



# The Vermont Landscape Conference: Views of the Past, Visions of the Future

**T**he Robert Hull Fleming Museum held a once-in-a-lifetime major exhibition of landscape paintings by Vermont artist Charles Louis Heyde in 2001.\* The opportunity to see Vermont's scenic vistas through the eyes of the popular nineteenth-century artist provided the incentive for the museum and the Center for Research on Vermont at the University of Vermont to organize an interdisciplinary conference on the history and future of the Vermont landscape. The event, which took place on March 31, 2001, brought together humanities scholars, scientists, environmentalists, planners, and concerned citizens. Lectures, workshops, and discussion sessions informed participants about the natural and man-made forces that created the Vermont landscape and the pressures for development that affect land use now and will continue to do so in the future.

The exhibition's title, "Old Summits, Far-Surrounding Vales," was taken from Charles Louis Heyde's poem "Burlington," in praise of the natural beauty of the Champlain Valley, published in the *Vermont Historical Gazetteer* in 1867. A resident of Burlington from 1856 until shortly before his death in 1892, Heyde painted familiar landmarks—the Winooski River, Lake Champlain, Camel's Hump, Mount Mansfield—in different seasons and times of day. His picturesque views continue to captivate us with their vision of Vermont as a special place where imposing mountain peaks tower over prosperous valley farms.

\* Note: In conjunction with the exhibition, the Fleming Museum published *Charles Louis Heyde: Nineteenth Century Vermont Landscape Painter*. The book contains essays by Heyde biographer Barbara Knapp Hamblett and art historian William C. Lipke, and a catalogue raisonné compiled by Guest Curators E. Thomas Pierce and Eleazer D. Durfee. It is illustrated with twenty-eight full-colored plates of Heyde's works. The publication is available through the Fleming Museum Store in hard- and softcover editions.

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The conference sought to address the questions of whether and how this distinctive landscape will be preserved in the twenty-first century.

Presentations at the conference reflected the diverse interests and expertise of the lecturers and panelists, each of whom addressed the issues from his or her own informed perspective. The texts that follow make the participants' contributions accessible to a wider audience and they are published in the hope that they will inspire individuals to become involved in community planning and preservation at the local level. Knowledge of Vermont's political, economic, and cultural history significantly enriches current debates on the meaning of community, and the value of historic preservation and environmental conservation.

ANN PORTER

*Director, Robert Hull Fleming Museum  
University of Vermont, Burlington*

FACING PAGE: *Mount Mansfield, ca. 1857. By Charles Louis Heyde (1822–1892). Oil on canvas. Collection of the Robert Hull Fleming Museum, University of Vermont, gift of Mrs. Guy Bailey (1944.3).*

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