Walloomsack Review

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

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

On the cover:

A framed textile fragment with a past on display at the Dorset Historical Society.
Courtesy of Dorset Historical Society

On the back cover:

A poster widely distributed by the American Railway Association. The old warning "Stop, Look, Listen," so frequently ignored, was eventually replaced during the mid-1930s by automatic crossing signals.

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Editor's Notes

The articles and images in this issue expand one's interest in a wide variety of personalities, procedures, confrontations, and victories of the past in this lively region of western New England.

Of special interest is the unusual presentation by Michele Pagan on the history of textiles, a vital commodity whose research is rarely explored. The article demonstrates how the production of textiles has followed a common path from home-grown and home-made to commercially manufactured. The author's qualifications enhance the story as she defines obscure terms such as rippling, hanking, retting, scutching, and swingling.

The story of early textile production in Vermont was stimulated, in part, by a close look at the amazingly detailed 1835 map of the town of Bennington, which shows numerous cotton factories.

Bob Hoar reviews the Vermont Historical Society's newest and most important book, *The Rebel and the Tory*. Bob raises intriguing questions as he challenges some of the authors' findings and analyzes new discoveries about the state's earliest days. It was Bob's idea to include several illustrations to amplify his discussion, and we agreed.

Margarette Beckwith's analysis of a trunkful of family letters brings to life some members of the family of Hiland Hall, the nineteenth-century historian-politician who was the father of the Bennington Battle Monument.

The story of Vermont's first highway fatality is especially poignant because of the prominence of the couple who were killed. Phil Jordan's narrative offers a classic cautionary tale.

The question of women's suffrage—the very right to vote—is one of those historical subjects that seems both modern and distant in time. The time when women did not have voting privileges is within the memory, via parents or grandparents, of many citizens today.

How women's suffrage was won in Vermont is especially interesting because its governor at the time, Percival W. Clement of Rutland, was opposed, and stood in the way of casting the final state vote to ratify the 19th Amendment. Earlier, as a candidate for governor in 1902, Clement lost that vote but succeeded in breaking the back of a half century of statewide temperance.

On these pages Dawn and Ray Rodrigues have carried out extraordinary fresh Vermont research to enrich the century-old story of women's push for the basic right to vote.

~ Tyler Resch

Contributors

Michele Pietryka-Pagan is a native Vermonter and graduate of UVM. She trained as a textile conservator and has worked on textile collections for the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, U.S. Department of State, and the Smithsonian Institution. She has a master's degree in textile studies from the University of Connecticut. Now returned to Vermont, she is a textile conservator in private practice in East Dorset, where she lives with her husband John Pagan.

Dawn and Ray Rodrigues are Pownal residents who received their Ph.Ds from Kent State University and the University of New Mexico respectively; they have taught at several universities in the American West. Dawn is program chair of the Bennington branch of the American Association of University Womens. She serves on the board of the Bennington Performing Arts Center and volunteers at the Pownal Library. Ray edits the Bennington Historical Newsletter, has taught at the high school and college level, and retired as a provost in the University of Texas system. He co-authored a photo book of Pownal and edited Joe Parks's *Pownal: A Vermont Town*.

Margarette Beckwith is an appreciative descendant of Hiland Hall who lives in Oxford, Ohio. She is a retired landscape architect who taught environmental design at Kansas State University, Miami University at Oxford, and the University of Cincinnati. She and her husband, Allen Chapman, established the firm of Beckwith Chapman Associates, architects and landscapers.

Philip Jordan is the former editor and publisher of *Vermont* magazine and lives in Sunderland. He is active in the Rutland Railroad Historical Society, which publishes the quarterly *Rutland Newsliner*.

Bob Hoar is an independent scholar whose interests focus on the early settlements and political maneuverings of Vermont and New York. In season, he is a public interpreter at the Bennington Battlefield in Walloomsac, N.Y.

John F. Kennedy wrote the articles on William Lloyd Garrison in our Volume 25, autumn 2019, and on Booker T. Washington's rise from slave to educator in Volume 26, spring 2020.

Geography and Technological Change in Vermont:
The Transition from Homespun Flax To Machine-Made Cotton Textiles

Michele Pagán

"This framed piece of needlework was made from flax, grown in Dorset Hollow, and most likely made by a member of the Barrows family, on the spinning wheel displayed here."[1]

The framed textile fragment described is an overshot[2] weave, exactly like that woven by early New England coverlet weavers, who used a combination of wool and usually cotton, typically in contrasting colors, to create the design. Sometimes the maker's initials or the family name were also woven into the corners, along with the year made. The wool was obtained from the fleeces of the herd of sheep that most families maintained, and the earlier textiles incorporated linen, a product of the flax

field each family sowed, harvested and processed each year.

The question of whether a textile incorporated linen or cotton can be answered these days by utilizing simple microscopy. But as for assigning a date to a textile if there isn't one woven or embroidered into the body, some knowledge of how and when households switched from making their own homespun fabrics, to going to the general store to trade for cotton is also helpful.

During the time period in question, a farmstead's self-sufficiency was the norm within each family. President Thomas Jefferson described it this way in a letter to former President John Adams:

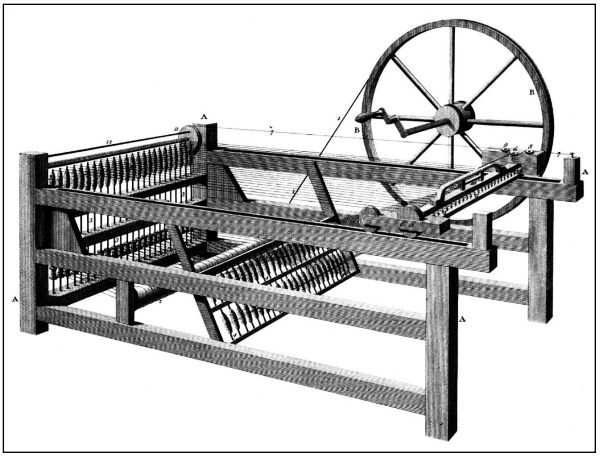
> *Every family in the country is a manufactory within itself, and is very generally able to make within itself all the stouter and middling stuffs for its own clothing and household use. We consider a sheep for every person in the family as sufficient to clothe it, in addition to the cotton, hemp and flax which we raise ourselves.*[3]

President Jefferson not only managed his own farm and produced most of what he and his own household needed, he proposed that model for everyone else's farmstead, too. That idea was the basic philosophy of his Democratic-Republican party for many years, in opposition to the Federalist party. Not only was it an economic necessity to be able to provide food, clothing and shelter for one's family, it was also a matter of patriotism. As Jane Nylander describes the young nation's life: "In the more successful farming areas, textile production increased during the years after the Revolution, when patriotic sentiment combined with economic necessity…" [4]

Cultivation of Flax vs. Cotton

Part of the self-sufficiency that prevailed in most homes included the husbanding of sheep and the growing of flax. Flax can be grown in the Northeast because it doesn't require a long growing season – ten to twelve weeks is sufficient, whereas cotton requires five and a half to six and a half months, from planting to harvest time. Early farm journals mention multiple tasks allied to the growing of flax, including the hiring of seasonal labor to help with the entire process. As an early source of a raw material for the making of clothing, in addition to the wool provided by their sheep, all Northern farms engaged in the growing of this fiber.

In the laborious process of turning the flax fiber into linen fabric, the work was subdivided into indoor vs. outdoor tasks. Crews of male farm



The spinning jenny was designed by James Hargreaves in 1770 and was brought to America in 1793.
Britannica.com

laborers usually provided the labor for the exterior steps in processing flax, while female family members and "hired hands" took over the process when the work moved indoors. From start to finish, the steps included s*owing the seeds into acres of fields, harvesting* by pulling the entire plant from the soil, *rippling* to remove the seeds from the stalk, *retting* the flax in a stream or with dew to break down the sap that bound the bark to the interior fiber, *braking* or literally breaking the outer fibers from the finer interior fibers, *scutching* or *swingling* to remove any hard pieces from the fiber using a scutching board and knife, and *hackling* bunches of fibers through a series of combs to completely remove the longer fibers from the shorter tow fibers.

All of these steps were performed by men and sometimes also women, outdoors. Women then took on the indoor steps in the process: *spinning* the long fibers into yarn to make fabric for clothing, towels and table cloths, *hanking* involved taking the spun yarn and winding it into measured skeins or hanks, *warping* the loom lengthwise with the resulting yarns, *weaving* the fabric on a loom by intersecting both warp and weft yarns, and finally *bleaching* unless the fabric were to be dyed or used in its natural color.[5] It could be a year from when flax seeds were first sown, to having a new final garment made of new linen cloth.

Geography of Vermont:

The nation's patterns of settlement and trade initially followed the rivers. Southeast Vermont was fed by the Connecticut River, and southwest by the Hudson River and Champlain Valley. Goods and people arrived from coastal cities like Boston and Portsmouth in the eastern half of Vermont via the Connecticut River. Southwestern Vermont received goods initially from cities like Albany, New York City, Philadelphia, and further south via the Hudson River. Bennington itself has been described as being "the economic vassal of Troy, Albany and New York City."[6]

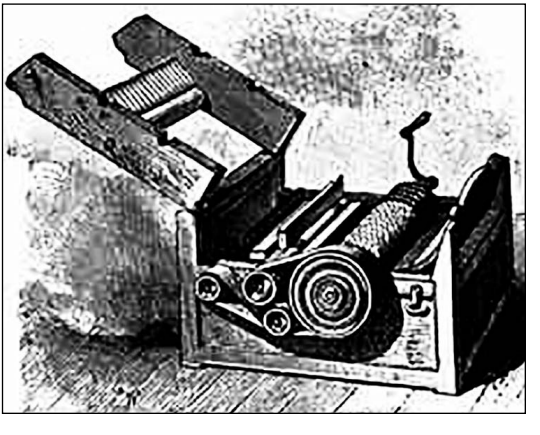
Once the Hudson-Champlain Canal opened in 1823, and the Erie Canal in 1825, goods from further south, places like New Orleans and Charleston, S.C., were able to reach this part of New England via the Mississippi River, or up the east coast and then up the Hudson River and across New York State.

Two notable inventions at the close of the eighteenth century sped the industrial revolution and changed American home life forever. The spinning jenny, built by James Hargreaves in England, was brought to America by Samuel Slater in 1790, who then set up the first mill for spinning cotton. While the home spinning wheel allowed for only one spindle at a time to be wound with yarn, the spinning jenny allowed for many spindles set up on a frame to be wound with yarn – vastly speeding up the production of yarn. While the household had been the factory of its day, the spinning jenny now spawned a commercial enterprise.

Next, the cotton gin, patented by Eli Whitney in 1793, cleaned the cotton bolls of their seeds – work that had been done by slave labor – before the cotton could be spun. Exports exploded. Whereas 138,000 pounds of cotton were exported in 1793, more than 6,000,000 pounds were exported in 1795, in addition to that shipped to the Northeast.[7]

By 1813, the first water-powered mill for both spinning and weaving was built. Between 1812 and 1832, the cotton industry quadrupled. By 1831, there were 250 cotton mills in Massachusetts, 116 in Rhode Island, 94 in Connecticut, 40 in New Hampshire, and seven in Vermont.[8]

Before these two important inventions were available, homespun textile production had been an essential part of every household in America, as President Jefferson himself espoused. The spinning jenny and cotton gin prompted families to put away their spinning wheels and looms, first in the seacoast cities and later in rural villages, as people gravitated to working in textile mills.



The cotton gin was patented by Eli Whitney in 1793.
eliwhitney.org

Census Data Disclosures:
Looms & Spinning Enumeration

When a writer states, "Only a third to half of all New England households owned looms…"[9] the source was probably the 1810 federal census, the third census, but first effort to count the manufactures in the young United States. In August of 1810 an advertisement appeared in local newspapers such as the *Vermont Gazette* in Bennington, notifying inhabitants that a census enumerator will be asking for detailed information about home textile manufacturing. For the first time, interviewers were required to gather data concerning the domestic economy. The announcement that was published in Bennington on August 13,1810, asked the surveyors to count the number of tanneries, distilleries, breweries, paper mills, oil mills, fulling mills, hat manufactories, carding machines for cotton or wool, spinning machines, furnaces & forges, rolling & slitting mills, cut nail factories, and trip hammers.

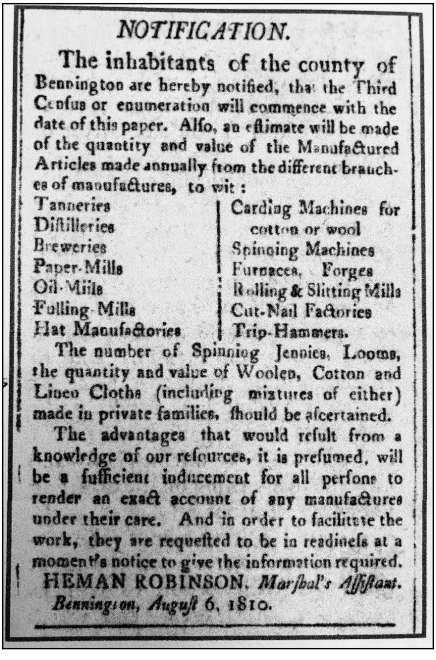
In addition – and this has particular interest for this research – the census asserted that "The number of spinning jennies, looms, the quantity and value of woolen, cotton and linen cloths (including mixtures of either) made in private families, should be ascertained."

The administration in Washington wanted to know how self-sufficient its citizens were, in light of the embargo on imported goods and forbidden exporting of domestic products – including fiber and fabric – which President Jefferson had imposed on the country. Just how self-sufficient was the young country in the run-up to the War of 1812? The war also prevented the trade in which the U.S. had engaged with Great Britain, such that of basic items such as yardage and clothing.

What resulted was a detailed, if imperfect, economic report, showing how much homespun textile production was continuing, and where industrialized cloth production had spread. Statistics that become apparent showed that from twenty to fifty percent of all households owned looms, and almost all households were still spinning their own wool or linen yarn. Few if any had started processing cotton yarn.

When textile mills are mentioned in this census, they are either wool or cotton – rarely flax. Flax was still being processed by hand in the home. Cotton mills at this time spun the raw material into yarns that could then be purchased for in-home weaving. Woolen mills did the finishing processes of homespun woolen cloth, which was woven in homes, either by the females of the family, or by itinerant male weavers.

