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BOOK REVIEWS



Darkness Falls on the Land of Light: Experiencing Religious Awakenings in Eighteenth-Century New England

By Douglas Winiarski (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017, pp. 606, \$49.95).

New England's "First Great Awakening" (1735-1743) has long been recognized for its fiery sermons, itinerant firebrands, and "surprising works of God." Orderly revivals originally spearheaded by Jonathan Edwards and other established Congregational clergy championed a rekindling of religious piety among a traditional audience otherwise preoccupied with worldly pursuits. With the arrival of itinerants who progressively insisted on their ability to distinguish between true and false converts, the intentional dynamics of religious community (re)building in the early Awakening fell victim to a divisive rancor that permanently fractured New England's "Standing Order."

Douglas Winiarski's hypothesis in *Darkness Falls on the Land of Light*, that the struggle "transformed the once-puritan churches from inclusive communities of interlocking parishes and families into exclusive networks of gifted spiritual leaders" (pp. 19-20), seems far less original than the scholarly process by which he arrives there. His impressive bibliography identifies more than 200 manuscript collections he consulted over twenty years of research. In addition, Winiarski painstakingly worked as a "new social historian," drawing upon a variety of local records (church, town, vital, and familial) to reconstruct patterns of religious affiliation across eight New England parishes and identifying multiple traits of male and female converts before and during the revivals. To this effort, he then adds a whole new dimension of analysis by working through more than 1,200 church admission "relations" (required spiritual testimonials) from dozens of towns.

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It is the latter set of materials that contributes most powerfully to Winiarski's engaging narrative, organized around a sequence of five large charters or parts. Part One, "Godly Walkers" (pp. 23-130), portrays the vast majority of pre-Awakening (1680-1740) conversion relations he examined (disproportionately involving adult married women) as conventionally "contractual" in form, "orderly," and "inclusive." Part Two, "In a Flame" (pp. 131-206), highlights the ability of the "Grand Itinerants" to target a new demographic (younger male and female) and to inculcate in them a new vocabulary that described the primacy and suddenness of their conversion experiences involving an unexpected "Infusion of the Holy Spirit." Part Three, "Exercised Bodies, Impulsive Bibles" (pp. 207-284), this reader's favorite, describes a magistrate's fear that a belligerent young Boston convert, Martha Robinson, was likely "possessed by the Devill," and underscores the difficulties that many traditional clergy experienced as they encountered ever increasing numbers of revival converts whose experiences included violent physical manifestations, visions, trances, and dreams. In Part Four, "Pentacost and Protest" (pp. 287-364), the story of later and more radical itinerants spearheaded by James Davenport highlights a similarly explosive pattern among many new converts to both favor and, in many cases, to become lay preachers and exhorters, thereby fostering confrontations with established clerics. Met with disruption, disrespect, and discord, clergymen like the Rev. John Lowell of Newburyport, Massachusetts (introduced in Part Five, "Travels," pp. 367-506), who had once been "extremly taken with the new Scheme" of the revivals, forcefully and abruptly reversed himself and condemned the revivals as a "Day of temptation" rather than a "day of illumination" (p. 370). With accusations flying from all sides, the divisions continued to grow. By the eve of the American Revolution, New England's religious landscape boasted "Old Lights" as well as "New Lights" and dozens of Separatist congregations were renouncing infant baptism in declaring themselves Baptist churches.

Vermont readers will likely be particularly interested in Winiarski's treatment of the Fay family of Westborough, Massachusetts, described in the early pages of Part Five. John, James, and Steven Fay, awakened in the Whitefield revivals and transformed into "outspoken and independent-minded religious enthusiasts" (p. 386), were leaders in the initial settlement of Bennington in 1762. They were confident that newly opened and fertile frontier soils offered Separatists the opportunity to escape the repression of the existing "Standing Order" and to shape a future of their choosing. Fully three-quarters of Bennington's

early settlers were affiliated with the Bennington church. What “should have been a landmark event” (p. 394) in Congregational history, however, quickly foundered in the face of internal squabbling and fractiousness over sermons, practices, and individual callings. Bennington’s future, like that of Vermont, would be one of competition between Christian sects (e.g., Baptists, Congregationalists, Methodists, Episcopalians, Unitarians and Universalists) as well as between religious practice and secularity.

