



# The Other Montpelier: Historical Glimpses and Memories of the City's Development along the River Valleys

*While many of the industries along the river valleys and the buildings they occupied are no longer there, images remain in photo archives and the memories of some of the city's older residents. As a Montpelier native who has spent many years researching its history, I offer here some historical glimpses and my own memories of the city's industrial past.*

By MANUEL GARCIA JR.

**V**ermont's capital city is a picturesque community nestled around the junction of two river valleys and the surrounding hillsides. It is the seat of state government and the legislature, having been the state capital since 1805. Beyond that, it has been the home of several insurance companies since the early to mid-nineteenth century. In this rural state, Montpelier has always been regarded as a small white-collar city, a status it retains today. Most of the neighborhoods appear well kept, with many homes receiving major renovations

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to preserve not only their own value but that of the entire community. The downtown is a vibrant place for residents, office workers, and non-residents, and the statehouse is the focal point for residents and tourists.

Behind this idyllic image of Montpelier one can easily find the remnants of a rich industrial history much like most other Vermont communities settled in the early 1800s. In those early years the basic necessities to sustain life were of primary importance and in close proximity to peoples' homes. Other types of industries soon followed to provide salable products and offer employment for local people. Mills were constructed from the time of the earliest settlement well into the nineteenth century along the Winooski and North Branch rivers. In the nineteenth century the railroads connected the area to the outside world. The tracks were also set along this valley. This facilitated the transportation of material, whether manufactured or in unfinished form.

During the middle of the nineteenth century, the major portion of manufacturing in Montpelier was along the Winooski River at the south end of Main Street, and along areas of the North Branch. Toward the end of the century and into the twentieth century, granite-manufacturing plants were built easterly along the valley and into the Pioneer Street area.

Residential neighborhoods were interwoven with all of the industry. It was not uncommon to have a granite shed as your neighbor across the street. That industry was a large employer and attracted people of various ethnic backgrounds who came to live in the city in the latter 1800s and much of the 1900s. Your nationality, whether it was Spanish, Italian, Scottish, or French, was generally a good indicator of the neighborhood you lived in.

In this mix of commercial activity, the various sights and sounds could be heard. During the weekdays, there was the constant hum of all of the machinery. Regularly throughout the day you could hear the whistle of a steam locomotive chugging along the tracks. Also there was the traffic along both Berlin and River streets, which since 1927 were part of US Route 2 through the city.

While many of the industries along the river valleys and the buildings they occupied are no longer there, images remain in photo archives and the memories of some of the city's older residents. As a Montpelier native who has spent many years researching its history, I offer here some historical glimpses and my own memories of the city's industrial past.

I grew up on River Street, an industrial section of Montpelier, where

from the latter 1940s through the early 1960s I was exposed to the commercial activity along the Winooski River Valley. I have many memories of the granite industry as well as of the smaller commercial establishments that were essential to supplying the community's needs. The entire area seemed to be alive with activity. There was no escaping the fact that the theme for life in this area was manufacturing, with its noise, pollution, and dust, in contrast to the quiet upscale neighborhoods north of the Winooski River. As a result I was always fascinated to explore the "sights and sounds" associated with my surroundings.

### MONTPELIER'S EARLY YEARS

In 1787, when Col. Jacob Davis came into the area that would ultimately become the Village and in 1895 the City of Montpelier, he cleared land and built a log cabin near the confluence of the Winooski River and its North Branch. Davis's reasoning was that travel would eventually go through the valleys and that location would have more potential for commerce and growth.<sup>1</sup> In addition to clearing the land to grow crops and raise animals to sustain his family, and authorized by a vote of the Montpelier proprietors in January 1786, Davis started the first local enterprise by erecting a sawmill on the falls of the North Branch of the Winooski River in 1788. The following year he constructed a gristmill at this same site.<sup>2</sup> This was the beginning of available material for shelter and food produced locally to support the needs of people moving to the area.

In the following years, business owners built various mills not only on the North Branch but also along the Winooski River. Until 1899, the river was the boundary between Montpelier and the town of Berlin, and mills along its banks at the falls west of the Main Street Bridge therefore occupied land in both towns and served the area's growing population.

