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No Parking: Vermont Rejects the Green Mountain Parkway

The Green Mountain Parkway was a classic New Deal proposal, born of developments in federal and state public works programs. It also belonged to a relatively new but growing tradition of conservation and recreation philosophies. It directly reflected how states and local communities could be influenced (or resist being influenced) by movements at the national level.

By HANNAH SILVERSTEIN

On Town Meeting Day 1936, record numbers of voters crowded meeting halls across Vermont. The issue drawing so many citizens to the polls was the referendum to decide the future of the Green Mountain Parkway, the scenic mountain road that boosters had envisioned running from the Massachusetts border all the way to Canada. In a day of heavy voting, Vermonters turned down the proposal to construct the road, and so ended three years of impassioned debate. Vermonters on all sides had used the plan to focus on the most controversial topics of the times, which ranged from conservation policy to un-

employment, from the role of the federal government in state affairs to the aesthetics of the wilderness. Although in the end the parkway proposal had less effect on the state than did the urgent problems of the Great Depression, at the time there seemed to be no greater issue than the road itself.

Why did a plan to build a road cause such an uproar? To many Vermonters, the parkway battle symbolized the complexities and mixed feelings generated by the New Deal as a whole. The issue thus serves as a window through which we can examine the impact of new social policies on a small and politically conservative state. In many ways the Green Mountain Parkway was a classic New Deal proposal, born of developments in federal and state public works programs. It also belonged to a relatively new but growing tradition of conservation and recreation philosophies. It directly reflected how states and local communities could be influenced (or resist being influenced) by movements at the national level.

THE FEDERAL CONTEXT

The New Deal created an enormous federal bureaucracy whose agencies organized projects that combined employment, recreation, transportation, and conservation. The National Planning Board (NPB) was established in 1933 to orchestrate the numerous levels of bureaucracy.¹ The NPB encouraged development of similar organizations at the state level and often helped them in their attempts to wade through the confusing conglomeration of New Deal opportunities. Despite these efforts to coordinate federal interests with agencies on a smaller scale, the federal government could easily lose sight of the wishes and needs of local communities.

A key factor of New Deal policy that Vermonters encountered was the question of conservationism: what priorities should the nation and Vermont set for land management? Those who decide public conservation policy have always struggled with the central problem of keeping public lands accessible without jeopardizing the goals of preservation that make those lands worth visiting. This conflict has affected the shape and organization of the National Park Service from the time of its founding in 1916. The Park Service has never reached a comfortable balance between preservation and access, and throughout the 1930s the tension was heightened in part because the dramatic increase in federal conservation projects made the issue more pressing.

Several factors contributed to the New Deal emphasis on projects meant to improve public lands. In the face of the collapsed stock market and failing industry, unemployment during the depression era reached ter-

rifying proportions. Franklin D. Roosevelt's administration, declaring that the federal government would take responsibility for the welfare of the people, needed to find ways to employ the masses of skilled and unskilled laborers. Furthermore, as a major landholder in his own right and later as governor of New York, Roosevelt had demonstrated his concern about the declining productivity of American croplands and the fragile condition of forestlands. Government, he believed, had a role to play in preserving and improving these important natural resources. Through the creation of programs like the Civilian Conservation Corps and agencies like the Works Progress Administration, Roosevelt and his advisers found ways to put people to work on the land, thereby addressing problems of unemployment and conservation.²

Another element that contributed to the rising public interest in conservation policy had less to do with the economy than with popular culture. Throughout the early part of the twentieth century, the amount of leisure time available to Americans expanded. Planned recreational activities and the spaces in which to pursue them became more important to the general population. In contrast to their Puritan ancestors, twentieth-century Americans held their spare time sacred, not to be filled with work. As columnist William H. Upson wrote in 1934, "We have . . . large cities filled with people who want to go on vacations. . . . Year by year, even in spite of the depression, a greater number of people are taking more and longer vacations at a greater distance from home."³

The Great Depression did not slow the recreation movement. In fact, New Deal planners saw great potential for boosting the economy by developing tourism and recreation, and the Roosevelt administration responded to the nation's growing addiction to leisure by increasing the number of national parks and recreation areas and helping fund state projects for recreational purposes. In 1936 the National Resources Committee reported that revenue generated from manufacturing had gone down about 50 percent from 1919 to 1933, whereas the money spent on recreation increased from \$115 million in 1917 to \$400 million in 1935. The committee called recreation "the salvation of many rural areas and smaller cities."⁴ In rural states such as Vermont, for example, tourism seemed to be a stable business compared to other prime resources. In 1929 Vermont earned twice as much from its recreation industry as it did from its rock quarries, and income from tourism nearly equaled the revenue from dairy production.⁵ Thus there were powerful incentives for Vermont to focus its planning energy on the development of recreation.

The proliferation of automobiles among a wide segment of the population had a dramatic effect on recreation. Areas that had been accessible only to the few brave or wealthy enough to attempt to reach them were

now within driving distance of anyone who owned a car. American society during the 1930s was more mobile than it had ever been, despite the hard times, and that mobility was increasing. Because road building could potentially employ people from all backgrounds and with many different skills, the government actively encouraged projects that combined the dual needs of transportation and recreation. According to the National Resources Planning Board, "recreation accounted for 60 percent of road use in the United States in 1933."⁶

Much of this recreational driving was done on parkways, roads specifically designed to be scenic.⁷ New York was the first state to explore the possibilities of such roads, building the Bronx River Parkway in 1907. By 1922, counties across New York were modeling their recreational development on the Bronx River Parkway, which was an enormous success. The parkways of New York in turn set the standard for scenic roads constructed throughout the country during the 1930s. The parkway seemed to many to be a logical extension of the concept of the public park, which was, ideally, accessible to everyone. The parkway met modern recreation needs and as such was highly attractive to New Deal planners, who were concerned with bringing rural states such as Vermont into the industrialized, technologically advanced twentieth century. The Blue Ridge Parkway connecting Shenandoah National Park in Virginia to the Great Smoky Mountain National Park in Tennessee was the first major project the Roosevelt administration funded; it has been called the epitome of New Deal projects, utilizing "all the prominent New Deal agencies," including the Public Works Administration, Works Progress Administration, National Park Service, Bureau of Public Roads, Civilian Conservation Corps, and Resettlement Administration.⁸

The parkway concept was modern, simple, and sanctified by the federal government, making the idea attractive to state leaders in Vermont. It was the newest thing in highway design, a symbol of advancement beyond pure necessity: Americans could afford to build a road for aesthetic pleasure alone. To highway planners, it was not simply the landscape but the road itself that was scenic. They considered the parkway an artistic expression seeking to create harmony between the natural world and human constructions; roads were to be "rhythmical in alignment and profile," not "the stiff lines of curves and tangents . . . found in general highway work."⁹ The highway in Figure 1 was designed to handle increased use and mitigate safety hazards. It was also intended to be more beautiful, a feature noted prominently but matter-of-factly on the drawing. By eliminating roadside billboards, skirting the eyesores of industrial cities, diverting the flow of traffic into open areas, and producing a continuously flowing line in the highway, the designer added an aesthetic

