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More About Vermont History

Compiled by PAUL A. CARNAHAN

BOOK REVIEWS



Ethan Allen: His Life and Times

By Willard Sterne Randall (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2011, pp. xvi, 617, \$35.00).

Willard Sterne Randall has produced the first serious full-length biography of Ethan Allen in nearly a half century, and only the third scholarly assessment, among a long list of biographical and other accounts of the leader of the Green Mountain Boys. Allen, portrayed by some scholars and in popular imagination as the founder of Vermont, has become an icon whose name graces a conservative think tank, a bowling alley, a motel, a fire company, an Amtrak train, and more than a dozen other modern enterprises. A detailed new treatment of Ethan Allen becomes, simply by its publication, an important event in interpreting Vermont's formative years and Allen's continuing grip on the ethos of the state. Randall's *Ethan Allen* presents the latest and a very readable story of Vermont's often flamboyant hero.

Despite his almost universal recognition in Vermont, Ethan Allen presents special challenges to a biographer. The contemporary evidence describing the first half of his life, twenty-five years, remains thin. Very little new evidence about Allen has turned up since the appearance of the previous biographies, histories like Michael Bellesiles's 1993 *Revolutionary Outlaws: Ethan Allen and the Struggle for Independence on the Early American Frontier*, in which Allen plays a very significant role, and the publication of the Allen family correspondence and the collected works of Ethan and Ira Allen. Randall compensates for that difficulty, in part, by utilizing his previous work. He draws from his one-volume biographies of Alexander Hamilton, George Washington, and Benedict

Arnold, all of whom had meaningful interactions with Allen and Vermont, his book on *Thomas Chittenden's Town* (Williston) with Nancy Nahra, and his research into eighteenth-century America, to provide a loom on which he weaves the threads of Allen's life into a textured fabric.

The accurate subtitle, *His Life and Times*, a biographical genre developed in the nineteenth century in the face of difficulty in accessing primary sources, offers Randall a larger backdrop and context for presenting Allen. He treats the reader to a wide variety of small and useful essays on New England religious controversies and trends, inoculation against small pox, and major events preceding the Revolutionary War, including the post-French and Indian War economy, the politics of British colonial policy, and the Stamp Act crisis and the American resistance to it that presaged the Revolution. These background pieces also include, among many others, the potash and iron industries in Connecticut, New Hampshire's Wentworth family and the land grants that would become Vermont, the North Carolina activities of Governor William Tryon, who when he came to New York became Allen's nemesis, the 1775–76 campaign to make Canada the fourteenth state, New York City and the British treatment of American prisoners during the Revolution, and Shays's rebellion, about which Randall adds new material.

Randall also turns to another device common, and often necessary, to biography. He uses a form of triangulation to fill in the gaps between clearly documented points in the subject's life. Biographical triangulation attempts to find the intersection of the direct lines from two or more documented points. This device of informed speculation allows Randall to develop a coherent chronological narrative for the many instances when direct evidence for Allen's thoughts and actions does not exist. In the years following his retreat from the failed lead mining venture in Northampton, Massachusetts, back to Salisbury, Connecticut, in 1767, for example, Allen began to venture into the New Hampshire Grants. By 1770, he had sufficiently established himself in the Grants to get appointed to manage the 1770 Ejectment suits New York proprietors brought against settlers in the Bennington area holding New Hampshire titles. Documentation, largely involving legal matters, and suggestions from Ira Allen's *Autobiography*, an account composed in England years after the fact that begins its narrative in 1769, establish Ethan's whereabouts and activities at certain specific points between 1767 and 1770. With this information, Randall connects the dots. Allen would head north into the Grants to scout for land and hunt and trap for deer skins and other pelts to earn money. "In the spring of 1768," Randall engagingly asserts, "Allen's first winter in the wilderness ended after the

torrents of snowmelt subsided. His canoe sagging under bundles of pelts and furs, he paddled east along the Winooski River, followed streams and ponds through the four ridges of the Green Mountains, then glided down the Connecticut River” (p. 180). Allen did, according to documents, arrive in Northampton where he negotiated an agreement with a creditor for the power of attorney to settle a debt which in turn resulted in his debt being relieved. But the description of the winter in the woods amounts to informed conjecture.

Ethan’s first visit to Philadelphia provides another example, among many, of triangulation. In June 1775, not long after he led the stunning capture of Fort Ticonderoga, Allen traveled with Seth Warner through New York, where Tryon had declared both of them outlaws, to meet with the Continental Congress in Philadelphia. Their appearance, well documented in the *Journals of the Continental Congress* and in a letter from President John Hancock to the New York Provincial Congress, places Allen and Warner squarely in the largest city in the thirteen colonies. Randall asserts that Allen spoke to Congress “in his slow, confident, distinctive voice” (p. 339). At the same time Dr. Thomas Young, Allen’s mentor and friend from his days in Salisbury in the 1760s, had trod a stormy path from the Oblong near Salisbury, through Albany, Boston, and Newport, Rhode Island, to Philadelphia. There Young, who in May 1777 would suggest the name “Vermont” and offer the Pennsylvania Constitution as a model for the new state, had become active in Philadelphia’s highest revolutionary circles. Randall connects the dots and has Allen enjoying “one of the most satisfying interludes in his tempestuous life,” in which “the loquacious Dr. Young regaled Allen with his account of the dozen-odd years since they last toasted each other over tankards of hot buttered rum” (pp. 343–44). This triangulated speculation enriches the biography. It also provides an opportunity for a brief account of Young, who John Adams described as an “Eternal Fisher in Troubled Waters.” Allen had worked with Young on a manuscript that he would later enlarge and publish, without attribution to Young, as *Reason the Only Oracle of Man*, popularly dubbed Ethan Allen’s Bible. But Allen’s “satisfying” interlude remains only a possible, even if likely, confection that contributes some texture to the story of Allen’s life.

