

VERMONT HISTORY

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Book Reviews

Where We Lived: Discovering the Places We Once Called Home

By Jack Larkin (Newtown, Conn: Taunton Press, 2006, pp. 266, \$40.00).

Published jointly with the National Trust for Historic Preservation and extensively illustrated with photographs from the Historic American Buildings Survey, this handsome hardcover book provides a fresh perspective on the history of the American home. With its major emphasis on the period from 1775 to 1840, one might expect this to be yet another celebration of high-style Federal and Greek Revival American architecture. Instead, author Jack Larkin, chief historian at Old Sturbridge Village, provides an engaging essay that explores domestic life in New England, the Middle States, the South, and the West. Largely based on observations of European and American travelers from the period, the author's generous use of direct quotations enriches the text with voices that are often tinged with subtexts of humor and criticism. For example, in one such quotation a Scotsman writing in 1834 observed, "The New Englanders are not an amiable people, but it still must be admitted they are a singular and original people."

Rather than emphasizing just the homes and lifestyles of the wealthy and prominent, this study looks at a broad range of housing arrangements of the times. For example, in the first chapter of the book Larkin notes that census records show that during the late 1700s and early 1800s the number of persons in each household was quite large (more than half had seven or more residents). He also observes that before the 1820s, most houses were so small that they offered virtually no privacy. In an era before private bedrooms became common, Larkin describes a

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range of sleeping arrangements, including how unheated and unfinished attics in many homes and taverns were typically used. Indeed, according to the quotations from travelers' journals, to find three or more persons sharing a bed was common—not just for small children, but also for adults and even strangers.

Larkin also explains how our perceptions of domestic life in the past are easily skewed by the tendency for the larger, better built homes to survive longer. These “big houses” are the ones that have long received the most attention from preservationists and historical groups. The many small, poorly-built houses, cabins, and shacks that dominated the American landscape during the early nineteenth century—especially in the South and the West—have suffered much higher rates of loss. These also have been less well documented. The poignant glimpses of day-to-day life within these very small homes are some of the greatest contributions that this book makes to the field of study, especially by showing a variety of examples of lower-grade homes that survived to be photographed in the 1930s for the Historic American Buildings Survey.

By examining the history of housing before 1840 geographically, Larkin presents contrasts in American cultural heritage that echo to the present. When describing life in the South, he boldly begins by observing, “We can’t understand the landscape of Southern houses and families unless we first look at slavery.” He goes on to explore the extremes of wealth and power in the region with the help of travelers’ observations and photographs of houses, both great and squalid. The descriptions of slaves sleeping on floors in mansion hallways wrapped in dirty blankets and in desolate cabins are certainly not pleasant, yet it is refreshing to see that these difficult aspects of the American past are now being discussed in a volume such as this. Indeed, some passages and descriptions may prompt comparisons with the disconnected tolerance for the plight of the homeless and other unfortunate people that we may see in some areas today.

Subtitled “Discovering the Places We Once Called Home,” this book is an easy and satisfying read, but the lack of footnotes or detailed source citations may frustrate some scholars. To tell his well-crafted and engaging story the author sometimes relies on generalizations that may prompt some readers to seek more historical evidence. The rich collections of photographs from the Historic American Buildings Survey and from Old Sturbridge Village provide a magnificent backdrop to the narrative, but some readers may thirst for more detail in photo captions and more information about the specific sources of the images.

As research in history, architectural history, and historic preservation continues to develop toward more fully embracing the more common-

place and vernacular aspects of our cultural heritage, some scholars are making greater use of surviving physical evidence to better understand the past. *Where We Lived* makes a noteworthy contribution to this line of research by effectively demonstrating how these sources can be combined to provide a richer perspective on day-to-day life during this early period of American history, while also providing a valuable resource for placing such evidence in context.

THOMAS D. VISSER

Thomas D. Visser directs the graduate program in historic preservation in the department of history at the University of Vermont and is the author of Field Guide to New England Barns and Farm Buildings.

John Stark: Maverick General

By Ben Z. Rose (Waverly, Mass.: Tree Line Press, 2007, pp. xiv, 199, \$19.95).

New Hampshire's General John Stark: Live Free or Die: Death Is Not the Worst of Evils

By Clifton La Bree (Portsmouth, N.H.: Peter E. Randall Publisher, 2007, pp. xiv, 261, \$25).

John Stark: Live Free or Die

By Karl Crannell (Stockton, N.J.: OTTN Publishing, 2007, pp. 80, \$23.95).

