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Compiled by PAUL A. CARNAHAN

# BOOK REVIEWS

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## *Discovering Black Vermont: African American Farmers in Hinesburgh, 1790–1890*

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By Elise A. Guyette (Burlington, Vt.: University of Vermont Press, 2010, pp. 232, \$26.95).

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Our understanding of Vermont’s past has gained richness and nuance in recent years as historians have worked to tell the stories of people who have largely been ignored. Lately, we’ve seen works about the lives of women, Abenakis, the Irish, and laborers in Vermont, among others.

Elise A. Guyette’s *Discovering Black Vermont: African American Farmers in Hinesburgh, 1790–1890* is a valuable contribution to this effort. Guyette uses the experiences of a community of black families in Hinesburgh to explore the African-American experience in Vermont from the state’s founding to the end of the nineteenth century.

African Americans have always been part of Vermont, as Guyette makes clear in the book’s opening pages. When the first African-American settler to this part of Hinesburgh visits the land he is buying, a seemingly primordial forest looms before him. “Shubael Clark paused his horse at the bottom of the Hill and studied the 2,000-foot rise that was darkened by a canopy of old-growth beech and maple trees, many six feet around, that prevented the sunshine from reaching the forest floor” (p.16). The year is 1795. Clark is moving with his wife, Violet, from nearby Monkton, where they had been living. The Clarks’ choice of the hilltop spot, Guyette writes, suggests that they were in this for the long haul. More easily accessible land was available in the valley below, but if they were willing to put in the back-breaking effort of clearing trees, this hilltop

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held more promise. Crops planted here would get more sun than those planted in the valley below.

The hilltop might also have offered some seclusion, Guyette writes. Although Vermont was the first state to outlaw adult slavery in its constitution, racism still lurked in the Green Mountains. In delving into the lives of family members, Guyette didn't have anything as simple as a diary or extensive correspondence from which to work. Instead, she had to rely on grand lists and pension and probate records, and the experiences of other black Vermonters, to get a feel for their lives. Such an approach can seem off-putting at first, as if a historian is taking liberties by making suppositions, but Guyette uses the technique judiciously. For example, she notes that other African Americans in Vermont often suffered vandalism, slanders, and lawsuits from their neighbors, so the Clarks and the other families were probably not immune from such strife.

To understand the racism that the families of the Hill (now known as Lincoln Hill) might have experienced, Guyette draws on the experiences of Charles Bowles. A black, Free Will Baptist preacher who lived in nearby Huntington, Bowles learned that some whites objected to being preached to by a black man. When Bowles arranged to lead a group of parishioners to a Hinesburg lake and baptize them, a gang of white men schemed to seize him, tie him to a wooden horse, and throw him into the water. Bowles got wind of the plan and announced that he would continue to sing and preach, even if he were attacked. According to Bowles' biographer, the gang dropped the plan when they realized that the preacher refused to be intimidated.

Guyette also found evidence of trust between the races. For example, one African-American widow turned to a white neighbor, whom she had long known, to represent her in probate court when she could have asked a black neighbor to help. In general, however, it is unclear how much the families of the Hill interacted with whites in the surrounding area. Since a network of rural exchange existed, the Clarks and the other African-American families of Hinesburg could have limited these interactions. We do know, however, that the three adult males living in the Hill community in 1808 were paying poll taxes, which indicates that they were making the trek into town to vote. They took on other civic responsibilities as well. Men from the families fought in the Revolutionary War, the War of 1812, and the Civil War.

By scouring the town grand list and probate records, Guyette tracked the families' fortunes as they rose after the Revolution, with more cleared land and livestock being added to the farmsteads. But they couldn't maintain their prosperity. Rising economic uncertainty and racism in the years preceding the Civil War played a role in the families' declining

fortunes. One by one during the second half of the nineteenth century, they decided to leave the Hill, hoping to find better opportunities. Some moved out of state, while others resettled elsewhere in Vermont. The only ones who remain on the Hill today are those who rest in the burying ground there.

Guyette believes that the story of this African-American community is integral to understanding Vermont today. Thinking of Vermont as one of the whitest states in the nation is misleading, she argues. It has always been more of a blend than most people realize. “[W]e need to see whiteness as the complex combination of color that science reveals—reflecting all the colors of the visible light spectrum,” she writes. “More of the histories and stories we tell our children need to reflect the mix of peoples and ideas that led to what we are today” (p. 13).

MARK BUSHNELL

*Mark Bushnell writes a regular Vermont history column, “Life in the Past Lane,” for the Sunday Rutland Herald and Barre-Montpelier Times Argus. He is the author of It Happened in Vermont, published by Globe Pequot Press.*

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### *The Indian History of an American Institution: Native Americans and Dartmouth*

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By Colin G. Calloway (Lebanon, N.H.: University Press of New England for the Dartmouth College Press of Hanover, N.H., 2010, pp. xxiii, 256, paper, \$24.95).

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Near the Connecticut River at Windsor, Vermont, a band of Abenakis erected two wigwams in 1834–1835 to shelter themselves from the winter cold. A Vermont newspaper reported they came from “the eastern shore of Lake Champlain, and are on a journey to Hanover, N.H. for the purpose of entering a member of the family in Dartmouth College” (p. 74). But did the prospective student, age 17, actually register and attend classes at Dartmouth? No record in the college archives shows that he did.

This perplexity is typical of the problems Colin G. Calloway confronted while researching this book, but readers will marvel at how adroitly he has weaved his narrative from “scattered glimpses” of Indian students at Dartmouth and its sister institution for younger students, Moor’s Charity School. Some got into the administrative records solely by their first names, such as “Katharine,” “Margaret,” and “Abigail.” (Yes, Eleazar Wheelock, Dartmouth’s founder, was admitting female

students two centuries before Dartmouth's stormy passage to coeducation in 1972.) Others are identified as "Peter Indian," "Andrew Indian," and "David Indian." Entries for "Lewis Indian," "Lewis Lovet," and "Lewis Vincent" are likely for a single student. Letters to Wheelock were sometimes dictated by Wheelock to dutiful students, especially when they had to confess to frolics in taverns. In one instance a letter of remorse to Wheelock matches Wheelock's handwriting.