Darkness Falls is a superb albeit challenging read. It is original in its method and succeeds both in informing broad and meaningful patterns of American cultural experience while resurrecting forgotten individuals and capturing the depth and breadth of their human experiences. It is a must read for any student of history who seeks to understand the powerful imprint of religion on the course of our democratic experience.

P. JEFFREY POTASH

Jeff Potash is a former Professor of History at Trinity College (Vt.), a “new social historian,” and co-author with Michael Sherman and Gene Sessions of Freedom and Unity: A History of Vermont (2004).

Green Mountain Opium Eaters: A History of Early Addiction in Vermont

By Gary G. Shattuck (Charleston, S.C.: The History Press, 2017, pp. 175, paper, \$21.99).

Here is a scenario that may seem familiar. There is widespread recognition that addiction to opiate drugs is a serious health problem in Vermont. Much blame for this dilemma is given to the medical profession, which has incautiously prescribed opiates to patients seeking pain relief. The excessive promotional activities of companies that make dangerous drugs persuade both doctors and patients that the products are safer and more useful than they really are. The art and science of medicine fall short in efforts to treat addicted people. Government sometimes expresses its desire to help the situation, but is not quite sure how to do so, and often seems to be dithering. Doctors aren’t happy when it looks as if their therapeutic decision making will be second-guessed by a government entity.

This is, of course, a rough summary of a public discussion that has

been prominent in Vermont in the past couple of decades, highlighted by Governor Peter Shumlin's January 8, 2014, State of the State address to the legislature, which, unusually for such addresses, made this crisis its single dominant concern. It is also a rough summary of a problem that plagued the health of Vermont's communities throughout the nineteenth century. It is that century that Gary Shattuck's excellent new book takes as its focus. (Shattuck published an abbreviated version of this material as "Opium Eating in Vermont: 'A Crying Evil of the Day'" in *Vermont History* 83 [Summer/Fall 2015]: 157-192.)

There are several intertwined stories here, and they are not nearly as pleasant as the romantic view of Old Vermont in which the menfolk enjoyed a nip of rum at a barn raisin', the womenfolk sometimes took a spoonful of Paine's Celery Compound to help with the vapors, and the doctor came in his buggy and always had something good for what ailed you.

Shattuck traces the commerce of opium, first in its raw form (generally imported from Asia Minor), in due course refined to morphine, and by the end of the nineteenth century also available as heroin. (The last was initially marketed as a non-addictive cough medicine.) Medical science, such as it was, had some concept of what doses of these medications were reasonably safe and effective, but doctors poorly understood such concepts as tolerance, whereby a regular user of an opiate gets utterly inadequate relief from a dose that might help a non-user.

Prescribing and controlling the use of opiates was not restricted to physicians with any standard qualifications, because through most of the nineteenth century Vermont had no effective licensure law. (Neither did most states, but Vermont was slower than most in developing licensure.) Many people presenting themselves as physicians had little training in what was known of pharmacology. It is not unreasonable to point out here that opium and morphine were on a very short list of drugs available in the nineteenth century that actually had some beneficial effect. There were anesthetic gases such as nitrous oxide and chloroform (which were also abused); quinine (which had modest benefit for malaria but was useless for the myriad other febrile illnesses for which it was prescribed); digitalis (whose use for heart failure has taken a significant downturn only in the past generation); and some laxatives. The doctor who wanted to make people feel better did not have lots of choices.

Pharmacists, whose shops became vastly more widespread as transportation and communication modernized through the century, in-

sisted on their right to sell drugs independently of physician prescriptions. Throughout the nineteenth century the influence of the patent medicine industry increased, as its larger companies generated vast advertising campaigns for products that generally included alcohol and/or opiates. Vermont's biggest patent medicine enterprise was Wells, Richardson & Co. of Burlington. Its most intensely advertised nostrum, Paine's Celery Compound, certainly incorporated a potent dose of alcohol; I have never seen any evidence, including in the present work, that it had any opiate ingredient. Patients insisted on their right to decide for themselves what treatments they would buy and use, and they were certainly influenced by the promotional activities of the drug companies.

By the end of the century, the quantity of opium and morphine being consumed in Vermont was utterly astonishing. A study by Dr. Ashbel Parmelee Grinell in 1899 surveyed as many of the state's retail pharmacies as he could persuade to cooperate, and applying some solid math to the findings, concluded that the good people of Vermont, in aggregate, were going through 3,300,000 doses of opium per month. This study had considerable national influence, because there probably was no comparably accurate estimate for any other state. It would still be some time, however, before the federal government assumed the control over controlled substances we now take for granted.