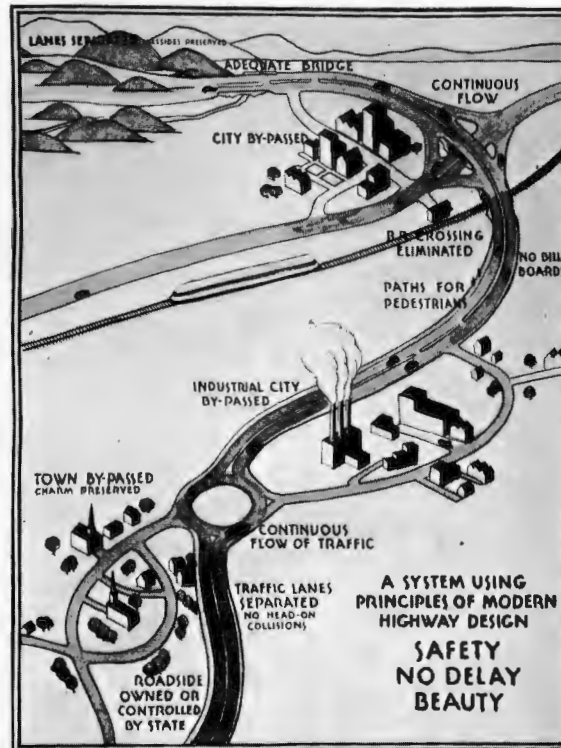
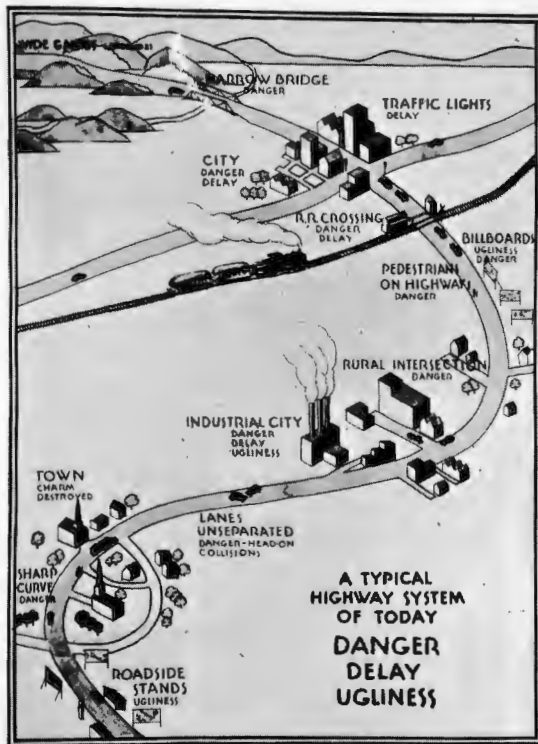


FIGURE 1. Drawings to illustrate the principles and advantages of "modern highway design." From National Resources Committee, Regional Planning: Part III—New England (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1936).

dimension to the plan. Based on the assumed need to balance nature and society, this was a rather practical aesthetic. The designer would have been surprised by a view that considered all highways, with their pavement and carbon monoxide fumes, to be inherently ugly.

VERMONTERS

The peculiar character of Vermonters played a large role in their reaction to federal plans. Vermonters could be stubborn and self-contained in their politics as well as their personal lives.¹⁰ They were cautious of outsiders and clung to old traditions. Many out-of-staters felt that entering Vermont was like stepping back in time, and publicity agents played up this nostalgia to attract tourists to the state.

In 1937 the Writers' Project of the Public Works Administration completed its guide to Vermont. Like its companion volumes in the American Guide series, the book attempted to characterize the state and its residents for a wide national audience. A number of Vermont authors, including Dorothy Canfield Fisher, contributed to the book, which reflects how Vermonters perceived themselves and wished to be perceived from the outside. Fisher proudly declared Vermont to be old-fashioned, almost a museum or a national park "representing the American past." It was an old-fashionedness, exemplified in people like the Green Mountain Boys and Calvin Coolidge, that came from an enduring spirit of independence yet had a practical edge: while the rest of the nation bounced from fads back to tradition and to the next new fad, Vermont held firm to old values that worked.¹¹

The guide mentioned how "in 1936, Vermont gained national notice by declining the Green Mountain Parkway."¹² Though the Writers' Project declined to pass judgment on the state's rejection of another New Deal proposal, the authors saw in the event aspects of "that spirit of independence which has brought [Vermont] both great praise and great obloquy, but which has always, whatever the issue, been the dominating force behind its history."¹³

Tourism was becoming increasingly big business in Vermont by the 1930s. The state was fortunate in that it did not have to create artificial attractions to win visitors; in an era of industrialization, Vermont marketed its own lack of development. In 1931 the Vermont Bureau of Publicity launched a campaign to attract tourists to the state, selling Vermont with the motto "Vermont, a state unspoiled." Governor Stanley C. Wilson, who became an early advocate for the parkway in 1933, made a series of speeches to this effect, with titles such as "Vermont—A Vacation Land" and "Vermont—A Tourist's Paradise." In one address he told the audience, "Don't forget that while we have our industry and our agriculture and

are endeavoring to strengthen and expand them both along proper lines, we propose to preserve to Vermont her natural beauty.”¹⁴ Yet the state government’s resolve to keep Vermont “unspoiled” could be shaken by a good proposal for development.

The Green Mountains, the most prominent feature of Vermont’s landscape, have long played a role in its politics, culture, and economy. Running on a north-south axis the entire length of the state, the mountains form a physical (and psychological) barrier separating eastern and western Vermont. The highway the federal government planned to build would have accentuated this barrier, and the potential divisiveness of the proposed road was a major argument against it. With the fear of division came the worry that Vermonters would not be able to control that split. A front-page editorial in the *Rutland Herald* warned, “The state will be split in half, into East Vermont and West Vermont, with a wide strip of U.S. territory in the middle, which Vermonters can cross only with the permission of the Federal government.”¹⁵ Vermonters, already aware of their regional differences, wanted to be unified. They united around their distrust of the federal government.

Vermonters had a love-hate relationship with the New Deal. Many failed to see the purpose of the emergency measures the government was using to meet the economic crisis of the depression. When times got bad, Vermonters’ solution was to hunker down and wait for conditions to change. Vermonters took longer to acknowledge the existence of the depression in part because the state’s economic problems did not seem as dramatic as they did in other regions of the country. Banks in Vermont did not begin to fail until 1933, a year after Roosevelt had declared the national bank holiday to slow down the epidemic of bank failures. If Vermont seemed to be doing all right in the 1930s, it was because the state had always been poor; Vermont “was falling from a lower rung in the economic ladder.”¹⁶ When the economic crisis finally reached Vermont, though, it hit with a vengeance that made even the most skeptical Republicans think hard about the potential benefits of a welfare state.

In spite of their reluctance to recognize an emergency, for the most part Vermonters welcomed with open arms the relief packages the federal government offered. No one argued that the state was poor or that its infrastructure was outdated and crumbling. Unpaved roads still connected many Vermont farmers to the towns where they bought supplies and sold their products. Measures were needed to control the spring floods, which in 1927 had caused enormous damage throughout the state, as they would again in March 1936.¹⁷ By 1933 the state’s major industries, dairy farming and quarrying, were rapidly declining.¹⁸ Because politics in Vermont has always been practical, the state government unhesitatingly ac-

cepted assistance through work relief programs such as the Public Works Administration and the Civilian Conservation Corps.

