



Champlain Valley Telecom
December ♡ 1995

A Panton Tapestry

Panton residents today, a little over 600 in number, look back with pride at their town's often dramatic history, a history that helped to shape the very being of our country. There are the tales of brave heroes and historic naval battles fought on Lake Champlain, of valiant settlers who persevered through daunting hardships, of noble causes for which our forebears laid down their lives. There are the adventures of those who braved stormy seas to bring prized Merino sheep to the other side of the globe during the heyday of "wool-growing". Contemplating Panton's past, one can feel the ghosts of such famous historic figures as the hero-turned-traitor Benedict Arnold, the stalwart statesman Benjamin Franklin, and the martyred John Brown, well actually, his body — before it lay "moldering in the grave."

Was there really a British nobleman named Lord Panton who somehow lent his name to this new town on the eastern shore of Lake Champlain? Or does the name Panton come from Panton in Lincolnshire, England? Or from Francis Panton, who although not a grantee of Panton, was a grantee of other Wentworth towns? No one knows for sure.

The Panton charter of 1761 was signed by Governor Benning Wentworth of the "Province of New Hampshire" and thus Panton was considered to be a Wentworth town. Panton documents provided the earliest record of the first English settlement in Addison County. Today Panton is one of a small number of Vermont towns with its original charter and records dating back to pre-Revolutionary times. Townspeople can be rightfully proud of their fine tradition of caring for these treasured documents in a humidity controlled and fire retardant vault and for supporting an ongoing project of professional restoration.

Along with the records are a gavel and "palatt", made from a rib from one of Benedict Arnold's boats burned and sunk in Ferris Bay, on October 13, 1776. This wood had been underwater for 163 years when Russell Grover took it from its watery resting place. The late Lester M. Fleming, Sr. of Panton, known locally as Skinny Fleming, made the gavel and a protective display case and presented them to moderator Dean Jackson at the annual Town Meeting held on March 6, 1979.



Benning Wentworth,
Royal Governor
of New Hampshire,
1741 to 1767

Originally the Town was to have been 25,000 acres, but the first survey proved that much of the land was underwater in Lake Champlain and the actual acreage was considerably less. As land was absorbed over the years by Addison, Weybridge and Vergennes, Panton's land area dwindled further. The total acreage of Panton today is 14,272 acres.

Otter Creek forms the eastern boundary of the town, and the wide, sluggish stream known as Dead Creek flows through the center of the township from south to north, with low marshy land on both sides.



Dead Creek Wildlife Refuge, by Margaret Parlour, 1994

Visitors to Panton today stand in awe as they gaze at the sweep of breathtaking vistas, Lake Champlain in its pristine glory cradled between the Green Mountains to the east and the Adirondacks to the west. On pleasant days roadside artists can be seen capturing their own singular vision of the scenic beauty surrounding them. Bird watchers and kayakers enjoy the teeming wildlife of Dead Creek, which is renowned for its abundant and often rare birds and animals. The sprawling agricultural land has been richly endowed for ideal grazing. The sheep which dotted the Panton landscape in the 19th century are gone, but the dairy and beef cattle which replaced them are prospering. In addition to farming, Panton today has several small, home-based businesses.

The famed Panton stone, a high quality building material given its name years ago by Gerald Hatch, graces local buildings as well as ones in such places as Middlebury College, the Waterbury Holiday Inn and many out-of-state locations. Panton stone, which is found in many locations throughout the area, is being used in the refurbishing of the historic Fort Frederic on the New York side of Lake Champlain. Many fireplaces are also made from this popular material.

Daryl Hatch, whose husband Peter took over the stone quarry from his father Gerald, notes that Panton stone is also of great interest to scientists and students from the University of Vermont who come to study this fine Chazy stone and the many fossils it contains. She adds that the Hatch family now sells only small, selected amounts of stone, since they wish to preserve it for future generations.

Speaking of Panton stone, Dean Jackson said, "Gerald Hatch always called it Panton stone, but if it's a little over the line in Ferrisburg, so what. If we can claim fame, why not? Nice stone anyway."



Panton Four Corners by Margaret Parlour, 1994



Dean Jackson

PHOTO BY CARLEY STEVENS-MCLAUGHLIN

Dean and Alberta Jackson run Roads End Farm in East Panton with their son Richard and grandson Steve. The Jacksons' great grandchildren, who spend a great deal of time at the farm, represent the eighth generation of Jacksons at Roads End. Dean and Alberta's son Roger, who lives in Georgia, has compiled the History of Roads End Farm. Dean is in his 56th year of serving the town of Panton; he was moderator for 18 years and is currently a lister. Speaking of his days as moderator he says, "You have to use all the diplomacy you can muster and mix that with a little bit of common sense and you can handle almost any situation."

A Panton Family Farm in Vermont Farmsteads Exhibit

From mid-September, 1995 to mid-April, 1996, the Vermont Historical Society in Montpelier is featuring an exhibit called "Making and Remaking Vermont Farmsteads". One of the ten Vermont farms featured in this remarkable exhibit is Roads End Farm, owned by the Jackson family of Pantan. Three scale models of Roads End Farm are displayed: as the farm appeared in 1895, 1935 and 1985. Dean Jackson described the process: "They came out and measured and scaled all the buildings. Nobody knows how old the center barn here is. My grandfather didn't know how old it was. It's all hewn timber beams and they even measured and scaled those."

In large letters in prominent locations within the exhibit are three quotes from Dean, as he talked about stump fences, Merino sheep shipped to Australia and when and how to plow the land.

The project is the culmination of five years of research, interviews with farm families and photo-documentation of farmsteads throughout the state. The exhibit follows the histories of the farm families and their buildings over the last two centuries to illustrate adaptations to climate, soil, growing conditions, changing markets, new technology and new knowledge. The exhibit will also go to the Billings Farm and Museum in Woodstock, Brattleboro Museum and Art Center, and Shelburne Farms, where it closes at the end of October, 1996.

The Vermont Folklife Center has published a book, *Families on the Land*, to accompany the exhibit. Interviews with Dean and his grandson Steve are featured in the book.



Roads End Farm, by Margaret Parlour, 1994

Early Settlement

From 1609 when Samuel de Champlain first explored the lake that bears his name until about 1760, the Champlain Valley was mainly military, with major forts on the lake shores, at Fort Carillon (renamed Fort Ticonderoga) and Fort St. Frederic at Crown Point. As the Champlain Valley saw activity in land speculation, small bands of settlers began to move into the wilderness. In 1761 the town of Panton was chartered to James Nichols and 69 others, mostly from Litchfield County, Connecticut.

