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A Bristol Tapestry

by Earline V. Marsh

Champlain Valley Telecom takes pleasure in presenting *A Bristol Tapestry*, a word-weaving of people, events and natural environment that have shaped this beautiful and beckoning town.

Holley Hall, Bristol's town hall, was built in 1884 at a cost of $11,000 on a site donated by Winter Holley at the main intersection in the village. Photo courtesy of the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation

Within These Pages . . .

"Bristol wasn't even Bristol when it was first chartered. I discovered this fact, hitherto unknown to me, at the Vermont Historical Society Library in Montpelier, in the waning days of winter when snow still lingered on the lawn of the State House complex. I was off and running, delving into the history of one of our state's most charming and beckoning towns." EVM

No one knows for sure why the town of Pocock was renamed Bristol in 1789, when more than fifty families had settled here, most of them in log cabins nestled in the fertile farmland along the New Haven River at Bristol Flats. One reference says that the name probably came from Bristol, Rhode Island, a seafaring town incorporated in 1681. Its name came from Bristol, England, a major port of embarkation for the New World. Another reference says that settlers from Bristol, Connecticut, a town incorporated more than 100 years later in 1785, influenced the name change. (And did Bristol, Connecticut, take its name from Bristol, Rhode Island?) In any case, a third reference is supported: it says that the change to Bristol was prompted by the townspeople's desire for a "patriotic place name."

When the original charter was granted by Governor Benning Wentworth of the Province of New Hampshire in June, 1762, the town was named Pocock, in honor of Sir George Pocock. The eldest son of an English vicar, he had risen steadily through the ranks, and in 1761, was knighted and made an admiral, in recognition of his services and successes in naval encounters. The distinguished English admiral's name was attached to the town for only 27 years.

As early as 1761, nearby New Haven Gore was also known as Pocock Leg. In 1790 it was annexed to the town of New Haven, and again the admiral's name faded into obscurity.

Bristol Village

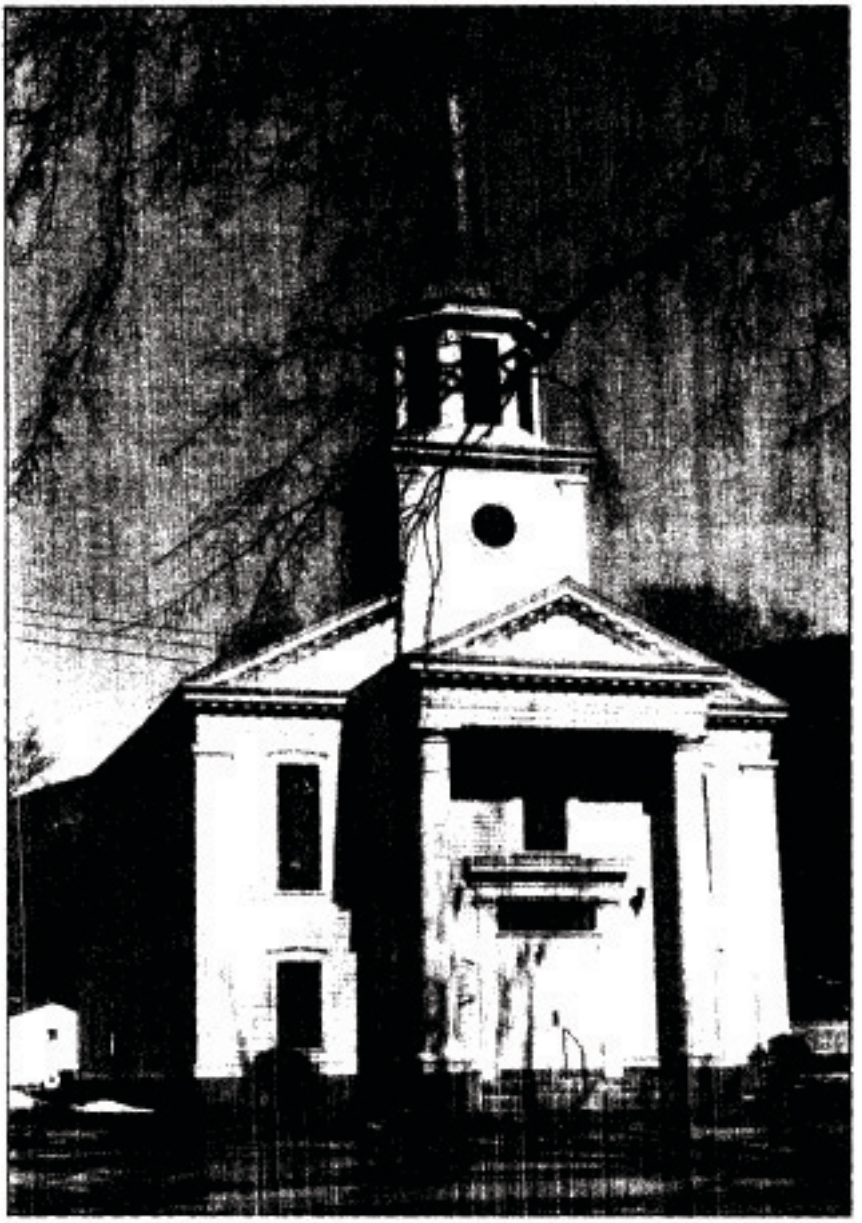
Bristol's population and commerce hub has always been the centrally located village. A 1937 account written by workers of the Federal Writers' Project of the Works Project Administration notes:

> "Bristol, situated on a broad terrace in the shelter of bluff mountains, is a clean pleasant village with well kept homes and grounds indicating the home-loving character of its people. In orderly arrangement, wide maple-lined streets bound the central Green with its cool-splashing fountain, park benches, old cannon, war memorials and playground." Not much has changed in the Village Green, but for the frequent drone of down-shifted trailer-trucks passing through the town. Today many of these turn-of-the-century homes are listed on the Vermont State Register of Historic Places.

Rocky Dale

Known historically as Rocky Dale (sometimes Rockydale), this small hamlet east of Bristol village evolved on the New Haven River near waterfalls which provided power for nineteenth century mills and early twentieth century hydroelectric generation. It is centered around the area where Route 116 makes a sharp bend and twice crosses the New Haven River. Early maps showed the small settlement as Ackworth, after a local resident. The 1937 Federal Writers' Project reads:

> "Ackworth is simply a group of homes lying at the junction of roads in the shadow of a forested ridge. On the west the abrupt rock-ledged knob of Hogback Mountain rears above the narrow valley. Between Ackworth and Bristol, State 116 runs alongside of the New Haven River, racing in the swift white spray of rapids over its stony course."



"Congregationalists, Baptists and Universalists united in 1819 to erect this meetinghouse (10 Park Street), remodeled a number of times since that date. Only its elaborate, enriched cornice and the pilasters and pediment surround of the window above the entrance likely date from its original design, attributed to builder Solomon Drake."

Quote from the *Historic Architecture of Addison County*.
Vermont State Register of Historic Places
Photo courtesy of the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation

Discovering Bristol

It was a picture perfect day in May, as I embarked on my first explorations of Bristol. I found myself basking in June as I thought, "What is so rare as a day in May -- then if ever come perfect days." From my home in Moretown, I blithely drove over the McCullough Turnpike, winding through the Appalachian Gap where ice-damaged trees, broken and twisted, bent eerily in contrast to the sunshine and new green.

I could never have foreseen the shocking imperfection of June days to come, nor the temporary end to my joyful drives over the Gap. The second weather disaster of 1998 struck, rivaling the winter ice storm in destructive powers. Longtime Vermont weather watcher Stuart Hall called it "the Great Rain Storm of June into July" and said, "The amounts of rain were prodigious, sometimes falling in sheets." The bridge which had stood for 70 years by the Squirrel's Nest Restaurant washed away in the rage of the New Haven River on that fateful June 27th. The Bristol ford -- which you can read about beginning on page 10 -- was swept away, leaving behind it the unsolved mystery of its age and origins. People living between the washed out bridge and the Lord's Prayer Rock were marooned for a few days, when the road disappeared into the angry rushing waters.

Responding to Governor Dean's request for federal aid in the wake of almost $18 million in flood damage, President Clinton declared eight Vermont counties disaster areas, Bristol being among the hard-hit Addison County towns. It was history in the making for Bristol.

But back to that perfect day in May. Arriving in Bristol village, I drove out North Street to start my discoveries with Bristol Pond/Winona Lake, which had captured my imagination. I had read Judge Harvey Munsill's account of the discovery of a Native American burial ground near the north end of Bristol Pond and I was intrigued. I was also grateful to the accommodating person who laboriously transcribed Judge Munsill's account hand written 150 years ago, so that today people like me could easily read this worthy history of early Bristol. In my research at the Vermont Historical Society Library in Montpelier, I had read how Bristol Pond became Winona Lake when a doting grandfather pushed a bill through the legislature to change the name, to honor his beloved granddaughter Winona. She had loved this pond during her growing up days in her grandfather's house after her mother had died. No connection to Winona, the mother of Hiawatha, I discovered. More about this on page 22.

Bristol Pond was hauntingly beautiful. I was alone at the water's edge, reveling in the freedom of simple reverence. Cheeky red winged blackbirds scolded from swaying cattails, a graceful water snake slithered by, two yellow and black butterflies performed a spirited ballet, a splash nearby mingled with familiar cries of gulls. Lake Champlain is not too far away. Lush newly green hills on the opposite shore, reedy shallow water with a beaver lodge in view, white trilliums, occasionally a pink one -- all these delighted my senses. I was happy to be enjoying this magnificence as if it existed just for me during this snapshot in time.