Fortunately for Calloway, a resident of Norwich, Vermont, and professor of Native American Studies at Dartmouth, other sources compensated for these fragmentary records. Wheelock's most famous student, Samson Occom, authored the first autobiography written by a Native American and left about 1,000 pages of manuscript material, a resource not matched until the physician Charles A. Eastman, class of 1887, started writing early in the twentieth century. Most useful to Calloway were the records of the Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge in the Highlands and Islands and the Foreign Parts of the World, which funded the education of many Native Americans at Dartmouth with the prospect of returning them as Christian missionaries to their tribes-people. Because Dartmouth depended heavily on these donations, the record keeping was meticulous, explaining how every cent was spent. Calloway and his student assistants were equally meticulous in mining these financial records.

The result is an admirable account, thoroughly contextualized, of all that can be learned about "Indian History" at Dartmouth to 1970. Only a trickle of students were admitted in the college's first 200 years and only a handful graduated, but Wheelock's commitment to educating Native Americans became the tradition underlying Dartmouth's renewal in 1970 of the college's historic mission. Calloway's two longest chapters center on the emotional controversy about Dartmouth's Indian symbol and related issues, and give an overview of the enrollment of more than 700 Native Americans from more than 160 tribes since 1970. Today only the tribal colleges likely match Dartmouth's vigorous support of Native American education.

Rarely will Calloway's readers be frustrated by contradictory facts or assertions, but there are a few worth noting. He has Moor's Charity School ceasing to function in 1849 or 1850—the evidence is unclear—but he has the last student at Moor's arriving in 1854 and departing in 1856. Avid Dartmouth alumni will wince at the charge their alma mater was not "a first-tier academic institution" until after James O. Freedman became president in 1987. Persnickety sorts will wonder how Edward Connery Lathem's last name got misspelled. As Dartmouth's long-time librarian and a prolific editor of historical documents his book *Your*

*Son Calvin Coolidge: A Selection of Letters From Calvin Coolidge to His Father*, was published by the Vermont Historical Society in 1968.

Calloway's subtitle is "Native Americans and Dartmouth," not "at" Dartmouth, and accordingly he recounts how Dartmouth alumni who were not Native Americans have historically been involved, honorably and otherwise, in Indian affairs. Many Vermonters who became missionaries after attending Dartmouth make cameo appearances: Cutting Marsh from Danville, Alfred Finney from Randolph, and Edward Hyde Alden from Windsor, who came back to Tunbridge after thirty-five years working with Native Americans in Minnesota and the Dakota Territory. Redfield Proctor (Dartmouth class of 1851) is here because, as secretary of war for President Benjamin Harrison, he tried to find a suitable site for imprisoned Chiricahua Apaches. Albert Carrington (Dartmouth 1834) from Royalton is here because, as the first college graduate to convert to the Church of Latter-day Saints, he mapped and surveyed where the Utes lived in the Great Salt Lake Basin. A Hanover native, Asher Wright, is here because of his work defending the Senecas in western New York, and readers familiar with Vermont-born women as historical figures might wish more credit was given to his spouse, Laura Marie Sheldon Wright, born in St. Johnsbury, raised in Barnet, and educated at Newbury Seminary.

Calloway's overview of Native Americans at Dartmouth since 1970 merits an amplified book-length version worth writing within the next decade or two. But the pre-1970 narrative he gives us is so commendable I cannot envision any critic arguing this topic deserves a fresh look. He is thorough. He is comprehensive.

CHARLES T. MORRISSEY

*Charles T. Morrissey is a Dartmouth College alumnus (1956), a former director of the Vermont Historical Society, and author of Vermont: A Bicentennial History (1981).*

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## *Run Chamberlain, Run: Solving the 200-Year-Old Mystery of Runaway Pond*

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By Dennis D. Chamberlain (N.p.: Mount Olympus Publishing Company, 2010, pp. 140, paper, \$12.95).

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**D**ennis D. Chamberlain's book *Run Chamberlain, Run* has two related missions. The first is a detailed account of what happened when workers in June 1810 inadvertently destroyed the northern barrier

of Long Pond, a large mountain lake in Greensboro and Glover, Vermont, sending its entire contents into the valley below. Chamberlain also endeavors to determine the identity of one of the workers who, realizing that an immense wall of water was going to engulf a string of houses and mills in Glover, managed to run ahead to warn residents of the impending disaster.

The story of Runaway Pond is one of the better known sagas of early Vermont. When the first settlers came to Glover in the late 1790s they found a beautiful mountain lake, which they christened Long Pond. The lake was perched precariously on a height with a smaller body of water, Mud Pond, lying below its north end. Water from Long Pond flowed south toward Hardwick, while a scant flow of water from Mud Pond was the starting point of the Barton River, which flowed north. A mill belonging to Aaron Wilson on the Barton River often had to suspend operations because of the lack of water in Mud Pond. Therefore, Wilson and a group of local farmers who often frequented the area devised a scheme whereby they could cut a channel from Long Pond down to Mud Pond to increase the flow of the Barton River.

What Wilson and his cohorts did not realize was that the northern end of Long Pond consisted of quicksand deposited by a glacier thousands of years ago. What kept Long Pond intact was a thick crusting of hard clay next to the water. When Wilson's diggers cut through the clay that held the sand in place, the huge pressure from the lake caused its north end to explode. A huge wall of water sixty to seventy feet high and 100 yards wide rolled down the valley toward Barton, finally reaching Lake Memphremagog within six hours. Wilson's mill disappeared forever, as did other houses, barns, and business establishments; but miraculously, nobody was killed.

