# Walloomsack Review

## Bennington Museum

Volume 18 — Autumn 2016

# Walloomsack Review

Bennington Museum

*Volume 18*
*Autumn 2016*

WALLOOMSACK REVIEW
ISSN 1943-9644

© 2016 The Bennington Museum, All Rights Reserved

Robert Wolterstorff, executive director

Tyler Resch and Anthony Marro, editors

Bennington Museum Publication Committee
Jamie Franklin, Anthony Marro, Marianne Peters,
Jane Radocchia, Tyler Resch

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

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

***On the cover:***

*Karnak*, by Paul Feeley, 1966 (fabricated 2015), painted aluminum, nine units, 21 feet high (approx.), collection of Columbus Museum of Art. See Jamie Franklin's appraisal of this artist's work on page 30.

***On the back cover:***

The University of Vermont, represented here by the campus statue of its chief founder, Ira Allen, figures strongly in Rick Winston's article (page 6) on the Red Scare in Vermont. The Red-hunting Sen. Joseph McCarthy (top inset) was brought down by Vermont's Sen. Ralph Flanders (inset below).

# WALLOOMSACK REVIEW

**Volume 18, Autumn 2016**

**Editors' notes** *Tyler Resch and Anthony Marro* **page 4**

**Contributors** **page 5**

***The Red Scare in Vermont:*** **page 6**
**Newspapers were on both sides of guilt-by-association episode*s***
*Rick Winston*

***From Hyppolite to Fred Plumtree*** **page 20**
**Nineteenth-century immigration of French-Canadians to Vermont**
*Michael F. Dwyer*

**Book Reviews**

***Lionel Nowak remembers Paul Feeley*** **page 30**
Tom Fels
**An overdue assessment of this modern artist**
*Reviewed by Jamie Franklin*

**Vermont's gem of a State House** **page 48**
**a new and friendly appraisal**
*Reviewed by Anthony Marro*

**Farmers and Honest Men:** **page 50**
**Insight into the loyalist viewpoint**
*Reviewed by Michael P. Gabriel*

# *Editors' Notes*

Several varied and important subjects are explored by the historical articles in this issue, each of which has widespread and even national implications. Rick Winston demonstrates how Vermont figured prominently in the national episode during the 1950s known as the Red Scare. It was a serious time of widespread conformity and paranoia about the extent to which communists were thought to be penetrating all aspects of American life and politics. Careers were destroyed and many suicides resulted. As Winston points out, the fearfulness was sparked by Senator Joseph McCarthy of Wisconsin, but it continued to play out by others including Richard Nixon well after McCarthy's death in 1957. It was Vermont's Senator Flanders who courageously helped bring McCarthy down. Vermont was also the summer home of Owen Lattimore and Alger Hiss, two figures in this drama whose involvement will be spelled out in a book Winston is researching.

Staying with the 1950s for the moment, the role of faculty members and associated artists at Bennington College in the development of American Modernism is insightfully described by curator Jamie Franklin in his focus on the influential work of Paul Feeley. To amplify the discussion, Tom Fels's rediscovered 1984 interview with the late Lionel Nowak of the college music faculty brings out important human details of Feeley's life and character.

Moving back to a somewhat earlier timeframe, the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a well-researched essay by Michael Dwyer traces the French-Canadian immigration into Vermont. This is a story of a proud and cohesive ethnic and religious group who had to re-settle for economic reasons and took ample time to become assimilated. Dwyer, the new editor of the journal *Vermont Genealogy*, pays particular attention to the interesting ways original French-Canadian names were anglicized, or not.

Stretching back much farther to the time of the American Revolution, Michael Gabriel, our authority on the Battle of Bennington, reviews a seemingly obscure book, published not long ago, that presents the British side of that battle. *Farmers and Honest Men* is a title that fully obscures its contents. The book publishes a previously unknown muster roll of Loyalists in that battle of August 16, 1777, along with scans of relevant documents. Among other subjects, it follows the lives of brothers Hans and John Ruiter who had settled early in the region of Pittstown, N.Y., and associates them with a particular immigration, that of the Palatine Germans in the early eighteenth century.

For change of scene, a new book on Vermont's elegant State House, completed in 1858 to replace one damaged by fire, is reviewed by a citizen who came to know it intimately.

# *Contributors*

**Rick Winston** is a film history instructor and former co-owner of Montpelier's Savoy Theater who has had a long-standing interest in the history of the Cold War era. He was one of the organizers of the 1988 Vermont Historical Society conference "Vermont in the McCarthy Era." He is preparing a book-length manuscript about this and other aspects of the Red Scare in Vermont.

**Michael F. Dwyer** has been teaching Vermont high school students English, European history, and American Studies since 1983. The Vermont Department of Education named him 2004's Teacher of the Year. A Fellow of the American Society of Genealogists, he now edits *Vermont Genealogy* and is a frequent contributor to other genealogical publications. He expresses his thanks to Susan L. Valley for her sharing of unique source material for this article. Michael may be contacted at michaelftdwyer@comcast.net.

**Michael P. Gabriel** reviews a book that brings new understanding about the cause of Loyalists who were involved in the British side of the Battle of Bennington. Bearing the unusual title *Farmers and Honest Men*, this book contains the first muster roll we've seen of those who fought with Burgoyne at that battle 239 years ago.

**Tom Fels** is a curator and writer from North Bennington with a long-standing interest in the history of Bennington College. His most recent article for the Walloomsack Review (Vol. 10, spring 2013) was a review of Dona Brown's *Back to the Land: The Enduring Dream of Self-Sufficiency in Modern America*.

**Jamie Franklin,** curator of the Bennington Museum since 2005, has focused on American art of the early to mid-twentieth century, with particular emphasis on the intersection of modernism and self-taught art. In this issue he concentrates on the work of Paul Feeley, who taught at Bennington College.

**Anthony Marro,** co-editor of this journal, re-lives some of his experiences as a reporter covering Montpelier in his review in this issue of a new book on the Vermont State House.

# Burlington Newspapers and the 'Red Scare:'
## *Two Case Studies*

*Rick Winston*

The anti-Communist fear that gripped America during the late 1940s and throughout the 1950s has been termed both "the McCarthy Era" and "the Red Scare." Although Vermont was far from the klieg lights of Washington, D.C., hearings, the blacklisting of Hollywood writers, and the wholesale purges of left-wing academics that took place elsewhere, our state had its share of controversies and conflicts during this time.

On balance, Vermont was spared the most extreme aspects of political reaction, and one aspect of this resistance was the leadership of the press. Publisher-editors like Robert Mitchell of the *Rutland Herald*, John Drysdale of the *White River Valley Herald* and the *Bradford Opinion*, Bernard O'Shea of the *Swanton Courier*, and John S. Hooper of the *Brattleboro Reformer* all took principled stands against the guilt-by-association tactics that came to be known as "McCarthyism." These men could hardly be described as radicals, but their sense of justice and moderation resulted in incisive editorial stands.

In Burlington, Vermont's largest city, however, things unfolded differently. This article will examine the Burlington newspapers' coverage of two major stories: the Henry Wallace presidential campaign of 1948 and the firing of Professor Alex Novikoff from the University of Vermont in 1953.

There were two daily newspapers in Burlington at that time. The *Burlington Free Press* is still publishing today, though greatly diminished; the *Burlington Daily News*, the paper owned by William Loeb III, is a distant memory. It ceased publication in 1959 after a tumultuous 15 years under Loeb's reign.

Although most people associate Loeb with his influential New Hampshire paper, the *Manchester Union-Leader*, his publishing career started with the purchase of the *St. Albans Messenger* in 1942, followed by the purchase of the Burlington Daily News in 1944. One of Loeb's early infamous exploits was the publishing of his own baptismal certificate on the front page of both Vermont papers, in an attempt to disprove rumors of his Jewish ancestry.[1] He bought the *Manchester Union-Leader* in 1948, and it was there he gained the national reputation as a publisher that many politicians dared not cross.

David Holmes, who wrote the definitive study of the Novikoff case, "Stalking the Academic Communist," characterized the two Burlington newspapers in this way: "The *Daily News* conveyed a virulent right-wing

Burlington Free Press, July 15, 1953

**He Isn't Talking**

## Novikoff on Way Out; Little Chance Of Last-Minute Reprieve from UVM

With only hours left in which to make his "talk or walk" decision, Dr. Alex B. Novikoff remained silent last night. UVM officials said there is no chance of a last-minute reprieve for the 40-year-old biochemist.

Unless he indicates his willingness to "tell all" to the U.S. Senate internal security subcommittee, Dr. Novikoff will automatically be suspended from the faculty of the University of Vermont College of Medicine at midnight tonight.

**Borgmann Still Away**

Dr. Carl W. Borgmann, president of UVM and one of the few men able to initiate action to set aside the deadline, is still out of town on his vacation and is not expected to return here until this week end.

Strong indications came from the group of interested Burlington clergymen that they will continue to press their opposition to the UVM stand and will work for the future re-instatement of Dr. Novikoff.

Bishop Vedder Van Dyck, one of the spokesmen for the 18 clergymen of the Protestant, Jewish and Catholic faiths who have protested the action, said yesterday:

**Won't Give Up**

"I hope our group will decide to continue the struggle to correct this gross injustice. We have already accomplished an awakening by the public to the dangers of this action. I feel we will continue to take a stand on this important issue."

Bishop Van Dyck made his statement after another meeting of the clergymen yesterday. They "reaffirmed" their stand in the case and once again issued a request to the trustees to reverse the decision and make public all the facts.

G. Richard Hopwood, director of UVM public-relations, said:

"There's nothing new. We haven't heard from Dr. Novikoff and I guess we won't hear from him."

If Dr. Novikoff does not report—in writing—that he is willing to answer all questions asked by the subcommittee, his suspension will begin automatically at midnight.

Although it was learned he will be eligible to receive a year's severance pay, UVM officials said they thought Dr. Novikoff will leave immediately to seek employment elsewhere.

**Salary $6,500 to $7,000**

The cancer researcher, married and the father of two young children, has been receiving a salary of "about $6,500 to $7,000." He has had large medical expenses for the treatment of one of his children.

**Refused To Talk**

Dr. Novikoff refused to tell the subcommittee, headed by Sen. William E. Jenner (R-Ind) whether he had any Red connections during the period before he came to UVM in 1948.

He did say he has not been a Communist since 1948. Dr. Novikoff invoked the protection of the Fifth Amendment in his refusal to answer questions.

A six-man committee, composed of three faculty members and three trustees, investigated the case. They made a report to the trustees who handed down the ultimatum.

The clergymen charge the trustees reversed the committee report. The report has never been made public, but the clergymen claim it contained a 5-1 vote for the retention of Dr. Novikoff.

Both the clergy and the local chapter of the AAU have asked the trustees to make the report public.

The trustees have been as silent as Dr. Novikoff.

***'Novikoff on way out'! headlines the* Burlington Free Press *in July 1953, assuming that a "Fellow Traveler" on the faculty has been outed.***

perspective, while the *Free Press* assumed an editorial position close to the Eisenhower brand of Republicanism." Holmes observed, "The first instinct of most of Vermont's newspapers at this time was to accept the messages from Washington about the state of world affairs, particularly about the Communist threat."[2]

Both Burlington papers were active participants in the first major display in Vermont of the potent mix of super-patriotism, staunch anti-Communism, and fear tactics that marked the era. The occasion was the unsuccessful, some would say quixotic, presidential campaign of Henry Wallace in 1948, two years before Senator Joseph McCarthy burst on the scene.

Today Henry A. Wallace is largely forgotten, but to those who do remember him, he remains a controversial figure. As the person most closely associated with Franklin D. Roosevelt's "New Deal" save Roosevelt himself, Wallace was a

**EDITORIAL**

**MacNair Should Go**

Today our nation is dangerously close to a new war. If this next war starts according to the trend of world affairs at this critical moment, we will again be engaged in a war that is not of our own making.

Our enemy will be Soviet Russia, and the war will come as a direct result of her plans to rule the world.

There is no escaping these conclusions. The proof has been offered in countless ways, the Red scheme of aggression being patterned closely along the same lines followed by Adolf Hitler.

This then is the horrible threat hanging over our heads today—the threat that Stalin and his killers may force us to go to war to stop the Russian enslavement of many nations.

When we know these facts, and they are now self-evident, it is outrageous to learn that no less a person than a history teacher of the Lyndon State Teachers College is going around the state preaching a doctrine strongly defending the Communists in their program of world expansion.

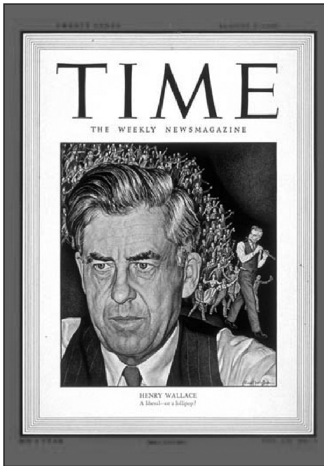
This individual, Vice-Principal Luther MacNair, has a perfect right to support Henry Wallace if he wishes. He also has a perfect right to indulge privately in the belief that Russia's program can be understood, that Wallace is really for peace and freedom, and that the nations which oppose Russia are "reactionist" and "fascist."

Vice-Principal MacNair made these assertions in a talk before a Wallace rally in Burlington last Friday evening. He even went to the extreme of defending the Red rape of

(Continued on Page Two)

**6 Billion Aid 'Package' Sent to House for Debate**

***'McNair Should Go' editorializes the* Burlington Daily News *in March 1948, in its zeal to rid a tainted faculty member at Lyndon State Teachers College. McNair did go.***




***Henry A. Wallace appeared on the cover of* Time *August 9, 1948.***

***Wallace and Pete Seeger sang the same political song in this AP file photo.***

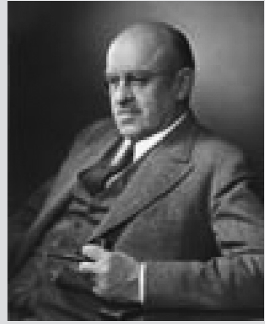
figure of international renown at the close of World War II, ranking in a June 1946 poll as one of the "most admired" people in the United States. For many, Wallace embodied New Deal political values with his wartime advocacy of "the century of the common man," based on pro-labor and anti-monopoly policies at home, and U.S.-Soviet cooperation abroad.