Peter Ferris, one of the first settlers on the east side of the Lake, came to Panton in 1765 from Nine Partners, New York, with his second wife and two sons, James and Squire. He built a log cabin, probably the first in Panton, and later a house on a bluff overlooking what became known as Ferris Bay, more popularly known as Arnold Bay after Peter Ferris's death in 1816. Darius Ferris is thought to be the first white child born in Panton. The wife of Peter Ferris died before the Revolution and was the first white person buried in Panton.

Peter Ferris's grave in the Adams Ferry Cemetery is marked by a thin marble slab, so weathered it is hard to decipher. It reads:

In Memory of Peter Ferris, Esq.
who died 7, April, 1816
Age 92 years

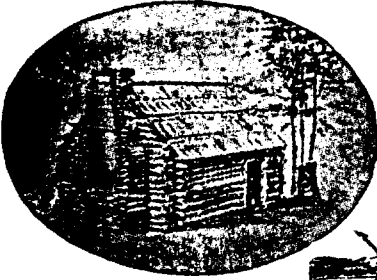
Grass, smoke, a flower, a vapour, shade, a span,
Serve to illustrate the frail life of man,
And they who longest live survive to see
The certainty of death, of life the vanity.

Writing the history of Addison County in 1886, H.P. Smith gives a glimpse into the hardships endured by early Panton settlers. He says, "From this time [late 1776] the inhabitants were frequently visited by straggling bands of Indians and Tories, who plundered them of any moveable property desirable in their eyes, and after Burgoyne came up the Lake in June 1777, these robberies were more frequent."

In 1778 a devastating British force arrived from the north in several ships and left every house in Panton burned to the ground, in an attack immortalized in history as Carleton's Raid. (Controversy exists whether the Timothy Spalding home was spared.) Many men were taken prisoners; women and children, and the few men who had not been imprisoned or joined the Continental Army, sought safety in more remote locations. Panton remained deserted until the war ended, when many settlers returned to the beckoning wilderness to rebuild their homes and farms.

A population which numbered 220 in 1791 was to grow to its highest figure ever in 1840 when the Town records showed 670 inhabitants.

Life in Mid-18th Century Vermont Depicted in These Drawings



Backwoods
house
circa 1700



Haying time



Schoolmaster circa 1780



Settlers watching the burning
of their home



Running
home with fire
borrowed from a neighbor



Combing wool



PHOTO BY CARLEY STEVENS-MCLAUGHLIN

Claudia Allen

Claudia Allen and her husband Pete Hawkins have worked together in recent years enlarging their farm operation "to keep up with the times," and they will soon have 300 milkers. Allendale Farm has been in Claudia's family for five generations. The house and some of the buildings are in Pantton, the rest in Ferrisburgh. In addition to owning 450 acres Claudia and Pete rent an additional 400 acres. Claudia's father, Obediah Claude Allen III, was born in the same room as his father before him. A descendent of Ethan Allen, Claudia has a strong sense of her roots and ties to the land, as she carries on the family tradition of dairy farming and preserving the land.



PHOTO BY CARLEY STEVENS-MCLAUGHLIN

Ann Sullivan

Ann Sullivan is pictured here in her role as Panton moderator, holding a ceremonial gavel made from a rib of one of Benedict Arnold's boats sunk in Arnold Bay in 1776. Ann is active in town and community affairs, serving as town moderator and chairperson of the 1991 Vermont State Bicentennial Committee. She teaches Vermont Literature and English at Vergennes High School. The ancestors of Michael Sullivan, Ann's husband, first came to Panton in 1859, and throughout the years the Sullivan family has resided in the same location on the Panton Road. A Vergennes native, Ann has lived in Panton for over 20 years and plans to live here "until they take me away."

Panton in Revolutionary History

In the dawn of the American Revolution, the Champlain Valley served as a critical military corridor, and the town of Panton played a significant role in the events that shaped the history of our emerging country. The Peter Ferris family was well known to the local militia and to visitors passing through Panton. Soldiers found that here was one of the few places in the Champlain Valley at which they would find a welcome. The lake-side Ferris home sheltered many travelers and it figures prominently in the tumultuous times which marked the beginning of the American War for Independence.

Noted historian Ralph Nading Hill in his book, *Lake Champlain: Key to Liberty*, writes "[The Continental] Congress sent a three man commission headed by Benjamin Franklin, Samuel Chase and Charles Carroll to try to rally the French Catholics to the American cause. They were accompanied by the latter's cousin, John Carroll, a Catholic priest. The bateau which in April carried them over the snow-fed waters of Lake George, was hauled down the portage to Champlain by oxen. A second 36 foot bateau with a single blanket sail here joined the first, the 70 year old Franklin embarking with only an awning to protect him from the wind and icy spray."

The small delegation first stopped at Crown Point, then Panton where they stayed at the home of Peter Ferris on the night of April 24, 1776. Four days later, arriving in Montreal, they were dismayed to find mistrust of their Colonial money and indifference to the faltering American cause. Franklin and his compatriots returned empty handed, over the cold lakes and down the Hudson River.

In the months following the Declaration of Independence, control of Lake Champlain was a major objective. A naval contest ensued and dominance of this strategic waterway lay in the balance. For lack of an experienced naval officer, the Americans relied on an accomplished military leader with little nautical background, Benedict Arnold, who had recently recovered from wounds suffered in the battle of Quebec. (Some historical accounts credit Arnold with a greater level of experience as a naval officer.) By late summer he had put together a creditable assortment of ships built in the wilderness, but he faced the enemy's superior flotilla with mostly untrained soldiers.

The first significant naval clash of the Revolution took place on October 11, 1776 at the Battle of Valcour Island. The badly outnumbered and outgunned Americans, which Arnold called his "wretched and motley

BURLINGTON DAILY NEWS

SPECIAL HISTORICAL TABLOID - PUBLISHED BY POPULAR DEMAND. Price 3 Cents.

**THE CONTINENTAL GONDOLA "PHILADELPHIA"
RAISED FROM THE DEPTHS AFTER 158 YEARS**

crew", were no match for the British. Arnold's own ship, the Congress, had twelve holes in her hull by evening. The gondola Philadelphia, resurrected in 1935 amid great fanfare, was awash and sank in the darkness. Although the British fleet had sustained considerable damage, they were well able to continue the raging fight in the morning. This was not true of the American fleet: they had already used three-fourths of their ammunition. The tattered fleet took refuge after nightfall in a fog fortuitously so dense that they were able to slip past the British lines in a single file, hugging the New York shore. In the morning a confounded British commander Sir Guy Carleton awoke to find that his quarry had mysteriously escaped.