According to legend, one of the laborers, Spencer Chamberlain, a tall, athletic young man, was able to run just ahead of the flood just in time to save Aaron Wilson's wife, working at the mill. Other local historians, however, have cast doubt that it was Chamberlain who made the run, but rather one Solomon Dorr, the millowner's son-in-law. Whoever did get there first did indeed warn Mrs. Wilson in time to leave the mill before it was obliterated. The author, the great-great-grandson of Spencer Chamberlain, argues that Spencer, not Solomon Dorr, was the legendary runner who managed to race ahead of the initially slow-moving wall of water.

The author also carefully documents how the destruction of Long Pond created a long strip of very fertile ground that proved beneficial to later area farmers. He also hypothesizes that the very fragile structure of Long Pond might well have led to a disaster at some later date when the area was much more densely populated.

Dennis D. Chamberlain's search for the identity of the brave runner is an interesting quest, but he tends to devote too much time to this one issue and can be a bit repetitive. Nevertheless, he has written an interesting and useful book that gives the reader a very good picture of what happened that fateful day. The book is well researched and clearly written. The author employs abundant primary source material as well as a useful map to provide an excellent overview of this incident.

DANIEL A. MÉTRAUX

*Daniel A. Métraux is a professor of Asian Studies at Mary Baldwin College and adjunct professor in the graduate program at Union Institute and University. His most recent book is The Asian Writings of Jack London. He lives in Staunton, Virginia, and Newton, Massachusetts.*

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### *Loyalties in Conflict: A Canadian Borderland in War and Rebellion, 1812–1840*

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By J. I. Little (Toronto, Buffalo, and London: University of Toronto Press, 2008, pp. ix, 182, paper \$24.95).

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*Loyalties in Conflict* consists of two long chapters that present well-documented essays about particular aspects of the Eastern Townships of Canada that border Vermont (and to a much lesser extent New Hampshire and Maine). J. I. Little, professor of history at Simon Fraser University, does not attempt to write a comprehensive history of the border area. The first chapter focuses on the War of 1812; the second on the Lower Canadian Rebellions of 1837–1838.

American and Vermont historians have generally stopped at the south side of the border, as have Canadian scholars on the other side. The history of the Eastern Townships, which has enjoyed increasing attention of serious scholars, especially in the last two decades, makes little effort to cross into Vermont. Little asserts that seeing history through the analytic prism of a borderland provides a different view, but his attention remains focused primarily on the Eastern Townships and Canadian history.

In times of peace, especially with a permeable border that witnessed largely unfettered trade and free movement of people, the boundary had little palpable influence on the lives of those on either side. In times of commercial interruption, war, and rebellion, the borders took on heightened definition. During U.S. President Thomas Jefferson's embargo (1807–1809) and Non-Intercourse Act (1809), and the War of

1812, the border along the Eastern Townships experienced sudden tensions. The British officials in Lower Canada distrusted the loyalty of much of the population of the Eastern Townships, many of whom had recently drifted over that border from the United States in search of new land. The government would not provide uniforms or arm much of the local militia, fearing they might support their former neighbors to the south.

For the settlers in the Eastern Townships, intent on creating farms and building institutions, localism prevailed over nationalism and profit trumped war. They welcomed the markets stimulated by the war, and, with the help of their neighbors to the south, smuggling cattle and other items across the border to help provision the British Army became a lucrative cottage industry. The settlers performed militia service perfunctorily, and when called to active duty away from their homes, many, particularly the young and unmarried, fled to the United States. Though they did not respond to “tensions” along the border, a real threat produced a very different reaction. In 1813 the American construction of a large barracks for 1,200 soldiers in Derby at the south end of Lake Memphremagog and a blockhouse and military depot at Stewartstown, New Hampshire, on the Connecticut River, directly threatened the Eastern Townships. British authorities had no difficulty rallying “sedentary” militia units. Their ensuing attack at Derby in December 1813 destroyed the American barracks, stables, and storehouses and carried off a large quantity of military supplies. A subsequent attack a few days later at Stewartstown also achieved success.

Two decades after the War of 1812, when armed rebellions against the British colonial governments of Upper and Lower Canada erupted, the Eastern Townships had grown beyond fledgling settlement and had achieved a degree of maturity in economic and institutional development. They had formed churches and adopted millennialism and social movements like temperance and anti-Masonry that had drifted north from Vermont. But the Eastern Townships exhibited more interest in property, economic development, and political institutions responsive to local interests. Newspapers (despite a few printed in Vermont with Canadian mastheads), the powerful British American Land Company, and the vital infrastructure of roads and the promise of canals and railroads fixed the Eastern Townships’ attention much more on the urban entrepôt of Montreal and the seat of government at Quebec than on the United States.

The French-led reformers in Lower Canada wanted the Provincial Assembly to manage the revenues, bestow or withhold the patronage controlled by the British placemen, elect the Legislative Council to

replace the one with members appointed for life by the Crown, and have the Executive Council, or administration, responsible to the elected legislature. They also hoped to break the sway of the English-dominated Montreal merchant oligarchs. Many in the Eastern Townships, under-represented in the provincial government and displeased with what they regarded as economic isolation, easily related to and often supported the reform agenda.

But the primarily English-speaking residents of the Eastern Townships did not embrace the Patriot Rebellion when it turned to the rhetoric of the American Revolution for inspiration and to Vermont for military support and refuge. Also, they did not countenance the ethnic nationalism or, in Lord Durham's term, racial aspirations of French Canadians. Fearing reprisals for their early support of reform, some families and prominent spokesmen moved back to the United States. Most, however, adopted what Little describes as "a more pragmatic political stance thereafter, and politics would centre around economic development more than constitutional issues" (p. 95). The militia would also participate in the defense against the Patriots' raids launched from south of the border and post-rebellion marauding, more outlaw than political, that took place near Lake Champlain and the Richelieu River on the western fringe of the Eastern Townships.

Little sees the War of 1812 and the Patriot Rebellions of 1837–1838 as important to "transforming the borderland on either side of the forty-fifth parallel into a distinctively bordered land" (p. 108). His monograph (which would profit from a clear map rather than a marginally legible historic reproduction) demonstrates serious research and control of the primary and secondary sources. Little succeeds in defining "a Canadian borderland" and describing the Eastern Townships' developing loyalty to British North America in the context of their American neighbors.