The Ethan Allen who emerges on Randall’s pages, often richer and nuanced, reinforces the standard, long accepted version of a complex, ambitious, charismatic, physically imposing, intelligent leader at the center of the creation and maintenance of Vermont’s independence from New York. This interpretation of Allen and Vermont, begun by the Rev. Samuel Williams in his pioneering *The Natural and Civil History of*

Vermont (1794), took firm root in the second quarter of the nineteenth century in accounts that combined fact and myth to sculpt a hero. Even with some more modern revisionist weathering, it has remained the rock-hard platform of the standard story of Vermont. Ethan Allen logically stands at the center of biography about him. That focus causes Randall to downplay the contributions of Warner, Chittenden, Ethan's brother Ira, and other Vermont leaders with whom Allen worked and who declared and achieved Vermont's independence while he languished as a captive of the British.

The view of the Haldimand Negotiations provides a litmus test for the ongoing interpretive debate about regarding Allen as consistently dedicated to liberty and Vermont independence, or as a strong leader sometimes more driven by self-interest. In 1780, the British approached Allen in an effort to lure Vermont back into their fold. Allen and the inner circle of the state's leadership engaged in negotiations with the British under the ostensible cover of talks to secure an exchange of prisoners. Randall joins the majority of historians and biographers who attribute the negotiations to canny Yankees using them to protect Vermont's northern frontier from the British, and at the same time apply pressure on Congress for recognition of its independence. Randall quotes from an Allen letter to Frederick Haldimand, governor of Canada, in which he declares "I shall do Every thing in my Power to render this state a British province." Randall then asks the questions, "Did Allen mean it? Or was he only wedging the door open for future ties between Vermont and Canada? Had he ever meant it?" (p. 491). Some historians have answered "yes," Allen seriously contemplated rejoining the British. Randall concludes firmly the opposite. Wily Vermonters, who had remained steadfastly loyal to Vermont and the ideals of the American Revolution, cleverly "duped" Haldimand into restraining British military force on Vermont's northern frontier (p. 493).

Randall generally agrees with the mainstream story of Vermont, with well-formed renditions of the decision to resist New York at a meeting in Bennington immediately after the Ejectment suits, and the activities of the Green Mountain Boys under Allen's leadership. His previous work on Benedict Arnold informs and enriches the account of the capture of Fort Ticonderoga. The story of Allen's capture in an ill-conceived attack on Montreal in September 1775 through his release in May 1778, derives from Allen's *The Narrative of Colonel Ethan Allen*, first published in 1779, and an American Revolution best seller. Randall sees "no reason to doubt the general thrust" of the *Narrative*, though it lacks introspection about Ethan's actions that led to his capture (p. 366).

Randall compresses the last decade of Allen's life into about one-seventh of his text. Though Ethan never held elective office in Vermont and in high dudgeon resigned his commission as commander of the Vermont militia in the swirl of accusations over the Haldimand Negotiations, Randall has Allen in the middle of Vermont's formative years as "the governor's unelected counselor the day he returned" from captivity (p. 450). Randall does not provide a similar level of context for Vermont in the 1780s as a backdrop for assessing Allen as he did for the earlier years. The account of his counsel also competes with other major events including the publication of *Reason the Only Oracle of Man*, his work on behalf of Connecticut settlers and speculators in Pennsylvania's Wyoming Valley, and his second, whirlwind marriage. Randall's thin depiction of Vermont in the 1780s, with the exception of the response to Shays's Rebellion, does not deal with the Allens's discomfort with the movement that eventually led to statehood two years after his death in 1789. Placing Ethan Allen at the center of Vermont affairs does not adequately recognize the partial postwar eclipse of the Allens and their allies, that the reins had begun to pass during Ethan's captivity to other leaders, and that he never fully regained them.

Unfortunately, geographic errors litter the landscape of *Ethan Allen: His Life and Times*. Randall twice locates the Hudson River outpost of Fort Edward on the "southern end" of Lake George (pp. 103, 151), moves Fort William Henry from the southern end more than thirty miles to the northern end of Lake George (p. 102), and places Fort Ticonderoga once at the "foot" of Lake Champlain (p. 25) and another time, in its French days as Carillon "at the lake's southern tip" (p. 102). Three times he relocates Worcester, Massachusetts, many miles west to the Connecticut River (pp. 6, 29, and 30), and he places Windsor in the southeast "corner of the Grants" (p. 442). Randall has timber rafts floating out of Lake Champlain loaded with forest products drifting against the current to unload upstream on the St. Lawrence at Montreal, rather than downstream at Québec (pp. 534–35). He struggles with actual mileage between key points, even accounting for eighteenth-century roadways, and confuses "up" and "down" Lakes Champlain and George with "north" and "south."

