

# WALLOOMSACK REVIEW

BENNINGTON MUSEUM

VOLUME 23 — SPRING 2019



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*Volume 23*  
*Spring 2019*

WALLOOMSACK REVIEW  
ISSN 1943-9644

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

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

***On the cover:***

A detail of the panorama “Prisoners Taken at the Battle of Bennington,” painted in 1938 by Leroy Williams, focusing on the “Black youth” analyzed in Phil Holland’s article that begins on page 6.

***Collection of the Bennington Museum***

# WALLOOMSACK REVIEW

Volume 23, Spring 2019

<b>Editor's notes</b>	<b>page 4</b>
<b>Contributors</b>	<b>page 5</b>
<b>The Figure of the Black Youth in Leroy Williams's 'Prisoners Taken at the Battle of Bennington'</b> <i>Phil Holland</i>	<b>page 6</b>
<b>The Civil War Letters of Newton Gould</b> <i>Ruth Burt Ekstrom and Avis Hayden</i>	<b>page 15</b>
<b>Aftermath of the Murder in Tampa of Joseph Shoemaker, Bennington socialist</b> <i>Jennifer Shakshober</i>	<b>page 22</b>
<b>A Look Back at the Vermont in Mississippi Project of 1965</b> <i>Tyler Resch</i>	<b>page 28</b>
<b>How Grand Lists Document Early Bennington Potteries</b> <i>Warren F. Broderick</i>	<b>page 37</b>
<b>Paying for Schools: Another Look</b> <i>Allen Gilbert</i>	<b>page 44</b>
<b><i>Book Reviews</i></b>	
<b>Vanishing Vermonters: Loss of a Rural Culture</b> by Peter Miller <i>Reviewed by Jamie Franklin</i>	<b>page 46</b>
<b>'Those Turbulent Sons of Freedom' . . .</b> by Christopher S. Wren <i>Reviewed by Phil Holland</i>	<b>page 50</b>
<b>'Two Brides for Apollo': Biography of Samuel Williams</b> by Richard F. Rothschild <i>Reviewed by Tyler Resch</i>	<b>page 54</b>

## *Editor's Notes*

**A**n inter-racial theme runs through several articles in this issue, starting with the Black Youth, also known as “the negro man,” who led a band of trussed-up Tories in the painting of the aftermath of the Battle of Bennington. Phil Holland ably examines the several historical versions of the story of this young lad in an effort to authenticate his role both in the community and in the battle cleanup. Another intriguing detail of that Revolutionary War battle has been analyzed and perhaps settled in history.

A more somber story is Jen Shakshober’s follow-up to the article in our previous issue about the 1935 murder in Tampa, Florida, of the political agitator Joseph Shoemaker of Bennington. Jen carefully documents and exposes a particular brand of early twentieth-century Southern justice in which the perpetrators of flogging and murder are let off the hook. Norman Thomas, the national Socialist leader (who ran for President six times) came to the scene to call attention to the role of the Ku Klux Klan.

The story of the Vermont in Mississippi Project of 1965 is recalled in my article that combines factual reporting with some personal recollections. Looking back on it a half century later, the VIM episode seems like a remote drama that could never be repeated, a naive adventure on the part of an entire state. The timeframe of the project can be seen as an expression of a new politically progressive movement, sparked by Governor Philip Hoff, that was emerging in the early 1960s as Vermont responded to national civil-rights issues.

The Civil War letters of Newton Gould provide some perspective of domestic wartime life by citizens who made the unlikely move during the war from Bennington to rural Kentucky.

For a change of pace, Warren Broderick describes an unusual method of historical research that uses records of a town’s Grand Lists as he digs into the financial woes of the nineteenth-century Bennington potters. *Grand List* is a Vermont term for one percent of the total valuation of all real property in each town. One’s Grand List value is multiplied by the tax rate to determine one’s property tax. Still on the subject of municipal taxes, Allen Gilbert corrects an error he discovered in his previous article on Vermont school tax law that deals with union, or merged districts.

The book *Darkness Falls from the Light of the Land* by Douglas Winiarski, which was reviewed in our fall issue by Lee Williams, has won an astonishing number of awards, including those of the Massachusetts Historical Society, the New England Society, and Columbia University. An excerpt was published in *American Heritage*; it was named book of the year by the Jonathan Edwards Center of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, and was a finalist for the George Washington Prize. The theological origin of Bennington is easy to forget, and Winiarski’s book goes a long way toward a more complete understanding of the forces that brought it about.

- Tyler Resch

## *Contributors*

**Phil Holland**, a graduate of Bennington College with a Ph.D. in English, is a writer with interests in literary and historical subjects. He recently collaborated with historian Lion Miles of Stockbridge, Mass., in a presentation on the black presence at the Battle of Bennington.

**Jen Shakshober** graduated in 2016 from Bennington College with a Master of Fine Arts in Creative Nonfiction. Always interested in researching her Bennington ancestors, she earned a certificate in genealogical research from Boston University in 2017. She works as a library assistant at the Hartford Public Library while pursuing a Master of Library and Information Science degree at Simmons College.

**Ruth Burt Ekstrom** and **Avis Hayden** share an interest in ancestors common to the Burt family. They are co-authors of the article about Oliver Knox in the New England Historical Genealogical Society's project "American Ancestors: Western Massachusetts in 1790," and are currently working on the genealogy of Newton and Almira (Burt) Gould. Ruth has been a frequent contributor to this journal.

**Allen Gilbert** of Worcester has been a journalist, teacher, public policy researcher and consultant, and executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Vermont. He is working on a book about equity in Vermont.

**Warren F. Broderick** is an independent scholar and emeritus from the New York State Archives who specializes in fine art and Bennington pottery history research. He is currently working with the Albany Institute of History and Art and the Southern Vermont Art Center on upcoming exhibits.

**Jamie Franklin**, the curator of the Bennington Museum, is preparing a major summer exhibit, *Fields of Change: 1960s Vermont*.



**The Figure of the Black Youth  
in Leroy Williams's  
*Prisoners Taken at the Battle of Bennington***

*Phil Holland*

**I**t is well known that the Battle of Bennington did not take place in Bennington at all, but in the state of New York, six miles west of the center of settlement now known as Old Bennington. That is where 2,200 patriot troops led by Gen. John Stark of New Hampshire defeated a British force of Brunswickers (“Hessians”), Tories, British marksmen, Canadians, and Indians on August 16, 1777. Patriot forces took captive more than 500 German officers and soldiers as prisoners, along with approximately 150 Tories and 37 British troops. All of these men, some of them wounded, were taken from the battlefield under guard to Bennington, the military target that British troops never reached. Fifty wounded Americans were also brought to the town. A settlement of some dozen or fourteen houses suddenly had to cope not only with attending to its

own casualties but also with guarding, feeding, and otherwise caring for hundreds of enemy soldiers, most of whom spoke no English.

When the Bennington Museum, under its founding director John Spargo, commissioned a mural commemorating the battle, it was fitting for the aftermath of the fighting, when the battle truly became “of Bennington,” to be chosen as the subject. “Prisoners Taken at the Battle of Bennington” was painted by Vermont artist Leroy Williams under the auspices of the WPA’s Federal Art Project, and was unveiled on May 23, 1938. The six-by-twelve-foot mural shows a mass of prisoners and patriots on the town green, with the eighteenth-century meetinghouse, Dewey’s Tavern (later the Walloomsac Inn), and Mount Anthony prominent behind them.

A good deal is known about Williams’s preparations for executing the painting because some of his preliminary sketches, along with letters from John Spargo to Williams, have been preserved. Spargo, an indefatigable researcher who had published a book about the Bennington Monument in 1925, was closely involved in the project and concerned to ensure that details of the scene, such as the clothes worn by the Indians, be historically accurate. In hindsight, we can see that Spargo and Williams made some mistakes, but we know that they were aiming for historical fidelity.

This is not the place for a comprehensive study of Williams’s mural and the men and women it depicts. I wish to concentrate on just one figure, that of the black youth mounted on horseback leading a column of bound men (Tories) in green uniforms in the rightmost portion of the mural, a figure that has puzzled or made uneasy many viewers of the painting. “Some of the actions, such as the black man leading the prisoners, are products of 1930s culture rather than historical fact,” states a portion of the text accompanying a key to the figures in the painting<sup>1</sup> in the Bennington Museum. The painting *is* a product of 1930s culture, but is the image of the black youth a New Deal-era glimpse of racial inclusion and post-Harlem Renaissance racial pride, or does it show signs of racial caricature? Or all of the foregoing?

Depicting the “negro” (as Spargo called him) is likely to have been Spargo’s idea, but he supplies little counsel about how to represent him in the series of letters he wrote to Williams about the painting in 1937 and 1938, other than suggesting that the mounted figure be placed in a space to the right of Dewey’s Tavern. Spargo goes so far as to consider what kind of rope was used to bind the Tories but offers no advice on how the “negro” might be dressed. It may be that the written record is incomplete or that, for whatever reason, Spargo avoided putting his ideas in writing.

Numerous first-person accounts tell of the situation in Bennington in the days that followed the patriot victory but it is unlikely that Spargo

and Williams had access to them. The journal of Brunswick surgeon Julius Friedrich Wasmus, who was himself among the prisoners and who gives the best description of conditions, was not published in English until 1990. Revolutionary War pension records were difficult to access before they were microfilmed in the 1970s (they may now be viewed online). How then did the historical memory of the black youth on horseback get started and where did Spargo and Williams find it?

How *do* such memories get started? Either a keen contemporary observer records them, and the words eventually find their way into print, or else they begin as anecdotes in someone's oral recollections and are recorded and published by what we now call amateur historians. We owe many stories of the battle to men such as Hiland Hall, Asa Fitch, James Davie Butler, and others who spoke to veterans with the aim of preserving their memories. Later historians have made use of these second-hand accounts and quoted from them in turn, with or without attribution to the middleman.

Spargo and Williams had several such secondary sources available to them for the figure of the black youth. In 1928 Hoffman Nickerson published his 500-page *The Turning Point of the Revolution, or Burgoyne in America*, which includes an account of the Battle of Bennington. Nickerson saves the episode of the black youth for the conclusion of his chapter on the Battle:

*The hundred and seventy-five Tories . . . were fiercely hated as traitors. The entrance of these last into Bennington was made a sort of Saturnalia. The women of the village took down their old-fashioned beds so that the cords, which in that day held up the mattresses instead of springs could be used to bind the captives. They were tied in pairs; to each pair a horse was attached by traces and on some of the horses, as a token of contempt, negroes were mounted. . . With such base show of rustic contempt was celebrated the turning of the tide against Burgoyne.*<sup>2</sup>

But there was an even handier recent source: Spargo's own 1925 prisoner narrative in his book on the battle monument.

*The Tories . . . were bound. Their hands were tied and they were bound two by two. The women of the village had taken down many of their bedsteads to furnish the rope required for this purpose. Headed by a negro, they were marched into Bennington. It was a special indignity which marked the hatred and contempt of the patriots for the Tories.*<sup>3</sup>

Spargo had his own sources, of course. His book on the monument lacks footnotes, but he evidently found his sources reliable. Two days before Williams's painting was unveiled to the public, he commented to the *Bennington Evening Banner* that "the representation of the Loyalists, the so-called Tory prisoners, led by a negro on horseback with ropes around their

necks is historical record, not artistic fancy.”<sup>4</sup>

Spargo could have read of the black youth in James Davie Butler’s *Addresses on the Battle of Bennington and the Life and Services of Colonel Seth Warner* (1849; the address on the battle had been delivered to the Vermont legislature the year before). Butler reports:

*The Tories being held in special abhorrence, they were treated with more severity. Bound two and two like slaves in a coffle, each pair was tied behind a horse, which was often ridden by a negro. In this style, a rude imitation of the Roman fashion of triumphal processions, they were marched into Bennington.*<sup>5</sup>

Butler’s words were repeated almost verbatim by Henry W. De Puy in his *Ethan Allen and the Green Mountain Heroes of ’76* (1853), with one notable omission:

*The Tories being held in special abhorrence, were treated with considerable severity. They were bound two by two, like slaves in a coffle, and led by persons on horseback.*<sup>6</sup>

The “negro[es]” have become “persons” in this account. What led to this minor suppression can only be conjectured, but it appears to be deliberate.

The *Memoir and Official Correspondence of General John Stark*” by the general’s grandson Caleb Stark (1860) provided Spargo with another source for the story:

*. . . but the Tories, 152 in number, were tied in pairs; to each pair a horse was attached by traces with, in some cases, a negro for its rider; they were led away amid the jeers and scoffs of the victors – the good housewives of Bennington taking down beds to furnish cords for the occasion.*<sup>7</sup>

But where did Butler and Caleb Stark hear or read the story? It is not in Thomas Mellen’s first-person account, which looms large in Butler’s retelling of the battle. Butler did include references in the notes to his published address, and one of his most frequently cited sources is the Henry Stevens Papers<sup>8</sup>. Stevens was a prodigious collector of historical documents and was the first president of the Vermont Historical and Antiquarian Society. Caleb Stark, who does not footnote sources in his biographical memoir, thanks Stevens in a preface for supplying him with materials. Caleb’s own father, also Caleb Stark, had taken part in the battle as a young man and would have been a source of family history prior to his death in 1838.

Henry Stevens himself wrote about the incident in a letter to the black historian William C. Nell, who published it over Stevens’s name in his *Services of Colored Americans in the Wars of 1776 and 1812* (1851). The same account reappears in Nell’s much enlarged 396-page *The Colored Patriots of the American Revolution* (1855), this time without attribution to Stevens:

*As soon as arrangements could be made, after the prisoners were all collected, – something more than seven hundred,-- they were tied to a rope, one on each side. The rope not being long enough, Gen. Stark called for more; when Mrs. Robinson, wife of Hon. Moses Robinson, said to the General, “I will take down the last bedstead in the house, and present the rope to you, on one condition. When the prisoners are all tied to the rope, you shall permit my negro man to harness up my old mare, and hitch the rope to the whiffletree, mount the mare, and conduct the British and tory prisoners out of town.” The General willingly accepted Mrs. Robinson’s proposition. The negro mounted the mare, and thus conducted the left wing of the British army into Massachusetts, on their way to Boston<sup>9</sup>.*

This elaborate account, verbatim from Stevens’s letter, is the fullest – and most imaginative – of possible sources for Williams’s painting. Nell’s, “Colored Patriots,” printed in Boston, would have been known to a scholar like Spargo, whose interest in African-American history is evidenced by his commissioning two paintings of the biracial Vermont preacher and patriot Rev. Lemuel Haynes from other artists soon after the Williams commission; one of the paintings of Haynes (by William Tefft Schwarz, 1939) shows him preaching in the Old First Church in Old Bennington, which he evidently did circa 1820. A biographical sketch of Haynes follows the (Stevens) account of the Bennington prisoners in Nell’s book.

