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BOOK REVIEWS



Warfare and Logistics along the US-Canadian Border during the War of 1812

By Christopher D. Dishman (Lawrence: Kansas University Press, 2021, pp. 334, cloth, \$39.95).

The border between the United States and Canada is famous for being the longest demilitarized international border in the world. Two hundred years ago, this was hardly the case. Fresh off the American Revolution, many of the resentments from that conflict between Britain and the young United States endured into the nineteenth century, leaving the fate of the North American continent far from resolved. The War of 1812 between the United States and Great Britain gets short shrift in wider surveys of American history, even though the conflict definitively settled the unresolved issues and was pivotal in shaping American and Canadian national identities. For those looking for a primer on the War of 1812, and in particular the dramatic events that unfolded from the Great Lakes to Lake Champlain, Christopher D. Dishman's latest book, *Warfare and Logistics along the US-Canadian Border during the War of 1812*, would be a good choice.

The United States and Britain attempted several invasions of each other during this three-year war. That each of them failed was entirely unexpected since the invaders greatly outnumbered the defenders. Christopher Dishman, a region director for the US Department of Homeland Security with experience in border security and in the Department of Defense, seeks to explain the curious outcomes of these engagements. His stated argument is that victory "depended on enough men and supplies arriving promptly at a remote outpost or dockyard" (p. xii). The book then covers the fighting on the Canadian border

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chronologically, with chapters focusing on the major campaigns from Michigan to Vermont.

For those unfamiliar with this overlooked episode in American military history, *Warfare and Logistics along the US-Canadian Border* provides an engaging survey of the dramatic events on that front. The prose is sharp and clearly written, making the story of this complicated American frontier easy to follow. Military engagements and their contexts dominate the narrative. Although sources from Britons and Americans are cited, the perspective on the war is primarily that of the United States, with Native Americans only appearing occasionally. Along with logistics, a primary theme of this study is the woeful state of preparedness of the US military during the War of 1812. More than logistics, an incompetent officer class and an undertrained soldiery are fundamental to the author's explanation for the outcome of events.

For those with a more academic background, or who are already well read on the War of 1812, *Warfare and Logistics along the US-Canadian Border* primarily covers familiar ground with few original observations. This may have been Dishman's intent, since he does not engage with the historiography on the conflict. Although the narrative of the book is enjoyable to read, most of the chapters lack a clear argument; the primary drivers of the story are "great men." This is fine for a book on logistics; however, this reader was hoping to see more of the insights of historians of communication networks and infrastructure during the early republic incorporated into the analysis. Finally, because contemporary historians such as Alan Taylor have shown identity to be in such flux in North America, portraying the War of 1812 dichotomously as simply the United States versus Great Britain flattens the diverse perspectives that existed during the war. A social historical approach or a careful incorporation of Native American perspectives would reveal the experience of these campaigns beyond the tents of military officers.

The events on the Canadian front during the War of 1812 are sorely overlooked in American national and military history, which is unfortunate because they help us understand important developments in the evolution of the US military. *Warfare and Logistics along the US-Canadian Border during the War of 1812* provides an engaging and accessible account of this important moment in North American history.

ZACHARY M. BENNETT

Zachary M. Bennett is Assistant Professor of History at Norwich University. His work has appeared in the New England Quarterly and the Journal of Early American Studies.

Vermont's Northern Border During the Civil War

By Kenneth Lawson (Derby, VT: Derby Historical Society, 2022, pp. 72, paper, \$10.00).

Before 9/11, the difficulties one faced in crossing the land border between Vermont and Canada consisted of waiting in line for a matter of minutes before answering a few questions for a customs officer regarding identity, residence, purpose of trip, and the transporting of any merchandise subject to an excise tax. However, events have arisen since then to increase those difficulties, such as pandemics, terrorism, and war.

After 9/11, passports were required to cross the international border into the United States from Canada or any other foreign country. Kenneth Lawson, in an unbound treatise, examines the heightened scrutiny on that border that occurred during the Civil War, including a brief history of the passport system. Citing detailed sources, Lawson traces the federally issued passports to 1856, when they became strictly required for travelling to Canada on main roads and railways in Vermont.

