

Rambling Around  
Southern Vermont

Fresh Zucchini  
Recipes to Savor

See What's New at  
Shelburne Museum

S U M M E R  
2 0 2 3

# Our Vermont



*Yours to experience—the traditions, people,  
and places of the Green Mountain State*

## Art and Soul

I cannot prove this, but my guess is that there are more writers, musicians, artists, artisans, and creative energy per square mile in Vermont than can be found in any other state. Only about 645,000 people live here today, and among this historically small populace (only Wyoming has fewer), some of the most famous writers of the past century have called Vermont home. (Rudyard Kipling wrote *The Jungle Book* from an elegant home in Dummerston in 1894, so we can throw him in the mix too.) Vermont's land and people helped define the poetry of Robert Frost and David Budbill and Leland Kinsey. The novels of John Irving and Howard Frank Moshier, Annie Proulx, and Julia Alvarez and the short stories of

Shirley Jackson—all grew in the creative soil of this state. It is not by chance that Bread Loaf, one of the country's most notable writing schools, has welcomed writers and teachers from around the world to Middlebury since 1920.

Maybe it is the quiet that inspires. Or the landscape. Maybe the villages and thousands of miles of dirt roads that slow life down. Whatever the reasons, Vermont is where good work gets done.

I've been thinking about this recently since Lyman Orton showed me around

the Manchester headquarters of The Vermont Country Store. To call it a company headquarters does not capture what it is like to stroll the hallways. What I saw was the world's most impressive display of 20th-century paintings by Vermont artists.

I came to see Lyman Orton and his collection because this summer, 200 of those paintings will be displayed at two concurrent exhibitions titled "For the Love of Vermont," at Southern Vermont Arts Center in Manchester and Bennington Museum (see "The Collector," p. 29). The works come from his near-half-century quest to keep Vermont-inspired art in his home state. And if you cannot make it to a museum, the namesake companion book is out now. You can sit in an armchair, turn the pages, and see memories of a Vermont that is one person's passion to keep alive.

Anita Rafael, herself the daughter and granddaughter of artists, lives in a 19th-century Vermont farmhouse. She wrote much of the book after sitting with Lyman in front of his paintings and listening to him talk about them. "I considered it a gift to tell the story," she says.

In the magazine world, we often speak about a concept we call "sense of place." It can be difficult to define. But sometimes, a place leaves its imprint on people so indelibly that we cannot imagine them belonging anywhere else. Vermont is Lyman Orton's place.



*Mel Allen*

Mel Allen, editor@yankeepub.com

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PUBLISHER  
*Brook Holmberg*

MARKETING DIRECTOR  
*Kate Hathaway Weeks*

EDITOR IN CHIEF  
*Mel Allen*

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*Joe Bills*

PHOTO EDITOR  
*Heather Marcus*

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS  
*Edie Clark, John Fleischman,  
Bill Scheller*

CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHERS  
*Adrienne Anderson, Keller + Keller,  
Liz Neily, Oliver Parini, Michael Piazza*

*On the cover: An August sunset flares above a field of golden sunflowers in St. Albans. Photo by Adam Silverman*

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ADAM SILVERMAN (FIREWORKS);  
KEN WIEDEMANN/ISTOCK (AD BACKGROUND)

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# Master of the Lawn

*Memories of a father's devotion return with the scent of new-cut grass.*

In late spring, I like everything there is about mowing the lawn. I look forward to the first cut with the kind of eagerness reserved for special occasions. For so long the ground lies open, the grass brown and matted from the weight of winter. We wait not only for warmth but also for color—the reds and whites and yellows that come on the tips of the branches in the first warm wave, along with the brilliant greening of the grasses. There is also the smell of that new grass, crushed by the blades of the mower: puree of summer.

That smell and the mowing of my own grass will always remind me of my father. He was a master of the lawn, and he kept the task in front of him with the precision of a soldier. Our lawn was big and sloping, and eventually it included the field where my sister and I had kept donkeys and horses when we were growing up. When the animals left, my father kept the pasture razored, a thick fringe of green that was pleasant to look at from the upstairs windows of the house. “Let it grow,” my mother, widow to the lawn, would say. “It was meant to be a field.” But my father liked the sense of order that came to him through the lawn. Mowing the lawn seemed to be one of the ways he took care of us.

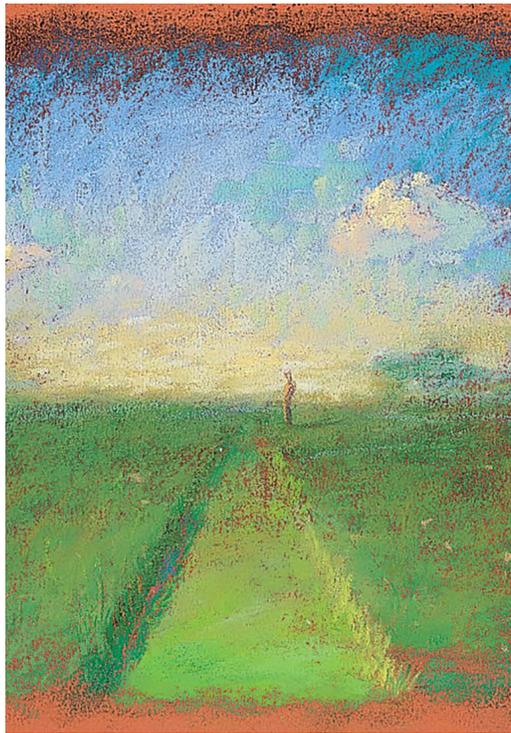
For this important job, my father wanted the best machine he could buy. This involved a great deal of searching as well as conversation with our next-door neighbor, whom my sister and I called Uncle Jack. Uncle Jack had a mowing machine called a Gravely, a tractor with the engine and the cutters up front and a little surrey rig that Uncle Jack rode while he steered and managed the cut. My father envied him that tractor, which was expensive. Until he could afford better, he used a cheery little yellow and red reel mower, which he pushed by its black handles.

He never got the Gravely, but eventually he bought a garden tractor, small and green, behind which he towed a line of mowers. He called these his “gang mowers,” an invention he and Uncle Jack rigged up in the shelter of our garage. They acquired several old-fashioned push mowers from a salvage yard, disconnected the handles, and sharpened the blades. There were six of these reels in all, and my father and Uncle Jack arranged the

mowers in a big triangle, one at the top, two in the middle, and finally three in a line at the bottom. The big mowing machine was a source of pride for my father. The mowers made a sweeping cut on our big lawn, and he liked the efficiency of it, cutting such a wide swath with only a single pass. I liked watching the whirling blades move across the growing grass and spray it out from behind in synchronized arcs, like fountains or small green breaking waves.

That fresh smell of the new-cut grass brings this to me. I remember all of this while I mow, turning in ever smaller circles on the patch of grass to the east of my house and again to the west. My mower is a simple affair and I don't treat it with the care my father would have. But, always, I can hear his voice guiding me through

the task: *Keep one tire just an inch over onto the grass you've already cut. That way you won't miss any patches.* As I make my turns, I remember how my father taught me to cut a tight corner, without running over the flowers in the side beds or, for that matter, my own foot. My father made the lawn an essential part of our lives, a type of nourishment we couldn't get anywhere else. My grass was never planted to be a lawn. It was a field for sheep and chickens. But it grows well and I keep it trim. The grass is never greener or more nostalgic than it is at this newly minted season, poised between spring and summer. —Edie Clark



# The Joy of Zucchini

*Recipes that make the most of a true taste of summer.*



## Zucchini Pancakes

*These savory pancakes are a great way to serve summer's most abundant vegetable. They go well with most meats and can even stand in as a main course. Serve pancakes plain, or top with Greek yogurt or sour cream.*

**2 cups grated unpeeled zucchini**  
**1 teaspoon kosher or sea salt**  
 **$\frac{3}{4}$  cup all-purpose flour**  
**2 teaspoons baking powder**  
 **$\frac{1}{2}$  cup grated cheddar or Colby cheese**  
**1 tablespoon thinly sliced scallions or**  
**2 tablespoons chopped fresh chives**  
**2 large eggs, lightly beaten**  
**2 tablespoons salted butter, melted**  
**1 tablespoon cold salted butter**

Toss zucchini with the salt in a colander and let stand for 10 minutes. Squeeze out any remaining liquid. In a medium mixing bowl, whisk together the flour and baking powder. Stir in the cheese and scallions, then add eggs, melted butter, and zucchini and mix until well combined.

Melt 1 teaspoon of the cold butter in a large skillet over medium heat. Spoon batter by the tablespoon into the pan, being careful not to overcrowd. Press down lightly with a spatula to flatten. Brown pancakes lightly on each side, about 4 minutes per side, then transfer to a baking sheet and keep warm in a 200°F oven until serving. Repeat with remaining batter. *Yields 12 pancakes or 4 servings.*



## Stuffed Zucchini

*This recipe is very easy, but don't skip the first step of salting the zucchini boats and letting them drain while you make the filling. This step keeps the zucchini nice and firm.*

**6 medium zucchini**  
**Kosher salt, to taste**  
**3 tablespoons olive oil**  
**1 pound sweet or spicy Italian sausages**  
(uncooked), removed from their casings  
**1 small onion, diced**  
**¼ cup finely chopped sun-dried tomatoes**  
(dried or packed in oil)  
**3 large cloves garlic, minced**  
**½ teaspoon dried basil**  
**½ teaspoon ground black pepper**  
**⅓ cup plain bread crumbs**  
**Freshly ground black pepper, to taste**  
**¾ cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese**

Slice the zucchini in half lengthwise and spoon out the flesh until the walls are about ⅓ inch thick. Roughly chop the flesh and set aside. Sprinkle the insides with a thin layer of salt, then lay the zucchini upside-down on paper towels to drain while you prepare the filling.

Preheat your oven to 400°F. In a large skillet, warm the olive oil over medium-high heat. Add the sausage and cook, breaking it up into very small pieces, until the meat begins to brown.

Add the zucchini flesh, onion, sun-dried tomatoes, garlic, basil, and pepper. Cook, stirring often, until the vegetables are soft and have lost much of their liquid, 6 to 8 minutes. Stir in the bread crumbs. Taste the mixture and add additional salt as needed.

