

Our Vermont

WINTER 2020 / 2021

YANKEE



RECIPES FOR
DELICIOUS GIFTS

A VERY MERRY
MAIN STREET
SHOPPING GUIDE

Celebrating the people, places, and traditions
that make the Green Mountain State so original

FAMILY-FRIENDLY
SKI RESORTS

Learning to Fly

When my sons were young ski racers at Okemo Mountain, we rented a cottage by a lake only a few miles from Ludlow. Our home was an hour away, and when you have to get two children up, fed, dressed for skiing, and on the slope by 8:30 ready for race training, being close by kept the peace.

As I look back, it seems they learned to walk and then to ski without missing a beat. Dan's first lesson was at age 5, and Josh never had a single one: He looked up at his older brother coming down the mountain and knew he needed to be where Dan was. After seeing 4-year-old Josh fly down a steep black diamond within inches of his brother, a college ski coach who trained members of the U.S. Ski Team told me, "You give me Josh now to work with, I guarantee he will be an Olympian." I didn't, and Josh wasn't—but our winters were still defined by early mornings on Vermont mountains, hours racing, then free skiing in the woods, days ending with the boys happy and tired by the fireplace in the cottage.



After they fell asleep, I took out the waxing bench, opened my ski tuning box with its files and scrapers, and for the next few hours worked on their skis, knowing my attention to sharp edges and smooth, flat bases would not only provide speed but also grip when a trail turned icy. When I would awaken the boys the next morning, their skis gleaming in the doorway with blade-sharp edges and wax ironed on smooth and slick, I felt the same as when they rode a bike for the first time and I ran

beside them, far enough away so they felt alone, close enough to make a difference if they were about to take a tumble.

The winter after Josh graduated college, he became a full-time ski patroller at Okemo. It was a homecoming, really. He kept an online diary, and here is part of what he wrote, his words speaking not to the sport but to the love of a winter lived outdoors:

Sunny days on the mountain are hard to beat. Dreamweaver was really a dream today—the pale blue horizon mixed with an almost autumn blend of colors as the clouds ascended towards the sun. Drifting down Tuckered Out in the morning, I was entirely alone, surrounded only by mountains and motionless trees. I felt as if I could shout and shatter these frozen branches, but wished only to remain silent.

And each time I read those words, I know our years of waking up early on snowy winter mornings was worth it.

Mel Allen

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YANKEE

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On the cover: The Old Round Church in Richmond, Vermont, takes on a Christmasy glow. Photograph by Jeff Folger

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SPECIAL Holiday ISSUE
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The Perfect Tree

A trip into the winter woods reminds us that nature can make things so beautiful they don't need ornaments.

One of the few disadvantages to working at a ski area is the loss of Christmas. It's one of the busiest days of the ski season. But several years ago I resolved that, for once, I was not going to let myself lose Christmas. I would have a tree—my first in years. Friend and housemate T.C. agreed, so one night we went to get ourselves one.

I knew the tree I wanted. I'd been looking at it all year. It was located about three miles from the ski area. There's a certain reverence involved in cutting a Christmas tree, so we left the chain saw on the porch, packed a small, folding Svensaw, and loaded ourselves into T.C.'s battered pickup truck.

The evening's light snow had become heavy by the time we got there. We examined the tree—growing on flat ground, it was as straight as a Kansas highway. It was perfectly shaped. We measured its height—6'8" from ground to treetop. I got the Svensaw from the back of the truck and started to put it together. The snow muffled the woods; all we could hear was our breathing, the crunch of snow under our boot soles, and the gentle squeak of the tensioning nut as the blade tightened. I handed T.C. the saw.

He got down on his knees and pressed the blade against the trunk. Stopped. "Who owns this land?" he asked. I didn't know. We both sat back for a moment.

The snow, if you listened carefully, made a faint sound as crystal lighted upon crystal. Every once in

a while a gentle *whummmmmph!* came from deep in the woods, as snow exceeded the carrying capacity of the limbs on which it sat. We could hear our hearts beating. We started to think.

Did we need a tree? Well, yes, we did. But almost magically, we decided—and voiced simultaneously—that we didn't need *that* tree. That tree was perfect, and it made no sense to destroy perfection in order to celebrate it.

T.C. dismantled the saw, and we climbed back into the truck. We drove around for a while until the headlights shone on a tree that looked as if it might do. Not very full, but that's what ornaments are for—enough tinsel will hide a multitude of flaws.

It looked awful. It shed needles almost from the moment we got it home and had lost most of them by the 27th. We took it

down on the 28th, tossed it out back, and burned it in March. It was probably the worst-looking Christmas tree I've ever seen, but it filled the house with the marvelous scent of spruce, and it did its job.

T.C. got married that spring and moved to Burlington. I was his best man. And the perfect tree is still there, about 12 feet tall now, too big for anyone's living room. It is still beautiful. I stopped by and looked at it recently; there is a scar in the bark at the base that looks to be two or three years old. We didn't make it. Someone else had visited the tree, I think, on a cold evening in December and had listened to snow falling in the woods. —*Skip King*



Winter Wonders

New to bird-watching? Bundle up—there's more action to come.



MISSY MANDEL/GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT

For the past few years, birds have come and gone at my feeders largely for a rapt audience of one: my indoor-only cat. All that changed last spring because I, too, was stuck inside the house—but also specifically because of one baffled hummingbird.

Catching a glimpse of this miniature flying jewel, a bird I'd never seen before in real life, as it tried to make sense of my seed feeder made my heart leap. And it instantly made me a birdwatcher.

One hastily bought hummingbird feeder became five, scattered through the yard. I acquired books by Sibley and Peterson, then binoculars. Baltimore orioles, rose-breasted grosbeaks, indigo buntings—a rainbow of birds came calling over the summer, seemingly for the first time, but my real loves were the ruby-throated hummingbirds, those tiny emissaries of joy.

Then, one day in September, the colors vanished. And as I watched a parade of house sparrows and increasingly drab goldfinches, I wondered how I would ever make it through till spring. Then I talked to Debbie Archer, the education program manager for Audubon Vermont.

