



It is up to us to get the word out about the vigor and subtlety with which Vermont women have defined the terms of their existence. Vermont women, after all, have always been acting, thinking—and at the center of Vermont life.

Women's History: The State of the Art

By CONSTANCE M. MCGOVERN

More than a decade ago, Faith Pepe challenged the readers of this journal "to close a major gap in Vermont historiography" by making the story of women's lives an integral part of Vermont's history. In that 1977 pioneering article, "Toward a History of Women in Vermont: An Essay and Bibliography," Pepe lamented that because Vermont historians, like others, traditionally have defined history as the saga of man and his efforts at politics, war, and diplomacy, chroniclers have neglected the experiences of women.¹

Significant insights into women's lives, Pepe discovered, were not to be found in the standard Vermont histories, in town histories (with very few exceptions), nor even in the works of social historians like Stewart S. Holbrook, Lewis D. Stilwell, or Harold Fisher Wilson. The few biographers of women had presented their subjects "as atypical and essentially removed from history," while other writers (at least at the time of Pepe's article) had neglected interpretive histories of organizations like the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, the Woman's Board of Missions, or the Woman's Relief Corps.²

Finding a few hardy souls who had gone against the tide, Pepe applauded their efforts. Abby Hemenway, for instance, resisted advice about the unwomanly nature of a career as an historical editor and, in the "miscellany of historical materials" that constitutes her *Vermont Gazetteer*, preserved some of the "domestic and social life of Vermont women." Pepe noted, too, the fleeting efforts of one editor of *The Vermonter* (1895-1907) to acknowledge the accomplishments of the first generation of female college graduates, professionals, and club organizers and the "hesitant beginning" the publishers of *Vermont History* made in the late

1930s with the printing of “a number of valuable and well-documented pieces on early Vermont school-teachers, seamstresses, and mill girls.”³

In her forays into libraries, historical societies, and archives, however, Pepe uncovered voluminous materials that speak to the rich heritage of the female experience in Vermont. Diaries, letters, and autobiographies, even antiquarian pieces, reveal fascinating glimpses about women’s lives. Pepe marvelled, for instance, at the evidence she found of the outspokenness of an indignant clergyman’s wife when maltreated by her husband’s parishioners, at the courage of those nineteenth-century Vermont women who extended the prescriptive exhortations of feminine “duty” to include their own foreign missionary work or public speaking for “good causes,” and at the stamina of an orphan like Carrie Kilgore who not only worked in a woolen factory as a child but eventually earned a law degree in 1883 and argued before the Supreme Court of the United States.⁴

Pepe admonished historians to look at these women’s lives and, especially, at the ways in which women themselves interpreted these experiences. How Vermont women “adapted their thinking, beliefs, and actions to changes in the family structure and society” are as important to our understanding of history, she suggests, as gubernatorial elections, trade agreements, or military campaigns. Women’s experiences are not merely personal and idiosyncratic, they have affected family and community life, social movements, and public policy. Westward expansion, religious revivals, depressions, wars, and immigration, moreover, have had a different impact on women than on men, and Pepe explained that until we explore the ways in which “industrialization, urbanization, and emigration from Vermont affected [women’s] lives” (and, I would add, how Vermont women have affected those historical events), we have only part of the story of the past. An astute historian, Pepe not only raised these issues for Vermont historians, she supplied a bibliography of over two hundred sources to begin the work that would allow women to “come to occupy their proper place in history.”⁵

When Pepe wrote in the late 1970s, Vermont women’s history was at the stage where Gerda Lerner had placed most women’s history a decade before. At that point, the historians who had launched a campaign to compensate for the invisibility of women in the historical record erred on the side of chronicling “firsts.” Elizabeth Blackwell as the first woman to attain a medical degree, Myra Bradwell as the first woman lawyer, or Sybil Ludington as a female counterpart to Paul Revere received much attention. Lerner, admitting the need to unearth women’s historical accomplishments, nevertheless characterized such compensatory and “great woman” approaches as “topically narrow, predominantly descriptive, and generally devoid of interpretation.”⁶