Federal programs required states to have project proposals ready before they received money, thus Vermont had to be well organized, anticipating federal legislation before it was passed and having proposals ready immediately so the state could get as large a portion of the relief packages as was legally possible. For example, the Public Works Administration was created in June 1933. In July Governor Wilson called a special session of the state legislature in order to form an agency to help Vermont coordinate with federal relief agencies. This was the beginning of the State Planning Board (although it would not take on that name until the following year). As a result of this prompt action, by December 1933 "over three quarters of a million dollars of PWA money had been spent in Vermont," proving that "Vermonters were not backward in asking for assistance in the construction of public works."¹⁹ Vermont's commissioner of forestry, Perry H. Merrill, asserted that "instead of the four [CCC] camps which she would have received had she not been prepared, thirteen were allotted to the Green Mountain State."²⁰ If money was available, Vermont was going to get it. Still, it seemed to many Vermonters that accepting federal doles was striking a deal with the devil, and some feared that in exchange for short-term assistance, Washington would undermine Vermont's independence, taking control over areas of life Vermonters held sacred.

These, then, were the elements — the economic conditions of the Great Depression, the growth of the tourist industry and the development of modern forms of recreation, and the political and social character of Vermont — that contributed to one of the biggest controversies the state faced in the early part of the twentieth century.

THE PARKWAY PROPOSED

The parkway proposal was intended to connect the interests of the federal government with the needs of Vermont. The plan was to take advantage of relief assistance of \$18 million available to Vermont for a large-scale comprehensive public works project under the National Industrial Recovery Act. The proposal called for a 250-mile road along the length of the Green Mountains to be flanked by strips of protected parkland 1,000 feet wide; it would connect approximately 1 million acres already designated as state parks, including the newly created Green Mountain National Forest. An enormous wilderness park would be set aside at the parkway's northernmost end. All the state government had to do was acquire, at the cost of \$500,000, approximately 50,000 acres of land for the right-of-way.

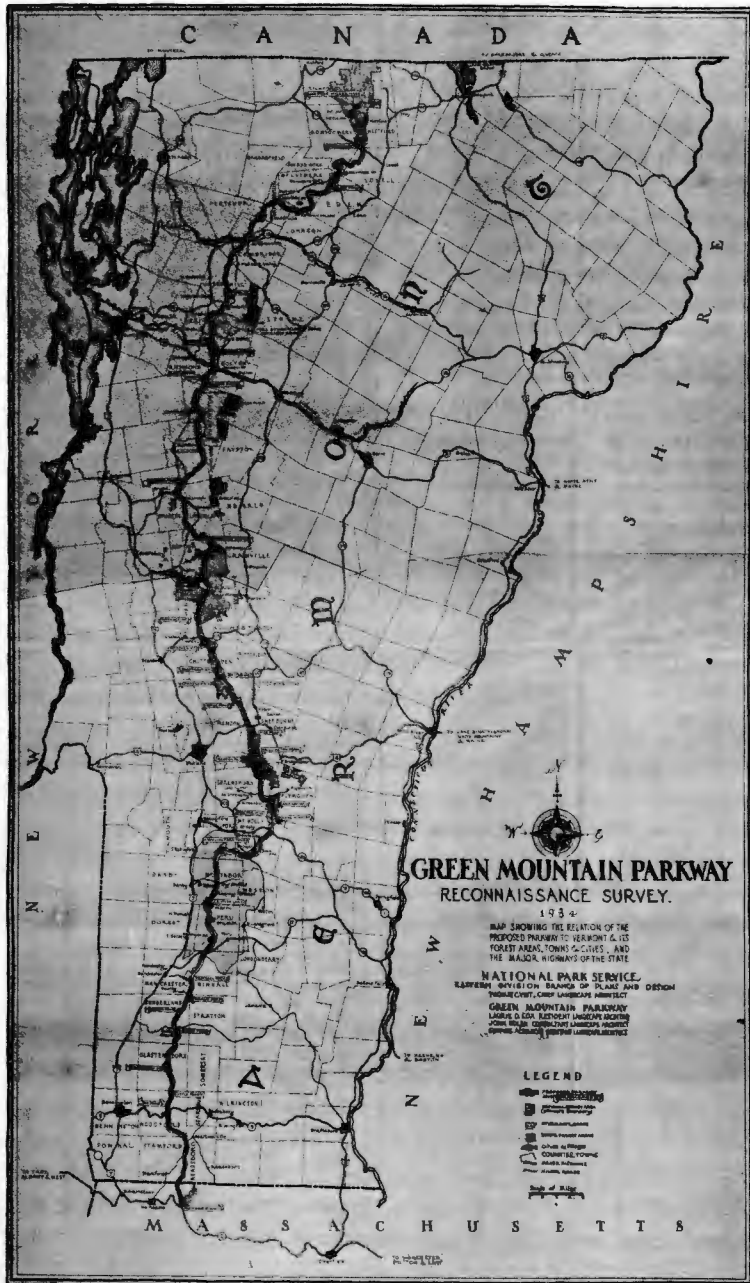


FIGURE 2. *Green Mountain Parkway Reconnaissance Survey, 1934. Prepared by the National Park Service, Eastern Division, Branch of Plans and Design.*

It was a grandiose idea (or "scheme," as its opponents referred to it) requiring miles of adjacent hiking and bridle trails to accompany the road, which was to be built according to the most modern highway technology. Designed to highlight the diverse features of the Green Mountains, the road would cover a great variety of terrain. At Glastenbury Mountain in the south and Killington Peak in central Vermont, the road was to achieve an elevation of 3,500 feet. It would reach its lowest point, below 500 feet, as it crossed the Winooski River just east of Burlington. The parkway would have traveled through more than thirty Vermont towns.²¹ Its planners maintained that it would help alleviate short-term unemployment and spur long-term growth of Vermont's tourism industry.

This was not the first time someone had raised the issue of a mountain road through Vermont, although most of the earlier ideas were on a small scale, lacking the scope and detail of the 1933 plan.²² The new proposal, called the Wilgus Plan after its designer, was the first to state concretely the means by which a skyline road could be feasibly constructed. Colonel William J. Wilgus was a civil engineer from Buffalo, New York, whose accomplishments included the plan for Grand Central Terminal. Wilgus had a talent and passion for designing functional projects for public benefit. He considered the parkway "the only project of magnitude suited to [Vermont's] conditions, with which for all time to bring spiritual and material blessings to her own citizens and those of the country at large."²³

Although Wilgus was experienced in public life and skilled at presenting proposals to all kinds of people, both within the state and in Washington, D.C., he had a major shortcoming in the eyes of Vermonters: he was not native to the state, having retired to Ascutney only a few years before. Vermonters distrusted outsiders, especially those who came to the state claiming to know how to fix its problems, as Wilgus did. He described his idea in grand terms:

Along this lofty scenic route I envisioned year-round cultural, recreational and spiritual centers, akin to those of ancient Greece, in which attractive occupations thereby offered young Vermonters would hold them to their native heath. Coupled with this transformation of Vermont from a static to a dynamic region, pulsating with renewed vigor, would go healthful opportunities for the general public, near and far, to spend their increasingly available leisure time wisely.²⁴

Had they known of it, the characterization of Vermont as a "static" society in need of the spiritual centeredness of ancient Greece might have led some lifelong Vermonters to question the intentions of the well-meaning colonel. In its promotional literature the Bureau of Publicity tried to avoid this potential problem by drawing attention away from Wilgus's imme-



William J. Wilgus. From Vermont Life 2, 4 (1948): 19.

diate background and emphasizing that “his ancestry harks back on two lines to Vermont, one having settled in Weathersfield, and the other in Cavendish, after the close of the Revolution, in which both took active parts.”²⁵

