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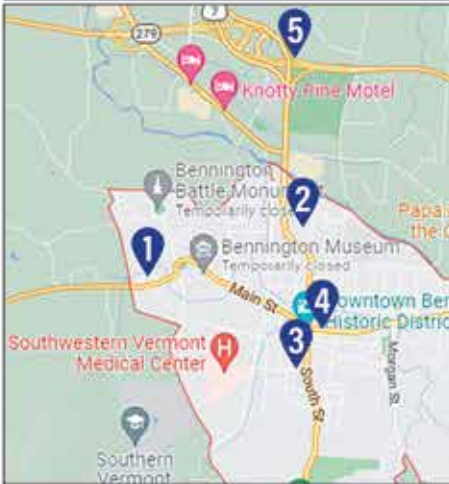




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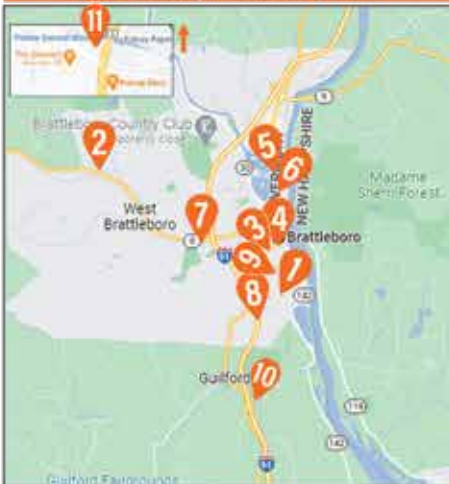
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Bob Audette has been writing for the Brattleboro Reformer for more than 17 years. Before that, he was a beat reporter in the Hudson Valley. He started out his career in journalism as a newsroom clerk for the Salt Lake Tribune, in Salt Lake City.



Shane Covey has covered 15 different sports in his career, and would love to add short track speed skating and ultimate fighting to that list. He would also like to interview WWE star Ronda Rousey and the great Dick Vitale.

Gordon Dossett traded the traffic and urban ugliness of Los Angeles for the Green Mountains. He lives with his teenaged children, a cat and a dog, packing urban sprawl into one home. He likes making to-do lists and losing them.



Lex Lecce's boss has called her a "bulldog" and "crime junkie." Although she has a BA in English, she relies on autocorrect to spell restaurant. It remains unclear as to how she's found so much success as a writer.

Bill LeConey is night news editor of Vermont News & Media publications, the Brattleboro Reformer, Bennington Banner and Manchester Journal. He loves all kinds of music, especially rock, funk, punk, jamband, reggae, jazz and soul. He's from New Jersey (don't hold that against him) but now lives in Brattleboro with his wife Linda, son Billy, dog Iko and cat Pippi. He hates celery.



Gena Mangiaratti, whose first name rhymes with henna, is arts and entertainment editor for Vermont News & Media. She regularly falls behind on grocery shopping, which leads to picking up bread from the nearby Vermont Country Deli, which leads to impulse purchases of local wares. She lives in Brattleboro with her cat, Theodora, who can be followed on Twitter, @fedoratheodora.

Makayla-Courtney McGeeney is a digital marketing consultant and journalist/photographer. She became a staff writer for the Bennington Banner, Brattleboro Reformer, and Manchester Journal in 2015 and later contributed as a freelancer for Vermont Country Magazine. She consults small businesses in the Northern Berkshires on digital marketing, enjoys lifting weights and keeping up with her two energetic cattle dogs. More about her digital marketing business at mcgeeney.media.



Tory Rich just joined the Manchester Journal in September. Though he went to high school in Bennington, 10 years living in the desert has him re-learning how to be a Vermonter the right way.

Greg Sukiennik reports on the Northshire of Bennington County for Vermont News & Media. His occupational hazards have included a World Series victory riot in Kenmore Square, climbing up the hull of a moving Coast Guard cutter, and nearly being heaved into the bleachers by a surly donkey who did not find basketball amusing. He spends his free time scouring vinyl record bargain bins and obeying the whims of Cleo, the family cat.



Dan Tebo is a Boston-based film critic whose work regularly appears on his mother's refrigerator. He works as a waiter and amateur archivist and runs a VHS blog with a readership in the high single digits.

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In search of serotonin

Every year, I wonder why we do Christmas and all the stress and preparation and finances required of it. Then the sun sets before I have worked up the courage to be a member of society, and I remember why: Christmas lights provide light.

Now, with the holidays behind us, we still have several more weeks of darkness to make it through. Fortunately, we live in a place that offers reliable sources of serotonin all around, from the historic charm of Brattleboro as an “organ town,” explored in this issue by staffer Bill LeConey, to maple-flavored lip balm at the corner store, tested by me. Speaking of



Gena Mangiaratti
Vermont Country Magazine

The author celebrating a tiny victory of being able to smell hand sanitizer after contracting COVID-19 this past fall.

corner stores, staff writer Bob Audette spoke with Allen Brothers, a local business where Vermonters and visitors get fresh pies and produce year-round.

Though the holidays have passed, another winter event to look forward to is Brattleboro’s Harris Hill Ski Jump, to take place this year Feb. 17 to 19. The adrenaline-filled competition is an annual favorite for locals and tourists alike. In this issue of Vermont Country, our own Shane Covey checks in with local competitor Spencer Knickerbocker.

Skiing is a popular Vermont pastime that uses our natural landscape. But if hurling yourself down a mountain doesn’t appeal to you, Vermont Country’s Tory Rich has compiled a list of other options for exercising while enjoying the outdoors in winter months. And correspondent Makayla-Courtney McGeeney writes of the many opportunities, skiing and otherwise, awaiting at Stratton Mountain.

Some people like the Vermont landscape so much that they make it the backdrop for their wedding. Staff writer Greg Sukiennik explores the wedding business in the region, highlighting some of its most popular venues.

And staffer Gordon Dossett has taken on the intrepid endeavor of exploring the region where he lives, but with the eye and enthusiasm of a tourist. One of his first stops was the American Museum of Fly Fishing in Manchester, where he learned that even “fishing bumbler” like himself could appreciate the experience and atmosphere.



Gena Mangiaratti
Vermont Country Magazine

A rose the author made from recycled newspaper in an effort to find small joy.

If you prefer to stay home, film critic Dan Tebo is back with his takes on an array of three-hour films and whether they are worth the watch.

And of course, our resident crime and all-things-spooky junkie Lex Lecce is back with a look at the history of spiritualism in Vermont. Ever hear of Sleeping Lucy? The first known trance medium in spiritualism came from the Green Mountain State.

I hope we can provide some help in seeing the good around us in the dark months that remain.

And if you are struggling, I see you.

Gena Mangiaratti is the arts & entertainment editor of Vermont News & Media and assistant editor of Vermont Country.

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Pipe dreams

Arts venues sustain Brattleboro's rich organ legacy

*Kristopher Radder
Vermont Country Magazine*

Henry Danaher plays the Estey pipe organ at Epsilon Spires in Brattleboro during a monthly organ concert.

By Bill LeConey

Vermont Country Magazine

BRATTLEBORO — When Henry Danaher performed a free concert on the historic Estey pipe organ at Epsilon Spires on a weekday afternoon in December, he wasn't merely "tickling the ivories" on joyous advent chorales of the holiday season.

He was actually building upon a tradition and legacy unique to Brattleboro. It was almost as if the founders of the Estey Organ Company — which transformed this Southern Vermont town into a manufacturing mecca of the instrument more than 150 years ago — were looking down in approval, and admiring their own handiwork still in use all these years later.

"With instruments like these, it's kind of like a conversation," said Danaher, the director of music at the Church of Christ at Dartmouth College in Hanover, N.H. "The instrument really determines the tempo and the register, and every instrument is completely another personality, so you have to re-discover the music that you've learned and think about it in a new way."

Several of the pieces that Danaher played that day were written during the era when the Estey organ at Epsilon Spires was built, in 1906. At times soothing and soft, at times boisterous and dramatic — with percussive chimes adding bursts of color to the

mix — the Estey pipe organ under Danaher's masterful control filled the sanctuary with all of its "personalities."

"It really turns a building into an instrument," Danaher said. "It's like the whole building is singing. That's one thing that's special about the organ. I really feel like you're inhabiting it for a while."

The massive pipe organ is vital to Epsilon Spires, originally the town's First Baptist Church, which bills itself as "a center of communication, illuminating the relationships between creative arts, natural sciences and sustainability using multimedia platforms" (epsilonSPIRES.org). The arts venue features the organ in everything from experimental drone performances to monthly classical concerts to silent film accompaniment — which is appropriate, since many of the Estey organs were key fixtures in movie theaters during the era of silent films.

"There's such a wide range of sounds that it can produce," said Epsilon Spires director Jamie Mohr. "We try to have a wide variety, and you get to see all the different characters that can come out of that. A lot of the organists are very excited about building their own program where they can show their own influences, where it can range from very old and Baroque, to modern and everything in between, and sometimes in the same show. And we've had organists

from around the world, from Taiwan, Hong Kong, from Shetland Islands, and from all over the U.S."

The silent film series has been a hit. Accompanist Ben Model, one of the top players in the country, has provided live pipe organ soundtracks to Fritz Lang's "Metropolis" (1927), and the Buster Keaton films "The General" and "Steamboat Bill Jr." Model plans to return this spring for a screening of "Safety Last!" starring Harold Lloyd.

World-renowned organist Dennis James is also returning to Epsilon Spires in March for a suspense program showcasing silent films by Alfred Hitchcock. In October, James performed a live soundtrack on the Estey for the centennial celebration of F.W. Murnau's silent classic "Nosferatu."

Epsilon Spires has also featured performers like experimental Canadian composer Sarah Davachi — who provided immersive deep listening in the sanctuary with performances on pipe organ, strings and pedal steel drones.

It's hard to imagine the company's founder, Jacob Estey, a former plumber, envisioning those sounds when he purchased a bankrupt Brattleboro company in 1850 that made melodeons, a category of reed instruments that includes accordions. Together with his relatives, Estey took the business from a failing endeavor and built it into what would eventually become the largest manufacturer of reed and pipe organs in the world.

An entire neighborhood (called Esteyville) sprung up around the large factory complex in Brattleboro, which included over 20 buildings of unique slate architecture, now listed on the National Registry of Historic Places. One of the buildings now houses the Estey Organ Museum, which is open from May through October and features many of the company's "artifacts," some of which are still operable. Its website is esteyorganmuseum.org.

The Estey Company employed a large workforce, many of whom were highly specialized craftsmen, including woodcarvers, designers, engineers and inventors from Europe. Estey produced more than 500,000 reed organs and 3,000 pipe organs



Photo provided by Brattleboro Historical Society

An Estey Company organ is transported by horse-drawn carriage in the early 1900s.

before closing its doors in 1960. If the company had taken advantage of the switch to electronic synthesizers earlier, Estey may have bridged the divide quicker and continued operations.