But by the time he announced his presidential candidacy on the Progressive Party ticket in 1948, he had become viewed by many as someone out of step with the post-World War II world. Roosevelt had appointed Wallace Secretary of Commerce, but after Roosevelt's death and the collapse of the US–USSR wartime alliance, Wallace feuded with both the new president, Harry Truman, and Truman's anti-Soviet Secretary of State James Byrnes.

Truman fired Wallace from the Commerce post in September 1946, which freed Wallace to voice ever more provocative opinions about the growing Cold War conflict. As Ira Katznelson recently wrote in *Fear Itself*, a history of the Roosevelt years, "While others saw ominous signs in Soviet speech and behavior, Wallace's vocal minority focused on the fact that the Soviets had taken positions that were not unreasonable about German reparations, reconstruction of Italy and Japan, and other strategic issues."[3]

Wallace became editor of *The New Republic* magazine, which provided a platform to criticize Truman's foreign policy. By the start of 1948, Wallace and others formed a new party, which was called variably, the New Party or the Progressive Party, and then ran for president in 1948. The platform advocated friendly relations with the Soviet Union, an end to the nascent

## Vermont's Flanders played key role in ouster of McCarthy



***Senator Ralph Flanders***

Senator Joseph McCarthy's decline began with his being condemned by the U.S. Senate for conduct "contrary to senatorial traditions," which resulted from a motion to censure him that was made by U.S. Senator Ralph E. Flanders, the junior senator from Vermont.

Flanders was a rather conservative Republican who had become prominent in Springfield's machine-tool industry and who was considered by many to be more of a businessman than a politician. His conservative Republican credentials gave his criticisms of McCarthy a great deal of weight. McCarthy had claimed to have evidence of many communists having infiltrated the State Department — an unsubstantiated charge that ultimately proved groundless — and then had moved on to claims that communists had infiltrated the Army as well. One of the people McCarthy had focused on was an Army dentist at Camp Kilmer, N.J., Maj. Irving Peress, who had belonged to what some considered a communist front group but refused to say whether he actually had ever been a communist.

For two years McCarthy had been using his role on a Senate subcommittee on investigations to bully witnesses with accusations that often were unproven yet damaging, ruining many careers in the process. Flanders objected not only to the bullying, but feared that McCarthy's search for American communists was diverting attention from the greater threat of communist expansion abroad. It was against this backdrop that he stood on the floor of the Senate on March 9, 1954, and made a speech highly critical of McCarthy, and in the process scathingly belittled his charges of a vast communist infiltration of the government.

"He dons his war paint," Flanders said. "He goes into his war dance. He emits his war whoops. He goes forth to battle and proudly returns with the scalp of a pink Army dentist. We may assume that this presents the depth and seriousness of Communist penetration in this country at this time."

On June 11 Flanders introduced a formal resolution charging McCarthy with unbecoming conduct, and calling for his removal from his committee chairmanship. On December 2 the Senate voted against McCarthy — it was not technically a "censure" but he was "condemned" for violating the dignity of the Senate by his flagrant abuse of power, which was pretty much the same thing as a censure — by a vote of 65 to 22. His influence faded quickly and dramatically after that vote.

Flanders's formal education had ended in high school, in Pawtucket, Rhode Island, but he was well read and had a solid grounding in mathematics. Eventually, he'd write eight books including his autobiography, *Senator From Vermont*, and would receive honorary degrees from eight colleges, including Harvard, Dartmouth, Middlebury, and UVM. He served two terms in the Senate and died in 1970 at eighty-nine. His wife, Helen Hartness, whose father James Hartness had been a wealthy machine-tool company owner, amateur astronomer and one-term Vermont governor who had hired Flanders to help run his business, was well-known in her own right as an early historian of folk music, who recorded and transcribed thousands of old New England ballads and wrote several books about them.

**– Anthony Marro**

Cold War, an end to segregation, and universal government health insurance.

One writer commented recently, "His messianic belief in his abilities to single-handedly reverse US foreign policy led him into treacherous waters."[4] The Communist Party, along with a militant union, the Congress of Industrial Organizations, served as Wallace's grassroots organizing force, leaving the Wallace campaign open to distrust and strong criticism from both Republicans and establishment Democrats. The launch of Wallace's presidential campaign in February 1948 suffered from particularly damaging timing, coming as it did in the same month as the Soviet coup in Czechoslovakia and the suspicious suicide (years later, proven to be murder) of the Czech leader Jan Masaryk.

The suggestion in those days that the United States and the Soviet Union were equally to blame for Cold War hostilities was hard enough for many to swallow. But to maintain, as Wallace and some supporters did, that the fault was mainly if not all on the American side, was far beyond the accepted parameters of discussion. As Curtis MacDougall wrote in *Gideon's Army*, a voluminous history of the Wallace campaign, "there was hardly another state in which the New Party was taken more seriously -- as a menace -- than in the Green Mountain State. Instead of welcoming the movement as an aid to Republicans, the press of the state let no opportunity pass to assail it as an extremely dangerous Leftish threat to the American way of life."[5] Although no newspapers in Vermont were in favor of Wallace's platform, two papers stood out for their opposition: the *Burlington Free Press*, and above all, the *Burlington Daily News*. The editorials from these papers ran the gamut from sneering disdain to apoplectic outrage.

*Daily News* publisher Loeb frequently used his front page for signed editorials, often with a strident right-wing message. Shortly after Wallace announced his candidacy, the *Daily News* called Wallace "America's Rabble Rouser #1," blasting his refusal to condemn the Soviet Union for the February 1948 takeover of Czechoslovakia. Under the headline "Our American Fuhrer," the editorial said, "His strange ideology had seemed to be the product of half-baked thinking, a dreamy-eyed prophesying unworthy of serious examination." Loeb continued, "But that can no longer be true. While his utterances here at home are dangerously close to outright sedition against our own nation, he could not more loyally serve the Kremlin by his passionate attacks on capitalism and his unashamed support of many things Communistic."[6]

The first newsworthy incident of the Wallace campaign in Vermont occurred shortly after the formation of the state Wallace campaign. In late March 1948, Dean Luther MacNair of Lyndon State Teacher's College addressed a Wallace for President meeting in Burlington. Recalling the late

Wendell Willkie's description of the "reservoir of good will" the United States had throughout the world and his warning that it was diminishing, Dean MacNair said that the recent history of U.S. foreign policy was further threatening that reservoir.

"American strength is not being thrown on the side of people struggling for freedom," he said, and classed American action in Indonesia, China, the Middle East, Turkey, Greece, and Spain as supporting elements of reaction in the world. "I covet for our country," said Dean MacNair, "the role of supporting all people struggling for freedom, but instead we see ourselves on the side of reactionary forces everywhere."[7]

During a question session, MacNair declared he saw no reason to consider the Soviet Union as aggressive. He explained the coup in Czechoslovakia as provoked by reactionary forces, and raised other points that were anathema to the *Burlington Daily News*, which responded with a front page editorial declaring "MacNair Should Go." "It is outrageous to learn that no less a person than a history teacher of the Lyndon State Teachers College is going around the state preaching a doctrine strongly defending the Communists in their program of world expansion."[8] The *Free Press* weighed in as well: " Dean MacNair's frank following of the Communist line is serious because he is in a position to influence public thinking . . . If he is ignorant of the fact of Soviet aggression, is he a competent leader in the field of education? If he knows it, what shall we say of his honesty?"[9]

But it was the *Daily New*s that kept up a barrage of criticism during that week. Dean MacNair did not publicly defend his remarks, and did not respond to the *Burlington Daily News'* campaign. Although the *Free Press* published both anti- and pro-MacNair letters, including a letter of support signed by five former students, William Loeb's paper did not have a letters section. Before the week was out, McNair had submitted his resignation.

A *Daily News* article of March 28, headlined "MacNair Resigned in Time to Escape State School Board Inquiry" made clear that the newspaper was taking credit for keeping the controversy on full boil; Loeb had brought the State Board of Education into the picture by personally sending Commissioner Ralph E. Noble a copy of MacNair's speech.[10] Whether such an investigation into MacNair's teaching was actually planned or was simply after-the-fact public relations is unknown. The *Daily News* took the opportunity for one last strongly worded "good riddance" editorial entitled, "Sing On, McNair, Sing On;" "Dr. Noble and the state board are to be commended for their promptness in becoming aware of the situation," said the editorial. "Mr. MacNair has long been known as an extreme left-wing radical; his ideological display at the Wallace rally clearly indicated that

his rabid personal opinions were based on distorted ideas rather than on truth."[11] MacNair then disappeared from the news; the entire controversy spanned just a week and a half.

(After resigning from Lyndon State, MacNair and his family moved to Cambridge, Massachusetts, where he had an ailing father. He worked at various odd jobs, and in 1950 he became executive director of the Massachusetts chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union, a post he held until 1970. He died in 1988 at age 83, and there is now an annual award in his name given by the Massachusetts ACLU. When I contacted that group a few years ago to find out more about MacNair, I was stunned to learn that his widow, Louise, aged 107, was still alive. She has since died, at age 109, but I was able to see her in Cambridge and ask some questions about the 1948 controversy. What she was able to remember was that her husband thought highly of the president of Lyndon State at the time, Rita Bole, and resigned to spare her and the college unwanted attention.)

## Rockwell Kent tainted

The next major controversy to arise during the Wallace campaign was the Burlington appearance of Rockwell Kent on May 20. Kent was an American painter, printmaker, illustrator, and writer who had been a nationally known figure in the arts dating from the 1920s. As World War II approached, Kent shifted his priorities, becoming increasingly active in left-wing politics. In 1938 the U.S. Post Office asked him to paint a mural in their headquarters in Washington, D.C. The mural was of mail delivery in Puerto Rico and Kent included (in Inuit dialect and in tiny letters) a postcard from Alaska which read when translated, "To the people of Puerto Rico, our friends! Go ahead. Let us change chiefs. That alone can make us free!" This caused considerable consternation but Kent refused to alter the mural until after he had been paid.

Increasingly supportive of Soviet-American friendship and a world devoid of nuclear weapons, Kent's identity as an American painter receded in the postwar years; the more he spoke out on world issues, the more he became, along with other prominent intellectuals and creative artists, a target of anti-Communists. At the time of his appearance in Burlington, he had been embroiled in controversy in his town of Ausable Forks, New York. His successful dairy business had been boycotted due to his political views, specifically his support of Wallace. One resident was quoted as saying, "We refuse to buy Russian milk." In a story that appeared in the Burlington newspapers the very same day of Luther McNair's resignation in March, Kent canceled his insurance and other business ties, signing over the farm to

two of his workers there.[12]

Kent was the guest speaker at a University of Vermont Students for Wallace meeting that May and perhaps feeling that he had nothing to lose, delivered an incendiary speech, headlined in the *Burlington Daily News* the next day, "Rockwell Kent welcomes aid for Wallace from Commies." "God bless the Communists for their support of Henry Wallace," said Kent. "They have offered their aid to us. What fools we would be to refuse them." He went on, "It is true that Wallace has the support of the Communists, and also true that Republicans and Democrats have the support of every crook and gangster in the country."[13]

The next day, the *Daily News* editorial was headlined, "Kent's Charm is Disgusting" and called the speech "a collection of frustrated opinions parading as facts, a parcel of lies gathered with care to create disrespect for our government and support for Henry Wallace and the Communists." It went on, "No good citizen should distort the truth by saying — without any factual proof whatever — that ours is a government 'of corporations, by corporations, and for corporations." The editorial concluded, '"The visit of Mr. Kent to Burlington was a good thing for one reason only: it gave good Americans a chance to see just how far wrong an idealistic guy can go when he indulges in an emotional orgy supporting such a demagogue as Henry Wallace."'[14]

By the time candidate Wallace made a June 1948 appearance in Burlington, it was apparent that the campaign was in trouble, both nationally and statewide. Inexperience and lack of organization led to difficulty in selling tickets to Wallace's Memorial Auditorium rally. In addition, there was a clear reluctance by many to be associated with the campaign; Curtis MacDougall reported that it took many calls to find a farmer willing to allow a noon picnic lunch, and it took fourteen calls obtain an accompanist for Bob Penn, one of the stars of the Broadway musical "Oklahoma," who was slated to sing at the rally.[15]

By this time, the tone of the *Free Press* and *Daily News* editorials moved from outright alarm into condescending dismissal. A few days before Wallace's personal appearance, the *Daily News* editorialized, with prescience as it happened, "He is being very naïve, indeed, if he expects to pick up many supporters hereabouts. Henry, a persistent fellow if ever there was one, said his third party group would take away votes from both Republicans and Democrats. We have a sneaking suspicion," it went on, "that Henry should be getting ready, about now, for an awful surprise."[16]

Describing Wallace's sparsely attended speech at Memorial Auditorium, the *Free Press* mocked Wallace's campaign slogan of bringing "a fresh breeze to American politics," and editorialized, "The kindest explanation

of Wallace the candidate is that much learning has made him mad. The Wallace breeze, we are sorry to say, seems like a zephyr that has become balmy."[17] But this attitude did not prevent the *Free Press* from publishing the names of everyone at the rally who gave money, with their identifying towns and the donation amounts. "Several Well-Known Persons Give Checks of $100 or more" read a headline. Among those "well-known persons" were state officers of the Wallace campaign, Charles Zimmerman of Brattleboro and Una Buxenbaum of Putney; two professors, Lucien Hanks of Bennington College and Waldo Heinrichs of Middlebury; and Rockwell Kent.[18]

The *Daily News* also treated Wallace's speech with bemused condescension. "During his appearance in Burlington this weekend, Henry Wallace impressed observers as a rather pathetic figure, a man who has been misdirected in his efforts, probably sincere, to gain world peace." That editorial also pointed out that "however sincere he may be, his tie-in with Communists, whether direct or indirect, will be his final undoing."[19]

In this, William Loeb was correct, for as Wallace biographers John C. Culver and John Hyde wrote, "Each new chapter in the Red Scare only further isolated Wallace and his party . . . By the time of the election, his credibility as a political figure was destroyed and his party removed to the fringe of public life."[20] The national vote for Wallace was just over one million votes (only 2.4 percent of the vote), and a fourth-place finish behind Strom Thurmond and the States Rights Party. In a development that must have been dispiriting to Vermont supporters, Wallace fared worse in Vermont than he did nationally, garnering 1679 votes for only 1.04 percent of the vote.