The next time I stood by Bristol Pond it was early July, post-flood. A torrential rain had followed me through the Monkton detour, and now soft raindrops speckled the sunspread surface of the water. Yellow waterlilies bloomed and the red-winged blackbirds were gone. Someone had marred the state fishing access bulletin board with graffiti. I wondered if graffiti writers carry indelible markers in their pockets, to be prepared when the urge to desecrate strikes them. In my car I wrote on a dappled notebook as the sun shone through raindrops still gently falling on my windshield.

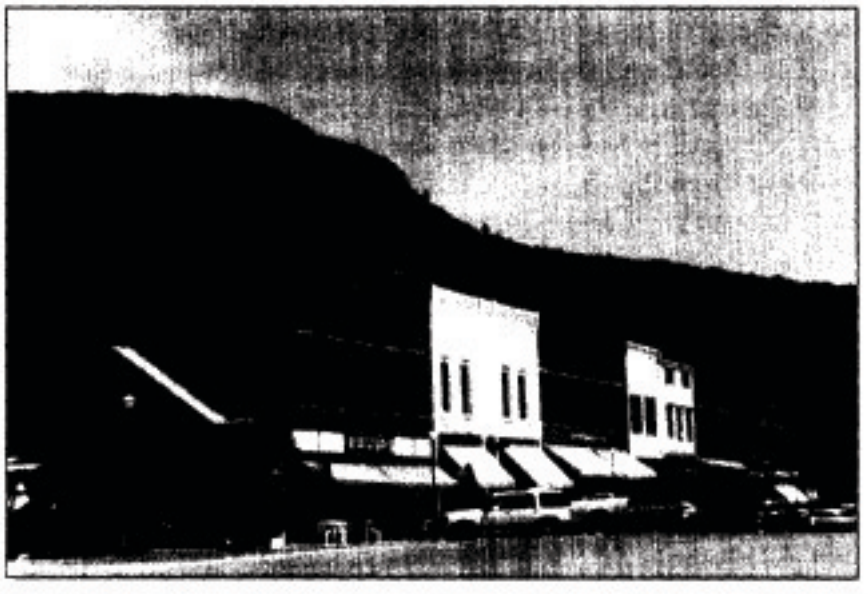
I continued on into Bristol village, noting signs on the power poles pointing to Red Cross Disaster Relief. The village looked peaceful -- green lawns, well tended flower beds, kids on bicycles, red, white and blue flags and buntings from the 4th of July celebration. Governor Howard Dean and several other notables had been here to march in Bristol's 4th of July parade. The fickle sun played hide and seek as I drove cautiously past the "road closed sign" and slowly over the newly filled section of road that had washed out near the Lord's Prayer Rock. No trees were left as a buffer and the road fill was low. The still coffee colored New Haven River was right there -- safely channeled by a newly laid rock bank. I parked inconspicuously across from the Squirrel's Nest and joined a pleasant onlooker in a bright yellow shirt. We chatted as we watched the orange armada of state trucks and the small army of diligent workers in orange shirts and orange safety helmets. Their sense of urgency was electric.

"Look behind you," my new friend said as he pointed to a dark cloud in the sky. We were soon scurrying to shelter in a quick deluge. The workers, ignoring what was now commonplace, continued undaunted.

During visits both before and after the flood, I sat in the Park at noon. In May chimes sounded from the classic Baptist Church standing sentinel on the Park Street side. People in the bandstand ate bag lunches. Next to the bandstand, three tables with snow white cloths were being set up by servers in trim white shirts and black pants. A large copper kettle was heavy with bottles of juice. I ate my sandwich from home -- and wondered what was in the large silver urns and laden containers being ferried from a mysterious cache across the street out of my view. Not-yet-arrived guests would elegantly dine in warm spring sunshine.

Sitting in the Park in July I felt a difference; it was more than the orange state trucks coming and going. It was, I slowly realized, the quiet absence of large trailer trucks going through Bristol village on their east-west journeys. I noted vacant parking spaces on Main Street.

On both visits I strolled around the Park. It's alive with people and well tended gardens and lawns, yet steeped in the town's history. At the corner by the traffic light -- the only one in town -- the 1862 cannon is still there, pointed at what is now Bristol Insurance Company diagonally across Main Street. The ornate green fountain still splashes cooling water on summer days. Two war memorials commemorate service to our country. One bears the names of Bristol soldiers who fought in the war, 1917-19.



Historic Bristol village with Deer Leap Mountain in the background. The 1899 Union Block on the north side of Main Street consists of separately owned buildings sharing common walls and a single foundation.

Grateful townspeople at the time, I thought, did not know this would become World War I. The second memorial, dated 1928, is without names. It was dedicated by the "Women's Relief Corps of Bristol, Vermont" to honor Vermont soldiers who served their country from 1861-65. (It does not, however, refer to the Civil War.)

I had recently watched a video of the 1988 film "The Wizard of Loneliness" set during WWII, filmed on location in Bristol and based on the novel by John Nichols. On this July day I stood by the memorial where war-tattered Duffy Kahler met his end. (Never mind that the actual memorial commemorates WWI.) I remembered the scene in which the 1940s vintage fire engine went racing by the Baptist Church and jubilant townspeople danced in Main Street as "War Is Over" is proclaimed in newspaper headlines.

One particular event during my visit in May is now unexpectedly a treasured memory. With a dripping chocolate and vanilla creemee from the Squirrel's Nest in hand, I walked over wintered acorns on the ground to the nearby concrete bridge. I could not find a date on the narrow and battered span, built seventy years ago when traffic was slower and less heavy. It was scary to venture out and peer down to see the Bristol ford I'd read about in a detailed report from the Consulting Archeology Department of the University of Vermont. At the time, I admit, the rocks laid in the river bed did not look very impressive. I knew that this was the Bristol ford, an early river crossing, recently documented in extensive detail to become the only inventoried ford in Vermont.

A few days after the dreadful floods I phoned Dr. Duncan Wilkie, the archeologist with the state Department of Transportation who had been so helpful with my research. It was Duncan who confirmed what I'd feared: the ford and the bridge were gone. He had just been there to review the damage. His words brought some measure of comfort: "It was fortunate that we recorded the ford before it went."

Now that the enigmatic Bristol ford has been swept away, along with the battered concrete bridge, I know that I was fortunate indeed to stand there on that perfect May day, peering over the side of the bridge down onto those imperturbable rocks so laboriously laid in the riverbed.

The crash of the boulders and the smell of the earth -- that's what people remember from the crescendo of flooding in the predawn darkness of that late June Saturday.

Early in my research I talked with Elsa Gilbertson and Giovanna Peebles at the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation. They told me the remarkable story of the Bristol ford, and generously headed me toward resources I'd need, both print and people. I was fascinated -- and then frustrated that I had to leave the story in early September to meet my deadline -- with the temporary bridge in place, new research on hydroelectric stations underway, and a beautiful new sandy beach where the old ford had been. The mystery of the Bristol ford continues as I "save and quit" on my computer. EVM

The Bristol Ford

"The large quartzite slabs of the ford represent a unique method of constructing a river crossing. As the only inventoried ford in Vermont, the Bristol ford has yielded information important in understanding Vermont's history." Consulting Archeology Program - UVM

When the Vermont Agency of Transportation started the planning process in 1991 to replace the twin bridges in Rocky Dale, where Route 116 twice crosses the New Haven River, an amazing story of early Vermont history began to unfold. A stone construction was discovered in the river channel by the lower bridge (near the Squirrel's Nest Restaurant) and proved to be the state's only early ford, or river crossing, to be thoroughly mapped and photo-documented, for inclusion in the state archeological inventory.

Discovery of the Bristol ford sparked a cooperative research and documentation effort by the transportation department, The Vermont Division for Historic Preservation and the Consulting Archeology Program of the University of Vermont. The ford became a major impetus for an exhibit on Early Roads at Chimney Point Historic Site during the summer of 1998. It was the catalyst for continued research on fords in the context of Vermont's transportation history. And because of its historic significance, the Bristol ford became eligible for nomination to the prestigious National Register of Historic Places.

Because the area is considered to be archeologically sensitive, the UVM Consulting Archeology Program was called upon early in the planning process to conduct a survey in the location of the two proposed bridges near the confluence of Baldwin Creek and the New Haven River. (Areas

