VERMONT HISTORY

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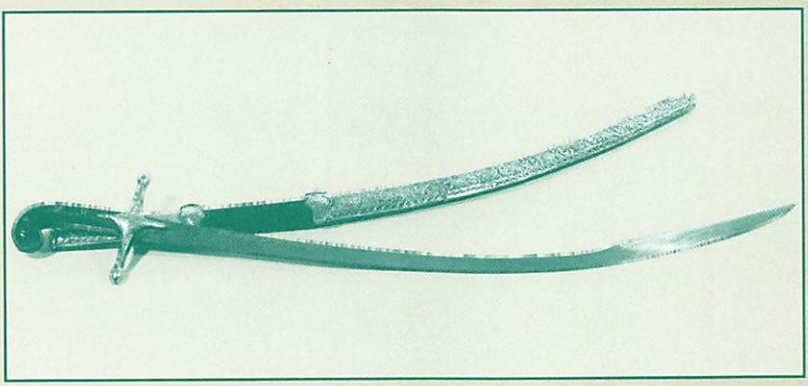

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- Making It Right: The Civil War Letters of John Wilmot — Marjorie J. Strong and Paul G. Zeller
- The Wrong Rail in the Wrong Place at the Wrong Time: The 1887 West Hartford Bridge Disaster — J. A. Ferguson
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The Journal of the Vermont Historical Society

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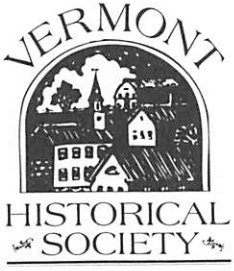

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What the VHS Collects and Why

This year marks the 175th anniversary of the founding of the Vermont Historical Society. During the next year, as we celebrate past accomplishments and contributions to the state's awareness of its history, the board and staff will also look ahead and begin drafting a new museum collections plan. This document will describe the existing strengths and weaknesses of the museum's collections, define the scope and priorities for future collecting, and guide us as we set future work goals and prepare budgets. It won't be an easy task. Professional advisors advocating for this "best practice" tell us that the process is often as important to an organization as the final document, since it provides an opportunity to review basic assumptions about what we will collect and why.

Currently on view in one of the new Vermont Heritage Galleries at the Vermont History Center in Barre is an exhibit created with the purpose of showing a broad cross section of the collections. *Icon, Oddities, and Wonders: Stories from the Vermont Historical Society Collections* displays paintings, glass, ceramics, military items, clothing and textiles, furniture, musical instruments, and relics. Some are aesthetically pleasing, while a few look like pieces of rubble. All have a Vermont story and can be placed in an historical context. Each one helps us reveal and explain an episode in Vermont's history. These items represent over one hundred years of acquisitions.

The earliest acquisition in the exhibit (front cover) is the sword of British poet and adventurer, George Gordon, Lord Byron, who went to Greece to support the war for independence from Turkey and died there in 1824. The sword was given to the VHS in 1902 by the daughter of Montpelier's Jonathan Miller, who was quite an adventurer in his own right. Miller, too, participated in the Greek war for independence and bought the sword in Greece in the late 1820s. After he returned to Vermont, Miller continued to fight for democracy and became a leader in the struggle to abolish slavery.

Another intriguing artifact on exhibit is a box presented to the VHS in 1905 to commemorate the Battle of Bunker Hill (back cover). It is

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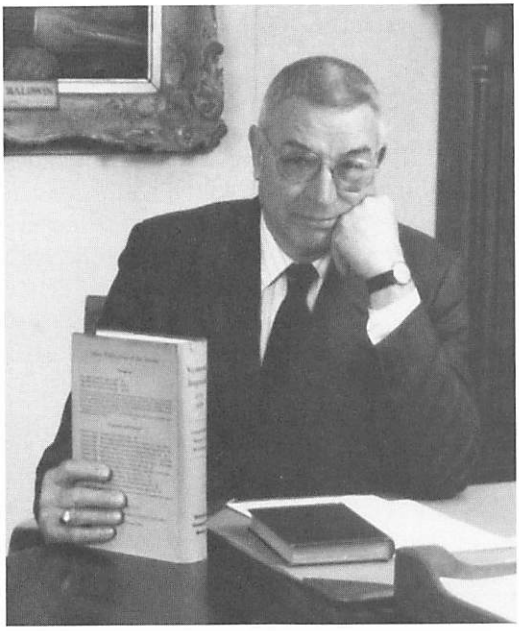
full of small relics dating from the 1700s through the end of the 1800s, fragments taken from historic buildings, trees, and military ships from around the country. This type of souvenir collecting, picking apart historic structures and sites, was common practice in the early 1900s and illustrates what was then the Society's identity as a historical and antiquarian organization.

The most provocative piece in the show is a large white banner purchased by the VHS in 2004. It was used at a Ku Klux Klan rally held in Montpelier in 1927. Embroidered in red thread is a shield with a cross under which is stitched: "Women/ of the/ Ku Klux Klan/ Realm of Vermont /Montpelier." Most visitors are surprised to learn that the KKK was active in Vermont. The banner is a harsh reminder to viewers that the past has many dark periods that we would prefer to forget.

All of these artifacts exemplify important concepts that we think about during the acquisitions process. All meet the primary criteria of having a strong connection to Vermont. Byron's sword illustrates ideological, cultural, and political connections between Vermonters and the world beyond their state and national borders. The Bunker Hill box has been at the VHS for over one hundred years and raises important questions about changes in the purposes and ethics of collecting. What would we do today if offered a box full of pieces and fragments newly collected from historic buildings and sites? Curatorial ethics require careful consideration of provenance and ownership. What message would be conveyed to the public if we accepted artifacts acquired in this way? The KKK banner is a rare survivor. People don't usually save things that show their ancestors in a negative light. Acquisitions like this are uncomfortable but important because they help our museum tell a more complete and complex story of Vermont's past.

These are just some criteria we consider when evaluating possible additions to the collections. We invite you to visit the exhibit at the Vermont History Center in Barre, and the exhibit *Freedom and Unity: One Ideal, Many Stories* at our museum in the Pavilion Building in Montpelier, to see some other examples of what the VHS has collected over time.

JACQUELINE CALDER, *Museum Curator*



MARCUS ALLEN MCCORISON
1926–2013

Memories of Mark McCorison

Marcus A. McCorison, who died at the age of 86 on February 3, 2013, was a towering presence in the world of early Americana. In a thirty-two-year tenure as librarian, director, and president of the American Antiquarian Society, Mark led one of the nation's greatest historical institutions. A prolific author on various aspects of the history of the book in America, he excelled at collection development, significantly expanding the extraordinary AAS holdings of pre-1877 Americana through purchase, expert cultivation of leading collectors and other donors, and uniquely productive relationships with dealers, auctioneers, and book scouts across the country. In the long line of outstanding early Americana collectors, curators, bibliographers, and connoisseurs that stretches from the 1790s to the present—Isaiah Thomas, Joseph Sabin, James Lenox, George Brinley, Wilberforce Eames, William L. Clements, Lawrence Wroth, and others—Mark McCorison was

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one of the giants of our time. Looking at today's up-and-coming young talents in historical research librarianship, it's hard to identify his equal for combining encyclopedic knowledge of early Americana, a flair for fundraising and collection development, scholarly research, the ability to interact effectively with antiquarian dealers and collectors, and the vision, drive, and administrative ability to lead a great institution.

Mark had deep Vermont connections. He began working on early Vermont printers as a UVM graduate student in the early 1950s, producing a bibliography of early Vermont imprints that became his 1963 book *Vermont Imprints 1778–1820,* then and now one of the most essential reference works for Green Mountain researchers and collectors. His first professional job, after service as a combat officer in the Korean War, was as head of the Kellogg-Hubbard Library in Montpelier. He continued to work on Vermont topics after moving to Special Collections at Dartmouth College and during his long years at AAS. He was a trustee of the Vermont Historical Society from 1960 to 1966. Mark knew almost everybody who collected, curated, or researched early Vermont between 1950 and 2010; his circle of now-departed Vermont friends and acquaintances included Hall Park McCullough, Harold Goddard Rugg, Ken Leach, Gertrude Mallary, Frank Teagle, Tom Bassett, Edwin Hoyt, Hamilton V. Bail, Charles Tuttle, and others. Vermont history and bibliography will be poorer for the loss of Mark's memories of those individuals.

I first met Mark in 1976, when I was a senior at UVM working on an honors thesis about the Dresden Press. I had written to him earlier, when I was a teenager starting up an antiquarian book business specializing in Vermontiana, and he had responded graciously to my uninformed questions about arcane points of early Vermont bibliography. In 1976 Mark, Frank Teagle, and Bob Sharp did some work on the old printing press at the VHS museum, which Alden Spooner used at Dresden in 1778–79, and they were kind in letting me hang around while they discussed whether they could restore the press to working condition. Shortly thereafter, when I became a member of the Committee for a New England Bibliography, I watched with interest as the other CNEB members consistently deferred to Mark on almost everything. Once, when a CNEB meeting ran on far too long, Mark started rapping his big ring against the top of the table. When that had no apparent effect, the rapping pace and noise increased, thoroughly flustering our chairman, John Armstrong of Boston University. John marched us rapidly through the remaining agenda items, for which most of us thanked Mark and his dislike of wasting time on administrivia. Patience was not always a McCorison virtue, and he did not suffer fools gladly; but if you

could hold your own with Mark and earn his respect, there was no better colleague, advisor, dinner companion, or raconteur in the history community.

In my years as curator of UVM's Wilbur Collection of Vermontiana, I occasionally went up against Mark in the collection development arena. Youth, inexperience, and representing the less prestigious institution usually put me at a disadvantage, but once I came out ahead on something important. Gertrude Mallary (1903–2002) of Fairlee owned her generation's finest private collection of Vermontiana, and both Mark and I cultivated her assiduously for our institutions. When Gertrude decided in the early 1990s that UVM would be the best home for her library, it was a huge coup for me and a big disappointment for Mark. He managed to be gracious about the rare defeat, even in the face of my occasional ribbing about it.

In a long career that has now moved me firmly into the ranks of "senior" Vermont historians, I've had a handful of important mentors and influences on my professional development. Mark McCorison ranks high on that list, and I am proud to say that he was my friend as well. When colleagues have occasionally said I remind them in some ways of "a young McCorison," I've always considered it high praise, for there's nobody I've regarded with more respect and affection than Mark. May we all live so long, accomplish so much, and be so loved.

J. KEVIN GRAFFAGNINO

J. Kevin Graffagnino is director of the William L. Clements Library at the University of Michigan. He was a trustee of the Vermont Historical Society from 1979 to 1985 and was its director from 2003 to 2008.

DeWitt Clinton Clarke: A Political Life in Antebellum Vermont

Clarke's life charts the rise of a vibrant, indispensable American political type during the formative period in Vermont and New England history. An examination of his career also provides a particularly advantageous avenue for viewing the antebellum era's most important economic, political, and cultural forces in an integrated way.

By GENE SESSIONS

DeWitt Clinton Clarke was a familiar and influential figure in mid-nineteenth-century political and journalistic circles of Vermont and New England. He engaged in major rail transportation projects, participated in the call for ending slavery, and contributed to the rise of the Republican Party, three of the distinctive marks of the period. His greatest impact came, however, in his career as a newspaper editor, as the head successively of two of the largest newspapers in the state, and in his role as a behind-the-scenes political figure from the late 1830s until his death in 1870. Despite this notable career, Clarke's professional and personal life was marked by impecuniousness. Although he possessed a talent for gaining friends and raising money for his various ventures, Clarke was almost perpetually in financial difficulty, and as a tireless worker for first the Whig and then the Republican parties, he repeatedly was forced to rely on party

GENE SESSIONS is professor emeritus of American History at Norwich University. He was a co-author of *Freedom and Unity: A History of Vermont* (2004), and was the editor of *Vermont History*, 1989–1992.

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reward for his financial well-being. Clarke's life charts the rise of a vibrant, indispensable American political type during the formative period in Vermont and New England history. An examination of his career also provides a particularly advantageous avenue for viewing the antebellum era's most important economic, political, and cultural forces in an integrated way.

Personal and physical attractiveness, civic engagement, and financial trouble were recurring features in DeWitt Clinton Clarke's family history. His grandfather, Stephen Clark, migrated in the late 1780s with his family from Connecticut to the central region of Vermont, where he gave the name Mount Holly to the community where the family settled. He served as its town clerk and as its state representative until a series of bad business deals forced his departure to Ohio in 1815.

Stephen's son, Asahel, the father of DeWitt, was remembered, like Stephen, as possessing traits desirable in a public person. He was an unusually handsome man and dressed with "scrupulous care." An acquaintance described him as the "handsomest man I ever saw."[1] And he was well educated, graduating from Middlebury College in 1807, and studying law at nearby Granville, New York.

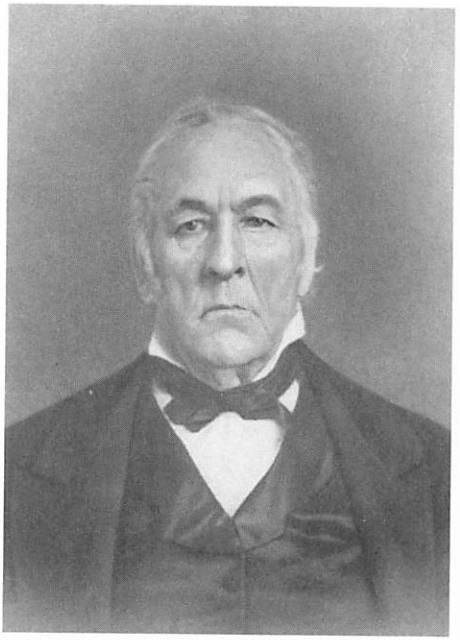
At the urging of Israel Smith, a U.S. congressman from Vermont and future governor, Asahel briefly considered accepting an appointment as a federal clerk in Washington, D.C. Instead, he settled into the practice of law at Granville. In 1806 he married Lydia Finney of Shrewsbury, Vermont, and it was at Granville that DeWitt was born on September 27, 1811. (As a young man DeWitt took the liberty of adding an "e" to the spelling of his family surname.) Soon after DeWitt's birth, Asahel moved his practice to Glens Falls, New York, and became a fully engaged citizen, participating in Jeffersonian Republican politics and Freemasonry and, like his father, earning a reputation as an eloquent orator.

In New York's political wars, Asahel allied himself with independent-minded Republican Governor DeWitt Clinton, after whom he named his son. According to DeWitt's mother, at frequent social events involving the Clarks, Governor Clinton "always seemed to fancy him."[2] Asahel was a close acquaintance of Clinton's and became sufficiently prominent in New York and national political factionalism during James Madison's presidency (1809–1817) that he, for a time, came under suspicion in the president's circles, of heading—as Asahel melodramatically wrote to his wife—"a grand national plot to blow up the present Government and place Mr. Clinton at the helm."[3] In 1822, Asahel was campaigning as a Republican candidate for Congress when typhus cut short his life at age thirty-eight, leaving a young family with little money and significant financial debts.

Asahel's death disrupted a family that included, in addition to ten-year-old DeWitt, a brother, Napoleon Nelson, three years older, and a younger sister, Jane. The next four years were difficult for the family, during which the mother and DeWitt in particular experienced "all the ills of a dependent life."[4] Lydia later described the young DeWitt as having "lived around after his father's death . . . in so many places, it had a tendency to make a restive boy," and in fact, one "a little wild."[5] Acquaintances recalled young DeWitt as a source of continual worry for his elders. Although "so hard a child to take care of,"[6] his mother nevertheless insisted that DeWitt "never had any malice about him"[7] and, in fact, "had so much good nature that it always disarmed every one who undertook to punish him."[8]

An uncle, Russell Clark, a physician, tried taking responsibility as DeWitt's guardian, but in April 1825, at age thirteen, after several altercations with Russell's wife, DeWitt ran away to Granville, where he took a job as a store clerk. The store owner, pleased by young DeWitt's diligent work, "wanted him bound to him," and applied to his uncle "to bind him to him" under Vermont legal provisions that allowed mandatory apprenticeships for children in poverty. DeWitt and Nelson both protested this proposition, with DeWitt writing to his mother—who was lodging at a brother's house— "If I cannot live in this world without being bound, I do not want to live." She relented and in the fall of 1826, DeWitt was allowed to enter the advanced grammar school at Castleton Seminary as a boarding student.[9]

From early childhood DeWitt had taken enormous pleasure in reading, and his mother worried that her child was "a little too fond of fiction." He had, in fact, read "all of Sir Walter Scott's novels" when "but a boy,"[10] and his love of reading continued throughout his life. His literary tastes were broad. As a young man he began keeping a diary and often copied into it entire pages of verse from Shelley, Coleridge, and Shakespeare. His enthusiasm for reading sometimes led to trouble. While attending school at Castleton Seminary he discovered an outdoor "wildwood nook" near the village where he often took his books to read, uninterrupted. A prying townsman who observed the boy in his outdoor hideaway reported the "scandal" to his stepfather and to school authorities. There were no ill effects for him, and he was not barred from using the spot for study; but, as Abby Hemenway observed, Clarke "writhed a little under the extra watchfulness exercised over him." It was "a fatality that seemed to accompany his young boyhood's careless days; that always rather seemed to follow him life-long, more or less in the distance, to never quite quit him; of some person, or persons, questioning every move that he ever made, or didn't make,



Ezra Meech, wealthy Shelburne land owner and merchant, and step-father to DeWitt Clinton Clarke. From Genealogical and Family History of the State of Vermont, *compiled by Hiram Carleton, (New York: The Lewis Publishing Co., 1903), vol. 2, facing page 584.*

and imputing to it some evil that had never entered his head, much less his heart."[11]

In the summer of 1826, when DeWitt was fourteen years old, his mother married Ezra Meech. DeWitt's new stepfather was, at age fifty-three, an imposing figure in the state. Known locally as "the judge," he was a "self-made man" whose early business forays included a venture in the fur trade with the formidable New York merchant John Jacob Astor.[12] Meech was noteworthy not only for his great wealth—he was reputed to be the largest landholder in the state—but for his "fine physique": he was six feet four inches tall and weighed 365 pounds.[13] His "very large size" had necessitated the provision in his home of a specially made chair and bed stand, and a wagon with a seat specially made wide enough for him.[14] Later, when writing as editor of the Burlington *Free Press*, DeWitt described his stepfather as "one of the largest of Whigs in every sense of the word."[15] He was indeed large in political size. Three times in the 1830s the Democratic Party selected him as its candidate for governor of Vermont (he later shifted his allegiance to the Republican party), and at the time of his marriage to Lydia Clark, he was serving his third term as U.S. congressman from Shelburne.[16]

Married to Ezra Meech, Lydia led a more rewarding and ordered life, but DeWitt now saw even less of his beloved mother. She traveled

to Washington, D.C., with her husband for congressional sessions, and while there attracted the attention of capital society. Contemporary accounts describe her appearances there in glowing terms: as a tall, dark-eyed "handsome woman," with a poised and gracious manner. Senator Daniel Webster of Massachusetts, a friend of Meech's, was said to have remarked that Lydia was "the most splendid woman at Washington."[17]

Although DeWitt and his mother remained emotionally close, he seldom visited the new Shelburne home she shared with Ezra Meech. He stayed busy with his school work, bunking at the academies in Castleton and Hinesburgh, and although an indifferent student, continued to nurture his enthusiasm for reading. In 1829 he enrolled at the University of Vermont, but transferred after one term to Union College in Schenectady, New York, from which he graduated in 1831.

Perpetually short of cash while attending college, DeWitt received little assistance from his tight-fisted father-in-law, Judge Meech. Letters from DeWitt to his mother contained references to his chronic financial difficulties and he gained a reputation in the Meech household for carelessness with money. When, in one letter to his mother, he described having his purse stolen, containing all his money, the news was received with skepticism, though Lydia remained trusting. For "DeWitt's good," according to his mother, the Judge "was pretty strict with DeWitt," who nevertheless "never complained." Meech, a widower, had several sons and daughters by his previous marriage who, however, *did* complain "of DeWitt's being an expense" and thus harmful to their own financial interests. In fact, DeWitt's mother later recorded that "all the spending money DeWitt ever had was what I could contrive to save when his father gave me any for some personal expenses, a ten cents here and a quarter there."[18]

In one of his requests for money, DeWitt wrote to his mother, "I know you would, but cannot help me." In this particular instance his brother, Nelson, did assist him but also took the occasion to caution DeWitt that "we must cut our coats from our cloth, brother." In a letter, Nelson advised his younger brother that friends are often attracted to "the young man who throws his money about him with a contemptuous kind of indifference where it may fall, or what he may get in return."[19] "We are sprung," Nelson warned, "from a source too generous, often, for its own good; that should make us suspicious of ourselves. There never was one of our family who knew the real worth of a dollar. It is from this family trait we have the most to fear." Then he added, "my brother, look well to the 'main chance'; take such a course as your own good sense shall dictate; be firm and resolute in pursuing it, and you cannot but succeed."[20]

After graduating from Union College, Clarke studied law in Albany for a year. In May 1832, he married Caroline Gardner (known by her nickname "Caro"), a beautiful and artistically talented young woman from a prominent family in Troy, New York. Clarke's mother described her new daughter-in-law as "very pleasing and talented." She could "do almost everything a little better than anybody else." Naturally a great society woman, she was "made for it and shone in it." She possessed a "gift in conversation . . . so sensible and so quick."[21] In 1832, Clarke established a law practice in Troy, and the socially well-connected Gardners provided a boost to his new career. Clarke and Caro became frequent guests at dinner parties at which the governor of New York and other significant political personages were also present.

Clarke, however, soon was exhibiting both his restless nature and his vulnerability to questionable financial judgments. In 1837, despite a declining Vermont economy, Ezra Meech persuaded Clarke that financial opportunity was bright in Brandon, Vermont, where Clarke's cousin John A. Conant was manager of the Conant Iron Works. In late November of that year, he and Caro moved to that south-central Vermont community and he became a stockholder in the iron works. The enterprise could not shake off serious economic difficulties, however, and in March 1841 it folded, causing Clarke to lose not only his job but "all he had paid in." The loss also included "a large portion of what came to him from his wife" as the last of her family inheritance, approximately twelve thousand dollars, following the death of her father.[22]

Although the financial cost was high, the iron company's troubles actually delivered Clarke from an employment that had become a source of misery for him. For a while after arriving in Brandon the iron venture had excited his interest, and he had felt "an increasing attachment for business." After a few months on the job, however, in which he mainly performed the duties of a clerk, he confided his restlessness and boredom in his diary: "Variety is not 'the spice of' business," he wrote, while also lamenting the lack of enlivening incidents in their "quiet little village." "Twenty-seven years old and as yet nothing done!" he wrote in another diary entry. "Heaven forgive me, I have been dawdling all my life, and in good faith, I should take that place among men which my years at least entitle or require me to hold."[23]

Despite his failed experiment as a Brandon businessman, he earned, over the years, a reputation in the community as a prodigious doer and joiner. He established himself as an unflagging booster of community causes, helping organize Brandon's village fire company and its library society, joining its Reading Society, serving as president of the village Literary Association, and as justice of the peace and member of a

committee to improve local schools. Still, he remained bored and restless with his situation. After a particularly uneventful evening spent with local Brandon acquaintances, he wrote sarcastically in his diary, "What a mounstrously eventful life! I've a mind to steal a sheep to give it some animation!"[24]

Gradually through his community experiences, the precocious Clarke came to realize that it was not business but public affairs that gave vibrancy and richness to his life. The political realm satisfied his impulse for service, fired his imagination, answered his desire for recognition, and provided him access to much convivial companionship. For individuals like Clarke, as historian Richard Hofstadter has written about the sphere of pre-Civil War American politics, the political life provided individuals "a creed, a vocation, and a congenial social world all in one."[25]

In June 1839, scarcely eighteen months after moving to Brandon, Clarke attended the Vermont Whig party's state convention in Woodstock, where he was appointed one of the convention's secretaries. At the Whig county convention two weeks later he gained election as secretary and was appointed to its three-member county committee. Although he failed in a bid for the Whig nomination for the state legislature, he—undaunted—accepted appointment in February 1840 as editor of the campaign organ, *The Rutland and Addison County Whig.*

During that year, according to his own description, he was "dwelling in . . . a state of constant political animation."[26] A highlight of this animation was his participation as a member of Vermont's delegation to the National Convention of Whig Young Men, in Baltimore. The inclusion of DeWitt (and Caro, despite her "small interest" in political matters) in this group,[27] which was composed of several of the most able and ambitious young leaders in the state, signaled his emerging social popularity and his political progress.[28] The Baltimore convention also provided DeWitt with occasions to broaden his contacts beyond the state. He reported his "pleasure" there at "seeing and conversing with Mr. [Henry] Clay several times," and he wrote to his mother that the famous Kentucky senator "desired to be very kindly remembered to you, and to Father Meech."[29]

Back home from the Baltimore trip, DeWitt attended the October opening of the state legislative session in Montpelier, where he captured a major patronage prize: election by the Whig-dominated upper chamber as secretary of the Vermont Senate. The position submerged him in the Senate's three-to-four-week sessions every fall for the next ten years.

For these annual October legislative gatherings, it became his custom to occupy a room in Montpelier at the Pavilion Hotel next door to

the capitol, usually room no. 25. The gregarious Clarke's perpetually open door made no. 25 a boisterous center for each legislative session's political gossip, attracting both friends and visitors. Included were many of "those having business in which they were interested before the Legislature,"[30] as well as influential members of the legislative and executive branches. The small village of Montpelier, according to Clarke, had "the reputation of being the loneliest village in New England."[31] But during the short legislative sessions it swarmed with lawmakers, lobbyists, and hangers-on, lodging in the town's inns and rooming houses, and Clarke's hotel room there was known as an oasis of convivial society.

In these circumstances Clarke found himself acting as an inside player at the upper levels of state politics and establishing personal acquaintances and influential relationships with Vermont's political and economic power wielders. Clarke had a gift for friendships. ("He was from a child always deeply attached to his friends," according to his mother.)[32] In the 1840s, he numbered in his youthful circle ex-governor Charles Paine and others, but none more dear than Frederick Billings, the Vermont secretary of civil and military affairs during the 1840s and future railroad magnate. "Him we know," Clarke once wrote, "as the clouds know the rain!"[33] Billings's feelings were reciprocal. Writing to Clarke in 1847, he spoke of their knowing each other "so well" that "we can really meet and mingle, only up in the blue ether."[34]

During the 1840 presidential election drive—the raucous "hard cider and log cabin campaign" that pitted the Whig ticket of William Henry Harrison and John Tyler against the incumbent Democrat, President Martin Van Buren—Clarke epitomized the new Vermont Whig Party's exuberant, aggressive spirit.[35] A witness later recalled that Clarke entertained his Brandon neighbors "by singing Whig songs from the platform around the pump in front of the taverns."[36]

Singing political campaign songs, often extemporaneous and containing many verses, was characteristic of the new politics of the period and Clarke emerged as Vermont's leading Whig (and later Republican) singer/poet. The importance invested in this form of campaign expression is apparent in a letter written on March 21, 1844, to Democratic power broker and editor, Charles G. Eastman, who was also a leading Green Mountain State purveyor of light verse. The letter writer urged Eastman to "Write more [songs] . . . and send them on for the people must sing and if we suffer them to sing Whig doggerel when you can give them good poetry we ought to be crucified."[37]

The rowdy 1840 campaign climaxed in a sweeping victory for Harrison in Vermont, and in the nation. Clarke's stepfather Ezra Meech and

DeWitt Clinton Clarke, from History of Saint Joseph Parish, Burlington, Vermont, 1830–1987, *edited by Robert G. Keene and Rev. Francis R. Privé (Burlington, Vt.: History Committee of Saint Joseph Parish, 1988). The original source for this image is not identified.*

his former business associate John Conant served as Vermont electors for the triumphant Whig ticket. "Laus Deo!" Clarke wrote in his diary on March 4, 1841, the day "Old Tippicanoe" took the oath of presidential office. Reflecting on the year just passed, the exhausted Clarke described it as a time "abounding in great processes and great results politically, at least." "The busiest year of my whole life," he added. "It will be remembered and I have helped to make it memorable, in the political annals."[38]

Clarke's record of tireless community service and enthusiastic, faithful party work during the campaign led state Whig leaders to see to it that he was rewarded after the election. The reward came from Harrison's new postmaster general, who named Clarke to the position of postmaster at Brandon, Vermont. (Clarke's job at the Conant Iron Works had ended on March 31.)

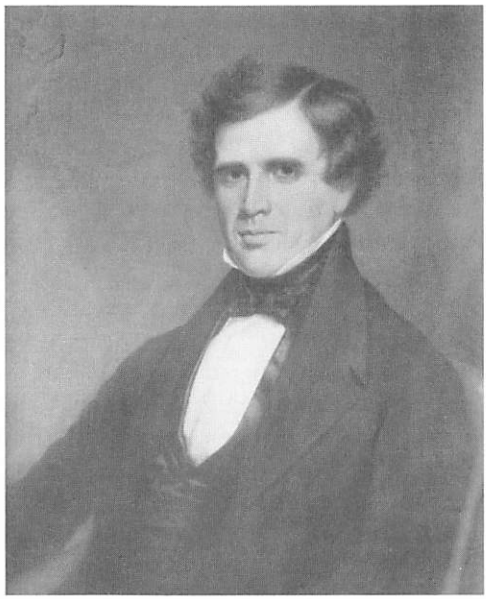
However, events (some of his own making) intervened to deny Clarke his appointment. Harrison, to whom Clarke owed the Brandon position, died after only one month in office. As a result, the presidency went to Harrison's vice president, John Tyler of Virginia, states-rights former Democrat whose philosophical credentials as a Whig were suspect. In subsequent weeks, national Whig skepticism of Tyler's leadership mounted when the new president opposed party-backed tariff and banking bills. In Vermont, Clarke was among Tyler's doubters. At the 1842 Whig state convention, Clarke applied his caustic wit in offering a resolution "That we bestowed but a timid confidence upon John Tyler,

in the beginning, and that this confidence has marvelously decreased, upon better acquaintance; that from his calamitous accession to the Presidency, to the present time, his official course has been distinguished by inconsistency of conduct, instability of purpose, and imbecility of mind."[39] Clarke's resolution rousingly concluded that Tyler was "a weak, vacillating, contemptible despot."[40] The Tyler administration responded to these comments by promptly firing him from his job as Brandon's postmaster. Clarke took the turn of events in stride. According to the Brandon ex-appointee, "I lost my post office quicker than you could say *spat.*"[41]

Within a year, Vermont Whigs replaced Clarke's lost national patronage with a "better office" derived from state-level spoils. Governor Charles Paine appointed Clarke to the position of Vermont quartermaster general, an office with only intermittent duties that he occupied for the next nine years. This appointment also earned him the rank of brigadier general in the Vermont militia and the title "General" with which he was customarily addressed during the rest of his life. To friends and acquaintances this seemed an appropriate identity for Clarke, who possessed a "carriage" and physical appearance that were notable. He stood six feet two inches in height, with broad shoulders, dark eyes, quickness of movement, and a long, commanding stride. He stepped "like an army officer. . . ready, springy and self exultant."[42]

Clarke's finances continued to be unstable, however. After the iron company folded, he had renewed his law practice and gained admittance to the bar in Rutland County. However, the early 1840s was a period when "railroad fever" afflicted most of the state's public leaders, and Clarke was soon drawn away from private law practice and into the politics of railroad construction. His political contacts and skills gained him appointment, in the spring of 1845, as chief lobbyist and emissary in the Boston office of Timothy Follett's Rutland & Burlington Railroad, of which he himself was a small stockholder.[43] Operating out of the Tremont House in Boston from late May until early October, he competed with E. P. Walton of Montpelier, who was serving as "the resident agent in Boston"[44] of the Rutland road's main rival, the Vermont Central railroad, as they canvassed stock subscriptions for the two roads. Walton was also editor of the Montpelier *Watchman,* the Vermont Central's principle newspaper voice.

Also spending much of that summer doing railroading in Boston was former Vermont governor—and Clarke's former benefactor—Charles Paine. With Walton, Paine extolled the benefits of the Vermont Central, which he presided over as company president. At issue was a determination of which of the two roads provided the best route for



Charles Paine, two-term governor of Vermont (1841 and 1842), and president of the Vermont Central Railroad.

gaining the Boston and New York City markets for the agricultural and industrial products of western Vermont. An example of this propaganda competition was an article in the *Rutland Herald* that summer, signed "Otter Creek," but almost certainly written by Clarke, depicting the Vermont Central's efforts as "corrupt," and offering the following poem, lamenting the purported probable fate of those who would purchase Vermont Central stock subscriptions:

> In *Paine* they trusted, as a leader
> To show to all, their road a feeder
> In *pain,* their road will be suspended;
> Begun by *Paine,* and in *pain* ended."[45]

Many years later Walton described the significance of his and Clarke's activities during that Boston summer. The two men had been "employed in discussing, through the daily newspapers of Boston, the advantages of the two routes, as well as the indispensable importance of either to Boston should not the other succeed. The discussion was ardent and exhaustive, developing two zealous parties in Boston and vicinity, and along the two competing lines in Vermont, which secured the construction ultimately of both roads. The capitalists of Boston were at that time far from appreciating the importance of the western trade, and it is believed that but for that discussion neither road would

have been constructed for some years at least. The results, however, were, that both secured capital for organization in 1845, and both were speedily constructed."[46]

Clarke's service in behalf of the Rutland road surprisingly did not damage the close relationship he enjoyed for many years with former governor Paine. This is evident from Paine's inclusion of Clarke as his guest on the special train that opened the Vermont Central's tracks from Montpelier to Lebanon, New Hampshire, in 1848. During that historic railroad trip, Clarke wrote and sang a celebratory "Railroad Song" for the occasion. With liquor flowing freely, Clarke's song was sung "tolerably often" en route and was later published, to good response, in the *Boston Atlas.*[47]

During his efforts in 1845 in behalf of the Rutland road, Clarke developed a close relationship with H. B. Stacey, also a staunch advocate of the Rutland route's primacy in the state, and the owner and editor of the Burlington *Free Press.*[48] Clarke had acquired an interest in journalism during the 1840 presidential race when, as one of his tasks for the Brandon Whig Association, he had edited the campaign newspaper, the *Rutland and Addison County Whig.* Begun in March 1840, the newspaper's life had been brief, lasting little longer than the campaign itself, but it marked Clarke's initiation to journalism.[49] And it was considered by observers to have been a sensational effort.[50] One local historian recorded that Clarke's product earned "the reputation of being the most vigorous and spicy newspaper ever printed in Vermont" and wondered that Clarke had not been "sued for malicious slander."[51]

Now, six years later, Clarke decided to become a full-time journalist. In July 1846 he purchased the *Free Press* from his friend Stacey, took over its editorship, and abandoned Brandon for Burlington. Clarke's decision was likely influenced by his ongoing need for a settled job, but also his enthusiasm for politics, his love of the written word, and his desire to live nearer his beloved mother, who resided a few miles south of Burlington, in Shelburne. In taking Stacey's offer, Clarke probably also was aware that he was embracing a livelihood that could be made to complement his zest for civic involvement and his Whig belief system, and one that placed him continually in an agreeable social milieu. During the next fifteen years, Clarke earned a place as one of the state's most talented and combative journalists.[52]

Clarke's *Free Press* had been founded in 1827 by Lyman Foote, a Burlington lawyer. Stacey, the paper's printer, joined Foote as co-owner a year later and by 1833 Stacey had become the paper's sole proprietor. Under his guidance its readership, a Whig audience, gradually surpassed Burlington's only other newspaper, the *Sentinel* (begun in

1801), and by the late 1830s the *Free Press* had become "one of the most influential" of the approximately twenty weekly newspapers published in the state.[53]

From the 1830s through the 1850s, local newspaper editors, while not the principal leaders of their towns, were nevertheless, in most cases, figures of significance and influence. Historian Bernard Weisberger has described these early American editors as "adventurous, self-centered, and articulate—not giants perhaps, but certainly originals."[54] However, in his biography of New York newspaper editor, James Watson Webb, historian James L. Crouthamel is less diplomatic in describing early newspaper men. He characterizes the journalism of the pre-Civil War era as "not for the aesthete." The editors, he concludes, were "a boisterous, crude, outspoken, brawling group. . . . Rival editors would curse each other, post one another as scoundrels, liars, or cowards. . . . [and] sue fellow editors for libel or assault."[55] It was a fraternity in which DeWitt Clinton Clarke was comfortable and more than able to hold his own. And in an era when Vermont's newspaper circulation, per capita, was one of the highest of all the states, Clarke emerged as a significant state and regional figure. His financial footing as a journalist, nevertheless, failed to draw to him the support of backers with deep pockets needed for the stability and profitability he continually sought.

Clarke's purchase price for the *Free Press* apparently had been $5,000.[56] To help manage the transaction, he likely used the approximately five hundred dollars earned from Follett while lobbying for the Burlington & Rutland railroad in Boston.[57] His only other reliable financial sources at the time seem to have been his approximately two hundred dollar annual salary as quartermaster general[58] and his yearly salary of two hundred and fifty dollars as secretary of the Vermont state senate.[59] He was forced to borrow funds to pay for significant start-up expenses that included the cost of new font type for the paper. The new font, he explained in soliciting the loan, was needed to "give éclat to my first number."[60]

Clarke, the ex-lawyer, ex-iron company entrepreneur, and familiar State House personage, moved easily into the *Free Press* editorship. With a weekly run of only about 200 copies and a four-page format, he managed the paper with a small staff that included, in addition to Clarke, a printer and a few helpers to handle advertising, subscriptions, and job work. As a one-man editorial staff, he wrote all the local material himself except when the legislature was in session. During those legislative periods he was busy in Montpelier as clerk of the senate, necessitating that he find annual temporary replacements.

In fact, however, neither his, nor other, newspapers of the time contained much "local news," which in small towns was most often a

category of information circulated by word of mouth. Newspaper editors consequently augmented their partisan editorial columns with only a few community originated items and with more news of regional and national interest clipped out of newspapers published in Boston, New York City, Baltimore, or Albany. The rest of the paper's news columns typically were filled with extracts from agricultural periodicals, speeches by nationally prominent political figures, and serialized installments of English or American novels. Advertising customarily occupied between thirty and forty-five percent of each issue.

