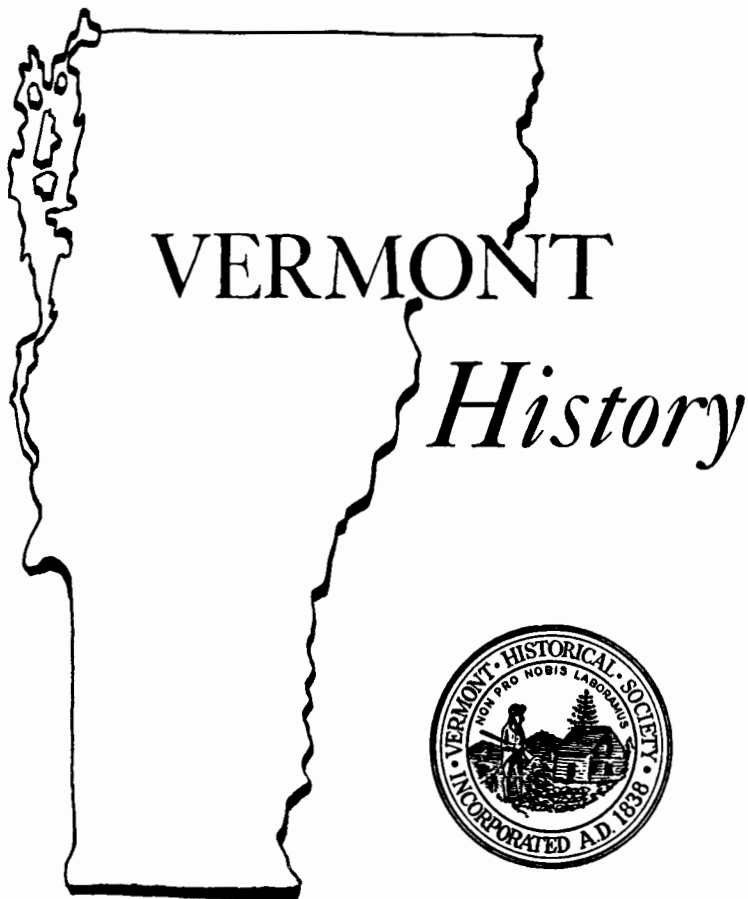


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In 1891 Vermont established a publicity service — the first such agency in the United States. In 1911 this position was enlarged so a full-time director of publicity could be employed. This article explains how Vermont decided to make itself a tourist attraction. . . .

The Selling of Vermont: From Agriculture to Tourism, 1860-1910

By ANDREA REBEK

TODAY Vermont is a mecca, the last “unspoiled land.” Vermont evokes images of white church spires in the midst of rustic villages, tidy farms dotting rolling, verdant countryside, rivers and lakes of pristine beauty. Each season brings with it a different crop of visitors, eager to breathe the fresh air, take in the magnificent fall foliage, ski the slopes of Mansfield, or to hike on the Long Trail. To hear what is said about the state gives the distinct impression that Vermont is unique, a world apart from sister regions in New England. One gathers that Vermont has been ever blessed as the site of idyllic vacations and as one of the prime centers of scenic splendor in the Northeast. But this present attitude has all but buried the historical past. It is a myth because Vermont has not always been the apple of the tourist’s eye. The thesis of this article is that the roots of the myth stem from a combination of Vermont’s economic situation and the emergence of larger attitudes toward nature during the late nineteenth century. Thus, the focus is on the selling of Vermont, 1860 to 1910.

I

Introduction: “the bloomy flash of life is fled”

Evidently Vermonters themselves had to be sold on their native state. Although the greatest tide of emigration occurred before 1850, after that date Vermont’s growth rate was nearly stationary, and markedly disproport-

