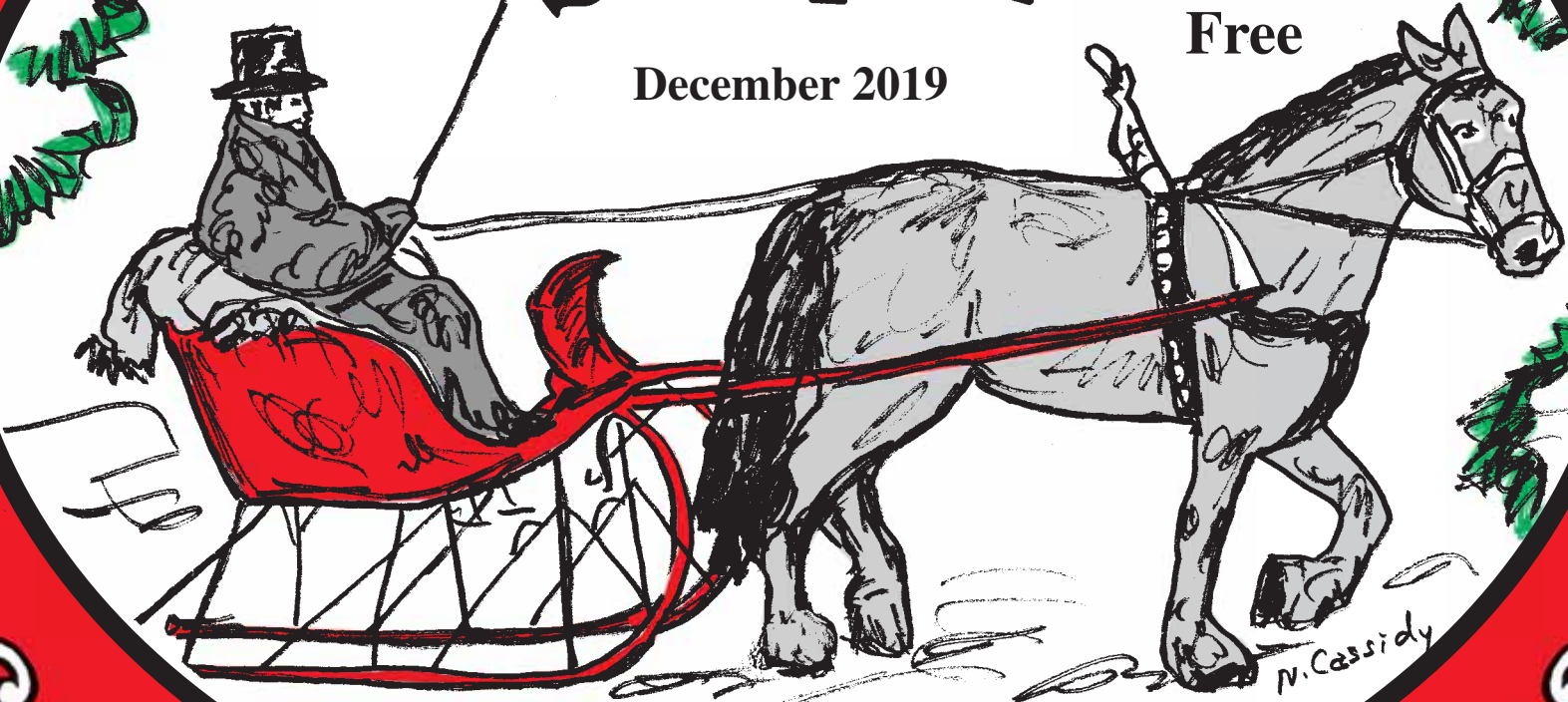


Vermont Country Sampler

December 2019

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December Journal

Coyotes and the Eighth Day Of Creation: Ruminations Of a Mad Almanacker

by Bill Felker

Extremism in the pursuit of diversity is no vice.
—Eliades Quintana, O.S.B.

I was trying to respond to the madness of the national news and to the research I had been doing on local climate change when I came across a column I had written for the News back in the last century. Here is some of what I wrote.

One day in early December, Jeanie brought home a note from Diana: "Coyote seen crossing Dayton-Yellow Springs Road last Sunday."

I checked the Ohio hunting regulations. Coyotes are fair game. But I hope this one lives a long and fertile life.

A hundred years ago, wildlife had been almost completely destroyed in this part of the world.

Through public and private efforts, the fauna and flora are returning. Ohio's deer herd is now one of the largest in the country. Fish have come back in many the rivers, in spite of all the pollution. Diana's coyote might be a sign that things continue to improve. And it might elicit a promise that we have to keep: we will do more, bring back more life.

We have long since entered the Eighth Day of Creation. Here in the early years of the Anthropocene and the Sixth Great Extinction, it is our turn to remake the world, to renew the aborted planet.



Ice on the trees in central Vermont.

photo by Nancy Cassidy

Preservation is an outmoded concept now. It's far too conservative a position and implies defense rather than offense.

We may not be able to start with coyotes. Or maybe we can. We can start anywhere we want. Everywhere you look, there are places without flowering trees. So plant flowering trees. It's time to breed birds. When was the last time you saw a pheasant in town?

It's time to bring pheasants to Yellow Springs and more geese and turkeys. How about rabbits! It's a hungry coyote

that has no rabbits. Let's encourage rabbits. Hunters and state agencies have protected the game we have with regulations. It's time to do more, to breed more.

On the Eighth Day of Creation, the bike path will be lined with flowers and exotic trees, all the way to New Orleans. Aviaries will breed and feed the birds threatened with extinction, and butterflies will be protected and bred and loosed by the millions to the blossoms they deserve.

And it is time to breed other bugs, lots of beneficial insects to feed the spiders and

to pollinate the land and to become our allies and to keep it from dying at the hand of the corporations.

I could even put up with a million more people in Greene County. (It will come to that anyway in the next century.) They would have organic gardens for yards full of flowers and vegetables, chickens and ducks, fish ponds for lawns, sidewalks and paths lined with roses and lilies.

A million more people planting bulbs in the fall, aficionados of apples and plums and grapes and pears. So that I could walk down the street, and pick my fill of

fruit. And talk to the animals, and watch the ponds of koi and tilapia off Xenia Avenue, and the jumping perch and bass of Ellis Pond, more fish to catch and feed and nurture than a fisherperson's sweetest fantasy.

To inspire a revolt in the name of diversity, to be safe from the assaults of the distributors of hazardous waste who would be stopped by any means necessary to support the Recreation of the World.

That is the Eden we already have the technology and the resources to create. All we lack is the desire, the confidence, the excitement, the belief, and the madness.




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Welcome to Woodstock's Wassail Parade



Woodstock's 34th Annual Wassail Weekend is December 13 & 14. The Wassail Parade will be held Saturday, December 14th at 2 p.m. There will be something for all ages, lots of sleigh bells and holiday spirit.



Nancy Cassidy Photos

The 1908 Country Life Commission Encouraged the Revitalization Of Country Churches in Serving Rural America

by Roger Allbee

After the Civil War, the late 1800's and early 1900's was a period of unrest in American agriculture. In 1893, historian Fredrick Turner proclaimed the end of the American Frontier...as the trend toward urbanization was well underway. Some of the farm population was moving to the cities, farmers were losing some of their political clout, railroads and others were gaining political power, and there were growing risks and uncertainties for agriculture. More people lived in rural communities and on the farm, but this number was decreasing. America was being transformed from a rural agrarian society into an urban industrial one. The Patrons of Husbandry or the Grange, the first national farm organization, was formed during this period due to the grievances that existed at that time within the farm and rural population. The railroad monopoly had established an absolute tyranny over the farmers "unequalled in any monarchy of the Old World." Even in Vermont there were great uncertainties with the loss of hill farms. Coming out of this period, President Teddy Roosevelt in 1908 appointed a Country Life Commission. The Commission had three objectives for the improvement of rural life: a national agricultural extension program, scientific surveys of rural life, and the establishment of a national agency devoted to rural progress. They as well as other progressives believed in the country life movement, that "even rural neighborhoods in the twentieth century had lost the sense of community characteristic of the nineteenth century." Some believed that it was the decadence of country life that led to the fall of Rome. They saw the decline of the rural population as ultimately affecting the welfare of the nation.

Country Life Movement

Many in the Country Life Movement had also identified the country church as a key institution in the reform of rural life. The country church had declined and needed to be revitalized. Undertaking studies of how these churches could best be revitalized came through work conducted by Charles Otis Gil, a Yale and Yale Divinity School as well as Union Theological Seminary graduate. His early work in Vermont was as a Congressional minister in Harland, Vermont. Gil, along with Gifford Pinchot, also a Yale graduate, and a member of the Country Life Commission, authored two influential books on the state of rural churches in America with remedies for revitalization. Pinchot had already distinguished himself as a leading conservationist and as the first Chief of the U.S. forest service.

The first book, *The Country Church*, published in 1913 was done by studying rural churches in two counties; one in Windsor County in Vermont, and the other Tompkins County New York, the home of Cornell University, and the home of Liberty Hyde Bailey of Cornell who had been Chair of the Country Life Commission. It is said that the purpose of these studies and resulting books "was to help in getting the country church back into the position it ought to occupy as a great power working effectively for country life." Gill and Pinchot, as well as others in the Country Life Movement, had identified the country church as a key institution in the reform of rural life. The Church, they recognized, had declined but needed to be revived or restored to its "old time" vitality by a new program of social service. Thus, the country church was seen as a force for community improvement. Pinchot as a member of the Country Life Commission, believed, along with Gil, that the country church could take a role in making rural life a success by organizing cooperative ventures in crop production, marketing, milling, banking, and purchasing of supplies. The church needed to re-establish itself as a leader in the community and farm life as it had been in the nineteenth century.

Charles Otis Gil appointed as delegate to the North American Commission

In 1913 with his distinct knowledge of country life and rural communities, it was no surprise then that Vermont Governor Fairbanks chose Charles Otis Gil as a delegate to the



Old South Church in Windsor, VT.

photo by Alexius Horatius

North American Commission. This Commission, created by President Wilson in 1913, was established to further address rural and farmer concerns raised by the Country Life Commission and others at the time. It consisted of representatives from many of the states plus four Canadian provinces, and was challenged and authorized "to investigate, and study in European Countries cooperatives, land-mortgage banks, cooperative rural credit unions, and similar organizations and institutions devoting their attention to the promotion of agricultural and the betterment of rural conditions(see 63rd Congress, 1st Session, Senate, Document No. 214). They undertook this mission in travels and meetings throughout Europe, Russia and Egypt in a three-month period from April to July 1913(the map of their study route is very interesting)

After his return as a member of the Commission, Gil joined Pinchot to continue their investigation of country churches and as a follow-up to their study of the two counties, one in Vermont and one in New York. The conclusion of this earlier study led to the creation of the Commission on Church and Country Life. It was decided to extend the study to an entire state, and Ohio was chosen. The Study, *Six Thousand Country Churches*, by Gill and Pinchot, was published in 1919, and was considered one of the most thorough studies of country churches and their role in rural America at that time. In their findings, they state that "unless a larger and stronger social and religious institution is created in the country districts than is now found in the country church, the more vigorous young people will for the most part leave the country..."

Gil retired as a farmer in Westford, VT

Charles Otis Gill, an American Congregationalist clergyman, retired as a farmer to Westford, Vermont in 1929 after spending many years as a minister in several Vermont towns, and after having co-authored two influential books on the state of rural churches in the United States. Clifford Pinchot, the Co-Author of the two books, went on to serve two terms as Governor of Pennsylvania. He was considered a leading conservationist at the time, and it is said that his leadership put conservation of forests high on America's priority list

This period of unrest in the rural and farm community helped to usher in fundamental and lasting institutional changes in the United States. Congress created the feder-

ally authorized Agricultural Extension Service and also established the Federal Farm Credit Land Banks in 1916.

Blogger's Reflections by Roger Allbee: Fredrick Turner, a leading historian at the time indicated that the American Fortier had ended. The information at the time contributed to that finding. Beginning in the early 1800's, the Erie Canal had contributed to the opening of the West (see blog posting: *The Erie and Champlain Canal, Two Hundred Years of History and How It Transformed the Flow of Commerce by Opening the West*). During the 1800's vast tracks of Western land were provided, forcing the native Americans onto reservations. For Example, from 1850 to 1871, the railroads received more than 175 million acres, more than 1/10 of the whole U.S. In addition, western homesteaders (Homestead Act of 1862) received more than 80 million acres of public land. The Land Grant Act of 1862 provided 17.4 million acres of public land for the creation of Land Grant Colleges (based upon 30,000 per the number of members of Congress from each state). Vermont received scrips for the sale of 90,000 acres, valued at the time at about 90 cents per acre. These programs opened up the West for settlement and contributed to the findings by Turner that the frontier had ended.

The mid to late 1800's was also a time of increased national attention to education. The Land Grant Act was the first national attention to higher education for the masses. (see blog posts: *The Life and Times of U.S. Senator Justin Morrill*, and also *The Historical Importance of Agricultural Education*). The formation of the Land Grant in Vermont was not without controversy. In the beginning it was proposed for example, that UVM, Middlebury, and Norwich be formed into one Land Grant institution. Even the state legislature passed a law to allow that to happen. It did not and UVM became the Land Grant, but not without further controversy when the Grange and others at the time in 1890 proposed that its status be taken away due to its lack of attention to agriculture within the state (see *Vermont History, the Proceedings of the Vermont Historical Society, April 1958*). Other Land Grants with public funds created at the time in the East consisted of Dartmouth (ended with formation of UNH), Yale and Brown Universities. (these ended with UCONN, and URI being established as Land Grant Institutions in each state), and M.I.T. which received 1/3 of the public funds available to the State of Massachusetts under the Land Grant Act, with UMASS also a Land Grant in the State.

In 1887, The Federal Hatch Act authorized the creation of agricultural experiment stations. The Vermont General Assembly authorized one and it was established at the University of Vermont as a partnership between the state, USDA, and the Land Grant College for the purpose of "conducting research in field of agriculture with special reference to conditions in the State of Vermont." The 1900s it can be argued was the beginning of a more activist or interventional period in American agriculture. The creation of the Federal funded Agricultural Extension Service, and the beginning of the Federal Farm Credit Land Banks started this more direct service period to farmers and rural citizens in the United States in 1916. A more activist period came after the Depression that resulted in the New Deal Programs of the 1930s.

Roger Allbee is a former Secretary of Agriculture, Food and Markets for the State of Vermont. He does a blog on Vermont agricultural history at www.whatceresmightsay.blogspot.com.

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Christmas at the Farm at Billings Farm & Museum

Discover the traditions of a late 19th-century Vermont Christmas with a visit to the Billings Farm & Museum this holiday season. Christmas at the Farm will be featured December weekends and December 22, 2019 – January 5, 2020, 10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. (excluding Christmas Day). Tour the authentically decorated farmhouse and visit the dairy farm and meet the farm animals. Horse-drawn sleigh or wagon rides offered December 15 and December 26 – January 1, as conditions permit.

Holiday programs, making historic Christmas ornaments and crafts, candle dipping, plus the Academy Award® nominee film, *A Place in the Land* will be offered. Programs include cooking demonstrations and tastings and storytelling with Artist in Residence Kristina Rodanas.

New for 2020: Get off to a healthy start in the new year with our new wellness cooking demonstrations and recipes using vegetables grown in the summer garden, offered daily January 2–5, 2020.

In 1890, Christmas celebrations were much simpler than they would become in the 20th century. Families enjoyed the holiday, but still had cows to milk, ice to cut, and wood to saw. A few gifts, a special meal, and the gathering of friends, were noteworthy in an otherwise typical day.

Decorations of the period included fresh greens draped over mantels, windows, and staircases throughout the house. Small trees, packed in a jar or butter tub and placed on a tabletop were common. Many of the ornaments reflected an agricultural tradition, including strands of cranberries, popcorn, or dried apples that circled the tree. Apples studded with

cloves, “exotic” oranges, silvered (foil-covered) chestnuts, painted pinecones, and acorns complemented the handmade paper ornaments, which rounded out many a tree’s decorations.

In Woodstock, turn-of-the-century businesses advertised their wares for Christmas gifts. Most gifts were useful domestic items: fabric, clothing, umbrellas, linens, crockery, some of which can be found today in our Museum shop. Most common gifts were homemade, handcrafted items such as fancy mittens, satin bows, and stockings filled with candies, nuts, and raisins.

Winter at the Farm

Visit the Jersey herd, draft horses, oxen, chickens, and sheep—inside for the winter—and tour the restored and furnished 1890 Farm Manager’s House. *A Place in the Land*, our Academy Award®-nominee film is shown every hour in the theater. Interactive programs offered throughout the day. *Weekends beginning in January, 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.*

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1890s style Christmas ornaments adorn the tree for Christmas at Billings Farm in Woodstock, VT. photo courtesy Billings Farm & Museum



Fairest Lord Jesus

Fairest Lord Jesus, Ruler of all nature,
O thou of God and man the Son,
Thee will I cherish, Thee will I honor,
Thee, my soul’s Glory and Crown.

Fair are the meadows, fairer still the woodlands,
Robed in the blooming garb of spring:
Jesus is fairer, Jesus is purer,
Who makes the woeful heart to sing.

Fair is the sunshine, fairer still the moonlight,
And all the twinkling, stary host:
Jesus shines brighter, Jesus shines purer,
Than all the angels heaven can boast.

—FROM THE GERMAN, 17th Century

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Poor Will's Guide to Farming & Gardening

by Bill Felker

December: Week 1

If you have a shallow koi, tilapia or goldfish pond, keep a waterfall running through the winter or use an electric heater to keep the surface of the pond from freezing.

Fertilize trees and bushes after leafdrop is complete. Prune fruit bearing bushes.

After November 25, the percentage of cloudy days doubles over the average for the rest of November; cloudy days begin to increase the likelihood for seasonal affective disorders and contribute to complications with harvest.

Bring in oregano, rosemary, parsley and thyme for winter seasonings. Stake weaker shrubs and trees. Mulch strawberries with straw. Prepare to transport goat and sheep cheese, Christmas cacti, dried flowers and grasses, poinsettias, mistletoe and ginseng to market.

Order legume seed for winter pastures. Schedule your frost seeding for January and February. Fertilize pastures now for improved winter hardiness and spring development. Order sunflower, beet, Jerusalem artichoke, pumpkin, comfrey, carrot, kale and turnip seeds for you and your livestock.

December: Week 2

Increase grain to feeder stock in order to have them at desirable market weight in late winter and early spring.

Review the use of fertilizer and the types of seeds you use. What grows best, and where does it grow best? What contributes to its growth?

The corn and soybean harvests are usually complete all around the county by this date, and development of winter wheat slows in the cold. New garlic shoots are firm and green, but they've stopped growing and remain at their middle-autumn height. The Christmas tree harvest is at its peak, and the last poinsettias have come north.

Try to save your best quality feed supplies for the colder months, the months closest to late winter and early spring birthing time. The Christmas tree harvest is at its peak, and the last poinsettias have come north.

Once rhubarb roots have been frozen, bring the plant indoors, and put it in a dark place. Cut the stalks as they appear. Watch for mold in feed; be sure the grain and hay are dry and sweet.



Weathering the storm in central Vermont.

photo by Nancy Cassidy

December: Week 3

Avoid overcrowding in the barn in order to cut down on the possibility of pneumonia. And keep adequate ventilation in any closed area your animals use on a regular basis.

Heavy December snows may put pressure on coyotes to find suitable prey. Make sure your fences are adequate and that drifting snow does not cover them up.

Tamp down the snow around younger fruit trees after each snowstorm to protect them from mice working under the surface.

Review this year's costs for hay and grain. If they are too high, experiment with a later breeding schedule so that lambs and kids will be about five or six weeks old at the time that pasture growth is strong.

Pruning Season gets underway as average highs drop into the 30s; it continues until the average highs climb once again past 40.

In the greenhouse or south-window garden, hibiscus will bloom, open before dawn, fading and falling by three in the afternoon.

Soil temperatures have often fallen into the mid 30s throughout the lower Midwest.

December: Week 4

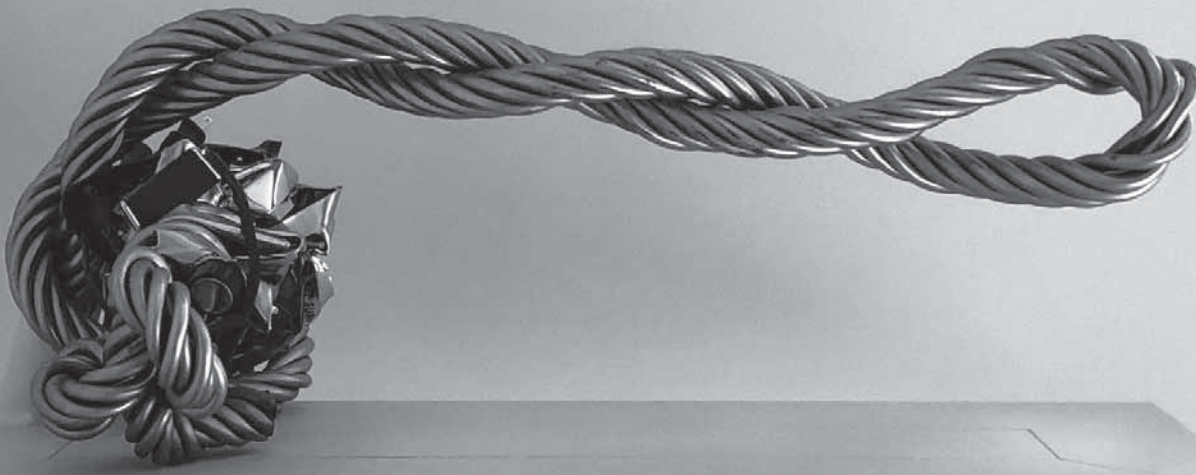
Separate your thinnest pregnant ewes and does now and give them a little extra attention in order to improve their body condition and reduce risk of abortion. Mark for culling ewes that failed to rear their October and November lambs.

Check gladiolus, dahlia and elephant ear bulbs brought in for the winter. They should be dry and firm.

Be especially careful of stressing pregnant animals this week; abortion risk can increase at new moon. Put off clipping hooves and hair until next week when the moon will be less powerful.

New moon on the 26th is expected to intensify the Christmas cold front. Snow and brisk temperatures are likely throughout the northern half of the country. Taking advantage of the dark moon, however, get your bedding plants planted under lights with gentle radiant heat provided below the flats. Root grape vine cuttings, too.

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A Vermont Almanack for Early Winter

by Bill Felker

Splitting Osage at sunset, half Moon and Aldebaran in the orange sky, temperatures into the teens, and my breath white, I feel like I'm closing in on the rhythm. I feel that everything could be right here in front of me. Limits are clear and distinct this cold Christmas evening. Things mean what they are. I don't need myths, allegories, metaphors. These are the same stars and Moon that shone on Bethlehem. If there is a Jesus, he must be here beside me.

—Bill Felker

The Sun's Progress

*The trumpet of a prophecy! O Wind,
If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?*

—Percy Bysshe Shelly

Between December 5 and January 8, is the Season of Solstice (or the Season of Sunstop). This is the time during which the Sun holds within a degree of 23 degrees and 26 minutes, its solstice position, and produces a period of solar stability similar to the one between June 5 and July 8.

Winter solstice occurs at 4:19 a.m. on December 22, and that day the Sun passes from Early Winter's prophetic sign of Sagittarius into Deep Winter's Capricorn, the fulfillment of November's promise. Capricorn is the sign of the year's end and of its beginning, the fulcrum on which longest nights of the year balance and then fall into January and down toward June.

Those born beneath the sign of Capricorn are sometimes said to be ruled by Saturn, the planet associated with time and aging. As the new year of 2019 unfolds, Saturn remains Capricorn's companion, leading that constellation across the day in Sagittarius. It is visible far in the west with Jupiter and Venus near sundown, then disappears until Late Winter, when it reappears to take Capricorn into the morning.

And so Saturn, planet of time, with its companions carries us, as well as the Capricorn Sun, from bleak December into shorter nights and brighter days.

We make our lives by the stars and the planets even if we do not believe astrologers. We live by the seasons, are led by the great sky signs from one age to the next, can welcome Capricorn as a gateway to what we will become as its snow turns into pussy willows and periwinkles in Aquarius and then into daffodils and buttercups in Pisces and then into tulips and peonies and iris and mock orange in Taurus in May.

The Silent Cricket Moon And the Pussy Willow Cracking Moon

By this point in the year, cricket song has quieted deep into the South, and the silence of Early Winter offers a sound of solitude, an absence that opens space for reflection and renewal. The Silent Cricket Moon, like all the Moons between Scorpio and Pisces, can be cruel and challenging, but it also offers a context for personal centering, as well as for finishing the work of the year and preparing for the year ahead.

While crickets sleep, the last leaves fall from woodland asters. Mice and voles find safety in your walls and attic. The stubborn Zelcova, beech and pear leaves finally come down. Crows gather in vast murders to feed in the harvested fields. Hoary goldenrod and brittle great ragweed break in storm gusts. Jerusalem artichokes lean against each other, leaves clutching leaves. Pokeweed stems, hollow and empty, rattle in the wind. Snow and overwintering robins pull off the last honeysuckle berries. Winterberry branches bend to let down their fruit. Bittersweet hulls split away from their branches.

The evergreen foliage of the hardiest herbs and flowers collapses tight against the frozen but nurturing ground, crouches in wait like new seeds through the Moons of Deep Winter, Late Winter and Early Spring. In spite of the cold and darkness, Lenten roses gradually show their buds, and sap quivers in the maples every thaw. Sandhill cranes travel high toward the Gulf of Mexico. Owls lay out their nests.

And revealing another side of lunar guidance, the Pussy Willow Cracking Moon becomes new just as the Sun begins to rise toward summer. Pussy willows often begin to crack in deeper thaws, and if winter seems too long, pussy willow branches, cut and placed in warm water, forecast March. If we choose, all these signs and creatures become allies in the darkest days, holding promises and lessons to ponder by the fires we build to guard us from the cold.

December 12: The Moon is full at 12:12 a.m. Lunar phase initiates the season of Early Winter this year, bringing precipitation and hard cold to the nation.

December 18: The Moon reaches perigee, its position closest to Earth at 3:30 p.m. and enters its final quarter at 11:57 p.m. Lunar perigee negates the warming influence of the waning moon.

December 26: The Pussy Willow Cracking Moon is new at 12:13 a.m. The New Moon is likely to bring a white Christmas to the north and a chilly passage to the New Year.



Country road in winter in Central Vermont.

photo by Nancy Cassidy

The Planets

Mars, rising in Libra before dawn is the Morning Star this month. Jupiter, Venus and Saturn are clustered together in Sagittarius, coming up after sunrise, travelling along the southern horizon during the day and disappearing into the southwest near sunset.

