

Get Packing—
It's Picnic Time!

Exploring Champlain
by Houseboat

Lush Summer
Garden Escapes

YANKEE

Our Vermont

S U M M E R 2 0 2 1

*Celebrating the people, places, and traditions
that make the Green Mountain State so original*

Finally Summer

On the wall in my home office is a photo of my son Josh, age 5 or 6, paddling in a small kayak. We were spending a few days at Basin Harbor Club in Vergennes, a revered summer resort that has welcomed guests since 1886. Every time I look at that picture of Josh, the paddle so big in his hands, I smile—one moment preserved from a summer past.

For me, these warm months are about those moments that flow from one summer to the next, notes that linger like a favorite song. The smell of newly mown lawn. The walk through the pick-your-own berry field. Playing catch in the yard with my two sons, the simple act of catching and then tossing the ball in return bringing



back the time when once hours passed like this. I can measure my boys' years by these summer moments, as if they are marks on one of those growth charts that families pencil onto a wall.

Just before you reach downtown Brattleboro, there is a small marina beside the Connecticut River, tucked away from the main road. We would rent two canoes—one for the boys, one for the grownups—and on the slow, wide river we'd paddle an hour or so, then pull up by a clearing, where I'd take out the

cooler. And in a life that sometimes moved too fast, we'd just be still, watching other small boats glide past.

Every summer, once the Little League season ended, we'd pack up our bikes and spend a day riding on the path that winds along the Lake Champlain shoreline in Burlington. It's freeing for a child to be told, "Stay on the path, stay right, meet you at the end." The boys would pedal off, brother behind brother. When we rode back, it would be late morning and the farmers' market would beckon with the promise of exploring a small village of treats. If there is a better small city anywhere to turn children loose and watch them explore, whether by bike or on foot, I have not yet discovered it.

I figure we all have our own special moments to remember, as if they were placed in an album. Today as I write this, I see forsythia in bloom and I feel the coming of a summer that carries with it the exuberance of new life.

Inside, you will find moments that bring a Vermont summer into your life, no matter where you live. Whether you join a houseboat journey along New England's great lake, or breathe the scent of fresh-cut hay, or lean back at a classic drive-in theater, this is the promise of summer in Vermont, a promise that is always kept, and never forgotten.

Mel Allen

Mel Allen
editor@yankeemagazine.com

YANKEE

1121 Main St., P.O. Box 520, Dublin, NH 03444
603-563-8111; newengland.com

This special edition was produced by Yankee Publishing Inc. for The Vermont Country Store. Select stories and photographs are excerpted from articles previously published by Yankee.

Vol. 4 No. 2

Copyright 2021 by Yankee Publishing Inc.; all rights reserved.

PUBLISHER
Brook Holmberg

MARKETING DIRECTOR
Kate Hathaway Weeks

EDITOR
Mel Allen

ART DIRECTOR
Katharine Van Itallie

MANAGING EDITOR
Jenn Johnson

SENIOR FEATURES EDITOR
Ian Aldrich

SENIOR FOOD EDITOR
Amy Traverso

ASSOCIATE EDITOR
Joe Bills

PHOTO EDITOR
Heather Marcus

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS
*Ben Hewitt
Julia Shipley
W.D. Wetherell*

CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHERS
*Corey Hendrickson,
Penny Hewitt, Keller + Keller,
Little Outdoor Giants*

*On the cover: Sunrise over
Ledge Haven Farm in Orwell, Vermont.
Photo by Caleb Kenna*

Contents



Find fresh gardening ideas or just soak up nature's beauty amid the flowers of Hildene, the Lincoln family home in Manchester. Story, p. 22

Changing Seasons

- 4** **Starry Nights**
Summer finds the allure of an old-school drive-in theater shining bright as ever.

Local Flavor

- 5** **A Movable Feast**
Reimagined ham-and-cheese, ginger-spiced limeade, and other fresh recipes will have you picnicking in style. **Plus:** From mountains to meadows, these picnic destinations hit the spot.
- 13** **Mighty Food Farm**
We visit with an organic vegetable grower in Shaftsbury for our latest Q&A with small producers who are bringing the bounty of Vermont to our tables.
- 15** **Good as Gold**
The head of the Vermont Beekeepers Association takes a break from his hives to explain why there's never been a better time to seek out local honey.

Destinations

- 17** **Life on the Big Lake**
Spending a week on a houseboat on Lake Champlain offers a vision of the ultimate summer escape.

- 22** **Flower Power**
From historic estates to bustling garden centers, here's where green thumbs can go to discover inspiration all season long.

- 26** **Happy Trails**
Old rail lines are finding new life as some of the Green Mountain State's best bike paths.

Vermont Life

- 28** **Lessons from the Hayfield**
Long days spent baling hay together inspire a neighborly trust, respect, and gratitude that linger long after season's end.
- 31** **Hitting the Heights**
A Vermont steeplejack shares a look at his life at the top.
- 33** **When the Storm Came**
Ten years after Tropical Storm Irene, the story of one small town reminds us what was lost—and what was found.

One Last Thing

- 37** **Team Spirit**
The big-hearted story behind Vermont's Little Fenway.

A special deal for customers of
The Vermont Country Store
One year of *Yankee Magazine* for Only \$19.97
Subscribe now at vermontcountrystore.com/YANKEE

SAVE 52% off cover price

Starry Nights

The allure of an old-school drive-in theater shines bright as ever.

The heyday of the suburban drive-in movie is long past, and in my opinion it's no big loss: What the car giveth, the car taketh away. And yet there was another kind of drive-in that was much more innocent and endearing. For lack of a better term, let's call them cowfield drive-ins. With their rural origin, they were apt to remain charmingly pastoral—a reminder of a time when a film coming to a small New England town was a big summer event, the viewing of it a truly communal experience.

Miraculously, one of these rural drive-ins still exists: the Fairlee Drive-In in Fairlee, Vermont. Run with loving fidelity to its 1950s roots, it's a totally unself-conscious survivor of a bygone era. There are no frills here, never have been—just lots of old-school appeal. The distinct feature of this drive-in has always been the adjacent Fairlee Motel, where guests can see the evening's entertainment through the picture windows of their rooms.

Now the Fairlee Drive-In, of course, does suffer from that most dreaded of all contemporary qualities: inconvenience. You have to wait until dark to watch the movie, and it can't be fast-forwarded or replayed. The screen seems small in this day and age; the ground can be wet and rough after a rain; early in the summer mosquitoes can be a problem; and crickets can be more involved in the soundtrack than purists might want. Fog, too. Hard by the Connecticut River, on damp nights the late show can seem a bit steamy and blurred.

But for many, all this only adds to its charm. The Fairlee Drive-In has a large following of devoted fans, most of whom, I suspect, go for the atmosphere even more than the films. I remember one night when the fog was so bad that the screen became invisible and

refunds were cheerfully granted. I remember another time when, during an already scary film, a hawk or owl crossed the screen, its huge and exaggerated silhouette causing someone in the next car to scream.

Back in the early 1980s, one of Robin Williams's less memorable films, *The Survivors*, was shot partly in Fairlee, with many local residents cast as extras. When the film was released, the Upper Valley premiere was at the drive-in, and all the extras showed up with their families in tow—and there were many delighted toots of horns as, car by car, we recognized ourselves up there on the screen.

And one last virtue of the drive-in theater: Was a better, more infallible soporific ever invented? The coziness of the family car, the cool yet comfortable night air, the distant play of images on a screen that no one is forcing you to watch, the pleasant drone of voices hung there on the window. It's only the most stubbornly awake who are proof against these. As the last feature ends, the cars nod and bump their way back out past the ticket booth toward Route 5, sleepy themselves, the headlights winking in the mist, as if it's all they can do—a good night behind them—not to shut. —W.D. Wetherell



A Movable Feast

From a reimagined ham-and-cheese to a ginger-spiced limeade, these fresh recipes will have you picnicking in style.



Garlicky Cheese-Crusted Corn

Inspired by elote—Mexican grilled corn—this delicious recipe showcases cobs with a thin film of mayonnaise and a sprinkle of cheese. Instead of grilling, you broil the corn in the oven so that the cheese browns but doesn't fall off.

6 ears corn, husks and silk removed
1 cup grated Parmesan cheese
½ cup mayonnaise
1 large garlic clove, minced
3 tablespoons finely chopped cilantro or basil
½ teaspoon kosher or sea salt

Turn your broiler on high and set an oven rack to the second-to-highest position.

Cut or break each ear of corn into two pieces. Set aside. Pour the cheese into a shallow bowl. Line a baking sheet with aluminum foil.

In a food processor, blender, or mortar and pestle, combine the mayonnaise and garlic until evenly blended. Add the herbs and salt and blend again. Using a pastry brush, coat each piece of corn with a layer of the mayonnaise mixture; then roll each piece in the cheese and set it on the lined baking sheet.

Transfer the baking sheet to the oven. Broil the corn until nicely browned on one side, 2 to 3 minutes. Carefully turn the corn about a third of the way and cook an additional 2 minutes; repeat once more. Serve hot or at room temperature. To pack for a picnic, cool the corn; then wrap pieces individually in parchment paper or foil. *Yields 6 to 8 servings.*

Watermelon Salad with Mint & Feta

This salad is refreshing, sweet, salty, herbal, and tangy—a great antidote to a hot summer day.

