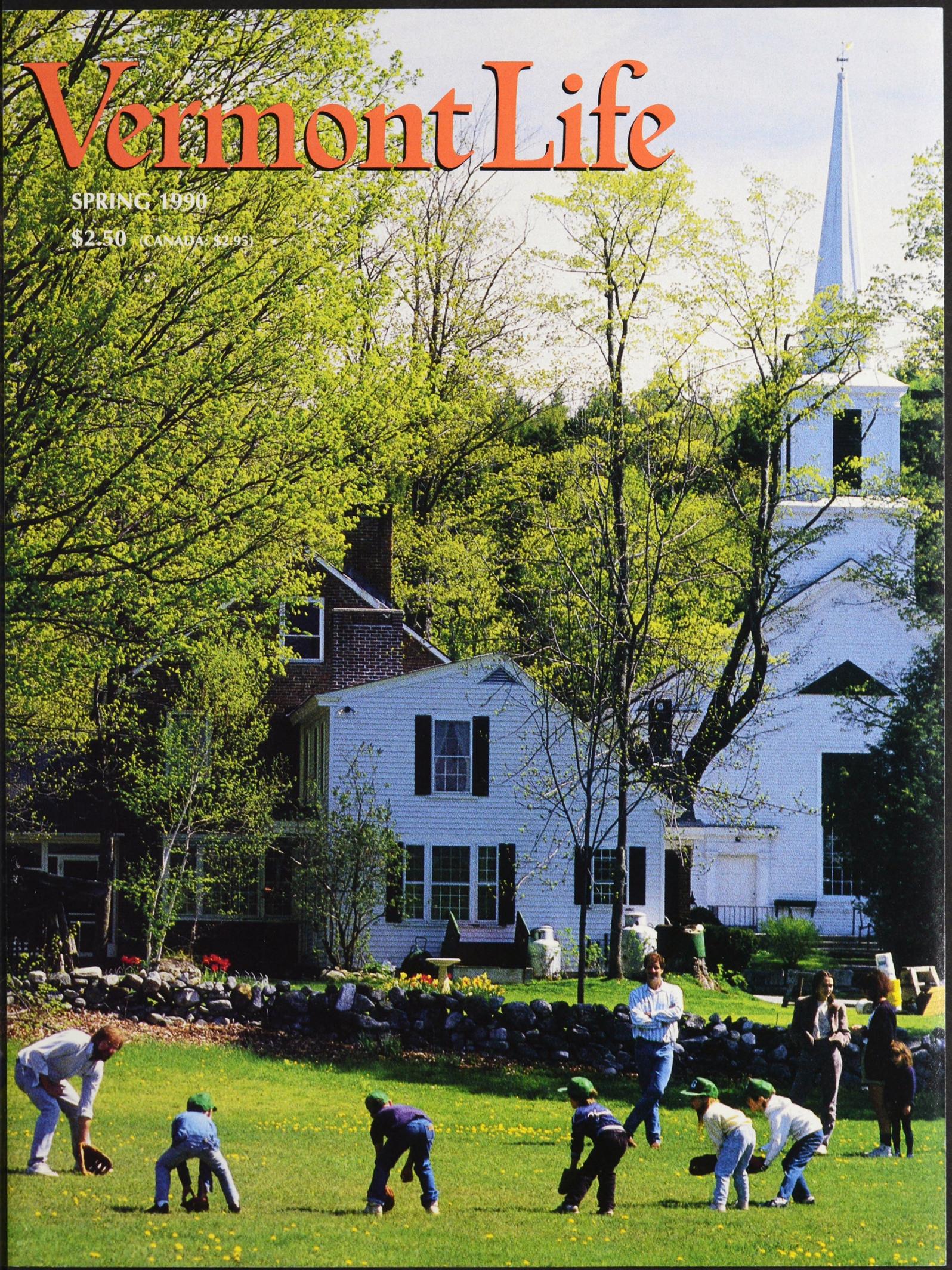


Vermont Life

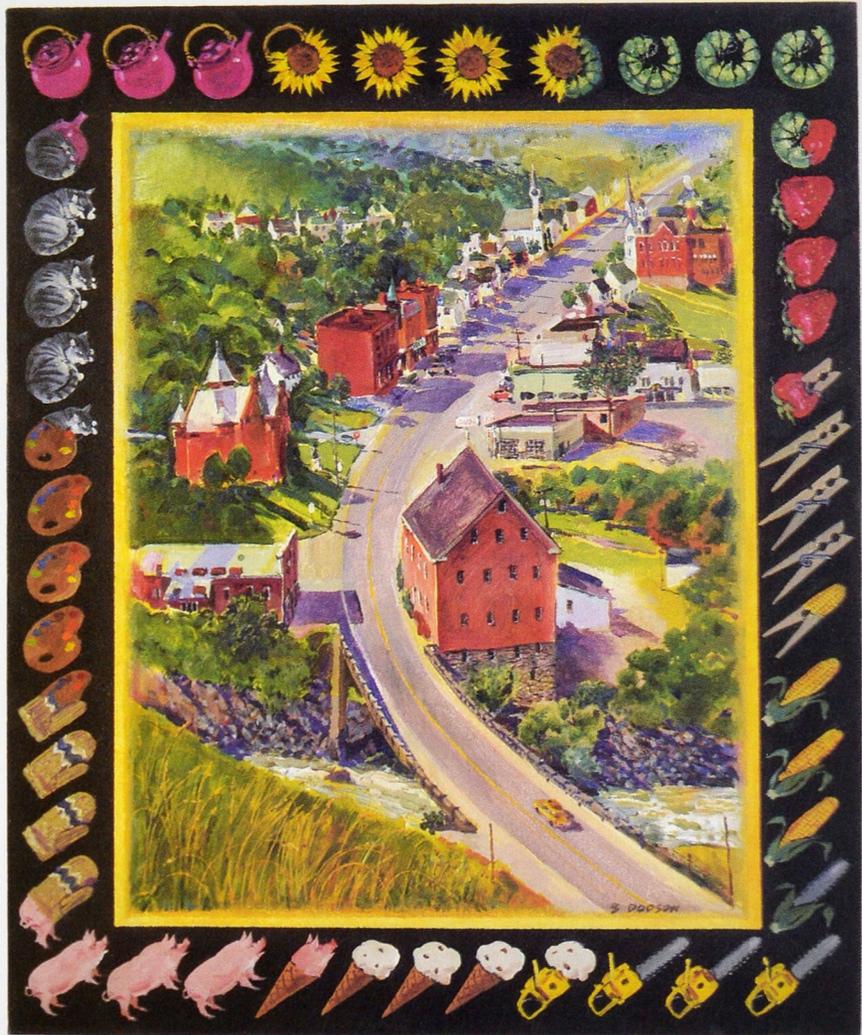
SPRING 1990

\$2.50 (CANADA: \$2.95)



PRIVATE VIEW

Artist Bert Dodson painted "Entering Bradford 1977" as part of a show of 18 Vermont artists' works on the subject of place and its significance in the lives of Vermonters. Dodson's painting shows him as he first came to Vermont, "another pilgrim from suburbia." The show, entitled "Memory Maps," has toured Vermont and can be seen through March at the Governor's Reception Room in the Pavilion Office Building, Montpelier.



Photograph by Mats Nordström

Editor: Tom Slayton
Managing Editor: Linda Dean Paradee
Assistant Editor: John Lazenby
Art Director: Mallory Lake Graphic Design
Assistant to the Editors: Alberta Mattson
Photo Consultant: Norman MacIver
Proofreader: Helen Benedict

Circulation and Marketing: Andrew Jackson
Business Manager: C. Fred Sullivan
Accountant: Julie George
Account Rep.: Lisa Batchelder
Circulation and Marketing Assistant: Anneke Edson
Shipping Manager: Raymond G. Edson

Vermont Life Advisory Board:
 Douglas Bernardini, William S. Blair, Paul Bruhn,
 J. Duncan Campbell, Laura Carlsmith,
 James Lawrence, Nicola C. Marro,
 Stephen C. Terry

VERMONT LIFE Magazine is published quarterly by the STATE OF VERMONT

Madeleine M. Kunin, **Governor**

Published at Montpelier, Vermont, by the Agency of Development and Community Affairs

Jeffrey Francis, **Secretary**

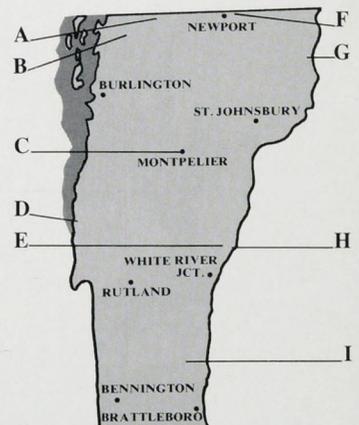
Single Issue: \$2.50

One-Year Subscription Rates: \$9.00 in U.S.A., \$13.00 Foreign Delivery

VERMONT LIFE Magazine (ISSN 0042-417X) is published four times a year, with editorial, business and subscription offices at 61 Elm Street, Montpelier, VT 05602. Tel. 802-828-3241. For subscription service, phone: 800-284-3243. Change of address must be received eight weeks prior to publication to insure continuous delivery of magazine. Please include your old address as well as your new address. Second-class postage paid at Montpelier, VT, and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send form #3579 to Vermont Life Magazine, 61 Elm St., Montpelier, VT. © Copyright 1990 by VERMONT LIFE Magazine. Printed in U.S.A., at The Lane Press, South Burlington, VT. Published February 27, 1990.

The editors of VERMONT LIFE will review any submissions; however no responsibility is assumed by the State of Vermont or VERMONT LIFE for loss or damage to materials submitted. Return postage must accompany all manuscripts, drawings and photographs, if they are to be returned. All rights are reserved. No part of VERMONT LIFE may be reproduced without permission of the editor.

Article Locations and Page Numbers in This Issue



- A. Richford, p. 20
- B. Sheldon Springs, p. 14
- C. Montpelier, p. 49
- D. Dead Creek, p. 53
- E. Thetford Center, p. 36
- F. Beebe Plain, p. 40
- G. Maidstone, p. 48
- H. East Thetford, p. 47
- I. Grafton, front cover

Member: Regional Publishers Association





Vermont Life

Spring 1990

Volume XLIV Number 3

FEATURES



page 4

- 4 **MAPLE TIME!** *Tradition lives on at 12 sugarhouses*
By Mark Pendergrast; photographed by Kindra Clineff and Stephen R. Swinburne
- 14 **OVER THE HILL:** *The last poor farm*
By Steve Young
- 20 **RICHFORD'S RENAISSANCE:** *New visions, new jobs*
By Joe Sherman; photographed by Paul O. Boisvert
- 28 **RAGGED BUT RIGHT:** *A scenic spring portfolio*
- 36 **THE ART AND PASSION OF THE STONE WALL**
By Noel Perrin; photographed by Kevin Pillsbury
- 42 **SIXTEEN LITTLE-KNOWN FACTS ABOUT WHITEWATER CANOEING**
By M. Dickey Drysdale; illustration by Jeff Danziger
- 50 **RUNNING PAST THE GRAVEYARD:** *A personal journey*
By Nathaniel Tripp; illustrated by Edward Epstein
- 56 **LIFE IN THE FOX LANE:** *A den full of red foxes*
Written and photographed by Ted Levin

DEPARTMENTS

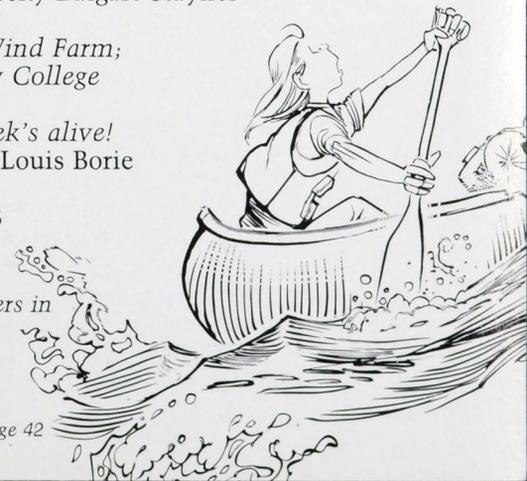
- 2 **GREEN MOUNTAIN POST BOY**
- 3 **LETTERS TO THE EDITOR**
- 26 **VERMONT VIEW:** *A call for the full story of Vermont*
By Richard Hathaway
- 40 **LANDMARKS:** *Beebe Plain's Friendship Festival*
By Jules Older; photographed by Paul O. Boisvert
- 44 **FOOD:** *Vermont spring lamb*
By Andrea Chesman; photos by Becky Luigart-Stayner
- 47 **VERMONT ENTERPRISE:** *Long Wind Farm; Maidstone Plant Farm; Woodbury College*
- 53 **INNS AND OUTINGS:** *Dead Creek's alive!*
By Fred Stetson; photographed by Louis Borie
- 61 **CALENDAR OF SPRING EVENTS**
Compiled by Alberta M. Mattson



page 56

FRONT COVER: *Learning how to field grounders in Grafton. Photograph by H. Stanley Johnson.*

page 42



Green Mountain
POST BOY



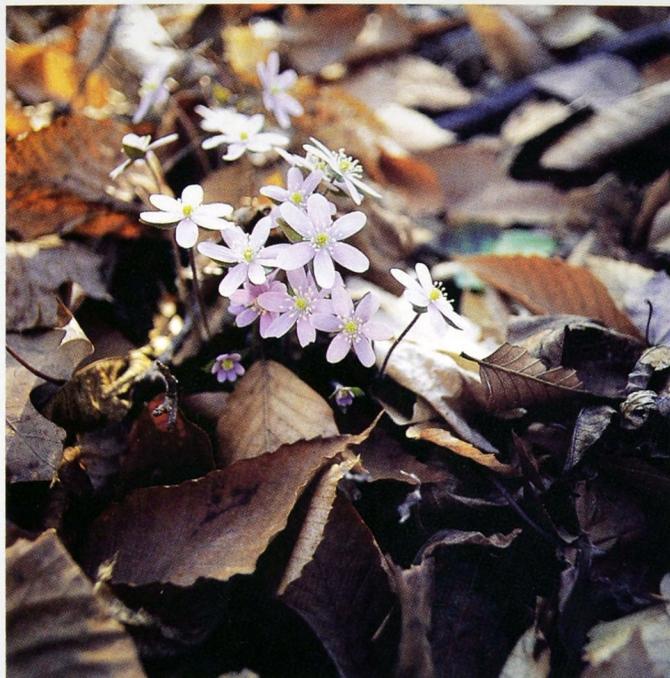
Vermont Life

WHATEVER else spring may mean, in Vermont it has always meant change. Winter is frozen in time so firmly that even its patterns of human life seem changeless from one year to the next. But spring — ah, spring! Snow disappears, skunk cabbage and hepaticas shoulder into the chilly sunlight, the ice washes out of rivers, and winter-pale Vermonters stumble out their front doors, rubbing their eyes, eager for the new season. And the world changes. Always, it seems that just when we need it most, the season of new life and new hope returns.

Lately, Vermont has been changing rapidly — too rapidly for the comfort of many who live here. Each day's newspaper offers more examples of how long-treasured institutions are changing. By the time you read this, the town of Pomfret, one of the last places in Vermont to maintain one-room schools, may be on the road to building a single modern replacement for its four small one-room schools. State school certification requirements, the difficulties of travel, and the growing problems of maintaining and heating four old wood-frame buildings are likely to do in yet another Vermont symbol, in Pomfret and elsewhere.

If there's an underlying theme in this spring issue of *Vermont Life*, it's that change is as much a part of life here in the Green Mountains as permanence. On page 14, we look at the poor farm, an institution that's gone forever. The last poor farm in America, located in Sheldon Springs, closed its doors in 1968. Now it appears that some aspects of the old system are being looked at anew, since homelessness among the poor and disabled has become a problem everywhere.

Starting on page 20, we visit Richford, a proud and hard-working town near the Canadian border where good times have been followed by lean times, but which is moving toward its former prosperity. Elsewhere, Noel Perrin looks at stone walls, which he still builds by hand, and finds them good; Nathaniel Tripp writes about how a self-imposed regimen of backroad running and the Vermont hill farm he lives



Hepaticas, photograph by Stephen Schwarzenbach.

on helped him through some of life's difficult changes; and Richard Hathaway writes about changing the way we have viewed Vermont history.

Even our most traditional story — on maple sugarhouses you can visit — notes some of the technological changes that have been transforming the ancient art of sugaring.

Yet while change is ever present, there are some things, beyond change, that reassure us. Those first raw days of early spring, for instance, when the ice goes out of the Dog River and buds begin to swell. There's a bank that overflows with bloodroot and Dutchman's breeches, and a woody glen where hepaticas are to be found, and I mean to see them once again. The more other things change, the more

reassuring I find those ever-faithful little blossoms.

In last spring's issue, we concentrated on the Connecticut River Valley. This fall people from both sides of the river met to focus on the Connecticut's future. At a conference at Ascutney Resort in Brownsville 260 residents of Vermont and New Hampshire compiled a statement of what they hope the river valley will look like in the years to come. Now commissions established by both states will meet in an effort to implement the proposals. To help, call Stephan Syz, Vermont chief of water resources planning, (802) 244-6951.

The 120-year-old covered bridge that spans the Connecticut between Windsor and Cornish, New Hampshire, was repaired over the past two years, and an unexpected dividend was music. Norman C. Pickering, a New York engineer and instrument maker, salvaged some of the ancient red spruce with which the bridge had been made to make new violins. And the wood was distributed to other violin makers, free. When the span — the longest covered bridge in North America — reopened last December, Pickering was there to mark the occasion with a tune played on a violin made from wood that had helped carry travelers across the Connecticut for more than a century. Now *that's* recycling!

— T.K.S.

LETTERS

James Hayford

To the editor:

This is to tell you how much I appreciated and enjoyed Garret Keizer's "Yankee Rebel," the story of James Hayford's "long, hard road to recognition" [VL, Winter 1989]. It is a beautiful account written with great sensitivity about a man's greatness overshadowed with humility.

Through the years, my life has been interwoven with the lives of Jim and Helen Hayford and I am all the richer for the association. Thank you for running this story, and thanks to Mr. Keizer for writing it, and thanks to Owen Stayner for the excellent photography that accompanied it.

Lois Ashe Brown

Worthington, Massachusetts

To the editor:

Having been introduced to poet James Hayford in your winter issue, I am writing to thank you. According to author Garret Keizer, Mr. Hayford was awarded the first and only Robert Frost Fellowship in 1935, which was the year before I entered Middlebury College, where I majored in English and American literature but never made the acquaintance of Mr. Hayford in book or lecture. . . .

. . . he is now "prized elsewhere" in St. Augustine, Florida.

Jeannette Perrin

St. Augustine, Florida

Popularity Contest

To the editor:

We are leaving California and driving across country. I am not a tourist; I was born and raised in Westford and Stowe.

. . . The Jersey cow used to be the Vermont cow, so how come everything [now] shows black and white cows?

Marion Babbie Burch

Tiburon, California

Editor's note: It may be because Holsteins (the black-and-white-patterned breed) are much more numerous in Vermont now than Jerseys because they produce more milk per cow. But some Vermonters still feel there's nothing as good as a glass of rich, delicious Jersey milk. The graphic quality of Holsteins has been captured by many artists, including Woody Jackson of Middlebury, whose Holstein designs are familiar across the country.

Butternutting Technique

To the editor:

I enjoyed reading the delightful article on butternutting in your autumn issue. As a young boy in the '50s, I remember gathering butternuts on a special hillside in Weathersfield and bringing them home to Connecticut. I am writing to pass on the technique which my family used to secure the delicious nut meat. We used a good-sized vise which was attached to the workbench in my father's greenhouse. Slowly closing the vise with one hand while using the other to shield against any flying shell, allowed one to get to the nut meat while keeping it relatively intact.

I look forward to visiting those trees in Weathersfield next September.

John Henderson

Killingworth, Connecticut

A Well-Rooted Transplant

To the editor:

I enjoyed Jon Vara's essay on flatlanders [VL, Winter 1989], but I have an alternate theory. . . . Back when Al Capp's popular comic strip "Li'l Abner" appeared in many newspapers, the residents of Dogpatch, a village somewhere in the Appalachians, referred to outsiders as "flatland furriners" — and the outsiders called Dogpatchers "hillbillies," a term that has also been applied to the native Vermonter, along with "woodchuck." It seems to me that "flatlander" may derive from that comic strip. I also have a vague recollection of "flatland furriners" being denounced on that old TV show "Beverly Hillbillies."

STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP (Required by 39 U.S.C. 3685)
Sept. 28, 1989; VERMONT LIFE, #4241; Quarterly, \$9.00 per year. Office of publication: 61 Elm St., Montpelier, VT 05602. Publisher: Agency of Development & Community Affairs, Montpelier, Vermont 05602. Editor: Thomas K. Slayton. Managing Editor: Linda Dean Paradee, 61 Elm St., Montpelier, VT 05602. Owner: State of Vermont, Montpelier, VT 05602. Bondholders, etc.: none. Nonprofit status (DMM Section 423.12 only) of the organization has not changed during preceding 12 months.

CIRCULATION — Average number copies per issue: Press run, 120,648. Sales through dealers, 22,082. Mail subscriptions, 81,065. Total paid circulation, 103,147. Free, 486. Total distribution, 103,633. Office use, etc., 6,447. Returns from dealers, 10,568. Total, 120,648. Single issue nearest filing date: Press run, 122,730. Sales through dealers, 24,560. Mail subscriptions, 80,500. Total paid circulation, 105,060. Free, 486. Total distribution, 105,546. Office use, etc., 4,531. Returns from dealers, 12,653. Total, 122,730.

I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete. C. Fred Sullivan, s/s Business Manager.

But "flatlander" is an indication of a certain state of mind, rather than the state you came here from. Flatlanders tend to make speeches in town meeting on the necessity for traffic lights and/or stop signs at backroad intersections; they complain about the spreading of manure on cornfields in the immediate vicinity of their homes; and they think that all-weather tires are really just that.

Like Vara, I'm a flatlander, though I prefer to consider myself a well-rooted transplant.

Janice S. Aitken

South Royalton, Vermont

Vermont Writing

To the editor:

Thanks for doing an entire issue devoted to Vermont writing [VL, Winter 1989]. It was a very classy issue that provided hours of absorbing entertainment. I'll look forward to next year's edition. Good job.

Stephen Morris

Randolph, Vermont

Editor's note: Stephen Morris is the author of The King of Vermont and Beyond Yonder.

Memories

To the editor:

"The Batten Kill" in the autumn issue of *Vermont Life* made this sixth-generation native Winchester Virginian very nostalgic. I believe that what is now the Sunderland Inn was the home of my husband's family, and when our children were young we spent two wonderful holidays at Hill Farm. Four generations of Holts are buried in the cemetery between Hill Farm and Route 7A, and my 94-year-old mother-in-law, a dour Vermonter, looks forward to the day she will join them!

Each generation of Holts fished the Batten Kill and each took his son fishing on the Winhall and up over Kelley Stand. My son owns his great-grandfather's fishing rod, but uses the beautiful Orvis that he and his father purchased as a college graduation gift.

From the icy brook that tumbles through Sunderland Village to the Hills' old pony — what memories invade me.

Dorothy C. Holt

Winchester, Virginia

Maple Time!

*A Sweet
Tradition Lives on at
12 Inviting Sugarhouses*

By MARK PENDERGRAST
Photographs by STEPHEN R. SWINBURNE
and KINDRA CLINEFF

When made in small quantities — that is, quickly from the first run of sap and properly treated — it has a wild delicacy of flavor that no other sweet can match. What you smell in freshly cut maple-wood, or taste in the blossom of the tree, is in it. It is then, indeed, the distilled essence of the tree.

JOHN BURROUGHS, 1886.

Ah, how right John Burroughs was. No sweetness on earth can match the taste of freshly made Vermont maple syrup, direct from the spigot in one of Vermont's many sugarhouses. In the spring of each year, the magic begins anew as snows begin to melt, the earth stirs from its long winter hibernation, and sap flows strong in the veins of man, beast, and plant.

For reasons best known to nature herself — scientists are still puzzling it out — Vermont's maple trees, thriving on hard-scrabble hillsides, produce an abundance of sweet sap. When boiled, it distills to a rich light-brown syrup. That's about as simple a product as you can get — no additives, no preservatives needed. Good syrup will keep indefinitely, though it may need to be reheated if it crystallizes. Some say it keeps best in glass containers in the freezer. Unlike water, syrup contracts when frozen and will not break your jar.

But by far the best way to take your syrup is fresh, and the only way to experience it properly is to visit a Vermont sugarhouse, where you can

Maple syrup in the making. John Schreindorfer and his daughter, Mary Kay, watch the transformation at the Robert Howrigan sugarhouse in Fairfield.



Kindra Clineff



Kindra Clineff

Mike Chaplin gathers sap the old-fashioned way at the Harold Howrigan farm in Fairfield.

take part in the magic, surrounded by the sweet fog from the evaporator, the hum of conversation, the culinary delights of homemade doughnuts and sugar-on-snow. Here we introduce you to 12 sugaring operations, from the surprising suburban setting of the Allens' sugarhouse in Essex Junction to the astonishing views way back on the hill at the LeBlancs' place in Newport. There are many, many more syrup-makers than these; last year the state's roughly 3,000 sugarhouses produced about 400,000 gallons of syrup, a third of the nation's total.

Even John Burroughs would be amazed by the high quality of today's maple syrup. The Indians, who first discovered the art of sugaring, taught the early settlers, but up until 100 years ago it was a haphazard process that featured boiling cauldrons to which fresh sap was continually added. This resulted in very dark, sometimes burned, batches of syrup — or, more accurately, sugar, since most producers continued to boil the product down to a hard brick of maple sugar that could be stored and transported more easily. From this early practice came the now somewhat inaccurate term "sugaring."

The modern sugaring operation features clev-

erly designed flat evaporators that allow sap to be added on one side while a uniform product of specified density is pulled off and strained on the other.

You'll find many differences in the way sugarmakers approach their craft, but you'll also find that all Vermont sugarmakers have a few things in common: love of family, respect for nature, joy in being outdoors, pride in a well-made product, and delight in sharing the brief season of sugaring with anyone, including perfect strangers, as long as they respect the process. Working sugarhouses generally do not charge admission but are glad to sell you their product.

Sugaring has no set schedule. It can begin as early as mid-February and extend to the first of May. Normally, however, it begins sometime in March and ends in April. Supposedly, sap flows best when there are crisp, below-freezing nights followed by warm, sunny days. Don't count on *anything* being predictable with maple sap, though. Remember that sugaring is synonymous with mud season, so wear boots and old clothes for your visit. Call ahead just before you're set to visit the sugarhouse of your choice and see what's cooking. You'd best ask directions to supplement those given here.



