

## **IMAGING THE SHELBURNE LANDSCAPE**

### **Proposal to the Lintilhac Foundation from the University of Vermont and the Vermont Commons School**

Shelburne is a dynamic, growing community bordering the city of Burlington. Over the past several decades, the community and its landscape have changed dramatically as new housing has taken over agricultural lands and as transportation and business corridors, such as Shelburne Road, have expanded. In many ways, Shelburne is a model for much of Vermont and much of the United States where the threat of sprawl is real and the historic/rural landscapes that attracted residents, and thus made these communities so pleasurable to live in, are disappearing. The rapidity of such change, and the attendant social and environmental consequences, have driven the need for accessible information so that planning decisions can be made prudently.

As a logical outgrowth of an on-going National Science Foundation project to collect images of Vermont landscape change, we propose a more detailed project to document the changing landscape of the Town of Shelburne and to develop a model curriculum to support this effort. This project is a team effort between the Vermont Commons School and the University of Vermont Departments of Geology and Education. The project would both build a database of imagery and serve as a model for place-based, hands-on learning about the natural and built environment.

#### **Project Objectives**

The project has two overarching objectives:

*To develop a web-hosted data base of historic landscape imagery covering the entire town of Shelburne and including maps, photographs, video, movies, and art work. The database will include supplementary historic materials and contemporary images of all scenes represented by the historic images. The database will be of interest to a wide variety of people including townspeople, town planners, and historians here and elsewhere.*

*To engage high schools students as the creators of this database so that they are actively collecting and interpreting the original source material. The project will be a model for curricular change both in Vermont and across the nation. We will develop written materials to enable such transfer of methods.*

## **Project Implementation**

The project will be web-based so that all data are widely accessible to the public.

The project will be a team effort involving the following people/organizations:

*Faculty and students of the Vermont Commons School  
Christine Massey, Museum Education Specialist, University of Vermont  
Paul Bierman, Associate Professor of Geology, University of Vermont  
A UVM student with a Geology degree seeking a Master's degree*

The project will also partner with historians at:

*The Shelburne Museum, The Shelburne Farms, and The University of Vermont.*

Students at the Commons School will collect images of Shelburne in the past and compare Shelburne, the place, what it *was* and what it *is* today. Such images will come in a variety of types and formats including maps, photographs, drawings, paintings, video, and movies. The images will many times be supplemented by written or oral documentation including diaries, historical accounts, and oral histories. The students will identify where the images were taken and produce contemporary images of the same scene. The web-based format will allow linking of supplementary materials as well as the students' image analyses. The landscape project will happen within the school's established framework for community-based research and service. UVM faculty will facilitate workshops with Common School faculty to design the program and train people as needed in the applicable technologies, geologic background, and web design.

Images will reflect many different environments and processes of change including:

*Ecosystem indicators of landscape change, deforestation/ reforestation,  
conversion of agricultural land to forest  
Change in the built landscape, formal and vernacular architecture  
Change in transportation corridors and technology: horse to train to car and  
plane  
Changes in the geologic landscape: rivers, landslides, erosion, lakeshore  
Changes in energy generation and distribution: dams, electric power, coal,  
wood*

The project will be coordinated by Christine Massey, UVM Education and Geology Department. She will interface with faculty/staff at the Commons School, co-supervise the Masters student with Paul Bierman (UVM Geology faculty), and manage the project web site. She will interface with town officials, Shelburne Museum staff, and Shelburne Farms experts to ensure that the best historic image collections are included in our database. Massey and Bierman will coordinate a 3-day workshop in August that will kick-off the project, present what we have done so far, and train selected VT Common faculty in landscape analysis and the use of the NSF-funded equipment that we will provide to the school (GPS, digital cameras, iMac computers) for the next two years.

The Masters student will work closely with the Commons School developing the curriculum materials and assisting with the web-site implementation. During the first year of the project, the graduate student will be funded by a UVM GTF and will teach 5 laboratories at UVM as well as work 10 hours/week at the VT Commons School. During the second year of the project, the student will be funded on a research assistantship and will work at least 25 hours/week at the VT Commons School including a semester of student teaching sufficient for certification.

One teacher from the VT Commons School will be supported 25% time to mentor the graduate student and to oversee the writing and preparation of the curriculum documentation.

The project web site will be linked extensively with other relevant sites including that currently being developed under EPA support by H& N, UVM's web site, the Town of Shelburne, and Vermont Historical Societies. We will consider how to notify all town residents that this image resource exists, perhaps through a mass mailing or inclusion of a flier with a mass mailing done regularly by town officials.