

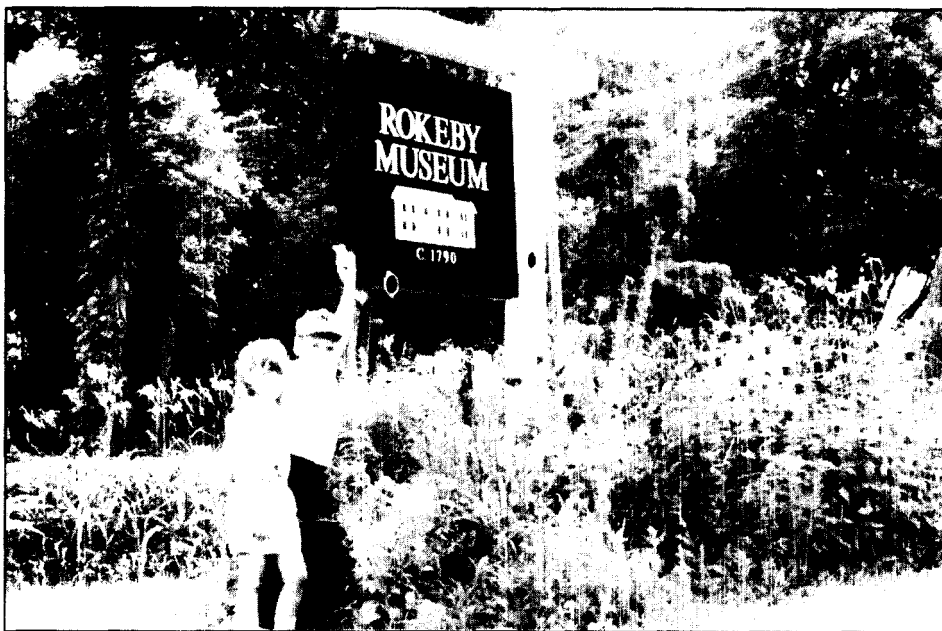


Champlain Valley Telecom
December ❄️ 1996-1997

A Ferrisburgh Tapestry

Champlain Valley Telecom takes pleasure in presenting *A Ferrisburgh Tapestry*, a word-weaving of events, people and natural environment that have helped to shape this historic town. Exploring Ferrisburgh with a Vermont atlas in hand opens up a wealth of experiences: Rokeby Museum, homestead of the remarkable Robinson family; two unique state parks, Button Bay and Kingsland Bay; the Lake Champlain Maritime Museum at Basin Harbor; the natural habitats of Otter Creek; and some of the most beautiful shoreline on Lake Champlain. Once out of the mainstream of late 20th century traffic, the visitor discovers peaceful countryside and slow-paced country roads, a few of them still unpaved. Here are places in which one can discover a tranquil harmony with nature and a reverential bond with history.

Divided north-south by the ever-busy Route 7, Ferrisburgh is home to about 2,400 Vermonters; they live near the town center, on sprawling farms, in the picturesque settlements of North Ferrisburgh and Ferrisburgh Station, or in scattered lakeside locations. Ferrisburgh is also separated in a placid way by Otter Creek and the marshy Little Otter Creek, defining travel between lakeside points by circuitous inland routes. For example, to go between Kingsland Bay and Button Bay requires a route through Vergennes and a corner of Panton, since no roads and bridges cross the waterways.



Rokeby Museum on Route 7 preserves the homestead of four generations of the remarkable Robinson family.

Rokeby and the Robinson Family

Within these pages is a glimpse into Rokeby and four generations of the remarkable Robinson family — Quaker abolitionists, prosperous Addison County sheep farmers, acclaimed artists and writers — who grew up and grew old there. This brief but intimate view will perhaps spur readers to visit Rokeby Museum, the homestead so generously open to us, and to read David Budbill's skillfully edited book *Danvis Tales: Selected Stories*, based on Rowland E. Robinson's best-remembered works of fiction. Perhaps some readers will discover and savor original Robinson writings, still found in many public libraries, as well as in personal collections.

A visitor's introduction to Rokeby includes a brochure that says, "Today the site tells two stories simultaneously — of the Robinsons in particular, and more broadly, of Vermont and New England social history from the 1790s to 1961."

The original house was built by the Dakin family, who came from Quaker Hill, Connecticut, and settled in Ferrisburgh in the 18th century. This older section is now a wing in the back of the imposing Federal style building sitting on a tree-shrouded knoll above the east side of busy Route 7, on 85 acres of remaining farmland.

In 1962 Rokeby became an official museum, under the auspices of the Rowland E. Robinson Memorial Association which had been established by his children in 1937, to keep his memory alive and promote his writings. Today Jane Williamson serves as director, Carol Place as museum educator and Cindy Fallows as caretaker. Rokeby members keep up to date on the museum's many activities through *The Rokeby Messenger* — "Being a folksy little epistle published every now and then in the interest of the Rowland E. Robinson Association."

Since the 1970s Rokeby has been listed on the National Register of Historic Places. But it is now in a competitive position to achieve National Historic Landmark status, a higher honor conferred on sites of national significance. As the result of a study begun in 1990, Rokeby is among the select group of thirteen sites in the United States identified by the National Park Service for possible interpretation of the Underground Railroad. Further information about this NPS project will be forthcoming.



Rokeby's logo is patterned after Rowland T. Robinson's sheep stamp.



Rokeby sits on a tree-shrouded knoll on the east side of Route 7. The original section of the house is in the back. It was here that Rowland E. Robinson was born in 1833, worked on his extensive art and writing, and died in 1900.

Rokeby puts one of its major goals — to help educate students and teachers — into action, with workshops and cooperative projects with such wide ranging connections as the Flynn Theater, the statewide teachers' convention, the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation, the Vermont Folklife Center and the Vermont Alliance for the Social Studies.

Rokeby Museum's 1996 Calendar of Events included a Ferrisburgh History Day in June, a week-end devoted to local residents who were welcome to visit free of charge and enjoy a special program. July's feature was the third annual Rokeby Wool Festival, with sheep shearing, working dogs, spinning and other 19th century wool-related activities. The 12th annual Pie and Ice Cream Social highlighted August activities. Marty Morrissey and Friends entertained guests who enjoyed both the music and the delicious pie a la mode.

A Christmas Open House will find "our halls decked, our spirits bright and our sideboard covered with holiday cookies."

For further information contact Rokeby Museum at 802.877.3406.

Robinson Family Background

Thomas Robinson and his wife Jemima, young Quaker emigres from Rhode Island, established the Robinson homestead in the late 18th century. Their son, Rowland T. Robinson, was active in the anti-slavery movement during the 1830s and 40s, and Rokeby became a well-known stop on the Underground Railroad. Rowland T. Robinson was the father of Rowland E. Robinson, well known throughout Vermont as an artist and writer. His son was a second Rowland T. Robinson. To keep a semblance of clarity, the first Rowland T. Robinson is referred to as RTR, Rowland E. Robinson as RER, and the second Rowland T. Robinson as Rowlie. (Rowland rhymes with how, not hoe.)

Thomas and Jemima became sheep farmers, and in the heyday of Addison County sheep raising, the family had 1500 sheep on 1000 acres of land. Many hired hands were needed, some of whom probably slept in the large upstairs room in the original part of the house. After the decline of sheep raising, other types of farming followed — dairy farming, butter production and apple growing. But even these did not prosper, and from the 1920s to 1940 Rowlie and his wife Elizabeth entered the emerging tourism market with Rokeby Rooms. Among the Rokeby mementos are copies of the state tourist publication in which Rokeby Rooms was advertised.