Mark Pendergrast

LeBlancs' sugarhouse overlooks Lake Memphremagog.

THE LEBLANC SUGAR HOUSE

Newport — 334-6350

The LeBlanc Sugarhouse, just a half-mile from the Canadian border on Lake Road in Newport, sits a fair distance up on a hill. But it's worth taking the quarter-mile hike to visit, if only for the sweeping vistas it offers of Lake Memphremagog and Providence Island. In addition, you can walk around the classic sugarbush, which often offers glimpses of deer and has some huge 300-year-old trees, rare in a logged-over state like Vermont.

Herman and Lucy LeBlanc still do much of the work, though Herman has "retired" since he sold his dairy farm to his son Jacques and Jacques' wife, Mim. Other friends and relatives often show up to help with the 1,600 buckets; it isn't unusual to have 30 people up on the hill for sugar-on-snow. Lucy serves instant coffee made with hot sap direct from the evaporator — presweetened! Jacques enjoys maple syrup on almost everything, including his morning fried eggs.

Former owner Earl Hammond, 94 and spry, sometimes catches a ride up on a snowmobile, pipe clutched firmly in his mouth, to see how the operation he started in 1925 is going.

For those who don't want to trek up the hill, Earl's son Milton and Milton's wife, Phyllis, operate a small sugarhouse just next door to the LeBlancs. The Hammonds offer doughnuts with their syrup. To make sure they're open, call 334-2685.

THE HOWRIGANS

Fairfield — Francis: 827-3751; Robert: 827-3256; Harold: 827-4479

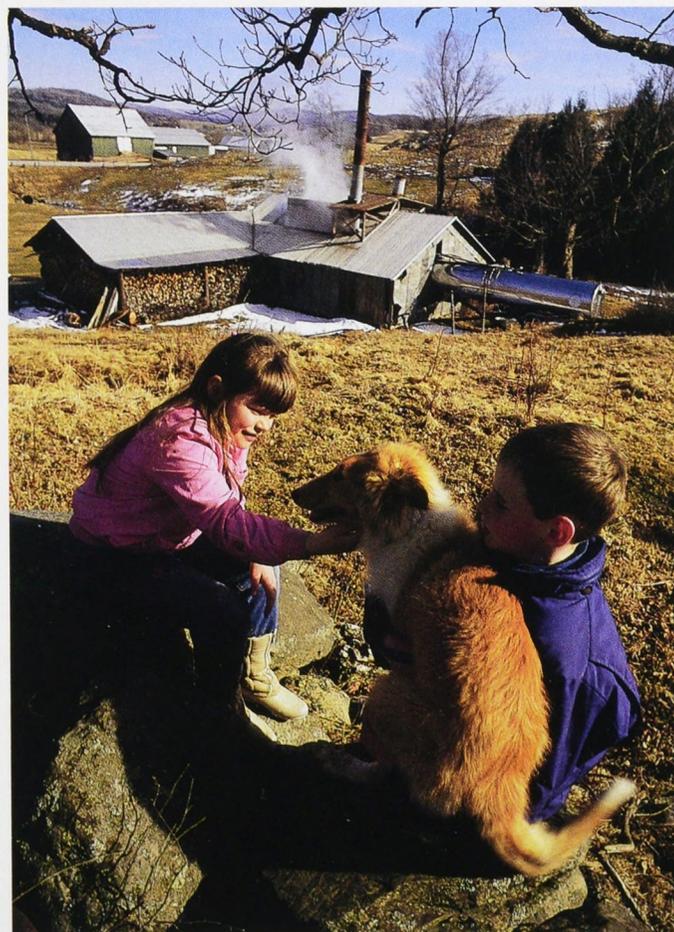
The Howrigans are a remarkable Irish-Catholic family, a veritable Franklin County maple dynasty. William and Margaret Howrigan produced five sons in a row, then five daughters. Howrigan, a dairy farmer, taught his children a love of the land and animals and the virtues of big families and hard work. He also taught them to love working with draft horses.

Now three of the sons own their own dairy farms, all nearby the stone house where they were born. Each has produced a healthy bunch of kids who continue the family tradition of dairying and sugaring with horses. If you want to see what Vermont — and sugaring — are really about, visit the Howrigans.

Francis, the eldest, is a state senator with five sugarhouses, one for each of his five sons — he also has seven daughters. His brother Robert has six boys and three girls and works about 12,000 taps with five teams of horses. A sign on his house reads: "Welcome to Misty Maples Farm, the Home of Robert and Virginia Howrigan and Family since 1953. The Lord, the Land, the Animals, and the Maples — These are Our Providers."

Harold Howrigan, the youngest of the brothers, runs two sugaring operations on either side of a dirt road near the Fairfax/Fletcher border with a total of 16,000 taps, some on maples he planted 40 years ago. *He* has five offspring, three boys and two girls. The boys work the four teams of gentle Belgian workhorses, who stop and go on command, unlike a tractor. "The horses also don't tear the woods up the way a tractor does," Harold adds, turning a bucket up for a refreshing drink of cool early sap.

NOTE: Be prepared for a bit of a hike. Most of the Howrigans' sugarhouses are a considerable distance back from the road.



Kindra Clineff

Taking a break at the Robert Howrigan sugarhouse.

ALLEN'S SUGAR HOUSE

Essex Junction — 878-2583

Fred Allen has been making maple syrup in Essex Junction since 1961, and though the town has mushroomed into suburbia around him, he continues to make a fine grade of syrup only 10 minutes from downtown Burlington. You can't miss his sugarhouse, located on Route 15 just east of the Five Corners.

For years, Fred did the collecting while his wife, Nora, a veteran syrup-maker from her childhood on a Fairfax farm, tended the boiling sap. Now that Fred, 72, has retired from working for IBM in Essex, he does most of the work himself, with a lot of help from daughters Judy and Jill, and a local doctor. Allen collects sap in a gathering tank on the back of his green pickup, driving on make-shift roads through the woods at the John Heins farm off Brownell Road in Williston. Then he pours the sap down a conductor pipe by the roadside, directly to his sugarhouse.

With only 1,600 buckets, the Allens call their operation a "sweet hobby, basically, when you figure it all out." Some years it yields a small profit, but that isn't the main point anyway. Allen explains that his operation introduces many city folks to sugaring. "Because we're right on the road, you can visit and not even get muddy feet. If you see the steam, just come on in for a sample of syrup."



Glenn and Ruth Goodrich, sixth generation sugarmakers.

GOODRICH'S SUGARHOUSE

West Danville — 563-9917

Glenn and Ruth Goodrich have a lot of energy. In addition to sugaring, Glenn teaches agriculture at Danville High School, builds post-and-beam houses, does mowing for the town and state, sells firewood, and welds. Ruth handles all the paperwork for the businesses and the maple product mail orders. She also cares for three daughters: Michelle, 7, Jean, 5, and Sarah, 3. "The girls all help out. Michelle can do just about every job except firing the evaporator. The two youngest — well, they're our expert taste testers," she says.

The couple also help out on the family farm, Molly Brook Farm, which has been family-owned and operated since 1840. Though the sugarhouse is new (built in 1982), Glenn and Ruth are sixth-generation sugarmakers. Their operation is strictly up-to-date, however, with not a bucket in sight. "We use vacuum tubing," says Glenn. "It pulls the sap in quicker. Fresh sap makes all the difference." He also meticulously cleans the lines every spring.

Visitors to Goodrich's Sugarhouse can sample syrup, sugar-on-snow, and try granulated maple sprinkles. You can buy maple cream, maple leaf candies, powdered maple sugar, sprinkles, maple granola, or a maple sugar brick. You can also walk along prepared trails through the sugarbush.

Goodrich's Sugarhouse is off Route 2 about three miles west of West Danville.

DAVIS FAMILY, INC.

Cabot — 563-2300

The Davises pride themselves on spotless, efficient sugaring at their operation on Strawberry Hill high in the hills between the villages of Cabot and Danville. They stopped using pipeline in 1980 and now use 5,000 buckets instead. Bob Davis, former general manager of the Cabot Farmer's Co-operative Creamery Co., believes that sap must be treated like milk — kept cool and free of bacteria and boiled quickly in absolutely clean equipment. He believes that is why he gets "only a smidgen of grade C — that goes to Uncle Jack for his whiskey sours."

Another virtue of buckets is aesthetic, according to Bob and Barbara's son Dan, one of three sons involved in the operation: "I love to walk through the woods and hear the music of the sap going ping, ping, ping into the buckets," he says.

It's a bit of a trek up into the woods to share that wonderful symphony, so be sure to call ahead so the Davises will be ready for you with sugar-on-snow and syrup. You'll find the sugarhouse tucked into a bush of maples with about 40 cords of wood neatly stacked out back. Step inside and admire the spotless, efficient operation.

Directions: Going north past Cabot Village, turn right a mile and a half from the post office. The Davis place is a mile and a quarter up the road on the left.



Stephen R. Swinburne

Dan, Barbara and Bob Davis of Cabot. No pipeline here, just 5,000 buckets, 40 cords of wood, and a lot of care.

TAFTS' MILK AND MAPLE FARM

Huntington — 434-2727

Bruce and May Taft have about 4,000 taps near the foot of Camel's Hump in Huntington. All but 350 buckets are on a pipeline system. Embossed on the King evaporator are dollar signs, but Bruce says "most of the dollars go to paying for the equipment, they don't come from selling syrup." Bruce's wife, May, didn't grow up sugaring, but she enjoys helping out. "I clean and can; I boil a little, but it makes me nervous. I don't want to be responsible for burning the pan."

Most days, you can get not only samples of syrup (which the dog, Snyphr, likes to lick from the floor when it's spilled), but maple popcorn or some homemade maple cream (see recipe, page 13). The Tafts' teenage son, Tim, helps out when he can, as does their daughter, Tina, who was once Miss Vermont Maple Queen and Miss Vermont Agriculture.

To find the Tafts, turn opposite Zeno's Body Shop in Huntington and follow signs for Camel's Hump State Park. Then look for the steam!

GREEN MOUNTAIN AUDUBON NATURE CENTER

Huntington — 434-3068

Nearby the Tafts' sugarhouse is the smaller demonstration sugarbush of the Green Mountain Audubon Nature Center, with about 750 taps us-

ing buckets and tubing. With booklets, activities, trails, and sugar-on-snow parties, the Audubon center is an excellent place to take children. There is a mini-evaporator that keeps sap boiling most of March and April, and there are nature walks, maple candy making, and tree-tapping demonstrations. The 230-acre sanctuary is located on Sherman Hollow Road. The sugarhouse is nearby, on the main road between Richmond and Huntington.

MORSE FARM SUGARHOUSE

East Montpelier — 223-2740

High on a scenic hill above Montpelier sits the Morse Farm, and there, even in the very earliest days of spring, there's usually a plume of steam issuing from the sugarhouse.

"We try hard to be boiling something every day," says sugarhouse owner Burr Morse. "If we have even just a drizzle of sap, we'll start with that, raising steam and making it smell good."

Morse noted that he's often able to boil when others are not because his sugarhouse contains three evaporators, a big 5-by-16-footer, a smaller 3-by-10-footer, and a tiny one for those chilly days when sap doesn't seem to want to leave the trees.

All the evaporators are wood-fired, Morse said. "It's all done the traditional way." That's one of the reasons the Morse Farm is a regular stopping place in central Vermont for Vermonters and tourists alike. Run by a farming family that operated



Kindra Clineff

Harry Morse, above, and son Burr do things traditionally at their East Montpelier sugarhouse.

the place as a dairy farm for many years, Morse Farm now has a gift shop selling maple syrup, vegetables, and Vermont craft items year-round. Both the sugarhouse and the gift shop are located on the County Road, about two miles north of Montpelier. Since the County Road is paved, and since the Morses are friendly, welcoming folks, this is an easy and pleasant sugarhouse to visit.

Burr's father, Harry Morse, used the present sugarhouse when he moved to the County Road site 40 years ago. He was primarily a dairy farmer then, but in 1966 decided to sell his cows and shift his operations to fresh vegetable farming and maple sugaring. Burr Morse now tends some 2,600 taps, all on pipeline.

The change to a diversified farming operation with a strong tourist orientation proved to be a wise decision, as the business is now firmly established. More than 35,000 people visit the Morse Farm shop annually, and the Morses often see 5,000 or more people in the course of a busy sugaring season. Buses of school children come by, as do many other local residents and the few tourists in the state in early spring. The farm's gift shop offers syrup for sale, both in the familiar

tins and served fresh and hot as sugar-on-snow. With sour pickles, doughnuts and coffee, sugar-on-snow costs \$1.85, which is as close to a bargain as you can find in the Northeast.

For Burr, the best part of the sugaring season is having people come visit the sugarhouse. "I like talking with the people, and just seeing how interested they all are," he notes, adding that it's especially nice that local people see Morse Farm as an attraction and come to visit. On a busy spring weekend when the weather is bright and clear and steam is issuing from the sugarhouse, cars often fill the parking lot, and Vermont license plates predominate.

"A lot of the rest of the year, much of our business is tourists," Burr says. "But that one month belongs to Vermonters."

Morse Farm is located on the County Road in East Montpelier. To find the County Road follow Main Street through and then up the steep hill out of Montpelier to the north. Main Street becomes County Road once it leaves the city. Follow it to the top of the hill, making no turns, and the well-marked Morse Farm sugarhouse is on your right. The shop is open from 9 to 5 seven days a week.

EVERETT AND KATHRYN PALMER

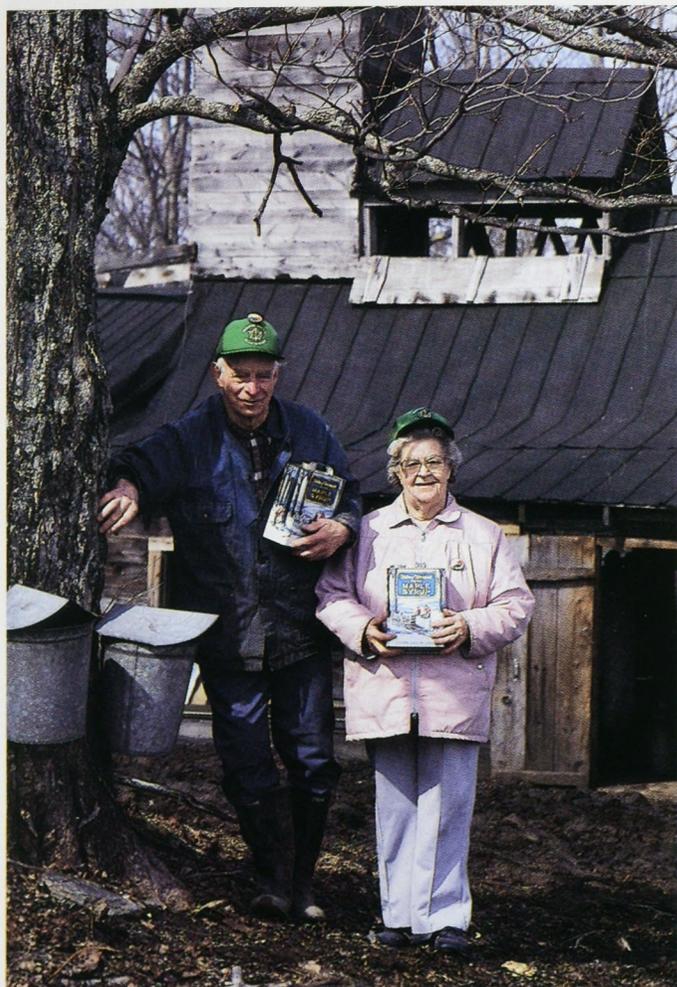
Waitsfield — 496-3696

One hundred and fifty years ago Everett Palmer's grandfather, Joseph Palmer, built the sugarhouse Everett still uses. The weather-beaten shack looks as though it has always stood there, a quarter-mile behind the farmhouse. But go inside and you'll find a two-year-old ultra-modern reverse osmosis machine that removes water from the sap before boiling.

"I hesitated a while to buy it," Everett says, "but it's more efficient, cuts boiling time in half, uses less wood. Now we get home before it's dark."

At 82, Everett Palmer probably knows as much about sugaring as anyone in Vermont. A wall in the Palmers' house is plastered with blue and gold ribbons from the Vermont Maple Festival in St. Albans. Nearby hangs a collage his grandson put together depicting a lifetime of sugaring. One of the photos shows 10-year-old Everett at work collecting sap with two massive Belgian horses.

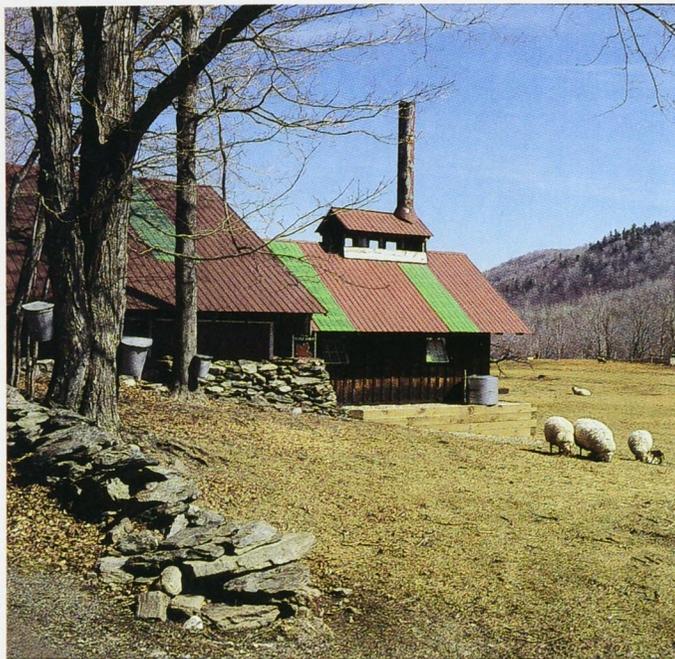
Now that they're retired from dairy farming, Everett and Kathryn devote most of their time to the maple business. Kathryn is the expert at testing and drawing off the final syrup. Four local men help Everett gather sap from the 3,000 taps (1,500



Everett and Kathryn Palmer: a lifetime sugaring together.

on pipeline, and 1,500 buckets). In addition to syrup, the Palmers make maple cream and candy. Stop by for doughnuts and samples of all their maple products. They also do a thriving mail-order business.

To get to Palmers' Sugarhouse, head out of the center of Waitsfield through the covered bridge on the Warren Road; one mile from the bridge, turn right, look for the sign.



Stephen R. Swinburne

Redemption Farm: new syrup, new lambs.

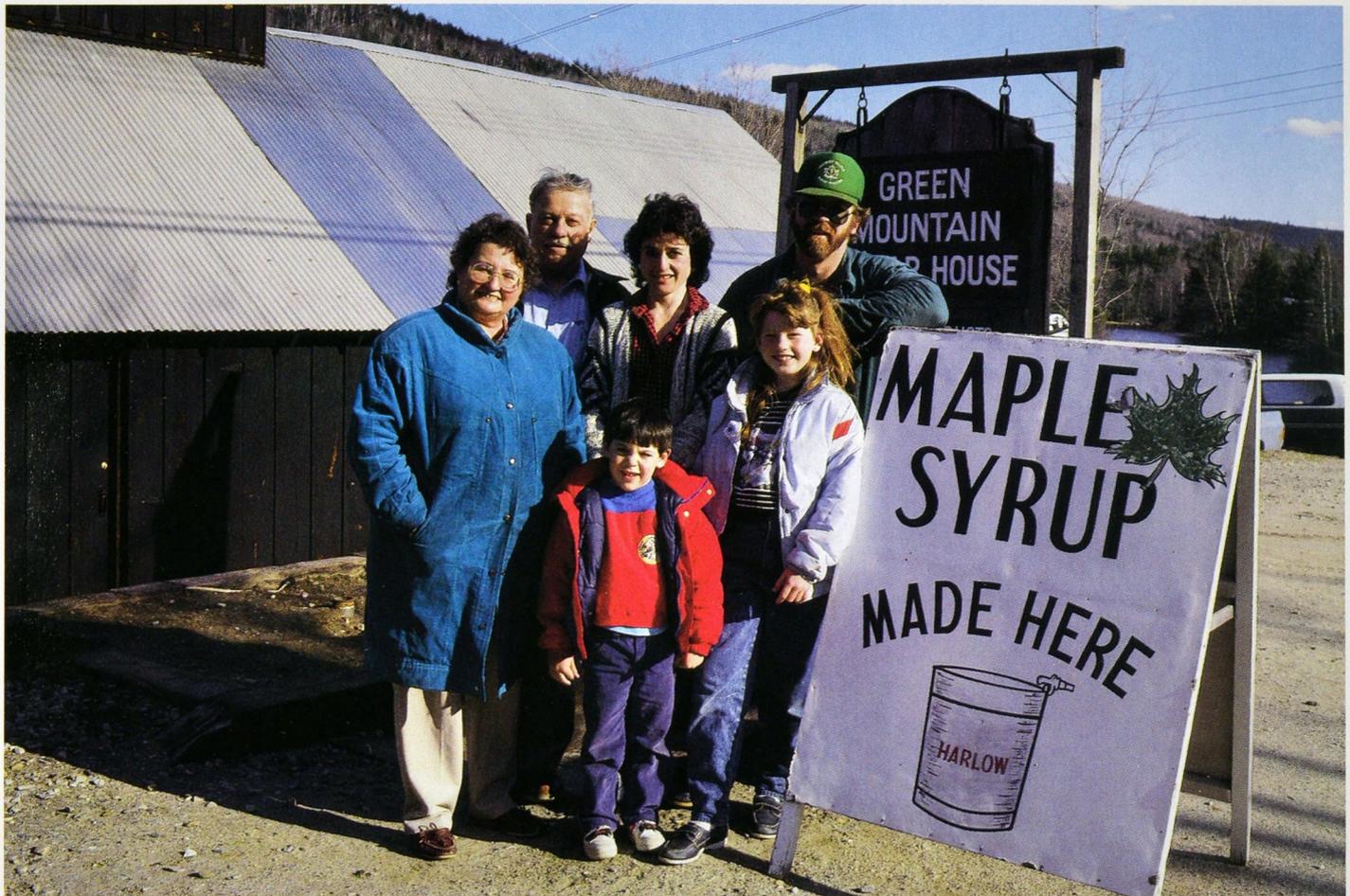
REDEMPTION FARM

Middletown Springs — 235-2105

Larry and Kissy Roach have been sugaring on their farm since 1975, in Vermont terms a relatively short time. Though neither had made maple syrup before (he's from New York and she's from Massachusetts), they learned quickly, and now are veteran producers, hanging 1,600 buckets with the help of four teenage sons. "We tried pipeline because we thought it would be quicker," Larry says, "but the squirrels ate it after the first year."

When they first came to Vermont as back-to-the-land hippies, the Roaches were "100 per cent accepted as neighbors right from the start," Larry says, and the party-like atmosphere when friends and neighbors pitch in to help with gathering and boiling is evidence.

You can join the party, too, but you should check on road conditions first — you might need four-wheel drive to get in over muddy Coy Hill Road, off Route 133. Once there, you might share two spring traditions: new syrup and new lambs. When Larry and his partner, Christian Lybeck, aren't busy with their roofing business and sugaring, they tend to 30 ewes. The lambing field is adjacent to the sugarhouse, and mass production sets in at the beginning of April.



Marjorie and David Harlow, left, with Ann and Doug Rose and their children, Joshua and Jessica.

Stephen R. Swinburne

GREEN MOUNTAIN SUGARHOUSE

Tyson — 228-7151

It looks folksy and traditional, but Doug and Ann Rose's Green Mountain Sugarhouse, located about four miles north of Ludlow on Route 100, is actually a high-tech operation. Sap from about 20,000 taps arrives via tank truck and is stored in a cluster of six-foot-high steel tanks behind the sugarhouse. Pipelines and some 350 hand valves move the sap quickly from tank to boiling pan to drum, and the high-pitched whine of a reverse osmosis machine can be heard from one corner.

"This is a pretty amazing machine," says Doug Rose, looking affectionately at its cluster of dials and valves. Like others in use throughout Vermont, the device uses reverse osmosis to extract up to 70 per cent of the water in sap, then sends the resulting sugar-rich sap concentrate on to be boiled down to syrup. It saves both fuel and time.

Doug and Ann are native Vermonters who attended Black River High School in nearby Ludlow. Young, smart, and determined to make a living from sugaring, they represent a new breed of sugarmakers who are willing to use modern technology and marketing techniques to bring the ancient art of sugaring successfully into the modern world.

They have done everything possible to make their operation top-quality, modern, and cost-ef-

ficient. "We just wanted to be able to do more, faster," Doug explains.

Even so, the feeling at their sugarhouse, located directly on Route 100 in Tyson, north of Ludlow, and easily accessible from the highway, is friendly and traditional. It has the atmosphere of a sugarhouse, not a factory. Doug and Ann, their children, and Ann's father, David Harlow, and Doug's father, Stuart Rose, are usually on hand to help out when sap's flowing. It was Harlow who built the sugarhouse in 1967 as a hobby operation.

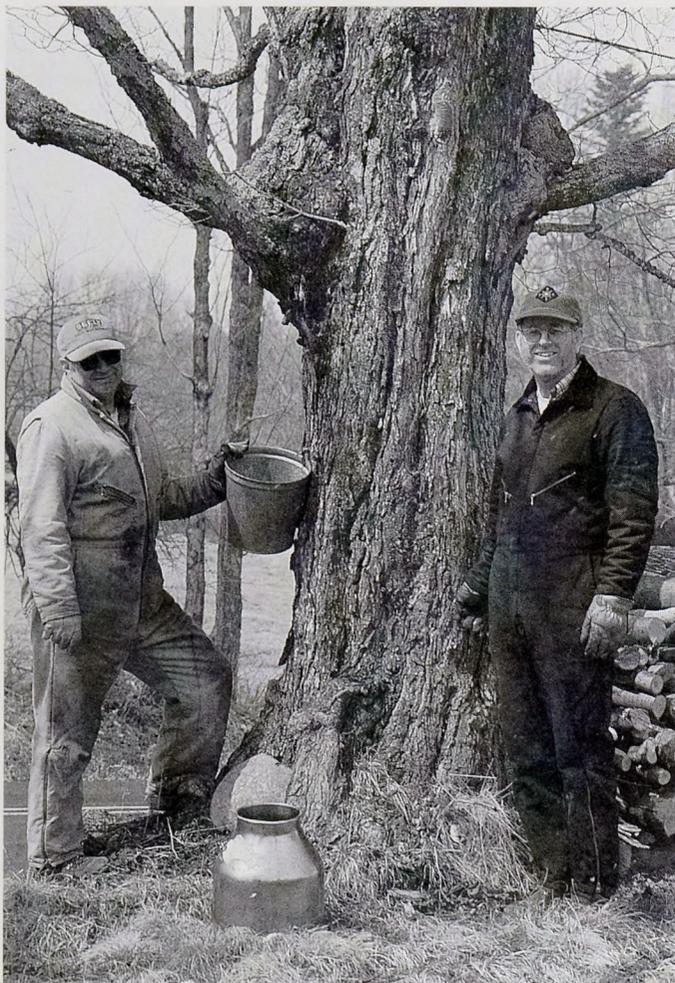
Doug and Ann welcome visitors to both the sugarhouse and to the small gift shop next door, where their syrup and other Vermont products are sold. Despite the uncertain nature of the maple business, they hope to be in it for a long time.

