VERMONT History

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"The collection of drawings . . . represents elements common to rural life in Vermont . . . in the first two decades of the twentieth century."

"Family Traits:"
Vermont Farm Life at the Turn of the Century: The Sketches of Stanley Horace Lyndes
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Among his legacy to his family, Stanley Horace Lyndes left a small, handmade and worn book of his drawings. The sketches of his family and their neighbors wryly depict life on small farms in Calais, Cabot, and Marshfield in the years between the turn of the century and World War I.*

"Gramp" Lyndes, as the young artist was known to his family in later years, was an unusual man. Born in Calais in 1898, he grew up on the family farms in Cabot and on the Brook Road in Marshfield. He dutifully trudged to the local grammar schools and graduated from Marshfield High School in 1916 and Montpelier Seminary in 1918. To develop his artistic talent, he left Vermont for New York City and enrolled in Pratt Institute.

The young Vermonter hated the city. He had to work at a variety of jobs to keep himself at Pratt, where he drew these sketches of his Vermont boyhood for an assignment. The art curriculum (which apparently did not stress spelling) prepared him to teach, and as soon as he secured a job offer in 1922, he left New York, without completing his last term. He taught manual arts in Indian Orchard, Massachusetts, at Choate School in Wallingford, Connecticut, and at summer camps in Maine. He was an exceptionally skilled woodworker creating everything from clocks to log cabins. An avid outdoorsman, "Gramp" Lyndes hunted and fished whenever and wherever he managed an opportunity. After a long career teach-

*Stanley Lyndes' sketches are in the possession of Jean Lyndes Andrews, Falmouth, Maine. The introductory material is based mostly on the oral tradition of the Lyndes family and their friends, the editor's recollection of her grandfather's stories, and town records.
ing young people, he retired to Plainfield, Vermont, where he lived until his death in 1975. His grandchildren remember his stories, the toys he made for them and the food and candy he always had for them.

In “Family Traits” the young art student primarily sketched his immediate family. His father ALP Adams Lyndes (1872-1940) lived in Massachusetts and Wisconsin before coming to Plainfield, where he married Flora “FOLIE” Hill (1877-1967) and ran a livery stable before he started to farm. Alp, whose sons nicknamed him “Alphonse,” did not really like farming, and he usually had some scheme percolating on the side, such as raising racehorses and breeding hunting dogs. Folie and Alp had five children: Elery (1896-1967) or “PUSSIE” (pronounced like “fussy”) as the family called him, STANLEY (1898-1975), MERTON (1900-1946), DORIS (1907-1917), who does not appear in the sketches, and Arthur (1909-1972) known better as “BILL.” Alp’s mother, JENNIE, lived with them. UNCLE HENRY Hill, Folie’s brother, and her parents, Horace (“HOD”) and Augusta Hill, lived nearby, as did their neighbors, the Spencers.

The Lyndes liked the Spencers and their three children, Mary, Ivan and Bertha. “Gramp” Lyndes later referred to them as having “nothing modern about their existence in style of clothing, foods, or living habits. Old fashioned is the best way to put it plus being odd and independent.” Ivan Spencer, born with club feet, developed unusual skill sliding down hill on an old single-runner jack jumper. The Lyndes boys, swinging lard buckets full of lunch, frequently walked to school with the Spencer children.

Uncle Henry Hill, who was eccentric, fascinated the young artist. Hill had studied engineering at New Hampshire College, now the University
of New Hampshire, in Durham, and had gone to the western mining frontier. He returned to Vermont with "problems" and lived with the haunting spectre of "them who were after him." He would disappear in the middle of the night, be gone for extended periods and then just as mysteriously reappear at breakfast as though nothing had happened. He stimulated the imaginations of the Lyndes boys with tales of the wild west and his "supposed" shoot outs with Pinkerton detectives and famous criminals. He always spiced his language with expletives of unknown origin such as "caday," "Wheeler swore," and "'Tis round."

