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2002 WAITSFIELD HISTORY SECTION

A Few Valley Stories Worth Telling

About fourteen years ago, maybe fifteen, I was poking around the lower reaches of the Mad River. My family and I had recently moved to the area and I was taking a little time to learn the lay of the land.

After making my way down a steep bank a short distance downstream of the Moretown Hydro dam, I began to casually explore the riverbank, looking for nothing in particular. But in my aimless ramble, I discovered a stream sparkling with a million jewels, dancing on top of the river as the sun played upon the water.

I also discovered another thing, a dragonfly that seemed hell-bent on landing upon a small rock a few feet out in the water. He would almost make it, coming within a few inches of his island destination, then suddenly sweep away as if tugged by an invisible leash. I could have spent hours watching him.

I thought we were alone, the dragonfly and I, when I heard the clatter and low rumble of an old sedan banging down the dirt road above. The old car came to a stop and out climbed an even older gentleman. He grabbed a few things and groped his way cautiously down the hill. His boots were duct-taped – at least one was. The sole of his second boot was flapping loose.

The old man walked a short way downstream, took off his duct-taped boots, rolled up his pant legs and waded into the icy water. My dragonfly was yanked one last time from his final landing attempt and flew off in the direction of the old man.

I lost track of the dragonfly, but now took interest in the visitor who intruded upon my private world; he seemed as focused on the river as my dragonfly was on his rock. The man carried a wide, glass jar and an old baking tin. Occasionally, he'd place the glass jar into the water, then he'd scoop up gravel with the baking pan. After inspecting the contents, he'd dump the pan back into the river. This ritual continued for some time. "Must be after crayfish," I thought.

It eventually came time for me to leave, but about the same time, the old man waded back to shore. I decided to ask him how the crayfishing was. "Crayfish?" he replied. "I'm looking for gold. There's gold in this river."

I climbed back up the hill wondering who was the fool.



It turns out the fool was me. I've since learned that the Mad River and some of its tributaries have been known to produce small amounts of gold, mostly scant deposits in river-bottom gravel. I'll never know if the old prospector was successful or not, but in the years since, I've discovered other treasures in this wonderful Valley of ours. One treasure entered my life just by chance. *It happened like this...*

My youngest son was ten years old at the time and was playing for the New York Yankees. The *other* Yankees – of the Mad River Valley Little League. One of his fellow teammates, a boy named Nate, had a mom and dad who helped out the team. Nate's mom, Karen, kept score, kept Band-Aids on hand and kept the dugout behavior under control. Karen also wore a mean glove and spent quite a bit of time on the field. She was a very special parent and a real "team mom" to the kids.

Nate's dad, Jimmy, also wore a mean glove, and could throw a mean fastball – but that's about all you could find mean in Jimmy Vasseur. Jim lived for his family and was always there for his team as well. He was the first one to arrive at practice and the last to leave. He was there in the rain, all wet, urging the kids to get in a few more drills. He was there in the heat, sweating it out with the rest of them. At each and every game, he was there to give the kids a friendly pat on the back – home run or strikeout. He wore a forever smile and it rubbed off on those around him.



Jimmy and his Yankees

Jimmy was more than a dad and a special coach. He was a friend to most everyone he met. As a dedicated employee, Jim was also a much-loved member of the Waitsfield/Champlain Valley Telephone Company family.

Last fall, after a winning season, the Yankees, the phone company and the rest of the world suddenly lost their friend.

Jimmy was a star and there wasn't a person in his constellation who didn't love him. And I know he loved everybody in return. But before we lost our good friend, we were blessed to have gotten to know a very special person – a treasure worth more than all the gold in the world.



As the Waittsfield/Champlain Valley Telephone Company nears the completion of its first century of operation, I was very honored to be asked to compile another history section of this telephone directory. Unlike last year, when I focused on a single community, Fayston, this year I am simply re-telling a handful of the stories, vignettes and biographies that appeared in these “pink” pages through the years.

It may appear to the reader that there are some important events left out of this account, some prominent people omitted. They are absolutely right. This year’s story is far from complete, but, in a few words, I hope to take a trip to some places that add color to our verdant land. We will also meet a couple of people along the way.

I am endlessly grateful to the past researchers and authors who have contributed to these pages over the years, many of whom I have never met. Their efforts are truly an important part of this community’s written heritage. This is largely their story, I’m like the messenger given a carton of news to deliver, but only a small envelope to carry it in.

In the following pages, I will try my best to share a few of their stories, some true, some perhaps a little bit of a stretch. I haven’t picked the “best” stories – there are no “best.” The stories that appear here are like a handful of jellybeans grabbed from the candy jar. They’re good and tasty – but so are the rest of the jellybeans still in the jar.

One final point. Many of the tales that have made their way into Valley folklore have developed different versions, a process common in storytelling. But they are common enough in their thread that they can be retold without losing the point. In the following pages, I’ll try to remain true – and to the point – as I share some tales from our past.

