VERMONT HISTORY

The Proceedings of the Vermont Historical Society

FALL 1991

VOL. 59, NO. 4

Reflections on Three Classics of Vermont History

A half century later, Ludlum, Stilwell, and Wilson still have much to offer scholars considering new syntheses of Vermont history, but many themes need to be added.

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This essay offers a retrospective analysis of three classic histories of Vermont social, economic, and cultural life published in the 1930s: David M. Ludlum's *Social Ferment in Vermont, 1791-1850*; Lewis Stilwell's *Migration from Vermont*; and Harold F. Wilson's *The Hill Country of Northern New England: Its Social and Economic History, 1790-1930.*[1] The trio were the first volumes incorporated into Earle Williams Newton's projected ten-volume series, *The Growth of Vermont*. Intensive research and broad generalization undergirded each, sustaining their influence for a half-century. Recent research modifies specific conclusions, but each remains the broadest overview of its subject, shaping conventional wisdom about religion and reform, those who left Vermont, and economic and social life for those who stayed behind. This essay seeks to encourage reading or rereading these works, ideally followed by works of more recent scholarship, especially Randolph Roth's *The Democratic Dilemma: Religion, Reform, and the Social Order in the Connecticut River Valley of Vermont, 1791-1850* and Hal Barron's *Those Who Stayed Behind, Rural Society in Nineteenth-Century New England*, which approaches its subject through a close look at Chelsea, Vermont.[2]

That the broad picture of rural life these three studies paint will not be easily revised owes to one particular characteristic they share: enormous funds of evidence forming the basis for their generalizations. Ludlum analyzed hundreds of sources of reform sentiment through 1850. Stilwell collated data on eight thousand emigrants from Vermont before 1861. Wilson organized a staggering base of statistical data on the productivity of Vermont's economy, 1790-1930. After a review of the major themes of these works, I will suggest four broad areas for future research.

David Ludlum's *Social Ferment in Vermont* begins with a contrast: contemporary Vermont (1939) as a stronghold of conservatism versus an earlier era of "radicalism" and a "spirit of innovation" (ix). As Ludlum sees it, Vermont "reached maturity around 1850. Thereafter, a new institution, the Republican Party, "conceived in antislavery and nourished by industrialism, won the allegiance of Vermont and has ever since molded its outlook" (273-75). Throughout its youth, however, Vermont remained in social ferment. Eight chapters survey its rich history of religion and reform in that era. The seedbed of reform was "the mighty moral regeneration of Vermont," 1800-1815, after the wildness of its frontier settlement stage had begun to give way. A Revival-oriented evangelical Protestantism "awakened a tender social conscience," which expressed itself in a "multitude of humanitarian enterprises." For Ludlum, two themes comprised "the underlying motif" of reform: millennialism, or a desire to extend "the rewards of a Christian living," and equal rights, or extension of democratic rights to all citizens (3-4). In its basic attitudes, Ludlum contends, Vermont was both an extension of Connecticut's conservatism to a frontier setting and the product of the Revolutionary Era's intellectual tradition of "natural rights liberalism." This divergence formed a continuing tradition of conflicting ideologies. "Advocates of natural rights liberalism and the champions of the Calvinist system of election and reprobation" engaged in "a constant warring" (6).

Strong on social and intellectual history, Ludlum attempted to account for both underlying unity and regional diversity in the relationship between religion and reform. In setting "the scene," he suggests that "to understand the various social disturbances that won the support of the state we must consider the type of settler" coming to the frontier. His conclusion is that "an intense desire to better their station in life" was "the only common denominator" (18). *Social Ferment* also posits a clear and continuing split between east and west, [3] "two socio-physical sections" (15) differing in levels of radicalism, and qualified only by the addition of a third region, the "northern hill country" (17). While the western half of the state was "the home of the radicals," (13) "many persons high in the councils of reform resided" in the northern region (18). Revivals were

less intense and lasting alternatives to Calvinism won far fewer adherents in the east[4] (13). Randolph Roth's *The Democratic Dilemma*, the most important study of these subjects since Ludlum, carefully assesses the contributions and social roots of each group to this ongoing conflict in the Upper Valley. It is essential reading in the scope of its analysis, in its subtle description of causal dynamics, and in the way hundreds of personal documents breathe life into the picture presented by quantitative assessments.

Between 1780 and 1800, ideological struggle pitted Deism and Arminianism, transmuted from "the realm of speculation" into "significant social forces," against an increasingly formalistic Calvinism (25). While Deism presented a blatantly secular challenge, Arminianism more subtly undermined New England Puritanism of the 1780-1800 variety (32). Its strongest manifestations came in the formation of new religious bodies—the Universalists, the Freewill Baptists, the "Christian" sect, and most powerful of all, the Methodists. Ludlum argues that "the dynamic behind" a Puritan Counter-Reformation in the 1800-1815 years was a premillennialist conviction that "God was cutting short his work on earth" (40). The result was a series of evangelical awakenings affecting all denominations and exacerbating sectarianism. Through the Panic of 1837, religious fervor remained white hot—"an almost continual state of excitement," comments Ludlum (51). Sectarianism gave way to multifold organizational efforts marking an "age of benevolence" in the phrase of Asa Burton. If revivalism was "the attacking force" of the Counter-Reformation, then benevolent reform groups served as "the army of occupation" preaching "a more humanitarian creed" than Calvinism's "harsher doctrines" (52). A belief in good works underpinned the social ideology of a freshened evangelicalism.

The turning point came early. Just "at the moment of seeming triumph," around 1828, "a new spirit appeared," termed "ultraism" at the time to identify "attention on a single objective" marked in its adherents by "radical views" and "extreme measures" disrupting "the orderly progress" of benevolent reform (55). Ludlum was a pioneer proponent of ultraism's central role after 1830; in this respect he was the intellectual father to Whitney Cross's more famous study, *The Burned-Over District*.[5]

By the end of the 1830s revivalism was much criticized, and reform thoroughly radicalized. The 1840s, Ludlum notes, was a decade of "schism—temperance, antimasonry, abolition and kindred reform measures stimulated intense dissension within the churches," leading to rampant "come-outerism." Ludlum remarks that, after 1840, the "strand of religious development . . . broke into many threads" (62). The remaining three-quarters of the book offers a sequential history of five of these

threads in the fabric of ultraism between 1830 and 1850: antimasonry, temperance, antislavery, social democracy, and sacred millennialist and secular utopian thinking. Antimasonry rather than temperance was the true precursor to later reforms.[6] Masonry was viewed as anti-Christian by the regular Baptists, who took the lead in early opposition, and by the Freewill Baptists and Methodists. As early as 1828 Freemasonry was being referred to as "a moral evil"; this was an early instance of "a surge of ultraism" (105).