Ever since the pandemic started, Archer and her colleagues have been sensing a significant uptick in birding interest. For instance, when it came time for Audubon Vermont's spring Birdathon (an event that typically sees staff and board members seeking pledges per bird documented in a 24-hour period), they made it a virtual event that was open to the public—and it drew participants from as far away as Hawaii and Switzerland.

"That was a big aha moment for us, that something really cool could be happening because of Covid," Archer says. "Covid locked us all down, but it also really



Stunning snowy owls, like the one shown above, and jaunty common redpolls (see below left) are among the winter "irruptives"—northern dwellers that venture south to Vermont in search of food.

slowed us all down, which is great for birding and especially for beginning birding.

"It's this amazing practice of being calm and being quiet and taking in the outdoors and getting to know who your wild neighbors are. And while there aren't, say,

bears all over the world, there are birds: seabirds, desert birds, forest birds, birds in our most populous cities. So birding is particularly in tune for this moment of us being close to our homes."

When I tell Archer about my angst over the departed hummingbirds, she's not surprised. And she has one word for me: phenology.

"It's the study of what's changing in the landscape, and how, and when—basically, seasonal cycles," she says. "And that's one of my favorite things! I would encourage new birders to pay attention to those comings and goings, and not just be resigned to, 'Oh well, once the spring migrants leave, I don't care anymore.'"

In winter, she says, the loss in species variety is made up for by a greater ability for birders to focus and observe. It's an ideal time to pay closer attention to who's coming to the feeder—chickadees, titmice, jays, goldfinches—and get to know them really well. While you may miss the sweet singing of summer favorites like hermit thrushes, veeries, and white-throated sparrows, it'll be much easier to pick out the calls of the remaining birds, or as Archer puts it, "learn to bird by ear."

And it's not as though winter doesn't have its own showstoppers. Bald eagles congregate on lakes and rivers in search of food. In addition to Vermont's resident owls (barred, great horned, etc.), majestic



snowy owls often come down from Canada. Other northern visitors include winter finches such as common redpolls and pine grosbeaks.

Venturing out into different habitats increases the odds of seeing the full winter bird spectrum. The Green Mountain Audubon Center in Huntington has five miles of easy-access trails through meadow and forest; Geprags Park in nearby Hinesburg offers more of a shrubland habitat. Meanwhile, the Wenlock Wildlife Management Area and other places in the Northeast Kingdom provide the chance to spot species in a boreal forest. But Archer's advice? "Just go where you are comfortable. One of my coworkers is a naturalist, and her favorite place to go birding is the park near her house in Burlington."

Beginning birders can also challenge their new skills—and collect valuable data for researchers—by participating in a bird count, with two big ones traditionally popping up in winter. First held more than a century ago, the Audubon Christmas Bird Count is conducted within 15-mile-wide circles, with the counting being done by local volunteers sometime between December 14 and January 4. "It's a terrific

Changing Seasons



The bare and open winter landscape makes it easier to spot all kinds of birds, from raptors like bald eagles to backyard favorites such as red-bellied woodpeckers and Northern cardinals.

way to see things you've never seen, especially if the people you're going to be counting with are really experienced birders," Archer says.

However, since planning for that event may be complicated by Covid, the more popular choice may be the Great Backyard Bird Count—which is exactly what it sounds like. From February 12 to 15, participants count birds anywhere, anytime. "It's like it was made for pandemic birding. You can literally just sit and look out your window to make your observations."

"It's a great entry point," Archer continues. "Especially if you're a beginner and you're feeling unsure and nervous about birding, this is an excellent way for you to, one, help collect important data and, two, prove that you know more birds than you think you do." —Jenn Johnson

Resources for Fledgling Birders

■ **BIRD COUNTS:** Find out how to participate in the Great Backyard Bird Count at gbbc.birdcount.org. For the Audubon Christmas Bird Count, go to audubon.org/christmas-bird-count.

■ **BIRDING APPS:** Two free, must-have mobile apps are the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's eBird and the Audubon Bird Guide. Learn more at ebird.org and audubon.org/app.

■ **BIRD-WATCHING SPOTS:** Both the Green Mountain Audubon Society (greenmountainaudubon.org) and the Rutland County Audubon Society (rutlandcountyaudubon.org) list birding hotspots on their websites. Plus, the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department

recommends wildlife management areas for bird-watching at vtfishandwildlife.com/watch-wildlife/bird-watching.

■ **KIDS' AT-HOME ACTIVITIES:** Check out Audubon Vermont's growing online collection of nature activities at vt.audubon.org/programs/audubon-from-home. For ideas from the National Audubon Society, go to audubon.org/get-outside/activities/audubon-for-kids.

■ **BINOCULARS 101:** For helpful information on buying this essential bit of birding gear (and tips on how to use them), go to audubon.org/gear/binocular-guide.

In Good Taste

A season of inspired gift-giving can begin in the kitchen with these sweet and savory homemade treats.



CHOCOLATE
TRUFFLES

RECIPE, P.13

Vermont Maple Granola

For a lovely holiday present, seal granola in an old-fashioned jar and add a vintage ribbon or a candy cane.

**1/4 cup vegetable oil
 2/3 cup Vermont maple syrup
 (Grade A dark amber)
 1/4 cup sesame seeds
 1/2 cup shredded unsweetened
 coconut
 3 1/2 cups rolled oats
 1/2 cup whole almonds, chopped
 1 cup mixed raisins, dried
 cranberries, and/or cherries**

Heat oven to 225°. In a bowl, combine oil, maple syrup, sesame seeds, coconut, oats, and almonds. Spread on a foil-lined baking sheet. Bake until golden-brown, about 1½ hours; stir so that it toasts evenly. Transfer to a bowl, stir in fruits, and let cool. Store in a tightly sealed container. *Yields 8 cups.*





Tarragon-Shallot Vinegar

- 7 fresh tarragon sprigs
- 2 shallots, thinly sliced
- ½ teaspoon kosher or sea salt
- ½ teaspoon cracked black pepper
- 3 cups white-wine vinegar

Place all ingredients in a clean glass bottle with a good seal. Let steep 3 days. Strain as you use. Yields 1½ pints.

