

VERMONT

HISTORY

THE VERMONT HISTORICAL SOCIETY • VOL. 72 • WINTER/SPRING 2004

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VERMONT *The Proceedings of the Vermont Historical Society* HISTORY



WINTER/SPRING 2004

VOL. 72

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VERMONT HISTORY

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(ISSN 0042-4161)

Articles appearing in this journal are abstracted and indexed in *Historical Abstracts* and *America: History and Life*.

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Vermont History: The Proceedings of the Vermont Historical Society, published two times a year by the Vermont Historical Society, whose offices, library, and museum are located in the Vermont History Center, Barre, Vermont. Second-class postage paid at Montpelier, Vermont.

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Compiled by PAUL A. CARNAHAN



Anticipating Antimasonry: The Vermont Gubernatorial Election of 1826

As early as the gubernatorial election of 1826, many issues that underlay the multifaceted antimasonic crusade were already being subjected to spirited debate in Vermont.

By KENNETH A. DEGREE

Discussing political antimasonry during the spring of 1829, Jonathan Allen of Middlebury commented that until recently, the "excitement" engendered by the movement had but slightly touched the Green Mountains. "The last four months, however," he wrote, "have seen it burst upon us like the sudden explosion of a volcano."¹ Allen leaves his readers with the impression that no one could have anticipated the antimasonic eruption, which raged throughout the state during its brief existence, leaving scorched earth, scars, and gouges in the political landscape. It would have taken quite a seer to predict the fury sparked by the disappearance and possible murder of William Morgan in upstate New York in 1826 for threatening to expose Masonic secrets. Yet in retrospect, the widespread misgivings, discontent, and concerns that accompanied the rise of the new economic order taking shape in Vermont after the War of 1812 can be viewed as the initial bursts of steam and ash from the crater, to carry this volcanic metaphor to its conclusion.

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KENNETH A. DEGREE has long been captivated by the history of his native state, particularly antebellum politics. The author of several books and articles on Vermont, he is currently working on a biography of William Slade.

Vermont History 72 (Winter/Spring 2004): 5–22.

© 2004 by the Vermont Historical Society. ISSN: 0042-4161; on-line ISSN: 1544-3043

Of course, the historian has the advantage of hindsight, and the added benefit of knowing how the story ultimately turns out. As early as the gubernatorial election of 1826, many of the issues that underlay the multifaceted antimasonic crusade were already being subjected to spirited debate in Vermont. At first glance, this election hardly seems to have been meaningful. Ezra Butler of Waterbury, capping a long and distinguished political career, captured the governor's chair with 63 percent of the vote. In this case, appearances are, indeed, deceiving. Behind this landslide lay a campaign featuring considerable sparring over the allocation of political offices, the effect religion should have on politics, the rise of the "village aristocracy," and the necessity of the legislative caucus for choosing gubernatorial candidates. The statewide discussion demonstrated a growing gulf on these critical issues, which helped set the stage for the emergence of the Antimasonic Party.

AGRARIANS VERSUS ENTREPRENEURS

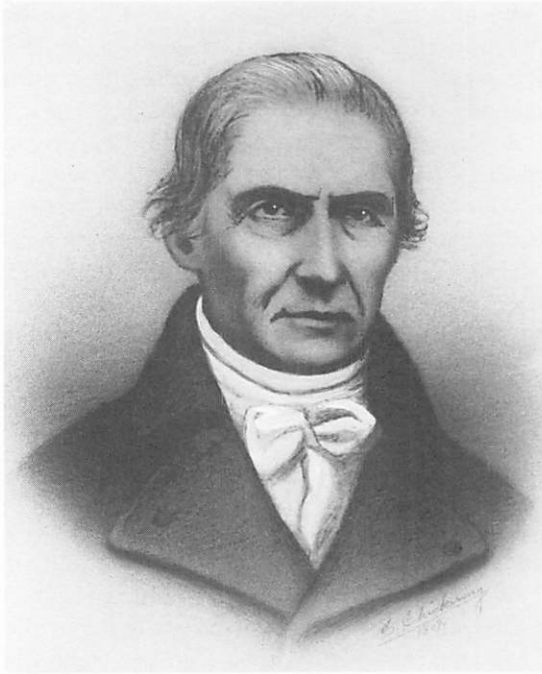
As the gubernatorial campaign of 1826 opened, many followers of the republican creed espoused by Thomas Jefferson were deeply troubled by the changes they observed on the Vermont landscape. Fiercely holding to the notion that the yeoman farmer was "the bone and sinew" of the republic, they still deemed the tillers of the soil, owners of their own land, who asked only their competence and the fruit of their labor, as the appropriate symbol of the nation. Generally, they approved of the transportation breakthroughs, such as the Champlain Canal, which helped propel the state out of the economic doldrums that had characterized the previous decade. However, these old-school republicans grew increasingly dismayed by the grasping, entrepreneurial mentality developing within the merchant class populating Vermont's emerging market towns. Such agrarian notions didn't always emanate from small towns, just as those citizens who considered the changes occurring as "progress" weren't always the residents of larger towns. Yet what emerged was a serious debate over the political economy of the state and which direction it should take.²

While the Jeffersonian disciples were heartened by the new opportunities opening before them, discomfiting signs abounded that along with providing new markets, these economic changes were also eating away at the foundation of the agrarian society that they knew. The promise that community life would go on unchanged, that farms and shops would be available for their children, was not being realized. As the price of good agricultural land rose faster than farm wages, farmers' children and laborers saw the prospect of securing their own property grow more and more remote. The opportunity to own a shop or store

dwindled as well, as market towns gained most of this growth at the expense of rural proprietorships.³ These towns were reaping the lion's share of the benefits, and were moving quickly to secure their advantage.

Annual gatherings of the legislature were turning into scrums as market towns scrambled after charters for banks, insurance companies, canals, and business incorporations. The sessions of 1824 and 1825 were dominated by this commercial activity, reducing representatives from small towns to a cheerleading role.⁴ In 1821, many larger towns also threw their weight behind the proposals of the Council of Censors to amend the state's constitution to apportion the legislature on the basis of population, rather than by the one-town, one-vote method then in use, and to add a Senate selected by county. The Constitutional Convention, to which each town sent a representative, soundly thrashed these amendments. Those encouraged by the quickening of the market economy remained irritated with the undemocratic unicameral legislature dominated by small-town solons, however. They accused the small-town representatives of passing fickle legislation, especially on judicial matters, when they weren't bullying them into aiding their own quest for charters.⁵ After being thwarted in their bid for a Senate, the champions of progress endorsed the gradual assimilation of the Executive Council into a second chamber to provide needed stability. In 1801, the House came under the control of Jeffersonian Republicans for the first time. They found the fact that Vermont granted each town one representative regardless of its population undemocratic. Aware that the governor and the Executive Council were elected at large, and were probably more reflective of the popular will, they willingly conveyed upon the council the right to non-concur with a bill the House had passed. By the decade of the 1820s, however, representatives began to bristle as the incursions of the council on their legislation increased. They fought back, hoping to maintain their hegemony. They argued that their predecessors were in error, that the council lacked the constitutional authority to non-concur, and now they were willing to challenge the move in the courts and on the floor of the assembly.⁶

The choice of Ezra Butler as a candidate for governor in 1826 again provoked debate between agrarian and entrepreneur. Butler appeared to be the perfect candidate for the office, as his life typified the republican ideal. Born in Massachusetts, he traveled with his family to West Windsor before he had reached the age of seven. His mother died shortly after the journey, and young Ezra was packed off to live with his oldest brother, where he received a scant six months of education. At the age of fourteen, he was indentured to Doctor Thomas Sterne of Claremont, New Hampshire, "to learn the art, trade and mystery of a



Ezra Butler. Portrait by E. Chickering (1907).

husbandman." He faithfully served out the terms of his indenture, leaving only for a brief stint in the Revolutionary army. Shortly after being released from his obligation, Butler and another brother traveled by oxcart and snowshoe to Waterbury, Vermont, in the early spring of 1785. He was only the second settler in the town. They selected a plot for Ezra, cleared land and planted corn, and after things were put in order, Butler went home to marry. Returning with his new bride, he discovered that he had a bad title to the land he had begun to wrench from the wilderness. Butler brought his wife back to her parents, and journeyed back to Waterbury. He selected another lot, and repeated the grueling process, finally erecting a log cabin by the fall of the year.⁷

With the same grim determination, Ezra Butler would quickly rise to prominence in his new residence and, shortly thereafter, in state affairs. He built the first frame house in Waterbury, sired the first white child, became the first town clerk, and was a member of the first group of selectmen. From 1794 until 1807, with the exception of two years, he was

chosen to be the town's representative to the General Assembly. His work there, and his growing popularity in his county, led to his elevation in the latter year to the Executive Council, where he served until he became governor, with the exception of two years he spent in the United States House of Representatives. These were the turbulent war years of 1813 and 1814, during which he labored diligently on behalf of the beleaguered Madison administration. Butler also found time to serve as presidential elector, as University of Vermont trustee, and was judge of the Washington county court for over ten years.⁸ He certainly had the laurels and experience necessary for the job, and the mien of the modest self-effacing pioneers who had served so well as Vermont leaders in the past.

However, his emergence as the early gubernatorial frontrunner did little to ease the growing tension between the yeoman and the village aristocrat. When informing his readers that Butler was the leading candidate for governor and his political contemporary, incumbent Aaron Leland of Chester, was the leading candidate for lieutenant governor, Judah Spooner, the editor of the *St. Albans Repertory* remarked,

Of the latter two gentlemen, it may be truly said, that they have acted well their part in the affairs of the state, and that their virtues and services will entitle them to the lasting gratitude and affection of their fellow citizens. But it appears to us inconsistent with the spirit of the times, and prejudicial to the interests of our growing institutions, to place at our head men whose powers and faculties must necessarily be in some degree impaired by age; who, having lived only in "bygone days" must now be found far behind that spirit of improvement, enterprise and energy, which so peculiarly characterizes the present day.⁹

Again and again, many newspaper editors residing in the larger towns attacked the sixty three-year-old Butler as being hopelessly out of date. They argued that he was "thirty years behind the times" and that "the school in which he was educated is too antiquated to give tone to the present day."¹⁰ They feared his election would inhibit the progress recently enjoyed by the state. Vermont needed a better candidate, suggested Wyman Spooner, editor of Windsor's *Vermont Journal*, to ensure that this progress continued.

Her neighbors are up and doing, successfully pursuing a wider and bolder policy. Her latent energies, too, have received a quickening impulse, and the word is, *onward*. Power and influence, and wealth, are before her; and she sees that by placing her destiny in *able* hands, she shall attain a character as elevated in the political, as her mountains are in the natural world, and like them, perennial in its beauty and glory.¹¹

To his supporters, these assaults were not just denigrating Ezra Butler; they were slanders against the republican form of government handed down by their Revolutionary fathers. Emphasizing the importance of the chase for wealth and power confirmed their suspicions of “that spirit of monied, aristocratical, monopolizing corporation mania, which so often discovers itself in populous, speculating, commercial towns.”¹² The few newspapers that still gave credence to the agrarian catechism rushed to the defense of their candidate. George Washington Hill, editor of Montpelier’s *Vermont Patriot and State Gazette*, was in the vanguard.

It is true Mr. B. is a man considerably advanced in age; and it is equally true that he has served this state as a public officer, more years than many of those have seen, who [speak] thus diminutively of his manners and his worth. It is true that he is not one of the learned “limbs of the law,” who obtain their living by the misfortune of others, and “touch not one of their fingers” to the plough. He is a farmer of plain republican simplicity. Whoever visits his residence will find him, like our first Governor [Thomas] Chittenden and [the] venerable [Jonas] Galusha, clad in the farmer’s dress and wielding the implements of agriculture, like three-fifths at least, of his constituents.¹³

Simeon Ide, the editor of Windsor’s *Vermont Repertory and American Yeoman*, agreed with this assessment, arguing against the elevation of “any sort of *professional* man” to the office. “Our [g]overnment has been too much stocked with this class of citizens, for the good of the community, and we have paid too little attention to the class of thorough, practical and intelligent FARMERS.”¹⁴ “The yeomanry of Vermont,” G. W. Hill assured his readers,

who obtain their bread by the labor of their own hands, and who have little opportunity to riot in luxury, and indulge in the gaudy trappings in which the dandies of modern times and those who would ape them pretend that true dignity consist, we confidently believe will most cordially give their votes to Mr. Butler.¹⁵

Hill was correct, of course. Ezra Butler did win the election. Despite the clamor exhibited on the pages of the statewide press, large towns reluctantly fell in behind him. Towns with a population of more than 2,000 people cast 60 percent of their votes for the farmer, a number not substantially different than that cast by small towns.¹⁶ The chief explanation given for their submission was the dearth of other attractive candidates willing to remain in the race. This lack of competition was brought on, reasoned many market-town editors, by the paltry salary of seven hundred fifty dollars, which was insufficient to induce “gentlemen

of the first respectability and influence." The debate on this side issue continued to widen the breach between agrarian and entrepreneur.

How could we gather more qualified candidates? The answer was clear to Wyman Spooner.

We must *dignify* the office, by filling it with a succession of those only of elevated minds and superior attainments and it will no longer be refused by men of talents and worth; and we must *support* it, by placing it at least, in a pecuniary point of view, on an equality with private pursuits.¹⁷

Spooner and his allies warned that as long as the remuneration of the governor remained so contemptible ("A less sum than is given *under* clerks in most of the minor departments of the general government." "A payment that 'a village clergyman would hardly be induced to accept.'"), it should be apparent to everyone that the office would "go begging," and the state "be compelled to fill it with the *second best*."¹⁸

The keepers of the old republican flame refused to accept this degrading complaint lightly. The notion that the office of governor went begging was ludicrous, in their opinion, the uproar "undoubtedly raised by a few designing men" in order to "favor the views of certain professional men." Let the office be offered to the tillers of the soil, "and we apprehend no objection will be made to the acceptance of it for the want of more pay."¹⁹ The indefatigable Hill mocked the supporters of an increase in salary.

During the long period that the venerable [Jonas] Galusha held that office, no complaint was heard, if we recollect right, about the Governor's salary. But since the office has been obtained by [l]awyers, there has been a hue and cry set up on this subject, to procure an increase of the salary. Great complaint is made by the dandies, lawyers, and straight-laced gentlemen, that the Governor's salary is insufficient to support the office with that dignity which, in their opinion, the respectability of the state requires. This being the case, we think it is high time that the farmers, composing by far the largest class of the electors, should bestow the office on some one of their own profession.²⁰

Farmers were successful in bestowing the office on a member of their own profession. Yet this bitter debate revealed unsettling divisions among the populace. As the market economy permeated Vermont soil, members of "the village aristocracy" in burgeoning market towns were always quick to point out how every new technological breakthrough, every canal or rise in tariff rates, was to the farmer's advantage. Every new market opportunity helped to exalt his place as the vital element in the preservation of the republican social order.²¹ Yeoman remained skeptical as they welcomed new opportunities. The harsh rhetoric of

the governor's race of 1826 confirmed their skepticism. The thickly spread flattery was just a ruse. They were now sure that the lawyers, merchants, ministers, and politicians of the market towns were out for themselves. Therefore, is it such a stretch to believe that devout republicans who were apprehensive about the social change that had occurred over the past few years would be susceptible to the siren song of antimasonry? It would come as no surprise to them that the same members of the "village aristocracy" who had been grasping for the baubles of emerging capitalism would also dominate the ranks of Masons. Yet this was only one of the facets of this election that would fire anti-masonic sentiment. Another would come in the debate over the fate of the legislative caucus method for selecting gubernatorial candidates.

THE FATE OF THE LEGISLATIVE CAUCUS

The demise of the Federalists after 1817 left Vermont a one-party state. Republicans, however, continued the tradition of selecting their gubernatorial candidate by legislative caucus, and the few voters who bothered to come to the polls gave the choice their near unanimous support. From 1818 to 1825, the caucus candidate received at least 80 percent of the vote. The problem with the system was that, increasingly, it was viewed as an anachronism used to subvert popular will. Revolts against "King Caucus" had erupted sporadically in the Green Mountains, such as during the congressional election of 1818, or in the debate over giving the people the chance to vote directly for presidential electors in 1824. Therefore, when Governor Cornelius Peter Van Ness waited until the end of the 1825 legislative session before informing the handful of lawmakers remaining that he did not wish to run for re-election, allowing little time to choose a successor, opponents of the caucus relished the opportunity to observe an election for governor without the hated system.²² Many soon would rue what they had wished for.

On June 20, 1826, a group of gentlemen from Orange County and surrounding towns met at the courthouse in Chelsea to nominate Ezra Butler as governor and Aaron Leland as lieutenant governor. This choice was seconded by "a large and respectable meeting of freemen" from Washington County, which had met in Montpelier on the Fourth of July.²³ If these supporters believed that jumping in early would somehow stanch the flow of other candidates, they were wrong. Many prospective voters agreed with Judah Spooner, editor of the *St. Albans Repertory*, who wished for a man "who has higher claims to the office than the gentleman that has been nominated."²⁴ By the end of the month, editors or their readership had nominated no fewer than fifteen

men for the office of governor. As J. W. Copeland, editor of Middlebury's *National Standard*, fretted,

The more the subject has been canvassed, the less ground of hope appears of [a] union of strength upon any one individual. Every week brings forth a fresh brood of candidates whose pretensions are urged with great confidence and high commendations, constantly decreasing the chances of meeting with a gale of popular favor sufficiently powerful to waft any one of them into office.²⁵

Although Copeland conceded that "the old method of caucus nominations" had been scoffed "out of existence," the current gaggle of gubernatorial aspirants made many realize that "it was not after all a bad" method to winnow the field. If a return to this formula was unlikely, the Middlebury scribe urged that any other "procedure to designate candidates for office would be far better" than what was presently unfolding. "The inevitable result" of the current canvass was to transfer the power of election away from the people and once again back into the hands of the legislature if no candidate could be found with the ability to garner a majority. Yet one citizen under the pen name "Some of the People" ridiculed those who were "alarmed at the great number of candidates, and regret exceedingly that the legislature had not, before they separated last fall, as usual, assumed to themselves the right of pointing out to us the man for whom we *must* vote."²⁶ He counseled patience, confident that a candidate would emerge.

Darius Clark, editor of Bennington's *Vermont Gazette*, while endorsing Ezra Butler, cautioned his readers that many of the other candidates "have been presented to the people wholly against the wish or consent of the persons themselves, without the least hope or expectation of their success, but with a view to distract the public mind, and prevent an election by the people, and thus open the door for intrigue and speculation."²⁷ Many accused outgoing governor and current senatorial candidate Van Ness and his followers of deliberately attempting to rig the process, hoping that they might be able to stock the General Assembly with allies and then be able to choose a candidate of their own liking. Those who discounted such a conspiracy still had the fresh memory of the unpleasant conclusion of the formless presidential election of 1824, also brought on by a covey of candidates. Rather than be a party to mischief or confusion, many gubernatorial hopefuls began to recuse themselves from the race. By the middle of August, only Butler, Middlebury attorney and perennial candidate Joel Doolittle, and a small coterie of regional candidates remained.²⁸ Butler then captured the contest with the smallest percentage garnered by the victorious candidate in ten years.

Most Vermont National Republican politicians were unwilling to undergo another such campaign. Unable to bring themselves to trust the people, they were only too ready to return to the predictability of the legislative caucus for choosing gubernatorial candidates after 1826. How were they to know that its efficacy was to be short-lived? The agonizingly narrow defeat of Cornelius Peter Van Ness in the balloting of the Joint Assembly for United States senator that fall set in motion the rise of a new party system in Vermont, leaving politicians scrambling for alternatives to the caucus. It would be left to the Antimasonic Party, with a faith in the people born out of grassroots meetings held to denounce the fate of William Morgan and other purported infidelities of the ancient craft, to introduce the state to the new style of mass politics. They turned to the statewide nominating convention, which was used in Vermont for the first time in 1829 and eventually emulated by the other two parties. The people would choose delegates from their towns, and these delegates would, in turn, choose statewide candidates and the platform. Whereas the National Republicans leaned on the caucus because they did not trust the will of the oft-erring common herd, anti-masons were willing to ride public opinion into office.²⁹

ROTATION OF OFFICE

By the 1826 election season, regionalism had become a corrosive force infecting Vermont politics. It could be seen as towns battled for banks and canals in the state legislature. In Addison County, for example, the choice of a site for the county bank was delayed for three years as Vergennes and Middlebury bitterly struggled for the honor. Northern county towns lined up behind Vergennes, while southern towns backed Middlebury. It could be seen in the selection of candidates for public office. In the race for United States representative from the state's fourth congressional district in 1826, consisting of Chittenden, Franklin, Grand Isle, and Orleans Counties, Franklin County nominated Benjamin Swift of St. Albans, while Chittenden County chose Heman Allen of Milton. Rather than effect a compromise, a bitter battle was joined for regional supremacy. Candidates received overwhelming support from their home counties, scant support from the others. The contest left Grand Isle and Orleans Counties with the balance of power, but it made mortal enemies of the dominant counties in the district. In other districts, attempts were made to alleviate this internecine warfare and to keep all regions happy. Some succeeded, while some didn't.³⁰

It was in this spirit of conciliation that many west-side residents agreed it was time for a governor to come from the east side of the mountains. In Vermont's brief half century of existence, the only east-side man to

serve as chief executive was Paul Brigham of Norwich, who as lieutenant governor ascended to the post upon the death of Thomas Chittenden. Many west-side editors agreed with J. W. Copeland, who thought "it is no more than equitable," that the east side be provided "her share of the honor and perquisites of the office."³¹ Editor Spooner of the *Vermont Journal* stood ready to take up the offer on behalf of his section.

We care not for the local situation of candidates, but there is a courtesy due from the different sections of the state towards each other, which goes far to create and preserve harmony and good feeling. In the exercise of this courtesy, we ought, if possible, to gratify the wishes of our western brethren, and give them a governor among ourselves.³²

The arrangement seemed to be settled. However, when the number of candidates began to proliferate, and, then, when the choice seemed to come down to Ezra Butler, more than a few west-side editors began having second thoughts on their offer. William Fay, editor of the *Rutland Herald*, went so far as to nominate his town's favorite son, attorney Robert Temple, a move quickly seconded by the *St. Albans Repository*. Fay sneered his willingness to drop the Temple candidacy if the east siders could come up with "a prospect of uniting on any other man of talents and worth," rather than the mediocre Butler. "Freeman of the East" took issue with the Rutland editor, suggesting that after it was acknowledged that the next governor should come from the east side, "we would take it more kindly if the freemen on the west side would have the goodness to let *us* nominate the candidate."³³

The results of the election demonstrated that an acceptable mechanism for rotating office had yet to be found in Vermont. The east side eagerly gave their favorite 68 percent of their votes, and if the contrary former Federalist bastion Windham County is excluded, it swells to 77 percent. However, Butler was barely able to secure a majority of west-side votes. Only 38 percent of Butler's 8,066 votes came from the west side of the mountains. Although an attempt had been made, rotation of the governor's chair would have to wait for the rise of the Republican Party in the 1850s and its use of the "Mountain Rule" to maintain hegemony.

Without any method to dilute its effects, regionalism would go on to play a significant role in the success of the Antimasonic Party. Again the Fourth Congressional District provides a fine example. Here the election for a representative in 1830 was once more paralyzed by regionalism. Many Franklin County National Republicans, after a few fruitless trials, rejected Heman Allen and threw their support behind

the Antimasonic candidate, despite showing little hatred for masonry before the election. The result was deadlock. With state law requiring that the winning candidate receive a majority, the existence of three viable political parties combined with a poisonous regionalism to give birth to the longest political campaign in Vermont history. It dragged on for almost two years and required the untimely death of one of the candidates before Heman Allen was able to secure a majority of the votes.³⁴

CHURCH AND STATE

The year 1826 saw not only considerable hand wringing over the impact of new market opportunities on the economic life of Vermont communities. It also witnessed increasing concern over how these changes contributed to the creeping secularization infecting Green Mountain churches. Many of the faithful felt that their houses of worship had become too accommodating to the status striving and worldliness of their membership, relaxing the obligations that they felt were vital to Christian life. Therefore, as many citizens urged a return to the first principles of political economy voiced by their forebears, so did many urge a return to an older, communitarian Christian faith that imposed more rigorous standards of behavior. As the clergy attempted to strengthen their moral authority, many members rebelled against this imposition on their ability to do as their conscience dictated. The struggle to define Christian duty in this age of change would prove to be a divisive one for Vermont churches.³⁵

The gubernatorial campaign of Ezra Butler was also drawn into this debate. For not only was Butler one of Vermont's most popular politicians, he also labored as a Baptist clergyman. Therefore, as many churches began calling on their neighbors to join their crusade for a moral regeneration, many of the less zealous saw Butler's nomination as yet another manifestation of an attempted union of church and state. The situation was fraught with irony, for at the beginning of the century, Butler and Lieutenant Governor Aaron Leland, also a Baptist elder, had been two of the most vociferous opponents of the standing order. They worked tirelessly to establish Baptist churches throughout the state and, in the political realm, played an instrumental role in the passage of the Ministerial Act of 1807, which once and for all prevented dissenting sects from being forced to pay to support the majority churches in their towns.³⁶ By the election of 1826, however, with the churches wrestling over what it meant to be one of the faithful, Butler and Leland were seen as betraying their old cause. As *Vermont Journal* editor Alden Spooner offered when their election seemed assured,

So it may be now confidentially asserted, that Elder Butler will be our next governor, and Elder Leland our lieutenant governor,—Church and State, will, therefore, have been literally *united*, by the same people who have hitherto stood first and foremost in opposing their union.³⁷

Whether or not the two clerics should be candidates became one of the leading questions of the campaign. As “One of Many” argued, Butler and Leland possessed the necessary qualifications for the office,

but their profession as clergymen, in the opinion of many, is a reason why they should not be concerned in politics. In as much then, as we respect their learning and piety, and value their usefulness—we should leave them free from the cases attendant on the stations to which their misguided friends would devote them.³⁸

“Anti-Clerical Magistrates” wondered whether the state was really “under the desire of resorting to such a course,” asking, “Shall such a nomination, started by an inconsiderable few in Orange County overwhelm us, and put church over state? No! - No! *Give us some other candidates!*”³⁹

The editor of Poultney’s *Northern Spectator* dismissed the idea “that the occasional elevation of clergymen, to political stations, was a formation of the hated league between church and state.” The church, he cautioned,

has a moral effect upon society at large, as virtue always will have, and ought to have, the government and laws still enforcing no opinions, yet protecting every man in the enjoyment of such as he may choose. It would seem, therefore, that there can be no more union of church and state to allow ministers to hold offices, than there would be a union of the cooper’s or tailor’s *trade* with the *state*, because coopers or tailors were elected to public station.⁴⁰

“Civis” remained unconvinced, finding that “the civil and ecclesiastical interests of the state” would be better served “by keeping their duties distinct.” How would Butler handle such incongruous obligations?

