



Vermont as a Way of Life

Neither wholly the product of vacationers' sentimentality, nor simply of homegrown boosterism, a circle of writers in the 1930s reshaped the image of Vermont based on the conviction that the state's traditional rural society offered a tangible alternative to what seemed likely at the time to be the permanent breakdown of centralized industrial capitalism.

BY DONA BROWN

Many Vermonters today can recall the times back in the 1960s and 1970s when the state seemed to attract an endless stream of refugees from urban congestion or suburban conventionality. But for much of its history, Vermont has been imagined as a place to escape *from* rather than as a place to escape *to*. As far back as the Civil War, the agricultural press was warning of the consequences of long-term rural depopulation in northern New England. In the late nineteenth century, to be sure, the tourist industry prospered (and nostalgic Currier and Ives images proliferated), but for the most part Vermont appeared in the popular press as a landscape of decline. By the end of that century, northern New England's abandoned farms, population loss, and social deterioration had all become well-worn journalistic clichés.

In the early years of the twentieth century, northern New England's image did not improve. Modern writers intensified the sense of loss associated with rural New England, chipping away at the region's once-admired cultural legacy. From Edith Wharton's bleak *Ethan Frome*
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Vermont History Vol. 85, No. 1 (Winter/Spring 2017): 43–64.

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(1911) to Eugene O'Neill's steamy *Desire Under the Elms* (1924), New England tales were set in harsh and bitter landscapes, where characters were crushed beneath a legacy that repressed all natural instincts. Even popular children's books like *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm* (1903) and *Pollyanna* (1913) portrayed northern New Englanders as rigid, tight-lipped, and joyless.

The Vermonter who moved into the White House in 1923 seemed to step right out of the pages of those grim fictional portrayals. Calvin Coolidge's "antique Vermont character," as the *New York Times* branded it, did little to brighten the image of the state. In the 1920s, the popular press portrayed Vermont as the ragged rural edge of a region in economic and cultural decline: politically conservative, socially backward, economically stagnant. Indeed, many of the state's own leading citizens seemed to share that gloomy perspective. Viewed in contrast to the vibrant cities, bright lights, and fast cars of the 1920s, Vermont's upcountry farms and villages must have seemed like remnants of a darker, slower time. Public-spirited citizens worried over the state's antiquated educational and charitable systems, its persistent poverty and aging population. Many progressive and educated Vermonters even inclined toward the view that the state's problems were rooted in a genetic deterioration of its rural Yankee "stock."¹

It took the shock of the Great Depression to persuade Americans (and Vermonters among them) to look at things differently. In a March 1932 *Harper's Magazine* column titled "New England: There She Stands," historian Bernard DeVoto issued the first direct challenge to the old way of thinking. DeVoto began with mock solemnity: As everyone knew, New England was a "rubbish heap of burnt-out energies, suppressed or frustrated instincts, bankrupt culture, social decay, and individual despair." So well known was this characterization that DeVoto feared he would be "expelled" from the "guild" of right-thinking intellectuals for challenging it. Nevertheless, he admitted, he had recently encountered something altogether different in the region. New England seemed to be holding on to something that the rest of the nation had lost. At a time when "panic possessed America," he announced, "New England wasn't quite so scared. The depression wasn't quite so bad in New England, despair wasn't quite so black." All those years of decline had evidently made New Englanders strong. Getting by in hard times had become as much a part of the region as its rocky soil: "By the granite they have lived on for three centuries, tightening their belts and hanging on."

DeVoto ascribed this "granite" fortitude to the entire region of New England, but his evidence came mostly from a farm next door to his summer home in Morgan, far up in the sparsely populated northeast-

ern corner of Vermont. Visiting a neighbor there, DeVoto “came away with a dazed realization” that this upcountry rural household was “wholly secure.” The family’s income had been small before the crash; it was almost nonexistent now. Yet they lived well on what they could grow and make for themselves, canning vegetables, hunting, tapping maple trees, and doing odd jobs for summer people. To DeVoto, the farmer next door no longer seemed to be a relic of a backward social order. In those dark days, he appeared more like a beacon of hope—“a free man, self-reliant, sure of his world, unfrightened by the future.”²

This dramatic pronouncement generated skepticism among some readers. DeVoto was a westerner by birth; he had been living in New England for only a few years when he wrote this essay, and he knew Vermont only as a summer vacationer. Harvard historian Crane Brinton (a summer vacationer of longer standing than DeVoto), who wrote most of the reviews of Vermont literature for the *New England Quarterly* during the 1930s and 1940s, accused DeVoto of romanticizing his country neighbors. Brinton still imagined rural Vermont as a landscape of social decline. Even if DeVoto’s one self-reliant farmer were “wholly real,” Brinton thought, there would certainly have been cousins living nearby, breeding illegitimate children, and living in “poor-white squalor.”³

But DeVoto was not the only exponent of the new way of thinking about rural Vermont. Just three months after his column appeared in *Harper’s*, another writer—this one arguably better informed—published an article with a remarkably similar argument. Walter Hard was a shopkeeper in the town of Manchester, Vermont. He was also a poet, who was earning a growing regional reputation for his faithful representation of the speech and thought patterns of his rural neighbors. Hard’s wife later recalled that his article had been inspired by a conversation with a Manchester summer resident, the publisher John Farrar, who wondered aloud why he was not encountering in Vermont the “atmosphere of desperation and despair” he saw everywhere else that year.⁴ Hard’s response to that question became the article “Vermont—A Way of Life.”

Hard’s article appeared in the *Survey Graphic*, a magazine designed to make available to a broad audience of non-specialists the results of new sociological research.⁵ With that in mind, Hard made his case in sociological terms: The social structure of rural Vermont produced people who were uniquely qualified to cope with the Depression. Certainly, they were poor, but from earliest childhood they were taught the old-fashioned values of thrift and frugality, along with the practical skills of making do with little. What is more, Hard argued, the entire community placed the highest value on personal and household self-suffi-

ciency; rural Vermonters encountered virtually no social pressure to live beyond their means. A Vermont family might not enjoy getting along without a car, Hard explained, but their self-respect would not suffer without one. On the contrary, they would be ashamed to have their neighbors know that they were “rid[ing] around in something they could not afford.” (DeVoto had made a nearly identical point: “Here, if you have a Buick income, you do not buy a Cadillac to keep your self-respect.”⁶) As Hard concluded, “That is habit. It is also tradition. It is Vermont.”⁷

