Waitsfield Telecom

June ❦ 1996

A Valley Sampler

People, Places and Folklore

Introduction:

Within this beautiful and historic Valley is a trove of scenic splendor, unique people and fascinating legends and tales. If you are fortunate enough to live here you might recall pleasurable memories as you read through these pages, and you might be in for surprising and enchanting discoveries right in your own back yard. If you are a visitor here in the Valley, be our guest as we share fact and lore about a few of the incomparable places and people that have shaped these four towns — Fayston, Moretown,Waitsfield and Warren — as we know them today.

Some of these distinctive attractions were first made known to us by our families and friends. Some of these people will share their recollections and stories. Where possible we've researched historic backgrounds, and we welcome any additional information that would enhance our accounts.

These special Valley places are in our richly endowed outdoors, changing in character with the changing seasons — sweeping vistas, quiet country roads, fields and woods, green with spring and summer, white-blanketed in snow or brilliant with fall color. When you visit them as a next door neighbor or an out-of-town guest, we ask that you are mindful of your role as special caller, one who leaves behind no visible trace of the pleasurable moments spent there. In turn, we hope that you take away happy memories, perhaps of an invigorating adventure, an exhilarating view, or peaceful moments of quiet reflection.

The Maynard farm in Moretown from across the Mad River.

Mount Alice & Scrag Mountain

Sometimes called Old Scrag or Old Scragg

From Vermont Place Names: *"Origin of Mount Alice has proved to be elusive." Scragg (or Scrag). "Origin of name is not certain; if it's not a family name then it could have been descriptive of an area ragged, rough and uneven."*

Maps today show Scrag Mt. as Waitsfield's highest peak at 2,923 feet, with Mt. Alice nearby at 2,628. But there's a romantic story here, and like so many romantic stories, this one has a bittersweet quality to it.

The following piece is based on an interview with Mary Moriarty, who grew up in Waitsfield but now lives in Waterbury. Childhood polio left Mary unable to walk without a leg brace and crutches; she has never been to the top of Mt. Alice, but she knows a great deal about its history.

"My father wanted the mountain named for my mother. He used to say, after we're all gone that will be there to remember you by."

Mary Moriarty

In the early 1930s, the Vermont Forestry Department, later renamed Department of Forests and Parks, was developing a system of fire prevention lookout towers. Commissioner Perry Merrill approached Walter Moriarty, Mary's father, who was in the lumber business and owned quite a lot of land, including the summit then known as Old Scrag. (The map included in Matt Jones' 1909 History of Waitsfield shows Old Scrag.) The Forestry Department had targeted this prominent summit as a likely location for a new fire tower. Walter Moriarty said that he would give permission for a right-of-way and location for the tower and ranger's cabin with a condition: that the summit would be called Mt. Alice, after his wife. Walter knew of a place somewhere in the Granville Woods area that a man had named for his wife. "That appealed to my father and he wanted the mountain named for my mother," Mary said. "He used to say, after we're all gone that will be there to remember you by."

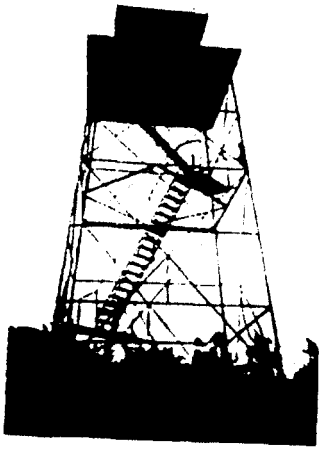
This was agreed upon, that the place where the fire tower was located would be called Mt. Alice. But somehow this agreement was not legally recorded. "It should have been put into writing, but it was not specified," Mary said.

Mary Alice Bisbee, Alice Moriarty's granddaughter, added, "One person told me the interpretation that they call it the Mt. Alice Tower on Scrag Mt. and that was a way of making it alright. But I don't think it's alright according to family tradition; [the mountain] should be called Mt. Alice." Townspeople in the early days generally referred to the fire tower as being on Mt. Alice — and some people today still do.

"I worked in the telephone office from the fall before Eleanor [Farr Haskin] was born until 1942," Mary said. "It was during that time that the fire lookout tower was maintained. The tower was always in the telephone directory as Mt. Alice."

One day Mary noticed a sign near Fletcher Joslin's house pointing the way to the lookout tower on Scrag Mt. She was taken by surprise, but quickly collected her thoughts and wrote a letter to Perry Merrill, to ask if it wasn't legally supposed to be maintained as Mt. Alice and why the name had been changed. But this was just about the time of Perry's retirement in 1966. She received a letter back from someone else in the forestry service saying that they would do their best to keep the name Mt. Alice, but the letter gave no explanation about why the name had reverted to Scrag. And there was no follow-up.

Walter Moriarty did indeed leave a lasting monument to his beloved wife; today there is a Mt. Alice, but it is in the shadow of the mountain he had intended to carry his wife's name "after we're all gone."



Research into Forest Service records shows that in 1934 a wooden tower and cabin were built on Mt. Alice. The tower was destroyed by lightning in 1947 and a new steel tower with a wooden cab was built. The biennial reports refer to maintenance of the tower and cabin on Mt. Alice until 1949-50, when the location was referred to as Scrag Mt. Subsequent reports refer to Scrag Mt. and to routine maintenance. The lookout tower system was gradually phased out during the 50s. More information about fire towers is *located on page 11.*

The Fire Tower

A Look Back at this Waitsfield Landmark

For many years this was a favorite climb with Valley residents and visitors, first hiked by some as relatively young children. The trail to the summit of Waitsfield's highest peak —which stands at 2923 foot elevation — had easy walking sections through dense patches of ferns, over stream beds (wet or dry depending on the season), through handsome white birches, as well as some challenging places over ledges and rock obstructions.

In addition to the Jonathan Palmer family, other early settlers in the general Palmer Hill area include the family names of Grandy, Bartlett, Hamilton and Wheeler. Up here, too, "Squire" Mattias Stone Jones settled in 1798, before forsaking these mountainous wilds for more fertile fields. It's hard now to believe that this remote area was once one of the most densely settled parts of Waitsfield. Herbert Spaulding, who lives on the Waitsfield Common, tells us, "My grandfather's father lived up on Palmer Hill, on a big farm up there; I don't know just where it was." His great grandfather, Andrew Long, was born in Ireland in 1826 and died in Waitsfield in 1897.

Many townspeople remember the rugged steel fire tower that stood at the summit for 30 years. In the early 1930s the Civilian Conservation Corps built a wooden tower and cabin for the watch-

Caitlin and Kristen Gallagher begin a winter hike to the old fire tower site. The signs read SCRAG MOUNTAIN TRAIL and HIKERS PLEASE STAY ON TRAIL.

man. In the late 40s the wooden tower was struck by lightning and destroyed; a new steel tower was built, the one best remembered by townspeople who climbed it to enjoy the spectacular views it afforded.

In the 1960s Gordon Moulton was one of the 15 or 20 Boy Scouts who enjoyed the treks and overnight camping on Scrag Mt., under the leadership of Norman Neill. Gordon remembers listening to the forest ranger who would take them up the tower and tell them fascinating stories. "We'd pitch our tents on the ledges just below the fire tower," he said. "I remember one day when we walked south on the ridge line and were standing there when a glider soared over our heads. We could hear the whistling sound as it approached." He added, "My camera was back in my tent."

Now the scoutmaster of Boy Scout Troop 100, Gordon said that until recent years he would take Boy Scouts up Scrag. "In 1972," he said, " the Boy Scouts bought the cabin for one dollar from the state forestry department." Since a new landowner took over a large area, including the summit of Scrag, the cabin was sold to the property owner and is no longer available to the scouts. Gordon added that it's been two years since he's been up Scrag.

Ramona Shaw, who lives in Waitsfield village, remembers when her father Carlos Shaw climbed Scrag Mountain every day, when he was employed as a ranger by the state of Vermont to scan from the lookout tower and report any forest fires that he spotted. The Shaw family lived in the Marble Bingham house in the village, which has since been torn down. Ramona, her sister Jean and Eleanor Farr (now Eleanor Haskin) would sometimes accompany Carlos on his trips up Scrag. Ramona remembers picking blueberries in season; she remembers the spring at the bottom of the trail and another at the top, which was almost always full enough to fill their canteens.

Ramona remembers when the original wooden fire tower was struck by lightning. This happened in the mid-40s. "It was toward dark. There was a loud crack of thunder and then we could see the fire," she said. Fortunately the fire was contained and the nearby woods didn't catch the blaze. The men who went up to fight the fire used back pumps, fire rakes and other equipment supplied by the CCC. At that time the Shaw family lived up on the hill, and on a clear day they could see the fire tower from their house.

During the years that her father worked at the Fire Tower, Ramona recalls, there was a one stringer phone line tacked to trees along the way, which connected to a phone at the summit. Sometimes a fallen tree would land on the line, which would then need repair.

Peggy Bisbee Thompson, who now lives on the Old County Road in Waitsfield, grew up on the farm on the Cross Road now owned by the Jennings family. She has fond memories of the hike to the top of what she remembers as Mt. Alice. She remembers one day when they made two trips to the top. In those days, she said, after going through

the gate, you went through an expanse of pasture. Peggy adds, "I haven't been up there in forty years."