Those denominations opposed to "hyper-Calvinism," the Universalists and Freewill Baptists, all became strongly antimasonic, seeing Masonry as one of the beasts to be overthrown before the millennium. Ludlum argues that this rhetoric derived from "overexposure to Bible reading" (109). To defend themselves, Masons established their own serials, charging a counter-conspiracy of Calvinist, Baptist, and Universalist preachers. Once begun, political antimasonry spread very widely and remained a force through 1836. Thereafter, "the blessed spirit" was redirected into temperance and other humanitarian campaigns resting on the same ideological foundation, particularly opposition to slavery (133).

As Ludlum probes the roots of ultraism in antimasonry, he emphasizes the critical role of the newspaper. Antimasonry "could not have been precipitated" without "conveyance to the remotest communities"; "the employment of newspapers . . . formed one of the principal causes of the outburst of intense feeling." Ludlum judged that, for the first time, common people gaining a rudimentary education were enabled "to consume – hardly to digest – the outpourings of printing establishments." Antimasonry's rapid spread was made possible by the "springing to life of many rural news organs during the age of reform," which stimulated "the intellectual quickening accompanying those years." The problem, as David Palmer of Thetford (a Mason) noted in 1829 was that "All our people can read a newspaper, while, comparatively, few can judge of the probable truth or falsehood of its contents" (99). In attempting to formulate a rough theory of communication, Palmer comments that "'public opinion in this country, is like the ocean with its tides and currents; and the newspaper press the tornado, which raises . . . mountainous waves'." Mixing metaphors, he continued: afterwards "the conductors of the press" determined that the crimes of Jackson and Adams would "soon cease to make music in the public ear. They had vitiated the taste of their readers with high-seasoned, inflammatory dishes, and they dreaded the experiment of treating them to plain and wholesome fare." The "sounding of the anti-masonic alarm" was "an expedient eminently calculated to serve their purpose" (99-100).

For antimasonry and for all subsequent reforms he attends to, Ludlum

tells the story through the newspaper and periodical vehicles each side established to further its viewpoint. Unlike his treatment of religion, little context is provided to help us understand this phenomenon. Newspapers are less a factor influencing reform activity than a natural part of the cultural atmosphere. Recognizing their impact, Ludlum quotes Vermont's leading antislavery congressman, William Slade: "the spirit of free enquiry is the master spirit of the age"[7] (153).

Temperance, antimasonry, and abolition were not the only disturbances of social order. Ludlum pinpoints the Industrial Revolution as the stimulus to major alterations in the economic system. One of its results was "a critical scrutiny of native political and social institutions" (202), deflating the rhetoric of Vermont's governors in the 1820s that America would become "the scene of the paradisical millennium" (200). The "spirit of inquiry" noted above also fostered "an awakening of the underprivileged classes to a consciousness of their rights," manifested in the Workingmen's movement's advocacy of equality and social democracy.

Ludlum saves for last a survey of sacred and secular prophets and messiahs—"social architects" and their plans and predictions. Linking ultraism to millennial thinking, he divides the array into "mutually hostile" sacred (seven groups) and secular (three groups) movements, a later elaboration of the basic split in cultural values between Calvinism and natural rights liberalism. Religious prophets included the Dorrilites, Winchell, the Pilgrims, John Humphrey Noyes, Swedenborgians, the Mormons, and Millerite Adventism.[8] Secular utopians included Fourierist communalism, George Henry Evans's movement for land reform to foster equal property rights, and consumer and producer cooperatives. Ludlum links social architects with "emigration, itself a form of Utopia-seeking" (262).

Ludlum's final question is: why did widespread reform collapse in the 1850s? Admitting his difficulty in explaining "what dried up their sources" after 1850, he notes "new factors." One was coalescence around one reform, antislavery, and its embodiment in the Republican Party. Slavery, it was widely believed, "nullified all attempts at creating a real democracy" (273). Second, "industrialism, with its handmaid, science, moved America into a different world," and the latter "undermined the basis of revivalism." The "vision of the millennium" faded into acceptance of northern capitalism; the Gold Rush legitimated entrepreneurialism and a get-rich mentality. Money-making "put an end to campaigns of equal rights."

While covering the same period as *Social Ferment*, Lewis Stilwell's close analysis of the rising tidal wave of emigration in *Migration from Vermont* is a very different kind of history. Whereas Ludlum describes a world of contending ideas and embeds adherence to revivalism, reform,

and ultraism in a framework of group struggle, Stilwell's Vermonters live in a world of struggle with a northern forest. The two authors agree on land as the common denominator for settling Vermont. But Stilwell emphasizes hardship and hardiness, labor and disease, inspired by the view of his mentor Frederick Jackson Turner that emigration was integral to the frontier social process. His stance is that of the emigrant, and while this is refreshing, it conflicts with his larger ambition to answer basic questions: "How did people live and make a living in Vermont between the Revolution and the Civil War? Why did a great part of these people find it wise or necessary to leave Vermont?" He also analyzes the process of emigration in great detail: where to, "and how, and why?" (63) And what did they contribute to America? *Migration from Vermont* is organized by phases in the history of emigration. Since migration was fairly minimal at first, he presents an overview of life in Vermont during "the good years," 1783-1808. Thenceforward, his chapter units each cover about a decade through 1860. That emigration might not constitute a clear angle of vision into life in Vermont is never seriously considered.

Stilwell discusses only one difference between those who emigrated and those who did not. The former were even younger than those who remained in a state marked by a youthful population. Otherwise, both emigrants and non-emigrants shared a basic set of characteristics. They were "a climbing and creative stock, who delighted in obstacles, felt certain of their purposes, and proceeded to make over by means both bold and dubious whatever environment they might encounter" (65). Stilwell's central theme is that emigration was essential to Vermont life from the start, and as hopes for success diminished, it formed part of the dominant set of beliefs and values. To his pool of data on emigrants, Stilwell adds a wealth of sources on conditions in Vermont through 1861, but no fund of data on those not emigrating.[9]

In contrast to Harold F. Wilson's benign summer of self-sufficiency in *The Hill Country of Northern New England*, Stilwell accents the roughness of life. Vermonters had to raise "a little of everything" because "agricultural methods were biblical in their crudeness" (98). In its settlement period, Vermont was "an environment so full of challenge and difficulty, variety and charm" that its settlers had to be "a lively lot" (74). Even in the good years, normal hardships were outmatched by "special afflictions that recalled the plagues of Egypt": worms, dysentery, great snowfalls, killer frosts in summer, smallpox, fever and ague (82-83). Difficulties in obtaining and sustaining a homestead spurred emigration. "What else could be expected of such folk," Stilwell concludes, "but that they should move and keep on moving, both literally and spiritually, as they did?" While the balance sheet of this first era "looked good," there

were "crosses," such as the limitations of the barter system, "the ravages of disease," and liquor. Stilwell suggests that "under such a terrorism religion was the only solace." The "brighter side" of religion was "a proud enthusiasm for education." Its result was a fascination with knowledge: "one is astonished . . . at the amount of general reading that was going on" (108-110).