6–7 cups cubed watermelon (1-inch chunks, from an 8- or 9-pound melon)

1 seedless (English) cucumber, peeled or unpeeled, cut into ½-inch pieces

¼ cup chopped fresh mint leaves

2 tablespoons chopped fresh basil leaves

1 teaspoon kosher or sea salt

¼ cup freshly squeezed lime juice

¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper (optional)

5 ounces fresh feta cheese, crumbled

In a large bowl, gently toss the watermelon with the cucumber, mint, basil, and salt. Sprinkle with lime juice and cayenne, if you're using it, and toss again. Just before serving, top with feta. *Yields 8 servings.*



Local Flavor



Ham-and-Cheese Stuffed Bread

This picnic entrée tastes like a particularly delicious ham-and-cheese sandwich and is fun to eat, with everything neatly tucked into a package.

1 package (1 pound) prepared pizza dough, at room temperature

All-purpose flour (for work surface)

3 large eggs

5 ounces shredded Vermont cheddar and/or Monterey Jack cheese

4 ounces good-quality sliced ham, cut into ½-inch pieces

4 scallions, sliced crosswise into ½-inch pieces

¼ cup finely chopped fresh basil leaves

¼ teaspoon kosher or sea salt

¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

Garnish: 1 scallion, halved lengthwise

Set one oven rack to the lowest position; set the second rack a couple of levels above. Fill a pie plate or other shallow pan halfway with water and set it on the oven's upper shelf (to create steam and let the bread rise better). Preheat the oven to 400°. Line a baking sheet with aluminum foil and set aside.

Press the dough out on a lightly floured surface to form a rectangle about 10 inches wide and 12 inches long. Cover with a clean dish towel and set aside.

In a medium-size bowl, whisk the eggs until blended; then add the cheese, ham, scallions, basil, salt, and pepper, and stir to combine.

Pour the egg mixture down the center of the dough, leaving a 1-inch border around the edges (save the small amount of egg left in the bowl for later). Form a loaf by first folding the shorter edges up an inch or so over the filling (as you would with a

burrito); then fold the long sides up so that they meet in the center; now pinch them together. Be sure to seal the dough well so that the filling stays inside during baking.

Turn the loaf over, seam side down, onto the lined baking sheet. With a sharp knife, make a few shallow slashes on the top of the dough. Brush the top with the leftover egg from the mixing bowl and lay a halved scallion lengthwise down the center to garnish. Bake until the bread is deep brown, about 50 minutes. Check the bread periodically during the latter half of cooking—if any filling is leaking out, bring the foil up and around the sides of the loaf to hold everything in.

Transfer to a wire rack for at least 15 minutes to cool before serving. Cut into slices and serve warm or at room temperature. *Yields 6 servings.*

Classic Deviled Eggs

A plate of classic deviled eggs is always a welcome sight at any picnic, party, or cookout. Note: The perfect hard-cooked egg has just a bit of softness at the center. The following method of cooking guarantees perfect results.

8 eggs
3–4 tablespoons mayonnaise
2 teaspoons Dijon mustard
¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper
2 tablespoons finely diced celery
(optional)
2 tablespoons finely diced red onion
(optional)
Kosher or sea salt and freshly ground
black pepper, to taste
Garnish: paprika (optional)

Place eggs in a saucepan and cover them with an inch of water. Cover with a lid and bring water to a simmer. Turn the stove off and let eggs sit covered in hot water 16 minutes. Remove eggs from the pan and sit them in a bowl of cold tap water 5 minutes to cool. Remove shells by tapping them on the counter to create a crack and then peeling them under running water.

Slice eggs in half lengthwise and pop yolks out; set whites aside. Place yolks in a bowl and mash them with the back of a spoon until smooth. Add mayonnaise, mustard, cayenne pepper, celery, onion, salt, and black pepper to taste. Spoon filling into a zip-top bag, cut off a corner tip, then pipe into the egg white halves. Garnish with paprika if you like. Chill and serve.
Yields 16 servings.



Blueberry & Nectarine Open-Face Tart

This tart is simplicity itself: crust, jam, and fruit.

For the crust:

- 1¼ cups all-purpose flour
- 3 tablespoons granulated sugar
- ½ teaspoon kosher or sea salt
- 8 tablespoons chilled unsalted butter, cubed
- 3–4 tablespoons ice water
- 1 large egg white

For the filling:

- 3 large nectarines, peeled and sliced into ½-inch-thick wedges
- 1 tablespoon maple syrup
- 1 teaspoon cornstarch
- ¼ teaspoon ground cardamom
- ¼ cup seedless raspberry jam
- ½ cup fresh blueberries

First, make the crust: Whisk together the flour, 2 tablespoons sugar, and salt. Sprinkle the butter on top and use your fingers to work them in. Stop when the mixture looks like cornmeal with some pea-size bits of butter remaining. Sprinkle 3 tablespoons ice water on top, and stir with a fork until the dough begins to come together. If needed, add 1 tablespoon ice water. Turn out onto a lightly floured surface and knead three times.

Gather the dough into a ball, press into a disk, and wrap in plastic. Refrigerate at least 30 minutes.

While you're waiting for the dough to chill, prepare the fruit: Toss the nectarines with the maple syrup, cornstarch, and cardamom. Set aside.

Preheat the oven to 400° and set a rack to the middle position. Line a baking sheet with parchment and set aside. Roll out the dough on a lightly floured counter to a circle about 16 inches wide. Transfer to the baking sheet. Spread the jam over it, leaving a 2½-inch border. Arrange the nectarine slices in overlapping circles atop the jam, leaving an empty 3-inch well in the center.

Fold the sides of the dough up and over the edge of the nectarines. Brush the edges with the egg white and sprinkle with the remaining tablespoon of sugar. Bake 10 minutes; then lower the temperature to 375° and bake 20 minutes more.

Pour the blueberries into the empty well in the center, mounding them slightly; then bake until the crust is nicely browned, another 7 to 10 minutes. Let cool completely before packing the tart for a picnic.

Yields 8 servings





Zingy Ginger Limeade

The combination of ginger, lime, and mint isn't just for cocktails—this simple punch is a great summer cooler. (But if you do want a little more oomph, just add a splash of rum.)

2 cups granulated sugar
2 cups plus 6 cups water
Juice of 8 limes
Freshly grated zest of 3 limes

2 tablespoons freshly grated ginger
20 fresh mint leaves
Garnish: Mint leaves and lime wedges

In a small saucepan, combine the sugar and 2 cups water. Set over medium-high heat and bring to a simmer. Cook, stirring, until the sugar dissolves. Remove from the heat and let cool for 5 minutes.

Pour the sugar water into a pitcher and add the lime juice, lime zest, ginger, and mint. Stir with a wooden spoon, pressing on the mint leaves to release their flavor. Let sit for 10 minutes.

Pour the lime mixture through a strainer and into a thermos or serving pitcher. Add the remaining 6 cups of water and taste. Add more sugar, if you like. Garnish with mint and lime wedges. *Yields 8 servings.*

DINING WITH A VIEW

From mountains to meadows, these picnic destinations hit the spot.

Statewide, Vermont offers so many fine locations for a memorable outdoor meal that the quest for a place to spread your blanket could be endless. After all, the Green Mountain State even has rest areas that boast respectable scenery and ambiance (off I-89 south of Sharon, for instance, or I-91 near Guilford). That said, we have a few favorites to get you started—and you can find even more great destinations in “Flower Power” [p. 22], which includes such legendary landscapes as Hildene and Shelburne Farms. —*The Editors*

Mount Equinox | *Sunderland*

Only 20 minutes have elapsed since you paid the toll and began the zigzagging 5.2-mile Skyline Drive to the 3,648-foot summit of Mount Equinox. But when you stand at the viewing center and look out at the rounded peaks of the Green, White, Adirondack, Berkshire, and Taconic mountain ranges, you’re in another world. You can whet your appetite with a stroll on the nearby hiking trails, then choose from picnic areas at the top or along the Skyline Drive itself. equinoxmountain.com

Stowe Recreation Path | *Stowe*

This 5.3-mile scenic paved trail starts from the village center of the classic mountain town of Stowe and runs to Topnotch Resort, ending at a picturesque covered bridge. With four parking-area access points, it’s easy to find and enjoy, and crosses several parks offering picnic tables in shady areas. Want to spread your blanket in a serene meadow with panoramic views? Look for the Quiet Path extension, a 1.8-mile natural-surface trail for pedestrians only that intersects portions of conserved farmland and meanders along the West Branch of the Little River. stowerec.org/parks-facilities/rec-paths

Retreat Farm | *Brattleboro*

When Retreat Farm was established in 1837 as a therapeutic facility for psychiatric patients, fostering well-being by connecting to nature was a pioneering notion. Happily, it’s widely embraced today—as you’ll

Picnicking along the Stowe Recreation Path



appreciate on an outing to this scenic 550-acre-plus property, now a nature and farm education nonprofit. Enjoy a picnic on the historic farmstead, then explore the grounds, which includes gardens, meadows, and over 10 miles of trails. retreatfarm.org

Crystal Lake State Park | *Barton*

While the Northeast Kingdom’s dramatic Lake Willoughby—the so-called “Lucerne of America”—may get more attention, there’s another beautiful glacier-carved lake just to the west that’s got the laid-back feel we love for picnicking. There is ample parking and nearly 80 picnic tables (a few dozen charcoal grills, too), plus a wide sandy shoreline that’s great for a cool swim during the dog days of summer. vtstateparks.com/crystal.html

Mount Philo State Park | *Charlotte*

Vermont’s first state park (c. 1924) is also one of its best-loved properties, offering spectacular views of Lake Champlain and the Adirondack Mountains from its namesake summit, the 968-foot Mount Philo. Drive

the summit access road to the top or, if you’re feeling slightly more adventurous, tackle the three-quarter-mile hiking trail to the top. There on the grassy lawn await Adirondack chairs and a selection of picnic areas; there’s also a 1930s summit lodge with covered pavilion that can be rented in advance for large groups. vtstateparks.com/philo.html