However, with the advent of the Civil War, passport forgery became a serious issue. A significant fear was the use of forged passports by Confederate operatives from Canada; a real problem was the use of forged passports by army deserters and “skedaddlers” who fled when facing combat (see, for example, Stephen Crane, *The Red Badge of Courage*, chapters six and seven).

Lawson examines the militarization of the international border that accelerated with the advent of the Civil War. Initially, border protection fell to the Vermont militia, whose origins dated back to the days before the Revolution as the “Green Mountain Boys.” The militia’s defense of Vermont’s northern border during the War of 1812 was only halfheartedly effective in preventing the smugglers’ trade with British Canada because of New England’s opposition to that unpopular war. However, with the mobilization necessary to build a federal army, the militia companies were formed into army regiments and sent south to war, leaving the protection of Vermont’s northern border to the Home Guard.

With the depletion of the Vermont militia due to members joining the federal forces, the Home Guard was organized into a loose collection of volunteers who were too young, too old, or too infirm to be acceptable for federal military service; they had no uniforms and had to provide their own weapons. They protected railway traffic, checked passports, kept watch for deserters, and served other functions, relieving the more able bodied for more strenuous assistance to the war effort.

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All that changed with the St. Albans Raid. Escaped Confederate prisoners of war made their way to Canada, congregated in Montreal, filtered across the border to St. Albans, and on October 19, 1864, announced their intention of burning down the town after robbing its banks of all available funds. As a consequence of that guerilla action a provisional militia was created consisting primarily of able-bodied volunteers sufficient to fill several infantry regiments and a company of cavalry commanded by officers both retired and recuperating from wounds suffered in combat. Wounded combat soldiers recuperating in military hospitals in Burlington, Montpelier, and Brattleboro also participated. Those who were at least ambulatory were formed into the Veteran Reserve Corps (formerly called the Invalid Corps). Their functions were more akin to the Home Guard.

The provisional militia was only a temporary measure. The federal government finally took over primary responsibility for border security with the creation of the 26th New York Cavalry, stationed in upstate New York and Vermont. The unit's *nom de guerre* was the Frontier Cavalry, two companies of which were stationed in Vermont; inevitably it became known as the Vermont Frontier Cavalry. After Appomattox, it was mustered out in June 1865.

The wounded veterans of the Veteran Reserve Corps had already seen the horrors of combat. Lawson, a veteran himself, provides a litany of discipline problems arising in the ranks of the VRC including organized vandalism, homicide, and resisting arrest resulting in gunplay. He passes over these events without acknowledging "soldier's heart," the Civil War's name for the psychological phenomenon whose label evolved a half-century later into "shell shock" during World I, then World War II's "combat fatigue," and ultimately the current diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder.

Lawson asserts that, "It is important to remember that many of these deploying VRC soldiers had serious handicaps" (p.43), and "After the war ended, many wounded veterans in Vermont's three military hospitals still needed medical care" (p. 45). He cites examples of lost fingers, amputated arms, and death resulting from a debilitating stomach ailment. But he appears to have no sympathy for the veterans' invisible emotional wounds. He dismisses a homicide with the statement, "he . . . was placed in jail" (p. 43), and the shooting of two veterans interfering with the arrest of another in a hospital with the report that, "Order was, however, soon restored, and all has been quiet there since" (p. 46).

Of course, Lawson can say that he was simply quoting the period newspapers. But is quoting primary sources all that a historian does? In his disclosure of the darker side of the members of the Veteran Reserve

Corps, does he not owe the casualties of war an explanation of the symptoms of the emotional wounding they suffered?

Nevertheless, Lawson does provide a credible overview of the securing of Vermont's northern international border during the crisis of the Civil War. He liberally spices up his treatise with anecdotes of human interest pulled from newspaper accounts. This treatise is a worthwhile addition to the study of the Vermont home front during the Civil War.

CHARLES S. MARTIN

Charles S. Martin is a Barre attorney and a veteran of most of the major Civil War reenactments during the sesquicentennial of the Civil War during 2011–2015.

