

## Book Reviews

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- RICHARD W. JUDD, *Second Nature: An Environmental History of New England*.  
Christopher McGrory Klyza 82
- MATTHEW STEWART, *Nature's God: The Heretical Origins of the American  
Revolution*. Murray Dry 84
- JOHN J. DUFFY AND H. NICHOLAS MULLER III, *Inventing Ethan Allen*; DAVID  
BENNETT, *A Few Lawless Vagabonds: Ethan Allen, the Republic of Vermont,  
and the American Revolution*. Ennis Duling 87
- ROBERT A. MELLO, *Moses Robinson and the Founding of Vermont*.  
Paul S. Gillies 91
- SHELBY M. BALIK, *Rally the Scattered Believers: Northern New England's Religious  
Geography*. Jill Mudgett 93
- RACHEL HOPE CLEVES, *Charity & Sylvia: A Same-Sex Marriage in Early America*.  
Amy F. Morsman 95
- GARY G. SHATTUCK, *Insurrection, Corruption & Murder in Early Vermont:  
Life on the Wild Northern Frontier*. Paul S. Gillies 97
- KEVIN J. CRISMAN, ED., *Coffins of the Brave: Lake Shipwrecks of the War of 1812*.  
R. Duncan Mathewson III 99
- J. KEVIN GRAFFAGNINO, H. NICHOLAS MULLER III, DAVID A. DONATH, AND  
KRISTIN PETERSON-ISHAQ, EDs., *The Vermont Difference: Perspectives from  
the Green Mountain State*. Tyler Resch 102
- RON MILLER AND ROB WILLIAMS, EDs., *Most Likely to Secede: What the Vermont  
Independence Movement Can Teach Us about Reclaiming Community and  
Creating a Human-Scale Vision for the 21st Century*. Daniel A. Métraux 105
- JIM DOUGLAS, *The Vermont Way: A Republican Governor Leads America's  
Most Liberal State*. Bill Schubart 107
- PEGGY SHINN, *Deluge: Tropical Storm Irene, Vermont's Flash Floods, and How  
One Small State Saved Itself*. Helen Husher 110
- KURT STAUDTER AND ADAM KRAKOWSKI, *Vermont Beer: History of a Brewing  
Revolution*. Andrew C. Stein 112

More About Vermont History

Compiled by PAUL A. CARNAHAN

115

Letters to the Editor

117

# BOOK REVIEWS

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## *Second Nature: An Environmental History of New England*

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By Richard W. Judd (Amherst and Boston, Mass.: University of Massachusetts Press, 2014, pp. xiv, 330, \$24.95).

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I would be hard pressed to name an historian better suited to write an environmental history of New England than Richard Judd, long-time professor of history at the University of Maine. The author of several books on Maine and environmental history, he brings a deep knowledge to the topic. The book *Second Nature* does not disappoint. Like environmental history generally, Judd focuses his attention on the constantly evolving interaction of nature and culture on a particular landscape. Yet unlike many environmental histories, his is not a story of “declension and destruction” (p. xi). Instead, he writes, “Nature becomes undeniably artificial over the course of New England’s long human history, and in a region where ecological process is endowed with such powerful regenerative properties, cultural landscapes become natural almost as quickly as they materialize” (p. x). This perspective provides the title *Second Nature*, a landscape culturally modified since the arrival of Native Americans, quite significantly since the arrival of European colonists.

The book is divided into three sections of three chapters each. The first section deals with the arrival and development of Native American cultures in New England, the arrival of European colonists, and the rise of colonial society through the end of eighteenth century. This section offers an excellent synthesis; for readers looking for more depth on this period, I recommend William Cronon’s *Changes in the Land* (1983) and

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Carolyn Merchant's *Ecological Revolutions* (1989). The second section covers the nineteenth century, with a focus on the rise of industrialization, from timber and fisheries to textiles. An especially noteworthy chapter traces the birth and evolution of intellectual trends regarding the culture-nature relationship in New England: Romanticism, landscape painting, and transcendentalism—especially the thinking of Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau. The final section, covering the second half of the nineteenth century through the end of the twentieth century, focuses on the rise of efforts to manage human effects on land and water. In chapter 7, on the birth of conservation in New England, Judd draws on his own excellent work in *Common Lands, Common People* (1997) to discuss both the importance of conservation from the bottom up and New England's leadership in state-level conservation. New England states, for instance, created the nation's first permanent fish commissions, first agricultural experiment station, and first forestry commission. Urban and suburban environmental issues are the focal point of chapter 8. This is a very useful synthesis on the development of clean water supplies, sewage treatment (including creation of some of the nation's earliest state boards of health, which focused on water-borne illnesses), architectural preservation, urban parks, and the rise of environmental justice. In the final chapter, Judd focuses on the rise of environmentalism and preservation in New England, stressing different characteristics in the region compared with other parts of the country, especially the West. These differences are primarily driven by a landscape extensively manipulated by humans over the last three centuries, as well as a much greater proportion of the landscape being privately owned. This private ownership helped New England become the national focal point of the land trust movement, as nonprofits purchased, or received donations of, conservation easements.

Vermont readers will find the book tilted toward coastal and southern New England. They may also point to gaps in the Vermont coverage, for instance: no mention of the Long Trail, the nation's first long-distance hiking trail; no mention of the innovative Vermont Housing and Conservation Board, for funding land conservation and affordable housing; only a sentence on Act 250; and no discussion of the challenges of cleaning up Lake Champlain. I also missed maps, and an epilogue or conclusion to the book. There I would have liked Judd to engage a few major questions after writing this book. Does New England still make sense as a coherent region? What of the differences between coastal and interior New England, and between the more densely populated southern New England and the more rural northern New England? (Based on the U.S. Census Bureau's definition, in 2010 Maine and Vermont were the most

rural states in the country—both over 60 percent rural—while Massachusetts and Rhode Island are among the seven most urban states in the U.S.—both over 90 percent urban.) Also, I would have liked Judd to discuss more how larger global trends have affected and will affect New England. What of climate change? How much of New England’s ability to protect “second nature” is due to the region’s importing energy and other resources from elsewhere?

Anyone with an interest in Vermont’s place in the larger New England landscape will benefit greatly by reading Judd’s environmental history of New England. It is a smart, comprehensive, well-written synthesis with a clear narrative thread connecting the region over the last several centuries.

CHRISTOPHER MCGRORY KLYZA

*Christopher McGrory Klyza is Professor of Political Science and Environmental Studies at Middlebury College. He is the coauthor of The Story of Vermont: A Natural and Cultural History (1999), 2d edition, 2015.*

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### *Nature’s God: The Heretical Origins of the American Republic*

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By Matthew Stewart (New York, London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2014, pp. 566, \$28.95).

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In this his fifth book, independent scholar Matthew Stewart provides a radical interpretation of the American Revolution. Members of the Vermont Historical Society should be particularly interested in Stewart’s account of Ethan Allen and his friend Thomas Young. Stewart presents these men, along with Thomas Paine, Joel Barlow (“The present is an age of philosophy and America an empire of reason,” p. 7), Thomas Jefferson, and Philip Freneau as revolutionaries in thought as well as action. Moreover, he argues that American founders such as Franklin, John Adams, Washington, and Madison agreed with them on the philosophical foundations of government.

The book’s distinctiveness and its intellectual power derive from Stewart’s taking thought about politics seriously. He argues persuasively, with substantial support from the relevant texts and by demonstrating the connection between those texts and American Revolutionary statesmen, that the term “Nature’s God” in the Declaration of Independence reflects a philosophically radical doctrine, which is nor-

mally described as reflecting Deism. Such a term, according to Stewart, conceals the truly atheistic foundations of the American Revolution and the resulting system of government. Whereas Jefferson referred to having “harmonized the sentiments of the day” with the language he used in the Declaration, Stewart intends to uncover the truth behind the American founders’ willingness to accept that harmonizing. As Stewart presents the story, at issue is the relationship between the philosophic movement known as the Enlightenment and Biblical, or revealed, religion.

Stewart is particularly interested in refuting the recent position he calls Christian nationalism, which describes the founding in terms of the Christian religion. “The Enlightenment, not the Reformation, was the axis on which human history turned” (p. 73). And while “[t]he enthusiasts supplied much of the labor of the Revolution, . . . the infidels provided the ideas. . . . Here then is one instance where ideas have a chance of explaining history—a case in which philosophers happened to rule” (pp. 73, 74).