These annoying examples of cartographic lapses do not seriously affect the narrative, but when combined with other misstatements they do raise questions about problems in other areas. Randall introduces the new character of Daniel Fay, who Williams and other sources do not record, as a participant in the Haldimand Negotiations, conducted in part by Joseph Fay (p. 488). He has Bennington religious leader Reverend Jedediah Dewey, rather than Stephen Fay, as the "Landlord" and

proprietor of the famous Catamount Tavern (p. 237). He misnames Thomas Walker, a leading Montreal merchant and proponent of the American thrust to capture Canada in 1775, calling him “John” (pp. 322, 368). Soon after Allen’s capture in Montreal, Randall depicts the “one-eyed,” mean-spirited, and gloating English fur merchant Brook Watson taunting Allen (p. 396). Watson had lost his leg, not his eye, in Havana harbor in 1749, a gruesome event immortalized in Copley’s famous and powerful painting “Watson and the Shark,” now at the National Gallery of Art.

Randall also claims that Ethan Allen—with a total formal military experience of two weeks in a militia company that saw no action—could muster in 1775 a regiment of 2,000 frontiersmen “he had trained and disciplined through five years of armed resistance to royal officials in New York” (p. 25). This claim does not comport with the population on the Grants that Randall correctly estimates at 8,800 in 1775 (p. 301). The Grants had an average household size of between five and six, five-eighths of whom lived in towns on the east side of the Green Mountains, whose residents did not join the Green Mountain Boys. Allen would have had to draw his 2,000 troops from a population of a little over 3,000 men, women, and children from roughly 625 families. Randall misstates the name of the cemetery (Greenmount, not “Green Mountain”) to which, he asserts, a crowd of 10,000—over 10 percent of Vermont’s population—trekked over many miles in a few days in February 1789 to attend Allen’s funeral (pp. 531–32). Allen’s now iconic statement to Yorker James Duane, to whom Randall assigns the role of arch villain in the Ethan Allen story, was first reported by Ira Allen in 1798 as, “The Gods of the valleys are not the Gods of the hills.” The sequence of the valleys and the hills became reversed in many nineteenth-century accounts, and Randall follows them (p. 237). He carelessly lists the distinguished historian William F. Cronon as the author of an article published while Cronon attended grade school (p. 563).

Many readers will not recognize or care about these and other factual hiccoughs, as they do not seriously interrupt the flow of the narrative about an engaging man whose story has become synonymous with the founding of the Green Mountain State. Ethan Allen led a full, interesting, varied, and often exciting life in momentous times. Randall has imaginatively captured much of it. Historians and other scholars may disagree with giving the Allens the central, dominant role in Vermont, particularly after 1775, and they will continue to study and write about Ethan Allen from a variety of vantages. But without the unlikely discovery of a substantial cache of new documentary evidence, Randall has probably and unfortunately forestalled another attempt at a

full-length biography for as many years as have lapsed since the last effort appeared in 1969.

H. NICHOLAS MULLER III

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Revolutionary Westminster: From Massacre to Statehood

By Jessie Haas (Charleston, S.C.: The History Press, 2011, pp. 174, \$19.99).

Lexington. Concord. Westminster. Scholars of American history will undoubtedly link the first two places with the beginnings of the American Revolution. If Vermont author Jessie Haas has it her way, Westminster will no longer seem the odd-fellow. Haas' work centers on the tragic events of March 13, 1775 that resulted in the death of two men, the overturning of New York colonial rule in Cumberland County, and as Haas contends, the earliest bloodshed of the Revolution. Haas' book is the result of a new history of Westminster, commissioned by the local historical society, and it reflects that vision. In addition to a sustained treatment of the massacre the work includes information about the town's early settlement and the often influential role played by the town and its citizens in both the Revolutionary War effort and the post-massacre creation of the state of Vermont.

The first third of the book recounts the town's founding, using the political rivalry between New Hampshire Governor Benning Wentworth and New York Lieutenant Governor Cadwallader Colden to frame a discussion about the confusing land grants dispute which, over the course of time, saw Westminster fall under four separate charters. Haas also takes time to introduce to the narrative several important citizens who appear in early Westminster and who figure prominently in the later drama. Of particular note is the diabolically fascinating Crean Brush, an Irish loyalist who arrived in Westminster in 1771 and used his extensive social ties in New York to swiftly consolidate his own political power. Haas notes that in just three years, Brush—a lawyer and land speculator

by trade—was able to acquire thousands of acres of land, make Westminster the county seat, install a close friend as sheriff, relocate the courthouse, and maneuver himself into one of the two seats Cumberland County acquired in the New York assembly. (Admirers of the Allen family will find it interesting to note that Brush's stepdaughter was Frances Montresor Buchanan—Fanny—who, as a young widow, married Ethan Allen.)

After firmly situating Westminster in its historical context and demonstrating how it became the seat of New York colonial rule in Cumberland County, Haas examines how several events occurring outside Cumberland County exacerbated the tensions within Westminster. In reaction to farmers' revolutions occurring in Massachusetts throughout August and September of 1774 (the product of resentment toward the Coercive Acts), sympathizers in Westminster organized a series of conventions to address the increased pressure from Great Britain. The first convention produced language that strongly opposed the acts of Parliament and aligned Cumberland County with the Continental Congress. At the second convention, held on November 30, the citizens of Cumberland County cemented that allegiance when they voted to adhere to the Articles of Association—a bold move that put the county at odds with New York, the only colony to reject the association. The final convention primarily dealt with the flow of information, setting up monitors for the Committees of Correspondence. It was an issue of some concern, as word had spread throughout Westminster that the county council had concealed an earlier letter from New York Committee of Correspondence member Isaac Low inquiring about the peoples' sentiments following the previous year's events in Massachusetts. Haas pays particular attention to the language emerging from the conventions to bolster support for her claims, finding in the proclamations the rumblings of a sentiment that would turn revolutionary after the massacre.