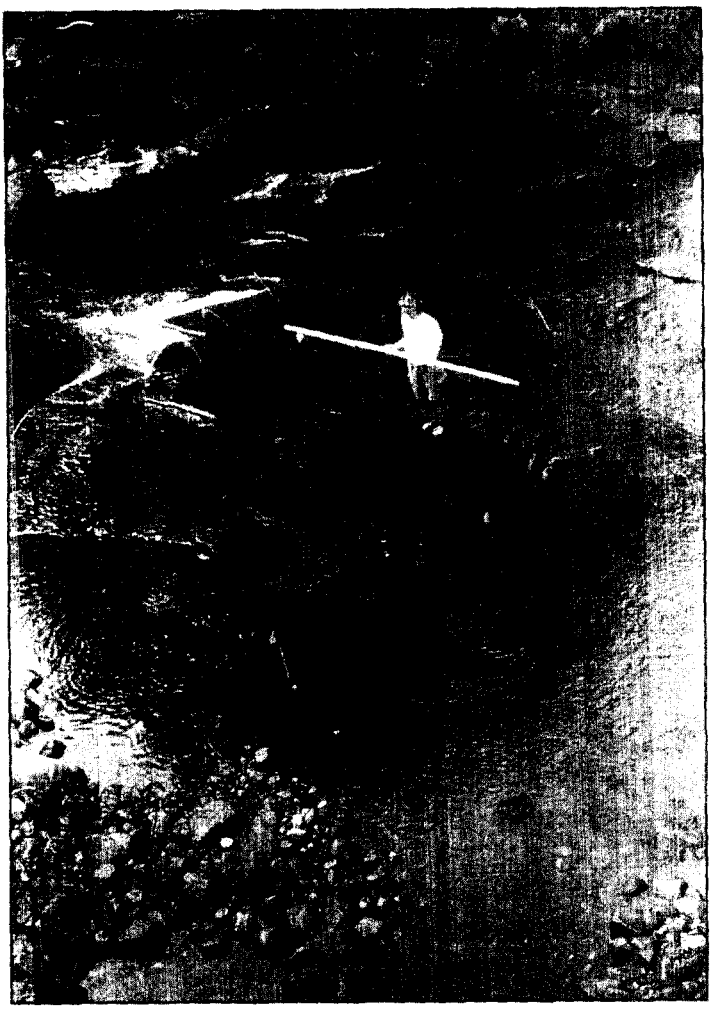
that are likely to contain historic or prehistoric archeological sites are considered to be "archeologically sensitive.") Although no prehistoric Native American sites were identified, the survey revealed this unusual historic site -- a stone ford which crosses the river near the location of the existing bridge and a long-gone covered bridge. The ford was constructed of large quartzite slabs which may have been quarried from ledges just upstream. Measuring as large as 14 feet long and 8 feet wide, the slabs, some irregularly shaped, were placed side by side in the river channel to create a 40 to 50-foot wide ford.

Subsequent excavation indicated that the only intact portion of the ford was in the riverbed. The prevailing theory was that approaches to the ford, along with any evidence of an old road, were destroyed in the late 1920s during construction of the two concrete bridges in the aftermath of the Great Flood of 1927.

Following identification of the stone construction in the river channel as a ford, extensive research in town and county histories and town land records failed to reveal information about the ford's age or its builders. It is possible that the ford goes back to the early years of Bristol settlement and predates the two covered bridges which were probably built in the mid-1800s. The archeological report reads: "The results of the documentary and oral informant research were disappointing. The ford was not mentioned in any of the sources consulted, leaving its exact age, function and affiliation still a mystery." Interviews with long-time local residents proved fruitless. This, and the absence of references in later nineteenth and twentieth-century sources suggest the possibility that the ford dates to the early nineteenth century.

At the old concrete bridge by Rocky Dale Nursery, abutments for the old covered bridge can still be found, one being tied into the remains of an old mill site, probably the Bartlett Plow Manufactory. The abutment on the Lincoln side is hand laid stonework, clearly visible from the road. Upstream from the lower bridge, washed out in summer floods and replaced by a temporary span, one old bridge abutment remains, having survived the raging flood waters.

In mid-August, state archeologist Duncan Wilkie said that historical research continues at the locations of both bridges, each of which had a hydroelectric facility at some point in the past. The history of these long-gone generating stations is being reconstructed from a variety of sources.



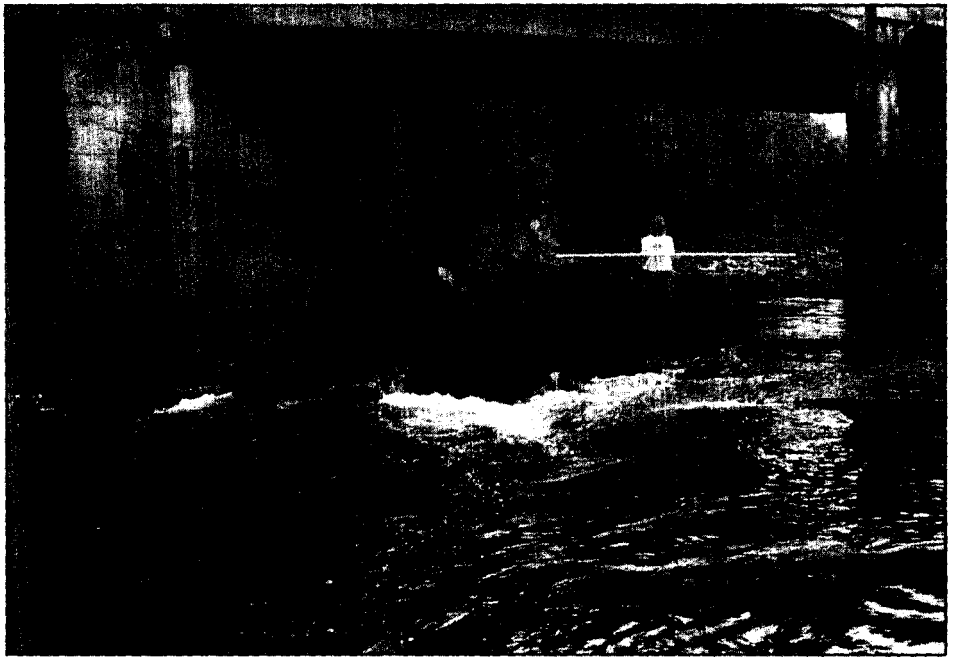
Looking down on the ford from the bridge by the Squirrel's Nest before the summer floods.

Photo courtesy of the Consulting Archeology Program - UVM

A Backward Look

Harvey Munsill, writing for the mid 19th century *Vermont Historical Gazetteer*, described the area 150 years ago.

"New Haven River enters through a mountain ravine, on the west, over so rough and rocky a bottom for some two miles that, in time of high water, it appears in a perfect rage, and winds its way by a circuitous route to New Haven. Upon this stream and Baldwin's Creek, a tributary, there are many good mill privileges."



The Bristol ford looking upstream and the concrete bridge near the Squirrel's Nest. The 70 year old bridge, along with the ford, washed away in the late June flooding. But the old bridge abutment, visible on the bank just beyond the large rock in the riverbed, survived.

Photo courtesy of the Consulting Archeology Program - UVM

The Archeological Site Identification and Evaluation report quotes Munsill: "[In earlier years] the road used to pass along near the [north] bank of the river and crossed Baldwin's Creek near where it entered the main stream." The report continues: "Sometime before 1857, the road had been relocated to roughly its present route, and crossed the river through two covered bridges. The bridge closer to Bristol village was called the lower bridge, and the one to the east was the upper bridge."

Note: Judge Harvey Munsill (1791-1876) was one of eight children born to Capt. Gurdon Munsill, who served in the Revolutionary War and came to Bristol in 1789. In a family biography it was said of Harvey Munsill: "He died April 11, 1876, full of years and covered with honor."

Study of Early Roads & River Crossings

When staff members from the Division for Historic Preservation, the Agency of Transportation and the Consulting Archeology Program met in 1992, they came up with recommendations for mitigating the adverse effects of the proposed bridge construction. Summarized, the mitigation phase "will involve an in-depth research on fords in the context and history of transportation." The exhibit of early roads displayed at the Chimney Point Historic Site was part of this agreement. Further, the preservation community "will gain from this study information about the development of technology in early river crossings and possible predictive indicators to locate other early ford crossings in Vermont."

At this stage in the research into early transportation in Vermont, fords or river crossings have been poorly documented. They were probably a common transportation feature predating covered bridges. But fords have been forgotten in our cultural history. Perhaps information revealed by the Bristol ford before its untimely end will provide clues to locate other early river crossings.

The Early Roads of Vermont: An Exhibit at Chimney Point Historic Site

A large yellow banner on the side of the historic red brick building at Chimney Point proclaimed the summer exhibit here as "The Early Roads of Vermont." In a spectacular setting on a bluff overlooking the narrows of Lake Champlain, Chimney Point Historic Site in Addison is owned by the State of Vermont, Division for Historic Preservation, and has been opened to the public since 1991. This special exhibit ran from June to October, 1998 and was open to tourists and to fall school groups interested in Vermont's cultural heritage.

Displayed in an air-conditioned upstairs room, which affords a sweeping view of the Lake, the exhibit "Making Connections: Early Roads of Vermont" covered a progression which included Indian Routes, Military Roads, and Settlers Roads. An introductory sign explained to the viewer that this exhibit was a product of research undertaken for the Vermont Agency of Transportation to mitigate the effects of the construction of a new bridge across the New Haven River in Bristol. The section called Settlers Roads contained "Crossing Streams Without Bridges" which showed two photographs of the Bristol ford, courtesy of the Consulting Archeology Program

at the University of Vermont. The caption read: "River fords were chosen at rocky shallow sections. Stream banks were often smoothed out. This unusual ford in Bristol was made by lining the New Haven River with huge slabs of quartzite."

Research in connection with two proposed new bridges in Bristol prompted an exhibit on the Early Roads of Vermont at the Chimney Point Historic Site. The section titled "Crossing Streams Without Bridges" showed the Bristol ford before it was washed away in the devastating summer floods.

Also on display at Chimney Point Historic Site is a selection of colorful posters commemorating celebrations of Archeology Across America. In 1982 Arizona was the first state to focus on archeology with a special week of activities. In 1994 Governor Dean officially proclaimed the second week in May as Archeology Week, with celebrations to promote archeology and to educate the public about threats to its rich historic and prehistoric past. In 1998 Vermont Archeology Week was celebrated September 20-26.

The Bristol Ford Site -- Summer 1998

Flash floods throughout the state in late June left widespread devastation in their raging torrents. On June 28 *The Sunday Times Argus and Rutland Herald* read, "The flooding happened quickly while people slept. The rain, which began late Friday night, rushed down mountains in Central Vermont, swelling valley rivers and forming walls of water that carried unbelievable force."