The Esteys were original founders of the First Baptist Church (now Epsilon Spires), and the “Sanctuary Organ” was given as a gift to the church in memory of Jacob’s son, Julius. The organ was revised (electrified) in 1958, but its tonal features remain, for the most part, untouched.

The company offered its products at cost to local churches, in part to serve as examples of the quality of the product and hopefully increase sales. Often, the organs became inseparable from the buildings in which they were housed. Such is the case with the Opus 300 at Epsilon Spires.

“You know, it’s got a mystical sound. It’s kind of got like a mammoth feeling to it,” Danaher said. “And I feel like playing the organ’s a little bit of an untapped resource, you know. Especially since there are so many instruments waiting to be played everywhere. And I’m just grateful that some folks have decided to maintain this and make this concert possible. I’m lucky.”

There are other Estey organs still in use in Brattleboro, and throughout New England, but none serves as diverse a purpose as the one at Epsilon Spires. That’s an inspiration to Robin Johnson, owner and general manager of the nearby Stone Church, the remarkable and handsome “high Victorian” Gothic building that is now one of the premier concert venues in New England.

The Stone Church was built in 1875 by the Unitarian Congregational Society, and it houses an Estey pipe organ that was originally installed in 1914 and rebuilt in 1948. The Estey organ is not currently operable, but Johnson would like to change that.

“It’s one of the coolest features we have. It would be great to use it and to revive it. It’s the thing that people ask about first, so that’s why it’s always remained on our minds,” said Johnson, whose family refurbished the old All Souls Unitarian Church as a concert venue in 2016.

“The thing we toy with sometimes is that, if we’re not going to do it, it’s a



Kristopher Radder — Vermont Country Magazine

Robin Johnson, the owner of The Stone Church, poses near the Estey pipe organ inside his Brattleboro music venue.

ton of unused square footage behind there and below, where the blower is, a giant motor that pumps air through it. So, it’s like all this great space we could use. But we can’t quite give up on the dream of making it work, so that’s why it stays as is.”

Johnson said local pipe organ expert Larry Nevin, who also maintains the Epsilon Spires organ, has thoroughly studied The Stone Church Estey and reported that the organ “works” themselves are not in bad shape.

“I don’t think it would be ridiculous money because we wouldn’t try to restore the old console,” Johnson said. “What we would probably do is

digitize it — build a new console and plug it in and play it like a MIDI (Musical Instrument Digital Interface).”

Johnson said musicians who come in to The Stone Church for concerts, especially keyboardists, ask him about the pipe organ all the time.

“It’s a pretty standard question. A lot of times they’ll say, ‘This may be a funny question, but,’ ... and we just cut them off. ‘No, it doesn’t work.’ I don’t even wait for the question any more,” he said with a laugh.

Some day, the question may get an affirmative answer. And the legacy of the Estey Organ Company will continue for generations to come.

Ex-Goose keyboardist to launch funk ‘residency’ at Stone Church

By Bill LeConey

Vermont Country Magazine

BRATTLEBORO — Keyboardist Kris Yunker has played all sorts of organs and pianos, from vintage Fender Rhodes, Ludwigs and his beloved Hammond A100, to modern synthesizers hooked up with MIDI technology. But the only instrument that really “scared” him was a church pipe organ he dabbled with as a youngster growing up in Texas.

“I was just playing a couple of notes, and I felt the power wielded by it and it was, like, kind of frightening,” said Yunker. “I was like, ‘Oh my god, I don’t know what to do with this.’”

He long ago overcame any fears and has gone on to a stellar keyboard career, but he remains intrigued by the idea of mastering an instrument such as the Estey pipe organ at The Stone Church in Brattleboro. And he may just get the chance: in February, Yunker will begin a monthly afro-funk-soul “residency” at the Church, one of the top concert venues in New England. He plans to bring in special guests, including former American Idol finalist Elise Testone, Boston-based soul singer Toussaint the Liberator, members of the Connecticut funk-rock band Deep Banana Blackout, and maybe even members of his ever more popular former band, Goose, currently challenging Phish at the top of the jam band mountain.

“I was talking with (Stone Church owner) Robin (Johnson) about it, and I thought it would be good to get a funk night going in Brattleboro,” said Yunker, who lives in Guilford. “I think there used to be one at the old Metropolis (Wine Bar), but I thought it’d be great to get it into the Church, which is a really cool spot. We’ll start off with trying it as a monthly thing, the first Wednesday of every month, and if it starts going off we might want to turn it into a weekly thing.”

As the keyboardist for Alan Evans Trio, On The Spot Trio (with his



Keyboardist Kris Yunker toys with the vintage Estey player pipe organ at the old Shriners Club building in Brattleboro.

musical “brother,” guitarist Danny Mayer), Jen Durkin and the Business, Wubakia and many others, Yunker has been rising in the music scene with a very unique style that includes rich and soulful soundscapes alongside heavy grooves from his left hand bass lines. Influenced by the likes of legendary jazz keyboardists such as Oscar Peterson and Herbie Hancock, as well as rock and funk pioneers such as Stevie Wonder, Ray Manzarek and John Medeski, he eventually became hooked on the Hammond, which he calls the “focal point” of his extensive live gig array.

“I always have the Hammond, and then I’ll add different keyboards around that,” he said, “whether it’s a MIDI controller for bass, or other sounds that I use on my computer, or I’ll bring in a clavinet. Sometimes I’ll bring a Rhodes. It just depends on the gig. I pick and choose my hefty instruments. They all weigh a lot, and they’re vintage, so they require maintenance inevitably, so I’m picky and choosy about what I take out.”

Yunker calls the Hammond organ “one of the toughest built things ever

in America,” likening it to a 1950s refrigerator.

“It’s kind of amazing, really. It was like the competitor of the pipe organ. The pump organ was made for homes so you can have kind of the pipe sound because it’s got reeds in it, but the Hammond organ was the first electric organ made to just be a stand-in for pipe organs for churches that couldn’t afford the large pipe organs. And then this guy built a Leslie speaker for it to toss the sound around. Even though Hammond didn’t want his organ sold that way, the instrument just became an iconic piece of American music, rock and roll, all music over the ages. It’s become an iconic piece for that.”

Originally from Indiana, Yunker has lived all over the country, including lengthy stops in Texas, Hawaii and Santa Cruz, California. He settled in Southern Vermont partly because one his musical partners, Alan Evans, has a studio in Irving, Mass., but also because the town of Brattleboro “spoke to him.”

“I wanted to be close enough to the city but also in nature, because I do better and feel more inspired whenever I’m in a more natural surrounding. And also I love the community of Brattleboro and it surely has great, conscious-minded people.”

Yunker is currently recording and giving lessons in a studio at the old Shriners Club building in Brattleboro, which owner Steve Heim is converting into a hub for music recording and performance. The space also includes an old Estey player organ, which fits perfectly with Yunker’s passion for vintage instruments.

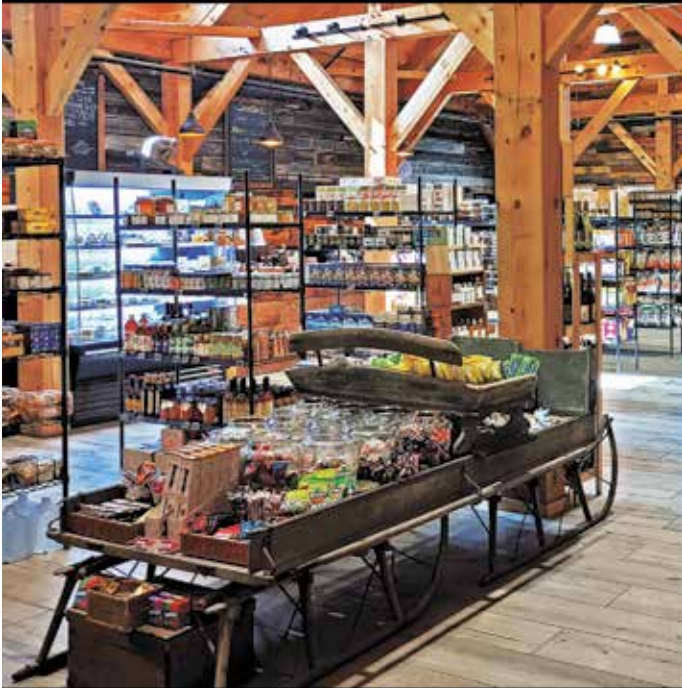
Yunker toured with Goose for about a year, in 2016, right before they started “picking up steam,” as he puts it. He remains friends with them, especially percussionist Jeff Arevalo, and doesn’t resent their current success at all.

“That’s so cool, I’m really happy for those guys. They definitely deserve it.”



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Photo provided by Laura Greve

"One of my nephews literally uses them as a hockey puck. They're very sturdy," Laura Greve said of her birch wood coasters.

By Gena Mangiaratti

Vermont Country Magazine

BENNINGTON — Vermonters know maple isn't just for pancakes. Turns out, it even transcends food.

When I spotted lip balm made with "100% Pure Vermont Maple Syrup" near the checkout at Vermont Country Deli, the popular tourist stop that is also my corner store, I was immediately intrigued. There's something about the natural sweetener that appeals to my senses (It's also of mythical origins, by the way: It comes from trees!).

Vermont Maple Beak Balm, I learned, is made by Jenny Wren, of North Bennington, called "the village" by locals. The tube is decorated with artwork of maple leaves around the top and bottom, framing a small, round bird wearing a red bandana. A visit to wrenhouse.com reveals that Wren creates needle-felted sculptures of small forest creatures such as birds and mice and chipmunks. She photographs and draws her creations in natural and whimsical settings, such as in front of a covered bridge and holding maple syrup.

"I've always been interested in natural products and making my own things," Wren said by phone. "And I always made my own lip balm. After giving it to friends and family and stuff, I was encouraged to, maybe, take it further afield."

She started Wrenhouse in 2005 with original note cards and handcrafted jewelry. At that time, she lived in Maine, so the first flavored lip balm she sold was blueberry.

"When I came back to Vermont, I was like, 'Oh, I should do some maple stuff,'" she recalled. "And that really took off. People really responded very happily to that flavor."

The Beak Balm ingredients are sweet almond oil, coconut oil, beeswax, avocado oil, cocoa seed butter, shea butter, stevia leaf extract, organic natural maple flavor and 100 percent pure Vermont maple syrup.

"It's really all natural. There's no chemicals in it at all," Wren noted.

