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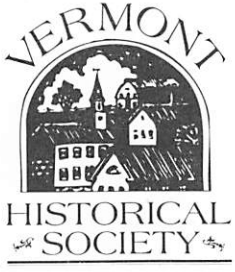

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VERMONT HISTORY

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Book Reviews

About the Cover Illustrations

Superior Craftsmanship on a Small Scale

Lucy Pfeiffer must have been a perfectionist. The Vermont Historical Society museum collection of thirty-two figurines (not dolls!) she made are exquisitely detailed, finely sewn, and beautifully costumed. Each figure is about thirteen inches tall and dressed in period clothing ranging from a medieval courtier to 1970s hippies. Three of the figurines are currently on exhibit at the Vermont History Center in Barre; but further proof of Pfeiffer's meticulous attention to detail and careful research was brought to my attention by museum volunteer Anita Rogers. She recently helped catalog all the paper documentation of the Pfeiffer collection for the library. It is clear from the numerous notes, drawings, and newspaper clippings in the collection that Pfeiffer spent at least as much time researching as crafting her subjects.

Lucille Rivelis was born on June 16, 1912, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. While in high school, she took private lessons in oil painting and attended classes at the Graphic Sketch Club. After high school, she studied in Paris (one year) and spent four years in Vienna, Austria, where she attended the Wiener Frauen Akademie (the Vienna Women's Academy) studying commercial art. At this school, she also had the opportunity to design costumes for the balls in Vienna. While in Vienna, she met and married Gerhard F. Pfeiffer (1907-1982), a chemist. They left Austria in 1935, just before the outbreak of war, and returned to the United States, eventually settling in Chester County, Pennsylvania, outside of Philadelphia.

Obviously well trained in art and design, Pfeiffer was told that if she wanted to work in clothing design, she needed to learn sewing. She took a two-year course in dressmaking at the School for Home Economics and Commerce in Philadelphia. Subsequently, she did some apron and quilt designs for the *Farm Journal* and also started making dolls. Initially she made stuffed dolls but wasn't able to earn any money and wasn't happy with their unrealistic faces. She consulted a book written by a sculptor to instruct her in making figurines using a wire arma-

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ture and layers of newspapers. After much experimentation, she eventually developed a figure made of papier maché over a wire armature. On that base she painted the skin tone and facial features, adding appropriate makeup, and then the costume, including the undergarments.

In 1966 the Pfeiffers retired and moved to Vermont, where they settled on a farm in East Montpelier. It was there that Lucy Pfeiffer perfected her figurines. In a 1975 newspaper article she said, "My ambition has been one of artistic endeavor, to combine the many handcrafts needed to make the accurate historical costume with the skill needed to model a lifelike little figure and create a work of art." In 1982, the same year her husband died, Pfeiffer stopped making the figurines. Gerhard Pfeiffer always encouraged his wife's work and even built custom cases for each figurine. Surprisingly, she never sold any of her work (though she did give a few figurines away), hoping it would someday become part of a museum collection. Pfeiffer died in 2002.

Following Pfeiffer's wishes, Agathe McQueston, the executrix of her estate, donated the collection to VHS in 2003.

JACQUELINE CALDER, *Museum Curator*

Front cover: "The Shopper." Figurine made by Lucy Pfeiffer, modeled on a 1970s Montpelier shopper.
Back cover: Lucy Pfeiffer working on one of her figurines in 1972.

Of a Snuffbox, a Ship, and Sheep: A Tale of William Jarvis

William Jarvis is known in Vermont history for his business acumen and prowess in sheep husbandry. Less well known are episodes from his early business and diplomatic careers, or that the naval tradition of giving presentation pieces salvaged from restorations started with the USS Constitution *and Jarvis's special snuffbox.*

By Louis Arthur Norton

A round oak snuffbox with an engraved gold medallion on its cover rests on the fireplace mantle at my home. If it could speak, this 180-year-old artifact would tell a curious tale that combines maritime, diplomatic, and agricultural history; a relationship between the frigate *Constitution* and Merino sheep (then possessing the world's most prized wool); and stories about an American diplomat stationed in Portugal, a renowned United States Navy captain who fought against the Barbary corsairs, and a lucrative business opportunity that evolved from Napoleon's conquest of Spain. The snuffbox once belonged to William Jarvis, a prominent sheep herd owner and resident of Weathersfield, Vermont.

Jarvis is known in Vermont history for his business acumen and prowess in sheep husbandry. Less well known are episodes from Jarvis's

Louis Arthur Norton, professor emeritus at the University of Connecticut, has published widely on maritime history topics, including, *Joshua Barney: Hero of the Revolutionary War* (2000) and *Captains Contentious: The Dysfunctional Sons of the Brine* (2009).

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William Jarvis.
Vermont Historical Society.

early business and diplomatic careers. Few are aware that he was a ship owner, had a relationship with the USS *Constitution*, a contentious encounter with the early naval hero Captain John Rodgers, and became a staunch advocate for the welfare of sailors; that Presidents Thomas Jefferson and James Madison benefitted from Jarvis's Merino sheep herd; or that the naval tradition of giving presentation pieces salvaged from restorations starts with the *Constitution* and includes Jarvis's special snuffbox.

Businessman and Diplomat

William Jarvis was born in Boston, Massachusetts, on February 4, 1770, the son of Charles Jarvis, a prominent doctor and Revolutionary War patriot, and Mary (Chapman) Jarvis. William attended schools in Boston, New Jersey, and Philadelphia and worked in a counting house to prepare for a career in business. In 1797, the year of the launching of the frigate *Constitution* in Boston, twenty-seven-year-old Jarvis became a one-third owner of the brig *Mary*.[1] Taking advantage of his maritime investment, Jarvis made several trips to Europe onboard *Mary* to become a mercantile trader doing business under the name of William Jarvis & Company. An observant and astute businessman, he soon became familiar with the intricacies of foreign commerce and also made many business contacts in Europe.

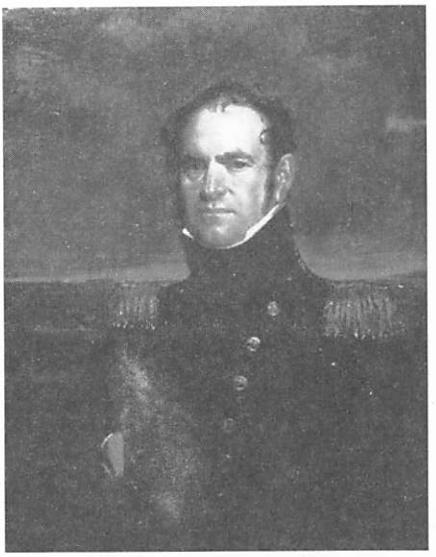
In 1802, Jarvis's entrepreneurial skills were brought to the attention of President Thomas Jefferson. Although the Boston merchant was a Federalist, Jefferson saw the advantage of bipartisanship. Appointing a talented Federalist for his Democratic-Republican administration was a wise political move. The president asked the New Englander to represent the United States as consul plus chargé d'affaires at Lisbon, Portugal then an important North Atlantic trade and ship building center.[2] Being appointed to a diplomatic post was an honor, but Jarvis also recognized this as a business opportunity and accepted the appointment.[3]

This was a politically tense time in American history. The British were stopping American vessels at sea, impressing into their navy many American sailors whom they claimed were British. The Quasi-War between the United States and France had just ended, Napoleon was in the midst of his European conquests, and the war against the Barbary States of North Africa had just begun.[4]

Shipping and commerce were the lifeblood of maritime nations, but because of widespread hostilities involving many countries, there was a shortage of sailors. One way to augment the crew of an undermanned vessel was to sail to a busy port such as Lisbon and obtain foreign sailors either by legitimate recruitment or from crimps and lawless press gangs.[5] Stopping at Portugal's capital was problematic, however. Foreign ships anchored in Lisbon harbor were subject to being placed in quarantine, a governmental health control measure to halt the spread of potentially lethal yellow fever.

On November 6, 1804, Captain John Rodgers of Maryland took command of the frigate *Constitution*, succeeding Captain Stephen Decatur, who was reassigned to *Intrepid*. Shortly thereafter, on November 27, Captain Rodgers received orders from Commodore Samuel Barron to sail the vessel from Syracuse, Sicily, to Lisbon, Portugal, to acquire new sails, cable, and, most of all, eighty new crewmen. Syracuse was a Mediterranean port strategically located near the North African coast. En route, the vessel encountered a severe Atlantic storm that sprung the bowsprit and delayed her arrival at Lisbon to December 28. The *Constitution* had departed from Syracuse, a port where yellow fever was rampant; therefore, the frigate was required to berth in a quarantine anchorage far from the bustling port. Communicating with the Portuguese authorities and the American consul was difficult from this remote area, but Rodgers advised Jarvis about his need for seamen and repairs. Progress was slow.

Rodgers enlisted several Danish naval and merchant ship deserters for service as crewmen on *Constitution*. When the Danish consul objected, Rodgers simply dismissed them from the ship and had them re-



Commodore John Rodgers. Oil painting by John Wesley Jarvis, ca. 1810. Courtesy of the National Galley of Art, Washington, D.C.

turned to Lisbon. Jarvis, however, insisted that the men be delivered to the Danish vessels from which they had deserted; otherwise they would be vulnerable to press gangs on shore. Rodgers, a gruff and impatient officer, occasionally displayed a fierce temper. The naval captain became critical of Consul Jarvis, threatened him with castigation, and accused Jarvis of neglecting his duties as the American representative with "contemptible, ungentlemanly conduct" by interfering with Rodgers's recruitment of crew in the port.[6]

Rodgers also wrote a stinging letter to Jarvis, saying, "I cannot conceive that I am bound either by national or personal honor to deliver men into hands of an authority that would punish them for wishing to serve our country in preference to their own . . . And it does not a little astonish me that you the only representative of the government of the United States in this port should furnish the means of punishing your fellow-beings for preferring Freedom to Slavery."[7]

In time Rodgers recruited a supplementary crew mostly of foreigners, had a new bowsprit installed, and all other repairs completed. To the relief of Jarvis, Rodgers sailed the *Constitution* from Lisbon on February 9, 1805. His destination was the coast of North Africa, the ongoing Barbary Corsair War, and naval history. On June 3, 1805, the Treaty of Tripoli was signed onboard the *Constitution* marking the end of the first Barbary War amid cannon salutes from ships and shore batteries.

Despite the unfortunate and uncomfortable *Constitution* episode, Jarvis became a zealous protector of American seamen in Portugal.[8] He persuaded the government to make press gangs illegal, lobbied for a change in the quarantine law, negotiated a decrease in the tariff against American goods, and helped expand commerce between America and Portugal.

Jarvis and Merino Sheep

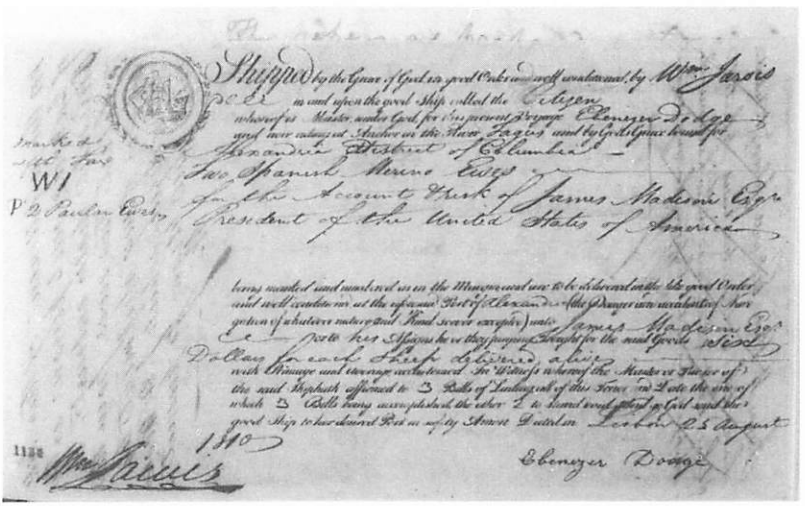
Jarvis returned to the United States in October 1810 and subsequently resigned his consulship. Shorty thereafter, Jefferson, now retired to Monticello, wrote to Jarvis commending him for his services as consul to Lisbon, and thanking him for the casks of Portuguese wine Jarvis had shipped to Jefferson before leaving his post (See Jefferson's letter, below). Before his return, however, Jarvis made some purchases that had enormous consequences for Vermont's and ultimately America's agricultural and industrial history, and would be the source of his own new riches.

Over hundreds of years, Spanish shepherds had developed highly prized Merino sheep that produced fine, soft fleece, admired throughout the western world. The Spanish monarchy tightly controlled the valuable breed, and Spanish statutes imposed harsh penalties on anyone caught exporting this breed of sheep. Spain had used the profits from sales of Merino wool to help finance explorations and enlarge their colonial empire. In 1808, Napoleon conquered Spain, confiscated property, and established new laws. War was expensive and the embattled French government was in dire need of funds to finance its military campaigns; therefore, their newly acquired Spanish sheep became a source of revenue.

The first recorded importation of Merino sheep to America was three animals, two ewes and a ram, by William Foster of Boston in 1793. Unfortunately, their value as sources for fine wool was not appreciated and they were killed for mutton shortly thereafter. In 1801 Eleuthère Irénée (E. I.) du Pont (later of Delaware) imported a ram named "Don Pedro" who, in the next five years, went on to sire many Merinos in the New York area. Pierre Samuel du Pont de Nemours, the father of E. I. du Pont, and a Monsieur Delessert, a Parisian banker, culled one hundred of the best Merinos from a herd of roughly four hundred that were trafficked into France from Spain. The two Frenchmen, in turn, took four animals for import into the United States. (One was supposedly designated for Thomas Jefferson.) Only a single ewe survived the voyage, and that animal was bred to Don Pedro on Delessert's and Dupont's American farms near Kingston, New York. Chancellor Robert

R. Livingston, United States Minister to France, sent over two pairs of Merinos in 1802 and in 1810. Colonel David Humphries, Minister Plenipotentiary to the Court of Madrid, Spain, managed to ship over twenty-one Merino rams and seventy ewes in 1802 from Portugal and a further importation of one hundred "Infantado Merinos" in 1808.[9]

Being an opportunistic businessman, Jarvis purchased 3,638 Merino sheep and shipped them to America under the first Spanish license of 1810 to export them.[10] As a patriotic gesture, or perhaps banking political capital for a future unidentified need, Jarvis chose some of his finest breeding stock to be sent to the Virginia farms of President James Madison and former President Jefferson.[11]



Invoice for shipping two Spanish Merino ewes to President James Madison, August 1810. Courtesy of the Library of Congress.

To Jefferson, now retired at Monticello, he wrote:

Lisbon 20 January, 1810

Sir:

[M]y veneration for you being in no wise lessened by your secession from Office, I hope you will allow me again to trespass on your goodness with a small present, which I trust, from your Patriotism, will not be unacceptable. After much exertion I have been able to obtain a few Merino Sheep warranted of the best breed in Spain, and, thinking the climate of Virginia more favourable for their propagation, as more resembling that of Spain than the Northern states, I cannot forbear sir making you an offer of a Ram & Ewe, both as a mark of my

great esteem, & well knowing that the experiment cannot be in better hands; and I pray you sir to do me the honor of their acceptance. Least sir the idea of expense should deter you, allow me to say, that they did not cost me very much, having got them at a reasonable price by the assistance of a [S]panish Gentleman.

Wm Jarvis[12]

To President Madison, Jarvis wrote:

Lisbon 20 January, 1810

Sir:

Having lately, with some pains, been able to obtain a few Merino Sheep, warranted of the best breed in Spain, I hope that you will allow me the honor of presenting you with a Ram & a Ewe. I shall also take the liberty of sending a pair to Mr Jefferson. As the cost has not been great, I hope Sir that you will do me the favour of their acceptance as a mark of my great veneration & respect. . . . [T]hey will be so beneficial an acquis[it]ion, should the [more southerly climate] prove favourable, that I think it is well worth the experiment; and I am satisfied that it will not be more fairly made by any persons, than by yourself sir & your patriotic & enlightened predecessor.

Wm Jarvis"[13]

Jefferson replied almost a year later.

Monticello Dec. 5.10

Dear Sir:

. . . [Permit] me . . . [to convey] my thanks for the many marks of attention I received from you, while in the administration, and the reiterated proofs of your approbation & support. in an especial manner however, I must acknolege your last favors in putting me on the list of those who were enabled to extend the improvement of one of the most valuable races of our domestic animals. the 4. Merinos are now safe with me here, and good preparations made for their increase the ensuing season. pursuing the spirit of the liberal donor, I consider them as deposited with me for the general good, and divesting myself of all views of gain, I propose to devote them to the diffusion of the race through our state. as fast as their increase shall permit, I shall send a pair to every county of the state, in rotation, until the whole are possessed of them. . . . [The] expence and risk you took on yourself by this measure, but especially the promptitude with which you availed us of this single opportunity of transferring the rich possession to your own country merits our general acknolegements, and justifies our wishes that you may be duly remunerated by advantageous disposals of them here. . . . [You] may remember some wines you were so kind as to procure for me in 1803. Carrasqueira, Aruda & Oeyras. the first of these is now abroach, and is among the best wines I have ever had. it would be a great pleasure to give you proofs here how erroneous is the opinion of the Lisbon merchants that the Termo wines will not keep unless fortified with

> brandy, and how injurious to the quality and estimation of those wines their brewing practices are. the Oeyras, with the age it has, 12. years, has become also a fine wine. it did not promise this at first. altho sweet, it is not too much so, & is highly flavored. come [to Monticello] however & judge for yourself, that you may bear testimony to others.
>
> Th: Jefferson[14]

Having returned to the United States, the ex-diplomat selected what he considered the best animals for himself and sold the rest of the sheep. With the profit, in late April 1812, Jarvis purchased a 2,000-acre farm near the Connecticut River in Weathersfield, Vermont, his home for the remainder of his life. Jarvis cleared the land of thousands of tree stumps, and then fenced it in for his livestock, including cattle, goats, and horses as well as sheep.[15]

Jarvis sold part of the herd, but with an eye toward additional economic returns he retained what he considered the best Merinos for breeding and, with the help of Spanish animal husbandry experts, produced the valuable Vermont A-type subspecies. These animals have a wrinkly appearance and heavy, dense, even, and fine fleece with an abundance of oil or lanolin. The wool's color may vary from off-white to a yellowish straw, the straw color being preferred because it is considered to be a genetic marker for the best A-type specimens.

The new Merino herds in Vermont created new farming opportunities and practices plus a growing demand for this unique wool from the New England textile industry. Merino sheep, largely the Saxony subspecies, are hardy, have good herding instincts, and graze on a variety of flora. The poor rocky soil of Vermont made respectable grazing land for Merinos, but these sheep require large grazing areas. Early Vermont agriculture was largely characterized by small independent farms. Merinos were gradually producing prosperity, but at a hidden cost. Land prices increased and many small family farms were consolidated into larger farms, thus generating economic disparity in Vermont's rural communities.[16]

Competition from overseas started to harm Vermont's manufacturers of woolen goods and its sheep growers.[17] William Jarvis was elected a delegate to a national convention in 1827 to promote legislation for protective tariffs. In 1837, over one million sheep populated Vermont, but wool prices per pound plummeted by the late 1840s, partly from competition from western farmers who had much lower overhead costs. Most Vermont sheep farmers absorbed devastating financial loss during this period. The average number of sheep per farm dropped to fifty-three in Orange County by 1850 and many were slaughtered for mutton.[18]

JARVIS AND "OLD IRONSIDES," THE USS *CONSTITUTION*

Years earlier, the frigate *Constitution* had distinguished itself during the War of 1812, by defeating five British warships—HMS *Guerriere, Java, Picou, Cyane,* and *Levant*—and became a floating national naval icon. Now a sheep farmer in Vermont, Jarvis had provided for the needs of the famous vessel during his service in Lisbon, likely a source of pride for the former consul. By 1830, however, the old frigate had fallen into disrepair and was marked for scrapping. On September 16, 1830, a distraught twenty-one-year-old Oliver Wendell Holmes (later the father of jurist Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr.) wrote a poem titled "Old Ironsides" in response to a *Boston Advertiser* article about the proposed dismantling of *Constitution*.[19] This poem caught the public's imagination and precipitated an outcry. "Save Old Ironsides" was repeated throughout the country, exciting patriotic passions and spurring a successful campaign to scuttle the plan to dismantle the ship.[20] Instead, *Constitution* would be rebuilt and given an honored place among America's warships.

Shortly after dawn on June 24, 1833, the venerable United States Navy frigate *Constitution* was nudged into the newly built Charlestown dry dock, an engineering marvel recently completed by Loammi Baldwin Jr. Sixty-year-old Isaac Hull, with his speaking trumpet in hand, was the honorary commander of the *Constitution* for this momentous docking event. Hull had served as an officer in the United States Navy during the Quasi-War with France, the Barbary War, and the War of 1812 as commander of *Constitution*. He was appointed commandant of the Washington Navy Yard in 1829 and now, in his impressive navy dress uniform, Hull played host to Vice President Martin Van Buren (President Andrew Jackson was too ill to attend), Secretary of War Lewis Cass, Secretary of the Navy Levi Woodbury, Massachusetts Governor Levi Lincoln, and Joel R. Poinsett, representing South Carolina—the source of the Constitution's live oak—plus many other dignitaries. The ship was made fast in the dock. A traditional three huzzahs erupted from the crowd assembled on the wharf while escorting naval vessels fired muffled cannon salutes that echoed across the harbor.[21]

The entourage of notables gathered later at the house of Captain Jesse Duncan Elliott, the commander of the Boston Navy Yard, for formal presentations. Hull ceremoniously awarded canes fashioned from the *Constitution*'s timbers to Van Buren (for the absent President Jackson), Woodbury, Lincoln, and Poinsett. In his speech Hull mentioned that all of the recipients had been strong supporters of the Constitution of the United States as well as the great ship that bore the same name. He said that it was his great hope that these strong canes made from the live oak of the *Constitution* would return "the support which the instru-

ment [i.e., the Constitution of The United States] has received at their hands, I trust that an equal support may be rendered to them when they arrive at the same age."[22] For the next several years, during the remainder of the vessel's overhaul, souvenir artifacts were fashioned from *Constitution*'s discarded wood and given to distinguished Americans under the watchful eye of head shipwright Josiah Barker. [23]

Family descendants have retained some of these *Constitution* artifacts. Other pieces reside in museum collections around the nation, particularly in the USS *Constitution* Museum in Charlestown, Massachusetts. The Museum of Connecticut History in Hartford displays a 35-inch oak cane with a gold ferrule dated 1843 with an ivory knob carved in the shape of the head of a woman. Nearby is a judicial gavel of similar vintage made from the ship's wood. The Hermitage near Nashville, Tennessee, the home of President Andrew Jackson, owns a large desk chair made from the wood of the *Constitution* that was given to Jackson's secretary of the Navy, Levi Woodbury. The most elaborate object fabricated from the wood of the *Constitution* was a phaeton carriage presented to Jackson, which he rode in at the inauguration of his successor, Martin Van Buren. That unique vehicle was partly destroyed by fire in 1894. A few wheels and part of the frame that survived the flames are on display at The Hermitage.[24]

Additional artifacts are in private collections. One such memento is the personalized snuffbox for former Consul William Jarvis. Snuffboxes were the mark of a gentlemen during the eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Jarvis's singular box has an engraved gold medallion on its cover inscribed: "Constitution or Old Ironsides . . . Mr. Miller to the Honorable Mr. Jarvis." Unfortunately "Mr. Miller" cannot be positively identified among the many possibilities of those with that common surname, but that snuffbox likely became a nostalgic possession of one of

Snuffbox made of wood from the USS Constitution, *presented to William Jarvis ca. 1833. Courtesy of the author.*

America's most important importers and breeders of sheep. It contains a small sample of raw wool. Whether it is Merino and was placed there by Jarvis is not known.

William Jarvis died in Weathersfield, Vermont, at the age of eighty-eight on October 21, 1859. Ironically that date marked the sixty-second anniversary of *Constitution*'s 1797 launching, which took place at Edmund Hartt's shipyard, a short distance from the house on Boston's State Street where Jarvis was born. The frigate *Constitution*, America's Merino sheep, and the snuffbox are still with us. The old snuffbox improbably links an iconic American navy ship, a unique and wonderful breed of sheep, and many important historical figures.

Notes

[1] Mary Pepperrell Sparhawk Jarvis Cutts, *The Life and Times of Hon. William Jarvis of Weathersfield, Vermont* (New York: Hurd and Houghton, 1869), 61.

[2] Ibid., 130.

[3] The rank of Ambassador was first used by the United States in 1893 when Thomas F. Bayard was appointed Ambassador to Great Britain. Prior to this date, the highest-rank among U.S. diplomats was Minister.