tionate to the growth of the United States as a whole. Between 1850 and 1860, the state's population increased by 978 people, 0.3% over the 1850 census, while the population of the United States grew by 35.6%. The 1870 census shows a jump of 15,453 or 4.9% — a growth rate still far lower than the nation's (22.6%). The census for both 1880 and 1890 reported a less than 1% increase in population for Vermont while the United States grew more than 25% in both decades. Not until 1900 did Vermont again register a population gain comparable to that recorded in the 1870 census.¹ Vermont's main means of livelihood, agriculture, suffered as a result of what appeared to be widespread rural decline in northern New England. The upheaval of the Civil War, the lure of the West, and the growth of cities drew people off the farms. Furthermore, the development of the railroad in Vermont after 1850 made possible the opening up of mining, quarrying, and manufacturing industries, which tended to attract Vermonters out of backwoods areas to these centers. Emigration from Vermont had reached 200,000, according to the Census of 1870.² The 1910 Census reported a gradual increase in the number of farms from 1850 to 1880 (totaling 5,759), but noted a net decrease of 2,813, or an average of 94 per year, during the following thirty year period.³ As early as 1872, the *First Annual Report* of the Vermont State Board of Agriculture sounded the alarm, and proposed a variety of somewhat quixotic solutions to keep young people on the farm. Suggestions were offered on how to make farm life more pleasant; farmers were urged to make improvements to augment farm value, and to be proud of their land and achievements. Above all, one theme was constant: "Vermont as Home."⁴

Other trends undermined Vermont's agriculture. By 1870, the bread baskets of the Midwest furnished stiff competition in marketing staple farm products. The rivalry forced Vermont's wheat production down 92% from 1869 to 1899, while corn fell 30%.⁵ In the early phases of decline, farmers still saw hope. T. H. Hoskins, in an article entitled, "Vermont as an Agricultural State," written for the State Board's first *Report* (1872), was typical of those who painted a bright future. He argued that Vermont's posi-

1. Bureau of the Census, *Thirteenth Census of the United States (1910): Abstract of the Census with Supplement for Vermont* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1913), p. 568.

2. Victor I. Spear, *Vermont: A Glimpse of Its Scenery and Industries* (Montpelier, Vt.: Argus and Patriot Print., 1893), p. 17; Harold Fisher Wilson, *The Hill Country of Northern New England* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1936), p. 56.

3. Bureau of the Census, *Thirteenth Census: Supplement*, p. 592. The northwest corner of the state — Chittenden, Grand Isle, and Franklin Counties — actually showed a steady increase in the number of farms, evidence of a move away from hillside acreage to the flat and more effectively cultivated lands along Lake Champlain. *Ibid.*

4. Vermont State Board of Agriculture, *First Annual Report* (Montpelier, Vt.: J. and J. M. Poland's Steam Printing Establishment, 1872), pp. 541, 542, 549, 553.

5. Wilson, *Hill Country*, p. 98.

tion in relation to the markets of southern New England and New York was unrivaled, especially because of the quick and direct access provided by railroads.⁶ However, the vision was spoiled by the reality that the same technology would serve other distant regions equally well in getting goods to market — which is, of course, what made Midwestern competition so potent.

During the same period, which Harold Fisher Wilson has termed a time of “abandonment and retrenchment,” Vermont experienced a decrease in the amount of improved land, a drop in farm values, and the desertion of economically untenable hillside farms. The extent of the decline in improved acreage is difficult to pinpoint, as the decrease may be partially explained by changes in definition; for instance, after 1880 abandoned fields and rocky pastures were excluded from the improved category, lowering the figure for the 1890 census by over a half million acres.⁷ The abandonment of hillside farms may have reflected several forces: dissatisfaction with rural life (as members of the Board of Agriculture thought), failure to compete for staples marketed on the same scale as the Midwest, or changing patterns of settlement. Regarding the latter suggestion, Wilson has pointed out in *The Hill Country of Northern New England* that eighteenth century settlers considered hillside land ideal because it was not swampy or subject to spring flooding, and was easier to clear. Not until dense lowland forests were cut away and the land allowed to dry out did valleys have appeal as potential farms.⁸ It was difficult at best for families to eke out a living on steep, rocky land, and by the third quarter of the nineteenth century many were no longer disposed to try. One author reflected in the state agricultural report for 1878 that “we have places here in Vermont, that remind us of the lines . . . ‘Deserted Village,’ where

The sounds of population fail,
No cheerful murmurs fluctuate in the gale,
No busy steps to the grass grown footway tread,
But all the bloomy flash of life is fled.⁹

A number of Vermonters, to paraphrase native son Stephen A. Douglas, found their state a fine enough place to be born in, but a better one to leave.¹⁰ One wonders if outsiders had any more affection for Vermont than

6. T. H. Hoskins, “Vermont as an Agricultural State,” in Vermont State Board of Agriculture, *First Annual Report*, p. 572.

7. Wilson, *Hill Country*, pp. 97, 100.

8. *Ibid.*, pp. 124-25.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 110.

