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Four Miles to the Falls: A History of the Beldens Falls Branch Railroad

Whether they carried people, freight, or an industrial commodity, Vermont's numerous short-line railroads shared a common trait: they provided efficient, relatively inexpensive transportation to many parts of the state that otherwise would not have had it.

By GREG PAHL

Beers's 1871 *Atlas of Addison County, Vermont*, shows a railroad running from Beldens Falls on Otter Creek in the town of New Haven to its terminus, seemingly in the middle of nowhere, at the edge of present-day Quarry Road in the town of Middlebury. After its initial appearance in Beers's atlas, the Beldens Falls Branch Railroad mysteriously vanished from all subsequent maps.

This elusive little railroad was one of a large number of short- and branch-line railroads that sprouted from Vermont's main trunk lines after the Civil War. These small lines were built for a variety of reasons: some provided rail connections for towns that had been bypassed in the initial frenzy of railway construction in the 1840s and 1850s. The Woodstock Railroad between White River Junction and Woodstock, Vermont, completed in 1875; the Bristol Railroad from New Haven Junction to Bristol, Vermont, completed in 1892; and the White River Railroad between Bethel and Rochester, Vermont, opened in 1900, were just a few of these small common carriers.¹ Other branch lines were built primarily to serve industries. The Victory Branch Railroad between North Concord and Granby, Vermont (finished in 1883), as well as the associated Moose River Railroad (completed in 1889) and the Moose River Lumber Company Railroad (opened in 1904) hauled lumber until the timber industry ran out of logs.² The Barre Railroad (1888),³ the Hardwick and Woodbury Railroad (1896),⁴ and the Bethel Granite Railway (1905)⁵ transported granite.

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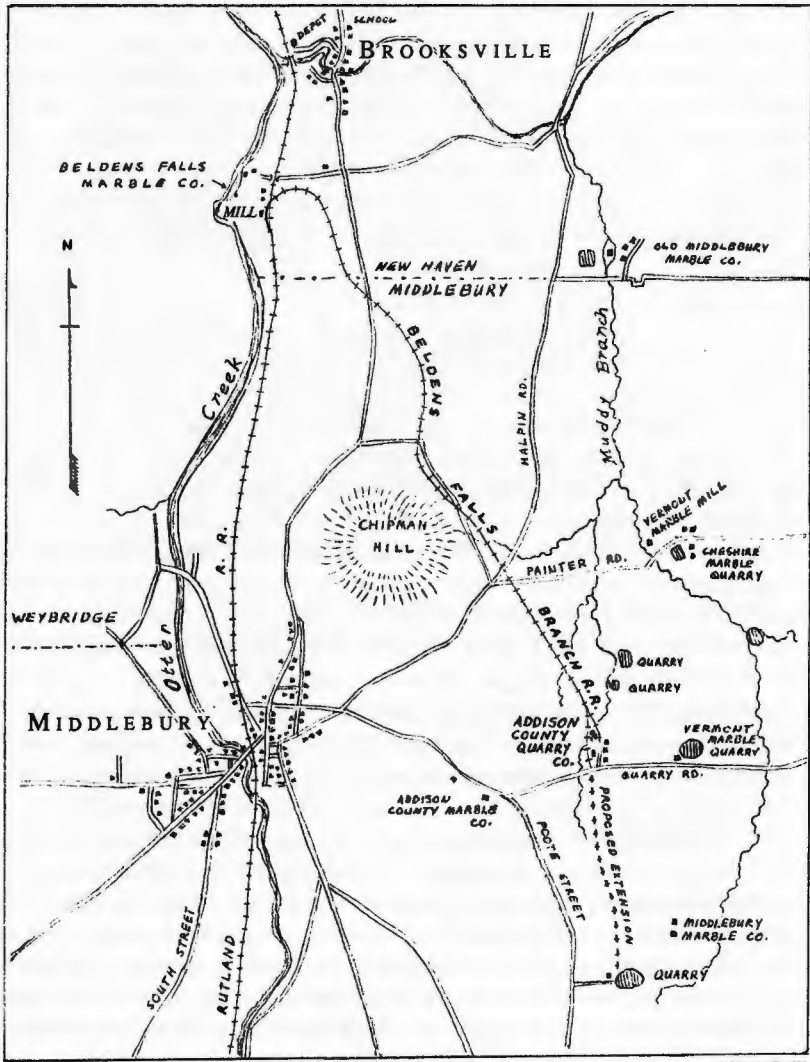
In the marble industry the two best-known short lines (both owned by the Vermont Marble Company) were the Clarendon and Pittsford Railroad, which served Florence, Proctor, and West Rutland, Vermont, beginning in 1886, and the Manchester, Dorset, and Granville Railroad, which ran between West Dorset and Manchester, Vermont, starting in 1903.⁶ The Beldens Falls Branch Railroad opened in 1870, also to haul marble, but it was one of Vermont's most obscure lines, in part because it did not connect any major population centers and in part because it had already been abandoned by 1879, years before its better-known counterparts were built. Whether they carried people, freight, or an industrial commodity, Vermont's numerous short-line railroads shared a common trait: they provided efficient, relatively inexpensive transportation to many parts of the state that otherwise would not have had it.