[4] In the 1790s France began stopping American merchant ships to interrupt their trade with Britain. This was followed by the so-called "XYZ Affair," in which three French government officials requested bribe money from American diplomats. This caused an outcry in the United Sates and ultimately led to the undeclared and limited Quasi-War with France, a war whose very few engagements took place at sea. Shortly thereafter, the Barbary powers, located on the northern coast of Africa (the current nations of Algeria, Libya, Morocco, and Tunisia) began operating lucrative protection/extortion schemes. European maritime nations paid annual tributes to these principalities bordering the Mediterranean Sea. Non-compliance meant attacks on their flagged ships and if captured, the crews were held for ransom and/or enslaved. American vessels, under a new flag that recently appeared upon the high seas, projected both vulnerability and potential profit. The United States at first paid tributes to the Barbary States and then, after several seizures of American vessels, declared war on them. This, the first declared war of the nascent American government, was known as the Barbary War. The first part of this war concluded with a peace treaty, signed on June 10, 1805, on the deck of the *Constitution*. By 1807, Algiers resumed taking American ships and seamen hostage. United Sates forces finally put an end to the provocation in 1815.

[5] Crimps worked for a commission that was paid to them for wooing or entrapping unsuspecting men by often nefarious means to sign on to become crewmen on vessels. Press gangs were groups of a ship's crew ordered ashore to effectively kidnap men to serve on their vessels.

[6] Charles Oscar Paulin, *Commodore John Rodgers: Captain, Commodore, and Senior Officer of the American Navy, 1773-1838*, (Cleveland: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1909), 126.

[7] Ibid., 126-127.

[8] Cutts, *William Jarvis*, 204-208.

[9] Rowland E. Robinson, "Merinos in America," *Century Magazine*, 27 (February 1884): 516-517; Henry Stephens Randall, *Fine Wool, Sheep, Husbandry, Etc.* (Albany, N.Y.: Transactions New York State Agricultural Society, 1861) 21; and Carroll W. Pursell, Jr., "E. I. du Pont, Don Pedro, and the Introduction of Merino Sheep into the United States, 1801: A Document," *Agricultural History*, 33 (April 1959): 86-88.

[10] According to Cutts, 287, Jarvis shipped 1,400 Paulars, 1,700 Aguires, 200 Escurials, 130 Negretes, and about 200 Montarcos, approximated to be 3,600 animals dispatched to the United States.

[11] Vermont Merino Sheep Association, *Introduction into Vermont and Improvement Since Introduced* (Burlington, Vt.: The Free Press Association, 1879), 38. Sources recording the exact number of animals sent to these men conflict. It is safe to say, however, that Jarvis did supply some Merinos to these two presidents.

[12] William Jarvis to Thomas Jefferson, *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson Digital Edition*, Barbra B. Oberg and J. Jefferson Looney eds. (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, Rotunda 2008), Retirement Series, Volume 2 (16 November 1809–11 August 1810).

[13] William Jarvis to James Madison, *The Papers of James Madison, Digital Edition*, J.C.A. Stagg, editor, (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2010). Presidential Series, Volume 2 (1 October 1809–2 November 1810).

[14] Thomas Jefferson to William Jarvis, *Papers of Thomas Jefferson, Digital Edition.* Retirement Series, Volume 2 (12 August 1810–17 June 1811).

[15] Cutts, *William Jarvis*, 314-316, and the Vermont Historical Society website (http://www.freedomandunity.org/1800s/Jarvis.html) *Freedom and Unity: Building Communities, 1820-1860* (section on William Jarvis).

[16] Michael Sherman, Gene Sessions, and P. Jeffrey Potash, *Freedom and Unity: A History of Vermont* (Barre, Vt.: Vermont Historical Society, 2004), 172-173.

[17] Walter Hill Crockett, *Vermont: The Green Mountain State*, 5 volumes, (New York: The Century History Company, 1921) 3: 220.

[18] John E. Weeks, chairman, Vermont Commission on Country Life, *Rural Vermont: A Program for the Future by Two Hundred Vermonters* (Burlington, Vt.: Free Press Printing, 1931), 60. See also Harold Fisher Wilson, *Hill Country of Northern New England: Its Soul and Economic History, 1790-1930* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1936), Chapter 4, "The Sheep Industry," 75-94; and Howard S. Russell, *A Long Deep Furrow: Three Centuries of Farming in New England*, (1976; abridged edition, Hanover, N.H. and London: University Press of New England, 1982), 158.

[19] Sheldon M. Novick, *Honorable Justice: The Life of Oliver Wendell Holmes* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1989), 4. The poem was published September 18, 1830.

[20] Louis Menand, *The Metaphysical Club: A Story of Ideas in America* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2001), 6.

[21] Linda M. Maloney, *The Captain from Connecticut: The Life and Times of Isaac Hull* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1986), 433.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Ira N. Hollis, *The Frigate* Constitution*: The Central Figure of the Navy under Sail* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1901), 220. The creation of souvenirs from removed parts of famous vessels was borrowed from the British. Their long and proud naval and maritime traditions gave birth to the custom of fabricating useful artifacts from ships of the Royal Navy, particularly Lord Nelson's *Victory*.

[24] The Peabody Essex Museum in Massachusetts and the Mystic Seaport maritime museum, in Connecticut, have several pieces from the *Constitution*. The charred remains of Andrew Jackson's phaeton can be seen at The Hermitage in Nashville, Tennessee. These are but a few of the places that have these artifacts.

"Women were among our primeval abolitionists": Women and Organized Antislavery in Vermont, 1834-1848

Vermont's reputation as a bastion of antislavery and women's extensive involvement in antislavery societies elsewhere in the Northeast suggests that Jonathan Miller was not just boasting. But if so many women were involved, as Miller contended, why are they absent from these histories?

By MARILYN S. BLACKWELL

In June 1840, abolitionist Jonathan Miller of Montpelier traveled to London to attend the World Anti-Slavery Convention hosted by the British and Foreign Antislavery Society. After a successful campaign to eradicate slavery from the British colonies in 1838, abolitionists had reorganized to promote an end to the slave trade throughout the world. They had circulated invitations to the convention widely, seeking delegates from the United States, Europe, and the Caribbean to coordinate the campaign. Before deliberations began, Wendell Phillips of Boston sparked a heated debate about whether to admit women as voting members, not just observers. Controversy over the role of women had provoked a split in the American movement a month earlier when moderate abolitionists resisted the efforts of Phillips, William Lloyd Garrison, Samuel May, and others to allow women equal partici-

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Col. Jonathan P. Miller (1797-1847) of Montpelier attended the World's Antislavery Convention in London in 1840 and championed women's role in the abolitionist movement.

pation and leadership roles in the American Anti-Slavery Society (AASS). Now the "woman question," as it was commonly called, threatened to derail the world convention even before it began.

Colonel Miller, who maintained an international reputation as a champion of Greek independence, argued in favor of the "right of women" to participate in "this cause of humanity." Vermont had "never been troubled with the woman question," Miller insisted, and "women were among our primeval abolitionists," having "established a standard of liberty" that their husbands followed. No women from Vermont were at the convention, but if our "female friends" were here, he boasted, "this Hall would not hold them." There were, however, seven female delegates from Massachusetts and Pennsylvania, including Lucretia Mott, waiting expectantly outside the hall to join the convention. Despite the insistence of Phillips and other advocates, the women were not seated, leaving Miller to abide by the convention's rules.[1]

Who were these "primeval" female abolitionists of Vermont? The state's reputation as a bastion of antislavery and women's extensive involvement in antislavery societies elsewhere in the Northeast suggest that Miller was not just boasting. But other than Rachel Gilpin Robinson of Ferrisburgh, who along with her husband Rowland T. Robinson

was a committed abolitionist, no other women and only a few female antislavery societies appear in historiography on Vermont's antislavery movement.[2] If so many women were involved, as Miller contended, why are they absent from these histories? Why did he assert that the "woman question" was a non-issue in the state at a time when it had become so disruptive to the national movement? These questions led to my search for women's participation in Vermonters' crusade to eradicate slavery.

Scholarship on abolitionism in Vermont has focused on its radical male leadership, highlighting the religious and political roots of the movement, the rapid injection of antislavery into Vermont political discourse, and the direct action of a small number of Vermonters, including the Robinsons, who sheltered fugitives from slavery. Sources for these accounts include antislavery newspapers, reports of state and county societies, local membership records, memoirs, letters, and local histories, most of which reveal little direct evidence of women's participation or that of black abolitionists, with the exception of itinerant speakers from outside the state.[3]

Little attention has been given to antislavery petitions to Congress and the Vermont legislature, and that is where I found the names of many women committed to the cause. In small agricultural towns abolitionist men repeatedly urged women to join their ranks and assist in the task of awakening every family and neighborhood. They believed that the virtue, patriotism, and benevolence attributed to educated white women would validate the moral integrity of the movement. Women's presence as followers rather than leaders of this radical fringe element in Vermont politics has rendered them largely invisible in association records. Their history remains buried within the contours of the larger movement.

Organizing Antislavery Activism

Abolitionists were an unwelcome addition to the state's religious and political landscape in the 1830s. Driven by moral principle and often by the same evangelical fervor that spurred religious revivals, they were concentrated in agricultural towns in the Champlain Valley, on the flanks of the Green Mountains, and in the Upper Connecticut River Valley. After they began demanding immediate emancipation in 1831, Vermonters who held little economic interest in slavery or consideration for racial equality responded with ridicule and resistance, which precipitated several notable mob actions against abolitionist speakers. Undeterred, a small group of men, composed of religious evangelicals, Quakers, and sympathetic Antimasons, founded the Vermont Anti-Slavery Society (VASS) in Middlebury in 1834; it became the first affili-

ate of the AASS, headquartered in New York. They dedicated themselves to a campaign of moral suasion to convince the public that slavery ought to be eradicated immediately, a goal that set them apart from more pragmatic reformers who sought to end slavery and racial strife by exporting blacks to Africa. With the help of outside agents, VASS helped organize close to ninety local societies with approximately 6,000 members in the next three years, and launched campaigns to petition the state and federal governments on the issue. Evangelical ministers and their followers, including men and women who sought to rid the nation of sin, were key players in this mass mobilization by persuading friends, neighbors, and the reading public of the immorality of condoning human chattel.[4]

Vermont's national reputation for antislavery radicalism arose from the success of this grassroots effort to bring the issue to the forefront of political debate within the state, and from the capacity of Vermont's congressional delegation to articulate moral outrage over slavery. Compared with other Northern states, where economic ties to the South undergirded resistance to the reformers, Vermont's economy benefited less directly from slave production. Yet most Vermonters did not readily embrace abolition, even if they were willing to admit slavery was morally reprehensible. Gradual emancipation as proposed by the Vermont Colonization Society appeared more practical than the call for immediate emancipation, which threatened to dismantle the Union; gradualism was still the favored position of Vermont's Congregational leadership until the mid-1840s. At the same time, the moral issue provided evangelicals within the Baptist, Congregational, and Methodist churches and political liberals such as the Antimasons with a potent ideological message of freedom and equality that resonated with the public.[5]

As contention over abolition mounted, passage of the "gag rule" in Congress tabling petitions against the slave trade and slavery in the District of Columbia shifted the debate markedly in mid-1836. The state gained notoriety when Congressman William Slade of Middlebury, an Antimasonic representative who subsequently became a Whig, vigorously defended the right of petition. Many Vermonters, infuriated at the suppression of free speech, adopted the antislavery cause without condoning immediate emancipation. By 1837, antislavery had become politically potent in Vermont, prompting abolitionist James G. Birney to remark on a visit to Montpelier, "I have never seen our cause stand on such high ground among political men." Vermonters were ready to acknowledge that slavery was immoral, but it was unclear how to convert those convictions into political change without threatening to divide the Union.[6]

Research on women in northeastern states has shown that they were deeply involved in a parallel rise of antislavery sentiment throughout the region. Historian Julie Roy Jeffrey insists that they constituted a "great army of silent workers" who played a key role in shaping public opinion.[7] The moral values and persuasive methods of the crusade were in keeping with the contemporary presumption of female virtue and with the benevolent goals of women's previously organized religious and charitable associations. Since the post-Revolutionary period, women had been encouraged to fulfill their duties as citizens by becoming the moral guardians of the nation through their virtuous influence over husbands and children. As religious revivalism spread during the late 1820s and 1830s, educated women committed to universal salvation expanded the role of republican wife and mother outward through missionary and benevolent associations and soon began to press for moral reform and temperance, both of which arose from home concerns.[8] Like most of their male colleagues, abolitionist women believed slavery was a national sin, abhorrent in a supposedly free nation, and it was their sacred duty as Christians to combat it despite popular condemnation of the reform. To that end, they hoped to overturn widespread public apathy about the issue by distributing antislavery literature and displaying their moral convictions widely to prick the conscience of the nation.[9]

Yet it was difficult to contain antislavery activism within this moral and familial framework, especially after abolitionist leaders urged women to exert themselves in the public sphere through writing, organizing, and petitioning. To bolster their personal efforts, women either followed family ties into local antislavery associations or formed their own separate societies along the lines of their previous benevolent organizations. With inspiration from British women who lobbied effectively for emancipation, they raised funds, boycotted slave-made products, educated free blacks, and formulated petitions to state and federal governments, helping to create a mass populist movement. Radical abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison became a key sponsor of women's activism through his paper, *The Liberator*, in which he published some of the first writings of abolitionist Angelina Grimké and initiated a Ladies Department. He embraced Boston's female abolitionists, who collaborated with ministers and agents of the New England Anti-Slavery Society (NEASS) to help create a network of local female auxiliaries. Women circulated some of the first petitions to Congress in 1834, and thereafter they readily joined mass petition campaigns against slavery, which clearly politicized their activity. While female societies nurtured women's organizational skills, they also sent delegates to meetings of

the AASS and eventually represented approximately eleven percent of its membership.[10]

Women's engagement in the movement, especially petitioning and the entrée of a few women as abolitionist lecturers, provoked the debate over women's role in politics. Abolitionist women were even more subject to condemnation than their male colleagues, especially from conservative clerics. They were criticized for acting independently of male authority to mobilize the public and straying from women's domestic sphere into political debates normally reserved for men. In 1837, leaders of the Congregational clergy in Massachusetts condemned Angelina Grimké for her lectures to mixed-sex audiences on behalf of the AASS; her appearance before the state legislature was considered inappropriate for a woman. Grimké and other outspoken women, including Lucretia Mott and Abby Kelley, challenged established authority by insisting upon their rights as human beings to vote and hold office in associations. In the process, they began to assert their equal political rights as women. [11]

These feminist demands raised fundamental questions about women's place in American society, which not only helped fracture the male leadership but also the majority of female abolitionists. Even if they valued women's moral influence in the cause, many reformers and ministers disapproved of women's engagement in politics and resisted their attempt at gaining equal status within male institutions. Evangelical women tied to the movement through their religious affiliations readily signed petitions, but they often preferred traditional forms of female association and disdained politics as a corrupt male sphere of action. The leading women from New York, for example, favored organizing a separate society at the national level whereas Angelina Grimké and others insisted upon gaining equal representation within the AASS. To resolve these differences and to organize a mass petition campaign in response to the "gag rule," the women's leadership from Boston, New York, and Philadelphia staged their first national convention in New York City in May 1837. They developed state-based networks spearheaded from urban societies and gathered 175 delegates from nearly every northern state. Although they remained at odds over separatism, they agreed on a state-based plan for the petition campaign.[12]

Conspicuously absent from this event or even listed as correspondents were women from Vermont. Only three local female societies, in Weybridge (1834), Waitsfield (1836), and Cornwall (1837), had been formed by the time; four more, in Randolph (1838), Stowe (1843), Norwich (1844), and possibly Montpelier (n.d.), were created in the next decade. This compares with ninety-six in Massachusetts and nineteen in

New Hampshire.[13] Most of the delegates to the convention came from Massachusetts, New York, Pennsylvania, or large commercial towns such as Concord, New Hampshire, or Providence, Rhode Island, where large female societies were responsible for informing and gathering delegates from the rural hinterland.[14]

Living in small, rural communities separated by the Green Mountains, Vermont women were geographically isolated from each other and from the women's recruitment network. The role of separate female associations was crucial to raising the visibility of women in the movement and the development of feminist demands. Functioning as a female support system, they incubated women's organizational and leadership skills. Previous association with women's groups provided leaders, such as Abby Kelley and Lucretia Mott, with the capacity to assert their rights after joining mixed-sex associations and to face popular disapproval for stepping outside the boundaries of traditional womanhood. In rural areas beset with religious dissension, it was difficult to sustain separate groups; they were dependent upon the support of like-minded family members, ministers, and visiting agents, as well as access to antislavery literature, traveling speakers, and regional women's groups. Sectarian divisions and widespread public criticism of women's activism after 1838 compounded the difficulty.[15]

Lacking sufficient numbers or support for separate organizations, Vermont's abolitionist women joined mixed-sex societies to create a cooperative, less contentious movement with men. As Julie Roy Jeffrey and other scholars have shown, women's involvement took many forms in different regions and evolved over the course of three decades. Women's participation in mixed-sex antislavery societies formed the backbone of a massive grassroots movement that reached into every neighborhood and social gathering to reshape public opinion.[16] Yet, collaboration also limited women's access to leadership and their visibility in the movement. Even if they joined local groups, they remained largely anonymous because they did not become officers, whose names were published in annual reports and antislavery newspapers. Equally hidden were the few women who worked with their husbands to shelter fugitives. Women's names appear in rare manuscript records of local societies, but these records provide only partial membership rolls; a male signature was often enough to represent the family. Petition campaigns, on the other hand, required individual signatures to demonstrate popular support for abolition. After petitioning waned in the 1840s, VASS disintegrated, and the campaign of moral suasion was redesigned to influence voter behavior and recruit candidates for the Liberty Party, collaborating with men became more problematic. Some women became

enthusiastic supporters of the party, but others preferred separating their antislavery activism from the taint of political involvement.

Women's Voices

During the heyday of abolitionist organizing, two Vermont women ventured outside woman's traditional sphere to publicize their commitment and recruit other women to the cause. Unfortunately, they chose to remain anonymous, but their writings reveal how and why abolitionist women felt compelled to act. By addressing women readers and writing in a womanly style, both writers circumvented prohibitions against involvement in male affairs. Driven by religious conviction, they alerted other women to their responsibilities to God and the nation; they insisted that northerners were complicit in the crime of slavery and sought to awaken their readers to the common humanity of enslaved women. This gender-based style of writing was typical of abolitionist women and helped them establish a political voice outside the realm of electoral politics.[17]

In November 1834, when the president of the Weybridge Female Anti-Slavery Society (WFASS) offered her opening address for publication in the *Middlebury Free Press*, she exhibited little concern about engaging in public affairs. Jehiel K. Wright, a local Baptist minister and member of VASS, may have urged her to publicize the address to advertise the new society, hoping that such a pious woman would testify to the virtue of abolitionism. She expressed her firm commitment to following God's laws while also proclaiming her maternal role as a moral guardian of the nation. Humbly disclaiming her capacity to serve as president, she appealed to members' "hearts . . . bound by every tender feeling of humanity," to their "affectionate sensibilities," and to their consciences. She alerted them to their kinship with enslaved women as wives, mothers, and sisters and advised them to teach their children that "the poor degraded black boy too is their brother." We are "made of the same blood," she insisted, and therefore "we cannot suppose that the color of the skin, renders these ties . . . valueless"; blacks "have by nature the same tender ties to bind them together—they are prone to the same failings—and they have the same need of a companionate Saviour." Slavery was "legalized oppression," she concluded, lamenting that the enslaved woman was even more degraded than the poor widow in India enflamed on her husband's funeral pyre. Her grasp of the humanity of blacks clearly surpassed that of many contemporary Americans, yet her promotion of racial uplift also reflected the privileged position of a white, educated woman.[18]

Drawing parallels among women worldwide was one way to create a

sense of sisterhood, but what action could northern women take to change the laws or undermine the system? Let us "wash our own hands" of the crime of slavery, the president of WFASS begged. She vowed not to "partake of the blood of my fellow creatures" by purchasing slave-made products. Just as patriotic women during the Revolution boycotted British imported tea, so too abolitionist women could use their growing power as consumers to avoid slave-made sugar, cotton, or dyes in the commercial marketplace of the 1830s. Although she recognized the impracticality of such a commitment, participation in the free-produce movement represented an ethical stance against slavery and a form of direct action that resonated with many white and black women. Initiated by Quakers in Delaware and Pennsylvania who eventually established networks of stores to distribute freely made goods, the movement spread among a minority of ardent abolitionists in the Northeast, including Rachel and Rowland Robinson of Ferrisburgh.[19]

In a bolder, more political move addressed to men as well as women, the president of WFASS also forwarded the society's constitution with a letter to William Lloyd Garrison for publication in *The Liberator*. The constitution, which she appears to have written, linked her belief in a higher law of justice to American Revolutionary ideals, to that "liberty which is surely the inalienable right of all mankind." Like their Revolutionary forbearers, women needed to fulfill their patriotic duty. "Historic records portray in lively colors the services of females for the good of the State," she asserted. We must "do all within our sphere of action to wipe from the tarnished glory of our beloved country this foul blot!" In her letter, filled with political invective and sarcasm, she blamed the nation's legislators for passing tyrannical laws. Pleading the "requirements of humanity and religion" as justification for voicing her sentiments, she directed her ire at slaveholders and their enablers. They were hiding behind unjust laws such as those that banished and hanged Quakers, executed witches, and drove the "poor Indians" from their "native homes," she argued. "Even in our own happy republic—this boasted asylum of the oppressed," she remarked sarcastically, laws "have been enacted, which cannot be ranked on the side of justice." Equally guilty was a southern editor who had rationalized the crime of slavery by suggesting that the enslaved were well-treated and content. He is either blind or ignorant, she surmised, and doubted his commitment to the "law of Heaven" because most of the enslaved are not allowed to read and must suffer with a perverted Christianity. As for our unjust laws, she concluded, "Our humane editor doubtless thinks this all right, as our government can do nothing wrong; and he seems to think slavery . . . [is] a merciful dispensation!"[20]

The president of WFASS was not the only woman engaged in political debate about slavery, but her pointed critique of lawmakers was unusual for her day. Lydia Maria Child's *An Appeal in Favor of That Class of Americans Called Africans*, published in 1833, detailed the sufferings of slaves, including those of women subject to sexual exploitation and mothers robbed of their children, and argued against race prejudice. Hugely influential, it awakened the compassionate sensibilities of educated women like the president of WFASS, who responded keenly to the comparison between slave conditions and her own comfortable domestic world.[21] Whether Child's *Appeal* had inspired her or not, she challenged the unjust legal system and the hypocrisy of politicians who had designed it. Under cover of female piety and sympathy, she circumvented the bounds of feminine propriety several years before the question of women's participation in public debate exploded in the press and pulpit alike.

By 1838, when another nameless Vermont woman published *An Appeal to Females of the North, on the Subject of Slavery by a Female of Vermont*, a public furor had erupted over the appearance of antislavery women as speakers, organizers, and petitioners. Congregational leaders in Massachusetts had denounced Angelina Grimké for presuming "the place and tone of man as public reformer," and Grimké noted that "the whole land seems aroused to discussion on the province of woman." Vermonter Oliver Johnson, who had moved to Boston to assist Garrison, later explained that conservative ministers "were more afraid of those two women [Angelina and her sister Sarah] than they would have been of a dozen lecturers of the other sex."[22] Undeterred, Grimké had published, *An Appeal to the Women of the Nominally Free States*, to persuade northern women to overcome their scruples about public activism and to galvanize them into a national petition campaign. A few months later in February 1838, the editor of the Brandon *Vermont Telegraph* published the *Appeal to Females*, and leaders of VASS subsequently circulated it in pamphlet form. Reformer Orson Murray of Brandon, editor of the Baptist paper since 1835 and an officer of VASS, recommended the tract as a "gold mine" for his readers while assuring the author he would "make no remarks" that would reveal her identity, which is still unknown.[23]

Like the president of WFASS, the author appealed to women's maternal sympathies and their Christian obligations, but she also responded keenly to the new political environment by defending her outspokenness and highlighting female influence rather than petitioning, which had become so controversial. It was disingenuous of critics to "divert our attention" with claims of "feminine impropriety," she in-

sisted; they simply wish to "prevent a concentration of our influence." To prove that abolitionism was not outside the bounds of "female decorum," she cited the active role of female missionaries in India and China and others committed to temperance, peace, and even Greek and Polish revolutionary movements. "Shall our religion be dishonored and our country disgraced by crime, and Christian mothers and daughters remain unmoved amid this awful accumulation of guilt?" she queried. To alert northern women to their complicity with slavery, she explained that slave-made products pervaded their households while their husbands had surrendered to "Southern dictation." Rather than succumb to the arrogance and lies of southern men, she urged northern women to sympathize with enslaved mothers. "Is there no chord within the hearts of Northern mothers that vibrates, as the grasp of avarice and lust tears the clinging daughter from the arms of a fond mother, and consigns her to perpetual ignominy and servitude?" Do not "shrink" from such "wretchedness," she warned; a "great responsibility rests upon the Christian females of the North." Yet, when it came to direct action, instead of signing petitions, she urged women to recognize their capacity to shape "the moral sense of the nation" by pressuring male relatives, enlightening neighbors about race prejudice, and teaching their children "that all mankind are the children of one common father."[24] This moderate but determined approach to antislavery activism characterized much of women's independent action in Vermont and allowed them to maintain their political activity within the confines of the ideal republican wife and devoted mother of the 1830s.