The Stars

*Behold Orion rise,
His arms extended measures half the skies.*

—Manilius

The rising of Orion after 9:00 p.m. continues to be the most dramatic event of an Early Winter evening. The seven sisters, the Pleiades, and the constellation Taurus, precede it.

Due north of Polaris, the Little Dipper hangs in the sky overhead before midnight. North-northeast, the Big Dipper hugs the horizon. Due east, Cancer has just come up. Due south, the gangly formations of Cetus, Fornax and Eridanus wander along the tree line. In the far west, Aquarius pushes Delphinus into the Pacific Ocean.

Past midnight, Orion is fully visible overhead, preceded by Taurus. July's Leo follows Gemini and Cancer across the sky. Regulus, the brightest star of spring, is just starting to rise along the eastern tree line a few hours before dawn.

Many of these stars are relatively easy landmarks for the turning of the Earth, and with just a few them, the time watcher can match what happens in his or her neighborhood with what happens in deep space. One star or constellation is always near others, leading the horoscoper deeper into time. With a simple star chart, one can hopscotch from one marker to another. Naming them is not important, but owning them—making them your own by adopting their movements—is one key to make your own movements in harmony with so many other guideposts of the planet and beyond.

The Shooting Stars

The Geminid meteor shower peaks on December 13-14 near Gemini, with the bright, round Moon interfering somewhat with meteor viewing. The Ursid Meteors fall after midnight at the rate of about five to ten per hour on December 23. The dark Moon will not obscure these shooting stars.

Meteorology

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Interlude

I'll dream the northern winter through,
And hope to waken in the spring
When that first faint soft twittering
Comes in my elm beside the way,
When piles of snow slip fast, and gray
Of winter turns to sunny hours,
And little buds swell full to flowers,
And roses bloom, for they too slept
And waited while the winter crept
Upon them in their blooming prime.

So I shall sleep through winter time
And wake, earth's nectar in each vein
When Spring comes winging North again!

—NELLIE S. RICHARDSON
1936

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Hildene, the Lincoln family home.

photo courtesy Hildene

Manchester Village, VT

It's Christmas Eve 1912 at Hildene—The Lincoln Family Home

It matters not what the calendar says, for its Christmas Eve 1912 at Hildene, The Lincoln Family Home. From December 5 through January 1, guests will experience what it would be like to stop by the family's Manchester, Vermont home as presidential son, Robert Lincoln and wife, Mary prepared Hildene for their family Christmas, just as they did more than a century ago. The windows are candlelit and there's a fresh scent of balsam amidst floral flourishes and satin ribbon. The tree has been cut and brought in from the woods, its graceful boughs hung with lovely ornaments and candles.

The sounds of Christmas resonate throughout the home from the Lincoln family's Aeolian player organ and its more than 900 pipes.

Often on weekends guests will encounter visiting musicians giving of their time and talent to bring the family's Aeolian pipe organ or Steinway piano to life with period music. To learn more about the musicians and for their schedule, visit www.hildene.org/news/calendar.html.

Whether guests choose to visit some or all of the Lincoln family's estate, touring the home, visiting the goat dairy and cheese-making facility and boarding the Pullman palace car, Sunbeam, they will find holiday spirit aplenty. The Museum Store, located in the historic carriage barn, now the Welcome Center, is also a popular destination for holiday shoppers. The store is filled to the brim with Vermont products and items inspired by Lincoln family history, the

estate's natural environment, gardens, and life on the farm. In addition, an ever-growing line of Hildene product now includes new items available in limited quantities: "Maple Rum Leaf," a soft ripened, bloomy rind cheese wrapped in rum soaked maple leaves harvested from Hildene; undyed natural yarn made of fibers and wool from Hildene's alpacas and sheep; goat's milk soap with assorted natural scents; and from the bees, beeswax lip balm, salve, and estate honey; and historic Hildene peony seeds. There is also a student-focused section with new choices for children of all ages.

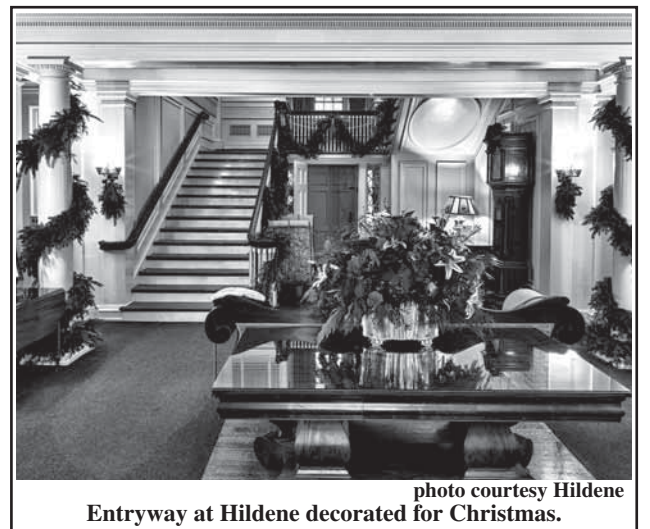
For four decades, a visit to Hildene during the holidays has become a tradition for many families. Hildene is open from 9:30 to 4:30 daily.

Admission is required and is \$23 for adults and \$6 for children 6-16. Members, volunteers and children under 6 are free. Groups of 20 or more may request the group tour rate. Those who purchase the required admission receive a sticker that identifies them to staff across the many Hildene venues. Guided tours are offered daily at 1:00 with an advance reservation for an additional \$7.50 per person. Admission is not necessary for visiting the Welcome Center and The Museum Store. Hildene is closed December 24, 25 and 26.

For more information on the holidays at Hildene, visit www.hildene.org. Hildene is located off Rt. 7A south of Manchester Village, VT. (800) 578-1788.



The dining room at Hildene. photo courtesy Hildene



Entryway at Hildene decorated for Christmas. photo courtesy Hildene

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Useful Vermont Websites

Vermont Tourism Site: vermontvacation.com
 Vermont State Parks: vtstateparks.com
 Green Mountain National Forest: fs.fed.us/r9/gmfl
 Vermont Outdoor Guide Association: voga.org
 Golfing: vtga.org • Hunting & Fishing: vtfishandwildlife.com

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Winter at Merck Forest & Farmland Center

It's a great time of year at Merck Forest & Farmland Center, with gorgeous clear days and crisp starlit nights. They have plenty of organized activities and events, but you may also bring family and friends to enjoy a stroll around the farm, or an invigorating hike along our 30+ miles of trails.

Winter Event Schedule

To learn more about the details of an event that interests you, please call the Visitor Center at (802) 394-7836 or register at merckforest.org. For outdoor events, please dress for the weather: sturdy shoes/boots, layered clothing, snow/rain gear, flashlight/headlamp, snacks and water. Outdoor events are held weather-permitting.

Full Cold Moon Hike. December 14, 2019, 4-5:30 p.m. This staff-guided hike will be of moderate difficulty. Participants must be dressed appropriately for the weather—keep in mind that it's not called the "Cold Moon" for nothing! Have sturdy footgear, micro-spikes and a headlamp or flashlight. *Fee: \$5.*

Full Wolf Moon Hike. January 11, 2020, 4pm - 5:30pm. A moderate hike (or snowshoe—depending upon snow cover) on moonlit trails. Dress for the cold and have sturdy footgear, micro-spikes/snowshoes, water & snacks, and a headlamp or flashlight. *Fee: \$5.*

Tracking Workshop. January 25, 2020, 10am - noon. We'll hike across snowfields and into the woods to find... whatever has come before. Held weather-permitting. Dress for the cold and have sturdy footgear, micro-spikes/snowshoes, water & snacks. *Fee: \$5.*

Treats for Tweets Workshop. January 25, 2020, 1-3 pm. Learn about the birds who stay through winter, and make special treats to bring home to sustain your own feathered friends. Children must be accompanied by an adult companion; \$10 per child. *Fee: \$10/child.*

Full Snow Moon Hike. February 8, 2020, 4pm - 5:30. Staff-guided hike/snowshoe (snow-cover-dependent) across the winter landscape. If the sky is clear, the trails will be moon-lit, and the evening air cold so dress warmly! The snow conditions will dictate whether this is a micro-spike or a snowshoe hike: bring both if you have 'em, as well as water, snacks and a headlamp/flashlight. *Fee: \$5.*

Winter in the Woods: Kids' Camp for Winter Vacation. February 18-20, 2020, 9am - 3pm. Come join our Winter-Break Day-Camp for second through fifth graders. We'll explore the snowy woods, create wintry crafts and play! Merck Forest is a winter wonderland and you can come to camp for one day or all three, from 9am to 3pm each day. Bring a bag lunch, water and snacks (we'll supply the hot chocolate!) and dress for outdoor play. *\$50 per child per day or \$125 for all three days.*

Owl Presentation & Hike. February 22, 2020, 4pm - 6. We'll start the evening with a presentation about the owls found in our region and then we'll hike out to find some of these magnificent raptors. Dress warmly, with layers, and be ready to do some hiking. *Fee: \$5.*

Maple Madness for Children. March 14, 2020, 1-3 pm. Let's find out what sugaring and maple trees are all about: This is a sap-to-syrup program with games and story-telling, a tapping demonstration, a sap house tour (if we're very lucky and the weather conditions are just right, we may even get to watch the sugar makers at work!), and finally, a tasting to savor the sweet product of our maple trees. Part of the program is outside, so participants should be dressed for the weather; children must be accompanied by an adult companion. *Fee: \$10.*

Full Worm Moon Hike. March 14, 2020, 4-5:30 pm. The earth is stirring beneath our feet at this time of year, but there might still be enough snow to snowshoe. This will be a moderate staff-guided hike over (potentially) moonlit trails. Dress for any weather contingency, and bring water and snacks. *Fee: \$5.*

Maple Celebration & Pancake Breakfast. March 21 & 22, 2020, 9 am - 2 pm. This weekend we celebrate ALL THINGS MAPLE, with our fabulous pancake breakfast (featuring our own pasture-raised pork sausage and certified-

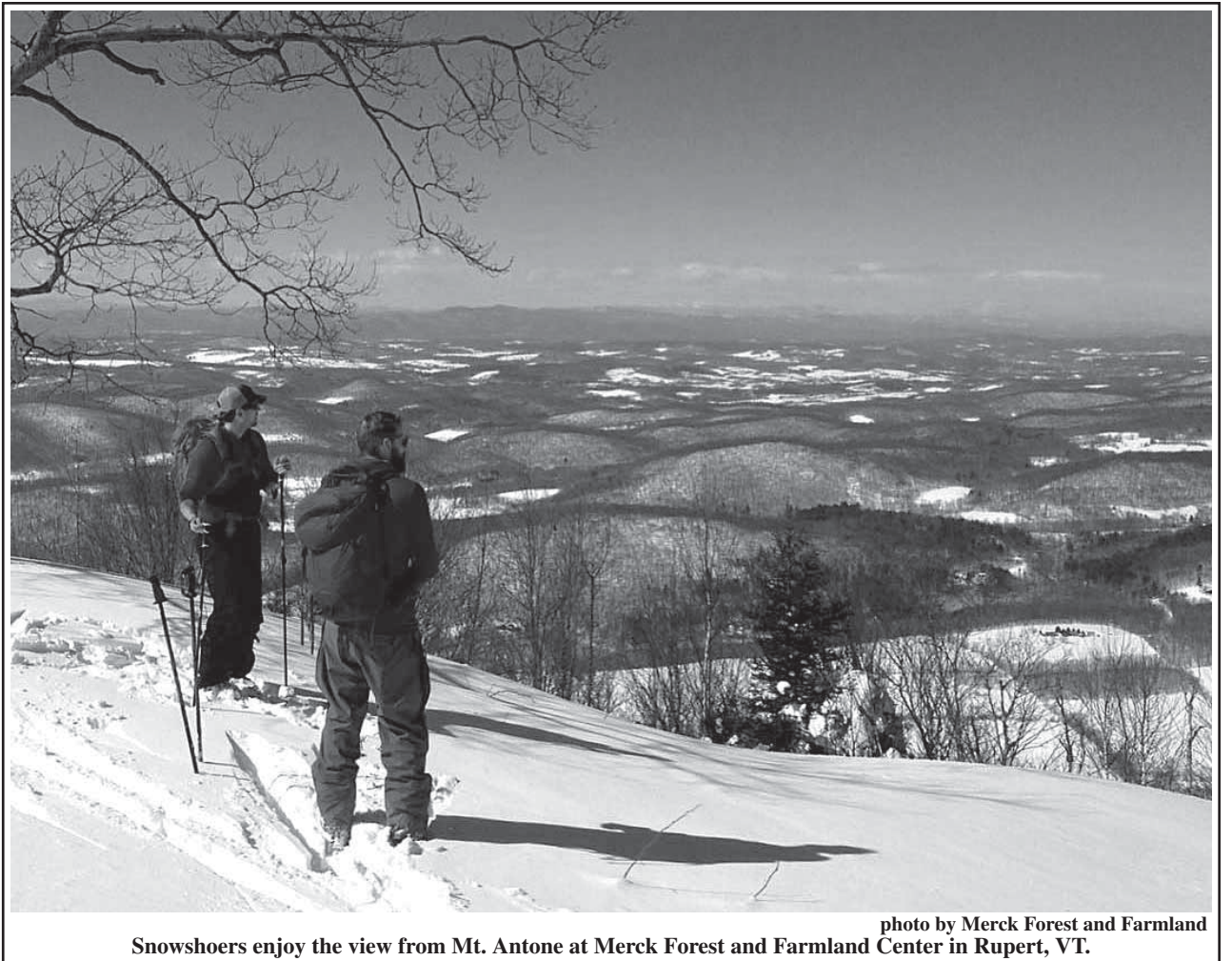


photo by Merck Forest and Farmland
Snowshoers enjoy the view from Mt. Antone at Merck Forest and Farmland Center in Rupert, VT.

organic Maple Syrup), tractor-drawn wagon rides, and tapping & sugaring demonstrations. It is just a plain-old good time. \$10pp (12 & up), \$5 (5yrs to 11yrs), under 5yrs free.

Chicks & Eggs for Children. April 4, 2020, 10 am - noon. Bring your youngsters to meet our feathered friends: Everybody will have a chance to hold a chicken, to collect some eggs, and then to dye them using natural dyes. Children must be accompanied by an adult companion. \$10 per child. Enrollment for this program is limited (so as not to over-tax the chickens). *Fee: \$10/child.*

Baa, Baa, Black Sheep: Farm Program for Children. April 4, 2020, 1-3 pm. Baa, baa, black sheep, have you any wool? Bring your children to meet our fleecy flock, and to create felt using wool from our sheep. Children must be accompanied by an adult companion. *Fee: \$10 per child.*

Second Saturday Hike. April 11, 2020, 2-4 pm. This staff-guided hike is a tossup - will winter conditions prevail, or will balmy breezes wake up the sleeping earth? Either way we'll venture out into the landscape for a moderate jaunt to free our winter-bound spirits. Dress wisely. *Fee: \$5.*

Spring Break on the Farm: Day Camp for Children. April 14-16, 2020, 9 am - 3 pm. Vacation Day Camp for 2nd through 5th graders: we'll be based out of the Visitor Center and the Yurt as we get curious and explore the farm and play in and around the woods at the Discovery Trail. We'll

meet and learn about the animals that live on our farm and in our pond, do some crafts, and go hiking and exploring. Bring lunch, a snack, and water. *\$50/day or \$125 for all 3 days per child.*

Merck Forest and Farmland Center is a non-profit educational organization in the Taconic Hills of southwestern Vermont. The Center's mission is the sustainable management of its forest, the promotion of innovative agricultural practices on its upland farm, the education of local students in outdoor exploration and the study of natural sciences, and the creation of recreational opportunities. The property is open free to the public daily, from dawn to dusk, year-round.

Merck Forest and Farmland Center is located between Rupert and Dorset, at 3270 Rt. 315 (Rupert Mountain Rd.) in Rupert, VT. Once you reach the top of the very big hill turn into Merck Forest's driveway. If you start going back down the hill, you've gone too far. (802) 394-7836. merckforest.org.



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Fair Haven, VT

Marble Mansion Inn Holiday Tour

For the past few years, the Parke Family has welcomed the community to tour the Marble Mansion Inn. This year tours will be offered on Saturday, December 14th from noon until 3:00PM. There is no charge for the tour, but free will offerings will be accepted. All proceeds benefit the Fair Haven Historical Society.

The white marble structure is known as the Allen house or The Marble Mansion. It overlooks the Fair Haven Park. This elegant mansion takes visitors back to another era. It has an Italianate wrap around porch and is topped with a belvedere.

The house will be fully decorated for the holidays.

Visitors are guided through all three floors and sometimes the belvedere.

In addition to the tour, visitors are welcome to join us for light refreshments. The Historical Society will also have a few items for sale. If you haven't yet purchased your copy of *Fair Haven Memories*, you can get one at this event. The cost of the book is \$25 and includes a CD of many of the oral interviews. We also have Historical Society clothing available for purchase.

The Inn is located on West Park Place in Fair Haven, VT. For more information call (802) 265-3010 or email fhvthistory@gmail.com



The Marble Mansion Inn Holiday Tour is offered Saturday, December 14 in Fair Haven, VT.



Looking over the goodies at Pawlet Library's Holiday Tea.

Pawlet, VT

Pawlet Public Library Hosts Holiday Tea on December 15

The Pawlet Public Library hosts a Holiday Tea on Sunday, December 15, 2-4 p.m. Library staff and board members spread their best tablecloths and collect their teapots for this time of gratitude and cheer. Take a break from frenzied activities, slow down and enjoy Sunday afternoon tea.

Tea will be served in both

the community room and the children's room. Guest are invited to add favorite cookies and treats to the finger-food potluck buffet. Hats encouraged!

For info, call the Pawlet Public Library at (802) 325-3123. The library is located at 141 School St., Pawlet, VT. pawletpub@gmail.com.

Nesting Loons Have a Record Year

Vermont's loons are thriving with a record 101 nesting pairs recorded statewide in 2019, the highest since loon monitoring began in 1978, according to the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department and Vermont Center for Ecostudies (VCE).

"Seventy-five of the loon nests successfully produced 115 chicks this year," said wildlife biologist Eric Hanson with VCE. "Although there were losses, 87 chicks survived through August which exceeded the past five-year average survival of 73 percent."

VCE leads the Vermont Loon Conservation Project in partnership with the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department.

"We are very grateful to Eric Hanson and the many volunteers who help monitor Vermont's nesting loons," said Fish and Wildlife's bird biologist Doug Morin. "The loon has been the flagship species of our nongame work since the nongame tax checkoff and conservation license plate programs began to help fund these efforts."

"Vermont's loon project is a tremendous success story, with only seven nesting pairs producing nine chicks in 1983 growing to more than 100 nesting pairs this year," added Morin.

Loons were removed from Vermont's endangered species list in 2005 following decades of recovery efforts. One of the main threats still facing loons as they continue to recover is human disturbance during the breeding season.

"Many areas where loons are nesting on Vermont's lakes are surrounded by signs reminding people to give loons the space they need, but not all nesting areas are marked," said Morin. "We ask people to enjoy loons from a distance, whether they are in a motorboat, a canoe or a kayak."

Morin also reminds people to avoid lead fishing tackle. Loons sometimes swallow stray fishing tackle and suffer the

effects of lead poisoning. Lead sinkers weighing one-half ounce or less are prohibited for fishing in Vermont. And, he recommends that anglers be careful to not attract loons to their bait and lures, and especially don't leave any fishing line behind as fishing tackle does kill loons.



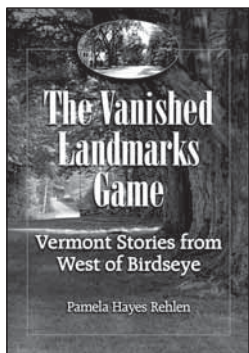
VTF&W photo by Mitch Moraski
A record 101 pairs of loons nested in Vermont in 2019 with 87 chicks surviving through August.

To Jesus on His Birthday

For this your mother sweated in the cold,
For this you bled upon the bitter tree;
A yard of tinsel ribbon bought and sold;
A paper wreath; a day at home for me.
The merry bells ring out, the people kneel;
Up goes the man of God before the crowd;
With voice of honey and with eyes of steel
He drones your humble gospel to the proud.
Nobody listens. Less than the wind that blows
Are all your words to us you died to save.
O Prince of Peace! O Sharon's dewy Rose!
How mute you lie within your vaulted grave.
The stone the angel rolled away with tears
Is back upon your mouth these thousand years.

—EDNA ST. VINCENT MILLAY

Captivating Stories from Castleton



The Vanished Landmarks Game Vermont Stories from West of Birdseye

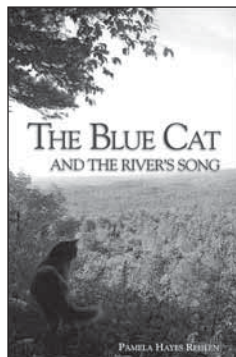
by Pamela Hayes Rehlen
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Old-time and present-time people and places from west of Vermont's Birdseye Mountain. Here are their stories.

The Blue Cat And The River's Song

by Pamela Hayes Rehlen
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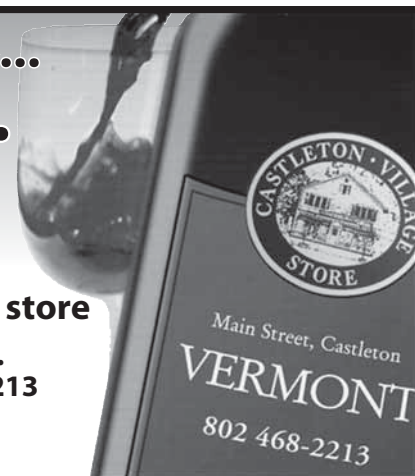
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Main Street Ladies

by Pamela Hayes Rehlen

I think sometimes about the widowed, or never married, elderly women who over the years owned houses along Castleton's Main Street. They were often retired teachers, Normal-School-graduates, living with and taking care of a relative. They'd come home to the town in which they'd grown up, or they'd always been here, left behind in a family house after their husbands died and their children moved away.

Their names float through my mind: Edna and Mary Higley, my Aunt Ruth Gibbs, Emily Jennison, Julia McCann and Mildred Graham, Helen Brown, Loretta and Anne Hanley, Stella Durkee, Hulda Cole, Bessie Ransom, Mildred Northrup, Beth Hyman.

After she'd retired, Julie McCann and her niece Millie Graham moved into the little early-1800s house next door to us. Widowed Julie—who'd been a Bassett before her marriage, graduated from the Normal in 1923, and once, looking about the same age as her pupils, taught fifth and sixth grade in the Castleton Village School—had held onto this family place by renting it during the years when she was teaching out-of-state.

She was a pleasant woman who had been my father's Practicum instructor at the Normal School. She'd once gently told him that it was shameful for a teacher to enter the classroom wearing scuffed shoes, as he had, and he was abashed and forever reformed.

Although we often saw the hospital-bound ambulance in her driveway, Julie lived to be over a hundred, and managed to escape Sagers Nursing Home. But her last years were tough. Because she'd taught in parochial schools, she

“Although we often saw the hospital-bound ambulance in her driveway, Julie lived to be over a hundred...”

had very little retirement income, and finally took to selling family items to visiting antique dealers.

Once, things must have taken such a desperate turn that elderly Millie came over to our house to ask if she could get a job clerking for us at the Village Store.

Every day, Julie's car shot out of a once-common-to-both-of-our-houses driveway, and we'd see the two of them heading off to visit relatives in Fair Haven. I used to think that Millie and Julie never stopped moving because, as the years went by, they saw the Grim Reaper in their rear view mirror steadily gaining on them.

They returned in the early afternoon, and Lulu, our little dog, would be impatiently watching for them. As soon as he saw their car pulling in, he headed out our kitchen door to sleep the rest of the day curled up on their back porch sofa.

Loretta and Anne Hanley lived down from us on the same side of the street. Anne, the last in a long line of Hanley siblings, was known as 'Baby.' The 'girls' graduated from the Normal, moved away, and taught in parochial schools. When they retired, they came back to an 1810 Main Street family house filled with antiques.

I remember the sisters when they first returned to town. They were a high-spirited, bubbly pair with a lot of local relatives and connections to all the old-timers. A niece often came up from Staten Island to stay with them and later to oversee their care.

Both the Hanleys lived to be over a hundred, so I also remember the poignant, twilight years when they'd disap-



Julia McCann's first teaching school (top row, far right, wearing glasses). from a family collection



from a family collection
Julia McCann.



from a family collection
Mildred Graham.

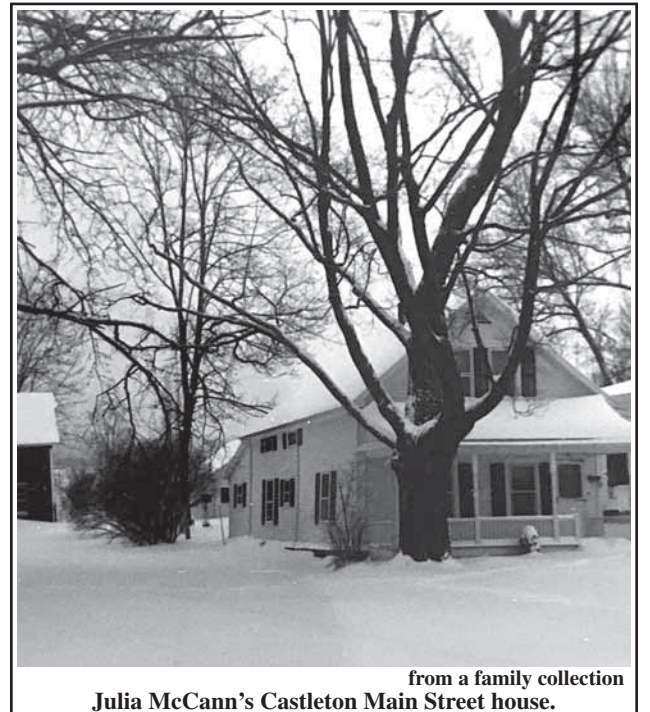
peared into their dark, closed-up, house, and every morning round-the-clock caregivers would straggle into our Village Store to kick back after a long night, tell us their tales, buy cigarettes and scratch-off tickets, then head home to sleep.

Down at the western end of Main Street, Bessie Ransom and her severely-handicapped son Barrett lived in a brick, step-gable, 1832 house.

This place is now owned by Chris and Andrea Cresci and meticulously maintained, but when Bessie had it, everything seemed to be picturesquely-deteriorating. There was a nearly-hidden-by-sprawling-plants side porch, now gone, on which she and her son spent a good part of their warm-weather days.

Bessie looked like the Scandinavian author Isak Dinesen, and earlier in her life would have been a beauty. Like many of the other Main Street single women she lived to a great age.

Barrett was a handful, and Bessie was coping with him in her nineties. He was intimidatingly-volatile, gibbering and shouting, lunging along with the aid of two crutches. To calm him, they would load into her car and go for drives, Bessie



from a family collection
Julia McCann's Castleton Main Street house.

serenely bumping up over curbs and shooting out into the street. Town's people knew to give that beat-up, erratically-operated, old vehicle a wide berth.

