

WALLOOMSACK REVIEW

BENNINGTON MUSEUM



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Robert Wolterstorff, executive director

Tyler Resch and Anthony Marro, editors

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

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On the cover:
“Pawlet Farm” by Arthur Jones.

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Editors' Notes

Ruth Greene-McNally's interview with Dorset artist Arthur Jones covers virtually the entire span of the history of Manchester's Southern Vermont Art Center. Jones was involved as one of the very first "Southern Vermont artists" at the age of 20 in 1948, when a nucleus of painters in Bennington County's North Shire formed an association and began thinking about acquiring a building. This charming interview mentions almost all of the distinguished artists of that magical time.

Another important contribution by Michael Gabriel to an understanding of the Battle of Bennington of 1777 -- that victorious incident that brought about a turning point of the American Revolution -- is published in this issue. Gabriel knowledgeably interprets the diary of soldier William Boutelle, who marched to the battle from his residence in Leominster, Mass. It is rare not only to have uncovered a diary that has been obscure for so many years, but also to have it written by one of the soldiers from Worcester County.

Gary Shattuck appears twice as an author in this issue. His article on health care in Vermont in the nineteenth century is a followup to his feature "Opium Eating in Vermont: 'A Crying Evil of the Day,'" which appeared in *Vermont History*, summer-fall 2015. That article carried a preface that said, "In 1900 Dr. A.P. Grinnell surveyed druggists, general store owners, physicians, wholesalers, and manufacturers of opiates and opium products, then made his grim assessment that Vermonters consumed an incredible 3,300,000 doses of opium each and every month. The numbers were simply staggering." In a very different vein, Shattuck's book *Insurrection, Corruption & Murder in Early Vermont -- Life on the Wild Northern Frontier*, is reviewed in this issue by Anthony Marro. This book deals with the famous "Black Snake" incident in the War of 1812 and explores the nature of widespread smuggling on Lake Champlain.

Curator Jamie Franklin reviews a much-anticipated interpretation of the lifelong early twentieth-century mission of Lewis Hine and his stunning photographs that exposed the scandal of child labor.

For a change of scene and subject, Tyler Resch reviews two recent Vermont town history books about Halifax, which reflect the character and energy of one of the state's smallest towns.

Contributors

Ruth Greene-McNally is an independent scholar who has served as curator or research curator at the Southern Vermont Art Center, the Arkell Museum, and Albany Institute of History and Art, and served as museum educator at the Tang Teaching Museum and the Montclair Art Museum. She is co-author of *Hudson River Panorama: Four Hundred Years of Arts, History, and Culture*, published by SUNY Press.

Gary Shattuck writes extensively on historical issues from a legal perspective. He is a retired assistant attorney general and assistant U.S. attorney, and served for many years as a Vermont State Police supervisor. He is a graduate of Vermont Law School and lives in Shrewsbury.

Michael P. Gabriel a professor of history at Kutztown University in Pennsylvania and has become a leading authority on the battles of Bennington and Saratoga. This is his fourth article for the *Walloomsack Review* on an aspect of the Battle of Bennington. His book *The Bennington Battle: Soldiers & Civilians* was published by History Press in 2012.

Jamie Franklin is curator of the Bennington Museum. He is currently working on a major summer exhibition of paintings, watercolors, drawings, and prints by Milton Avery 1885-1965, who summered in Jamaica and Rawsonville, Vermont, six years between 1935 and 1943.

Anthony Marro and **Tyler Resch** are the co-editors of this journal



Arthur Jones
Photograph by the author

VESTIGE VERMONT

A Conversation with Dorset Artist Arthur Jones

Images courtesy of Arthur Jones Gallery

Ruth Greene-McNally: When we met a few years ago, I was opening an exhibition on Jay Hall Connaway at the Wilson Museum at Southern Vermont Arts Center. I'd been interviewing his few remaining friends, primarily collectors and his gallerist, our mutual friend, Robert Deeley, who died recently at age 95.

Arthur Jones: I'm the last man standing.

RGM: As the last living artist associated with the collective originally known as Southern Vermont Artists, I'd like to know more about your background and affiliations with the artists. The arts played a significant role in the history of the region for the better part of the twentieth century.

AJ: It was a miraculous thing when the founders acquired the [Gertrude Devine] Webster Estate on the hill. Until then the artists were exhibiting on the green, at the Equinox, and the school gymnasium.

RGM: Was Connaway a part of the effort to find a home for the organization?

AJ: He was. He arrived in Dorset shortly beforehand but he knew the artists and he had local patrons.

RGM: Connaway made a brief appearance in 1926 under the auspices of Bartlett Arkell, president of Beech Nut Company. At that point, Connaway found the landscape dull. He wanted to paint the sea and Arkell sent him to Monhegan Island. At that point Robert McIntyre of Macbeth Gallery represented Connaway and helped with rent and supplies.

AJ: I've actually never been to Monhegan but the isolation of the island is a story unto itself. No doubt about it. I knew many people who painted there and it had to affect his mood because Monhegan is remote. His colors of the sea were very true. Given that he was born and raised in Indiana, it's remarkable that he became a marine painter. My impression is that it took



“Big Barn” by Arthur Jones

Connaway quite a while to achieve the feeling of the Vermont landscapes, especially some of the earlier ones. But he achieved his own Vermont landscape theme and I think he represented the elements quite well. I think he grew to adore it here.

RGM: After seventeen years on Monhegan, Vermont was salvation.

AJ: He wanted to be alone but he was liked. His gruff exterior was a persona. He really worked it. Did I tell you the day we met – it’s probably not publishable – but when he came here, somebody gave him a place to live up in Dorset Hollow. It would have been after World War Two. We had a very dry summer and there was a fire up there. I remember my father went to it and the whole town was trying to fight the fire. But after that Jay Connaway was always going around with a pack on his back and few knew who he was. A lot of people thought ‘who is this tramp up in the hollow?’ That was the appearance he presented. (Laughs) He probably set the fire! Some people referred to him as ‘poor Jay.’ (Laughs)

RGM: I’d not heard that story.

AJ: He’d kept himself very aloof. It wasn’t until Louise arrived from Monhegan that they became social and went out for dinner with artists.

RGM: I see a lot of emotion in his work. Intimacy is conveyed in his figures. I think the figures are about human connection, his connection to the viewer and the viewer’s to the landscape.

AJ: The way he placed the figures in the setting presents a tremendous amount of loneliness. He used the figure to translate the mood he was trying to create.

RGM: I have no hard evidence but Connaway may have studied Casper David Friedrich’s landscapes. He used a figurative device called the Rückenfigur, a German word for “back figure.” Prominent figures in that style have been in film noir and photography. In Connaway’s landscapes, the figure is anonymous, generally a silhouette.

AJ: I think, quite frankly, Winslow Homer did the same thing with his figures. I think Jay used the figure to create a deeper sense of the loneliness of the sea and the mountains.

RGM: There is similarity. Connaway's representation of the sea, to my eye, conveys more emotion. His figures are flat, painted with broad brushstrokes in a muted palette as opposed to Homer's use of color and detail. Connaway admired Homer but I think Connaway was expressing terror rather than beauty. He was injured at the start of the First World War and while recovering drew medical illustrations of patients for army doctors. He did a series of paintings depicting widows afterward. The motif is repeated throughout his career.

AJ: Jay came to Dorset by himself. I don't know what Louise was doing at that point. I had very few visits with Louise but one time she described the winters on Monhegan. The islanders did this progressive dinner thing to keep themselves going. And of course a drink in every place and a bit of food and that's how they survived up there. They were a very close-knit group on the island, those who wintered there. There were only a few of them.

RGM: Louise didn't come with him right away? I know he moved to Dorset in 1947. Bartlett Arkell left the Monhegan house to Connaway in his will and Jay sold it and later bought the house in North Rupert.

AJ: When Louise came, no one really knew about their daughter Leonebel until she finally appeared.

RGM: Leonebel was at Bennington College, likely the reason the Connaways chose to be close. Of course Robert McIntyre had a house in Dorset and had been a supporter. He exhibited with the Dorset Artists in 1927.

I wonder if we could talk about Southern Vermont Artists as an art colony. The collective was strong but it's never referred to as a bonafide colony of artists that attracted talent. I'd like to focus on some of the painters involved in the development of the group, yourself among them.

AJ: There is no one left. The only history is what's been printed up. I joined in 1948, a mere child.

RGM: How old were you?

AJ: Just twenty. Last summer when SVAC announced its sixty-fifth season, I realized I had exhibited in most of the exhibitions. I was blessed to know the artists. Wallace Fahnestock, for example, was so quiet and gentle. He



“Looking South from Pawlet” by Arthur Jones

was living up in the Hollow. And Herbert Myers was grand. I knew every one of them. They were actually all a part of my career. They all bothered to give me critiques and attention. Apparently they saw something in my work, even Jay. He was having a one-man show the same summer I was having mine; he was downstairs and I was upstairs. For some reason he came up to look at my show while I was getting it arranged. He didn't say anything until he was ready to go out the door and then said, “I like that one.” Well, I couldn't see which one he was referring to – and it was very rare for Jay to make a comment. I never found out which one he liked!

RGM: Louise referred to him as monosyllabic. I'd like to know more about your formative years and influences.

AJ: I was born in South Dorset. I've lived my whole life in Dorset, except for two years in the service on the West Coast, but I never went overseas. At first, painting was a hobby and that's all it was going to be. Jay taught classes at SVAC but that one comment was all I got from him. At first I painted with a watercolor set and didn't tell anybody, but then Ada Davis, the daughter of artist John Lillie, discovered what I was up to and she asked if I wouldn't like lessons. So I painted with her in her room. We finally got outside to paint just once from nature – we were always up in her little

studio – but I always liked to start with small paintings. I never met John Lillie; he had died before I went there but she had all his paintings and was trying to sell them. Some people came to see her father’s paintings and I had one of my little paintings on the floor and I was off somewhere probably in my gardening work but no one could find me. The couple wanted the painting and Ada called my mother but she didn’t know where I was. Then Ada commented, “I’m going to sell it because he’ll be telling this story the rest of his life.” And of course, I have. So I sold my first painting for five dollars and it was amazing to me that I could sell it.

Jim Ashley and Dean Fausett both critiqued my work so I had probably had, in retrospect, as much [training] as if I’d gone to the Arts Students League because these artists provided feedback.

I learned from other artists. I would go out on a bicycle and clutch my materials in my arms and basket. Harriet de Sanchez had a great big touring car and knew several patrons. She asked one day if I wouldn’t like to go out painting with her. Of course I was ecstatic. We decided a bend in the river would be a good site to paint so she unloaded me and then announced she would be back to pick me up. She’d ride around for days to find the spot where she decided to paint. I did do a nice painting that day and she gave feedback.