What is notable is that Nell includes the account of the black youth in a volume designed to show off the patriotism and abilities of black soldiers and citizens. Stevens had presumably written his letter to Nell in that spirit. We are to infer that the black rider conducts the prisoners not merely as the vehicle of a gesture of contempt but like a hero; Butler saw a Roman triumph in the scene. Singled out for special service, Mrs. Robinson’s “negro man” is recalled by Nell as a notable though nameless colored patriot.

If there is any substance to the Stevens anecdote, which seems too dramatically developed to be fully credible, Mrs. Robinson’s “negro man” would in any case have been a household servant, not a slave – a small but critical distinction. There were slaves in early Bennington, but Col. Moses Robinson was not a slave owner.<sup>10</sup>

Taken all together, the accounts available to Spargo and Williams contain discrepancies enough to offer a wide berth to a painter – or historian. Was the procession of Tories coming or going? Was there one “negro” or many? How could the housewives of Bennington have taken down their beds to furnish ropes when the Tory prisoners were tied up on or near the battlefield after the first engagement? Wasmus saw them there:

*Like cattle, they were tied to each other with cords and ropes and led*

*away; it is presumed that they will be hanged.*<sup>11</sup>

(They were not hanged).

Would it help if we had a primary source for the black man on the horse? It might tell us something about history, but it wouldn't make the painting any more or less real, because as a work of art it never was real, however "historically accurate" it may have aspired to be.

In fact, we do have a previously unknown first-person account, thanks to Lion G. Miles's unpublished research in the pension files.<sup>12</sup> In 1832, David Nichols of Holden, Massachusetts, declared in his pension application that after scouting duties in Col. Job Cushing's Massachusetts regiment, he arrived in Bennington the day after the battle and assisted in guarding the prisoners, and that "*while there he saw 60 Tories who had been taken, tied together in pairs and led away by a Negro.*"<sup>13</sup>

Nichols's story (told when he was 75) has the ring of truth. From his account it is possible to regard what he saw either as a common scene of war (prisoners being led away) or as a ritual humiliation, or both. No interpretation is proposed. No interpretation is made in the Stevens account either, though the subservient status of Mrs. Robinson's "negro man" is evident. In fact, it was not until Spargo wrote of the black youth's role in the procession as conferring a "special indignity" on the Tory prisoners that the youth's symbolic role was explicitly characterized. Previous accounts had focused on the subjection of the Tories, bound with ropes from patriot beds supplied by patriot women. Even there, however, racial imagery is invoked: the Tories are bound (in Caleb Stark's account) "like slaves in a coffle."<sup>14</sup>

Let us turn to the painting itself.

There are five mounted figures in the mural, four of them prominent in the foreground. On the left, in green coats, are Vermont's colonels Warner and Herrick; then, raising an arm in the center background, is one of the Stockbridge Indians who were allied with the patriots, here serving as a guard; then General Stark, with horse rearing and saber aloft; and, lastly, in semi-shadow, but at the same height and on the same scale as the officers, facing in the same direction as Stark and dominating the rightmost portion of the painting, is a splendidly attired mounted young African American leading tied-up men in green coats as prisoners.

If Williams was inspired by the Stevens-Nell story of Mrs. Robinson's "negro man," that would account for the black youth's fine, well-fitting clothes, befitting a servant – or slave – in a wealthy household. The youth sports a magnificent tricorne that contributes to his festive and patriotic appearance. His right side and shoulders are relieved against the sunlit background of Hessian captives, and his posture is upright but jaunty. His expression is jubilant and he appears to be enjoying the victory just as much



*Al Jolson's blackface in The Jazz Singer was a cliché of early minstrel shows.*

inversion, when masters would wait on their slaves for a day each December. The black youth's elevation is only temporary; he is a mock-king whose masters will depose him when the pageant is over. But Williams captures the moment when the youth is exulting in his own power, which is expressed by the firm grip of his left hand on the rope that leads the Tories by their necks.

"Prisoners Taken at the Battle of Bennington" was painted only a decade after Al Jolson's blackface turn in *The Jazz Singer* (1927). The representation of black joy by the use of exaggerated white eyes and teeth and red lips was a cliché of twentieth-century popular illustration and cinema originating in nineteenth-century minstrel shows. Compare the character of Buckwheat (William "Billie" Thomas Jr.) in Hollywood's *Our Gang Follies* of 1938 to Leroy Williams's black youth, his exact contemporary. Williams's broadly smiling figure shares the characteristics of the stereotype to a degree (several white patriots at the left of the canvas,

as (if not more than) the mounted white officers.

Stark's face is a mere mask of command. But the face of the black youth is lit up from within, and his eyes look off into the distance as if he were anticipating the triumph of freedom, including perhaps his own freedom, in America. His ascendance is a sign that the political order has been turned upside down. Blacks had more freedom to gain through the Revolution than any other group in society; the youth's joy may be celebrating liberty as a vision of liberation. He's off in his own free world.

In his discussion of the incident, Hoffman Nickerson invokes the Saturnalia, a Roman rite of social



*The character Buckwheat in the Our Gang Follies was contemporaneous with Leroy Williams's Black Youth, 1938.*



***Rev. Lemuel Haynes was portrayed by another Depression-era artist, William Tefft Schwarz, as a gesture of racial inclusion.*** Bennington Museum Collection

those right behind Warner and Herrick, for example, are also smiling and showing their teeth). Is the black youth in any respect the butt of a (white) joke or is he the captain of his black soul? The meaning of the portrait of the youth lies in the beholder. I see a skillful portrait of black dignity and triumph that rises above the stereotype. The radiant face of the dashing figure of the black youth strikes me as the highlight of the painting.

Historians estimate that 5,000 black soldiers served as patriots during the American Revolution. A small number of black soldiers, mostly from Massachusetts, fought at the

Battle of Bennington. One of them, Sipp Ives, a member of Warner's regiment of Green Mountain Boys, was killed in action<sup>15</sup>. That fact would have been unknown to Spargo and Williams, but they had already created a symbol of black participation in the victory – and in American society – in the figure of the black youth astride the horse.

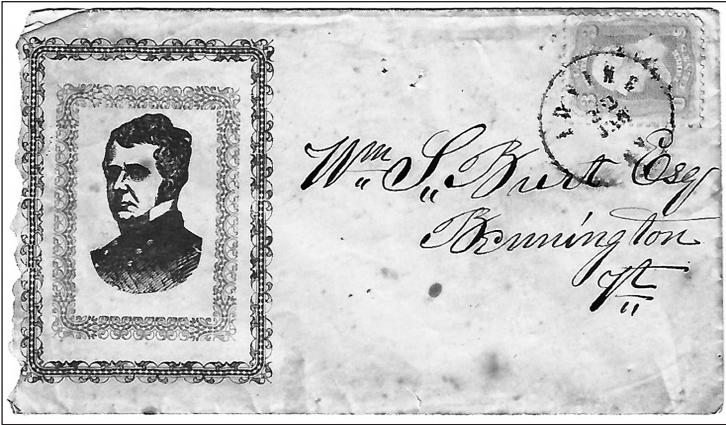
The triumphant Indian lost in the background of the painting is already fading from history (and will soon be dispossessed in Stockbridge and all across the continent<sup>16</sup>). The black youth is another story; his 1777 gaze is directed toward a future beyond the painting, reaching all the way to 1938 – and 2019 – to engage the viewer.

Referring to the two commissioned paintings of Rev. Lemuel Haynes, Bennington Museum Curator Jamie Franklin has written, “The gesture of racial inclusion in an institution devoted to Vermont’s Yankee heritage was a bold one.”<sup>17</sup> Franklin notes that the Gleaners, “a group of Negroes . . . organized for the study of Negro history and culture,” as they identified themselves in a letter to John Spargo in 1940<sup>18</sup>, commended the museum’s commissioning of the paintings of Haynes. Their letter concludes by noting, “It is our hope that in doing this, you have led the way in the erecting of memorials to the Negro heroes of our great Nation, thus blazing the trail for a *true* democracy.”<sup>19</sup>

No event is more connected to Vermont heritage than the Battle of

Bennington, commemoration of which was also the founding impetus behind the Bennington Historical Association (that was responsible for the monument) and the Bennington Museum. Black Americans were still second-class citizens in much of America in the 1930s. In response, in “Prisoners Taken at the Battle of Bennington,” Spargo and Williams elevated an anonymous black man into the pantheon of Vermont patriots. □

1. In Williams's original key the black youth has a number (17) and a description: “Negro Mounted -- Leading the Tories by Rope --.” The author of the current Museum text, the then Curator Stephen Perkins, has told me that the dated (and perhaps offensive) rendering and labeling of the young African American, together with the second-hand and sometimes fanciful nature of the 19th-century sources for his role in leading the Tories, led him to downplay the youth's role in his explanatory text.
- 2 Hoffman Nickerson, *The Turning Point of the Revolution or Burgoyne in America*, Cambridge, Mass., 1928, pp. 262-63.
- 3 John Spargo, *The Bennington Battle Monument*, Rutland, 1925, pp. 78-79.
- 4 *Bennington Evening Banner*, May 21, 1938.
- 5 James Davie Butler, *Addresses on the Battle of Bennington and the Life and Services of Colonel Seth Warner*, Burlington, 1849, p. 24.
- 6 Henry W. De Puy, *Ethan Allen and the Green Mountain Heroes of '76*, 1853, pp. 368-69.
- 7 Caleb Stark, *Memoir and Official Correspondence of General John Stark*, Concord, 1860, p. 63-64.
- 8 Unfortunately, the Stevens Papers have gone through two fires in their turbulent history, and examination of microfilm of the surviving papers pertaining to the Revolution by the present writer turned up no information relevant to the aftermath of the Battle.
- 9 Nell, *Services of Colored Americans in the Wars of 1776 and 1812*, Boston, 1851, p. 19; *The Colored Patriots of the American Revolution*, Boston, 1855, p. 122.
- 10 Robert C. Mello, *Moses Robinson and the Founding of Vermont*, 2014, p. 186.
- 11 Julius Wasmus, *An Eyewitness Account of the American Revolution and New England Life*, trans. Helga Doblin, New York, 1990, p. 72.
- 12 Lion Miles, personal communication, 2018.
- 13 National Archives, <https://www.fold3.com/image/25331464>, accessed Feb. 24, 2019.
- 14 A vivid example of the contempt in which ordinary black soldiers could be held by their superiors comes from General Philip Schuyler, commander of the Northern Department, in a letter to the president of Massachusetts Bay, July 28, 1777: “I cannot help remarking that of the few Continental troops we have had to the Northward, one third part is composed of Men too far advanced in Years for full Service; of Boys or rather children and mortifying, barely to mention, of Negroes.” In other letters of the same month, the slave-holding Schuyler refers to “Negroes, who disgrace our arms” (to Governor Trumbull of Connecticut, July 27, 1777).
- 15 As established by the unpublished research of Lion G. Miles, presented by Miles and this writer at the Bennington Museum, Feb. 2, 2019.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qujPzh6pc-Q&list=PLdXvmafaL6tiJHA0cOQeoBXLgg8RLGhQt>
- 16 The Stockbridge Indians relocated first to the Oneida Reservation in New York, N.Y., then to Shawano County, Wisconsin, where they now live on the Stockbridge-Munsee Reservation.
- 17 Jamie Franklin, “Crash to Creativity,” Bennington Museum, 2018.
- 18 The letter, dated Jan. 16, 1940, is in the object file for item A2229, *Preaching in the Old First Church* by William Tefft Schwartz, in the Bennington Museum. The Gleaners were based in New York City.
- 19 *ibid.* Adoree Allan, the writer of the obituary for Leroy Williams, published in the *Times and Reporter* of Springfield, Vermont, Feb. 12, 1996 (p. 5) took note of Williams's portrayal of the black youth in a similar vein: Williams “immortalized heroes of Vermont, but his recognition of greater sociological responsibility is indicated by the negro soldier prominently displayed with the other heroes in the foreground of the battle.”



**We Are Living on Hope and Fear:**

## *The Civil War Letters of Newton Gould*

*Ruth Burt Ekstrom and Avis Hayden*

After the Civil War began, Newton and Almira Gould wondered if they had made a good decision when they left Bennington, Vermont, and moved to Estill County, Kentucky in the early 1850s. They felt that life in Kentucky had gone reasonably well despite some difficulties in the first couple of years. By 1860 they had a farm, Newton did some work as a cabinet maker, and they had four children all of whom had been born in Kentucky.<sup>1</sup> The Goulds also had encountered slavery; the census for 1860 shows that Estill County had 6,886 residents, 600 of them slaves.

During much of 1861 Kentucky tried to be independent, but by the end of the year the legislature decided to remain in the Union. Residents of the state saw a variety of military activities around them. 35,000 Confederate troops occupied the southwestern quarter of the state while more than 50,000 Federal troops tried to control the rest of the territory.<sup>2</sup> Some of the Goulds' neighbors supported the Union while others supported the Confederacy. In Estill County two regiments were organized to support the Union cause and one regiment to support the Confederacy.<sup>3</sup>

In 1862 the 14th Kentucky Cavalry was formed and assigned to scout the mountains of Eastern Kentucky and fight against guerrillas who were stealing food and horses, and burning buildings.<sup>4</sup> This included action in Estill County in October 1862 that left Newton and Almira concerned about their safety. Almira was pregnant and they wanted to avoid the



*Newton and  
Almira Burt Gould*

Bennington Museum collection

possibility of a simultaneous arrival of Confederate guerrilla raiders and a new baby at their home. Newton leased out his house and land for the year of 1863 and the family returned to Vermont. The Goulds' daughter, Sarah, was born in Bennington on February 28, 1863.<sup>5</sup> But that happy event did not keep them from worries related to the Civil War.

