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Vol. 86, No. 1 Winter/Spring 2018

French Canadian Immigration to Vermont and New  
England (1840-1930)

LESLIE CHOQUETTE

*1*

Postscript: Andrew Harris at the University of Vermont

KEVIN THORNTON

*9*

William Hale, Railroad Surveyor: His Life, His Work

GERALD B. FOX AND JEAN BALLANTYNE

*20*

Spiritualism in Brattleboro, 1886-1889:  
One Man's Contact with the Afterlife through Letters

JERRY CARBONE

*31*

## Book Reviews

- .....
- MARK BUSHNELL, *Hidden History of Vermont*. Tyler Resch 46
- PHILIP K. LUNDEBERG, ARTHUR B. COHN, JENNIFER L. JONES,  
*A Tale of Three Gunboats: Lake Champlain's  
Revolutionary War Heritage*. Kevin J. Crisman 48
- SUSAN OUELLETTE, *An Extraordinary Ordinary Woman:  
The Journal of Phebe Orvis, 1820-1830*. Amy F. Morsman 50
- LESLIE ASKWITH, *Thunderstruck Fiddle: The Remarkable  
True Story of Charles Morris Cobb and His Hill Farm  
Community in 1850s Vermont*. Cameron Clifford 52
- KEVIN THORNTON, *Death in the Wilderness: A Love Story*.  
J. David Book Jr. 55
- REIDUN D. NUQUIST, *A Century of Long Trail Guidebooks:  
A Retrospective*. Thomas K. Slayton 57
- JOANNA TEBBS YOUNG, *Lilian Baker Carlisle: Vermont  
Historian, Burlington Treasure: A Scapbook Memoir*.  
Cynthia D. Bittinger 59
- RICHARD W. BROWN, *The Last of the Hill Farms: Echoes of  
Vermont's Past*. Jeb Wallace-Brodeur 61

More About Vermont History  
Compiled by PAUL A. CARNAHAN

# BOOK REVIEWS

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## *Hidden History of Vermont*

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By Mark Bushnell (Charleston, S.C.: History Press, 2017, pp. 175, paper, \$21.99).

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Is it possible that every state hides such an abundant storehouse of great stories? Maybe so, but there seems to be an unending supply in this little state of Vermont. Having been fairly well-versed in a great deal of Vermont history myself, until I read Mark Bushnell's thirty-four essays in *Hidden History of Vermont*, I had not known, for example, that:

- The Bellows Falls canal, finished in 1802, was the first canal in the United States, and it prompted a short-lived canal craze that climaxed in 1825 with the great Erie Canal; or that:
- Rev. Lemuel Haynes of West Rutland, having been born an illegitimate, unwanted, mixed-race infant, was given the surname Haynes as possible revenge against a family who had rejected him; or that:
- When cars first came to Burlington, a speed limit of 6 miles an hour was established for in-town drivers, who could speed up to 15 mph outside of town; or that:
- Vermont's first labor strike, among Irish immigrants laying railroad track in 1846, was called not for a wage increase, but because they had not been paid at all; or that:
- Turkey drives were an annual way to raise cash for some Vermont farmers, who herded these wily birds toward Boston with or without plans for purchasers (can you imagine doing this along Route 2, or the now-gridlocked I-95?).

Bushnell has a definite gift for scoping out the retellable tale, the unusual episode, the curious happening, and the unforgettable character. The book is introduced by another writer deeply experienced in Vermontiana, Tom Slayton, the Editor Emeritus of *Vermont Life* magazine,

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who comments on the state's hog-on-ice independence and ability to avoid the beaten path.

In his own introduction, Bushnell suggests that he has really produced a travel book, which takes the reader to fascinating places and intriguing times, and introduces some of the most interesting people. (Bushnell's stories are also seen regularly online at [VtDigger.com](http://VtDigger.com).) The book is divided into categories such as Singular Characters and Surprising Events; Scams, Shams and Strange Stories; Personal Struggle and Social Activism; and Riding Waves of Change.

In the latter category, one story of great dramatic change in Vermont during the lifetime of many today is that of the decline of dairy farming. As Bushnell tells it, there were 10,637 dairy farms in the state in 1953, a statistic made more meaningful if you divide it by 251, the number of towns and gores, to discover that on average each town had 42 dairy farms. These were mostly small operations with an average of 25 cows. Then came efficiencies prompted by the dairy industry that required a change to handling milk in expensive stainless-steel bulk tanks rather than ten-gallon metal cans, each of which weighed eighty pounds when full. Bushnell corrects a common misperception by reporting that it was the dairy industry that caused the change, not the state, which remained mostly concerned about sanitary regulations. Largely because of its expense, the upgrade to the bulk tank caused a serious decline in the number of dairy farms. By 1963, one third of them had closed, Bushnell reports, and by 1970 the number had been cut by two-thirds; today, fewer than 10 percent of those 1953 farms are still operating, though with much larger herds.