Rosemary-Garlic Croutons

Rosemary is the herb of choice for this recipe, but sage, oregano, thyme, or a combination would also work well.

- 5 thick slices country bread
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 2 tablespoons minced rosemary
- 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil

Heat oven to 375°. Cut bread into half-inch cubes. In a large bowl, combine bread cubes, garlic, rosemary, and olive oil; coat bread well.

Place bread cubes onto a rimmed baking sheet and bake until nicely toasted, about 10 minutes. Stir croutons and toast another 5–6 minutes. Remove from oven and let cool to room temperature. Yields about 6 cups.

Cranberry-Pistachio Biscotti

Decked out in the colors of Christmas, these festive Italian cookies are the perfect edible holiday gift.

- 2 cups flour**
- 1 teaspoon baking powder**
- ¼ teaspoon baking soda**
- ¼ teaspoon salt**
- 1 stick (½ cup, or 8 tablespoons) unsalted butter, softened**
- ¾ cup sugar**
- 2 large eggs**
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract**
- 1 cup pistachios, shells discarded, toasted**
- 1 cup dried cranberries**
- 2 ounces white chocolate, melted**

Heat oven to 325°. In a small bowl, whisk together flour, baking powder, baking soda, and salt. In the bowl of a standing mixer, beat butter with sugar until light and fluffy. Beat in eggs one at a time. Add vanilla. Lower speed and beat in dry ingredients. Stir in pistachios and cranberries by hand.

Line a baking sheet with parchment paper or Silpat. Form dough into a log, 14 inches long by 4 inches wide by 1½ inches high.

Bake until golden, about 30 minutes. Transfer baking sheet to a rack; let cool about 5 minutes. Using a serrated knife, slice log on the diagonal into ½-inch-thick pieces.

Arrange on a lined baking sheet and bake about 8 minutes per side. Transfer to a rack and cool completely. Drizzle with white chocolate. Refrigerate until set, about 10 minutes. *Yields 4 dozen cookies.*





Lemon Curd

Lemon Curd

How can just five simple ingredients create something that feels so rich? Creamy yet wonderfully light, this lemon curd will make your "giftee" feel downright spoiled.

Zest and juice of 3 lemons (about $\frac{1}{2}$ cup juice)
1½ cups sugar
1 stick unsalted butter, room temperature
4 extra-large eggs
¼ teaspoon kosher or sea salt

In the bowl of a food processor with steel blade, add lemon zest and sugar. Pulse until zest is finely minced into sugar. In a separate bowl, cream butter, and beat in sugar/lemon mixture. Add eggs one at a time, then lemon juice and salt. Mix until combined. Pour mixture into a 2-quart saucepan. Cook over low heat, stirring continuously, until thickened (at about 170°, just below simmer), about 10 minutes. Remove from heat; cool or refrigerate. Yields about 2 cups.



Seven-Spice Blend

Bursting with flavor, this fragrant mix is inspired by five-spice powder, a staple of Chinese and Vietnamese cuisines.

- 1 tablespoon cardamom pods**
- 1 tablespoons coriander seeds**
- 2 teaspoons whole, dried Szechuan peppers**
- 4 star anise pods**
- 2 tablespoons fennel seeds**
- 2 teaspoons whole cloves**

- 1 2-inch cinnamon stick**
- 2 teaspoons kosher or sea salt**
- 1 teaspoon black peppercorns**

In a small glass jar, carefully layer ingredients one on top of the other. Attach a tag to the jar of spice mix with instructions for using: *Place mix into a spice grinder or mortar-and-pestle and grind finely. Store in a separate glass jar.*

Dijon Mustard

This tart-sweet mustard is our go-to for elevating humble sandwiches.

- 3½ ounces dry mustard**
- 1 cup cider vinegar**
- 1¼ cups sugar**
- 2 eggs**

In a double boiler over medium heat, combine ingredients. Cook over simmering water 2–3 hours, or until thick, stirring occasionally. Let cool. Pour into hot, sterilized 4-ounce glass canning jars (leaving headspace). Seal and refrigerate. *Yields six 4-ounce jars.*

Chocolate Truffles

Snag a few boxes from your local craft store, line with seasonal waxed paper, and fill with these elegant sweets.

- 1 pound dark or semisweet chocolate (or a combination), finely chopped**
- 1⅓ cups heavy cream**
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract**
- ½ teaspoon kosher or sea salt**
- 1 cup (approx.) unsweetened cocoa powder**

Place chocolate in a medium-size bowl. In a small saucepan, over medium-high heat, bring cream to a

simmer; pour hot cream over chocolate. Cover bowl with plastic wrap and let stand 10 minutes. Uncover and whisk chocolate mixture until smooth. Whisk in vanilla and salt. Pour into a pie plate and let cool 10–15 minutes. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate until completely set, about 3 hours.

Place cocoa powder into a second pie plate. Using a melon baller or 1-inch ice cream scoop, scoop out some chocolate mixture and roll into a ball. Roll in cocoa powder to cover; then place on a parchment-lined baking sheet. Repeat with remaining chocolate. Refrigerate until set, about 15 minutes. *Yields about 6 dozen truffles.*



Hot Chocolate Mix

Keep your eye out for locally made mugs. Place dry cocoa ingredients in a clear plastic gift bag, attach the instructions, and arrange inside the mug or a pretty box with wrapped mini-marshmallows (see next recipe).

¾ cup sugar
½ cup unsweetened cocoa powder
4 ounces bittersweet chocolate, chopped
2 teaspoons ground cinnamon (optional)

Instructions for using the mix: In a medium-size saucepan on medium setting, heat 4 cups of milk until simmering. Whisk in the hot chocolate mix. Simmer, whisking continuously, until chocolate and sugar are melted and mixture begins to thicken.