While gender constraints shaped the *Appeal to Females*, the religious experience of its author underlay her response to slavery. Her sense of personal accountability only to God, her firm but humble resistance to any authority other than that of "Holy inspiration," and her willingness to endure any "reproach cast upon us," indicates that she was probably a Quaker. Moreover, after its publication in Vermont, the *Appeal to Females* was reprinted and circulated by the Philadelphia Association of Friends for Advocating the Cause of the Slave, and Improving the Condition of the Free People of Color. Founded in 1837, this Quaker society published antislavery tracts, promoted free produce, petitioned state and federal governments, and organized a school for black women in the city, all the while avoiding non-Quaker civic engagement.[25]

Many Quakers in Addison County participated in Vermont abolitionism in the 1830s, and it is likely that the network of Friends in Ferrisburgh, Starksboro, Lincoln, Monkton, and Shoreham was responsible for shepherding the pamphlet to Philadelphia, where leaders often traveled for meetings. Quaker women in these groups maintained an equal

but separate position within the community. They operated and presided over women's meetings and held leadership positions as traveling elders. The authority to speak about their religious faith provided some women with the experience and self-confidence to write or lecture on abolition. Yet Friends also disagreed over how to abolish slavery; they argued internally over strategy, and many preferred not to agitate with outsiders or enter politics for fear of compromising their commitment to Quaker belief.[26]

Without igniting controversy over women's political action, the *Appeal to Females* was a persuasive plea to engage all women and the perfect recruitment tool for Vermont's male abolitionists. As the petition movement advanced, men in the movement not only appreciated women's effectiveness at the local level, but also recognized that their patriotism and virtue would testify to the pure goals of abolitionism. In 1839, leaders of VASS concluded that the *Appeal to Females* had "done essential service to the interest of the slave." Jedidiah Holcomb of Brandon was so moved by the tract that he exhorted, "let us have a little *more* from the same fountain." He heralded women's activism, comparing it favorably to the heroism of Revolutionary-era women, some of whom prepared and furnished cartridges on the battlefield. To "aid this peaceable warfare," he urged women to substitute words for guns, circulate articles and pamphlets to friends and relatives, "make abolitionists of their children," and even petition Congress. Like David who faced Goliath with only a few stones, Holcomb argued, they would confront the overwhelming slave power. Southern congressmen would surely foresee the end of slavery, he surmised, if all or two-thirds of the women of the North signed petitions to abolish it. With women on our side, he predicted, "freedom will prevail,—not by sword . . . but by truth, love, free discussion, and perseverance."[27] By invoking the memory of female patriots, Holcomb recognized women's role in the nation, not just their moral obligations, and hoped to convince them to overcome their lack of political experience by signing petitions without fear of admonition.

Antislavery Societies

In a similar vein, VASS officials, local ministers, and abolitionist agents eagerly solicited women to join local societies, raise funds, distribute literature, and assist with petition campaigns. Between 1833 and 1838 agents from outside and within the state solicited funds and stimulated the organization of approximately ninety local societies. A year after Orson Murray, acting as an agent for NEASS, helped community members in Jamaica organize the state's first local society, the women and men presented separate but identical petitions to Congress. By

1838, Murray was also urging women to organize separate cent-a-week societies devoted to the cause. Whether women joined a mixed-sex society along with their male relatives or organized separately was largely dependent upon initial and sustained support from a local minister. Women were accustomed to organizing separately within their religious congregations in support of preaching, foreign missions, and other charitable endeavors, and therefore a "ladies" antislavery society was a logical extension of the movement.[28]

Yet these efforts were often short-lived. Despite the leadership of a committed minister in Weybridge and a fearless president, there is no record indicating that the WFASS survived for long.[29] Rev. Amos Dresser, an agent for AASS from Massachusetts, helped fourteen women form a society in Randolph in March 1838, but it lasted only two years. Women of the Norwich Congregational Church, who organized a society in 1843 with the encouragement of the local church deacon and Rev. Alanson St. Clair, met and sewed together for seven years. They may have been more successful because by the mid-1840s they were able to connect with the network of black abolitionists who had developed a system for aiding fugitives.[30]

Spreading information, mutual support, and benevolence characterized much of the work of women's separate societies. By educating themselves and distributing antislavery literature, women bolstered each other as abolitionists and extended their influence over local opinion about slavery. Members of WFASS, who included any woman who paid dues and supported antislavery principles, dedicated themselves to spreading "correct information" about slavery. They also sought to take direct action by buying free produce whenever possible and to assist in the "laudable undertaking of raising [blacks], according to the requirements of Christianity, to an equality with the whites." Women of the Norwich Female Abolition Society also vowed to "elevate the character and condition of the people of color," a commonly expressed goal among white evangelical abolitionists who believed in universal salvation. Driven by missionary zeal and sympathy for the oppressed, they adopted benevolent goals but were unable to address the practical realities of enacting human equality. The women in Norwich sewed clothing, which they forwarded to a Canadian mission for fugitives. Black women provided support for fugitives as well, but they were often situated in communities where they could also extend their antislavery work by operating black schools and educating the public about white racism.[31]

With little experience, women needed guidance to operate and sustain societies outside the realm of religious benevolence, especially for such an unpopular cause. The demise of the promising Randolph Fe-

male Anti-Slavery Society (RFASS) shows the difficulties they faced. Rev. Elderkin J. Boardman and his wife Ann, who served as the first president, had enlisted 190 members by June 1838. He exalted their special role in the movement, comparing them to the early Christians who suffered with Jesus at the cross, and insisted that God had given them "more moral courage, fortitude and influence" than men; "in the hour of peril," they would "go where men cannot and dare not approach." Though Congress had shelved their petitions and rioters had burned Pennsylvania Hall during the second national convention of antislavery women, he defended women's right to "organized action" and "free discussion," asserting that women were "peculiarly fitted" to this "field of moral and religious enterprise."[32] The members voted to affiliate with the Boston Female Anti-Slavery Society (BFASS) for special "counsel and instruction." Closely associated with William Lloyd Garrison, the BFASS mentored women's auxiliaries, but this regional network barely reached Vermont. The women in Randolph raised nearly thirty dollars, circulated antislavery pamphlets, and sent three petitions to Congress, but as Secretary Elizabeth Bancroft explained, "our cause has many opposers, and presents few inducements of a worldly nature to enlist advocates in its favor." Imbued with a combination of patriotism and missionary zeal yet wary about the future, Bancroft prayed for "beloved America," and believed that "the Lord will open a high-way for emancipation, but it may be a judgment that will pain the nation."[33]

Bancroft's apprehensions were realized when religious controversy engulfed Boardman and severed the society's link with the BFASS. Members of the affiliate in Boston disagreed vehemently about whether to associate with clerical leaders who disapproved of women's activism and women's rights. When the BFASS ceased to function and eventually dissolved in 1840, the 210 members of the RFASS were left without guidance and a vital connection to the regional network of female abolitionists.[34] The subsequent loss of Boardman, who was dismissed from the Randolph Congregational Church at the end of the year, was an even greater blow. An outspoken abolitionist, he no doubt offended some members of his congregation and Vermont's conservative Congregational leadership as well. Boardman and his followers were caught in the same dilemma: Should they persist with radical abolition or adhere to religious authorities? To follow their consciences and criticize or even leave the church would render them outcasts from the community. Though independent-minded abolitionists, such as the Grimké sisters and Lucy Stone, summoned the courage to take such a step, most did not.[35]

Women's lack of experience, their sensitivity to critics, and the difficulties of sustaining separate societies in rural Vermont led most of Ver-

mont's abolitionist women to participate in the movement through mixed-sex groups, especially after men urged them to join. The secretary of the Hardwick Anti-Slavery Society urged all "ladies of this town" to read Mrs. Child's *Appeal* and "to enroll their names as members of this society."[36] Yet documentation of women's participation in local societies has rarely surfaced. Records from the Rupert Anti-Slavery Society, organized in January 1834, list 133 members; seventy-two or 54 percent were women. Quakers, who initiated the Starksboro and Lincoln society with sixty-three members in May 1834, sent petitions to the Vermont legislature the following year urging abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia signed by 332 men and 420 women. Of course, not all were members of the society, but the same year Rowland T. Robinson boasted that "nearly the whole adult population, of both sexes" joined the antislavery society in his section of nearby Ferrisburgh. Even if Robinson was guilty of inflating the membership, it is clear that women were engaged in antislavery activity in their communities and participating in petition drives with men.[37]

It was easier for women to participate in local gatherings than to travel to meetings of county or state societies. Such a venture normally required a male chaperone who was also involved. During the mid-1830s, members of VASS organized county societies throughout the state to help coordinate the network of local groups. Only three women, Quakers Rachel Robinson, Rachel Hoag, and Huldah Hoag, were present at the organization of the Addison County Anti-Slavery Society, which enrolled thirty-eight members in 1835. The Washington County Anti-Slavery Society was organized in Montpelier a year later with eighty-four members, including nineteen women, about half of whose surnames match those of men on the list. But county societies were also difficult to sustain, especially after controversies arose over strategy within the movement. Leaders of the Washington County society, who expected a "full and spirited meeting" in early 1839, discussed whether to convene more frequent meetings in different towns, presumably to bolster participation. "Heretofore, the ladies have, as in duty bound, furnished their quota of numbers at the county meetings," they recalled. "So may it be again," they hoped, if only the women would turn out.[38]

Involvement at the state level was an even more significant step toward non-traditional political activism for women. Orson Murray, corresponding secretary for VASS, was as enthusiastic as Rowland T. Robinson about women's participation; his wife Catherine and Delia Higgins of Brandon became members of VASS at its founding meeting in May 1834. The society affirmed women's role in the movement by resolving that "the ladies of our Country can do much if they will take

up this subject and act with concert and decision." According to the constitution, "any person" who supported immediate emancipation through non-violent means of persuasion and who contributed was eligible to join and vote at meetings. The strategy of moral suasion was ideally suited to enlisting the army of benevolent women into a righteous war on the sin of slavery and to exposing "the guilt and danger of holding men as property."[39]

In addition to spreading abolitionist principles, leaders of VASS hoped women would provide funds to support lecturers and publications. "Great sacrifices must be made," the executive committee insisted, "every friend of Humanity, who has a heart to sympathise with the suffering slave, must contribute." The Cornwall Female Anti-Slavery Society sent funds regularly for three years, beginning in 1837 with an unusually large contribution of $20.25. More typically, ardent women sent a few dollars, such as: "2 Female Friends [Quakers]," an "aged female," and "two young Ladies" from Rochester; "Mrs. Stewart of Westford" sent a "string of gold beads." Individual women and their societies also contributed directly to AASS, the national society. Rev. Justin Parsons of Jamaica sent $111 to AASS "on account of [his] pledge and to constitute his wife, Hannah Parsons, a life member."[40] After the Panic of 1837, when financial constraints forced AASS to decentralize the movement, VASS enlisted women in a system of volunteer antislavery agents organized by county and town. Local societies were instructed to appoint "one man and one woman" as agents in each school district to sell newspaper subscriptions, develop libraries of antislavery literature for parents and children, supply every family with the Anti-Slavery Almanac, and circulate petitions "to every man and woman of lawful age." To applaud and encourage this effort members of the Washington County society resolved that "woman [has] already done much for the cause of abolition" and would do great service to "this nation and the community of nations" with "her energetic and mild, yet irresistible influence."[41] This conception of women's role, rather than that of political activist, was common among men in the movement and most women as well.

Petitioning

Signing and circulating petitions did not change the perception that women's sympathetic influence and virtue would enhance abolitionism, but petitioning gradually transformed their volunteer labor from pure benevolence into political activism. Spearheaded by AASS and NEASS, petition campaigns against the slave trade and slavery in the District of Columbia and territories, where federal law prevailed, began

in 1834 and became the dominant strategy to influence Congress until 1839. Local societies organized the most successful petition campaigns, but even without a society, advocates copied or clipped forms for circulation from the abolitionist press. Despite initial concerns that women were not voters and should refrain from political involvement, by 1835 itinerant agents from AASS were enlisting local women as well as men to gather signatures, following the example of British women who had been effective in petitioning Parliament. For most women signing a petition was their first political act and far different from exercising a customary female right of petitioning the government for redress of personal grievances. Angelina Grimké, known for her assertion of women's citizenship, insisted that it was a woman's duty to exercise the only right she possessed. VASS leaders believed that women's moral influence was even more persuasive than men's within some households, and that women would be effective in gathering signatures, if not money, from relatives and neighbors. To gain local support, women needed to venture outside familiar networks, but going door-to-door with a petition advocating a radical, unpopular cause could jeopardize longstanding relationships in the community. A woman's social standing could easily be undermined by the perception that she was engaging inappropriately in political affairs; she could be greeted with rudeness and closed doors when confronting friends and acquaintances.[42]

Despite these risks, Vermont women were enthusiastic petitioners. One historian has counted 22,381 female signatures on petitions from Vermont to the 25th Congress (March 1837 to March 1839), during the most successful petition campaigns. In some cases such as Jamaica, where women gathered 218 signatures and men supplied 580, abolitionists circulated separate petitions and forwarded them together to the Vermont Legislature or Congressional representatives. More typically, men signed in one column and women in another, such as the "Memorial of Paul Champlain & 32 other men & Sally Hill & 27 other women of Middlebury, Vt." The arrangement followed the customary separation of the sexes and clearly identified voters from the disenfranchised. Separate women's petitions came from towns where men were also active or female societies had been organized; they represent only about 10 percent of those that exist from Vermonters to Congress and only one to the Vermont Legislature. The impressive number of women's signatures from Vermont is further evidence that women were devoted to the cause, despite the dearth of separate societies in the state. By contrast, fewer women's signatures appear on petitions from both Ohio and Pennsylvania, though each state had more than twenty female societies.[43]

Women who formulated their own petitions were clearly sensitive to the propriety of their actions and felt compelled to justify their political activity by expressing their sentiments in gender-specific language. The women of Starksboro (420) sent a petition to the Vermont General Assembly in October 1835 urging legislators to instruct the state's congressional delegation regarding slavery. Opening their plea with a typical line of reasoning, they asserted that slavery in the District of Columbia was "incompatible with justice and humanity, the spirit of our free institutions, and the gospel of Christ." As women, they also defended their right to stray "from the customary walks of female life," by noting "the tremendous physical sufferings, —the sighs, and groans, and mental agonies of three thousand, three hundred American females." Pleading for their sisters in slavery, "for the sake of female innocence, unprotected,—of conjugal and maternal ties, rudely severed," they appealed to the sympathy of legislators and connected these familial concerns with the fate of the nation at home and abroad. "For the sake of national prosperity,—the permanence of our free institutions,—and the stability of the Union," they argued, and "for the sake of our country's tarnished fame,—the cause of universal freedom,—and the cause of righteousness and peace." For their part, 332 men from Starksboro sent their own petition with a lengthy but similarly patriotic plea that "freedom is the 'inalienable right' of all men." Instead of a mother's woes, however, they detailed slaves' sufferings from a male perspective: the physical harm black men endured, their lack of education and religion, and the substitution of a "system of concubinage, adultery and incest" for the institution of marriage. The greatest wrong in their estimation arose not so much from inhumane treatment as from slaves' "inability to ask redress," the absence of the right to petition the government for relief.[44]

Unlike black slaves, Vermont women were able to affirm that right for themselves, despite concerns about intruding on male affairs. In 1836, the women of Sterling tread carefully around the issue in a humble petition to Congress, noting that when pleading for the "downtrodden and despised" they were not "violating the proprieties of that relation to society and government our sex should sustain." It has "never been considered unbecoming the female character," they contended, to show that "our hearts are easily moved with tenderness and pity." In fact, they reminded the lawmakers, these traits are "so much esteemed in us by your respectful and honorable body." Committed to a faith that only "God should be our guide," they insisted that slaves were "made by the same Being that we were." Yet the "inalienable rights such as life Liberty and the lawful pursuits of happiness" did "not seem to exist" for those in bondage; nor did "the conjugal and parental rela-

tions established by our Maker," even while "female virtue" was exposed to "every inconceivable indignity." Southerners who "traffick in the bodies and souls of their fellow beings only because they have a black skin" as well as the nation would soon be subject to "God's wrath," they warned.[45]

Similar themes based upon women's piety, their patriotism, their obligations to God, and their sympathy with "the disgraced and afflicted of our sex" also appear in petitions from women in Washington and Addison counties. Endorsed and circulated by members of AASS or NEASS, who championed women's moral influence as "Christians" and "daughters of America," these printed forms standardized the expression of female sympathy and virtue; more importantly, they were effective vehicles to highlight the benevolence of white women, thereby cloaking abolitionism in republican virtue while masking women's political activity.[46]

The wording mattered little to members of Congress, who debated how to dispatch the flood of antislavery petitions, not just from Quakers who had led previous campaigns, but from fervent agitators in communities all over the Northeast. Southern congressmen hoped to silence the abolitionists, but John Quincy Adams of Massachusetts advised referring them to the committee on the District of Columbia. Braving the wrath of southerners and Democrats alike, Vermonter William Slade insisted upon a special committee and asserted, "we must not bury these petitions." Moreover, though he favored gradual not immediate emancipation, Slade pursued the issue further than any other congressman by exposing the horrors of the slave trade, challenging the biblical defense of slavery, affirming the humanity of blacks, and insisting upon congressional action. Rising at one point to display his constituents' support, he presented a petition from a hundred women of Cornwall, Vermont, and several others against slavery in the district. Despite his efforts and those of Adams, they were all tabled in May 1836 when congressmen passed the first gag rule. Renewed the following February and regularly thereafter, the rule became permanent in 1840.[47]

Meanwhile, the gag rule had energized a larger "army of women" to join the petition campaigns. A deluge of petitions in 1837 and 1838 (many with fewer words in the hope they could be easily read) included an additional set of related issues: the admission of Texas or other territories as slave states into the Union, the recognition of the revolutionary black Republic of Haiti, and the unconstitutional tabling of petitions. Presenting each issue on a separate printed form effectively multiplied the number of signatures that could be gathered at one time.

The decidedly political nature of these pleas did not inhibit women from signing petitions; their numbers rose dramatically, slightly surpassing those of men.[48] Legislators in Vermont also witnessed a rise in petitions. In October 1838, 2,220 Vermonters, approximately a third of whom were women, protested against slavery and congressional denial of their rights.[49]

In response, congressmen, conservative ministers, and newspaper editors either denounced or ridiculed women, effectively telling them to stay out of politics. Angelina Grimké defended women's petitioning on the grounds that "we are citizens, of this republic, and as such, our honor, happiness, and well being, are bound up in its politics, government and laws." Without endorsing full citizenship for women, John Quincy Adams and a few others testified to the petitioners' benevolence, patriotism, and integrity on the floor of the House, though Slade was silent on the issue. But the critique took its toll. The surge of petitioning waned because it was no longer deemed effective, and so too did women's political engagement.[50]

That a few defiant women were keenly aware of their critics and the congressional debates is evident from an 1847 petition to Congress from seventy-two "Ladies of Vermont" from Windsor County. They continued to believe in their responsibility for the moral integrity of the nation and showed their frustration with seven years of congressional inaction by reasserting their "right of petition." They had not forgotten the rebuff from a "distinguished Senator," Benjamin Tappan of Ohio, who had refused in 1840 to "'recognize the right of country-women to interfere with public affairs'" because "we were 'out of our appropriate arena;'" nor the advice of a New York editor "that we 'had better be shaking bed*ticks* rather then poli-*tics*.'" Coming from a northern Democrat who reportedly held strong antislavery convictions, Tappan's critique of female petitioners had been even more frustrating than those of southern slaveholders. Imploring Congress once again to end the "National evil" of slavery and the slave trade, the women defended their actions by invoking the memory of their Revolutionary grandmothers who had helped "to 'shake the red-coats.'" With a heightened political consciousness, they expressed their indignation at being "governed by Laws which we have no voice in making." To prove congressional complicity in the trade, they cited the recent seizure and sale of two enslaved women from a dispossessed debtor to replenish the U.S. Treasury. "Is not the whole Nation responsible for this outrage on humanity? The buying and selling of human beings as the herds of the field! Separating them from their friends, Separating husbands from their wives, parents and children brothers and sisters." By showing that

politics could not be divorced from morality or from family life, these women protested their exclusion from politics and reaffirmed their right as citizens, if not voters, to participate in the debate over slavery.[51]

The "Woman Question" in Vermont

The controversy over women's antislavery activism did not disrupt the movement in Vermont as much as the internal conflicts over political strategy and constant sectarian strife. By 1839, abolitionists were impatient with church leaders for failing to condemn slavery forcefully and divided over whether political action would effect their goals. Despite initial support for the radical leader William Lloyd Garrison, a number of Vermonters were dismayed by his increasing extremism and confrontational style. Garrison stood at one end of a spectrum of interrelated conflicts within the movement: He condemned church authorities for refusing to preach against slavery as a sin or disassociate from southern slaveholding ministers; he characterized the U.S. Constitution as pro-slavery and repudiated all violence or political action under it, a stance known as non-resistance; and he was outspoken in his endorsement of women's participation, their leadership, and their full political rights. A minority of VASS members, such as Rowland T. Robinson and Orson Murray, followed his lead, but most believed Garrison's tactics would backfire and doom the movement. These disagreements, disruption within the churches, and lack of funds weakened organized antislavery. Even in the stronghold of Ferrisburgh, Robinson feared that the movement was "dying away," and he exhorted abolitionists to "cast aside all sectarian and party jealousies" in an effort to regain momentum.[52]

Nationally, these divisions simmered until the controversy over the status of women within the AASS eventually sparked a fatal split in abolitionism, causing Vermont leaders to reconsider their connection with the national movement and their longstanding support for women's participation. Chauncey Knapp, editor of the *Voice of Freedom* and advocate of political antislavery, and Jedidiah Holcomb of Brandon believed that women were effective abolitionists and noted that the constitution allowed any person to be a member. But after the AASS endorsed membership rights for women in May 1839, they denied the measure's full implications.[53] At the next annual meeting, when Abby Kelley was appointed an officer of AASS, a cadre of dissenters from New York walked out, rejecting women's demand for rights as an extraneous issue that would taint the movement with radicalism. Equally frustrated with Garrison's leadership and eager to adopt a political strategy, they organized the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society

(AFASS) as an alternative. The Vermonters followed their lead by vowing to endorse candidates who expressed strong antislavery views, but they were wary of entanglement with either party or a single-issue third party. They subsequently affiliated with the AFASS, but back home they continued to foster women's cooperation by granting them voting rights in VASS in January 1841. Orson Murray, a notorious radical and dissenter from political action, was euphoric, boasting that at least the Vermonters had not "the shameful inconsistency to gag [women] and nail them to their seats." He insisted that only one negative vote had been cast, and he published women's voting record from the meeting. "The voice of *Females* is in future to be heard," he proclaimed, "on the mountains and in the valleys of Vermont, in behalf of perishing humanity." Societies under Garrison's leadership and Rhode Island's state society granted women similar rights, but others in New England did not.[54]

For all the furor regarding women's role in the AASS, the issue did not cause as much disruption at VASS meetings as sectarian dissension. Nor did it change the trajectory toward political antislavery and the eventual formation of the Liberty Party in 1841. VASS needed women's labor and their influence, and no woman had challenged the male leadership by seeking office or lecturing in public. Murray's support represented his effort to maintain the morally pure, non-partisan nature of the movement, to resist mounting pressure for a third political party, and to galvanize women in his campaign against the religious establishment. Five women voted in favor of his resolution in 1841 demanding that ministers condemn slavery and repudiate slaveholding ministers or face dismissal.[55] Unfortunately, Murray's notoriety—his attacks on Baptist leaders, his interference at VASS meetings, and his non-resistance—may have also solidified the link between women's rights and radicalism, discouraging female involvement. The association of women's rights with Garrison and with his critique of established religion led to the charge that feminist abolitionists were infidels lacking Christian sympathies.[56]

For most abolitionist women, political rights were not as immediate a concern as the assault on religious belief and dissent within Vermont's churches, which forced them to reexamine their faith and affiliations. In the early 1840s, abolitionist agitation peaked within the Congregational, Baptist, and Methodist churches. State leaders and local congregations readily dismissed ministers who were either too zealous or too moderate on the issue. Congregations splintered and separate antislavery sects emerged. Just as Reverend Boardman's dismissal in Randolph undermined the female society there, so too religious con-

flicts in Cornwall, where women had organized their own society, disrupted community connections. Twenty-seven men and women opposed to the moderate antislavery stance of Cornwall's Congregational minister left the church in 1841 to form a Free Church with Baptists and Methodists. They installed an abolitionist minister, proclaimed their strong belief in human rights, and refused to worship with Christians who remained "silent and inactive" on slavery, but the new congregation faced an uphill battle to gain members.[57] As abolitionists struggled to forge new but weakened institutions, women faced the prospect of losing the vital support of ministers whom they had relied upon for religious guidance and severing longstanding ties with female religious groups, relatives, and neighbors to adhere to antislavery principles.