Bessie had been born a Jakeway in West Haven. Once, in the early 1970s, she came into our store and in her croaky, difficult-to-understand voice told me that she remembered seeing my West Haven Hitchcock grandmother as a young girl, riding into town sitting next to my great-grandmother on a buckboard.

I don't know whatever happened to Bessie and Barrett. I can't believe that I didn't keep better track. They were here on Main Street for decades. Like others, I thought of them as just part of the furniture, and then they were gone.

Pamela Hayes Rehlen has written and lived most of her life in Castleton, Vermont. She is the author of stories, articles, essays, magazine features, and of two books: The Blue Cat and the River's Song (\$17 plus shipping and handling) and The Vanished Landmarks Game—Vermont Stories from West of Birdseye (\$20 plus shipping and handling) available at the Castleton Village Store P. O. Box 275, Castleton, Vermont, 05735, and at a number of Vermont bookstores. To reach the store, call (802) 468-2213.

All back issues of these columns are available to read under the archives at www.vermontcountrysampler.com.

O Little Town of Bethlehem

O little town of Bethlehem,
How still we see thee lie!
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep
The silent stars go by.
Yet in thy dark streets shineth
The everlasting light;
The hopes and fears of all the years
Are met in thee to-night.

O morning stars, together
Proclaim the holy birth,
And praises sing to God the King,
And peace to men on earth;
For Christ is born of Mary;
And, gathered all above,
While mortals sleep, the angels keep
Their watch of wondering love.

How silently, how silently,
The wondrous gift is given!
So God imparts to human hearts
The blessings of his heaven.
No ear may hear his coming;
But in this world of sin,
Where meek souls will receive him, still
The dear Christ enters in.

Where children pure and happy
Pray to the blessed Child,
Where misery cries out to thee,
Son of the mother mild;

Where charity stands watching
And faith holds wide the door,
The dark night wakes, the glory breaks,
And Christmas comes once more.

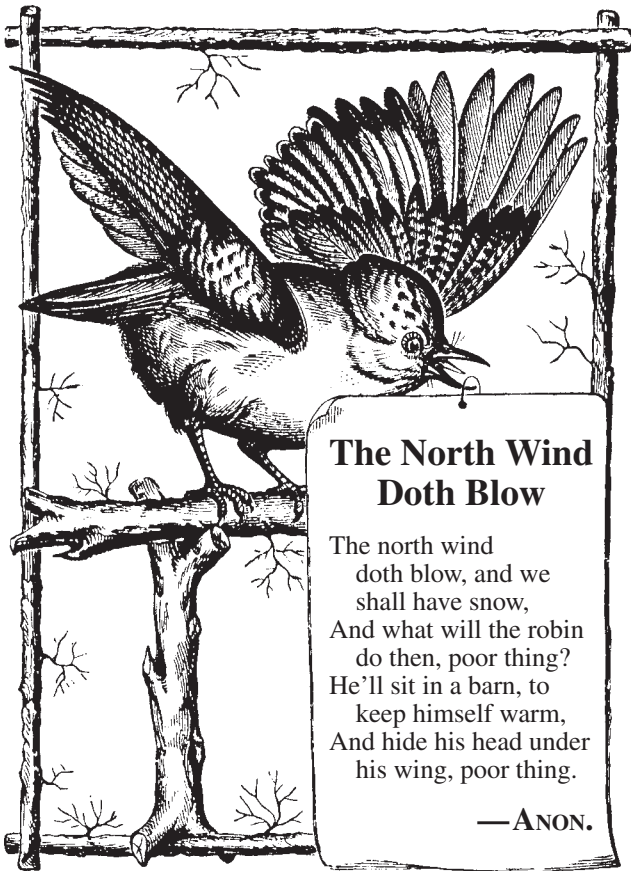
O holy Child of Bethlehem,
Descend to us, we pray;
Cast out our sin, and enter in,
Be born in us to-day.
We hear the Christmas Angels
The great glad tidings tell:
O come to us, abide with us,
Our Lord Emmanuel.

—BISHOP PHILLIPS BROOKS

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**The North Wind
Doth Blow**

The north wind
doth blow, and we
shall have snow,
And what will the robin
do then, poor thing?
He'll sit in a barn, to
keep himself warm,
And hide his head under
his wing, poor thing.

—ANON.

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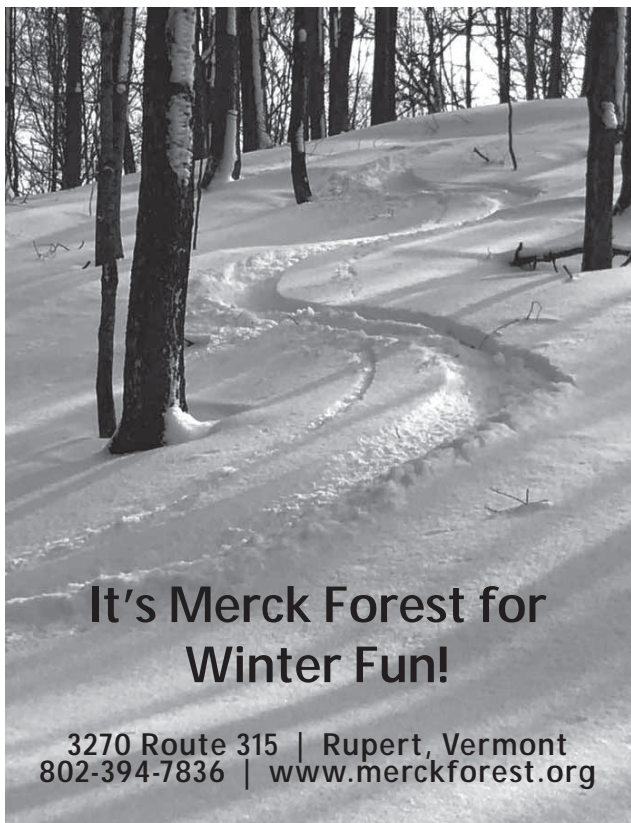
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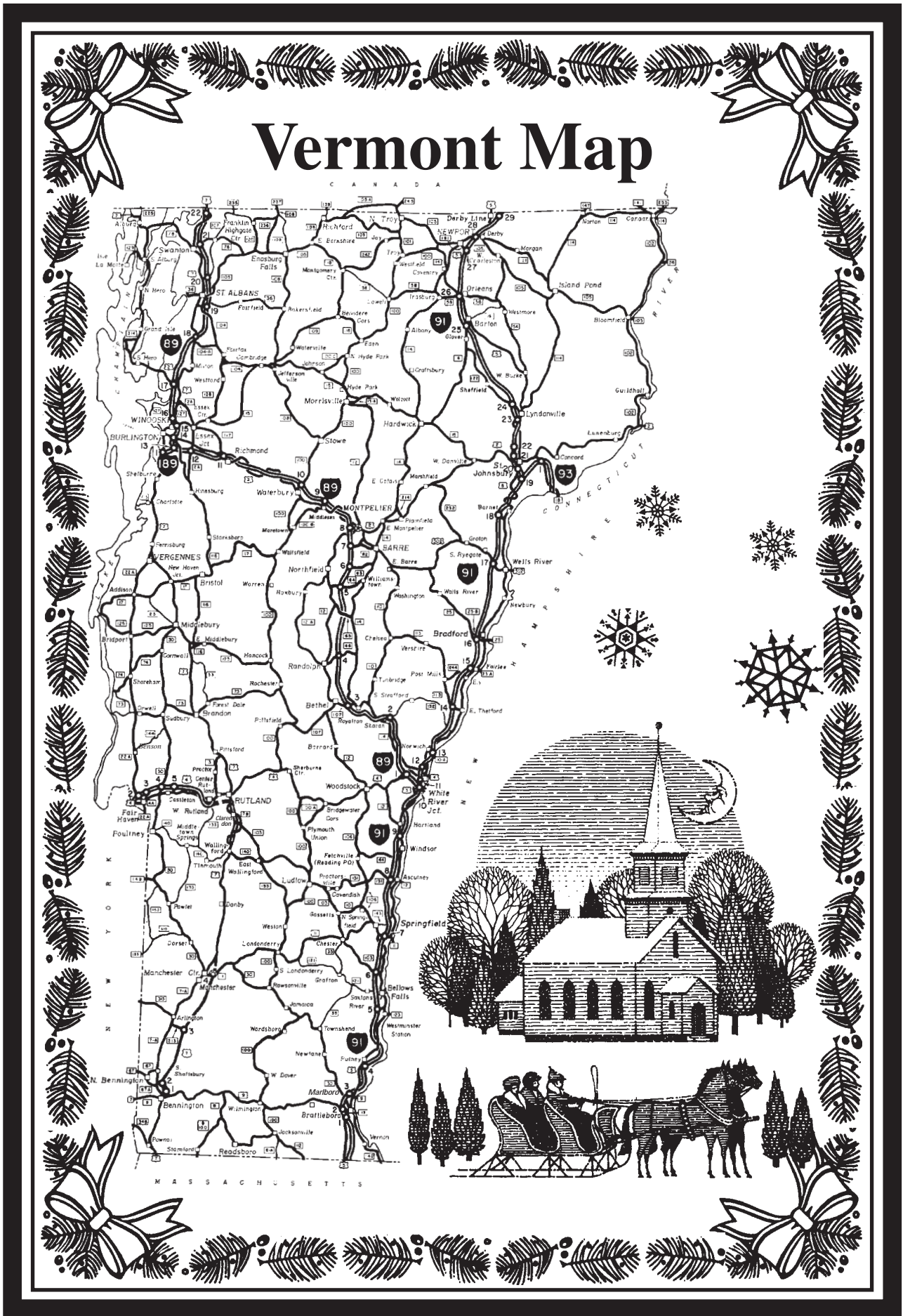
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God Bless the Little Things

God Bless the little things this Christmastide
All the little wild things that live outside
Little cold robins and rabbits in the snow
Give them good faring and a warm place to go
All the little young things for His sake who died
Who was a little thing at Christmastide.

—MARGARET MURRAY

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Vermont Country Calendar

See the end of the daily event calendar for ongoing activities; and museums, exhibits, and galleries.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 1

NORWICH. English Country Dance. Dances taught by David Millstone. Music by Thal Aylward (violin and viola), Carol Compton (piano and recorders). All dances taught beforehand and prompted to live music. Bring shoes to change into at the hall, no high heels. Potluck snacks at the break. Admission: \$10. 1-4 pm. Tracy Hall. davidmillstone7@gmail.com. Also Jan. 26 3-6 pm, Feb. 23 3-6 pm, Mar. 29 3-6 pm, Apr. 19 3-6 pm.

RUTLAND. Concert: Natalie MacMaster and Donnell Leahy present a Celtic Family Christmas. The MacMaster-Leahy family perform classic Christmas carols and original renditions, with dancers, bag pipers, drummers, fiddlers and special guests. Tickets: \$35-\$55. 7 pm. The Paramount Theatre, 30 Center St. (802) 775-0903. paramountvt.org.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 6

HANOVER, NH. Free Preview Performance of The Christmas Revels. Selections from the upcoming production of The Christmas Revels: An English Celebration of the Winter Solstice. Free. 6 pm. The Hanover Inn. (866) 556-3083. info@revelsnorth.org. revelsnorth.org.

VERGENNES. 14th Annual Broadway Direct. Bill Carmichael brings together some of his professional acting/singing/dancing friends from NY and Boston to present an evening of familiar, funny, moving and exceptional music. Tickets: \$15 advance (adults and senior), \$18 at the door, \$5 for students 18 & younger. 7:30 pm. Vergennes Opera House, 120 Main St. (802) 877-6737. vergennesoperahouse.org.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 7

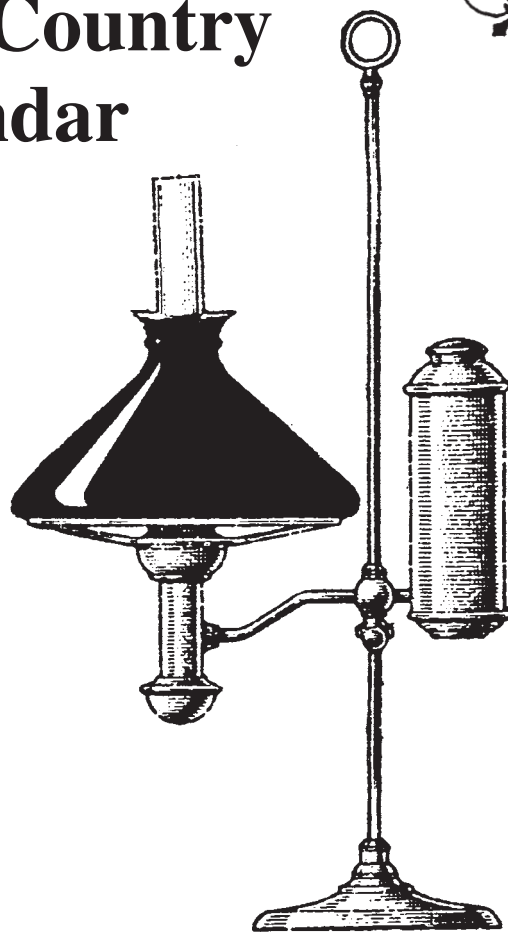
BRATTLEBORO. Brattleboro Winter Farmers' Market 14th season. Fresh produce, syrup, local meats, eggs cheese and other farm products. Yummy treats, delicious pies, pickles and preserves, and beautiful handmade gifts. Saturday 10 am - 2 pm. Church Building, 80 Flat St. (802) 869-2141. farmersmarket@posttoilsolutions.org. Saturdays through March 9.

LEBANON, NH. Free Preview Performance of The Christmas Revels. Selections from the upcoming production of The Christmas Revels: An English Celebration of the Winter Solstice. Free. 4 pm. AVA Gallery. (866) 556-3083. info@revelsnorth.org. revelsnorth.org.

LUNENBURG. Gingerbread Bazaar. Vendors with Christmas theme and gift items. Free and affordable activities for all ages. Door prizes, cookie stacking and gingerbread creations contests. Christmas story time, fudge, cookie walk. Homemade soup luncheon 11 am - 2 pm. Bake sale, activities with Mrs. Claus. 10 am - 3 pm. Lunenburg School, Bobbin Mill Rd. (802) 892-6654. toptothecommon.org.

NORWICH. Free Preview Performance of The Christmas Revels. Selections from the upcoming production of The Christmas Revels: An English Celebration of the Winter Solstice. Free. 1 pm. King Arthur Flour. (866) 556-3083. info@revelsnorth.org. revelsnorth.org.

POULTNEY. Lighting of Annual Christmas Tree. Saint Raphael's Ladies Guild invite contributions and names for the Memory Lights, through November 30, \$1 per name requested. Proceeds support Poultney Food Shelf and Tree of Giving. (802) 287-4349.



RUTLAND. Vermont Farmers' Market. From farm fresh veggies and fruits to artisan cheeses. Live music. 10 am - 2 pm. Vermont Farmers Food Center, 251 West St. (802) 342-4727. vtfarmersmarket.org. Saturdays through May 2.

VERGENNES. 14th Annual Broadway Direct. Bill Carmichael brings together some of his professional acting/singing/dancing friends from NY and Boston to present an evening of familiar, funny, moving and exceptional music. Tickets: \$15 advance (adults and senior), \$18 at the door, \$5 for students 18 & younger. Matinee and evening performances. Saint Michael's Playhouse. (802) 877-6737. vergennesoperahouse.org.

WEST RUTLAND. Audubon Marsh Bird Monitoring Walk. 3.7-mile loop, or go halfway. Kids, new birders and non-members always welcome; friendly and accomplished birders will help you grow your bird identification skills. Meet at the boardwalk on Marble St. at 8 am. birding@rutlandcountyaudubon.org. rutlandcountyaudubon.org.

WOODSTOCK. Christmas at the Farm. Discover the traditions of a late 19th-century Vermont Christmas. Tour the authentically decorated farmhouse, visit the dairy farm, and meet farm animals. Make historic Christmas ornaments and crafts, candle dipping. Cooking demonstrations and tastings. Storytelling. Admission: adults \$16, 62 & over \$14, children 5-15 \$8, 3-4 \$4; 2 & under free. 10 am - 4 pm. Billings Farm & Museum, one-half mile north of the Woodstock village green on VT Rt. 12. (802) 457-2355. billingsfarm.org. December weekends and December 22 - January 5 (closed Christmas Day).

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 8

WOODSTOCK. Christmas at the Farm. Discover the traditions of a late 19th-century Vermont Christmas. Tour the authentically decorated farmhouse, visit the dairy farm, and meet farm animals. Make historic Christmas ornaments and crafts, candle dipping. Storytelling. Adults \$16, 62 & over \$14, children 5-15 \$8, 3-4 \$4; 2 & under free. 10 am - 4 pm. Billings Farm & Museum, one-half mile north of the Woodstock village green on VT Rt. 12. (802) 457-2355. billingsfarm.org. December weekends and December 22 - January 5 (closed Christmas Day).

Firs in Snow

These woodland chieftains hear and know
The slow, majestic speech of snow.

The white wind-cloud fleet, cruising by,
Dips them salute from seas of sky.

Star-clocks have ticked for their keen ears
Earth's moments thundering into years.

The lynx and wolf and shrewd fox pause
For housing here till hunger gnaws.

What outpost stands with surer tread,
Armored in hush, from foot to head?

Tonight the moon has garbed these firs
Like Gothic kings and emperors.



—J. CORSON MILLER
Driftwind, 1932

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Vermont Country Calendar

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 10

MONTPELIER. Panel Discussion: Climate Change and Food Security. The impact climate change will have on food security in Vermont and beyond, including threats to the well-being of pollinator populations. Free. 7-8:30 pm. The Garage Cultural Center, 58 State St. jkelly@garageartsvt.com.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 11

BRATTLEBORO. Brown Bag Lunch Series. Talk by Tim Kipp: Impeachment and the Rule of Law. Free. 12 noon - 1 pm. Robert H Gibson River Garden, 157 Main St. (802) 246-0982. bb1@strollingoftheheifers.com.

BURLINGTON. Film Screening: *Anything*. A Southern widower moves to Los Angeles, where he falls in love with a transgender sex worker. They help each other face their trauma, loneliness and unhealthy coping mechanisms. Free. 6-8 pm. Fletcher Free Library, 235 College St. (802) 865-7211. www.fletcherfree.org.

BURLINGTON. Science and Stories at ECHO: Migration. Explore why some birds over winter in Vermont, and what determines if they stay or if they go. Free with ECHO admission: \$14.50-\$11.50. 11-11:30 am. ECHO, Leahy Center for Lake Champlain, 1 College St. (802) 864-1848.

MONTPELIER. Documentary Film Screening: *Fiddlin'*. Fiddlers and pickers pass their uplifting music from one generation to the next with a fierce determination to keep Old Time and Bluegrass music alive in the Appalachian Mountains. 6:30 pm followed by a Q&A with the writer/producer Vicki Vlasic. Savoy Theater, 26 Main St. (802) 229-0958. savoytheater.com.

RUTLAND. Class: The Heart of Ukulele. You can learn to play ukulele... even if you've never played an instrument in your life. Informal group lead by volunteers. Donations appreciated. Beginners 5-5:30 pm, other levels 5:30-7 pm. Chaffee Art Center, 16 S Main St. (802) 775-0356. info@chaffeeartcenter.org. *2nd & 4th Wednesday of the month.*

SHELburne. Winter Wellness: Hands-on Medicine Making with Spoonful Herbs. Explore key herbal strategies to prevent and relieve symptoms of common winter ailments. Learn how to make elderberry and wild cherry bark syrup, and take home jars of your own. Cost: \$25. Registration required. 5-7 pm. McClure Education Center at the Farm Barn, Shelburne Farms, 1611 Harbor Rd. (802) 985-8686. shelburnefarms.org.

ST. JOHNSBURY. Film Screening: *A Christmas Story*. In the 1940s, a young boy named Ralphie attempts to convince his parents, his teacher and Santa that a Red Ryder BB gun really is the perfect Christmas gift. Free. 7 pm. Catamount Arts Theater 1, 115 Eastern Ave. (802) 748-2600.

WHITE RIVER JUNCTION. Public Ice Skating. Skate rentals and skate sharpening on site. Price: \$5, season passes available. 11:30 am - 1 pm. Wendell A. Barwood Arena, 431 Highland Ave. (802) 295-5036. hartford-vt.org.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 12

BRATTLEBORO. Brown Bag Lunch Series: Singing Colors. Slide show and discussion of the fabric work of Carlene Raper, whose work is on display at the River Garden through the end of December. Free. 12 noon - 1 pm. Robert H Gibson River Garden, 157 Main St. (802) 246-0982. bb1@strollingoftheheifers.com.

MONTPELIER. Gingerbread Festival. Prizes for the best sustainable-themed gingerbread houses. Barr Hill cocktails. Free. 4-7 pm. Caledonia Spirits, 116 Gin Lane. (802) 398-7118. suncommon.com/vt/gingerbread.

MONTPELIER. Concert: Metalwerx, Vermont's tuba/euphonium quartet. Bring a bag lunch. Coffee, tea (and sometimes cookies) provided. Freewill donations for Central Vermont Refugee Action Network. 12 noon - 12:45 pm. Christ Church Episcopal, 64 State St. (802) 223-3632. christchurchvt.org.

PITTSFORD. Pittsford Senior Luncheon. Roast beef, twice-baked potatoes, green beans, Christmas cookies. Salad bar included. All foods are homemade, including soup, bread and desserts. Suggested donation: \$5 for 60 and up. Reservations required. 1-3 pm. Vermont State Police Academy, Furnace Rd. (802) 483-6500 ext. 17. pittsfordvermont.com.

RUTLAND. Sip N' Dip Painting Class. BYO bottle of wine for an evening of painting, laughter, quality instruction, and a finished canvas by the end of the night. Cost: \$30, includes paint, brushes, canvas, smocks, and instruction. Pre-register. 6-8 pm. Chaffee Art Center, 16 S Main St. (802) 775-0356. *2nd and 4th Thursday each month.*

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 13

BARRE. Concert: Vermont Symphony Orchestra—Holiday Pops, with the Bronze Ambassadors, student bell ringers. Program includes Corelli's Christmas Concerto, Christmas a la Valse, Minor Alterations, Tintinnabulations. Sing along with the handbells. Tickets: adults \$30, seniors 62+ \$24, students/children 18 & under \$9. 7:30 pm. Barre Opera House, 6 North Main St. (802) 476-8188.

BELLOWS FALLS. Weekend Residential Retreat: Strengthening Quiet Presence—A Spiritual Institute Retreat. Contemplative prayer, meditation practices, good food and fellowship. Currier Hall, Stone Church Center, 12 Church St. (802) 460-0110. stonechurcharts.org. *Through December 15.*

BRATTLEBORO. Holiday Pop-Up Gift Shop. Specialty foods, pottery, woven and knit wear, jewelry, and more. 11 am - 5 pm. Strolling of the Heifers River Garden, 157 Main St. (802) 275-8059. vicki@strollingoftheheifers.com. *Also December 14 and December 20-21.*

CLAREMONT, NH. Concert: A Nashville Christmas. Traditional country music and special guest appearances by some folks you might know (whose names might be Elvis, Roy O. or S. Claus). Tickets: \$25. 7:30 pm. Claremont Opera House, City Hall, 58 Opera House Square. (603) 542-4433. claremontoperahouse.info.

RANDOLPH. Jason Lorber performs "The Santaland Diaries" by David Sedaris. A first-person account of the satirist's seasonal sojourn at Macy's as Crumpet the Elf. For mature elves only. Tickets: \$25. 7:30 pm. Chandler Upper Gallery, Chandler Center for the Arts, 71-73 Main St. (802) 728-9878. outreach@chandler-arts.org.

RUTLAND. Musical: Rutland Youth Theatre presents Disney's Frozen Jr. All the memorable songs from the animated film, plus five new songs written for the Broadway production. Tickets: \$10-\$12. Friday 7 pm, Saturday 2 pm and 7 pm. The Paramount Theatre, 30 Center St. (802) 775-0903. paramountvt.org. *Also December 14.*

SALISBURY. Opera: *Amahl and the Night Visitors*. All-Vermont principal cast with local amateur chorus. Tickets: adults \$30, children up to 17 free (up to two tickets per ticketed adult). 5:30 pm and 7:30 pm. Salisbury Congregational Church, 853 Maple St. (802) 247-4295. barnopera@brandon-music.net. *Also December 14.*

WATERBURY. Holiday Concerts. Solaris Vocal Ensemble will present Sing We Now of Christmas holiday concert 7:30 pm at the Waterbury Congregational Church and at 7:30 pm and at 7:30 pm at Charlotte Congregational Church at 7:30 pm and at 3pm at the College St. Congregational Church. The concerts will feature Dominick Argento's exuberant Gloria. Argento passed away earlier this year and Solaris will be paying tribute to this Pulitzer Prize winning composer. Also featured is renowned harpist Rebecca Kauffman. Tickets are available at flynntix.org and at the door. www.SolarisEnsemble.org.

Burlington, VT

Home Horticulture Course Set to Begin January 17

Whether you are an experienced gardener or just starting out, the University of Vermont (UVM) Extension Master Gardener online course can help you expand your home horticulture knowledge.

The upcoming course will run from January 17 to May 22 and involves four to six hours a week for course work, assignments and quizzes. Interactive webinars with lectures and live Q & A sessions will be offered through Zoom on consecutive Thursday nights from 6-7 p.m. beginning Jan. 30. Or you may watch the archived recordings at your convenience.

A broad spectrum of topics will be covered in the 15

online modules and lectures including vegetable gardening, annuals and perennials, sustainable landscape design, garden wildlife, botany basics, plant pathology, entomology and invasive plants. You also will hear from university and horticultural industry experts about healthy lawn care, garden pollinator habitats and fruit trees and pruning, among other topics.

Go to www.uvm.edu/mastergardener for information or to enroll in the 17-week non-credit course. January 15 is the deadline to register. If you require a disability-related accommodation to participate, please contact Beret Halverson at (802) 656-1777 by December 20.

Two course tracks are

available, both with the same schedule, instruction and comprehensive gardening manual. The first track is for individuals interested in earning certification as a UVM Extension Master Gardener Volunteer.

The fee is \$425 and includes an internship of 40 volunteer hours over a two-year period upon completion of the course and 25 hours per year in subsequent years to remain active. Partial scholarships are available for

Vermont residents enrolled in this track. If you just want to broaden your horticultural knowledge or don't have time to volunteer, you can sign up for the second track. Registration is \$475 and you will receive a Vermont Certificate of Home Horticulture for completing the course.

Questions? Contact the UVM Extension Master Gardener Program Office at (802) 656-9562 or mastergardener@uvm.edu.

