



# A Riverton Retreat: Royal Charter to State Forest

*A piece of Riverton, Vermont, evolves over the course of two centuries from empty land in the Royal Charter, to the site of a grand cottage peopled by diverse occupants including a tycoon's family, a Hungarian hostess, and composer Béla Bartók, to empty land once again, now preserved as state forest.*

By SYLVIA PARKER

**R**eal estate records are always indexed by land location, explains the town clerk.<sup>1</sup> People, boundaries, usages, and structures change over time but the land remains through all. Such is the case with a particular locale in Riverton, Vermont. The 1785 lotting map of the area chartered by the royal governor of New Hampshire before the Revolutionary War shows perfectly rectangular divisions of said land.<sup>2</sup> A later 1873 map of the same area shows rivers, ponds, springs, railway, roads, ledges, quarries, cemeteries, a century's worth of buildings, and implied property boundaries considerably different from the perfect rectangles of the lotting map. The house built on the site of interest in this article has been known sequentially as the Erhardt Cottage, Mountain View, and the Hay House. Its history is shaped by the many people who have lived, worked, and visited there, including one of the twentieth century's most famous composers, Béla Bartók. It no longer exists. Two centuries after the town's royal charter, its location now lies

.....  
SYLVIA PARKER is senior lecturer of music at the University of Vermont. She has published papers analyzing Béla Bartók's compositions and issued a CD of his piano music. She lives just up the road from the cottage in this article.

*Vermont History* Vol. 78, No. 1 (Winter/Spring 2010): 95–111.

© 2010 by the Vermont Historical Society. ISSN: 0042-4161; on-line ISSN: 1544-3043



within the Boyer State Forest on Crosstown Road, the connector between Berlin Corners and West Berlin, the latter colloquially known as Riverton.<sup>3</sup>

By the time of publication of the 1873 Beers Atlas, generations of Emersons had lived and farmed and owned land in the area. The Emerson place is labeled by name on the map. Their graves in the West Berlin Cemetery mark their presence in local history long ago.

In 1893 Wilbur Fisk Hascall, a fine organist and composer from Boston,<sup>4</sup> and his wife Etta May bought the Emerson farm, away up in Vermont, far from the madding crowd. The next year they purchased yet more land from the Emersons, creating a property of hundreds of acres along today's Crosstown Road stretching from the house down the hill nearly to the village of West Berlin. The farm became known as the "Hascall Place." Although nothing is recorded of their use of the property, it quite likely represents the rising appreciation among out-of-state folk for Vermont's rural character and natural beauty. The Hascalls were in their prime of life at the time of their initial purchase, he in his forties and she in her thirties. Its later sale the year after his death at age 71 suggests the possibility that they may have enjoyed their Vermont place summers during his working years and onward into retirement.

A decade after their initial purchase of Vermont land the Hascalls sold some of the property, the acreage closest to West Berlin, to the daughter of Chicago railroad and business tycoon J. W. Doane.<sup>5</sup> Fannie Doane Erhardt and her husband Justus Erhardt purchased this land in 1904.<sup>6</sup> Her sister Julia Doane Dresser and husband George E. Dresser purchased adjacent land in 1910, also from the Hascalls. Deeds thereafter refer variously to the Hascall, Erhardt, and Dresser lots.

The timing of the Erhardt purchase is suggestive. Fannie suffered the deaths of her first husband, her father, and her mother all in a span of two years.<sup>7</sup> Her marriage to Justus Erhardt within a year of these losses, in 1902, was surely a welcome turning point in her life. The newly married Erhardts soon bought country land in Vermont and built a cottage at the bend in the road west of the old Emerson house on the 1873 map, just up the hill from the village and its convenient train station.<sup>8</sup> They, her siblings, and numerous guests summered there from 1904 to 1937. The road on which it is located, officially named Crosstown Road, is known locally to this day as "Erhardt Hill."<sup>9</sup>

For wealthy city people, the structure was appropriately called a "cottage." Compared to their lavish mansions elsewhere, and to other Vermont country homes of the fabulously rich such as the Rockefeller and Webb estates in Woodstock and Shelburne, the Erhardt Cottage was modest.<sup>10</sup> Yet it certainly contrasts with the style of ordinary Vermont