Hilltop Farm: Journals and Correspondence from a Rural Vermont Experiment in Subsistence Living, 1941–1945

By Piers Anthony Jacob and Teresa Jacob Engeman (Kennett Square, PA: The Write Place, 2021, pp. xi, 453, paper, \$24.95).

Back-to-the-land dreamers have found themselves drawn to Vermont for over two hundred years and counting. While the 1970s saw the most famous and, arguably, most politically transformative of these movements, Vermonters have played key roles throughout the long history of rural American utopian experiments. The twentieth century's most famous homesteaders, Scott and Helen Knothe Nearing, settled near Jamaica, Vermont, in the 1930s. In *Living the Good Life*, they described their experiments with building and gardening and eventually helped unleash a flood of idealistic young people seeking out a "Good Life" of their own—a flood that has slowed at times, but never fully ceased.

Now, in collaboration with the Vermont Historical Society, Piers Anthony Jacob and Teresa Jacob Engeman have offered a new entry into the literature of Vermont utopias. In *Hilltop Farm: Journals and Correspondence from a Rural Vermont Experiment in Subsistence Living, 1941–1945*, the brother-and-sister authors have pulled journals and letters from a battered cardboard box to compile the exhaustive record of another, Nearing-adjacent experiment in idealistic "simple" living: that of their parents, Norma and Alfred Jacob.

Like the Nearings and many other passionately committed back-to-the-landers before and since, Norma and Alfred emerged from privileged childhoods and elite educations (they met at Oxford in the 1930s)

with the desire for a more hands-on livelihood than they'd been raised to undertake. Devout Quakers, their commitment to pacifist activism led them into refugee relief work during the Spanish Civil War and, after narrowly escaping Europe at the start of WWII, to the Quaker intentional community at Pendle Hill in Pennsylvania. "I think some of us should prepare for the breakdown of the structure of society," wrote Alfred. "[F]or me this means experimentation with a small, closely knit community of friends close to the soil" (p. 4). Within a few months, they'd recruited two other couples and bought land and a 100-year-old house, sight unseen.

The chronicle of Hilltop Farm will draw chuckles of recognition from anyone familiar with the learning curves often experienced by idealistic, city-bred newcomers to Vermont: frigid winters spent unwittingly burning uncured wood; cellars full of rotting, improperly stored potatoes; heartbreaking late-April blizzards; clever solutions that somehow made the problem worse. Armed with confidence in lieu of skills, the Jacobs threw themselves into the endless work required by their experiment with simplicity. The fact that they succeeded as well as they did (while also finding time to keep meticulous records!) is a testament to their energy and drive.

It's important, though, to acknowledge the extent to which they, like many others before and since, drew on less-visible resources, including the inherited capital that allowed them to buy 800 acres and live (frugally) for months without additional income; the social networks that provided helpful visitors, salaried professional work, and access to children's education; and the class and race privilege that protected them from anything more destructive than "courteous indifference" (p. 96) from local communities. Over and over, these resources allow certain utopians to put their plans into action where others only have the means and safety to dream.

Hilltop had another experience in common with cooperative utopias across the centuries: tension between the pure, inspirational ideals of its founders and the necessary adjustments to those ideals amid the realities of actual subsistence and poverty by people experiencing them for the first time. Alfred Jacob's monomaniacal vision fueled Herculean levels of physical labor, but—as he himself admitted—his inability to recognize others' needs or desires immediately destroyed any possibility of cooperative community. Alfred's children attribute his inflexibility and occasionally violent frustration in part to undiagnosed Asperger's Syndrome. But it's worth noting that at Hilltop, as in many other visionary-driven utopias through the centuries, these tensions often fell along gendered lines, with male founders prioritizing building work and an ethic

of self-sacrifice over the dietary and child-rearing needs for which female founders argued (the Nearings' experiment notably did not include children).