Berlin's northerly border with Montpelier was just south of the Winooski River. Many people on the Berlin side of the valley felt stronger ties to the nearest village. The roots of a secession movement began as far back as 1858; however, not until February 1, 1899, did the annexation become a reality. Annexation would mean a northerly part of Berlin would become part of the City of Montpelier. The city authorities had concerns at the time that the number of pauper families in Berlin included in the move would become their responsibility. Eventually, as a result of a decision from the Vermont Supreme Court, Montpelier inherited the paupers that were on the Berlin side.<sup>3</sup>

The first published image of Montpelier (1821) was made by Sarah

Montpelier was still a small town when the first Vermont State House was erected northwest of the confluence of the Winooski and North Branch Rivers. *FIRST STATE HOUSE COMPLETED IN 1808* Curator of State Buildings Photo



*Figure 1. Woodcut based on the Sarah Watrous view of Montpelier, 1821. All images for this article are available for viewing online at: [DigitalVermont.org/IndustrialMontpelier](http://DigitalVermont.org/IndustrialMontpelier).*

Watrous. Figure 1 is a view looking north from the hillside south of the Winooski River. It shows the falls on the river, which appear to have been formed into a dam to supply water power to the buildings on either side. This rendition also shows the trestle-type bridge crossing the Winooski River just east of the dam.



*Figure 2. Red Arch Bridge from Berlin side of the Winooski River, c. 1890.*

Elijah Paine's turnpike ran from East Brookfield to Montpelier to the north end of this bridge, where there was a toll house. Dependable access to both sides of the river was of vital importance to the area's economy. The bridge was prone to washouts and was replaced in 1826 with a covered bridge known as the Red Arch Bridge that crossed the river in a single span. That bridge remained in place for seventy-two years (Figure 2) until replaced with a steel truss bridge in 1898.

Fire destroyed Col. Davis's sawmill and gristmill on the North Branch in 1826.<sup>4</sup> Other businesses in this vicinity included a woolen factory, also destroyed by fire in 1826, and another woolen factory that was started in 1837. This company employed twenty to thirty workers

and was later converted into the largest lumber manufacturing establishment that ever existed in town.

Various other mills operated at the falls on the banks of the Winooski River. As early as 1805, references indicate the existence of a linseed oil mill, a paper mill, a cotton factory erected in 1810 that manufactured cotton sheetings and cotton shirtings, a sawmill, and no fewer than four gristmills. James R. Langdon operated a notable gristmill in its day, which “had the capability of producing 250 barrels of flour daily” and was in business for several years.<sup>5</sup> Many of these structures were eventually consumed by fire or damaged or, in one case, completely carried away by floods.

In addition, there were two tanneries, one located adjacent to the North Branch on Cummings Street and the other on the south side of the Winooski River on Northfield Street.<sup>6</sup>

Other areas of early industrial development were Wright’s Mill on the North Branch approximately three miles north of Montpelier Village,<sup>7</sup> and Daggett’s Mills on the Winooski River in what would later become the Village of East Montpelier. In 1839 Mrs. Nathaniel Davis, a relative of Jacob Davis, established a large woolen mill that employed many people on the falls of the Kingsbury Branch in North Montpelier.<sup>8</sup>

In 1832, Alfred Wainwright started operating a foundry and a forge on the east side of the North Branch falls. He operated this business until his death in 1852 (Figure 3, a view from Elm Street looking northeast).<sup>9</sup> The buildings erected by Wainwright in 1832 were purchased in 1863 by Dennis Lane, a sawmill proprietor of Plainfield. With a patented lever-set sawmill and in partnership with P. P. Pitkin



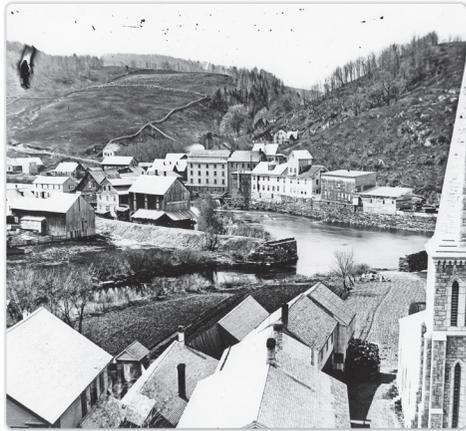
*Figure 3. Alfred Wainwright's foundry and forge, c. 1868.*



*Figure 4. Lane Shop employees, no date.*

and James W. Brock, he established the Lane Manufacturing Company, which manufactured circular mill saws and many other products, including cranes and machinery for the granite industry (Figure 4).<sup>10</sup>

Figure 5, looking southeast from State Street, shows the mills located at the falls of the Winooski River. The buildings shown on the far side of the river are in the town of Berlin



*Figure 5. Berlin mills, c. 1871.*

and were known as the Berlin Mills in early years and later as the Montpelier Manufacturing Company.<sup>11</sup> Buildings on the near side in the village of Montpelier housed a carriage shop and factory. Of interest in the photograph are a railroad bed and bridge abutments under construction at the mouth of the North Branch.