Haas' retelling of the massacre itself deserves credit. Her lyrical talent (she has written numerous children's books) is especially evident in the introduction, which succinctly and beautifully weaves the various primary accounts of the massacre into a seamless episode. The reader will appreciate the quality of the narrative all the more when, later in the text, it becomes apparent how contradictory were the reports that emerged from either side. Again, as Haas notes, the language of the accounts offers us clues about the assumptions of the participants. The Whigs termed it a massacre: innocent, peacefully assembled men unjustly attacked by an illegitimate authority. The Yorkers imagined it a riot: an unruly, violent mob rightly taken care of by the law. Lieutenant Governor Colden deemed it an insurrection. That such varied interpretation

of the massacre existed at the time makes Haas' appendix, which deals with the historical legacy of the event and particularly how its memory has been used over time, especially interesting.

Those interested in local history and the American Revolution will find value in Haas' book. She has gathered an impressive array of primary sources that support her argument and present the reader with the sort of intimate knowledge that one would expect to find in a local history. Photographs of important sites, documents, and memorials provide an interesting visual context for Haas' narrative. Ultimately, she offers an interesting story of the Westminster massacre that challenges us to reconsider our assumptions about the earliest violence of the American Revolution, and calls our attention to the unique role that Westminster and its citizens played in the creation of the state of Vermont.

SCOTT MCDOWELL

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Architecture and Academe: College Buildings in New England before 1860

By Bryant F. Tolles, Jr. (Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 2011, pp. 232, \$50.00).

Bryant Tolles has long guided us to and through the architectural treasures of New England, and with this latest book, the journey continues. Tolles traces the history and physical development of sixteen major colleges and universities, beginning with their founding years in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries: Amherst, Bates, Bowdoin, Brown, Colby, Dartmouth, Harvard, Holy Cross, Middlebury, Norwich, Trinity, Tufts, Yale, Wesleyan, Williams, and the University of Vermont (UVM). The Vermont institutions comprise their own chapter.

College campuses were among the first institutions in the young nation to experiment with layout to create views and vistas, and to enhance major structures by placement as well as architectural detail. Tolles points out patterns and departures from patterns. Although he nods to English antecedents at Oxford and Cambridge, he focuses on American models—Yale's row plan and Harvard's quad model. Through in-depth research of college records, Tolles uncovers the stories of early campus development. He points out that Yale originally proposed a quad plan, but New Haven residents wanted buildings that faced outward, to the

Green. (Later changes turned Yale's brick row inward on the quad model.) At Dartmouth, the town common became the quad for the college. Tufts broke with the row tradition, or rather, doubled it, by creating two rows of inward-facing buildings, along opposite edges of a rectangular "mall," possibly inspired by Thomas Jefferson's design for the University of Virginia.

Williams eschewed a village environment and located in a natural country setting, to reflect the college's transcendental focus. This break with tradition foreshadowed another tradition, the pastoral college campus, separate from (but often adjacent to) everyday urban life. Before too long, the "college on the hill" would become a revered model, exemplified in this grouping by Brown and Middlebury.

The author treats unique building types developed on antebellum college campuses—dormitories, commons, scientific buildings, chapels, etc., and specialized uses like "cabinets"—rooms for housing scientific instruments and natural specimens. (Amherst had a freestanding cabinet building, Appleton Cabinet [1855]). He helps us understand how buildings were originally used and how the physicality of the buildings reflected contemporaneous views of education, gender, and faculty/student relations.

Many of the colleges' first buildings were multi-purpose, reminiscent of mill architecture, and surprisingly consistent in size—about 100 feet long, 40–50 feet wide, and 2½–3½ stories high: classically pleasing proportions. Residential, educational, administrative, and assembly spaces were located together in one building.

Tracking ideas, in this case, architectural ideas, is an enjoyable pursuit. Tolles provides many historical and modern illustrations that offer stimulus and reference for this architectural detective work. And the older images sometimes also give a glimpse of life on campus: people on horseback, horse-drawn carriages, and young men playing ball in top hats and morning coats. It's also the kind of book that will tempt a reader to thumb through the extensive footnotes to extract an extra level of detail. Tolles also calls attention to what is unknown (designers) or missing (plans) to identify research questions for future efforts.

The Vermont chapter of the book begins with a chronicle of UVM's little-known original building (1801–07, burned 1824), known as the "College Edifice," a handsome four-story, hip-roofed brick structure with central pedimented pavilions visually supporting a tall open bell tower. UVM's oldest surviving building, Old Mill (1825–29, 1846, 1882–83), was originally three buildings with a seven-foot fire separation between them. In 1846, master builder John Johnson joined them, and in 1882–83, Rutland architect J. J. R. Randall enlarged the central chapel and added

a fourth floor for more dormitory space. When Old Mill was recently renovated again, one of those student rooms was preserved in the attic.

Middlebury College began in 1800 in the Addison County Grammar School (1797–98, demolished 1864), a space it shared until 1805. It was over a decade before they built the first campus structure, Painter Hall (1816). Tolles reports that Middlebury’s Old Chapel (1836) had a small astronomical observatory in the belfry. Starr Hall (1861, rebuilt after a fire in 1865) completed the iconic Old Stone Row, which has been recognized with National Register of Historic Places designation and a commemorative U.S. Postal Service stamped card in 2000, the College’s bicentennial year.

