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BOOK REVIEWS



Uncommon Law, Ancient Roads, and Other Ruminations on Vermont Legal History

By Paul S. Gillies (Barre, Vt.: Vermont Historical Society, 2013, pp. viii, 414, \$34.95; paper, \$24.95).

Vermonters have a way of engaging in exceptionalism. We have a sense that what happens here is so unique that we stand apart from the rest of the nation. Of course, this isn't always true, but such a belief is part of our shared identity. It was with this sense of exceptionalism that I read Paul Gillies's book *Uncommon Law, Ancient Roads, and Other Ruminations on Vermont Legal History*, a collection of essays originally published in the *Vermont Bar Journal* since 1993. The twenty-five essays examine a diverse range of topics, from the law of log drives to Act 250. There is no overarching narrative; rather, the book is an eclectic mix of topics that captures selected moments in history. The reader looking for particular cases of national importance, such as the decision striking down Vermont's ban on abortion, won't necessarily find it in this collection. Nor will the reader be provided with broader social and political context for a legal history outside of our borders. But the reader will find unexpected observations on what makes Vermont's legal history and those who shaped it exceptional.

The first section, simply called "Law," provides an overview of the judiciary. Two essays in this section highlight what is both good and bad about Vermont legal exceptionalism as Gillies portrays it. In the essay "Why Do Judges Wear Robes?" Gillies provides a history of the black robe in Vermont, claiming that it did not fully become part of the judicial wardrobe until the 1950s. I was left wondering whether this was true for

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judges across the country, or whether this was unique to Vermont, and if so, why? Thus, while it may be interesting to both lawyers and lay people to imagine judges and their evolving dress, one shouldn't presume anything particularly unique about the Vermont experience.

In contrast, in "Dissents and Deceptions," Gillies provides a detailed and lively examination of the Vermont Supreme Court's use of dissenting opinions. This is a particularly important analysis given that Vermont has only five justices on its high court, and therefore would likely also have more unanimous decisions as a result. Gillies suggests that the Court has grown more contentious over the years, and cites Justice Denise Johnson's opinion in the 1996 ruling that private driveways are public highways for the purpose of DWI laws. Her dissent begins, "Vermonters beware!" and then ridicules the outcome of the majority's opinion. This is one of the most important dissents in Vermont law, highlighting a significant tension around privacy rights that is perhaps more central to our state's jurisprudence than any other. This essay is where the author's exceptionalism is at its best, because it brings to life a unique piece of Vermont's legal history. Like Gillies, I delighted in the dissents and the dissenters.

Much of the book looks at the legal history around towns and land and the early years of the Vermont economy. I especially enjoyed "The First Settled Minister Lot," which explains both how towns got their beginnings and why the Vermont Constitution and its culture are so secular. So too does "A Different Kind of Sunday" detail the evolution of Sunday laws and the ongoing struggle between church and state in Vermont, and the pull of consumerism over religious worship. While this essay focuses on the legal treatment of laws that restricted activities on Sundays, it also tells a story about life in Vermont at a different time, weaving in the interplay between law and our daily lives.

Gillies also does a masterful job of sharing with us the lives of important legal figures in the section on "Luminaries." Here he provides mini-biographies of eight of the state's most colorful lawyers. My favorite tells the tale of former Chief Justice Royall Tyler and his notable hair; but essays on Nathaniel Chipman, John Mattocks, and F. Ray Keyser all preserve the characters that built the foundations of Vermont law.

The most important essay in the book is "The Evolution of Act 250: From Birth to Middle Age." Here Gillies carefully and more thoroughly details this uniquely Vermont law from its beginning through its first forty years. No other law has influenced the shaping of modern Vermont and its identity more than the restrictive environmental law that seeks to preserve Vermont's natural exceptionalism. Gillies refers to the story of the law as Vermont's creation myth, and there is something very

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powerful about understanding the origins of our modern environmental regulatory regime.

Uncommon Law, Ancient Roads, and Other Ruminations on Vermont Legal History reflects one person's passion for both the state and the law. Gillies has clearly spent a significant part of his life researching these essays, and may know more about Vermont legal history and its cast of characters than any other person in the state. The book is interesting and fun and important, even if it lacks some topics or a deeper analytical framework. And above all, it captures Vermont's legal exceptionalism, most always for the better.

CHERYL HANNA

Cheryl Hanna is Professor of Constitutional Law at Vermont Law School.

Abolition & The Underground Railroad in Vermont

By Michelle Arnosky Sherburne (Charleston, S.C.: The History Press, 2013, pp. 160, paper, \$19.95).

Ceremonies last year marking the fiftieth anniversary of the 1963 Civil Rights March on Washington were accompanied by much public reflection on America's complex and tortuous path from our founding institutionalization of human bondage, toward greater racial equality. A recent publication, *Abolition & the Underground Railroad in Vermont* by Michelle Arnosky Sherburne, tells the story of Vermont's role in the antebellum movement to end slavery.

This ambitious effort is a labor of love, written to provide a comprehensive, popular narrative of the UGRR in Vermont. One comes to expect a hagiographic treatment in UGRR books, and this one does not disappoint: Individual Vermonters are brave, compassionate, and forthright.

The author includes recent scholarship on historic black settlement, and highlights black Vermonters and fugitives who lived here. Initial chapters summarize research issues, examine antislavery politics, and consider the "contradiction" of racism and anti-abolitionism in a famously antislavery state. Stories associated with local individuals and families are grouped by towns along UGRR "routes" in the central chapter, followed by biographies of Vermonters active nationally. A final chapter assesses physical evidence—that is, concealed rooms, closets, and passageways. The author accepts the work of historian Wilbur H. Siebert and his ideas on routes and hidden rooms without question.

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The book is something of a magpie's effort, crammed with anecdotes and stories gleaned from a host of primary sources, periodicals, and town histories. The author diligently assembles a wide collection of tales, and includes many photographs and maps. Sources are generally noted within the text, but works are not formally cited, there are no endnotes, material used goes unattributed, and the indexing is poor. These issues limit the book's usefulness.

Stories repeated—quoted or paraphrased—are taken at face value. There is little attempt to look more deeply into elements of a family memory, because all is what it appears to be. Details are seldom scrutinized for accuracy or plausibility, nor is context considered. This is troubling, first, because more than a few mistakes and confusions are apparent. It is also a missed opportunity to find out—in a given time and place—what the UGRR was. My concern is that when we know what we are looking for, this may well be all that we find.