But the net result in terms of milk production has been amazing. As Bushnell tells it: "New agricultural technologies have enabled the fewer than 1,000 dairy farms that remain to produce more milk together than did the 10,637 farms that existed in 1953" (p. 163). Significant social and economic changes also accompanied the demise of dairy farming, contemporaneous with Vermont's political and demographic transformation due to legislative reapportionment and the construction of Interstates 91 and 89. One ultimate result, noted nationally though not by Bushnell, is the state's political about-face from red to blue.

My chief criticism of *Hidden History of Vermont* derives from the fact that almost every episode sparked so much interest that I wanted to follow up, read more, and find sources of information. This would have been facilitated if there were some notes for further reading at the end of each chapter. The book does have a good bibliography, but the reader must wade through a long list of references and is often left guessing which source could be relevant to a specific question.

True to its name, *Hidden History of Vermont* offers many wonderfully intriguing examples of the kinds of stories that are hidden in more formal texts.

TYLER RESCH

*Tyler Resch is research librarian of the Bennington Museum, editor of its history journal, the Walloomsack Review, and author of several books of Vermontiana.*

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## *A Tale of Three Gunboats: Lake Champlain's Revolutionary War Heritage*

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By Philip K. Lundeberg, Arthur B. Cohn, Jennifer L. Jones  
(Basin Harbor, Vt. and Washington, D.C.: Lake Champlain Maritime Museum and National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, 2017, pp. xiv, 238, paper, \$25.00).

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As the title of this book suggests, *A Tale of Three Gunboats* is the story of a trio of wooden warships built on Lake Champlain, two of them during the American Revolutionary War, and the third a little over two centuries later. The volume's 205 pages of text cover an astounding amount of ground. *Three Gunboats* presents the story of a dramatic freshwater naval campaign, of the past preserved in the form of documents, images, and found objects, of heritage found but sadly *not* preserved, of contrasting outcomes and shifting social and technological contexts, and of the place of these gunboats in our collective past, present, and—in a manner still to be determined—future.

The three vessels in question, *Philadelphia*, *Philadelphia II*, and *Spitfire*, were built to the same set of specifications and if lined up side-by-side when brand new would appear to be nearly identical. Their individual stories, however, have followed vastly different arcs through time.

The pair of Revolutionary War survivors featured in this book, *Philadelphia* and *Spitfire*, were two of the eight diminutive three-gun gunboats assembled by Continental Army shipwrights on Lake Champlain in the summer of 1776. Together these gunboats comprised half of the cobbled-together naval squadron outfitted and commanded by Benedict Arnold. Their mission was to stop a British invasion from Canada that threatened the future of the rebelling colonies. Fate was not kind to the American ships and their crews: *Philadelphia* was sunk in battle at Valcour Island, New York; *Spitfire* was scuttled due to battle damage; and the remaining ships were all ultimately burned by their crews or

captured. Paradoxically, the short-lived squadron won a brilliant strategic victory by delaying the British for one year. Rebel forces resoundingly defeated the second invasion attempt at the Battle of Saratoga in 1777.

The history of the 1776 naval campaign on Lake Champlain and its outcome is narrated in the first quarter of the book, while the remaining three-quarters is devoted to the gunboats' careers in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. *Philadelphia* was discovered and salvaged in 1935 by the famed salvage master Lorenzo Hagglund. Upon his death twenty-five years later, the intact boat was donated to the Smithsonian's Museum of American History in Washington, D.C. It remains on display at the museum to this day, where it is annually seen by thousands of visitors. Detailed plans of *Philadelphia* prepared by the Smithsonian provided the basis for the Lake Champlain Maritime Museum's (LCMM) creation of *Philadelphia II*, a full-sized working copy of the gunboat begun in 1989 and launched in 1991. *Philadelphia II* was entering its sixth sailing season on the lake in June 1997, when *Spitfire* was discovered deep under the water. The LCMM-led sonar survey found the gunboat upright, with its single mast standing and the bow gun projecting over the stem. Since its discovery *Spitfire* has captured the popular imagination as a ghostly relic of the War of Independence.

The substance of *A Tale of Three Gunboats* lies in its presentation of lessons learned in the management of archaeological and historical heritage. *Philadelphia* is a rare successful example of the old salvage-style approach to archaeology. Hagglund protected his find and ensured that it ended up in a worthy museum; but most of the historic wrecks salvaged from the lake in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries no longer exist today, destroyed after their recovery by ignorance, neglect, or active dismemberment. As the book notes, technology has made finding shipwrecks a relatively easy process; but the truly difficult, expensive, long-term decisions come afterward. *Philadelphia II* illustrates a productive approach to discovering and sharing stories of the past through replication and testing. By all measures the LCMM's vessel has achieved its mission of engaging and educating the public, adults and children alike. *Spitfire*'s modern-day story, we learn, is still being written. Although seemingly secure in its deep-water grave, the gunboat in fact faces two serious threats in the coming years. The first of these is unauthorized visitors to the site, divers who could intentionally or unwittingly damage the fragile structure and its contents. More dire, perhaps, is the imminent invasion of Lake Champlain by non-native quagga mussels, small freshwater bivalves that quickly colonize the surfaces of submerged wrecks and hasten their deterioration and collapse.