*1913 view of the cottage looking up from Crosstown Road. (Courtesy of Berlin Historical Society)*

homes. In the words of a later owner, it was “built by a man who was reacting against the typical Vermont farmhouses with their cramped little rooms, close ceilings, tiny windows—built, you might say, in defiance. . . . White and tall, it stood solitary on the hilltop, built in the form of a cross with its four wings set on a broad terrace surrounded by open fields and deep woods, a panorama of mountain ridges stretching around it in a semicircle as far as the eye could see.”<sup>11</sup>

Photos dating from 1913 to 1947 show its enormous size and its patterned shingles in the gable peaks typical of turn-of-the-twentieth-century décor. A large porch stretching the full length of the house overlooked the Northfield and Green Mountain ranges in the distance. Above it was a smaller upper-story balcony. A small outbuilding housed the generator and pump that provided the most modern conveniences such as lights and indoor plumbing.<sup>12</sup> A bit farther away was a barn for carriage and horses.

The interior is described by local residents who remember it in detail: The large front room was like a dance hall with a beautiful fireplace,

.....

hardwood floors, multiple patio doors, a library, and crystal chandeliers. An elegant double staircase led up to numerous bedrooms on the second floor and another fireplace. Its furnishings included a grand piano downstairs, an upright piano upstairs, huge chairs and sofa, a dining table big enough to accommodate a crowd, an enormous glass coffee table, and books and music.

The Erhardts, and soon Fannie's sister Julia Dresser, must have enjoyed their country cottage immensely. Family photos taken in the neighborhood show the five Doane siblings sitting together in the grass, Fannie and Julia playing with their distinctive spotted dogs, the two of them with their horse-drawn carriage, an outing with their husbands to a nearby farm. One photo suggesting the style of summertime activity pictures elegantly dressed ladies, fine riding horses tended by men in white shirts and neckties, and a table-clothed buffet of refreshments beside the enormous cottage.

A man whose relatives lived farther up the road<sup>13</sup> tells tales from his mother, who knew them in the 1930s when she was a child. She remembers that horses were ever-present and very important to the family.<sup>14</sup> She recalls Mr. Erhardt as a handsome man always concerned with his physique. He often jogged along Crosstown Road. The living room was full of body-building and weight-lifting equipment. She remembers



*The five Doane siblings at the cottage. (Courtesy of James Sumner)*

.....



*Fannie Doane Erhardt and Julia Doane Dresser. (Courtesy of James Sumner)*

fondly that the Erhardts would buy the Sunday newspaper and invite her down to the cottage to pick up the funnies and take them home. Saturdays, Mrs. Dresser's chauffeur would pick up the neighborhood children and take them to the movies in nearby Montpelier. There were often guests at the cottage, including famous actors, actresses,

.....



*A visit to nearby Emerson farm. The barn no longer exists. These are probably George Dresser, Justus Erhardt, and Julia Dresser. (Courtesy of James Sumner)*



*1930s view of the cottage; Bartók's room is in the upper far wing, not seen. Ditta's room is in the upper left wing, its balcony not seen. (Courtesy of James Sumner)*

and musicians.<sup>15</sup> Sometimes her grandmother would go there to cook, and she would go along too and sleep in a bedroom upstairs. Later a Mr. Doane (probably the brother of Fannie and Julia) lived there, sometimes staying when the rest of the family was away. She remembers walking to school in Riverton (officially West Berlin) at the bottom of the hill. After school, Mr. Doane would set up an ice cream stand for the local kids walking back up the hill toward home.<sup>16</sup>

By the mid-1930s the elderly Mrs. Dresser seemed the chief resident of the cottage (along with a staff of cook, chauffeur, and helpers). She is remembered as being in bed much of the time, usually giving orders but not being active herself. Her health declined and she died in 1936 leaving her brother, Mr. Doane, who stayed on a while longer.<sup>17</sup>