RGM: You’ve been referred to as a self-taught artist, yet you had instruction through direct tutelage similar to students attending art school.

AJ: I’m self-taught in a way. I would look at paintings and say I can’t do that but as years went on I began to acquire technique. Jim Ashley offered great critiques. All my miniatures were selling quite well. They started at \$5 and in time reached \$100. I told Jim my little paintings were selling very well and my large work wasn’t selling. And he said, “Arthur, your mistakes don’t show in your small paintings.” That was the best critique. As a result I began to concentrate on the larger work because I saw I hadn’t achieved the same quality in them. Isn’t that a great critique?

RGM: Insightful but stinging.

AJ: He couldn’t have said it better. And of course, when I would tell my friends, they would say, well, I would never let him get away with that remark. But I thought he was so right and I would not have noticed otherwise. Harriet de Sanchez looked at a painting and said, “You need to push this back and pull this forward and I was thinking, but I don’t know what she means. But then maybe months would go by and I would do

another painting and I'd think, there it is.

RGM: Were you the youngest member of SVA?

AJ: I was. Once I joined, I was a go-fer and I hung all the shows. Around 1955 the person who was supposed to be jurying didn't show up. I was carrying pictures in and Clifford Ashley said, "You'll have to drop the paintings because you have to be one of the jurors." I was absolutely flabbergasted because you're not supposed to know the identity of the artists you're jurying. They don't tell you the names. But I had been carrying the artists' work in for five years and my eyes would crawl over these paintings to study what they were doing so of course I knew every piece coming before me.

If I had been born anywhere else, this all would have been fatal. This era was the place to paint. My father encouraged me. He was a farmer. I wanted nothing to do with farming. I painted little red barns in winter and I made money and renovated this barn and I'm living in it. I've been very lucky. I never sought a gallery for representation. The Arts Center gave me the exposure I needed.

RGM: But other galleries represented you.



"Winter Vista" by Arthur Jones

AJ: My first break was when Alison Leiberman from the Woodstock Gallery came to the Arts Center. She bought one of my paintings and road-tested it and sold it right away and then I sold through her for 25 years. And then Serena Merck from Merck Foundation was a good friend of the woman I worked for and she bought one of my paintings. She invited Mrs. Payson from Long Island to be a guest one summer. I was showing at the Dorset Theatre and she attended and she wanted to show me on Long Island. She helped artists by showing their work and her cut went to charity. From there, I showed in Wilmington, Delaware. There was another Vermont couple that wintered in Palm Beach and she had a very narrow gallery of miniatures hung from floor to ceiling. She contacted me and I sent her paintings and we were off and running. In 1968 we did a one-man show and I took some larger pieces down. The gallery put me up in a hotel and I then moved into the maid's room. I was in Palm Beach for two weeks and while I was there the first painting sold to people that had an estate in Warm Springs. They asked if I did commissions and I didn't have airfare home so I said yes to everything! I had my own cottage and a jeep. I think I was back and forth to Warm Springs for maybe three or four years doing paintings for them.

In the '60s I taught art at SVAC for two years and found it takes too much of your time so I stopped. Jay was director of the art school. Most of the artists taught classes. Then Jay found he didn't want to teach there and he took the whole gang to his place and I made up my mind I wouldn't teach either but after two more years I started teaching again. I had a fabulous group of ten women for over ten years.

Then in 1975, SVAC asked me if I would be the director pro tem. There was an upset between directors but within twenty four hours I knew I wasn't a born administrator. I didn't show my work the summer I was the director. A couple came in and I sold them a Gene Pelham and quite a few others. The couple knew quite a few people in town and was astounded when they discovered I was an artist. They came back the next year, furious that I had not told them so I offered to bring them to my studio. As director, I wasn't there to tap my work.

RGM: When the estate was purchased Yester House was transformed into galleries. Where did they hold classes?

AJ: There's a garage at the top of the hill where they keep tools. There was a small studio in the attic where we taught. Students had to go to Yester House for a bathroom and the reason I say this was because the first year I taught, I was scared to death. I found out I didn't have a lot of technical

terms. I had one private student that wasn't happy because I didn't know anything and she wished she hadn't spent her money. But within a few classes, I really began to tear them apart. I got the hang of teaching.

RGM: What other initiatives came out of the new facility?

AJ: A lot of the things we started that were so successful have been dropped along the way. But we had very successful events when people were still spending. We did a fifty-fifty auction so that the artist got fifty percent and the Arts Center got fifty. And one day, my little miniatures were going for \$300. And I knew this one couple that had been collecting them for some time and they ran it up to \$1,200 and everyone was gaga. But first of all, they knew they wanted it and second of all they knew it was an Arts Center benefit.

RGM: There were local press and reviews by New York art critics such as Royal Cortissoz and that summoned new clientele I'm sure. The local arts community had all the ingredients of an emerging art colony. Why do you suppose the local culture didn't align in character like that of Rockport, Old Lyme, or the Ogunquit Art Colony and others?

AJ: The difference is that Rockport and the other places encouraged people to come to them. Whereas, the Arts Center began as a small group of artists who needed a place to exhibit their work. They started showing at the Equinox and then the high school gymnasium but the organization only included artists within a fifty-mile radius. It was strictly local and limited. What we did get out of that was to have the fall show open to artists far away, but there was exclusion. The group wasn't encouraging wide membership. But I came along and of course others joined but you really had to be in this area to be part of Southern Vermont Artists. So it wasn't quite the same as Rockport. That would be my interpretation. Currently, if you're not a local member, you pay to exhibit.

RGM: Let's talk about your favorite artists.

AJ: Ogden Pleissner was the most generous in his critiques and involvement. When I was a gardener, I painted on weekends and nights and started having shows at the Arts Center. The woman I worked for was having a cocktail party and asked if I would tend bar. Ogden was one of the guests along with Herb Meyer and many others. I was just a bartender but Ogden came over to chat and the very next day, we were both opening

shows at the Arts Center. Ogden said, “Are you ready for your show?” I said, “Yes,” but he really had no reason to speak to me. It was wonderful that he took an interest. He had a big studio easel he didn’t want and offered it to me, but I never went to get it, and one day he said, “I’m going to do away with the easel.” And I said, “I’ll be right there!” So I’m painting on an Ogden Pleissner easel, which is extraordinary.

RGM: Robert Deeley once told me that Ogden Pleissner thought no one could paint the figure as well as Connaway. And meanwhile, according to Robert, Connaway admired Pleissner’s active figures in the landscape.

AJ: I “crawl” into these paintings of all these artists and Ogden looked to me to be as detailed as the rest of us but he really wasn’t. His figures take you where he wants you to look and the rest of the painting does what it has to do. I was always intrigued with that ability.

RGM: Speaking of detailed, did you interact with Lucioni?

AJ: I adored Lucioni. One year I overheard someone ask a patron if he collected my work and he said no because I was copying Lucioni. I wasn’t, but I painted details. If you put our work together you can see differences but we painted the same Vermont settings after all. He took much longer on his paintings than I would.

RGM: I admire the etchings. He was a master draftsman.

AJ: Yes, and the sad thing to me is the still lifes are so perfect but they’re almost going begging now. They’re not in vogue as much as they were. We go through those cycles every once in a while. Buyers are leaning toward Impressionism again. Lucioni was tight and detailed but, oh, I loved his work.

RGM: I was at the Denver Art Museum recently and came upon a Lucioni still life in the American wing. It was wonderful to see a Vermont classic on display in the West.

AJ: Luigi did a portrait of the opera singer Gladys Swarthout. She’s wearing a fur stole and, oh, you could feel the tips of the fur. And his velvet! I made a comment and others agreed with me; in the latter years – it happens to all of us – Luigi had lost his velvet. There’s a certain touch to make it right and it wasn’t quite there and I could sense the change because I had studied his

work for years. His “Self-Portrait” in the chair is probably the most effective piece of his I’ve seen.

RGM: It’s interesting that during World War One and the Great Depression Vermont artists seemed to do okay. In contrast to what was going on around the nation, patrons attended the annual exhibitions.

AJ: Other than World War Two when the exhibitions were suspended, the artists sold their work.

RGM: And this is a rather tucked-away pocket not easily accessed in that era. Transportation was limited before the Eisenhower-era highway system. Despite the sensation of Modern Art and the momentous ascent of the Abstract Expressionist movement at mid-century, landscape art remained relevant. Can you comment on the nexus of nature and culture and traditional and avant-garde art in Manchester?

AJ: Interest in the landscape and the area is what built the Arts Center. Local people would rent rooms to artists who would come up from the city to paint. Then others came and would stay at the inns and sit on the porches and enjoy the view and camaraderie. Patrons came here to experience Vermont and take it home and of course to mingle with artists. The art sales were strong. They came checkbooks in hand from far and wide to buy. The first little painting I sold in the gymnasium was to two women from Ohio. The locals would say, ‘Well, it’s your family buying your paintings,’ but I was pleased to say no this is a lady from Ohio!

Part of the current problem of the Arts Center is that we don’t have the same strength in the current artists. A lot of them are just getting into it. The local artists who started the organization like Bea and David Humphreys and Harriet de Sanchez (her nickname was “Tarzan,” by the way!); they were trained artists and had a following. Also, the Meyers, they were an entire painting family that included Reginald Marsh, an artist of fame. Reginald married Felicia Meyer. The family got him up here for one summer but he couldn’t stand it! He was all about Coney Island and city streets.

RGM: I read that he didn’t like it here. The fortunate thing is that he was here. His presence, however brief, was influential. The New York critics cited the work of established artists and local talent.

AJ: We were able to show Reginald’s work through the influence of Felicia.

But the founders gave us the nucleus that established decades of exhibitions. Those artists are gone now. They were strong enough to start something like the Arts Center. It's gotten to be a whole new group coming but I would say what made it work then were the people discovering the artists. Because of course John Lillie, a local, found his fame through Robert McIntyre who exhibited his work at Macbeth. When the Metropolitan Museum bought a painting by John Lillie that was a big deal for local artists. A lot of the artists wintered in New York and came here in the summer so that gave the area its particular character. Personally I don't think these artists cared about being an art colony; they just wanted a place to show their work. They wanted to paint and exhibit.

You speak of the landscapes, but as we opened up the Arts Center in the '50s, we began to get abstract paintings, but the staff wasn't quite sure what to do with them. Stewart Bennett from the Manchester Journal used to review the shows. One year we put the modern work all in one gallery; we didn't mix it, which we eventually learned to do but when Stewart reviewed the shows he referred to the abstract gallery as the room of horrors! You can imagine how the artists felt. But after that, we realized that if you hung the abstracts with the landscapes, one style helped the other.