This summary of *Three Gunboats* hardly does justice to the breadth and depth of the book. It is hard to imagine a trio of authors more qualified to tell the tale. The lead author, Smithsonian Curator Emeritus Dr. Philip K. Lundeborg, accompanied *Philadelphia* from Lake Champlain to Washington in 1961 and led research efforts on the boat throughout his career at the museum. Jennifer L. Jones, curator and chair of the Division of Armed Forces History at the Smithsonian, has played a vital role in the museum's ongoing exhibition, documentation, and preservation of *Philadelphia*. Arthur B. Cohn, co-founder of the Lake Champlain Maritime Museum and the preeminent maritime archaeologist on the lake, has carried out nearly forty years of Revolutionary War-related projects on and under its waters, including the building of *Philadelphia II* and the discovery of *Spitfire*.

*Three Gunboats* is beautifully illustrated throughout with scores of prints, black-and-white or color photographs, maps, diagrams, and both contemporary and modern paintings. The cover illustration and many others by Vermont's own maritime painter Ernie Haas are particularly impressive. The volume also includes an annotated bibliography and index.

KEVIN J. CRISMAN

*Kevin J. Crisman is a Professor and holds the Institute of Nautical Archaeology Faculty Fellowship in Texas A&M University's Department of Anthropology. He is the editor of the book Coffins of the Brave: Lake Shipwrecks of the War of 1812 (2014).*

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## *An Extraordinary Ordinary Woman: The Journal of Phebe Orvis, 1820-1830*

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By Susan Ouellette (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 2017, pp. 380, \$29.95).

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Our understanding of history has always been skewed toward the stories of the rich and powerful. Who else from centuries past had the resources to generate substantial documentation and leave it behind with some care for posterity? Social historians have long wished to find evidence that might expose the historical reality of those who were *not* the rich and powerful, and though these scholars have made excellent use of public sources of information—census records, court documents, newspapers, etc.—to better understand the worlds of ordinary people, they still struggle to gain insight into the everyday movements, motivations, and private thoughts of the masses.

It is truly exciting, then, to come upon a document written by a regular American citizen about the details of her own life. Enlivened by such a discovery, Susan Ouellette has worked carefully to make sense of one young woman's private journal and to connect her experiences to larger social and economic forces shaping early America. In Ouellette's estimation, this single historical actor, known only to her friends and family in one small, quiet corner of the country, is extraordinary *because* she was ordinary and because she took care to chronicle that valuable ordinariness from which we can learn now.

In the summer of 1820, Phebe Orvis, a nineteen-year-old woman from Bristol, Vermont, began a journal. She seemed to do so primarily to log her activities both at home on her grandparents' farm as well as in her travels to neighbors far and wide across Addison County. Orvis kept this journal somewhat consistently for ten years, through significant stages of her own life: from busy, cheerful single womanhood to the challenges of being a wife in a new and distant household and then, as nature and culture dictated, to the hazards and burdens of motherhood many times over. Orphaned by her mother shortly after her birth, Orvis was removed from the house of her father and siblings in the hills of Lincoln to the more developed village of Bristol down below, where she would grow up in the home of her maternal grandparents. There she enjoyed the benefits of town life, especially the greater proximity to different opportunities for fellowship, work, and learning. It was this area, along Vermont's western border, that Orvis would write about with great affection and sadness after she married Samuel Eastman and moved to live with him in the northern New York frontier county of St. Lawrence.

Her journal reveals that life as a young farmwife and then mother was not easy for Orvis, not only because of the constant toil associated with domestic production and reproduction, but also because she felt isolated from her Vermont family and her faith community. In a departure from the mundane, Orvis used her journal at times to express her discontent with her husband, his drinking, and the pressure that he as patriarch placed on her to fall in line with his own family, their religious practices, and their customs. By the time her journal ended in 1830, Orvis was so deeply entrenched in the business of keeping a farm and raising a large family, she had little time for introspective writing.

Ouellette has lightly edited and annotated Orvis's ten-year journal, along with two very brief travel diaries she wrote in the 1850s. This should be interesting reading for anyone concerned with Vermont history and women's history in early America. Orvis's journal could be quite useful to students of all ages, but especially undergraduates, who



can try their own hand at making sense of daily life captured in her quick scribbles from long ago.