Will he put on the clerical insignia; the cassock and the surplice on the Sabbath, and put on the regal ensigns on other days? Will he at one time preside at the sacramental table, handling the sacred emblems—at another, act as “*Captain General*” in the military field handling the sword? Will he attend military *parades* and *reviews* in his civil or ecclesiastical capacity? And address the troops as “Fellow soldiers” of the *cross* or of the *crown*?⁴¹

The election of Ezra Butler as governor brought discomfort to many because he was a Baptist elder. However, to others, the pace of the social change being experienced called out for divine intervention. They agreed with the correspondent “Ichabod” when he wrote

Although it may not be proper, under ordinary circumstances, to call a Clergyman from the desk, to officiate in a political capacity; yet cases may occur, when the good of the state requires it.—Such a case now occurs.⁴²

The religious rhetoric of the gubernatorial campaign of 1826 was yet another signpost on the road to the antimasonic revolution. Those members of the public and the press who voiced a mild apprehension over clergymen who left their pulpits to occupy the two highest statewide offices, would soon be overwhelmed by the phalanx of ministers who would occupy vital positions in the antimasonic crusade. The purported death of William Morgan and the events that followed in upstate New York provided the faithful with a convenient target in their battle to reassert moral authority. Soon, many of the clergy were working to spread the antimasonic gospel throughout their communities. They went to work editing newspapers, writing tracts, and delivering sermons devoted to destroying the ancient craft. They demanded public confessions from church members who were Masons, similar to confessions of sin. When the movement migrated into the political realm, the men of the cloth followed.⁴³ The Cassandras of 1826, who considered the gubernatorial election as a movement toward the union of church and state, took cold comfort in the accuracy of their prediction.

CONCLUSION

The gubernatorial campaign of 1826 was significant in Vermont politics, as it exposed unmistakable fault lines developing within the state in this time of social upheaval. Despite Ezra Butler's landslide victory, the issues heatedly debated over the course of the summer and fall of that year visibly demonstrated the existence of decided differences of opinion over changes convulsing the countryside.

On the surface, Vermont politics returned to normal after the 1826 election season. The Horatio Seymour–Cornelius Peter Van Ness senatorial battle that occurred the same year precipitated this turn of events. A joint assembly of the House and the Council narrowly decided the contest in favor of the incumbent Seymour. A bitter Van Ness accused the Adams administration of meddling in the election and by the spring of 1827 took up the banner of the Jackson party. Alarmed supporters of President Adams called for party loyalty after the Van Ness apostasy, and the majority of Vermonters were successfully brought back into line. The legislative caucus was revived to renominate Butler in 1827, and Samuel Crafts the year after. Republicans exhorted against the Jacksonian menace and its possible impact on the economic well

being of the state, and were able to garner overwhelming support for New England's favorite son in his quest for reelection in 1828.⁴⁴

Yet the divisions that appeared in 1826 smoldered below the surface like a spark in damp straw. The disappearance of William Morgan and the subsequent trials in New York grasped the attention of many Vermonters. Although they remained receptive to National Republican entreaties, the emergence of grassroots meetings throughout the state on the masonic question clearly gave the lie to the notion of a united citizenry. By 1829, antimasonry had become a political manifestation and though it had an awkward birth, it clearly demonstrated a terrible power over the populace.

By the 1830 election season, the Antimasonic Party stood poised to gain control of the state. At the Antimasonic state convention held at Montpelier, the president of the proceedings was none other than the lieutenant governor of 1826, Aaron Leland. His speech to the throng used notions eerily familiar to followers of that campaign. Leland warned the crowd that the republican principles they held so dear were in danger. Aristocracy still stalked the land and would rule when any distinction was allowed among citizens "which confers upon a part, privileges which are not common to the whole."⁴⁵ Masonry had become yet another method by which the aggressive merchant class in market towns had sought to gain advantage.

Yet Leland remained confident that the people would destroy the institution "by public disapprobation." This was the same faith that many felt would allow the people to elect a governor in 1826 without the aid of a legislative caucus. As Leland assured the crowd,

In a government, where public opinion is omnipotent, however much they strive to avoid its scrutiny, there is no ultimate escape for the works of darkness or the mysteries of iniquity. To be placed under the ban of public opinion, is not only the most effectual remedy for an evil, but it is also, by far, the severest rebuke which man can suffer at mortal hands.⁴⁶

The speech also carried a reminder of the religious underpinnings of the 1826 campaign. Leland provided the gathering a public confession. He admitted to his listeners that he had once been a member of the Masons. However, the Baptist minister soon began to find his religious sensibilities offended. Leland "felt that it destroyed my devotion to God." After his initiation,

I yet began to feel myself a man of consequence. I was *hailed* by the members, and was greeted as a *brother* by men of all creeds—of no creeds—by the unprincipled, by infidels!—This afterward led me to reflect.⁴⁷

Shortly after Leland's speech, members of the gathering recognized former governor Ezra Butler in attendance and he was called on to offer his thoughts on the subject. Already on record as charging Masonry with being "both in its structure and tendency anti-Christian," he called on those present to study the institution and if they found it evil as he did, to destroy it at the ballot box.⁴⁸

It would appear, then, that the antimasonic movement did not actually come upon Vermont with the suddenness of a volcanic eruption. The issues of concern to those that followed this new party were hardly novel. They had been heatedly discussed during the gubernatorial election of 1826, before the disappearance of William Morgan. The same concerns about the fate of republican society in the face of change that led many Vermonters to ignore convention and choose Ezra Butler as governor, found them following their chief executive into the Anti-masonic Party.

NOTES

¹ David Ludlum, *Social Ferment in Vermont 1791–1850* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1939), 115–116.

² Paul Goodman, *Towards a Christian Republic: Antimasonry and the Great Transition in New England, 1826–1836* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 20–24; Drew McCoy, *The Elusive Republic: Political Economy in Jeffersonian America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980), 12–17.

³ Goodman, *Towards a Christian Republic*, 37–39; Randolph Roth, *The Democratic Dilemma: Religion, Reform, and the Social Order in the Connecticut River Valley of Vermont, 1791–1850* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 118–130; P. Jeffrey Potash, *Vermont's Burned-Over District: Patterns of Community Development and Religious Activity, 1761–1850* (Brooklyn: Carlson Publishing Inc., 1991), 100–116. A similar study of the preindustrial transformation in another New England state is Christopher Clark, *The Roots of Rural Capitalism: Western Massachusetts, 1780–1860* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1990).

⁴ A cursory examination of the *Vermont General Assembly Journal* for the years cited would lend credence to this statement. Also, see Kenneth A. Degree, *Vergennes in the Age of Jackson* (Vergennes, Vt.: The author, 1996), 26–52; Kenneth A. Degree, "Legislative Voting Patterns on Banking in Vermont 1803–1825," *Vermont History* 69 (Winter/Spring 2001), 163–169; Roth, *Democratic Dilemma*, 139–140.

⁵ Paul S. Gillies and D. Gregory Sanford, eds., *Records of the Council of Censors of the State of Vermont* (Montpelier: State of Vermont, 1991), 236–277; Daniel B. Carroll, "Development of the Unicameral Legislature in Vermont," *Proceedings of the Vermont Historical Society* 3 (1932), 15–18; Daniel Chipman, *Speech Delivered in the Convention Holden at Montpelier on the sixth of January, 1836* (Middlebury, Vt.: E. R. Jewett, 1837), 14–19.

⁶ Carroll, "Development of the Unicameral Legislature in Vermont," 18–22; Degree, *Vergennes in the Age of Jackson*, 37–41; Gillies and Sanford, *Records of the Council of Censors*, 295–297.

⁷ Theodore Graham Lewis, ed., *History of Waterbury, Vermont, 1763–1915* (Waterbury, Vt.: The Record Print, 1915), 17–20. When Waterbury's original settler, James Marsh, died in 1788, Butler assumed the role of town father.

⁸ Lewis, *History of Waterbury*, 21; Prentiss Dodge, ed., *Encyclopedia Vermont Biography* (Burlington, Vt.: Ullery Publishing Company, 1912), 33. Butler is described as having a form that was "slightly stooping, his complexion dark and sallow, and his whole appearance quite unprepossessing; but his penetrating black eye and the calm tones of his voice, quickly told of intellect and will of no common order." Reverend Henry Crocker, *History of The Baptists in Vermont* (Bellows Falls, Vt.: P. H. Gobie Press, 1913), 398.

⁹ St. Albans *Repertory*, 3 August 1826. Aaron Leland served as lieutenant governor from 1822 to 1827.

¹⁰ *Vermont Journal*, 1 July 1826; *Vermont Gazette*, 3 August 1826.

¹¹ *Vermont Journal*, 15 July 1826.

¹² Roth, *Democratic Dilemma*, 140.

¹³ *Vermont Gazette*, 3 August 1826 (reprint of an article from the *Vermont Patriot and State Gazette* submitted by a correspondent who styled himself "A Freeman").

¹⁴ *Vermont Repertory and American Yeoman*, 22 July 1826.

¹⁵ *Vermont Patriot and State Gazette*, 5 September 1826.

¹⁶ The figures were calculated using towns with a population of 2,000 in the 1820 census.

¹⁷ *Vermont Journal*, 1 July 1826.

¹⁸ *Repertory*, 22 June 1826; *Vermont Watchman*, 22 August 1826.

¹⁹ *Vermont Patriot and State Gazette*, 15 August 1826.

²⁰ *Vermont Gazette*, 3 August 1826 (reprinted from the *Vermont Patriot*, see note 13 above).

²¹ One such example can be found at a meeting of Bennington town leaders called to discuss economic matters in 1823. The gathering, of which few were farmers, decided that manufacturing and agriculture shared common interests. See Robert Shalhope, *Bennington and the Green Mountain Boys: The Emergence of Liberal Democracy in Vermont, 1760–1850* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 291–298.

²² Along with almost unanimous consent came an alarming drop in participation. Voters in gubernatorial elections, who had numbered almost 36,000 during the tempestuous years of the War of 1812, had withered to nearly one-third of that total by 1825. See Christie Carter, ed., *Vermont Elections 1789–1989* (Montpelier: State of Vermont, 1989). For examples of the revolt against the caucus, see J. Kevin Graffagnino, "‘I saw ruin all around’ and ‘A comical spot you may depend’; Orsamus Merrill, Rollin Mallory and the Disputed Congressional Election of 1818," *Vermont History* 49 (Summer 1981): 159–168; and Kenneth A. Degree, "The Watershed Election: Cornelius Peter Van Ness, Horatio Seymour, and the United States Senate Campaign of 1826," *Vermont History* 71 (Summer/Fall 2003): 152–179.

²³ *Vermont Journal*, 1 July 1826; *Repertory*, 3 August 1826.

²⁴ *Repertory*, 6 July 1826. Spooner also insinuated that the Orange County caucus was actually the handiwork of Washington and Windsor County politicians. See *Repertory*, 10 August 1826. However, the vote totals suggest a different story. Orange County cast 1,521 votes for Ezra Butler, more than any other county, and just 82 votes for Joel Doolittle, with 122 scattered. Butler thus carried 88 percent of the vote in the county. The towns of Corinth, Orange, Strafford, Topsham, Vershire, Washington, and West Fairlee cast a total of 657 unanimous ballots for Ezra Butler.

²⁵ *Vermont Gazette*, 3 August 1826 (reprinted from Middlebury's *National Standard*). The fifteen men who received nominations were Butler, Joel Doolittle of Middlebury, William Griswold of Burlington, William Jarvis of Weathersfield, Chauncey Langdon of Castleton, Aaron Leland of Chester, Charles Marsh of Woodstock, Ezra Meech of Shelburne, Henry Olin of Leicester, Samuel Prentiss of Montpelier, Samuel Strong of Vergennes, Robert Temple of Rutland, Lemuel Whitney of Brattleboro, Charles K. Williams of Rutland, and Norman Williams of Woodstock.

²⁶ *Ibid.*; *Vermont Aurora*, 3 August 1826. Simeon Ide agreed, suggesting that the people "are as capable of judging and acting correctly on this subject as any body of men they may delegate to judge and act for them." See *Vermont Repertory and American Yeoman*, 29 July 1826.

²⁷ *Vermont Gazette*, 3 August 1826.

²⁸ For the alleged Van Ness conspiracy, see Degree, "The Watershed Election."

²⁹ Kathleen Smith Kutolowski, "Antimasonry Reexamined: Social Bases of the Grass-Roots Party," *Journal of American History* 71 (September 1984): 287–292.

³⁰ The bank struggle can be followed in Degree, *Vergennes in the Age of Jackson*, 26–52; the 1826 congressional race in the Fourth District can be followed in Kenneth A. Degree, *Deadlock, Deceit, and Divine Intervention: The Politics of Regionalism and the Longest Political Campaign in Vermont History, The Fourth Congressional District 1830–1832* (Vergennes, Vt.: The author, 1997), 7–13. In the first trial, Heman Allen rolled up almost 88 percent of the Chittenden County vote, while Benjamin Swift collected 73 percent of the Franklin County ballots. It took three elections before Swift was declared the winner, but the votes they garnered in their home counties varied only slightly.

In the 1826 congressional race in the First District, consisting of Bennington and Windham Counties geographically separated by the Green Mountains, efforts were made to prevent such a struggle. Some Windham County men were willing to concede the choice to Bennington County when it was suggested that ex-governor Richard Skinner would be nominated. When Skinner declined, the deal dissolved into petty regionalism and it took three elections to determine a winner. See the *Vermont Gazette*, 26 July, 3 August, 15 August, 22 August 1826, and *Northern Spectator*, 30 August 1826. I have found that many other congressional elections, such as in the Fifth District in 1828, or the special election in the Second District in 1831, were significantly impacted by such parochialism.

³¹ *National Standard*, 17 August 1826.

³² *Vermont Journal*, 5 August 1826.

³³ *Rutland Herald*, 1 August 1826; *Repertory*, 27 June 1826; *Vermont Patriot and State Gazette*, 3 August 1826.

³⁴ For a portrayal of, and a testimony to the efficacy of, the Mountain Rule, see Lyman Jay Gould and Samuel B. Hand, "The Geography of Political Recruitment in Vermont: A View from the Mountains," in *Growth and Development in Vermont*, ed. Reginald L. Cook, the Vermont Academy of Arts and Sciences, Occasional Paper No. 5 (1970), 19–24; Samuel B. Hand, "The Mechanisms of Control: The Mountain Rule," *Vermont History* 48 (Fall 1980): 198–201; Samuel B. Hand, Jeffrey D. Marshall, and D. Gregory Sanford, "'Little Republics': The Structure of State Politics in Vermont, 1854–1920," *Vermont History* 53 (Summer 1985): 141–166; and Samuel B. Hand, "Mountain Rule Revisited," *Vermont History* 71 (Summer/Fall 2003): 139–151. For the longest election in Vermont history, see Degree, *Deadlock, Deceit, and Divine Intervention*.

³⁵ Goodman, *Towards a Christian Republic*, 54–79.

³⁶ For information on the passage of the Ministerial Act, see Ludlum, *Social Ferment in Vermont*, 102–103; T. D. Seymour, *The Gods of the Hills: Piety and Society in Nineteenth-Century Vermont* (Montpelier: Vermont Historical Society, 2000), 103–132; and the *Vermont General Assembly Journal* (1807), 118–120. Butler, a member of the Executive Council, voted for the act. Leland, a member of the House, did not vote.

For Butler and Leland's work in the Baptist church, see Crocker, *History of the Baptists in Vermont*, passim., but particularly, 182–184, 396–398, 427–428. At the first Baptist state convention, held in Montpelier in 1825, Butler was chosen president and Leland vice president. Their tenures were not without conflict, however. Leland briefly became the center of controversy in the Chester Baptist church, where he would serve for forty-three years, as eleven members of his congregation charged him as having, ironically, "exhibited a spirit more ambitious for secular honors." Although the majority of his church ultimately supported him, the incident left him chastened. The encounter may have been due to his flirtation with Masonry.

Butler was engaged in a battle with the Reverend Jonathan Hovey. Hovey had been called to settle over the Waterbury church in 1802. Butler had been ordained the previous year and had been ministering to the congregation. Covetous of the minister's right, Hovey called into question the regularity of Butler's ordination. When the town requested that Hovey quitclaim any right in the lot before he was settled, the whole thing ended up in court. Butler eventually prevailed, and the land was deeded to the town for school purposes. See Lewis, *History of Waterbury*, 39–41.

³⁷ *Vermont Journal*, 12 August 1826. Wyman Spooner ran the newspaper during this campaign until this date, when Alden Spooner assumed the controls.

³⁸ *Rutland Herald*, 1 August 1826.

³⁹ *Rutland Herald*, 15 August 1826.

⁴⁰ *Northern Spectator*, 16 August 1826.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Northern Spectator*, 23 August 1826.

⁴³ Goodman, *Towards a Christian Republic*, 54–61.

⁴⁴ Degree, "The Watershed Election"; Donald J. Ratcliffe, "Antimasonry and Partisanship in Greater New England, 1826–1836," *Journal of the Early Republic* 15 (Summer 1995): 207–215.

⁴⁵ *Proceedings of the Anti-Masonic State Convention, 1830* (Middlebury, Vt.: O. and J. Miner, 1830), 14.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 13, 16.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 18–19.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 23–24; Ludlum, *Social Ferment in Vermont*, 102–103.



“Butler’s Rotten Breath of Calumny”: Major General Benjamin F. Butler and the Censure of the Seventh Vermont Infantry Regiment

One Vermont officer recalled that when the men disembarked, Butler said “he would rather see 300 barrels of Pork” come ashore than the Seventh Vermont. Another, a sergeant, put the figure at ten barrels.

By JEFFREY D. MARSHALL

The Civil War produced both heroes and scoundrels. Benjamin F. Butler (1818–1893), lawyer and politician of Lowell, Massachusetts, and major general of volunteers in the Civil War, emerged as either hero or scoundrel, depending on one’s point of view. His harsh treatment of civilians in New Orleans, where he served as military governor for eight months in 1862, proved as gratifying to righteous Northerners as it was bitterly provocative to Southerners. Butler favored certain regiments under his command, including the Eighth Vermont Infantry Regiment, whose men held their general in high esteem. But to the men of the Seventh Vermont Infantry Regiment, Butler was a scoundrel of the highest rank. Butler’s censure of the Seventh for its conduct in the battle of Baton Rouge on August 5, 1862, was the

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Vermont History 72 (Winter/Spring 2004): 23–54.

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product of his poor military leadership and the culmination of a festering, mutual animosity. The Baton Rouge incident gained little attention outside Vermont or from historians beyond the realm of Vermont Civil War scholarship. Yet the controversy provides important insight on Ben Butler's character and the political dimensions of military command during the Civil War.¹

Raised from the age of ten in Lowell, Ben Butler graduated from Waterville College (now Colby), gained admission to the Massachusetts bar in 1840, and quickly made a name for himself. He saw the harsh side of life in the great mill town and his clients included many of Lowell's downtrodden citizens, as well as the wealthy. Butler used every legal procedure and technicality he could find to win a case. He was a skilled debater with a talent for inflating his opponents' inconsistencies and misstatements—and for getting in the last word. The young lawyer worked hard, gained a formidable reputation, and made himself wealthy through his law practice and business deals by the time of the Civil War.²

Butler's talent for manipulating the legal system soon found expression in politics, which he entered as a Democrat. He championed the cause of the ten-hour workday and sided with the growing population of Irish Catholics against the interests of the Whiggish, predominantly Protestant, manufacturing and commercial establishment. As one of the architects of the Democratic-Free Soil coalition that briefly seized control of the Massachusetts legislature and governorship in 1850, Butler helped push through a reform agenda. He was elected to the Massachusetts House of Representatives in 1852 and the State Senate in 1858, but the Democrats had lost control of the legislature and governorship, leaving Butler with little power to achieve his legislative objectives.³

Although he was more successful in pre-Civil War law than in politics, Ben Butler wielded considerable influence in the national Democratic Party. In the raucous convention of 1860 in Charleston, South Carolina, he supported Stephen A. Douglas for president on the first few ballots, and then switched his vote to Jefferson Davis, U.S. senator from Mississippi. Butler had been at best indifferent to the slavery issue, and he viewed Davis as a pro-Union moderate. When the Charleston convention failed to agree on a nominee, and a second convention in Baltimore appeared ready to nominate Douglas, Butler and others bolted the convention. Holding their own rump convention in Baltimore, these disaffected Democrats nominated the vice president, John C. Breckinridge of Kentucky, whom they judged to be the best hope for preserving the Union.⁴

Choosing Davis and then Breckinridge was a breathtaking miscalcu-



Benjamin F. Butler. Source: Harper's Pictorial History of the Civil War (Chicago: Puritan Press Co., 1894), 1: 201.

lation, and Butler alienated many of his supporters at home by appearing to embrace the Southern cause.⁵ Motivated by this political embarrassment and a sincere devotion to the Union, he offered his services as a military officer immediately after the bombardment of Fort Sumter on April 12, 1861. Although he had no practical experience as a military leader, Ben Butler had belonged to the state militia since 1840, and had managed to get himself elected brigadier general in 1855.⁶ Early in 1861 he anticipated the coming conflict and diligently prepared his six militia regiments for duty. Massachusetts Governor John A. Andrew detested Butler, but when Washington called urgently for state militia to defend the capital, Ben Butler's brigade was among the few units ready to march. Andrew dispatched the troops within a week of Sumter's fall.⁷

Ben Butler was the most visible figure among Union commanders in the early days of the war. His visibility at first brought him a measure of glory when he seized control of Baltimore—without orders, but to wide

acclaim in the North. The Lincoln administration soon realized that Butler was a loose cannon, yet as a Democrat he was a vital symbol for national unity.⁸ In May 1861, Lincoln forwarded Butler's promotion to major general to the U.S. Senate and assigned him to Fortress Monroe, at the tip of the Yorktown Peninsula, where he was to command some 7,500 men—among them the First Vermont Infantry Regiment, enlisted for ninety days under Colonel John W. Phelps. Of these soldiers, 6,000 were considered to be “disposable for aggressive purposes.”⁹ Butler's army was no threat to Richmond, seventy miles to the northwest, but he undertook a few military adventures on the lower peninsula. Most significant was the June 10 assault on Big Bethel, ten miles from Fortress Monroe, where a rebel force was said to be garrisoned. Marching toward Big Bethel in the dark, two columns of the poorly trained Union force fired on each other, heralding their approach to the enemy. When they arrived at last before the barricades of the badly outnumbered rebels, the Yankees suffered many casualties while inflicting few, and many of the Northern soldiers fled in disorder. Big Bethel was a great embarrassment for Butler, though he gamely reported that “we have gained more than we have lost.” Although the skirmish was of no military significance, it was the first land battle of the war and the newspapers made much of Butler's misadventure. “A senseless cry went out against me,” Butler wrote thirty years later, “and it almost cost me my confirmation in the Senate.”¹⁰

In the fall of 1861, Butler won permission to raise a New England Division to serve under his command. The general visited each of the New England capitals to request state regiments for his division from among those being raised under the latest national call for troops. In Montpelier Butler addressed the General Assembly and requested two infantry regiments and two batteries of light artillery. The legislature authorized one infantry regiment—the Eighth Vermont—and the two batteries. Granted the privilege of selecting the Eighth's colonel and lieutenant colonel, Butler chose Stephen Thomas, a manufacturer, former probate judge, and prominent Vermont Democratic legislator, for colonel. The second post went to Edward M. Brown, adjutant of the Fifth Vermont Infantry Regiment and formerly the editor of a Democratic newspaper in Montpelier. The Eighth, therefore, was led by men politically sympathetic to Butler, and recruited from among men who knew that the regiment was bound for service under his leadership.¹¹

The General Assembly declined to recommend the Seventh Vermont Infantry Regiment to Governor Frederick Holbrook for Butler's division. Peeved by this rebuff, the general appealed to the War Department to have the regiment assigned to his division.¹² Meanwhile, Holbrook

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appointed the Seventh Regiment's senior officers: George T. Roberts of Clarendon as colonel, Volney Fullam of Ludlow—a captain in the Second Vermont Infantry—as lieutenant colonel, and the governor's nineteen-year-old son William—a lieutenant in the Fourth Vermont Infantry—as major. Soon, rumors were circulating that the Seventh would join the Eighth in the New England Division, and that the whole command would be sent to the Gulf of Mexico. It is unclear whether the War Department would have defied the wishes of the Vermont General Assembly and ordered the regiment to serve in Butler's division, but before any orders were made public, Governor Holbrook acquiesced to Butler's request, extracting a promise, though, that all the Vermont units in the division would serve in a brigade commanded by John W. Phelps, formerly colonel of the First Vermont Infantry.¹³ Phelps, an 1836 West Point graduate and vocal abolitionist, hailed from Guilford and more recently Brattleboro, the hometown of the Holbrooks. When the War Department's orders were made public, the men of the Seventh learned to their dismay that they were destined for the Gulf, not Virginia. The objective of Butler's expedition was to cooperate with naval forces under Admiral David Farragut in the capture of New Orleans, and then attempt to wrest control of the Mississippi River Valley from the Confederates.¹⁴

The staging area for the lower Mississippi campaign was Ship Island, a sandbar several miles off the coast of Mississippi. Seven miles long and less than a mile wide, bearing almost no vegetation, Ship Island played a dull host for the thousands of soldiers and sailors who set up camp in the spring of 1862. "The principal inhabitants of the Isle are alligators snakes and Yankees," wrote Adjutant Charles E. Parker of the Seventh Vermont. "The former do not associate with the latter," he added.¹⁵ After a stormy voyage of several weeks' duration, many of those Yankees were relieved to step on the sandy, if not exactly firm ground of Ship Island.