Abolitionist Rachel Robinson encountered such a dilemma when controversy engulfed the Society of Friends. As a Hicksite Quaker, she believed strongly in following God's will and her own conscience more than any religious leader. Though she accompanied her husband into the movement, Robinson acted upon her own firmly held antislavery principles within the confines of her family life; she purchased free-labor produce and welcomed fugitives at the Robinson home in Ferrisburgh. The Robinsons bemoaned the apparent decline in antislavery sentiment in the early 1840s, but they persisted with their efforts to rejuvenate the movement locally and within the Society of Friends. Unhappy with the

Rachel Gilpin Robinson (1799-1862) was an ardent abolitionist who sheltered fugitives at her home in Ferrisburgh, now the Rokeby Museum. Courtesy of Rokeby Museum.

conservatism of the New York Yearly Meeting of Friends, the couple eventually left the society in the mid-1840s.[58] As a result Rachel also resigned from the Ferrisburgh Women's Monthly Meeting, which meant abandoning her role as a leader since the 1820s. Though bereft of religious community, Robinson was unlikely to follow the independent stance of feminist abolitionists. Like many wives, she sought to do good in the world in companionship with her husband; her antislavery zeal did not prompt her to assert her rights as a woman separately or to speak out in public forums. During a visit to Pennsylvania, she wrote Rowland about the brave and singular work of Lucretia Mott and her endurance under a mountain of public criticism. Rachel sympathized with the "suffering through which minds like her have to pass," yet she clearly instructed her husband not to share her thoughts on the matter with others. As the public critique of women like Mott, Grimké, and Kelley mounted, it was increasingly difficult for women to speak out.[59]

Women and Political Antislavery

Regardless of women's views about their political rights, the emergence of the Liberty Party clarified women's subordinate status in Vermont's antislavery movement, resulting in more diffuse forms of female activism. Women's participation in the party nationally varied greatly by state and region, depending upon the attitude of male leaders and the capacity of abolitionist women to overcome the risks of associating with a political party. Providing customary female support or organizing separate fundraising was a safer bet for most abolitionist women who recoiled from the controversy over women's rights. Yet, their attendance at Liberty conventions was almost always applauded, and their presence distinguished these events from other political gatherings of the era.[60]

With its members divided over both religion and politics, VASS eventually disintegrated, and those men who had favored a political strategy assumed control of the Liberty Party in Vermont. They had rejected feminist abolitionists' claims for equal status, but they championed women's moral influence in the family and remained as driven by religious conviction as ever. Between 1841 and 1848, they sought electable candidates from both parties and anticipated luring voters to the moral purity of a single-issue platform. Abolitionist leadership shifted away from the Champlain Valley to the center of the state, with strongholds in Montpelier, Randolph, Rochester, and Brandon. With the exception of a failed campaign to protest the annexation of Texas in 1845, there was little effort to organize petitions. The party became increasingly pragmatic over the course of the decade until Liberty men eventually

found common ground with disaffected Democrats in the newly organized Free Soil Party, which captured approximately a third of the electorate in 1848.[61]

Following the national leadership, Liberty men in Vermont did not expect women to partake of politics but to resume the supportive roles in which they had been so effective. Believing "that our females are equally interested in the cause of *Liberty* with us," party leaders saw no impropriety in welcoming women at annual conventions and meetings, but they were clearly cheerleaders and symbols of the party's ideological purity. Liberty Associations, organized to educate voters, were composed only of "male citizens," who vowed to vote for antislavery candidates. Women were included in their grassroots campaign to persuade voters and distribute antislavery literature in school districts, but even if a woman gained political experience through the process, it represented an indirect form of influence compared with signing a petition.[62] After the party's organization floundered, in 1847 leaders rejuvenated and centralized the operation in a State Liberty Association. Recognizing that they needed women's fundraising capacity, they expanded membership to anyone who paid a dollar in dues; twenty-two women and 288 men became members that year. At the same time, according to one report, the women formed an auxiliary "Female State Anti-Slavery Society," indicating that they preferred separating their activism from male politics.[63]

Despite their small numbers, as long as the Liberty Party represented a single-issue moral crusade, women felt welcome in the army of recruits, and for some the experience no doubt raised their political consciousness. Politics infiltrated the personal relationships of Liberty women, who readily expressed political opinions and support for candidates. In 1842, Harriet Wood of Shelburne wrote her sister that she had decided to become an abolitionist and support the Liberty Party.[64] Liberty conventions, where families gathered to hear rousing abolitionist lecturers, were little different from religious revivals. Party leaders preached abolitionist principles, decried partyism, and sponsored fugitives as speakers, who could elicit feminine sympathies by testifying to the oppression of slaveholders. Jedidiah Holcomb of Brandon, editor of the *Voice of Freedom*, heralded the patriotism of the "host of men and women, of varied talents and constitutional temperaments, now battling for humanity...who have enlisted for the war, and will not lay down their arms until victory is won, or death shall remove them from the field of battle!" Joseph Poland, a Liberty official and influential editor of the *Green Mountain Freeman*, was solicitous of women's engagement if only in traditional benevolent activities. In "An appeal to the

Friends of Common Humanity" in 1844, he addressed the "*Mothers of Vermont*" with a plea for aid: "is there no way in which women can act for the removal of this evil?"[65] After Liberty women expressed their enthusiasm by forming the Female State Anti-Slavery Society, former slave and speaker Henry Bibb reported, "The Green Mountain ladies are awake to the subject. They have hearts to feel and tongues to speak; hands to work, and the ability to carry out." No records of the auxiliary have been found, but involvement with the party heightened women's political awareness and encouraged separate female activism. It may have also stimulated a few independently organized petitions to Congress, such as the "Ladies of Vermont" petition in December 1847.[66]

Separate organizing was also the preferred form of activism for benevolent women who supported Liberty's goals but either lacked male sponsorship in the party or disdained politics. By sewing and sending clothing and goods to fugitives, they could aid blacks directly without straying from the bounds of womanhood. Women in Stowe showed their frustration with politics by noting the "inhumanity practiced upon a large portion of the American people, by the politicians of our land." Instead, they formed a Ladies Female Anti-Slavery Society with 117 members in November 1843, and vowed to educate themselves, to spread abolitionist sentiment, and to aid fugitives. The following year they sent over $40 to a mission in Dawn Mills, Canada West (now Ontario), founded to support refugees from slavery.[67] Parallel sympathies and activities motivated women of the Norwich Female Abolition Society. Rev. Alanson St. Clair from Massachusetts and Chester Briggs were Liberty Party agents and editors; their wives and the local deacon's wife were among its seventeen members. The women avoided any connection with political controversy by affirming that, "denunciation of those who hold their fellow in bondage, forms no part of the object of this Society." Especially moved by the "suffering of our own sex who are deprived of personal liberty," they forwarded boxes of goods to Hiram Wilson, a black minister at the mission in Dawn Mills; to Henry H. Garnet, who harbored fugitives in Troy, New York; and eventually to the American Missionary Association, dedicated to abolition, black education, and civil rights.[68]

The plight of fugitives captured the sympathies of these benevolent women, who found a meaningful outlet for their antislavery zeal either through their religious associations or directly to the network of black abolitionists, rather than through regional women's groups. Women in more populous areas often donated their home production to antislavery fairs, which had become the dominant form of female activism in the 1840s and a powerful tool to raise money and focus public atten-

tion on slavery. With little direct access to fair organizers in larger commercial markets, women in rural Vermont resorted to traditional means of organizing. Abolitionist and Presbyterian minister Nathan R. Johnston linked members of Topsham's Anti-Slavery and Sewing Circle to Benjamin Still, who ran the Vigilant Committee in Philadelphia in the mid-1850s. They wrote Still explaining that they had never seen fugitives in the region, but "we want to give the little money raised, in such a way that the fugitives who are really needy will be benefitted." In this way, they were able to contribute directly to the relief of former slaves and to express their antislavery convictions.[69]

. . .

Fifteen years earlier, when Jonathan Miller had touted the abolitionist fervor of Vermont women in London, he had not only applauded their moral convictions but also recognized their right to participate fully in the movement. Most other male abolitionists in the state, with the exception of Orson Murray, were reticent about the broader issue of women's rights despite their unwavering enthusiasm for female influence and support. Women's participation in joint societies, their willingness to sign and circulate petitions, and their symbolic role in legitimating the moral purity of the movement confirmed Miller's assessment that women had contributed significantly to the change of heart among Vermonters, if as followers rather than leaders. Yet they did not become political enough to disrupt VASS by pressing for women's rights, affirming Miller's insistence that the "woman question" was hardly controversial in Vermont.

As it turned out, abolitionist women had already reached the height of their effectiveness in the state. As petitioners, they had exercised their political rights directly to help influence the opinions of lawmakers. Without a network of separate societies that would foster female organization and leadership, most abolitionist women in Vermont were comfortable working alongside their husbands, their ministers, and other male activists or performing benevolent work in the name of antislavery. Only a few women's groups, such as the Randolph Female Anti-Slavery Society, were large enough to launch petition drives. Recast in the 1840s as political cheerleaders and functionaries of the Liberty Party, women were drawn into political organizing, but their influence was indirect and anonymous. Nor did abolitionism engender a women's rights movement in the state as it did in New York, Massachusetts, and Ohio. Journalist Clarina Howard Nichols, who supported temperance and initiated reform of married women's property rights in 1847, was not previously involved in organized antislavery. As editor of

a Democratic paper, she refrained from endorsing abolitionism, despite her highly moralistic views on slavery, until she was able to champion Liberty principles as part of the more moderate Free Soil Party in 1848. Thereafter she became a proponent of free soil and a lone voice in support of women's rights.[70]

By that time Jonathan Miller was no longer a key player in antislavery politics. His early death in 1847 at the age of 50 was a significant loss to the movement and to the men and women largely responsible for convincing Vermonters that there was no place for slavery in a nation founded upon liberty.[71]

Notes

[1] Garrison and three other men protested women's exclusion by refusing to be delegates and sitting in the gallery with the women. *Proceedings of the General Anti-Slavery Convention, Called by the Committee of the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society and Held in London from Friday, June 12th, to Tuesday, June 23rd, 1840* (London, 1841), 31-32; Kathryn Kish Sklar, "'Women Who Speak for an Entire Nation': American and British Women at the World Anti-Slavery Convention, London, 1840," in *The Abolitionist Sisterhood: Women's Political Culture in Antebellum America*, eds. Jean Fagan Yellin and John C. Van Horne (Ithaca, N.Y., and London: Cornell University Press, 1994), 302-313. For Miller, see D. P. Thompson, *History of the Town of Montpelier, from the Time it was First Chartered in 1781 to the Year 1860* (Montpelier: E. P. Walton, 1860), 249-262.

[2] For the Robinsons, see Jane Williamson, "Rowland T. Robinson, Rokeby, and the Underground Railroad in Vermont," *Vermont History* 69 (Winter 2001): 19-31; Ronald Salomon, "Being Good: An Abolitionist Family Attempts to Live up to Its Own Standards," ibid., 32-47. Delia Webster of Vergennes became an abolitionist after leaving Vermont and had little connection with Vermont's movement after returning briefly in 1845-46. See Randolph P. Runyon, *Delia Webster and the Underground Railroad* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1999).

[3] David M. Ludlum, *Social Ferment in Vermont, 1791-1850* (New York: AMS, 1966), 134-151; Randolph A. Roth, *The Democratic Dilemma: Religion, Reform, and the Social Order in the Connecticut River Valley of Vermont, 1791-1850* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 178-183; Raymond P. Zirblis, "Friends of Freedom: The Vermont Underground Railroad Survey Report," Typescript, Vermont Division for Historic Preservation, 1996.

[4] Ludlum, *Social Ferment in Vermont*, 134-151; Roth, *Democratic Dilemma*, 178-183; John Myers, "The Beginning of Antislavery Agencies in Vermont, 1832-1836," *Vermont History* 36 (Summer 1968): 126-140, and "The Major Efforts of Anti-Slavery Agents in Vermont, 1836-1838," ibid. (Autumn 1968): 214-229.

[5] Ludlum, *Social Ferment in Vermont*, 147-156; Roth, *Democratic Dilemma*, 178-183.

[6] For Birney's comment, see *Emancipator*, 9 November 1837, quoted in Ludlum, *Social Ferment in Vermont*, 168. See also Andrew S. Barker, "Chauncey Langdon Knapp and Political Abolitionism in Vermont, 1833-1841," *New England Quarterly* 73 (September 2000): 444-455.

[7] William Lloyd Garrison Jr., quoted in Julie Roy Jeffrey, *The Great Silent Army of Abolitionism: Ordinary Women in the Antislavery Movement* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 1.

[8] For the republican mother and wife, see Linda K. Kerber, *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980), 227-231, 283-288; Jan Lewis, "The Republican Wife: Virtue and Seduction in the Early Republic," *William and Mary Quarterly* 44 (October 1987): 689-721. For ideal womanhood and Christian benevolence, see for example, Nancy F. Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: 'Woman's Sphere' in New England, 1780-1835* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), 126-159; Lori D. Ginzberg, *Women and the Work of Benevolence: Morality, Politics, and Class in the Nineteenth-Century United States* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 2-35; Anne M. Boylan, *The Origins of Women's Activism: New York and Boston, 1797-1840* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 136-153.

[9] Jeffrey, *Great Silent Army*, 4-5, 54-55; "Permeable Boundaries: Abolitionist Women and Separate Spheres," *Journal of the Early Republic* 21 (Spring 2001): 79-93; Beth A. Salerno, *Sister Societies: Women's Antislavery Organizations in Antebellum America* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2005), 11-22.

[10] Richard S. Newman, *The Transformation of American Abolitionism: Fighting Slavery in the Early Republic* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 134-149; Salerno, *Sister Societies*, 24-48; Larry Ceplair, "Women Organized Against Slavery, 1688-1870" (2003), unpublished ms, available at http://www.larryceplair.com/anti/antiintro.php.

[11] Salerno, *Sister Societies*, 63-76; Susan Zaeske, *Signatures of Citizenship: Petitioning, Antislavery, and Women's Political Identity* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 108-131. For Kelley and Mott, see Dorothy Sterling, *Ahead of Her Time: Abby Kelley and the Politics of Antislavery* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1991); Keith Melder, "Abby Kelley and the Process of Liberation," in Yellin and Van Horne, eds., *Abolitionist Sisterhood*, 231-248; Carol Faulkner, *Lucretia Mott's Heresy: Abolition and Women's Rights in Nineteenth-Century America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011).

[12] Dorothy Sterling, ed., *Turning the World Upside Down: The Antislavery Convention of American Women Held in New York City, May 9-12, 1837* (New York: Feminist Press, 1987), 3; Salerno, *Sister Societies*, 11-75; Zaeske, *Signatures of Citizenship*, 79-103; Amy Swerdlow, "Abolition's Conservative Sisters: The Ladies' New York City Anti-Slavery Societies, 1834-1840," in Yellin and Van Horne, eds., *Abolitionist Sisterhood*, 31-44; Nancy A. Hewitt, *Women's Activism and Social Change: Rochester, New York, 1822-1872* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984), 43-46, 56-57, 81-85, 90-93.

[13] Salerno, *Sister Societies*, 184; Ceplair, "Women Organized Against Slavery," Table 2. Listings of female societies in antislavery newspapers and state society records are probably incomplete. Ceplair lists only three in Vermont; Salerno errs in listing Bellingham as a Vermont town. No information about the Montpelier, Vermont, Female Anti-Slavery Society has been found except from a list of donors to the Amistad Committee in 1841. See *Emancipator*, 2 December 1841. (I would like to thank Jane Williamson for this reference.)

[14] Sterling, *Turning the World Upside Down*, 3.

[15] Salerno, *Sister Societies*, 24-47; Jeffrey, *Great Silent Army*, 53-86; Hewitt, *Women's Activism and Social Change*, 43-46; Stacey M. Robertson, *Hearts Beating for Liberty: Women Abolitionists in the Old Northwest* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 11-36. For separatism, see Estelle Freedman, "Separatism as Strategy: Female Institution Building and American Feminism, 1870-1930," *Feminist Studies* 5 (Autumn 1979): 512-529. For the role of regional agents, see Myers, "Major Efforts of Anti-Slavery Agents," 214-229; Newman, *The Transformation of American Abolitionism*, 152-162, 188-189.

[16] Jeffrey, *Great Silent Army*, 2-6; Hewitt, *Women's Activism and Social Change*, 46-50; Robertson, *Hearts Beating for Liberty*, 4-5; Newman, *Transformation of American Abolitionism*, 168-173.

[17] Zaeske, *Signatures of Citizenship*, 54-66; Salerno, *Sister Societies*, 72-76; Jeffrey, "Permeable Boundaries," 88-92.

[18] "An Address," *Middlebury Free Press*, 23 December 1834.

[19] Ibid. For the free-produce movement, see Salerno, *Sister Societies*, 17-19; Salmon, "Being Good," 35-38.

[20] "Another Female Society," *The Liberator*, 13 December 1834.

[21] Carolyn L. Karcher, *The First Woman of the Republic: A Cultural Biography of Lydia Maria Child* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1994), 182-192; Elizabeth B. Clark, "The Sacred Rights of the Weak: Pain, Sympathy, and the Culture of Individual Rights in Antebellum America," *Journal of American History* 82 (September 1993): 465-486.

[22] Gerda Lerner, *The Grimké Sisters from South Carolina: Pioneers for Woman's Rights and Abolition* (New York: Schocken Books, 1967), quotation on 183; Oliver Johnson, *William Lloyd Garrison and His Times*, (Boston: B. B. Russell, 1880), 261, quoted in ibid., 188.

[23] *An Appeal to Females of the North, on the Subject of Slavery by a Female of Vermont* (Brandon, Vt.: Telegraph Press, 1838; reprint, Philadelphia: John Thompson, 1838); "Appeal to Females of the North," *Vermont Telegraph*, 21 February 1838.

[24] *Appeal to Females of the North*, 4-8, 10-11.

[25] Ibid., 10; *Annual Report of the Association of Friends for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery, and Improving the Condition of the Free People of Color* (Philadelphia: Merrihew & Thompson, 1847), 3-6. Jane Williamson, director of the Rokeby Museum, suggests that the *Appeal* may have been written by either Rachel Robinson or Ann King, a Quaker who lived intermittently at Rokeby.

[26] Hugh Barbour, et. al., *Crosscurrents: Three Hundred Years of Friends in the New York Yearly Meetings* (Syracuse, N.Y.: New York Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends and Syracuse University Press, 1995), 122-129, 184-189; Charles W. Hughes and A. Day Bradley, "The Early Quaker Meetings of Vermont," *Vermont History* 29 (July 1961): 153-67.

[27] *Fifth Annual Report of the Vermont Anti-Slavery Society Presented at Middlebury, February 20, 1839, with Minutes of Proceedings at the Annual Meeting* (Montpelier, Vt.: Allen and Poland, 1839), 14; *Vermont Telegraph*, 7 March 1838. For male support of abolitionist women, see also, Newman, *Transformation of American Abolitionism*, 139, 168-170.

[28] Ludlum, *Social Ferment in Vermont*, 146; Myers, "Beginning of Antislavery Agencies," 131-135; "Major Efforts of Antislavery Agents," 214-229; *Vermont Telegraph*, 28 March 1838. For the Jamaica petitions, see note 43. For women's religious associations, see Cott, *Bonds of Womanhood*, 132-135, 142-146; Marilyn S. Blackwell, "Surrogate Ministers: Women, Revivalism, and Maternal Associations in Vermont," *Vermont History* 69 (Winter 2001): 68-70.

[29] "Another Female Society."

[30] Myers, "Major Efforts of Antislavery Agents," 226; Elderkin J. Boardman, *Immediate Abolition Vindicated. Address, Delivered June 26, 1838, Before the Randolph Female Anti-Slavery Society, at their Annual Meeting* (Montpelier, Vt.: Walton, 1838), 15; Records of the Norwich Female Abolition Society, 1843-1850 (Transcription), Norwich Historical Society, Norwich, Vermont. Nancy Osgood of Norwich provided a transcription of these records.

[31] "Another Female Society"; Records of the Norwich Female Abolition Society, 1843-1850. For black abolitionists and racialism, see Newman, *Transformation of American Abolitionism*, 98-129; Shirley J. Yee, *Black Women Abolitionists: A Study in Activism, 1828-1860* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1992), chs. 2-4.

[32] Boardman, *Immediate Abolition Vindicated*, 11-13.

[33] Ibid., 15-16.

[34] Debra Gold Hansen, "The Boston Female Anti-Slavery Society and the Limits of Gender Politics," in Yellin and Van Horne, eds., *Abolitionist Sisterhood*, 45-65. Orson Murray mentions the 210 members of the RFASS in *Vermont Telegraph*, 22 January 1840.

[35] For Congregational leaders and antislavery, see Ludlum, *Social Ferment*, 157-158. The Randolph Congregational Church split, c. 1839-1840, perhaps because of Boardman, resulting in a new missionary church at West Randolph. See, *Extracts from the Minutes of the General Convention of Congregational Ministers and Churches in Vermont, 1839;1842* (Windsor, Vt.: Chronicle Press, 1842).

[36] *Vermont Telegraph*, 1 November 1837. For another appeal including women, see *Address of the Starksborough and Lincoln Anti-Slavery Society, To the Public* (Middlebury, Vt.: Knapp & Jewett, 1835), 13, 36.

[37] Records of the Rupert Antislavery Society, 1834-1836, Vermont Historical Society, Barre, Vt.; *Middlebury Free Press*, 2 June 1834; Petition of 420 females of Starksborough and vicinity praying the Legislature to instruct our Senators and request our Representatives in Congress to use their endeavors in favor of the abolition of Slavery in the District of Columbia; and Petition of 332 of the inhabitants of Starksborough and vicinity praying . . . District of Columbia, 14 October 1835, Manuscript Vermont State Papers, vol. 64, pp. 125, 127, Vermont State Archives and Records Administration, Middlesex, Vt; *Vermont Telegraph*, 24 April 1839.

[38] Addison County Anti-Slavery Society records, 1835-36, Sheldon Museum, Middlebury, Vermont; Washington County Anti-Slavery Society, Record Book, 1836-41, Vermont Historical Society, Barre, Vt.; *Voice of Freedom*, 2 February 1839.

[39] "Vermont Anti-Slavery Convention," *State Journal*, 12 and 19 May 1834; Vermont Anti-Slavery Society Records, 1834, Rokeby Museum, Ferrisburgh, Vt. The women are listed in the record book as members but not in the account in the *State Journal*, an omission that may have occurred in other published material as well.

[40] Vermont Anti-Slavery Society, Account Book, 1838-1842, Special Collections, Bailey/Howe Library, University of Vermont, Burlington; *Voice of Freedom*, 19 January 1839; *Fifth Annual Report of the Vermont Anti-Slavery Society*, 6-7, 30-33.

[41] *Voice of Freedom*, 19 January, 8 February 1839; see also, *Fourth Annual Report of the Vermont Anti-Slavery Society: With Proceedings of the Annual Meeting, Holden at Middlebury, February 21 & 22, 1838* (Brandon, Vt.: Telegraph Press, 1838); for women as subscribers, see "Anti-Slavery Subscriptions," *Voice of Freedom*, 30 November 1839.

[42] Gilbert Hobbs Barnes, *The Antislavery Impulse, 1830-1844* (New York and London: D. Appleton-Century and the American Historical Association, 1933), 109-111, 140-144; Jeffrey, *Great Silent Army*, 86-92; Zaeske, *Signatures of Citizenship*, 13-28, 36-46; Mary Hershberger, "Mobilizing Women, Anticipating Abolition: The Struggle against Indian Removal in the 1830s," *Journal of American History* 86 (June 1999): 24-35. For petitioning in Vermont beginning in 1828, see Ludlum, *Social Ferment in Vermont*, 139-141, 152-153.