Cotton wadding, or batting, was shipped from the South from cities like Charleston and New Orleans via waterways to the mills in the North. Flax was still grown in New England and processed locally in the home for



NOTIFICATION.

The inhabitants of the county of Bennington are hereby notified, that the Third Cenſus or enumeration will commence with the date of this paper. Alſo, an eſtimate will be made of the quantity and value of the Manufactured Articles made annually from the different branches of manufactures, to wit:

Tanneries	Carding Machines for cotton or wool
Diſtilleries	Spinning Machines
Breweries	Furnaces, Forges
Paper-Mills	Rolling & Slitting Mills
Oil-Mills	Cut-Nail Factories
Fulling-Mills	Trip-Hammers.
Hat Manufactories	

The number of Spinning Jennies, Looms, the quantity and value of Woolen, Cotton and Linen Cloths (including mixtures of either) made in private families, ſhould be aſcertained.

The advantages that would reſult from a knowledge of our reſources, it is preſumed, will be a ſufficient inducement for all perſons to render an exact account of any manufactures under their care. And in order to facilitate the work, they are requeſted to be in readineſs at a moment's notice to give the information required.

HEMAN ROBINSON, *Marſhal's Aſſiſtant.*

Bennington, Auguſt 6, 1810.

From the* Vermont Gazette *in Bennington, August 6, 1810.

home consumption or bartering.

Bales of raw cotton were packed onto steamboats for shipment from the plantations of the South to the industrial North for spinning first into thread, or yarn, and subsequently woven into yardage. From the larger rivers, like the Mississippi, Ohio, Hudson, and Connecticut, bales were transferred to barges for navigation of smaller rivers. Hiram Harwood, the Bennington diarist, recounts seeing a barge loaded with cotton and flour while on a trip to Lansingburg, N.Y.[10]

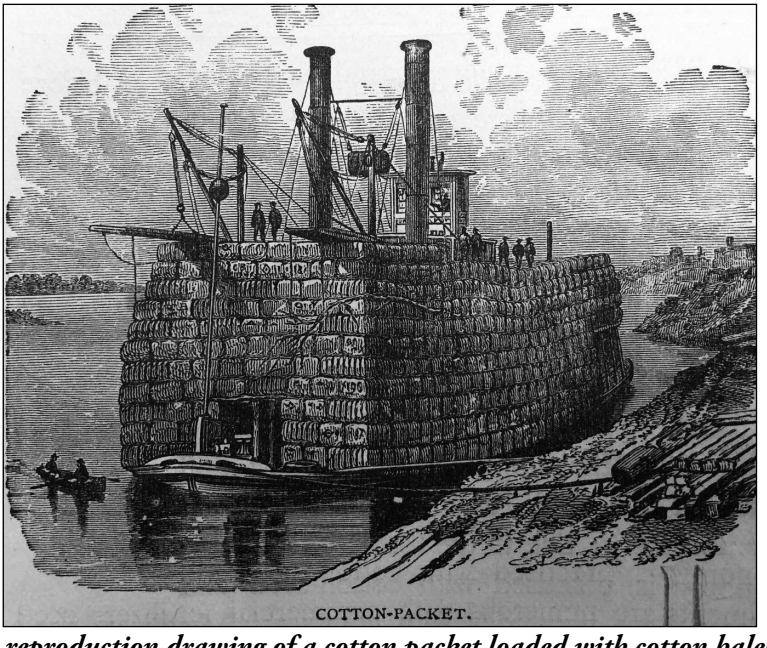
1810 Census Figures for Bennington and Windham Counties

The 1810 census reported state by state and county by county the aggregate numbers for each category requested. For cotton production, while Windham County produced 15,491 yards of cotton yarn, Bennington County produced only 800. To the west of Bennington, Rensselaer County in New York was credited with producing only 2,263 yards – one-hundredth of the amount of linen yardage produced. The only cotton mill listed in Vermont was in Orange County, up the Connecticut River at the confluence with the White River.

Fortunately, the census assistant marshals filed their numbers by towns, not just counties, so it is known specifically which towns were already producing cotton at home, in addition to flax and woolen goods. In the town of Bennington, furthest south and closest to shipping facilities of Troy and Albany, with 2,524 citizens, surveyors enumerated five spinning jennies having 258 spindles, which spun the yarn and produced 1,140 yards cotton, 11,410 yards woolen cloth, with 19,985 yards of linen cloth being woven in homes.

In the larger town of Manchester, among 1,502 citizens the surveyors found one spinning jenny with 24 spindles, which produced 466 yards of cotton. Homespun yardage also included 8,802 yards of wool and 13,777 yards of linen. In Dorset, 30 miles north of Bennington, and the furthest

A TOWN	B Indiv.	#homes	# Looms	D/C	Yds Woolen	Yds Cotton	Yds Linen	Jennies	Spindles
Glastenbury	76	16	5	31.20%	600	0	530		
Woodford	254	49	11	22.4	565	0	999		
Dorset	**1294**	**220**	**104**	47%	**8809**	**0**	**12559**		
Sandgate	1187	208	87	41.8	7207	10	10048		
Peru	239	42	18	42.8	1485	20	2180		
Arlington	1408	236	87	36.80%	8567	20	12881		
Pownal	1655		114		9381	20	17225		
Rupert	1630	262	130	49.60%	3254	36	illegible	2	48
Landgrove	299	49	23	46.90%	1993	60	3177		
Shaftsbury	1973	318	165	**51.8**	15267	80	23343		
Stanford	378	68	37	54.40%	2197	150	4691		
Winhall	429	73	37	50.60%	2166	182	5017		
Readsboro	410	55	29	52.70%	1358	350	2260		
Sunderland	575	69	33	47.80%	3179	383	4907		
Manchester	1502	257	115	44.70%	8802	466	13777	1	24
Bennington	2524		117		11410	1140	19985	5	258
TOTAL	15893								



A reproduction drawing of a cotton packet loaded with cotton bales shipping to the North.

From *Industrial History of the United States*, by Albert Bolles, 1881.

north in the county, the census count showed 220 households with 104 looms (47%)producing 8,869 yards of wool, 12,559 yards of linen, but zero yards of cotton cloth.

In fact, all Bennington County can be sorted as follows, as to cotton yardage production in 1810.

As late as 1826, Zaddock Thompson's *Vermont Gazetteer* described

homespun production of fabric this way: "Except the domestic fabrics of linen and woolen made in almost every family for home use, the manufactures of this state are not very considerable."[11]

Manchester was recorded as having 115 looms, or 44.7% of the population, and only one spinning jenny having 48 spindles. As a result, 466 yards of cotton are recorded. Of Dorset, Thompson reported: "There are in this township 9 school districts, 8 schoolhouses, 2 meeting houses, 2 grist and 7 Saw mills, *1 woolen factory*, 1 furnace, 1 tannery, 2 taverns, 1 store,1 distillery, 1 pottery, *2 fulling mills and 1 carding machine*."[12] But no cotton mills of any kind, nor even spinning jennies.

TOWN	# Indiv.	# homes	# Looms	# Great wheels	# foot wheels	# yds woolen	#yd linen blends	#yds cotton	#yds Linen
Springfield*	2556	368	203	446	439	17313	24574	1175	
Chester*	2370	362	224	478	482	14,012	26,806	2859	
Andover*	957	141	88	185	167	5002	12120	613	
Weston*	629	107	59	126	120	2745	7087	402	
SubTotal		978	574	1235	1208				
Rockingham	1954		118			8598	0	6672	15632
Townshend	1115		100			5370	2335	5000	9730
Dummerston	1704		153			6902	0	3577	14549
Grafton	1365		81			5242	0	3226	7213
Westminster	1925		172			10943	882	1732	23156
Guilford	1872		134			8884	1092	1637	17334
Brattleboro	1841		132			3241	669	1236	5396
Halifax	1758		168			illeg	2795	1071	19470
Marlboro	1245					9190	2215	968	14221
Newfane	1271					4796	4685	842	9217
Wardsboro	894		101			5221	238	737	8629
Athens	478		31			2274	0	631	3327
Vernon	521		28			1875	259	611	4632
Putney	1603		64			9621	349	591	4060
Whitingham	1242		89			5641	1009	491	10662
Wilmington	1193		103			7943	50	408	9996
Windham	782					3952	2005	190	9713
Somerset	199		19			1466	0	126	1689
Brookline	432					1093	107	119	2242
Londonderry	637		56			2990	206	94	7089
Jamaica	996		54			182	703	75	88
Stratton	265		21			1255	139	10	2612

**Denotes towns located in Windsor County; the rest are further south, in Windham County.*

On the other side of the Green Mountains the surveyors of Windsor and Windham counties found that every town was already producing cotton yardage. Note that the towns with the greater numbers of cotton yardage are all in Windham County, and closer to the river than to the mountains.

1810-1840 developments

As early as 1821, an advertisement appeared in the *Vermont Gazette*,

specifically asking for families with children to work in the mills: "Wanted in the Bennington Cotton Factory several families that can furnish a number of children each. To such constant employ will be given wages paid to the ability of the children."[13] Hiram Harwood in 1814 referred to the Paran Creek Cotton Factory.[14] Later, in 1824, he called this Peck's Cotton Factory, named Peck, Bowen & Co., in the 1831 commercial report.[15]

In 1823, the *Vermont Gazetteer* described Bennington as having only this one cotton manufactory, plus four woolen manufactories, five carding machines, and four fulling mills. This lone cotton mill was also verified by Thompson's 1824 *Gazetteer of Vermont*, which reported that Bennington had one cotton factory, five saw mills, five grist mills, three woolen factories, two paper mills and two furnaces.

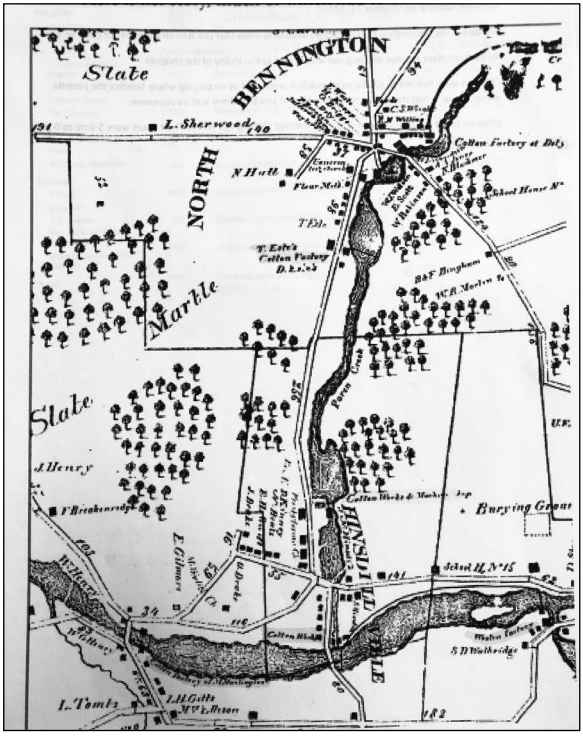
The 1830 census asked many detailed questions of the manufacturers listed, and from the responses we know the names of these cotton mills. All stated that their products are sold a little locally, but mostly in New York City, two hundred miles away.

In total, 299 residents of Bennington, including children, were employed in these mills by 1830, out of a total population of 3,419. Figures shown in the chart correspond roughly with previous research, which found that "Due to advances in the processing of cotton and the proliferation of cotton mills, even before 1825, cotton yarn was readily available to weavers and was relatively cheap."[17]

Company name	Product	Type Mill	Year begun	Location	# employed
W. & M Henry	Cotton Shirting	Cotton	1831	No. Bennington	30
Doty & Loomis	Cotton fabric, Woolen machinery	Cotton	1831	No. Bennington	54
S. D.Walbridge	Sheets Paper	Paper	1810	No. Bennington	11
	Satinette[16], ¾ woolen	Cotton	1829		
J. Valentine	Narrow woolens, Satinette	Wool Cotton	1825 1831	Bennington	11
Hinsdill & Swift	Woolens, Shirting	Woolen Cotton mill	1807 1825	No. Bennington	170
T. Estes	Cotton sheeting	Cotton mill	1824	No. Bennington	23
Baker & Harris	Broadcloth	Woolen	1831	Manchester	17
Ethan Brown	Cotton sheeting	Cotton	1819	Pawlet**	33
Peck, Bowen & Co.	Cotton shirting	Cotton	1828	Pownal	39
Tyler, Martin, Barnes	Cotton shirting	Cotton	1831	Pownal	23

** Pawlet, Rutland County.

Documents relative to the manufactures in the United States, collected and transmitted to the House of Representatives, in compliance with a Resolution of Jan. 19, 1832, by the Secretary of the Treasury. In two volumes. Volume I. 1832.



A detail of the 1835 map of Bennington, Vermont by Joseph Hinsdill.
Bennington Museum collection

Noteworthy are the responses of Walbridge and Valentine, who both said they were fabricating *satinette* fabric. Satinette was woven using the spun cotton yarns that were used as the vertical yarns in the woven yardage produced. Only the machinery that could spin cotton into yarns made this fabric possible.

In addition to the manufacturers' responses included in the report of 1833, the introductory paragraph also included the following: *Besides the larger factories which are noticed in the report, there is scarcely a town which does not contain several shops, in which various handicraft trades are carried on, upon a small scale without machinery, and it is from these sources that most of the agricultural implements, and other articles of daily household use, as well as a considerable proportion of the coarser clothing of the inhabitants, are supplied.*[18]

Homespun production of woolen and linen fabrics was not dead yet, in spite of the growing presence of these various mills. By the time the 1840 census was taken, enumerators had found seven cotton mills in Vermont: three in Bennington County, and one each in Addison, Rutland, Windsor, and Windham counties. Jointly, they utilized 7,253 spindles, but none was engaged in printing or dyeing cotton. Two hundred sixty-two persons are listed as employed in these mills. (There were 47 free African-Americans included in this Bennington census, but whether they were employed in these mills could not be known.)

The 1835 Hinsdill map of the town of Bennington from 1835 shows exactly where these mills were located, some with names attached. The Harwood diaries, written between 1806 and 1837, mention flax production

as many as 63 times up to 1826, and not at all by 1834. By the time of the 1850 Federal Agricultural Census, Vermont reported that 20,852 pounds of flax were harvested, and by 1860 that figure had dropped to 7,007 pounds.[19]

By 1850, Dorset reported zero pounds of flax, and cotton yarn or yardage had almost completely displaced flax as a fiber for homespun production of clothing and furnishings fabric.