While the collection of drawings which makes up "Family Traits" portrays the personalities and special facets of the Lyndes family, it also represents elements common to rural life in Vermont and other places in the first two decades of the twentieth century. Stanley Lyndes captured with his sketches much the same sense of growing up in Vermont that Robert L. Duffus skillfully described in his affectionate books, Williams-town Branch (New York: Norton, 1958) and Waterbury Record (New York: Norton, 1959). Hard work, the monotony of chores, and responsibilities shared by grandparents, parents, and children alike underlay all other activity. These rural families had little to spare and knew how to "make do" as the sketches revealed with their stress on the importance of pennies, homespun recreation, "Maggie", the family horse, or small details as patches on a dress or pair of pants, the lunch pails made from lard buckets, the uses for skunk oil, and the inevitable "hand-me-downs." An event which Stanley Lyndes long remembered was his first orange. Given to him as a Christmas gift in 1912, he smelled it every night as he went to bed for about two months before he finally ate the precious fruit.

Despite the obvious hardships - the cold winters, the lack of plumbing, and the constant demands of the farm - Lyndes preferred the spare life in the country to New York City. With a certain boyish rascality he recalled in his sketches the swimming hole, the fascination with racing and speed, the lively pranks, and the earthy humor. The family, with, typically, three generations living under the same roof, showed patience and love; the family also witnessed moments of anger, and the practical jokes had a faintly cruel twist as they played on individual foibles. Yet the family generally lived happily together, working and entertaining themselves in the seasonal rhythm of the hill country farm and looking forward to the ragman's visit, sugaring-off, rolling the snow, and a congenial family Christmas dinner to relieve the steady round of chores.

Hard living was not necessarily bad living, and the stern life on a Vermont farm and its "cold crude days," as Lyndes called them, brought a certain warmth.
Home sweet Home

POLIE WISHES SHE COULD SIT DOWN TO ONE MEAL WITHOUT SEEING A FLOCK OF POTS PASS BY HER NOSE. BUT A. P. HADN'T DARE SAY A THING. SHE HAS PUT UP WITH IT FOR 25 YEARS AND EXPECTS TO FOR 25 MORE. BILL REMARKS THAT JENNIE NEVER SMELLS.
Now Alp—I want you to gather the grapes and crabapples today—Arthur can pull dock in the pie pen.

Justin would make his rounds about once or twice a year and Folie was always ready to banter with him over her old rags and rubber, for a bag of rags she always got a broom and a couple of agate sauce pans and sometimes a quarter ter boot.
JENNIE WAS FOND OF SHOWING THE GUESTS MR. LYNDERS ANTIQUARY AND TELLING THEM OF WHAT A FAMOUS FAMILY SHE WAS FROM — WHY YOU KNOW PETER WAS A MINUTE MAN AND BOTH MY BROTHERS FOUGHT IN THE CIVIL WAR. YES AND I AM A MEMBER OF THE DAR. I THINK YOU ARE A NICE LOOKING COUPLE, AND WOULD YOU THINK I AM 77 YEARS OLD.

JENNIE SAYS MR. REECHER TEARING DOWN THE HILL LIKE A JUN — I'LL BET HE'S COMING OVER HERE.
Jennie used to be afraid of the old horse and it seemed as tho bill watered them what they needed any or not when she was collecting flowers for her herbarium. She always would make a break for the house and never failed to beat the horse — Arthur was so cruel to her.

Jennie was never safe when the boys were at home. They delighted in sneaking up and pinching her behind. Such actions
Pussie 'gets his' when by mistake he brings home 50c worth of peanuts instead of 50c worth of nutmegs. McCallum didn't have that many so he went up to Mark's. He was sure that Folie said peanuts—so he got a dam good tanning and part of the purchase.

The boys made it hot for Pussie with their apple sticks when he came to school one day after Alp had just clipped his hair close with the horse clippers—Pussie had to stick near the school house with the Spencer girls til his hair grew out.
Pussie had a spell of church going and became very much interested in the twice a week meetings of the Christian Endeavor. Old Mag was all the means of conveyance that the family afforded. Ed. Jennie thought it was nice that the Lyndes family could be represented by one at least, but Earl Smith soon put the kibosh on it all.