She said people have asked her if she makes sunscreen lip balm. She does not, because she would need to add



Photo provided by Jenny Wren

Jenny Wren photographs her needle-felted sculptures in natural and whimsical settings — and holding her maple lip balm.

chemical additives as a sun protectant. “Those chemical additives are really not the best thing to be putting on your lips, because what you put on your lips is going into your body.”

Wren said she uses her product herself, sometimes smearing it on her chapped knuckles.

“This is all very skin-safe, natural stuff that you can feel good about putting on your skin.”

I have found that my tube is lasting for a while — yes, because I haven’t lost it, and nobody has sent it through the wash — and also because it works well. After using it, my lips aren’t chapped ... until another run of dry weather or nose-blowing. Beak Balm has a light taste and scent of maple, too. I asked Wren if there are any healing properties in the maple.

“Maple syrup is a natural product. It has trace minerals and stuff if you ingest it. I’m not sure if it does anything specific,” Wren told me. “Typically, more of what’s happening is the special blend of oils and fats that are used in my recipe are really good in terms of locking in the moisture.”

The maple lip balm and other work by Wren can be found at wrenhouse.com, as well as at local shops.

Sturdy maple coasters

Another non-food maple product I recently learned about was the



Photo provided by Laura Greve

Some of Laura Greve’s coasters include birch bark hearts placed in the middle of the maple leaf. “It was an idea my sister actually had, kind of like, ‘My heart is in Vermont,’” she said.

artwork of Laura Greve, who grew up in the Brattleboro area and now lives in Central Vermont. Among her creations are birch wood coasters with red maple leaves lacquered on — very Vermont, and also reminiscent of the Canadian flag.

“I was lacquering coasters one day, and I was like, I should put leaves inside of this,” Greve said, adding lightheartedly, “One of my nephews literally uses them as a hockey puck. They’re very sturdy.”

Her work, which also includes candles and pebble art — images put together with small rocks and other elements from nature — can be found and ordered via her Facebook page, “Greve’s Grove Art.” She also makes appearances at Vermont craft fairs.

Some of her coasters include birch bark hearts placed in the middle of the maple leaf.

“It was an idea my sister actually had, kind of like, ‘My heart is in Vermont,’” Greve said.

Maple everything

The mighty maple can be functional art, too. If you have a spare \$20,000, Taftsville artist and craftsman Andrew Pearce will personally pick

Vermont maple burls (those knobby sections of tree trunks) to create you a one-of-a-kind coffee table. His hand-turned maple bowls cost way less. Check them out at andrewpearcebowls.com.

Up in Middlebury, Maple Landmark (maplelandmark.com) is making all manner of toys out of maple. As durable as they are functional, these quaint and natural items make for a gift that will stay out of the landfill, where so many plastic junk toys end up.

For an item enjoyable for any age, Vermont Woodshop’s Randy Crossman turns native Green Mountain hardwoods into heirloom quality pieces, such as his maple carousel. Using hand planes, scroll saws, steam bending and hand chiseling techniques, Crossman employs old techniques to produce modern gifts, signs, toys and games, many from the maple. Visit vermontwoodshop.com to see Crossman’s puzzles, sleds and cutting boards.

Of course, if these maple-y things aren’t doing it for you, you can always go back to the syrup (vermontmaplesyrup.com, a Vermont Country Magazine sister company, isn’t a bad place to start).

Say 'I do' in the 802

*Places to choose from, and how the
wedding industry helps Vermont*



By Greg Sukiennik

Vermont Country Magazine

MANCHESTER — Who wouldn't want to get married in Southern Vermont?

Whether it's amid the splendor of fall colors, intense summer greens or even the dazzling white of winter frost, there's something about the region's charming small towns, breathtaking mountain landscapes and enchanting rustic pastures that makes lasting memories for couples and their guests.

Consider Manchester, a commercial and education hub of 4,500 on the Battenkill River, wedged in a narrow valley between the Green Mountains and the Taconic Range in the Northshire of Bennington County.

Most think of Manchester as a four-season resort town, thanks to its historic links to fly fishing, golf, skiing, restaurants and shopping. But Manchester has another claim to fame, one that's also an economic engine for the region: Every weekend, visitors arrive here as nervous engaged couples and leave as happy newlyweds.

"It's important to the region, and it provides predictability," said Steven Bryant, whose hospitality group includes The Dorset Inn, The Barrows House and the Old Gray Barn, in addition to several restaurants in the region. "If someone commits to a wedding, they're going to come up here. The transient guest may cancel. Weddings are committing six months to a year in advance. It allows for better planning for everything."

In 2021, Manchester Town Clerk Anita Sheldon issued 145 marriage licenses. Just 24 of those went to residents; the remainder went to out-of-state couples, mostly from New York, Massachusetts and Connecticut. The remainder went to couples from 16 other states and Washington, D.C., and from as far away as Oregon and Arizona.

Weddings are half of the annual banquet and catering business for The Equinox Golf Resort and Spa in

Manchester, according to Robert Booth, the historic hotel's director of sales. The same is true for The Wilburton, said Tajlei Levis, the historic inn's director of weddings and special events.

"It's very nice knowing our summer's basically sold out," said Levis, whose family has operated and owns the historic mansion overlooking the Green Mountains for 35 years. "Most every weekend is already booked. ... I know how much staff we need. I know a lot way in advance."

While the Northshire is just one slice of Southern Vermont, its variety of accommodations — from quaint inns to grand hotels — speaks to the range of options available to couples when they choose the region for their big day.

While prices and settings vary, the thing that gets folks in the door and keeps them here is Vermont itself, in all its splendor. Every innkeeper and hotel manager we talked to said the same thing: Couples usually have some connection to the state when they plan a wedding here, whether it was a vacation house, an annual ski trip, or a family member or friend's wedding.

"There are lots of reasons why they come to Southern Vermont. A lot of the ones I hear are 'I went to school in Vermont or spent summers here,' or 'My grandparents have a second home here,'" Booth said. "We hear 'We want to be here. It's beautiful.'"

Saying "I do" in the 802 has economic benefits, as well. In addition to the hotels, inns, bed and breakfasts and the employees, a good many vendors, retailers and service providers — bartenders, florists, servers, photographers, caterers, hairdressers, musicians and DJs among them — can make a living from serving couples on their big day.

"Let's say you have 200 people for a wedding," said Carmine Cole, private functions director at Hildene, The Lincoln Family Home, in Manchester. "Those 200 people are in town at local hotels, motels, inns and Airbnbs. Those 200 people are eating several meals a day outside of the one they

Photo provided by Andy Duback

Hildene, The Lincoln Family Home, in Manchester, can provide a picture-perfect backdrop for newlyweds.

get at Hildene, not to mention all of them shopping in town, as well.”

In a letter to Gov. Scott during the pandemic, the Vermont Association of Wedding Professionals estimated that the state’s wedding industry is worth \$164 million per year.

The 36 weddings hosted annually at Hildene, Robert Todd Lincoln’s family estate, account for about \$400,000 in revenue for the nonprofit’s \$3 million operating budget, according to its president, Brian Keefe. That’s part of the reason that the Friends of Hildene are replacing a quasi-permanent event tent with Lincoln Hall, a 14,000-square-foot building that will also offer year-round event space for educational programming and food service operations.

Down Route 7A in North Bennington, the Park-McCullough Historic Governor’s Mansion also relies upon

weddings for revenue that helps care for the 35-room mansion. It hosts 15 to 20 weddings a year, according to Jeanne Mintrone, the nonprofit’s event and tour group manager.

“We’re turning away bookings for October. We’re booked through 2024 already, and September is right behind. Fall has been way more popular than summer,” Mintrone said.

“A lot of it is the natural beauty of the area,” Booth said. “They do want to be outside. I would say the Equinox Pond Pavilion is the most requested site we have — nearly every wedding wants to take pictures up at the pond. When you have that backdrop, the photos are stunning.”

“I think there’s something cozy that builds into the Vermont brand,” Bryant said, noting that the region is only a four-hour drive from the New York metro area. “People are

craving that nostalgia, that Norman Rockwell fantasy.”

Many venues can and will host weddings year-round, but the majority report that fall and summer are the most-requested seasons, in that order, and gear up accordingly.

“It’s funny how many times we get a wedding asking for September and October, asking us, ‘Can you tell me exactly when the leaves are going to change?’” Booth said with a laugh.

That said: When the mountains are shrouded and frost and the trees are coated in snow and ice, the effect is magical, Booth said. Last year, after an ice storm, “the pictures they took of the trees sparkled. Everything was coated in diamonds,” he said. “We tell people, don’t shy away — it’s a magical time of year to be here.”

Weddings involve a lot of moving parts. Fortunately, for couples



Photo provided by Julia Luckett Photography

The Wilburton’s rural campus provides a beautiful escape for newlyweds and their guests.

Next page: Photo provided by Andy Madea

“People really appreciate that everything is one place,” said Tajlei Levis, The Wilburton’s director of weddings and special events.



**“The world’s
kind of chewed
up, and they
see Vermont as
a safe place.”**

— Tajlei Levis, director of weddings
and special events, The Wilburton



Hannah Photography

Southern Vermont Arts Center in Manchester is on a 103-acre campus.

wanting to get married in Southern Vermont, local venues and vendors have a lot of practice at making sure the details are just right for the couple, the family and their friends. Area hotels and inns pride themselves on being “one-stop shopping” for couples — whether they can offer onsite activities, have a list of preferred vendors to choose from, or simply suggest things to see and do until the big moment arrives.

At the Equinox, the resort is large enough to accommodate multiple events during the weekend, whether it’s cocktails on the veranda, spa treatments for the bridal party, or a round of golf. “It makes it very simple for the couple to plan one point of contact,” Booth said.

“People really appreciate that everything is one place,” Levis said of

The Wilburton’s rural campus. “They can have a welcome party on Friday night, a bonfire ... the ceremony, cocktail hour and reception can all be outdoors, and 100 guests can stay here, so nobody has to drive. Once you’re here, there’s space to connect in a lot of different ways.”

Bryant has also noticed how a shared destination brings families and friends together.

“There’s something about a destination wedding that resonates. It’s multigenerational,” he said. “Vermont as a whole is within a four-hour drive for a lot of people. The world’s kind of chewed up, and they see Vermont as a safe place.”

What if you want to bring no guests at all? The Kimpton Taconic Motel’s website offers an “Escape to Elope” package that includes an officiant, an

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Scott Farm Orchard

707 Kipling Road, Dummerston, Vt.
802-254-6868
scottfarmvermont.com/weddings

Southern Vermont Arts Center

860 SVAC Drive/West Road
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802-362-1405
svac.org/rentals

Stratton Mountain Resort

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Stratton Mountain, Vt.
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on-site ceremony, a complimentary one-night suite stay, a three-course dinner at The Copper Grouse, complete with Champagne toast and more.