By curious coincidence, General John Stark of New Hampshire, the iconic Revolutionary War hero of the Battles of Bunker Hill and Bennington, long regarded as oft-forgotten American hero, suddenly came to life in the year 2007 with the publication of three biographies—two hardcovers and one for children. Evidently none of the three authors knew that the others were working along the same path.

Stark was born in 1728 with strong Scots-Irish ancestry and a heritage that held the British in deep distrust. He continued to feel their condescension during his experiences fighting alongside them in the French and Indian wars. But he also learned the British military methods, which he was canny enough to use against them in such engagements as Bunker Hill, Bennington, and Saratoga. Stark the maverick was often dubious about the military leadership provided by the Continental Congress and

preferred to report to New Hampshire's provincial assembly. He was at home in Manchester so rarely that it was a wonder he and his wife, Elizabeth "Molly" Page, managed to raise eleven children.

All three of these biographies have their strong points, but most worthy is *John Stark: Maverick General*, by Ben Z. Rose, a securities analyst by profession and obviously an earnest history buff and a smooth writer. Rose has done extensive research in all the right places and weaves together an impressive bibliography to produce a readable fabric that brings to life the facts, moods, and personality of this modest but courageous early-American original who emerged from the wilderness.

Indeed, Stark was so forgotten that for more than a century after the 1891 dedication of the massive 306-foot Bennington Battle Monument, there was a statue of the battle's secondary hero, Colonel Seth Warner, but none of Stark himself, until the year 2000, when a descendant provided one.

A sample of Rose's prose will help place Stark in the context of the time he had been passed over for promotion but decided to take charge of the foray against British General John Burgoyne in the spring of 1777:

Making his way back to Manchester, angered, disappointed, and dejected, John Stark no doubt reflected on a tumultuous two-year period in which he fought gallantly in three critical campaigns [Bunker Hill, Québec, Trenton]. Now, less than two years into what would become an eight-year struggle for independence, the outcome of the war was far from clear.

Despite personal overtures from John Sullivan and Enoch Poor to remain in the army, Stark refused to rethink his decision to resign.

To be sure, there was no reconsideration of the cause for which he was fighting. Although his older brother William and his good friend Robert Rogers decided to fight for the British, nothing in the last two years had changed Stark's embrace of the Patriot cause. On the contrary, Stark vowed to fight again if needed (p. 101).

All three books offer chronologies, and Rose concludes with a "Legacy" chapter that helps place Stark in historical context and quotes from his correspondence with prominent political figures in his elder years. Clifton La Bree similarly offers a chapter on Stark's post-Revolutionary "Fading Shadows" as well as a chapter "In Tribute." All three authors recall the most memorable element of Stark's legacy, the one seen on New Hampshire license plates. It was a letter to citizens of Bennington in 1809, regretting that his health prevented him from attending a reunion, that contained the quote, "Live Free or Die, Death is not the worst of Evils." Stark died in 1822 at the age of 94, one of America's longest-living Revolutionary generals.

La Bree, a forester by profession, has written a biography that is more ambitious than Rose's, with more pages and more quoted documents, but less successful overall. Indeed, it appears to be a classic example of a book that was well conceived and in many ways well written, but is flawed by chronic misstatements of historical fact, misspellings, and typographical errors. While I read it with mostly genuine pleasure, the thought occurred repeatedly that if only La Bree's efforts had been given a thorough vetting both by a copy editor and a fact checker before publication, it would have had a more successful outcome. On the positive side, La Bree incorporates fascinating correspondence and original documents dealing with the times before and after the Battle of Bennington. He can convey a memorable mood or set the scene, for example, the terror and dread among the population of the Champlain Valley when Burgoyne's army tramped southward in the spring and summer of 1777. But the negatives of this book are legion. Despite abundant bibliography, La Bree's work seems undersourced and inadequately footnoted. The author contends with basic historical misunderstanding that the Catamount Tavern in Bennington was "a landmark inn where Stark had frequently stayed during the French and Indian War" (p. 154). The fact was that this territory was unsettled during the French and Indian wars and Bennington had no settlement at all until 1761. The author copied Stark's famous description of the Battle of Bennington, "the hottest engagement I have ever witnessed, resembling a continual clap of thunder," but wrote instead "a continental clap of thunder" (p. 147).

Karl Crannel, a staff member at Fort Ticonderoga, offers a solid biography of Stark aimed at a middle-school reading level. It is part of a series on "forgotten heroes of the American Revolution" that includes Daniel Morgan, Nathanael Greene, Henry Knox, and Francis Marion. The illustrations are attractive and a picture of eighteenth-century life in New England is well drawn, but the history is somewhat simplified. The brash capture of Fort Ticonderoga by Ethan Allen and Benedict Arnold in May 1775 is overlooked; and Burgoyne's master plan, the pincer movement from the west and south on Albany that never materialized, is glossed over.