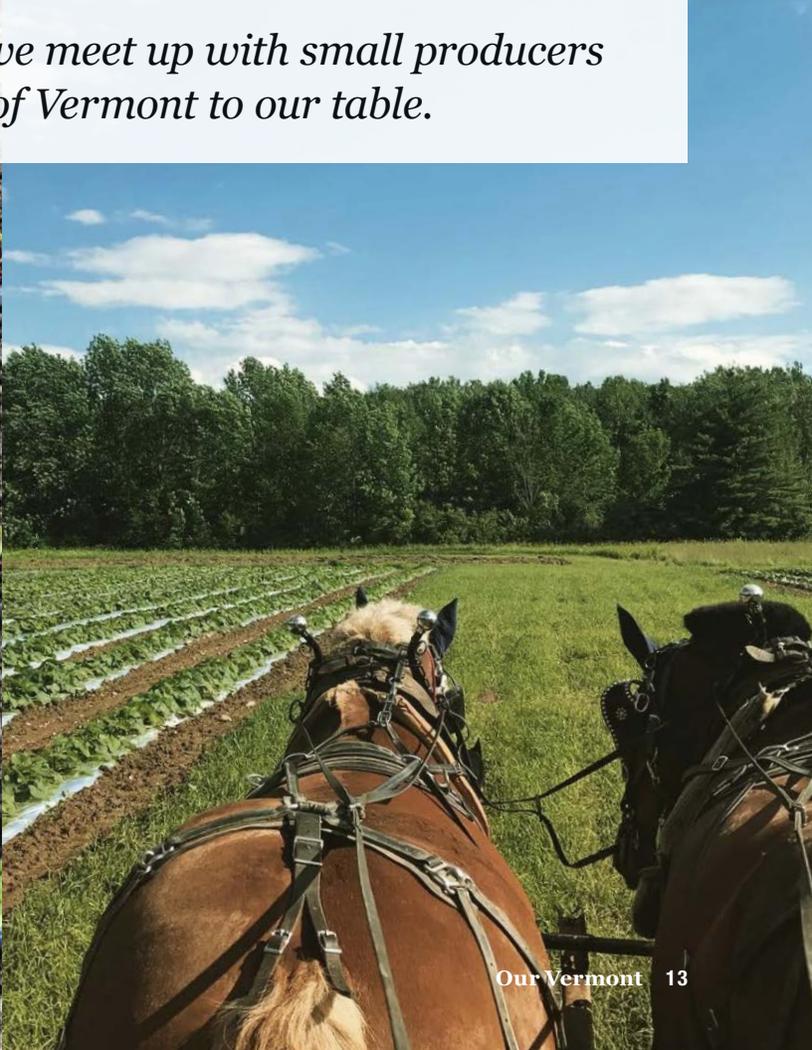
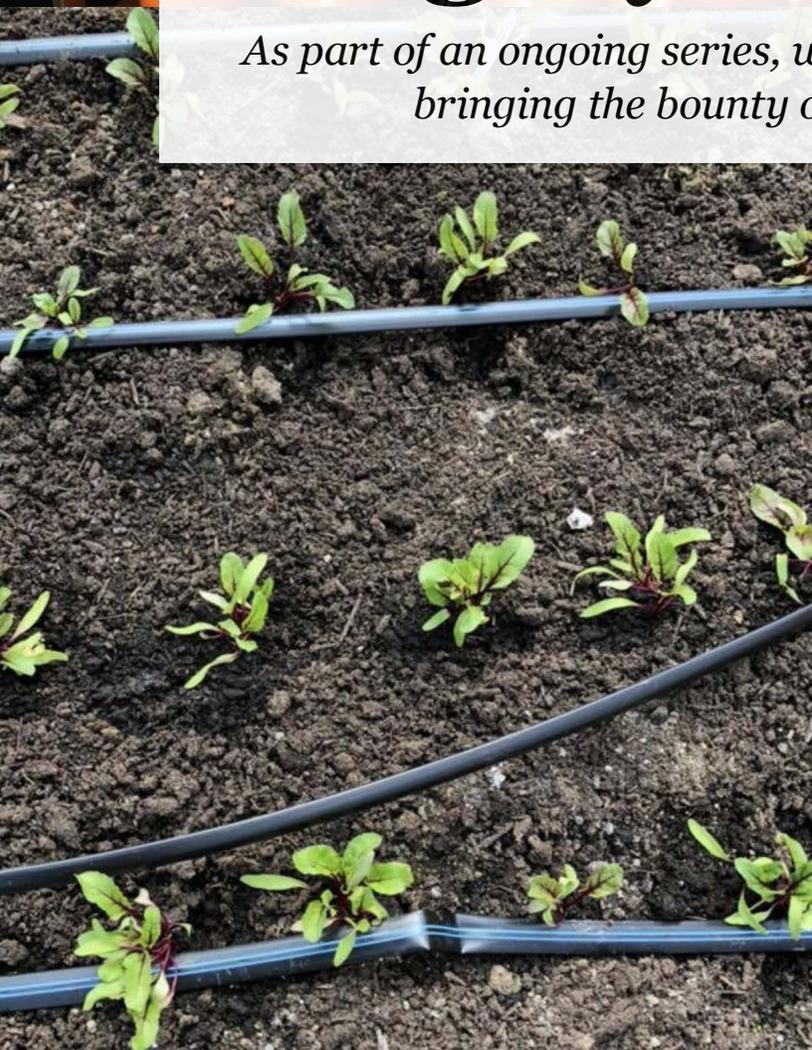
Path of Life Sculpture Garden | *Windsor*

Find a tranquil escape and a little artistic inspiration at this collection of 18 landscaped and sculpture areas scattered across 14 acres by the Connecticut River. Highlights include a maze of 800 hemlock trees and a rock labyrinth; meanwhile, lush, grassy swaths invite unpacking your picnic hamper. Access and admission is through Great River Outfitters, part of the adjacent Artisans Park commercial complex, which also offers the chance for shopping at Simon Pearce Glass and sipping at Harpoon Brewery and Silo Distillery. artisanspark.net



Mighty Food Farm

As part of an ongoing series, we meet up with small producers bringing the bounty of Vermont to our table.



When Lisa MacDougall was growing up in her native Massachusetts, she had a job at a horse farm that instilled in her not only a strong work ethic and an appreciation for being outside, but also a feeling that her career would center on horses. Turns out, she wasn't entirely wrong. Today this energetic 30-something—and current president of the Vermont Vegetable and Berry Growers Association—runs her 155-acre Mighty Food Farm on, yes, former horse farm land in Shaftsbury, and she does it with the help of a hard-working crew that includes two sturdy and faithful draft horses, Malcolm and Red. We recently caught up with MacDougall right as her 15th season as an organic vegetable farmer was getting under way. —Jenn Johnson



Does farming run in your family?

Not at all! My mom's a psychotherapist and my dad was in golf course maintenance—which is crop-tending in its own way, for sure—and none of my grandparents were farmers. But in my freshman year at UMass Amherst I got a summer job at the Hampshire College CSA farm, and I totally loved the work. I loved everything about it. So I went whole hog into plant, soil, and insect sciences. I even wrote up a business plan for Mighty Food Farm as part of an independent study just before I graduated.

How did you come to buy your own farm?

I started out in 2006 leasing 70 acres in Pownal. Being close to Bennington and Albany and Williamstown, the area had lots of market potential, and it felt like it really needed another farm. We definitely had support right away from the community—people were excited.

There's no way I would have been able to buy my own land, though, without the Vermont Land Trust's Farmland Access Program [which purchases agricultural land that it can then sell at an affordable price to farmers through conservation easements]. I had put in a lot of applications by the time the Shaftsbury farm came along and I was feeling a little burned out, but Donald Campbell [the trust's southern regional director] convinced me to at least go check it out. And then as soon as I pulled into the driveway, it was like, *Yep, this is it.* I put in my application that night.

Tell us a little about your operation.

We grow everything from broccoli and garlic and onions and potatoes to melons and tomatoes and cucumbers—

just all of it. Right now we're doing the Dorset Farmers Market, and we have pretty extensive wholesale routes too: natural food stores, restaurants, breweries. Almost all of our food goes within 30 miles of where it's grown.

Our CSA has about 225 members. It's such a great relationship: The farmer gets financial security in the spring, when we're spending so much money getting things going, and the members get a secure vegetable source for the year, and they're getting it at a discount. I'm always so grateful that the community has faith in myself and my crew to provide food for them. Some CSA members have been with me since year one!

You've been certified organic from the start. Why is that important to you?

I feel like farmers have a real responsibility to their land and the watershed and their neighbors, and organic certification provides oversight of those things, oversight that you don't get in conventional agriculture. It keeps you on your A game, it makes you a better farmer, it produces a higher-quality food product. And it all goes back to soil health, you know? Soil is a finite resource—it takes thousands of years to make it but only a couple of years to ruin it—and we need it in order to eat real food.

TO LEARN MORE

- For details on **Mighty Food Farm's** CSA program, or to see where its vegetables are sold, go to mightyfoodfarm.com.
- For more information on the work being done by the **Vermont Land Trust**, go to vlt.org.

Good as Gold

There's never been a better time to seek out local honey.

As sweet as a violin or an acoustic guitar may sound to us, talking with a luthier—someone who understands the brightness and richness that different woods lend to the instrument—can provide a whole new appreciation for what we hear.