Arnold managed to sail his badly damaged Congress and four gondolas into a small bay on the eastern shore of the Lake, then called Ferris Bay in Pantan. Barely ahead of the pursuing British, Arnold burned and sank the five boats, rather than have them fall into enemy hands.

Arnold rallied his men at the Ferris house which reportedly received several grapeshot in its walls. The Ferris family joined Arnold and his bedraggled company as they retreated to Crown Point. The British burned Ferris' crops, cut down his orchard and killed his farm animals. The Ferris family later returned and continued to farm their lands until 1778 when the entire town was raided, the Ferris farm buildings burned and Peter and his son Squire Ferris were captured, along with several other settlers. They remained prisoners in Quebec for more than three years.

Two noted historians provide sobering insights into the contribution Benedict Arnold made to the ultimate outcome of the Revolutionary War in this highly significant piece of history played out in part in the town of Pantan. Ralph Nading Hill wrote in 1972: "Much has rightfully been made of the precious year that Arnold gained for the Americans with his battered fleet whose odd complement of ill-trained farmers engaged the energies of the British all through the navigable summer months when otherwise they might have poured south into the Hudson Valley, sealed off all New England and ended the war."

In 1993 Michael A. Bellesiles wrote: "But for the reckless heroism of Benedict Arnold in October [1776] the northern frontier would have fallen to the British. The naval battle at Valcour Island in Lake Champlain proved the most brilliant defeat of the Revolution, giving the Americans several months in which to prepare for the invasion they knew would come."

Benedict Arnold died in obscurity in London in 1801 at the age of 60, after fleeing to the British lines and becoming the turncoat for which most Americans now remember him. On his deathbed he asked to be dressed in his Continental uniform, saying, "Let me lie in my old American uniform in which I fought my battles. God forgive me for ever putting on any other."

"But for the reckless heroism of Benedict Arnold in October [1776] the northern frontier would have fallen to the British."

The Benedict Arnold Marker

Visitors to Panton can stop on the west side of Lake Road near the Arnold Bay Farm and read the bronze memorial tablet rededicated in 1983 to commemorate the significance of Benedict Arnold's historic role in an early battle of the Revolutionary War. The site is small, easily overlooked by a casual traveler. In summer the marker, with its striking background of the Lake and mountains, is ringed with colorful flowers, well-tended by Marion Manning. The tablet reads:

Near this spot on the afternoon of October 13, 1776 in the first important naval engagement of the War for Independence Benedict Arnold, after a battle in which he displayed great boldness, gallantry and sagacity ran ashore and burned the remnants of the American Squadron under his command as the only alternative to its surrender to a British Fleet much stronger than his own.

"Never had any force, big or small, lived to better purpose or died more gloriously." A.T. Mahan.



The quote chosen to appear on this memorial marker was by Admiral Alfred Thayer Mahan, a noted naval historian. The original tablet, which was dedicated on July 4, 1916 by the Vermont Society of Sons of the American Revolution, stood near the spot on the shore of Lake Champlain where Benedict Arnold destroyed the tattered remains of the American Fleet after the defeat at Valcour Island. This tablet was lost to vandals and never recovered. Panton resident Mitzi Goward was instrumental in gaining a grant which made possible the replacement memorial which now stands in a more protected location.

The Ferris Ferry/Adams Ferry

Panton records show that in 1796 town authorities recognized the need to establish a ferry across Lake Champlain, and Captain Joseph Kingman was given the privilege of "building a wharf or any other building at said landing for the accommodation of boats", provided that he "keep and maintain a boat or boats suitable for carrying on ferrying across said Lake men, horses and cattle."

In 1800, Peter Ferris, although almost 80 years old, was granted the exclusive right of keeping a sail ferry which ran from Ferris Bay (later renamed Arnold Bay) to Barber's Point, New York. After four years the operation was passed on to Peter's son Darius. The ferry service operated by the Ferris family between Panton and Barber's Point was one of the first commercial ventures in Panton.

Ferry rates established in 1802 by vote at Town Meeting were as follows: for every loaded carriage and two horses or oxen, 84¢; each man and horse, 16¢; each single passenger, 20¢; each ox or cow, 16¢; and each sheep or swine, 4¢.

At one time Friend Adams, a prominent and wealthy citizen who lived until 1837 was one of the largest landowners in the area. He owned the ferry that formerly belonged to the Ferris family and also had a wharf, storehouse, store, large farm and hotel on Arnold Bay. Thus the name changed from the Ferris Ferry to the Adams Ferry. Under Adams' proprietorship the ferry ran between Arnold Bay and Westport, New York. During this period there was a great deal of traffic on the Bay and Lake, and the ferry business prospered.

Friend Adams, who served in the War of 1812, is buried along with other Adams family members in the small Adams Family Burial Lot on Lake Road near the Panton-Addison town line.



The Adams Family Burial Lot, Lake Road

Recent Archaeological Findings at the Ferris Cellar Hole


The Ferris Site on Arnold Bay, published by the Lake Champlain Maritime Museum in 1989 reads: "Most sites do not undergo the extreme erosion that had occurred here, and the degradation of the entire bay is something that the Ferris family could not have anticipated when they constructed their farm buildings here." Years of erosion and vandalism had removed most traces of the homestead.

The archaeological work was undertaken with thanks to the Alan Lowenstein family, owners of Arnold Bay farm on which the Ferris site is located. The archaeology team determined that the southern wall of the Ferris house was about 15 feet wide but the length from north to south was unknown. Only about 9 feet of the western wall and less of the eastern wall survive. Not enough evidence remained to determine the location of doors and windows. The footings for the fireplace had already collapsed onto the beach below. The report states, "The quality and permanence of construction are ample proof that this was not the foundation of the Ferris log cabin of 1765." Rather, this was the site of the Peter Ferris home destroyed during Carleton's Raid of 1778.

Indications were that the pace of erosion was accelerating. "After the passage of another generation," the 1989 report predicts, "it is more than likely that nothing would have been left for archaeologists to document."

Today, thanks to an erosion control project undertaken by the Arnold Bay Farm owners, this historic site, one of the most distinguished on Lake Champlain, has been protected from further natural ravaging. Describing the extensive "rip-rapping" of these fragile banks, Arnold Bay Farm manager Dennis Mueller said that the project was completed three years ago.

