



Introduction

On September 18, 1999 the Vermont Historical Society hosted the first in a series of biennial symposia. This symposia program is a critical part of the Society's goal to assume "a statewide leadership role in promoting an understanding of Vermont history by improving and expanding public access to its collections and by expanding its interpretive and educational efforts." It is also an important piece of the Society's commitment to strengthening and encouraging new scholarship by cultivating and drawing upon the expertise of the research and academic community in the state and beyond its borders to create public programs, long-distance learning opportunities, internships, and fellowships.

Presented in conjunction with the Society's exhibit, "Generation of Change: Vermont 1820–1850," the day-long symposium brought together nearly one hundred individuals to discuss issues affecting the lives of Vermonters during the period that has been called by some historians, "Vermont's Golden Age." Among the major topics of the period were slavery, temperance, religious diversity, shifting governmental policies toward education and imprisonment, political partisanship, altered work patterns, and economic innovation. This volume contains the papers that served as the basis for presentations on three facets of Antebellum Vermont history—"Reform," "Religion," and "Work." The publication of proceedings, as a special issue of *Vermont History*, is part of the educational outreach component of this biennial program.

We wish to thank heartily all those who participated and made this a successful event for the Society. In particular, we thank Paul Searls of the University of Vermont for his work as moderator, especially during the "Needs & Opportunities" session, which was designed to discuss the current state of research in Antebellum Vermont history and to delineate new areas for scholarly investigation. We thank Michael Sherman and Alan Berolzheimer for their expertise in editing and preparing this issue of *Vermont History* for publication. The Society also wishes to thank the A. D. Henderson Foundation, Inc., and Denis, Ricker and Brown Insurance Agency, Inc., for underwriting a major portion of the costs associated with the "Generation of Change" symposium.

In fall 2001, the Society will convene its second biennial symposium—"The Future of Vermont History in the Twenty-first Century:

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Needs and Opportunities.” This symposium will review the current state of research in the field and discuss new or under-researched areas of Vermont history. We hope that you will join us in 2001 and participate in shaping the direction of future biennial symposium topics.

Gainor B. Davis
Director