It was useful to get reacquainted with John Stark, about whom no biography had been written since Howard Moore's self-published typescript in 1949.

TYLER RESCH

Tyler Resch is librarian of the Bennington Museum and author or editor of a dozen books of regional historical interest.

“The Troubled Roar of the Waters”: Vermont in
Flood and Recovery, 1927–1931

By Deborah Pickman Clifford and Nicholas R. Clifford (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England; Durham, N. H.: University of New Hampshire Press, 2007, pp. xvi, 229, \$29.95).

Mention 1927 to anyone familiar with Vermont history and the first thing to come to mind will probably be the disastrous flood that struck the state in early November of that year. The flood of 1927 was a cataclysmic and transformative event in Vermont, wreaking havoc statewide, and resulting in tremendous losses to property and human life. But as Deborah Pickman Clifford and Nicholas R. Clifford reveal in *“The Troubled Roar of the Waters,”* the flood’s significance goes far beyond the drama of its immediate impact. By placing the flood within a larger historical framework, and by examining its broader relationships to cultural, political, and economic circumstances in Vermont, Clifford and Clifford weave an engaging and thought-provoking story sure to be of interest to a range of readers.

Following a brief preface, the book begins with a chapter examining the flood itself. Here readers are treated to some fine storytelling through which the authors recount incidents of horror, tragedy, and heroism associated with the event. Chapter two provides a conceptual core for the book by discussing Vermont’s economy, infrastructure, and prospects for development (all below national averages) at the time of the flood, and by exploring the state’s idealized associations with cultural characteristics such as independence, strength, and thrift. While Clifford and Clifford are careful not to romanticize this identity, they do argue that its strength in the state helped to mitigate Vermont’s lack of material preparedness for a disaster of this scale.

Chapters three through six all focus on the politics of post-flood reconstruction. Chapter three explores the flood’s immediate aftermath, including efforts to help hard-hit towns like Waterbury, and legislative debates about funding reconstruction. Chapter four explores issues associated with railroad reconstruction, the availability of credit, and the role of the Red Cross in Vermont. Here the authors offer a particularly instructive glimpse into the growing scale of relief efforts in the United States at this time, as national agencies and the federal government increasingly assumed some of the responsibility for local recovery following natural disasters. Chapter five highlights road reconstruction and changes

in state and federal politics as a means for tracing political dynamics between Montpelier and Washington. And in chapter six, the authors explore the politics of flood-control initiatives in post-1927 Vermont, before concluding with an extended discussion of the work of the Vermont Commission on Country Life and its insights into issues facing Vermonters in the years just after the flood.

The book's strong conclusion does three things. First, it addresses the challenging task of assessing the flood's lasting impacts and consequences, arguing that it is best to see the flood, in large measure, as a "catalyst for changes already underway" (p. 168). Second, it reminds readers to place the story of the flood in the larger context of American history. The flood of 1927, the authors argue, was partly a mirror for larger trends, partly a commentary on the nation's idealized assessment of Vermonters and rural life, and partly a story of one state's struggle to reconcile modernity and traditional life in twentieth-century America. Third, the conclusion ends with a thoughtful discussion about differences between past and present responses to disaster in American society.

It is worth noting two themes that weave throughout the book and that lend strength to its overall presentation. First Clifford and Clifford necessarily have to tackle questions about Vermont's reliance on outside financial support and its fabled desire to handle flood reconstruction independently. The authors address this issue directly throughout the book, noting that while Vermonters were generally willing to accept outside assistance, there remained a strong feeling among many that the state should do as much as it could on its own. That sentiment matters, the authors suggest, because it reinforced popularized ideas inside and outside Vermont about the culture of its residents. This leads to a second key theme worth noting. Clifford and Clifford offer a number of excellent insights into the complexity of cultural identity in Vermont, never shying away from the ironies, inconsistencies, and mythical underpinnings of that identity, but never undermining the credit due to Vermonters for their very real courage and determination. As they suggest, what matters most is not the accuracy of one cultural image or another, but the bigger story at work here: The tests that the flood would place on the character and material life of Vermonters reveal larger lessons about the anxieties of rural society in America at a time when many were struggling to reconcile modernity and tradition.

For anyone who has written or who wants to write state-level history, *The Troubled Roar of the Waters* is a model of success. Not only is it written in a lively style that makes complex stories accessible to a range of readers, it combines an appreciation for the uniqueness of Vermont history with an appreciation for its connections to broader historical trends.