For Peggy Brockett and Briana Wilkins at The Lily of the Valley Florist in Manchester, which gets 95 percent of its business through weddings, the challenge of personalizing arrangements for each couple is rewarding.

“Bringing their vision to life and being such an important part of their wedding day. Those are photos they’re going to have forever,” Wilkins said.

“That reaction, that feedback from them is the best part,” Brockett said of making couples happy. “When you can bring someone’s dream to fruition, it’s a good feeling.”

The Vermont Country Wedding Guide

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Vermont Country Magazine file photo

People enjoy the fresh snow while sledding at Living Memorial Park, in Brattleboro, in February 2021.

Not a skier (or snowboarder)?

Here are some other ways to enjoy Vermont this winter

By Tory Rich

Vermont Country Magazine

It's no secret that Vermont is home to some of the best skiing and snowboarding in the country. We're just set up for that sort of thing around here. The governor's office even made things official in 2012, declaring skiing and snowboarding as the sports of the Green Mountain State.

I have joked for years now that I am the worst Vermonter ever. In addition

to not fishing or hunting, I've never participated in the snow sports. You see, I wrestled in high school. For the uninitiated, that meant that during the winter I was booked all Saturday, every Saturday, and in bed until about noon every Sunday.

Between being stationed in Yuma, Ariz., in the Marines followed by a five-year stint living in Las Vegas, I spent most of my 20s living in the desert. I've been back in Vermont for about four years now. When I tell

people that I'm a native, but I don't ski, the response is usually visible confusion, as if I told them I didn't have my driver's license.

"[Shrug] It just ... never happened."

I aim to change that and join the club at some point this winter. I don't exactly know how it works, but I can't help but imagine myself on the bunny slopes with a bunch of elementary schoolers, like a repackaged version of "Billy Madison." But I digress.



People pull their sleds up one of the hills at Willow Park in Bennington.

Vermont Country Magazine file photo



Vermont Country Magazine file photo

Anna and Gil Rosenberg, from Brattleboro, enjoy cross-country skiing at the Brattleboro Country Club, in January 2022.

So whether you're a local like me and just never found the time to learn, or just visiting and seeking a way to break up a week on the slopes, you might find yourself looking for another way to spend your day in our fine state. Without any further ado, I give you my list of the best ways to stay active in Vermont that aren't skiing or snowboarding.

Sledding or tubing

If you've got a need for speed, skiing and snowboarding aren't the only way to put Vermont's mountains and hills to good use. If you find the investment of time and money in lessons and equipment to be less than palatable, tubing or sledding are excellent alternatives.

The fun-to-skill level required ratio

for launching yourself down a hill in a low-friction vehicle of some kind is quite high, and it's a great family activity. Between \$10 and \$20 will get you an adequate chunk of plastic to glide downhill on. Or, if your body requires something with a little more give to it, tubes are available with most retailers for just a bit more.

Going sledding or tubing is a great family activity sure to keep a smile not just on your kids' faces, but yours, as well. There's even a hard work/reward dynamic to it. Kids will be hustling back up the hill for "just one more time," and you might just forget yourself that you're getting quite a bit of exercise as you work your way back to the top for another boost of adrenaline.

Of course, that's if you're going the old-school route and finding your

own hill. If you're willing to pay a little extra, ski resorts like Mt. Snow in West Dover or Magic Mountain in Londonderry offer trails for tubes, as well, which also means lifts to take you back to the top.

Snowshoeing and cross-country skiing

Vermont might be known for being most picturesque in foliage season, but there is no shortage of stunning views to be had from December through March. If you seek a place to quiet your mind and get some rest for your soul, Vermont might be second to none. There's a catch, though, as you'll probably have to find that peace on foot. It's worth the trip to those spots where once your feet stop crunching the snow, you can't hear a single sound.



Vermont Country Magazine file photo

Christine Koenig and Jane MacKugler play a game of pickleball at the Manchester recreation park.

Snowshoes or cross-country skis make traversing snow a much more enjoyable and efficient experience, but it's still fantastic cardio! Both activities burn about 500 calories per hour for a 180-pound adult, which is nothing to sneeze at.

There are those weird winters where there isn't much snow on the ground at lower elevations. In that case, I'll borrow the premise of Mitch Hedberg's old joke about escalators: "Snowshoeing is now temporarily hiking ... sorry for the convenience."

Most of the time, though, snow on the ground isn't going to be an issue. If you aren't sold on buying your own pair, check out resorts like Stratton Mountain, where skis or snowshoes are available for \$38 a day (\$28 for kids 12 and under), as well as a small fee to use the trails.

However, if you want to blaze your

own trail (and be able to walk freely with your dog), there are plenty of spots to explore, free of charge. Among my personal favorites are the hills on the old Southern Vermont College campus.

Pickleball

If you haven't heard of pickleball yet, you will. It's the fastest growing sport in the country. If you like tennis, or squash, or badminton — or any of the racket sports — you'll love pickleball. Even the way the relatively new sport was named is fun; Most accounts say "Pickles" was the name of the inventor's family dog that would steal the ball and run off with it.

While there are a few nuances that are easy to pick up after a few games, I liken pickleball to pingpong, but instead of standing behind the table, you're standing on it. Instead of a

pingpong ball, you use a whiffle ball. This makes for a fast-paced game and an excellent workout.

While the skillset for both tennis and pickleball is similar, the learning curve is a lot shorter for the latter. Pickleball courts are roughly a quarter of the size of tennis courts, making spaces to play easier to find.

Less ground to cover means less mobility is required, and it generally comes down to a battle of reflexes and accuracy versus speed and power. This makes it a great activity for all ages; seeing players in their 70s and 80s isn't at all uncommon.

As the sport continues to catch on, pickleball courts (and opponents) are only getting easier to find. Multiple locations are listed for Bennington, Brattleboro and Manchester for places to play at places2play.org/state/vermont.

Hometown favorite to compete at Harris Hill



Vermont Country Magazine file photo

Spencer Knickerbocker takes the first-ever attempt on the new Harris Hill Ski Jump in Brattleboro in 2009.

By Shane Covey

Vermont Country Magazine

BRATTLEBORO — Each winter in Brattleboro, a couple of legends are generally spotted traveling high in the sky.

One is Santa Claus.

The other is Spencer Knickerbocker.

“I always tell people that I’m retired,” Knickerbocker joked on Dec. 2. “I will compete again. You can lock it in.”

The 30-year-old was referring to the 2023 Harris Hill Ski Jump, set for Feb. 17 to 19. This will be his 14th straight competition.

“It’s pretty incredible to be up on

top of the hill, have your name announced, and hear the roar of the crowd. It’s pretty surreal.”

Knickerbocker is the hometown favorite each year, having started out in Memorial Park’s Junior Jumping program in 2004 and going to Brattleboro Union High School from 2008 to 2009.

In front of a record crowd last February, he was one of 41 jumpers at the event’s 100th anniversary celebration. The competitors came from as far away as Alaska, Colorado, Norway, Iceland and Slovenia.

“I compete in the Masters Class now, so it’s a lot of fun and there’s no pressure.”

Knickerbocker is best known for being the first to use Harris Hill’s brand new 90-meter jump in 2009.

“I was only 16 at the time, so I was pretty nervous. It was a huge honor to be asked to take the inaugural jump.”

He explained that it’s important to stay calm and relaxed prior to each attempt.

“You’re definitely a little nervous and then you’re just focusing on a good jump. When you have a good jump, it’s one of the coolest feelings ever. It feels like you are flying.”

Knickerbocker, the executive director of the Marlboro Nordic Ski Club, soared 74.5 and then 84 meters on day one of the 2022 competition.

His Sunday jumps measured 79.5 and 82 meters.

“It’s the only time I jump each year,” he pointed out. “I’m pretty active in general. I cross-country ski a lot, I run in the non-winter months, and I also do some slalom water skiing.”

More than 40 of the world’s top up-and-coming male and female ski jumpers from the U.S. and Europe are scheduled to compete in the 101st Harris Hill Ski Jumping Competition. The event will have a festive atmosphere for the whole

family, with food, music, souvenirs and a beer tent.

The five judges will be scoring the jumpers on total distance and their style, all the way from the take-off to the landing and out-run.

“I try to keep to myself, but I also like saying ‘hi’ to the people I know there,” the local hero noted.

There were 5,400 fans for the 2009 event, which is when Knickerbocker was the first to fly off the newly renovated jump. During his streak of

Harris Hill appearances, the hometown favorite has seen: U.S. jumpers sweep the podium (2012), the first Japanese competitor (2013), five-degree temps (2015), Slovenian Blaz Pavlik’s record 104-meter leap (2017), a Nordic combined event added (2018), three female judges (2019), a cancellation due to COVID-19 (2021) and the Centennial celebration (2022).

In 2023, he will witness some night competition for the first time — on Feb. 17, a target jump under the newly installed lights will be the main event.



Vermont Country Magazine file photo

Spencer Knickerbocker waits with fellow skiers for the Opening Ceremonies of the 93rd Harris Hill Ski Jump in Brattleboro.



Vermont Country Magazine file photo

Young fans check out the action during the 2022 event in Brattleboro.

If You Go

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Feb. 17: Inaugural Night Competition. Gates open at 5 p.m., Opening Ceremonies at 6:45 p.m., Target Jump Competition at 7 p.m.

Feb. 18: Pepsi Challenge & US Cup. Gates open at 10 a.m., Opening Ceremonies at 11:15 a.m., competition begins at noon, awards ceremony following event at the base of Harris Hill.

Feb. 19: Fred Harris Memorial Tournament. Cross-country ski race at Marlboro Nordic Center at 9 a.m., Harris Hill gates open at 10 a.m., Opening Ceremonies at 11:15 a.m., competition begins at noon, awards following event at the base of Harris Hill.

Tickets: \$20 for adults, \$15 for ages 6-12 (buy online at brownpapertickets.com/event/5624694).



Vermont Country Magazine file photo

Despite temperatures in the 20s and snow squalls throughout the day, a record crowd showed up for the 100th anniversary celebration last February.

Fresh Vermont, all year-round

Allen Brothers a source of pies, produce and community



Kristopher Radder — Vermont Country Magazine

Denny Searles pushes the apples through a washer before they go through the grinder as they make fresh apple cider in 2018.

By Bob Audette

Vermont Country Magazine

WESTMINSTER — At just before 4 a.m. each day, three people arrive at Allen Brothers on Route 5 to get the pie ovens warmed up in preparation for the day's business.

"We have to cook enough to have

them on a shelf for the people that say 'Oh, Allen Brothers has pies every day. Let's go get one,'" said Stacey Allen, who co-owns Allen Brothers with her husband, Tim Allen.