H. NICHOLAS MULLER III

*H. Nicholas Muller III, currently treasurer of the Vermont Historical Society, formerly taught Canadian and Vermont history at the University of Vermont. He has published on the Patriot Rebellions of 1837–1838 (with John J. Duffy) and on commercial and smuggling relations with Canada during the Embargo and the War of 1812.*

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*Voices without Votes: Women and Politics in Antebellum New England*

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By Ronald J. Zboray and Mary Saracino Zboray (Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 2010, pp. x, 306, paper, \$35.00).

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On June 30, 1840, Mary Pierce of Brookline, Massachusetts, informed her fiancé that, “The Whig association . . . have been making a great fuss and everybody is so full of Harrison and log cabins that there is really a strong temptation to turn a Loco foco [Democrat] for effect” (p. 88). Introduced to Whig campaigning by her fiancé, Pierce was eager to gratify him with evidence of her partisan fervor. “I feel almost as much interest as the voters can,” she had told her parents earlier (p. 69). Neither Pierce nor any other woman in antebellum New England could vote, but that did not limit their interest in “talking politics,” according to Ronald and Mary Saracino Zboray. Indeed, the authors of *Voices without Votes* show that at least by 1840, many literate women were active partisans, engaging in civic culture through conversing and electioneering at rallies, picnics, and fairs. Less convincingly, they assert that these “politicos” persuaded voters and influenced lawmakers by taking sides.

*Voices without Votes* contributes to a growing body of evidence documenting the politicization of women in the nineteenth century, particularly their engagement in party politics. Scholars of print culture, the Zborays perused a vast number of letters and diaries (2,202) in search of New Englanders’ responses to reading. In the process, they uncovered a surprising amount of political commentary from women, amounting to 41 percent of those sampled (448), and an equal percent who read newspapers. The volume contains only scattered references to women from Vermont, either because of a dearth of material or research limitations (only one repository in the state, the Vermont Historical Society, is listed). In fact, with the exception of two chapters, the cited documents are largely drawn from middle- and upper-class women in Massachusetts, whose families were likely to preserve a record of the past and, for the most part, were associated with the antebellum political establishment. The authors recognize this pitfall but tend to neglect the class and regional biases of their data base by extending their conclusions a bit too far and failing to place New Englanders within the national political scene.

Despite this limitation, the Zborays are adept at showing the evolution of conservative women’s political awareness and integrating their

personal lives with state and local politics. Overall, readers will be struck by how often male relatives and economic insecurity sparked women's partisanship, reinforcing the notion that politics is personal. Structured chronologically, from the rise of the second party system to the Civil War, the volume is enlivened with chapters on specific women alternating with those on regional political developments. For example, the story of Eliza Bancroft Davis, who enhanced her husband's career as a U. S. senator in the mid-1830s and was dubbed the "most intellectual woman in Washington," is sandwiched between chapters about anti-Jacksonism and the advent of Whig electioneering in 1840.

As other scholars have shown, Whigs developed a style of public campaigning that appealed to the masses and relied partly upon the participation of women, whose supposed virtue, nonpartisanship, and patriotism were invoked to validate the party's pure motives. The Zborays contradict this notion that feminine ideals had much to do with women's engagement, emphasizing instead how the women in their sample became committed to Whig goals despite the proscription on female partisanship. The sociability Whigs offered allowed women to join—even organize—partisan events, to enjoy campaign rallies, and to converse about political and economic issues, albeit in a "diffident" or self-effacing style. More comfortable with stable party alignments, conservative women retreated from partisanship as Whigs fell apart during the late 1840s and 1850s and found nothing to cheer about until John Frémont and his wife Jesse galvanized political women into the Republican camp in 1856. During the presidential campaign, Sarah Hurlburt of Colchester, Vermont, queried her cousin Henry in Massachusetts, "*I am Fremont, how is it with you? I think you are the same*" (p. 179). Similar political talk from Democratic women is sparse, partly as a result of documentary limitations, but also because party stalwarts failed to appeal to women before northern Democrats splintered over slavery.

The Zborays' chapter on Dorrite women, who allied with Democrats in Rhode Island, provides a welcome exception, proving that women's partisanship during the era was not limited to the political establishment. Supporters of the Dorr Rebellion organized their own political associations, spoke in public, and commented in the press during the 1842–1844 campaign to expand the adult male franchise.

The fervor of Dorrite women highlights the most significant contradiction in *Voices without Votes*: Why did these politicized women not object to their own disenfranchisement? The Zborays believe that they were reluctant to weaken their potential female influence with any hint of radicalism, a conclusion indicating the power of separate spheres ideology to circumscribe their lives rather than its irrelevance. A more

systematic comparison of these partisan voices with those of their more outspoken contemporaries in the antislavery, temperance, and woman's rights movements, who challenged prevailing feminine ideals to varying degrees, would strengthen the analysis. Also problematic is the absence of comparative men's voices and sufficient evidence to indicate that these female partisans garnered influence with voters. The authors suggest that politically aware mothers schooled their daughters, yet the authority to persuade the electorate is what matters. Though *Voices without Votes* provides only a hint about that elusive dynamic, the Zborays' painstaking research is a welcome addition to the history of women's political engagement.

MARILYN S. BLACKWELL

*An independent scholar, Marilyn S. Blackwell has written widely on Vermont and women's history and recently co-authored, Frontier Feminist: Clarina Howard Nichols and the Politics of Motherhood (2010).*

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## *The First Vermont Cavalry in the Civil War— A History*

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By Joseph D. Collea, Jr. (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2010, pp. 336, paper, \$45.00).

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**T**his book is about a different Civil War than the one you may have read about before. Most of the men who served in both armies were foot soldiers. Thus, the usual histories describe exhausting marches and counter-marches, long periods of inactivity broken by picket duty, and perhaps a dozen or fifteen pitched battles. The First Vermont Cavalry fought seventy-five official battles, and uncounted skirmishes where shots were exchanged and men killed, yet no one has written a comprehensive history of their exploits.<sup>1</sup> Mr. Collea has finally rectified this omission. He makes skillful use of letters, diaries, and pension files as good substitutes for the memories that might have been tapped soon after the war. The result is a very valuable addition to the literature of Vermont's Civil War.