The Town of Brandon section (p. 89) is a case in point regarding errors and latent possibilities. It erroneously notes the “famous Vermont 1793 court ruling known as the Dinah Matteis [sic] case” and records Judge Theophilus Harrington ruling against a southern owner who seized two runaways, declaring “only a bill of sale from God Almighty” would persuade him otherwise.

Dinah Mattis and her daughter Nancy were taken as a prize of war from the British near Fort Ticonderoga by troops under Col. Ebenezer Allen in 1777. Allen declared them free in a document read before his men at Pawlet. This renowned episode is taken as testimony to the patriots’ antislavery sentiments. Actually, it was remembered because it broke with the common practice of selling booty and dividing the profits, and Allen’s statement makes clear that mother and daughter are his to free under military law; thus, his generosity sanctions slavery as an institution.

Another piece of the puzzle concerns the familiar fugitive slave trial at which Judge Harrington is said to have delivered his famous “bon-mot”; it occurred in Middlebury, not Brandon, about 1807. Henry Olin was the judge presiding, with Harrington in attendance. Judge Olin found the owner’s bill of sale incomplete and held for the state. On the way to dinner, Olin asked Harrington what evidence he would have accepted. Only then did Harrington make his reply. The remark was so good, however, that—I like to think—it grew arms and legs, elbowed Judge Olin out of the way, and walked Harrington out onto center-stage in Vermont’s collective historical consciousness, where he has resided ever since!

The story appears in the *Vermont Anti-Slavery Society Report* in

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1836, and becomes a stock tale in the national propaganda campaign. So, when oral tradition's reliability is asserted by the broad generalization (p. 129) that Vermonters did not share information unless they knew or trusted a person, and "have never been self-promoters," I must disagree. Reverend Bailey of Hardwick and Judge Poland of Montpelier bragged in the newspapers, while aiding fugitives. Some activists became more circumspect after the 1850 Fugitive Slave Law, but make no mistake: Others—Rev. Cyrus Prindle of Sherburne, Titus Hutchinson of Woodstock, and Rodney V. Marsh of Brandon—were spoiling for a fight. As for self-promotion, Judge Poland's 1897 letters to Siebert recount his aiding some six hundred fugitives. Rowland E. Robinson of Ferrisburgh, a member of Vermont's eminent abolitionist family, owned a copy of Siebert's *The Underground Railroad from Slavery to Freedom* (1898), which resides in the Rokeby collection. In the page margin, next to Poland's biography, Robinson penciled two words: "A Fraud."

One slips easily into hagiography when writing abolition history. But neither abolitionists nor fugitives were saints: All were humans with the usual admixture of venality and self-interest. That they contended with and sometimes rose above their lesser selves is surely part of what makes them compelling. Antebellum Vermonters struggled with the question of living a moral and ethical life in the real world of their time and place. Direct action, such as the Underground Railroad, is one way some chose to answer a question that is still with us today.

Michelle Arnosky Sherburne's deep admiration for the participants in the UGRR and commitment to historical research come through on every page of this book. Errors and problems notwithstanding, her efforts represent the pick and shovel work of local history. I applaud her willingness to research an extremely complex period and share the results of her work with the public. The struggles evident in this book are growing pains.

RAYMOND ZIRBLIS

Raymond Zirblis wrote The Green Mountaineer (1989-1991), Friends of Freedom: The Vermont Underground Railroad Survey Report (1986), and associated topics for the Vermont Encyclopedia (2003). He is a member of the University of Vermont Center for Research on Vermont and teaches history at Norwich University.

The New York Times: Disunion: Modern Historians Revisit and Reconsider the Civil War from Lincoln's Election to the Emancipation Proclamation

Edited by Ted Widmer (New York: Black Dog & Leventhal Publishers, 2013, pp. v, 450, \$27.95).

The Civil War is not fading into a distant memory; quite to the contrary, it seems more present than ever. The war's unfinished business seems to occupy so much of our current public discourse, from protection of the right to vote to the proper role of the national government, it is no wonder comparisons have been drawn between the political instability of today and the forces that threatened the republic 150 years ago. It could be argued that some of the fault lines that precipitated the Civil War still underpin American society today, including a surviving predisposition to engage in brinksmanship, nullification, and even some talk once again of secession. In an era of government shutdowns and debt ceiling threats, the plain spoken words of Pennsylvania Congressman Samuel Blair in the winter of 1861 capture a hauntingly similar mood of frustration and despair: "Will the generations that are to succeed us believe that at such a time we sat out a whole winter with these guns still pointed at us, trying how far we might go to comply with the demands of traitors, and what new securities we might devise for the protection and spread of human bondage?"

So the war's 150th anniversary is about more than an exercise in remembrance, and despite a vast library of Civil War scholarship, there is a particular immediacy to achieving a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the war's meaning and its lasting grip on American consciousness. The *New York Times* has performed an invaluable service by opening the newspaper's opinion section and web page to scores of Civil War historians offering new research and new perspectives (<http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2010/10/29/opinion/20101029-civil-war.html>). Each submission appears to examine relatively small details and incidents. However, branded under the editorial moniker *Disunion*, the essays, when read in aggregation, suggest new relationships and insights that significantly broaden our understanding of the war, particularly evolving views on slavery, race relations, and the vast complexity of emancipation and freedom. The *Times* has published a selected compilation, appropriately titled *New York Times: Disunion*, covering the period between Lincoln's election and the Emancipation Proclamation.

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Among the essays are contributions from historians whose books, written for the sesquicentennial, are reshaping the contours of Civil War scholarship, including David Blight, Amanda Forman, Adam Goodheart, Harold Holzer, Louis Masur, and Richard Slotkin. The *Disunion* blog essays of both Stephanie McCurry and James Oakes, authors of excellent new books, are notably missing from the anthology—even though, oddly enough, McCurry is actually identified as an “esteemed contributor” in the *New York Times*’ own advertisement for their book. For example, the editors might have considered including McCurry’s “The Rebel Constitution” in place of “The Dogs (and Bears, and Camels) of War” (same word count)—but even so, overall there is really not much to argue with.