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William Boyce Goes Digging

I selfishly introduced myself with the story of a man panning for gold. But this is not a story about me; I should now introduce William Boyce and his business partner, Arad Sherman, two of the earliest gold diggers around.

It was early in the 1800s and William Boyce lived in North Fayston. Like his fellow Faystonites, William worked hard to earn a simple living. Nonetheless, William was not about to pass up the opportunity for easy fortune. When William learned of a rumored buried Spanish treasure, he took it upon himself to make it his. The location was Shepard Brook, a convenient spot right in his own backyard.



A gutsy but cautious explorer, William planned his expedition wisely and hired the best expert available to help him out. He employed the renowned Arad Sherman, to lead the exploration. Arad, “a man of mystical powers.” would take to the stream with his witch hazel rod “with which he could perform as many antics as the rod of Aaron.” Arad would make William a wealthy man.

The pair began to slowly and methodically explore the stream banks with Arad and his rod guiding the way. After a considerable amount of time probing the riverbed, Arad – the man with mystical powers – finally got the vibes, sensing a strong message from his magic rod. He knew they had finally located the spot where the treasure was buried!

“Dig here!” yelled Arad. With that command, William Boyce commenced to dig, madly pounding his iron bar into the hardpan riverbed. Heart beating wildly, William dreamed of fortune, a few feet – maybe only inches – from the end of his iron bar. Then it happened – clank! William’s iron bar struck what surely must be the treasure.

“I found it!” William shouted. He began to dig even more furiously. But his elation was short-lived. The more he dug, the more William realized that the treasure was sinking away from his reaches. He shoveled even faster, but, in spite of his efforts, began to eventually lose the battle; the bounty was sinking far out of his reach. The treasure eventually disappeared into the bowels of the stream. Indeed the Shepard Brook was not about to surrender this Spanish bounty. And, as if to discourage William and Arad from further attempts, the brook swallowed the iron bar as well.

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Silence is Surely Golden

William might have blown his opportunity due to his overt display of enthusiasm. Indeed, one version of this tale has it that William’s chances were lost as soon as he shouted out loud. It seems that there existed a cardinal rule, one important to early settlers, that one should remain utterly silent at critical moments. To cry out loud at the wrong moment could be a bad move. This might also explain the poor luck experienced by Samuel Stowe Savage.

Samuel Savage lived in the brick farmhouse, now the Von Trapp’s, just south of the Waitsfield Common. Across the road is where the Von Trapp greenhouses and fields now sit. Where today grow impatiens, Samuel Savage once grew impatient, and thus may have lost a sure fortune.

It seems Samuel’s daughter was experiencing a recurring dream, one that included a pot of gold buried somewhere on their land. Inspired by his daughter’s visions, Mr. Savage decided to check it out. He poked and dug for many days in search of



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this pot of gold. Finally, one day, his efforts got awfully close to paying off. Prying the soil behind their home, Samuel's bar suddenly sank deeply into soil, surely furrowing into the deposit of valuable coins. Mr. Savage was elated! But, in his enthusiasm, he forgot the 'golden rule' – he failed to remain silent at a critical moment. We don't know what he said – probably "Eureka!" or something like that – but no matter. It was too late. With his cries, the gold simply vanished.

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Earning a Living

It goes without saying that the early settlers of this region had a lot more to think about than where gold and treasure might lie. Life in the wilderness was difficult and families spent nearly all their hours working to eke out a simple existence. Most early settlers established small subsistence farms, generally on the hills high above the river. They believed these spots provided better land for farming; they also offered some protection from the natives who frequented the immediate river valley.

Many of these subsistence farmers eventually became successful, but often after enduring spells of hardship. As an example, the story of Aaron Rising is worth re-telling.

Though he eventually went on to a position of influence in the community and grew to prosper, Aaron Rising had a tough beginning. Growing up on his family's farm in Warren, there was a time, when Aaron was about sixteen years-old, that things were especially difficult for the Rising family. Food in the household was running low, and for weeks the family lived on a small diet of pumpkin, potatoes and milk.

Hoping to add some grain to the cupboard, his parents packaged up some salts and sent Aaron on horseback to Randolph, some thirty miles away, to see if he could trade the salts for some grain. They gave him a small amount of money to buy a meal on his journey.

Aaron and his horse made their way to Waitsfield, then headed up a rough path over the ridge toward Roxbury. Hungry, Aaron hoped to find a good meal in Roxbury. He was disheartened to find that the people there could offer him no more than the same potatoes and milk he had been eating back home. Hoping for better, he rode on toward Braintree, but there found the menu to be the same.

When he arrived in Randolph, Aaron decided to go straight to the mill to barter for the grain. He was now very hungry and though he probably could have found a

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good meal at the mill, for some reason he became too shy to ask. His horse fared much better, having the nearby meadow to graze upon.