Talking with beekeeper Andrew Munkres is a bit like that too. You may think you know what honey is: a concentrated solution of simple sugars, mostly fructose and glucose, made by honeybees from flower nectar. But especially in the case of local honey, a crop harvested by people living close to the bees and the land, it is something far more fascinating and complex.

Munkres will tell you all about the mild flavor of Vermont's main honey flow, starting in June, powered mostly by blooming white clover but with birdsfoot trefoil and alfalfa and other flowers mixed in. He'll tell you about the stronger, "butterscotchy" taste of honey made in late summer when goldenrod and New England asters come into play, and the rarer, darker honey from buckwheat or Japanese knotweed flowers.

His own personal favorite, though? It's a particular kind of "comb honey"—unfiltered, eaten right from the honeycomb—and it's got a story.

"In some years, around the Fourth of July, give or take, the basswood trees will bloom incredibly well, and that produces a light, almost greenish-colored honey that tastes a bit like wintergreen," he says. "And when you uncap the honeycomb, where it's been sealed under wax and never exposed to air, that basswood flavor just kind of pops out. It's really intense and it tastes incredible."

Munkres is the first to admit that he can talk about honey all day long. But as both the



Andrew Munkres,
president of the
Vermont Beekeepers
Association



founder of Lemon Fair Honeyworks in Cornwall and the current president of the Vermont Beekeepers Association (VBA), he's someone with a front-row seat to the state of Vermont's bees. Which means he's not much for sugarcoating things.

Climate change, environmental toxins, disease, and pests, especially parasitic mites—they've all shaped up as a kind of "perfect storm" for honeybees and native pollinators alike, he says. "This past winter we had operations that have been around for almost a hundred years that lost half their bees. And if you can imagine, if half of the dairy cows in the state of Vermont died over the course of one season, that would be huge, but because they're bugs, most people don't really pay attention."

We should, though. Aside from producing the delectable stuff we love to spread on toast or drizzle over ... well, almost anything, honeybees play a huge role in other crops, from blueberries to backyard tomatoes. It's been estimated that we owe roughly one-third of the food we eat directly to pollination by bees and other insects.

Munkres and the other 600-plus members of the VBA can't do much to protect their honeybees from things like global warming or agricultural chemicals, so the focus is on fighting back where they can, starting with managing the parasitic mites. "One of the VBA's biggest goals is educate beekeepers on how to keep their bees healthy," he says, "and by extension keep all pollinators healthy."

That's where buying local can take on new weight. When consumers choose Vermont honey over imported honey, they're supporting the health of local bees by keeping their caretakers in business.

"Local beekeepers' cost of production is higher because they're paying fair wages to Vermonters. And because their cost of production is higher, their honey sells for more on the shelf," Munkres explains. "So it's pretty easy to walk by it and pick up a jar of honey that says 'Product of India' or whatever, but you're not supporting your neighbors"

There are other reasons, too, to source the sweet stuff close to home. Some studies have shown that nearly a third of imported honey is "adulterated," or diluted with sugar syrup or other sweeteners. And even if it's pure, it didn't come from the area where you live, which is key for those who believe honey can help desensitize you to nature's allergens.

Since some imported honey is actually bottled here in Vermont, finding a truly local product can be tricky. A new state law prohibiting the labeling of out-of-state foodstuffs as "Vermont made" may help, but in the meantime, Munkres advises that you read all labels carefully, check out the offerings at natural food stores, and, whenever possible, go to the source. On the VBA website, for example, there's a list of members offering honey and honey products for sale, from the Northeast Kingdom to the southern Green Mountains.

And while you're at it, keep your eye on the craft beer scene. Munkres says the VBA is working on a partnership with the Vermont Brewers Association to get Vermont honey into—what else?—local beers. "We've actually got a board member who's been teaching some of the brewers beekeeping classes so that they know a little bit more about where the honey is coming from," he says. "They're pretty excited about it!" —*Jenn Johnson*



TO LEARN MORE

■ For more information about the **Vermont Beekeepers Association** or to locate a local honey producer, go to vermontbeekeepers.org.

Life on the Big Lake

*A Champlain houseboat cruise offers
a vision of the ultimate summer escape.*



When you're on a houseboat in the middle of Lake Champlain on a warm summer night, sunset is the primetime programming.

PHOTO BY LITTLE OUTDOOR GIANTS

Early one morning in July a few years back, a houseboat left Chip Taube's marina in Orwell, near the southern end of 120-mile-long Lake Champlain, and began chugging its way north at a leisurely 8 miles an hour. Steering the boat—and admittedly out of their comfort zone—were Jarrod McCabe and Dominic Casserly, a pair of New England-based photographers on assignment for *Yankee* magazine. They, along with a few friends, had rented this floating home from Taube; it's one of two he maintains for intrepid travelers.

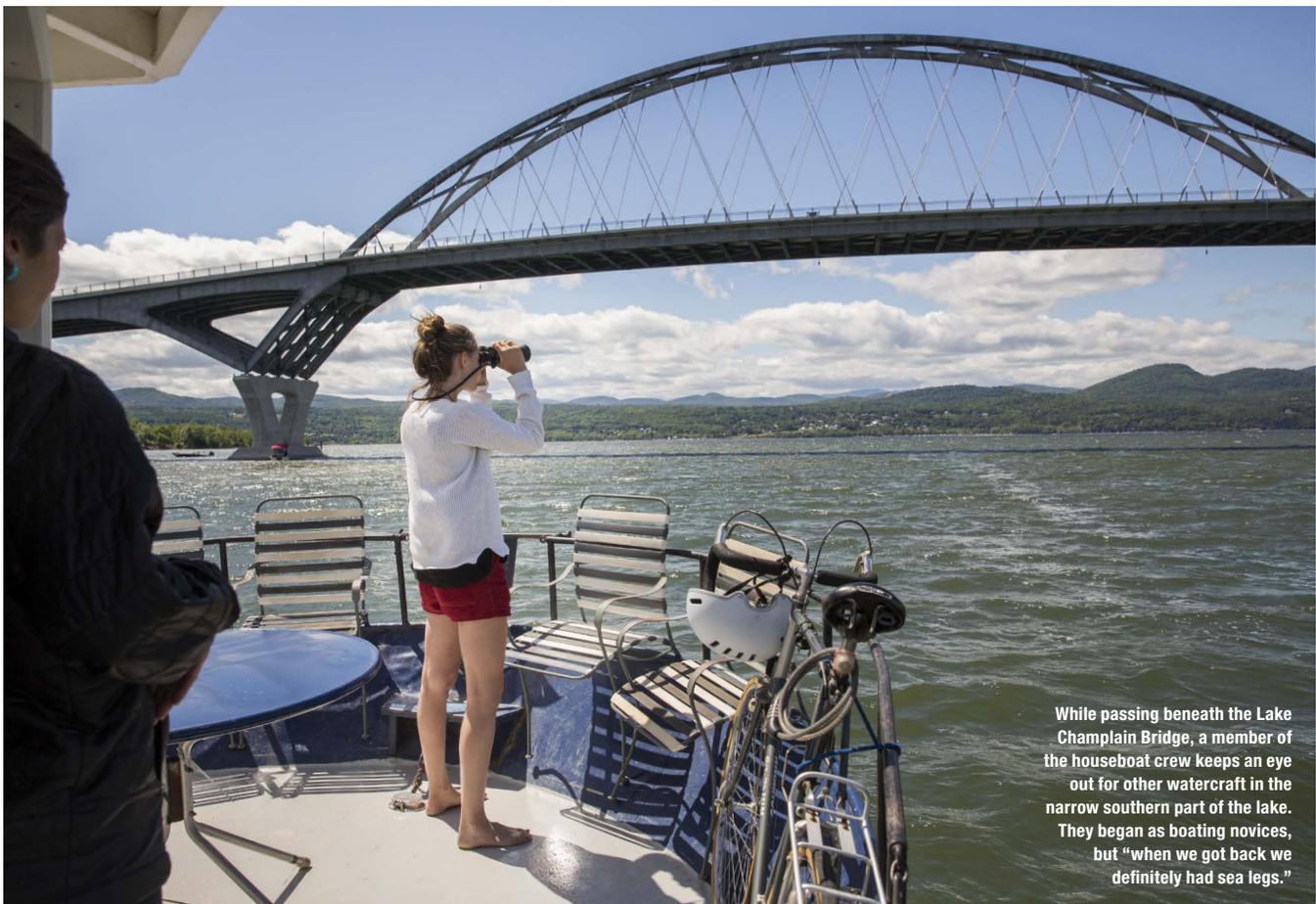
Previously for *Yankee*, McCabe and Casserly—who go by the professional moniker Little Outdoor Giants—had followed Thoreau's wilderness paddle in Maine and hiked across New Hampshire's Presidential Range. This time, the plan was simpler: to see what would happen during one summer week on a houseboat on New England's biggest lake. At the end of each day, the duo would write and draw in one of their signature leather-bound journals. *It's funny how on all trips I feel anxious that by the end of the trip I still haven't relaxed*, muses one of the entries. *Here I find what I was looking for. All the adventure, the natural beauty,*

the opportunity for a unique and one-of-a-kind New England vacation...

There were some tense moments on the trip—as when winds made the waves crest as if at sea, and when throngs of pleasure boats required both patience and attentive steering of their 38-foot-long craft—but the days proved largely carefree. The travelers learned to navigate coves and narrow streams, chatted with people from around the country, snorkeled, fished, ate well and often, lazed on beaches, walked and biked on shore (and, yes, swatted mosquitoes). Most of all, they discovered that when you make a slow boat your home, it can take you places you never knew you could find. —Mel Allen



Jarrod McCabe, left, and Dominic Casserly, aka Little Outdoor Giants



While passing beneath the Lake Champlain Bridge, a member of the houseboat crew keeps an eye out for other watercraft in the narrow southern part of the lake. They began as boating novices, but “when we got back we definitely had sea legs.”