Summary of Findings:

With an understanding of the dates of technology transfer in any geographic area, textile items can be dated more closely. In southwestern Vermont, due to the range of mountain down the center of the state, acting as a deterrent to easy trade, and the availability of major rivers, technological transfer proceeded slowly. By examining the location of villages with respect to the shipping venues afforded, one can better estimate the date of availability of a raw material such as cotton, and its arrival for use in local fabric production, whether homespun or millmade. □

Dating early textiles

For any textile to be made of flax, it would have had to be made earlier in the nineteenth century, up until 1825, rather than later in the ante-bellum period. To have been woven of cotton, it would have had to be of a later date, after 1825 due to the slow transition from home production of flax to the availability of cotton yarn at a local cotton mill. This change was made possible by the increased investment in the machinery that developed from combing cotton fiber, to spinning and dyeing the yarn, to weaving the yarn into fabric, and finally making the fabric available for sale at a mill or general store. From there, families either had to hire a tailor or seamstress to custom-construct garments, or rely on a member of the family.

Footnotes

1. The text of a label for a framed textile fragment on exhibit at the Dorset Historical Society.
2. Heisey, J. W. *A Checklist of American Coverlet Weavers.* Williamsburg, VA: The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 1978, 3.
3. Lepore, J. *These Truths - a History of the United States.* New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 2018, 171.
4. Nylander, J. C. *Our Own Snug Fireside: Images of the New England Home 1760-1860.* New Haven and London: Yale University Press,1993, 169.
5. Coons, M. & Koob, K. *All Sorts of Good Sufficient Cloth: Linen-Making in New England 1640-1860* North Andover, MA: Merrimack Valley Textile Museum, 1980, 34-63.
6. Ludlum, D. *Social Ferment in Vermont 1791-1850.* Montpelier VT: The Vermont Historical Society, 1948, 10.
7. Bolles, A. S. *Industrial History of the United States, from the Earliest Settlements to the Present Time.* Norwich, CT: The Henry Bill Publishing Company, 1881, 408.
8. Ibid., 412
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12. Ibid., 118.
13. *Vermont Gazette*, (Bennington), Oct 13,1821.
14. Hiram Harwood, Diary entry, Feb 19,1814.
15. Ibid, May 6,1824.
16. Satinet: " fabric . . . made of cotton mill warps and of a woolen filling so overlying like an all-wool fabric. These goods originally were substantial, and they speedily displaced serges and cheap cassimeres for outer garments." (Montgomery, 1984) 342.
17. Heisey, 2.
18. *Documents relative to the manufactures in the United States, collected and transmitted to the House of Representatives, in compliance with a Resolution of Jan. 19, 1832, by the Secretary of the Treasury, 377.*
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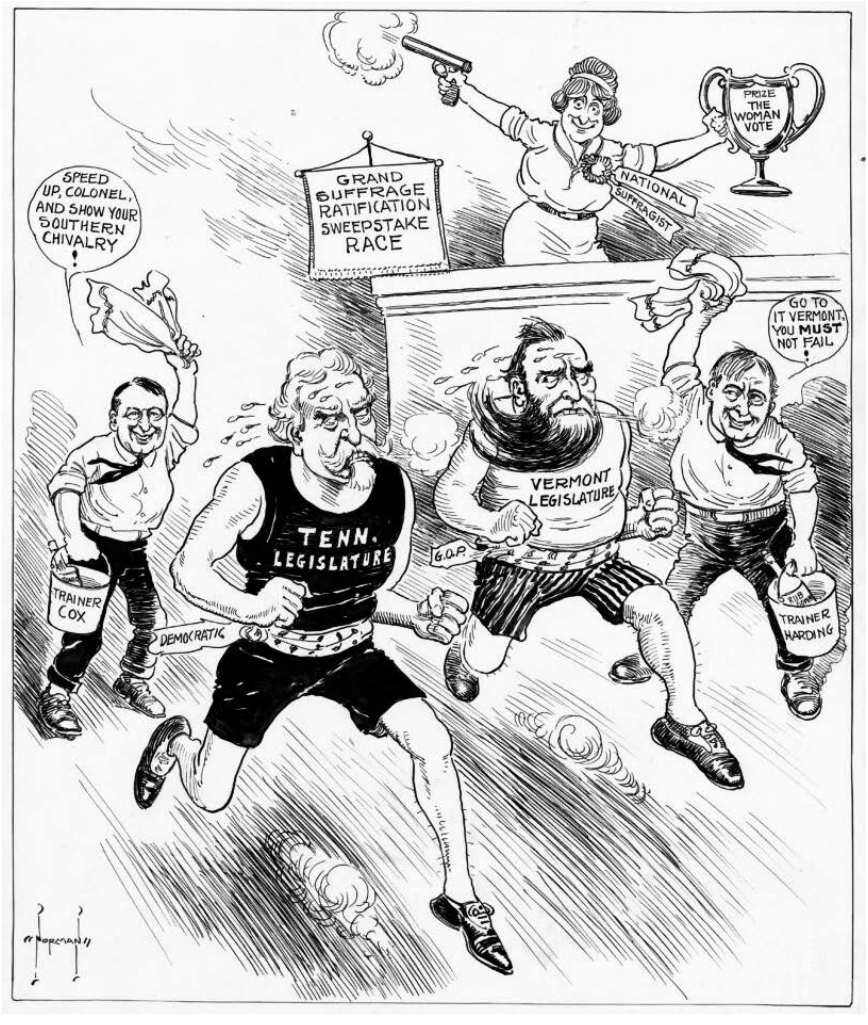


Cartoon in the* Boston Post *July 9, 1920, dramatized the competition between Vermont and Tennessee for the final state to approve the 19th Amendment. University of Vermont Digital Archives

The Evolution of Woman Suffrage in Vermont: Bennington and Beyond

Dawn and Raymond Rodrigues

On November 2, 1920, the lines of voters in Bennington were long at the library—the polling site, with two lines inside and a line outside.[1] Usually the results were known quickly, but not that night. The *Banner*

reported that "owing to the women voting in all states a tremendous vote is being cast and the returns will be slow and authentic news is likely to be late."[2] To give people across the town access to the "big board"—the election results board of the time—extra magic lantern projectors and screens were set up at the bank, the *Banner,* and the local theaters. **Women in town had voted for president for the first time!**

Dampening the excitement on election day 1920 would have been the memory of the valiant effort made by both male and female Vermont suffragists to make Vermont the 36th state to ratify the 19th Amendment. In spite of high expectations and an energetic campaign to call the legislature into a special session, it was Tennessee, not Vermont, that won the race, thereby ratifying the amendment.

The path toward suffrage in Vermont was a bumpy one. Isolated from one another by the Green Mountains, women in small communities like Bennington had few opportunities (without significant travel time and expense) to take part in statewide conventions, which were held in different towns each year, most of them far beyond Bennington County.[3] Instead of monumental gains at any given point, suffrage for women evolved gradually. From 1847-1919, legislation yielded partial voting rights at some points, only to have other attempts fail repeatedly. It took seventy years for universal suffrage to gain widespread acceptance in Vermont.

From Abolition to Women's Rights

Nationally, the women's movement had its roots in the anti-slavery movement.[4] *The Vermont Telegraph,* published in Brandon from 1828 to 1843, included columns on women's rights, temperance, and anti-slavery,[5] but women's actual participation in the anti-slavery movement in Vermont was limited to attending meetings with their husbands, making contributions through benevolent work, or distributing anti-slavery literature and circulating petitions.[6] For example, one column in the *Telegraph* noted that "Mr. Prentiss presented the petition of a number of women of Townshend, praying for the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia and the slave trade in the United States."[7] Unlike in states such as New York, Massachusetts, and Ohio, where women in the abolition movement formed their own auxiliary organizations, giving them a chance to develop leadership skills and a progressive agenda, in Vermont women would have to wait until the temperance and suffrage movements to have the benefit of meeting by themselves.

In 1840, Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, two abolitionists, were transformed into women's rights advocates when—at the World Anti-slavery Convention in London—they were banned from the convention

Vermont Suffrage Timeline

- 1848--Seneca Falls Convention
- 1847--Bill passes Vermont Legislature allowing women to inherit property, write their own wills, and be free from their husband's debts (inspired by Clarina Howard Nichols).
- 1869--Suffrage organizations split into two factions: American Woman Suffrage Association (AWSA) and the National Woman's Suffrage. Association (NWSA). AWSA supported the Fifteenth Amendment. NWSA opposed it because it did not include suffrage for women.
- 1870--Men form Vermont Woman Suffrage Association and invite the American Woman's Suffrage Association (AWSA) to organize conventions across the state.
- 1875--Vermont Woman's Christian Temperance Union organized.
- 1880--Bill passed to allow tax paying women to vote in school elections (supported by WCTU).
- 1883--Vermont Woman Suffrage Association reorganized.
- 1886--Vermont WCTU endorses suffrage. Municipal suffrage bill defeated.
- 1889--Schism in Vermont WCTU. Anna Park from Bennington forms a separate temperance association.
- 1890--Vermont Legislature again defeats municipal suffrage.
- 1890--Rival national organizations (AWSA and NWSA) reorganize and form National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA).
- 1900--Carrie Chapman Catt becomes president of NAWSA after Susan B. Anthony retires.
- 1907--Vermont Woman Suffrage Association is renamed Vermont Equal Suffrage Association (VESA).
- 1914--Vermont Federation of Women's Clubs endorses suffrage.
- 1917--Municipal Suffrage passes Vermont legislature.
- 1919--Vermont legislature passes Presidential suffrage bill, but Governor Clement's veto is not overturned.
- April, 1920--400 women meet with Governor Clement to request a special session, which Clement denies.
- 1920--Tennessee ratifies 19th Amendment (making it possible for all women to vote).
- 1921--Vermont ratifies 19th Amendment.

floor and forced to sit in the gallery (where they were joined by prominent abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison). Their indignation over this treatment prompted them to form their own organization. In 1848, they organized the Women's Rights Convention, otherwise known as the 1848 Seneca Falls Convention, widely viewed as the start of the suffrage movement.[8] The purpose of this convention was "to discuss the social, civil, and religious condition and *rights of women*." Interestingly, the inclusion of suffrage in their Declaration of Sentiments was a point of contention with the group, some of whom felt that including it would "make the whole movement ridiculous." [9]

The Role of Clarina Howard Nichols

Several years before the Seneca Falls Convention, Clarina Howard Nichols (1810-1885), from Townshend, Vermont, became editor of the *Windham County Democrat* in Brattleboro, where she wrote a series of editorials on topics such as temperance, abolition, and the property rights of married women. She focused on the unfairness of inheritance rules (coverture) which made not only a married woman's real estate, but also her personal property, subject to the management and control of her husband. Inspired by Nichols's writing, Larkin Mead of Brattleboro introduced legislation (Act 26 of 1847) to protect married women's property rights: An Act Relating to the Rights of Married Women. The act became law, thus

allowing a woman to own, inherit, or will property.[10] In a chapter of the *History of Woman Suffrage*, Nichols writes that "this was the first breath of a legal civil existence for Vermont wives." [11]

In 1852, Nichols organized a series of petitions submitted to the Vermont Legislature arguing that women deserve the right to vote in school elections. She was granted permission to speak before the legislature, thus earning the honor of being the first woman to address it. This report of her speech was printed in the *Vermont Christian Messenger*:

Clarina Howard Nichols
Vermont Historical Society

> *A petition has been presented to the Legislature from various persons in Brattleboro, asking for women the right to vote in school meetings. Mrs. Nichols, the talented editress [sic] of the Windham County Democrat, was allowed to present the claims of the petitioners in the Representatives' Hall. . . She claimed for a woman the right to represent her property and natural interests in her child, in overseeing its educational interests.*[12]

Even though it would be years before women were granted the right to vote in school elections, Nichols's sentiments were prescient. Her speaking skills led to many invitations to address groups across New England. In 1851, she was invited to speak at the Second National Woman's Rights Convention in Worcester, Massachusetts; in 1852, she was invited to the Third Woman's Rights Convention in Syracuse, New York. It was there she met Susan B. Anthony, who became a life-long friend. Disappointed with the slow speed of women's reform efforts in Vermont, Nichols and her family moved to Kansas in 1855, where she hoped more could be accomplished than "in conservative old Vermont, whose prejudices are so much stronger than its convictions."[13]

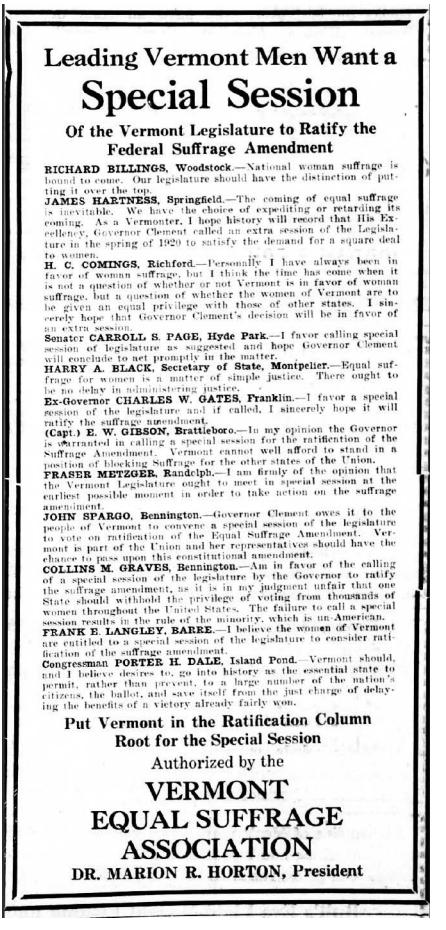
First Attempt at Suffrage Legislation

The Fourteenth Amendment, passed in 1866, granted citizenship to former slaves. In 1870, The Fifteenth Amendment gave black men the right to vote. Deeply disappointed that the amendment did not include women, the more radical wing of the National Woman's Suffrage

Association (NWSA), led by Susan B. Anthony, was determined to achieve the vote by way of a federal amendment. The conservative side of the party—led by Lucy Stone, Henry Blackwell, Julia Ward Howe, and others, including William Lloyd Garrison—believed in incremental change and chose a different strategy. In November 1869 they formed an organization called the American Woman Suffrage Association (AWSA), with the goal of achieving suffrage state-by-state.