The Rokeby staff is still piecing together the early background of the Robinson family and their historic homestead, with much of the ongoing research based on an amazing collection of more than 10,000 letters. "There's more of the story yet to tell," said Carol Place. "We can still open a drawer and find something no one knew was there."



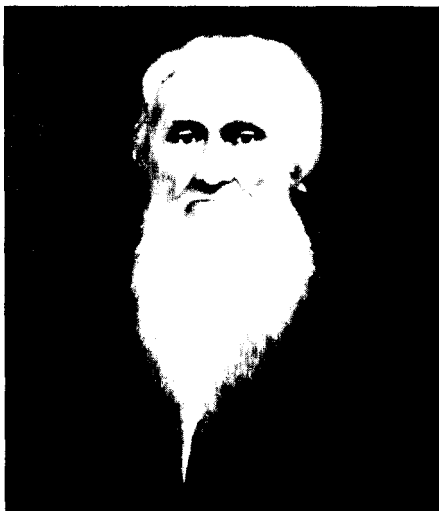
The table is set as if to welcome Tiana Parkinson as a Rokeby guest.



Rowland T. Robinson & the Underground Railroad

Rokeby is the only documented stop on the Underground Railroad in Vermont and one of the few in the United States. About ten years ago Rokeby researchers who were engaged in the time-consuming task of reading letters came across interesting insights into questions surrounding the Underground Railroad and the safety of fugitive slaves at Rokeby. The ongoing research indicates that Rowland T. Robinson hired fugitive slaves to work on the farm. In one letter to RTR the writer said, referring to one particular fugitive slave, "I know he will be safe with you."

Carol told this remarkable story. RTR wrote to the owner of a slave boy named Jesse, who had found refuge and employment at Rokeby. Robinson asked the question: how much would it cost Jesse to buy his freedom, adding that Jesse had already raised \$150 "by his own industry." The owner wrote back, saying, "I realize he's entirely out of my reach." But the answer was clear: no, Jesse could not buy his freedom with his \$150. "And that's where the story ends," said Carol. "It remains a mystery, but it's very exciting. This is as much of the story as we've pieced together." Current research indicates that slaves here were considered to be safe. Bounty hunters rarely came this far north.



Rowland T. Robinson
by Anna S. Robinson
1878

The Quakers in Ferrisburgh, like those elsewhere, were fervently anti-slavery, and the whole community protected slaves who came this way. Rowland T. Robinson in particular was an ardent abolitionist who started an anti-slavery society in Vermont, the first state to do so. In this capacity he corresponded with many leading abolitionists of the day. Today a singular treasure remains at Rokeby: about 30 years' worth of *The Liberator*, an abolitionist newspaper edited by William Lloyd Garrison.

Like other Quaker women of her time, RTR's wife Rachel was involved in critical social and political issues. Garrison commented on the fact that Rachel decided to boycott products produced by slaves: cotton, rice and sugar. (The Rokeby farm produced honey.) At RTR's invitation Frederick Douglass, a former slave who became a leading journalist and abolitionist, came to Ferrisburgh. The museum has a poster of this Great Convention held in 1843. Carol posed the question: Where did Frederick Douglass stay? "We're still learning," she said. "Kids think it's all figured out; we're always learning new things and re-writing history."

Art at the Rokeby

Three members of the Robinson family were accomplished artists who left behind a significant art collection, much of it on display in the house. A twenty-four page catalog, written in 1972 by curator Edward Williams, details the collection and adds biographical notes about the artists.

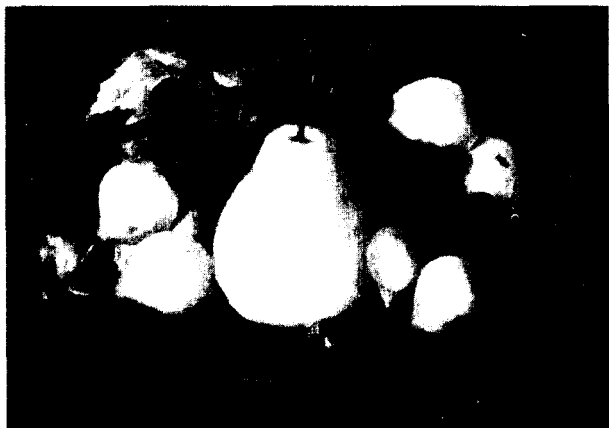
Many of the pieces were framed and hung many years ago, and since the work is not up to contemporary conservation standards, much of the art was at risk. A technical assistance grant from the Institute for Museum Services provided funding to train staff in matting and framing, as well as to buy the necessary supplies and equipment. Each piece of art in the entire collection will be checked and repaired to ensure long-term preservation of this valuable and unique collection. The training has also provided staff with the expertise to create new exhibits, as well as to retrieve art from storage, refurbish it and include it in new displays.

Rowland E. Robinson was an artist who in his youth studied engraving



Two works by Rowland E. Robinson: left, *Old Mill, North Ferrisburgh*, oil on canvas, 1861; right, *Self-Portrait*, oil on board, undated.

in New York City. Not until his later years, when his eyesight failed, did he become renowned as a writer. In both spheres he was an astute and reflective observer of the natural surroundings in his own special world. Readers of Robinson's books gain a privileged view of this world through his drawings and paintings. He was a strict realist in art, one who carefully chose precise images and experiences.



Pears, Anna S.
Robinson, oil on
canvas, 1871

Anna Stevens Robinson, the wife of RER, expressed her love of botany and birdlife through her "delicate reproductions of flowers and animals, painted with a fine touch and realistic eye."

According to Edward Williams her masterful portraits "are perhaps the most accomplished works of art in the [Rokeby] collection."



Two portraits by
Rachael Robinson
Elmer: left, her
brother Rowlie as
an Indian, 1900,
and right,
her sister
Molly, 1897

Rachael Robinson Elmer, the eldest of three children born to Rowland E. and Anna Robinson, studied art in New York City and developed her own romantic style in drawing and painting that sets her apart from her parents. She became a successful commercial artist, a pioneer in the field of post card design. The Rokeby collection contains representative samples of her work promoting New York City, where she met her husband, Robert Elmer. During long visits with her family in Ferrisburgh she did portraits and water colors, adding those of her family to the ancestral collection. Two of her portraits — one of a cowboy and one of an Indian — are actually playful likenesses of her younger brother Rowlie. Rachael's promising career was cut short at the age of 40, when she succumbed to influenza while serving as a nurse to wounded soldiers during World War I.

As research and documentation of the Rokeby art continue, more details of this incredible collection unfold.

Reproduction of art courtesy of Rokeby Museum

Rowland Evans Robinson

Ferrisburgh's native son, artist and writer Rowland Evans Robinson, captured and preserved — unlike any other — the spirit, culture and language of pre-Civil War Vermont. His stories about the imaginary town of Danvis and its true-to-life people are his best remembered works, set in a place author David Buddbill describes as “fully real yet fully within the imagination of Rowland Robinson.” Danvis was home to such engaging characters as Uncle Lisha Peggs, whose shoemaker's shop is the story-telling stage; his wife Aunt Jerusha; Sam Lovel, Robinson's protagonist; Gran'ther Hill, an early settler and many more.