ALL PHOTOS BY LITTLE OUTDOOR GIANTS



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Exploring Valcour Island, on the New York side of Lake Champlain, home to a historic lighthouse that later became an eclectic summer home; a sign at the Fort Ticonderoga Ferry, which has been shuttling lake travelers between Shoreham and Ticonderoga, New York, since 1759; the makings of a tasty pan-fried dinner, fresh from the lake; at the helm of the travelers' floating home.





On the average day's to-do list: fishing, bobbing around in inner tubes, and launching off the houseboat to swim in the cool waters below. When evening comes, a small table and chairs turn the deck into a floating dinner patio.



LEFT: A friendly tadpole flashes a grin at the Basin Harbor resort and boat club, well known by kids around the lake for its pair of blue-and-yellow water trampolines.

BELOW: On a trip that took the houseboat crew from one end of Champlain to the other—and included stops on the Burlington waterfront, in the Champlain Islands, and along the New York shore—a favorite destination was Burton Island. A 253-acre park off the southwestern tip of St. Albans Point, Burton Island is accessible only by boat. And while you can get there on a state-run ferry, it's far better to arrive under your own steam, drop anchor, and enjoy what can only be called "magical" seclusion and beauty.



Flower Power

Where to go to unearth new ideas for your garden.

Green Mountain vistas compete with more than 1,000 blooming peonies each year at the historic Manchester estate Hildene.

For many years, *Yankee* published a much-loved column by Edie Clark called “The Garden at Chesham Depot,” a journal of both missteps and successes in coaxing living green things from a small plot of land. As much as anything, though, it’s about realizing that each season represents hope: As we renew our landscape with fresh ideas, we can find a renewal of our spirit as well. “Maybe what I love best about gardening is that so much of it is about dreams,” she wrote, “and that the very best part is that the sins of one summer do not follow you into the next.”

As both veteran and aspiring green thumbs know well, gardening calls for sweat and toil. There is manure and mulch to hauled, crops of rocks and weeds to be dug out. But there is dreaming to do, too—time needed to stop and smell the roses, so to speak. And what better time than summer to stroll through someone else’s garden or greenhouse bursting with life, and find inspiration for your own small plot of land in seeing what other hands have created? Vermont is blessed with all kinds of Edens that invite wandering, from serene grand estates to bustling garden centers. Here are a few to help sow the seeds of inspiration for next season.

Hildene

If you are reading this in late May to mid-June, hurry down to the southern Green Mountains to behold some unforgettable floral fireworks. At the former home of Abraham Lincoln’s son Robert, now a museum, more than a thousand peonies (many dating back to the original 1907 plantings) are swelling with color. They are the showstoppers of a formal European parterre garden created by Robert Lincoln’s daughter, Jessie, as a gift for her mother; when seen from the Lincolns’ Georgian Revival mansion, the garden evokes a stained glass window. There’s much more to delight the eye at this 400-acre-plus estate, however, from the grounds designed by Frederick Law Olmsted protégé Frederick Todd to the butterfly, cutting, and kitchen gardens, and allées featuring hawthorn and apple trees. *Manchester; hildene.org*

Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park

At the only U.S. national park devoted to conservation history, you’re invited to immerse yourself in nature’s beauty not only via the walking trails crisscrossing the 550-acre property but also in the formal plantings that speak to four generations of stewardship. Around a stunning mansion built in 1805 for the family of George Perkins Marsh—considered by many to be America’s



Summer brings forth a riot of color in the mansion gardens at Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park.

first environmentalist—you will find a mature azalea and rhododendron garden; cutting gardens; a hemlock hedgerow; a rock garden; and a formal flower garden filled with delphiniums, daisies, lilies, and more, crowned with a white marble fountain. *Woodstock; nps.gov/mabi*

Shelburne Farms

This c. 1886 model agricultural estate, now an environmental education center, was created by Lila Vanderbilt Webb and her husband, William Seward Webb, along with the talents of architect Robert H. Robertson and legendary landscape architect Frederick



Italianate elegance reigns in the formal gardens at Shelburne Farms.

Law Olmsted. Lila envisioned and executed her Italianate formal gardens between 1909 and 1915; a century later, the nonprofit caretaker of her former estate restored them in about the same time frame. They share the spotlight here with naturalistically landscaped grounds, woodlands, a market garden, and a timeless vista of Lake Champlain. *Shelburne*; shelburnefarms.org

Shelburne Museum

Though founded in 1947, this eclectic 45-acre museum has many plantings whose purpose and design are rooted much further back in history. Among the 20-plus gardens in its collection are an apothecary garden filled with medicinal herbs, a 19th-century-style “dooryard” garden, an 1820s heirloom kitchen garden, and the Settlers’ Gardens, which channel the horticultural spirit of 1790s Vermont. Other highlights include the Bostwick Garden, in which annuals, perennials, and roses are arranged like an artist’s palette, and the Circus Building Daylily Garden, which boasts more than 1,700 daylilies in 38 varieties. And did we mention the lilacs and peonies? *Shelburne*; shelburnemuseum.org

UVM Horticulture Research Center

Also known as “Hort Farm,” this 97-acre research and learning hub is home to 700-plus types of ornamental trees and shrubs, many of them uncommon, as well as one of the largest known mature ornamental crabapple collections in the Northeast (more than 120 kinds in all) and a collection of 15 species of rhododendrons that put on a stunning display each June. Near the parking lot is a display border of perennial plants ideal for Vermont gardens, while a pollinator garden showcases native plants that attract bees and other beneficial insects. Take the self-guided “woodland walk” or check out the workshops and volunteer opportunities organized by Friends of the Horticultural Farm (fhfv.org). *South Burlington*; uvm.edu/cals/hrec/visit

Vermont Nurseries, Farms & Garden Centers

From north to south, Vermont gardeners have a bumper crop of options when it comes to finding commercial sources of inspiration, but the following selection of *Yankee* editors’ favorites can help get you started.

■ **Equinox Valley Nursery, Manchester:**

The late horticulturist Roger Preuss founded this nursery in 1979, and today it's thriving as a three-generation business. Check out the greenhouses, including a tropical conservatory, filled with rare and unusual cultivars, and be uplifted by the sight of volunteers harvesting fresh veggies from a "Plant-a-Row" garden for the Manchester Food Cupboard. equinoxvalleynursery.com

■ **Horsford Gardens & Nursery, Charlotte:**

Having worked for Horsford as a UVM student, Charlie Proutt bought the nursery with his wife, Eileen Schilling, in 1986 on a mission to bring back its "glory days." Today Vermont's oldest nursery (c. 1893) covers nearly 50 acres and offers 2,000-plus varieties of plants ranging from roses to evergreens to vegetables, most of which are grown on-site. horsfordnursery.com

■ **Marijke's Perennial Gardens Plus,**

Starksboro: Imagination and humor run wild at this retail nursery created by Dutch native Marijke Niles. Explore the possibilities in some 40 display gardens on her eight-acre property, where low-maintenance and "nature-nourishing" native plants and hardy succulents are specialties. perennialgardensplus.com

■ **Olallie Daylily Gardens, South Newfane:**

Daylily fans, look no further: This three-generation family farm grows over 2,500 cultivars, filling its six acres of growing fields with all colors, sizes, and varieties. Peak bloom is mid-July through August, though there's a collection of rare fall bloomers, too. You'll find other field-grown perennials, such as Siberian iris, and even pick-your-own organic blueberries. daylilygarden.com

■ **Red Wagon Plants, Hinesburg:** Named the

SBA's 2019 Vermont Woman-Owned Business of the Year, Red Wagon was founded by Julie Rubaud in 2005



as a small wholesale operation. Today it's a beloved gardeners' resource that's open to the public and staffed by two dozen knowledgeable employees who help oversee the growing of 500-plus kinds of annuals, 200-plus perennial varieties, fruit trees and bushes, herbs, and so forth. redwagonplants.com

■ **Rocky Dale Gardens, Bristol:** An 1856 farmstead has been transformed into a beautiful country showcase for uncommon conifers, trees, shrubs, and perennials (folks rave about the hosta selection here). Extensive display gardens covering about three acres offer ample inspiration. rockydalegardens.com

■ **Summersweet Gardens Nursery at Perennial Pleasures, East Hardwick:** An English-style hedged herb garden, a primrose garden, island heather beds, and shade gardens add flair to this 41-year-old nursery specializing in heirloom flowering plants and herbs that gardeners as far back as the 17th century might have recognized. In summer, English cream teas are served in the gardens or conservatory (reservations required)—and don't miss the Phlox Fest in August. summersweetgardens.com

■ **Von Trapp Greenhouse, Stowe:** A first-rate display garden set against mountain vistas makes this one of the loveliest nurseries you'll ever find. Six greenhouses nurture the hundreds of annuals, perennials, and herbs and vegetable plants that are all grown on-site—so you can safely bet they'll stand up to Vermont's climate. vontrappgreenhouse.com

■ **Walker Farm, Dummerston:** A family business since before the Revolution, Walker Farm is not only a one-stop shop for humdrum-busting perennials and annuals, but also a cornucopia of produce, including 125 heirloom tomato varieties and a variety of Asian and Hispanic vegetables, plus berry plants, rare dwarf conifers, and flowering shrubs. walkerfarm.com

COURTESY OF OLALLIE DAYLILY GARDENS; VON TRAPP GREENHOUSE



Happy Trails

Old rail lines find new life as some of Vermont's best bike paths.