Almost immediately the Seventh Vermont found itself in trouble with Butler. The second of two ships carrying the regiment arrived offshore on April 10, and Colonel Roberts ferried the men ashore on General Butler's steamer, as ordered. When Roberts proceeded to unload the regiment's camp equipment and supplies, the general became angry. No orders had been issued to unload anything but the men, and the general wanted the steamer for other purposes. Consequently, he had the regiment's quartermaster arrested.¹⁶ The incident soon blew over, but it was a cold reception from a commander who ought to have been grateful rather than petulant. One Vermont officer recalled that when the men disembarked, Butler said "he would rather see 300

barrels of Pork” come ashore than the Seventh Vermont. Another, a sergeant, put the figure at ten barrels.¹⁷

The first objective of the campaign, the capture of New Orleans, proved surprisingly easy to achieve. The Confederacy’s largest city, counting 149,000 white and 25,000 black residents in 1860, capitulated at the end of April after Admiral Farragut’s naval forces muscled their way past two fortresses downriver. The loss of New Orleans opened the Mississippi to Union control as far north as Vicksburg, Mississippi, the only remaining Confederate stronghold on the river. General Butler wasted no time in transporting troops to New Orleans. On May 16 the Seventh Vermont encamped at Carrollton, just north of the city, where General Phelps established his brigade headquarters.¹⁸

Meanwhile, thousands of fugitive slaves crowded into New Orleans and the Union camps, eager to taste freedom and, in some cases, willing to fight to keep it. General Phelps, filled with the fervor of abolitionism, seized the opportunity and began drilling companies of African-American volunteers. Phelps “had but one fault,” Butler later wrote, “he was an anti-slavery man to a degree that utterly unbalanced his judgment.” Others shared this assessment. “Gen. Phelps is almost insane on the nigger question,” Major Holbrook declared, suggesting that Phelps’s obsession interfered with his leadership of the brigade to which the Seventh Vermont belonged. Soon it would result in a showdown with General Butler.¹⁹

Ben Butler’s reign in New Orleans raised him to a pinnacle of notoriety. A city tottering on the edge of anarchy, where food and money were scarce and former Confederate soldiers were plentiful, New Orleans needed a firm hand at the helm and Butler supplied it. Many citizens were arrested for disloyal activities and one was hanged for pulling down the Stars and Stripes from a public building. Wealthy residents were taxed heavily to help feed the poor. Butler earned the undying contempt of Confederates and their sympathizers with his “woman order,” which warned that any female who insulted a Union officer would henceforth be considered “a woman of the town plying her avocation.” Harsh or merely insulting, Butler’s measures brought stability to the Crescent City: The insults, most notably the emptying of chamber pots on Northern heads, ceased. Butler also got the wheels of commerce turning again, and there is little doubt that he enriched himself in the process. Rumors reached the Eastern press of shady transactions and the questionable involvement of Butler’s associates in various enterprises. More alarming to the Lincoln administration, however, Butler confiscated property belonging to foreign nationals, drawing the wrath of European governments whose neutrality Lincoln needed to maintain.²⁰

As he tightened his grasp on the civil administration of New Orleans, Butler focused his military attention on Vicksburg. He selected Brigadier General Thomas Williams to lead a brigade composed of regiments (including the Seventh Vermont) from each of his three brigades, for an expedition to capture Vicksburg. Williams was "a great martinet," Holbrook later wrote. Occupying Baton Rouge late in May, Williams soon arrested two of his colonels for refusing to evict fugitive slaves from the Union camps, and so infuriated his subordinates that a group of them—including three of his aides—filed charges against him. Williams would later arrest five officers for refusing to obey an order they considered harsh and unreasonable.²¹

Williams and Admiral Farragut surveyed Vicksburg's defenses and quickly concluded that a conventional assault would be impossible. The city sat on a bluff on the eastern bank of the Mississippi, with heavy artillery trained on the river. Farragut could not elevate his heavy guns enough to target these cannon. Land approaches were few and well protected, and Vicksburg's defenders far outnumbered Williams's brigade. Butler devised another plan: He would divert the Mississippi River so that it bypassed Vicksburg altogether, leaving its guns out of range of Union vessels. The river could be diverted, he reasoned—without sufficiently consulting engineers—by cutting a channel across the peninsula that defined a loop in the river in front of Vicksburg, allowing the river's current to wash out a new course.²²

The soldiers exchanged their guns for shovels and went to work. The camps near Vicksburg were built on low ground, and the Vermonters had no tents or camp equipment for the first several days. "We have to drink Mississippi river water & it is muddy & nasty but I don't think it is very unhealthy," Sergeant Rollin Green wrote. "We draw two or three barrels full & let it settle & it becomes somewhat clear after a while." Sergeant Green undoubtedly overestimated the quality of the water. Lack of proper sanitation, exposure to malaria and other diseases, and poor living conditions soon contributed to a rapid rise in sickness. To make things worse, General Williams insisted on drilling the men with backpacks in the broiling sun. Soldiers grew sick by the hundreds, and they began dying by the dozens. Forty-two Vermonters alone died in July, fifty in August (not counting battle casualties), and fifty-eight in September. So many of the soldiers were sick by mid-July, Sergeant Green wrote, that there weren't enough in his regiment for guard duty.²³ More than a thousand runaway slaves were put to work digging but the faster they dug, the faster the level of the river dropped. In addition, it turned out that the underlying soil, far from being unstable silt, was hard clay, almost impervious to the river's current—which,

contrary to Butler's assumption, was not very strong at the point of excavation to begin with. Finally, in late July, "Butler's Ditch" was abandoned.²⁴ While he would not admit the futility of the expedition, Butler concluded that Williams's men were "not so much needed there as . . . elsewhere." Accordingly, he ordered General Williams's brigade, at least half of it on the sick list, to return. Williams evacuated the Vicksburg camps on July 24 and reached Baton Rouge on the 26th.²⁵

Williams downplayed rumors of Confederate forces gathering nearby and reported that in preparing defenses at Baton Rouge he would avoid "unnecessary exposure or fatigue to the troops," a consideration that does not seem to have occurred to him in the swamps of Vicksburg. A week passed and "not so much as a rifle pit" had been dug for Baton Rouge's defense, according to Lieutenant Colonel Fullam. Meanwhile, General John C. Breckinridge, the former vice president and Butler's second choice for president in 1860, was assembling some 4,000 men at Camp Moore, sixty miles away, with orders to attack Williams at Baton Rouge. On August 2 a spy employed by General Butler reported to Williams that Breckinridge was on the march. Williams speculated in a note to Butler that the rebel ram *Arkansas* might participate in an attack.²⁶

Though he did little to prepare for an assault Williams guessed Breckinridge's intentions correctly. The Confederate general planned to throw his troops against the Union force from the east, driving them through the city toward the Mississippi while the *Arkansas* attacked from the river. In the weeks leading up to the battle, sickness and fatigue had devastated Breckinridge's army as badly as Williams's, so that the Confederate general could count only 2,600 men fit for duty on the day of the attack. By his own estimate Breckinridge was outnumbered. In fact the sides were evenly matched numerically, but being on the defensive gave the Union troops a substantial advantage, as they could fight with less exposure than the attackers, and on ground of their own choosing. Facing these odds, Breckinridge made his final advance on Baton Rouge only when he received assurances that the *Arkansas* was nearly in position and ready to strike.²⁷

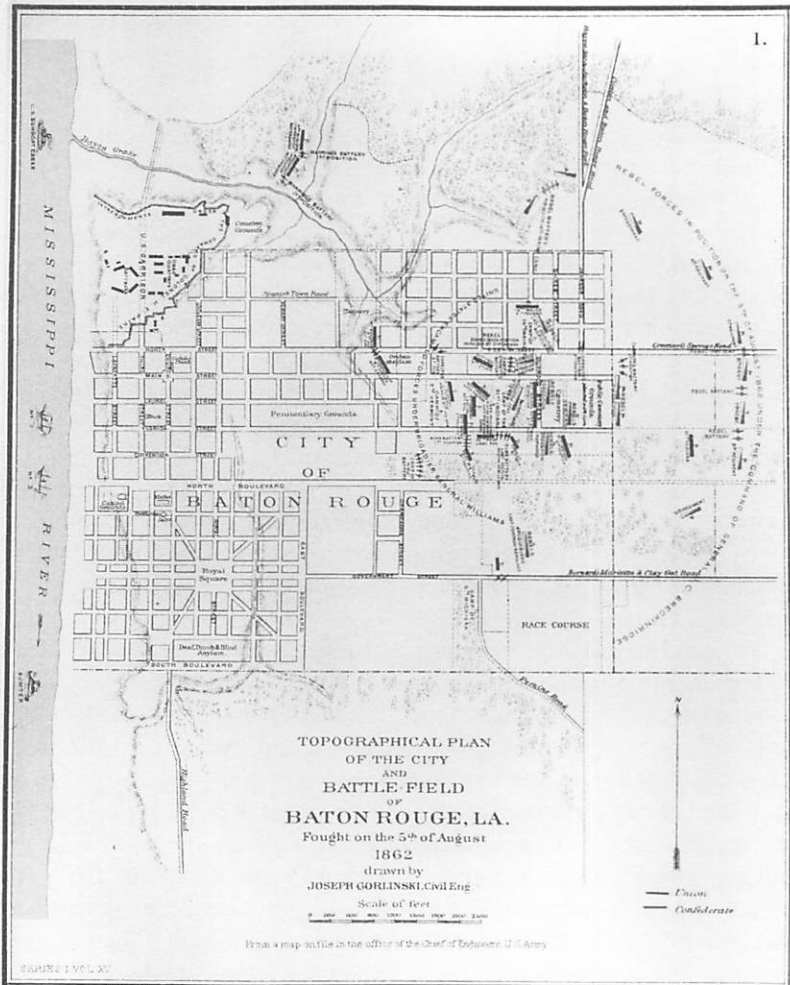
The *Arkansas* was a newly constructed steamboat clad with railroad iron and boilerplate. Longer, stronger, and more heavily armed than any Union ironclads on the Mississippi, the *Arkansas* had already proven her superiority in July when she steamed through the Union fleet and a heavy barrage to dock beneath the protective guns of Vicksburg. Although several Union gunboats patrolled the river near Baton Rouge, they were no match for the *Arkansas*. Once in position near the

Union back door, she could pound away with her heavy artillery and wreak havoc on the Yankees.²⁸

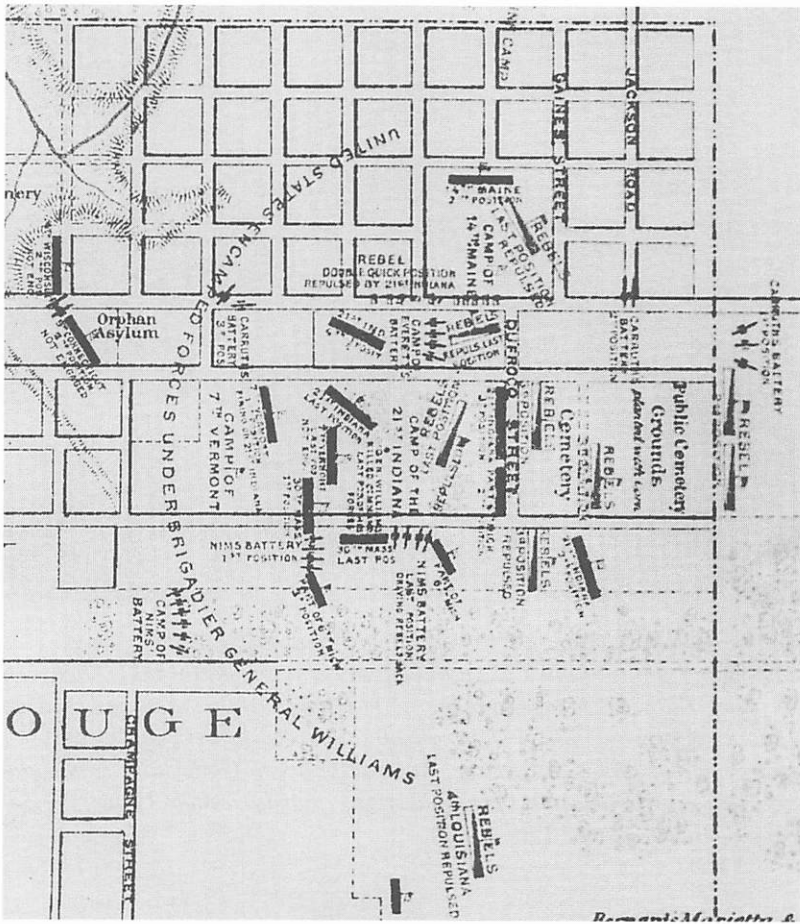
Baton Rouge, the state capital, had a prewar population of 7,000 white and 9,000 black residents; 94 percent of the latter were slaves. A U.S. military map shows a grid of streets next to the river, where the commercial district, state house, and other public buildings were located. On the northern extremity of the city, bordering a bayou, the federal arsenal and barracks lay within a small, fortified enclosure. To the east and somewhat north of the downtown grid, and connected to it by several east-west streets, lay another grid of streets in which the orphan asylum, state penitentiary, and a cemetery were located, as well as houses. As one traveled eastward on these streets the buildings grew more sparse and were interspersed with woods and farm fields. Within and just outside of this second grid Williams's six infantry regiments and three batteries set up camps where they could find open spaces large enough to accommodate tents and equipment. The Seventh Vermont set up camp near the middle of this neighborhood, a few hundred feet behind (or to the west of) the camp of the Twenty-First Indiana regiment.²⁹ Most of the ensuing battle took place among these houses and fields and in the cemetery.

News of Breckinridge's imminent attack reached Williams on August 4. The shooting began sometime after 2 A.M. the next morning, when rebel scouts ran into pickets of the Twenty-First Indiana posted about a mile east of their camp. General Williams had issued instructions for each regiment to assemble in front of its camp at the first sign of an attack, and await further orders. Each regimental commander had the discretion to move to any point where fighting appeared to be heavy, but the general did not establish a command structure before the battle to coordinate the activities of the various units. As rebel skirmishers began slowly to drive their Union counterparts through a thick fog between 3 and 5 A.M., the Northern regiments formed ranks in front of their camps as instructed. Major Holbrook was field officer of the day, with responsibility to supervise the pickets, respond to any emergency in the field, and communicate with General Williams. This assignment relieved Holbrook of any direct responsibility for his own regiment.³⁰

The battle began in earnest around 5 A.M. with firing on the Union left.³¹ While riding toward the right flank to make sure it was secure, Major Holbrook passed the camp of the Seventh Vermont and told Colonel Roberts where the attack was developing. Roberts exercised his discretion and moved the regiment several hundred yards to the northeast. Here the rebels were already pressing the Fourteenth Maine, which before long fell back through its camp, but a section of the



"Topographical plan of the city and battle-field of Baton Rouge, LA," by Joseph Gorlinski, showing the area of battle in the outskirts of Baton Rouge. The various positions of Union and Confederate units were derived from officers' reports in the Official Records. Source: Reproduced from Plate XXIV, no. 1, of the Atlas to Accompany the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1891–1895). Photograph of original plate courtesy of the Norwich University Archives.



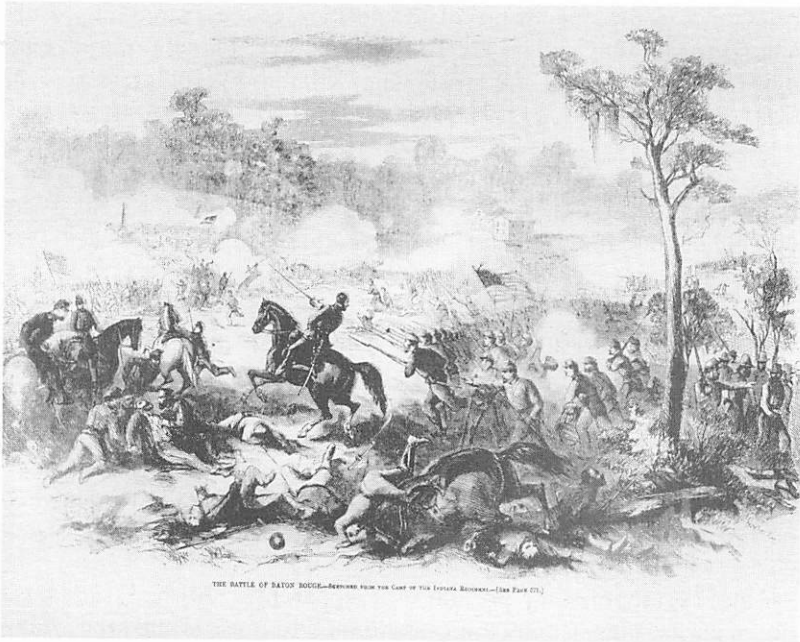
Detail of the "Topographical Plan," showing the Seventh Vermont near its camp in its "1st position firing on 21st Indiana," and "last pos[ition] not engaged]." The inaccuracy and incompleteness of these depictions was partly the fault of Lieutenant Colonel Volney Fullam, who failed to submit a substantive report on the regiment's activities.



Union encampments south of the state penitentiary in Baton Rouge. This east-facing photograph by Andrew Lytle was probably taken between October, 1862 and May, 1863. The hottest action of the battle of 5 August 1862 took place within and beyond the wooded area in the distant left and center of this view. Source: Andrew D. Lytle Collection, Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collection, Louisiana State University Libraries, Baton Rouge, La.

Fourth Massachusetts Light Artillery (commonly referred to as Manning's Battery after its captain, Charles H. Manning) opened on the rebels and stopped them in their tracks. The men of the Seventh Vermont did not fire a shot, and apparently received no fire from the rebels. They soon discovered, however, that in the fog and darkness, Manning's Battery was unable to distinguish friend from foe. Shells from the Union battery were falling too close for comfort, so Lieutenant Colonel Fullam rode off to inform the Massachusetts men of their mistake. Meanwhile, seeing that the attack from the northeast had been stopped, Roberts moved the regiment back to its original position in front of its camp.³²

The Twenty-First Indiana bore the brunt of the rebel advance on the Union right. Three Indiana companies had been skirmishing and were largely scattered about the front lines. One company fell back and



THE BATTLE OF BATON ROUGE.—REPRODUCED FROM THE CAMP OF THE INDIANA REGIMENT.—[SEE PAGE 27.]

"The Battle of Baton Rouge—Sketched from the Camp of the Indiana Regiment." Source: Harper's Weekly, vol. VI, no. 297 (Sept. 6, 1862), 564.

joined the Seventh Vermont well behind the front, where they stood awaiting orders.³³ The main body of Indianans was fighting directly east of the Vermonters, stopping an enemy advance through the cemetery. When the enemy troops reformed on its left flank, the regiment formed a line diagonal to its position in front of the cemetery and northeast of the Vermonters. Here the Twenty-First was partially screened from the Seventh Vermont by woods, and wholly out of sight in any event because of fog and smoke. Meanwhile, more rebel troops advanced from the east through the camp of the Twenty-First, whose commander soon realized that the enemy was moving unchallenged in its rear toward the city. The Indianans hurriedly faced about and charged the invaders, running directly in front of the Seventh Vermont.³⁴

At this moment, according to historian George Benedict, General Williams galloped to the rear of the Seventh Vermont and demanded to know why the regiment was not firing. He issued a peremptory order to fire and dashed off. Colonel Roberts apparently obeyed with

reluctance, as he was unsure of the position of the Twenty-First Indiana. Three or four volleys soon brought several Indiana officers running out of the fog with the dreaded news that the Vermonters were indeed firing on their friends. The fighting had become intense, and several Vermonters were now wounded by rebel fire. Colonel Roberts gave the order to cease fire, and immediately fell to the ground with a bullet wound to the neck. As Roberts was helped from the field, a second bullet penetrated his abdomen, wounding him mortally.³⁵

Seeing their leader fall, the men of the Seventh fell back in some disorder before Captain Henry Porter reformed them just to the rear of their camp. He then moved the regiment to a ravine 100 to 200 yards (two or three city blocks, apparently) to the rear of the Seventh's camp. Command of the regiment devolved upon Porter because the colonel was incapacitated, Lieutenant Colonel Fullam was still not back from his mission to Manning's Battery, and Major Holbrook was absent as field officer of the day. The absence of the lieutenant colonel stretched on for about half an hour, during which time the regiment was not engaged in the battle.³⁶

The Seventh, or some portion of it, apparently returned to its position near its camp. Confederates continued to press against the Union right between 7 and 9 A.M., and when they threatened to turn the right flank, General Williams ordered his men to fall back. Colonel Nathan A. M. Dudley of the Thirtieth Massachusetts Regiment, whom Williams had belatedly ordered to coordinate the right wing, approached the rear of the camp of the Seventh and found some 125 men in line. These troops told the colonel that they had "fallen back with the rest," but it is unclear what previous movement of the line they were referring to.³⁷ What does seem clear is that soldiers of the Seventh Vermont were in the front line of the battle during the last hour of the engagement, as Union regiments on the right fell back and formed on the Seventh's position near its camp. In the thick of the fight General Williams fell, killed instantly by a bullet to the chest.³⁸

The fighting had gone on for nearly six hours by 9 A.M. and the rebels were exhausted. All morning the rebels had expected to hear the booming voice of the *Arkansas* speaking devastation in the Union rear. It was not to be: The *Arkansas's* engines had broken down on her approach to Baton Rouge, depriving the land forces of their river-borne support. The partial success of the Confederate army on the Union right had also exposed them to the fearsome fire of the Union gunboats, though these produced much more fear than casualties. "Under these circumstances," Breckinridge reported, "although the troops showed the utmost indifference to danger and death, and were reluctant

to retire, I did not deem it prudent to pursue the victory further." He ordered the stores and equipment found in the overrun camps to be burned, and withdrew from the field. The Confederates lost 453 men killed, wounded, and missing; Union losses totaled 383.³⁹

Two days later General Butler's protégé, Lieutenant Godfrey Weitzel, arrived to assess the situation in Baton Rouge. Weitzel glowed with approval, calling the battle "a glorious victory," though he noted the mournful loss of General Williams, Colonel Roberts, and other officers. In response, Butler issued General Orders 57 on August 9, congratulating the army, which, he declared, had routed an enemy twice its number—an enemy that had launched a "cowardly attack" under the leadership of a general (Breckinridge) "recrunt to loyal Kentucky (whom some of us would have honored before his apostasy)." ⁴⁰ He had not yet received reports from regimental commanders, which would fill in the details and inform him of particularly meritorious behavior—and misconduct. Although Weitzel's report made no reference to misconduct, in an accompanying letter to Butler he mentioned "that the Seventh Vermont behaved very badly." On August 8 Weitzel reported on the steps being taken to secure Baton Rouge against another attack. By August 16, however, Butler concluded that an attack on New Orleans was imminent, and he ordered the Baton Rouge brigade to return. Most of the troops arrived in New Orleans on August 20, though the attack Butler expected never materialized.⁴¹

Meanwhile, trouble was brewing in the camps. The men of the Twenty-First Indiana were angry about the friendly-fire incident. Colonel MacMillan of the Twenty-First, who rose from his hospital bed at the end of the battle and saw only the final minutes of the fight, and other members of his regiment lodged verbal complaints about the Vermonters with General Butler. Captain James Grimsley, who commanded the Indiana regiment for part of the battle, made the friendly-fire accusation official in his report to Butler. He also charged that General Williams had ordered the Seventh forward to support his regiment shortly after the incident, and that the Seventh refused to obey. These were the most serious allegations of misconduct against the Seventh, and Butler took Grimsley at his word.⁴²

Acting as colonel of the Seventh, Lieutenant Colonel Fullam wrote the official regimental report to General Butler. In a lengthy but unfinished draft of the report Fullam recounted the regiment's initial movements in detail but stopped in the middle of an explanation for his absence. Perhaps sensing that this account might raise more questions than it answered, Fullam instead submitted a brief paragraph, admitting that he was "not able to give a connected account" of the regiment's



Volney Fullam. Source: Vermont Historical Society.

participation in the battle. Butler therefore received no information about the regiment's activities except as reported by the officers of other regiments.⁴³

Fullam had never been popular in the Seventh, and now the feeling against him intensified, perhaps because of the role he played (or failed to play) in the battle, or perhaps simply because the colonel's death left him in command of the regiment. Writing nearly fifty years later, Fullam listed as reasons for his unpopularity that he had disciplined men and officers for being away without leave, had strictly forbidden stealing from citizens, and had demanded written explanations from several officers (including the regimental surgeons) for their absences during the battle of Baton Rouge. Training methods also caused disputes: Colonel Roberts and many of the company officers were accustomed to outdated militia drills, while Fullam insisted on drilling by current U.S. Army methods. Since drilling took place at company, battalion, and regimental levels, under a variety of officers, the conflicting methods resulted in great confusion and resentment.⁴⁴

Under ordinary circumstances, Fullam could expect to be appointed as Colonel Roberts's successor, but he did not have the support of the men or officers. "He is very unpopular with the regt.," Major Holbrook wrote to his father on August 14, "& I hear the officers are going to ask him to resign." In fact, Fullam later wrote, most of the staff and line officers signed a petition asking him to resign but never delivered it. The same officers petitioned Governor Holbrook to appoint his son colonel.⁴⁵ Major Holbrook wrote again to his father on August 17 that there was "the most bitter feeling in this regt. existing against Col. Fullam," adding, "I hope he will resign." The major believed himself the man preferred for colonel by nearly the whole regiment, but said he did not want "to be jumped" over Fullam. The next day, however, Fullam forwarded a list of recommendations for promotion to the governor, and placed his own name at the top to succeed Colonel Roberts.⁴⁶

On August 25, Fullam and Holbrook received orders to report to General Butler the following day amid rumors that the Seventh had been accused of misconduct. Meeting first with Fullam, Butler confirmed the rumors and told the lieutenant colonel about his soon-to-be-released General Orders 62-1/2, in which he censured the Seventh for its conduct in the battle of Baton Rouge. Butler then asked for Fullam's resignation, on the grounds that the performance of the regiment was the result of poor discipline, for which he held Fullam responsible. The lieutenant colonel did not deny the charge but tried to explain the confusion caused by conflicting methods of drill, which were exacerbated by the difficulties of drilling in the sand of Ship Island and the

swamps of Louisiana. Butler, though, was not in the mood for excuses, and Fullam knew that fighting “a man of his character, practically a dictator in New Orleans,” would be “hopeless.” After consulting briefly in the anteroom with Holbrook, Fullam agreed to resign, but under one condition: that Butler exonerate him in writing of any of the misconduct alleged against the Seventh. The General consented, and on his endorsement of Fullam’s resignation letter he wrote: “Owing to General order [62-1/2] in regard to the 7th at Baton Rouge I feel bound to say in justice to Lt. Col Fullam that I have heard no complaint of his personal conduct in that affair.”⁴⁷

Next, Butler met with Major Holbrook. After informing him that Fullam had resigned, and that Holbrook was to be promoted to the colonelcy, Butler told him that the Seventh would be rebuked for misconduct in the battle, without revealing to Holbrook the specific charges. Holbrook protested and pleaded with the general to convene a board of inquiry to examine the accusations before they were given the weight of publication in general orders. Butler refused. Holbrook then demanded that a board of inquiry be held after the issuance, and that it be composed of officers from outside the Gulf Department. Butler suggested that Holbrook might himself select the members of the court from among any of the officers within the Gulf Department, but he agreed to forward Holbrook’s demand to the War Department.⁴⁸