"Once you get sugaring in your blood, when spring comes, that's what you do," Ann Rose says. "There's a romance to sugaring that's hard to get away from."

JAMES H. TWITCHELL

South Londonderry — 824-3605

On an early April evening, Jim Twitchell — town clerk, treasurer, caretaker, snow plower — can be found with Everett West, postmaster, stoking the fires or checking sap density in Twitchell's clean, airy sugarhouse on Winhall Hollow Road



Stephen R. Swinburne

Jim Twitchell and Everett West, on the job.

in South Londonderry. This is "spare-time sugaring," as Jim puts it, so visitors are welcome to help out or sample syrup, but should call before visiting to make sure he's boiling.

Twitchell's father began sugaring in South Londonderry in 1944, and one of Jim's earliest memories is of boiling sap in his own personal sugaring operation — a kettle over a pit fire — when he was 10.

Nowadays, Twitchell, 49, has about 2,000 taps and mainly uses tubing to collect sap. He worries about the current threats to his maples: acid rain and pear thrips — insects that attack maple buds. To counteract acid rain he fertilizes his sugarbush with lime; because of the thrips he has reduced the number of taps he puts out.

But when he's in his sugarhouse surrounded by the steam, he forgets any worries: "When I'm boiling sap, I'm in heaven." The Twitchell sugarhouse is roughly two miles from the bridge in South Londonderry, on Winhall Hollow Road.

The state Agriculture Department has a limited number of free copies of *Vermont Maple Sugarhouses Open to the Public*, which lists 171 sugaring operations. Write to the Vermont Department of Agriculture, 116 State Street, Montpelier, VT 05602 or call (802) 828-2416. The department also sells the 64-page *Official Vermont Maple Cookbook* for a dollar.



Mark Pendergrast is a Vermont-based free-lance writer. He was aided in his sugarhouse research by photographer-writer Stephen R. Swinburne of South Londonderry and VL editor Tom Slayton.

RUTH GOODRICH'S MAPLE DIVINITY FUDGE RECIPE

Mix:

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup syrup (any grade)

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup water

1 cup sugar (maple or white)

Cook to the temperature of a "hard ball" on candy thermometer. Pour over as you are stiffly beating one egg white; add $\frac{1}{4}$ cup chopped nuts. Stir until the mixture stiffens. Teaspoon onto wax paper, cool, and eat.

KATHRYN PALMER'S MAPLE SUNDAE TOPPING

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup maple syrup

8 large marshmallows

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup chopped nuts

Combine syrup and marshmallows. Cook over hot water, stirring frequently until marshmallows have melted. Cool, then add nuts and serve on ice cream.



Kindra Clineff

Sugar on snow at the Morse Farm.

MAY TAFT'S MAPLE CREAM

Boil syrup until it reaches about 232° F. Cool fast in freezer. Stir until gloss disappears and furrows appear. Keep in refrigerator; use on toast or muffins.



Photograph courtesy of Evelyn Bocash, St. Albans.

OVER THE HILL TO THE POOR FARM

*How an Era Ended Quietly
On a Back Road in Sheldon Springs*

By STEVE YOUNG

*The Sheldon Poor
Farm and residents,
above, in 1912.
Fire destroyed the
building in 1913,
but its replacement
was in use until 1968.*

THE POOR FARM as an American institution came to an end in 1968 on a back road in Sheldon Springs. To follow that road today is to travel back to a time when Vermont had a very different way of caring for society's outcasts and unfortunates.

Sheldon Town Road #29 is paved when it leaves Route 105 and passes the town's elementary school, but it turns to dirt around the first bend. About a mile farther, if you know where to look, you come upon a small, neglected cemetery with tiny headstones, enclosed by a dilapidated post-and-chickenwire fence and surrounded by ancient oaks and maples and pines.

The tombstones, now partly lost in the high weeds, are nearly identical: small squares with names and dates, each poking barely a foot out of the ground. Near the road they are arranged in rough symmetry, but toward the back they appear to have been placed willy-nilly.

These are paupers' graves. There are hundreds of them, many overgrown with tough, prickly weeds. The cemetery, so crammed with human remains, served for over a century as the Sheldon Springs paupers' graveyard. Nearby, on a site now marked only by some mobile homes and a few old barns, was the Sheldon Poor Farm.

The main poor farm building burned to the ground in 1978. It was a cavernous, three-story black and white dormitory with halls 150 feet long. Built on a hillside above the Missisquoi River Valley, it was always visible to the residents of Sheldon Springs though it was a mile from town. A local newspaper once described it as "the finest building of its kind in the state of Vermont." It was the last poor farm in Vermont; in fact, it was probably the last in the nation when it was closed, by law, in October of 1968.

Now only a memory lost on an obscure site, the Sheldon Poor Farm was unusual, perhaps unique. There, nine Franklin County municipalities cooperated to build and run what may have been the most progressive poor farm in Vermont.

The Sheldon farm was the best of a bad system. Poor farms and overseers of the poor constituted, statewide, a jumble of locally run, patched-together institutions that often resulted in harsh, inhumane treatment of the downtrodden and disabled. And yet at Sheldon Springs, by most accounts, poor farm inmates, especially in the institution's later years, were treated with care and consideration.

In places where it worked as well as it apparently did in Sheldon Springs, the poor farm and overseer system had attributes that still interest those who care for the needy and the homeless. But it was, overall, an expression of an earlier day that had no chance of surviving into the modern era.

In 1967, while the nation's cities were exploding in riots and its campuses were experiencing some of the first protests against the Vietnam

War, a revolution was quietly taking place in the corridors and caucus rooms of the State House in Montpelier. It was framed not in strident invective but in the dry, cool verbiage of government reports and in endless columns of statistics.

Passed by both chambers of the Republican-dominated state legislature and signed into law by Gov. Philip H. Hoff, a Democrat, this fundamental change in government policy was called the Social Welfare Act of 1967. It decreed that for the first time in Vermont history welfare responsibility for the poor was to be taken out of the hands of town authorities and placed under state and federal control. Massive federal aid to the poor began flowing for the first time into state coffers, to be distributed to the needy out of a central office in Montpelier.

Up until 1967, the system that included poor farms was Vermont's method of handling aid to the needy. It was based upon the concept of absolute local autonomy, of taking care of one's own. Though we have forgotten now, a mere generation ago poor Vermonters were brought up with, as an old adage had it, "A reverence for God, the hope of heaven, and a fear of the poorhouse."

Every town in the state at one time or another had a town overseer of the poor, and most had poor farms. Waldo Chaffee was the last overseer for the town of Enosburg (about 10 miles east of Sheldon Springs), a position he held for more than 20 years. As overseer, he was expected to take a proprietary interest in the town's poor families, to know their lives intimately, and to step in and provide assistance when families needed it. He was the ultimate arbiter for the poor in his town, a combination of caseworker and court of last appeal.

"I took care of people who were maybe out of work for a week or two and needed temporary help," he recounted shortly before his death in 1981 at the age of 94. "The town gave me a budget every year out of the Poor Tax for that purpose. I'd give them orders for food and they'd go to the store and the store would bill me and I'd pay it. Or maybe they were sick and needed a doctor and I'd notify one and they'd go see him and he would send me the bill. With what the town gave me and what we would make on the farm, there was never a year when I didn't come out a dollar or two ahead."

The farm Chaffee spoke of was the Sheldon Poor Farm, which — like all Vermont poor farms — was supposed to pay for itself and, if possible, make a profit. If the short-term help offered by the overseer was not enough, the needy person — and sometimes his or her family — often ended up at the poor farm. There they were given food and shelter and, if willing and able, were put to work with the hired farmhands on the poor farm's more than 300 acres. In the 1930s, the Sheldon Poor Farm and its 75 inmates raised more than 100 pigs a year, had a herd of 45 Ayrshire dairy cows, and purchased a pure-bred bull to improve its stock.

Though we have forgotten now, it was not long ago that Vermonters were brought up with "A reverence for God, the hope of heaven, and a fear of the poorhouse."





With its barns and dormitory stretched across a hillside above the Missisquoi Valley, the Sheldon poor farm was home to people who had nowhere else to go.



Like many older Vermonters, Waldo Chaffee disagreed bitterly with the state's decision to close the poor farms and modernize the welfare system.

"We were keeping them down there and it wasn't costing the state one penny and they (state officials) weren't satisfied with that," he said. "They (the inmates) was taken care of in good shape. They weren't neglected or anything of the kind. They had plenty to eat and clean clothes and everything."

Sheldon and the other cooperating towns appear to have been quite proud of their poor farm. "Visitors are always welcome and should visit the institution to appreciate the vast amount of care and labor involved in caring for the unfortunates who are committed there," noted *Over the Hill*, a small book on the farm published in 1937. It's the only published history of a poor farm in Vermont, and that fact also suggests some of the pride that northern Franklin County took in its big poor farm.

The Sheldon Poor Farm Association, formed in 1833, was in many respects a unique organization, a loose confederation of neighboring towns that agreed to "unite together to support the poor of our respective towns" as a town report of the time stated. Ground was broken for the first poorhouse in 1837, and the poor farm finally settled in Sheldon Springs in 1855. Towns dropped out and re-joined frequently during the association's 135-year history, the number varying from four to nine at any given time. Member towns were: Berkshire, Enosburg, Fairfield, Franklin, Highgate, St. Albans town and city, Sheldon, and Swanton.

Poor farms grew out of the Elizabethan Poor Laws in 17th century England. Prior to the enactment of these "humane" laws, paupers were liable to be jailed, hanged, or indentured into servitude for generations. The wave of liberalism that swept Europe in the 17th and 18th centuries helped end total neglect of the indigent.

By the early 1800s, poor farms began to dot the landscape of America. In 1797, the Vermont legislature passed a law that remained essentially untouched until the 1967 Social Welfare Act. The wording of the old law is instructive: "The inhabitants of any town in this state may build or purchase a house of corrections or workhouse, in

which to confine and set their poor to work. And such house may and shall be used for keeping, correcting, and setting to work vagrants, common beggars, lewd, idle, and disorderly persons."

Vermont was not alone. All but one of the 48 continental states eventually built poor farms. The New England states were unusual in that each town was responsible for its own poor. In most other states, it was the county.

The poor farm residents (called inmates in most places) fell into two categories: "permanents," the old, the infirm, the insane, the blind and deaf, the crippled; and "transients," people who had fallen on hard times and were expected to leave as soon as they had found jobs in the community.

In 1913 the state legislature, whose attitude toward poor farms was generally laissez-faire, passed a law stating that children could reside on the poor farm for a maximum of only 90 days. Prior to that law, it was not unheard of for entire families to spend all their lives on the poor farms.

At the Sheldon farm, for example, there were



A dilapidated wire fence and thriving weeds surround the paupers' graves.

people who by 1968 were in their 80s and 90s and had spent their lives there, from birth. From 1913 on, families were considered to be "transients." The breadwinner was allowed to work outside the farm and either return nightly or live in town, sending for his family after he got settled. If no job was available, the husband worked in the poor farm fields and barns for no pay and the wife worked in the kitchen (again, for no pay).

For most transients, the poor farm was a last resort. Once there, they were highly motivated to



Photograph from *Over the Hill*, courtesy of the Town of Sheldon.

RULES FOR OVERSEER OF THE POOR HOUSE ADOPTED MARCH 10th, 1867:

- Paupers must have an order or token from the overseer of the town before they can be received.
- You are expected to insist on strict obedience to all reasonable requirements at all times. But are in no case to use abusive language or undue severity to enforce obedience, but when mild means fail solitary confinement may be resorted to.
- All paupers who are in good health and not otherwise disabled should be required to take their meals at the common table.
- All who are able and competent to work should be employed in a reasonable manner according to their ability, and a refusal to comply with these or any other requirements may be punished by withholding food. Not to exceed two meals at any one time.
- You are to do all you can to induce the paupers to keep the Sabbath in a quiet and peaceable manner, and not allow them to stroll about the farm or neighborhood, but encourage them to read or listen to the reading of suitable books and papers and to attend the religious meetings in the house.

— From *Over the Hill, More Than One Hundred Years in the Sheldon Poor-House History, 1833-1937*.

leave. It was not just the possibility of unpleasant conditions, the filth and abuse they might face, but a far more powerful psychological trauma: the nature and conditions of their fellow residents. They were forced to live side by side with the

permanents — the loud, perhaps dangerous lunatics, the grotesquely maimed, and the old and infirm, those who had been abandoned by their children yet who retained their sanity and a modicum of health as they awaited death and burial in the paupers' graveyard.

All of these categories of permanents were thrown together on the work farms, given only the most basic medical care, treatment or rehabilitation. It was they whom the state social workers were hoping most to help, because it was they who were most clearly the victims of a system of welfare that was outmoded.

Often, poorhouses were ramshackle buildings that were not kept up and were abandoned long before the officially mandated closings in 1968. Not so the Sheldon farm. A 1913 Swanton *Courier* article described with pride the new building that replaced one torched earlier that year:

"The building is 151 x 40 feet, three stories, and cement basement with accommodations for nearly 125 people. Everything is of the best material and thoroughly up-to-the-minute. In the spacious, well-lighted basement is found the inmates' dining room, vegetable cellar, coal and furnace rooms.

"The manager's suite of rooms and directors' room and helpers' sleeping quarters are on the first floor, while the second and third floors contain the inmates' sleeping rooms. The walls are plastered and kalsomined and the finish is hard pine."

The Sheldon farm was run by a board of directors that included each town's overseer of the poor, an elected position in most towns. The farm staff consisted of a manager and a matron who ran the day-to-day work and tried to enforce the rules among the inmates. These rules included strict segregation of sexes and punishment for unruly inmates that ranged from sending the inmate to his or her room without supper to incarceration in a "pesthous," a kind of solitary confinement in a shed on the grounds. This form of punishment apparently was phased out by the time the poor farm's last managers, Florence and Hank Nolan, were hired in 1947.

For many, moving to the poor farm meant a long-term stay.

"Generally, when they would bring someone

Even after it became the Sheldon Home, the poor farm provided exactly what it had always provided — no less and no more: a roof, food, and, if inmates were able, work.





"Today the concept of the poor farm is being revisited in some states as an alternative to homelessness. And there are some aspects of poor farms in shelters for the homeless."



there, the family would just go and forget them," recalled Florence Nolan. "There were exceptions, but it was pretty much so. We had one old guy there, he was up in his 90s and he was the father of 16 girls. Used to say, 'Sixteen girls and all red-headed.' They all lived around Sheldon but only one ever came up to see him, and he was there for quite a few years. In fact, a *number* of years. He died there."

Those involved with the farm have praised the way the Nolans ran it, and the Nolans were proud of their work. Florence Nolan, now a widow, still cares for elderly people in her Enosburg Falls home. A framed photograph of the Sheldon Poor Farm hangs in her dining room.

"The main house was a beautiful place, a real showplace," she said. "I tried to make it more or less like home. We all lived right in."

Considering the changes brought by the present system, Mrs. Nolan said: "It's nice (for the poor) to get the checks today, if they get them, but they were much happier then. Much happier. 'Cause they had work to do. All they needed, they really did."

Of course, she added, many residents at the farm couldn't read or write and others had severe mental or physical limitations. Many were too sick to do any work, in which case, she and her husband, aided when necessary by a doctor, cared for them.

Medical treatment, rehabilitation, or diagnosis consisted of Dr. Lester Judd's weekly visits. "The inmates were mostly mentally impaired or senile," Dr. Judd recalled. "The permanents were quite simple folk and seemed quite happy. The transients were rarely happy. Any inmates who made trouble or who couldn't be tolerated were packed off to Waterbury (state hospital) or Brandon (Training School, a residential institution for the mentally retarded)."

By 1968, the majority of Sheldon Poor Farm residents were permanents, people who, in the words of Mrs. Nolan, "had no other home and knew no other home. Home was there."

In a vain attempt to mollify the state, the name of the poor farm had been changed to the "Sheldon Home" and inmates were referred to as "patients," starting in the late 1950s. The poor farm had become, by the time of the closing, rather like a large nursing home. But even then, by no

SECTION IV: Government and By-Laws

With an average of 75 inmates, each day requires: eighteen to twenty-five loaves of bread: 50 lbs. of flour: 1 bushel of potatoes. It is customary to serve pie once each week, doughnuts, cookies, and cake twice each week: pudding three times each week.

The inmates who are able to go to the dining room each have their places at the two long tables in the basement dining room, one table for the women and another for the men. The manager and matron with their family, dine on the first floor. There are two kitchens, each with its individual cook.

In October 1936 the following inventory of vegetables were found: 27 bu. carrots; 12 bu. of beets; 65 bu. of turnips; 1010 cabbages; 3½ bu. popcorn; 400 bu. potatoes; 915 quarts of vegetables and preserves; 48 gallons of pickles; 47 squash and a few pumpkins.

The inmates are kept clean and the majority seem to be content with the daily routine. Visitors are welcome and should visit the institution to appreciate the vast amount of care and labor involved in caring for the unfortunates who are committed there.

— From *Over the Hill*

means were the aged the only "patients." The class of homeless citizens crossed many lines. They included the mentally ill or retarded, the physically disabled, or people who had lived on the farm their entire lives. They were people whose families simply did not have the resources to care for them.

Surviving on the poor farm was not easy, particularly if you were old and infirm. It was where you went to die, after all. For poor people, it was the end of the line. The basic criterion for getting



on the farm was the same as it had been a century before: "If you were poor and had no home, that got you up there," explained Chaffee.

The Sheldon Home provided exactly what the poor farm had always provided — no less and no more: a roof, food, and, if you were able, work. For those unable to work, there was nothing to help pass the time. Nothing, that is, until the '60s when "television came along," recalled Mrs. Nolan. "That made them all happy, their television and their radio."

Writing in last autumn's issue of *Vermont History*, Steven R. Hoffbeck noted that the poor farm as an institution was never intended to be a perfect system of caring for society's unfortunates. "Rather," he wrote, "it was a groping attempt to deal with community failure to care for a growing underclass."

Newer programs and deinstitutionalization now give many people a freedom of choice they never before enjoyed. Likewise, the reforms of 20 years ago gave many of the physically and mentally disabled, as well as the elderly, a dignity that they had never known on the poor farms or in state institutions. But they also brought increased expenses and a gnawing feeling that some people's problems were being overlooked. The local touch was gone.

James O'Rourke, assistant secretary of the state Human Services Agency, noted that society's vast changes since the early 1900s have been reflected in the way the state now deals with the poor and disadvantaged. New institutions to care for the disabled, state payments to help support the poor, and a philosophy that emphasizes reintegration into society's mainstream offer a more humane way than the poor farm, O'Rourke said.

And yet, he notes, there were aspects of the poor farm system that were not bad. In places such as Sheldon, it offered the poor, the infirm, and the disabled shelter, food, and work at a time when neither they nor their families could provide it. As homelessness increases, especially among the mentally disabled, the idea of a place where people can do some simple work for a bed and a warm meal is being looked at anew.

"Today, the concept of the poor farm is being revisited in some states as an alternative to homelessness," O'Rourke said. "And there are some

aspects of poor farms in shelters for the homeless."

The irony of that situation would not have been lost on Waldo Chaffee. Just months before his death, he still remembered bitterly and vividly the black day of October 1, 1968: "The state took all of them away from us. Just moved right in and shut us down. Put them here, there, and everywhere, just scattered them all around."

Echoed Florence Nolan: "Some went to Waterbury, some went to Brandon. Oh, they put them just everywhere."

As overseer of the poor and treasurer of the Sheldon Poor Farm Association Waldo Chaffee eventually lost both of his jobs due to the Social Welfare Act of 1967. "I think that the state taking over was the worst thing that ever happened in the state of Vermont," he declared. "They came up here and said 'We're overseeing the state, you're through. We're going to take over, we're going to save money.' But for what it used to cost us to feed over 40 down there, the state would take care of maybe seven or eight."



The final blow was the fire of 1978.

Leonard Parent/The St. Albans Messenger

His frail body rising out of his easy chair, Chaffee's old eyes flashed with anger as he spoke. "It's a crime what happened," he said. "It's terrible, that's all. I never have gotten over it. I never have since they told us we were through." ∞

Writer Steve Young lives in Fairlee and is an announcer for Vermont Public Radio. He was assisted in his research by Peter Youngbaer of Plainfield.

Richford's Renaissance

A Working Town Comes Back

By JOE SHERMAN

Photographed by PAUL O. BOISVERT

A QUIZ: Which town in Vermont once had an international brothel that was built on the border, allowing customers to hustle into Canada when the Americans raided and into the United States if the Mounties showed up?

Which town had an explosion in 1908 that killed 17 employees of an animal feed plant and two unlucky women who happened to be walking along the nearby railroad tracks?

And if you have ever owned a Northland hockey stick, where was it manufactured?

There's a one-word answer to all these questions — Richford!

North of Montgomery, east of Franklin, west of Jay, and south of Abercorn, Quebec, this once legendary border town has a varied and colorful past. It hit major economic turbulence in the late 1950s, however, and went on a long glide downward, leveling off in 1982, just above the ground.

In a state priding itself on a modest prosperity, Richford was a conspicuous pocket of poverty: unemployment hovered around 25 percent and a quarter of the town was on public assistance. Downtown had a great collection of rundown Victorian houses, a few of them ideal for horror movie sets just as they stood. Disenchanted-looking teenagers milled around the empty Boright Block and grim-looking people shuffled around and stared into the Missisquoi River from the bridge in the heart of the dead business district.

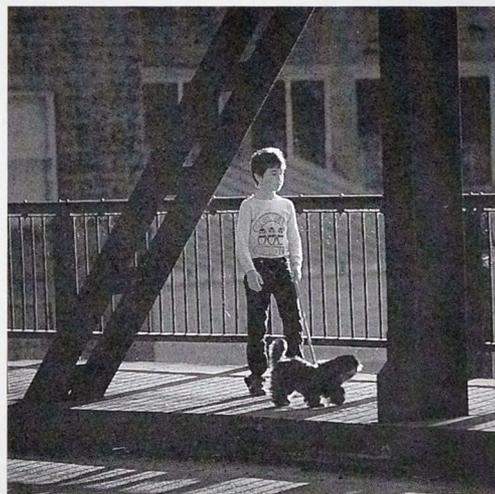
"Things were pretty desperate," remembers Dean Howarth, manager of the local branch of the Franklin-Lamoille Bank.

In its heyday, back in the 1920s, no one would ever have thought Richford would face problems. It was a prosperous town with half a dozen mills, two hotels, two daily newspapers, and the brothel, which faced the railroad tracks that were the town's economic lifeline.

The railroad was built in the 1870s, initiating an economic boom. Surrounding the town were some of New England's last stands of virgin timber. Mills turned out products from the woods, the railroads hauled them to market, and dairy farms spread over the denuded landscape. Population doubled in a decade. Plush mansions appeared: Queen Anne style, French Second Empire, Italianate. Local entrepreneur Sheldon Boright built a showplace home, "Grey Gables," and his brick business block hugging the Missisquoi River had a gentlemen's club on the

third floor. The Quaker Oats Company erected the largest grain elevator in New England here. The Sweat-Comings Company, which owned its own forests and had its own distribution system for the hard-wood furniture it made, built a large mill. In the wake of industry came tailors, jewelers, milliners, grocers, barbers, and hotel operators.

But it took the Roaring Twenties to really put Richford on the map. Shoppers from both sides of the border flocked to the trading center. Vacationers came to spend weekends at the Richford Country Club for a little golf; the cost for greens fees, meals, and lodging, for two, was \$8.50. Of course, the real excitement-makers were the bootleggers. During Prohibition, Richford's border location assured it a soft spot in







the heart of anyone still fond of a cocktail.

One illegal syndicate rented a garage in town as a front. Mechanics kept Buicks, Pierce-Arrows, and Cadillacs — favorite vehicles for evading the law — tuned and ready. Bootleggers ran liquor from Canada to the major markets in New York and Boston.

It was a time also, if you were so inclined, when you could visit Queen Lil's three-story palace of sin on the borderline.

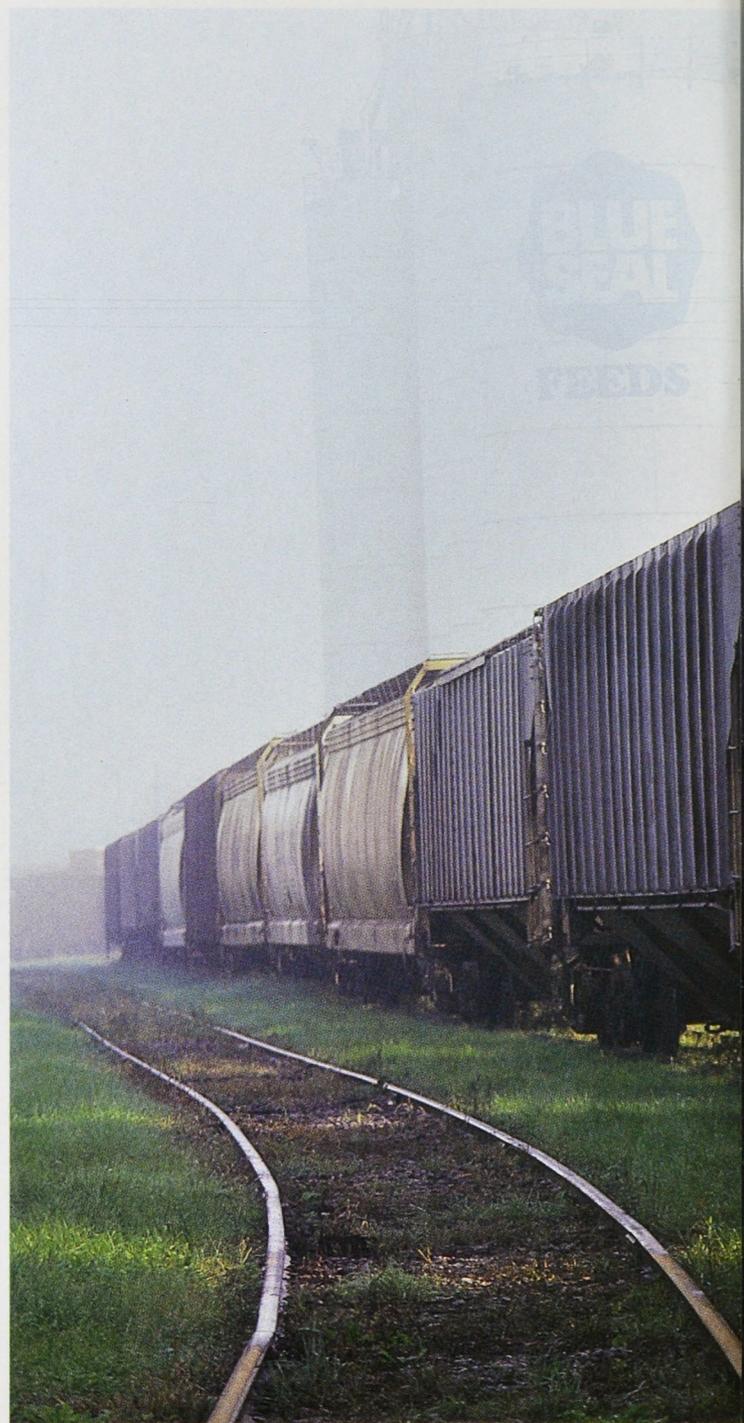
A local girl who had spent her youth on the road staging Indian medicine shows, Lil became a madam in Boston before returning home to build her very own brothel. It was known far and wide. The queen rode around town in a luxurious Willys-Knight sedan, awing children and offending the self-righteous. She carried bundles of bills in her petticoats, and almost always avoided going to jail. There were rare exceptions, such as the time the Feds and the Mounties coordinated their raids and entered both sides of her establishment simultaneously, catching embarrassed patrons holding their clothes, with no place to go.

