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In This Issue

About The Contributors

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"Will's Panther Club": Reverend William J. Ballou, The Irrepressible and Uncompromising Order of Pantherites, and the Chester, Vermont, Catamount-Sighting Controversy, 1934–1936

"Nothing since the last national election has stirred such a flood of conflicting opinions as has this panther controversy"

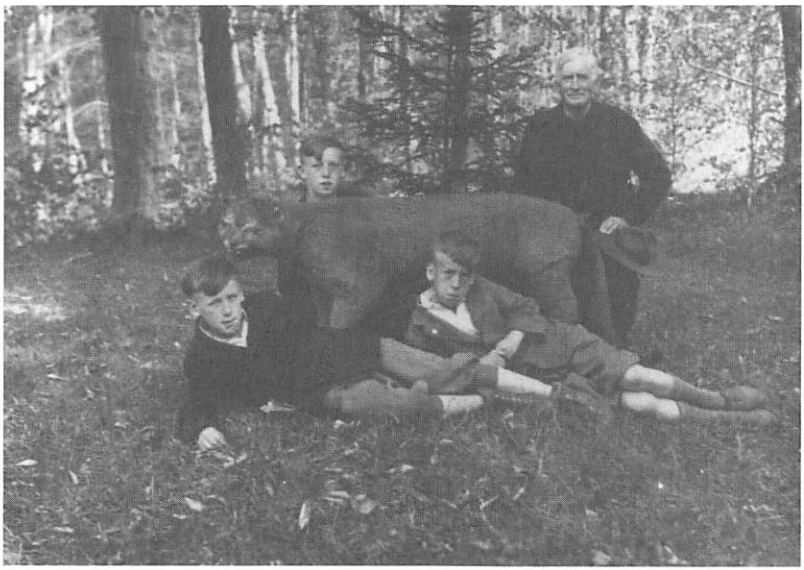
By THOMAS L. ALTHERR

Claims about a catamount sighting in March, 1934 propelled Chester, Vermont to the center of a controversy about whether panthers had returned to the state's wilds. For the next three years panther backers, "pantherites," and skeptics argued pointedly, and often humorously, over the matter. The debate drove the Bellows Falls *Times* to declare on May 10, 1934, "Nothing since the last national election has stirred such a flood of conflicting opinions as has this panther controversy." At the end of the story, the paper went into more detail: "Men, and women too, throughout this section of Windsor county have risen in violent support or denial of the existence of a panther. Scores of people report having seen the animal in Chester, Reading, Cavendish, and Weathersfield. Others are just as certain that these people saw a bobcat, or perhaps a large dog. But those who have seen and heard panthers just won't be denied."[1]

This lively dispute had arisen over a Chester Congregationalist minister and scoutmaster, some of his Boy Scouts, and their plaster cast of

a suspicious large feline pawprint. Panther advocates received a big boost in 1934, when Reverend William J. Ballou discovered what he claimed were catamount tracks in that southeastern Vermont township. The find and ensuing debate prompted Ballou's backers to form an organization, the Irrepressible and Uncompromising Order of Pantherites, induced the Rutland *Herald* to offer a one hundred dollar reward for proof of the animal, and drew a Boston newspaper into the fray. Experienced hunters and outdoorsmen challenged the official assumptions of scientists and game department personnel that the panther was extinct in Vermont. Supporters of Ballou recounted their own brushes with catamounts, recent and past, and regaled readers and listeners with previous hunts of the notorious beast in Vermont history. Intraregional friction, much of it good-natured, surfaced among Vermont newspapers and between Bostonians and Vermonters. Some critics and wags blamed overzealous bureaucracy of the New Deal for the sighting fracas. But worries about the effects of a real panther on tourism also emerged, reflecting anxieties over environmental and cultural changes affecting Vermont in the 1930s. Even though the fuss about a Chester panther faded by 1937, the argument had already outlined the dimensions of the debate for future sightings controversies and demonstrated the significant emotional appeal the catamount had for Vermonters.

The controversy was hardly new in twentieth-century Vermont. Long a symbol of the rugged wilderness qualities of Vermont and ferocity of its early settlers, the actual catamount, however, was the target of relentless campaigns to rid the agricultural countryside of this and other predators. Bounties from the 1770s onward induced hunters to shoot any of the felines on sight. After the Civil War, three major catamount hunts, in Weathersfield in 1867, West Wardsboro in 1875, and the most celebrated one, in Barnard in 1881, captured public attention. For reasons still unclear, Vermonters and state officials convinced themselves that the "Barnard Monster" was the last one within the state and settled on a complacent assertion that the panther was extirpated.[2] Sporadic claims of catamount sightings, however, peppered the period since the death of the "last" one in 1881. For example, Carl Kelley and a group of St. Albans hunters allegedly shot a catamount in 1914 in Belvidere Basin, but sold the hide to a St. Albans fur dealer, who likewise was unaware of the supposed extinct status of the species.[3] Similarly, Perk Angwin, a longtime outdoors writer for the *Barre Times,* claimed to have killed a catamount at East Orange in 1923, but he buried the decomposing carcass without thinking twice that the occurrence was unusual. "At that time I did not realize that it was rare in Vermont," Angwin later wrote.[4] These killings remained unverified or escaped the press attention that



William Ballou and his Boy Scouts, 1934. Photograph by William J. Ballou, courtesy of Hubbard and Patricia K. Ballou.

the Barnard hunt had enjoyed. No one, no governmental agency, zoologist, nor newspaper, raised the issue for serious investigation. Naturalists concurred with the game department opinion that the species was absent from the state and New England in general. Whatever fond memories the catamount had for Vermonters who recalled Stephen Fay's Catamount Tavern in Bennington, Ethan Allen and the Green Mountain Boys, or other earlier renditions of the animal's image, the feline seemed mostly out of sight and out of mind during the fifty years after the Barnard shooting.

Then during the mid-1930s, with the nation sunk in the depression, the prospect of free-roaming catamounts resurfaced. On March 24, 1934, Ballou, a scoutmaster, was hiking with some of his Boy Scout troop near Steadman Hill, a 2,308-foot peak in the northwestern part of the township of Chester. The party spotted tracks of some large feline species and, with some difficulty, made a plaster cast. Ballou, who had lived in Wyoming in 1883 and encountered cougars on his father's cattle ranch there, was certain that he and his scouts had just found the tracks of a catamount. Whether or not Ballou himself or his scouts knew of the "official" claims of the cat's absence is unclear. The minister dropped a casual remark about the tracks to a friend, who then relayed the news

to the Associated Press.[5] Stories of the alleged discovery popped up in several Vermont newspapers and the *Boston Evening Transcript* on March 28th and 29th. "Panther Tracks as Large as Horse's Hoof Marks Found" announced the St. Johnsbury *Caledonian Record.* The other papers noted that the tracks were ten to twelve feet apart, remarked that this was the first panther in memory for many of the area's residents (although some recalled the panther shot at nearby Downers in 1867), and speculated that extreme cold had driven the beast down out of the hills.[6] On the 29th and 30th, papers in neighboring Bellows Falls, Windsor, and Springfield delivered a bit more detail, adding that the scoutmaster had loaded his .32 six-gun "for he had an idea that a pussey [sic] of that size would not be satisfied with a diet of mice."[7] Vermonters were already on edge about wildcats. Just that week tales of wildcat depredations near Barre and St. Johnsbury had flooded the state, but the *Brattleboro Reformer,* with a touch of the acerbic, reckoned that the Chester panther was more exciting: "Chester is now ahead of St. Johnsbury in wild animal stories. What are a few wildcats compared to a panther that makes tracks as large as a horse's hoof, with a distance of 10 or 12 feet between leaps?"[8] Additionally, the paper worried that these "wildcat tales" would fuel "the wild and woolly ideas people outside the state acquire about Vermont."[9]

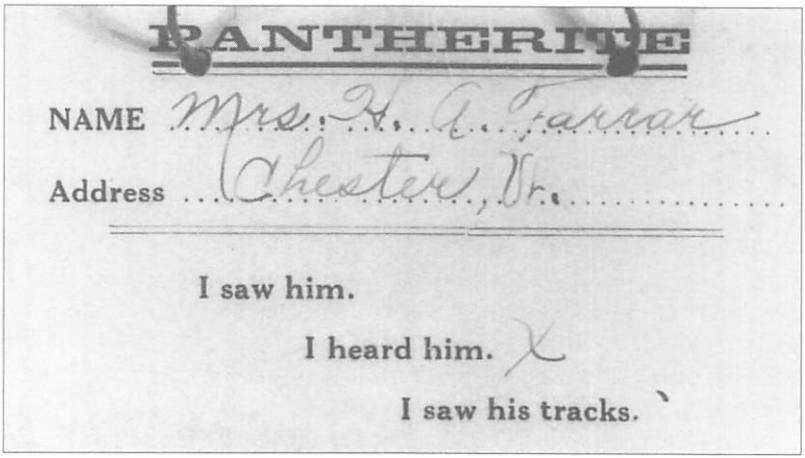
Controversy was not long in coming. The *Boston Herald* quickly expressed doubt about the find, and, throughout the spring of 1934, some Vermont hunters and outdoorsmen chimed in with their own reservations. The remarks rankled Reverend Ballou, who protested that his experience was genuine. He emphasized his boyhood encounters with the animals in Wyoming, his outdoor skills as an adult, and his long service as a scoutmaster. Supporters for Ballou responded with testimonials about the minister's veracity and expertise. Many added their own recountings of sightings or reminded readers of previous catamount hunts. But only more evidence, preferably a verifiable track or photograph, or the cat itself, would solidify the case.

Perhaps in anticipation of such criticisms, Ballou and his supporters attempted to secure more proof of the panther. On Saturday, April 7, he and Harold Murray, his best Boy Scout "gun toter," took a tape measure up Steadman Hill. Deep, soft snow hindered their trek and the original tracks had probably melted away. All they found were bear tracks.[10] Emphasizing the need for certainty, the *Rutland Herald* published a bounty notice on April 25: "$100 REWARD! The Herald offers $100 reward for a panther, alive or dead, captured and killed in Vermont during 1934 and not imported for the purposes of this reward. Suitable proof of these facts will be required."[11] The reward soon became a focal point for jokes

and raillery, as some editors sought to soft-pedal the catamount debate or take jibes at the Rutland daily.

What Reverend Ballou thought of the jokery is unclear, but he held steadfast in his claim about the catamount. Ballou's brother, Henry, who was also a Congregationalist minister in Chester, jotted in his diary for April 28: "Will's panther controversy is still on. A woman over in Windsor has written a letter as the last thing."[12] A week later, at a Rotary meeting at the newly-opened Fullerton Inn in Chester, William gave a talk, "Did I See the Tracks or Did I Not," about his celebrated encounter. His "explanations caused considerable merriment," but the minister remained firmly convinced. He announced that he was organizing a gathering of "all those who have seen Vermont panthers, panther tracks, and those who have heard their crys [sic], into Chester in a few weeks for the purpose of sympathising [sic] with each other and backing up each other's stories."[13] His Scouts were still believers, so much so that they placed a panther image on their troop flag.[14] Emboldened by the support and perhaps nettled by the criticism, Ballou called for a convocation of believers on May 18 in Chester in "the midst of the area most pregnant with panther stories."[15] The minister reserved the Fullerton Inn and arranged for the stuffed Downers panther, the one shot in Weathersfield in 1867, to be on display. He sent out an invitation letter to newspapers, proclaiming the worthy aims of the get-together: "Wealth, social position, office and genealogical trees do not count here. Nothing but panther contacts admit you or a friend of your's [sic] who is still loyal." With good fortune, the inn would become a "second Catamount Tavern," where Vermonters would defend, not their land grants this time, but their integrity.[16] He also posed for a photograph with it. "Will is all woke up over the panther racket, was off today having his picture taken with stuffed one over at Downers," Henry Ballou penned in his diary for May 14.[17] Just in the midst of the fray in mid-May, Sherman Howe of Hammondsville rushed in with a fresh report of seeing a catamount on the road midway between West Windsor and Felchville, and two veteran Pawlet hunters, Ivan and Frederick Morey, reported finding enormous cat tracks on Okemo Mountain.[18] Writers in Burlington, Barre, and Brattleboro challenged Howe's account, questioning his night vision and comparing the claim to those about a sea serpent in Lake Champlain.[19]

Undaunted by such skepticism, and following that characteristic American penchant for conventions and forming into associations that the French visitor Alexis de Tocqueville had noted as far back as the 1830s, nearly one hundred believers gathered at the Fullerton Inn on May 18th. Of the assemblage, twenty-six maintained they had seen a catamount, another sixteen claimed to have heard one, and yet another eleven vowed



Pantherite tag of Mrs. Harry Farrar of Chester, Vermont, at the first Pantherite meeting, May 18, 1934. Courtesy of Peter Farrar.

they had seen panther tracks.[20] To swing the crowd into a jubilant mood, Ethel Creaser led the singing of a fight ditty, "The Pantherites Song," and Mrs. Waldo Stevens wrote some verses strung together as "Panthers and Vermont."[21] Arminala Severence, who played the organ at the gathering, remembered the atmosphere as very convivial.[22] To solemnize the occasion, Reverend Harry Farrar of Chester, Vermont, said a prayer that "asked that the integrity of the pantherites be guarded and that disbelievers be shown the light." Three great-grandsons of Josephus Streeter unveiled the stuffed Weathersfield panther, and Ballou showed off a plaster cast of the tracks he had discovered. Several persons recounted their personal encounters with catamounts. Hermon M. Guild, one of the more elderly participants, recalled that, in addition to a 1906 encounter, in 1866 he had seen what at first he thought was a yellow dog, but then recognized firmly as a panther. Lloyd Martin told of his hair-raising, horse-scaring incident in the winter of 1918. Mr. and Mrs. Frank Blake, Leon Bolster, Elbert Stevens, Edward Parmenter, and Mrs. Raymond Kiniry all added their testimonies of recent panther sightings.[23] The meeting adjourned with the hopes that the next meeting would be "to celebrate the killing of a Vermont panther." So charged, "the hunters stole out to their cars and drove home through the night's sinister shadows ever on the alert for new evidence of panthers in Vermont."[24]

Responses to the meeting were mostly positive. Henry Ballou wrote in his diary for May 19: "The panther banquet at the hotel proved a success. P. [his son Paul] & G. [Paul's wife, Grace] attended. Between 90

& 100 present and Will was vindicated to his heart's content"[25] The *Vermont Journal* thought that anyone who heard the accounts at the meeting would be "convinced that in the majority of cases the stories rang true" and believed that "if some one will bring down a panther in these parts," those accused of vivid imaginations would have good reason to crow.[26] The *Rutland Herald* printed photographs of Ballou and some of his Boy Scouts standing with the Weathersfield panther and looking at the spot where it met its demise, as well as one of the plaster cast of the track.[27] The disbelievers and the scoffing newspapers, such as the *Boston Herald,* remained silent. After all, the burden of proof still lay with the pantherites who hungered to produce a live specimen.

The believers thought that they had their animal when in early June, they heard stories of a cattle-killing catamount in Mendon township near Rutland.[28] Wendell Pike, a state game warden, wavered on pronouncing the marauder a panther: "No, I am not sure of it, but I do not see what other animal of the cat kind could have made such a big track." The *Boston Herald* attempted to ridicule Pike and make it seem there was a rivalry between the Mendonites and Chesterites.[29] Back in Chester, Harold Murray, Ballou's "gun-toter" Boy Scout, had a run-in with a bear, but the mountain lion continued to elude discovery.[30] Vermonters had to be content that summer with stories of other sightings, which poured out in the wake of the pantherites' meeting. Apparently, Ballou encouarged banqueters at the Chester gathering to write down their stories and send them to him. He may have also sent out a general call, verbally or even by letter, for other accounts. In mid-June 1934, several Vermonters responded with a variety of catamount sighting accounts and retellings of the lore of previous confrontations.