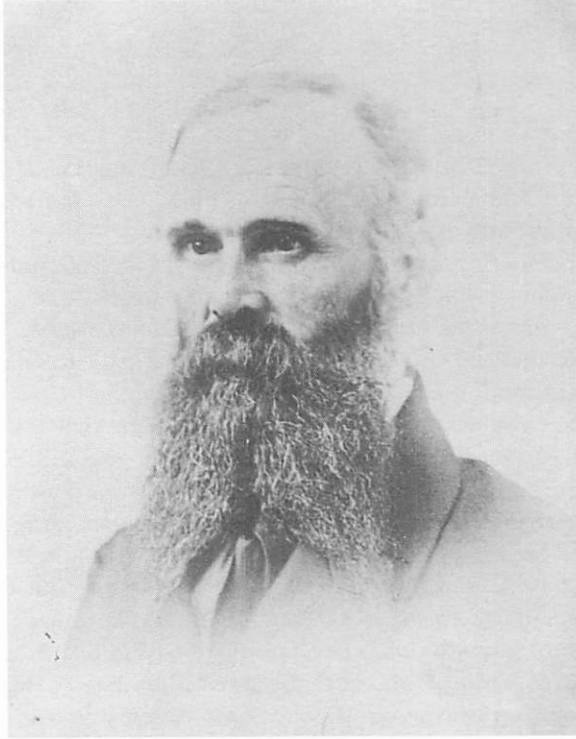
Butler’s General Orders 62-1/2, promulgated as a revision of the laudatory General Orders 57, began with a series of accusations against the Seventh followed by lengthy and often fulsome praise of the other regiments, which served to heighten the disgrace heaped on the Vermonters. Butler wrote that Colonel Roberts “fell mortally wounded while rallying his men. He was worthy of a better disciplined regiment. . . . His regiment gave him the inexpressible pain of seeing it break in confusion when not pressed by the enemy and refuse to march to the aid of the outnumbered and almost overwhelmed Indianians.” The regiment, he continued, “by a fatal mistake, had already fired into the same regiment they had failed to support.” Butler also commended a soldier of Manning’s Battery for bringing off “from the camp of the Seventh Vermont their colors at the time of their retreat.” For these reasons, the general refused to allow the name of Baton Rouge to be sewn on the regiment’s flag (a standard privilege for units engaged in a battle), and forbade the regiment from carrying its flags at all “until such time as they shall have earned the right to them” and shown “whether they are worthy descendants of those who fought beside Allen and with Starke at Bennington.”⁴⁹

The regiment heard General Orders 62-1/2 for the first time on

Saturday, August 30, while in formation for dress parade. According to Sergeant Rollin Green, Butler spoke "in the most cutting & sarcastic way. He said 'you will have to stand in the next fight cant run for I have sent home all the ships. There is not enough boats left in the harbor to carry a corporals guard.' He talked to us as tho' we were all cowards. I tell you my blood boiled." Lieutenant Dickinson fumed, "We have been disgraced deliberately and falsely as I pledge my honor to show if ever the opportunity is given."⁵⁰

News of the disgrace of the Seventh soon reached Vermont. Volney Fullam, at home in Ludlow by mid-September, wrote an account of the regiment's role in the battle of Baton Rouge and its subsequent censure for the *Rutland Daily Herald*. The Vermont General Assembly adopted a resolution calling for an impartial inquiry. Governor Holbrook wrote to Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton that the people of Vermont were "stirred up" and "nothing short of an entirely impartial court of inquiry, to be appointed at and sent on from Washington, will satisfy our people." He wrote as well to General Butler, accusing him of treating the Seventh "with great injustice, and the State of Vermont with at least marked disrespect."⁵¹ These efforts did not, however, bring the desired results. Army General-in-Chief Henry W. Halleck approved the request for a board of inquiry but informed Butler that no officers could be spared from Washington to serve on the board. Halleck gave Butler permission to convene a board on the terms he had offered to Holbrook—that the colonel might choose any officers he wished from within the Gulf Department. Although he was skeptical that an impartial court could be mustered, Holbrook put the question to his officers and received their unanimous approval to proceed, "let the consequences be what they might."⁵² Laboring under conditions of extreme discouragement, Colonel Holbrook wrote to his father that he expected recruitment for the Seventh would suffer as a result of "that infamous order." Once the charges were proven false, he continued, "I shall tender my resignation with a full conviction that this war was brought on by rascals & can be settled by them. I have discharged my duties as well & faithfully as I could . . . but my education never fitted me to serve in a Department where everything is so repugnant to my feelings."⁵³

One who might have had some influence with General Butler, if he had not exhausted Butler's patience and his own credibility, was General John Phelps. During the twenty-five days that the Seventh spent in Baton Rouge under General Williams, Phelps acted out the final scenes of his abolitionist drama. On July 30 he formally requested arms and equipment for three regiments of black soldiers he proposed to recruit



John W. Phelps. Source: Photograph Files, Special Collections, University of Vermont Library.

from among the fugitive slaves who had flocked to his camp. He assured Butler, "They are willing to submit to anything rather than to slavery." Butler agreed in principle with the effort—it was he, after all, who, as commander at Fortress Monroe, had forced the government to affirm his policy of treating runaways as contraband of war—but he blocked Phelps's attempts to muster the black troops into Federal service. He told Phelps that the blacks were needed as laborers and that Congress had forbidden their enlistment. They were to be employed in necessary work at the camp and Phelps was not to enlist them as soldiers. Phelps responded, "I am not willing to become a mere slave-driver which you propose, having no qualifications in that way," and tendered his resignation.⁵⁴ Butler refused to accept it, but passed it on to Washington, where it was accepted by General Halleck. Although he wrote a supportive note to accompany Holbrook's request for a court

of inquiry, Phelps's usefulness and influence had evaporated. Notwithstanding his refusal to condone the mustering of contrabands, Butler no sooner forwarded Phelps's resignation to Washington than he announced that he would muster free blacks into Federal service. These men had been free before the start of the war, and their service did not raise the difficult issues connected with the mustering of fugitives. Butler thus gained fame as one of the first to raise black troops just as he denied that distinction to Phelps.⁵⁵

The Board of Inquiry finally convened on October 23, and took testimony for five days over the following week. The first witnesses were officers of the Twenty-First Indiana. Captain Frank Noblet, who commanded the regiment near the end of the battle, testified that he passed a regiment moving "in tolerably good order" toward the rear, whose members ignored his order to return to the line of battle. He was told later that the men were of the Seventh Vermont. Lieutenant John W. Day claimed that the Seventh fell back "to the gas works in the hollow" at the same time the Twenty-First moved forward to retake an abandoned position. Lieutenant Walter C. Elken, whose company fell in with the Vermonters shortly before the friendly-fire incident, testified that his company and the Vermonters broke when they received a "tremendous volley" (presumably the volley that wounded Colonel Roberts), and found shelter in a ravine. Elken soon rallied his company, he stated, and fell in with the Thirtieth Massachusetts on the Union right. Elken added that he saw a regiment reforming near the Vermont camp, and that when the Thirtieth Massachusetts fell back under orders, it took a position in line with the Seventh.⁵⁶

The first day's testimony therefore included some negative remarks and suspicions about the conduct of the Vermonters, but no clear or substantive evidence of misconduct. On the second day, Lieutenant W. S. Henkle and Captain James Grimsley testified. Henkle was quartermaster of the Twenty-First, and having no battlefield duties was assigned to carry orders for General Williams. He claimed that he had delivered an order to the Seventh from Colonel Keith to advance and support the Twenty-First. If true, the Seventh clearly failed to obey the order. But Henkle's testimony was flawed: He stated that he was "very sure" he gave the order to Major Holbrook (who sat before him and questioned him at the court of inquiry), but Holbrook was never with his regiment, and denied ever receiving such an order. Whoever the officer was, Henkle admitted he did not wait for an answer, as his horse was becoming unmanageable.⁵⁷

Captain Grimsley contradicted Henkle, stating that he was "very positive that Colonel Keith did not send an officer to the Seventh asking

them to come up.” Instead, the captain insisted that General Williams himself gave the order directly to a Vermont officer, after rebuking the regiment for firing into the Indianans. According to Grimsley the Vermonters responded to the order, moving some thirty yards forward, but then fell back in good order as if ordered to do so. Grimsley saw no disorder in the Vermont ranks. Most importantly, from the Vermonters’ perspective, Grimsley stated that the men of the Seventh, when they fired the volleys into the Twenty-First, had no reason to suspect they were firing at anyone but the enemy. “My impression,” he stated, “is that when we received the two volleys from the Seventh Vermont we ran under a fire which was already going on.” These words from the man most responsible for Butler’s censure surely gave Colonel Holbrook a flush of gratification. Grimsley’s insistence that the Seventh disobeyed a direct order from General Williams was disturbing, but the lack of any corroborating testimony consistent with his recollection must have raised serious doubts about its veracity.⁵⁸

The Board heard only one witness, Lieutenant Colonel Elliott of General Williams’s staff, on October 27. Elliott evidently thought the conduct of the Seventh was good except that it “broke in confusion” under the severe fire that wounded Colonel Roberts. He quoted General Williams as saying, “if our troops are going to behave this way we may as well abandon the field.” He knew nothing of an order for the Seventh to support the Twenty-First Indiana. But Elliott specifically cited Fullam as deserving censure for drawing the regiment up in the protection of a ravine. “I asked him what he was doing there. He said he was getting his men in a sheltered position. I saw no other officers exhibit any disposition to evade duty.”⁵⁹

The Vermonters got their chance to speak on October 28 and 29. Each of the Vermont officers insisted that he had heard no order to advance to the support of the Indianans. Each also asserted that any disorder in the ranks was minimal. Captain Porter explained that the right wing of the regiment fell back “in some disorder” about one hundred yards after Colonel Roberts fell, but that he reformed the line a hundred feet to the rear of its original position. After informing the general that he had assumed command of the regiment, Porter received an order from Williams, he claimed, to take the regiment to the shelter of a ravine. He remained in command for twenty minutes, when Lieutenant Colonel Fullam returned. Captain Barber, the next witness, also stated that Fullam returned and resumed command twenty to twenty-five minutes after Colonel Roberts fell.⁶⁰

Much of the Vermonters’ testimony concerned the allegation that a member of Manning’s Battery rescued the colors of the Seventh when

the Vermonters fell back. It became apparent that these flags were not the regimental, state, or national flags that each regiment ordinarily carried into battle, but small marker flags (each with a "7" on it) used to mark camp and parade ground boundaries. A small, frayed U.S. flag, lately used as a blotter, was also recovered. Sergeant Sherman Parkhurst of the Seventh's color guard testified that the regimental colors were never abandoned, declaring "they did not leave my hands during the engagement."⁶¹

Colonel Holbrook took the witness stand on October 29th and spoke of the severe debilitation of the regiment from sickness and hard work. He noted that he had had virtually no contact with the regiment during the battle, but quoted from the official report of Colonel Dudley, of the Thirtieth Massachusetts, in which Dudley stated that one section of Manning's Battery was "well supported" on the right by the Seventh, and that the Vermonters stood in line with the Twenty-First Indiana and the Thirtieth Massachusetts regiments against a strong force on the Union right. "At one time," Dudley had reported, "these three brave regiments stood face to face with the enemy, within forty yards of each other."⁶²

Dudley followed Holbrook on the stand and stated that he did not see the Seventh until the latter half of the battle, when the Vermonters came under his command. When ordered by General Williams to fall back, he found some 125 men of the Seventh to the rear of their tents, who said "they had fallen back with the rest." Dudley claimed that he gave no orders and knew of no orders given to the Seventh that they failed to obey. Dudley dismissed the implication that the Vermonters had fired into the Indianans through negligence. The Twenty-First was "scattered over the field very much and it was impossible to tell where they were. They even complained of my Regt. firing into them but I showed them that we had not. I doubt very much whether they were fired into from the rear at all."⁶³

The Board adjourned after hearing nineteen witnesses and spent the next week deliberating. Colonel Holbrook waited impatiently for the Board's report, but expressed great relief at the tenor of the testimony. General Butler "no doubt was considerably surprised at the testimony of all the witnesses," he wrote to his father, "and is at a great loss how to account for such unanimity. . . . Nothing but the blackest malice can actuate Genl. Butler to give us anything less than an acquittal." Yet Holbrook by now was convinced that malice was indeed what motivated Butler, and he did not expect a full retraction of the accusations. And if this expectation proved true, Holbrook wrote, "I shall always wage war upon him."⁶⁴

While the officers of the Board of Inquiry were bound to consider only the evidence presented in the inquiry, they were no doubt conscious of both the enormous humiliation the Seventh bore and the potential embarrassment to General Butler if his charges should prove entirely false. Under these circumstances, the Board's report, issued on November 6, appears to be fairly objective. It stated somewhat ambiguously that the Seventh "fled about one hundred feet and to the cover of some gullies" after Colonel Roberts fell. The "gullies" presumably referred to the ravine some one to two hundred yards to the rear of the Seventh's camp. The weak conjunction leaves open the possibility that the men were ordered to take cover in the ravine after fleeing, but the wording suggests that the "gullies" were occupied by panicked troops looking for cover. The examining officers concluded (apparently on the basis of Colonel Dudley's statement that he found 125 Vermonters just to the rear of their camp) that two-fifths of the regiment never returned to the line of battle. Captain Porter and all of the line officers behaved well, as far as they could determine, but Lieutenant Colonel Fullam was singled out for "discreditable" behavior on the testimony of Colonel Elliott that he "sought to evade duty" by sheltering his men in a ravine, despite Captain Porter's assertion that the regiment had been ordered to take cover there. The Vermonters were not to blame for the friendly-fire incident, the Board concluded, citing Captain Grimsley's "exculpation" and the testimony of various witnesses that the Indians, changing position frequently, could not be distinguished from the enemy in the fog and smoke. Finally, the Board stated in unequivocal terms that the colors of the Seventh were "retained" and "brought off the field" by the regiment's color guard, in direct contradiction to Captain Manning's report.⁶⁵

General Butler accepted the report but in his endorsement he distorted the Board's findings. He reiterated, for instance, "that the Regiment did fire upon the Indiana Regiment" without mentioning that the evidence exonerated the Vermonters. In the same sentence he added, "that was the only firing done by the regiment that day, although they held the centre of the line, which was most hotly pressed." Certainly, the regiment held its fire under orders from its colonel until General Williams intervened—with unfortunate results. For the remainder of the battle, there is ample evidence that at least a portion of the regiment was engaged in the fight. Lieutenant Austin Woodman of the Seventh Vermont had mentioned in his testimony that "we did not fire at all, during the Action except at the three or four rounds at the time Colonel Roberts was killed." It is unclear whether Woodman was referring to the whole regiment or just his company. It seems unlikely that

the Seventh could have held the "most hotly pressed" portion of the line and not have fired a shot. More to the point, the accusation defamed the regiment without specifying an act of misconduct, and without giving the accused an opportunity to respond. Butler expressed pleasure that "most" of the line officers behaved well when in fact the report stated simply "the Line Officers behaved well." He did not repeat some of the inaccurate statements in General Orders 62-1/2—for instance, that Colonel Roberts fell while trying to rally his men. This was a concession of a sort, but on only one point did the general admit that he had been misinformed, on the issue of the camp colors being rescued. He therefore ordered the regiment's flags restored, but refused to allow the regimental flag "to be inscribed with the name of the glorious battle of Baton Rouge."⁶⁶

Colonel Holbrook's estimation of Butler proved accurate, though the general's minor concessions—in addition to the fact that, shortly after the Board concluded its work, Butler was removed from command of the Gulf Department—seemed to mollify him to some degree. "It was more than I supposed Gen. B___ would admit," he wrote to his brother Frank. He hoped that Vermonters would consider the report "as a virtual admission or retracting [of] Gen. Order 62." At the same time, he expressed weariness over the whole affair. "I don't see now why the thing should not be hushed up[.] I have heard enough about the 7th Vt. It will always be a disagreeable stigma to the regiment."⁶⁷ Months later, he wrote to the retired General Phelps,

I am conscious that we received but a small part of our just due, but I feel that I done the best I could under the circumstances. It was a very unequal contest, an old and professional politician pitted against a mere fledgling. You suggested that I should have preferred charges against Gen. Butler. I thought the matter over very seriously and I should have done so had I felt sure of gaining decisive results. With the experience, knowledge and "wire pulling" disposition of an expert politician, I might have brought out important and advantageous features. I fully realized my delicate and responsible position, and felt that more skillful and older heads should have managed it, but it devolved on me alone to extricate the Regt. and the reputation of the State. I done the best I could under the circumstances.⁶⁸

General Butler's recall had more to do with politics, rumors of corruption, and the complaints of European nations about his treatment of their citizens than with any complaints of soldiers. He remained without a command for most of 1863, but pressure from powerful friends and the possibility that the unemployed general might emerge as an opponent in the 1864 presidential race eventually led President Lincoln to appoint Butler to command the Department of Virginia and



William C. Holbrook. Source: Vermont Historical Society.

North Carolina, with his headquarters again at Fortress Monroe. In this post Ben Butler ultimately proved his military incompetence beyond the endurance of the army: General U. S. Grant cashiered him early in 1865.⁶⁹

Twenty years after the battle of Baton Rouge, Benjamin F. Butler was elected governor of Massachusetts after five terms in the U.S. House of Representatives and several unsuccessful bids for the governorship. The same year, William Holbrook—now a well-known lawyer himself—published a regimental history of the Seventh Vermont. He devoted one-quarter of the book to the Baton Rouge affair and spared Butler none of his contempt, writing, “I doubt if the annals of the war furnish another such instance of premeditated iniquity as was this monstrous attack upon our regiment.” Addressing the Reunion Society of Vermont Officers a year later, he called the incident the regiment’s “sharpest trial . . . it was compelled to stand ‘four square’ to Butler’s rotten breath of calumny.” Colonel Holbrook was clearly carrying out his vow of twenty years’ standing to “always wage war” on Butler.⁷⁰

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The attempt of Holbrook the historian to set the record straight fell short of complete candor. Holbrook obtained a copy of the proceedings of the Board of Inquiry and corresponded with former members of the regiment. He pointed out significant inconsistencies in the testimony of the Indiana officers, which should have undermined their credibility.⁷¹ Yet in claiming that the Vermonters never fell back in disorder he ignored the testimony of Captain Porter. In denying the board's conclusion that two-fifths of the Vermonters never returned to the line of battle he remained silent, as were all of his comrades, about where the men were and what they were doing for the final two hours of the battle.⁷² Holbrook also implied that the single instance of misconduct that Lieutenant Colonel Elliott cited was the regiment's fleeing one hundred feet; in fact, what Elliott said was that Volney Fullam shielded the regiment in a ravine "to evade duty."⁷³

Holbrook struggled to explain why Butler had disgraced the Seventh. The idea that a state so renowned for the heroism of its soldiers could furnish a regiment capable of cowardice struck Holbrook as an absurdity.⁷⁴ Even if the Seventh had temporarily lost its composure, few were the infantry regiments on either side that never panicked in battle, especially their first battle. Such incidents happened countless times in countless Civil War engagements. One of the officers in charge of a Confederate brigade in the battle of Baton Rouge, learning that his brigade had fled and "could not be rallied" after he was wounded, wrote in his official report, "this has often happened with the best of troops and the bravest veterans, and should not attach any disgrace to the soldiers."⁷⁵ As for the Seventh's friendly-fire tragedy, it too was one of scores, perhaps hundreds of similar incidents. Seldom were the shooters considered culpable; when someone was blamed, it appears that the blame usually fell on a commanding officer.⁷⁶ Surely Butler's animosity was rooted in the Vermont legislature's rejection of his plea for the Seventh to be assigned to his division in 1861. General Phelps had suggested that the incident gave Butler the opportunity to curry favor with the Indianans, who would be much more important to him in a presidential race than Vermonters. This explanation sounds far-fetched, though Holbrook asserted that Butler would not have taken the political risk of condemning troops from New York or Massachusetts.⁷⁷

Holbrook overlooked a simpler explanation that, in retrospect, seems obvious, and consistent with Butler's character: the need for a scapegoat. Butler had been publicly humiliated and widely criticized after the disastrous skirmish at Big Bethel the year before. Although that affair had been eclipsed by bigger disasters by other generals, Ben Butler remembered how it had threatened his military and political

careers. General Williams clearly deserved blame for his lack of preparation and poor leadership at Baton Rouge, but he lay beyond Butler's reach: Death in battle had conferred on him a certain immunity to criticism. Moreover, as a political general Butler could do himself no good by criticizing Williams, a regular army officer.⁷⁸ Lieutenant Colonel Fullam deserved a share of the blame if only because he failed to account for the regiment's activities in his official report.⁷⁹ Butler, however, had already exonerated Fullam and sent him home. He could not pick on Holbrook, who had nothing to do with the Seventh during the battle. But by reprimanding the entire regiment, now led by a young and inexperienced colonel, Butler provided some protection for himself while ensuring that the accused would be unable to challenge him effectively.

It might seem as if there was little need for a scapegoat for the battle of Baton Rouge. After all, the rebels had been beaten back with moderately heavy casualties. But if this battle was in some sense a victory for Butler, at the same time he was losing the war in the Mississippi Valley. His Vicksburg campaign had been a disaster. The battle of Baton Rouge showed that the rebels were able to challenge Union control of the region. Criticism of Butler's administration in New Orleans grew daily in the latter part of the summer, and led to his removal in December. Given his lawyer's tendency to play every angle, it is no surprise that he sought and found a scapegoat for some of what was going wrong.⁸⁰

Ben Butler's censure of the Seventh Vermont had no significant impact on the outcome of military events in the Gulf Department, except to further undermine his own credibility as a military leader. For the soldiers and citizens of Vermont, however, it was a serious affront to pride and morale, and a potential threat to recruitment efforts. Commissioned officers of Vermont regiments were highly conscious of their wartime reputations, and many would refashion successful military careers into postwar business and political careers.⁸¹ Ben Butler was not the only officer to perceive the war as a vehicle for his personal ambitions. Unlike most, though, he was willing to use sophistry, manipulation, intimidation, and a creative interpretation of the facts to advance his cause.

NOTES

¹ Several biographies of Benjamin F. Butler have appeared over the last seventy-five years, ranging from highly critical to adulatory. The best are Richard S. West, Jr., *Lincoln's Scapegoat General: A Life of Benjamin F. Butler, 1818-1893* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1965); Hans Louis Trefousse, *Ben Butler: The South Called Him Beast* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1957); and Chester G. Hearn, *When the Devil Came Down to Dixie: Ben Butler in New Orleans* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1997). Butler's reputation among the men of the Seventh and Eighth Vermont regiments can be judged from the histories of those regiments: William C. Holbrook, *A Narra-*

tive of the Services of the Officers and Enlisted Men of the 7th Regiment of Vermont Volunteers (Veterans) from 1862 to 1866 (New York: American Bank Note Co., 1882), and George N. Carpenter, *History of the Eighth Regiment Vermont Volunteers, 1861-1865* (Boston: Press of Deland & Barta, 1886).

² See West, *Lincoln's Scapegoat General*, 4-28, for an overview and anecdotes of Butler's early life. All of Butler's biographers have relied heavily on his autobiography for information about his first forty years. *Autobiography and Personal Reminiscences of Major General Benjamin F. Butler: Butler's Book* (Boston: A.M. Thayer & Co., 1892) is best consumed with large portions of salt.

³ West, *Lincoln's Scapegoat General*, 30-45.

⁴ Trefousse, *Ben Butler*, 49-57.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 57-58.

⁶ West, *Lincoln's Scapegoat General*, 20, 42.

⁷ Hearn, *When the Devil Came Down to Dixie*, 25.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 28-29.

⁹ Winfield Scott to Butler, 18 May 1861, in *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (hereafter cited as *Official Records*), series I, 2: 640-641.

¹⁰ For a description of the battle see George G. Benedict, *Vermont in the Civil War* (Burlington, Vt.: Free Press Association, 1886), 2: 42-53; report of B. F. Butler, 10 June 1862, in *Official Records*, series I, 2: 80; Butler, *Autobiography*, 275. The Senate confirmed Butler by a vote of 25-14 on August 5, 1862 (*Journal of the Executive Proceedings of the Senate of the United States of America*, 2: 558).

¹¹ Both Thomas and Brown had been delegates to the 1860 Democratic convention in Charleston, according to Butler, *Autobiography*, 300; see also Carpenter, *History of the Eighth Regiment Vermont Volunteers*, 1-10. Like Butler, Thomas had no previous military experience when he accepted his commission. Unlike Butler, he proved exceptionally competent, emerging as one of the best general officers from Vermont in the Civil War.

¹² George C. Strong to Thomas A. Scott, 27 November 1861, in Benjamin F. Butler, *Private and Official Correspondence of Gen. Benjamin F. Butler During the Period of the Civil War* (Norwood, Mass.: privately printed, 1917), 1: 293. Strong was Butler's assistant adjutant general; Scott was assistant secretary of war.

¹³ Volney S. Fullam (who changed the spelling of his name to Fulham) claimed to have a letter from Governor Holbrook stating the governor had requested "that the 7th Vt. Regt. should be sent to the Department of the Gulf" in order to serve under Phelps. Volney S. Fulham, *The Fulham Genealogy* (Burlington, Vt.: Free Press Printing Co., 1910), 91. If so, it was apparently written without the knowledge of the governor's son. See Holbrook, *Narrative*, 2, footnote.

¹⁴ George B. McClellan to Butler, 23 February 1862, *Official Records*, series I, 6: 694-695.

¹⁵ Charles E. Parker to his father, 13 May 1862, Charles E. Parker Papers, Special Collections, Bailey/Howe Library, University of Vermont (hereafter UVM).

¹⁶ Holbrook, *Narrative*, 4-5.

¹⁷ John Q. Dickinson to Dugald Stewart, 1 September 1862, Stewart Family Papers, Sheldon Museum, Middlebury, Vermont; Rollin M. Green to friend, 2 September 1862, Rollin M. Green Papers, Vermont Historical Society (hereafter VHS).

¹⁸ *Preliminary Report of the Eighth Census, 1860* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1862), Table No. 41, 262; see Hearn, *When the Devil Came Down to Dixie*, 57-75, for details of the capture of New Orleans; Benedict, 2: 8.

¹⁹ West asserts that Phelps "bent his energies toward freeing every black on the plantations in his vicinity;" *Lincoln's Scapegoat General*, 161; Butler, *Autobiography*, 896; William C. Holbrook to Father, 29 July 1862, Holbrook Papers.

²⁰ On the arrests for disloyalty see Hearn, *When the Devil Came Down to Dixie*, 134-141 and West, *Lincoln's Scapegoat General*, 148-157; the text of the "woman order" is in Butler's "General Orders 28," *Official Records*, series I, 15: 426; for details of Butler's involvement in commercial enterprises in New Orleans see Hearn, *ibid.*, 180-197; on Butler's relations with foreign consuls and their citizens in New Orleans see Trefousse, *Ben Butler*, 124-127.