The key philosopher for Stewart is Spinoza. His influence comes to America through Locke, so part of Stewart’s argument requires a demonstration that the English philosopher who was so familiar to the American founders was in fact only judiciously different in his philosophic position than Spinoza. Stewart credits the Dutch scholar William Klever with directing him to what Klever calls “Locke’s Disguised Spinozism” (see pp. 3-4, 146-147, 238; for Klever’s work see [www.benedictusdespinoza.nl/lit/Locke's\\_Disguised\\_Spinozism.pdf](http://www.benedictusdespinoza.nl/lit/Locke's_Disguised_Spinozism.pdf)).

Moreover, Stewart links the naturalistic philosophy of these seventeenth-century philosophers to the Roman philosopher-poet Lucretius, whose *On the Nature of Things* is regarded as the fullest available account of Epicurean philosophy (pp. 87-88). Stewart quotes Lucretius: “Nature is her own mistress and is exempt from the oppression of arrogant despots, accomplishing everything by herself spontaneously and independently and free from the jurisdiction of the gods” (p. 88, quoting from *On the Nature of Things*, II, 1090-1092; line 1090 begins “If you learn these things well and hold on to them”). Stewart explains that on this view nature is homogeneous matter, or “eternal corporal substance” (p. 89; the phrase comes from Bruno). Stewart fails to point out that Lucretius described the pleasures that come from knowledge of nature in a way that transcended politics (“Sweet too, to gaze upon the great contests of war staged on the plain, when you are free from all danger” II, 5-6). Moreover, Lucretius later predicts the destruction of the world (V, 243-246 and 364-370).

Stewart celebrates the efforts of Hobbes, Spinoza, and Locke to use Lucretius's materialist philosophy to solve the theological-political problem. While Stewart's treatment of these philosophers is full and, I believe, accurate, he has concluded too quickly that they have presented an adequate solution to the problem of good government. I do not think such a philosophic foundation accurately describes the kind of free government the American founders established and Americans continue to support. The radical Spinozistic teaching, which Stewart states, is that the big fish eat the small fish by natural right, or natural right is coextensive with power. Spinoza argues that our rational faculties will lead us to conclude that we are better off following the laws that we have a hand in making than in trying to lord it over others. Americans know this as ambition counteracting ambition. But does it always work reasonably, as Spinoza argued it would, without any other consideration? If we follow Stewart on Locke, we need to consider what the right of revolution amounts to. Is it equivalent to the law of falling bodies, which means right is determined by might, or outcome? As much as Locke urges us to exercise prudence, and claims that people are constitutionally conservative, his teaching on revolution involves a standard of right and wrong that is not reducible to force alone: preservation of property, or life, liberty, and estate.

Turning to America, how does "Nature's God" account for Madison's contention, in his *Memorial and Remonstrance* (1785), that "what is here a right [of religion] towards men is a duty toward the Creator"? How does it account for Lincoln's and the country's determination to oppose slavery extension, thereby putting it in course of ultimate extinction, and their willingness to fight a civil war to preserve a union so dedicated to the liberty of all?

What does that mean for the foundations of American constitutionalism? Perhaps we need to reconsider the contribution of Biblical religion (Puritanism). Perhaps also, we would do well to consider philosophic accounts of nature that do not subordinate reason to the passions, and that do not reduce human beings to material substance. And if the common understanding of the laws of nature and nature's God is broader than the account derived from Hobbes, Spinoza, and Locke, the resulting political and moral benefits seem to outweigh the loss in philosophic clarity.

MURRAY DRY

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## *Inventing Ethan Allen*

By John J. Duffy and H. Nicholas Muller III (Hanover, N.H.:  
University Press of New England, 2014, pp. xii, 285; paper, \$29.95).

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## *A Few Lawless Vagabonds: Ethan Allen, the Republic of Vermont, and the American Revolution*

By David Bennett (Philadelphia and Oxford: Casemate, 2014, pp.  
276, \$32.95).

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In *Inventing Ethan Allen*, John J. Duffy and H. Nicholas Muller III maintain that the heroic Ethan Allen found in popular culture and in most histories and biographies is a fabrication distant from the real man. Their goal, they write, is “in part to debunk” the myths and fictions about Allen, while presenting him “as an important, complex figure” (p. 4).

Although many of Duffy and Muller’s contentions will not be new to longtime students of Vermont history, even they may be surprised by the extent of the authors’ indictment of the iconic figure. Other readers may feel that they have stepped through the looking glass into a world where reality is the opposite of what they have always been led to believe. In one summary, Duffy and Muller describe Allen as a “schemer, prevaricator, self-promoter, land speculator, aspiring traitor, and impulsive military leader” (p. 189). At another point, he is “a boastful bumbler fond of the ‘flowing bowl’” (p. 204). They present evidence, although inconclusive, that he may have been a slaveholder after the Vermont Constitution abolished adult servitude. They offer a theory that he might have been implicated in the death of opponent Crean Brush, who was thought to have committed suicide.

Duffy and Muller are among Vermont’s most respected scholars. Duffy is emeritus professor of English and the humanities at Johnson State College. He was the chief editor of *Ethan Allen and His Kin: The Correspondence, 1772-1819* (1998). Muller served as president of Colby-Sawyer College and dean and professor of history at the University of Vermont. Both men have edited *Vermont History* and published extensively on Vermont topics; together they wrote *An Anxious Democracy: Aspects of the 1830s* (1982).

*Inventing Ethan Allen* is part Allen biography, part examination of more than two hundred years of writing about the man, and, as a result, part history of Vermont from the eighteenth century to today. Facts collide with storytelling in surprising ways as the book exposes

the sometimes messy business by which events become the history we read about. The book invites readers to question what is certain, what is conjecture, and what is no more than a good story.

In the earliest work on Vermont's history—Samuel Williams's 1794 *The Natural and Civil History of Vermont*—Allen was a significant but not dominant figure in the founding of the state. For several decades into the nineteenth century he held “a somewhat shadowy place in public memory” (p. 3). But in the 1830s and 1840s, he “blazed to mythic proportions” and became “an intrepid, larger-than-life figure . . . an accomplished military leader; an articulate, ardent, and often colorful advocate for democracy; and the scourge of tyrants” (p. 93). Daniel Pierce Thompson's 1839 novel *The Green Mountain Boys* played a crucial role in Allen's ascension at a time when thoughtful Vermonters were concerned that the state was in decline and hoped that a link to a heroic past would spur revival. Historians, led by former Governor Hiland Hall, gave a scholarly foundation to the story of the great man.

In the 1920s and 1930s, a more skeptical generation began to depict Allen as a self-serving land speculator and careless military leader who was fortunate at Ticonderoga. In this emerging revisionist biography, he lifted most of his work of philosophy, *Reason the Only Oracle of Man*, from the writings of his late friend Thomas Young while giving him no acknowledgement. Allen genuinely wanted Vermont to rejoin the British Empire and engaged in treasonous acts. But Allen's reputation rebounded in the late twentieth century and reached recent heights in Willard Sterne Randall's *Ethan Allen: His Life and Times* (2011). Duffy and Muller appear to be less certain of the reasons behind Allen's current resurgence, but suggest that today there is “an audience hungry for heroes” (p. 194).

The authors conclude that some of the best-known incidents in Allen's life were constructed by Ethan or his brother Ira to serve family purposes. It is likely he never told New York attorneys John Tabor Kempe and James Duane, “The gods of the valleys are not the gods of the hills,” and he may have actually agreed to advocate for New York. The story of Ethan rescuing two lost children provided him with an alibi against accusations of treason. Comic accounts of his first wife may not reflect the reality of their marriage. Details of his death and funeral are confused and unreliable. Even tall tales, which might seem to provide a link to early settlers swapping stories in a tavern, originated not during his lifetime but in the mid-nineteenth century, when he was being reinvented as a larger-than-life hero.

Occasionally the authors may overdo it in their desire to put the

iconic Allen to rest. “There is an original something in him that commands admiration,” George Washington wrote from Valley Forge to the president of the Continental Congress, “and his long captivity and sufferings have only served to increase, if possible, his enthusiastic Zeal.” Duffy and Muller note the phrase “original something,” but omit the remainder of the quote and believe that Washington’s thoughts about Allen in May 1778 were ambiguous (p. 57). It must be added quickly that two-and-a-half years later, Washington called for Allen’s arrest—if “palpable proofs” of his dealing with the enemy could be found.

The discussion of Allen’s life and his contributions to the founding of Vermont is sure to continue. Whatever their interpretation, writers will have to come to terms with *Inventing Ethan Allen*, which now takes its place in a long line of books about a complicated man. Will Duffy and Muller’s efforts have a lasting negative impact on Allen’s reputation, or will the traditional account stride into the future unfazed? Perhaps there will be two Ethan Allens, the flawed man careful historians study and the heroic figure standing guard at the State House door. We may need both.