On July 1, newspapers were reporting yet another day of heavy rains that had then spanned two weeks. Bristol was one of the communities particularly hard hit. Roads and bridges were torn apart. Homeowners and businesses suffered agonizing losses. The National Guard was called upon to help repair the washed out road by the Lord's Prayer Rock. The historic Bristol ford, along with the seventy year old bridge, was washed away. The New Haven River was wildly out of control.

Plans for the new twin bridges were not yet finalized when devastating floods destroyed the bridge by the Squirrel's Nest, as well as the remains of the old ford. Just prior to the disastrous floods, Alec Portalupi, project manager with the department of transportation, explained that several different roadway alignments had been studied in the course of the planning process. At that time the projected construction date was 2002.

After attending a post-flood meeting with officials in Montpelier, Bob Hall, Bristol town administrator, talked about the latest plans for the new bridges. "The floods triggered an emergency procedure," he said, adding that final plans are now only weeks away and construction on the washed out bridge should start soon. "According to the original plan," he said, "there will be a two lane temporary bridge to handle traffic while the new permanent bridge is under construction." If all goes well, Bob predicts that the first bridge could be completed in 1999. Regarding the second, he was not prepared to make a prediction at this point. He added that, in this post-flood period, the Agency of Transportation holds update meetings on the issue of the new bridges every two weeks.

As summer drew to a close, one-way traffic, controlled by traffic lights, flowed across the temporary bridge. The Rocky Dale Nursery side of the temporary span utilized the intact pier of the old concrete bridge. A sizable expanse of fine clean sand formed an ideal riverside beach. All of the huge flat boulders from the ford were gone -- and there was still no answer to the question of where they may have ended up.

State highway crews worked diligently to restore Rt 116 when the bridge and a section of the highway washed out in the summer floods. Here in early July, working in the rain, crews are putting the finishing touches on the temporary bridge over the New Haven River near the Squirrel's Nest Restaurant.

Late August brought more heavy rain and wind, and the New Haven River once again was swollen by thunderstorms that swept through the area. Rainfall was reported to be 3.65 inches in one day. But town clerk Penny Sherwood reported: "We are doing fine -- nothing major."

Marianne Lancer once lived next to the now washed out bridge, and she has pleasant memories of the old ford. "It was like giant cobblestones," she recalls. "The ford was our summer beach. We'd put sun chairs on the rocks and sit in the river with our feet in the water listening to its pleasant sound." On first seeing the ford, she asked the question, "What's this?" When she figured it out as a ford, she said it was "a wonderful thing," not having realized before how people crossed the river before there were bridges. Marianne says that each year she noticed subtle changes in the river. But never before has she seen a perfect sandy beach like the one there now in mid-August.

Archeological Sites in Bristol

"Archeological sites are the sole source of information for the longest part of human activity in Vermont. These sites are extremely fragile, non-renewable resources. As tangible links to our past, archeological sites are important educational resources for both the young and old alike."

Archeological Report for the Town of Bristol,
Vermont Division for Historic Preservation

The 44 recorded sites in Bristol listed on the Vermont Archeological Inventory represent only a fraction of those that potentially exist in the town. Of these, 35 are prehistoric Native American sites, ranging in age from the Paleoindian Period (10,000 years ago) through the Late Woodland Period (400 years ago). To date, all the prehistoric sites recorded in Bristol were found by artifact collectors and avocational archeologists.

The archeological report notes: "To find archeological sites in one town that represent all cultural periods of prehistory is rare. Thus Bristol has a rich and valuable collection of Native American sites." The report also suggests that "systematic studies . . . by professional archeologists would add immeasurably to our knowledge of Bristol's prehistory and history."

Native Americans in Vermont date back 12,000 years, without documented history. Few references have come down to us during the less than 400 years of Europeans in Vermont, with their written tradition. The scant notes available to researchers come from explorers, soldiers and settlers referring to Native American villages, fishing spots or burial grounds.

The Harvey Munsill papers, an unpublished handwritten manuscript on the history of Bristol, were compiled between 1855 and 1865, when the author was in his late 60s and early 70s. Available in transcription at the Vermont Historical Society Library and other locations, the papers provide interesting information about Native Americans specific to the Bristol area, in a chapter titled Aborigines. Munsill wrote: "There is strong evidence tending to prove that they [Native Americans] have at some period of time made Bristol their temporary residence and hunting ground, if not a more permanent residence." When Bristol was first settled in 1786, Munsill wrote, there were small areas that appeared to have been cleared in the past and then showed a second growth of timber. He described other indications "such as a profuse scattering of arrow points, spear heads, chisels, gouges,

axes and pestles and some other relics the use of which is unknown to us." Munsill wrote about arrow points, some in an unfinished state. "There was such a place on the premises of the writer, in Bristol Village, where he has picked up and now has . . . a large number of [perfect] arrow points . . . and a large quantity of broken fragments." He described how relics were unearthed during plowing and "are now constantly being found."

Munsill quotes from a letter written by Philip C. Tucker Esq. of Vergennes, who "had paid considerable attention to this subject of Indian relics, and we deem his opinion worthy of consideration." Tucker wrote, "The large proportion of arrow heads in my possession are more of the kind of boulder common upon our lands, which the farmers dignify with the name of hard heads."

Munsill recorded the story of the Native American burial ground discovered north of Bristol Pond. "Something more than a year ago . . . some four or five skeletons [were] found in a sand bank and to appearances, as the writer is informed, they were buried in a sitting posture."

Also in this chapter on Aborigines is the story of "two or three families of Indians" that came from the north about 20 years earlier. "Among them was a very old man who called himself about 98 years of age." Munsill, with Noble Munson and Abraham Gage, visited the Indians. Munsill described the old man as being intelligent, having a good memory and an ability to converse in English. Although the Indian shed no new information about how the stone arrow heads were made, he said an axe-like implement was used for skinning deer and other game, and the implement that looked like a rolling pin was used in dressing animal skins.

"The old man was suddenly taken very sick, and soon died in his tent while stopping near Bristol Village," Munsill wrote, "and was buried in our burying ground at the foot of Stony Hill."

Subsequent references most likely come from Munsill's records. One line in the Gazetteer of Vermont Heritage (1966) reads: "Many years ago an Indian burial ground was unearthed near Bristol Pond, rich in skeletons, war clubs, arrowheads, stone knives and pottery." The 1937 Federal Writers' Program reveals: "The finding of many Indian relics, arrow-heads and spear heads in this vicinity indicates that the Bristol Pond region was once a rendezvous for Indian tribes, and the discovery of many unfinished arrow-heads revealed that the implements were made in the locality. Near the north end of the pond early investigators uncovered the skeletons of several Indians buried in sitting positions in a sand bank."

How these early stone tools were made is explained in the archeological report from the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation. "Local outcrops of quartzite, a rock material used by prehistoric peoples to fashion their stone tools, are found throughout portions of Bristol. Seven of the 35 prehistoric sites are characterized as quarry sites, where quartzite was extracted from an outcrop and manufactured into rough tool forms, or 'blanks' at the quarry location. These blanks were then transported back to the main camps where they could then be fashioned into finished stone tools, such as arrow and spear points, knives and scraping tools."

Ever since the days of early Bristol settlers, people have found Native American artifacts here in large supply. Many of these relics are now in museums; many are in private, well-cataloged collections.

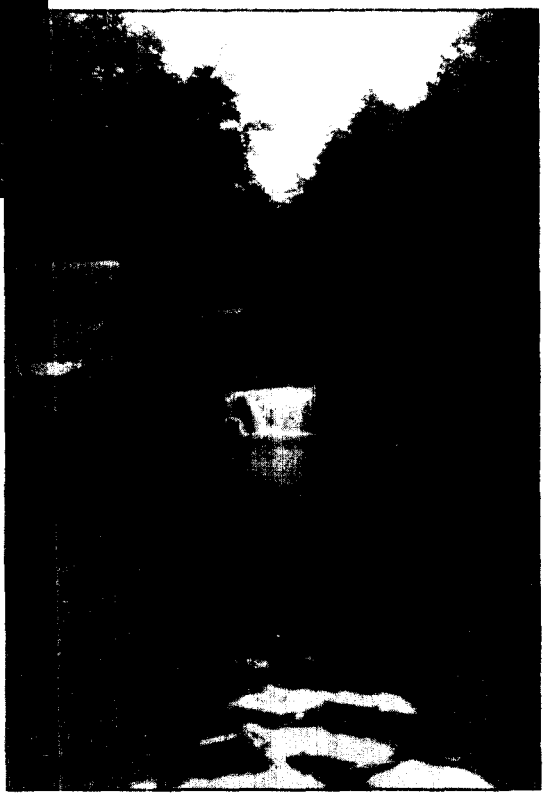
Bristol resident David Crawford is a serious avocational archeologist. He reads extensively in his collection of archeology reference books to aid in his collection and study of these "beautiful artifacts." Dave agrees with the state archeology report that Bristol is a rich source for Native American campsites and artifacts. He belongs to an informal group of like-minded avocational archeologists in Bristol who share their expertise and the relics they frequently find. In his experience, Dave finds that "Indian tools are more interesting than the points. The quality is amazing." In his personal collection are artifacts from the same site that range from 9000 to 300 years ago. Dave says, "The quality is better the farther back in time you go." As he talks about his deep interest, Dave conveys a reverence for his connection with these long-past people. Holding a small collection of arrow points, he says, "I couldn't go out and get my supper with one of these. Anyone who could has my admiration."

A recommendation from the state archeological report reads: "There are many ways in which community members can begin to identify and record archeological sites. The information gathered can serve as the town's preliminary inventory of archeological sites. Since identifying and recording archeological sites is indeed a lengthy on-going process, all activities that contribute to this effort are worthwhile."