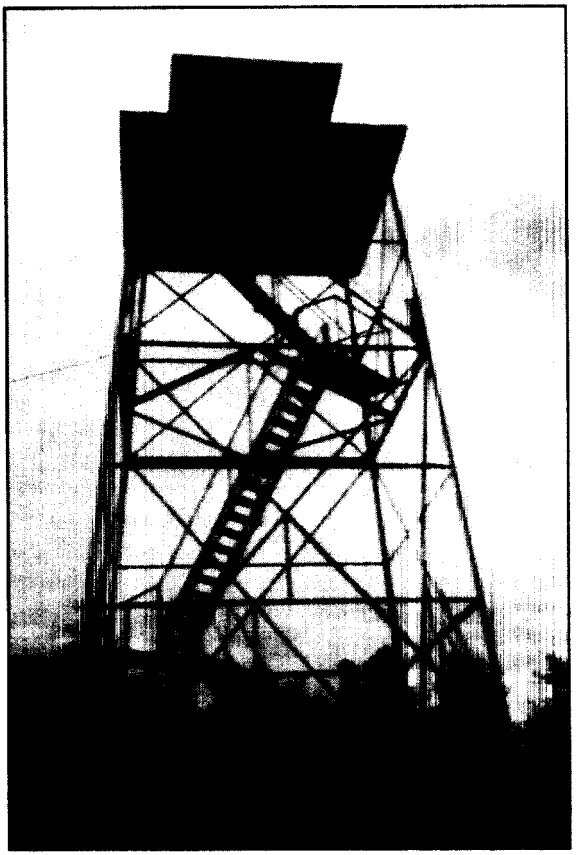
After Carlos Shaw retired from the job, it was held by a series of rangers who lived in the cabin during the fire danger periods. Martin von Trapp, who has made many trips up Scrag Mt., remembers one ranger who lived there. "He used his time up there to work on a book he was writing. He would hike down to get supplies," Martin said. He added that there is another trail that leads to the summit, beginning at the Great Lakes Carbon Co. farm, formerly belonging to Ike Folsom. Remnants of an old wind tower remain in this locale, Martin said.

The Harold Stafford family lived in the large house at the junction of Palmer Hill Road and the Common Road. Alberta Stafford, who now lives in a new house a short distance away, wrote from her winter home in Florida: "Folks eager to hike were not only locals, but summer folks who often inquired the way." She added, "Often supplies and messages would be left at our house for the ranger." Her son Morris, a frequent hiker to the tower, has two particular memories: the interior of the ranger's cabin, with its bunk beds and stove, and the phone line that ran from the Rivers farm.

In the late 70s the tower was dismantled and for the sum of one dollar, Dave Sellers of Warren bought it from the state forestry service. He arranged to take it down the mountain by helicopter to his home at Prickly Mountain. "During the trip a few I-beams fell into the woods and we never found them," Dave says. "Somewhere up there is a bit of industrial archeology." Dave has plans to re-erect the tower. "It's a long-term, unaccomplished plan with no deadline," he adds. Dave remembers the climb up the tower before its demise. "It was a very strong tower with an awesome view," he recalls.

William "Bill" Osgood, a renowned outdoorsman who lives in Northfield, described the access to Scrag Mt. from the Northfield side. (The town line between Northfield and Waitsfield goes almost across the top of Scrag Mt.) Follow Stony Brook Road to the end, where there is parking for three or four cars. The relatively new trail is marked with paint or tape, since the old trail was closed off by landowners. The trail follows a stream, the headwaters of Stony Brook, and can be slippery in wet conditions. Nearing the top, the trail becomes quite steep. "It's a great hike," Bill said. "There are nice views at the top, particularly if you walk south on the ridge line to get views towards Waitsfield." Having last made the hike up Scrag in October, 1995, Bill reported that the hut is still there and is in relatively good basic condition.

Kristen Gallagher, who made a winter climb with her family, said that the trail was in good condition, though in places steep and icy,



The fire tower in July, 1966.

"I remember the eerie, muffled drumming of the ruffed grouse in the nearby brushy woods, a sound that begins slowly and gains speed until it is a hollow whir."
Earline Marsh

with deep snow at the top. She reported that the old Boy Scout cabin showed signs of vandalism inside. Walking south from the old fire tower base, staying on the ridge line for a few hundred feet, Kristen used binoculars to enjoy the sweeping view of the Valley below. "I could see the Round Barn and roads, farms and fields to the south. The sun shining on the view gave an amazing effect," she said.

The 1974 edition of *Fifty Hikes in Vermont* contained a two page section on the hike up Scrag Mt., with a map and a picture of the stand of white birches. The photo caption read: "The most beautiful white-birch forests we've seen can be found in the cool woods on the slopes of Scrag Mountain." The current edition of *Fifty Hikes in Vermont*, published by the Green Mountain Club, does not contain information about Scrag Mt. Today portions of the old forest service right-of-way are inaccessible for public use, and in some sections parking on Palmer Hill Road is restricted.

Remembering the Hike
to the Old Fire Tower on Mt. Alice

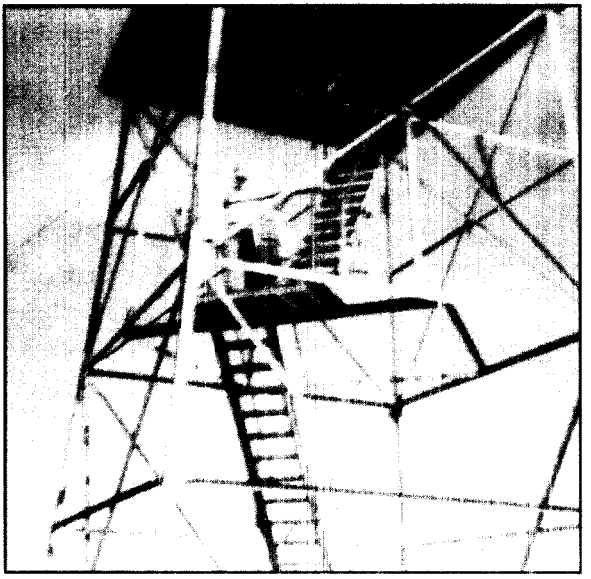
by Rick Thompson

A woods road bears uphill through an avenue of mature maple trees whose crowns form a canopy, creating an inviting gateway for Old Scrag, Mt. Alice and the Northfield Ridge. Within minutes the trail passes an old stone foundation on the right which probably belonged to the Jonathan Palmer family, who were among Waitsfield's early settlers. This location may have been occupied as early as 1800. The mass of stone used to support a central chimney is still visible within the foundation, and remnants of the barn location can be seen across the lane.

The trail then bears left below the "Priest Camp", fords the shallow head water tributary of Pine Brook and immediately begins its ascent up the ridge. The distance to the summit of Mt. Alice is only about 1.75 miles from this point, but it is all uphill with only slight level breaks in the climb. Logging roads enter from the left as the mature maples and beech woods of this lower elevation were cut in the 1980s. In autumn wild turkeys are sometimes seen at this level feeding on fallen beech nuts.

Author Rick Thompson with his daughter Charlotte, summer 1995. Rick is married to Pam Barnard. Charlotte's grandparents are Peggy and Ford "Tex" Thompson and Jan Barnard and the late Don Barnard.

These photos were taken in June, 1970, when Rick Thompson's family hiked to the fire tower.



A small spring fed stream soon crosses the trail. In earlier years a battered tin cup and an old iron pipe gave hikers their last drink of cool water here. Springs exist near the summit, slightly down from the junction of the Northfield trail.

About a mile into the hike the trail begins its steepest ascent through a forest of white birch. Cooler micro-climates and thinner soils start to play a role here in the vegetation, as the majestic hardwoods of the lower elevation decrease and small clumps of

Thanks to Suzy Thompson for the use of photos.

spruce and hemlock become noticeable. This section of the trail has been heavily eroded by seasonal streams. Often hikers will find wind-falls of birch blocking the trail. Ledge outcrops become more and more numerous.

Slight reward for the steep climb is a short flat expanse covered with black spruce that is typical of most Vermont summits. Small swampy areas lie here near the trail, as do fern beds. In dry times suitable tent sites have been found here between ledge and wet soil. Bearing left, the trail leads to the ranger's cabin in less than a quarter of a mile. When Boy Scout Troop 100 of Waitsfield owned the cabin, overnight hikers were welcome to use it for shelter, in exchange for their courtesy and care.

The old anchor plates and tie bolts drilled into ledge to support the lookout tower can still be found.

Over grey ledge, (schist or gneiss) and through thick clumps of spruce used as cover by chipmunks and rabbits, the trail continues a few hundred yards beyond the cabin to the summit. The old anchor plates and tie bolts drilled into ledge to support the lookout tower can still be found. There is a view here looking east into Northfield and the lower hills of eastern Vermont. For a view of the Mad River Valley, continue south along the ridge for a few hundred more yards until reaching a short cliff face that exposes the southern end of the Valley. This overlook is not well marked, but easy to find if one is willing to scramble along the ledge crest of the mountain. The view is quite dramatic and worth the effort.

On the summit one is most likely to hear a collection of bird song. Chickadees, blue jays and song sparrows are common, as are the caws and clucks of ravens. In the fall hawks are often seen soaring past. Do not fear the mysterious metallic screeches that sound like taut wire piercing fierce wind, nor duck under the long skinny shadows you will feel on the back of your neck while resting on the summit ledge. Look more closely as the next ones passes and wave. The glider pilot will undoubtedly tip his wings back.