Norwich University was originally established in Norwich and had a two-building row, South Barracks (1820) and North Barracks (1832). The latter had an exterior stair tower similar to mill design, and diminishing window sizes on the upper stories, like Reed Hall (1839–40), designed by Ammi Burnham Young, at Dartmouth across the river in Hanover, New Hampshire. (That project was a Young family affair, with Ammi the architect, brother Dyer the contractor, and brother Ira, a professor and astronomer, the project manager.)

Tolles’ book becomes a guide to reading the college and university landscape in New England and beyond. Where inspiration from one campus to another was direct, Tolles points out “architectural twins.” And the early college buildings that Tolles describes often served as models for twins across time in the Colonial Revival period in the early twentieth century. But the influence of New England colleges extended far beyond the northeastern states. Many colleges elsewhere modeled themselves educationally and physically on these New England institutions. A great many of the buildings in the book remain today and can be visited. Bryant Tolles’ book will open your eyes to the architectural history of a very special part of the New England landscape, our early colleges and universities.

NANCY E. BOONE

Nancy E. Boone served many years as the State Architectural Historian and Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer with the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation. She is now the Federal Preservation Officer for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development in Washington, D.C. Her personal higher educational path included two years at Middlebury College.

“A Very Fine Appearance”: The Vermont Civil War Photographs of George Houghton

By Donald H. Wickman (Barre, Vt.: Vermont Historical Society, 2011, pp. xxxi, 232, \$44.95, paper \$34.95).

“*A Very Fine Appearance*” celebrates the life and work of Vermonter George Houghton (1824–1870), the sesquicentennial of the Civil War, the history of war photography, and regional history. These themes, carefully and thoughtfully presented in the foreword by Harold Holzer and the introductory essay by Donald Wickman, seek to restore both the photographer and his work from anonymity.

Houghton presented a leather-bound, gilt-edged volume of his photographs in 1864 to the Vermont Historical Society. The members were so impressed that he was awarded a lifetime membership. Houghton’s photographs of Vermont’s regiments, field notes, and newly commissioned maps of the places where they fought are the second part and heart of the book. The photographer’s range of subject matter, from troop encampments to battlefields and fortifications, and the accompanying texts, are the motivation for this publication and its value to the general reader and specialist.

Francis Miller’s ten volumes, *The Photographic History of the Civil War*, published in 1911, sought to elevate photographs to historical record and cultural memory. The thousands of photographs published in it, for the most part without attribution to individual makers, serve that purpose today. Furthermore, they are an important aspect of photographic history. The Civil War was the first war to be photographed in its totality from its beginning to its end. Mathew Brady, the most famous photographer of the war, made few photographs due to poor eyesight. He took credit for pictures done under his direction; posterity has continued to credit him for pictures that were made by his operators. The best-known ones were Alexander Gardner and Timothy O’Sullivan.

“*A Very Fine Appearance*” lifts Houghton from the anonymity of 3,154 pre-Civil War photographers or those working in related fields and places his life and work in an honored position in Vermont and in the annals of Civil War photography. This genre evolved at the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth century into photojournalism and war photography with the advent of Eastman Kodak roll films and smaller cameras. The wet plate process used during the Civil War required a stand camera, and the emulsions used were too

slow to capture movement or actual fighting on the battlefield. Holzer and Wickman provide detailed accounts of this process. They also document and explain how it limited the range of Houghton's photographic subjects but did not hinder his making evocative photographs of the war experience.

The interpretive pieces by Holzer and Wickman do not attempt to give an account of the entire war as Miller does, but instead illuminate aspects of Houghton's private and professional life. The financing of the war through the passage of an Internal Revenue Bill and levying taxes on photographs did not prove to be a burden for Houghton, as he had plenty of paying customers who sought his portraits and battlefield views. The income allowed him to purchase a house for his family and take care of their daily needs.

His status as a photographer gave Houghton access to the troops and nearness to war. His photographs of a newly freed slave family after the battle of Gaines Mill, and of the burial site of the 3rd Vermont killed at Lee's Mills, are poignant reminders of the meaning of the war. Contemporaries would have understood the costs and pain witnessed in the photographs. This is a shared American history, and it is of particular interest to residents of Vermont. This shared duality (national and local) is further amplified by the contemporary accounts gathered by Wickman and placed on the page opposite each photograph. This pairing is one of the strengths and values of this book.

However well researched and written this book is, it has a serious fault. The reproductions made from digital scans of the prints are flat, lifeless representations of the originals. This volume does not visually represent Houghton's photographs as they were when presented to the Vermont Historical Society in 1864. They do not come close to the legibility of the black and white halftone reproductions in Miller's volumes published in 1911. At that time, halftone technology was state of the art and appropriate for a photographic history. The reproductions in this photographic history are not first rate and diminish the book's value but not its usefulness as a research tool.

WILLIAM EARLE WILLIAMS

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Farms, Flatlanders, and Fords: A Story of People and Place in Rural Vermont 1890–2010

By Cameron Clifford (West Hartford, Vt.: Cameron Clifford Books, 2011, pp. vii, 245, \$20.00).