Of course, the stereotype of Yankee frugality was nothing new, but in Hard’s article it seemed to be acquiring a different significance. The editor of the *Survey Graphic* explained the new context in a sidebar: “In good times, the people of Vermont made a living—and were rather looked down upon as unambitious.” But now that the nation had fallen on hard times, Vermonters need do no more than “make that same living—and millions envy them.”⁸ As if to sharpen the point, in this same issue the magazine announced that it was hoping to avoid bankruptcy by shrinking down to a half-size format and getting rid of all but the most essential staff. In other words, from the mail clerk up to the managing editor, everyone who worked on the magazine had reason to feel apprehensive in that summer of 1932. It is not a stretch to imagine that many of the magazine’s readers were feeling similarly insecure themselves as they pondered Hard’s assurance that security, serenity, and peace were the products of the “Vermont . . . way of life.”⁹ Viewed through the lens of the Great Depression, that promise might begin to look very appealing indeed.¹⁰

In her essay for the 1937 WPA guide to Vermont, author Dorothy Canfield Fisher commented on the change in perspective. When she and her husband had moved to Vermont thirty years earlier, she recalled, the state had played so small a part in the national consciousness that sales clerks in New York City had not even recognized “Vermont” as the name of a state—“thinking ‘Vermont,’ we used wrathfully to imagine, was some fancy name for a new ‘development’ in the suburbs.” Now everything had changed: “When you tell New York saleswomen that you live in Vermont they say, ‘Oh, how nice! I envy you!’” Fisher jokingly attributed some of the new recognition to the popularity of skiing (“Vermont sounding like a place where you could wear ski pants”), but she believed that the deeper cause was the profound psychological and moral impact of the Depression, which had turned “a good many Americans . . . disillusioned, away from the future.” This was more than a matter of personal anxiety. For many people the sheer scope of the economic catastrophe brought into question the entire course of industrial progress, from its giant factories to its vast cities,

from its class conflict to its consumerism, from its radios to its skyscrapers. If all that growth and speed had precipitated the inevitable crash, perhaps those who had been reluctant to join the rush to modernity had been right all along. In that case, one might well turn away from the future, and toward Vermont, “still jogging with slow steadiness on its horse-and-buggy back-road way.”¹¹

LITERARY OUTLANDERS AND HOMEGROWN TALENT

Crane Brinton, writing in *New England Quarterly*, agreed with Fisher that the new interest in Vermont was part of a more general “revulsion from the worship of bigger and better.”¹² But Brinton also proposed a more immediate source for that interest, suggesting that it was actually being stirred up by large numbers of “literary outlanders”—writers like “Messrs. Sinclair Lewis, Bernard DeVoto, Leonard [sic] Merrick, Frederick F. Van de Water, and others”—who were relocating to the state and flooding the market with books and articles about it.¹³ By 1942, Brinton would be declaring in *New England Quarterly* that Vermonters were “more written about . . . than any group of equal size in the country.”¹⁴

Brinton was certainly right that there was an outpouring of literature about Vermont in the 1930s—everything from travel guides and histories to memoirs and poetry, along with the genre one author memorably referred to as “I bought a barn books.”¹⁵ And it is true that summer visitors and recently arrived permanent settlers were responsible for much of this literature. Brinton’s literary list began with Sinclair Lewis, a summer resident of Barnard (although it was actually Lewis’s wife, the distinguished journalist Dorothy Thompson, who wrote most frequently and cogently about Vermont “as a way of life”). Brinton’s list also included Frederic Van de Water, an émigré from Manhattan who recounted the tale of his move to Vermont in *Home in the Country* (1937) and several sequels. Elliott Merrick (not “Leonard”) and his wife moved to Vermont as back-to-the-landers; he chronicled that experience in *From This Hill Look Down* (1934) and later in *Green Mountain Farm* (1948). And there were others: Charles Morrow Wilson (an Arkansas native whose first book, *Acres of Sky*, was based on Ozark traditions) wrote about his farm in Vermont in *Country Living Plus or Minus* (1938). Samuel Ogden and his family relocated to Vermont from New Jersey in 1929, when they purchased nearly the entire village of Landgrove; he would write about that experience later, in *This Country Life* (1946).

But while newcomers were indeed swelling the ranks of Vermont authors, a handful of native-born Vermonters were also playing a critical role in generating the new Vermont-related literature. One example

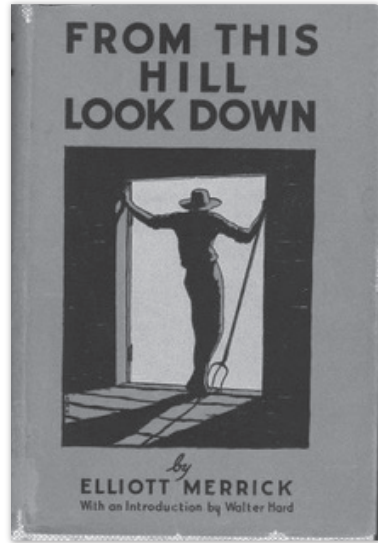
was Vrest Orton, who had left his native state to seek his fortune, but returned during the Depression years just in time to get involved with this new literary project. Orton edited a pictorial essay called *And So Goes Vermont* (1937), but that was only a small part of his contribution. In 1930, Orton helped to found the Stephen Daye Press, the publishing company most responsible for the “boom” in books about Vermont. (As an indication of the boldness of this initiative, one writer in *Publisher's Weekly* wondered what was going on up in Vermont that would justify the audacity of starting a new publishing company “in the middle of a world-wide depression.”¹⁶) The Stephen Daye partnership soon broke up.¹⁷ But Orton transferred his considerable energies to Weston, Vermont, where he founded another press, opened a museum, restored a gristmill, organized a guild for handcrafts, and most famously, started a mail-order business that would become known as The Vermont Country Store.

Nor can these native-born contributors be considered rustic or provincial “junior partners” of the out-of-state writers. Walter Hard lived and died in Manchester, Vermont, but only because he had relinquished his dreams of a career in journalism and dropped out of Williams College to take over his father’s drugstore. (When Hard was finally able to close the drugstore and attend to his writing and to the Manchester bookshop his daughter had started a few years earlier, his friends threw him an “emancipation party.”¹⁸) Even those who seemed most deeply rooted in traditional rural life were quite well connected to the world outside their villages. Muriel Follett was a sixth-generation Vermonter whose *New England Year* (published by the Stephen Daye Press in 1939) chronicled daily life on her family’s Townshend dairy farm. But the Folletts were not living on an isolated hill farm: Next door was Muriel’s uncle Abel Grout, an eminent botanist who conducted a seminar for college professors at his informal summer school. Francis Colburn, her husband’s cousin, was an up-and-coming young painter who stopped by on his way to Manchester when his paintings were exhibited at the Southern Vermont Arts Center. These native Vermonters, in other words, were precisely the sorts of progressive, educated citizens who might only a few years earlier have viewed their upland rural neighbors as the source of all kinds of intractable social or even genetic problems.¹⁹ Now, increasingly, they shared DeVoto’s view that those Yankee farmers embodied the best of their state’s tradition.