Rick Thompson grew up and lives in Waitsfield, where he is a builder, amateur geologist and spare-time writer. He combines his college major, geography, with his other interests as he writes "emotional landscaping about places across America" which he and his wife Pam Barnard have visited during their many cross country trips.

A Brief History of the Fire Tower System

from the Vermont Forest and Parks Annual Reports

Author's note: Starting to research and write about the fire tower in Waitsfield, I found little information until I contacted the Vermont Forests, Parks & Recreation Department in Waterbury. Poring through volumes of biennial reports resulted in the following general information with some specifics about our fire tower.

Devastating forest fires in Vermont around the turn of the century prompted officials to formulate a plan for early fire detection. Forest Service records show that in 1908 alone 15,894 acres of Vermont timber and other valuable property were lost to the ravages of forest fires. In the ten year period between 1918 and 1928 an average of 3,000 acres were burned annually. The records note that while this was an improvement, the figures were still not satisfactory. The Vermont Forest Service, the U.S. Forest Service and the Vermont Timberland Owners Association worked together to build and operate a system of manned lookout towers equipped with telephones, as a line of defense against the destruction of forest fires, which were caused mostly by carelessness. In 1918 there were 8 lookout towers on prominent mountain peaks in Vermont. This figure rose to 15 in 1928 and 20 in 1930.

When the CCC (Civilian Conservation Corps) came into being in 1933 as a means of providing employment and training during the Great Depression, one of the early projects in Vermont was the building of six new fire lookout towers, one of which was in Waitsfield. The Forest Service record for 1934 notes that a wooden tower and cabin were built on Mt. Alice. The 1943 report says that a new cabin for the lookout watchman was built and the tower was painted. No reference could be found to explain what happened to the cabin built 9 years earlier.

Looking optimistically ahead in a section titled Post War Planning, the 1944 report notes that there is no need for an increase in fire control organization, based on a favorable fire record that has been maintained in Vermont over a number of years. "Intensive educational fire prevention programs should be conducted, aimed at stressing the responsibility of the individual," the report concludes.

The 1946 report reads: "The value of aeroplanes for observing fires and getting information for dispatching was demonstrated on

several fires and there are indications that they can be used to a much greater extent for this purpose." On October 20, 1947 the Civil Air Patrol started a regular system of aerial fire patrols, foretelling the ultimate end of the lookout towers for fire detection.

Although credited to "Allis" rather than "Alice", a reference in the 1947-48 report reads: "The old wooden tower was struck by lightning and destroyed by the resulting fire. A new tower has been completed with a base of a steel tower and a wooden cab on top. It makes a very satisfactory lookout station. Considerable brushing and repair work has been done on the telephone line. The lookout cabin has been painted inside and out." There's hardly a shadow of a doubt that this refers to "our" fire tower.

The 1949-50 report has no reference to Mt. Alice but rather the first reference to Scrag Mt. "Lightning protection installed on camp. Painted interior of cabin. Tower cab and windows painted and old wooden tower removed." The next report notes 300 yards of telephone line were relocated. Subsequent reports refer only to Scrag Mt. and to routine maintenance.

As the lookout tower system was gradually phased out during the 50s, a now familiar figure, actually "born" in 1945, was introduced into Vermont. The 1957 report reads: "A 'Smoky Bear' costume was procured and has been used to bring the fire prevention message to a large number of people through appearances at the Lumberjack Roundup, fairs, Boy Scout Jamborees, parades, and schools. Additional publicity was obtained through radio and TV programs, educational movies shown at meetings, posting of signs and the distribution of nearly 30,000 pieces of literature."

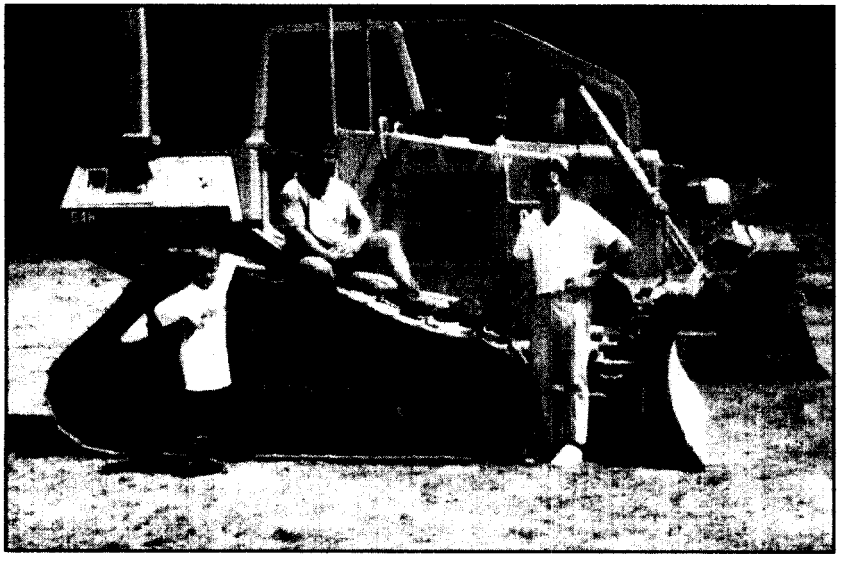
The 1962 report states: "The past fifty or more years have shown conclusively the value of prevention efforts."

Today, as in years past, the town forest fire warden plays an important role in fire prevention. Many towns in Vermont include in their Town Report a reminder of the law pertaining to open burning, the number of permits issued, the number of acres burned and the cost to the town and state. For example, Moretown fire warden Duane L. Howes reports that last year 21 acres were burned at a cost to the town and state of $1,109.30.

Moretown Recreation Fields and Nature Trail

In 1995, a model community project in Moretown was begun with volunteer help and donated equipment from throughout the Valley. Ready for use by 1997 are a regulation Little League and softball field and a regulation soccer field, located on land behind the school owned jointly by the town and school district. Doug Reed, an architect and chair of the Planning Commission, drew up plans and spearheaded the community effort to turn an inadequate playing field behind the school and unused space behind the town offices into a modern, well designed recreational area. No taxpayer money was used. "There are no funds for labor and machinery; that has come graciously and wonderfully from the community," Doug said. "This is not a Moretown project, it's a Valley institution," he added. Residents from throughout the Valley, including Harwood Union High School students, will have access to the facilities.

Soccer fields for 7th and 8th grade girls to practise and play are in short supply, and the nearby Moretown fields will be available.



On a sunny day in July, 1995, volunteer work crews and donated equipment combined to shape the Moretown Recreation project. Doug Reed, right, representing the planning commission, spearheaded the effort. With him are Rick Haynes, center, member of the select board, and visitor Cooper Parkinson.

Townspeople involved in the project say that they have been using other people's playing fields over the years. The new Moretown fields will become "like the Waitsfield Couples Club Field North End."

Doug expressed enthusiasm for an outdoor amphitheater, next on the construction list. "The natural location is very rare. There are few places in the middle of a town with such an acoustically ideal natural bowl." Doug, who sings in the Vermont Symphony Chorus, envisions classical concerts here in the future.

Ongoing supervision of the fields is under the jurisdiction of a recreation commission formed by the Moretown select board. This includes representation from the school board and select board, and the Valley community at large.

Doug noted long range plans: "Ultimately we'll have a recreation path linked to Harwood. We're working with the Valley Recreation Committee and plan to extend our path up South Hill to loop with the rest of the Valley. People could use the bike path to come to the playing fields without using the highway."

Michael Strojny, a member of the school board, pauses in his earth moving work on the new recreation fields, July 1995.

Nature Trail

Earlier this year the Vermont Institute of Science, Math and Technology awarded a $6000 grant to Moretown School, to resurrect the Nature Trail that extends from the school yard easterly up the hill ultimately to South Hill Road near the historic St. Patrick's Cemetery. Ray Holland, the school librarian, wrote the grant and will be closely involved in its implementation. He says that one of the primary needs is an accurate survey of the school's actual property, estimated to be about 120 acres.

Until the trail is more clearly marked, Ray said, "You could get lost up there." He continued, "In places the old trail followed a stream bed. We'll re-locate the trail to avoid this." The whole area has the potential for being a unique outdoor learning and recreation environment, to be used by the community as well as school children. "There are interesting natural phenomena in those woods," Ray noted.

During the late 70s and early 80s, the school Nature Trail was used extensively for outdoor learning projects, including land use, Abenakis of Vermont, sources of energy, and soils and plants. In 1980 Moretown School was chosen to participate in the APEX Program, a teacher education program at the University of Vermont. An article appearing in 1981 in *Phi Delta Kappan*, an education journal, explained: "The 120 acres of fields, hills, streams, plants and animals that make up the grounds of the Moretown Elementary School provided an ideal setting for a 10-day experiment in cooperative, cross-disciplinary learning."

In recent years the Nature Trail has continued to be used to some degree, but limited resources prevented continued development and upkeep. Present plans, which will be made possible through the grant, include the ELF program (Environmental Learning for the Future), cross country ski program, guided tours offered by students to members of the community to teach about flora and fauna, and student-submitted annual reports to be included in the town report.

