

Writing Home:
Shaping Perceptions of Vermont Antebellum Outmigrants

HST 184: Vermont History

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Writing from their Long Grove, Illinois home in 1849, Mr. and Mrs. Ives assured their friends Asahel and Jerusha Hubbard that they were:

“well and contented or as much as could be expected on being removed from those with whom we have spent the better part of our days. We often have imaginary visits with our friends in old Vermont.”¹

While movement to and from Vermont was a constant throughout its history, the increase in outmigration in the years preceding the Civil War reached near epic proportions. Concomitant with an age of increasing literacy, Vermonters who stayed and those who left continued their bonds of family and friendship through letters.² In writing their “imaginary visits” outmigrating Vermonters shaped the perceptions of those left behind who were struggling with the decision to stay or go. In sharing their concerns, anxieties, and conflicts they show that outmigration was not a simple choice. Nor was it one that, once made, was considered irrevocable.

Turner has framed the story of the expanding frontier as one bound by the struggle with the physical environment. Stilwell has added specific Vermont data to this picture but continues to describe Vermonters as being pushed by “used up land” to seek new land in the west or industrial opportunities in the eastern cities. He further posits that they were led by men (and men only) who subdued the wilderness, put their faith in material progress, and, through their Yankee frugality, ended up in positions of wealth and power. Their women followed at a safe distance and “civilized” the subdued frontier by starting schools and churches.³

Much is missing from this interpretation. Most obviously is that of an active role for women who, as Armitage has argued, were not “hidden in the household”—engrossed in domestic chores and childrearing . . . [while] the “real” life of the West—the subduing of the environment” was being done by men. Also, leaving Vermont did not mean leaving all ties to home. Reasons for leaving were based on perceptions of what such a new life would mean. These perceptions were shaped by the communications of friends

and families who had left as well as by the friends, families, leaders and editorialists in Vermont who encouraged them to stay.

“I want to hear from you again and I suppose I shall not until I write”

Louise Denison began her March 26, 1854 letter to her Aunt Jerusha by reassuring her that the family’s health was good, and followed with:

“Mr. Denison sits by the table reading a newspaper. Willis has taken a walk and Spencer is on the carpet with an open map before him tracing the way to Vermont.”

That same year, Mary Ladd Dinesmore was facing a decision that would change her life. After marrying Henry Dinesmore, a doctor, they had set up housekeeping in Quechee, Vermont. Her earlier letters to her sister describe adapting to life in the village in the somewhat more public role as doctor’s wife, along with the challenges of establishing a home while caring for their infant son. But in 1854 Mary had a new challenge. Henry had decided that, though they were doing well enough in Quechee, he wanted to move somewhere else where he could, as Mary quotes, “be Somebody.”⁴

Mary’s sister Elizabeth faced a similar decision. After attending Kimball Union Academy in Meridan, New Hampshire, she had married Rueben Allen Savage in 1842. The brother of her friend and classmate Almira, Allen had also attended Kimball, but had been called home in 1837 to take over the family farm when his father became ill. By 1849, Almira was teaching in Virginia, and Allen, Elizabeth, and their three children, were living on the farm at Stowe. However, they were considering a move. Elizabeth’s parents encouraged them to look for a farm in the Woodstock area and offered them a temporary home while they looked. They did not take that offer, but moving from Stowe continued to be a topic of discussion. In the mid 1850s Allen’s cousin, Joseph, was considering a move to Kansas and urged the Savages to move with him.

Louise Denison’s son Spencer was “tracing the way back to Vermont” from their home in Kalamazoo, Michigan, to that of her aunt and uncle, the Hubbards, sheep farmers in Whiting, Vermont. Several years after her move to Michigan her mother, Marcia Jackson, joined her and added her own pages to Louise’s letters home. They mention two other Whiting families, the Ives and Moultons, some of whose letters to the

Hubbards are also preserved. Meanwhile, Mary Ladd Dinesmore did indeed leave Quechee to live in New York City for several years before returning as a widow to settle near her family in Woodstock. Her sister and brother-in-law, Elizabeth and Allen Savage, chose to remain in Stowe despite their discussions to the contrary. The Savage family had been one of the first families of Stowe, establishing the Congregational Church there and Allen eventually became a leader in the church as well.⁵ His sister Almira Savage continued the peripatetic life of an unmarried teacher, leaving Virginia for Missouri and finally settling in Wisconsin. Thus, the families represent a cross section of Vermonters. The Denison's settled in a large Midwest town. The Moultons continued to be farmers, albeit under the rather different conditions of the Midwest. The Dinesmores left the rural life for the city, while the Savages stayed on the farm. Almira Savage experienced life in the South and the Midwest.