The First Vermont Volunteer Cavalry Regiment was not supposed to happen. Governor Erastus Fairbanks did not believe that the militia laws authorized him to raise a cavalry unit. But a politically well-connected Colchester farmer, Lemuel Platt, obtained authority directly from the Secretary of War to raise a cavalry regiment in Vermont, along with a colonel's commission. However, he had to do it in forty days. A thousand

men signed up in time. Recruiting for the Vermont cavalry always seems to have been easy. Going to war on horseback appealed to the romantic, and the practical assumed that riding would be less work than walking. As a young recruit wrote to his mother, "I have enlisted in the First Vermont Cavalry, Company H, so I shall not have to walk. I chose it before carrying a nap sack" (p. 207). But they overlooked the constant work required to maintain a horse. When the infantryman stopped marching, he could sleep, while the cavalryman had to spend another hour looking after his horse.

Mr. Collea does not permit the reader to believe that there was anything romantic about the real world of the Civil War cavalry. Dozens of their battles and skirmishes are described using writings of the participants themselves, including occasional Confederates. Many are spectacular examples of nineteenth-century prose, and downright frightening for a reader with imagination. Drawing on 157 pension files, he concludes each account of a fight with the details of wounds received by several of the survivors. "Private Henry O'Hayer was hit by a bullet that entered through his left lung and exited through his back. . . . Being unhorsed by the impact of the minie ball, O'Hayer fell to the ground, whereupon the following trooper's horses 'went over him and injured his knee'" (p. 66). This also illustrates another difference between infantry and cavalry: The cavalryman could be injured just by falling off his horse, and often was at risk of being ridden over. He also risked probable capture if his horse failed him, leaving him on foot and alone. An incredible 582 First Vermont cavalymen were taken prisoner, some more than once.<sup>2</sup> One hundred seventy two died in Confederate prisons.<sup>3</sup> By contrast, the Second Vermont Infantry, which fought twenty-eight battles from Bull Run to Appomattox, had 104 taken prisoner, of whom twenty-two died.<sup>4</sup>

The Civil War was the sunset of mounted troops, though armies continued to maintain them even into the Second World War. Union officers were still trying to resolve the best use of horsemen. Was it to charge into the ranks of the enemy with sabers, thrusting and slashing, or to ride swiftly to the battlefield, where they would dismount and fight with rapid-firing breech-loaders? This issue came to a head in the equipment and tactics of the First Vermont Cavalry. Yet the author does not discuss it, and it surfaces only in isolated remarks.

George Armstrong Custer was an advocate of the saber charge. The author notes that the First Vermont was delighted when he was promoted to command their division, for he fought their way.

When Custer assumed command of the 3rd Division in late September [1864], Horace Ide spoke for most of the Vermont boys when he

confided to his diary how much ‘this change delighted the men in the regiment who felt wronged when they were removed from Custer’s brigade during April.’ [Brigadier General James] Wilson had never been a popular leader among the men. (p. 231)

Wilson preferred fighting dismounted. But does Ide speak for the whole regiment?

Originally only ten carbines were issued to each company of 100 men, so they were a regiment of saber wielders (p. 23). In 1862, after Banks’s retreat from the Valley, new Sharps breech-loading carbines were issued, but only to four companies, designated “heavy cavalry” (p. 79). The other eight companies continued to rely on the saber. In December, 1863, Major William Wells wrote in a letter that he was trying to replace the Sharps with the seven-shot Spencer (p. 205). But we never learn whether some men, or all of the men, eventually received the Spencers. Did the regiment remain divided between saber swingers and shooters?

Another intriguing set of problems revolved around horses. The Vermonters were proud of riding Morgans. But did they for the whole war? The regiment left Vermont in February 1862 with a thousand Morgans. In September 1862, the regiment dragged into camp with only 335 horses, all but 14 of them broken down and of no further use (p. 93). By June 16, 1863, 879 men were mounted, implied by Collea on Morgans (p. 94). After that? Horses were continually dying in battle and breaking down. In 1863, General Henry Halleck, general-in-chief of the Union Army, remarked mournfully that he had to replace the equivalent of all the Army’s horses every two months.<sup>5</sup> What was done to replace the First Vermont’s horses after June of 1863? Did they ride army remounts, rather than buy Morgans from home? Or did a large percentage of the regiment end up periodically as “doboys”—dismounted cavalry serving as infantry? If so, it would be worthwhile to learn about their contribution to the defeat of the Confederacy.

The book provides a mine of information about the life and death of the cavalry soldier and his regiment. Like the infantry, he spent a good deal of time in camp, but he rode out often, as commanders took advantage of the horse’s mobility in picketing, scouting, and raiding. For the first half of 1863 the regiment confronted the rebel guerillas of John Singleton Mosby, fighting in small groups but mostly risking capture instead of death. As Lee marched toward Gettysburg in June 1863, they were sent to the Army of the Potomac. From then on they were in the mainstream of the war.

Long distance raids, two to the outskirts of Richmond, and many saber-waving cavalry charges enliven the book and distinguish it from

almost anything you have read about Vermont soldiers. It should be an essential part of any Civil War library.

GRANT REYNOLDS

<sup>1</sup>G.G. Benedict's *Vermont in the Civil War* (Burlington, Vt.: Burlington Free Press Association, 1888) does have a 161-page section on the First Vermont Cavalry (2: 533–694). Perhaps that discouraged other writers. Benedict's account is quite detailed, but reads as if it was taken from the regiment's orderly books. Mr. Collea's account is far more interesting.

<sup>2</sup>vermontcivilwar.org; original source the Vermont Adjutant General's Revised Roster of 1892.

<sup>3</sup>Benedict, *Vermont in the Civil War*, 2: 694.