Shattuck also covers the parallel story of alcohol and its use and abuse. In the nineteenth century, it was widely supposed that gentlemen abused alcohol while ladies abused opium, and for various social reasons that may have been true. In any event, the social and moral opprobrium attached to being an inebriate was considerably greater than that attached to being addicted to opiates. Shattuck gives credit to the Women's Christian Temperance Union for an early understanding that both addictions had serious consequences.

Addiction was a recognized phenomenon, and there were approaches to its treatment, many of which were insufficient. Much of what is now known about the neurophysiology of opiate use and abuse comes from research in the past generation, and it is fair to predict that present understanding of the condition will be seen not long into the future as having been primitive indeed.

Drawing on a vast array of published and documentary sources, this book tells the story very well. Even putting aside its particular focus, I am unaware of any account of the practice of medicine in nineteenth-century Vermont that is so compelling. I'll throw in a couple of minor quibbles. Apothecary weights and measures are complicated. Nowadays, practically all drugs are measured in milligrams (mg). A grain,

the unit most commonly used in the nineteenth-century records here, is 65 mg. An ounce is 28 grams, or 28,000 mg, or about 437 grains. A dram (in this book generally rendered as the rather more old-fashioned *drachma*) is 27.34 grains or one-sixteenth of an ounce. A standard aspirin or acetaminophen tablet is 5 grains, nowadays expressed as 325 mg. Some of these equivalents are noted in the book, but the numbers can quickly make you dizzy. On another matter, Shattuck sidesteps the vexing linguistic problem of referring to opium and alcohol as stimulants. Pharmacologically, they are not. That is why ingesting too much of either of them can make you stop breathing. Use of either of them, of course, does lead to a sense of well-being, which can be thought of as a stimulant effect. A rather more precise term is intoxicant. This discussion is not new; it has been seen in medical literature since at least the early twentieth century.

The final chapter of the book, entitled “Aftermath,” romps through the twentieth and early twenty-first century with an enjoyable, sometimes disturbing string of anecdotes, not quite as tightly edited as the main body of the work. Some of the anecdotes are madcap indeed, as for example a 1970 memo from Mental Health Commissioner Dr. Jonathan Leopold, complaining that during a useless meeting, the coffee machine would “buzz, gurgle, slurp, and belch” (p. 144). As practicing physicians, pharmacists, researchers, educators, law enforcement professionals, legislators, and (most important) patients have buzzed, gurgled, slurped, and belched through this difficult, often tragic problem through two centuries, there has been some progress. The “crying evil of the day” still needs work.

JOHN A. LEPPMAN

John A. Leppman, M.D. is a practicing physician and past president of the Vermont Medical Society and of the Genealogical Society of Vermont.

Shelburne Farms: House, Gardens, Farm and Barns

By Glenn Suokko (New York: Rizzoli, 2017, pp. 288, \$65.00).

This new publication celebrates Shelburne Farms, a National Historic Landmark (NHL) and Vermont’s outstanding Gilded Age estate. Published by Rizzoli International Publications, renowned for its books on art, design, and architecture, *Shelburne Farms* provides an account of the estate’s history and, with over 300 photographs, creates a sumptuous visual tour of the property.

Glenn Suokko organizes his narrative and photos through chapters focused largely on physical attributes, such as “The Beauty of Shelburne Farms,” “Shelburne House,” “Formal Gardens,” and “Major Barns.” The history of the Farms is scattered throughout these chapters, most of it concentrated on the seminal period between 1886 and 1907, as Dr. Seward Webb and his bride Eliza Vanderbilt Webb create the estate using the fortune Eliza inherited as a daughter of William Henry Vanderbilt and a granddaughter of railroad magnate Cornelius Vanderbilt. Except for events pertinent to a particular building or landscape feature, the years after 1907 are treated in less detail, until the 1970s redevelopment of the Farms as an inn and a site open to the public. A foreword by descendent Alec Webb and an afterword by Megan Camp, respectively the current president and vice president of Shelburne Farms, tell first-hand of this transition to an educational and environmental mission. A substantial portion of the book (nearly 100 pages) is devoted to current farm operations and the farm-to-table restaurant (including 30 recipes).