The arrival of the Rutland and Burlington Railroad in 1849 caused a major revolution in the Vermont marble industry, which up to that time had relied mainly on water transportation for getting its heavy finished products to market. Railroads not only brought improved transportation to Vermont, they also helped stimulate the national economy, which in turn whetted an appetite for impressive new business structures, many of which were built of stone. In the 1850s the Vermont marble industry began to boom.⁷

Although marble had been quarried in Middlebury as early as 1803, the real boom there did not begin until after the Civil War, when more than half a dozen companies were active.⁸ In 1865 one of the most promising of these ventures, the Addison County Marble Company, was organized by Thomas J. Ormsbee of Rutland, Vermont; William H. Ireland of Boston, Massachusetts; and others.⁹ They purchased the old Francis Slason and E. L. Ormsby quarry, dormant for about twenty years, located about a mile east of Middlebury Village, just off Quarry Road. The reopened quarry contained a layer of beautiful white statuary marble approximately 4 feet thick, but the operation was hampered by its lack of an adjacent mill site with adequate waterpower.¹⁰

There was, however, an exceptionally good site at Beldens Falls, a remote and scenic spot on Otter Creek, in the towns of New Haven and Weybridge, nearly 4 miles northwest of the quarry. The Rutland and Burlington (later, Rutland) Railroad ran past Beldens Falls, making the site even more attractive for industrial development. Hauling the large, heavy, rough blocks of marble with teams of oxen this distance over the frequently muddy clay roads was a slow and arduous procedure, so it was decided that a branch-line railroad would be the best means of connecting the quarry with the proposed mill site.

In November 1868 the Beldens Falls Marble Company, which was to



BELDENS FALLS BRANCH RAILROAD

1869 - 1879

build the new marble mill at the falls, was chartered along with the Beldens Falls Branch Railroad, which would connect the mill with the quarry. The new marble company's president was Sir Alexander T. Galt, a prominent Canadian businessman and former finance minister. Galt and other Canadian backers put up roughly one-third of the initial investment in the venture; the rest of the capital came from Portland, Maine, and Addison and Chittenden counties in Vermont.¹¹ In the same year, Albert F. Manley, a highly regarded quarryman from Sutherland Falls (later Proctor), Vermont, moved to Middlebury, where he began to supervise the day-to-day work at the Addison County Marble Company's quarry.¹²

After many months of careful preparation, plans quickly began to fall into place. In June 1869 Edwin Vallette, a successful Middlebury merchant and secretary-treasurer of the Beldens Falls Marble Company, purchased the 65-acre mill site at the falls for the company. The following month several contracts were signed with nearby quarry companies to provide for railroad construction, marble transport, and finishing work at the mill. These comprehensive documents contained detailed terms covering virtually every aspect of the proposed operation.¹³

In its contract with the Addison County Marble Company, the Beldens Falls Marble Company agreed to furnish cars and transportation to and from the mill over the railroad virtually free of charge, *except* that it would receive a one-half share of all the marble transported from the quarry. Beldens Falls also agreed to allow the quarry company the free use of the railway for the disposition of quarry waste and to furnish cars and motive power (a steam locomotive or horses) for waste removal "when not employed in the general purposes of the railway . . . and only when the Beldens Falls Marble Co. can conveniently dispense with the use thereof." Another part of the contract (probably included at the insistence of the Addison County company) stipulated that if the railroad were not completed on time, the cost of transporting the rough blocks of marble from the quarry to the mill would be borne by the mill company until the railroad was completed. This may in part account for the remarkably quick construction of the railroad. The proposed completion date for the railroad was on or before October 1, 1870, and the mill was to be finished on or before December 1, 1870.¹⁴

As soon as the contracts were signed, the weekly local newspaper, the *Middlebury Register*, announced, "The Beldens Falls Marble Company has determined to proceed at once to erect their mill at Beldens Falls and to build the Beldens Falls Branch Railroad."¹⁵

A few weeks later the marble company contracted with Dr. Benjamin S. Nichols, owner of the Pioneer Shops (a busy manufacturer and general

STOCKHOLDERS MEETING.