Stilwell locates "the real beginning of migration from Vermont" in settlement of the northern half of the state, a "movement which took place completely within" its borders. The push for good cheap land soon led pioneers into Canada and New York State, attracted by "Vermont newspapers . . . dotted with advertisements." Emigration was most intense, not in times of adversity, but in the good years (117-120). Stilwell admits that, attempting to discover "the causes of this early emigration, we are somewhat nonplused" (123). Neither economic depression nor controversy were critical. Instead, he stresses that "children were growing up" and finding "no room for homes of their own" (124).

"Discouragements and Departures" is Stilwell's chapter title for the troubled years between 1808 and 1820. It refers to a "procession of misfortunes that reduced much of the prosperity to poverty and transformed the previous emigration into an exodus" (125). Immigration to Vermont "stopped short, never again to be resumed" and emigration "rose for the first time to a flood." Disaster is the watchword: a flood in the summer of 1811 washing away mills throughout Rutland and Windsor counties; the collapse of the Vermont State Bank in early 1812; the embargo and then the War of 1812; a spotted fever epidemic claiming perhaps six thousand lives in 1813; a year without a summer in 1816; and then the Panic and depression ending the decade (126-32). Stilwell admits that life carried on and that improvements in transportation and efforts to reform agriculture through voluntary organizations disseminating knowledge were underway. Nevertheless, "one almost feels called upon to explain why the majority stayed in Vermont rather than why the minority departed" (134). While Stilwell fails to distinguish those who emigrated from those who remained, he does offer a valuable accounting of emigrants by occupation through 1861. Always the largest numbers were farmers. Other significant groups included peddlers; schoolteachers; emigrants to the South, mainly schoolteachers and consumptives; foreign missionaries traveling to every continent; sailors and soldiers; professionals, including ministers, lawyers, doctors, and printers; and a large cache of artisans and craftsmen noted for their "mechanical ability" (145-50).

Stilwell views the 1820s as chiefly characterized by failed efforts "to readjust the whole economic structure," including the Vermont canal program and steamboat navigation of the Connecticut River. His judgment

is that "Vermont was about as destitute as ever of any adequate means of exporting the bulk of its surplus products." Further, he argues that Vermont had actually never been "an agricultural community in the true sense. The people, in obedience to their pioneer necessities, had mined the state rather than cultivated it," gradually exhausting "natural resources" (151-54). Stilwell titles the 1820s chapter "Waterways, Wool, and Other Ways Out."

"Steadily increasing enthusiasm" over the prospects of the wool industry is acknowledged as offering "a valid offset to the decline in other resources" except that rich farmers bought out poorer ones, increasing wealth and decreasing population (157-59). Likewise for religion and reform. Vermont's "peculiar social and spiritual enthusiasms" highlight that "chronic unrest and millennial zeal which must have helped" foster emigration (164). One other potential for optimism is also blasted. "Sparkling expectations . . . clustered around a myriad of little manufacturing efforts." Mechanical genius was everywhere, and "somewhere in this scattered miscellany" should have been "the basis for a new economic era." While these small enterprises sustained "perhaps ten thousand people, almost all of whom might otherwise have emigrated" (162), access to broader markets was still lacking. Perhaps Stilwell is correct in his assessments, but emigration had become the norm; remaining in Vermont is what he is most hard-pressed to explain, even during Vermont's last decade of sizable expansion. At one point he comments: "whatever the economic situation, it was biologically almost essential that they [youthful Vermonters] should seek adventure and scatter their strength for at least a little while" (169). The question this begs is: what then accounts for the internal biological dynamic distinguishing the majority of youthful residents who did not emigrate?

By the 1830s, ("A Great Migration") "emigration rose from a steady stream to a freshet, not to say a flood" (171). Stilwell notes a "striking parallelism" between towns with large numbers of sheep and those with the greatest population losses. He concedes that many Vermonters remained hard at work inventing machines to sell and that "almost every" town "tried at least a dozen different types of manufacture." Cheap transportation was the elixir; in its absence, most industries closed within a few years. Woolen mills were the critical exception, but he also notes other positive industrial developments (177). By 1840, at the height of the depression, about fifteen percent of the male work force was employed in manufactures and trades. "For our purposes," concludes Stilwell, "it was almost negligible" because it was seen as unrelated to leaving or staying. Evidently we are to assume it was therefore negligible in the Vermont economy. The "paradox" of the general economy, to Stilwell, was

that the "one prosperous factor—sheep—increased emigration," whereas the depression decreased it.

"Agitative unrest" also played its part in emigration; "the come-outers and the go-outers were emotional brethren" in Stilwell's wonderful phrase. Heaven competed with Michigan as the promised land. One trend in 1830s emigration was to move in colonies. His best example, the Congregationalist Union Colony of East Poultney and Castleton, which transmuted into Vermontville, Michigan, left a constitution and here we find four major goals. Two were religious: to "carry the institution of the gospel" and "to strictly and rigidly observe the Holy Sabbath." One was reformist: to exclude ardent spirits; the last was secular: to perpetuate "the same literary privileges that we are permitted here to enjoy" (189-90). Beyond land and a quest for material betterment, emigration required a cultural trinity incorporating religion and reform, but also secular knowledge and the freedom to pursue it.

By the 1840s the woolen industry "was caving in" and even Vermont sheep were migrating westward. While Vermont's population increased rose slightly (seven percent) between 1840 and 1850, it remained lowest in the nation, and this despite sizable immigration of Irish and Canadian natives. Stilwell admits that butter and cheese production increased more than tenfold, but he links increases in dairy cattle with parallel declines in beef cattle, hogs, and even a small decline in numbers of horses. A few manufacturing towns were prospering, and invested capital rose by sixteen percent, but the latter is interpreted as evidence that "the bulk of the state obviously was getting almost nowhere in attempts at industrial expansion" (197-200). Only "a radical improvement in transportation" could help.

In his chapter "A Sequel With A Climax," referring to a climax of emigration in the California Gold Rush, Stilwell offers a comparative perspective. It is instructive. He finds that Vermont "was producing more wheat and corn and potatoes per acre, paying higher wages, and obtaining more wealth *per capita* than was Ohio, Illinois, or Michigan" (201). Outproducing the emigrant's paradise requires explanation. It is this: "Here we have the rub of the whole matter. Conditions might be livable, or even good, for the present. But it was the future, not the present that counted." For Stilwell, "the West was dynamic; Vermont was static."[10] Vermonters might be successful in comparative terms but they lacked faith in the future, "in economic but also in other phenomena" as diseases reappeared and revivals disappeared. Somehow both Millerism and Noyes's perfectionism exemplified, in Stilwell's dirge, inadequate faith in the future. Actually, Millerism and perfectionism served double duty; the former evaporated and the latter emigrated as a group in 1847. In

Stilwell's inverted universe, leaving in any guise was preferable to life as it existed in Vermont.