Throughout the rest of 1934, the panther issue simmered. In late October the *Boston Herald* snickered that the *Rutland Herald*'s reward still went unclaimed, but noted, probably also sarcastically, that "the pursuit continues relentlessly." It also seemed that the Vermonters might lose the one hundred dollars to an out-of-stater. A hunter from Michigan, Ralph Beebe, reported that he had spied a half-grown juvenile in Weathersfield and sparked hope that an adult or two must be lurking there, too.[31] In November, local hunters spotted what they claimed were catamounts. Ed Roys of Perkinsville fired three shots at what he saw as a panther chasing deer near Downers, the site of the 1867 hunt, and Mr. and Mrs. Adin Houghton of Springfield chanced upon one while they were driving near West Townshend.[32] The Windsor *Vermont Journal,* reporting on these events optimistically—"Panther Stocks Soar"—still admitted to some embarrassment: "But until some enterprising hunter succeeds in getting one where it can be photographed, we stand convicted of gullibility with

the rest of the believers in panthers."[33] But even Beebe, who had fired at one on October 24th and seen "unmistakeable signs of the presence of panthers" in southern Windsor County, gave up and returned to Michigan. In an interview with the *Vermont Journal,* however, Beebe offered his opinion as a naturalist that although catamounts are wily beasts, some definitely called Vermont their home. "I saw them on three other occasions and tracks almost daily," he said. "The testimony of persons who lived in the vicinity was overwhelming. Whether we believe it or not, there are panthers in Vermont."[34] So also thought John Hastings of Perkinsville, who ran across what he reckoned were catamount tracks in late December.[35] Ballou himself obtained a plaster cast of a track and prepared to send it off to New York with his banker son, William, for verification at a reputable museum. Henry Ballou made a terse notation on December 22: "Will got a cast of panther tracks."[36]

The new year brought some renewed hope. In mid-January, 1935, Reverend Ballou received some scientific legitimization of his find. Robert T. Hatt, an assistant curator at the American Museum of Natural History in New York, and four other staff members pronounced the plaster cast track indeed that of a mountain lion. Ballou and his backers found this heartwarming in contrast to the cold shoulder the previous spring from Boston's natural history museum. News also spread that William E. Green, a veteran big game hunter and guide from Fairlee, would bring his pack of dogs to the Chester area, set up camp, and hunt down tangible proof of the panther's existence.[37] Ballou and Green investigated some tracks in the Grafton Gulf area, but apparently Green and other hunters had no luck in tracking down the cat.[38] A couple of weeks later came reports of panthers across the Connecticut River in Charlestown.[39] The Chester Boy Scout Panther Patrol planned to camp out in the Smokeshire district just north of Steadman Hill and search for catamount evidence.[40] In early March, Chester residents discovered a big track where carnival trucks had been parked and made a plaster cast of it.[41] But still no capture of an actual cat occurred.

The Pantherites

Disappointed only slightly, Ballou and the believers planned to regather in Chester in April, 1935. On April 15, a committee at "Pantherite Headquarters" sent out an invitation to any and all pantherites to crowd into the Fullerton Inn again on April 26. The committee estimated that there were sixty pantherites in Chester alone. William Green would be the guest speaker, informal storytelling would punctuate the festivities, and the pantherites would found a more formal association: "Some permanent form of organization will take place as there appears to be need

of such action." The previous year the group had christened themselves the "Irrepressible Order of Pantherites."[42] Ballou himself warmed up for the meeting with talks before the Springfield Rotary Club and Methodist church in mid-April.[43] John Spargo of Bennington, president of the Vermont Historical Society, a pantherite himself who would later publish a pamphlet on Vermont catamounts in 1950, agreed to speak, adding some more dignity to the dinner, and as if on cue yet another catamount sighting claim sounded, this one from nearby Amsden, on April 25.[44]

Somewhere between sixty and seventy-five backers convened over dinner at the Chester inn. Spargo had to go to Washington and Green's wife went into childbirth, so they were unable to attend. Nevertheless the mood was happy, as the pantherites chanted, "Get that panther—Hold that panther" and listened and recited their accounts of encounters. Mr. and Mrs. Albert Westney, the couple who had seen the panther in Amsden, repeated their tale to the crowd. E. H. Bancroft of Barre, president of the Vermont Association of Fish and Game Clubs, and Charles Hazen of Chester each underscored the biological possibility that the increase in abandoned farms had led to an increase in deer numbers that, in turn, attracted the panthers. The Irrepressible and Uncompromising Order of Pantherites organized, complete with a slate of officers. They anointed Reverend Ballou as the "Grand Puma," and reaffirmed their intentions to find a catamount in Vermont "to silence, once and for all, the up-the-sleeve giggles of allegedly pseudo naturalists who have been pooh-poohing the idea for months." In addition to seeking vindication, the organization promised also to preserve and study panther lore and meet when it warranted to discuss and disseminate that lore. A junior auxiliary, the "Wild Cats," would also form, charging the children twenty-five cents dues.[45] The *Bennington Banner* joked that the Irrepressibles might become just another civic organization, although one with "subterranean" inclinations, but the *Rutland Herald* warned that it was just a matter of time before "Panther Hunter Green is going to nick a big cat and put a stop to the kidding of the anti-pantherites."[46]

But the big cat remained uncooperative despite the efforts of Ballou and his Boy Scouts, his "Wildcats" who scoured the Pine Hill area of Weathersfield that May.[47] Rumors of sightings in Chester and West Springfield arose, but overall interest subsided; a wolf kill in Windham in June even upstaged the hunt for the catamount.[48] Reverend Ballou, however, remained convinced. That autumn he spoke on the felines to the Wallingford Rotary Club. Henry Ballou recorded it in his diary for October 28: "Anna has taken Will to Wallingford where he speaks at the Rotary club on Panthers. It is ladies' night and Burnie [?] wanted him."[49] That next January, the pastor delayed attending his son's wedding to go

off and check on a panther-sighting rumor.[50] That May, the pantherites met for a third time, this time at the Congregational Church. The 1936 meeting suffered a delay of a week due to a conflict over the meeting space and the Ladies Aid Society came through with a good chicken dinner, even though the duty may have surprised some of the women. Henry Ballou confided to his diary on May 20th: "Will's Panther club is to be fed by our Ladies' Society the evening of Friday. C. [his wife Carrie] had chickens brought to her to make into a pie with no previous notice"[51] The Irrepressibles went through the motions of re-electing officers, but the interest focused more on the guest speaker, "Broncho Charlie" Miller, a Western friend of Ballou's who had been a Pony Express rider in his youth.[52] Henry and Carrie Ballou enjoyed the talk, as he recorded in his diary for May 22: "C. & I. attended the Panther supper. 'Bronco Charlie' was the attraction. He spoke interestingly."[53]

Thereafter the zeal of the Irrepressible and Uncompromising Order of Pantherites faded, even though the *Rutland Herald* congratulated it for becoming "an authentic society."[54] That September, Reverend Ballou and his young great-nephew, Hubbard, freshly back from China, investigated a report of catamounts in Newfane. Henry Ballou wrote in his diary for September 9, "Hubbard went off with W. & Dr. Bugbee to look after panthers that have been killing deer near New Fane. He didn't get back until after nine o'clock."[55] Apparently, the panther club did not meet again in 1937, despite new reports of a panther in Cold River, New Hampshire, across the river from Bellows Falls, or thereafter.[56] The failure to produce an actual catamount or at least a photograph of one probably deflated a number of the pantherites and kept the public skeptical. It may have been another case of the boy crying wolf, or, in this case, panther, even if the predator didn't arrive to gobble up the sheep. William Ballou's death on March 4, 1943 in Boston also probably deprived the movement of its charismatic spark. But in the mid-1930s, Ballou and his followers stirred up people on both sides of the debate. Well could Charles Edward Crane write in *Let Me Show You Vermont* in 1937, "Vermont is not divided alone between Republicans and Democrats, but between Pantherites and Non-Pantherites."[57]

Vermont Outdoorsmen and Bostonians Debate

The 1934–1936 Chester catamount controversy reflected a conflict between the experience of outdoorsmen such as Reverend Ballou and the claims of urbanity, science, and game management. Offended by the *Boston Herald*'s remarks in the spring of 1934, Ballou declared that his experiences were credentials enough to establish his credibility. "I have always hunted and enjoyed outdoor life the year round," he wrote in a letter

to the Boston editors, "For 18 years I have been a scoutmaster, and have taught my scouts to read tracks and trails in summer and winter, for the tales they tell are full of interest. I know the tracks of all animals about there, including bobcats. I have lived in Vermont for the past 26 years, and in Chester for 14 years, and know my state, its history and its animals." He advised the editors to come discuss panthers with a local man who maintained he had seen a catamount three times within the previous fourteen months and whose son had shot at and wounded one.[58] A week or so later, still defending himself, Ballou told the *Rutland Herald,* "I would just as soon have it broadcast through[out] New England that I was a fool as to have it intimated that I did not know the difference between a panther's track and a bob-cat's. A person who can't tell the difference between 2½ and 5 inches ought to be put in an asylum."[59] On April 12, Guy Blood, a hunter from Walpole, New Hampshire, added his views: "As a leader among men, as a citizen of the highest type, Mr. Ballou has a standing that is unquestionable. I feel certain he should know more, or at least as much about wild animal 'tracks' as an office born editor, who in all probability never saw any animal tracks larger than those made by a wharf rat."[60] Even hesitant supporters still appealed to the weight of experience. As the aptly named Edward Wild of Newfane put it, "some of us who know our native Vermont very well, are reluctantly compelled to admit that it is at the present time an exceedingly 'catty' state."[61] The Boston paper, however, stuck with science. "Chester, Vt., or the Boston Society of Natural History—which is correct on its pantherology?" the *Herald* asked on April 17. After noting the recent claims by Vermonters, the editors retorted sarcastically, "What do academic judgments on Vermont carnivorous fauna amount to, as against these witnesses? All that's needed now to complete the Vermont case and confound the Boylston Street experts is a dead panther!"[62]

In the ensuing tussle over the catamount sighting, some of the defense of Reverend Ballou centered on his personal character. Edward Wild testified to Ballou's "high standing, both in Chester and throughout Vermont," calling him "one of the ablest, best beloved and most influential Congregational ministers in the state" and citing his eminence "in Masonic circles."[63] The *Vermont Journal* in Windsor and *Springfield Reporter* also rushed to Ballou's side, arguing that his "integrity is so great, that were he to tell us he saw a white blackbird, we should be inclined to believe" him.[64] The May, 1934, Congregationalist monthly, *Vermont Missionary,* noted about the controversy: "Chester residents stoutly maintain the veracity of their pastor."[65] Occasionally the matter bordered on tongue-in-cheek humor. "If I didn't know Rev. Ballou was a gentleman of sobriety and temperance, I'd think that repeal [of Prohibition in

1933] had already done the deadly work charged against it!" ran one quotation in late April.[66] Despite these testimonials, the character issue still persisted into May. The *Bennington Banner* accused the organizers of a hoax, "a publicity stunt, a ballyhoo, or some similar scheme to work the papers for free advertising." "The astonishing thing about the whole affair is that this graft seems to be worked by the clergy," the editor intoned and reprinted a letter from Ballou advertising the Fullerton Inn gathering.[67]

But much of the argument that April and May rested on competing notions of just how wild the Vermont landscape had become and differing assumptions about the natural history of catamounts. For their part, the local outdoorsmen in Rutland were mostly skeptical. George L. Howe, a "veteran bear and deer hunter," figured that Ballou and the Boy Scouts had chanced upon a bobcat or a lynx with big paws. George H. Ross, denouncing the story as "absurd and not founded on facts," ascribed the screeching sounds some Chesterites heard to owls; Henry R. Adams concurred. Fred I. Osgood, a mammalogist, withheld firm judgment "without personal investigation" and listed the only "authentic records" he could find of panthers in Vermont: "Bennington, 1850; Cavendish 1867 [the hunt actually took place in Weathersfield]; Wardsboro, 1876 [actually 1875]; Barnard, 1881."[68] Much more pointed queries came from Birney C. Lynds of Bridgewater Corners on April 23. Like an attorney in cross-examination, Lynds attacked Ballou, Mrs. Miller, and Frank Blake, calling into question their eyesight, judgment, and common sense. For example, Lynds asked, "How could Mr. Ballou tell whether the panther broke through the crust every jump it made or not?" He accused the Chester residents of taking something to "see such things" and of telling whoppers. Lynds had seen the stuffed cats in museums and some live circus ones, but he doubted strenuously that Vermont was wild enough to support "such horrible animals."[69] Charles Earle, of Peru, Vermont, reminded readers that the sun's rays on the animal tracks may cause them to enlarge through melting and refreezing. Ballou might have seen nothing more than bobcat or lynx tracks so enlarged.[70]

Ballou's backers responded with their own assessments of Vermont's wilds and the panther's habits. Frank Blake, a farmer residing near Steadman Hill, told of seeing a catamount in that area on several occasions within the past year; and several other local men speculated that the "extensive, heavily wooded section" there could have harbored a panther that "might easily have worked down from the far north."[71] Walter F. Burbank, another Rutland sportsman, was inclined to accept the reports. "I believe that it is probable that the Chester panther is a reality. There

is a vast wilderness in Vermont." Burbank claimed to have seen a stuffed catamount that hunters had killed in Massachusetts near the Connecticut line many years back.[72] R. J. Flint of Bethel maintained that while he had not actually seen one during his thirty or so years as a surveyor, he knew "from indisputable evidence that years ago some of these creatures were roaming our mountains." Catamounts were elusive animals, but they would, according to Flint, "frequently follow on the tracks of a man for hours, being very careful to keep out of sight." Ballou's encounter with the tracks, then, didn't surprise Flint at all. The catamounts might be strays from the north, but Flint thought that it was "much more likely that they are natives of the Green Mountains, having their homes and breeding places in the wilder sections seldom visited by man."[73] A. A. Roberts of Dorset, who had spent sixty years in the state and the Adirondacks as a trapper, hunter, timber cruiser, and game warden, was just as forthright. "I think that today we have some of all the game in Vermont that was native of the eastern states," he declared. "How many readers . . . know that there was a wolverine killed in Rupert ten or 12 years ago and an oppossum [sic] caught last year in Rupert?" Roberts made a similar point about fisher, marten, otter, and beaver: "Because people don't see them on the trails or on the farms they think they are gone but I am thankful that they are not." The same applied for catamounts, Roberts thought: "I could tell you a good many things about our wilds but some of your readers would think that I was given to romancing. But if they wish to come and see me I think I can convince them that we still have panthers in Vermont."[74]

B. Hall of Ludlow tried to refute Birney Lynds' sharp questioning with a narrative of his own "face to face" confrontation with a catamount a few years previously. Hall maintained that panthers make different striding motions depending on whether they are chasing game or not and that the width of the paws would occasionally have a snowshoe effect, stopping the cat from breaking through crusted snow. Thus a catamount could have made the tracks in Chester.[75] Charles Hubbard of Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts, wrote to the *Boston Herald* to support Ballou's find with stories of his and his brother's sightings in New Hampshire since 1915.[76] John Spargo of Bennington took that town's paper to task for casting aspersions on Ballou and the panther believers. Spargo asserted that publicity was the last thing Ballou sought and urged readers to keep an open mind about the possibility of such cats existing in the state: "I am not a very credulous person, but I have lived long enough and [have been] sufficiently awake to learn that 'impossible' is a very dangerous word to use about life. About panthers I know nothing except that I am confident that the bronze one [commemorating Stephen Fay's