In the original part of the house is Rowland E. Robinson's room in which he was born in 1833 and died in 1900. His presence still lingers here. His trousers on the bed show that he was a tall man who, like his counterparts of the time, slept in a short bed. His writing desk remains as he might have left it last month rather than 96 years ago. On it is the grooved writing board that guided his pencil as he wrote, when his eyesight failed and then was lost completely. What lyrical tales came off this board that at first glance looks simply like an antique clip board. His wife Anna would take these drafts and read them back; they would work together on editing and she would write out the final manuscript.

Rowland E. Robinson,
1833-1900
Blind Author of the
Robinson Books.
Vermont Classics



Mindful that Robinson turned from art to writing after his eyesight failed, readers are struck by his brilliantly visual kinship with nature. Here's his description of a Vermont June rain:

"The prophet of the almanac had written along the June calendar, 'Now, perhaps, a spell of weather,' and his prognostication was being verified. For two days the rain had come down from the leaden sky, now in drenching showers, now in drizzles slanting to the earth before the gusty north east wind, and still it came down. A robin in the apple tree where his mate shingled their nest with her half-spread wings only left off 'singing for rain' to preen his wet feathers, and then began again his broken song, cheerful enough but for its import to seem unsuited to its accompaniment, the splash of the rain, the doleful sighing of the wind, and the sullen roar of the swollen streams. The beaten down-blossoms that whitened the ground beneath the apple trees, as if an unseasonable flurry of snow had fallen there, looked unlike blossoms now, but added another dreary feature to the dreary landscape; the little brown house, without light or shadow on its walls; the dripping, wind-swayed trees; the sodden fields and woods ghostly behind the gray veil of rain, bounded by the blurred, flat wall of mountains, and roofed by the low sky." (This is found on page 56 in *Danvis Tales*.)

Listen to Uncle Lisha as he chides the friends who have sought refuge in his shop from the rain and the "time which hung with unendurable heaviness" on their hands.

"Good airth an' seas, boys, what's the motter ails ye, all on ye? Ye ain't no socialabler 'n a passel o' snails holdin' a meetin' 'n under a cabbage leaf! 'Tain't a fun'el. By mighty, it's wus, for the' hain't no preachin' ner singin', ner even sighthin' ner crying'. Why don't some on ye up an' die an' kinder liven up things a little mite, hey?" (This is found on page 11 in *Danvis Tales*.) Reading this dialect out loud helps to become familiar with it and therefore to appreciate Robinson's skill at capturing this bygone style of conversation.



Rokeby's educator Carol Place holds Rowland Robinson's trousers to show Cooper Parkinson how tall he was. Behind them is a portrait of Robinson painted by his daughter Rachael.

The Wheelock Family & the Danvis Characters

So great was the popularity of the Danvis stories and characters with the extended Wheelock family of Calais that their family reunions in the early 1930s highlighted stage renditions created by Maude Wheeler Pierce of Montpelier, a Wheelock descendent. Mrs. Pierce faithfully wrote the scripts in typical Robinson-like dialect, and the actors were true to this spirit of early Vermont.

Today Bob Jackman of Montpelier, himself a Wheelock descendent, remembers the big family picnics when he was a child and the dramatized scenes from Uncle Lisha's shop. "My mother played Aunt Jerusha," he recalls. "I have interesting memories of those days." Maude Pierce left all her Danvis scripts in Bob's care, he says, with the stipulation that anything he did must be "true to the characters."

In 1937 the Montpelier Women's Club hosted a highly acclaimed production of a Robinson drama by the Wheelock descendents. Rowland T. Robinson (Rowlie) spoke about his father's work and invited the packed audience of Robinson lovers to visit Rokeby. In a dramatic moment George Wheelock, playing the colorful Gran'ther Hill, made his final speech amid enthusiastic applause, went backstage and died. This tragic loss took the heart out of the Robinson productions for Maude, and there were no more.

A yellowing scrapbook of photos and news clippings about the family dramas is now in Bob's care. He read from a sample news item: the Montpelier Women's Club production "faithfully adhered to the spirit and conversation" conveying "an accurate portrait of 100 years ago."



Sam Lovel (Carl Bancroft)



Gran'ther Hill (George Wheelock)

Photos courtesy of Robert Jackman

David Budbill's *Danvis Tales: Selected Stories*

Vermont author David Budbill edited a new book of Robinson's work, titled *Danvis Tales: Selected Stories*, published in 1995 by University Press of New England. Budbill writes: "... there is a unique joy in championing the rediscovery of a forgotten writer. I hope you will join me in this joy and step out of the momentary now, out of cultural assumptions and back into a world of a hundred and fifty years ago."

In his introduction Budbill offers this insight: "Because Rowland Robinson lived close to the natural world as a farmer and as one who loved the outdoor life, and no doubt because he was a Quaker, he believed that in each of us there is an 'uneliminated atom' that 'still holds us to kinship with nature, and though it may not be the best part of us, without it we should be worse than we are. He who loses all love for our common mother is, indeed, a wretched being, poorer than the beasts.' Such a wholistic and ecological world view certainly has relevance for us today."

In his monograph, *Vermont's Genius of the Folk*, which serves as a significant part of the introduction to *Danvis Tales*, Hayden Carruth wrote in 1971: "Finally, I hope some enterprising publisher will soon see the value of bringing out a one volume selection of the best of Robinson's writing. Let it be soon." In a postscript written in 1994: "And here we are — twenty-three years later. The wheels grind slowly but they do grind."



Camel's Hump, Rowland E. Robinson, oil on board, undated
Used on the dust jacket of *Danvis Tales*

Rokeby's Next Door Neighbor, Albert Devine



Albert Devine

Albert Devine, who has always lived next door to Rokeby, has happy memories of his growing-up days which included frequent visits with Uncle Rowlie and Aunt Elizabeth. The lovely locust trees surrounding Rokeby today were there when Albert was a boy. He often played with Robin and Annie Perkins, the children of Rowlie's sister Molly. Albert remembers a stone fort in the woods where the children spent many carefree hours in imaginative play. Perhaps it's still there.

Uncle Rowlie was a great story teller, Albert recalls, and he enjoyed poking fun at himself, as the following story illustrates. When first there were fire wardens in

Vermont towns, it was the town clerk who took on this responsibility. At the time of this story Uncle Rowlie was town clerk. He was burning brush when the wind suddenly came up. Albert remembers that the fire got out of control and men from all around came to help put it out. But the sheep barn burned down. And Uncle Rowlie had to fine himself: he had failed to get a burning permit.

Once a month the Farmers' Club would meet, often here at Rokeby, with programs designed to keep up to date on various aspects of agriculture. Speakers would include the county agent or an expert from UVM. As a kid Albert poured coffee at these meetings. He remembers that Uncle Rowlie would say that he wanted just half a cup — the top half. These meetings continued from the 1920s to 40s. Albert was himself a farmer until he had a back problem; he ran the farm next door that was originally his mother's.

Albert is an avid RER fan, particularly of the Danvis stories. He added that they are still popular in the area.

Albert remembers the old Academy on top of the hill. As a kid he and his fellow adventurers would sneak into the old Academy, which had been abandoned for many years, and with a boyish sense of daring would climb into the bell tower. During World War II the Academy was blown up to supply bricks needed for expansion of a nearby factory.