10. The numbers of native Vermonters residing outside the state ranged from 145,655 in 1850 to 178,261 in 1880. After that date, the total began to decrease. The percentage of residents emigrating peaked at 42.4% of the population in 1870. Wilson, *Hill Country*, p. 103ⁿ.

the residents. The literature of travel may hold one key to that question; accordingly, at this juncture, an examination of responses to Vermont's scenery and resort business in the 1860's and 1870's is appropriate.

II

The 1860's-1870's: "the Green Mountains . . . are more generally admired than visited"

Americans in the mid-nineteenth century approached nature through the landscape. Touring was a must for anyone of means: there was nothing more likely to lift the soul than the thunder of Niagara Falls or restore health like the waters of White Sulphur Springs. The way in which people described scenery provides clues to both the expectations of resort-goers and to the popularity of certain scenic locales. In 1852, the landscape painter Charles Heyde wrote his mother-in-law, Louisa Whitman, about the grandeur of the views near his new home in North Dorset, Vermont. The whole distance, he said, was so shut in by mountains that one had to look straight up to see the sky. "Nothing could be more solemn and sublime than the effect of these mountains whose tops are amid the clouds the shadows of which rest upon their surfaces."¹¹ Sublimity and picturesqueness were the watchwords of the age, carried to America in the writings of the late eighteenth century English aestheticians, Edmund Burke, Richard Payne Knight, and William Gilpin. Interpreted by native Hudson River School artists, the Sublime particularly denoted obscurity, power, silence, vastness, and roughness. Note the descriptive phraseology chosen by the editor of the *Burlington Free Press* to describe his climb to the top of Mt. Mansfield in 1859: "The ascent of the last mile and a half was as steep, rugged, and exciting as any one could wish for." The party was forced to form a single line to pass through the dense forest; the undergrowth was thick and tangled on either side of the trail. "On the whole," he exulted, "it was steeper and steeper, wilder and wilder, rougher and rougher as we went on." The trees changed in appearance, becoming dwarfed and stunted — "every one had a shrivelled and savage aspect, as if it had been battling with north-winds and snow storms for ages."¹²

But several facts indicate that Vermont did not adequately satisfy this public expectation. While it is true that wooden hotels burned down frequently during the nineteenth century, they were replaced less often after 1870. Two of the better known resorts, the Missisquoi (in 1870), and the

11. Charles L. Heyde to Louisa Whitman, 27 August 1852, Heyde Collection, Guy Bailey Library, University of Vermont.

12. *Burlington Free Press*, 6 September 1859, p. 2, Col. 2.



The author, Andrea Rebek, researching her subject atop Mt. Mansfield (photo by Prof. Neil Stout, her thesis adviser, of the University of Vermont).

Mt. Mansfield Hotel (in 1899) in Stowe disappeared that way. In any case, business was slowing down; whereas the Clarendon House averaged nineteen room rentals a day in 1840, as Louise Roomet notes, in 1880 the hotel register showed a daily average of only nine.¹³

But other evidence in the literature of travel also suggests that Vermont was not a highlight on any American Grand Tour. Theresa Vielé, who lived in Burlington briefly in the early 1850's while her husband was on army duty there, remarked in her memoirs, *Following the Drum: A Glimpse of Frontier Life* (1858): "Startling incidents never occurred in Burlington. . . . The advent of a stranger was an important event, so few people ever came there. A stray artist, or lingering traveller, fascinated by the shadows of the Adirondacks as they fell into the lake, or an occasional acquaintance passing through on the way from the White Mountains to Saratoga, were always welcome visitors."¹⁴ Disturnell's guide to *Springs, Waterfalls, Sea-Bathing Resorts, and Mountain Scenery of the United States and Canada* (1855) proclaimed the views from Mt. Mansfield and Camel's Hump beautiful and sublime, but devoted a mere four pages to

13. Louise Bentley Roomet, "Nineteenth Century Vermont as a Resort Area," term paper Univ. of Vermont, 1973, p. 14.

14. Teresa G. Vielé, "Condemned to Burlington," in T. D. S. Bassett, ed., *Outsiders Inside Vermont* (Brattleboro: Stephen Greene Press, 1967), p. 83.