[43] Petition of 420 females of Starksborough; Petition of the Female Citizens of Jamaica, in the County of Windham, and State of Vermont and Vicinity, 5 March 1834; Vermont—Inh. of Jamaica-agt. Slavery in the Dist. of Col., 5 March 1834, both in HR 23A-G4.3, fl. 4; Petition of Paul Champlain & 32 other men & Sally Hill & 27 other women of Middlebury, Vt. praying that no State may be admitted into the Union, whose Constitution tolerates domestic Slavery, 26 March 1838, HR25A-H1.7, fl. 7, all in Record Group 233, National Archives, Washington, D.C. [hereafter RG 233, NA]. For an accounting of signatures, see Ceplair, "Women Organized Against Slavery," Tables 2 and 4. The totals are incomplete because many petitions were destroyed, and some signatures were duplicates. See Zaeske, *Signatures of Citizenship*, 173-174.

[44] Petition of 420 females of Starksborough; Petition of 332 of the inhabitants of Starksborough.

[45] Petition of Sundry females of Sterling Vermont, praying for the abolition of Slavery and the Slave Trade in the District of Columbia, 29 February 1836, HR24A-H1.3 [filed in fl.3, NA box 14 of LOC box 75], RG 233, NA.

[46] Petition of 426 females of Addison County, State of Vermont Praying for the Abolition of Slavery and the Slave Trade in the District of Columbia, 18 January 1836; Petition of Sundry Females in the County of Washington Vermont Praying for the Abolition of Slavery and the Slave Trade in the District of Columbia, 29 February 1836, HR24A-H1.3 [filed in fl.3, NA box 14 of LOC box 75], RG 233, NA. For the political uses of women's rhetoric, see Zaeske, *Signatures of Citizenship*, 48-68.

[47] Barnes, *Antislavery Impulse*, 112-145; Ludlum, *Social Ferment in Vermont*, 152-153; William Lee Miller, *Arguing About Slavery: The Great Battle in the United States Congress* (New York: Knopf, 1996), 52-58.

[48] Miller, *Arguing About Slavery*, 201-202; Barnes, *Antislavery Impulse*, 118-119, 130-145. Ceplair counted 318,003 female signatures versus 299,434 male on petitions to the 25th Congress, see Ceplair, "Women Organized Against Slavery," Table 3.

[49] My tally of signatures is derived from existing Vermont petitions from 1838. See Manuscript Vermont State Papers, vol. 65.

[50] Zaeske, *Signatures of Citizenship*, 105-144; quotation on 121, from *The Liberator*, 2 March 1838; Barnes, *Antislavery Impulse*, 140-145.

[51] Petition of 72 Ladies of Vermont for the Abolition of Slavery and the Slave Trade in the District of Columbia, 17 December 1847, HR 30A-G5.1, fl. 1, RG 233, NA; see also Deborah Bingham-Van Broekhoven, "'Let Your Names Be Enrolled': Method and Ideology in Women's Antislavery Petitioning," in Yellin and Van Horne, eds, *Abolitionist Sisterhood*, 197-198. For Tappan's speech, see *Congressional Globe*, 26 Cong., 1 sess., 4 February 1840, 161. The older brother of Lewis and Arthur Tappan, Benjamin Tappan deplored slavery but also derided the abolitionist movement for its Christian pacifism and sentimentality. See Daniel Feller, "A Brother in Arms: Benjamin Tappan and the Antislavery Democracy," *Journal of American History* 88 (June 2001): 48-74.

[52] Barnes, *Antislavery Impulse*, 88-94, 146-152, 161-164; Ludlum, *Social Ferment in Vermont*, 155-179; "Fifth Annual Report of the Board of Managers of the Anti-Slavery Society of Ferrisburgh and Vicinity," *Vermont Telegraph*, 24 April 1839.

[53] *Voice of Freedom*, 18 May, 8 and 22 June 1839; for Knapp's support of political action, see "The Debates," *Voice of Freedom*, 24 August 1839; Barker, "Chauncey Langdon Knapp and Political Abolition in Vermont," 457-458.

[54] Nine of thirteen delegates, all clergy and advocates of political action, voted to affiliate with AFASS, see Ludlum, *Social Ferment in Vermont*, 179-181; *Vermont Telegraph*, 22 January 1840, 20 January 1841. Connecticut's antislavery society excluded women; in New Hampshire and Maine women attended meetings but without voting rights. See Ceplair, "Women Organized Against Slavery," ch. 8.

[55] The women voters were Elizabeth Carpenter and Eunice Eastman, probably from Randolph, Ann King, who lived with Rachel and Rowland Robinson, Phoebe N. Hurlburt, and Elizabeth D. Ingraham. See "Seventh Anniversary of the Vermont Anti-Slavery Society," *Vermont Telegraph*, 20 January 1841.

[56] Ludlum, *Social Ferment in Vermont*, 179-181. For VASS resolutions on political action, see *Vermont Telegraph*, 22 January 1840, 20 January 1841. For Murray's support of women's rights, his anti-clericalism, and frustration with VASS, see *Vermont Telegraph*, 11 November 1840, 20 October 1841, 9 March 1842, 11 and 25 January 1843; and ibid., 164-165; Thomas D. Hamm, *God's Government Begun: The Society for Universal Inquiry and Reform, 1842-1846* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: University of Indiana Press, 1995), 22-29.

[57] Ludlum, *Social Ferment in Vermont*, 157-166; Lyman Matthews, *History of the Town of Cornwall, Vermont* (Middlebury, Vt.: Mead & Fuller, 1862), 182-185, 200-201; quotation on 201. See also, Jeffrey, *Great Silent Army*, 139-161.

[58] Salomon, "Being Good," 34-44; Williamson, "Rowland T. Robinson, Rokeby, and the Underground Railroad," 20-23, 28. For controversies within New York Monthly Meeting, see Barber, et. al., *Quaker Crosscurrents*, 122-129, 184-189. For Rowland Robinson's distress regarding the movement, see Rowland T. Robinson and Charles Gilpin to Rachel Gilpin Robinson, 23 January 1842, box 55, Robinson Papers, Rokeby Museum, available at Sheldon Museum, Middlebury, Vt.

[59] Ferrisburgh Monthly Meeting of Women Friends, Ferrisburgh Monthly Meeting Record Book, 1831-1846, Microfilm, #544, Bailey/Howe Library, University of Vermont; Rachel Gilpin Robinson to Rowland T. Robinson, 7 September 1839, box 1, fl. 17, Robinson Papers. For abolitionist women and religion, see Anna M. Speicher, *The Religious World of Antislavery Women: Spirituality in the Lives of Five Abolitionist Lecturers* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2000), 61-97.

[60] Reinhard O. Johnson, *The Liberty Party, 1840-1848: Antislavery Third-Party Politics in the United States* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2009), 276-285; Robertson, *Hearts*

Beating for Liberty, 37-66; Alice Taylor, "From Petitions to Partyism: Antislavery and the Domestication of Maine Politics in the 1840s and 1850s," *New England Quarterly* 77 (March 2004):73-75, 77-79; Michael D. Pierson, *Free Hearts and Free Homes: Gender and American Antislavery Politics* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 27-46.

[61] Reinhard O. Johnson, "The Liberty Party in Vermont, 1840-1848," *Vermont History* 47 (Fall 1979): 258-275; map on 266; Johnson, *Liberty Party*, 111-120; "State Liberty Convention," *Voice of Freedom*, 26 October 1843; "To All Opposed to the Annexation of Texas," *Green Mountain Freeman*, 30 October 1845.

[62] *Green Mountain Freeman*, 24 March 1844; *Voice of Freedom*, 13 July 1843, 26 October 1843, 1 Feb 1844; Johnson, *Liberty Party*, 237-238, 276-285.

[63] Green Mountain Liberty Association Records, 1845-1847, Vermont Historical Society, Barre, Vt.; *Green Mountain Freeman*, 4 March 1847; R. L. Morrow, "The Liberty Party in Vermont," *New England Quarterly* 2 (April 1929): 242; *The Emancipator*, 17 February 1847.

[64] Jeffrey, *Great Silent Army*, 162.

[65] *Voice of Freedom*, 22 February 1844; *Green Mountain Freeman*, 20 September, 11 October 1844. Holcomb left the Liberty Party and became a Whig in 1846 after a dispute over finances. For antislavery poems and stories of interest to women readers, see, *Green Mountain Freeman*, 23 August, 19 November 1844.

[66] *The Emancipator*, 17 February 1847. A former slave from Kentucky with white ancestry, Henry Bibb lectured widely in the North. Women's petitions include: "Petition of 72 Ladies of Vermont," 17 December 1847, HR 30A-G5.1 fl. 1, RG 233, NA; and twelve "Women of America" petitions, 2 February 1849, Sen 30A-J3, fl. 4, RG 46, NA; for the latter, see Zaeske, *Signatures of Citizenship*, 158-160.

[67] *Green Mountain Freeman*, 10 May 1844.

[68] Records of the Norwich Female Abolition Society, 1843-1850, 16 May 1844; Hiram Wilson to "Dear Sister," 13 June 1844, in ibid., 11 July 1844. St. Clair and Briggs edited *The People's Advocate* and *Norwich Vermont Freeman*.

[69] Salerno, *Sister Societies*, 128-135; Jeffrey, *Great Silent Army*, 108-125; quotation on 186; see also William Still, The *Underground Railroad* (Philadelphia: Porter & Coates, 1872), 585-589. For a list of benevolent women and groups who sent clothing to Hiram Wilson's mission in Canada, see "Canada Mission," *Green Mountain Freeman*, 27 November 1845.

[70] For Nichols, see, Marilyn S. Blackwell and Kristen T. Oertel, *Frontier Feminist: Clarina Howard Nichols and the Politics of Motherhood* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2010), 71-75; Pierson, *Free Hearts and Free Homes*, 57-58, 60-61.

[71] Thompson, *History of the Town of Montpelier*, 249-262; Abby Maria Hemenway, *Vermont Historical Gazetteer* (Montpelier, Vt., 1882), 4: 457-462.

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.

"My Soldier Boy Mark": The Civil War Letters of Pvt. Mark B. Slayton

By PAUL G. ZELLER

The 17th Vermont Infantry Regiment was the last regiment raised in Vermont for the Civil War. Governor Frederick Holbrook issued the order for its formation on August 3, 1863. The nine-month regiments of the Second Vermont Brigade had been mustered out of service just several weeks before, and it was thought by state officials that many of those veterans would enlist in the 17th Vermont—but that was not the case. For most nine-month men, business or family affairs made it difficult for them to spend any more time in the army. In addition, many men thought that the Union victories at Vicksburg and Gettysburg meant that the war was about over. Probably most importantly, bounties (similar to signing bonuses today) for the new regi-

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NOTICE!

Official information is just received that recruits for the

17th Vermont Regiment,

Who have never served, will if enlisted on or before January 5th, 1864, receive the Government Bounty of

$302,00

And Veterans will receive the Government Bounty of

$402,00

After January 5th, recruits whether veterans or new men, will only receive one hundred and two dollars.

Now is the easiest time to fill the 17th. Selectmen of the different towns are earnestly enjoined to use their utmost endeavors to fill the Reg't by the 5th.

JULIAN H. DEWEY,
Supt. of Recruiting.

St. Albans, Dec. 31, 1863.

LEFT: Recruiting poster for the 17th Vermont Infantry Regiment, released on December 31, 1863. RIGHT: Pvt. Mark B. Slayton, Company C, 17th Vermont Infantry Regiment.

ments were limited to $100, while men enlisting in the older regiments were receiving $300. The War Department finally lifted the $100 bounty cap in December 1863 and offered $302 bounties to first-time enlistees and $402 bounties to veterans, but the offer was only good until January 5, 1864. That offer helped fill up Company A, but it was not until early March that Companies B, C, and D were mustered, followed later by Companies E, F, and G on April 12.[1]

One of the men, a boy really, to enlist in the 17th Vermont was Mark B. Slayton from Stowe, who enlisted as a private in Company C on February 28, 1864. While his age on his enlistment papers appears as eighteen, he was actually about three months shy of his seventeenth birthday. At the time of his enlistment he stood five feet, seven inches tall, had black eyes and black hair, and gave his occupation as a farmer. Mark Slayton was the son of Jerome Bonaparte and Rhoda N. (Thomas) Slayton. Jerome Slayton had originally married Sarah Bicknell on September 12, 1843. They had one daughter, named Sarah, born in September 1844. Sarah Slayton died on January 10, 1845, and her daughter died the following June. Jerome then married Rhoda N. Thomas on July 22,

1845. They had two children: Mark B., born on May 5, 1847, and Helen, born on August 10, 1849. Rhoda died August 24, 1851, at age 27. Jerome married for a third time on April 18, 1852, to Sabrina A. Montague. Sabrina was the daughter of Isaac and Hannah (Pierce) White of Barre, Vt. She married William Montague around 1841 and after William's death on April 15, 1850, she married Jerome. William and Sabrina had two children: The first died as an infant; the second was Rosamund Marion Montague, who was born on April 16, 1846. Jerome and Sabrina had one child of their own, Angie M., born on December 5, 1855.[2]

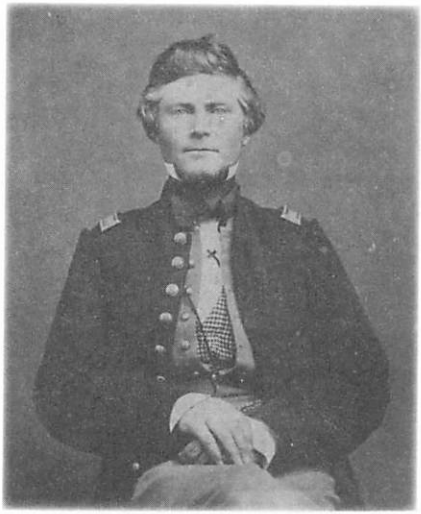
There are ten letters written by Mark Slayton in the collections of the Vermont Historical Society. The first was written while he was in the 17th Vermont's camp of instruction on the fairground in Burlington. This letter was written to Mark's uncle, Ahijah Thomas who married Jerome Slayton's sister, Clarissa, in 1849.[3]

Burlington Apr. 10 [1864]

Uncle A. & Aunt C:

On Sunday, a week ago today, I received a letter from you announcing that you intended to send a valise containing eatables. Nothing could have been more satisfactory and acceptable. But I little expected as rare a treat as I found in my possession on Thursday when I opened the valise and discovered the valuable articles. You will think [it] strange that I was unable to get it before Thursday when it left Stowe Saturday. Monday being unable to get a pass, I sent to the office by a member of Co. C but it was not open. Tuesday I could not go or send. Wednesday I sent again with no better success, though the office was open. Thursday I sent a third & last time; they said as previously that it was not there, but the fellow looked around a little and discovered it, and brought it safe and good minus the chicken into camp. The chicken, alas was unsuitable for eating and I buried it with military honors. Every thing else was in excellent condition, the sugar, pies, apples, dried beef and the rest. And I am enjoying their delicious taste. Considering this timely and splendid present not only entitled to a reply, but an acknowledgement of heart felt indebtedness I have endeavored to do both. But I find it not an easy task with what language I have at command, to do the latter. All I can say is I shall remember it. Uncle H., you have done well; 1000 lbs. of sugar & faithful attendance to the horses in March. I suppose you will make some more this mo. Tell Howard & Flora & the rest, not excepting Arthur, to write frequently and I will try and ans. them. We drill four hours a day and go on guard quite frequently. Yesterday was quite a day in camp; two companies were organized & the Governor, Adjutant Gen. and Col Randall were present. It seems like summer here. We are living much better than we did, a change of Quartermaster has brought a change of fare.

Tell Uncle Abial & all others thinking of coming down here to do so without fail, for they will have a grand opportunity. It is quite certain that we shall remain here till we leave the state and there is but



Capt. Abial H. Slayton, Company H, 9th Vermont Infantry Regiment.

little prospect of that this two months. I shall without doubt have an opportunity to send the valise home before we leave the state. I will improve the first good one.

If you are anxious to get it soon, write to that effect.

Tell Howard not to be discouraged if in great labor & calculation have rendered his brain & body partly inefficient. I want he should eat my allowance of sugar in addition to his own. Tell grandfather I should like to have him come down with Uncle A. and I shall not object if the rest of you come. Write the health of all.

Your Nephew
Mark[4]

The Uncle Abial that Mark mentions is Abial H. Slayton, another of Jerome Slayton's brothers. Abial Slayton had commanded Company H, 9th Vermont Infantry Regiment, from June 27, 1862, until his resignation due to poor health on December 8, 1862.[5]

The dignitaries Slayton writes about are Vermont Governor Frederick Holbrook, Vermont Adjutant General Peter T. Washburn, and Colonel Francis V. Randall. Randall had previously served in two other units. He was commissioned as captain of Company F of the 2nd Vermont Infantry Regiment in May 1861. Then he was commissioned colonel and given command of the newly formed 13th Vermont Infantry Regiment on September 24, 1862. The 13th Vermont was one of the nine-month regiments in the Second Vermont Brigade. Colonel Randall and the 13th Vermont had gained some notoriety in the battle of Gettysburg when the 13th, 15th, and 16th Vermont Regiments flanked and helped

stop Confederate Major General George E. Pickett's fateful charge on July 3, 1863.[6]

In his next letter Mark writes about the disposition of his pay. At the time privates in the U. S. Army received $13 a month. The state of Vermont paid its men an extra $7 a month, which went to someone designated by the soldier or was held in escrow until the soldier was discharged. The $125 he mentions is part of his bounty.

Burlington, April 14, 1864

Father, mother & the rest:
I received a letter from you yesterday stating to my surprise that you had not received any letter from me for some time, when I wrote you last saturday in reply to Helen's letter that I found in the valise. You should certainly have received it monday night. You probably have rec. this. I am greatly indebted to you for all the letters, but cannot answer each separately. I must write briefly and pointedly. We have been ordered to report to Annapolis, Maryland. And Lieut. Guyer told me to day that we should certainly come monday. We shall probably be paid saturday. To day I allotted my monthly government pay, or ten dollars of it. The other three I shall draw together with my government bounty which will be a sufficiently large amount for spending money. I mean the $3, the rest I shall endeavor to send home. The $10 will on pay days be sent to the State Treasury there to draw interest. I thought this an admirable course to pursue. Nearly every man in the company did the same. They consider it best to keep as little money with them as they can conveniently. If you should need any of this money you can easily get it.

I expect the $125.00 this week. I shall send it home by express, or some other safe way, also the Valise. send no more letters here for they will not reach here in season to be read before we leave.

My health is good, and I am ready to go to the southern portion of the country. It is not certain that we shall leave the Monday, but quite bearable. I can hardly make the boys believe that your statement in relation to sugar is true. Six pounds is beyond their comprehension. The mail man is here waiting and I shall have to close. When we leave I will write more frequently.

Affectionately
Mark

Lieutenant Guyer that Mark mentioned was First Lt. Guy H. Guyer of Wolcott. Guyer had previously served as the captain of Company H, 9th Vermont Infantry Regiment, but had to resign from the army for family reasons. He was commissioned as first lieutenant in Company C of the 17th Vermont on February 24, 1864.[7]

Due to the desperate need for troops in the upcoming campaigns, the first seven companies of the 17th Vermont were ordered south, totaling about 600 officers and men, with the other three companies to follow as soon as they could be formed. The scuttlebutt about going to

Annapolis, Maryland, was only partly right. The IX Corps, to which the 17th Vermont would be assigned, was in Annapolis being re-equipped and reinforced with new units. However, instead of going to Annapolis, the seven companies of the 17th left Burlington for Alexandria, Virginia, on April 18. Because the regiment still had not filled its last three companies, the seven companies left under the command of the regiment's Lieutenant Colonel, Charles Cummings. Since army regulations would not permit a colonel to command a regiment without its full complement of ten companies, Col. Randall remained in Vermont recruiting. Cummings had previously served as lieutenant colonel of the 16th Vermont.[8]

Camp near Alexandria, Va. [April 25 or 26, 1864]

Father, mother and the rest:

You will perceive by the date That I am in the land of strife. A pretty little journey of about six hundred miles brought us here saturday night [April 23]. Monday tuesday, wednesday, thursday, friday and saturday were consumed in this journey. We passed through some of the principal cities of the U.S., viz.: Springfield, Hartford, New Haven, New York, Amboy, Wilmington, Philadelphia, Washington, Alexandria. I had some nice boat rides & saw the state house and a few other large buildings.

Saturday about dark we arrived on the field of rest. Tents were immediately furnished us sufficiently large to be occupied by four. These tents, called A tents, were thrown up, and I slept as sound on the ground as I ever did on feathers. Our tents forming as do a village present a novel & beautiful appearance. Our streets are kept neat & clean. Samuel Clark is sweating over the kettle in virtue of his position of cook of the co. I can hardly realize that I am actually in Va. the state of which I have read so much and that rebels have traveled over the country in view. But as it is I like [it] better than I expected, but we shall not probably remain here long. We are liable to leave at any time. Some think we shall leave to-morrow. Some that we shall not for a week or two. Some think that we shall go to North Carolina. Others that we shall go to the front. All is conejecture [sic] for some length of time. You will probably do best to wait till I write again. There are encamped in this vicinity about 30,000 men. I shall write as frequently as possible. You must not expect as often as while at Burlington. You have probably received the $20 sent by me. While the cars stopped at Waterbury about five minutes, I saw Uncle Abial. He handed me a package of sugar & cakes and a letter from Aunt C. & Uncle A. The letter contained good advice & the sugar was not bad to take.

Father handed me a letter from T. a good long one. I will try and answer it some time.

Tell grandmother W. her present is just the thing. It is as hot as June in Stowe.

Mark[9]

Upon arriving in Alexandria, the 17th Vermont was assigned to the Second Brigade of the Second Division of the IX Corps. It was brigaded with the 6th, 9th, and 11th New Hampshire Regiments and the 31st and 32nd Maine Infantry Regiments. The Maine regiments were combat-hardened units while the New Hampshire regiments, like the 17th Vermont, were new. On April 27 the 17th Vermont, along with the rest of the Second Brigade, left Alexandria and marched south, reaching Bristoe Station on the evening of April 28. Here it remained until May 4. While at Bristoe Station, Mark Slayton wrote his next letter.[10]

Camp near Bristow Station, Va.
May 2, 1864

Dear Mother
You probably think that it is about time to write again. I am of the same opinion and will prove so as I get through with this short. And I also think that mother is the one to write to. So the rest of you need not complain if I write to you only indirectly. Well then mother how do you get along making your flower beds with your feeble health. But perhaps you have not commenced yet. When you do I want Angie to assist all she can.

I learned by your letter a sad account of Henry Pike. It must be hard for his parents to see him in such a forlorn condition. I hope God will give me strength to resist the many temptations in my path. You also mention an unpleasant difficulty between T. Barnes and F. in consequence of liquor sold by the former. All I have to say about it is I am glad to hear that [the] cause of temperance is advancing. Tell grandmothers White and Slayton & my other relatives that I would gladly write to them all now, but cannot for the present, but I think of them never the less. When you write again you must write all the particulars of interest. Write concerning your health and the rest. How is father getting along with his work. Tell him to take good care of himself. How is the school flourishing. How are Helen & Rosa, Angie, little Angie I will try and write a few lines to. My last letter by mistake I did not give the time, which was written about a week ago just previous to starting from A [Alexandria]. We left that city last Wednesday as we supposed for the front. We marched that day and the next marching about 40 miles and then stopped here, where we are at present. I have something to tell you rather unpleasant. Since we started from Alexandria I have been pretty unfortunate. The night before we started I was taken sick & vomited some. The next morning I fainted. I had caught cold and was quite lame in my back. The Dr. thought I had better try and march. I did and had to take the ambulance after making 4 or 5 miles. But the ambulance came near breaking down and I changed and lost my knapsack and contents.

Do not work too hard
From your son,
Mark

Mark Slayton was not the only one sick. With many men unused to marching and others coming down with measles, the 17th Vermont reached the bloody battlefield of the Wilderness on May 5 with only 400 men. May 5 was the first of two days of horrendous fighting in the tangled woods of the Wilderness. The 17th Vermont was thrown into combat with virtually no training on May 6. This was the start of what would be known as Ulysses S. Grant's Overland Campaign that would consist of forty days of almost continuous fighting and marching, as the Army of the Potomac pushed its way toward Richmond. In its first day of combat the 17th Vermont lost more men than any other regiment in the Second Brigade. Its losses were ten killed, sixty-four wounded, ten of which were mortal, and six missing. One of the wounded was the 17th Vermont's acting commander, Lieutenant Colonel Charles Cummings, who received a scalp wound that would keep him out of action for several weeks. He would be killed the following fall in the Battle of Poplar Grove Church on September 30. The 17th's next fight was on May 12 at Spotsylvania Court House. In this action the regiment lost twelve men killed, fifty-eight wounded, seven of which were mortal, and two missing. Four days after the battle of Spotsylvania, Mark wrote home again.[11]

Camp in the field 18 miles
South of Fredericksburg
May 16, 1864

Dear Father
About two weeks ago since I wrote home from Bristow Station; since that time I have had no opportunity to write. Between the date of that letter and this much has transpired. As you are doubtless aware there has been fighting every day since the first of May. The 17th Regt. has been in two battles. One Black Wilderness near Chancelorsville, and the other at this place. One was fought the sixth the other the 11th [actually the 12th], five days later. Our loss in the first was 11 wounded, 1 killed; in the second 12 wounded, 1 killed in Co. C.
Which leaves us only 29 men fit for duty. I was with the regt. in both fights and feel very thankful that I have escaped. The entire loss of the Regt. is heavy, probably over a hundred killed & wounded. There are a great many sick. Only 188 men in the Regt. able to do duty. You will learn a list of the killed & wounded.