Notice is hereby given that the first meeting of the
**BELDEN'S FALLS BRANCH RAILROAD
 COMPANY**

will be held at the Office of E. Vallette, Middlebury, on Wednesday, the 18th day of August inst., at 3 o'clock, P. M., for the purpose of organizing said Company, electing Directors, and transacting such other business as may legally be brought before said meeting.

E. VALLETTE, } Commissioners
CHAS. C. COLBY, }

to receive subscriptions to the Capital Stock.
 Middlebury, August 1st, 1869. 19w3

Notice of the first Beldens Falls Branch Railroad stockholders' meeting as it appeared in the Middlebury Register. Courtesy of Sheldon Museum.

contractor located on Lake Street in Burlington, Vermont), for construction of the new marble mill, including all machinery, a dam, and rock-cutting work at the falls. Nichols also just happened to be the vice president of the marble company.¹⁶

On August 18, 1869, a meeting of the stockholders of the Beldens Falls Branch Railroad was held at Edwin Vallette's office in Middlebury. Charles C. Colby,¹⁷ a Canadian investor from Stanstead, Quebec, one of the original incorporators, was elected president; the final survey of the railroad route was approved; and the process of acquiring the right-of-way was begun. Court-appointed commissioners worked out land damage payments to landowners whose property was used; construction work on the roadbed began on September 25, 1869.¹⁸

About fifty workmen were brought down from Canada and split into three gangs, each responsible for a separate section of the line. The size of the crew was increased a few days later, and the work progressed rapidly. At the same time, construction on the mill and dam was proceeding well, and about sixty men were employed on the rock-cutting and foundation work.¹⁹

On October 2, dark storm clouds rolled in. Two days of heavy rains caused extensive flooding all across Addison County. The unfinished railroad grade was not harmed, but the dam under construction at the mill site was badly damaged by high water. Nevertheless, work on the mill was soon resumed, and within a few weeks the frame of the building was up, ready for sheathing.²⁰

The railroad was also quickly beginning to take form. By late October the majority of the cuts and fills were complete, and the crews were nearly ready to begin on the trestle work. Two large and several small wooden bridges were needed on the line. At Beldens Falls the railroad surveyors had been faced with the dilemma of getting past a rocky hill, a small stream, and the main line of the Rutland Railroad, all of which blocked the access to the mill site near Otter Creek. They decided to go around the hill with a long, sweeping horseshoe curve and continue over the stream on the first of the major trestles (approximately 100 feet long), which was part of the horseshoe. This brought the Beldens Falls Branch Railroad to a crossing, at grade, with the Rutland main line and then on to the millyard just beyond.²¹

The second major trestle had to be built to take the line over a tributary of the Muddy Branch that flowed through a remote valley just north of the Addison County Marble Company's quarry property. This valley required extensive fill on its north side, and marble riprap was used to carry the railroad grade partway across.²² The remainder of the valley was bridged with a trestle about 15 feet high and 150 feet long.²³

On November 9, 1869, the Vermont legislature approved the consolidation of the Beldens Falls Branch Railroad with the Beldens Falls Marble Company. The railroad was also given permission to build a spur to an unspecified point on the south bank of the New Haven River. The most likely destination was the marble quarries and mill of the Old Middlebury Marble Company that straddled the New Haven town line. The poor production history of this company's quarry, however, discouraged the extension plans. The spur track, which would have been about a mile and a half in length, was never built.²⁴

In December 1869 the railroad's officers voted to approve the transfer of assets to the marble company with the provision that the mill owners would complete the construction of the railroad on or before July 1, 1870. With this bit of legal housekeeping accomplished, the railroad officially became a subsidiary of the Beldens Falls Marble Company, although for all practical purposes it had been one from the beginning. From this time on, the fortunes of the railroad were tied to the success or failure of the parent company.²⁵

Bridge building and tracklaying continued through the winter, and on

February 15, 1870, the *Register* reported, "The first train passed over the Beldens Falls Branch Railroad to the Addison County Marble quarry on Tuesday. Two trips were made and quite respectable loads of marble blocks were carried to the mill at the Falls." The railroad had been finished nearly eight months ahead of its original schedule, a remarkable feat that can be attributed to the aggressive management of the Beldens Falls Marble Company and also, undoubtedly, to the penalty clause in the contract. The track had cost the company about \$20,000 per mile to build, a bit above average for the time, but it was a first-class job that even boasted the finest imported English rails.²⁶ Although the opening of the line didn't attract the hoopla normally associated with such an event in those days, it surely was a happy day for everyone involved in the enterprise.