Wipe the salt from the drained zucchini boats and lay them in a large casserole dish. Spoon in the filling, packing gently. Sprinkle each boat with about a tablespoon of grated Parmesan. Place into the oven and bake until nicely browned on top, 25 to 30 minutes. Serve warm. *Yields 6 to 8 servings.*

## Grilled Zucchini Salad

*This recipe is a classic example of grilling over high heat (around 400°F or more). Zucchini slices are cooked directly over hot coals until lightly browned, then tossed with fresh herbs, almonds, Parmesan, and lemon juice and zest. It's a fresh summer salad with an Italian accent.*

**3 tablespoons olive oil, plus more for drizzling**  
**5 medium zucchini, ends removed, cut lengthwise into ¼-inch-thick slices**  
**Kosher salt and freshly cracked black pepper, to taste**  
**Juice and zest of 1 lemon**  
**¼ cup toasted slivered almonds**  
**¼ cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese**  
**¼ cup roughly chopped parsley**  
**10 basil leaves, roughly chopped**  
**8 mint leaves, roughly chopped**  
**Coarse sea salt, for serving**

Spread an even layer of unlit charcoal (about one briquette or charcoal chunk deep) in the

bottom of the grill, then fill your chimney with charcoal. Stuff 2 sheets of newspaper into the bottom of the chimney and light it. When the coals are fully engaged (you should see flames peeking over the top), pour them over the unlit charcoal. When you can hold your hand 5 inches over the grate for no more than 3 to 5 seconds, it's ready. (If using a gas grill, just turn all burners to high.)

Brush the zucchini slices with the 3 tablespoons of oil and season with salt and pepper. Place the zucchini on the grill and cook for 1 to 2 minutes. Flip and cook for 1 to 2 minutes more, until it is browned in spots but not soggy. Remove from the heat and place on a cutting board.

Roughly chop the zucchini crosswise and place in a bowl. Add the lemon juice and zest, almonds, Parmesan, and herbs, and toss very gently to combine. Sprinkle with sea salt, drizzle with oil to taste, and serve immediately (this salad also works well at room temperature).  
*Yields 6 side servings.*

## Ratatouille

*When you have a lot of vegetables—including zucchini—making this stew is a good way to use them. To round out the meal, serve with pasta or cornbread.*

- 2 small eggplants, peeled and cubed**
- 2 teaspoons kosher salt, plus more to taste**
- 6 tablespoons olive oil**
- 2 medium-size onions, thinly sliced**
- 3 garlic cloves, minced**
- 2 red or green bell peppers, seeds removed, thinly sliced**
- 4 medium-size tomatoes, diced**
- 4 small zucchini, halved lengthwise and sliced into half-moons**
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh basil**
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley**
- 2 teaspoons chopped fresh oregano**

In a colander, toss eggplant with salt. Let sit 30 minutes; then rinse well and dry thoroughly.

Heat oil in a large frying pan over medium-high heat. Add onions, eggplants, garlic, and peppers; cook, stirring often, until softened, 8 to 10 minutes.

Add tomatoes and cook until most of the liquid evaporates. Add zucchini and cook until tender, about 10 minutes more. Stir in basil, parsley, and oregano; then taste and add more salt if you like. *Yields 6 to 8 servings.*

## Zucchini Noodle Lasagna

*This zucchini noodle lasagna is actually a no-noodle lasagna recipe, making it a great choice for gluten-free eaters. Imagine strips of zucchini acting as pasta. Serve with (regular or gluten-free) bread; you'll want to sop up all the juices.*

**2–3 large zucchini (about 1½ pounds)**  
**2 tablespoons olive oil, divided**  
**1½ teaspoons kosher salt, divided**  
**½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper, divided**  
**2 cups canned diced tomatoes with their juice, divided**  
**½ tablespoon fresh rosemary, chopped**  
**¼ cup fresh basil, very thinly sliced into ribbons, divided**  
**8 ounces fresh mozzarella (packed in water), cut into very thin slices, divided**  
**1 cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese, divided**  
**5 ounces ripe tomatoes, very thinly sliced**

Preheat the oven to 400°F and set a rack to about 5 inches below the heating element. Cut the ends off the zucchini. Cut each zucchini in half crosswise, then lengthwise into slices about ¼-inch thick.

Pour 1 tablespoon olive oil into each of two rimmed baking sheets, and spread it around evenly. Arrange the zucchini slices in a single layer on the sheets, turning once to coat with oil. Sprinkle each sheet with ¼ teaspoon salt and ¼ teaspoon pepper. Roast until the slices sizzle and begin to brown, 12 to 15 minutes.

Pour 1 cup diced tomatoes on the bottom of an 11×7-inch baking dish, and stir in all of the rosemary and 1 tablespoon of the basil. Arrange half of the cooked zucchini slices on top of the sauce in a solid layer. Season with ½ teaspoon salt, ¼ teaspoon pepper, and 1 tablespoon basil. Spoon the remaining diced tomatoes on top; then place half of the mozzarella on top and sprinkle with half of the Parmesan. Top with the remaining zucchini. Sprinkle with the remaining salt and basil. Layer the fresh tomato slices on top; then top with the remaining mozzarella and Parmesan. (You can make this several hours ahead of time; cover and refrigerate until ready to bake. Bring to room temperature before baking.)

Cover tightly with foil and bake (still at 400°F) on the middle rack 20 minutes. Remove the foil and bake until the sauce is bubbling and the cheese is golden, about 40 minutes more. *Yields 4 to 6 servings.*





## Chocolate Zucchini Cake

*The perfect summer dessert: a chocolate-zucchini cake slathered with chocolate frosting. You don't taste the zucchini, just the chocolate, but the zucchini does create a very moist crumb. Some people add chopped walnuts or chocolate chips to their loaves, but we kept it simple here with just a dash of cinnamon. Adapt as you wish. If you don't have buttermilk on hand, you can simply add 1½ teaspoons of lemon juice to regular milk and let it sit for 10 minutes.*

### FOR THE CAKE

**½ cup unsalted butter, softened, plus more for greasing loaf pans**  
**½ cup vegetable oil**  
**1¼ cups granulated sugar**  
**2 large eggs, at room temperature**  
**1 teaspoon vanilla extract**  
**½ cup buttermilk**  
**2½ cups all-purpose flour, plus more for flouring loaf pans**

**¼ cup cocoa powder**  
**1 teaspoon baking soda**  
**1 teaspoon table salt**  
**½ teaspoon baking powder**  
**½ teaspoon cinnamon**  
**2 cups grated zucchini, squeezed to remove any excess juice**

### FOR THE FROSTING

**½ cup unsalted butter, softened**  
**1 cup plus 2 tablespoons confectioners' sugar**  
**½ cup cocoa powder**  
**½ teaspoon vanilla extract**  
**⅛ teaspoon table salt**  
**1–2 tablespoons milk or heavy cream**

Grease two standard loaf pans with butter, then sprinkle with flour to coat. Shake to remove excess. Preheat your oven to 325°F and set a rack to the middle position.

In a medium bowl, use a handheld or standing

mixer to cream the butter, oil, and sugar together for 1 minute, scraping the bottom with a spatula halfway through. Add the eggs and vanilla, and beat for an additional minute, scraping once more. Add the buttermilk and beat until blended.

In a separate bowl, whisk together the dry ingredients, then add to the butter-sugar mixture. Mix well, scraping the bowl as needed. Stir in zucchini until evenly combined. Divide the batter among the loaf pans.

Bake until a toothpick inserted into the center of each pan comes out clean, and the cakes are beginning to pull away from the sides, 45 to 55 minutes. Remove cakes from pans and let cool.

Now, make the frosting: In a medium bowl, use a standing or handheld mixer to beat the butter with the confectioners' sugar for 1 minute. Add cocoa powder, vanilla, and salt, and beat for another minute or two. Add enough milk or cream to reach your desired consistency, then spread over the tops of the cooled cakes. *Yields 2 cakes.*

Local Flavor



# Take Your Pick

*Come for the bountiful berries or the family fun—or why not both?—at Owl's Head Blueberry Farm in Richmond.*



**O**n Tuesday evenings in the summer, Owl's Head Blueberry Farm in Richmond transforms into something beyond just a pretty pick-your-own destination. Families descend on the property to stock up on berries, to picnic, and to take a listen (or a twirl) to the sounds of a live local band. On a prime August evening, as many as a thousand people may fill the scene. "The land forms something like a natural amphitheater, so the acoustics are really cool," says Rachel Gray, who owns the farm with her husband, Ryan. But it's not exactly slim pickings for visitors the rest of the week, either. Owl's Head spreads across 30 acres, five of which are home to more than 3,000 highbush blueberry plants. We recently caught up with Rachel, who lives on the farm with her husband and their two young sons, Waylon and Ethan, as Owl's Head was gearing up for another strong summer season. —*Ian Aldrich*



Rachel and Ryan Gray  
with their boys

### **You and your husband bought the blueberry farm in 2016. What was the appeal for you?**

We both grew up in Vermont's Upper Valley and worked on berry and vegetable farms in high school for summer jobs. So we had that background. Before owning the farm, we were living in Colchester and we both wanted to have more land and possibly a farm. We found out that this blueberry farm was for sale—and after many conversations about what it would look like, all the logistics and the commitment of it—we eventually decided to take the leap and do it. And so far it's been great, though it's definitely a lot to manage at times.

### **Tell us a little about the work that's involved in running an operation like yours.**

A big task is the pruning. Just focusing on that can take weeks, in the winter and spring. Then there's all the mulching you need to do, and fertilizing and staying on top of the weeds. And in the summer there's a fair amount of mowing. Plus, we want to keep the field friendly, so families feel comfortable coming here to picnic. Around all of that is just the usual odds and ends that come with owning and managing a business.

### **Beyond the berries, you've also dedicated part of your land to supporting bees and other pollinators. What was behind that decision?**

Two years ago in May, I was out in the fields and it was quiet, whereas usually at that time of year you can hear the droning from all the bees. That got us worried. So we brought in some bees, who did their job and helped

us have a strong berry season. But it got us thinking that maybe this wasn't just a blip and that we needed to intentionally attract more pollinators. So we started working with a program at UVM to help us reassess our farming practices and prioritize things like growing flowering shrubs.