Exceptional Vermont women have had their chroniclers as well. Gerald A. Hinckley's *A Booklet of Achievement: Vermont Woman, 1791-1979*, the Vermont State Division of the American Association of University Women's 1980 publication of *Those Intriguing Indomitable Vermont Women* and, more recently, Marion Tinling's *Women Remembered* all provide interesting details about the feats of Vermont women. Susannah Johnson, Indian captive; Olympia Brown, minister; Linda Richards, trained nurse; Lucy Wheelock, organizer of kindergartens; Clarina Howard Nichols, journalist and suffragist; and Dorothy Canfield Fisher, writer, all receive multiple mentions.⁷

While the cataloguing of exceptional women reminds us of the prominent roles women played and restores some of them to the historical record, ultimately it becomes little more than an imitation of the "great man theory" of history. This approach tells us little about the activities of most women, ignores the varied historical experiences of women of different classes and races, and perpetuates our ignorance about the significance to society as a whole of women's activities. Further, by merely chronicling exceptional women's deeds, historians have done even those women a disservice. Having neglected the ways in which large numbers of women (and men) were aided and affected by "great" women like Jane Addams or Margaret Sanger, historians often have overlooked the ways in which these women grew into feminist awareness as well.

Jane Addams, for instance, was far more than the founder of Hull House, more than an influential Progressive or representative of a group of frustrated college-trained women with no place to use their education. She was an inspiration to Progressive era settlement house workers and to future generations of women precisely because she provided a support network for women and created new structures for living. Rather than acknowledging Margaret Sanger as a woman who raised a revolutionary challenge to the centuries-old practice of man-made laws dominating and ruling the bodies of women, historians often have viewed her merely as the founder of the birth control movement.

Another early phase of women's history was characterized by the theme of "woman as victim." Asking how and why women were victimized has its usefulness, but that approach presents women as largely passive or mindlessly reactive to male pressures. It fails to illustrate the positive ways in which women have functioned in history. Victimization is only one, and not the central, aspect of women's history. Furthermore, to argue victimization as the rationale for women's experiences is to subscribe to a male-defined conceptual framework: one that assumes women were oppressed by the standards and values established by men.⁸

A more valid approach to the history of women consists of an analysis of how they functioned in that male-defined world *on their own terms*.

For example, early researchers had presented the nineteenth-century woman as the victim of the rise of “separate spheres” and the “cult of true womanhood.” They emphasized the gender-specific values and obligations of this middle-class ideology, especially woman’s restriction to family life, female moral superiority, and the sexual purity of women compared to the natural licentiousness of men. In essence, some historians argued, men had created a conspiracy to entrap women in the home to accommodate men’s needs in an emerging capitalist marketplace.⁹

Later researchers, however, have suggested a different scenario. Women, it seems, were the principal creators of this ideology. Sarah Hale, the editor of *Godey’s Lady’s Book*; Catherine Beecher, author of the widely read *Treatise on Domestic Economy* and “feminizer” of the teaching profession; and all those popular female novelists (the “damn scribbling women” Nathaniel Hawthorne so resented) were the major arbiters of nineteenth-century American women’s values. Moreover, women often used the virtues dictated by the “true woman” ideology to gain autonomy in the home and to enlarge their domestic sphere. The concept of women as pure and passionless, for example, while it can be repressive, was actually pivotal in liberating many women from unwanted pregnancies. Over the course of the nineteenth century, middle-class women, especially, redefined their obligation to protect the sanctity of family life into a theory of social feminism that extended women’s realm into the schools, the streets, and municipalities. Women’s colleges, women’s clubs, library work, and social work became patent extensions of women’s “separate” sphere as well.¹⁰

The “true woman” and the social feminist were white, middle-class women. However valiantly the members of the moral reform societies who sought a better life for the prostitute or the abolitionists who claimed sisterhood with the woman slave tried to bridge the gap between class and race, their efforts remained largely rhetorical. Yet even their sentimental notion of a “separate sphere” sisterhood, historians now suggest, contributed to the forging of a female solidarity that was necessary for the birth of the nineteenth-century women’s rights movement. In reinterpreting these activities, historians at last have begun to challenge the one-dimensional aspects of compensatory or “woman as victim” approaches to the study of women’s history; they not only raise new issues but move us beyond the limitations of “great” person cataloguing and the myopia of middle-class history. By embarking upon this major revisionist mission, historians are making women historically visible and, more importantly, they are revealing a lost dimension of history—that of women’s work, values, relationships, and politics.¹¹