The mill at Beldens Falls also was completed ahead of schedule. Shortly after the mill opened, the *Daily Free Press and Times* of Burlington sent a reporter down on the local southbound to see what was going on. His article is the only known firsthand description of the operation:

South of the mill stands a huge derrick, swinging its . . . arm over the side-track, and looking [ready] to take up any little pebble of fifteen or twenty tons or so. . . . Already, around it, in a double ring, lay piled up on each other, huge white blocks, ready to be dragged into the mill and slitted up.

The mill itself is a wooden building one hundred feet by seventy-five, and about thirty feet high to the ridge, through which, overhead, runs the main shaft . . . [which powers] the gang saws, six on each side of the mill. A railroad track for the marble trucks runs up from the yard to the inside of the mill.

The mill [is driven by a water] turbine of two hundred and fifty horsepower, of the well-known Tyler pattern . . . built at Claremont, New Hampshire. . . . It is the [intention] of the company this coming summer, to put up another building adjoining this one—the power furnished by the same shaft—to contain 16 gangs of saws. . . . This will make the mills of the Beldens Falls Marble Company, we are informed, the largest in the country.²⁷

The planned expansion of the mill never materialized, however.

A trip on the newly completed Beldens Falls Branch Railroad would have started at the small railyard beside the marble mill. The train, probably consisting of an old "American"-type locomotive²⁸ leased from the Rutland and several flatcars owned by the mill, initially headed north for a short distance. At this point the marble company's track swung to the right and the train crossed the Rutland Railroad's main line at grade, then over the long, curved trestle, which was the first part of a sweeping 180-degree turn to the southeast. The fireman would have been kept busy throwing wood onto the grates as the locomotive, belching thick clouds of smoke from its huge, spark-arrester smokestack, chugged slowly on

a steady grade through open farmland for about a mile until it crossed present-day Route 7.

After another half mile, the line reached its highest point, 460 feet above sea level. The engineer would have eased off on the throttle as the train drifted slowly downgrade through a shallow cut and crossed what is now Happy Valley Road. The tracks closely paralleled Happy Valley Road for about a half mile until they recrossed it, Halpin Road, and Painter Road in the next quarter mile. These road crossings were so close together that even at slow speed the train's engineer would have had his hand on the locomotive's whistle cord almost constantly, to the delight of the local children and the probable discomfort of the local livestock.

After the road crossings, the line ran virtually straight and level for about a half mile through broad fields and pastureland. The train then rumbled cautiously across the second major wooden trestle, beyond which the train went on for an additional quarter mile to a switch located just north of the Addison County quarry property. At this point the track diverged. A siding ran southeast about 1,000 feet, crossing a swampy area on a marble riprap causeway to its terminus in a small railyard beside what was later known as Number One Quarry. The other track, officially the main line, ran almost due south for about half a mile, crossing another small trestle along the way, to an abrupt end at Quarry Road.²⁹

It was originally intended that this main line would be extended to a quarry operated by the Middlebury Marble Company, located about a mile south near Foote Street, and perhaps to other quarries even further south.³⁰ This extension was never built, and the completed stub of the main line probably saw little if any traffic.³¹

At Number One Quarry the empty railroad flatcars that had been hauled up from the mill were loaded with rough blocks of marble and then, apparently, rolled down an incline track to await the next train back to the mill. This incline facilitated the movement of the heavily loaded cars and eliminated the need for a locomotive to switch the quarry yard.³²

Except for an occasional load of tools, equipment, or supplies, the railroad's normal routine of hauling empties to the quarry and loaded cars back to the mill was repeated over and over during the entire life of the railroad. The only change in the schedule was the annual winter shutdown of the quarry, which usually lasted for several months, depending on the severity of the weather.

And yet the heaviest traffic ever recorded on the marble company's railroad occurred during the winter shutdown of 1870-1871. The *Register* reported that on March 3, 1871, "about 300 freight cars which had been run out upon the Beldens Falls Branch [Rail]road and lain there for some time, were hauled off toward Burlington. This indicates heavier freight

trains over the [Rutland] road soon."³³ These 300 cars represented nearly one-third of the Rutland's entire fleet. Although a seasonal slowdown in business could have been responsible, another possible explanation is that the lease of the Rutland by the Vermont Central on December 31, 1870, had disrupted operations during the transition period and caused a massive glut of empty cars that had to be stored somewhere. Whatever the cause, the little marble company railroad would never see so much activity again.