In exchange for the salt, the miller was only able to give the young boy three bushels of grain; he needed to ration the supply so that others in the community could access some of the scarce commodity. His trading done, Aaron boarded his horse and headed back north toward Roxbury. By now, the thought of a meal of potatoes and milk was beginning to regain its appeal. But by the time he made it back to Roxbury it was getting late and all the residents had gone to bed. More than a little discouraged, the boy headed up the mountain in the direction of Waitsfield. He hoped he might stop at the home of a family friend, one Mr. Sampson, but his house was also dark. The young man had no choice but to continue home without stopping.

Well into the woods and with darkness upon them, the boy and his horse were soon joined by a pair of wolves, howling at them with every step. The wolves followed the boy and horse until the light of day. Eventually the boy made it back to his family homestead, frightened, hungry and nearly dropping from exhaustion. He went straight to bed without a bite to eat.

When he awoke, his family called him to supper. At the table, young Aaron could not keep back the tears as he looked at the meal on his plate – a small chunk of bread and some milk. With the cupboard still nearly empty, it was all the family could afford to serve. The hardships of a family suffering from hunger was indeed more difficult than the journey he had endured earlier the previous day.

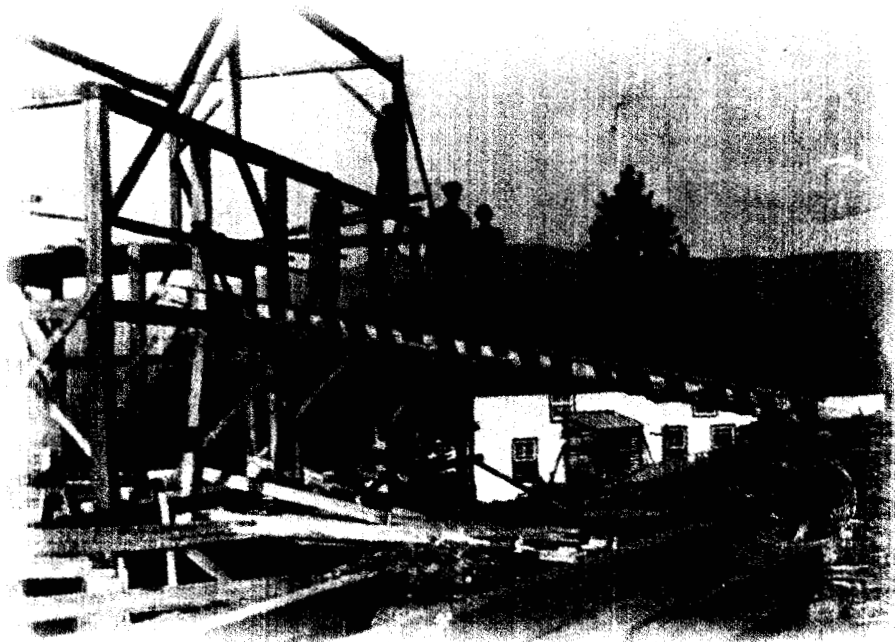
Fortunately the situation in the Rising household eventually improved and the family went on to some prosperity. Their story is not unusual; many families suffered periods of hardship and poverty.

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“Rufus, Is that you?”

The young Aaron’s brush with wolves in the hills above the Valley was not unusual either. This was the wilderness after all, and danger – both real and imagined – kept the early settlers company. The threat of Indian attack was also an occasional concern. One day, in 1803, a pending attack certainly got the attention of “Uncle” John Barrett.

John and his brother Rufus lived with their families in the Mill Brook area of Fayston. Rufus had joined other men in town to help a neighbor with a barn raising. John would stay behind to care for the women and children. In his account of the story, Hamilton Child explains what happened next: That evening, as the sun went



Neighbors helping neighbors. This photo of a Fayston barn raising comes courtesy of Ann Day.

down, Uncle John was alerted by a chilling sound, "a cry between a howl and a whoop." John feared the worst. "'Tis the Indian war whoop! No doubt we are surrounded and all the men away!"

Uncle John gathered the women and children and locked them in the house. He prepared the guns, ready to defend the group against the impending Indian attack. Night fell, but the raid never materialized. The small group huddled fearfully inside, listening for sounds of approaching Indians. Suddenly, one of the women heard something. "I hear voices – 'tis the Indians, sure."

Bang! Bang!, went the door. Then a loud voice: "What are you all about here? Why don't you let us in?" It was Uncle Rufus! He and the boys were back from their barn raising. The women, relieved that their scalps were spared, fell into the arms of their husbands.

Upon hearing of the Indian war cry, the returning men enjoyed a good laugh. "Why it was the wolves!" one said, "We heard them howling when we came along."



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The Business of Doing Business

In spite of the challenges the wilderness provided, the settlers in the Valley were not content to just get by, and soon set out on the business of getting ahead.