In July Almira's brother, William Spaulding Burt, received news that his son, Henry Burt, who had joined the 14th Vermont Infantry, Company A, had been wounded at Gettysburg.<sup>6</sup> Henry returned to Bennington later that summer; although he had survived his wounds he would never fully recover from them.

About the same time news reached the Goulds telling them about the Battle of Irvine. This took place on July 30, 1863 when Confederate troops led by Col. John Scott attacked the town and tried to capture the 14th Kentucky Cavalry; but the Confederates held Irvine for only a few hours before being chased out by Union troops led by Col. W. P. Sanders.<sup>7</sup>

The Goulds returned to Kentucky later that year after learning that the Union Army had set up a camp not far from their home. But things were not peaceful. In January 1864 the town of Irvine was raided by Confederate guerrillas who ransacked the town and burned buildings.<sup>8</sup>

Newton Gould wrote about this in a January 23 letter to his

brother-in-law, William Spaulding Burt, in Bennington. This is the first of three letters that tell the story of the Goulds' experience living in Kentucky in the midst of the Civil War fighting.

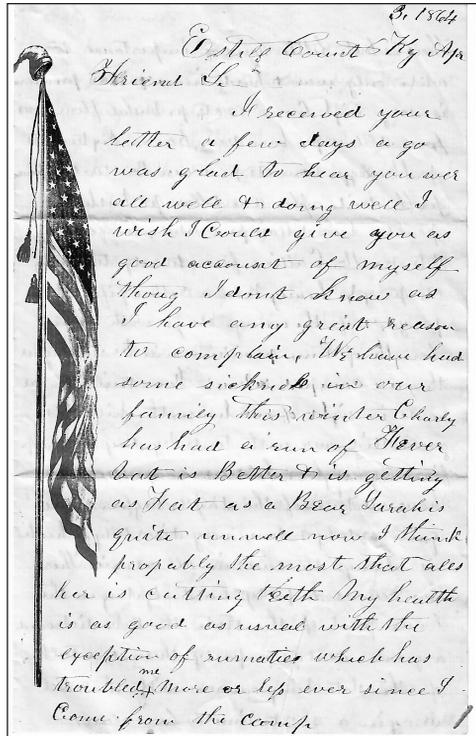
Brother S[Spaulding]

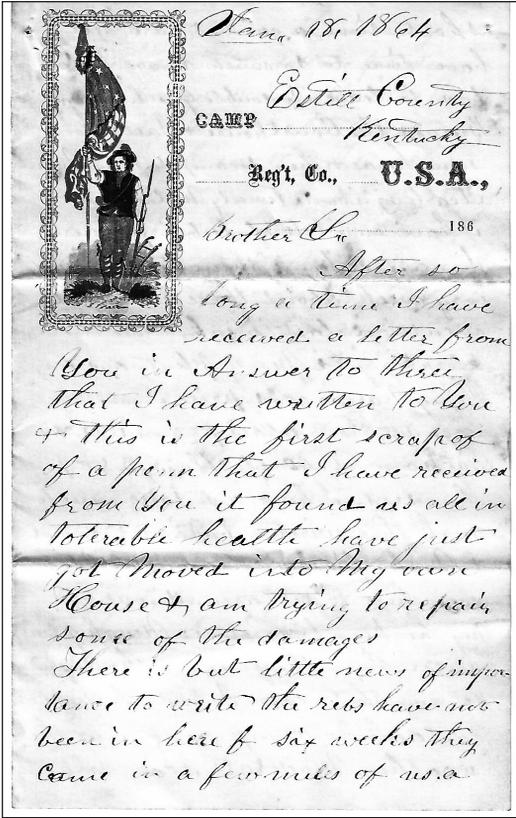
After so long a time I have received a letter from you. . . . You have found us all in tolerable health just got Moved into My own House & am trying to repair some of the damages. There is but little news of importance to write. The rebs have not been here for six weeks. They came in a few miles of us a short time ago but did not have

time to do much damage before they had to leave in double quick. They Burned the Courthouse and the Gaol & took some horses & then decamped from Mount Stearling about twenty miles from us. I have seen lots of Rebel prisoners. They are taking them through here every week about three thousand went on last week. Times are tolerably good. Money plenty and every thing bares a good price. I bot My hogs at Four dollars pr hundred & My Corn at 60 cts, flour 3.0 pr Hundred. I have not done much work this winter but cut wood & make fires. I often wish you was here to set round one of My hickory fires it is much pleasanter than fires in the East or any that I ever had.

I shall go back to [the Union Army] camp as soon as the weather Moderates. I can make more money there than any where else. Two dollars pr day and boarded is rather better than I done in the east. You think so, this Idea they have in the East of getting \$9 pr Week & Costing \$10 to live don't suit me it Makes a man think so much of the World but if they are contented at that I suppose it is none of My business.

Tell Hub [Hubbard Burt] and Dan [Daniel Burt] they ought to have been out here with Me this winter after I come from camp. I





Killed One hundred & 40 squirrels Mornings & Evenings & hardly went out of hearing of the house. I then went out on a Deer hunt was gon a week we kill 5 & I expect we saw 50 & then I was out again 2 weeks ago in a tracking snow hunted 2 days & killed 5 more. I think if they was out here they would do nothing but hunt the first time I went out I borrowed a horse to bring my venison home & sent Will [his son] back with the horse & he staid 5 weeks had a fine time working Calves riding horses all kinds of amusement.

It has been the Coldest here this winter

that it has for 10 Years and I don't know as I ever saw a much colder time since I have been in the State the Ice on the ponds is a foot thick. You must write to Me as soon as You receive this and tell me what You have been doing and what is going on in B [Bennington] this winter what wages are & all the news Generally I will Answer all the letters You send.

Yours with the respects of  
N Gould & family<sup>9</sup>

The next letter from Newton to Spaulding is dated 3 April 1864. It opens with a little family news before going into some detail about war related topics.

Friend S[Spaulding]

I received your letter a few days ago was glad to hear you wer all well & doing well I wish I Could give you as good account of myself thoug I don't know as I have any great reason to complain. We have had some

sickness in our family this winter. Charly has had a run of Fever but is Better . . . Sarah is quite unwell now I think propably the most that ales her I cutting teeth. My health is as good as usual with the exception of the rumaties which has troubled me more or less ever since I Come from the camp.

There is but little news of importance to write only war & hard times & War provisions is very high Corn 80 cts per bushel flour four dollars pr hundred, Bacon Sixteen cts pr lb Eggs ten cts pr dozen Butter ninepence by lb dried apples One dollar pr bushel peaches two dollar pr bushel, Coffe fifty pr lb. Callico from twenty to thirty cts pr yd heavy Brown cotton fifty cts pr yd & if the army stays with us any length of time provisions will be still higher. They are camped about Four miles of our house in sight of our house, the hill sides are dotted over with tents by day & camp fires by night. Soldiers are passing our house all times of the day & night. Some quite orderly & some very disorderly which is always the case in all armies.

There has been some pretty hard fighting in the lower part of the state. The Rebs destroyed a great deal of property. There is a talk of the state being overrun with the rebel army in a short time by four ~~large~~ Armies Coming in four different directions Buckner, Brag, Brackenridge, & Longstreet. If they do get in again We are gon up But I am in hopes they will be kept out the Union Soldiers give us trouble enough But if the rebs get in they will destroy every thing as they go. I have not been back to [the Union Army] camp to work any since last fall the small pack [smallpox] Broke out there & it is not altogether disappeared yet & I am not settled up what I Shall do this summer. I don't like to be away from my Family. But I may have to be Before the summer is out.

We are living on hope & fear. They have just commenced enrolling Blacks & they may take them to fill up the last calls. There is a greate many that is anxious to go into the army & I think they had better take them. Tell Hub and Dan they ought to be here this Spring to help me Fish I went Yesterday a little while & Caught Four that weighs nine pounds in my dip net the first I hav Caught this spring But I have done hunting tell I get another dog Fr my dog took sick died last week I would almost as leave lost my cow. You have Bot You a farm now & I suppose we may never look for You out hear Yet I would be glad to see You Once more We have plenty of Meat & Bread & some times we get a little Wood. I have chopped Wood on Wisemans land & he gives it to me & than halls it one half for the other Halls it about one fourth of a mile.

We have been in some pretty tite places since I saw You But thanks

*to kind fortune we are all living Yet. I see so many Families in a worse condition than mine I think I am pretty well off. But I am in hopes our Friends will live well & Die Happy. I see the Camp fires are getting dim & so is mine Too. I will bid You Good Night & wate patiently for an answer.<sup>10</sup>*

Apparently Spaulding was not a good correspondent. But that did not stop Newton from writing to him again – this time on 25 September 1864.

### *Friend Spaulding*

*I take the present opportunity writing You a few lines to let you know how we are & that we are not all dead nor have we entirely forgotten You, although we have not received a word from You since last spring. I have been very busy this summer Farming. I have Broke up & tended about 25 acres in corn by me self. It looks very well but the high water has damaged Me considerable. Provisions are very high here. Flour \$5 per hundred corn \$1 per bushel Bacon 25 cts per lb & dry goods about the same as there. I am now making a Mill to Grind my shugar cane to make molasses. There is but little War news here. More than You know off. We have a rade of rebs in here once in a while. I had to Skedadle once this summer. But they only come in 6 miles of me. The Rebs have been killing some Union men here & the Union Men have benn settling off the Act in the same way. Several of my Neighbors on Both sides have settled their Acts. Tell the Boys I wish they Could have been in some of my Fishing sprees I have caught over One Thousand pound of fish this sumer some very fine Ones of the Salmon & the pike species.*

*I have been on the point of writing Luther [son of Amelia's brother, Daniel Burt] to come out here & teach School several has told me they would Give \$50 a peace for a school for a Year. Ask him if he will come & what wages we will have to Give him for Tenn Months*

*We are Most all sick at present the Children have got the mumps . . . Spaulding I don't know when ther I ever paid Doc Robinson Morgan that Two dollars or not I wish You would see him & find out & if he is not paid Tell Dan if he is a mind to pay it we will call even if not Sell that Bond & pay it for me & You will oblig me. You must write me often it seems we don't get all of Your letters are they drafting there this county is between two & three hundred a head of the draf so there will be no draf here for the present & I am in hopes the war will end before they draf again. Write Soon<sup>11</sup>*

Newton, Almira and their family remained in Kentucky for many years after the Civil War ended. The of 1870 and 1880 census shows them still in Estill County. □

1. United States 1860 Federal Census, Kentucky, Estill County, page 104.
2. James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1988, page 297.
3. U.S. Gen-Web Archives – Civil War, Kentucky
4. Union Kentucky Volunteers, Battle Unit Details, The Civil War, U.S. National Park Service.
5. Vermont Vital Records, Births, Bennington
6. Civil War Pension Application file SO 746 412, SC 618 758,
7. Kentucky Historical Society Highway Marker #1507.
8. Estill Development Alliance – History.
9. Unpublished letter from Newton Gould, Estill County, Kentucky January 28, 1864 to William Spaulding Burt, Bennington, Vermont (Burt-Hayden File H 24, Bennington Museum).
10. Unpublished letter from Newton Gould, Estill County, Kentucky, April 3, 1864 to William Spaulding Burt. (Burt-Hayden File H 58, Bennington Museum).
11. Unpublished letter from Newton Gould, Estill County, Kentucky, September 25, 1864 to William Spaulding Burt. (Burt-Hayden File H 59, Bennington Museum).

### **Manuscript Location Information**

*Photocopies and transcripts of the letters by Newton Gould quoted in this article can be found in the Burt-Hayden Family Papers in the Bennington Museum Library.*

# *Tar and Terror in Tampa : Part II*

## Florida Justice Frees the Floggers and Murderers

*Jennifer Shakshober*

On a cold, wet day in mid-December 1935, the Reverend E.C. Nance, pastor of First Christian Church in Tampa, Florida, addressed a crowd of three hundred mourners who had gathered for the funeral of Joseph Shoemaker. The scene described in newspapers was heartfelt: a bier covered with with pink rosebuds bought from “the nickels and dimes of WPA workers” and a large arrangement of white chrysanthemums donated by the people of Tampa.<sup>1</sup>

Indeed, it was a funeral befitting the peaceful reformer who apparently harbored no ill sentiments about his attackers and whose notebook bore the epigraph, “Happy is that people, and proud may they be, who can enlarge their franchises and perfect their political forms without bloodshed or threat...”<sup>2</sup> When Shoemaker had been found brutalized and lying in a roadside ditch in Tampa’s warehouse district on December 1, 1935, he expressed only disbelief: “I didn’t think that people could be so mean.”<sup>3</sup>

Despite gentle appearances, Shoemaker’s service called for a rather different sort of eulogy: on the one hand sorrowful in acknowledging the loss of a visionary; on the other hand, vengeful that the state of affairs in Tampa should have allowed this death to occur in the first place. Reverend Nance demanded action from a formerly indifferent populace, who were at last roused to attention by the brutality of Shoemaker’s death. It is certain that no one in attendance that afternoon had been ignorant of the flogging, but mourners departing the gravesite that day were imbued with a fresh commitment to justice.

As Americans read about Tampa in the newspapers, they had to question the constitutional principles they held to be self-evident. Each competing political faction advanced its own definition of American values. Tampa’s political machine, a coalition among law enforcement, the governor, and the Ku Klux Klan, sought to eliminate any threats to the status quo. Referred to derisively, but not unfairly, as the “White Municipal Party,” it favored the exclusion of non-whites, labor union members, socialists, and communists from society.

Shoemaker’s supporters appealed to the Socialist Party, to the American Federation of Labor, to the Workers’ Alliance of America; and to God. From the vantage point of Tampa’s political elite, these people were not ragtag

heroes but iconoclasts set on dismantling American values. Those in power failed to recognize that the working class upheld the same democratic values that shaped American politics in the first place; that full

***The Tampa Bay Times published this commentary on Nov. 22, 1937, after the conviction of the murderers and floggers had been overturned by the Florida Supreme Court.***

enfranchisement of all citizens defined the nation perhaps more than ethnic and religious uniformity.