John Brown: His Shopping Trips and Last Journey Home

In his book, *Full Service: Vermonters in the Civil War*, author Howard Coffin writes: "John Brown was past 50 when he became obsessed with the idea of setting free the slaves, and thereafter a touch of madness was seen in his gray-blue eyes. If many talked about freeing the slaves, Brown did something about it, and in the end he swung from a Virginia gallows on a soft blue-sky day in the late autumn of 1859. Just before they hanged him Brown handed a note to his jailer: 'I, John Brown am now quite certain that the crimes of this guilty land; will never be purged away; but with blood.'" 

Thus John Brown foretold the bloody war to come, a war in which the Northern forces adopted a marching song with words still familiar today, "John Brown's body lies a-moldering in the grave, but his soul goes marching on."

From his farm in North Elba, New York, John Brown went across Lake Champlain on the Adams Ferry that ran between Westport, New York, and Arnold Bay in Panton. From there it was a five mile trip to Vergennes where Brown went on shopping excursions for his large family.

Local reminiscences preserved in the Bixby Memorial Library in Vergennes portray Brown as kindly and likeable, especially fond of children. But Chris Yattaw, who worked at the Stevens House in Vergennes as "man of all work", said that "many were the rumors in town concerning Brown's activities during those days prior to the Civil War."

Among the large bill of goods for his family on his last shopping trip to Vergennes was a 75 foot length of quarter inch rope. W.W. Hawkins, who sold Brown the rope at Parker, Booth and Co., said that he "always thought this was the rope which Brown used at Harper's Ferry to string across the road." A local legend persists that this was the same rope used in his hanging after his ill-fated raid on the U.S. Armory at Harper's Ferry.

The publication *Panton - Past and Present* notes: "The story and its impact on Panton might have ended there had the Delaware and Hudson Railroad been completed, but it hadn't and so [the body of] John Brown went home by way of a train ride to Vergennes and a sleigh ride to Panton." His body came north by train from New York City, accompanied by Mrs. Brown and the Boston Abolitionist Wendell Phillips. A light coating of snow greeted the small cortege as they arrived at the station in Vergennes on the bleak morning of December 6, 1859. A cutter met the train and carried the coffin box to the Stevens House at the town's main intersection. The mournful procession crossed the Otter Creek bridge and out the Panton Road to Adam's Ferry at Arnold Bay.

In February, 1860, Vergennes attorney Philip C. Tucker, who was among those who "despised the attempted respect to the remains of a murderer", wrote to his sister: "I enjoyed very richly the accidental fact that a flock of hen turkeys followed the [funeral] sleigh through the main street extemporizing their single sound of 'quit, quit, quit', which somebody near me remarked was the most sensible advice he had heard given by a bird and particularly to people who were making fools of themselves."

Daniel Adams, the ferryman who took the funeral party across the Lake, did not see the end of the cruel Civil War. He died in a violent squall on the Lake in 1865.

Panton native Russell L. Kent wrote about an early recollection: "Don't touch that piece of wood. Your grandfather cut it off John Brown's coffin." Kent said that the funeral procession also stopped at Panton Corners, where another crowd had gathered. He reported that the coffin box "was all cut up where folks had taken souvenir pieces."

In 1914, Mr. J. Hall Long of Panton wrote to the editor of the local paper *The Enterprise and Vermonter*, suggesting that the Panton Road be re-named the John Brown Road, a change that never took place.

The Sheep Industry and "Half-Seas Over"

In the 1800s "wool-growing" became a prosperous endeavor, as high grade Merinos dotted the rolling green hills so well suited to sheep grazing. So successful was the industry that in 1840 Addison County could boast the largest number of sheep per acre in the whole nation.

The more adventurous breeders undertook the arduous exportation of sheep to California. The live cargo was shipped to the Isthmus of Panama, driven across and then shipped the rest of the way. Or it was shipped around Cape Horn, the notoriously dangerous tip of South America, to California. Many local men worked on the ships, tending the valuable livestock during these long voyages.

Dean Jackson recalls conversations with his neighbor Henry Fisher, who worked on the boat taking Merino sheep to Australia. "He said that it was kind of tricky," Dean says. "The boys used to get to where they were smuggling things over. For instance there was a harness maker in Vergennes — Barnard, who made harnesses for horses. He said a set of harnesses, taken apart and hidden in a trunk, would bring them ten times more over there than what they'd have sold them for here. Mr. Fisher did make several trips across, he told me, with Merino sheep from here to Australia."

In her publication *They Lit Their Cigars with Five Dollar Bills: The History of the Merino Sheep Industry in Addison County*, Betty Jane Belanus writes: "The Civil War was the real Golden Age of the Vermont Merino. The four year period between 1863 and 1867 brought more money to County Merino breeders than any other ten year period." Along with the short supply of southern cotton and the demand for blankets and clothing, the War caused western wool-growers to pay exorbitant prices for Merino rams. (At this time "western" meant no further than Michigan.) Rams brought such high prices — one reported at \$3,500 — that many beautiful homes, barns and outbuildings were built with the earnings.

On the original Barton farm just the other side of Otter Creek, the three story barn that once stood there was one of the finest around in its time. Dean Jackson says, "My grandfather always told me that barn was built with the sale of 20 Merino rams."

Belanus gives a glimpse of the international reputé of local Merinos. She writes: "In 1863 Addison County Merinos gained world-wide fame by their prize-winning appearance at the Hamburg Exhibition in Germany."

The sheep industry experienced its ups and downs, and in its declining years overseas trade became a way of making a reasonable profit. In the bargain local breeders and dealers experienced the excitement of cultures very different from their own. The Merino trade to South Africa, South America and Australia is a legendary Addison County business. Many fascinating stories, perhaps not all of them true, resulted from these travels. Nevertheless, the tales of these distant, vast and unsettled lands provide a mystical background to the lives of those who ventured afar and those who stayed at home eager for news of the great adventures.

Elgin Mineral Spring and Hotel

In 1850, during a time period when mineral spring spas were a key Vermont tourist attraction, Hiram Allen discovered Elgin Spring in East Pantown. Allen built up a popular health resort, which included a hotel, spring house and boarding house for invalids. The water from the Spring, which remained in operation for twenty years, was considered to be valuable for its medicinal qualities, particularly for healing all sorts of impurities of the blood. Large quantities of water from the Spring were shipped to all parts of the country. The business prospered until it closed down in 1870.

The old hotel building, once known as the Sears place, is located on the west side of Route 22A. It was once owned by Frederick and Lois Noonan and is currently owned by Mary Marzalkowski.

ANALYSIS OF

~~ELGIN WATER~~

Received from Mr. F. E. Sears.