<sup>4</sup>vermontcivilwar.org; original source Vermont Adjutant General's Revised Roster of 1892, and Benedict, *ibid.*, 1: 22.

<sup>5</sup>George W. Smith and Charles Judah, *Life in the North during the Civil War* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1966), 171. On the same page Smith and Judah note that Vermont had 69,071 horses in 1860 and 49,222 in 1866. Some of them must have gone to the First Vermont Cavalry!

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## *The History of Shelburne Farms: A Changing Landscape, an Evolving Vision*

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By Erica Huyler Donnis (Barre, Vt.: Vermont Historical Society; Shelburne, Vt.: Shelburne Farms, 2010, pp. 365, paper, \$34.95).

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**T**his book began as a documented reference account, for primarily internal use, of Shelburne Farms up to its 1972 establishment as a non-profit organization. Erica Donnis (the Farms' curator of collections from 1998–2002) has turned it into much more—a fascinating, accessible, comprehensive, and inspiring history of the estate from its pre-history to the present.

Shelburne Farms is a place of superlatives, each a story in itself: its extent—at its peak, almost 4,000 acres, combining thirty-two farms; its setting—with a view of lake and mountains declared by travel-writer William Dean Howells more beautiful than that of the Bay of Naples; its landscape of park, forest, and farm—shaped in consultation with landscaper Frederick Law Olmsted and forester Gifford Pinchot and realized over decades of planting up to 155,000 trees per year; its architecture—including the largest house in Vermont, the fairy-tale main barn embracing a two-acre courtyard, and a breeding barn built as the largest unsupported interior space in the United States; its connections to America's fabled Golden Age elite—Webbs, Vanderbilts, Pulitzers, Havemeyers; its prolonged economic impact—employing hundreds of local workers; its prize-winning artisanal cheese production; and its pioneering

role as a non-profit educational institution dedicated to environmental sustainability on the land.

As the Farms' National Historic Landmark status may attest, many of these stories connect with significant patterns in American history. Between the 1880s and World War I, New York's financial and social élite built elaborate seasonal retreats amidst fine gardens. Lila and Seward Webb's siblings alone were responsible for ten great houses in Newport, Rhode Island (including The Breakers and Marble House), the Hudson Valley, the Berkshires, New Jersey, and North Carolina. In its own way as ambitious and extravagant, the Webbs' creation differed from most of their families' vacation palaces by its additional goal of establishing a sustainable forest and farming operation that would encourage the most progressive agricultural models—a program embraced as well by Lila's brother George Washington Vanderbilt when he took over her Olmsted/Pinchot design team for Biltmore in Asheville, North Carolina.

The fascinating vision of the Webbs' house and lifestyle—their carriages, yachts, private railroad cars, greenhouses, stables, hunts, private golf course, illustrious guests, and extensive staff—was the subject of Joe Sherman's contextual and anecdotal *The House at Shelburne Farms* (Middlebury, Vt.: Paul S. Erickson, 1986), written at the time that the house was converted into a luxury inn. Donniss's history is more scholarly, substantial, and multifaceted. While giving the spectacular buildings and lifestyle of the founding Webbs their due, she taps the resources of the Farms' precious archives (facts, photographs, and illuminating quotes) to paint a more comprehensive history of the overall estate as her real subject.

Important to her story are the progressive vision that informed the formation of the estate and the dedication of the Webb family through multiple generations to preserving their land. While its counterparts became museum houses, golf clubs, and university campuses, the Webbs managed Shelburne Farms' survival through the diminishing of the great Golden Age fortunes, wartimes, depression, the depredations of time, the vicissitudes of regional agriculture, and inevitable pressures for subdivision and development. Shedding over time the trappings of almost inconceivable privilege, they held to the love of the land and the agricultural interests of the founding generation. Through what Tom Slayton in his foreword calls an “act of creative relinquishment,” they pursued new land use, economic, and organizational models to foster a pioneering vision of holistic sustainability through example and education.

In focusing on the estate and its evolving vision, Donniss has written a book that not only is of general national interest for its treatment of one of America's great estates, but is also of particular relevance as Vermont history. Shelburne Farms is not an imported aberration. In

Vermont from the 1860s through World War I, native sons and newcomers alike, supported by wealth garnered out of state, returned to the land to form gentleman farms notable for their progressive ideas of agricultural improvement and land conservation: the Billingses in Woodstock, the Parks, Everetts, and Colgates in Bennington, Battell in Middlebury, the Lincolns in Manchester, the Martins in Plainfield, the Darlings and Vails in Lyndon. They introduced improved breed stock, technologies, and methods. Their idealistic goals of improving Vermont agriculture through example did not necessarily bear immediate fruit. But they laid the groundwork for values of continuing agricultural experimentation, local production and marketing, and, most importantly, appreciation for and conservation of the working landscape that have become an important part of the contemporary Vermont identity. Most of their stories have yet to be told and likely can never be so thoroughly documented. However, by documenting Shelburne Farms' embodiment of an enduring attachment to the land as a productive as well as a beautiful resource and its tempering of manifest wealth with social and environmental relevance and responsibility, Donniss has underlined special Vermont qualities of this remarkable place and opened a window onto what was a broader and significant phenomenon within the state.

GLENN M. ANDRES

*Glenn M. Andres is professor of the History of Art and Architecture at Middlebury College.*

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### *Why Coolidge Matters: How Civility in Politics Can Bring a Nation Together*

*Compiled by National Notary Association (Chatsworth, Calif.:  
National Notary Association, 2010, pp. xxvii, 172, \$29.95).*

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### *The High Tide of American Conservatism: Davis, Coolidge, and the 1924 Election*

*By Garland S. Tucker III (Austin, Tex.: Emerald Book Company,  
2010, pp. 325, paper, \$29.95).*

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**M**ost readers of this review who can recall their school-day depictions of Calvin Coolidge will remember him portrayed as a taciturn, do-nothing president. Both these volumes are contributions to the burgeoning Coolidge renaissance, inaugurated when Ronald Reagan took down Truman's portrait from the White House cabinet room and

replaced it with one of Coolidge, elevating his reputation to that of a great or near-great president. *Why Coolidge Matters*, the more persuasive of the two volumes, is a coffee table book compiled by the National Notary Association that includes nineteen essays, some by historians and others by public figures familiar to most readers. A consensus proclaims Coolidge's civility as a lasting value for American life and politics but also asserts additional still relevant policies.