Cyclists biking the Missisquoi Valley Rail Trail roll across a vintage iron railroad bridge spanning the Missisquoi River in Sheldon Junction.

COREY HENDRICKSON

Over the past few years, Vermont has entered a golden age of cycling that far exceeds its well-established mountain biking scene. Across the state, rail lines that once carried the freight of industry have been rehabbed into four-season recreation paths that now help power the tourist economy. The selling points are clear: The rides are flat, there are no cars to contend with, and because the routes go in a straight line, cyclists can meander without getting lost as they slice through a scenic landscape of forests and farmland.

At the center of Vermont's vast and growing riding network is the **Lamoille Valley Rail Trail**, or LVRT, whose completed sections span 34 miles of the final planned route from St. Johnsbury to Swanton (lvrt.org). The path it follows has been an important one for Vermonters since the 1870s, when the line for what would become the St. Johnsbury & Lamoille County Railroad was first cut, providing an vital cross-state link.

After the line's train operations dwindled and then finally ceased in the 1990s, trail enthusiasts eyed the route for a different kind of four-season transport. A little less than a decade ago, construction of the LVRT began, and today its development continues through a partnership between the state and the Vermont Association of Snow Travelers (VAST). Completion of the entire ride, which runs through the spine of the Green Mountain Range, is slated for 2023. When finished it will traverse 93 miles, making it the longest rail trail in New England. Bonus: It already links up with another popular trail, the **Missisquoi Valley Rail Trail** (mvrailtrail.org).

Until then, riders have the opportunity to ride four sections of the LVRT: St. Johnsbury to Danville (15.4 miles), Morristown to Cambridge (17.4 miles), and two shorter runs in Sheldon (1.5 miles) and Swanton (1 mile).

"It's a really gentle grade, which makes it very approachable riding," says VAST trail manager Ken Brown. "You're not in traffic, and you're riding through all these different landscapes—farm fields, wooded areas, along some of the old rail bridges that are still out there."

Indeed, cyclists are treated to a part of Vermont that is impossible to accessible to access by car. The trail follows the Lamoille River for several miles before opening up to farm fields and straight-on views of Mount Mansfield, Vermont's highest peak. And there's no shortage of refueling spots: The Farm Store in Jeffersonville, for example, has homemade sandwiches, cold drinks, and espressos, while in St. Johnsbury local brews await at Lost Nation Brewing, where the bike racks are often crowded.

Brown says the LVRT offers a little bit for everyone, but if he had to pick just one spot to showcase the trail,

Ride On!

According to the national Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, Vermont has 18 rail trails covering some 130 miles, making it easy to keep the two-wheel fun going. Here are three favorites to try.

Island Line Trail

Burlington to South Hero (14 miles)

Built on the former route of the Rutland Railroad, this scenic pathway spans the Burlington Greenway Bike Path, the Colchester Causeway, and South Hero's Allen Point Access Area. Lake Champlain and views of the Adirondacks play starring roles, while the causeway will have you feeling like you're skimming across the water. Note: The causeway has a 200-foot gap that can be traversed only by a seasonal ferry run by the Burlington bike organization Local Motion. localmotion.org

Delaware & Hudson Line Trail

Rutland and Bennington Counties (20 miles)

For years the Delaware & Hudson Railway helped drive the Vermont economy as it moved minerals and slate out of state. Today this route offers an assortment of postcard-perfect moments for cyclists. Rolling meadows, dense forests, and an acclaimed cheesemaker (Pawlet's Consider Bardwell) highlight the journey. The railbed jogs briefly into New York, breaking the Vermont ride into two sections: Castleton to Poultney, and West Pawlet to Rupert. fpr.vermont.gov/dh-rail-trail

Montpelier & Wells River Trail

Groton to Marshfield (13 miles)

Part of the Cross Vermont Trail, a 90-plus-mile bike route from Wells to Burlington, this leg runs on a railbed that used to carry the "Granite Train," which linked the mines of Barre to the Connecticut River Valley and thus, the world. Today's journey brings cyclists through the Groton State Forest and the Pine Mountain Wildlife Management Area, as well as the charming downtowns of Marshfield and Groton. crossvermont.org

he would bring riders into Sheldon.

"It goes along the Black Creek, right in Sheldon Village," he says. "There's a really beautiful waterfall near the trail and a 400-foot-long rail bridge—it's a pretty neat spot to check out that people might not be aware of." —*Ian Aldrich*



Lessons from the Hayfield

First published nearly a decade ago, this essay by Vermont homesteader Ben Hewitt—presented here in a slightly abridged form—remains a Yankee classic.

About six years ago, my wife, Penny, and I, along with our sons, Finlay and Rye, began haying with a neighbor. Martha runs a small dairy farm with her sister, Lynn, on the ridgetop across the valley from our holding in Cabot. She is 60-something, tousle-haired, and inhabits a body that seems to have been purpose-built for labor. When I see her arms emerging from the rolled-up sleeves of the flannel shirts she wears even in July, they're all protruding vein and muscle, and I'm reminded of those hollow-boned migrating birds that can fly hundreds of miles without food or sleep. Martha even eats like a bird, subsisting on a sporadic ingestion of calories. When we

hay, she often forgets about food, and I've learned to put a sandwich into her hands, to say, "Here, Martha, eat this," even if all she's asked for is coffee or a Coke.

Our haying arrangement with Martha evolved out of mutual needs, in the manner of many rural working arrangements made across generations that came long before mine. In short, what she needed was muscle, enough to meet the demands of pulling a few thousand 50-pound bales from the long metal chute of her baler, before tossing them toward the rear of the wagon to whomever is stacking them, neatly in a crosshatched pattern for utmost stability. The stability is important, as her hayfield features numerous undulations, like ocean swells caught at the height of their unfurling. I ride the wagon with my feet spread wide and planted, feeling it pitch and heave beneath me, like some landlocked hillbilly version of surfing. The fact that the

ALL PHOTOS BY PENNY HEWITT

old John Deere's brakes are barely operational takes the excitement up a notch or two, but still I stick the toes of my boots over the edge to hang ten. Then the wagon bucks, and it feels suddenly as if I might be tossed under the wheels, and I retreat.

What we needed was simpler: hay for our menagerie of ruminant animals (a half-dozen cows, an equivalent count of sheep, and, if the boys get their way, a couple of goats to launch our town's first goat-sausage enterprise). So a deal was struck, although, truthfully, there never was a deal, per se. Rather, things took on a life of their own, following a path of crude logic: We'd help Martha and Lynn fill their barn, and once that was full and their livestock were guaranteed another winter of sustenance, we'd fill ours. We'd kick in something for fuel and maintenance, but the bulk of our debt would be paid in sweat and the slightly nauseated feeling one gets at the end of a long day of tossing square bales.

That feeling has something to do with the fact that not many farmers put up large quantities of square bales these days. In terms of haying technology, square bales are nearly two generations past their prime. The onset of the square bale's decline can even be traced to a specific year: 1965, which is when the delightfully named Virgil Haverdink was casting about for a master's thesis project at Iowa State University. After a winter of tinkering in the school's machine shop, Haverdink had fabricated a loutish-looking contraption that would become the world's first commercially successful round baler.

Haverdink cleverly designed the implement so that the finished bales—each of which contained roughly the equivalent of 15 square bales—would shed water. And, because air couldn't penetrate the compacted mass of hay, any moisture encapsulated within would introduce fermentation, rather than mold. The former is entirely palatable to ruminants; the latter can be deadly.

This meant that farmers could bale before the forage

The field we hay is at a high elevation, with 270-degree views of everything that makes Vermont the place where non-Vermonters wish they lived.

was entirely dry, which in turn meant that they needn't wait for a three-day window of sun to make hay. Indeed, many farmers now put up what's known as "hay in a day."

And because modern round bales are too big to be handled by hand (depending on moisture content, a round bale can weigh upwards of 1,200 pounds), they must be handled by machine. Because they must be handled by machine, no more physical effort is required



than what's necessary to operate the tractor's controls.

All of which is to say, putting hay into rounds is quicker, easier, and exponentially more forgiving than putting it into squares. Heck, if you wrap them in plastic, they don't even require shelter. It's not hard to understand why you can't drive through Vermont's farmland today without passing row upon row of big, white, plastic-wrapped marshmallows of hay.

So, sure, the round bale makes a certain kind of logical sense; this I must concede. And in full fairness to Haverdink and the technology as a whole, I should note that we feed a few to our cows every winter. It's enormously convenient to simply fire up the tractor, plop the bale in the paddock, and leave the cows to their ruminating. But doing so always leaves me feeling a little hollow and confused, as though I've just gotten something for nothing, and I'm not quite sure whether

I should be grateful for all the work I didn't have to do, or cheated because I didn't have to do it.

In recent years, I've come to understand that certain moments shape my life by a measure not consistent with their brevity and immediate imprint. These are not the big events, the births and deaths, the unions and separations, which for all their significance are the commonplace joys and tragedies of humanity. Rather,

they're the almost imperceptible splashes in the pool of my existence, as when I glance up at Martha perched on that big green tractor like a sprite riding the back of some great beast, 100 pounds soaking wet atop 12,000 pounds of machine, towing another 10,000 pounds or more of hay and baler and wagon, and I marvel at what it means to be human, to be of the species that for better or worse has invented all this stuff, this amazing, crazy, magical stuff.

The field we hay with Martha is at a high elevation, with 270-degree views of everything that makes Vermont the place where non-Vermonters wish they lived, if only it weren't for blackflies, mud season, and, depending on their political leanings, Bernie Sanders. During the rare moments when bales aren't popping out the chute, I like to look out across those views, and I remind myself to stop taking so damn much of my life for granted. This works for a day, maybe two, before I retreat back into my old jaded self. But every year, a little more of it sticks, and I remain hopeful that by the time I'm Martha's age, gratitude will have become habitual, an ever-present backdrop from which to greet the world.