I must close now or not send
God bless you all Good bye
Mark

P.S. I will write again more particularly as soon as convenient
Mark

Three days later Mark had an opportunity to write home again.

Near Spottsylvania C. H.
May 19, 1864

Dear friends at home.
Today for the first time since leaving Bristow Station the mail was distributed for the regt. The boys had just stopped from a tedious march, but you ought to see their eyes glisten as they peruse the various letters from their distant friends. There is nothing that will make them feel half so well. Do not then forget to write frequently. You have opportunities & advantages that I have not. I will write when I can rest assured of that although perhaps with poor pen or lead pencil and amid scenes of confusion & strife. The 5th of May after a long & toilsome march we took the field of danger, and ever since then we have been exposed to an enemy's fire, night & day. We have been two day's in a hot fire where we lost heavily considerable over 100 men killed & wounded which reduced our regt. with various sick to about 200 men. And the survivors are pretty well fatigued. You will learn by the papers much more than I can tell concerning the regt. Yesterday—today is May 20—I saw a number of soldiers from the 11th [Vermont Infantry Regiment] which has been organized into two infantry regts. and assigned to the 6th [Corps]—Gen. Hancock's—corps where the old Vermont Brigade is. I saw S. Simmon, C. Moody, P. Night, P. Pike, G. Whitney, C. Watts, J. Currick, S. Gillet. I shall endeavor to see the other boys of the 11th. also old Brig. I am very anxious to see Henry Thomas and will if practicable. The boys are enjoying a fine rest just now a little in the rear. Yesterday—May 19—I had indescribable pleasure in reading some papers brought in with the mail. The first I had seen for three weeks. 3 or 4 days since I began a letter, but had only half finished it when the letters were sent. That is the way here, if you commence a letter you little know when it will be completed. I am quite certain, however, that I shall be able to finish this. It is useless to use any words respecting my knapsack & contents. They are of little account in a time like this. If I can carry a blanket, piece of tent with my gun, cartridges & rations I shall be doing well. Soldiers in an active campaign carry only what is absolutely necessary, and think themselves fortunate to escape with their lives so not a sigh for the old knapsack, but heart felt thanks to Providence that I am alive & well this fine morning. You can little imagine what we have undergone & have to in the future. But do not worry about me. I am well very well comparatively speaking. I began this letter last night and am finishing it this morning, but it will take another page.

Mark[12]

Mark was incorrect about two details concerning the 11th Vermont. The unit was raised as the 11th Vermont Infantry Regiment, but when it reached Washington, D.C., in September 1862 it was redesignated as the 1st Vermont Heavy Artillery and stationed in the fortifications that surrounded Washington. As a heavy artillery unit it was authorized twelve companies rather than ten like an infantry regiment, and the two addi-

tional companies were quickly recruited. After the terrible losses in the Wilderness, many of the heavy artillery units in Washington, including the 1st Vermont Heavy Artillery, went back to their original organizations as infantry regiments and were sent to the Army of the Potomac. When it was converted back to an infantry regiment it was not divided into two regiments as Mark thought, but rather into three battalions for better command and control. Secondly, it had been assigned to the VI Corps not the V Corps.[13]

The 17th Vermont left Spotsylvania with the rest of the brigade on the evening of May 20, heading south. On May 31, the Vermonters were in combat again at Totopotomoy Creek, where they lost one man killed and four mortally wounded. From Totopotomoy Creek the Army of the Potomac moved south until it encountered Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia at Cold Harbor on June 1. The 17th Vermont was not involved in the slaughter that day, when the Federals sustained nearly 2,200 casualties. The Vermonters, however, were not so lucky on June 3, when Grant ordered another charge on the Confederate works. In this attack the 17th Vermont lost one man killed and seventeen wounded, five mortally. The charge of June 3 was the last assault on the Confederate works at Cold Harbor. From that time until June 12, the two opposing armies engaged in trench warfare. On June 8, the newly recruited Company H arrived from Vermont to join the 17th, bringing an additional fifty-seven men. Prior to Company H's arrival, the 17th was down to 178 men. On the day of Company H's arrival, Lieutenant Colonel Cummings wrote, "During the last fifteen days we have been under fire every day but three, and two of those days we were on the march."[14] Company I would not join the regiment until August and the last one, Company K, would not arrive until October. On June 12, the Army of the Potomac moved out in the dead of night toward the James River with Petersburg as its objective. The Second Brigade crossed the James River on June 15 at 11 A.M. and after a grueling twenty-two-hour march it reached the outskirts of Petersburg at noon the next day.[15]

The 17th Vermont participated in an assault at Petersburg on June 17, where it distinguished itself. In the assault the 17th Vermont captured the colors of the 17th Tennessee Infantry, its adjutant, and seventy of its men. Lieutenant Colonel Cummings wrote after the battle, "I cannot refrain from noticing the coincidence, that on the anniversary of the 17th of June the Seventeenth Vermont captured the colors of the Seventeenth Tennessee, together with guns and prisoners numbering more than half their own number."[16] The loss in the 17th Vermont was six men killed, including Company C's First Lieutenant Guyer, who fell early in the charge shot through the chest. The Vermonters were en-

gaged again on June 18 and lost four men wounded, two of whom later died of their wounds. The next day three more men were killed and two wounded, one mortally, in their trenches. For the next several weeks the Vermonters were engaged in almost constant fighting along their picket lines and experienced numerous artillery bombardments. Unable to break the Confederate line, Lieutenant General Grant decided to lay siege to Petersburg. It was during this period that Mark Slayton wrote his next letter. [17]

Camp near Petersburg, Va. June 23, 1864

My Dear Father:

You are [no] doubt anxious to hear from your little boy who is fighting the enemy of his country—the enemy of freedom, of justice and of Humanity. I have written you in great distress for writing material, not because I had any desire to annoy you, but because I was in actual need of said material. Please remember this the first time you write and that will be sufficient. You will notice that we have advanced considerably and are now below the James, near Petersburg, Va. A long and tedious march brought us here. We crossed the James I think the fifteenth at midnight on pontoons. The march ended of course in a fight & a hard bloody fight, where we lost our Lieut. Lieut. Guyer was shot dead at the head of his men in a midnight charge. He was a brave officer, a noble man, and his loss is deeply felt by the boys. We also lost killed two other men, John Hall, Ralph Dwinell and two or three were wounded. Our Co. numbers only 20 men and is commanded at present by Sergt. Raymond. We have one other officer, a Corp. This is a terrible reduction. I have had a great many narrow escapes. But good Providence has spared my life thus far. I certainly have great reason to be thankful. I trust I am. We are getting the rebels in close quarters. We will fix them yet. I have just answered Charlie S's letter. I did it yesterday and committed two blunders. I stated it the 23 instead of 22, and forgot to put a Postage Stamp on. But they say it will reach home and take three cents out of C's pocket. Tell him I will settle with him when I get home. I could find nothing but a couple of half sheets of paper and old pencil. I am more fortunate today and have got ink and pen. Continue to keep me well posted on home affairs. The condition of crops and of the health of my friends.

I will again explain my desire to write all and my inability also. Rosie I hope will find relief doctoring her eyes.

I cannot write to Angie and Helen this time, nor Mother. They all deserve replys to their letters which I received on the 17th. Father my pen is getting so poor, and I am getting so tired that I shall have to stop by asking you to write more frequently and the rest to do the same. Take good care of yourself and stock.

Send frequent reports.

Tell Mother to look out for number one.

We are resting in the woods.

Your Son
Mark [18]

The Sergeant Raymond that Mark mentions was Albert Camp Raymond from Stowe. Raymond had enlisted as a private in Company E, 13th Vermont, and was mustered out on July 21, 1863. He enlisted in Company C, 17th Vermont, on February 5, 1864, and was selected as second sergeant. On July 26, 1864, he was wounded while on the skirmish line in front of Petersburg by a rebel minié ball that skimmed across his nose and right eye, causing him partial blindness. He was treated in Harwood Hospital in Washington, D.C., and returned to his regiment in late September 1864. He was promoted to first lieutenant on March 11, 1865, and to captain of Company C on June 26, 1865. He was mustered out of service July 14, 1865. [19]

Two weeks later Mark was finally able to write home again.

Near Petersburg, Va.
July 6, 1864

Father & Mother:

The evening of the third we came from our position in front. Let me explain. We have no regular line of battle in front, but a strong picket line occupying formidable pits or breastworks, extending some 10 miles in front of the doomed city. There is a rebel fort on the left of this line and about a mile in front, which our folks are approaching by means of a subterranean passage. As soon as it is reached it is contemplated blowing it up.

We are not making much progress as you doubtless think. To all appearance we are not. But it is a slow work, another Vicksburg. It took months to capture that strong hold, and why should it not take most of the time, at least to accomplish the same result here. Petersburg has proved to be, or Lee has made it by concentrating a greater portion of his forces here, and by fortifying, a much more formidable place than is generally supposed. It is in fact the key and approach to Richmond as the contending armies are now situated. I mentioned our going to the rear on the evening of the third to spend 48 hours and to celebrate the fourth of July in fine soldier style. Well it passed like other days. It was a happy day for me. I saw to my pleasure and surprise Mr. Seamans on that eventful day, a day which I shall never forget. I was lying down in my rudely constructed tent when he peeped in very unceremoniously. Was not I very glad to see him and didn't I have a nice chat with him. He is a volunteer with the sanitary commission, and intends returning home in August. He sent Helen his best respects and expressed a strong desire to see her and thought he should go to Stowe as soon as he went north. Tell Helen to tell Charlie that I have seen Philo. I read Helen's letter to him which pleased him very much especially what it said about Mr. P. Angie's letter I also read, he thought it was a very good one. This morning I received a letter from Helen mailed the 1st, in which I learned for the first time that I was wounded and in Vermont. I can't see the point yet. The 30th of June we were mustered for pay. When we get it I will let you know. I want you should

write from the old brick house by Mr. Churchill's. now you have got my letter and remember what I wrote about materials. I am going to write Angie and will stop here.

Your son,
Mark[20]

The following letter is the one Mark wrote to his sister Angie and included in the same envelope with the previous letter.

Dear Little Sister Angie
I must certainly write a few lines to you in return for your many little excellent letters. You must go to school and learn all you can, help mother & father all you can, play all you can, and write to your brother all you can. Father must let you hold the old horse once and a while, and he must not scold you any more than is necessary. They must let you go to the lyceums in my place when it is best. You may write just as many more letters as you please.

Good bye Siss,
from Mark

P.S. Father and the rest: You can direct your letters Washington, D.C. and they will reach me where ever I am.

Mark[21]

The next letter is one received by Mark Slayton from his father.

Stowe July 11th, 1864

My Soldier Boy Mark
I improve this at this time a little leisure while my hay is drying to write you a few words. We have received your letters quite regular and have read them with interest, also those to your uncles & aunts. You appear to be making the best of your situation & seem hopeful of the future. A few days ago we expected to see you soon for the following reason, Azro Luce passed through town on a furlough from Brattleboro where he has been since wounded as you probably are aware and told Madison Hodge that you were there badly wounded in the breast. But as soon as able would come home on a furlough. This coming direct left no reason for doubt and he belonging to your co. made the thing sure as we supposed. Added to this was the statement of Eugene Stockwell that a soldier by the name of Keller, member of your company, as he stated to him on the cars that you were at B sick or wounded. Eugene & Luce both came the same day & their time expires in a few days. The same day Albert Raymond's letter to his father informed us you were at Petersburg & soon several letters from you revealed the same fact. It was presumed you knew best of your whereabouts & so rested in the conviction that you were where the enemy state shows a bold front. What caused this blunder of Luce, we are curious to learn.
Shall hire a few days work at $2.00 per day. Crops look very well generally. A very dry June has made the hay crop a little less than an average. For as change I have gone into the India Meal business to

the extent of an acre or so just to please you & others. The Caulkin's cow brought twins this year both oxen but not quite ready for the plough. I am well as ever but mother is quite unwell for a few days past, hopes to be better soon. Helen's at home till she improves. Expect Rosa, eyes are better she writes & expects to come home soon. I think of nothing more to write now & have written this in a hurry. Write every opportunity.

J. B. Slayton[22]

The following letter is the last one in the collection written by Mark Slayton. Whether it is the last one he ever wrote is unknown.

Near Petersburg Virginia, July 21, 64

Dear Father

After waiting a month I received a letter from you the 17th Inst. The last one before that I got in the evening of the 17 of June, the day of the desperate charge on Lee's works in front of Petersburg. Quite an internal—a letter to long to send me. You certainly must do better in the future. I should have to excuse you in part I suppose on account of pressure of business. But there is one thing I shall not excuse you for. And that is your non-fulfillment of a request of mine to send some of the articles used in writing. I commenced appealing for the above mentioned articles as early as May 20th, and have kept it up very persistently until the present and all I have received is 4 stamps, a month since that helped me considerably, but I have had to work every way to get material to write home. I started from Burlington with $3.00 most of which I spent at Alexandria for necessaries. The rest I have saved until it was all gone. Some have sent home for a number of dollars. All I want is a package of what I have asked for. Now do not disappoint me father. I saw George Cheney yesterday. He is detailed on some light duty at City Point—distant some 6 miles. He rode on a good horse and seems to be taking comfort. The day before John Weeks came 2 or 3 miles to see me. He is looking tough as a knot if you know how that is, and says he does not regret that he enlisted. Pretty spunky. George insisted upon giving me a few stamps. I am glad to learn that you are getting along so well with your work. I would recommend the course you have adopted in changing work. A little society is good and also hiring what is necessary. You say that you have rec. several letters from me, but you do not say when. I wish you would hereafter. I wrote one on the 9th, which you have probably rec. before this. Tell my Aunts and uncles they must immediately ans. my letters. In my letter of the 9th is enclosed a sheet to C. A. Savage. I forgot to mention it in my haste. But it was evident to whom it was intended. I get any amount of reading most all the newspapers and some [illegible] reading. In a newsdealer [*Lamoille Newsdealer*] of the 18th I learned that the telegraph from Stowe to Waterbury is completed. And today's paper contains a call for 500,000 more men. These new calls and northern raids and the rise in gold are doubtless discouraging to Copperheads, but they cannot be very to the loyal. There is a brighter time

coming. You can send a few quids of gum in the next package. Write on stationary and it will cost you less. You can tell mother I hope she will soon regain her health. She must be careful. So must you. Write soon as you get this.

Your son, Mark [23]

The "subterranean passage" Mark mentioned in his letter of July 6 was a tunnel, or mine as it was called at the time, that was being dug by members of the 48th Pennsylvania Infantry Regiment, whose members had been recruited in the coal mining region of Pennsylvania. The mine had been proposed by the commander of the 48th Pennsylvania as a way to break through the Confederate fortifications and get to Petersburg. It was started on June 25, and when finished on July 23 the mine ran 511 feet from the IX Corps' position. At the end of the mine a chamber with two lateral galleries was dug twenty feet under a Confederate fort. The chamber was to be loaded with 8,000 pounds of powder and blown up. Initially, a division of colored troops was chosen to lead the assault through the gap made by the exploding mine, and in fact, they had rehearsed the maneuver a number of times. On July 29, the day before the mine was to be blown, Major General George G. Meade, commander of the Army of the Potomac, informed the commander of the IX Corps, Major General Ambrose P. Burnside, that using the African American troops for such a hazardous operation was fraught with political repercussions if the mission failed, and that one of his three white divisions would have to be used instead. Burnside let his division commanders draw straws to see which one would lead the assault. Brigadier General James H. Ledlie, commander of Burnside's 1st Division, who was incompetent and usually drunk, drew the short straw. [24]

The 17th Vermont, now consisting of only eight officers and 120 men, along with the rest of the Second Brigade, moved into position for the assault at 2 A.M. on July 30. At 4:45 A.M. the mine was exploded. The earth trembled and roared and then a column of smoke and sand, mingled with cannons, camp equipage, and men leaped into the air. Ledlie's troops were slow to start and by the time they were underway, the Confederates had regained their composure and made a counterattack. Many of the Federal troops who were supposed to be charging through the Confederate lines went instead into the crater made by the explosion, and were trapped and shot like fish in a barrel. Meanwhile, the Vermonters lay on the ground waiting for the mass confusion around the crater to clear so they could make their charge.[25]

At about noon the 17th Vermont finally began its advance, led by their major, William B. Reynolds, because Lieutenant Colonel Cummings had been ill for several weeks and unfit for duty. No sooner had

they started than Major Reynolds was hit in the chest by a rebel minié ball. He staggered and fell against Lieutenant Worthington Pierce of Company D, saying, "Pierce, I am shot! Can you get out of this?" Several men placed Reynolds on a blanket and carried him to the rear, where he died a few minutes later.[26]

The rebels were also using artillery in addition to small arms fire. In their cannons the artillerymen were using anti-personnel ammunition called canister rounds, which were similar to paint cans filled with cast iron balls. One of the canister balls hit Pvt. Mark B. Slayton in the left breast, killing him instantly. He was only seventeen years old. [27]

By the time the slaughter was over, and the Federals had retreated, the 17th Vermont had lost ten men killed, forty-six wounded, and eighteen missing. Of the eighteen missing, seven died in Confederate prisoner of war camps. The 17th returned with only one officer, who was wounded, and a little over half of the men with which it went into battle. Afterwards this battle would always be known as the Battle of the Crater.[28]

After the battle, Company C's Corporal Daniel C. Watts thought that Mark Slayton was among the missing. He found out differently several days later, as he wrote in the following letter to Mark's father.

Camp in front of Petersburg
Aug. 6, 1864

Mr. Slayton Sir

It is with the deepest regret that I seat myself to inform you that Mark was killed in the fight on 30th of July. I supposed him to be a prisoner at least some of my company that came back said that he was in the fort with the Capt. & was taken with the rest. A Pioneer from the 48 Pennsylvania Regt. came to my tent to day and inquired if I knew a person by the name of Mark B. Slayton in the 17 Regt. & at the same time handed me an old letter which he had taken from Mark's pocket & he said that his pockets were all picked & the letter he found in his Blouse Pocket. I also inquired of him where he was hit. He said that he was hit in the left breast with a grape shot.

Thinking perhaps you would like to keep the letter. I will send it to you & also the postage stamps that was in it just as they were placed by him.

Truly Yours
D. C. Watts

Mark Slayton was buried on the battlefield near where he fell. The letter found in Mark's pocket is thought to be the one his father wrote him on July 11. After the war, all of the soldiers buried in field graves were reinterred in Poplar Grove National Cemetery in Dinwiddie County just outside Petersburg. This is where Mark B. Slayton probably lies today as one of the hundreds of unidentified soldiers.[29]

Manuscript

Mark B. Slayton Civil War Letters, 1863, MSA 518:15. Vermont Historical Society, Barre, Vt.

Notes

[1] 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*, 2 vols. (Burlington, Vt.: The Free Press Association, 1886, 1888), 2:496-497; 17th Vermont Infantry Regiment recruiting poster, Vermont Historical Society, Barre, Vt.

[2] This information obtained from Mark B. Slayton's compiled service record, Records of the Adjutant General's Office, 1780-1917, Record Group 94, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D. C.; ancestry.com; familysearch.org; Abby Maria Hemenway, *The Vermont Historical Gazetteer*, 5 vols. (various publishers, 1867-1891), 2:763; 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), 582.

[3] Asa Walker Slayton, comp., *History of the Slayton Family* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Dean Printing Company, 1898), 107, 206; Ancestry.com.

[4] Mark B. Slayton Civil War Letters, 1863, MSA 518:15, Vermont Historical Society, Barre, Vt.; the other letters transcribed for this article are also from this collection; Benedict, *Vermont in the Civil War*, 2:497. Howard and Flora that Mark referred to are two of Ahijah and Clarissa Thomas' children. Uncle A is Abial Slayton.

[5] Peck, *Revised Roster*, 368; Abial H. Slayton's compiled service record, Records of the Adjutant General's Office, 1780-1917, Record Group 94, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

[6] Benedict, *Vermont in the Civil War*, 1: 65 and 2: 405-407; Peck, *Revised Roster*, 50, 482, 582.

[7] Guy H. Guyer's compiled service record, Records of the Adjutant General's Office, 1780-1917, Record Group 94, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.; Peck, *Revised Roster*, 368, 580.

[8] Benedict, *Vermont in the Civil War*, 2:497, 498.

[9] Benedict, *Vermont in the Civil War*, 2:498. The Samuel Clark that Slayton mentions was Pvt. Samuel B. Clark, Co. C, 17th Vermont, from Morristown, Vt. Grandmother W. is Sabrina Slayton's mother Hannah (Pierce) White.

[10] Benedict, *Vermont in the Civil War*, 2:498-499;

[11] Benedict, *Vermont in the Civil War*, 2:498-504, 523.

[12] The 11th Vermont soldiers that Slayton mentions were Pvt. Sylvester Simons, Pvt. Clement G. Moody, Pvt. Philo J. Knight, Pvt. Paphro D. Pike, Pvt. George S. Whitney, Pvt. Chandler Watts, II, Pvt. John B. Kusic, Pvt. Willis Stephen Gillett. The Henry Thomas Slayton mentions was Pvt. Henry G. Thomas, a musician in the 3rd Vermont, from Stowe; Peck, *Revised Roster*, 252, 255, 424, 427, 429, 430, 443, 447.

[13] Benedict, *Vermont in the Civil War*, 1:342-354.

[14] Benedict, *Vermont in the Civil War*, 2:507.

[15] Peck, *Revised Roster*, 571-573; Benedict, *Vermont in the Civil War*, 2: 505-508.

[16] Benedict, *Vermont in the Civil War*, 2:509.

[17] Benedict, *Vermont in the Civil War*, 2:509-510.

[18] Pvt. Ralph E. Dwinell was killed in the assault on the Confederate lines June 17, and Pvt. John H. Hall was killed by a rebel sharpshooter while on picket on June 22; Benedict, *Vermont in the Civil War*, 2:509, 510; Peck, *Revised Roster*, 581, 582; Ancestry.com; Asa W. Slayton, *History of the Slayton Family*, 206.

[19] Peck, *Revised Roster*, 580, 581; Jacob G. Ullery, comp., *Men of Vermont: An Illustrated Biographical History of Vermonters and Sons of Vermont* (Brattleboro: Transcript Publishing Company, 1894), Part II, 333.

[20] Mr. Seamans and Mr. Churchill are not identified.

[21] The Philo that Mark mentions is Philo Pike, 11th Vermont.

[22] The men mentioned in Jerome B. Slayton's letter were Pvt. Daniel Azro Luce, Co. C, 17th Vermont; Pvt. Eugene Stockwell, Co. D, 5th Vermont and Pvt. David C. Keeler, Co. C, 17th Vermont; Peck, *Revised Roster*, 159, 582; Madison Hodge is probably James M. Hodge, a 44-year-old shoemaker of Stowe; Ancestry.com; The Caulkins are not identified. India meal is actually Indian meal, which is another name for corn meal.

[23] Pvt. George A. Cheney, Co. B, 4th Vermont Infantry Regiment; Peck, *Revised Roster*, 115; C. A. Savage is probably Charles A. Savage, the 11-year-old son of Reubin A. and Elizabeth D. Savage of Stowe; Ancestry.com.

[24] Michael A. Cavanaugh and William Marvel, *The Petersburg Campaign: The Battle of the Crater "The Horrid Pit," June 25-August 6, 1864* (Lynchburg, Va.: H. E. Howard, 1989), 23; Benedict, *Vermont in the civil War*, 2:511-514; Mark M. Boatner, III, *The Civil War Dictionary* (New York: Vintage Civil War Library, 1991), 647-648.

[25] Benedict, *Vermont in the Civil War*, 2:511-514; Cavanaugh and Marvel, *The Petersburg Campaign*, 40.

[26] Benedict, *Vermont in the Civil War*, 2:514-517.

[27] Boatner, *Civil War Dictionary*, 119; Benedict, *Vermont in the Civil War*, 2:518; Cavanaugh and Marvel, *Petersburg Campaign*, 51. Although Corp. Daniel Watts says that Mark was killed by a grape shot, it was actually a canister ball.