But the emerging automobile culture of post-World War II America put Richford at the end of the road. As railroad business declined, so did the town. The worst blow came in 1957 when the Atlas Plywood Company closed, putting several hundred people out of work. After that it was a classic case of falling economic dominoes: stores, the movie theater, and more businesses closed. People left. Real estate prices dropped.

Howarth recalls taking a drive in 1982 and counting 32 downtown houses and commercial buildings for sale. The average asking price was about \$20,000. Even Grey Gables looked as though it needed an owner interested in historic preservation.

But then a number of things started going right. A group of citizens, business people, and elected officials got a HUD loan to stimulate redevelopment. They formed the Richford Economic Advancement Corporation, better known as REAC. A new company, Sterling Scale, which makes components for electronic industrial scales, was lured to town in 1983, and a study called "A Case for Richford" came up with a game plan that wouldn't cost a fortune to implement. The plan said Richford, which today has a population of nearly 4,000 in town and village, ought to recapture its past, dress up what it had, highlight the historical, and attract some industry.

So REAC set about getting owners of buildings with ugly facades to tear them off, getting peeling buildings painted,



and finding occupants for empty stores. At the same time new businesses were courted and attempts made to stimulate tourism. As former REAC employee Kate Parsons says, "We could go nowhere but up."

In 1986, "Take Pride in Richford" bumper stickers began appearing. REAC had an impressive record. A new town library had opened in a renovated house on Main Street. REAC's offices occupied the towering Carpenter mansion just down from the library. Boston Boiler Works, a steel fabricator, had moved into an unused sawmill. Cleverly navigating the depths of various grant and loan programs, REAC renovated the Boright Block by the river, and then built a 23-acre business park on the site of an abandoned drive-in a couple miles west of the village. In 1989, in a coup of sorts, REAC moved



Left, banker Dean Howarth has watched Richford's turnaround, from the high-tech work of Vermont Creative Software to the steel fabrication of Boston Boiler Works. Above, the Blue Seal plant gets raw materials by rail, and trucks out 100,000 bags of animal feed per week. Right, Boston Boiler Works. Pages 20 and 21: the heart of town is the steel bridge over the Missisquoi River.



Vermont Creative Software (VCS) into a 12,000-square-foot building there that married the look of an old railroad station with that of a historic rural Vermont school. VCS had been started in Richford four years before by returned native son Vince Taylor. Taylor's company gave the industrial park a high-tech anchor whose product fit in a little cardboard box for which his wife, Sunshine, had done the artwork.

Taylor's success story has a romantic side that Richfordites with ambition can relate to: local boy goes to M.I.T., does brainy stuff for Rand Corporation, returns to hometown, founds a company with two employees in a ramshackle Victorian house, and five years later (1989) has 34 employees and does \$1.8 million in sales.

The world Taylor created in the industrial park is definitely not your typical Richford mill. VCS has a lounge with a view of Mt. Pinnacle in Quebec, an exercise room with a ping-pong table and a sauna, and a no-tie and no-crease-in-the-pants dress code. Taylor likes to emphasize that VCS is offering local people, "a real opportunity to use their minds."

Kate Parsons, now his assistant, is a case in point. He lured her away from REAC during the construction of the VCS building. Until 1986, Parsons had farmed with her husband, Chet. She says her work at VCS demands the same dedication and time the farm did: "We thought we'd have all this time to do something, and we have less time."

It's only a mile from VCS in the industrial park outside of town to Boston Boiler Works, which occupies a boxy former saw mill adjacent to a residential neighborhood nearer the business district. In this more traditional Richford mill atmosphere, cigarette-smoking men wearing boots and jeans make bridges, trusses, boilers, and fire escapes. Steel clangs, blue-tipped torches hiss. Taking a break around a beat-up wooden bench, eating out of lunch pails, the men are a sharp contrast to the table-tennis playing, chatting-in-the-lounge bunch at VCS.

They "suck smoke all day and throw steel," owner Lloyd Boston says. "It's hard work."

Boston is an entrepreneur who likes to get his hands dirty. He never graduated from high school, has started several businesses, and knows the taste of failure. In the early '80s, he founded BBW to manufacture coal boilers. If you need a low-cost coal boiler, give him a call — he's still got plenty of them. To save the company from bankruptcy, Boston switched to steel fabrication. REAC convinced him to move from Berkshire, where he employed about 10 people in a converted barn, to the old sawmill. The group helped him

get low-interest loans to modify the building, and steered him past stringent state restrictions that could have been more costly. In 1989 BBW shipped 2,500 tons of steel, had \$2.5 million in sales, and put \$650,000 into the local economy with its payroll.

The boom may bust, though, Boston adds. Richford's resurgence has been helped by good times elsewhere. "Everything we see in Vermont is because of the boom in southern New England. It's stopped now."

Richford's proximity to Canada and passage of the free trade law that will open the U.S.-Canadian border may help the



Gray Gables is a reminder of Richford's shining days of prosperity.

town survive a regional slowdown in the U.S. For instance, two Canadian firms, Pinnacle Bakeries, which bakes goods for stores and restaurants, and Frontenac Industries, a manufacturer of venetian blinds, have just moved to town, and others are looking. Canadian-born Jamie O'Brien, a hockey player who graduated from Middlebury College, purchased Northland Products last year, changing the name to Northland Sports. Until 1981, the company had been king of the hockey stick manufacturers in America. But then despite attempts to revive the company (VL, Autumn 1986), sales slumped. Still, O'Brien says, "Here

was this great name." Photographs of National Hockey League greats like Phil Esposito, Gordie Howe, and Stan Mikita — all wielding Northland sticks — still hang in the lobby. In the first eight months after O'Brien took over, the company's work force jumped from eight to 55, and production increased dramatically.

Of course, a revitalized town needs more than new jobs to get back on its feet. State basketball championships won by the high school boys in 1988 and the girls in 1989 also helped restore pride in the town.

Yet, there were growing pains. Some small business people got the feeling REAC was helping too many out-of-towners, while slighting them. Senior citizens, who occupied nearly a quarter of the houses in the village, worried about rising taxes and rapid change. A few people grumbled that REAC was "going to ruin the town," says Rhoda Berger, a columnist for the Franklin County weekly newspaper, *The County Courier*.

That's not how superintendent of schools Ray McNulty sees it. "If there's no turmoil, then there is no change," he says from his office overlooking Main Street. "A split is indicative of real change."

The growing split in town turned into a broad gulf in 1988 when the state told Richford it had to comply with Vermont's Safe Water Drinking Act. Projected cost: \$2.86 million. One

side blamed REAC and growth. The other said both the citizens' and the economy's health were at stake. As with many town squabbles, the issues soon got as cloudy as Richford's water after a downpour.

In a series of articles in *The County Courier*, reporter Merritt Clifton explained that in 1933, when Richford's mountainside reservoir had been built, water quality tests measured four elements, but in 1989 the state looked for 83 pollutants, including such frightening sounding microorganisms as campylobacter and giardia. The old system is a "God-given resource," replied long-time Richfordite Jack Salisbury. "Pure as pure can be."

Twice, and both times by large margins, the voters rejected the new system; they'd live with the old. The state said no. In early 1989, after the second vote, the state slapped a boil-before-drinking order on the village, followed by the threat of a fine of up to \$25,000 a day for non-compliance. Frustrated village trustees, caught between angry townspeople and the state, began to quit, throwing their hands up over the water imbroglio. State Senator Vincent Illuzzi called the state's mandate a "Cadillac project," when Richford needed a Yugo.

A big water balloon had been dropped on Richford's seven-year-old REAC-led revitalization parade.

Al Yoder, manager of Blue Seal Feed, the largest employer in Richford, grimaces a little when he talks about the water problem. But he discounts the street talk that says a new water system means the feed plant will leave Richford. "Nonsense," he says. The added cost will just get tacked onto your Sing Along Wild Bird Seed, your Calf BT Starter, your Stampede Horse Feed, and the 196 other varieties of feed the plant puts out in about 100,000 bags a week.

One of the largest full-line feed plants in America, Blue Seal gets corn, oats, soybean meal, and other raw materials by rail, and ships its dairy and pet foods out mostly by truck. Ironically, the trucks are another factor — besides water, — that is aggravating Richford's problems. They make the corner by the Boright Block noisy, dusty, and potentially dangerous. A new bridge across the Missisquoi River would eliminate the trucks from Main Street, but might also reduce the traffic that some merchants insist is vital to downtown business.

A proposed shopping center on the outskirts of town, near the industrial park, has also come under scrutiny. "A Case for Richford" urged the town not to siphon off the downtown's vitality by allowing this kind of growth. It's a moot point at present, because the mall has been stalled by the

water issue. In fact, until Richford clears up the water problem, no new construction permits can be issued.

Still, Richford is forging ahead. REAC administrator Doug Scott says, "I'm quite optimistic." Town and state officials are working things out. What's happening here "may show what's going to happen to other Vermont industrial parks as Canadians look south for industrial space," he contends. If the water problem is not resolved, however, he adds, everything will soon halt, "stopping the momentum of 10 years."

Richford's history has been stop and go, so the present situation has precedents. The lull following the Civil War

needed the completion of the two railroads in 1873 to start a boom that lasted through World War II. The mill-town past, in which Quaker Oats, Sweat-Comings furniture, the O.L. Hinds Clothing Company, Northland, and others employed hundreds of people, is a powerful reminder of what Richford once was. The whistles of the Redwing and the Allouette, two passenger trains that once ran through town daily on trips between Boston and Montreal, no longer bring children running to the tracks, but the momentum of recovery has definitely begun. As Gene Pynuss, owner of the Sears mail-order store downtown, says, "It's



Northland Sports' Jamie O'Brien watches as Pat Boyce of Richford finishes another Northland hockey stick.

just a matter of time. We'll expand again."

Dean Howarth worries, though. "If we can't get around this water issue, then things are going to flatten out."

"I keep positive thoughts about it," says Barbara Nye, owner of the Rexall Drug store, across Main Street from the Boright Block. The water issue "shows Richford is independent in its thinking," she adds. "The media is making water more of an issue than Richford is."

The growth slowdown may just be natural. REAC members and local officials need to address the concerns of senior citizens who believe the changes benefit mostly newcomers and younger folks while raising their taxes and living costs. They need good reasons to get behind change or they'll continue to vote no on the water improvement question.

Yet the state and towns have a history of eventually getting past issues that momentarily seem unresolvable. Vince Taylor and Lloyd Boston don't seem to be worrying. VCS is making plans to build an addition that will double its size, and BBW just installed a mammoth outdoor crane for handling more steel. And a new bumper sticker has appeared in town: "RICHFORD HAS CHARACTER," it proclaims, and no one is arguing about that.

Joe Sherman is a free-lance writer who lives in Montgomery.



Archives of Barre History at the Aldrich Public Library.

The Monti, Fontana and Bianchi families picnicking in a field above Barre's North End in 1909.

Vermonters

*A Yankee Kingdom?
Our Real Heritage
Is Far Richer*

By RICHARD O. HATHAWAY

WHAT IMAGES SPRING to mind when we utter the word "Vermont?" Surely "Yankee Kingdom" would be one. We also instinctively think of our picturesque landscape, where carefully tended pastures push up against wilderness and dairy cows contentedly munch grass in Vermont's version of the peaceable kingdom. Other images include vibrant foliage in the fall, undefiled snowfall in winter, and mud season. Toss in visions of the nation's smallest state capital, maple sugaring, classic town squares, clapboard houses, hikes in the hill country, and country auctions. These are some of the constants in Vermont's panoply of pastoral images.

We are comfortable with these basically nostalgic, rural images. And we celebrate — as indeed we should — the wonderful 19th century town greens of a Chelsea, Craftsbury, or Newfane. Both our landscapes and townscapes are rightly cherished reminders of the decentralized communities of roughly 1,000 souls where neighbors could enjoy — if they wished and only if they wished — friendly face-to-face relationships and a direct impact upon local affairs.

All well and good. But these perceptions overlook significant dimensions of Vermont's rich and diverse history. In fact, because of our preoccupation with and even adoration of rural, pastoral images, we ignore or slight contradictory tendencies in our history.

Where in these visions are the manufacturing and laboring classes that are a vital part of Vermont's past? Where are the "other Vermonters" — the successive waves of Irish, Scots, Welsh, Swedes, Italians, Spaniards, and, of course, the enormous numbers of French-Canadians who populated the northwestern sections of Vermont in the late 19th and early 20th centuries?

Where are the images that reflect the urban environment and the textile mills of Burlington and Winooski, the potteries of Bennington, the copper mines of Vershire, the paper mills of Bellows Falls, and the slate factories of Fair Haven? What of the once mighty Fairbanks Scale Works of St. Johnsbury, the Estey Organ factory in Brattleboro, and the machine tool industries of Springfield? And what of the workers who constructed the railroad networks of the 19th century that linked Vermont to the wider world?

What, in our predominant pastoral imagery, allows us to understand the remarkable ethnic and political diversity of the groups that converged upon the Barre and Rutland/Proctor areas in the granite and marble industries? And how many of us realize that for a decade or more in the early 1900s, Barre shared the distinction, with Patterson, New Jersey, of being one of the country's two main centers of anarchist thought and agitation? We have all heard of John Deere, Joseph Smith, Ethan Allen, and Calvin Coolidge. We have celebrated the splendid Morgan horse. But how many of us have heard of the fiery orator, polemicist, and writer Luigi Galleani, knight errant of Italian-American anarchism, who lived in Barre for eight years as editor of the influential *Cronaca Sovversiva* (the "Subversive Chronicle")? This weekly publication of revolutionary propaganda enjoyed a circulation of about 5,000 in the United States, Europe, and South America.

Those who view Vermont through spectacles that see only maple trees and sap buckets might wish to see Vermont's past more fully and to see it whole. We can remind ourselves that of the many thousands of female mill workers at Lowell, Massachusetts, in the 1850s, some 1,400 were from Vermont's small towns and farms. We can underline Vermont's many connections with wider social currents when we recall that Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti were disciples of Galleani ("Galleanisti"), a fact that perhaps sheds new light upon their activities in greater Boston in 1920.

In short, there is far more to Vermont history than we have heretofore dreamt of. The gracious and often contented historians of the late 19th and early 20th centuries (mostly male, Protestant, and patriarchal in outlook) too often wrote about the Green Mountain State as if our history were basically the

result of the virtuous behavior of generations of pious, male, Anglo-Saxon community leaders. This "Yankee Kingdom" school of Vermont history has tended to downplay or overlook altogether evidence of class frictions. And it sometimes warned about the difficulties of assimilating diverse ethnic groups into the fabric of traditional Vermont culture, while virtually denying the presence of the native American Abenakis.

Thus, the otherwise gentle Quaker writer and artist Rowland Robinson could slander and condemn the French-Canadians who "infested" Vermont in "an insidious and continuous invasion" during the late 19th century.

We do not need to abandon altogether the traditional pastoral and ethnocentric Yankee

Kingdom conceptions of our state, but we must add to our images and diversify our analyses. In particular, we need to give more sustained and careful attention to the "other Vermonters," including mill workers, those who extracted marble, slate, and granite from the quarries, and the gifted stone carvers who brought the rich traditions of Carrara and northern Italy to Proctor, Rutland, Barre, Northfield, and Hardwick. In this cosmopolitan ethnic mixing bowl, we also need to celebrate the Cornish who toiled in the copper mines of Vershire, and those who built the network of railroads that connected Vermont more securely to its neighboring states and allowed both its rural and industrial economies to enjoy moments of prosperity.

Nearly 30 years ago, the gifted writer Michael Harrington invited our compassionate attention to the too-often hidden "other Americans" — the poor and less visible populace who lived and struggled beyond the view of those who were affluent. Today, we also need to redefine our traditional perceptions of Vermont. With enhanced imaginations and the benefit of up-to-date scholarship, we can move beyond the severe constrictions of the nostalgic "Yankee Kingdom" vision. More inclusive urban, industrial, and mixing bowl images that embrace workers, women, minorities, and the other left-out Vermonters can remind us that while our state is unusual, we are not divorced from the powerful themes of political, social, and industrial history so evident outside our borders.

∞

A trustee of the Vermont Historical Society, Richard Hathaway teaches history and politics in the Adult Degree Program of Vermont College, a division of Norwich University. He is also vice president of the Vermont Labor History Society. He lives in Montpelier.

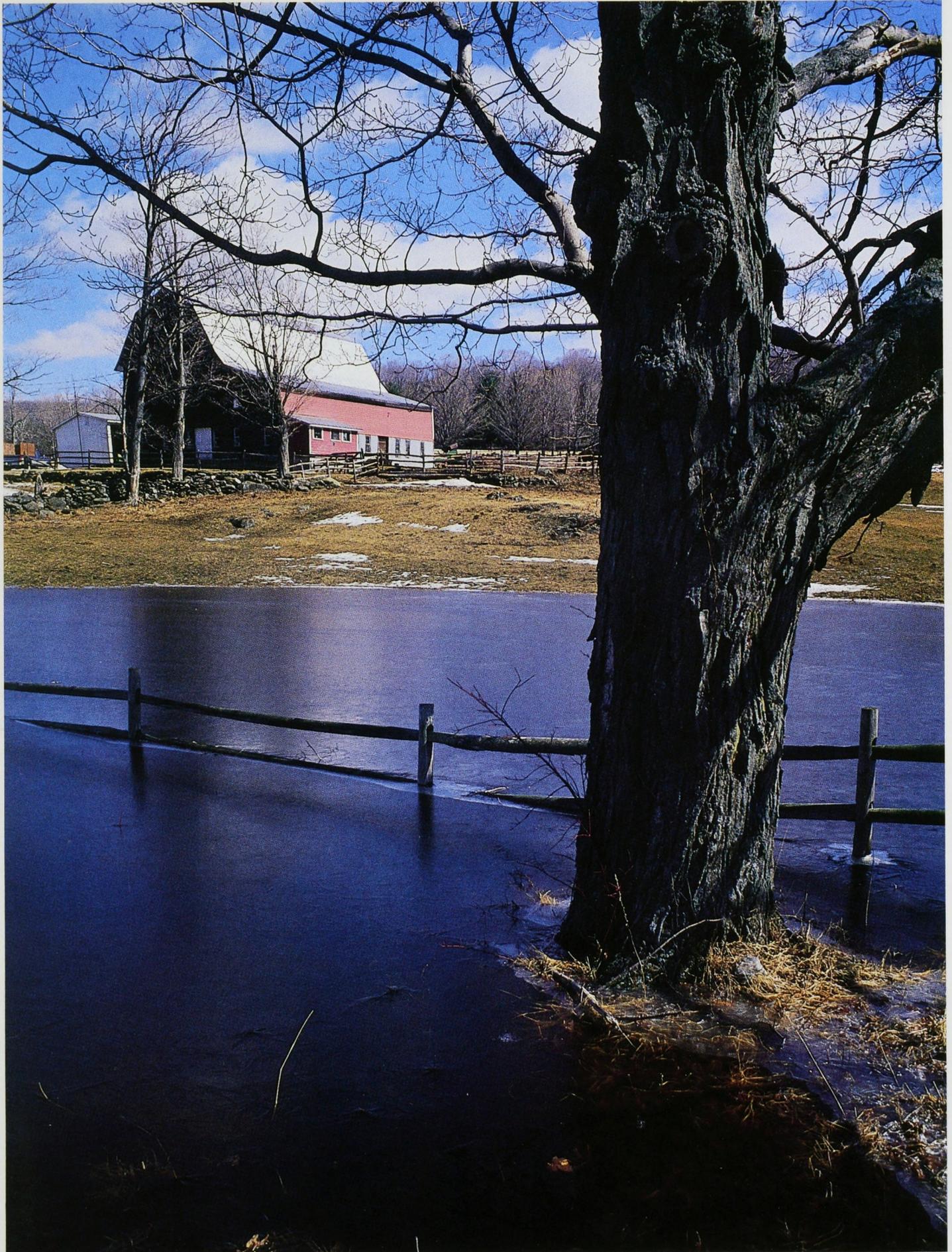
In these visions,
where are the
manufacturing
and laboring
classes that are
a vital part of
Vermont's past?

Ragged But Right

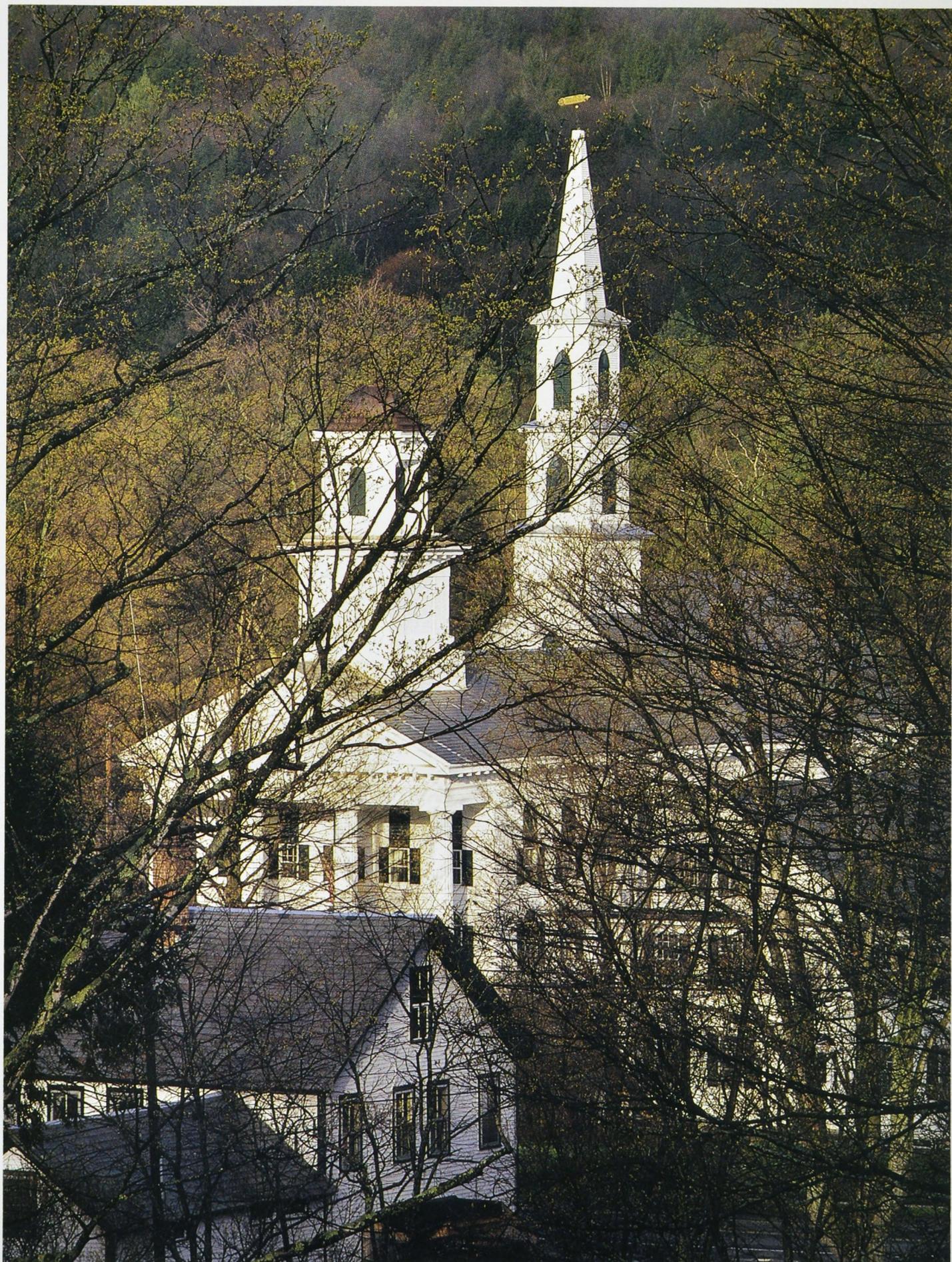
A Vermont Springtime
Is Never Simple

OUR first glimpse of spring usually comes in mid-snowstorm: Instead of the grainy, pelting snows of January, the flakes are suddenly as big and soft as feathers shaken from some cosmic pillow. "Sugar snow," we think, and consign winter to the past. Or that first glimpse may come on a raw March morning when we see, for the first time in months, an enormous blast of bright sun and sky reflected in an ice-skimmed pool of meltwater. Spring starts that way here: a mixture of the seasons, pain and pleasure, ice and apple blossoms.

In warmer places springtime is a gentle awakening; here we no sooner finish trudging through the snow than we're up to our ankles in mud. Snow shovels put away, we reach for the garden spade and the manure fork. We get out the screwdriver so we can take down the storm windows and put up the screens — or do whatever else needs doing. If the dance of winter is a slow, stately waltz, springtime dances the hornpipe, hopping frantically from one foot to the other, bouncing from March back to February, forward to May and back to April, hoe or rake in hand. It's a vigorous, busy time of pieced-together weather, hope for the summer, and relief from the winter just past. Yet while spring leaves us feeling ragged, we're always glad it's arrived. It always seems to come along at just the right time, no matter when it comes.