Since there were no turning facilities at either end of the line, the locomotive probably backed up from the mill, pushing the empties in front of it to the quarry, and then pulled the loaded cars behind it on its return trip to Beldens Falls.³⁴ This routine would have required fairly slow operating speeds, especially considering the large number of highway grade crossings and long trestles. There were never any recorded accidents or fatalities on the railroad, although minor derailments may have occurred now and then.

In early 1870 the Addison County Marble Company was trying to promote its statuary marble, which William H. Ireland, the company's treasurer, described as "one of the best and purest veins . . . ever found in this country."³⁵ Richard S. Greenough, a sculptor from Newport, Rhode Island, who had used several blocks of the marble, added his own endorsement: "I have no hesitation in assuring you that I prefer it to any marble I have ever used."³⁶

Greenough had received \$1,000 for a bust made from the marble and in 1870 fashioned a 3-by-4-by-6-foot block of this marble into a full-sized statue titled *Victory* for the Boston Public Latin School.³⁷ Whatever merit the statue may have had as a work of art, its promotional value to the marble company was enormous; as late as 1886 an advertisement referred to the "celebrated" statue of *Victory*.³⁸

The entire operation prospered initially, and in September 1871 the Beldens Falls Marble Company and its railroad were purchased by Galt, the Canadian, and Edward J. Hale, an investor from Boston. Galt had already been company president and principal investor, but Hale's arrival signaled the end of any semblance of local control. With the change of ownership, the affairs of the company took a dramatic turn for the worse.

Almost immediately the mill company defaulted on its bond payments. John W. Stewart, a Middlebury lawyer (and also Vermont's governor at the time), and Edwin Vallette, trustees, sued for the bondholders. In December 1871 they won a chancery court decree against the Beldens Falls Marble Company.³⁹

At about the same time, a disagreement arose between the new mill

owners and the Addison County Marble Company over preexisting terms of their contract. This conflict nearly ruined both companies. Galt and Hale wanted better compensation for transporting and sawing the marble, but the quarry company refused to renegotiate. At this point, Galt and Hale played their trump card and simply stopped running their train to the quarry. Operations on the Beldens Falls Branch Railroad ground to a halt.

The quarry officials were understandably furious. As the piles of unshipped marble grew at the quarry, L. Miles Standish, president of the Addison County Marble Company, insisted that the mill live up to the terms of its contract, but to no avail. The last straw came when Galt and Hale signed a new agreement with the Wheaton Quarry Company in Pittsford and began to saw their marble, which was shipped north by rail to Beldens Falls.⁴⁰ While this arrangement with the Wheaton Company appeared on the surface to be a significant coup for Galt and Hale, the greatly increased costs of shipping the rough stone from Pittsford, some 25 miles distant, cut into the mill's profits.

This dispute also landed in court, and although the case never came to trial, the expensive litigation dragged on and on. The mill owners struggled to meet their financial obligations during 1872, but the Beldens Falls Branch Railway to the Addison County Quarry, which represented a major part of their investment, remained idle.

The stalemate was gradually sapping the strength of both ventures, and finally, in the spring of 1873, Galt and Hale decided that they had had enough. In April they agreed to sell the Beldens Falls Marble Company and its railroad to their adversary, the Addison County Marble Company. The selling price indicated the depths to which the mill company's fortunes had sunk: it was a mere \$35,000 out of an original investment of well over \$100,000.⁴¹

The quarry company was jubilant, and the *Register* happily reported that "of course this solution of the difficulties means business. It will soon be lively again in the vicinity of the quarry, and the iron horse will be puffing along over the long neglected [rail]road between the quarry and the mill."⁴² By June all of the outstanding lawsuits were discontinued, and the quarry, railroad, and mill, now under single management, were once again in full operation. With the renewed activity, the Rutland Division of the Vermont Central made Beldens Falls an official flag stop for its two daily mixed trains.⁴³

The success of the Addison County Marble Company seemed assured. But the post-Civil War economic boom ended unexpectedly on Black Friday, September 19, 1873, with the failure of several New York City banks and stock brokerage firms, due mainly to overspeculation in land



Water-filled Number Two Quarry at the former Addison County Marble Company site just north of Quarry Road in Middlebury. The main-line stub of the Beldens Falls Branch Railroad was several hundred feet to the left of this view. Photo taken by the author in 1989.

and railroad stocks. The economic panic that followed soon deepened into a full-scale depression that lasted for five years.⁴⁴

As the aftereffects of the panic began to spread throughout the national economy, orders for marble evaporated, leaving the new, heavily mortgaged company in a precarious position.⁴⁵ The marble company had other difficulties as well. The quality of its marble was not living up to expectations, a frequent problem with most of the quarries in the Middlebury area. To make matters worse, the new owners soon discovered that the marble companies in the Rutland and Pittsford areas, benefiting from the introduction of the Ball diamond drill around 1870, had virtually cornered the entire domestic market by 1873. Reeling from the combined impact of these problems, the Addison County Marble Company reluctantly shut down the entire combined operation before it really had a chance to prove itself. The workers, many of whom had just been hired, were laid off again.