Beggar's Rhyme

Christmas is coming, the geese are getting fat,
Please to put a penny in the old man's hat;
If you haven't got a penny, a ha'penny will do,
If you haven't got a ha'penny, God bless you.

—TRADITIONAL



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Vermont Country Calendar

WESTON. Third Annual Winter Cabaret, with former Young Company members. A fabulous evening filled with the songs of the season. Food and drink by MKT: Weston available for purchase. Tickets: \$27, table seat \$35 (limited), \$32 at the door. 7:30 pm. Walker Farm. (802) 824-5288. westonplayhouse.org. *Also December 14.*

WHITE RIVER JUNCTION. Public Ice Skating. Skate rentals and skate sharpening on site. Price: \$5, season passes available. 1:15–2:30 pm. Wendell A. Barwood Arena, 431 Highland Ave. (802) 295-5036. kmcnall@hartford-vt.org. hartford-vt.org.

WOODSTOCK. Christmas at the Farm. Discover the traditions of a late 19th-century Vermont Christmas. Tour the authentically decorated farmhouse, visit the dairy farm, and meet farm animals. Make historic Christmas ornaments and crafts, candle dipping. Cooking demonstrations and tastings. Storytelling. Admission: adults \$16, 62 & over \$14, children 5–15 \$8, 3–4 \$4; 2 & under free. 10 am – 4 pm. Billings Farm & Museum, one-half mile north of the Woodstock village green on VT Rt. 12. (802) 457-2355. billingsfarm.org. *December weekends and December 22 – January 5 (closed Christmas Day).*

WOODSTOCK. 18th Annual Holiday House Tour. Docents at each location provide historical information and answer questions. Hot coffee or cocoa and a muffin. Theatre open throughout the day with holiday music. Boxed lunch option. Tickets: advance \$45, day of \$50. 9:30 am – 2 pm. Woodstock Town Hall Theatre, 31 The Green. (802) 457-3981. pentanglearts.org.

WOODSTOCK. Concert: The Whiffenpoofs, a cappella singers from Yale University. Vocal jazz, folk, pop, and Broadway hits. Tickets: adults \$25, kids \$20. 7:30 pm. Town Hall Theatre, 31 The Green. (802) 457-3981. info@pentanglearts.org. pentanglearts.org.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 14

BENNINGTON. Festival Gala annual fundraiser. Passed appetizers and seasonal fare. Cash bar. Welcome Chorus by MAU Chamber Singers. Django Reinhardt Jazz by the Hot Club of Saratoga. Silent auction. Closed-bid auction of original artwork by thirty regional artists. Raffle drawing for a week in Puerto Rico. 7–10 pm. Bennington Museum, 75 Main St. (802) 447-1571 ext. 200. sstrano@benningtonmuseum.org. benningtonmuseum.org.

BRATTLEBORO. Brattleboro Winter Farmers' Market 14th season. Fresh produce, syrup, local meats, eggs cheese and other farm products. Yummy treats, delicious pies, pickles and preserves, and beautiful handmade gifts. Saturday 10 am – 2 pm. Church Building, 80 Flat St. (802) 869-2141. farmersmarket@posttoilsolutions.org. *Saturdays through March 9.*

BURLINGTON. Free Miniature Horse Rides, in holiday carriages pulled by miniature horses from the Green Mountain Miniature Horse and Donkey Association. Free. 11 am – 3 pm. Church Street Marketplace, 2 Church St. (802) 863-1648. churchstmarketplace.com. *Every Saturday of the holiday season.*

ESSEX. Holiday Book Signing: The House that Santa (Almost) Missed, a heartwarming story for young and old by Vermont author and illustrator Paul Laud. Free and open to all. 2–4 pm. Phoenix Books Essex, 2 Carmichael St. (802) 872-7111. www.phoenixbooks.biz

FAIR HAVEN. Marble Mansion Inn Holiday Tour. Light refreshments. Historical Society clothing available for purchase. Free; freewill offerings accepted. 12 noon – 3 pm. Marble Mansion Inn, 3 North Park Pl. (802) 265-3010. fhvthistory@gmail.com.

LEBANON, NH. City Center Ballet presents *Clara's Dream*, a nutcracker story. New choreography lends fairy tale magic to our version of The Nutcracker. Tickets: \$10–\$38, \$15–\$43 day of show. Clara's Tea at Lebanon Ballet School prior to the afternoon shows: tickets@citycenterballet.org or (603) 448-9710. Saturday 1 pm and 7 pm, Sunday 2:30 pm. Lebanon Opera House, 51 North Park St. (603) 448-0400. *Also December 15.*

MONTPELIER. Touch of Vermont Holiday Gift Market. Crafts from over 45 Vermont artisans, from booze to booties, clay to quilts, and sweets to balms. 9 am – 4 pm. Montpelier City Hall, 39 Main St. (802) 310-1725. info@touchofvt.org. touchofvt.org.

NORWICH. Contradance. Live music by Gypsy Minor (Tom Moreau fiddle, Sarah Jane Nelson keyboard). Caller: David Millstone. Admission: \$12, students \$8, under 16 free (additional contributions gratefully accepted). Tracy Hall, 300 Main St. marthadmcDanielmd@gmail.com.

RANDOLPH. Elf Market Kid Makerspace. Crafts, cookie decorating, and holiday fun for everyone ages 2–12. 12:30–4:30 pm. Chandler Upper Gallery, Chandler Center for the Arts, 71-73 Main St. (802) 728-9878. outreach@chandler-arts.org. chandler-arts.org.

RUPERT. Full Cold Moon Hike. Staff-guided hike, moderate difficulty. Dress appropriately for the weather — keep in mind that it's not called the "Cold Moon" for nothing! Have sturdy footwear, micro-spikes and a headlamp or flashlight. Reservations requested. Fee: \$5. 4–6 pm. Merck Forest & Farmland Center, 3270 Rt. 315. Located between Rupert and Dorset, at the top of the very large hill. (802) 394-7836. merckforest.org.

RUTLAND. Meet Santa. Visit with Santa, enjoy some cookies, and make a holiday craft. Free and open to all ages. 11 am – 12:30 pm. Phoenix Books Rutland, 2 Center St. (802) 855-8078. phoenixbooks.biz

RUTLAND. Vermont Farmers' Market. From farm fresh veggies and fruits to artisan cheeses. Live music. 10 am – 2 pm. Vermont Farmers Food Center, 251 West St. (802) 342-4727. vtfarmersmarket.org. *Saturdays through May 2.*

RUTLAND. Vermont Farmers Market Christmas Holiday Fair. Craft and food creators, offering Christmas wreaths and decor; crafts in fiber, fabric, wood and glass; jewelry; baked goods and specialty foods with the flavor of Vermont; prepared foods, apples, cider and veggies. Free admission. 9 am – 4 pm. Holiday Inn, Rt 7 South. (802) 342-4727. vtfarmersmarket.org.

SHOREHAM. Concert: The Addison County Gospel Choir a cappella Holiday Concert. Members of churches throughout Addison County comprise this gospel choir, which spreads joy throughout the holiday season. Free will offering. 7 pm. Shoreham Congregational Church, 28 School St. (802) 897-2687. shorehamucc@gmail.com.

SHREWSBURY. Hike Lottery Road Wildlife Corridor Loop. Moderate, approximately 4 miles. Newcomers and nonmembers welcome. Bring drinking water and a lunch. Wear sturdy footwear, dress appropriately for the weather and be prepared for weather changes. Meet at 9 am at Main Street Park, near the east end of the fire station off Center St, in Rutland, or 9:30 am at Shrewsbury Meeting House parking lot. For details contact leader: Sandy Bragg, (802) 492-2143. gmckillington.org

SPRINGFIELD. Talk: Soup to Nuts: An Eccentric History of Food, by writer Rebecca Rupp. The rocky evolution of table manners, the not-so-welcome invention of the fork, the awful advent of portable soup, and the surprising benefits of family dinners, plus catchy info on seasonal foods. 11 am. Springfield Town Library, 43 Main St. (802) 885-3108. springfieldtownlibrary.org.

SOUTH BURLINGTON. A Holiday Drag Cabaret, hosted by Erika Riesling and Shani, featuring some of Burlington's fiercest drag performers. Games, raffle, door prizes and more. Ages 18+. Tickets: advance \$10, day of show \$15. Doors 8:30 pm, show 9 pm. Higher Ground, 1214 Williston Rd. (802) 652-0777.

ST. ALBANS. Holiday Concert: Carol Ann Jones Quartet. Holiday classics and contemporary favorites (and a surprise or two). Cash bar and merchandise from both SAM and the band. Tickets: adults \$18, 12 & under \$5. 7 pm. Saint Albans Museum, 9 Church St. (802) 527-7933.

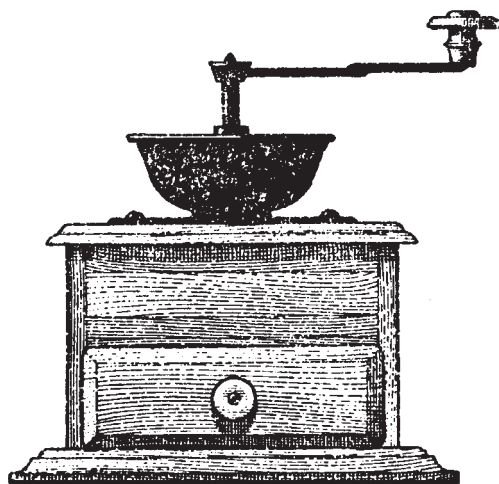
ST. JOHNSBURY. Holiday Concert: The Swingle Singers. Folk and jazz-inspired a cappella originals, traditional carols and holiday favorites. \$52, \$42, \$32, \$15; students free. 7 pm. Fuller Hall, St. Johnsbury Academy, 1000 Main St. (802) 748-2600. catamountarts.org.

STOWE. Family Day. Sweet treats and seasonal art activities. Create holiday decorations, play dreidel games and decorate gingerbread houses with New England Culinary Institute students. Free. 1–4 pm; drop in anytime. Helen Day Art Center, 90 Pond St. (802) 253-8358. helenday.com. *Through December 28.*

WOODSTOCK. Christmas at the Farm. Discover the traditions of a late 19th-century Vermont Christmas. Tour the authentically decorated farmhouse, visit the dairy farm, and meet farm animals. Make historic Christmas ornaments and crafts, candle dipping. Storytelling. Adults \$16, 62 & over \$14, children 5–15 \$8, 3–4 \$4; 2 & under free. 10 am – 4 pm. Billings Farm & Museum, one-half mile north of the Woodstock village green on VT Rt. 12. (802) 457-2355. billingsfarm.org. *December weekends and December 22 – January 5 (closed Christmas Day).*

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 15

BARRE. Concert: Green Mountain Youth Symphony Fall Concert. The Repertory Orchestra performs Tchaikovsky's *The Nutcracker*. The Concert Orchestra performs familiar tunes from Moussorgsky and Leroy Anderson. The Senior Orchestra will present Dvorák's Symphony No. 8, and two concerti. Suggested donation: adults \$15, seniors \$12, kids \$5, under 5 free. 2 pm. Barre Opera House, 6 North Main St. (802) 476-8188. barreoperahouse.org.



Montpelier, VT

Stories for the Season A Holiday-Inspired Special Event

Join favorite Lost Nation Theater artists and fans for cozy dramatic readings of stories from around the world that celebrate the return of the light from a host of traditions. Presentations include Solstice stories, some Dr

Seuss, Jewish tales, merry music, Native American lore, and a little Charles Dickens. Stories suitable for all ages and fun for the whole family. It all happens Wednesday, December 18 at 7:00 p.m. Box Office and Lobby will

open at 6:15 p.m. Seating begins at 6:30 p.m. and the readings begin at 7 p.m. The event is free (donations welcome). Tasty treats and warm beverages will be sold.

Lost Nation Theater was named One of the Best regional theaters in America by the New York Drama League. It is located at 39 Main Street, City Hall, Montpelier, VT. For more information call (802) 229-0492 or visit lostnationtheater.org.

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Vermont Country Calendar

BURLINGTON. 1619 Exhibit Community Commemoration Ceremony. Closing ceremony for the "1619: Arrival of the First Africans Traveling Exhibit." Free. 5-8 pm. Fletcher Free Library, 235 College St. (802) 865-7211. www.fletcherfree.org.

EAST BURKE. Burke Mountain Club Holiday Party and Tree Lighting on the Green. Songs by Newark Balkan Chorus. Cookies and cocoa. Choosing of winners for annual Christmas Tree contest: fifteen trees lighting up the green for the holidays. 2-5 pm. East Burke Library. Free; bring a non-perishable food item to donate to our local food shelf. (802) 626-4124. burkevermont.com.

RUTLAND. Concert: Vermont Symphony Orchestra—Holiday Pops, with the Bronze Ambassadors, student bell ringers. Program includes Corelli's Christmas Concerto, Christmas a la Valse, Minor Alterations, Tintinnabulations. Sing along with the handbells. Tickets: \$10-\$32. 3 pm. The Paramount Theatre, 30 Center St. (802) 775-0903.

WEST BURKE. Holiday Festivities: Santa escorted via wagon ride to Mike's Gas on Route 5. Presents for kids, cookies and cider. Two beautiful Belgian Horses will take folks on scenic wagon rides through the village. 11 am - 1 pm. Free; bring a non-perishable food item to donate to our local food shelf. (802) 626-4124. burkevermont.com.

WHITE RIVER JUNCTION. Public Ice Skating. Skate rentals and skate sharpening on site. Price: \$5, season passes available. 3:30-4:45 pm. Wendell A. Barwood Arena, 431 Highland Ave. (802) 295-5036. hartford-vt.org.

WOODSTOCK. Christmas at the Farm. Discover the traditions of a late 19th-century Vermont Christmas. Tour the authentically decorated farmhouse, visit the dairy farm, and meet farm animals. Make historic Christmas ornaments and crafts, candle dipping. Storytelling. Horse-drawn sleigh or wagon rides, as conditions permit. Admission: adults \$16, 62 & over \$14, children 5-15 \$8, 3-4 \$4; 2 & under free. 10 am - 4 pm. Billings Farm & Museum, one-half mile north of the Woodstock village green on VT Rt. 12. (802) 457-2355. billingsfarm.org. *December weekends and December 22 - January 5 (closed Christmas Day).*

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 17

BARRE. Public Informational Meeting about Eastern Coyotes, with Vermont's Furbearer project leader Kimberly Royar and wildlife ecologist Dr. David Person. Understand them from an objective, scientific perspective, and learn how to live with them. 6:30 pm. Barre Fish and Game Club, Gun Club Rd. john.hall@vermont.gov. vtfishandwildlife.com.

BRATTLEBORO. Brown Bag Lunch Series: Holiday House Plant Care. Garden writer Cheryl Wilfong talks about cyclamen, poinsettias, paper whites, and amaryllis. Free. 12 noon - 1 pm. Robert H Gibson River Garden, 157 Main St. (802) 246-0982. strollingoftheheifers.com.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 18

BRATTLEBORO. Artist Talk: Fafnir Adamites discusses her installation "Interfere (with)," on view through March 7, and the ways in which her sculptures act as "monuments and reminders of trauma, intuition, and the legacy of emotional turmoil." Free. 7 pm. Brattleboro Museum & Art Center, 10 Vernon St. (802) 257-0124. brattleboromuseum.org.

BRATTLEBORO. Brown Bag Lunch Series: All About the Decennial Census of 2020 with David Longsmith. Overview of the Census and information about jobs available for "enumerators" or Census Takers. Free. 12 noon - 1 pm. Robert H Gibson River Garden, 157 Main St. (802) 246-0982. strollingoftheheifers.com.

BURLINGTON. Art Journaling, with Billie Miles. Explore some of the many faces and forms of art journaling. Bring yourself, your curiosity, and a desire to play. Billie will supply the rest. Free. 6-8 pm. Fletcher Free Library, 235 College St. (802) 865-7211. www.fletcherfree.org.

BURLINGTON. Science and Stories at ECHO: Winter Trees. Explore why many of our Vermont trees stand all sticks and bones in the winter time, but not the evergreens. Free with ECHO admission: \$14.50-\$11.50. 11-11:30 am. ECHO, Leahy Center for Lake Champlain, 1 College St. (802) 864-1848. info@echovermont.org. echovermont.org.

MONTPELIER. Lost Nation Theater Presents Stories for the Season—a Holiday-Inspired Special Event. Join favorite Lost Nation Theater artists and fans for cozy dramatic readings of stories from around the world that celebrate the return of the light from a host of traditions. Tasty treats and warm beverages will be sold. Free (donations welcome). 7 pm. Lost Nation Theater, City Hall Arts Center, 39 Main St. (802) 229-0492. lostonationtheater.org.

WHITE RIVER JUNCTION. Public Ice Skating. Skate rentals and skate sharpening on site. Price: \$5, season passes available. 11:30 am - 1 pm. Wendell A. Barwood Arena, 431 Highland Ave. (802) 295-5036. hartford-vt.org.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 19

BRATTLEBORO. Brown Bag Lunch Series: Job Corps Tuition-free Job Training for 16-24 year olds with Gene Woodcock. Free. 12 noon - 1 pm. Robert H Gibson River Garden, 157 Main St. (802) 246-0982.

SPRINGFIELD. Telescope Observing at "Star Wars" Movie. Sky conditions permitting, the three first evenings of the showing of Star Wars—The Rise of Skywalker. Southern Vermont Astronomy Group will have telescopes for film goers to view the *real* celestial realm as they wait to enter the theater at early evening showings. Springfield Cinemas, 26 Main St. cva.pllc@gmail.com. sovera.org. *Through December 21.*

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 20

BARNARD. Ninth Annual Winter Carols. BarnArts Youth and BarnArts Chorale perform, focusing on a Winter Solstice theme for a night of music and wonder. Free. 7 pm. First Universalist Church of Barnard. (802) 234-1645. barnarts.org.

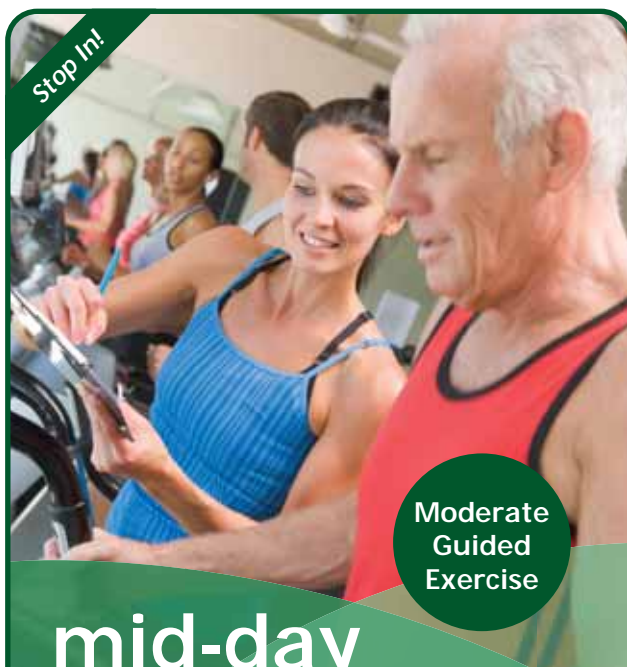
BRATTLEBORO. NECCA's Annual Holiday Show, The Flying Nut. Performers from recreational classes, youth performance troupes, and professional training programs. High-flying feats, acrobatics and so much more. Tickets: adults \$15, 12 & under \$10. Friday 7:30 pm, Saturday 3 pm and 7:30 pm, Sunday 1 pm. New England Center for Circus Arts, 10 Town Crier Dr. (802) 254-9780. info@necenterforcircusarts.com. necenterforcircusarts.com. *Through December 22.*

BRATTLEBORO. Holiday Pop-Up Gift Shop. Specialty foods, pottery, woven and knit wear, jewelry, and more. Friday 11 am - 5 pm, Saturday 11 am - 3 pm. Strolling of the Heifers River Garden, 157 Main St. (802) 275-8059. vicki@strollingoftheheifers.com. strollingoftheheifers.com. *Also December 21.*

MIDDLEBURY. Jason Lorber performs "The Santaland Diaries" by David Sedaris. A first-person account of the satirist's seasonal sojourn at Macy's as Crummet the Elf. For mature elves only. Tickets: \$22. 7:30 pm. Town Hall Theater, 68 South Pleasant St. (802) 382-9222. townhalltheater.org.

POULTNEY. Songwriters/Composers Night. All styles of music encouraged and welcome. Stone Valley Arts will supply a baby grand; others bring their own instruments and electronics. Or come to just listen. Free. 7-8 pm. Stone Valley Arts at Fox Hill, 145 East Main St. (802) 325-2603. stonevalleyartscenter@gmail.com. stonevalleyarts.org. *Third Friday of every month.*

RUTLAND. Concert: Twelve Twenty-Four: A Holiday Rock Orchestra. High energy, full-scale, concert includes a six-piece rock band, multi-piece string section, and a variety of vocalists. Tickets: \$39. 7 pm. The Paramount Theatre, 30 Center St. (802) 775-0903. paramountvt.org.



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Vermont Country Calendar



TINMOUTH. Contra Dance. Hannah Otten calling and music by Brendan Taaffe and George Wilson. All dances taught, no partner needed. 8 pm beginner's lesson. Live music, enthusiastic swinging and dancing, refreshments. Admission: \$10-\$12, teens \$8, children 12 and under free. 8-11 pm. Tinmouth Community Center, 573 Route 140. (802) 881-6775. tinmouthdance@gmail.com. tinmouthcontradance.org. *Third Friday of the month.*

WHITE RIVER JUNCTION. Public Ice Skating. Skate rentals and skate sharpening on site. Price: \$5, season passes available. 1:15-2:30 pm. Wendell A. Barwood Arena, 431 Highland Ave. (802) 295-5036. hartford-vt.org.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 21

BARRE. Concert: The Green Mountain Nutcracker, presented by Moving Light Dance. A classic holiday story with an enchanting local twist. Tickets: advance \$15-\$25, door \$18-\$28. 7 pm. Barre Opera House, 6 North Main St. (802) 476-8188. *Also December 22 at 2 pm.*

BONDVILLE. Concert: The Yale Whiffenpoofs, the world's oldest and best-known collegiate a cappella group. Tickets: \$15. 6:30 pm. Stratton Mountain School. (802) 856-1120. gosms.org/events/yale-whiffenpoofs.

BRANDON. Concert: Swing Noir Holiday Concert. 7:30 pm. Dinners by reservation starting at 6 pm. Brandon Music, 62 Country Club Rd. (802) 247-4295. brandon-music.net.

BRATTLEBORO. Brattleboro Winter Farmers' Market 14th season. Fresh produce, syrup, local meats, eggs cheese and other farm products. Yummy treats, delicious pies, pickles and preserves, and beautiful handmade gifts. Saturday 10 am - 2 pm. Church Building, 80 Flat St. (802) 869-2141. farmersmarket@postsoilsolutions.org. *Saturdays through March 9.*

BRISTOL. Fourth Annual Lumen Celebration of Fire & Light. Fire performers Cirque de Fuego on the town green. Lighted walk down Main Street to the fire pits at Tandem and Vermont Tree Goods for hot drinks, tasty eats. Create your own holiday lanterns in a free workshop at 4:30 pm in Holley Hall. All ages welcome, all supplies provided. Free. 4-9 pm. 1 Main St. (802) 760-6076. ian@bristolcore.org. bristolcore.org.

BURLINGTON. Free Miniature Horse Rides, in holiday carriages pulled by miniature horses from the Green Mountain Miniature Horse and Donkey Association. Free. 11 am - 3 pm. Church Street Marketplace, 2 Church St. (802) 863-1648. churchstmarketplace.com. *Every Saturday of the holiday season.*

GREENSBORO. The Best Christmas Pageant Ever, by Barbara Robinson, featuring the talents of local performers from across the Kingdom. Tickets: adults \$10, students/seniors \$8, kids under 6 free. Saturday 7 pm, Sunday 3 pm. Highland Center for the Arts, 2875 Hardwick St. (802) 533-2000. highlandartsvt.org. *Also December 22.*

HINESBURG. Concert. Deep Midwinter: Songs from Winter's Heart. Social Band performs ancient and modern-day songs and carols to honor this season. Tickets: advance \$15, day of concert \$18. 7:30 pm. United Church of Hinesburg, 10570 VT-116. (802) 355-4216. socialband.org.

HINESBURG. Winter Wildlife Ecology and Forest Management, with Chittenden County Forester Ethan Tapper and Wildlife Biologist Andrea Shortsleeve. Public walk will highlight winter wildlife ecology and wildlife tracking. Free. 1-3 pm. Hinesburg Town Forest. Meet at the plow turnaround at the end of Economou Road, Huntington. john.hall@vermont.gov. vtfishandwildlife.com.

LEBANON, NH. Revels North presents *The Christmas Revels: An English Celebration of the Winter Solstice.* Tickets: \$8-\$47; all youth seats \$8 on December 23. Saturday and Sunday, 2 pm and 7 pm, Monday 2 pm. Lebanon Opera House, 51 North Park St. *Through December 23.*

MANCHESTER. Manchester Lions Elf Express. One-hour journey through the Green Mountains. Holiday melodies and dance by elves of Burr and Burton Academy. Refreshments served on decorated trains. Story about Christopher Pop-In-Kins. Mr. and Mrs. Santa Claus provide every child with a special gift. Tickets: adults \$25, children \$20, under 2 free. 10 am, 11:30 am, 1 pm, 2:30 pm, 4 pm. Depot Station, 570 Depot St. LionsElfExpress@gmail.com. manchesterlionselftrain.com. *Also December 22.*

MIDDLEBURY. Solstice Lantern Decorating. Decorate a light to get you through the longest night of the year. Ages: 5-14+. Free. 10:30 am - 12 noon. Ilesley Public Library, 75 Main St. ilesleypubliclibrary.org.

RANDOLPH. Annual Holiday Artisans Market. Over 50 Vermont artisans and specialty food producers. Pottery, silk scarves, woodblock prints, stained glass, felted wool animals, and much more. Books by local authors, beeswax candles, maple syrup, natural soaps, handcrafted chocolates. Admission is free. 12 noon - 7 pm. Chandler Center for the Arts, 71-73 Main St. (802) 431-0204. chandlergallery.weebly.com.

RUTLAND. Vermont Farmers' Market. From farm fresh veggies and fruits to artisan cheeses. Live music. 10 am - 2 pm. Vermont Farmers Food Center, 251 West St. (802) 342-4727. vtfarmersmarket.org. *Saturdays through May 2.*

SOUTH BURLINGTON. Motown for Kids Holiday Party, with The Rock and Roll Playhouse. Games, movement, stories, and an opportunity to rock out. Tickets: \$15, children under 1 free. 12 noon. Higher Ground Ballroom, 1214 Williston Rd. (802) 652-0777.

SOUTH BURLINGTON. Concert: Singer-songwriter Matsyahu with Bedouin Soundclash. Tickets: advance \$28, day of show \$30. Doors 7:30 pm, show 8 pm. Higher Ground, 1214 Williston Rd. (802) 652-0777.

