another important narrative and is not a part of this story.) For the first time, I learned that Nadia Chilkovsky, my first modern dance teacher at the Philadelphia Dance Academy, was in session at the first Bennington School of the Dance in Martha Graham’s Dance Workshop and

performed with her company.

Author McPherson provides a complex, multi-faceted view of the people and information that contributed to these years. Not only do we read about the passion and commitment to the artistic vision of the participants, but also we learn about what it takes to put on a real program while feeding, housing, and providing handmade “leotards” for all of the participants. Classes were offered on the Commons lawn and in every conceivable space that could be found. Martha Graham’s dachshund dogs were in residence, along with Doris Humphrey’s young son, Charles Humphrey Woodford, with his reminiscences about his complicated childhood. This experience was not for the fainthearted as many remembered Louis Horst’s amazing sessions in dance composition, but accompanied by his “barbed” comments and harsh criticism of students’ work.

But this was serious business and demanded full artistic commitment and participation. The first one hundred and three participants were primarily physical education teachers from all over the country who were treated as if they would be future professional modern dancers. This innovative art form was creating a new type of theater. The temporary summer stage built at the Bennington armory by Arch Lauterer, had to be approved by the Vermont National Guard. Originally composed live music was essential, and creative costumes and sets were designed for the premieres. Imagine three thousand and five hundred audience members traveling from New York City and all over New England to attend these performances in Bennington!

It is important to note that McPherson provides the context for why this significant event happened in Bennington: it was due to Bennington College. In Director Martha Hill’s recollections, she describes why the college was the perfect location for such a progressive endeavor: “the college included, (to paraphrase), high intellectual standards, a community organization far ahead of its time, and a full acceptance of the arts as respectable for an academic education.” In fact, Bennington College was the first institution of higher learning to put the study of dance on the same level as the sciences and humanities. As Martha Hill goes on to state, “Those were experimental years for everyone at Bennington — learning by doing and by opening one’s mind.”

The first president of Bennington College, Dr. Robert D. Leigh, saw in Martha Hill the potential to develop a summer program that would fit perfectly with the ideals of a Bennington education. Not only did modern dance fulfill this potential, it put Bennington “on the map.” The spirit of collaboration, the passion, the energy, the festival of premieres of new work, the audiences coming from all over, and the students going back to their respective universities and colleges nationally and internationally to spread the word, built an artistic and cultural movement that still inspires today. McPherson’s collection of memories and writings from such a variety of people involved in the nine years of the program, 1934-38, the year 1939 at

Mills College, and the final years 1940-42 as the School of the Arts, reveals new perceptions into why the ingredients were so unique as to create such important work. Her own comments are enlightening as if she understands intuitively and from her research what the collaborative atmosphere felt like to be there and the enormous respect that was expressed for the artists. She reminds us in her conclusion of this profound insight about the formation of the Bennington School of the Dance and its power: "It is a reminder that one or two or three people can start a project that will affect the course of history, for the Bennington School of the Dance certainly did this, despite its humble beginnings in a small, quiet Vermont town during the Great Depression."

For all of us who want to believe that positive, innovative change can come from the hard work of creative, committed individuals, we can look to Elizabeth McPherson's new book to reveal an important historical story to illuminate this path. It is a wonderfully interesting story, and for one who follows the history of modern dance, progressive education, and the cultural transformation of modernism through dance in the 20th century, this is a must read. □

The Bennington School of the Dance: A History in Writings and Interviews, compiled and edited by Elizabeth McPherson. McFarland & Company, 2013; 340 pp., photographs, paperback, \$45.

From obscurity to prominence in early Vermont: Col. William Marsh, patriot and loyalist

Reviewed by Tyler Resch

In many ways, this book is the best Vermont history to be published in many moons because it offers such rich detail and valuable context – geographical, military, and personal. *Col. William Marsh: Vermont Patriot and Loyalist* paints a fresh portrait of Vermont's perplexity before, during, and after the American Revolution. Disaffected and even fearful of New York, twice disappointed at rejection by the Continental Congress, ambivalent toward England, briefly attracted to join Quebec, striving for its own stability, independence and unity, Vermont also was uneasy about the validity of its land titles.

Col. William Marsh seems an obscure figure to be plucked from the depths of history but in the hands of authors Jennifer and Wilson Brown his life offers a compelling story. Marsh functioned on both sides of the Patriot-Loyalist environment and on both sides of the Vermont-Canada border. The sensitive subject of divided loyalties is carefully explored during the time when the New Hampshire Grants were being transformed first into an independent republic and then the state of Vermont.

A quote on the book jacket from Matt Bushnell Jones, author of the well-regarded *Vermont in the Making*, attests to Marsh's importance to early

Vermont: “There were three men who guided [Vermont’s] steps along the path of independence: Captain Heman Allen of Salisbury, Connecticut, commorant on the Grants, Dr. Jonas Fay of Bennington, and Colonel William Marsh of Manchester. Their pre-eminence can be read in the records. No other name can rank with theirs as leaders at this crucial moment when, for the first time, the Grants faced the vital question and declared for a new state. They, with Ethan Allen and Seth Warner, planted the seed and watered it, and here in Cephas Kent’s old tavern at Dorset the seed sprouted.”

In 1775 when the American Revolution began, “many residents on the Grants still felt that New York was a greater threat than the British. Would they lend their support to the revolution, while also finding means to secure their New Hampshire titles and escape New York’s claim to the region?” (p. 95). The issues that inflamed Massachusetts, like the Stamp Act and the Coercive Acts, were not felt so keenly in the Grants. Indeed, some hundred miles north of Boston a larger threat was New York’s imposition of the Bloody Act of 1774, which targeted the Green Mountain Boys and forbade the assembly of three or more persons on penalty of death “without benefit of clergy.”