After the election, an embittered and disillusioned Wallace pulled back from party-building efforts. As Wallace watched his position in Washington go from one of respect to one of derision, he began to recant his attachment to left-wing politics, drawing further away from hard-line ideologues and adding criticisms of the USSR to his speeches. The Progressive Party's opposition to American involvement in the Korean War precipitated a final break, and in 1950, he left the party that he helped found.

## Novikoff disillusioned by Stalin

The imminent end to the Korean War was one of many stories that dominated the front pages in the spring of 1953. There was the announcement of ties between the USSR and Yugoslavia following Stalin's recent death, a workers' uprising in East Germany, the coronation of Queen Elizabeth, and the execution of accused atomic spies Julius and

Ethel Rosenberg. One local story, however, jostled for the headlines: would Professor Alex Novikoff of the University of Vermont lose his faculty position?

The Ukranian-born Novikoff, like many young idealists, had been a member of the Communist Party during the Depression while a doctorate student in biology at Columbia and a part-time instructor at Brooklyn College. By the time he arrived in Burlington, he had drifted away from the Communist Party due to disillusionment with Stalin's policies, coupled with fears that his views might affect his academic career. He was earning national recognition for his work in cancer research and was awarded full professorship at UVM when his past caught up with him.

Once a teacher was publicly identified as a Communist or invoked the Fifth Amendment in response to questions from an investigating committee, it fell to the faculty member's college to carry out the punishment. The institution would then commence a proceeding to determine the fitness of the teacher to continue on the faculty. Communist Party membership was considered to constitute unprofessional conduct — invoking the Fifth Amendment was evidence of a lack of candor inconsistent with professional conduct, proceedings almost always led to dismissal. Though hundreds of college professors in the United States — at public and private institutions — were either fired or resigned during this period after having been named, Novikoff was the only high-profile example in Vermont. By way of contrast, thirteen instructors in the New York City college system, which included Novikoff's alma mater Brooklyn College, were dismissed. The atmosphere was so charged at Brooklyn College, writes McCarthy Era historian Ellen Schrecker, that a former colleague refused to let one of the dismissed teachers acknowledge him in a book she was writing.[21]

***Alex Novikoff in his lab at the Einstein College of Medicine in 1955 after his dismissal from UVM.***
Photo by Jay Waller, courtesy of Phyllis Novikoff

Although Senator McCarthy was the one who grabbed most of the headlines, there were others in Congress

eager to join the bandwagon. Novikoff fell victim to one of the lesser-known figures, Senator William Jenner of Indiana, a Republican elected in what was known as the "Class of '46," conservatives who led the charge in regaining control of Congress for the first time since 1928. This class, which also included Richard Nixon, William Knowland, and a then little-known Joseph McCarthy, were determined, in the words of one historian, "to rid the government of Communists, perverts, and New Dealers, get tough with Stalin, and crack down on labor unions."[22]

By 1953, Jenner had endeared himself to the Republican right wing by calling for President Truman's impeachment over the dismissal of General MacArthur, and by opposing the post-war Marshall Plan. He had incurred the distaste of the more moderate President Eisenhower but gained the approval of the now-powerful McCarthy. Republican leaders were glad to see Jenner, less unpredictable than McCarthy, take control of the chairmanship of the powerful Senate Internal Security Committee.

It was before this committee that Professor Novikoff was called to testify in April 1953. Senator Jenner was investigating, as the *Free Press* put it, "Red influences in the nation's colleges and schools."[23] The committee had received 1941 New York State files and more directly, the testimony of a former colleague of Novikoff's at Brooklyn College. When Novikoff was faced with the committee's request that he name other members of the Communist Party at Brooklyn College, he refused, citing the Fifth Amendment.

At the insistence of Vermont Governor Lee Emerson, UVM President Carl Borgmann convened a six-person committee of faculty and trustees to assure Vermonters that the "the faculty is 100% pro-American and anti-Communist."[24] Chaired by trustee Father Robert Joyce of Rutland, pastor of one of the largest Catholic parishes in the state (and later bishop of the Burlington diocese), the committee surprisingly voted 5-1 to retain Novikoff. But Emerson successfully persuaded the trustees to override the Joyce committee's recommendation.

The trustees suspended Novikoff for a month with the ultimatum that he either return to Washington and cooperate or risk dismissal on grounds of "moral turpitude." He remained silent. The *Daily News* praised the trustees' decision. "This forthright and American type of action is in contrast to the disgusting vacillations and chicken-heartedness" at Harvard where similar cases occurred. "There has been a great deal of false and dangerous sentimentality," it went on, "to the effect that the various Congressional investigations are trespassing on the rights of the individual."[25]

Novikoff's main defenders were UVM's chapter of the American

Association of University Professors, who argued that the university had violated its own bylaws by not giving Novikoff a public hearing; and members of the Burlington clergy, led by Episcopal Bishop Vedder Ven Dyck, Methodist minister Harold Bucklin, and Rabbi Max Wall. When twenty-nine members of the clergy wrote a letter in support, the *Daily News* featured a front-page story that highlighted three religious leaders who chose not to sign the letter. Reverend Ralph Peterson, pastor of the Assemblies of God Chapel, was quoted as saying, "I did not like the wording that 'the methods of the McCarthy and Jenner committees do violence to our democratic traditions.'" Reverend Rudolph Harm, pastor of the South Burlington Community Church, added, "I thought the statement was a little too strong, committing me to a position that I did not feel I had sufficient information about." Reverend John Carlson of the Alliance Community Church objected to the statement that Novikoff should be retained, saying it amounted to a demand.[26]

The *Daily News* also editorialized, "In times such as these, when the nation faces destruction by the sympathetic and very able plotting of Communist agents and spies, such judgment on the part of the clergy is very miserable indeed."[27] Those who followed the case saw several religious leaders and many faculty members supporting Novikoff, while the college administration and the press were in favor his dismissal. "Congress and public have a right to know," said Loeb in one of his signed editorials, "whether Novikoff is attempting to influence the minds of countless numbers of individuals in favor of the Communist conspiracy to destroy this nation."[28]

One of the twentieth century's greatest historians, Richard Hofstader, put this attitude into perspective by noting that deep strains of anti-intellectualism have appeared in cycles in American political life. He might have been thinking about Senator Jenner and publisher Loeb when he wrote, "Primarily it was McCarthyism which aroused the fear that the critical mind was at ruinous discount in this country. Of course, intellectuals were not the only targets of McCarthy's constant detonations but intellectuals were in the line of fire, and it seemed to give special rejoicing to his followers when they were hit. His sorties against intellectuals and universities were emulated throughout the country by a host of less exalted inquisitors."[29]

Former UVM Professor David Holmes, in his 1988 book on the Novikoff case, drew the conclusion that "although milder in its rhetoric than Loeb's paper, the more middle-of-the-road *Free Press* was equally damaging to Novikoff's cause. The business manager of the *Free Press*, David Howe, shaped the editorial policy of the paper and pressed an

anti-Communist view in public and private, even going so far as to reject several pro-Novikoff letters to the editor."[30]

Holmes also noted that although other Vermont papers weighed in on the case, the only editor to express support for Novikoff was Bernard O'Shea, the editor of the weekly *Swanton Courier*. The reaction to O'Shea's support brought the suggestion that the *Courier* was "communist-minded" and that the editor was flawed by his education and by his out-of-state origins. One letter writer said, "It is known that O'Shea has a college education and it is more likely that he received some instruction about Communism. He brings those thoughts here to Vermont."[31]

Ultimately, Emerson's position won out and Novikoff was forced to resign. Novikoff's attorney, Francis Peisch, argued in vain that dismissing Novikoff would violate the terms of tenure, while Louis Lisman, attorney for the university, countered that invoking the Fifth Amendment was grounds for dismissal.

## Novikoff earns two apologies

But unlike many victims of the Red Scare, Novikoff went on to significant professional success, becoming a researcher at the newly founded Albert Einstein Medical School in New York City. He returned to Burlington in 1983 to receive an honorary UVM degree and received an official apology from the university. Showing a surprising generosity of spirit, Novikoff willed his papers to UVM. When the university received those papers, two years after Novikoff's death in 1987, the *Burlington Free Press* ran an editorial formally apologizing for their role. "The University of Vermont was wrong in 1953," the editorial said. "So was the *Burlington Free Press* editorial page, which saw Communists in every closet, and failed to defend Novikoff's rights and endorsed his firing. The arrival of Alex Novikoff's papers renews our regret that we are 36 years late."[32]

In that editorial, the *Free Press* accurately judged Novikoff's case as "a mere footnote in the broader American chronicle of McCarthyism." But, they added, "the papers provide vivid proof that Vermonters -- despite their vaunted tolerance and independent-thinking -- are not immune to political hysteria."

A few days later, poet James Hayford, a longtime political activist and friend of Novikoff, wrote a response to the *Free Press* that first congratulated the paper on its apology. Hayford, who had been a Henry Wallace delegate at the 1948 Progressive Party convention in Philadelphia. then explicitly tied the Novikoff and Wallace episodes together. "As you indicate, Novikoff wasn't the only one whose way of life, and way of making a living, were

undermined by the political hysteria that your predecessors encouraged during that period. All of us Vermonters who publicly worked for Henry Wallace were named in your columns as suspicious characters who ought to be deported to Moscow, or words to that effect. As you say, you were wrong."[33]

Hayford — like Luther MacNair and Alex Novikoff — might well have agreed with the recent assessment by Ellen Schrecker, a noted historian of the McCarthy Era: "Compared to the horrors of Stalin's Russia, the Red Scare phenomenon was rather mild. But mild as it was, McCarthyism worked. . . For more than a decade, at the height of the Cold War, meaningful dissent had been all but eliminated."[34] ▯


1. Cash, Kevin R. (1975), *Who the hell is William Loeb?* Manchester, New Hampshire: *Amoskeag Press*
2. David Holmes, *Stalking the Academic Communist: Intellectual Freedom and the Firing of Alex Novikoff*, University Press of New England, 1975, 118.
3. Ira Katznelson, *Fear Itself: The New Deal and the Origins of Our Time,* Liveright Publishing, New York, 2013, 425.
4. Alex Ross, "Uncommon Man," *The New Yorker*, October 14, 2013
5. Curtis MacDougall, *Gideon's Army*, Marzani and Munsell, New York, 1952, 817
6. *Burlington Daily News*, March 1, 1948
7. *Burlington Free Press*, March 20, 1948
8. *Burlington Daily News*, March 22, 1948
9. *Burlington Free Press*, March 23, 1948
10. *Burlington Daily News*, March 28, 1948
11. *Burlington Daily News*, March 29, 1948
12. *Burlington Daily News*, March 28, 1948
13. *Burlington Daily News*, May 21, 1948
14. *Burlington Daily News*, May 22, 1948
15. MacDougall, 820
16. *Burlington Daily News*, June 22, 1948
17. *Burlington Free Press*, June 27, 1948
18. *Burlington Free Press*, June 27, 1948
19. *Burlington Daily News*, June 27, 1948
20. John C. Culver and John Hyde, *American Dreamer: The Life of Henry Wallace*, W.W. Norton, 2001, 503
21. Ellen Schrecker, *No Ivory Tower: McCarthysim and the Universities*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1986, 170
22. David Oshinsky, *A Conspiracy So Immense: The World of Joe McCarthy*, Oxford University Press, 1983, 53.
23. *Burlington Free Press*, April 25, 1953
24. Holmes, 146
25. *Burlington Daily News*, June 25, 1953
26. *Burlington Daily News*, July 9, 1953
27. *Burlington Daily News*, July 10, 1953
28. *Burlington Daily News*, June 25, 1953
29. Richard Hofstadter, *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life,* Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1963, 3.
30. Holmes, 184
31. Holmes, 151
32. *Burlington Free Press*, November 9, 1982
33. James Hayford, *Recollecting Who I Was*, Oriole Books, 2003, 259-260
34. Ellen Schrecker, P*olitical Tests for Professors: Academic Freedom during the McCarthy Years*, University of California at Berkeley symposium, October 7, 1999.

***This complex of Winooski buildings stood between Spring and St. Peter streets from the 1870s until they were razed in 1967. The front building was the convent for the Sisters of Providence of Montreal, with the school in the rear; St. Francis Church would have been off to the right. Thousands of children were educated in the French language here.***
Collection of Joseph Perron

# 19th Century French-Canadian Immigration to Vermont

## *From Hyppolite Prunier to Fred Plumtree*

*Michael F. Dwyer*

By the beginning of the twentieth century, one could see the architectural imprint of French-Canadian settlement on the cultural landscape of Vermont. French-speaking Catholics built monumental churches in Burlington, Winooski, St. Albans, Rutland, Newport, and St. Johnsbury, among other towns. Each of these parish communities has its own stories-within-stories of French-Canadians who struggled to maintain their language, identity, and culture within an English-speaking and, sometimes hostile, Catholic hierarchy. This physical evidence also points to a larger but somewhat hidden truth: that a significant number of Vermonters have French-Canadian ancestry whether they realize it or not. The 1990 federal census disclosed that twenty-nine per cent of Vermonters stated that "French," or "French-Canadian" was one of their ancestries,

making them the largest single group in that census from whom ethnicity was claimed.[1]

Emigration from French-speaking Canada to Vermont cannot be understood as a single monolithic movement: it has distinct phases, conditioned by when and where in Vermont the immigrant settled. Small numbers of French-Canadians began to drift over the border and along Lake Champlain after the American Revolution. Poverty pushed people out of Canada. Though France lost Canada in the French and Indian War, the "revenge of the cradle," the high birth-rate among French-Canadians, created a surplus population of farmers that their native land could no longer sustain. Vermont, by contrast, needed seasonal or temporary workers in agriculture and the lumber industry. As historian Ralph D. Vicero noted, "For many years the movement was irregular in character and insignificant in volume."[2] A turning point, however, came after the War of 1812, when more of these migratory workers brought their families with them and settled with more permanence, notably in northern Vermont. Catholic church records help identify some of these arrivals. In October 1815, Boston's missionary priest, Rev. Francis A. Matignon, baptized more than a dozen French-Canadian children, from infants to the age of eleven, in Burlington.[3]

Nos. 56 et 58 rue Church.