We hay as a family, and my boys have been part

of the process for better than half their lives. "Pay attention, guys, because you're going to be in charge of this operation before long," Martha tells them, although frankly the boys seem a little skeptical. And who can blame them? The intricacy of the baler, with its gears, knotters, and web of twine, all of which require frequent intervention, and the sheer mass of the Deere, its rear tires towering high above the boys' heads, its exhaust snorting the rich black smoke of uncombusted diesel: My children have not yet arrived at the conquering age, when the default assumption is that such things can be bent to their will. But they're only human; they'll get there.

On haying days, Penny mixes thick milkshakes, and we drink them on the ride home, the four of us crammed into the cab of our old Chevy. We idle down the gravel road from the hayfield; the loaded wagon pushes us, and I ride the brakes. Oncoming traffic gives us a wide berth, and wisely so. Everyone waves in that two-fingers-off-the-steering-wheel way rural Vermonters wave, as if afraid to commit to even this brief, passing relationship. I can smell the warm hay, the hot brakes, and the chopped-up sprigs of mint that Penny puts into the sweet slurry of cream, egg, and maple syrup. I can smell the sweat that has risen, flowed, and is now drying on my skin.

I know that my day is nowhere near over. There's this wagon to unload, and yet another to fill; there will be more tomorrow. But for the seven or eight minutes it takes to get home, I'm afforded the simple luxury of the satisfaction only hard labor can provide, and I think ahead to the coming winter, when I'll pull each of these bales out of our barn, one by one, extracts of summer in an iced-over world. And I'll remember how it happens every year that I improbably recognize a bale or two—maybe one from the field's edge, with an identifying stick woven in, shed from the old maples that line the northern fringe. And I'll stand there for a minute, holding the bale, wrenched back to the moment when I hauled it off the chute and passed it back to Penny or one of the boys as Martha guided the tractor down the long windrow, the smell of grease and diesel and drying hay riding softly on the summer air. It's not a moment frozen in time, but rather just the opposite: a moment so fluid it can travel across weeks and even months to be with me at six o'clock on a January morning, roughly equidistant from the haying season before and the haying season to come.

Then I will walk up the hill to the paddock, release the compressed hay from the confines of its twine, throw it over the fence, and leave the cows to their breakfast.



Hitting the Heights

A Vermont steeplejack shares a look at his life at the top.



Steeplejack Jay Southgate "in the chair" atop the United Methodist Church in Shelburne.

Jay Southgate is the owner of Southgate Steeplejacks, which is headquartered on the grounds of a former granite-processing facility in Websterville. A steeplejack is ... well, wait ... we'll let Jay tell you himself. Suffice it to say that he and his "awesome employees" make their living by climbing into an earlier century's peak locations and mending them, all the while getting a fine view of the world. We caught up with Jay a few years ago while he was on the job in Shelburne. —*Julia Shipley*



Jay Southgate

"I moved to Vermont in 1988, and I was working in general construction, but I became increasingly frustrated with residential work. One day I was working for a particularly irksome homeowner and happened to look over and see two guys working on a nearby steeple, exchanging a piece of copper flashing. The sunlight reflected off the copper as it passed between their hands, and I thought, 'I want to be doing that!'"

—

"There's a rush that comes when we have to take down and truck a steeple—which was never designed to be moved on modern roads—to our workshop. Just the act of breaking a steeple into legally shippable waterproof units, and repairing it and then bringing it back, and with a crane on site reassembling the parts that weigh six tons—it's like putting on a show, it's like dance choreography."

—

"I do this because it's my dream job. I get to create beauty. My two favorite jobs were Trinity United Methodist Church in Montpelier and First Presbyterian Church in Barre. Each place gave me full artistic license. Most of the time I have to make the steeple look exactly like the original, using the most long-lived materials, but in these circumstances I didn't have to replicate what was there. When I'm working on a steeple, I either come to admire those who worked there before me, or not."

—

"We often find patent-medicine bottles hidden all throughout the steeple, squirreled away in little nooks, left over from Prohibition. You can just picture men sneaking off to drink without their wives knowing—in that sense not much has changed. Or maybe it's the women who went up there, who knows? Back

when I was just learning the trade, we found a big sign left behind in a building dating from the 1800s, explaining something about the engineering of the structure. I remember it had a sketch and stated something like, "You think it works like this ... but it works like this ..." They left it there as a guide for whoever came along to renovate the building. Another time, when I was just learning my carpentry skills, I was working in Lexington [Massachusetts] doing a restoration project, and I noticed this loop of wood that served no obvious purpose. I pulled it out, and it revealed a panel that read: *Who are You? What year is This? My Name is William. I built this in 1802. I put this loop in as a joke. Good Luck.*"

—

"We sometimes leave something behind for the future—a coin, or sometimes the guys will sign their names."

—

"When I'm up there, I don't spend too much time admiring the view—I'm usually focused on the steeple five inches in front of my face—but when I do look around, I'm usually wondering about my public protection system. From where I am up there, it looks as if everyone's walking around with target circles on their head. People on the ground don't think they're in danger, but if I drop something ... It never ceases to amaze me when people think the 'Do Not Cross' safety tape we've set up around the perimeter of the building doesn't apply to them."

—

"The rigging equipment we use up there is more commonly used in the emergency-rescue industry, but it's also what they used on Mount Rushmore. The drive to work each day is probably the most dangerous thing I do!"



Downtown Wilmington at the height of Irene's flooding, August 28, 2011.

When the Storm Came

Ten years after Tropical Storm Irene, the story of one small town reminds us what was lost—and what was found.

This August will mark the 10-year anniversary of Hurricane Irene, which first made U.S. landfall in North Carolina on August 27, 2011. Though downgraded to a tropical storm, it was no less destructive, causing nearly \$16 billion worth of damage and eventually coming to rival anything that the Hurricane of 1938 had wrought.

Among the New England states, Irene was especially catastrophic for Vermont: It claimed six lives, damaged or destroyed more than 500 miles of roads, and left many towns inaccessible for days. Covered bridges in Bartonsville, Quechee, Taftsville, and Northfield Falls were either wiped out or battered to the point of ruin; Brandon's House of Pizza floated into the middle of U.S. Route 7; in Jamaica, four homes were swept out into what one resident described as "liquid earth."

But perhaps no Vermont community felt the storm quite like Wilmington. Built on the banks of the Deerfield River, this southern Vermont town of nearly 2,000 residents was transformed into an unrecognizable scene



of destruction that Sunday morning of August 28. When the river finally retreated, it left behind a thick glaze of mud and a town of overturned lives. The flood also swept away a 20-year-old summer employee at Mount Snow, Ivana Taseva, who had been trying to escape a car trapped by floodwaters on Route 100.

The cleanup in the wake of Tropical Storm Irene took years; for some, recovery continues to this day. In honor of Wilmington's resilience, we are sharing excerpts from the story that *Yankee's* Ian Aldrich wrote to mark Irene's five-year anniversary. To read the full article, go to newengland.com/irene-anniversary.

For years, Wilmington residents had looked in awe at the high-water mark on the town hall that showed where the Deerfield River had risen during the '38 hurricane, 65 inches above the sidewalk. At the height of Irene, however, the Deerfield managed to surpass that historic mark. The storm's onslaught came fast. Some were braced for calamity, others less so.

Susan Haughwout, town clerk (1995 to 2020): [Earlier] that week I ran into a woman downtown having a cocktail after work, and she remarked about the birds—how they were acting unusual and she felt that something was going to happen. Well, nobody paid attention to her; people thought she was being silly. But she was right.

Florence Crafts, resident: My late husband, George, had grown up on this property and was 5 years old when '38 hit. He watched his house get ruined pretty bad. I've lived here since '56, and we've had water in the cellar before,

but you could clean it up right away. When I heard the weather report for this storm, it sounded like it was just going to stay west. [The report] never said anything about its coming to Wilmington until later. But just to be safe, I moved a few things, some pictures and a few other family mementos, to the top of my refrigerator.

Joe Szarejko, police chief (1998 to 2018): I got to the firehouse that morning [August 28] around 6 to watch the Weather Channel with Chief [Ken] March. I checked the river height before going in; it was already rising at that point. Around 15 minutes later I went back out to check it, and the water had risen three feet in just that time. That's when I knew we were in trouble, 'cause I'd never seen it come up that fast before.

Monique Johnson, wife of firefighter Brian Johnson: At around 7 a.m. Brian called me and said that the high school had been opened up as an emergency shelter, and asked me if I could go down there to help out. ... As I was backing out of my garage to go to the high school, my neighbor drove by in a pickup and asked where I was going. When I told him, he shook his head: "Not in the car you're not." I climbed into his truck, and he brought me to the high school. It's only a mile-and-a-half ride, but the only thing I could say as I saw that water and devastation was "Oh my God! Oh my God!"

Susan Haughwout: I told my husband, "I have to go down [to the town clerk's office] and start moving books so they won't be damaged by floodwaters." Based on how high the water had been in '38 and how high our building sits, I figured I needed to move anything in our vault that was shelved below my waist. ... I had a small team of helpers: Ann Manwaring, our state rep; Pat Johnson, the assistant town clerk; and her boyfriend, Larry Nutting. We stacked the land-record volumes onto office chairs, then wheeled them into the elevator to take to the second floor. It was relentless. ... At one point we couldn't move the filing cabinets, so Larry, who's really strong, just started ripping the drawers right out.