Religion was not all fanaticism, however. In fact, education was thriving as never before. Stilwell notes that three hundred new schools and ten thousand pupils were added, and academies more than doubled in numbers as did college enrollments. These data are not interpreted as suggesting positive change such as expanding infrastructure development. Rather, Stilwell remarks: "it seems curious that no one protested against the effect of all this book-study upon agriculture." Stilwell confesses that he is "almost tempted to assert that the three words—ambition, education and emigration—were approximately synonymous in the later stages of Vermont's history." This is precisely the argument of the most virulently anti-rural 1840s version of modernization theory. It may be accurate, but given his portrait of persistent underdevelopment in the Vermont economy, one is at a total loss to explain the process of capital formation undergirding such robust expansion (204).

Emigration peaked in the 1850s ("Railroad Days") as nine percent of the 1850 Vermont population had left by 1860. The reality of the railroad proved "a somewhat equivocal blessing"; emigration was "now preponderantly a railway migration," exporting people as readily as Windsor rifles for British soldiers in the Crimean War (226). Towns with junctions flourished while others lost their previous commercial advantage. Certain industries thrived, including lumbering and quarrying; the value of manufactured products expanded seventy percent in the 1850s; and farm values rose by fifty percent in the vicinity of the railway lines. Nonetheless, Stilwell discovers no "definite correlation between the increase and improved transportation" (218). By the 1850s "two deep and well-nigh universal sentiments" powered continued emigration: "a feeling . . . that Vermont was without promise" and a "longing for good land—fat land and flat land" (229). One can grant these beliefs among emigrants and still expect, given the broad questions Stilwell posed at the outset, some account of the views of the ninety percent remaining in Vermont.

In his concluding summary, Stilwell contends that even one of the acknowledged strengths of Vermont, its educational system, "unfitted youth for life in Vermont" due to a lack of "courses in agriculture or mechanics or forestry." Finally, he adds, Vermonters "were used to migrating," the fathers of the early settlers having settled "the newer, upland townships of Connecticut" (239). Stilwell's massive local history research uncovered an extraordinary story and he reshaped his astute understanding of Vermont life to fit its contours. In his opinion, such massive emigration had to comprise the heart and soul of Vermont's human culture after 1808, and scholarship has yet to recover from his winnow-

ing of those eight thousand files. The central problem is that history is not a discipline of evidence alone, nor of imagination or apt phrasing; inference is history's true counterweight. What remains most problematic in the wake of Stilwell's stunning dirge is the historical location of Vermont itself in the story of in-migration and subsequent out-migration, 1791-1850.

Troubled by the popular image of northern New England and "her abandoned farms," Harold F. Wilson's *The Hill Country of Northern New England: Its Social and Economic History, 1790-1930* investigates "those who stayed at home" (4). Wilson's mentor was Arthur Schlesinger, Sr., whose interest in the evolution of American society is reflected in Wilson's complex picture of gradual change. The central theme is neither sustained depression nor decline but "constant adjustment to new conditions" (10) in the face of the inherent limitations geography had placed on agricultural development. At key moments of relative overdevelopment, in the decade beginning in 1810, in the 1850s, and again in the 1920s, climate meted out harsh penalties. And when neither geography nor climate appeared to break the prospects of paradise, "manias" and "fevers" swept through northern New England – steamboat lines, sheep and woolen mills, silkworms, railroad salvation, butter and cheese production, hopes for a Scandinavian migration, and fur animals. Each was overstimulated by enthusiastic publicity, opportunism, and unrealistic predictions.[11]

Wilson's model is deceptively simple: the period from 1790-1930 is divided into four eras, each designated a season, beginning with summer. As Wilson sees it, the "vigor of youth" (13) overwhelmed the backbreaking labor and rough conditions of life of the settlement era. Despite an early note of warning from Timothy Dwight, that the land was "better fitted for grazing than for agriculture," the typical contemporary account stressed the "richness of its soil, the variety and value of its products, the salubrity of its climate." Dwight made another prescient remark, that Vermont would become "one important nursery of the human race." The dominant theme of summer was that all was well in an "Age of Self-Sufficiency," stretching from the 1780s to the War of 1812. The disasters of the next decade cut growth dramatically, 1810-20,[12] but by the mid-1820s prosperity had returned.

As summer waned after 1830, a protracted autumn crept into the state. While it is difficult to interpret the dimensions of population movements from the overall net population increase, apparently out-migration was larger than the combined increases due to natural births and in-migration. Below the surface, the pace and character of change became far more frenetic; there were nearly as many losses as gains, and the panic and depression of the 1837-43 years intensified anxiety. Actually, autumn reversed the order of nature, moving from south to north. By the mid-1830s

in the southern counties, population losses were noticeable in many townships, and yet sizable increases were recorded for a series of factory villages and a few other market centers. People continued to settle mountainous townships, and fifty-six percent of all Vermont towns attained their greatest growth between 1830 and 1870. Many small factories opened and closed during the 1820-1850 years, further exacerbating a tense awareness that the world was passing Vermont by. Southern New England factories siphoned off ever greater numbers of youth. In the northern two-thirds of the state, summer continued into mid-century, but the basic pattern recapitulated the cycle of southern Vermont counties.

Wilson concludes that the "strongest single factor affecting life in northern New England" between 1848 and 1870 was the railroad. Railroad mania, the spurt of 250 miles of actual construction, 1846-49, and the fever accompanying the spread of the sheep industry were the mainstays of optimists (40). Lumber and wood production for fuel expanded, woodworking shops sprang up (46), and substantial quantities of agricultural produce (butter and cheese) and livestock were taken to Boston until after the Civil War. The railroad also brought goods produced elsewhere into the state, leading to the collapse of countless small factories and stores, further intensifying consolidation. Expansion of the railroad net also brought grain and other staples eastward; pork and beef prices in 1845 had fallen to nearly half those of 1820 (65). Worse, exodus to eastern cities as well as to the West was made easier (48). The Civil War added a final blow as a substantial share of the state's young men went to war and never returned. Restlessness among those who remained intensified (62). Wilson notes an ominous trend: by the late 1850s Weathersfield spent more on its poor farm than on it schools (63). The magnitude of economic change is seen in the 1850 census: only fifty-two percent of Vermont men had listed agriculture as their primary occupation (68).

In Wilson's account, the sheep rage lasted for more than a generation. By 1840, 1.6 million sheep crowded the state (79), spawning many pockets of concentration. Before the Panic of 1837, the number of woolen mills had risen to thirty-three (80). One-third of them closed in the 1840s, and by 1870 the sheep population had declined to 600,000 (81). Actually, wool volume fell only marginally because of better breeding (raising yield per head from 2.2 to 5.3 pounds, 1840-70). Another boon to the economy was a shift to sheep breeding for resale—"Merino mania" (92), extending the cycle of prosperity for larger herders. Extensive butter and cheese production also assisted economic growth (83 ff.). Only through enormous expenditures of labor did agriculture keep up with increasing competition, seemingly from everywhere.