Wilgus’s status as an adopted Vermonter did not dampen his reception at Lions and Rotary clubs. Businessmen across the state greatly admired his experience and knowledge: “his purposes are so lofty, his judgment so sound and his experience so large that he is a man to be trusted.”²⁶ The simplicity and clarity of his project won many supporters; the day after hearing an early version of the plan, one proponent wrote to Wilgus, “Your magnificent project for a scenic highway along the skyline of our Green Mountains, with its appropriate parkification, grips my imagination and interest.”²⁷ But at least one organization, the Green Mountain Club (GMC), gave him a different message:

Please, Mr. Wilgus,
 Go back and sit down,
 We've heard what you have to say;
 Find some other State
 Where early and late
 You can talk of a wide parkway.²⁸

The arguments formulated by conservationists on both sides of the debate sounded remarkably alike. All showed a deep concern for the natural beauty of Vermont and all expressed the desire to share that beauty with others. There was never a question about whether or not the Green Mountains should be preserved. Rather, the issue was how best to preserve them. Local opponents of the parkway claimed that the road would be a "gash through the mountains" and that "a great wilderness region would lose forever its charm of solitude and natural wildness. The roar of motors through these mountain fastnesses would be as a political harangue in the silent dimly-lighted aisles of a beautiful cathedral." The Long Trail and the few roads that led to the tops of specific mountains, such as the toll road up Mount Mansfield, were as much development as the region needed. "Vermont will benefit more by its hills and trails than by any motor road."²⁹

National leaders of the conservation movement, among them Aldo Leopold, also voiced their opposition to the plan, and to similar ones in other states.

There seems to be something approaching an epidemic of expensive unneeded roads invading the last remnants of wild country still available in the United States. . . . It looks as though the availability of loose public money were breaking down the last remnants of good taste and common sense in much the same way that these roads are breaking down the wilderness. I can assure you that any desire on my part to revisit the Green Mountains would be forever canceled and destroyed if your state goes ahead with this road.³⁰

Robert Marshall and Harold Ickes, FDR's secretary of the interior, both expressed their concerns about the proliferation of scenic roads through previously uncut wilderness. Ickes said, "I do not happen to favor the scarring of a wonderful mountain side just so that we can say we have a skyline drive."³¹

Proponents of the parkway seemed to feel just as strongly about the preservation of the natural landscape. They asserted that development in the Green Mountains was inevitable and that the federal government would do a better job of protecting the region than would commercial interests concerned only with profits: "Would not such a parkway help to preserve during the recreational development which is sure to come

the very beauties of mountain scenery which parkway opponents fear would be destroyed?"³² The parkway would not be a gross freeway with hot-dog stands on either side; it would be an elegantly designed, modern road surrounded by state and national parks extending its entire length. Without it, they claimed, "the exploitation of the Green Mountains [would be] an assured fact."³³

This was, after all, a proposal sponsored by the National Park Service, the federal agency most avidly in favor of preservation. Clarence P. Cowles, a Burlington probate court judge and a founder of the Green Mountain Club, was a consistent leader in Vermont's conservation debates before and after the parkway issue. As late as the 1960s he fought to protect Mount Mansfield from the burgeoning ski industry. An enthusiastic botanist, he welcomed the coming of the National Park Service to Vermont in part because it could help preserve the state's diverse species of ferns. Cowles considered the parkway idea a "magnificent project" and confided to a friend that it "did rather take my breath away at first." He believed the Wilgus Plan would "add to the attractiveness and use of the Long Trail, and help maintain and perpetuate it."³⁴ Cowles lobbied hard for the proposal among the leaders of the GMC and within the state government.

The loudest voice of opposition to the parkway came from the GMC itself. Founded in 1910 on the model of John Muir's Sierra Club, the GMC is best known for building and maintaining the Long Trail, the footpath that leads over the mountains from Massachusetts to Canada, roughly along the route the new road was to take. The Long Trail had just been completed in time for the twenty-first birthday of the GMC, celebrated by passing a series of flares from one peak to the next all the way down the trail. Governor Wilson made much of the Long Trail as a tourist attraction, "a health giving and enjoyable recreational endeavor . . . worthy of consideration for a vacation that will be different from any other."³⁵ Although Wilson supported the Green Mountain Parkway because he believed it would bring more tourists to the state, he obviously viewed the Long Trail as a similar asset.

It is not surprising that the GMC would protest a project that could easily be seen as a threat to the purpose, if not the existence, of the Long Trail. Even among the club's leaders, however, there was disagreement over whether the parkway was antithetical to GMC goals. According to its constitution, the objective of the GMC is "to make trails and roads, to erect camps and shelter houses, to publish maps and guide books, and in other ways to make the Vermont Mountains play a larger part in the life of the people."³⁶ Cowles believed that the use of the word *roads* in

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this context had anticipated a project such as the Green Mountain Parkway, that the parkway would “forward quite significantly the fundamental purposes of the Green Mountain Club.”³⁷ What better way to make the mountains play a greater role in peoples’ lives, he argued, than to have a road that made them accessible to all?

The club’s trustees refused to be sidetracked by this argument, responding: “We think that ‘roads,’ as used there, is practically synonymous with ‘trails.’” Automobiles and roads designed specifically for automobiles were still relatively new at the time of the GMC’s founding, so perhaps Cowles was stretching the meaning of the clause. The club stated that its mission was to provide people who desired it an experience in the wilderness that they could not easily find anywhere else. A highway, with its noises and smells and the abundance of “ignorant” people it would bring to the mountains, would make such enjoyment impossible.³⁸

The GMC certainly was not opposed to federal involvement in Vermont land management nor to the exploitation of forests for logging and other commercial uses. For instance, it supported the development of the National Forest Service, believing that the Department of Agriculture would better protect Vermont’s forests than would private owners. With proper management, it asserted, Vermont could provide for the “perpetual production of timber.” Other benefits of a well-managed forest would be better flood and erosion control. The trustees therefore encouraged the Forest Service to expand its boundaries in the Green Mountain National Forest.³⁹ The GMC clearly differentiated between the necessary uses for a forest and what they considered exploitation.

In 1933 the club took a hard-line position against the parkway, categorically refusing to consider endorsing its construction. At a special meeting of the trustees held in July, the GMC’s leaders drew up a statement of opposition, resolving that the club was “unalterably opposed to the construction of such a highway.”⁴⁰ The GMC appealed to Vermonters’ thrifty nature, framing its argument in terms of the economic well-being of Vermont before discussing the club’s philosophy of conservation. The issue was as much about saving money as it was about keeping Vermont “unspoiled”; although the parkway appeared to come out of federal funds, it could easily turn into an extravagance the state could ill afford. The GMC then acknowledged that its primary interest—preventing damage to the Long Trail—was slightly different from the interests of the public at large. The trustees sent this resolution to Vermont’s political leaders, and news of the GMC’s stance reached newspapers across the state the next day.⁴¹