\* \* \*

The title of Canadian David Bennett’s history of early Vermont, *A Few Lawless Vagabonds*, is taken from a quote by Québec Governor Frederick Haldimand, who was trying to convince the independent state to rejoin the British Empire. In addition, Haldimand called Vermonters “inveterate rebels,” “profligate banditti,” and “a collection of the most abandoned wretches that ever lived, to be bound by no laws or ties” (pp. 187-188).

Bennett is clearly fascinated by Ethan Allen and the men who created a new state during wartime when threatened on all sides. He notes with pride that much of the book was written in Montgomery, Vermont, “almost within sight of Hazen’s Notch” (p. 7).

At his best Bennett, who has a Ph.D. in philosophy from McGill University, presents close readings of early documents as well as of secondary sources on Vermont and Allen. He can be insightful, viewing Vermont’s history with fresh eyes and offering original analysis. His research in Library and Archives Canada is a welcome contribution. Readers who are already familiar with the personalities and the *where* and *when* of Vermont’s early history may be intrigued, if not always convinced, by his views.

However, too often Bennett jumps to the big picture or speculates when additional research would have resolved an issue. For example,

he writes that the disastrous American attack on Québec at the end of 1775 took place “on New Year’s Eve” or “possibly early on the day before,” when there is no question it was pre-dawn, December 31 (p. 91). Occasional errors also suggest that he has not entirely mastered the details behind his analysis. In one passage, a bay north of Crown Point is confused with the Poultney River; the mills at the outlet of Lake Bomoseen become Fort Vengeance in Pittsford; and spy and agent Justus Sherwood marches only four miles from Pittsford to Castleton to negotiate with Ethan Allen (p. 184). The mills were indeed only a few miles from Allen’s headquarters; Pittsford, on the other hand, is about ten miles as the crow flies and seventeen by road.

Bennett’s use of “the Republic of Vermont” to refer to the independent state is more an interpretation than a historical fact and needs explanation.

Although Allen is absent from parts of the book, he dominates *A Few Lawless Vagabonds* because Bennett believes he dominated early Vermont. Bennett is well aware of the revisionist critique of Allen and in his acknowledgements prominently thanks *Inventing Ethan Allen* co-author John J. Duffy for his “great help” (p. 7). However, Bennett simply weaves Allen’s faults and weaknesses—vanity, ostentation, self-promotion, drunkenness—into the mystique of the great man, who is “more impressive than his biographers have ever depicted” (p. 13). Allen is a “Renaissance man, in the wrong time and place, with a truly staggering range of talents,” “a natural leader of men,” and “rightly celebrated as the principal founder of the State of Vermont” (pp. 231-232). Bennett realizes that Allen may not have been the primary author of *Reason the Only Oracle of Man*, although the question “is not of great importance, for Ethan’s intellectual achievements were not in original thinking” (p. 18). And while Bennett is certain that Allen was sincere in his negotiations with Governor Haldimand, accusations of treason are misplaced. Throughout, he acted as a “Vermont nationalist” (p. 13).

Although *A Few Lawless Vagabonds* lacks the depth of research and the concern for detail necessary to have a major impact, the book reveals the continuing power of Ethan Allen on the imagination, even in the face criticism.

ENNIS DULING

*Ennis Duling of East Poultney studies and writes about the American Revolution. He is on the board of the Mount Independence Coalition.*

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*Moses Robinson and the Founding of Vermont*

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By Robert A. Mello (Barre: Vermont Historical Society, 2014, pp. xix, 450, paper, \$34.95).

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**M**oses Robinson was Vermont's first chief judge, second governor, and one of its first U.S. senators. He was active in the military and political fight to attain Vermont's independence and statehood. Until this year, no biographer had written his life. Now that void has been filled, with the publication of Robert A. Mello's *Moses Robinson and the Founding of Vermont*.

Moses Robinson did more than any other person to create the State of Vermont. He succeeded because he was a natural leader, willing to fill the necessary offices he was elected or appointed to hold, lead when necessary, and serve others as needed. He was different from the other bright lights of the time. Ethan Allen was more theatrical. Ira Allen was craftier. Thomas Chittenden was less articulate. They all contributed to the miracle of a state clawed out of the wilderness, overcoming competing claims for the land, defying Britain, New York, and even the United States when necessary to preserve its identity and legal authority. But it was Moses Robinson whose courage and diplomacy transformed the energy of rebellion into a mature government, ruled by law.

He was the one steady hand, the one clear voice, the personality who could best adapt to changes, cross party lines, settle conflicts, and persuade majorities. He was the one Vermont turned to when it needed order, direction, patience, and diligence.

His name appears in all the histories, often in a list of the founders. The offices he held, the written records he created, the conventions he attended, are familiar to us; but he isn't, because until now nobody has given him the attention he deserves. Restored to his place in the drama of the New Hampshire Grants' first years, Robinson now appears as the anchor and the keel of the infant state.

There are many good histories about the founding of Vermont. Some are reliable, although many are plainly so partisan and romantic that the founders seem like gods of a Green Mountain Olympus, and their struggles as an Homeric epic, enough to justify warning labels on their covers. Consider, for instance, Hiland Hall. His 1868 *History of Vermont* continues the myth that the New Hampshire charters and the land titles that relied on them were valid, making the

struggle for Vermont not only virtuous but legally justifiable. It took some years to get over that—some distance—before Matt Bushnell Jones wrote *The Making of Vermont* (1939) and had the courage to recognize that Benning Wentworth was a fraud, that the core of New York's claim was justifiable, as a matter of royal law.

We still read Hall and Jones. Each provided the leading history of his age. Now we have Mello's *Robinson*. It is the early history we deserve for our time. It is a monumental piece of scholarship, and it warrants a close reading because it is so much more than a biography. It tells the story of the origin of Vermont in a way that no other author has done before: with fresh eyes, new sources, and a lawyer's acuity for nuance and clarity of ideas—a modern history of that period.

What makes a great history? In Vermont, it is the ability to avoid the trap that tempts writers to a patriotism that borders on narcissism. Sometimes that goes under the epithet of Vermont exceptionalism, but love blinds us to the truth. The measure of a good history is how few punches it pulls. So we have Mello on the Haldimand negotiations, unflinchingly describing the heresy of Ira Allen and others in treating with the British for peace and reunion with the crown, while the United States were at war. Others called it cleverness. Robert Mello doesn't. So we have Mello on the validity of the New Hampshire charters. Highland Hall conducted a second war with New York defending them. Judge Mello rules them invalid as a matter of law. The struggle for independence was the real source of title, not the official papers.

That's his gift: the fresh look at old material and the ability to explain the complexities and ambiguities of this rough and tempestuous period in a clear, impartial voice. It is the voice of a writer who knows the difference between a finding of fact and a conclusion of history, and it bears a close reading for anyone who wants to understand how this state came to be.

PAUL S. GILLIES

*Paul Gillies is a lawyer and historian, whose Uncommon Law, Ancient Roads, and Other Ruminations on Vermont Legal History was published by the Vermont Historical Society in 2013.*

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*Rally the Scattered Believers: Northern New England's Religious Geography*

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By Shelby M. Balik (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014, pp. xv, 295, \$60.00; ebook, \$46.99).

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Even the most casual reader of early Vermont history has encountered the references to religion. Ethan Allen's faith, long labeled "deism," was unorthodox and elicited the impassioned criticism of his rivals. Travel accounts by Congregationalist ministers from southern New England have become oft-cited primary sources on faith in early Vermont, particularly passages like Timothy Dwight's comments on the irreligion of Vermonters and Nathan Perkins's comments about the squalor and contented godlessness of Vermont homesteads. *Rally the Scattered Believers*, the first book by Shelby M. Balik, assistant professor of American History at Metropolitan State University of Denver, places those sources in context by examining the role of religion in the white settlements of northern New England. It is an ambitious and engaging piece of scholarship.

Balik's argument is that the town-church model that defined southern New England by the time of the Revolution failed to replicate across the northern frontier, despite the best intentions of many northern New England settlers and southern New England religious leaders. Religious expression took a different form in the north partly because of the timing of settlement, as the political ideas about liberty and freedom of choice that circulated both before and after the Revolution drew Christians to newer denominations like the Freewill Baptists, Methodists, and Universalists. At the heart of Balik's thesis is the idea that the rugged topography and dispersed rural settlements of northern New England added to a privileging of sectarianism over older Congregationalist loyalties in a way that eroded the southern New England town-church model that had, in theory, united the entire community in a shared culture bounded by town borders. What replaced it was a sectarianism that connected people with wider regions and with other New Englanders based on shared denominational values that could be quite specific and exclusionary, and so disregarded older spatial ideas about town consensus. The result was a new iteration of New England religious culture. As Balik says, "As the clergy—and the laity they courted—pursued the work of conversion and church-building, they laid the groundwork for a new religious world" (pp. 1, 4).