²¹ Holbrook, *Narrative*, 23; Norman C. Delaney, "General Thomas Williams," *Civil War Times Illustrated* 14, 4 (July 1975), 4-47 *passim*.

²² West, *Lincoln's Scapegoat General*, 164-165.

²³ Rollin M. Green to friend King, 12 July 1862, Rollin M. Green Papers; death figures were derived from Theodore S. Peck, *Revised Roster of Vermont Volunteers . . . During the War of the Rebellion, 1861-66* (Montpelier, Vt.: Watchman Publishing Co., 1892).

²⁴ See Holbrook's criticism of "this colossal piece of folly" in *Narrative*, 23-24.

²⁵ Butler to Williams, 16 July 1862, *Official Records*, series I, 15: 31.

²⁶ Williams to Captain R. S. Davis, 26 July 1862, *Official Records*, series I, 15: 33; Fulham, *Fulham Genealogy*, 95; "Report of Maj. Gen. John C. Breckinridge," 30 September 1862, *Official Records*, series I, 15: 76; Williams to Davis, 2 August 1862, *ibid.*, 34.

²⁷ Breckinridge, "Report," *Official Records*, series 1, 15: 77.

²⁸ See Shelby Foote's description of the building of the *Arkansas* and her arrival at Vicksburg in *The Civil War: A Narrative* (New York: Vintage Books, 1986), 1: 549–553.

²⁹ *Eighth Census*, 262; "Topographical Plan of the City and Battle-Field of Baton Rouge, LA.," Map 1, Plate XXIV, *The Official Atlas of the Civil War* (New York: Thomas Yoseloff, 1958).

³⁰ Holbrook, *Narrative*, 38–39; see his criticism of Williams's tactics and lack of preparation on page 42, footnote.

³¹ Published histories of the battle are largely unreliable. Contradictions abound in manuscript and published accounts concerning the time and exact location of events. References to the "left" and "right" of the battle line, and the directions particular units faced, are especially confusing. The fog and smoke that persisted on the field for much of the morning undoubtedly contributed to some inaccuracy in eyewitness accounts. William A. Spedale's *The Battle of Baton Rouge, 1862* (Baton Rouge, La.: Land and Land Pub. Division, 1985) and Edward Cunningham's *Battle of Baton Rouge, 1862* (Baton Rouge: Committee for the Preservation of the Port Hudson Battlefield, 1962) do not include citations but appear to follow the reports of Confederate officers in the battle, all but ignoring the reports of Union officers. John D. Winters's *The Civil War in Louisiana* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1963), 113–119, is more balanced in tone.

³² Holbrook, *Narrative*, 39–40, 42–43; "Report of Col. Frank S. Nickerson," 8 August 1862, *Official Records*, series 1, 15: 69–71; Fulham, *Fulham Genealogy*, 96. Major Porter later testified that the regiment had moved 300 yards to the front and left, but "had not participated in the Action" prior to returning to its position in front of the camp. "Proceedings of the Board of Inquiry into the conduct of the Seventh Vermont Regiment," untitled manuscript in RG 153, Military Court-Martial File KK-345, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C. (hereafter referred to as "Proceedings"), 33, 34.

³³ See the testimony of Lieutenant Walter C. Elken of the Twenty-First Indiana, in "Proceedings," 9–10.

³⁴ "Report of Capt. James Grimsley," 7 August 1862, *Official Records*, series 1, 15: 72–75. Grimsley described these movements more clearly in his testimony before the Board of Inquiry ("Proceedings," 22–26).

³⁵ Benedict, *Vermont in the Civil War*, 2: 26–27.

³⁶ See Porter's testimony in "Proceedings," 31–35.

³⁷ "Report of Col. Nathan A. M. Dudley," 7 August 1862, *Official Records*, series 1, 15: 60. Dudley's comment about finding 125 men of the Seventh in line of battle is found in his testimony before the Board of Inquiry, "Proceedings," 47. Several Confederate officers reported that Federal units in the center of the battle line were routed and retreated well into the city. None of the Union officers' reports supports this claim, but the retreat of the Seventh Vermont, in combination with the inevitable flux of sick, wounded, and straggling soldiers may have given such an impression. All of the Union and Confederate reports can be found in the *Official Records*, series 1, 15: 55–108.

³⁸ One of those who placed the Vermonters in the battle line was Maj. Horace Whittemore of the Thirtieth Massachusetts. See his report, 6 August 1862, *Official Records*, series 1, 15: 66.

³⁹ Breckinridge, "Report," *ibid.*, 15: 79.

⁴⁰ "Report of Lieut. Godfrey Weitzel," 7 August 1862, *ibid.*, 15: 51–53; Butler, "General Orders No. 57," *ibid.*, 41–42.

⁴¹ Weitzel to Davis, 8 August 1862, *ibid.*, 15: 545–6; Davis to Col. Halbert E. Paine, 16 August 1862, *ibid.*, 552. Davis was General Butler's acting assistant adjutant general, and Paine was in charge of the troops at Baton Rouge.

⁴² Holbrook, *Narrative*, 61; Grimsley, report, 7 August 1862, *Official Records*, series 1, 15: 72–75.

⁴³ Unsigned manuscript report of Volney Fullam, 8 August 1862, Volney Fullam Papers, VHS; "Report of Lieut. Col. Volney S. Fullam," 8 August 1862, *Official Records*, series 1, 15: 69. In his account of the battle written decades later, Fullam explained that, after he had warned the Fourth Massachusetts Battery that they were endangering friendly troops—being ordered to do so by Colonel Roberts—he attempted to rejoin the Seventh at its position on the left. Finding that the regiment had moved back to its camp, he attempted to rejoin them there, but kept running into enemy fire. His horse was shot, and he finally reached the regiment on foot. Fulham, *Fulham Genealogy*, 96.

⁴⁴ Fullam, *Fulham Genealogy*, 100–101. Fullam's dispute with the regimental surgeons spilled onto the pages of the *Rutland Daily Herald*, which gave much attention to the plight of the Seventh. See Fullam's letter in the *Herald* of 23 September 1862 and Dr. Blanchard's response, 24 November.

⁴⁵ William C. Holbrook to Father, 14 August 1862, Holbrook Papers; Fulham, *Fulham Genealogy*, 102.

⁴⁶ William C. Holbrook to Father, 17 August 1862, Holbrook Papers; Fullam to Frederick Holbrook, 18 August 1862, Volney Fullam Papers.

⁴⁷ Fulham, *Fulham Genealogy*, 98–100, 102–103; Special Orders No. 314, 26 August 1862 (manuscript copy in Fullam Papers).

⁴⁸ Holbrook, *Narrative*, 61–62; Butler to Gen. L. Thomas, 14 September 1862, in Butler, *Private and Official Correspondence*, 2: 293.

⁴⁹ "General Orders No. 62-1/2," 25 August 1862, *Official Records*, series I, 15: 42–46. Most of those who referred to the General Orders dropped the "1/2."

⁵⁰ Rollin M. Green to friend, 2 September 1862, Rollin M. Green Papers; John Q. Dickinson to Dugald Stewart, 1 September 1862, Stewart Family Papers.

⁵¹ Fullam letter, *Rutland Daily Herald*, 26 September 1862, 2–3; Vermont, *Joint Resolution Relating to Charges of Misconduct of the Seventh Vermont Regiment, Acts and Resolves* (1862); Frederick Holbrook to E. M. Stanton, 13 October 1862, in *Official Records*, series I, 15: 47; Frederick Holbrook to Butler, 12 September 1862, in Butler, *Private and Official Correspondence*, 2: 295.

⁵² Halleck to Butler, 3 October 1862, *Official Records*, series I, 15: 47; William C. Holbrook to Father, 5 November 1862, Holbrook Papers.

⁵³ William C. Holbrook to Father, 24 September 1862, Holbrook Papers.

⁵⁴ Phelps to Davis, 30 July and 31 July 1862, *Official Records*, series I, 15: 534–535; see also Butler's interpretation of federal policy on page 536. Butler had written to his wife on July 25 that "The Government have sustained Phelps about the Negroes," but it is unclear whether he was referring to the recruitment policy; the *Official Records* do not provide an answer from the government. Butler, *Private and Official Correspondence*, 2: 109.

⁵⁵ Butler to Phelps, 5 August 1862, *Official Records*, series I, 15: 542; Phelps memorandum, 2 September 1862, *ibid.*, 47; on Butler's enlisting of black troops see his letter of 14 August to Stanton, *ibid.*, 548–549.

⁵⁶ Board of Inquiry, "Proceedings," 7–17. Historians have confused the sequence of events to the detriment of the Seventh Vermont. The confusion may have begun with Butler's ambiguous statement in General Orders 62-1/2 that the Seventh "had already fired into the same regiment they had failed to support." Winters, *Civil War in Louisiana*, 117, asserts that the Vermonters fled after firing into the Indianans, were stopped and "severely reprimanded" by General Williams, and then ordered forward to support the Indiana regiment. The only reprimand acknowledged by Holbrook and the other Vermonters came before the friendly fire—for not firing in the first place. Webb Garrison, in *Friendly Fire in the Civil War: More than 100 True Stories of Comrade Killing Comrade* (Nashville, Tenn.: Rutledge Hill Press, 1999), 85–86, writes that General Williams gave his infamous order to the Vermonters to fire because he was "infuriated" by their "performance," specifically that "40% of the men . . . ran from the field" (in Garrison's words). None of the contemporary accounts and reports makes such a statement. Garrison also repeats the accusation that the Vermonters failed to obey an order from Williams to aid the Indianans, a charge that the Board of Inquiry refuted.

⁵⁷ Board of Inquiry, "Proceedings," 19–22.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 22–25.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 26–28.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 31–38.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 49.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 43–46; see Dudley's full report in *Official Records*, series I, 15: 58–61.

⁶³ Board of Inquiry, "Proceedings," 46–48.

⁶⁴ William C. Holbrook to Father, 5 November 1862, Holbrook Papers.

⁶⁵ Board of Inquiry, "Proceedings," 47–53.

⁶⁶ Message of Butler accompanying the "Proceedings," 6 November 1862; testimony of Lieutenant Austin Woodman, *ibid.*, 41.

⁶⁷ William C. Holbrook to Frank Holbrook, 21 November 1862, Holbrook Papers.

⁶⁸ William C. Holbrook to Phelps, 18 April 1863, John W. Phelps Papers, Special Collections, Bailey/Howe Library, University of Vermont.

⁶⁹ See Trefousse, *Ben Butler*, 130–134, 166–173.

⁷⁰ Holbrook, *Narrative*, 100–101; *Proceedings of the Reunion Society of Vermont Officers, 1864–1884* (Burlington, Vt.: Free Press Association, 1885), 422.

⁷¹ Holbrook, *Narrative*, 82–88.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 97.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 89.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 108–109.

⁷⁵ "Report of Col. H. W. Allen," 18 August 1862, *Official Records*, series I, 15: 100.

⁷⁶ Garrison, *Friendly Fire in the Civil War*, mentions charges of misconduct in only a handful of friendly-fire incidents.

⁷⁷ Holbrook, *Narrative*, 103–108.

⁷⁸ Butler issued an order praising Williams shortly after the battle (General Orders 56, 7 August

1862, *Official Records*, series I, 15: 41), and quietly dismissed the charges and countercharges between Williams and several of his subordinate officers, according to Norman C. Delaney, "General Thomas Williams," *Civil War Times Illustrated* 14: 4 (July 1975), 47.

⁷⁹ In his 1910 account of the battle, Fullam provided a few details of the regiment's activities after the friendly-fire incident, which suggest that the regiment stood in formation near its camp and anchored the right wing when it was ordered to fall back. Fulham, *Fulham Genealogy*, 97.

⁸⁰ The loosening grip of the Union on the Mississippi was part of a "brightening overall picture" for the Confederacy in the summer of 1862, as Shelby Foote put it (*The Civil War* 1: 582); see Hearn, *When the Devil Came Down to Dixie*, 213–224, for an insightful account of Butler's removal from command.

⁸¹ Samuel B. Hand notes the influence of postwar military fraternal organizations in *The Star That Set: The Vermont Republican Party, 1854–1974* (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2002), 38–39. Prominent examples of Vermont officers who successfully built upon their military careers are General William Wells, of the Wells-Richardson drug company and later Collector of Customs for the District of Vermont, and Lieutenant Colonel Roswell Farnham, attorney for the Vermont Copper Company and governor of Vermont from 1880 to 1882.



Caring for the Poor: Thetford and the Baker Family, 1792–1817

What is perhaps surprising is the extent to which the people of Thetford rallied around to support their own poor. The citizens of Thetford cared for Elizabeth Baker from 1792 until her death in 1812, and for John Baker until his disappearance in 1817, while the four children bound out were placed in some of the leading families of the area.

By MARY L. EYSENBACH

Vermont in its years of independence adopted the practice of colonial New England and made public assistance the responsibility of the towns, continuing that practice into the twentieth century. How one town shouldered that responsibility in Vermont's early years can be seen in Thetford town records concerning the Baker family, which was under the care of the selectmen for twenty-five years, from 1792 until 1817. These old town records were entrusted by Thetford town clerks to the care of the Thetford Historical Society, thus preserving them for researchers.¹

The 1787 Vermont poor law ("An Act Providing for and Ordering Transient, Idle, Impotent, and Poor Persons, March 9, 1787") provided

That when and so often as it shall happen that any person or persons shall be naturally wanting of understanding so as to be unable to provide for themselves, or by the providence of God, by age, sickness,

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Vermont History 72 (Winter/Spring 2004): 55–62.

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or otherwise become poor and impotent, or unable to provide for themselves, and have no Estate wherewith they may be supported, they and every of them, shall be provided for ...²

The law made close relatives (father, mother, grandparent, child, or grandchild) responsible for support, if they were able. But

if such Idiot, distracted, poor and impotent persons, have not estate (the income of which being improved or disposed of as aforesaid) sufficient for their support, and no relations appear to provide for them, or stand in so near a degree that they may be compelled thereto, in every such case the selectmen or overseer of the poor in the town where such person is by Law an inhabitant, be, and they are hereby empowered, to take effectual care and make necessary provision for the relief, support, and safety of such person at the charge of the town, or place where he or she of right belongs, or if they belong to no town or place, in this or the other American States, then, at the cost of this State.³

After the 1797 revision of the statute, selectmen were also to provide medical care as they “shall judge necessary.”⁴

Poor children “exposed to want and distress”⁵ could be bound out as apprentices or servants, a male child to age twenty-one years, a female to age eighteen years.⁶ In the 1797 revision, overseers were directed to ensure the indentures were “equitable and for the benefit of the person so bound out” and to “endeavor to redress wrongs.”⁷ Males were to be taught to read and write, females to read.

Taken together these provisions placed a substantial burden on a town. In the decade after 1810 care of the poor accounted for over half of Thetford's town budget.⁸ It is not surprising that Vermont towns, especially those along the Connecticut River that had a large influx of newcomers after the American Revolution, “warned out” indigents from elsewhere, requiring them to move on, because, until 1787, legal residency was established by one year's stay in a town; the 1787 poor law introduced a property qualification of £200.⁹ What is perhaps surprising is the extent to which the people of Thetford rallied around to support their own poor. Thetford experienced more than a five-fold increase of families from 1771 to 1791, about a doubling every decade.¹⁰ Although many families were from towns of eastern Connecticut (chiefly Hebron and Lebanon, but also Mansfield, Pomfret, Stonington, and others), most were not long established in Thetford and had not grown up together there. The citizens of Thetford cared for Elizabeth Baker from 1792 until her death in 1812, and for John Baker until his disappearance in 1817, while the four children bound out were placed in some of the leading families of the area.

After four years in the Continental Army, including the winter at Valley Forge, John Baker moved from Mansfield, Connecticut, to Thetford, Vermont, where in August 1781 he purchased fifty acres of land for £20.¹¹ He married Elizabeth Rich of Strafford, Vermont, in July 1782,¹² and by 1792 had a family of six children ranging in age from eleven to a newborn.¹³ But John and Elizabeth Baker did not prosper. The grand lists (tax rolls) of 1784 and 1785 show John as one of the smaller taxpayers in town, and he does not appear on grand lists of 1788 or thereafter.¹⁴ Sometime in that first decade in Vermont John Baker became mentally ill and could not care for his family. The Thetford selectmen took the action required of them by Vermont's poor law:

2 June 1792 Whereas John Baker an Inhabitant of this Town has become Insane in mind and altogether unfit to trade and do business necessary for the support of himself and family and has by his indolent mismanagement become reduced to a state of necessity and want, therefore we the subscribers by virtue of authority vested in us and according to a certain statute law of this state have for the safety of this town and good of the family of the said John taken into our care all the Estate both personal & real which we know of belonging to the said John to the intent that the same together with the Earnings of the said John & wife may be the better applied as the Law in that case provides, for their support therefore no bargain or contract of any kind made with the said John after this date by any person whatever will be considered valued and good in Law for the time being but such as is allowed and approved by Mr. William Child of this Town who has charge of the same and all rights to superintend therein. By order of Israel Smith, Jonathan Nichols, Selectmen. Thetford, 2nd June 1792¹⁵

Less than a week after the selectmen's order, on June 8, 1792, "John and Elizabeth Baker, persons under the care of the selectmen of Thetford," sold their land for £40; they acknowledged the sale as "their own voluntary act and deed," June 10, 1792.¹⁶ Although this was a forced sale, the price appears to have been fair, because when the land was resold a year later the price was the same.

When Thetford declared John Baker insane in 1792 the town made itself responsible for the welfare of his children. As the law provided, the younger Baker children were soon bound out as servants to other families. In November 1792, the youngest boy, Simon, "about four years of age," went to William Judd of Strafford. In March 1793, Anne, "two years old last May," was indentured to William Moor, Jr. The same day Abigail, "about ten months old," was indentured to serve John Way, with the added notation "when arrived to the age and ability of service." Five years later Zechariah, then twelve years old, was indentured to Captain William Heaton.¹⁷

Each of these young children, even Abigail at ten months, was indentured to serve and dwell with his or her master until each came of age, the girls at eighteen, the boys at twenty-one. Similar wording is found in all the indentures. For example:

19 March 1793 This Indenture is made this Nineteenth Day of March In the Year of our Lord Seventeen Hundred Ninety three—Witnesseth that James White, Josiah Hubbard & William Sackett Select Men & Overseers of the Poor In the Town of Thetford In the County of Orange & State of VERMONT—Have put and place & by these presents do put & place Abigail Baker A Poor Girl who hath become a Town Charge to said Town—A Girl Servant to John Way of said Thetford. With him to serve and dwell from the Day of this Date of these presents until the said Abigail shall Accomplish and Arrive to the full Age of Eighteen Years: According to the Statute for such cases made & provided—During all which term the said Abigail her said Master shall Serve (when Arrived to the Age & Ability of Service) in all Lawfull Business. According to her Power Witt & Ability and shall Honestly Orderly & Obediently In all things demean herself and Behave towards her said Master Durth said Term—And the Said John Way In Consideration of the Sum of Ten pounds Nineteen Shillings being to his full Satisfaction and also the Services of said Girl—For himself his Executors and Administrators Doth Covenant and Grant to and with the said Selectmen & Overseers of the Poor and Every of them by these presents and their and Every of their Successors for the time being. That he the said Way shall and will Cause to be Instructed in the Business & Art of Housewifery the said Abigail and In the Art of reading and Writing &c Suitable for a Housewife And during all said term find provide & Allow the said Abigail Sufficient Meat Drink Lodging & Apparel and all other things Necessary & Fitt for her Comfortable Subsistence and also shall & will provide for the said Abigail Baker in such manner so that she shall not in any wise become Cheargable to the Town of Thetford but from the same and Each Inhabitant thereof save harmless for and During said Term. And at the End of the Term the said Way Engages to furnish the said Abigail with two New suits of Cloths compleat one suitable for Holy Days the other suitable for Labour In—In Witness whereof the Parties have Interchangeable placed their hands & Seal the Day & Year above Mentioned. The girl now about Ten Months Old.

/s/ John Way, James White, Josiah Hubbard, Wm Sackett

In presence of /s/ Israel Smith, Oramel Hinckley¹⁸

Such indentures sound harsh to modern ears, but the selectmen expected of the indentured children only what parents then expected of their own children. Vermont law required only reading for girls and reading and writing for boys. Thetford demanded of masters more than what Vermont law mandated: the girls were to be taught reading, writing, and “housewifery,” and the boys reading, writing, husbandry, and “cyphering suitable for a farmer.”

.....

The families who took in these four children were all substantial members of their communities and they received minimal compensation for raising the young children. Captain William Heaton, who took twelve-year-old Zechariah Baker, received only the services of the boy and no other consideration. Heaton was a former Thetford selectman and town leader. He was by far the town's largest taxpayer according to the grand lists. William Judd, who took four-year-old Simon, was an early settler of Strafford, financially middling according to the Strafford grand lists, and a fellow townsman of Elizabeth Rich's parents, Jonathan and Abigail Rich. He had several children of Simon's age. The Judds received a cow in compensation for raising Simon. William Moor, Jr., received £4.12s. when he took in two-year-old Anne Baker. Moor was in the top third of Thetford taxpayers on the 1791 grand list, and his father was also a substantial taxpayer there. John and Nellie Way, who took the infant, Abigail, received the largest compensation, £10.19s. The Ways were newcomers to Thetford, but already members of the church, and well established in Vermont. John was in Newbury as early as 1764 and they married in Haverhill, NH, in 1771. The Ways resided in Peacham before moving to Thetford, where they were modest land-owners, and they moved to Barnet in the late 1790s.

The social and economic position of the families suggests that these indentures functioned as a form of guardianship or fostering for the poor children, rather than as a means to get cheap servants. In the case of Abigail Baker in the Way family, the arrangement apparently was satisfactory: She named her first-born son John Baker Way McIndoe, John being the name of both of his grandfathers as well as Abigail's former master.¹⁹ What became of the other indentured children has not been discovered, nor has any information been found about the two oldest children, Lovinia and Samuel. Elizabeth Baker's parents in Strafford or her brothers and sisters in Thetford and Strafford may have taken them in.

The parents, John and Elizabeth Baker, remained a charge on the town of Thetford until their deaths. Bills survive from 1802 and for the next fifteen years for town expenses on behalf of the Bakers.²⁰ The town probably paid bills in the earlier years for which no records exist. There is no evidence that the children were ever required to contribute to the support of their parents, although the 1787 and 1797 poor laws provided for such support. There is also no evidence that Elizabeth Baker's elderly parents, Jonathan and Abigail Rich, were called on for support.

The surviving records cover both general living expenses and medical care. Apparently the Bakers sometimes were boarded and sometimes

lived on their own, for the records contain bills for supplies as well as bills for board. For example:

James Bennett received \$30.62 for boarding Elizabeth for a year from March 1803 to March 1804.

Jacob Newcomb in November 1811 billed the town three dollars "to boarding and Nursing John Baker & family 9 days including Services I did for them while at his house moving him & her and carrying him down to Doc't Allen's," and "\$1 to washing 4 weeks."

Joseph Reed billed the town for codfish, gin, molasses, sugar, rum, one hay rake, flannel, awl and shaft, and tobacco, covering April 1807 to March 1810.

James White billed for a variety of items for March 1809 to June 1812, including: a bushel of corn, 62¢; a quart of salt at 34¢; a bushel of potatoes at 50¢; a pair of shoes at \$2; and a pair of stockings at \$1; plus cloth and sewing services for a coat and pantaloons, services for washing, for nursing Mrs. Baker, and finally for a burying cloth. White's bill came to \$28.96.

There were also bills for washing and baking at 25¢ per day; for making a shirt, 34¢; and "a pair of trowsers," 17¢; for making a frock for Mrs. Baker, 17¢; for thread, soap, and mending, 25¢; and for "Large Stout Thick Shoes," \$2.80. The town also paid for keeping Mr. Baker's cow from 1807 to 1809.

Sometime about 1802 Elizabeth Baker became ill, and the records show increasing medical bills paid by the town. Bills for medicines and visits by Dr. Theodore Hamilton cover thirty-two visits from 1802 to 1808; the total was \$13.63, the usual charge 83 cents to one dollar per house call. Bills of Dr. Joram Allen cover forty-five instances of "visit, medicine, advice" between January 1808 and August 1810 costing the town \$21.45. Medicines included "tinct. digitalis," "—— Peru," "camphorated tinct," "tinct Aloes Comp Gin Ammoniar," "cathartic & Ipir," and "tinct Sand' Canadensis." Beginning in December 1810 the phrases "gin opia" and "tinct opia" appear with regularity. Almost weekly visits from June 1809 to June 1812 cost the town \$29.50, the medicine now described as "tinct opia" or "gum opia." The last payments Thetford citizens made for Elizabeth Baker were in June 1812, "a Coffin for Mrs. Baker \$2.00" and "grave for Mrs. Baker \$1.00."

From November 1811 until 1817 regular bills for room and board were paid, with weekly fees, \$2 per week from November 1811 to June 1812, reduced to \$1 per week after the death of Elizabeth. Among the people being paid were John's brother-in-law, Richard Wallace. From 1812 until mid-1815 John Baker boarded with Aaron Hosmer, and then with Charles Chamberlin. Included in the bills were itemized lists of

clothing and services (a pair of shoes, \$2.00; 6 yards woollen cloth, \$7.50; making one pair of trousers, 50¢; making a coat, \$1.25; a pair of stockings, \$1.00; a pair of leggings, 33¢; etc.). Hosmer's bills were expressed in shillings and pence and then converted to dollars, indicating that although the United States adopted the dollar in 1791 he, and undoubtedly many others, still thought in the old currency. The last invoice found in the file is dated March 14, 1817, when Chamberlin billed for "boarding clothing & lodging John Baker one of the Town's poor a year ending 20th March 1817 \$65," and for "nursing him in sickness," an additional dollar.

For twenty-five years, in an era with no state or federal welfare or veterans' services, the townspeople of Thetford provided services to John Baker and his family, probably with more personal care than a modern bureaucracy would show. The last record of John Baker is this notice which appeared in three successive issues of *Spooner's Vermont Journal*:

Went away from the subscriber, on Monday the First Day of September ult., JOHN BAKER, a pauper of the town of Thetford, Orange County, Vt. Said Baker is about sixty years old, middling sized, light sandy complexion and hair, and commonly wears a long beard; is frequently delirious, and talks to himself. He had on when he went away a linen tow frock and pantaloons. Whoever will give notice to the subscriber where said Baker can be found will exercise an act of humanity, and shall be handsomely rewarded.

CHARLES CHAMBERLAIN
THETFORD, OCT. 8, 1817²¹

NOTES

¹The author is grateful to Charles Latham, Jr., president of the Thetford Historical Society, for helping locate the many documents in their care, and to the former town clerk of Thetford, Roberta Howard, for help in using the town's vital and land records.