Divide among four mugs. Sprinkle with mini-marshmallows.

Homemade Mini-Marshmallows

1 cup ice-cold water, divided
3 packages unflavored gelatin
1½ cups granulated sugar
1 cup light corn syrup
¼ teaspoon kosher salt
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
¼ cup confectioners' sugar
¼ cup cornstarch
Nonstick cooking spray

In the bowl of a standing mixer with whisk attachment, pour ½ cup ice-cold water. Place gelatin on top of the water.

In a small saucepan over medium-high heat, combine remaining water, granulated sugar, corn syrup, and salt. Cook, stirring often, until mixture reaches 240°, about 8–10 minutes. Remove from heat.

With the mixer on low speed, pour sugar syrup slowly down the side of the bowl into gelatin mixture. Once you've added all of the syrup, increase speed to high. Continue whipping until mixture is very thick, 12 to 15 minutes. Add vanilla.

Combine confectioners' sugar and cornstarch in a small bowl. Line 4 rimmed baking sheets with parchment. Mist with nonstick cooking spray, and dust with sugar/cornstarch mixture.

Scoop syrup/gelatin mixture into a piping bag fitted with a ½-inch round piping tip. Pipe mixture onto prepared sheet pans lengthwise, leaving about 1 inch between strips. Sprinkle tops with enough of remaining cornstarch mixture to cover lightly. Let strips set 4 hours, or up to overnight.

Cut into ½-inch pieces; then dust each marshmallow lightly with remaining sugar/cornstarch mixture. Store in an airtight container for up to a week. *Yields about 1 pound marshmallows.*



CARL TREMBLAY



The storefronts on Main Street glow warmly as dusk falls on Middlebury.

Merry Main Streets

Downtowns sparkling with holiday lights make checking off that shopping list a festive occasion.

Remember the holidays of yesteryear, when businesses were local and magical retail displays buoyed your spirits? In Vermont, that festive era continues, in lively downtowns that offer one-of-a-kind stores and park-once, find-everything convenience. Even better, shopping local this year gives vital support to the retailers that help give our towns their character. It's seasonal fun and community spirit, all wrapped up with a bow.

Brattleboro

Snuggled up against the New Hampshire border in southern Vermont, Brattleboro puts a quirky spin on small-town character—for proof, look no further than

its signature summer event, the Strolling of the Heifers, which sees up to 100 cows parading through downtown. Among its historic brick façades you'll find a mix of yesterday and today, global and local: There are tomes new and old at **Everyone's Books** and **Brattleboro Books**, Guatemalan-inspired fashion and gifts at **Altiplano**, home and garden finds at **Trillium**, and throwback chic at **Boomerang**, whose racks of resale, vintage, and artisan wares guarantee one-of-a-kind gifts. Have a beer lover on your list? The terrific **Brattleboro Food Co-op** has more than 100 Vermont-crafted brews. **Don't Miss:** The celebration of local food and crafts known as the **Winter Farmers Market**, open Saturdays from November through March, and now offering online shopping for curbside pickup. brattleboro.com

Burlington

Blending big-city perks with small-town friendliness, this city on the shores of Lake Champlain is a mecca for diners and shoppers, especially at its downtown pedestrian mall, Church Street Marketplace. More than 100 shops and eateries fill a four-block stretch, ensuring you can find something for even the choosiest person on your list: a stack of snow-day reading from **Crow Bookshop**, distinctive arts and crafts from **Frog Hollow Craft Gallery** (the first state craft center in the nation), sweet treats from **Lake Champlain Chocolates**, everyday cookware and last-minute holiday splurges from **Kiss the Cook**, and much, much more. **Don't Miss:** The outdoor holiday markets organized by the venerable Burlington Farmers Market, scheduled for November 21 and December 19. helloburlingtonvt.com

Manchester

Set among the timeless Green Mountain vistas that once enticed Abe Lincoln's son Robert to build a residence here, Manchester is a popular shopping spot that's home to both name brands and homegrown appeal. From **Eileen Fisher** to **Le Creuset**, designer outlets line up along Main and Depot streets—but you don't have to look far to find the local flavor. **Northshire Bookstore** is one of the best independent bookstores

in the Northeast, while **Spring & Harbor** is a locally owned outpost for colorful preppy chic. And if you need stocking stuffers, check out **Above All Vermont**, a cheerful hodgepodge of toys, foods, crafts, and more.

Don't Miss: The **Southern Vermont Arts Center**, which not only offers artful made-in-New-England wares in its museum shop but also hosts a holiday market on December 5 and 6. manchestervermont.com

Middlebury

You would actually have to live in this handsome college town to visit the entire cast of artisans, makers, and farmers packed into its 40 square miles; luckily, their crafts and wares are readily found throughout downtown. **Middlebury Natural Foods Co-op** is stocked with all things local, **Vermont's Own Products** is the go-to for things like aged cheese and maple syrup (their fudge alone is worth the stop), and **The Vermont Book Shop** spotlights resident authors like Bill McKibben and Julia Alvarez on its packed shelves. For a little holiday sparkle, stop in at Middlebury-based **Danforth Pewter**, whose handcrafted creations include tree ornaments that are works of art. **Don't Miss:** A reimagined, Covid-friendly version of the town's holiday festival, A Very Merry Middlebury. Dates and details to be announced. experiencemiddlebury.com



Church Street in Burlington,
all decked out for the holidays.

ALEX BOUDREAU/ISTOCK



Holiday Joys

Since 1946, The Vermont Country Store has been welcoming visitors to the picturesque town of Weston, in Vermont's southern Green Mountains.