It is a lesson taught in any civics class that freedom constitutes both protection (freedom *from*) and autonomy (freedom *to*). In the Shoemaker case, one group desired freedom from heterodox elements while the other advocated for the freedom of those so-called undesirables to exercise their constitutional rights of assembly and speech.

A few days after Shoemaker, Samuel Rogers, and Eugene Poulnot were abducted, Chief of Police Robert Tittsworth insisted that the city police department had nothing to do with the floggings. Mayor Robert E. Lee Chancey nevertheless suspended five Tampa police officers, a city employee, and a fireman associated with the raid on the residence of Adolphus and Farleigh Herald and the unlawful arrest of Shoemaker and his comrades.<sup>4</sup> The fireman in question was J.A. McCaskill, one of the six men who attended the Modern Democrats meeting on November 30, and also among those who were brought to police headquarters for questioning. His complicity in the murder was suspected when investigators found that his name had been struck from the police docket.

The socialist leader Norman Thomas could not visit Tampa until January, but sent David Lasser, chairman of the Workers' Alliance of America, with a legion of four detectives to conduct an independent



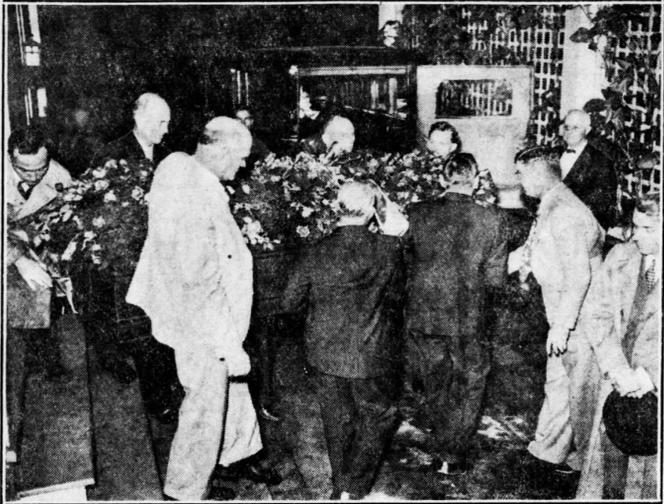
### Where Police Arrested Men Flogged By Gang



—Photo by Roscoe Frey, Tribune Staff.  
Residence at 307 East Palm avenue where police arrested the late Joseph Shoemaker and five other men the night of Nov. 30 and took them to headquarters for questioning about alleged communistic activities. Three of the men were flogged by a gang after being released. It is a private home occupied by Adolphus M. Herald.

*The Tampa Tribune published these photos on Dec. 12 and Dec. 13, 1935, showing the private home of Adolphus M. Herald, where police first carried out a raid on suspicion of "communistic activities;" and a view of the pallbearers carrying the murdered body of Joseph Shoemaker, recent resident of Bennington, Vt., to a hearse.*

### Flogging Victim Is Carried to Grave



—Photo by Roscoe Frey, Tribune Staff.  
Pallbearers carry the body of Joseph Shoemaker, murdered by floggers, to the hearse after funeral services attended by hundreds.

investigation. From New York, Thomas leveraged his political connections to form the ad-hoc Committee for the Defense of Civil Rights in Tampa. The committee's widely circulated "Tar and Terror" pamphlet articulated an alliance between city employees and the KKK, a claim which Grand Dragon George Garcia later disputed with the significant caveat that the organization would have followed police orders if they had been deputized.<sup>5</sup> Thomas wired a provocative statement to Sheriff Sholtz implying that "the investigation may be mishandled to save the face of Tampa police and some higher-ups," which the sheriff promptly denied.<sup>6</sup> Under the auspices of Wendell C. Heaton, president of the Florida section, the American Federation of Labor, authorized a separate investigation and threatened to hold its 1936 meeting elsewhere.

Meanwhile, the Tampa Baptist Association and the Tampa Methodist Ministers called for a "thorough clean up" of the city. The American Civil Liberties Union offered a reward of \$1,000 for information leading to the arrest of Shoemaker's assailants.<sup>7</sup> Under pressure from these civic organizations and a grand jury probe, the city's eighteen-million-dollar gambling industry voluntarily closed its houses.<sup>8</sup>

Wide press coverage and a spate of protests meant few Tampa residents were eligible jurors, so on March 31, 1936, Judge Robert Dewell ordered a change of venue for the Eugene Poulnot kidnapping trial.<sup>9</sup> Proceedings would be held at the Circuit Courtroom of the Polk County Courthouse in Bartow under the assumption that public interest in the case necessitated a larger venue. On May 23, 1936, C.A. "Smitty" Brown, Sam Crosby, John Bridges, F.W. Switzer, and C.W. Carlisle were convicted for the kidnapping and flogging of Eugene Poulnot; Robert Tittsworth and Robert Chappell were both acquitted as accessories.<sup>10</sup> "Free men who love their freedom will draw an easier breath as a result of the jury's action," read the *Tampa Bay Times*.<sup>11</sup> The five men were each sentenced to four years in prison.

Then in July of 1936, Judge Dewell entertained the defense counsel's motion to appeal, citing a litany of court violations: a fistfight between two jurors, the jury's consumption of liquor in the courtroom, separation of jurors during a recess, the jury's exposure to radio coverage, and the jury's statement that they had reached a verdict before the end of the trial.<sup>12</sup> For months, Brown, Crosby, Bridges, Switzer, and Carlisle remained free on bond. One year later, the Florida Supreme Court reversed the conspiracy conviction on the grounds that the trial judge had acted in error by hearing evidence related to the conspiracy charge when this information had already been expunged from the record.<sup>13</sup>

The Shoemaker murder trial led to a similarly distressing conclusion. On October 15, 1937, Judge Dewell acquitted C.A. Brown, Sam Crosby,

John Bridges, F.W. Switzer, C.W. Carlisle, and Arlie Gilliam on a directed verdict, stating that the testimonies of eighteen prosecution witnesses could not place the convicted men at the scene of the flogging. Poulnot, sole witness to the flogging yet blindfolded during the ordeal, could neither prove that the defendants had been principals in the murder by their “actual presence,” substantiating the charge of murder in the first degree, nor could he prove their “constructive presence” at the scene, substantiating the second charge of second degree murder by aiding and abetting.<sup>14</sup>

The state had actually conducted two separate trials in the Shoemaker case: one for the conspiracy charge, one for the substantive charge of murder. Normally, in the case of a substantive charge, evidence to prove a conspiracy is admissible because that charge culminates in the more substantive one: “the principal crime charged may itself be established first proving the formation and execution of a pre-existing conspiracy out of which its accompaniment was realized in the completion of the substantive offense.”<sup>15</sup> If the precondition of conspiracy was not met, then the judge had his hands tied; he could not reasonably indict on a murder charge. Shoemaker’s case had no chance.

Dewell’s ruling ensured that none of Shoemaker’s alleged assailants spent a day in jail, since the five kidnappers had been freed on bond pending their Supreme Court appeal. In June 1938 came the retrial of the Poulnot kidnapping, at which the jury found the defendants not guilty. State’s Attorney Farrior motioned to dismiss the remaining two charges.<sup>16</sup>

With Alice Cameron Voorhis as their spokesperson, Bennington residents decried the situation in Tampa. “Every office-holder and every politician of the city of Tampa is morally responsible for a condition that could breed such a crime,” she wrote Mayor Chancey in December 1935. Her paean to Shoemaker had been published earlier in the *Tampa Tribune*.<sup>17</sup> The *Bennington Banner* admitted that while he lived among them, the townspeople looked upon Shoemaker as “a newspaper pest.” He had spent a decade in Vermont, joined the Bennington local chapter of the Socialist Party, and established the Handee clothes hanger factory; still, he was a transplant there, just as he had been in Florida. Vermonters did hold Tampa officials accountable for its vigilante crimes and denied that their officials could ever construct such machinations. In that Republican stronghold, Shoemaker was afforded a civil dismissal from the Socialist Party. But they agreed that like Tampans, they were suspicious of outsiders. As explained in the *Banner*: “The man who died of his injuries was a northerner who was looked upon as a meddler. . . .the ending, while not wholly creditable to the administration of justice in Florida, will accord with predictions of many who have followed the case. . . . Moreover, it is about the same result that

would have been achieved in Vermont . . .”<sup>18</sup>

After 1935, Sheriff McLeod resolved to clean up Tampa’s municipal elections. “I promised myself if I ever had the opportunity, I would do something about it,” McLeod recalled almost sixty years later. “That was the last disorderly election ever held in Tampa.”<sup>19</sup>

The kidnapping, flogging, and murder of Joseph Shoemaker on the night of November 30, 1935, however, is not a scourge on Tampa history, but on American history at large. That the guilty parties were never held accountable for their crimes suggests that First Amendment rights of free speech and assembly can be abridged when the person exercising them is a political outcast, a threat to personal liberties that persists to this day. Ultimately the Shoemaker murder was not Florida’s problem, but America’s. □

- 1 “Hundreds Brave Rain at Rites for Shoemaker,” *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 13 Dec 1935, page 7.
- 2 “Shoemaker’s Creed to Avoid Violence,” *Tampa Tribune*, 13 Dec 1935, page 4.
- 3 “Finds Roosevelt Studied Flogging Victim’s Views,” *Baltimore Evening Sun*, 24 Mar 1936, page 3.
- 4 “Six Men Lose Jobs,” *Tampa Tribune*, 17 Dec 1935, page 1.
- 5 “Klan Disclaims Any Connection With Floggings,” *Tampa Bay Times*, 04 Oct 1937, page 3.
- 6 *Fort Myers News-Press*, 12 Dec 1935, page 1.
- 7 *Tampa Tribune*, 09 Dec 1935, page 1.
- 8 *Tampa Tribune*, 17 Dec 1935, page 1; “Tar and Terror” pamphlet.
- 9 “Lashing Trial Sent to Polk,” *Tampa Bay Times*, 01 Apr 1936, page 2.
- 10 “Jury Convicts Five Tampan in Flogging Case,” *Tampa Bay Times*, 24 May 1936, page 1.
- 11 “Florida Justice Triumphant,” *Tampa Bay Times*, 24 May 1936, page 6.
- 12 “Judge Studies New Trial Plea,” *Tampa Bay Times*, 09 Jul 1936, page 1.
- 13 *Tampa Bay Times*, 02 Jul 1937, page 1.
- 14 “Flog Defendants Freed,” *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 15 Oct 1937, page 1.
- 15 *Ibid*, page 5.
- 16 “Tampa Flogger Cases Dropped By Prosecution,” *Tampa Bay Times*, 21 Jun 1938, page 2.
- 17 “As the Tribune Readers See It,” *Tampa Tribune*, 22 Dec 1935.
- 18 Reprinted in *Burlington Free Press and Times*, 14 Jul 1938, page 4.
- 19 *Tampa Tribune*, 23 Jun 1991, page 8.



*Ted Seaver's easy rapport with Jesse Montgomery is evident in this 1965 photo at the Vermont in Mississippi community center in Jackson, Mississippi.*

## The 'Vermont in Mississippi Project' of 1965

*Tyler Resch*

Photographs by Tyler Resch

**A**lthough much progress had been achieved by 1965, that year in the United States was still marked by uneasy civil-rights anxiety. The nation had experienced the 1955 bus boycott in Montgomery, Alabama, the 1960 lunch-counter sit-ins, and the 1961 bloody Freedom Ride through the South. Then the memorable 1963 March on Washington when the Rev. Martin Luther King's "I have a dream" speech broadcast to the world that the American promise of equal protection under the law was deeply flawed.

In June 1964 while a national civil-rights bill was making halting progress in Congress the nation felt the bitter sting of violence and racial hatred when three voter-registration workers, James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, and Michael Schwerner, were arrested, tortured, and appallingly

murdered in Philadelphia, Mississippi. More intense civil-rights agitation and activity followed.

Organizations came together in many states. In the Green Mountain State the Vermont Civil Rights Union (CVRU) had been created as an amalgam of the Burlington chapter of the NAACP and Rutland chapter of the National Conference of Christians and Jews. In January 1965 it was announced that a "Vermont in Mississippi" (VIM) project was being formed as a branch of the VCRU.

The list of honorary directors was headed by Governor Philip H. Hoff, the first Democrat to hold that office in more than a century, and a political progressive, who clearly felt a responsibility to act. The rest of the board of prominent supporters constituted an inclusive model of the state's political, religious, and labor leadership. Besides the governor it included Lieutenant Governor John J. Daley of Rutland, Speaker of the House Franklin S. Billings Jr. of Woodstock, later a federal judge; Senator Ellery Purdy, chair of the Senate Education Committee; Representative Flora Coutts, chair of the House Education Committee; Harold "Ron" Reynolds, chair of the State Board of Education; and Robert H. Ryan, president of the Vermont Bar Association.

The theological waterfront was covered by religious leaders of all stripes: Bishop Robert F. Joyce of the Roman Catholic diocese; Bishop Harvey D. Butterfield of the Episcopal diocese; the Rev. Lawrence Larrowe and the Rev. Elmer Haley, both of the Troy Methodist Conference; the Rev. Max Webster of the Vermont Congregational conference; and Rabbi Max Wall of Burlington's Ohavi Zedek synagogue. Labor was represented by John Williams, president of the state labor council. Two other clergymen who were especially supportive were the Rev. Msgr. Edward J. Fitzsimons of Burlington and the Rev. Msgr. John A. Lynch, both Catholic diocesan superintendents of schools.

At a meeting in Rutland on January 16, 1965, the VCRU agreed to sponsor a Vermont family who would live in a black section of Jackson, Mississippi, to represent the Green Mountain State, and to become, in effect, community organizers to develop a sense of local leadership. A natural candidate for the VIM position was Ted Seaver, a Montpelier high school teacher who had spent the previous summer in Mississippi where he ran a "Freedom School" that followed the philosophy of non-violence practiced by Martin Luther King and other leaders. Seaver, 25, was eager to get back to the South to continue his work.