While the book certainly stands on its own, readers may choose to revisit the essays on the *Disunion* blog where they also live, in many instances embedded with additional interactive content encouraging deeper exploration of the subject. Susan Schulten’s essay, “Visualizing Slavery,” for example, features the extraordinary 1861 demographic map of the southern states illustrating the concentration of slaves based on county census data. The map, created by an unexpected intergovernmental collaboration between the Census Bureau and the skilled mapmakers from the little known U.S. Coastal Survey was, in Schulten’s words, “a landmark cartographic achievement, a popular propaganda tool, and an eminently practical instrument of military policy.” According to Schulten, Lincoln consulted the map regularly as he formulated his emancipation policies. In fact, the *Disunion* blog iteration of the essay includes a reproduction of Francis Bicknell Carpenter’s famous painting of Lincoln reading his draft Emancipation Proclamation to his cabinet, and if you look closely (use the zoom tool) the map can be clearly recognized partially unrolled in a corner of the room.

When the slave population map is considered in conjunction with Michael Varhola’s essay on the naval blockade of the Confederacy, “Squeezing the South into Submission,” the reader begins to realize the map’s broader associations. By the spring of 1862, to tighten the blockade, Union forces moved inland along the coast of the Carolinas and up the Mississippi Delta. Federal soldiers and sailors, operating far from the main battlefields, were advancing into regions with some of the highest concentrations of slaves in the South. Those advances precipitated a large-scale movement of self-liberation on many nearby plantations—progressively destabilizing the institution of slavery and placing additional pressure on Lincoln to accelerate his emancipation planning.

The Vermont Humanities Council has been able to augment and amplify the impact of the *New York Times Disunion* franchise with its weekly blog *Civil War Book of Days: 150 Years Ago—This Week in the*

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Civil War (<http://www.vermonthumanities.org/WhatWeDo/CivilWarat150Years/CivilWarBookofDays/tabid/226/Default.aspx>), created and ably nurtured by Executive Director Peter Gilbert. Similar to *Disunion*, the *Civil War Book of Days* invites contributions from around the country, building a multilayered narrative enriched with occasional insights into Vermont's role in the war. *Disunion*, for example, tells the story of the localized emancipation proclamations independently issued by Major General John C. Frémont in Missouri and General David Hunter in South Carolina, both rescinded by Lincoln. In fact, there was also a hardheaded Vermonter, Brigadier General John W. Phelps of Guilford, who in July 1862 while serving in Louisiana, according to the *Civil War Book of Days*, insisted on using contraband refugees as combat soldiers despite the indecision of his chain of command and the War Department. The logic for such a step was overwhelming, only Phelps's timing was off; barely a month after Phelps resigned his commission in frustration, his commanding officer, General Benjamin Butler, mustered the first African American regiment into the Federal Army with the quiet acquiescence of Washington.

Used in tandem, both blogs and the *New York Times: Disunion* book have become essential reading not only for what we can discover about our Civil War past, but also for what we can still discover about ourselves as Americans.

ROLF DIAMANT

Rolf Diamant serves on the Vermont Civil War Sesquicentennial Commission. Formerly Superintendent of Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park, he is an adjunct lecturer at the University of Vermont.

Bennington and the Civil War

By Bill Morgan (Charleston, S.C.: The History Press, 2013, pp. 142, paper, \$17.95).

Not long ago, Bennington historian Bill Morgan put together a bus tour for local historical society members to view Civil War sites in and around Bennington. The surprising result is a succinct and entertaining annotated volume describing Bennington's role in the Civil War. Using anecdotes gathered largely from the *Bennington Banner*, Morgan covers a broad range of topics and introduces readers to some fascinating and largely unreported facts. Who knew that all of the machinery used to manufacture gun powder in the country and nearly all the horse-shoes used by the Federal Cavalry were manufactured in Bennington?

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Morgan presents the book in two sections: “Part I, Bennington and the Civil War,” and “Part II, Guide to Bennington’s Civil War Sites.” The first section has a distinctive organization that separates it from similar books that have recently appeared. Seven brief essays explore Bennington’s role in the broad issues of the conflict, presenting readers with an unusually clear background and context. For example, in the opening essay on the scourge of slavery, Morgan reports that in 1772 all sixteen slaves living in Vermont resided in Bennington. A story of the emancipation of Bennington slave Dinah Mattis and her two-year-old daughter, descriptions of a year-long residence in Bennington of the ardent abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison, and a rare documented case of the existence of an Underground Railroad site operated by stagecoach driver Charles Hicks further enrich this section. Morgan provides adequate detail regarding the formation of six companies in Bennington—five infantry and one cavalry. He does not shy away from the fact that some in Bennington were sympathetic to the Confederate cause, identifying those who aligned themselves with the South and some who fought with them. He suggests the probability that Bennington County furnished more men to the Union army in proportion to its size than any county in Vermont, but does not offer a detailed enumeration. These initial essays are interspersed with excellent visuals from the Bennington Museum and the author’s private collection.

Following these essays, Morgan presents a concise yearly summary of the war’s impact in Bennington. Here, the focus is almost exclusively the home front. Readers learn about the Ladies’ Soldiers’ Aid Society, the formation of a Zouave company, and an accidental explosion of two tons of gunpowder at the Bennington Powder Works. These sections are little gold mines of information and fascinating trivia. An example:

On May 18, 1863, an enormous gun passed through town on its way from the Fort Pitt Foundry in Pittsburgh to Boston, where a gunboat was being prepared for it. A huge crowd of people turned out to inspect the fifteen-inch-bore Rodman gun that weighed all of 42,500 pounds, one of the largest guns to ever be put on a boat. It would have had a range of nearly five thousand yards and shot a cannonball weighing 400 pounds (p. 97).

The positive effect that the war had on Bennington’s population, business, and industrial growth is well chronicled by the author. It is an important reminder that not all suffered during such times.

While Morgan presents a vivid description of life in Bennington during these four years, he misses the opportunity, possibly intentionally, to discuss the drama taking place in the South. There is little reference to specific battles and little attempt to convey any of the contributions

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Bennington soldiers made there. There is but slight mention of Gettysburg and none of Cedar Creek. Perhaps less information about recruitment, quotas, bounties, and desertions and more facts about the success of Bennington men on the frontline would have been desirable. Occasionally his reporting of the actual events of the war may need scrutiny. He writes on page 97, "Other false rumors that circulated included news that an entire Vermont regiment had been captured by the enemy." Indeed, this was no false rumor, as the Ninth Regiment had been forced to surrender to the Confederates at Harper's Ferry, West Virginia, in September 1862.