The circle of writers engaged in this wholesale reimagining of Vermont was not formally organized, but they knew each other’s work and they maintained a network of professional and social connections. Dorothy Canfield Fisher was at the center of a dense network of correspondents that included Elliott Merrick, Vrest Orton, and Samuel

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From This Hill Look Down, 1934. Cover image by Alan Congdon. Elliott Merrick's From This Hill Look Down tells the story of a man who seeks refuge from the Great Depression by moving to a farm in Vermont. Allen Congdon's cover design shows the character surveying his domain from the barn door, perhaps already reveling in his new independence and self-reliance. The introduction by local poet Walter Hard strengthens the association of those traits with Vermont itself. Courtesy of the author.



Ogden, among many others. Walter Hard's wife Margaret worked as a secretary for Fisher during the times when the two women relocated to Montpelier with their husbands, both of whom served in the state legislature. Elliott Merrick took the title for his first book, *From This Hill Look Down*, from the first poem in Walter Hard's 1933 collection, *A Mountain Township*. Hard, in turn, wrote a gracious introduction to Merrick's book, granting him the honorary status of a "real Vermonter." Native or newcomer, the members of this group projected an almost seamless vision of Vermont. Neither wholly the product of vacationers' sentimentality, nor simply of homegrown boosterism, this shared viewpoint was based on the conviction that Vermont's traditional rural society offered a tangible alternative to what seemed likely at the time to be the permanent breakdown of centralized industrial capitalism. As these writers saw it, Vermonters had successfully resisted the temptations of consumer capitalism during the good years, and they were rewarded by losing little when it all came crashing down. Because they had been slow to change with the times, their farms remained diversified and their cities small, and thus, less vulnerable to systemic breakdowns. Vermonters had refused to worship growth, prosperity, and mobility as others had done during the 1920s, and they had been proven right. It seemed like simple common sense: Vermont had what Americans now clearly needed.

No advocate of this position praised Vermont's traditional rural way

of life more lavishly than Governor and soon-to-be Senator George Aiken. "It is true," Aiken wrote in *Speaking from Vermont* (1938), that "the folks in the hills don't have all the modern conveniences that those along the main highways do." Slipping inconspicuously into the first-person plural (although Aiken himself was of course no subsistence farmer), he acknowledged that "we have less money to spend during the year than the big farmer or the business man." Yet "we do have those things that money can never buy for anybody. We have a pretty large degree of happiness in our hillside make-up."²⁰

Perhaps Aiken's campaign rhetoric painted an implausibly sunny portrait of hill-farm life in the 1930s, but most of the writers engaged in this project did not deny that life was hard on those farms. (The question of the *real* state of affairs in Depression-era rural Vermont is one that deserves wider historical analysis elsewhere.²¹) Dorothy Canfield Fisher acknowledged repeatedly that Vermont's self-reliant way of life was particularly hard "on the sick, the old, and on widows and orphans."²² Other writers warned that newcomers fleeing Depression-era cities would encounter many unfamiliar hardships and a comparatively Spartan existence in rural Vermont. Samuel Ogden stated flatly that immigrants to rural Vermont must be "willing to accept a lower standard of living," and specifically, "willing to take on more and harder physical work" than they were accustomed to in the city.²³ But in general these authors were disposed to believe that rural life, even at its backbreaking and primitive worst, might still offer a good alternative to unemployment, homelessness, and outright hunger. Elliott Merrick, for example, urged his readers to give up their urban comforts, to go without electricity and plumbing if necessary, and to "make their homes out of logs or boards or sod or canvas." It would not be an easy road, but it was better than staying in the cities, "starving to death on charity rolls."²⁴

Although this circle of Vermont writers embraced a range of political positions (Walter Hard Jr., recalled, for example, that his father had "passed as a Republican" and his mother as a Democrat²⁵), they shared a core belief in a set of values often viewed by others as romantic or outdated.²⁶ A number of these writers embraced a now mostly forgotten "third way" political perspective they termed "decentralism." Decentralists rejected both large-scale industrialism and big government, championing the face-to-face villages, independent workshops, and self-sufficient farms they believed offered the only enduring basis for true democracy. Dorothy Thompson, Elliott Merrick, and Vrest Orton, for example, all wrote for the decentralist journal *Free America*, and that journal praised George Aiken as "the strongest advocate of decentralism in public life today."²⁷

Advocates of decentralism could point to the flow of population back to the farm in these years as an endorsement of their position, as city dwellers returned to the “abandoned” hill farms and “declining” villages that had been the subjects of so much hand-wringing in the past. As Dorothy Thompson described the change, New England farmers might once have envied the broad acres and high-tech machinery of prairie farms, but now those high-flying western farmers were facing widespread foreclosure and bankruptcy. The sons of Vermont farmers who had left home for “ventures in one-crop farming on the richer soils of the Middle West” were returning “to find a home with Papa, who never has had a bonanza year in his whole life.”²⁸

Decentralist rhetoric sometimes tapped into deep-rooted American nostalgic fantasies about the regenerating power of rural toil or the manly independence of the farmer, but it rested on a somewhat different set of attitudes and beliefs. In *Green Mountain Farm*, for example, Elliott Merrick told a tale that might at first glance seem to be just another misty-eyed tribute to old-fashioned rural hospitality. A neighbor invited his family to share Christmas dinner, apologizing as she did so for her own family’s poverty: “‘We ain’t got much, but you’re welcome to what we have.’” But this story was not really nostalgic. Merrick chronicled the family’s grinding poverty in painstaking detail: They worked a small farm on shares, and Merrick calculated that their total cash income was not much over three hundred dollars a year for the five of them.²⁹ Nevertheless, he reported, their Christmas table was lavishly provisioned with

roast turkey and roast pork, done to a turn, all you could hold; also five kinds of vegetables from their own supplies, three kinds of pie, two kinds of cake, butternuts, maple sugar, hickory nuts, butter and cream in profuse quantities, and coffee.