By 1934, however, it appeared to GMC leaders that the parkway was inevitable, as both the state and federal government were taking serious

steps toward turning the project into a reality. Most significant was the reconnaissance survey of the proposed site, undertaken by a team of Vermonters as well as landscape architects and engineers employed by the National Park Service. The trustees realized that if they wanted the Long Trail to survive the road building, they would have to cooperate with the federal government. The surveyors made it clear that the GMC's input was valuable to them; after all, the club's leaders had spent the past twenty years surveying this territory, and their knowledge and opinions were based on hard-earned experience. In return the club received guarantees that the Long Trail would be relocated where necessary and that the federal government would provide the funding and labor force to do so. GMC trustees appointed Herbert Congdon to "cooperate with the state and federal authorities in trying to locate the National Parkway so as not to affect the Long Trail and also assist in the re-location of the Long Trail as agreed to by the federal commission." The club explained this change of position to its members: "While the trustees have opposed this project, and regret that their opposition has not availed to kill it, still they feel that there are several mitigating circumstances, and the result will not be as bad as was feared."⁴² This was not capitulation but an attempt to make the most of an unavoidable situation. GMC leaders did not pretend to be happy about the developments. "Many lovers of the mountains and wilderness . . . will not cease to regret that this gash . . . is to be cut."⁴³

This switch was short-lived, however. By September the trustees reaffirmed their former "unalterable opposition" and published a sarcastic statement about Governor Wilson, claiming he had acknowledged the group's "power to wreck this plan." A considerable amount of discussion and debate was taking place within the ranks of the club during this time. Although the GMC's shift in position had been well publicized, it was less widely known that the club's members were far from unanimous in their understanding of the issues. The official history of the GMC mentions only that the club "mounted opposition to the so-called Green Mountain Parkway."⁴⁴ Other GMC literature states that it "never faltered in its opposition" to the parkway.⁴⁵ Cowles was sarcastic about the club's self-congratulatory stance, commenting to his friend David Howe, the editor of the *Burlington Free Press*: "It is a wise man who can be 'unalterably' opposed to a debatable position, and a brave soul who cares openly to say so. Don't you think we ought to take off our hats to the trustees of the G.M.C. for that?"⁴⁶ Of course the membership could not have been in complete, "unalterable" agreement about the parkway if even the trustees' views changed during the three years of the controversy. One of them, Mortimer Proctor, was quoted as saying, "When the parkway was first proposed, I was somewhat captivated by certain spectacular phases. Con-

tact over a period of several months with all sorts of arguments, however, has placed me in the opposition column.”⁴⁷

In order for the trustees accurately to represent the view of their constituents, they polled the members. In July 1934 Wallace M. Fay of Proctor, Vermont, then the club's president, sent out ballots asking members to take a stand. Attached to each ballot was a list of seven advantages and disadvantages of the Wilgus Plan, “endeavoring to give, in a fair way, the arguments on both sides” and pointing out the parkway's impact on the Long Trail, the risk of roadside development, the possible effects on trade and tourism, the kind of visitor the parkway was likely to attract to the state, forest management and conservation issues, and potential benefits the parkway could yield for Vermont. Even Cowles complimented Fay on “the fairness with which you have set out the pros and cons of this question.”⁴⁸ If anything, the ballot was biased in favor of the parkway, each of the reasons for the proposal taking up several paragraphs apiece and the reasons against it never running longer than two concise sentences.⁴⁹

The results of the vote were disappointing and inconclusive. Only 468 out of over 1,000 members returned their ballots, and 42 percent favored the parkway.⁵⁰ Of those for the parkway, more than half were Vermonters, which meant that although more Vermonters opposed the proposal than supported it (by twelve votes), a significant number were skeptical of the club's opposition. The *Long Trail News* complained that “there should have been a larger vote.” Still, this slim majority, as well as a separate trustees' vote that came out fourteen to two against the road, was considered enough of a mandate for the leadership to continue to voice opposition in the name of the GMC.⁵¹

This survey alone might suggest that the parkway was not as pressing an issue as activists on either side made it out to be. A majority of GMC members did not even vote, so the ones who did must have been those most concerned about the issue—although some members might have been confused by Fay's positive presentation of the proposal. When Fay sent out the ballots, the parkway seemed to be a fait accompli; members may have failed to vote because they believed neither their vote nor the actions of the GMC would affect the outcome of the issue. Two years later, though, when the proposal was brought to a state referendum, it clearly had become the major issue of the day. We can assume that at least some GMC members were active in their town meetings that year. Everyone else was.

GMC leaders recognized that simple opposition was not a good strategy where federal money was concerned, and so a committee set out to design another proposal that would fulfill the goals of the parkway with-

out endangering the mountains or the Long Trail. Early alternatives were so-called valley parkways, which would have looked much like Interstate 91 does today, with its beautiful views and easy access to towns throughout the state. Placing the road in the valleys, its advocates claimed, would encourage tourists to stop in Vermont villages and contribute to the state's economy. Many argued that the skyline highway would bypass too many towns, especially in the south, making it inconvenient for tourists to visit them.⁵²

Wallace Fay's "All-Vermont Plan" was more sophisticated. Fay proposed that the federal money intended for the parkway be spent on renovating abandoned farmhouses and reconstructing the roads to get to them, with the purpose of attracting long-term visitors who, instead of exploiting Vermont for a day or two on a parkway, would live in the state, bringing in their talent and money.⁵³ The people who would want these "summer houses" would be the kind of people Vermont wanted to attract. Another benefit would be the general improvement of the failing infrastructure. Although Fay's plan was presented to the state's House of Representatives, it was never seriously considered.

The *Burlington Free Press*, which consistently supported the Green Mountain Parkway, strongly objected to these alternative plans. In the case of the "valley parkways," the editors claimed that the Green Mountain Parkway would not, for the most part, be along the ridges of the mountains, so the mountainsides would not be scarred. As for the people who complained that their villages would be bypassed, they were simply too shortsighted to see the long-range benefits the parkway would bring to the state.

The *Free Press* was most critical of the All-Vermont Plan, rebutting the claim that the parkway would drive away the kind of visitors Vermonters wanted to receive: "The fact is that the records indicate the year in which the parkway survey was made, and nearly everybody was talking about it, more outsiders bought property in Vermont than in any other year for which records have been kept. Is not that evidence that the prospect of the Parkway encouraged outsiders to buy summer homes in Vermont?"⁵⁴ At a hearing on the parkway held on March 8, 1935, the head of the division of public roads made the claim that it was out-of-staters with no lasting stake in Vermont who were spreading opposition to the parkway. He "had no patience with people from out of the state who buy summer places here and then object to anyone else coming in to the state."⁵⁵

Vermonters were extremely concerned that they get their money's worth from any project funded by the federal government. Many were not convinced that a skyline drive would provide the kind of economic stimulus

needed to pull the state out of its poverty. Some resented that the aid package could not be spent more practically—on flood control, for example, or the improvement of existing highways and backroads. “Parkways would be awfully nice,” a Rutland salesclerk told the *Herald*, “but they don’t seem as essential as good roads and sidewalks.”⁵⁶ A few suggested that the parkway be built somewhere else, perhaps in upstate New York or in the wilderness of Maine.⁵⁷

Opponents of the parkway considered it unfair that the offer of aid should be an all-or-nothing package tied to the acceptance of a potentially damaging project, but supporters of the parkway found the alternative proposals as irritating as those of the GMC. Many favored the proposal for the sole reason that its passage would allow the state to obtain \$10 million; as the *Free Press* remarked, “if our Washington Santa Claus wants to send us up ten millions to build a road over the side of our old Green Mountains, let’s graciously accept it and put the boys to work.”⁵⁸

Others regarded this as poor rationale and warned that there was no guarantee that Vermont would not eventually have to shell out huge amounts of money to finish a project that the federal government began and then abandoned.⁵⁹ As it was, Vermont was to contribute \$500,000, to be collected through a gasoline tax. Many Vermonters were uncertain whether the parkway would bring revenue into the state or end up costing a fortune in unrepaid maintenance costs. Much of this distrust had to do with antagonism toward New Deal legislation in general: the more involved the state became in New Deal projects, the more it stood to lose if or when the New Deal failed.