Aux Dames:

Nous ne pouvons nous attribuer la gloire d'avoir le seule magasin dans la ville, mais nous sommes convaineu que nous avons le plus grand et le meilleur assortiment de Marchandises Sèches de l'état du Vermont, à des prix les plus minimes, comparant valeur pour valeur. Veuillez nous faire un appel, afin de nous permettre de vous prouver le fait.

La J. W. McAuslan Cie.
Boston Store.

PROGRAMME
DE LA
SOIREE DRAMATIQUE et MUSICALE
PAR LE CLUB MAISONNEUVE DE WINOOSKI, VT.

Membres du Club Maisonneuve.

Samedi, le 26 Fevrier, 1898,
A LA SALLE CORPORATION, WINOOSKI, VT.
Portes ouverts a 7 Heures. Levee du Rideau a 8 Heures.

ALPERT & ROSENBERG,
Nouvelles Marchandises du Printemps Recues Chaque Jours.
NOUVELLES ETOFFES A ROBES, NOUVELLES SOIES, NOUVEAUX VELOURS, NOUVEAUX RIDEAUX, NOUVEAUX TAPIS.

***A program for an evening of drama and music, Maisonneuve Club, Winooski, Feb. 26, 1898. Gustave Lavallee is at center of the picture.*** Author's collection

As Vermont continued to lose its native-born population in the 1830s and 1840s, Lower Canada supplied a seemingly inexhaustible supply of labor. For these French-Canadians who planted roots in Vermont, it is important to consider that the earlier their immigration, the swifter their assimilation among Yankee neighbors. They had to in order to survive, particularly in rural areas of central and southern Vermont where French-Canadians were more widely disseminated. This phenomenon is manifested through what happened in the transformation of surnames. Some names

became rough phonetic transliterations of what Anglos heard their French-Canadian neighbors say. These examples, from censuses and vital records throughout Vermont, have the original French name at left and the Vermont equivalent on the right.

| | |
|---|---|
| Archambault | Shambo |
| Boucher | Bushey |
| Caron | Crone |
| Tétreau | Tatro/Rowe |
| Nicolas | Nicklaw |
| Benoît | Benware/Benway |
| Beausoleil | Bosley |
| St. Jacques | Jock/Jakes |
| Gingras | Jangraw/Shangraw |
| Beaupré | Boprey |
| Vincent | Benson |

Other names were direct translations of a French word:

| | |
|---|---|
| Boulanger | Baker |
| Courtemanche | Shortsleeves |
| Dufresne | Ash |
| Léveiller | Wideawake |
| Leroy | King |
| Lacroix | Cross |
| Létourneau | Blackbird |
| Boisvert | Greenwood |
| LaPierre | Stone |
| Prunier | Plumtree |
| Lefebvre | Bean |
| Ledoux | Sweet |
| Poissant | Fisher |
| Tranquille | Steady |
| Viens | Come |

In this last grouping, these English-sounding names, after a generation or two, would eventually mask the French-Canadian identity of some Vermonters. A few census-takers had no idea of what to do with some names as they heard them; consequently, one man from Rupert was listed as Joseph Frenchman. John Battese of Hubbardton also lost his last name, leaving only his first name, the ubiquitous, *Jean-Baptiste.* Other examples from censuses show anglicization of the first and last name: For example, Narcisse Lussier became Nelson Lusha, Michel Davignon became Mitchell Devino.

***A cabinet photo of Gustave Lavallee, Hector Huard Studio, Winooski, 1896.*** Author's collection

***Insignia of Societe de St. Jean Baptiste, fabricated before the American branch, L'Union de St. Jean Baptiste was created in 1901.*** Collection of Joseph Perron

When tracking individuals and families through census records, any part of the name could appear differently in successive censuses, yet they refer to the same person. Since Québec baptismal registers often record at least two or three first names for every child, and with almost every girl baptized as Marie, there is considerable variation among the listing of women in Vermont records. How a French-Canadian's name was written depended on who did the recording; many of the immigrants were illiterate. Another aspect of French naming practices that would have confused Vermonters were *dit* names—nicknames given as a suffix often used to distinguish two people of the same name. Even within the same generation of families like those of Paquet dit Lavallée or Brault dit Chaillot, one brother may choose the first part of the name and the other the second part. From these two examples emanated many garbled versions: Pockette, Lavly, Lovely, or Brow, and Shiette or Chiot—each trio of names referring to the same person.

Until the last third of the nineteenth century when many births went unrecorded by town and city clerks, baptismal records remain one of the most useful tools in ascertaining an immigrant's true name, yet among these records considerable surname variations exist attesting to whether the

priest spoke French. Only Québec priests maintained the precise formula that came from France of recording a full citation for every sacrament: a marriage record, for example, would have not only the names of bride and groom, it would have the full names of parents, their residence, names of the witnesses, their relationship to the bridal couple, and whether they could sign the register. By contrast, American priests would record only names of bride and groom, the witnesses, and name of the officiant.

Against this larger background, individual stories make statistics into real people. Two early immigrants, among an interrelated group from the environs of Chambly, Canada, seventy-five miles north of the Vermont border, were Augustin Davignon (1798–1859) and his brother-in-law André Brault dit Chaillot (1796–1867). They were living in the section of Colchester that came to be known as Winooski Falls, when they were listed as heads of household, one following the other, in the 1820 census.[4] Names that followed theirs—Rolfe, Robinson, Rice, and Washburn, were all Yankees. André, recorded as Andrew Brough in 1820, was listed as Andrew Shiotte in 1830, Andrew Chiette (1840). In the early 1830s, prior to the building of a woolen mill at the falls, Shiotte and Davignon purchased land in Colchester among Yankee neighbors. It was not a seamless transition for either side. As emigration from Québec continued to rise through the nineteenth century, denunciation from the French-speaking clergy grew in vituperation toward those who left Canada, calling them cowards, deserters, and renegades as they moved to a land characterized as a "vast Sodom." More than differences in language and culture, when French-Canadians crossed into the United States, they entered an environment hostile to Catholics. Until a permanent Catholic church was established in Burlington, these two families made regular trips back to Chambly to have their children baptized. Augustin Davignon, known in Vermont records as Hueston Devino, clamored for a French-speaking priest and the establishment of a French church, yet among his nine children who lived into adulthood, two of his sons married Yankees. One of André's sons married a woman born in Canada, the other did not.[5]

A small-scale exodus from Canada followed Papineau's Rebellion of 1837–1838. Participants who took up arms against the British government became wanted men. One rebel, Toussaint Audet dit Lapointe, of Mont St. Hilaire, fled over the border with his wife and eight children. His time in Vermont was brief. St. Hyacinthe, Québec, church records show that by 1844 he returned when another child was born. Two of Toussaint's children, though, remained in Benson, Vermont. Here the story gets more interesting. On January 16,1847, his son Toussaint *Odet* Jr. was married to Emilie *Croto* [Croteau dit Vincent] by Rev. Azariah Hyde of Benson's Unitarian Church.

Later that same year, Hyde also married Mary Audet (1831–1910) and Edward Bird (1829–1908). A marriage outside the Catholic Church not only would have been considered illicit, it often meant excommunication. In some but not all instances, a Protestant marriage might have been rehabilitated, i.e., blessed by the church. Eventually, that is what happened to Toussaint Jr. Within a year he returned to the eastern townships of Canada, where his eldest daughter, Rosalie, was baptized in 1848. Over the next fifty years, Toussaint Audet and his wife Emily moved frequently but ended their days as a three-generation family in Putnam, Connecticut.[6]

By contrast, Mary and Edward Bird's story has a stronger Vermont connection. Their marriage was not among the rehabilitated. Following the birth of their first child in 1848, the Birds left Vermont for the mills of Auburn, Massachusetts, where they were living at the time of the 1850 census. From there, the family moved to Putnam, Washington County, New York. Edward Bird is recorded there as a farm laborer in the 1860 census. By 1864, they returned to Vermont, settling in the Hortonville village in Hubbardton. Near the end of the Civil War, Edward made a life-changing decision: he accepted the town of Hubbardton's five-hundred-dollar bounty to fill the town's quota of soldiers. With that money, Mary Bird bought the house and farm where they lived for the remainder of their lives. Given their pattern of frequent moves before the Civil War, it is doubtful the Birds ever would have accumulated enough capital to buy property. Edward survived the war, and in 1876, became a naturalized citizen by virtue of his Civil War service. In 1892, he qualified for Civil War disability pension, which he collected until his death in 1908.[7] As evidence of his break with the Catholic Church, five of his six children did not have Catholic weddings. Edward had turned his back on Canada.

One would not have found *Edward Bird* in any Québec parish record—in fact, he was born Antoine Loiseau, in Boucherville, along the St. Lawrence River, where all of his siblings remained. He came to Benson as a teenager, with his mother's brother, Léandre Casavant, whose name morphed into Lewis Casavaw. No evidence survives that anyone in this family ever went north again. Lewis is found in Edward Bird's household in Sudbury's 1880 census with the curious label describing him as Edward's "father-by-law."[8]

Hundreds of other Canadian-born Vermonters served in the Civil War. Many remarkably detailed stories survive through Civil War pension files, and therein one learns details of the Lussier/Lucier family: a father and son who both fought, survived their wounds, and lived to old age.[9] Charles Lucier (1826–1905), from St. Simon, County Bagot, left Canada in his late teens for work and marriage in New York State. Charles then returned to

St. Simon where his eldest son, Gilbert Lucier, was baptized in April 1847. This young family then settled in Alburgh by 1850. Sometime in the next decade, the Luciers embraced Methodism, never to return to the Catholic Church. Charles Lucier enlisted as a Private in Company K, Fifth Vermont Regiment; his son Gilbert, just 17, enlisted in Company F, Eleventh Vermont Regiment. Charles died in 1905 and his funeral was held at the Methodist Church in Jay.[10]

Gilbert Lucier has the distinction of being Vermont's last surviving soldier of the Civil War. He died at the age of 97 in Newport on September 22, 1944.[11] In nine Vermont censuses (1850–1940), Gilbert always claimed Vermont as his birthplace even though the record of his baptism shows otherwise. Was this a faulty memory or a conscious decision to affirm Vermont? Though he married a first-generation Vermonter, Lucy King, her family name only a generation before had been Leroy. With the Luciers joining and maintaining membership in a Protestant Church, they assimilated among other Vermonters to a much higher degree than they would have had they remained in a Catholic enclave.

Some towns, in the aftermath of the Civil War, had 15 to 20 per cent of their inhabitants born in Canada. A nativist backlash, which had started in the 1840s, never quite disappeared. In this vein, Rowland Robinson wrote:

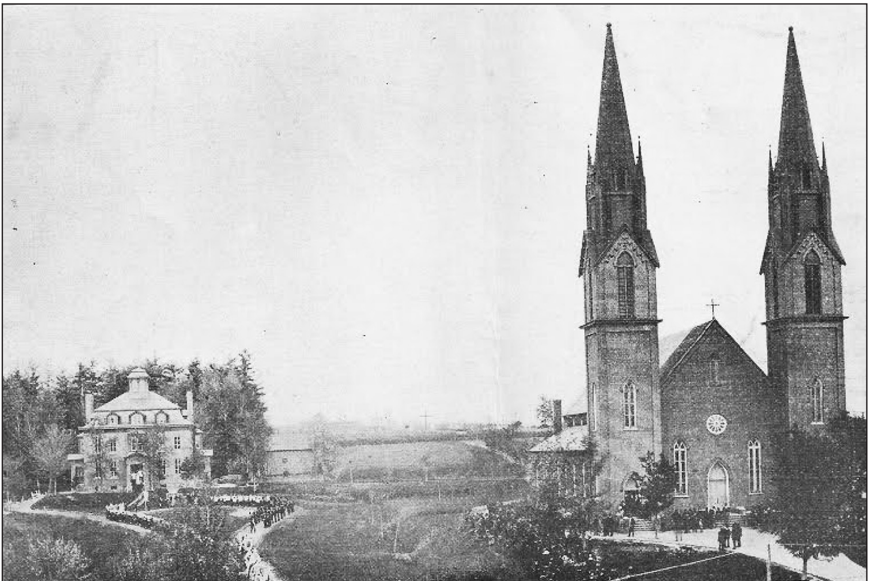
> ". . . swarms of Canadian laborers came flocking over the border in gangs of two or three, baggy-breeched and moccasined habitants, embarked in rude carts drawn by shaggy Canadian ponies . . . they have become the most numerous of Vermont's foreign population. For years the State was infested with an inferior class of people, who plied the vocation of professional beggars . . .
>
> "They were an abominable crew of vagabonds, robust, lazy men and boys, slatternly women with litters of filthy brats, and all as detestable as they were uninteresting . . .
>
> "The character of these people is not such as to inspire hope for the future of Vermont, if they should become the most numerous of the population."[12]

A significant change in the demographics did not support Robinson's fear of a French-Canadian takeover. Whereas in 1860, Vermont represented 44.3 per cent of the French-Canadian population of New England, by 1880 it had slipped to 16.1 of the distribution. Massachusetts now took the lead with almost 40 per cent of the Canadian-born population.[13] As one example, Fred Plumtree, born Hyppolite Prunier, a Civil War veteran, lived in Bennington along with his ten children at the time of the 1870 census; but by 1880 the Plumtrees had moved to Holyoke.[14] Reason for the shift:

the lure of larger textile mills and the thousands of workers needed to fuel the machines. Vermont simply did not have that kind of draw.