The last section of the book is most interesting for those who are touring the Bennington area visiting Civil War sites. Morgan identifies 4 monuments, 10 buildings, 7 houses, 7 cemeteries, 1 farm, and 48 grave sites in Old Bennington, Bennington, and North Bennington that have Civil War connections. Of particular interest are the descriptions of the Old Soldiers Home and the relevant collection at the Bennington Museum. A map indicating the location of these sites would have been beneficial to those who are not familiar with the area.

The volume concludes with notes, bibliography, and a thorough index, and is an important resource for Civil Was enthusiasts.

J. DAVID BOOK

J. David Book, a retired educator, is the author of books about Civil War soldiers in Cabot and Worcester, Vermont.

Gettysburg: The Graphic History of America's Most Famous Battle and the Turning Point of the Civil War

By Wayne Vansant (Minneapolis: Zenith Press, 2013, pp. 96, paper, \$19.99).

My reward for enduring the horror of a visit to the dentist during my childhood was picking out a comic book at the newsstand a few doors down the street from his office, with the whining of the dentist's drill still shrill in my ear. Spinning the carousels that held crime, cowboy, combat, cartoon character, and Classics Illustrated comic books required my intense concentration to make sure my selection would adequately compensate me for my most recent suffering. As I grew to adulthood, comic book publishing grew to give rise to the graphic novel.

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Gettysburg: The Graphic History uses the graphic novel format to retell the story of the most recognized Civil War battle. This is not the first use of panel art to provide Civil War history to the masses. An addition to newspaper comic strips during the Civil War centennial, fifty years ago, recounted the events of the corresponding week a century previously. Classics Illustrated issued a Civil War edition as well during the war's centennial anniversary. More recent graphic artists have also added their talent to this sesquicentennial, including several comic books about the Gettysburg battle. None of them have been done with the graphic artistry and historical detail that Wayne Vansant has produced in this work. However, although this is an entertaining and accurate synopsis of the battle for semi-serious students of history and a welcome, captivating introduction to the battle for the less scholarly reader, its artistry only approaches but is not equal to the more successful graphic attempts to portray historical events.

It is not fair to compare Vansant's work to that of Art Spiegelman's *Maus*, which used mice to portray Jewish victims of the genocide carried out by Nazi cats, a novel not constrained to actual historical fact, but that nonetheless accurately portrays the terror of the Holocaust. However, the late Will Eisner's *The Plot: The Secret Story of the Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, Robert Crumb's *Genesis*, and George S. Rigakos and Red Viktor's work in *Marx-Engels: The Communist Manifesto Illustrated* are all superior in artistry. Vansant does well in reproducing portraits of the major figures—army, corps, and division commanders, and an excellent likeness of Colonel Strong Vincent, whose successful defense of Little Round Top cost him his life. However, his rendition of Joshua Chamberlain commanding the 20th Maine, receiving orders from Vincent to hold his ground at all costs, is recognizable only by the panel's caption and Chamberlain's handlebar mustache. The inconsistent quality of Vansant's artwork is unfortunately apparent in the amateurish cover art of two opposing soldiers engaged in the mêlée, and presents a less than favorable first impression that one must page through the book to overcome.

Vansant's written account of the battle, appearing as captions to his art, holds the reader's interest and does well in maintaining historical accuracy. This is the case when Vansant recounts some important personal conflicts between key historical figures—Jefferson Davis *versus* Robert E. Lee, whether to relieve Vicksburg or invade Pennsylvania; Lincoln *versus* Joseph Hooker, over operational strategy; and Lee *versus* James "Pete" Longstreet, whether to use direct assault rather than maneuver to defeat "those people," as Lee called the enemy, ultimately resulting in Pickett's Charge. Here, Vansant refuses to join the chorus of Douglas Southall Freeman's disciples, who use Longstreet as a scapegoat to ab-

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solve Lee of the Confederate defeat at Gettysburg, as Freeman did in *Lee's Lieutenants* (1942), but he does not neglect to point out J. E. B. Stuart's late arrival on the battlefield and resulting failure to provide tactical intelligence for Lee that most historians agree denied the South victory at Gettysburg.

Vansant also does well by seasoning his work with human interest stories to show the impact of the battle on individuals—the strained meeting of captured Confederate Brigadier General James Jay Archer with his pre-war friend, General Abner Doubleday; Gettysburg resident and veteran of the War of 1812 John Burns grabbing his flintlock and joining the fighting against the Confederates; the mercy extended by Confederate General John Gordon to severely wounded Union General Francis Barlow and their surprise meeting years after the war, each thinking that the other did not survive; the search for the three orphaned children appearing on an ambrotype clutched in the their dead father's hand; and the death of Jennie Wade, the only civilian killed during the battle. Vansant's rendition of Miss Wade is among his best artistry and captures her beauty far more ably than the photograph upon which he based his portrait.

Several events of the battle as described by Vansant leave the reader with unanswered questions. A. P. Hill's mysterious illness that kept him from performing at maximum efficiency during the battle was, in fact, syphilis contracted when a cadet at West Point—but then again, we don't want to render this work, which shows in appropriate detail the violence perpetrated against fellow human beings during the war, unsuitable for children.

The actions of the Second Vermont Brigade are relegated to only one panel that shows its assault on James Kemper's Confederate Brigade on Pickett's exposed right flank. However, the map a dozen pages previous clearly shows that the brigades of Cadmus Wilcox and David Lang were to be part of the attack on July 3, attacking *en echelon* to support and reinforce Kemper's brigade. What Vansant fails to mention was that the 16th Vermont, commanded by Wheelock Veazey, did an about face after helping to decimate Kemper's brigade, then successfully attacked Wilcox's and Lang's advancing brigades, taking 200 prisoners and two stands of enemy regimental colors. That maneuver guaranteed a Congressional Medal of Honor for Colonel Veazey, one of four issued to Vermont soldiers at Gettysburg. A fifth Vermonter who received the Medal of Honor was Private Marshall Sherman, serving with the 1st Minnesota, but born in Burlington. He was one of 47 survivors out of a regiment of 262, in a suicidal charge on the second day of the battle that saved the Union center. That action gets a well-deserved total of six

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panels over two pages. Sherman's capture of the regimental colors of the 28th Virginia the next day, during Pickett's Charge, assured him this nation's highest military decoration.

