

## “On the Road to Harrisville”

### Local Transformation and the Construction of Identity in Marlboro, Vermont

In 1933 a couple by the name of Hendricks purchased a plot of land from a Mr. and Mrs. Hewes in Marlboro, Vermont. An unremarkable notecard in the town records contains the documentation for this event. It is the deed record for a piece of property “on the road to Harrisville,” from August 9, 1933. A handful of dilapidated farm buildings—shadows of a bygone economy—stood at the end of the road, and in 1933 the Hendrickses saw in them the potential for a charming summer retreat. No electricity, no heat, no running water: only an encroaching forest reclaiming land that had been stripped decades earlier. Nearby the cottage stood an enormous hay barn falling into disrepair, and abutting the Hendricks’ new lot sat a neighboring farm consisting of an old house and a barn, they too crumbling.

Thumbing further through the notecards in the town records shows the Hendricks name popping up more and more, on abutting pieces of property, and soon the name Arthur Whittemore, too, appears. The records indicate the accelerating acquisition of property up and down South Road through the 1930s and 1940s.

By the time Walter and Flora Hendricks arrived in 1933, the town of Marlboro had undergone several dramatic transformations. An older industrial economy had plummeted by the end of the nineteenth century, and farming was barely hanging on. Most Marlboro farmers had left the town during the 1920s, and by the time Dr. and Mrs. Hendricks acquired their property in Marlboro, the term “farmhouse” for them would have been more ideological than functional. A 1932 essay by Dorothy Canfield Fisher entitled “Vermont Summer Homes” noted the Hendricks’ acquisition of the home: “An old Vermont Cape Cod cottage-type of farmhouse recently acquired by PROF. WALTER HENDRICKS of Chicago. Prof. and Mrs. Hendricks, both writers, plan to spend their summers here, and perhaps eventually make it their permanent home.”<sup>142</sup> The text is accompanied by a small picture of the old, crumbling house. The Hendrickses were neither alone nor unusual in their acquisition of a Vermont summer cottage; wealthy out-of-staters snatched up hundreds of such properties in the state throughout the 1930s as Vermont’s reputation as a vacation destination amplified.

By 1950 these cottages, and the towns that they stood in, belonged to a much different kind of Vermont. The Hendricks’ home—and the vision it came to embody—fit into a cultural and political transformation sweeping the entire state. With a war in between, Hendricks would consolidate the properties clustered at the end of the road and begin a project that would radically alter the fabric of Marlboro, Vermont, a deindustrialized post-agricultural outpost ten miles west of Brattleboro. In 1946, he—along with a prominent Boston lawyer, a Brattleboro banker, and a handful of other backers—filed papers with the state of Vermont and formed a new company situated on this little chunk of property: Marlboro College Incorporated.

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<sup>142</sup>Dorothy Canfield Fisher, cited in Blake A. Harrison, *The View From Vermont: Tourism and the Making of an American Rural Landscape* (Lebanon, NH: University of Vermont Press: 2006), 85.

## “Vermont is a Way of Life”

Luke and Lois Dalrymple of Marlboro, Vermont, were country people, doing what they had to do to get along in the harsh woods of Vermont. They kept chickens, and at night Lois would retrieve one from the coop and chop its head off in order to prepare its body for dinner. Meanwhile, Luke sat on the porch with a shotgun and shot rats off the roof. A Marlboro carpenter, he was the man approached by Hendricks to help him transform a collection of dilapidated farm buildings into a new college.<sup>143</sup> Dalrymple’s daughter, Sylvia Johnson, was nine years old when Walter Hendricks arrived. The dormitory that now bears Hendricks’s name, in fact, had been Luke Dalrymple’s childhood home. Until the 1920s, the building was a working farmhouse, but when farming finally began to decline the house was sold to someone named McDonald and then to a couple named Hewes, and Luke moved to Brattleboro.

In 1931 he moved back to Marlboro. Johnson grew up hearing about the new school from her father, and she witnessed firsthand the transformation of the town as a result of the college’s expansion. Today, she lives in a small, neat house on South Road near Route Nine. Inside, rows of apples line her countertops. “As the college grew, more people came to town,” she recalls. She speaks with a distinct Vermont twang, of a kind rarely heard at the college today. “When I was a child this road was just a dirt road with grass growin’ up the middle,” she says, gesturing toward South Road. “Y’know, if somebody went by you knew who it was, because there was very few people, and some people were just summer people that came up here and stayed, had houses, and they’d go south in the winter.”<sup>144</sup>

The town of Marlboro developed out of the New Hampshire Land Grants of the 1740s. Reverend Ephraim Newton, in his history of the town written during the Civil War and bound in 1930, chronicles the town’s development. His history illuminates a phenomenon which would only develop through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries: Marlboro, like the rest of Vermont, was conceived of and settled as a disputed colonial territory, overtaken from the native population by settlers, squabbled over by the governments of New York and New Hampshire, and eventually separated from both colonies thanks to Ethan Allen and the Green Mountain Boys. From its inception, Vermont was a territory in dispute, ideologically if not legally, a landscape where competing visions were negotiated and continued to be negotiated well into the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.<sup>145</sup>

It was a tough landscape. According to Newton:

Such was the thick, heavy-timbered forest of the Township as to present the first settlers no other prospect than that of hard service, self denial, coarse fare, and dreary abodes, in subduing the uncultivated wild to fruitful and productive fields. None but bold, hardy, determined spirits could be expected to encounter so forbidding an enterprise; and such was the character of those noble hearted pioneers who will be honored and revered by their descendants and long remembered as the early settlers of Marlborough.<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>143</sup>Lynn Lundsted, in a conversation with the author, 11 October 2013.