Merrick concluded, “they were the richest poor folks we had ever seen.”³⁰

This passage might have been read a generation earlier as a simple celebration of rural bounty. But a close reading reveals a different kind of agenda. This family ate well (at least at that one Christmas meal) precisely and only because they were able to supply their own table without entering the cash economy. In addition to the cream and butter from the cows, they raised poultry and a pig or two (“roast turkey and roast pork”). They cultivated a garden, and canned or cellared the produce (“vegetables from their own supplies”); perhaps they tended a few fruit and nut trees, but apples, butternuts, and hazelnuts could also be gleaned from roadsides and field edges. The family would have needed to pay cash only for the flour used in the pies and cakes (perhaps for

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Daughter of FSA Client with butternuts, Bradford, Vermont, 1939. Photograph by Russell Lee, Farm Security Administration. A pleased-looking little girl poses with a cache of butternuts. Collecting and processing those nuts would have required a great deal of hard work, but no cash outlay—just the sort of frugality and self-sufficiency many Depression-era commentators admired in Vermont farm families. Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, FSA/OWI Collection, LC-USF34-034330-D.

extra cane sugar to supplement the maple sugar they had made or traded for), and for the coffee that put the finishing touches on the feast. Merrick’s detailed description is not hazy nostalgia, but a sharply focused message about this family’s practical strategy for feeding itself, a strategy Merrick maintained could offer out-of-work city dwellers a chance to recover both food security and self-respect.

Indeed, as Merrick related in both *From This Hill Look Down* and *Green Mountain Farm*, his family was engaged in precisely this sort of project, attempting to secure their own food supply from a self-sufficient subsistence farm. But this idea reverberated with symbolic power even for authors who had no intention of producing all those good foods personally. As Walter Hard explained ruefully in the first issue of *Vermont Life* in 1946: “I’ll have to confess that I never have had a successful garden. I never kept a cow and could not milk one if I did. I have raised chickens but there the use of the word ‘successful’

is a matter of opinion.” Nevertheless, as Hard added, he had a feeling that “given some land, some chickens, a pig and a cow, I could feed my family.” The feeling was based on seeing it done by other people, who were “dependent on the soil and find it does not fail them. To them, and vicariously to me, it means *Security*.”³¹

At the heart of this Depression-era vision of Vermont was the promise that a refugee fleeing the breakdown of urban industrialism could acquire not just the abundant food, but also the underlying reality that (in theory at least) insulated rural Vermonters from the Depression—not just the pork and apples, but “Security” with a capital S. Even the character traits associated with the Vermont “way of life,” it seems, were not reserved for natives alone. Dorothy Thompson described how her neighbor up the road acquired those traits, and it started with simply moving to Vermont: “When the depression came and he lost his job . . . he came back to the land, with his wife.” In the beginning, they had “what looked like less than nothing,” but within a few years they had built a self-sufficient farm. Thompson, like Merrick, listed the components of their newfound security: “a team of good horses, a herd of eight or ten cows, fine stands of corn . . . an orchard of young apple trees, enough chickens to supply eggs and poultry for his table, and sometimes for mine, and a cellar stocked with food.” Most important, Thompson’s neighbor had also acquired a new sense of self-respect: “In terms of cash income he certainly belongs to the ‘underprivileged,’ but I would advise you not to suggest that idea to him. He would not like it.”³²

A GOOD TIME IN THE COUNTRY

Perhaps during the 1930s, a hopeful reader (or writer) might have been forgiven for believing that anyone could trade fear for security, want for plenty, helplessness for self-reliance—all by moving to Vermont. Whether the promise was completely accurate, wholly false, or somewhere in between, it was this vision of rural self-sufficiency that attracted Vermont’s “back to the landers.” Merrick, who settled on a Vermont farm in 1933, was one of these, as were the better-known back-to-the-landers Helen and Scott Nearing, who moved to Vermont in 1932.³³ But in an odd turn of events, the message of the new interpreters of Vermont seems also to have encouraged a different kind of migration. As early as 1936, Crane Brinton was already warning that an “influx of refugees from a harsh and unsettled world” was having the ironic effect of destroying Vermont’s unique charm: “Vermont is no doubt—and this is its attraction for many people—. . . a kind of backwater.” Recently, however, “it has been getting to be a self-conscious backwater.” That was a “highly unstable situation,” as he pointed out:

“A self-conscious backwater is well on the way towards ceasing to be a backwater.”³⁴

It was not the comparatively small handful of hardcore back-to-the-landers that worried Brinton. It was all those writers and artists and musicians and other professionals who were beginning to show up in small towns and villages in some parts of the state. Charles Morrow Wilson reported in his 1938 account *Country Living, Plus and Minus* that his immediate neighborhood in Westminster West harbored seven “recent returners to the land.” Among these Wilson numbered a harpist, a sculptor, and a retiree from Wall Street.³⁵ Perhaps attempting to capture the experiences of such rural neighbors as these, Wilson presented his own food inventory:

Apples, mellow and red, fried in butter with just a sprinkling of brown sugar. Bacon fresh sliced from a side of home-cured pork. Cornbread thin and crisp. A corner of yellow butter, a spoonful of comb honey, a cup of alien tea seasoned with honest, home-skimmed cream. I am having a good time in the country.³⁶

In contrast to Elliott Merrick’s list, this passage does not seem to point so clearly toward food self-sufficiency as a motive for moving to Vermont. (Where, for example, is the iconic maple syrup?) To be sure, there is “home-cured” pork and “home-skimmed” cream, but Wilson seems more interested in that “good time in the country,” apparently envisioning his reader not as a desperate out-of-work city dweller, but as another professional like himself, enjoying a weekend retreat. As it turns out, many of the advocates of “Vermont as a way of life” were actively encouraging exactly those types of immigrants.

More than any of the other chroniclers of the new Vermont vision, Dorothy Canfield Fisher worked tirelessly throughout her life to attract professionals as visitors and migrants to the state.³⁷ For decades, Fisher argued in women’s clubs and at teachers’ conferences, in popular magazines, history books, and promotional brochures, that Vermont could best guard its traditions of rural self-sufficiency and agrarian values by encouraging an influx of sympathetic professionals as summer people and permanent residents. In retrospect, Fisher’s position may seem mystifying, but it rested on her belief that academics and other professionals as a class were less infatuated with the materialism and consumerism of mainstream American culture, and that they, like rural Vermonters, were skeptical of the rewards of the fast-paced urban modern life. Fisher thus argued that Vermont needed vacationers and new settlers, but only the right kind. By the “right kind,” she meant those who would appreciate and cherish the anti-materialist, self-sufficient values of rural Vermont.³⁸

Moreover, both Dorothy Canfield Fisher and Dorothy Thompson personally sponsored European refugees and émigrés relocating to Vermont. To take a single example, it was Thompson's advice and support that brought the German playwright Carl Zuckmayer to Vermont in 1939. Fleeing the Nazi regime, Zuckmayer and his wife spent the years of World War II raising poultry and goats on a rented farm near Thompson's summer place in Barnard. (Alice Herdan-Zuckmayer's 1949 account of their experiences—*Farm in the Green Mountains*—became a bestseller in postwar Germany.³⁹)