These studies are changing the face of history nationwide. Articles concerning issues in women’s history appear as a matter of course in every

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This 1917 broadside from the Vermont Historical Society collection illustrates one of the many organized activities for women in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

major historical journal. Women who are professional historians have moved from their own marginal special interest committees in historical organizations to the mainstream elective offices, and sessions devoted to women's history have proliferated at every historical conference. At prestigious events, like the Berkshire Conferences on the History of Women, historians working under the assumption of gender as an organizing and interpretive concept examine issues ranging from gender and class in right-wing politics to explorations of identity in Lesbian art. They study everything from the disadvantages of reform for Black and Chicana women to the ways in which white women office workers have redefined work and family. They analyze Black women writers of the Harlem Renaissance, the relationship of business and women's history, the interplay of feminism and psychoanalysis, the uses of images of motherhood in times of public stress, and the boundaries of acceptable behavior for women in law and medicine. Studies of the relationship between capitalism and patriarchy in American agriculture vie for attention with questions about the connection between female consciousness and working-class militancy. It is an exciting time to be working in women's history.

It is an even more exciting time to be working in Vermont women's history; there is so much to do. In the past, a few people like Lilian Baker Carlisle, Betty Bandel, and Madeleine Kunin, among others, contributed short articles to *Vermont History*, *Vermont Life*, the *Chittenden County Historical Society Bulletin*, and other local publications, although, for the earlier years, T. D. Seymour Bassett's 1946 *Vermont History* article on the women's suffrage campaign of 1870 stands alone. More recently, Elise Guyette has integrated the theme of women's rights in her children's textbook, *Vermont: A Cultural Patchwork*, and the Vermont Academy of Arts and Sciences has sponsored a conference, "Vermont Women: Thinkers, Creators, Doers." At that meeting, Patricia Austin, Deborah Clifford, and Marshall True, in their presentations on nineteenth-century women whose decisions about careers, activities, and lifestyles altered the structure of their families and communities, made worthy contributions to the historiography of Vermont women. The Vermont Council on the Humanities has promoted the roles of women in its literature series in libraries across the state; in its history series, the Council unabashedly has assumed that women's experiences are as crucial to the understanding of Vermont, American, and constitutional history as those of men.¹²

We have had marvelous photographic exhibits touring the state: most notably "The Strong and Spirited Women of the Northeast Kingdom," assembled by Louise Swainbank and the Fairbanks Museum in St.

Johnsbury, and “Indomitable Vermont Women: Women in Vermont, 1800-1920,” organized by Faith Pepe and the Brattleboro Museum and Art Center. Eleanor Ott and other folklorists are busily recording the oral memoirs of the extraordinary lives of “ordinary” Vermont women. Those of us in the academic world who have benefitted from the cooperation and enthusiasm of the archivists and manuscript curators at depositories like the Vermont Historical Society, the Sheldon Museum, or Special Collections at the Bailey/Howe Library of the University of Vermont are encouraging our students to explore women’s lives in their papers and theses.



Schoolteaching was one early way for Vermont women to enter the work force. A teacher and her fifth-grade class at Lawrence Barnes School, Burlington, 1896.

It is not enough, however. Our response to Faith Pepe’s challenge of 1977 has been muted. We have too little in the way of interpretive history; even less that has been published and is widely available. A few articles have appeared in *Vermont History*, and they are an important beginning – but only a beginning. Margaret Nelson’s work on nineteenth-century Vermont schoolteachers raises some of the issues that cry out to be addressed. Nelson reexamines the assumption that teaching, as paid employment outside the home, automatically guaranteed greater autonomy and broader life choices for all those single young women who monitored Vermont classrooms. Warning that “progress” is an alluring mindset, Nelson argues that female schoolteachers, although they were

independent wage earners for a time, did not necessarily seek freedom from the authority of their parents, greater possibilities for setting up a separate home, or opportunities to improve women's status. Her conclusion that "common schoolteachers joined the labor force without ever leaving home" reminds us of the pervasiveness of the "cult of true womanhood" in these young women's lives and cautions us not to be overly sentimental about that underpaid, quickly "feminized" opportunity for female employment.¹³