Farming and husbandry developed as the first industry in Waitsfield, with butter, cheese and maple sugar production leading the way. Local horse breeders also earned some recognition; in the Gazetteer of Washington County, Hamilton Child celebrates Waitsfield breeders as “not excelled by any town in the county.” Warren, too, had a vibrant agricultural economy.

“A distillery, hardware store and an undertaker, all right here, provided more convenience to local residents than any of today’s big box stores could hope to offer. Moretown was a one-stop town.”

Nature also helped out by providing the early families with additional bounty. The streams and brooks were alive with trout and the woods were full of moose, deer and bear for the hunt. In this rough but abundant land, the residents soon turned to trade. Eventually dozens of specialty shops were established to provide goods and services to the growing population. By the mid 1800s, a sort of “industrial boom” swept through the Valley.

In East Warren, the site of the town’s first settlement, a blacksmith soon shared the neighborhood with the schoolhouse and private homes.

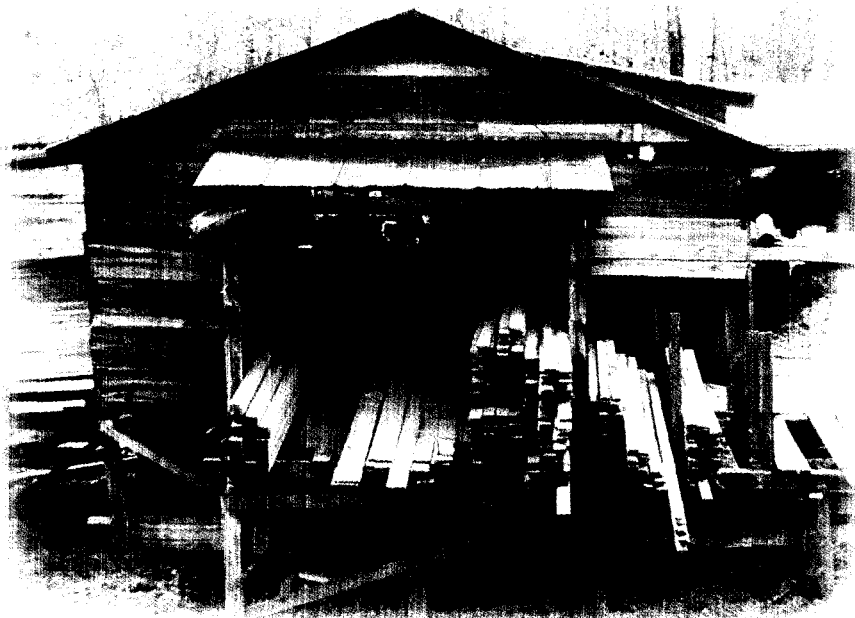
Down in the newer village, along the banks of the Mad River, George Banister too had a blacksmith operation and D.C. Geer operated a full-service furniture, carriage and casket shop just down the road. Tub manufacturers, cider makers and undertakers joined in the economic activity of the community. Warren even had a hotel in which to accommodate guests.

A few miles down river, but a world away, Moretown also saw similar growth. Two general stores, a pair of blacksmiths and a hotel were just a few of the operations that kept the village busy. A distillery, hardware store and an undertaker, all right here, provided more convenience to local residents than any of today’s big box stores could hope to offer. Moretown was a one-stop town.

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“There’s Mills in These Hills”

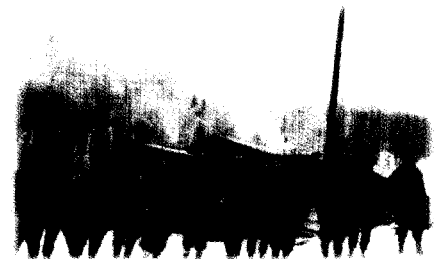
But any discussion of the economic past of the Mad River Valley would be incomplete without mention of the sizeable lumber and mill operations that grew at the forest edge and along the rivers.



The present day Baird Lumber Mill along the Mill Brook in Irasville.

On any given day, the whir of blades can still be heard from some of the few remaining sawmills in the Valley. Andy Baird still turns out boards in his small mill along Mill Brook, and quarter-sawn clapboards are still produced now and again at the Ward Mill in Moretown Village. These operations are a living reminder of our past and still provide income for a few residents. But there was a time, not very long ago, when activity at these and other mills was a backbone of the local economy.

The geography of the Valley was rough. Farming, though possible, was labor intensive, with tremendous energy needed just to clear the land. However, the Valley was rich in two priceless resources: timber and running water. These provided many settlers with the material and energy to create an important local industry. Land was cleared and scores of mills opened up to create products from the timber. In addition to those who opened lumber mills, many settlers chose to harness the abundant energy supply provided by the many streams to power other small industries.



Is there a strong breeze or is the photographer anxious to get home? These men from the Grandfield Mill in North Fayston pose for a company picture.