In another part of the state, Samuel Ogden did his part to encourage the new migration of professionals and artists by refurbishing and selling old buildings, beginning with the village of Landgrove where his own family had settled in 1929.⁴⁰ Ogden later recalled remodeling houses or barns as homes for a series of well-known cultural figures: the documentary filmmaker Robert Flaherty, the artist Bernadine Custer, and the violinist Nathan Milstein, among many others.⁴¹ In the process, Ogden helped to create an informal network that linked writers and artists across his section of southern Vermont. That network in turn made it easier for artists and authors to ply their trades in even the most rural of settings, by facilitating the maintenance of connections with key urban contacts who vacationed in or visited Vermont. New York City publishers, after all, might also wish to renovate a barn or stay at a ski lodge—such as the one operated by Ogden's wife Mamie, where Ogden first met the man who would become his own publisher. (As Ogden told the story, after staying at the ski lodge, John Lowell Pratt “fell in love with the place to the extent that he became a landowner here,” and later suggested to Ogden that he “consider doing a book on the subject of family vegetable growing.” This became Ogden's 1942 book, *How to Grow Food for Your Family*.⁴²)

The advocates of a new vision of Vermont, along with the newcomers they were helping to attract, did much more than write. They took leading roles in state and local projects. Samuel Ogden was elected to the Vermont House of Representatives in 1935, John Fisher (Dorothy's husband, as he must have been accustomed to hearing himself described) in 1937. John Fisher went on to chair the state Board of Education, while Ogden served on the Vermont Development Commission. Indeed, by 1946, Ogden himself reported that fully 10 percent of the representatives in the Vermont House had been born outside the state.⁴³

These newcomers were not just joiners: They were institution builders. At a time when private schools were closing all over the country, Bennington College opened in 1932, the Putney School in 1935, and Goddard College in 1938. All three institutions were committed to the

progressive educational principles long associated with Burlington-born philosopher John Dewey. (Dewey himself was a trustee of Bennington College.) In spite of Vermont's lingering reputation as the last bastion of political conservatism, the founders of these institutions were surprisingly confident that Vermont offered a uniquely welcoming environment for their progressive experiments. For Putney School founder Carmelita Hinton, Vermont's rural environment was the attraction: "When worlds are tottering. . . to have rural roots cannot but be a good thing."⁴⁴ Dorothy Canfield Fisher explained at the groundbreaking ceremonies for Bennington College that its founders had chosen Vermont because of the state's "simplicity of life and regard for individuals as against the mass."⁴⁵ Not surprisingly, Fisher was a trustee of both Bennington and Goddard. (Apparently, the administrators of the Putney School had not recognized the opportunity in front of them when Fisher dropped by the place in its first year of operation, and no one was on hand to meet with her.⁴⁶)

In the same years, a group of painters, originally organized in the Dorset area in the 1920s, was evolving into the increasingly well-known and highly regarded Southern Vermont Arts Center, and experiencing a new influx both of painters and of visitors to its summer exhibitions. They gained their first official notice from the *New York Times* in 1932, when a reviewer called the show "the most vital exhibition of the Summer." At that point, however, the *Times* writer still viewed the exhibit chiefly as a showcase for "authentic Vermont 'folk' art"—in spite of the presence of the work of such notable landscape painters as William Fahnstock, Henry Schnakenberg, Herbert Meyer, Carl Ruggles (better known as a composer), and Luigi Luccioni. The very next year, however, the same *Times* reviewer reported his discovery that the Southern Vermont Artists had become much more accomplished in a very short time. He affected to be a bit unhappy about the sudden change: The title of his review was, "Our Primitives Who Do Not Stay Put." Like Crane Brinton, he had hoped Vermont might stay a charming backwater for a little while longer.⁴⁷

PLAIN FOLKS' SYMPHONY

Perhaps the single most impressive example of the transformative power of the new vision of Vermont was the creation of the Vermont Symphony Orchestra in 1935. Writers, after all, could easily relocate. They could carry their work to any part of the country or city (and might be particularly tempted by the low cost of living in the country in years when money was hard to come by). Painters—at least landscape painters—might find an outright advantage in relocating to a rural area, at least for a time. But large-scale symphonic and choral performances

required large numbers of performers and equally large audiences to support them. Dorothy Canfield Fisher had admitted as much in a 1932 essay, "Why I Live Where I Live." There she explained all the reasons she liked to live in the country: She did not have to socialize in formal settings or wear fashionable clothes; her writing time was not interrupted by social calls. Just one thing bothered her about country life (and this may have been the only personal complaint she ever recorded about living in Vermont): "Good music. . . means so much to me that, in spite of all the other advantages of living on a mountainside, life would seem very barren if I never got away from the country."⁴⁸ As it happened, within a few years Fisher would find that music of the kind she sought in the city was coming to the country.⁴⁹

The founder of the Vermont Symphony Orchestra, Alan Carter, was one of those recent artistic migrants to Vermont whom Fisher was working so hard to encourage. The son of a New York City physician, in 1917 Carter had begun serious training as a violist, the first American student of the recently arrived and highly acclaimed Hungarian violinist and teacher, Leopold Auer. Carter then spent several years studying in Europe. He returned home with a wife and child, moved to Chicago where he "played jobs, taught," and tried his hand at the "rare violin business" until the stock market crash ended it all. As he later explained, "we lost our home and I my wife." In the wake of this personal and financial crisis, Carter returned to New York City, reassembled a string quartet from back in his student days, and tried to make a living playing music.

Carter's introduction to Vermont came by way of a second marriage, to Barbara Kent, a daughter of the artist Rockwell Kent. (Kent had been a resident of Arlington, near the Fishers, for several years, but was now living across Lake Champlain in the Adirondacks.) Barbara Kent's mother owned a summer home in Barnard (not far from where Dorothy Thompson and Sinclair Lewis spent their summers), and in 1935 Carter refurbished one of the barns on the property to use for summer concerts. As he described it, nearby Woodstock was "inhabited by a rather wealthy retired group of older people who enjoyed the idea of driving up in the hills and hearing some music."⁵⁰

With these experiences in mind, and faced with chronic health problems in New York, Carter determined to try a musical career in Vermont. In a characteristic "chain migration" pattern, he and his wife followed in the footsteps of friends John and Julia McDill, a pair who were already living in Vermont full-time. Carter later recalled that John McDill had come to Vermont from Yale in search of "the real country life," a place where he could "write and farm"—a phrase that was coming to seem oddly natural in Vermont by then. McDill assured Carter and his wife that Vermont winters were not really as bad as everyone said, pic-

turing “in glowing terms how wonderful it was, how warm they had kept, and that there was no trouble or difficulty to encounter.”⁵¹

Thus reassured, Carter made ambitious plans. He consulted first with Howard Bennett, head of the music department at the University of Vermont. Demonstrating a clear sense of how to network in Vermont, Carter’s second call was to “John and Dorothy Fischer in Arlington.” The Fishers, after all, were “great friends of my wife’s family as the Kents had lived next door to the Fishers in Arlington for some five years.”⁵² As he gained support among influential Vermonters, Carter moved fast, recruiting his orchestra from around the state. Joining the effort was a small but critical group of professional musicians from the University of Vermont, Middlebury College, and the newly founded Bennington College.