Catamount Tavern] on the pedestal which I can see from my window has made no nocturnal visits to Chester."[77]

Cat Tales

Some of the strongest support for Ballou's stance came from numerous Vermonters who related their own stories of catamount encounters. Mrs. Dwight Miller and Frank and Charles Blake started this trend with recitations about recent panther-sightings near Chester in an April 11, 1934 *Rutland Herald* article.[78] Soon thereafter Guy Blood took on some of the doubters, recounting his hunt after what he thought were bears in the spring of 1933 in Grafton: "When we located the tracks we were surprised to find that these bears had made jumps of from ten to fifteen feet. We then knew that the bears we were after were of the CAT family, and not cats or BOB cats, but PANTHERS. Their foot prints in the snow were about six inches in diameter." Blood had no doubt that catamounts presently roamed Vermont.[79] A. A. Roberts of Dorset averred that two panthers had lived at Mount Tabor nearly all winter in 1879, and that in 1880 he saw tracks on several occasions.[80] Stories poured in about more recent encounters in Londonderry, Grafton, and Weston.[81] Mrs. Raymond Kiniry of Windsor narrated her recent encounter with one near Mount Ascutney. On February 2, she made what she declared a positive identification of a panther. The next day she hung up some calf meat for bait and waited with two loaded rifles. The cat did appear, but she was unable to get a clear shot, only wounding it.[82] Charles C. Foster of Chester entered his own evidence of an encounter in the Adirondacks, in which the tracks matched those Ballou and the Boy Scouts found.[83] Sue Hapgood Millington of Woodstock told of hearing a panther scream while her family was camping in Peru township, and Mrs. George Pratt of Cavendish thought she remembered hunters capturing a catamount on the Billings estate near Woodstock, but that another had escaped, suggesting at least one cat still may roam Windsor county.[84] Edward C. Parmenter Jr. of Belmont claimed that he saw tracks and heard from hunters stories "of an animal and its actions which spelled Panther and nothing else I know of." Parmenter believed that there was "at least a pair of these animals in our forest reserve and woods south of the Mt. Holly-Wallingford line," but that they were very wary and not likely to be "brought in for some few years yet."[85]

The May 1934 pantherite meeting triggered a new round of tales. In addition to the narrations at the Fullerton Inn that evening, Ira Belknap and Leon and Nellie Bolster of Cavendish, Mrs. Harry Farrar of Chester, Blanche Howard Foster of East Wallingford, Philip VanBebber Jr. of Belmont, Annie Sherwin of Manchester Depot, Elbert Stevens of Bridge-

water Corners, and Hermon Guild and Waldo Stevens of Chester all corresponded with Ballou in mid-June about their own panther sightings. Belknap recollected his own experiences with the Weathersfield panther in 1867, a couple of others detailed encounters that occurred at the turn of the century, and several related more recent confrontations during the 1920s and early 1930s.[86]

In the spring of 1934, while Ballou was searching for evidence and doubters and believers traded quips, several Vermonters took this opportunity to remind current state residents of the previous Vermont panthers. C. C. Perry, a doctor from West Rutland, recalled the 1881 Barnard hunt.[87] E. P. Perkins, of Bridgewater reminisced of his actual experiences that day with the Barnard hunting party. "I think I could take anyone to the very spot now where he was killed," Perkins wrote.[88] A "Pantherite" noted that Josephus Streeter, the great grandfather of three of the Scouts along with Ballou, had been one of the men who killed the Weathersfield panther in 1867, and Ira Belknap of Cavendish told of seeing the cat alive at the base of Pine Hill the day of that hunt.[89] Will C. Withington of Bennington sent in the excerpt of the kill from the Windsor County history.[90] The *Randolph Herald and News,* citing the recent excitement, pulled its December 1, 1881, story of the Barnard shooting from its archives and reprinted it.[91] Elbert L. Miller of East Barnard recalled his childhood memories of that famous hunt for the Rutland paper's readers, and Elbert Stevens of Bridgewater Corners listed encounters in December, 1891, and November, 1924, to supplement the tale of the Barnard panther.[92]

The *Rutland Herald,* the Vermont newspaper most vociferous about the Chester controversy, played an interesting, moderate role in the debate. The daily offered the one hundred dollar reward for proof of the catamount and often pleaded for certainty and calm. The paper reckoned that it would be worth springing for the one hundred dollars to provide the paper's readers with genuine information on a real, current catamount in the state.[93] On April 7, the *Herald* took note of the "mortifying and veracity-impugning" Boston article and reckoned that the testimonials on Ballou's behalf were "about the next best thing to producing the panther," something that "might happen, most any day.'"[94] An editorial in the April 12, 1934, issue suggested that an expedition to Chester, an examination of the evidence, and an exhaustive search of the woods might erase the doubts among sportsmen and naturalists, with whom the paper had "considerable sympathy." Until then the story was fanciful: "The notion of a panther in Vermont, in this year of grace, is almost as fascinating as the Conan Doyle story of the inaccessible plateau where dinosaurs and prehistoric mammals still lived."[95] Indeed, the next day, the

Rutland paper detailed its caution in an editorial. Pointing out that reports of a moose tromping through southern Vermont the previous year had proved to be true, the *Herald* wondered whether or not the Chester panther would be a repeat: "It is difficult to reconcile the current evidence about the presence of mountain lions in Vermont with their habitat history of recent years, but so was it difficult to believe in the presence, if only temporary, of a moose in this state." Adhering to its self-proclaimed conservative tradition, the paper promised it would content "itself for the time being with merely presenting the evidence pro and con as it is received" and urged "local naturalists, big game hunters and others of expertise" to shed light on the controversy.[96] The same number of the paper contained a natural history article on the panther, assuring readers that, contrary to legend, the cat was a timid, nocturnal animal, hardly a danger to humans, but definitely one to large game and livestock.[97] When a writer to the paper suggested that there might be a stray catamount, just as a wolf from the Adirondacks had showed up in a Vermont trap, the Rutland editor mused: "If this were going to be a long session, we'd have a panther evening and get somewhere in this anthology of revived and revised zoological lore, as applied to Vermont."[98] In May, with Ballou's pantherite conference approaching, the *Herald* reprinted a story apparently from 1834 about a father shooting a panther that was mauling his son in the Adirondacks, and, in the same issue, included a long letter from Fred A. Emery of Washington, D.C., who listed several of what he considered verifiable instances of catamounts all across Vermont since the 1860s and advised Vermonters not to pet the cat whenever they located one.[99] In some instances, however, the *Herald* gently ridiculed the pantherites. In May, 1934, the *Herald* published a folksy letter from an anonymous East Wallingford reader, who claimed that a panther had made their old mare so wild and "pantherish" that they had had to shoot it in July, 1933.[100] The scheduled pantherite meeting also prompted some mild satire. After joking about just which hunters would be eligible to attend the "panther party," the Rutland daily chuckled, "If Rev. W. J. Ballou has his way, Fullerton Inn will be another Catamount Tavern before the week's out."[101]

On occasion the *Rutland Herald*'s interest in the topic was in rejoinder to jibes from other papers around the state. When, that April, the *St. Albans Messenger* supposed that Middlebury College's black panther mascot was off-limits for the reward and the *Brattleboro Reformer* reckoned that the Rutland daily had made a safe bet with its one hundred dollars, the *Herald* did take some consolation among all the negativism: "And even if panthers may ultimately take their place in storybooks with fairies and jabberwocks, it's pleasant to know that once upon a time,

at least, there were panthers in Windsor and Bennington county and we have the stuffed hides to prove it."[102] In May, *The Burlington Free Press* ribbed the Rutland paper that its anxieties might come to a close soon if noted hunter Frank Buck arrived. Moreover, the *Free Press* commented, Buck could help out Rutland County gubernatorial candidates by giving them the panther as a campaign attraction.[103] The *Herald* responded that the Burlington paper should "produce its third candidate and turn him loose on Rutland county candidates—and panthers."[104] The Rutland daily warned Frank Buck not to bring his own panther along to collect the reward in response to a *Brattleboro Reformer* taunt that the "Chester panther, if he really does exist, had better take to the tall timber and lie low" if Buck arrives to hunt it down.[105] The *Free Press* returned with a barb that the federal agents currently investigating in Rutland county might just be panther hunters in disguise trying to cash in the *Herald*'s bounty.[106] Regarding the upcoming pantherite convention that May, the *Herald* thought that a large hunting party might form at such a meeting and "drive out a panther in this territory, if there be any."[107] The *Montpelier Argus* took the opportunity to sting the Rutland paper, hinting that the panther seekers would do well to look under the editor's desk at the *Herald.* The Rutland editor fired back that the Downers panther, which would be on display at the meeting, was "much better than the stuffed carcass in the state museum" at the capital.[108] Some additional smirking from other Vermont papers appeared in 1935. Noting that the panther advocates were about to restage "a revival and a restatement of their creed," the *Burlington Free Press* thought it detected some excess fervency: "India has its sacred cows. It begins to look as though Vermont is developing a cult for the publicizing of panthers."[109] The *Brattleboro Reformer* jibed that the Rutland editor might yet have "to fork over the [reward] money."[110]

Indeed much jollity attended the catamount controversy. In late April, 1934, Rose Holden of Chester Depot chipped in with a mock heroic poem, in which the "panther" stalking a boy and his uncle turned out to be the family dog, and another fragment of verse poked fun at "how he killed one four feet tall/With his own trusty parasol."[111] A joke making the rounds had an old-timer believing the panther stories because he had lived with one—i.e., his wife—for forty-four years.[112] In May, Dorset folk poet Mark Whalen dashed off a humor piece on his worries about the *Herald*'s panther bounty: "Supposing some one comes along and shoots my pet panther!" he wailed.[113] Bob Hascall, who was complaining about the "dangers" of summering in Vermont, thought he saw a correlation between panthers and Prohibition repeal and speculated that panther hunting might be profitable—for his wife, who would get the reward money, if he bagged the cat, or his insurance money, if the feline got him.[114] Gertrude Bryant

Jubb of Reading penned some light verse spoofing panther hunters and the Rutland editor's reward offer.[115] The *Woodstock Vermont Standard* and *Manchester Journal* treated the announcement of the pantherite gathering somewhat whimsically.[116] Even the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* got wind of the news of "the barbaric feast to be spread in the town of Chester." This humorous piece pleaded Vermont's case, maintaining that there is *a* panther, not hordes of them, roaming the state's woods: "That is Vermont's position and she will not recede from it, though Massachusetts shrug an incredulous shoulder, New Hampshire lift a supercilious eyebrow, and Maine keep an accusing silence." But, the St. Louis paper thought, Vermont might as equally become home to African exotic game species as become the "big game paradise of the Western Hemisphere," drawing economy-boosting "mighty hunters" who would trek in to chase the beasts."[117]

Unwittingly or not, the St. Louis article touched another major area of humor and bantering, intraregional potshots between Bostonians and Vermonters. Ever since the *Boston Herald* challenged Ballou in late March, 1934, a friendly but pointed interchange had followed. That first editorial sympathized with Vermonters that the winter had been a hard one, but thought that Reverend Ballou and his Boy Scouts "were being overly pessimistic." "The wild animals may be upon New England," the Boston paper declared, "but it is quite certain that they are two-legged ones, not four-legged." The *Herald* went on to acknowledge the stuffed panther in the state Capitol in Montpelier and the one killed in Wardsboro, Vermont in 1875 [the paper had the date wrong as 1872], on display at the Boston Museum of Natural History. But as for panthers in the present, the *Herald* pronounced them "virtually extinct," that it "would take a cold winter indeed to revive them." Perhaps, the paper suggested, the Chester group had run across tracks of a bay lynx or bobcat.[118] But Vermonters resented the attack by the Bostonians. J. W. Brown of Chester defended Ballou and told the *Herald*'s editors "that Vermonters are perhaps better judges of real panthers than a Bostonian, even with his superior intelligence" and that the newspaper had best "stick to your beans and codfish."[119] Guy Blood offered to escort the "city editor" into the Chester woods, "for I am sure I would enjoy showing him some 'Tracks' providing he is not too timid or 'panther minded.'"[120] Boston writers might express incredulity given the rarity of the animal, but just because "one has not been sighted in the vicinity of Boston Common or around Bunker Hill monuments should not be grounds for Boston editors' going off half-cocked.'" "Unusual thing[s] do occur occasionally beyond the realm of the Boston city hall," averred the Vermonters, who may not have known what to make of the discovery yet, but would brook no snobbish com-

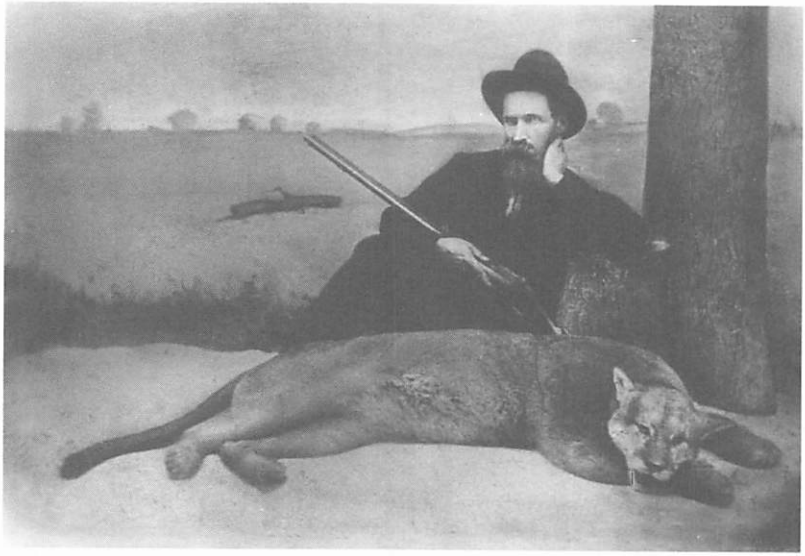
mentary from the Hub.[121] When the Boston paper tried to enlist science to trump Ballou's claims, the Rutland paper fired back in kind. Boston may have "multifarious activities" to impress the visitor, "but nowhere within the limits of the city of Boston have we observed terrain or cover suitable for the habitat of panthers." Thus Bostonians should not presume to "speak authoritatively on the subject of panthers."[122]

When the *Boston Herald* learned of the announced pantherite meeting, the editors rejoined the argument. "The pantherites, pantherists, panthermaniacs or pantherphiles have been summoned to meet and eat in Chester next week, to swop pantherology and thus confound those who doubt their word," chirped the *Boston Herald.* "Anybody is eligible to attend who has the price and has seen or heard a beast or found its spoor." After speculating that perhaps a "gigantic bobcat" was roaming southern Vermont or that a New Deal agency had "stimulated the growth of these feral beasts," the Boston paper delivered another dig at Vermonters: "If and when the panther is found, he will have that superiority over non-Vermont panthers which Vermont maple syrup, butter, cheese, eggs, apples and marble, to say nothing of men and women, have over all competitive products from outside the state." The Boston newspaper kept on tweaking the Vermonters: "Stubborn folks, those Green Mountaineers. Sensitive, too. They have pride in their eyes and ears. They insist that there are panthers in Vermont, and are nettled by the doubts of city slickers who work in natural history museums and newspaper offices."[123] The Vermonters made no rejoinder, believing perhaps that silence now was the better part of valor in this age-old regional rivalry.