PHOTOS BY ELIZABETH PARKINSON

"A Sketch of the Early History of Ferrisburgh"

From an article by that name, written by Rowland E. Robinson for the *Vermont Quarterly Gazetteer*, No. 1, July 4, 1860, pp. 31-35, reprinted in *Ferrisburgh: A Scrapbook of Memories*

Ferrisburgh's inveterate Rowland E. Robinson wrote that Gov.

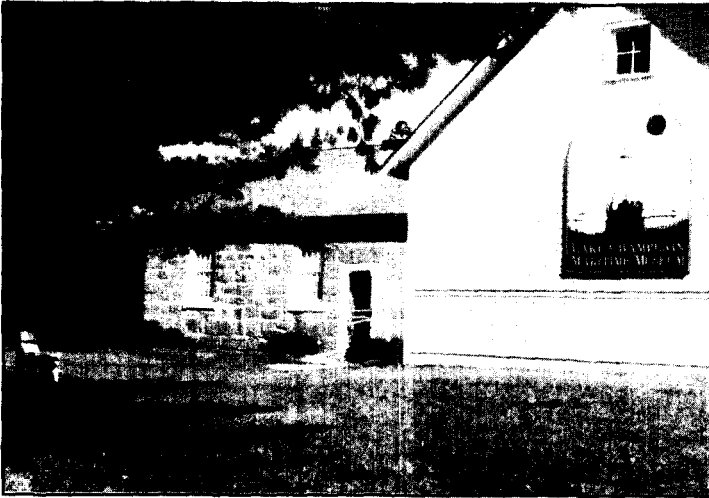
Benning Wentworth of the Province of New Hampshire granted the Ferrisburgh Charter on June 25, 1762, "applied for by Benj. Ferris, of Oblong, Dutchess County., N.Y.; granted to David Merritt, Thos. Douglass, Volentine Perry, Gid. Gifford, Timo. Dakin, Anthony Field, J. Field, Benj. Ferris, Reed Ferris, and 55 others."

Tracing the early history of the town was difficult, Robinson notes, "from the fact that the first Records were destroyed by fire in 1785, while in the possession of Timothy Rogers, the Proprietors' clerk and surveyor, whose account of this mishap is subjoined, as recorded by him in the Ferrisburgh Records."

Two early settlers of Ferrisburgh, Charles Tupper and "one Ferris", abandoned their homes at the outbreak of the Revolutionary War. Robinson recorded this significant conversation: "Mrs. Betsy Gage, an old lady near 81 [she was born in 1779], says that her father, Zuriel Tupper, a brother of Chas. Tupper, was the first settler in Ferrisburgh, after the close of the Revolutionary War. He came in the autumn of 1783, and in March, 1784, brought his wife and three children to Ferrisburgh. During the previous visit he had built a bark shanty for their accommodation, and this they occupied until the completion of their log-house. Mrs. Gage, who was then 5 years old, says that she well remembers seeing the sun shine down through the roof of their primitive abode. At the same time, Mr. T. had prepared a small plat of ground and sowed some apple seeds, and to him belongs the honor of raising the first apples from the seed in town."



Lake Champlain Maritime Museum



The new and the old -- the recently completed Gateway which houses a well stocked gift and book shop, and a 19th century schoolhouse which contains an overview of Lake Champlain history.

The 18th century came alive for visitors at the Lake Champlain Maritime Museum during a special week-end in August. On hand to demonstrate their trades and skills to late 20th century novices were a carpenter, horn smith, cordwainer (not to be embarrassed by being called a cobbler), chandler, lace maker, blacksmith, military engineer and more. These re-enactors, assembled from throughout the northeast and Canada, portrayed the daily life of the French, British and Native Americans who were inhabitants of this area during the 1700s. This was just one of the many innovative programs regularly offered to visitors at this remarkable lakeside museum, celebrating its first decade in 1996 with a full schedule of exciting events.

Located at Basin Harbor in Ferrisburgh, the Lake Champlain Maritime Museum, with its advantageous lakeside location, regularly takes visitors back in time to discover many historical surprises. Entering through The Gateway, they start a fascinating voyage through the history of the Champlain Valley from Native Americans to the present day.

Director Art Cohn, who founded the museum with Basin Harbor Club neighbor Bob Beach, Jr., points out that they maintain close working relationships with state historic preservation departments in both Vermont and New York. LCMM staff members regularly carry out research and field assignments. "It's a symbiotic relationship," Art says. He adds that in the vast underwater historic preserve system are about 300 known shipwreck sites. An accelerated survey expects to locate and document an additional 100 during the next five years.

"Lake Champlain arguably has the most extraordinary history and timeline in North America, and because of that we have the most extraordinary collection of wooden shipwrecks," Art says. "It's almost an embarrassment of riches."

The central theme of future development will be dynamic interpretive presentations of Lake Champlain's historic underwater shipwrecks. Art says, "The managed plan is that 99.9% of the wrecks will stay where they are, unless there is a compelling reason to remove them." In his hand he holds five just-completed videos and says that they will soon be ready for visitors to view.

At present viewing technology at the museum is basic: VCRs and television screens. But perhaps in the coming years it will become "high tech." Perhaps visitors will board a specially equipped boat to observe historic wrecks through a roving underwater camera. The next decade at LCMM promises to be just as remarkable as the first.



Volunteer Megan Foster, a junior at Otter Valley High School, removes small particles of dirt from a special wood preservative used on pieces of wood from the sunken schooner *The General Butler*.

In the Nautical Archaeology Center, visitors can interact with staff and volunteers at work on a variety of projects in the conservation lab. Or they can view remarkable underwater footage of documented historic wrecks. Ship models and fascinating historic artifacts hold visitors' attention in this popular center.

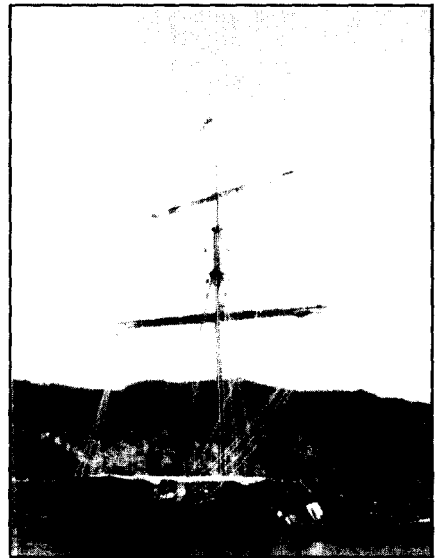
View from the gunboat *Philadelphia*, with the Lake Champlain Maritime Museum's research boat *Bruno* in the background.



One of its most memorable features appears on the museum's logo. The 54' replica of the Revolutionary War gunboat *Philadelphia*, is docked in a sheltered inlet and open for visitors to explore as they listen to a well-versed guide in period attire. The story of the original *Philadelphia* is indeed history at its most exciting. In the Battle of Valcour Island, the first significant naval battle of the Revolutionary War, the *Philadelphia* sank in the darkness of October 11, 1776. The original *Philadelphia* now rests in the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC. Following their exploration of the surprisingly small gunboat, visitors walk through the well-done exhibit of the Revolutionary War in the Champlain Valley.