RGM: You paint a number of solitary barns.

AJ: Several artists in my age group, who showed in the Manchester and Woodstock galleries, pictured farm scenes as symbolic of the region's agricultural lifestyle. They were the subjects to paint. But in this span of fifty years those farmsteads have disintegrated. And that's what makes them collectible. That painting over there (AJ points) is the barn encircled by Equinox Nursery on Route 7A. The barn is a now the florist shop but to look at the painting, you'd never recognize it. So much has changed. And that one there (Arthur points) with the yellow barn, that's in Pawlet. This (points again) was a group of barns in Pawlet that no longer exist. That barn (points) is on the West Road but most of the sheds are gone. That's the reason the artists are significant. They came here to paint these scenes and the experience is different now and so are the artists. I did a talk for the Rotary one night and they wanted to know how I survived as a painter and I quickly came up with the three B's: bridges, birches, and barns.

Winter itself is a subject. Winter offers more color than you'd think. The summer is pervasive green but winter has a distinct palette and the landscape is changing constantly. The older structures had real quality to

them. Now they're too expensive to build and they're erecting domes with cheaper materials and the farms and barns just don't exist anymore. Luckily, I made some money on little red barns in winter.

RGM: Lucioni referred to the rural barns as "Vermont Castles." They're vestiges of the past but indicative of the agrarian lifestyle and the area's artistic and cultural history.

AJ: That lifestyle was in decay and I wanted to preserve it. I wanted to save this old barn to put my students in it. Once I put in electricity and bathrooms, I made it my home. But the unpreserved barns eventually fall inward because in time the backbone shatters, they're leaking, and then the roof falls in. It's heartbreaking to see them self-destruct.

RGM: There's a somber beauty about them.

AJ: I've always painted the more lonely aspect of barns. When you speak of the figure, I usually don't like a figure in the scene because it's static but as you say, Jay's worked but I never included figures or cows. My farm scenes are barren to emphasize change. A fellow asked if I would include a cow in one of my scenes and I finished the painting and mailed it. When he got it, he called me because I outsmarted him – the title of the painting was "Cows Behind the Barn." (Laughter) And he loved it.

RGM: Your barns suggest activity transpired.

AJ: I'd rather paint an old truck or an old rake than human activity. It's very rare but I have maybe three winter scenes with a rabbit in the composition. I did a big winter scene with a squirrel, a rabbit, and a fox. But those are rare. I did a series of found objects and one with a dead rabbit and a squirrel, and one with a dead deer. Those were early paintings.

RGM: How did you address the problems in the larger paintings?

AJ: I wasn't spending enough time on them. I would decide it was finished and it wasn't. Artists think that by a certain point you have it figured out. But you never do. I will work upstairs and the light changes. I come down and I stare at it all night and it is so wrong. The layman may not understand that sometimes you spend a whole day painting and the next day you scrape it all out.

I worked past my limitations. Ada Davis was very reassuring. Sometimes

you understand what an instructor says to you after the fact, like what Harriet de Sanchez meant; so I did absorb all of their advice. I was in awe of Luigi but I seldom spoke with him even though I would study his work, his greens especially. I wouldn't steal his greens or other aspects because I didn't really agree with everything he did. That's a saving grace if you are going to be self-taught. It's not good to copy.

RGM: But it pays to be influenced.

AJ: Virginia Webb studied with Jay and painted like Jay. After she studied at the Arts Students League she came home and said, "Arthur, I had a wonderful time and I painted all day and I drew all night and I'm home and I can't do anything." I said, "Virginia, let it gel. You have to think about it." I, who never went to New York, was giving her a pep talk!

My neighbor Wallace Fahnestock owned a house at the foot of Nichols Hill. There was a family of Kinneys who lived at the top of the hill. It used to be Kinney Hill; then it was changed to Nichols Hill. Eventually, they'll have to call it Jones Boulevard but they haven't gotten to that!

RGM: They had better.

AJ: Wallace was the most kind, gentle man. His window faced Nichols Hill. He'd sit in the studio doing what we all do – staring at a canvas. Well, old man Kinney came down and knocked on the door and said, "Well, I seen ya' sittin' there. Thought I'd come in and visit." It was the epitome of naiveté. Poor Wallace was working, but poor Mr. Kinney didn't know this. And Wallace just endured this visit. You spend a lot of time mulling a painting over in your head.

RGM: Your larger scale work is on canvas and the miniatures are on board.

AJ: Once I moved into the barn I worked on larger canvases. I primarily did miniatures because they were the bread and butter. The early miniatures are on Masonite and the hard surface allowed for fine detail. I don't have eyes that can cope with all that detail now so I'm now working on canvas and I'm much more loose with that.

RGM: Which artists have you collected?

AJ: Only because you're a fellow writer and artist, I'll let you into the boudoir. I bought at various artists' studios. This is a Brian Sweetland in

pencil. That's a Natalee Everett. She recently died. Carolyn Droge did these cows. Dean Fausett did this Grandma Moses portrait. And this is Nicolas Comito. And here's an early Herb Meyer. That's a little Luigi over there.

RGM: Caught my eye from across the room.

AJ: The Arts Center had what they called a Little Collectors Gallery and they sold these for twenty-five bucks but I found that painting in 1980 at Arlington's Ice Pond Antiques and it was over \$300 and oh, I wanted it so badly. A friend said I'd regret it so I bought it. It's worth thousands now. I have about eleven Lucioni etchings.

RGM: Laurance Rockefeller collected your paintings. They're on display in the estate house at the Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller.

AJ: I took a friend recently. We walked past several Hudson River School paintings and then there were mine in the dressing room where Mary had hung them. She bought them at Woodstock Gallery. I had one-man shows every two years.

For one show I was encouraged not to come to the opening early, to make an entrance, so to speak. I found a cheap motel and later went to the Woodstock Inn for a martini, walked down to the gallery like I was staying at the Inn, and by then they had dots all over the sold paintings. I was there another day and chatting with a lovely woman for some time, suddenly she said, "Oh, I think Larry is going to buy another one." I didn't know I talking with Mrs. Rockefeller! If you're in a museum, what's left?

RGM: I'd like to see you represented at the Bennington Museum.

AJ: One of your colleagues has put a bug in their ear.

RGM: You speak fondly of the old guard.

AJ: Yester House was a warm wonderful place and we would roar with laughter on the nights of the openings, and it's gone because nobody knows anybody any more and the wealth that supported the Arts Center is gone. I didn't have a patron like Connaway but the people who collected me were enthused about my work. I got by per painting. The pre-eminent artists helped the emerging artists. If I were twenty years younger I might get involved but I'm not twenty years younger. And I don't know if I'll give any further interviews either. (Chuckles.) But I did want to talk with you.

RGM: Twenty years ago, the administration was gathering support to build the Wilson Museum at SVAC to house the permanent collection. No one could have anticipated the recession of '08 or the numbers of supporters who have passed on. What suggestions would you offer?

AJ: I would suggest better light bulbs. The new variety don't light the paintings well. They could close the facility in winter like we did in the old days. Or don't turn on the lights until visitors come in. The Arts Center was a lucrative enterprise in its heyday. Art can be a gamble in this day and age.

RGM: Do you still paint?

AJ: Not quite every day but I'm in the studio every day. The eyes are rebelling. Early in my career I thought that if I got a painting in one living room, I would eventually find my way to another living room. The man who washes my windows said that everywhere he goes he sees one of my paintings.

RGM: What advice would you give to an emerging artist?

AJ: Be open-minded. The women I taught improved, and I had two nine-year-olds and two teenagers. Some of the women began to think they knew it all but that attitude stunts your growth. By the time I turned forty, I'd done a lot of soul searching. My one-man shows were selling out and I didn't have a bona-fide studio at that time but I gave up my job, started painting full time, and doubled my income. It was the right era. It's not the time for young artists to take that risk now. The art market has slowed. But even if I don't sell another painting, I'll still be up in the studio every day. □

William Boutelle's Diary of the Bennington Expedition

Michael P. Gabriel, Ph.D.

Originally published in the December 24, 1890, edition of the *Leominster [Massachusetts] Enterprise*, this soldier's diary contains a virtually unknown account of the Battle of Bennington, August 16, 1777, that has not appeared in print since. The diary's author, William Boutelle, was a twenty-two-year-old Leominster native who served as a private in Captain John Joslin's company of Colonel Job Cushing's Sixth Worcester County militia regiment.¹ From the newspaper's introduction, it appears that Boutelle recorded a brief day-to-day account of his service on loose paper that he kept folded in his pocket, and later he used these notes to write the longer, more detailed account. Collectively the two documents cover events in the days prior to the battle, the fight with Lieutenant Colonel Heinrich Breyman's relief column, and Boutelle's service during the following two weeks.

The Boutelle diary is valuable for several reasons besides not having been published for more than one hundred twenty-five years. It offers a perspective of the Worcester County, Massachusetts, soldiers who fought at Bennington. The participation of Massachusetts in the battle is sometimes overshadowed by Vermonters and John Stark's New Hampshire regiments. When writers do mention Bay State troops, they usually focus on Parson Thomas Allen and the Berkshire County contingent.

Boutelle's diary reminds readers of Worcester County's role in the engagement. He traces the route that the Worcester men took to the battle, where they stayed on the march, and how long it took. It also shows us again how quickly soldiers of all ages want to return to their homes and families, no matter how devoted they are to a particular cause. Boutelle's company took ten days to march 117 miles to Bennington, yet he covered 106 miles in half that time after receiving his discharge.

Boutelle offers both new and familiar perspectives of the battle, especially the second phase, which began around 4:15 p.m. when Breyman's 664-man relief force reached the area.² Unlike other sources, the diary reveals that Stark did not commit his entire force into the elaborate plan he used to overwhelm Lieutenant Colonel Friedrich Baum's soldiers earlier in the day. Instead, Stark left some troops in reserve, such as Boutelle's company, which had arrived at Bennington on August 11. When Boutelle finally arrived on the field, the survivors of Baum's shattered

command were in full retreat. The diary reveals the Americans' surprise at finding that Breymann's force had arrived and deployed for battle. The Massachusetts militiaman believed that he was pursuing a defeated foe, little expecting to come upon "a formidable enemy" supported by two six-pounder artillery pieces.