WHITE RIVER JUNCTION. Public Ice Skating. Skate rentals and skate sharpening on site. Price: \$5, season passes available. 4:15-5:30 pm. Wendell A. Barwood Arena, 431 Highland Ave. (802) 295-5036. hartford-vt.org.

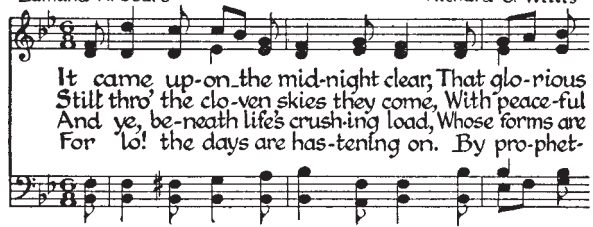
WOODSTOCK. Christmas at the Farm. Discover the traditions of a late 19th-century Vermont Christmas. Tour the authentically decorated farmhouse, visit the dairy farm, and meet farm animals. Make historic Christmas ornaments and crafts, candle dipping, Storytelling. Admission: adults \$16, 62 & over \$14, children 5-15 \$8, 3-4 \$4; 2 & under free. 10 am - 4 pm. Billings Farm & Museum, one-half mile north of the Woodstock village green on VT Rt. 12. (802) 457-2355. billingsfarm.org. *December weekends and December 22 - January 5 (closed Christmas Day).*



It Came upon the Midnight Clear

Edmund H. Sears

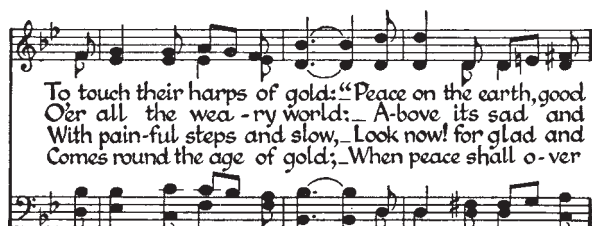
Richard S. Willis



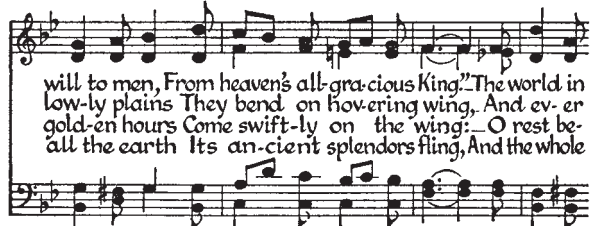
It came up-on the mid-ni-ght clear, That glo-ri-ous
Still thro' the clo-ven skies they come, With peace-ful
And ye, be-nea-th life's crush-ing load, Whose forms are
For 'lo! the days are has-ten-ing on. By pro-phet-



song of old, - From an-ge-ls bend-ing near the earth
wings un-furled, And still the heav-en-ly mu-sic floats
bend-ing low, - Who toil a-long the climb-ing way
bards fore-told, When with the ev-er-cir-cling years



To touch their harps of gold: "Peace on the earth, good
O'er all the wea-ry world: - A-bove its sad and
With pain-ful steps and slow, - Look now! for glad and
Comes round the age of gold; - When peace shall o-ver



will to men, From heav-en's all-gra-cious King: "The world in
low-ly plains They bend on ho-ver-ing wings, And ev-er
gold-en hours Come swift-ly on the wing: - O rest be-l
all the earth Its an-cient splen-dors fling, And the whole

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Vermont Country Calendar

WOODSTOCK. 10th Annual Woodstock Vermont Film Series. *A Tuba to Cuba*. \$6-\$11. Complementary refreshments. 3 & 5:30 pm. Billings Farm & Museum, 69 Old River Rd. (802) 457-2355. www.billingsfarm.org.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 22

BARRE. Concert: The Green Mountain Nutcracker, presented by Moving Light Dance. \$18-\$28. 2 pm. Barre Opera House, 6 North Main St. (802) 476-8188.

CHARLOTTE. Concert. Deep Midwinter: Songs from Winter's Heart. Social Band performs ancient and modern-day songs and carols to honor this season. Tickets: advance \$15, day of concert \$18. 3 pm. Charlotte Congregational Church, 403 Church Hill Rd. (802) 355-4216.

MANCHESTER. Concert: VSO Brass Quintet with Counterpoint. Brass arrangements of a Bach chorale and Poulenc motet, popular tunes like "Sleigh Ride," "Let It Snow," and "All I Want for Christmas Is You." Carol singalong and traditional favorites. \$20-\$24. 4 pm. First Congregational Church of Manchester. (802) 864-5741.

POULTNEY. 12th Annual Christmas Concert by Poultny-Granville Town Band. 1 pm. Saint Raphael's Church, East Main St. (802)-287-5751

RUTLAND. Miss Lorraine's School of Dance presents *The Nutcracker*. Dozens of area dance students come together to create this holiday favorite. Tickets: \$25, \$35. 1 pm and 6 pm. The Paramount Theatre, 30 Center St. (802) 775-0903.

ST. ALBANS. Sleigh Rides. Horse drawn wagon/sleigh rides on the beautiful backfields at Hard'ack. Dog friendly, snack stand. Residents \$10, non-residents \$15, reservations required. 10 am - 3 pm. Hard'ack Recreation Area, 179 Congress St. (802) 524-1500. stalbansrec.com.

WHITE RIVER JUNCTION. Public Ice Skating. Skate rentals and skate sharpening on site. Price: \$5, season passes available. 3:30-4:45 pm. Wendell A. Barwood Arena, 431 Highland Ave. (802) 295-5036. hartford-vt.org.

WOODSTOCK. Christmas at the Farm. Discover the traditions of a late 19th-century Vermont Christmas. Tour the authentically decorated farmhouse, visit the dairy farm, and meet farm animals. Make historic Christmas ornaments and crafts, candle dipping. Storytelling. Admission: adults \$16, 62 & over \$14, children 5-15 \$8, 3-4 \$4; 2 & under free. 10 am - 4 pm. Billings Farm & Museum, one-half mile north of the Woodstock village green on VT Rt. 12. (802) 457-2355. billingsfarm.org. *Through January 5 (closed Christmas Day)*.

MONDAY, DECEMBER 23

BRATTLEBORO. Brown Bag Lunch Series: Sing along with Rich Grumbine. Free. 12 noon - 1 pm. Robert H Gibson River Garden, 157 Main St. (802) 246-0982.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 26

WOODSTOCK. Christmas at the Farm. Discover the traditions of a late 19th-century Vermont Christmas. Tour the authentically decorated farmhouse, visit the dairy farm, and meet farm animals. Make historic Christmas ornaments and crafts, candle dipping. Storytelling. Horse-drawn sleigh or wagon rides, as conditions permit. Admission: adults \$16, 62 & over \$14, children 5-15 \$8, 3-4 \$4; 2 & under free. 10 am - 4 pm. Billings Farm & Museum, one-half mile north of the Woodstock village green on VT Rt. 12. (802) 457-2355. billingsfarm.org. *Through January 5*.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 27

NORWICH. Chain Reactions: A Winter Break Event. Using blocks, balls, ramps, string, and other materials, work with other visitors to make a Rube Goldberg-inspired machine. Then, combine your machine with others to create one massive chain reaction. Free with museum admission. 12 noon - 4 pm. Montshire Museum, One Montshire Rd. (802) 649-2200. montshire@montshire.org. montshire.org.

WOODSTOCK. Christmas at the Farm. Discover the traditions of a late 19th-century Vermont Christmas. Tour the authentically decorated farmhouse, visit the dairy farm, and meet farm animals. Make historic Christmas ornaments and crafts, candle dipping. Storytelling. Horse-drawn sleigh or wagon rides, as conditions permit. Admission: adults \$16, 62 & over \$14, children 5-15 \$8, 3-4 \$4; 2 & under free. 10 am - 4 pm. Billings Farm & Museum, one-half mile north of the Woodstock village green on VT Rt. 12. (802) 457-2355. billingsfarm.org. *Through January 5*.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 28

BRATTLEBORO. Brattleboro Winter Farmers' Market 14th season. Fresh produce, syrup, local meats, eggs cheese and other farm products. Yummy treats, delicious pies, pickles and preserves, and beautiful handmade gifts. Saturday 10 am - 2 pm. Church Building, 80 Flat St. (802) 869-2141. *Saturdays through March 9*.

BURLINGTON. Reindeer Live. Get an up-close look at the incredible reindeer from Vermont Reindeer Farm. Learn more about them and what makes them so well-suited for cold, snowy weather. Free with ECHO admission: \$14.50-\$11.50. 11-11:30 am. ECHO, Leahy Center for Lake Champlain, 1 College St. (802) 864-1848. info@echovermont.org. echovermont.org.

BURLINGTON. Free Miniature Horse Rides, in holiday carriages pulled by miniature horses from the Green Mountain Miniature Horse and Donkey Association. Free. 11 am - 3 pm. Church Street Marketplace, 2 Church St. (802) 863-1648. churchstmarketplace.com.

HUNTINGTON. Monthly Bird Monitoring Walk, outdoors on trails in forest and meadow. Coffee afterwards at our viewing window. For adults and older children (10+) with some birding experience. Bring your own binoculars. Free, donations welcome. 8-9 am. Birds of Vermont Museum, 900 Sherman Hollow Rd. (802) 434-2167. museum@birdsofvermont.org. birdsofvermont.org. *Last Saturday of each month*.

NORWICH. Grange Breakfast. Buffet-style meal includes pancakes, French toast, sausage, bacon, eggs, biscuits and gravy, real maple syrup and beverages. Price: \$5-\$8, under five free, family rate available. 8-11 am. Norwich Grange, 344 N. Main St. (802) 356-0844.

PROCTOR. Christmas Bird Count. Field participants and feeder watchers within the count circle welcome. Potluck and countdown of the day at Proctor Library at 6 pm. Bring a dish to share (utensils and beverages provided). birding@rutlandcountyaudubon.org. rutlandcountyaudubon.org.

RUTLAND. Vermont Farmers' Market. From farm fresh veggies and fruits to artisan cheeses. Live music. 10 am - 2 pm. Vermont Farmers Food Center, 251 West St. (802) 342-4727. vtfarmersmarket.org. *Saturdays through May 2, 2020*.

RUTLAND. Sip N' Dip Painting Class. BYO bottle of wine for an evening of painting, laughter, quality instruction, and a finished canvas by the end of the night. Cost: \$30, includes paint, brushes, canvas, smocks, and instruction. Pre-register. 6-8 pm. Chaffee Art Center, 16 S Main St. (802) 775-0356. info@chaffeeartcenter.org. chaffeeartcenter.org.

WOODSTOCK. Christmas at the Farm. Discover the traditions of a late 19th-century Vermont Christmas. Tour the authentically decorated farmhouse, visit the dairy farm, and meet farm animals. Make historic Christmas ornaments and crafts, candle dipping. Cooking demonstrations and tastings. Storytelling. Horse-drawn sleigh or wagon rides, as conditions permit. Admission: adults \$16, 62 & over \$14, children 5-15 \$8, 3-4 \$4; 2 & under free. 10 am - 4 pm. Billings Farm & Museum, one-half mile north of the Woodstock village green on VT Rt. 12. (802) 457-2355. billingsfarm.org. *Through January 5*.

WOODSTOCK. 10th Annual Woodstock Vermont Film Series. *Maiden*. \$6-\$11. Complementary refreshments. 3 & 5:30 pm. Billings Farm & Museum, 69 Old River Rd. (802) 457-2355.

Hanover, NH

The Just and the Blind at Hopkins Center for the Arts

Why do so many black American men end up in prison? Who are they and what are their stories? How does skin pigmentation color the way authorities—from teachers to law enforcement officers—treat young men?

In *The Just and the Blind*, a poet, a musician and a dancer dive into these questions with clarity and passion, constructing an evening of poignant vignettes of music, words, dance and song that testify to the realities facing American black boys and men. The show will be presented on Thursday, January 16, 7:30 pm, at the Hopkins Center for the Arts at Dartmouth College. There will be a post-show discussion with the artists. \$40 and up, 40% discount for youth.

Composer-violinist Daniel Bernard Roumain (known by the initials "DBR") and spoken-word artist Marc Bamuthi Joseph are joined by flexing street dance pioneer Drew Dollaz, who brings mind-blowing movement to the mix of music, spoken and recorded words and evocative projections. Conceived and written by Joseph with DBR's original music, the show draws on the Joseph's own personal experiences of fatherhood as well as a recorded conversation with a young man imprisoned for life for a crime committed in his youth.

In a special collaborative arrangement only for Dartmouth, the performance will also include vocalists led by Walt Cunningham, Dartmouth director of Pop Music Ensembles.

Framed by visually striking photography and animation projections, the performance explores racial profiling and the prison-industrial complex in a seamless flow of short vignettes that include DBR's electro-acoustic music on violin

and piano; searing dance interludes by Dollaz; and Joseph's spoken word. The creative team also includes Michael John Garcés (director), David Szlasa (projection designer), Lisa Armstrong (investigative journalist), Xia Gordon (animator), and Brittense (photographer).

A cry from the soul

When it premiered at Carnegie Hall, which commissioned the work, the New York Times called *The Just and the Blind* a "raw, cry from the soul new work...driven by Mr. Joseph's stinging, brilliant words...Mr. Joseph voices the thoughts of a black father who admits to being afraid when, at night, he walks past young black men who look the same age as his son. Every day, he tells his son, the boy's main mission in life is 'to come home to me.'" The New Yorker praised Joseph and DBR's "viscerally eloquent partnership, infusing artistic expression with social activism and their shared experience as Haitian-American men," which in this work also includes "the supremely lithe street-dance choreographer Drew Dollaz...in a multidisciplinary work that examines racial injustice and juvenile incarceration."

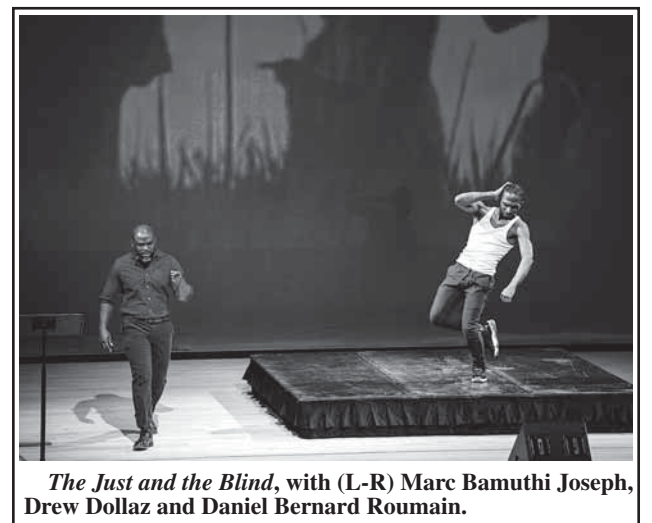
DBR has been getting to know the Hop region over this year through multiple collaborations with Vermont artists through a residency involving Burlington's Flynn Center, University of Vermont's Lane Series and the Vermont Symphony Orchestra. In October, he was joined by more than 30 local artists in a 24-hour public performance on Burlington's Church Street in protest of Trump administration policies on issues including immigration.

DBR and Joseph previously collaborated on *We Shall Not Be Moved*, a chamber opera co-commissioned by Opera Philadelphia and the Apollo Theater, directed by Bill T. Jones, which The New York Times called one of the "the best classical music performances of 2017."

The three principal artists are each at the forefront of their fields. A 2017 TEDGlobal Fellow and Bessie nominee, Joseph graced the cover of Smithsonian Magazine as one of America's Top Young Innovators in the Arts and Sciences and was an inaugural recipient of the United States Artists Rockefeller Fellowship, which annually recognizes 50 of the country's greatest living artists. His life in art began in dance: he made his Broadway debut at age 10, as the tap dancing understudy to Savion Glover in "The Tap Dance Kid." He went on the national tour and was on TV by age 12.

Omnivorous contemporary artist

DBR's acclaimed work as a composer and genre-bending violinist spans more than two decades. The New York Times called him "about as omnivorous as a contemporary artist



The Just and the Blind, with (L-R) Marc Bamuthi Joseph, Drew Dollaz and Daniel Bernard Roumain.

gets." Known for his signature violin sounds infused with myriad electronic, urban, and African-American music influences, DBR also is composer of chamber, orchestral, and operatic works; he has won an Emmy for Outstanding Musical Composition for his collaborations with ESPN.

Dollaz is a pioneer of flexing, a Brooklyn-based genre of street dance, also referred to as "bone breaking," characterized by rhythmic contortionist movements. A self-taught dancer, Dollaz is known for blending flexing with other styles including ballet to create a transcendent hybrid of movement artistry. He has performed and partnered with a broad range of artists including Madonna and Rihanna, and he's a leader in Next Level Squad, a New York City collective of flexing dancers which has garnered more than a million views on YouTube and has been featured on World of Dance, The Breakin' Convention and America's Got Talent.

Two additional programs for the public

A **Flex Dancing Master Class** with Dollaz, Tuesday, January 14, 5:30 pm, Straus Dance Studio, \$12 for adults, free for students and youth but RSVP required.

"**Inside The Just and the Blind**," a pre-performance conversation with the artists about live arts and activism, on Thursday, January 16, 6:30-7:15 pm, Top of the Hop, free.

The Hopkins Center for the Arts is located at 4 East Wheelock Street in Hanover, NH. The Hop Box Office is open Monday - Friday: 10 am - 6 pm, Saturday: 1 - 6 pm. (603) 646-2422. hop.dartmouth.edu.

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Vermont Country Calendar

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 29

GREENSBORO. Film Screening: *The Goldfinch*. \$10. 3 pm. Highland Center for the Arts, 2875 Hardwick St. (802) 533-2000. highlandartsvt.org.

WHITE RIVER JUNCTION. Public Ice Skating. Skate rentals and skate sharpening on site. Price: \$5, season passes available. 3:30–4:45 pm. Wendell A. Barwood Arena, 431 Highland Ave. (802) 295-5036.

WOODSTOCK. Christmas at the Farm. Discover the traditions of a late 19th-century Vermont Christmas. Tour the authentically decorated farmhouse, visit the dairy farm, and meet farm animals. Make historic Christmas ornaments and crafts, candle dipping. Horse-drawn sleigh or wagon rides, as conditions permit. Admission: adults \$16, 62 & over \$14, children 5–15 \$8, 3–4 \$4; 2 & under free. 10 am – 4 pm. Billings Farm & Museum, one-half mile north of the Woodstock village green on VT Rt. 12. (802) 457-2355. billingsfarm.org. *Through January 5.*

MONDAY, DECEMBER 30

BURLINGTON. Winter Wonderland Day Camp (grades K–5). Learn how animals survive the winter and what's happening under the snow. Fling snowballs and be a detective. Fee: \$65/day; aftercare available until 5 pm for \$12/day. 8:30 am – 3 pm. ECHO, Leahy Center for Lake Champlain, 1 College St. (802) 864-1848. info@echovermont.org. echovermont.org. *Through December 31.*

WOODSTOCK. Christmas at the Farm. Discover the traditions of a late 19th-century Vermont Christmas. Tour the authentically decorated farmhouse, visit the dairy farm, and meet farm animals. Make historic Christmas ornaments and crafts, candle dipping. Horse-drawn sleigh or wagon rides, as conditions permit. Admission: adults \$16, 62 & over \$14, children 5–15 \$8, 3–4 \$4; 2 & under free. 10 am – 4 pm. Billings Farm & Museum, one-half mile north of the Woodstock village green on VT Rt. 12. (802) 457-2355. billingsfarm.org. *Through January 5.*

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 31

BURLINGTON. Tales of Russia in Winter, with Yuriy and Abby of the Slavic folk group Lekko. Zakuski (authentic Russian treats), traditional Russian and Eastern European music on authentic folk instruments. For all ages. Free. 6:30–7:30 pm. Fletcher Free Library, 235 College St. (802) 865-7211. www.fletcherfree.org.

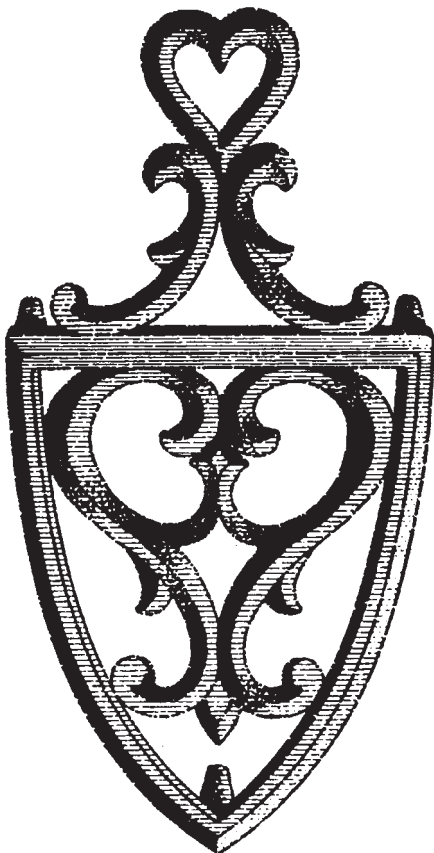
BURLINGTON. Highlight—New Year's Eve Burlington celebration. Church Street parade, waterfront fireworks and bonfires (fire dancers included), hands-on creative activities, diverse cultural events, art installations, music from around the world, storytelling, comedy, and so much more. Buttons: adults \$10, kids \$5. 11:30 am – 12:30 am. Citywide. highlight.community.

BURLINGTON. Performance: VSO Burlington Does Broadway. Lyric Theatre Company and the Vermont Symphony Orchestra join for a night dedicated to the bright lights of Broadway, from Golden Age standards to contemporary classics. Tickets: \$25–\$60. 7:30 pm. Flynn Center for the Performing Arts. (802) 864-5741.

EAST CALAIS. New Year's Eve Celebration. A unique evening of reflection, bells and refreshment. Shao Shan Temple, 125 Cranberry Meadow Rd. (802) 456-7091. shaoshantemple@gmail.com. www.shaoshantemple.org.

LUDLOW. Family New Year's Eve. Early evening ice skating, snow tubing, mountain coaster rides, horse-drawn wagon rides, party-hat decorating, bingo games and trivia tournament. DJ dance party. Party games, balloons, noisemakers and fireworks. Pizza party dinner in the Roundhouse. 5–9 pm. Jackson Gore Inn at Okemo, 111 Jackson Gore Rd. (802) 228-1600. okemo.com.

ST. ALBANS. Last Night St. Albans. A safe, affordable New Year's Eve alternative. Late afternoon activities for children and teens: Sledding, making snowmen, children's carnival, ice skating and teen dance, early evening fireworks in Taylor Park. Later evening activities generally 21+: paint & sip event; beer, chocolate and cheese tasting; comedy performance. Live music and dance at City Hall, 2019 countdown and fireworks at midnight. Most events free; Last Night Button: \$5; family \$20. Beginning at 4:30 pm, at locations throughout the City. (802) 524-2444. frcvvt.com. lastnightvt.com.



ST. JOHNSBURY. First Night North. Buttons: sponsor \$37.74, adult \$20.75, student \$12.26. 4 pm – midnight. Various locations in St. Johnsbury. Catamount Arts, 115 Eastern Ave. (802) 748-2600. info@firstnightstj.com. firstnightstj.com. catamountarts.org/first-night-north.

WOODSTOCK. Christmas at the Farm. Discover the traditions of a late 19th-century Vermont Christmas. Tour the authentically decorated farmhouse, visit the dairy farm, and meet farm animals. Make historic Christmas ornaments and crafts, candle dipping. Horse-drawn sleigh or wagon rides, as conditions permit. Admission: adults \$16, 62 & over \$14, children 5–15 \$8, 3–4 \$4; 2 & under free. 10 am – 4 pm. Billings Farm & Museum, one-half mile north of the Woodstock village green on VT Rt. 12. (802) 457-2355. billingsfarm.org. *Through January 5.*

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 1

WHITE RIVER JUNCTION. Public Ice Skating. Skate rentals and skate sharpening on site. Price: \$5, season passes available. 11:30 am – 1 pm. Wendell A. Barwood Arena, 431 Highland Ave. (802) 295-5036.

WOODSTOCK. Christmas at the Farm. Discover the traditions of a late 19th-century Vermont Christmas. Tour the authentically decorated farmhouse, visit the dairy farm, and meet farm animals. Make historic Christmas ornaments and crafts, candle dipping. Horse-drawn sleigh or wagon rides, as conditions permit. Admission: adults \$16, 62 & over \$14, children 5–15 \$8, 3–4 \$4; 2 & under free. 10 am – 4 pm. Billings Farm & Museum, one-half mile north of the Woodstock village green on VT Rt. 12. (802) 457-2355. billingsfarm.org. *Through January 5.*

THURSDAY, JANUARY 2

BRATTLEBORO. Brown Bag Lunch Series: All About the Decennial Census of 2020 with David Longsmith. Overview of the Census and information about jobs available for "enumerators" or Census Takers. Free. 12 noon – 1 pm. Robert H Gibson River Garden, 157 Main St. (802) 246-0982. strollingoftheheifers.com.

WOODSTOCK. Christmas at the Farm. Discover the traditions of a late 19th-century Vermont Christmas. Tour the authentically decorated farmhouse, visit the dairy farm, and meet farm animals. Make historic Christmas ornaments and crafts, candle dipping. Horse-drawn sleigh or wagon rides, as conditions permit. Admission: adults \$16, 62 & over \$14, children 5–15 \$8, 3–4 \$4; 2 & under free. 10 am – 4 pm. Billings Farm & Museum, one-half mile north of the Woodstock village green on VT Rt. 12. (802) 457-2355. billingsfarm.org. *Through January 5.*

Quechee, VT

New Exhibit at VINS: A Forest Canopy Walk

A new exhibit is now open at the VINS Nature Center—the Forest Canopy Walk. Designed so people of all levels of ability can enjoy it, this new ADA-accessible feature offers every generation a new perspective and way to experience the beauty of the landscape.

VINS' 47-acre property is perfectly suited to allow people to gain elevation without the need for stairs or steep ramps. Because the land drops in elevation as it slopes toward the backwater of the Ottauquechee River, a boardwalk has been built that remains relatively level while the land drops away beneath. At the highest points, visitors are an amazing 65 feet above the forest floor getting eye-to-eye with tiny warblers, woodpeckers and squirrels!

Special features

The Walk provides an opportunity to move from forest floor to treetops without a climb. Connecting to the existing McKnight Trail, the Walk can be reached by a combination of ground-level trail and a newly constructed, ADA-accessible boardwalk. The increase in elevation from the start of the trail to the entrance is minimal to accommodate the greatest diversity of visitors.

Three special features and five Interpretation Nodes are built into the Walk. The Eagle's Nest is a spur off the main walk. It is built on two levels, with the upper level being an oversized nest that visitors can climb into and see the world from an eagle's vantage point. The Tree House is an elevated structure on one corner of the Walk built with several levels that are reached by a helical stair system. With the Forest Canopy Walk, your perspective will be completely altered!