But the creation and maintenance of a symphony orchestra in such a rural state proved to be almost as difficult as skeptics imagined it would be. Most of the members of the orchestra (roughly two-thirds) were amateur musicians holding down other jobs; they had limited time to commit to rehearsal and performance. To make matters worse, those rehearsals and performances required many miles of travel on backcountry roads difficult to traverse even in good summer weather. For the first few years, one part of the orchestra rehearsed in Burlington and another part in Rutland, the two not coming together until the day of the performance. (As the *New York Times* reported sympathetically, “The problem of rehearsals is solved only by good-will and a zealous love for music—both of which, luckily, imbue its members.”⁵³) Sheet music was hard to come by. The orchestra had no permanent home, performing, as one musician later recalled, in “any gym or barn on the side of any mountain where they will have us.”⁵⁴

Still, Carter persevered, and the Vermont Symphony Orchestra met with enthusiastic support from all corners of the state. Rockwell Kent designed the cover of the orchestra’s first program, and 1,500 people attended its first performance, “filling every available inch of space” in the Rutland Armory.⁵⁵ After a few years, buoyed by its success, the VSO determined to try its luck with a larger venue: the upcoming World’s Fair in New York City. At that critical juncture, the state legislature voted the orchestra the impressive sum of a thousand dollars to send them there, thus making the VSO the first American orchestra to receive state funding. The bill to provide that support was introduced by Samuel Ogden.⁵⁶

The Vermont Symphony Orchestra’s appearance at the 1939 New York World’s Fair made headlines in the national press. (Reports ran in venues as diverse as the *New York Times*, *Newsweek*, *Collier’s*, and *Ladies’ Home Journal*.) To be sure, this national coverage often began with old clichés about Vermont conservatism and backwardness. The

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Vermont State Symphony Orchestra program, circa 1935. This evocative image was designed by the well-known artist Rockwell Kent, who was the father-in-law of Alan Carter, the founder of the new VSO. The angel arising from the Green Mountains suggests that bringing music to the isolated villages and farms of Vermont was itself a small miracle. Courtesy of The Estate of Rockwell Kent (1882-1971).



Collier's article opened with a well-worn joke: Vermonters were so wedded to the Republican Party that they would “respond when the roll is called up yonder by marching up to the box and dropping in a small slip marked ‘Republican.’” But the World’s Fair concert subverted all those old canards. “If they were expecting a hillbilly rendition of symphonic music,” said *Collier's*, “they were disappointed.” Carter’s program was serious, even daring. It opened with three short pieces by living American composers, and concluded with a very ambitious and well-known work, Tchaikovsky’s Fourth Symphony. If Vermont, of all places, could support an orchestra capable of pulling off such a program, *Collier's* declared, nothing was impossible: “Arkansas can have a ballet and one can only tremble thinking of where the movement might lead after that.”⁵⁷ (Arkansas was probably not an accidental choice. It was another poor, rural state that attracted a lot of attention from back-to-the-landers during the 1930s.)

Though the tone of these stories was flippant, they touched on a serious matter. The image of an orchestra performing “serious” music in the backwaters of rural Vermont was incongruous enough, but it was not just the idea of such a rustic audience that attracted attention. It was the

musicians as well. Many of the VSO's members were ordinary working people: The trombonist was a barber, a stenographer played cello, the first violin was a salesman. It was a "Plain Folks' Symphony," as *Newsweek's* headline exclaimed, a "Vermont Orchestra... Made Up of Tillers and Toilers."⁵⁸

The national media's celebration of such musical democracy reflected precisely what Alan Carter had hoped to achieve. As he later expressed it, his idea of a state orchestra arose from his belief that "too much attention was being focused on the large centers such as New York and not enough in the hinterland." Employing a term that was widely used in the 1930s, Carter wrote that he "firmly believed in the decentralization of the arts."⁵⁹ "Decentralization" was the term New Dealers used for their project of redistributing population, factories, and electricity more widely into the countryside away from the major cities, just as Carter was planning to do with his musical enterprise. But the term also evoked the decentralists' vision of small-scale farms and local self-sufficiency. Carter probably intended it to signal his allegiance to just that vision of Vermont. He hoped the work of the orchestra would serve to "dispel the feeling among many Vermonters that anything local was not good enough." The VSO might actually provide a model for the nation as a whole: "I even thought of the possibility of other states following our example and in this way starting a national movement of music for and by the people."⁶⁰

Dorothy Canfield Fisher—who else!—articulated the greater aspirations of the VSO in a speech she delivered at a benefit for the orchestra. Fisher explained that the new organization bore a heavy moral burden: "Until fairly recently it has been assumed . . . that fine music was too far above the heads of ordinary people to be cherished and fostered by them." But if "ordinary people" meant those who had to work for a living, she continued, "we Vermonters are ordinary people if there ever were any." So if the VSO could stay afloat, it would prove that "millionaires and professionally trained men and women are not the only human beings capable of understanding that human life needs art." Ultimately, Fisher claimed, the VSO's success would transmit a message of global significance: "that it is possible for the citizens of a democracy to work to make life . . . not only politically free—but civilized."⁶¹

Her speech notes are undated, but clearly Fisher, who had spent several years in France during and after World War I and had close friends there, was painfully aware of the newly gathering threat to democracy and civilization in Europe. "It is not only the 'Vermont way of life' we are eager to defend and enrich," she declared. Vermont offered living proof that "modern democracy [could] make life fully worth living for

its citizens.”⁶² In that speech, one can almost see Fisher’s vision of Vermont in the process of expanding. Through the worst years of the Great Depression, Fisher had offered the “Vermont way of life,” with its small farms and self-sufficient villages, as a remedy. Now, facing World War II, those small-town, “decentralized” values would come to be associated with democracy itself.

In 1940, the VSO created a new advisory board to assist in coordinating its concerts and expanding its educational programs. (Starting almost at the beginning, Carter had developed a system to train future musicians for the VSO, spinning off thirteen “little orchestras” to play free concerts in isolated villages throughout the state, and beginning a series of programs to train children in classical music performance.) Many of the new board members were the same sorts of people who would likely have been appointed to such positions in days gone by. The important political families in the state were well represented: from George Aiken and Ralph Flanders on the progressive end of Vermont’s political spectrum to two Proctors from the conservative wing of the Republican Party, along with Grace Coolidge, the widow of Vermont’s most recent U.S. president. The list also included local journalists, religious leaders, and industrialists.