[28] Benedict, *Vermont in the Civil War*, 2:518.

[29] Peck, *Revised Roster*, 582; Mark B. Slayton's compiled service record.

BOOK REVIEWS

Uncommon Law, Ancient Roads, and Other Ruminations on Vermont Legal History

By Paul S. Gillies (Barre, Vt.: Vermont Historical Society, 2013, pp. viii, 414, $34.95; paper, $24,95).

Vermonters have a way of engaging in exceptionalism. We have a sense that what happens here is so unique that we stand apart from the rest of the nation. Of course, this isn't always true, but such a belief is part of our shared identity. It was with this sense of exceptionalism that I read Paul Gillies's book *Uncommon Law, Ancient Roads, and Other Ruminations on Vermont Legal History*, a collection of essays originally published in the *Vermont Bar Journal* since 1993. The twenty-five essays examine a diverse range of topics, from the law of log drives to Act 250. There is no overarching narrative; rather, the book is an eclectic mix of topics that captures selected moments in history. The reader looking for particular cases of national importance, such as the decision striking down Vermont's ban on abortion, won't necessarily find it in this collection. Nor will the reader be provided with broader social and political context for a legal history outside of our borders. But the reader will find unexpected observations on what makes Vermont's legal history and those who shaped it exceptional.

The first section, simply called "Law," provides an overview of the judiciary. Two essays in this section highlight what is both good and bad about Vermont legal exceptionalism as Gillies portrays it. In the essay "Why Do Judges Wear Robes?" Gillies provides a history of the black robe in Vermont, claiming that it did not fully become part of the judicial wardrobe until the 1950s. I was left wondering whether this was true for

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judges across the country, or whether this was unique to Vermont, and if so, why? Thus, while it may be interesting to both lawyers and lay people to imagine judges and their evolving dress, one shouldn't presume anything particularly unique about the Vermont experience.

In contrast, in "Dissents and Deceptions," Gillies provides a detailed and lively examination of the Vermont Supreme Court's use of dissenting opinions. This is a particularly important analysis given that Vermont has only five justices on its high court, and therefore would likely also have more unanimous decisions as a result. Gillies suggests that the Court has grown more contentious over the years, and cites Justice Denise Johnson's opinion in the 1996 ruling that private driveways are public highways for the purpose of DWI laws. Her dissent begins, "Vermonters beware!" and then ridicules the outcome of the majority's opinion. This is one of the most important dissents in Vermont law, highlighting a significant tension around privacy rights that is perhaps more central to our state's jurisprudence than any other. This essay is where the author's exceptionalism is at its best, because it brings to life a unique piece of Vermont's legal history. Like Gillies, I delighted in the dissents and the dissenters.

Much of the book looks at the legal history around towns and land and the early years of the Vermont economy. I especially enjoyed "The First Settled Minister Lot," which explains both how towns got their beginnings and why the Vermont Constitution and its culture are so secular. So too does "A Different Kind of Sunday" detail the evolution of Sunday laws and the ongoing struggle between church and state in Vermont, and the pull of consumerism over religious worship. While this essay focuses on the legal treatment of laws that restricted activities on Sundays, it also tells a story about life in Vermont at a different time, weaving in the interplay between law and our daily lives.

Gillies also does a masterful job of sharing with us the lives of important legal figures in the section on "Luminaries." Here he provides mini-biographies of eight of the state's most colorful lawyers. My favorite tells the tale of former Chief Justice Royall Tyler and his notable hair; but essays on Nathaniel Chipman, John Mattocks, and F. Ray Keyser all preserve the characters that built the foundations of Vermont law.

The most important essay in the book is "The Evolution of Act 250: From Birth to Middle Age." Here Gillies carefully and more thoroughly details this uniquely Vermont law from its beginning through its first forty years. No other law has influenced the shaping of modern Vermont and its identity more than the restrictive environmental law that seeks to preserve Vermont's natural exceptionalism. Gillies refers to the story of the law as Vermont's creation myth, and there is something very

powerful about understanding the origins of our modern environmental regulatory regime.

Uncommon Law, Ancient Roads, and Other Ruminations on Vermont Legal History reflects one person's passion for both the state and the law. Gillies has clearly spent a significant part of his life researching these essays, and may know more about Vermont legal history and its cast of characters than any other person in the state. The book is interesting and fun and important, even if it lacks some topics or a deeper analytical framework. And above all, it captures Vermont's legal exceptionalism, most always for the better.

CHERYL HANNA

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Abolition & The Underground Railroad in Vermont

By Michelle Arnosky Sherburne (Charleston, S.C.: The History Press, 2013, pp. 160, paper, $19.95).

Ceremonies last year marking the fiftieth anniversary of the 1963 Civil Rights March on Washington were accompanied by much public reflection on America's complex and tortuous path from our founding institutionalization of human bondage, toward greater racial equality. A recent publication, *Abolition & the Underground Railroad in Vermont* by Michelle Arnosky Sherburne, tells the story of Vermont's role in the antebellum movement to end slavery.

This ambitious effort is a labor of love, written to provide a comprehensive, popular narrative of the UGRR in Vermont. One comes to expect a hagiographic treatment in UGRR books, and this one does not disappoint: Individual Vermonters are brave, compassionate, and forthright.

The author includes recent scholarship on historic black settlement, and highlights black Vermonters and fugitives who lived here. Initial chapters summarize research issues, examine antislavery politics, and consider the "contradiction" of racism and anti-abolitionism in a famously antislavery state. Stories associated with local individuals and families are grouped by towns along UGRR "routes" in the central chapter, followed by biographies of Vermonters active nationally. A final chapter assesses physical evidence—that is, concealed rooms, closets, and passageways. The author accepts the work of historian Wilbur H. Siebert and his ideas on routes and hidden rooms without question.

The book is something of a magpie's effort, crammed with anecdotes and stories gleaned from a host of primary sources, periodicals, and town histories. The author diligently assembles a wide collection of tales, and includes many photographs and maps. Sources are generally noted within the text, but works are not formally cited, there are no endnotes, material used goes unattributed, and the indexing is poor. These issues limit the book's usefulness.

Stories repeated—quoted or paraphrased—are taken at face value. There is little attempt to look more deeply into elements of a family memory, because all is what it appears to be. Details are seldom scrutinized for accuracy or plausibility, nor is context considered. This is troubling, first, because more than a few mistakes and confusions are apparent. It is also a missed opportunity to find out—in a given time and place—what the UGRR was. My concern is that when we know what we are looking for, this may well be all that we find.

The Town of Brandon section (p. 89) is a case in point regarding errors and latent possibilities. It erroneously notes the "famous Vermont 1793 court ruling known as the Dinah Matteis [sic] case" and records Judge Theophilus Harrington ruling against a southern owner who seized two runaways, declaring "only a bill of sale from God Almighty" would persuade him otherwise.

Dinah Mattis and her daughter Nancy were taken as a prize of war from the British near Fort Ticonderoga by troops under Col. Ebenezer Allen in 1777. Allen declared them free in a document read before his men at Pawlet. This renowned episode is taken as testimony to the patriots' antislavery sentiments. Actually, it was remembered because it broke with the common practice of selling booty and dividing the profits, and Allen's statement makes clear that mother and daughter are his to free under military law; thus, his generosity sanctions slavery as an institution.

Another piece of the puzzle concerns the familiar fugitive slave trial at which Judge Harrington is said to have delivered his famous "bon-mot"; it occurred in Middlebury, not Brandon, about 1807. Henry Olin was the judge presiding, with Harrington in attendance. Judge Olin found the owner's bill of sale incomplete and held for the state. On the way to dinner, Olin asked Harrington what evidence he would have accepted. Only then did Harrington make his reply. The remark was so good, however, that—I like to think—it grew arms and legs, elbowed Judge Olin out of the way, and walked Harrington out onto center-stage in Vermont's collective historical consciousness, where he has resided ever since!

The story appears in the *Vermont Anti-Slavery Society Report* in

1836, and becomes a stock tale in the national propaganda campaign. So, when oral tradition's reliability is asserted by the broad generalization (p. 129) that Vermonters did not share information unless they knew or trusted a person, and "have never been self-promoters," I must disagree. Reverend Bailey of Hardwick and Judge Poland of Montpelier bragged in the newspapers, while aiding fugitives. Some activists became more circumspect after the 1850 Fugitive Slave Law, but make no mistake: Others—Rev. Cyrus Prindle of Sherburne, Titus Hutchinson of Woodstock, and Rodney V. Marsh of Brandon—were spoiling for a fight. As for self-promotion, Judge Poland's 1897 letters to Siebert recount his aiding some six hundred fugitives. Rowland E. Robinson of Ferrisburgh, a member of Vermont's eminent abolitionist family, owned a copy of Siebert's *The Underground Railroad from Slavery to Freedom* (1898), which resides in the Rokeby collection. In the page margin, next to Poland's biography, Robinson penciled two words: "A Fraud."

One slips easily into hagiography when writing abolition history. But neither abolitionists nor fugitives were saints: All were humans with the usual admixture of venality and self-interest. That they contended with and sometimes rose above their lesser selves is surely part of what makes them compelling. Antebellum Vermonters struggled with the question of living a moral and ethical life in the real world of their time and place. Direct action, such as the Underground Railroad, is one way some chose to answer a question that is still with us today.

Michelle Arnosky Sherburne's deep admiration for the participants in the UGRR and commitment to historical research come through on every page of this book. Errors and problems notwithstanding, her efforts represent the pick and shovel work of local history. I applaud her willingness to research an extremely complex period and share the results of her work with the public. The struggles evident in this book are growing pains.

RAYMOND ZIRBLIS

Raymond Zirblis wrote The Green Mountaineer *(1989-1991),* Friends of Freedom: The Vermont Underground Railroad Survey Report *(1986), and associated topics for the* Vermont Encyclopedia *(2003). He is a member of the University of Vermont Center for Research on Vermont and teaches history at Norwich University.*

The New York Times: Disunion: Modern Historians Revisit and Reconsider the Civil War from Lincoln's Election to the Emancipation Proclamation

Edited by Ted Widmer (New York: Black Dog & Leventhal Publishers, 2013, pp. v, 450, $27.95).

The Civil War is not fading into a distant memory; quite to the contrary, it seems more present than ever. The war's unfinished business seems to occupy so much of our current public discourse, from protection of the right to vote to the proper role of the national government, it is no wonder comparisons have been drawn between the political instability of today and the forces that threatened the republic 150 years ago. It could be argued that some of the fault lines that precipitated the Civil War still underpin American society today, including a surviving predisposition to engage in brinksmanship, nullification, and even some talk once again of secession. In an era of government shutdowns and debt ceiling threats, the plain spoken words of Pennsylvania Congressman Samuel Blair in the winter of 1861 capture a hauntingly similar mood of frustration and despair: "Will the generations that are to succeed us believe that at such a time we sat out a whole winter with these guns still pointed at us, trying how far we might go to comply with the demands of traitors, and what new securities we might devise for the protection and spread of human bondage?"

So the war's 150th anniversary is about more than an exercise in remembrance, and despite a vast library of Civil War scholarship, there is a particular immediacy to achieving a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the war's meaning and its lasting grip on American consciousness. The *New York Times* has performed an invaluable service by opening the newspaper's opinion section and web page to scores of Civil War historians offering new research and new perspectives (http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2010/10/29/opinion/20101029-civil-war.html). Each submission appears to examine relatively small details and incidents. However, branded under the editorial moniker *Disunion*, the essays, when read in aggregation, suggest new relationships and insights that significantly broaden our understanding of the war, particularly evolving views on slavery, race relations, and the vast complexity of emancipation and freedom. The *Times* has published a selected compilation, appropriately titled *New York Times: Disunion*, covering the period between Lincoln's election and the Emancipation Proclamation.

Among the essays are contributions from historians whose books, written for the sesquicentennial, are reshaping the contours of Civil War scholarship, including David Blight, Amanda Forman, Adam Goodheart, Harold Holzer, Louis Masur, and Richard Slotkin. The *Disunion* blog essays of both Stephanie McCurry and James Oakes, authors of excellent new books, are notably missing from the anthology—even though, oddly enough, McCurry is actually identified as an "esteemed contributor" in the *New York Times*' own advertisement for their book. For example, the editors might have considered including McCurry's "The Rebel Constitution" in place of "The Dogs (and Bears, and Camels) of War" (same word count)—but even so, overall there is really not much to argue with.

While the book certainly stands on its own, readers may choose to revisit the essays on the *Disunion* blog where they also live, in many instances embedded with additional interactive content encouraging deeper exploration of the subject. Susan Schulten's essay, "Visualizing Slavery," for example, features the extraordinary 1861 demographic map of the southern states illustrating the concentration of slaves based on county census data. The map, created by an unexpected intergovernmental collaboration between the Census Bureau and the skilled mapmakers from the little known U.S. Coastal Survey was, in Schulten's words, "a landmark cartographic achievement, a popular propaganda tool, and an eminently practical instrument of military policy." According to Schulten, Lincoln consulted the map regularly as he formulated his emancipation policies. In fact, the *Disunion* blog iteration of the essay includes a reproduction of Francis Bicknell Carpenter's famous painting of Lincoln reading his draft Emancipation Proclamation to his cabinet, and if you look closely (use the zoom tool) the map can be clearly recognized partially unrolled in a corner of the room.

When the slave population map is considered in conjunction with Michael Varhola's essay on the naval blockade of the Confederacy, "Squeezing the South into Submission," the reader begins to realize the map's broader associations. By the spring of 1862, to tighten the blockade, Union forces moved inland along the coast of the Carolinas and up the Mississippi Delta. Federal soldiers and sailors, operating far from the main battlefields, were advancing into regions with some of the highest concentrations of slaves in the South. Those advances precipitated a large-scale movement of self-liberation on many nearby plantations—progressively destabilizing the institution of slavery and placing additional pressure on Lincoln to accelerate his emancipation planning.

The Vermont Humanities Council has been able to augment and amplify the impact of the *New York Times Disunion* franchise with its weekly blog *Civil War Book of Days: 150 Years Ago—This Week in the*

Civil War (http://www.vermonthumanities.org/WhatWeDo/CivilWarat150Years/CivilWarBookofDays/tabid/226/Default.aspx), created and ably nurtured by Executive Director Peter Gilbert. Similar to *Disunion*, the *Civil War Book of Days* invites contributions from around the country, building a multilayered narrative enriched with occasional insights into Vermont's role in the war. *Disunion*, for example, tells the story of the localized emancipation proclamations independently issued by Major General John C. Frémont in Missouri and General David Hunter in South Carolina, both rescinded by Lincoln. In fact, there was also a hardheaded Vermonter, Brigadier General John W. Phelps of Guilford, who in July 1862 while serving in Louisiana, according to the *Civil War Book of Days*, insisted on using contraband refugees as combat soldiers despite the indecision of his chain of command and the War Department. The logic for such a step was overwhelming, only Phelps's timing was off; barely a month after Phelps resigned his commission in frustration, his commanding officer, General Benjamin Butler, mustered the first African American regiment into the Federal Army with the quiet acquiescence of Washington.

Used in tandem, both blogs and the *New York Times: Disunion* book have become essential reading not only for what we can discover about our Civil War past, but also for what we can still discover about ourselves as Americans.

ROLF DIAMANT

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Bennington and the Civil War

By Bill Morgan (Charleston, S.C.: The History Press, 2013, pp. 142, paper, $17.95).

Not long ago, Bennington historian Bill Morgan put together a bus tour for local historical society members to view Civil War sites in and around Bennington. The surprising result is a succinct and entertaining annotated volume describing Bennington's role in the Civil War. Using anecdotes gathered largely from the *Bennington Banner*, Morgan covers a broad range of topics and introduces readers to some fascinating and largely unreported facts. Who knew that all of the machinery used to manufacture gun powder in the country and nearly all the horseshoes used by the Federal Cavalry were manufactured in Bennington?

Morgan presents the book in two sections: "Part I, Bennington and the Civil War," and "Part II, Guide to Bennington's Civil War Sites." The first section has a distinctive organization that separates it from similar books that have recently appeared. Seven brief essays explore Bennington's role in the broad issues of the conflict, presenting readers with an unusually clear background and context. For example, in the opening essay on the scourge of slavery, Morgan reports that in 1772 all sixteen slaves living in Vermont resided in Bennington. A story of the emancipation of Bennington slave Dinah Mattis and her two-year-old daughter, descriptions of a year-long residence in Bennington of the ardent abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison, and a rare documented case of the existence of an Underground Railroad site operated by stagecoach driver Charles Hicks further enrich this section. Morgan provides adequate detail regarding the formation of six companies in Bennington—five infantry and one cavalry. He does not shy away from the fact that some in Bennington were sympathetic to the Confederate cause, identifying those who aligned themselves with the South and some who fought with them. He suggests the probability that Bennington County furnished more men to the Union army in proportion to its size than any county in Vermont, but does not offer a detailed enumeration. These initial essays are interspersed with excellent visuals from the Bennington Museum and the author's private collection.

Following these essays, Morgan presents a concise yearly summary of the war's impact in Bennington. Here, the focus is almost exclusively the home front. Readers learn about the Ladies' Soldiers' Aid Society, the formation of a Zouave company, and an accidental explosion of two tons of gunpowder at the Bennington Powder Works. These sections are little gold mines of information and fascinating trivia. An example:

> On May 18, 1863, an enormous gun passed through town on its way from the Fort Pitt Foundry in Pittsburgh to Boston, where a gunboat was being prepared for it. A huge crowd of people turned out to inspect the fifteen-inch-bore Rodman gun that weighed all of 42,500 pounds, one of the largest guns to ever be put on a boat. It would have had a range of nearly five thousand yards and shot a cannonball weighing 400 pounds (p. 97).

The positive effect that the war had on Bennington's population, business, and industrial growth is well chronicled by the author. It is an important reminder that not all suffered during such times.

While Morgan presents a vivid description of life in Bennington during these four years, he misses the opportunity, possibly intentionally, to discuss the drama taking place in the South. There is little reference to specific battles and little attempt to convey any of the contributions

Bennington soldiers made there. There is but slight mention of Gettysburg and none of Cedar Creek. Perhaps less information about recruitment, quotas, bounties, and desertions and more facts about the success of Bennington men on the frontline would have been desirable. Occasionally his reporting of the actual events of the war may need scrutiny. He writes on page 97, "Other false rumors that circulated included news that an entire Vermont regiment had been captured by the enemy." Indeed, this was no false rumor, as the Ninth Regiment had been forced to surrender to the Confederates at Harper's Ferry, West Virginia, in September 1862.

The last section of the book is most interesting for those who are touring the Bennington area visiting Civil War sites. Morgan identifies 4 monuments, 10 buildings, 7 houses, 7 cemeteries, 1 farm, and 48 grave sites in Old Bennington, Bennington, and North Bennington that have Civil War connections. Of particular interest are the descriptions of the Old Soldiers Home and the relevant collection at the Bennington Museum. A map indicating the location of these sites would have been beneficial to those who are not familiar with the area.

The volume concludes with notes, bibliography, and a thorough index, and is an important resource for Civil Was enthusiasts.

J. DAVID BOOK

J. David Book, a retired educator, is the author of books about Civil War soldiers in Cabot and Worcester, Vermont.

Gettysburg: The Graphic History of America's Most Famous Battle and the Turning Point of the Civil War

By Wayne Vansant (Minneapolis: Zenith Press, 2013, pp. 96, paper, $19.99).

My reward for enduring the horror of a visit to the dentist during my childhood was picking out a comic book at the newsstand a few doors down the street from his office, with the whining of the dentist's drill still shrill in my ear. Spinning the carousels that held crime, cowboy, combat, cartoon character, and Classics Illustrated comic books required my intense concentration to make sure my selection would adequately compensate me for my most recent suffering. As I grew to adulthood, comic book publishing grew to give rise to the graphic novel.

Gettysburg: The Graphic History uses the graphic novel format to retell the story of the most recognized Civil War battle. This is not the first use of panel art to provide Civil War history to the masses. An addition to newspaper comic strips during the Civil War centennial, fifty years ago, recounted the events of the corresponding week a century previously. Classics Illustrated issued a Civil War edition as well during the war's centennial anniversary. More recent graphic artists have also added their talent to this sesquicentennial, including several comic books about the Gettysburg battle. None of them have been done with the graphic artistry and historical detail that Wayne Vansant has produced in this work. However, although this is an entertaining and accurate synopsis of the battle for semi-serious students of history and a welcome, captivating introduction to the battle for the less scholarly reader, its artistry only approaches but is not equal to the more successful graphic attempts to portray historical events.

It is not fair to compare Vansant's work to that of Art Spiegelman's *Maus*, which used mice to portray Jewish victims of the genocide carried out by Nazi cats, a novel not constrained to actual historical fact, but that nonetheless accurately portrays the terror of the Holocaust. However, the late Will Eisner's *The Plot:The Secret Story of the Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, Robert Crumb's *Genesis*, and George S. Rigakos and Red Viktor's work in *Marx-Engels: The Communist Manifesto Illustrated* are all superior in artistry. Vansant does well in reproducing portraits of the major figures—army, corps, and division commanders, and an excellent likeness of Colonel Strong Vincent, whose successful defense of Little Round Top cost him his life. However, his rendition of Joshua Chamberlain commanding the 20th Maine, receiving orders from Vincent to hold his ground at all costs, is recognizable only by the panel's caption and Chamberlain's handlebar mustache. The inconsistent quality of Vansant's artwork is unfortunately apparent in the amateurish cover art of two opposing soldiers engaged in the melée, and presents a less than favorable first impression that one must page through the book to overcome.

Vansant's written account of the battle, appearing as captions to his art, holds the reader's interest and does well in maintaining historical accuracy. This is the case when Vansant recounts some important personal conflicts between key historical figures—Jefferson Davis *versus* Robert E. Lee, whether to relieve Vicksburg or invade Pennsylvania; Lincoln *versus* Joseph Hooker, over operational strategy; and Lee *versus* James "Pete" Longstreet, whether to use direct assault rather than maneuver to defeat "those people," as Lee called the enemy, ultimately resulting in Pickett's Charge. Here, Vansant refuses to join the chorus of Douglas Southall Freeman's disciples, who use Longstreet as a scapegoat to ab-

solve Lee of the Confederate defeat at Gettysburg, as Freeman did in *Lee's Lieutenants* (1942), but he does not neglect to point out J. E. B. Stuart's late arrival on the battlefield and resulting failure to provide tactical intelligence for Lee that most historians agree denied the South victory at Gettysburg.

Vansant also does well by seasoning his work with human interest stories to show the impact of the battle on individuals—the strained meeting of captured Confederate Brigadier General James Jay Archer with his pre-war friend, General Abner Doubleday; Gettysburg resident and veteran of the War of 1812 John Burns grabbing his flintlock and joining the fighting against the Confederates; the mercy extended by Confederate General John Gordon to severely wounded Union General Francis Barlow and their surprise meeting years after the war, each thinking that the other did not survive; the search for the three orphaned children appearing on an ambrotype clutched in the their dead father's hand; and the death of Jennie Wade, the only civilian killed during the battle. Vansant's rendition of Miss Wade is among his best artistry and captures her beauty far more ably than the photograph upon which he based his portrait.

Several events of the battle as described by Vansant leave the reader with unanswered questions. A. P. Hill's mysterious illness that kept him from performing at maximum efficiency during the battle was, in fact, syphilis contracted when a cadet at West Point—but then again, we don't want to render this work, which shows in appropriate detail the violence perpetrated against fellow human beings during the war, unsuitable for children.

The actions of the Second Vermont Brigade are relegated to only one panel that shows its assault on James Kemper's Confederate Brigade on Pickett's exposed right flank. However, the map a dozen pages previous clearly shows that the brigades of Cadmus Wilcox and David Lang were to be part of the attack on July 3, attacking *en echelon* to support and reinforce Kemper's brigade. What Vansant fails to mention was that the 16th Vermont, commanded by Wheelock Veazey, did an about face after helping to decimate Kemper's brigade, then successfully attacked Wilcox's and Lang's advancing brigades, taking 200 prisoners and two stands of enemy regimental colors. That maneuver guaranteed a Congressional Medal of Honor for Colonel Veazey, one of four issued to Vermont soldiers at Gettysburg. A fifth Vermonter who received the Medal of Honor was Private Marshall Sherman, serving with the 1st Minnesota, but born in Burlington. He was one of 47 survivors out of a regiment of 262, in a suicidal charge on the second day of the battle that saved the Union center. That action gets a well-deserved total of six

panels over two pages. Sherman's capture of the regimental colors of the 28th Virginia the next day, during Pickett's Charge, assured him this nation's highest military decoration.