Several decades of fervid activity were, as Wilson sees it, followed by a winter season of abandonment and retrenchment. Rural population and

rural farmland declined during the last third of the century, and "decay and desertion" formed the central message of external commentary (9). Wilson's emphasis is on declining production of staple crops, a sharp and broad-based decrease in the amount of improved land, and a sharp drop in farm values. His data and more recent analyses suggest the need for further research.[13] Competition from the West made its most serious inroads in wheat production: volume had declined modestly (fifteen percent) through 1869, but by 1900 production beyond local needs all but collapsed. On the other hand, corn production remained fairly robust, declining thirty percent over the entire half century, 1849-99, and oats showed no major decline (99). Moreover, the numbers of farms increased into the 1880s and then declined less than nine percent through 1900[14] (98-99).

There is no doubt, however, about the serious scope of population losses. Emigration remained high, amounting to nearly two-fifths of all those born in the state between 1850 and 1900 (103). The share of townships losing people in the three decades between 1870 and 1900 were: fifty-nine percent, eighty-one percent, and seventy-two percent. That population figures reflect very modest net growth in each decade is due to expansion of the state's largest villages and small cities. Consolidation was rampant. The transformation in living situations was quite astonishing. Rural population (townships of two thousand or less) fell by one-third between 1850 and 1900, whereas population in townships above two thousand souls doubled (107). By the turn of the century, commentators were referring to "the tombs of abandoned farms" (108). The thread of tragedy was a prominent theme, with phrases (in an 1893 piece) such as "a grim reminder of the dead past" (117).

Critics of the decline and decay school argue that those who stayed behind were not left behind. Hal S. Barron's study of Chelsea concludes that lessened in-migration was far more significant in lowering population than out-migration. This led to "lessened growth" and "increasing economic, demographic, and social stability." He admits that the structure of the community was altered, 1850-1900, but almost half the males, nearly two-thirds of the household heads, and fully three-quarters of the farm operators did not migrate. While this helps us pinpoint who stayed behind, Barron's explanation for the net loss of forty-five percent of the township's population between 1850 and 1900—he terms it "a steady decline"—as the normal result of "the first agricultural area to grow old" does not fully address the issues raised by Stilwell, Wilson, and others.[15] Why did in-migration cease? And why is a loss of nearly half of all males (and presumably females), including one-third of household heads, a quarter of farm operators, and most other businesses "normal?"

Wilson had identified three main causes of rural decline. First was the

location of many farms in high terrain areas likely to be unproductive in the long run (132). Second was the inability of New England staple crop agriculture to compete with the large farms and extensive machinery of the West (137). Third was the continued lure of the city, diminishing the supply of family labor. Residents under intense pressure to make a rural society work with fewer resources and a smaller talent pool could hardly avoid accepting some characterizations denigrating rural life. Pseudo-social science had certified rural degeneracy and shiftlessness as a major motif in urban formulations of modernization toward the close of the century. The presumption was that the best had left. Wilson appears to accept some of these judgments. I am struck by the enterprising and energetic efforts to survive and thrive in a transitional era.

In keeping with his generally balanced approach, Wilson does discuss "ameliorating influences." These included campaigns for the reoccupation of unused farmland,[16] and quite successful efforts to disseminate information about more efficient agriculture methods[17] (166). These were long-term contributions to the cultural infrastructure, which eventually succeeded in reorienting general attitudes toward agriculture. This section of the book ends with the rise of the dairy industry, harbinger of a reorganized agricultural sector. Dairy cows doubled to 270,000 between 1870 and 1900 (205). Creameries to manufacture butter and cheese expanded; cheese export declined by the mid-1870s (207) but butter production privately and in creameries rose dramatically between 1879 and 1899 (197-98). By 1900 half of all Vermont farms reported dairying as their main source of income, and fluid milk production had already risen substantially. The key overall trend by the 1890s was a shift from "extensive" to "intensive" farming, and the transition from a state reliant on "meat-wool-and-grain" to a "dairy-fruit-potato-poultry-and-garden-truck territory" (206-10).

Further consolidation, readjustment, and specialization—"and not disaster"—form the main themes of the Vermont spring blossoming in the initial third of the twentieth century (10). While one-third less improved land existed in 1930 than in 1900 (346), a considerably greater share was under cultivation—seventy-three percent in 1909 vs. fifty-six percent in 1899 (213). One-quarter of all farms were yielded to the forest between 1900 and 1930. The net effect was that just over twenty-five percent of people were employed in agriculture in Vermont in 1930 (365). Traditional crops were being produced (for local consumption) much more efficiently, and Vermont led the country in earning capacity per acre in five crops (214).

Questions about the aptness of a "winter" season can be extended to the timing of Wilson's "spring" season as well since the first absolute decline

(albeit one percent) in Vermont's population occurred between 1910 and 1920 (370). Wilson's careful conclusion is that the story line was a "tough readjustment to modern conditions" (38). Just under three-fifths of all Vermont farms listed dairying (high-grade eggs and fluid milk) as the core of their total income by 1930. Wilson's judgment is that the market for milk and cream was "the greatest single factor in the successful maintenance of agriculture in the New England hill country" through 1930 (301). Vermont led the nation by 1919 in dairy products per capita (312). Other agricultural products were also providing valuable revenue. Advice by authorities on agriculture became even more widely distributed and beyond the continuing denials, the value of scientific farming took root (250). The Farm Extension Service and its agents spread sound advice, as did 4-H clubs and the Grange. Technological advances overcame much of the presumed isolation of the late nineteenth century farmstead, including daily mail service, the telephone, the automobile, electricity, and the radio (261-65).

One new industry sparked by the automobile was summer recreation trade. Targeted publicity, including a 1911 illustrated booklet (285) and better roads (282), led to substantial capital investment in summer property in some townships, and this, in turn, raised tax revenues (289 ff.). In all of these economic areas—dairy, auto, tourism, small industries—Southern New England's changing infrastructure exerted enormous leverage on Vermont. In Wilson's terms, Vermont had found its niche.

A half-century later, Ludlum, Stilwell, and Wilson have much to offer scholars considering new syntheses of the social, economic, and intellectual history of Vermont. Toward this end, many themes need to be introduced.[18] Four seem to me to be particularly worth pursuing for the period through 1861, though they are relevant to Wilson's "winter" and "spring" seasons as well. They include: incorporating women's as well as men's lives and beliefs; setting emigration in the broader context of migration patterns; closely analyzing the social process resulting in shifts in production and distribution of agricultural and manufactured commodities; and unravelling the role of knowledge and the communication system in shaping the cultural setting of Vermont life, encompassing both shared and conflicting values.