Montpelier

Nothing says '*tis the season like the sight of the Vermont state Christmas tree (which last year topped 40 feet) glittering beside the Statehouse. It's the perfect backdrop for visiting the many pretty little shops scattered like ornaments across downtown. A fixture in Montpelier since 1978, **Artisans Hand** showcases the work of 120-plus Vermont crafters whose creations range from stained glass and sculpture to unique Christmas ornaments. Among the other longtime favorites: **Bear Pond Books** (c. 1973); gift and card shop **Capitol Stationers** (c. 1950); and music mecca **Buch Spieler Records** (c. 1973). And no visit to Montpelier is complete without a visit to **The Quirky Pet** and its lovable Bergamasco sheepdogs. **Don't Miss:** Getting a caffeinated pick-me-up at local roaster/café **Capitol Grounds**, where coffee sizes go from "Conservative" (8 oz.) to "Radical" (20 oz.). montpelieralive.com*

Waitsfield

In the heart of the Mad River Valley, Waitsfield is well known to ski nuts as a handy home base for Sugarbush and Mad River Glen. But the collection of shops and eateries along Main Street are worth a visit in their own right. Load up on artisanal cheese, syrup, bread, and chocolate at **Mad River Taste Place**, then peruse old and new tomes in the cozy **Tempest Book Shop**. Farther up the road is an arts-and-crafts cluster that includes **Artisans' Gallery** and **Mad River Glass**; beyond that, **Clearwater Sports** overflows with gift ideas for outdoorsy types (including your own ski nuts). **Don't Miss:** Stopping by cult-favorite microbrewery **Lawson's Finest Liquids** to see what all the fuss is about (drive-up service available). madrivervalley.com

Weston

Sometimes you don't need a lot of shops to do a lot of shopping. Exhibit A: Weston, a quintessential New England village complete with graceful 19th-century churches, period homes, and a tidy town green. There's nary a chain store in sight; instead, there's the **Weston Village Christmas Shop**, where you can stock up on ornaments, retro ceramic trees, and Annalee caroler dolls. And the **Weston Village Store**, whose eclectic offerings include jigsaw puzzles and New England souvenirs perfect for stocking stuffers. And then there's the granddaddy of them all, **The Vermont Country Store**, which has a dizzying array of clothing, toys, and hard-to-find food, home, and beauty items you thought were lost forever. **Don't Miss:** A winter-wonderland photo op in the town's Victorian gazebo. westonvt.com

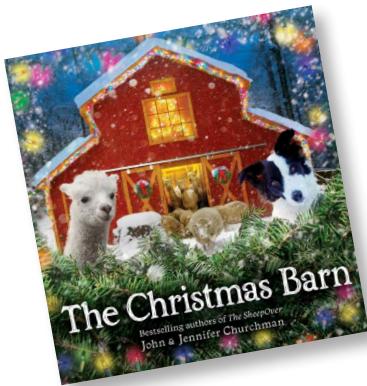
Woodstock

Located on the banks of the Ottauquechee River, postcard-perfect Woodstock boasts three covered bridges, farmland silhouetted by rolling hills, and—oh yes—a historic shopping district with charming restaurants and boutiques. Browse classic general store merchandise and souvenirs to your heart's content at the sprawling, 134-year-old landmark **F.H. Gillingham & Sons**; stock up on cozy blankets at the **Vermont Flannel Company**; or select an heirloom-quality serving bowl at **Farmhouse Pottery**. For foodies on your list, check out the **Woodstock Farmers' Market** for Vermont-made delicacies, from cheeses and jams to bread and chocolate. **Don't Miss:** A reimagined, Covid-friendly version of Woodstock's beloved holiday celebration, Wassail Weekend, slated for December 11–13. woodstockvt.com

The Christmas Shelf

12 terrific Vermont-centric books to put under the tree.

With many of us glued to our screens now more than ever—for news, for work, for school—there is a timeless comfort in tuning out for a little while and turning to the old-fashioned comfort of books. If you'd like to give the gift of literary escape to someone on your Christmas list this year, here are a dozen editors' picks for great books with Vermont ties to help inspire your holiday shopping.

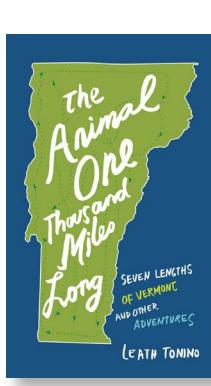


THE CHRISTMAS BARN by John and Jennifer Churchman (**Kids, 2020**): The Essex-based husband-and-wife team that gave us *The SheepOver* and *Alpaca Lunch*, among others, are back with another witty and beautifully illustrated children's book about the animal friends of Moonrise Farm, this time with a heartwarming holiday theme.

JUSTIN MORGAN HAD A HORSE by Marguerite Henry (**Kids, 2015**) Originally published in 1945, this timeless, award-winning tale of the scrappy Vermont colt who would sire a world-famous breed was released in 2015 in a gift-worthy hardcover, featuring the original text and illustrations you remember from your own childhood.

THE YOUNG ADVENTURER'S GUIDE TO (ALMOST) EVERYTHING by Ben Hewitt (**Kids, 2019**): Aimed at youngsters itching for outdoor independence—and inspired by the author's own experience raising two boys on a Northeast Kingdom homestead—this funny, informative guide is a how-to on everything from building the world's coolest fort to finding your way home without GPS.

SNOWFLAKE BENTLEY by Jacqueline Briggs Martin (**Kids, 1998**): The inspiring story of a genuine Vermont icon plus lovely



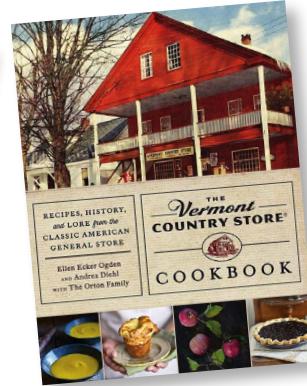
woodcuts by Calais illustrator Mary Azarian combine to make this Caldecott winner a must for any youngster's picture book library.

THE ORPHAN'S GUILT by Archer Mayor (**Mystery, 2020**): In the 31st mystery featuring Brattleboro police detective turned state investigator Joe Gunther, a traffic stop snowballs into a homicide investigation—and ends up revealing a decades-old hidden truth.