There's something for everyone at the Lake Champlain Maritime Museum: programs are designed for visitors ranging from three years old to Elderhostel. About 3,000 school children visit the museum during the year, and the staff maintains an outreach program in both Vermont and New York.

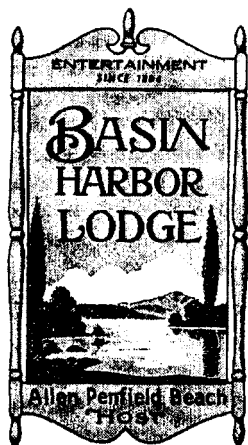
The LCMM has a well-stocked book and gift shop featuring historical maps and maritime related books. Open daily from early May to mid-October, the museum can be reached at 802.475.2022.



Left: a young captain commands the new "ship" on the children's playground, and right, the replica of the 54' Revolutionary War gunboat *Philadelphia* is open for visitors.

PHOTOS BY ELIZABETH PARKINSON

Enjoy Basin Harbor Hospitality When in Vermont



No trip through the verdant hills and valleys of Vermont can be complete without a visit to Basin Harbor, truthfully termed "The Beauty Spot of the Champlain Valley."

Long before the founding of the Green Mountain State a French settlement was established at this point, and oddly enough, part of the first United States Navy was later outfitted at the shipyard here. The first steamboat in the world, to run on a regular schedule, had Basin Harbor as its home port.

Coupled with the magnificent scenery of its own state, Basin Harbor boasts a picturesque panorama of the Adirondacks with Lake Champlain in the foreground, over which the brilliant hues of the evening sunsets play.

A charming grey stone building meets the eyes of those traveling the road to Basin Harbor; this edifice, known as the Homestead, was built by Basin Harbor's first English settler, Platt Rogers, a prominent character of Revolutionary War days. On the south side of the harbor one arrives at The Lodge which looks out upon a 600-foot bay in which many cruisers and numerous smaller boats may drop anchor, assured of ample protection.

These comfortable inns and adjoining cottages offer entertainment to travelers. Write Allen P. Beach, Host, P.O. Vergennes, Vermont.

**This advertisement appeared in the
Vermont Sesquicentennial brochure, 1791-1941
(The top of the sign reads: Entertainment since 1886)**

Today the fourth generation of the Beach family runs this historic lakeside resort, maintaining a close "good neighbor" policy with the Lake Champlain Maritime Museum and collaborating on selected events that celebrate summertime in beautiful Basin Harbor.

Button Bay State Park

Today 253 acres of this historic lakeside area are preserved by the State of Vermont as Button Bay State Park. Three distinct areas are offered to visitors: a campground, a day use area and a natural area. On a typical summer day laughter fills the air as happy campers cool off in the pool; cooking odors waft from the large picnic shelter where a group from Barre enjoys an outing. A pleasant walk through the rich and diverse natural area leads to scenic Button Point, where park ranger Francis Herman checks in with naturalist Laura Hollowell and stops to chat with a family of nature lovers.



Laura Hollowell, park naturalist, with historic Button Island in the background.

Laura, who has been park naturalist here for four years, maintains the Nature Center and Museum in Button Wood, the rustic former summer home of Miss Amy Welcher, the last private owner. Laura schedules an enticing array of creative activities and field trips, and her enthusiasm and knowledge are sure to make them memorable experiences. As she talks with the many groups or families who come to this remarkable site Laura reaches in her pocket and shows sample "buttons" shiny from long use.

A sampling of the nature programs under Laura's direction includes a canoe trip to nearby Button Island, to explore crumbling walls, wild gardens and ruins on this fossilized island, or a night hike/star walk to experience the beauty and magic of a summer evening, to gaze at Jupiter or in mid-August the Perseid meteors. Laura offers a Wild Tea Party, learning about edible and medicinal plants — and wild tea; a Bug and Spider Hunt, exploring the world of monsters and beauty at our feet; a Lake Splash, wading into the bay to explore plants and animals; and Paper Making, decorating handmade paper with natural materials.

Among Laura's visitors from time to time are former Girl Scouts who attended the International Girl Scout Roundup in 1962. Laura said that these women enjoy making a "pilgrimage" back to Button Bay, and she in turn enjoys talking with them about their experiences here 34 years ago.

Why Button Bay?

During the early years of the American Revolution, when there was a strong British presence on Lake Champlain, Button Mould Bay acquired its name because the characteristic round concretions found here looked like the turned wood button molds used in England. The journal of William Gilliland contained an entry made in September 1765, in which he wrote of going aboard the sloop of "the Governors and other gentlemen" at Button Mould Bay. (Included as Governors and other gentlemen were Sir Henry Moore, Governor of New York; General Guy Carleton, Governor of Quebec; Brig. General Philip Schulyer; and Adolphus Benzel, map maker. These notables were making observations in connection with determining boundaries.) The name Button Mould Bay appeared in a book of charts by Captain William Chambers, containing soundings taken in August, 1779. Apparently the name was first shortened to Button Bay in Whitelaw's map of 1796.

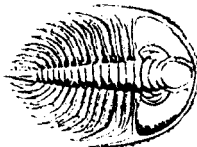
The Geology of Button Bay

The ancient bedrock of Button Bay contains fossils from a time when life did not exist outside the primordial sea, making it a unique place to study geology. A pamphlet available at the site contains a concise explanation of the characteristic buttons and other concretions: "During glacial times, several types of clay were deposited here. The calcium which occurred naturally in the Champlain Sea cemented the clay into many interesting shapes. The most common concretions looked like an old-fashioned button mold."

Today buttons are no longer abundant, since they have been extensively collected throughout the years or no longer wash ashore because of the reedy growth in the shallows. Collecting of buttons or fossils is not permitted in the state designated natural area.

The literature available to visitors reads: "Button Island was part of a coral reef extending north through Grand Isle. This area now contains some of the oldest fossilized coral in the world. Ship Island has trilobites — long-extinct crab-like creatures — sandwiched between its shaly layers. Along the nature trail look for large fossilized sea snails coiled next to a long cavity in the limestone."

Trilobite and
sea snail



The abundant nature and history of Button Bay are described in excellent literature available to visitors. Further information about Button Bay State Park and Nature Center is available by calling 802.475.2377 in summer, 802.483.2001 in winter.

Worldwide Senior Girl Scout Roundup at Button Bay State Park, 1962

For two weeks in July, 1962, this usually placid setting was the focus of international attention, as 10,000 Girl Scouts and their leaders from all over the world descended on Button Bay State Park. "By Vermont standards it is a staggering affair," noted the summer issue of Vermont Life magazine. The back cover listed some sample statistics:

- 1,756 counselors and staff
- 250,00 pieces of baggage
- 6,000 tents
- 458,000 pieces of mail
- 3,500,000 gallons of water
- 40,000 visitors and 30-acre parking lot
- 297,000 cafeteria meals involving 70,000 eggs, 57,000 pounds of meats, fish and poultry, 34,000 loaves of bread, 3.5 tons of butter, 151,000 quarts of milk
- 53 tons of campfire charcoal

Perry Merrill, remembered today as the Father of Vermont State Parks, summed it up: "Altogether it was a tremendous undertaking, but the little state of Vermont proved to be an able host, and many long-time friends date their interest in Vermont from the Girl Scouts' 50th anniversary Jamboree held at Button Bay."