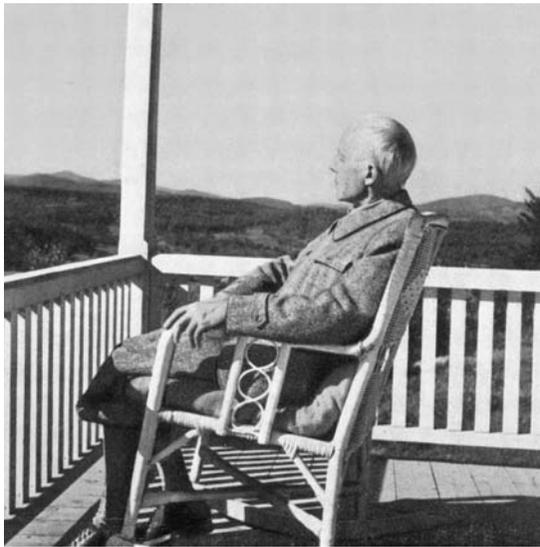
After a third of a century of residence by the Doane family, the cottage passed in 1938 to the ownership of Hungarian-born Agatha Illes, an accomplished pianist and music teacher in New York City. It became her “Mountain View” summer residence and the vacation destination of her many visitors, particularly music acquaintances. Thus it continued its role, in the view of one local Vermonter,<sup>18</sup> as a bed-and-breakfast for the rich and famous.<sup>19</sup> Guests, often eight or ten at any one time, would arrive at the Riverton train station<sup>20</sup> and be brought up Erhardt Hill just above it to the cottage with its beautiful views, healthful country setting, and relaxing atmosphere.

Local folks today remember Miss Illes well.<sup>21</sup> She was eccentric, warm, smiley, a bit theatrical, and spoke with a distinctive Hungarian accent.<sup>22</sup> One Riverton resident recalls that she always honked her horn driving around curves, so everybody knew when she was on the road.<sup>23</sup> Another enjoyed working at the cottage summers as a teenager, along with her mother, cleaning, cooking, and serving meals.<sup>24</sup> She remembers that she and other workers there would fight over the good jobs like dusting the furniture in the gorgeous parlor and preparing rooms for guests. (But Miss Illes’s own room up in the attic was pretty messy, she says, with clothes thrown all over the floor.) She recalls that there were often unusual foods. Miss Illes especially enjoyed an odd sour buttermilk-like drink, and one Hungarian guest spoke of potato dumplings filled with prune jam.<sup>25</sup>

The cottage had its moment of greatest glory, one might say, in the summer of 1941 when one of the twentieth century’s most famous composers, Béla Bartók, spent a month there. He and his concert pianist wife Ditta Pasztory had emigrated to the United States the year before, escaping the imminent occupation of their native Hungary by Adolph Hitler’s army. Their first contact in America was a former piano student of Bartók’s at the Budapest Academy of Music, now an established

concert pianist in New York City.<sup>26</sup> This Ernő Balogh and his wife invited the Bartóks to a welcoming dinner at their home. They invited another Hungarian friend as well, Agatha Illes. Years earlier, as an elementary piano student at the Budapest Academy, Agatha had stood in awe of the almost mythical Professor Bartók. Now in New York at her friends' house, she recognized the same famous Professor Bartók.<sup>27</sup> She and Bartók's wife Ditta immediately developed a fondness for each other, and Agatha helped her new friend find an apartment and furnish it, mostly very cheaply at auctions, to the pleasure and amazement of both Bartóks. As she helped them gradually settle in and adapt to life in the new country, she and Ditta became closest of companions, so close that when the Bartóks' teenage son Peter arrived in the United States a year later, he recalls his mother asking him the first night to call Agatha Illes right away, sounding "as if I had known her all my life."<sup>28</sup>

Agatha invited the Bartóks to her Mountain View retreat in Vermont that first summer. Bartók had always spent summers in the mountains, usually the Alps, where he enjoyed hiking, fresh air, natural scenery, and the opportunity to compose music. Thus this invitation to the mountains of Vermont was appealing. The Bartóks' visit to Riverton in the summer of 1941 is chronicled in Agatha's book *The Naked Face of Genius*.



*Béla Bartók on upper-story balcony, 1941. (Photo 246 from Béla Bartók: His Life in Pictures, Boosey & Hawkes, 1964)*

His naturally taciturn character, homesickness, worry over the war, and the onset of his terminal illness (leukemia) which was not yet diagnosed, made Bartók perhaps a finicky guest. He was a shy man, aloof, quiet, serious, uncompromising, of impenetrable character, a lover of nature and the honest peasant way of life, and a disciplined self-reliant composer. His son Peter says, "When not sleeping, talking to a visitor, having a meal, taking a walk, etc., he knew of no activity other than work."<sup>29</sup> In Vermont that summer of 1941 Bartók worked diligently on preparing his now famous Rumanian folk music collection for publication.<sup>30</sup>