Even more valuable are the six chapters, plus introduction and conclusion, that Ouellette has written to provide some interpretive focus and analysis of Orvis's journal. She does a commendable job explaining the routine, the unusual, as well as the mysterious elements of Orvis's life and writings. Ouellette also pinpoints aspects of Orvis's life that signal significant changes happening in American society. For example, her chapter on young Orvis's work and educational opportunities, most notably the education she briefly enjoyed in the Middlebury Female Seminary (first established by Emma Willard), help to demonstrate new ideas emerging around women's usefulness to society. Ouellette's chapter on religion is particularly provocative, as it situates this young, devout Quaker within the tumult of the Second Great Awakening and shows Orvis's own faith convictions pitted against those of her in-laws.

I recommend reading the brief acknowledgments section at the back of the book before reading anything else, for this section explains how Orvis's overlooked little journal from rural America was discovered and explored. Larger, more detailed maps of Orvis's Vermont and New York worlds, along with a family tree, and an image of the manuscript journal, would have enhanced this work even more. Still, Ouellette has produced a valuable contribution and introduced an important new voice to American history.

AMY F. MORSMAN

*Amy Morsman is Professor of History at Middlebury College in Middlebury, Vermont, where she teaches about gender in American history.*

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*Thunderstruck Fiddle: The Remarkable True Story  
of Charles Morris Cobb and His Hill Farm  
Community in 1850s Vermont*

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By Leslie Askwith (n.p.: Blurb, 2017, pp. xii, 259, paper, \$17.95).

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I have an admission to make. I made a fool of myself after reading Leslie Askwith's delightful book, *Thunderstruck Fiddle: The Remarkable True Story of Charles Morris Cobb and His Hill Farm Community in 1850s Vermont*. The book is about Charles Cobb, who was born in Woodstock in 1835, lived a hardscrabble childhood on the family farm, and later made his way in life through pursuing music. The book is written in the voice of Cobb as an old man and I approached it as Askwith's

adaptation of a retrospective written in the 1890s by Cobb about his youth, using his old diaries to aid his memory.

After finishing the book, I sought out the 1890s retrospective Askwith must have used to create the present book. To my surprise, and the amusement of others, no such retrospective exists. Askwith simply used Cobb's antebellum diaries and her own skill to create a convincing account of Cobb's life as if he were narrating it himself. Let me be clear: Askwith had no intention of deceiving anyone by writing the book in Cobb's voice. Her introduction states that she wrote the book using her own words as well as Cobb's.

Now that I have wiped the egg off my face, I have to admit that Askwith is an experienced and a very convincing writer. Not only that, she did her homework. She must have spent years researching Cobb and his so-called "Rum Street" neighborhood where he grew up the only child of an unenthusiastic farmer and his long-suffering wife. Surrounded by sympathetic, and some unsympathetic, neighbors and kin, Cobb felt the sting of living in poverty on the edge of disaster and experienced what we would term today, "low self-esteem."

Most of the book's forty-five short chapters detail the trials of young Cobb and those around him dealing with daily life in a world where teachers in public schools beat their pupils, state efforts were focused on controlling alcohol consumption, toll roads were transitioning into free roads, receiving mail was an expense, and masturbation was seen as potentially debilitating.

It is not until chapter 36, when Cobb's musical interests led him to the Woodstock Brass Band, that his horizons broadened and his spirits lifted to the point where he could call himself a musician. His skill and reputation grew, and by his twenties he was instructing other Vermont brass bands on how to improve their playing. He played and toured with the Boston Brass Band, performing in Cleveland, Buffalo, Toronto, and Montreal, among other venues. Then, at the height of his popularity, he came back to Woodstock to live on his own terms as a shop worker and musician. Cobb had grown up and found his calling. He was able to assist his parents financially, took over the old homestead, married, and raised a family. He died in 1903, a well-liked and respected member of society.

Creating this book was a labor of love for Askwith, as she felt a deep connection to Charles Cobb. A Cobb descendant (although not directly from Charles), she first encountered his diaries through genealogical research. She spent most of the summers during her youth at her grandparents' home in Woodstock, about "a mile from where Charles Cobb lived a century earlier" (p. viii). Later, she conducted "[c]ountless exploratory drives on the roads winding through the hills" of Woodstock

looking for cellar holes in Cobb's old neighborhood, imagining what it must have been like in his day (p. vi). Her interest in Cobb took her another step toward his world when she "lived off-the-grid through three winters and learned to appreciate the difficulty of house-keeping with water hauled from a lake and working by the dim light of a kerosene lamp," while learning "something of the value of Charles Cobb's way of life" (p. viii). Unsurprisingly, she also raises chickens and gardens at her home in Michigan's Upper Peninsula, where she has "won awards for her writing about the Great Lakes, nature, small farming, local food and the stories of ordinary people" (p. viii).