### **How long does your picking season run?**

It varies, but generally we're ready for picking by the second week of July and stay open through August.

### **What do you think explains the magical draw that pick-your-own farms like Owl's Head have for so many people?**

The process of picking can feel meditative. I've definitely had customers tell me that they hadn't planned on getting that many berries that day, but they just couldn't stop. I also think that people want to be connected to where their food comes from, and a place like ours is the perfect experience for them to be on a farm, pick their own food, and be part of that experience.

### **IF YOU GO**

■ **Owl's Head Blueberry Farm** is located at 263 Blueberry Farm Road in Richmond. For information about visiting, go to the Owl's Head website (which also has details on the farm's other offerings, including 100 percent wool yarn from a resident flock of Shetland sheep): [owlsheadfarm.com](http://owlsheadfarm.com)

Local Flavor

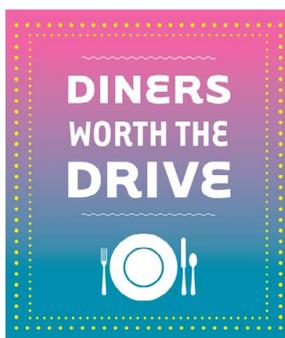
# True Blue

*For more than 70 years, Bennington's Blue Benn diner has been a beacon for comfort-food fans.*



John Getchell has something of a taste for shenanigans. After he bought Bennington's Blue Benn diner and reopened it in early 2021, the sign out front began advertising things like "Important PSA: It's National Eat What You Want Day" and "Blue Benn Doughnuts: The Original Hole Food." On April 1 this year, the Blue Benn Facebook page announced the historic diner would be relocating tout suite to, of all places, Manchester ("Must be the sign of the apocalypse!" wrote one commenter).

And then there was the time, some years ago while walking his dogs on a beach in Maine, that Getchell managed to convince the late Barbara Bush that his dogs were a breed called Acadian Langoustiers. "I told her this whole story about how I had to smuggle them into the country because they're not allowed in the United States, because they go into the water and catch lobsters and it's against the law," he recalls, chuckling. (He later confessed to the former first lady that they were actually Bouviers.)



For all his playfulness, though, Getchell couldn't be more serious about the Blue Benn, a vintage Silk City Diner car that's been a Bennington landmark since 1948. The diner was put on the culinary map by owners Sonny and Mary Lou Monroe starting in the 1970s; thanks largely to the strength of Sonny's cooking (Getchell calls him a "visionary" chef), the Blue Benn

not only inspired deep local loyalty but also attracted foodies from far and wide, including celebs such as Gwyneth Paltrow and James Gandolfini. As recounted in the recent book *Sonny's Blue Benn: Feeding the Soul of a Vermont Town*, the Monroes made their diner the pride of its community.

With Sonny's passing in late 2019 and Covid arriving a few months later, Mary Lou put the diner up for sale in July 2020. Getchell, who had formerly owned a catering business as well as worked as a cook aboard sailing yachts, jumped at the chance to take the reins of the same diner that he'd loved as a Bennington College student in the '80s.



The Blue Benn's entry vestibule offers a cozy shelter when there's a wait to be seated—which, given the diner's fame both locally and beyond, is sometimes inevitable.



LEFT: Owner John Getchell with a token of the Blue Benn's recent appearance in the national TV spotlight, as a featured small business on *The Late Show with Stephen Colbert*. BELOW: Two trademarks of today's Blue Benn: the diner's unofficial mascot, Pooka, and the ever-changing attention-getting outdoor sign.

"But I wouldn't have done it if I couldn't keep the Blue Benn basically the same," he says, and nods at the diner's long front counter. "See all the wear marks on the edge? Those are people's elbows, you know. That's the patina of all that time as the town's 'other dining room.' People tell me sometimes I should change it, and I say, 'Not on your life.'"

Indeed, there haven't been many obvious signs of the Blue Benn's new ownership aside from a top-to-bottom cleaning and some updated equipment. Many of the same staffers who worked for the Monroes came back to work for Getchell, including head chef Brian Carpenter, who helped ensure the food was as tasty as ever: pancakes as big as your plate; from-scratch doughnuts and pies; nearly two dozen signature omelets, each more tempting than the last; turkey sandwiches made from a whole bird roasted on-site.

And in a testament to Getchell's "if it ain't broke, don't fix it" philosophy, the Blue Benn's reputation remains stellar. In the past two years alone it's been singled out by the editors of *Food & Wine*, *Reader's Digest*, and *Yankee* as being among the best eateries of

its kind. Patrons who have long loved the place, meanwhile, are still coming in droves—even from overseas, Getchell notes, because Bennington College and nearby Williams College have a fair number of international alumni. "When they come to the States, they may be traveling to Chicago from Europe or something like that, and they'll treat the Blue Benn as a waypoint because it's one of their touchstones. Which is really kind of wonderful."

Getchell did launch the Blue Benn's first-ever website, and during the pandemic the diner transitioned from cash-only to credit cards ("a big leap into the 21st century," he laughs). He'd also like to bring back dinner service and maybe put his own culinary stamp on those dishes. But he believes there's only so much the Blue Benn can change and still remain authentically what it is.

"Basically, my job is just taking care of the diner. I think of it as being a sailing ship of sorts, and it's up to me to keep it on course," says Getchell, who admits that the job so far has been something of a seven-days-a-week commitment. "Maybe eventually," he muses with a smile, "the diner will take care of me." —*Jenn Johnson*

## IF YOU GO

■ **The Blue Benn** is open 6 a.m.–2 p.m. Tuesday through Sunday at 314 North St., Bennington. 802-442-5140; [bluebenn.com](http://bluebenn.com)



CAROLINE BONNIVIER SNYDER/BENNINGTON BANNER (PORTRAIT); JOHN GETCHELL (SIGN)

# Drive Time

*Filled with classic Green Mountain State scenery and welcoming small towns, southern Vermont is a road-tripper's delight.*

Jamaica State Park is a detour well worth making while exploring southern Vermont by car this summer.

PHOTO BY OLIVER PARIN

## Destinations

Vermont's twisty blacktops may not be the quickest way to get around, but they seem to have been made for that most delightful of summer pastimes, the poke-along ramble.

And for serious poking along and rambling, there may be no better part of the state than its southeast corner, where the West River takes its sweet time getting to the Connecticut. Start in Brattleboro and go against the river's flow, through a 100-mile skein of villages, covered bridges, state parks, and attractions steeped in Green Mountain tradition.

### Brattleboro to Townshend

Brattleboro is a town bustling with bookstores, ethnic restaurants, and galleries. Pottery, glass, fiber art, furniture, and an upstairs devoted to fine art and photography make **Vermont Artisan Designs** a must-stop before heading out of town. Pop into **Mocha Joe's Café** for coffee and locally baked treats, browse **Everyone's Books**, and maybe fatten your CD and vinyl collection at **Turn It Up!**

Leave town on Route 30, which hugs the West River and passes a right turn for the 1872 **West Dummerston Covered Bridge**, spanning the West River with the help of a stone center pier. It was a town splurge, costing taxpayers over \$7,700, and well worth it.

The first village you'll hit is Newfane, the shire town of Windham County. It clusters sedately around a classic town green dominated by the Greek Revival **Windham County Courthouse**. The elegant white building to the rear of the courthouse is the **Four Columns Inn**; its new restaurant, **Andrea's Table**,

features a farm-to-table menu. Linger long enough at the huge **Newfane Flea and Farmers Market** up the road, and getting a table at Andrea's when it opens for dinner might be doable.

Another venerable covered bridge, the **Scott Covered Bridge**, spans the West River just past the village of Townshend. This one isn't crossable by car, but it's worth a walk for a look at its mix of



TOP RIGHT: Historic brick buildings filled with locally owned shops and galleries encourage browsing along Main Street in Brattleboro. ABOVE: Revisit the era before music streaming at Brattleboro's Turn It Up! RIGHT: A peaceful view of the 1872 West Dummerston Covered Bridge over the West River.



ALL PHOTOS BY OLIVER PARINI



LEFT: Perfect for those who love both nostalgia and serendipity, The Vermont Country Store in Weston stocks merchandise as eclectic as its decor (check out the genuine potbelly stove). BOTTOM ROW, FROM LEFT: The colorful wares of D. Lasser Ceramics in Londonderry; in Lasser's studio, production artist Jenna Daly prepares a piece of pottery for glazing.



lattice, arch, and kingpost designs. Just ahead is a different sort of span: the narrow steel drive across the Townshend Dam, leading to a recreation area with picnic tables and a sandy swimming beach on **Townshend Lake**.

### Townshend to Weston

Route 30 now joins Route 100 and continues north. Tiny Jamaica stands at the threshold of the vast Green Mountain National Forest, and gives its name to **Jamaica State Park**, tucked along a bend of the West River. Trails lead to Ball Mountain Lake and to Hamilton Falls, an impressive series of pools and cataracts.

Leave Route 30 when 100 breaks off and heads up to Londonderry, where the gallery of **D. Lasser Ceramics** spills onto the lawn in a riot of color. Daniel

Lasser and his artisans craft a brightly expressive line of tableware, sculptures, and garden ceramics in a vivid palette and a vocabulary of designs that make most pottery look drab.

Ahead lies Weston, a hill town whose fame long surpassed its size because of two landmark institutions: the **Weston Playhouse** and **The Vermont Country Store**. In 1946, writer Vrest Orton drew on memories of his grandfather's general store in northern Vermont and put together a mail-order catalog of classic, durable items, then opened a store to go with it. The Vermont Country Store still occupies its original premises in Weston, purveying country clothing, practical housewares, hard-to-find old-time products, Vermont foods, and too much more to mention. Across the town green, the Weston Playhouse has presented summer stock since 1937.



A vintage car looks right at home outside the c. 1841 Grafton Village Store building, now home to MKT: Grafton.