Many of the state's editors, like H. B. Stacey, were actually printers by trade and often lacked skills or flair in writing, but Clarke was an exception. He was a gifted stylist. "His pen mixed the ingredients that made a happy and popular editor," Abby Hemenway wrote of him. "The little locals, accidents and incidents, he had peculiarly the agreeable art to handle in a way that amused everybody, and offended no one."[61] Yet Clarke wanted to produce a paper with a Whig political message. So his editorial columns were outspoken and combative, and he early found himself in fierce quarrels, in print, with other editors. The *Free Press* quickly came to be a reflection of Clarke's personality.

His spirited editorial exchanges most often involved the Burlington *Sentinel,* the *Free Press*'s most consistent rival for readership. In 1845, the *Sentinel* was not only the town's sole other newspaper but also the leading Democratic paper in the state. Other targets of Clarke's barbs were the *Liberty Herald* (later, *Liberty Gazette*), published in Burlington from 1846 to 1848, and the *Free Soil Courier* (which eventually merged with the *Liberty Gazette*), published from 1848 to 1853. Clarke once described himself as "very sanguine and savage . . . in my political opinions," and the *Sentinel*'s editor once denounced him as a "whith [sic]-livered, malignant poltroon." Nevertheless, at least one of Clarke's contemporaries insisted that his attacks, unlike those of many other of the state's editors, were seldom personal. Because of his temperament, according to his obituary writer, he "never retained malice."[62]

Clarke understood from the outset that his newspaper's primary audience was the Whigs of the Burlington area.[63] He issued to that audience his first number of the *Free Press* on July 10, 1846. In it, Stacey used a few paragraphs to "introduce" the new editor to *Free Press* readers, saying that Clarke was "already too well known to the people of this state to require any endorsement from me. As a gentleman of talent and a scholar, he ranks among the first, and . . . possesses those peculiar qualifications which fit him for the duties of an editor."[64] Clarke then followed with his initial column, in which he sketched "the future course of this paper." He told readers it would be "the organ of the

Whig party in Vermont," forthrightly committed to "enforce and illustrate Whig principles, and to opposing the favorite and distinctive dogmas of the party which calls itself 'Democratic'."[65]

National Whiggery in the 1840s, however, was so faction ridden that its true "principles" were the subject of dispute. Clarke dealt with this situation of ambiguous party ideology by selecting those issues clearly congenial to the party's northeastern wing. He embraced Henry Clay's "American System," championing the protective tariff ("for the reasonable protection of home industry"), the Bank of the United States (for "the management of the National Finances and Domain"), and internal improvements (that is, "river and harbor improvements for the promotion of the interests of internal Commerce and Trade, etc.").[66]

Clarke also added his editorial voice to the era's spirit of reform, but he endorsed a moderate pathway to social change that was common among northeastern Whigs. As a good Whig with a regionally calibrated platform, he viewed many of the era's reformers and proposed reforms as too extreme. Thus, he editorially urged the abolition of slavery and denounced efforts to expand the "peculiar institution" into the western territories. But he also criticized the antislavery Liberty Party for its single-issue focus,[67] and denounced William Lloyd Garrison as a political fanatic who stirred up "contentions and enmities at home by the most impracticable and exasperating theorizings."[68] And he attacked the American Antislavery Society as "the most odious, abominable, and disgraceful focus of villainy, fanaticism, and treason that ever outraged an enlightened and tolerant age!"[69] When, in 1848, the nomination of the slaveholder Zachary Taylor split the Whig party, causing one group to move into the Free Soil camp, Clarke stayed with his party, editorializing lamely: "A man may be a slave-holder, but it doesn't follow that he is altogether the lowest demagogue in the world."[70] Yet, he was able strongly to denounce the equally divisive "1850 Compromise" legislation, asserting that "the great Whig heart of the Country is opposed to their 'compromises' and their temporizing with the spirit of slavery aggression."[71]

On other issues, too, New England Whig moderation appeared to be his guide. He backed increased rights for women, but ridiculed female "extremists" who wore trousers or attempted to engage in business or trade.[72] He sympathized with a group of Irish railroad workers near Bolton, Vermont, who had gone on strike after laying rails along the track. But, again, he sought a middle way. Although they had done the work but not been paid, Clarke reasoned that the workers' strike was unlawful. Thus, he denounced "all illegal combinations for the purpose of redressing even *real* wrongs."[73]

Clarke invariably used his paper's columns for occasional community boosterism. He enthusiastically encouraged support for the local Handel and Hayden Society, the Lyceum, bookstores, and charities, and for expansion of hotel facilities and travelers' accommodations. He pushed hard for area enterprise and industry, promoting a proposal to move the State House from Montpelier to Burlington, and championing the interests of the Rutland Railroad, an issue that put the *Free Press* in combat with the interests of E. P. Walton's Montpelier *Watchman* and the Vermont Central line.[74]

In return for Clarke's support of projects favored by area Whigs, local party leaders handed him occasional patronage rewards. In a journal entry, Clarke expressed satisfaction that "Mr. Hodges and Judge Follett sent for two hundred extra copies of the paper for circulation among the members [of the legislature] to enlighten them on the subject of the canal and bridging the lake."[75]

Clarke's vigorous local boosterism, his main-line Whiggery, and his wit and personal flair initially appeared to be keeping the *Free Press* on sound economic footing. The financial signs had been hopeful. "The business in my office seems to accumulate," he wrote to his wife, Caro, "and every moment that our presses are free from the papers, they are busy with jobs."[76] After one year with the paper he glowingly reported to readers a fifty percent increase in his subscription list and "increased patronage . . . [in] all of the business departments of the office." In this spirit of apparent prosperity, he announced a reduction in the paper's subscription price, from $3.00 to $2.50 for village carrier subscribers, per year. He also announced that the *Free Press* Company had acquired a new rotary press that would enable the printing department to "execute ordinary job work with much greater dispatch, and in better style, than heretofore."[77]

Appearances were misleading, however. Almost from the beginning, Clarke struggled to satisfy his creditors, and a few months after his upbeat public assessment, he privately acknowledged that the paper was providing him "a good deal of anxiety." "My secretariship [of the Vermont state senate], paper, and military affairs [quartermaster general's responsibilities] . . . present me with a tolerably formidable array of business demands upon my time," he confided to Caro.[78]

The demands were especially severe each fall during legislative sessions when his time was consumed by the duties of senate secretary, which included writing and getting the journal published. In a letter home from Montpelier, he described one of his days as senate clerk: "Yesterday (as you know I have always adhered to my determination to stick to my seat til I had my journal up) I was in my chair, writing

almost incessantly, from two in the afternoon till quarter to eleven at night."[79] On another occasion he described himself as having "to work here like a galley-slave."[80] In still another letter to Caro, this one at the height of the legislative session, he complained, "I have to write so much, just now, with my journal and my paper, that I almost shudder at the sight of pen, ink, and paper."[81]

Clarke nevertheless continually allowed himself to be diverted—"conscripted"—to ghost-write articles and speeches for legislators or lobbyists involved in the session's various legislative skirmishes. He even agreed to write a speech that was to be delivered by one of his arch political foes—of the "loco foco" stripe—who had been asked by the governor to speak at a distinctively "ceremonial" occasion, but whose skills were inadequate for the task.[82]

Clarke urged Caro nevertheless not to "disquiet" herself "about my affairs." "I shall not fail to be able to make my arrangements so as to meet my payments. I am sure my expenditures are not extravagant, and certainly the income of my office, due now, is very considerably more than everything I owe. If with this and a constantly increasing business, as you know, I cannot get along, I ought to give up."[83]

Clarke's most ambitious step in trying to improve his newspaper's competitive position was his decision in the spring of 1848 to launch a daily edition of the *Free Press.* Although the paper's weekly edition, with 692 subscribers, led all weekly newspapers in town circulation, that spring it had suffered a loss of one hundred in its subscriptions from a year earlier, and it trailed the total county circulation of both the *Liberty Gazette* (c. 753) and the combined weekly and daily circulation of the *Sentinel,* which had also begun a daily addition, at 2 cents a copy, in March of the same year. Clarke, meanwhile, asserted in print that the *Sentinel* had been able to pull ahead of the *Free Press* only because a "loco-foco paper lately defunct in St. Albans" had its subscription list taken over by the *Sentinel.* Clarke concluded that a daily edition of the *Free Press* might give him the edge he needed.[84]

Launching a daily newspaper had become possible because of the extension to Burlington in February 1848 of the lines of the Troy & Canada Junction Telegraph Company, of which Clarke had made himself an "active stockholder."[85] The line established connections between Burlington and New York City, giving access to an expanded source of news to fill the pages of a daily paper. Also included in Clarke's calculations for launching the daily was the expanding population of Burlington, which, at 7,000, was the state's largest town. In addition, he anticipated the arrival by 1849 of rail lines to Burlington from both the Rutland and Vermont Central railroads, through which he hoped to expand the *Free Press*'s circulation over a larger part of the state.

Clarke, nevertheless, struck a note of business fatalism in his announcement of plans for the daily paper. Emphasizing its modest cost to potential future readers, he wrote that at $4.00 "the price at which it is afforded is so small as to preclude the expectation of profit without such patronage as appears at present at least, little likelihood to be bestowed upon the enterprise."[86]

He was not wrong. The paper's first issue arrived at readers' homes on April 1, 1848, and Clarke soon found that despite the telegraph's aid he was not only taxed to produce adequate copy for his new daily—especially when the legislature was in session—but that the new paper proved to be of no help in alleviating his financial woes. On April 2, 1849, after one year of daily publication, Clarke confided to readers that the effort had "pretty nearly made an end of us," and suggested that Burlington's citizenry did not really desire a daily newspaper, much less two. (The rival *Sentinel* had entered the daily field in January 1849,[87] and the combined circulation of the two dailies, by 1850 was only 450. In 1852, the *Sentinel* gave up on its daily). "We believe," Clarke declared, that "our 'kind patrons' have about reconciled their consciences to acquiesce in the dogmas that consign country Editors, poor devils! to a labor like that of Sisyphus—hard and profitless." He claimed that after paying the cost of paper, fuel, lights, presswork, and carrying fees, the compensation from a subscriber's $4.00 annual payment was less than 20 cents.[88]

"We don't believe," he wrote, "that respectable and sensible people in other callings or avocations, would work as hard as we have done, during the past year, without some little pecuniary . . . compensation." Nevertheless, he pledged to continue. "[W]e don't mean to stop it now," he concluded, "we shall stop—when we get ready, and without further notice." Describing himself and other "country editors" as "pack mules in the great March of Life," Clarke told readers he could "get along without a daily paper . . . We have no rich relations, and cannot afford to print a paper . . . for the love of it."[89]

Despite the hints of approaching insolvency, Clarke nevertheless appeared to many of his acquaintances as a pillar of prosperous stability. According to the 1850 U.S. Census, in which his occupation was identified as "lawyer and editor of *Free Press,*" Clarke claimed real estate holdings of four thousand dollars.[90] In that same year a local minister, to whom Clarke apparently had given a financial contribution, described the *Free Press* editor as a "rich" man "in every sense," including his "purse."[91]

Clarke's anxiety to increase the *Free Press*'s competitiveness and readership—and thus its profitability—was unceasing. In July 1851 he

greeted an advantageous new federal postal law by asserting his "hope to find our already handsome subscription list constantly increasing." He told readers that he planned "to very soon enlarge our Daily, so that, in *appearance* at least, it shall be respectable."[92] That same month, partially in an effort to ease his personal work burden, he brought in Elliot E. Kellogg as an "associate proprietor, and editor." The addition of Kellogg enabled Clarke to enlarge the daily *Free Press* by "about four columns of additional matter," and he took the occasion to raise carrier subscription rates by fifty cents per year. Clarke hoped by these moves to "secure to us a wider patronage" in the congressional district and "over the Lake."[93]

Within three months, however, he was again publicly lamenting his journalistic ordeal, comparing the country newspaper editor to the Southern slave, and declaring, "Unrewarded servitude in an Editor's den is in direct contravention of the first postulate of the Declaration of Independence."[94]

New financial advantages beckoned as he responded to the financial pressures. He briefly explored launching an agricultural periodical with Casper Hopkins, a son of Vermont Episcopal Bishop John Henry Hopkins.[95] In March 1848, a prospectus for the *Vermont Agriculturist* was published at Burlington, but nothing came of the effort.[96]

Clarke also doggedly pursued a "claim on the Rutland Railroad Company" relating to his service to the company in Boston during the summer of 1845. He traveled to Boston in this regard on at least one occasion to meet with one of the directors—a "Mr. Rice"—who had been "very supportive" in the past. Writing to Caro, he alluded to dissent among the directors on the issue. Mr. Rice, he asserted, had "always over-estimated the value of my exertions in behalf of the railroad in 1845 though not half so much as our excellent friend and cousin [John Conant] in Brandon has always under-rated them." After much delay, the railroad's directors finally settled the issue by allowing Clarke "assessments on his stock, for services in Boston promoting there the interests of this corporation."[97]

He gained additional income by using his authority as senate secretary to contract with his own *Free Press* company to print the senate journal in 1849, 1850, and 1851. This apparently occurred even though Clarke was required by law to follow a process that included receiving proposals from printers, after which the job was to be given to the individuals "who shall offer the best terms of publication, taking into consideration the price, style of execution and time in which the work is to be printed and delivered."[98] Even with these contracts, however, he was forced to borrow money in order to complete the jobs. No other

significant public printing contract came his way. To make matters worse, in 1850 his arch-competitor, the *Sentinel,* received the state's contract for printing the proceedings of that year's constitutional convention.

Out of public view, Clarke considered more drastic remedies for his financial problems. In 1848 and 1849, as he colorfully wrung his hands over the fate of his daily *Free Press,* he privately engaged in extended and eventually unsuccessful efforts to gain for himself a federal appointment as clerk of the U.S. House of Representatives, apparently viewing the job as a possible final solution for his financial problems. Clarke had explored his prospects for a federal clerkship on one previous occasion, in 1841, after the Brandon iron company's collapse. In that instance, however, he had yielded to the judgment of his stepfather Meech, who possessed familiarity with Washington through his years serving in the House. Although suggesting he might be able to "obtain" for Clarke a federal clerkship at the national capitol, he advised his stepson against actually accepting such a position, which he implied entailed onerous working conditions. According to Clarke's journal, Father Meech told him that the appointment "would be worth ten or twelve hundred dollars" and that "I should be obliged to be there at all times, and, at the beck and call of the head." Clarke's journal continued, "I can do better by staying in good old Vermont, and shall not leave it, unless for very sufficient inducement." The clerkship, finally, would "furnish nothing more than a bare living, for which I would have to work rather too manfully."[99]

Now, in the fall of 1848, following the Whig presidential victory of Zachary Taylor, Clarke, while telling Caro "I never felt better in my life," confided to her that he had decided to make a serious bid for the House clerkship.[100] He relied for advice this time not on his stepfather Meech but on Vermont U.S. Senator Solomon Foote, with whom Clarke had served on the Rutland County Whig Committee ten years earlier, and who encouraged him to try for the post. Foote advised his old friend in 1849 that to gain the clerkship, an office acquired through election by the House membership, he would need sponsorship by Vermont's congressional delegation. He would also need to gain the near unanimous endorsement of important state-level Whig voices, and to win the backing of House leaders from regions outside New England, an effort that could only succeed through personal lobbying in Washington. Clarke consequently spent much time that winter and spring in the nation's capital, heeding Foote's advice that the candidate "who has the most extensive personal acquaintance has a decided advantage." Included in his Washington rounds was a meeting with President Zachary Taylor.[101]

In his campaign Clarke easily won the support of the state's party leadership. The many years he had spent establishing contacts and cultivating friendships, earning good will, and accruing obligations from noteworthy Vermonters now served him well. Despite his wide support, however, he ultimately failed in 1849 to win the House clerkship vote, losing to a candidate with broader backing in midwestern states.

In the months following his failed clerkship effort, Clarke and his wife experienced turbulence of a more personal nature that, in its intensity, likely rivaled their fiscal woes and political frustrations. In October 1849, influenced by friends and acquaintances from her years as a resident in Troy, New York, Caro underwent a religious experience and became a convert to the Roman Catholic faith. She brought her artistic talent to the new commitment, painting the back altar picture for St. Mary's church in Burlington and contributing poetry to the *New York Tribune,* among other publications. She published a novel in 1857, *Lizzie Maitland,* which was praised by Orestes Brownson in the book's introduction. Brownson, a prominent figure in New England transcendentalist circles, had himself become a convert to Catholicism in 1844.[102]

A month after his wife's conversion, Clarke also embraced Catholicism, "becoming," according to one observer, "more of a Catholic than his wife—had more faith."[103] Throughout his adult life, Clarke had been a regular church attendant, variously, at Episcopal (serving as a junior warden), Baptist, and Methodist services at Brandon, Burlington, and Montpelier. Along the way he had made occasional strong criticism of Roman Catholicism, but had been baptised into no denomination. However, during a period of months in 1849 his wife persuaded him to read several "Catholic books," especially the writings of St. Francis, and in response, "he became interested and convinced." "He could not read and not become one," his mother later said.[104]

Clarke's conversion to Roman Catholicism appears to have been, in fact, an extraordinary act of courage for a person whose livelihood and social well-being depended heavily on maintenance of a favorable public presence. It came at a time of intensified anti-Catholic feeling in Vermont and the nation, fanned by a large influx into the country of Catholic Irish immigrants, and finding expression in the Know Nothing political movement.

The anti-Catholic controversy intensified the reaction within his family and among groups in the public at large, in response to news of DeWitt's and Caro's conversion. He acknowledged to his mother that their action "would inflict pain and regret upon your heart, and distress to Father Meech."[105] Members of the Meech family, in particular,

treated Clarke "with unkindness and contempt,"[106] and Father Meech made it known that he was "violently opposed" to the Catholic religion.[107] A measure of the Clarkes' personal sacrifice is apparent in the experience of his mother who, fifteen years later, converted to Catholicism and in so doing discovered she was not able to "retain" her "choice and intimate friends."[108]

DeWitt and Caro Clarke's conversion to Catholicism was not, however, altogether unique for the period. The rector of the Episcopal church in St. Albans, Rev. William H. Hoyt, became a Catholic convert in 1846, an early participant in what became known as the Vermont version of England's Oxford Movement, which led to decisions by approximately fifty additional converts over the next few years to embrace Catholicism.[109]

It is not clear what impact Clarke's religious convictions had on his standing as a Vermont journalist and political operative. He certainly did not try to hide his allegiances. When in Montpelier for legislative sessions he attended Mass in that community's modest, makeshift Catholic chapel. He spoke out editorially in the *Free Press* against "the practice of making our religious opinions party tests." He used his influence in the state senate and house to gain the loan of state-owned land near the capitol for a Catholic house of worship.[110]

Events during the 1851 state legislative session, meanwhile, intensified Clarke's financial distress. During that session his job as quartermaster general, and its annual salary, vanished with the passage of a bill requiring that the position be filled by legislative vote in joint assembly, rather than by gubernatorial appointment.[111] Also in that period, Clarke brought to an end his eleven-year reign as secretary of the Vermont senate, and its accompanying annual salary, having decided during the previous fall not to return for another term. (This decision likely did not reflect a Catholic-tainted new political weakness, because during that same session the annual Whig Legislative State Convention chose to elect Clarke as secretary for the occasion, as had long been customary for that event.) Clarke took the step of resigning his senate secretarial duties as part of his effort to devote more time to his financially strapped newspaper. In a letter to Caro from Montpelier, he wrote that the amount of time taken up by the secretary's job was "a real sacrifice," but that by freeing himself of that office's responsibilities he would henceforth be "laboring to get completely out of debt, and to make you happy. I shall do it."[112]

Clarke's renewed commitment to ending his personal money woes did not ease his financial distress. By late 1852, although the archrival *Sentinel* had ceased publishing its daily paper earlier that year, Clarke's

financial status, and that of the *Free Press,* reached a point of desperation. The end finally came in April 1853, when Clarke sold the *Free Press* to George W. Benedict, a former professor at the University of Vermont, and his son, George G. Benedict. Shortly thereafter, according to a notice published in the *Free Press,* he put at auction his household goods, including furniture, stoves, carpeting, and "several fine framed Engravings, books, pamphlets, etc." The auction notice declared that "Everything not previously disposed of at private sale will be sold without reserve."[113] Within a few days he and Caro—they had no children—were gone from Burlington and the state of Vermont for what would be a remarkable and tragic interlude in Texas.

The occasion for the Clarkes' sojourn to the distant Texas frontier was the invitation DeWitt received to join a railway expedition headed by former Vermont Governor Charles Paine that also included DeWitt's uncle, Orville Clark, who was a New York State lawyer and businessman, and Philip Greely, Jr., a Boston businessman who once served as collector for the Port of Boston. Paine planned his expedition for a stay in Texas of no more than three or four months. The trip's stated purpose was to gather information to advise the New York-based Atlantic & Pacific Railroad Company (A&P) regarding the feasibility of a projected rail route through Texas along the 32nd parallel that would connect Mississippi River railheads with the Pacific Ocean. In fact, however, the expedition's central goal was to attract political and financial support for construction of the A&P road. DeWitt's role in the delegation seems to have been primarily in this regard—as publicist in the railroad promotional efforts. Thus, as the group moved across Texas from Galveston, on the coast, then to Houston and further inland to Austin, they dispatched letters to newspapers across the eastern United States, and also provided presentations and statements to interested Texans about the ease and practicality of the proposed Texas route for completing the intercontinental railroad.[114]

Paine's unexpected death, from dysentery, on July 6, 1853, at the little frontier village of Waco, disrupted the tour. Within weeks all members of the delegation, except Clarke and Caro, had retreated to Galveston and departed the state. The Clarkes remained in Texas, with DeWitt continuing to beat the drum for the foundering A&P project and for other rail ventures in the state on behalf of a group of speculators that included his uncle Orville Clark, former Texas Attorney General Ebenezer Allen, and others. The A&P and other projects eventually collapsed, leaving DeWitt marooned without further prospects in the state or the means for returning to Vermont.

It was this situation that prompted Clarke, reluctant but "homesick,"

to write to Ezra Meech for help. He asked for a loan of five hundred dollars that could provide the means for his and Caro's return. To assure Meech of repayment, Clarke pledged one of the few possessions he had been unwilling to auction in April—his personal library. Although his stepfather reacted with dismay at what he viewed as his stepson's "Texas failure," he nevertheless grudgingly dispatched the money, telling DeWitt's mother that he would "give it . . . instead of remembering him in his will." In the spring of 1856, DeWitt and Caro finally made their return to Vermont.[115]

Back home in Burlington, Clarke quickly set about financially reestablishing himself. By the fall of 1856 he "found business to go into." Also, according to his mother, "DeWitt succeeded partly to make and partly to borrow money to make . . . payments" for the purchase of a house near the town's market district. Caro raised additional funds for the family by giving music lessons, and his mother, who moved into the house with them in the fall after the death of Judge Meech, contributed her surprisingly small widow's annuity.[116]

Clarke also quickly became immersed in civic and political affairs, reestablishing old affiliations and connections. Within days of his return he gained election as a delegate from Shelburne to the Vermont Constitutional Convention gathering in January 1857. He was elected secretary for these proceedings, which earned historical notoriety for rejecting an ordinance of the Council of Censors in 1855–1856 (dominated by the American Party, also known as the Know Nothings) that promoted proportional representation by calling for election of ninety delegates to the Constitutional Convention apportioned by county by population rather than by town.[117]

The most important step in his "return" came on April 8, 1858, when he issued the prospectus for a new newspaper, the *Burlington Times,* with daily and weekly editions, owned and edited by Clarke. On May 18, the first issue rolled off the presses. With the old Whig party now dismantled in the state, Clarke editorially embraced its successor, the new Republican Party. The *Times*' publication thus launched not only a subscription rivalry with the daily *Free Press,* his old paper, but also a struggle over which of the two would be the editorial voice of the region's Republican followers.

The *Free Press* editors initially greeted this new journalistic challenge in a superficially comradely way. They welcomed Clarke "again to the fraternity of the Press," but expressed "regret, on his account, that his success in the objects which have called him from the State for several years past has not been such as to prevent him from returning to the toilsome life of the editor of a small country Daily."[118] The *Free Press*

editors observed that the "platform" of the *Times,* which Clarke published in the paper's initial issue, did "not appear to differ from our own at present, enough to afford much promise of political sparring between the two Dailies."[119]

Clarke promptly disabused his rival of any such expectations. He responded that the *Times* saw its job as filling "a want in the community that seemed to be imperfectly supplied." The *Free Press,* he wrote, was in the grip of "morbid and chronic lifelessness." Had it not been for that paper's "extraordinary dullness and vacuity," and its "grave inanity," the *Times* would never have been started.[120]

Clarke's *Times* venture was an almost immediate popular success. During the fall 1858 legislative session the new newspaper claimed the same number of thirty-day subscribers among state legislators as the *Free Press.*[121] Of more significance, by 1860 its general subscription list and circulation was "nearly double that of any other Daily paper in the State."[122] Nevertheless, the *Times* foundered. Perpetual shortages of funds kept it from competing successfully with the *Free Press.*[123] Shortfalls in advertising profits and the weakness of the *Times* weekly edition apparently contributed heavily to Clarke's difficulties (the *Free Press* boasted 1,200 subscribers to its weekly number, compared to the *Times*' 800). As T. D. Seymour Bassett has noted, Clarke quickly faced a situation in which "the cost of publishing a daily was . . . more than the income from subscriptions."[124]

For two years Clarke tried mightily to make a financial success of his newspaper, while admitting to his readers, "the life of the Editor of a Daily paper is of no little drudgery."[125] Finally, in October 1860, with the regional and national economy faltering and his own financial obligations mounting, he sold the *Times* at auction to G. H. Bigelow, for $950. Clarke kept the title of "editor" for a few months more, but by mid-March 1861 he had severed all connections with the paper.

In contrast to his previous departure from journalism, Clarke this time possessed a secure place to go. In early spring 1861 he accepted a position in Washington, D.C., as executive clerk of the U.S. Senate. Clarke had explored prospects for a federal clerkship on two previous occasions, both coming to naught. The chances for success in this bid for a Washington patronage job had been greatly improved with the November 1860 electoral victory that swept into power Abraham Lincoln and the Republicans. Clarke was politically well positioned in the competition for the appointment with a strong and lengthy record of political service—most recently as a member of the five-man Vermont slate of Lincoln presidential electors. With strong support again from Senator Foote, who now occupied the powerful position of Senate

president pro tempore, Clarke was able to acquire this "plum" Senate appointment.

The clerkship duties involved keeping the record of Senate actions on all treaties and nominations and publishing the record as the *Senate Executive Journals.* Such actions occurred in strict executive session, and the executive clerk's office, near the senate floor, "was often compared to a bank, for its elaborate metal bars and large safes for protecting secret documents."[126] It was a prestigious and highly sensitive post and Clarke's acquisition of it was a signal tribute to the Vermont newspaperman.

Clarke and his wife traveled to Washington for each year's Senate term, where they set up housekeeping in either the National Hotel or the Ebbett Hotel in the center of the city. Beyond his clerkship chores, he involved himself again in transcontinental railroad schemes and occasionally published eyewitness accounts in the *New York Times* of Civil War military engagements in the Baltimore-Washington area.[127] Of most importance personally for Clarke, the job was a financial windfall, assuring a "fine salary" for the first time in his life. He managed within a short period of time to complete payments on his Burlington home and to achieve, finally, genuine financial security.[128] He occupied the post until his retirement in 1869.

Clarke returned from Washington to Vermont, where he quickly again took up the activity of a "public man." He campaigned for, and won, election to the Burlington school board of commissioners, and was a representative to the 1870 Vermont Constitutional Convention, which he served as secretary. A few months later, on August 31, 1870, he died at his home off Pearl Street at the center of Burlington.[129]

Clarke's life intersected the main currents of Vermont's antebellum years. He was, by turns, a lawyer, businessman, journalist, public official, and—with his wife Caro—a notable participant in the period's religious ferment. Through it all, however, his vocation, practically, remained that of a patronage politician. Clarke was not one of the era's major public figures. He was, nevertheless, one of its persistent "public men," a talented, exuberant, necessary political cog whose career offers a nexus for his times.

Notes

[1] Abby Maria Hemenway, ed., *Vermont Historical Gazetteer. A Magazine Embracing a History of Each Town, Civil, Ecclesiastical, Biographical and Military* (various publishers, 1860–1892), 3: 1,856 (hereafter cited as *VHG*).

[2] Abby Maria Hemenway, *Clarke Papers, Mrs. Meech and her Family* (Burlington, Vt.: The Author, 1878), 81 (hereafter cited as *Clarke Papers*).

[3] Hemenway, *VHG*, 3: 856.

[4] Ibid., 92.

[5] Ibid., 57.
[6] Ibid., 79.
[7] Ibid., 115.
[8] Ibid., 80.
[9] Ibid., 84–88.
[10] Ibid., 88.
[11] Ibid., 113–114.
[12] Jacob G. Ullery, *Men of Vermont: An Illustrated Biographical History of Vermonters and Sons of Vermonters* (Brattleboro, Vt.: Transcript Publishing Co. 1894), 145.
[13] *Clarke Papers,* 53.
[14] Ullery, *Men of Vermont,* 145.
[15] Hiram Colton, *Genealogical and Family History of the State of Vermont* (Lewis Publishing Company, 1903), 2: 585.
[16] *Clarke Papers,* 92, 93.
[17] Burlington *Free Press,* 19 July 1849.
[18] *Clarke Papers,* 56–58.
[19] Ibid., 119–120.
[20] Nelson, an army lieutenant, died in 1832, at age 24, in a duel at New Orleans.
[21] *Clarke Papers,* 275, 252.
[22] Ibid., 197–98, 135.
[23] Ibid., 152, 148–49, 146.
[24] Ibid., 185.
[25] Richard Hofstadter, *The Idea of a Party System; the Rise of Legitimate Opposition in the United States, 1780–1840* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), 242.
[26] *Clarke Papers,* 194.
[27] Ibid., 233.
[28] Walter Hill Crockett, *Vermont, the Green Mountain State,* 5 vols. (New York: The Century History Company, 1921), 3: 306.
[29] *Clarke Papers,* 195.
[30] Ibid., 253.
[31] Ibid., 245.
[32] Ibid., 83.
[33] Burlington *Free Press,* 23 January 1849.
[34] *Clarke Papers,* 212–215.
[35] Crockett, *Vermont,* 3: 311.
[36] E. S. Marsh, "High Spots in Brandon History," *Vermonter* (July 1932): 154–55.
[37] Eastman Papers, box 41, 1844 folder; J. E. Dow to Eastman, 21 March 1844. Vermont Historical Society, Barre, Vt.
[38] *Clarke Papers,* 184.
[39] Ibid., 199–200.
[40] *Vermont Statesman* [quoting *Democratic Ploughman*], 13 July 1842.
[41] *Clarke Papers,* 203.
[42] Ibid., 204.
[43] Edward Chase Kirkland, *Men, Cities, and Transportation: A Study in New England History,* 2 vols. (Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard University Press, 1948), 1: 167.
[44] *Rutland Herald,* 30 July 1845.
[45] Ibid., 16 October 1845.
[46] E. P. Walton, ed., *Records of the Governor and Council of the State of Vermont* (Montpelier: J. & J. M. Poland, 1879), 7: 487.
[47] *Clarke Papers,* 235–37.
[48] Hemenway, *VHG,* 3: 1,112–1,114.
[49] M. D. Gilman, *The Bibliography of Vermont* (Burlington, Vt.: Free Press Association, 1897), 220.
[50] *Rutland Herald,* 10 March 1840.
[51] Leon S. Gay, ed. *Brandon, Vermont: A History of the Town Dedicated to Its Citizens, 1761–1961* (Brandon: The Town, 1962), 204–205.
[52] Gilman, *Bibliography of Vermont,* 212; Hemenway, *VHG,* 1: 554.
[53] Hemenway, *VHG,* 1: 554; T. D. Seymour Bassett, *The Growing Edge: Vermont Villages, 1840–1880* (Montpelier: Vermont Historical Society, 1992), 104–106.
[54] Bernard Weisberger, *The American Newspaper Man* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), 65–66.
[55] James L. Crouthamel, *James Watson Webb; A Biography* (Middletown, Ct.: Wesleyan University Press, 1969), 15.

[56] Clarke to "Nat," 28 April 1846, in Timothy Follett papers, Stevens Collection, box 45, Vermont State Archives and Records Administration, Middlesex, Vt. (hereafter cited as Follett papers).
[57] *Clarke Papers*, 210.
[58] *Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Vermont, October Session, 1845* (Windsor: Bishop & Tracy, 1846), 316.
[59] *Acts and Resolves Passed by the Legislature of the State of Vermont at Their October Session, 1839* (Montpelier: E. P. Walton and Sons, 1839), 9.
[60] Clarke to "Nat," 28 April 1846.
[61] *Clarke Papers*, 211.
[62] Ibid., 233; Burlington *Sentinel*, 28 October 1852; Burlington *Free Press*, 1 September 1870.
[63] Crouthamel, *James Watson Webb*, 15.
[64] Burlington *Free Press*, 10 July 1846.
[65] Ibid.
[66] Ibid., 3 June 1848.
[67] Ibid., 18 July 1848.
[68] Ibid., 9 January 1849.
[69] Ibid., 11 May 1850.
[70] Ibid., 17 June 1848.
[71] Quoted in Edward P. Brynn, "Vermont's Political Vacuum of 1845–1856 and the Emergence of the Republican Party," *Vermont History* 38 (Spring 1970): 118.
[72] Burlington *Free Press*, 29 November 1850.
[73] Ibid., 10 July 1846.
[74] Ibid.
[75] *Clarke Papers*, 220.
[76] Ibid., 227.
[77] Burlington *Free Press*, 18 June 1847.
[78] *Clarke Papers*, 217.
[79] Ibid., 247.
[80] Ibid., 259.
[81] Ibid., 220.
[82] Ibid., 233.
[83] Ibid., 217.
[84] Burlington *Free Press*, 10 April 1848.
[85] Crockett, *Vermont*, 3: 352; T. D. Seymour Bassett, "The First Vermont Dailies: A Chapter in Newspaper History," *Vermont Quarterly* 14 (October, 1946): 155.
[86] Burlington *Free Press*, 31 March 1848.
[87] Ibid., 2 January 1849.
[88] Ibid., 2 April 1849.
[89] Ibid.
[90] U.S. Census, Burlington, Vermont, Manuscript Schedule I, Seventh Census, 1850.
[91] Robert G. Keenan and Francis R. Privé, eds., *History of Saint Joseph Parish, Burlington, Vermont, 1830–1987* (Burlington: History Committee of Saint Joseph Parish, 1988), 24.
[92] Burlington *Free Press*, 2 July 1851.
[93] Ibid., 14 July 1851.
[94] Ibid., 1 October 1851.
[95] DeWitt Clinton Clarke to J. M. Weeks, 17 January 1848, in *Clarke Papers*, 228–229.
[96] See *Vermont Watchman and State Journal*, 23 March 1848.
[97] Hemenway, *VHG* 3: 1,114; *Clarke Papers*, 245.
[98] *Revised Statutes, 1839*, 54–55. See also Burlington *Free Press*, 26 January 1849.
[99] *Clarke Papers*, 197.
[100] Ibid., 244.
[101] Ibid., 295; Burlington *Free Press*, 27 March 1849.
[102] See [Caroline T. Clarke] *Lizzie Maitland*, ed. O[restes]. A. Brownson (New York: E. Dunigan & Brothers, 1857), vii–xii.
[103] *Clarke Papers*, 251.
[104] Ibid.
[105] Ibid., 254.
[106] Frances Harriet Babb, "Abby Maria Hemenway (1828–1890), Historian, Anthologist, and Poet." Master's thesis, University of Maine, 1939, 47, 50.
[107] *Clarke Papers*, 273.
[108] Ibid., 271.
[109] *History of St. Joseph Parish, Burlington*, A15. For discussion of Catholicism in antebellum Vermont, see Deborah Pickman Clifford, *The Passion of Abby Hemenway: Memory, Spirit, and the*

Making of History (Montpelier: Vermont Historical Society, 2001), 160–180. See also Clifford's article, "Abby Hemenway's Road to Rome," *Vermont History* 63 (1995): 197–213.

[110] *Clarke Papers*, 260; Burlington *Free Press*, July 22, 1852; Hemenway, *VHG*, 4: 423.

[111] *Acts and Resolves Passed by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont at the October Session, 1851* (Montpelier: E. P. Walton & Sons, 1851), 39.

[112] *Clarke Papers*, 257.

[113] Burlington *Free Press*, 5 April 1853.

[114] See Gene Sessions, "The Last Days of Charles Paine," *Vermont History* 53 (Summer, 1985): 167–184.

[115] *Clarke Papers*, 59–61.

[116] Ibid., 68, 72.

[117] Crockett, *Vermont*, 3: 436–438; Paul S. Gillies and D. Gregory Sanford, eds., *Records of the Council of Censors of the State of Vermont* (Montpelier: Secretary of State, 1991), 605–609; Michael Sherman, Gene Sessions, and P. Jeffrey Potash, *Freedom and Unity: A History of Vermont* (Barre, Vt.: Vermont Historical Society, 2004), 276–278.

[118] Burlington *Free Press*, 5 April 1858.

[119] Ibid., 18 May 1858.

[120] Burlington *Times*, 10 October 1860, 27 October 1858.

[121] Ibid., 27 October 1858.

[122] Ibid., 10 October 1860.

[123] W. S. Rann, ed., *History of Chittenden County Vermont* (Syracuse, N.Y.: D. Mason & Co., 1886), 274.

[124] Bassett, "The First Vermont Dailies," 157–158.

[125] Burlington *Times*, 28 July 1858.

[126] Letter to author from Donald A. Ritchie, Historical Office, United States Senate, 10 July 1987.

[127] Burlington *Free Press*, 14 July 1864, 19 July 1864.

[128] *Clarke Papers*, 71–73.

[129] City of Burlington, Vermont, Office of City Clerk, Index of Deaths, 1857–1964. Burlington *Free Press and Times*, 1 September 1870.

IN THEIR WORDS

This occasional section offers readers selections from manuscripts—usually letters and diaries—in public and private collections, with commentary, elucidation, and editing by the owner or curator of the documents. Information about access and cataloging details appears at the end of the article text.