²"An Act Providing for and Ordering Transient, Idle, Impotent, and Poor Persons, March 9, 1787," in John A. Williams, ed., *Laws of Vermont*, in *State Papers of Vermont* (Montpelier, Vt.: Secretary of State, 1966) 14: 290-291.

³*Ibid.*, 292.

⁴"An Act defining what shall be deemed and adjudged a legal settlement; and for the support of the poor, for designating the duties and powers of the overseers of the poor; and for the punishment of idle and disorderly persons," in *Laws of the State of Vermont, Revised and Passed by the Legislature in the year of Our Lord One Thousand Seven hundred and Ninety Seven* (Rutland, 1798), 263.

⁵"An Act Providing for and Ordering Transient, Idle, Impotent and Poor Persons," Williams, ed., *Laws of Vermont*, in *State Papers of Vermont* 14: 295.

⁶These age limits were based on the 1777 Constitution of Vermont, "Chapter 1, Declaration of the Rights of Inhabitants of the State of Vermont," which provided that no male should be held by law to serve any person, as servant, slave, or apprentice, without his consent, after he reached twenty-one years of age, and no female after she reached eighteen. For the Constitution see website: <http://vermont-archives.org/govinfo/constitu/con77.htm>

⁷"An Act defining what shall be deemed and adjudged a legal settlement; and for the support of the poor, for designating the duties and powers of the overseers of the poor; and for the punishment of idle and disorderly persons," in *Laws of the State of Vermont 1797*, 275-276.

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⁸ Charles Latham, Jr., *A Short History of Thetford, Vermont, 1761–1870* (Thetford, Vt.: Thetford Historical Society, 1972), 25.

⁹ Josiah Henry Benton, *Warning Out in New England 1656–1817* (Boston, 1911; reprint, Bowie, Md.: Heritage Books, Inc., 1992), 109, 111, and “An Act Providing for and Ordering Transient, Idle, Impotent and Poor Persons,” Williams, ed., *Laws of Vermont*, in *State Papers of Vermont* 14: 295.

¹⁰ Latham, *A Short History of Thetford*, 22–23.

¹¹ *Rolls and Lists of Connecticut Men in the Revolution, 1775–1783* (Hartford: Connecticut Historical Society, 1901) 2: 54, 184, and *Record of Service of Connecticut Men in the I. War of the Revolution, II. War of 1812, III. Mexican War* (Hartford, 1889; reprint Baltimore, Md.: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1997) 149, 155; both reproduced in *Military Records: Connecticut Officers and Soldiers, 1700s–1800s*, Family Tree Maker CD #120, and National Archives, pay and muster records of John Baker of Mansfield, CT; *Town Meeting Records–Deeds*, 1–3: 112, Town Clerk’s Office, Thetford.

¹² *Records of the Church of Christ, Thetford, 1773–1832*, typescript, Thetford Historical Society.

¹³ *Births, Marriages, Deaths*, 1: 47, Town Clerk’s Office, Thetford.

¹⁴ File M34: “Thetford Grand Lists,” Box 1, “1781–1823,” Thetford Historical Society.

¹⁵ File M31: “Thetford Town Papers,” Box 9, “Care of the Poor,” Thetford Historical Society.

¹⁶ Deed recorded 3 January 1802, Thetford *Land Records*, 7: 122–123. Resale, 14 August 1793, was recorded earlier, *Land Records*, 5:102.

¹⁷ File M31: “Thetford Town Papers,” Box 9, “Care of the Poor,” Thetford Historical Society.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Frederick P. Wells, *History of Newbury, Vermont, from the Discovery of the Coös Country to the Present Time* (St. Johnsbury, Vt.: The Caledonian Company, 1902), 628.

²⁰ File M31 “Thetford Town Papers,” Box 9, “Care of the Poor,” Thetford Historical Society. All the information on bills and expenses in the following paragraphs was found in these papers.

²¹ *Spooner’s Vermont Journal*, 20 and 27 October, and 3 November, 1817, microfilm, Vermont State Library.



Three Vermonters

"This story, in which a very young boy meets a very great man, is based on a true incident." Based on a true incident? That, of course, is a key question.

By MICHAEL N. STANTON

In the late 1830s one Jonathan Emery decided to leave his home in London, England, and settle in the New World. It is impossible to guess his motives for this enormous shift, but in any event Emery brought his family first to Maine, then to a town in Vermont called Eden. He could scarcely have imagined that his decision would result in the death of his eldest son, George, in a Confederate prison camp during the Civil War, still less that George's young son Martin would have an encounter with President Abraham Lincoln while George was imprisoned at Andersonville. No one could have supposed that more than eighty years later, another Vermonter, Catherine Cate Coblenz, would set these events down in a not-quite forgotten book for children.

THE FIRST OF THE THREE VERMONTERS

Jonathan Emery and his wife Sarah had nine children, of whom the first three were born in England. The oldest of these, George, was born there on September 26, 1828, and so would have been about ten years old when his family came to Vermont.¹

George in turn married Mary Belle Carter in Maine in late 1849, and they lost little time in starting a family. Unlike many of his fellow soldiers, George Emery was no raw youth when the Civil War broke out in 1861. He was in fact thirty-two years old and the father of five children

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Vermont History 72 (Winter/Spring 2004): 63-72.

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(so far), of whom the fourth, Martin, had been born on November 14, 1858. George seems to have consciously chosen to fight for his adopted country by enlisting in the Eleventh Regiment of Vermont Volunteers (later designated the First Regiment of Heavy Artillery) when it began forming in the summer of 1862. He enlisted from Irasburg on August 6 of that year and along with many others from the area (including the town of Eden, Lowell, Barton, and Albany) was assigned to Company F. The entire regiment was mustered into federal service on September 1, 1862. It was the largest of Vermont's seventeen regiments, with a nominal strength of 2,320 men divided into thirteen companies and a staff unit; its commander during most of the war was Col. (later Brevet Brigadier General) James Warner of Middlebury.

At first the nature of the Eleventh's service seemed idyllic, in wartime terms anyway. It was stationed in the northern defenses of Washington, D.C., building and garrisoning posts such as Fort Slocum, Fort Totten, and Fort Stevens. Garrison duty was bland, and men like George Emery could have their families nearby, as Emery in fact did. As the regimental historian (the very same James Warner) wrote in the encyclopedic *Revised Roster of Vermont Volunteers*, "No more pleasant or cheerful experiences were ever the lot of soldiers in actual war than those enjoyed by this regiment during the whole of the year 1863 and the first three months of 1864."² According to pay records, George Emery had "extra duty" as a carpenter at Fort Slocum from December 1862 on into the new year.

With the sharp irony of wartime, this placid life soon ceased. After the Battle of the Wilderness in May 1864, General U. S. Grant (who had come east to take command in March) needed replacement line troops and the Eleventh was called to actual combat duty. It fought at Spotsylvania, where Col. Warner was wounded in the neck, at Cold Harbor, and at Petersburg. That Grant sent these comfortably situated troops into extremely uncomfortable battle is in a way a testament to his well-known ruthless resolve. That they suffered the fate they did is a testament to Robert E. Lee's equally notable tenacious resolve.

As a kind of sidelight to Grant's efforts to dislodge Lee from Petersburg, troops of the Eleventh Vermont, with others, were sent on June 23, 1864, to attack the Weldon Railroad, an important Confederate supply route. The attack failed and over 400 Vermonters were taken prisoner. It was, Howard Coffin says, "one of the saddest of all days for Vermont in the Civil War."³ Among the 400 were George Emery and forty-eight others from Company F alone; most were sent to Andersonville, and most died there. Of the forty-eight men captured from Company F, thirty-five never returned north, including George Emery.



George Emery, Union soldier. Courtesy of Michael Stanton.

THE SECOND VERMONTER AND THE MAN FROM ILLINOIS

Back in the capital city of the Union, five-year old Martin Emery was doing his best to help his fatherless family. According to the story as preserved in Emery family tradition, and as related by Catherine Cate Coblentz in *Martin and Abraham Lincoln* (1947),⁴ Martin often accompanied a black man named Snowden from the Emery home in Alexandria

into Washington, where Snowden sold fresh produce from his wagon. Martin wore a smart little uniform in emulation of his father and was very proud of his dad as both a soldier and as a cobbler, which George Emery had been in civilian life.

On a certain day in the heat of a Washington summer, Snowden saw that little Martin was very tired. He left the boy to rest in a parklike area while he completed his rounds. As the boy ate his lunch sitting on the steps of a large building he fell into sober reflections on how long his father would be a prisoner of war and how his mother could feed and clothe the family. A shadow fell across his somber countenance—the shadow of a tall lanky man who asked why the boy was so sad. It was Abraham Lincoln, coming down the steps of the Capitol building, and Martin explained about his family's plight in his father's absence. Lincoln promised to speak to someone and, in Catherine Coblentz's account, said, "I'm pretty sure there will be food from the army stores every week for your mother." Little could be done about George Emery's evil situation at this moment, but his family could be helped.

Then Martin noticed that Lincoln himself looked rather worn and uncomfortable. Something was wrong with his shoe, Lincoln explained, and it was causing him considerable pain. Martin, who had been well schooled at his father's bench, offered to repair Lincoln's shoe and with a pair of rocks managed to flatten a protruding nail. Thus the small boy and the great man provided one another comfort and help, each according to his abilities.

George Emery's plight was indeed bad. If the Confederates could not adequately feed, or clothe, or arm their own soldiers, and they could not, they certainly could not adequately feed or house enemy prisoners—especially since the number of those prisoners had been vastly swollen by the suspension of prisoner exchanges. Thus, George Emery died at Andersonville on September 15, 1864. He was thirty-five years old and left a wife and six children.

But the gods of war—ironists all—had not finished their sport with George Emery. Conditions at Andersonville were dreadful and dozens of men like Emery died daily of disease, privation, and ill treatment. It is unsurprising in these circumstances that good record keeping was a matter of almost no consequence. Although he had died in September, word did not get through, and George Emery was listed as a deserter in his unit's records for November and December.

One of the best collateral results of the compilation of the *Revised Roster of Vermont Volunteers* was the correction of such errors. The compilers canvassed Army records, North and South, over and over to ascertain the facts. As Theodore S. Peck, who was in charge of this



Abraham Lincoln and Martin Emery. Illustration by Trientja, from Catherine Cate Coblentz, Martin and Abraham Lincoln (1947). Courtesy of Michael Stanton.

work, wrote: "I find that about three hundred Vermonters who were recorded as deserters in the roster of 1864-65-66 died in rebel prisons, or on the battle field in the hands of the enemy . . . *These corrections of the record of so many of our gallant men are alone worth all the work and expense of preparing this Roster*" (Peck's emphasis).⁵

Peck was writing at the completion of the *Roster*, in 1892, but long before that, George Emery's status had to be dealt with. Although he had died in September 1864, he was carried on the rolls in November and December as a "deserter," one who had in fact sworn allegiance to the Confederacy in October 1864. Such, as Peck noted, was the confusion surrounding the status of Emery and several hundred others.

When Martin's mother Mary applied for a widow's pension for herself and her six children in 1868 her petition was denied on the basis of the erroneous records of George Emery's behavior. The rejection is dated November 3, 1869, some fourteen or fifteen months after the original application. Documents show that she applied again in 1872, this time armed with statements from Emery's fellow soldiers about his good record, and even from fellow prisoners about his death at Andersonville well before the desertion and treason allegedly took place.

In both rounds, Mary Emery had to furnish affidavits and other proof that (1) she was indeed the wife of George Emery (testimony from those present at the wedding back in 1849); (2) she was the mother of his children (testimony from relatives and neighbors who were present at the actual lyings-in); and (3) statements from still higher officials that those officials taking the testimony—justices of the peace and the like—were indeed competent to hear it. Finally, on March 21, 1873, the Adjutant General's Office in Washington issued a finding that in the case of George Emery "the charges of desertion & of having taken the oath of allegiance to the Southern Confederacy . . . while he was a prisoner of war are removed from this man's record."⁶

With the way now clear, further proceedings eventually awarded Mary Emery a pension, probably for about the amount originally applied for: \$8.00 per month plus \$2.00 per month for each child under sixteen years of age. In 1879 Mary Emery applied for arrearages on her pension according to a law passed that year (it is unknown whether these arrears were awarded) and in October 1910 a rather stark document entitled "PENSIONER DROPPED" noted that Mary's pension should cease because she had died the previous January.

Meanwhile, Martin Emery grew to manhood, married, raised a family, and told his children and grandchildren and eventually even his great-grandchildren about his encounter with the now all-but-sainted president. As a man of many interests he pursued many callings and

was at one time police chief of Plymouth, New Hampshire, according to his granddaughter, Ruth Jones, of Hillsboro. Emery died in Concord in the summer of 1944.

Martin Emery was twice married, and after the death of his second wife, Mrs. Jones says, at what would seem to many people an advanced age, Martin Emery became what she calls a "gentleman hobo." He would travel about from place to place, always well turned out and spruce in appearance, visiting friends and kinfolk. He mostly alternated between family in and around Eden, Vermont, and relatives in central New Hampshire. On one of these peregrinations, around 1934 or 1935, he hitched a ride with a woman and he told her his story of meeting Abraham Lincoln. The woman was Catherine Cate Coblentz, and a few years later she was able to retell his tale to a larger audience.⁷

THE THIRD VERMONT

Catherine Cate Coblentz was a writer with a strong Vermont background and strong ties to her native place, yet she is little known there. She was the author of ten children's books, of which one, *The Blue Cat of Castle Town*, won an honorable mention in the Newbery Awards for 1946. As the title indicates, that book, like *Martin and Abraham Lincoln*, had a Vermont background.

Catherine Cate was born in Hardwick in 1897, where her father was a stonemason and later a schoolteacher. Her love of books came early, for the family home was next door to the village library. Young Catherine spent considerable time there and when the village librarian eloped one fine day, she took over the library for the summer. She was then a ninth grader. About this time her father died and to help support the family she began writing for the village newspaper.

During World War I Catherine moved to Washington, D.C., where she worked for the Bureau of Standards and graduated from George Washington University. At the Bureau she met and then married a distinguished physicist, William Weber Coblentz (1873-1962), who later won the Rumford Prize for his work on the properties of light. They had two children but both died young, so Catherine's love of children expressed itself in books. It is a tribute to her writing and her love of young people that the children's reading room at the Cleveland Park branch of the D.C. Public Library is named for her.

Catherine and her husband traveled widely, and she "sometimes discovered stories lost in history, which it seemed to me that children would enjoy." *Martin and Abraham Lincoln* would be such a story. Its setting and background combine the two areas she was most familiar



Catherine Cate Coblentz, from the dust jacket for The Beggars' Penny (1943).

with, rural Vermont and the city of Washington, and it was certainly a story lost in history until she met old Martin Emery.

Even though Catherine Coblentz died in 1951 her stories have taken on a kind of independent life. She meant them not just for entertainment but also for enlightenment. She saw the value of history for children and others: As she wrote, "Becoming acquainted with the people and the problems of yesterday is, I believe, one way of knowing the people of today. Such knowledge and understanding should aid in solving the problems of tomorrow."⁸

Pious hope this may be, but some have shared it. In 1976 *Martin and Abraham Lincoln* became one segment in a 32-part series, "Stories of America," fifteen-minute color videotapes designed for grade-school children, produced by the Ohio State Department of Education and distributed by the Agency for Instructional Television. *Martin* fits into the sequence right between *The Underground Railroad* and *Clara Barton*. The tape itself seems unobtainable nowadays, but the blurb in the *Teacher's Guide* reads as follows: "This story, in which a very young boy meets a very great man, is based on a true incident. Abraham Lincoln finds a way to help the boy, whose father is in Andersonville Prison, and Martin, in his small way, helps the President."⁹

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FACT AND FICTION

"Based on a true incident"? That, of course, is a key question, and debate about the legend, including which Emery son met Lincoln, persists within the family.¹⁰ Still, there is no compelling reason to doubt Martin Emery's story or its value as lore, legend, and lesson, even though it has no independent verification. So far as I have been able to discover, Lincoln made no record of the meeting, none of the many Lincoln biographers mentions it, and it is not found among the endless stream of anecdotes about Lincoln. Nor have I been able to locate any papers of Catherine Coblentz's that would tell us whether she undertook research into the authenticity of the tale.

Martin Emery's story lives at the intersection of fact, folklore, and fiction. It certainly contains a nugget of truth, despite the accidents of transmission, embellishments, and mere passage of time that may deface any such story. According to Ruth Jones, Martin himself never celebrated Thanksgiving because he mistakenly believed that was the day in 1864 on which his father died. Martin would have been only five years old when he met Lincoln—a tad young, perhaps, for the encounter as told (could he have learned even rudiments of the cobbler's trade?); his nine-year-old brother Jonathan might be a more likely candidate, as some descendants have suggested. And this uncertainty becomes even cloudier when an imaginative writer deals with the material.

Indeed, there is some reason to suppose that Catherine Cate Coblentz exercised measurable poetic license to change a few of the details and circumstances of the story, perhaps to help children understand it more easily. For example, in the story Martin meets Lincoln as the president is coming down the steps of the U.S. Capitol Building. But, then as now, presidents almost never visited the Capitol except on important state occasions. Lincoln, whose presidency was as closely watched and as thoroughly documented as any before very recent times, seems to have visited the Capitol during the time Martin's dad was a prisoner (from June 23 to September 15, 1864) only on the 4th of July, and that clearly would have been a public, not a personal occasion.¹¹

Another candidate for the site of the meeting of the very young boy and the very great man would be in the vicinity of the Soldiers' Home, near Rock Creek Road, where Lincoln used a cottage on the grounds as a kind of summer White House or retreat—a prototype of Camp David. Putting the encounter there would solve another problem of accuracy that Coblentz seems to have created: in her story Snowden and Martin come into the city from Alexandria, where both the Emery house and the "nearby fort," as Coblentz calls it, are supposedly located.

But Alexandria is southwest of central Washington, whereas the forts and emplacements where the 11th Vermont Regiment was stationed (Forts Slocum, Stevens, Totten, and others) are all in the northeast or northwest quadrants of the District of Columbia, in effect forming an arc or chain guarding Washington from invasion or other threats from the Maryland side—and not very far from the Soldiers' Home. Company F specifically was at Fort Slocum for almost its entire time in the District. Just why Coblentz transferred the action in this way is unclear, unless it was simply to use the iconic image of the Capitol as an easily recognized symbolic landmark.

So where, and consequently when, and to what effect the man and the boy met may be problematical questions, but they do not damage the core of the story. By still another irony, in October 1864, just a month after George Emery's death, negotiations for prisoner exchanges between North and South reopened. From the viewpoint of the Emery family, this renewal must have seemed far too little and far too late.

NOTES

¹ Most of my sources are mentioned in later notes, but special thanks go to an old friend, Kenneth Gervais of Portland, Oregon. He is Martin Emery's great-grandson, and it was he who first told me about Martin's encounter with the president, and about Catherine Coblentz's book. It was pleasant not only to hear the family story, but also to renew a boyhood friendship. Added information on the Emery family comes from Emery Family Genealogy: <http://www.lanset.com/memry>

² James Warner, "Eleventh Regiment," in *Revised Roster of Vermont Volunteers . . . during the War of the Rebellion, 1861–66* (Montpelier, Vt.: Watchman Publishing, 1892; reprint Newport, Vt.: Civil War Enterprises, 1996), 409; hereafter cited as *Roster*. Unless otherwise noted, all the information on the regiment and its men comes from this book.

³ See Howard Coffin, *Full Duty: Vermonters in the Civil War* (Woodstock, Vt.: Countryman Press, 1995), 273–75. For a detailed account of the Weldon Railroad conflict, see Dr. David Cross, *A Melancholy Affair at the Weldon Railroad: The Vermont Brigade, June 23, 1864* (Shippensburg, Pa.: White Mane Publishing, 2003).

⁴ Catherine Cate Coblentz, *Martin and Abraham Lincoln based on a true incident*, pictures by Trientja (Chicago: Children's Press, 1947).

⁵ *Roster*, vi.

⁶ This information and that in the preceding and following paragraphs comes from documents copied and furnished by Debra Gervais, Esq., of Riverside, California. George Emery was her husband Michael's great-great-great-grandfather.

⁷ Conversation with Ruth Jones, 30 April 2002.

⁸ "Catherine Cate Coblentz," in Stanley Kunitz and Howard Haycraft, eds., *The Junior Book of Authors* (New York: H. W. Wilson, 1951), 73–74. Coblentz's interest in writing about history for children is indicated by some of her other titles: *The Falcon of Eric the Red* (1942), *The Bells of Leyden Sing* (1944), *Sequoia* (1946).

⁹ *Stories of America: Teacher's Guide* (n.p., n.d.) p. 25.

¹⁰ Private communication dated 9 August, 2002, from Natalie Whalen (a great-granddaughter of Martin): "There has been controversy [in the family] for years as to which of the brothers really met Abraham Lincoln, but there is no way to prove it now."

¹¹ See Earl Schenck Miers, ed., *Lincoln Day by Day: A Chronology 1809–1865* (Dayton, Ohio: Morningside House, 1991), *passim*. This chronology is detailed enough to document a number of encounters—quite trivial ones—Lincoln had with children during his presidency.

BOOK REVIEWS



The Vermont Encyclopedia

Edited by John J. Duffy, Samuel B. Hand, and Ralph H. Orth
(Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 2003,
pp. xx, 332, \$39.95).

Anyone with an interest in the state of Vermont and its past will welcome the *Vermont Encyclopedia*. There has never been a compact reference book about Vermont at once as comprehensive and accessible as this volume. To be sure, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries a number of important compendia were published, including the *Encyclopedia of Vermont Biography* (1912) and the sprawling *Vermont of Today, With Its Historic Background, Attractions and People* (1929). Though valuable, these sources tended to be idiosyncratic and partial to the endeavors of the state's white male elite. Many first-rate guidebooks about Vermont have been published, but they are understandably more interested in highlighting the special flavor of the Green Mountain state than in serving as authorities on its politics, history, and culture.

The *Vermont Encyclopedia* is framed by brief, yet rewarding, overviews of seven dimensions of the state: its geography, weather, and natural history; its population; its history, its government; its economy; efforts to protect the environment; and historic preservation. Samuel B. Hand's essay on Vermont's history is the best concise survey of the subject that I have read.

The heart of the encyclopedia consists of the more than a thousand entries, organized alphabetically, on a wide range of topics. Many are brief summaries, fewer than 200 words long. Every community in the

state is covered, as are most of the state's influential figures, including those who were born elsewhere and came to Vermont to live (like the writer and humorist William Hazlett Upson) and those born in the state but who gained fame after they left (like John Deere and Stephen Douglas). The entries even include prominent individuals, organizations, and events presently active in the state, such as the poet Ellen Bryant Voigt, the *Bennington Banner*, and the Mozart Festival. The editors—John J. Duffy, Samuel B. Hand, and Ralph H. Orth—ultimately had to select which subjects to cover from a larger set of contenders, and individual favorites of some readers are bound to be missing. (I wish, for instance, that Seth Storrs, who was arguably more influential in establishing Middlebury College than Gamaliel Painter, had not been omitted. Painter is justly included.) On the whole, however, the selections are fitting and appropriate.

The encyclopedia also features many longer entries. The large towns and cities are accorded in-depth coverage. So too are leading politicians like Justin Smith Morrill and Redfield Proctor, Sr. Dairy farming, the Republican Party, skiing, and the Northeast Kingdom are just a few examples of topics that are treated more fully.

The editors wrote many of the entries, but they wisely recruited a stable of over 140 contributors to bring their expertise to the project. One of the great strengths of this volume is the opportunity to read a summary of the larger work by an expert on a topic: Frederick Wiseman on the Abenaki, J. Kevin Graffagnino on Ira Allen, Nancy L. Gallagher on the Eugenics Survey of Vermont, and Deborah Clifford on Abby Maria Hemenway, to name a few.

The encyclopedia covers topics that were largely ignored by its predecessors. The imprint that Vermont women have left on the state is clear here. The story of African Americans in Vermont is given close attention. The cumulative effect of the entries on slavery in Vermont, the Ku Klux Klan, and the Irasburg Affair is to raise questions about the common perception of Vermont as a land without prejudice.

The editors' decision to take a wide view of what could be included gives the encyclopedia added sparkle. Here, for instance, one can learn about Samuel de Champlain and Champ, films of Vermont and Phish, back-to-the-landers and endangered species.

Maps, charts, and photographs enliven the text. The practice of capitalizing within a given entry subjects that are featured elsewhere in the volume makes the encyclopedia easier for the browser or the scholar to use. It would have been advantageous, however, if the longer entries had been broken up into paragraphs rather than permitted to run as long, uninterrupted blocks of text.

I have heard rumors about this project for a number of years now. The publication of the encyclopedia—"an historical dictionary and a current report," as Duffy calls it—is an important event in its own right. This volume—appropriately dedicated to the late T. D. Seymour Bassett, who did so much to promote understanding of his state—should be a fixture on the bookshelves of libraries, scholars, and all those curious about Vermont.

JAMES RALPH

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Republic of Shade: New England and the American Elm

By Thomas J. Campanella (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003, pp. 240, \$35.00).

There is no tree like the American elm. It towered over the pastures and riverbanks of New England, and it lined our streets, lofty, wide spreading, and supremely graceful. Thomas Campanella, a professor in the Department of City and Regional Planning at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, has given us the first book about this great tree. As he says, we loved it to death. *Republic of Shade* tells the elm's story from colonial times until the present. The loss of those trees, which made a green summer forest of streets, houses, and elms, was so heartbreaking that it would have been hard to read about it twenty years ago. But we've had a long time to get used to our grief, and it seems high time someone recalled and recorded the history of the elm tree.

The American elm is a tree of river valleys and wet soils, with the spreading crown often seen in that open habitat. It is also fast growing and adaptable. With wood that is hard to split and work, many elms were spared the ax and left standing by early settlers. Its beauty and open shade were appreciated by early botanists and farmers, and it was transplanted from woods and pastures to dooryards, streets, and commons. Many a house was flanked by sentinel elms, providing shade and shelter. The elm became the quintessential street tree of the Northeast.

One of several admirable aspects of this book is the way the author traces the various roles and meanings of the elm in the New England

landscape. Campanella tells how elms in colonial towns often became symbolic rallying places for the Revolution, like the famous Liberty Tree of Boston. Large elms became monuments of remembrance for great events, persons, and town histories. Early in the nineteenth century, citizens of New England towns joined together to beautify and improve their surroundings by planting elms along their streets and in parks and squares. This effort eventually made the leafy streets a living link between forest and city, joining nature and culture. Some saw in their lofty green arches the Gothic cathedrals of the New World. The author says that "As an icon of the pastoral landscape, a harbinger of domesticity, a civic totem, a relic of pre-European settlement, or an arboreal monument marking great events and persons, elms bore extraordinary cultural freight" (p. 138). The dominance of the elm began in New England, but it spread across the country, and over 25 million elms were growing in American towns and cities in 1937.

