

# VERMONT

*The  
Proceedings of the  
Vermont Historical Society*

---

# HISTORY



SUMMER/FALL 1997

VOL. 65, NOS. 3&4



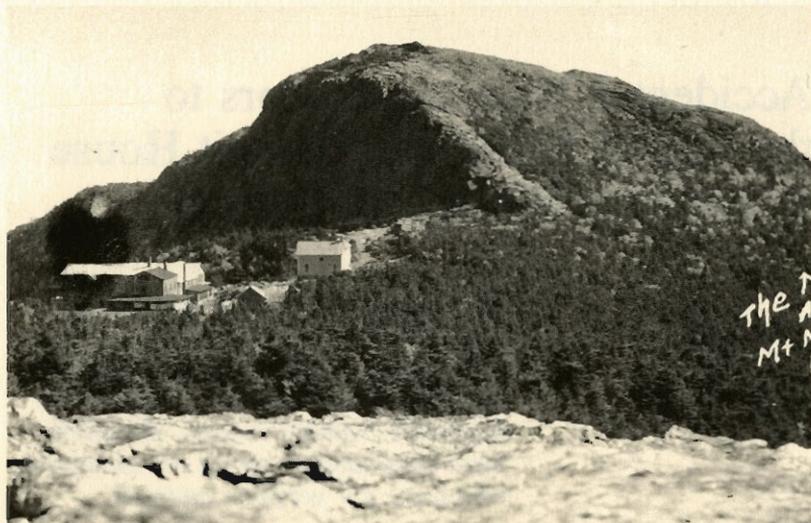
## Accidental Tourists: Visitors to the Mount Mansfield Summit House in the Late Nineteenth Century

*The registers of the Summit House recorded precisely the urban, prosperous clientele whose preferences shaped the development of all of New England's summer resorts. But there were some people up on the mountain who have not yet been counted.*

By DONA BROWN

**N**ot long ago, the history of tourism was treated as local history. Information about tourists was recorded chiefly in the form of anecdotes about famous visitors who had passed through town. A history of Stowe, Vermont, might record that Ralph Waldo Emerson had once stayed the night at the Summit House atop Mount Mansfield, or that visitors had come from as far away as Paris (France!) to see that same view, but it would not ordinarily pause to consider the network that had brought such visitors so far. In the past decade or so, however, historians have turned to a more systematic study of the tourist industry. In these studies, tourism has been revealed to be a vital national industry, a force that inspired great innovations in technology, marketing, and production, and helped to shape a national middle-class culture. But local studies still provide a useful lens through which to view the effects of that industry, and still raise challenging new questions for historians of tourism.<sup>1</sup>

The tourist industry came to the small town of Stowe, Vermont, in the middle of the nineteenth century. Like their counterparts in the White Mountains of New Hampshire and all over the northeast, from Newport, Rhode Island, to Niagara Falls, Stowe's speculators discovered new potential in local scenery. Here, the attraction was Mount Mansfield.



*"The Nose and Mt. Mansfield Hotel," Stafford Photo, no date. Postcard collection, Vermont Historical Society.*

In 1850, a local entrepreneur named Stillman Churchill built the first resort hotel in Stowe and began the work of making the ascent of the mountain possible for traveling ladies and gentlemen. Like many other early entrepreneurs, Churchill went bankrupt, but his mortgage holder, a local lawyer named William Henry Harrison Bingham, took over the hotel in town and continued to develop the mountain. In 1858 Bingham built a hotel at the top of Mount Mansfield. It was called the Summit House, or sometimes the Tip-Top House.

Bingham did not have a monopoly on the name, or the concept. By the late 1850s, there were Summit and Tip-Top houses springing up on many New England mountain peaks. Mount Washington boasted the highest and most famous Summit House, but there were many others. By mid-century, there were already hotels on Mount Wachusett, Mount Holyoke, and Greylock Mountain in Massachusetts. In Vermont, the late nineteenth century saw the appearance of "summit houses" atop Camel's Hump, Equinox, Killington, Lincoln, and Ascutney, as well as Mansfield.

