

Deborah Pickman Clifford

1933–2008

This issue of *Vermont History* is dedicated to the memory and work of Deborah Pickman Clifford, who died July 25, 2008, after a brief illness. Deborah was a prolific and imaginative historian, who made women's history in the nineteenth century her special field of interest. She excelled in biography and published full-length studies of the lives of her relative Julia Ward Howe, of the writer and reformer Lydia Maria Child, and of the great Vermont historian Abby Maria Hemenway.



Deborah's ground-breaking research on suffragists in Vermont in the late nineteenth century deepened our understanding of the links between women's involvement in social reform and their political education that helped bring about women's suffrage in the early twentieth century. But she also studied and wrote about women who led less celebrated lives. She discovered in their letters and diaries reflections on their work, expressions of their aspirations and independence, and accounts of their accomplishments that expand and alter our understanding of women's lives in the nineteenth century. Indeed, it was Deborah's meticulous research and eye for detail that characterized her articles and books; and it was her devotion to searching through the private documents that these women created that made her work so lively, accessible, engaging, and informative.

It is fitting, therefore, that this issue includes articles that report on the lives of three nineteenth-century Vermont women by looking into and analyzing their memoirs and diaries. And it is fitting that one of the articles is by Deborah Clifford herself. In fact, this issue was planned not as a tribute to Deborah but with her cooperation and around the article that she submitted for publication. As it turns out, sadly, the article that we publish here is one of Deborah's last pieces of scholarship, the revisions completed just days before she left for a trip to Europe, and just weeks before her untimely and unexpected death.

Those of us who read Deborah's work, and who met or worked with her in one of the many activities she engaged in to promote history, women's history, and Vermont history, mourn the loss of an inspiring colleague and a spirited, warm-hearted friend.

— MICHAEL SHERMAN