Hilltop Farm the book faithfully follows the timeline offered by the archive's journals and letters. While this no doubt offers a huge favor to scholars and historians who would otherwise have to sort through the sources themselves, this strict adherence to chronology feels less useful to a casual reader. Helpful (and, frankly, fascinating) information about people, places, and wider contexts tend to appear only in footnotes, making it hard to retain important names and events. The authors wisely include their own memories, adult reflections, and even whole sections of dialog between adult Teresa and nonagenarian Alfred. However, this commentary takes the form of brief asides, leaving a tantalizing trail of childhood adventure vividly shot through with neglect and pain ("*Alfred*: My mind was on world needs, not on local children. *Teresa*: 'Local children?' Your *own* children!" p. 160). Fleshed out and given full attention, these reflections might offer readers nuanced and historically useful insights into how children raised in radical experimentation made sense of their parents' choices and how those experiences continued to influence their lives; Piers, for example, became a well-known author of speculative fiction.

But maybe that's a different book. There's no doubt that any reader drawn to the midcentury back-to-the-land movement made famous by the Nearings will find much to interest them in *Hilltop Farm*.

As someone raised in a back-to-the-land Quaker community by 1970s arrivals to Vermont, I read about the Jacobs' adventure with pleasure and recognition. Hilltop Farm's legacy is clear both in theme and in actual community connections. I spotted the names of 1940s back-to-the-landers who had provided a vital roadmap for my parents and their friends, much as their generation provides guidance to today's newest arrivals.

Years after she'd left Hilltop, Norma Jacob published an open letter in *Liberation*, a radical magazine run in part by David Dellinger (later of Montpelier, Vermont). Under the title "Community—But Not Utopia," she offered this advice: "We are people, not angels, and should face that fact at the start of our experiment, rather than have it thrust crudely upon us at its end" (p. 440). I hope the next generation of Vermont-bound dreamers are listening.

KATE DALOZ

Kate Daloz is the author of We Are as Gods: Back to the Land in the 1970s on the Quest for a New America (2016).

Night-Rider Legacy: Weaponizing Race in the Irasburg Affair of 1968

By Gary G. Shattuck (Burlington: University of Vermont, Center for Research on Vermont; Amherst, MA: White River Press, 2022, pp. xxxv, 463, paper, \$30.00).

Gary Shattuck has set himself a difficult task in his most recent book, *Night-Rider Legacy*. He wants to correct what he contends was a smearing of the good name of the Vermont State Police (VSP) during several prominent investigations that took place a half century ago. The smear was state police officers tagged as racists. Shattuck's method of correction is a review of the trove of documents created during the investigations. These documents, he asserts, show a cover-up of the real facts of three cases.

This interesting book makes bold assertions. Shattuck—who, after twelve years as a state police officer (1975–1987) went to law school and became a lawyer—acts as a guide through the mountains of evidence he's collected. You follow a hardworking sleuth putting his case together and presenting it to a jury. You're on the jury and you constantly feel the tug as you read the book that by its end, you'll have to decide who may be guilty and of what.

It's not an easy judgment to make. Were the book just about the 1968 "Irasburg Affair," when a Black minister named David L. Johnson, recently arrived in that town, had his home shot up in a nighttime drive-by, it would be easier to isolate the facts of that case and determine whether racism was involved and on whose part.

But Shattuck tries to connect what he feels was gross mischaracterization of the Irasburg investigation to two other events that didn't have anything to do with Irasburg racism. These are the "Paul Lawrence Affair," when VSP drug cop Lawrence framed numerous young people on bogus drug charges in the early 1970s; and the "Router Bit Affair" of the late 1970s, when VSP officers at the St. Johnsbury barracks were willing recipients of woodworking tools given them by an auxiliary VSP officer who had, unbeknownst to the others, stolen the items from the Lyndon tool factory where he worked.

These latter two events became noteworthy due to gross mismanagement by higher-ups in the VSP chain of command who hid evidence and didn't respond to reports of wrongdoing because of possible embarrassment to the police. The "Router Bit Affair" ended in the tragic suicide of a well-respected officer.

Shattuck's attempt to tie these three events together around a theme of

racism just doesn't work. What is illuminating, however, is the detailed research he's done into the formative years of Vermont's effort to establish the state's first statewide professional law-enforcement agency.

The VSP grew out of a force of officers within the Department of Motor Vehicles. In 1947, Governor Ernest Gibson Jr. convinced the legislature that a statewide police force was needed not just to keep the roads safe (for many years Vermont had one of the highest rates of fatal car crashes in the country), but to fight crime and provide emergency services statewide as well. Training was rudimentary, the pay bad, the hours worse, and the education level of its first officers basic (college graduates were discouraged from applying).