#### NINETEENTH- THROUGH TWENTIETH-CENTURY DEVELOPMENT

Around the middle of the nineteenth century, some significant changes occurred. In 1848 a large portion of the town of Montpelier split off to become the Town of East Montpelier, leaving the area in the valleys adjacent to the Winooski River where it meets the North Branch to become the Village of Montpelier. A year later, the Vermont Central Railroad, which started with a line from Windsor to Essex, connected the Village of

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Montpelier with a mile-and-one-half-long spur from the mainline at Montpelier Junction to Taylor Street. This served the traveling public and supplemented the horse and wagon for transporting goods and supplies, thereby opening the region to wider markets. Additionally, telegraph, gas



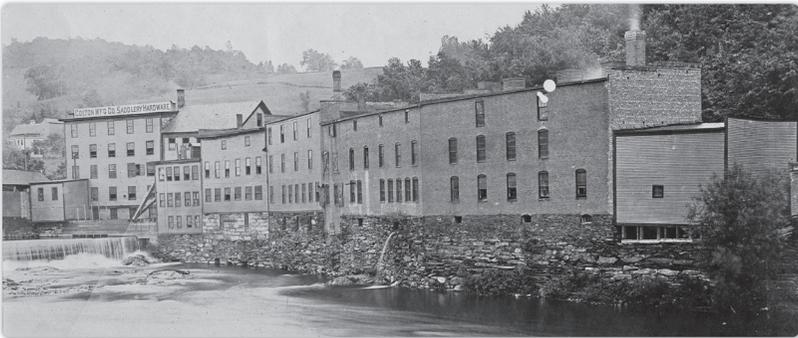
*Figure 6. Vermont Central Railroad station, 1873.*

lighting, and eventually electricity became available, and the advancement of photography allowed reliably detailed images of the city to be recorded.

Figure 6, taken from the State House, is a view looking southeast towards the Main Street covered bridge in the background. Near the right margin

of this photograph is the Vermont Central (later known as the Central Vermont) passenger depot, which was the terminus of the short spur into the village. It also shows the tracks of the Montpelier and Wells River Railroad running east from Taylor Street and through the covered railroad bridge over the North Branch. In November 1873, the Montpelier and Wells River Railroad ran the first passenger and freight train over the completed line from Montpelier to Wells River.

By 1891, the rambling complex of buildings on the south side of the Winooski River falls, formerly known as the Montpelier Manufacturing Company, was now largely occupied by the Colton Manufacturers

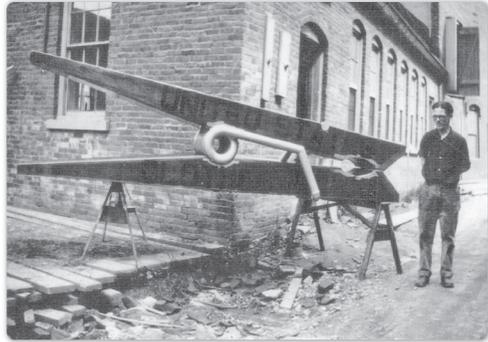


*Figure 7. Montpelier Manufacturing Company later Colton's Saddlery Hardware, 1891.*



*Figure 8. Montpelier Manufacturing employees with State House to the west, no date. Private Collection of Doris Price.*

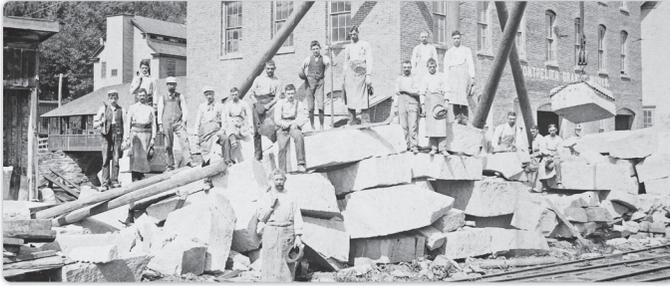
of Saddlery Hardware. Figure 7 is a view looking southeast upstream with the end of the Main Street covered bridge at the left margin. In the busy season, they employed about 75 men (Figure 8).<sup>12</sup> Other businesses in this location were the Sabin Machine Company, manufacturers of several types of springs and patent candy-cutting machinery, the Colby Wringer Company, and the T. Gisborne Lumber Sawing and Planing works. In later years, the United States Clothespin Company was the last business to occupy this complex. In the late 1920s Charles H. Ellicott Jr., an employee of the company, made a large-scale model of the clothespins they produced (Figure 9) and mounted it on the roof at the east end, for all to see. As a very young child I remember riding past the building and noticing the large clothespin on the roof.<sup>13</sup>



*Figure 9. Large scale model of wooden U. S. Clothes Pin.*

On Main Street at the northwest corner of the covered bridge stood the E. W. Bailey Grist Mill, built in 1873 (Figure 10). This firm did a general jobbing trade, wholesale and retail, in flour, feed, and grain. Part of their operation was grinding full car lots at their mill, which was situated on the Winooski River. When the mill burned in 1924 a new