Other first-hand accounts, such as Thomas Mellen's, cover this sharp two-hour contest, which most veterans of the battle – including Boutelle – remembered as the longest and fiercest action of the day. Boutelle vividly describes the "grape shot and leaden balls as thick as hail whizzing about our ears." Like "Reminiscences of Colonel Seth Warner" and fellow Massachusetts militiaman David Holbrook's pension deposition, he recounts how the German barrage wounded Major John Rand's horse and forced his company to retreat, leaving one of his friends dead. Breymann nearly succeeded in undoing much of what Stark had achieved earlier that day, but the American general rallied his troops, as Boutelle relates, and eventually forced the Germans to retreat into the falling darkness.³

The Boutelle diary also reveals what occurred near Bennington in the days following the engagement. Stark suspected that the British might again attempt to capture the provisions at Bennington and liberate the prisoners. Therefore he ordered Boutelle's detachment to serve as a forward outpost at the mill at Sancoick, where the Americans first encountered Baum on August 14. The Major Rensselaer whom Boutelle discusses is probably not the mill owner, Stephen Van Rensselaer, but instead his kinsman, Lieutenant Colonel John Van Rensselaer, who led some of the New Yorkers at the battle. Only thirteen years old in 1777, Stephen was far too young to hold the rank of major and command troops.⁴

Finally, Boutelle's journal offers insights into the day-to-day life of a Revolutionary-era soldier. Readers can imagine his sorrow at seeing one of his closest friends, Thomas Joslin,⁵ being killed, and then helping to carry him back to camp, build his coffin, and attend his funeral. Boutelle also records the mundane details of soldiering, such as indifferent food, battling "fleas . . . thick enough to eat us up alive," and an accidental shooting. Still, this routine activity was sharply punctuated by combat and the fear of a nighttime alarm. Overall, the diary offers a penetrating portrait of a young soldier during the Bennington operation.

Following his discharge, Boutelle served one more tour of duty during the Revolutionary War. He re-enlisted in October 1777 in Lieutenant Samuel Stickney's company of Colonel Abijah Stearns's Worcester County militia regiment. He then marched to General Horatio Gates's army near Saratoga, taking part in the final phase of the turning point of the American War for Independence.⁶ On October 28, 1779, he married Rachel Wood,

another Leominster resident, and the couple was blessed with ten children, most of whom survived to adulthood. In 1788, William and Rachel moved to Hancock, New Hampshire, and they established the farm where his descendant O. L. Boutelle discovered his diary nearly a century later. A deacon in the local Congregational Church, William Boutelle was also a supporter of the Federalist Party, and spent the rest of his life in Hancock, dying on July 1, 1835, at the age of eighty.⁷

Charles Filkins, the director of the Louis Miller Museum in Hoosick Falls, New York, generously brought this rare diary to the attention of Tyler Resch, the co-editor of this journal, in the form of the newspaper article. Thanks go to Charles for expanding our knowledge of the American Revolutionary War and the Battle of Bennington by allowing the *Walloomsack Review* to publish this unknown treasure.

A Note of the Editing of the Diary

Because the copy of the *Leominster Enterprise* story and diary that Charles provided were typed transcriptions, not the original documents, it was impossible to determine original spellings. The author of this article corrected all typographical errors and standardized punctuation and capitalization to make the diary easier to read. He only left town names in original spelling to give the readers a flavor of the variations of them. Similarly, the current names of towns are provided in brackets, if they have changed since 1777.

One final note involves the spelling of Boutelle. Although the diary and William's descendant, the Congressman, spelled the name "Boutelle," other sources use "Boutell." The latter is the way that William's name appears in *Massachusetts Soldiers and Sailors*. Similarly, *The History of Hancock, New Hampshire* contains a section titled "Boutelle" yet includes a copy of William's signature, which lacks the "e" at the end of his name. The author of this article selected to use "Boutelle" because it is most common.

A REVOLUTIONARY RELIC

Quoting from the *Leominster Enterprise* December 24, 1890: "Congressman [Charles A.] Boutelle⁸ recently received from his kinsman, Mr. O. L. Boutelle of Hancock, who is now residing upon the homestead farm of his grandfather, William Boutelle, the great-grandfather of the Representative of the Fourth Maine District, a very interesting relic in the form of a diary written by their ancestor at the time of his service under General John Stark at the Battle of Bennington, Vermont, which took

place August 16, 1777, when the British troops under Colonels Baum and Breymann were defeated by the patriot forces under General Stark and Colonel [Seth] Warner. William Boutelle, a young man residing at Leominster, Massachusetts, promptly enlisted, and the diary which is yellow with age, and from which some portions have been lost, furnishes an interesting record of the experiences of a soldier of the American Revolution.”

BATTLE OF BENNINGTON

War Diary of William Boutelle of Leominster, 1777.

The enemy had taken a very advantageous situation, having a wood in their rear, and on their left, and a very smooth and level field in their front with two field pieces.

Our party not having been in any engagement this day we were fresh and very zealous to overtake the retreating foe, little thinking of meeting a formidable enemy all ready to engage in battle; we with hasty steps advanced on rising ground and were on a sudden in plain view of the enemy: our officers, however being very zealous, not thinking a formidable enemy so near, marched on within about eighteen rods⁹ of their field pieces, when they poured in upon us cannon ball, grape shot and leaden balls as thick as hail whizzing about our ears; it was a critical moment with us – our major [John Rand] had his horse shot through the head and cut off the head stall of its bridle and a cannon ball cut a lane through his horse's mane. We were soon ordered to retreat, leaving one of our company dead on the field. We retreated about thirty or forty rods into the valley where we were [sheltered] from the fire of the enemy and then waited for reinforcements.

General Stark soon came up with considerable reinforcements and field pieces (which they had taken in the first engagement.) When General Stark arrived at the edge of the field he cried out “Fire on, my brave men, we shall soon have them,” and fired off the field pieces, and our men huzzaed and rushed forward; and the enemy fled in confusion and disorder, leaving their field pieces with their horses dead in their harness; as our fire was aimed chiefly where the field pieces were, the ground was almost covered with the dead bodies of the enemy. This was a warm contest, the most so of any that day – the enemy were made to fall or flee before us.

Praised be the name of God for his blessing upon us and goodness to us in so remarkable a manner preserving our lives and giving us the victory.

Night came on and [we] were forbidden to pursue the enemy. We

continued to our quarters bringing with us the body of Thomas Joslin who was killed in the first onset; he was tied up in a sheet and swung on a pole, and two of us had to carry him at a time and changed often.

It was four or five miles to our quarters. We arrived almost exhausted [it] having been a very hot day and we not having but little refreshments.

17th. Sabbath. Helped make a coffin for Joslin and went to his funeral. The deceased was conveyed in a wagon to Bennington and decently buried in their burying ground, the minister of the town attended and went to pray at the grave; the whole company followed the corpse to the grave as mourners. I felt peculiarly interested as the deceased had been one of my intimate friend and possessed a very amiable disposition.

O that I might have grace suitably to notice this and all the dispensations of God's providences whether merciful or afflictive and O that they might work together for my good as God has said they shall do for all those that love him.

18th. Monday. This day I wrote a long letter to my friends at home giving an account of the events of the late battle; while I was at the barn writing my letter an accident happened. A part of our company was called on to go and scout the battle ground, to pick up and bury the dead, and to search for the wounded and any of the enemy that might be strolling the wood. While this party had loaded their pieces and were just faced round in order to move, one of the soldier's gun accidentally went off. The ball went through the side of the house into the chamber where one of our soldiers lay on a bed. The ball entered his belly but did not pierce his innards but skirted along near the skin 15 or 16 inches and lodged against the skin and was very easily extracted. The ball was flattened considerably by passing through the wood.

19th and 20th. Stayed where we had been stationed, about three miles west of Bennington meeting house. Nothing remarkable happened.

21th. Thursday. Set out to go to guard the mills at St. Cook [Sancoick] and went one mile and stayed there that day and next day and night waiting for reinforcements and provisions. The fleas were thick enough to eat us up alive. One of these nights I was on guard, and the other I was obliged to defend myself against the encroachments of the fleas which I thought was rather worse than to stand sentry.

23rd. Being reinforced with men and provisions we marched about six miles to Major Ranclur's [Van Rensselaer's] mills: here was a large mansion house. The lower story was cheaply furnished, chamber floors laid, several barns and an excellent set of mills for grinding and bolting wheat.

The major was [a] very agreeable, pleasant man. He had several fields

of corn near his building, just fit to roast. He said we might make us of all the corn near the building, only requiring us not to injure his corn fields down the intervale near the river.

He we had a pleasant situation and nothing to do only to guard ourselves and the public. We were several miles advanced of any of our army, there was nothing to hinder the enemy from coming right upon our outposts; we used to double our sentries on the right. Here was nothing very disagreeable only we had no milk or sarce, the cattle we all drove off before the enemy. Our provisions were fresh beef and bread.

The first night after we arrived at Major R's we were ordered to have our arms placed in such a situation as we might be able to seize them in a moment in the dark if we should be alarmed – about ten o'clock when we were all sound asleep we were alarmed. We sprang up and put on our accoutrements and seizing our guns, were on the parade in an instant; they had got some story flying but did not know what was the matter.

[Van Rensselaer] said if ten men would volunteer themselves he would go with them up the road and see what they could discover – we were all kept under arms on the parade till they came back. It was cold and chilly standing out doors in the dark and nothing to do – we were not allowed to make any noise and speaking a loud word was against rules. Some of the soldiers began to be cross – after a while M. R. [Major Rensselaer] and his men came back without discovering any signs of enemy – the story was fabricated by some evil minded person.

(The following records were made in a little diary formed of sheets of folded paper, which had evidently been carried in the pocket.)

William Boutell's Journal, 1777

August 2, 1777 – Then I began my march from Leominster to Bennington and went 4 miles to Kendall Boutell's of Fitchburg.

3rd day went 14 miles to Templeton.

4th day went 17 miles to New Salem.

5th day went 5 miles to Shutesbury.

6th day went 19 miles to North Hampton.

7th day went 15 miles to Witherington [Worthington].

8th day went 9 miles to Gageborough [Windsor].

9th day went 14 miles to East Hoosac [Adams].

10th day went 15 miles to Pownalborough [Pownal].

11th day went to 5 miles to Bennington.

12th day stayed there.

13th day. Set out to join the army at Stillwater and marched about 2 miles and then had orders to return back and so spent the day.

14th day. Went to meet the enemy and marched about 4 miles and came to breastwork when it began to rain; we were ordered to march forward about one mile for an advance picket and kept a patrol of 12 men upon the move down to the river about one mile and back again likewise a number of sentinels.

15th day. About noon our picket advanced toward the enemy near the bridge, we left about half and the rest advanced over the bridge to the enemy's breastwork – the enemy fired their field pieces and some small arms; we likewise fired the number of small arms. We received no hurts; we retreated back to the main body bringing off all the plunder we could.