One feature of Charles Cobb's writing that Askwith identified as important to her was that it was not "bound by tradition or correctness, only the truth" (p. viii). Truth is a reoccurring theme in the present book, as Cobb, or Askwith in the voice of Cobb, declares multiple times about his "Remarkable True Story," the "truth of his own life," detailing "only the truth of what he thought and saw," and "[t]he truth of our poor circumstances," so that in the future he could refer to them "and know they told the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth" (pp. iii, vi, 5, 67, 209).

There is a deep irony here in claiming so many truths. "Truth" in history is an age-old dilemma, with some claiming there is no such thing. Cobb's diaries speak a certain kind of historical truth, as they reflect his perspective on his circumstances with little or no consideration of their significance or broader context. They are a source for history. Historians work at trying to get as close as they can to report past experience. They depend upon sources like Charles Cobb's diaries and their own skill at using them. Askwith has used these diaries imaginatively, creating a tale of struggle and redemption as told by her protagonist. The problem is that there is no way to identify which words are Cobb's and which are Askwith's. Some phrases and sentences are set within quotes. These include special terms, apparent genuine quotations, and invented dialogue, with nothing to indicate where they came from. A section at the end of the book, "Chapter Notes," is mainly explanatory in nature and lacks any references linking the writing to Cobb's diary entries. There is a useful section after the "Epilogue," identifying seventy-three of the more than two hundred individuals mentioned in the book; but, alas, there is no index, so one cannot easily locate them or anything else in the text.

The book includes photographs of Woodstock's rural landscape, Cobb's original diaries, family members, and Cobb posed with his instruments and fellow musicians. There is a nice map of Cobb's Rum Street neighborhood and fifty-four original pen-and-ink sketches depicting various incidents and undertakings from Cobb's life.

Despite the drawbacks, this book provides a unique and entertaining picture of life in an antebellum rural Vermont neighborhood. One just has to keep in mind that it includes a mix of fact and fiction, Cobb's words and Askwith's, with no way to tell the difference. Good historical writing involves imagination bounded by documentation. While Leslie Askwith's book lacks the second, it abounds with the first.

CAMERON CLIFFORD

*Cameron Clifford, an independent scholar living in West Hartford, Vermont, has written two books and three articles on Vermont topics.*

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## *Death in the Wilderness: A Love Story*

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By Kevin Thornton (Colchester, Vermont: Vermont Public Television, 2016. Free at: <http://video.vermontpbs.org/video/3006578842>).

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Every Memorial Day in Brandon, Vermont, first-grade girls clad in white parade to the Civil War monument on the village green, laying there a tribute of flowers. The origin of the ceremony had been forgotten when retired University of Vermont history professor Kevin Thornton moved to Brandon and began to inquire. His curiosity resulted in a moving Vermont Public Broadcasting "Made Here" production entitled "Death in the Wilderness: A Love Story." Through persistent research over several years, Thornton uncovered a remarkable story of a Civil War widow whose determination to memorialize her husband and make his death mean something led to a tradition that has endured for over a century in Brandon. It was brought to life by talented young filmmaker, Josh Hummel.

For fifty-two minutes viewers are treated to both video and still photography accompanied by music, much of it composed specifically for the story. The narrator skillfully shares the fascinating tale of Frankie (Frances) Davenport, who married Captain George Daniel Davenport, Fifth Regiment, Company B, Vermont Volunteers in 1861. Their love and devotion were evident as the bride chose to spend the first three years of her husband's military service in the Fifth Regiment winter camp, returning to Vermont when the spring campaigns began. On May 12, 1864, Captain Davenport died of severe wounds suffered the week before at the Battle of the Wilderness. The grief-stricken widow was determined to locate and return to Brandon the remains of her husband and his close friend, Captain Charles Ormsbee, who also had been killed in the battle. After hostilities ceased in 1865, through pure grit Frankie Davenport located the one person, a hospital steward by the name of

Wallace Baldwin from the 67th Pennsylvania, who knew where the two had been buried. He had written Frankie to inform her of her husband's death. With his guidance, Frankie located the graves about eighteen miles from Fredericksburg in the middle of a cornfield, and had the remains disinterred and shipped back to Vermont. Frankie had been able to identify the body of her husband from buttons which she herself had sewn on his shirt. In describing the recovery in vivid details to her brother, she wrote, "[I] succeeded at last, as I always do when I undertake anything" (11 minutes, 37 seconds). Back in Brandon, both fallen officers shared the same flag, the same funeral at the Episcopal Church, the same hearse, and the same cemetery. Now Frankie could put flowers on her husband's grave each day. But there is more to this story.