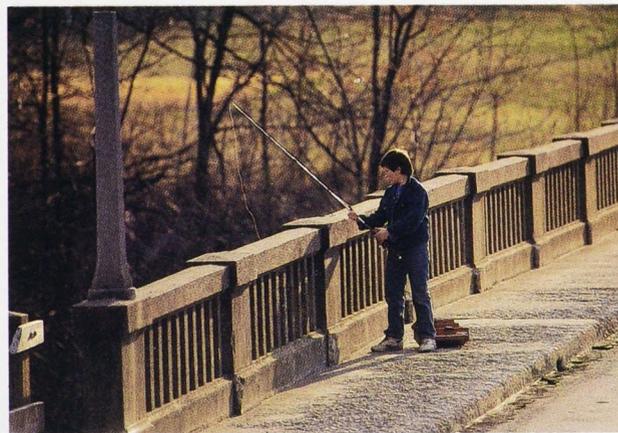
BARNARD, JON GILBERT FOX.



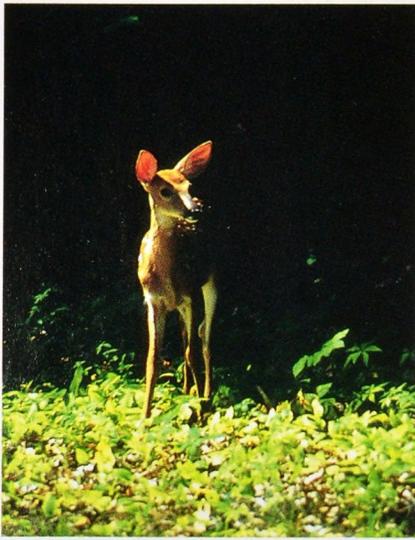


GRASSFIRE IN SHELDON, PAUL O. BOISVERT.

Spring can offer delicate beauty, as this view of Newfane in a haze of spring leaves (facing page) suggests. The sight of new spring greenery, flowers in blossom, moving water, and the reappearance of birds never fails to stop us with the wonder and delight of new, burgeoning life. Yet much of a Vermont spring is just plain gritty reality. Grass fires (such as this surprisingly scenic one in Sheldon) need to be controlled, cows released to pasture, gardens planted, and houses spruced up after the ravages of winter. We hope, however, that in all of this, time can still be found for a boy or girl to go fishing.

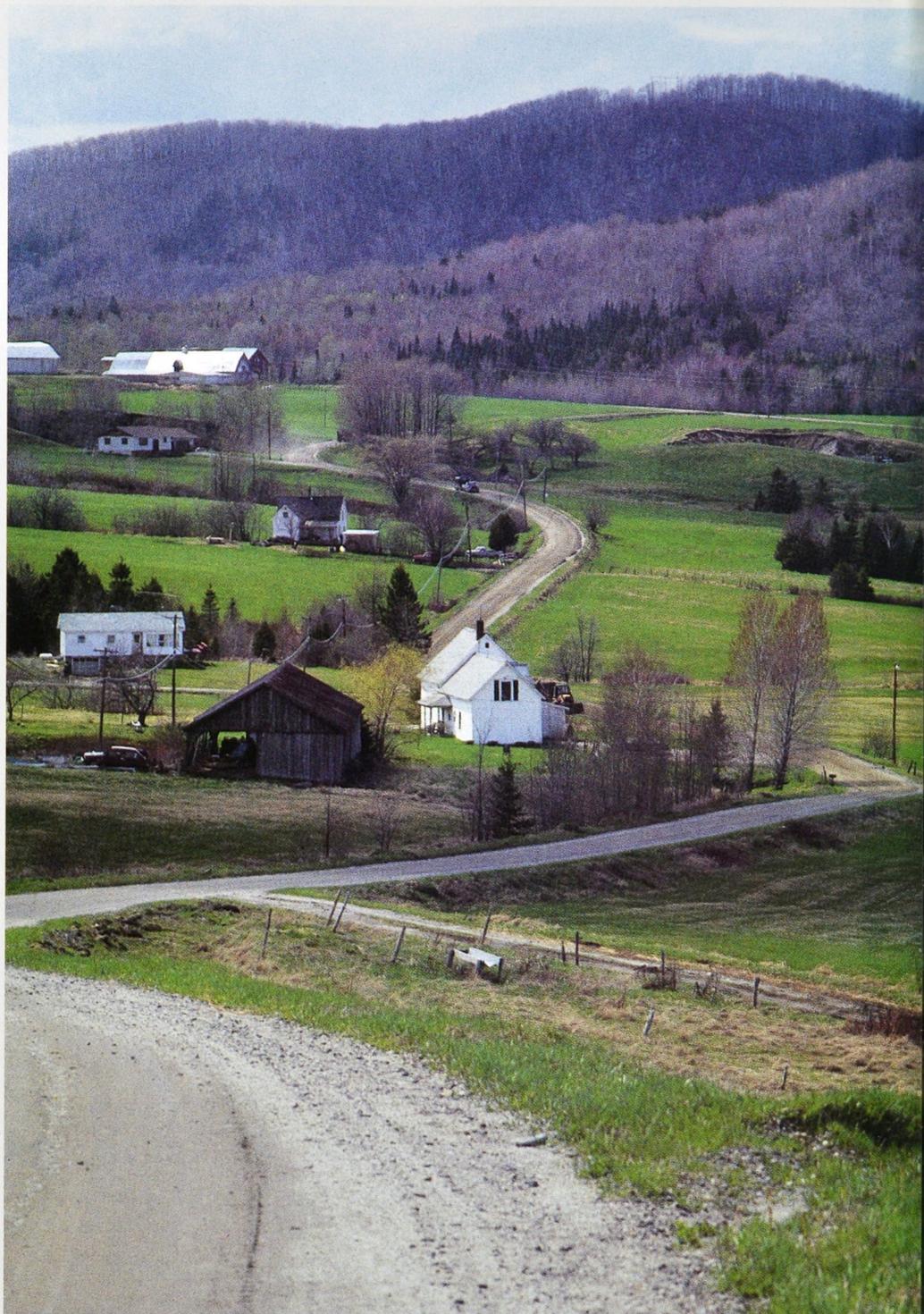


SHELDON, PAUL O. BOISVERT.



FAWN, ART PHANEUF.

"Spring is the mischief in me," wrote Robert Frost half a century ago, and it still holds true. After winter's icy grasp, there's something deep within us that wants to let responsibility go awhile, and simply play. Kids and mud go together well in April and May; a walk in the woods may turn up a delicate, spotted fawn or a bed of hepaticas. Still, the season demands respect, especially in its earliest days. Though pastures and hillsides are gradually returning to green, the process can seem painfully slow. And the compositions of early spring are more often spare than lush. The landscape often seems to express a proper New England reticence, at least until truly warm days late in the season enrich the grey hills and tawny fields with new growth. This perfectly composed view of Westmore (right), has a cool and distant beauty that only the ministries of May will soften.



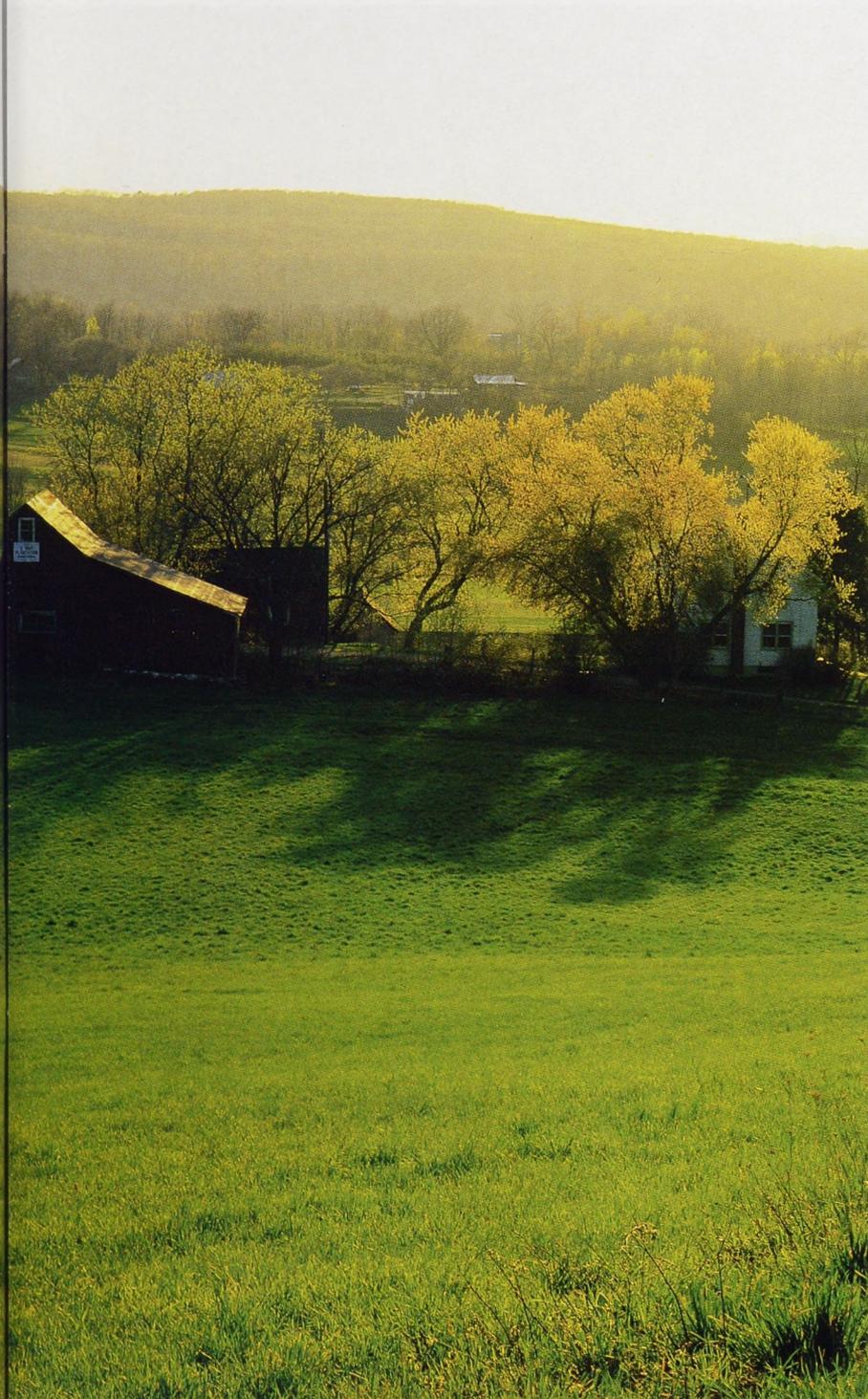
WESTMORE, C.B. JOHNSON.



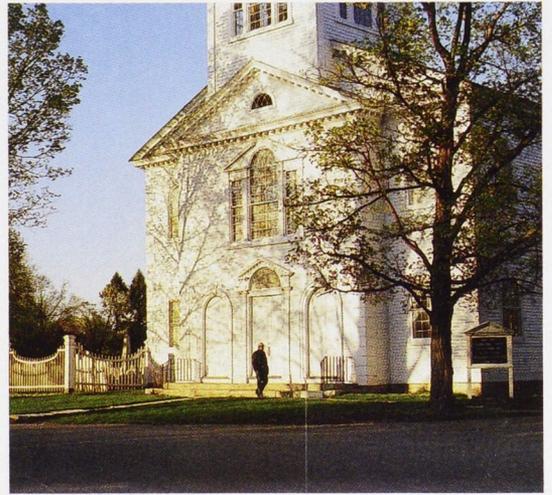
GRAND ISLE, PAUL O. BOISVERT.



WALLINGFORD, C.B. JOHNSON.



NEAR SUDBURY, GEORGE WUERTHNER.



OLD FIRST CHURCH, OLD BENNINGTON, PAUL O. BOISVERT.

The much-vaunted exuberance of spring finally arrives, at least a month after the first sugar snow. Usually, it takes longer. But at last, the hillsides really do break forth, the trees clap their hands and the mountains rejoice, along with those of us fortunate enough to live in the mountains. By the time farmland actually looks as inviting as this view near Sudbury (left), the often grim reality of mud and flood has been left far behind. Then it's time for a walk or a run or a bike ride. Do the beasts of the field share our delight in the season? You might ask the horses seen frolicking in Wallingford at the height of last spring (lower left). But you probably already know the answer, and it's clear they do. Our advice is not to think too much about it, but to get out and enjoy the year's newest, freshest days. There are precious few of them, and they're here again.

— T.K.S.



Photograph by Lud Munchmeyer

The Art And Passion Of the Stone Wall

By NOEL PERRIN
Photographs by KEVIN PILLSBURY

SO FAR in my life I've built or rebuilt about 900 yards of stone wall — just over half a mile. Do I say this boastfully? *Of course* I say it boastfully. Of all the physical work I have ever done, these walls are what I'm proudest of. And they are what will endure longest. Forgive another boast: They're beautiful, too. I hear that from even some rather taciturn neighbors.

But if boasting were all I was up to, there would be little reason for you to read this. I have many other reasons to talk stone walls.

The first is a generous wish to share. Wall-building is a keen pleasure. Many people don't realize that. They think it's just hard work.

Go through the woods almost anywhere in New England and you're likely to find old stone walls, built when those woods were fields and orchards. People coming across such abandoned walls are apt to comment on how incredibly hard the settlers must have worked, piling all that stone. And even to feel sorrow at all that now-wasted effort.

I want to say, "Oh, no, no, no! You've got it all wrong. This was passion. Yes, it was a strenuous passion, for them and their oxen both. But it was also art, and



Noel Perrin has been building stone walls for nearly 25 years. He not only enjoys the work, but his back is intact and he's planning more walls. Above and opposite, the wall builder, his tools, and some of his creations.

it was glory." You have only to look at the perfect fitting of stone to stone in many of those old walls to know that their makers were not just getting rocks out of the fields, and not just figuring out ways to keep cattle fenced, in the days before barbed wire. They were giving themselves over to an aesthetic impulse.

Okay, grant that wall-building is a pleasure, and often a passion. Isn't it nevertheless incredibly laborious, and doesn't it require skills that few people possess? No and no. Twenty-five years ago I believed those two things, and I had reason: I was meditating my very first wall, and two friends gave me books on

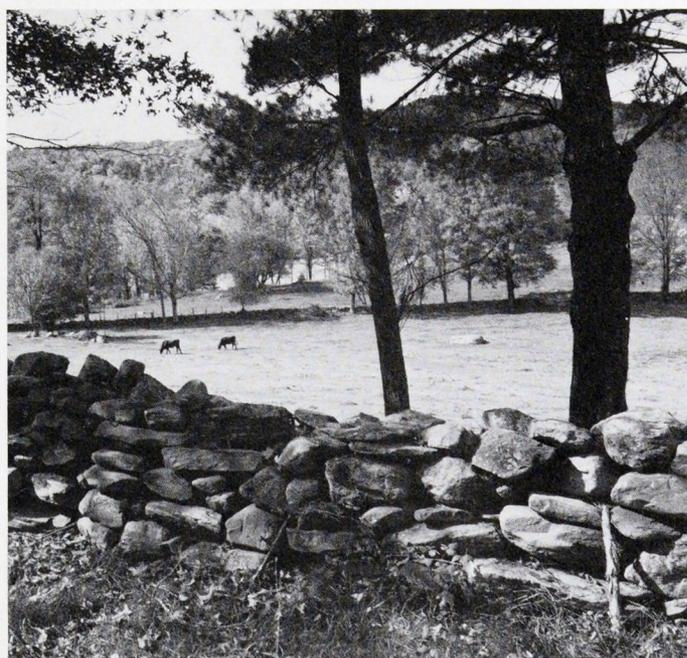
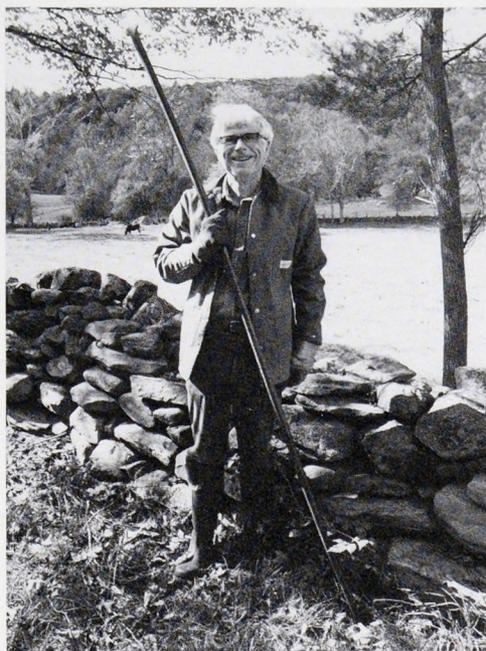
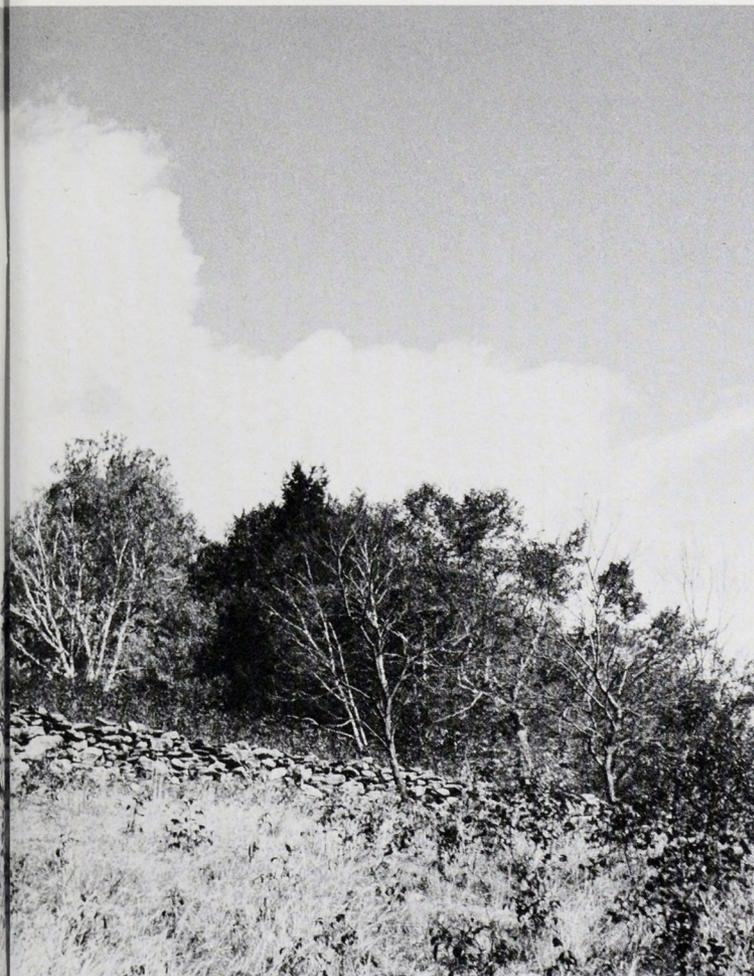
how to build walls. I found both deeply depressing. One emphasized the need for digging foundations. Want a wall? First you dig a trench, and then you bury hundreds of your good stones before you get to see anything above ground.

The other book emphasized fancy details: building steps into a stone wall, making little parapets — stuff I *knew* was beyond my skill.

Both books turned out to be misleading. It may be desirable to dig a foundation for a wall, but it sure isn't necessary. I have laid stones right on the ground and built a wall that has now gone 24 and a half years without shedding one stone,

or even shifting much, that I can see. As for stone steps, they're seldom needed in country walls — and anyway after the first year or two you could make a set, just by instinct. The hands and the eye get a feel for what will work, though the mind couldn't possibly explain. This complete immediacy is one of the greatest pleasures of wall-building.

My own walls are of many kinds. Two little ones are entirely ornamental. There's a bigger one that terraces the steep lawn behind the house. Half a dozen short ones have stopped erosion in old gullies on my pasture hill. But the four biggest are what I think of as true



farm walls. They march around all four sides of my best, and most visible, cow pasture — and on two and a half sides they keep the cows in without benefit of wire. These are the ones my neighbors notice, and sometimes praise. Each is 100 yards or longer.

I don't want to claim too much. On three of the four sides there was an existing tumble-down wall when I bought this place — and on all four sides a lot of ancient barbed wire on fallen posts. There I only had to rebuild, and maybe add a couple or three pickup loads of stone per rod, to get the wall a bit higher. The new stones I dug up in other and

worse pastures, thus improving those fields in the process.

But the fourth side I built from scratch, eventually with the help of an old bucket-loader on a still older tractor, and also the help of the town doctor, with whom I build wall one morning a week — his walls one Wednesday, mine the next, and so on. We don't worry too much about the old rule of putting one stone over two, and then two over one. When you're using whatever comes out of the ground, you can't be that choosy. We *are* careful to get a really big, heavy stone across the full width of the wall every few feet, to bind it together.

All very well, but what about your back, people wonder. Aren't you going to ruin it, lifting all those stones? I freely admit that there was a long period of years when I threw out my back about twice a summer, working on walls. (It was worth it. People get hurt playing baseball, too.) But then I went to a physical therapist and got a set of exercises tailored to my spine, and I have not had a sore back since. What I have is low cholesterol, a flat belly, and plans for more walls. ∞

Noel Perrin and his stone walls reside in Thetford Center.

Vermont
LANDMARKS



Northern Friendship

Beebe's International Festival

By JULES OLDER

Photographed by PAUL O. BOISVERT

THE CAKE contained 3 gallons of milk, 60 pounds of butter, 71 pounds of sugar and half a million calories. More important, it was baked in the name of international friendship by the student chefs of North Country Union High School.

The Newport students, under the direction of their chef/teacher Michael Lacroix, created the 233-pound cake as their contribution to the 1989 International Friendship Festival of Beebe, Quebec, and Beebe Plain, Vermont. The festival is held on Canusa Street (Canusa as in Can.-U.S.A.), which marks the border between the state and province and unites the towns. On one side of the street the parked cars sport white Quebec license plates; on the other, familiar Vermont green.

Despite its imposing name, the International Friendship Festival is a one-afternoon affair. During that afternoon, both the street and border crossing are closed to traffic so that citizens of both countries can join together for an exchange of flags and friendship.

It is every inch a small-town event. There's no glitz, no hype, no visiting celebrities. Instead, about 300 English-speaking Americans, mostly from northern Vermont, and 300 French-speaking Canadians, mostly from the Eastern Townships, meet, mingle, chat and gossip in the middle of the street, which has American Customs on one corner and *Douanes Canada* on the other.

Between them sits an old stone house, half in one country, half in the other, which once served as post office for both. Local wits used to claim that this was the widest street in the world because a letter mailed from Beebe Plain, Vermont, to Beebe, Quebec, traveled 150 miles by way of Burlington to cross the road. "Today," one resident laughed, "we just put it in our pocket and walk it across."

The Friendship Festival celebrates the longest unarmed border in the world, and speeches by local dignitaries last spring toasted that accomplishment in French and English.

One American quoted Ronald Reagan, who said, "A border should be a meeting place rather than a dividing line." A Canadian responded, "There's no frontier for friendship." Emory Hebard, retired Vermont state treasurer, replied, "Here we are, people together. Somewhere there's a border, and we don't even know it exists."

Hebard got inadvertent support from the festival's master of ceremonies, Bob Sheldon, manager of one of the granite centers that are the major employers in the Beebe area. Speaking first in English, then in French, he said, "We live in harmony on both sides of Canusa Street. Elsewhere, borders are marked by machine-gun nests and mine fields. Here, the white line down the middle of Canusa Street is the border."

In fact, Canusa Street doesn't have a line down the middle. The border is truly invisible.

The Friendship Festival is coordinated by the *Comité Touristique des Villes Frontelières* on the Canadian side and — unlikely though it seems — the International Dracontology Society on the American side. What is the link between a tourist board and a society for the study of dragons? The two are united by Memphre, the putative sea monster who resides in the body of water that spans the border, Lake Memphremagog. By proclamation, Memphre holds dual citizenship.

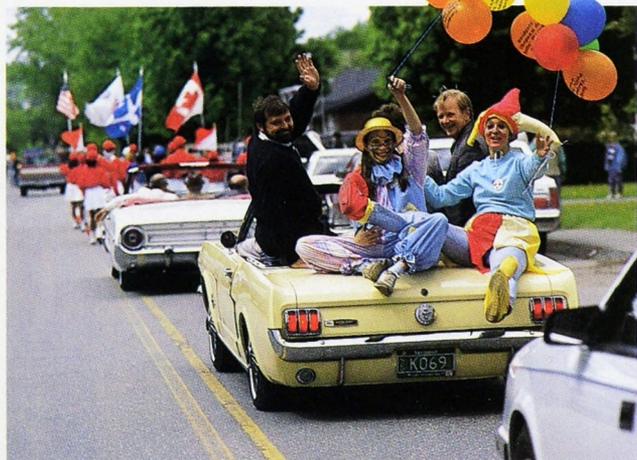
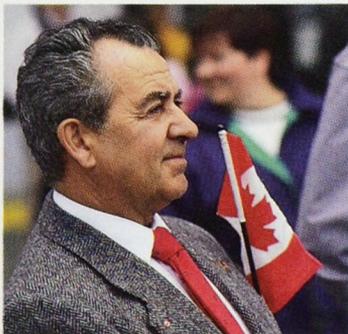
Last year's Friendship Festival started at 1:30 p.m. and was wrapping up two hours later. When the girls marching band finished playing and the dignitaries had made their speeches and the national anthems of both countries were sung (the Canadian anthem sung in French), the North Country cake was cut. By four in the afternoon, all that was left of the 233 pounds of cake was one slim, L-shaped slice.