Making It Right: The Civil War Letters of John Wilmot

By MARJORIE J. STRONG AND PAUL G. ZELLER

The story of John Wilmot is as old as soldiers and wars. From his twelve surviving wartime letters at the Vermont Historical Society we learn that when he went off to war in 1861, he left his girlfriend, Saphronia Ann Prescott, pregnant. He spent the rest of his short life trying to make it right.[1]

John Wilmot, the son of Willard W. and Annette (Towle) Wilmot, was born in 1842 in Thetford, Vermont. In the 1860 U.S. census he was living with and working as a farm laborer for a Mr. James Tyler in Post Mills. This is how he came to know Saphronia.[2]

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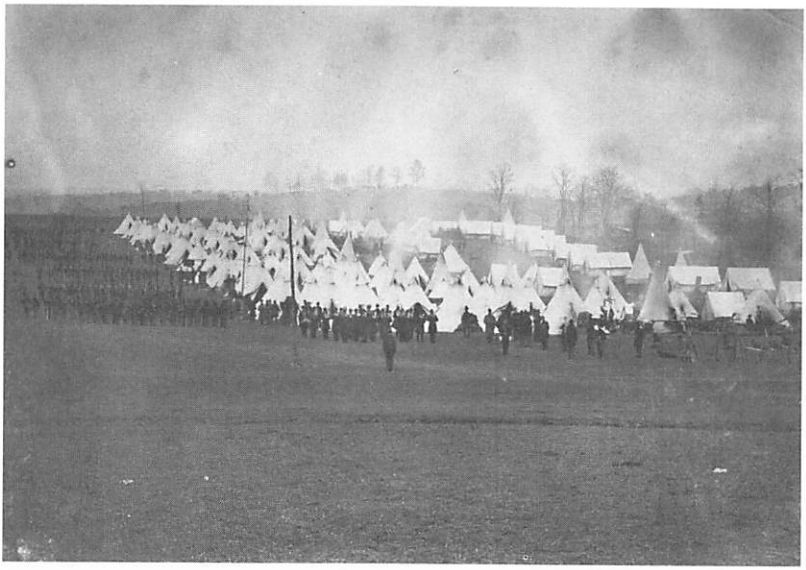
Saphronia, the second daughter and third child of Truman and Permelia (Stowell) Prescott, was born on August 8, 1838, in Fairlee, Vermont. Though her father appears to have been a relatively prosperous farmer, the family had its ups and downs. The Fairlee town records show that Saphronia's older sister, Melency, had an illegitimate child in 1857.[3]

The governor of Vermont, Erastus Fairbanks, ordered the formation of the 4th and 5th Vermont Infantry Regiments a little over a week after the Union defeat at Bull Run on July 21, 1861. Answering the governor's call, John Wilmot enlisted in Company H, 4th Vermont Infantry Regiment on September 9, 1861. At the time of his enlistment Wilmot was nineteen years old, stood five feet, eight and one-half inches tall, had grey eyes and dark hair, and cited his occupation as a farmer. The recruiting of the regiments was accelerated and they rendezvoused in Brattleboro over a three-day period between September 12 and 14. On September 14, before the troops were even outfitted, Governor Fairbanks received a request from the secretary of war to send the two regiments to Washington as soon as possible. The 4th Vermont was mustered into service on September 21 and that evening boarded a train heading for Washington, D.C.[4]

On September 28, the 4th Vermont joined the 2nd and 3rd Vermont Infantry Regiments at Camp Advance in Arlington, Virginia. On October 9 the regiments moved a few miles north to Camp Griffin, located near the present-day Central Intelligence Agency headquarters in Langley, where they remained until the spring of 1862. Here the men spent the winter training, building fortifications, and doing picket duty protecting Washington.[5]

The first surviving letter written by Private John Wilmot was written from Camp Griffin on March 5, 1862. It is apparent from the letter that Wilmot had known for some time that Saphronia was pregnant and he was determined to help support her. At this time she was living with her parents in Post Mills. Unfortunately, John had already assigned his state pay to his father, Willard Wilmot. The $100 bounty Wilmot refers to was an enlistment bonus paid by the federal government to entice the men to volunteer; however, they would not receive it until their enlistment was up. The $7 state pay he mentions was a state supplement to the $13 a month the federal government paid to privates, which would hardly support a single man, much less a married one. The state pay was either held in escrow for the soldier until he was discharged or paid monthly in an allotment to his spouse or family as designated by the soldier. Wilmot also mentions being under age. At that time a man had to be at least twenty-one years old to enlist in the army. If he was



Winter quarters of the 4th Vermont Infantry Regiment at Camp Griffin. Photographer: George H. Houghton.

younger, one of his parents had to sign his enlistment papers giving their approval. In his letters, Wilmot sometimes calls Saphronia by her middle name, Ann. The spelling in the transcribed letters is as John Wilmot wrote it. In some cases punctuation has been added for clarity.

Camp Griffin, Va.
March 5th, 1862

Dear Ann
Your verry kind letter of the 26th Feb. was duly received. I was verry much pleased to hear that your health was so good. I hope this will find you well. My health is fast improving but I am not able to do dewty yet. I came from the Hospital Feb 27th and it seams good to get into camp again. If the Regt. should move in a few days I shal be likely to go to Washington to the general Hospital for they want none that are not able to carry a knapsack to go on the march. I dont want you to say anything about it but it would not be strang if Lyman Clement was at home within six weeks for they are makeing out his discharge now. He has done no dewty of any amount four months or more. I dont know but I could get a discharge if I should try for one but if I get a discharge now I should not get my $100.00 bounty and that is what I should like pretty well. You spoke of my letting you have my state pay of $7.00 dollars a month but it is too late now for I have made Father my attorney so that he now has the power of drawing it; and he can do as he pleases with it for I am not of age and you

know had I known a little sooner how things were I would [have] made arrangements a little different; but as I wrote you before I shal let you have twenty dollars the next two months pay I get . . . I cant think of any more to write be verry careful of your health. Please write soon. My respects to your Father and mother. Yours with much love from one who thinks of you continually.

John Wilmot[6]

In mid-March of 1862 the Army of the Potomac started deploying over a period of several weeks to the Virginia Peninsula in an attempt to capture Richmond. By April 5, the Vermont Brigade, consisting of the 2nd through the 6th Vermont Regiments, was in upper Newport News on the east bank of the Warwick River facing the rebel fortifications on the other side. Here the brigade would remain until May 4. On April 16, several companies of the 3rd and 6th Vermont were sent across the Warwick River in an ill-fated attempt to stop the rebels from reinforcing their fortifications. The 4th Vermont supported the operation with sharpshooters, as Wilmot explained in a letter written on April 21. The two men from Company H that he mentions being wounded were Private Francis A. Page of Barnet, who was given a disability discharge on December 12, 1862, and Private John P. Harris of Danville, who was given a disability discharge September 18, 1862.

Camp near Yorktown
Apr. 21st, 1862

Dear Ann

I now take my pen to let you know that I am yet in the land of the liveing. I am well and hope these lines will find you the same. You are in my thoughts where ever I am you are before me. I suppose you are having plenty of new sugar now up in Vt. I hope you will eat some for your absent and loveing friend. I suppose you have heard of our engagement of April 16. Six Co. from our Regt. were deployed as skirmishers in the woods opposite the fort consequently wee lost but few men. Our los was two killed and nine wounded. The los of our Co. was two wounded both with the same ball and both were wounded through the lungs. One was F. A. Page who worked for Calvin Coburn a year ago last summer. Wee Vt. boys just begin to find out something about war. Each have to take ther turn in working nights on the breast works that are to protect our artillery. The third, fourth, fifth and sixth Vt. Regiments worked night before last. The rebbels fired upon us with their rifles at four different times but wee saw the blaze of their guns in time to sit down so that the balls passed harmlessly over our heads or lodged in the bank of earth before us and a battery near by us gave them a few charges of grape shot which with the fire of our pickets drove them behind their works. I think there is verry careless firing on boath sides. I can write no more this time. Please send me a postage stamp when you write. Perhaps you had better send me three or four for wee cannot get

them here. I should not send to you for them but it takes the last one I have to send this letter and if my life is spared I will try and pay you for them. Love to all from your true friend.

John Wilmot[7]

After this last letter there is a large gap in Wilmot's letters and the next one was not written until November. During this time the Vermont Brigade saw plenty of action. The 4th Vermont was involved in the battles of Williamsburg, Golding's Farm, Savage's Station, and White Oak Swamp. Then, with the rest of the Army of the Potomac, it marched into Maryland, where it was involved in the battles of Crampton's Gap and Antietam. After the battle of Antietam, the Vermont Brigade garrisoned the town of Hagerstown, Maryland, until the end of October, when it rejoined the Army of the Potomac and marched to New Baltimore, Virginia, and went into camp. It was from New Baltimore that Wilmot wrote the next letter, dated November 12. In this letter he mentions the baby being born. In fact, she was born April 23, 1862, and was named Rohessie Ardelle Wilmot, but was called Hessie by her mother. Saphronia stayed with her parents during her pregnancy. Her mother referred to Saphronia's stay as "her confinement" and the baby was born in her parents' house. Wilmot also mentions in the letter seeing Privates Joel Aldrich and John F. Abbott, both in Company B, 6th Vermont, and from West Fairlee, which is only two miles from Post Mills. They were apparently acquainted with Saphronia and would have undoubtedly learned of her pregnancy in letters from home. They were, however, too gentlemanly to mention it to Wilmot. He again is very concerned with supporting her and tells her that if he survives the war, he will marry her and "remove the stain which has fallen upon their family." The person Wilmot refers to as Chase in this letter is Saphronia's older brother, Truman Chase Prescott, who was married to Sarah A. Emerton, formerly a neighbor of the Wilmot family. Frank, Chase, and Sarah are their children.

Camp near New Baltimore, Va.
Nov. 12th, 1862

My Dear Friend

Yours of Nov. 2nd was received this morning. I had nearly given up all hopes of ever hearing from you again but the long looked for letter has at length arrived. And very glad am I to hear that you and the baby are both well. I hope this will find you Both well. My health has been good since I last wrote to you and is still good. I have had a sore on my right elbow for three months past. I had it opened two months ago and it has been a running sore ever since. It is not a verry large sore the raw place being about as large over as a ten cent piece. I have never been excused from dewty with it until today. I am

excused from drilling because when I am in the ranks the others crowd against me and hurt it & besides when I have a bandage on it I cannot handle my gun so well. Some times that arm is nearly twice as large as the other but I hope it will soon get well. When I wrote to you before wee were at Hagerstown, MD. Wee started from there on the 29th of Oct. and have not stopped over two days in a place since. You have received all the orders and you say you have even received the money on the last order so that my pay is all straight now. I mean to do all I can for you and save all the money that I possibly can. I would sine my state pay to you if I could but when I first came out here I made my Father my attorney to draw my state pay and I cannot change it now but if I live to come back home I think Father will give the most of it back to me. And if I had known how you were last fall two weeks before I did I should have given my state pay to you at that time. We have not been payed off for four months & I have not had any money for so long a time that I have almost forgotten when I had the last. When you write me again write me all you know about the friends at Post Mills. Tel me all the news you can. Tel Frank Chase & Sarah to be good children and tell Chase if he does not write to me I don't know as I shall come to see him when I get home. I have seen Joel Aldrich and Frank Abbott. They both spoke of you but said nothing against you. They are in the 6th Regt. Saphrona [*sic*] you must keep up good courage and spirits and not feel dessolate for I don't feel as though it was my fate to die in the army and if my life is spared wee will live enough happier together when I get home to make up the time that I am here. I don't think thare is any nead of my telling you to take care of our ofspring for I know you are too warm hearted to neglect the little darling. Give my respects [to] your Parents and tel them that if God spares my life I will remove the stain which has fallen upon their family if it is in my power to do so. I want you to write to me as soon as you get this and write to mee once a week without fail if you donot hear from me and I will write to you once a week if I have a chance to write as often as that. You will please always direct your letters to Washington, DC until I write you otherwise. I have now got wher it is hard to get postage stamps and I would like to have you send me some in your next letter. I must now bid you good by with many good wishes from your loving friend John Wilmot

From John Wilmot
To S. A. Prescott
Post Mills
Vermont[8]

John Wilmot survived the battle of Fredericksburg on December 13, 1862, where the 4th Vermont had been on the skirmish line, losing eleven men killed and forty-five wounded, three of whom died of their wounds. The 4th Vermont went into winter camp near Falmouth, Virginia, where John Wilmot wrote to Saphronia on December 28. The person he refers to as Bush in the letter was one of his older brothers,

Bushrod W. Wilmot. He also mentions two other soldiers. The first is possibly Private John H. Fuller of Chelsea, who was in Company D, 2nd Vermont. The second is M. Hill who is Private Myron D. Hill of Thetford in Company A, 3rd Vermont.

Camp near Falmouth, Va.
Dec. 28th, 1862

Dearest Saphronia
Your favor of Dec 14th and of the 20th are at hand and I hasten a reply. I am verry glad to hear from you so often and know that you and the little girl are well. I hope Frank and the rest of the family will soon get over their bad colds. My health stil continues good. I have received all the stamps you have sent to me and am verry thankful for them. You will not need to send me any more at present as I have a plenty on hand now. Bush [Bushrod] has sent me some in his last two letters. You spoke of our eating apples togather in the long winter evenings at some future time. I hope and trust wee may be allowed to. To speak the truth I have never felt as though I should die in the army. My way is Saphrona [*sic*] to always look on the bright side of things and I think it is the best way dont you. We are not having verry cold weather here now it does not freeze any nights. But the heavens are clouded and look like a storm. This winter has not been so cold as last winter was.

I think John Fuller was unlucky looseing his horse as he did. I donot know anything about M. Hill. I have not seen him since the battle. My Co. is now three miles away from our Regt. and the Brigade so you see I know nothing about them. Wee are now at Genl. Franklin's head quarters building stables for the cavalry horses and artillery horses. There are four Companies of our Regt. here H I D & K. You will Direct your letters the same as usual. I will now close hopeing and trusting all will be well with us in due time and my best wishes to all. I remain with much love your true friend.

John Wilmot
(Write soon)[9]

The 4th Vermont moved its camp in January 1863 to Belle Plain, where Wilmot wrote home on January 31. Again, he is concerned about his ability to support Saphronia since the regiment had not been paid for some time and tells her that he cannot reimburse her father for supporting her and the baby until he is out of the army.

Camp near Bell Plains, Va.
Jan. 31st, 1863

Dearest Ann
Your favor of the 21st came to hand the 28th. Was happy to hear from you once more and know that you and the little girl are both well. All I can say is I hope [you] will continue to be blessed with good health. My health is quite good at present. About the army being payed off wee have seen no pay master yet but all of us want to verry much. Wee see by the papers that our pay master has the money to pay us with but he has not shown himself among us yet.

You spoke about being out of money. Well if you could get along without any this pay day I shal send it to another place where I have made arrangements to have it kept for me until I come home. But if you cannot get along without some I will have to send it to you. I want to have a little readdy money to use if I ever come home you know, and if I don't live to come home it will be so arranged that you will get it. As for your Father I cannot pay him while in the Army. But if I live to come home sound as I now am I shal endeavor to pay him for taking care of my family. Wee have been have a hard storm here. It rained the 27th. The 28th it snowed all day and I think if it had not melted a great deal whil it was falling there would have been 15 inches on a level but as it was there was about 6 or 8 inches on a level in the morning of the 29th. It is about half gon now the roads are in verry bad condition now. Maj. Genl. Joseph Hooker Commands the army now. Burnside played out pretty quick but I think he meant to do what was for the best but he seemed to have bad luck on all sides. I hope Hooker will have better success. Wee shal not be likely to move at present as the going is so bad now but I will close hopeing to hear from you soon. Love to all. You must kiss the baby for me many times and hope fore my safe and speedy and safe return. I remain as ever your faithful and loveing

John Wilmot[10]

Again writing from the camp near Falmouth on May 9, Wilmot tells of having a tumor removed from his back and being unable to perform duty for two months, which means he did not participate in the second battle of Fredericksburg on May 3, and Banks Ford on May 4.

Camp near Falmouth, Va.
May 9th, 1863

Dear Saphronia
Yours of May 3rd has just been received And imagine my surprise when I read in your letter that you had written me several letters but had received no answer to any. Now Saphrona [*sic*] I have not received a letter from you since March 3rd until today And in that letter you said not a word about the box which I sent for although you had ample time to get it. In your letter which I received today you said that you had not the money to get the things with that was a sufficient reason for not sending it to me. I suppose you think strange that I have not sent you any money of late. You see it is just here I had a Tumor cut out of my back nearly two months ago and have not done any dewty since the wound is not healed up yet and I don't know as it ever will be sound again. I mean to send you some more money some time. We have had another big fight on the other side of the Rappahannock. The rebels were too strong for us and we had to fall back across the river again. I cannot write any more now. Joel Aldrich has been here to see me today. He was in the fight but came out safe. My best respects to all and hoping to hear from you soon. I remain as ever your affectionate friend.

John Wilmot [11]

There is another large gap in Wilmot's letters between May 9 and the end of September 1863. In that span of time Wilmot participated in one of the largest and most crucial battles of the American Civil War—Gettysburg. The Vermont Brigade, along with the rest of the Sixth Corps, was on the extreme left of the Union line and saw virtually no action, except for the 4th Vermont. On the third day of the battle, July 3, the 4th Vermont was on the skirmish line and had one man severely wounded. On July 10, the Vermont Brigade had quite a fight with the retreating Confederate forces at Funkstown, Maryland.[12]

The next letter was written from the Culpeper camp on September 26. In this letter Wilmot mentions leaving New York City, where the Vermont Brigade had been sent to suppress the draft riots. The state of New York implemented the federally mandated draft on July 11 and riots broke out in New York City two days later. Between July 13 and 16 the rioters caused $1,500,000 worth of property damage and killed more than a dozen people, most of them African Americans. The draft went off successfully without any more riots and the Vermonters began their journey south on September 13, arriving in camp near Culpeper, Virginia, on September 22.

Wilmot writes in this letter that he is not able to perform duty again because of the wound where the tumor was removed, and that he expects to be transferred to the Invalid Corps or a general hospital. The Invalid Corps was established in April 1863 and provided a place for officers and men who could not perform full combat duty to perform in limited duty positions such as clerks and guards. The name was changed in March 1864 to the Veteran Reserve Corps. Wilmot's back apparently improved, since he was not transferred out of his regiment. He again sends money home to Saphronia in the letter. The person he refers to as Frank is one of Saphronia's younger brothers, Francis P. Prescott, who was apparently drafted but failed the physical examination.

Camp near Culpepper, Va.
Sept. 26th, 1863

Dear Annie

Your favor of the 15th came to hand last night and right glad I was to hear from you once more and know that both you and my little girl were well and I sincerely hope this may find you stil in the enjoyment of good health. My health is not so good as it has been. That old sore on my back is troubleing me again. I would get my Discharge if I could but it is impossible to get a Discharge now in the field. I am going to the Invalid Corps or to a General Hospital as soon as they have a chance to send me. When we left New York my back was not sore any and I was on dewty. But as soon as I began to march and carry a load it came on again as bad as ever and I shal try to do no more dewty until it is entirely well And I am satisfied it never will get

well as long as I march I was sorry to hear that your Fathers health was so poor and I hope he will soon get well. I think Frank was lucky to be inspected out when he was drafted for he never could stand it to be a Soldier. You wished to know what I was going to do when I got home. If I live to get home I shal get Married the first thing I do if any one will have me. Farther than that I cannot tel you And if any one asks you again what I am going to do you tel them as I tel you. But I think I can find some way to get a liveing. I have no more to write now. Enclosed I send five $5.00 dollars. I am as ever with much love.

John Wilmot[13]

After several brushes with the Confederates at Rappahannock Station and Mine Run, the Army of the Potomac went into winter camp in the vicinity of Brandy Station, Virginia, where it would remain through the winter of 1863–1864. In a letter written to Saphronia on December 13, Wilmot broaches the subject of reenlisting and asks her opinion. With the various bounties available he could earn a little over $600 and, more importantly, a thirty-day furlough.

Camp near Brandy Station, Va.
Dec. 13th, 1863

Dear Annie
I once more take my pen in hand to let you know that I am yet alive & have not forgotten you & my little girl. Although many miles from you & surrounded by the rough scenes & enjoyments of camp life If such I be allowed term it. Yes I am surrounded by many War worn & hardened friends & companions. Hardened did I say? Yes they are hardened to the endurance & privations of true Soldiers & Patriots, defenders of their Country's laws against the attempts of a maliceous & despotic Tyrant Who has wantonly attempted to overthrow one of the best & Noblest Governments on the face of the globe. But with Gods help I think we shall succeed in subdueing him & his petty hord of hirelings. Poor misguided & ignorant men who now begin to see the uselessness of resistance But are either too proud or else ashamed to return to loyalty And enjoy the blessings of a peaceful country once more. But I think these hardened Vetrans of ours will show those poor misled wretches that the only hope for their salvation is to return to their homes as peaceful citizens of the United States. Thare has been a great deal of talk in our camps of late on the subject of old soldiers reenlisting. Thare are not many in my company who will reenlist but in some companies and regiments nearly all of the old soldiers have decided to go for three years more. The inducements are good. $402.00 Government bounty with the State bounty of $125.00 for old vetrans besides which they get the $100.00 bounty from Government for the term now nearly expired & they of course will get the town bounty as they would count on the quota from their respective towns. But allowing they do not get the town bounty it amounts to $627.00 and the regular monthly pay the same as now. What do you think Annie had I better go in again. I forgot to

tel you too all that reenlist are granted a furlow of thirty days. Let me know in your next what you think I had better do. My health continues good and I truly hope this will [find] my dear ones enjoying that great blessing. Yours as ever from your constant but absent Soldier.

John Wilmot[14]

John Wilmot did reenlist on December 16 and got his bounties and his thirty day furlough. While he was home he married Saphronia Ann Prescott in Post Mills, on January 17, 1864. He also rented a house so she no longer had to live with her parents. In his first letter after he returned to Brandy Station, written on Sunday, February 14th, 1864, Wilmot tells Saphronia how much he loves her and asks how she is getting along in their new home. In this letter, Wilmot mentions Melency, Saphronia's older sister, and the possibility of her marriage. Melency married George Parker of Topsham on February 29, 1864. As well, he mentions Emma, Saphronia's younger sister.

Brandy Station, Va.
Feb. 14th, 1864

My Dear Annie

I suppose you are thinking of me at this moment. I cannot help thinking of you and my little Hessie all the time. Yes Ann you in my thoughts every moment. But Ann my dear I donot mourn over our sepperation. No I feel that we are to be sepperated only for a reason And I now feel you are min all mine And I now have something to live for and some one to love and love me. And now my dear Girl if you ever feel lonely remember that I love you as passionately as on the eve before we parted. Oh no dearest Girl sepperation does not cool the ardor of my love But Dearest I will not dwell too long upon the subject.

Has Father got his sleigh fills mended yet. We came near haveing a serious time of it for I thought old Charley would break his legs when he went down. I wonder if old Charley is lame any after such a breakdown. I hope he is not.

How are you getting along with your things for house keeping. Do you have good success. I hope and trust you do. Is little Hessie Fathers Lady now? I trust she is. I think Ann that I am the happiest man that ever lived it seems to me so & I hope I never shall have occasion to regret my choice.

Here the letter abruptly ends when Wilmot is tapped for picket duty and it is not resumed until Wednesday, February 17, when he returns to camp. Wilmot appears proud that the men in his company compliment him for getting married while he was home on furlough.

I will now try & finish my letter I had to go on Picket Sunday & stay three days It is verry cold & windy here today & has been for two days past We are expecting a storm after this cold snap The boys

all compliment me on my success while at home they say I was the smartest one of the crowed for I was the only one that got married from my Company Ann I want you to write to me every week & oftener if you can. I want you to get your picture & Hessies taken for me as soon as possible. Have them taken on separate plates. You can most likely guess the reason for that. I suppose Melency is married by this time & if she is give her my love & tel her I wish her a happy life. My love to Father & Mother & all the rest of the family. Tel Emma she must learn to write so as to write to me. My respects to all friends & tel Mrs. [illegible] that her brother Henry is well & a prisoner in Richmond. P. S. accept this from your ever affectionate Husband

John Wilmot[15]

As usual, in a letter written on March 14, 1864, Wilmot talks about getting money to Saphronia. He also seems euphoric over being married. The Frank Rowell he refers to is Private Francis H. Rowell of Thetford in Company D, 1st Vermont Cavalry Regiment.

Brandy Station, Va.
March 14th, 1864

My Dear Wife
Your kind favor of the 6th came to hand last evening And I was once more gratified to learn that my little family were enjoying that greatest of blessing good health. My health continues quite good and I am most thankfull for it. About the bounty if Willard [his father] gets it I think he will do as I ordered him to do with it that was to put $200.00 of it into the bank and give you the notes And take his pay out of the remaining $100.00 and give what was left to you which would probably be about $75.00 And if he gets the bounty for me I think he will do with it as I told him to. I saw Frank Rowell last evening. He is now only a few steps from us at Head Quarters 3rd Brigade. Frank seams to think evrything of his wife and I guess she thinks evrything of Frank for she writes three or four letters a week to him. I don't want you to write to me so often as that for I think you can manifest your love for me without writing so often as that. Do you remember about Frank and his wife huging and kissing the time that you saw them in Pratts Store. If it is true about their doing so I think they must have been smart. Now you were thare and you can tell whether it is true or not. I don't think we shall have any fighting here for a month at least and perhaps not for two or three months. We have been mustered for pay and expect to be payed within two or three weeks. I have sold my watch but it got damaged so that I did not get only $18.00 for it and I don't get that until pay day. I shall send you $50.00 and perhaps more when we are payed. I am glad that you love our little Daughter so much and I hope your love will not diminish with time but continue to strengthen. Oh Ann you don't know the love I have for my Dear Wife and child. I cannot find words to express my love for you. It is as pure as the morning dew or the unclouded rays of the noonday sun. I know not how soon we shall meet again. It may be many months and perhaps years but I hope and trust

and pray that a few months may bring us together again. A stout heart and steadfast performance of dewty Trusting in god for the consequences. Hoping to hear from you soon and sending many good wishes & warm kisses. I remain your affectionate husband with respects to all friends.

John Wilmot[16]

On April 14 Wilmot writes that he has been on picket again. In this letter he sends Saphronia two photographs of himself and suggests she offer one to her father's folks "if they want it." It would appear that although he married Saphronia as soon as he could, all was not forgiven. He also asks her to send him some black felt tape and elastic, presumably to make mourning armbands for the death of someone in his unit. By army regulation, a mourning arm band was made of black crepe and worn on the left arm, above the elbow. Also, since his last letter John Wilmot had been promoted to corporal.

Brandy Station, Va.
April 14th, 1864

My Dear Wife

Your kind favor of the 7th came to hand the 10th when I was on picket. I was once more pleased and gratified to learn that you were all well at home. My health is quite good. I got pretty well soaked out on picket for it rained nearly 36 hours. But it was a warm rain so we did not take cold and we had a good fire and plenty of wood. I was on picket three days. I came into camp the 11th.

This is the 4th pleasant day we have had since the storm. We haven't had over one fair day at a time between storms before this for three weeks.

I have got some Photographs and I am going to send two to you and you can let Father Ps [Prescott's] folks have one of them if they want it. Now my little dear you aint going to be such a foolish little simpleton as to get jealous of George & Melency for fear that Father and Mother will think more of them than they do of you and me O! Ann my love I am real glad if they do like George after all and I hope he will be steady and do well for Melency's sake if for no other reason. I hope Father and Mother wont fall out of bed again for I think it looks foolish don't you. I am going to send you an order for allotted money $20.00. You had better burn that extra order that I sent for it never will be of any use to you. Have you drawn your State pay and the money on that other order. I trust you have.

Hopeing to hear from you soon again. I remain with my best wishes to all friends And much love to my dear ones your faithful and confiding husband.

John Wilmot

P. S. please send me by mail as soon as you can conveniently get it 2½ yards of velvet tape ¾ or 1 inch wide and ½ yard of elastic ¼ inch wide or perhaps a little narrower. I want the whole black. P. S. please don't forget This from

John[17]

Corporal John Wilmot's last surviving letter was written from Brandy Station on Friday, April 22. As usual he was concerned with financial matters. He was also interested in how Saphronia was getting along with her new neighbors.

Brandy Station, Va.
April 22nd, 1864

My Dear Wife
I have just received your kind favor of the 17th. I was very much gratified to learn that both yourself and my darling little Hessie were enjoying good health Which is the greatest blessing we are permitted to enjoy.

My health continues perfectly good And I feel very thankful for the same.

I am verry glad that you are on such good terms with your neighbors And I hope and trust in their friendship.

Did not Willard say anything about what he sent you that $10 Dollars for I think it is that which I mentioned in my last letter to you And guess Bushrod did not want the money. Willard is going to put it into the bank for me. That is what is left after paying that note to Dodge and the expenses of getting the money etc. Which will leave $250 Dollars to put at interest. I shall [decide] what is done with the money as soon as I hear from Willard again which will probably be within a week from this time.

I haven't much to write tonight dearest it is so quiet in these parts just now.

Thare are pretty fair prospects of another rain tonight. But this rainy season is not going to last much longer I am thinking.

You must kiss my little girl for me and my little girl must kiss her Mother for Papa.

Give my best respects to all friends And write as often as convenient.

And accept this with many good wishes from your affectionate husband.

John Wilmot[18]

During the middle of April 1864, the Army of the Potomac got busy with preparations for the upcoming spring campaign. On May 4 the Vermont Brigade, with the rest of the Army of the Potomac, was on the road moving south in search of General Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia. The next day the two armies found each other in an area known as the Wilderness. Because of their severe casualties, the Vermonters would later call it "a wilderness of woe." The Battle of the Wilderness was especially frightful for the 4th Vermont. It went into battle on May 5 with approximately 600 officers and men. By the evening of May 6 it had suffered 257 casualties, over 40 percent of the regiment, which was more than that of any other regiment in the Vermont Brigade. Of these casualties 34 were killed, 194 were wounded, of

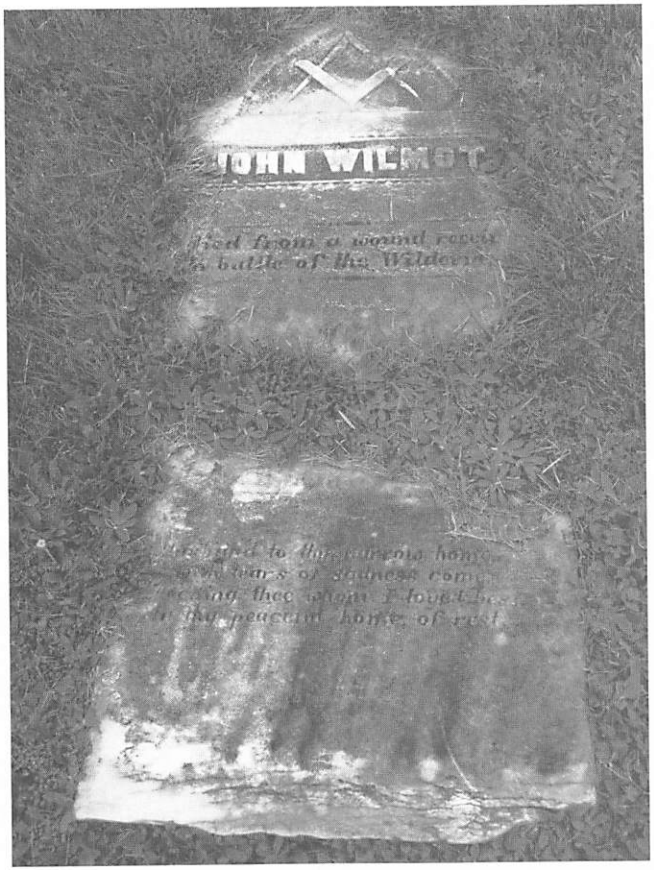
whom 45 died of their wounds, and 129 were missing, many of whom were probably killed.

One of the severely wounded on May 5 was Corporal John Wilmot. He was hit by a rebel shell fragment on the inside of his left leg, tearing it open. After being stabilized in a field hospital he was evacuated to a hospital in Washington, D.C., and a week later he was evacuated to the Mower General Hospital in Philadelphia. Mower General Hospital was known as a pavilion hospital. It had a central enclosed complex of administrative and utility buildings with forty-seven patient wards radiating from the center. It was strategically located on twenty-seven acres opposite the Chestnut Hill depot of the Reading Railroad. Here Wilmot lingered until June 17, before dying of his wound. The cause of his death was listed as effects of his wound and bilious fever, an archaic term for a relapsing fever characterized by vomiting bile and having diarrhea.[19]

Saphronia did not know of her husband's death until she received a letter from Chaplain W. F. P. Nobel at the Mower General Hospital written on June 18. She probably received it on June 22 or 23. It read:

> Dear Madam,
> You have already been informed of the dangerous illness of your husband John Wilmot. I regret to inform you that he died yesterday morning, June 17th at 6 a.m. and was buried this morning at 10 a.m. He died from bilious fever and the effect of his wound. He left the following effects: 1 cap, 1 drawers, 1 bootees, 1 boots, 1 silver watch, 1 gold ring, 1 gold pen & holder, 1 pocket knife, photographs & pocket glass. He lent $12 June 8th to Lewis Secor, Private Co. F, 4th Vt. [Lewis Secor was also wounded on May 5] You can get these by application to J. Hopkins, surgeon in charge, Mower Hospital, Phila. (Chestnut Hill)[20]

According to Theodore S. Peck's *Revised Roster of Vermont Volunteers and Lists of Vermonters who Served in the Army and Navy of the United States During the War of the Rebellion, 1861–66,* John Wilmot was buried in the Philadelphia National Cemetery. For this article, contact was made with officials at the Veteran's Administration to verify the location of John Wilmot's burial site, however, the Veteran's Administration has no record of his burial. Apparently someone from Wilmot's family either went to Philadelphia and brought his body back to Thetford or paid to have it shipped. Regardless of how he returned to Vermont, he was reinterred in the village cemetery at Post Mills. John Wilmot's name, date of death, and the words "Died of wounds received in the battle of the Wilderness" are carved on his gravestone. The following poem is also inscribed on the stone:



Grave of John Wilmot, Post Mills Cemetery, Thetford. Photographer: Paul G. Zeller, courtesy of the author.

Husband in thy narrow home
I with tears of sadness come
Seeking thee I loved best
In thy peaceful home of rest

After John's death, Saphronia had to find a way to take care of herself and Rohessie, or else she would have to move back in with her parents. Thankfully the government had provided a solution to the problem. On July 14, 1862, Congress passed an act to provide a pension to soldiers injured by wounds or disease while in the service. If the soldier died of his wounds or disease, his widow, dependent children (if there

was no mother), or dependent mother were also eligible for a pension. Saphronia took advantage of this opportunity and applied for a widow's pension, which she received at the rate of $8 a month. In July 1866, the Pension Act was revised and the monthly rates were increased. Saphronia applied for an increase to her pension, but this time she hit a snag. In her supporting evidence for her pension, someone at the Pension Bureau noticed that Rohessie was born before Saphronia and John were married and therefore denied the increase. Why this was not taken into consideration in her initial application was not recorded. In September 1866, Saphronia hired a lawyer to help her, but he was unsuccessful. She hired another lawyer in June 1868 who served her better. In his appeal he noted that in accordance with General Statutes of Vermont, Chapter 56, Section 5, page 415, a child is considered legitimate if the father acknowledged it. This appeal worked and her pension was raised to $12 a month. Because Saphronia never remarried, she received the pension, with increases, for the rest of her life.[21]

Saphronia had another child out of wedlock in Fairlee. The little girl was born on June 13, 1866, shortly before Saphronia applied for an increase in her pension, but only lived until October 6, when she died of croup. For some reason the baby's first name was not recorded in the Fairlee vital records upon her birth nor her death. On February 26, 1875, Saphronia had a third child out of wedlock, a son whom she named Alger Prescott Wilmot.[22]

Saphronia died in her daughter's home in East Barre, Vermont, a few minutes before 5 P.M. on November 19, 1909. Her death certificate states her chief cause of death was senile debility, with a morphine habit as a contributing factor. She was buried in the Post Mills Cemetery on November 22, presumably beside John, although the space beside his grave is unmarked. One can only wonder if Hessie could not afford a stone for her mother, or if John's family would not let her grave be marked, or if the stone is missing.[23]

Manuscript

The Letters of John Wilmot (MSS-28 #99-100) consists of letters written to Saphronia Ann Prescott (later his wife, Saphronia Ann Wilmot) from 1862 to 1864. The collection occupies two folders. Research material gathered through Ancestry.com and FamilySearch.org has been added to the collection. As well, the VHS holds two Wilmot family letters (Misc 1688), one dating from 1839 and the other from 1850, and a letter addressed to Saphronia Ann Prescott by a cousin (MSS-24 #85) dated 1861.

Notes

[1] Letters of John Wilmot, MSS-28 #99-100, Vermont Historical Society, Barre, hereinafter cited as Letters of John Wilmot.

[2] Vermontcivilwar.org.; Ancestry.com, U.S. Census 1860, Thetford, Orange County, Vermont, p. 436; John Wilmot's compiled service record, Records of the Adjutant General's Office, 1780–1917, Record Group 94, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C., hereinafter cited as John Wilmot's compiled service record.

[3] Town Clerk's office, Barre Town, Vt., Vital Records, death originals 1908–1909, p. 105; Town Clerk's office, Fairlee, Vt., Vital Records, book no. 1, p. D1.

[4] George G. Benedict, *Vermont in the Civil War, A History of the Part Taken by the Vermont Soldiers and Sailors in the War for the Union, 1861–5*, vol. 1 (Burlington, Vt.: The Free Press Association, 1886 and 1888), 156–159, hereinafter cited as Benedict and all references are to vol. 1; John Wilmot's compiled service record.

[5] Benedict, 160–161.

[6] Letters of John Wilmot; Benedict, 24; Saphronia A. Wilmot's widow's pension file, Records of the Office of the Secretary of the Interior, Record Group 48, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C., hereinafter cited as Saphronia Wilmot's widow's pension. The Lyman Clement that Wilmot mentions is Pvt. Lyman H. Clement of Thetford, Vt., who was given a disability discharge on April 3, 1862.

[7] Letters of John Wilmot; Theodore S. Peck, *Revised Roster of Vermont Volunteers and Lists of Vermonters who Served in the Army and Navy of the United States During the War of the Rebellion, 1861–66* (Montpelier, Vt.: Watchman Co., 1892), 134, hereinafter cited as Peck; Benedict, 162.