Seaver was granted a year's leave of absence by his school. The CVRU's plan was to support him and his wife, Carol, and their sons, Teddy, 5, and Tommy, 4. After an ambitious goal of \$7,500 for the year was established,

work began immediately. A January newsletter was drafted and Seaver began making the rounds of Vermont communities to spread the word, raise money, and enlist support from groups and individuals.

In an interview with Chester Ringheiser in the *Bennington Banner*, Seaver acknowledged that his original outlook as a conservative had evolved during his previous work in Mississippi, when he “learned . . . what it feels like to be Negro.” He said he left the South in 1964 inspired and deeply committed to the civil-rights struggle, especially in a state that integration workers refer to as “the other America.”

He was also motivated, he said, by the so-called block rehabilitation projects in Chicago and San Francisco. Social workers and others trained in such work entered blighted neighborhoods to find local citizens to act as leaders to bring some sort of civic pride to the area. The idea was to engender a sense of community from within, not to impose an external and impersonal motivating authority, he explained.

But his experience had also showed him, Seaver noted, “Everything goes slow in Mississippi. . . . These people have to decide what they want. Their sense of community must emerge from their own thoughts. It’s not so much teaching but letting them find out what they need and want to learn.”



While most of the VIM leadership resided in northern Vermont, a noted author-mathematician from Shaftsbury, Irving Adler, became chairman. A scholar of lifelong devotion to liberal causes, Adler had



*Carol Seaver takes charge of an art class at the VIM project.*

stirred controversy since he moved to Shaftsbury in the early '60s because a few politically right-wing citizens were spreading rumors that he had been a communist. It was a time when a small group known as the Green Mountain Patriots were raising alarms of suspicion about newcomers who were believed to be of a politically progressive or liberal stripe. Adler took the wind out of their sails at a public meeting when he admitted that he had, indeed, been a communist, but had broken with the party and left it during the brutal Soviet takeover of Hungary in 1956.

Adler was the author, usually with his first wife Ruth, of more than a hundred books, mostly devoted to math and science for students. Eventually he was elected to serve for several terms on the Shaftsbury and Mt. Anthony Union School Boards.

Adler was one of the first Vermonters, in June 1965, to visit Ted Seaver and the VIM project. In a series of reports during early July, Adler described his tour of the neighborhood and the building that was going to become a community center. He met with a bi-racial board of directors, attended an integrated Unitarian church service, and spoke with young Negroes who had been arrested at a civil-rights rally at the state capitol – which he had attended earlier.

He wrote that he arrived during “Hospitality Month” in Mississippi and quickly observed that while the city of Jackson rolled out a red carpet for certain visitors, others were not so welcome. Adler took the opportunity to report that in the previous two weeks about a thousand people had been arrested and jailed “for exercising their rights of peaceful assembly and petition” amid many acts of police brutality, which he proceeded to describe. The fact that these events were never reported in the newspapers, Adler commented, enigmatically, was a good sign. By that he explained that even though average white citizens remain unaware, “it shows that the city officials and newspaper editors sense the fact that the average white resident of Jackson does not approve of police brutality and would oppose it [if they knew about it].”



In early September 1965 I drove to Jackson, Mississippi, in my two-tone green VW microbus to visit Ted Seaver and the VIM project. I was between jobs and intended to write an article for Vermont papers and take photos of the project. I was accompanied by a good friend, Horst Rodies of Arlington, a clinical psychologist who had strong civil-rights interests. Horst also hoped to visit a black woman in the small town of Itta Bena whom he had befriended by mail. Another passenger was Paul Hurlburt of Bennington, a junior at Brown University who was planning to take a



*A Volkswagen Microbus from Vermont visited the Jackson site of the project.*

semester at Tougaloo, a black college in Jackson. Paul had been my summer reporter that year on the *Bennington Banner*, where I was the editor.

Ted Seaver had written to give me some advice about Yankees traveling to Mississippi during a time of heightened north-south tension. He figured, correctly as it turned out, that with Vermont license plates we would be safer than if we were to broadcast our origin as New York or Massachusetts. “Be as relaxed as possible,” he advised. “The people that get in trouble are those that are expecting it and keep looking nervously at cops, etc.”

“Be jovial and touristy, like you are going to New Orleans,” Ted wrote. “Your chief contact will be with gas station attendants and waitresses. Be friendly. In their world view they don’t expect civil-rights workers to be ordinary people – ergo, the more ordinary you are, the better.”

But he warned: “Try to avoid driving at night in either Alabama or Mississippi.” It was important to have a driver’s license, registration, car title, draft card, “my telephone number, and a dime.” We also had memorized the phone number in Montpelier of Governor Hoff, who was aware of our adventure.

As it turned out, the very fact of driving to Mississippi in tense September of 1965, and the fears it could conjure up, was probably the most memorable element of the junket.

I had outfitted the VW bus with folding plywood planks and pads so we could sleep in it. We parked in Ted and Carol’s driveway at 1131 Corinth Street. They let us use their bathroom, and even generously provided an impromptu meal or two. A most important detail about the duplex they rented was that it was on a dead-end road, meaning that if

some drive-by joy riders decided to harass the white family living in a black neighborhood, they would have to pause long enough to turn around.

Out at the site of the community center, a plain cement block building was nearing completion. Horst and I pitched in with some painting of the building and generally took in the scene. Children milled around, playing. We admired Ted's easy sense of rapport with the people he was hoping to inspire. I took a lot of photos and made notes for an article.

One evening Horst and I ventured into a black bar in downtown Jackson. Horst was the kind of casual guy who could strike up a conversation with anyone. We had some beers, and were drawn into some friendly conversations with black patrons – they were generally called Negroes back then – who were clearly puzzled and intrigued to have these two Caucasians from up north coming into their establishment – when they would not be allowed to come into ours.

The next morning we had breakfast at a Howard Johnson's, segregated of course. The deep sense of hypocrisy at being served in a restaurant where, by law, others were not welcome, made a strong impression on us.

Memories at random these many years later still focus on the importance of that dead-end road, the safety provided by the Vermont license plate, and the memorized phone number of our governor in case of trouble. During our visit to Ita Bena, where Horst had a small gift ready for his pen pal, and we stopped several times along the cotton fields to ask where we might find her. But in this dusty rural town of some 1,100 residents, confronted with two white guys in a weird car with a strange license plate, no one admitted even knowing her. Horst later sent the gift by mail.



By February 1966, much progress was reported at the VIM project. Seaver said that activities at the community center were straining the staff and overloading the budget. Teen-agers wanted to use the building for dances, but “the center is too small to handle all the kids who want to come.” A counseling program had been assisting Negro adults with employment problems, voter registration, and “other problems caused by racial discrimination.” Seaver also reported about the Medgar Evers Neighborhood Guild Mothers' Club (named for a slain civil-rights worker), which had been gaining representation of the poor and was operating under the federal Economic Opportunity Act. The Guild published a newsletter.

“Apathy and fear of reprisal by employers” was cited as a reason men resisted forming their own club, but Seaver said the success of the mothers' group “spurred the men into action,” and a men's club was formed in January. Negotiations were in progress with the Mississippi Employment

Security Commission and state day-care agency to set up a program in the Medgar Evers Guild “to train poor people under the Manpower Development Training Act as day-care supervisors and teachers.”

During 1966, according to an update twenty years later in “Vermont History News,” the VIM day-care cooperative was self-supporting, with sliding-scale fees, some federal funds, and access to federal surplus commodities. The counseling center was active with employment and welfare cases, and a Hinds County Community Council was coordinating activities in eleven neighborhoods and operating under local leadership.

The project had found an angel in the Michael Schwerner Memorial Fund of New York, which paid Seaver’s salary and allowed VIM to hire an employee, Jesse Montgomery of Jackson. Seaver’s goal of having local leaders in place was furthered by his efforts to secure black representation on Community Action Project boards.

In June 1966 the VCRU committed to another year of support to VIM, but September of that year proved to be a turning point, when Vermonters braced for relevant issues closer to home. VCRU supporters became focused on the attempt to enact a fair-housing law during the 1967 Vermont General Assembly; despite the backing of Gov. Hoff, intensive lobbying was needed.

In January 1967 Carol Seaver reported in the VCRU Bulletin that much of the community organizing had shifted to Jesse Montgomery with the Hinds County Community Council and Medgar Evers Neighborhood Guild. But even with help of the Schwerner foundation, VIM was short \$2,500 of meeting its budget. Carol’s urgent plea for continued Vermont support went unanswered and appears to mark the denouement of the project.

Michael Sherman, in the “Vermont History News” account, quotes Msgr. Fitzsimons as speculating that the long successful struggle to get a fair-housing law passed in Vermont, plus the creation of a state human-rights commission, marked the end of both VCRU and VIM.



After they left Jackson, the Seaver family moved to Milwaukee, Wisconsin, where the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* reported that Ted soon earned the reputation of “a real gutsy creative guy, who was born to organize.” Milwaukee was the home town of Carol, where she devoted her life to teaching, poetry, and art. When she died in February 2005 at the age of 66, her obituary said she “lived a life full of grace, compassion and joy.”

Writing in the Barre-Montpelier *Times-Argus*, historian-teacher Paul Heller remembered Ted Seaver as “an advocate for people, an advocate for

fairness, and he sometimes could be offensive. But it was always in service of a worthy cause, to make the city a better place to live.” Seaver loved sailing, bought a boat he named *The Class Struggle* and helped form a sailing center in Milwaukee so that others could learn to sail for a modest fee. Heller also remembered Seaver as a chain-smoker and that he was diagnosed with lung cancer in 1994. His last years were spent sailing on the coast of Maine, and he died in 1999 at the age of 59.

The VIM project can be seen fifty years later as an earnest, if probably naïve, attempt to make a statewide statement during a time of national civil-rights upheaval. It also had much to do with the personality and aspirations of Philip Hoff, who as governor seemed to be driven to thrust Vermont forward and “bring it into the twentieth century,” as was often said of his six-year tenure. As a brief slice of Vermont history VIM can take its place in a series of events that began with the initial outlawing of slavery in the constitution, vigorous abolitionism and anti-slavery societies in mid-nineteenth century, and record-setting participation in the Civil War. □

### ***VIM Project Drew Critics in Both States***

*The Vermont in Mississippi project was not universally popular with some folks in either state. Occasional letters to the editor took the position that it was none of our business to tell people elsewhere how to solve their problems or live their lives. The VCRU issued a press release to tamp down those thoughts. “Should we be telling people in Mississippi now to solve the problems they know best?” the press release asked, and then answered: “VIM does not intend to. It hopes only to provide a meeting place and an educational opportunity program, so that Mississippians will have a better chance to solve their problems themselves.”*

*The spectre of communism was raised in some letters that appeared to be organized. A letter in the Bennington Banner signed by Mrs. S. M. Neill of Leland, Miss., claimed: “There is more than ample documented proof that these groups are dominated or directed by the Communist party. Ask your senators to send you copies of Sen. Eastland’s expose, in which he names names and documents each fact.” A letter signed by a Janet Bean of Springfield, Vt., and received by several newspapers, asked: “Since moving to the Springfield area, I have been concerned to find Vermont people meddling in Mississippi affairs. Don’t Vermonters know that these groups are invariably directed or managed by Communists?” An editorial in the Banner on Sept. 28 commented on the letters attacking the civil rights movement, reported that efforts to locate “Janet Bean” were unsuccessful, and assumed that it was a fake.*

*An envelop containing several racially sour tracts from the “Association of Citizens Councils” in Greenwood, Miss., was sent to the Springfield Reporter*

*in September 1965. Among them was a letter signed by Robert B. Patterson, as secretary of the Citizens' Councils, that said, "We have read of the Vermont in Mississippi project whereby funds and workers are sent to Mississippi in an effort to bring about 'racial equality.' Perhaps more realistic method would be to offer homes, jobs, and schools to Mississippi Negroes who might want to migrate to Vermont.*

*According to the 1960 census Vermont has only 519 Negroes in the entire state. An influx of 40,418 Negroes into Vermont would give you the national average of ten per cent, and thereby your people could take a much more personal interest in the race problem." □*

# How Grand Lists Document Early Bennington Potteries

*Warren F. Broderick*

In Vermont in the 1800s, property taxes made up the principal source of funding for local government operations. As today, this revenue stream funded town, village, and school district day-to-day operations, but was the process different from that followed today? Actually, tax assessment, levy, and collection has not changed that much over the years, or more specifically, since 1842. But why should the assessment records (known from the beginning as “Grand Lists”) interest us in researching the history of the town of Bennington? What information on the history of your property is found in these little-known historical records?

Hand-written ledgers were created to document property valuation information which is now maintained in electronic format. In Vermont these records have been known as “Grand Lists” ever since their creation was authorized by the legislature in 1841. In New York State these records are known as Assessment Rolls and Tax Rolls. In Massachusetts they are referred to as Valuation Books, Tax Books, and Collectors Books.

To demonstrate the historical significance of these records, Grand Lists of the town of Bennington have been analyzed for the years 1841-1894 to highlight how they document the famous Norton stoneware and United States Potteries.

In Vermont’s first years of independent existence, government was primarily funded by the confiscation and sale of the estates of Revolutionary War era Loyalists. But beginning in 1781, land owners were minimally taxed based purely on their acreage regardless of its location, uses and appurtenances.<sup>1</sup> In addition, each eligible male was charged a poll tax for his right to vote in elections.

The origin of the term “listers” came about in 1841 when the Vermont legislature passed Public Act No. 16, which required towns and cities to determine property valuation and record it on “Grand Lists.” Hence the assessors who made these lists became known as “listers.” This law describes the valuation process in detail in its 24 sections. In particular, the law carefully describes which personal property was exempt and which should be “listed.” Personal items such as farm animals, wearing apparel, books, tools, furniture, and farm animals were exempted. In the case of the potteries, all machinery and some finished “goods, wares and merchandise” and materials used in the manufacturing process were exempted from taxation.