Kevin Thornton briefly changes the focus from the main story line in the second section of the documentary, to explore some higher ground in a segment he calls "The Meaning of the War." In a "Kickstarter" campaign statement he articulated this principle perhaps more clearly than it is stated in the production. "This wasn't just the story of one woman in one little town. And it wasn't just a story about Vermont. It's an American story about the kind of country many among her generation tried—and ultimately failed—to create. They believed to the end of their lives that the Civil War had been fought for a moral purpose, and to ignore that purpose was to betray the dead" ([www.kickstarter.com/projects/379751627/death-in-the-wilderness-a-love-story](http://www.kickstarter.com/projects/379751627/death-in-the-wilderness-a-love-story)). This segment too briefly touches upon concepts that could have been more thoroughly considered. Thornton surmises that all the expressions of remembrance of Civil War veterans, both living and deceased, were motivated by the need to make meaning of the cost in lives and resources. The monuments, memorial celebrations, concerts, lectures, and regimental reunions were all expressions of Union efforts to preserve democracy. It would be more accurate to say that most officers may have been motivated by a higher moral principle. However, rank-and-file enlisted men in the trenches might have been differently inspired. Despite its shortcomings, this segment is well portrayed through the use of images from the Civil War era, as well as footage of contemporary citizens of Brandon.

The rest of the story about Frankie Davenport is as poignant as the earlier part. Her husband's friend Charles Ormsbee had a younger married brother, familiarly known as Jolls, whose son was born just after Charles was killed. A few years later Jolls's wife died in childbirth, and later his son died of dysentery. Ten days after his son died, Jolls and Frankie Davenport were married. They became instrumental in organizing memorial observations in Brandon and were active in numerous endeavors to memorialize Civil War veterans. Active in political affairs,

Ebenezer Jolls Ormsbee served a term as lieutenant governor before being elected governor of Vermont in 1887. Frankie had a stroke in 1902, which limited her activities for many of the last fourteen years of her life; but that same year, at her urging, the little girls of Brandon began marching to the Brandon Civil War Monument with flowers.

The last ten minutes of the documentary are devoted to the story behind the story. Thornton relates the adventure of discovering this extraordinary series of events, which is almost as exciting as the actual tale. His success in putting all the pieces together is the dream of every historian. Who does not love a good mystery solved? The filming is excellent all the way through. Every Vermont community would be so fortunate to have its history and legacy depicted so well. Of the sixty-six films produced in this series by Vermont PBS, “Death in the Wilderness: A Love Story” merits viewing by every Vermonter. The citizens of Brandon, Vermont, should be very proud.

J. DAVID BOOK JR.

*J. David Book Jr., a retired educator and author, has contributed several reviews and an article to Vermont History. A docent at Vermont's State House, he also serves as president of the Worcester Historical Society.*

## *A Century of Long Trail Guidebooks: A Retrospective*

By Reidun D. Nuquist (Waterbury Center, Vt.: Green Mountain Club, 2017, pp. 90, paper, \$9.95).

If you think a history of hiking guidebooks might be dull stuff, think again, at least where this charming little book is concerned. Reidun Nuquist has written an affectionate review of a remarkable publishing feat—the 28 guidebooks to Vermont’s Long Trail written and produced over its 100-year-plus history by the Green Mountain Club (GMC).

*A Century of Long Trail Guidebooks* also encompasses much of the history of the club, the hikers, and the mountains that are its *raison d’être*. And so, in addition to being a publishing history, the book is a compendium of the struggles, changing practices, humor, and pleasures of hiking in Vermont since its earliest, wool-clad days.

Nuquist and her husband, Andrew Nuquist, have been stalwarts of the club for several decades. Now a retired librarian, she is a former GMC director, a past president of the club’s Montpelier section, and a frequent writer on Long Trail and GMC history.

And because she is a Long Trail end-to-ender, she knows from experience what those guidebooks describe.

The Long Trail was built, largely with volunteer labor, between 1910 and 1930. The first GMC guidebook was published in 1917, well before the trail was complete. It included the five sections of the trail then extant: Mount Mansfield, Camel's Hump, Lincoln Mountain, Killington Peak, and the Bennington area. It would be several years before the Long Trail connected those dots and reached from Massachusetts to Canada.

After the publication of that first slender guide (34 pages, no cover), new editions usually appeared every two or three years, with a couple of longer gaps, notably the years between 1940 and 1947, when World War II intervened.

The early guides of the 1920s offered plenty of advice for novice hikers, some of which sounds more than quaint today. Nuquist notes that the 1920 guide even suggested how a hiker should stuff his (or her) pockets:

“Left shirt: handkerchief, postals [postcards], notebook, pencil. Right shirt: guidebook, money securely pinned in bag or envelope. Left trousers: matches in flat tin box, waterproof. Right trousers: pocket knife, strong twine. Left hip, toilet paper. Fob pocket: compass on lanyard” (p. 30).

“The only thing left for the hiker,” Nuquist notes, “was to select the contents of the right hip pocket!” (p. 30). In a similar prescriptive vein, the early guidebooks recommended lots of bulky, heavy camping gear and food. The lengthy food list for two men for two weeks that appeared in the 1920 edition included ten pounds of flour, two pounds of baking powder, a loaf of bread, five pounds of bacon, and more. Hikers were urged to carry a blanket, flannel pajamas, three handkerchiefs, a camera and film, an axe, a whetstone, and copper wire for repairs, among many other items. Nuquist adds: “Yet each man's pack was not to exceed 30 pounds—a seeming impossibility, especially considering the canvas knapsacks and pack baskets then in use” (p. 31).