Going to school up Carpenter Hill, Pussie and Mary Spencer always brought up the rear.
A snow roll drawn by four horses would break out the roads after every snow fall. It was an unwritten law that the man who could not treat the crowd with hard cider would not get his yard rolled. Alp never had any cider so he shoveled his own road, usually the boys did it.

The S.O.S. call meant speed.

The mowing machine would always break down when Alp was mowing the upper field. It took a good runner to get the Big Monkey Wrench up to him without bringing fourth a few words of propriety. We always rejoiced when the last load of hay was mowed away on the high beams.
The boys claimed that Alp's Ayshire cows made more manure than any other breed of cattle. As soon as the snow was gone and the manure pile thawed out the boys got busy with the white stags.

The neighbors could always tell for three miles distant when the Lyndes' started haying. Cricket was so lazy that the horse flies did not bother her. After two hours of mowing, Alp would be wetter than the horses from yelling at them.
The damned hens didn't amount to anything anyway - So Bill says.

Bill allus had fer feed the hens - The boys wouldn't ever do it.

God-dam it Bill, head them sheep - What are you sleepin' up there? If you leave that damn automobile alone and keep your nose out of a book two minutes perhaps you'll amount to somethin' some day. - We'll never be able to catch them now.
Bill dashing down after the milker - He'll be glad when the boys leave home and dad gets his business straightened out with Whoopee. He allus had ter go after it rain or shine but he got out of milking tho.

Bill Allus had ter wear out the boys old underwear or some made over that had ole uncle Holden used ter have. No wonder Bill grew tall. He had ter ter to fill his clothes. Such cold crude days.
Bill exercising his goat after school.

He allus carries a picked stick for speed and every night he would make a new record. Alp claimed he had better be doing chores.

Alp would chase the boys up from the brook with the horse whip when they had stayed too long but Pussie was never so fleet on foot as Merton and Stanley and usually got his jacket warmed about the time he made the fence. He was too heavy an' stern.
IVAN SPENCER TAKING A SLIDE DOWN SANT’S HILL. HIS JUMPER WAS MADE BY HIS UNCLE TYLER BUT ACCORDING TO SANT, IT NEVER CAME UP TO GEO. LAWSON’S FOR SPEED.

ELMER POWERS’ PREDICTION THAT IVAN WOULDN’T EVER AMOUNT TO MUCH PROVED TRUE.

HERTIN SNEAKING HOME FROM THE SWIMMING HOLE. AFTER STANLEY STOLE ALL HIS CLOTHES EXCEPT HIS STRAW HAT AND ONE BOOT, HE HAD TO WAIT UNTIL DUSK BEFORE RETURNING BUT CAME WELL PREPARED WITH A CLUB. FOLIE ALWAYS CLAIMED ONE WOULD KILL THE OTHER BEFORE THEY GREW UP. JENNIE SAID THEIR FIGHTING WAS A DISGRACE TO THE FAMILY.
OLD MAGGIE AT THE TUB.

SHE WAS TOO UGLY AND DISAGREEABLE TO DRINK WITH THE OTHER HORSES, SO SHE WENT TO THE TUB ALONE. THE BOYS Seldom Rode Her, IT Was Too Painful, BUT She COULD STEP. ASK NOTE!

TAKING THE OLD BLACK COW UP TO JOHNIE ENN'S
IT ALWAYS SEEMED THAT WHEN WE HAD SOMETHING PLANNED TO DO AFTER CHORES, THAT WAS WHEN THE OLD BLACK COW HAD TO GO CALLING.
He soon became too sporty to walk so got into the habit of taking Horace's team—He is now attending lawn parties and church socials at Marshfield but never drives to the scheduled spot. It's a good thing that Mose Lambert is not shoeing horses any more. He'll want a fliver next.