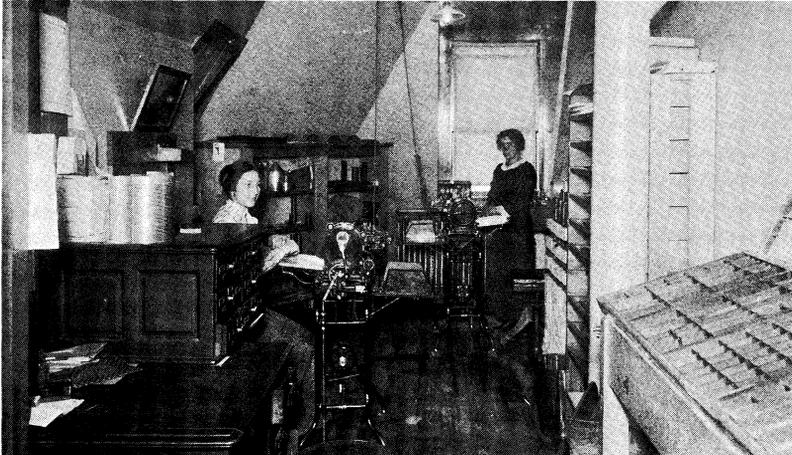


How did women employees of the Montpelier Steam Laundry (Whitcomb Brothers, Proprietors), seen here in an 1890s photograph, regard this commercial extension of the traditional women's sphere?

On the other hand, Thomas Dublin's analysis of the lives of the young women from Vermont and elsewhere who worked in the Lowell mills (including Mary Paul, some of whose letters he published in *Vermont History*) proposes that new employment opportunities did, indeed, alter the lives of Vermont women in positive ways. Dublin found that mill girls worked for themselves, not for their parents' mortgages or their brothers' educations. They married at a later age than young women who did not work in the mills, did not return home or marry farmers, were closer in age to their husbands, and bore fewer children. Dublin suggests that their savings and their closeness in age to their husbands may have placed these women on a more equal footing in their marriages. Not only did they exercise considerable choice in selecting spouses who had the potential to provide them with a brighter economic future, but they undoubtedly participated with their husbands in decisions about the benefits of smaller families.¹⁴

Deborah Clifford's articles on suffrage and temperance and her forthcoming work on women's clubs take a different tack and are equally exemplary. She, too, illustrates how Vermont women, through their

organized activities, found a way to exert their influence, especially in the public arena. In the late nineteenth century, some of these women perceived evils in their own communities, and in the process of trying to rout out “demon rum” or remedy the constitutional disenfranchisement of women they learned the techniques and effectiveness of organizing. More importantly, they discovered a common identity with other women—an experience that perceptibly altered their self image, their world view, and the social dynamics of their communities.¹⁵



Corporations provided clerical employment for women like these shown in the printing room of the National Life Insurance Company in Montpelier. Did gainful employment alter their perceptions of themselves, one another, or the society in which they lived?

As important as these studies are, analyses of the historical significance of the experiences of teachers, mill girls, and organized women merely scratch the surface of Vermont women’s history. No one has yet addressed the two areas that Faith Pepe found so lacking in attention in 1977. Noting that Abby Hemenway mentioned a number of midwives who had practiced in Vermont in the early nineteenth century, Pepe wondered why they were gone by the 1850s. Samuel Thomson, that itinerant botanical practitioner and bane of the traditionally trained medical profession, then could claim that the “unskilled treatment” of doctors raised the infant mortality rate in the state to new heights. What did become of Vermont midwives, Pepe asked. Did they protest? And why would ordinarily frugal Vermonters pay doctors a twelve to twenty dollar obstetrical fee when midwives charged only one dollar? Pepe also raised questions about the 28,000 unmarried women and widows in

Vermont following the Civil War. “How did these women survive?” Pepe wanted to know; “What was their attitude toward their status as single women? Did single women develop a sense of sisterhood, which encouraged feminist sentiments, or did they generally accept their lot without protest?”¹⁶