Like Vermont generally (and much of the country), the VSP wasn't ready for the 1960s. This was especially true when the state's first Democratic governor in 100 years, Philip Hoff, was elected in 1962. Hoff brought with him a group of other activist Democrats and some progressive Republicans who felt Vermont had to be pulled into a dynamic century already half over.

Among the issues Hoff took up were poverty and prejudice. Shattuck sees Hoff's efforts as largely political (Hoff was beginning to be noticed nationally as young, bold, and progressive). When the Vermont State Police were called in July 1968 to investigate the Irasburg shooting, they were thrown into a volatile situation that brought out issues simmering under the surface of small-town life in one of the state's most rural regions, the Northeast Kingdom. Circumstances developed that allowed the worst of suspicions, prejudicial or not, to come forward. The VSP stumbled (almost literally) upon the Black victim of the shooting allegedly having sex with a White woman who wasn't his wife.

Suddenly, public attention that had been focused on the shooting turned to what in 1968 was still a prosecutable crime in Vermont, adultery. The VSP's rationale for the adultery investigation was that Johnson's integrity was relevant to his having to give testimony about the vigilante raid if the perpetrator(s) were found and charged. Determining the credibility of a potential witness is part of an officer's job, Shattuck says, and shouldn't be seen as racist smearing.

If one follows the evidence Shattuck presents, however, comments made by some of the officers involved in the Irasburg investigation meet common standards of what can constitute racism. From the files Shattuck reviewed, a young divinity student (Edward Bottum) accompanying a local minister during a conversation with VSP officers noted that the troop commander of the St. Johnsbury barracks, Clement Potvin, "voluntarily admitted that he might be a little racially prejudiced," Bottum testified, "although he felt he had handled the case impartially." Bottum,

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says Shattuck, wrote that “Potvin told them that ‘Vermont was a pretty good state as it is now and he was a little concerned what would happen if a lot of colored people came.’” When the discussion with Potvin turned to the adultery allegation, Bottum wrote that Potvin said, “‘You know, it is the epitome for a colored man to have intercourse with a white woman. You know there are some white women who think that it is great to have intercourse with a colored person.’” Bottum asked Potvin what he meant; Potvin responded, “‘Have you ever seen a colored man in the shower?’” (pp. 145–46).

Assistant Attorney General Frank Mahady, when he drew up charges against the suspected shooter, wrote that “‘One state police officer informed me that I had charged young Conley [the shooting suspect] with the wrong crime. When I asked him what he meant by this, the officer told me that Conley should have been charged with ‘shooting coon out of season’” (pp. 147–48).

When VSP officers interrogated Johnson about his relationship with the White woman with whom he allegedly had sex, Shattuck relates that Johnson shouted, “‘Man, give me a break. What are you trying to accuse me of?’” To this, one of the officers responded, “‘Boy, I’d like to give you a break.’” The white police officer and his partner later “explained” the word “Boy” was meant for emphasis. But to a Black man, “Boy” is used to belittle and intimidate.

Accusations of racism can be difficult to assess. To a large extent, the Irasburg Affair speaks to the state’s growing pains during the turbulent 1960s, particularly around race issues. The terms “racism” and “racist” were not thrown about then the way they are today, but what exactly they mean and who is guilty of them remains ambiguous for many and invites controversy.

One thing is certain: Racist patterns of policing exist in Vermont today. We know this from statistical analysis of police “stop” data. Black drivers are stopped, arrested, and searched at a higher rate than White drivers but are less likely to be found with contraband when searched. We don’t know why one population is falsely targeted; but the cold, hard, statistical fact is it’s a race-based pattern. And the genesis of race-based patterns is a tendency to believe one group is more suspect of crimes and general misconduct than another. And an assumption based on race is racism.

Arguments about racial bias persist (in early 2022 a state police officer sued the state Human Rights Commission for alleging he was racially biased in a landlord-tenant dispute he investigated). One hopes that courts can help navigate a centuries-old race-based quagmire we still struggle to understand. To its credit, the VSP has taken bold steps in the

last ten years to gather data about the actions of their officers and to try to understand the actions that don't align with department policies.