Exciting elements

The Tree House is designed to bring people higher into the canopy and reach above the treetops, providing visitors with a 360-degree view of the surrounding countryside.

Integrated into a portion of the Walk is the Giant Spider Web (20 feet in diameter), which gives visitors the chance to lie in wait, or walk across a woven web high above the ground. Fitted with three layers of netting to protect users, the open weave permits visitors to see down to the forest floor. A cargo net added to one end of the web encourages those with the strength and stamina to climb the net to reach the Owl's Nest.

There are four other nodes on the Walk, encouraging visitors to engage with a variety of forest facts and experiences from sight and sound to contemplation of the forest.

We are all used to walking through the forest and looking up to see the birds and leaves, but rarely do many of us have the opportunity to see those same things at eye level or while looking down.

VINS Nature Center is located at 149 Natures Way, Quechee, VT. (802) 359-5000. Adults \$16.50, Seniors (62 plus) \$15.50, College Students \$15.50, Youth (4-17) \$14.50, Children 3 & under Free. Open 7 days a week 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.

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Vermont Country Calendar

FRIDAY, JANUARY 3

RUTLAND. Concert: STOMP! Eight-member international percussion troupe uses matchboxes, wooden poles, brooms, garbage cans, Zippo lighters, hubcaps to fill the stage with magnificent rhythms. Tickets: \$29-\$49. Friday 7 pm, Saturday 2 pm and 7 pm. The Paramount Theatre, 30 Center St. (802) 775-0903. paramountvt.org. *Also January 4.*

WHITE RIVER JUNCTION. Public Ice Skating. Skate rentals and skate sharpening on site. Price: \$5, season passes available. 1:15-2:30 pm. Wendell A. Barwood Arena, 431 Highland Ave. (802) 295-5036. hartford-vt.org.

WOODSTOCK. Christmas at the Farm. Discover the traditions of a late 19th-century Vermont Christmas. Tour the authentically decorated farmhouse, visit the dairy farm, and meet farm animals. Make historic Christmas ornaments and crafts, candle dipping. Storytelling. Horse-drawn sleigh or wagon rides, as conditions permit. Admission: adults \$16, 62 & over \$14, children 5-15 \$8, 3-4 \$4; 2 & under free. 10 am - 4 pm. Billings Farm & Museum, one-half mile north of the Woodstock village green on VT Rt. 12. (802) 457-2355. billingsfarm.org. *Through January 5.*

SATURDAY, JANUARY 4

BARRE. Concert: Young Tradition Vermont Touring Group Concert. Traditional music and dance featuring the 25-member teen group touring Japan in April 2020. Guest performers Pete Sutherland and Jeremiah McLane. Suggested donation: \$15. 7 pm. Barre Opera House, 6 North Main St. (802) 476-8188. barreoperahouse.org.

BRATTLEBORO. Brattleboro Winter Farmers' Market 14th season. Fresh produce, syrup, local meats, eggs cheese and other farm products. Yummy treats, delicious pies, pickles and preserves, and beautiful handmade gifts. Saturday 10 am - 2 pm. Church Building, 80 Flat St. (802) 869-2141. farmersmarket@postoilutions.org. *Saturdays through March 9.*

RIPTON. CD Release Concert: Katie Trautz with Michael Roberts of Wooden Dinosaur and Julia Wayne from the duo Mayfly. 7:30 pm open mic followed by featured performers. Open mic sign up: (802) 388-9782. Tickets: general admission \$15, generous admission \$20. Doors open at 7 pm. Ripton Community Coffee House, 1305 Rt 125. (802) 349-3364. rch.org. *First Saturday of the month.*

RUTLAND. Vermont Farmers' Market. From farm fresh veggies and fruits to artisan cheeses. Live music. 10 am - 2 pm. Vermont Farmers Food Center, 251 West St. (802) 342-4727. vtfarmersmarket.org. *Saturdays thru May 2.*

SHELBURNE. Owl Pellet Detectives. For ages five and up with accompanying adult. Dissecting owl pellets to look for clues about what owls like to eat. Meet live owl ambassadors from Outreach For Earth Stewardship. Cost: children \$7, adults \$4. Registration required. 10-11:30 am. McClure Education Center at the Farm Barn, Shelburne Farms, 1611 Harbor Rd. (802) 985-8686. shelburnefarms.org.

WESTON. Classical Concert. Join faculty artists from Kinhaven Music School for an evening of chamber music. 7:30 pm. Walker Farm. (802) 824-5288.

WHITE RIVER JUNCTION. Public Ice Skating. Skate rentals and skate sharpening on site. Price: \$5, season passes available. 4:15-5:30 pm. Wendell A. Barwood Arena, 431 Highland Ave. (802) 295-5036. hartford-vt.org.

WOODSTOCK. Christmas at the Farm. Discover the traditions of a late 19th-century Vermont Christmas. Tour the authentically decorated farmhouse, visit the dairy farm, and meet farm animals. Make historic Christmas ornaments and crafts, candle dipping. Cooking demonstrations and tastings. Storytelling. Horse-drawn sleigh or wagon rides, as conditions permit. Admission: adults \$16, 62 & over \$14, children 5-15 \$8, 3-4 \$4; 2 & under free. 10 am - 4 pm. Billings Farm & Museum, one-half mile north of the Woodstock village green on VT Rt. 12. (802) 457-2355. billingsfarm.org. *Through January 5.*

SUNDAY, JANUARY 5

WEST BRATTLEBORO. Wildlife in Winter: The Long and Low, with naturalist Patti Smith. Begin with photos, videos, slides, and artifacts, then head to the field to find weasel, mink, fisher, and otter tracks, introduce tracking basics, and look at tracks and sign. Fee: \$30 per session, all four \$90. 1-4 pm (may run later). Bonnyvale Environmental Education Center, 1223 Bonnyvale Rd. (802) 257-5785. beec.org. *Also Saturdays January 25, February 22, March 28.*

WHITE RIVER JUNCTION. Public Ice Skating. Skate rentals and skate sharpening on site. Price: \$5, season passes available. 3:30-4:45 pm. Wendell A. Barwood Arena, 431 Highland Ave. (802) 295-5036. hartford-vt.org.

WOODSTOCK. Christmas at the Farm. Discover the traditions of a late 19th-century Vermont Christmas. Tour the authentically decorated farmhouse, visit the dairy farm, and meet farm animals. Make historic Christmas ornaments and crafts, candle dipping. Storytelling. Horse-drawn sleigh or wagon rides, as conditions permit. Admission: adults \$16, 62 & over \$14, children 5-15 \$8, 3-4 \$4; 2 & under free. 10 am - 4 pm. Billings Farm & Museum, one-half mile north of the Woodstock village green on VT Rt. 12. (802) 457-2355. billingsfarm.org.

ONGOING ACTIVITIES 2019

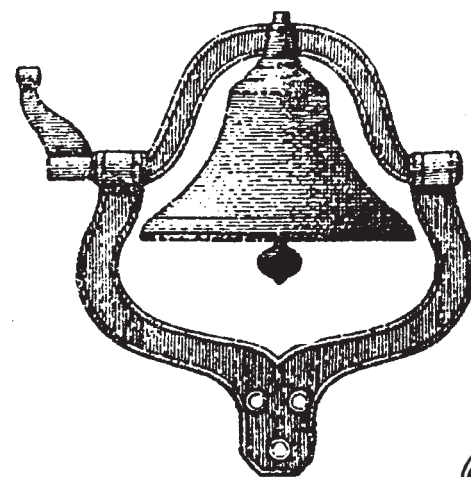
BRATTLEBORO. Brattleboro Winter Farmers' Market 14th season. Fresh produce, syrup, local meats, eggs cheese and other farm products. Yummy treats, delicious pies, pickles and preserves, and beautiful handmade gifts. Saturday 10 am - 2 pm. Church Building, 80 Flat St. (802) 869-2141. farmersmarket@postoilutions.org. *Saturdays through March 9.*

BRATTLEBORO. The Cotton Mill. Housed in a three-story, 145,000 square foot renovated mill building dating back to 1910, The Cotton Mill is home to over 60 small businesses and artists' studios. 74 Cotton Mill Hill. info@thecottonmill.org. www.thecottonmill.org.

CASTLETON. Coffee Hour. Enjoy homemade goodies, hot brew and good company. Free. 9-11 am. Castleton Community Center, 2108 Main St. (802) 468-3093. *Continues on Fridays.*

ESSEX JUNCTION. Winter Lights in the Park. Bright lights and winter tunes on display. Hidden ornaments in the trees. Pick up a scavenger hunt list on your way into the park. Free. 5-8 pm. Maple Street Park, 75 Maple St. (802) 878-1375. recreation@ejrp.org. ejrp.org. *Through January 2.*

HARTLAND. First Friday Short Story Group. Sign up at the library and pick up a copy of 100 Great Stories. Each month we'll read two stories, then discuss them on the First Friday. 10:30-11:30 am. Hartland Public Library, 153 US-5. (802) 436-2473. director@hartlandlibraryvt.org. hartlandlibraryvt.org. *First Friday of every month.*



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Way Back Then

Dancing No Fun for Some Kids

by Charles Sutton

Even with the war going on families continued normal routines like going to work, getting the kids off to school, having family outings.

A must-do for boys my age was to attend twice-monthly ballroom dancing classes to learn the waltz, foxtrot, rhumba, samba, cha-cha-cha, tango, and even the Lindy Hop.

At Miss Cromer's dance studio we had to come dressed in suits, white shirts and ties, and wear white cot-

ton gloves. Gloves? Well, yes, back then boys were known to have sweaty hands and they also could have touched things like picking up snakes. The girls had to wear pretty party dresses, but nothing suggestive.

The various dances were taught and demonstrated by Miss Cromer using one of the dance-talented boys to be her partner. Then we would be expected to do the same with one of the girls sitting on the other side of the dance

floor. Miss Cromer would blow a whistle and we the boys would race across the floor and stand in front of our choice and ask "May I have this dance?"

Miss Cromer would quickly round up the left-over boys and pair them with the unchosen girls.

She did this with a good-natural enthusiasm, moving quickly about on the dance floor, a reminder that she was once a ballet dancer. She wouldn't tolerate any boy having an attitude about her pair-makings. We were there to learn good manners as well as good dancing.

If I was lucky I got to dance at least once with someone I had a crush on,

then the disciplined dance classes were fine by me. In my diary on those it-was-fun nights I commented I danced with Patty Jean Hope, Marian Cornwall or Pat Hoyt, who all were especially pretty. No comments at all on the nights Miss Cromer picked my partners.

I was years away from being thoughtful and kind on my own to ask a less popular girl to dance.

The classes really were mean as the un-chosen girls couldn't help but be embarrassed and hurt, and couldn't do anything about it. Their parents shouldn't have set them up to be treated as wallflowers during a time that was supposed to be fun.

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Sunday, January 26th from 3-6 p.m.
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Presented by Muskeg Music

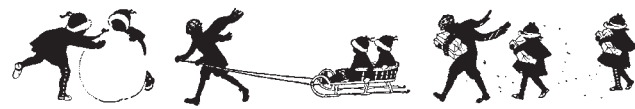
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Vermont Country Calendar



LUDLOW. Fletcher Farms School for the Arts and Crafts. Vermont's oldest residential arts and crafts school. Register for our arts and crafts classes. Fletcher Farm School for the Arts & Crafts, 611 Rt. 103 South. (802) 228-8770.

MANCHESTER. Tour: Winter Merriment in the Shires. Designed for those who have only a couple of days to spend and want to see the best-kept secrets. Learn interesting stories and history. Many stops. Opportunity to sample and purchase local products. Advance reservations necessary. Price: \$35. 1-3:30 pm. Manchester and area. (802) 362-4997. bckrddisc@aol.com.

MANCHESTER. Christmas Eve 1912 at Hildene. Tour the home, goat dairy, cheese-making facility and Pullman palace car. On weekends period music on the Aeolian pipe organ or Steinway piano. Museum Store. Admission: adults \$23, children 6 to 16 \$6. 9:30 am - 4:30 pm daily. Hildene, The Lincoln Family Home, 1005 Hildene Rd. (802) 362-1788. hildene.org. *Through January 1 (closed December 24-26).*

MIDDLEBURY. Exhibit: Twelfth Annual Holiday Show of Original Works by Local Artists. Handmade and hand-printed art and fine crafts by twenty-five regional artists in a wide variety of media and styles. Monday-Saturday, 12 noon - 5 pm, and an hour before public events in the building. The Jackson Gallery at Town Hall Theater, 68 S Pleasant St. (802) 382-9222. *Through December 31.*

MIDDLEBURY. Holiday Train Exhibit. Mid-Vermont Train Club's elaborate electric train layout stands 3 levels high, with Lionel O gauge and HO trains. Backdrop of the Green Mountains. Cost: adults \$5, youth 6-18 \$3, under 6 free, seniors \$4.50, family \$12. Engineers run the trains: Tues.-Fri. 1-4 pm; Saturdays 11 am - 2 pm; Sundays (December 15 & 22) 1-3 pm. Henry Sheldon Museum, 1 Park St. (802) 388-2117. *Through January 11.*

MIDDLEBURY. Christmas Trees. Balsam fir, Fraser Fir, Balsam Fraser Cross, Canaan Fir, Concolor Fir, Scots Pine, Blue Spruce. Cut your own or choose from pre-cut trees. Hot cocoa and cookies. Ponies in the barn to pet. Large scale indoor/outdoor train. Werner's Christmas Tree Farm, 429 Painter Rd. (802) 388-7781. wernertreefarm.com.

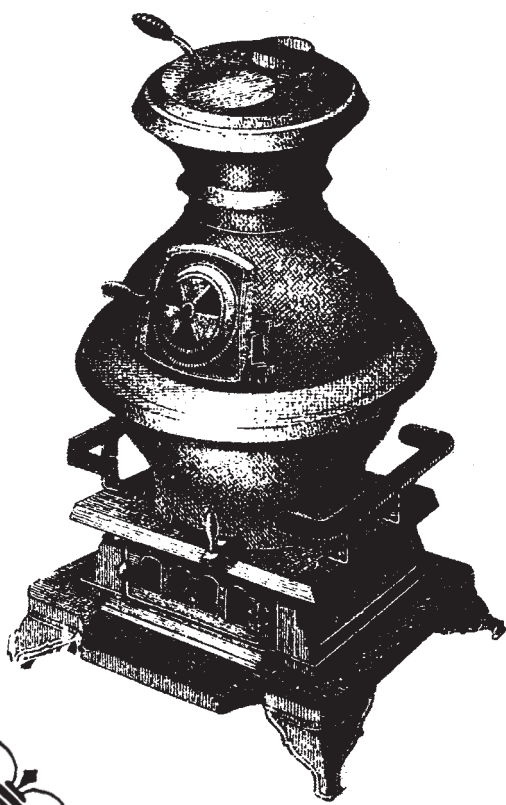
MIDDLEBURY. Annual Gingerbread House Exhibit. The theme this year is Christmas at Hogwarts Castle. Open daily, Monday-Saturday, 10 am - 5 pm, closed on Sundays. Vermont Folklife Center, 88 Main St. (802) 388-4964. vermontfolklifecenter.org. *Through December 21.*

POULTNEY. Tree of Giving: Donate \$\$\$ or get a name and give a gift. Monday through Friday 12 noon - 4 pm, Saturday 9 am - 12 noon. Northland Real Estate. (802) 287-9600. *November 29 through December 18.*

POULTNEY. Weekly Game Night. Games for young children as well as adults. Bring your own or play ours. Experienced game players help new players get started. 7-10 pm. Poultney Public Library, 205 Main St. (518) 282-9089 or (802) 287-5556. poultneypubliclibrary.com. *Ongoing every Thursday.*

POULTNEY. Stone Valley Arts. A non-profit community arts center. visual art shows, literary events, music concerts, dance performances, guest speakers, and classes in dance, drawing, music, scriptwriting, yoga and meditation. Stone Valley Arts, 145 E. Main St. (802) 884-8052. www.stonevalleyarts.org.

QUECHEE. Vermont Institute of Natural Science. Wildlife exhibits, workshops, and special events. Wildlife rehabilitation. Admission: adults: \$15.50, seniors (62 plus) \$14.50, youth (4-17): \$13.50, children 3 and under free. Open 7 days a week 10 am - 5 pm. Vermont Institute of Natural Science, 6565 Woodstock Rd. (802) 359-5000.



RANDOLPH CENTER. Silloway Maple Sugarhouse Tour. Open year 'round. Tour our solar powered, wood-fired maple sugarhouse. Hear how syrup used to be made, compared with today's modern ways. See the reverse osmosis machine, where part of the water is removed before boiling. Sample maple candy, shop for syrup, cream, and sugar - ship or bring home. Take your children and dogs on a self-guided hike to see the tubing system in the woods. 7 am - 8 pm. Silloway Maple, 1303 Boudro Rd. Call ahead and we'll meet you at the sugarhouse! (802) 272-6249 or (802) 249-0504.

RUPERT. Merck Forest and Farmland. Camping, cabins, 30 miles of trails, farm, workshops and seasonal events. Visitor's Center and store with certified organic maple syrup, our own 100% wool blankets, and more. Free. Open year round, dawn to dusk. 3270 Rt. 315, west of Manchester. (802) 394-7836. merckforest.org.

RUTLAND. Men's Yoga with Brian Sylvester every Tuesday. Focus on flexibility, strength and stress reside. \$5 for first class; \$10 per class/\$8 members. 6:30-7:30. Studio Serpentine at Cobra, 56 Howe St. (802) 772-7011. cobravt.com.

RUTLAND. Children's Classes: All About the Arts. Explore a variety of arts and crafts. Cost: pre-registered \$10; drop-ins \$15. 11 am - 12:30 pm. Chaffee Art Center, 16 S Main St. (802) 775-0356. *First Saturday of the month.*

RUTLAND. Children's Classes: Paint & Sip for Kids. Kids paint on canvas. Follow along with the instructor or create your own. Cost: pre-registered \$10; drop-ins \$15. 11 am - 12:30 pm. Chaffee Art Center, 16 S Main St. (802) 775-0356. info@chaffeeartcenter.org. *Second Saturday of the month.*

RUTLAND. Children's Classes: Let's Get Crafty. Featuring a hands-on craft experience. Cost: pre-registered \$10; drop-ins \$15. 11 am - 12:30 pm. Chaffee Art Center, 16 S Main St. (802) 775-0356. info@chaffeeartcenter.org. *Third Saturday of the month.*

RUTLAND. Children's Classes: The heART of Cooking. Aspiring Chefs will explore culinary arts from creating delicious treats to presenting them. Plus, themed table decorations and table scapes to make any occasion special. Cost: pre-registered \$10; drop-ins \$15. 11 am - 12:30 pm. Chaffee Art Center, 16 S Main St. (802) 775-0356. info@chaffeeartcenter.org. *Fourth Saturday of the month.*

RUTLAND. Open Studio Hub, for teens and young people. Draw, paint, craft. Do homework; Listen to music; Read; Create a book club, chess club, music club, writer's/poetry club, art club. Join Yoga, Ukulele Group, CreativeSpace, and more. Free. 3-6 pm. Chaffee Art Center, 16 S Main St. (802) 775-0356. info@chaffeeartcenter.org. *Wednesdays.*

RUTLAND. Figure Drawing Class. Live model, drawing benches, boards & easels. Bring own drawing materials. Cost: \$15. 4-6 pm. Chaffee Art Center, 16 S Main St. (802) 775-0356. info@chaffeeartcenter.org. *First and third Thursdays.*

RUTLAND. Sip N Dip Painting Class. Cost: \$30. 6-8 pm. Chaffee Art Center, 16 S Main St. (802) 775-0356. info@chaffeeartcenter.org. *Second and fourth Thursdays.*

RUTLAND. Meditation Group. Donations appreciated. Tuesday, Thursday, Friday 7:15-7:45 am; Sunday 5:30-6 pm. Chaffee Art Center, 16 S Main St. (802) 775-0356. info@chaffeeartcenter.org.

RUTLAND. Walking Group for All Ages. Donations appreciated. 5:15 pm. Chaffee Art Center, 16 S Main St. (802) 775-0356. info@chaffeeartcenter.org. *Mondays.*

RUTLAND. The heART of Ukulele. Informal group lead by volunteers. Donations appreciated. Beginners 5-5:30 pm; other levels join 5:30-7 pm. Chaffee Art Center, 16 S Main St. (802) 775-0356. info@chaffeeartcenter.org. *Second and fourth Wednesdays.*

RUTLAND. Yoga for the Mindful heART. Please Bring your own mat. Cost: \$5. 6:30-7:30 pm. Chaffee Art Center, 16 S Main St. (802) 775-0356. info@chaffeeartcenter.org. *Thursdays.*

RUTLAND. CreativeSpace. Bring tools/supplies to create your works of art along with other inspiring artists. Open to all arts: fine artists, quilters, jewelry, musicians, etc. Some supplies available to purchase; call ahead. Donations appreciated. 10 am - 12 noon. Chaffee Art Center, 16 S Main St. (802) 775-0356. info@chaffeeartcenter.org. *Fridays.*

RUTLAND. Writers Group. Donations appreciated. 12 noon - 2 pm. Chaffee Art Center, 16 S Main St. (802) 775-0356. *Chaffeeartcenter.org. Fridays.*

RUTLAND. Mindful heART Book Group. Donations appreciated. 9:30-11:30 am. Chaffee Art Center, 16 S Main St. (802) 775-0356. info@chaffeeartcenter.org. *Chaffeeartcenter.org. First Saturdays.*

RUTLAND. Vermont Farmers' Market. From farm fresh veggies and fruits to artisan cheeses. Live music. 10 am - 2 pm. Vermont Farmers Food Center, 251 West St. (802) 342-4727. vtfarmersmarket.org. *Saturdays through May 2.*



Katie Trautz.

CD Release

Katie Trautz's 2019 Album 'Passage'

Katie Trautz's new album 'Passage' is a collection of original music written over the past decade, with echoes of Honky-tonk, Appalachian music, and modern Americana that give the album an eclectic and creative sound. The decision to create an album that reflects the complicated passage between childhood and adulthood was a deliberate one, closing a chapter of songwriting, and turning a new page of creativity. This is Katie's eleventh album, including at least four with 'Wooden Dinosaur', and three with 'Mayfly'. 'Passage' is her second solo album, but the focus on original music sets it apart from Katie's previous records. Katie is joined by Mike Roberts (electric guitar), Julia Wayne (harmonies) and Tyler Bolles (bass) for the Ripton Coffeehouse show.

'Passage' includes songs accompanied by country-style guitar, dobro, ethereal harmony, and a warm, steady rhythm section. The musicianship is excellent, bringing a cohesive and creative sound to the studio. Katie's musical compadres include Tony Award winner Michael Chorney, legendary Vermont bassist Rob Morse, Dan Davine, Asa Brosius, Mike Roberts of Wooden Dinosaur, Julia Wayne of Mayfly and Will Andrews. The history Katie has with these musicians is long, adding to the depth and sensitivity of the material. She has worked with many of them in previous projects, and has stayed personally connected over the years, often looking to them for inspiration in her own music.

With the help of Michael Chorney as producer, the album has been able to bend the borders of folk music, and live outside of any specific genre. As life's journey can be unexpected, dark at times, and somehow always warm at the core, 'Passage' is reminiscent of all of that.

The album can be found on iTunes, amazon.com, CDbaby, and www.katietrautz.com, as well as local stores in the Central Vermont area.

Katie Trautz is a native Vermont fiddler who has toured nationally and internationally sharing traditional music and original folk songs. Katie also plays the guitar and banjo crossing genres with her numerous ensembles. Katie is the co-founder of the Summit School of Traditional Music and Culture, based in Montpelier, VT. Following her 8-year directorship at the Summit School, she became the Executive Director of Chandler Center for the Arts in Randolph, VT. In the fall of 2016, she decided to return to teaching music to children, while raising her new baby son.

The CD Release Show will be Saturday January 4th at 7 p.m. at the Ripton Coffee House, Ripton, VT. Open mic begins the night, followed by the main act. Admissions at the door is \$15-\$20, \$3 for kids 12 and under. www.rcch.org.

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Vermont Country Calendar

(Ongoing activities 2019, continued)

SHELBURNE. Sleigh Rides. 20-minute horse-drawn wagon ride from the Welcome Center (weather permitting). On the half hour, 11 am – 2 pm. No reservations; tickets sold on a first come, first served basis beginning at 10 am when the Welcome Center opens. 2:30 pm and 3 pm private rides available. Call for snow conditions and weather updates. Cost: adults \$10, children \$8, under 3 free. Shelburne Farms, 1611 Harbor Rd. (802) 985-8442. shelburnefarms.org. December 21–31 (except Christmas Day).

SOUTH BURLINGTON. Santa Visits. Visit with Santa in Center Court. Sit with Santa and have your picture taken with him (please no personal photography). December 14–23 11 am – 3 pm and 4–8 pm, December 24 9 am – 12:30 pm and 1–4 pm. University Mall, 155 Dorset St. (802) 863-1066. umallvt.com.

SPRINGFIELD. Stellafane. A place and an organization devoted to amateur astronomy, founded by Russell W. Porter in 1923, and considered by many to be the “Birthplace of Amateur Telescope Making.” Home to The Springfield Telescope Makers, Inc., an active amateur astronomy and telescope-making club that sponsors many events, classes, and an annual convention in August on Breezy Hill. Springfield Telescope Makers, Inc., PO Box 601, Springfield, VT 05156. webmaster@stellafane.com. www.stellafane.com.

STATEWIDE. Salvation Farms. Volunteer opportunities to glean and process Vermont raised, surplus fruits and vegetables for use by vulnerable populations. For more information contact (802) 522-3148. info@ourfarmsourfood.org. salvationfarms.wordpress.com.

STATEWIDE. December is Prime Time for Feeding Birds. Be vigilant for signs of bears because they can re-emerge for short feeding forays if there is a period of warm weather. If you see bear tracks or bears are raiding bird feeders in your area, take the feeders down until later. Audubon recommendations about how to feed birds and what to feed them: vt.audubon.org/bird_feeding.

ST. ALBANS. Book Cellar—Library Used Book Sale. \$3 per bag of books! Sponsored by Friends of the St. Albans Free Library. Tuesdays from 10 am – 8 pm. Held in the library basement. St. Albans Free Library, 11 Maiden Lane. (802) 524-1507. stalbansfreelibrary.org.

STOWE. Exhibit: Members’ Art Show & Sale and Festival of Trees & Light. Artwork from ceramic sculpture to fine art photographs. Evergreen trees decorated with ornaments handmade by master artisans. Hanukkah display of menorahs, games, and dreidels. Helen Day Art Center, 90 Pond St. (802) 253-8358. Through December 28.