Gradually, suffrage was entering the national conversation. The western territories had begun to consider enfranchising women. Although Kansas voted against it, the territory of Wyoming included full suffrage for women in its 1868 constitution.

Vermont suffrage supporters were paying attention. During the Constitutional Convention of 1869, the Vermont Council of Censors recommended an amendment to the state constitution granting women the right to vote in state elections. The amendment was initially introduced as a joke, but the legislators took it seriously, noting that they realized that the purpose was to try "the effect of ridicule upon the claim of woman to suffrage," and adding that "as the Council has entertained the resolution, and referred its consideration to this committee, we have given it that attention that the dignity of the Council and the subject seem to require."[14] Although this amendment failed, the mere fact that it was brought up by the legislators indicated that the time might be ripe for the suffrage movement to gain momentum.



Leading Vermont Men Want a

Special Session

Of the Vermont Legislature to Ratify the Federal Suffrage Amendment

RICHARD BILLINGS, Woodstock.—National woman suffrage is bound to come. Our legislature should have the distinction of putting it over the top.

JAMES HARTNESS, Springfield.—The coming of equal suffrage is inevitable. We have the choice of expediting or retarding its coming. As a Vermonter, I hope history will record that His Excellency, Governor Clement called an extra session of the Legislature in the spring of 1920 to satisfy the demand for a square deal to women.

H. C. COMINGS, Richford.—Personally I have always been in favor of woman suffrage, but I think the time has come when it is not a question of whether or not Vermont is in favor of woman suffrage, but a question of whether the women of Vermont are to be given an equal privilege with those of other states. I sincerely hope that Governor Clement's decision will be in favor of an extra session.

Senator CARROLL S. PAGE, Hyde Park.—I favor calling special session of legislature as suggested and hope Governor Clement will conclude to act promptly in the matter.

HARRY A. BLACK, Secretary of State, Montpelier.—Equal suffrage for women is a matter of simple justice. There ought to be no delay in administering justice.

Ex-Governor CHARLES W. GATES, Franklin.—I favor a special session of the legislature and if called, I sincerely hope it will ratify the suffrage amendment.

(Capt.) E. W. GIBSON, Brattleboro.—In my opinion the Governor is warranted in calling a special session for the ratification of the Suffrage Amendment. Vermont cannot well afford to stand in a position of blocking Suffrage for the other states of the Union.

FRASER METZGER, Randolph.—I am firmly of the opinion that the Vermont Legislature ought to meet in special session at the earliest possible moment in order to take action on the suffrage amendment.

JOHN SPARGO, Bennington.—Governor Clement owes it to the people of Vermont to convene a special session of the legislature to vote on ratification of the Equal Suffrage Amendment. Vermont is part of the Union and her representatives should have the chance to pass upon this constitutional amendment.

COLLINS M. GRAVES, Bennington.—Am in favor of the calling of a special session of the legislature by the Governor to ratify the suffrage amendment, as it is in my judgment unfair that one State should withhold the privilege of voting from thousands of women throughout the United States. The failure to call a special session results in the rule of the minority, which is un-American.

FRANK E. LANGLEY, BARRE.—I believe the women of Vermont are entitled to a special session of the legislature to consider ratification of the suffrage amendment.

Congressman PORTER H. DALE, Island Pond.—Vermont should, and I believe desires to, go into history as the essential state to permit, rather than prevent, to a large number of the nation's citizens, the ballot, and save itself from the just charge of delaying the benefits of a victory already fairly won.

Put Vermont in the Ratification Column

Root for the Special Session

Authorized by the

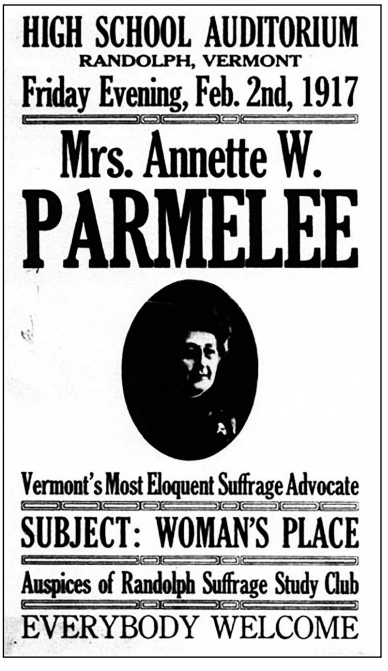
VERMONT EQUAL SUFFRAGE ASSOCIATION

DR. MARION R. HORTON, President

This ad was published in the* Brattleboro Reformer *on April 16, 1920.

Seeing an opportunity to move the Vermont cause forward, the men who supported suffrage formed a male-only suffrage organization, known as

the Vermont Woman Suffrage Association (VWSA) in January, 1870. In an attempt to convince citizens across the state that women should be granted suffrage, the VWSA decided to hold a series of conventions before the next session of the legislature. But they needed help from experienced suffrage leaders.



Annette W. Parmelee's extensive letters and speeches reflected her comprehensive knowledge of laws and legislative matters.
Vermont Historical Society

With their new mission to work state-by-state, the AWSA members were happy to come to Vermont and help push for a statewide suffrage amendment. In February 1870 a group of AWSA reformers (both women and men) arrived in Montpelier.[15] Lucy Stone, one of the women, was quite familiar with Vermont, having campaigned in Vermont in the 1850s, shortly after Clarina Nichols moved to Kansas. Henry Blackwell, her husband, was especially optimistic, noting that Vermont appeared to be "an especially promising ground for a suffrage campaign."[16]

After a successful convention in Montpelier, the group worked with the VWSA to hold a series of events across the state: In February they went to Rutland (where William Lloyd Garrison spoke); in March, there was a convention in Brattleboro. Then smaller conventions were held in St. Johnsbury, St. Albans, and Burlington. Initially, newspaper articles across the state were positive. As the months went by, however, the press began to publish mostly negative reports, maintaining that women were simply not interested in the suffrage cause.

By the time the speakers got to Burlington it was clear that the sentiment in Vermont was not favorable to suffrage. One person wrote: "One could scarcely resist the conviction that the speakers themselves were hired advocates having but little heart or faith in their work."[17] A newspaper story in the *Woodstock Standard* expressed a similar notion,

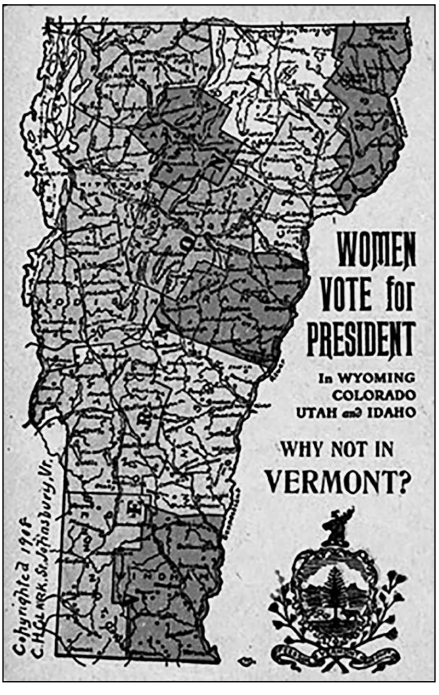
indicating that the "eloquent periods of the most impassioned orators failed utterly to awake a response in the hearts of the audiences."[18]

The Constitutional Convention convened in June. When the amendment was placed on the floor, the legislators did not even discuss the issue; rather, they immediately cast their ballots. Only one delegate, Harvey Howes from West Haven, voted for the amendment. Clearly, the Vermonters were not comfortable with the idea of full suffrage for women. At least the year of publicity for the suffrage movement got people talking and thinking. *The Woman's Journal*, the AWSA publication, reported that in Vermont, "two persons cannot meet in the street without discussing woman suffrage."[19]

The Push for School Suffrage:
The Temperance-Suffrage Connection (1880)

When the Civil War broke out, the suffrage movement ground to a halt as women helped with the war effort. After the war, the temperance movement had replaced abolition as the focal point for reformers. The Women's Christian Temperance Union provided an opportunity for women to support a cause that they believed in, while at the same time having an opportunity—possibly the first in their lives—to be involved in a woman-only organization, one that was socially sanctioned. Though a small step, the WCTU's involvement moved suffrage from the background onto center stage. The Woman's Christian Temperance Union was established in Cleveland in 1874. The Bennington WCTU was organized in March of 1875, four years before the Vermont WCTU, which, in 1879, immediately advocated for the right for women to vote in school committees: "The Christian women of Vermont ought to have more influence and power in suppressing intemperance; and as an indirect means to that end, we will petition the next Vermont Legislature to allow us to vote for school committees, hoping thereby that we may be able to place temperance textbooks in our public schools." [20]

In 1880, the measure was sent to the legislature and passed. But only tax-paying women, that is, women who owned property, could vote. Nationally, a WCTU organizer named Mary Hunt was paying close attention. She asked individual chapters to petition their school districts to demand that temperance instruction be added to the curriculum. She traveled around Vermont with Mrs. Perkins, the Vermont WCTU president, as they "bombarded legislators with petitions, and attended open hearings on a proposed bill."[21] The bill was signed into law by the governor in 1882. So Vermont had the dubious honor of being the first first state in the nation to add alcohol education to the curriculum. Twenty-two other states



Postcards were a popular tool in the campaign for suffrage.
Vermont Historical Society

followed.

In 1881 Frances Willard, president of the national WCTU, formally endorsed suffrage. In 1889 she encouraged the WCTU to endorse the Prohibition Party, a decision that caused a split in the Vermont WCTU. Anna Park of Bennington, the Vermont WCTU president, withdrew from the organization and formed a splinter organization in Bennington County. Park's decision was based on her notion that the WCTU should be a single-issue organization. Even though the national organization indicated that state chapters did not have to follow in lock-step with the platform, Park was appalled at the notion of politicizing the movement. In a pamphlet distributed across the state and republished in the *Banner*, she argued that adding support for prohibition and suffrage—a still controversial cause—to the platform was not a good idea: "Our state is in the hands of the minority as is the national WCTU. But we do not intend to continue to aid the partisanship of the leaders. We claim a right to our religious and political beliefs outside of the WCTU and will work against the saloon (and Democrats!)."[22]

In spite of the lack of support from temperance members in Bennington, the temperance movement at the state level played a major part in moving suffrage into the spotlight. In 1903 the Baptists held a convention in Bennington during which women were granted "an equal voice with the men" on the question of the license or prohibition.[23] By 1905 the WCTU had begun to openly support suffrage. The Vermont Equal Suffrage Association Convention minutes include a letter from the WCTU president who had to be in Bennington at a WCTU meeting on the same date. In her letter she pointed out that both organizations were working on common goals, including "trying to create public sentiment in favor of woman's suffrage. . . . Not many years ago we had to avoid this question as much as possible lest someone might be offended. A minister's wife in conversation with me a few years ago, said in a whisper—'Yes down deep in

my heart I believe in woman's suffrage, but I dare not mention it.'" –Mrs. A.F. Smith, State Supt. Franchise, W.C.T.U.[24]

Moving Toward Municipal Suffrage

Undaunted by the failed attempt toward full suffrage, the VWSA re-organized in 1883. At a state meeting in St. Johnsbury, the group decided to focus on women's suffrage in municipal elections, arguing that women who owned property had to pay taxes but were deprived of the right to vote. They recognized that municipal suffrage might provide an inroad to full suffrage, for reforms "are in a measure experimental and must from their nature be brought about gradually and by the strengthening and education of public sentiment." [25]

Again they collaborated with the AWSA and held meetings across the state during the next year. They proposed "giving taxable female citizens a right to vote in town, village and fire district meetings." They were encouraged by the response to the bill when it was introduced on November 22, 1886. Of five speeches made on the floor, only one was opposed to the bill. Yet when the bill came up for a third reading, it failed. The *Daily Journal* reported, "the woman suffragists were highly elated by the vote ordering the municipal suffrage bill to a third reading, but a saneness came over them when the representatives, subsequently recovering from a quixotic freak, incontinently dismissed the bill." [26]

In 1887 the VWSA proposed the bill yet another time. In a letter to the editor, Joseph B. Holton wrote: "Should this bill pass, Vermont which never had a slave . . . will have the added honor of being the first New England state to grant municipal suffrage to women."[27] Again the bill failed. It passed in the House but lost in the Senate by eight votes. The anti-suffragist organization from Boston had intervened and managed to change the minds of many legislators. The group introduced the bill a third time in 1888, with the usual high hopes of passage, this time because the WCTU and the Prohibition party had both endorsed the bill. But the sentiment against the bill across the state was growing; newspapers reported that women simply did not want the bill. This time the bill failed 192 to 37.

Every two years until 1917 the VWSA introduced the bill, only to see it fail in one branch of the legislature or the other. Why didn't the organization give up? Laura Moore of Barnet, its secretary for twenty-two years, explained that it was important to keep the suffrage cause in the minds of legislators and citizens.[28] By 1912, women had gained various forms of suffrage in Washington, Wyoming, California, Colorado, Utah, and Idaho, but not in Vermont. Finally, in February 1917 the legislation passed. Vermont was the first state in New England to grant women the

Members of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union in Weston before the 1910 convention. Vermont Historical Society

right to vote in municipal elections. The VWSA was well organized by then and continued to push for full voting rights, with enthusiasm growing across the state.

The Final Push

With municipal suffrage a huge success, suffragists planned the next phase of the movement, this time focusing on presidential suffrage. In 1907, the WVSA re-organized and renamed itself the Vermont Equal Suffrage Association (VESA), a name that strengthened the emphasis on equal rights. The push for suffrage slowed down somewhat after April 6, 1917, when the United States entered World War I. Women's work for the war effort, however, caused many Americans—including President Woodrow Wilson—to finally recognize that women deserved the vote.

In 1919, both houses of the Vermont legislature voted to give women the right to vote in presidential elections, but Governor Clement vetoed the legislation. Already across the country, thirty-five states had voted in favor of full suffrage for women. Only one more state was needed to ratify the U.S. Constitution granting women full suffrage. Tennessee and Vermont seemed to be the two states most likely to vote in favor of the amendment to the constitution, so national suffrage leaders focused their effort on those two states.

Carrie Chapman Catt, president of the National Woman Suffrage Association, helped Vermont leaders design a campaign to convince Clement to call a special session of the legislature. Of the many active women during this initiative were these three: Annette Parmelee, from Enosburgh Falls, Anna Hawks Putnam, from Bennington, and Mary Bennetts Spargo, also from Bennington. Each was also active in other reform movements that supported suffrage. And all three were part of the attempt to change Governor Clement's mind and enable Vermont to cross the finish line.