Most significant is the lack of serious attention to the theme of women. How odd an almost wholly male-centered rural world appears in 1991. Stilwell makes interesting comments throughout, such as that "everyone worked hard," and a substantial factor from the outset was "mother and daughter power,"[19] but he offers no extended analysis of women's lives or perceptions. Wilson has surprisingly little to say about the role of women

and Ludlum passes off "agitation of 'women's rights' as a post-1850 phenomenon," mentioning that he could not locate "the only substantial consideration of the subject before 1850."[20] That women appear marginally in all three works is reason enough to require new syntheses of each. In doing so, sources on women's lives and values need to be gathered and then every major question posed needs to be reframed based on a full analysis of the people of Vermont.

A second theme worth pursuing is the relationship of emigration and migration to the broader history of American society. Vermont offers a valuable reminder that migration was an unusually important dimension in the history of American society. Vermont was on the receiving end of rising immigration between 1749 and the War of 1812. This was followed by a dual transition: migration within Vermont and accelerating emigration from Vermont. In context, most eastern states north and south shared the commonality of high levels of emigration, hence a comparative perspective would be enlightening.

Migration was also a youth movement integral in shaping the later life experience of many southern New Englanders under thirty in the century after 1760. At least seventy percent of those emigrating to Vermont and about three-quarters of those leaving the state were under thirty. It would be valuable to know the duration and character of Vermont experience for later emigrants. Studies of the ways family, school, and community nurtured the young may reveal the sources of that special emigrant outlook, which sustained lifelong attachment to the home state. Orestes Brownson, who emigrated from Vermont at sixteen, retained a love for New England and for his "native Vermont" for nearly sixty years. Was this dual attachment the norm? The strengths and limits of state consciousness require dispassionate investigation. In the Postscript to *Migration from Vermont*, Arthur Peacham notes "the enigma of the Vermonter's love for his state and his as characteristic willingness to leave it."[21] As much of the country became deeply entwined in development goals and projects, buttressed by at least a hundred editions of treatises and pamphlets praising one or another form of an "American System" between 1815 and 1830, migration rates rose north and south, and state-based identification gained competitors.

The pace of migration inevitably created multiple affiliative bonds. That is, each family evolved its own interlocking series of cultural securities: to the transatlantic British culture they imbibed from birth and had reinforced in most school readers and other texts they read through at least 1830; to the Federal Republic; to one or more states and regions; and to local communities. One image packing tightly this complex of affiliations was the cultural corridor embodied in the phrase, the "universal

Yankee nation." How did multiple bonds of affiliation coexist and was the process essentially the same in all eastern states, north and south?

Vermont was settled mainly by southern New Englanders seeking land, a better life, and often greater degrees of freedom. What determined their varied experience in Vermont? Some stayed forever, and of these, some fairly quickly settled into a community while others moved around the state and eventually settled into a community. Of those who arrived and left, we need to know which patterns of living were typical. What differentiates those who came and left from those who came and stayed but whose sons and daughters born in Vermont left as youth or young adults? One typical family pattern constitutes a cycle of about a generation of Vermont experience.[22] This is the experiential basis for strong attachment. In comparative perspective, nationwide in 1860, seventy-five percent of native-born Americans of the dominant cultural group (former European Americans) lived in their home state versus fifty-eight percent for native Vermonters. Nationwide, eighty-two percent of native-born Americans of this cultural group lived within their home region versus sixty-six percent of Vermonters. Nearly all of the difference appears to come from Vermonters emigrating beyond New England. Surprisingly, a greater share of New Englanders continued to live within their home region (eighty-four percent) than was true for the comparable groups in the South Atlantic (seventy-five percent) or East South Central region (seventy-eight percent). In comparative terms, emigrating westward was neither a peculiarly Vermont or New England phenomenon; nor was it most prevalent in that region. The basic population shift comprised a vast eastern migration. Since Vermont was among those states with the highest emigration rates, perhaps Vermonters shared greater affinity with North Carolinians or Kentuckians than with other New Englanders.

The history of American settlement is an interactive process involving both rural and urban migration in a context of intra- and then interregional expansion. Evidently a desire for cheap, fertile land to cultivate for material advancement remained a staple in the minds of many Americans and competed successfully with other influences, including state and regional consciousness. From the 1750s onward, advertisements of fertile land in other states of paradise became a regular feature in American newspapers. These were just one of several sources of information and substantial misinformation surrounding the process of migration. Studies linking migration of peoples with their perceptions and intentions would be of great value. The combination of desire for land, the great beauty of the Vermont environment, and active encouragement of settlement made emigration to Vermont and then on to the next natural paradise an enormously attractive possibility.

Persistent migration at a fairly high level has many implications for a history of American experience. In comparative perspective, the lack of legal restrictions on migration in America is unusual enough that its study would profit from comparative analysis with other parts of the world. Moreover, the relative ease of emigration suggests that the transportation network and the level of infrastructure development must have been more efficient than centralized, urban-based modernization theory allows. Once settled in the West, emigrants writing back to Vermont emphasized economic advantage and spiritual need in their new homes. This was a winning combination, not only because it appealed to the continuing desire for material improvement but also because it certified that Vermont's versions of religious and cultural formation were highly valued and unusual.

The history of migration is also the history of the gradual integration of Vermont into a regional, interregional, and eventually a national society. States were porous vessels in a culture increasingly marked by integrated democratic development. The interaction between the homeland and the terminus of emigration was synergistic; each phase in this process rearranged all in its wake. As New England and then the entire Northeast was integrated into an ever larger system of communication, culture, and economy, development activity in Ohio and Michigan directly affected life in Vermont.[23]

A third significant theme is the social process resulting in shifts in production and distribution of agricultural and manufactured commodities. Both Wilson and Stilwell assume that a decline in beef cattle and a rise in sheep, and then a decline in sheep and a rise in dairy cattle meant a replacement of one for the other by countless individual farm families. We need to study the process more closely as have several recent dissertations, differentiating adjustments made by farm families continuing to operate their farms from replacements of families producing one commodity by other farm families producing another commodity. Changes by a family in the agricultural commodities it produced, in the goods it manufactured, or in the nature of a store (from one specialized line of goods to another) involved enormous expenditures of time and effort, readjustment of economic goals, and changing values. The combination suggests a degree of rural innovation matching urban innovation.[24] It is easy to forget that the majority of the Vermont population through 1861 did not emigrate but, rather, readjusted its lives to changing circumstances.

Perhaps a continuing search for equilibrium would provide a richer framework for economic life than a simple growth or decline model. Headlong expansion, overextension, and adjustment seem natural to many processes of rural life, beginning with settlement. National markets

and federal development policies also shaped Vermont lifeways. Caught in the web of a vast, nationwide transformation, Vermonters altered their crops, their marketing strategies, and their agricultural techniques. Absent schooling in scientific agriculture, exactly what nurtured adaptability in agriculture—or in commerce, and manufacturing?