[8] Benedict, 163–165; Peck, 187; Letters of John Wilmot; Saphronia Wilmot's widow's pension record; ancestry.com.

[9] Benedict, 165; Peck, 74; Letters of John Wilmot.

[10] Benedict, 165; Letters of John Wilmot.

[11] Letters of John Wilmot.

[12] Benedict, 165–167.

[13] Paul G. Zeller, *The Second Vermont Volunteer Infantry Regiment, 1861–1865* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Co., 2002), 152, hereinafter cited as Zeller; Benedict, 167; Mark M. Boatner III, *The Civil War Dictionary* (New York: Vintage Civil War Library, 1991), 870; Letters of John Wilmot.

[14] Benedict, 167–168; Letters of John Wilmot.

[15] Peck, 135; FamilySearch.org; Letters of John Wilmot.

[16] Peck, 237; Letters of John Wilmot.

[17] United States War Department, *Revised Regulations for the Army of the United States, 1861* (1861; Reprint, Harrisburg: National Historical Society, 1980), 45; Letters of John Wilmot.

[18] Letters of John Wilmot.

[19] Benedict, 169, 412–435; Zeller, 169; Peck, 135; John Wilmot's compiled service record; http://www.lcpimages.org/inventories/mower/; Saphronia Wilmot's military pension record; http://www.antiquusmorbus.com/English/EnglishB.htm.

[20] Saphronia Wilmot's widow's pension file.

[21] Ibid.; U.S. Government, *Instructions and Forms to be used in Applying for Army Pensions Under the Act of July 14, 1862* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1862), 1–12.

[22] Town Clerk's office, Fairlee, Vt., Vital Records, book no. 1, pp. B6, D10; Ancestry.com; Family Search.org.

[23] *Barre Daily Times*, 20 November 1909; Town Clerk's office, Barre Town, Vt., Vital Records, death originals, 1908–1909, p. 105.

The Wrong Rail in the Wrong Place at the Wrong Time: The 1887 West Hartford Bridge Disaster

'Twas the Montreal Express
It was speeding at its best;
Near Hartford Bridge it struck
a broken rail.
When down with a fearful crash
To the river it was dashed.
And few survived to tell the horrid tale.

—Anon., from "The Hartford Wreck"
(in Joyce Cheney, comp., We Tell Our Story: Vermont Songmakers and Their Songs)

By J. A. FERGUSON

When Professor Robert Fletcher, the dean of Dartmouth College's Thayer School of Engineering, got out of bed on February 5, 1887, he knew it was cold even by the standards of Hanover and those who had long lived in the Connecticut River valley. As was his daily habit, he duly noted in his diary the local weather: −15° F and clear skies.[1] Fletcher was soon warmly dressed, however, and marshaling three of his students, he crossed the Connecticut River and traveled by horse-drawn sleigh some eight to ten miles southwest, to the scene of a devastating conflagration, a horrendous bridge burning on the Central Vermont Railroad's West Hartford bridge over the White River. Thirty-seven people perished in the fire when the

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TABLE 1 Estimated Distribution of Casualties, Feb. 5, 1887

	Passengers	*Crew*	*Total*
Killed	32	5	37
Injured	49	1	50
Uninjured	22	6	28
Total	103	12	115

derailed train plummeted onto the ice, fifty were injured and twenty eight escaped, but with the event's trauma to follow them the rest of their days. In all, 115 persons are counted in what was and is still today the worst railroad disaster in the history of Vermont railroading [Table 1 and Appendix].

The Boston-Montreal "Night Express," an hour and twenty minutes late out of White River Junction, finally left at 2:10 A.M. in the frigid early morning hours of February 5, 1887. The train had departed Boston Friday at 7:00 P.M. via Lowell and Lawrence, then proceeded north through Concord, N.H., with thirty-seven passengers, twelve in the sleeping car, probably two in the smoker car, a combination unit with the mail coach, and the rest in the single coach. The consist was made up of the engine "E.H. Baker," a 45-ton 4-4-0 and tender, plus a baggage car, the mail/smoker combination, a regular passenger coach, and the sleeper "Pilgrim." The Springfield (Ct.) train, starting out from New York City and behind schedule, would join with the Boston train at White River Junction; it left its station at 8:15 P.M., coming north along the Connecticut River valley, stopping at Windsor, the southern starting point of the original Vermont Central Railroad, now the Central Vermont Railroad. When joined with the Boston train, the Springfield coach and the sleeper "St. Albans" made up the new train, train #50. Thus two great eastern locales were represented for an eagerly anticipated trip to the metropolis of Montreal, host city of an upcoming week's *carnaval* that was to open the following Monday. The distribution and exact number of passengers may well and forever be in question, but of the 115 accounted for, twelve of whom were crew members, each sleeper was listed as carrying thirteen people including two porters, when the train arrived at White River Junction and before additional people boarded for the remaining part of the trip. Finally getting under way at 2:10 A.M., train #50 proceeded north and reached the West Hartford bridge, 4.2 miles away, at about 2:20 A.M., an average speed of about twenty-five miles per hour. The train was under orders to meet the southbound Montreal train at Randolph, "as usual."[2]

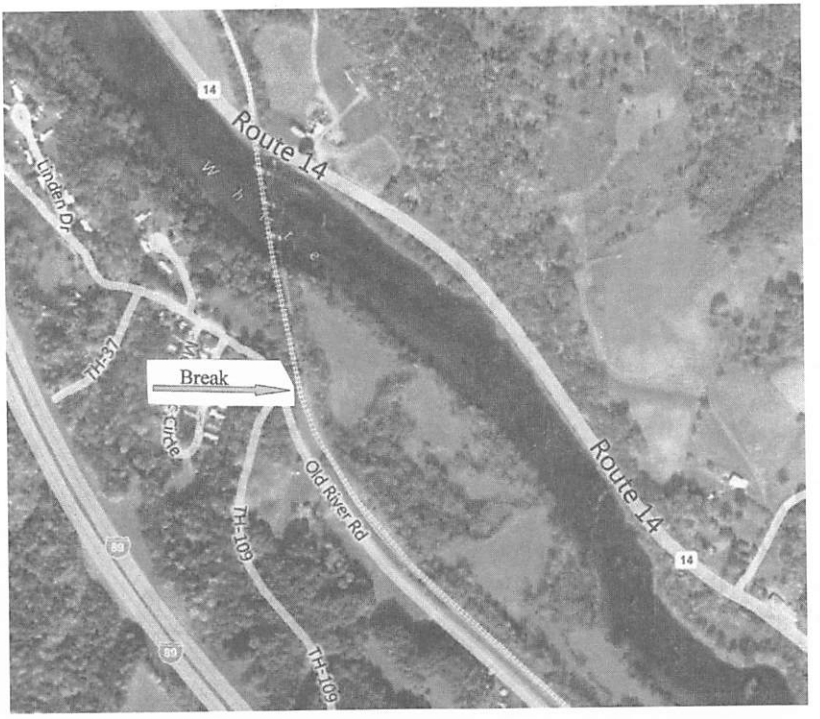
The passengers aboard the train that early February morning were an eclectic group. Henry Tewksbury, lawyer, Dartmouth alumnus, and noted lecturer, had the previous evening given a lecture in Windsor about the Gettysburg battle and was returning to his home in Randolph. Some twenty individuals were returning from New England to the Canadian provinces of Québec and Ontario, and the city of Montreal. New York City businessman Louis Combremont was on board for Montreal. Three Boulanger children, Bennie, Francis, and Anastasia, from Holyoke, Massachusetts, appear to have been traveling by themselves but may have been accompanied by David Maigret and his son Joseph, who were going from Holyoke to their home in Shawinigan, Québec. French names were common among the passengers, most of them coming from New England mill towns: Winooski, Nashua, Manchester, Lawrence, Chicopee Falls, and Lowell. Dartmouth student Edward Dillon from Springfield, Vermont, was on board with his college roommate, Alvin Veazey, son of a prominent Vermont juror and trustee of Dartmouth College. They were somewhat surprised to find the train at the station in the early morning hours and on the spur of the moment thought it a good idea to travel to Burlington. Annie Murphy and Katie Cahill, of Boston address, were bound for service in Burlington, in the employ of Mr. James Stone, also on board. Fred Tuttle of Tunbridge was on his way home, perhaps coming up from Windsor, one of the stops on his teamster route. One of the more well-known names was Frank Wesson of Springfield (Mass.), a member of the Wesson family of Smith & Wesson, the firearms manufacturer. Not everyone on board was asleep; although both sleepers were filled, people in the coaches were trying their best to get as comfortable as possible on the firm cushions. Now fully loaded, the sleeper "Pilgrim" had twenty-five occupants, including "five ladies"; and the other sleeper, "St. Albans," probably had the same approximate number.[3] In the second coach at Bellows Falls were noted "7 ladies, 2 small boys and 18 men, making 27 in all"; with some of the men in the smoking car and other passengers in the other coach, the total of 103 passengers can be accounted for.

The porters had done their job well, the cast iron "Baker" stoves were laid with coal and stoked, providing as much heat as they could along the lengths of the uninsulated wooden cars. Whale oil and kerosene lamps flickered evenly for those who were still in need of illumination. In one of the coaches a four-handed game of whist was being played. Outside the temperature had fallen to −18° F. It was a cloudless night, fully lit by moonlight.

The crew that night was made up of experienced railroad personnel. The engineer was Charles H. Pierce of Hartford, an employee of the

Central Vermont for twenty-two years, nine as engineer. With him in the cab was fireman Frank Thresher of St. Albans. The conductors of the train were Smith C. Sturtevant of St. Albans and M.R. Burgess of Boston. Edward Banks (or Brocklebanks) of West Lebanon, New Hampshire, and George H. Parker were brakemen. A.J. Hammer of Malden, Massachusetts, and J.H. Jones of Boston were the two porters. In the baggage car was Cole and in the mail/smoker were Perkins, Armington, and express messenger Robbins: twelve crew in all.

The Central Vermont tracks out of White River Junction closely follow the western side of the White River to the point where they take a more northward bend, requiring a 33° turn to the right (east) as the river crossing is approached. The bridge, entirely of wooden construction was known as a "deck bridge" and was 650 feet long with four major 145 foot spans, and a smaller sixty to seventy-foot span at the north abutment, crossing over the road below (Route 14). The distance from the top of the track to the ice-covered river below measured forty-two



West Hartford bridge crossing the White River.

feet, with the trusses themselves sixteen feet from the surface. On top of the wooden trusses was a layer of sheet iron, placed between the rails and ties and the supporting structure, an apron to deflect any sparks from the locomotive's belching smokestack. Ironically, what had been designed to protect the bridge from fire contributed to its ultimate demise.

In spite of the need to make up time due to the late departure and to meet the scheduled passing of the southbound Montreal express at Randolph, the engineer reported that he slowed the train in accordance with standard practice, making the crossing at about twelve miles per hour. The first indication that something was wrong was reported by Henry Tewksbury. There was a "swaying of the car back and forth, and a jolting, and I knew the wheels were running along the sleepers [ties]."[4] He was with his friend, conductor Sturtevant, who had just returned to the coach after checking fares in the smoking section. They immediately pulled on the overhead cord attached to a bell in the engine, signaling engineer Pierce to make an emergency stop. Upon hearing the alarm Pierce looked to the rear of the train on his, or right, side and was startled to see the rearmost sleeper, "Pilgrim," teetering off the bridge and heading for the river below, dragging with it the adjacent sleeper "St. Albans" and the two coaches from the middle of the train. The coupling broke apart where it joined with the mail/smoker car, leaving the engine and tender, baggage car and mail/smoker unit intact on the bridge. Flames quickly erupted, enveloping the four coaches and like a flaming torch reaching to the bridge above. What was at first shock, disbelief, darkness, and confusion soon became an inferno visible for miles in the Vermont countryside. There had been no warning other than some vibration, a shudder, and no doubt the squeal of tortured metal, then the awful sense of tumbling into the space below. It all happened so quickly no alert other than the alarm bell was possible.

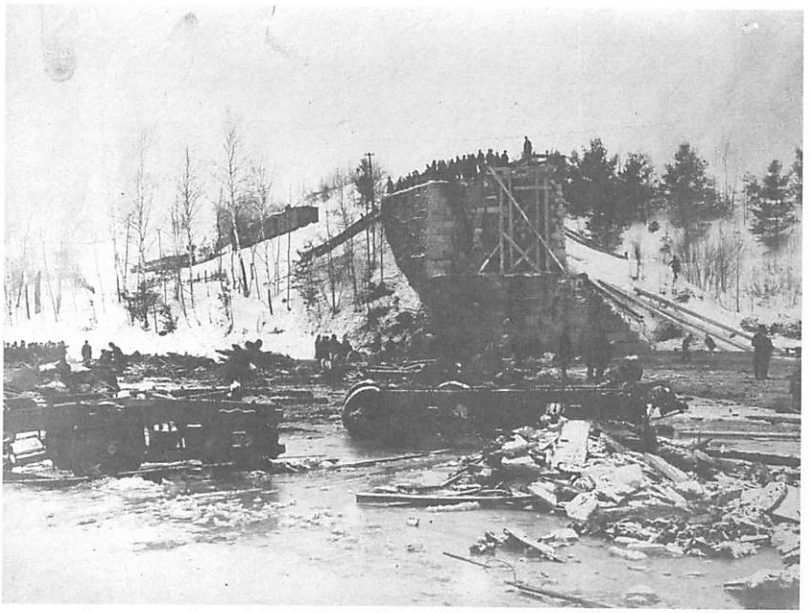
In the doomed coaches, scenes of death and escape were taking place. Dartmouth students Veazey and Dillon were cast out of their shared sleeping berth, Veazey only slightly injured, his roommate fatally pinned under debris. Mrs. W.S. Bryden, retired for the night in her sleeping berth, was barely able to be extricated through a broken window, only, she said, because she had practically no clothes on. That she survived in the bitter cold under the circumstances is a marvel of her determination and stamina, as well as a tribute to her rescuers. A father from Canada, probably David Maigret, was so pinned down in the wreck he was unable to get out, and gave his personal belongings, watch, and pocketbook to his young son and bade a tearful good-bye before the creeping wall of flames engulfed him. Conductor Sturtevant had taken

a fare in one of the coaches and went down with it, suffering severe burns, a mangled shoulder and arm, and a crushed head. Death came mercifully the next day. Some passengers were identified by bits and remnants of clothing or personal gear; others, not at all. One of the most heart-rending remains was that of a parent and child fused together in a final poignant embrace, burned beyond immediate recognition.

The stunned crew members in the remaining units on the bridge reacted immediately to the catastrophic descent. Engineer Pierce, shovel and lantern in hand, with his fireman, Thresher, jumped from the cab and slid down the embankment to the broken heaps of the four coaches. Brakeman George Parker, who was on the second coach, had correctly assessed the vibrations and jolting and leaped from the coach before it went over, sliding down the bank at the south abutment. He then took a team from a nearby house and brought the alarm to the White River Junction station and the community. In no time fires started in the demolished wooden coaches. Pierce shoveled snow in a vain attempt to put out the flames, but they were increasing at a faster rate than his efforts could overcome. His next action was to break windows to get

West Hartford bridge train wreck, February 5, 1887; view from south abutment. Photo by H.H.H. Langill, courtesy of Rauner Special Collections, Dartmouth College Library.

survivors out of the flaming wreckage; eight made it out thanks to his efforts. This was most likely the Boston coach, the unit nearest to the mail coach, and was probably the first in line that he came to. Conductor Sturtevant was in this coach, clothes ablaze, and Pierce tried to douse the flames by showering him with snow. Henry Tewksbury was also in that coach and was luckier; he got out, but with difficulty and with injuries he suffered from for the rest of his days. Others were not so fortunate; there was "darkness and confusion,"[5] the smoke was "dense and the fire burned rapidly."[6] No sounds came from the stricken coach as Pierce and Thresher continued their efforts. At the other end of the piled-up coaches, or what was left of them, the two mail agents, Armington and Perkins, and the express messenger, Robbins, worked with baggage master Cole to extricate passengers, some of whom pitched in to do what they could. By now the flames were clearly threatening the bridge, so Pierce had Thresher move the engine and remaining cars forward and well clear of the bridge. From the moment of derailment, toppling off the bridge and onto the frozen river and with flames reaching upward to the wooden lattice-style bridge, no more



West Hartford bridge train wreck, February 5, 1887; view towards south abutment. Photo by H.H.H. Langill, courtesy of Rauner Special Collections, Dartmouth College Library.

than twenty to thirty minutes had elapsed. Thirty-seven people were to die, including five of the train crew; fifty were injured and twenty-eight escaped with minor injuries or were otherwise physically unharmed.

Two buildings stood at the ends of the bridge: the Pingree house at the southern end and the Paine farm at the northern end and on the right (east) side of the track. Both immediately became hospitals, refuges, recovery rooms, and morgues. The crushing and maiming of crew and passengers, adults and children, was horrible in itself; but the outside temperature, approaching −20° F, presented the additional threat of frostbite and hypothermia and dictated that rescue efforts be made as quickly as possible. Those able to exit their sleeping berths were likely to be very thinly clad, some with nothing on but night clothes. The injured and dying were stretched out on floors in all and any rooms, "kitchen, sitting room and parlor, bedroom and two large upper rooms to the number of fifty or more."[7] The response from White River Junction, a relief train with physicians, wrecking tools, and volunteers, was soon underway.

Some of the people in the Paine house who were not injured or slightly so boarded the train and continued their trips to Montpelier, St. Albans, and Montreal. Engineer Pierce pulled away with the baggage and mail sections at 8:30 that same morning. He estimated that five or six passengers were on board,[8] but D. Roy counted "about a dozen" names on the conductor's list, including Jacques, Beauregard, and Lacaillade.[9] Euclide Chagnon of Manchester, New Hampshire, was quick to escape the turmoil, so quick that he was listed among the missing and unidentifiable dead, and a friend from Manchester was dispatched to collect his remains. A telegraph from Montreal later confirmed that he arrived there Sunday evening in good health. The same occurred to Charles C. Domett of New York (or Boston). Barely escaping with his life from the sleeper "St. Albans," he claimed he "went over to St. Albans" and refitted himself with clothing. He, too, had been listed among the dead, not because of a body count but because he wasn't around to be otherwise accounted for. Upon his return to the White River Junction hotel, he collected his watch and money that had been picked up and was eager to continue on to Montreal. The same can be said of Dr. C. F. Clark, who telegraphed his family that he was safely in Montreal. These three were representative of others who, uninjured, thought their best plan of action was to avail themselves of an offered route out of the valley on the northbound mail train and put behind them as quickly as possible the traumatizing aspects of the situation.[10] Sunday, the day following the tragedy, saw throngs of onlookers swarm to the scene, some searching for relatives or friends, others

to aid in the grisly job of picking over remains, and others souvenir hunting or just gawking at the burned-out residue of what had been four proud coaches of the popular Central Vermont.

The Investigation

An investigation by the Vermont Railway Commission, headed by Lt. Governor Levi K. Fuller, formally started Monday afternoon at the Junction House in White River Junction. Other commission members were Senator Henry L. Clark, a lawyer from Rutland; Col. T.C. Fletcher of St. Johnsbury,[11] a well-to-do merchant; and chairman Samuel Pingree, ex-governor (1884–86) of Vermont. In attendance at the investigation were C.W. Witters and Guy C. Noble, attorneys representing the interests of the Central Vermont; A.E. Watson was secretary. CVRR President J. Gregory Smith and his brother, Worthington C. Smith, were also present. The focus of the investigation started out questioning the condition of the track, as there was some evidence that the cause of the derailment might have been a fracture in one of the rails. Trackman Clarence Hutchinson testified that his job as trackman was to walk a section of the railway that included the accident site. This he did between the hours of 7:30 and 11:00 P.M. with a lantern, walking in one direction examining one rail and returning over the same section checking the other, "looking for defects, *especially on curves.*"[12] He passed the point of rail failure at 10:30 P.M. that subzero Friday night, four hours prior to the accident, noting no defects. He added that he thought a freight train had passed over those same rails between the time of his inspection and the accident.

Lewis Benjamin, section foreman, corroborating Hutchinson's testimony, said "we have always been extra careful in our inspections of *curves and bridges*[13] and was quick to note that never had a track walker failed to do his duty. Another section hand, Charles Sturtevant, swore he had passed over the bridge that day (Friday) and saw no defects. He was one of the track crew who replaced rail after the accident. He described the broken rail by noting that "the ball of the rail was broken off, and the shoulder was about half broken off."[14] If there were other pieces of track lying about, he did not notice them.

Roadmaster A.C. Bean, who served fourteen years in that capacity out of the twenty he had been employed by the Central Vermont, testified about the direct aid he supervised to the suffering victims and the additional equipment he had ordered brought up from the station. He gave a more detailed description of the track: He saw three rails torn out of position, some bent, the first rail broken off nineteen feet, seven inches from the south end, the whole length of rail being thirty feet.

The rails, he noted, had been rolled at the St. Albans foundry from blooms of Bessemer steel bought from Germany and had been laid five years earlier.[15]

Roadmaster Bean's testimony and analysis speak well for him as an experienced railroad man. His detailed observations and conclusions cannot be disputed. He found two or three breaks in the rails and could not say which occurred first. The marks made by the wheels indicated that one truck, a forward set, had derailed, but he considered that both pair had derailed before reaching the south abutment. It was the last car of the train, the sleeper "Pilgrim" from Boston, that precipitated the chain reaction, its axle neatly sheared at mid length causing a skewed tracking and subsequent rotation and tumbling to the right off the bridge. While all of the coaches went off the right, or east, side of the bridge, one of the trucks and axle was ejected on the opposite, or west, side of the bridge; it showed no signs of having been subjected to fire.

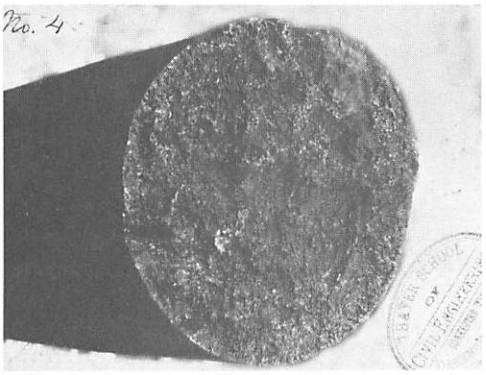
Following Bean's testimony, the panel heard from Mr. Mulligan, the superintendent of the Connecticut River road, and he didn't mince his words. His detailed observation of the rails and axle noted pertinent distances of the various truck parts that were scattered and thrown about by the break-up. He was of the opinion that the broken axle was the cause of the accident and caused the rails to fracture. He did allow, however, that the rails were defective as well. Both men were of the opinion that the defects in the rails were not noticeable by visual inspection.[16] As to why the rails were defective, no qualified technical opinion was proffered other than that "slag" was probably included at the time of rolling. This is a likely explanation, and it could be added that the temperature of the alloy at the time of rolling is critical, as well as the speed at which it is done. The proper integrity and modulus of the steel section are governed by these factors, and any compromise on them results in brittleness. These factors, coupled with the extremely low temperature, −18° to −20° F, and with the stress of the wheels on the rails due to the curve in the tracks as it approached the bridge, made up a collection of conditions that spelled trouble for the Montreal-bound night express. Had there been no turn or side thrust on the rails and journals, it is likely the accident would not have happened. It was the wrong rail in the wrong place at the wrong time.

It didn't take long for the magnitude of the disaster to catch the attention of the media, especially the metropolises on the east coast. *The New York Tribune* quickly contacted Professor Fletcher at Dartmouth College, a recognized and respected authority on civil engineering matters, especially bridges. Fletcher, at the accident site early that very cold

Professor Robert Fletcher (undated). Courtesy of Rauner Special Collections, Dartmouth College Library.

Saturday and accompanied by three of his students, examined the track and "got pieces of broken rails," which he brought back to Hanover.[17] He was also contacted at this time by *Engineering News,* a publication issued to professionals in engineering. The magazine's purpose was to keep abreast of the latest happenings in the field of technology. At their behest Fletcher returned to the site on Monday, the 7th, accompanied again by three students and photographer H.H.H. Langill of Hanover, who took photos of the broken axle and the split rail as well as some outstanding shots of the devastated scene. He deserves credit for his zeal to accurately record scenes that might otherwise never be known. Along with a detailed sketch of the rails, noting where the break occurred, Fletcher sent his report and prints of Langill's photos to *Engineering News* the next day. He tersely noted all of his activities in his diary alongside his other daily activities, typically noting how many hours he had worked on Thayer School matters as well.[18]

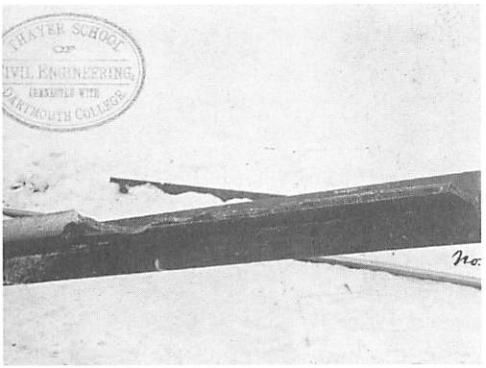
While Fletcher was independently analyzing the accident scene, making a sketch, and supervising Langill taking photographs of the available evidence, the Vermont Railway Commission continued their investigation in White River Junction, getting to the best of their ability first-hand accounts by those who were on the scene at the time of the disaster, those crewmen who came after to replace and repair the damage, and those who, while not present at the accident, were deemed qualified to give their opinion on what might have happened. These



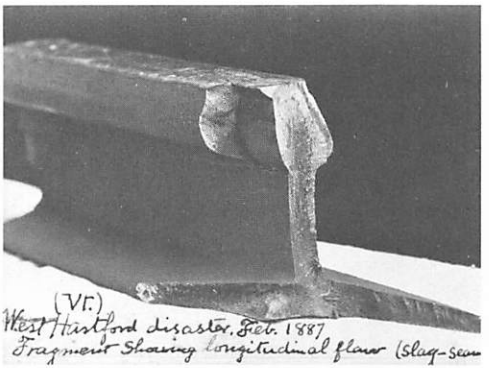
Broken axle. Photo by H.H.H. Langill, courtesy of Rauner Special Collections, Dartmouth College Library.

witnesses were all railroad men whose aggregate years of experience no doubt was impressive and their testimony credible. Nevertheless, Professor Fletcher's presence did not go unnoticed, and commission members Senator Clark and Col. Fletcher (no relation to Robert) made a call to him "after breakfast" on Wednesday the 9th to "get my view as to the broken rails."[19] Here was a non-railroad source of knowledge and one whose opinion carried weight. Fletcher obliged the commission by again testifying "After dinner" that very day and, accompanied by two students, he went again by train to the scene of the tragedy. Time logged in his diary for that effort: "3–6:15 P.M."

The testimonies of Bean and Mulligan notwithstanding, Fletcher's fact findings are noteworthy. His report, "The facts in Regard to the Woodstock Disaster," prepared at the request of *Engineering News*, sums up succinctly what happened and why. The article is dated February 8, 1887, only three days after the calamity. Fletcher laid out the



Broken rail. Photo by H.H.H. Langill, courtesy of Rauner Special Collections, Dartmouth College Library.



Slag seam. Photo by H.H.H. Langill, courtesy of Rauner Special Collections, Dartmouth College Library.

scene, described the consist, and its departure, the dimensions and construction of the bridge, and using the newspaper reports, the occurrence as recounted by the engineer and crew. Arriving at the scene by noon that day, he was no doubt surprised to see that the (defective) inside rail had already been replaced, no small feat in light of the chaos and sub-freezing temperature. He found several broken rail fragments lying about the track and, not one to make a hasty judgment, he opined that they might be a result of the accident *or* maybe a result of that morning's re-laying of track by the section hands. In any case he had Langill take photos of them, which clearly showed the breaks. In every fragment he examined he found flaws, and he concluded that the steel's strength had been reduced by 50 to 75 percent. One rail was marked "St. Albans 1881," a product of the St. Albans Foundry (*Engineering News* editors pointed out that the blooms, or steel ingots, were of German manufacture). Apparently there was not full agreement among the principals about the rail breaks. Fletcher leaned toward there being "at least two, and perhaps more, as broken." Not all of the stressed ("slightly bent") rails were replaced. Summing up, Fletcher ended his report by leaving the door open as "to learn[ing] the determining cause of the disaster," but he then committed to "the failure of a rail about 450 feet from the end of the bridge as the beginning."[20] His conclusions about the failure of the steel member fell short of any condemnation, in contrast with the opinions of Mulligan and Todd of the Boston and Lowell. A letter to Central Vermont's general manager, J.W. Hobart, provided insight to Fletcher's position in the matter: "I was there for scientific inquiry as to *facts,* not to talk *theory.*"[21]

In the astonishingly short time of two days following the accident, reconstruction had been started on the bridge, and in less than a week

125 men were involved in setting up the trestle "in drizzling rain . . . (and) half snow."[22] Central Vermont had not only started repairs on the tracks, initiated steps to rebuild the bridge, and devised a schedule of shunting traffic out of White River Junction northward via the Passumpsic and Wells River road, but it had carried out an inquiry that did not seem to generate a broad spectrum of opinion as to what had caused the wreck or to whom blame might be ascribed. The Central Vermont was no doubt relieved to find that the professor from Dartmouth did not provoke further and controversial dialogue; he was asked his opinion, he gave it, and that was that. Outside of making a rebuttal to a *Boston Globe* article that misquoted him,[23] he had no further involvement with the disaster until two years later, when he obliged the principals by testifying as a witness for the Central Vermont at court in Burlington.[24]

The history of the Central Vermont includes other accidents, ranging from mishaps to those involving fatalities. Twenty years earlier in Northfield, the wooden Harlow bridge had caught fire and was completely consumed. When its replacement was under construction, the crew were being transported back to the work site and the engineer failed to stop; the train fell seventy feet into the Dog River below. Fifteen were killed and injured. Less than two weeks after the West Hartford disaster, Montpelier Junction was the scene of an unexplained head-on collision between a Northfield-bound freight and train #58 headed north. No fatalities or serious injuries were reported, the crews jumping before impact. A crew of engineer and fireman were killed near Rockingham the following year due to a track washout. In Bethel two months later, a wood train, while loading, was smashed in the rear by a cattle train, killing one person immediately. January of 1889 saw a near replication of the 1887 tragedy as a freight crossing the Hartford bridge broke an axle on the engine about halfway across, causing the truck to strike a siding switch at the end of the bridge, opening the points, and forcing the train onto the siding, a relic of the construction of the new bridge that replaced the one of the previous disaster. It was a short siding: The train, unable to stop, careened off the end of the siding and down a twenty-foot fill. The first eight cars piled up on the engine but the engineer and fireman were able to leap to safety. On May 4, 1889, a freight broke into two sections at East Granville, derailing twenty-one cars and scattering hogs into the nearby woods. On May 29 a freight broke in two at Highgate Springs, seriously injuring a brakeman.

Once the cause of the West Hartford accident had been determined and agreed upon by most of the principals, the public outcry focused on the consequences: Why the unfortunate victims had burned alive in the

worst cases and were probably scarred for life in other cases. The question naturally arose as to why lit candles and coal-fired stoves were the source of heat and illumination when electricity was available, as was steam from the engine. Central Vermont president J. Gregory Smith apologized for the lack of technical advancements with regard to heating and lighting and professed that if there were better sources than the 300° whale oil candles and coal stoves the Central Vermont used, he would be the first to install them on his line. This statement, printed by the Springfield (Vt.) *Union* sounded like a whitewash of wishful thinking or weak hindsight as Smith explained that they had tried just about everything and had not been able to find a better system than whale oil and coal.[25]

Smith's somewhat pallid defense was assailed from many quarters. The Vermont Railroad Commission in their first Biennial Report of December 1, 1886 to June 30, 1888, summarized the findings about the tragedy and noted that "many who lost their lives in the accident would have been saved if it had not been for the stoves and lights in the wrecked cars," and concluded with the somewhat fuzzy recommendation that something should be done about the heating and lighting inadequacies.[26] The *Valley News* was to note many years later (June 13, 1985): "By 1887. . . several railroads used electric lighting in place of kerosene or oil lamps. Many railroads also used steam from the engines to heat the cars. The means for preventing fires after train wrecks were available." The paper further indicated that safety measures on that night express were uncommon and broadly hinted that safety had been sacrificed for economy. Other papers pointed out that "Electricity had been in use by other railroads since 1882,"[27] and in fact, as early as October 1881 saw the first use of electric illumination in a Pullman coach, in England, that was powered by a somewhat clumsy French-designed battery.

The Aftermath

Litigation inevitably followed the disaster. As soon as the shock and media coverage subsided the cases against CVRR began to proliferate. They sprang up in several county courts, with CVRR facing as many as seven (known) suits at the same time. Precedent in law is like a guiding light in legal proceedings: It sets an example or standard on which arguments can be based, juries influenced, and decisions rendered. The attorneys for CVRR were quick to establish their position early in their defense, no doubt anticipating suits soon to be on various court dockets. Unfortunate as the various plaintiffs' sufferings may have been, CVRR was quick to establish their defense: CVRR was not negligent in operating a railroad for the use and benefit of the public.

One of the first cases was heard in Chittenden County Court in Burlington, in September 1887. The plaintiff was John E. Lavelle, administrator of the estate of James A. Stone of Burlington, killed. Stone, a veteran of the Civil War, who received a pension for wounds he got during the conflict, left a widow and four minor children. He was proprietor of a hotel in Burlington and earned his living from that business, letting rooms and selling meals, and, pointed out by the defense, alcohol. Stone was fifty years old and not in the best of health, such that the defense lawyers brought to the stand his personal physician who, oddly, was also on the payroll of CVRR as company physician. He testified that Stone had cirrhosis of the liver and could not have expected to live beyond one year. Stone's friends and associates, as well as his wife, denied there was any ailment, and insisted that he seemed to them normal in every respect.

The trial was in continuance in September 1887, further delayed by defense demurrers in both April and in September 1888,[28] once again demurred and postponed to the following April 1889 session, and even once more when postponement was again requested in May 1889. The eventual date for commencement was finally established as April 29, 1889.[29] Despite defense maneuvers to further postpone the trial, the suit was opened on May 14, 1889, with closing arguments in June. The plaintiff sought $30,000 for the benefit of the widow and four children. The defense countered that the "pecuniary loss of the family was nothing."[30] The jury of ten farmers, a painter, and a hardware merchant decided for the plaintiff in the amount of $5,000 and costs.[31] While it would seem that the amount even in 1889 was not a huge sum to be awarded, the lawyers for CVRR would not abide by it and petitioned the Vermont Supreme Court to hear an appeal based on their multiple exceptions. It was clear that in this opening case the CVRR legal team was playing hardball, reflecting the harsh business attitude typical of the front office. The case was entered on the Supreme Court docket and was on continuance in January 1890.[32] Up to this point the opening trial against CVRR had taken over two years and settlement was not yet determined. The whereabouts of the records and files of the *J.E. Lavelle v. CVRR* remain an open question.

The Supreme Court was to be the venue of other suits against CVRR stemming from the 1887 bridge disaster. The case of William Devino of Winooski was brought against the railroad for $30,000, seeking damages for the loss of Devino's wife, Mary Emma. The suit originated in the same Chittenden County court as the Lavelle case and, like it, was delayed by continuance in September and upon demurrer in October 1889.[33] It seems that Mrs. Devino was a wife to Mr. Devino in the

common-law sense and that provided the defense with a point of contention that the next of kin or rightful heirs stood first in line to receive consideration in settling her estate; this was another valid legal point that served for delay. In January 1890, the case was finally brought before the Supreme Court where it was further continued.[34] The Court did reach a decision, favoring the plaintiff, and remanded the case to the lower court with "leave to re-plead."[35] Court records for the final settlement have not been located.

The case of W.F. Dillon, administrator for the estate of his son, Edward F. Dillon, killed in the accident, was in contrast a relatively quick settlement. W.F. Dillon was a wealthy woolen manufacturer from Springfield and his legal representative in the case was P.M. Meldon, a respected and experienced juror from Rutland. Suit was brought before the Windsor County Court in Woodstock and apparently was settled out of court by June 1889.[36] Terms of the agreement are not known as records of the trial are not available.

The case of *Westcott v. CVRR* was brought by Addie C. Westcott, administrator for the estate of her late husband, Samuel, and their ten year-old son, Eddie, both of whom perished in the conflagration. The jury was "struck" for the trial in September 1889, but due to a conflicting trial CVRR was defending with another plaintiff stemming from the same incident but in another court jurisdiction, both parties agreed to a postponement.[37] In an unsurprising move, CVRR's attorney, Henry Ballard, suggested the jury be excused—indefinitely. The case was put over until October, at which time the jury was excused.[38] In February 1890 the jury was struck again,[39] and settlement was reached by April 23, 1890. For the loss of husband and child, widow Westcott was awarded $5,200.[40]

Henry Mott, of Alburgh, was well known to CVRR and was considered a favored customer. As a dealer in agricultural products he used the CVRR freight services to transport his merchandise to southern New England customers. As such, he was given a regular pass to ride the CVRR sections; he was comped during his travel on the train that night of February 5, 1887. He had boarded the train in Bellows Falls and soon retired to his berth in the sleeper "St. Albans" and next woke up in an unfamiliar room in a White River Junction hotel, having been struck unconscious by the crashing sleeper, and, lucky to be alive, had no recollection of any of the tragic details.[41] His injuries, though not life threatening, were painful and, he later claimed, prevented him from going about his daily duties. His suit was brought before the Grand Isle County Court in North Hero and closed September 30, 1889, after four weeks of trial. The jury found in favor of the plaintiff 7–5 in what was

reported to have been a "warmly contested" suit.[42] This apparently was not the end of the case and a retrial and change of venue was indicated. Further trial data and files have not been found.