<sup>144</sup>Sylvia Johnson, interview by the author, 28 September 2013.

<sup>145</sup>Rev. Ephraim H. Newton, *The History of the Town of Marlborough, Windham County, Vermont* (Montpelier, VT: 1930), 31.

<sup>146</sup>Newton, *The History of the Town of Marlborough*, 28.

It was a lonely landscape, where settlers spread across vast, dispersed tracts of land.<sup>147</sup> But after the Revolution and especially after Vermont's entrance into the United States, more settlers began to migrate to the state to take advantage of the vast, available tracts of land and good soil. One settler, in 1780, recounted that he and his cousin traveled north from Massachusetts and "crossed ye ferry at fort Dummer," making note of the "sandy pine plaine oak Thro' Brattleborough to Guilford," eventually making their way to a 100-acre plot of land that they purchased in Pomfret, seventy miles north of Brattleboro.<sup>148</sup>

Through the eighteenth century and into the nineteenth, settlers and their descendants engaged in the work of harnessing the land's resources. In the woods of Marlboro, maple trees were sugared and logged. In the dirt were streaks of mica, discovered by "A Mr. Samuel Mather, a man of rare genius and of a peculiar visionary temperament," who "pretended to possess a glass into which he could look and see the mineral treasures in the bowels of the earth" and "induced individuals to believe that in the heart of this rock he saw caverns lined with ingots of gold."<sup>149</sup> Townspeople discovered soapstone with "perfect rhombic crystals of brown spar" lodged in it and "veins of greenish talc and crystalline magnesian carbonate of lime, of snow whiteness."<sup>150</sup> There were streams along which sawmills were erected, tanneries and distilleries, manufactories of cloth, ponds and farms, and there was potash.<sup>151</sup>

Vermonters' interactions with the landscape occurred on a small scale, working with the available productive terrain. But as the American population and, as a result, markets swelled in the twentieth century, Vermont's small farms and other forms of production struggled to maintain a competitive advantage. In terms of agriculture, this limitation was felt particularly hard in the dairy market, where small dairy farms began to fold while larger operations took more and more advantage of the marketplace. By World War II, small dairy farms could hardly compete with larger operations growing throughout the state.<sup>152</sup>

In 1946, the same year that Marlboro College was founded, the governor's office established a new magazine, *Vermont Life*, to promote the state to tourists. Published by the Vermont State Development Commission, the magazine sported an enticing motto—"Vermont is a Way of Life"—and was filled with articles that celebrated the state's industry and landscape, as well as the hardscrabble identity of "the Vermonter." It favored profiles of individuals, businesses, and institutions, but in all respects the magazine insisted on a representation of the state as a rural, tough, and above all patriotic corner of the United States. *Vermont Life* presented people unfamiliar with Vermont with a selective understanding of what characterized the state. Early issues of the magazine were littered with stylized maps showing off the plentiful ski areas and natural beauty of Vermont, and pictures of Norman Rockwell paintings throughout these issues situated the ideal American way of life squarely within Vermont's borders.

The explicit idea behind *Vermont Life* was to promote the state as an attractive, and

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<sup>147</sup>Jan Albers, *Hands on the Land: A History of the Vermont Landscape* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2000), 87.

<sup>148</sup>Jonathan Carpenter, cited in Albers, *Hands on the Land*, 97.

<sup>149</sup>Newton, *The History of the Town of Marlborough*, 53-54.

<sup>150</sup>*Ibid.*, 55.

<sup>151</sup>*Ibid.*, 56-60.

<sup>152</sup>Christopher McGrory Klyza and Stephen C. Trombulak, *The Story of Vermont: A Natural and Cultural History* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1999), 91.

commodifiable, place. The editors worked to selectively craft a state identity and history and to promote those ideas to an outside, wealthy audience. “If you are one of those who has not yet had an opportunity to know at first hand our beautiful countryside, the friendliness of our people, and the ‘Vermont way of Life,’” read Governor Mortimer R. Proctor’s welcome letter included in the first issue, “this magazine will be a preview of what you may expect.”<sup>153</sup> In reality, the magazine served as a welcome mat for outside developers and tourists looking to exploit the state’s resources.