The itinerant and sectarian model that came to dominate northern New England, characterized by circuit preachers and robust missionary societies, was initially a sore point among established church leaders who eventually accepted that traveling missionaries made sense in the scattered rural north. Balik's chapter on missionary societies is wonderful and will prove illuminating for readers who've always wondered about the shape of religion in early Vermont. Switching denominational loyalties was not easy, and Balik's chapter on disestablishment, taxation, and church authority is fascinating and includes a detailed account of the sequence of Vermont legislation that resulted in "the severing of ties between church and state," which Balik characterizes as "a smooth transition" (p. 80).

Balik's geographic argument is regional, and readers interested in contextualizing Vermont landscape and culture will undoubtedly be pleased by the way she links Vermont hill towns to fledging settlements along Maine's coast. Church construction came slowly to the rural north, so people worshipped in a variety of places—barns, fields, houses—and frequently relied on themselves for sermons and shared services. Balik was influenced by work on spatial studies rather than interdisciplinary work on sense of place and place-based attachments, and her geographic argument will seem subtle to readers hoping for a discussion of how the landscape of the rural north itself perhaps infused religious practices or contributed to settlers' understandings of themselves as Christian people. We learn that the topography could be rugged and that Christians of many denominations worshipped outdoors, but Balik is unclear about the extent to which Romantic ideas about nature shaped those religious experiences, if at all. Similarly, by the late nineteenth century, denominations had constructed permanent churches in towns throughout all of New England, so the long-term influence of itinerancy in the north is not entirely clear.

*Rally the Scattered Believers* promises to complement classic and much-respected works on Vermont's religious communities during this period. Vermont historians will find the familiar and expected authors in the bibliography—names like Ludlum, Roth, Potash, and Bassett—but the book lacks a discussion of the historiography on northern New England religion, so just how Balik's argument fits with earlier scholarship won't be readily evident to the non-specialist.

More significant than the book's engagement with that earlier scholarship is its contribution to recent and ongoing scholarly discussions about the place of religion in early American life. Balik's New England is a religious place. For example, her discussion of disestablishment concludes that New Englanders saw denominational choice as an individual liberty,

but also viewed participation in a branch of Christian faith as one's duty. I wish that she'd been more upfront about the power of faith in her New England, about the implications of that argument, and about the ways that her interesting new book provides an alternative to other recent books that see more of the secular than the sacred in American's past.

JILL MUDGETT

*Jill Mudgett is a Vermont historian with an interest in New England history and in the ways that Vermont history fits a larger regional story. She appreciates interdisciplinary approaches to the past and is currently a member of the Vermont Roots Migration Project research team sponsored by the University of Vermont.*

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## *Charity & Sylvia: A Same-Sex Marriage in Early America*

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By Rachel Hope Cleves (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014, pp. xix, 267, \$29.95).

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In this age of shifting public opinion about gay marriage, it seems fitting for historians to turn their attention to the presence of long-term same-sex relationships in America's past. Rachel Cleves breaks exciting new ground on this subject in her book, *Charity & Sylvia: A Same-Sex Marriage in Early America*.

While the history of homosexuality is not exactly a new area of scholarly inquiry, much of what has been explored on this topic has focused either on the development of gay and lesbian subcultures that took root in urban centers or on how homosexuals handled the opposition of heterosexuals who denounced them as unnatural, immoral, dangerous seekers of short-term sexual gratification. Cleves pursues another setting for her study—a small community in nineteenth-century rural Vermont and the same-sex partnership that was embraced there more than 200 years ago.

In nineteen chapters filling just over 200 pages, Cleves tells the story of two women, Charity Bryant and Sylvia Drake, the post-Revolutionary worlds from which they came, the union they created together, and the conditions by which the villagers of Weybridge, Vermont, came to accept their unusual forty-four-year-long relationship. One might wonder if the story of just one couple could fill a whole book. Cleves dives deep, however, providing a detailed but well-written and highly readable exploration of the lives of Charity and Sylvia and the communities they called

home. She draws on a wide array of sources from New England town and organizational records, plus the papers left by Charity and Sylvia, as well as numerous letters written to them by their friends, relatives, and even former lovers. Cleves uses these sources to argue that though the law did not allow for their marriage at the time, what Charity and Sylvia had together was certainly a kind of marriage, not only because they adopted the roles of husband and wife, but also because their neighbors viewed them that way, too.

As spouses of the Early Republic period, Charity and Sylvia shared a household, created a successful economic partnership, bound two kinship groups together, and benefited from the emotional support of each other. Was there a sexual component to their union as well? That is a question that Cleves tackles directly in her research. Many people, including scholars of lesbian history, are reluctant to believe that nineteenth-century women involved in same-sex relationships were sexually active. Cleves suggests that Charity and Sylvia definitely valued the physical intimacy of their relationship. Both of these women enjoyed writing, as did many of their female friends, and Cleves uses these writings—especially their poetry—to uncover and decode the language of their sexuality. Her analysis is quite convincing in showing that Charity and Sylvia expressed their love for each other physically and that Charity, the older and more experienced of the two, likely had other female lovers prior to her relationship with Sylvia. According to Cleves, this aspect of their long relationship was thrilling and fulfilling, but it was also deeply troubling for them spiritually and for their loved ones and neighbors who were afraid to broach the open secret at the center of their union. Cleves offers intriguing bits of commentary from the women about what they considered to be their own significant and unusual sins and their need to repent and change their ways. They feared for their own souls and attributed their frequent illnesses to their immoral behavior, yet they did not seem able (or ultimately all that committed) to suspend the physical aspect of their relationship.

According to Cleves's argument, the union between Charity and Sylvia was real not only because they themselves believed in it, but also because other members of Weybridge recognized them as legitimate partners. They gained this legitimacy through the contributions they made to their community. Charity and Sylvia were pillars of their church, leaders of voluntary organizations, skilled seamstresses, and revered aunts. They mattered to the people of Weybridge, and beyond. It remains somewhat unclear, though, how their friends and neighbors could value Charity and Sylvia so much that they treated them almost

like a normal married couple while at the same time being uncomfortable enough with their sexuality to leave it largely unspoken and unexplored. Therein lies the difficulty of historical research: What goes unspoken is usually lost to history. Given her remarkably thorough research throughout the book, I suspect that if Rachel Cleves had found evidence to elucidate this point, she would have used it.

Cleves's book is not the first historical account of Vermont's most famous same-sex couple, but it is the first to provide such rich context and depth for every aspect of their story. Readers will leave this book learning considerably more about nineteenth-century American life than they might have expected. If Cleves has her way, readers will also come away impressed with the idea that there are many more unions like that of Charity and Sylvia to be discovered in nineteenth-century American history. Her book provides an excellent model for others to follow toward that goal.

AMY F. MORSMAN

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*Insurrection, Corruption & Murder in Early Vermont: Life on the Wild Northern Frontier*

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By Gary G. Shattuck (Charleston, S.C.: The History Press, 2014, pp. 397, paper, \$29.99).

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On August 3, 1808, at a turn in the Winooski River, smugglers opened fire on federal officers attempting to enforce the trade embargo passed by Congress in 1807 at the urging of President Thomas Jefferson and expanded by Jefferson in March 1808 to include overland trade to Canada. Three men were shot and died. Three weeks later, following an arrest, grand jury indictment, trial, and conviction, Cyrus Dean was hanged for the crime of murder. The incident is remembered by the name of the smugglers' 40-foot-long lake boat, *The Black Snake*, and for the high passions of the times, that split Vermont into two very divisive parties, one loyal to the federal government, the other dedicated to independence and economic self-interest. It was the worst of times, times of great passion, corruption of public officials, and political tension.

The best book to date on the subject has just been published. Gary Shattuck, a former federal prosecutor, is the author, and his work is both meticulous in detail and broad in appreciating the context of the incident

on the water and the swift justice that followed it. Never in Vermont's history has the state been so polarized, the tensions so taut, the law so disrespected, not just by the men willing to take extreme risks to continue their trade with Canada, but by the powerful people who supported them. The difference between law breaker and law enforcer blurred, and everybody seemed to sue everybody for relief in the civil courts.

So much of early Vermont history stops at statehood, leaving us to think that after the struggles with England, New York, and the United States, the state cruised toward the present on an even keel. But the harmony of interests that kept Vermont focused on winning its independence and then acceptance as a part of the new country did not last. A decade and a half later, Vermonters felt the first shock of statehood when the federal government closed the border to trade, when most of the economy of the northern part of the state depended on the sale of potash, pearlash, and other goods down the lake to Québec. The embargo was the law, but it wasn't tolerated, and its uneven enforcement only contributed to its rejection by many.