In this respect, it is a book that should make Vermonters feel proud of their heritage, both in terms of their responses to the flood itself and their ongoing importance to the history of land and life in rural America.

BLAKE HARRISON

Blake Harrison teaches courses in history and geography at Yale University and Southern Connecticut State University. He is the author of The View from Vermont: Tourism and the Making of an American Rural Landscape.

*Failure, Filth, and Fame: Joe Ranger and the
Creation of a Vermont Character*

By Cameron Clifford (West Hartford, Vt.: The Clifford Archive, 2007, pp. 234, paper, \$20.00).

The title has it just right. Joe Ranger failed catastrophically at farming, his house and person were spectacularly filthy, and his fame was largely the creation of others with interests of their own to promote. Largely but not entirely, we should add, for Joe liked attention and to some extent played the game.

Lest we attach stigma to the failure, we should note that failing farms were an epidemic in much of Joe's lifetime (1875–1964) and a wasting illness ever since, although not many failed farmers sank so low for so long. One of the great merits of this well-documented book is its concise account of the social and economic conditions of the times, not only of Joe's neighborhood of Pomfret and West Hartford, Vermont, but regionally as well. Joe's story is firmly and gracefully set in a web of historical detail that will disabuse sentimental readers of the pretty pictures that fifty years of propaganda and nostalgia have imprinted on our brains.

And yet, in this clear-eyed author's account, Joe Ranger and his times emerge as something more than objects of pity and condescension, although there was much about Joe to inspire disgust and contempt. The lack of electricity, automobile, and running water could be laid to poverty alone, and the production of moonshine during Prohibition might be defended as a public service. But one did not have to be hypersensitive to be appalled by supper plates wiped with bread and never washed, by a dead horse stinking in the field unburied, by stories of the yard off the door step serving as a latrine, and by the report that Joe simply added additional clothes to the outside while the ones next to his body rotted away. Not that he didn't bathe—once a year, it was said, although another

account said twice—the method the simple expedient of lying in a brook or pond fully clothed. Clifford makes good use of Joe’s diaries, but prurient interest would ask for more quotations, for the diaries confirm local gossip that Joe indulged in amorous engagements with his neighbors’ horses, heifers, and cows.

Yes, this strange character kept a diary, as did many country people of his time. He was an avid reader who knew the Bible well and liked the stories of Zane Grey and Max Brand. He had a beautiful voice and was often heard singing by himself for the pure joy of it. Although eventually called by many a hermit, he liked company, could carry on an interesting conversation, and was known for holding his own in witty exchanges with creditors among others. Before one creditor could bring up the subject, Joe asked if he was worried about getting paid. Embarrassed, the creditor said that he wasn’t, whereupon Joe said, “‘Keep right on not worrying’” (p. 91).

Joe lived through two eras in the public perception of Vermont’s rural life. In the 1920s and 30s, widespread concern about rural poverty, decadence, and the allegedly deleterious influence of French-Canadians and Indians led to Vermont’s participation in the national eugenics movement with sterilization of genetically defective women as one of its goals. As an obvious failure and degenerate and the son of a French-Canadian father with some supposed Indian ancestry thrown in, Joe could have been a pathological specimen for the social type the eugenicists worried about. Following WWII, however, thanks in large measure to the State’s efforts to attract prosperous outsiders as visitors and residents (*Vermont Life* was a brilliant instrument) and to the writings of such authors as Bernard DeVoto and Dorothy Canfield Fisher, a pretty gloss was spread over Vermont’s rural past. White houses, red barns, contented cows, and loveable Old Timers became the stock in trade of those who wished to promote Vermont as a bastion of proud independence, rugged individualism, and community harmony. How Joe Ranger became a poster boy for this largely successful effort is too detailed for summary here but is one of the strengths of the book.

Even in energetically concocted myths such as this one, there is often enough truth to tether the story by slender threads to reality. Just as in his own eccentric fashion, Joe had something of the iconic rural character later ascribed to him, so the community of Pomfret showed some of the neighborly care imagined to have been the norm. The official care of the poor was a hit or miss affair, but individual neighbors did many acts of kindness, especially in Joe’s later years when he needed more help. Perhaps some element of kindness as well as frustration played a part in the town’s inability to collect any of Joe’s property taxes from 1937 to 1953.