By the mid-1860s, the tourist industry was beginning to have an impact on the town of Stowe. A new Mount Mansfield Hotel Company was formed by investors from Boston, New York, and Montreal. In 1864, their elegant and expensive new hotel, the Mansfield House, opened in the middle of town. Bingham sold the Summit House to the company that same year. At the same time, the town of Stowe responded to the

pressure for development by building two roads for tourists, one to the top of Mount Mansfield and the other to Smuggler's Notch, a narrow passage through the mountains that was becoming popular with visitors.<sup>2</sup>

In the same years, Mount Mansfield and the Mansfield House made it onto the grid of nationally-recognized tourist attractions, edging their way into the national guidebooks. As early as 1862, *Appleton's Companion Hand-Book of Travel*, a guidebook series published yearly in New York, allotted Mount Mansfield a paragraph out of the two pages given to Vermont. By comparison, New Hampshire—at that time the preeminent resort region in the Northeast—received eight pages of description, mostly devoted to White Mountain attractions. The guidebook's editor appeared apologetic about the lack of information on Vermont, beginning the section by pointing out that “[t]he thousand points of interest in the Green Hills of Vermont have not yet received their due meed of favor from tourists, but their claims to especial homage are now being fully admitted.”<sup>3</sup>

Over the next decade, Appleton's editions registered a modest growth of interest in Mount Mansfield. The 1867 guidebook devoted a slightly larger paragraph to Mount Mansfield, and gave better directions about how to get there: “Mt. Mansfield, the loftiest (4,469 feet) of the Green Hills, is 15 miles from Waterbury Station.” The statistics were followed by a description of the Central Vermont Railway's route and connections. That year, too, Appleton's formally recognized the existence of hotels in Stowe: “The Mansfield House and the Summit House, both owned by the Mansfield Hotel Company, are well-kept houses. Price, \$3.50 per day.”<sup>4</sup> The relative significance of Mount Mansfield was still slight. Its single paragraph still competed with the thirteen pages of loving detail showered on the White Mountains. And the new editor kept the old editor's apology word for word: “The thousand points of interest in the Green Hills of Vermont have not yet received their due meed. . . .” But this single paragraph revealed that Stowe was now “on the map” of the tourist's geography; it had the railroad connections, the corporate capital, and now the New York publishing company to advertise its attractions.

In spite of the good press, the Mount Mansfield Hotel Company had its ups and downs. In a pattern typical of resort corporations in the late nineteenth century, it was sold and resold, changed management several times, went through both good and catastrophic seasons, and ended in failure when, in 1889, the downtown hotel burned to the ground.<sup>5</sup> Such corporate resort enterprises frequently did end in fire, bankruptcy, or some combination of the two. Often, the fires were extremely well-timed, like the one that struck the Mansfield House on the very day the water was turned off at the end of the season. But by the 1870s, the national

network was in place to make sure the tourists would keep coming anyway. The Central Vermont Railroad, making stops in neighboring Waterbury, connected with every major railroad network in the Northeast: the Boston and Maine Railroad at White River Junction, the New London Northern Railroad at Brattleboro, the New York Central at Rutland, and the Fitchburg Railroad at Bellows Falls. The 1874 Central Vermont excursion guide suggested as "Excursion 204" a trip from Boston to Stowe and back, using three railroad lines and a stagecoach, for fifteen dollars.<sup>6</sup>

Railroads had brought Stowe into a geographical network; guidebooks put the local attractions "on the map." By the 1870s, specialized regional guidebooks were taking on a frankly promotional role. *New England: A Handbook for Travellers* called Stowe the "Saratoga of Vermont," a designation that evoked images of a handsome, crowded, and above all fashionable resort. This *Handbook* claimed that Stowe was "unrivalled in the beauty, picturesqueness, and luxuriant magnificence of its mountain scenery."<sup>7</sup> *Keyes' Hand-book of Northern Pleasure Travel* promised more tangible joys, praising the grand hotel in Stowe as "spacious and commodious in all its arrangements and appointments and the stables and alleys connected are on a liberal scale. The proprietors are not to be outdone in their attentions to guests."

Keyes' handbook acknowledged that the main attraction in Stowe was the ascent of Mount Mansfield, and paid particular attention to the famous Mount Mansfield "profile," with its "Nose" and "Chin": "The bold summits of this noble eminence are thought to represent in their peculiar outline the features of the human face, looking upward forever from the firm base of the everlasting hills."<sup>8</sup> Experienced tourists were well-versed in that kind of anthropomorphism. They had probably already visited the "Old Man of the Mountains" in the Franconia Notch of the White Mountains, and perhaps even some of the nearby "spin-offs" of that attraction: the "Old Maid of the Mountains," the "Imp," or the "Young Man of the Mountains." Guidebooks promised similar attractions atop Mount Mansfield, modeled on those found in the White Mountains. In addition to the "Nose" and the "Chin," tourists could see the "Rock of Terror," the Lake of the Clouds, or even the "Old Woman of the Mountains."