THE DECISION OF THE PEOPLE

The debates grew more heated when the issue came before the General Assembly. On February 1, 1935, Governor Charles M. Smith sent the findings of the National Park Service reconnaissance survey to the Vermont House of Representatives. The governor’s report informed legislators of the nature of the parkway, showed how it would fit into a broader plan of regional parkways connecting Massachusetts and New York, and assured them that it would be accessible and attractive to large numbers of people living in cities. The report went into the details of the plan, explaining that the 1,000-foot right-of-way surrounding the road, key to Wilgus’s idea, would “give approximately 500 feet of forest and park land on either side of the Parkway.” Moreover, “At numerous places this width will be expanded into park area including whole lakes and their shores, stream valleys and their adjacent hillsides and entire mountains or groups of mountains. . . . The present terminus of the project will be a park area of some 20,000 or more acres of complete wilderness,

including the several peaks of the Jay group and extending to the Canadian boundary.”⁶⁰

The legislature held several hearings notable for the amount of public attention they received. The first, on March 14, “drew Vermonters from every section of the state, who packed every foot of available space in the Hall of Representatives and overflowing into adjacent lobbies.”⁶¹ The *Free Press* reported that most of the audience favored the parkway.⁶² The *Herald*, the newspaper most avidly opposed to the parkway, omitted mention of the reaction of those at the hearing.

The House of Representatives voted on the issue on March 26. Legislators were asked to approve the sale of 50,000 acres of land to the federal government to be used for the right-of-way bordering the highway. The *Free Press* predicted that the majority of House members would approve this resolution: “‘Ninety per cent of the House now favor the Green Mountain Parkway,’ remarked one of its few opponents after last Friday night’s hearing in Montpelier. . . . The doubters and objectors played a useful part at first. Now it has been before the state for 21 months. Time is precious. The days of big Federal spending are limited.”⁶³ Whatever confidence the *Free Press* may have had, the atmosphere of suspense drew a large audience to hear the House debate on the resolution: “It was a throng rivaled in numbers only by the greeting accorded Amelia Earhart and the debate was the longest on any single subject considered in regular session of either House for many legislative sessions.”⁶⁴ The arguments on the floor echoed those that had been going on in public for two years. The major points concerned state versus federal rights to control taxation and land management. For the legislators, the issue was more monetary than anything else. Their decision was based upon what was best for Vermont’s pocketbook.⁶⁵

Finally, hoping to test the vote, supporters of the parkway, led by Representative Joseph H. Denny from Northfield, proposed an amendment reducing the acreage in the bill from 50,000 to 35,000; it passed 126 to 103. Supporters saw approval of the amendment as a sign that the entire resolution would pass, and so the resolution was brought to a vote soon afterward. In that vote, however, eight more legislators cast their ballots than had in the test resolution, and some changed their votes. This time the resolution failed 126 to 111.⁶⁶

After rejecting the parkway, the representatives were pleased enough with themselves to read into the *House Journal* a favorable article from the *New York Herald Tribune*. The staunchly anti-New Deal piece praised the “hard sense” of Vermonters, saying they had “looked this particular gift-horse in the mouth and shipped him back to Washington. The whole state should be proud of their legislators.”⁶⁷

Advocates of the parkway did not give up after the 1935 vote. The *Free Press* carried an editorial claiming the defeat was “not a decisive blow” and warning that the House of Representatives had “gone against a strong popular will, even though members may feel they were representing their constituents.”⁶⁸ Cowles wrote the editor of the newspaper in July 1935: “I still expect to drive my auto over the full length of the Green Mountain Parkway.”⁶⁹ In the fall Governor Smith asked legislators to reconsider their decision. Instead, they turned it over to the people, asking for a referendum vote to be held on the upcoming Town Meeting Day.⁷⁰

Vermonters rejected the parkway 43,176 to 31,101.⁷¹ This wide margin was a surprise even to those who had worked hardest to defeat it. The *Long Trail News* reported, “The referendum vote on the parkway at the Vermont town meetings in March was not as close as expected. It was generally expected that the voters would turn down the scheme by a small majority of perhaps 3,000, but the majority against it was about 12,500.”⁷² The victory was somewhat confusing to the plan’s boosters, who acknowledged that their defeat could work to the state’s advantage. The editor of the *Free Press* wrote, “We cheerfully and without bitterness accept the verdict of the majority. . . . And, while we are still of the opinion that the Parkway would not have ‘spoiled’ Vermont had it been built, we fully recognize that its defeat will enable Vermont to place new emphasis on the slogan ‘Unspoiled Vermont’ and we feel sure the State Publicity Service will take advantage of that opportunity.”⁷³ This graciousness did not preclude the impulse to satirize the outcome. While the *Herald* made much of Glastenbury’s unanimous negative vote, the *Free Press* noted that the unity of the town’s three voters “undoubtedly . . . indicates that the members of the Mattison family are still getting along reasonably well together.” Still, this was as harsh as the post mortem commentary became. Parkway supporters, like good Vermonters, possessed a strong streak of realism. The *Free Press* editor summed up his notes with a practical sigh: “Well, the people have expressed their opinions in no uncertain terms. So that’s that. Now we can turn our attention to other matters.”⁷⁴

CONCLUSION

Why did the parkway proposal fail? There is no single satisfactory explanation, which suggests that the more important question is why the parkway became a major issue in the first place. And crucial to an analysis of this question is an understanding of how those involved in the debate perceived themselves and their motives.

The debate cannot be understood as a conventional conservation battle. It is wrong to assume that the proponents of the parkway were anticonservationist simply because they favored development. Indeed, both sides

saw themselves as the protectors of Vermont's natural environment. To believe that parkway supporters cared more for development than for conservation is to take the arguments of the opponents at face value, a risky business for a historian.⁷⁵ Many if not most parkway supporters believed their position to be in harmony with their conservation values; Cowles epitomizes this attitude.

The construction of parkways in other states generated controversy but was not generally criticized as anticonservationist. In Virginia, for instance, the Skyline Drive was considered a "victory for conservationists."⁷⁶ The debate there, as in Vermont, centered on states' rights and the problem of relocating citizens who lived on lands that were reverting to federal ownership. Virginians did not worry (at least out loud) that the road would destroy the scenery of the Blue Ridge Mountains, and so the parkway was built with the full consent of the state's conservationists. It is clear that Vermont's system of government, although Vermont was as much a single-party Republican state as Virginia was a single-party Democratic state, contributed to the defeat of the Green Mountain Parkway. With its New England tradition of town meetings, Vermont relied heavily on the general public in its decisionmaking process. Local communities in Virginia had much less impact on the plans of the state and federal government.

Partisanship may have played a role in Vermonters' decisionmaking process, but despite statistical evidence for such an interpretation,⁷⁷ in the primary literature there are few direct references to party politics. Items in the press that do mention the relationship of political parties to the parkway comment on how small a role partisanship played in the issue.⁷⁸ An analysis that relies on party politics to interpret Vermonters' response to the parkway fails to take into consideration their self-perception as they went to the polls on March 3. Frank Bryan argues that statistically two Vermonters of the same occupation and economic standing but belonging to different parties would have voted differently on the parkway, whereas two Vermonters of the same party, one a granite worker and the other a farmer, would have cast the same vote.⁷⁹ This may be true. It is important to understand, however, that nobody—either at the public hearings or in the legislature or even in the press—referred to party alignment in the discussion of the parkway. Debate was focused on the issue itself. This does not mean that the political parties did not influence people's opinions but that this influence was secondary to the debate.