The railroad now entered its second major period of dormancy. Finally, in November 1874, the stockholders authorized the directors to sell the company's assets at public auction, and in March 1875 the mill, quarry, and railroad were sold to Michael H. Barston from Boston, Massachusetts, for \$46,000.⁴⁶ It took some time to sort through the financial wreckage,



Abandoned Beldens Falls Branch Railroad grade running across the marble riprap causeway on the siding to Number One Quarry, which is just beyond the trees to the right. This section of the old grade is used as a farm access road. Photo taken by the author in 1989.

and as the years passed, weeds and brush began to cover the rusty tracks of the unused railroad, and the quarry, its pumps silent, filled up with water.

But things began to look up in March 1877, when a reorganized Addison Marble Company, now a Massachusetts corporation, proposed to resume the operation with new financing and renewed optimism. In August 1877 they hired Albert F. Manley, who had previously been the quarry superintendent, to reopen the quarry and further develop the vein of statuary marble that had attracted such attention a few years earlier.⁴⁷ Manley set up a steam-driven centrifugal pump and began to draw off about 30 feet of water from the quarry. The *Register* commented that the quarry “will probably be an odorous place in a short time, as

the water is alive with small fish."⁴⁸ When the quarry had been pumped dry, the quarry workers were rehired and normal operations resumed.

The long-neglected railroad probably received some minor repairs to rotted cross ties and bridge timbers, the old locomotive was fired up, and the empty flatcars were hauled over the line from the mill to the quarry. On November 16, 1877, the *Register* noted, "The Addison Marble Company shipped two car loads of marble to market Wednesday, and have more that will soon be in readiness for shipment."

Work continued until the end of January 1878, when the quarry was finally shut down for the winter. Manley's crew had uncovered a new layer of fine statuary marble, and the *Register* exclaimed that it was "beautiful and almost sets crazy the sculptors who have seen specimens of it."⁴⁹ The outlook seemed promising, and plans were made to resume the operation in early spring of 1878.⁵⁰ The renewed enthusiasm, however, was soon followed by bitter disappointment. The old problems of strong competition from Rutland and Pittsford as well as a persistent unsoundness of the marble from the Middlebury area were undoubtedly the reasons the operation foundered once more. This time the failure proved to be fatal for the railroad.

Although now in its third and final period of dormancy, the line remained intact through most of 1879.⁵¹ By that time the owners of the Addison Marble Company had obviously decided that the quarry was not capable of producing sound marble in economically viable quantities. In an attempt to cut their losses and salvage what they could, they contracted with two local men, Byron Fleming and Chester Clark, to remove the rails of the Beldens Falls Branch Railroad. Fleming and Clark started at the edge of Quarry Road and gradually worked their way toward the mill at Beldens Falls. By mid-November the job was done. The imported English rails, which had seen very little use and were consequently "good as new," were sold to the Old Colony Railroad Company of Massachusetts.⁵²

The decision to dismantle the railroad must have been a difficult one indeed for some of the owners of Addison Marble who had worked dauntlessly for many years to make a go of the business. By severing the rail link between the mill and the quarry, they also were giving up any possibility of selling the combined properties as a package to prospective buyers. Without the quarry, however, the railroad had no purpose and represented a huge, nonproductive capital investment. The questionable output of the other quarries in the immediate vicinity offered little incentive to extend the railroad elsewhere.⁵³

The quarry and mill remained dormant for several years while the owners of the Addison Marble Company tried to find a way to unload

their remaining assets. Finally, in April 1883, the Burlington Marble Company purchased the entire mill site at Beldens Falls for \$25,000 but did not buy the quarry, now stranded 4 long miles from the mill. Included in the sale, according to the deed, was "the railway as it now exists on the *western* [author's emphasis] side of [the] Rutland Railroad . . . including all tools, cars, machinery, derricks, buildings and other property."⁵⁴ The "railway" referred to was the remnant millyard trackage adjacent to the mill (the railway on the *eastern* side of the Rutland having already been removed in 1879). The "cars" mentioned in the deed were

MARBLE QUARRY

FOR SALE!