Clearly written and well supplied with notes and index (more index

entries would have helped), *Failure, Filth, and Fame* is an unusual and engaging biography and an excellent summary of the times. If it misleads at all, it may be that despite careful mention of those farm families who survived or adjusted to other ways of life, the vivid portrait of Joe himself and the precise description of myth-making may obscure for the careless reader the complex reality of the countryside, which was neither a simple story of loss and defeat nor one of bucolic bliss.

CHARLES FISH

Charles Fish's most recent Vermont book is In the Land of the Wild Onion: Travels Along Vermont's Winooski River.

Giving a Lift in Time: A Finnish Immigrant's Story

By Wayne A. Sarcka with Elizabeth Man Sarcka. *Edited by Anne Sarcka and Michael Wells* (Montpelier, Vt.: Anne Sarcka, 2007, pp. 195, paper, \$18.00).

Written as a Christmas present to his daughter in 1966, Wayne Sarcka's autobiography recounts the life experiences that led him to establish Spring Lake Ranch. In the preface, Sarcka notes that his journal is full of inaccuracies because he never kept a diary and simply dictated these events to his wife, Elizabeth, in streams of recollections.

The first fifteen chapters of this journal are devoted to Sarcka's life journey. He was born in Finland in 1890 and arrived in Proctor, Vermont, in 1895, where his father had settled to work in the marble industry. Sarcka graduated from elementary school and went to work in the Proctor marble quarries. He left Proctor at age eighteen for Connecticut to be co-director of the Boy's Club and further his education.

Sarcka transferred and received his high school education at Mt. Pleasant Academy while directing physical and social activities for the YMCA. At the outbreak of World War I he was recruited to serve the British YMCA as a morale officer in Mesopotamia. Sarcka later joined the Mesopotamia Expeditionary Force. He managed a British convalescent and rest camp and operated food kitchens for the Near East Relief community. Chapters five through eight give the reader a very descriptive representation of the life and trials of the people in that area. A brief history of the campaign, drawn from several scholarly sources, appears in Appendix D (pp. 188–190).

Returning home, Sarcka headed to New York to begin his career as a

fundraiser for nonprofit organizations. The campaign for the Girl Scouts of America changed his life. His request for a liaison officer led to meeting Elizabeth Man, the commissioner for the Queens (N.Y.) Girl Scout Council. In 1928 Elizabeth became his wife. While honeymooning on the Green Mountain Appalachian Trail they discovered the setting of their future life and work. The trail had led them to Spring Lake in Cuttingsville, Vermont. Impressed by the beauty of the area they pursued the purchase of land and some buildings surrounding Spring Lake with the idea of a summer home. Daughter Anne was born the year they came to their summer home. Considering all the work needed to make the property livable, Wayne and Elizabeth hit upon an idea of having teenage boys from the New York City settlement house and YMCA come and work during summer vacation.

Chapter eleven describes Spring Lake Ranch, the buildings, the people and the success of Wayne and Elizabeth's dream of an experimental camp for teenage boys to prepare them for living as mature adults by working in the morning and playing in the afternoon. Three years later a New York psychiatrist saw the progress made by the boys and urged the Sarckas to pioneer the first year-round halfway house in the United States dedicated to family care of the mentally ill.

Chapters twelve through fifteen return to Sarcka's life experiences. He entered state politics while Elizabeth and Anne continued to run the ranch. The Sarckas left the ranch after thirty years and moved to the island of Jamaica where, by 1965, Sarcka had helped to develop an educational facility. Wayne died in Jamaica in 1969 and Elizabeth returned to New York and became involved with various local social campaigns. She died peacefully in Vermont in 1992 at the age of ninety-eight.

Michael Wells, co-editor, includes an epilog updating Wayne and Elizabeth's Spring Lake legacy. In Appendix A, Elizabeth Man Sarcka tells of her life experiences and involvement in the ranch with frequent annotations by her daughter Anne. Appendix B contains several letters written by Wayne and Elizabeth to one another.

The story of Spring Lake Ranch is entwined in this autobiography. The reader will find it a little slow going to reach the actual account of Spring Lake and without the updated epilog by Michael Wells might be disappointed in the amount included. The lifelong journey of Wayne Sarcka can become tedious reading, but it was meant for his daughter as a gift and as such his presentation is successful. This book is an interesting tribute to a couple dedicated to helping others receive a "Lift in Time."

HELEN K. DAVIDSON

Helen Davidson is the author of a weekly column "Tidbits from Then and Now" in Sam's Good News. She is Secretary of the Rutland Historical Society and a past president of the society.

*Bellows Falls, Saxtons River and Westminster:
A History of Vermont's Most Beloved River
Communities, A Portrait in Postcards*

By Anne L. Collins (Charleston, S.C.: The History Press, 2007,
pp. 128, paper, \$21.99).