The inaugural issue of *Vermont Life* included articles which sought to draw the state—or at least readers’ perception of it—out of rural isolation and into tourists’ concept of an accessible getaway destination. This reimagining of the state appealed specifically to an urban audience. “Any map will show you that it’s just an easy day’s drive from New York or Boston—2 hours by plane,” according to an article by J.E. Hart entitled “Rendezvous with Summer,” “but nothing I could write and only your personal experience will disclose its particular homespun charm which is just a little different from the smartly tailored and hand pressed variety of the usual New England vacation area.”<sup>154</sup> Readers were also encouraged to craft a relationship with Vermont based around automobiles, a relationship that highway development would further facilitate by the late 1950s. “Need we be specific about the spectacle?” asked A.W. Coleman, an employee of the Vermont Department of Highways in the pages of *Vermont Life*. “Topography is largely mountainous, with good highways winding along the many valleys or crossing the ridges through gaps and notches. Dip into Vermont anywhere for a day or a week.”<sup>155</sup>

The call for attention to Vermont put out by *Vermont Life* was not an isolated phenomenon. Beginning around the time of the magazine’s founding, the state had begun to accelerate a self-conscious transformation which would draw in different kinds of people, and with them their ideas for how “Vermont” could apply to them as a worthwhile investment of their time and capital. The underlying root of this movement was the state’s rapidly deteriorating agricultural economy. By the end of World War II, Vermont’s farming economy had gone by the wayside, and state politicians recognized that if the state were to proceed into the second half of the twentieth century on solid economic footing, it would quickly need to find new sources of revenue. Increased tourism was immediately identified as a possible solution.

But before this solution could be thoroughly explored the state would require a major infrastructural overhaul. This project of modernization and development occurred simultaneously with the conversion of Hendricks’s South Road properties into a liberal arts college. The modernization of Vermont extended into several areas of the state’s economy and affected the lives of all Vermonters. New construction projects, especially those centered on highway and road development, reflected and reproduced the social and economic transformations occurring in the state. Indeed, the transformation of Vermont’s landscape was inseparable from these broader phenomena.<sup>156</sup> In 1955 governor Joseph Johnson sounded a cry for increased development: “I believe the state should extend a welcome hand to all corners of our nation so that people will be encouraged to come here. These folks spend money and this money makes jobs.” Moreover, he envisioned a Vermont which would “furnish access roads to developments in which people, both

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<sup>153</sup>*Vermont Life* 1:1 (Fall 1946).

<sup>154</sup>J.E. Hart, “Rendezvous with Summer,” *Vermont Life* 1:1 (Fall 1946), 4.

<sup>155</sup>A.W. Coleman, “Local Color,” *Vermont Life* 1:1 (Fall 1946), 29.

<sup>156</sup>Harrison, *The View From Vermont*, 166.

from within Vermont and from outside the state, have invested money. These people need our cooperation. They have asked nothing else for their great investment in Vermont.”<sup>157</sup>

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Dummerston artist Dan Snow grew up on Western Avenue in Brattleboro in the 1940s and 1950s. When he was eight years old, in the late fifties, the landscape of his neighborhood changed profoundly. Riding his bike down the avenue, toward the quiet residential streets on the west side of town, he began to see new and monumental sights associated with an enormous construction project on the outskirts of town. “It very dramatically changed the landscape of Western Brattleboro, because streets got cut off that had been thru streets, make ‘em dead ends, and fields that were farm fields just became big construction sites, dirt all over the place, earth-moving equipment. What I remember of that as a kid is walking out at the end of the day off of Western Avenue near where I lived, just walking around the equipment and just seeing what seemed like kind of a desert landscape.”<sup>158</sup> That desert would become Interstate 91, a northern tendril of the enormous highway system born of the 1956 Interstate Highway Act.



Fig 1: Construction of the Interstate 91 South exit, Brattleboro, 1958, aerial photograph, Agency of Transportation Collection, University of Vermont Landscape Change Program.

The district road commissioner’s son was a football player three years older than Snow at Brattleboro Union High School. And in the summertime the football team became the road crew. They moved up and down the stretch of highway from the Massachusetts border to the Bellows Falls exit, wielding scythes against the tall grass on the slopes beside the road. In the first decade, the highway was manicured carefully, with broad vistas of short grass and little traffic—a wide, open parkway. Today, it’s “more like a pavement through the jungle,” says Snow.<sup>159</sup>

During this period, too, the Green Mountains became increasingly criss-crossed with ski slopes and lifts. Several miles west of Marlboro, a profound transformation was well under way in the town of Dover. In 1953 the Mount Snow Ski Area was established, and subsequently a flow of new businesses, tourists, and institutions flooded into the area. Over the course of a decade the village of Dover would expand into a conglomeration of new shops, restaurants, nightclubs, and, of course, ski lodges, superimposing an economy of tourism and leisure upon a Vermont landscape formerly dominated by agriculture. Many of the original owners of these lodges and businesses

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<sup>157</sup>Joseph Johnson, cited in Joe Sherman, *Fast Lane on a Dirt Road: A Contemporary History of Vermont* (Montgomery, VT: Black Falls Press, 2010), 35.

<sup>158</sup>Dan Snow, interview by the author, 22 March 2014.