My criticism of Vansant's neglect of the impact of Vermont troops at Gettysburg is not only generated by my Vermont chauvinism, but also by the fact that the author devotes only one panel to the Vermonters after he noted on the page following the table of contents that Vermont had the fourth-most state troops on the field, behind New York, Pennsylvania, and Massachusetts. Nevertheless, Vansant's work is the best effort to date not only to expand the interest in our history to those who mostly satisfy their literary appetites with the direct descendants of the comic book, but also to those like me, who never outgrew their enjoyment of the art form that again proves the truth of the proverb, "A picture is worth ten thousand words."

CHARLES S. MARTIN

Charles S. Martin is a Barre attorney and a Civil War reenacting member of the Champlain Valley Historical Reenactors.

Coolidge

By Amity Shlaes (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2013, pp. x, 566, \$35; paper, \$18.99).

Roughly half of *Coolidge* covers the period before he became president, and it forms the emotional heart of the book. Coolidge's childhood was austere. His father, John, was a farmer, small businessman, and state legislator from Plymouth, Vermont. Survival meant rigorous thrift and other forms of self-reliance. These in turn became the great virtues for young Calvin. Beyond the financial austerity of his youth was the emotional austerity brought on by the deaths of Calvin's mother when he was twelve and his beloved younger sister, Abbie, when he was seventeen. All his life people viewed Coolidge as cold, but from the evidence provided by Shlaes, it might seem more accurate to see him as numb—an intelligent, sensitive boy who never recovered from those family losses, who learned early on that words could never truly convey what he really felt. Thus he grew into an extraordinarily shut-mouthed man. The tragic death of Calvin Jr. in 1924 seems to have removed whatever remaining pleasure he took in life.

The dramatic arc of the book is the story of how a shy, quiet, provincial boy, whose likeliest path would have been to follow his father as a

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farmer and small businessman in Plymouth, rose to win popularity at Amherst College, become an attorney, make a fortunate marriage to Grace Goodhue, who had all the personal warmth that he lacked, and commence an astonishing rise in politics that took him from the Northampton, Massachusetts, school committee to the vice presidency. We forget how skilled Coolidge was as a politician. His quiet demeanor masked a huge ambition. People underestimated him until he had achieved his goal, and they were left scratching their heads.

Coolidge's political talents included a sly wit, a smooth way with words when he chose to use them, and, above all, persistence, perhaps the key quality for someone determined to rise above modest circumstances. Coolidge may not have aimed at the presidency initially, but the fame he gained as Massachusetts governor from his law and order stance during the Boston police strike made him an instant contender for the highest office and made possible his nomination for the second highest.

The vice presidency probably would have been Coolidge's greatest achievement if Warren G. Harding had lived. The vice president felt profoundly alienated from the political and social culture of Washington and had little influence. He longed early in his tenure to return to private life. But Harding's death changed everything. Even then, Coolidge might have simply played a caretaker role until the next election, but once he had his hands on the levers of power he wanted to pull them and carry out the budget balancing and tax cutting that would force Washington to live by the values he had learned as a boy in Vermont.

Perhaps as impressive as Coolidge's early rise to prominence was his winning election as president in his own right. Left with an unsavory legacy of financial corruption by Harding, Coolidge was in a delicate position as the 1924 election approached. Without breaking with the old administration and alienating many Republicans, yet demonstrating an ability to use such tools as radio and press conferences to turn his personal probity into a winning image, the unelected president made himself unbeatable. Shlaes is rightfully admiring of Coolidge for his success as a candidate.

Whether he deserves admiration for his policy achievements is something most scholars have doubted, though Shlaes suggests he does deserve it for his success in cutting the national debt and for embracing the tax-cutting strategy of Secretary of the Treasury Andrew Mellon. If there is some basis for this interpretation, the author clearly goes too far in claiming that Coolidge's convincing the Senate to ratify the Kellogg-Briand Pact was a triumph. Despite Shlaes's effort to show this as an example of Coolidge embodying popular wisdom to work for world peace, most scholars see the treaty as naïve, masking as it did the reality

of the global power politics that would ultimately drive the world into another cataclysmic war.

The author's approach to Kellogg-Briand is just one example of the limitations of her study. It is very much a narrative, full of interesting stories about Coolidge, his family, his friends, and connections to some of the great events of the early twentieth century. However, it shuns anything but the most cursory analysis. Although Shlaes lauds Coolidge for his beliefs in small government, low taxes, and individualism, she does little to justify them. Instead, she tends to simply assert they are right while dismissing critics of the time with little explanation. Reformers, including Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover, who called for more support for flood relief and control and aid to farmers, are presented as malign distractions from the noble business of slashing taxes and government programs.

The merit of Shlaes's book is in her readable portrait of Coolidge's developing personality, character, and ambition. The demerit is that she insinuates rather than substantiates an argument for why we should value his achievements as President.

DOUGLAS SLAYBAUGH

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The Seeking

By Will Thomas, Introduction by Dorothy Canfield Fisher; Edited, and with a New Introduction and Afterword, by Mark J. Madigan and Dan Gediman (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2013, The Northeastern Library of Black Literature Series, pp. xxxi, 305, paper, \$22.95).

Mark Madigan and Dan Gediman's edited version of Will Thomas's *The Seeking* is an excellent contribution to Afro Vermont history in the twentieth century. Yet this work has meaning for the study of African American history well beyond the borders of the Green Mountain State. Originally published in 1953 with an introduction and endorsement from well-known Vermont author Dorothy Canfield Fisher, Will Thomas's biography is a stunning testament to the migrations of one black man (and his family) hoping to escape the straitjacket of American racism and racial essentialism.