By the 1870s, these kinds of scenic attractions had been around for awhile. That was, after all, the reason for the existence of all those mountaintop houses. Summit houses like the one on Mount Mansfield were born of tourists' fascination with views and scenery. As early as the 1830s, adventurous tourists had sought out waterfalls, jagged cliffs, and dramatic mountaintop views as expressions of nature untrammelled. The term of choice for such scenery was "sublime." Mountains were said to inspire one with thoughts of one's own mortality, the grandeur of nature,

the vastness of God's creation—hence the pious, heavenward gaze of Mount Mansfield's "face." In the 1840s and 1850s, fashionable tourists climbed mountains with some very specific activities in mind. When they got to the top, they sketched views, discussed their emotional responses to the scenery, and recited poetry, especially Byron, the patron saint of scenic romanticism. By the 1860s, the whole thing had been fashioned into a science. For the price of a guidebook, tourists could learn everything they needed to know about scenery, from the proper order for viewing attractions to the proper language for discussing them.

By the 1870s, the language of scenery was so widely used that it had become hackneyed. But scenic connoisseurship still provided an opportunity for tourists to stake a claim to gentility, social status, and cosmopolitanism. Appreciation of scenery was an enterprise heavily freighted with class consciousness, as the author of an influential *Harper's Magazine* article was very well aware. "For loftiness, grandeur and majesty, Mount Mansfield is, of course, inferior to Mount Washington," the author admitted. Mount Mansfield's charms "are of a more modest nature," he acknowledged, but those charms "will not escape the eye of discerning visitors." In fact, he argued, truly "discerning visitors" might even prefer Mount Mansfield to Mount Washington, and not entirely because of the view. Atop Mount Mansfield, the author claimed, scenic connoisseurs were "exempt . . . from the intrusion of unsympathetic Philistines." One would not find there, as on Mount Washington, "the shoddyite, the cockney, and the snob," the fashionable people, or "that still lower class who pursue and imitate fashionable people." Instead, one would find people who knew how to respond to fine scenery, who were "serious, thoughtful, and appreciative." In the language of late nineteenth-century tourist promotions, that was a clear claim to the patronage of educated, genteel, largely urban tourists who saw appreciation of scenery as a badge of identity.

There were plenty of such tourists on Mount Mansfield in the 1870s and 1880s. One sure sign of the presence of well-to-do city people was the presence of the press, covering their summer peregrinations. In August 1872, a reporter from the Washington (D.C.) *Herald* signed the register of the Summit House, and a year later a reporter from the Pawtucket *Gazette* did the same. In 1872, the first year for which a Summit House guest register survives, nearly 700 people signed it. The banner year was 1876, proudly noted by the clerk as "Centennial Year." That summer, 976 people came up the mountain. After that, the registers are missing for five summers, and the 1882 book records a catastrophic drop in numbers, with only 302 registered visitors. In the 1880s, numbers for each summer typically hovered between 200 and 400 visitors.<sup>10</sup>

These vacationers came from cities all over the country, and occasionally beyond: from New York, Boston, Baltimore, Chicago, Philadelphia, and Montreal. In 1875, the clerk proudly noted that the governor of Rhode Island, Henry Lippitt, "and family" were visiting. Not all of these urban vacationers signed in with names as distinguished as the Roosevelts and Van Rensselaers who showed up in 1872, but many of them *were* staying down below in the Mansfield House at \$3.50 a night, a price that placed the hotel at the high end of luxury hotels.

Nearly one quarter of the visitors were from New York and Boston. An average of 14 percent of the tourists signing in were from New York City—the single largest out-of-state origin—and 9 percent were from Boston. Out-of-staters were usually in the majority on the mountaintop in August, ranging from a high of 72 percent in 1872 to a low of 49 percent in 1876, and averaging just under 60 percent.

In short, Mount Mansfield's out-of-state visitors were not radically different from the vacationers one would have encountered at other New England resorts. One such typical tourist, a Boston-based landscape painter named Winckworth Allan Gay, described the company he met in Stowe in 1864, the year the great hotel opened. He wrote that the Mansfield House was filled with "every description of people from New York fashionables . . . to the quiet seekers of fresh air from Boston . . . dashed with the sentimental young women *un peu passe* [sic], old frequenters of N. Conway."<sup>11</sup> (The snide French phrase "*un peu passé*" suggests that these sentimental young women were no longer so young, and that they had already passed several summers in the artists' resort of North Conway, in the White Mountains.)