<sup>159</sup>Ibid.

were, like Hendricks, out-of-staters in search of fulfillment in Vermont. Like Hendricks and the early students and faculty of the college, they were sometimes surprised by the realities of Vermont's harsh environment in getting their businesses off the ground.<sup>160</sup>

Dan Snow remembers the changes at home which signalled the arrival of more tourists in the early sixties. His father was the advertising manager at the *Brattleboro Reformer* for most of his childhood, working his way up from cleaning the newsroom, and in the early sixties he decided it was time for a career change. He began selling real estate to clients moving to Vermont from out of state, often New York City. "A lot of the reason that he made that change was that there was actually a need for realtors, and it came out of second home sales. That was the beginning of people in this area coming from out of state to buy a home in Vermont that wasn't a primary home." Before the sixties, Snow remembers that most of the home sales were "done on a handshake, and away you go." On one trip to a house in Guilford, his father met with a couple from New York. They stepped out of the car to have a look at the property. "I can hear it," one of the clients said. "What do you mean?" responded his father. "I can hear the highway from here. This is no good."<sup>161</sup>

The shift in demographics ushered in by tourists and second homeowners represented a shift in power, and the Vermont which Hendricks chose as his summer retreat would evolve into something quite different in the decades to follow. Integral to this process, perhaps even more so than Hendricks, was the man who agreed to fund the experiment in Marlboro: Zee Persons, President of the Brattleboro Trust Company and the college's first treasurer. Tom Ragle, president of Marlboro from 1958 until 1981, recalls the massive financial influence that Persons had in Brattleboro and the surrounding area:

He was the one who nudged Serkin and the others to come here. He was the president of a local bank, and he had the courage to walk up and down Main Street and negotiate the debts to the college at less than a hundred cents to the dollar. Not many bank presidents would put their reputation on the line like that. But he was convinced that the area needed a college, and he's right. The founding first of Putney School in the early thirties, and then Marlboro in the late forties, and then the Music School in the early fifties transformed this area, culturally....Yes, he had a vision for the area, definitely, and the vision was based on cultural institutions—colleges, chamber music orchestras, acting....Music came first, the visual arts came, dance came, writing came...If you wanna take a broad brush look at it, that's what happened to Marlboro in fifty years.<sup>162</sup>

The changes occurring in southern Vermont did not occur by chance; rather, they were orchestrated by a series of interested organizations and individuals who saw the Vermont landscape as potentially valuable.

The land was not the only commodity that Vermont offered. At work in *Vermont Life* and, increasingly, in state politics, was a positioning of local against outsider, rural against urban, Vermonter against flatlander. The culture and residents of Vermont were being assimilated into charming tourist concepts, and this process extended to the new college in Marlboro. In 1949, Hendricks and Dalrymple traveled to New York City, where a reporter from the *New York Times*

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<sup>160</sup>"Heritage and History," Dover, Vermont, accessed 15 October 2013, <http://www.doververmont.com/heritage-history>.

<sup>161</sup>Snow, interview by the author.

<sup>162</sup>Thomas B. Ragle, interview by the author, 6 November 2013.

caught up with the pair to document their visit. “First Visit to New York Impresses Vermont Campus Sage,” the headline read, “but He Prefers Home Hills—Central Park Trees Just ‘Brush.’” The article summarizes Dalrymple as “a down-to-earth, native Vermonter, with a clipped Yankee twang and a dry sense of humor. He is a man of few words—a five or six word sentence is an oration for him.”<sup>163</sup> The article is accompanied by four photographs of Dalrymple looking at different sites in New York: the Empire State Building, the United Nations construction site, the Statue of Liberty, and the *Alma Mater* statue at Columbia University.

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The transformation of Marlboro at midcentury thus fit into a larger economic and social movement occurring in the southern half of the state. The landscape of Vermont—in the span of only a few decades—had rapidly shifted from one of production to one of consumption. As the result of outside pressures, the state’s geography itself transformed into a readily consumable cultural product. The college was certainly not a tourist destination, a national park, or a ski resort, but it developed in a similar fashion and along lines similar to Vermont tourist sites. It stood as both the justification for and a beneficiary of the development projects which sought to modernize the state.

During and after World War II, Vermont came to signify American innocence and virtue in a variety of ways. With the highway and increased tourist infrastructure, it embodied—for some—a place where one could easily escape the hubbub of city or suburban life and briefly reconnect with nature. But it also captured the notions of patriotism coalescing during and after World War II. The rhetoric that surrounded the establishment of the college, which linked patriotism to the pastoral virtues of Vermont, could be seen in other cultural phenomena.