While French-Canadian organizations, like L'Union St. Jean Baptiste, a cultural and mutual-aid society, as well as Catholic sodalities, existed in Vermont, as they did in the other New England States, Vermont never possessed the population to warrant the regular publication of a French-language newspaper. St. Albans, Newport, Burlington, and Rutland had their "French" neighborhoods, but none had the same concentration that Winooski village developed after the Civil War. In 1868, Rev. Jean-Frédéric Audet, founded St. Francis Xavier Church, to serve the growing number of French-Canadian Catholics. Over the next forty-nine years he created a French-speaking bastion anchored by the church, convent, school, and cemetery, the largest single parish-owned property in the state.[15]

Winooski most closely approximates the "Petit Canadas" associated with mill towns like Biddeford, Maine; Fall River, Massachusetts; and Woonsocket, Rhode Island, but without blocks of tenements. In greater Burlington, one finds a variety of print media that attest to the widespread use of the French language. Contrary to the experience of a French-Canadian immigrant who emigrated fifty years before, Gustave Lavallée (1875–1931), a twenty-year-old blacksmith from Cap Santé, Portneuf County, Québec, arrived in 1895 to a familiar cultural environment in Winooski. Here he joined a network of relatives and friends who had



***St. Francis Rectory and Church, showing a procession for the episcopal visit of Bishop DeGoesbriand in 1892.*** Winooski Historical Society

established themselves in the previous two decades. As a young man, Gustave participated in theatrical productions and musical reviews. He married at St. Francis Xavier Church, Claudia Lavallée, a millworker who had come from an adjoining village in Canada. When his wife died at 29 after giving birth to her third child, Gustave returned to Québec within a few years and married his wife's younger half-sister, Eugénie. Their seven children all remained in the area, found their spouses among other Catholic French-Canadian families, and most kept French as their mother tongue. Though trained as a teacher in Canada, Eugénie Lavallée never learned English but managed to live and function within similar network of family and friends until her death in 1973.[16]

For immigrants like Mme. Lavallée, her native language and her Catholic faith were intrinsically bound. Outsiders decried the clannishness and foreignness of French-Canadians. Polemics decrying the lack of French-Canadian assimilation persisted through the 1930s, when they became infused with the Eugenics Movement. Some writers proposed quotas, citing one of the problems with French-Canadians as "the fecundity of their race."[17] Among the targets for these writers were Catholic schools where "state legislation in regard to private schools should be much more stringent than it is now." Their ideals and aims differed from those of "the native stock."[18] Indeed, the Sisters of Providence of Montréal staffed an elementary school in Winooski since the 1870s to educate French-speaking population; the sisters continued to give half-day instruction in French until the late 1950s until a directive came from the bishop of Burlington that such instruction was no longer necessary. Winooski thus exemplifies the longest surviving pocket of French immersion in Vermont. While it would not have been difficult for most French-Canadian descendants in Winooski or Burlington to find their origins in Québec, other descendants had long lost their heritage in French Canada.

For many Vermonters today, especially with names different from their nineteenth-century forbears, it becomes an act of retrieval to access the language and culture of their ancestors. Would someone looking at Bennington's 1900 census, in isolation, realize that Paul Brooks was Guillaume Napoléon Paul Rousseau? As the wave of genealogical yearning sweeps across America, hundreds of people seek to retrieve their lost roots and connect to their ancestors who through deprivation or courage crossed Lake Champlain or drove a team over the Beebe Plains to pursue a better life. Vermont's history needs to be more inclusive of the various people who lived here in the past and who live here now. It is an unfounded stereotype to maintain that Vermont is only a place of village greens anchored by white-steepled Protestant churches. Indeed, as a result of other

immigrant groups, like the Irish, who brought their faith with them, the single-largest church denomination in Vermont has remained the Catholic Church. French Canadians in Bennington also had a separate school and a separate church. All over Vermont, alternative histories have yet to be written and ancestors rediscovered. Joseph-André Senécal, former director of the Canadian Studies Program at the University of Vermont, concluded "Vermont has stayed that mythic kingdom that Currier and Ives can come home to. Much of this pious infectious construct is dangerous and insidious. It blinds us to the nature of Vermont's ethnic past . . ."[19]

1. Joseph-André Senécal, "Franco-Vermonters on the Eve of the Millennium: Tales from the 1990 Census," Links, *Journal of the Vermont French-Canadian Society* Vol. 1, No. 2 (Spring 1997), 8.
2. Ralph D. Vicero, "French Canadian Settlement in Vermont Prior to the Civil War," reprinted in Madeleine Giguère, *A Franco-American Overview,* vol 4: New England (Part Two) Cambridge, Mass., National Assessment and Dis-semination Center for Bilingual Education, 1981, 167.
3. Matignon baptisms at Vermont-French Canadian Society website: http://www.vt-fcgs.org/PDFs/1815%20Burlington%20baptisms%20by%20Matignon.pdf
4. 1820 U. S. Census, Colchester, Chittenden Co., Vt., p. 541.
5. Michael F. Dwyer and Susan L. Valley, "Augustin Davignon and André Brault dit Chaillot, Brothers-in-law of Winooski Falls, Vermont," The New England Historical and Genealogical Register, 170 (Winter 2016), 45–57.
6. Napoleon Jasmin household, 1900 U. S. Census, Putnam, Windham Co., Conn., p. 3A, E. D. 521.
7. Edward Bird, Civil War pension, appl. #894935, cert. #758083. An indication of Bird's assimilation into the community, none of those men who gave depositions for him, Cyrus Jennings, Charles Morgan, and James Hall, were French-Canadian.
8. Michael F. Dwyer, "The Path to Edward Bird: A Story of Identity, Assimilation, and Discovery," *American Ancestors* (Spring 2012), 28–32.
9. Civil War pension files, Charles Lucier, appl. #611,749, cert. #387, 312; Gilbert Lucier, appl. #103, 800, cert. #75, 465
10. *Newport Express and Standard,* 3 Feb. 1905.
11. Howard Coffin, *Something Abides Discovering the Civil War in Today's Vermont* (Woodstock, Vt.: Countryman Press, 2013), 304.
12. Rowland Evans Robinson, *Vermont: A Study of Independence* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1892), 330.
13. Yves Roby, *Les Franco-Américains de la Nouvelle Angleterre, 1776–1930* (Sillery, Québec: Septentrion, 1990), p. 47.
14. Fred Plumtree, 1870 U. S. Census, Bennington, Bennington Co., Vt., p. 348B; 1880 U. S. Census, Holyoke, Hampden Co., Mass., p. 167.
15. Vincent Edward Feeney, *The Great Falls on Onion River: A History of Winooski, Vermont* (Winooski: The Winooski Historical Society, 2002), 73, 119.
16. Personal interviews with the Lavallée family, 1994–2001.
17. Robert C. Dexter, "The French-Canadian Invasion," in *Aliens in Our Midst*, Madison Grant, ed. (New York: Galton Pub. Co., 1930), 75.
18. Ibid, 78.
19. Joseph-André Senéchal, "Nos ancêtres les Gaulois: Ethnicity and History in Vermont," *Vermont History* 71 (Winter/Spring 2003), 66.

***Paul Feeley in front of his studio on Murphy Road, North Bennington, 1965.*** Photograph by Ugo Mulas © Ugo Mulas Heirs. All rights reserved.

# A Long Overdue Assessment of One of the Most Important Painters of the 1960s

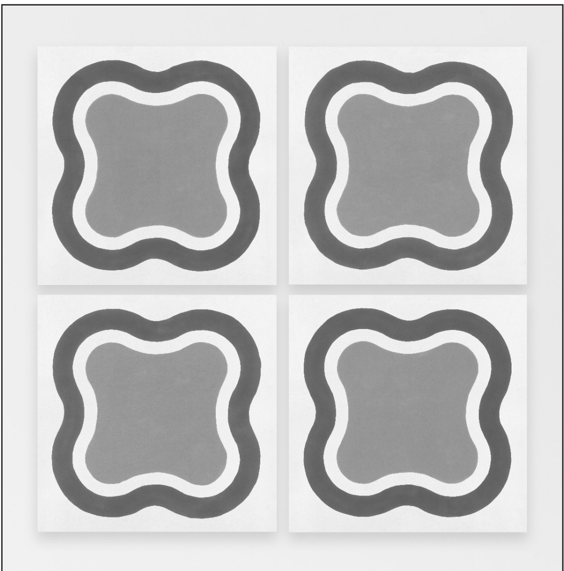
*Reviewed by Jamie Franklin*

Paul Feeley may not be as well known today as many of his art-world colleagues and friends. Though, during the last ten to fifteen years he has had a well-deserved revival of sorts (including an exhibition I organized in 2008), thanks in no small part to the brilliant management of his estate by his daughters and granddaughters. Feeley played a pivotal role in the complex narrative of post-painterly abstraction in America during the 1950s and 1960s. Head of the visual arts department at Bennington College during the post-war years until his untimely death in 1966, Feeley was revered by his student Helen Frankenthaler, whose use of luminous pools of thinned oil paint on unprimed canvas is often cited as the origin

of Color Field painting. Feeley was also integral in organizing a highly lauded exhibition program at Bennington College, which included the first retrospectives of Jackson Pollock (1952), Adolph Gottlieb (1954), and Barnett Newman (1958). Perhaps most critically, Feeley was the lynchpin in creating a faculty and creative environment in and around Bennington during the 1950s through the mid-1960s that reads like a *who's who* of emerging Color Field and proto-Minimalist trends.

In addition to Feeley, visual arts faculty at the college in the 1960s included Pat Adams, Vincent Longo, Jules Olitski, and Tony Smith. Kenneth Noland lived in nearby Shaftsbury, and David Smith, who died in a car crash as he drove from Noland's home to Bennington College, made regular visits to the area during this period. Patricia Johanson, a 1962 graduate of Bennington College, who was making her name as an important young minimalist painter, maintained a residence in nearby upstate New York. Ruth Ann Fredenthal, a Bennington alumna who would go on to a successful career as a painter of luminous monochromes, worked as Feeley's studio assistant during his last year of life. If one branches out to look at all the important critics with deep ties to the area, including Lawrence Alloway, Gene Baro, Eugene Goossen, and Clement Greenberg, Bennington, with Feeley at its helm, was one of the leading centers of the art world at the precise moment that the catalog *Imperfections by Chance: Paul Feeley Retrospective, 1954-1966* and the exhibition that it accompanied, surveys.

In this regard the catalog, especially Douglas Dreishpoon's lead essay, wonderfully chronicles not only Feeley's development as one of the leading artists of the period,

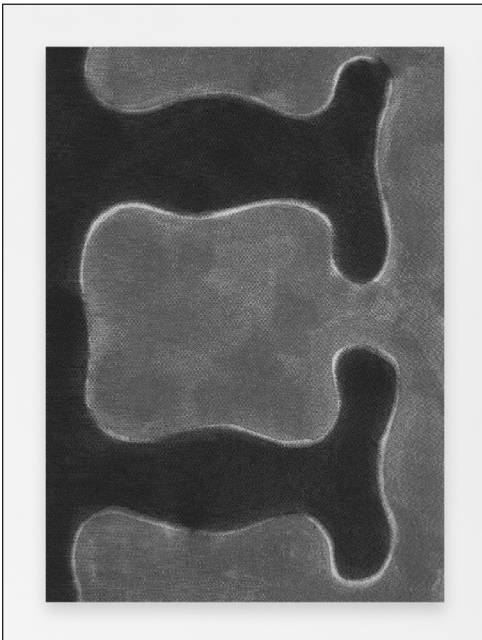


**Asellus, *1964, oil-based enamel on canvas, four panels, collection of Albright-Knox Art Gallery.***

Courtesy of Estate of Paul Feeley and Garth Greenan Gallery, New York.

represented by the visionary dealer Betty Parsons and lauded posthumously by a major retrospective at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in 1968, but also details his relationships to those figures mentioned above and provides an excellent overview of his position within a complex web of artistic power and influence. The curators of the exhibition, Dreishpoon, chief curator emeritus at the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, and Tyler Cann, associate curator of contemporary art at the Columbus Museum of Art, pulled together a stellar body of work, all of which is illustrated with beautifully photographed full-page reproductions in the catalog. While I sadly missed the exhibition at both venues, the catalog includes excellent photographs of the installation at Buffalo, with Feeley's works looking glorious in the building's classically inspired stone-clad galleries. Indeed, such a setting seems wholly appropriate for Feeley's work, inspired as he was by ancient Greek sculpture and architecture, to the point of installing two large Doric columns from an Greek Revival building in Troy, New York, that had been demolished, just outside his North Bennington studio.

The chronological focus of the exhibition and catalog on the last dozen years of Feeley's life and career may be both their greatest strength and their greatest weakness. There is no question that the work from this period is the work that truly set Feeley apart and established his unique artistic voice. The exhibition begins with *Red Blotch* from 1954, in which Feeley seems to have broken free from any overbearing influence of cubism and his Abstract Expressionist colleagues, perhaps even foreshadowing Gottlieb's *Burst* series. Jumping ahead to 1956 the selection of works then continues through the rest of the artist's career, eloquently summarizing Feeley's stylistic development, as well as some of his more interesting aesthetic tangents. An untitled work from 1959, which was in the retrospective and is currently on view in the Bennington Museum's



***Untitled, 1959,***
***oil-based enamel on canvas.***

Courtesy of Estate of Paul Feeley and Garth Greenan Gallery, New York.