### Weston to Rockingham

At Weston, the route leaves the West River and Route 100 behind, taking Chester Mountain Road, with its fiddler's elbow turn, onto Route 11. That leads you to Chester, where Scottish masons long ago created a "stone village" that oddly stands apart in a state known for granite quarrying, but where wood for building houses was always closer at hand. Chester's village green stretches into an elongated mall, accommodating inns and cafés. Here, **Inn Victoria** and the **Fullerton Inn** are possible overnight choices, the first for its Victorian luxe and the second for feeling more like a small country hotel, which it's always been. Spending the night or not, it's pleasant to enjoy lunch on the Fullerton's broad veranda—or, if a picnic is more in order, pick up salads and sandwiches at **Southern Pie Café** (obviously a slab or two of their namesake offering wouldn't hurt, either).

From Chester, head south on Route 35 to Grafton, a town reclaimed from obscurity by a forward-thinking foundation ... and by one of Vermont's oldest artisan food traditions. During the 1960s, the Windham Foundation set about the task of remaking the entire town of Grafton into the epitome of a New England village. The centerpiece of the project is the foundation-owned **Grafton Inn**, occupying a grand colonnaded structure built as a hostelry in 1801. Dine here

at the 1801 Tavern, or the informal Phelps Barn Pub. Also under the Windham Foundation umbrella is the **Grafton Village Cheese Company**, crafters of cheddar using milk from small local farms since 1892. Sampling is no longer available at the factory, but the cheeses (the two-year-aged is ambrosial) are for sale at **MKT: Grafton**, a block from the inn.

Next, wander down Route 121 along Saxtons River to the town named after it, and jog north via Pleasant Street and Rockingham Hill Road to Rockingham, for a look at one of Vermont's oldest unchanged buildings: the chastely beautiful **Rockingham Meeting House**, erected in 1787 to serve as both a place of worship and a center of civic life. In all the years since, it's never been



TOP ROW, FROM LEFT: The high slated spire of the c. 1835 Chester Baptist Church rises above the eastern edge of Chester's village green; a sampling of the cache of Grafton Village Cheese Company products at MKT: Grafton; a view of the cheerfully overstuffed interior at MKT. RIGHT: Rescued and renovated by the Windham Foundation in 1965, the Grafton Inn is the gracious cornerstone of Grafton.

## Destinations

altered, inside or out. The building is open to visitors daily, and there's no more serene a spot in Vermont's built environment. A few centuries away, on Route 11, Rockingham is also home to another outpost of **The Vermont Country Store**, as rambling and jam-packed as the Weston original.

### Rockingham to Putney

South along Route 5 at Bellows Falls, Vermonters' penchant for revival and reuse comes across in an old railroad and canal town that's been stylishly snapped back from the doldrums—in this case, not by a foundation but by the grit and imagination of local artists and entrepreneurs.

The **Windham Antique Center** is a treasure trove at the heart of Bellows Falls. The center is a small town in itself, a warren of rooms filled with vintage furniture, porcelain, jewelry, lamps, and restoration hardware—and an unexpected sideline, a natural history collection that includes geodes bursting with color. Around the corner, on a quaint, narrow alley leading down to the river, creators of present-day art and artisanship work and display at **River Artisans Cooperative** and the **Canal Street Art Gallery**. It's likely they'll be having a cup of joe right nearby, at the cozy **Rockingham Roasters** or **Flat Iron Cooperative**.

If it takes more than coffee to hit the spot, continue down to Putney and **Curtis' All-American Barbeque** (just check the Facebook page first for news on this year's opening date). Pork ribs and pulled chicken are the



mainstays here, with traditional sides like yams, collard greens, and corn muffins. Curtis Tuff was a local culinary legend for over 40 years; since his passing in 2020, his daughter Sarah has kept at the job of long, slow smoking and serving “till sold out.” Look for the old blue school bus and the outdoor tables.

You're almost back in Brattleboro now. But as you drive south through Putney on Route 5—especially if there are little voices entreating you from the back seat—you can't miss **Santa's Land**, an old-school roadside attraction that's been here since 1957. Every weekend from late July through Christmas, this is the place to meet Santa and his elves, ride a Christmas-themed train and carousel, play a merry game of mini golf, navigate the funhouse, and have a hot dog and cocoa. It's not high-tech, but it's good old-fashioned fun ... like a summer drive in Vermont. —*Bill Scheller*



TOP RIGHT: From tiny figurines to furnishings you'd need a truck to take home, the Windham Antique Center overflows with the decor of yesteryear. BOTTOM ROW, FROM LEFT: Sarah Tuff, who is carrying on a family legacy at Curtis' All-American Barbeque in Putney; a hearty helping of Curtis's ribs, along with home-style sides.



# Polishing a Gem

*Now in its eighth decade as one of Vermont's favorite attractions, Shelburne Museum is shining brighter than ever.*



Just 20 minutes south of Vermont's biggest city, Shelburne Museum offers a storybook landscape filled with history, art, and fun.

PHOTO BY ANDY DUBACK



FROM LEFT: “Pet Friendly: The Art of Stephen Huneck,” including the playful *Lucky Dogs (Eye on the Pie)*, is at Shelburne Museum till Oct. 22, while “Built from the Earth: Pueblo Pottery from the Anthony and Teresa Perry Collection,” June 24–Oct. 22, showcases Indigenous art from the Southwest, such as this Acoma Pueblo jar crafted in the 1890s.

In the run-up to opening day at Shelburne Museum this year, director of advancement Leslie Wright happened to bump into a delivery driver looking to unload a semi-trailer full of turf. “Turf? You want the buildings and grounds department,” she told him, quite reasonably. Turns out, it was special artificial turf to be installed for an upcoming exhibit on toy design, allowing youngsters to frolic indoors as part of the learning experience.

That exhibit, “Object/s of Play: The Work of Cas Holman and Karen Hewitt”—along with a new installation of giant inflatable outdoor sculptures and a celebration of the whimsical folk art of Vermont’s Stephen Huneck—perfectly represents what Wright sees as “a truly fun, happy, joyous season” for northern New England’s largest art and history museum in 2023.

“We’re back open seven days a week for the first time since Covid,” she says. “So it’s a full museum operation again, and there’s a lot to celebrate.”

Perhaps the biggest reason for celebration was announced shortly before opening day on May 13: Shelburne Museum not only has received a jaw-dropping gift of Native American art amassed by collectors Anthony and Teresa Perry, but also will build a \$12.6 million center to house these items and its own holdings of Indigenous art—together representing nearly 80

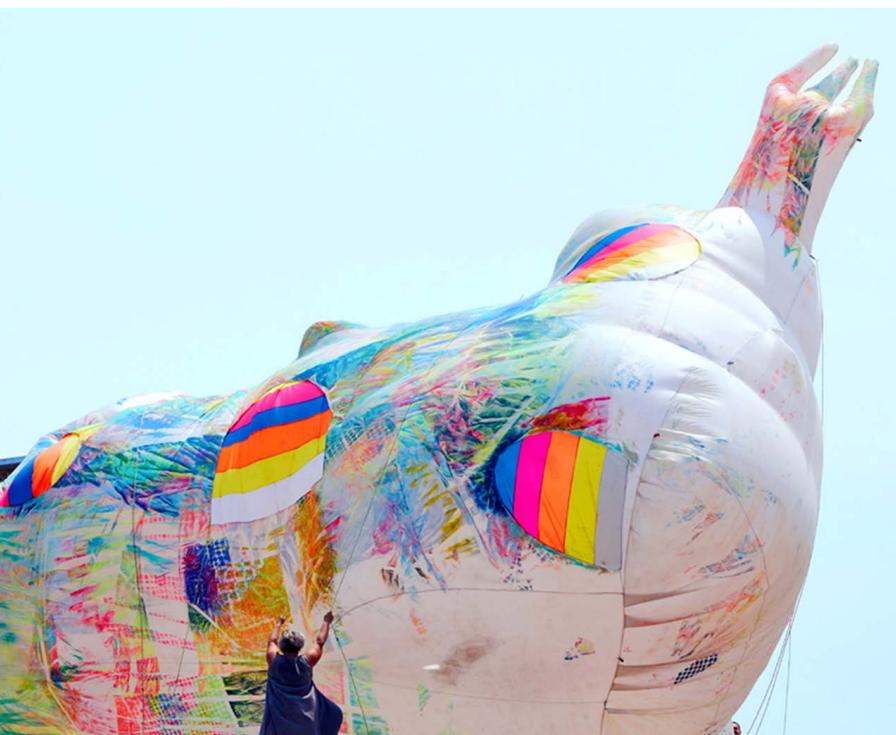
tribes from coast to coast. Undertaken in collaboration with Native American advisors and scholars, the initiative has been called the most significant addition to Shelburne Museum since its founding in 1947.

Ground-breaking is still months away for the new Perry Center for Native American Art, which will become the 40th building on the museum’s sprawling 45-acre campus. But visitors this summer can get a preview of its treasures in the upcoming exhibit “Built from the Earth: Pueblo Pottery from the Anthony and Teresa Perry Collection,” put together by Victoria Sunnergren, recently hired as the museum’s first-ever associate curator of Native American art.

“Her background is in Southwest pottery, so this is a terrific first exhibition for her to do for us,” says Wright. “She’s really attuned to the nuances and is working with representatives from many of the Pueblo cultures to make sure we represent these pieces accurately and include tribal language wherever we can.”

Aside from planning its slate of must-see exhibits for this season, Shelburne Museum has been busy with a number of other updates, offering fresh discoveries for those who haven’t visited in recent years. The c. 1873 Stagecoach Inn, home to the museum’s renowned folk art collection, reopened last fall after a two-year renovation that not only created a lighter, brighter space

LEFT: STEPHEN HUNECK; *Lucky Dogs (Eye on the Pie)*, DATE UNKNOWN. WOODCUT PRINT, 18½x25½ IN. COLLECTION OF SHELBURNE MUSEUM, GIFT OF THE FRIENDS OF DOG MOUNTAIN, INC. 2022-3.19. PHOTO BY ANDY DUBACK. RIGHT: ARTIST FORMERLY KNOWN (ACOMA PUEBLO), *POLYCHROME OLLA*, 1890S. PERRY COLLECTION OF NATIVE AMERICAN ARTS. PT144.