People do not generally know that as governor of Massachusetts Coolidge promoted the expansion of a beneficent government to aid the underprivileged to a greater extent than he is credited. However, he was never the advocate of aggressive federal action as Woodrow Wilson had been or Franklin Roosevelt would become. One of the sidelights to Coolidge's story is his disapproval of Herbert Hoover's efforts to intervene in the economy during its decline after he left office. In fact, the prosperity during his administrations is credited as a Coolidge achievement brought about by reductions in taxes as well as the national debt, a process inaugurated by Warren Harding. His success in surmounting the Harding scandals is also regarded as an achievement. As well, Coolidge came into the presidency at the same time the radio came of age and used it frequently and quite effectively.

Among the more interesting essays in *Why Coolidge Matters* is the one by Alvin Felzenberg of the University of Pennsylvania, who records Coolidge's seldom commented upon efforts in behalf of religious and racial tolerance. Coolidge's political prominence coincided with the rise of the second Ku Klux Klan, with a membership of five million, whose founding was attributed in part to the popularity of the film *Birth of a Nation*. Coolidge had voted while lieutenant governor in favor of a bill to restrict the showing of the film and as president had refused to allow the Klan to gather in a federal building. He dedicated a veterans' hospital at Tuskegee, and when he learned the all-white staff was abusing the patients, he dismissed them and directed the hiring of a black staff instead.

*The High Tide of Conservatism: Davis, Coolidge, and the 1924 Election*, by Garland S. Tucker III, reads like a promotion of conservative values and their effectiveness when implemented. Tucker, the CEO of a finance company and not a trained historian, unlike the contributors to *Why Coolidge Matters*, accompanies his text with endnotes, which are not always reassuring. For example, when referring to a practice that is said to continue at Washington and Lee University to the "current day," he cites a 1981 publication.

Tucker's enthusiasm extends not only to Coolidge but to John Davis, Coolidge's Democratic opponent in the 1924 presidential election. Davis,

according to Tucker, was as insistent as Coolidge in his opposition to federal intervention in the economy except to lower taxes and reduce the national debt. Tucker credits Coolidge with being the last president to treat “a major industrial recession by classic laissez-faire methods, allowing wages to fall to their natural level” (p. 127). His message that the 1924 election was the high point of American conservatism is persuasive. Davis was the last nominee from the conservative, Jeffersonian wing of the Democratic Party. Since then “the Republican Party has set on an increasingly conservative course while the Democratic Party shifted ever leftward.”

It is notable as well that admirers of Coolidge’s epigrammatic wit will find new material to delight them in both of these books.

SAMUEL B. HAND

*Samuel B. Hand is professor emeritus of history at the University of Vermont, a past president of the Vermont Historical Society, and author and editor of many works on Vermont history, including The Star that Set: The Vermont Republican Party, 1854–1974 (2002).*

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*Managing the Mountains: Land Use Planning, the New Deal, and the Creation of a Federal Landscape in Appalachia*

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By Sara M. Gregg (New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press, 2010, pp. xviii, 285, \$40.00).

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Vermonters may not always think of themselves as living in Appalachia. They may not always make connections between their state’s environmental history and that of states to the south. And they may not always appreciate the degree to which federal initiatives have shaped the Vermont landscape. But as Sara Gregg demonstrates in *Managing the Mountains*, both the southern and northern Appalachians (of which the Green Mountains are a part) share a history of federal land use management with roots that date back to the early decades of the twentieth century. Gregg, who teaches history at the University of Kansas, focuses on Vermont and Virginia, tracing Progressive Era and New Deal policies that ultimately transformed the Appalachian landscape from one “dotted with small subsistence farms into a patchwork of federal landscapes” (p. 4). In the process she speaks to larger points in related literature by environmental and political historians. Her work draws attention to divergent perspectives between federal officials and local residents,

highlighting the contested nature of conservation policy in the United States, and it elaborates on the expansion and intensification of federal land policy leading up to the New Deal.

Following a preface and introduction, the book is presented in two sections, each with three chapters. Part one begins with a chapter on Virginia's Blue Ridge Mountains, in which Gregg examines natural resource development, ecological change, and the largely self-sufficient nature of farming in the region. Gregg highlights differences between local perspectives on the region's economic viability and those of federal researchers in the 1920s, who framed agriculture in the region as largely futile. Their views, she argues, helped define the approach taken to the region by federal policymakers during the 1930s. Chapter two turns to Vermont, offering a parallel examination of land use and economy during the early decades of the century. But unlike in Virginia, where federal officials took the lead in managing reform, Vermont's approach to land use reforms were managed primarily at the state and local levels. Here Gregg offers a detailed account of farm life in Vermont, examining cultural meanings associated with the idea of rural self-sufficiency. She highlights work by the Vermont Commission on Country Life (1928) and others designed to improve land use efficiency in the state, in part through the contexts of tourism and forestry. Chapter three breaks with the regional configuration of the previous chapters to trace the academic, political, and policy roots of land use planning in the United States during the first three decades of the century. This is an important but tricky chapter: Despite its national focus, Gregg works hard to maintain links to Vermont and Virginia, though at times it feels as if her regional approach fades into the background. Readers with specific interests in Vermont will need to wait a bit longer for the state to make another appearance.