In addition to the dozens and dozens of fruit pies they bake everyday, the cooks are also making bread

from scratch and making sure there are plenty of cider doughnuts ready for when the farm store's doors open at 6 a.m.

"A little after 6 a.m., all of our booths are filled with all of the local people that come and have their coffee and doughnuts and breakfast," said Stacey.

*Kristopher Radder —
Vermont Country Magazine*

This page, clockwise from top left:

Tom Samaniego, of Alyson's Orchard, fills half-gallons of cider with help from Allen Brothers to press apples.

Russell Allen, one of the four brothers who founded Allen Brothers in Westminster, shows the inside of some apple flowers in 2021, to see if there will be a crop that year.

Stacy and Tim Allen, owners of Allen Brothers in Westminster.

Yanniel Gale, a worker from Jamaica, helps pick pumpkins at Allen Brothers Farms in 2015.

Workers at Allen Brothers in Westminster press apples for fresh apple cider in 2018.



As the morning turns into lunch-time, people filter through, grabbing a sandwich or one of the prepared specials, like stromboli, mac and cheese, fried chicken or pizza.

Others might grab some prepared food, like a shepherd's pie, from the frozen food section.

Allen Brothers Farmstand was established in the early 1950s by Tim's father and three uncles. In the early 1980s, Tim took over the business and began to expand it beyond its origins as a farm stand.

"Within a short period of time, Tim realized that in order to be a year-round, profitable business, he needed to expand," said Stacey. "One of his first ideas was for the bakery and the deli and to put gas pumps in."

Since then, Allen Brothers has become a regular stop for locals needing a quick bite to eat or to pick up some fresh produce, for travelers to Vermont who make a point of pulling off Interstate 91 at Exit 5 to get some maple syrup or fresh-pressed apple cider, and for folks who just need to grab some coffee or use a restroom.

"If you build it, they will come," said Stacey. "That's what happened here."

She said her staff of 48 stays pretty busy throughout the year taking care of customers.

"It never really slows down, except for maybe one week in January," she said.

Allen Brothers farms 20 acres in Westminister and offers much of its produce, pumpkins and apples at the farm stand on Route 5. Some of the produce ends up in local markets as well.

In the winter, Allen Brothers grows winter greens — arugula, baby spinach and baby kale, and a mesclun mix — in its greenhouses.

"Tim's really a farmer at heart," said Stacey. "Growing plants and produce is really his passion."

In the garden center, Allen Brothers offers hanging baskets, annuals and perennials, and in the late fall, Christmas trees and holiday wreaths.

"We strive to offer the best quality and make it an experience where you will want to come back again and again," she said.



Kristopher Radder — Vermont Country Magazine

Stacey Allen, an owner of Allen Brothers in Westminister, stands near the newly installed gas pumps in November 2020.



Kristopher Radder — Vermont Country Magazine

Allen Brothers in Westminister.

Vermont Country
Homes
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Photo courtesy of Brattleboro Area Realty

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MLS #4874416



More information:



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MLS #4920249



More information:



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CRS, CBR, GRI
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51 Overhills Road, Putney, VT

\$2,500,000 • 6 bedrooms, 5 baths, 4952 sq. ft. • MLS # 4936087



It's easy to romanticize farm life when you arrive at Hill & Dale Farms, this premier location at the base of Putney Mt. & Holland Hill Rd., 51 Over Hills is a rare find. In the same family for nearly 100 years, it's time for this legacy property to transition to new stewardship. This relatively untouched late 18th century gem, with pleasing proportions, period details, including 6 fireplaces, raised paneled interior shutters, all combine to create an opportunity to restore this exceptional home back to its original splendor. Encompassing 318 +/- ac. of rolling fields, woodlands, streams, old apple orchard, sweeping long range views, breathtaking beauty & privacy, along with numerous barns of varying sizes and styles for all your future endeavors. This property is being offered "as is". Nearby attractions include Putney Mountain Trails, Green Mountain Orchard, Next Stage Music Venue, Food Coop, Library, numerous schools both public & private as well as Landmark College. Easy access to I-91.

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4 Bedroom, 2 Full Bath Cape on 2.2 acres. This 2000 sq ft home has a nice floor plan with an open kitchen and dining area comprising half of the main floor and boasting hardwood floors, a wood-burning fireplace, and flat land with mature perennials and gardens. **\$249,000**

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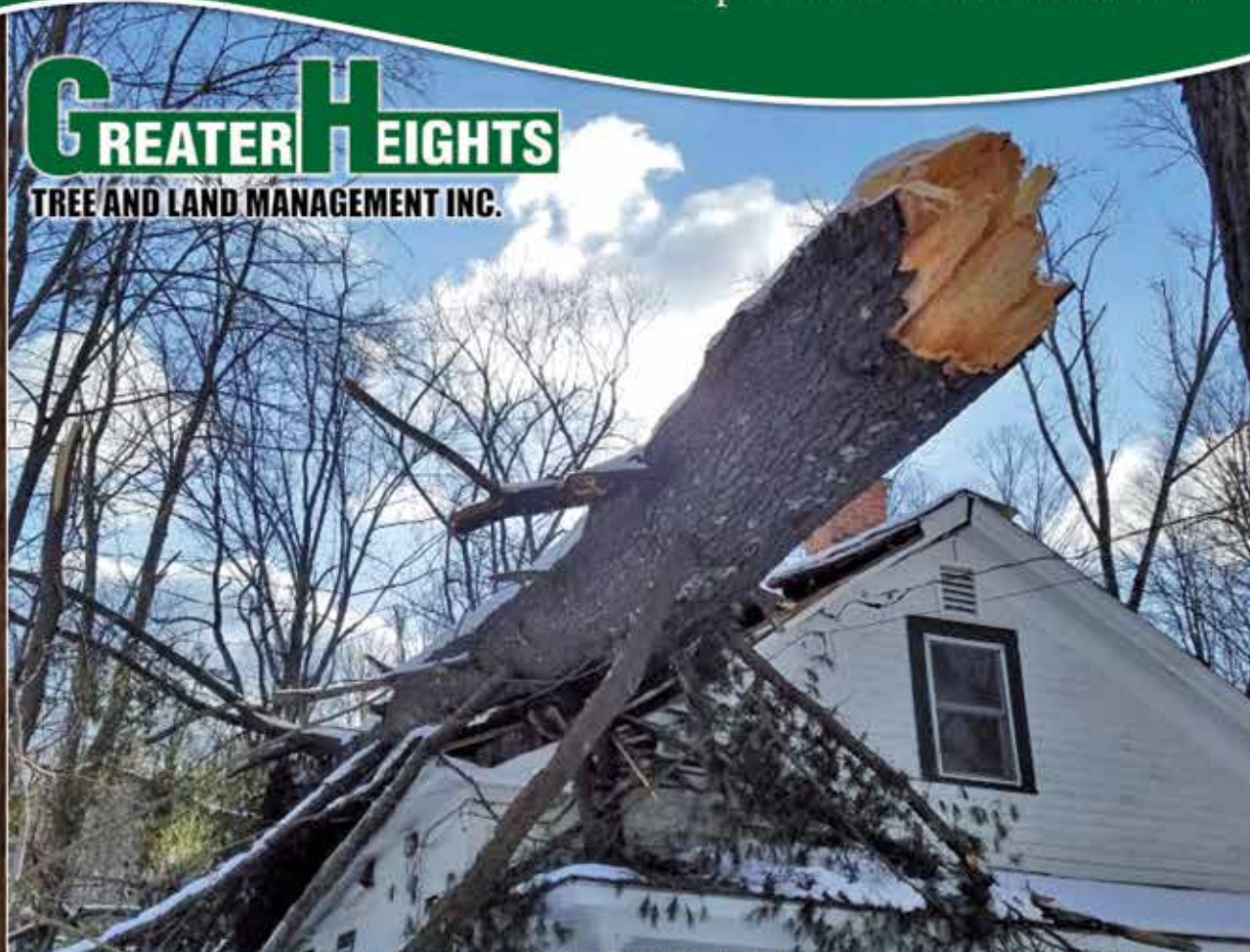
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Three-hour power

Long films to watch in the comfort of your home

By Dan Tebo

Vermont Country correspondent

It was always a big ask: expecting people to leave the comfort of their homes to spend three entire hours sitting shoulder to shoulder with hundreds of strangers in a dark theater. Yet there was always an unspoken contract that stipulated that the filmmaker wouldn't ask us for such a significant sacrifice unless they had something really important to show. Over the last century, films that broke the 180-minute mark were almost exclusively sprawling historical dramas or weighty biopics.

Of course, streaming services have completely rewritten the rules. The upside is that artists now have platforms where they can let their stories unfold over multiple episodes. The effect of this paradigm shift is that the remaining few blockbusters that see a theatrical release always flirt with a three-hour running time, often in the name of sheer bombast. Whether your jam is Marvel or Malcolm X, I maintain that an uninterrupted viewing experience is good for the soul. So black out the windows, mute the devices, and divert your attention to these 10 butt-numbing narratives for the next three to 13 hours.

"Barry Lyndon" (187 minutes): Of the 13 feature-length films Stanley Kubrick made in his lifetime, this Thackeray adaptation is his least celebrated work, outside of the cinephiles who still gush about the flick's groundbreaking candlelight photography. It's a pity because "Barry Lyndon" is probably the late legend's breeziest and most easily digestible film. That candlelight photography is totally bomb too.

"Magnolia" (188 minutes): Paul Thomas Anderson, a filmmaker who has rarely stood accused of brevity, was still in his emo 20s when he unfurled this gleefully over-the-top melodrama. Long simmering familial tensions reach a furious boil. The cast inexplicably sings an entire Aimee Mann song. Actual frogs rain from the heavens. Bold.

"The Green Mile" (189 minutes): In this adaptation of a Stephen King serial novel, John Coffey, a falsely convicted prisoner with scarcely explained supernatural powers, spends his death row days resurrecting jailhouse mice and healing warden Tom Hanks' UTI, which is awesome. Coffey also burdens Hanks with the unsolicited gift of eternal life and is subsequently executed, which is less awesome.