“You talked of coming west”

Though “remote from the influences of the great commercial centres” the Middlebury literary newspaper, *The Topaz*, promised its readers national and international news, along with professional information, statistics of home industry, local history, biography, and agricultural news. Editor Phillip Battel's 1842 prospectus assured readers that local history, biography, and travelogues would also form a part of its contents.⁶ Brief notices of events occurring in other parts of the country were common, especially those of a sensational nature. Agricultural news included articles on better farming practice, but also offered comparisons of western and eastern agricultural production.

Battell's promised articles on geographically distributed topics began in the first issue. They included an article on improvements in transportation to Wisconsin, and brief news items from such diverse locations as Lake Michigan, London, Afghanistan, Illinois, Russia, St. Domingo (an earthquake), Virginia (reporting on the poor farming land there), Charleston (Indian murders), and New Orleans.⁷ Battel assumed that his readers would be interested in non-local material, and the abundance of such information found in his and other newspapers supports his assumption.

The Hubbard and Savage families had their own travelers. A young man who had lived with and worked for the Hubbards sent a letter some years later describing his long journey from Vermont, through New York City, across the country and then south to New Orleans. In June of 1854, Hart M. Walker wrote to his cousin Frank Hubbard that he had just returned from a five month trip across the country, spending one month at Pike's Peak and returning to his home in upstate New York by way of Illinois. Judging the far west a "harsh place to make money" he was, however, pleased to announce that his grandparents' "likenesses have been to Pike's Peak [where] he looked at them a good many times and thought of Old Vermont." Another young friend of Frank's, C. Seymour, traveled from Whiting to Buffalo, thence to Chicago, and finally to his Uncle's home in Amboy, Illinois. He writes that he "likes here better than I expected to" but seemed less interested in the scenery than in the local populace saying "I tell you what Frank there is some Dutch girls here, as slick as the goslings at gooshill."⁸

Letters home from those who had left often contained invitations to those who had stayed behind to leave the "rocky hills" of Vermont. Meanwhile, Vermont newspapers exhibited their ambivalence to such lures. News articles on western events were published beside those that attempted to stem the flood by extolling the virtues of Vermont. The May 5, 1855 edition of the *American Journal* reports that the Midwest 'granary of the Union' was producing wheat at record rates and expected to continue to do so. Yet the editors felt compelled to leaven this enticing news with two articles more prominently featured. The first article bemoaned seeing "our eastern villages deserted," and warned readers to weigh carefully the disadvantages of emigration. "But of this . . . people are not aware . . . They seem to labor under a strange misconception that in 'going west' they are fleeing from labor and toil."⁹ The editors attempted to dispel this notion, asserting that, despite its advantages, the west required hard work. "With industry and frugality . . . the cunning may rise to opulence [in the west]. But this may be done in New York or New England."¹⁰ This advice had been tried earlier. In the early months of the gold rush the Burlington Courier carried several articles that encouraged Vermonters to stay put, suggesting that they could do "as well here as in California if you work hard."

Rose has suggested that “advocates of regional cultures set out to record their areas’ unique traits and histories when they realized how much the national marketplace threatened local distinctiveness.”¹¹ A second article in the *American Journal* suggests that its editors saw this as a useful strategy. It began “there are probably but few portions of our earth . . . that are truly more picturesque than Vermont . . . in the number and variety of those objects which eminently constitute rural scenery, this portion of our country will be found second to none.” It continued by waxing lyrical on the woods, “beautiful rivers, vernal mountains . . . and one of the most delightful lakes on earth.” bolstering these claims by extensively quoting “an eminent English divine, as he describes his experience while passing through our beautiful Lake Champlain.”¹²