Henry Tewksbury of Randolph was not one to be ignored under any circumstances. An attorney by training, he had foregone a practice in law to become a lecturer, notably about the Civil War but also about other issues that he deemed might be of public interest. It was just by chance that he happened to be on the ill-fated train that early February morning. He had planned to stay over at White River Junction after lecturing that evening in Windsor, but could not find a room available so opted for the short ride up the valley to Randolph. Not being shy about court proceedings where it involved CVRR, Tewksbury sued for $80,000 and claimed for the rest of his days that he was severely disabled by the wreck. At several of the hearings and trials involving the bridge disaster Tewksbury was a star witness and seemed to enjoy being in the spotlight as a survivor of the incident. His case opened in May 1889 in a Boston court, then went to the Vermont Supreme Court and was withdrawn by October of that same year, perhaps indicating an out-of-court settlement. Because court records are not available, the results are not known. Henry Winslow Tewksbury died January 4, 1903, in Brattleboro after a period of failing health; he was 56 years and 7 months of age.

The eventual cost to CVRR, when "out of the woods" (April 1890),[43] i.e., all claims settled against it relative to the Hartford bridge disaster of February 5, 1887, will never be known. The records of the court trials are in disarray and the records of CVRR have been destroyed, lost, or, more likely, discarded. What is known is that the railroad continued to function, not profitably perhaps, but despite apparently not having any meaningful insurance coverage between 1889 and 1892 and significantly higher legal costs, the railroad added revenue miles, and net income from operations showed an increase [Table 2]. The eventual contraction of net corporate profits was the result of the lack of dollars coming from the leased roads, rental obligations, and interest owed, plunging the line into bankruptcy.[44] During the period 1887 to 1890, CVRR was faced with multiple court cases, not all of which were related to the Hartford bridge disaster. It's little wonder that the delaying tactic was a prime strategy. The legal team of Witters, Noble, Farrington and Ballard, under the watchful eye of J. Gregory Smith, worked overtime and endlessly in the interest of their employer. Guy C. Noble, one of the point men in the legal battles, succumbed, unexpectedly, during the legal turmoil.

The bridge at the West Hartford crossing of the White River, sometimes referred to as the Woodstock bridge, was completely rebuilt the

TABLE 2 Statement of Central Vermont Railroad Company

	1887	*1888*	*1889*	*1890*	*1891*	*1892*
Total income	$2,535,276	2,649,169	2,732,621	3,090,473	2,923,854	3,093,636
Total expense	$1,861,187	1,956,036	1,913,534	2,285,864	2,172,064	2,189,162
Net (operations)	$674,088	693,133	819,087	804,608	751,789	904,474
Net income	$15,088	34,133	19,933	11,951	100,007	<152>
Officers' salaries	$86,045	93,529	110,252	115,657	120,811	132,192
Legal expense	$14,042	5,754	30,456	33,377	19,971	16,203
Insurance	$2,129	5,708	19,078	1,597	1,673	11,969
Total revenue mileage*	$2,186,246	2,865,127	2,457,220	3,005,610	2,765,275	3,060,741
Employees	2,094	2,431	2,366	2,698	2,701	2,701

Source: Annual Reports of CVRR Co., 1887–1892.
* Fares (dollars) × miles traveled.

following year by the Vermont Construction Company of St. Albans, using modern steel construction: "riveted lattice . . . of a hundred and fifty [foot] spans," as well as improved approach, lending some credibility to the troubled railroad's image. Sparked by the accident's tragedy, railroad companies began to replace coal stoves and candles with the newly developed electric light systems and steam heat generated by the engine. In November 1887, the Canadian Atlantic Railroad introduced electric lighting aboard their trains and commenced heating their coaches from engine-generated steam—the first railroad in Canada to do so. The Pullman Ltd. Express of England installed electric lighting the following year. Two years after the accident, the first axle generator was installed on an American train, and in 1890 the *New York Times* reported the use of a self-contained electric battery, called a "plant." Pullman introduced the first all-steel coaches in 1908, further reducing the threat of fire. Central Vermont, in 1889, fairly gloated with its introduction and announcement of its latest investment, a new style Wagner Vestibule car that "has in every part the latest and most improved appliances and invention," and that those who would ride the new coach "will appreciate its artistic beauty as well as find comforts in its arrangements." Those who toured the car, in Boston, were hosted and "entertained" by T.H. Hanley, the "genial ticket agent."[45]

That CVRR played a role in the development of railroad safety cannot be denied, albeit reluctantly and with a somewhat dubious credit to its history. As with many similar events, the disaster for which it must take a measure of responsibility did enable the creation of

higher industry standards. By 1893, six years after the Central Vermont disaster at the West Hartford bridge, Congress passed the Railway Appliance Act, establishing national safety standards for railroads.

Appendix

Hartford Bridge Disaster—Uninjured Survivors

Passengers (22) **Crew (6)**
Armington, mail agent
Bouciquet, Mr., Attawaugan, Ct.
Bouciquet, Mrs., Attawaugan, Ct.
Bouciquet, child, Attawaugan, Ct.
Bouciquet, child, Attawaugan, Ct.
Bouciquet, sister of Mr., Attawaugan, Ct.
Brigham, Herbert, Bakersfield
Butler, W.S., New York
Chagnon, Euclide, Manchester, N.H.
Clark, Dr. C.F., Laconia N.H.
Cole, A. B., baggage master
Curran, Major James
Desilets, Ben, St. Albans
Domett, Charles, C.
Duvelle, Mr., Chicopee, Ma.
Farwell, A.D.
Ferguson, Mary Stuart (Stewart), Inverness, P.Q.
Haggerty, William, Providence, R.I.
Hall, Charles, Boston
Halloway, William, NYC
Lee, W.H., Burlington
Lord, Frank, Great Falls, N.H.
Maigret (Maiquete), Joseph (son of D. Maigret)
Perkins, Moses, postal clerk
Pierce, Charles H. (or E.), engineer
Robbins, Alfred S., Manchester, N.H., express messenger
Rousseau, Napoleon, Montreal
Thresher, Frank H., St. Albans, fireman

Hartford Bridge Disaster—Listed As Injured

Passengers (49) **Crew (1)**
Alexander, J., Boston
Arel, Polly, Chicopee Falls, Ma.
Beauregard, Joseph, Montreal
Boisvert, O.S., Ste. Angeline, P.Q.

Boisvert, Mrs. O., Angeline, P.Q.
Boulanger, Bennie, Holyoke, Ma.
Bryden (Beyden), Mrs. W.S., Montreal
Cahill (Kahill), Katie, Boston
Casey, W.C.
Casey, Mrs. W.C.
Combremont (Conbrement), Louis, New York, N.Y.
Costello, Mrs., Boston
Cushing (Cushman), J.H., Middleboro, Ma.
Devino (Deveneaux, Devineau, Devine),William, H. Jr., Winooski
Follet (Falett, Follett), Mrs. Persis H., Sharon
Fisher, Fred A., Gloucester, Ma.
Genette (Jeanette, Gennett, Jeanville), Joseph, Scotia, N.Y.
Graham, Mrs. John (Mary E. or J.), Bedford, Ma.
Hosmer, Charles M., Lowell, Ma.
Howe, George, Montreal
Hibbard (Hubbard, Hebbard), Charles A., Cambridge, Ma.
Hutchins, Julius C., Montgomery
Jacques, Joseph, Fitchburg
Juneau, Horace, E. Pepperill, Ma.
Kastner (Castner), Mrs. Charles, Boston
Kiley (Kilbey), J. E., Burke, N.Y.
Lacaillade (Lacard), Michael (Mitchell), Lawrence, Ma.
Lavalle (Laville, Lavelle), Alex, Greenfield, Ma.
Lebeuf (Lebouef), August, Lynn, Ma.
Libby (Sibley), James, St. Valere, P.Q.
Lovell, Emily (Emma) O., Montreal
Lowe (Law), George, Montreal
Maigret, Clovis (Joseph), Shawinigan (Schanigen), P.Q.
Mills (brother of Cephas, killed)
Morse, Mr., Springfield, Ma.
Mott, Henry, Alburgh
Murphy, Annie (Anna), Boston
Parker, George H., Charlestown, N.H., brakeman
Pratt, Frank M., Springfield, Ma.
Prue (Prew), David N., Providence, R.I.
Remillard (Remilard), David, Brocton, Ma.
Sadler, Marie (Maria), Ormstown, P.Q.
Smith, Howard (Horace,), Gloucester, Ma.
Sult (Shull, Sutt), J.S., New Haven, Ct. (Salem, N.J.)
Tewksbury, Henry W., W. Randolph
Tuttle, Fred W., Tunbridge

Veazey, Alvin B., Rutland
Welch (Walsh, Wisch), Mrs. Margaret, Greenfield, Ma.
Wheeler, Andrew, Fitchburg, Ma.
Wilcox, H.G. (H.J.), Malone (Bangor), N.Y.

Hartford Bridge Disaster—Listed As Killed

Passengers (32) **Crew (5)**
Bell, George J., Bellows Falls
Blair (Blais), Peter, Warren Ma.
Blair (Blais), Fred, Warren, Ma.
Blaisdell, Mrs. Edward, Fitchburg, Ma.
Boulanger (Bellinger), Francis, Holyoke, Ma.
Boulanger (Bellinger), Anastasia, Holyoke, Ma.
Brocklebanks (Banks) Edward, brakeman, West Lebanon, N.H.
Brodeur, Selma (Delima), Nashua, N.H.
Brooks, Harry, Boston
Burgess, M.R., Boston, conductor
Cadieux (Daieux), Charles, Rockville, Ct.
Cassens (Cassino), Mr.
Devino (Devineau, Deveraux), Mary Emma (Mrs. William H.) Winooski
Dillon, Edward Frank, Springfield, Vt.
Dunbar, Miss Nancy, Somerville, Ma.
Flynn, Francis, Worcester, Ma.
Guirard, Armine, Lawrence, Ma./Upton, P.Q.
Hammer (Hadden, Hammond), John A., Malden, Ma., porter
James, Lewis (Louis) B., New Haven, Ct.
Jones, J.H., Boston, porter
Maigret (Meigret, Marquete), David (Dieudonné), Schawiningan, P.Q.
Marr, David, Providence, R.I.
McDonald, Daniel, Lowell, Ma.
McLane (McLain), Peter, Acton (Actonville), P.Q.
Mills, Mason (Cephas), Iroquois, Ont.
Pouliot (Poeloet, Poulet, Poullier), Moses, P.Q.
Riggs, Homer, Middlebury
Rogers, Agnes, Monroe, N.H./Lakefield, P.Q.
Sanford, Charles W., Boston
Stone, James A., Burlington
Sturtevant, Smith C., St. Albans, conductor
Thayer, Herbert A., Chateaugay, N.Y.
Westcott, Samuel S., Burlington
Westcott, Eddie, son of S.S. Westcott

Wesson, Frank L., Springfield, Ma.
Wilder, Edgar, St. Albans
Woodard (Woodward), D.D., Waterbury

Notes

[1] Diary of Professor Robert Fletcher, 5 February 1887, courtesy of Rauner Special Collections, Dartmouth College Library.

[2] "First Biennial Report of the Railroad Commissioners of the State of Vermont, December 1, 1886 to June 30, 1888" (Boston: Rand Avery Co., 1888), 91.

[3] *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 7 February 1887, 1.

[4] *Valley News* [Windsor, Vt.], 13 June 1985, 1–2. A *Valley News* rewrite of the incident.

[5] *Daily American* [Lawrence, Mass.], 7 February 1887.

[6] *St. Albans Daily Messenger*, 7 February 1887, 1.

[7] Ibid.

[8] *Boston Daily Globe*, 8 February 1887, 2.

[9] Manchester *Union*, 7 February 1887 (from one o'clock edition of 5 Feb. 1887).

[10] *Boston Daily Globe*, 8 February 1887, 1.

[11] Col. T. C. (Thomas Chittenden) Fletcher, of St. Johnsbury, was the son of Col. Frederick Fletcher, a neighbor and friend of W. Seward Webb, son-in-law of William H. Vanderbilt, owner of the Rutland Railroad and a friend of J. Gregory Smith, president of CVRR.

[12] Manchester *Union* (morning edition), 9 February 1887, 1, italics added.

[13] Ibid., italics added.

[14] *St. Albans Daily Messenger*, 9 February 1887, 1.

[15] Manchester *Union* (morning) 9 February 1887, 1.

[16] *St. Albans Daily Messenger*, 9 February 1887, 1.

[17] Fletcher diary, 5 February 1887.

[18] Ibid., 8 February 1887.

[19] Ibid., 9 February 1887.

[20] Robert Fletcher, "The Facts in Regard to the Woodstock Disaster," *Engineering News*, 12 February 1887, 106. Courtesy of Dartmouth College Library.

[21] *St. Albans Daily Messenger*, 11 February 1887.

[22] Manchester *Union* (morning edition), 11 February 1887.

[23] *St. Albans Daily Messenger*, 11 February 1887.

[24] Robert Fletcher, "Memorandum of Surveys, Reports, Court Cases etc. in Practice of Civil Engineering," 22 May 1889, Courtesy of Dartmouth College Library.

[25] *Springfield Union* (Vt.), 12 February 1887.

[26] "First Biennial Report of the Railroad Commissioners of the State of Vermont," 98–99.

[27] *Rutland Herald*, 5 February 1887, 16.

[28] *Burlington Free Press and Times*, 3 April 1889.

[29] Ibid., 5 April 1889.

[30] Ibid., 14 May 1889.

[31] *Boston Daily Globe*, 6 June 1889.

[32] *Burlington Free Press and Times*, 9 January 1890.

[33] Ibid., 11 October 1889.

[34] Ibid., 9 January 1890.

[35] C.A. Prouty, "Reports, . . . Supreme Court" (Vt.), Vol. 63, October 1890 (Burlington: Free Press Association), 101–103.

[36] *Burlington Free Press and Times*, June, 1889.

[37] The conflicting trial was undoubtedly that of *Henry Mott v. CVRR* being heard in the Grand Isle court in North Hero, because the defendants' and plaintiffs' attorneys were the same as those involved in the Westcott case.

[38] *Burlington Free Press and Times*, 11 October 1889.

[39] Ibid., 25 February 1890.

[40] Ibid., 23 April 1890.

[41] Wesley S. Griswold., *Train Wreck!* (Brattleboro, Vt.: Stephen Greene Press, 1969), 85.

[42] *Burlington Free Press and Times*, 2 October 1889.

[43] Ibid., 8 April 1890.

[44] Annual Reports, CVRR, 1887–1892.

[45] *Burlington Free Press and Times*, 17 October 1889.

"Work of national importance": Conscientious Objectors in Civilian Public Service in Vermont during World War II

By the time World War II ended, forty-three men—several with their wives—had done service as conscientious objectors at the Brattleboro Retreat under the auspices of the Civilian Public Service program. Fifteen COs served in another CPS project in Vermont, testing dairy herds for butterfat content and diseases.

By MICHAEL SHERMAN

"War Objectors Due Next Week," was the headline on an article in the *Brattleboro Daily Reformer* on February 13, 1943. The newspaper reported that twenty-five conscientious objectors (COs) were to be transferred from Civilian Public Service camps in Gorham and West Campton, N.H., and assigned to the Brattleboro Retreat as a unit that would have an official designation as CPS Camp No. 87.[1] Although this was doubtless news to many residents of Brattleboro, it had been announced three weeks earlier, on January 25, 1943, when the Burlington *Free Press* reported on an agreement between A. S. Imirie, chief of the Camp Operations Division of national Selective Service headquarters, and Lieutenant Colonel Warren B. Steele, state Selective Service executive officer for Vermont, to bring

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the conscientious objectors to the Brattleboro Retreat to work as ward attendants. In his announcement of the arrangement to the press, Lt. Col. Steele explained that with many men leaving to join the military or work in more lucrative jobs in war-related industry, "the labor situation in Vermont hospitals for the mentally ill 'has been at a low ebb.'" The state Selective Service, Steele explained, "made a thorough study of the type of men who would comprise the group. 'These men . . . are conscientious objectors who, due to their religious training for years past, have been adverse [*sic*] to war and are also indoctrinated with the idea of helping their fellow men.'" All had volunteered for this service which, he asserted, "is a step in the right direction in solving the acute labor situation in Vermont's hospitals for the mentally ill."[2]

The *Brattleboro Daily Reformer* article provided more details of the negotiations and arrangements. The article reported that Dr. George A. Elliott, superintendent of the Retreat, initiated the request for the unit the previous November, "when it was apparent to him that institutions such as the Retreat were facing an employment crisis due to the war drain on a field of employment in which, even in normal times, there is a limited supply." Elliott sought the cooperation of Governor William H. Wills and Lt. Col. Steele to secure the transfer under a provision of the Selective Service and Training Act of 1940 that established the Civilian Public Service (CPS) program and designated projects for men who received classifications from their draft boards as "conscientious objectors to both combatant and noncombatant military service."[3]

By the time the war ended, forty-three men—several with their wives—had done service as COs at the Retreat under the auspices of the CPS program. Fifteen COs served in another CPS project in Vermont, testing dairy herds for butterfat content and diseases.

In May 1993, some of those men and women gathered for a reunion at the Retreat. This article has its origins in that gathering and owes much to the generosity of those who agreed to be interviewed on that occasion, subsequently corresponded with the author about their backgrounds and experiences as COs, and shared materials they collected and saved from that time.[4] The generation of COs who lived through World War II is now mostly gone; and with them we are losing voices that challenged the interpretation that that war, or any war, can be thought of as a "good war."[5]

Conscientious Objectors and Civilian Public Service

As Europe drifted into war, beginning with Adolph Hitler's invasion of the demilitarized Rhineland in 1936, and culminating with the invasions of Austria, Czechoslovakia, and Poland in 1939, the United States,

although officially neutral, slowly but steadily prepared to enter the conflict. At first limiting participation to providing war materiel to England —making the U.S. "the great arsenal of Democracy," as he called it— President Franklin D. Roosevelt started putting in place the mechanisms for raising an army. On September 16, 1940, Roosevelt signed a new Selective Service Training and Service Act,[6] passed by the Congress to replace the Draft Act of 1917 under which the United States raised troops for World War I.

Conscientious objectors had fared poorly under the Draft Act of 1917, which acknowledged only those who were members of recognized sects and religious groups—the so-called "traditional peace churches" —that forbade their members from participating in warfare of any kind under any conditions. These included primarily the Society of Friends (Quakers), Mennonites, the Church of the Brethren, Molokans, Seventh-Day Adventists, and Jehovah's Witnesses. Those who belonged to other denominations, opposed war for philosophical or political reasons, refused noncombatant duty, or resisted any form of compulsory military training and service were nonetheless forcibly inducted, court-martialed, and sent to prison, or assigned to service jobs in military camps. Men placed in military camps were subjected to ridicule, physical abuse, and cruel punishment by officers and enlisted men. Of the 545 objectors who were court-martialed as COs in World War I, 17 received death sentences, 142 were given sentences of lifetime imprisonment, 85 received prison sentences of 25 to 50 years, and 301 received sentences of fewer than 25 years. None of the death sentences were carried out, and after the war the sentences were reduced for all others. But some men did die as a result of the harsh treatment meted out in the military camps.[7]

During the 1920s and 1930s, in reaction to the devastation of World War I and reflecting the idealism that hoped to prevent the repetition of that disaster, several antiwar and pacifist coalitions and associations formed or flourished in Europe and the United States. Foremost among them was the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR). Founded in 1915 to support COs during World War I, FOR in the postwar years actively recruited members in the U.S. on college campuses and through religious and quasi-religious organizations such as the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA). Social action committees formed within many other religious denominations not among the traditional peace churches, and as war again loomed on the horizon, these groups also began to prepare to protect pacifists.

Public opinion in the United States concerning intervention in the war in Europe was starkly divided as late as the summer of 1941. A

Gallup poll taken in February 1941 showed that 85 percent of those questioned favored staying out of the war, although 65 percent supported aiding Great Britain, even if that would eventually lead the country into war.[8] According to historian Roland H. Bainton, writing in 1945 on Christian churches' attitudes on war for the magazine *Social Action,* "opinion in the churches was not far different from that in the country at large. The prevailing sentiment was in favor of staying out of the war."[9] Disillusion with the outcome of World War I was a major factor influencing public and ecclesiastical opinion.

Nonetheless, anticipating a new struggle to guarantee the rights and safety of conscientious objectors if the United States did enter the war, representatives from the peace churches and other groups coordinated efforts to redefine and clarify the meaning of conscientious objection, assure a procedure by which individuals could state their position, and build into the Selective Service System arrangements for COs that would avoid the harsh treatment they had previously received while performing alternative service.

The result of this negotiation was Section 5(g) of the Selective Training and Service Act of 1940, which described the criteria and process whereby men could apply for CO status:

> Nothing contained in this Act shall be construed to require any person to be subject to combatant training and service in the land or naval forces of the United States who, by reason of religious training and belief, is conscientiously opposed to participation in war in any form. Any such person claiming such an exemption from combatant training and service because of such conscientious objections whose claim is sustained by the local board shall, if he is inducted into the land or naval forces under this Act, be assigned to noncombatant service . . . or shall, if he is found to be conscientiously opposed to such participation in such noncombatant service, in lieu of such induction, be assigned to work of national importance under civilian direction.[10]

The act thus created two distinct groups of conscientious objectors: Those who were opposed to combat service (classified as 1-O-A) were assigned to non-combat duty within the armed forces; those who were opposed to war in any form (classified as 4-E) were assigned to alternative service. In Vermont, a total of sixty-five men qualified as conscientious objectors. Forty-eight were classified 1-A-O; seventeen were classified 4-E.[11] With one exception, none of the seventeen 4-E men were allowed to serve in CPS units in the state.

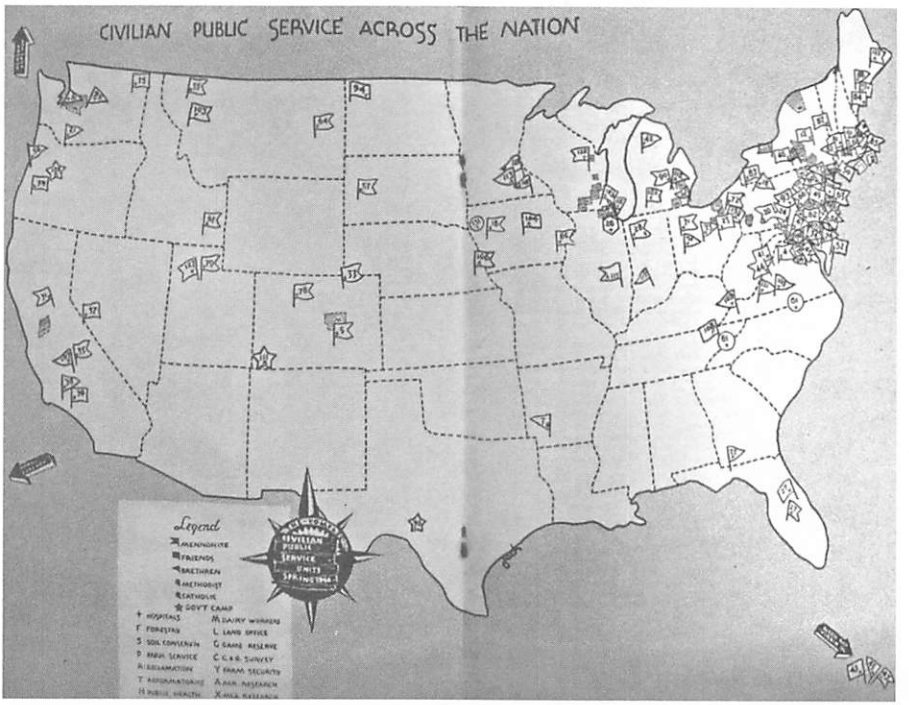
Almost immediately after the enactment of the law, the coalition that had helped forge section 5(g) organized itself as the National Service Board for Religious Objectors (NSBRO). Under the leadership of Paul Comly French, the NSBRO began to work out details for alternative

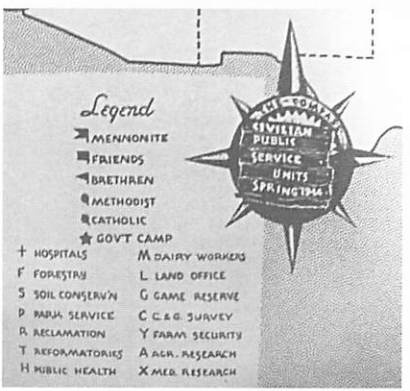
service for COs. In December the National Headquarters of the Selective Service System in Washington, D.C., issued a memorandum to all the state directors reminding them of the provisions for COs under section 5(g) and clarifying some of the terms. First, the memorandum reminded the local boards that the new law specifically provided consideration for all such persons on a basis of their individual conscientious convictions and did not require membership in a religious organization or sect as evidence of the sincerity of those convictions. The memorandum then broadly defined several key terms in the law:

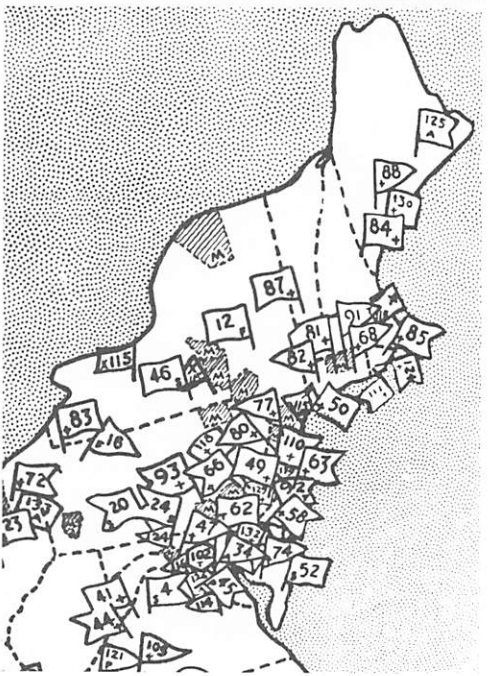
> Religious training or discipline may be considered as having been received in the home, in the church, in other organizations whose influence is religious though not professedly such, in the school, or in the individual's own personal religious experience and conduct of life.... Religious belief signifies sincere conviction as to the supreme worth of that to which one gives his supreme allegiance. . . . "conscientiously . . . opposed to participation in war in any form" may be interpreted as meaning that a person may have become a conscientious objector to war, either by specific teaching . . . or by specific application of fundamental doctrines.[12]

It fell to Clarence A. Dykstra, national director of the Selective Service System, to work out the details of civilian service with Paul Comly French and the NSBRO. This was accomplished in December 1940 and on February 6, 1941, President Roosevelt issued Executive Order 8675 authorizing the director of the Selective Service to establish or designate "work of national importance" for COs who refused to accept noncombatant service. A six-month experimental period followed, in which COs doing civilian public service were sent to several former Civilian Conservation Corps camps—recently abandoned as the CCC began closing down operations following Congress's vote in 1940 to discontinue the program. In this first phase of the CPS program, COs worked on projects under the technical supervision of the Soil Conservation Service, Forest Service, National Park Service, Farm Security Administration, General Land Office, Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission, and Fish and Wildlife Service.[13] By the end of the experimental period, Clarence Dykstra had resigned as head of the Selective Service System and was replaced by General Lewis B. Hershey, who agreed in November 1941 to extend CPS to at least January 1, 1943, with the option of negotiating for continuation as necessary. By then it had been agreed that COs assigned to CPS would do service for the duration of the war plus six months—the same as military duty for draftees. This condition later became a cause for much controversy and anger among COs.

By the spring of 1942, the NSBRO had negotiated with General Hershey to expand CPS to include "special projects." These included







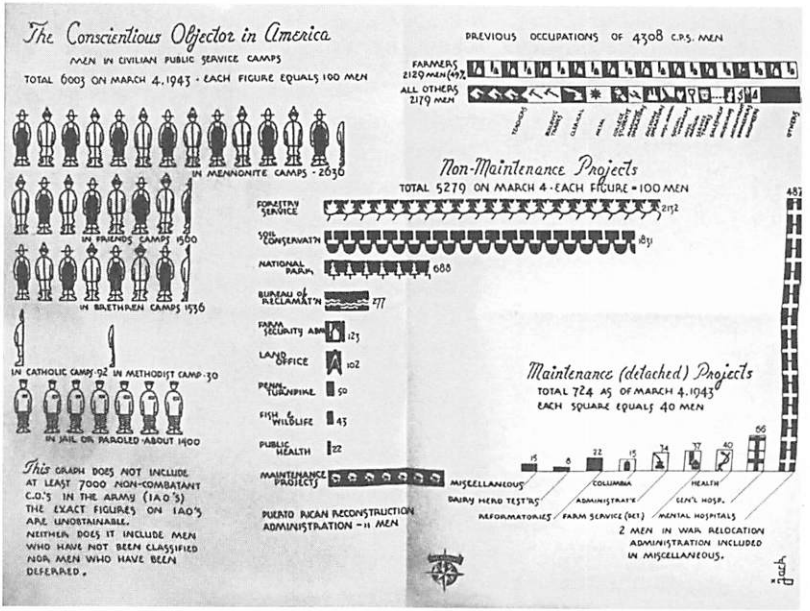
"Civilian Public Service across the Nation, a Map" from The Compass: An Instrument of Direction *[Ames, Iowa] 1: 4&5 (May 1944), 1–2.*

detached service to work as farm hands on dairy farms; work in agricultural experiment stations; work as attendants and kitchen aides in general hospitals; training as "smoke jumpers" to fight forest fires; mapping uncharted sections in western forests and national parks; building and improving sanitary facilities in Florida to control and prevent hookworm; hospital, health, and recreational projects in Puerto Rico; and work in state mental hospitals and training schools. Projects planned for relief and reconstruction work in South Africa and China were cancelled when members of Congress objected to sending COs abroad, but the Alexian Brothers hospital in Chicago, which had set up a "China unit" to prepare for volunteer relief programs, began accepting CPS men later in the war years.

Altogether, CPS enrolled 11,950 men nationwide in 151 administrative units. Two CPS special project units operated in Vermont. CPS 87, assigned to the Brattleboro Retreat, was authorized to accept twenty-five men. Another special project unit, known officially as CPS 100, was created as an administrative structure to account for men sent to several states around the country to test dairy herds for butterfat content and diseases. CPS 100.13 was assigned to Vermont. Working under the supervision of the Vermont state agricultural extension division, these men did not live or work as a unit, but were assigned to one of six regions and traveled singly and on their own to dairy farms in several parts of the state. A total of fifteen men did this work as alternative service from September 1943 until discharged in June 1946. One man, Robert Wehmeyer, served in both Vermont units. Wehmeyer entered CPS 87 in March 1943, transferred to the dairy testing unit in November 1944, and returned to Brattleboro in January 1946 to serve out the remainder of his term.

Who Were They?

Of the fifty-eight men who did service under CPS in Vermont, only one had been inducted while living in the state, although he listed his place of origin as Buffalo, N.Y., and was probably inducted through that draft board. Most of the men were living in New England or Mid-Atlantic states at the time of induction into CPS. Two came from Illinois, two from Ohio, one each from Indiana and Kansas. Their training and work careers were as varied as their places of origin. The "Communiqué from Brattleboro"—a mimeographed publication written and produced by the CPS members in February 1944—noted that "our occupations prior to CPS were quite varied. A half dozen of us were undergraduate students. Joe Albrecht had been teaching bookkeeping



"The Conscientious Objector in America. Men in Civilian Public Service Camps" (March 4, 1943), from The Compass *[West Campton, N.H.] 1:3 (Spring 1943), insert.*

for seven years; Lu [Luther] Kirsch taught English; Jim Eastman and Ben Pierce were librarians; Roger Harnish a statistician, Henry Ormsby a mechanical draftsman, Howard Pedersen a commercial artist. Others have been clerks, factory workers, salesmen, social workers, etc."[14]

Although CPS was the result of a coalition of churches working as the NSBRO, each unit was sponsored and supported by a participating denomination (see Table 1). Some units, for example, the medical experiments projects (CPS 115 and 140, with thirty-two and nine subunits respectively) were sponsored with pooled money from all the religious organizations. In a few cases, two denominations cosponsored a unit; the Selective Service System sponsored eight units on its own, one in cooperation with the Brethren Service Committee and seventeen in cooperation with the Friends Service Committee. NSBRO sponsored one unit. The American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) placed no religious test or restriction on membership in units it supported. Units sponsored by the Mennonites and the Brethren were restricted to members of those denominations. One CPS camp in New Hampshire was for members of the Catholic Church.

TABLE 1 Sponsorship of CPS Camps by Organization*

Sponsoring Organization	*Number of Units Sponsored*
American Catholic Conscientious Objectors (ACCO)	4
American Baptist Home Mission Society (ABHMS)	2
Brethren Service Committee (BSC)	47
Disciples of Christ (DOC)	1
Commission on Christian Social Action of the Evangelical and Reformed Church (EARC)	1
Friends Service Committee (FSC or AFSC)	22
Mennonite Central Committee (MCC)	77
Methodist World Peace Commission (MWPC)	1
National Service Board for Religious Objectors (NSBRO)	1
Selective Service System (SSS)	8
Joint Sponsors	
BSC-MCC	5
BSC-SSS	1
BSC-FSC	1
FSC-MCC	3
FSC-SSS	17
Cooperative, by all religious agencies	3†
Total	147‡

*Source: Swarthmore College Peace Collections, DG2, 32c and 36d.

†This number does not include the 34 subunits of CPS 97 (Dairy Farm Project) and 13 active subunits of CPS 100 (Dairy Herd Testing), each of which was sponsored by one denomination and is included in the count for that denomination.

‡Four units were administratively approved and received numbers but were never active.

CPS 87 was sponsored and supported by the AFSC. But of the forty-three men who served in the unit, only six identified their religious affiliation as Friends. CPS 100.13 was also sponsored by AFSC, but only three of the fifteen who served in the unit identified themselves as Friends. The men in both Vermont units listed as their religious affiliations a wide range of other Christian denominations. One was Jewish, and five did not list any religious affiliation (see Table 2).

Many of the men in CPS came from deeply religious backgrounds. Religious principles and training had been one of the criteria by which local draft boards and federal courts had assessed commitments to conscientious objection, and some men (and their wives) were either in the ministry or planning on entering the ministry. Thus, in CPS 87 at Brattleboro, religion played a significant but not necessarily central part in the personal and daily life of many members of the unit, who

TABLE 2 Religious Affiliation, CPS 87 and CPS 100.13*

CPS Unit Number	*Religious Affiliation (Number of Men Claiming Affiliation)*
CPS 87 ($n = 43$)	Baptist (5) Catholic (1) Christadelphian (1) Congregational (4) Disciples of Christ (1) Episcopal (3) Evangelical/Reformed (1) Friends (Quakers) (6) Jewish (1) Lutheran (4) Methodist (3) Methodist-Episcopal (1) Oxford Movement (1) Presbyterian (5) Unitarian (1) Universalist (1) None/not listed (4)
CPS 100.13 ($n = 15$)	Baptist (1) Catholic (1) Christadelphian (1) Congregational (1) Evangelical/Reformed (1) Friends (3) Meggido Mission (1) Methodist (3) Presbyterian (2) None/not listed (1)

*Source: Swarthmore College Peace Collections, DG2, 32c and 36d.

found time for private devotion. Several members of the CPS unit at the Retreat formed a non-denominational devotion and study group, but attendance was voluntary. A few of the men and their wives attended religious services in local churches in Brattleboro, and one local minister, Robert White of the Methodist Church, was sympathetic with the conscientious objectors and befriended several of them. Early in the history of the unit, Reverend White hosted a gathering of a dozen Brattleboro members of the local chapter of the Fellowship of Reconciliation with COs at the Retreat.

All of the men who served in CPS did their initial service in one of the larger CPS units located at former CCC base camps. Transfer to any of the CPS special projects was an option to men only after they had received orientation and done at least sixty days of service at the CPS

base camps. Many men moved from one base camp to another, and service in the CPS is notable for the numerous transfers of men.

Few men, therefore, did their entire alternative service in a single CPS unit. Of the forty-three men who served in CPS 87, twenty-five went on to serve in one or more additional units during their term of service. One served in seven different units from the time he entered CPS in June 1942 until his discharge in February 1946. Two others served in six units. Of the fifteen men who served in CPS 100.13, ten served in three or more units, and one served in seven, including units in Ohio, California, Montana, and New York. Service assignments thus typically took the men to many parts of the country.

Applications for transfer from one unit to another were usually reviewed by the supervisor of both the sending and receiving unit. In the case of CPS 87, Dr. Elliott insisted on interviewing each man of the initial group that came from the West Campton and Gorham, N.H. camps. But as the mental hospital project expanded and applications began arriving from more remote areas, personal interviews became impractical and only the applicants' files were forwarded for his approval.

In the case of the dairy herd testing unit (CPS 100.13), the Agricultural Extension Service supervisor in charge of the project reviewed applications. Prior experience was preferred but not necessary. Wesley Herwig, originally from New Britain, Connecticut, was preparing for a career as an artist when he entered CPS in 1943. By the time he arrived in Vermont in January 1944, he had been at the forest camp in Gorham (CPS 53), and had done mapping and forest fire service under the supervision of the U.S. Forest Service in Nevada and in Colville, California (CPS 37). His prior agricultural experience was limited to occasional work milking cows on his uncle's dairy farm. He knew how to milk cows but little else about the details of farm management, herd health, or butterfat testing. Like all the others assigned to the dairy herd testing units, Herwig received thirty days of training, was handed a box of supplies, and was sent out on his own to test butterfat content in herds on farms in Randolph, Bethel, Sharon, and other Orange County towns. He reported the test results to the farmers and sent weekly reports to the Extension Service agent who supervised his work. He had only occasional contact with some of the other dairy herd testers.

Why They Came

Petitioning for exemption from military service as a conscientious objector was not an easy choice in a war that quickly gained wide public support after the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. Until that time, American entry into another European war had been controversial and had met with resistance in Vermont, as elsewhere in the

United States.[15] But by 1942 most of the opposition to the war had faded, partially the result of the Japanese action, and partly the result of an intense public relations campaign coordinated by the federal government's Office of War Information. War bond sales—sometimes featuring public appearances by stage and movie stars—scrap metal drives, and civilian paramilitary efforts such as "plane spotting" corps and civilian defense units, had succeeded in generating popular support for the war effort. Choosing to be a conscientious objector thus had its risks.

Although the 1940 Selective Training and Service Act had described criteria and a process for claiming CO status, there were still areas open to interpretation and local draft board discretion. In 1940, Clarence Dykstra had ruled that religious belief could include purely moral considerations, and this had been confirmed by a U.S. Court of Appeals decision that defined religion as a "response to an inward mentor, call it conscience or God." Two years later, General Hershey, the new director of Selective Service, insisted on a narrower definition, going beyond statements of ethical or moral principle to one that "contemplates recognition of some source of all existence, which, whatever the type of conception, is Divine because it is the Source of all things."[16] To further complicate matters, discretion to grant or deny CO status started with each draft board, and an applicant denied that status at the local level had to appeal to a federal judge for review and possible reclassification.