THE BEAR AND THE NIGHTINGALE by Katherine Arden (**Fantasy, 2017**): Set at the edge of the Russian wilderness and glittering with the dark magic of folk tales, the debut novel from this Vermont-based author launched her best-selling Winternight Trilogy.

AFTERLIFE by Julia Alvarez (**Fiction, 2020**): The internationally beloved author and writer-in-residence emerita at Middlebury College returns with her first adult novel in 14 years, centering on a recently retired college professor experiencing the weight of loss and the power of human connection.

A STRANGER IN THE KINGDOM by Howard Frank Mosher (**Fiction, 1989**): Winner of the 1991 New England Book Award (along with Mosher's *Disappearances*), this novel about a murder in a small town and the devastating events that follow has become a Vermont classic.



THE ANIMAL ONE THOUSAND MILES LONG

by Leath Tonino (**Essays, 2018**): Nature and travel writer Leath Tonino's smart, quirky, and openhearted essays about his beloved home state of Vermont invite all who live in the Green Mountain State to look at it with fresh eyes.

THE VERMONT COUNTRY STORE COOKBOOK by Andrea Diehl and Ellen Ecker Ogden (**Food, 2015**): Mildred's Gingerbread, a delicious and easy-to-make holiday classic, is just one of approximately 120 recipes shared by the Orton family in a cookbook that captures both the essence of their iconic store and the soul of the Vermont way of life.

THE KING ARTHUR FLOUR BAKER'S COMPANION (**Food, 2012**): Filled with expert tips and tasty recipes, this doorstop-size tome first published by the Norwich-based baking company back in 2003 is more than worth the dough. Buy the essential 2012 update (or preorder the forthcoming 2021 edition).

A LIFETIME OF VERMONT PEOPLE by Peter Miller (**Photography, 2013**): Raised in Weston, Peter Miller is an award-winning photographer who drew on more than 60 years of work for this stunning coffee-table collection of portraits and essays that celebrate the character of rural Vermonters.

Ready, Set, Stowe!

Make tracks for a classic ski town that's all about fresh-air fun.



Nestled between the Green Mountains to the west and the Worcester Range to the east, Stowe is postcard-perfect from just about any angle.

MARK FLEMING



When winter comes to the Green Mountain town of Stowe, it's not uncommon to see pedestrians toting skis and snowboards downtown. This is, after all, the self-proclaimed "Ski Capital of the East," thanks to nearby Mount Mansfield, Vermont's tallest peak.

Stowe straps on its ski heritage with gusto. Inns, shops, and restaurants all display their own private cache of memorabilia. Vintage photos show members of the Civilian Conservation Corps cutting Vermont's first ski trails in the 1930s; there are pictures of Sepp Ruschp, who arrived in Stowe from Austria in 1936 to spearhead a ski school and promote the new sport. On Main Street, the old meetinghouse (c. 1818) is now the Vermont Ski and Snowboard Museum, filled with old-fashioned lift chairs, retro ski gear, and vintage snowboards.

That said, Stowe is a two-for-one winter destination. Even as it celebrates the excitement of the outdoors,

Stowe's largest cross-country ski center can be found at the Trapp Family Lodge, owned by the Austrian family of singers made famous by *The Sound of Music*.

it also invites visitors to relax in a classic early-19th-century New England village that's perfect for strolling and taking advantage of snowy photo ops. There are deep family roots here, with generations passing down their stores and inns. Tradition is a watchword, but so is creativity: Predictably great on pancakes, Vermont maple syrup puts a nice spin on Stowe Cider's Berry Merrill hard cider and makes for a mean margarita at the luxury inn and restaurant Edson Hill.

Chalets abound, craft beers flow, fires crackle, and the slopes beckon ...

Getting Outside

Wedged in by mountains, Stowe sits in the northern reaches of Vermont, about a 45-minute drive east of



Burlington and less than three hours south of Montreal (which, in typical years, explains the fun of hearing French spoken on the streets here). Mountain Road stretches like a rope tow from the village center to the ski resort: six snowy miles dotted with inns, resorts, and eateries. A free winter bus shuttles handily from town to mountain, with stops along the way.

Visitors to **Stowe Mountain Resort** find the air is fresher at 4,395 feet, the powder softer. Mount Mansfield is laced with ski trails, with experts favoring the Front Four—National, Goat, Starr, and Liftline—verticals that are the stuff of ski legend. A more relaxing ride can be found on greens such as the Toll Road and the former Lullaby Lane, renamed Jake's Ride in 2020 in honor of the late snowboarding pioneer Jake Burton Carpenter [see page 40]. Stowe Mountain Resort's newer Spruce Peak area is popular with beginners, but it has its share of blue runs and black diamonds too.

MARK FLEMING



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: A popular attraction in summer as well as winter, the Stowe Gondola SkyRide offers eye-popping vistas as it takes passengers up Mount Mansfield; food to warm the soul at Doc Ponds, which was created by the same team behind the award-winning restaurant Hen of the Wood; Laughing Moon Chocolates, a sweet Stowe fixture since 2002.





FROM LEFT: A snowy stroll past the Stowe Public House, a go-to for Vermont craft brews and hard ciders; the eclectic lobby at boutique hotel Field Guide, a relative newcomer to the Stowe hospitality scene.

At Trapp Family Lodge's cross-country ski center, folks of all ages snap into their gear and sweep off into the snow-covered fields. Johannes von Trapp, the Trapp Family Singers' youngest member (now president of the resort), established this, North America's first cross-country ski center, which offers 37 miles of groomed trails on 2,500 acres. Closer to town, the 5.3-mile **Stowe Recreation Path** draws skiers and snowshoers alike as it winds from the village to Topnotch Resort, through woods, over bridges, and past iconic red barns.