FROM LEFT: Fantastical works like Claire Ashley's *Adam's Madam (Divided)* will appear across the Shelburne Museum campus during "Pop Up: Inflated Sculpture" (now through Oct. 22); among the museum's 39 buildings, one of the most recognizable is the graceful c. 1901 Round Barn, which houses a superb collection of horse-drawn carriages.

LEFT: CLAIRE ASHLEY, *ADAM'S MADAM (DIVIDED)*, 2021 ROOFTOP INSTALLATION AT KIMBALL ARTS CENTER, CHICAGO, IL. SPRAY PAINT, RIPSTOP NYLON, FAN. APPROX. 22x35x20 IN. PHOTO BY IAN AGE, COURTESY OF THE ARTIST.

but also saw the art reinstalled and reinterpreted—"placing it in a modern context, helping us understand what folk art is as we look at it through a 21st-century lens," Wright explains.

Last year brought the unveiling of another makeover, at the Dana-Spencer Textile Galleries at Hat and Fragrance, where you'll find the museum's beloved collection of quilts. A new entrance with a mini foyer helps protect the antique textiles from exterior light and humidity, while the old hanging frames have been replaced with "slant walls" to better display a rotating selection from a treasure trove of 700 quilts.

More broadly, Wright says, Shelburne Museum has been ramping up its accessibility campus-wide. In 2022 it became the first museum in Vermont to offer the use of EnChroma glasses, which helps visitors with color blindness see a full range of vibrant hues. Another boon for the visually challenged are new large-format labels available for certain galleries and special exhibits; users can view or download them online, or pick up a hard copy on-site. And to help ease visitors on the autism spectrum or with other sensory sensitivities into the museum experience, the monthly Sensory-Friendly Fridays series invites them to explore exhibits that have been specially adjusted for light and sound.

Beyond everything that's new at Shelburne Museum

these days—from exhibits to gallery makeovers to visitor aids—there's the thing that has kept people coming back for generations. This is the only museum in the world where you can come aboard a steamboat, explore a lighthouse, and ride a vintage carousel. Where you can also wander through lush gardens (22 in all) or kick back on a summer evening for a concert by the likes of Grace Potter or Sylvan Esso.

"A lot of the time, people think of museums as just these big, giant boxes that you walk around in, and everything is very, very quiet," says Wright. "But here, it's inside, it's outside, kids have room to run around, and there's so much ground to cover. That's one of the beautiful things about Shelburne Museum, I think: We aren't just a box." —Jenn Johnson

## IF YOU GO

■ **Shelburne Museum** is located at 6000 Shelburne Road, Shelburne; hours are 10 a.m.–5 p.m. daily through Oct. 22. For admission fees, visitor guides, and details on current and upcoming exhibits, including "Built from the Earth: Pueblo Pottery from the Anthony and Teresa Perry Collection" (opens June 24), go to: [shelburnemuseum.org](http://shelburnemuseum.org)

# Out & About

*A sampling of summer events across Vermont worth the drive.*

Burlington gets a jump on Independence Day festivities with a spectacular fireworks show over Lake Champlain on July 3.

PHOTO BY ADAM SILVERMAN

# JUNE

## JUNE 7-11 Burlington

*Discover Jazz Festival*  
Begun 40 years ago as a grassroots musical get-together, this festival now welcomes thousands of music fans into local clubs, restaurants, and other venues for jazzy performances by regional and international acts.

Opening this year:  
Samara Joy, recently crowned as best new artist at the 2023 Grammy Awards.  
[flynnvt.org](http://flynnvt.org)

## JUNE 16-18 Quechee

*Quechee Hot Air Balloon, Craft, and Music Festival*

The skies fill with a riot of color as New England's longest-running hot air balloon festival returns. Among the on-the-ground diversions are live music and comedy, a kids' play zone, and 50-plus artisan and food booths.  
[quecheeballoonfestival.com](http://quecheeballoonfestival.com)

## JUNE 21-22 Killington

*Killington Wine Fest*  
Sip, sip, hooray! The Killington Wine Fest returns for its 23rd year, inviting oenophiles to sample new vintages amid stunning mountain views. The event also offers a look at the resort's brand-new K1 Lodge, which will host Saturday's Grand Tasting.  
[killingtonwinefestival.com](http://killingtonwinefestival.com)



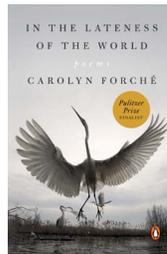
Raise your glass to the Killington Wine Fest this June 21-22.

## JUNE 23-SEP. 10 Dorset

*Dorset Theatre Festival*  
Staged in an intimate playhouse constructed from a pair of pre-Revolutionary War barns, the productions in the 2023 Main Stage season are *Misery*, based on the Stephen King horror novel; the world premiere of the comedy *Still!*; Kate Hamill's riotous *Ms. Holmes & Ms. Watson—Apt. 2B*; and the ground-breaking satire of *The Thanksgiving Play* by Native American playwright Larissa FastHorse.  
[dorsettheatrefestival.org](http://dorsettheatrefestival.org)

## JUNE 23-25 Woodstock

*Bookstock*  
Bibliophiles can rejoice in three days of appearances by prize-winning and emerging authors, art exhibits, live music, poetry slams, workshops, and a book sale. Among the literary luminaries to appear: *The New Yorker's* Andy Borowitz and Pulitzer-finalist poets Patricia Smith and Carolyn Forché.  
[bookstockvt.org](http://bookstockvt.org)



## JUNE 24-25 Webster

*RockFire*  
Celebrate central Vermont's rich granite heritage against a backdrop of former quarries as you enjoy a three-mile-long Firewalk, illuminated by thousands of candles and dozens of bonfires, leading to fire-lit art installations and musical performances.  
[rockfirevt.com](http://rockfirevt.com)

The Red Dress, an international collaborative embroidery project, premieres at SVAC in July.



# JULY

## JULY 1-SEP. 24 Manchester

*The Red Dress*  
Southern Vermont Arts Center is the first U.S. venue to host The Red Dress project, envisioned by British artist Kirstie Macleod as both a work of art and a social and cultural statement. Macleod describes the project—a magnificent red dress embroidered by 375 women from 51 countries—in an audio accompaniment, which includes the voices of those who helped create the one-of-a-kind work.  
[svac.org](http://svac.org)

## JULY 3 Burlington

*Independence Day Celebration*  
The state's largest fireworks show will light up the skies over Lake Champlain as the grand finale to an evening of food, music, and other festivities.  
[enjoyburlington.com](http://enjoyburlington.com)

## JULY 8-29 Various locations

*Farm to Ballet Project*  
Born from the idea of bringing classical dance to

rural Vermont, this series of joyful performances starring dancing vegetables and barnyard animals is held at beautiful outdoor venues including Brattleboro's Retreat Farm and Champlain Orchards in Shoreham.  
[balletvermont.org](http://balletvermont.org)

## JULY 12-30 Weston

*What the Constitution Means to Me*  
Dubbed "the best and most important new play of the year" by *The New York Times*, Heidi Schreck's one-woman show is a must-see



for anyone interested in politics, history, or thought-provoking storytelling. Performed at Walker Farm, it's a highlight of the Weston Theater Company's 2023 season, which runs from June 22-Oct. 22.  
[westontheater.org](http://westontheater.org)

ELEMENTALIMAGING/ISTOCK (BALLOON); GRAFNER/ISTOCK (WINE); ALEXLIM/ISTOCK (CONSTITUTION); THE RED DRESS WORN BY LEKAZIA TURNER OF JAMAICA, PHOTO BY MARK PICKTHALL, 2022

**JULY 14–15**

**Waterbury**

*Waterbury Arts Fest*  
Downtown Waterbury transforms into a lively outdoor art gallery and street fair with more than 100 artist exhibitors, tasty gourmet fare, and live music. [waterburyartsfest.com](http://waterburyartsfest.com)



**JULY 15–AUG. 13**

**Marlboro**

*Marlboro Music Festival*  
Created in 1951 by legendary pianist Rudolf Serkin, this world-class chamber music festival showcases the talents of young musicians and master artists side-by-side. [marlboromusic.org](http://marlboromusic.org)

**JULY 22**

**Montpelier**

*Maple Roots Festival*  
The eighth-generation Morse Farm Maple Sugarworks hosts a homegrown get-together of area musicians and community members that features local food and beverages, kids' activities, and plenty of great tunes. [maplerootsfest.com](http://maplerootsfest.com)

**JULY 28–AUG. 6**

**Wilmington**

*Vermont Blueberry Festival*  
With 10 full days of berry-centric fun, you're bound to get your fill of summer's favorite fruit—not to mention there's a craft fair, a block party, a teddy bear picnic, performances by circus artists, a flotilla of blueberry-themed decorated boats, and a "blue eyes" contest. [vermontblueberryfestival.com](http://vermontblueberryfestival.com)



Meet and greet the four-legged residents at the UVM Morgan Horse Farm on Vermont Day.