This book by Cameron Clifford could be about almost any rural town in Vermont during this period of time. It captures the changes that took place as the town went from being a close-knit agricultural community in the late 1800s, primarily dependent upon dairy farming, to a rural bedroom community today. What is unique and interesting about this book is that it focuses on twenty native North Pomfret families that lived, witnessed, and endured these changes over time. Many participated in and saw the loss of the once predominant family-operated dairy farms, the advent of the automobile and television, the growth of tourism and second homes, and the conflict around preserving the past while moving into the future. These changes brought to the forefront issues relative to land use and related values, and resulted in the eventual decline of involvement in local social institutions like the Grange, church, store, and other places that once were a key or essential part of the close-knit farming community of North Pomfret.

Clifford captures these changes with unique detail, showing how they came about due to technology, market forces, and new infrastructure, and how they not only impacted the families but also the fabric of the community. He discusses with clarity the significance of dairy farming to the town during the late 1800s and early 1900s, and its decline after the 1940s. This decline was not rapid, as men returned from World War II intent on continuing this occupation. But market forces led to decreases in milk prices, and combined with changes in technology and new health and regulatory standards such as the bulk tank, dairy farming became unprofitable for many. These proud, independent men and women of North Pomfret sought other work and opportunities. With the advent of the automobile and improved roads, many were able to find employment elsewhere, at times more distant from town. The everyday community's social structure that had evolved around the town's working dairy farms could no longer continue easily.

It was inevitable, as Clifford demonstrates, that a conflict in values would eventually take place between the "natives" and those who moved into the community from other areas. While Interstate routes 89 and 91 brought renewed opportunities to the region in tourism and second home

and retirement living and related employment, they also raised questions within the town relative to its future and open space. Conflicts that arose included the posting of land for hunting, something that many of the old timers did not do; use of land for snowmobiles and other types of recreation; junkyards and trash removal; and local land use controls. Zoning became a contentious issue, as in many Vermont communities during this period. It took a major land development proposal to bring the community together, both the so-called newcomers and the old native families, around the discussion of controls to help preserve open space.

This book is a must read for those interested in the changes that have taken place in many Vermont communities during this period of time. Many of us who were raised in small towns in Vermont that had been part of our family histories for many generations have witnessed these impacts, both positive and negative. Like those families in North Pomfret, we too revel in the past, but understand that change is inevitable. Clifford captures these sentiments very well and makes them human through the stories of the lives of the twenty families of North Pomfret that he presents in the book. It is clear that North Pomfret is trying to preserve the best of the past while moving into the future. The town today is much different than it was in 1890, and it will become much different in the future. As Clifford writes, "If one from the past was transported into the present and went for a walk through North Pomfret, he would see persistence amidst change" (p. 212).

Those who love Vermont, who live in, visit, or travel through the communities of our state, will enjoy this book. Clifford captures the lives of twenty long-time Vermont farm families that are confronted with change that has transformed many towns in Vermont during the last century. While in some cases the book brings to the forefront conflicts between the old and new, there remains a community spirit and a real sense of place that will inspire the reader.

ROGER N. ALBEE

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Back to the Land: The Enduring Dream of Self-Sufficiency in Modern America

By Dona Brown (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2011, pp. 290, paper \$34.95; ebook, \$12.95).

Readers who follow contemporary trends in home gardening and production will be aware that growing numbers of Americans, particularly in cities and suburbs, are trying to provide for at least some of their domestic food needs. New ranks of gardeners, chicken owners, and beekeepers are expressing concern through action about the stresses that environmental degradation, oil depletion, and overpopulation are placing on economic systems, resource availability, and food supplies. Readers who have an interest in such things may also be aware that their efforts are not entirely unique to the present day. University of Vermont historian Dona Brown's new book, *Back to the Land: The Enduring Dream of Self-Sufficiency in Modern America*, helps us understand how and why this is so. Brown's broadly conceived book traces the history of back-to-the-land movements and cultural attitudes toward self-sufficiency, ultimately reminding readers that many of our contemporary attitudes have deep historical roots. As is characteristic of Brown's work, *Back to the Land* is well researched, smoothly written, and often sharp and witty. The book does not engage Vermont history specifically throughout its length, but Vermont and neighboring New England states play prominent roles in many of the stories that Brown tells. There is a great deal here to appeal to audiences from a range of backgrounds and with a range of historical interests.

Back to the Land is divided into an introduction, seven chapters, and an epilogue. Brown's introduction outlines a range of periods, sentiments, motivations, and social groups associated with the back-to-the-land "movement" writ large. The history of back-to-the-land efforts in the United States is characterized by a great deal of diversity, both in social groups and attitudes, making it impossible to identify a consistent set of motivating factors. Over time, Brown argues, concerns ranging from urbanization and immigration to economic collapse to environmental decay have informed back-to-the-land action, politics, and literature. Back-to-the-landers have ranged from those content to read about and consume trappings of back-to-the-land sentiment to those who actually picked up and moved out of the city to the countryside. Their stories are not always easy to trace in the historical record, but the chapters of this book do as thorough and satisfying a job as anyone might imagine.

Chapter one begins in the early twentieth century, examining the early strands of thought and action associated with the movement's urban enthusiasts. Here Brown identifies roots within the arts-and-crafts movement, landownership reforms, intentional agricultural communities, and immigrant reforms. Early back-to-the-land supporters all shared an emphasis on crafting independence from market uncertainty through self-sufficiency—an emphasis that would inform the movement for decades. Chapter two adopts a focused look at back-to-the-land literature. Brown uses this body of work to identify the attitudes of leading thinkers as well as readers' reactions to their work. Included in chapter two is a fascinating discussion about “fakery” and the degree to which readers (as well as contemporary historians) can trust the veracity of the back-to-the-land endeavors recounted in such works.