The men who came to Vermont brought with them a variety of backgrounds and personal journeys toward their position on the war. They also experienced a wide range of treatment by their local draft boards. Many came to be conscientious objectors through their religious training or upbringing; others mentioned their involvement with the YMCA, pacifist youth groups that flourished in the post-World War I years, high school friends and discussion groups, and sometimes college pacifist groups and associations. Lee Hebel, who later became a minister, wrote about his self-study of the New Testament and prayer. Henry Ormsby wrote, "My training as a child by my mother and father was that 'Killing is not the answer to any problem.' My twelve years in Quaker Schools helped reinforce my conscientious stand against war."[17] Robert Wehmeyer wrote: "I could not envision myself killing any other human being. They [his draft board] thought I must be deranged and referred me to the appeals board. I appeared before a Federal Judge in N.Y. City with my Dad (a German-born émigré) and was granted C/O status. My mother was Italian by birth and father German. I had visited both countries and spoke both languages. Father left Germany to escape the military prior to W.W. II."[18]

Luther Kirsch was the younger of two sons in a Lutheran family. His father and brother, both Lutheran ministers, were pacifists, and encouraged his own reading and thinking in that direction. Kirsch concluded from his reading in scripture, and also from reading Henry David Thoreau "and other such people . . . that I could not conscientiously serve two masters. So I chose to serve the master Jesus as I interpreted what he was saying."[19] Kirsch wrote about how he and his colleagues in CPS followed news of the war and what they thought about the events they read and heard about at the battlefront:

> I don't remember any group discussions on the subject, but I'm positive we mentioned to one another what was going on and felt concern for all the men and women caught up in the war.
>
> I ~~suppose~~ know we commiserated with those in the Armed Forces, feeling they were caught up in the evil of war and that man has to come up with better ways to solve problems between nations. They were doing a dirty job they shouldn't have been forced to face. Doesn't mankind ever learn?[20]

Robert Dick was a student at the Universalist Crane Theological School, part of Tufts College (now Tufts University). He recalled that some of his fellow students were pacifists who belonged to the Fellowship of Reconciliation, and that the dean, Clarence Skinner, was "an outstanding pacifist." Through Skinner, Dick was introduced to John Haynes Holmes of the Community Church movement in New York City. "[W]henever I had a chance I would attend services where John Haynes Holmes would be the speaker in Boston. As a matter of fact, on December 7 [1941] . . . I heard John Haynes Holmes speak. His topic was 'the ten commandments of peace.' And he said that in light of what had happened that very day, this was a purely academic presentation. But I kept very careful notes on that whole presentation."[21]

Once he had come to a pacifist position, Dick had to decide how to act on it. Under the Selective Service Act of 1940, ministers and ministers in training were assigned the exempt classification status 4-D. "I waived my theological exemption because I had just recently come to the pacifist position. I had read this little booklet called 'Creative Pioneering' by a Quaker author—CPS director Thomas E. Jones. I was tremendously impressed by this. It was an accounting of the work camps that had been directed by the . . . Quakers—and I just felt that this would be a way to make a constructive contribution."[22]

Robert Dick's wife, Helen, was also at Crane Theological School at the time, but left school to join Robert at the Retreat when he was assigned there after a short stay at the base camp at West Campton (CPS 32). She elaborated on the issue of Robert's decision to waive his

exemption from the draft as a minister in training in order to register as a conscientious objector and the reluctance of his draft board to register him as a CO: "[T]here already had been a court case saying that it was possible to do that. A student at the University of Chicago had wanted to waive his theological exemption [and] many of the other students tried to do that, but their draft boards said, 'Sorry, you're in theological school; you're going to be a minister.' This was partly because they didn't want to have so many COs. If they could classify them anything else but CO, the draft boards were anxious to do that."[23]

Thomas Shipley arrived at Brattleboro from the Powellsville, Maryland, camp (CPS 52) in November 1944 and served until demobilized in June 1946. Just nineteen years old, he was one of the younger members of the CPS group. He described how he came to the decision to apply for CO status:

> I grew up in a Quaker family, and that undoubtedly had an influence on [me]. Also of influence was going to a Quaker school, Germantown Friends School [in Philadelphia]. There weren't many Quakers there, but we got into all sorts of arguments and discussions in the school. So very often I wound up discussing this with my good friends, some of whom then went off and went into the army. . . . Of course, it wasn't an issue until the war broke out for real. Pearl Harbor really made it happen. . . . I was drafted in '43 and of course at that point you said 'yea' or 'nay.'
>
> I was one of the first that [my draft board] actually called in to interview on this topic and they interviewed me and they asked me for my reasons. It was a relatively benign interview. I was relatively quickly classified as 4-E.[24]

William D. Foye came from Middletown, Connecticut. "Officially, I was a Baptist," Foye explained, although, he added, he had not been active in any religious denomination. The Baptists "had something called the Peace Foundation," but the church that his family attended had no association with that splinter group. Foye therefore arrived at his decision to be a CO from a combination of philosophical and religious perspectives. While enrolled as a student in 1939 at Wesleyan University in Middletown, he took a course called "The Problem of War." Listed as an interdepartmental course offered by the Religion and Ethics Department at Wesleyan, it was taught jointly by faculty from history, economics, religion, and philosophy. The philosophy professor was Cornelius Cruse. "He was a Quaker," Foye recalled, "and fairly active in the Society of Friends. I knew Professor Cruse [personally], and he was a pacifist. He'd been a pacifist in World War I and had gone to France to do reconstruction work after the war. And he was the one who really influenced me."[25]

Foye left Wesleyan in 1940 to complete his education at Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, N.Y.

> When I was a Pratt I became active in the Fellowship of Reconciliation and kept contact with friends there. I was drafted when I was in Brooklyn. But since I lived in Middletown and I was registered in Brooklyn, there was some confusion. Both draft boards seemed to not want me on their rolls because I was a CO.
>
> I was denied the status eventually [because] they didn't want anybody in it. They didn't say why, they just said 'No.' So I had to go before a federal judge in New York City for an appeal to see if I could get this status upheld. And they finally granted me a CO. You see, partly it was that I wasn't at that time a member of a peace church, and that probably influenced them some.[26]

Foye and several of his acquaintances at Wesleyan signed the Oxford Pledge, a statement of personal commitment not to fight in a war.[27] "There were quite a few people at Wesleyan that signed up—probably there were eight or ten that eventually did become COs. But as soon as the war started, most of them decided that they didn't agree with that anymore. But it was the time when you thought, a lot of people thought, well, that was the last war and there wouldn't be any more war." When he transferred to Pratt Institute he made contact with Quakers, largely through his associations with members of the Fellowship of Reconciliation. By the time Foye was called before his draft board, he had his own interpretation of biblical text: "I didn't believe that you should take other people's lives. And the way I interpreted the New Testament I felt at that time, I don't know that I do now, but at that time I placed a lot on the teachings of Jesus."[28]

Information about the rise of the Nazi party in Germany was not plentiful, according to Foye:

> *Kristalnacht*: I knew about that. But my first recollection of Hitler, for instance, was reading in what used to be called the *Literary Digest,* and I remember reading at that time that he was considered a very strange character that would never get anywhere; and that they couldn't quite understand how he'd got as far as he did and what were these Germans thinking about, and that sort of thing.... I don't remember when I heard about the concentration camps, or what went on in them. I don't think I knew at that time.[29]

Many of the men who served in CPS 87 had the support of their families. Several mentioned that their families either agreed with their position to become COs or did not voice active disagreement. Luther Kirsch's whole family supported his decision; his mother also encouraged his pacifist thinking and during his time in CPS, she organized a

group of women in their home church to send "books and goodies." Theodore S. Horvath, who went on to become a minister, wrote:

> My family background was in the Hungarian Reformed Church . . . where pacifism was a relatively unknown concept in what was still a second-generation immigrant church. My father, an ordained minister, died in 1929. My mother and my [younger] brothers, however, gave me moral support, as did the pastor of my home congregation, even though all four of my brothers later went into the military . . . as did all of the other young men of my home congregation. One of my brothers was killed as an infantryman in the invasion of France, . . . but even then none in my family, church, or community turned against me for my CO position. I received open support in my community from the minister of the South Norwalk [Connecticut] Congregational Church, who was a life-long war resister, and from a Quaker who was on the national staff of the YMCA at its New York headquarters and who held to the peace witness.[30]

Several men received modest financial support from family or wives to supplement the meager pay that the CPS members received during their terms of service. In the diary Wes Herwig kept throughout his service in CPS and in numerous letters home he noted the arrival of boxes of clothing, supplies, subscriptions to magazines and auction catalogues related to his intense interest in circuses, and even food sent by various members of his family, supplemented with a few modest gifts of cash. His family never faltered in their support of him and never questioned his decision to be a conscientious objector.

This was not uniformly the case, however. One member reported that "some tolerated it (grudgingly); two uncles cut me off completely." Robert Fleisher, a native of New York City, was from a German-Jewish family, but had been brought up in the Ethical Culture Society. His family had been mostly antiwar and angry about the treatment of Germany after World War I. But after the family started to hear about the Nazi persecution of Jews, they became pro-war. His persistence as a conscientious objector angered the family and caused a split that never healed.

Robert Dick's decision to declare himself a CO elicited a variety of responses in his family. His brother-in-law, who was active in the American Legion, wrote: "As to being a conscientious objector: If one could not be, we certainly would not be a democracy, and I do not feel it is acting the part of a good American citizen to ridicule anyone taking that attitude. At the same time, it does not meet with my approval or rather my personal opinion at all." A nephew wrote: "I think you are kind of crazy to get exempted because of religious beliefs. I do not want to criticize you but I think you are doing very wrong." But the harshest criticism Dick received was from his older brother, whom he had "always admired": "I am concerned in the attitude you are taking in this

present crisis. Do you realize you are ruining your life by doing as you are? Think of the many boys just from this town that are doing their part. They write home and ask about the slackers. I shiver to think that you are in that list."[31]

Doing "Work of National Importance"

Section 5(g) of the 1940 Selective Service Act provided that conscientious objectors who refused noncombatant duty would be assigned to do "work of national importance under civilian direction." Neither President Roosevelt nor General Hershey wanted COs in highly visible places. Consequently COs mustered into service at the relatively remote CCC camps, where they continued the work of the now terminated Civilian Conservation Corps, working on forestry and conservation projects, building roads, clearing trails, digging irrigation ditches, and fighting forest fires. Nonetheless, many COs resented the forest service assignments at the base camps, which they considered merely make-work, unimportant, and punitive. They especially resented the obvious and to them demeaning strategy of hiding them away from view, where their "witness" to pacifism would be invisible and could be ignored. Robert Dick had been in the CCC before going to seminary. When he was assigned to the base camp at West Campton, N.H., he was disappointed because "I felt that this was simply a continuation of what I had done in the CCC—it was not work of national importance."[32]

By 1943, however, shortages in the workforce in other sectors of the economy provided the opportunity to expand the scope of CPS assignments. The "special projects" or "detached units" were assigned to Agricultural Experiment Stations, the U.S. Coast and Geodetic Service, the Office of Scientific Research and Development, the Weather Bureau, the Office of the U.S. Surgeon General, and to sixty-five public mental hospitals and state training schools around the country.[33]

The detached service thus offered a greater variety of work opportunities that met a variety of needs and goals for the COs. Some of the men who volunteered to work at the Brattleboro Retreat did so from personal interests in mental health. Roger Harnish wrote that he was motivated by his "innate interest in [the] medical field and a desire to help others."[34] Henry Ormsby, who was at Brattleboro from September 1943 to March 1946, wrote:

> In 1942, when I was first drafted, I was sent to Royalston, Ma[ssachusetts], to an old C.C.C. camp [CPS 10]. The project there was to dig waterholes in the forest to be used for fire protection. I did not feel this was important work and after three months I applied for hospital work and was accepted by Columbia Medical Center in N.Y.C. I worked there for about a year as a bus boy in the nurses'

> dining room. While there I became friends with another C.O. He talked me into applying for work in a mental hospital because they were short handed for patient care and my wife could work in the hospital, too.[35]

Like Ormsby, several men were married and their wives were allowed to live and work with them, and earn more money as regular employees of the Retreat than the $15.00/month that men earned as CPS members.[36] The 1944 issue of "Communiqué from Brattleboro" noted that eleven of the men were married—almost half the population of the unit at that time. Six couples were working at the Retreat, the wives of four other men worked elsewhere, and one member was about to marry. When Helen Dick left seminary to follow her husband Robert, she was hired at the Retreat and earned $60/month, still a paltry salary for her sixty-hours-a-week job.

Barbara Griffith was the sister of Tom Griffith, one of the men serving in CPS 87 in 1944. In late October that year she traveled by horseback from her family home on Cape Cod, Massachusetts, to visit her brother and his wife. During the visit she met Herbert Beam. Barbara later moved to Brattleboro, where she took a job as a bookkeeper at the Hotel Brooks. After she and Herbert married in August 1945, Barbara took a job at the Retreat and they lived on the grounds.[37]

Married couples were allowed to live together in rooms on the grounds of the Retreat. Initially, married men had to live on the grounds but when they were not on duty could stay overnight with wives living off the campus. Later, married couples were allowed to live together full time off the grounds and a few found apartments in town. Robert and Avis Fleisher were among those who moved into town. Robert recalled that they, like other COs and their wives, were looked upon with distrust if not outright dislike in town. He recalled being booed and hissed at. Their upstairs neighbor in the house where they lived banged on the floor all day to disturb them, and when they complained to the landlord, they were told that the upstairs tenant was there to stay, whereas they were only temporary tenants. Eventually the Fleishers moved out of town and walked two miles to their work at the Retreat. Robert mentioned trying to thumb a ride, but no one would pick him up.[38]

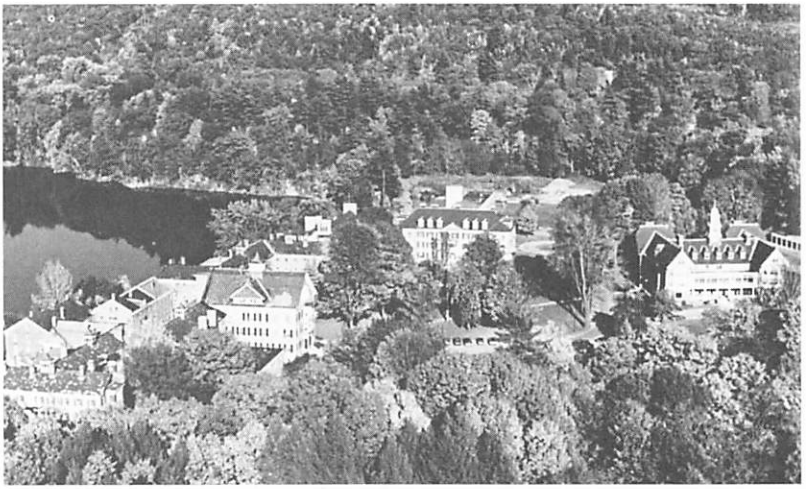
The wives of COs who worked at the Retreat mostly did the same kinds of ward attendant and "housekeeping" work assigned to the COs. Some of the women had limited nursing duties, although few had any formal nursing training and relied on principles of pacifism and their religious training to get them through difficult moments with patients and staff. Avis Fleisher reflected on a year at the Retreat in the February 1944 issue of "Communiqué from Brattleboro":

> After a year's experience of evils inherent in the mental hospital system, and of course in conscription which made this experience possible, there are still many advantages apparent at the Brattleboro Retreat.
>
> From a personal viewpoint, living conditions and working environment are better than average for such institutions. Husbands and wives have the privileges of living and working together, and exploring the field of psychology. . . .
>
> Most important is the test of pacifist principles in our associations with others of opposing views and in dealing with patients whose reasoning powers are nil.[39]

Helen Dick, in her contribution to the same publication, commented on the need—in the absence of any formal training—to improvise in dealing with patients:

> My first reaction as an attendant in a mental hospital was one of bewilderment. The primary concern of the institution is to serve the patient, but just how was one who had no training in this work to help most? It was reassuring to learn from a former patient that one's most effective contribution can be made through the daily practice of basic Christian principles such as kindness, courtesy and understanding.[40]

Barbara Beam wrote of using principles from Quaker reading that she began after her marriage to Herbert, who was a Quaker, to solve problems with both patients and staff. Assigned to night duty on a ward that housed "the most disturbed women patients," Beam worked with a young woman attendant "who took no nonsense from any of the patients." One night they had to deal with a restless patient, who had earned the sobriquet "The Tiger" because of her violent outbursts that included scratching and clawing. When the staff attendant suggested "putting her to bed"—which meant subduing the patient and restraining her in straightjacket—Beam received hesitant permission to try an alternative approach. She described slowly, cautiously, and softly calling to the patient. When the patient stopped screaming "as suggested in the Quaker book, I held out my hand and asked her to put hers in mine. Each passing second seemed an age. I wondered if she would jump me, but finally she gave me her hand. Then I asked if she would walk with me. She got up from the bench, and hand in hand we walked the long corridor. At last she asked in a very small voice, 'Do you think I should go back to bed?'" Having successfully gotten the patient back to bed and "feeling pretty good," Beam returned to her station where the attendant eyed her carefully and admitted "'You two didn't see me, but I was down there hiding out of sight close by, just in case.'" Beam concluded that "in spite of her tough, no-nonsense demeanor" the attendant "really cared about the people in her care, me included."[41]



Brattleboro Retreat, 1940. From Esther Munroe Swift and Mona Beach, Brattleboro Retreat, 1834–1984: 150 Years of Caring *(1984), 126.*

Beam's application of Quaker nonviolence was used by many of the COs in their relationships with patients and staff. Much of this they learned from each other or from materials that the NSBRO and its member organizations prepared and distributed to COs working in the mental hospitals and training schools.

Working and Living at the Retreat

The members of the unit performed clerical work, served as attendants on the wards, and worked as farm hands at the Retreat's farm under the direct supervision of the superintendent of the Retreat. Dr. Elliott noted at the time the memo creating the unit was drafted that he anticipated having opportunities for the men to use their specific skills in the Retreat's occupational therapy programs for patients (music, art, woodworking, dance, and sports). He also anticipated using two or three of the men in the hydrotherapy unit, where he had a shortage of workers, and he committed to providing the COs training in nursing and first aid.

The draftees of CPS 87 assigned to do general ward duties at the Brattleboro Retreat, which housed both publicly funded and private patients, worked on the men's wards in both areas of the hospital. They served food, washed and groomed the patients, cleaned up after incontinent patients, and sometimes took patients on walks or attended

to other personal needs. Because of the shortage of employees, CPS men were also assigned to some routine cleaning duties in the women's wards.

Theodore Horvath described the work on the wards in some detail:

> The duties were to work under the supervisor of the ward (a non-professional who had risen from the ranks of the attendants) in keeping the patients occupied in maintaining their rooms and the ward as a whole and in keeping the patients from harming one another. Since I worked only on wards four and five for the most severe cases, very little group activity was possible. A few on ward five were well enough to qualify for the daily trips to occupational therapy classes, which meant that an attendant would escort them to another building for the classes and remain with them for the return trip to the ward. From other wards where patients were farther along the road to recovery an attendant might be assigned to escort a patient for a walk around the grounds or even into town, to see the sights or even to have a lunch in a restaurant, as part of the recovering therapy. On the wards, the duties were mainly supervision of the patients, looking after their physical welfare and physical cleanliness, and at meal times feeding those who were unable to feed themselves. I remember being assigned at times to ward four for night duty, as the lone attendant for the forty or fifty patients, and having to be especially on the alert for any emergency, should one or more patients become disturbed or become ill. My ward duties did not change over the eight months.[42]

In the February 1944 issue of "Communiqué from Brattleboro" several men described their work in similar terms—adding to the list of routine ward and grounds-keeping work, assisting patients in the occupational therapy shops. Roger Harnish, who had experience cutting hair, became "a part-time tonsorial specialist; I cut about thirty heads of hair a day." Jim Jamieson, a music major in college, noted that "I have had the chance to work with patients both in ensemble playing and teaching. We have a choral group; I also have led a small amount of community singing." Luther Kirsch, who had a night shift, described getting the patients to bed, trying to keep them there, keeping records of sleep patterns of some patients, and changing soiled beds or waking patients for bathroom purposes during the night. "Most night attendants find, during the eleven hours stretch, leisure moments for reading, studying, and correspondence. The job is a lonely one for most, for which we compensate by a monthly party."[43]

The men worked a regular rotation—that is, the same rotation as the civilian employees: six days a week, twelve hours a day, with an hour and a half off for meals. They could accumulate their one day off each week to a maximum of three consecutives days off. Pay was stipulated at $2.50 a month plus maintenance, which included room, board, and

suitable working clothing. They received free medical and dental care, paid for by the Retreat, upon authorization by the hospital director. They were eligible for a two-week vacation or furlough after one year of service.

The COs were free to come and go from the grounds of the Retreat when they were not on duty, and to use the facilities for meetings, recreation, and education "as long as they conduct themselves with gentlemanly decorum"—words that Dr. Elliott wrote into the memo of understanding.[44]

Although CPS 87 was about the average size for a unit assigned to a mental hospital, the Brattleboro Retreat was among the smallest of the facilities that received CPS units. This provided some opportunities for closer interaction with the medical and professional staff than at the larger mental hospitals that had CPS placements; but it also meant that personnel shortages put extra pressure on the CPS units to fill in the gap. Both situations seem to have occurred. Working in the infirmary and other wards where patients received nursing service gave some of the men opportunities to interact with the professional staff, but that was always on a limited basis.

Relations with the professional staff were for the most part cordial but distant. Although many of the men in CPS 87, and their wives, had some college education or had finished college by the time they were drafted into service, the Retreat professional staff seemed to take little notice of that or try to use it to any particular advantage in assigning work. One member commented that he was allowed to assist in one of the treatment rooms, but this was clearly the exception. A few men noted that they had good working relationships with Dr. Catherine Armstrong and with Dr. Neils Anthonisen, clinical director at the Retreat.

Dr. Elliott himself kept his distance from the COs. With over 150 employees and 750 to 800 patients to supervise, it might have been unreasonable to expect the hospital director to give the twenty-five CPS men and their wives any special attention. Yet several of the men and women associated with CPS remarked on Dr. Elliott's uneasy relationship with them. Thomas Shipley remembered Dr. Elliott as "very stiff and 'proper'" who had "very strong opinions about how people should behave on the wards. You never really saw much of him. You knew he was there and he was looked upon as a very strict administrator, if not a martinet."[45] But Shipley also remembered that when he told Elliott of his interest in psychology and psychopathology, Elliott showed some flexibility and looked at some notes Shipley had made on patients. At the conclusion of his November 1943 report to AFSC, Huston Westover remarked that "Dr. Elliott apparently is quite authoritarian in his

Dr. George Albert Elliott, superintendent of the Brattleboro Retreat, 1940–1949. From Esther Munroe Swift and Mona Beach, Brattleboro Retreat, 1834–1984: 150 Years of Caring *(1984), 125.*

treatment of employees; however, as yet this has brought no particular reaction from the men of the unit with the exception of a few minor cases. He never meets with the unit."[46] Invited to contribute some comments in the February 1944 "Communiqué from Brattleboro," which was devoted to reflecting on the past year of service, Dr. Elliott wrote two short paragraphs on the theme of "service."

The relationship between Dr. Elliott and the CPS unit continued to be stiff, and over time several conflicts concerning large and small issues emerged. These were handled primarily through the CPS unit's assistant director, an administrative position created by the AFSC to serve as liaison between the members of the unit, the AFSC administrative staff, and the hospital's administrative officer, in this case, Dr. Elliott. Soon after his arrival at Brattleboro, Theodore Horvath was assigned by AFSC to be the first assistant director—or as they came to be known, "AD"—of CPS 87. He described his working relationship with Dr. Elliott as "always on the best of terms. He was a man of strong temperament and ran a tight ship. But even when we had some difficult problems to handle . . . I do not recall any blow-ups on Dr. Elliott's part—he was firm but fair in the way he handled all administrative problems."[47] All of Horvath's successors as ADs, however, had rockier working relationships with Dr. Elliott.

Robert Dick was selected to be the AD in 1944. By then, the organization of the COs at Brattleboro, as elsewhere, had become more elaborate, with the addition of a personnel secretary—or "Persec" as it was

known—to coordinate on-site educational and training programs and arrange for appearances by guest speakers sent out by NSBRO, AFSC, and other peace groups. Over time, the reporting and programming duties of the assistant director and personnel secretary, and eventually also an education secretary, "Edsec," had grown to such proportions that they had negotiated with Dr. Elliott to give each of these people time off from ward work, as was the case with most other CPS sites. To minimize the impact of these released hours, the AD was usually assigned to the night shift. But these adjustments of work schedules developed over time into a major source of conflict between Dr. Elliott and the men of the CPS unit. Reluctantly conceding hours, and complaining to AFSC that his own administrative staff was perfectly capable of doing the required paperwork, Dr. Elliott continued to argue that his first concern was the well-being and care of the patients. He therefore objected to the amount of time he had to give away from ward work for unit administrative work.

Joseph Albrecht became the third AD for the unit in August 1944, following Robert Dick's departure to participate in medical experiments at Rochester, New York. Albrecht, too, tangled with Dr. Elliott over the amount of time he would be released from ward duty to accomplish the administrative and record keeping work required by AFSC in its reporting responsibilities to the Selective Service System.

Luther Kirsch was the unit's fourth AD, elected in April 1945. He and Dr. Elliott had a rocky relationship from the beginning, in part because of Elliott's growing irritation that the administrative structure of the CPS unit interfered with their service on the wards. This dispute apparently triggered a much deeper disagreement between Elliott and the unit. In a letter to AFSC in July 1945, Kirsch reported Elliott saying that "a question has been plaguing him for quite some time."

> The question is: "Just how far does conscience go?" I am not certain what he meant by it, but I suppose he is wondering how men of conscience (his phrase) can act the way they do by always questioning his actions and bringing up issues. Along with this he said that we were all selfish, interested primarily in ourselves and our own comfort and enjoyment and not really concerned with the patients' coming first. Every time he says "no" to us on some issue we revolt and become rebellious, he says, and I suppose he thinks that is conduct unbecoming to a c.o.[48]

Despite his difficult relationship with the COs, Dr. Elliot continued to try to bargain with the Selective Service for additional men for the unit. But AFSC and the Selective Service System resisted Elliott's plea for more manpower, noting first that the Retreat served both public and private patients, and that the CPS units were meant to serve only

public institutions; and second that "it should not fall upon CPS men to attempt to cover the whole shortage of an institution."[49]

The problem of administrative duties never came to a satisfactory conclusion, although Dr. Elliott appears to have reconciled himself to the fact that he would not get any additional men and would have to accept the released time arrangement.

Kirsch and Elliott also tangled over personal leave time and procedures, how many nights out would be allowed to single men in CPS, who controlled which personnel records, and who reported to which authority about the performance and policies of the unit. Dr. Elliott objected to AFSC and Selective Service policies that ran counter to those adopted by his board of trustees, and at one point discussed ending the relationship with CPS entirely. On their side, the men of the unit and the AFSC staff in Philadelphia had similar misgivings about continuing the relationship and discussed withdrawing CPS from Brattleboro. But Elliott was desperately short of workers and for all his complaints, did not finally recommend pulling out of the program. Similarly the CPS men, when they weighed the alternatives, decided that they preferred to stick it out at the Retreat rather than disband and relocate at some other mental hospitals. Several transferred, however, to different units and to different special programs.

Another ongoing area of disagreement between Dr. Elliott and the unit—and indeed between Dr. Elliott and the AFSC—was over training and education of the men for the work they were doing. This problem emerged early in the history of the unit and apparently was never adequately resolved. Dr. Elliott claimed that the small population of the unit, the constant turnover of men, and shortages of professional staff at the Retreat made it inefficient and difficult for him to provide the professional training that had been an item in the original agreement. At the end of June 1943, J. Huston Westover from the American Friends Service Committee visited the Retreat on his circuit of visits to CPS units at mental hospitals sponsored by AFSC. While he noted with approval the living and working arrangements for the CPS men and wives, he also commented on the education opportunities: "There has been some small-scale education here: a series of evening lectures. Dr. Elliott seems open, however, to a real educational program, especially if 15 more men will be forthcoming in the fall. . . . He wants the men to be trained 'with their feet on the ground.'" Westover was concerned, however, by the delay in getting a full education program going and recommended that "we should not waste any more time than absolutely necessary in getting our minimum educational plans set up, as there is great danger, in my mind, of the men getting patterned after

former attendant standards before their courses start. . . . There are very apparent morale and job proficiency differences where men are properly trained. Wives should be included in this program also."[50]

When he visited again in November 1943, Westover noted the lack of progress in setting up a training program. "Dr. Elliott is interested in introducing some instruction for the men, and they in turn are greatly interested in job education, feeling it quite improper that they have been there so long without orientation or teaching of procedures. I encouraged Dr. Elliott to use part time of one nurse, as other even more needy hospitals have done, to train these men to give better service."[51]

In the absence of substantial training offered by the Retreat, the unit created some of its own educational programs and drew upon resources provided by the NSBRO and its member organizations. AFSC gave each unit $250 a year for educational activities, programs, and library purchases. The unit's personnel secretary, and later the education secretary, used this fund to schedule educational programs and guest speakers, purchase books and educational materials for the unit library, and circulate training materials that came from NSBRO, the member churches, and the Mental Hygiene Program of the Civilian Public Service, which took shape as several units formed to work in mental hospitals and training schools. In his November 1943 report to AFSC, Westover commended the unit: "For their part our men have done well in advancing their own information. From the educational funds allotted them by us, the entire required book list for attendant training has been purchased, as well as other valuable books. The library in general is quite excellent for a unit of this size."[52]

The formation of a network of training and educational materials coming from the peace churches and pacifist organizations to CPS units suggests that the problem in Brattleboro was not unique, and that the training that CPS created for its members either filled a vacuum at the hospitals that had CPS units or supplemented (and perhaps replaced) the training that the hospitals routinely offered attendants. As early as January 1943, leadership within the CPS recognized this effort as both its mission and its contribution to mental health care. A memo circulated to CPS units at mental hospitals observed:

> Our unique contribution which we can make to mental institutions is the preparation of orientation and training material. Many of us have come to work in mental institutions without receiving adequate instruction in the care of patients. As a result, we have frequently used trial and error methods which sometimes have been to the disadvantage of our patients. But another result of this trial and error experience has been the gradual refinement of old techniques and occasionally the development of better ones.[53]

A year later, the first issue of "The Attendant" appeared, published for CPS members by the Mental Hygiene Program of Civilian Public Service. Published monthly as a typeset and printed pamphlet, each issue of "The Attendant" ran a feature article with a byline and shorter articles or symposia, with unsigned contributions from members of CPS units in mental hospitals around the country.

There were also periodic but infrequent training sessions for the assistant directors, for which they received furlough time from the hospital and travel expenses from AFSC, to help them learn what was expected of them as liaisons to the sponsoring church and indirectly to NSBRO.

The nonprofessional staff who were at the Retreat when the CPS draftees arrived for the most part kept their distance from the COs and initially disliked them as a group. In part, the ill will was because of the men's declared pacifism—not a popular position under the best of circumstances. In part, the tension between hired staff and COs was based on concern and suspicion that the CPS men would replace hospital staff. This was not a realistic expectation, since there was a great shortage of labor for the hospital. Dr. Elliott had informed the hospital staff of the arrival of the COs ahead of time, and in fact had each staff member sign a statement that they would agree to work with conscientious objectors; and he had negotiated with both the American Legion and local labor leaders to secure if not their agreement then at least their acquiescence in bringing the COs to the Retreat.[54]

In part, too, the distance between the regular staff and the CPS members and their spouses was clearly an issue of class—real or, sometimes, perceived. Most of the members of the CPS unit had some college education or had completed college; some had advanced degrees, including one who was a candidate for a Ph.D. in astronomy. Few if any of the regular staff of the hospital had gone beyond secondary school in their education. Most of the regular staff were not highly trained or highly skilled workers and were not highly paid. Average salary for workers at the Retreat was $69 a month, plus room, meals, and laundry.[55] They were just getting by economically; some were single parents with children; some had husbands or brothers in the armed services. While the CPS members came from a diverse background of social and economic circumstances, the perception among staff members seemed to be that these men and their wives had independent means, were being supported with room and board by the government or by the Retreat, and were enjoying benefits that staff members did not have access to.

Moreover, there were few areas of overlap in the lives, experiences, and core beliefs of the staff and the CPS unit members. The CPS members were by law assigned to duty outside their home states or outside a

100-mile radius of their home town. Although some came from rural environments, most of the men had some urban experiences and had seen more of the world, or at least more of the nation, than most of the ward staff workers. Even in their religious convictions, staff and CPS unit members found little in common; the CPS members finding in their religious traditions, beliefs, or practices, a philosophy of pacifism that the staff members did not share.

Over time, according to most CO reports, the CPS men and the other staff worked out some live-and-let-live relationships at work and most got along without conflict. There are few reports of socializing between the CPS unit and the other staff, and what success the CPS population had in meeting other workers and other people from the Brattleboro area were primarily in one-to-one contacts. But relationships with the other staff were complicated. Luther Kirsch reported that the staff night attendants typically had a get-together and, while they did not like to associate with the CPS members, nonetheless resented it if the COs did not show up. "Usually regular employees refuse to participate [in social events] if they know CO's are going to be there too. . . . Now the condition is reversed, and people feel hurt if we don't take a part in activities with them. . . . I think some of the regulars believe we consider ourselves superior to them, and thus show our contempt of them and their inferiority by not attending. . . . I was struck by this desire on the part of regular employees for CPS men to attend the party, when usually the feeling is to be glad if the CPS men don't appear."[56] Kirsch also wrote a long account of an exchange with an off-duty attendant in a local tavern that almost came to blows. But he also reported that an informal and unofficial get-together of staff and COs at CPS member John Pullman's farm near Brattleboro was congenial and relaxed, until one of the attendants mistook the swastika-like figure on a traditional Indian blanket for a pro-Nazi sentiment.[57] Robert Dick remembered that some attendants were friendly in individual contacts but would strike a pose of hostility and insult in groups or in public. Helen Dick never felt comfortable or welcomed by the nursing and female attendant staff, and Barbara Beam's story of facing down "the Tiger" suggests that the COs and their wives won acceptance slowly and grudgingly, and only by showing enormous patience.

Contacts with other members of the Brattleboro community were spotty and irregular. The twelve-hour shifts, six days a week, left little time or energy for socializing or other activities, and what there was seems to have been spent in individual study or activities on or close to the Retreat. Some recreational facilities at the Retreat were available to the CPS members, including a bowling alley and a gymnasium that

Sunday evening Quaker Meeting (also known as "Vesper Service") with CPS 87 members and families, and Brattleboro residents, on a hillside above the Brattleboro Retreat, 1943 or 1944. Clockwise from left: Joe Albrecht, Cassie Albrecht, Peggy Ormsby, two unidentified women (in hats) and unidentified man from Brattleboro, Ben Cates (with guitar), Mary Harnish, unidentified woman, Helen Dick (back to camera), Robert Dick, two unidentified women. Photo courtesy of Robert and Helen Dick, who also provided information about the photo.

was used for Saturday night dances. Many used off-duty time to work at the Retreat's thirty-acre farm, three miles from the hospital grounds, where they worked in the vegetable gardens, kitchen, and barns, helped with canning, and organized informal evening social activities. They used the town library and on their rare day or night off went into the town for entertainment. The married couples who lived in apartments off the Retreat grounds often hosted the others at evening get-togethers, for lectures, study groups, and informal sing-along evenings. And CPS member John Pullman and his wife bought a farm near the village where the CPS members gathered to get away from the Retreat altogether.

There were a small number of pacifists in the Brattleboro area, organized by Methodist minister, Rev. Robert White, and some CPS members remembered making friends in town. Bob and Helen Dick also recalled that the Congregational minister, Milton Czatt, was "quite

supportive."[58] He served as a chaplain and director of human and social services at the Retreat in 1943, and later became executive assistant and admissions officer for the hospital. Others reported a pervasive and persistent hostility, being publicly booed and reviled, and called "yellow" or "yellowbellied"—which was the almost universal epithet applied to COs, suggesting cowardice rather than principled resistance to war. Luther Kirsch wrote about being taunted by a man selling newspapers at the Brattleboro rail station. Aside from the first notice in the *Brattleboro Reformer* that the unit was going to be.stationed, there are no mentions of the COs in the local paper.

These responses to the COs by members of the community are typical of what CPS members around the country reported, although the reaction of people in Brattleboro seems to have been milder than what many COs encountered elsewhere in the country.[59] Wes Herwig, working as a dairy herd tester in the Randolph area, reported a similar range of encounters. One farmer, a World War I veteran who was an officer in the local chapter of the American Legion, initially refused to let Herwig on his farm and it took a year before the farmer finally allowed him to test the herd. The one-to-one contacts that Herwig had as a solo worker, doing work that area farmers considered important and necessary, sometimes doing other farm chores that were not part of his assignment, and always—he said—taking an interest in the farmers and their families and speaking with them, made it easier for him to break through the barriers of ideology. In his first months on the job, Herwig had no car of his own and depended on farmers driving him from one farm to the next and letting him stay overnight at times to complete his work and make his circuit in the most efficient way. "The first few months were hard," he commented. "There were stars in the windows" (indicating that a family member had died in the war), and "you were unsure of your reception at each farm. If the kids liked you, the dog liked you, the woman of the house liked you, you were all set."[60] Many farmers, however, did feed and house him, apparently without malice or resentment of his position as a CO; and he made many connections and friendships in the area that later flourished when he decided after the war to settle in Randolph. The farmer who initially refused to let Herwig test the herd eventually came to him and said he was " 'getting old; my wife's getting old; I need somebody to be an overseer for me. I wondered if you would do it.' I said, 'When you're ready, holler.' "[61] Herwig's diary entries and letters do not record that he spoke much, or was asked much, about his position on the war or being a CO; but in the oral history interview it was clearer that because the extension service agents had contacted farmers before the CPS men started their

duty, it was obvious, or at least known to the farmers, that his assignment as a diary herd tester was alternative service.[62]

After Brattleboro; After the War

Information about special programs and openings in existing programs circulated in camp newsletters, newsletters and bulletins published by the sponsoring church organizations and the FOR, and often by word of mouth. *The Compass,* published at West Campton, N.H., and other CPS base camps, informed men in the unit (and from it; men who moved on could continue to subscribe and receive it by mail) of activities and accomplishments, spoke to the pacifist traditions that had brought them into CPS, and informed them of opportunities for other kinds of alternative service through special projects, openings at other camps, and postwar rehabilitation service. The sponsoring peace churches or pacifist groups within other denominations also published newsletters for CPS; NSBRO published a newsletter, called at different times, *Camp Information Bulletin, Bulletin,* and *The Reporter;* and the Fellowship of Reconciliation published a magazine called *Forward.* All of these publications helped the CPS members and their wives feel part of a larger community, isolated though they often were from the larger communities around them, or within the institutions where they were assigned to do alternative service.