16th day. We marched down near the bridge and halted, two parties marched off one to the right and the other to the left. A little after noon they began to fire on both sides. Our party stayed this side of the bridge till after the middle of the afternoon and then marched over the bridge and through the woods and came round to the other bridge by the enemy's breastwork. They were retreated from their ground and we followed them till we came up with them, and we had a smart engagement, till after sunset, and then we came off, taking their field pieces.

We brought off Thomas Joslin who was killed in the engagement.

We came off victoriously – our enemies were made to flee before us.

Praised be the name of God for his blessing upon us and goodness to us in preserving our lives and giving us the victory.

17th – Sabbath Day. I went and helped to make a coffin for Thomas Joslin, Dec's'd, and went to the funeral – O that I might have grace to take notice of all God's providences whether merciful or afflictive, and O that they might work together for my good, as God has said they shall do for the good of those that love him.

18th, 19th, and 20th days. Stayed where we had been

stationed about 3 miles beyond the meeting house.

21st. Day. Set out to go and guard the mills at St. Cook [Sancoick] and went one mile and stayed that night and the next day.

23rd. Day. Went 6 miles to the mills at St. Cook [Sancoick].

24th. Day, 25th, 26th, 27th, 28th, 29th and 30th stayed there.

31st. Set out to go home and went 13 miles.

Sept. 1st. Went 25 miles to Merryfield.

2nd Day. Went 18 miles to Samuel Pools of Shelburn [Shelburne].

3d. Day. Went 23 miles to Cook's of Shutesbury.

4th day Went 27 miles to Jackson's of Westminster.

The names of the towns that we marched through and taverns.

Fitchburg, Kendall Boutell

Westminster, Holden

Templeton, Wright

Petersham, Winslow

New Salem, Cook

Shutesbury, Caday

Amherst, Rues

Hadley, Goomans

North Hampton, Edwards

Chesterfield, Pierce Merrick

Witherington, Eager

Partridgefield [Peru], Trusdal

Gageborough, Clarke

New Providence [Cheshire], Stafford

East Hoosac, Jewel

Williamstown, Colton

Pownalborough, Wheeler

Bennington, Billings

St. Cook, Ranclurse [Van Rensselaer] □



Private Boutelle used some of the archaic names for the Berkshire County towns he traveled through on his way home. This map, from the pictorial history Berkshire: The First Three Hundred Years, depicts those towns as they existed in the late 1700s.

Courtesy of the Berkshire Eagle

- 1 Secretary of the Commonwealth, Massachusetts *Soldiers and Sailors of the Revolutionary War* (Boston, MA: Wright & Potter Printing Co., 1901), 2: 314.
- 2 For an overview of the first and second phases of the battle see Michael P. Gabriel, *The Battle of Bennington: Soldiers and Civilians* (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2012), 15-23; Richard M. Ketchum, *Saratoga: Turning Point of America's Revolutionary War* (New York: Henry Holt, 1997) 294-328. For Breymann's strength, see Helga Doblin, translator, *The Specht Journal: A Military Journal of the Burgoyne Campaign* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1995), 135.
- 3 For Mellen's statement, see John Hayward, *A Gazetteer of Vermont, Containing Descriptions of all the Counties, Towns, and Districts in the State, and of its Principal Mountains, Rivers, Waterfalls, Harbors, Lakes, and Curious Places, to Which are Added Statistical Accounts of Its Agriculture, Commerce, and Manufactures with a Great Variety of Other Useful Information* (Boston, MA: Tappan, Whittemore and Mason, 1849), 213-15; D.S. Boardman, "Reminiscences of Colonel Seth Warner," *The Historical Magazine and Notes and Queries Concerning the Antiquities, History, and Biography of America*, 4 (July 1860): 200-202; Holbrook's deposition is found in, John C. Dann, John C. ed., *The Revolution Remembered: Eyewitness Accounts of the War for Independence* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 87-91.
- 4 In her masterful translation of the Julius Wasmus's diary, Helga Doblin mistakenly identifies Stephen Van Rensselaer as being an officer at the battle. See *An Eyewitness Account of the American Revolution and New England Life: The Journal of J.F. Wasmus, German Company Surgeon, 1776-1783* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1990), 69, 74, 100 n42.
- 5 Thomas Joslin was a private in Boutelle's company, who had served at least one previous tour of duty at Dorchester Heights, Massachusetts, in 1776. If he was related to the company commander, John Joslin, remains uncertain, but it seems likely. *Massachusetts Soldiers*, 8: 1003.
- 6 *Massachusetts Soldiers*, 2: 314.
- 7 William Willis Hayward, *The History of Hancock, New Hampshire, 1764-1889* (Lowell, MA: Vox Populi Press, 1889), 859-860.
- 8 United States House of Representatives, "Boutelle, Charles Addison," accessed January 22, 2016, <http://history.house.gov/People/Detail/9655>.
- 9 One rod equals 16.5 feet.



“The Quack Doctor” by artist T. W. Wood in 1879 depicts a scene in downtown Montpelier and includes a couple of artistic jokes. Under the charlatan’s cart strides a line of ducks quacking loudly; and partly obscured by the wagon wheel is the “doctor’s” name, “I.M. Cheat” (ham).

Courtesy of the T. W. Wood Gallery, Montpelier, Vermont

NINETEENTH-CENTURY VERMONT MEDICINE

With no major federal oversight of health issues in the nineteenth century, each state had its own laws regulating medicine, or no laws at all. In this article Gary Shattuck, a retired assistant U.S. attorney, makes the case that the situation in Vermont was somewhat different than in surrounding states, and that opiates, perfectly legal and unregulated, were commonly used by a sizeable percentage of the population. The legislature did not pass the first drug laws dealing with opium until 1915, just a century ago. --ed.

Gary G. Shattuck

Vermont’s health-care system in the nineteenth century was fraught with hesitation, ignorance, greed, malice, combativeness, and the unnecessary infliction of pain. If that was not dire enough, the

situation was rendered even more unnerving by the ready and uninhibited access to strong narcotics in the form of opium and morphine, which resulted in widespread addiction that reached obscene proportions by the end of the century.¹

Other states also experienced their own travails with drugs, as a nationwide epidemic crested in the mid-1890s (opium importations increased three times faster than the population in the last half of the century), but it was the unique circumstances surrounding Vermont's experience that made it so singular.² In fact, the situation had deteriorated so badly that by the 1900s Vermont found itself touted as a destination for those in nearby states with somewhat stronger laws seeking easily obtained drugs; it was a situation that only began to diminish in 1915 upon the state legislature's implementation of egregiously delayed laws.

A cursory review of the development of Vermont's medical profession at the time provides little appreciation for the truly significant hurdles obstructing it on the path to modernity. Most standard treatments of the subject romantically describe frontier doctors, sparse in number, unselfishly saddling up their horses, or mounting onto their carriages, before heading off into dark hinterlands to provide care to an appreciative rural population. On its face, that much is true, but when various early records are closely examined, a wholly different, and surprising, perspective reveals itself, forcing a reconsideration of erroneous impressions.

To begin to understand the complexities involved, one must first acknowledge that Vermont's particular geographical characteristics, set apart from surrounding New England states with its many mountains and valleys, played an important role. From the beginning, urban-educated physicians rarely found reason to practice in the primitive conditions that the Green Mountains represented where, instead, a cadre of often uneducated practitioners made the rounds. Carrying their various remedies packed into their saddlebags, they traveled about using whatever innate personable abilities they possessed to persuade the inhabitants of their competency to allow them to treat them, their loved ones or, if the situation required, their sick or injured animals.

The early pharmacopeia they employed consisted of numerous

Quack

A *quack* is a fraudulent or ignorant pretender to medical knowledge. The word derives from the medieval Dutch *quacksalver*, a term for a person lacking medical knowledge who typically moves from town to town. *American Heritage Dictionary and Collins English Dictionary.*

compounds concocted from locally grown plants and those arriving in their raw state, such as the opium coming from Turkey and East India.³ While often of questionable purity and effectiveness, it hardly stopped their being administered in an unrestricted manner by an untrained hand, after which payment was expected regardless of outcome. Extant account books maintained by these practitioners reveal their repeated return trips in many following days to the same sick room, prescribing the same drugs, including potent opium administered in various forms, and ending with a notation of the debt incurred.⁴

Doctors were not the only ones providing drugs to the public. Anyone could simply walk into the local general store and order up any amount of a number of potent substances with no questions asked. Store owners vigorously advertised their wares, seeking the patronage of both doctors and the heads of households to come in and stock up on drugs. Descriptions of the conditions that customers encountered once they walked over to the drug side of the store suggest that it could be a filthy, odorous environment, attended by a clerk behind the counter who offered up his own diagnosis of their ailments while recommending drugs about which he was just as uninformed as the patient.⁵

Often the substances being sold and administered came in the form of a powder and could only be consumed by being dissolved in a liquid. Coincidentally, the early nineteenth century was also a time when Vermont's largely rural, farming population was wrestling with the challenges posed by rising rates of alcohol consumption. Many factors contributed to the



An 1885 advertisement for Mrs. Winslow's Soothing Syrup was produced by Meyer, Merckell & Ottmann in New York.