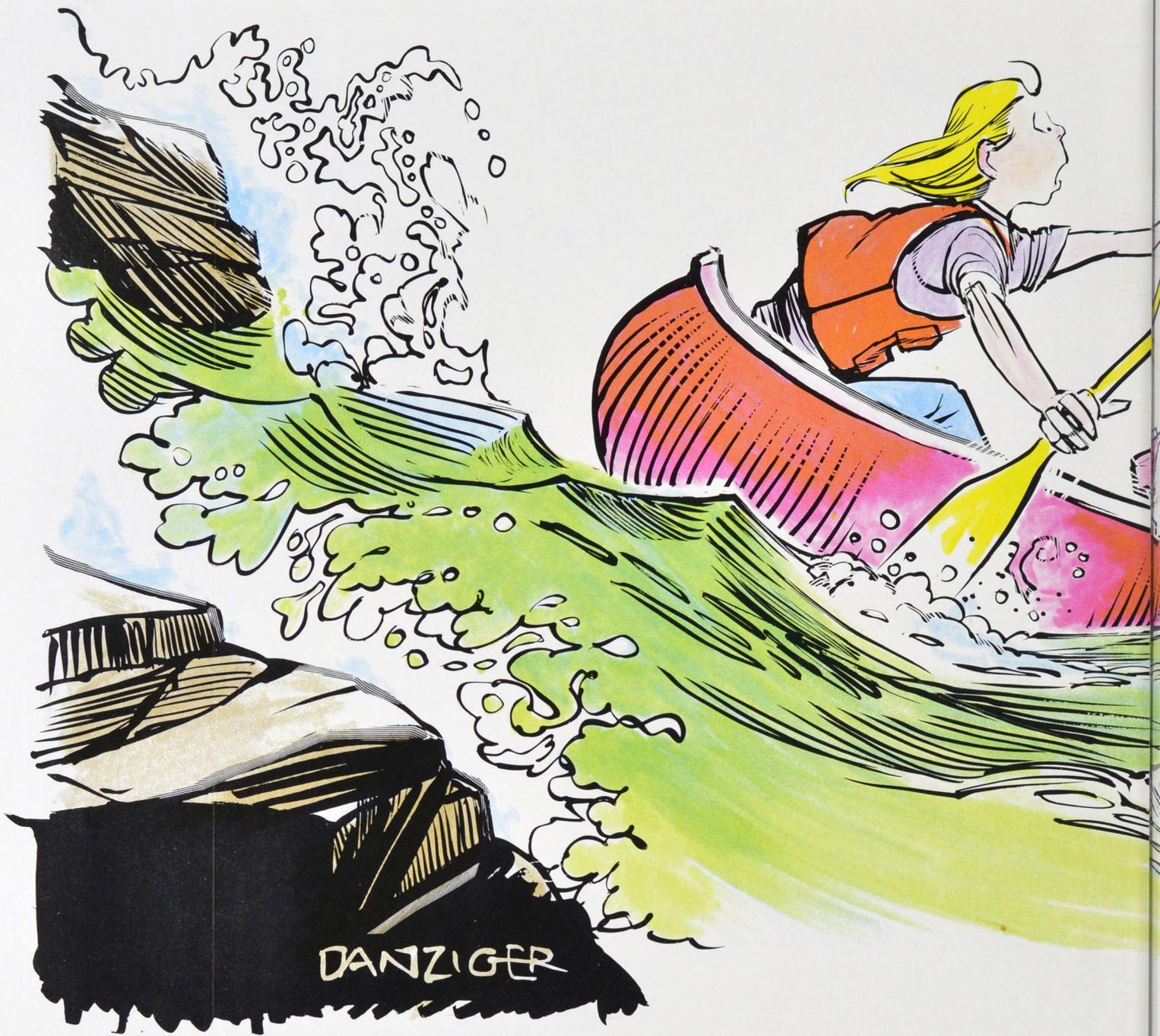
The two towns will hold a "Hands Across the Border" festival this May 20 beginning at 1:30 p.m. Information: (802) 334-7782. 

Free-lance writer Jules Older lives in Albany.



Canadian-American amity was the theme along Canusa Street in Beebe Plain last spring, from the official International Friendship Festival cake to the parade and speeches.



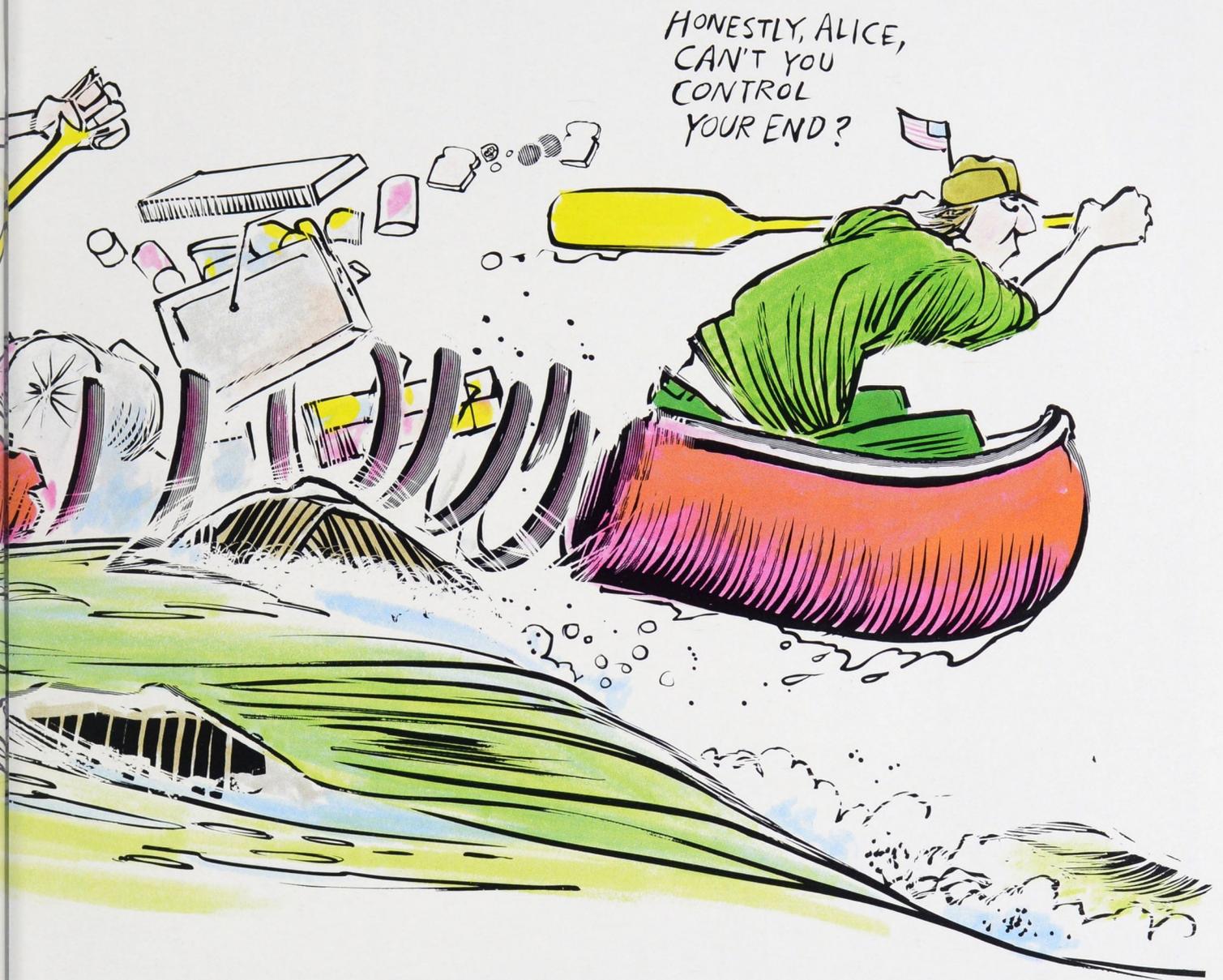


Sixteen Little-Known Facts About White

EDITOR'S NOTE: Spring's high water brings in the canoeing season, and eager canoeists climb into their boats and race downstream in rivers all over Vermont. It's an exhilarating, sometimes dangerous sport, and we hereby officially caution all would-be river-runners to don wetsuits and life jackets before attempting the frigid streams of early spring. It also pays to attempt only water within your ability, as this minor classic from the pen of White River Valley Herald editor and publisher M. Dickey Drysdale aptly suggests. Drysdale first published his article in the Herald under the headline "How Not to Do It" after a mildly disastrous trip on the White River. He says he is "older and wiser" now.

Things you might not know if you never tried canoeing the White River without quite knowing what you were doing:

1. There's a lot more water in there than you think.
2. However, there's not quite enough water to cover the rocks.
3. There are a lot more rocks in there than you think.
4. Shouting at the canoe will not make it turn to avoid the rocks.
5. Shouting at your partner will not make the canoe turn to avoid the rocks.
6. The current moves considerably more rapidly than you might think.



water Canoeing

By M. DICKEY DRYSDALE Illustrated by JEFF DANZIGER

7. Sometimes white water indicates the presence of a rock, but sometimes it does not.
8. Sometimes the presence of a rock is indicated only by the THUNK on the bow of your canoe.
9. When your canoe strikes a rock, it promptly turns broadside to the river.
10. When you are broadside to the river, it is very easy and natural for the current to flow right into the canoe.
11. When there's water in them, canoes tip over easily.
12. Canoe paddles can move right along downstream all by themselves.
13. The water in the White River in May is not meant for swimming.
14. An overturned canoe, wedged against a rock with the current flowing into it, weighs several tons.
15. Jack Kennedy over in Chelsea has a power winch which is about the only thing that will get a wedged canoe out of the river.
16. It takes a long time to get warm and dry again. ∞



Spring Lamb

By ANDREA CHESMAN

Photographed by BECKY LUIGART-STAYNER

Some New Variations On an Old Vermont Theme

EVERY TIME I told someone that I was working on an article about lamb, I got one of two responses. Those who offered me their favorite recipes turned out to be outlanders in a previous existence. The born and bred Vermonters simply turned up their noses.

Native Vermonters often do not like lamb. Shocking, but true in the way that many of those descriptions of native Vermonters are.

Why? I had my theories and asked Becky Cassel, a shepherd from East Fairfield, who confirmed them.

"Vermont used to be sheep country," Cassel explained. "Those people with bad memories of eating lamb as kids — they weren't eating lamb, they were eating mutton. They must have had some pretty horrendous meals in their time." Cassel sells lamb kabobs at festivals, and offers a money back guarantee to those who think they hate lamb. Few have ever taken her up on her offer.

In the old days, when sheep outnumbered people, the sheep industry was dedicated to producing wool. Meat was a by-product and the lambs that were slaughtered were older than those slaughtered today. Lambs weren't grain-fed, and they certainly weren't bred for tenderness. The wool industry went bust by the turn of the century, but mutton — the meat from fully grown sheep — and lamb remained available, especially during

World War II, when unscrupulous grocers were passing off mutton as lamb in the days of meat rationing.

Today, about 300 shepherds raise 15,000 to 18,000 Vermont lambs annually for meat, and roughly 75 percent of the meat is raised for consumption right in the state. It has been easy to find Vermont lamb in the supermarket year-round since about 1985. And if you think you don't like lamb, or if you have a memory of your grandmother serving you something gamy and greasy, perhaps it is time to give Vermont lamb a chance.

Vermont lambs are slaughtered at a tender four months of age as a rule, which isn't the case for all lamb. I remember scrimping on the food budget and buying New Zealand "lamb" a few years ago. By definition, lamb is no more than a year old. Those so-called lambs were probably slaughtered between 12 and 20 months of age, resulting in a tough piece of meat euphemistically known as "yearling lamb." Steer clear of foreign impostors. Even "American lamb," raised out on the western range, tends to be tougher and older than Vermont lamb.

In recent years there has been something of a revolution among chefs concerning the proper way to handle lamb in the kitchen. My meat thermometer suggests that lamb should be roasted to 175° F. But any chef will tell you that lamb is best eaten pink and rare, like

prime ribs. Roast it to 140° for rare (150° for medium), and don't overcook.

My favorite way to prepare lamb is to make a roasted leg of lamb. I have prepared it with the bone in, but it is much easier to carve when you have the butcher bone and butterfly the leg. Then it is rolled and tied for roasting.

For extra flavor, I cut tiny slits in the meat and insert slivers of garlic. Then I sprinkle the meat with a little thyme and rosemary. The meat is seared for 15 minutes at 450° F. and then roasted at 350° until a meat thermometer measures 140°. I remove the lamb from the pan and deglaze the drippings with 2 cups of beef broth and a touch of red wine, which I reduce to the consistency of a light syrup. The lamb is carved at the table and the sauce is passed along side it. Prepared this way, the meat is juicy, tender, and very flavorful.

Cassel suggests having the butcher slice the leg into 1½-inch steaks and grilling the steaks over a charcoal flame.

We both think the leg has the best flavor and tenderness, although many prefer a rack or chops. You can cut the leg up to make stew or kabobs or stir fries, though the shoulder is often used for those. Whatever the cut, trim away all visible fat. The fat is very strongly flavored and its taste is unpleasant.

Recipes

LAMB MEATBALLS WITH CURRIED FETTUCCINE (pictured on page 44)

The slightly gamy flavor of lamb stands up nicely to the assertive spices in this dish.

LAMB MEATBALLS

2 slices whole-wheat bread
1 pound ground lamb
¼ cup chopped onion
¼ cup chopped parsley
2 garlic cloves, chopped
1 egg
1 teaspoon salt
1 tablespoon cumin
¼ to ½ teaspoon cayenne

SAUCE AND PASTA

3 tablespoons butter
1 teaspoon garam masala*
1 teaspoon turmeric
⅓ cup chopped shallots
3 tablespoons flour
2 cups chicken broth or stock
1 tablespoon lemon juice
1 cup half-and-half
12 ounces fettuccine
1½ cups halved cherry tomatoes

* Available at specialty food stores. Curry powder can be substituted.



If you think you don't like lamb, perhaps it's time to give Vermont lamb a chance.

Preheat oven to 400° F.

Soak the bread in running water under the tap. Squeeze out the excess water and combine with the remaining meatball ingredients in a food processor fitted with a steel blade. Process until well mixed.

Form the meat into 2-inch meatballs and place on a very lightly oiled or nonstick baking sheet. Brown in the oven 15 to 20 minutes, turning once halfway through the baking. Drain on paper towels.

To make the sauce, melt the butter in a medium-size saucepan. Add spices and simmer over low heat, stirring constantly, for 1 minute. Add shallots and sauté until the shallots are limp, about 2 minutes. Sprinkle the flour over and work in with your spoon to form a smooth paste. Gradually stir in chicken broth and half-and-half. Add the tomatoes. Simmer while you cook the fettuccine.

Cook the fettuccine in plenty of boiling salted water until just *al dente*. Drain and pour onto a warmed serving platter. Pour the sauce over and toss. Add meatballs and toss again. Serve immediately. Serves 4.

SOUVLAKIA (pictured above)

These kabobs make wonderful picnic and party fare.

¼ cup olive oil
¼ cup red wine vinegar
2 garlic cloves, minced
2 bay leaves
1 teaspoon dried marjoram
1 teaspoon dried thyme
1½ pounds lean lamb, cut into 1-inch cubes
1 cucumber, seeded and finely chopped

2 tomatoes, seeded and finely chopped
¼ cup finely chopped onion
½ cup plain yogurt
Salt and pepper to taste
Pita pockets

Combine oil, vinegar, garlic, and herbs. Add the lamb and toss to thoroughly coat with the marinade. Cover and refrigerate overnight or at least 8 hours. Turn the lamb over a few times as it marinates.

Prepare a relish topping by combining the cucumber, tomato, onion, and yogurt. Add salt and pepper to taste.

Thread the meat onto 8 presoaked bamboo skewers. Grill over white hot coals for 10 minutes on each side, basting with marinade from time to time. The meat is done when it is still faintly pink inside.

While the meat cooks, preheat the pita pockets. Serve kabobs with the relish topping and pita pockets and allow each person to assemble his/her own sandwich. Serves 4 to 8.

MEDITERRANEAN LAMB STEW

Many people are familiar with Irish stew, a layered casserole of potatoes and lamb, seasoned with onion and a touch of thyme. For a change of pace, consider this tasty stew made with the sunny flavors of the Mediterranean. It can be served over orzo, a rice-shaped pasta, or with a crusty loaf of French bread. A salad of mixed greens completes the meal.

For stew, I prefer to use leg of lamb, cut in bite-size pieces, but any cut will do. Be sure to trim off as much fat as possible.

2-3 pounds lamb, cut in bite-size pieces

⅔ cup flour
1 teaspoon dried thyme
1 teaspoon dried basil
½ teaspoon powdered garlic
½ teaspoon salt
2 tablespoons olive oil
1 large onion, diced
1 green pepper, diced
12 ounces mushrooms, sliced
1 (28-ounce) can peeled tomatoes with juice
1 cup lamb stock or beef bouillon
1 teaspoon dried thyme
1 teaspoon fennel seeds
1 teaspoon dried basil
Salt and pepper to taste
1 cup oil-cured black olives
½ cup dry red wine
¼ cup chopped fresh basil or parsley

Trim off any fat from the lamb. Combine flour with 1 teaspoon thyme, 1 teaspoon basil, powdered garlic, and ½ teaspoon salt. Toss to coat the lamb.

Heat oil in a stew pot. Add lamb and brown the meat over medium heat, about 5 minutes. Remove lamb from pot and add onion and green pepper. Sauté until limp, about 3 minutes. Add the mushrooms and sauté until limp, about 5 more minutes. Return the meat to the pot along with tomatoes, lamb stock or bouillon, thyme, fennel, basil, and salt and pepper to taste. Simmer for about 40 minutes. Add olives and wine and continue to simmer for another 30 minutes. Just before serving, taste again for salt and pepper, and add the fresh basil or parsley. Serves 4 to 6.

Andrea Chesman is a food writer and editor who lives in New Haven.

Vermont
ENTERPRISE



Long Wind Farm

Where the Tomatoes Grow Big and Early

LONG Wind Farm's reputation is based on tomatoes — very early tomatoes.

In January tomato seeds sprout in the East Thetford farm's propagation chamber. In mid-February the seedlings are transplanted into greenhouses. In mid-May, out of season and against the odds, the first tomatoes ripen and are sold at Long Wind's farm stand. You can't miss it: The shutters are painted tomato red.

For the past few years Long Wind Farm has produced the earliest commercial greenhouse tomatoes in Vermont, no mean achievement considering the glacial North Country winters. And throughout the season, tomatoes are a big crop. In 1989, the farm produced 35,000 pounds, 50 percent of which were sold at the farm stand, the rest at stores around the Upper Connecticut Valley.

For owner Dave Chapman, there's the added satisfaction of knowing his tomatoes are pesticide-free and certified organic by the Vermont Organic Farmers Association. Long Wind also produces a

full menu of other organic vegetables, strawberries and melons, bedding plants and perennials.

Ten years ago Chapman, originally from the farming country of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, worked for a Vermont truck farmer, taking his apprenticeship in vegetable cultivation and marketing. After that he rented a few acres and cultivated with a team of oxen. Eventually he started looking for farmland in the Connecticut River Valley, but he and his wife, Claudia Henrion, found the pickings slim.

"The real estate agents laughed," he recalled. "So we began to look further back in the hills. Then we heard about a piece along the river. It was being sold privately. Five acres of tillage, beautiful sandy soil, no stones. It was just blind luck."

Today Long Wind Farm, named for the breezes along the river, has 10 acres in cultivation, nine greenhouses, two dwellings, and the roadside stand beside the bridge that crosses the Connecticut to Lyme, New Hampshire.

If you pry a bit, Chapman will confirm that as far as he knows Long Wind's hot-water, sub-soil greenhouse heating system was the first in the state. So were the two rolling plastic greenhouses.

Over the past two years, business has more than doubled. During the peak growing season, the farm employs up to nine people and the stand is open seven days a week. During most of the



Photograph by Jon Gilbert Fox

Dave Chapman and some of his famous tomatoes.

winter months, the farm supports a staff of three. Farming without pesticides is one of the big attractions of the job.

Chapman says that there are plenty of good reasons to farm organically. "I don't want to live with a bunch of bags of stuff I'm scared of in the barn. There are health problems with the pesticide residues, and with the production of pesticides and chemical fertilizer. There are groundwater problems. The water under a big commercial greenhouse is a disaster."

But farming for the health of the environment has its price. At Long Wind, it takes two days to spread compost and fertilize an acre of land. With chemicals it could be done in an hour. Strawberries are difficult to grow because of the extra hours required to hand weed the plants. Field tomatoes present another difficulty. The cool damp

mornings by the Connecticut River often trigger tomato blight. A chemical farmer would spray with chemical fungicide, but the Long Wind crew had to experiment with different plant varieties and growing techniques to solve the problem.

Chapman believes Long Wind gets much more than healthy food and early tomatoes for its emphasis on organic farming: It gets taste.

"At Long Wind, this is the most important thing we aim for," he says. "I think that growing organically helps us a lot. Certain crops like organic carrots are famous for their superior taste. I don't know if that is why our strawberries and tomatoes taste so good, but something is working right."

— TIM MATSON

Long Wind Farm, Box 203, East Thetford, VT 05043

Instead of expanding, White hopes to succeed by emphasizing efficiency, diversity, and quality.

Maidstone Plant Farm

Quality Primroses And Perennials

ISOLATED in the chilly northern Connecticut River Valley, tiny Maidstone seems an unlikely spot for a flowering of horticultural creativity. But Tim White's thriving business there is a true hothouse of innovation.

White, 43, came to Essex County in the 1970s as a University of Vermont extension agent, but in 1976 he succeeded his father as the American representative of Clause Seed Co., a French flower-breeding firm. He traveled about the United States, sowing new blooms and expert advice among greenhouse growers.

Then, in 1985, he gave up this Johnny Appleseed existence and turned to growing his own perennials for the wholesale market. Today, Maidstone Plant Farm nurtures hundreds of species of flowering and ornamental plants, is the largest producer of primroses in the Northeast, and has pioneered new cold-weather growing techniques.

White has a horticultural pedigree that might be the envy of the Burpee family. His father, Lyman, was instrumental in launching the All-America Selections for



Photograph by Gary Fournier

Perennial producer Tim White is at home in greenhouses.

recognizing the best new varieties of vegetables and flowers annually; his grandfather, Kirby White, was a founder of the Ferry-Morse Seed Co.

Maidstone Plant Farm's roster of perennial varieties now approaches 300, but annuals are being added to keep greenhouse space filled more of the time. The primrose, Europe's number one pot flower and an old friend from the days with Clause, is the top income producer. About 20,000 primrose blooms go out each year, mostly during the Valentine and Easter seasons — although White has introduced them regionally as a Christmas flower.

The bulk of the more than 300,000 plants he ships yearly leave Maidstone as young seedlings in 32- or 50-cell flats, going out to other growers for as little as 30

cents per plant for perennials, less for annuals; a quarter to a third of the total are grown to maturity and potted, fetching anywhere from \$1.40 up to \$5, wholesale. Retail prices range widely.

Maidstone Plant Farm now sells all over New England, but building that market wasn't easy. In the spring of 1986, White was forced to dump more than half of what he grew because of buyers' misgivings about his novel approach to overwintering plants. Many perennials need to pass through a 12-week period of winter dormancy, or vernalizing, before they will bloom, and growers have traditionally brought their crops to maturity for overwintering. White carried plants through the cold months as tiny seedlings, then moved them to market at a small size in the spring. Buyers

didn't go for the underwhelming little seedlings at first; the next year, he resorted to giving customers free sample flats to get their attention.

Experimentation has been a hallmark of White's company. He has worked extensively in conjunction with the University of Vermont on overwintering temperatures, finding that even in unheated greenhouses in the Northeast Kingdom, the tenderest young shoots can be coaxed through the winter if covered with polyester blankets. White has even made something of a virtue of his northern location because he can put his perennials into dormancy a month ahead of competitors to the south, giving him a jump when it comes time to repot and move them to market in spring.

Instead of expanding, White hopes to succeed by emphasizing efficiency, diversity and quality. Twenty percent or more of what is grown is routinely discarded in order to maintain an exacting standard for the shipped product.

"There are two ways to survive in the greenhouse business," says White. "You can sell for less money, or you can do an exceptional job of growing and get more for each plant." For Maidstone Farm, the latter has proved a route to success.

— GARY FOURNIER

Maidstone Plant Farm, R.F.D. 1, Box 75, Guildhall, VT 05905

The school has made a name for itself with unusual one-year programs that give graduates the chance to find secure jobs.

Woodbury College

Making the Time To Educate Adults

FOR the single parent with limited time for school but in dire need of marketable job skills, few options exist. Most colleges require two or more years of study, much more time than is available to adult students. Fifteen years ago the founders of Montpelier's Woodbury College recognized this dilemma. Since then the school has made a name for itself with unusual one-year programs that have given its 650 graduates new starts and the chance to find jobs.

Today the school occupies a newly renovated building in Montpelier and offers programs in paralegal studies, mediation and conflict resolution, counseling and human relations, and — new this year — community planning. If Woodbury's programs aren't typical college fare, neither are its 125 full- and part-time students typical. Their average age is 33. Ninety-four percent are Vermont residents and 80 percent are women. Seventy-five percent are low income people. Many have had careers that were at a dead-end. Many were single parents trying to make ends meet with earnings from jobs with little future. The unaccepta-

ble situations they found themselves in provided their motivation. Woodbury's one-year programs fit the limited time they could carve out for an education.

The school's educational philosophy was conceived in South Woodbury in 1975 by Robert Brower, a Goddard College teacher, and Lawrence Mandell, a Northfield attorney. Brower's interests were in guidance and education; Mandell wanted to demystify the study of law.

The two came up with a plan to teach paralegal studies, then a relatively new educational concept. They quickly obtained \$125,000 in Comprehensive Employment and Training Act funds for the newly named "Woodbury Associates." In May 1975 Woodbury opened its doors to 17 students and three teachers.

"It was a new idea and caught the attention of people who could do something about it," said Mandell, who has remained with the school since its inception, and is now president. Brower left in the early 1980s to pursue other interests.

The school, then located on the Vermont College campus in Montpelier, was the first in Vermont to specialize in paralegal studies. Its paralegals, who left behind careers that ranged from carpentry to being housewives, have gone on to work in government and private agencies, business and the law. Twenty have become attorneys by "reading the law" while working as paralegals,



Woodbury College president Lawrence Mandell, on campus.

and then passing the state bar exam.

Woodbury eventually purchased a house on Elm Street in Montpelier and moved its classes there. In the early 1980s, the New England Association of Schools and Colleges accredited the school, and in 1986 it became Woodbury College. It branched out into teaching the practice of mediation, and established a dispute resolution clinic that helps families and others settle their differences.

Woodbury's newest program is community planning, a course designed to provide graduates who can help Vermont communities work with the state's new planning law, Act 200.

Tuition for a year is \$5,900, and 90 percent of the school's students receive some financial aid. Short intensive workshops and training are

also available to community members.

This year the school moved across Elm Street to an 8,000-square-foot building — once part of the old Montpelier Poor Farm — that has been renovated into a bright, modern structure of classrooms and offices.

But the professional education that goes on there is only part of what happens at Woodbury, according to Jean Olson, the school's director of development. "Students who come here are taking a giant step and a risk, and it is scary and frightening for them," she said. Building self-confidence and self-esteem is also an important part of what Woodbury does.

— ART EDELSTEIN

Woodbury College, 660 Elm Street, Montpelier, VT 05602



Running Past The Graveyard

*With Strength from the
Land, the Past, and Within*

By NATHANIEL TRIPP
Illustrated by EDWARD EPSTEIN

THERE IS A small graveyard on a hilltop about two miles from my house. It lies almost unnoticed in the roadside dust, across from what was once the neighborhood's one-room schoolhouse and has since been converted into a family home. I must have driven past this graveyard nearly a thousand times without giving it a second glance during the first decade I lived here; it is very small and has lain unused for almost a century. It was not until I began to run for exercise that I really became acquainted with it. More precisely, it was not until I had been running for about a year. Up to that time I couldn't make it that far.