An Archeology Projects Idea List is available from the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation, National Life Building, Drawer 20, Montpelier, VT 05602-0501. The telephone number is 802-828-3211.

A favorite summer swimming area, the historic Bartlett Falls underwent a dramatic change this summer, when severe flooding washed out the old timber crib dam that had stood here for many years. Town administrator Bob Hall lent the two photos on this page.

Left: a typical summer day in the past, date and photographer unknown.



Right: Shirley Emilo, secretary/receptionist at the town hall, took this photo of Bartlett Falls shortly after the devastating floods. The remains of the wooden dam are barely visible to the right of the falls.

Bristol Pond/Winona Lake

". . . [Truman] Varney pushed a bill to change the name of Bristol Pond to Winona Lake. True it was contrary to policy but . . . the bill was passed by the Senate, signed by the Governor, and so became law on February 17, 1931. It said:

The pond, situated in Bristol, commonly known as Bristol Pond, is hereby named and designated as Winona Lake.

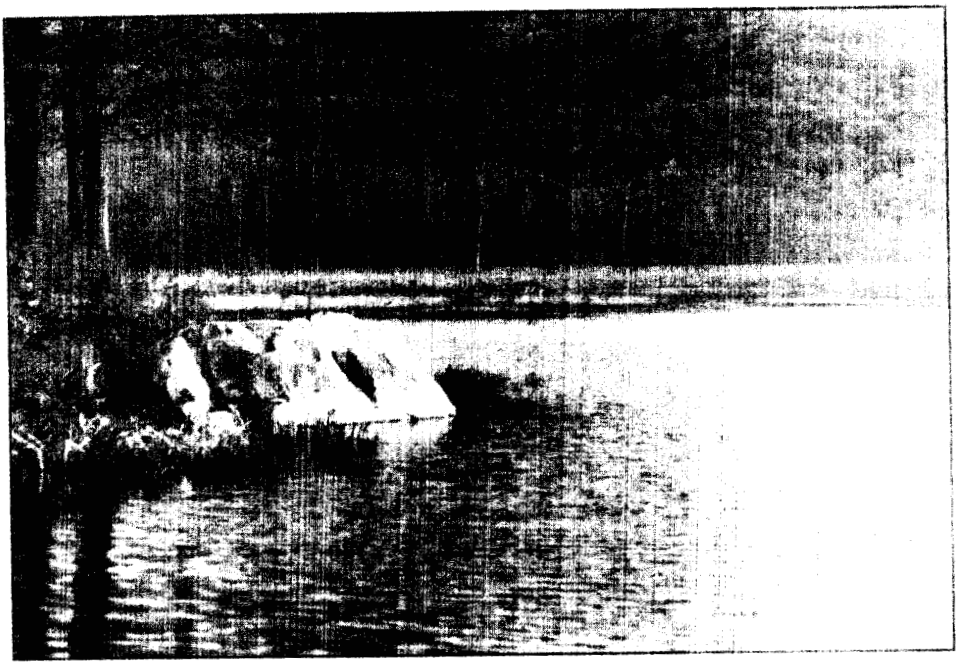
"The basic motive, as all at the time seemed to realize, was the desire of an elderly man to pay tribute to a granddaughter [Winona Meilleur] for whom he had a great affection." Elbridge Colby, 1968

Winona Lake -- still known locally as Bristol Pond -- is a low-lying, shallow waterbody with a muddy bottom, largely surrounded by marshlands. It is not much different today than it was almost 70 years ago when retired farmer Truman Varney in his second legislative term succeeded in having the name changed to Winona Lake, thus "planting his granddaughter's name on a pond she had known and loved during her life in his house." A committee reporting on the proposed new name argued that the change was desirable "as a means of aiding in advertising the lake." Author Elbridge Colby wrote in 1968: "But that is fantastic. A shallow, muddy, small pond with marshes on three sides, and limited camp and beach space, had no real hope as a resort, whatever simple local pleasures it might furnish winter and summer."

Today one of the "simple local pleasures" is a peaceful serenity in an enchantingly beautiful place. A fishing access here is maintained by the Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife. An unobtrusive sign tells the visitor that this is a sport fishing restoration area.

John Guilmette, of the Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife, explained the designation of sport fishing restoration. A longstanding federal program collects taxes from a variety of fishing related sources -- boat registrations, sale of boats and fishing equipment, etc. -- and distributes funds to states for programs that promote sport fishing. Through this funding, states can develop and maintain fishing access areas, like the local one in Bristol. The Bristol Pond access area is one of 176 developed access sites in Vermont.

When major construction was done here about ten years ago, John said, his department followed restrictions imposed by the fact that the Bristol Pond area is considered to be archeologically sensitive. (The overall Bristol



Two views of Bristol Pond today.

area is sensitive for prehistoric Native American archeological sites.) Evidence of prehistoric people has been found in the present and ancient shoreline of Bristol Pond and its adjacent wetlands. In the distant past, Bristol Pond had a water level higher than it is now, forming a primordial shore that extended approximately 300 feet from the present water edge. Prehistoric campsites are likely to be found here, as well as quartzite outcropping used by ancient people as quarry sites.

Like 42 other lakes and ponds in Vermont, Bristol Pond today is infested with Eurasian water milfoil, an aquatic plant first confirmed in this waterbody in 1986. "It's definitely bad news," said Holly Crawson, biologist with the State Fish and Wildlife Division. She explained that this exotic plant was first identified in Vermont in Lake Champlain in 1962. One frequent way this aquatic pestilence is transmitted is by small fragments of plant material caught on boat propellers, which are then taken to another body of water. "The pieces float off and start a new population," Holly explained. Eurasian water milfoil has few natural enemies and it grows aggressively, spreading quickly and forming a dense mat that impacts on the natural ecology of infested lakes and ponds.

In a transcription of the Harvey Munsill papers, Bristol Pond is described as having "considerable extensive marshes . . . covered with a fine broth of White Cedar, Tamarack, Black and White Ash, and a few scattering Pine. This pond is now well stocked with Pickerel, large fine ones taken from this pond every year, having been originally brought and put there from a pond in Shelburne. Previous to the time when Pickerel were first put into this pond which was about the year 1830 or 1831 large quantities of Suckers and Bull-pouts were annually taken by means of driving them into the outlet of the pond where they were taken in a snare, or what was then commonly called a Sucker Shoot or Sucker Ketcher. Bushels have been taken here in a single night. But since [the introduction of] Pickerel the suckers . . . have almost disappeared."

Lucille and Leon Jimmo enjoy fishing on Bristol Pond. Among their catch are bass, crappie, northern pike, and sunfish, or pumpkinseed -- and when they brave the mosquitoes at night, bullhead. Lucille catches more fish than he does, Leon says. "She just takes me along to run the boat," he adds. They also enjoy watching the wildlife at Bristol Pond, like osprey, Canada geese, beaver and an occasional great blue heron. When the ospreys' tree blew down, Leon says, they found another one nearby and have still been seen in the Bristol Pond area.

Bristol Cliffs Wilderness Area

". . . it is the glorious westward view of the Champlain Valley, Lake Champlain, and the Adirondacks that attracts most visitors. On a clear day, the panorama is breathtaking and certainly warrants the effort of packing binoculars." Warner Shedd, 1987

On January 3, 1975, the last day of his long and distinguished career in Washington, Vermont's venerated Senator George Aiken saw one of the most significant conservation laws of his time -- one which he helped to author -- signed by President Gerald Ford. The Eastern Wilderness act, which created the Bristol Cliffs Wilderness Area, was a major step in the conservation of our irreplaceable wilderness resources. Fifteen other wilderness areas in National Forest lands east of the Mississippi River were also created, including the Lye Brook area in the southern section of Vermont's Green Mountain National Forest.

The Bristol Cliffs Wilderness Area, located in the northern section of the Green Mountain National Forest, holds vestiges of those who once cleared the land, lived here and left their mark. It is not therefore virgin forest. The area covers 3,740 acres, to be left untouched except for such compatible recreational uses as hiking, backwoods camping, hunting, fishing and cross country skiing. The Lye Brook Wilderness Area, similarly restricted in use, comprises 14,300 acres.

Naturalist and author Ottar Indridason lived in Vermont and wrote about the natural history of his adopted state. In the autumn, 1975, issue of *Vermont Life*, he captured a well-researched, almost lyrical portrait of the newly designated Bristol Cliffs Wilderness Area. He included excerpts from an interview with Senator Aiken, known affectionately to Vermonters as the Governor. Indridason wrote: "This preservation of the land for now and for the future seemed to be the theme of the Governor's thinking, so that later generations could have the chance to see the land as it was."

Here are two other quotes from Indridason's article:

"Bristol Cliffs was a good choice for a wilderness area -- few sections of Vermont are as starkly beautiful, rugged, or as utterly wild. The precipitous, boulder-strewn hillside rises to cliffs some 1,200 feet above the Champlain Valley lowlands . . ."

The boulder-strewn hillside Indridason wrote about is the largest talus field in Vermont. Described in early writings as "a mass of broken stone, piled promiscuously," the talus slope at Bristol Cliffs can be seen from the west for many miles. Glimpses of it come and go driving eastward on Route 17.

Also an accomplished photographer, Indridason included a photo to go with the following written description.