*Figure 12. Montpelier Granite Works, before 1898.*



*Figure 13. E. W. Bailey building at west side of Main Street, c. 1927).*



*Figure 14. Building (currently Sarducci's Restaurant), moved to new location on east side of Main Street, c. 1995. Courtesy of Paul Carnahan.*

The building was completely rotated one hundred and eighty degrees so that its front, which had faced eastward, was now facing in a westerly direction. In its new location, it was first used as a retail salvage company with many parts of demolished buildings sold to those involved with restoring older homes and buildings. By January 19, 1994, the building was the home of a new Montpelier restaurant specializing in Italian cuisine (Figure 14). Sarducci's has become a very popular place to eat. My mother's family was from Italy. She lived long enough to sample Sarducci's food.



Figure 15. Home of Lester Greene's patented medicine, c. 1898.



Figure 16.  
“Twill Cure  
Your Cold!”  
Greene's  
Warranted  
Syrup of Tar  
broadside,  
c. 1898.



Figure 17. Business men with derby hats and workers with lunch pails, at M. & W. depot, c. 1891.



Figure 18. Commuter train pulled by locomotive Arthur Tandy, c. 1890-1913.

Looking southeast across the river from the Main Street bridge, the building shown in Figure 15 housed Greene's Warranted Syrup of Tar. This firm manufactured patented medicines including “remedies” such as cough syrup, wart and bunion removers, and other cures. It was located on the corner of Berlin Street and School Avenue (Figure 16). Lester Greene, a Montpelier pharmacist who had a drugstore in the village, started the operation at this site in the 1890s.<sup>15</sup> The Montpelier and Wells River Railroad passenger depot and administrative offices were located at the southeast end of Main Street in the building that today houses the Citizens Bank. Businessmen in derby hats and workmen with lunch pails waited for the train together (Figure 17). The railroad company was based in Montpelier and ran thirty-eight miles east to Wells River. In 1889 they started service on two additional lines, one to downtown Barre and the other to the granite quarries beyond (Figure 18). This provided Montpelier and eventually Barre and other surrounding towns with a link to the railroad routes along the Connecticut River Valley.<sup>16</sup>



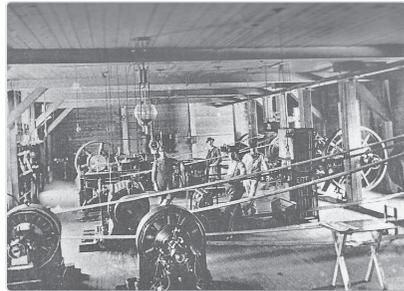
*Figure 19. Former M. & W. engine and repair shop, no date, 1873-1907.*

Figure 19 looks east along what is now Stone Cutter's Way and shows the engine and repair shops of the Montpelier and Wells River Railroad. Although the engine house was destroyed by fire in 1907, the building to the right in the photograph still stands today.

Several feet east on Pioneer Street on the south side of the Winooski River, a large wood frame building known as the Pioneer Mills was constructed in the second half of the nineteenth century. This complex was adjacent to a small concrete dam on the Winooski River and was advertised for many years as a building for lease with water power (Figure 20). A succession of granite manufacturers including the Excelsior Granite Company used the water power to run their polishing machines.<sup>17</sup> In 1888, the Standard Light and Power Manufacturing Company purchased the Pioneer Mills property along with the water power and began to supply the villages of Montpelier and Barre with electricity generated at this site for lighting streets, stores, and homes (Figure 21).<sup>18</sup>



*Figure 20. Pioneer Mills from old Country Club Road, c 1890.*

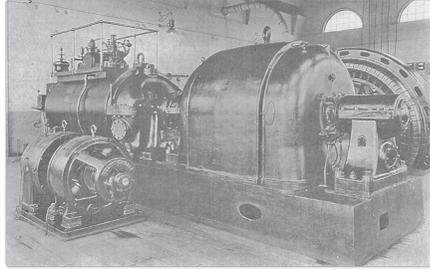


*Figure 21. Interior of Standard Light and Power Manufacturing Company, c. 1888. Personal Collection of Manuel Garcia Jr. Source Unknown.*

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*Figure 22. Steam Plant# 3 reserve power, c. 1903. Courtesy of National Life Insurance Company through Brian Lindner.*



*Figure 23. Interior of Consolidated Lighting Company Steam Plant, c. 1903. From Arthur W. Brayley, History of the Granite Industry of New England. Vol. 2 (1913).*

Another electrical power source in central Vermont came from the Consolidated Lighting Company, which operated a hydroelectric plant at Bolton Falls and a reserve steam plant on the outskirts or Pioneer section of Montpelier (Figure 22). The power was used in stone sheds to drive air compressors and a variety of special machines used in the manufacturing of monuments and mausoleums. This reserve steam plant was necessary in times of low river flow when hydro power would have been reduced (Figure 23). In January 1927 this plant was owned by Peoples Hydro Electric Vermont. The following year it became part of Green Mountain Power Corporation.