Alphonse used to exercise Darkie every evening in the speed cart. He and George Bliss agreed that he was the makings of a second Dan Patch but Alphonse's expectations went a-smash when Darkie cornered him and kicked him in the slats. (The boys made him ugly.)
WHEN ALP THREW A BAKED POTATO AT OLD "BANK" HE HIT
FOLK BELOW THE BELT. ALP LEARNED HIS LESSON AS WELL AS
DID THE CAT.

Alphonse makes a hurried call — The evening after
Thanksgiving, Folie forgot to put a vent in her
chicken-pie.
Even the cats dug holes till their feet
were sore. — Jennie had a terrible distress spell
and Bill claimed the lantern burned dry twice on him.
DEC. 24TH 1907 WHEN OLD BUFF STOLE OUR CHRISTMAS DINNER— THERE WOULD HAVE BEEN ONE LESS HOUND ARROUND HERE IF FOLIE HAD AIMED TRUE. (WE ATE SALTPORK)

THE BOYS MADE A PRACTICE OF GOING TO THE BACKHOUSE EVERY NIGHT AFTER SUPPER WITH THE LANTERN JUST AS ALF WAS ABOUT TO USE IT TO SEE TO MILK. IT WAS MORE COMFORTABLE TO BUTTON UP BESIDE THE KITCHEN FIRE, BUT WE HAD TO GO IN THE DARK AFTER PUSSIE DROPPED THE LANTERN THROUGH THE HOLE.
HENRY DECIDED THAT HE IS ENTITLED TO A RECREATION SO DONS HIS COAT AND OVERSHOES AND HEADS FOR BARRE TO SEE MARY PICKFORD AND DOUGLAS FAIRBANKS. ATTABY HENRY—GO WHILE YOU ARE YOUNG, TREAT EM' ROUGH AND BUY EM' DATES AND RASINS—YOU'LL WIN EPHRAIM.

HENRY SEES THE WIDER BLISS DO THE DANCE OF SEVEN VEILS IN A SMALL MINING TOWN THEATER IN ARIZONA. SHE SLIDED ON A MASK TO DISGUISE HERSELF.
BACK IN '49 WHEN HENRY SHOT UP FLAGSTOFF.
BOWMAN'S CAFE IN THE BACK GROUND AND JULIUS REMBLAND BEHIND
THE BARRELS IN THE FOREGROUND DURING HOT LEAD. HE DIDN'T GET
VERY FAR DOWN THE STREET BEFORE JESSIE JAMES AND ARN HILL BOYS
TURNED HIM BACK TOWARD THE MOUNTAINS. HE HELPED BUILD UP THE WEST YHO.

HENRY GOT OFF THE TRAIN IN DENVER ONE MORNING AND FOUND
A GANG OF PINKERTONS MEN WAITING FOR HIM. HE MADE QUICK WORK OF
THEM AND THEN STRUCK OUT TO FIND A RESTAURANT.
It was the night before Christmas when the solitude of the New Hampshire woods got the better of Henry—so he packed his traps—carried the prize of three weeks trapping in his hand (a chipmunk) and mushed his way out of Diamond Pond woods just as the silvery moon was rising—cold, bleak, it was hard winter.

Alp invites the Spencers over for a sugaring off.

It happened that Elery was sent out for two buckets of snow but he did not go far enough for it. Old Buff and Bogie used to hang around the sugar house a lot. Alp claimed you never could depend on Elery.
TRAPPING SEASON WAS A BIG EVENT FOR THE BOYS... THEY SMELLED LIKE SKUNKS FROM NOVEMBER 11 UNTIL CHRISTMAS. THE PROCEEDS WENT FOR LEGGINS AND RUBBERS, AND IF THERE WAS ANYTHING LEFT WE GOT A FEW CHRISTMAS PRESENTS. THE SKUNK'S OIL WAS ALWAYS SAVED FOR COLD'S, AND SORE TEATS ON THE COWS.