Later editions of the guidebook offered fewer helpful recommendations and more environmental cautions, especially in the 1960s and '70s, as the number of hikers in the woods vastly increased.

The many editions of the guide were necessary because the trail moved around a lot over the years. The most dramatic recent route change is noted in the new 2017 Centennial Edition of the guide: the opening of the club's new Winooski River footbridge and the elimination thereby of a lengthy road walk in Duxbury and Bolton.

The author also notes that differences of opinion over estimated hik-

ing times and other matters have surfaced periodically. For example, an entry in the Stratton Pond register quipped that when the guidebook noted that the trail goes through a “beautiful hardwood forest,” it actually means: “a place where dead birch trees lie across the trail at frequent intervals. These trees are usually too low to crawl under and too high to climb over” (p. 49).

The many changes around and near the Long Trail are noted; two that stand out are the disappearance of the mountain farms that used to provide food and occasionally lodging for hikers, and also the rowboat service that once ferried hikers across the Winooski for a small fee.

Throughout the book, historic photos, maps, and drawings enliven the text.

This is also the case with the Centennial Edition of the guide itself, which can be purchased separately for \$19.95, or in combination with the *Retrospective* as a “Collector’s Set,” for \$26.91.

THOMAS K. SLAYTON

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## *Lilian Baker Carlisle: Vermont Historian, Burlington Treasure: A Scrapbook Memoir*

By Joanna Tebbs Young (Burlington, Vt.: Chittenden County Historical Society, 2017, pp. 85, paper, \$25).

One cannot help but be impressed and inspired by this scrapbook biography of Lilian Baker Carlisle. It portrays her as widely recognized, respected, and acknowledged for her activism and community service. On top of that, she became an expert on many antiques at the Shelburne Museum and wrote a definitive book, *Vermont Clock and Watchmakers, Silversmiths, and Jewelers, 1778-1878*, in 1970. She was also a legislator at a pivotal time, 1969-1970, sponsoring Green Up Day and Act 250. She gave tours of Burlington and helped begin the Chittenden County Historical Society. The list of the projects she initiated goes on for many pages.

Yet Carlisle still had time for fun and family. Her husband, Grafton, was a sailor on Lake Champlain and she was a skier at the Underhill Snow Bowl. They bought a house in 1957 in the Old North End of Burl-



ington with a view of Lake Champlain. Their remodeling was very modern for the time, with a focus on views and open floor plans. Pictures in the scrapbook show her wearing stunning dresses and jewelry. She must have been somewhat of a fashion setter in her community. Lilian and Grafton had two children and eventually six grandchildren. At sixty Carlisle took up belly dancing. This woman enjoyed life and those around her benefited from that demeanor.

The scrapbook assembled by Joanna Tebbs Young is a creative and eye-catching presentation of Carlisle's life and accomplishments. The format was inspired by the scrapbooks of mementos in Carlisle's closet—a record of eighty years of events and articles that provided the archival evidence of a woman in constant motion who preserved photographs, newspaper clippings, and other items that documented each new adventure she tackled. What she saved and treasured has given us a trail of exploration and wonder at her two main categories of interest: “love of the things of the past and future preservation of Burlington history” (p. 60). This clever way of detailing her life should encourage us to collect meaningful objects that depict a way of life that we appreciate.

One could almost make a list of what would not be here if Lilian Baker Carlisle had not lived. The list would be long and the City of Burlington would be the worse for it. Two striking buildings would be gone: the Louise Howard Chapel in Lakeview Cemetery and the Fletcher Free Library building. She led a movement to save them. Since she was the right arm to Electra Havemeyer Webb, founder of the Shelburne Museum, for ten years, many items now in the collections might have not been acquired. For example, the *Ticonderoga*, the last side-wheel steamboat to run on Lake Champlain, was moved to the Shelburne Museum grounds while Carlisle worked with author and historian Ralph Nading Hill to make that happen.

Carlisle's writing career began at that period in her life, with the publication of *The Story of the Shelburne Museum* (1955) that she wrote with Hill. After collaborating with many authors and editing nine “look around” books about Chittenden County towns and cities, she published a historical guide to Burlington neighborhoods in 1991. She realized that writing about historical things and places puts them on the map, so to speak. They begin to be appreciated and now will not be taken for granted. Educating the public about the history and importance of neighborhoods is an excellent way to preserve and protect them.