Exploring Stowe

Denizens of Stowe have a knack for weathering the big chill in style. In the town's many shops, the fleece seems fleecier, the Nordic sweaters more Nordic-y. There's all manner of winter gear for sale at Stowe

Mountain Resort, but on Main Street look for **Shaw's General Store**, a fixture since 1895, where fifth-generation proprietor Alex Stevens presides over a tidy maze of hats, vintage-inspired T-shirts, and cozy sweaters. Farther up the road you'll find the candy makers at **Laughing Moon Chocolates** practicing their sweet craft; signature offerings include maple buttercreams, and truffles made with Jasper Hill Farm's famous Bayley Hazen blue cheese. At the other end of downtown is **The Country Store on Main**, filled with home décor and Vermont-inspired gifts ranging from Farmhouse Pottery to Runamok maple syrup.

As for dining, where to begin? **Doc Ponds** is a casual favorite, where rib-sticking fare such as taco bowls and Vermont cheddar-topped burgers is complemented with an array of local brews (look for Heady Topper, made down the street at The Alchemist).



FROM LEFT: Filling up at Stowe Cider, which leans heavily on local fruit and hops for its creations; a vibrant snapshot of downhill heritage at the Vermont Ski and Snowboard Museum.

At Butler's Pantry, the breakfast acai bowl is like an addictive slushy topped with granola and fruit, while the chunky warm biscuits, cheesy grits, and house-made maple sausage are more comforting than flannel. The Asian takeout joint **Umami**—recently opened by the owners of elegant sit-down eatery **Plate**—is doing brisk business with standards (kung pao, lo mein) and innovative entrees (black bean salmon with greens; tofu with pork belly, chilies, and wild mushrooms). Set on a snowy hillside, **The Dining Room at Edson Hill** has a beauty matched by that of its food: things like venison tartare, citrus beet salad, ribeye with candied pearl onions and king oyster mushrooms, chai buttermilk panna cotta. Much is locally sourced—because it's Vermont, and they can.

Travel Notes

■ Although all of the Stowe businesses and destinations mentioned in our story (and many more besides) are up and running this winter, hours and operations may be affected by Covid-19. For instance, **The Alchemist** is selling its beers by online order and curbside pickup, and is not offering factory tours. Always check in advance before making travel plans, and please respect local businesses' safety policies.

■ Visiting from out of state? You can find all the latest information on traveling in Vermont on the state's Department of Health website: healthvermont.gov/response/coronavirus-covid-19/traveling-vermont

The Beer Scene

Stowe excels at the artisanal, and its carefully crafted brews and ciders are prime examples. Here's a quick list of some names to know: 1) **The Alchemist**, home to Heady Topper, the now-legendary IPA that caused a sensation when first released by John and Jen Kimmich; 2) **Idletyme Brewing Company**, an après-ski brewpub housed in a former blacksmith shop, where brewmaster Will Gilson brings 20 years of expertise to bear; 3) **Stowe Cider**, a family-run cidery that blends 100 percent Vermont apples into small-batch hard ciders that range from year-round standbys (High & Dry, Tips Up) to seasonal offerings and creative one-offs (maple and ginger cider shandy, anyone?); 4) **Von Trapp Brewing**, a brewery inspired by Johannes von Trapp's trips to Austria and which produces "crisp, clean Austrian lagers," served up in the bierhall with schnitzel.

Staying Overnight

Stowe has one of the highest concentrations of famous mountain inns and resorts in the Northeast. It also has a superb chamber of commerce ready to help you get your bearings (gostowe.com). At **Stoweflake Mountain Resort & Spa**, third-generation owner Scot Baraw helms a greatly expanded version of the 16-room inn that his grandmother started. The Mountain Road shuttle swings by the lobby and whiskers guests right to the slopes. Other worthy accommodations in Stowe include **Topnotch Resort**; the upscale **Green Mountain Inn**; country-chic **Field Guide**; and the sleek **Lodge at Spruce Peak**, at the base of the resort. —*Annie Graves*

Recently voted
the East's no. 1
family-friendly resort
by *Ski* magazine
readers, Smugglers'
Notch knows how
to keep the kiddos
entertained.



Lift Your Spirits

Family-friendly ski areas are unbeatable for parent-kid playtime.

No sports bring families together quite the way skiing and snowboarding do. Lifetime memories happen not only on the slopes but also in the lodges, as you sit together drinking hot chocolate and planning the next day's trails. Parents don't simply watch their children on these mountains, they join in the journey: the easy greens, the more challenging blues, then the steeper blacks and moguls and glades. With patience, practice, and good instruction, there's no terrain that families cannot conquer together.

Finding the right ski area for your family depends on what you're looking for. If you have younger kids, you might prefer a cozy mountain where every trail is visible from the main lodge; for teenagers, on the other hand, you may need a place with multiple lifts and more trails

than anyone can do in a week. Fortunately, Vermont offers a veritable buffet of choices. Here are some favorites to get you started. —*Mel Allen*

Smugglers' Notch Resort, Jeffersonville

For years, "Smuggs" has been the gold standard of family ski resorts. It strikes the perfect balance between a supportive learning environment for beginners (here, as young as 2½) and a choice of terrain for all ages and abilities. All-day instruction includes the use of GPS devices for young students, so teachers know where they are at all times; Smuggs also features a program geared to children with special needs. Better yet, this is a park-your-car-once resort, where everything you and your clan could want is right at the base village. smuggs.com



FROM LEFT: Okemo's covered lifts with heated seats let families cruise to the top in comfort; a ski school instructor at Stratton helps a gaggle of youngsters find their snow legs.

Mount Snow Resort, West Dover

Older children and teenagers who may be drawn to half-pipes and terrain parks have Carinthia, a mountain park all to themselves. But even here, the younger ones and beginners have a space within the space: Grommet Park, which comes with its own chairlift and sized-down bumps and slides. The mountain has distinct areas geared to different abilities and appetites for speed and challenges. mountsnow.com

Jay Peak, Jay

When you run a ski mountain in one of Vermont's most remote regions, it helps to have the highest average snowfall in the East (over 400 inches of powder each year); glade runs that are considered among the best in the country; one of the longest vertical drops in the state; ski-out-your-door lodging; an ice skating rink; and, oh yes, an enormous indoor heated waterpark that is a bona fide kid magnet. jaypeakresort.com

Stratton Mountain Resort, Stratton

There may be no better mountain for families who want to ski together than Stratton. While new-to-the-sport skiers are often relegated (at least at first) to low slopes that offer scant views and few "oh my gosh" moments, the Mike's Way green trail takes you from the summit of southern

Peak Safety

Planning for ski season in the Covid-19 era is a tall order, but Vermont's ski areas got a big head start thanks to lessons learned from their summer operations and from how countries like Australia and New Zealand handled winter recreation this year.