Chapter four explores the creation of Virginia's Shenandoah National Park (1936). Gregg highlights the growing willingness of federal officials to acquire private property for the sake of land use initiatives. This required that the park's promoters reinterpret (and reconstruct) the area's long history of human settlement in favor of a more pristine view, and it required that they dispossess mountain residents of their homes—a process fraught with complexity, confusion, and heartbreak. Chapter five turns back to Vermont, again contrasting it with Virginia's experiences. Gregg reminds readers of the willingness among Vermont officials to work in limited partnership with the federal government, drawing at times on its resources, but always in ways that prioritized local- and state-level control. Chapter five also tackles some familiar terrain for many who follow Vermont history, including the flood of 1927, the Green

Mountain Parkway, and the establishment of the Green Mountain National Forest (1932), though each is packaged in new ways designed to speak to the book's larger points. Chapter six examines the work of the federal resettlement administration in both Vermont and Virginia. Gregg examines efforts to relocate families displaced by Virginia's national park to productive homesteads, and she traces contentious and failed efforts in Vermont to relocate farm families from "submarginal" to productive farmland. The book concludes with an epilogue reiterating the book's main points through discussions about returning forests in Appalachia and the passage of wilderness legislation in Vermont.

*Managing the Mountains* is an ambitious book, in part because it deploys a comparative strategy between two regions that followed very different tracks relative to federal land use policy in the early twentieth century. The extent of these differences makes it critical that Gregg remind readers of the common historical threads that bind them and that make it logical to pair them in the same book. At a few points these threads become a bit harder to follow, yet on balance Gregg pulls them together effectively, using both differences and similarities to constructive ends. Readers with interests in Vermont land use and in comparative approaches to historical storytelling (whether involving Vermont or not) will find value and interest in that.

BLAKE HARRISON

*Blake Harrison teaches in the Department of Geography at Southern Connecticut State University and is the co-editor of the forthcoming book, A Landscape History of New England.*

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*Forty-Six Years of Pretty Straight Going:  
The Life of a Family Dairy Farm,  
The Wyman Farm, Weybridge, Vermont*

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By George Bellerose (Middlebury, Vt.: Vermont Folklife Center, 2010, pp. 224, paper, \$25.00).

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There is no dearth of books about the family farm, but even if your shelves are crowded, make room for this one. It is the story of a small Addison County farm and the efforts of the Wyman and Kehoe families to keep it going against great odds. Attractive, engagingly organized and written, clear-eyed and informative, this ambitious book takes you into the vital center of a perilous, shrinking enterprise.

The author's superb black and white photographs both please the eye and instruct. The moody landscape views suggest one of the pleasures of working the land, but a corn chopper mired in mud and a breeding technician with his arm inside a cow remind us of unromantic realities. The photographs are just one feature of a splendidly designed book with every element from paper quality to font choice revealing the finest professional care.

The text consists of four distinct parts repeated over the course of ten chapters dealing with the land, cattle, machinery, finances, family life, retirement, and the future of farming. First there are the words of George Bellerose, introducing the book and prefacing each chapter, providing much of the book's statistical and other hard information. Next, also by Bellerose, are monthly summaries, April 2004–December 2005, giving a calendar of events and activities and often quoting Larry Wyman's notebooks. An unusual feature are the extended commentaries by family members in their own words, twelve by Larry Wyman, thirteen by his brother Grayson, and a few by other people. These contribute much to the intimate human story of the farm. Finally, there are twenty-one small sections called "A Look Back," drawing on documents from Vermont's agricultural history. These excerpts provide some perspective. The life of the small farmer is always difficult, but it would be hard to beat the exertions of one Seth Hubbell, an eighteenth-century pioneer in Wolcott, Vermont, who wrote that "My family necessities once obliged me to carry a moose hide thirty miles on my back, and sell it for a bushel of corn" (p. 97).

The book is rich with information, some of it general and more or less familiar, much particular to this farm. We are reminded of Vermont's precipitous decline in the number of farmers and cows over several decades: In 1965, about 12 percent of the people were on farms and earning at least part of their income milking some 233,000 cows; in 2006, about 1 percent were milking 141,000 cows. But we are also told that some dairy operations are absorbed by other, bigger, ones, and that thanks to better breeding and nutrition Vermont's production remains more or less constant, making up more than 60 percent of New England's milk with 80 percent of it, either liquid milk or other dairy products, sold out of state. Long-range difficulties remain, however, and are probably getting worse. The farmer has no control over pricing, which is boom or bust—all too often bust. Prices drop, the farmer produces more to make up, and overproduction depresses prices further. Big operations benefit from economies of scale, and for big you have to look beyond the so-called megafarm of the East, 500 to 1,000 cows, to the colossi of the West. The web site of Idaho's Bettencourt Dairies tells us that the

company operates thirteen “milking facilities,” employs 465 people, and farms 30,000+ acres to feed its 60,000 cows (<http://www.bettencourt dairies.com>).

A brief review cannot do justice to the book’s detailed account of the Wyman farm. To take just Chapter 6, “Pamper the Cow,” we learn about the farm’s breeding program, the desired conformation of a cow (tall legs, high udder), the costs and advantages of artificial insemination, the complexities of feeding, and the various ailments of these animals, which Larry Wyman characterizes as “very complicated pieces of machinery” (p. 123). In this chapter and throughout, what emerges is the precise knowledge successful farming requires, the experience it takes to acquire it, and the unremitting labor demanded to put it into practice.

What really touches the heart, however, is the family narrative. The story has an arc: early struggles, heavy labor and deep satisfaction, modest success, the ills of advancing age, retirement, the sale of the cows. The Wymans sell the development rights to the Vermont Land Trust to keep the land in agriculture. The Kehoes are hired in 1997 and become like members of the family. After Jeanne dies of leukemia in 2005, Dan, an expert mechanic, carries on, leasing the farm and hoping to buy it, not to milk but to add to his repair business a mix of other ventures such as cropping and raising beef and veal. All this is told with deep feeling but no sentimentality. This is life.

Finally, mention should be made of the book’s helpful bibliography and Tom Slayton’s foreword, a fervent plea to preserve what is left of Vermont farming.

CHARLES FISH

*Charles Fish is the author or co-author of four books about Vermont, including In Good Hands: The Keeping of a Family Farm (1995) and In the Land of the Wild Onion: Travels Along Vermont’s Winooski River (2006).*