Carlisle was not successful at every task she took on. She ran for a seat in the Vermont House of Representatives in 1968 on a platform to close the Moran Municipal Generating Station (popularly known as the Moran Plant), a coal-fired power plant built in 1953, and end its pollu-

tion; but the plant sputtered on for many years, until 1986. Though she won that race, she did not get reelected to her district because of her advocacy of women's rights, especially the right to have an abortion. Her Catholic neighbors failed to support her, so after leaving the legislature she turned to teaching at Champlain College and for Elderhostel. She could not save the bishop's house, an elegant late-nineteenth-century mansion on South Williams Street (also known as the D. C. Linsley House and the Richardson House), now the site of a parking lot for the UVM Health Care campus; but she went on to be part of the 1976 Bicentennial Commission and the City of Burlington Waterfront Access and Protection Advisory Committee.

Lilian Baker Carlisle blazed a trail of civic engagement and local history research and encouraged others to join her. The list of sponsors of this scrapbook is long; many people treasured Carlisle. It is up to us in the history community to appreciate her gifts, remember to take up the torch she lit, and carry it along.

CYNTHIA D. BITTINGER

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### *The Last of the Hill Farms: Echoes of Vermont's Past*

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By Richard W. Brown (Jaffrey, N.H.: David R. Godine, 2018, pp. 136, \$40.00).

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A new collection of black-and-white photographs from Vermont photographer Richard Brown richly illuminates the humanity and quiet tenacity of farm families eking out a living on small-scale operations sprinkled across the rugged hillsides of Vermont. Such farms have nearly vanished from the Vermont landscape, and Brown's work serves as a clear-eyed elegy to a way of life that has slipped away.

Brown moved to Vermont in 1971 and settled in the picturesque Northeast Kingdom town of Peacham. Inspired by luminaries of the photography world, Brown went to work documenting life in rural Vermont. He often used an 8x10 view camera, a cumbersome beast of a camera that was the tool of choice for legendary photographers such as Mathew Brady and Ansel Adams. The large-format camera requires a patient approach to subjects and produces rich works that allow viewers to dwell on intimate and subtle details.

Most of the photographs in the collection were taken during the 1970s, many within an hour's drive of Brown's home, which allowed him to develop relationships with his subjects. Several chapters are devoted to people for whom he clearly had a deep and reciprocal affection. The book features a satisfying mix of candid and posed portraits.

Small details fill in the blanks about the subject's life: a battered kettle on a wood stove, a torn or mended sleeve, worn boots drying by the fire, a child's grubby cheeks. Brown's work calls to mind the spare but luscious documentary work of modernist photographers like Paul Strand and Edward Weston.

Brown divides the book into chapters with loose themes such as "Wood Heat," "Benign Neglect," "Making Hay," and "The Barn." Each chapter features a short introduction from Brown with poetic and evocative anecdotes about the subject matter. They offer a satisfying and sometimes unexpected riff on a theme. The chapter titled "Ghosts" presents a moody shot of a fog-shrouded cemetery, an abandoned farmhouse, an ancestral portrait in an ornate frame, and surprisingly, the frost-coated wisps of a milkweed plant gone to seed. The chapter entitled "Tradesmen" is the only one that felt unresolved. It opens with a spectacular shot of a sheep shearer holding the glinting steel blades of his craft at the neck of a wary sheep. I was expecting shots of a farrier or blacksmith or butcher or lumberjack to follow, but the rest of the chapter's images are devoid of people, which left me feeling a bit unfulfilled.

Perhaps the most successful chapters are those that focus on a particular person or family. Brown's relationship with these folks is evident as he captures various aspects of their tough yet seemingly fulfilling lives. Brown's chapter on Theron Boyd, a dairy farmer who lived without electricity, is particularly engaging, as the viewer marvels at the clash of centuries embodied in this anachronistic farmer, already in his late seventies when Brown photographed him. The opening photo of Boyd cooking supper on a battered wood stove in his torn overalls and Chuck Taylor canvas sneakers is one of the book's best. Another of Boyd, glowing with love as he stands before a photo of his grandmother, coffee cup in hand, bubbles with tender kindness and defies the cliché of the grumpy old farmer.

While Brown's portraits are the heart of this collection, he offers numerous landscapes and still lives that speak just as loudly. A shot of a team of draft horses, paused while plowing a field, highlights perfect rows of freshly turned earth that are the work of an artist as much as a farmer. A full moon rising over the Learmonth Farm in Kirby displays textures and tonal range that would make Ansel Adams swoon. A shot of a lonely elm tree in a snowy pasture crossed by a toothy wooden fence is a minimalist tour de force.

*The Last of the Hill Farms* is a bittersweet celebration of a way of life that has all but vanished from Vermont. There is no denying the hardships that these farmers faced, but they were making a living and a life, albeit a modest one. At the time these photos were taken, a farmer could get by comfortably with a herd of forty dairy cows. That scale is almost unthinkable in the current age of big farms, big competition, and big debts. It's hard not to pine for those simpler times. Richard Brown's luminous photos take us back to a particular time and place that can warm the soul, even on a cold winter day in Vermont.

JEB WALLACE-BRODEUR

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