If we knew more about the diverse character of literacy instruction in Vermont, beginning at home and at district schools, that created habits of lifelong reading, we might gain critical insight into forms of adaptability that came to be accepted as an essential to rural living. In *Reading Becomes a Necessity of Life: Material and Cultural Life in Rural New England, 1780-1835* I have suggested that Upper Connecticut River Valley rural society was marked by great diversity as early as the 1780s, and that the bulk of the agricultural population, living neither in large villages nor in the most mountainous districts, was itself not a single unit. If an economic locale comprising four to eight contiguous townships was the fundamental economic unit, and most residents were neither isolated nor self-sufficient in the narrowest usage of that term, then perhaps the emergence of larger units of economic and cultural integration was a comprehensible extension of an earlier, more circumscribed but nonetheless integrative setting.[25]

A final theme deserving exploration is the impact on daily life of expanding knowledge derived from the culture of print. If the widening ability to read and write I attempted to establish for Windsor County after 1780[26] is accurate for other areas of Vermont, then we might expect readers and writers to have turned to printed matter in formulating positions on contemporary issues. While literacy was never universal, even in Vermont, lifelong reading and expanding uses of writing emerged earlier in the nineteenth century there, continued unabated, and enveloped a greater share of the population than in most other states.[27] Reform, emigration, and increasing levels of economic and social change among those who remained at home were underway before changes in communications and culture led to more regular reading. Hence the relevant questions are when and how did Vermonters' reading come to bear on public policy issues. As lifelong reading spread, it served many purposes, from the reinforcement of traditional views to advocacy of new perspectives on current topics. Until about 1810, the emphasis in printed matter most readily available in the Connecticut River Valley was to reinforce values already held.

From the founding of Vermont's earliest print centers, the dominant way most families learned about the existence of what was available to read was through the weekly newspaper. It was the information center for the culture of print, advertising most works printed locally[28] as well

as every new shipment of works printed elsewhere and available locally. Excerpts enticed readers to purchase the full text. By the 1820s, newspaper reviews, notices, and letters from subscribers guided the reading public's attention to specific pamphlets, books, and periodicals keyed to presumed local concerns. These imprints were chosen by newspaper editors, publishers, and bookstore personnel from literally hundreds of new works and new reprints of older works available each year. Many contemporary observers accurately noted in the mid-1820s, as circulation was rising to a majority of all Upper Valley households, that the newspaper had become the defining vehicle of print communication in America. By that time the newspaper had evolved into the keystone in the arch of an emerging democratic culture and its major substantive concerns were those of contemporary American life.

As newspaper reading spread, we can, thanks to Ludlum, Stilwell, and Wilson, more clearly understand some of the uses residents made of reading matter. One was that news of the distant world was increasingly assumed to be relevant to local life. Ludlum notes that reports of the murder of William Morgan in western New York, which sparked the antimasonic movement, were circulating in Vermont eight weeks after it was first reported in local New York State newspapers.[29] Concern about the character of Masonry could spread so rapidly because the mainstream communication network had been expanding for a generation. Weekly, in keeping with the rhythm and regularity of an agriculture-based society, the newspaper carried knowledge of the distant world into Vermont homes. True, newspaper circulation was severely restricted in the most mountainous areas and among the poorest residents throughout the state. But everywhere else, post-riders distributed a vehicle whose contents informed subscribers, borrowers, and listeners not only about the home state and region, but also about current transatlantic, national, and Western and Southern public policies.

While the inclusion of news from afar was not new, greater variety and detail about other regions of the United States was a post-1815 phenomenon in Vermont newspapers. Something else of even greater consequence was changing by the 1820s. Growing acceptance of an ideal of intellectual currency, premised on notions that the American Republic's survival depended on an informed citizenry, prompted families to keep up with contemporary trends and views.[30] As a result, newspapers devoted a large share of their space to those very subjects Ludlum, Stilwell, and Wilson studied. Among the most regular topics in Vermont newspapers and the works they recommended by the mid-1820s were denominational activities, the progress of scores of reform movements, remarkably changeable estimates of the strengths and weaknesses of the Vermont

economy, new techniques, manias, machines promising great success, opportunities for factory work elsewhere in New England, and a rolling list of Elysian fields to the West, with much commentary on cheap, fertile land.

Future research will profit from explorations of the ways nineteenth-century Vermonters used printed matter. Widespread lifelong reading led to growing attention to, and in some cases reliance on, sources of knowledge that themselves were products of the changes they depicted. Newspapers devoted considerable space to accounts of the lure of Michigan. That similar coverage was not accorded Georgia or Mississippi suggests the ideological involvement of local editors and publishers. As knowledge of the progress of society elsewhere expanded, and as trust in the newspaper's ability to provide intellectual currency intensified, religion and reform, emigration prospects and schemes, manias as well as sensible improvements were all reinforced. Print culture fostered both sacred and secular values, but those religious values most often discussed were increasingly directed at reforming the evils of the earth. Salvation was by no means pushed aside; rather, cultivating the path to heaven became ever more prominent.

Vermont remained among the top tier of states in newspaper circulation per capita into the Civil War era. Heightened attention to affairs of this world converted Vermonters' commitment to knowledge and lifelong reading into fascination with change: in personal piety, in reforming others, in emigration to continue their search for improving their lot, and in adjusting economic practices at home. By adding knowledge of the distant world to other, regular preoccupations in households across Vermont, newspapers and other vehicles of printed matter blurred the distinction between near and far, distant and local, remaining at home or emigrating to Michigan. Michigan newspapers followed life in Vermont and vice versa. No wonder that it was essential for the emigrants to the colony at Vermontville, Michigan, to perpetuate "the same literary privileges that we are permitted here to enjoy." How could they otherwise remain current?

It is remarkable how little we know about the history of knowledge, an element at the core of American civilization. Knowledge of distant places and activities had become a pressing necessity; the amount and character of attention provided by newspapers was both enriching and profoundly destabilizing. That support for both tendencies was transmitted within the same vehicle in the same communications network is central to the contemporary observation that reading had ceased to be a luxury and was now among the necessaries of life for emigrants and for those remaining at home.[31]

As a steady flow of reading matter became a normal accompaniment

of all varieties of human choice, not all values received equal attention. Many traditional beliefs came under increasing pressure, especially conservative qualities that had guided the rhythm of agricultural society for centuries. A desire to preserve the best of what existed was supported by the culture of print, but it seems undeniable that preservation was facing ever stiffer competition, outweighed by the brute force of the belief that whether Vermonters remained at home or emigrated, cultural and material advancement appeared possible, and would require change. Historians may catalogue many of the forms of change as ultimately futile or foolish, but it is equally important that we learn why so many early Vermonters came to believe that paradise could be gained by a trip to Michigan, switching crops or livestock, cultivating silkworms, or removing an existing social evil. The ideology of material improvement and personal advancement antedated new attitudes toward knowledge and intellectual currency, but more regular reading of the publications advocated by the press by the late 1820s stimulated this ideology, sometimes soundly, often to excess. No consensus of opinion prevailed among the countless antebellum commentators concluding that this was "an age of knowledge." The history of knowledge and all its complex interventions in rural society should be high on the research agenda of future syntheses of Vermont life. The bonds it forged between local and distant worlds remains with us to this day and are still largely a mystery.