Annette Parmelee

Annette Parmelee was well known to legislators, who dubbed her the "Suffragette Hornet." Beginning in 1908, Parmelee gave regular addresses to the Vermont Legislature, attempting to persuade the legislators to grant women the right to vote in municipal elections. In November 1910 she spoke for almost an hour before arguing that if women had to pay taxes, they ought to be able to vote on matters for which their taxes were used, just like men. A native of Enosburgh Falls, Parmelee first began her public efforts in her support of temperance, becoming vice president of the Enosbugh Falls Women's Christian Temperance Union. She became the press secretary one year later. Parmelee gave speeches at VESA annual conventions, routinely offering strategies for members to gather support in their local communities. It may have been her work on temperance that taught her how necessary it would be for women to have voting rights the same as those of men.

Parmelee was invited by towns across the state to give lectures, which were always reported in key newspapers. In a talk titled "Woman's Place Defined," she posed a poignant question: "Some have placed us as fit to occupy a pedestal in some man's parlor, while others say our place is rocking the cradle in some man's kitchen. If every woman's place is 'in the home' why have not all women been given decent homes and decent husbands?" Referring to that talk, the *Herald and News* of Randolph reported that "Randolph has survived the shock occasioned by holding its first public meeting for disseminating equal suffrage wisdom."[29]

Newspaper editors thoroughly enjoyed her and appreciated her spunk. They also took every opportunity to poke fun at her. For example, a correspondent for the *Bennington Banner* wrote: "I shouldn't wonder if some of the 'boys' were influenced by Annette's words."[30] Her continual advocacy for suffrage led the *Rutland News* to poke fun at her, writing, "In Iceland the women are allowed to vote. Why not locate in Iceland, Mrs. Annette W. Parmelee?" To which the *Brattleboro Reformer* responded, "But would Iceland be Iceland with Mrs. Parmelee there?"[31] She thanked them

for not asking her to go to a "hotter place than Iceland."[32] In yet another attack in a *Rutland Herald* article entitled "He Has Heard from Annette," the writer said that if Parmelee were living during the time of the Puritans, she would have been put on a board and dunked in a pond.[33] Depending upon whose side you were on, you either thought of her as "Annette the Suffragette" or "The Suffragette Hornet."

Anna Hawks Putnam

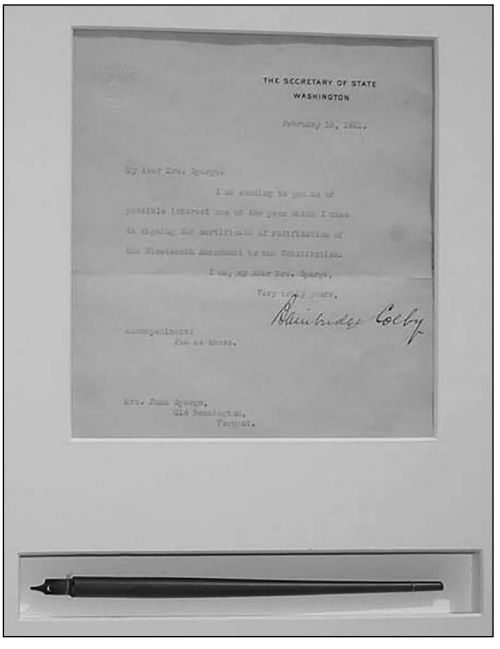
Anna Hawks Putnam moved to Bennington in 1893 with her husband, Warren, a doctor (unrelated to hospital founder Henry W. Putnam). She was named secretary of the Vermont Branch of the National Child Labor Committee during its inaugural meeting in 1910 in Burlington.[34] In addition to working on child labor issues, Putnam was actively involved in both the statewide committee of the Vermont Federation of Women's Club (VFWC) and the Fortnightly Club, a local affiliate of the national organization. She chaired the Industrial and Consumer's League at the 1908 VRWC convention in St. Johnsbury, a position that she held for many years. Also, during World War I, she served as the state chair of the Vermont Division Woman's Committee, Council of National Defense.

An accomplished speaker, Putnam gave talks across the state on both child labor and women in industry, reporting on working conditions. In a 1909 talk on "Women in Industry," she disclosed that Vermont is the only New England state without laws to protect working women and proposed areas that club women might work on. She recommended a state department of factory and labor inspection.[35] In "Vermont and Child Labor," published in the 1910 *Vermonter*, Putnam wrote of deplorable labor conditions children face. She asked, "Is it necessary that they should toil day after day ten and eleven hours? Does it tend toward their physical well-being to breathe marble dust, woolen dyes and cotton lint? But beyond this, will it improve their moral well-being?" No children should be allowed to work more than eight hours a day and those under fourteen should not work in these jobs at any time of the year, she demanded.[36]

Although more widely known for her work on child labor reform, Anna Hawks Putnam was a strong advocate for equal suffrage. The "Woman's Page" editor for *The Advance,* a Burlington weekly published in 1915 and 1916, Putnam explained that "all of the big questions of social import are included in the feminist agenda: temperance, peace, child labor . . . and so ad infinitum." She added, "To some extent through its efforts the hours of labor for working women have been shortened." [37]

In a letter to the *Banner*, Putnam posed this question: "Vermont was the first state in the union to adopt universal manhood suffrage. Why not the first New England state to bestow presidential suffrage upon its women?

Is there a specific reason for Vermont's granting this privilege to her women during this coming legislature?" Her answer: "Yes, enthusiastically."[38]


THE SECRETARY OF STATE
WASHINGTON

Bainbridge Colby

Letter from Bainbridge Colby, secretary of state, to Mary Bennetts Spargo with the pen he used to sign the constitutional amendment that gave women the right to vote in national elections.
Bennington Museum collection

Mary Bennetts Spargo (1880-1953)

Though John Spargo is best known in Bennington as founder and first curator-director of the Bennington Museum and nationally as a prominent socialist and writer, his second wife, Mary Bennetts Spargo, was prominent in Vermont's state suffrage movement. Born in London to Frederick M. Bennetts and Anna Smith, she came to New York in 1882 and worked in a carpet mill. It was there, in 1904, that she met John Spargo, a recent widower. After they married, they lived in Yonkers and managed Prospect House, one of many settlement houses in New York.[39] In 1909, the Spargos were invited by friends to live in a house in Old Bennington so that he could recover from poor health.[40] They later purchased the 34 Monument Avenue home and lived there the rest of their lives. John lectured locally, nationally, and internationally about topics ranging from Marxism to child labor to woman suffrage. Mary took part in Bennington women's groups, including the Bennington Woman Voter's Association, serving as its vice president. She sang in the Community Choral Club and was active in the Fortnightly Club, an affiliate of the General Federated Women's Clubs, which promoted volunteer service and in 1914 supported suffrage for women.

Mary's local involvement set the stage for her statewide effort for equal suffrage. She attended every Vermont Equal Suffrage Association (VESA) conference from 1916 to 1920 and was its auditor from 1917 to 1920. John lent his support to the suffrage cause by writing letters to the editor of newspapers across the state, pointing out the importance of granting women

full voting rights. He also organized a group of male suffrage supporters to meet with the governor and attempt to convince him to call a special session.

As one of VESA's executive board members, Mary collected thousands of signatures from men and women supporting equal suffrage. The signed petitions were delivered to Governor Percival Clement in 1920, as part of the effort to convince him to call a special session of the legislature. When Mary died in 1953, her obituary, published in the *New York Times,* portrayed her as "a pioneer worker in the national women's suffrage movement" and said that, "as one of the first women in the successful drive for women's suffrage, she canvassed the entire state of Vermont for signatures . . . and was one of the three recipients of pens used to sign the suffrage legislation."[41]

Conclusion

The high point in the campaign for a special session occurred in April 1920. Almost 400 women from across the state marched in a pouring rain to the Statehouse for two meetings at 5 and 8 o'clock. They packed into the meeting room wearing yellow badges and jonquils and made their arguments. Governor Clement's response was a model of political obfuscation:

> *I do not know that there is anything I would care to say at the present time, only that I am pleased to see you here, as I said this afternoon. I think all of these meetings do go and create interest in the thing that you are asking—that you are in favor of. I have not been at any time opposed to suffrage and have taken no position on that question. Whenever the State of Vermont shall pass upon that question, in whatever the state decides to do we shall all acquiesce.*
>
> *I think it very desirable that the state—and when I say the state, I do not mean part of the state; I mean the people who hold the right of suffrage, should control this question. I think those people who have the right to express their wish in regard to this important matter, are the ones to whom we should leave the decision. I think that you agree with me in this that that is what we should do in the matter.*

In other words, let the men of Vermont vote on whether the women of Vermont should have the right to vote in national elections.

Clement's official reason for not calling a special session was that the amendment "invades the Constitution of Vermont," since the legislators had

been elected before the amendment was considered. More likely, Clement had an underlying reason for opposing woman suffrage. He realized that many of the women who were working for suffrage had also been active in the temperance effort and were members of the WCTU. Further, in January 1919, Prohibition had been approved as the 18th Amendment to the U.S Constitution. Hopeful that it might someday be overturned, Clement may have feared that giving women the vote in national elections might lead to their supporting the continuation of Prohibition should it come up for a national vote.

Some supporters of equal suffrage in Vermont even hoped for a bit of skullduggery to enable the legislation to pass and be signed into law. Warren G. Harding was the Republican candidate for President at that time, and he asked Governor Clement to meet with him. That gave a number of Vermonters the idea that, if Clement were to leave the state to meet with Harding, Lieutenant Governor Mason Stone, as acting governor, could convene a special session of the legislature. They would pass legislation giving women the right to vote in national elections, and Stone would sign it into law before Clement returned. As it turned out, that never happened.

On August 18, 1920, Tennessee crossed the finish line, becoming the 36th state to ratify the 19th Amendment, ensuring that voting rights could not be denied based on sex. Women across the nation would be able to vote in the next presidential election, even women in states that had not yet ratified the amendment.

And so, on November 2, 1920, the lines at the polls in Bennington and across Vermont were long – women had the right to vote, and vote they did. The *Brattleboro Reformer* noted that those who thought that "the American woman, especially the New England woman, as a rule didn't want to vote and wouldn't vote if she could, met enlightenment yesterday – enough to persuade even the most stubborn of them of their error."[42] The victory for equal suffrage in Vermont came as a result of the efforts of women – and many men – working for over 70 years to establish the right to vote in school district, municipal, and national elections, overcoming competing priorities, such as prohibition vs. suffrage, and committing themselves to keep up the effort, despite the political losses over time.

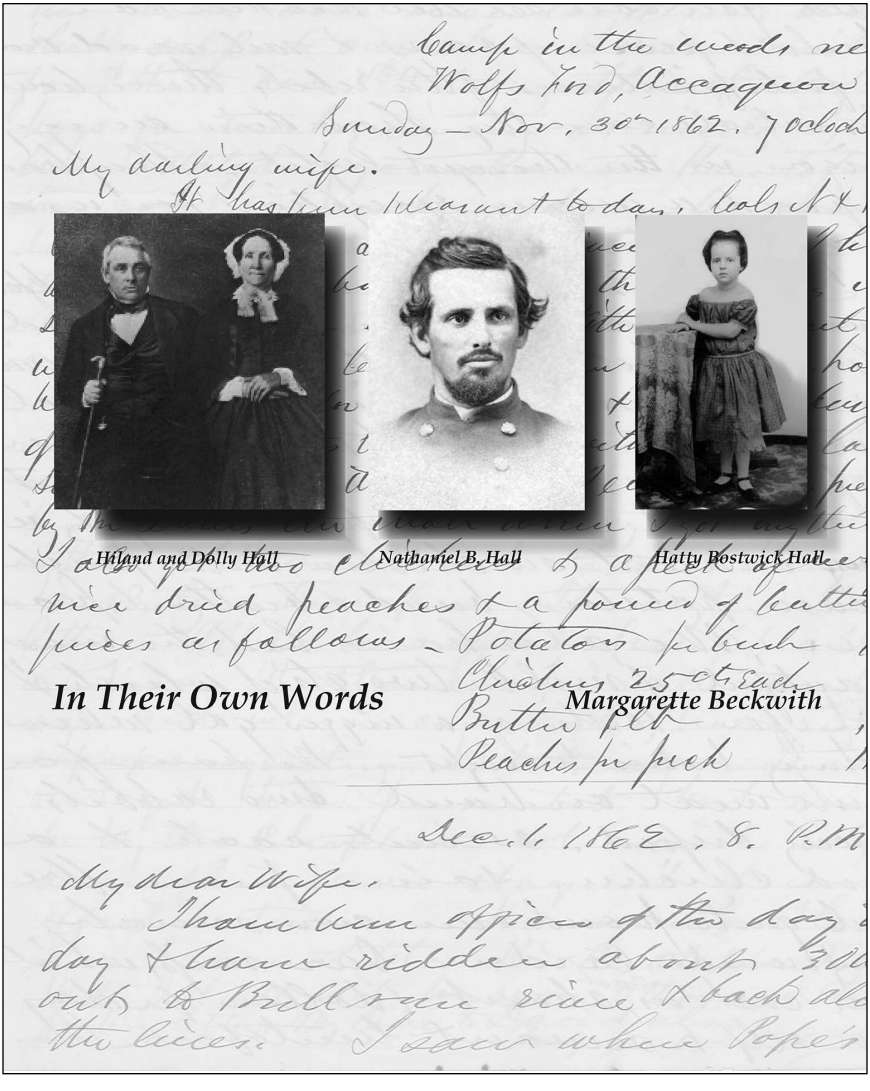
On Feb. 8, 1921, the Vermont legislature finally ratified the 19th Amendment—three months after Vermont women had voted in the first presidential election. □

Notes:

1. *Bennington Banner,* Nov. 3, 1920.
2. *Bennington Banner,* Nov. 2, 1920.
3. For example, early meetings of the Vermont Equal Suffrage Association were held in the following towns: Barton Landing, 1885; Danby, 1886; Barton Landing, 1887; Bellows Falls, 1888; Barre, 1889; Bradford, 1890; Lyndonville, 1891; Sutton, 1892; Hardwick, 1893; Barton, 1894; Peacham, 1895; Montpelier, 1896; Burlington, 1897; South Royalton, 1898; Bellows Falls, 1899; Waterbury Center, 1900; Rochester, 1901; Concord, 1902; Barton, 1903; Woodstock, 1904; Springfield, 1905; Brattleboro, 1906; Burlington, 1907; Rochester, 1913.
4. Bennington's anti-slavery society was founded in 1837. The group combined with Shaftsbury in 1839 to form the "Shaftsbury and Bennington Union Anti-slavery Society (*Vermont Telegraph*, Feb. 10, 1887). See also *Vermont Gazette*, November 5, 1833.
5. *The Vermont Gazette*, Dec. 14, 1819, includes the constitution of the American Colonization Society. This group believed in moving slaves back to Africa (colonizing them) rather than freeing them in the states.
6. Marilyn S. Blackwell, "Women Were Among Our Primeval Abolitionists: Women and Organized Antislavery in Vermont, 1834-1848," *Vermont History* 82:1 (Winter/Spring 2014), pp.14-34.
7. *Vermont Telegraph*, July 14, 1841, p. 172
8. Women had been introduced into some leadership roles within the wing of the abolitionist movement that William Lloyd Garrison led.
9. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, Matilda Joslyn Gage, and Ida Husted Harper (eds.) *History of Woman Suffrage,* New York: Fowler & Wells, 1881-1922.
10. Vermont, Acts and Resolves Passed By the Legislature of the State of Vermont at their October Session 1847, Burlington, 1847.
11. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, Matilda Joslyn Gage, and Ida Husted Harper (eds.) *History of Woman Suffrage,* New York: Fowler & Wells, 1881-1922.
12. *Vermont Christian Messenger*, Montpelier, November 3, 1852.
13. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, Matilda Joslyn Gage, and Ida Husted Harper (eds.) *History of Woman Suffrage,* New York: Fowler & Wells, 1881-1922.
14. Paul S. Gillies and D. Gregory Sanford, eds. *Records of the Council of Censors of the State of Vermont.* Montpelier, 1991, p. 680. The Council of Censors, established in the Vermont Constitution, had the power to review the actions of the legislature to determine whether it had functioned within the intent of the Constitution, whether taxes were appropriately established, collected, and used, and whether the laws of the State were appropriate. It could censure an action, but could not change or repeal it. Also, it could convene a constitutional convention to review and possibly amend the Constitution.
15. Deborah S. Clifford. "An Invasion Of Strong-Minded Women: The Newspapers and the Suffrage Campaign In Vermont in 1870. *Vermont History.* Winter 1975, Vol. 43, No. 1. pp. 1-19
16. Cliffords, *Invasion*, p. 6
17. Cliffords, *Invasion*, p. 6
18. Cliffords, *Invasion*, p. 6
19. *Women's Journal,* April 2, 1870.
20. Tyler, Helen E. *Where Prayer And Purpose Meet: the WCTU Story, 1874-1949.* Evanston, Ill.: Signal Press, 1949.
21. Mezvinsky, Norton. "Scientific Temperance Instruction in the Schools." *History of Education Quarterly* 1, no. 1 (1961): pp. 48-56.
22. *Banner*, September 1889.
23. *Annual Report of the Vermont Woman's Suffrage Association and Minutes of the 19th Convention.*

Barton, Vermont, June 9 and 10, 1903.

24. *Twenty-first annual report of Vermont Woman's Suffrage Association* and *Minutes of the Annual Convention at Springfield, Vermont, 1905*. Retrieved from University of Vermont Libraries Digital Collections.
25. *Minutes of the Suffrage Convention of St. Johnsbury*, Nov. 8 and 9, 1883. Retrieved from University of Vermont Libraries Digital Collections.
26. *Daily Journal* (Montpelier) Nov. 25, 1884.
27. *Daily Journal* (Montpelier), Nov. 9, 1896.
28. *Woman's Journal*, 1903, p. 240.
29. *Herald and News***,** Jan. 8, 1917.
30. "Women and the Ballot," Letter to the Editor, *Banner*, May 25, 1914, p. 2.
31. Quoted in the *Rutland Daily Herald*, July 13, 1915, p. 4.
32. Quoted by Marilyn Blackwell, *Enosburgh Historical Society Newsletter*, July, 2020.
33. *Rutland Herald*, Nov. 29, 1909, p. 4.
34. Tony Marro, "Biographical Sketch of Anna Hawks Putnam." Included in *Biographical Database of NAWSA Suffragists, 1890-1920*.
35. *The Vermonter*: Volume 15, January 1910, and *Rutland Daily Herald*, Nov.16, 1909
36. *The Vermonter*: Volume 15, January 1910.
37. *The Advance*, April 29, 1916.
38. *Banner*, Jan. 17, 1917.
39. A Settlement House was a home for poor immigrants who lived together and took part in cultural and social activities together.
39. Tony Marro, "John Spargo: The Socialist Founder of the Bennington Museum," *Walloomsack Review,* Volume 15, *Spring 2015.*
40. *Banner,* March 13, 1920.
41. Obituary, New York Times, Feb. 18, 1953.
42. *Brattleboro Reformer,* Nov. 5, 1920.



Hiland and Dolly Hall

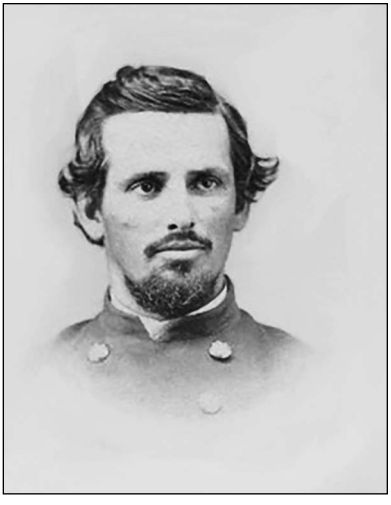
Nathaniel B. Hall

Hatty Bostwick Hall

3,000 letters that relive an earlier generation

Margarette Beckwith

Photographs provided by the author.



Left: ***Young Hattie.***

Above: ***Nathaniel B. Hall in his Civil War uniform.***

In 1978, a dusty leather trunk was discovered in the rafters of a barn near Jackson, Michigan. Out of sight for many years, it contained nearly 3,000 letters in stamped envelopes, bundled with black, waxed cord. In one of the letters, eleven-year-old Hatty writes to her father, N.B. Hall, Field Marshall in the 14th Vermont Regiment during the Rebellion:

Bennington Nov 7th 1862

My dear Papa.

I received a letter from you to-day. I suppose you think it strange that I have not written to you, but it is not because I do not think of you, for I do think of you, Pa. I do think of you a great many times a day and it is very lonesome at home with out you…..

Five little girls, beside myself, are having a sewing society. We are working for the soldiers. Hemming handkerchiefs, making neckties, and slippers, and pulling lint. These things are for the sick soldiers and I hope you will never need any of them. The names of the little girls,

belonging to this society are Gracie

Eddy, Katie Root, Katie Cockson, Mary White, Fanny Loring, and Hatty Hall, your oldest daughter. They have made me president, and are going to meet, at our house the next time.

.....

Mama is well and Dolly is lying in her lap playing with kitty. Harry is well and David and Ellen too.

It has been snowing to-day and Harry and I are expecting to have fine times, to-morrow sliding down hill for to-morrow is Saturday and school does not keep.

I should like the fun of being with you a little while in camp. I should like camp-life very much for a little time, I think.

Do you like Dick, {her father's horse} as well as ever and can he jump as high.

Mama sends love and a kiss and says she would much prefer to give you the kiss her self. And David if he was here would say "give my best respects to Mr. Hall." I love you very dearly and long for the time to come when I can see you again. I must bid you good night, papa.

From your daughter,
Hatty

The letters dating from 1842 to 1906 were collected and preserved by the Hall family and descendants. They chronicle much of their lives, experiences and relationships, and include letters of the Bostwick and Park families, in addition to those of friends and associates whose correspondence was a part of this cache. Over time, members of the family moved

The Patriarch of the Hall family

When he cast his vote, at the age of 90, to approve a final design for the Bennington Battle Monument, Hiland Hall capped an active sixty-year career in the public interest. As he anticipated, he did not live to see the memorial he had created.

Hiland Hall (1795-1885) was a remarkable native son of North Bennington. He was a member of Congress for the decade 1832-42, served two terms as Vermont governor, was a Supreme Court judge, and spanned the continent as chair of the California Land Commission during the Gold Rush. As the primary advocate of a "massive and lofty" monument to commemorate the Battle of Bennington, he had a permanent impact on the landscape of southwestern Vermont.

Importantly for history, Hall wrote a 500-page still-respected early history of Vermont, from its settlement to statehood in 1791. It was published in 1868. A central theme was his support for the controversial actions of Governor Benning Wentworth of New Hampshire, who chartered some 163 towns in the territory now known as Vermont. Hall's dedication to writing about the past began when he wrote a series of columns about the Green Mountain Boys for a new Whig newspaper, the *State Banner*, which he helped to establish in 1841.

Hall and his wife Dolly Tuttle Davis lived during his long retirement in the grand North Bennington mansion built by his son-in-law, Trenor Park. They had two daughters and six sons. The letters described on these pages are those of the family of his son John.

Hiland Hall and his wife, Dollie Tuttle Davis Hall.

west from Bennington, Vermont, to Dexter and Jackson, Michigan.

In 1979, the trunk of letters was delivered to my parents home in Stockbridge. On a twelve-foot pine kitchen table, my mother (Harriet Hall (Kennedy) Beckwith) began the process of arranging the letters by date and writer. Even now, some of the acid-free file folders bear her distinctive handwriting in red Pentel, and the notes remind me of her enthusiasm for the project. Hatty Hall Kennedy was her grandmother, author of the letter at the beginning of this piece.

Years after my mother's death, I sifted through the letters. As I drew each one from the folder and transcribed it onto the computer, I felt as though I were slipping gently into the nineteenth century, closer to the world of this affectionate family. Gradually, I became acquainted with them, their friends, relationships, personalities, histories, and foibles. I located photographs from old albums and searched on-line. I discovered photos of comrades from the Civil War, and the business people mentioned in the documents. To understand some of their travels, I made small maps and slipped them into the margins of the page. I looked up clothing styles, carriages, diseases, and cures. And like any epic, the episodes rolled out, and I became eager for the next installment: a message from Aunt Sarah in Newark wanting to see her niece and the new baby; a description of travel by train from Jackson to Bennington in which a packed lunch of fried chicken would be consumed en route, and sometimes shared with strangers, including some young women heading to Vassar.

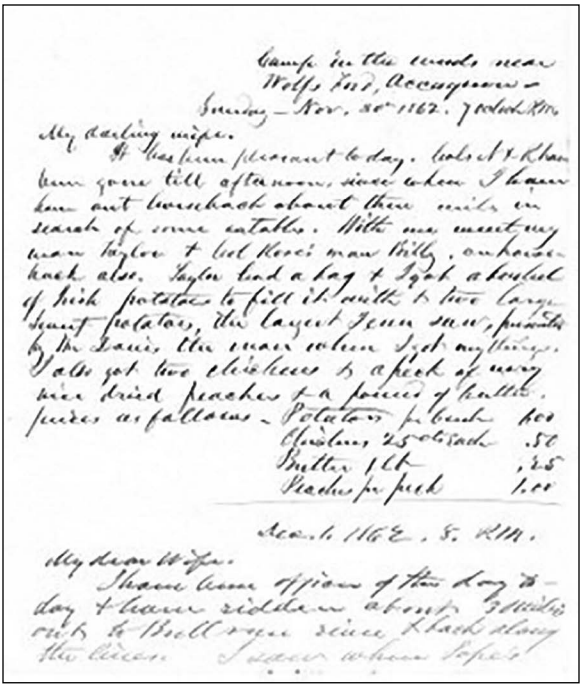
Among these were N.B.'s letters from Gettysburg and Camp in the Woods, near Wolfs Ford, Occoquan. I read of his traveling via steamer across the Gulf of Mexico via Panama to San Francisco; of bouts of seasickness and ports of call including Aspinwall, where he saw "half dressed men & women [on the streets] almost naked children, pigs, pups, buzzards

& fighting cocks." At the same time, N.B.'s brother, John Hall, was also in California and describes his view from horseback, watching seals barking atop house-sized boulders, shoving each other and tumbling into the foaming California surf. Letters from Titusville, Pennsylvania, describe the newly established oil-fields and explore friendships and experiences in that boom-town. Others include accounts of the health problems suffered by Hatty's mother, Martha, and her months of therapy at the Castle-on-the Hill in Dansville. And when Hatty and Charlie begin their family at the Naval Academy at Annapolis, the families exchange letters that reflect the pleasure of visiting grandchildren. Deeply personal letters reveal anxiety for brother John when divorce leads to fears he will lose his children. I was relieved to read the lively account of a stake-out and of the guilty night visitor's early-morning attempted flight. John's wife was at the door in her night dress! His innocence is proved and he was able to keep his children.

Hattie picking sweetpeas.

There were letters from father Hiland about a visit to his son, Charles, who was beginning a new life and establishing a branch of North Bennington Shoe and Boot Company in Chicago. The letter was dated October 10, 1871, a day after the Great Fire. Hiland describes the city in ashes, he writes of "the great calamity [that befell] the city" and of the business records and inventory lost in the blaze.

Over the ten years of transcribing the letters, the allure of discovery never left me. New events sparked my interest and drew me to the next letter or Google search. I wondered, who were those friends – James Canfield, John Archbold, and Col. W. G.Veazey? What was their relation to the family? Where could I find their pictures? I couldn't help identifying with long-dead family members and enjoying their friendships as if I were there. In the end, I knew many of them almost intimately: the loneliness of Aunt Sarah; the religious fervor of brother Henry; or the charity and generosity of sister Laura; and the caring father, historian and consummate letter writer, Hiland Hall. Was this connection genetic? Were these likes, dislikes, and values just family patterns that had been passed on through



Civil War letter from Nathaniel B. Hall.