Specifically, the work of Norman Rockwell during and after the war crafted an idealized narrative of American virtues based largely on the people of Vermont. Rockwell’s own life and work paralleled the personalities and conditions which led to the establishment of Marlboro: an urban intellectual heads to Vermont in order to seek creative freedom, and as a result he uses the state as a means of enacting his own ideal world. For Hendricks that vision was embodied in a college,

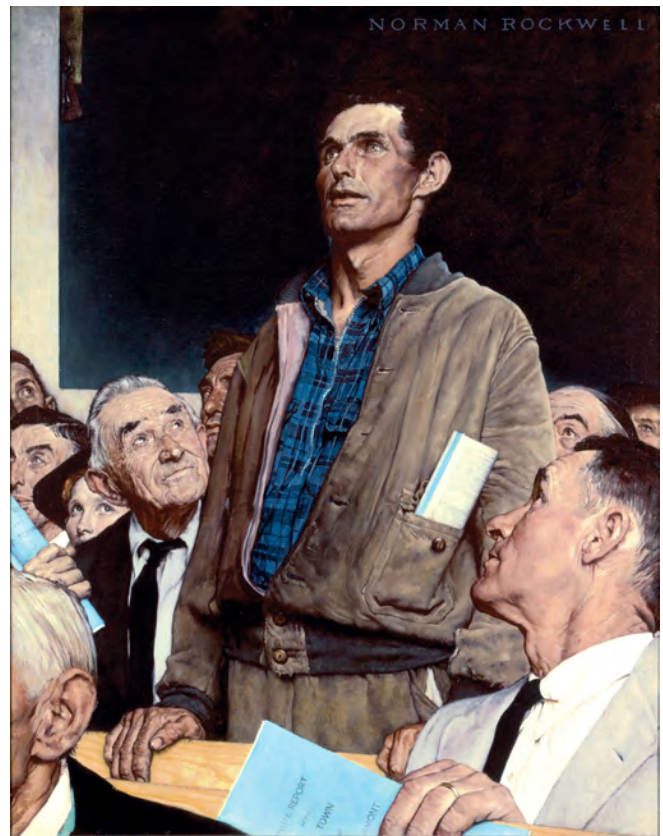


Fig. 2: Norman Rockwell (1894-1978), *Freedom of Speech*, 1943. Oil on canvas, 45 3/4" x 35 1/2". Story illustration for *The Saturday Evening Post*, February 20, 1943. Norman Rockwell Museum Collections.

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<sup>163</sup>Benjamin Fine, “Superintendent of College in Vermont Here on Sight-Seeing Tour,” *The New York Times* Friday, October 7, 1949.



while for Rockwell it was in illustrations.

Rockwell and his wife Mary moved to Arlington, just an hour northwest of Marlboro, in 1938.<sup>164</sup> Arlington was no isolated outpost, despite Rockwell's insistence that it was somehow a pure rural community; it was home to a wide variety of artists and intellectuals.<sup>165</sup> Incidentally, also residing in Arlington was the novelist Dorothy Canfield Fisher, an early backer of Marlboro College and a woman Rockwell regarded as "the patron saint of the village," whose "vigilance has kept the town as simple and lovely as it is. It is not a tourist or summer place, but a genuine American New England town."<sup>166</sup>

But for the people who had lived in Vermont for generations, what did the postwar formulation of "Vermont" mean, if anything? For the people who had no hand in the production of *Vermont Life* magazine, who were not involved in the consolidation of the Hendricks properties and the incorporation of places like Marlboro College, what did a "Vermont life" mean? As in a Rockwell painting, iconic images played—and continue to play—a key role in mapping out the cultural significance of the college.



Fig 3: Luke Dalrymple sugaring, photographed by Lois Moulton for Southern Vermont magazine, February/March 1987.

And no human being was more iconic an image of the hardscrabble Vermonter than Luke Dalrymple—the hardscrabble Vermonter, the homespun local, the worker.

Like a Rockwell painting, the college was a fantasy, a fabrication of the land and buildings and people of Vermont, conjured from an obscure place and infused with patriotic and social meaning. Moreover, as in a Rockwell painting, perhaps most aptly represented by "Freedom of Speech," the image of Vermont invoked by the college intersects with an emphasis on preserving "American ideals" during the war and in its

aftermath.<sup>167</sup> Like a Rockwell painting, the relevance of the college—indeed, the *urgency* of founding the college—was framed in the context of democracy in peril. "When democracy is threatened," intoned Arthur Whittmore at the college's first commencement, in 1948, "it is increasingly realized that responsibility and participation are the concomitants of democracy's blessings and it is such institutions as Marlboro which teach responsibility and participation."<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>164</sup>Deborah Solomon, *American Mirror: The Life and Art of Norman Rockwell* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2013), 188.

<sup>165</sup>*Ibid.*, 189.

<sup>166</sup>Rockwell, cited in *American Mirror*, 192.

<sup>167</sup>Solomon, *American Mirror*, 202.

<sup>168</sup>"Marlboro College Graduates First Student, Inaugurates President and Honors Rice," June 1948, newspaper source unknown. From a scrapbook of Luke Dalrymple's newspaper



## Postwar

Much is made today of Marlboro's location in the Green Mountains as an essential component of the educational program. However, the establishment of a college in Marlboro, Vermont, might be attributed more to Walter Hendricks's own vacation tastes than to his concept of an educational connection to the geography and society of Vermont. The impetus for founding the college can be traced to the final days of World War II and, most importantly, to the GI Bill (Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944).