His wife Ditta and Agatha, both Hungarians as well as accomplished musicians themselves, were kindred spirits eager and able to accommodate his quirks. Arriving together in Riverton a while before his visit, Ditta and Agatha selected the best room in the house for him, upstairs with its own fireplace and windows on three sides. They found a large harvest table in the library and its leaves in the barn and had it moved into his room, along with a small piano (to the annoyance of the caretaker, who couldn't imagine what all the fuss was about).<sup>31</sup>

Bartók did not broadcast his presence in Vermont. "But there are still people in Riverton who remember well the little, oldish man who spoke in such an odd fashion, and who used to wander along the wood roads, leaning heavily on a stout stick and wearing a limp straw hat in all kinds of weather."<sup>32</sup> Nearby Vermont residents had the good fortune to meet him in various ways. One woman remembers being invited to Miss Illes's house to hear a twelve-year-old prodigy play the piano and only several years later realizing the musical greatness of the shadowy, frail man in the background. Another woman, a local piano teacher, recalls Bartók coming to play her fine piano.<sup>33</sup> Nevertheless, he was aloof and cold to two visitors from New York City, friends of Agatha's who had driven two days to meet the famous composer at her cottage.<sup>34</sup> And when four other friends of hers, two European concert managers and their wives, arrived for a week, he ate alone in his room and refused to speak with them.<sup>35</sup>

Meticulous in all of his activities from collecting insects, to refashioning old bits of pencils and paper clips for further use, to researching folk music, to composing, Bartók was critical of American casualness. Newfangled ways of doing things, and any kind of carelessness, bothered him. Thus he criticized the cook: "Is that the way you make bread? . . . In a cold porcelain bowl, with a cold metal spoon, right in the middle of the afternoon . . . when it should be done at dawn . . . in a deep, long, wooden trough . . . kneaded into a swelling, rising, softly breathing heap, not by a metal tool but by the hands of a woman to impart

that flood of life-giving warmth to our daily bread.”<sup>36</sup> By contrast, when they visited an elderly Spanish couple from the old country who lived on a nearby farm, Bartók “helped himself to one bowlful of buttermilk after another and ate big pieces of corncake, and hard sourish bread thickly spread with butter” and praised the Spanish woman for “a wonderful treat.”<sup>37</sup> He was distressed at visiting the neighboring farm of Agatha’s caretaker, which he found ill tended and dirty: “you mean to tell me . . . that these wretched animals, these poor helpless beasts are housed in that barn through the cold winter? . . . every day I will feel through my own body the horror and torment of their existence.”<sup>38</sup> He celebrated the breakdown of the generator one evening, having “struggled night after night against the terrible drum-beating of that machine!”<sup>39</sup> He criticized Agatha’s failure to farm her land, using it instead only as a summer vacation retreat. In her own defense she replied that her “fields were returning to wilderness, as they, and half of Vermont, had not been worked in many years, perhaps since Civil War days. Farms are constantly being abandoned, and then picked up by helpless summer people such as I keeping a little garden at best and forgetting what lies beyond it.”<sup>40</sup>

Bartók left Riverton abruptly following an ill-timed air raid drill when he, his wife, and Agatha were visiting the Rock of Ages granite quarry.<sup>41</sup> The siren reminded him of real air raids in Europe and haunted him with visions of the horror occurring in his homeland. He returned to



*Ditta, Agatha, and  
Béla Bartók at Rock  
of Ages granite quarry,  
1941. (Courtesy of  
Peter Bartók)*

New York City, leaving Ditta to finish the rest of their planned vacation. He never returned to Riverton. His advancing illness, still undiagnosed, led to his summering on doctor's orders in the famous tuberculosis cure cottages in Saranac Lake the next, and final, four years of his life.<sup>42</sup>