The division of the votes was not random: the northern part of the state supported the proposal whereas the south rejected it. The results of the referendum suggest that Vermonters were weighing the benefits of the parkway to the state against its potential effects on their local communities. In the south Vermonters tended to vote against the road in part

because the southern villages would be more easily bypassed by day-tourists who would gas up in Massachusetts, drive through the state, and stop in Burlington or somewhere up north for a bite to eat and another tank of gas. The split between north and south is especially striking if one looks at the map of towns along the proposed road. Only the two southernmost towns voted in favor of the parkway, possibly because they served as the entry point to the scenic road and to the state; tourists would be likely to stop there for information.⁸⁰

It could be argued that the press had a measurable impact on the outcome of the referendum. The state's newspapers, especially the *Rutland Herald* and the *Burlington Free Press*, followed the debates closely, served as outlets for public opinion, and took aggressive positions on the issue. Yet it is difficult to ascertain how these actions affected the outcome, for it is equally possible that the editorial stance of each paper was determined by the editorial assessment of the public that it served. The north-south dichotomy may have played a role in determining the opinions both of the newspapers and of the body politic.

The most powerful arguments for and against the parkway dealt with issues directly related to state and local concerns. Within this framework Vermont towns were of course worried about the local effects of the parkway. The state government, for its part, was attempting to maximize benefits for the state as a whole. Although these levels of government often work together successfully, each has its own primary focus. The government in Washington had little understanding of what Vermonters in Glastenbury, with its voting population of three, wanted in the way of federal assistance.

From the perspective of the federal government, the proposed Green Mountain Parkway would have fulfilled several New Deal goals. In addition to providing short-term employment for skilled and unskilled labor, it would have satisfied conservation and recreation needs. Most attractive to the national planners, however, was the potential to expand the parkway into an even larger project that could unify the eastern seaboard. The federal government, though it attempted to be sensitive to the particular needs of Vermont, was concerned mostly with the potential breadth of the project and its impact on a national rather than a state level.

None of these considerations satisfactorily explains why Vermonters responded to the proposal the way they did. Perhaps in the end the most critical factor was the most personal and therefore the most difficult to prove: taste. Those who appreciated the aesthetics of the built environment had little trouble supporting the proposal to build a parkway intended to be scenic in both its setting and its design. Vermonters who fought and voted against the parkway could not reconcile their ideal of "unspoiled"

nature with a permanent, artificial structure. Was it selfish, as some claimed, to oppose making the Green Mountains accessible to more people? If the battle were being fought today, the opponents' arguments would be full of data about ecosystems and environmental impact, issues that concern more than the human world. These arguments were not well formulated in the 1930s. Opinions about the parkway were mediated through individual beliefs about how nature and civilization should interact. For better or worse, Vermonters decided that a scenic parkway was not the best use of their mountain landscape.

NOTES

¹ National Planning Board, *Final Report, 1933-34* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1934), quoted in Philip W. Warken, *A History of the National Resources Planning Board* (Columbus: Ohio State University, 1969), 47. Marion Clawson, *New Deal Planning: The National Resources Planning Board* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981). The NPB, originally designed to analyze the economic potential of the nation's resources, after several permutations became the National Resources Planning Board in 1939. Its extended powers and duties related to long-term planning of the use and maintenance of everything from land to energy to social security.

² John Aubrey Douglass, "The Forest Service, the Depression, and Vermont Political Culture: Implementing New Deal Conservation and Relief Policy," *Forest and Conservation History*, October 1990, 164.

³ William Hazlett Upson, "The Green Mountain Parkway," *Informational Bulletins on State Problems* 4 (Burlington: Vermont State Chamber of Commerce, 1934), 1.

⁴ National Resources Committee, *Regional Planning: Part III—New England* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1936), 50.

⁵ Vermont State Planning Board and the NRB, "Graphic Survey: A First Step in State Planning for Vermont" (1935), 43. According to this report, recreation generated \$25 million in revenues in 1929 compared to \$10.4 million from quarrying and \$29 million from dairy production.

⁶ Phoebe Cutler, *The Public Landscape of the New Deal* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 53.

⁷ "The Green Mountain Parkway Up To Date," *Informational Bulletins on State Problems* 5 (Burlington: Vermont State Chamber of Commerce, 1934); Cutler, *Public Landscape*, 51.

⁸ Cutler, *Public Landscape*, 56.

⁹ "The Green Mountain Parkway Up To Date."

¹⁰ Richard Munson Judd, *The New Deal in Vermont: Its Impact and Aftermath* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1979), 44.

¹¹ Dorothy C. Fisher, "Vermonters," in Federal Writers' Project of the Works Progress Administration, *Vermont: A Guide to the Green Mountain State* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1937), 3-9.

¹² *Ibid.*, 36-37.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Stanley C. Wilson, *Vermont: A Tourist's Paradise* (Montpelier: Vermont Bureau of Publicity, 1931).

¹⁵ *Rutland Herald*, 2 March 1936, 1.

¹⁶ See Judd, *The New Deal in Vermont*, especially chapter 2.

¹⁷ See Samuel Hand, "The 1927 Flood: A Watershed Event," in Samuel B. Hand and H. Nicholas Muller III, *In a State of Nature: Readings in Vermont History* (Montpelier: Vermont Historical Society, 1982). Hand discusses the emergency proceedings of the state legislature, pointing out that "the decision to reconstruct Vermont's highway system with *hard surfaced roads* ushered the motor vehicle age into Vermont considerably earlier than it would otherwise have come" (italics in the original, p. 388). For reports of the 1936 floods, see the *Rutland Herald* and *Burlington Free Press*, 5 March through the end of April 1936.

¹⁸ "Graphic Survey: A First Step in State Planning for Vermont," 43.

¹⁹ Judd, *The New Deal*, 37.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 38.

²¹ Vermont State Planning Board, *Green Mountain Parkway: Facts About the Proposed Green Mountain Parkway and Green Mountain Parkway Acts (1935-1936)*; this pamphlet includes topographical profiles and cross-sections of the parkway site. "Col. William J. Wilgus Explains Proposed Green

Mt. Parkway," *Informational Bulletins on State Problems* 3 (Burlington: Vermont State Chamber of Commerce, 1933), describes an earlier version of the plan. The notable difference in the plans between 1933 and 1935 was that the federal government increased the amount of aid it offered from \$10 million to \$18 million. In the 1935 session of the legislature, the amount of land to be purchased was reduced from 50,000 to 35,000 acres as part of a compromise tactic.

²² Clarence P. Cowles introducing Wilgus at a speech, Cowles Papers, Green Mountain Club Archives, Vermont Historical Society, Montpelier.

²³ Wilgus to Cowles, 6 August 1933, Cowles Papers, GMC Archives; William J. Wilgus, "Vermont's Opportunity," *Bulletin of the Vermont State Chamber of Commerce*, August 8, 1933.

²⁴ William J. Wilgus, unpublished manuscript completed March 8, 1948, 240-241, Wilbur Collection, Bailey/Howe Library, University of Vermont.

²⁵ Wilgus, "Vermont's Opportunity." Wilgus uses almost this exact wording in an undated biographical statement among the Cowles Papers in the GMC Archives.