I had started running during what is often lightly referred to as a mid-life crisis, but for me seemed more like a mid-life conspiracy of divorce, family loss and career ambushes designed to destroy my dream of raising a family in Vermont. Two thousand miles lay between me and my children, and prospective buyers were circling the property like wolves. Alone and under siege, I began to run, not out of a desire for self-improvement so much as sheer anger and a desire simply to survive. I pushed myself into going out for a run every day that first year, visibly defying the odds that I would give up and return to the city.

It was hard going at first, but eventually I was able to reach the graveyard on its little knoll. It was a logical halfway point where I could catch my breath for a moment before turning around and heading back home. There is a nice view to the

south, and perhaps this site was selected for that reason, though I suspect that the pocket of sandy soil that makes for easier digging here was also a major factor.

After appreciating the view for a moment, I would sometimes wander among the stones that time had canted this way and that; these were simple markers, just slabs, and sometimes less than that. Breathless, streaming sweat, poisons oozing from me, I would read the inscriptions and think about the souls who had, for me at least, left no other trace but this. They were the first settlers here. Like me, they had come up from the south following the banks of the Connecticut River. The view from the graveyard looks back along their route, and the footpath they used can still be traced past my own front door.

I, however, had arrived in Vermont via Interstate 91, and there were other profound differences as well. I came by choice, for one thing, with a set of "values" in mind. Most of the souls whose bones moldered beneath my feet had been driven by necessity. Their values were simplified by the need to survive, while what I was trying to wrest from the land was more philosophical than agricultural. Their struggle is written in stone.

If I were going to stay, it would not be as a dilettante. With little more than time and land on my hands between the meager harvests of free-lance work, I went to work on the highest, farthest corner of my place, stringing barbed wire and fixing up the tumbled-down stone wall and zig-zag fence. It gave me a strange and heady feeling to be at work up there, with the sky close above and the valley far below, my hands

shifting mossy stones that perhaps had not known a human touch in a hundred years. People had gotten tired, and the tireless woods returned. I wonder how those early settlers — mostly Scotsmen in this corner of Caledonia County — would feel if they could hear the skirl of coyotes floating above their cellar holes today, or see their tillage thick with trees. And what would follow me? Once the fence was up, I began to cut the trees from my own corner. Gradually the open land began to re-emerge, but the work I did up there was not so much productivity as simply a gesture of love.

Love of the land, however, is not always an easily afforded luxury. My own great-to-the-fourth-power grandfather came to Vermont after his father had been carried off by Indians. He settled on the western side of the state, but then his legs were crushed while clearing the land, and the duties of the farm fell upon the shoulders of his son, who was nine.

They are all buried there in the Champlain Valley clay, but there as here with each generation that followed fewer stayed. One by one they went west, until all that was left were the gravestones. So why was I here, especially now? I had no pretensions as a real farmer. I was even having trouble getting a year ahead on the firewood supply, and had resorted to building little log cabins of wet stuff on top of the cook stove to dry, running the risk of getting burned out and adding one more cellar hole to the neighborhood collection, marking the site where yet another settler had failed. I was running around their graves wearing nylon shorts and colorful rubber-soled shoes, and turning down city jobs offered on silver platters. At times I feared that if the dead could rise and speak, they would call me a nincompoop.

Often, while running, I found myself engaged in imaginary conversations with those spirits. From these it emerged that one characteristic we seemed to hold in common was tenacity. Also, we offered each other a certain degree of sympathy. I was particularly drawn to the grave of a woman who had died at 22 while giving birth. Beside her was the grave of the son she had borne during the last day of her life. He had lived for three months before rejoining her. This had all taken place during the winter, and it took only a little imagining to envision it being played out while the wind howled. I wanted to take them all in my arms, for in my mind they represented the family that I, too, had lost. I became the bereaved father, suckling his son with a bit of rag soaked in milk. When my own very real sons were with me, I rejoiced. The rest of the time I ran and ran.



I wanted to take them all in my arms, for in my mind they represented the family that I, too, had lost.

Meanwhile, I was drawing my own sustenance from things as intangible as moonlight. A snow crystal struck by the rising sun would sometimes be enough to get me through the entire day. And I was running farther, too, pausing at the graveyard less often. Most of the time I turned around and headed back again without missing a beat. Of course, the road itself went on past the graveyard, but it pitched steeply downward, then up, then down again before resuming a more reasonable level course. I longed to go on. The road continues deep into a valley beside a rough-and-tumble stream; it is a beautiful place which the settlers had forsaken long ago. But I didn't think I was capable of running that far. Those steep places beyond the graveyard seemed to present an insurmountable barrier, not unlike others confronting me. So I would turn and take what I could from the fields and the trees and the wild turns of weather.

In the depths of winter I replaced running with cross-country skiing. I measured that season by the colors of the waxes I used; blue was my favorite, matching the color of the sky and the shadows on snow. Purple and red meant it was time to start running again, dodging the mud puddles. Within

weeks, hepaticas would be winking with their pale blue eyes from the wooded roadside. Then the sod of the graveyard would erupt with violets and forget-me-nots, and I would plant an enormous vegetable garden in anticipation of the return of my boys for the summer.

The fourth spring was the last one I spent alone; it was the beginning of a new season in my life, a new marriage and new work. Everything seemed to happen at once; even the apple trees I had planted as whips years ago and nearly forgotten were suddenly covered with blossoms.

I ran past the graveyard, past the stone of the man who had lost his family, and the stone of his second wife and all the children they'd had together, and down the hill, and up the next hill, then down again to the flat, deserted valley road. It opened up for me and seemed to keep calling me forward farther, past the cellar holes where lilacs were in bloom. I ran 11 miles one day along this road, which is so seldom used that butterflies gather in pools on it, lapping up minerals. I would come upon them, flocks of coppers or azures or yellow swallowtails like patches of magic carpet. I would shout and spread my arms as I ran through them, and they would rise in a cloud, brushing me gently with their wings. ∞

Writer Nathaniel Tripp lives in Passumpsic. He wrote about canoeing with his sons in the Spring 1989 Vermont Life.



Dead Creek's Alive!

With Ducks, Herons, Loons, Rails, Geese...

By FRED STETSON

Photographed by LOUIS BORIE

ON THE wind-ruffled surface of a shallow pond about 75 yards away, what appeared to be a slate-gray boulder protruded from the water. Suddenly, the boulder moved and a long, black neck with snake-like curves stretched out in front of it, inches above the water.

It was a Canada goose, sneaking away from a nest of reeds occupied by his mate, who sat still, her neck in the same low and outstretched position geese assume to remain inconspicuous to raccoons, foxes and other predators.

No matter how inconspicuous they make themselves, you're still likely to see geese if you visit the state's 3,525-acre Dead Creek Wildlife Area in the wide-open spaces of Addison County. About 100 Canada geese nest at Dead Creek and as many as 10,000 may migrate through the area in the spring and fall. Another 250 species of geese, ducks, hawks, sandpipers, herons, woodpeckers, wrens and other birds have been identified there.

Named for its sluggish flow, Dead Creek is the 12-mile-long aquatic life source for Vermont's largest and most intensively managed state waterfowl area. More like a series of ponds and marshes than a creek, it meanders north through Bridport, Addison and Panton, and empties into Otter Creek in Ferrisburg.

While it is a well-known hunting ground, the area's diverse wildlife and scenic vistas also appeal to birders, photographers and canoeists, especially in the spring and fall.

Although Lake Champlain is nearby, you can't quite see it from Dead Creek. When you look west on a clear day, New York's Adirondack Mountains seem to rise from the fertile floor of the Champlain Valley. In the distant northeast, Mt. Mansfield and Camel's Hump, two of Vermont's highest peaks, jut into the sky. To the southeast, Snake Mountain, named for the shape of its distinctive, two-mile-long ridge, forms a 1,300-foot-high backdrop. A mile east of Dead Creek,



More than 30 years of work assure waterfowl a rich habitat.

a gentle, windswept ridge passes through the center of Addison, a town of 960 people with a few stores, a white Community Baptist Church and a century-old Town Hall. Neat farms with red barns and tall, shining steel-capped silos dot the landscape. Several are owned by Dutch families — the Gosligas, the Veldmans, the Buzemans and others.

At dusk in the early fall, ducks and geese swarm into the area, searching for feed amid the marshes and fields. As the sun falls and the light dims, you can hear the beating, whistling wings of the ducks, sometimes even before you see them. Then they suddenly appear and drop, swaying on a jagged course to a quick splash-

down in the darkened water.

Though awe-inspiring, this sight isn't entirely a miracle of nature. Wildlife biologists, led by Robert Fuller, a long-time University of Vermont natural resources professor, have worked since 1953 to develop Dead Creek into an ideal nesting and feeding ground. Due to their efforts, paid for with hunting license revenues, the waterfowl dine on a rich variety of feed.

State wildlife biologist Bill Crenshaw, a native of Tennessee with a master's degree in wildlife management from the University of Maine, has worked at Dead Creek since 1973. He likes to point out Dead Creek's acres of legumes, alfalfa, clover and trefoil, the four-acre pond of buckwheat and Japanese millet, and the pastures of corn, oats, and winter wheat.

And that's not all. Like hosts who want only the best for their guests, the Dead Creek staff mows the legumes. "It creates a nice, low, lush field — highly preferred by geese," Crenshaw explains. "Mow it a second time, and it's even better."

Equally important are the shallow ponds and creek tributaries the biologists impounded with dams. Here Crenshaw and his associates alter the water level, drawing it down at the right season to encourage growth of diverse plants, cre-



Dead Creek is in the middle of Addison County farmland, but it is cultivated to be as hospitable as possible to wildlife. The best way to see its many wild residents is by canoe.



When You Go...

ating cover and feed for wildlife.

"One time there were seven different species (of ducks) sitting right on that impoundment," Crenshaw said, pointing to the small observation pond a few hundred yards west of his home and office in the midst of the Dead Creek area. "By manipulating the water level, we create a very fertile area. Before, it was just a muddy stock pond."

As we sat in his green pick-up truck gazing at a pond, a red-tailed hawk floated along about 20 feet above the banks. In a few minutes we drove past tree swallows, their brilliant blue backs flashing as they flitted back and forth above the water, feeding on insects. About a dozen Canada geese nested on floating platforms built by the Dead Creek staff and placed in the middle of the ponds and streams, away from bank-side predators. Generally, the geese return to Dead Creek in March, nest in April, and produce five to six goslings in early May. In March, you may see flocks of 500 or 1,000 Canadas. Snow Geese also frequent the area in the spring and fall, and the list of ducks that visit Dead Creek includes mallards, blacks, green-wing teals, blue-wing teals, widgeons, galpers, gadwells, ringnecks, shovelers, common mergansers and hooded mergansers.

Last April a friend and I canoed much of Dead Creek, putting in near the Pantan Road bridge that crosses the northern end of the creek, and again at the Brilyea Dam at the head of the creek's east branch.

There was little perceptible current, but with a slight breeze at our backs we pushed along easily in the shallow water, which in the rainy spring has a muddy, light yellow-brown color.

Paddling kept us warm as we continued up the river in a gray, early morning overcast. There were misty clouds along Snake Mountain. Red-winged blackbirds, their brilliant red and yellow epaulets flashing, bounced from reed to reed, chattering furiously if we ventured too close to their nesting territory. In the distance, blue- and green-winged teal sailed back and forth before settling down in open patches of water.

Anglers with hand lines strung through small, whippy jigsticks plied the shores near the Stone Bridge Dam and access area a mile or so upstream. We made an easy portage around the small dam and continued our paddle.

As we approached Dead Creek's goose management area

Early morning and late afternoon in spring and fall are the times when wildlife is most active at Dead Creek. If you go in autumn, be sure to inquire about hunting season dates, whether you hunt or simply watch birds. Helpful information and maps showing six access and parking areas are available at the Dead Creek Wildlife Management Area office on Route 17 about a mile west of Addison Four Corners, tel. (802) 759-2398. Although you can walk or canoe through much of the area, trespassing is prohibited in the 600-acre goose management area, which is marked by signs.

D.A.R. State Park, seven miles southwest of Addison on Route 17, offers 71 beautiful campsites a stone's throw from Lake Champlain. The park is open from late May to Labor Day; reservations are recommended, tel. (802) 759-2354.

Nearby lodging includes the Strong House Inn and Emersons' Guest House in Vergennes, and the Chimney Point House near the Crown Point Bridge in Addison. The Strong Mansion, Crown Point, Fort Ticonderoga and the college town of Middlebury offer numerous attractions for visitors.

near Route 17, we could hear the familiar honking of Canada geese. Two or three times a lone goose, probably a gander, leaped from the water and flew in a wide circle about 50 feet above the surface, then passed directly over our heads before gliding, wings outstretched, back to his starting point.

Tall pines and oaks, flagged northward by southerly winds, stood at the edges of the east and west banks. At the Brilyea East Dam, the east branch of the creek deepens and narrows as it passes through rich, green fields and soft, pine-carpeted banks.

Three times we spotted dark patches of brown fur on top of mounds of reeds and bulrushes. When one of these moved, we knew we'd seen a muskrat.

Along the way we also saw a wary osprey high in a tree, and I wondered if it were the same one Crenshaw and I had observed a few days earlier. That bird had been magnificent, with a wingspan of more than four feet. It circled over Dead Creek, searching for a meal of bullhead or carp. Suddenly it dropped out of the sky and exploded into the water, feet first, but came up with nothing.

Again the osprey soared upward, then dove. This time, success! Even though you couldn't see the fish distinctly, you could sense there was something in the bird's talons. They remained extended as it flew, circled again and landed on the gray-white branch of a tall, dead tree.

Crenshaw marveled at the bird. Though widespread along the lower Connecticut River and occasionally seen passing through Vermont, the osprey hasn't nested in the state for years.

"Here, have a look," Crenshaw said, gesturing toward the 60-power spotting scope clamped onto the left window of his pick-up truck.

Perched on a rocking limb, the osprey held a bullhead in one talon and ripped the fish with his sharp beak. I could see his white breast and the black cheek patch on his white head.

"Boy, is he a pretty bird," Crenshaw said, directing a few seductive words toward the osprey. "Now wouldn't you like to nest here? Wouldn't you like it here — lots of nice managed marsh and fish . . ."

"Yup," he said, "you'd be one of the most famous ospreys in Vermont." 

Fred Stetson is a free-lance writer who lives in Burlington. He has been a frequent contributor to Vermont Life over the years.

Life in the Fox Lane

At Home with A Den Full of Red Foxes

*Written and photographed
by TED LEVIN*

LATE ONE DAY in May, I first saw the fox pups. With binoculars I followed their silhouettes as they pranced and bounced along the crest of the hill. When the pups stopped moving they faded into the hill like shadows. No movement, no foxes. The vixen was around but I never saw her. She glided through the woods on the far side of the hill, a specter of the night. A twig snapped. A shadow barked. I measured her presence and influence by the movement of the kits. Every rustle drew their attention, and when she spoke, they froze. The vixen ran a tight ship.

But you'd think she'd have found a better spot for her den. Its main entrance was 60 feet from Route 5 — a well-used state highway that parallels the Connecticut River — and 15 feet from the Boston & Maine railroad tracks. I imagined what the rumble of the midnight train would sound like to a family of foxes tucked in a dark passage four feet below the ground.

One hundred yards north of the den, the hillside flattens into a broad alfalfa field, and to the south a tangled slope of brambles and perennials runs for more than a mile. In addition to the train and the highway, there is the clanking of farm equipment from the hayfields down by the river. Bicycles and canoes pass all day long. Yet the vixen and her family — three pups and the adult male — subsisted in the center of this hectic rural

world. Their territory was varied, the game abundant.

When I returned the next afternoon, all three pups were lying in the sun on a bare patch of ground just below the crest of the hill. They paid no attention to my car until the door swung open. Then they plunged downhill, disappearing into their burrow as though sucked into the ground.

The main entrance to the burrow was hidden from the road by a saddle of packed soil. I assembled my camera gear and waited. In a few minutes a pair of ears poked up from the saddle. Then a nose. More ears. And eventually, three pups. They were gray and dull, rusty brown, the color of bare earth, and blended into the hillside so well that bicyclists slowing down to inspect my activity never noticed them. Once the pups emerged from behind the saddle, they shed their fears and began to play. One batted around a piece of woodchuck hide while the other two gently chewed and pawed at each other's faces.

As long as I kept my distance they paid no attention to me. To them my laughter was no more threatening than the wind or the whine of tires along Route 5. And at times I found it hard to stop laughing. The pups had no sense of balance and only a rudimentary sense of the princi-

Red fox pups are cute, but to survive they must learn to be successful predators.





ples of gravity. As their play became frenzied, one leaped onto the other and the two tumbled off the saddle, head-over-tail downhill. The solitary pup, too, had a hard time staying on all fours. Twice he took a break from playing with the woodchuck hide and started scratching so vigorously that he fell over and rolled downhill as well.

Red fox pups, born blind and helpless, are covered with a dense grayish-brown wool, and except for their white-tipped tails there is little to suggest they are red foxes. Although their eyes open in nine days and they walk in three weeks, they stay below ground for their first month. Adult foxes may move their families two or three times before the pups are six weeks old. Often a litter is split between two dens, which reduces the concentration of external parasites — like fleas and ticks — and ensures that a catastrophe will not wipe out the entire litter at once. When the pups are moved, their playthings — wings and bones and hides — go with them.

I guessed the pups to be seven weeks old, and their den, as I far as I could tell, was their birthplace. Red foxes may use a den over and over, sometimes for generations. When a plane passed over, the three pups stopped playing and watched with rapt attention. Cars and trucks had no effect on them, neither did bicycles. But a bark or a yip from a parent triggered

When a plane passed over, the pups stopped playing and watched with rapt attention. But a bark or a yip from a parent sent the kits scrambling.

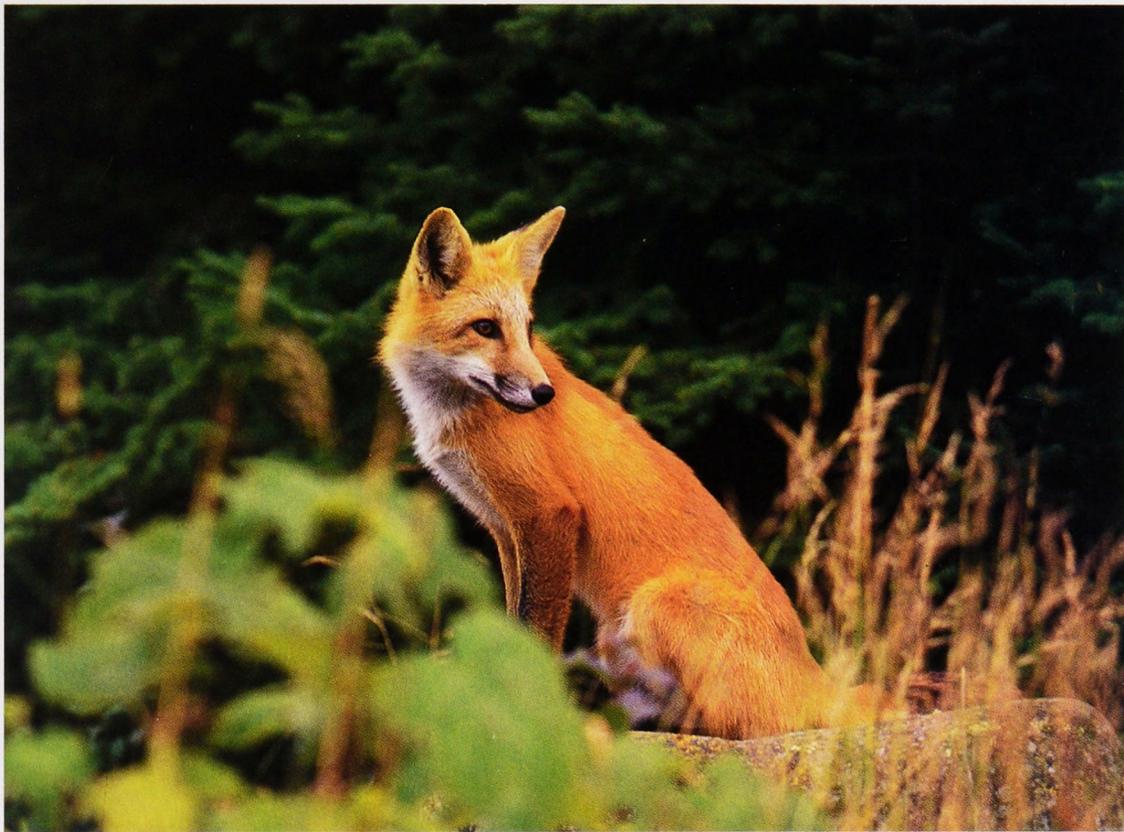
a mad rush to the burrow or sent the kits scrambling into the woods and down a rear entrance to their den.

Fox dens have several entrances. Often the pups would enter via the saddle and reappear on the top of the hill. Late that fall, months after the family had dispersed, I crossed the railroad tracks and found the foxes' rear entrance. An auxiliary burrow fashioned beneath the roots of an old paper birch led back 30 feet into the hill. This was no record for fox excavation; they are known to dig tunnel systems more than 75 feet long.

I could tell by the deep trails that cut through the grasses and brambles that foxes had been drawn to this sandy hillside for years. There is a diversity of cover and plenty of food. The earth is easy to dig, and the railroad tracks made an easy path to the far reaches of the foxes' territory. If the fox pups could handle the noise and avoid being hit by a car or train, I thought, they'd have it made. I was wrong.

Later that afternoon I spotted the vixen coming down the railroad tracks. She had been hunting in the pasture north of the burrow and was heading home with a mole in her mouth. Her gait was strange, for with each step she hitched to the right as though walking half on, half off some imaginary curb. When she passed just below the burrow, the vixen started up the hill. She limped. As she drew parallel to my car, I saw that she was hobbling on three legs. Her right foot was missing, chewed off, probably, in desperation to escape from a leg-hold trap. Local trappers insisted that the vixen's leg must have been shot off during deer season, or that she had stepped on glass or been run over by a train. No matter how the loss occurred, the fox's pouncing days were behind her.

The following spring, I returned to the railroad tracks and found some bleached woodchuck bones and damaged mallard



Photograph by Tom Dietrich/Stock Imagery

feathers, but no sign of the foxes. Ranks of horsetails and sensitive ferns crowded the saddle, and the mouth of the burrow, widened by snow melt and rain, was plugged with leaves and cobwebs.

After hearing of my interest in red foxes, two kids at a Montshire Museum program reported that a pair with pups lived on their parents' dairy farm in Norwich, half a mile south of the empty den. The foxes were active all day, they said, and were easy to watch. They had already approached celebrity status among the kids of Norwich. A Brownie troop, the farmer's five children, and all of their friends enjoyed fox watching. So did the farmer, and I wanted to see these foxes for myself.

However, the three-legged vixen was not at the new den. Dead, I assumed. One of the vixen's daughters and the father, or perhaps a brother or wayfaring young male looking for a territory, had decided to forsake the railroad den site for the sloped pasture of the dairy farm.

Again, there were three pups. And again, I kept abreast of their domestic affairs. There were three dens this year. The first, the largest and most important of their three homes, faced the Connecticut River so that when the sun moved above the New Hampshire hills it warmed the brown earth and the brown pups. Above the ground a worn footpath threaded from the front door to the back.

T*he vixen, who rested in a gully at the base of the knoll, knew every footstep of every cow and every shuffle of the farm children.*

Below, a tunnel with barely enough elbow room for an adult red fox led into the den and out the back door.

The vixen, who often rested in a gully at the base of the knoll, knew every footstep of every cow and every shuffle of the farm children. The male fox, yellowish-red like fresh-plowed earth, sat at the crest, where he could see the farmhouse door slam or hear the tractor start. There was no surprising this fox family.

Their home was a stolen one. The original owner, architect and builder was a woodchuck, now deceased. The red foxes

ate the woodchuck (as red fox often do) and left its shredded hide for their pups to cut their teeth on. During the second week in May, the foxes moved off the grassy knoll and renovated yet another den. Their second home, across the farm road and midway up a wooded slope, faced the pasture. Here the foxes were in deep shade until 11 a.m., when less than two hours of filtered sunlight began to sprinkle through the canopy. The entrances, less than 50 feet from the farm road, were guarded by the exposed roots of a balsam fir and a big white pine, as though the foxes meant to hold back larger animals — coyotes, perhaps, or the farm dogs.

The new home was perfect. There were no heavy-footed cows, no noisy grackles and red-winged blackbirds, and as the days grew hotter and stickier, the pups stayed cool in the shade. If something startled them, they rushed toward the fir — half running, half sliding — and dove between the roots. In a moment, a pair of little ears and a moist black nose poked back out, as though the pups were playing peek-a-boo.

Early one morning as I sat in my car watching the pups play, three crows broke the silence with a loud volley of discordant caws. I could see them now and again through a weft of branches, black and noisy above the hill, announcing that a predator had marched into the

open across the upper pasture.

The pups knew this too as they ran up the wooded slope to meet their mother.

The first pup up got the prize, a half-grown ruffed grouse. He seized the limp bird in his mouth and trotted toward the den, half blinded by the grouse's wings, which bounced back and forth across his eyes like a Mardi gras mask. The other two pups were right behind.

Out of the corner of my eye I saw the male walking up the farm road. Within 20 feet of my car, he stopped and stared. In his mouth was a vole. The crows missed this fox; the pups hadn't. One meadow vole does not go far with three red fox pups. But this spring the meadow vole population had peaked. They were everywhere and easy to catch. I caught three by hand, one in the front yard as I mowed the lawn. And almost nightly on the interstate, plump little voles — the roly-polies of the rodent world — scooted in front of my car.

As far as I could tell, voles accounted for most of the red foxes' diet that summer. Each thin, tapering scat I examined consisted of vole fur and vole bones, and sometimes teeth. Uncut meadows, tall and green with hints of golden Alexander, harbored hundreds of voles an



The foxes returned by dawn to bask in the sun like lazy farm dogs.

acre. To the dairy farmer, vole-eating foxes were welcome neighbors, for meadow voles — the most prolific mammal in North America and perhaps the world — eat lots of grass and if unchecked by predators have the ability to overrun their habitat.

That's one reason foxes are valuable parts of nature's fabric. The average adult red fox needs 5.7 pounds of food per week. A meadow vole weighs about an ounce and a half, or about 11 voles to the

pound. When the voles are numerous, foxes eat almost nothing else. That is to say, more than 300 meadow voles per week — a rather conservative estimate — are needed to keep a family of five red foxes happy and healthy. To the farmer this is money, for 300 voles — with their rapid metabolism and nervous disposition — crop grass almost as fast as a calf.