# AUG

**AUG. 5**

**Weybridge**

*Vermont Day*  
Those who love horses and Vermont history will want to gallop to the UVM Morgan Horse Farm for a day celebrating the official animal of the Green Mountain State. See demonstrations of this versatile, sturdy breed; take advantage of petting opportunities and educational activities; and picnic on the grounds of this beautiful national historic site. [uvm.edu/morgan](http://uvm.edu/morgan)

**AUG. 13**

**Greensboro**

*Vermont Cheesemakers Festival*  
The Highland Center for the Arts is the backdrop for the best and most innovative examples of the cheesemaker's craft, courtesy of 30-plus award-winning producers. There will be cheesemaking and cooking demos and workshops, and lots of goodies

to sample, from every kind of cheese imaginable to Vermont-made specialty foods, beer, wine, and spirits. Tickets are available online now, so get yours before they sell out. [vtcheesefest.com](http://vtcheesefest.com)

**AUG. 15–19**

**Rutland**

*Vermont State Fair*  
Celebrating agriculture since 1846! Reach new heights on the Ferris wheel, thrill to the action of the demolition derby, try your luck at games of chance, ride the carousel, enjoy 4-H livestock shows, indulge in some tasty treats (fried dough, anyone?), and much, much more. [vermontstatefair.org](http://vermontstatefair.org)

**AUG. 17–20**

**Springfield**

*Stellafane Convention*  
One of the oldest and largest assemblies of night-sky enthusiasts returns with astronomy talks, telescope-making demos, swap tables, and lots of heavenward gazing. [stellafane.org](http://stellafane.org)

**AUG. 23–27**

**Middlebury**

*Middlebury New Filmmakers Festival*  
Showing more than 125

features and shorts across all genres, the MNFF spotlights the work of first- and second-time filmmakers all over town, with screenings at Town Hall Theater, the Marquis Theatre, Dana Auditorium, and Twilight Hall, plus outdoor screenings at Swift House Inn. [midfilmfest.org](http://midfilmfest.org)



**AUG. 26**

**Hartford**  
*Quechee Scottish Games and Festival*

Don your kilt for some good old-fashioned Celtic fun at the Quechee Polo Field, where lively music, an array of microbrewed beers, sheepdog trials, a pipe band competition, Highland games, and a dancing competition will all combine to transport attendees, at least temporarily, to Scotland. [quecheegames.org](http://quecheegames.org)

MARGOT SMITHSON FOR THE UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT MORGAN HORSE FARM; STUDIOCASPER/ISTOCK (VIOLIN); XAVIERARNAU/ISTOCK (KILT); AZURE-DRAGON/ISTOCK (BLUEBERRIES)



# The Collector

*“For the Love of Vermont” opens a window onto Lyman Orton’s mission to find and save the art from a place he cherishes.*

**F**or nearly half a century I have written about people and places I have known in New England, and I’ve never met anyone whose life has been defined by a place—and who has *defined* a place—as much as Lyman Orton. That place is Vermont. Or rather, the Vermont he grew up in during the 1940s and ’50s, as well as the Vermont that his parents and grandparents might have known.

I meet him in The Vermont Country Store’s corporate offices in Manchester. Along with his three sons, Orton is the proprietor of this multimillion-dollar business that has for decades sold nostalgia and homespun goods via its catalogs, website, and two actual country stores—

Works by American master Rockwell Kent (1882–1971) are among the gems of The Lyman Orton Collection. Shown here: *Mount Equinox, Summer*, painted while Rockwell was in Vermont in the early 1920s.

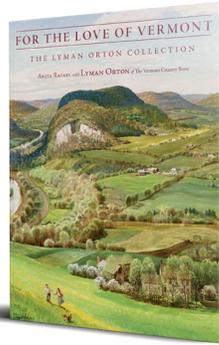
but that is a story for another day. I am visiting because Orton has amassed the largest private collection of 20th-century Vermont art in the world, and this year, from early July to early November, anyone who visits Bennington Museum or Southern Vermont

Arts Center can view 200 of his favorite and most notable pieces. The exhibits are called “For the Love of Vermont: The Lyman Orton Collection,” and there is a companion book with the same title, written by Orton and Anita Rafael and filled with the stories of both the artists

and the scenes that they painted.

Orton is an energetic and fit 81 now, and as he gives a tour of the art-filled offices with Rafael, he often pauses to explain what a particular painting says to him. This takes time because there is barely a foot of wall anywhere that does not hold a framed canvas. As he talks, his hands are in motion, and it's as if he is speaking of two things at once: art and memory. They seem inseparable. We hear about how art speaks to the viewer—and it is clear, as we look, that Orton listens.

He is a seventh-generation Vermonter, raised on stories about his ancestors and the certainty there is no place on earth like Vermont. He tells of growing up in the 1940s in Weston, one of the most beautiful small villages in the Green Mountain State. The West River and Cold Spring Brook meet here and flow through the town, and modest mountains rise in the near distance. There are farms and orchards. His family's handsome brick home sat beside the town green. Fewer than 500 people lived there, and everyone knew the Ortons. A young Lyman played in the woods, fished the streams, skied and skated in winter. Across the green, his



parents, Vrest and Mildred, ran The Vermont Country Store, which they founded in 1946. From the beginning, he worked there, too, and saw the deep pull of nostalgia for customers from across the country.

In his 20s, now married, he went to auctions, looking for antiques. He befriended Barbara Melhado, an antiques dealer and art appraiser who always arrived early, just as he did. She became his mentor. They looked

for the work of homegrown Vermont artists as well as painters from elsewhere who gravitated to the Vermont landscape. Orton and Melhado focused mostly on the half century from 1920 to 1970. "You should buy that," she would say, and he paid attention. They saw paintings that depicted a vanishing way of life being bought by dealers and collectors who moved them to distant places. To Orton he was not a collector; he did not seek art to enhance his estate. He was a hunter pursuing what he calls "escaped art." He speaks of "repatriating" the works, as if they were friends who had been sent away from their homeland.

A few years ago, he was in an art gallery in Carmel, California, and found himself standing in front of a

dramatic painting of a horse-drawing contest at a Vermont country fair titled *Good Boys*. "It was painted in 1957 by Cecil Crosley Bell—how that painting got all the way from Vermont to Carmel, I have no idea," he says. "There is nothing better than walking into a gallery in some other part of the country and suddenly recognizing a painting of Vermont. So I paid what I judged was a fair price and brought the local scene that Bell had captured back home, 3,000 miles, to Vermont."

*Story continues on page 35*



LEFT: Lyman Orton at The Vermont Country Store mail-order office, 2022.

INSET: The new book *For the Love of Vermont: The Lyman Orton Collection*, whose 200-plus pages are filled with stunning artwork from the Green Mountain State.

LYMAN ORTON PORTRAIT BY KEN BURRIS



ABOVE: *County Fair Ox Pull*, by Irwin Hoffman (1901–1989). Born in Boston to Russian immigrant parents, Hoffman worked mainly in New York City but spent summers in Cavendish; his home and studio there were eventually sold to the Russian author Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn.

LEFT: *Carnival at Royalton, Vermont*, by Cecil Crosley Bell (1906–1970). As Orton writes in his book, “In this painting I’d like to point out the bandstand in the center. These structures are still common on town greens all around Vermont. ... Whenever I see a town green I see it as a tangible symbol of a democratic way of life, because the center of town is where people come to attend to their civic affairs.”

***Clouds Over Manchester*** by Jay Connaway (1893–1970), the first director of the school at Southern Vermont Arts Center and a longtime art teacher in Manchester.





Among the most prized works in Orton's collection are those by Italian-American artist Luigi Lucioni (1900–1988), whose paintings are in the permanent collections of some 30 major museums, including the National Gallery of Art and the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Shown here are Lucioni's *Pillars of Vermont* (top) and *The Birches* (below).

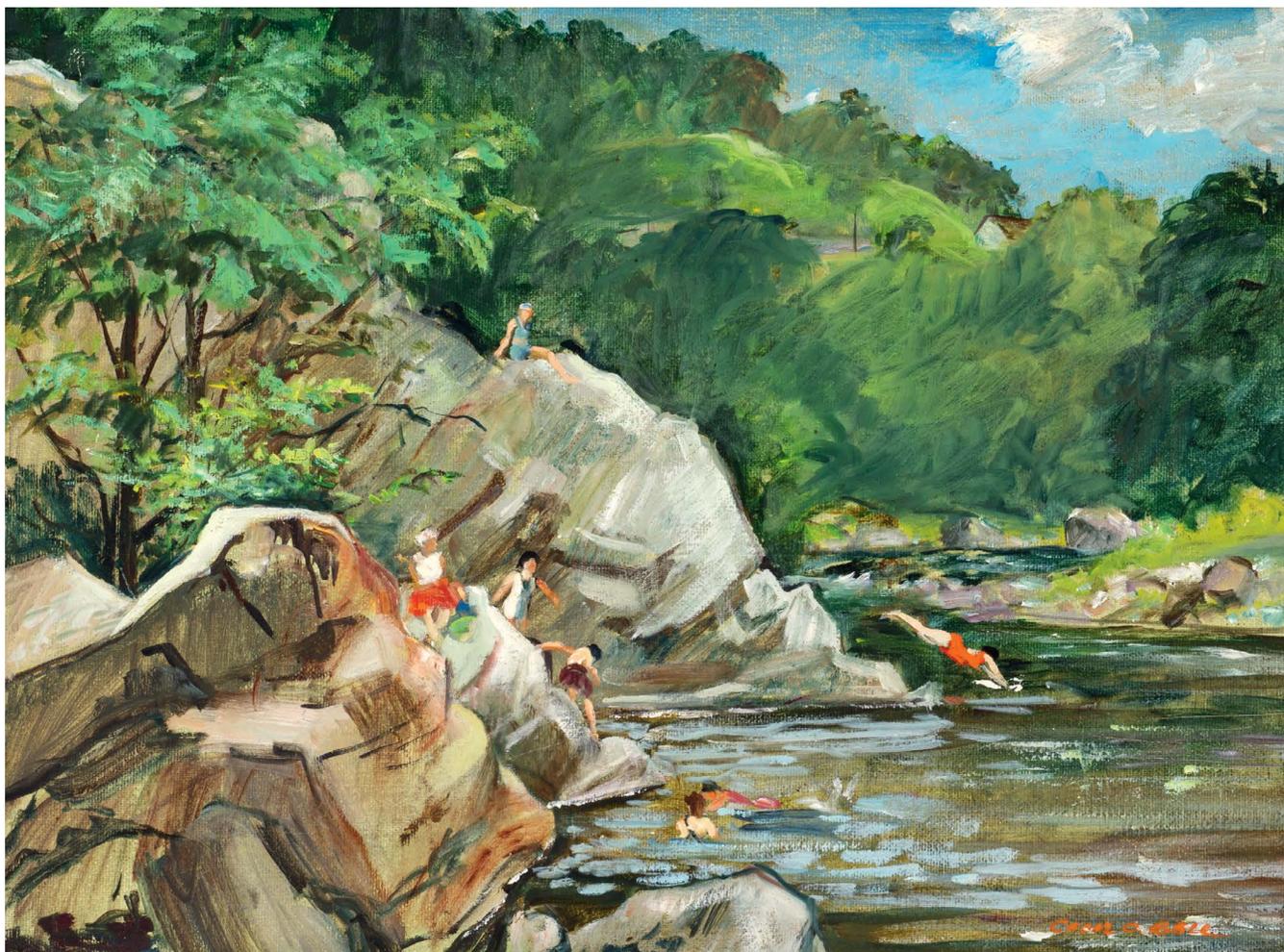


RIGHT: *Adjusting the Plow* by Leo Blake (1887–1976). Like many other painters of Vermont at the time, Blake—who taught art at Williams College as well as at the Berkshire Museum in Massachusetts—was drawn to scenes of farmers and their workhorses and oxen.