Ditta and Agatha continued as fast friends. Each summer Ditta would take vacation time to visit Vermont. The Bartóks' son Peter also visited in the summer of 1943 after his discharge from the U.S. Army, into which he had been drafted during the war. He recalls that his mission then was to capture a cat, a later sibling of two beloved kittens born on his parents' first visit to Riverton: "I arrived late at night on a train and people directed me up the hill; when I saw a house on a hillside, I tried it, the door was open, and when I walked in, a cat [one of Agatha's many] greeted me. I knew then it was the correct house. I tried a light switch, that started the generator and woke up Agatha. . . . [Earlier she had] arrived with a lot of baggage, one of them a basket with the cat in it, and the boy porter was curious, lifted up the basket lid and the cat jumped, ran away, and was in territory unfamiliar to him. . . . I built a cat trap, with salmon as bait, and surely, on the second night the cat was in the trap. He was frightened, tried to escape, but I pulled him out of the trap. Once I held the cat to my breast, his muscles suddenly relaxed and he no longer tried to free himself; I was recognized."<sup>43</sup>

Sometime in her decade-long ownership of Mountain View, Agatha Illes met Stephen Fassett, a New York radio personality, music lover, recording engineer, and owner/director of Fassett Recordings in Beacon Hill, Boston.<sup>44</sup> They were married at the cottage on a beautiful September day in 1947 by a neighbor up the road, Riverton's own Reverend Arthur W. Hewitt.<sup>45</sup> Their wedding was also attended by another friend and neighbor, Sue Boyer, who would later become owner of the property. Agatha and her new husband took to summering at his cottage in West Falmouth, Massachusetts, on Cape Cod, rather than Vermont. They sold Mountain View four years after their marriage.<sup>46</sup> During the next decade she wrote a fine book (dedicated to Ditta) about her acquaintance with Béla Bartók, *The Naked Face of Genius*.

Alas, a house neglected in Vermont quickly suffers the ravages of weather and careless tenants. The new New York owner did not occupy the cottage or tend it as its previous owners had. An absentee landlord, he was perhaps unaware that the large family to whom he rented took appallingly poor care of the cottage, damaging it and its contents, even throwing a piano and chandeliers down the stairs. In 1960 the filthy run-down property was purchased by neighbors Donald and Sue Boyer, owners of the old Emerson house seen on the 1873 map.<sup>47</sup> They had no

.....



*Wedding of Agatha Illes and Stephen Fassett, 1947. Sue Boyer is on the far left. Rev. Arthur Hewitt stands behind the groom. (Courtesy of Berlin Historical Society)*

particular need for the cottage, but eagerly added the potential pasture land to their ever-increasing estate on Crosstown Road.<sup>48</sup> Eventually Mr. Boyer evicted the slovenly Mountain View tenants and began to use the cottage instead for storing hay for the feeding of his large herd of cattle. Thus it became known as the “Hay House.” Soon hippies moved in of their own accord. When it became evident that they were further damaging and endangering the property, stealing, and carelessly building fires in the fireplace despite the flammable hay stored close by, Mr. Boyer decided to ask the Berlin Fire Department to burn the cottage down. It was common practice in those days for firemen to set controlled burns for firefighting practice. Mr. Boyer conveniently exchanged his problem of what to do with an unwanted structure for the fire department’s desire for a drill. The once glorious cottage was burned to the ground in the mid-1960s by a combined effort of volunteer fire departments from Berlin, Northfield, East Montpelier, Calais, and Woodbury.<sup>49</sup>

As a widow, Sue Boyer willed much of her extensive acreage upon her own death to the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks, and Recreation. The Boyer State Forest came into existence in 1986.<sup>50</sup> The land

.....



*Boyer State Forest in 2008. The large maple tree on the right is the small one on the right in the 1930s photo. (Photo taken by the author)*

on which the cottage once stood has now returned to its original condition. Its bare hillsides have grown up again to trees. Only the level ground on which the cottage once stood is open, mowed by the State to preserve the deer yard. With careful searching, one can make out the location of the old foundation.<sup>51</sup> The entrance driveway at the bend in the road atop Erhardt Hill remains,<sup>52</sup> as well as forest paths trod upon by the many visitors of yore. Music echoes forth from the birds rather than the pianos. Woodland creatures are nowadays the only residents, as in the days of the Royal Charter two centuries ago.

#### NOTES

The author thanks the following for conversations and remembrances about the properties and people in this article, in alphabetical order: Berlin Town Clerk Rosemary Morse; neighbors and townspeople Evelyn Berglund, Marilyn Bruce, Paul Gillies, Stephen Green, David Mercier, Elizabeth and Gary Richardson, Norma Ryan, and James Sumner; Berlin volunteer firefighters Bill Clifford, Bob Simon, and Brice Stygles; Berlin Historical Society President Norbert Rhinerson and Secretary Richard Turner.