A few of the men assigned to Vermont moved on to other special projects. Robert Dick left Brattleboro in August 1944 to join the medical experiments unit at Strong Memorial Hospital in Rochester, N.Y. (CPS 115.21 [?]).[63] Another member of CPS 87 volunteered to be a medical "guinea pig"—as they called themselves—in CPS 140.3: the neurotropic virus project at Yale University.

William D. Foye left Brattleboro in October 1944 to join the China Unit at the Alexian Brothers Hospital in Chicago (CPS 26). "I thought that on the whole I'd had a pretty easy time of it during the war years and I thought maybe I should do a little more and maybe try to do some relief work and rehabilitation work after the war."[64]

Lee Hebel transferred to CPS 103 in Missoula, Montana, where he trained to be a smokejumper. One of the dairy herd testers also transferred to the smokejumpers project in Montana. Another dairy herd tester in the Vermont unit transferred to Byberry, the State Mental Hospital in Philadelphia (CPS 49).

Although the fighting stopped in Europe in May 1945, and in Asia in August 1945, and the war ended with the signing of a peace treaty in September 1945, according to the terms of the Selective Service Act of 1940, all those called into service would be held "for the duration" and

for up to six months following the end of the war. While pressure in Congress mounted for a more rapid demobilization of the armed forces, there was simultaneous pressure in Congress and from local draft boards and veterans organizations not to demobilize conscientious objectors at the same pace. As a result, although 60 percent of the armed forces had been demobilized by December 1945, only about 10 percent of those in Civilian Public Service were released from duty. In June 1946, President Truman signed legislation extending the life of the Selective Service Act of 1940 for an additional nine months. While this affected both military and CO draftees, the rate of release for the CPS continued to lag behind that of military units, so that the last of the CPS camps closed in March 1947.

Although an elaborate point system for discharge based on length of service, age, and other factors applied equally to military and nonmilitary service, many COs complained bitterly that they were again being punished for acting on their principles and core beliefs and directed their anger against the NSBRO, which, they now claimed, had simply caved in to political pressure and failed to represent the interests and principles of pacifists. Held to longer service and thereby prevented from getting back into the labor force, paid lower wages than military draftees or civilians, denied the financial benefits, education, mortgages, and health care that were granted to those who did military duty, COs argued that they, too, had done service and were suffering continuing discrimination. At some of the CPS camps, men walked out or refused further labor when the overseas fighting stopped, and some were jailed as a result, although most were later released under a "selective amnesty" proclamation signed by President Truman on Christmas Eve, 1947.[65]

The Brattleboro unit began demobilization in early 1946. At the beginning of February the unit had twenty-one members; at the end of the month only fifteen were on the roster. The last members of the unit were discharged from CPS duty on July 10, 1946.

Despite his ongoing conflicts with the COs, Dr. Elliott was reluctant to see the unit demobilized, for he continued to have serious problems recruiting staff for ward attendants. In September 1945 he told Luther Kirsch that he needed 100 staff members, but even as Brattleboro was gearing up for a postwar revival of industry with reconversion to civilian production, the Retreat struggled to find workers. In a letter to the Friends Service Committee, Kirsch reported that there were over 1,000 jobs available in Brattleboro, that the Estey Organ Company and A. G. Spaulding and Brothers had taken out big ads in the *Brattleboro Reformer* recruiting workers, promising permanent work, good wages

(Spaulding advertised "60¢–85¢ cents an hour with piece work earnings of over $1 an hour for men; less for women"), forty- to fifty-hour work weeks, and benefits including hospitalization and rest periods. Estey offered to pay five cents a mile for workers who had to travel six miles or more to the factory. By contrast, Kirsch added, the advertisements for the Retreat "often do not state the name of the hospital, but merely mention that an institution is in need of help. Their ads are small, hardly designed to catch the eye, they speak of good wages but say nothing definite, they tell of good hours, but twelve hours [a day] are hardly good."[66] A few of the CPS men and their wives stayed on as paid employees of the Retreat, but most left as soon as they were released from service.

Where the CPS men went after completing their service reflects in part the convictions and concerns that had brought them to the Retreat and into CPS. Joseph Albrecht went to work for the Board of World Peace of the Methodist Church in Chicago. Daniel Allen, who served as the unit's last assistant director, stayed on at the Retreat for a few weeks and then moved to Middletown, Connecticut, to teach history at Wesleyan University, eventually retiring from Hartwick College in Oneonta, N.Y.

Bob Currier walked out of CPS 87 on April 27, 1943, as a protest against the CO programs and policies. He was arrested and imprisoned in Danbury, Connecticut. In his autobiographical statement for the CPS 87 fiftieth anniversary reunion in Brattleboro, he wrote: "As ill-conceived and youthful as that plunge might have been, I don't regret my prison experience leading up to our strike against segregation and my expulsion while others went into prolonged isolation." After the war, Currier was a musician in New Orleans, Indianapolis, and Providence, Rhode Island, where he taught violin, and continued to be involved in civil rights and antiwar activities.[67]

Robert Fleisher, who had worked steadily on his Ph.D. dissertation in astronomy throughout his service in CPS, went directly to a position teaching physics and astronomy at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute until 1962, worked for the National Science Foundation until 1976, consulted with colleges and universities on federal relations, then retired to do part-time farming.

After completing his training at the Alexian Brothers hospital in Chicago, William Foye went to China with a Friends Ambulance Unit, started and staffed by British doctors and medical assistants, and worked in a kala-azar unit in Honan province for two years.[68] He returned to the United States in 1948 and went to architecture school at Syracuse University, then settled in his family home in Middletown, Connecticut.

Roger Harnish went back to a job as a production planner at Eastman Kodak in Rochester, N.Y., where he retired after forty-four years. H. Lee Hebel, who left Brattleboro to join a CPS smokejumpers training unit in Montana, found work with the U.S. Forestry Service as a smokejumper and fire fighter, then became a Lutheran minister. Ernest Hixon found a position teaching at a private school for boys, then worked for Oxford University Press. When he retired, he moved back to Brattleboro. Henry Ormsby, whose wife had worked with him at the Retreat, had trained as an engineer before the war. His daughter was born while he was in CPS, and after his release from the unit, Ormsby went back to Philadelphia to look for work in engineering. When Robert Wehmeyer left the Retreat to do dairy testing in Windham County, his wife stayed on at the Retreat through the war years. Two of their children were born while he was in CPS, and after demobilization he moved his family to Manchester, N.H., to become a youth director and summer camp director for the YMCA.

Robert Dick completed his training for the ministry in the Universalist Church. In the summer of 1949, recognizing his experience at the Brattleboro Retreat, the Universalist Service Committee asked him to direct an Institutional Service Unit (ISU) at the Danvers, Massachusetts, State Hospital. The fifteen college-age participants worked on the wards for ten weeks, forty hours a week. Dick later did clinical pastoral training programs at Ann Arbor, Michigan, and at the Boston State Hospital to qualify as a chaplain in a mental hospital. He served as a minister in Acton, Massachusetts; Canandaigua, N.Y., where he also did some work in a state mental hospital; rural Ohio; Springfield, Vermont, where he and his family lived from 1967 to 1976; and Elkhart, Indiana. He retired from the ministry in 1984. In his ministry, Dick commented, he maintained an unwavering commitment to pacifism, making public presentations on the rationale for being a conscientious objector and with his wife, Helen, doing draft counseling during the Korean and Vietnam wars to help men who wished to register as COs.

Thomas Shipley was among the last to leave the CPS unit Brattleboro. Finally discharged in June 1946, he used his final months there to plan for completing his college education. He had started at Haverford College, intending to study law. The time he spent at the Brattleboro Retreat influenced him to transfer to the University of Pennsylvania to study psychology. He received his B.A. and M.A. in psychology at Penn, his Ph.D. at Harvard, and returned to Philadelphia to participate in a project with the Department of Psychiatry working with men and women on skid row. This eventually became the area of concentration in his research, writing, and clinical work at Temple University. Speaking

of his experience as a CO at the Retreat, he characterized it as "a determining influence on my life . . . [b]ecause of the psychology, which at the time was a real challenge. These people had problems: what do you do about it? What the hell's the matter with them? What the hell's the matter with me? It became a very important experience."[69]

According to the records of CPS 100.13 at the Swarthmore College Peace Collection, Wes Herwig was discharged from duty as a dairy tester on May 26, 1946. But Wes had no recollection of being informed that his service as a CO had come to an end or that the CPS unit he served in had closed down, and his diary entries for 1946 do not mention being discharged. In an interview he recalled being informed of his discharge in July 1946. By that time he had developed such good rapport with the farmers that they convinced him to stay on with the Extension Service. He kept testing dairy herds in the Randolph area for sixteen years, meanwhile doing other kinds of work.

On May 18, 1946, apparently still unaware that he was about to be discharged from duty, Wes married Miriam Boyce (known as Mim) of Williamstown, Vermont. After their marriage they settled in Randolph Center, where Wes had made many friends through his CPS service. He owned a sign painting company, was a circus booking agent, and worked as an advertisement salesman, writer, and photographer for the *Randolph Herald.* The couple ran a small publishing company and helped establish a historical museum and the local historical society in Randolph.

The Significance of CPS

For many of the members of CPS, the program was a mixture of frustration, humiliation, and gratifying alternative service. Most spoke of the work at the forest camps as anything but "work of national importance," and considered their time there as little more than a way for the federal government and Selective Service to hide away from public view the existence and extent of pacifist objection to war. Some acknowledged that if they did nothing else, the camps brought together men of widely varied cultural, social, economic, and education backgrounds (although not much in the way of racial differences) for a brief time around a single shared idea of principle. That, of course, had value and significance for the COs, for it helped them to know that they were part of a community of like-minded citizens (if only on this one point of conscience), and it helped them organize themselves to accomplish activities that reflected their own ways of doing work of national importance as alternatives to combat. Only Wes Herwig, however, spoke of the camp as doing much good, because while he was at Gorham, N.H.,

the men cut wood to distribute in the nearby community of Berlin, where workers lost their jobs when International Paper Company closed its factory in response to a strike for higher wages.

By contrast, the detached service units for medical experiments, smokejumper training, mental hospitals, and dairy farms were seen by many participants as worthwhile activities that had some important and lasting effects on their lives as well as on the lives of others. Robert Dick spoke with great pride of his participation in medical experiments in lice control, diet, and high-altitude adaptation. William Foye was grateful for the training he received at the China Unit of the Alexian Brothers Hospital because it enabled him to work in the kala-azar hospital in China and allowed him to see a wider world.

> Living in China and associating with people from other countries gave me a chance to see conditions and problems from the point of view of other people and other cultures and strengthened my growing belief that since we all live on one small planet, we must find ways to live together and share the earth's resources without exploiting them.[70]

For Thomas Shipley, CPS opened the way to a career in clinical psychology; for Lee Hebel the service, though less than a year, taught him "much of value to me in 35 years of active Christian ministry." Henry Ormsby wrote that "the work I did at the Retreat added much to my life experiences. It helped me overcome my fear of being in a hospital[,] and the life-long friendships I have made with fellow COs have been very special. I am still volunteering in a hospital trauma unit."[71]

In addition to being among the "most rewarding as well as the most advertised work" of CPS, the detached service of COs in mental hospitals has been interpreted—at least by COs themselves—as reformist and revolutionary. In 1994 Alex Sareyan, a former member of CPS who worked at the Connecticut State Mental Hospital in Middletown, published *The Turning Point: How Men of Conscience Brought about Major Change in the Care of America's Mentally Ill.* The subtitle states one thesis of the book: that the commitment to nonviolence among COs assigned to work on the wards in mental hospitals had a revolutionary and enduring effect on the treatment of patients by ward staff; that the COs brought to their work on the wards attitudes of empathy and humaneness antithetical to the rough treatment, restraints, beatings, physical abuse, isolation, and anonymity routinely inflicted on mental patients by the staff and at least tacitly tolerated by hospital administrators; and that the Mental Hygiene Program initiated by detached units working in mental hospitals helped hospital administrators and the public at large reconsider the nature, causes, and institutional treatment of mental illness.

But change, when it came about, came slowly, as most CPS participants admit; and CPS might better be discussed as having been a catalyst for that change rather than a cause. Dr. Elliott at one point wrote approvingly of the helpfulness of the CPS unit, but he did not discuss if or how their presence altered the care of patients by his ward or professional staff. His main concern appeared to be having enough bodies to maintain basic services for patients. The Brattleboro Retreat was not among the mental hospitals that were or became notorious for the poor treatment of patients. Most of the members of CPS 87 commented that the patients were treated fairly well and that because the facility was relatively small and because it had private patients as well as those who were supported with public funds, conditions overall were better —cleaner, less crowded, less harsh or abusive—than what they saw or heard about at the larger state mental institutions. And because Dr. Elliott resigned as director of the Retreat shortly after the war, it is difficult to identify or trace institutional changes related to the presence of the CPS unit.

It is more difficult to assess the importance or influence of the CPS members who worked as dairy herd testers or who worked as farm hands. Without question, their availability to make up for the shortage of farm hands helped some farmers get through the war, and their work testing herds for butterfat content and some diseases helped preserve the always fragile but socially and economically important dairy industry in Vermont.

Nonetheless, many of the participants in CPS, and the peace churches themselves, were not altogether satisfied with the results of CPS. One area of concern was the deterioration of the separation of church and state implicit in having churches both sponsor and administer a program of alternative service designed by and in many cases operated under the direction or authority of government agencies. Critics within the religious communities argued that CPS made the churches, whose doctrines included nonviolence and pacifism, complicit in condoning war as a legitimate activity by accepting alternative service as a requirement imposed by the state. These critics argued that the Selective Service itself should have taken responsibility for the program.

A second area of concern had to do with the fact that participants in CPS received little or no pay for their work and were held to longer terms of service than members of the armed forces. The COs argued that this amounted to punishment for their commitment to their principles of nonviolence rather than acknowledgement of and accommodation to those principles. One of the most difficult and annoying aspects of CPS for those who worked in it was the ambiguity of their status. Were

they to be considered and treated as if they were doing military duty, therefore under strict supervision, with limitations on their freedom of movement and action? Were they to be considered as if they were political prisoners? This was a question of the civil rights of CPS members and, at a higher level, the civil rights of conscientious objectors.

A third area of concern was in the definition of conscientious objector. The Selective Service Act of 1940 had restricted CO classification to those whose religious practice or beliefs included nonviolence or pacifism. The sponsoring churches had no quarrel with such a definition, but interpreting that definition was left to the director of the Selective Service, and application of the definition to each case was left largely to the discretion of each draft board, subject to judicial appeal. In effect this excluded men who professed no religious doctrine, claimed no religious training or tradition, or came to pacifism from secular ethical or philosophical grounds. For some, this constituted a religious test and hence raised questions about the constitutional basis for the 1940 Selective Service law that laid the groundwork for alternative service.

Each of these issues played out in the three decades that followed World War II. A succession of Supreme Court cases and Congress's renewals and revisions of the Selective Service laws from 1948 through the 1970s revised and refined the definition of conscientious objector, eventually arriving at a definition that acknowledged the authority of philosophically derived moral and ethical principles in addition to religious credos and traditions.[72]

These changes probably would not have affected the choices made by the men who registered as conscientious objectors and agreed to alternative service under the CPS program. Describing themselves and their choices in 1941 and 1942, the men of CPS who served in Vermont understood that they were making an absolute commitment to pacifism, even if, in some cases, they now acknowledge that the information they had about Hitler and Nazism (in particular) was incomplete. Bob and Helen Dick asserted that they have been pacifists "all our lives."[73] Wes Herwig reflected on his decision at the time by insisting,

> I was convinced all the way through that I'd done the right thing. . . . What I was really looking for was to do what I felt was right, and I give you the same. If you thought what you were doing was right, that's okay by me, you know, I'm not going to argue that, but don't ask me to do what you were doing because I didn't think it was right, really. Even to this day it bothers me to see the government spending such a vast amount of money on war stuff.[74]

Such statements of conviction have not ruled out for these men the understanding that it is easier for young men to make absolute commitments than it is for people of wider experience and riper years. Thomas

Shipley commented: "[I]t's funny about second thoughts. I mean, in many respects I was convinced that this was an appropriate stand to take. I don't know that I ever thought that this was the only one."[75] And William Foye acknowledged that making his decision was easier at the age of twenty than it would be as a much older man: "Well, I'm not quite as absolute as I was before. You know, after you saw what was going on in those concentration camps, I thought if there ever was a good war that might have been it. I still didn't like the idea of war. I thought it was counter-productive. But there are wars and there are wars, and I can see that there are differences."[76]

In the years following World War II, especially in the 1960s through 1980s, the executive branch and Congress, in some ways mindful of what had been accomplished by the Civilian Conservation Corps and Civilian Public Service, created new opportunities for national service outside the context of military duty, through freestanding federal programs such as Peace Corps, created in 1961; Job Corps and Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA), created in 1964; and the Corporation for National and Community Service, created in 1993, which serves as an umbrella organization for national, state, and local service programs such as Job Corps, AmeriCorps, Learn and Serve America, and the National Senior Service Corps.

Even before Congress created these organizations, however, it had set aside the structure, if not the principles, of Civilian Public Service as a model for alternatives to military duty. Because the peace churches felt compromised by their collaboration with the Selective Service System, Congress, when it rewrote the law in 1948, placed responsibility for finding alternative service in the hands of the director of Selective Service.[77] While Congress retained from the experience of CPS the goal of ordering alternative service that addressed "the maintenance of the national health, safety, or interest," it eliminated an intermediate agency—the peace churches directly or indirectly through coalitions—as administrators and financial supporters of alternative service; and substituted a fixed term of service for the former requirement of "for the duration" plus six months.

The most obvious change in the way alternative service would be handled was the elimination of large units of COs: no more forest camps or detached units at mental hospitals. From an administrative point of view, of course, this saved the Selective Service System both financial and human resources, because the men granted CO status and assigned by the System to alternative duties found their own placements, were hired and supervised by the institution where they served, and supported themselves from their wages. And whether by design or

as a consequence of individual assignments, COs would no longer be an easily identifiable or easily self-identifying community, working at common tasks. CPS, therefore, proved to be a one-time experiment in how to manage conscientious objectors in time of war.

For those who looked back on their service in CPS in Vermont, the years and service were important and in some cases turning points in their lives. In the spring of 1993 members of CPS 87 and their spouses held a reunion at the Brattleboro Retreat to mark fifty years since their unit was organized. They toured the grounds and buildings where they had spent some of the war years and some, or almost all, of their time doing alternative service. They renewed acquaintances, recalled events, activities, and their time together at the Retreat, then went their separate ways again. For almost all, this was an important time and one they remember with a mix of bitterness and satisfaction and pride in what they did and how they lived out their moral or religious commitments. Thomas Shipley later characterized the time they spent together: "It was a kind of unusual community, I think. . . . The morale was always reasonably good. But everybody knew it was temporary, it wasn't as if this was going to be your life work."[78] Robert Fleisher wrote in his biographical sketch of his years after CPS, "We need conscientious objectors more than ever before."[79]

Notes

[1] "War Objectors Due Next Week," *Brattleboro Daily Reformer,* 13 February 1943,-1.

[2] "Use Conscientious Objectors As Brattleboro Retreat Attendants," Burlington *Free Press,* 25 January, 1943, 2.

[3] *Brattleboro Daily Reformer,* 13 February, 1943, 1.

[4] Most of the individuals who granted oral history interviews, responded to questionnaires, loaned or gave me documents, and corresponded with me are mentioned by name in this article. I am also grateful to the staff at the Swarthmore College Peace Collection, and to the John Anson Kittredge Educational Fund for a grant that allowed me to complete my research. The research notes and documents collected for this study are now deposited with the Vermont Historical Society, Barre, Vt.

[5] The reputation of World War II as "the good war" has come under scrutiny in recent years, primarily but not exclusively from the political far right and far left. These new interpretations focus on three isses: 1) U.S. political and geopolitical policies, i.e., the wartime alliance with Joseph Stalin's USSR, and the protection of the British Empire; 2) domestic racism and prejudice aimed at both the enemy and domestic populations (e.g., anti-Semitism, racial segregation, internment of Japanese American citizens); and 3) wartime atrocities committed against civilian populations (e.g., carpet bombing raids in Germany and Japan, the use of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki) as a consequence of a strategy of "total war." For a summary of the arguments and a review of the recent literature on this revisionist view of the war, see Adam Kirsch, "Is World War II Still 'the Good War'?" (published under the headline "The Battle for History"), *New York Times Sunday Book Review* (May 29, 2011), BR 10. See also John W. Dower, *War without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (New York: Praeger, 1986). Dower argues that "[i]n countless ways, war words [and images] and race words [and images] came together in a manner which did not just reflect the savagery of the war, but contributed to it by reinforcing the impression of a truly Manichean struggle between completely incompatible antagonists. The natural response to such a vision was an obsession with extermination on both sides—a war without mercy" (11). Although some COs did discuss and comment on these issues during their alternative service, among themselves, and in

interviews and writings after the war, their applications and arguments for CO status were based on their religious principles and training. The origin of the phrase "the good war," as applied to World War II is difficult to pinpoint. It appears to be a postwar phrase.

[6] Also known as the *Burke-Wadsworth Act*, Public Law 76-783, U.S. Statutes at Large 54 (1940): 885, enacted September 16, 1940.

[7] See the poem by e. e. cummings, "i sing of Olaf, glad and big" (1931), in e. e. cummings, *100 Selected Poems* (New York: Grove Press, 1959), 37–38.

[8] Reported in the *New York Times*, 8 February, 1941; cited in Roland H. Bainton, "The Churches and War: Historic Attitudes Toward Christian Participation—A Survey from Biblical Times to the Present Day." Pamphlet reprint from *Social Action Magazine* (January 15, 1945): 43.

[9] Roland H. Bainton, "The Churches and War": 43.

[10] U.S. Statutes at Large 54. (1940): 885 at 889.

[11] Report of Charles N. Barber, Director of Selective Service for the State of Vermont, 16 September 1940–30 June 1947": 327–330 (PRA 413), F-26158. Vermont State Archives and Records Administration, Middlesex, Vt.

[12] Memorandum to State Directors in the Selective Service System, December 1940. Quoted in "The Conscientious Objector under the Selective Training and Service Act of 1940" (Washington, D.C.: National Service Board for Religious Objectors, rev. 1 April 1942), 2–3.

[13] For a detailed study of one of these CPS base camps, see Jeffrey Kovac, *Refusing War, Affirming Peace: A History of Civilian Public Service Camp #21 at Cascade Locks* [Oregon] (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2009). Kovacs also provides an excellent review of the literature on CPS (pp. 15–18), and a thorough bibliography on conscientious objection, pacifism, and the CPS (pp. 192–196).

[14] "Communiqué from Brattleboro," February 1944, back cover. The publication appears to have been planned as a periodical or occasional publication of the unit, but the members of CPS 87 never brought out a second issue.

[15] See for example, Waldo H. Heinrichs Jr., "Waldo H. Heinrichs, George D. Aiken, and the Lend Lease Debate of 1941," *Vermont History* 69 (Summer–Fall 2001): 267–83.

[16] See Richard Polenberg, *War and Society: The United States, 1941–1945* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1972): 54–55.

[17] Henry Ormsby to Michael Sherman, 2 November 1993.

[18] Robert Wehmeyer to Michael Sherman, 9 October 1993.

[19] Interview with Luther Kirsch, 22 October 1993, Dalen's Motel, West Brattleboro, Vt. Interviewer, Michael Sherman. See transcript, p. 2. In the interview Kirsch mentioned Gandhi and Albert Schweitzer. In a handwritten response to an earlier request for his recollections, Kirsch also listed John Woolman's *Journal*, and *The New Testament Basis of Pacifism*, by G. H. C. Macgregor (1936).

[20] Luther Kirsch to Michael Sherman, 17 December 1993. In the letter, the word "suppose" is crossed out and the word "know" follows it as a replacement.

[21] Interview with Robert and Helen Dick, 8 December 1993, Vermont Historical Society, Montpelier. Interviewer, Michael Sherman. See transcript, pp. 6–7. John Haynes Holmes (1879–1964) was an activist and social reformer. Ordained as a Unitarian minister, he split from the Unitarians to create the Community Church of New York, "a self-conscious repudiation of particularistic Christianity in favor of the religion of democracy." He was an early supporter of the founding in 1909 of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and served as its national vice president for fifty years. He was chairman of the board of the American Civil Liberties Union in 1939, and supported Progressive party candidate Robert La Follette for president in 1924 and Socialist party candidate Norman Thomas for president in 1928 and thereafter. Holmes was a steadfast pacifist, active in defending conscientious objectors and a member of the Fellowship of Reconciliation during World War I. He remained a pacifist through World War II. See *Dictionary of American Biography*, Supplement 7 (1961–1965): 355–57.

[22] Interview with Robert and Helen Dick, see transcript, pp. 1–2. Section 6(g) of the Selective Service Act provided that "students preparing for the ministry" in qualified schools "shall be exempt from training and service" under the Act. By registering as a CO, Dick set aside his exemption in order to make a positive statement of his commitment to pacifism.

[23] Interview with Robert and Helen Dick, transcript, p. 3. This is confirmed in the 1947 report of Charles N. Barber, director of Selective Service for the State of Vermont, who noted that "if . . . [an applicant's for exemption] occupation was such as to justify deferment, the Local Board did not have to consider the question of Conscientious Objection." See "Report of Charles N. Barber," 330.

[24] Interview with Thomas E. Shipley, Jr., 6 April 2004, Barrington, N.H. Interviewer, Michael Sherman. See transcript, pp. 1–2.

[25] Interview with William D. Foye, 24 March 2004, Middletown, Connecticut. Interviewer, Michael Sherman. See transcript, p. 1. The course was offered by the Ethics and Religion Department at Wesleyan University in the fall semester 1939 under the title "The Problem of War." My

thanks to Valerie Gillespie, Wesleyan University Archives, for her assistance in locating information about this course.

[26] Ibid., transcript pp. 2–3.

[27] The Oxford Pledge originated at the Oxford Union, Oxford University, England. A declaration that the signer would refuse to participate in war, it became a feature of many pacifist and anti-war rallies at British and American universities in the early 1930s. The pledge was later characterized as a statement of disillusionment over the causes and results of World War I and a statement of hope that international conflict could be resolved in ways other than warfare. For many signers, it was meant to be a way to support the League of Nations, although in the United States, joining the League was a dead issue after its defeat in the United States Senate.

[28] Interview with William D. Foye, transcript, p. 5.

[29] Ibid, pp. 5–6. The *Literary Digest* was a popular news, analysis, and opinion magazine, published by Funk & Wagnall's from 1890 to 1940, when it was bought by *Time Magazine.* It is best known for predicting, on the basis of unscientific polling in Maine—considered a bellwether state—that Alf Landon would win the 1936 presidential election against Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

[30] Theodore S. Horvath to Michael Sherman, 6 January 1994.

[31] Robert Dick, photocopy (no date) of quotations used for a paper, "A C.O. and his family," 16 October 1942. Robert Dick file.

[32] Interview with Robert and Helen Dick. Many COs shared this opinion. See Heather T. Frazer and John O'Sullivan, *"We Have Just Begun to Not Fight": An Oral History of Conscientious Objectors in Civilian Public Service during World War II.* Twayne's Oral History Series, No. 18 (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1996).

[33] The Brattleboro Retreat qualified for this CPS project because it accepted patients for the state of Vermont. See Esther Munroe Swift and Mona Beach, *Brattleboro Retreat, 1834–1984: 150 Years of Caring* (Brattleboro: Brattleboro Retreat, 1984).

[34] Roger Harnish to Michael Sherman, 12 October 1993.

[35] Henry Ormsby to Michael Sherman, 2 November 1993.

[36] CO's at the work camps were paid $2.50/month, but were paid at different rates when they moved to the special projects, at the discretion of the host institution. The agreement signed by Dr. Elliott stipulated payment of $2.50/month plus Workmen's Compensation. See Swift and Beach, *Brattleboro Retreat,* 127. Robert Dick, however, recalled that the CPS men were paid $15/month. If this is correct, the terms of employment may have been altered between the time the first agreement was signed and the time Dick arrived at the Retreat. See below, page 95.

[37] Barbara Beam to Michael Sherman, email: 25 March 2004. See also Barbara Beam's account of her horseback trip from Truro, Massachusetts, to Brattleboro in 1944, based on entries in her diary: Barbara Beam, "A Wartime Journey," *Equus,* 262 (August 1999): 24–28, 30–31.

[38] Interview with Robert Fleisher, 1 May 1993, Brattleboro Retreat, Brattleboro, Vt., Michael Sherman, interviewer.

[39] Avis Fleisher, "Wives Speak Up," in "Communiqué from Brattleboro" (February 1944): 10. For other accounts of women's experiences as wives of COs, see Rachel Waltner Goossen, *Women against the Good War: Conscientious Objection and Gender on the American Home Front, 1941–1947* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997).

[40] Helen Dick, "Wives Speak Up," 10.

[41] Barbara Beam, "A Reminiscence," *Fellowship* [published by Fellowship of Reconciliation] 67 (September/October 2001): 9–10, 26.

[42] Theodore S. Horvath to Michael Sherman, 6 January 1994.

[43] "Communiqué from Brattleboro," 2–3.

[44] Memo by R. Douglas Manning: Report on conference with Dr. Elliott, Mr. Imirie of Selective Service, and James Mullin at Montpelier 1/23/43. DG2, file 37d "Service—detached—Medical—Hospitals—Mental—Brattleboro," Swarthmore College Peace Collection.

[45] Thomas Shipley to Michael Sherman, 16 December 1993. The author has been unable to gain access to any archival material at the Brattleboro Retreat. It has therefore been difficult to represent Dr. Elliott's position on controversies in which he was involved or mentioned, except where third-party documents exist in the CPS 87 papers at the Swarthmore College Peace Collection.

[46] J. Huston Westover, "Report of Visit to Brattleboro Retreat, Brattleboro, Vermont, November 1–4, 1943." DG2 file 37d, Swarthmore College Peace Collection.

[47] Theodore S. Horvath to Michael Sherman, 6 January 1994.

[48] Luther Kirsch to George Mohlenhoff [AFSC], 11 July 1945, pp. 1–2.

[49] J. Huston Westover to Joseph Albrecht, 3 October 1944. Swarthmore Peace Collection DG2, file 37c.

[50] J. Huston Westover [unsigned], "Report of Visit to Brattleboro Retreat, Brattleboro, Vermont, June 30–July 2, 1943." DG2 file 37d, Swarthmore College Peace Collection.

[51] J. Huston Westover, "Report of Visit to Brattleboro Retreat, November 1–4, 1943."

[52] Ibid.

[53] Mental Hygiene Program of Civilian Public Service. Memorandum, 15 January 1943: "Educational Phase: Attendant Orientation and Training."

[54] Swift and Beach, *Brattleboro Retreat*, 127.

[55] Ibid., 128.

[56] Memo, Luther Kirsch to Sam Marble, "Goings on here," 12 January 1945. Carbon copy in Kirsch file.

[57] Luther Kirsch, "Brattleboro Days," no date. Handwritten manuscript, 4 pages, 7 sides. In Kirsch file.

[58] Interview with Robert and Helen Dick, transcript, p. 18.

[59] For a sample of first-hand accounts by members of CPS see Frazier and O'Sullivan, eds. "*We Have Just Begun to Not Fight.*" For accounts of and comments by women war resisters—including wives of COs—see Goossen, *Women against the Good War.* Many first person accounts have been published by the Mennonite, Brethren, and Friends service committees through their church or organizational journals (e.g., *Quaker History*; *Mennonite Life*). See also, *The Good War and Those Who Refused to Fight It*, documentary film directed by Judith Ehrlich and Rick Tejada-Flores (2002; pbs.org/itvs/thegoodwar/).

[60] Interview with Wesley Herwig, 19 January 1999, Randolph, Vermont. Interviewer, Michael Sherman. See transcript, p. 35.

[61] Ibid.

[62] The author had the privilege of reading Wes Herwig's diaries and letters for the years 1943 through 1946, thanks to the generosity of his widow, Miriam Herwig. Wes Herwig died December 10, 2003.

[63] See Robert T. Dick, ed., "Guinea Pigs for Peace. The Story of C.P.S. 115-R (1943–1946)," foreword by Dr. Arthur B. Otis (Rochester, N.Y.: University of Rochester Medical School at Strong Memorial Hospital, n.d. [1991?]), in Robert Dick, Materials Related to Conscientious Objectors during World War II, Vermont Historical Society, MS 355.224 D55. There were two CPS units at the University of Rochester Medical School: CPS 115.14 (cold weather) and CPS 115.21 (physiology). Dick does not specify which unit he belonged to—identifying it only and incorrectly as CPS 115-R; but his account suggests that he was probably assigned to CPS 115.21 See also, Sharman Apt Russell, "The Hunger Experiment," *Wilson Quarterly* 29:3 (Summer 2005), 66–82.

[64] Interview with William D. Foye, transcript, p. 20.

[65] See Goossen, *Women against the Good War*, 116–118; Frazer and O'Sullivan, "*We Have Just Begun to Not Fight,*" 20, 46–47, 84, 107–108, 165, 219; Mitchell Lee Robinson, "Civilian Public Service during World War II: The Dilemmas of Conscience and Conscription in a Free Society," (Ph.D. dissertation, Cornell University, 1990), 427–491.

[66] Luther Kirsch to George Mohlenhoff, Brattleboro, Vt., 28 September 1945.

[67] Bob Currier, autobiographical entry for CPS 87 fiftieth anniversary reunion, Brattleboro, April 30– May 2, 1993. CPS 87 reunion file. For accounts by COs who refused or left alternative service and were imprisoned, see Larry Gara and Lenna Mae Gara, eds., *A Few Small Candles: War Resisters of World War II Tell Their Stories* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1999); John H. Abbott, "Reflections on Machismo," in Studs Terkel, ed. "*The Good War*": *An Oral History of World War Two* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984): 166–174.

[68] William D. Foye, autobiographical statement for CPS 87 fiftieth anniversary reunion, CPS 87 reunion file; interview with William Foye, transcript, pp. 20–26. Kala-azar is a severe infectious disease, found chiefly in Asia, marked by fever, progressive anemia, leukopenia, and an enlargement of the spleen and liver. It is caused by a flagellate organism (*Leishmania donovani*) transmitted by the bite of sand flies.

[69] Interview with Thomas Shipley, transcript, p. 19.

[70] William D. Foye, autobiographical statement for CPS 87 fiftieth anniversary reunion.

[71] Lee Hebel to Michael Sherman, 19 October, 1993; Henry Ormsby to Michael Sherman, 2 November 1993. In "Questionnaires and responses" file.

[72] For an excellent summary of the post-World War II legal history of conscientious objector definitions, see Robinson, "Civilian Public Service during World War II," chapter 10, "Legacies and Lessons," 492–521.

[73] Interview with Robert and Helen Dick, transcript, p. 29.

[74] Interview with Wesley Herwig, transcript, pp. 67–68.

[75] Interview with Thomas Shipley, transcript, p. 13.

[76] Interview with William D. Foye, transcript, p. 30.

[77] Military Selective Service Act, as amended through July 9, 2003 (50 U.S.C. App 451 et seq.), Section 456 (j).

[78] Interview with Thomas Shipley, transcript, p. 17.

[79] Robert Fleisher, "Robert Fleisher—50-year summary." Autobiographical statement for CPS 87 fiftieth anniversary reunion. CPS 87 reunion file.

Book Reviews

A Mim's-Eye View from the Heart of Vermont

By Miriam Herwig (Randolph, Vt.: The Public Press/The Herald of Randolph, 2012, pp. 187, paper, $15.00).

Miriam Boyce Herwig, now eighty-nine years old, has been writing for upwards of seventy years and her columns for *The Herald of Randolph* span half a century; so giving readers her "view" in fewer than a hundred selections from those years was no small task. As the title implies, her selection is idiosyncratic, part popular history drawn from local and state archives and Abby Hemenway's *Vermont Historical Gazetteer,* part "winter's tales" passed down in local lore, part commentary on Randolph in her time there, and part personal recollections.

A Mim's-Eye View is not, and does not claim to be, a history of Randolph, but it is rich in those facts of social history that make a reader sit up and take notice. The scalp of Tom Pember, who was "speared and scalped" in the Royalton Raid of 1780, is reported to "have brought a double bounty because of his two cowlicks" (p. 32). Randolph boy Lee Tinkham, enlisting at age twenty under the command of General George Custer and surviving the Battle of the Little Bighorn, then deserted "like 30% of the soldiers at the time" and was summarily shot, as this was the penalty in that era (p. 48). Early settlers, once a simple house had been built "by the head of the house," came north in winter because "snow provided a means for ox-drawn sleds laden with household goods to travel on since there were no roads." A further recommendation was that "[o]xen could brouse (sic) like deer, which horses could not" (p. 31). In "A Handsome and Historic House," we learn that log cabins gave

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way to frame houses around 1801, just at the time the Randolph Center house Mim has lived in for over sixty years was built. And in World War II, milkweed 'silk' was used to insulate airmen's jackets.

Columns written for *The Herald* but also stories and essays contributed to other Vermont publications—*The Country Sampler* (published in Danby) and *Green Mountain Whittlins,* the Green Mountain Folklore Society publication—make up eleven chapters of an "old-time sideshow," in her words. But the terms on which life was lived over the centuries are treated respectfully as often as they are grist for amusement. Experience Davis, "the first man to live in town," came into the New Hampshire Grants, as they were called in 1776, and acquired his property under squatters' law, which gave a prospective landowner three days to fence in as much land as he could. "We can imagine [Experience] rising early on the longest days of the year to fell trees in a straight line until he had enclosed nearly four square miles, or 1,533 acres" (p. 30), Herwig writes in "More Glimpses Into the Lives of Early Randolph Settlers."