Adjacent to the Pioneer Mills and across the Central Vermont Railroad tracks a cluster of buildings housed the granite operation of Harry J. Bertoli. Shown in Figure 24 are many of the artisans posing outside of the statuary shop. There were many granite plants in Montpelier along the Winooski River valley from Taylor Street to Pioneer Street. Bertoli's sheds were at the eastern terminus of this cluster of stone-shaping activity. With a railroad connection to the quarry area in Barre,



*Figure 24. Harry Bertoli and sculptors, c. 1892. Private Collection of Manuel Garcia Jr.*



Figure 25. Inside of statuary shop, no date. Private Collection of Manuel Garcia Jr.



Figure 27. Bertoli Home on Taplin Street, c. 1905. Private Collection of Manuel Garcia Jr.



Figure 26. Margaret Pitkin Monument (Little Margaret). Private Collection of Manuel Garcia Jr.

the manufacturing of granite in both Barre and Montpelier created employment for many people. Bertoli was a sculptor who came to the area from Carrara, Italy, in 1888. He set up his own establishment in 1892. The company employed approximately fifteen people, six of whom were shaping statues and involved in carving work (Figure 25), and was located at this site for about ten years. At this plant Bertoli created the Margaret Pitkin monument known as “Little Margaret” (Figure 26), which still stands in Montpelier’s Green Mount Cemetery.<sup>19</sup>

Harry (Aristede) J. Bertoli and Maria Pisani Bertoli were my maternal grandparents. While living in Montpelier, they resided on Taplin Street in the Pioneer Mill neighborhood that was home to many Italian families (Figure 27). They took in boarders and also provided temporary lodging for many Italian immigrants who came to Montpelier looking for employment. My grandfather may have provided work for some of those lodgers. After Harry’s death at age 47, Maria, like many widows of gran-

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*Figure 28. Harry and Maria Bertoli. 1888. Private Collection of Manuel Garcia Jr.*

ite workers, continued to take in boarders on Taplin Street to help make up for the loss of her husband's income (Figure 28).

The National Clothespin Company, shown in Figure 29, moved into a building on Granite Street in 1918, where it still has a very limited operation. In the heyday of clothespin manufacturing, when walking past the building you could feel the vibration and hear the noise and clatter from all of the machinery in full operation pounding on the old wooden floors. It seemed to put the building under a great deal of stress. Figure 30 shows many of the women employed by this company to produce clothespins. Although the call

for wooden clothespins has declined over time, the current owners keep a small number of assembly machines that date from the early 1900s to fill specialty orders. Many parts of this three-story building have been renovated to make several smaller spaces (studios) that are leased out to generate income. Fortunately, the owners have an avid interest in keeping the building in good repair with concern for its historical significance.

My mother's sister Assunta (Susie) and her husband Andrew Berganti were very entrepreneurial and opened retail stores in Montpelier early in their marriage. My uncle started with a cigar store in 1920 and later built a filling station on Berlin Street. It was one of Montpelier's first modern service stations, employing a canopy over the gas pumps—an architectural concept that became the standard throughout the area



*Figure 29. National Clothes Pin Company on Granite Street, c. 2000. Courtesy of Peter Merrill.*



*Figure 30. Woman employees at the National Clothes Pin Company, c. 1938. Private collection of Doris Price.*

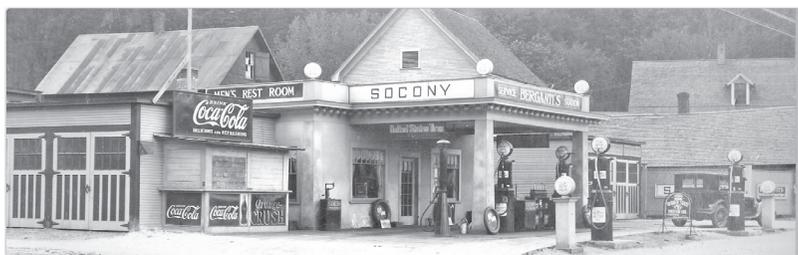


Figure 31. Socony Filling Station, c. 1927. Private Collection of Berganti Family.



Figure 32. Berganti Specialty Shop, c. 1930. Private Collection of Berganti Family.



Figure 33. Berganti home on East State Street, 1930s. Private Collection of Berganti Family.



Figure 34. Alpine Motel on River Street, 1950s. Private Collection of Berganti Family.