Not far below the headwaters of the Mad River, Ashael Young, one of Warren's early settlers and a legendary hunter, established a grist mill in that part of town that would later become Warren Village. In subsequent years, four mill dams were built in the village area alone. Along the Mad River, as well as beside the Stetson, Lincoln, Clay and Freeman Brooks, mills sprouted up, each providing a variety of goods. They produced clapboards and clothespins, turned out butter, cider and grain. Of course, they supplied lumber and boards for a growing community.

In Waitsfield, similar development took place, with grist mills and a sizeable lumber operation being established in the center of town, an area aptly called "Mill Hill."

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A Lumber Town in the Truest Sense

Probably more than any other Valley town, Fayston relied heavily on logging and commercial production of wood products. Less than 3% of the land in Fayston is considered agricultural; the rest is rugged, rocky and loaded with trees. Lumber would become the town's sole commercial export.

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In 1816, Joseph Marble built the first sawmill in town along the banks of Shepard Brook – it would be the first of many along this stream. Mills went up in other areas of town as well. Samuel Dana, C.D. Billings and Hugh Baird operated lumber and clapboard mills along Mill Brook. In North Fayston, John Grandfield ran a substantial sawing and milling operation, the largest in town. Other, smaller mills were also established along the Chase and Frenchman's Brooks.



This photo, from the Moretown Historical Society, shows some of the workers in front of the old Upper Mill owned by the Ward Lumber Company.

Some of Fayston's mills produced impressive quantities of timber products. The Baird Mill, for one, turned out 200,000 feet of clapboard. At the height of its operation, the Dana Mill produced over 300,000 clapboards as well as a million shingles. Though relatively large and prosperous, these lumber operations



largely remained independent outposts in the wilderness. Not so the operation of Hiram "H.O." Ward, Moretown entrepreneur and founder of the Ward Lumber Company.

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A Company Town

Arriving in the area in the mid-1800s, Hiram Ward soon began purchasing large tracts of woodland, primarily in the Dowsville section of Duxbury. After building a mill in Duxbury, H.O. Ward turned his attention to Moretown, where a series of gorges provided ideal hydro sites for mills. He purchased an existing grist mill toward the lower end of the village and soon afterwards built a new box mill just downstream. This "Lower Mill" was joined in a few years by a second,

"Upper Mill" at the other end of the village. All the while, Ward continued to add to his land holdings, assuring a steady supply of wood to feed his Moretown operations.

Some of the other lumber operations in the area ran lumber "camps," places the men could call home while they worked the woods. H.O. took things one step further, establishing a community within a community. The Ward Lumber Company became the town's largest employer: families whose livelihood depended upon the mills often lived in housing provided by the company and they shopped in the company-owned general store.

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"Are you covered by AAA?"

– Sam Farnsworth Comes to the Rescue

Sam Farnsworth worked for the Wards. Sam was a teamster, justly proud of his skills riding the key spot between tons of working horses and even more tons of saw logs. He worked the mills in Moretown and did so until the mid-1940s. In spite of the inroads modern trucks were making in the logging business, Farnsworth refused to give up his team, and the Ward Lumber Company remained happy to supply him with work.

One day, a powerful ten-wheel log truck pulled into one of the mill yards. It was a scene that would make our present day dealings with mud season look like an encounter in the desert. The giant truck, loaded with tens



Sam Dana, Fayston mill owner and Civil War soldier, around 1870.

"One day, a powerful ten-wheel log truck pulled into one of the mill yards. It was a scene that would make our present day dealings with mud season look like an encounter in the desert."



of thousands of pounds of wood, tried to negotiate the sea of mud that was the mill yard. It was having troubles, and after lunging and lurching through the yard, slid backwards and finally came to rest, plopped in the middle of canyons of muck.

Sam must have been silently pleased when asked if there was anything he could do. Sam led his team confidently through the mire toward the crippled giant. The teamster hitched his horses to the truck axle and the powerful team pulled the big vehicle out of the mess.

Though he must have realized he would eventually lose the war, Sam Farnsworth knew he had won this battle.

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We Pay Homage to Heroes...and Pigeons

Remember Mill Hill, the section of Waitsfield known for its mill activity? That's a place name that makes sense. So does Frenchman's Brook, the name of which was probably inspired by the large number of French speaking loggers who worked in the surrounding woods. And Dana Hill in Fayston, named for the family that owned the land. Ward Brook in Moretown isn't particularly surprising either. But many of our other local names are not quite so obvious.

"Like its neighbor to the north, the town was named after a soldier hero, but – one small problem – we can't be totally certain which soldier hero."

We could be tripped up, for instance, if we thought Lincoln Brook was named after our 16th president. In fact, the name of the brook that makes its way down from the Green Mountains originates from the name of the town that first encompassed this part of the Valley. This section was originally part of Lincoln, the Addison county neighbor across the mountain range. The town of Lincoln and the brook in Warren were named in honor of General Benjamin Lincoln, a soldier instrumental in the establishment of a Vermont militia. The association with Abraham and his family only came later, when some of the mountain peaks dividing this Valley from the Champlain Valley to the west were named after the president and his family.