Recent research on other New England resorts confirms Gay's first-hand description. Peter Bulkley's groundbreaking study of White Mountain tourists analyzed the 1853 and 1854 registers from Mount Washington's Summit House. Bulkley found that Boston made up 13.4 percent of the trade, and New York City, 9.5 percent, a nearly exact reversal of the percentages for Mount Mansfield that reflects in part the different travel routes to the two different regions.<sup>12</sup> My own study of the August 1879 register of the Sherburne Hotel on Nantucket, an entirely different kind of tourist destination, reveals similar numbers: 10 percent of their trade was from Boston, while 12 percent was from New York City.<sup>13</sup> These are very different statistical banks from different times and circumstances. Taken together, they suggest that Boston and New York—the two great metropolitan areas of the northeast—were home to about one quarter of New England's vacationers. Mount Mansfield, then, attracted the visitors its promoters might have expected, and also the sorts of vacationers historians would expect to find there.

So far, there are few surprises. The registers of the Summit House recorded precisely the urban, prosperous clientele whose preferences shaped the development of all of New England's summer resorts. But there were some people up on the mountain who have not yet been counted. Looking at the numbers again from a slightly different angle, a different clientele suddenly becomes visible. On average, 45 percent of the visitors to Mount Mansfield came, not from the great urban centers, but from Vermont itself. Of that 45 percent, the great majority were from nearby northern towns, from urban Burlington and Winooski, to be sure, but also from tiny rural towns like Eden and Elmore. Many were not travelers at all. On average, nearly 14 percent of the people on the mountaintop in July and August were from the three towns of Stowe, Morristown, and Waterbury, within a few hours' drive of Mount Mansfield.<sup>14</sup>

In other words, a certain number of the people at the Summit House on any given day were local folks. That may not seem a very startling fact, but it is a fact that has hitherto escaped the notice of historians of tourism. Hotel registers all over New England have recorded the visits of those local people, but historians have not yet paid much attention to them. In an earlier study, for example, I reported that Nantucket's Sherburne Hotel housed many visitors from distant cities. I was correct, but I did not notice at the time that 14 percent of the visitors there were from New Bedford, just across the Sound.<sup>15</sup> Similarly, Peter Bulkley acknowledged the presence of local visitors on Mount Washington, but he did so by quite literally marginalizing them in a footnote, where he explained that he had removed from his analysis the 43 local residents, 8 percent of the total, in order to study the travel patterns of tourists from farther away.

Local tourists have been almost invisible to researchers, partly because they did not, in fact, consume the "goods" the tourist industry sold. They did not travel hundreds of miles, or (usually) stay in hotels, or buy guidebooks. They were not the targets of the industry's marketing strategies, and there was no reason to feature them in its promotional literature. Reading the accounts of nineteenth-century journalists and letter writers will not usually reveal their presence either, since most travelers themselves had a stake in describing their fellow travelers as stylish and urban. Occasionally, of course, a fashionable traveler might register a complaint. Ralph Waldo Emerson, for example, wrote in a letter to his brother in 1868 that he and his daughter had been unable to sleep during the night they spent at the Mount Mansfield Summit House because of a "party of amateur players" who kept them awake with their "violent fun."<sup>16</sup> Guidebooks, novels, and travel literature from the nineteenth century depicted scenic travel as the exclusive preserve of the wealthy, the fashionable,

the urban, and the educated. The Summit House registers, along with Emerson's complaints, suggest otherwise.

Who were those visitors from nearby? A few of the visitors from Stowe were clearly part of the local gentry, people who might have shared the literary gentility and scenic sensibility of those Bostonians and New Yorkers. Asa Camp, for example, was a forty-seven year old "retired merchant" when he went up the mountain in 1872 with his daughter, a twenty-year-old school teacher. He and the local physicians and ministers who made the trip probably had a lot in common with some of those out-of-state tourists. Their parlors, wardrobes, and bookshelves may have featured the same scenic sketches, pianos, and travel books that signalled full-scale participation in the brave new world of consumer culture.