Ship Island, also known as Shin Island, as seen from the trail to the Nature Center. Geologists have found trilobites, long extinct crab-like creatures, in the shaly layers on Ship Island.

Ferrisburg(h)/Ferrissburg/Ferrisbourg

What is the spelling of “our town” today? Linda Salter, assistant town clerk, answered the question with a smile and said, “With an *h*. It’s official.” She showed the order from the State of Vermont, dated June 19, 1990, officially changing the spelling from Ferrisburg to Ferrisburgh, restoring the *h*.

But in practical, every-day use, it’s still both ways — even with the state highway department signs. Driving north on Route 7, motorists see a familiar green sign that says “Ferrisburgh, 4 miles”. They are shortly introduced to Ferrisburg.

Esther Munroe Swift in the 1977 edition of *Vermont Place Names: Footprints of History*, wrote: “Originally the name of the town was spelled Ferrissburg or Ferrisbourg, but the extra letters were soon dropped.” She also provided insight into some history of the final *h*. “What is today the main village of Ferrisburg got its post office in 1850, as Ferrisburgh. In 1892 the final *h* was dropped, as it was in most towns throughout the United States. Another post office was opened at North Ferrisburg in 1833, and until 1893 that name also was spelled with a final *h*.” Both post offices are still in operation today — and neither of them uses the final *h*.

But just to add more confusion, or perhaps individuality, think of what a visitor from Scotland would say: “Och, you mean Ferrisburra!,” with a distinctive roll of the two double *r*’s.



The Otter Creek, which is navigible all the way to Vergennes, empties into Lake Champlain at Fort Cassin, named for Lieut. Stephen Cassin, a hero in the War of 1812.

Kingsland Bay State Park

On a brilliant Monday morning in June, Seth Slayton, park ranger at Kingsland Bay State Park, stops to greet workers from the Vermont Tent Company as they disassemble the great white canopy used for a picture-perfect week-end wedding at this historic location on Lake Champlain. "We generally have about 40 weddings a year here," Seth says.

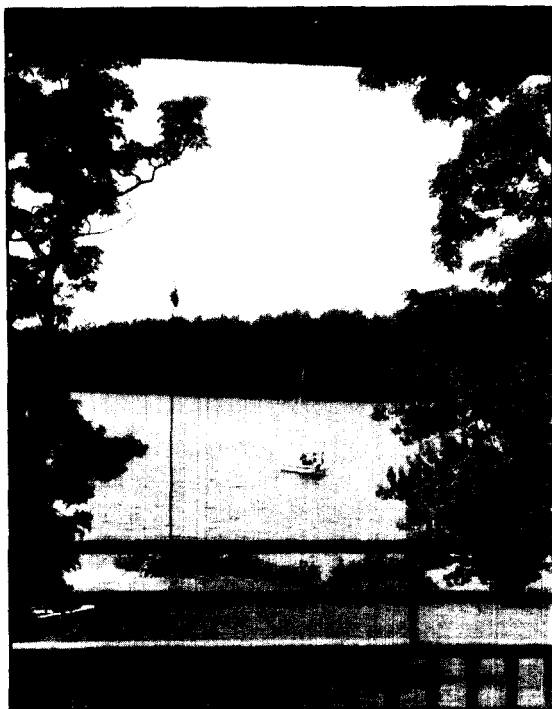
Kingsland Bay State Park, located on an ideal natural harbor, is a 287 acre gem that belongs to the people of Vermont. Its long and colorful history, its natural beauty and lake shoreline combine to make it a rare and valuable state holding. Bruce Brown, regional manager of the Parks Department,

explained that in 1976 the property became available and was purchased as a state park, with public land acquisition funds. He added that Addison County clay, problematic for septic systems, made the property less desirable for commercial purposes. The facilities now include a washroom with composting toilets.

For fifty years a private summer camp, Ecole Champlain, today the property is home to a YMCA sponsored day camp, Camp Greylock. The park is open for day use, but there are no overnight camping facilities.

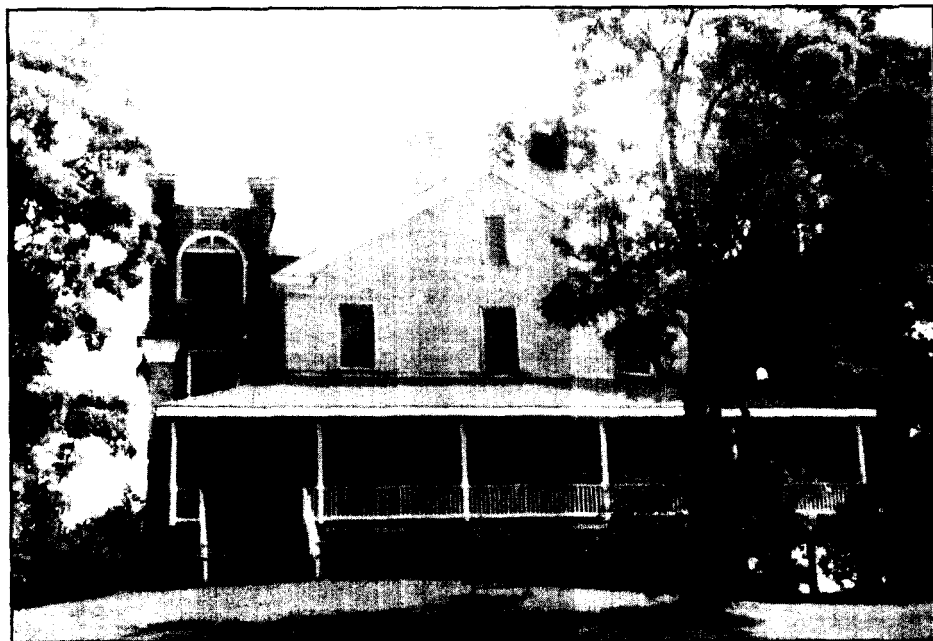
Writer Ottar Indridason painted a vivid word picture of Kingsland Bay State Park: "With wide vistas of mountains east and west, a mosaic of farms and towns in the valley and the rocky forested headlands of the shore itself, the location of the park provides an endlessly changing, magnificent panorama of moods, light and sound."

Describing Kingsland Bay State Park today, Bruce notes, "There are pleasant hiking trails that give an interesting perspective of the Lake Champlain coastline and natural habitat of the area. It's spectacular in the springtime when the white trillium are in bloom." One enthusiastic visitor noted, "It's one of Vermont's best kept secrets."



Kingsland Bay viewed from the porch
of the Hawley House.

The Hawley House at Kingsland Bay State Park



The Hawley House today.

Now in the early stages of a restoration project lead by the Vermont Parks Department, the historic Hawley House was built on the secluded shore of Kingsland Bay in 1790 by Gideon Hawley. Sturdily constructed of local grey stone, the building served originally as a family home and a stage-coach tavern. Its basic condition is still sound after more than 200 years. About a hundred years ago, when the property was owned by Father Pierre A. Campeau, the imposing wooden tower was added. Some people say that during this time period, the house and property became the setting for a monastic retreat.

Bruce Brown, regional manager of the Parks Department, said, "During the initial phase of restoration we debated about whether the tower should stay or be removed. The decision was to leave it, since it had become an integral part of the history of the house."

During the fifty year history of Ecole Champlain, from 1924 to 1974, the Hawley House, then known as Macdonough Lodge, served as administrative headquarters, with an infirmary for campers and offices for the director and nurse.