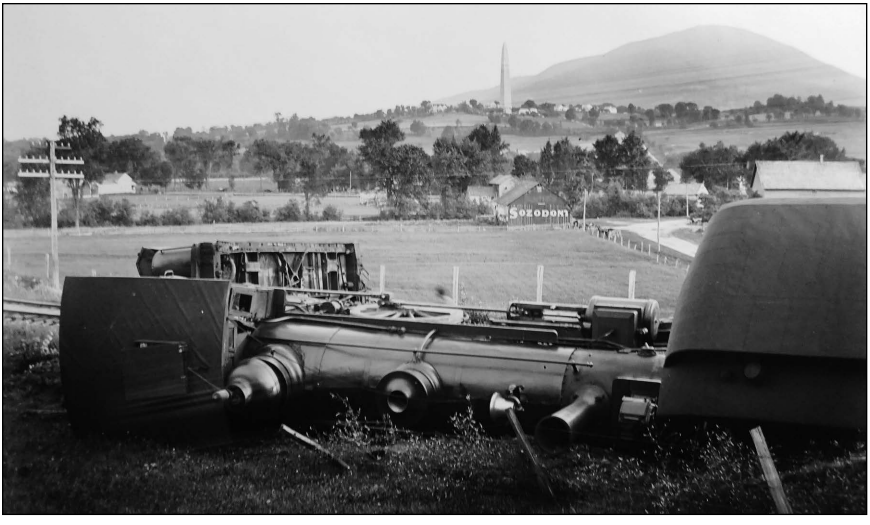
the generations? Or were they ties I was establishing as I transcribed their words?

One afternoon, I came across a photograph of Hatty, taken early 1900s, as she was tending the plant she loved, the flowering sweet pea. Wearing a long cotton house dress and sun hat, she is perhaps, "dead-heading" the tall trellised plant, picking a bunch of blossoms for the table or weaving a rogue tendril into place.

As a landscape architect, I have never specified or grown sweet peas, but as I looked at the picture I wanted to grow them. When a friend offered me some seeds, I was eager to get out the peat pots and push the seeds into the warm soil. The seedlings now are in the planter on my deck. By summer, I hope to have an array of dark red blossoming vines and will inhale the delicious fragrance as my great grandmother did. I feel the same pleasure when I take out the large soup spoons engraved "H. E. Rouse" in flourishing letters. They belonged to Hatty's grandmother, another Harriet, who died when her mother, Martha, was yet a child.

I am grateful to my ancestors for protecting and preserving this collection of letters, for allowing me the chance to get to know them, and I am grateful for the time I have had to transcribe the letters, to provide a new dimension to my life and to continue preserving these documents for family and others. ▯

***Affectionately Yours: Hall Family & Friends, Conversations in Letters**, Vol 1, 1842-1867; 400 p.*
***Affectionately Yours: Hall Family & Friends, Conversations in Letters**, Vol 2, 1868-1906; 388 p.*
***Letters from Hattie: A Young Woman's Conversations with Mother and Family**, Vol 1, 1858-1874; 183 p.*
***Letters from Hattie: A Young Woman's Conversations with Mother and Family**, Vol 2, 1874-1889; 290 p.*
Copies of the transcribed letters, in spiral bindings, are located in the Bennington Museum Library, the Jackson Genealogic Society, and are available from: Margarette Beckwith, 4358 Kehr Road, Oxford, OH 45056 or mbeckwith@beckwithchapman.com



The Rutland Railroad locomotive after it derailed and overturned upon striking the auto. Courtesy of Wills Agency, Bennington, Vermont

Vermont's first auto fatality

Collision at Pike's Crossing

Philip R. Jordan ©

One little-known facet of Vermont history is that the state's first recorded automobile collision fatality occurred in Bennington, at a highway crossing of the Rutland Railroad.

Killed in a collision with one of the Rutland's so-called shuttle passenger trains between North Bennington and Bennington were Harris Lindsley, third deputy police commissioner of New York City and his fiancee, Evelyn P. Willing of Chicago, who were to be married the next week. They were passengers in a large, open touring auto traveling between Williamstown, Massachusetts, and Manchester, Vermont. A chauffeur and another man (A. Cramer, Evelyn Willing's nephew) were in the front seat.

It appears that the highway crossing involved an appreciable rise to meet the level of the tracks and that the chauffer may have sped up in order to make the hill. The train coming from North Bennington was descending a grade and may have been moving at a brisk clip as well.

The collision occurred on what is today Route 7-A at Pike's Crossing, at 4 p.m. on August 14, 1905, and was reported in the pages of the *New York Times*: "The locomotive and one car were running backward . . . the shock of the collision threw both the locomotive and car off the rails, the

locomotive overturning and rolling ten or fifteen feet. The engineer and firemen jumped and were unhurt. The fifteen passengers also escaped injury."

A studio photograph taken after the collision, showing locations of the bodies of the two victims. Also visible are remains of the diamond-shaped railroad crossing sign and the overturned front of the auto.
Courtesy of John Schaub

Lindsley and Miss Willing, seated exactly where the locomotive's tender struck the vehicle, were reported to have died instantly. Their auto was thrown about 60 feet through the air and caught fire afterward, being completely destroyed. Miss Willing was reported to have spent summers in Manchester for several years. Her mother was the daughter of Judge Mark Skinner, for whom the Mark Skinner Library was named. The library was also where the unfortunate couples' bodies were laid in state while funeral arrangements were made.

Lindsley's body was later transported by train to New York City, where it was taken with military and police escort on August 17 to the Twelfth Regiment Armory to lie in state. Interment was in Manchester's Dellwood

Graves of the prominent victims of Vermont's first auto fatality rest in the Dellwood Cemetery in Manchester.
Manchester Historical Society

Cemetery, beside his fiancée in the Willing family plot.

A public hearing and investigation into the cause of the accident was held in Bennington, following a site visit, on Nov. 21, 1905. It was led by Vermont's three railroad commissioners, Fuller C. Smith, H.S. Bingham and George T. Howard. Present also were the Bennington County state's attorney, H. H. Power, with P. M. Meldon representing the Rutland Railroad, plus three men representing the estates of the deceased. The commissioners found the following, as stated in their biennial report:

> *On the 14th day of August Harris Lindsley and Evelyn P. Willing were on the road from Bennington to Manchester, riding in an open automobile driven by one J. A. Adamson. The fourth occupant of the automobile was A. Cramer. The machine approached Pike's Crossing, so called, at a rapid rate of speed just as passenger train 366, North Bennington to Bennington, approached from the west. A collision occurred on the crossing and Lindsley and Miss Willing were instantly killed. Adamson and Cramer escaped with slight injuries.*
>
> *Engineer William Sibley and conductor M. J. Belden were also slightly injured by the derailment of the train. The testimony of several witnesses who saw the automobile approach the crossing established beyond any doubt the fact the machine was running at a high rate of speed and that the occupants were, all of them, unaware of the approach of the train. Several witnesses, independent of the train crew, testified that the whistle was sounded for the crossing. The engine, in accordance with the usual practice of running this train, was backing towards Bennington.*
>
> *There was no pilot* (i.e., watchman posted) *on the tender and the view of the crossing from the engineer's position in the cab was obstructed to a certain degree by the tender and by the fact that backing the engine placed the engineer upon the inside of the curve and upon the side opposite from which the automobile was approaching. It was clearly apparent that if the engine had been headed* (i.e., front first*) toward Bennington and if the engineer had been upon the watch as he approached this crossing he would have seen the danger in time to have appreciatively slowed the speed of the train and the automobile would have passed over in safety.*
>
> *But the occupants of the automobile were in fault for approaching the crossing without stopping, looking and*

listening . . . from testimony of the chauffeur himself the machine was running at least twenty miles per hour and as it approached the crossing there is a considerable rise in the highway and the speed of the machine was increased to make this rise. The chauffer was not licensed to operate an automobile in Vermont and was exceeding the limit of speed permitted by section 8 of Act. No. 86 of the laws of 1904.

The Rutland Railroad Company at the time of the accident was operating its train in an unsafe manner. To draw a train with the engine backing is a dangerous practice and is excusable only in cases of necessity. But the Rutland Railroad Company from choice has elected to so operate the engine on this train for more than two years past. There are facilities at North Bennington for turning the engine but upon the plea of the congested yards the 'Y' has been used for storing cars and not left open for the uses for which it was originally intended.

In the judgment of the commissioners no adequate reason exists why the Rutland Railroad Company should not turn its engine at North Bennington and run its train on the Bennington branch as they do upon the main line with the engine head-on.

The commissioners concluded that the accident happened primarily due to carelessness on the part of the chauffeur, and also by operation of the train in an improper manner. As a result of their meeting in Montpelier on December 26, 1905, the commissioners ordered the Rutland to operate all of its trains on the branch with the engine running ahead, facing forward, as of January 10, 1906.

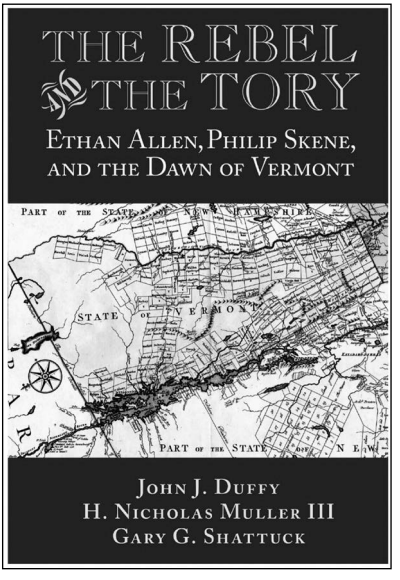
As more and more automobiles appeared on Vermont roads in the

The location of Vermont's first fatality is marked today by a railroad bridge at the foot of Harwood Hill in Bennington. It still sees an occasional mishap.
Bennington Banner

years that followed, many other incidents have occurred at Pike's Crossing at the foot of Harwood Hill. On September 10, 1913, state public service commissioners held a hearing on this subject in Bennington. The railroad had entered a petition to move the road and build a new crossing, but the town (which, in concert with the state, had recently constructed a new highway, today known as Route 7-A) prevailed, countering with a petition to have a railroad overpass built on the crossing site. The commissioners wrote in their report: "We find that said Pike's Crossing is one of the most dangerous upon the line of the Rutland Railroad Company and that public safety requires that said crossing be eliminated."

The Rutland was summarily ordered to construct an overpass with a steel girder bridge by July 1, 1914, with the state paying 25 percent of the costs, the town of Bennington 10 percent, and the Rutland the remaining 65 percent. The bridge remains to this day. Its abutments have scraped the fenders of many errant autos over the ensuing years, and its rusty girders, acting like giant can openers, have been the bane of semi-truck drivers hauling long trailers, who don't observe the 12-foot "low clearance" warning signs. One might wonder if those big rig drivers ironically consider this bridge, the one that replaced the notorious Pike's Crossing 100 years ago, as one of the most dangerous on the highway! □

This article first appeared in the spring 2014 issue of the Rutland Newsliner*, journal of the Rutland Railroad Historical Society*



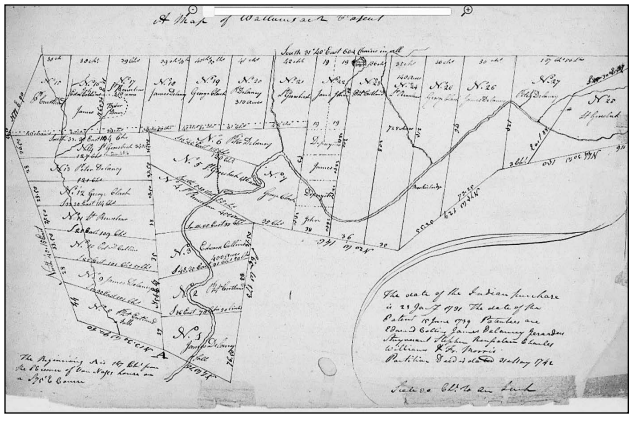
New visions of the dawn of Vermont

Reviewed by Bob Hoar

In a stylistic continuation of their *Inventing Ethan Allen* book, this coterie of established Vermont historians has now expanded their critique to that of the Vermont myth. Their previous offering (2014) dealt with a series of topics relating the Ethan Allen story that included a thoroughly damning historiography of those who created the Ethan-Allen-centric Vermont view, which caused the reviewer (Jennifer H. Brown) in this publication to take their quote about Allen slightly out of context: "Allen, despite legend, 'played no direct role in establishing the State of Vermont.'"

In *The Rebel and the Tory*, with its subtitle "the Dawn of Vermont," the creation of Vermont, an epic colonial-era story, is narrowed according to the New York legal view of the disputed territory, and set in context of a failed plan for a military colony under Major Philip Skene, to replace frontier forts at the conclusion of the French and Indian war. Unfortunately, this vision and critique of Vermont history and historians through a New York lens, does not constitute Vermont history, although it was published by the Vermont Historical Society. Here is why:

Vermont was settled by people from Massachusetts, Connecticut, and



The Walloomsac Patent map of 1739. Using the Rebel and Tory book plus this map has revived an understanding of the "Birthplace of Vermont" events, also referred to as the Ejectment Trials. N.Y. State Archives Digital Collection, courtesy of White Creek town historian Ted Rice

New Hampshire who had long anticipated settlements there as the land was a part of New England and not New York. After the initial settlements began under New Hampshire title in 1761, that is when New York revived its claim, and subsequently the King's rulings put the area into a legal limbo. What happened next was a series of confrontations between the settlers and the New Yorkers who counterclaimed the land and brought ejectment suits against the Vermonters in Albany starting in 1770.

This new book sheds much light upon this understudied topic. The book's appendix contains previously unknown documents that have opened up a whole new understanding of southern Vermont's lost colonial-era legacy. The book is useful and groundbreaking, but I disagree with many conclusions and find the authors in error, the way they have found most Vermont historians in error.

Much of the new evidence contained in this book is focused upon events that happened in Bennington and Shaftsbury. These depositions and reports by the New Yorkers have expanded what we knew happened on Murphy Road in Bennington at James Breakenridge's farm and the nearby Henry Bridge. One historian has already used the book to great effect. Unlike the authors of the book, who overlooked any meaning that could be found by using a map of the contested Walloomsac Patent and the lot numbers referred to, it has been discovered that these events were more numerous than thought, and happened in several locations other than just the Murphy Road.