NOTES

[1] David M. Ludlum, *Social Ferment in Vermont, 1791-1850* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1939); Lewis D. Stilwell, "Migration From Vermont (1776-1860)," *Proceedings of the Vermont Historical Society*, vol. V, no. 2 (1937), 63-246; Harold Fisher Wilson, *The Hill Country of Northern New England; Its Social and Economic History, 1790-1930* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1936).

[2] Randolph A. Roth, *The Democratic Dilemma: Religion, Reform, and the Social Order in the Connecticut River Valley of Vermont, 1791-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Hal S. Barron, *Those Who Stayed Behind; Rural Society in Nineteenth-Century New England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984). Roth's book won the Sturbridge Village prize for the best book in rural New England history.

[3] Stilwell, *Migration*, 96, notes that somewhat after 1783 the sharp distinction between east and west "began to fade."

[4] Given the sizable following garnered by Universalism, the Freewill Baptists, and the Christian sect, and later by the free thought movement and the Workingmen's party, scholars should turn to Roth for a more useful approach. Further, that John Humphrey Noyes, Orestes Brownson, and Joseph Smith were shaped by Valley-side culture suggests further problems with the application of an east-west political divide to culture or religion by 1800. Ludlum's examples of social anarchy, 1780-1800, and of religious recruiting do not sustain the argument that the three regions were marked by major differences. Roth adds further emendations on antimasonry and abolition. Perhaps it is best to suggest that the balance weight of conservatism remained more powerful in the Valley, but that radicalism was widespread in all three regions.

[5] Whitney R. Cross, *The Burned-Over District: The Social and Intellectual History of Enthusiastic Religion in Western New York, 1800-1850* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1950).

[6] Especially interesting are his comments on early religious opposition to aristocracy, a theme elaborated recently in Nathan O. Hatch's most insightful study, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989).

[7] The leading Methodist abolitionist, the Reverend Orange Scott, converted to abolition by reading Garrison's *Liberator*, and his *Thoughts on African Colonization*, and then "succeeded in opening the columns of *Zion's Herald* to Garrisonian viewpoints." *Social Ferment*, 159.

[8] It goes unremarked that four of the seven movements gained their main following in the Valley counties.

[9] Stilwell's Papers (33 boxes, 80 feet) have been deposited at Dartmouth College. For each decade he provides numbers of emigrants by occupation and by the states they migrated to, but not for Vermont county of origin. His occasional comments on this topic suggest that he attempted to collect this information.

[10] While it goes unremarked, Stilwell's actual count of emigrants to the five leading receiver states declines by thirty-eight percent in the 1840s as compared with the 1830s; see p. 207.

[11] Throughout the discussion, I focus on Vermont trends. Wilson's assumption is that the three northern New England states share a fundamental unity of prospect and achievement. I was struck by several differences among the states, but to this reader they did not seem to seriously threaten his major premise.

[12] We might add the spotted fever plague, noted by Ludlum, carried off more than six thousand Vermonters in 1813-14; see Ludlum, *Social Ferment*, 49.

[13] See H. Nicholas Muller, III, "From Ferment to Fatigue? 1870-1900: A New Look at the Neglected Winter of Vermont," Center for Research on Vermont, Occasional Paper, 1984.

[14] Because this data set includes unoccupied farms, the scale of the trend is unclear; similarly for the amount of improved land owing to changing census definitions (100).

[15] *Those Who Stayed Behind: Rural Society in Nineteenth Century New England* (1987 ed.), 27-30, 134, 136, 30, 88.

[16] While efforts to attract Swedish immigrants are recounted, little attention is paid to the fifty-percent decline in the Irish and doubling of the numbers of Canadians (163).

[17] County Agricultural Societies led the way in the 1860s (170) with their annual exhibits. Other vehicles of knowledge diffusion included State Agricultural Colleges, established in the mid-1860s; agricultural periodicals; the spread of the Grange in the early 1870s; agricultural clubs with libraries; state promotion of agricultural education, beginning in the 1870s (177); Farmers' Institutes; and the Federal Hatch Act in 1889 with its Agricultural Stations.

[18] We should note that historiographical precedents existed for each of these three works.

[19] Stilwell, *Migration*, 94-101.

[20] Ludlum, *Social Ferment*, 231. His next sentence, however, notes the 1848 passage of "a law [which] passed the Legislature easing the restrictions on the owning and managing of property by women."

[21] Stilwell, *Migration*, 246.

[22] We need to understand emigration within the larger population flow of the migration process, where four groups are involved. In the 1850 federal census, the population of Vermont included not just the 232,091 native Vermonters but another 82,029 people born elsewhere but then residing in Vermont. There were also another 145,655 residents of other states who were born in Vermont. The fourth group included those who had lived for a time in Vermont but had moved on (not born in Vermont and no longer living there in 1850). In 1860 the figures are 239,087, 76,011, and 174,765, respectively.

[23] The system was a series of parallel connective networks, such as the circuit including eastern Connecticut, southeastern Vermont, western New York State, northern Ohio and Illinois, and southern Michigan and Wisconsin. A similar southern circuit wended its way from Virginia to Kentucky and Tennessee to southern Illinois and Indiana to Missouri.

[24] See especially the work of Allen R. Pred, for instance, *Urban Growth and the Circulation of Information: The United States System of Cities, 1790-1840* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973); and *Urban Growth and City-Systems in the United States, 1840-1860* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980).

[25] William J. Gilmore, *Reading Becomes a Necessity of Life: Material and Cultural Life in Rural New England, 1780-1835* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1989), chs. 2-4, & 10.

[26] Ibid.

[27] The 1840 federal census provides the first national comparative standard; Vermont's ninety-eight percent literacy places it in the highest grouping of states; see the convenient summary in Lee Soltow and Edward Stevens, *The Rise of Literacy and the Common School in the United States: A Socioeconomic Analysis to 1870* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 159.

[28] Steady sellers known to be in stock were the main exception.

[29] *Social Ferment*, 94.

[30] I discuss this in "Literacy, the Rise of an Age of Reading, and the Cultural Grammar of Print Communications in America, 1735-1850," *Communication* 11 (1988): 23-46.

[31] *Reading*, ch.1.