This poetic description is similar to that expressed by a young man who had spent part of his childhood living with the Hubbards. In an 1844 letter to them he recalls fondly the

“scenes of my early childhood [which] are still vivid in my memory. How often I think of the big meadow, the Allen meadow, the Crick meadow, and the north meadow, and the north pasture and the west orchard, and the north orchard, the east orchard, and a thousand of other things rush involuntarily into my more mature mind. These things cease to afford you pleasure and delight; but to me, they are as rich as the golden produce.”¹³

Though this is only a single example, the fact is that he did not return to Vermont but made his home in New Orleans. This suggests that the newspapers’ promotion of an imagined Vermont presented in romanticized scenic terms, while it may have later proven a useful strategy for attracting tourists to the state, was not an effective way to stem outmigration.

“Perhaps he would do more good at the west”

While the pervasiveness of the image of poor, scrabbling Vermont farmers leaving their hill farms for the promised riches of the Midwest might make such movement seem inevitable, the letter writers provide a more complex image. Comments and questions about life in the west are a recurring theme for these Vermont families. Allen Savage was torn between the advice from his in-laws: “Tell Allen there is no necessity of his going west. There are good farms for sale in this region but I would not

be selfish, perhaps he would do more good at the west” and the invitation from his Cousin Joseph who, in 1855, was facing the same choice. “I saw Harper S. since my return from Kansas and we were speaking of the possibility of your changing location some time and I could not well resist the temptation of giving you an invite to accompany us to the territory.” Joseph continued that the climate was delightful, the soil rich, there was a railroad nearby, limestone, coal and lead, good roads, rolling country, and scenery “almost as varied and diversified as in our own state.” As a further enticement he added a postscript that “we have a steam mill in operation and two stores, and a hotel and school house one building and a good Con. minister on the ground. I was present at the election—the Missouriians came in to vote by the hundreds. we like the gov. well.”¹⁴

His cousin’s entreaties echoed those from his sister Almira who had written earlier that year that “Allen should not spend his days on those rocky hills.”¹⁵ Almira had made her decision to leave Vermont and become a teacher several years before. In so doing she followed the model promulgated by such influential leaders as Sarah J. Hale, editor of *Godey’s Ladies Book*, who encouraged women to expand their visible participation in society as teachers, doctors, and missionaries.¹⁶ Almira often questioned her own decision to teach far from her Vermont home. Though fascinated by the people she encountered and dedicated to her students, her homesickness during the first few years was quite evident. In 1849, while teaching in Richmond, Virginia, she wrote to her sister-in-law Elizabeth about a funeral that she had recently witnessed. The young man who died had been a visitor to the city and at his death had no family to mourn him and no one to attend the burial. She says:

“I stood at my window and heaved a long long sigh. O I cannot cannot die here. When I think of it my heart shrinks back and I exclaim I cannot, yet the secret conviction is with me and I cannot banish it that I never never shall see you . That Virginia will be my burial place.”¹⁷

Despite these reservations, Almira continued to teach. By 1855 she was living in Baraboo, Wisconsin and was able to report to Elizabeth that “this winter has been a very busy time to me. I have had a large school and plenty to do. One thing is certain I shall never die of ennui if I teach always.”¹⁸ A short time later she was able to report, with humor, that she had “74 scholars, girls and boys, some with beards, some not.” Her letters

still contained mention of “feeling blue” or missing her Vermont family, but she expressed no regret at deciding to make her permanent home outside Vermont. After several years boarding with various families she had saved enough so that, together with a loan from her family, she was able to purchase property and have a house built. Soon thereafter she married.

Newspapers and magazines may have emphasized outmigration to the west but New York and Boston remained the destination of choice for many Vermonters.¹⁹ Henry Dinesmore’s decision to abandon his medical practice in favor of opening a drug store may have been unusual, but his choice of New York City as the place to succeed by so doing was not. Hal Barron, in his *Those Who Stayed Behind: Rural Society in Nineteenth-century New England* argues that the transition to commercial farming practice in Vermont led to the diminishment of opportunities for professionals in small communities. Focusing on the outmigration process in Chelsea, he finds that “numerous young men studied medicine or read law in Chelsea but wound up practicing elsewhere, and few sons continued in their fathers’ offices.”²⁰ For Dinesmore, exchanging a medical practice in Quechee for a store in the same village would not have provided any additional opportunity. Pursuing this strategy by moving to New York City must have seemed the best answer.