Stress, from having to share the streets with trolley lines, utility poles and wires, sewer lines, water mains, and impervious pavement, had weakened street trees by the turn of the twentieth century. The next chapter in the elm story is a tragedy that only a few saw coming, and none could stop. Campanella tells it well. It is a terrible demonstration of the fragility of a monoculture. Dutch elm disease arrived in northern Europe in 1918 from Asia, and soon wiped out the European and English elms. It was first seen in North America in 1931, spreading out from the port of New York (though it had been first noticed in Ohio). It is a fungus that blocks the vascular system of the elm, spread by bark beetles carrying spores, and also directly through intergrafted roots of elms growing next to each other. After the hurricane of 1938 knocked down thousands of elms from New Haven to northern Vermont, disease spread quickly through them, infecting those still standing. Though cutting and burning of infected elms slowed the spread, World War II stopped those efforts. After the war, DDT was sprayed extensively, with little good effect—and by the 1960s and 1970s, most of the elms were dead or dying. Many streets in Vermont towns still look barren and bare without the elms that once grew there, and in many farmyards you can imagine the shapes of trees that are gone.

In a short time we have lost the American chestnut and seen the decline of the beech, butternut, and Eastern hemlock in many areas, all from imported diseases and pests. Is there any hope for elms? Campanella's epilogue makes it seem so. It was a bad idea to line so many streets with only one species, but it would be wonderful if we could all look at some healthy elms again. Breeders have been working for decades to develop resistant elms, and have had significant success.

Campanella's epilogue is an informative survey of these projects, as well as of intensive efforts to save some remaining large elms.

I hope this is the first, but not the only good book about *Ulmus americana*. It is well illustrated in black and white, and contains many references, but I think there is room for more in the way of documentation of the age of elms in paintings, writings, and photographs. *Republic of Shade: New England and the American Elm* makes an important contribution to the history of local landscapes, and will be welcomed by many. It gives a context to some rich and sad memories, a valuable lesson, and something to look forward to.

SUSAN SAWYER

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New England Weather New England Climate

By Gregory A. Zielinski and Barry D. Keim (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 2003, pp. xiv, 276, \$29.95).

“**Y**es, one of the brightest gems in the New England weather is the dazzling uncertainty of it” (p. 3). Mark Twain's quotation is as fitting today as when it was first written and provides the perfect opening to the text by Zielinski and Keim, which updates and expands David Ludlum's classic book on New England weather.

The book is arranged in six sections, each of which explores a particular aspect of weather and/or climate across the region at time scales ranging from daily and seasonal to decadal, centennial, and longer. Part I introduces the region's weather and climate and its perception by New Englanders and visitors alike. Part II offers a closer examination of the various causal factors of changes in New England's weather and climate, again at a variety of scales from the annual to the millennial and beyond. Part III takes readers across the region by noting the underlying reasons for spatial variations across different time periods. In Part IV, the authors introduce distinctly unique New England seasons and their characteristics, which resonate more closely than the more traditional winter, spring, summer, and autumn. This is appropriately followed in Part V by the examination of specific types of meteorological and/or climatological events that have an impact on daily activity in New England. The text ends with a look at the implications of both past and present climate changes.

The introduction of the redefined seasons of ski (winter), mud (spring), beach and lake (summer), and foliage (autumn), with the potential for overlapping lengths and differing characteristics from one year to the next, is one of the unique features of the book. New Englanders will certainly identify with the subseasons of these new annual periods, including, for example, sugaring and pothole seasons at the end of the ski season. Likewise, the ubiquitous mud season that heralds New England's true spring from mid/late April until early June, is a more accurate portrayal than relying on astronomical designations alone.

Some of the chapters (e.g. chapter 11, "Year in Summary") are quite technical in content, but the authors explain many difficult concepts such as teleconnections (chapter 6), climate singularities (chapter 7) and the use of statistical analyses (chapter 11) in very accessible language. The summary remarks at the end of each of the twenty chapters are another strength of the book, serving to highlight the key points outlined. These build upon the liberal use of photographs (often taken by the authors themselves), explanatory tables, and diagrams, which complement the narrative very effectively. Examples of weather events and landscapes are drawn from around New England, to paint the picture of the complex way in which storms can affect the region.

The final two chapters are devoted to deciphering the various ways in which New England "climate has and will continue to change with time" (p. 253). The authors present results from the New England Regional Assessment Group, which found that since 1895 most New England states (except Maine) have experienced both a warming and an increase in precipitation. Variations in climate over the last few centuries were then gleaned from historical records such as diaries, journals, and newspaper accounts. As for predicting future climate changes in New England, the authors highlight the inadequacies of current General Circulation Models (GCMs) for capturing regional variations and weather events. The book ends with a retrospective that not only summarizes the narrative but also discusses life in New England in response to the vagaries of our climate.

Several details somewhat detract from the book. The first is that a few topics are heavily weighted toward examples from New Hampshire and Maine, which may have led to the omission of some causal factors for a given weather event. For example, chapter 12 on the Alpine Zone could have been enhanced by including the role of the region's topography in creating ideal conditions for flooding during the beach and lake (summer) season. Similarly, the influence of terrain in setting up preferred locations for tornado development (chapter 17) could have explained why parts of Massachusetts are particularly prone to being affected. Finally,

the tropical storm remnants on November 3, 1927, which led to the Great Flood of 1927, should be included in chapter 18 on the hurricanes that have influenced New England. The rains from this storm produced greater than 100-year flooding on many rivers across Vermont, which is why it still remains the flood of record.

Zielinski and Keim have done a remarkable job in portraying the many intricacies of the weather and climate that New Englanders have learned to love and live with over the centuries. Written in a very accessible style, the book extends and complements the richness of the historical accounts of David Ludlum's works by placing the region's atmospheric characteristics in the context of global processes. While everyone will gain valuable insights from the text, perhaps the greatest beneficiaries will be those with some fundamental understanding of the ways in which the atmosphere works.

LESLEY-ANN DUPIGNY-GIROUX

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This American River: Five Centuries of Writing about the Connecticut

*Edited by W. D. Wetherell (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of
New England, 2002, pp. 325, \$30.00)*

W. D. Wetherell's anthology about the Connecticut River was a bit of a pleasant surprise to me. Even those of us who read a great deal of local and regional fiction and nonfiction of many kinds may not have realized how often the Connecticut River appears in our reading, and how centrally it figures in our perception of the region of New England. As I read this collection, I gradually became even more surprised that the Connecticut River has not received more of the sort of attention Wetherell focuses on here. Indeed, Wetherell begins his collection with a hilariously understated illustration of just how inadequate our understanding of the Connecticut River is. Chapter 1, "From the Source to the Sea," opens with a handful of epigraphs selected from several popular works on the Connecticut River. Each simply states the length of the river: It is, according to these experts, precisely 335, or 350, or 410, or 407 miles long, which prompts Wetherell to ask, "just how long is the river, anyway?" (p. 1).

Running directly through the center of New England, the Connecticut River also runs just as truly through the figurative heart of New England. It has been the site of many of the defining events of New England history, from the founding of the Puritan commonwealths to the industrial age and into our own time. Wetherell has done a real service in compiling this entertaining and thought-provoking collection.

The collection is quite idiosyncratic, as Wetherell is quick to point out—a reflection of his own interests, consulting his own literary tastes. This “slapdash” method (to use Wetherell’s own word) may be a little confusing at time, but it also makes for interesting reading. The collection does, however, follow a coherent plan. It is organized primarily to reflect different human interactions with the landscape, in roughly chronological order. The framework is chapters on the uses of the river: as a battleground, a source of industrial power, a conduit for lumber from the far North, a fishery, and a recreational area. Interspersed among these more thematic chapters are more general collections of genre writing: early travel writing, tourist guidebooks, and poetry.

A wide variety of fine writers are featured here, including those whose works are no longer much read. Two of my own favorites are nineteenth-century classics: Francis Parkman’s fine account of the Deerfield Raid, and a selection of the keenly observant travel writing of Timothy Dwight. Many Vermont readers will recognize the elegant description of “Cutting Ice at McIndoe Falls,” by Scott E. Hastings, Jr. The selection of poetry includes some unknown and intriguing poets alongside Wallace Stevens and Sylvia Plath. The two poems by Stevens are especially fine examples of writing shaped by a strong sense of place.

Wetherell has also ranged far afield from the standard literary anthology, including a well-chosen selection of classic guidebook accounts, ranging from the Boston & Maine Railroad’s nineteenth-century guide, to the WPA’s 1930s auto tour of the historic lower Connecticut, and the Appalachian Mountain Club’s canoeing guide to the wilder upper Connecticut.

This eclecticism is a source of strength, but it sometimes leaves the reader with little sense of context. In the “River of War” chapter, for instance, we are confronted with a text written by Susanna Johnson, a colonist taken captive by opposing forces in the imperial wars of the eighteenth century; a text written by Colonel Robert Rogers, the leader of an infamous military expedition against the Abenaki village of St. Francis; and a text written by Francis Parkman, a distinguished nineteenth-century historian. Primary sources such as the accounts of Johnson and Rogers we may take for granted as speaking from their own time, from the midst of armed conflict, and we may judge their descriptions with that in mind. But what is the general reader to make of the assertion

with which Parkman ends his account of the Deerfield Raid: that English women taken captive by the Abenaki/Caughnawaga coalition were not "subjected to violence" only because of "superstition, aided perhaps by the influence of missionaries"? (p. 37). A little more intervention from the editor would provide the proper context for understanding and evaluating this very nineteenth-century view.

Finally, though, this is an effective anthology. It is a book for dipping into, for sampling—and a book that provides a great deal of enjoyable reading. Ultimately, perhaps the best compliment one can give a collection like this is that it makes us eager to get our hands on the complete version of some of the works excerpted here. That is precisely what I predict readers will want to do.

DONA BROWN

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Conquering the American Wilderness: The Triumph of European Warfare in the Colonial Northeast

By Guy Chet (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2003, pp. xix, 207, \$60; paper \$18.95).

Historians have long debated whether English settlers created a distinctive "American way of war" in the colonial Northeast. Those who argue in the affirmative contend that European models of warmaking were outdated and ill suited to American conditions. Colonists, they suggest, readily adopted Indian-style hit-and-run tactics, what today we would recognize as guerrilla warfare. Those on the other side of the argument believe that European models of warfare carried over to the New World in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century America mirrored warfare in Europe, albeit on a smaller scale. Guy Chet situates his *Conquering the American Wilderness* on the latter side of the debate. He argues that colonial military leaders were not "Americanized" and their emulation of Indian tactics stands as proof of their inexperience and unprofessionalism. Indeed, Chet contends that one can see more continuity than innovation when comparing European and American warfare; that the colonists' tactical innovations were not departures from contemporary European doctrine; that Americans did not adopt a new style

of warfare; and that European tactics actually were effective in North America.

Chet centers his analysis on tactics, or what he calls “actual combat.” He goes to great lengths to make clear that he is discussing the tactical rather than the strategic and operational levels of war. He argues that the colonists never abandoned their preference for or dependence on massed volleys of fire, and that they most often fought on the tactical defensive, just like European armies. In assessing the contribution of Indians to American warcraft, he believes that they proved of little value as teachers of tactics; their real contribution to colonists’ military successes came in the strategic and political realms.

The narrative of *Conquering the American Wilderness* revolves around seventeenth-century New England. The Pequot (1636–1637) and King Philip’s (1675–1676) Wars thus receive most of Chet’s attention. After an examination of those conflicts, he focuses on the role of the British Army in the Seven Years’ War (1754–1763). It is in that conflict, when the crown sent large armies of regulars to North America, that Chet finds justification for his claim that European tactics, when employed by competent commanders with well-trained and well-equipped troops, could succeed in North America.

Chet’s insistence that the experience of seventeenth-century New Englanders and British regulars, writ large in the Seven Years’ War, speaks for all colonial Americans leads to problems. Most strikingly, he fails to account adequately for the American rangers who, especially in the early and mid-eighteenth century, sought tutelage from Indians and adopted hit-and-run tactics. Indeed, rangers who fought like Indians were ubiquitous in all the colonial era’s wars. “Indian fighters” such as Benjamin Church, Charles Frost, the Gorham family, John Lovewell, John Goffe, and Robert Rogers were the most famous American military figures of their day and, more important for Chet’s analysis, developed tactics quite at odds with contemporary European tactics. And while it would be a mistake to claim that the rangers single-handedly won the colonial wars, few contemporaries, either American or British, would have judged the Gorham brothers (John and Joseph) of King George’s War and Rogers in the Seven Years’ War as inexperienced and unprofessional amateurs. The British crown granted each of them commissions as officers in the regular Army, based on their expertise as Indian fighters. The little-examined skirmishing between Anglo-American rangers and Indians on the frontier, and the British Army’s partial adoption of ranger tactics in the wars of the mid-eighteenth century, certainly resulted in an “Americanization” of European warfare.

Chet therefore misses an early but important phase in the develop-

ment of an American way of war. Nonetheless, *Conquering the American Wilderness* is not without merit. It is a work that contextualizes early American battlefield tactics within broader patterns of warfare in early America. When combined with the current literature on colonial warfare, Guy Chet's work will help scholars advance a better and more thorough synthesis of early American military history.

JOHN GRENIER

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American Wall Stenciling, 1790–1840

By Ann Eckert Brown (Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 2003, pp. xv, 263, \$17.95).

This beautifully produced publication significantly expands the research of Janet Waring (1937) and Nina Fletcher Little (1952) into the field of early American wall stenciling. Begun as an inexpensive substitute for costly imported wallpapers, stenciling flourished in homes, inns, and taverns throughout the period under investigation. Among the considerable advances of the current study over previous publications is the discovery and documentation of numerous decorations found outside New England, especially in the South and the Western Reserve. Another advantage lies in the superb quality of photographic reproduction, as accurate color plates were not available to the earlier researchers.

In the matter of historical documentation, the author displays a wide ranging knowledge of the Federal period and follows the precedent established by Nina Fletcher Little of situating each recorded site in its specific cultural context. Brown further traces through credible attribution the peregrinations of known stencilers (J. Gleason and the admirable Moses Eaton, Sr. and Jr., in particular) from New England to the Midwest. These geo-cultural findings constitute, among other things, an important contribution to our understanding of patterns of artistic migration. In a more questionable critical move, Brown divides the practice of stenciling into a vernacular rural-based "folk group" and a more refined, urbane "classical group." At times these divisions can appear somewhat arbitrary and a more nuanced approach emphasizing hybridity and cross-fertilization might have yielded better insights into actual practices.

If this admirably researched study has any shortcomings, they lie in

the paucity of theoretical grounding. As stenciling is a relatively mechanical process, as compared, for example, with mural painting, it might have been instructive to develop a methodology for discriminating between original decorations, fragments thereof, and the numerous modern recreations encountered in the textual descriptions and photographic reproductions. These diverse levels of ornamentation emerge from this study as somewhat of a piece when in fact they are not, either physically, chronologically, or aesthetically. Moreover, some consideration of the role of the patron in choosing the decoration might have been set against the predetermined schemes of the artist-stenciler. In short, how were stencils marketed and what range of choices, if any, was available to the homeowner? Why were decorative stencils preferable to painted walls and what do these patterns tell us about aesthetic preferences? Were New England designs ever altered for midwestern applications? Are “classical group” stencils ever found in vernacular homes, producing some form of cultural disconnect? Questions such as these are either partially addressed, or not at all.

The underlying premise of this study—that stencils provide a tangible link to the past—is stated but less persuasively affirmed when many of the walls studied and reproduced are in fact re-creations. How can such mute, formulaic ornament be made to articulate the patterns of sensibility and imagination of the age? Here one thinks of the brilliant work of the art historian Alois Riegl (*Spatromische Kunstindustrie* [1901]) on Late Roman ornamentation. This is the challenge that a deeper archaeology and anthropology of wall stenciling may yet reveal. In the meantime this rich archive of ornamentation, carefully recorded, has set the bar for scholarly research and close documentation.

ROBERT L. MCGRATH

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Architecture in the United States, 1800–1850

By W. Barksdale Maynard (New Haven, Ct.: Yale University Press, 2002, pp. 322, \$50.00).

Starting with a size that invites holding, this book beckons the reader to settle in for an architectural armchair adventure. W. Barksdale Maynard presents an intellectual history of the first half of the nineteenth century as a context for understanding its architecture. He focuses

briefly on the waning Federal style, and then turns his attention to the ascending Greek Revival and Gothic Revival styles. The book visits the men who made architectural history, such as Andrew Jackson Downing, Benjamin Latrobe, and Asher Benjamin (although that visit is not nearly long enough), and those who commissioned it. An acquaintance with architectural chroniclers and critics would help the reader's understanding, but the book also offers a chance to become more familiar with the architects who defined style in the period and where they looked for inspiration.

Maynard sets out to counter the commonly held idea that by the third decade of the nineteenth century, America had developed a uniquely American architecture, the Greek Revival style, so ubiquitous in Vermont. He contends that twentieth-century architectural historians went astray in attributing the development and immense popularity of the Greek Revival to an affinity for ancient Greek democracy and political sympathy for the Greek war of independence from the Turks, fought from 1821 to 1830. Instead, he asserts that English precedent was the driving force behind American architecture, and that America remained a dependent cultural colony of England long after the Revolution. The credit for early nineteenth-century American architecture belongs to Britain, and Maynard shows example after example of direct design derivation from buildings in the mother country. Only the scale and materials were modified to suit American conditions. To bolster his case, he quotes many contemporary observers, in the same way that filmmaker Ken Burns enlivens still images with historic "voices." Maynard's research has uncovered many articulate voices, including a fair number of women, speaking about architecture.

The author guides the reader to early landmarks in Philadelphia, Washington, D.C., and upstate New York, many of them seminal in their influence but long gone from the landscape. Those landmarks spring to life in the book's 222 illustrations, which are mostly historic, and almost one-quarter in color. The beautifully reproduced photographs, aquatints, lithographs, and paintings in the book are teeming with detail and call out for examination with a magnifying glass. They contain a wealth of landscape and human details that greatly enhance their subject buildings. Women in hoop skirts ascend the steps of The Arcade in Providence. A crowd of students gathers at the University of Virginia in 1895 to watch Jefferson's Rotunda burn. Thomas Cole depicts the history of great building in the dreams of architect (and covered bridge designer) Ithiel Town. Maynard uses age-worn photographs showing construction, and even some early destruction, of landmarks in the history of style that evoke a time when they were new, or at least young. Their making,

and unmaking, reveal construction details and pre-machine-age methods that palpably connect the finished buildings to the skill of the craftsmen who made them. Images of the burned Ammi Young State House and a stunning painting of an early West Rutland marble yard constitute the only Vermont images in the book. Be forewarned that one cannot skim the book's images to learn its story; the image captions are curatorial identifications and not narrative explanations. The latter are contained only in the main text.

Maynard is a good storyteller with an abundance of sidebar detail that makes the characters in the book, be they creators or consumers of architecture, very human and three-dimensional. His lengthy chapter on porches is a wonderful architectural etymology of the feature known variously as verandah, portico, or piazza. Vermonters will read with interest his early nineteenth-century testimonials to the virtue of white houses with green shutters.

The book certainly succeeds in pointing out the continued English influence on American architecture, but it fails to convince the reader that the question of the source of American architectural design only has or needs one answer. Human behavior is complex and cannot be explained by single ideas or motivations. Maynard expands our understanding of the development of American architecture. Most early-nineteenth-century builders probably spent little time contemplating the source of their design ideas and simply relied on assumptions deriving from the cultural assimilation of those ideas, assumptions about what was appropriate, tasteful, and beautiful.

Through its words and images, the book inspires readers to get up out of the armchair and venture into the built environment in search of the stories that buildings can tell. Vermonters are fortunate that the journey does not have to be far. Maynard's book will give readers new insights into Vermont's rich architectural legacy—from the pink Gothic Justin Smith Morrill Homestead in Strafford, to the state's Greek Revival temples such as the old Town Hall in Brandon, the Follett House overlooking Burlington's waterfront, and the State House portico, to the "country seats" in Addison county's agricultural landscape. Enjoy the trip.

NANCY E. BOONE

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A Tale of New England: The Diaries of Hiram Harwood, Vermont Farmer, 1810–1837

By Robert E. Shalhope (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003, pp. 328, \$45.00).

In 1806, at the age of eighteen, Hiram Harwood assumed the role of scribe in his father's daybook. As he recorded both farm activity and his father's innermost thoughts, the bond between father and son became more tightly woven but also more perverse; repeatedly Hiram found himself inscribing his father's judgments about his own shiftless behavior. "Hiram did but little"; Hiram was "careless"; and "Hiram had a poor disposition to work" (p. 28) were common paternal refrains. This form of parental discipline hardly diminished Hiram's desire to please his father, even as it helped shape his lifelong struggle to fulfill his familial and social responsibilities. Eventually he transformed his father's diary into a voluminous record of his own personal journey into dutiful manhood.

In *A Tale of New England*, Robert Shalhope, professor of history at the University of Oklahoma, uses the Harwood diaries to trace the tortuous pathway of this Bennington farmer over a thirty-year period of economic and social change. Having detailed the evolution of republicanism in his earlier volume, *Bennington and the Green Mountain Boys: The Emergence of Liberal Democracy in Vermont, 1760–1850*, Shalhope provides readers with a new, personal perspective on the same community. The richness of the diaries, preserved and transcribed at the Bennington Museum, allows Shalhope to tell the story in Hiram's voice as he reflects both inwardly on his personal struggle and outwardly on the changes occurring in Bennington.

This account is neither a chronology of daily existence nor a social history. Instead, Shalhope shapes the story into a persuasive drama, a psychological biography that reveals the consciousness of a Vermont farmer and the heights and depths of male anxieties. Using a gender analysis, Shalhope highlights Hiram's developing sense of masculinity and the way family obligations circumscribed male autonomy. Along the way we see Hiram evolve from a self-conscious, dilatory, and tortured adolescent to a satisfied husband, proud father, and successful cheese manufacturer, only to reach a precipitous decline at the end of his life. This narrative structure allows Shalhope to conceal Hiram's demise for dramatic purposes until the end of the story.

The volume provides rich fodder for social historians. Choosing not to include historiographical discussions in the text, Shalhope has nonetheless used themes from recent social history to frame the story. Topics include: child rearing, adolescence, courting, gender relations, literacy, education, neighborly exchange and socializing, military experience, music (Hiram was an impressive flutist), and treatments for the insane. Shalhope's analysis of the latter is particularly astute. References to sexuality, however, are absent, a surprising omission.

Shalhope is most effective in detailing shifts in the household economy and the relationship between Hiram's economic concerns and his evolving social and political attitudes. We learn about the extent of local indebtedness, the exchange of labor and goods among neighbors, apprenticeship arrangements, and marketing difficulties. Unfortunately, he provides only a glimpse of the important role of women in the production of cheese, the farm's most successful commodity. Yet the story provides a window on the frustrations Vermont farmers faced as they shifted away from self-sufficiency and engaged more extensively in commercial operations.

Interweaving these economic interests with Hiram's reading habits, his thoughts about religion, and his engagement in local electioneering, Shalhope uncovers the complex roots of Hiram's social values and political attitudes. Hiram was a reluctant soldier and dismissed religious fanaticism, but he engaged actively in partisan politics and read literature and local newspapers prodigiously. He wrote ballots before elections, recruited neighbors for campaigns, and condemned the partisan uses of drunkenness. Shalhope uses the diaries to reveal how these activities, Hiram's economic interests, his reading, and his connections with local men, including Congressman Hiland Hall, shaped his evolution from Democratic-Republican to Whig by the 1830s. All the while, Hiram continued to subscribe to the communal values of Vermont's founding generation, a thesis Shalhope sets forth in more general terms in his earlier volume on the nature of liberal democracy in the new nation.

For all its insights into male behavior and thinking, there are some gaps in *A Tale of New England*. By keeping a sharp focus on Hiram's psychological development, his inner turmoil, and his perception of himself as a man, Shalhope is forced to resign the broader social and political context of his life to the endnotes. This tradeoff preserves the integrity of the story, but leaves readers to seek out his brief references or his earlier volume on Bennington to grasp how the larger community, the state, and the nation experienced the economic and social changes Hiram faced. Moreover, Shalhope supplies only a few insights into how others evaluated Hiram's character and behavior. This omission may

reflect a lack of sources, but the result is a one-dimensional view of the protagonist. Despite these problems, Shalhope has contributed immensely to our understanding of rural manhood while developing a compelling drama of one man's life.

MARILYN S. BLACKWELL

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A New Order of Things: How the Textile Industry Transformed New England

By Paul E. Rivard (Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 2002, pp. xviii, 156, paper, \$24.95).

In the history of New England, textile mills are as prominent a feature as the Puritans. As Paul Rivard's work clearly demonstrates, the manufacturing of textiles, whether in the homes, shops, or factories of New Englanders, measured the economic pulse of the region. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, textiles represented much of the personal wealth of colonial households, and their manufacture linked communities to the larger economic life of the region. The advent of machinery reinforced already developed patterns of outwork and piece work. Yet the incorporation of machine production also served to widen the gap between those who performed the work and those who profited from it. By the end of the nineteenth century, the desire for profits eclipsed the interest in innovation and long-term capitalization.

Rivard has not merely produced an economic assessment of cloth manufacture. *A New Order of Things* also traces the development of technology that enabled the textile industry to dominate the nineteenth-century landscape in an amazingly short time. Invention and innovation among textile entrepreneurs created a viable, even profitable industry that literally exploded onto the scene and reshaped or created whole communities in just a few years. Over the course of the first half of the nineteenth century, improvements in power delivery systems, efficiency of machinery, and coordination of multiple manufacturing processes made textiles the premier New England industry and some shrewd Yankees very wealthy. Technology also reduced the need for skilled workers and opened the door for unskilled factory operatives, especially the influx of immigrants around the middle of the nineteenth century.

Rivard's study is also a social history of the textile industry. The most original and interesting aspect of his work is his discussion of outwork and piecework. Often histories of the textile industry are telescoped in such a way as to imply that women put away their spinning wheels and went into the factories with no intermediate stage linking home production with the infant factory system. A more informed examination of that interim period reveals a more gradual evolution from home production to factory work. Women did not simply take up factory work when cloth was no longer produced in the home; they merged into the factory as they took up piecework and used machine-spun fibers in their work at home. In frontier areas, they continued to weave utilitarian fabrics when cost or distance made home production practical and cost-efficient. As transportation and distribution systems became more efficient and affordable, frontier production declined.