*An installation view of Bennington Museum's Bennington Modernism Gallery, with Feeley's painting* **Canopus** *(1964) on the back wall, upper right, and sculpture* **Enif** *(1965) on the floor, lower left.*

Both works courtesy of Estate of Paul Feeley and Garth Greenan Gallery, New York.

Bennington Modernism Gallery, beautifully summarizes the distinctive style Feeley developed in the latter half of the 1950s. His canvases of this period typically feature a spare palette, using only two or, more rarely, three colors, often shades of red, yellow and blue, in combination with the raw canvas. Feeley's forms from this period tend toward symmetrical biomorphic abstractions, featuring swelling attenuations that seem to wriggle with life. The paint is applied lovingly, but casually, allowing for occasional drips and glorying in the liquid nature of the thinned medium, with beautifully delicate passages of feathery interaction where colors meet the raw canvas. One of the greatest strengths of Feeley's work from this period, which continues throughout the rest of his work, is the way in which he manages to set up an incredibly tenuous equilibrium between positive and negative, figure and ground. The opposing blue and red forms in this canvas seem to jump back and forth in the viewers' eyes between projection and recession, forshadowing, albeit more gently, the optical effects of Larry Poons's lozenge paintings of the mid-1960s and Op Art more generally (Poons would go on to teach at Bennington College in 1968, not long after Feeley's death).

One of the many highlights of the catalog is the inclusion of Feeley's "Art Policy for Bennington College," written in 1959 and outlining twenty "aims" he envisioned as the central tenets of the college's pedagogy. Dreishpoon rightly draws particular attention to aims number 4 and 5, which include an "encouragement to do the most elementary and primitive things" and "a willingness at all times to return to first principles, to get

back to simple things." Certainly Feeely's own spare palette and seemingly simplistic anthropomorphic forms of this period echo these aims. Yet Feeley had an admiration for the "primitive" that well predates the late 1950s and isn't always so clean and tidy. His archives include photographs of lovingly hewn stone sculptures by self-taught artist Williams Edmondson, the first African-American artist to have a solo show at the Museum of Modern Art, in 1937, that likely date from the late 1930s. He also visited African-American grave sites in Georgia in the mid-1950s composed of what look like casually strewn chards of broken pottery, glass, and other detritus, that demonstrate an interest in a less polished "primitivism." This is an aesthetic Feeley himself explored in at least one painting that incorporated scraps of roofing tar and other unorthodox materials adhered to the raw-looking surface. By 1962 the beautifully simple, sinuous baluster form and its infinite combinations, which seem to weave in and out of space, come to dominate Feeley's paintings. But he never stopped experimenting. To the contrary, by this point in Feeley's career his experimental bent seems to go into overdrive. In the next few years, before his untimely death in 1966, Feeley's work begins to evolve rapidly, though always logically within the constraints the artist seems to have set for himself, notably exploring diagrammatic compositions composed of multiple nearly identical forms (jacks and quatrafoils), and, in the last year of his life, sculptures that extend variations on his two-dimensional forms into the viewers' space.

One of the great triumphs of the Feeley retrospective was the recreation of Feeley's monumental sculptural installation *Karnak*, and its permanent installation on the grounds of the Columbus Museum of Art. Cann, whose catalog essay focuses on Feeley's late career foray into sculpture, had the brilliant vision to have what may well be Feeley's *magnus opus* refabricated (under the careful supervision of Ruth Ann Fredenthal, Feeley's studio assistant during the last year of his life, who painted all of his sculptures) and acquired for his museum's permanent collection. *Karnak* was conceived by Feeley prior to his death but not realized until his 1968 retrospective at the Guggenheim where, based on the existing archival photographs, it turned Frank Lloyd Wright's iconic circular atrium into a forest-like, Dr. Seussian wonderland. After the 1968 exhibition the sculpture's nine 21-foot tall tower-like forms, constructed from plywood and painted, were unfortunately stored outdoors and deteriorated to the point of no return. The strength of Feeley's latest paintings and one-year venture into sculpture at the very end, beg the question of where would his art have gone if his life hadn't been cut tragically short.

During a recent visit to the Bennington Museum, Vanessa Harnick, Feeley's granddaughter and administrator of the Feeley estate, shared

photos of recently discovered sculptural maquettes. They are small painted cardboard models composed of interlocking planes painted with patterns that related to his two-dimensional work, but instead of identically shaped planes that intersected to create symmetrical configurations they are composed of at least two, sometimes three, differently shaped planes. How I would have LOVED to see these realized at full scale! The fabulous selection of works on paper in the exhibition and catalog, mostly watercolors, provide insight into just how restless and experimental the artist was. In this less taxing, more improvised medium, the artist seemed free to take more risks and push his limits.

As mentioned before, if there was a weakness to the exhibition and catalog, it was the laser-tight focus on the artist's last ten years of production. While this decision certainly allowed the curators to examine in greater depth what is without doubt Feeley's most distinctive work, it oversimplified a much longer, far more complex career. In doing so, I think we have a less nuanced understanding of not only who Feeley was as an artist, but how he fit into the incredibly complex American art world of the period spanning the mid-1930s, dominated by Social Realism and modernism in a distinctly European vein, through the apex of Abstract Expressionism in the early 1950s. This problem was rectified to a degree in the catalog by a fabulous, well-annotated and illustrated time-line by Carey Cordova, Feeley's granddaughter and a professor of American Studies at the University of Texas. Here we can begin to grasp the full breadth of his career and see a few tantalizing images of his earlier work, from his Social Realist work in the 1930s, to the highly refined analytic cubism of the late 1940s, and Abstract Expressionist works of the early 1950s in which he is clearly grappling to come to terms with the work of the most influential artists of the day. Illustrated is a Pollock-esque drip painting from 1952 that belonged to Feeley's close friend, the poet Howard Nemerov. Feeley isn't simply aping Pollock. He's clearly looked long and hard at Pollock's work (the first retrospective of the famous artist's work was held at Bennington College that same year) and come to the point where he could create a painting that was every bit as good as the best Pollock on Pollock's own terms. It says a lot that within a just a few years Feeley was able to establish his own terms that pushed American painting in new and exciting directions. In the third essay in the catalog poet-critic Raphael Rubinstein examines Feeley's inspiration to contemporary painters from the 1980s (Philip Taafe) through the first decade of the twenty-first century (Chris Martin and Carrie Moyer). The very fact that such an essay could even be written attests to the ongoing and ever-growing impact Feeley has had on the last half century of American art. ▯

*Imperfections by Chance: Paul Feeley Retrospective, 1954-1966,* by Douglas Dreishpoon, Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York in associaition with D Giles Limited, London, 2015, 270 pp.

# Lionel Nowak on Paul Feeley:

## *Interview by Tom Fels, January 23, 1984, in Nowak's studio in Jennings Hall, home of the Music Division of Bennington College.*

*In the winter of 1984 I was working with Eugene Goossen, an art historian with close ties to Bennington College, to research the history of the visual arts at Bennington. The goal was an exhibition and catalog surveying this more than 50-year history. These never came to pass, but along the way several other objectives were achieved. One was the following interview with Lionel Nowak, the eminent pianist, composer and teacher who during his almost forty years at the college had always taken a strong interest in the visual arts. Nowak was especially well positioned to comment on the life and work of his colleague and contemporary the painter and teacher Paul Feeley, also of the Bennington faculty. Feeley is the principal subject of the interview, which besides being of biographical and historical interest, offers a good sense of the intellectual, artistic, and social climate at Bennington in the years following World War II.*

*At the time of the interview Lionel was over 70 and had had a stroke several years before, which affected not only his playing but to a lesser extent his memory and speech, as can be seen from time to time here. Still, he had no trouble expressing his thoughts about Feeley, and his now pale complexion in the shaded calm of his studio left an impression impossible to forget.    TF*

**TF:** I did make a few notes, but perhaps you did also.
**LN:** I made a list of some things which came to memory. My comments about Feeley don't have much to do with his painting at all.

**TF:** That's okay; we're interested in the people.
**LN:** I was certainly interested in him as a painter, as my collection of his works would show, but I was equally interested in him as a person. I'll recount a couple of things we did together that were very enjoyable.

At the time of the planning of the arts building – now VAPA, the center for Visual and Performing Arts – in advance of that, we went out to see the person who is now Mrs. Malbin.

**TF:** Lydia Winston.
**LN:** Lydia Winston. Of course the first time I met her, she was Lydia Kahn Winston, but then she became Mrs. Malbin.[1]

We flew out there in my little plane. It was my first long trip. It was a little Piper Tri-Pacer, and he was as excited about going as I was. I had never

***Paul Feeley and Lionel Nowak in Feeley's studio looking at paintings, August 21, 1964.***
Courtesy of Estate of Paul Feeley and Garth Greenan Gallery, New York.

done anything like that before. (Laughs)

Well, everything worked out all right, although landing near Birmingham we had the sun in our eyes, and I could see he was just a touch nervous, but we managed to do it all right. We had very pleasant conversation with Mrs. Winston, and it was clear that to some extent they may have had some differing views.

Feeley, as I recall it, was never interested in the idea of collection. He wanted a place which was productive and creative. That is why his original statement was, "I'd like some kind of a barn" . . . where you could move around and handle the space totally freely . . . and not worry about what spills, and what happens.

That was in line with something of his general practice. I used to go to his studio when he lived in the Orchard; he had that one large room there.[2] And besides canvases leaning against the wall, there would be some on the floor, or some – they weren't yet – what is it called – not framed but stripped; they weren't stripped yet, they were just . . . And he'd kind of look at them and then he'd say, "Okay, we can walk over that one."

**TF:** Which meant that he was going to repaint it?
**LN:** Or else he wasn't too interested. Or else . . .

You see, he was interested so much in the process, and a kind of a

natural, an immediate approach just coming out of his head – at that time. Now, later on he became quite formal, as you know. I view that as just another kind of a track he was interested in. Not that he thought that that was "it," but "Let's see: this is what's going on right now, let me see what I can do with it." But, he was somewhat careless. He admitted it. He said, "You know, some of the canvases you have aren't going to last very long."

**TF:** How did he mean that?
**LN:** Well, I've got a large piece of his which is – which has on the canvas itself some paper that has been painted on, and some of it was kind of loose, and he said, "You know, this will probably fall off one of these days," or "some of it might flake very easily."[3]

I think part of this was due to the fact that he didn't have sufficient funds to use the best materials. On the other hand, as I perceived him, the process was so much a joy to him, the working the thing out, that the finished product might not be that kind of substantial thing made for the ages, but more: "here's a kind of a statement I'd like to make now."

**TF:** Really just a different kind of concept of what to paint than simply a canvas for a museum.
**LN:** Yes. Yes. I think the museum element, I don't think that ever particularly came to his real sensibility.

Anyway, I don't know how I got off on that. I got off on it talking about his visit where he wanted a big barn. Now part of the barn idea was: Let's not put all our money into fancy architecture; let's have something which is a work space.

**TF:** Well, he certainly succeeded in that; that's pretty much what's there.
**LN:** I don't quite agree. I think it's fancier than it would have had to have been. At one time, you know, they thought of taking over a shop on South Street, when that was emptied of an industry.

**TF:** No, I didn't know that.
**LN:** Yes, yes.

**TF:** Well, yes; I see what you mean. All those vast spaces . . .
**LN:** Yes. Just: What do you care what it looks like? Let's get to work and get more space. We need space. We need large enough space for the canvases we're going to work on, for the sculptor. But let's not get fancy.

I would say that would probably be one of his mottoes: Don't get fancy. (Laughs)

**TF:** Either in the buildings or the work, right?
**LN:** In any way at all.

Well, anyway, that was one thing I remember, that little trip. On the way back, an interesting kind of humor arose. I began hearing some strange noises in the plane, and I began to fiddle with stuff.

He says, "What's the matter?"

I said, "I don't know. We seem to be going all right, but I'm hearing some strange sounds."

And he said, "Well, I hope there's no trouble."

And then I turned around and saw a grin on his face; he had been doing something with his voice.

That was one of the few times I remember that kind of a humorous bit.

**TF:** That's wonderful.
**LN:** Yes, I enjoyed that.

I expect you've heard about the trip we made with the poker boys. We went up to the Adirondacks, to a little cottage which Doc Durand had arranged for us. That first visit was a rather simple visit. There was nothing in there, except places to lie down, and we did that.[4]

There was a little disturbance on the first morning; we awoke and there was a snake in the cabin. But that was nothing. A year later we went to the Florys – she was the psychologist here.[5] We went to their place, which was yet somewhat incomplete up there, on Lake George, but that was in a sense much more improved than what we'd had before. And that would have worked all right, but for some reason – Fred Burkhardt would remember this better – we got to speaking about things after breakfast, about fishing, I expect, and talking about worms. And Burkhardt says, "I'll bet you a dollar you wouldn't eat a worm."[6]

**TF:** -- said to – ?
**LN:** Feeley.

**TF:** Paul.
**LN:** And of course Feeley was never one to refuse a dare if it was at all within the realm of possibility, and of course eating is one thing we do. And so he said, "Oh, I'll take you up on that." So we found a small worm, and Feeley got it in his mouth – with a slight hesitation. But then he put it in his mouth, and started chewing. And you could hear what would have been dirt in the worm crackling in his teeth. And Burkhardt turned white and had to leave the scene.

**TF:** The bettor.
**LN:** Yes. (Laughs)

But, I thought, that's another facet of Feeley's character. He was a very alive human being; I'll come back to that later.

**TF:** That was you, and Fred, and Paul, and Oliver Durand?
**LN:** Yes, and Howard Nemerov, and George Finckel . . .

**TF:** That's a houseful. And Danny Fager?[7]
**LN:** I don't remember whether Danny was on that trip or not, but it was as many of the regular boys as could have gotten away. But that stood out as an interesting thing.

Then another time, he and I flew to Georgia, where my in-laws had a six-hundred-acre stretch of land which had a pond, and a stream, and it was just a nice Georgian piece of land.