This water is a distinctly saline one, faintly alkaline to test papers, without odor, and is slightly opalescent to the eye, after escape of contained gas, but on standing it becomes perfectly clear.

On evaporation a notable residue is left. This residue freed by heating from volatile material gave on analysis the substances here named and in the amounts indicated calculated in grains for the United States gallon of 231 cubic inches.

Silica,	-	-	-	1.192
Lime,	-	-	-	24.814
Magnesia,	-	-	-	25.105
Soda,	-	-	-	11.297
Chlorine,	-	-	-	.889
Sulphuric Acid,	-	-	-	87.648
Carbonic Acid,	-	-	-	1.081
Iron traces,				

151.274

Or one hundred and fifty-one and a quarter grains to the U. S. gallon.

A great peculiarity of this water is the presence of a large amount of the medicinal agent Magnesium Sulphate which largely gives it its distinct taste and character.

The ingredients of the water are so combined as to be in perfect solution. They are present mostly as sulphates, but with a small addition of chlorides and bi-carbonates. The water by the presence of these substances becomes allied to springs that have a world-wide reputation. Of famed waters it most nearly approaches those of Bohemia, the springs of Seidlitz, Pullna and Saidschutz.

HENRY M. SEELY,

Middlebury College,

Middlebury, Vt., May 1, 1889.



This "Analysis of Elgin Water" dated May 1, 1889, by Henry M. Seely of Middlebury College was originally contributed by Lois Noonan.

Schools: Education in Panton

The first school in Panton was built in 1786, and although the identity of the first teacher is not certain, Thomas Judd taught for two winters about that time, followed not long after by Dr. Post. The original schoolhouse was built of logs and roofed with bark, but five years later it was replaced with a frame-constructed school building. In those early years there were two terms of school: a summer term for the younger children, who were not much help with the work at home, and a winter term for the older ones, who were needed with the farm work during good growing weather.

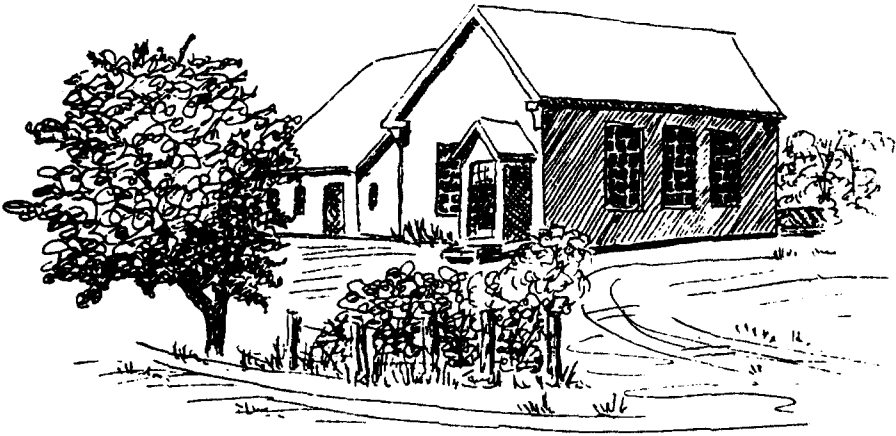
In 1800, Panton was divided into four school districts, each with a school building. The Town had a population of 419 and employed one male and seven female teachers, at an aggregate salary of \$458. 155 pupils attended Panton schools and the entire cost of schools for the year was \$506.69. Three of these one room schoolhouses were constructed of stone probably quarried in part from the ledges on the east side of Jersey Street. A fifth school was added in 1901.

Counted among Panton's successful teachers was James TenBroeke, who was born in England in 1800 and came to Panton at the age of 13. He is remembered for having a "select boarding school" which attained an excellent reputation, located in the house recently owned by his great granddaughter, the late Cornelia Kent, now owned by William and Nancy Polk. Mr. TenBroeke died in 1855.

In 1928 the East Panton PTA did something about bringing their school up to standards. Under the leadership of Grace Moulton, they held barn dances and whist parties to raise the needed \$1500. But the lot was too small for the planned addition — so the men and boys worked together and



Location of James TenBroeke's School, Pease and Lake Roads



School District #2, known as the East District, in 1800. In 1928 the building was moved across the street to a larger lot which could accommodate an addition.

moved the building across the road to its new site. The next year the State Department of Education awarded the school a "superior" status and called it "an outstanding example of fine cooperation." At that time it was "the most visited school in the union." The school closed in 1964, became a private dwelling and is now owned by James Merrigan Jr.

Dean Jackson recalls: "I rode the horse pulling it across. Mr. Moulton was a school director and he was also a brilliant genius; he could do almost anything. He headed up the drive to move that schoolhouse across. Where it sat they rented from the lady that owned that place, and something got sticky, I don't remember at that age; they got in some quarrel over the land, kids would get through the fence, made a lot of trouble. Mr. Moulton owned the land right across the road; he said I'll give them the land and we won't have to listen to that nonsense, that's what it amounted to, probably not the exact words. He engineered moving that building across the road. It was done mostly with volunteer help with his guidance."

A mother and daughter team, teaching at the same time in the 1950s in Pantton Schools, were Blanche Stagg and June Fisher, widow and daughter of E. Perlie Stagg, whose family was noted in early history records.

In 1959, Vergennes Union High School District No. 5 came into being to house grades 7-12, after affirmative voting by the five towns in Addison Northwest Supervisory Union.

In 1988, following years of thoughtful study, a successful vote resulted in the union of Pantton, Vergennes and Waltham, to form Union Elementary School District No. 44, for grades K-6, housed in the Vergennes school building.

Postal Service

Today Panton residents get their mail through the post office in Vergennes. From 1831 to 1902 Panton had its own post office, located at Panton Corners across and a little south from Burnett's Country Store on the spot where Harold Beach's garage is today. Abram Harris was one of the popular postmasters, and his wife Hannah was clerk.

Russell Kent, writing in his booklet *Panton Corners*, lends his own lighthearted view of those bygone days. He writes, "Old Abe Harris was postmaster in Panton in the 1880s. He also made boots, and shoes and sold tobacco and candy. His wife, old Hannar, was his clerk but she couldn't read and write. The mail came twice a week and when the bag arrived, they both went into the bedroom and shut the door and when the mail was sorted, Abe went back to making boots and his wife gave out the mail. If she couldn't read and write, how the devil could she tell one letter from another? Eric Trask looked in the window and solved the mystery. Old Abe put Kent's mail on a red block of the bed quilt, Barnes' on a green block, Stagg's on a blue, so when you came for your mail all old Hannar had to do was to pick the right letter off the right block of the bed quilt."