COL. 1.		COL. 2.		COL. 3.			
NAMES.		POLLS.		REAL		ES-	
at \$2.		No. & §		DESCRIPTION.		DESCRIPTION.	
				VALUE. DOLLARS/CTS.		VALUE. DOLLARS/CTS.	
✓ Norton Lucius	17	1	2				
✓ Norton Calvin	18	1	2				
Norton Samuel	18	1	2	pra Houe	500 00		
✓ Norton Johns Estate	17			prof den	200 00		
✓ Norton Sumner	17			pra Houe	1000 00		
Norton Franklin D.	18	1	2				
Norton Henry S.	17	1	2				
Norton Edward	17	1	2				
✓ Norton J. & C.	17			pra Pottery	7000 00		
✓ Norton Hurrit No.	17			pra Houe	900 00		
✓ Norton Lucy	17			pra Houe	350 00		
✓ Norton Julius	17	1	2	pra Houe	1900 00	10 1/2	1150 00
✓ Kitting William S.	23			pra Houe	1100 00		
✓ Oatman William	18			pra Houe	750 00		
✓ Oatman Abraham D.	18	1	2				
✓ Olds Wm Emerson	17	1	2	pra Houe	550 00		
Olds Chauncy J.	11	1	2				
✓ Pottery Company U.S.	17			pra Pottery	12000 00		

**The left side of a ledger page from the town of Bennington's 1855 Grand List shows property valuations of the Norton family and the United States Pottery Company.**

Act 16 also required that information must be recorded in an organized manner, specifying it be listed in columns in the ledgers. The following information was collected: land owner's name, number of voters and poll tax, description of property, acreage, real property valuation and tax due, personal property valuation and total tax due. Separate amounts of town, county, and state taxes are usually given. Some designate dollar amounts to be allocated to school and fire districts. Beginning in 1843, when books supplied by the state were available with pre-printed columns and headings, real property was divided into two classes: lots of ten acres of less, and parcels greater than ten acres that were used for agricultural purposes. Beginning in 1849 the school district number was listed as well. (The town had twenty school districts in all.)

Section 22 of Public Act 16 requires town clerks to maintain Grand

Lists, and Item 42 of Disposition Order 9818 of the Vermont State Archives requires their permanent retention. In Bennington, all Grand Lists survive from 1842. They consist of oversize volumes, mostly with cloth bindings, until 1978 when they became computer generated. The records are organized alphabetically by land owner's surname. Beginning in 1851, Bennington Village properties are listed separately from other town properties. Beginning in 1867, the village of North Bennington is listed separately. Beginning in 1899, the lists are divided by taxing district into three volumes. Beginning in 1903, each year is contained in a large single volume titled "Grand List and Individual Lists." Some volumes contain warrants to collect taxes, oaths of office of listers, and aggregate tax and assessment data. A closely related and inter-filed series called Quadrennial Valuations covers the period 1860-1952. These records resemble Grand Lists but contain additional cumulative data and were created every four years only. According to Vermont legislative historian, Paul Gillies, quadrennial valuations were used to conduct reappraisals and submit assessment information to the State in an attempt to equalize taxes among towns.<sup>2</sup>

The Norton stoneware pottery in 1833 relocated to Pottery Street (the present Park Street) in the village of Bennington (then known as East Bennington).<sup>3</sup> While the word "pottery" does not appear in the Grand Lists until five years later, the factory's listings begin in the initial 1842 list under the name of Julius Norton with real estate valued at \$7,425 and personal property valued at \$2,337. In 1845 the owners are listed as Julius Norton and C.W. Fenton, reflecting a new and short lived partnership. No personal estate is listed for Norton and Fenton in 1846, possibly because much of their ware had been destroyed in the fire of June 6, 1845, the year when the listers would have prepared next year's list. In the 1847 list their personal property is now valued at \$1,000. The partnership was dissolved in June of 1847 when Christopher Webber Fenton desired to establish a new pottery where he could experiment by creating a new array of decorative wares other than stoneware.

The stoneware pottery continued under Julius Norton's name until 1851 when the Grand List gives the owners as "J. & E. Norton," the co-owner being his cousin, Edward. The 1860 Grand List gives the owners as "J. Norton & Co." with Julius's son, Luman Preston Norton, constituting the new third partner. An annotation in the 1861 Grand List reads "1/3 to Edw. Norton, 1/3 to Lu. P. Norton, it seems to remain as it is." But Julius died in 1861 and in the following three years the owners are listed as the "estate" of Julius Norton until the name of the new partnership of "E. & L. P. Norton" is given, a pottery name that would remain in use until 1881.

The Norton stoneware pottery burned to the ground on March 20,

## CONSTABLE'S SALE!

THE non-resident proprietors of the town of Bennington, in the County of Bennington, and of School District Number Seventeen in said town, are hereby notified that the taxes assessed by said School District within the three years next preceding this date, to wit, the years 1858, 1859, and 1860, remain either in whole or in part unpaid on the following lands in said School District in said town, to wit:

Four acres of land, with the Pottery and tenements thereon; situate in the Village of Bennington, and bounded on the east by Joel Volintine's land and by land owned by S. B. & D. McEowen; on the north by lands owned by one Gensitt, by S. B. & D. McEowen, and by three-fourths of an acre of lease land, and by lands now or formerly owned by Newel Squires; on the west by lands of S. H. Brown; and on the south by lands of S. H. Brown, and by lands owned by J. & E. Norton and by Geo. F. Webb; being the lands known as the U. S. Pottery lands, and lying on both sides of Pratt street and on both sides of Pottery street.— Also three-fourths of an acre of land situate in the village of Bennington, and bounded as follows: Commencing on the north line of land formerly owned by C. W. Fenton and on the east side of Pratt street; thence northerly on Pratt street, seven rods, to a stake and stones; thence east, ten degrees south, sixteen rods, to a stake and stones; thence south, ten degrees west, about seven rods, to lands formerly owned by C. W. Fenton; thence westerly, on the north line of said Fenton's former land, to the place of beginning. The present owner of both tracts is Abner L. Westgate.

To whom assessed.	Tax of 1858	Tax of 1859	Tax of 1860
United States Pottery Company,	\$110.41	\$41.40	
Jason H. Archer,			\$34.51

And so much of said lands will be sold at public auction at the Franklin House, in the Village of Bennington, in said town of Bennington, on the thirtieth day of December, in the year of our Lord, eighteen hundred and sixty-one, at ten o'clock in the forenoon, as shall be requisite to discharge said Taxes, with costs, unless they are previously paid.

Dated at Bennington, in said County of Bennington, this second day of December, in the year of our Lord, one thousand eight hundred and sixty-one.

DAVID LOVE,  
First Constable.

41-3w

*A town constable's notice of the sale of the Bennington Pottery's property for failure to pay taxes in the weekly Banner of Dec. 5, 1861.*

1874, and the loss was only partly covered by insurance.<sup>4</sup> But the town of Bennington did its part to ensure that the pottery would be rebuilt and the business would survive the conflagration. While the new building was valued at \$6,850, it was only taxed at \$2,850 and the Grand List contains the annotation “new pottery building @ \$4,000 exempt ‘till 1879.” The listers allowed what is now known as an abatement, a partial property tax exemption granted to a commercial venture considered especially important to the community. The partial exemption was extended until April 1, 1880, and the 1881 Grand List shows the pottery’s full assessed value of \$6,500. The personal property was not completely assessed during these post-fire years as well.

When Luman Norton retired from the firm in 1881 the owners are listed for three years as “Edward Norton and wife.” In 1883 Edward Norton sold a half-interest to C. W. Thatcher, so the pottery’s owners were now listed as “Edward Norton & Co.” The pottery remained assessed at \$7,000 until it closed in 1894. Between 1891 and 1894 its personal property valuation is reduced from \$2,575 to \$18.70 to \$18.27 and finally to \$17.60. These numbers reflect the pottery’s sizable reduction of wares on hand as the stoneware market began to shrink when ceramic containers of all kinds were replaced by glass and metal.

Christopher E. Fenton is recorded in the 1842 Grand List with no property because this was the year of his bankruptcy proceedings in Federal District Court. By 1844 he had acquired 105 square rods of land (about .7 acre) and by 1848 the firm of Lyman, Fenton, and Park owned a wadding mill, planing mill, powder mill, and a dry-goods store on a one-acre lot. Fenton's partners were Alanson O. Lyman and Calvin Park. While the firm advertised its "Rockingham, White Flint and White Earthen CROCKERY WARE" in 1848, the term "pottery" does not appear in Fenton's Grand List entries until 1851, by which time Calvin Park had left the firm now known as "Lyman, Fenton and Company."<sup>5</sup> That year its "four acres, house & pottery" were valued at \$6,400, with personal property worth \$9,400. The new sizable pottery building with three kilns was constructed in the fall of 1850. It stood north of and directly across the Walloomsac River from the Norton stoneware pottery. This was the final year they also operated the powder mill.

By 1853 the owner is listed as "O. A. Gager & Co.," which validates John Spargo's statement that partner and china merchant Oliver A. Gager managed the business. The works were enlarged in 1853 as reflected in an increase in real property assessment from \$4,000 to \$12,000. Due in part to Fenton's aggressive marketing campaign and the popularity of the remarkable Crystal Palace exhibit, the firm's output was substantial at this time, but surprisingly no personal property is taxed following the preparation of the 1851 Grand List. Possibly the wares and materials were in short supply on the day of the listers' visits. The firm's financial troubles between 1854 and 1858, when the United States Pottery closed, leaving hundreds of workers without employment, are not reflected in the Grand Lists.

The firm's troubled short-lived "vain attempts at revival" as documented by Spargo, are not reflected in the lists until the 1859 Grand List, which contains a marginal note reading "to be sold to Jason H. Archer." Archer, a financier and one of the partners, is listed as the owner in the 1860 Grand List. The 1861 Grand List shows local manufacturer Enos Adams as the owner. Neither the deeds from the U.S. Pottery to Archer nor Archer to Adams were recorded in the town's land records, leaving the Grand Lists as the only official public record of these property title transfers. A legal notice in the *Bennington Banner* on December 5, 1861, listed unpaid town and school taxes totaling \$186.32 for the period 1858-1860 and announced that "four acres of land, with the Pottery and tenements thereon" would be sold at auction held at the Franklin House on December 13, 1861.

A previous tax sale scheduled for October 2, 1860, had apparently been postponed to give the landowners additional time to discharge the tax lien. These tax revenues were important to School District No.17, which comprised the village of Bennington. A special meeting of district residents

was held later in October to discuss the “deficiency caused by the non-payment of said taxes” and Julius Norton, of all persons, was appointed the “agent to bid off the property to be sold for taxes due the school district.”<sup>6</sup> One may assume that Julius was chosen because of his knowledge of the value and potential uses of a pottery complex.

As a result of recent research into town records and early newspapers it is now clear that a well-known industrialist, Enos Adams, (1806-1896) owned the U. S. Pottery building until it was acquired by the town in 1873 (through another unrecorded deed) and subsequently demolished to allow for the construction of the Bennington Graded School. While the building is referred to as a “pottery” in the Grand Lists throughout Adams’s ownership, pottery was not manufactured there after 1860. Adams used parts of the pottery and adjoining structures as a machine shop, soap factory, and wadding works (to make cotton batting). He even manufactured steam engines and water-wheel regulators on the premises.

The editor of the *Bennington Banner* commented that Enos Adams “is not confined to one business, but his energy is employed in several different enterprises, all of which are in successful operation.”<sup>7</sup> Adams and H. F. Dewey used part of the building to grind feldspar in 1862 and 1863.<sup>8</sup> Adams and Thomas R. Riddell were making firebrick there in 1863 and 1864.<sup>9</sup> During the 1860s, assessment of the pottery complex was considerably reduced. The U.S. Pottery site had been considered as a school site as early as 1870, and following numerous public meetings it was finally selected by voters at a school meeting held in 1873.<sup>10</sup> The pottery was demolished and the school erected the following year.

Enos Adams also maintained an ochre and kaolin mine and mill on Furnace Book Road for many years between 1854 and 1904. This property is listed in the Grand Lists as located in School District 7 and valued between \$150 and \$500. Ochre, a natural material containing clay and ferrous oxide, had many uses including a stoneware decorating slip that fired brown. It was also used in the composition of some ceramic bodies manufactured in Bennington for door knobs and scroddled ware. Kaolin, also found along Furnace Brook, was likewise invaluable in the ceramics industry. An extensive kaolin deposit near North Branch Street was used by C.W. Fenton first in the manufacture of fire brick and later in the production of Parian and porcelain wares at the U.S. Pottery.

Grand Lists are accessible to the public at the Town Clerk’s Office at 205 South Street. Reproduction of all town records, including Grand Lists, however, is restricted by state Law and must be handled by the clerk’s office. For assistance and additional information contact the Town Clerk, Cassandra Barbeau, at (802) 442-1043 or cbarbeau@benningtonvt.org. □

- 1 Paul S. Gillies, "The Evolution of the Vermont State Tax System," *Vermont History* 65 (Winter/Spring, 1997) 26-29.
- 2 email message from Paul S. Gillies to the author, February 28, 2018.
- 3 Catherine Zusy, *Norton Stoneware and American Redware* (Bennington, VT: the Bennington Museum, 1992), 14.
- 4 John Spargo, *The Potters and Potteries of Bennington* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co. The Magazine Antiques, 1926), 93-94.
- 5 *Vermont Gazette*, November 22, 1848.
- 6 Record Book of School District No. 17, Bennington Museum collection, catalog no. 2013:55.
- 7 *Bennington Banner*, October 13, 1870.
- 8 *Bennington Banner*, November 27, 1862.
- 9 *Bennington Banner*, October 22, 1863; January 14, 1864.
- 10 *Bennington Banner*, May 29, 1873.

# Paying for Schools: Another Look

*Allen Gilbert*

I made an error in the story “Paying for Schools in Vermont Has Prompted Perennial Controversy” that I wrote for the Autumn 2018 *Walloomsack Review*. The mistake concerns amendments to the education clause of the Vermont Constitution. I wrote in the 6th paragraph of the article:

When the constitution was amended in 1786, the school provision was altered. The new mandate said that:

*...a competent number of schools ought to be maintained in each town unless the general assembly permits other provisions for the convenient instruction of youth.*

I stated that because of that alteration, “No longer was every town required to have its own school. Tuitioning students to other towns was permitted.”