A change in occupation was a strategy adopted by other outmigrating Vermonters. For some the practice seems to have been land speculation, buying more land than they needed with the intent of selling some of it. Early settlers began by clearing the land and farming it. However, those who could soon entered into business by starting a store or mill.²¹ After the Civil War, when Midwest towns had become well established, this became even easier. In 1869, George G. Tilden of Rochester, Vermont, traveled to Mechanicsville, Iowa to determine whether he could go in as a partner in a store. Though the months of separation from his wife Lydia were difficult for both of them, he did manage to negotiate a satisfactory deal.²² Still others had no need to change occupation. In their economic study of antebellum agriculture, Atack and Bateman found only marginal differences in the variety of occupations in the Midwest as compared to the Northeast. Though laborers seem to have been in shorter supply, trades necessary to agricultural production and community support were well represented.²³

“Tell him there’s good farms here”

By 1850, Ephraim Moulton and his family were well settled in Pavillion, Kalamazoo County, Michigan. He wrote that he missed his family in Whiting, but that: “If Grand Father would come out here & stay one season he would never be contented to dig in VT . . . the reason why I think so is that land is much cheaper & yet more productive. Good farms can be bought here near the line of the railroad from 8 to 12 dollars per acre . . . There is one neighbor who has a farm of about 400 acres who has raised over 4000 bushels corn 1000 of wheat & over 1000 of oates & keeps 70 head of cattle & about 100 hogs.”²⁴

The Midwest was not without its environmental challenges. Among the difficulties transplanted Vermonters faced, weather was always a consideration. Louise Denison described one Michigan winter as long and dreary, a surprising assessment given Vermont’s record in that area. The following winter her mother was happy with the “good sleighing” as the “snow lays level. It has not drifted as it does in VT”²⁵ which, of course, made transportation easier. Mr. Ives agreed: “We had beautiful sleighing that long as you ever had in Vt.”²⁶ He did find the wind in winter to be objectionable, but though “wood & timber are also rather scarce water also in a dry season is not very plenty” he concluded that “the country in which we live is fine in many respects.”²⁷ The Denisons had much the same opinion of Michigan despite several summers plagued by drought, and springs that might feature an abundance of torrential rains, in one instance enough to wash “a new two story house with a long ell to it all to the ground.”²⁸

Overall, however, the pictures painted by the western farmers are glowing. For a Vermonter, whose primary focus at this time would still have been sheep, and whose acreage would probably have averaged half that amount at best, the farm sizes and yields suggested by Moulton would have seemed immense.²⁹ Even Marcia Jackson, Louise Denison’s mother, who does not usually write on the subject of farming, cannot forego marveling that a friend who has just bought uncleared acres “took one yoke of oxen and plowed with as much ease as he could old ground.”³⁰ The Hubbards heard the same sentiment from their friend Mr. Ives: “The country is very productive and easily tilled much more so than that in which you live. One man or boy 15 yrs of age will tend 20

acres of corn and it usually yields 40 bushels to the acre without any manuring.”³¹ He, too, found the biggest difference between Midwest farms and Vermont farms to be the amount of land that could be used for crops:

“. . . my tenants of which I have two one of which has about 30 acres to till the other about 50 making 80 acres in all which would be a large plow field for you Vermonters but it is rather small here Many here have two or three hundred acres of plowland all in to crops in one year.”³²

Brian Donahue argues in *The Great Meadow* that the English form of mixed husbandry practiced by Colonial farmers, where livestock and tillage create an integrated system that constantly replenished the soil, could have continued to support farmers interested in pursuing a lifestyle dedicated to sustaining competence.³³ Drawing on Stewart McHenry, Jan Albers in *Hands on the Land* depicts five distinct land use patterns adopted by early Vermont farmers and continued by their descendants. Based on the settlers origins, Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, French Canada, and even a small Dutch community, and tempered by the contours of the land that they settled, these patterns are differentiated by their adaptability to intensification of farming. Essentially, those that favor large rectangular plots can be worked more easily by plows, while those that conform to the earlier pattern described by Donahue are less amenable to plows.