The history leaves largely unexplored the broader context of the Gilded Age, when immense family fortunes were amassed prior to passage of antimonopoly legislation and the federal income tax. And apart from superlatives and naming names, Suokko does little to place the Farms in a wider family, architectural, and social context that might enrich its appreciation. For example, unlike the primarily recreational grand summer residences erected by Eliza’s older siblings (“The Breakers” in Newport, R.I., and “Elm Court” straddling the Lenox/Stockbridge, Mass., town line), the Webbs elected to develop their summer home within a country estate combining park, farm, and forest. They followed a model pioneered in 1871 by Frederick Billings in Woodstock, Vermont (now Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park), and one that Eliza’s immediate youngest brother George at the same time was planning for his “Biltmore” estate in North Carolina (also a NHL). But such cavils aside, *Shelburne Farms* is more art book than history, and therein lies its strengths.

As a photographer, Suokko displays in this volume his artistic range, capturing architecture, period interiors, landscapes, animal-life portraits, and farm-to-table cuisine. Captions and some historic photos provide the information needed to allow the reader to discern the significance and provenance of the features depicted. Suoko’s approach to the architecture and landscape is atmospheric and evocative more than strictly delineating. For example, he does not show the overall grand scale and thorough architectural symmetry of the primary Farm Barn in any one photograph. Instead he uses views in three seasons

and telling details (including that used for the cover jacket) to convey the whole. Treatment of the gardens in all seasons not only revels in their floral beauty but carefully explains their evolution and recreation, so that, for example, we know that only one variety of peony is original to Eliza Webb's tenure. Suokko's carefully composed and well-lighted interior views and details will be a delight to decorative arts devotees and perhaps a source of inspiration for eclectic design. And his approach throughout of juxtaposing many selective-focus details to inform and evoke a whole finds perhaps its highest expression in the farm-to-table photography, which would not be out of place in gourmet periodicals. The details of a cow grazing, grated cheese, washed kohlrabi, and draining mustard greens together evoke the farm practices and food preparation that went into the elegantly presented smoked cheddar soup shown in a full-page photo with accompanying recipe. This portion of the book documents well the contemporary Vermont upscale interest in linking environmental farm practices with high-quality food and its elegant presentation.

Overall, *Shelburne Farms* is a good introduction to the history and notable architecture and landscape of this Vermont landmark. Perhaps more importantly, it is an archetype of the photographic "big book" that most significant historic sites open to the public want to have available for its benefactors and visitors so they can remember and share their love of the place and their experiences there.

CURTIS B. JOHNSON

Curtis B. Johnson is an architectural historian and photographer. He is co-author of Buildings of Vermont (2014). His architectural photography was exclusively featured in the Middlebury College Museum of Art exhibition Observing Vermont Architecture (2014).

Greek Epic: The Latchis Family & the New England Theater Empire They Built

By Gordon Hayward (Brattleboro, Vt.: The Latchis Arts, Inc., 2016, pp. xv, 218, paper, \$22.50).

Hope and ambition can arise anywhere. For Demetrios Peter Latchis, it was in his hometown of Kastanitsa, a Greek village so small and remote that it was untouched by the Germans in World War II. Demetrios, whose family name was changed to Latchis at Ellis Island, emigrated to America in 1901 at the age of thirty-seven.

What followed was both a classic American story of immigrant enterprise and an intensely local one. *Greek Epic*'s first chapter describes the construction of the Latchis Memorial Theater in Brattleboro, 1936-1938, built by Demetrios's sons in his memory. The last chapter is an account of the rescue of the Latchis building by the Brattleboro Arts Initiative and its preservation as an arts and performance center and a business enterprise through the extraordinary efforts of local volunteers, the Preservation Trust of Vermont, and a complex mix of grants and loans. The outcome was a two-fold arrangement, with arts events under the wing of the non-profit Latchis Arts, Inc., and the theaters, hotel, office, and retail spaces under the management of the for-profit Latchis Corporation.