Some of the odder commentary came from would-be humorists who thought they saw the hand of the Roosevelt Democrats behind the catamount issue. Three Massachusetts writers harped on this theme. Austin S. Hale of Weston took a jibe at the New Deal, which had been in full sway for about a year: "Don't forget this is the era of the new deal. Anything is liable to happen, and this is simply a newly resurrected animal." Hale asked the editors to travel to Vermont to investigate and bring him some maple syrup on the way back.[124] Similarly Samuel L. Abbott of Framingham envisioned some more "alphabet soup," a "V. P. T. A.," a "Vermont Panther Tamers Association," in which "overworked brain trusters" could harm only the lion.[125] B. T. Prince of Westfield consoled the *Boston Herald* editors that they should not have to be experts on panthers any more than on social economics.[126]

Catamounts and Tourists

Frivolity aside, the Chester catamount dispute forced some Vermonters to focus on questions of tourism and state self-image. At least one



Alexander Crowell of Barnard shot this panther, November 24, 1881. It is on exhibit (with his rifle) in the Vermont Historical Society Museum, Montpelier.

writer from Chester, under the pen name "Orthie Dox," touched on the sensitive issue of the possible effect real catamounts could have on summer tourism. After affirming belief in the current panther stories and asserting that wild places such as Steadman Hill promoted the existence of panthers in Vermont, "Orthie Dox" zeroed in on the tourism matter: "I might tell my experience on Steadman for I know a panther was there, but it is no use to tell you as it is plain where the shoe pinches—summer guests—and in your effort to laugh it off, you have spread it well."[127] Another *Herald* reader asked, "Why keep up this panther business? Are you trying to scare everybody away from Vermont this summer?" The Vermont paper responded, trying to turn the question inside out. It would be likely that the controversy and the one hundred dollar reward might just draw more tourists and hunters. With perhaps a little bit of P. T. Barnum-style hokum in mind, the editors reminded "objectors to our panther hunt" that "one of the surest ways to attract visitors is to advertise some thaumaturgy, like a sea serpent, a plesiosaurus or even a petrified man." But even if there were actual catamounts, their timidity should inspire little fear. "So family reunions, class festivities, Old Home weeks and tourist conventions may be planned with the utmost confidence," the *Herald* declaimed.[128] Bob Hascall, a former Vermonter and *Herald* re-

porter then living in Sayre, Pennsylvania, wrote in joking about his fears about spending his annual vacation in the Green Mountains. He demanded a census "to see how many of these savage animals are roaming the wilds" and wondered if he could outrun such a cat. The *Herald* told him to get a gun and some buckshot and come up to try for the reward.[129] While it was at it, the Rutland paper sought to calm any fears among the livestock rearers. When Sister Sevilla Trudo offered an opinion that it might have been panthers that destroyed flocks of sheep in early Vermont, not wolves, the editor retorted, with possibly some zoologically incorrect information, that catamounts roam singly, that "one lone panther could hardly annihilate a flock of sheep."[130] It was sufficient for the near future to calm possible fears: "For the sake of summer boarders it may be said that the panther appetites appear to be satisfied with rabbits and deer. Vermonters do not worry about them."[131] The May 1934 *Vermont Missionary* noted that Chesterites were "reassuring prospective summer boarders by stating that panthers prefer rabbits and deer for a diet."[132]

During the 1930s, Vermonters watched forests overtaking abandoned farms and worried about the future effects of this transition. Would expanded tourism take up the slack in the state's economy? Or would the re-emergence of wilderness, replete with such predators as the panther, frighten away summer boarders and leaf peepers expecting a pastoral idyll? The alleged return of the catamount helped to crystallize some of these fears. Vermonters had spent over a century and a half attempting to eradicate the panther to make agriculture safer. Tales of terrifying cats assaulting or stalking humans and livestock descended from the days of Ethan Allen; nineteenth-century accounts of panther hunts reinforced this negative perspective. Although the catamount seemed to have vanished in Vermont after 1881, at least according to officials, little had happened by the 1930s to counter the fearsome portrait of the predator. Protection on an endangered species list was still four decades away. Undoubtedly some Vermonters, perhaps Reverend Ballou among them, took pride in the prospect that the catamount might be back. The animal, for some, symbolized the spirit of ferocity and enterprise that had fortified Vermonters from the time of the Green Mountain Boys. A familiar emblem would always be a welcome anchor in trying times of transition. Ballou himself did not comment on these anxieties, but the level of debate that his find provoked revealed that ambivalence over a changing Vermont was lurking right below the surface.

Despite the failure of Reverend Ballou and other Chesterites to produce firm evidence of the panther in the 1930s, throughout the 1940s and succeeding decades, the catamount-sighting controversy in Vermont remained lively. Starting with a sighting in Braintree in May, 1941, there

have been hundreds of claims of spottings and other encounters throughout the state, including one in Chester in 1952.[133] Harold Hitchcock, a biology professor at Middlebury College, started his lifelong interest in tracking down the cat around 1949, and Aldo Merusi, a reporter for the *Rutland Herald*, reactivated the paper's one hundred dollar reward and wrote occasional columns under the soubriquet "Panther Pete," keeping the issue alive until his retirement in 1971. Such was the spirit that drove Ballou's son William and Elizabeth Johnson of Chester Depot to organize a fiftieth-year commemoration of the Irrepressible and Uncompromising Order of Pantherites in 1984.[134] On June 7, about forty-five enthusiasts met at the Chester (formerly the Fullerton) Inn to celebrate the event Reverend Ballou had orchestrated fifty years previously. Arminala Severence, then eighty years old, was the only person in attendance who had been at the original meeting. Others who convened were more recent converts, some of whom themselves had seen what they maintained were catamounts. Hitchcock, by this time the dean of the panther advocacy movement, and Ronald Lewis of Brandon, Vermont, the founder of the New England Bigfoot and Black Panther Research Alliance, both gave talks on the catamount, holding that the changes in Vermont's natural landscape augured well for the cat's survival. "There is no reason why a panther couldn't live pretty handsomely today," Hitchcock said.[135] A decade or so later, however, the case is still open. Articles in magazines and newspapers continue to mull over the prospects of the cat's return, and the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department now has a "Catamount Sighting" form to keep track of the reports. But despite some interesting discoveries near Craftsbury in 1994, the big cat, long so symbolic of Vermont's own self-identity, remains elusive.[136] Sixty years later Reverend William Ballou and his pantherites still await complete vindication.

Notes

[1] "Meeting At Chester Will Attempt To Prove Panthers Do Exist In Vermont," *Bellows Falls Times*, 10 May 1934, 5.

[2] For an interpretation of the catamount in Vermont before 1900, see Thomas L. Altherr, "The Catamount in Vermont Folklore and Culture, 1760–1900," in Jay W. Tischendorf and Steven J. Ropski, eds., *Proceedings of the Eastern Cougar Conference, 1994* (Fort Collins, CO: American Ecological Research Institute, 1996), 50–91.

[3] "A Panther Story," *Burlington Free Press*, 11 December 1950, 6.

[4] P[erk] G. Angwin to Harold B. Hitchcock, November 8, 1949, in Hitchcock Collection, Vermont Historical Society, Doc. 290, Folder 1, "Letters and Interviews, 1904–1988."

[5] "Evidence Points To Panthers In Vermont," *Rutland Herald*, 11 April 1934, 1–2.

[6] "Panther Tracks as Large as Horse's Hoof Marks Found," St. Johnsbury *Caledonian Record*, 28 March 1934, 1; "Panther Tracks Seen in Chester," *Brattleboro Reformer*, 28 March 1934, 1; "Panther Tracks Near Chester, Vt.," *Boston Evening Transcript*, 28 March 1934, 1; "Panther Tracks Seen in Chester," *Montpelier Evening Argus*, 28 March 1934, 1; "Tracks of A Panther Seen Near Chester,"

Barre Daily Times, 28 March 1934, 3; and "Tracks of Panther Seen Near Chester," *Bennington Banner*, 29 March 1934, 6.

[7] "Chester," *Bellows Falls Times*, 29 March 1934, 10; the same story appeared as "Track Of Panther Seen On Stedman [sic] Hill In Chester" in the *Windsor Vermont Journal*, 30 March 1934, 1, and the *Springfield Reporter*, 30 March 1934, 1.

[8] "Wardens Discount Wildcat Stories," *Brattleboro Reformer*, 26 March 1934, 2; *Burlington Free Press*, 26 March 1934, 6; and *Brattleboro Reformer*, 30 March 1934, 4.

[9] *Brattleboro Reformer*, 26 March 1934, 2.

[10] "Chester," *Bellows Falls Times*, 12 April 1934, 10. The same column also was in the *Windsor Vermont Journal*, 13 April 1934, 10 and the *Springfield Reporter*, 13 April 1934, 10.

[11] "No Panthers in Boston," *Rutland Herald*, 25 April 1934, 8.

[12] "Diary of Henry L. Ballou," 28 April 1934. Much appreciation goes to Patricia Ballou of Chester and Carol Ballou Smith for making Henry Ballou's diary available.

[13] "Inter-City Rotary Meeting Opens Fullerton Inn," *Windsor Vermont Journal*, 4 May 1934, 11; the same story also appeared in the *Bellows Falls Times*, 3 May 1934, 15.

[14] "Chester," *Springfield Reporter*, 4 May 1934, 10.

[15] "'Panther Club' to Have Banquet at Chester on May 18," *Rutland Herald*, 8 May 1934, 6.

[16] "To Vermont Pantherites Wheresoever Dispersed," *Woodstock Vermont Standard*, 17 May 1934, 2.

[17] "Diary of Henry L. Ballou," 14 May 1934.

[18] "Huge Panther Seen By Hammondsville Man on Highway," *Rutland Herald*, 18 May 1934, 11; "Reading Man Knows That Vermont Has Panthers Now," *Woodstock Vermont Standard*, 24 May 1934, 2; "Full Grown Panther Surprises Men in Reading Township," *Springfield Reporter*, 25 May 1934, 1; and "Panther Tracks Seen on Okemo By Pawlet Men," *Windsor Vermont Journal*, 11 May 1934, 6; the same story also showed up in the *Springfield Reporter*, 11 May 1934, 6.

[19] *Burlington Daily News*, 21 May 1934, 4; and *Brattleboro Reformer*, 19 May 1934, 4, and 24 May 1934, 4.

[20] "100 Sit Down to Supper at Chester to Swap Yarns of Panthers in Vermont," *Rutland Herald*, 19 May 1934, 6.

[21] Typescripts of "The Pantherite's Song" and "Panthers and Vermont" in the Hitchcock Collection, Vermont Historical Society, Doc. 290, Folder 4, "Vermont Panther Ballou – Copies of Clippings 1934–1984."

[22] Arminala Severence, conversation with author, Chester, Vermont, January, 1995.

[23] Lewis Hammond, "Panthers Seen, Heard, Felt; Vermonters Exchange Facts," *Boston Evening Transcript*, 19 May 1934, 1 and 3; and "Convincing Testimony Heard At Unique Meeting At Chester Supports Belief Of Existence Of Panthers In Vermont," *Windsor Vermont Journal*, 25 May 1934, 1 and 5.

[24] "100 Sit Down to Supper at Chester to Swap Yarns of Panthers in Vermont," 6.

[25] "Diary of Henry L. Ballou," 19 May 1934.

[26] "The 'Panther' Meeting," *Windsor Vermont Journal*, 25 May 1934, 2.

[27] "100 Sit Down to Supper at Chester to Swap Yarns of Panthers in Vermont," 6.

[28] "Mendon Cattle Killer Believed to Be Panther," *Woodstock Vermont Standard*, 7 June 1934, 7.

[29] "The Panthers Again," *Boston Herald*, 5 June 1934, 12.

[30] "Chester," *Windsor Vermont Journal*, 20 July 1934, 10.

[31] "The Vermont Panther," *Boston Herald*, 31 October 1934, 14.

[32] "Panthers Stocks Soar As Springfield, Perkinsville Men Sight Big Cats," *Windsor Vermont Journal*, 16 November 1934, 1 and 5.

[33] "A Challenge To Panther Hunters," *Windsor Vermont Journal*, 16 November 1934, 2.

[34] "Mich. Naturalist Thinks Panthers Live In Vermont," *Windsor Vermont Journal*, 30 November 1934, 19.

[35] "Perkinsville Man Finds Panther Track," *Windsor Vermont Journal*, 28 December 1934, 2.

[36] "Diary of Henry L. Ballou," 22 December 1934.

[37] "Ballou's Faith In Panthers Wins Support Of American Museum," *Windsor Vermont Journal*, 18 January 1934, 1 and 4; the same story appeared in the *Springfield Reporter*, 18 January 1935, 1 and 4; and "Big Game Hunter To Seek Panthers In Chester Area," *Rutland Herald*, 14 January 1935, 9.

[38] "Chester," *Windsor Vermont Journal*, 25 January 1935, 13; the same account was in the *Springfield Reporter*, 25 January 1935, 13.

[39] "Panthers Heard And Seen In Hemlock District Near Charlestown," *Windsor Vermont Journal*, 14 February 1935, 12.

[40] "Chester," *Windsor Vermont Journal*, 28 February 1935, 12.

[41] "Chester Panthers Still Prowling About Woods," *Windsor Vermont Journal*, 7 March 1935, 1.

[42] Typescript of April 15, 1934 letter in "Panther," Miscellaneous File #1032, Vermont Historical Society; and "New Panther Evidence To Be Heard In Meeting At Chester Inn April 26," *Windsor*

Vermont Journal, 18 April 1935, 1; the same article appeared in the *Springfield Reporter*, 18 April 1935, 1.

[43] "Ballou Tells Rotary Vermont Has Panthers," *Windsor Vermont Journal*, 18 April 1935, 4; and "Methodist Brotherhood Hears Panther Lore," *Windsor Vermont Journal*, 25 April 1935, 1.

[44] "Spargo to Speak at Panther Rally in Chester Friday," *Springfield Reporter*, 25 April 1935, 12; "Panther Seen At Amsden Wednesday," *Springfield Reporter*, 25 April 1935, 1; and "Vermont News of the Week," *Randolph Herald and News*, 2 May 1935, 3.

[45] "Pantherites Elect Ballou Grand Puma," *Rutland Herald*, 27 April 1935, 3; "Pantherites Meet and Reassure Themselves Cats Range Vermont," *Brattleboro Reformer*, 27 April 1935, 1 and 5; "Ballou Elected Grand Puma," *Bennington Banner*, 29 April 1935, 5; and "Pantherites Re-Affirm Faith In Big Cats Despite Reverses; Elect Rev. Ballou Grand Puma Of Order," *Windsor Vermont Journal*, 2 May 1935, 1 and 2.

[46] *Bennington Banner*, 30 April 1935, 2; and *Rutland Herald*, 27 April 1935, 8.

[47] "Chester," *Springfield Reporter*, 9 May 1935, 7; and "Chester," *Springfield Reporter*, 16 May 1935, 16.

[48] "Chester," *Springfield Reporter*, 30 May 1935, 17; and "Windham Wolfers One Up on Chester Panther Hunters," *Springfield Reporter*, 13 June 1935, 16.

[49] "Diary of Henry L. Ballou," 28 October 1935.

[50] Richard Andrews, "'Irrepressibles' May Gather Again," *Rutland Herald*, 23 November 1983, 7.

[51] "Diary of Henry Ballou," 20 May 1936.