The nineteenth century intensification of agriculture to support external markets demanded an increased production more easily fulfilled by the former. Outmigrators certainly complained about the “rocky hills” of Vermont, but did not indicate that they believed the soil was insufficient, as long as it was manured. It was, rather, the lack of sufficiently large, and easily plowed, areas to support intensive farming that seemed to be the difficulty. Articles in Vermont newspapers that adjured farmers to improve their land and yield notwithstanding,³⁴ the Midwest prairies were simply better suited to large-scale, mechanized farming.

Choosing the right area was also important. In their move west farmers brought their seeds, livestock, and their localized knowledge of farming practice. In his study of the geographic impact on seed yields, Steckel found that yields were greatest in a narrow latitudinal band. “Farmers who went too far north or south [from their original homes] had poor yields, and sent relatively unfavorable reports back to the community from

which they left. Thus the reputations of agricultural areas became established and influenced the migration patterns of subsequent settlers.”³⁵ Thus, those who settled in areas that closely approximated the geographical and environmental conditions they had left behind could more easily adapt to, and benefit from, those conditions.³⁶ As they prospered, they could encourage their former neighbors to join them in prosperity. For farmers like the Moultons, these factors, combined with the ability to purchase sufficient acreage early on when prices were lower, aided in ensuring not only their survival but supported their conviction that they would “never for a moment regret leaving Whiting.”³⁷

“It is very healthy here”

In their 1849 letter to the Hubbards, the Ives provided another example of how their lives had improved by moving west:

“My family have enjoyed better health since we came here than they ever did in Vt.. Mrs Ives weighed 136 pounds which was 20 pounds above what she ever weighed in Vt.”³⁸

Mid-century letter writers displayed a preoccupation with health, reporting on their own as well as that of other community members. The increase in life expectancy experienced in the eighteenth century had not continued in the nineteenth. Although there were regional variations, the overall life expectancy for Americans declined in the decades before the Civil War. The very geographic mobility that Vermonters were participating in, along with increasing urbanization in the larger population areas of the country, fostered the spread of scarlet fever, typhoid, tuberculosis and periodic epidemics like yellow fever.³⁹ Those in the cities were at greatest risk. Mary Dinesmore seemed to have adjusted well to their move to New York, finding the street they lived pleasant, and happy for her young son Willie’s sake that “a few rods from us is a beautiful playground with a fountain in the center, a resort for children.” Her happiness was short lived. A few months later Willie was taken with dysentery and in spite of their best efforts, died. After describing their ordeal to her sister, Mary tells her that they telegraphed to Woodstock to bring him there to be buried instead of “there in that strange land among strangers.”⁴⁰

Although she and Henry would have two more children Mary made it quite clear in her letters that New York would never be considered home. After Henry's death she returned to Woodstock, raising her children and living out her life there.

These epidemics were not limited to the cities. The area around Woodstock in the spring of 1851 saw several cases of pneumonia but the most devastating deaths were a result of scarlet fever. Susan Ladd reported to her daughter Elizabeth Savage that Hiram Cobb's family had lost three of their five children while the family living with them had lost two. "The disorder was considered so contagious at Mr. Cobb's that during a funeral service the minister and people stood without the door."⁴¹ The doctor who treated them "carried the disorder from there in his clothes" and both his children and a young woman who lived with them died.

Though illness and death were obviously present in the west, the perception of the west as a healthy place was one factor used by outmigrators to justify their decision to leave and encourage their former neighbors to do likewise. Like Mr. Ives, Ephraim Moulton's letters suggest that not only the superior farming but also the healthy environs confirmed that his decision to leave Vermont for Michigan was a good one.

"I think it is much healthier here than it is in Vt. Consumption is not known here as a native disease & most that come here with pulmonary complaints or scrofula recover their health & become healthy. . . There has not been a funeral in this place since I came here & no person much sick to my knowledge."

As evidence he points to his children, finding that Henry was "never so fleshy in his life & Rachel as almost as fleshy as her Grandmother H" adding that "Oscar is as tough and saucy as ever."⁴² Such perceptions of western health had their impact on families back home. Writing to her friend Jerusha Hubbard, Charlotte mentioned that "Mr Hyde has gone west" and that his wife said if he liked it they thought they, too, would move west as it might be better "for her health and the children."