Vermont in comparison to twenty-five for New Hampshire and the White Mountains.¹⁵ The author of a travel piece, "Adventures on a Mountain Top," for *The Knickerbocker* in 1860, launched his article by stating that Mt. Mansfield was rarely visited until recent years, and was still unknown to the majority of summer tourists, despite the superb vistas seen from its summit.¹⁶ The same could never have been said of Mt. Washington. The White Mountains seemed to be the most sought after locale in New England in which to paint during the 1850's and 1860's. They also promptly became *the* place to tour; spurred by illustrated magazine articles, guidebooks, and easy railroad access, New Englanders went out in search of the picturesque and the sublime amid their towering peaks. By that time, the mountains had been popularized in literature by legend and poetry, and visually by the painter and the photographer.¹⁷ The same was not true of Vermont.

Perhaps the most telling indication of Vermont's position on the periphery of tourism comes in a retrospective observation made by Allen Chamberlain in 1919: "Fifty years ago Vermont people conceived the idea that their mountains were destined to win public appreciation as summer resorts, and hotels were built on a few of the principal summits. Of these, one is still entertaining guests. The others failed to receive the anticipated appreciation and long since disappeared in fire, porcupines, or decay."¹⁸

In 1866, the New York poet and man-about-town Will De Grasse, pointed out the obvious: ". . . there is scarcely a range of elevation in the state of Vermont, excepting Mount Mansfield, near the village of Stowe, which is truly worthy of the name of 'a mountain.' Truth demands that they should be called what they were first named, 'The Green Hills of Vermont'. . . ."¹⁹ Indeed, by 1850, Vermont was the epitome of the pastoral landscape. Men had humanized much of the land; they had built houses, barns, and fences, tilled fields, and had set sheep and cows to graze in pas-

15. *Springs, Water-Falls, Sea-Bathing Resorts, and Mountain Scenery of the United States and Canada* (New York: J. Disturnell, 1855), pp. 21-50. This ratio is true of many other guidebooks of the period such as Appleton's and Batchelder's.

16. "Adventures on a Mountain Top," *The Knickerbocker*, LV, No. 4 (April, 1860), p. 363. This is a theme which recurred often in the literature pertaining to Vermont. An ad for the Bostwick House in the *Burlington Free Press* in 1868 read "This enjoyable place of nature, with its 'grand and lofty' surroundings, needs only to be the more generally known to draw its full quota of visitors." *Burlington Free Press*, Evening Ed., 15 August 1868, p. 8, Col. 2.

17. William C. Lipke and Philip N. Grime, "Albert Bierstadt in New Hampshire," *The Currier Gallery of Art Bulletin*, No. 2 (1973), pp. 25-26. William Culp Darrah, in his book *Stereo Views*, cites at least three series of stereoviews of the White Mountains in existence in the period between 1855 and 1861. *Ibid.*, note 20.

18. Allen Chamberlain, *Vacation Tramps in New England* (Cambridge: Houghton Mifflin, 1919), pp. 54-55.

19. Will De Grasse, *Swallows on the Wing O'er Garden Springs of Delight* (Cambridge: Houghton Mifflin, 1919), pp. 54-55.

tures. The rolling, verdured Green Mountains were not quite sublime enough to attract the hoards who were trekking through the White Mountains, Mt. Desert Island, and the Adirondacks each summer. Despite this clearly discernible fact, observers continued throughout the 1860's and 1870's to describe Vermont with the existing and tremendously popular aesthetic vocabulary.²⁰ "Indeed," read one guidebook of 1867, "as one contemplates this sublime landscape he is inspired with reverence for the Great First Cause, who has shaped all so beautifully and majestically."²¹ One hears in that statement reverberations of Thomas Cole's belief, pronounced nearly forty years earlier, that reflection on such scenery led the viewer closer to a truly spiritual perception of the world.

Harper's, among the most widely read of late nineteenth century magazines, published an article in 1833, called "A Vacation in Vermont." The author, Herbert Tuttle, drew on experiences in the Stowe-Mt. Mansfield area and the Otter Valley for his account; of the two regions, he made his most telling observations about Mansfield. The opening paragraph again sounded the theme that Vermont was relatively unknown: "Of the Green Mountains one might probably say, they are more generally admired than visited. Poets sing without seeing them. They have furnished ready and familiar figures to orators who could hardly point them out on the map. . . ." ²² He added that the area was easily accessible from either New York or Boston (presumably the homes of many of his readers), implying his audience needed convincing. Tuttle went on to comment that tourists like himself, who chose the Waterbury over the Underhill route to Stowe, found "the final traces of a corrupt urban civilization. Beyond here, all is primitive, *idyllic*, *Arcadian* . . . ;"²³ not awesome, grand, and sublime, but pastoral. Even his description of Mt. Mansfield lacked for the most part any of the obsession with crags, precipices, and storm-battered rock spurs noted in earlier reports (he did, however, admit to the danger in descending the Nose). The walk to the Chin, along a narrow ridge nearly bare except for some dwarfish cedars and moss, was not troublesome. The Lips, he observed, were "mere accumulations" of boulders, not particularly interesting except for the "Rock of Terror."²⁴