Feeley enjoyed this. We didn't do any fishing at the time, although he was a fisherman. As you know, he loved to go fishing. He and Nemerov would go upstate and fish the streams, and they loved that. But, one of the things, we'd row together down the lanes leading from the pond, because it was kind of a swampy area and we'd kind of go around through the grasses. And if the going got a little rough, Feeley would jump out of the boat and push the rowboat, not worrying about what might be in there. That's – he was a –

**TF:** Is that something he picked up here? I don't know where he was from, really.
**LN:** He was from – I think his family came from Iowa. But this is easily found out.[8]

But what interested him most on the Georgia trip was – There was a Negro church not far from the little house we were staying in. He was fascinated by the burying ground outside the church, because, as you might know, the Negroes put all kinds of things on their plot: broken glass, little mementos from the house. And Feeley took as much with his camera as he could. These weren't the easiest things to photograph. It was anything they might pick up in their house, and he was really very excited by this. We visited another cemetery where some of my father-in-law's family were, and he enjoyed the old iron fences around certain of the plots. There was that about those things which had stood for a long time and weathered which seemed to catch his eye a good deal: old statues, old cemeteries.

**TF:** Relics. Ruins.

**LN:** Kind of that, yes. I think he appreciated the fact that the southern culture had a sense of being more continuous, more rooted than the other parts of the country, and I think that excited him.

Now let's see. What else. Yes, the work we did together in setting up that big, one-week arts festival we had here in 1955.[9]

We would drive together and go and interview various people, which . . . There was a peculiar kind of modesty Feeley had. I discovered that in meeting some people he would be more reticent than I in approaching them. This came as a total surprise to me, because I always thought I was frightened to death of something like this. I don't know that he was frightened, but he had a reticence, and he would say to me, "You sure moved in fast there!" I didn't know I was doing that. I always thought: Here's an Irishman, a passionate Irishman, who – nothing will get in his way. But, interestingly enough, I found him – Feeley was really a very complex person. I think of all the people I know, have known, he had the most significant balance between what one would call the masculine element and the feminine element. There were kinds of sensitivities which usually you'd think that only women would have, a kind of a delicacy would creep in. I find that in some of his things.

So, that's what I learned about him.

I can't forget the time he was getting out of my car. It was snowing then, and he was holding on to the car to get his balance while fighting off the snow. I didn't realize this at the time, so I shut the door, and caught his thumb in the door. We were on our way to visit a mutual friend. He was really in agony, but he never complained. I didn't know what to say. The first comment might have been, "What are you holding on to the car for?" But, anyway, he took it like a real gentleman, and as if pain would not interfere with his being – and when we went to where we were going, it was clear he had to have some attention to that finger. That's another side of Feeley I remember.

We'd have a U-Haul and we'd take some of his paintings down to Betty Parsons. And of course, I guess U-Hauls have their own idiosyncrasies. We were up in the Bronx, driving through the Bronx, and had been at a stoplight, and of course we were conversing about something or other, and instead of shifting into low to go ahead, he shifted into reverse. Suddenly there was a bump back there. We managed to talk our way out of that all right because Feeley was good with language, and with knowing how to deal with people in certain circumstances.

We were driving along the Taconic one day in his little convertible, breezing along at a reasonable clip, not out-pacing other cars, but keeping

up with them. And suddenly we were hailed to the right by a state policeman. It seems that all of the cars ahead of us, as well as us, had been trapped by radar. So, we lined up, and we sat there. Feeley was shaking his head: "Now what am I going to do, I don't have any money." Which was not unusual.

I always wondered what Feeley would have been like if he had had money at his disposal. I don't think he would have been any different, but it might have made his life somewhat – a little more pleasant. But, he never spoke of that, really.

So, when the state policeman finally came to our car to ticket us, I could see there was a moment of recognition. They had been Marine buddies! So right away the thing cleared itself up. Well, I was very pleased that things ended up that way, because I had very little money, and he had less.

Now, what he did for me in the way of art was that I hadn't been here very long before I took an interest in seeing the stuff around, particularly the senior shows. We began to hold these in the large downstairs court of the Carriage Barn, also using the upper part when necessary. And after a year or two of acquaintance, I began to help him hang the show. And every now and then, he'd allow me to make some decision about where things might be. I don't think my help amounted to much, but it meant a lot to me, because I began to get a sense of how to see things, all of which was totally new to me. I had enjoyed seeing things before, but I hadn't really looked with as much attention as I was beginning to do. He would – as I said earlier, we never really discussed art at all. It was kind of – what is it called, it just kind of permeates –

**TF:** An apprenticeship?
**LN:** No, not at all – when things gradually –

**TF:** Osmosis.
**LN:** Osmosis. I was beginning somehow to get something by osmosis.

And then I began to help him strip his paintings. We'd go to the old carpenter's shop on Sundays, and we'd make the strips, and we'd work on these together. He was terrified about having me work with him, because I used this band saw, which was a pretty husky saw, and I'd never done anything like this before. He kept watching just to make sure I wouldn't get my fingers in it or anything. Of course I wasn't afraid at all, because I knew that I could manage this all right. But that was also a good experience. I learned about all this: There's a certain kind of cut you make to get these things to fit at an angle.

**TF:** A mitre?
**LN:** A mitre-box, yes; we'd use a mitre-box for these things, and then nail them in, or else use the big – he had a thing that when we'd stretch the canvas he'd do that with – you know how you stick papers together? To clip them.

**TF:** A stapler?
**LN:** A stapler. He had a heavy stapler. And we'd stretch the canvas, and we'd pull and sweat about that – But: I was learning something. And, he would never try to teach. If you had a question, he'd do the best he could to answer it, and I thought that was excellent.

So, we got to be very good friends through the arts like that. Obviously everybody knows about our poker and bridge games.

**TF:** Well, people know a little bit, but probably not as much as you think, so if there's anything that you think is particularly useful or interesting – [10]
**LN:** I don't know . . . The poker games, of course, had their own kinds of amusement. The sudden spurts of irritation, which could develop in two minutes into some shouting and some threatening gestures, and then of course just as quickly subside. But I did enjoy Feeley getting a knife and smearing George's head with peanut butter.

**TF:** I'm sure you enjoyed it.
**LN:** Oh, of course! Well, I'd say I think George's baldness may have contributed, but – anyway.

Another indicator of his sense of humor. It was never devastating, it was a kind of fun, and that was nice.

Let's see. What else? I don't know that I have anything more to say.

I used to do my best to hang some of this stuff. For a while there, you know, he had difficulty getting his things seen. It took him a while to get into the gallery bit. I think he started kind of in the middle of the '50s. He began at one level, and then moved up to what was probably the next level of gallery attention-getting. He had quite good experiences with Betty Parsons; he and she stayed together quite a while. I got to know her pretty well, and therefore began to look at more shows, because I said, "Well, if she shows Feeley, she probably shows somebody else that's interesting," and I would go to New York to see.[11] And this whole thing, just by the nature of his being willing to be friendly with a non-artist, and sharing some of the little, grubby work of what has to be done, I got to be very fond of him.

I would go up there on Sunday mornings. I would have finished my lunch at about twelve-thirty, and I'd walk across the field – he lived

right behind us in the Orchard, and Helen would come to the door and say, "Paul's still up in bed." I'd say, "Well, maybe I'll go up and wake him up." She said, "That'll be fine. I'll bring you up some coffee." And so I'd go up there. We'd chat about all kinds of odds and ends – often about the College, of course, and the educational trends. He and I spent quite a number of years together on the old Educational Policy Committee, so I had another way of beginning to understand him, and learn from his kind of liberal, broad thinking. Never, though, was he without the urgency of the discipline, of the way he would couch his statements. I'm sure why his students were always such excellent students was that there was never anything authoritarian in any way, or any absolutism. He wanted them to discover, always making sure that the discovery was on solid ground which they had understood. One of the great teachers.

So, we'd go up there and chat. I think only once did we get to talk about some aspect of painting. Not a painting, but painting in general. I had seen a number of his things, and I said, "Feeley – " I seldom called him Paul; I used to call him Feeley. Nemerov used to call him Paul. But – I said, "I've begun to – I've seen enough of your paintings, and I have to ask a question." He said, "Oh sure, go ahead, go ahead." I said, "Is there any relationship, do you think, between being right-handed and the way – the general form the canvas takes?"

Well, he had never had that question put before, and I don't know that he'd ever thought about it, so he kind of considered. He wasn't sure that there was, but he couldn't say there wasn't.

I'd begun to see that the lower right corner somehow seemed to be weightier, whether in color, or in the kind of shape going on there, than some of the other parts. That wasn't universal throughout his paintings, but I had seen it often enough to ask the question. That's the only time we discussed art at all, and the property of what one sees on a canvas.

**TF:** That's an interesting question. What comes to mind is just that people often are – their lives are very different than their work, even if their work is as interesting as painting, and they don't want to talk about their work all the time.

**LN:** Yes, well, I doubt that he wanted to talk about it very much. On the other hand, he may well have talked about it with his painting colleagues, arguing about positions. That's one reason, I'm sure, that Clem Greenberg became so much a part of our environment for a while, because he wanted to talk about these things, and to expose his ideas, and it was through Feeley, of course, that I got to know Clem quite well, and enjoyed all the kinds of questions he was putting to the art.[12] Every now and then I could

borrow something he had loaned Feeley, by some other artist. I'd put it up in my house just to get a little bit acquainted.

**TF:** What were some of those?
**LN:** Who's that Russian artist?

**TF:** Gorky?
**LN:** Gorky. I had a Gorky in my house for a while. And then Gottlieb, and a few things like this I would get.

An interesting thing occurs to me; it has nothing to do with Feeley. Names slip my mind terribly; I can see the work – Cornell. We had a large Cornell show here. You know Gene Goossen gave us a series of wonderful exhibits over a period of a few years. I think they were, in my memory, the most enlightened and inspiring kind of exhibits I've seen here. It wasn't only contemporary. He had a wonderful surrealist show; I can't remember what we had to insure that show for, but it was a tremendous sum – five hundred thousand or so.

**TF:** That may be where the Gorky is from. There were a couple in that show.
**LN:** Well, maybe so.

Anyway, we had a Cornell show. And, a week or so after it had been taken down and taken back to the city, I was in the lounge there were we held them – we held them in the Carriage Barn lounge – and I saw something out over in one corner. They had forgotten to take one of his pieces. And of course I had been fascinated by that work. It was a piece in a little box about the size of an ordinary Corn Flakes box, I guess. It had two steel rods, and then little ball bearings which could roll, all nicely encased and then under glass, you know, as Cornell is.

Well, I thought, "I'm not going to let this sit here, for heaven's sake," so I took it home. After a couple of weeks, having enjoyed it – I had it up on my mantle – I mentioned it to one of the art faculty, and asked what I should do. They said, "Why don't you write to Mr. Cornell? So I did. And he said, "If you enjoy it so much, why don't you keep it for a while; I'll let you know when I need it." So we had that for about three years, and then one time I got a note from him: "I'd be happy if you'd return the little piece."

**TF:** Fortuitous, isn't it?
**LN:** Yes. All this – you see this whole thing comes about, really stems from my association with Feeley; getting used to the art, the idea of viewing.

**TF:** So visual art was new to you when you came here?
**LN:** Well, new in the sense of actuality. In my first teaching job in college, back in 1935 when I had been there for several years at that college, I taught a course in art history, because there was no art in the college. Somebody has to do it; I said, "I'll do it."

**TF:** What year is that?
**LN:** 1935 or 36. So I had a course in art history. We used the Gardner book, and I could bring some other things in, and in the meantime, I had been playing for a local dancer, modern dance, and composing some music for her. In the Depression, nobody had any money, but her husband ran a little shop in which he had some paintings, and so every now and then, if she owed me a little money, she would say, "Why don't you go down and talk to my husband, Julius, maybe he'll have something he'll let you have." So I began –

**TF:** What kind of paintings?
**LN:** Well – he was trying to be up to date. In two or three years I got two wonderful pieces, which I don't have any more. My first wife kept one of them, and my son has the other. There was a watercolorist who was known in Cleveland as the outstanding watercolorist in the Ohio area. His name was Sommer and I got a couple of his pieces.[13] I got a little Kuniyoshi print; and then I got a rather large painting by someone who was at the Art Institute in Chicago in the thirties. I think his name was Ruess, that's what comes to my ear. It's unsigned, but it was to me a wild piece, very colorful and a Mexican scene; cathedral and all this other stuff. [14]

*At this point the tape ran out, or perhaps we turned it off, but Lionel still had a few things to add, so I made some notes by hand.*

*He said that Feeley had wanted things to be even more "flowing" and "daring" than they were at Bennington. Together, they had discussed starting the whole thing over, a new educational enterprise, smaller and more flexible, somewhere else.*

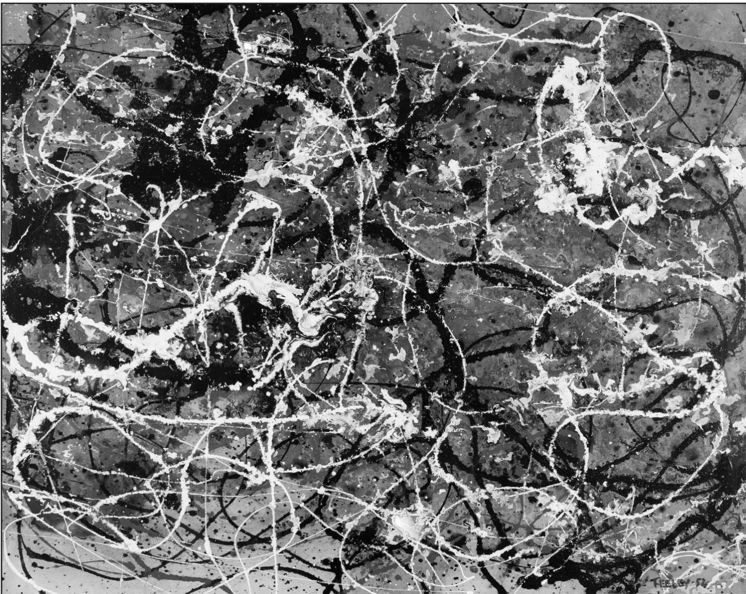
*He described bringing an immense Feeley into Jennings. It was hard even to hang it, he related. In the end it hung in Lionel's studio, where it could be well lit "so everyone could see it" through the large window there. Back in the artist's studio Feeley had ventured, "I'm not sure what I've got here." "I've never seen so much action on a canvas," replied Lionel. He was the obvious candidate to borrow it.*