Jamie Hearn and Lizzy Strauss enjoy a bit of frivolity
along with their serious study of ferns,
Moretown School Nature Trail, spring, 1981

Burnt Rock Mountain

Long before the days of established hiking trails with accompanying guide books, or private ownership as we know it today, early settlers had blazed their own trails through the wilderness of North Fayston to discover a summit of great scenic beauty. They explored the mossy glades, secluded hollows and rocky outcrops which led to commanding views of rugged mountainsides. From the top of what came to be known as Burnt Rock Mountain, peaks and ranges near and far were visible in most directions, only Camel's Hump and the Allens limiting the view to the north. These adventurous pioneers found a view to the west spanning Lake Champlain, to the east, the Northfield Range and the Granite Mountains, and to the south, Lincoln Ridge.

" — SUPPOSED (!) to bring party out at North Fayston saw mill by 5 p.m. and auto from there to Waterbury to catch the 6:45 train due in Burlington at 7:40 p.m."

Eighty years ago, during the summer of 1916, Will Monroe and his fellow trail builders were working on the Burnt Rock Mountain section of the famed Long Trail, which today extends 263 miles from the Massachusetts border to the Canadian border. Monroe, a New Jersey professor, first came to Vermont in the summer of 1914 to teach at the University of Vermont. Described as a genius at trail location, he led the difficult work on this bare rocky summit which rises to an elevation of 3,168 feet. One account of their experience that summer reads: "The plan is to go .... Skyline Trail to just south of Burnt Rock Mountain and from Slash Rock down that ravine or valley to the east — SUPPOSED (!) to bring party out at North Fayston saw mill by 5 p.m. and auto from there to Waterbury to catch the 6:45 train due in Burlington at 7:40 p.m." In those days roads and automobiles did not provide the reliable transportation we take for granted today, and train travel was widely used.

Hattie Boyce Gallagher, who was born in 1894 and died in 1982, is remembered for her great love of the outdoors. She was born in the Boyce homestead in North Fayston and grew up in this remote area. Among other stories, she enjoyed telling about warm summer days on Burnt Rock Mountain picking blueberries and filling a sap bucket. Berries not immediately consumed were destined to be canned for winter enjoyment. James Peck Boyce, who stars in Trudy Folsom's charming story about Burnt Rock Mountain on page 18 was Hattie's grandfather.

How did Burnt Rock Mountain get its name? *Vermont Place Names* simply tells that it was "named because there is a hole near the top that looks burned." Material from the Green Mountain Club, which is dedicated to the preservation of the Long Trail, reads, "The mountain's name indicates the reason for its bare summit, for its elevation is well below the scrub line."

Hattie Boyce with her two beloved oxen Bill and Tom. Even into her old age this was one of Hattie's favorite pictures.
Photo courtesy of Clare Hemingway

How Burnt Rock Mountain Got Its Name

by Trudy Folsom

Here's a tale handed down for generations in the Boyce family, early Fayston settlers. It offers a plausible though unproven explanation of how this North Fayston landmark got its name.

"Ma, have you seen little Blackface? He's not by the gate." Young James Peck Boyce and his brother Caleb burst into the small frame house where their mother sat busy at her flaxwheel, one foot on the cradle where two month old Mason lay sleeping. The two boys and eight year old Catherine had just returned from the little district school, a half mile up the road where a total of twenty-six pupils were now enrolled. Already the older boys were out helping their fathers with the spring work, mending fences, clearing more land and getting ready to put in the spring crops.

"Little Blackface", one of twin lambs born a month earlier, had been disowned by his mother. "If you can raise him, he's yours." David told his oldest son, who joyfully accepted the task. James spent every spare minute with his lamb, and soon the wobbly little legs grew sturdy and Blackface was following his young master everywhere, except to school. He waited each night at the split rail gate when he heard the children running noisily down the road. But tonight he was neither at the gate nor with the rest of the flock grazing on the fresh spring grass.

"I'm afraid it's a bear, son," said David Boyce, who returned a few minutes later from his task of pulling tree stumps from yet another fertile strip of land further down the Beaver Meadow. "This time of year those old mother bears are pretty hungry after sleeping all winter, and a month old lamb is mighty tempting."

And so it proved to be. Father and son had gone only a quarter of a mile up the mountain, following what were unmistakably bear tracks when they came to a spot by a big rock where a bloodstained lamb skin told the story. The bear herself had long since disappeared, probably back to one of the small caves dotting the Fayston mountainside where she undoubtedly had hungry cubs waiting.

"I'll get her!" vowed the boy, fighting to keep back his tears — a twelve year old Boyce must not cry. "I'll get every darn bear on this mountain."

And so was born the legend of James Peck Boyce, mighty bear hunter. At first he could only accompany his father or one of his uncles on hunting trips, but by the time he was sixteen — as strong and muscular as any man — hunting bears became an obsession with him. He spent every spare moment in the Fayston wilderness. One day he pulled stumps for his aging Uncle Paul, who rewarded James with a muzzle loader for his very own.

Within a month, however, that gun almost caused his undoing. One early spring afternoon James and his cousin Dan had driven an old bear into a rather deep cave at the foot of a small peak, one of many along the Fayston Ridge. "Let's smoke him out," said James, and after several attempts with the small flintstone which he always carried, the dry leaves caught and a good smudge was going. The bear came out all right, and was promptly dispatched with a well-aimed shot from the muzzle loader. But the boys had not reckoned with the dryness of the woods that spring. Their fire took off through the dry leaves and underbrush until the whole top of the mountain was aflame with a blaze that could be seen for miles. Farmers on all sides left their plows and fence building to fight the fire, which was finally extinguished, but not before it had consumed all growth on the top of the craggy rocks, and even burned so deeply into the thin soil that vegetation never did return. To this day the peak is known as Burnt Rock Mountain. Young James and his precious muzzle loader were grounded for the entire summer, but the next fall he was allowed to return to his bear hunting.

After his marriage to Mary Boyce, a distant cousin, his expeditions became less frequent, but whenever a farmer lost a new-born lamb or unmistakable bear tracks were seen in the neighborhood, James would be off again on his relentless search. He came to know the Fayston hills and each small cave where a bear might "hole up". Legend has it that, knowing a bear to be hiding in the back of one dark cave, he fashioned a torch from a dead branch and twice entered the cave, only to have the light dashed from his hand by the swish of a mighty paw. The third time he crept to the cave opening and without benefit of a light fired at a dark bulk in the deep recesses of the rocks. Luckily for him the faithful muzzle loader hit a vital spot.

By now he had become well known as the mightiest bear hunter of Fayston. Fewer lambs and young calves disappeared in the early spring, and mothers felt safer to let their children venture into the woods. Can we doubt that during his term in Montpelier as representative from Fayston that when he met his fellow lawmakers in the corridors of the State House, more conversation turned to his prowess as a bear hunter than to the enactment of new laws?

When he was ninety years old, two years before his death, James Peck Boyce shot his last bear. Little Blackface was avenged.

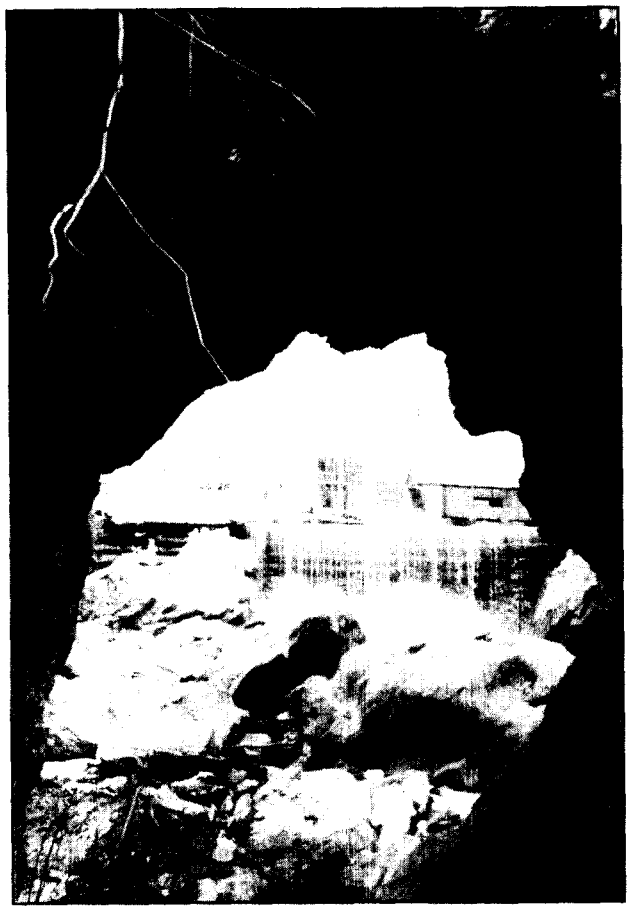
James Peck Boyce (1820-1912)
and his wife Mary Boyce (1827-1906)
Photo courtesy of Clare Hemingway

Trudy Folsom wrote this story for her family in December, 1982. James Peck Boyce was her husband Ike Folsom's great grandfather. Before his death at 96, Uncle George Boyce read Trudy's story. His response: "Sounds good!"

The Natural Bridge in Warren

When she first came to Warren Village as a 20 year old bride, Gerry Cota didn't know anything about a Natural Bridge near her new home on the banks of the Mad River. Soon her husband Kenneth arranged with his brother Jesse to build a new house next door, and Gerry discovered that in their new back yard was an amazing natural phenomenon created by the elements. "The Natural Bridge is better known outside of the Valley than in it," she said with a smile.

How do people know about the Natural Bridge? "They read about it in travel literature and when they get to Warren they go to the Post Office and ask where it is. It's four houses south of the Post Office," Gerry said.