20. An exception is the following remark made by a discerning Englishman, who wrote an article for *Macmillan's Magazine* in 1873: "from a country town at the foot of the 'Green Mountains,' pastoral continuation of the Allegheny chain, limestone, clothed with trees, turf, and moss; soothing, protective, and peaceful, and of constant beauty in summer and winter." "An Englishman in Vermont," *Macmillan's Magazine*, 28 (1873) p. 240.

21. L. M. Foquet, *Lake Champlain, Lake George, The Adirondacks, Lake Memphremagog and Mount Mansfield* (Burlington, Vt.: R. S. Styles' Printing Estab., 1867), p. 36.

22. Herbert Tuttle, "A Vacation in Vermont," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, XLVII (November, 1883), p. 813.

23. *Ibid.* Emphasis mine.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 818.

Herbert Tuttle's article appears to bear the seeds of a transition in Vermont's public projection; an acceptance of her characteristic landscape on its own merits without the rather futile attempts to "match" it to the aesthetic tastes of the moment. "For loftiness, grandeur and majesty, Mount Mansfield is, of course, inferior to Mount Washington. Its charms are of a more modest nature," Tuttle concluded.²⁵

Railroad guide books, published under the auspices of their passenger departments, serve as another index to the change. Charged with the task of attracting business to their lines, these early advertising agencies tried to detect and exploit the most deep-seated of public needs, values, and attitudes. The compiler of the Central Vermont Railroad's 1885 edition of *By-Ways* hastened to assure "the angler, or the man and woman seeking after rest and retirement from the bustle, confusion, and fashion of the city, that the Central Vermont Railroad offers superior inducements. Excellent fishing, quiet, peaceful repose, delightful scenery, healthful food, bracing, stimulating air — in fact, every desideratum for a summer's vacation can be found along the line of this Railroad. . . ."²⁶ The 1887 edition offered Lake Dunmore as a site second only to Lake George in picturesque beauty and pointed out the "undulating meadows and wooded hills" surrounding its western shore. A poem included in the sketch illustrates the shift in descriptive rhetoric:

. . . Yon gentle hills
Yon darksome rocks, yon glittering stream:
All form a scene
Where musing solitude might love to lift
Her soul above this sphere of earthliness;
Where silence undisturbed might watch alone,
So clear, so bright, so still.²⁷

Public taste and a serene and restful landscape such as Vermont's seemed to be coming together by the 1880's, although it is not at all clear that people were yet visiting Vermont in any great numbers. The Boston and Lowell Railroad guide of 1886 implied that its Vermont division was a way-station, of value to those traveling from Canada to Maine or from Lake George and the Adirondacks through to the White Mountains.²⁸

25. *Ibid.*, p. 820.

26. Central Vermont Railroad, *By Ways* (New York: Press of the American Banknote Co., 1885), p. 45.

27. *Ibid.*, (1887 ed.), pp. 56-57.

28. Boston and Lowell Railroad Co., *Summer Saunterings* (Boston: Rand Avery Supply Co., Printers, 1886), p. 33.

Still a third reflection of that perpetual modification appears in period photographs of the Vermont landscape. Stereo views and photos, because they were easily and inexpensively reproduced and widely sold, are truly cultural artifacts, and may be justifiably seen as a manifestation of particular public tastes. Stereographs of the 1860's and 1870's demonstrate (as far as early cameras would allow) the preoccupation of the age with heroic scenery. If agricultural Vermont could be fitted to sublime schema in descriptive literature, it could, chiefly by means of vantage point, be in visual media as well. By the closing years of the century, however, the compositional emphasis of photographs was unmistakably pastoral. Photography played a major part in the state's first advertising campaign.