Improved transportation also changed the character of the New England workforce. Although the development of a pluralistic society in nineteenth-century New England is not a new story, Rivard links this important development with the technological changes that occurred in the factory system. The same advent of steam-driven transportation that improved market access and expanded the scope and scale of manufacturing brought many new workers to the factories. French-Canadian and Irish immigrants changed the ethnic and social character of New England forever. They also made it possible for factory owners to gouge greater profits as they exploited the more vulnerable immigrant workers. Throughout the nineteenth and into the twentieth century, organized resistance to long hours and low pay was only marginally successful.

Finally, in his desire to construct a history of the textile industry for "a general readership," Rivard has produced a visually stunning book. A *New Order of Things* is a veritable compendium of some of the best and most important images on the subject. Certainly, the vast array and impressive use of images—drawings, maps, diagrams, and photographs—make Rivard's study accessible. In these images the reader can make direct contact with the past, whether through the eyes of a young factory operative posing in front of her power loom or through the technical drawings of the machinery. One troubling aspect of the book that may be related to Rivard's impulse to produce a popular book is his "Selected Bibliography." Most of the materials listed are dated while some of the most interesting and current books on New England's textile industry such as the work of Mary Blewett, Tamara Hareven, and Susan Porter do not appear at all.

Those hoping to see Vermont in this study of New England's textile history will be disappointed. Despite the fact that textile mills were an

early feature of Vermont's landscape, Rivard offers no information beyond the eastern half of the region. Yet the complex of woolen and cotton-producing mills along the Winooski River near Burlington that attracted its own populations of mill girls and immigrant families took Lowell as its model. Carding and spinning mills dotted the landscape and provided local producers with processed fibers to use in their spinning and weaving at the turn of the nineteenth century. By the 1840s industrial discontent among the factory operatives set the stage for walkouts, spontaneous strikes, and other job actions.

Despite these minor deficiencies, *A New Order of Things* is a worthwhile read and a visually appealing book that should not be overlooked.

SUSAN M. OUELLETTE

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Yankee in a Confederate Town: The Journal of Calvin L. Robinson

Edited by Anne Robinson Clancy (Sarasota, Fla.: Pineapple Press, 2002, pp. xi, 137, \$16.95).

During the antebellum period, sizable numbers of Vermonters left their homes and scattered across the United States as a part of the westward and southern migrations. Some of those who went to the South put down deep roots, taking active roles in the social, economic, and political life of their new homes. As the sectional conflict intensified, these transplanted Vermonters had to make choices about whether they would maintain their loyalty to the Union or cast their lots with the seceding states. Some remained loyal to the United States; others did not.

Calvin L. Robinson was among those who remained staunchly true to the United States, and this book chronicles his loyalty to the Union and his experiences during the Civil War era. Born in 1828 in Reading (Windsor County), Vermont, and educated at the University of Vermont, young Robinson taught for a few years before the "confinement of the school room" (p. 6) impaired his health, leading him instead to become a merchant. He lived briefly in Massachusetts and then emigrated to Florida in 1857. The next year he settled in Jack-

sonville, became prosperous, and stayed there for most of the rest of his life.

Robinson's experiences as a Unionist closely paralleled those of loyalists in urban areas elsewhere in the South. He found his loyalty to the Union frequently tested by intimidation, threats, and attacks on his property. He took an active role among the small group of Unionists in Jacksonville and appears to have been the most prominent of the Union band in the city. Like Unionists elsewhere in the South, he and his family suffered at the hands of Confederate partisans who destroyed his property, including his business and his home. And, like Unionists elsewhere, he witnessed the shifting loyalty of Confederates during the war, particularly as Union forces drew near. Ultimately, Robinson and his family had to flee their Southern homes and take refuge in the North. The Robinsons went first to New York City and then to their former home in Vermont. While in New York, Robinson took a prominent role in meetings of exiled Unionists in that city.

This book adds to the growing literature on Southern Unionism during the Civil War. The editor has performed a useful service in making it available for publication and in bringing the experiences of Calvin L. Robinson to the attention of those with an interest in Unionism, the Civil War, and Florida history. Unfortunately, it contains little material that develops in detail the connections to Vermont or the exile that Robinson and his family spent there.

There is confusion in the book as to whether the manuscript that formed the basis for the volume is a journal or a memoir. Notations on the book's jacket and title page indicate that we are reading a journal, but the editor refers to the manuscript as memoirs (p. 1). The substance of the printed version strongly suggests that it is a memoir written after the war. The editor indicates that chapter headings have been added for clarity and that some of the language has been "modernized" (p. 2). Historians who are interested in the document will want to resolve these and other problems concerning the nature of the manuscript.

The contextual research that the editor has undertaken is not extensive. Many additional sources might have been consulted that would have added depth and breadth to an understanding of Calvin Robinson and Unionism in Florida, including, in particular, the papers of the Southern Claims Commission. The commission received petitions for redress from loyal persons who lived in the South during the war and lost property to the Union forces. If Robinson or his Unionist colleagues in Jacksonville filed claims with the commission, those documents could greatly enlarge our understanding of this exceedingly interesting

Vermonters-turned-Floridian whose memoir reveals the courage and persistence of loyal Unionists in the Civil War South.

THOMAS G. DYER

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*"Dear Wife": The Civil War Letters of
Chester K. Leach*

Compiled by Edward J. Feidner (Burlington, Vt.: The Center for Research on Vermont, 2002, pp. 229 and "Photographs from the Leach Family Album," paper, \$16.00).

*Quite Ready to be Sent Somewhere: The Civil War
Letters of Aldace Freeman Walker*

Edited by Tom Ledoux (Victoria, British Columbia: Trafford Publishing, 2002, pp. 400, paper, \$25.00).

Two Vermont men who served three years in the Army of the Potomac each exchanged several hundred letters with their families in Fletcher and West Rutland. Charles K. Leach's and Aldace Freeman Walker's Civil War odysseys took them both to the hastily constructed outposts guarding Washington, D.C. and on the same campaign in the spring of 1864 as members of the revered Old Vermont Brigade. But each man observed a different war. They may never have met, and neither appears in the other's letters, though they must have traveled many of the same roads.

Charles K. Leach, a sober, steady, and rather dour married farmer enlisted with other men from Franklin County towns near Fletcher and joined the 2nd Regiment of Volunteer Vermont Infantry. Mustered in as a first lieutenant in June 1861, he served in that rank until his enlistment expired in June 1864, during the first months of the Overland Campaign from Spotsylvania to Petersburg, Virginia. Close by at the time, Aldace Walker noted matter of factly in a letter to his father on June 20, 1864, that "The 2d Vt. is just relieved from service at the front, as its time expires today" (*Walker*, p. 268).

Aldace Freeman Walker enlisted in the 11th Vermont Volunteer Infantry in 1862 and had begun drilling recruits before his graduation from

Middlebury College as valedictorian on August 13, 1862. That same day he received a commission as first lieutenant of Company B. After a few weeks assembling and equipping the unit at Camp Bradley in Brattleboro, the 11th traveled south to join the defense of Washington. Having marched and camped near Washington for much of 1861, Leach's unit, by the time the 11th arrived, had fought on the edges of the battles of Crampton Gap and Antietam and had begun preparation for winter quarters near the Potomac River a few miles north and west of the capital. Walker would leave the army after three years of service a few months after the Confederate surrender as a lieutenant colonel who had frequently commanded his regiment in hot action and in camp.

The publication of these two collections contributes to the ever popular genre of Civil War soldier's letters, and provides solid detail on the steadfast Vermont commitment and contribution to restoring the Union. Proud families sensing the importance of the letters preserved them. Leach's eventually came to Special Collections at the University of Vermont (UVM) through his granddaughter, who jealously guarded the record of her family's contribution to the momentous war, while Walker's granddaughter assumed the responsibility to preserve his. Edward J. Feidner, well known for his contributions at UVM as professor of theatre and a long tenure as director of the Champlain Shakespeare Festival, discovered the portrait album of family, army colleagues, and Civil War notables that Leach assembled. When he joined the album to the letters, he set about their transcription and preparation for publication. Feidner allows Leach to speak for himself, with editorial austerity worthy of Leach's own restraint. He assembled brief identifications of the men and family members who frequently appear in the letters and very little of the historical and geographical context in which to set the events about which Leach writes.

The Walker letters came to Tom Ledoux through the "Vermont in the Civil War" Internet project's effort to document the state's participation in the war. He understood that the Walker collection merited more substantial publication than "the website as it existed at that time" (*Walker*, Preface). Ledoux has divided the letters into chronological chapters with endnotes and has provided a useful historical introduction. For the dramatic transition in the spring of 1864 when the 11th Vermont left guard duty and went into the field, fighting from the Wilderness to Appomattox, he inserted Walker's published speech, "The First Vermont Brigade," which, decades later and after having compiled a history of the brigade in the Shenandoah Valley, established a clear context for his own detailed letters. This neat editorial touch greatly enhances the value of the letters that follow. Like Feidner, Ledoux did not include any maps

to help orient Leach's and Walker's letters in the complex local geography of their movements, though Ledoux did append a helpful description of "The Forts Surrounding Washington."

The straightforward Charles K. Leach tramped around much of Maryland and Virginia in the vicinity of Washington, protecting against approaches to the capital. The 2nd Vermont saw an unusual amount of action. They participated in the first Battle of Bull Run and McClellan's failed Peninsula Campaign in 1861. They fought at the edges of the 2nd Battle of Bull Run and Antietam in 1862, and at Chancellorsville and near Gettysburg in 1863. Both Leach and Walker corresponded to stay close to the familiar in a very difficult time. Leach's letters did not discuss strategy and muted the details of combat; instead he attempted to uphold his parental responsibilities and help his wife, Ann, operate the farm and subsist in tight financial times. He provided steady advice on livestock, crops, vehicles, building maintenance, sugaring, planting, and expenditures. His letters recount endless marching, persistent sickness, disease, death, concern about pay and finances (the slow and unpredictable army paymasters frustrated both Leach and Walker), complaints about avaricious sutlers, food, weather, and clothing. Leach's letters support the importance of logistics and the dictum that armies travel on their stomachs.

Both men relied on the Vermont press, in Leach's case the *St. Albans Messenger*, for war information. Walker supplemented his reading of the *Rutland Herald* (to which he contributed letters) with New York, Baltimore, and Washington newspapers, and, in the closing months, publications from Richmond and Petersburg. They both found the press accounts inadequate in describing the actions in which they had fought. They also shared, especially in the first years, a healthy disdain for the quality of officers commissioned more through political muscle than military capability. In an uncharacteristic, pithy outburst, Leach commented on one disappointed officer who huffily resigned when passed over for promotion to general because "the Eagle that sits on his shoulder cannot be made to shit a Star, to take the place of the Eagle" (*Leach*, p. 125). Walker referred to "complete ninnies" (*Walker*, p. 25) and excoriated one "exceedingly profane" and "withered little man, about 50, I should think, lame from a wound in the heel, received in no noble way, the story goes," who Walker dubbed "a silly martinet with no scope or width of purpose" (*Walker*, p. 49).

The educated son of a prominent clergyman, often traveling on horseback a few feet above the ubiquitous mud, Walker saw many of the same events as Leach from a much different vantage. The Fletcher farmer stayed close to camp, providing a fatherly steadiness to his men.

He fought without complaint, lamented the disease that carried away friends and his brother, enforced discipline, and worked to dampen the availability of alcohol. Walker frequently "boarded out," taking meals with fellow officers on a contract basis in area homes. He took advantage of frequent passes to explore Washington, where he visited with friends and classmates, met Vermont political leaders and their families, and attended theater and opera. He had entré to the parlor of Francis Preston Blair ("Old F. P. Blair," as Walker put it), the capital scion who had exerted great power in Jackson's Kitchen Cabinet in the 1830s and later supported Lincoln in 1860. Blair's son, also Francis Preston, served in Congress in 1860–62 and rose to the rank of major general.

Walker often had with him the *Atlantic*, a Greek Testament, some classics, and the works of Shakespeare, Dumas, and Bulwer. While Leach discussed the details of farm management, Walker confined his advice to his father to the purchase of a piano. Both men returned home on leave (Leach twice). Walker's father visited him outside of Washington, and Leach saw his wife, Ann, when she came to camp during his illness, when he went to Brattleboro to recruit, and in the aftermath of the New York City draft riots of 1863. The army dispatched Leach's unit to keep the peace in New York, an assignment Walker deemed "quite a compliment to the Vermonters, though I suppose they are as good a brigade as any in the army" (*Walker*, p. 161).

Though Walker fought in many of the hottest actions of the 1864 campaign in Virginia, where the Old Vermont Brigade absorbed huge losses, he never received a wound or suffered serious disease. His letters often demonstrate a capacity to look for the larger picture even as the confusion of combat swirled about him. Walker grew from serious boy to a man during the war, which became a formative experience in his life.

Leach, despite the huge casualties inflicted on the 2nd Vermont, also did not receive a wound. He shied away from discussing action, perhaps wishing to spare his wife and children anxiety and the brutality he witnessed. His letters demonstrate little propensity to reach beyond events in his immediate vicinity. He returned to Vermont much the same man who had left Vermont three years earlier, if wiser and more appreciative of his blessings. Leach never followed through on his intention to write the history of his unit. In the forty-five years allotted to him after he mustered out in 1864, Leach remained a solid citizen and family man, serving one term in the Vermont House of Representatives and remaining active in Fletcher town and school affairs.

Walker returned to Vermont to study law in the Burlington office of George F. Edmunds, later a leader of the United States Senate. He finished his study of law at Columbia College and returned to Rutland to

work as a railroad counsel, become a civic leader, and serve a term as president of the Vermont Bar Association. In 1887 President Cleveland appointed him to the newly formed Interstate Commerce Commission. In 1889 he moved to Chicago and became the head of the Interstate Railway Commerce Association and a succession of other Chicago-based organizations created to protect railroad interests. As a receiver of the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe system, he helped guide it back to financial health and became chairman of its board in 1895, a position he held until his death in 1901.

These two extensive collections join a substantial bibliography on the Vermont experience in the Civil War. Very different in many respects, but with poignant similarities, they underline the importance of the Civil War in the lives of Vermonters during the conflict and in the years that followed. These letters have earned their way into libraries and onto bookshelves.

H. NICHOLAS MULLER III

A Trustee of the Vermont Historical Society and a former editor of Vermont History, Dr. Muller has written extensively about Vermont's past.

Sightseeking: Clues to the Landscape History of New England

By Christopher J. Lenney (Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 2003, pp. 359, \$24.95).

Few observant travelers fail to notice how abruptly landscapes seem to change as one crosses boundaries, whether naturally or politically drawn. And for those who enjoy excursions across New England, few sightseers miss noting how older villages on the coast of Maine differ in so many subtle but remarkably discernable ways from the villages on the South Shore of Massachusetts or those along the Connecticut River or those in the Champlain Valley of Vermont.

To be sure, the lure of distinctive historic landscapes has been long recognized by the travel and tourism industry, politicians, and preservationists. But as a pervasive sameness of postindustrial America relentlessly seeps across the New England landscape and as so many places once cherished for their distinctive character and feeling are changed or repackaged as caricatures of their former selves, it is encouraging to

discover a book that offers a fresh academic approach to the study of vernacular landscapes.

For readers who enjoy unraveling clues of local and regional history while exploring historic landscapes, Christopher J. Lenney in his new book, *Sightseeking*, offers remarkable insights through his creative study of six common landscape artifacts. Through an examination of place names, town plans, boundaries, roads, houses, and gravestones, Lenney applies basic archaeological survey methods to test what he calls the Kurathian Hypothesis: “that the distribution of vernacular artifacts follows subregional lines that reflect original points of settlement (hearths) and subsequent internal migration streams (settlement patterns)” (p. 2). By plotting the geographical distributions of scores of examples of vernacular landscape artifacts, Lenney shows how the patterns that emerge can provide important clues to the history of the New England region.

While his approach may seem cumbersome at first, the value soon becomes clear. Indeed as he observes, “While the study of these building blocks may strike one initially as dull and inadequate to the overall task, once one’s curiosity is aroused, there is no landscape in New England that will ever be dull again. Ordinary things—select but ubiquitous—assume an unexpected importance, not only in the field, but in old photographs, sketches, and maps. Heretofore objects of nostalgic reverie, these become vital documents to be minutely scrutinized for key details. Historic landmarks, praised and preserved as rare or unique, are taken down from their pedestals and reconnected with the traditions and landscapes that created them” (p. 307).

Through his pattern-based approach to studying regional landscapes, Christopher Lenney encourages ambitious sightseekers to avoid the common trap of looking at places through a simple then-and-now filter, where artifacts are regarded either as old or as new. To be sure, it takes some effort and practice to view places in four dimensions and it may take some time to travel to where boundaries become distinct, but the rewards are addictive. As Lenney notes, “Conventional sightseeking blithely lumps the whole historic landscape under ‘Old New England,’ an undifferentiated Yankee dreamland that embraces two to three centuries and sixty thousand square miles. Sightseeking critically dissects this idyll along more calculated lines. The mind is quick to organize information according to the framework available, and a sightseeker is no more than a well-briefed sightseer with a focused agenda. The thrill of borders can be relied upon to spur the quest” (p. 294).

While this is not the first study to explore how physical features of vernacular buildings and landscapes may provide clues to the cultural history of a region like New England, *Sightseeking* will likely become

regarded as one of the most important works in this field of research. Lenney's awareness of how his work (which he wrote because he was convinced no "expert" would) fits within the body of scholarly research is reflected in his observation: "A rich genre of such scholarly syntheses, disguised as popularizations, yet written by distinguished experts, has served as an ever-present model for this volume. In effect, this book strives to be a pseudo-popularization of a subject that has not yet fully taken coherent form in the scholarly literature" (p. 308). As the author of one of the "scholarly syntheses, disguised as popularizations" mentioned in *Sightseeking*, I found that Christopher Lenney offers historians and preservationists a very powerful intellectual framework on which to base future research, while providing a stimulating affirmation of the urgency and value of the task.

Readers who enjoy investing a bit of effort into their literary excursions will find this energetically written book to be especially delightful and rewarding. Travels through New England will never be quite the same!

THOMAS D. VISSER

Thomas D. Visser is associate professor of historic preservation in the Department of History at the University of Vermont and author of Field Guide to New England Barn and Farm Buildings.

Off the Leash: Subversive Journeys around Vermont

By Helen Husher (Woodstock, Vt.: The Countryman Press, 1999, pp. 206, \$21.00).

Curious New England: The Unconventional Traveler's Guide to Eccentric Destinations

By Joseph A. Citro and Diane E. Foulds (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 2003, pp. xi, 334, paper, \$19.95).

Vermont has long been a popular destination for "people from away." Statesmen and hunters, artists and house hunters hope to find and savor some shard of "the Vermont mystique." These two books are intriguing guides for visitors (as compared to tourists) who appreciate the unusual.

In *Off the Leash*, Helen Husher, who lives in Randolph, leads us to a dozen off-the-beaten-track destinations, some symbolic of bygone eras,

others of more contemporary interest, such as the three devastating fires that nearly razed downtown Randolph over seven months after Christmas 1991. Husher writes engagingly, and has some illuminating observations about the nature and pursuit of travel. As well as ferreting out the unusual, she likes to perceive what lies behind the arras of the more or less familiar.

In the introduction, Husher makes an acute distinction between travelers and tourists. "Travel is a search for newness, for something different, and for a kind of magic. We like confirmation that places are genuine and that new places have something to tell us; we like to glimpse the forces that have come down from the clouds, like big hands, and squeezed places into being. If this is not true, and if places are interchangeable, then there is no point in going anywhere at all. Yet much of the work of tourism is to separate us from those forces and to offer, instead, a prettified and often rather costly version of a given destination" (p. 14).

Accordingly, Husher spends an afternoon in Hope Cemetery in Barre; reflects on Justin Morgan and his famous horse; and contemplates the Joseph Smith Memorial in Sharon. We also visit the Donohue Sea Caves in the Winooski Valley Park, the Dowers Labyrinth in Danville, the Round Schoolhouse in Brookline, and the Round Church in Richmond. She describes a performance at the Bread and Puppet Museum in Glover, and gives us a capsule history and significance of the Fenian Raids.

One example of her graphic, often mordant style can be found in the "Wheat Paste and Rags" chapter about the Bread and Puppet Museum in the Northeast Kingdom, "where the paved roads get bumpy and many of the villages take on an inward expression—half-painted, resistant, poised for flight or perhaps revolution. . . . The Kingdom, as it is called, is a place apart, provisional and defiant. This is Vermont's woodwork, a place where people and ideas lie hidden and ripen and sometimes spill out unexpectedly into dooryards" (p.125).

For *Curious New England*, Joseph Citro (Vermont's own Edgar Allan Poe) and Diane Foulds, a widely read newspaper feature writer, searched out and described dozens of "weird" or otherwise bizarre places in the six New England states, with emphasis on time warps and the macabre.

In Vermont, for example, we could admire Elvis Presley's gallstones in the Main Street Museum, Hartford; Hetty Green's "fainting couch" in the Bellows Falls Library; and Emily's (haunted) covered bridge in Stowe. Other, less esoteric entries cite the Spider Web Farm in Williamstown; Brigham Young's monument in Whitingham; the Bowman Memorial in Cuttingsville; and Fort Blunder in Alburg, plus the oddities in several town museums.

In New Hampshire, we visit "America's Stonehenge" in North Salem; Tilton's Arch in Northfield; and the quirky Wentworth-Coolidge Mansion in Portsmouth. Rhode Island entries are concentrated in fashionable Newport, where the ghoulish-minded can retrace heiress Doris Duke's vehicular homicide outside the gates to her estate.

The authors whet our curiosities in appealing terms and provide good directions to these tantalizing phenomena.

Both books add cubits to our appreciation of the life and lore of the land we are lucky enough to inhabit.

PETER SAXE JENNISON

Peter Jennison, Taftsville, a former trustee of the Vermont Historical Society, is the author of a dozen books, including The Roadside History of Vermont.

Untamed Vermont: Extraordinary Wilderness Areas of the Green Mountain State

Photographs by A. Blake Gardner, Commentary by Tom Wessels (North Pomfret, Vt.: Thistle Hill Publications, 2003, pp. 112, \$39.95).

Several years ago, A. Blake Gardner stuffed fifty-five pounds of camera equipment into a backpack and headed out across country to photograph Vermont's wild, remote, and untamed areas. The result is this collection of sixty-four stunning color photographs.

Six short essays by ecologist Tom Wessels accompany the photographs and provide the context for Gardner's pictures. Folded bedrock and a mile-thick ice sheet are two of the slow geological dramas that created Vermont's remarkable natural diversity: eighty-two distinct upland and wetland communities, including ancient black gum trees, "the Okefenokee swamp's northern outpost," according to Wessels (p. 69).

Wessels's essays also complement individual photographs. For example, Gardner has a close-up of a spray of showy lady's slippers in the Eshqua Bog. In the photograph, the white and crimson slippers extend enticingly from stems and leaves of vibrant green. Wessels describes the exotic reproduction ritual of the showy plant: "The pollinator crawls into the slit on the top of the slipper, which then restricts its exit. The insect has to struggle through a tight tunnel just below the flower stem, where it gets a pollen sack glued onto its back" (p. 61). When the insect and pollen sack enter another slipper for the tight crawl, cross-pollination occurs.

Gardner's photographs mirror the diversity of Vermont's natural environment. There are exquisite close-ups: a nest of warbler eggs, fiddleheads in spring; medium-range shots: black gum trees in Vernon, frosted grass along a beaver channel; and long views: Mount Hor reflected in Lake Willoughby, a storm over Kettle Pond.

All of Gardner's photographs contain enlivening contrasts in color, texture, and substance. In the fiddlehead close-up, for example, the fiddleheads are pushing through fallen oak leaves. The leaves are dry and brown; several curl upon themselves. By contrast, the fiddlehead stems are supple and green; the lighter green heads are covered with white fuzz. The leaves are dead; the fiddleheads radiate new life. The fact that fiddleheads are also good to eat completes the picture.

Another feature exemplified by the fiddlehead shot is the remarkable fineness of detail in Gardner's photographs. The veins of the oak leaves are as clear as if the object were literally in one's hand.

Gardner does amazing things with water. In a medium range shot of Austin Brook, the tumbling water looks like a sheet of silver. The water in the beaver channel is midnight blue and thick as mercury.

While Gardner tells us all about wild Vermont in his photographs, he holds the cards of his technique closer to his chest. We know he uses a large-format camera—thus the breathtaking detail—and we also learn in a caption that an exposure along Lake Champlain lasted eight seconds. Eight seconds! These are the exposure times used at the dawn of photography over a hundred years ago. Long exposure may explain the silvery effect in Gardner's rivers: The water is actually moving, not stopped in its flow by the shutter.

Gardner's pictures often tell a story from foreground to background. In his photo of Vernon's Black Gum Swamp, for example, the long foreground is dominated by an odd path that leads us into the dark forest background. But what is that path? Look closely and it seems to be a fallen black gum covered with fungi. Look more carefully and there is a tiny red lizard climbing through the fungi.

Wessels's longest essay discusses threats to untamed Vermont. He asserts, "Regional warming will extinguish species like sugar maple, paper birch, red spruce and balsam fir—all hallmarks of the Vermont landscape" (p. 81). Thus, Gardner's photographs may at some point become historic, picturing a landscape that no longer exists. This collection will therefore be of special interest to environmentalists and natural historians.

Tourists, travelers, and hikers will also find this book inviting. In fact, the photographs entice one into the wild: You want to go there and see it for yourself. Gardner's exquisite images sharpen one's own eye for natural detail and panorama.

Finally, photographers can spend hours with these pictures learning about composition, color, and visual narrative.

The question with a picture book is, can you return to it again and again or does it grow old quickly? Gardner's photographs are complex. I didn't see the tiny red lizard until my fourth look at the black gum picture. Repeat visits yield new pleasures. This book will not gather dust on the coffee table. It's a volume of art and nature for all seasons.

ROGER CRANSE

Roger Cranse was a Peace Corps volunteer in Nepal and an administrator and teacher at Vermont College and the Community College of Vermont. He lives in Montpelier.

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- *Ansley, Norman, *The Brief Battle at Fort Cassin, Vermont, May 14, 1814*. Severna Park, Md.: Forensic Research, Inc., 2003. 17p. List: \$10.00 (paper).
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- *Bonfield, Lynn A., comp., David E. L. Brown, editor, *The Peacham Anthology*. Peacham, Vt.: Peacham Historical Association, 2003. 297p. Collection of previously published articles about Peacham with unpublished reminiscences. List: \$25.00 (paper).

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- *Cohn, Arthur B., *Lake Champlain's Sailing Canal Boats, An Illustrated Journey from Burlington Bay to the Hudson River: Building the Canal Schooner Lois McClure*. Basin Harbor, Vt.: Lake Champlain Maritime Museum, 2003. 187p. List: \$24.95 (paper).
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