THE ADDISON MARBLE CO. being about to dissolve their corporation, have authorized the undersigned to sell their Quarry Property in

MIDDLEBURY, VT.

This quarry is located on a lot of 25 acres or more, and contains a vein of

STATUARY MARBLE

said to be equal or superior to any produced in the United States or Italy, and furthermore as to its quality we would refer to the celebrated

STATUE of "VICTORY,"

in the Boston Latin School, as a sample of what this vein produces, and which was cut from a block 3' x 4' x 6'.

Proposals will be received up to July 1, 1886, and if not sold at that date, will be sold at public auction after due notice.

By calling on Mr. E. J. Mathews, whose farm adjoins the quarry, he will show the property.

L. MILES STANDISH,
WM. H. IRELAND.
22 3/4 Boston, May 18, 1886. 28 State Street.

Advertisement of the sale of the Addison Marble Company quarry as it appeared in the Middlebury Register, June 11, 1886. There were no offers, and the property was finally sold at auction in July 1886. Courtesy of Sheldon Museum.

probably the small fleet of aging flatcars of the Beldens Falls Branch Railroad; they were presumably hauled down to the Burlington Marble Company's quarry railroad in Pittsford.⁵⁵

The railroad's demise seems to have attracted very little local attention. This is not surprising, since the railroad operated trains only about three years during its ten-year life span. The rest of the time the line rested quietly in the weeds or under deep snowdrifts, waiting for the parent companies to resume business.

After the breakup of Addison Marble, the mill at Beldens Falls was operated successfully until it burned down in 1887. It was rebuilt in 1889 and continued in operation under a succession of different owners until a second fire in 1916. Even the quarry was revived several times in later years and remained in production until 1943. But without the Beldens Falls Branch Railroad connection, the mill and the quarry followed separate destinies.

NOTES

¹ Walter Hill Crockett, *Vermont: The Green Mountain State*, vol. 5 (New York: Century History, 1923), 584.

² Gordon E. Hopper, *The Victory Branch Railroad of Vermont: A Spirited Lumbering Line That Helped Develop the Northeast* (River Forest, Ill.: Heimburger House, 1989), 17, 19.

³ Robert C. Jones, Whitney J. Maxfield, and William G. Gove, *Vermont's Granite Railroads: The Montpelier & Wells River and The Barre & Chelsea* (Boulder, Colo.: Pruett, 1985), 45, 130.

⁴ Crockett, *Vermont*, 584.

⁵ Robert C. Jones, *The Central Vermont Railway: A Yankee Tradition*, vol. 2: *The Busy Years, 1887-1910* (Silverton, Colo.: Sundance Books, 1981), 89.

⁶ Crockett, *Vermont*, 585.

⁷ Earle Newton, *The Vermont Story: A History of the People of the Green Mountain State, 1749-1949* (Montpelier: Vermont Historical Society, 1949), 161.

⁸ H. P. Smith, ed., *History of Addison County Vermont*, vol. 2 (Syracuse: D. Mason & Company, 1886), 329-333.

⁹ State of Vermont, *Laws of Vermont*, no. 112 (Montpelier, Vt.: Freeman Steam Printing, 1865), 147, 148.

¹⁰ Smith, *History of Addison County*, 331, 332.

¹¹ *Daily Free Press and Times* (Burlington, Vt.), 17 March 1870.

¹² *Middlebury Register*, 26 August 1904 (hereafter, *Register*).

¹³ Town of Middlebury, Land Records, vol. 22: 36, 37, 483-487.

¹⁴ The following addendum was tacked onto the end of the contract, presumably by a cautious mill company officer: "It is not intended . . . that the Beldens Falls Marble Company shall furnish cars or power to build any branches or side tracks for the disposition of waste in any ravines or marshy grounds outside the established limits of this line of railway." Town of Middlebury, Land Records, vol. 22: 483-487.

¹⁵ *Register*, 6 July 1869.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 27 July 1869.

¹⁷ Colby, who was also heavily involved in marble quarry land speculation in Pittsford, Vermont, was presumably an acquaintance of Galt. In later years he was to become a member of the Canadian cabinet.

¹⁸ *Register*, 28 September 1869.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 14 September 1869.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 19 October 1869.

²¹ *Daily Free Press and Times*, 17 March 1870.

²² It is probable that this riprap was dumped *after* the railroad was completed, in which case it would have been waste from the quarry, and the original length of the trestle would have been about 200 feet.