Courtesy of the U.S. National Library of Medicine

phenomenon, including the prevalent use of distillation to extract alcohol from fermenting apples or vegetable materials. Farmers who were fortunate enough to grow an abundance of crops, especially wheat, could turn it into potent whiskey and rye, so-called ardent spirits, in their many primitive stills.⁶

The ready availability of spirits then made it convenient for those taking their various medicines to mix them in and, in accordance with instructions from their doctors, set aside moments in the day to consume them. It was a practice that became known as “dram drinking,” and was acknowledged by doctors in the following decades, as well as repeatedly within the temperance movement, as one of the leading causes of alcoholism. Alcohol at morning, noon, and night, whether with medicine or without, consumed at home, in the local tavern, inn, or general store, in various community settings, including at church, the courtroom, and at militia trainings then became very much the norm.⁷

Treating those suffering from the excessive use of spirits, perhaps writhing in the distresses that delirium tremens delivered, posed significant problems for doctors. Beyond recommending the obvious, that the patient should stop his drinking, there was little they could do except attempt to calm him down, and not to waste any time in doing so. These were the years of so-called “heroic medicine,” when doctors handled their patients aggressively, both physically and in the administration of drugs, to give the appearance that they knew what they were doing.⁸ One violent episode occurred in Brattleboro in 1815 when doctors sought to treat a local attorney suspected of suffering from insanity. Attempting to quiet his actions, they submerged him in water for several minutes to render him unconscious, only to see him revive and shout out, “You can’t drown love!” Another attempt was made, but this time reportedly using the strong, sleep-inducing opium, only to end with his death.⁹

Opium was indeed the drug of choice for many ailments, becoming known as the doctor’s “sheet anchor,” as it was used in treating the DTs. In fact, at one time it was recommended as a substitute for anyone trying to wean themselves off the pernicious effects of ardent spirits. To quell the patient in its throes, huge amounts of it were administered, and with varying results depending on the competency of the doctor. While many were simply put to sleep for a long period of time, it was not unusual to see that others died. Unfortunately, it is not possible to say just how successful those efforts were because many simply returned to their old ways.¹⁰

Call it custom, habit, laziness, or sheer ignorance, but many of these old ways persisted for years. They became so embedded in Vermonters’ minds that they constituted a way of life and were, consequently, highly

resistant to change. In fact, these traditions became so imbued in their psyche that doctors frequently rejected what they thought was a responsible course of treatment in order to abide by the prevailing public opinion dictated to them by their unlettered constituents. As doctors came to recognize the ineffectiveness of what they were doing and the attending disarray it caused among the inhabitants, they organized themselves into various medical societies. These began with the “First Medical Society” in 1784, composed of members from Rutland and Bennington counties, followed in 1814 by the statewide Vermont Medical Society. At the same time, various medical schools began to appear in the region: Dartmouth in 1798; Castleton, 1818; University of Vermont, 1822; and, Woodstock, 1835.¹¹

Increased professionalism was certainly needed as one commentator woefully described several deficiencies of the local medicine men in 1818: irreligion (Sabbath breaking); conducting abortions; quackery; disagreements among themselves; want of humanity (“neglecting the poor”); indecency of behavior; want of firmness and decision of character; and dissipation.¹² Of them all, the presence of practitioners without formal training, the so-called “quacks,” presented the most serious obstacle to their efforts in establishing credibility in the public’s eye; and it was a challenge that lasted throughout much of the nineteenth century. Whereas the educated among them, called “rationalists,” attempted to understand a patient’s ailments by considering their underlying, hidden reasons and then treat them accordingly, the



Laudanum was promoted as “no more dangerous than many preparations sold as soothing syrups.” But it contained opium alkaloids, morphine, and codein, and was highly addictive.

Coca-Bola was a paste made from leaves of the Peruvian coca plant and came in “handsome tin pocket-boxes containing sufficient for at least two weeks’ use.”

“quacks” or “empiricists” looked superficially to the symptoms as they appeared on the surface and sought to address those. Their alternative way of practicing medicine rejected the rough ways of the otherwise learned, eschewing the use of harsh drugs such as opium, and utilized a gentler, holistic philosophy. This method involved administering various medicines from a botanical perspective utilizing non-threatening plants, while also employing the perceived attributes of water in various ways: submersion, consumption, and exposure to steam.¹³

Disagreements among those within the trained community of physicians came to assume a huge public awareness and had a significant impact on the course of Vermont medicine. In 1820, the trained among them succeeded in persuading the state legislature to pass a law restricting the practice of medicine to those who graduated from a recognized medical school and then satisfied the requirements of local medical societies from which they obtained their licenses to practice.¹⁴

As a consequence, in the next years the public became concerned that this privileged group of men was assuming the trappings of elitism, which led to the filing of petitions against them and support for repealing the law. It made no sense to them to allow this favored group to engage in what they considered dreaded monopolies that, in turn, permitted them to essentially exploit the public’s maladies for their own enrichment. The anti-elitists believed that it was within their basic rights to be able to choose those practitioners who followed alternative forms of medicine. Accordingly, in 1833 the law was repealed and the entire field was opened to unrestricted control for the following decades. Notwithstanding, the educated physicians continued in their efforts to advance their own professionalism while also making it an offense within their respective local societies, punishable by fine or loss of membership, should they ever deal with a quack.

All of this discord resulted in a confused public trying to understand which faction to believe, and caused many to turn inward and seek solace from accepted traditional folk remedies. This included the use of patent medicines, those that had proven themselves in the past and which had come from established, credible drug manufacturers in England. Yet in this new unrestricted environment many saw the times ripe for exploitation and so began to produce their own form of patent medicines or nostrums. These included both the benign, which utilized various vegetables as purported remedies for a host of ailments, and the dangerous, utilizing opium and morphine. Their use of such strong drugs was necessary both to produce some kind of an effect to show its ability to relieve one from symptoms and, importantly, to assure a return customer. As the decades

progressed, Vermont saw the arrival of several large-scale producers of such concoctions and it proved a most profitable trade.¹⁵

Developing alongside the medical men were those involved with drugs on a daily basis, the growing pharmaceutical profession. Following the arrival of the railroad in 1848, drug stores cropped up in many Vermont towns and began to offer their wares displayed in fantastic colored glass jars and from across shiny, marble-topped counters. It took decades but eventually, after abandoning attempts to engage in the doctoring aspects of the trade by diagnosing and prescribing drugs to customers, the druggists came to assume an important role in serving the public by restricting their participation to compounding and dispensing. Still, it was not unusual for them to also engage in questionable practices with the manufacturers and suppliers of drugs, as well as with favored physicians writing their prescriptions in code only they could decipher, that allowed for profitable kickbacks to occur at the expense of the patient.¹⁶

There is no question that many continued to die, despite the best efforts of doctors to deal with the ceaseless presence of unlicensed medics and the public's increasing use of bogus drug concoctions. Physicians took their patients' confidences seriously and refused to reveal things that would have reflected badly on them. One of the unusual relationships that developed during the course of the century was the physician's interactions with his female patients. Theirs became a unique bond, in which women felt free to disclose both their physical and psychological complaints to a trusted advisor who, in turn, was not hesitant to recommend substances such as the opium-based laudanum, itself responsible for the addictions of so many.

As one doctor described his treatment of those dying of intemperance in 1830, "The physician is a mournful witness of too many such cases, but they must lie deep buried in his own bosom."¹⁷ That knowledge, which included instances of alcohol and opium addiction (to include, minimally, some sixteen percent of the medical profession itself following the turn of the century), accidental overdoses, suicide, and physician malpractice did indeed often remain a secret, with the attending doctors chalking up a patient's ensuing death simply to "heart problems."¹⁸ Even after the state began statutory record-keeping requirements for the reporting of mortality statistics in 1857, the medical profession balked at having to travel to the local town clerk to record a patient's death because the law made no provision for their being compensated for their efforts.

The invention of the hypodermic needle in 1853 and then the return of soldiers from the Civil War, many carrying with them the so-called "Soldier's Disease" of opium and morphine addiction from their exposure to

Contemporary artist Ray Materson made this embroidered miniature a few months after Governor Peter Shumlin's 2014 address on Vermont's "full-blown heroin crisis." Entitled Ski Vermont, it appears to be a promotional poster until one notices that the letters "VT" are composed of drug paraphernalia. It is one of two Materson miniatures recently acquired for the Bennington Museum by curator Jamie Franklin. After Materson had served prison time on drug-related charges he became the first artist ever to receive a grant from Innovators Combating Substance Abuse, a national program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

Bennington Museum collection



it in battlefield hospitals, only increased the instances of drug abuse within the population. It was made all the more dire by the presence of a medical profession continually challenged in trying to understand the appropriate parameters for the administration of

strong narcotics for particular ailments, as doctors witnessed the growing addiction of their patients wrought by their own obtuse actions. The learned among them certainly appreciated how dangerous these drugs could be. But in the unrestricted legal atmosphere that the state legislature allowed, made all the worse by its myopic attention to enforcing the 1852 law prohibiting the manufacture and sale of alcohol, many untrained, and unlicensed, individuals silently took up the trade alongside them.¹⁹

In the 1890s it was estimated that addiction was caused by a doctor in nine out of ten cases, but responsible physicians were unable to garner enough attention to warrant legislative changes. So a distinct schism grew between the medical profession and the legislature. The most the lawmakers had been willing to do was to create the Board of Health in 1886. That provided a mandate to deal with such issues as public sanitation, but had severely curtailed enforcement powers. When it became apparent in 1900 that there was so much addiction occurring in Vermont as to make its problems distinguishable from those experienced by other states at the time, things began to change. It took another fifteen years of effort, but in 1915

Vermont finally took the necessary steps to create a criminal statute that addressed the distribution of opium and morphine.

The nineteenth century presented myriad problems for anyone seeking to engage in Vermont's medical profession. Those practicing in other states certainly experienced their own challenges, but at virtually no point does it appear an enviable role in Vermont in light of all the difficulties they faced, bringing their varying levels of intelligence, competence, and compassion. Certainly, there were the altruistic and idealistic among them with some degree of capability, but there were also those in it simply because it was an easily exploitable and lucrative trade made all the more possible by the "wild west" atmosphere that a hands-off legislature permitted. Meanwhile, despite their efforts, both good and bad, the public was able to derive some level of benefit, while also experiencing an egregious decades-long bout of addiction to dangerous drugs caused by those same individuals. In the end, it is a story of tenacity and creativity on the part of both doctor and patient alike that allowed each to withstand a most trying period in the state's history. □

NOTES

1. A.P. Grinnell, "Use and Abuse of Drugs in Vermont," *Transactions of the Vermont State Medical Society*, 1900 (Burlington: Free Press Association, 1901); A.P. Grinnell, "A Review of Drug Consumption and Alcohol as Found in Proprietary Medicine," *The Medico-Legal Journal* 23 (June 1905): 426.
2. Basil M. Woolley, *The Opium Habit and Its Cure* (Atlanta: Atlanta Constitution Print, 1879), 45-46; Statement of Dr. Christopher Koch, "Importation and Use of Opium," *Hearings before the Committee on Ways and Means of the House of Representatives*, 61st Congress, 3d Session, December 14, 1910 and January 11, 1911 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1911), 70.
3. For a review of the growth of Vermont's drug problem in the nineteenth century see the author's recent article, "Opium Eating in Vermont: 'A Crying Evil of the Day,'" *Vermont History* 83, no. 2 (Summer/Fall 2015): 157-192.
4. See, e.g., Dr. William P. Russel Papers, Large ledger vol. 1, 1833-1851, Henry Sheldon Museum of Vermont History, Middlebury, VT. Russel represents perhaps one of the most egregious examples of irresponsible opium sales taking place, providing the drug to many individuals in the Middlebury community, including a man who purchased it from him no less than 100 times.
5. *Proceedings of the Vermont Pharmaceutical Association*, October 11, 1871 (Rutland, Vt.: Tuttle & Co., 1871), 7-8.
6. Abby Maria Hemenway, *The Vermont Historical Gazetteer* (Claremont: Claremont Manufacturing Co., 1877) 3:702.
7. In 1811, Dartmouth Medical School's founder, Dr. Nathan Smith, actually admitted that much of the current alcohol abuse problem began, in fact, with doctors prescribing the consumption of these powdered drugs in this manner. Henry Ingersoll, "Lectures on the Theory and Practice of Physic & Surgery. Delivered at Dartmouth Medical Theater, D. 1811 by Nathan Smith, M.D.," MS. 11602.3, Rauner Special Collections Library, Dartmouth College, Hanover, N. H.