Pepe as easily could have raised inquiries about the patterns of marriage and divorce, the status of women in prisons and asylums, the work of women in the underground railroad or in abolitionist societies, the roots of domestic violence, or the contributions of religious orders of women. Where are the histories of our ethnic women, our rural women, our Abenaki women? We have sagas about quarry workers and their union activities, but what of their wives? A whole range of issues intimately affecting women’s lives still beg for attention. We know very little about the birth control movement in Vermont, for instance. While a woman’s ability to control her own fertility has been a liberating experience for many, there is considerable evidence that some activists in the early Vermont Birth Control League worked harder to control, rather than liberate, women—especially the poor and the immigrant.¹⁷ What has been the plight of poor women and how have working-class women resisted being cast as passive victims? Vermont historians need to address these issues to illustrate not only the manner in which women shaped history, but also to show how events and trends in Vermont history affected women and defined womanhood.

The truth of the matter is that women’s history in Vermont by 1987 was as nearly in the shadows as it had been in 1977. Recognizing that something needed to be done, in March of 1987 Governor Madeleine Kunin, the Governor’s Commission on Women, and the Vermont Historical Society convened a conference on the status of women’s history in Vermont. Nearly one hundred women and men listened to the governor extol the merits of prominent Vermont women like Clarina Howard Nichols and Consuelo Northrop Bailey before they joined workshops to identify the available resources for the study of Vermont women and planned strategies for spreading the word about that rich heritage.

Governor Kunin had already announced her intention to hold a statewide women’s fair that would “provide the opportunity for women from all walks of life to showcase their skills and experience in business, the arts, the home, and community.” And because Kunin envisioned the fair as a means to “measure and celebrate the dramatic achievements of Vermont women in the past decade”—and centuries, she used the occasion of the Women’s History Conference to commission a Governor’s Task Force on Women’s History and Traditions.¹⁸

The task force, coordinated by Eleanor Ott and Karen Lane, immediately set three goals. First, it organized an historical component for the 1987 Vermont Women's State Fair. The crowds of women and men who viewed the exhibits of contemporary women writers, weavers, entrepreneurs, and performers at the Barre Auditorium and Arena also rejoiced in the history depicted in photographic exhibitions, panel discussions, and teaching and networking workshops.¹⁹ Secondly, the task force cosponsored special celebrations for Women's History Month in 1988 by inviting speakers and planning exhibits at each of the twelve Vermont Community College offices, and it coordinated media coverage of other events across the state. Finally, in anticipation of the celebration of the bicentennial of Vermont statehood, the task force is seeking proposals for making women and their history an integral part of those gala events of 1991.

We can all partake of the enthusiasm of the Governor's Task Force on Women's History and Traditions by cooperating in this rediscovery of Vermont women's history. We can encourage individual women and their families to preserve diaries, letters, documents, and artifacts and to deposit them at an historical society or archival library so that Vermont women never again will "disappear" from the historical record. We can urge manuscript curators to seek women's collections, not just those of notable men — or women. While those of us who work in social or women's history value the events of ordinary women's lives as much as the triumphs of successful politicians, great writers, and noted philanthropists, curators often face the exigencies of funding and space and we must be ready to lobby for some of those scarce resources.

An effective way to illustrate the necessity for acquiring women's collections is to exploit fully the collections that are already housed at our major archives. Often, this is a difficult task because the collections generally are those of men, and traditionally cataloguers have treated items pertaining to family matters as insignificant; thus women's correspondence invariably is hidden under that amorphous category of "miscellaneous" in most manuscript inventories. But just as invariably, the material is there.²⁰

The Allen family papers and the Benedict family papers in Special Collections at the Bailey/Howe Library of the University of Vermont are particularly illustrative cases.²¹ Each collection is voluminous (twenty-nine boxes of Allen papers and eleven cartons of Benedict materials). The manuscript inventories extol the feats of Ethan, Ira, and Levi Allen and the business prowess of George, George Grenville, and George Wyllys Benedict, with only a brief mention of their wives to document the date of their marriages. In neither inventory is there a separate listing of

letters between husbands and wives or mention of a wife's correspondence with anyone else.