"I think you would enjoy the meetings and society here well"

Allen Savage's grandfather had been instrumental in starting the first Congregational Church in Stowe, yet when Allen and Elizabeth were deciding whether or

not to sell their farm and leave Stowe, Elizabeth's father suggested that, though such a move might be difficult, there were "other things to be brought into the account, in a moral point of view which certainly go far to justify you in this movement." Several years later, in 1860, the *Christian Repository* reported that an Evening Social Circle had been formed in Stowe to help raise funds for the Sabbath School but also to "improve the social feeling." Whether or not this attempt had anything to do with the Savages decision to stay in Stowe is unknown, but it does show that the community was aware of the dissension in their midst.

Denominational conflict combined with revival fever characterized antebellum Vermont. As Wagner has shown, such conflict may have been in response to many factors.⁴³ Vermont's earliest settlers, who established hill farm communities, and later settlers who built communities around valley industries, contended over where town centers, embodied by the town's meeting house, should be located. Expansion of religious diversity fostered by revival movements, combined with economic changes brought about by farm consolidation during the Vermont sheep craze and its subsequent decline, heightened community tensions.⁴⁴

The perception of great differences between the denominations in Vermont is thrown into relief by the reactions of transplanted Vermonters. Marcia Jackson, who, in the mid-1850s moved to Kalamazoo to live with her daughter Louise Denison, quoted a minister who made a similar move and said that "religious privileges were much greater than in Rutland."⁴⁵ In almost every letter to Jerusha Hubbard she commented on the "union and harmony among different denominations."⁴⁶ She found that there seemed to be "no jars nor discords, it is no uncommon thing for the Baptist Minister and the Congregational Minister to change some times. They and the Presbyterian Sabbath Schools meet together in concert . . . it seems like one family."⁴⁷

A letter from Ellen Emerson Morris of Racine, Wisconsin indicates why this form of "union and harmony" may have been important in determining how successful and satisfactory migration was for individuals. Writing to her sister Mary Ann in Rochester, Vermont she said:

"Yet there are objections to settling in Wisconsin – and one very prominent one is a want of society. That in many parts of our country is

either very poor or none at all. In our settlement we have preaching once in two weeks.”

Her conflation of preaching and society is not uncommon among the letter writers. As Hansen has argued, the church “created spiritual and moral communities that sustained its members by providing mutual aid and a vocabulary for struggling to understand social and economic change.”⁴⁸

The importance of the development of community ties, of “society,” among migrating women should not be underestimated. Although Bonfield adheres to the simpler “civilizing women” thesis by suggesting that “women pushed for the building of churches and schools in order to bring their New England civilization to their new home”⁴⁹ Hansen demonstrates that social activities played a more significant role, being inextricably intertwined with economic activity.⁵⁰ Vermonters, with their community-centric networks, exchanged labor, cared for each other’s poor and sick, and relied on family members for child care. Visiting, as practiced by both men and women, and churchgoing, reinforced these ties. Being unable to maintain visits was cause for concern, as Jerusha Hubbard’s friend Charlotte pointed out:

“Eliza and I take real comfort exchanging visits but she will beat me. She has walked here and back 4 or 5 times but I have not walked once. I have been there 3 times in 3 weeks . . . with Company. To tell you the truth I have been more unwell and less able to walk there.”⁵¹

Being unable to even develop these ties was even worse. Armitage has pointed out that both Faragher and Scissel in their work on the Overland Trail have shown that though kinship ties were important to men and women, their maintenance was primarily women’s task.⁵² This was true of Vermont outmigrants as well. Certainly, loneliness and sadness at long separations from family members was a recurring theme, as George Tilden’s letters to his wife suggest. For someone like Jerusha Hubbard’s young cousin Fanny, Vermont meant family and community connections while her new home in Ypsilanti meant isolation and loneliness:

“It does me a great deal of good to receive letters from Vt for I get rather lonesome here sometimes being a stranger and am so confined here with the baby. I don’t know as I shall ever get acquainted with the people.”