Brown's third chapter examines private and public documents produced between the 1890s and 1920s. Here she highlights core motivations ranging from independence from the market system to health, and from a search for general stimulation to the preservation of manhood. Most notably, chapter three includes a detailed discussion of gender dynamics within the early movement, as enthusiasts struggled to define men's and women's roles as well as the benefits of self-sufficiency accrued to each group. Chapter four highlights key shifts within the movement during the 1920s, focusing particular attention on intentional agricultural colonies in the American West. These settlements, Brown notes, were financed by both private and public funds, and often became the locus for suburban developments that blurred the boundaries between speculative capitalism and back-to-the-land radicalism. Chapter five highlights Depression-era trends within the movement, including New Deal attempts to foster self-sufficiency among many who felt that America's capitalist system was fundamentally flawed. Some of this chapter's material may be familiar to some readers, but what may be less familiar are the stories it also tells about Jewish and African American subsistence communities.

Vermont readers will likely find much of interest in the book's last two chapters. Chapter six explores intellectual and political attitudes toward New Deal subsistence farming programs, particularly in Vermont—a state that some intellectuals and policymakers turned to as a new source of opportunity and hope. Brown offers lengthy discussions about the work of Vermont Governor George D. Aiken, as well as Vermont writers (some of whom she refers to as “neo-Yankees”) such as Vrest Orton, Elliot Merrick, and Helen and Scott Nearing. What this chapter does so well is to take some familiar Vermont stories about the New Deal and reinterpret them through a framework of intellectual history.

Chapter seven, which focuses on 1970s countercultural initiatives, also revisits some people and places familiar to some Vermonters, including the Nearings, as well as Ray Mungo and the Total Loss Farm. Chapter seven's particular strength is its ability to interpret 1970s back-to-the-land efforts according to long-standing historical trends as well as the particular ideologies and concerns of those years, perhaps most notably, environmentalism.

Back to the Land concludes with an epilogue that ties the book's themes and historical lessons concretely to present-day concerns about food politics and domestic production. This self-conscious linking of past and present reminds readers that all contemporary issues have historical foundations, and that we should always work to understand those foundations as a means for understanding ourselves. All those with an interest in the past can benefit from work that makes this point as effectively as Brown's book. More specifically, this point also applies to those of us interested in back-to-the-land thought. Indeed, Brown shows us that back-to-the-land enthusiasts in the United States have typically been a thoughtful and self-reflective lot. If that characteristic still holds true, then today's back-to-the-landers will want to spend time reading and thinking about Brown's findings while they get down to the practical business of living and writing the next chapter in this longer American story.

BLAKE HARRISON

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Buddy Truax, Music Man

Produced by Mark Greenberg/Upstreet Productions (CD, \$15.00).

The colors of a lush and often complex musical imagination emerge, along with sweet aural fragments of a bygone Vermont, in *Buddy Truax, Music Man*, historical recordings compiled and released in 2011 by Montpelier musical historian Mark Greenberg.

Buddy Truax—guitarist, fiddler, saxophonist, and singer—was unquestionably one of the finest local talents Vermont has seen. His heyday stretched through the 1940s and '50s, when he played with Don Fields's Pony Boys, Vermont's premier musical act during the "cowboy band" era, and then formed his own equally talented and hard-working Playboys. Theirs was a Vermont version, spread into adjacent states and Québec, of the classic country-band experience: playing far-flung barn

dances into the night, then driving the pitch-dark, two-lane roads through the wee hours to show up for radio programs—for the Pony Boys and the Playboys it was WDEV in Waterbury—in the morning.

Even after he quit the road in 1962 to help his wife, Evelyn, run a family-owned restaurant, Buddy kept his hand in music, playing occasional jazz gigs and concerts into the 1980s. Truax died in 2007. Drawing his material from incidental, informal recordings and radio transcriptions, Greenberg has compiled nineteen songs and instrumentals into a program of two parts: “Country Buddy” and “Jazz Buddy.”

The former are, largely, the older recordings, and feature equal portions of Truax’s work on fiddle and guitar. Truax was an excellent hoe-down fiddler, fast and accurate. There’s great “sock” rhythm guitar behind him on many of these selections, and terrific accordion work, though the accompanists are not fully attributed, due certainly to incomplete records. But Truax’s sister, Barb (Truax) Izzo, is credited for rhythm guitar on some tracks and also sings leads and harmonies. The Truaxes, brother and sister, are smooth, seemingly effortless vocalists. The songs presented here are primarily slow country love ballads. It’s easy to slot Buddy Truax into the Jim Reeves category, but his pitch, tone, and delivery are more reminiscent of Gene Autry.

Beginning with track #11 (“The Doll Dance”), “Jazz Buddy” is a crisp departure from “Country Buddy.” Greenberg’s liner notes recount that Truax spent his Army years during World War II in the Special Service Unit, playing guitar with pop and jazz ensembles. The great melting pot of the U.S. Army put Vermont’s Buddy Truax into contact with musicians from Glen Miller and Stan Kenton’s bands. He evidently had offers to embark on a career with musicians of this ilk and profile after the war, but chose to return to Vermont, and, in 1953, formed the Playboys.