WEST RUTLAND. Vermont Herbal General Store. Tai’ Chi Gung classes, Tuesdays and Thursdays at 5 pm at the store. Free intro classes. Meditations at the store Wednesdays at 5 pm. Usul & Karuna Reiki Healings & Classes. Handmade Herbal Medicines, Oils, Essences, Crystals, Gemstones & Books. Open Tuesday & Wednesday 1-6, Thursday 11 am – 4:30 pm, Saturday 1-6 pm, Sunday 1-4 pm, closed Friday and Monday. Vermont Herbal General Store, 578 Main St. (802) 438-2766. vermontherb.com.

WHITE RIVER JUNCTION. Newberry Market. A year-round, public indoor market with vendors offering local products, cheeses, clothing, gifts, pottery, and specialty foods. Free admission. Open every Thursday year round 11 am – 6 pm. Newberry Market, 19 South Main St. For information contact: Betsy Briggs Wheeler at (802) 299-0212. newberrymarketwrj.com.

WOODSTOCK. Christmas at the Farm. Discover the traditions of a late 19th-century Vermont Christmas. Tour the authentically decorated farmhouse, visit the dairy farm, and meet farm animals. Make historic Christmas ornaments and crafts, candle dipping. Horse-drawn sleigh or wagon rides Dec. 15 and Dec. 26 – Jan. 1, as conditions permit. Adults \$16, 62 & over \$14, children 5–15 \$8, 3–4 \$4; 2 & under free. 10 am – 4 pm. Billings Farm & Museum, one-half mile north of the Woodstock village green on VT Rt. 12. (802) 457-2355. billingsfarm.org. December weekends and December 22 – January 5 (closed Christmas Day).

WOODSTOCK. Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historic Park. 20 miles of trails and carriage roads are open year-round. Gardens and mansion. Vermont’s only national park. Guided tours \$4/\$8, under 15 free. Walk the grounds free. Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historic Park, 54 Elm St. (802) 457-3368 x 22. nps.gov/mabi.

MUSEUMS, EXHIBITS & GALLERIES

ARLINGTON. Visit the Canfield Gallery and the Russell Collection. Library hours: Tues & Thurs 9 am – 8 pm, Wed 9 am – 5 pm, Fri 2-6 pm, Sat 10 am – 3 pm. The Russell Collection is open Tues 9 am – 5 pm. Martha Canfield Memorial Library, 528 East Arlington Rd. (802) 375-6153.

BARRE. Vermont History Center and Leahy Library. Thousands of books, manuscripts, photographs, maps, audio, video and film recordings, and many other items which shed light on the lives and times of past Vermonters. Admission: Adult \$7, seniors \$5, students free, families \$20. Admission includes both the Vermont History Museum in Montpelier and the Vermont History Center in Barre. Open Monday-Friday, 9 am – 4 pm. Vermont History Center, 60 Washington St. (802) 479-8500. info@vermonthistory.org. vermonthistory.org.

BELLOWS FALLS. River Artisans Cooperative. Really Handmade... Really Vermont. River Artisans is the longest continually operating craft cooperative in the state of Vermont. The works of 30+ of New England’s finest craftspeople await you in our shop located in this historic riverside village. The shop is open year round Wednesday through Monday 10 am – 4 pm (closed Tuesday). River Artisans Cooperative, 28 the Square. (802) 460-0059.

BENNINGTON. The Dollhouse and Toy Museum of Vermont. Dolls and dollhouses, puppets, trucks and trains, toys, and educational displays. Museum shop. Admission is \$2 for children three and older, \$4 for adults and \$10 for families. Open Saturdays and Sundays from 1-4 pm. 212 Union St. at the corner of Valentine St. (802) 681-3767. www.dollhouseandtoymuseumofvermont.com.

BENNINGTON. Laumeister Art Center. Permanent collections, theater productions, workshops. Open Wed-Mon, 10 am – 5 pm. Laumeister Art Center, 44 Gypsy Lane. (802) 442-7158. artcenter@svc.edu. www.artcenter.svc.edu.

BENNINGTON. Exhibit. Color Fields: 1960s Bennington Modernism. A group of artists who were pushing the possibilities of abstraction in pared-down, color-based works. Open daily, 10 am – 5 pm. Bennington Museum, 75 Main St. (802) 447-1571. benningtonmuseum.org. Through December 30.

BENNINGTON. Bennington Museum. Founding documents, fine art, Bennington Pottery, the 1924 Wasp Touring Car, Grandma Moses, Vermont furniture, and the Bennington Flag—one of America’s oldest flags. Lectures, workshops, concerts, films, and the George Aiken Wildflower Trail and Hadwen Woods. Admission: adults \$10, seniors and students over 18 \$9. Admission is never charged for younger students, museum members, or to visit the museum shop. Open 10 am – 5 pm. Bennington Museum, 75 Main St. (802) 447-1571. www.benningtonmuseum.org.

How Far to Bethlehem?

“How far is it to Bethlehem Town?”
Just over Jerusalem hills adown,
Past lovely Rachel’s white-domed tomb —
Sweet shrine of motherhood’s young doom.

“It isn’t far to Bethlehem Town —
Just over the dusty roads adown,

Past Wise Men’s well, still offering
Cool draughts from welcome wayside spring;
Past shepherds with their flutes of reed
That charm the woolly sheep they lead;
Past boys with kites on hilltops flying,
And soon you’re there where Bethlehem’s lying.
Sunned white and sweet on olived slopes,
Gold-lighted still with Judah’s hopes.

“And so we find the Shepherd’s field
And plain that gave rich Boaz yield,
And look where Herod’s villa stood.
We thrill that earthly parenthood
Could foster Christ who was all-good;
And thrill that Bethlehem Town to-day
Looks down on Christmas homes that pray.

“It isn’t far to Bethlehem Town!
It’s anywhere that Christ comes down
And finds in people’s friendly face
A welcome and abiding place.
The road to Bethlehem runs right through
The homes of folks like me and you.”

—MADELEINE SWEENEY MILLER

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Monday, Dec. 23 • 2pm
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BRANDON. Compass Music and Arts Center. Arts businesses and studios, workshops & classes, exhibits, concerts, and community events. A gift shop features art and music related books, collectibles, and the music of the classical recording company, Divine Art Records. Artisan food and crafts, Treasure Chest, and more. Open Monday-Saturday 10 am – 5 pm. Compass Music and Arts Center, 333 Jones Drive, Park Village, 1.5 miles north of downtown off Rt. 7. (802) 247-4295. www.cmacvt.org.

BRATTLEBORO. First Fridays Gallery Walk. Monthly celebration of the arts in downtown and nearby locations. 40-50 or more exhibit openings, many with meet-the-artist receptions and live music, plus occasional readings, dance, circus arts, theater, and more. Free. 5:30-8:30 pm. (802) 257-2616. www.gallerywalk.org. *Monthly on first Fridays.*

BURLINGTON. Fleming Museum of Art. More than 20,000 objects that span the history of civilization, from early Mesopotamia through contemporary America. Admission: adults \$5, family \$10, students and seniors \$3, children 6 and under free. Tue, Thu, Fri 10 am – 4 pm, Wed 10 am – 7 pm, Sat– Sun noon – 4 pm. Fleming Museum of Art, 61 Colchester Ave. (802) 656-0750.

CENTER RUTLAND. The Rutland Railroad Museum. Housed in the Rutland Depot, built in 1917. See railroad artifacts and historical exhibits including HO & N scale model railroad layouts and a children's layout. The museum is also available to educational groups and schools for tours by appointment. Open Saturdays from 11 am – 1 pm. Rutland Railway Association, 79 Depot Lane. For information call John Schaub at (802) 768-8427. www.rutlandrailroadmuseum.org.

HARTFORD. Hartford Historical Society Museum. Tours and exhibits cover the history of Hartford, including the Abenaki tribes. Free. Monday-Friday 9 am – 1 pm. Garipay House, 1461 Maple St. (802) 296-3132.

MANCHESTER. Southern Vermont Art Center. Galleries, exhibits, classes, performances, gift shop, café, botany trail. Free admission to some exhibits. Open Tues-Sat 10 am – 5 pm. Yester House Galleries, Southern Vermont Arts Center, West Rd. (802) 362-1405. www.svac.org.

MANCHESTER. Hildene House Tours of Robert and Mary Lincoln's home. The museum store in our 100-year-old carriage barn welcomes visitors for distinctive gifts. Tours daily at 2 pm with a prior reservation, not recommended for children under 10. Admission \$20 adults; children 6 to 14, \$5; under 6, free. A fee of \$7.50 for the tour is added to the general admission. No admission charged for Welcome Center and Museum Store. Open daily year round 9:30 am to 4:30 pm. Hildene, The Lincoln Family Home, Rt. 7A, south of the village. (802) 362-1788. info@hildene.org. www.hildene.org.

MIDDLEBURY. Exhibit. "Conjuring the Dead: Spirit Art in the Age of Radical Reform." Spirit photographs and original spirit drawings from the Henry Sheldon Museum's collections. Admission: adults \$5, youth (6-18) \$3, seniors \$4.50, family \$12. Tuesday-Saturday 10 am – 5 pm. Henry Sheldon Museum, One Park St. (802) 388-2117. mmanley@HenrySheldonMuseum.org. *HenrySheldonMuseum.org. Through January 11.*

MIDDLEBURY. Henry Sheldon Museum of Vermont. The oldest chartered community history museum in the United States, welcoming visitors since 1882. Exhibits, research center, and museum shop. Admission: adults \$5; youth (6-18) \$3, seniors \$4.50, family \$12. Open Tues-Sat 10 am – 5 pm and select Sundays in December 1-4 pm. The Henry Sheldon Museum, One Park St., across from the Ilsley Library. (802) 388-2117.

MIDDLEBURY. Middlebury College Museum of Art. Free. Tuesday through Friday 10 am–5 pm, Saturday and Sunday 12–5 pm, closed Mondays. 72 Porter Field Rd. (802) 443-3168. museum.middlebury.edu.

MIDDLEBURY. Vermont Folklife Center. Gallery, archives & research center, programs, and Heritage Shop. Free admission. Open Tues-Sat 10 am – 5 pm. Vermont Folklife Center, 88 Main St. (802) 388-4964.

MONTGOMERY CENTER. Montgomery Center for the Arts. Exhibits, classes, special events for all ages. 2 Mountain Rd. montgomerycenterforthearts.com.

MONTPELIER. Vermont History Museum & Bookstore. One admission fee gives access to both the Vermont History Museum in Montpelier and the Vermont Heritage Galleries in Barre. Admission: adults: \$7; families: \$20; students, children, seniors: \$5; members and children under 6: free. Open 9 am – 4 pm, Tuesday through Saturday. Pavilion Building, 109 State St. (802) 828-2291. info@vermonthistory.org. www.vermonthistory.org.

NEWFANE. County Museum. Early Vermont furniture, folk art, Civil War artifacts, clothing, toys, and tools. West River Railroad Museum: artifacts, documents and photographs documenting the Railroad's impact in the West River Valley. County Museum hours: Saturdays, Sundays and Wednesdays 12 noon – 5 pm (and by appointment). West River Railroad Museum hours: Saturdays and Sundays 12 noon – 5 pm (and by appointment). Railroad Museum, Cemetery Hill Rd.; Historical Society's County Museum, Main Street (Route 30). historicalsocietyofwindhamcounty.org.

NORWICH. Montshire Museum of Science. Trails, programs, and museum store. Open 10 am – 5 pm daily. Admission \$14 adults, \$11 children 2-17, under 2 free. Open daily 10 am – 5 pm. One Montshire Rd. (802) 649-2200. www.montshire.org.

RUTLAND. Chaffee Art Center. Exhibits, workshops, classes, Art in the Park October 6 & 7 in Main Street Park. Open Mon-Fri 10 am – 5 pm, Sat 9 am – 3 pm. Chaffee Art Center, 16 S. Main St. (802) 775-0356.

SAXTONS RIVER. Main Street Arts. Exhibits, concerts, lectures, workshops, and classes for adults, teens and children. Main Street Arts, 35 Main St. (802) 869-2960.

SHAFTSBURY. Robert Frost Stone House Museum. The house, built circa 1769, was considered historic even before the Frost period. It is a rare example of colonial architecture made of native stone and timber, and has changed little since Frost's time. The house sits on seven acres and still retains some of Frost's original apple trees. Wednesday-Sunday, 10 am – 4 pm. 121 Historic Rt. 7A. (802) 447-6200. www.bennington.edu.

SHOREHAM. Shoreham Bell Museum. See 5-6,000 bells collected from all over the world. Open most afternoons by appointment or chance year round. Free admission, donations accepted. Shoreham Bell Museum, 127 Smith St. off Rt. 74 west. For information call Judy Blake at (802) 349-9957. vtcat@shorehambellmuseum.com.

SPRINGFIELD. Gallery at the VAULT. A Vermont State Craft Center featuring fine art and hand-crafted gifts from over 125 local and regional artists and craftsmen. Classes, workshops. Current exhibit: Open Wall Show—"Rhythms." *Through July 25.* Exhibit: "Art In Bloom." Artists' renderings of flowers—a spectacular show with all new work, *through July 17.* Mon 11:30 am – 2:30 pm, Wed-Sat 11 am – 5 pm. Gallery at the VAULT, 68 Main St. (802) 885-7111. galleryvault.org.

SPRINGFIELD. Exhibit: "Alchemy, Metal, Mystery & Magic, The Art of Transformation." The Great Hall, One Hundred River St. (802) 258-3992. www.facebook.com/GreatHallSpringfield. *Through February.*

ST. JOHNSBURY. Fairbanks Museum and Planetarium. Exhibits, programs, special events, wildflower table, collections. Admission: adults \$8, seniors and children under 17 \$6, under 5 free. Open every day 9 am – 5 pm. Fairbanks Museum and Planetarium, 1302 Main St. (802) 748-2372. www.fairbanksmuseum.org.

WEST RUTLAND. Carving Studio and Sculpture Center Gallery. Hours are Monday-Friday, 10 am-1 pm, or by appointment. 636 Marble St. (802) 438-2097.

WHITE RIVER JUNCTION. Main Street Museum. A small, public collection of curiosities and artifacts, each one significant and telling a story about human beings and the universe we are part of—an alternative experiment in material culture studies. Open Tues & Wed 4-7 pm. Parking adjacent to the rear of the building. Located at 58 Bridge St., Studio 6, near the underpass. (802) 356-2776. www.mainstreetmuseum.org.

WHITE RIVER JUNCTION. Exhibits and workshops. Open 11 am – 2 pm Tuesday – Friday. Two Rivers Printmaking Studio, 85 North Main St. (802) 295-5901. trps@sover.net. tworiversprintmaking.org.

WOODSTOCK. ArtisTree Community Art Center. Exhibits, classes, music, special events. Tues 11 am – 8 pm, Wed-Sat 11 am – 4 pm. Mount Tom Building, 1206 Rt. 12. (802) 457-3500. www.artistreevt.org.

WOODSTOCK. Billings Farm & Museum. Visit the Jersey herd, draft horses, oxen, and sheep and tour the restored and furnished 1890 Farm House. Admission: adults \$16, 62 & up \$14, students 16 and up \$9, ages 5-15 \$8, 3-4 \$4, under 3 free. Open Saturday and Sunday, November through February from 10 am – 4 pm. Also open February vacation week from 10 am – 4 pm. Billings Farm & Museum, Rt. 12 & River Rd. (802) 457-2355. info@billingsfarm.org. www.billingsfarm.org.

The Friendly Beasts

Jesus our brother, strong and good
Was humbly born in a stable rude
And the friendly beasts around Him stood
Jesus our brother, strong and good

"I," said the donkey, shaggy and brown
"I carried His mother up hill and down
I carried His mother to Bethlehem town"
"I," said the donkey, shaggy and brown

"I," said the cow, all white and red
"I gave Him my manger for His bed
I gave Him my hay to pillow His head"
"I," said the cow, all white and red

"I," said the sheep with curly horn
"I gave Him my wool for His blanket warm
He wore my coat on Christmas morn"
"I," said the sheep with curly horn

"I," said the dove from the rafters high
"I cooed Him to sleep so that He would not cry
We cooed Him to sleep, my mate and I"
"I," said the dove from the rafters high




Thus every beast by some good spell
In the stable dark was glad to tell
Of the gift he gave Emmanuel
The gift he gave Emmanuel

—UNKNOWN



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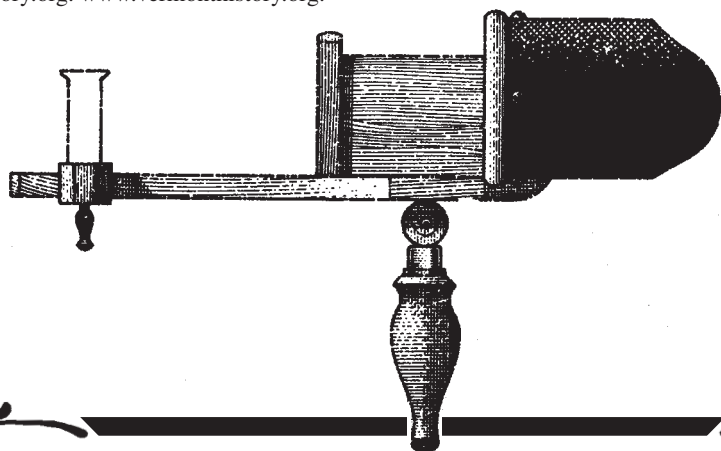
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50 States of Pie—Food Network Names Wayside Restaurant’s Maple Cream Pie the Iconic Pie for Vermont

The Wayside Restaurant’s maple cream pie has been selected by the Food Network as Vermont’s iconic pie. As we all know, pie is so much more than just a dessert. There’s a feeling of nostalgia and comfort in every bite, not to mention a strong sense of place. Turns out you can learn a lot about a state’s agricultural and historical traditions by eating its pie.

Located on the Barre-Montpelier Road for the past 101 years, the Wayside has become known for its homemade pies. The award-winning maple cream pie is a not too sweet custard-like pie, lightly laced with very flavorful dark maple syrup. Slices served in the restaurant are topped with a dollop of real whipped cream. Whole pies can be ordered in advance for a favorite family gathering.

“When we got the call from the Food Network, we couldn’t believe it,” says Wayside Restaurant, Bakery & Creamery co-owners Brian and Karen Zecchinelli. “It’s

a great tribute to our old-fashioned recipes and our modern day bakers that are committed to keeping Vermont’s longstanding baking traditions alive and well!”

Vermont is the nation’s leader in maple syrup production, accounting for approximately six percent of the world’s supply of the sticky sweet stuff (second only to Quebec province, which pumps out an astounding 75% of the world’s supply!) So it’s no surprise Vermont has developed so many delicious ways to consume maple syrup.

Travel across the country and you’ll find pies at roadside diners, orchards, bakeries, hotels, church potlucks—you can’t travel very far without bumping into a pie. The Food Network has identified pies in each of the 50 states that are worthy of a taste. To learn about them go to “50 States of Pie” at www.foodnetwork.com/restaurants/photos/50-states-of-pie and start planning your cross country trip!



photo courtesy Wayside Restaurant
Wayside Restaurant’s Bakery Team holds their Food Network award high celebrating a sweet victory! Over the years they have made thousands of tasty maple cream pies for locals and tourists alike. Gourmet Magazine once wrote in their Thanksgiving issue, “The Wayside Restaurant’s maple cream pie is too delicious for words!”



photo courtesy Wayside Restaurant
A slice of the Wayside Restaurant’s iconic Maple Cream Pie.

Hanover, NH

And So We Walked: A Cherokee Artist’s Moving, Funny, Mystical Journey Along the Trail of Tears

In the 1830s, federal Indian removal actions that became known as “The Trail of Tears” forced an estimated 100,000 Native Americans to relocate from the Southeastern United States to the West. Some 15,000 died on the journey. Among the survivors were ancestors of award-winning Cherokee actress, writer and activist DeLanna Studi.

Now Studi has created a riveting solo show that revisits that genocidal federal policy as she unfurls an epic tale about walking, with her father, a 900-mile section of the trail. Studi will perform *And So We Walked* on Friday, January 10, 7:30 p.m., and Saturday, January 11, 2:00 p.m. and 7:30 p.m., at the Hopkins Center for the Arts at Dartmouth College.

The show is being presented in conjunction with a ten-day Hood Museum of Art residency by Native photographers Kali Spitzer (Kaska Dena) and Will Wilson (Diné). On January 10 at 6:30 pm, there will be a free discussion about contemporary native arts by Spitzer, Wilson and Thomas Studi, Delanna Studi’s father and collaborator on *And So We Walked*. Jami Powell, the Hood’s curator of Native American Art, will be the moderator.

On an evocative stage set of wooden boards and a few plain furnishings, with a backdrop of wide cloth strips that capture projected images that help set the scenes, Studi recounts her journey along the same trail her great-great-grandparents took from their home in western North Carolina to Oklahoma, where Studi was raised.

Moving back and forth in time and voicing several dozen distinct characters, she recounts her childhood, her father’s experience in an Indian boarding school, the history of the Trail of Tears, and the people and situations she encounters on her journey—by turns comic, mystical and always more than what they seem. Her career decisions to pursue an acting career, her vivid, prophetic dreams, and a furtive romance also play their part in the enthralling narrative.

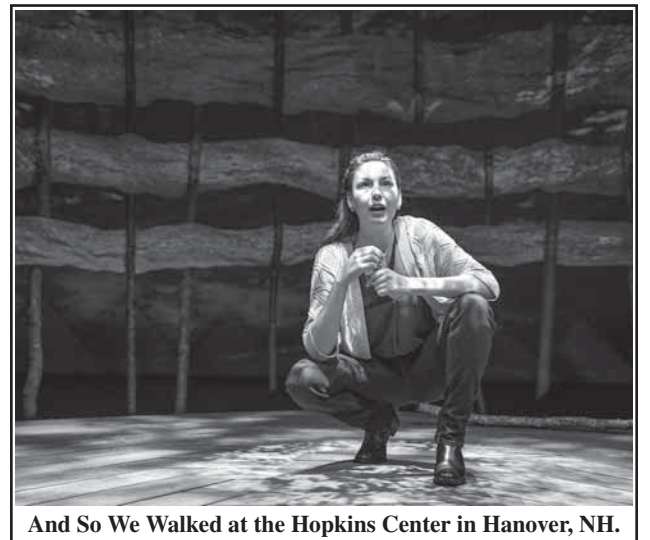
So far seen in only a few select venues around the coun-

try, *And So We Walked* was called “intensely powerful” by Broadway World, and theater blogger Judy Nedry wrote: “Studi’s storytelling is magical...*And So We Walked* is a journey of Biblical proportion.”

Part of the Hop’s ongoing commitment to Native voices and themes, *And So We Walked* is being programmed in conjunction with CIPX Dartmouth: Kali Spitzer and Will Wilson, a project and exhibit at the Hood Museum of Art, January 6 through March 15.

Studi developed the work in close collaboration with producer and director Corey Madden, who, over a 30-year professional career, has been the creator, director and/or producer of more than 300 site specific, interdisciplinary and new works that have premiered across the country and in Europe.

The Hopkins Center for the Arts is located at 4 East Wheelock Street in Hanover, NH. The Hop Box Office is open Monday - Friday: 10 am - 6 pm, Saturday: 1-6 pm. (603) 646-2422. hop.dartmouth.edu.



And So We Walked at the Hopkins Center in Hanover, NH.



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The Christmas Revels will be at the Lebanon Opera House, in Lebanon, NH December 21-23, 2019.

Lebanon, NH

The Christmas Revels: An English Celebration Of the Winter Solstice

One of the Upper Valley's most popular holiday traditions for the whole family since 1975, The Christmas Revels is coming to the Lebanon Opera House, in Lebanon, NH, for the first time! There will be five performances from Saturday, December 21 through Monday, December 23.

In a small town in Northern England at the height of the Industrial Revolution, it's business as usual at the textile mill on Christmas Day. Despite the factory owner's controlling presence, the hopeful and resilient community of workers is able to celebrate the season...thanks to a little help from the hands of Fate. Join Revels North for a magical, musical, and inspiring 45th Christmas Revels!

Audience singalongs, children's singing games, a nummers play, the mysterious Abbots Bromley Horn Dance, and Susan Cooper's poem "The Shortest Day" will weave together with an engaging story of struggle and the strength of the human spirit.

The Christmas Revels is presented annually by Revels North, a non-profit organization based in the Upper Valley that throughout the year brings to life traditional music, dance and stories that span the centuries and the world. Recent productions of The Christmas Revels have featured the stories, music and traditions of Scandinavia, Québec, Scotland, Appalachia, Venice, and Ireland.

Tickets for The Christmas Revels: An English Celebration of the Winter Solstice are \$8-\$47 and available at the Lebanon Opera House box office, (603) 448-0400, or online at lebanonoperahouse.org.

Five Performances: Saturday, December 21 at 2:00 and 7:00 p.m.; Sunday, December 22 at 2:00 and 7:00 p.m.; Monday, December 23 at 2:00 p.m. (all youth seats \$8).

Lebanon Opera House is located inside City Hall on the Lebanon Green at 51 North Park Street, Lebanon, New Hampshire, right off of Interstate 89 and only minutes away from Hanover. There is plenty of free parking on nearby streets and in the large public lots behind the theater, and several excellent restaurants within walking distance.



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Chef's Market: Breakfast, Lunch, & Natural Foods

by Charles Sutton

After 30 years of working in country inns Scott and Tammy Aronson decided the last thing they wanted to do was run a restaurant. But that's just what they ended up doing with their expanded Chef's Market in Randolph, VT.

They found that when opportunities present themselves, it's best to go with the flow.

So today the couple are running a combined restaurant and natural foods store in the old railroad depot in downtown Randolph.

In addition to the Chef's Market (with a previous location also in Randolph) Vermonters may have enjoyed Scott's cooking when he was a chef at The Dorset Inn, Townsend Country Inn, and Gifford Medical Center.

The career in being a chef began when Scott and Tammy took jobs at the High Winds Inn in the Adirondacks. Scott recalls the clientele of well-to-do New Yorkers brought their own alcoholic beverages and they gifted the couple with their left-over vintage wines and bonded liquors!

At the various locations Tammy usually had a job, too, in management. At the same time she worked as a goldsmith making wholesale jewelry. The couple also raised two boys Justin and Brandon.

Scott inherited the desire to be a chef from his French grandfather Edmund Schwartzmann who ran the former Chez Rene's in East Randolph. His father owned the Woodbury, VT General Store.

Scott got into combining natural produce with food service from having worked at Woodstock Farmers Market. The two businesses are natural companions: farm to table.

The couple moved into their present location at 2 Salisbury St. two years ago after being south of town starting in 2007 where their cozy little building was a natural foods market with a limited take-out food service. Scott had to cook on a six-burner stove in a tiny kitchen. The menu has been doubled at the new location now that dining tables are available.