Two weeks later the foxes moved back to the sunny south-facing knoll and to the heart of vole country. Their third den, close to the crest, included a sweeping panorama of the river valley. In late May, when the pups were about 10 weeks old, they began to explore the meadow and wooded hillside. At dusk they accompanied their parents on hunting forays, returning by dawn to bask in the sun like lazy farm dogs. Whether in the presence of people or red foxes, repose is contagious. So, as the morning sun warmed the air, I rolled down my car windows, laid back my car seat, and nodded off.

Ted Levin, a naturalist, photographer and writer, lives in West Fairlee. His first book, Backtracking, the Way of a Naturalist, was published in 1987 by Chelsea Green Press.

The Tale of the Red Fox

RED FOXES live throughout most of North America, from the high arctic into the southeastern lowlands, by-passing only the arid Southwest and coastal California. When I studied mammals in college, we called the North American red fox *Vulpes fulva*, which distinguished it as a separate species from the Eurasian red fox, *Vulpes vulpes*. Now the relationship between the two species of red fox is clouded, and most authorities agree that red foxes are the same species on both sides of the Pacific. Since the Old World fox was described first, the name *Vulpes vulpes* has replaced *Vulpes fulva*.

What complicates the issue is that some biologists suggest that prior to

the arrival of Europeans the red fox was absent or scarce over much of North America. In the middle of the 18th century, European colonists — missing the sport of kings — brought the Eurasian red fox to America and over the next 50 years the animals spread throughout southern New England and the middle Atlantic states. A century later they had reached as far south as Georgia. If red foxes were present prior to these introductions, then the animals here now are mongrels — hybrids with both Old and New World blood.

But pre-Columbian fossils taken from Pennsylvania caves and archeological digs are all from gray, not red, foxes, and the artist John James

Audubon believed that much of 18th century America was without red foxes. So where was the true North American red fox at the time the Mayflower dropped anchor? They were apparently in the far north — in the arctic and subarctic.

Blood typing by biologists indicates that the Vermont red fox of today is probably a flatlander — a descendant of the introduced strain of Eurasian fox.

Vermont's native gray fox, a woodland, tree-climbing fox not often seen in fields and pastures, became scarce as forests yielded to farms. They are still found across the state, but are most common in the wooded portions of the Champlain Valley.

— TED LEVIN

CALENDAR

of Spring Events

Compiled by

ALBERTA M. MATTON

Note: All dates are inclusive. Because the listings were compiled last winter, there may be changes in times or dates. For additional information on Vermont, call the Vermont Travel Division, 134 State St., Montpelier, VT 05602 (tel. 802-828-3236), or visit local information booths. To submit events, contact the Travel Division.

Special Events

MARCH

- 6: **Town Meeting Day.**
- 10: **Model Railroad Show.** 10 a.m.-4 p.m. So. Burlington Middle Sch. Info: 524-4429. **St. Patrick's Corned Beef Supper.** Fair Haven Cong. Church, 5-7 p.m. Info: 265-8605. **Burke Mt. Cajun Crawfish Fest.** E. Burke. Info: 626-3305.
- 17: **St. Patrick's Day Cele.** Burke Mt., E. Burke. Info: 626-3305.
- 20: **First Day of Spring.**
- 23: **Addison County Home, Garden & Industry Show.** Middlebury U.H.S. Info: 388-7951.
- 30-April 1: **Newport Home, Recreation, Garden and Auto Show.** National Guard Armory, Union St. Info: 334-7782.

APRIL

- 7: **Vt. Science Fair.** 9:30 a.m., Norwich Univ., Northfield. Info: 485-2082.
- 20-22: **23rd Vt. Maple Festival.** Arts & crafts, maple exhibits. St. Albans. Info: 524-5800.
- 28: **Green Mt. Dollhouse & Miniature Show & Sale.** 10 a.m.-4 p.m., Riverside Jr. H.S., Springfield. Info: 885-2830.



Best Bet

EARTH DAY IN VERMONT

Vermont is known for its devotion to a healthy natural environment, and on April 22 groups around the state will observe the 20th anniversary of the first Earth Day. Among the events planned to mark concern about the state of the environment — and the state's environment:

- **April 16-20:** Environmental displays at the State House in Montpelier, all day.
- **April 22-29:** Displays and workshops at Vermont Law School in South Royalton on such topics as solid waste, pollution, global warming, and energy conservation. Info: 763-8235.
- **EARTH DAY (April 22):**
 - Woodstock:** Parade and events all day, Vermont Institute of Natural Sciences. Info: 457-2779.
 - Burlington:** Events focusing on Lake Champlain. "Global Town Meeting" to discuss worldwide environmental issues. Info: 244-7347.
 - Rutland:** Earth Day Parade sponsored by the Rutland County Audubon Society. Info: 273-3834 (eve.)

Many other local events are planned. For more information on all Vermont Earth Day observances, call the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources recycling hotline: 800-932-7100 (Vermont callers only), or 802-244-7831 (out-of-state or Waterbury-Montpelier callers).

MAY

- 5: **Vt. Green-Up Day.** Statewide. Info: 447-3311. **Dorset Rum-mage Sale.** 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Info: 867-5773.
- 12: **Maple-Sugar-Cured Ham Supper.** Fair Haven Cong. Church, 5-7 p.m. Info: 265-8605.
- 19: **Vermont Bird-A-Thon.** Dawn to dusk, statewide. To benefit Vermont Institute of Natural Sciences. Info: 457-2779. **Vt. Horse Council All-Breed Horse Fair.** South Woodstock, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Info: 728-9426.
- 26: **Bennington Mayfest.** 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Booths, food. Info: 447-3311.
- 27: **Bennington "Dust Off" Car Show.** Door prizes, trophies. Info: 447-3311.

Arts & Music

(See also Through the Season)

APRIL

- 1: **Sage City Symphony.** Zeke Hecker, a suite of orchestra dances. 8 p.m., Shaftsbury Elem. School. Info: 823-7330.
- 6: **Vermont Mozart Festival.** Menahem Pressler and Friends. 8 p.m., 1st Cong. Church, Burlington. Info: 862-7352.
- 20-22: **20th Earth Day Film Fest.** 7:30 p.m., Middlebury College. Info: 388-3711, ext. 5697.
- 26: **Bennington Arts & Crafts Fest.** Info: 442-9624.
- 28-29: **21st Vermont Ceramic Show.** Essex Jct., 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Info: 888-2146. **Festival of Quilts.** College of St. Joseph, Rutland. 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Info: 775-1323.
- 29: **Vt. Philharmonic Concert.** 4 p.m., Michael Arnowitt, piano, Barre Opera House. Info: 479-1701.

MAY

- 19-20: **Champlain Valley Quilt Festival and Museum Opening.** Shelburne Museum, 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Info: 985-3346.

Outdoors & Sports

MARCH

- 2: **Stratton Mt. Senior Skiers Day.** Info: 297-2200.
- 2-4: **Vt. Special Olympics.** Alpine and X-C. Sugarbush, Warren. Info: 583-2381.

- 3: **Burke Mt. Snowshoe Race.** E. Burke. Info: 626-3305.
- 3-4: **Vt. Lung Association Ski for Life and Breath.** Skiathon, Craftsbury Nordic Ski Center. Info: 863-6817.
- 3-10: **Green Mt. Snowboard Championships.** Stratton Mt. Info: 297-2200.
- 4: **38th Family Ski Tourn.** Mad River Glen, Fayston. Info: 496-3551.
- 7-11: **NCAA National Ski Championships.** Mt. Mansfield. Info: 253-7311.
- 9-11: **Sugarbush Corporate Classic.** Warren. Info: 583-2381.
- 10-11: **N.E. Junior Championship X-C Ski Races.** Ages 15-18. Craftsbury Nordic Ski Ctr. Info: 586-7767.
- 11: **Mad River Family Tournament.** Waitsfield. Info: 496-3551. **Juggernaut Alpine-XC Derby.** Killington. Info: 422-3333.
- 11-16: **Disabled Ski Championships.** Stratton Mt. Info: 297-2200.
- 13: **Blueberry Hill Pig Race.** Fun cross-country race, noon. Goshen. Info: 247-6535.
- 16-19: **Men's U.S. Pro Championship.** Sugarbush, Warren. Info: 583-2381.
- 17: **White House Triathlon.** Run, bike, ski. Noon, Wilmington. Info: 464-2136. **Paul Hogan Jack Jump Race.** Mt. Snow. Info: 464-3333. **Bolton Valley St. Patrick's Day.** Irish music, night skiing, Can-Am Games. Info: 434-2131. **Ski and Swing Fling.** Okemo. Info: 228-4041. **Craftsbury Sprints.** Half-km. 2 p.m. Nordic Ski Ctr. Info: 586-7767. **Smuggler's Notch Balloon Fest.** Jeffersonville. Info: 644-8851.
- 17-18: **Telemark Fest.** Eastern Championship Race. 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Mad River Glen, Waitsfield. Info: 496-3551.
- 18: **Craftsbury Spring Fling.** 30-km. X-C race, 10 a.m., Nordic Ski Ctr. Info: 586-7767. **Stowe Winter Carnival Bump Contest.** Info: 253-7321.
- 20: **Stratton Mt. School Ski-A-Thon.** Info: 297-2200.
- 23: **Stratton International Ski Classic.** Stratton Mt. Info: 297-2200.
- 24: **Burke Mt. Surf's Up Beach Party.** E. Burke. Info: 626-3305.
- 24-27: **Vintners Ski Invitation.** Ski & wine tasting events, Stratton Mt. Info: 297-2200.
- 26-April 15: **Sugarbush Spring Fling.** Triathlon; mogul, dual



What's Next ?

Circus Smirkus! A photo story about the Vermont kids who get the chance to run away with the circus for a summer, from learning to shine before an audience to learning to say goodbye to new friends. Photographs by Glenn Russell.

Bear with Us! Few people see any of Vermont's many bears, but they're here, and protecting their habitat is becoming an environmental issue.

Vermont, the Bread State. Well, nobody really calls it that, but Vermont might just have the best bakers, per capita, in the nation. Bread lover Andrew Nemethy takes us on a tour to meet some of the state's best.

Hiking History. The traditions of hiking in Vermont, from the concept of the Long Trail and the formation of the Green Mountain Club to today's attitudes toward walking the Vermont woods.

Plus, Addison County's historic Mt. Independence, the inns and outings of Weston, the New England Ox Pull comes to Tunbridge, and more!

- doubles races. Info: 583-2381.
- 30: **Burke Mt. Sugar on Snow.** E. Burke. Info: 626-3305.
- 30-April 1: **Bolton Valley Spring Fest.** Info: 434-2131. **U.S. Open Snowboarding.** Slalom, Super G & Halfpipe, Stratton Mt. Info: 297-2200.
- 31: **Craftsbury Mud & Ice Quadrathlon.** 10 a.m. Ski, mtn. bike, canoe, run. Nordic Ski Center. Info: 586-7767. **Vt. Special Olympics.** Ice skating tournament. Sugarbush, Warren. Info: 583-2381.
- 31-April 1: **Stratton Mt. Sch. Alumni Wknd.** Sat. race. Info: 297-2200.

APRIL

- 1: **Sugarbush Triathlon.** Run, paddle, bike, ski. 15 categories. Waitsfield. Info: 496-7909, 3127.
- 7-8: **Mt. Mansfield 50th Sugar**

- Slalom.** Racing, sugar-on-snow. Stowe. Info: 253-7311. **Glade-iator of the Year Contest.** Mt. Snow. 464-3333.
- 13-15: **Bolton Valley Easter Special.** Free skiing, egg hunt. Info: 434-2131.
- 14: **Trout Season Opens.**
- 14-15: **Stratton Mt. Easter Cele.** Info: 297-2200.
- 15: **Okemo Easter Celebration.** Ludlow. Info: 228-4041.
- 28-30: **West River Water Sports.** Whitewater boating, tubing. Noon, Jamaica State Park. Info: 824-8178.
- 29: **Annual March of Dimes Walk-A-Thon.** Bennington. Info: 447-3311.

MAY

- Early May: **14th Annual Bennington Road Race.** Info: 447-0414.

- 5-7: **West River Water Sports.** Whitewater boating, tubing. Noon, Jamaica State Park. Info: 824-8178.
- 26-27: **Sugarbush Spring Tennis Classic.** Mixed doubles, Warren. Info: 583-2391.
- 27: **Batten Kill Raft Race.** Noon, Arlington. Info: 442-1054.

Through the Season

- Helen Day Art Center.** 12-5 p.m., except Tues., Stowe. Info: 253-8358.
- Through March 31: Creative Eye, Talented Hand.
 - May: Student Art Exhibit.
- T.W. Wood Art Gallery.** Vt. College Arts Ctr., Montpelier. Tues.-Sun., noon-4 p.m. Info: 223-8743.
- Through March 19: Paintings by Janet Fredericks; also, the Barreda Collection of Peruvian artifacts, slides & films of So. America.
 - March 30-May 21: Landscape, Cityscape, Mindscape. Artists explore their internal and external environments.
- Montshire Museum of Science.** Exhibits and courses, Norwich. Info: 649-2200.
- Feb. 23-April 30: Microscapes. 50 photographs. The beauty of fiber optics, computer chips.
 - Feb. 28, March 7, 14: Parents & preschoolers. Helping parents teach children.
 - Begins March 1: Late Winter Explorations. After school science program.
 - Begins March 21: Animals at the Montshire. For parents and young children.
 - Begins March 22: Basic Bike Repair.
- Shelburne Museum.** Lecture series, 7:30 p.m. Info: 985-3344.
- Feb. 27: Formal and Informal Learning in Rural New England. Jack Larkin.
 - March 13: Early Vermont Furniture and Woodwork. William Hosley.
- The Bennington Museum.** Daily, 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Info: 447-1571.
- March 1: Special exhibits.
- Pentangle Council on the Arts.** Town Hall Theatre, Woodstock. Info: 457-3981.

- March 1: James Cotton Blues Band.
- March 16: Alison Krauss and Union Station.
- April 7: The New Black Eagle Jazz Band.
- April 26: Ballet du Nord.
- May 4: *Tartuffe*. Vt. Ensemble Theatre.

New England Camerata. 8 p.m. Hooker-Dunham Theater, Brattleboro. Info: 254-4897.

- March 1: David Breitman, forte-piano; Salvatore Macchia, double bass.
- May 17: John Ziarko, viola; Zon Eastes, cello.

Brattleboro Music Center

Chamber Concert Series. W. Brattleboro Mtng. House. Info: 257-4523.

- March 3: Windham Orchestra, Zon Eastes, conductor. 8 p.m.
- March 13: Faculty recital, Peggy James, violin. 7:30 p.m.

Middlebury College Concert

Series. Mead Chapel. 8 p.m. Info: 388-3711, ext. 5697.

- March 3: Claudio Jaffe, cello; Elizabeth Sawyer, piano.
- March 17: Vt. Symphony, Geoffrey Simon, conductor; Meredith Parsons, soprano.
- March 22: Trevor Pinnock, harp-sichord.
- April 1: New York Woodwind Quintet, Orion String Quartet.
- April 21: Orford String Quartet.

Crossroads Arts Series. Rutland area. Info: 775-5413.

- March 3: Concert Dance Company. 8 p.m., Mill River U.H.S., No. Clarendon.
- March 17: Alison Krauss & Tony Rice. 8 p.m., Mt. St. Joseph H.S.
- April 14: Perseverance Theatre. 8 p.m., Castleton Fine Arts Ctr.
- April 24: Ballet du Nord. 8 p.m., Castleton Fine Arts Ctr.
- May 6: *Harriet the Spy*. 1 & 4 p.m., Mill River U.H.S., No. Clarendon.
- May 11: The Drifters. 8 p.m., Mt. St. Joseph H.S.

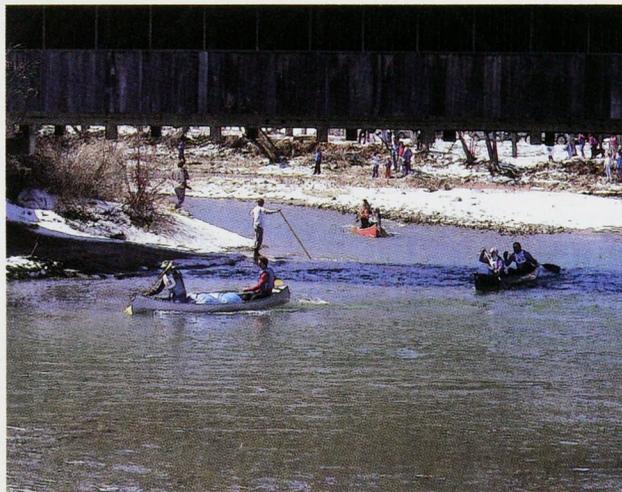
Capitol Chamber Artists. Music, narrative, theater. 8 p.m. Info: 537-3151.

- March 10: Celebrate the World, Burr & Burton Aud., Manchester.
- March 31: The Family Tree. Dorset Theater.
- April 28: A Zoological Fantasy. Poultney High School.

Green Mt. Audubon Nature Ctr. Sugar-on-Snow. Sundays, 1-4 p.m. Richmond/Huntington Rd. Info: 434-3068.

- March 11, 18, 25, and April 1.
- Lane Series.** Burlington, 8 p.m.

rites of spring



Triathlon, Waitsfield; photograph by Alan L. Graham.

Most people think of triathlons as races that involve running, swimming and bicycling. But in a Vermont spring they often become team quadrathlons that consist of a wild combination of canoeing down icy streams, skiing through slush, and speeding over wet or muddy roads on bicycles or on foot. No matter what the constituent events are, triathlons are a spirited leap into spring, and the weather is as much of a factor as the competition. Here are three of this spring's:

- **THE WHITE HOUSE TRIATHLON.** *March 17.* Run, bike, cross-country ski. Noon, Wilmington. Info: 464-2136.
- **CRAFTSBURY MUD & ICE QUADRATHLON.** *March 31.* Cross-country ski, mountain bike, paddle, run. 10 a.m., Crafts-bury Nordic Ski Center. Info: 586-7767.
- **SUGARBUSH TRIATHLON.** *April 1.* Run, paddle, bike, cross-country ski. Waitsfield. Info: 496-7909 or 496-3127.

Info: 656-4455.

- March 7: Pianist Vladimir Feltsman, Flynn Theatre.
 - March 26: *Big River*, Flynn Theatre.
 - March 30: Turtle Island String Quartet, Ira Allen Chapel.
 - April 5: Boston Consort of Viols; Lucy Shelton, soprano; Ira Allen Chapel.
 - April 10: Texas Opera Theatre, *H.M.S. Pinafore*, Flynn Theatre.
- Vermont Symphony Orchestra.** Info: 864-5741.

• March 9: Youth concerts, 9:30 a.m. & noon, Flynn Theatre, Burlington.

Concert series:

- March 10: 8 p.m., Flynn Theatre, Burlington.
- March 16: 8 p.m., Springfield H.S.
- March 17: 8 p.m., Mead Chapel, Middlebury.
- May 5: 8 p.m., Flynn Theatre, Burlington.

- May 6: 4 p.m., Mt. Anthony H.S., Bennington.
- May 11: 8 p.m., Opera House, Barre.
- May 12: 8 p.m., Col. of St. Joseph, Rutland.
- May 13: 4 p.m., River Valley Playhouse, Putney.

Catamount Arts. 7:30 or 8 p.m. Info: 748-2600.

- March 10: Three-fifths of Duck's Breath Mystery Theatre, St. Johnsbury Academy.
- March 23: Etta James, 8 p.m., Memorial Aud., Burlington.
- March 31: Franciscan String Quartet, Meth. Church, St. Johnsbury.
- April 4: Mummenschanz, St. Johnsbury Academy.
- April 26: *Tartuffe*. St. Johnsbury Academy.
- May 3: *The Wind in The Willows*. St. Johnsbury Academy.
- May 4: Kathy Mattea, 7 & 9:30 p.m., St. Johnsbury Academy.

Johnson State College Arts

Program. Dibden Center. Info: 635-2356, ext. 250.

- March 16: Maris Wolff concert, 8 p.m.
- April 6, 7, 11, 12: *The Crucible*. 8 p.m., also 10 a.m. on 11 & 12.
- April 30-May 3: J.S.C. Musical Ensembles. 8 p.m.

Onion River Arts Council.

Barre Opera House, 8 p.m. Info: 229-9408.

- March 15: Alison Kraus and Union Station. Bluegrass.
- April 27: *Tartuffe*. Vermont Ensemble Theatre.

Flynn Theatre Series. Burlington. Info: 863-5966.

- March 17: The Chieftans, 8 p.m.
- March 18: Maria and Luis of Sesame St., 1 and 4 p.m.
- April 6: Urban Bush Women, dance-theatre-music, 8 p.m.
- April 30: *Le Mystère des Voix Bulgares*, vocal ensemble, 8 p.m.
- May 11: Garth Fagan Bucket Dance, 8 p.m.

Chandler Series. Chandler Music Hall, 8 p.m., Randolph. Info: 728-5279.

- March 17: Craftsbury Chamber Players.
- April 7: Sounding Joy! and Central Vt. Brass.
- May 12: Folksinger Tom Rush.

Vermont College Brunch with Bach. Brunch at noon, followed by concert; Montpelier. Info: 223-8740.

- March 25: Steven Klimowski, clarinet.
- April 22: Marjorie Drysdale, soprano.

Norwich Univ. Performing Arts

Series. 8 p.m., Northfield campus. Info: 223-8740.

- March 27: Peter Cassino Jazz Quartet.
- April 17: Mount Holyoke V-8, vocal ensemble.

Oldcastle Theatre Co. 8 p.m., Tues.-Sat. Bennington. Info: 447-1267.

• April: Opening.

Champlain Valley Folk Concerts. Info: 849-6968.

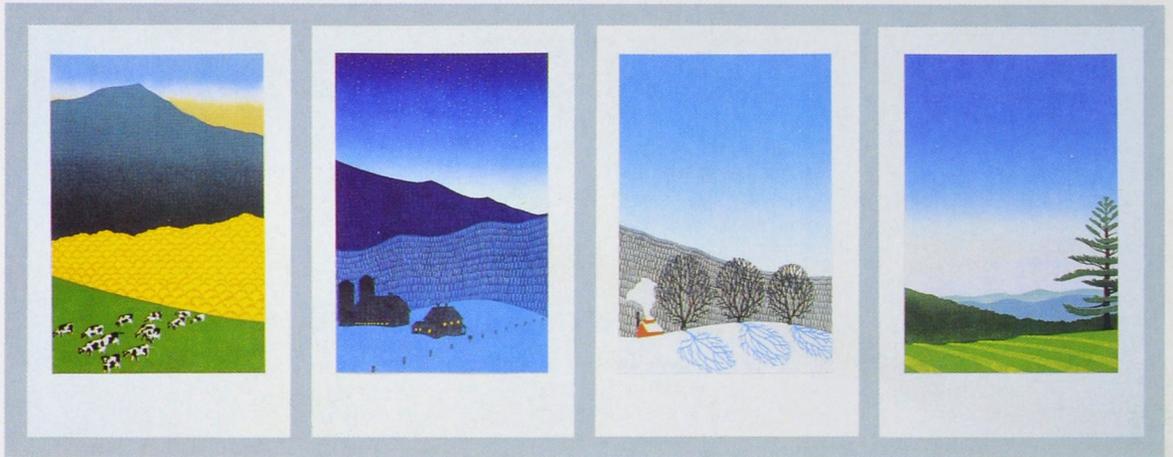
- April 4: Eric Bogle.
- April 20: Le Mystère Des Voix, Flynn Theater, Burlington.
- April 21: Vt. Maple Festival Fiddlers Concert, BFA H.S., St. Albans.
- May 11: Si Kahn, Burlington.

Billings Farm & Museum. Daily, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Woodstock. Info: 457-2355.

- May 1: Opening day.
- May 6: Plowing Match.
- May 20: Spring Farm Fest.

TWO GREAT PRODUCTS FROM NEW Vermont Life

Mountain Suite Note Cards *by Sabra Field*



Vermont's agricultural heritage, and the landscape it has shaped, are celebrated in the "Mountain Suite," a group of four woodcuts by the highly acclaimed printmaker Sabra Field. First available as original prints through *Vermont Life*, the artist has authorized their reproduction as note cards.

The four images represent Vermont's seasons, from autumn to summer, as they sweep down from the crest of the Green Mountains to the Connecticut River Valley.

Note cards are packed 12 to a box (3 each of 4 images) with envelopes. Give several to friends and at least one to yourself. $4\frac{3}{4} \times 7\frac{1}{4}$, \$5.95, MNC034

Vermont Coat of Arms Coffee Mug

from Bennington Potters

Made exclusively for *Vermont Life* by Bennington Potters, these handsome, 100% Vermont-made stoneware mugs are perfect for that hot beverage. Vermont's Coat of Arms is permanently fired onto the white glaze, and is microwave- and dishwasher-safe. A perfect gift for lovers of Vermont everywhere as the bicentennial approaches. 10-oz., \$9.95, MUG033

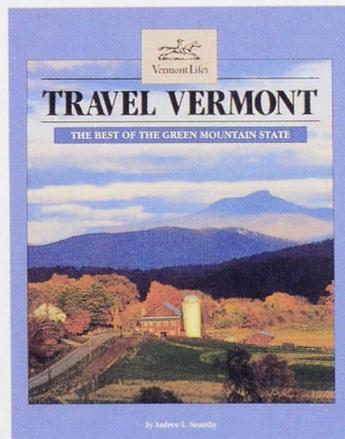


 Phone 802-828-3241 with
VISA or MasterCard orders,
or use the order form
between pages 52-53.



We Wrote the Book on Touring Vermont!

It's called TRAVEL VERMONT. And whether you're planning to drive Vermont's roads this year or just do some arm-chair touring, VERMONT LIFE's new travel guide is the way to go. Author Andrew L. Nemethy traveled the state sampling hiking trails, biking and canoeing routes, backroad jaunts, mountain views, and local foods. He talked to innkeepers, historians, town clerks and Vermonters of all sorts, and then wove the best of his discoveries into TRAVEL VERMONT. Enjoy tours of 16 regions, each with a well-planned route,



TRAVEL VERMONT
The Best of the Green Mountain State
 By Andrew L. Nemethy
 8½ x 11, paper, 136 pages,
 illus., \$14.95, TRV031

TO ORDER YOURS:
 Use the handy order form found
 between pages 52-53, or call
 802-828-3241 weekdays,
 8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

comprehensive information about things to do and see, and tips on places to stop and linger. There are more than 100 color photographs, plus colorful maps for each tour, and special sections on hiking, bicycling and watersports. Nemethy's colorful travel articles have appeared in many newspapers and magazines, including VERMONT LIFE. He writes about his home state with humor and style. A great way for visitors and Vermonters alike to get better acquainted with the Green Mountain State.



Cousins Mary Kay Schreindorfer, Kyle Howrigan, and Will Howrigan and their dog Shannon, sugaring in Fairfield. A visit to 12 family sugarhouses starts on page 4. Photograph by Kindra Clineff.