My criticism of Vansant's neglect of the impact of Vermont troops at Gettysburg is not only generated by my Vermont chauvinism, but also by the fact that the author devotes only one panel to the Vermonters after he noted on the page following the table of contents that Vermont had the fourth-most state troops on the field, behind New York, Pennsylvania, and Massachusetts. Nevertheless, Vansant's work is the best effort to date not only to expand the interest in our history to those who mostly satisfy their literary appetites with the direct descendants of the comic book, but also to those like me, who never outgrew their enjoyment of the art form that again proves the truth of the proverb, "A picture is worth ten thousand words."

CHARLES S. MARTIN

Charles S. Martin is a Barre attorney and a Civil War reenacting member of the Champlain Valley Historical Reenactors.

Coolidge

By Amity Shlaes (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2013, pp. x, 566, $35; paper, $18.99).

Roughly half of *Coolidge* covers the period before he became president, and it forms the emotional heart of the book. Coolidge's child-hood was austere. His father, John, was a farmer, small businessman, and state legislator from Plymouth, Vermont. Survival meant rigorous thrift and other forms of self-reliance. These in turn became the great virtues for young Calvin. Beyond the financial austerity of his youth was the emotional austerity brought on by the deaths of Calvin's mother when he was twelve and his beloved younger sister, Abbie, when he was seventeen. All his life people viewed Coolidge as cold, but from the evidence provided by Shlaes, it might seem more accurate to see him as numb—an intelligent, sensitive boy who never recovered from those family losses, who learned early on that words could never truly convey what he really felt. Thus he grew into an extraordinarily shut-mouthed man. The tragic death of Calvin Jr. in 1924 seems to have removed whatever remaining pleasure he took in life.

The dramatic arc of the book is the story of how a shy, quiet, provincial boy, whose likeliest path would have been to follow his father as a

farmer and small businessman in Plymouth, rose to win popularity at Amherst College, become an attorney, make a fortunate marriage to Grace Goodhue, who had all the personal warmth that he lacked, and commence an astonishing rise in politics that took him from the Northhampton, Massachusetts, school committee to the vice presidency. We forget how skilled Coolidge was as a politician. His quiet demeanor masked a huge ambition. People underestimated him until he had achieved his goal, and they were left scratching their heads.

Coolidge's political talents included a sly wit, a smooth way with words when he chose to use them, and, above all, persistence, perhaps the key quality for someone determined to rise above modest circumstances. Coolidge may not have aimed at the presidency initially, but the fame he gained as Massachusetts governor from his law and order stance during the Boston police strike made him an instant contender for the highest office and made possible his nomination for the second highest.

The vice presidency probably would have been Coolidge's greatest achievement if Warren G. Harding had lived. The vice president felt profoundly alienated from the political and social culture of Washington and had little influence. He longed early in his tenure to return to private life. But Harding's death changed everything. Even then, Coolidge might have simply played a caretaker role until the next election, but once he had his hands on the levers of power he wanted to pull them and carry out the budget balancing and tax cutting that would force Washington to live by the values he had learned as a boy in Vermont.

Perhaps as impressive as Coolidge's early rise to prominence was his winning election as president in his own right. Left with an unsavory legacy of financial corruption by Harding, Coolidge was in a delicate position as the 1924 election approached. Without breaking with the old administration and alienating many Republicans, yet demonstrating an ability to use such tools as radio and press conferences to turn his personal probity into a winning image, the unelected president made himself unbeatable. Shlaes is rightfully admiring of Coolidge for his success as a candidate.

Whether he deserves admiration for his policy achievements is something most scholars have doubted, though Shlaes suggests he does deserve it for his success in cutting the national debt and for embracing the tax-cutting strategy of Secretary of the Treasury Andrew Mellon. If there is some basis for this interpretation, the author clearly goes too far in claiming that Coolidge's convincing the Senate to ratify the Kellogg-Briand Pact was a triumph. Despite Shlaes's effort to show this as an example of Coolidge embodying popular wisdom to work for world peace, most scholars see the treaty as naïve, masking as it did the reality

of the global power politics that would ultimately drive the world into another cataclysmic war.

The author's approach to Kellogg-Briand is just one example of the limitations of her study. It is very much a narrative, full of interesting stories about Coolidge, his family, his friends, and connections to some of the great events of the early twentieth century. However, it shuns anything but the most cursory analysis. Although Shlaes lauds Coolidge for his beliefs in small government, low taxes, and individualism, she does little to justify them. Instead, she tends to simply assert they are right while dismissing critics of the time with little explanation. Reformers, including Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover, who called for more support for flood relief and control and aid to farmers, are presented as malign distractions from the noble business of slashing taxes and government programs.

The merit of Shlaes's book is in her readable portrait of Coolidge's developing personality, character, and ambition. The demerit is that she insinuates rather than substantiates an argument for why we should value his achievements as President.

DOUGLAS SLAYBAUGH

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The Seeking

By Will Thomas, Introduction by Dorothy Canfield Fisher; *Edited, and with a New Introduction and Afterword, by* Mark J. Madigan and Dan Gediman (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2013, The Northeastern Library of Black Literature Series, pp. xxxi, 305, paper, $22.95).

Mark Madigan and Dan Gediman's edited version of Will Thomas's *The Seeking* is an excellent contribution to Afro Vermont history in the twentieth century. Yet this work has meaning for the study of African American history well beyond the borders of the Green Mountain State. Originally published in 1953 with an introduction and endorsement from well-known Vermont author Dorothy Canfield Fisher, Will Thomas's biography is a stunning testament to the migrations of one black man (and his family) hoping to escape the straitjacket of American racism and racial essentialism.

Will Thomas was born in 1900 in Kansas City to a white father and a

light-skinned African American mother from Louisiana. After the death of his father, his mother remarried and moved to Chicago, but returned to Kansas City when Thomas reached the age of 12. Thomas first encountered racism while being involved in gang fights as a youth in Kansas City. At age 18, he entered the historically African American school, Lincoln University, but dropped out claiming that Lincoln encouraged self-segregation. During the next decade, Thomas spent time working on a fishing boat, attempted professional boxing, enrolled at the University of Kansas (but dropped out), and worked as a journalist for an African American newspaper in Kansas City. By the time he reached his thirties, Thomas moved to Los Angeles and got married to Helen Chappel. They had three children, but Thomas's career prospects were frustrated when a publisher rejected his novel about "an interracial love affair" (xi). Finally, in 1947, with the support of the writer Chester Himes, Thomas published his first book, *God Is for White Folks*. The book explores the phenomenon of "passing" and the identity of octoroons (a person of 1/8 African heritage) in regard to the racial realities of Louisiana.

In the late 1940s, while considering moving to Haiti, Thomas made the surprising decision to migrate to Westford, Vermont. He made this decision partially because he incorrectly believed that Vermont "never permitted" slavery (xv). More than anything, Thomas wanted to escape his so-called racial designation and be judged very simply by his character. These sentiments were not uncommon among African Americans, especially in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Thomas's years in Vermont (late 1940s to mid-1950s) were marked by the possibilities of the early Civil Rights Movement and underlined by President Truman's desegregation of the Armed Forces in 1948 and various challenges to segregation in the federal courts. The disillusionment with nonviolent resistance and middle class Civil Rights leaders was still several years away.

As the editors show, Thomas did not ignore racism in Vermont toward African Americans or French Canadians. Yet he viewed Vermont as rather virtuous in terms of race relations and notions of race. He thought racism in Vermont emanated not from evil or malice, but rather from ignorance or lack of understanding. Throughout his life Thomas wanted to escape the shackles of racial thinking—whether reified notions of race came from other African Americans or whites. During his 1953 "This I Believe" interview, Thomas summed up his views by stating, "So I thought to make one final try in my motherland for the equality of status which I considered I had been denied; and I chose Vermont for the experiment. I reasoned that because of its great

traditions of personal freedom there was at least a chance that I and my family might find there what we so yearned for, and we did. In the small farming community where we settled, we were accepted on a basis of individuality unqualified by race" (301).

As an African American living in Vermont, I truly found this book compelling and fascinating. We should consider Thomas's hope for a colorblind society in this new Age of Obama. Have we been brought closer to what Thomas wanted for all Americans especially people of color; or have we gone in the other direction toward racial essentialism and suspicion? Madigan and Gediman have done historians of the black experience in Vermont and New England a wonderful service with this edited volume. They provide an outstanding analysis of the literary value of Thomas's *The Seeking* and his earlier book. My only complaint is that the introduction would have benefited from more historical context. I wanted to know more about Westford in the 1950s and the black population in Chittenden County. How many black people lived there? What did they do for a living? Could we learn more about integration or residential segregation by looking at the census records or city directories? I suspect with further research we could develop a rather compelling portrait of black life in Vermont in the 1940s and 1950s. These are merely minor suggestions and should not take away from the editors' major achievement.

HARVEY AMANI WHITFIELD

Harvey Amani Whitfield is Associate Professor of History at the University of Vermont. He is the author and editor of The Problem of Slavery in Early Vermont, 1777-1810 *(2014).*

Vermont's Marble Industry

By Catherine Miglorie (Charleston, S.C.: Arcadia Publishing, 2013, pp. 127, paper, $21.99).

Vermont. What is Vermont? Asking that question often brings to mind maple syrup, quaint country inns, "White Christmas," ski vacations, fall foliage, artisan cheeses, and a long list of equally nostalgic definitions of what this place is all about in the eyes of those "from away." Yes, Vermont is all of these things, but many do not know about its other history, its multifaceted contribution to much of the fabric of this nation, and that this legacy, now preserved in stone, is found in monuments and architecture throughout this nation.

The granite quarries of Barre, the slate quarries of Fairhaven, the marble industries of the Rutland/Proctor area, and their collective histories have represented an important element in the development of Vermont for more than 200 years. From the time of the first opening of commercial quarries in the late eighteenth century to the present, finished quarry products have defined our rooflines, our thresholds and lintels, as well as the curbing and walkways that make many of our towns so much a part of the natural landscape that surrounds them. Monuments erected to commemorate our histories, such as the Jefferson Memorial, or those simple or even more spectacular architectural statements such as the National Gallery of Art or the United Nations Building, have made use of Vermont's natural stone. These contributions have found their way into our own sense of place during the past two centuries, and they all have their origins in the preglacial underpinnings of Vermont.

While the earliest histories of the quarrying of rock materials can be characterized as a variety of local cottage industries supplying the needs of nearby communities, the later development of these industries must be tied directly to the development of regional and interregional transportation systems. The early private turnpikes that supplemented locally maintained roads enabled some limited distribution of these materials to areas at some distance from where the stone was sourced. Eventually, railroads that snaked up every conceivable valley in much of New England beginning in the 1830s, contributed vastly to the expansion of local quarrying operations. The result was increased utilization of Vermont's quarry products and an expansion in the scale of production and diversity of goods provided by the industry.

Arcadia Publishing, known for its robust photo/historical coverage of much of small town America, has to date brought forward nearly fifty titles pertaining to various aspects of the history of Vermont. The *Images of America* series, as well as more than ten other publication series highlighting the American enterprise, community histories, and the impact of industry, make for an interesting mix of a photographic history of our nation. With the recent publication of Catherine Miglorie's *Vermont's Marble Industry* in Arcadia's *Images of America* series, a fresh look at the development of one aspect of Vermont's economically important quarrying industry is again available. Miglorie's book is not only a general introduction to the marble industry of western Vermont's "marble belt," it also takes a more specific look at the Vermont Marble Company and its local and national impact. In addition, the company's origin and growth in and around the village of Proctor provides for an interesting back story to the history of the village itself. It was indeed a company town.

With the resources of the Proctor Historical Society contributing much to the effectiveness of this story, Miglorie's book serves as an excellent window into a rich photographic history of this industry and this area of the state. While most images date from several decades after the Civil War and into the early twentieth century, they do manage to cover virtually all aspects of the industry, from quarry to production floor where finished architectural elements are created.

Miglorie's thoughtful and informative explanations of the more than 150 photographs make an excellent accompaniment to the volume's introductory text. While many may view this volume as a history of Proctor, its utility extends well beyond that village. The marble belt, as well as the history of the related industries that flourished for several centuries from Middlebury to Manchester, may now be appreciated more fully with the addition of this small volume.

Having spent many years tramping the outcroppings of Vermont's marble belt, and the slate belt to the west, I find this text to be a "must have." I thank Catherine Miglorie for making the effort to inform us all about Vermont's natural resources.

GARY D. JOHNSON

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American Ski Resort: Architecture, Style, Experience

By Margaret Supplee Smith (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2013, pp. xiii, 334, $45.00).

Skiers and ski historians all understand that resorts have individual styles, and that these have changed over time. But how deep their understanding goes will vary. Those who want to enhance their knowledge of resort architecture and ski culture should look no further than Margaret Supplee Smith's wonderful new book, *American Ski Resort.* Whether you have preference for a particular region of the country, or for a particular period, this book delivers for academics and casual readers alike.

Supplee Smith examines resort architecture as a medium for exploring broader changes in the ski industry and in American culture. Architecture, she contends, offers readers a window into changing attitudes toward topics such as recreation, development, and environmentalism—

all of which are interwoven uniquely into the history of twentieth-century American life. By tracing ski architecture from its crude beginnings to its more elaborate Alpine and Modernist traditions, Supplee Smith moves from specific (and often esoteric) case studies to broader historical themes. Her regional focus varies widely, though Vermont plays a particularly notable role throughout, reflecting both the state's centrality to the history of skiing as well as Supplee Smith's personal experiences at her vacation home near Mount Snow.

The book is divided into three parts, and includes two appendices on the life and work of notable architects and developers. Part one introduces readers to the early history of resort-based skiing. Chapter one explores skiing's rustic, often humble roots during the 1930s in places such as Stowe, Vermont, Franconia, New Hampshire, and Oregon's Mount Hood, particularly as linked to the Depression Era's Works Progress Administration. Chapter two explores the specific case of Sun Valley, Idaho, as a marker for tracing the early history of destination resorts designed for a wealthy clientele. Chapter three highlights Aspen, Colorado, to examine resort development undertaken within a pre-existing urban structure, where developers often stressed themes of cultural authenticity and economic revitalization.

Part two focuses on postwar resort architecture and ski culture. Chapter four traces the histories of Stratton, Vermont, and Vail, Colorado, where a new emphasis on Austrian architecture self-consciously played on themes of authenticity and glamour. Chapter five explores a counter theme—modernism—particularly at Mount Snow, Vermont, where trendy, colorful displays carried resort architecture in an entirely new direction. Chapter six highlights this trend and others as they related to vacation home architecture and condominium development.

Part three explores the final decades of the twentieth century, beginning with a chapter on skiing's environmental impacts. Many Vermont readers will find chapter seven of particular interest for its focus on both the state and controversial mountain development more generally. By drawing on the examples of Mount Snow, Vail, and other resorts, Supplee Smith examines in clear detail the conflicts that developed as postwar resort expansion collided with an emerging environmental ethic in American culture. Chapter eight explores a postmodern architectural turn toward regionalism within resort architecture and tourist marketing during the 1980s, as a new generation of corporate management sought to enhance their industry's tarnished environmental image through a focus on scripted regional authenticity, historic preservation, and land conservation. Chapter nine details a post-1980s reimagining of the self-sufficient, total-resort concept as developers constructed massive new resort

infrastructure designed to appeal to a new, younger generation of winter sports enthusiasts. Chapter ten offers an entertaining look at eclectic and elegant postwar resort housing design. The book closes with an epilogue that assesses contemporary trends in light of some of the book's key historical insights.

American Ski Resort is a delight for anyone with an interest in skiing. The passion that so many skiers bring to their sport is mirrored in the passion that Supplee Smith brings to her book. Its extensive collection of photographs, maps, and architectural renderings make this the kind of book that one can flip through casually. But it is also a well-researched, well-written, and challenging academic text. Though *American Ski Resort* deserves praise on so many fronts, this combination of entertainment and insight is perhaps the book's greatest strength.

BLAKE HARRISON

Blake Harrison is the co-editor of A Landscape History of New England *(2011), and author of* The View from Vermont: Tourism and the Making of an American Rural Landscape *(2006). He lives and works in Middlebury, Vermont.*

Greening Vermont: The Search for a Sustainable State

By Elizabeth Courtney and Eric Zencey (North Pomfret, Vt.: Thistle Hill Publications and the Vermont Natural Resources Council, 2012, pp. 176, paper, $35.00).

Vermont has a national reputation as a leader in conservation and environmental policy. Authors Elizabeth Courtney, who served on the Vermont Environmental Board from 1985-1994 and as the director of the Vermont Natural Resources Council from 1997-2011, and Eric Zencey, author and fellow at the Gund Institute for Ecological Economics at the University of Vermont, provide an "insiders" take on the development and implementation of many of the state's environmental policies from the 1950s through the present in *Greening Vermont*. The authors don't pretend to offer a dispassionate accounting, rather their perspective is clear throughout the book: A strong commitment to conservation and environmental protection has been and is of great importance to Vermont, and we must do more to move the state further down the path to sustainability.

The book is organized into six chapters, one for each decade beginning in the 1960s. The authors characterize each of these decades with a

single word: conservation, regulation, litigation, confrontation, collaboration, and localization. Although the overarching narrative of the book deals with the environment generally, there is a particular focus on land use and planning. In addition to this chronological narrative, there are a multitude of sidebars, on topics ranging from "Four Varieties of Capital" to "Rationing Retail: Who Decides?" as well as a series of interviews with leaders of the Vermont conservation movement over the last several decades (including, for example, the late Hub Vogelmann and Governor Madeleine May Kunin). The book is richly illustrated with graphics and photographs.

Among the highlights are Courtney and Zencey's recounting of the stories of the billboard law, Act 250 and the eventual failure of the state land use plan component of the law, Act 200, and the more recent rise of local energy conservation efforts and the local food renaissance. The saga over developing Taft Corners in Williston is especially interesting. The story of this crossroads underscores the challenges Vermont faced in trying to protect open lands and concentrate development in existing city, town, and village centers. The state denied an Act 250 permit for a proposed mall on the site, but the area eventually became home to a Walmart and several other big box stores. This development served as a catalyst for action by those worried about sprawl in Vermont, contributing to the creation of the Vermont Forum on Sprawl (which became Smart Growth Vermont), a final defeat for completing the nearby circumferential highway, and passage of several laws to encourage development in existing downtowns.

I found three shortcomings in the book. First, there is a romanticizing of the Vermont past. For the authors, the pivot point for the decline of the Vermont landscape is the coming of the interstate highways in the late 1950s, and the many changes that accompanied them. Before then, they suggest that the Vermont of the yeoman farm family and handshake culture conserved the landscape. Yet the Vermont landscape had been fundamentally transformed long before the middle of the nineteenth century—its forests had been cleared and its large wildlife were largely gone. Although the changes wrought by the development of the 1960s and beyond have certainly been significant, the human hand had been hard at work on the landscape much earlier.

Second, the authors are largely silent on several of the most contentious land use issues of the last two decades. Although the Champion lands are discussed, the authors don't discuss the intense controversy over designating 12,500 acres as an ecological reserve in the West Mountain wildlife management area, acquired by the state as part of

the Champion lands deal of 1999. This battle over wildlands was replayed over the unmentioned 2006 Vermont Wilderness Act. This law, which nearly doubled the protected wilderness in the state, featured a rare public dispute between Governor Jim Douglas and the Vermont congressional delegation. Perhaps the most intense intra-environmental movement issue of the last fifty years has been the conflict over the placement of large-scale renewable energy generation, especially wind (such as the fight over Lowell Mountain). Each of these issues highlights cleavages within the state and even within the environmental community.

Third, and perhaps most important, the authors don't fully delve into the question of how can Vermont, or any state, be sustainable in a meaningful sense when we are fundamentally embedded in global systems—whether it is markets for food or a global atmosphere filling with more and more carbon.

As Vermont moves forward into the growing challenges of sustainability, the history recounted in *Greening Vermont* will be a useful resource, one that we are fortunate to have.

CHRISTOPHER MCGRORY KLYZA

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A Lifetime of Vermont People

Photographs and text by Peter Miller (Colbyville, Vt.: Silver Print Press, 2013, pp. 208, $49.95).

Nostalgia in the best sense—a yearning for a vanished golden past—is the persistent subtext of Peter Miller's latest book of Vermont portraits.

Entitled *A Lifetime of Vermont People,* this is no ordinary coffee-table book. Its 208 pages of black-and-white photographs and short essays amount to a simple, powerful, and none-too-subtle protest against the social and cultural changes that have come to Vermont during Miller's lifetime. The photographer, now 80, has been making pictures for more than 50 years, and does not love the new Vermont of gentrification, fancy restaurants, high-end tourism, and boutique stores and products. He clearly mourns the passing of the more rural Vermont memorialized in

his earlier photographs. Yet his vision is modulated and complex, and his book is not a diatribe.

A Lifetime of Vermont People explores the profound transformation of Vermont over the last six decades in the faces of Vermonters themselves. The portraits in this book, like his earlier volumes, are gritty, often stark. They avoid simple prettiness to probe the souls of the people who have lived through Vermont's changes, and by doing so, poke at the soul of Vermont itself.

It may be characteristic that in an era of color photography, Peter Miller publishes exclusively black-and-white photos. It is an older and, in some ways, stronger graphic medium than color.

Miller's first portraits, made with a twin-lens reflex camera in the winter of 1959-60, were of Will and Rowena Austin, a retired farming couple who lived in Weston. Only memories and Miller's haunting photographs remain of them. Standing outdoors with fresh snow falling on their shoulders, their faces as weathered as the barn behind them, Will and Rowena in 1959 look like stubborn transplants from the nineteenth century.

They seem indomitable. But their way of life is now gone forever.

Nevertheless, something of their spirit remains, and can be seen in Miller's portraits of the Lepine sisters of Morrisville, Stub Earle of Eden, auctioneer Willis Hicks of Stowe, fiddlers Ray Grimes and Bill Royer, and others.

Accompanying each of the portraits is a short essay by Miller, often ending with an update to 2012, noting in many cases that the subject has passed on. One has the feeling that Miller personally mourns each of these losses.

He also includes some photos of Vermont places and events: his neighborhood, Colbyville, in Waterbury Center; the Moscow (Vt.) Fourth of July Parade, and so on. In each of those cases also, Miller notes the changes, and here again we get the clear indication that he prefers the earlier version.

But there are new photos also, in this new book. And what the newer photos suggest is that Vermonters are still a most interesting breed, and that Vermont remains, to some extent, a place apart.

Photos of younger farmers and entrepreneurs like Pete Johnson of Craftsbury, George Woodard of Waterbury Center, Jay and Janet Bailey of Fairwinds Farm in Brattleboro, and Diane St. Clair of Orwell are evidence that Vermont's rural traditions remain alive.

Miller's genius as a photographer is also expressed in the few, well-chosen landscapes that he includes in this book: the beautiful Mettowee Valley in Pawlet and Rupert, the raw springtime fields of a Mud City farm, a tractor, hay wagon, and dog backed by Camel's Hump, and others.

Like the human portraits, these black-and-white landscapes are brilliantly evocative of rural Vermont.

Vermont is changing and farming is changing, as Miller's masterful photographs show. But the land still produces crops, food, and families. And so there is a living connection between the earlier Vermont that Miller memorializes—and to some extent idealizes—and today's more complex, less distinctive Vermont.

Notably, Miller portrays several contemporary artists: Bread & Puppet's Peter and Elke Schumann, artist Warren Kimble of Brandon, poet David Budbill of Wolcott, novelist Howard Frank Mosher of Irasburg. The message in these photos is also clear: These are Vermonters, too, wresting their living in their own way from this rugged northern place.

It was Miller who made the most memorable photo of the late farmer and movie star Fred Tuttle. Like others who have lived their lives here, Miller saw Fred's funeral as the closing of an era—a goodbye to the traditional, backroads Vermont that many of us knew and loved.

His new book is a memorial to that world, but also offers hope—implicitly, without saying so—that the strong spirit that enlivened the Green Mountains in years past survives, and may yet flourish in the Vermont to come.

THOMAS K. SLAYTON

Tom Slayton is a commentator on Vermont Public Radio and editor emeritus of Vermont Life *magazine.*

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- A bequest in your will or trust
- Naming Vermont Historical Society as a beneficiary of your life insurance or retirement plan
- A charitable remainder trust
- A named endowment gift in memory of a loved one
- Gifts of stock or appreciated securities

If you'd like confidential information on planned giving, please call or write Jane Campbell, Director of Development, 60 Washington Street, Barre, VT 05641-4209 or 802.479.8516 (phone) or jane.campbell@state.vt.us (email).

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If you're not a member *of the Vermont Historical Society, please join 2,600 others who help preserve and teach Vermont history. Members also receive discounts on books and events, free admission to the library and museum, and subscriptions to the* History Connections *newsletter and* Vermont History *journal.* ***Please join—we need your support!***

If you're already a member—thank you! Please consider giving a gift membership to someone you know who may be interested in Vermont and its history.

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