This slim volume contains many fascinating images of Bellows Falls and its smaller neighbors, Saxtons River and Westminster. Most of the images are taken from photo postcards, though an occasional stereo view and other illustrations fill out the story. Because Bellows Falls is located near one of the most important rapids along the upper Connecticut River, many of the images focus on the river and on bridges, dams, canals, mills, factories, and log jams. There are also photographs of disastrous floods, especially in 1913, 1927, and 1936.

Floods were not the only disasters depicted on postcards. Local photographers, acting as photojournalists, captured fires, train wrecks, and other newsworthy events on film and then created photo postcards that they sold as souvenirs. Here are depicted the fire of March 26, 1912, that destroyed the Hotel Windham and many other buildings, a bakery fire on Christmas day 1906, and the town hall/opera house before it was consumed by fire in 1925. The photographers also turned out for celebrations and parades, and Bellows Falls residents seemed to find many excuses to march through the streets. The Knights of Pythias led a Decoration Day parade on May 30, 1907, and the Knights Templar marched in elaborate costumes. On another occasion the Amalgamated Society of Papermakers marched across the bridge from New Hampshire and along the streets of Bellows Falls. Another photographer recorded imaginatively decorated autos moving slowly through the crowded streets to launch the Bellows Falls Fair on September 30, 1913. The most interesting parade depicted in the book happened on June 22, 1916, when Company E of the National Guard was called up to help guard the Texas-Mexico border after General Francisco "Pancho" Villa and his troops raided Columbus, New Mexico. The Bellows Falls company was part of 100,000 National Guard troops called up by President Woodrow Wilson. The photo shows the troops marching through the streets of Bellows Falls on their way to the station to board a train that would take them south. It is a fascinating photo because it includes decorated store fronts, cobblestone streets with trolley tracks, several autos that now look antique, crowds

of fashionably dressed townspeople (all wearing hats), and the troops dressed in wool uniforms that would prove rather useless in the Texas climate. It is a good example of the way photo postcards capture the vernacular landscape, the built environment, and the material culture of a particular time and place.

One of the compelling attractions of old photo postcards is the way they depict a world that no longer exists. I am sure that those who are familiar with Bellows Falls and the surrounding communities will have fun browsing through the pages of this book. They will find reminders of the age of the horse, of watering troughs, hitching posts, horse-drawn stages, and delivery wagons. They will also find many examples of autos from past eras and even a photo from the late 1950s that shows a policeman directing traffic. The photos record many buildings and bridges that have long since disappeared, and streets lined with elm trees. The images of people, cars, and horses are more interesting than the formal shots of churches and houses, but even the boring illustrations help document the history of the town. Several postcards recall a day when Bellows Falls was a major railroad and manufacturing center anchored by the sprawling Vermont Farm Machine Company.

Perhaps a few people still remember Barber Park in Saxtons River, where people of all ages gathered to picnic, listen to music, and dance. Here also was a famous baseball field. There are several images of the famous park in the book, but the most interesting are photos of a trolley car that connected Bellows Falls to Saxtons River and a picture of the 1910 Bellows Falls "Locals," one of the many baseball teams that played at Barber Park, complete with a young girl mascot.

This compelling book has no particular organizing scheme and little chronology, but the author manages to tell us a great deal about the history of Bellows Falls and the other towns by providing extended captions. We learn little about the author, Anne L. Collins, and how she got interested in old postcards. Her focus is on Bellows Falls rather than on the postcards, and she ignores the messages on the back (and sometimes on the front) of the cards. These hastily written notes often reveal details about life in an earlier age. Unlike some postcard books, this volume is printed on relatively high quality paper, which assures good reproductions. There are sixteen pages in color, including some interesting color lithograph cards. I miss any discussion of the photographers who took these photos; P. W. Taft is the only one identified. We need to learn more about local photographers who worked to preserve a world that is now lost.

Perhaps this book will inspire other towns to collect, analyze, and

preserve old postcards. In many cases they provide the best record of the changing look of the landscape and the constantly evolving nature of the small towns in Vermont.

ALLEN F. DAVIS

Allen F. Davis is professor emeritus at Temple University and the author of Postcards From Vermont: A Social History, 1905–1945 (2002).

The View from Vermont: Tourism and the Making of an American Rural Landscape

By Blake Harrison (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 2006, pp. xiv, 323, \$65.00; paper, \$29.95).