[52] "Pantherites To Gather Again Despite Failure Of Supporting Evidence," *Windsor Vermont Journal*, 23 April 1936, 1; "Pantherites," *Brattleboro Reformer*, reprinted in *Windsor Vermont Journal*, 7 May 1936, 2; "Panther Club Speaker Last Express Rider," *Windsor Vermont Journal*, 7 May 1936, 1; "Panther Meeting To Be Held at Church," *Windsor Vermont Journal*, 21 May 1936, B4; "Chester," *Windsor Vermont Journal*, 21 May 1936, C1; "Panther Society Meets At Chester," *Rutland Herald*, 23 May 1936, 2; "Chester," *Windsor Vermont Journal*, 28 May 1936, C6; and "Figures From The Old West Live Again At Panther Club Meeting," *Windsor Vermont Journal*, 28 May 1936, 1; the same story was in the *Bellows Falls Times*, 28 May 1936, 1.

[53] "Diary of Henry L. Ballou," 22 May 1936.

[54] *Rutland Herald*, 25 May 1936, 8.

[55] "Diary of Henry L. Ballou," 9 September 1936.

[56] "Cold River Panther Shatters Peaceful Night With Hair-Raising Human Screams," *Windsor Vermont Journal*, 8 April 1937, 1; and "$25 For Cold River Panther," *Windsor Vermont Journal*, 8 April 1937, 2.

[57] Charles Edward Crane, *Let Me Show You Vermont* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1937), 99.

[58] "The Vermont Panther," *Boston Herald*, 3 April 1934, 12; and "A Panther in Vermont," *Bellows Falls Times*, 5 April 1934, 2.

[59] "Evidence Points To Panthers In Vermont," *Rutland Herald*, 1.

[60] "A Slant on the Recent 'Panther' Controversey [sic]!" *Bellows Falls Times*, 12 April 1934, 2. The same letter also appeared in the *Windsor Vermont Journal*, 13 April 1934, 2 and *Springfield Reporter*, 13 April 1934, 2. The Rutland paper reprinted it, too, as "N. Hampshire Man Supports Pastor's Panther Adventure," *Rutland Herald*, 16 April 1934, 9.

[61] "A Catty State," *Boston Herald*, 21 April 1934, 14.

[62] "Panthers?" *Boston Herald*, 17 April 1934, 12.

[63] "A Catty State," 14.

[64] "There Must Be A Panther," *Windsor Vermont Journal*, 6 April 1934, 2; and *Springfield Reporter*, 6 April 1934, 2.

[65] *The Vermont Missionary*, v. 46, n. 5 (May 1934), 3.

[66] *Rutland Herald*, 21 April 1934, 8.

[67] "Panther Hunters Attention!" *Bennington Banner*, 12 May 1934, 2; the *Burlington Free Press* reprinted the editorial in its 17 May 1934 issue, 6, and the *Rutland Herald* excerpted part of it as "The Pantherists," 15 May 1934, 8.

[68] "Some Hunters Think 'Panthers' Were Bobcats, That Owls Emitted Screams," *Rutland Herald*, 12 April 1934, 7.

[69] "Questions about the Panther," *Rutland Herald*, 23 April 1934, 8.

[70] "Bob-cat Versus Panther Tracks," *Rutland Herald*, 27 April 1934, 8.

[71] "Chester Residents Rally To Support Of Panther Story," *Springfield Reporter*, 6 April 1934, 9.

[72] "Some Hunters Think 'Panthers' Were Bobcats, That Owls Emitted Screams," 7.

[73] "He Believes in Panthers," *Rutland Herald*, 17 April 1934, 4.

[74] "Has Seen Panther Tracks," *Rutland Herald*, 20 April 1934, 8.

[75] "How The Panther Stalks Its Prey," *Rutland Herald*, 30 April 1934, 8.

[76] "To End the Discussion," *Boston Herald*, 8 April 1934, 10B.

[77] "Believer in Panthers," *Bennington Banner,* 15 May 1934, 2.
[78] "Evidence Points To Panthers In Vermont," 1-2.
[79] "A Slant on the Recent 'Panther' Controversey [sic]!" 2.
[80] "Has Seen Panther Tracks," 8.
[81] "Londonderry Panther," *Rutland Herald,* 27 April 1934, 8; and "2 Men Say They Saw Panthers in State," *Springfield Reporter,* 27 April 1934, 7.
[82] "Here's New Tale About Them Thar Pesky Panthers," *Rutland Herald,* 28 April 1934, 5.
[83] "Saw A Panther's Wet Footprint," *Rutland Herald,* 2 May 1934, 8.
[84] "Why Panther Screamed," *Rutland Herald,* 3 May 1934, 8; and "Panther In Woodstock," *Rutland Herald,* 3 May 1934, 8.
[85] "He Believes in Panthers," *Rutland Herald,* 3 May 1934, 8.
[86] Ira A. Belknap to William H. Ballou, 16 June 1934; Leon S. and Nellie E. Bolster to Ballou, ? June 1934; Mrs. Harry A. Farrar to Ballou, ? June 1934; Blanche Howard Foster to Ballou, 18 June 1934; Philip F. VanBebber Jr. to Ballou, 2 July 1934; Annie Sherwin to Ballou, 25 June 1934; Elbert S. Stevens to Ballou, ? June 1934; H[ermon] M. Guild, ? June 1934; and Waldo M. Stevens, ? June 1934, typescripts in the Hitchcock Collection, Vermont Historical Society, Doc. 290, Folder 4, "Vermont Panther Ballou – Copies of Clippings 1934-1984.
[87] "The Barnard Panther," *Rutland Herald,* 14 April 1934, 8.
[88] "Story of Panther," *Bellows Falls Times* 19 April 1934, 2. The same letter appeared in the *Windsor Vermont Journal,* 20 April 1934, 2, and the *Springfield Reporter,* 20 April 1934, 2.
[89] "Historic and Local Panthers," *Rutland Herald,* 16 April 1934, 8; and "Saw Downer's Panther Alive," *Rutland Herald,* 18 April 1934, 8.
[90] "More About Panthers," *Rutland Herald,* 19 April 1934, 8.
[91] "Animal Tracks Recall Panther," *Randolph Herald and News,* 19 April 1934, 1.
[92] "Story of Panther Hunt," *Rutland Herald,* 25 April 1934, 8; and "Believes Panther Stories," *Rutland Herald,* 26 April 1934, 8.
[93] "Panther Cats," *Rutland Herald,* 9 May 1934, 4.
[94] *Rutland Herald,* 7 April 1934, 8.
[95] "Seeking Panther Traces," *Rutland Herald,* 1 April 1934, 8.
[96] "Wild Animal Tales," *Rutland Herald,* 12 April 1934, 8. The *Burlington Free Press* reprinted this editorial verbatim, 16 April 1934, 4.
[97] "Panther," *Rutland Herald,* 12 April 1934, 8.
[98] *Rutland Herald,* 21 April 1934, 8.
[99] "What, No Panthers?" *Rutland Herald,* 12 May 1934, 8; and Fred A. Emery, "Man Who Knows, Says 'Be Gentle With Panthers'," *Rutland Herald,* 12 May 1934, 11; the same letter also appeared in the *Randolph Herald and News,* 17 May 1934, 1.
[100] *Rutland Herald,* 16 May 1934, 8.
[101] *Rutland Herald,* 15 May 1934, 8.
[102] "Taken During 1934" and "May Start The Hunters," *Rutland Herald,* 27 April 1934, 8; and "Tale Of A Panther," 26 April 1934, 8.
[103] *Burlington Free Press,* 4 May 1934, 6.
[104] "Wild Animal Campaigning," *Rutland Herald,* 5 May 1934, 8.
[105] "Buck Better Not Bring One of His Own," *Rutland Herald,* 8 May 1934, 8.
[106] *Burlington Free Press,* 8 May 1934, 6.
[107] "'Panther Club' to Have Banquet at Chester on May 18," 6.
[108] *Rutland Herald,* 12 May 1934, 8.
[109] "The Panther Cult," *Burlington Free Press,* 24 April 1935, 6.
[110] "Panthers Won't Down," *Brattleboro Reformer,* reprinted in *Windsor Vermont Journal,* 25 April 1935, 2.
[111] "Tale Of A Panther," 8.
[112] *Rutland Herald,* 27 April 1934, 8.
[113] *Rutland Herald,* 4 May 1934, 8.
[114] *Rutland Herald,* 5 May 1934, 8.
[115] "Panther Cats," *Rutland Herald,* 9 May 1934, 4.
[116] "Panther Notice," *Woodstock Vermont Standard,* 10 May 1934, 2; The *Vermont Standard* did, however, publish Ballou's invitation letter without comment in its 17 May 1934 number; *Manchester Journal,* 10 May 1934, 4; the *Burlington Free Press* reprinted the *Journal* article on 16 May 1934, 6.
[117] "Vermont: Pantheon of Panthers," *Windsor Vermont Journal,* 1 June 1934, 2.
[118] "A Panther in Vermont?" *Boston Herald,* 29 March 1934, 30.
[119] "More on Panthers," *Boston Herald,* 5 April 1934, 26.
[120] "A Slant on the Recent Panther Controversey [sic]!" 2.
[121] "There Must Be A Panther," 2.

[122] "No Panthers in Boston," 8.
[123] "The Pantherists," *Boston Herald*, 8 May 1934, 14.
[124] "One Cat Not Enough," *Boston Herald*, 7 April 1934, 14.
[125] "More Scrambled Initials," *Boston Herald*, 9 April 1934, 10.
[126] "On the Other Hand," *Boston Herald*, 7 April 1934, 14.
[127] "He Believes in Panthers," *Rutland Herald*, 1 May 1934, 4.
[128] "Who's Afraid of the Big, Bad Panther?" *Rutland Herald*, 3 May 1934, 8.
[129] *Rutland Herald*, 5 May 1934, 8.
[130] *Rutland Herald*, 8 May 1934, 8.
[131] "Chester," *Windsor Vermont Journal*, 6 April 1934, 10.
[132] *Vermont Missionary*, May, 1934, 3.
[133] Keyte McPeck, "Don't Look Now, But . . . Vermont Panther Rides Again," *Bellows Falls Times*, December 23, 1952, 2.
[134] Andrews, "'Irrepressibles' May Gather Again," 7.
[135] Richard Andrews, "Pantherites No Less Certain After 50 Years," *Rutland Herald*, 11 June 1984, 6.
[136] See, for example, Ed Barna, "The Panther Paradox," *Vermont*, v. 2, n. 1 (January 1990), 60–64, 66; Stephen Mease, "Has the Cat Come Back?" *Vermont Life*, v. 47, n. 2 (Winter 1992), 30–34; Harold B. Hitchcock, "Positive Glimpses of Vermont's Controversial Cat, The Panther," *Vermont Sportsman*, v. 23, n. 1 (April 1992), 20–21; John Lazenby, "The Cat Is Back," *Vermont Life*, v. 49, n. 2 (Winter 1994), 20–23, 25; "Catamount Questions Continue," *Vermont Woodlands* (Winter 1994), 8; and Ted Levin, "Of Catamounts and Panthers," *Vermont Life*, 51, no. 3 (Spring, 1997), 22–25.

In Their Words

Manuscripts in the Vermont Historical Society

This occasional section draws attention to the outstanding manuscript holdings of the Vermont Historical Society by presenting transcribed letters, diary entries, memoirs, and other documents. Editing has been kept to a minimum, but punctuation, capital letters, and paragraphing have been added for clarity. Following the manuscript material is information about its physical dimensions, location in the library, and provenance.

A Vermonter on the Trail of Tears, 1830–1837

On December 28, 1829, President Andrew Jackson, addressing the first session of the Twenty-first Congress, presented his vision for the peaceful removal of the Five Civilized Tribes[1] from the southern United States. In the preceding decades these Indian nations had been forced to cede much of their lands to the U.S. government; however, they still retained large, semi-autonomous territories, which the southern states were eager to possess. Jackson's speech pointed out the Indians' suffering under the recent extension of state law over them in Alabama and Georgia (which he had tacitly allowed) and the ongoing destruction of their culture by the advancement of white civilization. The only solution to "preserve this much injured race" was their removal to lands west of the Mississippi.[2]

After months of debate, Congress passed the Indian Removal Act, which was signed by President Jackson on May 24, 1830. The act provided for

the emigration of the southern tribes to the Indian Territories, located in modern-day Oklahoma. Individual Indians could voluntarily sell their private "allotments" (often parceled out in previous treaties) and remove to the West, where they might dwell under their own government, free from white interference. Upon the act's passage, numerous white settlers and speculators flooded into the northern Creek lands in Alabama, anticipating the eventual removal of the natives. In June 1830 William J. Beattie of Ryegate, Vermont, settled among the Creek Indians. He had come south to seek his fortune, which became inextricably linked to that of the Creek peoples.

The Beattie Family Papers at the Vermont Historical Society contain over a decade of correspondence and other materials associated with William's activities in the South. The collection's letters and legal documents reveal William's undefined mercantile activities, land speculation, and involvement with the emigrating Creek Indians. Included here are two documents dated in 1833, which link him to a group of Creeks who sought to remove themselves to Texas. Correspondence not represented here indicates that William was later employed with the Alabama Emigrating Company. This was a private firm hired by the federal government to assist in the forced removal of the Creeks when the Second Creek War broke out in the spring of 1836.

The nature of this "war," largely provoked by the U.S. government's lack of resolution in dealing with illegal white settlers on Creek lands, was a matter of immediate debate. That the government was conveniently using the hostilities as an excuse to forcibly emigrate the Creeks seemed undeniable to some. Vermont Representative Horace Everett was one such skeptic, asking his colleagues in June 1836 "On what evidence is this House called to act? On a letter from the Secretary of War to a committee, stating that actual hostilities have commenced, unaccompanied by any evidence . . . to enable the House to judge if the right to remove the Creeks by force is justifiable."[3]

Despite such dissenting voices, by 1838 nearly 18,000 Creek Indians were relocated west of the Mississippi. In the custody of the U.S. military and agents of the Alabama Emigrating Company, bands of Creek Indians were gathered at Fort Mitchell, Alabama, marched to the Gulf of Mexico, sent by boat to New Orleans, and then up the Mississippi and Arkansas Rivers. Upon reaching Fort Gibson, which lay on the border of modern-day Arkansas and Oklahoma, they were dispersed into the Creek allotment of the Indian Territories. It is evident from the correspondence addressed to William that he made this journey at least once in the summer of 1836, and, having returned to Fort Mitchell by the following spring, departed again for the Arkansas Territory in the fall of 1837.

The Indian removals were a matter of heated debate. Indeed, a wide range of opinions on the subject is found in the following excerpts. It is especially critical to understand a "middle-ground" which allowed white Americans to salve their collective conscience and, at the same time, obey the mandates of expansionism. This justification for the removal lay in the belief that the forward march of white civilization was inevitable, and that it was the moral duty of the superior white man to remove the child-like Indian from its path.[4]

As we read about the actions of William Beattie, we would do well to consider this idea that removing the Indians was critical to their survival. The manuscript collection makes it clear that William was a speculator in Indian land and in the employ of an emigrating company which, in the words of one recent historian, "received a fixed amount for the job and was therefore motivated to do as little for their charges as possible."[5] *While this pursuit of gain at the expense of an entire people seems reprehensible to our sensibilities, William possibly saw his endeavors in a different light. The documents portray William as a representative appointed by the Creeks, faithfully recording their grievances and assisting in their attempted emigration to a more desirable location in Texas; even, at one point, referring to the "goodness of my cause." The complexities of the situation defy a simple understanding of William's relationship to the Creek Indians. In any event, this Vermonter suffered the fate of many of the migrating Creeks: he died en route to the Indian Territories around December 1, 1837.*

W. J. Beattie in Alabama to Jacob Covert in New York, June 25, 1830

Sir,

Having now got settled I take the liberty of addressing a few lines to inform you where I am. I arrived safely in Mobile and disposed of my goods to a good advantage. After spending the winter in Mobile I went to New Orleans from there on to East & West Florida and have now settled on the Chattahoochee River among the Creek Indians on the Alabama side about 500 miles from Mobile. Am extremely well pleased with the country & opening there is for new beginners or Knights of the Stick[6] although there is every privation & hardship to (?) imaginable. No society at all—tea, bread, or vegetables I have not seen for months. Merchandise average profit 150%. I expect to remain in this country for some time and hope to hear often from you . . .