"Titanic" (195 minutes): Prior to its release, people assumed that this three-hour drama with a then-record high price tag and a baked-in conclusion (spoiler alert: the ship sinks) would be a box office disaster of,

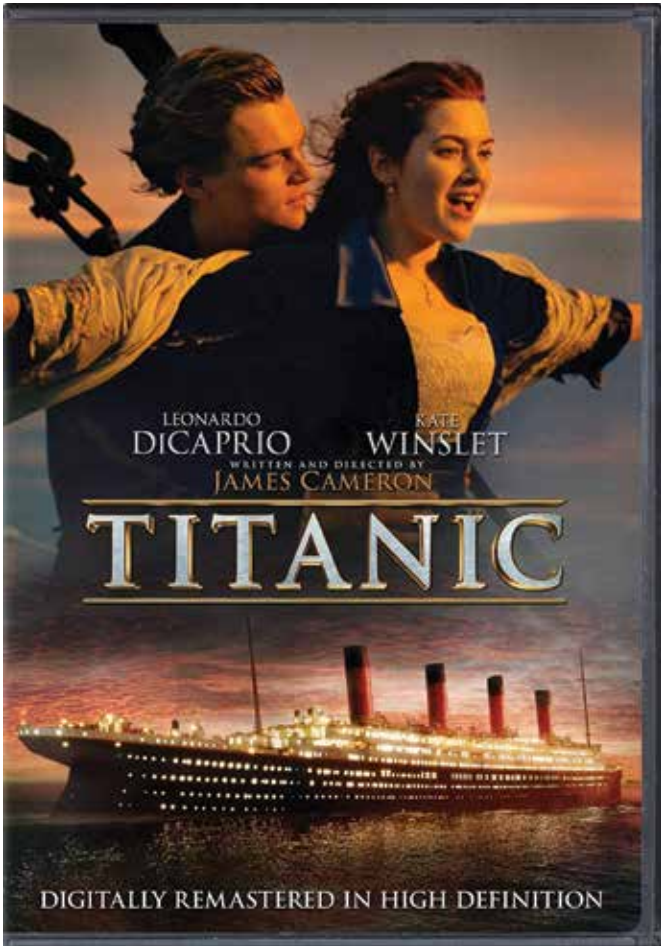
erm, titanic proportions. People assumed incorrectly. It's like "Das Boot" but with a love story and 100 percent less Nazis.

"JFK" (205 minutes): Oliver Stone's unhinged fever dream is an extraordinary piece of filmmaking and also (possibly ... definitely) complete hogwash. Come for the blizzard of paranoid conspiracy theories. Stay for the bravura performances from a murderer's row of acting legends and also Kevin Costner.

"Das Boot" (209 minutes): This unbearably claustrophobic flick about a doomed German U boat is still fathoms ahead of most contemporary CGI-laden blockbusters. It's like "Titanic" but with zero female characters and 100 percent more Nazis.

"The Irishman" (209 minutes): Although Martin Scorsese got Netflix to foot the bill for this uncharacter-



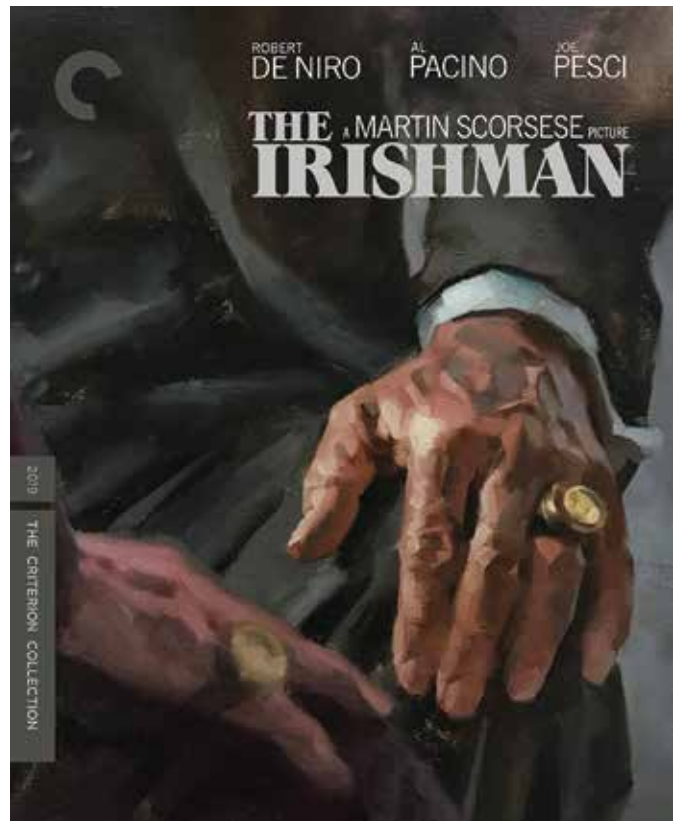


istically dour true-ish crime drama, he insisted on a theatrical rollout, reasoning that this 3.5-hour marathon would be impossible to digest in one sitting with home-based distractions. It's like "Goodfellas," minus the laughs and the boss Stones tunes.

"Until the End of the World" (287 minutes): Those who found Wim Wenders' much-maligned sci-fi noir too confusing will be delighted to hear that the 2019 five-hour director's cut is even more impenetrable. My advice: Skip the film and head straight for the seminal U2 track of the same name, which runs a tidy four and a half minutes.

"The Godfather Saga" (423 minutes): There are few things that are left to be said about "The Godfather" that we haven't heard from countless think pieces, books and at least one ghastly miniseries ("The Offer" ... I'm looking your way). Those arriving late to the Corleone epic would be advised to dive right into the mammoth "Saga," which tells the tale in chronological order, beginning with the turn of the century scenes from "Part II." The existence of "The Godfather III" should continue to be ignored at all costs.

"Lord of the Rings" trilogy (682 minutes): For my money, there's no better elixir for your COVID flu or gloomy snowed-in Sunday than a screening of Peter Jackson's "Lord of the Rings" trilogy. Watching the extended cuts of all three films in a row could put you at risk for bed sores. Make sure to stretch between films.





Stratton Mountain Resort photo

One new way to take in the evening at Stratton is at Mulligan's new spacious outdoor deck, The Drift. It touts Vermont craft beer, signature cocktails, DJ sets and a way to relax from invigorating mountain action. Mulligan's has been Stratton's anchor restaurant to winter sports enthusiasts since it first came to the village in 1988. After a successful first season with the introduction of The Drift to Stratton guests, the stylish new gathering space offers another season of a phenomenal upscale apres ski experience.

Ride, tube or drift: *Customize your Vermont outdoor adventure*

Stratton Mountain's most popular winter activities

**By Makayla-Courtney
McGeeney**

Vermont Country correspondent

If being outside this winter is on your to-do list, look no further than the tallest summit in Southern Vermont.

Stratton Mountain fuels

the appetite for outdoor excursions for all types of adventurers, offering much more than just powdery slopes and apres.

As you enter Stratton Village on any given evening after ski instruction or a fat bike ride through the forest, countless fire pits illuminate

the cobblestone courtyard with their ample warmth. You can feel it in the winter air: Myriad indoor and outdoor opportunities await ...

Classes

This year, Stratton Mountain instructors are seeing an enormous increase in

learn-to-ski and snowboard students. Whether it's a 4- or 40-year-old's first time in boots or someone who is relearning the sport on all new equipment after years away from the slopes, Stratton offers top-notch lesson programs catered to every skier or rider.

Lessons start as young as age 2 in a private setting or with others starting at age 4 to maximize fun and improve confidence on the slopes.

“Over the last three years, we’ve seen double-digit increases in learning-to-ski and learning-to-ride classes. Such a positive sign for our sports,” said Myra Foster, senior manager of marketing and communications at Stratton. “It ranges from people who are in their 40s or 50s to kids and families getting started together. It’s important not to just try it once, because it takes a few times to build a love for the sport.”

Stratton’s Mountain Sports School offers 15 different lessons to target all ages and skill levels. New skiers and riders start on the cub carpet in the learning area of the mountain before getting the full experience of a lift.

There’s also more than one way to reach the summit. Foster said there’s also

been a growing interest in uphill travel — such as with snowshoes or skis with skins — a wonderful way to experience the beauty and views of Stratton and the surrounding Green Mountains. An uphill travel pass is free but required when hiking designated routes.

“It’s a way to get out and earn your turns,” she said.

“One of the most popular times to hike is on New Year’s Day, because it’s the ultimate first tracks experience.”

‘Float on snow’

For those who don’t want the mountain biking season to end, Stratton offers fat bike rentals at the Nordic Center, which features over 10 kilometers of trails.

With thick tires that allow you to travel on top of the snow, fat bikers can roll right by cross-country skiers and snowshoers.

“It’s like floating,” Foster described. “It’s a unique experience and growing in popularity along with all the ways to be outside and loving winter.”

Cross-country skiing, snowshoeing and fat biking are all activities at the Nordic Center, with rentals available for each. Riders must be 13 or older to take part in these activities.

Cyclists introduced the fat bike in the mid-1980s with the goal of riding on sand and snow without wiping out or wallowing. In 2012, the Grand Targhee Resort became the first ski area in the country to offer groomed Nordic trails to fat bikers. Since then, a growing number of mountains and parks throughout the country have introduced groomed trails for fat biking.



Stratton Mountain Resort photo

All ages can learning skiing and riding at Stratton Mountain Resort.



Stratton Village has plenty of places to catch your breath, inside and out.

Stratton Mountain Resort photo



Stratton Mountain Resort photo

Ice skating at the resort is another fun way to get some outdoor exercise and fresh air at Stratton.



Stratton Mountain Resort photo

For those who don't want the mountain biking season to end, Stratton offers fat bike rentals at the Nordic Center, which features over 10 kilometers of trails. With thick tires that allow you to travel on top of the snow, fat bikers can roll right by cross-country skiers and snowshoers.



Luke Robins photo for Stratton Mountain Resort

A little adventure seeker enjoys tubing at Stratton Mountain Resort in Vermont.

Tube park

Another option to feel weightless and free in the winter is by gliding down trails in the Coca-Cola Tube Park — now with more lanes to meet demand. The resort added two more lanes this year after selling out of available times over the last two seasons.

“It’s really fun. It puts a smile on your face,” Foster said. “It’s nice to be able to offer this to more people with more lanes, more days and times this season.”

The park features lift-serviced snow tubing with refreshments and a fire pit equipped for high-speed fun during the day or under the lights at night.

Apres

After taking advantage of exploring the mountain by day, there’s always something to round out the night.

One new way to take in the evening is at Mulligan’s new spacious outdoor deck, The Drift. It touts Vermont craft beer, signature cocktails, DJ sets and a way to relax from invigorating mountain action. Mulligan’s has been Stratton’s anchor restaurant to winter sports enthusiasts since it first came to the village in 1988. After a successful first season with the introduction of The Drift to Stratton guests, the stylish new gathering space offers another season of a phenomenal upscale apres ski experience.

For a more romantic setting, the resort offers a feast by way of the Snow Cat groomer. The one-of-a-kind excursion takes dinner reservations to the next level with an unforgettable mountain experience at the Mid-Mountain Lodge, featuring a warm atmosphere and a three-course meal. To end an exceptionally true Southern Vermont winter day, Foster recommends booking the Snow Cat dinner in advance, as it regularly sells out.