Each summer, at the end of our family’s nine-hour-long drive from New Jersey to spend a week with my grandmother at “Silverwood”—her summer home on Lake Raponda in Wilmington—two sensory experiences told me that we had reached Vermont. As our old Rambler station wagon turned off Route 9 after coming over Haystack Mountain, we heard and smelled and felt the exotic dirt road surface beneath us. Then there was the smell of balsam firs, replaced quickly by the aroma of hay-scented fern, trampled by our happy feet as we eagerly hopped out of the car. Like Proust’s *madeleine*, the hay-scented fern creates a cascade of memory—the nightcrawlers from the soil below those ferns; foraging for wild strawberries and leopard frogs and red-spotted newts along the lakeshore, and discovering the strange sundews and orchids there; the sound of my Uncle Roger’s motorboat; the sunset gathering of three generations on Silverwood’s sweet but sagging back porch, and the sound of ice cubes tinkling in my parents’ cocktail glasses.

This luxurious landscape of leisure is so deeply embedded in my psyche that it was a shock to read in Blake Harrison’s *The View from Vermont: Tourism and the Making of an American Rural Landscape* that my beloved Lake Raponda had been created not by Mother Nature but by a pair of local industrialist brothers, as the key to their plans to turn a local mill pond into a fancy summer resort. My grandmother’s gracious lakeside camp was just one of the many erected during the turn-of-the-century boom spurred by the building of the Lake Raponda Hotel. Harrison’s portrait of Wilmington and its transformation at century’s end from progressive-minded, hustling hamlet to a summer (and later, winter) resort for well-heeled vacationers is a classic case study in how Vermont’s

working landscape became largely a landscape of leisure—or at least a landscape dramatically altered by leisure.

When another group of Wilmington brothers founded the Wilmington Forest & Stream Club, their eyes were on profit and productivity as much as pleasure; they hired a local farmer to run their model farm, providing fresh produce for guests and revenue from the sale of dairy products and maple sugar (they even displayed their syrup at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago!). The politely shared discourse of progress that brought natives and visitors together, however, was impolitely interrupted by the real and varied social tensions provoked by tourism. Locals saw their old hunting and fishing grounds enclosed; the visiting sportsmen constantly complained about poaching. Harrison ably describes how summer home “resettlement” followed a painful period of farm abandonment, with the Vermont Board of Agriculture serving as the state’s “first de facto tourist agency” (p. 61). The metropolitans who bought the boarded-up farmhouses and brush-filled fields imagined them as still potent symbols of democracy, patriotism, independence, and self-sufficiency. Promoters seized upon these values and quickly codified them into a regional identity that continues to hold mythic status in the national consciousness. Harrison points out that the operative cultural keyword for this era— “typical”—helped to drive some very *undemocratic* social programs such as immigration restriction and eugenics, and shows how the bright promise of summer homes filled with writers and college professors slipped all too easily into a variety of unwelcome threats. Vermont’s youth continued to emigrate, while the “new crop” of tourists pursued a “lifestyle of leisure rather than work, of self-indulgence rather than modest sobriety” (p. 81).

Between 1910 and 1940, “unspoiled” and “accessible” replaced “typical” as the Siren song courting flatland folk to Vermont. Harrison zeroes in on the seemingly contradictory but often complementary activities of automobile tourism and recreational hiking, and finds new historical and geographical dimensions to the cultural conversations surrounding billboards, the Green Mountain Parkway, and the Long Trail. In a wonderful chapter entitled “The Four-Season State: Creating a New Seasonal Cycle,” Harrison vividly shows how the frequently sentimental fantasies of rapidly disappearing traditional labor rhythms created an entirely new *temporal* landscape to match the spatial one. As in previous chapters, the final ones detailing the alterations wrought by the ski industry and the effort to control landscape change through Act 250 draw on a wide variety of sources, convincingly and compellingly demonstrating just how inextricably linked Vermont’s contemporary social and physical landscapes are to twentieth-century tourism.

The modern tourist's quest for a sublime "view" carries with it the danger of mere spectatorship rather than participation, and *The View from Vermont* likewise runs the risk of academic leaf-peeping in its ambition to comprehensively cover so much ground. Harrison accurately diagnoses the range of nostalgia underlying Vermont mythmaking and how it has transformed the landscape.

KEVIN DANN

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Richmond, Vermont: A History of More Than 200 Years

By Harriet Wheatley Riggs and others (Richmond, Vt.: Richmond Historical Society, 2007, pp 506, \$25.00).