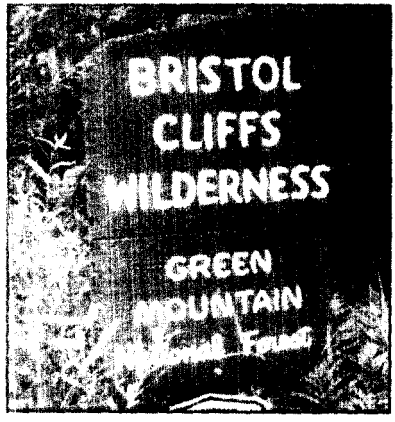
"At the southern edge of the water I saw an immense boulder, the size of a small house, and rectangular in shape. Tall hemlocks grew around it, and ferns had grown from the soil on its top. I recalled folk tales in Iceland which say that elves, man-like creatures, dwell in such stones. Surely this huge rock was such an abode."

In a 1987 issue of *Vermont Life*, outdoorsman and writer Warner Shedd wrote a piece titled "Ah Wilderness: Exploring and Enjoying Vermont's New Wild Areas." One of the seven areas he wrote about was "Bristol Cliffs: The Champlain Valley at Your Feet and Falcons in the Air." A quote reads as follows:

"Several peregrine falcons have been sighted near the cliffs in recent years. No nests have been identified, but the possibility of seeing one of these rare and spectacular birds should certainly be a major attraction for birders."

Permits for recreational use of Bristol Cliffs Wilderness Area are no longer mandatory. Further information about Bristol Cliffs may be obtained from the Green Mountain National Forest at 802-747-6700.

Note: While they lived in nearby Huntington, Ottar and Louise Indridason became authorities on the nature of Vermont. They later moved back to their native Iceland, where Ottar died in 1994.



The Bristol Cliffs Wilderness Area can be reached from either the Lower Notch Road or the Lincoln Road to York Hill Road. This sign is at the parking lot near the junction of York Hill and West Hill Roads.

Hell's Half Acre

Scene of the Bristol Money Diggings

For many years a gloomy site in Bristol Cliffs among broken boulders -- where "the solitude is heavy with an air of mystery" -- has been called by the daunting sobriquet Hell's Half Acre. Although the area is far more than a half acre, the name is in keeping with other diabolic fantasies associated with the tale -- skeletons in silhouette, wild fever, dank dark caves.

Other Vermont towns harbor stories of mysterious buried treasure from their early history, but Bristol's tale is unique. Treasure seekers here carried on their quest with unmatched fervor, resorting to conjurors, dynamite and even a fraudulent stock company.

Another detail sets the Bristol Money Diggings apart -- the story was romanticized in "The Ballad of Old Pocock" written by Leonard Twynham and published in 1931. In his introduction, Walter John Coates wrote that Mr. Twynham "is to be felicitated" for writing about "one of Vermont's most outstanding ballad incidents" which captures the tale of "the wild, weird and picturesque niche in the mountains wherein human gullibility and human folly mounted to so preposterous and tragic a height."

A copy of "The Ballad of Old Pocock" as well as further information about the Bristol Money Diggings can be found in the Lawrence Memorial Library.

A Ballad of Old Pocock
Vermont

A Legend of Bristol Money Diggings
by Leonard Twynham

The following verses are excerpted from among the 47 verses in the original poem.

South from the town in Little Notch
Is a wild ravine of stones
Vital with vibrant memories
Like Ezekiel's Valley of Bones.

Gloom prevails beyond the sun's glare --
Rock-bound paths and labyrinth turns,
Ice-cold springs and pitch-black clefts,
Moss-covered rocks, luxuriant ferns.

Hereby there hangs a curious tale
Of a hundred years ago --
How Indians fretted a Spaniard troupe
With treasures from Mexico.

The poet tells the tale of "uncanny jest" and futile search for the Spanish treasure and concludes:

Now, when the climber stalks through the glade,
Fear strikes his soul aghast,
For a ghost inhabits the sombre shades,
A memory of the past.

And still on the barren Rattlesnake Den
Vipers swarm in the sun;
And a Voice from the Devil's Pulpit cries,
"My joke is never done."

Published by The Driftwind Press
North Montpelier, Vermont
July 1931

Rattlesnake Den

Near the center of the west side of South Mountain, not far above the Money Diggings, is an area of several acres of what appears from a distance to be a rock surface in the Bristol Cliffs Wilderness area. It is actually a talus slope, a mass of broken stones, when viewed closer up. Early chroniclers of Bristol history wrote about the infestation of rattlesnakes here.

"Rattlesnake Den, a mass of broken stone, piled promiscuously, was at an early day infested by these snakes; but when they came out in the Spring, and curled upon the rocks, the settlers took advantage of their docility, and killed them in great numbers. None have been seen for many years."

The Hon. Harvey Munsill, *The Vermont Historical Gazetteer*, 1828-1880

"A letter from John Stewart of Royalton, Ohio, son of Samuel Stewart, one of the very first settlers in Bristol, states that his father with Captain Cyprian Eastman, Captain Gurdon Munsill and a few others whose names he had forgotten, once went to the den in the spring of the year and killed one-hundred-eighty snakes. They were piled up like a cock of hay after they were killed and left there as at that time no use was made of their skins."

Mrs. Jessie Stanton, *History of Bristol, Vermont*, first edition, 1940

". . . even early in Vermont's statehood, the timber rattler carried a bad name and was bountied for a dollar apiece, and later snake hunters reduced its small number even further."

Charles W. Johnson, *The Nature of Vermont*, 1980

Mark Ferguson, zoologist with the Natural Heritage Program in the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department, deals with nongame wildlife. He said that the strong historic written accounts of rattlesnakes in Bristol are generally accepted as being accurate. "Timber rattlesnakes are the only type of venomous snakes found in Vermont," he said. He added that no rattlesnakes have been seen in the Bristol area for many years, but that does not preclude the possibly that some still exist in this wild region now part of the Bristol Cliffs Wilderness Area.

Timber rattlesnakes live in remote, rugged terrain with steep cliffs and rocks, like the Bristol Cliffs Wilderness Area. They are timid creatures and flee when they encounter people. There have been no documented deaths from snake bites in Vermont.

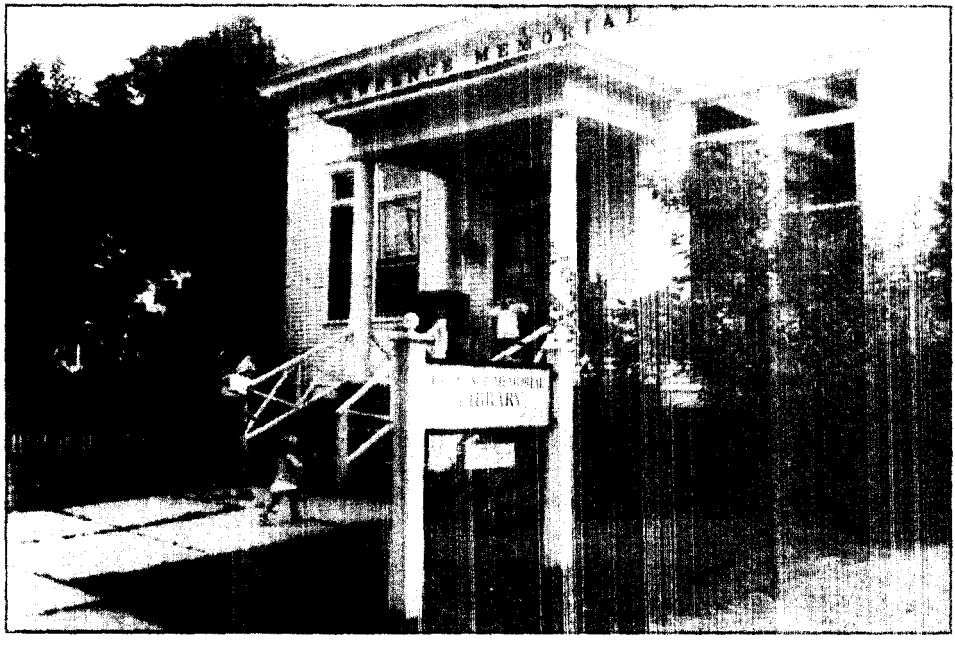
Are there still timber rattlesnakes in other parts of Vermont? Mark answered, "Yes, there are some in remote parts of southwestern Vermont."

Further information about the Vermont Nongame and Natural Heritage Program is available by calling 802-241-3700.

Lawrence Memorial Library

Located on North Street not far from the Park, the Lawrence Memorial Library underwent extensive renovations during the summer of 1998, making it handicapped accessible and doubling the library space. Originally, the library was one large room, attractive and well-organized, but librarian Nancy Wilson said she appreciates the added room to house the collection which had outgrown its space.

William A. Lawrence, who was village president when he gave the library to the town in 1911, also served in the Vermont legislature. The Lawrence Memorial Library, an example of the Classical Revival style of architecture used for libraries from about 1900 to 1930, was designed by C.E. Paige of California and built by C.C. Miller of Ferrisburgh at a cost of $9000.



Summer renovations made the Lawrence Memorial Library handicapped accessible and doubled the space.

Howden Hall

Built more than 150 years ago by the Howden family as a Congregational Church, this classic building is on Main Street facing the Park. Howden Hall was opened eight years ago as a Community Center which also offers a cheerful welcome to visitors who stop at the Vermont Information Center housed here.

Also in the building is a small but varied museum maintained by the Bristol Historical Society, with well-kept artifacts from Bristol's lively past. Included in the collection is the original sheepskin map of Bristol dated ca. 1792. There are also rooms for community groups to meet, including the Historical Society, Rotary Club, Girl Scouts, Senior Citizens and more.

The Lord's Prayer Rock

also known as Bristol Rock or the Prayer Rock

Like all enduring legends, the origin of Bristol's venerable Lord's Prayer Rock has at least two versions. Was this century-old landmark designed as a prayer of thankfulness -- or a reminder to disgruntled teamsters to watch their language?