But some board members represented a new kind of Vermonter. For example, the group included Horace Brown, an Illinois-born impressionist painter who lived at his family’s ancestral farm “North Mowing” in Springfield; John Alden Carpenter, a well-known composer who summered in Charlotte; Vincent Sheehan, a widely read journalist who visited Dorothy Thompson and Sinclair Lewis at their Vermont home (and later wrote the story of their marriage and its break-up). Alan Carter had even been able to recruit the internationally renowned conductor and composer Walter Damrosch as a patron. And there, among the famous and influential, were the names of the key players: Walter Hard; Dorothy Thompson; Samuel Ogden, president and chair of the Board of Trustees; and of course, Dorothy Canfield Fisher, “honorary director.”

A decade or two earlier, most Americans outside the region had known little about Vermont, and what little they had known was not likely to make them want to move there. As the United States moved from the hardships of the Great Depression to the struggles of World War II, Vermont would come to occupy a fundamentally different place in the national imagination. And after the war was over, that newly minted image of Vermont would attract another generation of newcomers. On the cover of *Vermont Life*’s second issue, in 1946, was a familiar phrase: “Vermont Is a Way of Life.” Now there would be more summer people to renovate old barns and keep the fields mowed; a

new wave of European refugees who would build new lives and institutions; more experimental colleges, art colonies, and music programs. Eventually there would even be another generation of back-to-the-landers, who would discover new ways—and rediscover old ones—to make a life on the land. After all, Vermont was now a natural home for such endeavors. It was only a matter of time before new generations found that out.

NOTES

¹ As Nancy Gallagher relates in *Breeding Better Vermonters*, leading Vermonters in the 1920s feared that Vermont's rural Yankee "stock" was undergoing genetic decline. A variety of programs were generated to prevent that decline, ranging from child welfare services to the sterilization of the "unfit." Nancy Gallagher, *Breeding Better Vermonters: The Eugenics Program in the Green Mountain State* (Lebanon, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1999).

² Bernard DeVoto, "New England: There She Stands," *Harper's Magazine* 164 (March 1932): 405-415.

³ Crane Brinton, "Review of Bernard DeVoto, *Forays and Rebuttals*," in *New England Quarterly*, 10 (March 1937): 172-173.

⁴ Margaret Hard, *A Memory of Vermont: Our Life in the Johnny Appleseed Bookshop* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1967), 141.

⁵ Professional social workers and reformers read its more technical sister magazine, the original *Survey*.

⁶ DeVoto, "New England: There She Stands."

⁷ Walter Hard, "Vermont, a Way of Life," *Survey Graphic*, 21 (July 1932): 301-303.

⁸ *Survey Graphic*, 21 (July 1932): 291.

⁹ Hard, "Vermont, a Way of Life," 303.

¹⁰ Vermont's story was part of the larger transformation of the image of New England as it was refracted through the lens of the Great Depression: New Hampshire's *Yankee Magazine*, for example, was founded in 1935 to explore a similar set of ideas. For a discussion of this process, see Joseph Conforti, *Imagining New England: Explorations of Regional Identity from the Pilgrims to the Mid-Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

¹¹ Dorothy Canfield Fisher, "Vermonters," *Vermont: A Guide to the Green Mountain State* (Cambridge, Ma.: Riverside Press, 1937), 4-5.

¹² Crane Brinton, review of Charles Edward Crane, *Let Me Show You Vermont* and Vrest Orton, *And So Goes Vermont*, in *New England Quarterly*, 11 (March 1938): 197.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Crane Brinton, *New England Quarterly*, 15 (June 1942): 379.

¹⁵ The phrase was coined by Elswyth Thane, a successful romance writer, in *Reluctant Farmer* (1950), her own Vermont "I bought a barn" tale.

¹⁶ *Publishers' Weekly*, April 2, 1932, 1,569.

¹⁷ Some of the conflicts that led to the break-up are discussed in Walter Hard's correspondence, found in the Walter Rice Hard papers, Special Collections, University of Vermont Libraries. See also the reminiscence of Walter Hard Jr., that his father was very tempered in his speech: "I heard him call somebody a skunk once and that's the worst I ever heard him say about anybody. That was Vrest Orton." Woodsmoke Productions and Vermont Historical Society, "Walter Hard Sr.: Vermont's Storekeeper-Writer," *The Green Mountain Chronicles* radio broadcast and background information, original broadcast 1988-89, accessed at <http://vermonthistory.org/research/research-resources-online/green-mountain-chronicles/walter-hard-sr-vermont-s-storekeeper-writer-1924>.

¹⁸ An announcement of the "emancipation party" appeared in the *Manchester Journal*, 5 December 1935.

¹⁹ I am not suggesting that Hard, Orton, or Follett were eugenicists, but that they, like the eugenicists, belonged generally to the category of well-educated, socially concerned "downhill" Vermonters who hoped to bring the state into closer contact with modern culture and the modern economy. My argument thus rests in part on Paul Searls' analysis of "downhill" and "uphill" Vermonters in an earlier period, laid out in *Two Vermonts: Geography and Identity, 1865-1910* (Durham: University of New Hampshire Press, 2006). Dorothy Canfield Fisher, a critical member of this group, actually did skirt the edges of the eugenics project, playing an important role in the Vermont Commission on Country Life's massive project to plan the state's future. Fisher was involved with the Committee on Traditions and Ideals, not the infamous Committee on the Human Factor, but her countenance of the larger project has been the subject of considerable discussion among historians.

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²⁰ George D. Aiken, "Not So Submarginal," in *Speaking from Vermont* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Co., 1938), 17.

²¹ In this essay, I will not address the question of how rural Vermonters *really* fared during the Depression years. I do not believe we have yet accumulated enough solid evidence to support a convincing general answer to that question. Vermont dairy farmers clearly took a substantial hit as milk prices dropped 50 percent during the first few years of the Depression; census materials also point to a long-term lowering of farm property values. In some parts of the state, rural areas lost population during the Depression, while other parts of the state experienced significant migration from cities to farms. I am currently working on a larger project addressing some of the real-life social and economic experiences of rural Vermonters in the 1930s.

²² Fisher reiterated this point in several contexts. One example can be found in "Vermonters," 6.

²³ Samuel Ogden, *This Country Life* (New York: A. S. Barnes, 1946), 6.

²⁴ Elliott Merrick, *From This Hill Look Down* (Brattleboro, Vt.: Stephen Daye Press, 1934), 30.

²⁵ "Walter Hard Sr.: Vermont's Storekeeper-Writer."

²⁶ In the 1930s, the most vocal critics of the decentralists were socialists and liberals on the left wing of the New Deal, who advocated greater centralization and planning, and a more rapid and thorough commitment to large-scale industrialization under national control.