The classic look of the Natural Bridge, as it has appeared in countless photos and paintings. Post cards of this view are available at the Warren Store. The house in the background is the one in which Gerry lived when she first came to Warren as a bride.

Today, Gerry looks back on almost 50 years of living in her home — and she tells about people from all over the world who have come here to see the natural bridge. "They have come from places like Japan, England, Australia, Korea," she said. Gerry keeps a diary that records the number of visitors and where they are from, but not their names. "One year we had 225 visitors," she said. "We've even

had bus loads of people on foliage tours." She explained that they would go down the steep path in small groups to see the bridge, until everyone had a chance to see and photograph it. During the time that her husband Kenneth was ill, before his death a few years ago, Gerry said that the visitors provided a kind of entertainment for them.

Gerry emphasizes that people go down the steep incline behind her house to view the bridge "at their own risk; it's treacherous." She added that she doesn't allow children to go down; she takes care of them while their parents make the descent to view the bridge.

It is a spectacular phenomenon; the north side frames the falls, full and noisy in spring, the covered bridge and the large white house in which Gerry first lived. This picturesque view has been captured by photographers and artists who have come over the years, many from far distant places. One of her favorite photos is a large one Gerry has framed and hung on her living room wall; it's a striking winter scene by local photographer Dennis Curran.

Gerry Cota stands on the Natural Bridge on her property in Warren Village. "The Natural Bridge is better known outside of the Valley than in it," she said.

In 1882, the patient compiler of Vermont history Abby Maria Hemenway wrote that the Natural Bridge in Warren is "a very interesting natural curiosity," located in the south part of the village on the premises of Donald C. Geer. She described it as being about 20 feet in height with an arch of about 12 feet. "Artists have taken views of it that have been sold through the country," she wrote.

Gerry filled in a bit more history: the Geer house was built in 1862 with a carriage house, casket and furniture shop. The property later belonged to Henry Brooks. In 1936 a devastating fire leveled the houses here. When the present Cota house was built the land was vacant.

Last year Gerry was pleased to see a former Warren resident who returned for a visit: Lyman Brigham used to own the nearby mill years ago. Most of the people who come knocking on Gerry's door are strangers who get not only a genuine smile and a friendly greeting but also a glimpse of the most remarkable back yard ever.

On a sunny early spring day James Litchfield, a student at Warren Elementary School, stopped his bicycle riding through the Village long enough to talk about the Natural Bridge. "It was formed by the water a long time ago," he explained. "In summer the water is lower and I go down there to fish for trout." Here he poses on the other side of the Mad River, the Natural Bridge scarcely visible over his right shoulder.

A Backward Glimpse

As early as 1790 — our towns were chartered before this but first settled about this time — there were few roads at best, and those were "rough and rugged." Early Moretown farmers hauling corn to the grist mill preferred the relatively easy water route to Burlington, even though this meant carrying corn and skiff around Bolton Falls. Not until the road to Montpelier became more user friendly did they venture to the grist mill there. By the mid-1800s Moretown solved the transportation problem with its own grist mill.

In 1807, when the population in the Valley was growing, the Mad River Turnpike was surveyed, beginning in Moretown at the mouth of the Mad River, running on higher ground east of the present route 100 until it would connect with the present North Road in Waitsfield. Thence the Turnpike was designed to continue into Warren, ultimately ending at the bridge over the White River in Hancock. So, as you drive on this magical journey, at times you'll be close to the location of the Mad River Turnpike, surveyed but never built.

When King George's cartographers back in England laid out the towns in what was to become Vermont, they drew straight lines on a map, which did not take into account the mountains, rivers and valleys of this terrain. Consequently, Moretown, for example, has not developed a single central community, but rather has a relatively small village and five other neighborhoods within the town limits. Fayston has never developed a town center. As we travel through Moretown, Waitsfield and Warren, we'll remind ourselves that the early settlers of these towns all chose higher ground for their first settlements, before venturing closer to the Mad River to establish the town centers that have emerged as we know them today.

If we stood in front of the Moretown Store and let our imaginations take us drifting back 150 years we'd envision ourselves outside the G. Fisher Village Hotel, looking across the dirt Main Street at the newly finished Town Hall. We'd wander the Village and see a myriad of businesses: harness shop, tin shop, dressmaker, wheelwright, livery stable, hardware store, lumber mill — and a distillery for

Roads were "rough and rugged."

Moretown artist Valerie Dudash created this pen and ink drawing as a logo for the 1993 Moretown Community Festival.

making whisky. The distillery owner, a Mr. Stevens, was mourned upon his death in 1884, as "a great loss to the town." Moretown also had two doctors, a lawyer, and an undertaker.

Moretown once had a military band, which boasted 25 dedicated musicians. In the early 1900s, there was a bandstand where the Girard DiCarlo house now stands. Frank L. Goodspeed, founder of a world famous bookstore in Boston, was born here in Moretown.

If we stopped at the Waitsfield Common Cemetery, drifted back 200 years in time and indulged in a bit of guided imagery, we'd envision the Common in those early days. "The Common was acquired by gift and purchase, and on September 6, 1796, the town raised money to 'chop over the public yard.'" This is from Matt Bushnell Jones' classic *History of Waitsfield: 1782 to 1908*. As the work of clearing this patch of forest began, a section on the westerly side of the Common was designated as a burial ground. In front of the cemetery, flanked by horse sheds stood the old meeting house built in 1807. Nearby was the parsonage; at the north end stood the store of Roderick Richardson, built about 1806. His brother, Dr. Frederick Richardson, owned a house at the westerly corner of the Common, and next to the doctor's house stood the house and blacksmith shop of Philip Gustin, built about 1804. Gustin did a small mercantile business as well: records show that when he found himself in financial straits the constable attached not only the house and shop with its equipment but also 30 gallons of new rum, 20 pounds of tobacco and one chest containing 8 pounds of tea. For more than forty years the political and religious life of the town centered here on the Common.

Listen to Matt Jones' words written almost 90 years ago. The picture they paint could be typical of the sister town centers in the

Valley during the early years of the 19th century. "Does not your imagination picture it to you as we sit here in the shade? In yonder store Federalists and Jeffersonian Democrats wage wordy warfare over the Constitution or our growing difficulties with England. On Sunday gather, on foot or horseback, from the four corners of the town a congregation that fills the meeting house to its doors to listen to the strong Calvinistic doctrine of a century ago. After the morning sermon the people seek each other out and break their week of isolated toil with neighborly communion, or wander to the churchyard to while away the time until their stern old Puritan pastor shall for the second time that day convict them of their sins." It's well worth finding page 56 and reading on.

Fayston, long known as bear country, was part of Chittenden County until 1811, when it came into the fold of Jefferson County. If you had Vermont history in fourth grade you probably remember that Jefferson County was changed to Washington County in 1814 and has continued with that name ever since.

The first settlement in Fayston was recorded in 1808, near the beaver meadow in the Shepard's Brook area. Brothers William and Paul Boyce, Quakers from Richmond, New Hampshire, settled here before marrying and raising their families. Paul married Rhoda Palmer of Waitsfield in 1812. Their son Ziba Wentworth Boyce made a name for himself in local circles as "the wisdom of North Fayston." Although he had only a "common school education" he was widely read and self taught. Ziba Boyce died in 1877 at the age of 63.

A tale about William Boyce shows that early inhabitants of Fayston were not unlike their counterparts in other towns when it came to superstition and tall tales. Hamilton Child's words, written in 1889, tell the story with a particular flourish. "Sometime in 1814 there was a rumor that the Spanish legions had buried a great treasure at the forks of Shepard's Brook, and William Boyce, having a desire to suddenly secure an abundance of the 'root of all evil' called to his aid Arad Sherman, who was possessed of such magical powers that a forked thong of witch-hazel in his hands would perform as many antics as Aaron's rod. Arad was accordingly conducted to the

location when lo! the magical rod pointed out the exact spot of the buried treasure. Arad directed that they must dig for it only in the night and that not a word must be spoken during that time, otherwise the treasure would be spirited away." The story continues that William chose a night for the secret enterprise and with high hopes dug with great zeal until — "Eureka! William's bar struck against the iron chest." Predictably William "in the exuberance of his soul, shouted, 'I found it!'" With an ominous rattle the strong box and William's crowbar sank slowly and completely out of sight.

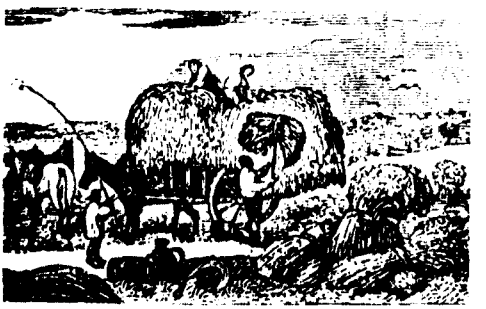
Another tale recorded by Hamilton Child took place in the Mill Brook area, set in 1803 with brothers John and Rufus Barrett — affectionately known as Uncle John and Uncle Rufus — as the star performers. As was the custom in those days, the men in this little neighborhood went together to work on a barn-raising in another part of town, all but Uncle John who stayed behind as home guard for the women and children. Near sunset "a cry between a howl and whoop burst upon his ears." Uncle John exclaimed, "Tis the Indian war whoop and no doubt we are surrounded and all the men away!" Performing his manly duty, he collected all the little colony together and barricaded the door, loaded all the guns, and awaited the onset, determined to protect his charges. "Night came on apace, but not the Indians." Another worry emerged: the unarmed men would be returning from the raising. One of the women whispered, "I hear voices; tis the Indians sure." When lo! Uncle Rufus rattled the door and cried out, "What are you all about here; why don't you let us in?" Instead of being scalped by Indians the women fell into the strong arms of their husbands. Upon hearing the story the men enjoyed a hearty laugh. "It was the wolves," said Esquire Wait. "We heard them howling on the out when we came along."