Family and community ties that could be maintained were counted a positive value in the choice of outmigration destination. Stilwell has dismissed this phenomenon as Vermonters being “consistently clannish” emphasizing those Vermonters that outmigrated together as a group. However, as the letters show, the network of communication between outmigrators was surprisingly broad. The Moultons did indeed report that “all the Whiting people here are well” but other correspondents, particularly women, provided greater detail. For example, in a single letter Louise Dennison writes that:

“Dr. James A. Allen has moved into town again formerly of Middlebury. He has been in Ann Arbor for the last few years. I occasionally see Mrs. Hawly. We saw a gentleman last Sabbath that had just come from S. Needham’s he had formerly known him in Hinesburgh.”

Newcomers to a town might find Vermont connections, as George Tilden did. Leaving his wife to see to the disbursement of their excess furniture and the packing of their effects in Rochester, he told her that:

“I purchased a residence building lot this P.M. on Douglass Avenue of Esq. Turner. It is between his lot and Mr. Stewart, a lumber dealer here late of Vermont. It is nearly half a mile from the store. The nearest neighbors are Vermont people.”⁵³

Or some might turn Vermont connections into new business connections as the Moulton’s friend did when he went:

“to Ohio and returned [married to] the Widow Lawrence formerly of Middlebury. He thinks now of removing to Wisconsin and going in to a drugstore in company with his wife’s brother.”⁵⁴

Conclusion

In his study of Sugar Creek, Illinois, Faragher expanded the definition of community beyond that of nucleated village finding that “other structures were at work that also pulled men and women together and helped them act not just as individuals but as a social unit.”⁵⁵ For Vermont outmigrators, making a living in their chosen destination was not their only measure of success. Before they left, their perceptions about their destination were shaped by news from family and friends as well as from local

publications. How closely their expectations about their “imagined destination” matched their actual experience there, combined with their ability to build and maintain community, determined whether or not their move had been the right choice.

Notes

¹ Letter excerpts are taken from the Hubbard Family Papers and Savage Family Papers at the Department of Special Collections, Bailey/Howe Library, University of Vermont, hereinafter HFP and SFP respectively.

HFP: Letter to Asahel and Jerusha Hubbard from G and M Ives, March 17, 1849.

² For discussion of patterns of increased literacy in New England see Gilmore, *Reading Becomes a Necessity of Life*.

³ Stilwell, *Migration from Vermont*, pp. 241-245.

⁴ HFP: Mary (Ladd) Dinesmore to Elizabeth (Ladd) Savage, September 1, 1854.

⁵ *History of Stowe, Vermont*

⁶ Prospectus of *The Topaz*, June 6, 1842.

⁷ *The Topaz*, June 6, 1842

⁸ HFP: C Seymour to Frank Hubbard, May 21, 1860.

⁹ *American Journal*, May 5, 1855.

¹⁰ *American Journal*, May 5, 1855, p. 2.

¹¹ Rose, *Voices of the Marketplace*, p. 164.

¹² *American Journal*, May 5, 1855, p. 2.

¹³ HFP: Bisher to Jerusha Hubbard, February 18, 1844.

¹⁴ SFP: Joseph Savage to Rueben Allen Savage, December 25, 1855.

¹⁵ SFP: Almira Savage to Elizabeth (Ladd) Savage, April 22, 1855.

¹⁶ Women as teachers, physicians, and missionaries are a common theme in Hale’s editorials, see, for example, *Godey’s Lady’s Book*, March 1852, p. 228, or, May 1852, p. 405. In response to the argument that women did not need a profession because they would marry, Hale counters “How is woman’s destiny any more connected with marriage than man’s? . . . Woman wants something to do . . . which will harmonize with her condition as an accountable being . . .” and then proposes teacher, physician, and missionary as professions which will do just that. For a brief discussion on Hale’s use of this strategy to both define and expand woman’s roles, see Patricia Okker, *Our Sister Editors: Sarah J. Hale and the Tradition of Nineteenth Century American Women Editors*. (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1995.) pp. 70-77.

¹⁷ SFP: Almira Savage to Elizabeth (Ladd) Savage, January 3, 1849.

¹⁸ SFP: Almira Savage to Elizabeth (Ladd) Savage, April 22, 1855.