Shattuck's is the first Vermont history to benefit from the court records project of the Vermont State Archives and Records Administration (VSARA), where for several years the files of half of the state's counties have been processed and made available to scholars. In his view, the *Black Snake* murders and trials are the most violent example of a rising tide of conflict and litigation between individuals and officials. His legal training and experience show through in the analysis of the rough justice of that time. His portraits of Cornelius Van Ness, Samuel Buel, and other central figures in the drama are compelling.

Shattuck's *Insurrection, Corruption & Murder in Early Vermont* is one of several recent studies that suggest the coming of a golden age of Vermont legal history, after a long period of dormancy. Robert Mello's biography, *Moses Robinson and the Founding of Vermont* (2014), Ron Morgan's work on the retreat from Mount Independence in 1777 and the court martial of Arthur St. Clair ("The Court Martial of Major General Arthur St. Clair and the Verdict of History" [2013], online at <http://035a6a2.netsolhost.com/wordpress1/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Arthur-St-Clair-and-the-Retreat-from-Mount-Independence.pdf>), and Stephen Martin's book, *Orville's Revenge* (2014), on the Orville Gibson murder trial of 1959, are further evidence of a rising interest in the rich history of the courts and the legal battles that defined the times and temperament of Vermonters. Court records are rich untapped sources of social and political history, and as their stories are brought to light through these histories, our understanding of the way we came to be is rectified and clarified.

Read *Insurrection*. You'll never think of Burlington quite the same way again. Two centuries ago, along the river, there were people everywhere, in boats, farming the land by hand, living out their hard lives in crude temporary shelters. They carried weapons, drank heavily all day long, conspired and plotted ways of getting goods to Canada around the feds, and cursed the president and the United States. There were serious fights on the waters, and men were killed. Justice was relative, and no one was innocent. The passions peaked when the great gun was fired and three men died, and then Dean was executed in public, hanged by the neck. It was a different time, and it happened right here.

PAUL S. GILLIES

*Paul Gillies is a Montpelier attorney and historian. His Uncommon Law, Ancient Roads, and Other Ruminations on Vermont Legal History was published by the Vermont Historical Society in 2013.*

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## *Coffins of the Brave: Lake Shipwrecks of the War of 1812*

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*Edited by Kevin J. Crisman (College Station, Tex.: Texas A&M University Press, 2014, pp. 417, paper, \$60.00).*

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**T**he short but intense conflict between the United States and Great Britain known as the War of 1812 continues to attract considerable interest to the naval action on North America's inland waterway on the Great Lakes and Lake Champlain from 1812 to 1815. After many years of research in nautical archaeology, Kevin J. Crisman has compiled and edited a well-illustrated volume that combines academic research with well-written narratives that bring to life fascinating stories about this naval conflict by piecing together both the history and archaeology of shipwrecks studied over many years.

*Coffins of the Brave: Lake Shipwrecks of the War of 1812* presents an unrivalled accounting of the naval war on the interior waterway between Canada and the U.S. Both the general reading public and researchers interested in naval history and nautical archaeology will find a considerable amount of information on the history of the ships, how they were built, and how they were studied. The book includes chapters by the people who conducted the field research and analyzed the recovered data. It documents sixteen vessels, representing a wide variety of warships, merchant schooners, and gunboats that served on both sides of the naval conflict. Many of the twelve contributors present their work from

previously completed M.A. and Ph.D. research projects associated with the Institute of Nautical Archaeology at Texas A&M University and the Lake Champlain Maritime Museum at Basin Harbor, Vermont. Several contributors are associated with past research with the Underwater Archaeology Service within Parks Canada, among other Canadian organizations.

The freshwater naval campaigns during the War of 1812 took place in three separate districts, each defined by its own logistical and sailing conditions as well as different wartime strategies. The book is divided into these three theaters of naval warfare: the Upper Great Lakes, including Lakes Erie and Huron; Lake Ontario and the upper St. Lawrence River; and Lake Champlain and the Richelieu River. Crisman writes a brief introduction to each section of the book, providing the historical and archaeological context for the chapters that follow.

The first section focuses on the remoteness of the upper Great Lakes during the war and the supply problems both U.S. and British naval forces had in attempting to maintain supremacy. Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry's victory on Lake Erie in 1813 put an end to a string of U.S. military losses to the British forces and restored American confidence. Five ships and their corresponding wreck sites are described by six different authors who provide a close look at the different vessels used in this naval campaign and the present-day research about them by shipwreck salvors and archaeologists. The British transport schooner *Nancy* and the Royal Navy brig *General Hunter* were constructed before the war, whereas the U.S. Navy brig *Niagara* was one of the American vessels built quickly during the early years of the war to offset the growing Royal Navy fire power. The two other vessels described in this section were the Royal Navy schooners *Tecumseh* and *Newash*, built to regain control of Lake Erie in 1815.

Lake Ontario represented the main focus of the on-going conflict because of its strategic significance on the waterway that controlled supply routes operating along the frontier. In this second section, three authors examine the history and archaeology of seven different shipwrecks. This narrative focuses on the primary types of vessels used on Lake Ontario, with emphasis on ship construction and naval life under canvas. The vessels described include what is believed to be a Royal Navy gunboat; the U.S. Navy 20-gun brig *Jefferson*; the Royal Navy frigates *Prince Regent* and *Princess Charlotte*; and the Royal Navy first-rate three-decker *St. Lawrence*, the largest warship to sail on any freshwater lake during the war. The other two ships described are commercial schooners that were converted into U.S. warships, *Hamilton* and *Scourge*, both of which capsized in a sudden squall during action against a British squadron in

1813. This book presents a detailed summary of the archaeological and historical information that has been assembled about these two-masted fore-and-aft American schooners since their discovery almost intact on the lake bed in Canadian waters in 1971.

The last section of the book discusses the naval war on Lake Champlain. War strategy delayed naval action on Lake Champlain until the last two years of the war. In 1812, Thomas MacDonough arrived to command the U.S. naval forces and quickly began to build ships in Vergennes, Vermont, on Otter Creek, using the nearby Monkton Iron Works to provide cannonballs and iron fittings. By 1813, the race accelerated on both sides of the U.S.-Canada border to build warships as fast as possible, to be better prepared for the naval battle everyone knew was coming.

The battle at Plattsburgh Bay on September 11, 1814, involved thirty ships and gunboats of all shapes and sizes. Although two large British warships were badly damaged and almost sunk, no vessels on either side were lost during the action. Three authors write about the battle and the different vessels involved, with a special focus on the U.S. Navy 7-gun schooner *Ticonderoga*, U.S. Navy 2-gun row galley *Allen*, U.S. Navy 20-gun brig *Eagle*, and the Royal Navy 16-gun brig *Linnet*. The authors describe these four very different warships both above and below the water and clearly demonstrate the full extent of many years of research.

The naval action at Plattsburgh Bay is considered by many scholars and naval history buffs, including Theodore Roosevelt and Winston Churchill, as the greatest U.S. naval victory during the War of 1812. A good summary of the battle and its archaeological legacy is provided by Crisman and Arthur B. Cohn, the co-founder and long-time director of the Lake Champlain Maritime Museum. In a final section that includes an overall summary and conclusions, Crisman writes about the artifacts found with the hull structures and the invaluable contributions of William Leege and his fellow sport divers in the Lake Champlain Archaeological Association. Their recovery of a large collection of artifacts from Plattsburgh Bay has revealed information about the naval action not otherwise available in the documentation.

The authors used a full array of primary and secondary sources to provide a well-balanced foundation for the historical research and archaeological studies of the shipwrecks themselves. However, it is somewhat surprising that the authors did not draw more from Russell Bellico's authoritative research on Lake Champlain shipwrecks of the war, compiled over three decades going back to the late 1960s and documented in his revised edition of *Sails and Steam in the Mountains* (2001) and his biography of Thomas MacDonough in *Chronicles of Lake Champlain* (1999).

The volume has extensive chapter footnotes and three appendices tabulating ship dimensions, armaments, and other construction information, including timber scantlings affecting the sailing qualities of the vessels. There is a glossary of technical terms and a comprehensive bibliography, index, and an index of ships. Brief biographies of the contributors would also have been nice for readers interested in the accomplished backgrounds of the authors. This book is a welcome addition to my own library, and I heartily recommend it to everybody looking for a great read in naval history and nautical archaeology. Thanks to all the contributors who made their research available to the public.