Through recent litigation (the cases filed over school mergers), I have learned that the provision “unless the general assembly permits other provisions for the convenient instruction of youth” was actually added not in 1786 but many years later, in the 1950s and 1960s. It came about because of the formation of union or “joint” school districts. The education commissioner pointed to the constitution’s requirement that every town maintain “a competent number of schools.” If that were to be strictly followed, a town would have to continue operating a school within its borders even if it had partnered with a neighboring town to operate a joint school. That made little sense.

The “other provisions” clause has created the impression over the years that the legislature has total control over the state’s schools. That may be true generally (Vermont municipalities – which include school districts – do not enjoy what’s called “home rule,” or the ability to govern independently). But it is not true because of what happened in the 1950s and 1960s. The change made then was done to address the narrow problem of towns no longer needing to operate their own school because of joining with another town to run one school. There was no assertion that the state could now, on its own, redesign the state’s education system.

The legislature had, in fact, been adapting the state constitution’s strict education requirements for some time. The reality was that Vermont, from

its earliest days, had set incredibly high aspirations for educating the state's children. But a scattered population, and perennial scarcity of funds, made fulfilling those aspirations an ongoing challenge.

In addition to requiring primary schools in the towns, the constitution also required that every county have at least one grammar school (what we today call high schools and back then were sometimes called "academies," which might be public or private). But no funding source for these grammar schools was identified. That led to the "voucher law" of 1869, which allowed towns to use public money to send students to a grammar school that might be some distance from the students' hometown. Another law was passed in 1906 that required all towns to provide high school education either by maintaining a local school or paying tuition for students to attend a state-approved "Secondary School" (such as an academy).

"Vouchers" and "tuition" were, in other words, an expedient solution to providing access to schooling beyond the primary grades. They were a way to do more for schoolchildren, especially those in rural areas, where the state's aspirations that every child receive basic and advanced learning were hard to meet.

The change that allowed "other provisions" that came in the 1950s and 1960s was fine-tuning of this adaptive mechanism. And it was at this time that the constitutional requirement that all counties have at least one grammar school was dropped. It had become unnecessary. "Grammar" schools were, finally, nearly everywhere. □

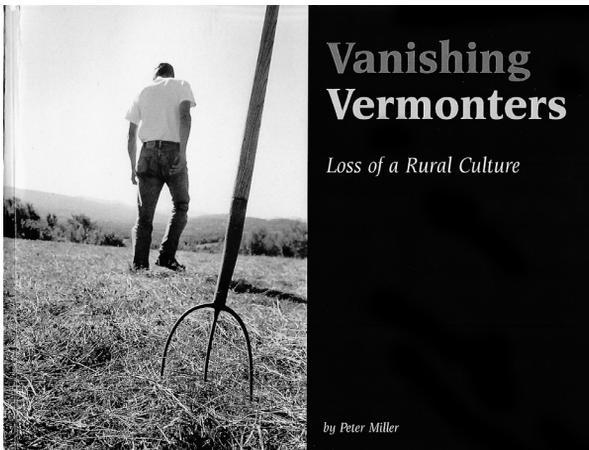
*Book Reviews*

**Independence and Community:  
Universal Vermont Values**

*Reviewed by Jamie Franklin*

Vermont is complicated. Think about the state motto: Freedom and Unity. It isn't exactly a mutually exclusive binary, but it does have an inherent tension. Put in more contemporary terms, it might be expressed as Vermonters' mutual love of independence - whether from mainstream American culture or "big" government - and community - that inherent desire to know and be known, to help and be helped, by whoever lives, works, or plays in the same place you do<sup>1</sup>. And so it is only appropriate that *Vanishing Vermonters: A Loss of Rural Culture*, the most recent (2017) of Peter Miller's six self-published books featuring his photographs and musings on Vermont's rural culture, is complicated as well.

Miller's book is not complicated in the sense of being dry, dense, or difficult to read. It is far from that. It is actually a quite enjoyable read, providing me, a flatlander who has only lived in Vermont since 2005, with a greater perspective on the state's people and the ideas that have shaped the Green Mountain State over the last 50-plus years. And Miller's black and white photographs - he has been one of the most lauded visual documentarians of Vermont's rural people for the last 60-plus years - are as satisfying as ever. In his images and words, Miller beautifully captures the grit, determination, and humanity that defines the lived experience of so many Vermonters.



Miller's book is complicated in the sense that it doesn't easily succumb to many of the most common stereotypes that have come to define Vermont in the public imagination, but it perhaps cedes too easily to others. Miller's Vermont is not an unpeopled landscape of beautiful, unsullied rivers, lakes, and mountains. Though he certainly captures the beauty of place in many of his images and acknowledges that conservation of the state's remarkable natural resources is a high priority (despite potential disagreements over how to accomplish that goal). Miller's Vermont is a Vermont of rugged, independent, frugal, and passionate individuals. He openly and honestly engages in politics, while allowing those across the aisle to do the same. He and many of the people he has chosen to feature in the book certainly know how to navigate the state's subtle political landscape with aplomb, largely eschewing too-simple dichotomies such as conservative vs. liberal or Republican vs. Democrat. This is a good thing! Miller and his subjects make clear that community and reaching across the aisle when necessary is one of Vermont's long-standing strengths. But like the state it so lovingly seeks to document, analyze, and understand, Miller's book is not perfect. Who, for example, determines whom a community is composed of? And when and to whom should we reach across the aisle? While embracing the often easy to miss common ground amongst our state's diverse political spectrum, which is especially refreshing in this current moment of polarization, *Vanishing Vermonters* simultaneously perpetuates a myth of Vermont as a bastion of open, diverse, independent thinkers.

Of course, there's often an element of truth to stereotypes. Vermont's landscape, both natural and built, can be stunningly beautiful. And it's no coincidence that Vermont has been home to some of the most successful independent politicians in the country and a national leader in embracing and providing protections to its increasingly diverse population. It is in that spirit of community, echoed in various permutations by Miller and his chosen subjects, that this book shines. Yet it is the faces that are not seen and the voices that are not allowed to speak, both in this book and on the public stage more generally, that I feel are at the heart of some of Vermont's most urgent current woes.

*Vanishing Vermonters: A Loss of Rural Culture* features 24 short chapters profiling 26 people (22 individuals and 2 couples) via photographic portraits and biographic summaries by Miller and, perhaps most importantly, musings and insights in the subjects' own words about their experiences as contemporary Vermonters. As I've already stated, Miller's photographs and writing are satisfying all on their own. His images depict a side of Vermont that is often overlooked, not only by tourists and outsiders but also by more urban Vermonters, like me, who too often see our rural

neighbors as literally and figuratively living on the periphery. Though, in fact, for the last 50 years Vermont has been the most rural state in union.<sup>2</sup> From my perspective, I have often noted that what I love most about Vermont is the frequent rubbing of elbows and friendly collaboration between white collar workers, such as professors and creatives, like artists and writers, and what Miller might call “traditional” blue collar workers, such as mechanics and mill workers. With Vermont’s long-term economic troubles both sides of the equation are often barely able to eke out a living, but frequently take pride in their frugality and industriousness. Miller’s book points to this rubbing of elbows among Vermont’s economically and culturally diverse population as well, featuring such seeming opposites of the political and cultural spectrum as former Democratic Governor Howard Dean and the outspoken conservative pundit John McClaughry, or Clem Despault, a stock-car racer and used-car salesman, and Jen and John Kimmich, founders and owners of Alchemist Brewery. Miller allows his subjects to give their own take on Vermont’s contemporary problems, as well as praise those things that either drew them here or have prevented them from leaving. It is this relatively balanced polyphony of contemporary Vermont voices in which the book finds its greatest strength.

Perhaps the most problematic aspect of the book is less what it contains and more what it leaves out, intentionally or not, and its acceptance, directly or indirectly, of some of “traditional” Vermont’s most disturbing qualities, such as a xenophobia to perceived outsiders and a closed mindedness to change. The book’s most glaring deficiency is its complete absence of the faces and voices of non-white, non-native “minorities” and the relative disparity between female and male subjects (only 6 out of the 26 people profiled, 2 of them part of a married couple, are female, versus 20 males). As a straight, white male myself, I don’t want to sound too righteous here, but these issues of representation and who is given a voice have become so urgent in the last couple of years in our country and state that it is simply an issue I can’t ignore. For me, it is Vermonters’ openness, including that of Miller and many of the people he profiles, to people of all stripes that makes this state the lively interesting place that it is to live. Perhaps the lack of diversity of a certain type isn’t a fault of this book or its author alone. Rather, it may be a symptom of a larger problem throughout the state that has deep historic roots, but has been especially ugly of late.

Here in Bennington, for example, over the course of the last couple of years we have seen a dramatic increase in the level of public racism, notably resulting in the resignation of Representative Kiah Morris, the state’s only black female representative, from the state legislature in August of 2018 after a bold campaign of racial intimidation by a self-proclaimed white

nationalist. Or to bring it back to the book, there is Miller's inclusion of the image of a barn with the hand-painted slogan, in large, bold white letters, "Take Back Vermont" (page 153). To his credit, Miller refers to the slogan, originally used as a pushback against Vermont's first-in-the-nation legislation making same-sex civil unions lawful, signed into law by Governor Howard Dean in 2000, as "odious." I feel that the "loss" referred to in the book's title is not the "vanishing" of rural culture in our state, which, though admittedly endangered, is still very much alive, having been protected and preserved by Vermonters across the political spectrum for decades (Peter Miller certainly not the least of them). In fact, for me, the perceived loss is not a loss at all, but an enrichment. The *addition* of outsiders of all stripes to our state's cultural landscape and the resultant evolution of the state over the last 60 years into a more diverse community is Vermont's greatest asset. And that can only be a good thing for Vermont in the long run.

### Postscript

Peter Miller dedicates his book to Romaine Tenney, one of the iconic personifications of the change that swept Vermont in the 1960s. A beloved, life-long resident of Ascutney, in 1964 Tenney's family farm was determined to be in the middle of the right-of-way for the construction of Interstate 91. He was offered money by the government, but Tenney declared that he was born on that farm and he would die on that farm. So his property was seized by eminent domain. As Miller describes it "On Friday, September 11, the sheriff came with a court order and he and his deputies began moving items from the horse barn . . . After midnight, Romaine let out the animals, barricaded the door and set fire to all the buildings. He climbed into his iron bed with his lever-action rifle. He probably shot himself before the fire consumed him."

Tenney's dramatic story will be featured in Bennington Museum's major summer 2019 exhibition, *Fields of Change: 1960s Vermont*, which will examine the dramatic shifts to Vermont's political, social, and cultural landscape that Miller and many of the people profiled in his book rightfully point out reached a dramatic turning point in the 1960s. As John McClaughry aptly put it, "change came – indeed, radical change, implemented over a period of years. It came with the Interstate Highway System . . . It came with the flight of urbanites, especially with the disorders of the Sixties, seeking a safe haven in low-cost land in unspoiled Arcadia . . . It came with . . . the new arrival of a "New Class" of professional people and gentry liberals . . . and a host of war protestors, hippies, back-to-the-landers and communards." While I may not agree with McClaughry on the implications of that change, there is no doubt Vermont has changed and continues to change, for both better and worse. □

*Vanishing Vermonters: Loss of a Rural Culture*, by Peter Miller, [www.petermillerphotography.com](http://www.petermillerphotography.com), \$24.95

1. It should be noted that one of the book's subjects, Chris Brathwaite, certainly not the most conservative of the individuals profiled, pegged the population of an effective political community at a surprisingly low 1,000. p. 73.

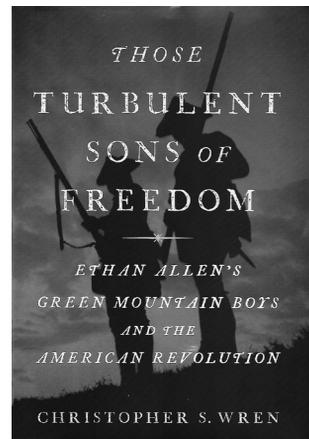
2. Iowa State University, Iowa Community Indicators Program, "Urban Percentage of the Population for States, Historical," [www.icip.iastate.edu/tables/population/urban-pct-states](http://www.icip.iastate.edu/tables/population/urban-pct-states), accessed March 11, 2019. Vermont had the largest percentage of rural population according to United States Census records from 1970-2000: 67.8 percent in 1970, declining (like the vast majority of other states) to 61.8 percent in 2000. West Virginia has historically been our nearest competitor for the title of "most rural" state, at 60.9 percent in 1970 and 63.8 and 63.9 percent in 1980 and 1990, compared to Vermont's 66.2 percent in 1980 and 67.8 percent in 1990. In the most recent census, 2010, Maine just barely surpassed Vermont as the most rural state, coming in at 61.3 percent (following a dramatic decline over the last 50 years, starting at 49.2 percent rural in 1970) vs Vermont's 61.1 percent. Recent sample analyses indicate that Maine and Vermont will continue to have the highest percentage of their populations living in rural areas, with just fractions of a percentage separating them, in 2020.

## Beware of verbal panache *'Those Turbulent Sons of Freedom'*

*Reviewed by Phil Holland*

The first part of Christopher Wren's title is owed to the felicitous characterization of the Green Mountain Boys as "those turbulent sons of Freedom" by General John Stark in a 1781 letter to George Washington; Stark, newly appointed to head the Northern Department, was hoping to recruit some of the Vermonters into his service. I suspect that the remaining part of the title, however, is the work of Simon & Schuster's marketing department because it includes three surefire tags: Ethan Allen, the Boys, and the Revolution. Allen himself disappears from Wren's narrative into the bilges of a British warship on p. 42, to reappear almost three years later as a free man on p. 149. True, the book's announced subject is not Allen but his Boys – only they weren't *his* Boys as of July 1775, when the representatives from towns in what was then the New Hampshire Grants overwhelmingly elected Seth Warner, not Allen, as leader of the newly authorized Continental regiment known informally as the Green Mountain Boys. Wren claims that by that time the name "had come to refer to [the Grants'] tenacious settlers, not just Ethan Allen's vigilantes," which may be a stretch; there was plenty of tenacity to go around, but the name did not suit all settlers of the Grants.