The water was rising "really fast" when Florence Crafts left her home, just off Route 100 north of downtown, on the morning of the storm. "My son had come over, and he got the truck started. We wanted to get as much firewood as we could loaded into the truck, but we never had the chance. We had to leave."





As the floodwaters rose, town clerk Susan Haughwout led a small team of volunteers to move vital documents, like these massive land-record volumes, from the archive vault to a higher floor.

Finally at around 10:30 I saw that the water was coming up to the sidewalk and told the group that we needed to leave and get to safety. Ann had borrowed my car to get a camera so we could document things, and when we stepped back outside, she couldn't find my keys. We took a quick look through the office, but it was hopeless. The car was parked right in the path of the water. Poor Ann was so upset, because we both knew it wouldn't survive, but I didn't care. I told her, "It's a car, it's not a big deal."

Patty Reagan, co-owner of Dot's Restaurant: Our first look inside the restaurant was around 6 that night. The building was undermined all the way around, but we were able to look in through the windows. It was funny, because the tables were all still set. They'd just floated right to the front of the building. I'll never forget that.

Florence Crafts: After the rain, the sun came out with a rainbow, so I walked down to my house. The refrigerator had flipped over; so had the big gun cabinet, which had pictures and souvenirs. In the basement there was two feet of mud. The year before, my grandsons had put on a new roof for me, because the old one had been leaking. I'd been worried about the water coming in from above, and instead it came in from the bottom.

Bert Wurzberger, resident: [At the time, Bert was weeks away from opening a downtown aquarium store; his parents, Sue and Al, owned the nearby 1836 Country Store and Norton House Quilting.] I got into the shop around 7:30 that morning. The night before, I'd moved stuff to the second floor just in case. The river wasn't that high. Within an hour it was waist-deep in the parking lot, and I was scrambling to get the last few things I could to the upstairs. Then I ran up to the Country Store to call my parents. I've seen a lot of floods, and I could tell this one was going to be the worst we'd ever experienced. "This is going to be bad," I said. "Worse than '76. What do you want me to do?" "Turn off the electricity to the buildings and leave," they said.

I just started running up and down Main Street trying to warn people about what was about to happen. I felt like Paul Revere. By this point my building had come off its foundation. There was this loud crunch, and then it just popped up like a cork. I made my way to the Vermont House, which is where I saw Ann Coleman's gallery building just pop up, slab and all, and float away. It all happened so slowly that I felt like I could have just grabbed it. That was my urge, to pull it back into place.

Susan Haughwout: As we worked, I'd go outside to check the river. A couple of times I came back inside and told the group, "It's getting really bad. We better go." And they just said, "No, we're not done yet." At one point I went out and saw that the water had breached the bridge and all this stuff was pouring over it—dumpsters, propane tanks, logs—just flying past.

"I couldn't imagine it had survived. The old girl was tougher than I thought." —Patty Reagan, on finding her restaurant intact after the storm

Al Wurzberger, Bert's dad: Two days after the storm, there were already volunteers here. One fella yelled at me, "Hey you! Come on over here. There's a crowbar—start tearing this wall off!" OK. And then somebody else said, "Well, you own it, right?" Yeah. "OK, we need crowbars; we need hammers." As days passed, we needed insulation; we needed wood. And I'd go up to W&W Building Supply, and I'd throw the stuff into my truck. We broke screw guns; we had to buy new screw guns. We wore them out.

I ordered wood from a place in Greenfield, Massachusetts. At first they told me they couldn't deliver because the roads weren't good enough, but an hour later I got a call from the owner: "We're in the goddamn wood business. We'll plank the road." That's what they did.

Slowly, things did get better. At the center of the recovery effort was the emergency shelter that had been established at the high school. Cots were set up in the gymnasium. In the library, sophomore Hannah Swanson oversaw a free child-sitting service, and the school's head cook, Joe Girardi, churned out food for anyone who came through the doors.

Monique Johnson: Because it was the end of summer, people were dropping off all this extra produce from their gardens. One day we got a big box of peaches, and somebody took them home and made peach cobbler. Joe turned a bunch of donated heirloom tomatoes into this amazing salad. Any time of day there was food available—desserts, sandwiches, anything you could imagine. The building took on a life of its own.

Nicki Steel, local photographer: It became magical the way things happened when we needed them to. One day a woman who was helping out in the kitchen came back from her break in tears. On her way home she'd passed a family doing laundry in a bucket in their front yard. She ended up stopping and taking their clothes home to wash them. I was like, "Oh my God, I bet there's a lot of people who can't do their laundry."

Literally as we're discussing this, a woman from Mount Snow—I didn't even know her—happened to overhear me and said, "I can help with that." She took out her phone, made a call to someone, then handed the phone to me. "This is Ruby from Mount Snow housekeeping" was the voice on the other line. For the next three days they drove down, picked up bags of dirty clothes from residents, and washed them in their big industrial machines.

Steve Butler, owner of North Star Bowl: I'll never forget it. They were serving gourmet food—to anyone who walked in the door. And the atmosphere—all those volunteers made you feel like the most important person in the world. It was an unbelievable feeling. It was like being hugged, when you walked into that building. It felt so good.

The community-wide recovery effort would continue for months, from a benefit concert called Floodstock that raised \$80,000, to a group of second-home owners who pooled together money to help local businesses rebuild. The nonprofit Friends of the Deerfield Valley alone raised \$175,000 to rebuild North Star Bowl.

Monique Johnson: One of the big network news shows came to town, and they wanted to know if there was one person they could highlight for their person of the

week. I remember thinking, *There's no single person to feature; it's everybody.* Everybody came together. They put on their boots and did what needed to be done.

Monique Johnson: We'd had, in the years before the flood, a couple of controversies in town that had created divisions. For some, it was quite serious. They maybe weren't as friendly with people as they once had been. But during this time of recovery, of coming together and helping out, that all disappeared. It was like this wonderful time of renewal.



On the town hall, a decades-old mark for the Hurricane of 1938 has been joined by a more recent reminder of Wilmington's endurance.

Steve Butler: I'm the most humble, thankful, grateful person in the whole wide world. I wasn't born or brought up here, but I got more help than anybody should rightfully expect for 10 lifetimes.

Florence Crafts: I guess some people thought that I shouldn't have fixed my house up, that it wasn't worth it. But it's my home. And if it happens again, I won't be here. And if I am, I'll be too old then, and I'll just pack my bag and move out. I'll let somebody else take over.

Nicki Steel: That first Saturday morning after the storm, I went downtown with paints and a brush to mark where the flood level had risen to. After all we'd gone through, after that whole first week, I felt like I needed to do that. For so long we'd looked at that '38 mark and couldn't imagine that the waters had ever gotten that high. And now we'd been through something where the water had gotten above that. I guess that by painting that new mark, I wanted to show that this had happened to us. That we had survived.



The Citgo sign, the Green Monster, Pesky's Pole—they're all here at the one-of-a-kind Wiffle Ball complex known as Little Fenway.

Team Spirit

The big-hearted story behind Vermont's Little Fenway.

While all kinds of people make pilgrimages of hundreds, even thousands of miles to visit a place dear to their hearts, it takes a special sort of devotee to bring that place back home. There's the businessman outside Atlanta, for instance, who built a three-quarter-scale White House on his property, and the California entrepreneur who re-created the Taj Mahal as a houseboat.

And then there's Vermont's own Little Fenway, a one-quarter-scale homage to Boston's c. 1912 "lyric little bandbox" that avid baseball fan Pat O'Connor built with family and friends in his Essex Junction backyard in 2001. But there's more: In 2007 they added a Little Wrigley, and 2014, a Little Field of Dreams.

Situated in a quiet residential neighborhood, the Little Fenway complex is not a roadside attraction for camera-toting fans but instead a much-loved host of Wiffle Ball tournaments for charity, most notably the Travis Roy Foundation. Founded in 1996 by former BU hockey player Travis Roy to help spinal cord injury survivors, the TRF held its first tourney here the year Little Fenway

opened and, over the next two decades, would go on to raise some \$6.4 million through the annual event. It also became the owner and caretaker of Little Fenway in 2017, when it bought the complex from the O'Connor family (who still remain deeply involved in the goings-on).

This year's TRF tournament is especially meaningful: Not only is it the 20th-anniversary event, it's also the first held since Travis Roy passed away last October, near his family's home in Colchester. In his honor, organizers are aiming to raise a record \$1 million.

"From seven teams and \$4,000 in 2001, to 32 teams and \$1 million 20 years later—that would be a real testament of how people for 25 years have felt about Travis and his foundation," says Travis's father, Lee Roy. And with everyone coming together in the first summer after Covid to mark this milestone, it will truly be, as Lee says, "the best weekend of the year."

The TRF Wiffle Ball Tournament, which is open to the public, will be held August 13–15. For more information, go to travisroyfoundation.org.



It's Officially Maple Creemee Season—Come On In and Get Yours!

Cool, creamy ice cream cones aren't the only reason to visit Vermont in the summer. We have secret swimming holes to discover, farmers markets to explore, and hiking trails to enjoy. And of course, you can while away the afternoon at The Vermont Country Store discovering the best of yesterday and today. See you soon!



Make a day of it – visit both of our stores!

WESTON | **ROCKINGHAM**
657 MAIN ST ▪ RT 100 | 1292 ROCKINGHAM RD ▪ RT 103

IN SOUTHERN VERMONT ▪ OPEN 7 DAYS A WEEK



The Vermont Country Store®

PURVEYORS OF THE PRACTICAL AND HARD-TO-FIND
802.824.3184 ▪ VermontCountryStore.com

