HIGHWAY HISTORY: HOW THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE INTERSTATE HIGHWAY CHANGED VERMONT

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Within the University of Vermont’s Landscape Change Program, a web-based collection of historic Vermont images (www.uvm.edu/landscape), is a digital archive of over 30,000 photographs taken before, during, and after interstate highway construction in Vermont (www.uvm.edu/interstate). All of the images are described, keyworded, and categorized by town, making for an easily searchable database.

These images weave a compelling narrative of the landscape changes brought about by interstate construction and by construction on routes that feed the interstate. They show the scale of physical landscape change, the excitement of opening an exit, and the devastation that can come with losing one’s home to make way for the highway. In regards to geology, the archive contains images that show the moving of sediment, the diversion of rivers, the blasting of rock, and the clearing of slopes. The archive also contains many images showing how changes in the land shaped tourism and changed the way of life for many Vermon ters.

As part of our outreach efforts and to make a broader impact, we have crafted the interstate photos into 20 stand-alone informative banners that will appeal to a diverse audience by including facts, quotes, and weaving a narrative within each. The banners inform the public about the history of the highway system, how the construction of the interstate highway altered the physical landscape, and how it changed the culture of Vermont. These banners will travel across the state during the summer of 2013, and will be temporarily exhibited at libraries, fairs, and at the University of Vermont.

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