Whereas the towns in eastern Vermont had tended to lean toward New York’s jurisdiction, the so-called Westminster massacre of March 1775 turned opinion against the Yorkers and brought important unity among east and west towns leading to the Dorset Conventions, which laid the groundwork for independence.

The book is not perfect. There is a strange omission of that final convention at Windsor in June 1777 where a constitution was adopted and Vermont’s independence was declared. One is led to believe that independence was finally declared at a January 1777 convention at Westminster (pp. 122-124). That is doubly strange, for the authors frequently cite Henry Steele Wardner’s *The Birthplace of Vermont: A History of Windsor to 1781*. There is no mention of Moses Robinson, the governor in 1791 who according to his forthcoming biography by Robert Mello was the key political negotiator for Vermont statehood. And there is a most sketchy account of the Battle of Bennington, which readers will be surprised to learn took place in Hoosick Falls, N.Y.

On the positive side – there are many positives – a most comprehensive series of explanations shows why Marsh switched sides from Vermonter to Loyalist. His decision took place in July of 1777, right after the indecisive battle of Hubbardton – in between his approval of Vermont’s independence in June and the battle of Bennington in August. Among the reasons: Marsh’s concern for the political and economic instability of the new Vermont government; uncertainty of the Burgoyne campaign; the harsh tactics of the Green Mountain Boys against suspected Tories (in the absence of Ethan Allen, who was in captivity); the feeling that New York and not Britain was the principal enemy of Vermont; a perception that the American nation was going to be unworkable; and the refusal of the Continental Congress

to grant Vermont statehood and confirm its land titles. In addition, Sarah French of Dorset, Marsh's wife, had many Loyalist kin including her parents (pp. 152-166). It was remarkable that Marsh was able later to return to his home in East Dorset, where much of his Tory-tainted property had been seized. At his death in 1818 he had long outlived virtually all of the principal characters with whom he had interacted: Ethan, Heman, and Ira Allen, Remember Baker, Seth Warner, Thomas Chittenden, and Gideon Brownson. His gravestone in the East Dorset Cemetery is the subject of extensive commentary about its Freemason symbols.

Marsh is best remembered locally because of the Marsh Tavern at the Equinox House in Manchester.

The reader of this book is introduced to another significant character who switched sides. Justus Sherwood was an early member of the Green Mountain Boys and was among those who rescued Remember Baker from the Yorkers in 1772. An Anglican, he began speaking up against armed resistance, then joined Peter's Queens Loyal Rangers and scouted the eastern shore of Lake Champlain before Burgoyne captured Fort Ticonderoga in July 1777 – the same month Marsh switched sides. The authors describe Sherwood taking command of Pfister's decimated troops at the Battle of Bennington, and then fading away at Saratoga before the surrender (p. 161). There was much interaction between Marsh and Sherwood, as there was with Ethan and Ira Allen in the quixotic effort to align Vermont with Quebec. Marsh did intelligence work for General Haldimand, governor of Quebec, and for Haldimand's chief aide, Robert Mathews. Marsh first sought to resettle loyalist refugees on the Canadian side of Lake Memphremagog, and in the end some 4,000 families did settle near the Bay of Quinte on Lake Ontario.

A strong attribute of this book is the inspired use of sources, reflecting the authors' extensive reading of available literature on this complex subject. Fortunately, each page has its own footnotes so the reader need not keep switching to a section at the back of the book. The abundant use of sources seems as appropriate as it is diverse. There is a good index and bibliography plus two appendices that offer text of selected deeds, Marsh's testimonies to the Loyalist Claims Commission in Halifax 1786-1787, and genealogies and commentaries about Marsh and related families. The authors credit newly indexed papers of the Sir Frederick Haldimand Papers for the richness of their abundant Canadian material.

This new biography opens the reader's eyes to the political and economic hardships of Vermont's settlers during the era of the American Revolution a time when many were justifiably troubled about where their loyalties should reside. □

Col. William Marsh: Vermont Patriot & Loyalist, by Jennifer S. H. Brown and Wilson S. Brown, published 2013 by Tiger Rock Press, Denver, Colorado, paperback, 415 pp.

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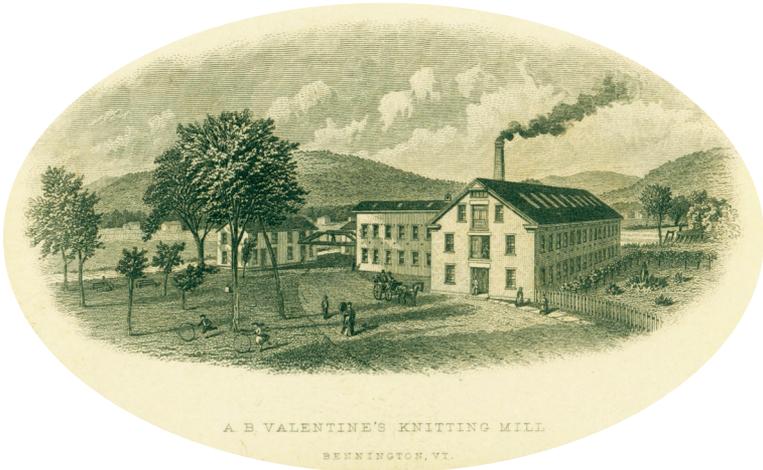
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Moseley Bridge as completed in the fall of 2013, crosses a stream in North Bennington's "Mile-Around Woods" with the Park-McCullough carriage barn seen in the near distance and the belvedere of the Big House beyond.



A nineteenth century engraving of the A.B. Valentine knitting mill on Pleasant Street, Bennington. Bennington Museum collection

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