In their 1961 publication *Concerning the Town of Panton*, William and Alberta Kent write: "The Mail & Stage Routes in the time [1880s] were from Vergennes by Panton and West Addison to Chimney Point - 14 miles both ways, every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday connecting to Vergennes with C.V.R.R. Charles B. Strong of Chimney Point was mail carrier with a one horse conveyance; passenger fare 75¢.

"Charles B. Strong of Chimney Point was mail carrier with a one horse conveyance; passenger fare was 75¢."

"Post cards were 1¢ each; letters 3¢ per half ounce; newspapers to each actual subscriber in the County were published free of charge."

Russell Kent gives another glimpse into Panton's postal service. He writes: "John Donnelly was the Big Democrat in Addison County and a great friend of my father's [Rollin Kent]. This is the story he told me in 1924. 'Your father was postmaster in Panton under Harrison so when Cleveland beat him I felt so good that when I saw him on the Stevens House steps, I hollered over, Hi, Rollin, we are going to put a Democratic postmaster in your town. He hollered right back, You can't do it. There are only two Democrats in town, neither can read and write and one is in jail.'"



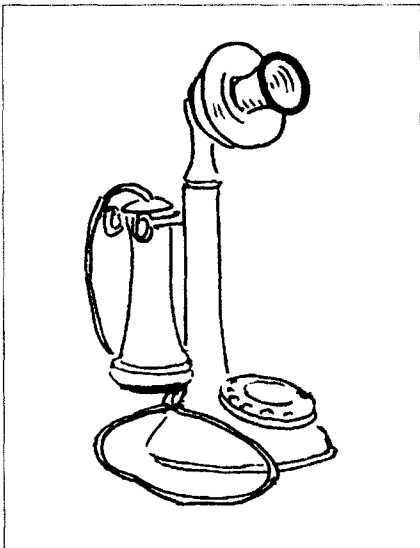
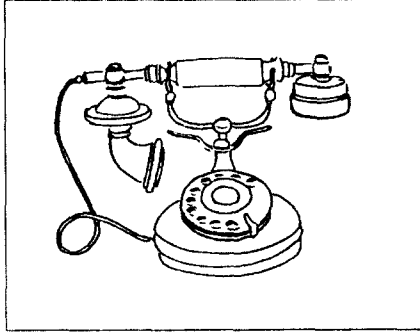
Telephone Service: Yesterday and Today

The Addison & Panton Telephone Company was chartered in 1900 and served the communities of Basin Harbor, Chimney Point, Vergennes, Addison, Bridport, Ferrisburgh and Panton. *The Vermont Year Book* lists the Addison & Panton Telephone Company as the town's provider until 1936; Weybridge Light & Power is listed from then until 1942.

During the intervening years, Vermont Utilities Inc, Central Vermont Telephone Company and General Telephone of Vermont served the town of Panton. From the early 1970s until 1991 Panton telephone service was provided by Continental Telephone Company. GTE took over Panton service in 1992.

In August, 1994, Waitsfield Telecom acquired the Champlain Valley portion of GTE, in the process retaining all former GTE employees involved in the transaction. The main business office for both Waitsfield Telecom and Champlain Valley Telecom is located on Route 100 in the northern end of Waitsfield.

In September, 1995, Champlain Valley Telecom celebrated its first year of providing service to the telephone exchanges of Addison, Bridport, Bristol, Charlotte, Hinesburg, Panton, Richmond and Weybridge. An Open House was held at its Hinesburg Central Office, with a variety of attractions and prizes.



With the publication of this telephone directory, Champlain Valley Telecom honors the Town of Panton as its first feature town. Subsequent directories will feature other towns which are serviced by Champlain Valley Telecom.

The Community Baptist Church

Marking its bicentennial in 1994, the Community Baptist Church in Panton, originally named the First Baptist Church, has much to celebrate. The tidy white church at Panton Corners is currently undergoing renovations, much of the work done by volunteers, to accommodate the revitalized life of its congregation. The upstairs area will house a new office as well as three Sunday School rooms for the growing number of children attending. From a number that often dwindled to under ten, average attendance at Sunday services is now between 50 and 60.

Describing his early days Rev. James Cook wrote in November, 1991: "What had we gotten into? February came and we were praying earnestly that God would send in some families." He continued: "What had we gotten into? A typical Village Missions opportunity where we have watched the hand of God renew and rejuvenate a congregation." (Village Missions is an affiliate of the interdenominational Stonecroft Ministries whose aim is to assist in renewing rural churches throughout the country.)

It was July 24, 1794 when a small group of dedicated Christians met and organized the First Baptist Church in West Panton. Elder Henry Chamberlain, one of the original ten members, was the first pastor. Their first meeting house, dated 1810, was used until the present building was built in 1854.

The First Methodist Church in Panton was organized in 1839, and its church building constructed in 1857. Reverend Richard Brown was their first pastor. In 1922, due to dwindling attendance, the church members voted to close the doors and federate with the Baptist Church. In 1931 Panton selectmen purchased the building which has since served as the Town Hall, with the clerk's office located in the lower level. Recent renovations have resulted in an airy, modern space which incorporates its classic

Panton stone foundation into the attractive decor.

In 1903 an anonymous person donated the cast bronze bell which still hangs in the Baptist Church belfry. The bell was probably transported over the frozen Lake by horse and sleigh from the Bell Foundry in New York. This was the year that a vestry was added, which over the years has housed many ample and well-appreciated community dinners.

Electric lights were installed in 1931. A quaint chandelier, made from a wagon wheel by a local blacksmith, still hangs from the high ceiling in the sanctuary.



The Community Baptist Church

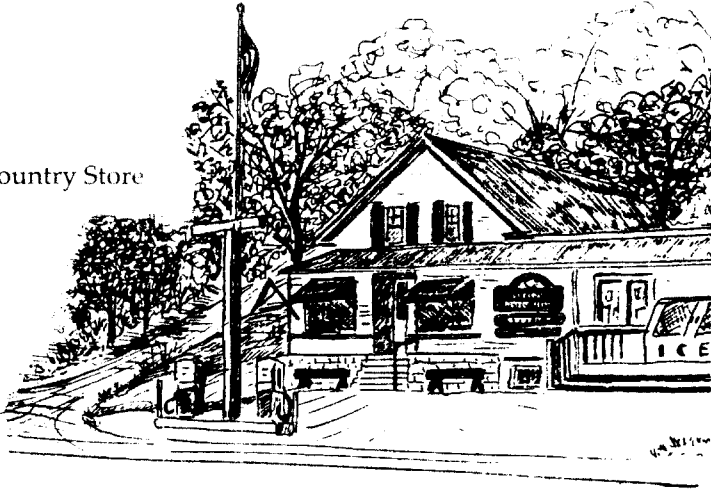
The Store at Panton Corners

On the wall of Burnett's Country Store is a bill of sale dated October, 1934, from the days when the store belonged to Charles Knott, "Dealer in Paints, Oils and Varnishes, and General Merchandise." Among the items are five pounds of nails for 37¢, a loaf of bread for 20¢, three bottles of soda for 25¢, and an ice cream cone for 5¢. Bill Burnett, a Burlington native, has owned the store at Panton Corners since 1988. Retaining the ambiance of a typical Vermont country store — sloping wooden floors and a crowd of needed items — Burnett's also has the look of the '90s, including a video section.