W. J. Beattie

JAMES BEATTIE IN RYEGATE, VERMONT, TO W. J. BEATTIE IN ALABAMA, FEBRUARY 16, 1831

Dear son,

. . . with respect to your own business I would be glad if you would write me more fully, if the Gentleman you are in company with stays along with you or if you [are] doing business there alone or what is the probable amount of your profits per month. I would be glad to know when you expect to return to Vermont as we are anxious to see you. The indian question as it is called is causing a good deal of excitement in the north. The general opinion is that government is violating the treaties made with the Indians. If that is so government is doing wrong. I wish you would write me a few lines on the subject as you have an opportunity of knowing the truth of it . . .

James Beattie

TO THE CHIEFS & HEAD MEN OF THE DIFFERENT TOWNS OF THE CREEK & SEMINOLA NATION [IN W. J. BEATTIE'S HANDWRITING]

Brothers,

We the undersigned Chiefs & head men of the Chushatta & Alabama tribes in the Province of Texas in behalf of ourselves & subjects in each respective tribe do sympathize with their brethren in their oppression by the Federal Government of the United States and do recommend to their brethren to leave the United States and do recommend them to emigrate to the Province of Texas and do assure them that we have found the climate & soil well adapted for our use & that our country abounds in all kinds of game. We have given your delegation a full detail of this country. We entreat you in brotherly love and affection to come & join here whereby we may become powerful & happy as we once wont to before we left you. Our government has been good to us & punctual in performing with its engagements.

Done in the Council at
Chushatta Village this
February, 1833

THE CHIEFS AND HEADMEN OF CREEK NATIONS TO HON. LEWIS CASS, SECTY. OF WAR [IN W. J. BEATTIE'S HANDWRITING]

Sir,

We the undersigned Chiefs and head men of the Creek Nations of Indians do hereby make known to their Father the President & to the Secty. War Dept. their wish to emigrate west of the Mississippi River but we have many and strong objections to emigrating to that portion of the country

which you have assigned to us in the west. The inclemency of the winter season is so severe that we who are now in the decline of life could never endure its piercing cold. The scarcity and unwholesomeness of the water is also another formidable objection to that country. We know these facts from the sad affects which our brethren have experienced since their arrival in the west. For our happiness and future prosperity we purpose to join our brethren and many of our relatives of the Apalachicola Tribes and to emigrate with them to the country whose climate may be congenial to our accustomed habits. To affect this we propose that the government of the United States pay to us the amt. of money that it would have in the event of our emigrating to the Arkansas, to emigrate and support us one year after our arrival per Treaty of 24th March 1832[7] . . . our objects are health happiness and prosperity neither of [which] we can enjoy here since the Laws of the States have been extended over us and our own became extinct. Advantage is taken of our ignorance of the Laws and we find ourselves daily impoverishing and our objections to the Arkansas are too formidable and too strong to overcome . . . we have appointed Mr. William Beattie who will receive all the communications you may see fit to make us on the subject.

done in Council at Siokola this
17th day of April 1833

W. J. Beattie in Georgia to Margaret Beattie in Ryegate, Vermont, April 29, 1833

Dear Mother,

. . . am happy to inform you that I am enjoying excellent health, never enjoyed better. My former letters will have informed you of my business and my prospects which are very flattering but slow. Am in the employment of emigrating Indians to the Province of Texas which is good pay and shure but slow. I have been [on] one trip which I informed you of soon after my return. I now expect to make another perhaps in 3 months. Am meeting with much formidable opposition but trust that the goodness of my cause & my unremitting exertions will enable me to surmount all these difficulties. The want of ready cash capital prevents me making an *immense fortune* but . . . I must keep on striking . . .

W. J. Beattie

J. McNab in Vermont to W. J. Beattie in Polecat Springs, Alabama, July 2, 1834

Dear Sir,

. . . You say your "interest requires that you should remain for some

time" in that part of the country. From anything you have written, I am still unable to divine what your business, in its various forms, really is. I should like to know what your speculation business really is; & if it is of such a character that you do not feel willing your parents & friends should be informed of, I assure you it would be carefully kept from them, were you to inform me and enjoin secrecy. You express anxiety to see me, hoping you are able to put me in possession of valuable information, *how to make fortunes;* that is exactly what I am very desirous of becoming aquainted with. What do you mean when you say "if Andrew Jackson does his duty, you shall have a competency"? . . . I am fully confident that General Jackson will do his duty. I admire his independence of mind. There are few men like him in the world [. . .] & I sincerely wish he were eligible for re-election . . .

J. McNab

EDWARD MCBRYDE IN ALABAMA TO W.J. BEATTIE IN COLUMBUS, GEORGIA, AUGUST 11, 1834

Friend Beattie,

I returned from Tuckabatchee[8] yesterday evening in company with old Lewis and he departed immediately for Soundes. The agent has done nothing yet. He has told the chiefs that where the oldest setter[9] has failed to get his improvement if he will now come forward and make complaint he shall have it. Also where any of the Indians have sold land and the money has been taken back by the purchaser that if he will come forward and make complaint he shall have the land back. I do not vouch for this but Hopoethlo Yoholo[10] gave it out in the square yesterday as coming from the agent. I will write again when the council is over.

Yours, Edward Aug. McBryde

JANE BEATTIE IN RYEGATE, VERMONT, TO W. J. BEATTIE IN FT. MITCHELL, ALABAMA, JULY 15, 1835

Dear Brother

. . . you wished me to use my influence to persuade father to remove to the South. I think this will not be hard to do but you will have to remove some obstacles which appear to be in the way. In the first place he wants you to write & be very precise in giving a full description of the place you want him to move to, whether there will be any chance to get the children educated or not & what chance there will be of hearing the gospel preached if any. He also wants to know if he owns a farm there if he can hire men to till it or be obliged to keep *slaves* for he says it is a settled point with him that he will keep no slaves . . . father wishes

you to come home as soon as you can without injuring your business. he does not want you to come now if you will lose by it . . . for the rest of our minds about going south we are all willing & I almost said ready except Mother. She is afraid that the Indians will rise & kill her if she goes there; there was an account in the last North Star of their having murdered & robbed several innocent travelers on the highway leading from Columbus Geo. to Montgomery but I am in hopes that the disturbance will be quelled by the time we go there . . .

Jane Beattie

J. McNab in Vermont, to W. J. Beattie in Little Rock, Arkansas, July 14, 1836

Dear Sir,

. . . The people in this quarter highly regret the miserable condition of many of those at the South, in consequence of the Indian War, and general devastation. Many of those who were rolling in wealth and basking in the sunshine of happiness & real enjoyment, and now in a state of total destitution; and beside, many valuable members of society are now no more!

You seem to think according to the tenor of your short hint on that subject that the war is pretty much over and I find by the accounts in the newspapers that that belief is pretty general. Had a more efficient force than has been employed, superintended by able & discrete officers, been properly managed and disposed of in defense of the Southern people and their valuable property, the war had not continued thus long & destructive. Had old General Jackson had the command, he would have blown the Indians to hell ere this time. The very *name* of General Jackson would have terror struck them, if they had supposed him in the field . . .

J. McNab

Post-Master Fort Gibson, Arkansas, to James Beattie in Ryegate, Vermont, March 29, 1838

Dear Sir,

Yours of the 21st of February came to hand making inquire respecting Mr. Wm. J. Beatty. I am sorry to say that he died at the mouth of the Arkansas River the last of November or 1st of December on his way to this place with a party of emigrating Indians. He died of fever. John Campbell of Montgomery Ala. can give you all the information desired. He was engaged in the same business.

Yours, E. W. Nowlund

Manuscript

The Beattie Family Papers consist of land deeds, correspondence, and various legal documents from the years 1814 to 1884. The collection primarily pertains to the activities of James Beattie of Ryegate, Vermont, and his sons, David, James, Thomas, and William, the latter of whom was involved with the emigration of the Creek Indians from Alabama between 1830 and 1837. The papers were given to the Vermont Historical Society in two parts, the first in 1985 and the second in 1988, by Mrs. James H. Woods of Sun City, Florida (ms. acc. 85.33). They were inherited by Mrs. Woods from her mother, May Gillespie Beattie Lackie of St. Johnsbury, Vermont, in 1963. The collection occupies one box (.25 linear feet).

Notes

[1] Namely, the Cherokees, Chickasaws, Choctaws, Seminoles, and Creeks. The Creek confederacy was composed of several smaller tribes, primarily united by their common tongue: Muskhogean. Traditionally the Creeks were divided into two parts: the Upper Creek, surrounding the Coosa and Tallapoosa Rivers in Alabama, and the Lower Creeks, centered on the Chattahoochee River between Alabama and Georgia. For more information, see Fredrick Webb Hodge, ed., *Handbook of North American Indians* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 1971).

[2] For a discussion of Jackson's speech and the text of both his December 9, 1830, address and the Indian Removal Act, see Anthony F. C. Wallace, *The Long, Bitter Trail* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993), 65–70, 121–128.

[3] *Speech of Rep. Horace Everett, of Vermont: Delivered in the House of Representatives, in Committee of the Whole, on the Indian Annuity Bill, June 3rd, 1836* (Washington: National Intelligence Office, 1836), 3.

[4] For a penetrating analysis of the psychology and rhetoric of the Indian removals, see Michael Paul Rogin, *Fathers and Children: Andrew Jackson and the Subjugation of the American Indians* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf Inc., 1975)

[5] Wallace, *The Long, Bitter Trail*, 88.

[6] Eric Partridge, *A Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English* (New York: Macmillan Pub. Co., 1984), defines "Knights of the . . ." as "forming various jocular (formerly often slang) phrases denoting one who is a member of a certain trade or profession." "Stick" is presumably a reference to a "walking-stick," i.e., an itinerant entrepreneur.

[7] See *Speech of Horace Everett*, 2, for Article 12 of the March 24, 1832 treaty, which stipulated that the United States desired the Creeks to voluntarily emigrate west, and would pay for the journey and provide one year's subsistence afterwards.

[8] Tuckabatchee was a prominent Upper Creek town roughly midway between Montgomery, Alabama, and Columbus, Georgia.

[9] This is apparently a reference to someone who had "set up" or made an improvement on his property. When selling their lands, the Indians were supposed to be paid for any improvements they had previously made.

[10] Opothle Yoholo was a resident of Tuckabatchee who emerged as the de facto leader of the Upper Creeks in the late 1820s. He is largely credited with coercing the Secretary of War Lewis Cass into an investigation of the fraud and abuse perpetrated on the Creeks in 1835. The Second Creek War aborted the investigation shortly thereafter. See Michael D. Green, *The Politics of Indian Removal* (Lincoln: Nebraska University Press, 1982), 133–139, 183–184.

Brett E. Whalen

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BOOK REVIEWS

Covered Bridges of Vermont

By Ed Barna (Woodstock, Vt.: The Countryman Press, 1996, pp. 215, paper, $17.00).

Public association of the covered bridge with Vermont is perhaps on a level with that of maple syrup and first-class skiing. For many Vermonters, these structures represent historically rich arteries of life, and Ed Barna is no exception. In this book, he takes us on a truly informative and emotional journey through time, place, and structure. We travel from the distressed Road River Bridge of Upper Troy in the far north to the handsomely suburbanized Silk Bridge in Bennington to the south, and from the hallowed, silent spaces of the covered railroad bridge of Shoreham in the west to the crisp, grand span of the Cornish-Windsor bridge in the far eastern part of the state. Each of the 106 bridges is thoughtfully researched with regard to place, date, builder, truss type, and dimensions. The research also includes directions for getting to each of these sites, and even photography tips once we've arrived.

This little volume is the most portable, accurate, and useful guidebook of its kind, and much more: it is generously enriched with valuable historical data, recollections, and selected anecdotes from the past. Perhaps most important, Barna's passionate belief in the worth and legacy of these structures is felt on virtually every page, beginning with his introduction, where the author sensitively contrasts past and present practices concerning the raw stuff of which these bridges were made:

> These trees had such girth that bridge chords (the horizontal timbers that spanned the stream) could be taken strictly from the inner heartwood. Their strength also came from their long, slow growth that left closely spaced rings—the opposite of trees grown by modern companies. (p. 13)

Barna traces the remarkable rapidity of truss developments and the

men responsible for them, from Timothy Palmer's efforts in 1797 to the wood and steel creations of T. Willis Pratt in 1877, which signaled the end of purely wooden spans and heralded the advent of total steel truss bridges. Along the way, Barna unfolds varied solutions to bridge strength and span through his intensely felt homages to such other bridge pioneers as Theodore Burr, Stephen Long, William Howe, Ithiel Town, and Nicholas Powers. This was indeed, as Barna notes, "the classic period of Yankee ingenuity" (p. 21). His admiration for the rich complexity of these covered forms and optimism about their continuance is felt in his insightful, organic connection between truss patterns, town life, and other forms of human expression:

> Their wonderful timbers—interlaced like the cross-stitching of an old farmhouse sampler, or the interplay of square dancers and the fiddler—have been the arks to carry older values across the troubled waters of the last century, and they promise to do so into a new millennium. (p. 17)

It is clear that Barna wants us to go beyond reading the book: the pointed directions and the photography tips are meant to involve us in getting out there and experiencing these sites. Even further, the author heightens our awareness and sensitivity to the task of building these bridges, when he reminds us of the 'treenail' makers' concern:

> When looking at all those pegged joints today, remember the exacting demands of this task: if a treenail was too big, a joint might crack; if it was too small, a joint might shift, weakening everything. (p. 28)

Barna also goes beyond these details and shares with us the transforming qualities and perceptions evoked by the passage of time and context at the Creamery Bridge in Montgomery:

> Haunted or not, this bridge can be haunting. Gradually the road falls into ruins, but get out and walk farther. The loudest sounds are birds and the brook rushing over a waterfall downstream from the bridge. Trees are taking back the land, as if people never really owned it. There is a feeling not just of rural seclusion, but of having come to the ends of the earth. (p. 108)

As for what lies ahead, Barna ends his introductory essay citing, as he does elsewhere, the organic connection of these bridges to past community. He subtly solicits our individual responsibility for their future:

> In the end, what matters most is a series of relationships—between one truss timber and another, between the land and its people, between generations. Long before the term "renewable resource" was invented, these structures were a living part of a forested landscape—and with care and attention, they always will be. (p. 28)

The quality of content and practical usefulness of *Covered Bridges in Vermont* will, we can hope, merit an enlarged hardcover version (in physical dimensions and reproductions only) with full-color plates, providing us with the lasting richness of formal presentation that the contents deserve. Ed Barna has truly provided a cultural service, illuminating the past and present worth of these cultural icons of Vermont and providing us with an indispensable guide for novice and experienced bridge seekers. This book flows from the author's generosity of spirit. Our own understanding and affection for these wood connectors to our history and hopefully, to our future, will be truly enhanced by it.