¹⁹ See also Barron *Those Who Stayed Behind* on Chelsea outmigrants, pp. 97-98.

²⁰ Barron, *Those Who Stayed Behind*, p. 106.

²¹ Bonfield, *Roxana’s Children*, pp. 25-26. Interestingly, if Barron’s suggestion that professionals were among the largest class of outmigrants, their early transition from farmer to businessmen becomes even more understandable. However, this small sample of letters is not sufficient to test that thesis.

²² Tilden Family Letters compiled by Farwell T. Brown

²³ Atak, Bateman, *To Their Own Soil*, pp. 43-46.

²⁴ HFP: Ephraim Moulton Jr. to Ephraim Mouton, Sr. December 9, 1850.

²⁵ HFP: Louise Denison to Jerusha Hubbard, April 22, 1855 and Marcia Jackson to Jerusha Hubbard, February 3, 1856.

²⁶ HFP: Letter to Asahel and Jerusha Hubbard from G and M Ives, March 17, 1849.

²⁷ HFP: Letter to Asahel and Jerusha Hubbard from G and M Ives, March 17, 1849.

²⁸ HFP: Louise Denison to Jerusha Hubbard, April 22, 1855.

- ²⁹ For average comparison see U.S. Census, 1850, Agricultural Products, sample towns of Whiting and Underhill. Farms over 300 acres, improved and unimproved, are rare. Those raising cattle are not generally also raising their own wheat.
- ³⁰ HFP: Marcia Jackson to Jerusha Hubbard, June 3, 1860.
- ³¹ HFP: Letter to Asahel and Jerusha Hubbard from G and M Ives, March 17, 1849.
- ³² *ibid.*
- ³³ Donahue, *The Great Meadow*.
- ³⁴ See for example, *Burlington Courier*, January 17, 1850, p. 1
- ³⁵ Steckel, "The Economic Foundations of East-West Migration." p. 23.
- ³⁶ Atack, Bateman. *To Their Own Soil*, p. 77
- ³⁷ HFP: Ephraim Moulton Jr. to Ephraim Mouton, Sr. December 9, 1850.
- ³⁸ HFP: Letter to Asahel and Jerusha Hubbard from G and M Ives, March 17, 1849.
- ³⁹ Isenberg, *Mortal Remains*, p. 1 and Marshall, "In the Midst of Life We Are in Death", in Isenberg, *Mortal Remains*, p. 177
- ⁴⁰ SFP: Mary (Ladd) Dinesmore to Elizabeth (Ladd) Savage, August 19, 1855.
- ⁴¹ SFP: Susan Ladd to Elizabeth (Ladd) and Rueben Allen Savage, April 22, 1851.
- ⁴² HFP: Ephraim Moulton Jr. to Ephraim Mouton, Sr. December 9, 1850.
- ⁴³ Wagner, "Town Growth, Town Controversy: Underhill Meetinghouses to 1840."
- ⁴⁴ Potash, *Vermont's Burned-Over District*, pp. 155-185. See also Roth, *The Democratic Dilemma*, pp. 220-264 for the impact of the 1837 recession and the temperance movement on church unity.
- ⁴⁵ HFP: Marcia Jackson to Jerusha Hubbard, February 3, 1856.
- ⁴⁶ *ibid.*
- ⁴⁷ HFP: Marcia Jackson to Jerusha Hubbard, August 19, 1855.
- ⁴⁸ Hansen, *A Very Social Time*." p. 153.
- ⁴⁹ Bonfield, *Roxana's Children*, p. 25.
- ⁵⁰ Hansen, *A Very Social Time*." pp. 79-113.
- ⁵¹ HFP: Charlotte Flower to Jerusha Hubbard, August 7, 1854.
- ⁵² Armitage, "Women and Men in Western History," in Cott, *Working on the Land*, p. 286-300.
- ⁵³ George Tilden to Lydia Tilden, from Brown, *Tilden Family Letters*, p. 26.
- ⁵⁴ HFP: Ephraim Moulton Jr. to Ephraim Mouton, Sr. December 9, 1850.
- ⁵⁵ Faragher, "Open-Country Community" in Hahn and Prude, *The Countryside in the Age of Capitalist Transformation*, p. 236.

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