Stratton Mountain is open daily through the winter season. Explore all activities, reservations and rentals at stratton.com.

Power that defies explanation

The rise and fall of spiritualism in Vermont

By Lex Lecce

Vermont Country

Spiritualism is a religious movement that was built on two basic beliefs. One, that contact with spirits is possible, and two, that spirits are more advanced than people. Spiritualists believed that there is a life after death, and that life is connected to this one.

The movement was at its peak from the 1840s to the 1920s. The phenomena took over mostly English-speaking countries, and most of its followers were in the middle or upper classes of society.

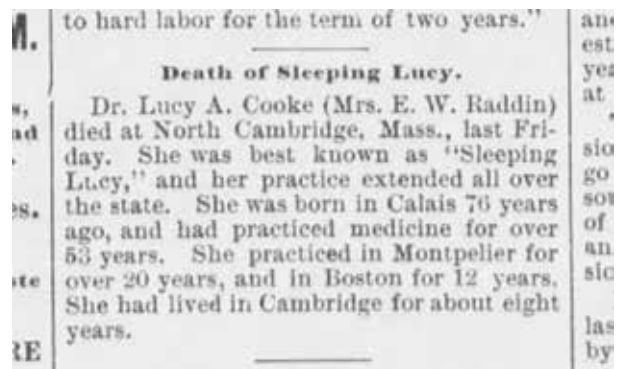
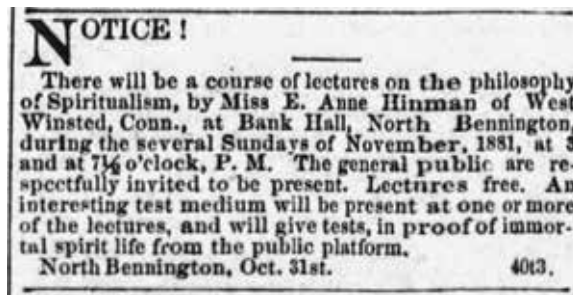
Most people today think of spiritualism as some hokey, failed religion that only impacted a small group of people in the U.S., but the reality is that spiritualism had a following of over 8 million people by the 1900s.

By 1857, the Bennington Banner reported, “in Vermont alone, seventy Churches, built by, or embracing nearly all sects, have been opened for the use of spiritualists.” That’s right: Seventy churches in the great state of Vermont welcomed the practices of spiritualism with open arms, proving the widespread nature of the religion.

That year, the Banner also reported on the existence of “un-believers” in Middlebury who turned away from the “great and noble truths of spiritualism.” The report said a church in the town stood in the way of the religion. By 1871, Middlebury’s Rev. A. F. Bailey would write a column on spiritualism for the local paper.

The Vermont Gazette started picking up on individuals throughout the state that moved the religion forward, including a 10-year-old medium in Bondville. She was the daughter of a Bondville resident, and her ability to speak to the dead put her in the center of the town’s spiritualism fad.

In 1881, the Bennington Banner started sharing information about lectures on spiritualism that were held at Bank Hall in North Bennington. The notice said an “interesting test medium will be present” at the lecture and will give tests to give “proof of immortal spirit life from the public platform.” Eventually, these would become weekly meetings.



A girl nicknamed “Sleeping Lucy” was the first known trance medium in spiritualism, and she came from Vermont.

Newspapers.com

From top: From the Bennington Banner, Nov. 3, 1881.

From the Vermont Phoenix, May 31, 1895.

HOW "SLEEPING LUCY" DOCTORED IN READING

**Woman Physician Was Also Trance
Medium—Widely Known
In State.**

The first woman physician in the town of Reading, and probably one of the first in the state was Mrs. Lucy A. Cooke, wife of Dr. Charles R. Cooke, who for many years kept the tavern at Hammondsville. We are not told a great deal of Dr. Cooke or his activities, we do not hear about his work as a physician, he is better known as the tavern keeper, and as the husband of Lucy Cooke, his better half taking the glory, and he shining with a reflected light.

"Sleeping Lucy."

Mrs. Cooke followed none of the accepted schools of physicians of that time, having a method of her own, which proved to be successful. Her method of diagnosis earned her the sobriquet of "Sleeping Lucy." It was her custom, when consulted by a patient, to go into a trance or deep sleep, and while in that condition, to make her diagnosis, and to prescribe the required remedies. Her utterances were taken down by an assistant, and her trance ended, she prepared the medicine indicated. She was by far the most successful doctor in the town, and her reputation extended beyond the limits of the town, and indeed, even out of the county.

She was not considered a quack by her neighbors, or by any, outside the regular disciples of Aesculpius, who in a body ridiculed her methods. Her medicines consisted simply of barks, roots and herbs, and this alone was enough to antagonize the doctors of the regular schools. This, remember, was in the days when blood-letting, blistering and the administration of the strongest drugs such as mercury, bismuth, antimony and the more powerful vegetable poisons was common and these drugs comprised the doctors' chief stock in trade. It did not tend to soothe the ruffled feelings of the doctors, when a greater part of her patients recovered, and it is remarkable that they did not go to greater lengths to stop her work in the town.

Of course, Vermont also hosted a few spiritualism nay-sayers, determined to prove that spiritualism is a crock of nonsense. Prof. W. W. Dayton would host lectures on the religion and perform a seance — only so he can show how sleight of hand was responsible for the "mystery" of the spirits. The Banner called Dayton the "Prince of Mediums."

A girl nicknamed "Sleeping Lucy" was the first known trance medium in spiritualism, and she came from Vermont.

The story goes — when she was a small child, Lucy got sick and went into a deep sleep. While she was asleep, she spoke in a loud voice and told the doctors the exact recipe for the medicine that ended up curing her.

Officially known as Mrs. Lucy A. Cooke, Sleeping Lucy was from Montpelier, and she became a "mesmeric physician." She was one of the first female physicians in the state. She was so well known that, although her husband was also a doctor, he was only known as Lucy's husband.

The Rutland Herald said, "Mrs. Cooke followed none of the accepted schools of physicians of that time, having a method of her own, which proved to be successful."

The method Lucy used was to fall into a deep sleep or trance after she was asked for medical advice. In that trance, she would utter the medicine that was necessary to cure her patient's ailment and her assistant would write it down.

That same article from the Rutland Herald called her "by far the most successful doctor in the town" and said, "Her power defied explanation."

The Manchester Journal told a story about Lucy in 1874 when a man from the area went to seek Lucy's help. Without knowing much about the man, he claimed that Lucy described his family "as well as [he] could," and she "mentioned every accident that occurred to [him] in [his] lifetime."

Many famous spiritualists were found to be frauds. Fake mediums would levitate tables, expel ectoplasm from their nose and pretend to speak with deceased loved ones for anyone who could afford their divine services. Just like Prof. W. W. Dayton proved long before the decline of spiritualism in the late 1920s, most of it was sleight of hand.

But, not all of them. Lucy was never proven to be a false prophet of spiritualism. Before she died in May of 1895 at the age of 76, Lucy successfully practiced medicine for 53 years, using her non-scientific method.

Newspapers.com

From the Vermont Journal, Aug. 14, 1925.

Where even non-anglers get *hooked*

Local becomes a tourist for a day with a visit to the American Museum of Fly Fishing

By Gordon Dossett

Manchester Journal

Editor's note: This column, part of an occasional series, previously ran in the Manchester Journal.

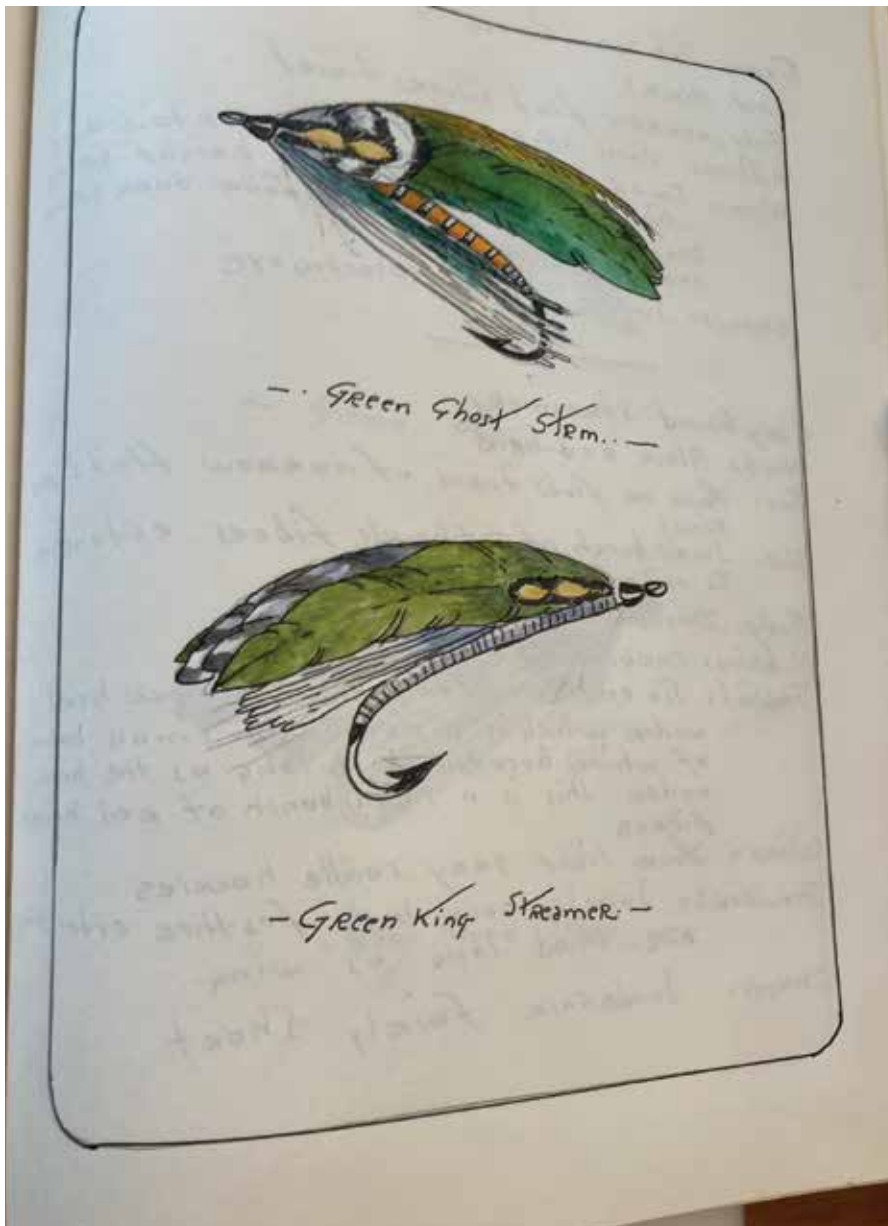
MANCHESTER CENTER — Do we locals ever act as tourists at home? A tourist dives into some of the best spots of a place, eager to experience what it has to offer. Too often, we locals — OK, I'll speak for myself — too often I settle into a routine and skip the places tourists travel hours to seek out. I decided to be a tourist in the Northshire, and see what I was missing.