BEN PFINGSTAG

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Revolutionary Brotherhood: Freemasonry and the Transformation of the American Social Order, 1730–1840

By Steven C. Bullock (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996, pp. 421, $49.95)

Fraternal organizations (and their sororal counterparts) have played an enormously important role in American communities for more than 250 years. Recently their numbers have been declining and their social influence has been reduced, but in their heyday they were a force to be reckoned with in almost every town and city.

Readers of this journal who are interested in the history of freemasonry in Vermont will know that not much has been published about that subject. The state's Grand Lodge sponsored a brief history more than fifty years ago (John Spargo, *The Rise and Progress of Freemasonry in Vermont the Green Mountain State 1765–1944*), but there is little else for the social historian to read, aside from several histories of local lodges. *Revolutionary Brotherhood, Freemasonry and the Transformation of the American Social Order, 1730–1840* does not shed much light on what we know about Masonic activities in terms of founding dates for various lodges or which leaders would be eligible for a Masonic Hall of Fame.

Still, Professor Bullock's book does, finally, begin to assess the influence freemasonry exercised in early America, including the Green Mountain State. Perhaps Bullock's monograph will spur other social historians to write institutional histories of similar organizations.

There are four parts to the monograph: "Colonial Masonry," "The Revolutionary Transformation," "Republican Masonry," and "Masonry and Democracy." There are also 25 illustrations, 21 tables and an essay on Masonic sources, followed by 80 pages of notes and a 14-page index. In short, the book contains all the material of sound scholarship. The data assembled in the tables provides an especially imaginative way of discovering who joined the early lodges in the eastern colonies (and, later, states).

The author begins, appropriately, with the early eighteenth-century creation of the fraternity in England, where "speculative" masons gradually assumed the leadership of the guilds, which had for centuries served "active" craftsmen. Soon the new fraternity crossed the Atlantic. By 1738 lodges had been formed in Philadelphia, Savannah, Boston, New York, Charleston, and Cape Fear (North Carolina). Issues of primacy marred these early beginnings and even today Boston and Philadelphia both claim to have been the city in which the fraternity was first organized in North America.

In America, according to Bullock, the new fraternity served to separate the provincial elite from the common folk. Bullock argues that during its first century American Masonry changed dramatically as Britain's colonies first separated from the mother country and then joined together as the new United States. Mid-to-late eighteenth-century Freemasonry then was like a moving stream which, near its end, little resembled its origins. Bullock points out that the contest between "moderns" and "ancients," which was underway before the Revolution, picked up its pace during the war years. Not long thereafter, the "ancients" could claim victory. The result, says Bullock, was the further democratization of the fraternity by "men of lesser rank." (p. 107) In the wake of the Revolution new inland leaders as well as numerous former Continental army officers changed the face of the organization. These changes spurred the growth of the fraternity, and from 1790 to 1826 it enjoyed unparalleled power and influence. Community leaders including businessmen and politicians joined local lodges in unprecedented numbers. Unfortunately, an event in 1826, exacerbated by conflicts with evangelical Protestantism, led to an Anti-Masonic movement that decimated the organization. The scandal following the unexplained disappearance of William Morgan was, no doubt, the worst thing that ever happened to the American Masonic com-

munity. As the author points out, the fraternity was never the same, even after the Anti-Masonic movement died down. That incident, of course, remains a blot on the record today. Its significance is attested to by the fact that it has lived on in history textbooks for nearly 175 years. No other fraternity or sorority can match "the Morgan affair" for notoriety. When Freemasonry revived in the years before the Civil War, it was no longer the model fraternity it had been early in the century.

However, for nearly four decades following the inauguration of Brother George Washington as President of the United States the fraternity was closely identified with public offices and public officers. They were there in 1793 when the president, wearing his Masonic apron, dedicated the U.S. Capitol and they were present in 1825 when the Concord, Mass. monument to the Minutemen was dedicated. In a society that separated church and state, the Masonic fraternity saw itself as a secular entity that could direct God's blessings to appropriate and approved government enterprises.

Although blacks were not admitted to white lodges, a black Bostonian named Prince Hall was made a Mason by a British soldier and went on to form the African lodge, with a charter from England in 1785. Blacks joined Prince Hall lodges in increasing numbers during the following decades. Women, too, were excluded from the fraternity, but in Boston Hannah Crocker became something of an expert on freemasonry. After due investigation in the 1790s she reassured her female friends that membership in local lodges would not harm their husbands. Nevertheless, she did not stop there, she organized a lodge for women and named it Saint Ann's, after Mary's mother!

As the fraternity grew, it increasingly served as a network, within which preference was given to those who belonged. While later in the nineteenth century the practice may have been more prevalent, it was not uncommon even in the early years for a brother to hire other brothers. Nor was it remarkable in post-Jacksonian America that products and services were purchased from other members of the order. Freemasonry in pre-Civil War America was in some ways the very model of the "old boys" way of doing business. (And, if anything, the network was expanded and systematized in the decades following the Civil War, a phenomenon that deserves further attention.)

Dense with information, this is not an easy book to read. Nevertheless, it is a welcome addition to a body of literature that contains too much bad history. Bullock has the advantage of being able to look at his subject from outside the lodge room, as it were. As a non-Mason he can bring a degree of objectivity to issues that have been inaccurately

described by members of the fraternity writing as amateur and filiopietistic historians. May there be more books like this one from the groves of academe!

THOMAS W. LEAVITT

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The Massachusetts Historical Society: A Bicentennial History, 1791–1991

By Louis Leonard Tucker (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1995, pp. 623, $49.95).

Not many American historical societies merit a 623-page history. As the reviewer of this volume, I'm happy that the Massachusetts Historical Society is among them. Founded in 1791 by Jeremy Belknap, the MHS is the nation's oldest historical organization and one of the best. The Society's small, by-election-only membership has included such New England luminaries as John Quincy Adams, Daniel Webster, James Russell Lowell, and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow; more importantly, the MHS has also enrolled or employed many of America's leading historians – Francis Parkman, Justin Winsor, Worthington C. Ford, Esther Forbes, Bernard Bailyn, Edmund Morgan, Perry Miller, Samuel Eliot Morison – in its two centuries. With research collections that include the papers of the Adams family, Paul Revere, William Pickering, and Robert Treat Paine, more than 9,000 Thomas Jefferson manuscripts, and impressive holdings of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century American books, broadsides, and pamphlets, the Society has long been a major destination for scholars interested in early American history. In New England, the MHS has but a handful of peers (the American Antiquarian Society, Harvard, Yale) in the quality and quantity of historical collections and publishing programs; nationally, there probably are not a dozen comparable American history libraries and archives.

Louis Leonard Tucker's *The Massachusetts Historical Society: A Bicentennial History, 1791–1991* is an impressive and interesting book. Director of the Society since 1977, Tucker writes with insight and perspective that only two decades on the scene could impart. He details the highs and lows of 200 years: the sleepy start of the first half-century; the dramatic revitalization of the MHS in the middle third of the nine-

teenth century during the presidency of Robert C. Winthrop; the Society's heated battles in the 1850s and 1860s with Boston antiquarian Samuel G. Drake and his upstart New England Historic Genealogical Society; Charles Francis Adams and his drive to modernize the MHS from 1895 to 1915; the doldrums that a combination of lethargic officers, ineffective administrators, and unenthusiastic members produced in the 1930s and 1940s; and the energy and drive that Stephen T. Riley brought to the MHS as Director between 1957 and 1976. While readers familiar with the outstanding institutions in American history know that most have followed a bumpy road to greatness, Tucker's narrative neither over emphasizes the positive nor hurries past the negative, and he deserves credit for not whitewashing the history of his own organization. If there is a flaw in Tucker's coverage, it is that he skips over his own years as director, and thus we may have to wait until the Society's tercentenary chronicle for a more thorough look at the MHS between 1977 and 1997.

Above all, Tucker writes well about people, and his book is full of fascinating vignettes about the individuals who made the Massachusetts Historical Society: Jeremy Belknap, the Congregational clergyman whose passion for "collecting and communicating the Antiquities of America" (p. 14) sparked the founding of the MHS; Frances M. Caulkins, who in 1857 became the first woman elected to MHS membership (a "first" the Society did not repeat for another 109 years); Robert C. Winthrop, the president who breathed energy and life into a moribund organization; Samuel A. Greene, a disagreeable curmudgeon who ruled the library for fifty years and made life miserable for members, researchers, and fellow staff alike; Worthington C. Ford, editor and compiler of fifty volumes of MHS publications between 1909 and 1929; "poor Stewart" Mitchell, Director of the Society from 1947 to 1957; and the many others who come to life in this volume. These are understandably familiar figures for Tucker, and he writes affectionately about them, but, even to an outsider, the abundance of biographical detail personalizes the MHS and adds interest to its story.

If distinctive people form one half of the MHS story, then great research collections are the other, and Tucker capably tells how the Society's library and archives grew. We read about Thomas Dowse, a successful but reclusive Cambridge tanner and leather dresser, who accumulated a magnificent personal library of 4,665 volumes, rejected the overtures of Harvard, and donated his treasures to the MHS four months before his death in 1857. The saga of the Society's forty-year effort to retrieve the manuscript of William Bradford's history of Plymouth Plantation from England forms another fascinating chapter. Tucker also details the histories of the Adams family manuscripts, which sat on deposit at Boylston Street for half a century before becoming MHS property, and the Henry

Cabot Lodge papers, on loan for forty years before their donation in 1969. These acquisition coups are evidence of the significance of the Society's holdings. To this reviewer their snail's pace also demonstrates the patience of Job that generations of MHS librarians have had to apply to the practice of Belknap's 1795 collecting philosophy: "not waiting at home for things to fall into the lap, but prowling about like a wolf for the prey" (p. 25).

Finally, the most instructive message in this book for members of the Vermont Historical Society lies in Tucker's coverage of the financial trials and tribulations of the MHS. Like the VHS, the MHS has gone through long periods of having far too little money to accomplish its goals, punctuated by missed opportunities with prospective major donors. In Vermont, perhaps the most notable examples of frustrated expectations centered around Rush C. Hawkins and James B. Wilbur, wealthy antiquarians whose money and collections went in the 1920s to other institutions. The MHS kept their contemporary, petty tyrant Samuel A. Green, on as librarian for decades, solely on the hope that he would leave his substantial fortune to the Society. Instead, Green's money went to Lawrence Academy, and the MHS received nothing for its years of waiting. While the MHS has more than made up for lost ground since Green's demise, the VHS has not, and the appearance of a flock of financial angels at the Pavilion is long overdue. Those who care about Vermont history must begin doing something about it *now* so that the author of the 2038 bicentennial history of the VHS can write about an organization as strong on its state level as the Massachusetts Historical Society is nationally.

J. KEVIN GRAFFAGNINO

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Becoming The United Church of Christ in Vermont: 1795–1995

By John E. Nutting (Burlington, Vt.: John E. Nutting, Christopher Scott, and Nancy Des Coteaux for the Vermont Conference of the United Church of Christ, 1996, pp. 544, paper, $50).

The heart of this large and remarkable compilation is its forty-five page narrative, pages 30–74, covering the years since 1895, and treating each half-century topically. The second half of the narrative, covering 1945–1995, is a primary source, because John Nutting has lived through most of those years as a Vermont minister of the United Church of Christ.

Nutting came to Vermont in 1954 from Yale Divinity School as a summer pastor. After his first appointment to Hyde Park, when he brought "the gospel, my guitar and family to house-church prayer meetings" (p. 15), he spent thirty years concentrating on statewide evangelism for the Vermont Congregational Conference and Domestic Missionary Society. His *Mission Journal* (1982–1996), a log of daily activities, is very much in the style of this book: enthusiastic and earnest, containing more data than distillation. In addition, Nutting, from 1981 to 1996, was part-time Executive Minister of the Vermont Ecumenical Council and Bible Society.

While his goal was Jesus' prayer "that they may all be one" (John 17:21), Nutting felt that dealing with the world outside the churches, inadequately tended because of the lethargy and frictions within them, took precedence over church unity. "Screams at church doors were heard: civil rights for people of color and same sex orientation, the Vietnam war, gender equity, hunger, poverty, and threats to the eco-system. . . . The anguish of God's people beyond the church" (p. 15) simply had to come first.

Nutting has invited "other voices" to contribute (pp. 79–124): the irenic Max Webster, Conference minister, 1948–1965 (based on an earlier tape-recorded interview); Harold S. Harrison on Christian education; Ida H. Washington's concise account of women's work (also available as a separate pamphlet); and material on foreign missionaries from Vermont. He acknowledges the historical work of ministers before him (see "Earlier Histories," pp. 480–486), and, like them, is eminently free from the dead hand of scholarship.

This will be a useful reference work, especially for those who wish to get the flavor of a particular period. The main body of the work, pages 130–397, is in the time-honored form of annals, notes year-by-year of what seemed important to Nutting as he turned the pages of the published annual reports of the Conference: changes in policy and purpose, controversies, historical summaries, "powerful prose," "religious experience," and Vermont background (p. 25).

Of the 250 copies printed, the Conference sent one free copy to each of its 167 churches. Photographs of nearly every U.C.C. house of worship ornament the text and the colored covers. The Conference office distributed with its December 1996 bulletin, *Keeping in Touch*, an index to these pictures by Alice Cook Bassett of Burlington's College Street Church. Portraits of Conference workers are also included in this list. Unfortunately, active use of this large volume encourages the wire of the spiral binding to work its way out at one end or the other. A spiral binding may be cheap, but without a backstrip, browsers cannot read

the title nor can librarians affix a legible call number. The index is long but unsophisticated.

All the data in Nutting's book relates to a denomination that once held hegemony over Vermont society through its business and political leaders. Today its Vermont adherents, with much less influence, number scarcely two percent of the population. Nutting inserts his prophetic voice into his work as a springboard for future Christians "seeking their own measure of meaning and understanding of the light that breaks forth from God's Holy Word through the fallible and frail beloved community given to us as the church" (p. 30).

T. D. SEYMOUR BASSETT

Thomas Bassett retired from the University of Vermont in 1977 as its Curator of the Wilbur Collection of Vermontiana and University Archivist. He has written The Growing Edge: Vermont Villages, 1840–1880 *(1992) and many articles on Vermont history.*

Vergennes in the Age of Jackson

By Kenneth A. Degree (Vergennes, Vt.: Precision Print and Copy, 1996, pp. 151, paper, $10.00).

Kenneth A. Degree's book is a well-written and solidly researched account of Vergennes, Vermont, focusing on the 1820s–1830s period during which Andrew Jackson dominated national politics. Because of the broad setting in which Degree places his story, this useful volume is, in many respects, also a history of the region and the state during these years. Unlike many authors of town studies, who simply gather up material and print it with little effort at explanation or interpretation, Degree competently identifies and analyzes the larger economic, political, and cultural forces of Jacksonian America that helped shape the direction and the particulars of local events.

The reader is presented with Vergennes's own versions of several of this materialistic era's dominating themes: its boom and bust mentality, bank wars, anti-Mason and Democratic-Whig politics, religious enthusiasms, temperance crusades, anti-slavery zeal—and individual excesses. Indeed, this Addison County community located on Otter Creek, near the shores of Lake Champlain, apparently had more than its share of colorful, dynamic figures, several of whom—notably journalist-writer

Rufus Wilmot Griswold and abolitionist Delia Webster—gained national attention. One point that comes through clearly in this study, however, is that, despite occasionally powerful temptations, Vergennes proved to be remarkably resistant to the excesses and extremes of the day.