R. DUNCAN MATHEWSON III

*R. Duncan Mathewson III, an educator and archaeologist, has spent many years diving on and researching wooden-hull historic shipwrecks. He lives in Middlebury, Vermont, and is the author of a book on Native American archaeology, First Peoples of the Dawnland: Western Abenakis of New England, scheduled for publication in 2015.*

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## *The Vermont Difference: Perspectives from the Green Mountain State*

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*Edited by J. Kevin Graffagnino, H. Nicholas Muller III, David A. Donath, and Kristin Peterson-Ishaq (Woodstock and Barre, Vt.: Woodstock Foundation and Vermont Historical Society, 2014, pp. xxii, 296, \$39.95; paper, \$27.95).*

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With the publication of *The Vermont Difference: Perspectives from the Green Mountain State*, any thought of an enduring antipathy between native and flatlander goes the way of the Mountain Rule. The Vermont Historical Society and the Woodstock Foundation have produced a marvelous compendium of eighteen important and informative essays that describe many aspects of a vibrant “new Vermont” as a blend of innovation and tradition, as Vermont Governor Peter Shumlin’s introduction points out. By my count those contributors who came to Vermont “from away” outnumber the natives, thirteen to eight. This includes some who consider themselves natives, even though in their biographical sketches, they admit they were not born here.

The important point is that this distinction finally has become unimportant.

The “new Vermont” comes across as an extraordinarily appealing place, redolent of artistic, intellectual, and economic vitality, a cultural

oasis in a nation of gridlocked and polluted cities and dreary look-alike towns or artificial eruptions of commerce near Interstate highway exchanges. In a national economy that adulates—nay, is fully dependent on—unlimited economic growth, it is sweetly ironic that Vermont has evolved a self-sustaining civilization that works quite well without population growth.

None of these essays disappoints. Many stand out. Madeleine Kunin, eloquent as always, offers mini-biographies of several women active in political leadership over many years, among them Edna Beard, Clarina Howard Nichols, Sister Elizabeth Candon, and Dorothy Canfield Fisher. She muses about what kind of person Gov. Percival W. Clement of Rutland must have been to have vetoed statewide women's suffrage *and* refused in 1920 to allow Vermont to become the key state to approve the nineteenth amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

Kevin Graffagnino offers an informed—who would expect otherwise?—recitation of the history of Vermont historical writing and provides a string of familiar author names and the rich heritage they have generated. He thanks benefactors Hall Park McCullough, James B. Wilbur, and Gertrude Mallary, in particular. Brushing up on this grand subject is well worth it.

Jim Douglas recalls a couple of wonderful historical tidbits I had not heard of. (Did you know that in 1794, on his way to Albany in a horse-drawn wagon, state Treasurer Samuel Mattocks accidentally spilled some of the \$30,000 in gold coins Vermont had agreed to pay New York to settle all land claims? It was before dawn, but neighboring farmers came out with torches to help pick up the coins, which were all recovered and accounted for.) Sam Hemingway offers some fine political anecdotes and analyzes the sometimes uncomfortable old divide between Vermont natives and others. I wondered whether Jan Albers's essay might reiterate the thrust of her book *Hands on the Land*; but no, it is a beautiful exposition on the subject of landscape economics that analyzes the trend toward a more conservationist approach to flora and fauna. She weaves important names and places into her fabric—such as Rockefeller, Webb, Mt. Philo, George Perkins Marsh, Hapgood Pond, Green Mountain National Forest, the 1927 flood, Great Depression, Civilian Conservation Corps, Long Trail—and reports that exactly 17 percent of Vermont territory now is in public hands—federal, state, or municipal. It's a long and compelling essay that, if expanded, could make a gorgeous coffee-table book in itself.

Tom Salmon provides a valuable history of higher education in Vermont, tinged with regret that the state lags behind in its financial sup-

port of its own colleges. Nonetheless, the story is impressive. Early influential names include Alexander Twilight, Alden Partridge, Justin Smith Morrill, John Dewey, and Guy Bailey. The first colleges are the University of Vermont, Middlebury, and Norwich. The year 1961 brought together Castleton State College, Lyndon Institute, Johnson Academy, and Randolph State Normal School into a coherent state college consortium, joined in 1975 by the Community Colleges. John Dewey's progressive influence is seen at Bennington and Goddard; Walter Hendricks studied with Robert Frost at Amherst and later launched Marlboro. Salmon also traces the origins of Green Mountain, Burlington, Landmark (nee Windham), and Southern Vermont colleges, Vermont Law School, plus the Catholic St. Michael's College and the College of St. Joseph. It's a great deal of erudition to take in, and well told by an experienced hand.

An essay that has special resonance for me is by Ben Rose, who relates how he was brought up on suburban Long Island and relocated at age fifteen to Vermont with his family. "Moving to Vermont was a chance to 're-create' myself—just at a moment in my life when I was eager to do so," Rose writes, then deliciously describes how his love for the outdoors became his lifestyle and led to his creation of the end-to-end Catamount ski trail.

After an informed review of the state's literature and its writers, Tom Slayton describes the way Vermont *transforms* writers who move here and then thrive when they connect with the working landscape. I would contend that "transformative" applies to others besides writers. I grew up in suburban Westchester, New York, and came to Vermont in my twenties, assuming it would be the first stop on an American moving-about career. My own transformation came, among other factors, in reveling in the ability to explore on foot relatively large territories of uninhabited forest topography, first near my parents' retirement home in Andover, and later near where my wife's ancestors lived for generations in Whitingham and Readsboro.

A couple of factual errors might be noted. Ellen McCulloch-Lovell has David and Gloria Gil founding the Bennington Pottery in 1964; it was 1948, shortly after World War Two. David Donath links Stratton with Bromley, Mount Snow, and Sugarbush as prominent ski areas of the 1950s. I remember in 1961 bouncing in Sam Odgen's Plymouth along a rough fresh-cut road that would later lead to the huge Stratton development.

The book's selection of photographs is superb, but several need more explanation. On page 22, for example, why is Senator Flanders holding

a pig? One might rightly assume that photographers are among the artists who contribute vitally to the new Vermont, yet in this book their credits are buried deep on a back page.

But the many assets of this significant and readable book far outweigh any minor quibbles. It is a heavy volume, printed on slick coated stock; the paperback alone weighs three and a half pounds. Future bookshelves of Vermontiana will need to make room for it for all time.

TYLER RESCH

*Tyler Resch is research librarian of the Bennington Museum and co-editor of its journal, the Walloomsack Review.*

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*Most Likely to Secede: What the Vermont Independence Movement Can Teach Us about Reclaiming Community and Creating a Human-Scale Vision for the 21st Century*

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Edited by Ron Miller and Rob Williams (Waitsfield, Vt.: Vermont Independence Press, 2013, pp. 264, paper, \$19.95).

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Several decades ago, when writing for a small weekly newspaper in northern Vermont, I covered a story concerning an order from Washington, D.C., that every post office had to install an air conditioner. Local Vermont postal officials were particularly irate: Why did post offices in the Northeast Kingdom need air conditioners in a region where ninety-degree temperatures are rare? One postmaster angrily noted that each office needed the power to determine its own needs without the necessity of following every directive from ill-informed bureaucrats in faraway Washington.

This story would certainly be appreciated by the editors of and many contributors to *Most Likely to Secede*. Their contention is that the United States has lost the ideals upon which it was founded, such as freedom, independence, and a government that is responsive to the needs of individual citizens and local initiatives. Contributor Taylor Silvestri states that what Americans define as democracy is “dead. The power of many voices has disappeared, and, in its place, a single centralized voice has grown” (p. 123). He and others in this book contend that Americans have lost their freedom and communities have lost the ability to determine their own way of life because they are under the domination of an “overly centralized and increasingly out

of control central federal government” (p. 219). Their primary argument is that

[M]odern political and economic systems have grown too large and overbearing. Governments, corporations, educational systems, global food supply chains, mass media, and other institutions are controlled by global forces that are distant from, and indifferent to, the diverse needs and preferences of citizens and their communities. In sum, the United States has developed into a classic *empire*—a massive, centralized concentration of power that dominates local economies, regional cultures, and other nations through military intimidation and economic exploitation (p. 11).

Ron Miller and Rob Williams, the editors of *Most Likely to Secede*, are members of a movement called Second Republic Vermont, which defines itself as a citizen movement whose goal is the “restoration” of Vermont as an independent republic. This “independent Vermont” would be dedicated to the idea of allowing its citizens to live as they wish as free and happy people not encumbered by the ever-increasing and expensive demands of what they regard as a corrupt, imperial, and disintegrating United States. The essays in this book are taken from their periodical, *Vermont Commons*, from its inception in 2005 through 2012. The editors of the journal see their work as a “forum for exploring the roots of American imperialism and a range of possible social, cultural, and economic antidotes to it” (p. 3).