But almost exactly half of the Summit House visitors from Stowe were "farmers," "farm laborers"—which usually meant farmers' sons—or members of farmers' families. Others deviated even more from the nineteenth-century image of a fashionable traveler: Herman Storey was listed as a stone mason, Dan Moulton as a shoemaker, in the 1870 census. It is not easy to draw clear class distinctions in a rural community like Stowe. There were rich farmers and marginal farmers, and a man listed as "shoemaker" in the 1870 census might have become a "shoe manufacturer" by the 1880 census. But money itself was not the only issue. The parlor pianos, elegant clothes, and travel books of genteel city-dwellers were not always welcome in the households of rural and small-town New Englanders, even in those that could afford them. For precisely the same reasons, vacations and many other new leisure activities were often suspect. Such activities often represented a kind of cutting-edge consumerism that was profoundly subversive of the habits of self-denial, hard work, and frugality that were still carefully engrained in many rural households. That is one reason we might not expect to find a great many Vermont farm families traveling for pleasure, even without considering the problems of money and time.

Yet there were many hard-working, self-denying, frugal Stowe farmers and their families up on the mountaintop each summer. What were they doing up there? We cannot simply assume that they were pursuing the same goals that had brought college students from Yale and society ladies from New York to the top of the mountain. For one thing, many of the local folks who signed the registers were not exactly vacationers. They were, in part at least, purveyors to the vacation trade. Tourist workers have been almost invisible both in nineteenth-century accounts of tourists and in historical analysis of the industry, but the Summit House registers bring these workers vividly to life. Lewis Demois, for example, was a clerk at the Mansfield House down in Stowe. Later he was the

manager of the Summit House, but in 1876 he signed the Summit House register as a guest. William F. Harris was the night watchman at the Mansfield House; Cora George was a "table girl"—a waitress, probably also at the Mansfield House. Their names both appeared on the register of the Summit House.

What did signing the register mean? The Summit House register was not exactly like the register of a hotel in town like the Mansfield House. Many, perhaps most, of the visitors who signed in at the Summit House did not stay overnight. Some came up the mountain for lunch or dinner. Many more probably brought their own supplies, and simply signed the register to indicate their presence on the mountain. (The registers record—sometimes—whether a guest ate lunch or dinner, hired a horse, or took a room for the night.)

Clearly, not everyone signed in. For one thing, there were routes up the mountain other than the toll road constructed by the town of Stowe, old hiking trails up from Underhill, from Smuggler's Notch, and from Stowe itself. Clerks at the Summit House frequently noted that there were people on the mountain who had not signed the register. In August 1876, for example, the clerk noted that parties were appearing on the mountain without signing in, and presumably without paying the toll for the road. At one point, the clerk specified that "fifteen people from Morrisville" (did he know them? or ask where they were from?) had evaded the guest register. In the late 1880s, the clerk appeared to have partly abandoned the effort to keep track of local people on the mountain, substituting for a list of signatures the simple notation of a "party of 15 from Morristoryn." Perhaps some local visitors refused to sign, or simply did not bother. Their existence suggests that those who did sign the register did so consciously and for a purpose.

The other exception to the rule may shed some light on what the registers meant to their signers. The men who worked on the carriage road that carried visitors up Mount Mansfield never signed the registers. Their presence on the mountain was obvious to everyone, but they were not part of the social world of mountaintop visitors, either those from New York or those from Stowe. Their names appear instead, clearly set apart from the rest of Stowe, on the census schedules, marked in the margins as "Mountain Road workers." The census also records that almost all the men were Irish or Canadian by birth.

People who did sign the registers indicated by their signatures that they were part of a social network, either the network of urban tourists, meeting one another on mountaintops all over the Northeast, or the social network of respectable families in Stowe and nearby towns. Even if they were on the mountain as workers, local residents staked a claim

to the recognition that came from sharing the page, and perhaps the dinner table, with visitors from Beacon Hill and Brooklyn Heights. On the pages of the Summit House registers, the bold and dashing signature of young Charles Burt the teamster, the shaky signature of the farmer from Elmore, who seemed not to have held a pen for some time, and the elegant signatures of young men from Yale and Harvard, share a common space.