The heyday of Ethan Allen's Green Mountain Boys was 1770 to mid-May of 1775, a month into the Revolutionary War. Allen was the leader of an impromptu militia based in Bennington that was challenging land titles



granted by the state of New York in the region where New Hampshire's Governor Benning Wentworth had also granted (that is, sold off) the land that would become Vermont. Using tactics of intimidation, destruction of property, occasional beatings, and pamphlet writing, for five years Allen's men (with Warner as second in command) more or less successfully opposed the New York authorities. Then came the outbreak of war with Britain and the daring and triumphant capture of Fort Ticonderoga and Crown Point by Allen, Benedict Arnold, Warner, and the Boys, augmented by militia from Connecticut and Massachusetts. This part of the story has often been told, and Wren retells it briskly in the book's first chapters.

He weaves his overall narrative around the three Connecticut-born men who were leaders of what the Yorkers dismissed as the Bennington mob: Allen, Warner, and Justus Sherwood. Sherwood's development into a Loyalist soldier, spy, and negotiator, and Allen's transformation from a stalwart patriot land speculator into a politically opportunist land speculator who was ready to deliver Vermont to the Crown in order to secure the titles to his extensive holdings gives Wren's book a plot, and it's an intriguing one. The fate of Vermont is the real subject of the book, and the checkered backstory of statehood is where the general reader will have the most to learn.

Wren, a retired foreign correspondent for the New York Times, writes in the tradition of nineteenth-century historians but with a modern eye for the realities behind the myths, as a comparison of his book with De Puy's hero-worshipping *Ethan Allen and the Green-Mountain Heroes of '76* (1853) will attest. Wren's portrait shows Allen "warts and all." Wren does not footnote. He prefers older secondary sources to newer ones – at his peril, as we will see. He offers general notes on his sources and includes a bibliography, but this is a book of popular, not scholarly history.

Wren is a fluent writer with a pointed style; we read that four Allen brothers and their cousin Remember Baker joined to create the Onion River Land Company, "which leveraged property they didn't own to buy land that they couldn't afford and to which New York said they were not entitled." The succinct summary of Ethan Allen's faults and virtues (p. 245) is written with insight and similar verbal panache. Wren is a skillful weaver-in of quotations, and colors his exposition with a wealth of historical anecdotes. His writing is certainly entertaining – but asks you to take its historical accuracy on trust. In a head note to his sources Wren professes "a reverence for the facts as they happened and were recorded at the time." He has consulted primary sources here and abroad, but unfortunately he lets the facts as they happened get away from him too often for comfort.

I am not an expert on all the matters Wren discusses, but I know

enough to be suspicious when I read that “Burgoyne’s war machine took more than three weeks to maneuver through twenty-three miles of Vermont wilderness.” The twenty-three miles of wilderness south of Skenesborough through which Burgoyne’s forces passed following the fall of Ticonderoga were in New York, not Vermont. Burgoyne did not “bog down” in Vermont, as the heading to Chapter Six proclaims. Some of his forces (under General Riedesel) camped at Castleton as they gathered supplies from Loyalists, but once they had left (for Skenesborough), no more of Burgoyne’s forces ever reached Vermont.

When Wren begins to tell the story of the Battle, his errors pile up. Stark pulled back on the 14th, not the 15th. The fortification occupied by Sherwood and his fellow Loyalists was on a hill, not “near a shallow ford in the river.” The Stockbridge Indians did not make it to Bennington in time for the Battle. The Caleb Stark who compiled the 1860 memoir of General John Stark was Stark’s grandson, not his son (who was also Caleb, and who also published a memoir; it is confusing). Surgeon Wasmus was captured when he tripped over a log, not as he was treating wounded dragoons. Baum stationed himself at the bridge position, not at the top of the hill, where Wasmus pointedly says he never went. The Green Mountain Boys did not march from Manchester under Samuel Herrick, but under Samuel Safford. The atmosphere in the Bennington meetinghouse when it was filled with prisoners was malodorous, but not because bodies were “decomposing” there in the August heat. The infamous exploding ammunition cart from Glich’s fictitious (literally) account lives on in Wren’s narrative, having worked its way into nineteenth-century sources on the basis of an English romance being taken as an authentic memoir. Proofreading slips also take their toll. Burgoyne wrote that “success would have ensued,” not “ensured.” He wrote “most active and rebellious race,” not “most active and most rebellious race.” Rebel stores, not “stories,” were abandoned.

There is no denying the lively writing, but an informed reader loses trust in Wren’s professed reverence for fact. A closer acquaintance with modern scholarship on the Battle would have helped. None of Michael Gabriel’s publications, for example, is included in the bibliography. Neither John Williams’s nor Bruce Venter’s studies of the Battle of Hubbardton is referenced; Wren relies on nineteenth-century accounts. At the same time, if the story of Jane McCrea has been told many times before (and Wren devotes four pages to it), that of Ebenezer Fletcher, a young patriot fifer captured at Hubbardton, was new to me. It’s from a manuscript in the Newberry Library and well worth the four pages Wren devotes to it.

Wren keeps his prose bubbling, but it can boil over, as when he describes the “wicked cold” winters with “avalanches of ice” that greeted

the early settlers. “Bloodsucking” mosquitoes appear whenever a swamp is approached. On one page we read of the Grants’ “fertile soil.” On the next it has become “stony soil” and farmers are working six days a week “coaxing crops” from it. Then comes a pungent quotation from Ethan Allen or Alexander Graydon’s wonderful characterization of Allen’s idiosyncratic oratorical gifts and you forgive Wren his own occasional excesses.

Ethan Allen’s legend has been debunked before, but he somehow manages to retain his aura. Wren has no doubts about Allen’s would-be perfidy, but Allen’s fascinating negotiations with Sherwood and Haldimand about Vermont’s becoming a province of Britain (when New York’s claims still loomed) were overtaken by events when Cornwallis surrendered at Yorktown. Wren persuasively argues that Ethan and Ira Allen’s intrigues were ultimately motivated not by patriotism but by their desire to secure their own land holdings. In the end, there was no reason for Washington to invade Vermont. By 1789 Vermont was a *fait accompli*, and New York was willing to be paid off in Spanish milled dollars to relinquish its claims. It helped too that Kentucky was ready to join the Union at the same time, though it took till 1791 for it to happen.

Wren’s concluding chapter, which lays out the fates of the actors in his narrative, is one of his best. Warner declines in health after helping defeat Burgoyne; Ethan Allen dies of a stroke crossing Champlain on a sled two years before statehood; Justus Sherwood, who failed as a diplomat but succeeded as a Loyalist settler in Canada, meets an untimely death on a log run in the St. Lawrence; and Ira Allen dies in debt in Philadelphia some years after the last of his schemes (gun-running in hopes of taking Canada) has gone awry.

Wren concludes his book by reprinting the parting words of Samuel Williams’s 1794 *History of Vermont*, addressed to “Ye people of the United States of America,” in which we read that “you are now in full possession of your natural and civil rights” and “under no restraints” in acquiring all kinds of desirable things. To which Tonto and the fifth of Americans who were enslaved in 1794 might justly reply, “We, white man?” To quote Williams’s words in 2018 as “no less relevant today” without pointing to the fault lines running through them is historically naïve. Wren’s own narrative of Ethan Allen’s life hardly gives us a model of the virtues that Wren and his beloved Williams so stirringly endorse – indeed, that is part of the value and appeal of Wren’s book. □

*Those Turbulent Sons of Freedom: Ethan Allen’s Green Mountain Boys and the American Revolution*, by Christopher Wren, Simon & Schuster, 2018.

## Two Brides for Apollo: The biography of Samuel Williams

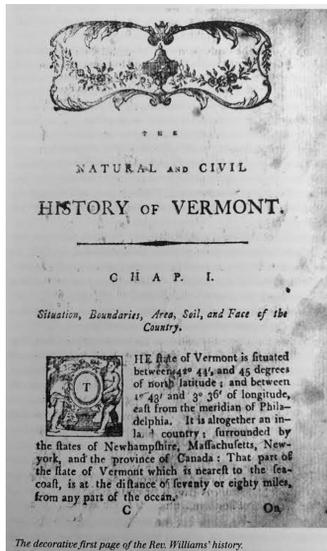
*Reviewed by Tyler Resch*

Samuel Williams (1743-1816) was a remarkable early Vermont educator, historian, astronomer, journalist, and theologian-philosopher you probably never heard of. If so, that is unfortunate because he played an important role in the days just before and after statehood.

He deserves more attention for these reasons: Samuel Williams wrote the first history of Vermont in 1794 when the state was only three years old, then he revised and doubled his findings in twin editions published in 1809. Along with his cousin, also named Samuel Williams, he established the *Rutland Herald* in 1794, a newspaper that has survived for more than two centuries; he remained its editor-publisher for a decade. With Ira Allen in 1793 he was a founder of the University of Vermont at Burlington, though he would have preferred to see it located in Rutland. He wrote what was probably the first history of the American Revolution.

Before Samuel Williams came to Vermont in 1788 he had been the distinguished Hollis Professor of Mathematics and Natural Philosophy at Harvard. Before that for about fifteen years he was a peace-preaching Congregational minister in Bradford, Mass., during the early years of the American Revolution. He was also a dedicated scientist, a pioneering astronomer who, for example, had traveled to Newfoundland to observe the transit of Venus across the surface of the sun and to take measurements of planetary distances from the sun.

Another reason you've likely never heard of Samuel Williams is that his biography – the first ever written about him, and published in 2009 – carries the enigmatic title “Two Brides for Apollo.” Author Robert F. Rothschild never explains or even mentions the title; you are supposed to figure it out. It is an astronomical reference, in which the moon and Venus are the brides and Apollo is the sun, after the Greek god. But what a foolish



*The decorative first page of the Rev. Williams' history.*

***The decorative first page of Samuel Williams's Natural and Civil History of Vermont, published when the state was three years old.***

and irrelevant name for a good biography. That title is likely to be the reason the only known review of this book appeared in the *Journal for the History of Astronomy* and not *Vermont History*. And it's probably the reason I was able to purchase it from abebooks.com for the grand sum of \$4.08 including shipping.

Still another reason for this book's obscurity is that it was self-published, by an outfit called iUniverse in Bloomington, Ind., and clearly had little or no marketing. (It also needed more attention to copyediting.) When I accessed the website of iUniverse and searched for the title *Two Brides for Apollo*, the response was that no such book existed. It deserved a mainstream or academic publisher.

Author Rothschild, a Harvard graduate of the class of 1939, who died in 2015 at the age of 97, took a very long time to research and write this capable scholarly biography. His *New York Times* obituary said that his lifelong passion for science led him to write it. I was aware of Rothschild's work in 1995 when I wrote a history of the *Rutland Herald* and devoted a chapter to Samuel Williams as its founder, so it was especially interesting to have this much more complete biography. Rothschild's abundant footnotes demonstrate great ingenuity in locating historical evidence about Williams's life and writing, citing an impressive variety of sources. The ample footnotes are especially friendly to the reader because they appear in the same font as the text and are numbered 1 to 844 consecutively throughout.

Rothschild answered a central question I had about Samuel Williams, and that was why in 1788 did he leave a distinguished Harvard professorship to settle, with no job prospects, in the primitive village of Rutland, Vermont? It seems that Williams had a jealous adversary at Harvard named James Winthrop, who was a son of the legendary John Winthrop, the previous holder of the Hollis professorship. After James was passed over for his father's position he made life difficult in many ways for Williams, eventually accusing him of forgery. Williams was also in poor financial shape, partly related to the purported fiscal mismanagement of John Hancock, then Harvard's treasurer. This is all spelled out in Rothschild's chapter "Scandal."

Williams's role in founding the University of Vermont was related to his wish to teach there, which became a more important factor to him than the Burlington location favored by Ira Allen. Almost a decade before UVM was founded, one of Williams's former Harvard students, Elijah Paine, had settled after graduation in Williamstown, ten miles south of Montpelier, and was elected to the legislature. Paine introduced the first bill in Vermont's legislature to establish a state university in 1784, before Williams had arrived in Rutland. According to Rothschild, ". . . Paine's apprenticeship

with Williams may have been the inspiration behind Paine's efforts to start a university in the frontier state . . . Williams must have left Cambridge with some vision of Paine's university in mind." (p. 300) The first president of UVM, the Rev. Daniel Clarke Sanders, was a 1782 graduate of Harvard, and had studied natural philosophy under Williams.

Williams's "natural and civil history" of Vermont is like no other. He was inspired to write it by Jeremy Belknap's pioneering history of New Hampshire, published in three volumes from 1784 to 1792, and also by Thomas Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia*. Williams identifies himself on the title page as "Member of the Meteorological Society in Germany, of the Philosophical Society in Philadelphia, and of the Academy of Arts and Sciences in Massachusetts." The book was printed at Walpole, N.H., by Isaiah Thomas (later, the founder of the American Antiquarian Society of Worcester) and David Carlisle Jr. and "sold at their Bookstore, in Walpole, and by said Thomas, at his Bookstore, in Worcester."

Being very much a "natural" history, Williams's table of contents offers chapters on mountains, rivers and lakes, climate, vegetable productions, and native animals. He was especially taken by the "quadropeds" and devotes six pages to the beaver alone. This is followed by two long sections on "original inhabitants" with his own observations. As a peace-preaching minister, he took an anthropological approach toward the Indians, writing: "A government of reason and nature ought to attempt to conciliate the affections of a free, brave, independent, and generous people." (page 324)

Then follow chapters on the first settlements by English, the controversy with New York and New Hampshire, employment, customs and manners, religion, government, population, and freedom. The first edition skimps on the American Revolution but he made up for it in the doubled second edition of 1809.

One problem for modern readers of Williams's first edition is the use of the English s, which resembles an f, making the word *assistant* look like *affifant* until you get accustomed to it. The second edition did not use that form.

Williams's last five pages lists "subscribers" who helped pay for the book, including 26 U.S. senators, most Vermont state officials, and hundreds of citizens, many with annotation as to how many copies of the book they had reserved.

Rothschild cites several other historians who came to similar conclusions about Williams's history, that with his strong emphasis on nature he "pursued the relationship between the physical environment and human society." □

*Two Brides for Apollo: The Life of Samuel Williams 1743-1817*, by Robert Friend Rothschild, iUniverse, 2009, paperback, 469 pp.





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