8. Papers of Albert Smith, DA-3, 2176, Rauner Special Collections Library.
9. *The Vermont Asylum for the Insane: Its Annals for Fifty Years* (Brattleboro: Hildreth & Fales, 1887), 7.
10. John Woodcock, "A Dissertation on Delirium Tremens," and Cyrus B. Hamilton, "On Ebriety," Medical Theses, 1815-1819, DA-3, 10925, Rauner Special Collections Library.
11. John P. Batchelder, *On the Causes which Degrade the Profession of Physick*, "An Oration Delivered before the Western District of the N.H. Medical Society" (Bellows Falls, Vt.: Bill Blake & Co., 1818), 5, 7.
12. Joanna Smith Weinstock, "Samuel Thomson's Botanic System: Alternative Medicine in Early-Nineteenth-Century Vermont," *Vermont History* 56 (Winter 1988): 5-22.
13. "An Act, regulating the practice of Physic and Surgery within this State," November 14, 1820, *Laws Passed by the Legislature of the State of Vermont, 1817-1820* (Middlebury, Vt.: William Slade, 1820), 27.
14. See, e.g., Catalogue and Handbook of Wells, Richardson & Co., Wholesale Druggists, Burlington, Vt., 35-57. Pamphlets, Vermont Historical Society.
15. Edward H. Currier, "Relations existing between Physician and Apothecary," 1880, Medical Theses, 1878, DA-3, Box 10955, Rauner Special Collections Library.
16. William Sweetser, *An Address Delivered before the Chittenden County Temperance Society, August 26, 1830* (Unidentified publisher, 1830), 12. Vermont Historical Society, Barre, VT.
17. David T. Courtwright, *Dark Paradise: A History of Opiate Addiction in America* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001), 41.
18. *Transactions of the Vermont Medical Society for the Year 1890* (Burlington, Vt.: R. S. Styles, 1890), 46-47.
19. "I speak from experience when I say that out of every ten cases of addiction I believe some doctor was responsible for nine of them.... I can hardly find words strong enough with which to condemn the careless—nay criminal—prescribing of opium in chronic cases." Dr. F. W. Comings, "Opium. Its Uses and Abuses," *Transactions of the Vermont Medical Society for 1895 and 1896* (Burlington, Vt.: Free Press Association, 1897), 366-371.

Book Reviews

The Cumulative Power of Lewis Hine's Photographs of Child Labor in New England

Reviewed by Jamie Franklin

Lewis W. Hine created some of the most powerful, moving images in the history of still photography. Take, for example, his photograph of Addie Card, an “anaemic little spinner,” standing in front of a spinning frame that threatens to engulf her in the North Pownal Cotton Mill. The image of Addie, taken during the summer of 1910, as Hine toured some of Vermont’s bustling factories and city centers, has become iconic. Hine’s image of Addie was prominently featured on a thirty-two-cent stamp issued by the United State Postal Service in 1998, and more recently it was used to great effect on the cover of Robert Macieski’s book *Picturing Class: Lewis W. Hine Photographs Child Labor in New England*, published by the University of Massachusetts Press in November of 2015.

Hine brought an artist’s eye to his work as a photographer, though he had no formal artistic training, having taken up a camera in 1903 in conjunction with his work for the Ethical Culture School in New York City. He was acutely aware of the power of images to evoke powerful emotional responses in a viewer. The photograph of Addie Card was part of a decade-long project, 1908-1918, in which Hine took more than 5,000 photographs of child workers for the National Child Labor Committee. Hine’s best photographic compositions, such as his image of Addie, are extremely effective in getting viewers to face the ills of child labor head-on. Hine literally brings us face-to-face with Addie; the girl’s direct gaze can’t



Addie Card, “Anaemic little spinner in North Pownal cotton mill. Girls in mill say she is ten years. She admitted to me she was twelve, that she started during school vacation and now would ‘stay.’” Summer 1910. Library of Congress

be avoided by the viewer. Her seemingly frail 12-year-old body, covered by a soiled, loose-fitting smock and standing on bare feet, is dwarfed by the unfeeling machine behind her.

Despite the singular power of this image, and many of Hine's other child labor photographs, Macieski, associate professor of history at the University of New Hampshire in Manchester, skillfully argues in his engaging, informative tome, that it is not in the individual images he created in which Hine's greatest power as a social reformer lie. Rather, it is in their cumulative effect, when viewed en masse, that they achieve their greatest efficacy. It isn't that Macieski doesn't engage in close readings of individual images, a common flaw when academically trained historians engage with visual culture. He does and does so very well. Rather Macieski makes it clear that when experienced cumulatively, we see in the larger archive of child-labor photographs by Hine not just the individual children staring back at us -- who certainly evoke a powerful empathy -- but we come to understand their sheer numbers and, more significantly, the larger context of the children's lives. As we absorb image after image we begin to see and better understand issues of social class and ethnicity, America's burgeoning capitalist economy, and competing views of children and the New England in which they live and work. As Macieski rightly points out, "Hine introduced modernity into depictions of New England, instilling them with fragments of industrial capitalism," in strong contrast to the



“Row of mill houses belonging to Holden-Leonard Co., woolen mill, Bennington, Vt. Rents are from \$6 to \$8 a month.” May 1908.

Bennington Museum collection



“Carl Brown, eleven years old. He and his father run a farm of 160 acres, in Southern Vermont. He is overgrown, sluggish, but he said ‘I’d ruther go to school.’” August 1915.
Library of Congress



“Work that educates: A twelve-year-old boy tends bees under the direction of his father, John Spargo. Bennington, Vermont.” August 1914.
Library of Congress

largely idyllic images that are most closely associated with the region, even to this day.

In summarizing the strength of Hine’s photographic archive, Macieski writes, “Our modern imaginings of child labor in the early part of the twentieth century are almost inseparable from the visual palette of child labor drawn from Hine’s photographs.”

Macieski’s book has particular interest in the context of the *Wallomsack Review* because Hine had strong ties to Bennington and, indirectly, the Bennington Museum. He took some 27 photographs in Bennington County between 1909 and 1915 (17 in Bennington, 8 in North Pownal, and 2 more in “southern Vermont”). The numbers increase if you add nearby locales such as Adams and North Adams, Massachusetts (34) and Rutland and Proctor, Vermont. Yet these numbers are only a small fraction of the total number of photographs he created across the country in his work for the National Child Labor Committee, which are now housed in the Library of Congress in Washington D.C.

More significant in regard to Hine’s local ties, aside from the few dozen images he created in our immediate region, is the role that John Spargo played in Hine’s project to document the ills of child labor. Prior to his years as founding director of the Bennington Museum, Spargo was a leading

Socialist muckraker and his seminal tome *The Bitter Cry of the Children*, published in 1906, was one of the most widely read and influential documents in a growing effort to remedy the horrors of child labor in America. Hine was certainly familiar with the book and likely attended Spargo's lectures on "The Spiritual Significance of Modern Socialism" at Cooper Union in New York in the winter of 1907-8. Spargo's approach to remedying the ills of child labor and the larger iniquities of the market economy was largely Romantic, as was that of many other social reformers of the period. As he stated in his lectures at the Cooper Union, "To free the wage-worker from economic exploitation is indeed the primary object, the immediate aim, of Socialism, but it is not the sole object. It is not the end, but the means to an end that is higher, the liberation of the soul." (These lectures were compiled into a book and published later in 1908.) Hine was on the precipice of his own journey as a prominent advocate railing for the same causes, in a highly reasoned and strategic manner, and undoubtedly saw Spargo as a mentor. It was their shared interest in the betterment of social conditions in America that brought Spargo and Hine together as friends and likely what led to Hine's time spent in Pownal and Bennington, where Spargo had moved in 1909.

As a result of this connection the Bennington Museum has had a continuing relation with Hine's photographs that lasts to this day. In 2002 we hosted an exhibition, "Before Their Time: The Child Labor Photographs of Lewis Hine," featuring 56 photographs from Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine, which Macieski helped organize for New Hampshire Historical Society. It was at that exhibit when author Elizabeth Winthrop first encountered the haunting image of Addie Card, then known incorrectly as Addie "Laird." Winthrop would go on to write a critically acclaimed book, *Counting on Grace*, inspired by the photograph, and then enlisted the services of historical researcher Joe Manning, from nearby North Adams, Massachusetts, to help her track down Addie's true identity. Manning and Winthrop were able to do far more than determine Addie's real last name, Card; they eventually pulled together a fairly extensive outline of her life. This is when I entered the story, working with Winthrop and Manning to put together a small installation at the museum documenting their research into Addie's life. While I worked on that project I acquired an original print of one of Hine's local photographs, depicting company housing for workers at the Holden-Leonard Mill on today's Benmont Avenue, which I'll discuss in more detail shortly. Manning's success in his research of Addie's life led to further research, and he has gone on to document the lives of dozens of the children in Hine's photographs all across America.

A dichotomy and resulting tension between art and documentation has been integral to a full understanding of the medium since photography was first introduced to the public in 1839. Hine's photographs of child

laborers are both hauntingly beautiful artistic creations and incredibly rich historical documents. One of the strengths of Macieski's book is that he doesn't ignore the former in his understandable inclinations towards the latter. He carefully deconstructs the social and historical contexts behind Hine's photographs in a way that doesn't detract from but rather adds to our aesthetic appreciation of them. Macieski makes clear that the way Hine's photographs look is deeply indebted to the context(s) in which they were made.

While Hine may also have wanted to "liberate the soul," as Spargo put it, he understood that in order to do so he needed to attack the problem as analytically as possible and took a holistic approach to the larger project. In addition to his carefully constructed images of children workers in the midst of deplorable factory conditions -- which pull on people's heartstrings -- Hine also documented the larger world in which they lived and he created, as a foil, images of children engaged in positive, educational work. Several Hine photographs from the Bennington area perfectly illustrate these points. His image of worker housing on current-day Benmont Avenue in Bennington conveys the mind-numbing monotony of their lives by the endless row of identical houses that recede into the background. Illustrating the latter point is a series of photos by Hine intended to model "work that educates," which depict Spargo and his 12-year-old son engaged in activities ranging from weeding and feeding chickens to bee-keeping. Macieski precedes his discussion of these images of Spargo and his son with an analysis of Hine's photographs of rural "home work," or children working on the family farm, including an image of 11-year-old Carl Brown helping his father hay on their 160-acre farm in southern Vermont. It seems industrial factory work wasn't the only ill Hines wanted to rectify, because he describes Brown as "overgrown, sluggish" and notes that boy claimed, "I'd rather go to school."