Yet the letters between Ira and Jerusha Allen and between Levi and Nancy Allen reveal much about the nature of marriages for many late eighteenth-century women. While Ira languished in a French prison and later evaded paying his debts by fleeing to Philadelphia, Jerusha, with four young children in tow, handled all the family's legal matters, operated Ira's saw and grist mills, negotiated his release from prison, and faced his creditors. In some ways, Levi was hardly less a scoundrel than his brother in his business dealings and absences from home, but letters between him and Nancy suggest that he thought of her more as a beloved helpmate and devoted mother of his children than as the business agent that Ira seemed to envision.

Nineteenth-century marriages are equally open to historians' analysis through collections like the Benedict papers—once the researcher is lucky or persistent enough to discover the elusive letters of the women of the family. Katherine Pease Benedict, for instance, wrote dozens of letters to her mother and her sisters, and their confidences speak volumes not only to the relationship between Kate and George Grenville (or “Mr. Benedict,” as Kate always called him in her letters), but to studies of female networks, mother-child relationships, courtship practices, child-bearing and rearing experiences, and women's community activities.²² Scouring collections for this kind of family correspondence should be on the agenda of every historian of women.

The collections of women like Caroline Marsh, Sarah Hagar, Sylvia Bliss, or Mary Jean Simpson and the organizational records of the Vermont Society of Colonial Dames, the Woman's Relief Corps, or the Vermont League of Women Voters—to mention a few—cry out for discovery and interpretation. Nor have we fully exploited census records, city directories, and town reports to reconstruct the lives of the poor, rural, and ethnic women who have left us no personal mementos. We need to study their lives so that they, too, can instruct us in the rich and varied heritage of Vermont women.

It is not enough merely to unearth these treasures of our past. We must share our discoveries. I suspect that there is much more women's history documented throughout the state than reaches the pages of *Vermont History* or other journals. I urge anyone who has material (even if it is only in typescript form or a student paper) to send it to one of the major depositories like the Vermont Historical Society, UVM's Special Collections, or the Sheldon Museum, so that it can be made available to others.

The forums for disseminating the “news” about women's place in history are limited only by the boundaries of our imagination and inventiveness.

The Center for Research on Vermont, for instance, sponsors works-in-progress seminars and supports the publication of *Occasional Papers*. Other likely places are local weekly newspapers (even the larger dailies), the publications of town and county historical societies, and newsletters of women's organizations. Trade and professional groups and large corporations often have newsletters and most editors are delighted to consider interesting and thoughtful items. Finally, the Vermont Historical Society, which issues *Vermont History News* six times a year and *Vermont History* on a quarterly basis, welcomes work in women's history.

Indeed, this issue of *Vermont History*, devoted to the history of Vermont women, offers an especially celebratory way to commemorate Women's History Month. The editor and the Vermont Historical Society are to be commended for their response to Governor Kunin's call for a "much greater understanding and public awareness of women's history." The variety of articles remind us once again of the richness of Vermont women's history.

Marilyn Blackwell has compiled a bibliography to supplement Faith Pepe's 1977 effort. She has scoured libraries and archives for writings and resources on women's history that have appeared since 1977. Every historian of Vermont women should find these two fine bibliographic works indispensable.

In exploring the life, poetry, and writing career of Frances Frost, Margaret Edwards recovers for us "a lost poet" of Vermont. Like so many women writers of the past, Frost's work and literary reputation have been hidden in the "attic of American culture," yet, as Edwards illustrates, the poetry of Frances Frost is well worth reading. She deserves revival both as a poet and as an individual who enriches Vermont women's history.

Marshall True's "Middle-Class Women and Civic Improvement in Burlington 1865-1890" analyzes the lives of the women who managed the Home for Destitute Children and the Howard Relief Society in late nineteenth-century Burlington. In so doing, True illustrates how women have shaped history, as well touching upon the ways in which history affected them and their sense of self. These middle-class Burlington women, it is true, found work in their charitable organizations that was "useful and self-fulfilling" and socially acceptable, but they discovered political power as well. They were as interested as their husbands in maintaining a community that fit their standards of social mores. Through the very "scale and organized nature" of their charities (in the 1890s the budget of the Home for Destitute Children was nearly \$95,000; that of the overseer of the poor, under \$5000), they overshadowed the overseer of the poor, changed the nature of police work, permanently altered the city's social welfare structures, and "enabled the Protestant middle class

to maintain a modicum of control" over Burlington's transition from Vermont town to multi-cultural city.