(Figure 31). This business provided an ample supply of gasoline, oil, water, and also service and repair work. The petroleum company was the Standard Oil Company of New York (SOCONY), a common brand of gasoline and automobile engine products of the day. They next operated a fruit and confectionary store at 14 State Street in 1925. My aunt later established a woman's apparel shop at 27 Main Street (Figure 32). The Bergantis also had a shop in their elegant home on East State Street, also known as Berganti's Specialty Shop (Figure 33). In later years, the Bergantis built and operated the Alpine Motel on River Street (Figure 34).

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Figure 36. Employees of Excelsior Granite Company, 1940s. Private Collection of Olive Franzl.



Figure 35. Excelsior Granite Company, 1940s. From Brayley, History of the Granite Industry of New England.



Figure 37. Manuel M. Garcia Sr. no date. Private Collection of Manuel Garcia Jr.

To the east of Granite Street was the Excelsior Granite plant (Figure 35), which later became the Montpelier Granite Works (Figure 36). My father Manuel Garcia worked for both of these concerns during the 1940s and 1950s as a monumental designer and draftsman (Figure 37). As a young boy I remember going into his drawing room and being aware of the smell of sharpened pencils and fascinated with the drawings on tracing paper. The Jurras Plant on the east side of Granite Street has been gone for several years.

#### LIVING ON RIVER STREET

My parents owned a tourist home on River Street and took in overnight guests during the warm part of the year. Many cars came and went from our residence. Before the interstate highway was completed through the area, River Street in Montpelier, also identified as US Route 2, was part of the main east-west road through the state, as it is today. Our house sat high off the street, and I often sat on our front lawn and made a game out of counting cars to find out how many of

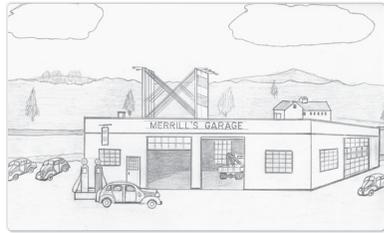
certain makes passed by in a given time (Figure 38).

Despite the fact that some of the business operations always closed at night and on weekends, there was never any time without activity and noise. Across the street from our house was a wrecking garage. This large building, used to repair and service vehicles of all shapes and sizes, seemed to operate all hours of the day and night (Figure 39). Heavy vehicle traffic could be heard from the street. During the season for motorcycle races at Laconia, New Hampshire, we could hear cycle after cycle, many from Canada, roaring down River Street, the riders singing at the top of their lungs at all hours of the day and night. In the background of all this was the Granite Street Bridge. The floor system consisted of wide timber planks laid somewhat loosely. When a vehicle came across the bridge the planks rattled so loudly we could hear the sound all the way to our house. I became so used to the sound, however, that I had no trouble falling asleep.

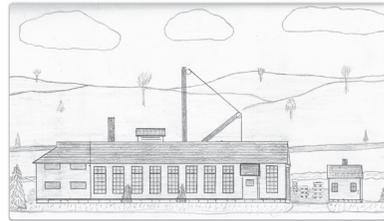
A granite plant diagonally across the street from our house was the Rock of Ages Eureka Plant #6 (Figure 40). This was an average-size granite shed built very close to River Street and it contributed to the noise in the area. As children we played cautiously after working hours among the stacked large granite blocks behind the plant. Because my mother operated our tourist home across the street, laundry was an everyday chore. Occasionally, to her chagrin, she would go out to the clothesline and find the sheets covered with black cinders of soft coal from the plant's heating system. This made it almost impossible to keep laundry clean.



*Figure 38. Garcia homestead, River Street, c. 1950. Private Collection of Manuel Garcia Jr.*



*Figure 39. Merrill's Garage, c. 1950. Private Collection of Manuel Garcia Jr.*



*Figure 40. Rock of Ages Eureka Plant #6, c. 1950. Private Collection of Manuel Garcia Jr.*



Figure 41. Ernie's Variety Store, 1972.  
Courtesy of City of Montpelier.

Of all the various shapes, sizes, and architecture of the buildings in our neighborhood, a small gambrel-style building that originally housed the Ghiringhelli Brothers grocery, and its prominent location, would be remembered by many residents and through-travelers alike. If there was ever a building that was in sharp contrast to the many industrial structures and family residences, it was the iconic little grocery store that was built in the “notch” of the intersection of Berlin and River streets. It was a place where one could stop for essential food, milk, bread, liquor, something to smoke, or for selecting penny candy to buy. This was one of several grocery stores in the area. The last occupant to own and run this business was Ernest Byron. It was known as Ernie's Variety Store (Figure 41). The operation went out of business after improvements to the roadway eliminated the parking area.



Figure 43. Early  
Glass Milk Bottle.  
Private Collection  
of Manuel Garcia Jr.