Waitsfield, of course, was named after its chief grantee and largest landowner. General Benjamin Wait. Wait fought in the French and Indian War and was instrumental in the capture of Louisbourg and the defeat of a number of French garrisons. He was later a leader in the American Revolution, having earned the position of brigadier general. In 1767, the Massachusetts native moved to Windsor, Vermont. Twenty-two years later, the grantee of land in this Valley moved to the town that eventually bore his name. It is worth noting that Waitsfield appears to be the only area town definitively named in honor of one of its early citizens.



Those in charge of naming their communities did seem to like honoring men of military valor. At least that was the case in Warren. Like its neighbor to the north, the town was named after a soldier hero, but – one small problem – we can't be totally certain *which* soldier hero.

In her 1977 volume "Vermont Place Names", Esther Munroe Smith reminds us that "Warren" is a commonly used name – over one hundred counties and towns throughout America are Warrens, or have "Warren" as part of their name.



Main Street Warren Village, around 1900.

Most likely, our local "Warren" is named after Dr. Joseph Warren. Born in 1741, this Massachusetts physician became a major general in the militia and fought honorably at the Battle of Bunker Hill. On August 23, 1775, Joseph was killed while leading his troops on Breed's Hill. It was he, in fact, who became the first American casualty at Bunker Hill; this won him the admiration of many.

The other possibility is that the town was named after Admiral Sir Peter Warren, an Irishman and officer in the British Navy. Stationed in America, Sir Peter was a key player in the capture of Louisbourg (as was General Wait, by the way); *anyone who handed the French a defeat in the French and Indian War earned the admiration of American colonists.* Our predecessors may have been honoring Peter in their choice of "Warren" as a name. (One interesting aside: Sir Peter made a



rural spot in New York his home while he was here in America. “Warren Farm,” as it was called, later grew to become New York City’s Greenwich Village.)

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A Mountain Named Alice

But not all local names honor the famous. One prominent local peak was to bear the name of the wife of its landowner, but unfortunately things didn’t turn out quite as planned.

At 2,923 feet, Scrag Mountain is the highest point in Waitsfield. In the 1930s, the Vermont Forestry Department was beginning to develop a network of fire towers throughout the state and approached Walter Moriarty who owned land on the Northfield Ridge. Walter’s land included the summit of Scrag Mountain, or “Old Scrag” as it was more commonly called, a spot perfectly situated to survey this part of Central Vermont. The officials hoped they would be allowed to construct a fire platform on the summit.

Moriarty agreed to allow the state to build its tower, with one stipulation; the mountain would be re-named Mt. Alice, in honor of Walter’s wife. With this understanding the state built its tower, but somehow the mountain continued to be called “Scrag.” Apparently, the agreement to rename the mountain was never officially recorded.

Fortunately, Mrs. Moriarty is today remembered by the nearby peak named “Alice.” Though three hundred feet lower in elevation, Mount Alice keeps “Old Scrag” good company as the twin summits look down on the valley below.

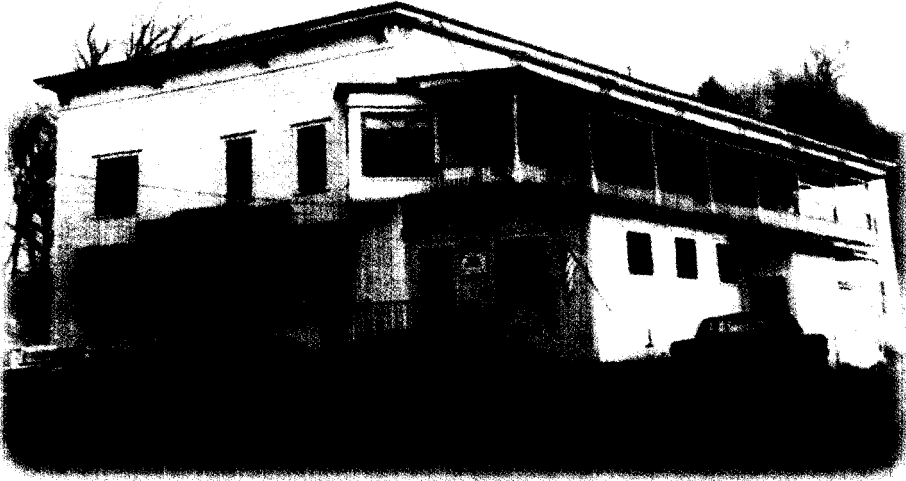
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Pigeons and Fists—Names of a Different Feather

Not all our place names are as honorable as General Wait’s Waitsfield or as romantic as Mt. Alice. Take Pigeon Hollow.

Just below Fenn Basin in Fayston sits Pigeon Hollow. In 1849 thousands of blue pigeons picked this spot to call home – there are reports that the flock grew so large that the trees in the forest were bending low under their weight.