In between these two chapters, Gordon Hayward tells the story of the tumultuous rise and fall of the Latchis family businesses with evident admiration and in fascinating detail. From humble beginnings the family "over thirty years went on to build five thousand-seat movie theaters, and own or lease a further ten in three states" (p. ix). We meet some interesting characters, starting with Demetrios himself, who, after a brief spell in Lowell, Massachusetts, working in the mills, came to Keene, New Hampshire, where he had a half-brother, then to Hinsdale, N.H., and eventually to Brattleboro. He sold fruit from his pushcart, first literally pushed or pulled, later horse-drawn and motorized. Demetrios and his sons expanded the fruit business and opened a confectionery shop. In 1919, son Peter took the family savings—without permission—to buy projection equipment to show movies at the Town Hall. His older brother, Spero, recalled that the family "was about to kill him," but after drawing a packed house, "the family let Peter do whatever he wanted. He seized the throne and for the rest of his life never looked back" (p. 50). But this businessman was also, in Hayward's words, "the artist, the renaissance man, the self-taught entrepreneur who went home at night to read Plato and Aristotle or to play his saxophone" (p. 73).

Spero, the oldest son, was known as the "organizer, the businessman and controller, the brother who kept everything in line" (p. 57). The youngest son, John, worked in the business, but his achievements and interests might have taken him in a different direction. The only son to be college educated, he graduated from Dartmouth College, where he had studied Greek philosophy. His nephew recalled hours together spent discussing philosophy and theology. His daughter, Joan Latchis Amory, remembered that her father was a great reader of classical Greek and liked the playwright Aristophanes. His Kastanitsa Greek (family-learned, for he was born in America) was considered by his

Dartmouth professors to be close to the ancient pronunciation; in reading the New Testament in Greek he would explain how differences in translation would affect the liturgy. “He would have made a wonderful professor, or a doctor,” she went on to say, “but he had been brought up to be part of the family business” (p. 140). This is a hint of another aspect of immigrant experience: the difficulties that can arise when the opportunities of America threaten to draw one away from family.

And of course there are many other characters and events to lead the reader on. Necessary to mention, however, is the splendid sixth chapter, “Evoking Greece in 1937-1938: The Art in the Main Theater.” There were earlier Latchis theaters in Brattleboro, but the one built in these years is the one that survives today, and although its exterior is Art Deco in design, one of just three such public buildings remaining in Vermont, its interior is given over to classical Greek imagery in honor of the family origins. The chapter features a number of striking color photographs by Jeff Woodward of the restored iconography of the theater. Here we see, among others, *Chiron with Achilles on His Back*, *Cupid Presenting Psyche to Zeus and Hera*, *Bacchus and Revelers*, and *Athena, Goddess of Wisdom, Courage, Inspiration and the Arts*.

Two prominent features of the book are the memories of the family members Hayward so helpfully interviewed and the heavy emphasis on context. Much of the personal detail of the story comes from the family itself. Hayward tells us what was going on in Brattleboro, the state, and the country at the various stages of the Latchis story. While occasionally the information may seem familiar and unnecessary, in general it repeatedly reminds us that the Latchis experience, like nearly all sustained human effort, has been dependent on circumstances beyond one’s control. This is evident in Hayward’s account of the economic and social conditions that favored the rise of the Latchis enterprise and the forces that destroyed it. The theater business was hit hard, for example, by the growth of television, the rise of multiplex theaters, the difficulties of the movie distribution system, indebtedness, and the burden of aging, hard-to-maintain buildings.

This book is a new venture for Hayward, a distinguished garden designer and author, and a personal one as well, for he is the board president of Latchis Arts and has a keen appreciation, warmly expressed, of the efforts of the many people who transformed the building and the business. Challenges didn’t disappear when the painful, eighteen-year struggle of Demetrios’s great-grandson Spero and wife, Elizabeth, to keep things going ended with the 2003 sale to the Brattleboro Arts Ini-

tiative. A spectacular example was the 2011 floodwater damage of Tropical Storm Irene, costing \$600,000 to repair with an additional loss of \$200,000 of business income. Hayward movingly describes the efforts of Executive Director Gail Nunziata and others to restore the building and the business.

Hayward writes in a clear, engaging manner; one senses the person behind the words. His presence is felt most obviously in the Introduction, in which he describes trips to Greece with his wife, Mary, and in the various acknowledgments of the Latchis staff and volunteers. The immigrant story and the regional theater history should find readers everywhere. The local details will be of most interest to readers in this area of Vermont and New Hampshire. Perhaps only a reviewer would miss an index.

CHARLES FISH

Charles Fish is the author of In the Land of the Wild Onion: Travels Along Vermont's Winooski River (2006) and other works about Vermont.

Horse-Drawn Yogurt: Stories from Total Loss Farm

By Peter Gould (Brattleboro: Green Writers Press, 2017, pp. 217, paper \$19.95).