After the first settlers arrived in 1797, the town of Warren settled rapidly. Hamilton Child wrote: "Her history after organization [in 1798] is like her sister towns. The pioneers set about leveling the forest, erecting farm buildings, school houses, mills, stores, and improving roads. They were young, brawny, resolute men [and women] who were not afraid of the hardships of backwards life, and they had the strength as well as the courage to endure it."

One of Warren's early settlers was Aaron Rising, who in his old age, having become an influential and prosperous man in town, told of an adventure when he was 16 years old. His family had nothing to eat but pumpkin and potatoes with milk for two weeks. They made some salts and sent him the thirty miles to Randolph for grain, with 25¢ in his pocket for dinner. Young Aaron set out to Waitsfield, then over the mountain to Roxbury on a road through the woods that was nothing more than a bridle path, with tree roots so thick the horse had to step pretty long sometimes. Finding nothing but potatoes and milk for dinner in Roxbury, he moved on to Braintree, where the fare was not better. Arriving in Randolph, Aaron went straight to the mill, where the miller weighed his salts and let him have 3 bushels of grain, with the balance due in money. The miller could not let him have any more, saying that he must divide the grain fairly so people wouldn't starve.

While the grist was being ground, Aaron turned out his horse to feed. There was plenty of food here, but Aaron was so bashful he did not dare to ask for anything to eat. He was getting very hungry at this point. Starting out on the homeward journey, he planned to stop for the night in Roxbury, hoping for a meal of potatoes and milk. But when he got to Roxbury the inhabitants had gone to bed. Feeling lonesome as well as hungry, Aaron went a little farther, hoping to stop at Mr. Sampson's, who lived up close under the mountain. The Sampson house was dark, and the tired and hungry lad kept going. Half way up the mountain he heard a wolf howl behind him, with an answering wolf up ahead. Now overpowering fright added to his woes. He urged the old mare along, and when at long last they got out of the woods it was so light the wolves left them. Arriving home about sunrise, Aaron dragged the meal into the house, so exhausted he could hardly climb the stairs to his bed.

The narrator concluded Aaron's story: "When breakfast was ready, he was called up, but when they gave him a piece of bread only about half as large as his hand, and a small quantity of milk, he said the tears rolled down his cheeks, and it was harder than all he had endured; but they told him that they must be saving, for they did not know when they should get any more."

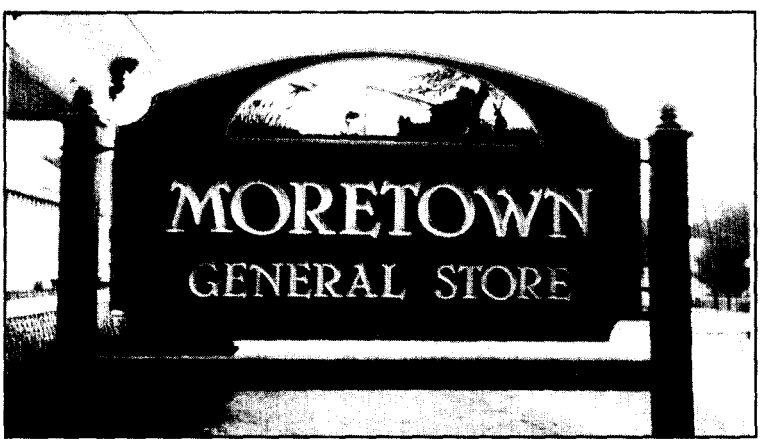


A Backroad Drive

In 1996 we can undertake a journey throughout the roads and byways of the Valley, from one end to the other, in a comfortable heated or air conditioned car depending on the weather, and all within a few pleasant hours. We can listen to world news on the radio or our favorite music on tapes or CDs, or travel only with our own quiet conversation, as we choose. Imagine the amazement of our forebears if they were to glimpse such unbelievable luxury!

Start of Our Journey: Moretown

We start this unique journey in the morning at the Moretown Store in the Village, with a fresh muffin and a cup of Green Mountain coffee, served with a pleasant welcome from Patty Moulton. We're prepared with the Vermont Road Atlas and Guide published by Northern Cartographic, which we check out between bites and sips. As local residents we're always sure to see someone we know sitting at a nearby table; if you're a visitor we'll give you a welcoming smile and friendly greeting.



Having taken care of our hunger, and checked out film for our camera and gas for our car, we decided to walk around the Village and savor bits of history. You might want a photo of yourself walking around the town reading the local phone book!

Today the classic Town Hall built in 1835 remains a central location for parties, weddings, family reunions, as well as a variety of community activities ranging from African dance classes to weekly playgroups for young children and their parents. Evelyn Goss, who with her husband Ozzie cared for the Town Hall for over 20 years, has happy memories of the many events that took place here during this time. In particular she remembers a "gorgeous winter day in January, 1973", when her daughter Patty was married. "We had the windows open it was so nice out. But that night it started to rain and

the next day there were three inches of water on the floor. We spent all day mopping." She said that subsequently this flooding problem was corrected. Evelyn sums it all up: "We enjoyed it."

In 1985 a major event in Moretown took place, as townspeople worked together and refurbished the Town Hall for a celebration of its 150th anniversary. Photos captured the spirit and pride in the festivities, a parade, dance, historical events, Foolish Folks Fair and more. "The whole week-end was one grand blast," recalls Evelyn Goss.

In 1993 a large and energetic group of people from all parts of Moretown got together and met at the school to organize a two day Moretown Community Festival. One of the organizers, Diane Girard DiCarlo, said at the time, "The goal is to celebrate our neighborhoods." By all accounts it was a great success, as people toured the school, attended historical presentations, danced in the school gym, and enjoyed a free community dinner presented by the three churches in town. Renowned professional magician and retired engineer Andy Tweedie enthralled his audience with his last performance: he died three months later at the age of 85.

Andy Tweedie, well-known in circles of professional magicians and beloved by Moretown people young and young at heart, at the 1993 Moretown Festival.

Photo by Susan Goodyear

Fasten your seat belts and get ready for takeoff; prepare to measure the first leg of the trip, 4.9 miles. To ease into our backroads journey, we'll take you on a paved highway north on route 100B, where the road follows the scenic twists and turns of the Mad River on our right. On a hot summer day the popular swimming hole at the Kenneth H. Ward Memorial Access is teeming with happy people cooling off. Pass the unmarked Moretown Hydro Dam, and at 4.9 miles, after crossing over the Mad River take a sharp right hairpin turn onto the Moretown Common Road. There is no road sign to give you a clue, but if suddenly you see the river on your left, you've missed the turn. Now you are on a dirt road, climbing steadily past pleasant countryside until the stunning view of the distant moun-

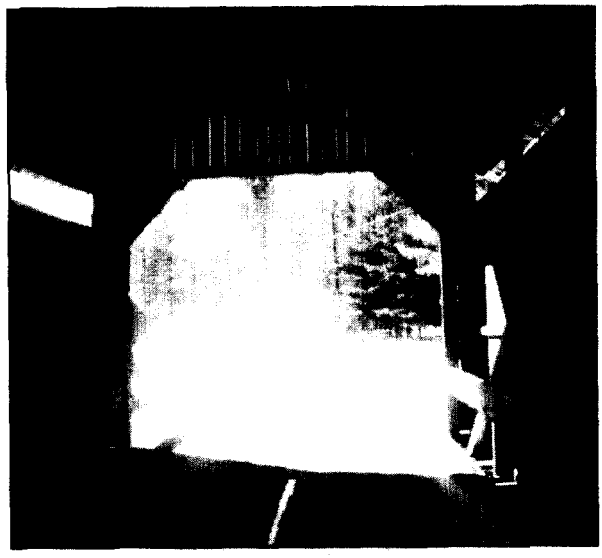
tains opens up, Camel's Hump to the northwest, ski trails to the southwest.

Moretown Common is marked on the map, as you arrive at the four corners after about 3 miles. Early town meetings were held here on the Common when the center of population was in this area. In 1832 it was voted to move town meetings to the "Hollow" which is the present Moretown Village. As noted it was about this time that the town hall was built. Here at Moretown Common, the well preserved red school house is now a private home. Two of the four remaining working farms in Moretown are in this area, the Howes farm on the left and the Wimble farm, with its charming belvedere, on the right as you continue straight at this junction. The map tells that this is the Common Road, but you'll notice a road sign that declares this as Wimble's Road. Proceed for about 2 miles to the Moretown Mountain Road. Turn right and go the short distance back to route 100B.

The Wimble Farm on Moretown Common

At the bottom of the hill turn left, noting the old Ward Lumber Co. mill across the road. Passing the Town Hall on the right and the Moretown Store on the left, you've now made a complete circle. A half mile through the village takes you to Austin Road, marked with a road sign; bear left onto the dirt road. The Mad River soon appears on the right, with an inviting stand of conifers nearby. Driving slowly, you can savor the views of fields, farms and distant mountains. After about a mile on Austin Road, you cross into Waitsfield, pass the Carpenter Farm, a working farm and country inn on the left, and go by Meadow Road and the Waitsfield Recreation Path a short distance away on the right. Continue straight, past the old brick farmhouse at the Neill farm on the left.