The birds would have been a lot wiser if they had picked Italy; on the sidewalks of a Venetian plaza the pigeons would have been fed a fine lunch of good Italian bread crumbs. In Fayston, their welcome was a little less cordial. The news spread throughout the county that the birds were in town and hunters came from as far away as Montpelier to shoot them. By the end of the summer, the population of the huge flock was nearly erased.



The Moretown General Store and Post Office

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A Young Boy is Cheated and a Battle Nearly Results

Not far from Pigeon Hollow lies the Battleground, the site of the fine condominium complex of the same name. It is told that this is the spot where the local militia used to muster. This could explain the name. Another explanation, one more fun to consider, is the story of a “big battle” that almost occurred here.

It seems that a woodsman who lived in the vicinity sent his young son out to the forest to cut some logs. After dropping a number of trees, the young boy drew them out to the landing along the Mill Brook. He then approached a local mill owner to sell his newly harvested logs. Sensing the youngster’s lack of business acumen, the mill owner offered the boy a small amount for his logs and paid the boy in cash.

“Hoping to see a good fight, a number of residents headed down to the landing in the wee hours of the night.”

The boy seemed happy enough with the deal, but the same could not be said for his father. Hearing of the low price his son received, the outraged father up and sold the same logs to another mill – for more money, of course.



Word got back to the original purchaser that the wood had been sold again. He'd have to act fast and skid those logs out before they disappeared! Word also reached the ears of townsfolk eager for a little excitement; they thought for sure there would be an entertaining skirmish at the landing as the two clashed over the disputed timber.

Hoping to see a good fight, a number of residents headed down to the landing in the wee hours of the night. The logs were there and so was the high bidder. But the first buyer was nowhere to be seen. Shortly before dawn, the first mill owner finally did arrive, but only after the second had skidded his logs to safety. Alas, no fists were thrown, no shots were fired and the spectators never saw the show they were hoping for; but, to this day, that spot along Mill Brook will always be called the "Battleground."

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"More Town?!"

One of the many New Hampshire grant towns to be established on June 7, 1763, Moretown seems to have started life as a leftover piece of property. In her account of Vermont place names, Esther Smith notes that the Moretown grantees were not part of the prestigious Onion River Company. Ira and Zimri Allen, both principals in that company, apparently surveyed the mountainous territory and decided the land was less than desirable. They would pass on this one.

Two of the grantees who did end up with ownership in this town, which was wedged between the Winooski and Mad Rivers and divided by mountains to the south, were Daniel and James Morehouse. Perhaps Moretown was named after these two men, or perhaps, as has been suggested, the town was named after the similarly sounding "Moreton," a small community about twenty miles northeast of London, England.

A third possibility also exists, and is worth mentioning for its humorous angle. It goes like this: When the state was originally being surveyed, the map makers worked very hard to establish evenly divided grants. Working from east to west, north to south, the surveyors were pleased with the developing map – that is until they discovered an orphan chunk of land at the confluence of the Mad and Winooski Rivers. "My God," one surveyor shouted, "More town!"

Whatever the origin, any present day Moretowner who places uniqueness on the mantle can stand proud – this town in central Vermont remains the only locality in the world so-named.

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Three Congressmen and a Man Who Gave Us a Library

I'll now take the opportunity to mention a few people born here in the Valley who moved away, gaining fame and fortune elsewhere. We might feel it was our

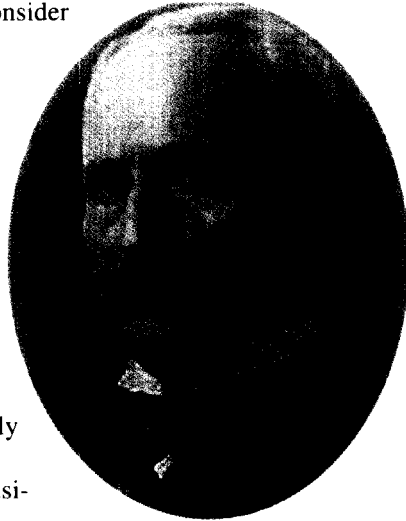


loss when they left; I think it's more accurate to consider their lives a rich part of our heritage.

At least three citizens born in Waitsfield are worth recalling, not only for the success they achieved, but also for the similar paths their lives took. The three were born in the early 1800s, all within the span of fourteen years. They all left Vermont at an early age. And all three became US Congressmen.

Henry Mower Rice was born in Waitsfield in 1816; his brother Edmund was born three years later. When both boys were still young, their family moved to the Midwest. It was here, in America's "Western Frontier," that the two would become business leaders and politically powerful figures.

After serving in the Mexican War, Edmund Rice began a career in the burgeoning railroad business. Within the span of twenty-two years, Edmund had become the president of three separate rail companies: The Minnesota and Pacific, the St. Paul & Pacific and the St. Paul & Chicago. But



George Joslyn



Completed in 1903, the Joslyn Castle was the private home of George and Sarah Joslyn. The home remains one of Nebraska's most remarkable buildings.