I had no idea what to expect when I began reading *Horse-Drawn Yogurt*. My expectation of libertine tales of life on a hippie commune in Vermont in the 1960s and '70s soon gave way to the realization that I was in the hands of a master storyteller—one who knows the point of story is not always the story itself but the deeper truths the narrative conveys about who we are and why we persist amidst life's chaos and confusion; how we hopefully migrate from naïve and youthful immortals through the realities life imposes to the hard-won wisdom and humility of age.

Gould's tales, while visceral and entertaining, are never content to be just stories. Sometimes they express a personal epiphany, ask the unanswerable question, or portray a time in which the postwar, middle-American dream began to unravel, as young people began asking their parents and teachers questions they could neither answer nor understand. The prospect of consumer comforts, golf club membership, a new car every other year, and a lifelong job is losing its appeal to this generation, as they're being drafted into a war that lacks any moral

purpose. They see the assassinations of civil rights leaders of all colors on snowy black-and-white TV sets, as well as other young people sharing their doubts about the country's direction being fired on by National Guardsmen. Gould captures this fraught time in America with the clarity of a starlit summer night in Packer Corners.

Woven through the tales is Vermont's live-and-let-live reception of new arrivals of all sorts, the bemused welcome Vermonters generally exhibited towards the counter-culture communards buying up lost hill farms that dotted the rural landscape. Gould weaves indigenous Vermonters into his tales with respect and gratitude for their oversight, help during natural catastrophes, and their willingness to offer advice and share a warm fire or a place at the table.

The quotidian chores of splitting and stacking wood, weeding a garden, tapping maple trees and boiling sap, pressing cider, gathering eggs, and baking pies with fruit raised on the commune all become metaphors for larger truths that gyre over the narrative like red-tailed hawks. Gould suspends us between the seasonal chores of communal life, the complexities of living together in anarchic penury, rampant hormones, and the larger truths to be distilled from those experiences.

He largely meets the challenge of chaptering his short stories of a different time into a virtual novella, capturing the details of communal life and work with an impressionist's eye and with an ear for the timbre of life in the '60s and '70s in Vermont.

Horse-Drawn Yogurt is a vital and personal telling of a period in Vermont and the country at large that rises to the literary level of Ken Kesey's *Sometimes a Great Notion* or Richard Brautigan's *Trout Fishing in America*. Few descriptions of the '60s and '70s transcend the monochrome lenses of political, sociological, or ecological narrative and capture the Cinerama-like zeitgeist of this time in America.

Writing of the Chilean singer, poet, activist, and martyr, Victor Jara, Gould (himself a stutterer) asks:

As a stutterer, to be impelled to speak perfectly by the terrible fluency of truth: the truth of why you were born joined to the truth of what you know, what you have to tell. When you see that or hear that in people, you recognize it and it nearly stops your heart; you wonder: will that ever happen to you? How would it feel? (p.153).

Gould answers his own question in *Horse-Drawn Yogurt*.

BILL SCHUBART

Bill Schubart is an author of seven works of fiction and currently chairs the board of trustees of Vermont College of Fine Arts. He lives, works, and writes in Hinesburg, Vermont.

We Are as Gods: Back to the Land in the 1970s on the Quest for a New America

By Kate Daloz (New York: Public Affairs, 2016, pp xii, 355, \$26.99).

Kate Daloz has written a highly readable account of the back-to-the-land movement that weaves larger temporal and national contexts with a narrative of the “Myrtle Hill” commune in Vermont’s Northeast Kingdom and nearby related, but non-communal, efforts. One of those non-communal efforts was by the couple who became her parents, giving a personal flavor to the narrative. To create that weave Daloz draws from the threads of published memoirs, academic studies, and sustained conversations with her parents, the Myrtle Hill residents, and their neighbors.

Each generation faces its own challenges. For the generation we broadly label the Seventies, those challenges—the Vietnam War and its associated protests, assassinations, widespread social upheavals, and a seemingly unresponsive, if not actually repressive, government—suggested that society was broken. For many who joined the “counterculture,” it appeared better to reinvent society rather than attempt to reform it. Reinvention meant removing to rural settings, striving for economic self-sufficiency, and experimenting with different social models from cooperative living to communal living that rejected individual ownership of land, to more open personal relationships.