The book features essays from twenty-nine contributors who call for economic relocalization and political independence for Vermont. They believe that decisions concerning allocation of fuel and resources, the production of food, control of the media, and health care should be returned to regional and local control. The welfare of the people, they argue, is severely endangered by an out-of-control federal government that wildly goes to war in places like Iraq and Afghanistan without consulting the people. The only way to escape the jaws of this ugly federal machine is to secede from federal America and create in Vermont an independent republic that can and will hear the voices of the people.

The possibility that Vermont could ever secede from the United States is remote at best, but the writers raise some very interesting questions concerning the power and role of our federal government. Many Americans might well agree that there is too much power in the hands of our government and corporate élites, that power and wealth are becoming concentrated in the hands of fewer and fewer people, and that local and regional voices and concerns are no longer heard or taken seriously.

Perhaps the most interesting chapter, “Powering Vermont’s Future by Embracing the Peak-Oil Challenge,” by Carl Etnier and Annie

Dunn Watson, asks the question, what happens when world oil production reaches its peak and starts its inevitable decline? Etnier and Watson claim that there is no coherent federal strategy to deal with this impending crisis and that Vermont, which imports 100 percent of its oil, is especially vulnerable. “The cheap, abundant energy that has fueled Vermont’s economy, and propelled us daily among home, work, and play is about to disappear—not the oil itself, but its affordability” (p. 69). Vermont must come up with its own plans to encourage the production of renewable energy and to better promote conservation of existing resources.

A better alternative is a combination of local responses, both individual and collective. Once people are aware of the peak-oil challenge, there are many things they can do immediately, like start growing more of their own food, insulate their homes, reacquaint themselves with their neighbors, install wood heat, build up their bicycling muscles, etc. But individuals alone cannot all meet the challenges; we need to respond collectively, through good policy, informed by and responsive to citizen input (pp. 72-73).

*Most Likely to Secede* is a very well-written collection of essays that raise meaningful questions about the direction and management of our society now and in the future. These questions pertain not only to Vermont, but also to every community in the United States. Many people will likely disagree with some of the commentary in this volume, but each essay at least raises questions that we all must debate. We need a national conversation about the future of the United States, and books like this could be tools to open this discussion.

DANIEL A. MÉTRAUX

*Daniel A. Métraux is Professor of Asian Studies at Mary Baldwin College, Staunton, Virginia. He is a summer resident of Greensboro, Vermont.*

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## *The Vermont Way: A Republican Governor Leads America’s Most Liberal State*

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By Jim Douglas (New Haven, Vt.: Common Ground Communications/A Bray Book, 2014, pp. 359, paper \$35.00).

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**F**ormer Governor Jim Douglas’s autobiography, *The Vermont Way*, details his thirty-eight-year political service to Vermonters. It is an intimate and personal narrative that captures his outgoing demeanor and tries to define his historical legacy.

Shortly after graduation from Middlebury College in 1972, Douglas was elected to the Vermont House. He went on to become majority leader and later joined Governor Richard Snelling's senior staff. He then served twelve years as secretary of state. He followed that with an eight-year stint as state treasurer, and election in 2002 as governor, which office he held for four terms, earning more votes than any other politician in Vermont history.

Douglas's reminiscences, both about his leadership roles and his influence on the political ebbs and flows during his many years of service, make for an interesting personal retrospective. The book's title and outline, taken together, define the inherent tension of his long career. Douglas works to convey what Vermonters already know and like about their former governor—his dry wit, accessibility, and congenial personality—sharing anecdotal digressions that make clear his affection for Vermonters. At the core of his belief system is his certainty that spending time among Vermonters rather than their politicians enabled him to distill the wisdom and experience of his constituents and bring it to the decision-making process in Montpelier. He also draws on Vermont's Republican century prior to 1963 as the philosophical basis for his own legacy. That long era of virtually one-party rule in Vermont was characterized by leaders who were often progressive with regard to the well-being of their neighbors and on environmental issues, while remaining conservative on fiscal issues—a balance that inspired Douglas. He also references the example of his mentor, Governor Deane C. Davis: "He told Vermonters the truth" (p.13).

Douglas's own delivery of hard truths to Vermonters is a recurring theme in the book. But "truth" is a slippery term, especially in the ideologically charged context of politics, and Douglas takes umbrage when others present facts to buttress political arguments that he disputes. For example, during his tenure he often asserted as fact that Vermont is the most highly taxed state in the country and that this drives Vermonters and businesses out. Yet according to IRS and Tax Foundation data commissioned by Douglas's and the legislature's Blue Ribbon Tax Commission (on which I served with Kathy Hoyt and Bill Sayre), although Vermont does have a relatively high tax burden, it ranks somewhere between ninth and thirteenth nationally, depending on the methodology applied. Moreover, the data showed that slightly more people are moving in than moving out, a fact Douglas himself now acknowledges in his book.

The book is further compromised by Douglas's under-edited writing style. Even though this is a memoir, too many sentences begin with "I," which leaves a reader wondering about Douglas's concept of political

leadership: Does he see himself as the sole standard bearer for his version of Republicanism? Did he have or rely on colleagues to help him shape and implement policies? And too many sentences end with an “!”. This breathless writing style is often at odds with Douglas’s more serious points.

Moreover, the narrative is often diminished by Douglas’s defensive reactions to those disagreeing with him. An example is his general antipathy for the press and media. “*Seven Days* isn’t really a newspaper,” he writes, “but I stopped reading one that is, *The Addison County Independent*” (p. 291). Douglas lambastes the editorial page writer for calling into question his policies and motives. *The Addison County Independent* is published in Middlebury, Douglas’s hometown, and he later adds, “It’s a little awkward, to be sure, not to read the local paper” (p. 291). He goes on to attack *The Rutland Herald/Barre-Montpelier Times Argus*: “The Mitchells [owner/publishers] have been community-minded and supportive but they give their editors free rein and the staff wrote a number of outrageous editorials in my later terms” (pp. 292-293). “Free rein”? Douglas seems to believe that publishers should dictate their editorial writers’ opinions. He cites an editorial in which the writer suggests that the governor’s opposition to gay marriage was “driven by politics” and that his reasoning was “bogus,” “sad and perplexing,” and “contradictory.” (p. 293). In this case, the writer of the “outrageous editorials” won a Pulitzer Prize for his writing on the evolution of gay marriage, which Douglas opposes. Not only does Douglas misunderstand editorial firewalls, he asserts, “I guess their view is that, if you disagree with someone, the best approach is to demean his or her arguments rather than rebut them civilly.” He adds, “Gee, how many insults can fit into a single editorial?” and “Wow! Time to take a deep breath!” (p. 291). Sadly, such personal reactions to press criticism substitute for a considered recollection of the evolving political debate and betray a misunderstanding of journalism’s role in a democracy.

Occasionally, a darker side of Douglas emerges, obscuring the otherwise warm and genial style. His retelling of his defeat on gay marriage and the legislative override of his veto focuses on his animus toward proponents. “He [his successor, Governor Peter Shumlin] later reciprocated by appointing one of the leading lobbyists of the movement to the Supreme Court” (p. 166). Beth Robinson was indeed appointed to the Court, but the implication is that this “lobbyist’s” appointment was political payback, when, in fact, Robinson is an experienced and highly respected attorney who clerked on the Washington D.C. Circuit, often considered a step away from the Supreme Court of the United States.

To refer to her as a “lobbyist” and her appointment to the Vermont Supreme Court as a political reward disregards her unimpeachable qualifications.

Douglas is also crisp in his disdain for special-interest groups, writing that environmental organizations “often had no connection to a proposal except that they opposed it, they had money, and they liked to cause mischief.” This generalization conveys his frustration, but hardly does justice to the motives at work. He goes on to say that “there are outfits like the Conservation Law Foundation, a special-interest law firm, whose initials might just as easily stand for, *Control Land Forever*. Along with their confederates at the Vermont Law School, they have impeded just about every development in the state in the last few years. They try to stop everything” (p. 213). In Douglas’s view there seems to be little room for the interplay of opposing ideas and civil discourse characteristic of democracy.

Governor Douglas’s autobiography is a comfortable read when it is about himself, his family, his Vermont neighbors, and his almost four decades of political activity. It is the subjective retrospective of a man who sincerely loves his constituents and, in turn, desires their affection. The partisan rhetoric, however, undermines the book’s value as an historical record of his extensive service to Vermonters.

BILL SCHUBART

*Bill Schubart is a retired businessman, a public radio commentator, and a fiction writer.*

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## *Deluge: Tropical Storm Irene, Vermont’s Flash Floods, and How One Small State Saved Itself*

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By Peggy Shinn (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 2013, pp xii, 218, \$27.95; ebook \$22.99).