Edmund had political aspirations as well, and began to run for public office. After serving two terms as the mayor of St. Paul, Minnesota, he ran successfully as a Democratic candidate to the Fiftieth Congress.

Like his brother Edmund, Henry Rice was also a skilled businessman. Having gained success as a fur trader, Henry began to negotiate treaties with the Territory Indians. After successfully negotiating pacts with the Chippewas and Winnebagos, Rice secured the consent of the Sioux Indians to the Treaty of 1851. This important agreement led to the opening of lands west of the Mississippi River to white settlement. Like his brother, Henry had an office in Washington, DC in mind and went on to serve as US Senator from Minnesota.

The third of our trio, Roswell G. Horr, was born in Waitsfield in 1830, and like the Rice brothers, relocated to the Midwest when his family up and moved to Ohio. He chose an interesting mix of careers, first becoming a practicing lawyer, then a miner. He later went on to Washington. But unlike the Rice brothers, both who were Democrats, Horr served as a Republican, representing Michigan in Congress from 1879-1885. Before he died in 1896, Horr spent some years as associate editor of the New York Tribune.

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George Joslyn and His Gift to the Valley

It is not clear whether any of these men ever returned to their native Vermont, but there is a fourth individual, born just a few years after them, who never forgot his Green Mountains. George Joslyn shared his good fortune with his communities, the one in which he made his fortune and the one where he spent his youth.

George was born in Lowell, Massachusetts in 1848, but not long afterwards his family moved to Vermont, where they settled in Waitsfield. Here he attended school and met his future bride, the young Sarah Hannah Selick.

George was anxious to get a start in the working world and left Vermont shortly after school, first for Montreal and later for Des Moines, Iowa. In Des Moines, he took a job unloading freight cars for the Iowa Paper Company. In short order, George had moved from the loading dock to the front office.

George eventually moved into the managing position at the company's Omaha branch. The Iowa Paper Company, a producer of "ready-print", a newspaper sheet that had pre-printed advertising on one side, was a growing concern and George was growing with it.

The firm eventually became the Western Newspaper Union, and by the late 1800s, Joslyn had acquired controlling interest. He proceeded to lead the company



in a remarkable expansion. With the acquisition of lumber mills, plate factories, printing presses and warehouses, Western Newspaper Union became the largest newspaper service organization in the world and George went on to become the company's president and general manager.

One of the wealthiest couples in the West, the Joslyn's lived well, building a large limestone estate dubbed the "Joslyn Castle" by Omahans. But far from being aloof, the Joslyns gave much to their community, supporting human service organizations throughout the city. The doors to "Joslyn Castle" were opened time and again to young residents from area orphanages, as the Joslyns hosted parties and holiday celebrations for the unfortunate.

Though deeply involved in Nebraska social life, the Joslyn's never forgot their roots. In 1913 George donated over twenty-three thousand dollars for the construction of the Joslin Memorial Library in Waitsfield, built in memory of his grandfather. His fondness for limestone as a building material is reflected in the large limestone columns that grace the library's entrance.



Joslin Memorial Library, Waitsfield.



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In 1916, three years after the library's construction, George Joslyn passed away. Sarah devoted the following years to creating a memorial that would celebrate George's love of art and music and decided to build a fine music hall and gallery for the people of Omaha. In 1931, the Joslyn Art Museum opened its doors.

Twenty-five thousand people showed up at the opening of this magnificent building, but, true to her conservative Vermont style, Sarah avoided center stage and slipped quietly into the crowd. "I am just one of the public," she remarked to those who recognized her. *And of the beautiful new museum? She said that it was simply her small gift to the people and theirs to do with as they see fit. "If there is any good in it, let it go on and on."*



It may be appropriate to leave our little account of this Valley with the humble quote from Sarah Joslyn. In many ways, her words befit the story of our past. We have grown as a community and suffered setbacks as well as successes, but in the end, we are a community of caring individuals who don't toot our horns too loudly.

Sarah wanted the best for her community, but realized that it was in the hands of future citizens to make the most of things.

I'm not particularly superstitious, but was heartened to learn that the Joslyn Museum is a huge success. Like our home here in the Mad River Valley, there is "a lot of good in it" and it is indeed "going on and on."



Post Script

One last time, thanks to everyone who has contributed to previous editions of this Mad River Valley history series. This is your story. The local historical societies are especially to be commended for their diligent pursuit in preserving our past. And of course, special thanks to the present day residents for opening their homes and voices—and to the same residents for simply being who they are.



About the Author

Rick Haynes lives in Moretown with his wife Patti and their two boys, Patrick and Thomas. The owner of WriteSideUp! Desktop Publishing and Abitibi Press, he rounds out his day by driving a bunch of great kids to school and home again in one of those big yellow school buses.