The Friendship Quilt photograph used to create the dust jacket is symbolic of this new local history publication. The quilt was made by women from Richmond, Vermont, probably in the 1850s. The caption for the quilt informs us that "It is designed in the Chimney Sweep Pattern, with the names of 36 women inscribed in the squares. Each square block is created from 31 pieces, stitched together by hand."

The quilt is an apt visual metaphor for this book. Quilts combine old and new materials, arranged in a recognized pattern to create a new useable item. A friendship quilt is the result of labor by a group of locals, who show their pride in the product by signing their names to it. Each carefully-fashioned section creates a stronger bond for the finished product, ensuring its usefulness for decades.

This well-crafted publication is the first book-length study of the Richmond, Vermont, community. It covers the history of this Chittenden County town from prehistoric times to the twenty-first century. Much like a friendship quilt, it is the result of efforts by members of the Richmond Historical Society under the leadership of editor Harriet Wheatley Riggs, who also expertly authored eleven of the twenty-three chapters.

Other chapters, organized by subject matter, were written by several members of the Richmond Historical Society committee. This approach encouraged those most knowledgeable about specific topics of the town's history to "contribute their own self-contained chapters, thus allowing the picture of Richmond's development to emerge through multiple voices

and perspectives” (p.1). The result is some minor variations in length and material among chapters, but these do not detract from the overall quality of the material.

All chapters are well documented using a variety of local, regional, and state resources, with extensive endnotes. Oral history interviews are well used. References to places in times past are linked to present-day locations, an especially useful tool. One can only imagine the hours of volunteer efforts that went into recovering and organizing that material and publishing it at a very reasonable price.

Many aspects of this book make it useful to those who will read it from beginning to end as well as those who will use it to research individual topics. The writing is clear with bold subtitles to assist the reader. Over three hundred photographs, document reproductions, maps, and appendices supplement the text. Most of the illustrations have their own complete documentation. The unusual two-column format of the text allows for layout variety. The forty-page index is uncommonly comprehensive. Any local historical society considering publishing or updating their own town history would be well advised to study the lessons in content, organization, and documentation this work offers.

The study of local history offers one bridge to understanding regional, state, and national trends. Many of the chapters link those trends with events in Richmond from its earliest days to the present and with a view to its future. The authors provide readers with detailed background information that makes aspects of Richmond’s history come alive.

This informative approach is especially helpful to those who are new residents or unfamiliar with state and national history.

Similarly, the book includes contributions of Richmond’s citizens to state and national history. Richmond’s native sons and daughters have included George Franklin Edmunds, Vermont U.S. Senator from 1866 to 1891, and the Cochrans, the world-famous skiing family. Neil Sherman’s chapter “In Service to Their Country” and the appended rosters honor those Richmond men who fought at Plattsburgh, Gettysburg, the Argonne, and in the Battle of the Bulge. Other chapters refer to those from Richmond who helped build the railroad and the interstate highway, each of which, in its own time, bisected the community and helped to define its role within the region. Other chapters discuss Richmond’s contributions to the state and national economy—ranging from underwear and dairy products to championship Morgan horses—the rise of local farms and industries, floods, fires, and economic trends that affected this community.

Richmond is itself a patchwork of land and people. It was chartered by the Vermont Legislature from portions of the neighboring towns of

Jericho, Williston, (New) Huntington, and Bolton. As with many Vermont towns, it has vibrant villages where much of the town's activity is centered and between which there is often competition. These include Jonesville, Fays Corner, and the village of Richmond. Each receives a separate chapter, and other chapters describe forces that unite the parts into a modern whole. This is also the history of well-established Richmond families enriched by relative newcomers, their libraries, inns, clubs, and schools.

Each Vermont community has characteristics that make it unique. The Old Round Church of Richmond, much highlighted in this history, is just one of Richmond's unique features. This reviewer knew little about this town other than that church, the successful merger of the Village and Town of Richmond in 1989, and signs on I-89. My knowledge was greatly improved by this publication. Anyone interested in Vermont history in general and Richmond history specifically will learn something here. In his prologue, "Richmond's Ancient Past," Peter A. Thomas writes, "history does have a lesson, if we choose to listen." This text offers that opportunity.

LAWRENCE COFFIN

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NOTICE: *Captain Henry Wirz and Andersonville Prison: A Reappraisal*, by R. Fred Ruhlman (2006), has been withdrawn from publication by the University of Tennessee Press as a result of allegations of plagiarism. The book was reviewed in *Vermont History*, Vol. 75, No. 2 (Summer/Fall 2007): 143–145. For more information see the following Web sites: <http://chronicle.com/news/article/1276/plagiarism-accusation-shelves-civ>; <http://insidehighered.com/news/2006/11/15/book>