First stop: The American Museum of Fly Fishing in Manchester Center. By chance, this turns out to be an excellent moment to visit the museum since it has just finished rebranding. Maybe the word “rebranding” needs rebranding, but really at heart it's an exercise in identity. Who are we? What have we been and how can we be better going forward? Organizations (and individuals?) who fail to stop and take stock risk becoming the next Sears, Atari or Zenith.

We can see the issue of identity in stark relief if we go back to the original artwork used by the museum in the late 1960s and early 1970s: Singular white man, old-fashioned get-up, old school rod and reel —

Gordon Dossett — Manchester Journal

One of the daily sketches of Casimir Naleway.



nostalgia for white men, perhaps, but not exactly an embrace of the sport going forward. This logo was discarded long ago.

The recent rebranding effort took about a year, Executive Director Sarah Foster told me, with those involved concentrating first on core values and attributes (water, fish, fly, as well as the preservation of fly fishing history and artifacts, and an appeal to a wide audience). The group then moved on to how those aspects could best be illustrated.

She showed me several competing examples for the logo. The group liked the shield, which implied protection. Trustee Adam Trisk, in his blog about the rebranding, notes the museum sought a vibrant color palette, suggesting waters.

Leaders emphasized the acronym. Just as Kentucky Fried Chicken morphed into KFC 30 years ago, the American Museum of Fly Fishing, perhaps more tradition-bound, just now sought out the snappier AMFF (11 syllables down to four), an acronym not as graceful as a fly line floating through the air. Well, maybe — if you pause: AM ... FF. But never mind. The acronym was widely used by members, according to Foster, so emphasizing it seemed right.

But let's get to the museum itself, shall we? While the museum is close to the Orvis Flagship Store and has its support, it is a stand-alone entity, not an auxiliary operation of Orvis. At the museum, I was greeted by Bob Goodfellow, a hale, well-met fellow and a former arts director at National Geographic magazine. His dog, Emme, is also part of the welcoming team, sometimes pacing back and forth outside, even in snow. Bob gave me the general layout: collection of fishing-related art, Joan and Lee Wulff exhibit, library upstairs. The

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The museum's front steps, sometimes home to Bob Goodfellow's dog.





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Lee and Joan Wulff, pictured at their fishing school, part of the exhibit at the museum.

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Manchester Journal**

Kirsti Scutt Edwards, collections manager, is searching for the background of Casimir Naleway.



space is modern, fresh and airy — in short, welcoming.

Before I get into the exhibits and other aspects of the museum, let me admit something: I've gone fly fishing maybe three times in my life, the last time 20 some years ago, and the most I caught was low-hanging foliage. Although I marvel that a person can tie a fly smaller than a kernel of popcorn, my typical day is not devoted to thinking of, much less participating in, fly fishing.

I'm sure fanatics, who know their wet flies from nymphs and dry flies, will approach the museum differently than me, a fishing bumbler.

Go into the art collection. Right off, you'll see a painting by Edward Lampson Henry from 1873 titled "Fishing by the Stream," a bucolic

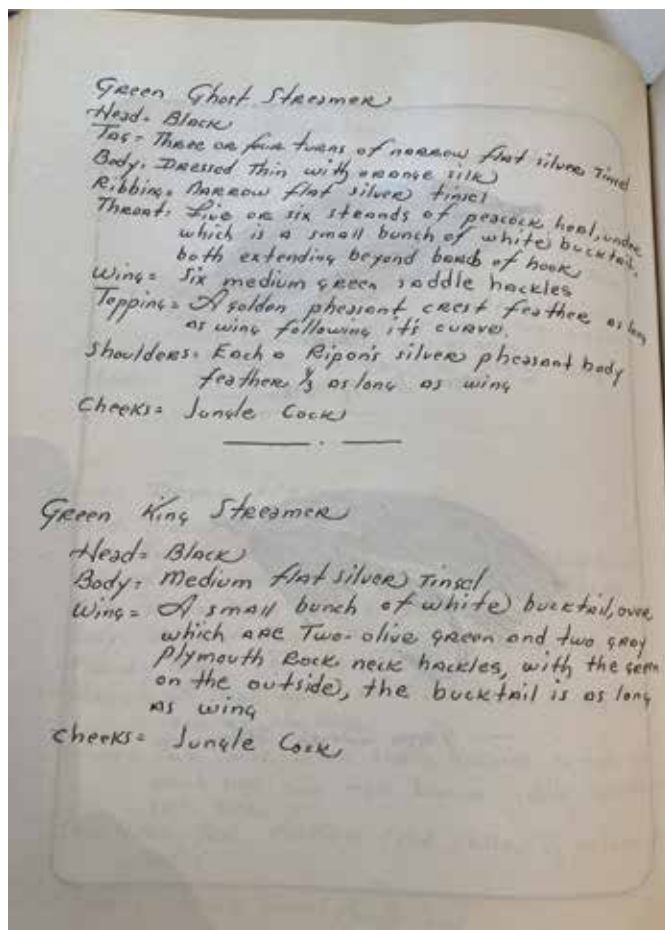
scene of some well-dressed people, dog nearby. Look closer, and you'll see that the inept, citified man has snagged his dog, not a fish — causing passersby to glance over. The painting suggests a differing perspective on humor in 1873; most of us today wouldn't find piercing a dog with a hook a real knee-slapper. But as the placard suggests, we see the tensions of people in those days striving — and failing — at getting back to a more "natural" state.

This tension also emerges in Robert Robinson's painting "Fly Fishing" (1933), depicting a mechanic who, in the process of towing a car (background) has taken a moment to park his tow truck and cast a line into the stream, to the consternation of a policeman in the background. As the placard states, "At the height of the Great Depression, the image of a

mechanic longing to reconnect with the natural world would have resonated with viewers."

Women are depicted in the collection, albeit in context of their times. One painting, "Tossing Trout" (1949), is by James Montgomery Flagg, the artist who drew Uncle Sam proclaiming, "I Want You for U.S. Army." This painting pictures a smiling, kerchiefed woman jauntily flipping a fish in a frying pan (fish flying rather than fly fishing). The painting reinforces sexist tropes of the time: She's doing the cooking, she's happy about it, and she even has her lipstick on out in the woods.

There are other paintings of sylvan scenes: fishing man and stream painted in soothing greens and blues. I found myself drawn not just to the fishing depicted, but what the paint-



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A sample entry, no cross-outs, of Casimir Naleway.



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"Tossing Trout" by James Montgomery Flagg of a woman frying fish.



Bob Goodfellow points out details in the Joan and Lee Wulff Exhibit.

Gordon Dossett — Manchester Journal

ings suggested about people — the artist and the subjects.

The next room is devoted to Joan and Lee Wulff, “basically royalty,” as Bob says. Google Joan and Lee Wulff and up will pop 608,000 results. They get just an inadequate paragraph here. The Wulffs personified brilliance

in fishing. A short film running on a loop depicts Lee Wulff pulling in three fish on one cast. (Ask Bob how the hell he did it.)

Lee invented the fly fishing vest and the concept of catch and release. An exhibit shows tiny flies that Lee tied, calling for dexterity not found

in mere mortals. In 1991, Lee sadly died of a heart attack at 86 — while flying his plane. Joan lives on, spry at 96, in New York’s upper Beavercill Valley, still teaching fly fishing. She has taught so many for so long, that one observer points out there is a little Joan Wulff in the casts of thousands of people in streams around



THE AMERICAN MUSEUM OF FLY FISHING

Provided image

Artwork used in the late 1960s and early 1970s, at the museum's beginnings.



Provided image

Here is the new logo, adopted in October, reflecting emphasis on inclusivity and the future.

If You Go

American Museum of Fly Fishing

4104 Main St., Manchester Center, VT 05254

802-362-3300

amff.org

Open Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. (winter hours); \$5 for adults; \$3 for kids

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the world. In the film loop, she's depicted casually reeling in a fish, making a challenging move seem effortless. She still holds records for distance — made when she entered competitions against only men — and accuracy in casting. One museum professional described Joan this way: "She's a badass."

To understand what was on display at the museum, I talked to Kirsti Scutt Edwards, collections manager. (Full disclosure: Kirsti is a neighbor and friend.) As she showed me the many boxes and shelves holding material that had come in over the years, I gained a sense of the huge scope of her work. For example, the museum houses hundreds of books related to fishing, the oldest of which goes back to 1597.

She showed me fascinating sketchbooks by Casimir Naleway, which had come in as part of a large collection. Naleway filled sketchbooks, usually one sketch a day, sometimes with detailed explanations. These sketches of flies are minutely detailed — sometimes in black and white, sometimes in color, and the explanations are precisely

expressed with not one word crossed out in hundreds of pages. The entries suggest a highly organized and disciplined mind, a person who took great satisfaction in detailing flies for the act itself, with no thought of publication. But the museum knows little about him. He is thought to have worked in the steel mills of Chicago, and kept notebooks from the 1940s to 1970s. (So: challenge to readers — just who is Casimir Naleway? My Google search uncovered a Casimir Casey Naleway (maybe?), but nothing further. Note: The work of the mysterious Mr. Naleway is not now on display, but who knows about the future?)

Kirsti's days are not all spent in search of mysterious illustrators. Only 5 to 10 percent of the collection, she estimates, is on display. The museum constantly receives donated private collections, which she catalogs so that future museum workers can find items and consider them for exhibitions. She's also part of the team that determines which artifacts become part of an exhibit, the Joan and Lee Wulff Exhibition being an excellent recent example. Sometimes a piece is too large and

simply doesn't fit in well with the other pieces being displayed. For that particular exhibit, the museum had many more artifacts than could go on exhibit.

So here are some reflections. Do you need to know or even care much about fly fishing to appreciate this museum? Surprisingly, no: I was drawn not so much to the intricacies of flies and fishing techniques. I'm sure that anglers would find displays fascinating on another level, one that I couldn't appreciate. I was drawn more to the people passionate about the sport. There is a beauty to lives lived as the Wulffs did, immersed and excelling in what to them was a calling. Further, the displayed art is beautiful in itself and gives insight into history.

My recommendation: Be a tourist. Go to the museum when it opens, maybe on a Thursday. Pet the friendly dog at the door. Talk to Bob. (He has a big name tag saying Bob, and he could fill in as Santa in a pinch.) Get a tour, if he isn't busy. And then treat yourself to lunch somewhere and ponder the wonders you've seen.

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