This issue of *Vermont History* will be a valuable resource for students, teachers, historians, activists and others who want to know more about the history and heritage of Vermont's women. It is also a tribute to Vermont women of the past, an inspiration to today's women, and a model for future historians of Vermont women.

The Governor's Commission on Women and the Vermont Historical Society have started us off. It is now up to the rest of us to get the word out about the vigor and subtlety with which Vermont women have defined the terms of their existence. Vermont women, after all, have always been acting, thinking—and at the center of Vermont life.

NOTES

¹ Faith Pepe, "Toward a History of Women in Vermont: An Essay and Bibliography," *Vermont History*, 45 (Spring 1977): 69-101.

² *Ibid.*, 72; Stewart S. Holbrook, *Yankee Exodus: An Account of the Migration from New England* (New York: Macmillan, 1950); Lewis D. Stilwell, *Migration from Vermont* (Montpelier: Vermont Historical Society, 1948); and Harold Fisher Wilson, *The Hill Country of Northern New England* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1936).

³ Pepe, "Toward a History of Women," 70, 71.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 75-78.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 71, 79. For elaboration of this theme, see Nancy Woloch, *Women and the American Experience* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984).

⁶ Gerda Lerner, "New Approaches to the Study of Women in American History," *Journal of Social History* 3 (Fall 1969): 53-62.

⁷ Marion Tinling, *Women Remembered: A Guide to Landmarks of Women's History in the United States* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986).

⁸ For some of the best discussions of the historiography of women's history, see Gerda Lerner, "New Approaches;" "The Feminists: A Second Look," *Columbia Forum* (Fall 1970): 24-30; "Placing Women in History: Definitions and Challenges," *Feminist Studies* 3 (Fall 1975): 5-14; and *The Majority Finds Its Past* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979); Catharine R. Stimpson, "Gerda Lerner on the Future of Our Past," *Ms.* (September 1981): 51-55; Barbara Sicherman, "Review Essay: American History," *Signs* 1 (Winter 1975): 461-485; Barbara Sicherman, E. William Monter, Joan Wallach Scott, and Kathryn Kish Sklar, *Recent United States Scholarship on the History of Women* (Washington, D.C.: American Historical Association, 1980); and Elizabeth H. Pleck, "Women's History: Gender as a Category of Historical Analysis" in *Ordinary People and Everyday Life: Perspectives on the New Social History*, ed. James B. Gardner and George Rollie Adams (Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1983), pp. 51-65.

⁹ The now classic piece on the rise of this ideology is Barbara Welter's "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860," *American Quarterly* 18 (Summer 1966): 151-174. Nancy Cott in *The Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's Sphere" in New England, 1780-1835* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977) and Carl Degler in *At Odds: Women and the Family in America from the Revolution to the Present* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980) argue along the same lines.

¹⁰ See, especially, Daniel Scott Smith, "Family Limitation, Sexual Control, and Domestic Feminism in Victorian America" in *Clio's Consciousness Raised: New Perspectives on the History of Women*, ed. Mary Hartman and Lois W. Banner (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), pp. 119-136; Nancy Cott, "Passionlessness: An Interpretation of Victorian Sexual Ideology, 1790-1850," *Signs* 4 (Winter 1978): 219-236; and Elizabeth H. Pleck, "Two Worlds in One," *Journal of Social History* 10 (Winter 1976): 178-195.

¹¹ See Pleck, "Women's History," as well as Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985) and Christine Stansell, *City of Women: Sex and Class in New York, 1789-1860* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1986).