<sup>1</sup>Land parcels are also cross-referenced according to buyer's name, seller's name, and transaction date. Records of all transactions in this article are on file in the Berlin Town Office and are available to the public.

<sup>2</sup>Copies of the 1785 surveyor's map of the town of Berlin are held in the Vermont Historical Society Library and the Berlin Town Office. Vermont, not a state until 1791, was disputed territory at

.....

the time of this 1785 map, claimed by both New Hampshire and New York. The town of Berlin was chartered by New Hampshire's Royal Governor Benning Wentworth on June 8, 1763.

<sup>3</sup>The postmark was changed in 1918 to Riverton to avoid confusion between the two post offices at Berlin Corners and West Berlin. An August 29, 1970, Barre *Times-Argus* article by Rev. Arthur Hewitt says the name Riverton was suggested by Fannie Erhardt.

<sup>4</sup>*Who's Who in New England: A Biographical Dictionary* (Chicago: A. N. Marquis and Co., 1916), 518. Wilbur Fisk Hascall and his wife Henrietta Mary are listed in "Descendants of Squire Hascall," 83, on the website familytreemaker.genealogy.com.

<sup>5</sup>"Death of J. W. Doane; Railroad Financier and Head of Big Coffee Firm a Victim of Heart Disease . . . He is survived by his widow, two sons, A. E. and J. W. Jr., and three daughters." *New York Times*, 24 March, 1901. John Wesley Doane and his children are also listed in "Descendants of Squire Hascall," 78. One wonders if it is possible that the Doanes and Hascalls might have been acquainted as cousins (see note 4), thus leading to their common interest in property in faraway Vermont.

<sup>6</sup>"The marriage of Mrs. Fannie Doane Rumsey, daughter of the late J. W. Doane of Chicago, to Prof. Justus Erhardt of Boston, took place Aug. 29," *New York Times*, 7 September, 1902. Justus Erhardt is listed in the 1914 *Harvard University Alumni Directory*, page 256, as "Erhardt, Justus: [Inst. Tech. Bologna (Italy) 1888. Ed.]"

<sup>7</sup>John Turner Rumsey (Fannie's first husband) died 9 Jun 1900; John Wesley Doane (her father) died 23 Mar 1901; Julia Ann Moulton Doane (her mother) died 7 Jan 1902. <http://familytreemaker.genealogy.com>

<sup>8</sup>Information in the Berlin Grand List suggests that the cottage was built in 1905, the year after the Erhardts' initial land purchase.

<sup>9</sup>The road is sometimes erroneously called Earhart Hill after Amelia Earhart, who was matron of honor at the 1931 wedding of Porter and Susan Adams, later residents farther up the road. Porter Adams had served in Washington as president of the National Aeronautic Association. Sue was his secretary, and they had many aviation friends. Adams became president of Norwich University in nearby Northfield in 1934, and in 1935 invited Amelia Earhart to speak there. After his retirement from Norwich in 1939, Porter and Sue Adams bought the old Emerson house on Crosstown Road (from the Smiths, who ran a bed-and-breakfast there named Lotus Lodge). There is no evidence that Amelia Earhart ever visited the Crosstown Road house, and her disappearance in 1937 makes this highly unlikely. But the rumor that the road is named after her persists locally. Extensive documentation about Porter and Sue Adams is available in the Special Collections of Kreitzberg Library at Norwich University. After Porter Adams's death, Sue married his personal assistant Donald Boyer. They continued to live in the same house, nowadays referred to as the "Boyer House."

<sup>10</sup>Seen in photos in the private collection of James Sumner, other Doane country (or perhaps seaside) estates were mansions of much grander appearance and scale. Their Vermont "cottage" is indeed humble in comparison.

<sup>11</sup>Agatha Fassett, *The Naked Face of Genius* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1958), 113, 89.

<sup>12</sup>According to later owner Agatha Illes, the town had promised electricity but not actually provided it as of 1941. To this day, power comes down Crosstown Road from one power company and up the road from another, but still does not reach the Erhardt Cottage property located between the two services.

<sup>13</sup>James Sumner. He is a descendant in the Hewitt family, longtime owners of the former Ayers property seen on the 1873 map opposite the old Emerson place. His grandmother and Rev. Arthur Hewitt were siblings. See notes 41 and 45, below.