In its colorful past, the building was once owned by Dr. Norman Towsley, who was a well known physician, postmaster, selectman and town representative. He died in 1898. In its approximately 87 years as a country store, there have probably been only seven owners.

Many visitors to Panton stop at the store located in the hub of town. Bill tells about a recent visitor. He left laden with an assortment of gifts with the name Panton to take back home to family and friends in Britain. His family name — Panton.

Burnett's Country Store



"I have dined in the best and worst places in [cities all over the world], but the greatest thrill of all is standing in front of the store at Panton Corners, drinking a bottle of Coke, gazing down at Gaines meadow to Dead Creek and the Green Mountains beyond it, for it was here my people fought the British, the Yorkers, the Indians, and the cold hard winters, and won."

*Panton native Russell Kent
written about 1972*

Fond Memories of Days Gone By — The 1930s to 60s

(Excerpted from *Panton - Past and Present*, 1991)

Panton townspeople have always been interested in sports, with baseball and horse racing high on the list. The story goes that, looking closely, one can see the outline of a race track in the meadow across from the Marshall house.

Sunday afternoon baseball games were a social event with Panton families packing a picnic and driving off to watch the games. Other players came from nearby towns: Addison, Bridport, Ferrisburgh. Townspeople voted in 1939 to permit baseball, lectures, concerts and moving pictures on Sundays.

The ever popular country square and round dances were held weekly during the summer months in the Panton Town Hall. Many people from nearby towns joined in the fun.

Family style church suppers in the summer were well attended by tourists, and proceeds help to support the church.

In the popular 4-H Clubs children learned crafts, cooking, gardening, sewing and caring for calves and horses. The children's work was featured in Field Day exhibits, dress revues, and showing of calves, cows and horses. The Community Talent Show sponsored by the Lucky Clover 4-H Club was a huge success, with help from Al and Dorothy Tisbert.

And then there were memories of school days:

- walking to school, rain or shine, snow or sleet
- wet mittens, socks and boots, spread out carefully under the large round wood stove to dry
- weather so cold that sometimes the water in the kitchen would freeze
- that special occasion — eighth grade graduation held at the Town Hall, generally for less than 10 students
- the excitement when Panton students Connie Thurber and Roger Jackson won the WCAX-TV Current Events Quiz
- family picnics at Arnold Bay on the last day of school; baseball games after lunch.



Eighth grade
graduation,
1959, held at
the Town Hall.



Roger Jackson and Connie
Thurber, January 22, 1957,
Current Events winners.
Roger now teaches social
studies and history in
Hinesville, Georgia.
Connie is assistant director
of a pre-school in Taunton,
Mass, where her husband
David Swensen is pastor of
the Winthrop Street
Baptist Church.



Aerial view of the Thurber Farm, 1968, now owned by
Richard and Linda Thurber.

Vermont State Bicentennial Events: 1991

In June, 1991, as spring flowers were in their full glory, a well-received house tour marked the Bicentennial kick-off celebration. Historical and modern construction was included, as more than 100 people visited the Richmond, Findiesen, Holzschuh, and Vierzen homes, as well as the Jackson Farm and Addison Gardens. Gina Vierzen and the late Rae Holzschuh co-chaired this event.

The town of Panton stepped back in time on a cool and breezy Labor Day week-end, as residents and historical re-enactors in Revolutionary attire dramatized a skirmish at Arnold Bay. White tents, musket smoke, period soldiers and their families all mingled with bright contemporary garb on the bluff above Lake Champlain, on property made available for the occasion by the Lowenstein family, owners of Arnold Bay Farm. Panton residents Al and Dottie Tisbert were among the driving forces that made this memorable week-end a reality after long months of planning.

The Bixby Memorial Library in Vergennes welcomed a display on the history of the town of Panton, designed by Margaret Parlour and Lois Thurber. Among the enduring Bicentennial projects was the refurbishing of the Town Hall and the revised history of the town, *Panton - Past and Present*, compiled by Lois Thurber and Ann Russett. Another was the attractive green and white welcoming signs on the highways entering Panton. And the final project, a Panton quilt, is proudly displayed in the Town Hall as a lasting reminder of this memorable year.

An attractive book with a quilted cover, titled "Panton Proud", was compiled by Dottie Tisbert. Documenting these Bicentennial events through photographs and a variety of written memorabilia, the book is kept at the Town Hall for townspeople and visitors to view, and in the future, to record yet another historic year in the life of Panton.





PHOTO BY CARLEY STEVENS-MCLAUGHLIN

Dottie Tisbert shows samples of the well-researched Revolutionary attire she made for Panton' Bicentennial events. Dottie applies her costume making skills in many ways, including costuming for Burlington's Lyric Theater.



Above: Dottie Tisbert in period attire shielding her eyes, surrounded by modern day compatriots at the Bicentennial Encampment

Left: a gathering of "revolutionaries" at Arnold Bay Farm

An Unlikely Monument

Reflecting on the dramatic role the Peter Ferris family played in the history of Panton and our emerging nation, one remembers that they sheltered Benjamin Franklin and they fled with Benedict Arnold; they farmed the land under severe hardships and they ran an early ferry service. And in 1784 Peter Ferris was Panton's first elected representative to the Vermont Legislature.

Yet it is one of Lake Champlain's best known marine hazards that is a lasting monument to this significant early family. In the spring 1987 edition of the Vermont Historical Society's quarterly publication author Art Cohn tells about Ferris Rock, a vast underwater mountain rising from a depth of 150 feet to within three feet of the water's surface. It is named after Hiram Ferris, who in 1809 became the pilot of the Lake's earliest steamboat Vermont I. Hiram Ferris made this discovery, much to his credit, without a maritime accident.