Restorations to date, hampered by limited funding, include replacement of the porch, which had fallen into disrepair. Undertaken in consultation with experts in the field, the restoration projects conform to original period designs. Bruce said, "This past winter we worked on the interior of the first floor. This will become an interpretive center, used for such activities as workshops and displays that relate to the natural history of Kingsland Bay." He added that the top floor, which at various times contained a ballroom and a chapel, was yet to be undertaken, along with access to the tower. "We are always looking for sources of funding to continue the restorations," he said.

The story goes that Captain David Hawley served as commander of Benedict Arnold's flagship, the ill-fated *Royal Savage* in the Battle of Valcour Island in 1776, in one of the early clashes of the Revolutionary War. When not engaged in the vital struggle for naval domination of the Lake, Capt. Hawley became enchanted with the natural beauty of the shoreline. In a letter home to his brother, Major Aaron Hawley in Connecticut, David Hawley extolled the virtues of the Kingsland Bay area. Aaron Hawley purchased the land; his son Gideon, became one of the early settlers. At one time Gideon Hawley ran a horse ferry that carried travelers across the Lake to Grog Harbor, New York. During the War of 1812, the Hawley House served as a militia garrison, to provide protection from a possible British attack on the fleet being built by Commodore Thomas Macdonough at nearby Vergennes.

Because of its historical significance, the Hawley House was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1978.



The newly restored porch of the historic Hawley House.

Ecole Champlain

When Dr. Edward D. Collins founded the French school at Middlebury College in the early 1900s, he quickly saw the success of adult students all "living and breathing" only French. He looked for an opportunity to create a French milieu for children. In 1921 Father Pierre A. Campeau was looking for a buyer for his old stone house and property at Kingsland Bay. Fortuitously, Dr. Collins and friends bought the property and laid the foundation for what was to become an innovative summer camp for girls.

In 1924 Ecole Champlain opened with an enrollment of 14 girls, who lived in tents and dined at the old stone Macdonough Lodge. The program included two French classes a day, one in conversation, the other in dramatics. Traditional summer camp offerings — swimming, sailing, riding and tennis — rounded out the activities.

Throughout the years, as Ecole Champlain flourished, new buildings and programs were added. Dr. Collins was joined in the running of this unique enterprise by his daughter, Ruth Collins Chase, who assumed the directorship upon his death. Later Dr. Collins' granddaughter, Alyce (Babe) Chase-Schaetz, took over the leadership. She still enjoys summer visits to the area, from her home in New York City.

When Ruth C. Chase's article, "Vermont's Ecole Champlain", appeared in *Vermont Life* in 1955, the camp had prospered for 31 years. Enrollment had grown to over 200 girls from twenty-four states. The Little Theater, an important part of the French language and culture, presented two plays a week, "French comedies, fantasies, farces and classics."

As the wealthy clientele diminished, Ecole Champlain faced difficult financial times. It continued to offer its unique program until 1974, ending a fifty year history of fulfilling Dr. Collins' ideal of a French summer camp on beautiful Lake Champlain.



The former Ecole Champlain theater now serves
YMCA sponsored Camp Greylock.

Camp Greylock

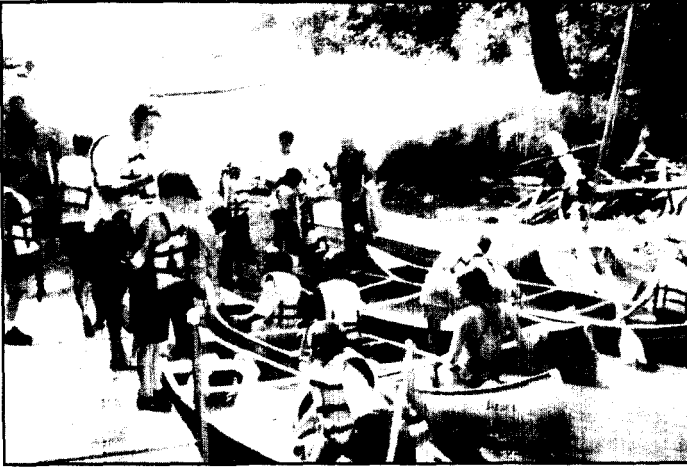
Today the long history of wholesome summer activities for children continues. On a hot, hazy day, splashing laughter still echoes from the waterfront. Drama groups still meet in the cool of the old theater. Now in its 24th year, Camp Greylock, a YMCA sponsored Outdoor Adventure Day Camp, provides an ideal program for girls and boys who live in the greater Burlington area, from Grand Isle to Middlebury.

Sheila Lockwood has been Camp Greylock director for three years, with a longer association with the YMCA. She describes the program here: a variety of sports including archery, canoeing and swimming, as well as theater, music, crafts and outdoor adventure. Each two week session includes special event days, a parents' night picnic with skits and a bonfire, and an overnight camp out. As Sheila shares her enthusiasms for the active and enriched program at Camp Greylock, she adds, "We also develop respect for self and others, trust and friendship. Our children build up wonderful memories." Sheila is "proud to be associated with the YMCA and its mission," part of which is to help people through programs which develop their spirit, mind and body.

When the lake level proved to be too high this year for the usual swimming area, the staff got together and moved everything to a new location. "The whole staff cooperated," Sheila said. "And I can't say enough in the way of thanks to the National Guard," she added. They put up tents for a changing area near the new swimming spot and brought in a 400 gallon "water buffalo" to supply fresh drinking water.



Kristin Hall and her young charges mime "YMCA" for the camera.



Canoeing on beautiful Lake Champlain is popular at Camp Greylock.



Counselor Kristin Hall says that many of her young charges are impressed that "Jackie O once went to camp here." (Jacqueline Lee Bouvier, who was to become First Lady as the wife of John F. Kennedy, 35th president of the United States.)

Camp Greylock is a licensed child care/day camp program, with specific programs for campers who have completed first grade through age 15. A "Teen Specialty Camp" for campers 11 to 13 features its own space and schedule separate from the younger children. For 14 and 15 year-olds, Camp Greylock offers an advance Leader in Training (L.I.T.) camping program.

For further information about Camp Greylock call the Greater Burlington YMCA at 802.862.9622.

PHOTOS BY ELIZABETH PARKINSON

Otter Creek



Perhaps the famed French explorer Samuel de Champlain did explore Otter Creek and its lush valley. Or perhaps he heard Indian reports of the playful creatures frequently seen along the banks of this peacefully meandering river. At any rate he does take credit for naming it — Riviere aux Loutres — Otter Creek, a name it shares today with everything from a brewery to a bait shop.

Are there otters in Otter Creek today? Vermont state wildlife biologist Bill Crenshaw answered the question: "Lots of them." After being trapped almost to extinction, today the otter population is higher than it has been in a long, long time. With the proliferation of beavers in recent years and the ponds they create has come an increase in the otter population in Vermont, as well as New England in general. The Otter Creek, the longest stream lying wholly within Vermont, provides an ideal habitat for otters: an abundance of fish, good den sites and secluded location.

Bill added that the first site of successful osprey nesting in Vermont was at the mouth of the Otter Creek in the 1980s, and the nesting platforms here have been successful ever since. Of the Wildlife Management Area in the Otter Creek vicinity, Bill said, "These wetlands are among the finest in Vermont. The diversity of wildlife here makes it one of the richest, most productive areas in the state."