The GI Bill radically altered the fabric of American society, extending access to education and housing to millions of Americans for the first time. After the war, servicemen and women took advantage of GI Bill benefits and flooded American universities. Today, the GI Bill is recognized as an enormous, though inequitable, social program, a fundamental component of the establishment of an affluent postwar middle class. Its legacy is hotly debated, and its history is rife with contention. In terms of education, the GI Bill was far from universally celebrated by American colleges and universities. Many universities feared that the sudden expansion of their student populations would result in disastrous effects to these institutions' existing orders. Other institutions expected little change at all, hoping instead to achieve again some pre-war enrollment equilibrium. What American universities experienced instead was a massive expansion in the years following the end of the war which transformed the meaning of American higher education and changed the demographics of who had access to it.<sup>169</sup>

Hendricks conceived of the idea for a college while he himself was a professor at one, in the seaside resort town of Biarritz, France. There, a temporary college had been established to accommodate the excess of soldiers hoping to make good on their GI Bill benefits but for whom there was not enough room to return them to the United States.<sup>170</sup> Before his time at Biarritz, Hendricks had been the English professor at the Illinois Institute of Technology in Chicago. Marlboro's bucolic setting undoubtedly triggered in Hendricks's mind memories of the "experiment at Biarritz," described by film critic Herbert F. Margolis in 1947, with terminology rivaling Marlboro College's own promotional literature:

One of the factors in the successful operation of this All-American University in France was undoubtedly its locale. Biarritz, a lovely prewar resort in the heart of the Basque country which had suffered little physically from the Nazi occupation, was a paradise to the war-weary soldier assigned to study there. Another factor was the virtual elimination of rank-consciousness from its proceedings. Officers and enlisted men often shared living quarters in palatial hotels or private villas...Civilian professors from the finest colleges in America formed the majority of the instructional staff. Away from the restrictions of established institutional policies, many found a new freedom of expression at Biarritz.<sup>171</sup>

Academic decorum without rank was replicated at Hendricks's new college, as was an appreciation for the natural environment's benefit in an academic setting. Furthermore, the environment of GIs

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clippings lent to the author by Lynn Lundsted, the wife of Dalrymple's grandson.

<sup>169</sup>John R. Thelin, *A History of American Higher Education*, second edition (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011), 263-264.

<sup>170</sup>Tim Little, interview by the author, 16 September 2013.

<sup>171</sup>Herbert F. Margolis, "An Experiment at Biarritz," in *Hollywood Quarterly* 2:3 (April, 1947): 273.

in Biarritz bore a strong resemblance to the new college in Vermont, where returning GIs constituted a large portion of the first classes.

The sudden emergence of a liberal arts college in rural Vermont was by no means an isolated instance. Following the war, new colleges and universities appeared throughout the country, often in rural and suburban areas. This phenomenon was no accident; colleges were influenced by the philosophy of intentionally *non-urban* placement following World War II, reflecting, according to historian Margaret Pugh O'Mara's, "the deep-seated cultural presumption that the urban environment was no place for intellectual discovery."<sup>172</sup>

The very makeup of the early student body and faculty of Hendricks's college suggested an urban and suburban foundation in the school. In addition to Hendricks, many key faculty came to Marlboro from cities. Among these early professors was John Macarthur, who came to Marlboro in the fall of 1948 from the University of Chicago to teach physics. "I was working in my lab at the University of Chicago, and this man walked in who I'd never seen before and introduced himself as Walter Hendricks, and he would like me to come and teach physics at the new college that I had probably heard about [in a 1946 *Time* magazine article]. You can probably guess the rest."<sup>173</sup> Barbara Cole, who came to Marlboro with her husband Bruce in 1956, viewed the college as a tangible alternative to life in the suburbs. "One of the things I think when we first got married was that we decided we didn't want to live in the suburbs. You know, and didn't want to do that same pattern that we saw everyone around us going, Oh, Lord."<sup>174</sup>

The college opened while the farm buildings were still in the process of being repurposed. The first to be renovated were the dining hall and the building now called Mather, which at that point was simply called "the men's dorm." The most comprehensive project on Dalrymple's docket was the building which would eventually bear his name: the hay barn on the hill. In the meantime, the dining hall served as the nucleus of the campus, containing not only tables and chairs for meals but offices and classroom space as well. At first, everything happened there. The administration offices would eventually move into a separate building: a goat barn relocated up to the main campus from further down the road.<sup>175</sup> Sleeping quarters were split between the men's dorm and—when women students began to enroll—the Hendricks's house and the nearby Colonel Williams Inn. Women students lived with the Hendricks family and in the Colonel Williams until a separate women's dorm was constructed at the edge of campus in 1955 at the bequest of student David Howland's parents.<sup>176</sup>

The utopian ideals of the college at the time of its founding quickly ran up against the practical challenges of running a new institution. By the close of the forties, the college was in financial disarray, helped little by the leadership of its passionate—but unpragmatic—founder.

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<sup>172</sup>Margaret Pugh O'Mara, "Uncovering the City in the Suburb: Cold War Politics, Scientific Elites, and High-Tech Spaces," in *The New Suburban History*, edited by Kevin M. Kruse and Thomas J. Sugrue (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 69.

<sup>173</sup>John Macarthur, interview by Tim Little, Marlboro Oral History Project, Marlboro College, 14 October 2005.

<sup>174</sup>Bruce and Barbara Cole, interview by Kit Harrington, Marlboro Oral History Project, Marlboro College, 7 December 2005.