<sup>14</sup>Her father, an orphan from Boston, had been brought to Vermont by the Doane family to tend horses. After he came to Vermont, he met the neighbor girl up the road and married her; they are the parents of the reminiscer here and the grandparents of James Sumner. Horses were of more than casual interest to the Doanes: "Thomson, Conn., Jan. 16.—White Heart, a famous Kentucky thoroughbred, owned by Mrs. Julia Doane Dresser, broke a leg by a fall while out on the track yesterday and had to be shot. The horse had seventeen blue ribbons to his credit." *New York Times*, 17 January, 1914.

<sup>15</sup>Housed in the Harvard University library, the Rogers Memorial Collection contains "An autograph album from 1876 and a scrapbook from 1911 compiled by Julia Doane, a Chicagoan with connections to the theatrical and musical communities. Both items feature actors and other theatrical figures of the late 19th century." <http://oasis.lib.harvard.edu>

<sup>16</sup>James Sumner says that his mother, the schoolgirl in this story, told Mr. Doane that she didn't have any money but he gave her ice cream anyway. Later, it was quite a surprise when Mr. Doane presented a bill to her father!

<sup>17</sup>There seems to be no local recollection by the 1930s of a Mr. Dresser. An October 28, 1927, deed of sale transferring the old Emerson farm from Hascall to the Dressers and Erhardts specifies

“Julia D. Dresser and George E. Dresser personally appeared [in Connecticut] and acknowledged this instrument.” George Dresser’s death date is unknown. Mrs. Dresser apparently spent her last years in Vermont without him.

<sup>18</sup>David Mercier.

<sup>19</sup>The neighborhood by this time also featured other lodges frequented by literary, intellectual, and musical guests—Lotus Lodge (the former Emerson place) and Cedar Lodge (the southernmost of the three former Ayers houses across the road from it, no longer in existence).

<sup>20</sup>The train station no longer exists, replaced in the 1960s by the Riverton fire station. Rail service was absent between 1952 and 1980, but now is provided by Amtrak. The new railroad station is at Montpelier Junction, five miles north of Riverton.

<sup>21</sup>Her name is often pronounced locally as “Miss Ellis.”

<sup>22</sup>Elijah Stommel, “Echoes of Agatha and Her People,” unpublished document housed in the offices of the Berlin Historical Society, date approximately 2000.

<sup>23</sup>Gary Richardson.

<sup>24</sup>Norma Ryan.

<sup>25</sup>The guest was Hungarian composer Béla Bartók, reminiscing over foods from the old country. Fassett, *Naked Face*, 120.

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*, 14–15.

<sup>28</sup>Peter Bartók, *My Father* (published by Bartók Records, P.O. Box 399, Homosassa, Florida 34487, 2002), 90.

<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>30</sup>The Rumanian project occupied Bartók from the 1920s to the end of his life and was not fully published until twenty years after his death. A huge collection containing documentation, scholarly discussion, and transcriptions of hundreds of melodies, it is now available as: Béla Bartók (Benjamin Suchoff, ed.), *Rumanian Folk Music* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1967). Bartók did no composing of new music while in Vermont. In a two-year lull in composition while he left his homeland and settled in the new country, he had not yet embarked on his last great masterworks, the Concerto for Orchestra, Solo Violin Sonata, Viola Concerto, and Third Piano Concerto.

<sup>31</sup>“Matthew, neighboring farmer and honorary caretaker of my house since the day I bought it and even before, for I had inherited him from the previous owner.” Fassett, *Naked Face*, 91. This caretaker was surely Raymond Norton, with his name changed in her book. Mary Fassett, cousin of Agatha’s husband Stephen Fassett, speaks in a December 2, 2008, private communication with the author of her experience at the cottage after Agatha and Stephen’s wedding: “There was a weird ghost of a caretaker named Raymond who walked in on me evenings when I was practicing [piano]. I was staying as cat-sitter while the newly weds went somewhere.” Mary Fassett stands at the far right in the wedding photo.

<sup>32</sup>Miriam Chapin, “Béla Bartók in Riverton,” *Vermont Life* 16, Summer 1962: 46.

<sup>33</sup>Earline V. Marsh, “Bartók in Vermont,” *Times Argus Country Courier*, 12 June, 1991, 3A.