In our neighborhood the Marvin and Cooley Dairy on Berlin Street processed milk for sale to the public (Figure 42). In the early days of the operation, co-owner Bing Marvin came to our house to take orders for milk and horse-drawn wagons delivered the milk to homes in glass bottles, which were placed in small insulated boxes on the porches. These containers kept the milk cool in warm weather, but in cold weather, if you did not bring it in soon after delivery, the milk would freeze and push the small cap up and out of the bottle (Figure 43).



Figure 42. Marvin and Cooley Dairy, 1972. Courtesy of City of Montpelier.

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*Figure 44. Aja Brothers River Street Market, c. 1950. Private Collection of Zorzi Family.*



*Figure 45. Tony Aja and children, c. 1940. Private Collection of Zorzi Family.*

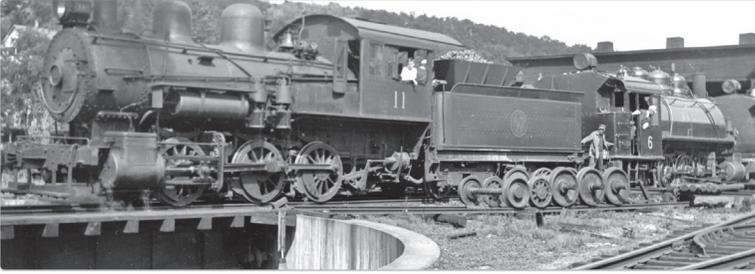
A short way from our house was the Aja Brothers Meat Market. The market was in the basement of the family homestead (Figure 44). In early years family members delivered the meat around the area in their horse-drawn wagon. A photo from that time shows two children and their father ready to make deliveries (Figure 45). The young girl on the horse is Angeles Aja Zorzi. In the wagon is her younger brother.

Among the commercial buildings clustered around the intersection of Northfield and Berlin streets was Louis Gould's scrapyard at the corner of Prospect Street and Northfield Street. As kids who lived a mile up river, we had no metal or rags to sell to him, but he also bought old newspapers that my brother, our friends, and I acquired from people who were glad to have us take them. We constructed some small trailers to attach to the rear of our bicycles and made several trips to Gould's to exchange our papers for cash. It was fun, but we received only a small amount of pocket change for our labors.

The rail yards parallel to Barre Street on what is now Stone Cutters Way were a beehive of activity when I was a youngster (Figure 46). From where I lived I could look north across the valley and watch the steam locomotives on their way to and from the Montpelier rail yards.



*Figure 46. Railroad Yards, c. 1929. (Now Stone Cutters Way).*



*Figure 47. Montpelier and Wells River Railroad yards. c. 1950.*

Living on River Street and attending school across the city, I crossed the Granite Street Bridge to Barre Street and then went via Hubbard Street to Union School. My childhood was not one of close supervision, and while it was not the safest route, it allowed me to explore the more interesting venues, including the railroad tracks along the rail yards. One had to be aware of moving equipment and what to stay clear of, but I remember the wintertimes especially, as there were small huts with stoves where the yardmen could warm up in the frigid weather. There was a mystique to the area that one did not experience by staying on the sidewalks (Figure 47).

#### WINOOSKI AVENUE

The Winooski Avenue neighborhood (today known as Memorial Drive) was an area somewhat segregated from the other parts of the city. It was a narrow and somewhat crooked lane that eventually led to Montpelier's junction with the railroad's mainline. Not a major thoroughfare and probably not travelled by many of the city's inhabitants, it started at the Main Street Bridge and ran west along the south bank of the river. At the street's beginning, adjacent to the river in earlier years, were the buildings that housed the mills. These formed a portal of sorts to the avenue, as there was no bridge at Bailey Avenue. When the new Montpelier High School was completed in 1956 in the meadow northwest of what is now Bailey Avenue, the only way to access the school was by way of Winooski Avenue. As a sophomore, I sometimes had the opportunity to use the family car or catch a ride with friends to get to the school. Many times, however, I walked to and from classes, which was an education in itself, as along this stretch of road there were small tarpaper cabins that people lived in. These odd-shaped little shacks were heated by wood stoves and, I assume, did not have indoor plumbing. I suspect they also had no electricity because I cannot remember seeing power lines. The south side of the Winooski River was



Figure 48. Model of Vermont State House, 1930s.

a contrast to life on the north side, but nowhere was this more evident than in this “neighborhood” of the city, directly across the meadow from the nice homes on State Street. Another overnight tourist accommodation near the western extremities of the city limits was the Toy Town Motor Court, which had cabins in addition to rooms in the main unit. This property contained the miniature model of the Vermont State House built for the opening of the Champlain Bridge in 1929 (Figure 48), which has been fully restored and stands sheltered today in another location. The motor court was owned and operated by my father’s sister, Marina, and her husband Pradelio Angulo. As children we had great fun playing around the cabins and the miniature State House.