III

1880-1910: "Vermonters are learning that scenery has economic value"

During the late 1880's and early 1890's, the selling of Vermont began in earnest. In 1888, the Vermont legislature appointed a commission to investigate agricultural and manufacturing interests in the state, and to formulate alternatives for developing their potential. The Vermont State Board of Agriculture tried to induce immigrant farmers (especially Swedes) to buy abandoned hillside property. The Board subsidized the printing and distribution of maps which explained in both English and Swedish the opportunities for immigrants in Vermont; however, that effort netted a total of only twenty-three families. Most French Canadian immigrants, who were not a welcomed element anyway, went to the mill towns and cities of southern New England. In effect, the drive to repopulate farms with farmers or other permanent residents did not come to any real fruition.²⁹ At around the same period, publicity concerning abandoned farms and rural decay in northern New England was reaching its height in the contemporary media — *New England Magazine*, *Scribner's*, *Atlantic Monthly*, and the like. Accordingly, the transitions in public attitudes underway in the previous decade found their full flowering; a nation acutely aware of increasing industrialization and tremendous urban growth reacted with both alarm and nostalgia to reports of rural decline. Edward Hungerford wrote in *The Century* in 1891 that summer migration extended the promise of solving social problems. City people — of proper moral bearing — could infuse rural districts with new life. In return, they would benefit from exposure to those time-honored values and traditions upon which the United

29. Wilson, *Hill Country*, pp. 157, 161-64.

States was built. He judged "the cultivation of rural tastes . . . a source of mental and spiritual health. The hills, the fields, the woods, the brooks, the open sky, are the natural heritage and instructors of men."³⁰

Closer to home, the Vermont sportsman W. H. H. Murray remarked on the urban drift and its consequences in his book, *Lake Champlain and its Shores* (1890): "The tide of our civilization sets toward the cities . . . we are a nation of city-builders, and the artificial characteristics of city population are fast printing themselves upon the body of society." However, he hailed as the "brightest sign of the times . . . the fact that men and women are beginning to turn their faces toward the country . . . a new day is at hand; a day in which we shall get back to the simplicity of nature, shall put a proper value on the charms of quietness, shall bring the light and purity of the outdoor world into our houses . . . and into our souls, too."³¹

The mood was not lost on that other early agency of Vermont's promotion, the State Board of Agriculture. Its 1891 pamphlet, entitled *The Resources and Attractions of Vermont*, and the probable result of the legislative decree a few years earlier, came close to giving up on the farmer and favoring instead the summer visitor: "Farmers are not without some reason when they make some such remark as 'Fishermen are a nuisance, anyway.' But they must admit . . . that fishermen patronize the railroads, and cause better accommodations for everybody. They cause hotels to be built, and bring their families. They hire boats and guides, and patronize country stores . . . they buy our much abused 'abandoned hillside farms' and make summer homes of them. The farmer sells his chicken, eggs, butter, lambs, etc., and gets a better price at home than formerly at a distant and uncertain market. It is the fishermen, or summer tourist who creates the demand. . . ." ³² Subsequent issues included lengthy sections on summer resorts and lists of desirable farms for sale.

Advertising Vermont was becoming a very conscious ploy by both the railroads and the State Board of Agriculture. At stake was not only a ready market for abandoned farms but also a share in a tourist trade in which Vermont, in earlier years, had not been successful. Besides, the characteristics of the potential vacationer had changed in half a century, enough so that Vermonters would want to attract them into the state. It had not always been so. Professor Matthew H. Buckham, later President of the University of Vermont, had contributed an article to Abby Maria Hemenway's *Vermont Historical Gazetteer* in 1867 which flatly stated his

30. Edward Hungerford, "Our Summer Migration," *Century*, XLII (1891) pp. 573, 576.

31. W. H. H. Murray, *Lake Champlain and Its Shores* (Boston: De Wolfe, Fiske and Co., 1890), pp. 5, 38-39.

32. Vermont State Board of Agriculture, *The Resources and Attractions of Vermont* (Montpelier, Vt.: Watchman Publishing Co., 1891), p. 61.

aversion to the summer visits of any wealthy “city cousins”: “But when they come with their long baggage trains of trunks and band-boxes and take possession of a country village. . . . importing into industrious communities [the habit of] doing nothing and doing it elegantly, they . . . demoralize the whole tone of society, [and] convert respectable villages into the likenesses of suburban Connecticut and New Jersey. . . .”³³ Hemenway herself mentioned the dubious effects of exposing the young during the summer months to a class of people whose main business was to ride around in fine carriages and display themselves in elegant clothing.³⁴