In the summer of 1891, Dr. Joseph C. Greene, visiting from his home in Buffalo, New York, commissioned W. N. McGee to inscribe the Lord's Prayer on this large granite rock at the base of a hill leading into Bristol Village from the east. Visitors from near and far know the town for this unique landmark, also known as Bristol Rock. In fact, the first letters carved into the protruding boulder read Bristol Rock. The inscription, carved deep and

painted white to be more easily read, includes Dr. Greene's name and place of residence. The right-hand edge of the boulder, painted white to be readily visible, stands perilously close to the now heavily traveled highway.

Joseph Greene grew up in a Quaker family in Starksboro, about 7 miles north of Bristol in the valley now followed by Route 116. The first version of Dr. Greene's reason for commissioning this singular work goes back to his youth. One can envision the lad with his precious load of logs, destined for a lumber mill in town during the latter half of the 19th century when Bristol village was the center of a thriving wood-products industry. When the youthful Joseph had safely negotiated the challenging Nine Bridge Road, or Drake's Woods Road, and reached the Big Rock not far from the entry to the village, the story goes, he would utter a prayer of thankfulness. The second version is that Dr. Greene deplored the vigorous and profuse cussing of rowdy woodsmen drawing goods by this outcropping of rock and through this challenging pass, which was particularly difficult in the spring mud. Dr. Greene hoped that when they saw the Lord's Prayer carved into the rock by the mudhole, they would be reminded of their better graces.

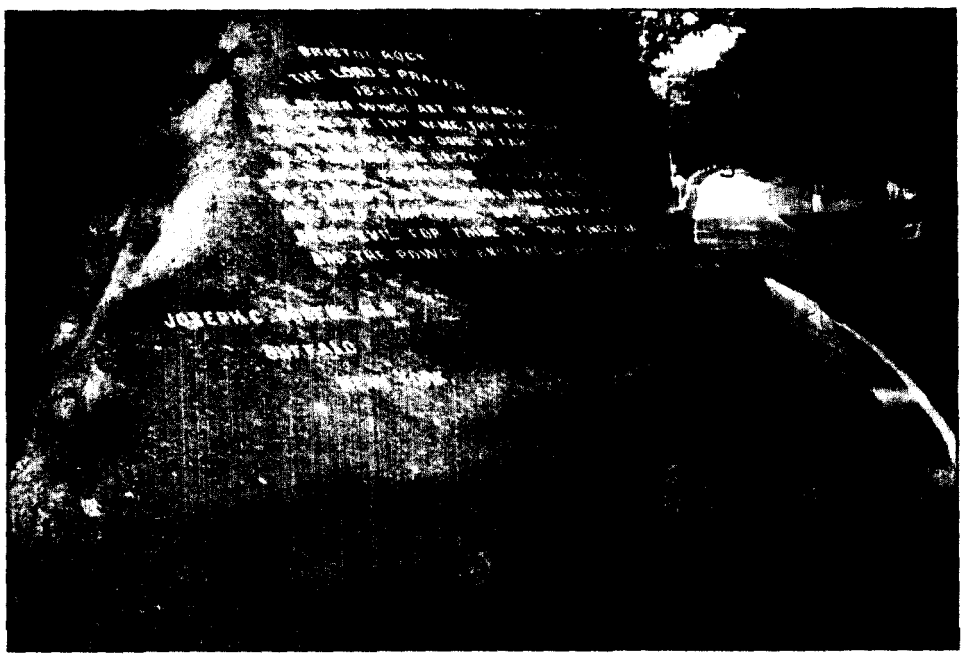


Photo courtesy of Vermont Division for Historic Preservation

Bristol Railroad

"There was once a little locomotive that carried the dreams and the hopes of prosperity and grandeur for a whole town. For thirty-eight years this small and somewhat unconventional engine traversed the six miles of one of the shortest railroads ever built in Vermont. The Bristol Railroad was to be the town's link to the pot at the end of the rainbow. But the pot wasn't there after all." William G. Gove, 1971

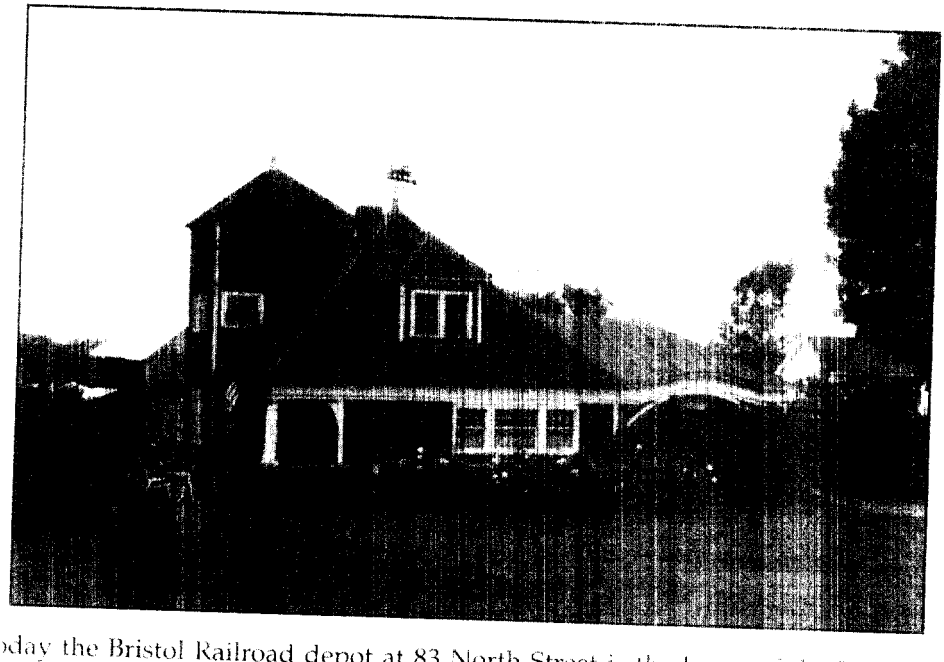
When townspeople saw the success of the nearby Rutland Railroad, the idea of a Bristol railroad began to take on growing numbers of supporters. Wood-related industries in Bristol and Lincoln would prosper even more, the promoters argued, if there was a railroad in Bristol to transport these goods. This was in 1881.

The next year, having decided on the short route to New Haven depot, railroad enthusiasts faced the next hurdle -- funding. In a 1971 *Vermont Life* article William Gove wrote about a unique approach to the problem: "In June [1882] a memorable railroad meeting featured the prearranged appearance of one hundred wagons from nearby Lincoln, all loaded with freshly sawn lumber -- and no railroad to load on. These small town theatrics aroused the interest of ex-Governor J. Gregory Smith, president of the Central Vermont Railroad. Smith was impressed, but nothing resulted to give Bristolites their railroad."

Years of frustration preceded the big break. In 1890 a New York City syndicate offered to finance the railroad. But, the towns of Bristol and Lincoln had to vote $30,000 in construction aid, $15,000 from each town. When all 385 votes in the town of Bristol were counted, there were only 33 negative ones.

It wasn't until 1892 that the entire 6.26 miles of rail were completed and the first freight rumbled into New Haven depot. It was a load of potatoes shipped by John S. Ridley. This same year construction began on "what was to be one of the finest little railroad depots in Vermont." William Gove told of a note in the state railroad commission report of 1893: ". . . flush water closets and wash bowls [helped to make the new depot] a model of taste and convenience."

The Bristol Railroad depot, built in 1892. The sign on the wagon reads "Bristol House"-- a popular inn that once stood at the main intersection in the village.
Photo courtesy of the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation



Today the Bristol Railroad depot at 83 North Street is the home of the Lathrop family, Alan and Denny and their children, four year old Jacob and two year old Jonathan.

As for the little locomotive, the pride of the Bristol Railroad, Gove provided this description. "Number One was an 0-4-4T Forney type with a cowcatcher installed on each end. This was quite unusual for the railroads of Vermont, or for most other places as far as that goes. But it wasn't especially convenient to turn Number One around at the end of the run. So she would just be run in reverse for the return trip."

Bristol commerce was not the only beneficiary of the railroad: the town's social and cultural life prospered. Entertainment shows made the extra six miles into Bristol via the railroad. In summertime a great flurry of excitement welled up in town when the circus trains arrived. Gove has preserved this charming memory of a long departed time.

"Other popular summer attractions were the Chautauqua Show with its Swiss yodelers and dramas, the medicine shows which entertained in between the sales pitches for cure-all tonics, and the minstrel shows such as the Sunny South or the Tallahassee Minstrels." One hundred years ago a troupe called the Lady Minstrels put on a winter performance in Holley Hall.

Gove concluded his lively and informative narrative about the 38 years of this remarkable 6 mile long railroad. "Old Number One had departed the scene in 1930, pulling up the rails behind her and steaming off to her grave. A small town's six mile connection to the end of the rainbow is now all but forgotten, erased easier than created. But it was not the fault of Old Number One and the hard-working crew of the Bristol Railroad."

Alan and Denny Lathrop and their children, four year old Jacob and two year old Jonathan, live at 83 North Street in the old Bristol Railroad Depot. "It's been in the family since 1930," Alan says. His grandfather bought the depot when the Bristol Railroad ceased operation. Alan has an abiding interest in the railroad and the old depot that is now his home, and he enjoys adding to his collection of Bristol Railroad memorabilia. When members of the Ridley family gave him an old railroad photo, Alan had it enlarged and was able to read "L.L. Ridley" on the side of the wagon. Although they are still young, the two young Lathrop children are learning about the history of their unique home.

Bristol Throughout the World

"In the Middle Ages, when the masts of ships surrounded Bristol on three sides, thick as pine woods, and the spires of the churches rose up between them and behind, this city . . . must have been one of the most inspiring sights in all England."