The foregoing glimpse and memories of Montpelier’s industrial history represents only a sampling of the many commercial establishments along the Winooski and North Branch. The businesses there were a combination of necessary manufacturing and services. Products from clothing to machinery, grain to patent medicine, were provided in Montpelier along with other service establishments. Today this area is still home to shops that provide some of the services that meet the needs of a modern society. But only a very small portion of the once-thriving granite industry remains, and there are many fewer manufacturing job opportunities for those who call Montpelier their home and place of employment. On the footprints of many of the concerns I mentioned, there are now newer structures that provide housing, convenience stores, restaurants, groceries, office space, and various other small businesses. Nonetheless, there are still areas where small industries compatible with the city zoning plan could be based along the Winooski River valley and make use of the existing railroad right of way. The tracks could serve the area should the rail system ever again

become a viable part of our country's transportation system. This would open up employment to those with a bent for being involved with a local product and also serve economic and environmental needs. As it was in the city's beginning, this part of Montpelier could provide a geographical location for potential added growth in commerce.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Daniel P. Thompson, *History of the Town of Montpelier, Vermont from the Time It Was Chartered in 1781 to the Year 1860* (1860; Bowie, MD: Heritage Books, 1995), 38-41. Abby Maria Hemenway, *Vermont Historical Gazetteer*, Vol. 4: The Towns of Washington County (Montpelier: Vermont Watchman and State Journal Press, 1882), 259-261. The author wishes to thank Paul Heller and Marianne Kotch for their editorial assistance; Paul Carnahan, librarian at the Vermont Historical Society, for assistance with finding images; and Marjorie Strong, assistant librarian, Vermont Historical Society, for assistance with the local history background.

<sup>2</sup> Thompson, *History of the Town of Montpelier*, 31, 48; Hemenway, *Vermont Historical Gazetteer*, 4: 259-261.

<sup>3</sup> Berlin Historical Society, *A Place to Pass Through: Berlin, 1820-1991* (Berlin, VT: Berlin Historical Society, 1991), 69.

<sup>4</sup> Thompson, *History of the Town of Montpelier*, 48, 135-136, 148; Hemenway, *Vermont Historical Gazetteer*, 4: 276.

<sup>5</sup> Thompson, *History of the Town of Montpelier*, 134, 144; Hemenway, *Vermont Historical Gazetteer*, 4: 275-276; Hamilton Child, comp., *Gazetteer of Washington County, Vt., 1783-1889* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse Journal Company, 1889), 326-327.

<sup>6</sup> Child, *Gazetteer of Washington County*, 330.

<sup>7</sup> Thompson, *History of the Town of Montpelier*, 137; Child, *Gazetteer of Washington County*, 327.

<sup>8</sup> Thompson, *History of the Town of Montpelier*, 136-137.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 135-136; Hemenway, *Vermont Historical Gazetteer*, 4: 276.

<sup>10</sup> J. A. DeBoer, *The Vermont Watchman Souvenir Edition Devoted to Montpelier, 1893* (Montpelier: Vermont Watchman, 1894), 39-40, 48; Child, *Gazetteer of Washington County*, 327.

<sup>11</sup> Child, *Gazetteer of Washington County*, 326-329; Hemenway, *Vermont Historical Gazetteer*, 4: 275, 277.

<sup>12</sup> DeBoer, *The Vermont Watchman Souvenir Edition*, 70-71; Child, *Gazetteer of Washington County*, 328-329.

<sup>13</sup> Child, *Gazetteer of Washington County*, 331.

<sup>14</sup> DeBoer, *The Vermont Watchman Souvenir Edition*, 41; Child, *Gazetteer of Washington County*, 328; Hemenway, *Vermont Historical Gazetteer*, 4: 275; Michael R. Doyle, *Events of This Day, Facts of Interest to Montpelier Folks Briefly Told by Dorman B. E. Kent* (New York: iUniverse, 2005), 348.

<sup>15</sup> Doyle, *Events of This Day*, 10, 89.

<sup>16</sup> Robert C. Jones, Whitney J. Maxfield, and William G. Gove, *Vermont's Granite Railroads: The Montpelier & Wells River and the Barre & Chelsea* (Boulder, CO: Pruett, 1985); Bill Gove, *Sky Route to the Quarries: The History of the Barre Railroad* (Williamstown, VT: Quarry View Publishing, 2004).

<sup>17</sup> Child, *Gazetteer of Washington County*, 188; DeBoer, *The Vermont Watchman Souvenir Edition*, 33-34.

<sup>18</sup> DeBoer, *The Vermont Watchman Souvenir Edition*, 44; Perry H. Merrill, *Montpelier: The Capital City's History, 1780-1976* (Montpelier, VT: Merrill, 1976), 89.

<sup>19</sup> DeBoer, *The Vermont Watchman Souvenir Edition*, 33-34.