In this same article, Cohn, who is the director of the Lake Champlain Maritime Museum at Basin Harbor, also tells a remarkable story of Squire Ferris and his "eye witness account that sheds new light on the career and reputation of Benedict Arnold."



Lake Street School in the early 1800s

Visitors to the Lake Champlain Maritime Museum start their incredible journey of discovery when they buy their tickets in the stone schoolhouse that was moved, stone by stone in 1985, from Panton to its present location. This reconstructed historic building was once the Lake Street School, built in the early 1800s. It also serves as a bookstore featuring maps and maritime related books. A replica of the Philadelphia is docked nearby and can be boarded when an attendant in period attire is on duty.

A Vision for Panton

"A Vision for Panton", in the Town Plan dated October, 1994, reads, "In twenty years we envision Panton to be a rural agricultural and residential community with working farms and open space still at the core of the community's character." The plan foresees that the Four Corners will still be the village center; the lakeshore will be more accessible; small agricultural and home-based enterprises will increase; more land will be conserved for natural resources; and regional connections — such as bikeways — will continue in the areas of service, recreation and education.

"An Undiscovered Gem"

As this author expressed deep appreciation for Panton's rich history, its warm and friendly people, its unsurpassed natural beauty and its agricultural assets, town clerk Joan Burt smiled and said, "We are an undiscovered gem."



PHOTO BY CARLEY STEVENS-MCLAUGHLIN

Town Clerk Joan Burt holds the carefully preserved original Town Charter dated 1761, signed by Governor Benning Wentworth.



PHOTO BY CARLEY STEVENS-MCLAUGHLIN

Ann Russett and Lois Thurber in front of the Bicentennial quilt displayed in the Town Hall

A Special Thanks

This work would not be complete without a very special tribute and thanks to Lois K. Thurber and Ann Russett, who compiled the condensed history of the Town of Panton, which served as a first resource for this author.

Within the hundred pages of the publication *Panton — Past and Present*, one finds a wealth of information, from early history of the town to current statistics, all supported by carefully chosen photos and graphics. This publication, part of Panton's Vermont State Bicentennial activities, can be found at the Town Clerk's office, the Bixby Memorial Library in Vergennes, and the Vermont Historical Society Library in Montpelier.

Many people contributed to the success of this publication, but it was Lois and Ann's energy and dedication that brought this enduring Bicentennial project to fruition.

On the title page is a note about the original edition, compiled in 1961 by William and Alberta Kent for Panton's Bicentennial. Titled *Concerning the Town of Panton*, this publication can also be found at the above mentioned locations.

Author's Notes

From my home in Moretown the trip over the Appalachian Gap to Panton is beautiful, particularly on late summer days when splotches of color dot the higher elevations. I would stop in Vergennes at the Bixby Library for research, or Small City Market for a cup of great coffee.

My trips to the Vermont Historical Society Library were full of discoveries. I pored over the legendary work of Abby Maria Hemenway; yes, it does tend to induce eye-strain. I read the documentation of the recent archaeological "digs" at the Ferris Site on Arnold Bay. I often had to remind myself that I was not writing a full length book.

When Dean Jackson told me about the exhibit "Making and Remaking Vermont Farmsteads" featuring the Jackson family, I phoned the Historical Society for details and when asked, "Do you have an invitation to the reception?" I answered truthfully in the negative. "Well," the friendly voice said, "I'll put you on the list." So I went. In her remarks, Jane Beck of the Vermont Folklife Center said there was a question about the identity of a child pictured with a calf, noted as Dean and Alberta's great granddaughter Kristine. The photographer was feeling dreadful, thinking he had made a mistake. "But Mrs. Jackson phoned this morning," Jane Beck explained to the hundred or so people, "and she said that it was correct. Dean looked at the photo and recognized the calf."

My heartfelt thanks go out to many people. Lois Thurber graciously met with me on my first trip; she gave me permission to use material in *Panton Past and Present*, supplied me with photos and steered me in the right direction to connect with other people. I'll long remember enjoying a welcomed cup of tea with Margaret Parlour; talking with Claudia Allen about roots to the land and scenes we both remember from "Gone With the Wind"; gazing in awe as Joan Burt showed me the original Panton charter; chatting with Dean Jackson on his great grandson's fifth birthday; hearing Bill Burnett's story about a customer from Britain named Mr. Panton; and orchestrating a photo session at the town hall with patient subjects, Ann Sullivan, Lois Thurber, Ann Russett, Joan Burt and Dottie Tisbert. My thanks go to Dennis Mueller for information about the rip-rapping at Arnold Bay and the second Peter Ferris house, and to Daryl Hatch for information about Panton stone for building and scientific research.

I regret that I did not meet Lois Noonan, librarian at Bixby Library and longtime Panton resident; she was in Africa on safari. Margaret Farnsworth was most helpful in showing me Bixby Library research treasures: a remarkable folder of information on John Brown and the work of Vergennes writer and historian Ruth O'Connor.

By no means have I written a complete picture of Panton. I've chosen from a glorious array. What's the story behind Turkey Lane, or Mrs. Winterbottom's magnificent mansion on the Lake? Where are Ruth O'Connor's slides of the second Peter Ferris house? There's a sequel in the making.

Very special thanks go to my daughter Lauren Gallagher for her steadfast and skillful editing and proofreading.

Author's Biography

Earline Marsh's "retirement career" includes free lance writing, supervision of teacher licensure students for Vermont College's Adult Degree Program and hand papermaking. A former elementary school principal, she has served as editor and contributing writer for *Central Vermont Magazine* and *Skiing Heritage*. She is now editor of the *Bull and Branch*, the newsletter of an international hand papermaking group. Earline is a frequent contributor to the *Country Courier*, and she has written for the New England Ski Museum's newsletter. She recently shared editing duties for her son Glenn Parkinson's new book, *First Tracks: Stories from Maine's Skiing Heritage*.

As a hand papermaker, Earline focuses on recycling and teaching recycling techniques to children and adults. She has conducted workshops at local schools, as well as Middlebury College and the Greater Upper Valley Solid Waste District Management.

Earline is currently board president of the Family Center of Washington County, a volunteer at the Harwood Union High School Library, and an instructor in the Moretown School After School Program. Her favorite occupation, however, is that of grandmother to five special children.



Credits

Current photos as indicated are by photographer Carley Stevens-McLaughlin of Montpelier. Pen and ink drawings are used with kind permission of Panton artist Margaret Parlour, whose work is available in several Vermont locations, including Burnett's Country Store in Panton. Lois Thurber lent the old photos of the farm and school events.