The book is Degree's second on the subject of Vergennes: his *Vergennes in 1870* was published in 1994. This most recent study is organized chronologically and topically in six tightly structured chapters, with a prologue and epilogue. A thorough set of endnotes indicates the author's extensive utilization of archival and other primary sources as well as scholarly secondary sources. Index, illustrations, and maps are not included, however. Occasional typographical errors and mislocated apostrophes provide small distractions. Also, readers would have benefitted if the author had included in the prologue his own precise definition of what the "age of Jackson" entailed, and his rationale for identifying it as a distinct "period" in Vergennes's history. These quibbles aside, *Vergennes in the Age of Jackson* is a book that lay readers and scholars alike can enjoy. It is a welcome addition to Vermont's local history bookshelf.

GENE SESSIONS

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Yankee Correspondence: Civil War Letters Between New England Soldiers and the Home Front

Edited by Nina Silber and Mary Beth Sievens (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1996, pp. 169, $29.95).

New Englanders, like all Americans of that time, were profoundly affected by the great national watershed of our Civil War. Most considered it the war to preserve the Union while some saw it as a struggle not only to preserve the Union but also to eradicate the curse of slavery. They conveyed their thoughts and feelings by many means, the principal being personal epistles to and from the front. Nina Silber and Mary Beth Sievens, the editors of *Yankee Correspondence,* lay before us the fascinating scope of contemporary New England's views on the war.

The editors' stated purpose, undertaken as part of a larger New England Foundation for the Humanities Civil War project, was "to represent a range of economic positions, of ideological positions, and of geography,

with letters from all states of the New England region. . . . to have New Englanders speak, in their own words, about their Civil War experience" (p. 24). As the medium to attain their goal, in lieu of more standard individual or family record, the editors opted for an innovative and effectively presented cross-section of military and civilian letters. The correspondence centers on five themes: expected service and combat experiences, the meaning of the war, thoughts on the South and its free and slave populace, politics at home, and personal and group sacrifice. The book's illustrations are excellent and interface well with these themes. The book concludes with a well chosen segment of a Vermont family's letters written over the course of the conflict.

Silber and Sievens rightly decided on minimal editing of the letters, thus preserving, to a large extent, their original flavor and allowing the reader accurate and vivid insights into the educational and literacy levels of wartime New Englanders. By accident or design, approximately 75 percent of the material deals with the correspondence of family members whose soldiers are involved with secondary theaters of war, such as the Gulf and the Carolinas. Perhaps this material accurately reflects what has survived in New England libraries and historical repositories; if so, the situation is somewhat unfortunate. The letters in *Yankee Correspondence* undoubtedly mirror the attitudes, concerns, and emotions of the correspondents. Nevertheless, their distribution by unit misses the point that the majority of New England long-service regiments, those that served for three or more years, particularly the ones considered most elite, were part of the Army of the Potomac. Thus the reader has few chances to delve into some of the war's key events, such as Grant's overland campaign of 1864. The impact of the bloodbaths at the Wilderness, Spotsylvania, and Cold Harbor on the troops, their families and friends, their hometowns and states, and the Union as a whole was profound and shocking. This reviewer, for one, would like to have seen more letters dealing with these and other battles in the main theater. Correspondence dealing with the interaction of New Englanders with the Army of Northern Virginia, both in Virginia and during Lee's invasions of the North, would have provided significant added value to the stated objectives of the book. Given the editors' obvious abilities to discern and select letters that illuminate so well their chosen themes, the inclusion of such texts would have made this book a veritable gem. Finally, a selling price of $29.95, seems a tad steep for a 169-page book.

Despite these criticisms, the down-to-earth and sometimes moving letters in this book are well worth reading, and would make a fine addition to the library of any Civil War buff, particularly one interested in our Yankee ancestors. The editors have met their goal of introducing

readers to New Englanders who narrate their Civil War experiences in their own words.

ROBERT G. POIRIER

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Ken Burns's The Civil War: Historians Respond

Edited by Robert Brent Toplin (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996, pp. 197, cloth, $24.00).

At the onset of the 1990 television season almost fourteen million Americans turned on their sets to watch the first episode of Ken Burns's PBS documentary, *The Civil War.* To the surprise of critics, network executives, and (perhaps) even the filmmakers, *The Civil War* became a hit, continuing to draw prime-time audiences during the remainder of its serial run and later reaching millions of other viewers as a video cassette. But, as the film's remarkable run through the culture made clear, *The Civil War* has a power that stretches beyond the medium of television. Whether mesmerized by grainy pictures of battle and death, or moved to tears by Sullivan Ballou's last letter to his wife, written on the eve of Bull Run, many Americans felt intimately drawn to their nation's past. Already a highly regarded filmmaker with several historical documentaries to his credit, Ken Burns saw his reputation skyrocket and his work discussed in both the popular and academic press. Yet, as Americans turned with new interest to books about the Civil War, as they made pilgrimages to the battlefields depicted in Burns's film, indeed, as *The Civil War* itself became standard instructional fare in many American high-school and college classrooms, some scholars were skeptical. Yes, *The Civil War* is entertaining. It is even artfully constructed. But is it good history?

The historians gathered in *Ken Burns's The Civil War: Historians Respond* do not fully resolve this question. Their reviews, strongly argued and occasionally contentious, can certainly be approached on their own terms—Siskel and Ebert style—for the individual thumbs up or down as to whether Burns got his story right. But when these essays are read together (with the responses by Burns and scriptwriter Geoffrey C. Ward),

they lead to a provocative and rewarding discussion of how history should be made. The book's appropriately awkward title, distinguishing Burns's version of the War from other possible interpretations, might seem to divide this discussion in half, pitting Burns's popular construction of history against more serious, academic views. However, the debates contained here defy easy categorization. As editor Toplin explains, the idea for the book came to him at a conference on history and film, where he listened to two historians argue the merits of Burns's film. *Ken Burns's The Civil War* expands the debate, and the diversity of critical opinion speaks not only to the strengths and weaknesses of the film but also to the different approaches and methods professional historians bring to their work. Inasmuch as these essays address a film about a war whose meaning is of great import to contemporary Americans, they make an eloquent case for the cultural relevancy of historical study.

Although each essay strikes a different historical chord, nearly all of them are concerned with the legacy Burns's film draws from the War. C. Vann Woodward, a consultant on the project, discusses the research and preparation that went into the film. In his essay, Toplin stresses the contemporary factors that shaped Burns's interpretation of the War, arguing that *The Civil War* is an "anti-war and anti-slavery" (p. 30) film whose balanced treatment of sectional conflict is in step with the "new nationalism" (p. 31) of post-Vietnam America. Gabor S. Boritt's discussion of the film's heroic elements—chiefly Lincoln and Gettysburg—is likewise admiring, not because *The Civil War* is great history (Boritt finds plenty of mistakes), but because its poetic narrative helps create a valuable national heritage.

Time and again the historians acknowledge the film's narrative power, likening it to that of *The Birth of a Nation* (1915) or *Gone With the Wind* (1939), but fault its treatment of the history. Some of the film's factual errors—like getting Lincoln's age wrong—are so obvious that even Ward laments them. Other criticisms target historical gaps in the film and the filmmaker's apparent unwillingness to engage the scholarship. Gary W. Gallagher, for instance, notes that the film's treatment of military campaigns and leaders would be more accurate had Burns screened his sources more carefully. The fiercest critics, however, attack the narrative's ideological slant—the very features that give the film its broad appeal. Catherine Clinton chides Burns for telling a powerful account of male courage that leaves women out of the picture. Leon F. Litwack accuses Burns of constructing an "emotionally seductive" (p. 126) film that does not adequately treat the War's most important accomplishment: the freeing of African-American slaves. And Eric Foner, also emphasizing the centrality of racial politics, argues that the final program's nostalgic treat-

ment of reuniting veterans eclipses the Reconstruction period. He calls the episode a "failure of historical imagination" (p. 112).

At its most negatively charged junctures, Toplin's collection describes an irreconcilable conflict in historical methods. While Geoffrey Ward argues that historiographical infighting should be "checked at the editing-room door" (p. 151), Litwack and Foner would no doubt say that creating history, no matter what the medium, is itself an historical act open to criticism. Reiterating the observation made in the film by historian Barbara Fields that "the Civil War is still being fought" (p. 138), they suggest that historians have a moral responsibility to take a stand in the battle for racial equality. Yet in his rejoinder, Burns likens the War to "a poignant family drama" (p. 164); though equally committed to social justice and history "from the bottom up" (p. 160), he values his refusal to choose sides in the film.

Adding another layer to the book's interpretive conflict is the fact that some of the more critical historians were invited to respond to an early version of *The Civil War.* They panned it then and later, even after Burns made significant changes. Given the years Burns spent documenting this nation's most horrific family fight, his expression of hurt and surprise at being attacked by one of his own seems willfully naive.

Robert Brent Toplin, who is both an academic historian and a filmmaker, seems to know better. In dividing his book into nine chapters, he has given this valuable study the same episodic structure—and sense of conflict—as *The Civil War.*

TIMOTHY B. SPEARS

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America in European Consciousness, 1493–1750

Edited by Karen Ordahl Kupperman. Published for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, Virginia (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1995, pp. xvi+428, $49.95; paper, $19.95).

In 1992, five hundred years after his voyage across the Atlantic Ocean, Christopher Columbus almost disappeared from public discourse. A few scholars acknowledged his extraordinary navigational feats. Most

of the public attention and rhetoric, however, focussed on his later, dismal career as a colonial governor and on the truly awful long-term consequences for the indigenous people of North and South America of his landfall on San Salvador in October 1492.

This shift of attention onto the history of the native people following the European "reconnaissance"—one result of a revolution in historical thought that has been taking shape for more than forty years—has given us an entirely new view of the period 1492–1750. We now understand better the period from both sides of the "contact" between Europe and the Americas. *America in European Consciousness, 1493–1750* is an important contribution to that intellectual revolution. Inspired by J. H. Elliott's *The Old World and the New, 1492–1650* (published in 1970), this volume contains twelve papers, including one by Elliott himself, delivered at a conference organized by the John Carter Brown Library in June 1991.

In her excellent introduction, editor Karen Ordahl Kupperman lays out the themes that appear in the subsequent essays. Noting the contributions of many new scholarly disciplines to the study of this period—anthropology, botany, linguistics, rhetoric, semeiotics, cartography, to name only a few—she suggests that the essays show that the "European–American relationship must be visualized not as steadily, though unevenly, growing knowledge of a constant reality, but rather as a many-stranded spiral of discourse that transformed all participants" (p. 5). What holds these strands together is that reports about, knowledge of, and interest in America by Europeans in the sixteenth through mid-eighteenth centuries were largely "self-referential." "America was interesting," Kupperman argues "insofar as it could enhance Europe, either in material goods or in knowledge" (p. 5).

Peter Burke's essay, "America and the Rewriting of World History," demonstrates this thesis by examining what books scholars had available and consulted from the end of the fifteenth century to the middle of the seventeenth century. In addition to the usual distinction between those who wrote from first-hand experience and those who relied on travelers' accounts for their information, Burke identifies national styles of response that reflect larger political, economic, and social interests: Spanish historians pursued the idea of empire by compiling encyclopedic works; Italians, initially eager to associate themselves with the accomplishments of Columbus and Vespucci, lost interest when their disunited city-states proved incapable of taking advantage of the voyages of discovery and exploitation; the Dutch, attempting to create a world-wide trade empire, were interested in the Americas in the same way they were interested in Asia and Africa. Burke also proposes a "sociology of response, dis-

tinguishing between the interests of missionaries, merchants, academics, and so on" (p. 46).

Readers of this journal will have a special interest in "The Holy See and the Conversion of the Indians in French and British North America, 1486–1760," by Luca Codignola. Several recent studies in the history of the native people of North America have suggested that French missionaries, especially the Jesuits, were far more active, flexible, and effective than English Protestants in their dealings with the Indians. The *Jesuit Relations*, annual reports from missionaries to the Jesuit headquarters in Rome, suggested that the French had an unflagging determination to make converts from among the Indian people and that they were willing to find some grounds for cultural rapprochement by learning native languages and, to some extent, learning about and adapting the beliefs and practices of native spirituality.

Codignola disagrees. The first half of the seventeenth century, he argues, had been a "heroic age" of Indian missions, but "at least by the end of the 1660s, for the bishops of Canada and for the rest of the French clergy the spiritual well-being of the Indians had ceased to be the focus of their religious interest in the New World. Coincidental with the waning importance of the missionary church was the growing importance of the . . . church whose main aim was to keep the faith among Catholics, not to convert heretics and pagans" (p. 211).

As French fortunes declined in Canada, the Church as an institution, Codignola argues, regarded the Indians as "marginal to the development of North America" (p. 214) and therefore gave up on them. Learning the native languages and adapting them to Christian doctrine proved to be demanding and fruitless tasks and "Indian societies were deemed to be too primitive to arouse much interest among Europeans" (p. 216).

An excellent essay by Henry Lowood, "The New World and the European Catalog of Nature," demonstrates that early reports and narratives by explorers had little effect on European studies of botany and zoology because very few firsthand reports were printed in a timely or reliable fashion during their authors' lifetimes. Instead of consulting books, Europeans examined specimens in herbaria, gardens, and collections—all taken out of context.

Readers interested in museums and ethnological collecting will profit from Christian F. Feest's article, "The Collecting of American Indian Artifacts in Europe, 1493–1750." Feest conducted an exhaustive search through catalogs and inventories of private collections in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries in an effort to discover what objects from the New World Europeans actually saw. He found that few catalogs were contemporaneous with the collecting of items and that prove-

nance for items was vague—"West Indian," "American," "Brazilian," "Canadian," with no further identification of precise location or ethnographic context. Relatively few objects from these collections survive or can be authoritatively associated with descriptions in catalogs. Moreover, changing criteria for organizing "cabinets" and early "museums" sometimes make it impossible to follow an object from natural history to ethnographic to fine art to decorative art collections. Feest's essay gives us some better understanding of the current confusion and controversies surrounding the repatriation of sacred objects from museums to the native people from whom they were taken. But his purpose was to demonstrate that what Europeans saw did not necessarily inform them about the lives of the people who had once owned and used the objects.

Other essays deserve notice, but of special interest is J. H. Elliott's "Final Reflections: The Old World and the New Revisited." Elliott reviews the historiographical sea changes since he published his own seminal work. He notes that "Time after time we find on inspection that the America we are seeking in the European consciousness turns out to be fantasy America—an America as Europeans either believed it or wanted it to be" (p. 394). He doubts, therefore, that there ever was a single idea of "America" and—an even more radical idea—that there was a single European "consciousness."

Elliott concludes that it is time for a paradigm shift in our approach to the study of the European–American contact. It is no longer productive, in his view, to try to resolve the tension between the reality of America and the projected fantasies of Europe; instead, we should concentrate on understanding how Europeans assimilated information about the Americas by understanding the intellectual and cultural frameworks into which they had to fit that information. Seen in that historical perspective, Elliott argues, "the effect of America is not so much to generate new departures in European consciousness as to reinforce existing proclivities and predispositions, including often contradictory ones" (p. 403).

The essays in *America in European Consciousness* represent some of the best work being done in this new paradigm. They complement the work of historians who are trying to understand better the effect of European contact on the native people of the Americas. This is, therefore, an important book. It explores events and ideas that continue to shape our consciousness.

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