The advertising appeals of the 1890’s and after were directed at a wide variety of people. One very important group included Vermonters living outside the state, numbering at least 172,000 in 1890. The author of *The Resources and Attractions of Vermont* expressed hope that his booklet would come to their attention.³⁵ To others, Vermont offered cheap land suitable for building summer homes, giving those of limited means the opportunity to take advantage of the country — renewed strength and health at less cost than city living. Sportsmen and fishermen were directed to the many lakes, ponds, and streams in Essex and Orleans Counties; campers were reminded of the shores of Lake Champlain and the Green Mountains. Vermont welcomed those who would escape “the heat, the dust, and disease of the cities, and become strong by close communion with nature, surrounded with her richest privileges;” who sought localities “as offer climatic and other conditions best suited to renew physical vigor and mental tone.”³⁶ In short, the advertising capitalized on those needs of an increasingly monied and leisured society, ripe for the appeal of a wild, yet domesticated, classic middle landscape.

“What of the future — advance or retreat?” queried the Central Vermont Railroad’s pamphlet, *Summer Homes*: “Every loyal son and daughter replies ‘Advance.’”³⁷ The 1891 edition left no stone unturned in a typically enthusiastic campaign to enhance Vermont’s public image. Old myths were refuted — Vermonters did not live in log cabins, chew gum, or navigate steep hills in buckboards, nor did their sheep have sharp noses from nibbling grass between rocks. Testimonials ranged from the sincere to the absurd: a little girl from Boston exclaiming to her mother, “Oh! Mama, we’ve got to Vermont, and I guess it’s pretty near Heaven . . . ;”

33. M. H. Buckham, “Burlington as a Place to Live In,” in Abby Maria Hemenway, ed., *The Vermont Historical Gazetteer*, Vol. I (1867), pp. 723-24.

34. Hemenway, *Gazetteer*, Vol. II (1871), p. 738.

35. Vermont State Board of Agriculture, *Resources and Attractions* (1892 ed.), p. 3.

36. *Ibid.*, pp. 30, 29, 53; Central Vermont Railroad, *Summer Homes Among the Green Hills of Vermont and Along the Shores of Lake Champlain* (St. Albans, Vt.: St. Albans Messenger Co., Print., 1896), p. 5.

37. *Ibid.*, (1891 ed.), p. 4.

horses gaining strength from grazing and running over Vermont land until they seemed to possess the "enduring qualities of the eternal hills." Perhaps the most amusing statement came from a famous, but unidentified, financier, which readers of the 1970's can appreciate: "When worn out and nervously exhausted by the tremendous responsibilities of the great corporation . . . I don't employ a specialist for broken down bankers, or go to Europe, I just take a run up and down Vermont, which refreshes my mind without wearying my body. . . ." The same source found the Green Mountains just as picturesque as the Rockies, but that craning his neck to view the latter produced unpleasant side effects — "tingling nerves, aching eyes, and throbbing head." At any rate, the grandeur was always several thousand feet above or below. *Summer Homes* also made sure the potential visitor was aware of the geological and botanical bonanza in Vermont, as well as of her high degree of intellectual and moral attainment.³⁸

The publicizers of Vermont carried on diverse activities to aid the effectiveness of their literary barrage. The Central Vermont Railroad sent representatives into the field, asking home owners' cooperation in opening their residences to summer visitors.³⁹ The State Board of Agriculture mailed questionnaires to town appraisers, inquiring as to the number of farms for sale in an area, the condition of buildings, price, etc. Although not every town answered, the Board was able to collect enough information to issue a report, *List of Desirable Vermont Farms*, in 1893. In addition, that agency invited all locales desiring to advertise their advantages for either summer resorts or new businesses to contribute articles to various editions of *Resources and Attractions*.⁴⁰ It was evident, too, that matters such as ease of access, roads, quality of accommodation, and modern conveniences (the Board of Agriculture cited co-op creameries, telephones, and free mail delivery) were important in popularizing rural regions. By the end of the next decade, the Central Vermont Railroad guide could proudly note that progress in those areas was evident. Burlington, the guide book pointed out, had completed a large, modern hotel costing \$250,000. New facilities were also being built throughout the state, and the legislature had just appropriated \$150,000 for good roads during the 1910 session.⁴¹

It is interesting to see the description of scenery in relation to that flurry of enterprise just recounted. On the summit of Mt. Mansfield the author of

38. *Ibid.*, pp. 3, 6-11.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 5.