²⁷ "These Men, This Land: The Man from Vermont," *Free America*, 4 (July 1940): 12-14. Samuel Ogden, too, was a committed decentralist, as he made clear in *This Country Life*. A later generation might categorize the politics of Thompson and Merrick (and arguably Aiken) as liberal or progressive, while the politics of Orton and Ogden would be viewed as conservative. Yet in the 1930s they shared a common set of beliefs. I have written about the connection between decentralist ideology and the back-to-the-land movement in Vermont, in *Back to the Land: The Enduring Dream of Self-Sufficiency in Modern America* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2011).

²⁸ Dorothy Thompson, *Concerning Vermont* (Brattleboro, Vt.: Hildreth, 1937), 11-12.

²⁹ Depending on how you calculate it, that might come to somewhere between \$4,000 and \$10,000 in 2010 dollars—in any case a very low income. See the website MeasuringWorth.com for a nuanced and sophisticated analysis of the process of comparing wages and income from different time periods.

³⁰ Elliott Merrick, *Green Mountain Farm* (New York: Macmillan, 1948), 9.

³¹ Walter Hard, "Vermont. . . to Me," *Vermont Life*, 1 (Fall 1946): 14.

³² Thompson, *Concerning Vermont*, 15.

³³ Nearing was not a decentralist, but a hard-boiled international socialist with a commitment to a future global state. Still, the Nearings shared many decentralist assumptions about independence, self-sufficiency, and subsistence farming. They advertised maple syrup in the pages of *Free America*, and they worked with decentralist activists at a number of points in their lives.

³⁴ Crane Brinton, review of Margaret and Walter Hard, *This Is Vermont*, in *New England Quarterly*, 9 (December 1936): 724-725.

³⁵ Charles M. Wilson, *Country Living Plus and Minus* (Brattleboro, Vt.: Stephen Daye Press, 1939), 114.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 9.

³⁷ For an overview of Fisher's promotional literature, see Ida H. Washington, "Dorothy Canfield Fisher's *Tourists Accommodated* and Her Other Promotions of Vermont," *Vermont History*, 65 (Summer/Fall 1997): 153-164.

³⁸ Some scholars see a not-too-hidden illiberal agenda in Canfield's promotional work, suggesting that she feared working-class and non-"Anglo-Saxon" vacationers. Fisher herself asserted frequently that what she really feared was the impact of wealthy, status-conscious snobs on Vermont's rural society. Her position is spelled out in detail in Dorothy Canfield Fisher, *Vermont Summer Homes* (Montpelier: Vermont Bureau of Publicity, 1932); it is also discussed in several novels and in many typescripts of her speeches to a variety of groups, contained in Cartons 29-30 in Dorothy Canfield collection, Special Collections, University of Vermont Libraries.

³⁹ Cynthia Bittinger, "Vermont Women: Alice Herdan-Zuckmayer," Commentary on Vermont Public Radio, March 27, 2008, www.vpr.net/news_detail/79860. See also the first English translation of Alice Herdan-Zuckmayer, *The Farm in the Green Mountains* (Shelburne, Vt.: New England Press, 1987).

⁴⁰ Paul Searls makes the point that Ogden's Landgrove ventures actually had the effect of driving real farmers out of the area—even those who had been recruited by the state only a generation earlier—and replacing them with artists and professionals. Paul Searls, "Destroying Vermont to Save It," Center for Research on Vermont Interview, podcast published August 31, 2015. See also Paul Searls, "Major Valentine's Swedes," *Vermont History*, 81 (Summer/Fall 2013): 139-169.

⁴¹ Samuel Ogden, *The Cheese that Changed Many Lives: Or, A Sentimental History of a Tiny Town High in the Green Mountains* (Landgrove, Vt.: Just-So Press, 1978), 92-98.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 105.

⁴³ Ogden, *This Country Life*, 29.

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⁴⁴ Carmelita Hinton, as quoted in Susan M. Lloyd, *Putney School: A Progressive Experiment* (New Haven, Ct.: Yale University Press, 1987), 80.

⁴⁵ Dorothy Canfield Fisher, "Remarks for the Breaking of Ground Ceremonies of Bennington College, August 16, 1931." Founding Documents, College Archives, Bennington College Digital Repository. <http://hdl.handle.net/11209/4574>.

⁴⁶ Lloyd, *Putney School*, 99.

⁴⁷ Edward A. Jewell, "The Manchester Idea: Once More the Value of 'Regional' Effort Becomes Strikingly Manifest in Vermont," *New York Times*, 4 September 1932. Edward A. Jewell, "Our Primitives Who Do Not Stay Put," *New York Times*, 3 September 1933.

⁴⁸ Dorothy Canfield Fisher, "Why I Live Where I Live," *The Golden Book Magazine*, 16 (December 1932): 541.

⁴⁹ At almost that very moment, music-loving residents of the Berkshires in western Massachusetts were inviting the Boston Symphony Orchestra to play a summer concert series at a patron's estate—Tanglewood, which would become the summer home of the BSO in 1937.

⁵⁰ Autobiographical sketches, Carton 8, folder 1, Alan Carter and the Vermont State Orchestra Collection, Special Collections, University of Vermont Libraries. A series of incomplete and undated autobiographical sketches are found here that contradict one another in some details. I have relied on the version that seems most complete, including the passage cited here, which was included as an unattached insert.

⁵¹ Carter sketch, 28.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 30.

⁵³ "Concert and Opera Asides," *New York Times*, 2 July 1939.

⁵⁴ Woodsmoke Productions and Vermont Historical Society, "A Symphony Is Born: The VSO," *The Green Mountain Chronicles*, <http://vermonthistory.org/research/research-resources-online/green-mountain-chronicles/a-symphony-is-born-the-vso-1934>.

⁵⁵ *Rutland Herald*, 9 January 1936.

⁵⁶ Earl P. Hanson and Kyle Crichton, "Music Round the Mountains," *Collier's Magazine*, 104 (December 30, 1939): 10-11.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ "Plain Folks' Symphony: Vermont Orchestra is Made Up of Tillers and Toilers," *Newsweek*, 14 (July 10, 1939).

⁵⁹ The term "decentralization" was also widely employed in the 1960s, when Carter was probably drafting these memoirs. At that point, when used, for example, by Carl Oglesby of the Students for a Democratic Society, it referred to small-scale democratic socialism.

⁶⁰ Carter sketch, 38.

⁶¹ Dorothy Canfield Fisher, "Remarks for a VSO Benefit Concert at Rutland," Carton 30, folder 21, Dorothy Canfield Collection, Special Collections, University of Vermont Libraries.

⁶² *Ibid.*