Young, mostly white middle-class members of this disaffected generation exited urban areas to try what they perceived as a purer, simpler rural/agricultural life. The communal movement may have received the most attention, but it was relatively short-lived in comparison to the broader back-to-the-land movement. The 1970s became the only decade in U.S. history in which more people moved to rural areas than to cities.

While the West Coast and the Southwest saw an early influx of communes, Vermont, with its relatively cheap land, agricultural traditions, and proximity to numerous population centers, became a magnet for communards and back-to-the-landers alike. Helen and Scott Nearing’s widely read *Living the Good Life* (1954, reissued in 1970) told an appealing story of one couple’s Vermont back-to-the-land experience. That the Nearing’s had already decamped to Maine by the time the next generation arrived did not diminish Vermont’s appeal. In 1970 there were an estimated fifty communes in Vermont; by 1972 that esti-

mate had climbed to around 200. Those estimates did not include the non-communards within the back-to-the-land movement.

Daloz moves with ease from larger contexts to the personal accounts of her parents, members of the Myrtle Hill commune, and neighboring efforts such as Entropy Acres. Many of the back-to-the-landers had no previous experiences in rural life and had to learn everything from house construction to farming and gardening through trial and error. Their neighbors, after initially looking askance at the “hippies,” offered hands-on advice while the emergence of published resources, notably *The Whole Earth Catalog*, provided pragmatic advice and connections to other resources.

A social movement as much as an agricultural experiment, the back-to-the-landers had to develop their skills within consensus-based decision making and the varying work ethics and skills of each participant. Open relations; disparity in resources among the communards; the eschewing of personal property; the role of gender in assigning tasks; use of horse-powered farm equipment versus internal combustion engines; the hard work mandated by the “simple life,” and a host of other issues gradually took a toll on back-to-the-lander and communard alike.

Further stresses were added by the development of potent, locally grown marijuana as a potential revenue resource that far exceeded money raised from organic vegetables and scented candles. Not all back-to-the-landers grew pot; but for the communards, pot raised new problems. If one member of a commune was arrested for growing it, all the collectively owned land could be confiscated.

Marijuana also added tensions with town residents. Daloz notes that while Vermont’s culture treasured neighborliness to survive bad weather and hard living, there was a distinction between neighborliness and friendship. Perceived threats to the local community, including pot cultivation, exposed those fault lines

As an aside, it is interesting that Daloz does not mention “Mac’s Party,” a 1973 concert in the Northeast Kingdom that devolved into public drug use, shootings, and other disruptions to the community. Mac’s Party not only created further tension with the traditional communities but also led the Vermont legislature to consider bills limiting the right of assembly that could pass constitutional muster and not inadvertently ban traditional gatherings like the state fair.

The personal memories gathered by Daloz show how all these potentially divisive issues played out over time. Those memories lend power to her narrative, and illustrate human nature at its best—and worst. One interviewee notes that in stripping away layers of social norms and

expectations they inadvertently stripped away traditional social protections—particularly when consensus was no longer achievable.

The communal movement was significantly pruned back by these tensions but the influence of the back-to-the-landers remains. Obvious examples are the organic and localvore movements. Those back-to-the-landers who persisted became members of local select and school boards, served in state government, became educators, and, in one case, a local newspaper editor/publisher. Their social ideals, tempered by experience, translated to active engagement in their communities.

For readers (and reviewers) of a certain age, *We Are as Gods* provides insight, memories, and perhaps a touch of nostalgia. Studies and recollections of the back-to-the-land movement are increasing in number and popularity. The Vermont Historical Society’s exhibit and programs on “Freaks, Radicals, and Hippies: Counterculture in 1970s Vermont” was an outstanding example. One reason is that those twenty-year-olds who came here to reinvent society are now in or approaching their seventies. Consequently, we seek to remember and give meaning to our lives, particularly within the context of another time of national disquietude. Kate Daloz has provided a thoughtful and powerful vehicle for such recollection and quests for understanding.

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Senator Leahy: A Life in Scenes

By Philip Baruth (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 2017, pp. xxxii, 317, \$35.00; ebook, \$29.99).

In the 1994 movie *Forrest Gump* (“Mama always said life was like a box of chocolates. You never know what you’re gonna get.”), the main character witnesses and at times influences some of the defining events of the twentieth century. There’s Gump as an All-American football player, meeting President John F. Kennedy, serving in Vietnam, causing the resignation of President Richard Nixon, and investing in Apple Computer before anyone realized its potential. The story is absolutely implausible. No person could ever be present as so much history unfolds.