In fact, the difference between local workers and local vacationers may not have been as clear as we might imagine. An anecdote making the rounds in the 1880s highlighted the potential for confusion. As Herbert Tuttle recounted the tale in his 1882 *Harper's* article, a group of vacationers were en route from the Waterbury railroad depot to Stowe and Mount Mansfield. When they stopped to water their horses, they encountered a gaunt Yankee who asked them if they were going to Stowe. They said they were, and he replied that "our girls about these parts they've all gone to the White Mountains." "Indeed!" replied the tourists. "That's surprising. There's such fine scenery right here at home, why do they go to the White Mountains?" The native replied, "Wa'al, they go there because they git three dollars a week."<sup>17</sup> This story was intended to poke fun at the Stowe Yankee's rural simplicity, and also at the tourists' naiveté. But it ends up implying something different. A story that was intended to highlight class differences between rural workers and urban vacationers in fact pointed out how difficult it might be to distinguish them from one another by sight.

Just as it might have been difficult for an observer to distinguish workers from vacationers in the 1870s, it is often difficult to determine from the registers whether local visitors were at work or at play. The signatures of Charles Burt and Charles and Lyman Churchill appeared more than once on the registers, for example, and that was not surprising. Charles Burt was a teamster who sometimes drove visitors up to the Summit House; Charles Churchill was a butcher who probably supplied the Summit House with meat; and Lyman Churchill was a hostler who might have taken care of the Summit House's horses. From one angle, the appearance of such visitors on the mountain simply confirms the fact that the Summit House, and Stowe with it, were integrated into the national tourist industry's grid. These visitors provided the local infrastructure for the industry, the services for the real tourists at the top.

From another angle, though, things are not so clear. When Charles Burt signed the register of the Summit House in 1872, the word "driver" usually appeared next to his name. Even if he brought his wife with him, as he did on September 21, he was probably working. W. A. Cobb, who signed in several times in 1875 and 1876, was also identified as "driver."

But Cobb always had dinner and took a room for the night, a practice that was not universal at the Summit House. When did work become play for Cobb?

William Smith was listed as a photographer in the 1870 census. Was he on vacation when he went up to the Summit House, or taking pictures for his portfolio, or was he on the mountain to sell souvenirs? Daniel Isham, the manager of the Mill Village hotel in Stowe, came up the mountain in August 1876 with his ten-year-old daughter Lillian. Was he on official business, or was he celebrating the centennial? When J. E. Miles came up the mountain from Morristown, did he come to look at the view, or to deliver some of the maple sugar, butter, cheese, and eggs advertised on the card he left glued into the facing page of the register? Perhaps we might consider such local visitors as "accidental tourists," taking an opportunity to see the sights or have a picnic in the course of a normal workday.

The Summit House registers offer an insight to students of tourism: the distinction between work and play is not always clear. They also provide evidence that another well-worn distinction may not be as clear as we imagine it to be. "Locals" and "tourists" were not always separated by an unbridgeable gulf. Apparently, they shared common ground atop Mount Mansfield. One Stowe farmer, Eliakim Bigelow, appeared in the Summit House registers several times. So did his brother, Newell Bigelow. The two brothers were almost archetypal Vermont citizen farmers, moderately prosperous small-scale mixed agriculturalists, and staunch supporters of their community through the neighborhood church, the Grange, and local politics.<sup>18</sup> Newell Bigelow signed the Summit House register for himself "and six children" on July 1, 1875. On August 16, 1876, he had dinner at the Summit House, this time apparently without the six children, but in the company of Walter Bigelow and his wife, who were from Salem, Massachusetts. Eliakim Bigelow went up to the Summit House with thirteen other people in August, 1881; he went to Smuggler's Notch that same month for a picnic. In July 1895 he and Newell went up the mountain again; in August 1899, Eliakim went with thirty people to Smuggler's Notch.<sup>19</sup>

The Bigelows had been traveling to the mountaintop and to Smuggler's Notch long before New Yorkers and Bostonians had been attracted there. One local historian (another Bigelow!) reported in his 1934 history that as a child he had heard the older men of Stowe describing a grueling trek the boys and young men of Stowe had used as a kind of coming-of-age ritual in the 1850s.<sup>20</sup> In fact, it was Newell Bigelow himself who reported having made that fifteen-mile hike. At the age of twelve he had walked up Mount Mansfield, down the other side into Smuggler's Notch,

and back to Stowe. As an adult, Newell Bigelow continued to ascend Mount Mansfield and travel to the Notch with his friends and relations, but immense changes had overtaken these places by then. In the place of a rather rough-and-tumble rural trek he would have taken a carriage ride, perhaps had a genteel supper, and rubbed shoulders with elegant visitors discussing scenery, poetry, and landscape art.