The “Jazz Buddy” selections reveal, however, that the sophistication of that genre was his love. These nine recordings are, mostly, newer than the country selections, and contain only one crooning Truax vocal, “Pennies from Heaven.” The other eight are jazz standards, including “Body & Soul,” “Sweet Georgia Brown,” and “Moonlight in Vermont.” Truax’s guitar stylings begin with chordal melodies and double-stops, drawing a full, mellifluous sound from his electric guitar, then branch into jazzier runs punctuated by more complex chords and harmonies.

Several of the “Jazz Buddy” tunes feature a larger ensemble: J. Don Jones on cornet and trumpet, Max Pelkey on bass, and Tom Truax on drums. They particularly cook on “Perdido,” where Buddy turns in his most forward-looking guitar work on the album, and where he and Jones play a sweet trumpet-and-guitar duet.

This is excellent music headed by an intelligent and well-informed musician. Yet a perhaps inadvertent delight of the album is the brief moments of insight it offers into a Vermont as attuned to its social and musical pleasures as people are today. On a radio broadcast, Truax promotes the band's upcoming gigs at Nichols' Barn in Stowe ("The barn is well-lighted and well-policed") and the Hen House in Underhill ("Bill Atkins runs the place over there and does a very good job of it"). Caller Bobby Joyal calls the steps on "Raggedy Ann" and "Rubber Dolly," and he is quick and rhythmic and fun ("Yours is pretty, so is mine, I'll swing yours, you swing mine"). It's nice to sense the joys—the carousings, in fact—of our predecessors who lived and loved their lives in Vermont.

In the same spirit, some of the jazz numbers were recorded at the Blush Hill Country Club in Waterbury, and along with the music you hear the chatter and laughing of the patrons. Hey—it wasn't a show; it was just a gig.

The recordings in this compilation are not high tech. They are more like the two-lane roads of that era than like the interstate highways of today: serviceable, simple, with some audio potholes. But think what would be lost if they were never given to us. *Buddy Truax, Music Man* is a sometimes rough ride through very beautiful country.

WILL LINDNER

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Images of America: Orleans County

By Sarah A. Dumas and the Old Stone House Museum (Charleston, S.C.: Arcadia Publishing, 2011, pp. 128, \$21.99).

Orleans County is famous for its rugged beauty. Natural wonders such as Jay Peak and Lake Willoughby, and picturesque villages such as Craftsbury Common draw visitors from around the world. But there is another side to the county that rarely draws public attention: its poverty. Orleans's 27,000 residents suffer the highest poverty rate in Vermont and the fifth lowest average household spending in the United States. Life has always been a struggle for those living there, but their rugged perseverance has permitted their communities to grow and survive.

There have been few if any attempts to write a comprehensive history of Orleans County. Indeed, due to the significant differences in the

personalities of many of the region's towns, such a history would be a monumental task. Fortunately, Sarah A. Dumas, research librarian at the Old Stone House Museum and Orleans County Historical Society, working in tandem with other museum staffers, has produced a splendid book of photographs depicting every town in the county, dating from the latter half of the nineteenth century to the 1950s. A lively text places the photos into context and provides a concrete history of the county.

Orleans County is published by Arcadia Publishing, a major producer of local histories across the United States. The typical Arcadia book contains some background and roughly 200 pictures with explanatory captions in about 130 pages. The series includes some worthy studies of Vermont locales, including the 2009 volume, *The Vermont-Québec Border: Life on the Line*. Pictures in most of Arcadia's books date from the mid-1800s to the immediate post-World War II era. The quality of each volume varies greatly, depending on the skill and dedication of the local historians and the quality of available photographs.

Luckily, Sarah Dumas and her staff had access to the rich files of the Orleans County Historical Society as well as many of the region's active local historical societies. They have divided their book into seven chapters, each representing a neighboring cluster of towns such as Craftsbury and Greensboro, Brownington, Coventry and Westmore, and Newport, Newport Town, and Derby. The authors showcase the major historical events and features of each town in considerable detail. While there are a few pictures of such beauty spots as Jay Peak and a few area lakes, the focus is on the people of Orleans County—their farms, factories, and religious and social lives.

What is most striking about this collection of photographs is the general poverty and visible hardship in the lives of its residents. Houses and barns show considerable wear and tear, the roads are badly rutted, and the factories are dark and gloomy. There is little cheer in the faces of the people, whether young or old. A constant theme throughout is the ever-present danger of fire. Virtually every town represented here experienced one or more calamitous fires that destroyed whole downtowns of villages.

Dumas's compendium of photographs carefully depicts the region's early dependence on farming and local mills and shops. By the end of the nineteenth century, most of the towns had spawned one or more large factories, such as the Blair Veneer Company of North Troy, which manufactured plywood panels, chair seats, and piano sounding boards. This company, like virtually every other manufacturing concern in the county, faded from the scene in the mid-1900s.

I did notice one minor error in a caption of an old photograph of

Caspian Lake in Greensboro. The caption notes that two famous summer residents of Greensboro were Wallace Stegner and anthropologist Margaret Mead. Dr. Mead was my mother's close professional colleague and personal partner during the latter part of both their lives. Mead made several short visits to my mother's house in Greensboro, but was never a summer resident there like Stegner.

Dumas's *Orleans County* does an excellent job of depicting both the history and character of the region and should be on the shelf of every local library and historical society.

DANIEL MÉTRAUX

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