The conditions of life and the occupations of women are one of the threads tying this collection together. Women survived the rigors that men did in the early eighteenth century, including starvation rations in winter and capture by Indians and the long trek to Canada to be sold as servants. But they also faced childbirth and its risks, often alone. With asperity, Mim also records that widows whose husbands had bought land could not take possession of it until a young son came of age to claim it. And in "Glimpses Into the Lives of Early Randolph Settlers," she writes that early accounts "seldom mentioned [women] by name, and referred to them as "so and so's wife." As an example, there is the nameless "Mrs. John Goss," whose husband, the contemporary accounts state, "raised nine boys and three girls" (p. 27). "Making Money at Home" tells a rather different story, that of a distant ancestress of Mim's who was the most prolific and accomplished counterfeiter of the early 1700s. "The Thirteen Single Ladies of Randolph Center" gives the facts of life for women in the 1950s who didn't marry or were early widowed.

A Mim's-Eye View draws a picture of the world Mim Herwig—a sort of *genius loci* for Randolph—has inhabited, with a past stretching back to early settlers in Massachusetts and then in Williamstown, Vermont. It is a portrait in small, deft, sharply etched strokes, and it is as an observer that she makes her mark. What she admires in a 1918 article, "Observation: Twin Brother to Invention," by Alexander Graham Bell, defines the best of this book: "The close observation of little things is the secret to success in . . . every pursuit of life" (p. 59).

Bottom-up history makes good reading, though history buffs will have to go elsewhere for a fuller picture of the Royalton Raid of 1780 or the

curriculum in the schools that proliferated once a village or hamlet took shape. (We do learn that one-third of high school graduates went on to college in late-nineteenth-century Randolph.) The book, without an index and without dates attached to each essay, is of most pleasure and value as a reminder that history is always immediately around us and worth exploring.

KATE ROBINSON

Kate Robinson is a writer, journalist, and editor. She was the original creator, producer, and writer for Vermont Public Radio's Camel's Hump Radio *program. Her most recent book is a biography of J. Richardson Dilworth.*

Vermont Women, Native Americans & African Americans: Out of the Shadows of History

By Cynthia D. Bittinger (Charleston, S.C.: The History Press, 2012, pp. 159, paper, $19.95).

This is a generously illustrated volume of black and white images accompanied by short essays on diverse people in Vermont from the days when Paleoindians tracked caribou on the flatlands to the twenty-first century. The difference between this book and other Vermont histories is that Cynthia Bittinger concentrates on people of color and women often left out of traditional histories. In using such a long timeline, she necessarily needed to pick and choose from among countless Abenaki and African American men and women, as well as white women who met her criteria: people who "wanted to leave a fairer, more caring world" or those who broke a glass ceiling (p. 14). As such, she chose people whose goal was leaving behind a more just society. This reminded me of Justin Morrill's idea in 1858 that we should not study the art of war but instead concentrate on ways to care for each other and enlighten humanity. Many people on Bittinger's list aspired to these ends.

For instance, Molly Ockett, a Pigwacket from Maine whose band moved to the upper Missisquoi River in Troy during the Revolution, was a skilled medicine woman. She lived though many adversities but helped her neighbors survive, including even those who had "gravely wronged her people" (p. 38). Bittinger also highlights Charles Bowles, a man of color with a home in Huntington for twenty years and a Free Will Baptist minister, who led revivals throughout the state in the early nineteenth century. Bittinger discusses people as different as Emma Willard of Middlebury, who fought for education for women, and Chief

Homer St. Francis of Swanton, who helped found the Abenaki Self Help Association in 1976 and organized fish-ins that ultimately led to official state recognition for his band in northwestern Vermont.

To find these people, Bittinger scoured mainly secondary sources but also some primary sources. She starts the three sections of the book, Native Americans, then African Americans, and finally women, with historical introductions. I would have liked much more of an overview to help the reader place these people within their historical contexts. However, it's obvious that Bittinger examined many print and visual sources. One strength of the book is the numerous images that dot the pages. It was a pleasure to find so many pictures of diverse Vermonters in one place. Another strength is the long list of sources about minorities and women that she encourages people to read in order to discover the complexities of our history.

The drawback of relying on secondary sources is that Bittinger sometimes repeats inaccuracies in those sources. For instance, Vermont did not truly ban slavery in 1777 (pp. 13, 95, and 97). Only adult slavery was constitutionally banned at that time. Bittinger asserts that free blacks were not obliged to fight during the Civil War (p. 72); but they were drafted along with white men in Vermont. When discussing Vermonters' fears of the Buffalo Soldiers stationed at Fort Ethan Allen in Colchester in 1910, she writes that people had heard about a black regiment terrorizing Brownsville, Texas, in 1906 and left it as a fact (p. 84). Some people believed it at the time; however, historians and our government today agree that the soldiers never intimidated anyone in the town. Madeleine Kunin and Esther Sorrel were not the founders of the Vermont Democratic Party, as stated on page 136. These sorts of missteps could have been avoided with a close edit by historians familiar with the relevant topics.

The three categories of the book bothered me when I read the title. However, I understand that having separate categories for women and minorities is needed until historians automatically integrate historical stories and put women and minorities back into their rightful places on the stage of history. If historians use a framework of highlighting people who fought for social justice, as Bittinger suggests, this will help to reincorporate women and people of color into our stories. At the same time, I found the "Vermont Women" section problematic. It starts with a segment on Abenaki women but then evolves into a completely white women's piece. Most Abenaki and all African American women in the book are classified by race instead of gender. I wondered why Bittinger made that choice. It would have been useful for the author to include an explanation for her reasoning.

Despite its drawbacks, this is a useful book for those looking for people usually left out of our traditional histories. It offers a different framework for choosing whom to pay attention to: Instead of focusing on military and political history, find those who worked to better the human condition. The book offers many short descriptions of these people and movements, as well as a good bibliography. In this, Bittinger has done a service for people looking for a more diverse history of Vermont. I believe teachers and students, especially, will find this little volume of importance as they begin a search for women and people of color to study. The book then points the way to other sources that will illuminate the complex entanglements among these groups and the deep intricacies of our society.

ELISE A. GUYETTE

Elise A. Guyette is the author of Discovering Black Vermont: African American Farmers in Hinesburgh, 1790–1890 *(2010) and the co-director of Turning Points in American History, a professional development program for grades 3–12 Vermont history teachers.*

No Turning Point: The Saratoga Campaign in Perspective

By Theodore Corbett (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2012, pp. xxi, 436, $39.95).

The Battle of Saratoga has attracted historians of the American War for Independence ever since British general John Burgoyne's army surrendered there in October 1777. This remains true in the early twenty-first century, with at least three major studies of the campaign appearing since 2008. Theodore Corbett adds to this growing body of recent scholarship on Saratoga by offering a very different interpretation. Rather than focusing on its impact on the broader war, he examines Saratoga in the local context. In the years following the battle, conflicts that had previously raged in the Hudson-Champlain Valley and Western New England continued. Furthermore, Britain remained dominant on Lake Champlain and launched raids that left the northern frontier in ruins. When seen from this perspective, Saratoga, the supposed American watershed victory, did not mark a turning point.

Corbett's opening chapters give a thorough overview of the complex settlement pattern that existed from the western Mohawk Valley through the Hampshire Grants following the French and Indian War.

Overlapping land claims and tense landlord-tenant relations fueled controversies that led to the creation of the Green Mountain Boys and shaped how the region's inhabitants responded to the Revolution. Having established this background, the author plunges into the war, from the capture of Fort Ticonderoga in May 1775 through the 1783 Treaty of Paris.

Those looking for a highly detailed tactical study of the various battles should search elsewhere, because this is not Corbett's intent. Rather, he provides summaries of the major actions and focuses on themes that support his main argument. The author examines Burgoyne's program to pacify civilians, but argues that the British general really never understood the local situation. While many Loyalists joined Burgoyne's army, they often did so to protect their families and retaliate against enemies, not to promote the king's cause. When Corbett does assess Burgoyne's military performance, he makes several assertions that will surprise readers. For example, he argues that American efforts to slow the British advance from Skenesborough to Fort Edward were largely ineffective. He similarly maintains that Burgoyne's army successfully obtained provisions from the countryside through mid-September, which runs counter to most interpretations of the origins of the Battle of Bennington and its results. Corbett also offers an interesting comparison of Native Americans and colonial militia. Both groups would serve for only short periods of time, were difficult to control, and then returned home, partly to harvest crops and provide for their families.

What makes *No Turning Point* stand out from similar works is its last seven chapters. Here Corbett argues that British actions in the years following Saratoga largely undid much of what the Americans had gained, at least on the local level. He credits Frederick Haldimand for deploying Loyalist units and Native Americans in unprecedented numbers. Many of these Loyalists, including Edward Jessup, Justus Sherwood, and some African Americans, had formerly resided on the northern frontier. Now led by Christopher Carleton, "an especially talented partisan, certainly as good as Seven Years' War predecessor Robert Rogers," they penetrated farther south than Burgoyne had and devastated their former neighbors (p. 291). New York abandoned its settlements north of Saratoga while independent Vermont opened negotiations with Haldimand about creating a special relationship with British Canada. Vermont also promoted a secession movement in eastern New York and western New Hampshire, offering these areas protection from British incursions. While these plans never came to fruition, partly because many Vermonters and Continental authorities opposed them, Corbett reveals an aspect of the war that remains largely unknown.

The author closes his work by comparing the lands north and south of Lake Champlain. Haldimand, one of the book's heroes, ameliorated a virtual "Loyalist Diaspora" by successfully settling families from the Hudson-Champlain Valley along the shore of Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River. "Today one can visit the historic homes constructed by Loyalists from New York and Vermont—evidence of the loss of population and talent sustained by both states at a time when they were needed" (p. 358). Meanwhile, the fledgling United States, exhausted by Haldimand's raids, experienced agrarian uprisings along its northern frontier that culminated in Shays's Rebellion and the sack of Stockbridge, Massachusetts. In these cases many Saratoga veterans fought against their former commanders, such as Benjamin Lincoln and Philip Schuyler, who now sided with local authorities and property.

The latter portion of *No Turning Point* is reminiscent of Gavin Watt's and Alan Taylor's recent works, both of whom Corbett cites. The book draws heavily on British, American, and Canadian manuscript collections, and local histories, but some of the current scholarship on the northern campaigns is absent from its bibliography. Additionally, the author often places the footnote number at the start of an idea, rather than at the end. This practice impedes the reader's ability to locate particular sources. Despite these shortcomings, *No Turning Point* is a thought-provoking look at the Saratoga Campaign and its aftermath. It enhances our knowledge of this important battle, and brings additional light to the internal conflict that was part of the Revolutionary War.

MICHAEL P. GABRIEL

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The Jackson County War: Reconstruction and Resistance in Post-Civil War Florida

By Daniel R. Weinfeld (Tuscaloosa, Al.: University of Alabama Press, 2012, pp. xv, 204, $29.95).

This book tells the grim story of the violence that plagued one county in Florida during Reconstruction. Jackson County is situated on Florida's Panhandle. At the time, it was the state's second most populous county. About half of its residents were white, the other half newly freed slaves. Jackson County was known during antebellum times for its

prosperity and stability, and most white residents only embraced secession reluctantly. In the months immediately after the end of the Civil War, most whites attempted to act as much as possible as if emancipation had not happened: they enforced restrictive "black codes" militantly, and refused to pay African Americans for their work.

The situation for African Americans improved dramatically in 1866. Brevet Capt. Charles Hamilton was appointed Jackson County's first officer of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, more commonly known as the "Freedmen's Bureau." Hamilton voided all current labor contracts, successfully forcing planters and employers to sign new contracts with much more favorable terms for blacks. Other problems were more intractable, such as local law enforcement's harassment of African Americans, including arrests for trivial or nonexistent crimes.

The year 1867 began with the murder of a respected African American, and things went downhill from there. Whites pointed to a number of incidents involving Bureau agents and blacks as provocations, though in his book, Daniel Weinfeld makes clear that these were largely manufactured outrages. Violence against blacks, meanwhile, escalated, especially as a result of enthusiastic African American support for the Republican Party in the elections of 1868. By 1869, as Weinfeld describes it in one chapter title, Jackson County was "a small hell on earth." The wave of violence did not abate until 1872 (p. 83). Later estimates of how many government agents and African Americans were murdered for political reasons between 1869 and 1872 varied from 120 to 185. Whatever the actual number, Weinfeld skillfully and colorfully tells the dramatic story of a place that plunged into a nightmare of terrorism and bloodshed.

The main interest of this story for readers of *Vermont History* is the role played in Jackson County by John Quincy Dickinson. A native of Benson, Vermont, Dickinson was a Middlebury College graduate who had worked as a reporter for the *Rutland Herald.* During the Civil War Dickinson served in the Seventh Vermont Regiment. After trying his hand at business in Florida following the war, Dickinson turned to government service. He was appointed the new head of Jackson County's Freedmen's Bureau in 1868. Finding the Bureau to have been mostly dormant in the previous year, Dickinson launched an ambitious program to improve the lives of blacks. He quickly found his life in danger. Various local white groups, including members of the Ku Klux Klan and groups commonly referred to as Regulators, became increasingly brazen, murdering blacks with virtual impunity. Dickinson escaped assassination in 1869 only because he did not accompany the other two most important government agents in the county to a minstrel show. On their

way home one was murdered, the other seriously wounded, in an attack that shocked the state.

Dickinson is the foremost hero of this story. Weinfeld paints him very sympathetically, as a kind and honest man who was in control of his emotions, and genuinely wanted to improve the lives of those he saw oppressed. By mid-1869, however, Dickinson "recognized that the situation had already passed far beyond his capability to influence or direct it," leaving him an "impotent witness" to the spiraling level of violence (p. 86). Dickinson grew severely depressed in 1870, but bravely continued his work in the face of death threats. He became fatalistic about his future, predicting his imminent assassination even as he made arrangements for admission to the Jackson County Bar. Both Dickinson's friends and enemies began to see his murder as inevitable. One friend in Vermont wrote him a letter in 1871 that exulted, "Hurrah! You still live." On the night of April 3, 1871, Dickinson was shot to death as he returned to his home alone.

The Jackson County War includes a picture of Dickinson's monument in a Benson, Vermont, graveyard. The inscription reads, "Capt. Dickinson Was Assassinated By the Ku Klux Klan Near His Home On the Night of April 3. He Fell at the Post of Duty in the Integrity of a True Patriot." Dickinson was widely mourned in both Florida and Vermont, even as an inquest failed to identify his murderer.

Like many books about the Reconstruction South, this can be a very painful read. But Vermont historians will find it worthwhile to explore the experiences of John Quincy Dickinson, a man who emerges from this book as an exceedingly courageous, and even heroic, figure.

PAUL SEARLS

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Edward Hopper in Vermont

By Bonnie Tocher Clause (Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 2012, pp. xix, 214, $35.00; Ebook, $29.99).

The depth and diversity of literature on twentieth-century American artist Edward Hopper reflects his unrivaled standing as our foremost painter of places. Among the many exhibition catalogues, biographies, monographs, literary essays and poetry, and archival works of scholarship and general interest written on Hopper, several are devoted

to his views of particular regions. Over the last decade, these publications have included works focused on his views of New England, New York, Charleston, S.C., and Maine. Independent scholar and part-time Vermont resident Bonnie Tocher Clause has added a useful and impressive study to this list with her new book, *Edward Hopper in Vermont.*

Although the elevated status and value of Hopper's works are unquestionable at this point, his drawings and watercolors of Vermont in the past have received almost no attention. Why? Perhaps because these works simply are not especially memorable. The few dozen drawings and watercolors Hopper made in the Green Mountain State are not works that will stick in anyone's mind for long, unlike his striking night views of urban windows, gas pumps, creepy Victorian mansions, iconic lighthouses, or solitary nudes. In writing about Hopper in Vermont, the risk would be to overstate the importance of his time here in the development of his work, or, concurrently, to overstate the importance of the images themselves. Clause avoids both pitfalls here, producing instead a book that is an enjoyable and worthwhile read for anyone interested in Hopper's artistic process, and/or Vermont in the 1920s and 1930s.

Hopper visited Vermont with his wife Jo on brief trips in 1927, 1935, and 1936, and then for month-long stays in the summers of 1937 and 1938. In each case, the purpose was finding new scenes to inspire paintings. It's clear from Clause's research that the artist enjoyed and admired Vermont, both for its beauty and its Republican, "anti-Roosevelt" politics. Hopper was famously terse, in the mold of Calvin Coolidge, and an avid reader of Robert Frost's spare poetry. Nevertheless, he came purely for the views, and never returned after 1938. As Clause notes, such artistic ventures to Vermont blossomed in this era, and had a "double payoff"—artists brought beautiful scenes back to big cities, which in turn inspired sales, more tourism, and therefore more visits from artists.

Clause paints a wonderfully meticulous and intimate portrait of Hopper's working process—driving on the hunt for the perfect vista, sketching, then choosing among sketches and finally, committing to paint. Clause refers to this as a "selection and sorting out process," and through her careful charting of roads traveled, bridges crossed, and even hillsides traversed, we experience the steps as if we were there. She has looked at all these works extremely closely, noticing when Hopper distorted a view for effect, or made a farm building seem more dilapidated than it probably was. Her love for the landscape of South Royalton—Hopper's favorite as well—emerges as a driving force. Most beautiful and striking are Hopper's several views of the White River, and especially his evocative and unfinished Black Conté drawing of the *Shallows of the White River* from 1938. The inset color illustrations, high-quality

paper, and many black-and-white photographs spread throughout all contribute to a handsome book.

For readers principally interested in Vermont history, the most enjoyable chapter of Clause's book will be the fourth—"On the Slaters' Farm, South Royalton." Here, the author admirably assembles quotes from the correspondence of Jo Hopper and Irene Slater, which lasted for several decades. Additionally, Clause includes information gleaned from interviews with the Slaters' son, Alan, who was a small boy when the Hoppers stayed as guests on his parents' working farm, called Wagon Wheels. We learn that Robert Slater was a celebrated pilot in World War I, who lost his job as South Royalton postmaster when Franklin Delano Roosevelt's victory threw federal jobs to loyal Democrats in the state. Irene adapted to farm life with impressive skill and hard work. The Slaters took in boarders like the Hoppers to add to the income from diverse farm operations. Clause adds research regarding the state's efforts to promote tourism as a new industry at this time, and the history of the bucolic settings Hopper chose for his works.

Clause's detailed history of sales and provenance is of more use to collectors, dealers, scholars, and curators than it is to those interested in Vermont history, but even here the author manages to infuse her text with interesting and well-told stories. By the end of this book we feel that we know the cast well—the taciturn Hopper, his scrappy and unsatisfied wife Jo, the Slater family, and those who sold, bought, exhibited, and/or donated the artist's Vermont pictures. In sum, *Edward Hopper in Vermont* is a fine addition to literature on both a much-loved artist, and a much-loved state.

AMY B. WERBEL

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From Barre-Montpelier to E. F. Knapp: The Story of a Small Airport in Berlin, Vermont

By Robert W. Turner (Berlin, Vt.: Berlin Historical Society, pp. viii, 142, paper, $19.95).

On Saturday afternoon, August 6, 1960, movie notable Lauren Bacall landed at the Barre-Montpelier airport in order to visit a

friend in Wells River. According to the *Times-Argus,* "she continually asked where Wells River was located and how to get there. 'Drive through Barre,' someone suggested, 'and take Route 302.' 'How do I know where Barre is?' she replied. 'I don't know anything about this state.' At this point the *Times-Argus* reporter told her to follow his car" ("Actress Visitor," Barre-Montpelier *Times-Argus,* 8 August 1960, 1, 7).

For those local readers who, like Miss Bacall, are eager to know more about the area in which they find themselves, Richard W. Turner's engaging new history of the Edward F. Knapp State Airport is a good place to start.

The Barre-Montpelier Airport was born of necessity. After the flood of November 3–4, 1927, destroyed much of the infrastructure that made transportation possible from central Vermont to the larger world, a plane carrying mail from Concord, N.H., landed on November 21 at what was then known as the St. John/Slocum field in the town of Berlin. The flood occurred in the same year as Charles Lindbergh's epic flight across the Atlantic, an event boosting excitement across the nation about the possibilities of aviation. The need and desire for a permanent landing space for planes was so substantial in the area that the cities of Barre and Montpelier actually cooperated on a major project. On August 5, 1929, with the approval of voters in both cities, prominent individuals from both communities formed Barre-Montpelier Airport, Inc. The first air show was held just two months later, and the Barre-Montpelier Airport was dedicated the following June.

The airport remained locally owned and operated for nearly forty years. On September 16, 1968, as part of a statewide trend, the State of Vermont took over. Turner writes that most airports in the state, with the exception of Burlington International, were not reaping great profits, and so were glad to have the option of letting the state step in, relieving local tax burdens. In a ceremony held on March 25, 1970, the field was renamed the Edward F. Knapp State Airport, after the longtime state aeronautics director. The mayors of both cities were present for the ceremony, Montpelier mayor Willard Strong voicing his approval of the new name by joking, "I never did like the way Barre-Montpelier Airport sounded" (p. 92).

This book provides a sensibly organized overview of the airport's history, including detailed photographic documentation of changes to its physical status. Separate chapters also cover the many air shows and other events held there; people important to the airport's story; and a comprehensive listing of accidents, serious and not-so-serious. A chapter on the airlines that used this airport may provide some surprises for younger readers who have never seen regular flights arriving and

departing there. (Turner notes that United Parcel Service's next-day air freight has been the only regular service at Edward F. Knapp since 1989.) Turner also devotes a chapter to the interesting and well-told reminiscences of Ed Underhill, concerning events at the airport in the 1930s.

Readers more interested in local history than in aviation per se, will find that Turner takes care to explain terms that might puzzle the layperson. Nonetheless, the many pictures of various aircraft, as well as sufficient identifying details, will probably leave the aviation enthusiasts well satisfied.

No doubt the most famous figure in American aviation history to land at the Barre-Montpelier Airport was Amelia Earhart, in 1933. She arrived, not as the most celebrated woman aviator alive, but as a representative from Boston and Maine Airways. As Turner explains, "her job was to publicly promote the airline and to make potential passengers comfortable with the idea of flying in place of driving. A very small percentage of the general population had ever flown at this time and frankly a very large percentage were afraid to fly. Hiring Amelia was an attempt by the airline to overcome this reluctance by the public to take that first flight. After all, if a young woman could fly all over the country and even across the Atlantic Ocean, how could the locals say they did not dare to take a short hop on an airline" (p. 31).

Nearly eighty years later, although never more than, as this book's title has it, "A Small Airport in Berlin, Vermont," Edward F. Knapp's namesake field is still open for business.

RUSSELL J. BELDING

Russell Belding is the author of three books on the history of Barre, Vermont.

The Lepine Girls of Mud City: Embracing Vermont

By Evelyn Grace Geer (Charleston, S.C.: The History Press, 2012, pp. 126, paper, $19.99).

The story of the Lepine sisters' lives parallels those of many Vermonters who moved here from Québec in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; yet these women stand out as being well known throughout northern Vermont and many places beyond. In addition to achieving celebrity status at home, they have appeared in numerous publications including the *New York Times* and the *Los Angeles*

Times. I have had the good fortune to be acquainted with them for thirty years and to have spent time at their kitchen table. The Lepine sisters' personal qualities and life stories are worthy of a book. I looked forward to reading Evelyn Grace Geer's book and enjoyed it, but found it disappointing as well.

Geer's book tells stories of the Lepine sisters' joyful approach to life, determination, curiosity, broad interests in the world, humor, and bold willingness to do what makes sense to them. Gert became a farmer at a time when women were expected to become farm wives, not farmers, and developed one of the top Jersey herds in the country. Jeanette wanted to see the world so she became a Pan Am stewardess but continued to come home to the family farm in Morrisville. She ran a seasonal antiques market for many years and the sisters became savvy collectors and influential dealers. During World War II, Marie went to Washington, D.C., to work, and Therese joined the Navy. After the war, Marie married and moved to Colorado, and Therese moved to Washington to become secretary to Senator George Aiken. Geer also tells us of other ways "The Girls" have stood out—as serious collectors and promoters of work by Vermont artists, and leaders in farming, community gardens, and land conservation—but she barely touches on some, such as their philanthropy or their leadership in the local community and importance to several statewide organizations.

Geer's book captures the Lepines' joie de vivre, their close-knit family, their hard work, strong ties to the land, and good humor. She relates interesting stories and information, but in a somewhat idiosyncratic way. The narrative digresses into history that may be intended to give context to the Lepines' story but tends to be overly detailed as well as frequently inaccurate. Some stories are in separate, very short chapters at the end of the book that seem added on. The collection of Mama Lepine's recipes at the end of the book is fitting and interesting, but the collection of vignettes about Vermont and famous people with ties to Vermont is tangential. The voice shifts from narrator, to a very personal view, to novelistic description, and I was not always sure whether I was reading the author's thoughts or a retelling of a conversation with the sisters. More about the lively, fun, wide-ranging kitchen table conversations at the Lepine farm would have been a nice addition. As a friend of mine says, "If you need your spirits lifted, there's nothing better than a visit to the Lepine sisters' kitchen table."

DAWN K. ANDREWS

Dawn Andrews is a trustee of the Vermont Historical Society and an active community volunteer with a passion for the history of everyday life. In 2010, she moved from Morrisville to Cabot to become a farmer.

Milk Money: Cash, Cows and the Death of the American Dairy Farm

By Kirk Kardashian (Durham, N.H.: University of New Hampshire Press, 2012, pp. 253, $27.95; Ebook $24.95).

Vermont's dairy industry is inextricably linked with the state's cultural and social identity, and with its economy. Vermont's agricultural industry is the most dairy dependent of any state, with over 70 percent of farm receipts drawn from dairy farming. As recently as 1950, there were 11,000 Vermont dairy farms, one farm for almost every thirty people. Today, there are fewer than 1,000 operating Vermont dairy farms.

Of greatest concern, Vermont has lost 40 percent of its farms since 2000, and milk production appears to have peaked. Inconceivably, Vermont's position as the anchor of the New England milk marketplace appears to be in jeopardy.

This hemorrhaging loss of family dairy farms has occurred across the nation, despite dynamic growth in demand for dairy products. In 1950, there were 4.5 million dairying farm operations producing just over 100 billion pounds of milk annually; today, fewer than 60,000 dairy farms produce almost 200 billion pounds of milk each year.

As indicated by the title of his book, *Milk Money: Cash, Cows and the Death of the American Dairy Farm,* Vermont writer Kirk Kardashian, formerly a lawyer, intended to provoke a discussion about this disturbing loss of dairy farms in Vermont and across the nation. In his preface, the author declares his intent to provide "a piece of consciousness-raising journalism" to fill the need for "a grand narrative that explore[s] the larger questions few others seem to be asking."

The book vividly illustrates the tremendous upheaval associated with the loss of this unique rural way of life, with poignant stories of the demise of three multigeneration Vermont farms. The farmers are articulate spokespeople for the author's chronicling of economic, social, and cultural upheaval, and their stories are well told.

Unfortunately, Kardashian's grander purpose of explaining the demise of family dairy farming falls far short of his mark.

The book does raise many key questions. These include whether the benefits derived from improvements in animal science and husbandry, and the transforming technological changes in milk production techniques, have been worth their accompanying costs. Kardashian rightly takes issue with several trends: concentration in the dairy industry,

including the establishment of a monopoly in the New England fluid marketplace; the performance of the federal regulatory program that largely determines the prices farmers are paid; and the outsized rise of the California dairy industry and its dependency on "feedlot" farming. He also appropriately draws attention to on-farm labor issues and our irrational immigrant labor laws.

Although he asks many of the right questions, Kardashian's discussion and proposed resolution are both seriously flawed. To start, the book lacks a coherent thesis. Each issue is addressed alone, in seemingly random order, and with little reference to the others, more like an assembly of disconnected magazine stories than a methodical analysis.

Further, and of greatest concern, the book's often scathing assertions and conclusions rest on little if any supporting documentation. Weakest of all in this regard is the analysis of the federal Milk Market Order Program, so pivotal to all parts of the author's story. The federal program's eighty-year history provides a most detailed consideration of precisely the author's "larger questions." Congress, state legislatures, and federal and state courts have all confronted these issues from every conceivable angle and side. Yet out of this truly rich history of law and policymaking, exactly one single document may be found in the book's entire bibliography (which does include a citation to *Moby Dick*), and only two passing citations appear in the discussion itself.

The equally critical antitrust analysis is arguably more flawed. A detailed catalog of antitrust violations is presented as seemingly established fact. Yet the four citations provided for this discussion include only the plaintiffs' pleadings in two civil antitrust actions and a newspaper story. Moreover, it is only in the small print of the notes that the author even acknowledges that his presentation is merely "as alleged" by party plaintiffs. For the author, a lawyer, to provide unsubstantiated case pleadings as seeming fact amounts to literary legal malpractice.

Perhaps not surprising given the lack of primary source citations, the book is rife with factual errors. These errors range from basically incorrect descriptions of the fundamental federal Milk Market Order Program and the competitive dynamic between the Northeast and Midwest dairy industries, to a constant misstatement of more minor, yet still critical, supporting facts in issue.

In this latter category, for example, Kardashian describes Vermont as being part of the United States in 1769 (pp. 39–40), or before the Revolution was even fought; he incorrectly describes Dean Foods as having purchased Organic Valley Cooperative (p. 218), which misrepresents completely the structure of the organic market; and he ascribes the downfall of the Northeast Interstate Dairy Compact to Midwestern

"Republicans" in Congress (p. 59), when the legislators involved were in fact almost all key Democrats.

Even if based on fundamentally flawed analysis, a fresh review prompted by such passionate concern might still have yielded a useful suggestion for change. Even here, unfortunately, the book provides little contribution. Like many before him, Kardashian has discovered an exemplary small-scale beverage milk operation, and holds this business out as the best promise for family dairy farms. Not to disparage what appears to be a great business, but a company founded by a New York City doctor that processes and sells four million pounds of milk to a most rarified customer base does not provide a structural alternative for an industry that processes almost 60 billion pounds of milk for beverage consumption, and almost 130 billion pounds for manufactured dairy products.

Finally, despite Kardashian's clear affinity for family dairy farmers, his book provides far too little recognition of their continuing vitality and perseverance in Vermont and around the country. Indeed, and most confounding to this reviewer, the author manages instead to denigrate the entire dairy community by his random inclusion of stories of animal cruelty, lacking any context at all.

Milk Money might well have provided a useful contribution to Vermont's historical literature had the author limited his storytelling to a more developed discussion of the impact of the loss of family dairy farms on Vermont's rural communities. Unfortunately, his mostly undocumented and factually flawed explanation for the demise of family dairy farming in Vermont and nationally contributes very little to our understanding, and this larger story remains untold.

DANIEL SMITH

Daniel Smith, an attorney, was founding Executive Director of the Northeast Dairy Compact Commission.

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Recent Additions to the Vermont Historical Society Library

Books

*Bagley, Jennifer, *Irene Storms through Mendon: You Can Get There from Here.* Manchester Center, Vt.: Northshire Press, 2012. 45p. List: $27.00 (paper).

Brattleboro Reformer Centennial: 100 Years of Breaking News: A Special Publication of the Brattleboro Reformer, October 27, 2012. Brattleboro, Vt.: Brattleboro Reformer, 2012. 48p. Newspaper supplement.

*Burbank, John, et al., *History of Bristol, Vermont, 1762–2012.* Bristol, Vt.: Bristol Historical Society, 2012. 128p. List: $20.00 (paper).

*Burtynsky, Edward, *Nature Transformed: Edward Burtynsky's Vermont Quarry Photographs in Context.* Hanover, N.H.: Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College, 2012. 70p. List: $24.95 (paper).

The Caledonian-Record: From 1837 to 2012: 175th Anniversary Edition, Saturday, August 25, 2012. St. Johnsbury, Vt.: Caledonian-Record, 2012. Newspaper.

*Carpenter, Greg, *What Makes Vermont Special: An In-Depth Look at Vermont State Symbols.* Manchester Center, Vt.: Shires Press, 2012. 94p. List: $20.00 (paper).

*Indicates items available through the Vermont Historical Society Museum Store (www.vermonthistory.org/store).

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*Chambers, Doreen, *Williamstown.* Charleston, S.C.: Arcadia Publishing, 2012. 127p. List: $21.99 (paper).

*Clause, Bonnie T., *Edward Hopper in Vermont.* Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 2012. 214p. List: $35.00. Famous artist visited South Royalton and painted in the White River valley.

*Coffin, Larry, *In Times Past: Essays from the Upper Valley—Book Two.* Lebanon, N.H.: Whitman Communications, 2012. 140p. List: $20.00 (paper).

*Courtney, Elizabeth, and Eric Zency, *Greening Vermont: The Search for a Sustainable State.* Montpelier, Vt.: Vermont Natural Resources Council; North Pomfret, Vt.: Thistle Hill Productions, 2012. 173p. List: $35.00 (paper).

*Decker, Karl, *The People of Townshend, Vermont.* Townshend, Vt.: Thisldu Mountain Press, 2012. 111p. List: $30.00 (paper). Late twentieth-century photographs of Vermonters.

*DeVoid, Rusty Clark, *Horse Tales and Hoof Prints.* Waitsfield, Vt.: Distinction Press, 2012. 124p. List: $13.95 (paper). Anecdotes about horses.

*Edwards, Judith, *Trouble on the Mountain.* Bennington, Vt.: Images from the Past, 2012. 119p. List: $12.50. Young adult fiction about the Civilian Conservation Corps in Vermont.

Flags for Veterans Committee, *Roster of Veterans Interred in Barre Area Cemeteries, 1800–2012.* Websterville, Vt.: The Committee, 2012. 116p. Source: Privately printed.

*Free Press Media, *Champlain Valley: Through Our Eyes.* Burlington, Vt.: Burlington Free Press; Battle Ground, Wash.: Pediment Publishing, 2012. 144p. List: $39.95. Historic photographs.

*Geer, Evelyn Grace, *The Lepine Girls of Mud City: Embracing Vermont.* Charleston, S.C.: History Press, 2012. 126p. List: $19.99 (paper). Three women farmers in Morrisville.

*Haas, Jessie, *Westminster, Vermont, 1735–2000: Township Number One.* Charleston, S.C.: History Press, 2012. 574p. List: $39.99.

Hadsel, Christine, and Wylie Garcia, *Scenic Artists in Vermont: Theatrical Scenery, 1900–1940.* Burlington, Vt.: Curtains Without Borders, 2012. 18p. Source: The publisher, 429 South Willard St., Burlington, VT 05401. List: Unknown (paper).

Healy, Mary Jane B., *Deeds and Misdeeds.* North Hero, Vt.: MJBH Publishing Co., 2012. 118p. Source: The publisher, P.O. Box 104, North Hero, VT 05474. List: $10.00 (paper). History of North Hero as viewed through town and probate court documents.

*Herwig, Miriam, *A Mim's-Eye View: From the Heart of Vermont.* Randolph, Vt.: Public Press, 2012. 187p. List: $15.00 (paper). Essays on Vermont history from a long-time Randolph resident.

Kent, Rockwell, *Rockwell Kent's "Egypt:" Shadow & Light in Vermont.* Bennington, Vt.: Bennington Museum, 2012. 63p. Source: The publisher, 75 Main St., Bennington, VT 05201. List: $24.95 (paper). Exhibit catalog.

Lee, Mordecai, *Promoting the War Effort: Robert Horton and Federal Propaganda, 1938–1946.* Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2012. 278p. List: $39.95. Vermonter in the Roosevelt administration.

*Lewis, Thea, *Ghosts and Legends of Lake Champlain.* Charleston, S.C.: Haunted America, 2012. 110p. List: $19.99 (paper).

*Magalis, Elaine, *The Body in the Butter Churn: A Green Mountain Whodunit.* Charleston, S.C.: No publisher, 2012. 265p. List: $11.95 (paper). Fiction.

*Marsh, Earline V., *The Dewey Boy.* Moretown, Vt.: Wordplay, 2012. 84p. List: $12.95 (paper). Historical fiction for kids about George P. Dewey.

Mermin, Rob, and Rob Gurwitt, *Circus Smirkus: 25 Years of Running Home to the Circus.* Greensboro, Vt.: Circus Barn Inc., 2012. 179p. List: $20.00 (paper). History of a modern Vermont institution.

*Norwich History Book Committee, *Norwich, Vermont: A History.* Norwich, Vt.: Norwich Historical Society, 2012. 318p. List: $29.95 (paper).

St. Albans Historical Museum, *The St. Albans Historical Museum History Walk.* St. Albans, Vt.: The museum, 2012. 43p. Source: The publisher, PO Box 722, Saint Albans, VT 05478. List: Unknown (paper).

*Thompson, Donald H., *Castleton, Vermont: Its Industries, Enterprises & Eateries.* Charleston, S.C.: History Press, 2010. 157p. List: $19.99 (paper).

Williamstown My Own: The History of Williamstown, Vermont, 1781–2012. Williamstown, Vt.: Williamstown Historical Society, 2012. 368p. Source: The publisher, PO Box 338, Williamstown, VT 05679. List: $35.00.

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Bixby, Brian L., and Jill Mudgett, "Daniel Pierce Thompson and 'The Shaker Lovers:' Portraying the Shakers in Fiction and on the Stage." *American Communal Societies Quarterly,* 6:2 (April 2012): 75–92. Thompson was a Vermont author.

"Castleton: 1787–2012." *Castleton Magazine* (Spring 2012): 12–18. History of the Vermont college.

"Champion of the Common Soldier." *Civil War Times,* 51:4 (August 2012): 46–51. Reproductions of several paintings by Vermont artist Julian Scott.

Raynor, Tom, "Vermont, 1942: The Summer of Idealism: Dorothy Thompson, the Land Corps, and Its Legacy." *Sinclair Lewis Society Newsletter,* 20:2 (Spring 2012): 1, 4–8.

VIDEOS

* *The Vermont Marble Trail: Its History & Artistry.* West Danville, Vt.: Broadwing Productions, 2012. 1 videodisc. (ca. 16 min.). List: $8.95.

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