<sup>175</sup>A new foundation betrays its recent addition to the campus; then, as now, the building had no running water.

<sup>176</sup>Little, interview by the author, 10 October 2013.

Hendricks had succeeded at transforming his summer property and gaining impressive financial backing, at recruiting accomplished intellectuals from around the country to serve on the new college's faculty, but his methodology proved unsustainable. He promised faculty money where there was none; he promised students the creation of new academic departments with no ability to follow through on those promises; and, infamously, he began to accuse faculty, students, and townspeople—most outrageously the Marlboro postmistress—of being communists. In 1951 the board of trustees met and voted to remove Hendricks from his position as president of Marlboro College. The school entered the early fifties on uncertain footing, in search of leadership.<sup>177</sup>

The person to whom the trustees turned was Thomas B. Ragle. Tom Ragle moved to Vermont, first and foremost. He wasn't married to the idea of Marlboro College—in the early fifties he didn't know anything about it. He applied to jobs throughout the state, including at the University of Vermont and the Experiment in International Learning (now the School for International Training). When he was approached by Zee Persons in 1955, he was working as a day laborer on the Woolworth Building on Main Street in Brattleboro:

He used to kibitz with us while we were lugging cement blocks and stuff, and one day he said to me, 'Can you come to lunch on Saturday?' And I said sure, so he took me to the country club for lunch, and he told me about Marlboro College....He was very good at putting people together and seeing where they belonged....He said 'I want you to meet Arthur Whittemore. I want you to meet Roland Boyden and Dick Judd' and so forth. So I did, one way or another. And he didn't know how it would turn out. It was two years later that I had my conversation with Roland Boyden, and they cabled him—he was aboard ship, off Africa on a tour of some sort—and said 'Whaddya think? Of Ragle?' And he cabled back, thought it was a good idea. But that's the way he operated. He bet on people.<sup>178</sup>

The college's enrollment had dipped, and the trustees were looking for someone to shepherd the institution out of the tumult of the fifties.

Following his institution as president, serving his first full year in this capacity in 1958, Ragle went about strengthening the college financially and academically. Perhaps his most lingering contribution to the college was his introduction of the Plan of Concentration, "something of a combination of my experiences at Harvard and at Oxford: the Harvard combination of academic fields in my own concentration...and the Oxford utter concentration on one discipline however broad...without distribution requirements."<sup>179</sup> In addition to instituting the Plan, in his first few years Ragle oversaw a modest growth in the student population, the construction of Howland House and Happy Valley, and the "reorganization of our finances" proceeding into the sixties.<sup>180</sup>

As a result of the early faculty's patience and Ragle's leadership, in Marlboro, by the dawn of the 1960s, a niche composed primarily of non-Vermont-born intellectuals was carved out in southern Vermont. Marlboro alumnus Christian J. Churchill and (now retired) Marlboro professor Gerald Levy, in their 2012 study of "Plufort College"—a clear reference to Marlboro—describe

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<sup>177</sup>Thomas B. Ragle, *Marlboro College: A Memoir* (Marlboro, VT: Marlboro College, 1999), 5-6.

<sup>178</sup>Ragle, interview by the author.

<sup>179</sup>Ragle, *Marlboro College: A Memoir*, 23.

<sup>180</sup>*Ibid.*, 25-26.

the ways in which Marlboro and similar institutions would transform the makeup of southern Vermont after the initial reimaginings of the postwar years—Vermont began to undergo a cultural transformation in the 1950s which developed throughout the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>181</sup> But the meanings ascribed to the state shifted; throughout these decades the state remained a drawing board for outside thinking, aspirations, and domination. Over time, Rockwell paintings and ski resorts came to share a cognitive frame with hippies and radicals. And all the while these conceptions of the state coexisted with those of multi-generational Vermonters.

These changes were connected to evolving relationships with the landscape. “The faculty, by and large, came for the lifestyle, as well as their interest in teaching,” according to Ragle. “There was a wave of people from southern New England and middle-Atlantic states, quite often from the cities, that came to Vermont in the thirties during the Depression, and they had a rural lifestyle. There was a generation to which I belonged, and perhaps that early faculty, which was even more wedded to going to garden and walking in the woods and so forth. And then I would say there were a generation or two after us who were even *more* involved in the environment and the countryside.”<sup>182</sup> The college helped to attract this next wave, which found itself in good company in Vermont, not only with members of the wave, but with those who already lived there.

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Michelle and David Holzapfel, who arrived at Marlboro College in 1969 and 1970, respectively, were part of the sixties wave. They arrived as hippies and have stayed in the area ever since. “By the sixties, as the interstate...and sort of back-to-the-land movement and hippies started moving up to the state, they were both seen as intruders, flatlanders,” says David. “But also, with time, and whenever those people moved into a town and got involved in the town, they then became a part of the town.” After completing their respective stints at Marlboro, Michelle and David eventually settled in town, where they opened a woodworking studio. David also teaches fifth and sixth grade at the Marlboro School, a progressive elementary and middle school whose principal for many years was Bruce Cole.<sup>183</sup>

Their reasons for attending Marlboro were a mixture of intention and accident; circumstances had brought them, like many others, to Vermont. When they decided to stay in Marlboro, that decision was similarly circumstantial. Looking for a place to live after attending Marlboro, they discovered a woodworking studio on Route Nine. Its owner had a business making tables out of wood acquired from local loggers, and he sold a hunk of property to the Holzapfels. One of the most valuable parts of their relationship with him was acquiring his logging contacts as they pondered making a living of woodworking.