<sup>34</sup>Fassett, *Naked Face*, 173.

<sup>35</sup>Although he knew both languages, he feigned no knowledge of German (perhaps due in part to his intense anti-Nazi sentiment), and so little English as to be tired by trying to speak it. Fassett, *Naked Face*, 176.

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*, 131–132.

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*, 163. The elderly Spanish neighbors were named Mr. and Mrs. Gonzales in Agatha’s book (pronounced Canallis by local Vermonters). They were actually Cipriano and Floripes Canales, then owners of the old Kimball place on Darling Road seen on the 1873 map.

<sup>38</sup>*Ibid.*, 128–129. The author believes this refers to the Norton farm, no longer in existence, but at the time adjacent to and up the road from the former Emerson place.

<sup>39</sup>*Ibid.*, 169.

<sup>40</sup>*Ibid.*, 146.

<sup>41</sup>The photo of Bartók with his wife and Agatha was undoubtedly taken at the granite quarry. Note the large square-cut stone blocks. It has been speculated that the photo was taken instead in front of the home of Rev. Arthur Hewitt, a neighbor and friend farther up Crosstown Road (the former Ayers property on the 1873 map); that stone wall, however, is built of smaller field stones, as can still be seen today behind overgrown bushes.

<sup>42</sup>He lived in the cure cottage of Mrs. Margaret Sageman, 32 Park Avenue, the summers of 1942, 1943 and 1944. In summer 1945 he stayed at the cottage belonging to Max Haar, 89 Riverside Drive. The Haar cottage is now preserved by Historic Saranac Lake as the “Bartók Cabin.” In 2004 the Hungarian deputy minister of culture “presided in a ceremony to install a brass plaque in the cabin, inscribed with a portrait of Béla Bartók and the words, ‘In the summer of 1945 Béla Bartók, the great Hungarian composer, found peace and inspiration in this place and here completed his last works.’” *Adirondack Daily Enterprise Weekender* 23–29 June, 2006, 1, 4, 7.

<sup>43</sup> Private communication from Peter Bartók to the author, 30 June, 2007.

<sup>44</sup> Stommel, "Echoes of Agatha."

<sup>45</sup> Rev. Hewitt owned the Ayers property seen on the 1873 map, opposite the old Emerson place. He named its northernmost house, the one in which he lived, "Highland Manse," and it is still known by that name today. In the photo he stands behind the groom, and Sue Boyer stands at the left of the picture.

<sup>46</sup> To Samuel Monoson of New York City. The transaction took place in New York, but its record is kept in the Berlin Town Office.

<sup>47</sup> Sue and Agatha had become friends, surely in part through their mutual love of music. Sue was herself a pianist, and among her cherished possessions were three pianos. She later became beloved benefactress of the Vermont Philharmonic Orchestra.

<sup>48</sup> According to caretaker Gary Richardson, the Boyers' goal was to provide ample open pasture for the cattle, which numbered about 100 head of registered Black Angus at the herd's largest. In the course of creating their beautiful private estate, Mr. Boyer had burned down the decrepit barn that so upset Bartók, as well as other structures he did not need.

<sup>49</sup> Probably 1966 or 1967, according to local firefighters who participated in the burn. The date is not recorded because controlled burns were very common in those days and not worthy of official documentation, newspaper coverage, or photos.

<sup>50</sup> Information about the Boyer State Forest is available at the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks, and Recreation in Waterbury. Its establishment was not without controversy. Letters attest to the town selectboard's worry over the loss of potential tax base and residents' desire for preservation of the rural countryside. As with many governmental acquisitions, approval by both the governor and the legislature was required for the state to establish the forest and to assume its management and consequent expense. A small portion of the Boyer estate became available for purchase in 1986, and the author and her husband now live in a house they built there in 1987, opposite the old Emerson house on Crosstown Road, just up the hill from the former Erhardt/Illes cottage.

<sup>51</sup> Its GPS location is N 44°12'27", W 72°37'34".

<sup>52</sup> Actually the entrance has been moved slightly downhill to accommodate a drainage culvert under Crosstown Road at the point of the old entrance. Time of placement of the culvert is unknown. The driveway now enters the property on the downhill side of the big maple tree, then curves up to meet its old path beside the cottage and thence to the barn.