The registers suggest that it was a common practice to travel to the top of Mount Mansfield with family members from out of town, as Newell Bigelow did in 1876. In July 1872, for example, a party of eight signed in at the Summit House: J. Bass and Willie Bass from Underhill signed in, followed by James Bass of Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, and his wife; next were E. S. Whitcomb of Underhill and a Mr. Henderson of Underhill, followed by Mr. L. C. Bass of Boston, and Miss Nellie Bass of West Randolph, Vermont. Basses from Underhill accompanied Basses from West Randolph, Boston, and Wisconsin to the summit.

Other examples suggest the same sort of pattern. In August 1889, W. C. Buchanan from Jeffersonville, Vermont, accompanied Agnes Buchanan from West Glover, Vermont, and F. W. Buchanan from Philadelphia up the mountain. In 1882, Frank N. Smith from Waterbury went up the mountain with Fred Smith of Minnesota. At a time when the high levels of emigration from rural Vermont were the subject of constant discussion and lamentation, it is certainly not surprising that for families divided by geography in this way, the trip to the summit may have become an established part of a summer's visit home to Vermont.

Mount Mansfield seems to have functioned locally as a kind of glorified picnic ground, a place to meet family and friends for the afternoon. On some occasions, the mountaintop served as the region's most prominent public space. In August 1859, for example, a Universalist convention in Stowe held a meeting atop the mountain that was reported to have attracted over a thousand people.<sup>21</sup> In September 1884 two people from Morrisville made a similar use of the mountain as celebratory, perhaps even sacred, public space: they were married at the Summit House.

The Morrisville bride and groom may have chosen the Summit House because they had good memories of family trips there, or because they associated it with the romantic scenery of parlor literature and paintings, or both. Newell Bigelow may have seen his picnics in the Notch and atop Mount Mansfield as part of a continuing tradition with his boyhood hikes or he may have felt he had gotten into a whole new world of experience. The Summit House registers cannot reveal the internal realities of these visitors.

Few documents, in fact, give us any insights into the responses of local citizens to the growth of tourism in their neighborhood, or to the ex-

panded leisure choices it brought them. One Stowe resident who did write on this subject, instead of celebrating the advent of the vacation industry, voiced a complaint that has become nearly universal among Vermonters over the years. In 1869, Stowe historian Maria N. Wilkins wrote that tourism had altered the appearance of her town, and not for the better: "The appearance of the Center Village, with respect to its buildings alone, is thought to be not improved by the erection of the large hotel. It is so much larger than all the private dwellings that it gives them a low and inferior look." Already in 1869, Stowe was dwarfed by the tourist industry.

More important, though, Wilkins worried about the moral impact of the industry, about the impact of "so large a class of persons, however virtuous, whose main business . . . seems to be to 'fare sumptuously,' ride in fine carriages and display themselves in fine and expensive apparel." Wilkins's criticism would have sounded reasonable to many rural New Englanders (and perhaps not completely unreasonable to many modern Stowe residents). The values of consumerism so accurately described by Wilkins, the "fine carriages," "sumptuous fare," "expensive apparel," and the single-minded and open devotion to their enjoyment, were often in conflict with older values espoused by rural and working people all over the country.

But even Wilkins, whose criticism of out-of-state tourists was based on a well-founded skepticism about the social effects of rampant consumerism, found herself caught up in the experience of scenic tourism. She boasted that "[t]he view from these mountains . . . has been pronounced by tourists, who have spent years in traveling in this and other countries, and made the visiting of mountains a specialty, as equal to anything they have seen." If only for the sake of regional pride, Wilkins couldn't resist a dig at the old arch-rival, claiming that tourists who had seen both pronounced the view from Mount Mansfield "quite superior to that from the White Mountains, in New Hampshire, to which there has been so much resort for many years."<sup>22</sup> Wilkins was skeptical of the values brought by scenic tourists from great urban centers, but she also embraced the opportunity to praise her native scenery, and she must also have been tempted to go up the mountain and see the view that had brought Stowe so much attention.

Perhaps the Stowe farmers and artisans who traveled to the Summit House shared some of Wilkins's mixed responses to the new view from the mountain. The registers of the Summit House allow us to begin to look at rural Vermonters not only as victims of or workers in the tourist industry, but also as participants in the tourist industry in their own right. We cannot be quite sure how the view from Mount Mansfield looked

to Newell Bigelow or how Charles Burt spent his leisure time. What the registers do point out, though, is that rural and small town people participated in what might be called the "tourist experience" to a greater degree than has been apparent. Perhaps it is time now for historians of tourism to look more seriously at these local "accidental tourists."