Will Thomas was born in 1900 in Kansas City to a white father and a

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light-skinned African American mother from Louisiana. After the death of his father, his mother remarried and moved to Chicago, but returned to Kansas City when Thomas reached the age of 12. Thomas first encountered racism while being involved in gang fights as a youth in Kansas City. At age 18, he entered the historically African American school, Lincoln University, but dropped out claiming that Lincoln encouraged self-segregation. During the next decade, Thomas spent time working on a fishing boat, attempted professional boxing, enrolled at the University of Kansas (but dropped out), and worked as a journalist for an African American newspaper in Kansas City. By the time he reached his thirties, Thomas moved to Los Angeles and got married to Helen Chappel. They had three children, but Thomas's career prospects were frustrated when a publisher rejected his novel about "an interracial love affair" (xi). Finally, in 1947, with the support of the writer Chester Himes, Thomas published his first book, *God Is for White Folks*. The book explores the phenomenon of "passing" and the identity of octoroons (a person of 1/8 African heritage) in regard to the racial realities of Louisiana.

In the late 1940s, while considering moving to Haiti, Thomas made the surprising decision to migrate to Westford, Vermont. He made this decision partially because he incorrectly believed that Vermont "never permitted" slavery (xv). More than anything, Thomas wanted to escape his so-called racial designation and be judged very simply by his character. These sentiments were not uncommon among African Americans, especially in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Thomas's years in Vermont (late 1940s to mid-1950s) were marked by the possibilities of the early Civil Rights Movement and underlined by President Truman's desegregation of the Armed Forces in 1948 and various challenges to segregation in the federal courts. The disillusionment with nonviolent resistance and middle class Civil Rights leaders was still several years away.

As the editors show, Thomas did not ignore racism in Vermont toward African Americans or French Canadians. Yet he viewed Vermont as rather virtuous in terms of race relations and notions of race. He thought racism in Vermont emanated not from evil or malice, but rather from ignorance or lack of understanding. Throughout his life Thomas wanted to escape the shackles of racial thinking—whether reified notions of race came from other African Americans or whites. During his 1953 "This I Believe" interview, Thomas summed up his views by stating, "So I thought to make one final try in my motherland for the equality of status which I considered I had been denied; and I chose Vermont for the experiment. I reasoned that because of its great

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traditions of personal freedom there was at least a chance that I and my family might find there what we so yearned for, and we did. In the small farming community where we settled, we were accepted on a basis of individuality unqualified by race" (301).

As an African American living in Vermont, I truly found this book compelling and fascinating. We should consider Thomas's hope for a colorblind society in this new Age of Obama. Have we been brought closer to what Thomas wanted for all Americans especially people of color; or have we gone in the other direction toward racial essentialism and suspicion? Madigan and Gediman have done historians of the black experience in Vermont and New England a wonderful service with this edited volume. They provide an outstanding analysis of the literary value of Thomas's *The Seeking* and his earlier book. My only complaint is that the introduction would have benefited from more historical context. I wanted to know more about Westford in the 1950s and the black population in Chittenden County. How many black people lived there? What did they do for a living? Could we learn more about integration or residential segregation by looking at the census records or city directories? I suspect with further research we could develop a rather compelling portrait of black life in Vermont in the 1940s and 1950s. These are merely minor suggestions and should not take away from the editors' major achievement.

HARVEY AMANI WHITFIELD

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Vermont's Marble Industry

By Catherine Miglorie (Charleston, S.C.: Arcadia Publishing, 2013, pp. 127, paper, \$21.99).

Vermont. What is Vermont? Asking that question often brings to mind maple syrup, quaint country inns, "White Christmas," ski vacations, fall foliage, artisan cheeses, and a long list of equally nostalgic definitions of what this place is all about in the eyes of those "from away." Yes, Vermont is all of these things, but many do not know about its other history, its multifaceted contribution to much of the fabric of this nation, and that this legacy, now preserved in stone, is found in monuments and architecture throughout this nation.

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The granite quarries of Barre, the slate quarries of Fairhaven, the marble industries of the Rutland/Proctor area, and their collective histories have represented an important element in the development of Vermont for more than 200 years. From the time of the first opening of commercial quarries in the late eighteenth century to the present, finished quarry products have defined our rooflines, our thresholds and lintels, as well as the curbing and walkways that make many of our towns so much a part of the natural landscape that surrounds them. Monuments erected to commemorate our histories, such as the Jefferson Memorial, or those simple or even more spectacular architectural statements such as the National Gallery of Art or the United Nations Building, have made use of Vermont's natural stone. These contributions have found their way into our own sense of place during the past two centuries, and they all have their origins in the preglacial underpinnings of Vermont.

While the earliest histories of the quarrying of rock materials can be characterized as a variety of local cottage industries supplying the needs of nearby communities, the later development of these industries must be tied directly to the development of regional and interregional transportation systems. The early private turnpikes that supplemented locally maintained roads enabled some limited distribution of these materials to areas at some distance from where the stone was sourced. Eventually, railroads that snaked up every conceivable valley in much of New England beginning in the 1830s, contributed vastly to the expansion of local quarrying operations. The result was increased utilization of Vermont's quarry products and an expansion in the scale of production and diversity of goods provided by the industry.

Arcadia Publishing, known for its robust photo/historical coverage of much of small town America, has to date brought forward nearly fifty titles pertaining to various aspects of the history of Vermont. The *Images of America* series, as well as more than ten other publication series highlighting the American enterprise, community histories, and the impact of industry, make for an interesting mix of a photographic history of our nation. With the recent publication of Catherine Miglorie's *Vermont's Marble Industry* in Arcadia's *Images of America* series, a fresh look at the development of one aspect of Vermont's economically important quarrying industry is again available. Miglorie's book is not only a general introduction to the marble industry of western Vermont's "marble belt," it also takes a more specific look at the Vermont Marble Company and its local and national impact. In addition, the company's origin and growth in and around the village of Proctor provides for an interesting back story to the history of the village itself. It was indeed a company town.

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With the resources of the Proctor Historical Society contributing much to the effectiveness of this story, Miglorie's book serves as an excellent window into a rich photographic history of this industry and this area of the state. While most images date from several decades after the Civil War and into the early twentieth century, they do manage to cover virtually all aspects of the industry, from quarry to production floor where finished architectural elements are created.

Miglorie's thoughtful and informative explanations of the more than 150 photographs make an excellent accompaniment to the volume's introductory text. While many may view this volume as a history of Proctor, its utility extends well beyond that village. The marble belt, as well as the history of the related industries that flourished for several centuries from Middlebury to Manchester, may now be appreciated more fully with the addition of this small volume.