PHOTO BY ELIZABETH PARKINSON

Little Otter Creek Waterfowl Area on Hawkins Road

Glimpses of Otter Creek

From James Petersen

In his book *Otter Creek: The Indian Road* James Petersen wrote: "It's been a long time since the last native Abenaki floated a canoe down the Otter Creek, but for millennia before that the Otter Valley was home to hundreds of his ancestors who undoubtedly couldn't have imagined there was any better place to live, this side of the Happy Hunting Ground." Petersen wrote about fur trader James Cross, who traversed the length of the Otter Creek in 1730, referring to it in his journal as Arthur Creek. "His (Cross') most noteworthy comment is a one-sentence description of the Otter Creek Valley: 'Said River is very Black and deep and surrounded with good land to ye extremity of our prospect.'"



From Janet Steward

In her Vermont Life magazine article "Highwater Canoeing" Janet Steward describes the spring floods that create "new wildlife habitats, recreation areas and fascinating havens for biological studies." She writes, "One such place is in the Otter Creek Waterfowl Area in Ferrisburg, which is created by the overflow of Lake Champlain and the Little Otter Creek." After describing an April canoe trip "to observe the abundant songbirds



and waterfowl that are in the spring highwater areas," the author notes that these waters would soon vanish. "Fields and woods would appear where once a temporary lake had shown us the natural world from a temporary perspective. Spring would recede into summer and this special sign of winter's demise would be no more."

The otter graphics are from material produced by the River Otter Fellowship, Box 2061, Irwindale CA, 91706.

Ferrisburgh: A Scrapbook of Memories

The Ferrisburgh Bicentennial Committee published a 64 page booklet in 1976, to commemorate the celebration of the two hundredth anniversary of the founding of the United States of America. Isabel Munnett was the committee chairperson. The booklet, edited and designed by Paulena Hollenbach and Ronald W. Slayton, was intended "to convey a little of the tenor and flavor of Town life, particularly over the past one hundred years." If no more copies are available at the town clerk's office, an interested reader can enjoy the comfort of the Vermont Room at the Bixby Library while browsing through or reading every word of this informative little publication.

"A Little of This and a Little of That"

Among the bits of wisdom from the past were suggested remedies for almost any ailment; here are but a few. They are quoted just as they appeared in *A Scrapbook of Memories*, creating a bit of havoc with a modern word processing spell-check.

Rhubarb and aloes - Boil together, allow to settle, use as a stomach purgative (also an animal medison)

Pine Pitch - to heal the cracks in chapped or work worn hands

Bell-shaped Milkweed - take the roots, dry them, powder them, sniff the powder to cure catarrh

Skunk's Oil - for croup

Poultices - made of mustard - cow manure - Tansy plant - Smart-weed

To Prevent Hair Coming Out

One ounce Wormwood

One ounce Sage

1/2 ounce White Oak Bark

Steep in pint soft watter two hours — then strain then add when cold tablespoon Brandy and 1/2 ounce glycerine. rub into roots of hair.



Author's Notes & Acknowledgements

Ferrisburgh, with its rich history and natural splendor, presented a glorious array from which to create this tapestry. The beginning was easy; a radio interview with David Budbill sparked my interest in the Rokeby story, and I quickly became happily engrossed in it. From there space and time constraints were constant reminders to contain my enthusiasms for the great stories within Ferrisburgh, and I regret that other interesting ones remain untold.

Many people contributed to this compilation, and I am grateful to them for their support and encouragement. Jane Williamson, director of Rokeby Museum, was a gracious hostess as well as a wealth of information. The museum's educator, Carol Place, generously shared her boundless enthusiasm for Rokeby's still-unfolding history. Bob Jackman of Montpelier gave me a unique connection with the Robinson stories, as he told about his family's theatrical productions of their favorite tales. Albert Devine, a long-time Rokeby neighbor, graciously shared his memories of "Uncle Rowlie and Aunt Elizabeth."

Art Cohn, director of Lake Champlain Maritime Museum, took time from cataloging the exciting underwater videos he had just completed. Art's vision and energy have been extraordinary in the first ten years of LCMM, and the next decade promises to be just as amazing.

The Kingsland Bay section unfolded from my early visit with park ranger Seth Slayton, who gave me valuable leads for further information. Sheila Lockwood, director of Camp Greylock, provided me with excellent current and historical information. Laura Hollowell, naturalist at Button Bay, quickly buoyed my sagging energy on a hot day, with her enthusiastic conversation about this unique state park. As a long-time Vermonter, I am overwhelmingly grateful that the people of Vermont now own these two splendid properties.

It was only through phone conversations that I met three helpful people: Bruce Brown, state parks regional manager; Bill Crenshaw, state wildlife biologist; and John Lazenby, assistant editor of *Vermont Life*. They answered my many questions competently and pleasantly.

Elizabeth Parkinson, who took most of the current photos, is keeping up a family tradition. She is the granddaughter of Henry Barrett, well-known depression-era photographer at Dartmouth College.

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



Author's Biography

Earline Marsh's "retirement career" includes freelance 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 the Friends of Dard Hunter, an international hand papermaking group. Earline is a frequent contributor to the *Country Courier*, a weekly supplement to the *Barre-Montpelier Times Argus*. She has written articles for the New England Ski Museum's newsletter and *Phi Delta Kappan*, an educational journal. She edited her son Glenn Parkinson's award winning book, *First Tracks: Stories from Maine's Skiing Heritage*. Earline is currently researching and compiling material on old autograph verse.

Earline's workroom is the former summer kitchen in an old Moretown farmhouse, where she works at her Macintosh computer and gains inspiration from the view of an aging willow tree framed by a wavy glass window. Her mailing address is HCR 34 Box 50, Montpelier, VT 05602, and telephone number is 802.223.6777.

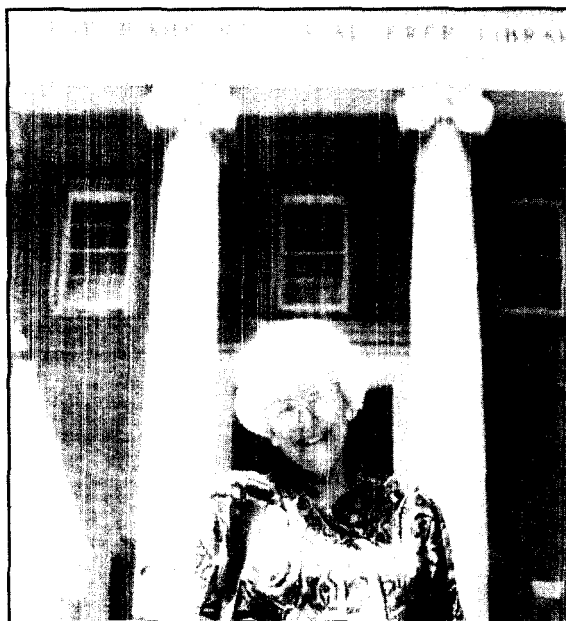


PHOTO BY ELIZABETH PARKINSON

"Leaving hot summer traffic behind me and entering the cool spacious interior of Bixby Library in Vergennes, I found a happy blend — a contemporary library with a wealth of resources from the past. It's an inspiring place, with a friendly staff. I also enjoyed climbing the regal staircase to an upstairs room to browse through a summer-long book sale." *Earline Marsh*