BELOW: *Another Day* by Paul Starrett Sample (1896–1974).



*Swimming Hole* by Cecil Crosley Bell (1906–1970), a New York–based artist who spent summers in a rustic log cabin in Stockbridge for three decades.



Orton is private about how many pieces of Vermont art he owns, and what he has paid over the years; it is safe to say hundreds and many thousands, respectively. He knows that people who have made their fortune may spend it on yachts and cars and castle-like estates, but, “What would I do with a yacht?” he asks, in a tone that seems to say, *You do know I am a Vermonter?*

Vermont was a poor state during the Depression, and for decades after. But artists found emotion and beauty in the birches, the country traditions, the resilient and solid people. When Orton shows me paintings of country fairs and horse racing and draft horse pulls, he is back there, he is in the painting. He stops at a Harry Shokler painting of a small church in the village of Peru. Shokler bartered his works for nearly everything he needed, Orton says, then adds, “My parents were married in that church.” And here is another by Shokler: Heavy snow has fallen on Weston. A teenage boy on skis glides past the green and, beside it, the very house where Orton grew up.

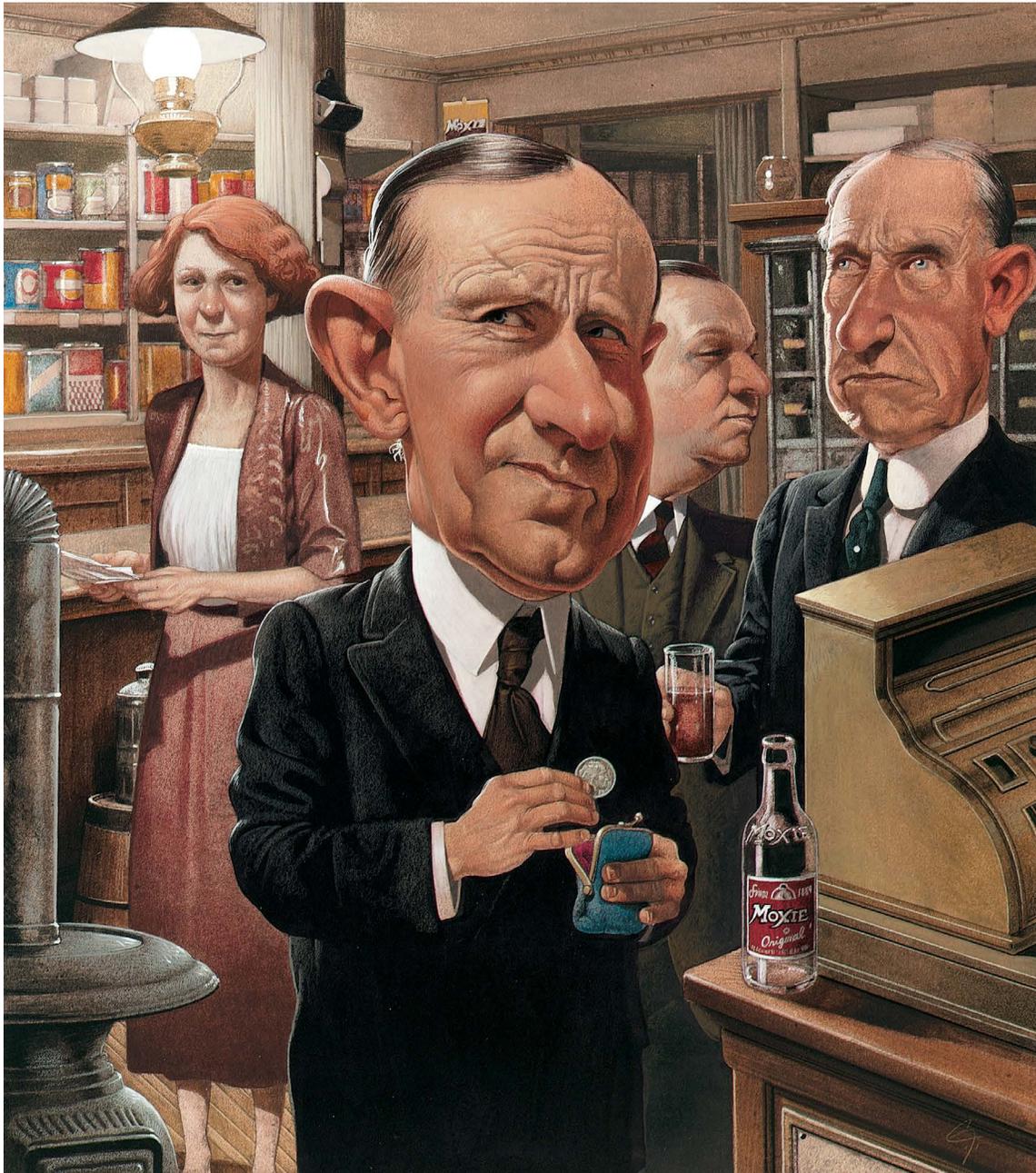
Anita Rafael, who for months worked closely with

Orton on the book *For the Love of Vermont*, turns to me and says, “The collection is really his autobiography. It is his memoir.”

In the book she writes, “[B]y being the highest bidder on the dozens of artworks of Vermont that Lyman Orton saw go up for sale at local country auctions ... he made himself every Vermonter’s heir. By keeping the art of Vermont in Vermont, it is tacitly being passed down to all Vermonters.”

As we end the tour, Orton tells me, “My next collection will be art that is not yet painted.” He has bestowed \$25,000 apiece on 10 contemporary artists to depict Vermont in a way that speaks to the future of the state. “I want to put Vermont on the map for Vermonters,” he says. “Vermont needs a buzz that will speak to people anywhere. I want people to say, ‘Look what they are doing in Vermont.’” —Mel Allen

*For details on the “For the Love of Vermont” exhibits in Bennington and Manchester, as well as the companion book, go to [fortheloveofvermont.com](http://fortheloveofvermont.com).*



# It Took Moxie

*What a political spin doctor, a curious reporter, and a bottle of Vermont's favorite soft drink had to do with Calvin Coolidge's "midnight inauguration" 100 years ago.*

ILLUSTRATION BY CHRIS PAYNE

**I**t is an August night and stiflingly hot even in upland Plymouth Notch. The bugs and a small knot of witnesses bump against the screen door, straining to make out the scene inside lit by a single kerosene table lamp. Despite the heat and the late hour, the men are all in coat and tie; the only woman is dressed for company and for history. Two men raise their right hands. The younger puts his left hand on the Bible. The older man holds a typewritten sheet and begins to read aloud: “I, Calvin Coolidge, do solemnly swear that I will faithfully execute the office of the president of the United States....” His son responds, line for line.

One hundred years ago this August, John C. Coolidge, notary public of Windsor County, Vermont, administered the oath of office to Calvin Coolidge. There were no more than a dozen witnesses and not a single camera. Yet while Coolidge’s lamp-lit inauguration is usually remembered as the last hurrah for plain-spoken, guileless, small-town American civics, it wasn’t as simple as that. A political spin doctor made a house call that night.

Word that President Harding had succumbed to a mysterious illness in San Francisco had reached Vermont shortly before midnight. But when a carload of reporters tore themselves away from their hotel card game in Ludlow, 12 miles away, and came roaring up the dirt road to the Coolidge family homestead, they were handed a statement. The vice president and Mrs. Coolidge had gone to bed. Next morning, the vice president would return to Washington, where Chief Justice William Howard Taft would administer the oath. With that momentous news, the press went roaring back to Ludlow to file their dispatches. They hadn’t reckoned on a second car tearing up the track toward Plymouth Notch.

It was a taxi from Springfield, Vermont, driven by one Dan Barney. Inside was Joe Fountain, the editor of the *Springfield Reporter* and a stringer for the Associated Press. Fountain was about to get the scoop of his career, and the man responsible was sitting next to him in the wildly bucking taxi. “The country is without a president,” Congressman Porter A. Dale said over and over.

Congressman Dale, a Vermont Republican, wanted to become Senator Dale. He knew that the man who could persuade Cal Coolidge to take the oath of office in Vermont would have a great leg up. The Republican Party was up to its scuppers in scandal, from Teapot Dome to President Harding’s alleged improprieties. Even in 1923, Plymouth Notch, with its dirt road, clapboard



It wasn't long after Calvin Coolidge took his oath in the wee hours of August 3, 1923, that tourists began flocking to Plymouth Notch to see the plain white house where the fateful event had occurred.

houses, and general store, was a reassuring setting. Dale figured—correctly—that it would make great press for the GOP, for Vermont, and for Porter A. Dale.

When the taxi reached Plymouth Notch, well past midnight, lights were on in the Coolidge homestead.

Even Silent Cal was too excited to sleep. Congressman Dale rushed into the house and found everyone dressed and ready to listen. He hymned his “the country is without a president” line over and over. Calvin asked his father if his notary’s commission was still in order. John said it was.

A delegation crossed to the Cilley family’s general store to telephone the chief justice in Washington. Taft saw no legal difficulty with taking the oath before a notary public, especially as Coolidge would come to Washington on the morrow and repeat it before the chief justice. Coolidge’s secretary fetched his typewriter to take down the exact words over the phone. The vice president, a very happy Congressman Dale, and a very curious Joe Fountain strolled over to the store to watch the proceedings.

And here the authentic hand of Vermont folk tradition made itself plain. Let Joe Fountain tell it:

*After quietly listening to Congressman Dale, the president-to-be seemed suddenly to work up a thirst,*

for he turned to Miss Cilley, who was hovering about doing nothing in particular but everything in general, and asked, "Have you some cold soft drinks?" With New England loyalty she produced some Moxie.