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank Rosalind Cuomo for her help in compiling and analyzing the information on which this essay is based.

<sup>2</sup> The most complete account of this process is in Walter J. Bigelow, *History of Stowe, Vermont* (1934, reprint; Stowe, Vermont: Stowe Historical Society, 1988). See also Robert L. Hagerman, *Mansfield: The Story of Vermont's Loftiest Mountain* (Essex Junction, Vermont: Essex Publishing Company, 1971).

<sup>3</sup> T. Addison Richards, *Appleton's Companion Hand-Book of Travel* (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1862), 72.

<sup>4</sup> Edward Hall, *Appleton's Hand-Book of American Travel: The Northern Tour* (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1867), 115.

<sup>5</sup> Walter J. Bigelow, *History of Stowe*, 133.

<sup>6</sup> *The Summer Excursionist of the Central Vermont Railroad* (Boston: Central Vermont Railroad, 1874), 85.

<sup>7</sup> [Moses F. Sweetser], *New England: A Handbook for Travellers*, (Boston: James R. Osgood and Co., 1880), 202. Perhaps Moses Sweetser had seen all that scenery, or perhaps not. In typical guide-book writer's fashion, he had borrowed the description. The phrase is actually taken from a local writer, Maria N. Wilkins, who wrote the description in [Mrs. M. N. Wilkins], *History of Stowe to 1869* (Stowe: Stowe Historical Society, 1987). Originally published in Abby Maria Hemenway, *The Vermont Historical Gazetteer* (Burlington: A. M. Hemenway, 1871), 2: 695-768.

<sup>8</sup> *Keyes' Hand-Book of Northern Pleasure Travel, to the White and Franconia Mountains, Green Mountains, Northern Lakes, Montreal and Quebec* (Boston: George L. Keyes, 1873), 143-144.

<sup>9</sup> Herbert Tuttle, "A Vacation in Vermont," *New England: A Collection from Harper's Magazine* (New York: Gallery Books, 1990), 8. Originally published in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 47, Nov. 1883.

<sup>10</sup> The Summit House registers are located in Special Collections at the Bailey Howe Library, University of Vermont. The numbers used here are not, and cannot be, quite exact, because of the ways different people dealt with the problem of virtual representation: some men signed in for their wives and children without any notation, some by adding "and wife," "and child," "and nurse," while a few wives and children had their names recorded individually. I have counted people by signature only, somewhat underrepresenting the total. I counted totals for each year between 1872 and 1890 for which complete registers exist, and recorded more detailed information for four sample years: 1872, 1876, 1882, and 1889.

<sup>11</sup> Marcia Mathews, editor, "An Artist Describes His Visit to Mount Mansfield in 1864," *Vermont History* 39, no. 1 (1971), 53.

<sup>12</sup> Peter D. Bulkley, "Identifying the White Mountain Tourist, 1853-1854: Origin, Occupation, and Wealth as a Definition of the Early Hotel Trade," *Historical New Hampshire* 35, no. 2 (1980), 109.

<sup>13</sup> The Sherburne Hotel registers for the years 1879-1881 are found in the Peter Foulger Museum and Library of the Nantucket Historical Association, Nantucket, Massachusetts.

<sup>14</sup> August was invariably the most popular month for ascending mountains, but it was also the month when the greatest proportion of out-of-staters showed up. Counting signatures over the entire season reveals a larger presence of local visitors, but the June and September records are usually sporadic and unreliable. I have analyzed the July and August records.

<sup>15</sup> In fact, I cannot now retrieve a reliable figure for local tourists in Nantucket, simply because I did not devise such a category at the time.

<sup>16</sup> Ralph H. Orth, "Emerson Lectures in Vermont," *Vermont History* 33, no. 3 (July 1965), 396.

<sup>17</sup> Tuttle, "Vacation in Vermont,"

<sup>18</sup> Edwin L. Bigelow, "Eliakim Bigelow: A Stowe Farmer," in *Vermont History* 31, no. 4 (Oct. 1963), 253-271.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 265.

<sup>20</sup> Walter J. Bigelow, *History of Stowe*, 142.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 139.

<sup>22</sup> [Wilkins], *History of Stowe to 1869* 2: 695-768.