An unfortunate distraction of the book is Shattuck's uneven writing. There are numerous typographical and syntactical errors that slow the reader. A copy editor paying scrupulous attention to detail could have helped. It's a shame that Shattuck's tremendous effort researching the book and documenting his sources of information is undercut by this lack of polish.

ALLEN GILBERT

Allen Gilbert is a former journalist, teacher, and executive director of the ACLU-VT. He is the author of Equal Is Equal, Fair Is Fair: Vermont's Quest for Equity in Education Funding, Same-Sex Marriage, and Health Care (2020).

A New Century in Waterbury, Vermont: Stories of Resilience, Growth & Community

By the Waterbury Historical Society (Charleston, SC: History Press, 2022, pp. 286, paper, \$23.99).

Vermont is filled with resilient individuals turning lemons into lemonade; but rarely is the spirit of resiliency of a community captured so clearly in one place as it is in this volume of stories of the people, places, and events in Waterbury and their symbols. In a relatively short timeframe, Waterbury has weathered massive changes: from Tropical Storm Irene (August 2011), which features frequently if surprisingly superficially in this book, to the recent growth of the beer culture and recreational tourism, to the long, fraught, and important history of the Waterbury State Hospital and its campus. The stories are of the people who made those changes possible, often in their own words.

The book is organized into chapters with clear-edged subjects, including arts and culture, businesses, celebrations, community organizations, recreation, tourism, and hospitality. This is a neat and tidy structure for material that would otherwise be challenging to organize. Each of these topics adds brushstrokes to the whole picture of Waterbury. With its many voices and clean writing, the reader is gently challenged to weave them together to make the story line.

The authors state in the preface (p. 10) that the symbols of the community include “dairy farms, a lantern parade, a new municipal complex, Village and Town distinctions, the train station, Tropical Storm Irene, Vermont State Hospital, craft beer, Not Quite Independence Day, and

radio station WDEV, among many others.” Any resident or visitor will recognize many of these but may not know the stories behind how they came to be. These stories serve as a virtual tour guide of the village, which this book could easily stand in for. Symbols are powerful only in their narratives, and this book presents “some of the narratives that have blossomed around these symbols, as told by the Waterbury community members themselves”(p.10).

Although a short reflective conclusion could have tied together these narratives and avoided an abrupt ending, the reader is left with a strong sense of the community of Waterbury and its symbols. The book weaves these stories and their symbols together in a way that subtly captures the essence of the place. It’s not until the end of the book that you feel its whole power. Again, symbols are a recurring theme and feature prominently; a visitor would recognize many of the chapter subjects. But in the words of Kim Phuc Phan Thi in a recent *New York Times* article, “We are not symbols. We are human.” This book is a fount of inspiration for any lover of symbolic or human markers of small-town life—in the Green Mountains and beyond.

While many of the book’s contributors remark in passing about Tropical Storm Irene or Covid-19 and on details and impacts of these events, they are not the focus of the stories; the people and what they made of those experiences are. The authors end the book with “Tragedies and Disasters” as its own chapter, reflecting on how these challenging events have impacted individuals, landmarks, and the landscape of the area. They could have started with these episodes, because it’s clear that they and other horrors, such as the loss of five local teenagers in a car crash involving a wrong-way driver, reinforced ties to the community and its people and, in many cases, contributed to the motivation to make Waterbury a better place. In fact, these tragedies and disasters are woven through the preceding chapters in subtle and powerful ways. If anything, the impact of these events is underrepresented, and knowing the stories behind many of the chapters makes me yearn for more introspection and candor—and less modesty—from the writers about their contributions to the recovery and renewal of their community.

Waterbury is strong for its people and the places around town remind us of that. This book captures many of them in one place, serving as a historical guide but also as a powerful reminder that when faced with what appear to be insurmountable obstacles, communities rise back even better because of the people who live there.

KIM GREENWOOD

Kim Greenwood lives on Camel’s Hump in Duxbury and contributed to The Land of Milk and Honey: A History of Beekeeping in Vermont (2019).