¹²Lilian Baker Carlisle, "Humanities' Needs Deserve Our Fortune: Mary Martha Fletcher and the Fletcher Family Benevolences," *Vermont History* 50 (Summer 1982): 133-142; Betty Bandel, "The Little Red Schoolhouse in Vermont," *Vermont History* 40 (Spring 1972): 97-104; "What the Laws of Man Hath Put Asunder," *Vermont History* 46 (Fall 1978): 221-233; and "Female Seminaries," *Chittenden County Historical Society Bulletin* 19 (Fall 1984): 2-5; Madeleine M. Kunin, "Clarina Howard Nichols, Green Mountain Suffragette," *Vermont Life* 28 (Winter 1973): 14; T. D. Seymour Bassett, "The 1870 Campaign for Woman Suffrage in Vermont," *Vermont Quarterly* 14 (April 1946): 47-61; Elise A. Guyette, *Vermont: A Cultural Patchwork* (Peterborough, N.H.: Cobblestone Publishing, 1986); and Jennie Versteeg Stoler, ed. *Vermont Women: Thinkers, Creators, Doers*, Occasional Paper No. 19 (Vermont Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1984).

¹³Margaret K. Nelson, "Vermont Female Schoolteachers in the Nineteenth Century," *Vermont History* 49 (Winter 1981): 5-30.

¹⁴Thomas Dublin, *Farm to Factory: Women's Letter, 1830-1860* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981) and "The Letters of Mary Paul, 1845-1849," *Vermont History* 48 (Spring 1980): 77-88.

¹⁵Deborah P. Clifford, "An Invasion of Strong-Minded Women: The Newspapers and the Woman Suffrage Campaign in Vermont in 1870," *Vermont History* 43 (Winter 1975): 1-19; "The Drive for Women's Municipal Suffrage in Vermont, 1883-1917," *Vermont History* 47 (Summer 1979): 173-190; and "The Women's War Against Rum," *Vermont History* 52 (Summer 1984): 141-160.

¹⁶Pepe, "Toward a History of Women," 78-79.

¹⁷William Hazlett Upson papers, Special Collections, Bailey / Howe Library, University of Vermont.

¹⁸*Burlington Free Press*, 25 June 1987; *News from the Governor's Commission on Women*, Winter 1987.

¹⁹Another important product of the task force's activity is "The Vermont Women's History Resource Guide," edited by Connell Gallagher. It contains documents in women's own words about their domestic life, work, health, education, religious experiences, and political activities. One of the more poignant examples is a letter from a Vermont woman to Franklin Delano Roosevelt in which she told the president that "we have certainly seen some hard days" and explained that on some nights she and her family had gone to bed without a meal or, on better days, having consumed some blackberries. Eventually, Gallagher hopes to make this primary resource guide widely available for use in schools.

²⁰We can alert archivists as well about the need to catalogue future collections with reference to women and their families. Some, like Connell Gallagher, Manuscript Curator for Special Collections at the Bailey / Howe Library of the University of Vermont, Polly Darnell of the Sheldon Museum in Middlebury, and Reidun Nuquist of the Vermont Historical Society, are already sensitive to this issue.

²¹I am grateful to a number of my students for the insights about the richness of the Allen and Benedict collections, especially Mary Peloquin, Karen Giles, and Viola Lunginbuhl.

²²See, for instance, Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *Good Wives: Image and Reality in the Lives of Women in Northern New England, 1650-1750* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982); Mary Beth Norton, *Liberty's Daughters: The Revolutionary Experience of American Women, 1750-1800* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1980); Degler, *At Odds*; Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, "The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations Between Women in Nineteenth-Century America," *Signs* 1 (Autumn 1975): 1-29; Blanche Wiesen Cook, "Female Support Networks and Political Activism: Lillian Wald, Crystal Eastman, Emma Goldman," *Chrysalis* 3 (1977): 43-61; Ellen K. Rothman, *Hands and Hearts: A History of American Courtship* (New York: Basic Books, 1984); Catherine M. Scholten, *Childbearing in American Society, 1650-1850* (New York: New York University Press, 1985); Judith Walzer Leavitt, *Brought to Bed: Childbearing in America, 1750-1950* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); Ellen Carol DuBois, *Feminism and Suffrage: The Emergence of an Independent Women's Movement in America, 1848-1869* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978); Mary Ryan, *Cradle of the Middle Class: The Family in Oneida County, New York, 1790-1865* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Barbara J. Berg, *The Remembered Gate: Origins of American Feminism* (Oxford University Press, 1978); Ruth Bordin, *Women and Temperance: The Quest for Power and Liberty, 1873-1900* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1980); and Karen J. Blair, *The Clubwoman as Feminist: True Womanhood Redefined, 1868-1914* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1980).