*Lionel described erecting in his side yard in North Bennington, when he and his family later moved into the village, the large piece by minimalist sculptor and architect Tony Smith that stood there for many years – a large, faceted black plywood structure which was a mock-up for a later piece in steel. It was, in my memory, about ten to fifteen feet tall, easily the size of a small house. The next-door*

*neighbor came over, Lionel related. "My wife is in tears," said the neighbor. "It's going to block her view of Main Street." They moved it back beside the barn. "Don't do anything to upset your neighbors," counseled Smith.*

## Notes

1. Lydia Winston Malbin, noted collector of twentieth-century art with strong ties to Bennington College and daughter of the architect Albert Kahn. VAPA has recently been renamed the Helen Frankenthaler Visual Arts Center, after the well-known painter and Bennington graduate.
2. The Orchard is a small enclave of faculty housing at Bennington College.
3. This piece remains in the Nowak collection.
4. The long-enduring poker club, made up of faculty, administrators, and locals alike, continues to hold a legendary place in the memories of the Bennington community.
5. Mary Delia Flory was the college's psychological counselor, her husband Kurt was a pathologist at the local hospital.
6. Burkhardt was president of Bennington College from 1947-57.
7. Physician Oliver Durand; poet Howard Nemerov; cellist George Finckel; local gas station operator Danny Fager.
8. Feeley was indeed originally from Iowa.
9. "Symposium on Music and Art: An Assessment of Vital and Controversial Developments in This Country During the Last Three Decades," Bennington College, May 1955.
10. Nowak is believed to have assembled a substantial portion of his art collection as winnings in the poker club. He also bought wisely from Bennington College's annual senior art majors' shows.
11. The Betty Parsons Gallery, 1946-82.
12. Distinguished art and social critic Clement Greenberg (1909-94).
13. Probably William Sommer (1876-1949).
14. Possibly Everett Ruess (1914-34?), a young artist who disappeared in the Far West in 1934.



***Feeley's Pollock-like painting Untitled, 1952, oil on paper, collection of Alexander and Mary Nemerov.*** Image courtesy of Fraenkel Gallery, San Francisco.

***Book Review***

# Vermont State House

## *Exploring Intimate Grandeur in Montpelier*

*Reviewed by Anthony Marro*

When John Gunther wrote his best-selling book *Inside U.S.A.* he described Vermont's State House as "the most beautiful state capitol in the country." That was back in 1947 when there were forty-eight of them, and neither of the more modern capitols in Honolulu or Juneau would be likely to change his opinion. Vermont's is also one of the smallest, which makes it as intimate as it is attractive, and — as Tom Slayton notes in his introduction to this thoroughly engaging work — "smallness has its virtues."

*Intimate Grandeur: Vermont's State House* describes the history of the capitol as well as many of the events that took place inside it and the efforts to undo the clunky renovations of the 1970s and restore it to its nineteenth-century elegance and charm. Everything about this book is nicely done, from the splendid introduction by Slayton to the lively and consistently interesting narrative by Nancy Price Graff and David Schütz to the wonderful design work by RavenMark Inc. and the magnificent photographs by Jeb Wallace-Brodeur. It's a book intended to make Vermonters proud both of their capitol and their history, and it succeeds in every way.

On a personal note, I should say that I worked in the State House for several years in the mid-1960s as a reporter covering state government for the *Rutland Herald* and *Barre-Montpelier Times-Argus*. We had an office at the top of the building, under the dome, and we covered the legislature from desks that were smack in the middle of the House and Senate chambers. The governor's working office was on the second floor of the capitol (now it's just a ceremonial office with the working office having been moved to a building to the south), and getting to see Gov. Philip Hoff often was just a matter of sticking your head in his open door and asking if he had a minute. We often got into the building late at night, after it was locked, by climbing in through a window right behind the statue of Ethan Allen that George Aiken, who often forgot his keys, had insisted be left unlocked back when was governor (1937 through 1941) and that stayed unlocked until the bombings of the U.S. Capitol and the Pentagon in the 1970s caused the Sergeant-at-Arms to put greater security in place.

I enjoyed the sense of history that permeated the place, particularly the paintings of Civil War battles and portraits of nineteenth-century governors.

One of my favorites was the large portrait was of Urban Woodbury, who was governor from 1894 until 1896, that showed an empty right sleeve.

"What happened to his hand?" a young student with a school group asked his teacher.

Before she could reply, Vic Maerki, a reporter for the *Burlington Free Press*, said quickly and loudly: "He got it caught in the till."

Actually, he had lost his arm at the first Battle of Bull Run, where it had been shattered by a fragment of an exploding artillery shell.

One of the more interesting of the modern portraits is of Gov. Howard Dean, which shows him in jeans and a flannel shirt, sitting by a canoe at a lake with fall foliage in the background and a paddle in his hand. It's known to State House insiders, somewhat mockingly, as the L.L. Dean portrait.

The present State House is Vermont's third. The first capitol building, completed in 1808, was made of wood. By 1830 it was said to be a sorry sight, with sagging floors and, as one observer noted, "holes too big for putty and paint." The second was a granite structure modeled on a 5th century B.C. temple in Athens; it was destroyed by fire in 1857. Gov. Hiland Hall of Bennington was the first governor to occupy the new capitol when it opened in 1859. Although now known for its golden dome, for all of the latter half of the nineteenth century the dome was painted a dull red to resemble Italian terra cotta. It was covered with gold leaf in 1906.

Until the legislature reapportioned itself in 1965, the House chamber had 246 seats, one for every legislator from the state's 246 towns or cities. In 1965 it still had many tin spittoons, a holdover from tobacco-chewing days. Most legislators used them as ash trays, except for tobacco-chewing Rep. Fred Westphal, a conservative contrarian from Elmore who once boasted: "I don't ask my constituents to vote for me — I dare them to."

Much history was made in the State House, and much of it is recounted in this book, including the call to arms during the Civil War, the Women's Suffrage movement, reapportionment, and the Civil Unions law. They are not detailed histories, of course, but they capture the essence of the issues and the mood of the times. And the building itself reflects Vermont and its people in many ways. As Slayton, the former long-time editor of *Vermont Life* magazine, notes in his introduction: "The State House expresses not only Vermont's history but this state's intrinsic values as well. Smallness in size is a defining virtue of Vermont, just as expansiveness is a defining characteristic of Texas. The intimacy of the State House means that face-to-face contact, actual communication in real time among legislators, other officials, and with the public, is not only easy, it's an accepted fact of daily life. Vermonters expect to meet their representatives, their governor and other

policy makers face to face. They expect to be able to talk with them."

Nancy Price Graff has written many books about Vermont and Vermonters, including a biography of Gov. Deane Davis. David Schütz is the state curator and one of the people intimately involved with the work to restore the State House that began in the 1980s. Their book clearly is a labor of love for themselves and also a delight for their readers. It deserves a place on the bookshelves of anyone who cares about the state and its history. ▯

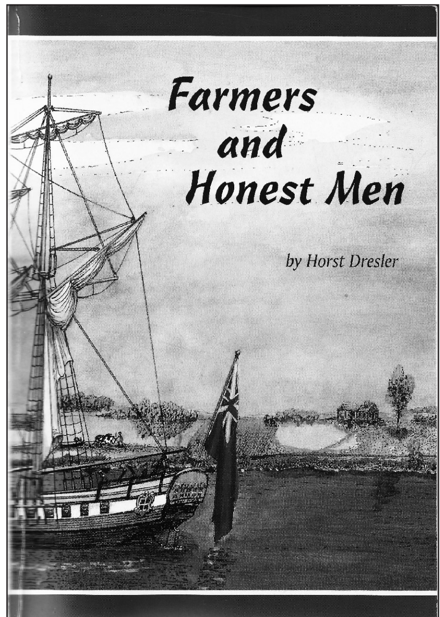
*Intimate Grandeur: Vermont's State House* by Nancy Price Graff with David Schütz, published by Friends of the State House. Hardcover, 120 pages, $39.95

***Book Review***

# Insight into the Loyalist Experience

*Reviewed by Michael P. Gabriel*

In *Farmers and Honest Men*, Horst Dresler tells the story of Henry (Heinrich) and John (Johannes) Ruiter, two brothers from Hoosick, New York, who fought for the British during the American Revolutionary War. In doing so, Dresler provides insights into thousands of other loyalists who shared the Ruiters' experiences and, like them, eventually settled in Canada.




The book opens with a detailed genealogy of the family, tracing their roots to the numerous religious and military upheavals that shook the Palatinate region of Germany in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Three of the book's five chapters of text, however, deal with the Revolutionary War. Like most loyalists, the Ruiters sympathized with the American cause but did not believe that British actions justified armed

rebellion and ultimately independence. Dresler suggests that the brothers were pushed to action when local committees of safety and the Second Continental Congress tried to identify who supported their cause and who did not.

Those with loyalist inclinations often suffered harassment from their patriot neighbors, and many eventually fled the area or joined British forces. Some left when Guy Carleton advanced up Lake Champlain in October 1776 while others, such as the Ruiters, awaited General John Burgoyne's arrival in the summer of 1777. In these discussions, the author introduces other prominent loyalists from northern New York and Vermont such as Samuel Mackay, Francis Pfister, Edward Carscallen, Robert Leake, John Peters, and Philip Skene. Many of these men fought at the Battle of Bennington, to which Dresler dedicates a full chapter. Not surprisingly he largely focuses on the loyalist role in this engagement that cost Pfister his life and forced the Ruiters to leave New York permanently. They and their sons continued to serve in the King's Rangers throughout the war on various raids and reconnaissance missions, operating out of St. Johns, Quebec.

Following the Revolution, the Ruiters and their families settled in what became known as the Eastern Townships, the lands between the Richelieu and Chaudière rivers in Quebec. The author describes in great detail the brothers' struggles to secure their claims, especially because Canadian Governor Frederick Haldimand wanted to settle the loyalists farther west in present-day Ontario. For the next thirty years, through Henry's death in 1816, the Ruiters continued to participate in events relating to the fledgling United States, such as the Jay Treaty, the Embargo Act, and the War of 1812.

One strong feature of this book is that the author touches upon an issue that makes researching loyalist participation in the northern theater difficult. Carleton, Burgoyne, and other British officials authorized influential loyalists to raise troops, but these men would not receive commissions until they met their enlistment goals. As a result, fierce competition and rivalries existed among them, and many loyalists' names appeared on multiple muster rolls or they were placed in units in which they had not enlisted. This continued after 1777 as loyalist units were reorganized. To this day, it remains difficult to identify definitively who served in which units, but Dresler does a commendable job of addressing this knotty issue. The inclusion of an order of battle, even if tentative, would have made his efforts even more successful.

Dresler is well suited to have written this worthwhile book, which complements the works of Gavin Watt, Alan Taylor, and Theodore Corbett. The founder of the Captain Henry Ruiter's 3rd Company of King's Rangers

re-enactment unit, the author has extensively research his topic in Canadian archives and includes copies or transcripts of many of these documents in the last third of the book. While they are often difficult to read, the documents provide a real sense of what primary-source research entails. They also reveal how much information can actually be obtained about individuals who participated in the war on both sides, if one is willing to put in the effort and do the research. The book contains a number of good maps and illustrations, but at times it could use more background information to place the events into a broader historical context. Additionally, those wishing to use the work as a research tool would benefit from the inclusion of an index. Still, *Farmers and Honest Men* provides a case study for those interested in the loyalist experience in the northern theater of the Revolutionary War.

*Farmers and Honest Men*; by Horst Dresler; Bedford, Quebec, Sheltus and Picard, Inc., 2007, paper, 181 pp.

# WALLOOMSACK REVIEW

*SUBSCRIPTION FORM*

Enjoy the convenience of home delivery. Have future issues of the *Walloomsack Review* mailed directly to you as soon as they are published. An annual subscription is only $12.95 for 2 issues, and includes mailing costs.

Name ______________________________________

Mailing Address ______________________________________

______________________________________

Email ______________________________________

Daytime Phone ______________________________________

SUBSCRIPTION FEE: $12.95 / year *(2 issues)*

Start Subscription with Volume _____ Auto-Renew *Y / N*

Previous issues of the *Walloomsack Review* are available for $5.00 each, while supplies last. Place an **X** next to each back issue you would like.

__ V. 1 – Oct 2008
__ V. 2 – Oct 2009
__ V. 3 – May 2010
__ V. 4 – Sept 2010
~~V. 5 – May 2011~~ *SOLD OUT*
__ V. 6 – Aug 2011
__ V. 7 – Sept 2011
__ V. 8 – May 2012
__ V. 9 – Sept 2012
__ V.10 – Spring 2013
__ V.11 – Summer 2013
__ V.12 – Autumn 2013
__ V.13 – Spring 2014
__ V.14 – Autumn 2014
__ V.15 – Spring 2015
__ V.16 – Autumn 2015

*Complete the subscription form and mail with your payment to:*

Bennington Museum Shop
75 Main Street
Bennington, VT 05201

Payment may be made by check payable to "Bennington Museum" or by credit card.

☐ Check enclosed

☐ Charge my credit card $ ______

______________________ CARD NUMBER ____/_____ EXP ______ CCV

______________________ SIGNATURE

www.benningtonmuseum.org
(802) 447-1571

**$4.95**
Bennington Museum