40. Board of Agriculture, *Resources and Attractions* (1892 ed.), pp. 9, 30.

41. Board of Agriculture, *Vermont, Its Opportunities for Investment in Agriculture, Manufacturing, Minerals; Its Attraction for Summer Homes* (St. Albans, Vt.: Messenger Co. Print., 1903), n. p.; Central Vermont Railroad, *Summer Homes* (1911 ed.), pp. 10, 9.

an 1892 guide observed: “. . . there is spread out before you on the west, the level, fertile land of Western Vermont, diversified by pretty hills, bordered by the silver waters of Lake Champlain, with the deep blue Adirondack Mountains in the far distance beyond. You see the farm-houses clustering into villages; you can follow the course of winding, trout-laden streams . . . you can see the dark green of waving grain and can almost distinguish the farmers at their toil. It is the wilderness that is chiefly impressed upon the mind at more elevated mountain tops, but here . . . there is another and a grander sensation.”⁴² What leaps from that statement is an appreciation of those qualities in scenery which made Vermont unpopular during the heyday of the sublime; it emphasized the charm and diversity (picturesqueness), rather than the non-existent awesome splendor of the landscape. It is pastoral, a place where one could find solitude with the comforting thought that a farmer was haying over the next rise.

From all indications, there was a sizable sentiment for the land during the late nineteenth century — for the pastoral landscape as well as wilderness. That it emerged at a time when the northern New England hill country was experiencing economic readjustment was a watershed in Vermont’s history as a tourist state. “Vermonters are learning that scenery has economic value . . .” stated the Board of Agriculture in 1895. The Central Vermont Railroad remarked in the same year that “the area of tilled land is growing less in Vermont . . . agriculture is retreating to the more easily tilled soil of the valleys and abandoning the farms on the hills,” while in the same breath, urging those seeking rest and change to buy unoccupied property as summer homes.⁴³ What began as a crusade to repopulate rural districts with farmers bloomed into a full scale effort to attract a wider market; and that market was more responsive every year. In 1906, the *Vergennes Enterprise and Vermonter* announced that the summer business of the 1905 season had been the largest in the state’s history.⁴⁴ While it was true that Maine and New Hampshire were engaging in similar activities, the fact remains that Vermont had gone virtually unnoticed during previous decades. The rest of northern New England and New York State, on the other hand, had seen tremendous growth as resort areas. Notably, Vermont led the others in the systematic advancement of summer attractions by the state; in 1911, the legislature took over the job of promotion from the railroads and the Board of Agriculture, establishing the

42. *Guide and Handbook to the Summit of Glorious Old Mount Mansfield* (Burlington, Vt.: Free Press Association, 1892), p. 8.

43. Vermont Board of Agriculture, *A List of Desirable Farms and Summer Homes in Vermont* (Montpelier, Press of the Watchman Publ. Co., 1895), p. 20; Central Vermont Railroad, *Summer Homes* (1895 ed.), pp. 81, 85.

44. *Vergennes Enterprise and Vermonter*, n.d., quoted in *the Vermonter*, 11, no. 12-13 (July-August, 1906), p. 195.

Bureau of Publicity as part of the Department of State. The title of its first publication was *Vermont, Designed by the Creator for the Playground of the Continent*.⁴⁵ With that formal, legislative recognition of the importance of tourism to the state's economy, the boom was on.

45. Wilson, *Hill Country*, p. 285.

Several years ago there was a very late Spring snow that lured so many skiers to Mount Snow from down-country that the cars were bumper to bumper for more than a mile on the access road. The late Archie Fitzpatrick was in charge of winter work then, and he was plowing the heavy snow with the town truck while his two sons, William and Willard, were standing in the back of the big truck shovelling sand into the spreader as the truck moved slowly along.

Finally the skier right behind him could stand the delay no longer: he pulled out to pass the plow truck, skidded and spun around — having no snow tires — and smashed his pretty grillwork to hell and gone against the side of the truck. Furious, he got out of his car to tongue-lash Archie: “Goddam it, let me see your license!” he shouted.

Archie took a long look at the damage, shook his head and replied: “In Vermont you don’t need a license to get run into.”

— from *The Old-Timer Talks Back*, by Allen R. Foley (Brattleboro: The Stephen Greene Press, 1975, pp. 79; \$2.45), page 64.

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