Having spent many years tramping the outcroppings of Vermont's marble belt, and the slate belt to the west, I find this text to be a "must have." I thank Catherine Miglorie for making the effort to inform us all about Vermont's natural resources.

GARY D. JOHNSON

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American Ski Resort: Architecture, Style, Experience

By Margaret Supplee Smith (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2013, pp. xiii, 334, \$45.00).

Skiers and ski historians all understand that resorts have individual styles, and that these have changed over time. But how deep their understanding goes will vary. Those who want to enhance their knowledge of resort architecture and ski culture should look no further than Margaret Supplee Smith's wonderful new book, *American Ski Resort*. Whether you have preference for a particular region of the country, or for a particular period, this book delivers for academics and casual readers alike.

Supplee Smith examines resort architecture as a medium for exploring broader changes in the ski industry and in American culture. Architecture, she contends, offers readers a window into changing attitudes toward topics such as recreation, development, and environmentalism—

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all of which are interwoven uniquely into the history of twentieth-century American life. By tracing ski architecture from its crude beginnings to its more elaborate Alpine and Modernist traditions, Supplee Smith moves from specific (and often esoteric) case studies to broader historical themes. Her regional focus varies widely, though Vermont plays a particularly notable role throughout, reflecting both the state's centrality to the history of skiing as well as Supplee Smith's personal experiences at her vacation home near Mount Snow.

The book is divided into three parts, and includes two appendices on the life and work of notable architects and developers. Part one introduces readers to the early history of resort-based skiing. Chapter one explores skiing's rustic, often humble roots during the 1930s in places such as Stowe, Vermont, Franconia, New Hampshire, and Oregon's Mount Hood, particularly as linked to the Depression Era's Works Progress Administration. Chapter two explores the specific case of Sun Valley, Idaho, as a marker for tracing the early history of destination resorts designed for a wealthy clientele. Chapter three highlights Aspen, Colorado, to examine resort development undertaken within a pre-existing urban structure, where developers often stressed themes of cultural authenticity and economic revitalization.

Part two focuses on postwar resort architecture and ski culture. Chapter four traces the histories of Stratton, Vermont, and Vail, Colorado, where a new emphasis on Austrian architecture self-consciously played on themes of authenticity and glamour. Chapter five explores a counter theme—modernism—particularly at Mount Snow, Vermont, where trendy, colorful displays carried resort architecture in an entirely new direction. Chapter six highlights this trend and others as they related to vacation home architecture and condominium development.

Part three explores the final decades of the twentieth century, beginning with a chapter on skiing's environmental impacts. Many Vermont readers will find chapter seven of particular interest for its focus on both the state and controversial mountain development more generally. By drawing on the examples of Mount Snow, Vail, and other resorts, Supplee Smith examines in clear detail the conflicts that developed as post-war resort expansion collided with an emerging environmental ethic in American culture. Chapter eight explores a postmodern architectural turn toward regionalism within resort architecture and tourist marketing during the 1980s, as a new generation of corporate management sought to enhance their industry's tarnished environmental image through a focus on scripted regional authenticity, historic preservation, and land conservation. Chapter nine details a post-1980s reimaging of the self-sufficient, total-resort concept as developers constructed massive new resort

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infrastructure designed to appeal to a new, younger generation of winter sports enthusiasts. Chapter ten offers an entertaining look at eclectic and elegant postwar resort housing design. The book closes with an epilogue that assesses contemporary trends in light of some of the book's key historical insights.

American Ski Resort is a delight for anyone with an interest in skiing. The passion that so many skiers bring to their sport is mirrored in the passion that Supplee Smith brings to her book. Its extensive collection of photographs, maps, and architectural renderings make this the kind of book that one can flip through casually. But it is also a well-researched, well-written, and challenging academic text. Though *American Ski Resort* deserves praise on so many fronts, this combination of entertainment and insight is perhaps the book's greatest strength.

BLAKE HARRISON

Blake Harrison is the co-editor of A Landscape History of New England (2011), and author of The View from Vermont: Tourism and the Making of an American Rural Landscape (2006). He lives and works in Middlebury, Vermont.

Greening Vermont: The Search for a Sustainable State

By Elizabeth Courtney and Eric Zencey (North Pomfret, Vt.: Thistle Hill Publications and the Vermont Natural Resources Council, 2012, pp. 176, paper, \$35.00).

Vermont has a national reputation as a leader in conservation and environmental policy. Authors Elizabeth Courtney, who served on the Vermont Environmental Board from 1985-1994 and as the director of the Vermont Natural Resources Council from 1997-2011, and Eric Zencey, author and fellow at the Gund Institute for Ecological Economics at the University of Vermont, provide an "insiders" take on the development and implementation of many of the state's environmental policies from the 1950s through the present in *Greening Vermont*. The authors don't pretend to offer a dispassionate accounting, rather their perspective is clear throughout the book: A strong commitment to conservation and environmental protection has been and is of great importance to Vermont, and we must do more to move the state further down the path to sustainability.

The book is organized into six chapters, one for each decade beginning in the 1960s. The authors characterize each of these decades with a

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single word: conservation, regulation, litigation, confrontation, collaboration, and localization. Although the overarching narrative of the book deals with the environment generally, there is a particular focus on land use and planning. In addition to this chronological narrative, there are a multitude of sidebars, on topics ranging from “Four Varieties of Capital” to “Rationing Retail: Who Decides?” as well as a series of interviews with leaders of the Vermont conservation movement over the last several decades (including, for example, the late Hub Vogelmann and Governor Madeleine May Kunin). The book is richly illustrated with graphics and photographs.

Among the highlights are Courtney and Zencey’s recounting of the stories of the billboard law, Act 250 and the eventual failure of the state land use plan component of the law, Act 200, and the more recent rise of local energy conservation efforts and the local food renaissance. The saga over developing Taft Corners in Williston is especially interesting. The story of this crossroads underscores the challenges Vermont faced in trying to protect open lands and concentrate development in existing city, town, and village centers. The state denied an Act 250 permit for a proposed mall on the site, but the area eventually became home to a Walmart and several other big box stores. This development served as a catalyst for action by those worried about sprawl in Vermont, contributing to the creation of the Vermont Forum on Sprawl (which became Smart Growth Vermont), a final defeat for completing the nearby circumferential highway, and passage of several laws to encourage development in existing downtowns.