The strength of Macieski's book, at least from my curatorial, art historically trained mind, is the fact that he doesn't get caught up in an analysis of only Hine's most classically beautiful images. Rather he looks at Hine's project as a whole, analyzing many photographs that may not be artistic masterpieces, and the ways in which they were presented to the public to help draw out nuances of the larger social and historical contexts in which Hine worked. In doing so, the author provides us with a far better understanding of Hine's images of local child laborers, which allows us to appreciate them all more deeply. □

Picturing Class: Lewis W. Hine Photographs Child Labor in New England, by Robert Macieski, University of Massachusetts Press, 2015, 312 pp.

Insurrection, Corruption, Murder and ‘the Black Snake affair’

Reviewed by Anthony Marro

Life was not entirely tranquil in Vermont in 1808, as Gary Shattuck makes clear in his book about the “Black Snake” affair: *Insurrection, Corruption & Murder in Early Vermont — Life on the Wild Northern Frontier*. Whether there was an actual insurrection — as opposed to a brief but deadly skirmish — was much debated at the time, and Shattuck isn’t entirely persuasive that the attack on the militia by smugglers that forms the basis of the book was any more a full-scale insurrection against the government than attacks on federal agents by bootleggers were during Prohibition years.

Moreover, four of the five men tried in the “Black Snake” affair eventually were convicted of manslaughter, not of murder, and the one convicted of murder didn’t actually kill anyone. But those are just quibbles with the title of an important and engaging book. Shattuck goes far beyond a mere recounting of the shootout on the Winooski River and, through the careful mining of soot-covered records in state archives that had been untouched for two centuries, describes in thoughtful and painstaking detail the many reasons both for the widespread violations of the Embargo Act and for the inefficient and ineffective enforcement of it. And in the process he tells us much about life in early nineteenth-century Vermont.

The Embargo Act of 1807, which Shattuck terms “ill-advised,” was an attempt by President Jefferson to punish Britain for seizing Americans sailors from merchant ships and forcing them to serve in the British Navy during the Napoleonic Wars. It was widely unpopular in Vermont because it prohibited the sale of cattle, potash, pork, lumber, and other things to British Canada, which was Vermont’s principal trading partner at the time.

The “Black Snake” itself was a 40-foot, single-masted, seven-oared cutter covered with black tar that was known widely as the most notorious smuggling boat on Lake Champlain. It was owned by two brothers in Caldwell Manor (now Noyan), Quebec, just north of Rouses Point, and routinely carried smuggled embargoed goods, including much potash, into Canada. Potash, which was a major source of cash for many Vermont farmers, was made by leaching water through the ashes of trees and stumps that were burned while clearing land. It was used as fertilizer, in the textile industry, and in the production of gunpowder and glass.

A band of militia from Rutland County had been sent north to help the U.S. Customs Collector enforce the Embargo Act and on August 3, 1808, some of these militiamen in the revenue cutter “Fly” tried to capture the

“Black Snake.” The long story short is that an ambush took place in which two militiamen and a farmer were killed and the leader of the militia was seriously wounded. Seven of the attackers were arrested at the scene and others were caught as they tried to escape into Canada. Eventually most of the members of the crew of the “Black Snake” were jailed in Burlington and charged with various crimes.

This book, however, is not a long story short but a short story long, with much attention paid in its 396 pages not just to the brief firefight on the Winooski but also to everything from the political controversies of the day, to the economic realities Vermont in 1808, to the methods of melting down lead for the smugglers’ muskets, to the amount of alcohol consumed by the smugglers before the skirmish took place. And as a former Vermont State Police officer and prosecutor for both the state and federal governments, Shattuck pays particular attention to the legal arguments for and against the Embargo Act, and to the prosecution and defense of the smugglers themselves. He also uses his investigative skills to make a compelling case that while the crew of the “Black Snake” ended up being prosecuted, many prominent Burlington area businessmen who benefited greatly from the smuggling were pretty much ignored. “Taking an expansive view of events occurring on and around Lake Champlain in 1808, it is an inescapable conclusion that several highly placed men within the community, including merchants, traders, doctors, bankers, entrepreneurs and militia officers silently aided and counseled smuggling activities,” he writes, “and their complicity in the . . . tragic events cannot be ignored.”

There are places where the narrative bogs down and reads like a legal brief, with much repetition and buttressing of the evidence. But for the most part it is an interesting story smoothly told. As well as describing the smuggling, Shattuck focuses on the “staggering” number of debt-related issues in Vermont courts during this time, showing that civil litigation is not a recent phenomenon. And he notes that the great amount of alcohol consumed by the smugglers was not unusual in a state that had more than two hundred distilleries and where many residents routinely engaged in “dram drinking” in which liquor was consumed all during the day, including by many farmers in the fields.

Shattuck is particularly good in recounting the criminal trials of the smugglers, which took place in a Burlington court where the chief judge was Royall Tyler, who in addition to being a Harvard graduate, a Revolutionary War veteran, and a respected jurist, was also a novelist, poet, and playwright who had authored what many consider to have been America’s first theatrical comedy, “The Contrast.” Among other things, the defense lawyers argued that their clients were ignorant and unschooled, and didn’t know what the law was; that the law was unconstitutional to begin with; that the militia had set out to take the boat without due process,

and that the crew was just trying to defend the owner's property. And they argued that a small group of men that had just ten or twelve muskets, little ammunition, and a handful of rocks to throw at soldiers could not be considered to be making war against the United States or any other form of insurrection or treason.

But most were found guilty of various crimes. On November 11, Cyrus Dean — who had urged others to open fire but hadn't actually shot anyone himself — was hanged for murder, which Shattuck says was "irrational." The last state-sanctioned hanging had been exactly thirty years earlier in Bennington when David Redding, a Loyalist soldier, had been hanged as a spy, which he probably wasn't, although he may have been a horse thief. Ethan Allen had overseen and stage-managed that spectacle, which many historians now believe was more a lynching than a proper trial. In this case, one of Allen's sons, Ethan Voltaire Allen, had to be removed from the jury pool in the Dean trial after expressing sentiments in favor of the smugglers and against the government. When Dean arrived at the gallows he asked for tobacco and was given it. He said that he was innocent of the crime, accused a witness of having given false testimony against him, and then said "That ends my story." He kicked his hat into his grave, spit on his coffin, and was hanged. The Vermont Encyclopedia says that a crowd of 10,000 people witnessed the execution though Shattuck suspects it was less because Burlington had only about 1,600 residents at the time.

Later, four others — one of them just seventeen years old — were convicted of manslaughter. Three of them were whipped at a public whipping post, and all four were forced to sit in pillory for an hour and sentenced to ten years of hard labor at the new state prison at Windsor, where they were the first prisoners. All were pardoned three years later.

Despite greater attempts at enforcement, the Embargo Act smuggling never really ended. During the War of 1812 it became even greater and, Shattuck believes, "clearly treasonous," with Vermonters providing beef cattle and other provisions directly to the British army.

Shattuck's book is a thorough examination of the Embargo Act, the nature of smuggling, and the practice of law in early Vermont. But readers also will find it an informative and engaging account of much of the routine of life in what, back in 1808, was still the "wild northern frontier." □

Insurrection, Corruption & Murder in Early Vermont — Life on the Wild Northern Frontier, by Gary G. Shattuck; The History Press, 396 pp., \$29.99.

Hill and Hollows of Halifax a double Vermont town history

Reviewed by Tyler Resch

In the annals of books on Vermont town histories, it is probable that none has exceeded the town of Halifax in number of pages produced or in the quality of the content of those pages. This obscure Windham County town, on the Massachusetts border between Whitingham and Guilford, chartered in 1750 by Benning Wentworth (next after Bennington), has produced and published in recent years a total of 1,102 pages of its own history in two handsome hardcover volumes.

The first, “Born in Controversy,” was published in 2008, and the second, “Hills and Hollows,” in 2015. Both contain a foreword by Civil War historian Howard Coffin. These volumes match in appearance, garbed in dignified dark brown jackets with suitable photographs. They are bursting with energy, enthusiasm, and local pride.

Halifax is the quintessential small Vermont town, rural in the best sense, an anachronism in today’s moving-ahead society of Internet, Facebook, big box stores, and acres of asphalt. Halifax has a fraction of its original population, so there are lots of cellar holes, stone walls, evidences of previous residence, and much lore. In Vermont’s first census Halifax counted 1,309 souls. That number held above 1,000 until after the Civil War, then bottomed out at 268 in 1960. Fifty years later the 2010 census comeback is now 720.

“Hills and Hollows” focuses heavily on the families and their histories, and many trace back two hundred years or more. A section is devoted to the town clerks past and present. There is “the news – then and now,” which includes accidental deaths, suicides, murders (three), epidemics, curiosities, news correspondents, philanthropists, utilities, and notable storms. “Born in Controversy” has to do with early settlements, the path to statehood, agricultural and community and commercial life. Both books have many good photographs.

“It’s the stories that have kept me riveted to this book,” writes Hilly Van Loon, one of many contributing authors, in a lengthy introduction, “. . . stories that evoke the landscape, a simpler time, that touch the heart and show the courage and spunk the folks of Halifax showed in tough times. During the Depression, the Burnett family raised mice to supply research centers to supplement their income; Elaine Fairbanks’s grandparents picked ferns to sell.”

Van Loon further seeks to define the spirit of the town: “The people of Halifax, like so many rural families, were the epitome of ‘living locally,’ in the parlance of today’s world. It was a way of life: They ate what they grew, ground the grains they raised for baking at the local grist mill, shopped at the store down the street for their staples, had the local smithy shoe their horses, and built houses and barns from timber cut on their property and milled at the local sawmill. In one shining memory of putting things by for the winter to come, Regina Hardgrove remembers canning 350 jars of fruits and vegetables on the woodstove in the family’s summer kitchen while her mother shouted out instructions from the couch where she was recovering from an accident.”

This writer is not personally acquainted with Halifax though I have dug deeply into the family of my wife’s ancestors, the Jewells, early settlers in Whitingham, next door. These remarkable new Halifax books open up for the reader an appealing world of heritage of past Vermont decades. □

Born in Controversy: History of Halifax, Vermont, published 2008 by Halifax Historical Society, hardcover, 544 pp. and *Hills and Hollows: History of Halifax, Vermont, Vol. 2*, published 2013 by Halifax Historical Society, hardcover, 558 pp.

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