Patrick J. Leahy has. He has been center stage for many of the nation’s milestones in the last forty-two years. The list is equally impres-

sive and implausible. There's Leahy as a freshman senator in the 1970s on the Armed Services Committee fighting to end the Vietnam War; there's Leahy working with Princess Diana on a landmine ban; there he is leading the fight for civil liberties against the Bush Administration following 9/11; and there he is surrounded by armed guards after he was targeted by anthrax. When President Obama announced the re-opening of relations with Cuba, who was standing in Havana? Patrick J. Leahy.

Philip Baruth's biography of Leahy documents the senator's wide-ranging and truly incredible impact. Baruth both recounts Leahy's long history and provides color, depth, and perspective.

Longevity plays a big part in the Leahy story: He has served in the Senate since 1975. To put that in perspective, more than half of Vermont's 626,000 residents have been born since then. They do not know of a Senate without Patrick Leahy. In the U.S. Senate longevity translates into seniority, which translates into power. Leahy is now the most senior member of the Senate.

Luck plays a role: Leahy ended up on meaningful and powerful committees that have dealt with some of the most pressing issues of the past forty-two years, such as Supreme Court appointments, the fights over civil liberties, and the battles over budgets.

But what stands out in Baruth's narrative is that many of Leahy's accomplishments have been driven by the senator himself. His drive and passion have never faltered. He has stepped up to fight battles others would not. He has attracted one of the most impressive staffs ever assembled in the Senate, no mean feat to maintain over four decades. He has a keen eye for meaningful issues—such as landmines and Cuba—and the willingness to dedicate years if not decades to making progress on those issues.

It is something of a historic irony that at times Leahy has been overshadowed by the big news splashes of Senator Jim Jeffords's 2001 declaration of independence, Senator Bernie Sanders's 2016 presidential bid, and even Howard Dean's 2004 run for president.

Baruth captures that irony and suggests that Leahy's long play is truly more significant. "While no single act of Leahy's has yet produced a media shock wave to rival Jeffords's 'short walk across the aisle' or Dean's foundational fund-raising miracle, it was Leahy who provided the most consistent, productive, long-term counterbalance to Bush Administration overreach" (p. xxx). That comment comes in a discussion of the Bush Administration, but it may well serve as a theme for Leahy's entire Senate career.

Baruth is a novelist who is at home with colorful fiction narratives with sweeping story arcs. He makes no apologies for bringing that style to this work of history. “If any reader comes to this biography in search of a comprehensive history of his important committee work or votes cast, he or she will be bitterly disappointed,” he writes. “The life of Patrick Leahy is replete with powerful, dramatic, sensational moments—and I have allowed myself the luxury throughout of simply jump-cutting from one to the next” (p. xxxi-xxxii).

That approach makes for interesting reading but lends itself to hero worship. Leahy is described throughout in terms that taken together are over the top: He is the tough-talking prosecutor who at times “growls” (p. 193), “as always, insisted upon order” (p. 203), “was understandably beside himself” (p. 197), and whose “instincts told him it was time to attack” (p. 193). This leads to a feeling that the book could almost be a Leahy autobiography. Baruth loves to get into Leahy’s head to build the drama, leading to sentences like this: “Leahy was at first unbelieving, and then livid” (p. 152). Later, in a Senate hearing: “Never had he looked so stern” (p 201).

What knits together the story for Baruth is Leahy’s fascination with Batman, culminating with the senator’s cameo appearances in the Batman movies. The arc of the Leahy story, Baruth writes, runs from his days as Chittenden County state’s attorney to chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee to his defiance of the villain The Joker in the Batman film, *The Dark Knight*. “It was a truly amazing moment, when set against the long arc of Leahy’s political career: The very same Top Cop image that Leahy had developed as a young Chittenden County state’s attorney . . . now being explicitly deployed by a major Hollywood director to a worldwide audience” (p. 225).

As much as Baruth argues this work is not a comprehensive history of Patrick J. Leahy, it is. Certainly, there is much missing from the forty-two years of Leahy’s tenure, but *Senator Leahy: A Life in Scenes* provides enough detail and enough color to give a reader a strong sense of the pivotal role Leahy has played for Vermont, the U.S. Senate, and the nation.

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