The charming Pine Brook covered bridge, built in 1870, welcomes you and poses modestly for a photo. (You're sure to take several photos before you reach this point.) Soon you are on paved road as you head up the North Road to Waitsfield Common. Here's a good place to park the car for a while and stretch your legs.

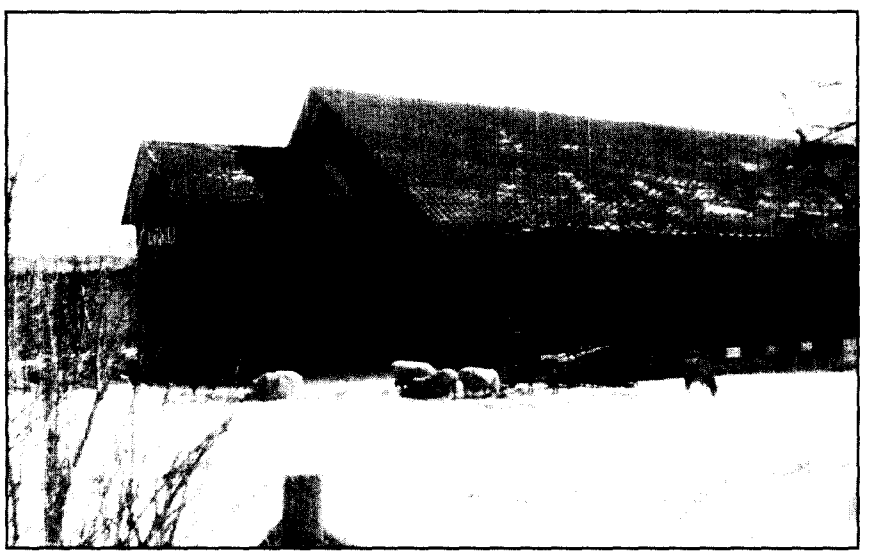


The Pine Brook Covered Bridge in Waitsfield, built in 1870.

Herbert Spaulding lives alone in one of the two old houses facing the"triangle" that marks the Common today. This house, reputedly built in 1793, has been in his family well over one hundred years. In 1984, Mr. Spaulding retired to his family homestead after living in Connecticut for forty years. He remembers visiting his grandmother Etta Long when she lived in this house. His grandfather Moses Long died when Herbert was 18 months old. "We lived on a farm in Starksboro," he recalls. "It took an hour to drive there, then we had to be back for chores at night." This was before the McCullough Turnpike was built; they came through Huntington and Jonesville. "All dirt roads then," Mr. Spaulding continued. "In the spring of the year, you knew it. All mud holes, some you couldn't even get through."

Herbert Spaulding with his grandmother's birthday book.

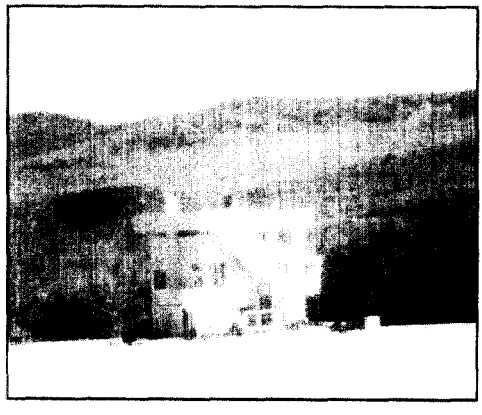
As pleasant a country road walk as you'll find anywhere awaits you, if you'd like to walk the less than two mile loop, mostly on dirt road, that will bring you back to your parked car at the Common Cemetery. As you start off south down the Common Road, on your right is the flourishing von Trapp Greenhouses, where Tobi and Sally von Trapp and their family live and work. Across the road on your left is the classic brick farmhouse of the von Trapp family, where Erica and Werner, now retired, raised their five children. Martin and Kelly von Trapp and their family live here and work the farm. The original owner was Samuel Stow Savage, the subject of an oft-told tale. As the story goes, Samuel's daughter dreamed three times about a pot of buried gold, and her father dug for many days trying to find it. A stipulation that seemed to go along with these tales so popular with early inhabitants was the need for silence during critical moments. Well, as the tale proceeds, at the precise moment when Samuel's crowbar clinked unmistakenly among the yellow coins, his son spoke — and all the gold vanished.



The von Trapp Farm originally owned by Samuel Stow Savage

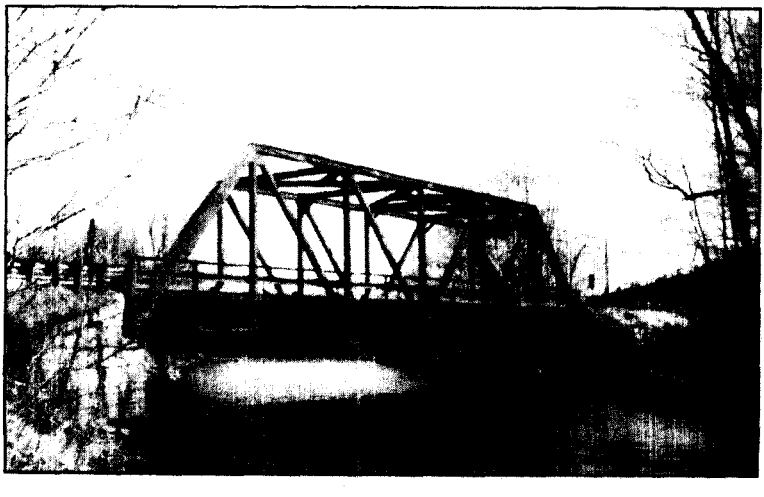
As you descend and turn onto the Cross Road, you see the splendid sweep of view into the Valley and across to the mountains. Open fields allow this panorama to continue for about half of your walk on this road, before the woods become close on both sides. If you brought your binoculars and camera, you'll certainly capture something interesting — perhaps the color and splendor of fall, or dark coated deer in a sparse field on a January-thaw day. Turn right again onto Joslin Hill Road — you are on hard surface road for the first time on the walk — and it's a short way back to the cemetery and your starting point.

Back in the car, start off south on the Common Road in a relatively straight though hilly line, enjoying classic old Vermont farms, a distant view to the right and a close view of the ridges to the left on this picturesque dirt road. After 2.7 miles you come to the junction of the Common Road and the paved East Warren Road. Along this stretch views continue; you pass Wadhams Stable and the Kristal Art Galleries and Sculpture Garden. A sign marks the right turn onto the Airport Road after 3.4 miles, but it's only .7 of a mile until a right bend in the road, quickly onto the dirt road that passes the renowned Sugarbush Soaring Center and Ole's Cross Country Skiing Center. The aptly named Dinersoar is also here. This next stretch of the road presents sweeping views of distant mountains — such as the south face of Camel's Hump — that appear and disappear. A wild turkey scuttles across the road just before the DeFreest Farm, momentarily interrupting the vision of the far-ranging scenery. A winding descent of 2.9 miles ends back on Route 100 near the "erector set" bridge spanning the Mad River. A left turn and 1.8 miles brings you to the left fork in the road into Warren Village, well marked with a sign.



Right: The Dinersoar at the Warren Airport

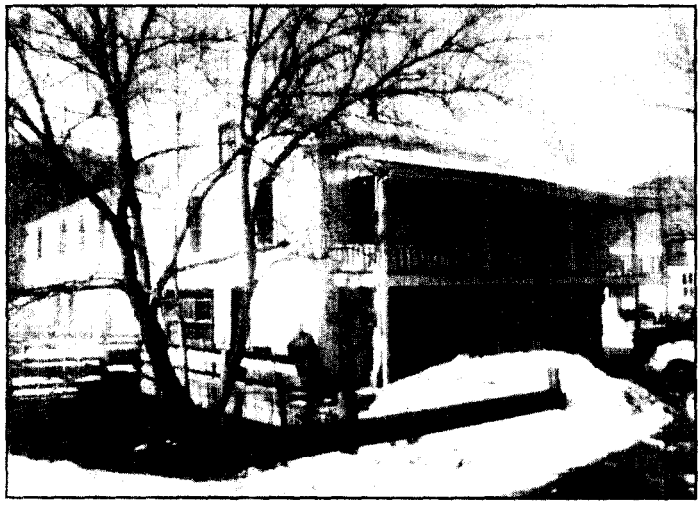
Below: The "erector set" bridge over the Mad River.



After parking the car, take a stroll along the short stretch of sidewalk through timeless Warren Village, where you're sure to add to your growing store of photos. Across the road are the gazebo housing the old school bell, the white steepled church that sits on a rise of land by Flat Iron Road, and the municipal building, formerly the elementary school. The Warren Village Pottery across the street specializes in handcrafted functional pottery. Also in Warren Village, for shopping or browsing, are Bradley House Fine Crafts, Creators Shop, Roth Real Estate, Parade Gallery and Warren Antiques.