²⁶ Cowles to Captain Herbert Wheaton Congdon, 14 September 1933, Cowles Papers, GMC Archives.

²⁷ Cowles to Wilgus, August 1933, Cowles Papers, GMC Archives.

²⁸ Ella Warner Fisher quoted in *Long Trail News (LTN)*, February 1934, 3.

²⁹ *LTN*, September 1933, 2; the first quote is Mortimer Proctor, the second Walter P. Eaton.

³⁰ Aldo Leopold to the *Rutland Herald*, 2 March 1936, 9.

³¹ Ickes quoted in the *Rutland Herald*, 18 March 1935. Ickes's position regarding parkways is not clear, though the report of the reconnaissance survey sent to determine the location of the parkway claims that he was "favorable" toward the proposition. "The Proposed Green Mountain Parkway," *Journal of the House of Representatives*, biennial sess., 1935, 206.

³² *Burlington Free Press*, 12 March 1935, 4.

³³ Laurie D. Cox, "An Artistic Conception: The Green Mountain Parkway," *Informational Bulletins on State Problems* 7 (Burlington: Vermont State Chamber of Commerce, n.d.).

³⁴ Cowles to Wilgus, 3 August 1933; Cowles to Captain Herbert W. Congdon, 14 September 1933; Cowles to Dr. Will S. Monroe, 3 August 1933, Cowles Papers, GMC Archives.

³⁵ Stanley C. Wilson, *The Long Trail* (Montpelier: Vermont Bureau of Publicity, 1931).

³⁶ Constitution of the Green Mountain Club, 1911, Cowles Papers, GMC Archives.

³⁷ Cowles to Mortimer Proctor, 26 August 1933, Cowles Papers, GMC Archives.

³⁸ *LTN*, April 1936, 2.

³⁹ Minutes of GMC trustees' meeting, 24 June 1933, GMC Archives.

⁴⁰ *LTN*, July 1933, 2.

⁴¹ *Burlington Free Press*, 14 July 1933, 2.

⁴² Minutes of GMC trustees' meeting, 2 June 1934, GMC Archives. *LTN*, June 1934, 2.

⁴³ *LTN*, June 1934, 2.

⁴⁴ Green Mountain Club, *Guide Book of the Long Trail*, 23d ed. (Waterbury Center, Vt.: Green Mountain Club, 1992), 12.

⁴⁵ *LTN*, July 1935.

⁴⁶ Cowles to David Howe, 31 July 1935, Cowles Papers, GMC Archives.

⁴⁷ Mortimer Proctor, quoted in the *Rutland Herald*, 2 March 1936, 1.

⁴⁸ Fay to GMC members, 30 July 1934; Cowles to Fay, 6 August 1934, Cowles Papers, GMC Archives.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Because the GMC tallied membership at the beginning of each year, it would be difficult to determine exactly how many members there were in July 1934. In February 1934 the GMC had 1,084 members; in January 1935 it had 1,204 members. There does not seem to be any indication that people dropped out of the club because they disagreed with its stance on the parkway.

⁵¹ *LTN*, September 1934, 2. Frank Bryan and Kenneth Bruno used this survey as evidence of the GMC's inconclusive statistical influence on the referendum vote of 1936, as it "indicated that much of the cry against the Parkway came from out-of-state members"; "Black-topping the Green Mountains: Socio-Economic and Political Correlates of Ecological Decision-making," *Vermont History* 41 (Fall 1973): 234. It should be pointed out, however, that in view of the small sample covered by the vote, the early stage in the debate at which this sample was taken, and the intangible influence of propaganda on the body politic, the vote simply shows the GMC's internal workings. What is more, the press and the state government (and therefore the public) at the time perceived the GMC as a major influence; in this instance perception is more critical than poorly substantiated fact.

⁵² *Rutland Herald*, 2 March 1936, 2.

⁵³ *Journal of the House of Representatives*, biennial sess., 1935, 232-234.

⁵⁴ *Burlington Free Press*, 14 March 1935, 6.

⁵⁵ *Rutland Herald*, 8 March 1935, 1.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 19 August 1933, 8.

- ⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 12 March 1935, 8; 25 March 1935, 8.
- ⁵⁸ *Burlington Free Press*, 16 March 1935, 7.
- ⁵⁹ *Rutland Herald*, 27 March 1935, 2.
- ⁶⁰ *Journal of the House of Representatives*, biennial sess., 1935, 207–208.
- ⁶¹ *Rutland Herald*, 15 March 1935, 1.
- ⁶² *Burlington Free Press*, 15 March 1935, 1.
- ⁶³ *Ibid.*, 13 March 1935, 6.
- ⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 27 March 1935, 1, 11.
- ⁶⁵ *Rutland Herald*, 27 March 1935, 2.
- ⁶⁶ *Journal of the House of Representatives*, biennial sess., 1935, 616–618. The similarity of the numbers in the first and second votes suggests that legislators who voted in favor of the compromise opposed the parkway and may have been trying to lull the proponents into thinking it was safe for them to call for a vote. This is difficult to ascertain, of course. The House called a roll for the second, determining vote but not for the “test” vote. The press failed to comment on the numerical coincidence, reporting simply that after the test vote it seemed the resolution would pass (*Rutland Herald*, 17 March 1935, 1). The only clue is that Representative Denny, who moved to change the resolution, voted in favor of the parkway (and presumably of his own compromise as well), suggesting that parkway proponents might have accounted for some of the 126 votes for the compromise and that a different 126 representatives then voted against the parkway.
- ⁶⁷ *Journal of the House of Representatives*, biennial sess., 1935, 709–710.
- ⁶⁸ *Burlington Free Press*, 27 March 1935, 6.
- ⁶⁹ Cowles to David Howe, 31 July 1935, Cowles Papers, GMC Archives.
- ⁷⁰ Bryan and Bruno, “Black-topping the Green Mountains,” 225.
- ⁷¹ *Burlington Free Press*, 4 March 1936, 1. These figures are described as the “complete, unofficial vote.” The *Herald* for the same day records slightly different numbers. A final total had to wait for absentee ballots to come in.
- ⁷² *LTN*, April 1936, 2.
- ⁷³ *Burlington Free Press*, 5 March 1936, 6.
- ⁷⁴ *Ibid.*
- ⁷⁵ But some historians have viewed the parkway debate as an issue of conservation, judging parkway opponents to be the true conservationists. Bryan and Bruno use it as a case study to predict how rural populations will vote on “clean” (clear-cut) environmental questions: “the issue was cast, molded and polished dichotomously in terms that still define the dimensions of the conflict over environmental decision-making, i.e., economic development versus preservation of ecological balances and the integrity of nature” (“Black-topping the Green Mountains,” 226). In 1982 the *Rutland Herald* also published a retrospective of the parkway debate under the headline “The Green Mountain Parkway: Vermont’s First Environmental Battle” (7 March 1982, 1–2). A large body of evidence, however, indicates that the matter was not so simple, the divisions in the debate far less clear.
- ⁷⁶ Dennis E. Simmons, “Conservation, Cooperation, and Controversy: The Establishment of Shenandoah National Park, 1924–1936,” *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 89, 4 (1981): 134.
- ⁷⁷ Bryan and Bruno, “Black-topping the Green Mountains,” 229.
- ⁷⁸ *Rutland Herald*, 2 March 1936, 8.
- ⁷⁹ Bryan, *Yankee Politics in Rural Vermont* (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1974), 232.
- ⁸⁰ *Burlington Free Press*, 6 March 1936, 2.