²³ Based upon on-site inspection and measurements made by the author in April 1989.

²⁴ This site was later operated successfully by the Cutter Marble Company, which opened a new quarry about a half mile south of its mill in August 1881. A tramway was constructed from the quarry to the

mill along the bank of Muddy Branch. The quarried blocks of marble were loaded onto flatcars and then, apparently, rolled down to the mill by gravity, since there is no evidence that a locomotive was ever used. The trip down to the mill would have been a thrilling experience for the brakeman. The empty cars were presumably hauled back up to the quarry by draft animals. The tramway followed a portion of the route proposed for the spur of the Beldens Falls Branch Railroad in 1869.

²⁵Town of Middlebury, Land Records, vol. 23: 103.

²⁶*Register*, 14 November 1879.

²⁷*Daily Free Press and Times*, 17 March 1870.

²⁸These steam locomotives had four lead or pony wheels and four large-diameter drive wheels and were the standard all-purpose engines on most U.S. railroads through the mid-nineteenth century.

²⁹Based upon several on-site inspections made by the author in April 1989 and April 1993.

³⁰In its contract with the Middlebury Marble Company, signed on July 6, 1869, the Beldens Falls Marble Company agreed to extend the railroad to the former's quarry *if* the amount of merchantable marble exceeded 30,000 cubic feet per annum; Town of Middlebury, Land Records, vol. 22: 36, 37. It seems the quarry never reached these minimum output figures, and the main line was never extended south of its awkward terminus at the edge of Quarry Road.

³¹It is possible that the main-line stub may have been used briefly in 1877 and 1878 if Number Two Quarry, which was located a few hundred feet east of the track at the south edge of the quarry property, was opened at or before that time. Several carloads of marble were shipped out in the fall of 1877, though which quarry opening the stone came from is not entirely clear. In any event, the main line to Quarry Road was a fairly useless appendage.

³²Although this incline (or hump, to use the proper railroad terminology) was never mentioned in contemporary accounts of the quarry operation, the remaining, heavily eroded evidence at the site strongly suggests its existence.

³³*Register*, 7 March 1871.

³⁴In its contract with the quarry company, the mill company agreed to provide "all usual and convenient side tracks, turntable, derrick, etc." at the mill; Town of Middlebury, Land Records, vol. 22: 483-487. The turntable, however, was never installed, and the locomotive of the Beldens Falls Branch Railroad backed one way on its trip between mill and quarry until the end of the operation.

³⁵Smith, *History of Addison County*, 332.

³⁶*Ibid.*, 333.

³⁷In later years the work was sometimes misidentified as *Liberty*.

³⁸*Register*, 11 June 1886.

³⁹Addison County Chancery Court, decree no. 14, 26 December 1871.

⁴⁰Although this new relationship between the marble mill at Beldens Falls and the quarries in Pittsford was short-lived, it was to reappear as a dominant pattern after 1883.

⁴¹Town of New Haven, Land Records, vol. 16: 539, 540.

⁴²*Register*, 29 April 1873.

⁴³*Ibid.*, 16 September 1873.

⁴⁴Ernest L. Bogart and Charles M. Thompson, *Readings in the Economic History of the United States* (New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1916), 729-732.

⁴⁵Town of Middlebury, Land Records, vol. 24: 221, 222.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, vol. 26: 1, 2.

⁴⁷*Register*, 17 August 1877.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, 25 January 1878.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*

⁵¹The "marble quarry railroad" was mentioned in an article on local road repairs, indicating that the line was still in place at that date; *Register*, 6 June 1879.

⁵²*Ibid.*, 14 November 1879.

⁵³It is possible that the Beldens Falls Branch Railroad may have served some of the other quarries in the area in the 1870s, although there is no evidence that the track was ever extended to any of them. Incoming supplies and outgoing marble would have been hauled overland to or from the closest point along the line. Addison County court records suggest a business relationship between the railroad and the Cheshire Marble Company (whose quarry was located less than a mile east of the tracks) prior to 1873. By 1879, however, these other quarries had been dormant for many years.

⁵⁴Town of New Haven, Land Records, vol. 18: 11, 12.

⁵⁵No specific information has ever come to light concerning the railroad's locomotive. In all likelihood it was leased from the Rutland or the Vermont Central Railroad and would have been returned to the lessor when the quarry was shut down around 1878. The Burlington Marble Company's quarry railroad in Pittsford was eventually absorbed into the Vermont Marble Company's Clarendon and Pittsford Railroad.