I found three shortcomings in the book. First, there is a romanticizing of the Vermont past. For the authors, the pivot point for the decline of the Vermont landscape is the coming of the interstate highways in the late 1950s, and the many changes that accompanied them. Before then, they suggest that the Vermont of the yeoman farm family and handshake culture conserved the landscape. Yet the Vermont landscape had been fundamentally transformed long before the middle of the nineteenth century—its forests had been cleared and its large wildlife were largely gone. Although the changes wrought by the development of the 1960s and beyond have certainly been significant, the human hand had been hard at work on the landscape much earlier.

Second, the authors are largely silent on several of the most contentious land use issues of the last two decades. Although the Champion lands are discussed, the authors don’t discuss the intense controversy over designating 12,500 acres as an ecological reserve in the West Mountain wildlife management area, acquired by the state as part of

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the Champion lands deal of 1999. This battle over wildlands was replayed over the unmentioned 2006 Vermont Wilderness Act. This law, which nearly doubled the protected wilderness in the state, featured a rare public dispute between Governor Jim Douglas and the Vermont congressional delegation. Perhaps the most intense intra-environmental movement issue of the last fifty years has been the conflict over the placement of large-scale renewable energy generation, especially wind (such as the fight over Lowell Mountain). Each of these issues highlights cleavages within the state and even within the environmental community.

Third, and perhaps most important, the authors don't fully delve into the question of how can Vermont, or any state, be sustainable in a meaningful sense when we are fundamentally embedded in global systems—whether it is markets for food or a global atmosphere filling with more and more carbon.

As Vermont moves forward into the growing challenges of sustainability, the history recounted in *Greening Vermont* will be a useful resource, one that we are fortunate to have.

CHRISTOPHER MCGRORY KLYZA

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A Lifetime of Vermont People

Photographs and text by Peter Miller (Colbyville, Vt.: Silver Print Press, 2013, pp. 208, \$49.95).

Nostalgia in the best sense—a yearning for a vanished golden past—is the persistent subtext of Peter Miller’s latest book of Vermont portraits.

Entitled *A Lifetime of Vermont People*, this is no ordinary coffee-table book. Its 208 pages of black-and-white photographs and short essays amount to a simple, powerful, and none-too-subtle protest against the social and cultural changes that have come to Vermont during Miller’s lifetime. The photographer, now 80, has been making pictures for more than 50 years, and does not love the new Vermont of gentrification, fancy restaurants, high-end tourism, and boutique stores and products. He clearly mourns the passing of the more rural Vermont memorialized in

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his earlier photographs. Yet his vision is modulated and complex, and his book is not a diatribe.

A Lifetime of Vermont People explores the profound transformation of Vermont over the last six decades in the faces of Vermonters themselves. The portraits in this book, like his earlier volumes, are gritty, often stark. They avoid simple prettiness to probe the souls of the people who have lived through Vermont's changes, and by doing so, poke at the soul of Vermont itself.

It may be characteristic that in an era of color photography, Peter Miller publishes exclusively black-and-white photos. It is an older and, in some ways, stronger graphic medium than color.

Miller's first portraits, made with a twin-lens reflex camera in the winter of 1959-60, were of Will and Rowena Austin, a retired farming couple who lived in Weston. Only memories and Miller's haunting photographs remain of them. Standing outdoors with fresh snow falling on their shoulders, their faces as weathered as the barn behind them, Will and Rowena in 1959 look like stubborn transplants from the nineteenth century.

They seem indomitable. But their way of life is now gone forever.

Nevertheless, something of their spirit remains, and can be seen in Miller's portraits of the Lepine sisters of Morrisville, Stub Earle of Eden, auctioneer Willis Hicks of Stowe, fiddlers Ray Grimes and Bill Royer, and others.

Accompanying each of the portraits is a short essay by Miller, often ending with an update to 2012, noting in many cases that the subject has passed on. One has the feeling that Miller personally mourns each of these losses.

He also includes some photos of Vermont places and events: his neighborhood, Colbyville, in Waterbury Center; the Moscow (Vt.) Fourth of July Parade, and so on. In each of those cases also, Miller notes the changes, and here again we get the clear indication that he prefers the earlier version.

But there are new photos also, in this new book. And what the newer photos suggest is that Vermonters are still a most interesting breed, and that Vermont remains, to some extent, a place apart.

Photos of younger farmers and entrepreneurs like Pete Johnson of Craftsbury, George Woodard of Waterbury Center, Jay and Janet Bailey of Fairwinds Farm in Brattleboro, and Diane St. Clair of Orwell are evidence that Vermont's rural traditions remain alive.

Miller's genius as a photographer is also expressed in the few, well-chosen landscapes that he includes in this book: the beautiful Mettowee Valley in Pawlet and Rupert, the raw springtime fields of a Mud City farm, a tractor, hay wagon, and dog backed by Camel's Hump, and others.

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Like the human portraits, these black-and-white landscapes are brilliantly evocative of rural Vermont.

Vermont is changing and farming is changing, as Miller's masterful photographs show. But the land still produces crops, food, and families. And so there is a living connection between the earlier Vermont that Miller memorializes—and to some extent idealizes—and today's more complex, less distinctive Vermont.

Notably, Miller portrays several contemporary artists: Bread & Puppet's Peter and Elke Schumann, artist Warren Kimble of Brandon, poet David Budbill of Wolcott, novelist Howard Frank Mosher of Irasburg. The message in these photos is also clear: These are Vermonters, too, wresting their living in their own way from this rugged northern place.

It was Miller who made the most memorable photo of the late farmer and movie star Fred Tuttle. Like others who have lived their lives here, Miller saw Fred's funeral as the closing of an era—a goodbye to the traditional, backroads Vermont that many of us knew and loved.

His new book is a memorial to that world, but also offers hope—implicitly, without saying so—that the strong spirit that enlivened the Green Mountains in years past survives, and may yet flourish in the Vermont to come.

THOMAS K. SLAYTON

Tom Slayton is a commentator on Vermont Public Radio and editor emeritus of Vermont Life magazine.