Mr. Coolidge took his glass first, raised it to his lips, and sampled. It must have tasted mighty good, for he then took a long, healthy drink. The Congressman followed suit and I brought up the rear. ... Never before having associated informally with vice presidents, much less men who were to become presidents in the matter of minutes, this Vermont newspaperman didn't know what to do about the paying end of this early morning refreshment interlude. Neither did the Congressman, apparently, because, as I recall, there was no great contest to be first on the counter with 15 cents. Mr. Coolidge himself did not show any particular enthusiasm or haste in that direction, so after what seemed hours, the 30th president of the United States slowly reached for his left hip pocket.

"Action," I thought, watching in fascination. "Let's see what happens."

Deliberately his left hand returned from the depth of that hip pocket and in it was a small leather change purse, the kind our parents got for us in the trolley days to carry our streetcar fare. Holding the purse firmly in his left hand, his right hand opened the change compartment.

By this time, both Mr. Dale and I were frankly intrigued—no, fascinated is a better word. For my part I could hardly believe my eyes. Here was the nation's number one citizen doing a most human thing, digging deep in a pocketbook for small change, even as you and I.

With the same deliberation that marked his every physical action, he fingered the loose change in the purse and carefully removed a single coin.

With an equally unhurried motion he carefully deposited this coin on the counter beside the three empty glasses. Congressman Dale and I stared blankly at the shiny coin on the oilcloth.

It was a solitary nickel.

Dale stepped back from the counter, bumping into me, and he was so surprised at what he had seen that I had no difficulty in beating him to the draw and deposited my own thin dime on the counter to cover the other two drinks.

Calvin Coolidge went to the White House the next day. Porter A. Dale went to the U.S. Senate that November.



Moxie is still for sale—although not for a nickel—at the President Calvin Coolidge State Historic Site. Plymouth Notch is a town under glass these days. Most of the hamlet's two dozen or so buildings are owned by the state's Division of Historic Preservation or the Coolidge Foundation. The president is buried just down the road, along with seven generations of his family. The cheese factory founded in 1890 by Calvin Coolidge's father is still cranking. The road to the Notch, Route 100A, has been paved. There's a parking lot, restrooms, a visitors' center, and museum shops where you can find several books on Coolidge, including accounts of his unusual inauguration.

Otherwise, it's still 1923 in Plymouth Notch, where visitors can see authentic "tourist cabins," the Florence Cilley General Store, and the loft over the Grange hall where, the following August, President Coolidge set up the 1924 summer White House. He ran the country with two clerks, three folding tables, and stuck over in the corner, the bass drum from the "Plymouth Old-Time Dance Orchestra."

You can still beat your own drum in Plymouth, and you buy your own Moxie. —John Fleischman

Shortly after Coolidge's death in 1933, the state of Vermont began acquiring ownership of land and buildings in Plymouth Notch to preserve the village as he knew it. The result is the 600-acre President Calvin Coolidge State Historic Site.

## CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION AT THE NOTCH

■ **The Coolidge Foundation**, which is based in Plymouth Notch, will host a lineup of special events Aug. 2–3 in honor of the 100th anniversary of President Coolidge's inauguration. Among the highlights: a dinner gala, a read-a-thon of Coolidge's autobiography, and not one but two reenactments of the inauguration. For details, go to: [coolidge2023.org](http://coolidge2023.org)



Made in Vermont

# Totes Sweet

*For Williamstown's Bergamot + Amor, success is in the bag.*



Countless visitors to Paris have posed for photos in front of the Eiffel Tower. But the star of one recent snapshot there wasn't the traveler—it was a handsome leather tote bag handmade in Williamstown, Vermont.

It wasn't the first time a satisfied customer had sent a photo from some far corner of the globe to Bergamot + Amor, where Peter Shangraw and Amanda Farrell create distinctive leather totes, carry-on bags, day packs, dopp kits, book bags, belts, and more at their Williamstown shop.

Both native Vermonters, Peter and Amanda founded Bergamot + Amor a scant three years ago. They'd met when Peter, a professional upholsterer who had worked mainly on automotive jobs, hired Amanda to paint a mural in his Williamstown home. Amanda, whose résumé included earning a fine-arts degree as well as managing a Stowe craft gallery and working in corporate marketing, responded with a commission of her own: Could Peter make her a leather computer bag?

"I was very busy, but I made the bag," Peter recalls. "That was the beginning. We realized that we were both interested in working with leather, and we started our business two weeks later." The pair bought a stock of leather and an industrial sewing machine, set up shop in Peter's garage, and "it took over by storm," as Amanda describes the partnership that's led to three years of seven-day weeks that "don't even feel like work."

Starting with a single post on social media, Bergamot + Amor sold 1,000 bags in its first six months. The company's unusual name combines Amanda's favorite wildflower, also known as bee balm, with Peter's great-grandmother's maiden name, which is also Latin for "love." And in keeping with the "amor" part of their business name, the founders have indeed spread love,



in the form of generous company donations to local nonprofits, family emergency and medical funds, scholarships, and fundraisers for school sports teams.

Bergamot + Amor's line of leather goods starts with hides procured from American tanners. "We try to source locally, at least New England—we do get some hides from Maine and Massachusetts," says Amanda, who adds that these days most tanneries are in Kentucky and Mexico. The hides that Bergamot + Amor buys are 5- to 6-ounce top-grain boot leather (in trade parlance, each ounce represents 1/64 inch of thickness).

Another thing about Bergamot + Amor's leather, which often comes in rich, vibrant hues: "None of it has color *painted* on," Amanda says. Instead, the colors in their creations have been impregnated into the leather through a soaking process—some involving

ABOVE: As seen in this Woodstock Classic leather tote, Bergamot + Amor's emphasis on preserving the natural variations in each hide ensures that the result is one-of-a-kind.

BELOW, FROM LEFT: A detail of copper hardware on a Scrambler Wristlet; vibrant patchwork in the making; the Stratton Book Bag, another brand favorite.





FROM LEFT: Local artwork and crafts sit side by side with a dizzying array of leather goods in Bergamot + Amor's retail shop in Williamstown; the cheery exterior of the historic Main Street building that holds Bergamot + Amor's shop and café.

oil, others wax. The natural characteristics of the hides remain, ensuring that each bag is utterly unique. “In the leather, you’ll see where the cow might have had a scar from barbed wire,” Amanda says, “or rubbed against a tree.”

Peter and Amanda used to cut all of their leather by hand, but they now mostly create patterns that are transferred by computer into sharp-edged steel dies. Mounted in a 20-ton press, the dies precisely cut components for bags and other products. The next stage is sewing: “Our industrial machine can stitch leather up to a half-inch thick,” says Peter, who operates the formidable machine. An especially attractive touch is the use of corrosion-resistant copper rivets at strap attachment points. The finished products are so sturdy and durable that each comes with a lifetime guarantee.

As of November 2022, Peter’s garage has gone back to being a garage. Bergamot + Amor’s two-person workshop is now located in a former hardware store in downtown Williamstown, which the couple purchased along with an adjacent building (with bee balm planted out front, appropriately) that houses a bright, attractive new retail shop and coffee bar, open seven days a week.



Bergamot + Amor founders Peter Shangraw and Amanda Farrell

“We like to introduce our new product lines in the shop,” says Amanda. “We’ll have laptop bags, duffel bags, a full-size backpack. You can be measured for a belt here, and have it made right next door!” Custom orders even apply to the length of straps on signature Bergamot + Amor bags, such as their number one seller, the Woodstock tote (all products are named after Vermont towns or landmarks) in its Mini and Squire models.

Along with the company’s own products, the shop features the work of dozens of Vermont crafters working in pottery, woodenware, glass, and other media. Peter and Amanda’s passion for promoting local artisans even extends to the Williamstown maple in the coffee bar’s maple lattes, and treats from micro-bakeries from around the state.

While Bergamot + Amor celebrates Vermont craftsmanship, Vermont repays the favor: Last year, the young company represented the state at the Eastern States Exposition’s Vermont Building, an honor that will continue at the “Big E” for at least the next three years.

And by then, who knows where else those beautiful tote bags will have been photographed? —*Bill Scheller*

## IF YOU GO

■ **Bergamot + Amor**’s retail location is at 2383 Vermont Route 14 in Williamstown. To shop online and to place special orders, go to: [bergamotamor.com](http://bergamotamor.com)



This causeway gap would bring Island Line Trail cyclists to a screeching halt, were it not for the one-of-a-kind ferry service that launched here 25 years ago.

# Mind the Gap

*How the shortest ferry in the world helps keep Vermont bikers on track.*

**T**he Island Line Trail is a gorgeous ride. On what has been hailed as one of the most scenic biking routes in the country, cyclists whisk their way past farms, through city parks, and over water via the 3¼-mile Colchester Causeway, a riprapped stretch of Vermont marble that glides across Lake Champlain. Then there's the trail's most memorable section, which requires no pedal power whatsoever—you're not even on your bike. But you *are* on the water.

The Island Line Bike Ferry is a destination all its own. The 45-foot pontoon boat transports bikers across what is known as the Cut, a 200-foot gap in the causeway that allows watercraft to pass through. Over the course of the ferry ride—a scant eight minutes—you can soak in the full splendor of the setting: the Green Mountains to the east, the Adirondacks to the west, the big lake all around you.

Like so many great bike rides across the state, the Island Line Trail is a reincarnation of old rail route, whose course once included a rotating bridge across the Cut. But then the train service ended, the bridge

came down, and Burlington-area residents rallied to reimagine the rail line as a bike path. That included a ferry across the big lake, and in 1998 Governor Howard Dean christened the new service.

In the years since, the Island Line Bike Ferry has proven immensely popular. Last summer Local Motion, the Burlington-based bicycle and pedestrian coalition that operates the service, welcomed visitors from every state and 28 different countries—more than 16,000 passengers in all.

The novelty of the ferry explains some of that appeal, but so does its sheer usefulness. The boat features racks that can accommodate up to 30 bikes at a time; it also stocks a small supply of tubes and a bike pump for those in need. The staff will even offer a hand to help make the changeover. It is truly a unique experience on one of the most distinctive cycling routes in New England. —*Ian Aldrich*

*For more information on the Island Line Trail and Bike Ferry, go to [localmotion.org](http://localmotion.org).*



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