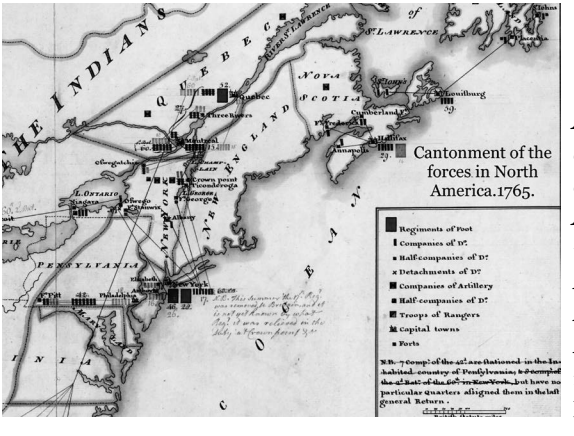
Most importantly, the book uncovered that the initial confrontation over the disputed twenty-mile line was very animated and led to Breakenridge becoming the focus of the ejectments. But no effort was made to locate the event. Relying on others, the authors assumed it all happened on Murphy Road despite their holding the key evidence. The tale now goes that Breakenridge stopped the New York surveyors *at the border*, possibly

at the present location of the three-story brick State Line House on Route 67 in Shaftsbury. Here, Breakenridge, the day after Jedediah Dewey warned the Yorkers and a 500-signature petition of appeal to New Hampshire was created, stopped the surveyors and threatened that "He would rather spill his heart's blood than to see his land divided."

The book held out the promise to expand our understanding of Major John Small. Small was asserted by the authors to be a close ally of Philip Skene in his military colony plan. Small is the key to connect the Ejectment Trials with Skene. Some evidence was brought forward, but: a look into the Patent he was granted in Shaftsbury leads to a critically important issue. In the Ejectment Trials, Isaiah Carpenter of Shaftsbury was the initial focus, before Breakenridge. Carpenter had chased off Major Small's tenant and the New Yorkers considered Carpenter on Small's land.

First of all, Carpenter may not have had any papers for the pitch of land he occupied in Shaftsbury as the original proprietors received one lot in each of five divisions, only one having been done at the time. A look into the meeting between Governor Moore of New York and the Shaftsbury settlers assigns the plots, based upon both the New York grants and the original lot divisions by the Shaftsbury settlers themselves. There is good reason to believe that Carpenter was not on Major Small's patent, and strong evidence that Small was claiming or buying a little extra-choice land in town. He may have been doing this with Ebenezer Cole of Shaftsbury as a sort of partner, or having bought the other military grants in town.

"Formerly granted under New Hampshire as the pretended town of Shaftsbury," it was in fact re-granted by New York as the Ebenezer Cole Tract. This would have been key evidence at the trials for the early Vermonters, if they had it at the time of the trials. If Carpenter was not on Small's land, Carpenter's actions and statements make sense and New York becomes the aggressor.

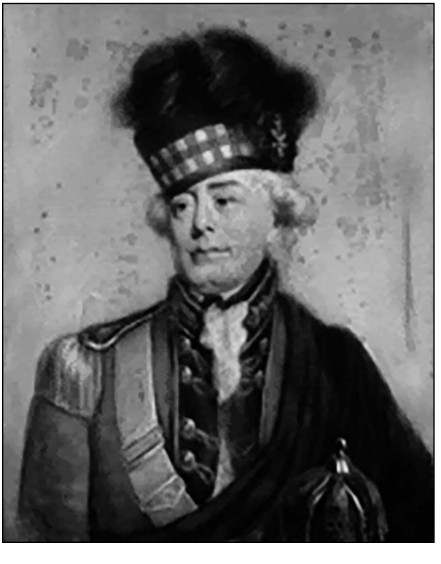


A 1765 map by Paterson of the Cantonment of British Forces in America. If Vermont was not a part of New England, but a part of New York, why would British military maps not include this fact? Library of Congress

The Carpenter homestead in Shaftsbury. Still standing today, this relic of the feud between Vermont and New York has a sweeping view of the landscape that may have been both necessary and useful to early settlers.
Shaftsbury Historical Society

The book, it is said, was initiated by a question the authors had about who the Vermonters used as a lawyer at the famous Ejectment Trials. The intriguing quote from Ira Allen is about an "Ingersoll, an eminent lawyer from Connecticut." Whether Ingersoll was actually at the trials is another question. There seems to have been no look into David Ingersoll or other choices besides Jared Ingersoll. The book dismisses the others with the quote that Jared was the "only possibility" to be connected with the Trials despite the book's being an investigation into this unproven fact. It turns out that David Ingersoll, a cousin of Jared and also a lawyer, lived in western Massachusetts and was the central figure in that state's totally similar confrontation with New York over the twenty-mile line. He and Ethan Allen even lived in the same town of Sheffield in Massachusetts.

This book is written in a critical style that presents not an unbiased view of Ethan Allen or popular colonial movements. Hiland Hall, in his many overlapping treatments of Vermont history, tried to explain to us here in the future what happened between Vermont and New York. His writings are complex and also importantly chronological; not to tell the story like that is a common



Major John Small, the enigmatic British officer who owned a grant in Shaftsbury and was assigned plots of land there. It has been asserted that he represented British military and New York interests by appearing in uniform at the Ejectment Trials, or not.
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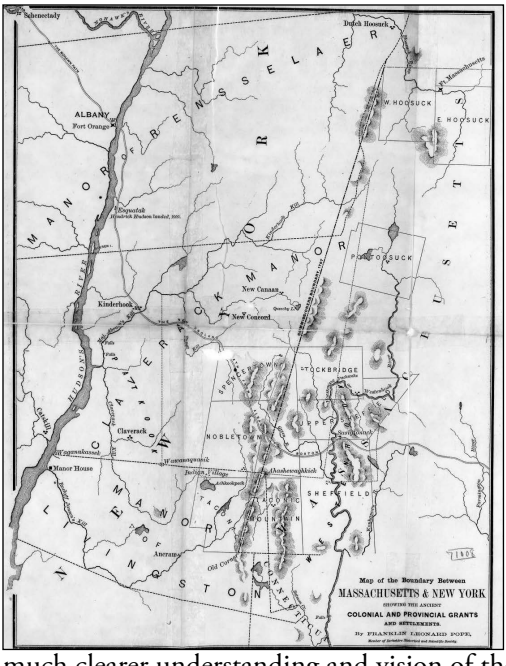


Franklin Leonard Pope's map of the boundary between Massachusetts and New York in colonial times. This border saw many more armed confrontations and casualties than in Vermont, but most remember only Vermont's – and the Green Mountain Boys.
Library of Congress

error with writing about the Ejectment Trials.

If the Ejectment Trials begin with the events before the trial in 1769, when the town unified under a petition and met the New York officials at the border, we have a much clearer understanding and vision of the origins of Vermont. Not all happening a mile or so into Bennington at James Breakenridge's farm is a big difference, because it has been hard to interpret the "Birthplace of Vermont" happening where the granite marker now is, further from the contested twenty-mile line.

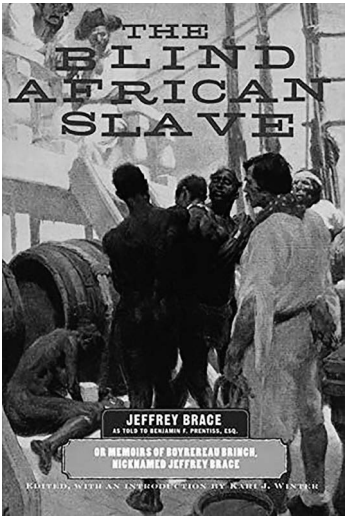
I think Shaftsbury was about to become a Tory town in 1769 and Isaiah Carpenter was evicted whether or not his house was on Small's land – which it wasn't. Major John Small may hold the key between General Gates's inner circle of friends, Philip Skene and the planned colony, but we have not put the key evidence together yet. I don't know if David Ingersoll was the Vermont lawyer vs. New York claims or if Jared was. David does appear to be a major leader for Massachusetts on the road between Albany and Boston on the twenty-mile line. An Ethan Allen, almost.

Southern Vermont's colonial-era legacy is based specifically on having defeated the New York claims to the land on behalf of New Englanders; on taking Fort Ticonderoga just after the Revolutionary hostilities began (thus saving Boston with the captured cannon); in effect seizing Philip Skene's land; then defeating Skene and his borrowed Germans and Indians at the Battle of Bennington. *That* is Vermont history, not the new and still useful *Dawn of Vermont* by Duffy, Muller and Shattuck. □

The Rebel and the Tory: Ethan Allen, Philip Skene, and the Dawn of Vermont, by John J. Duffy, H. Nicholas Muller, and Gary G. Shattuck, published 2020 by the Vermont Historical Society. Paperback, 327 pp.

The Blind African Slave, Updated

Reviewed by J. F. Kennedy



The first reprint in 2004 of *The Blind African Slave* in nearly two hundred years is the story of Jeffrey Brace as told to abolitionist attorney Benjamin Franklin Prentiss. The original document was printed in 1810 by a teenage apprentice, Harry Whitney, at the *Franklin County Advertiser* newspaper in St. Albans. It was re-discovered in a glass case at the University of Vermont Bailey-Howe Library by Kari J. Winter when she was an assistant professor of English there. In her words it described what Brace told Prentiss:

> *In brief,* The Blind African Slave *recounts the story of Brace's birth in West Africa around 1742, capture by slave traders in 1758, transportation to Barbados, service in the Seven Years War, enslavement in Connecticut, service in the American Revolution, and eventual freedom in Vermont where, despite many severe struggles with racism and poverty, he married an African widow named Susan (Susannah) Dublin, raised a family, worked as a farmer and laborer, and became a part of a multiracial evangelical network of antislavery agitators.*

A little more detail will highlight Brace's struggles as a slave and freeman in the Caribbean, the Atlantic Coast, and New England. He narrated to Prentiss the horrors of the middle passage; of slaves packed like sardines in the ship's hold; the near starvation diet; the cruelty of the crew; rape; and death from disease and starvation. Once in Barbados, he was half starved and beaten into submission in what he called "the house of subjection" for three months. He was then sold to Captain Isaac Mills of Milford, Connecticut, who commanded a 44-gun frigate operating as a privateer in the Seven Years War. Mills nicknamed Brace "Jeffrey" after Jeffrey Amherst, because he displayed "more courage than prudence." Brace participated with Mills in the capture of a Spanish warship and the horrendous siege and capture of Havana. He described Mills as unflappable under fire and beloved by his crew.

After the war in late 1763, Mills sold Brace to John Burwell in Milford, who Brace described as a "professed puritan" and complained, how could he "pray for all mankind" and then starve, beat, and torture "a poor negro boy?" After a neighbor, Samuel Eals, chastised Burwell for abusing Brace so badly, Burwell sold him to another sadistic puritan, and so began a series of transfers from one abusive master to another. According to Kari Winter, the fact that Brace was sold several times within a few months of his purchase suggests that he was determined not to make peace with masters he despised.

This acrid procession ended in 1768 when Brace was finally purchased by the widow Mary Stiles of Woodbury, Connecticut, about twenty miles north of New Haven. Mary was a godsend for Brace. She taught him to read and introduced him to merciful side of Christianity through bible readings. To Brace the widow Stiles was ". . . one of the finest women in the world . . ." Such praise was unique in Brace's narrative, as he was not shy to criticize.

Hopeful for manumission, Brace enlisted in the Continental Army in 1777 and completed more than five years of service until 1783. During the war he suffered a wounded leg and lost part of a finger in battle. Another time he barely escaped death or capture when posted as a lookout behind enemy lines. Quoting Lieutenant Daniel Booge in an 1818 sworn deposition, " . . . there was no better soldier." But Mary's son Benjamin Stiles, who was his master, was reluctant to free him until one year after the war in 1784, when he finally relented due to Brace's persistent pleas and growing public pressure.

Soon after his emancipation, Brace moved to Vermont, which at the time was an independent republic that had outlawed slavery. To seek his fortune, he labored by contracts, some of which were broken. Yet in spite of a few crooks, he eventually saved enough to buy land in Poultney, which he set to work clearing and farming. He also found a regular job at a tavern in Dorset, where he met Susannah Dublin who became his wife.

The Braces' ne'er-do-well neighbor Jery Goram coveted his land, and over time, pulled all kinds of shabby stunts to obtain it by driving them out. Once he pulled down the Braces' fence and released his cattle into their crops, causing a heavy loss. Then he tapped their maple trees, stole their prize ram, and got the town to bind out two of their children for indentured servitude.

After years of this harassment, Brace began to look for opportunities elsewhere. His old friend and advisor, Matthew Lyon, the congressman and entrepreneur from nearby Fair Haven, asked Brace join him in a move to Kentucky. Fearing possible re-enslavement there, Brace declined and moved

instead to northern Vermont, first to Sheldon, and then in 1804 to the little town of Georgia, where he got to work farming with his son-in-law. In 1807 Susannah passed away after a brief illness.

Prentiss was an unsuccessful lawyer who was appalled by the injustice of slavery. In the months leading up to October of 1810 when *The Blind African Slave* was published, Brace narrated to Prentiss his experience as a slave and freeman. Unfortunately, soon after the book was published by the *Franklin County Advertiser*, the paper went out of business, so the book went out of print almost immediately. Brace's and Prentiss' hopes of enough commercial success to inform the public were dashed.

It appears that Prentiss fell into poverty soon after. He and his wife joined six other families in the home of Luther Witcomb in the town of Milton. They were all "warned out" of Milton by the selectboard in June 1811. Why? Was it due to inability to pay bills; or were they engaged in some sort of scandalous social experiment, perhaps interracial? As with most "warnings out," the record does not specify. After this Prentiss disappeared without verifiable trace, probably migrating west.

In the final chapter of *The Blind African Slave*, Brace told how he was baptized in the town of Georgia by full immersion. Then he joined a Free-Will Baptist evangelist, Elder Charles Bowles, on several revival tours in northern Vermont. A chapter in an 1852 biography of Bowles by Elder John W. Lewis is devoted to Brace. Lewis quoted one of the faithful: "Said one brother, to hear Elder Bowles preach, and Brother Jeffrey Brace talk, was enough to make abolitionists of the whole community."

Kari Winter is currently a professor of American Studies and director of the Gender Institute at the State University of New York at Buffalo. She uncovered much evidence supporting Brace's story from military pension records; town records for St. Albans, Poultney, Georgia, and Milton; and manumission records from Barbados. She has written that hidden and under-published history revealing injustice in the past can shed light on the inequities of the present and stimulate a dialog to help resolve today's improprieties without threatening the foundations of liberty. □

The Blind African Slave, or Memoirs of Boyrereau Brinch, Nicknamed Jeffrey Brace, by Benjamin Franklin Prentiss, Esq., St. Albans, Vermont,1810. Edited with introduction by Kari J. Winter, University of Wisconsin Press, 2004.