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Peggy Shinn’s new book about the ravages of Tropical Storm Irene “does not aim to tell every Vermonter’s Irene story. There are simply too many” (p. xii). Instead, the focus is meant to rest on four individuals—Susie Haughwout, the Wilmington town clerk; Lisa Sullivan, a Wilmington bookstore owner; Tracy Payne, a homeowner in Jamaica; Geo Honigford, a farmer in South Royalton—and one town, Pittsfield, one of the places left stranded by the storm as the roads washed away.

The text is divided into three parts: the advent of the storm itself, the rescue, and the recovery. The book’s back matter offers a useful appen-

dix that lays out the key statistics that resulted from Irene: the number of towns affected, total property damage, road closures, FEMA assistance, and other measurements. It also includes a bibliography and a publisher's note about organizations still gathering and distributing recovery funds.

The literature of bad weather is a vine with many tendrils, with the best-selling *The Perfect Storm* by Sebastian Junger taking a certain pride of place, but with books on climate, tornados, storm chasing, and survival also in the mix. The elements in turmoil can make for thrilling reading, and we get a taste of this early on—the narrative opens with a dramatic rescue in Pittsfield featuring the sudden rise of the Tweed River, ropes, dogs, trucks, water-borne debris, and even a cliffhanger ending as Heather Grey fights the powerful current and yells, “I can't do it!” (p. 8).

But the narrow focus on selected people and places promised in the preface widens fairly quickly to include emergency responders, road construction crews, volunteers, organizers, selectmen, reporters, food vendors, utility workers, and innocent bystanders who stood and watched while a bridge or an entire house washed away. In a way this is unfortunate, since there's a challenge for the reader in keeping all these people straight; but it is also perhaps inevitable, since much of the point of the book is the mobilization of human, mechanical, and economic resources in response to Irene. The chapter called “Vermont Ingenuity and Volunteerism” is a catalogue of selflessness, focus, and the gritty, get-it-done determination that marked the response to the storm—at one point, CBS reporter Wyatt Andrews interviews Paul Fraser, emergency management director in Jamaica, about what the repair crew is doing, and asks,

“Is it fair to say you are moving this creek from there to there?”

“I like to say we're returning it to where it came from,” replied Fraser.

“You didn't ask permission?” asked Andrews.

“Well, we'll apologize later,” said Fraser. “This had to be done” (p. 119).

*Deluge* is at times overpopulated and at other times burdened with extraneous detail that can be distracting. This reader, for example, didn't really need to know about the views from the dormer windows of a house that is soon to be washed away, or that “[T]his would be her mom's room, when her mother could get away from caring for her ailing father in Maryland” (p. 46). Not every scrap of information is created equal or deserves inclusion, but at other times the reach for every detail pays off, as in the description of the search for the Garafanos, a father and son who worked for the Rutland Public Works Department and

were killed while checking on the status of an intake valve at Mendon Brook. Shinn carefully describes the search and eventual retrieval of the bodies in the wreckage left by the storm and the delicate, difficult work of picking apart the snags and snarls of debris. The “gut-wrenching work” (p. 97) of extracting the first of the two bodies using heavy machinery has real resonance: “It’s one thing to dig somebody out that you don’t know,” said Doug Casella. “It’s another thing to work around someone you know and recognize” (p. 96).

*Deluge* also reaches its overriding goal of capturing the courage and single-mindedness of Vermonters in the face of Irene’s unexpected devastation—from the ground up. Everywhere across the state, people turned out to help their neighbors and went on to help people they didn’t know. The aftermath of Irene affirmed the resilience of small communities and the backbone found in places like Pittsfield, South Royalton, and Jamaica. And in looking back, the right questions are asked about Vermont’s readiness for future disasters, given the new and unpredictable weather patterns apparently on the horizon. “Should buildings be allowed in floodplains?” Shinn asks. “If fluvial erosion caused so much damage, shouldn’t floodplain regulations be rewritten for mountain states?” (p. 205). Good questions, and questions Vermonters can no longer afford to ignore.

HELEN HUSHER

*Helen Husher is the author of three books about or based in Vermont. She lives in Montpelier.*

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## *Vermont Beer: History of a Brewing Revolution*

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By Kurt Staudter and Adam Krakowski (Charleston, S.C.: The History Press, 2014, pp. 192, paper, \$19.99).

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**M**odern-day Vermont is a beer-lover’s paradise, brimming with craft breweries that rank among the world’s best. It boasts the most breweries per capita of any state in the union and features “The best beer town in New England”—Waterbury, according to *The Boston Globe*.

But Vermont hasn’t always been the brew haven that it is today. “Simply put, before Greg Noonan’s Vermont Pub & Brewery and Cata-mountain Brewing Company [opened in the 1980s], there was no legal brewery in Vermont for over a century,” write Kurt Staudter and Adam Krakowski in *Vermont Beer: History of a Brewing Revolution* (p. 15).

In the first book of its kind, Staudter and Krakowski guide readers through the beer-hostile era of Green Mountain prohibition to the emergence of Vermont's gilded age of brewing. Staudter, the executive director of the Vermont Brewers Association, and Krakowski, a historic preservationist who has focused on Vermont hop farming, bring robust insights to a tale that has been brewing for centuries.

The story is split into two parts, and it reads like separate books. The authors begin by meandering through a sea of records, and the first brewing story they share with readers is dated 1777. At this time, Vermont was still an independent state, and a group of men sought to raise funds for a brewery via a state-sanctioned lottery. Documentation of the state's first fully functioning brewery, however, dates to 1791—the year Vermont became the fourteenth of the United States. This venture began in Middlebury with a man brewing porter and distilling liquors.

Daniel Stanford opened Burlington's first brewery in 1800, and Samuel Hickock established the Burlington Brewery in 1828. During this period, more than 100 distilleries cropped up across the state, and other breweries in Poultney and Hartford opened their doors.

These nascent breweries were short lived, however, as the beer market sailed into the lethal headwinds of state prohibition in 1852. During the early years of prohibition, many breweries continued to produce beer that they sold out of state. The first recorded instance of Vermont-crafted India Pale Ale—the popular beer known for its high hop content—emerged in 1856, paralleling a rise in state hop production. But, as Staudter and Krakowski point out, many breweries and industries that relied on the creation of beer soon fled Vermont for more hospitable markets.

The rhythm of the book's first section is a bit choppy, which is, in part, a reflection of the early Vermont brewing industry that included fewer than a dozen breweries before 1989. Even in light of the content, the book's early stories are at times clouded by information that would have greatly benefited from the editorial filters of footnotes and tighter organization. While the first part of the book moves tangentially through Vermont's beer history, the authors develop a stride in the second section that is more palatable to the casual reader—at least it was for this reader.

The second part of *Vermont Beer* presents short, punchy anecdotes that are arranged by brewery name, and flow in chronological order. This section begins with the founding fathers of the Vermont craft brewing revolution—Steve Mason of Catamount Brewing Company and Greg Noonan of Vermont Pub & Brewery.

In 1985, the now-defunct Catamount Brewing Company became

New England's first, modern microbrewery—100 years after Montpelier legislators outlawed alcohol production. Meanwhile, Noonan, with the help of Burlington Representative Bill Mares, successfully lobbied the legislature in 1988 to end an antiquated law that forbade the buying and drinking of beer where it was brewed. With a maple sap boiler for a brew kettle, Greg Noonan opened Vermont's first modern brewpub.

Before the decade was out, Andy Pherson began brewing the famous Long Trail Pale Ale, now known simply as "Long Trail Ale." Pherson's Mountain Brewers blossomed into the renowned Long Trail Brewing Company.

The 1990s were the yeast to the malt of the 1980s' brewing scene in Vermont. Roughly two dozen new breweries bubbled up across the state, and Vermonters were inundated with beers of a quality that residents in few other states could enjoy.

Lawrence Miller introduced the world to Middlebury's Otter Creek Brewing in 1991, and Ray McNeil opened the doors to Brattleboro's McNeill's Brewery that same year. Dozens of breweries—such as Burlington's Magic Hat, Montpelier's Golden Dome Brewing, and the Northeast Kingdom's Trout River Brewing Company—began supplying the demands of a vibrant and supportive local economy. While not all of these breweries met success, many led to new companies and world-class brewers, such as Shaun Hill of Hill Farmstead Brewery, Sean Lawson of Lawson's Finest Liquids, and John Kimmich of the Alchemist, to name but a few of the many brewers presently leading Vermont in high-quality suds.

Staudter and Krakowski's *Vermont Beer* takes readers on a tour through the openings, expansions, closings, and backstories of the state's most fabled breweries. What the book lacks in editorial oversight it more than makes up for in the high quality of information bursting from its pages. Staudter and Krakowski have written the go-to book on Vermont's brewing history, and it is a volume that deserves its spot on the shelves of any Vermont brewer, beer enthusiast, or thirsty mind.

ANDREW C. STEIN

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