Lunch at the Warren Store is always a treat, whether you are sitting on the deck overlooking Freeman's Brook or inside sharing a table with folks you know or just now meet. Great sandwiches, put together with fresh ingredients and a good measure of imagination, owe their tempting breads to Tim Owings, owner of An Honest Loaf Bakery within the Warren Store. Tim also makes super premium cookies, not to be missed with a memorable lunch. For over twenty years this Village landmark has been under the ownership of Carol Lippencott. In earlier times, still remembered by some, it was owned by Roy Long. The Warren Store is also widely known for its interesting line of general store provisions. The upstairs More Store features an eclectic array of clothing, jewelry, home decorations, toys and gifts, most of them from exotic places.

The Warren Store

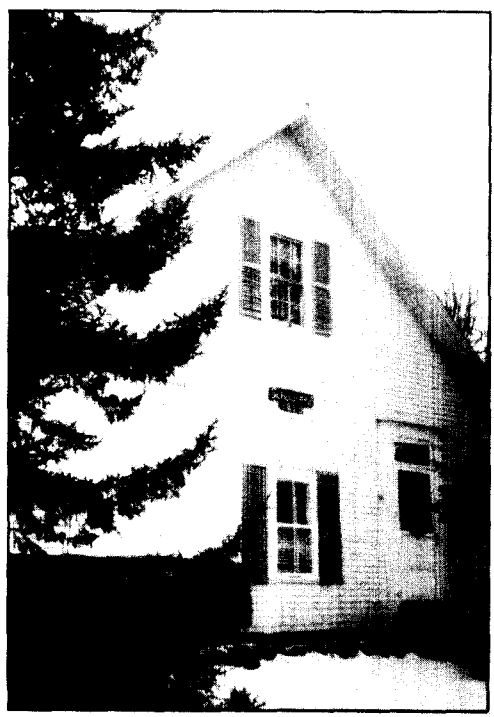


Continuing south in Warren Village, turn right and go through the 1879 covered bridge over the Mad River, climbing the .5 miles from the store to Route 100, and make a right turn. Proceed another half mile and turn left onto West Hill Road. A steady climb of a mile up West Hill Road brings you to the old Ernest Ralph sugar house at the corner of the Golf Course Road, where you turn right onto dirt road. Emerging from a woodsy area, the road becomes hard surface as the famous 18-hole Sugarbush Golf Course, designed by Robert Trent Jones, comes into view. After lingering here for a while to drink

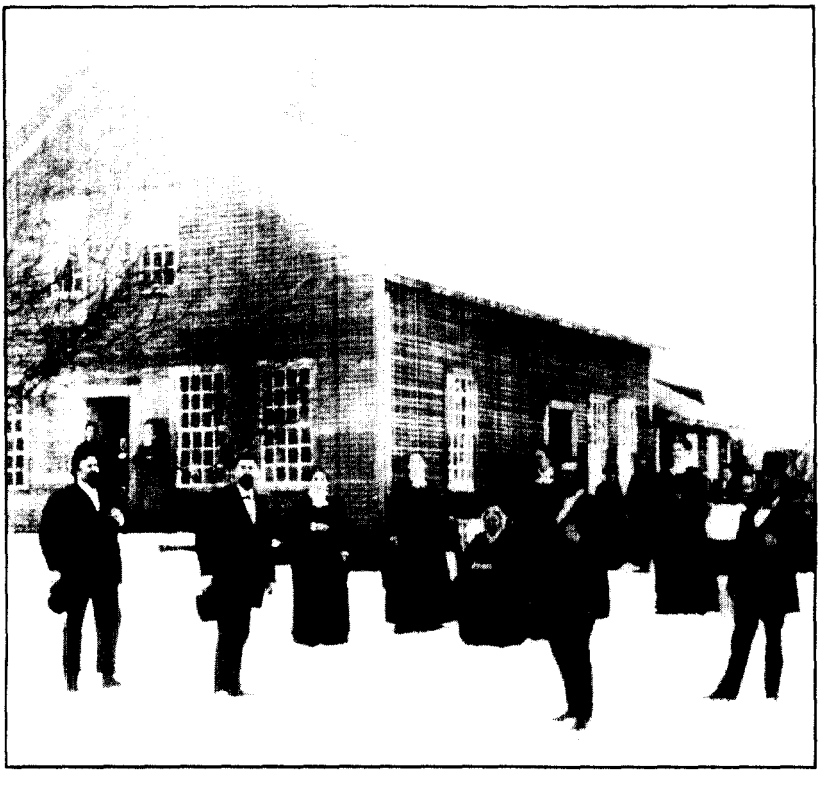
in the scenery that "makes this course as pleasing to the eye as it is challenging to play," continue on the winding, hilly road that leads to the Sugarbush Access Road, a distance of 1.6 miles.

Turn right onto Sugarbush Road for a mere .3 mile, then left onto German Flats Road. Proceed for 3.9 miles, past the entrance to Mt. Ellen, the Fayston Elementary School and various interesting places for visitors to stay or dine. After turning right and going .8 of a mile on Rt. 17, watch for the old refurbished schoolhouse on the right and a sharp, U-turn to the left. Go up the steep incline of Number Nine Hill. Here are some of the most spectacular views of the Valley, where it is easy to stop and pose for photos with a post-card background. After 1.8 miles, bear right — the other way becomes a dead end — and you'll see the Bragg Farm on the right and then Vasseur Farm on the left. Continue 1 mile to Kew Vasseur Road, and turn left. One and a half miles through a wooded and sparsely settled area allow glimpses of nearby mountains.

When you come to the Center Fayston Road, turn left and again enjoy a sense of real backroad touring. After 3.6 miles you'll come to North Fayston, and the road by that name. Here is the renovated farm house owned for many years by the Boyce family; many Boyce descendents live and work in the Valley or nearby towns. Here, too, is the old School #2 built in 1813. Big Basin and Sharpshooters Roads begin at this junction. Turn right to begin the 4.1 mile descent to Rt. 100, past more houses than you've seen in the last few miles, the Fayston town garage and Municipal Building.



The old North Fayston School #2 built in 1813.



The Boyce homestead in North Fayston
Men standing in front, the so-called "Boyce Giants", Dan, Seth, Hiram, and Guy. Seated, Mother Eunice (1798-1890). Ladies standing, daughters Maria, Mary, Clarissa, Zerviah.
Date of photo unknown, probably 1870s.
Photo courtsey of Trudy Folsom

And here ends our guided tour. Many more miles of beckoning back roads in our Valley are yours to explore. Perhaps you can mix and match parts of our suggested itinerary to design your own journey. Whatever the season — tranquil green summer, clear blue-sky autumn, white-clad winter, or soft beige leafless spring, you're bound to discover your own singular joys and pleasant memories.

Thanks

Many people contributed in many ways to this compilation, and I am grateful to all of them for their support and encouragement. I thoroughly enjoyed my personal journey back in time as I re-connected with people I hadn't seen in many years. Suzy Thompson, for example, reminded me that I was her Girl Scout leader; we didn't count back how many years that was.

Mary Moriarty was most gracious about welcoming me into her home and allowing me to tape-record our conversation about her father Walter Moriarty and the original establishment of the fire tower. I also captured some oral history in a taped interview with Herbert Spaulding, who lives in one of Waitsfield's oldest existing houses.

Special thanks go to Rick Thompson who wrote the descriptive piece about the hike to the old fire tower, evoking fond memories for many of us. His mother Peggy was very interested in this project and provided helpful suggestions.

Trudy Folsom's story about how Burnt Rock Mountain probably got its name is a gem. People at both the Vermont Historical Society and the Green Mountain Club found it delightful, in my condensed, verbal version. Trudy also provided old photos, as well as coffee and homemade muffins as she, Ike and I chatted amiably about families and times past.

The backroads drive owes some of its scenic interest to Gerry Gallagher and her sense of adventure. "Of course you go up Number Nine Hill," she assured me. She also kept me off dead-end roads. And she did a great job of writing on a yellow pad balanced on her knee while bouncing along on dirt roads.

When Gerry Cota took me down the snow-covered path to photograph the Natural Bridge, she did not know what a feat of unaccustomed bravery this was on my part. Her gracious sharing of this natural phenomenon is most impressive.

Lauren and John Gallagher were indispensable: they provided research, photography, editing and proofreading, as well as talking with many of the people with whom we established contacts. They also brought a valuable focus when I tended to get off track. I am deeply grateful to both of them.

A Continuing History Project

Compiling a history of the old fire tower in Waitsfield was a challenging as well as satisfying undertaking. And undoubtedly it's not yet completed. As additional memories and photographs come to light, they can be added to a looseleaf notebook on the history of the fire tower. Betty Howlett, librarian at the Joslin Memorial Library in Waitsfield, has graciously agreed to keep this notebook and add to it as material is given to her. Please feel free to phone me at my home, 223-6777, with any comments or questions.

The summit of Scrag Mt., Lauren, Kristen and Caitlin Gallagher.

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*; *Skiing Heritage*, the journal of the International Skiing History Association; and *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 and *Phi Delta Kappan*. She shared editing duties for her son Glenn Parkinson's award-winning book, *First Tracks: Stories from Maine's Skiing Heritage* and is currently working with Glenn researching material for a "First Tracks" of Vermont skiing heritage.

For many years Earline lived in Waitsfield and has many happy memories of bringing up her four children there. She now lives in an old farmhouse in Moretown with her husband Wavell Cowan.

Christmas 1995, from bottom to top, left to right; Cooper Parkinson, Kristen Gallagher, Caitlin Gallagher, Mandi Vilaseca, Earline Marsh and Ana Parkinson.