H.V. Morton, In Search of England, 1927

Today the original Bristol, in England, is recognized for its importance in international commerce and its popularity as a tourist venue. Severely bombed during World War II, the city fortunately rose from the ashes and today takes pride in its historic, well restored and preserved buildings, many dating back to medieval times. During cleanup of the war torn city, rubble was brought across the ocean as ships' ballast and was used as fill along the East River in New York City to form a dock area called Bristol Basin.

In New England alone there are four Bristols -- Bristol in Vermont, New Hampshire, Rhode Island and Connecticut. The two M states, Maine and Massachusetts, do not have a Bristol.

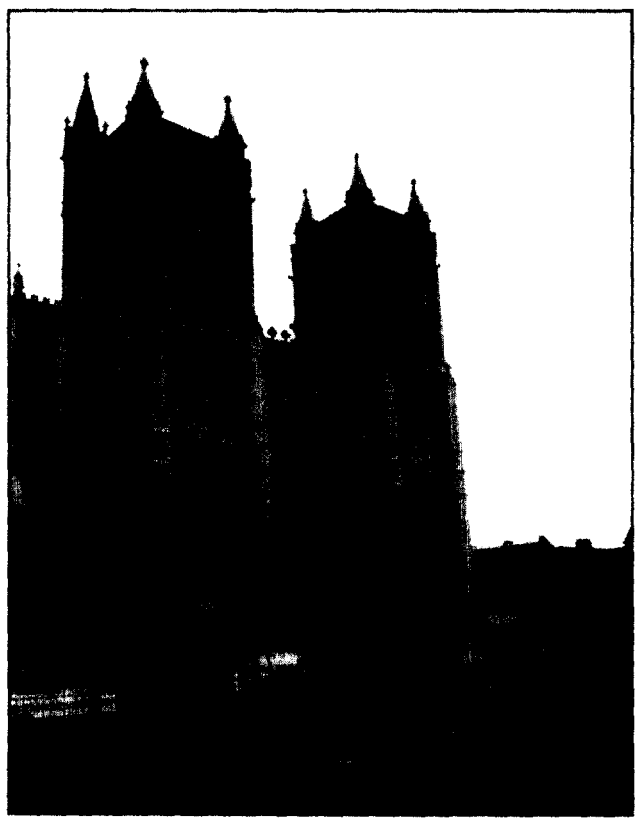
Bristol, Rhode Island is now known for its yachting and yacht building. A celebrated annual event in this first New World Bristol -- which was pillaged and burned by the British in 1778 during the American Revolution -- is its festive Fourth of July Parade. The parade route through this historic city follows permanent red, white and blue lines down the center of the main streets.

Since Colonial times, Bristol, Connecticut, situated on the Pequatuck River, has been predominantly a manufacturing center. Bristol Nursery is nationally known for its chrysanthemums.

Other states with a Bristol are Colorado, Florida, Indiana, Pennsylvania and South Dakota. A unique Bristol in the United States is a dual city in Tennessee and Virginia, along the short border between them. The state line runs down the middle of the city's main thoroughfare -- of all things -- State Street. In Canada, both Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick have a Bristol.

California has a Bristol Lake and Bristol Mountains. Alaska has Bristol Bay, north of the Alaska Peninsula. Bristol Channel is an 85 mile long inlet of the Atlantic Ocean, between southern Wales and southwestern England. A far-flung namesake location is Bristol Island in the South Sandwich Islands, off the coast of Antarctica.

Bristol Rotarians Fred Jackman and Chuck Menzer have visited all 45 Rotary Clubs in Vermont. This led to the idea of visiting all Bristol Rotary Clubs in the United States. They have joined Bristol Rotarians in New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Connecticut and Pennsylvania. At the time of this writing in mid-August they were about to accomplish their goal by visiting the last two Bristol Rotary Clubs on their list -- those in the dual city of Bristol in Tennessee and Virginia. What about the Bristols in other states and in Canada? Fred and Chuck agree, "If they had a Rotary Club we'd go there." Chuck plans to write an article on their adventures for the Rotary magazine. And next in their travels will be Rotary Clubs in Bristol, England -- all eight of them.



Bristol Cathedral in England, from the author's trip in 1993. The Cathedral was severely bombed during WWII and has been lovingly restored. One remarkable feature is a series of colorful stained glass windows depicting the people's heroism during the war -- the fire brigade, nurses, WVS, Women's Volunteer Service. Older Bristol residents remembered the fury of the fire bombings. One said, "We had our near shaves, but we were lucky."

The Romance of Bristol Scenery

A mid-nineteenth century piece written by Mrs. James Tucker and included in Abby Maria Hemenway's *Vermont Historical Gazetteer* extols the beauty of the writer's native town.

> "Beautiful may be the towns that lie beside the placid waters of Lake Champlain, but they cannot compare with the picturesque scenery of my own native town, -- its grand mountains, with towering rocks, and lofty oaks and pines; its verdant hills, with gushing springs and rivulets. Earth's scenes are chang ing, but mountains and hills remain, remnants of primeval beauty. The hand of man may change the wilderness to a fruitful field, -- Omnipotence alone maketh the mountains to nod, and drieth up the source of waters.
>
> "We cannot boast of mighty rolling waters, but there is magnificence in the ragged, rock-bound shores of our rivers. When the forests assume October tints, we enjoy a sunrise over these mountains, beautiful beyond description, as hill and dale are lighted by the ascending King of Day. If there is any devotion in the heart, it must ascend in praise to Him who hath said, 'Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool.'"

Author's Notes & Acknowledgements

I am grateful to my fellow writer and friend Bill Osgood who first told me about *Reading the Mountains of Home*. John Elder's new book is far more than a book about Bristol's mountains and natural history written by a long-time resident. Elder brilliantly achieves his goal ". . . to explore, in a direct and personal way, an ecosystem of meaning that includes both literature and the land."

With Robert Frost's poem "Directive" woven into the text, this is a heartfelt book -- elegant, personal, intellectual. I spent a happy summer day engrossed in reading it. No longer able to hike mountains myself, I followed John Elder's hikes with vicarious pleasure through Bristol's forested South Mountain and North Mountain, my foot slipping into jewelweed and my eye catching moose prints in the mud.

John Elder is a professor of English and environmental studies at Middlebury College. He is on the board of directors of Waterworks, an organization devoted to land conservation, education and recreation. The Waterworks property is a 664 acre piece in Bristol that once was the Vergennes Reservoir.

My initial research is always at the Vermont Historical Society Library in Montpelier, where there is a veritable wealth of material and a knowledgeable staff. Then I'm off to the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation, also in Montpelier. My special thanks go to Elsa Gilbertson and Giovanna Peebles at the VDHP, who first told me about the Bristol ford. Elsa has become an enduring resource in my research projects, and I greatly appreciate her skill and helpfulness.

Many people were helpful by telephone: John Guilmette and Holly Crawson, of the Vermont Department of Fish & Wildlife; Mark Ferguson, zoologist with the Vermont Nongame and Natural Heritage Program; Alec Portalupi. project manager with the Vermont Agency of Transportation; Duncan Wilkie, archeologist for the VAOT; and Prudence Doherty, archeology program specialist with the Consulting Archeology Program at the University of Vermont. I'll pass along a sentence from an e-mail from Prudence: "Thank you for sharing archaeology with the public."

At the Bristol town offices in Holley Hall I met and talked with Bob Hall, town administrator, and Penny Sherwood, town clerk, who answered many questions and offered me a homemade chocolate chip cookie. Shirley Emilo, secretary/receptionist, generously gave me copies of her recent photos

showing flood damage at Bartlett Falls. I asked if Holley Hall was still used for performances and they said yes, that a local group was presenting the Odd Couple, sure to be a hit with an appreciative audience. At the Lawrence Memorial Library, Nancy Wilson, librarian, and Marianne Lancer, library assistant, shared helpful information with me. Marianne told me her first-hand experience with the Bristol ford, her summer beach during the four years she lived next to it. Thanks to Bristol residents Leon and Lucille Jimmo who talked about their love of fishing, David Crawford who shared his dedication to avocational archeology and Alan Lathrop, who talked about the historic railroad depot now home to his family. And thanks go to Fred Jackman and Chuck Menzer who told me about their unique adventure of visiting all Bristol Rotary Clubs in the U.S. -- and next all eight in Bristol, England. At Howden Hall on two separate days volunteers Maggie Bouvier and Gerry Tilley presented me with a warm Bristol welcome.

People whose names I do not know also deserve thanks for talking with me -- the man in the yellow shirt who shared his "sidewalk superintendent" spot by the temporary construction at the washed out bridge and the young mother with her shy two year old enjoying a summer day at the temporary beach left in place of the ford.

Thanks to the Champlain Valley Telecom and the helpful staff who make possible this section on a chosen town's cultural history. Like the other five "histories" I have done, this was a rewarding adventure into the past and present of a wonderful town.

I am deeply grateful to Lauren Gallagher for thoroughly reading several drafts and helping me to refine them into the final product.

I know that this is only a part of the Bristol story. There is more to be told, and more wonderful people with interesting stories to be captured -- all for another time.

Earline Marsh

August, 1998

Earline Marsh is a former school principal whose retirement career includes freelance writing and hand papermaking. She lives with her husband Wavell Cowan in an old Moretown farmhouse that frequently echoes with the happy sounds of grandchildren. Earline still prefers to do research the old fashioned way -- in libraries and not the Internet. She says that often the most interesting book is the one on the shelf next to the one she thought she wanted. She does, however rely heavily on the modern communication wonder of e-mail.