The brunch features such items as steak and eggs, eggs Benedict and Eggs Romanoff made with Ducktrap cold smoked salmon. Their dozen sandwiches include Chef's Market's famous BLTs (2 kinds), Reubens, Pulled Pork, Portobello Mushroom Veggie, Chicken, Steak and others. There are soups of the day (watch for their lobster bisque). Salads include Beet, Chicken Curry, Asian Sesame Noodle, and Caesar.

During the summer special noodle bowls are offered which one usually finds only in large metropolitan areas.

When Chef's Market was in smaller quarters only a limited amount of vegetables and other produce was available. In the new location their selection of natural vegetables, fruits and other produce doubled in size.

Many of the suppliers are local farms. Look for produce from the following: Back Beyond Farm, Black River



photo by Nancy Cassidy

Looking down on the natural foods from the second floor at Chef's Market in Randolph, VT.

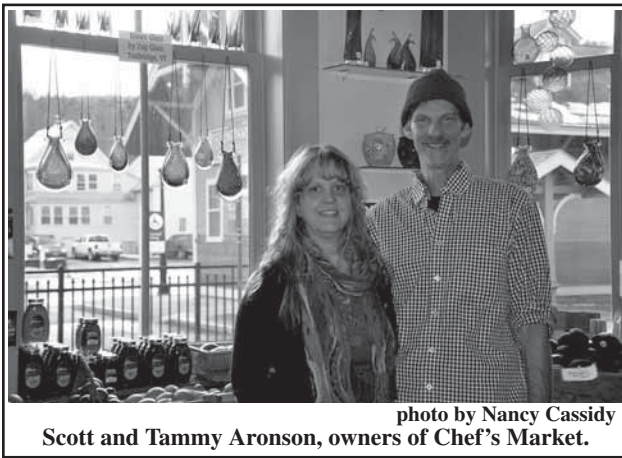


photo by Nancy Cassidy

Scott and Tammy Aronson, owners of Chef's Market.

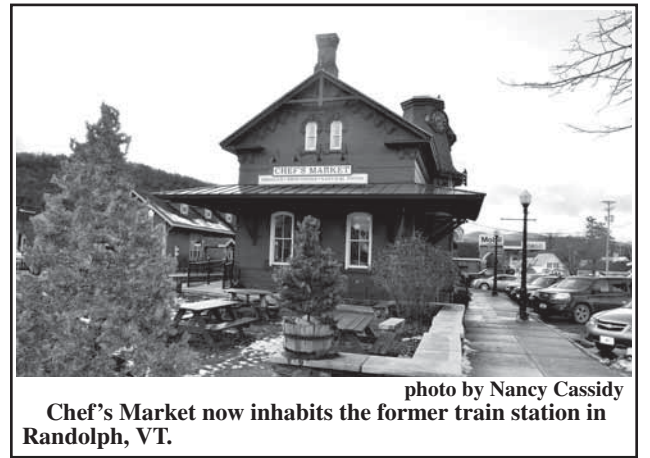


photo by Nancy Cassidy

Chef's Market now inhabits the former train station in Randolph, VT.

Produce, Brotherly Farm, Butterworks, Fat Rooster Farm, Fat Toad Farm, Misty Knoll Farm, North Hollow Farm, Neighborly Farm, Lelak and Tomaski Bakery, Quaker Hill Granola, Strafford Organic Creamery, Sundown Farm and Tunbridge Hill Farm.

Chef's Market can be reached at (802) 228-4202. Market hours are Monday-Friday 9-6; Saturday 9-5; and Sunday 9-4. The kitchen hours are Monday-Saturday 9-3:45 and Sunday 9-4.



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VERMONT (SSN 792) Commissioning Committee issues Naval Ship Calendar with Vermont names

The VERMONT (SSN 792) Commissioning Committee has issued a 15 month calendar for 2019-2020 depicting Naval vessels that have carried the Vermont State name or the names of towns, cities, counties and noted individuals of Vermont.

The calendar is to commemorate the upcoming Commissioning of the Submarine (SSN 792) named for the State of Vermont and all

the men and women that have served on those ships. The VERMONT a Fast Attack Submarine of the Virginia Class submarines is the third Naval vessel to carry the Vermont State name, the last being the Battle Ship (BB-20) commissioned in 1907 and part of the "Great White Fleet."

The calendar provides a glimpse into the ties that the State of Vermont has had with U. S. Navy including the only Admiral to have

been given by Congress the rank of Admiral of the Navy to George Dewey of Montpelier, VT. The first submariner and only enlisted submariner by the name of Henry Breault was presented the Medal of Honor by President Calvin Coolidge. When asked what state he was from Breault indicated Vermont, giving Vermont credit.

Other notable vessels include Ethan Allen, George Dewey, and for LT. William Charles Fitzgerald of Montpelier. In all more than 20 naval vessels have been given honor to Vermont. As Governor Phil Scott said at the Christening of the VERMONT (SSN 792) "The waters of our state are those of mountain lakes and rivers, amid a rugged landscape.

But here's what you need to know: though the oceans are absent from Vermont, Vermont has never been absent from the seas."

This pictured collection of just a few of the vessels and individuals that have had ties and continued ties to Vermont, is one calendar well worth collecting of past and current memories of the men and women that have served on them.

Calendars are available at many American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars posts, posted on the VERMONT (SSN 792) Commissioning Committee website: www.usssvermont.org or by contacting the e-mail or telephone number listed on the website.

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USS Vermont SSN-792 2020 Calendar
15-MONTHS

USS Vermont SSN-792 2020 Calendar.

You Made Your Bed (Finally) So Now You Can Lay in It!

by Burr Morse

Boy, do dogs ever have it made...no bills to pay, cards to write, beds to make...wait a dog-gone minute. They do make beds! In fact, they're quite precise about that process. It's not that they're particular about location...the living room rug or hard maple floor, cold porch, or even a dog-lover's plush bed but wherever it is, the ritual of circling three times before lying down is very important to them. And that's it. Dogs're smart enough to keep things simple!

Please tell me that you're still not trying to make that bed...you humans can be such fools sometimes!

Reminds me of the last time Betsy asked me to help her make our bed. Before I proceed, I'll say that there's no better homemaker than my good wife but in spite of her fastidiousness, there's one simple detail she left out. Here's my story:

The other day I helped her make our bed even though,

left to my own devices, I'd pick a place, circle three times, and flop. She insists there be both top and bottom sheets, the bottom being a nasty thing called "fitted". I say nasty because its corners are elastic and rounded. Because of this, it's impossible to fold into a neat square "bundle" (fine with me, I don't believe in folding, anyway), and since the mattress is square, it's a bit of a "round peg in square hole" situation. On that day, she handed me a piece of the offending thing and we grasped it as best we could. Betsy, the director, beckoned me to her opposing mattress corner and I stretched

against the corner she had already tucked in...no dice. Think putting a sixteen inch tire on a seventeen inch rim or the wrong Tupperware top on the wrong bottom.

As much as possible, we turned the thing ninety degrees. Still no dice. All the while our gentle Lab Fern lay on a rug close by looking at us through sleepy eyes that seemingly said, "Silly people...tsk, tsk, tsk!". Finally, after trying to decipher a tag with sheet-colored, faded lettering, we guessed that it was a double bed size and our mattress was queen size...again, think wrong tires and Tupperware.

Now to the thing Betsy left out: a laundry marker, of course. Oh to have had clear, legible markings that indicated size and orientation on that awful thing...but did we mark it? Heck no. We just folded it (crumpled it in my esteemed opinion) and put it back in the drawer to surely perform the same ritual next time. That's another place dogs have it all over us...they're capable of learning, you know, "lie", "sit", "shake", simple tasks like that.

In trying to bring my rant to a resolve, I "googled" fitted sheets to find out who in God's name invented them. Well, don't'cha know, there were hundreds of folks there glad enough to sell 'em to me but not a single clue about that flawed "fitted" inventor! Nope, guess I'll never know. In the meantime, think I'll just run out in the yard and circle three times...much more productive than workin' with a fitted sheet!

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Small Happenings

There isn't much to write about. The day is almost through. Nothing at all has happened— At least, there's nothing new. I washed the dishes, made the beds, And finished the new dress, The green and black, and though old stuff, It's got to do, I guess. I've swept the floor and fed the cat— Oh, yes, I made some hash, And tried to cook some turnips that Were bound they would not mash. I wrote two letters, knit some lace, And read a page or two In my new book, and now again, At night, I write to you!

—NELLIE S. RICHARDSON
Springfield, VT, 1944

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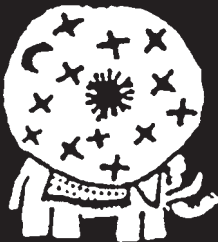
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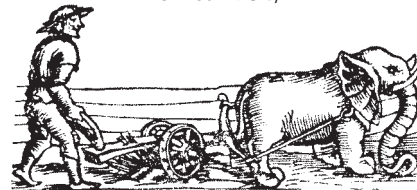
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North Country Book News

Children's Book Reviews by Charles Sutton

'Tis the Season for Good Cheer & Snow!

This season is when we are especially reminded that "it is truly more blessed to give than to receive." This message can hardly be more beautifully illustrated than in *The Star Child*, by The Brothers Grimm illustrated by Bernadette Watts (\$17.95. *NorthSouth Books*. www.northsouth.com.)

The English-born artist simply known as Bernadette is known throughout Europe for her folk and fairy tales, wonderful works spanning a 50-year career.

In this story you will love the title girl Mathilde who has no mother or father and is homeless. She sets out on a journey with only the clothes on her back and a piece of bread. Along the way she meets others who are as impoverished as she, but she gives them her only food and the clothes off her back: a hat to a little boy; coat to a young boy whose arms were scratched carrying wood; her dress to a little girl clothed in a sack; and finally her remainders to a girl dressed only in a dirty cloth. Happily and soon thereafter you will see the stars above rewarding The Star Child with gifts of clothing and gold coins so she can continue her life of giving. The artist's full and double-page spreads of beauty are the perfect setting for the child with so much heart and soul.



As soon as there is enough snow, especially the wet sticky kind, children will be out making snowmen. For advice on this wintery project enjoy the good works shown in *All You Need for a Snowman* by Alice Schertle and illustrated by Barbara Lavallee (\$8.99. *Board Book*. *Houghton Mifflin Harcourt*. www.hmh.com.)

Easy to follow instructions are told in poems. For advice about dressing the snowman: "Walnut buttons, five in a row, belt in the middle, boots below, big wool scarf, broom to hold, mittens (in case his hands get cold), fanny pack, something to read—that's absolutely ALL you need for a snowman."

Of course, some big balls of snow and a carrot for his nose.

Those who have never had the fun of making a snowman still know one when they see one. But not always in the

animal kingdom as you'll find out in *One Snowy Morning* by Kevin Tsing and illustrated by Dana Wulfekotte (\$16.99. *Penguin Random House*. www.penguin.com/kids.)

In this amusing tale a squirrel and his pal chipmunk discover odd things stuck in a pile of snow which they decide is enough "stuff" to do something else with—like making a dragon tooth (actually a carrot) soup party. They take home the snowman's wooden legs, red scarf, hat and buttons for their party decor. But later, in the spirit of the season, they return most of the items and recreate their snowman—a little wacky but funny to look at.

Children caught up in the Christmas spirit would gladly take a train trip to the North Pole to check up on Santa's plans and see the reindeer. You, too, can board in *Santa and the Goodnight Train* by June Sobel and illustrated by Laura Uliska-Beith (\$17.99. *Houghton Mifflin Harcourt*. www.hmh.com) and have a trip of a lifetime heading north through villages made of gingerbread and streets lined with candy canes. But what's that in the railroad bed? Help! Santa's sleigh and his reindeer are spread on the tracks and all over the place while there's Santa nearby counting sheep! Be assured there will be a happy ending to all this and a good night to all from the North Pole.

With more than enough snow all winter in New England it is hard to imagine places without much snow. But in *Snow for Everyone* by Antonie Schneider and illustrated by Pei-Yu (\$17.95. *NorthSouth Books*. www.northsouth.com) we visit Jerusalem for a rare snowfall much to the delight of all its citizens: "it snowed and now it is morning, and the soldiers, elders, worshippers, pilgrims, and tourists all hurry through the snow covered alleyways." Children are out, too, celebrating the snowfall, but not for long as each child proclaims his or her God made the snow just for him or her. But when each child's snow collection melts, they learn Snow is for everyone.

Going into winter one can expect dark moods and thoughts even when we are surrounded by beautiful white snow. As we find out in *A Day So Gray* by Marie Lamba and illustrated by Alea Marley (\$17.99. *Houghton Mifflin Harcourt*. www.hmh.com) two young girls find an abundance of bright, cheerful colors all winter even if one of the girls finds the snow "boring" and a field is "blah brown." But as they venture outside they do see plants that are now "dots of orange, and vines of black...with sticks of licorice red. And poofs of tan."

The girls befriend a black cat and see more colors: "soft pads of pink...and eyes glowing yellow-green." There's an orange-glowing fire in the fireplace and sunset of "purple and tangerine." Surely enough colors to cheer anyone (including us) willing to take a second look.



Book News

Popular Vermont Field Guide Now Revised and Expanded

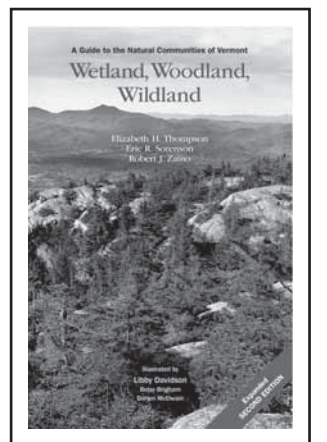
Wetland, Woodland, Wildland: A guide to the natural communities of Vermont is well-known to anyone curious about Vermont's forests, wetlands, mountaintops, and shores. A completely updated second edition is now available.

Co-authored by Elizabeth Thompson of the Vermont Land Trust, and Eric Sorenson and Robert Zaino of the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department, it incorporates recent scientific research about the state's natural communities and includes descriptions of seventeen newly recognized natural community types.

With photographs, line drawings and user-friendly writing, the new edition brings each natural community to life on the page. These updates will better inform amateur naturalists and professional scientists alike.

"Natural communities help us understand nature. When people can see patterns across the landscape, they have a better appreciation of nature and a heightened sense of responsibility to protect it," says co-author Elizabeth Thompson.

Natural communities are also important for the conservation of plants, animals



and habitats in Vermont. "They're places our native species thrive," said co-author Eric Sorenson. "If we understand and conserve all our natural communities, we will keep those species abundant. That's why all three organizations that collaborated on *Wetland, Woodland, Wildland* use natural communities in their work."

The book is published by the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department, The Nature Conservancy, and the Vermont Land Trust, and it is distributed by Chelsea Green Publishing. It is available online at vtfishandwildlife.com/wetland-woodland-wildland and in local bookstores.

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Barnyards, Barefeet and Bluejeans

A Horse's Tale

by Allen A. Mills, Jr.

(\$20. Shires Press. www.northshire.com.)

You surely have seen large shuttered farm houses with barns and out-buildings empty. No farmers and their families in sight, no cows nor other livestock and no tractors or equipment at rest in the barnyard. Some fields might still be leased out for hay-making or other crops, but these once working farms are no more. Blame the demise of small dairy farms on not being able to compete with large, factory farms, plus other economic pressures like rising taxes and other costs...pitted against smaller milk checks. In some cases farm children had no desire to take over and continue that hard life.

But what was farm life back then when these farms decorated Vermont's landscape?

A good place to find out is through the colorfully-written *Barnyards, Barefeet and Bluejeans—A Horse's Tale* by Allen A. Mills, Jr. (\$20. Shires Press. www.northshire.com). The book recreates the life on a family farm operated by the author's father Allen Sr. from 1947 to 1963. The 280-acre farm in Florence, VT, operated with a herd of 30-40 Holsteins—an ideal number then for single farmer. (Of course, the whole family shared in the work load). A bonus for the reader is the narrative is "told" by the farm's draft horse named Dick—hence the add-on to the title *A Horse's Tale*.

The book is comprised of more than 40 short stories or vignettes of farm life through all four seasons. Counter-balancing the daily

hard work, endless chores, and never-ending milking schedule, the readers learn about the bonuses of such a rugged life: picking wild strawberries and blackberries, gathering butternuts, hunting for ginseng root (used in herbal remedies), making dandelion wine, and going with the horse-tream and sled to cut one's own spruce tree for Christmas.

One time the children cut down a tree that was far too big so father had to cut off several

Book Review by Charles Sutton

feet from the top and bottom so it would fit in the living room. They also collected spruce branches which would be made later into decorated sprays that would be given later to friends and neighbors.

The Mills family consisted of father Allen, wife Ferne Spaulding Mills, and children Allen Jr. nicknamed 'Brud' after Brother who is the books' author, and Kathy, Ferne and Jan.

The Mills family also was home to nine foster children. The author recalls when the children first came "their eyes were dull, sad and hollow. Some showed signs of being physically abused" but after healing time on the farm "It was wonderful to see the transformation in these children that happened in whatever amount of time they had to stay in this magical valley."

We also meet a Fresh Air visitor with an extended name Michael James Joseph Horan from the Bronx, N.Y. who at the age of five started staying off and on with the Mills long enough even to be hired as farm laborer! Then he had to get up at 4:30 am and help with the milking by hand and do other chores and be quiet about it not to wake the others.

Another sign of the family's generosity was at Christmas time when they made gift packages to take to needy neighbors. These consisted of decorated sprays, pies, cookies and chocolate fudge laced with the butternuts which the children had so laboriously extracted out of the cracked shells, never an easy task.

The author recalls among the many shut-ins they gave gift packages to he enjoyed seeing a lone, old bearded farmer named Marco who lived in unkempt conditions but seemed to have everything he needed or wanted. "In the house, herbs and hot dried peppers hung from various places. There was always a wrong smell of garlic and an ever-present jug of red wine he had made sitting on the table. There were many books and papers



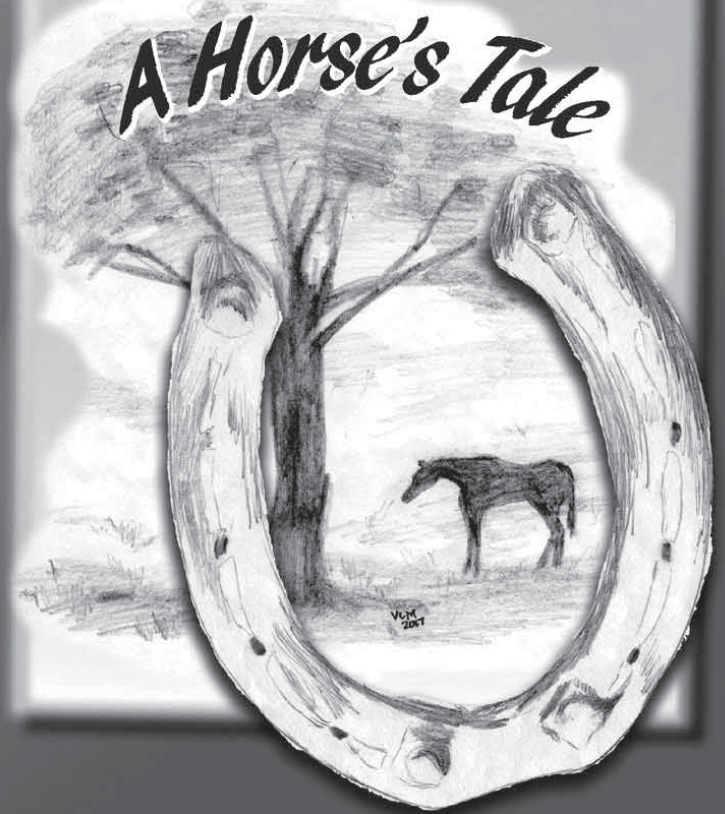
Mills farm family having the time out from chores. Top of pyramid is Allen "Brud" and left to right Ferne Marie, a Fresh Air child Mike Haron, Jan, Kathy and Morine Canon, also a Fresh Air child.



Hay heading for the barn on wagon pulled by workhorses Dick and Roany.

Barnyards, Barefeet and Bluejeans

A Horse's Tale



By Allen A. Mills, Jr.

around the house." He had the appearance of "a man of great knowledge and wisdom." He had present for the Mills, too—a large hand-woven willow basket.

The book is full of many anecdotes of farm life back then with each chapter titles giving a clue to what awaits the reader: Picking Berries with Grandpa Harley; Thistle Whacking; Mullen Dipping and Sweet Apples; Drawing Sawdust and Laundry Day; Working the Land and Fixing Fences; and Farm Life in Deep Winter.

The book has a good selection of family photos and appealing line drawings of the farm horses at work done by the author's daughter Vanessa Mills.

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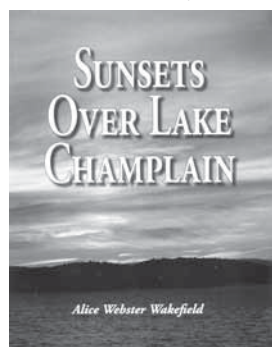
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North Country Reflections

Essential Tools For Gardeners

by Judith Irven
Photograph by Dick Conrad

At this time of year the annual catalog avalanche is beginning in earnest, not only in my physical mailbox down at the road, but also in its electronic equivalent on my desk.

And, since in the commercial world I am surely marked as an avid gardener, whole catalogs devoted to clever tools and gadgets designed to solve any garden problem I might ever encounter have already arrived, soon to be followed by colorful seed catalogs filled with tantalizing pictures of unblemished peppers and frilly lettuces.

But over time I have learned to avoid rash purchases of new garden gadgets that ultimately get little use but still take up valuable space in the tool shed.

Indeed, as I look back over the years, I find I typically reach for the same tools over and over again—these are my ‘essential tools’.

And furthermore, rather than hauling a heavy cartload of tools around the garden, I can carry many of my essential tools ‘at the ready’ in the very practical tool belt you see pictured here.

Its two ample pouches are large enough to safely carry my pruners, a weeder and a pair of hand saws—while the front pockets take smaller items like twine, seed packets and markers.

Essential hand tools that fit in my tool belt

I rarely step into the garden without my hand pruners, which I use both for grooming shrubs as well as for quickly dead-heading and tidying-up perennials.

Since I use my hand pruners primarily to cut soft plant tissue or live twigs, I chose the bypass type—where the blades pass across each other in a scissor-like motion. (The anvil design, which tends to crush the stem, is only recommended for cutting out dead wood—a much less frequent chore.)

Pruners come in many shapes and weights, and of course peoples’ hands vary widely in strength and size. Since you use your pruners a lot, it is really important find a pair that truly matches your hand. Take the time to shop for them in person at a store that offers several brands which you can really hold and feel before you buy.

Felco is usually considered the ‘gold standard’ for pruners and certainly they are beautifully made. However, after trying out the motion and weight of several different brands and models, I finished up buying an ergonomically designed Bahco pruner with its distinctively angled blade assembly, and I have been delighted with my choice.

My ‘Cobra head’ weeder—a unique steel hook with a distinctive blue handle that I received some years ago as a gift—is another tool that I would hate to be without. I press it into service for all kinds of weeding and cultivating, as well as for digging holes and transplanting small plants. And, by pushing the hook deep into the soil, I can even lasso those stubborn dandelion taproots, usually getting them out intact.

I found that my original Cobra head weeder had a tendency to fall out of my tool belt. However they now offer a new smaller model that not only is it perfectly sized for my hands, but also stays securely in my tool belt as I walk around!

I also count my folding saw, made in Japan by ARS, as another indispensable hand tool. Measuring just 9 inches when closed, it nestles easily into my tool belt. But it opens up to reveal an ergonomically designed curved handle that fits right into the palm of my hand, attached to an incredibly sharp 7 inch serrated blade that is perfect for cutting branches that may be too large for my pruners.

More recently I have combined this folding saw with a hand-sized version of the classic Japanese ‘sickle-saw’.



photo by Dick Conrad
Judith’s tool belt with two pockets carries all her everyday tools as well as smaller items like seed packets and twine.



photo by Dick Conrad
This sturdy fork and spade, made by Spear and Jackson, are still going strong after more than 15 years of use.

It too has a curved handle and an extremely sharp 6 inch serrated blade that makes quick work of cutting back large clumps of grasses and tough perennials stems during fall or spring clean-up.

Great tools for bigger jobs

Another alternative when pruning out larger branches is to invest in a pair of well-designed loppers and get them out as needed.

From personal experience I can vouch for the ‘Power Gear’ loppers made by Friskars, with a cam mechanism that actually gives you three times more power in each cut.

I find for most jobs the 18” size is perfect. But when confronted with heavier branches or the need to reach a little higher into a tree to make the cut, the 32” size is a nice back-up.

And, of course, no gardener’s toolkit would be complete without a good fork and spade. I use mine to prepare the soil for a new bed, to move (or remove) any larger plants, and also to lift and divide over-grown perennials.

So it is essential that my fork and spade be both strong and sturdy, while not overly heavy to use. From personal experience I can attest to the false economy of buying cheap thin forks that before long will bend or break.

Some years ago I purchased the digging fork and narrow transplanting spade shown in this picture. Each is forged from a single piece of high-carbon steel, and securely attached to a smooth ash handle. Made by the English company, Spear and Jackson, I bought mine at Gardener’s Supply in Burlington, where I was able to try the various makes and models to find tools that were compatible with my body.

Spear and Jackson has been making tools in England for over 100 years and their products come with a 15-year guarantee (not bad considering the stress many of us put on our garden tools). I use my fork and spade constantly and still they retain their original shape and strength—a testament both to their usefulness and also to their longevity.

Last but not least

My final recommendation is to invest in a battery-powered string trimmer, such as the Black and Decker model that runs on a 20 volt lithium battery. Oh, I can hear you say—‘an electric trimmer, that sounds really flimsy. Surely a gasoline engine would be preferable’.

The answer is that, while a gasoline powered trimmer works best for large jobs like cutting back wild grasses, you will be amazed at the host of smaller tasks that an electric trimmer can accomplish and its lightweight versatility is very welcome.

For example: I have a field-stone patio with thyme growing in the crevices. So, rather than attempting to weed between the stones, I use my electric trimmer to give the whole thing a monthly haircut.

You might also be tempted to experiment with some of the other tools in the same line which all have their interchangeable batteries. I have found plenty of uses for my electric hedge cutter (typically for cutting back large clumps of perennials), as well as for my small electric chain saw which will make short work of removing the occasional dead tree branch.

Choosing the right tools

If you have a small garden you will probably find the hand tools I listed here will meet almost all your needs. And furthermore they will be easy to store.

But if, like mine, your garden is more expansive, then having a few carefully selected larger tools for certain tasks will help make your time in the garden both fun and rewarding.

Certainly all the tools I have described here have been both extensively used and also stood the test of time—no small feat in today’s throw-away world!

Judith Irven and her husband Dick Conrad live in Goshen, VT where together they nurture a large garden. You can subscribe to Judith’s blog about her Vermont gardening life at www.northcountryreflections.com.

Dick Conrad is a landscape and garden photographer; to see his photographs go to northcountryimpressions.com.

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