The Holzapfels’ art now reveals the connection they have formed in their thirty years in Marlboro to the town’s history and landscape. They are woodworkers who work largely with burl, a kind of wart that develops as a result of a fungal infection and has little commercial value. The burl becomes larger and grows until it becomes a sizable mass, and to get them, the Holzapfels work with local loggers who sell them to artists and craftspeople. They turn it into clocks, tables,

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<sup>181</sup>Christian J. Churchill and Gerald Levy, *The Enigmatic Academy: Class, Bureaucracy, and Religion in American Education* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2012), 20.

<sup>182</sup>Ragle, interview by the author.

<sup>183</sup>Michelle and David Holzapfel, interview by the author, 22 February 2014.

and other forms of sculpture. As their business became more rooted in the town's fabric, Michelle and David themselves transformed into a new variety of locals as a result of these processes and choices, interacting with the land through their work, the intellectual life of Marlboro, and the town's artistic community.

They were not alone. Lucy Gratwick, a weaver, first came to Marlboro in 1967, to attend the Music Festival, and moved to Marlboro to live full-time in 1972. Her husband at the time, a Marlboro College graduate and a participant in the Music Festival, was a musician in Brattleboro, and together they opened a music store. "I knew I didn't want to be in a suburban New England, outside-of-Boston sort of place. We loved it here. There was no choice. It was the land as much as anything, I think....Rural New England is an interesting place to move to. You have to prove yourself." She arrived "at the time that all the hippie types were moving here, and so there were a lot of interesting people around, interesting stores and things to do. It was very lively. It was just transitioning out from being a very old-fashioned, small New England town. It felt as if, in a lot of ways, we were part of it." Since then, Gratwick has worked a variety of jobs and on a series of Marlboro town committees, including the Select Board and the planning commission. "If you move to this area, it's because you want to live here, and then you'll do whatever you need to do to stay. It's not that you're following a career path, because it's really hard to do that here. So I've done a lot of different things; I've worked in a nursery, I've worked in a bank, I've done this and that just to stay here."<sup>184</sup>

Gratwick's and the Holzapfels' experience in Marlboro reflects a general transformation that happened after midcentury—the incorporation of large numbers of out-of-staters into the fabric of Vermont society and politics. In reflecting on her own incorporation into the town, Michelle harkens back to the college's early years: "Roland Boyden, Dick Judd—history professors at the college—suddenly they became Town Meeting moderators. Before that it would have been a more...fifth-generation Vermonter. People from the college who were in town who had children were on the school board, and so college people shaped a lot of the institutions in the town...There was this interesting meeting of ways. I mean, these people would be mostly from urban areas, highly educated, bringing their sensibility to a place that was very self-sufficient, very stoic."<sup>185</sup> Ragle, too, remembers the changes taking place in town. "If you take a look at the school board or the selectmen or the town committees," Ragle recalls, "you'd find that the college is deeply involved—members of the college, on their own, as private citizens. Roland Boyden was the town moderator for...twenty or thirty years."<sup>186</sup>

The "identity" of a place is never fixed. Rather, it is informed by competing ideals and representations filtered through the realities of history. In Vermont, this competition has been a constant aspect of the state's history, especially with regard to the land, which various groups have laid claim to with different ends in mind for several centuries. This process has formed a large part of Marlboro College's place in the state. Today, when students, faculty, and admission representatives give off-the-cuff histories of Marlboro College, they almost always tell the same story: "This campus was Walter Hendricks's farm, and he turned it into a college." It is a nostalgic

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<sup>184</sup>Lucy Gratwick, interview by the author, 31 January 2014.

<sup>185</sup>Michelle and David Holzapfel, interview by the author.

<sup>186</sup>Ragle, interview by the author.

story, one which contextualizes the college as part of a pastoral tradition. But really, Hendricks's "farm" was a rundown vacation spot, tucked away, secluded, less-than-notable to highway passersby but a piece of local fabric, part of a landscape defined by rich history and memories. Hendricks's acquisition of the South Road properties came as a result of historical processes that developed over several decades, and the college established on it reflected nationwide historical changes occurring in the years following World War II.

Hendricks participated in a process which further developed in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, identifying the Vermont landscape as a virtuous canvas for expression and independence. By establishing a college in Marlboro, he engaged in a type of work that was occurring throughout the state in various forms, transforming it into something much different from an earlier state defined by agricultural decline. In the process, he opened the door for locals and new residents to arrive at their own definitions of the landscape and its meaning. These negotiations continue today, in towns like Marlboro and Brattleboro, in exchanges between neighbors, in the state house, and in the houses and barns converted by Luke Dalrymple.