In addition to wearing face coverings and maintaining social distancing, visitors to Vermont's ski areas this season can expect to see everything from online parking reservations to cashless transactions to new capacity limits on lifts.

Ski Vermont offers a wealth of visitor information on its website, including links to Vermont's latest travel regulations and to individual ski areas' Covid-19 policies. You can find it all at: skivermont.com/trip-planning-and-covid-19

Vermont's tallest peak, with spectacular views across to New York state, to the village with soft, easy turns that show you the joy of the sport. stratton.com

Bromley Mountain, Peru

There's a special quality to a cozy mountain where the lodge feels like a home, and the mountain itself is a neighborhood where neighbors wave as you glide by. What makes this 46-trail resort especially popular with families is its south-facing slopes—Bromley's known as "Vermont's Sun Mountain" for a reason. bromley.com

Okemo Mountain Resort, Ludlow

Okemo's 120 trails spread across two mountain areas have something for everyone: top-to-bottom winding greens, long intermediate groomers, steep blacks, and for the acrobatic boarders, half-pipes. And then there's the heated indoor pool,

which joins a 90-degree outdoor one where you can float and see snow drifting down ... and a tubing park ... and the Timber Ripper Mountain Coaster, which lets you steer your own personal thrill ride down a twisting course ... and a heated six-person high-speed covered lift, so your family can ascend warm and comfy together. okemo.com

Vroom for All

Riders young and old can enjoy great scenery (and social distancing) on Vermont's snowmobiling trails.



Snowmobilers traverse the Coburn Covered Bridge over the Winooski River while riding trails around East Montpelier.

The Green Mountain State is home to some of the finest snowmobiling in the country, thanks to the nearly 5,000 miles of well-marked and groomed trails that crisscross both public and private land. That network is maintained by a whopping 131 local riding clubs and the group that oversees them, the Vermont Association of Snow Travelers (VAST), a Berlin-based nonprofit that has directed the state's snowmobiling industry for more than half a century.

As VAST executive director Cindy Locke sees it, the great thing about snowmobiling in Vermont is that "you get to see places you wouldn't normally see otherwise: old cemeteries, old townships, the chance to get up on a hilltop on some farm and see a village the way that maybe only the guy who owns the property ever sees, when he's out haying." More generally, Locke says, a real benefit of snowmobiling is that it's a sport that generations of riders can share in, from newbies to veterans, both young and old. "It's something people really can get out and do together," she says.

Vermont's snowmobiling season begins the day after the hunting season concludes (December 15 this year) and runs until mid-April. To ride on the trail network, you can either go touring with an outfitter or, if you have your own sled, join a riding club and buy a trail pass from VAST. The group's free mobile app allows members to easily map out new rides, document old ones, and receive up-to-the-minute grooming and trail condition reports.

While a hefty annual snowfall—up to 250 inches in some parts of the state—and jaw-dropping scenery are constants, snowmobiling in Vermont is not a single type of experience. The network of trails brings riders through the state's many varied landscapes, from rolling farm hills to wooded villages to loftier terrain.

"What I love is that you can get that higher-elevation riding whether you're up north or down south," says Locke. "In a place like Mount Snow, you're in a ski town,



Who needs a TV, when sunset over Killington is your family viewing hour?

so there's a lot to do there. Then there's some great trails in the Woodford area that lead into the national forest. Up north, near Jay Peak, you have all this farmland.

"But because you're covering anywhere from 60 to 100 miles in one day," she adds, "you're not going to see just one thing."

As with other outdoor sports this year, snowmobiling is seeing a boom in interest as people look for activities that will keep them entertained but safe and socially distanced. Dealers are having a hard time keeping new machines in stock, says Locke, and VAST has experienced a steady uptick in membership.

"We saw it with bikes and kayaks and ATVs, and now we're seeing it with snowmobiling," she says. "It's really a perfect activity during these times. And I know tour operators are being careful, especially when it comes to making sure the equipment is sanitized."

Add it all together, and Vermont should see a banner year for snowmobiling, Locke says. "As long as we have snow, we know people will want to ride." —*Ian Aldrich*

For more information on the upcoming snowmobiling season and trail passes, go to vtvast.org.

Getting Started in Snowmobiling

If you've never hopped on a snowmobile before—or simply don't have a sled of your own—taking a tour with a local outfitter can be an ideal place to begin. As with many Vermont businesses this year, snowmobile touring companies may be making changes to their operations in light of Covid-19. Please check with them directly before making travel plans—or put them on your adventure bucket list for next season!

Snowmobile Vermont: One of New England's oldest and largest tour operators, offering a range of riding from beginner to

advanced at its locations in Killington, Okemo, Mount Snow, and Stowe. snowmobilevermont.com

NEK Adventures, St. Johnsbury: Snowmobile rentals and tours in the heart of the Northeast Kingdom; owned and operated by Vermont natives Phil and Maggie Brown. nekadventures.com

Stratton Adventures, Stratton: A small, locally owned company that runs tours to southern Vermont's tallest peak; afternoon, sunset, and starlight options run about 90 minutes each. strattonadventures.com

Slice of Life

Behind one very special loaf of bread lies a mission to reclaim—and reimagine—a historic Vermont foodway.



Loaves of Vermont
Redeemer, fresh from
the oven at Elmore
Mountain Bread.

The day I learned I'd been eating dead flour all my life came one summer when I wandered into my local co-op and picked up a loaf of hearth bread still warm from its oven. It was dark and crusty, with an ornate wheat pattern cut into the top, and it smelled like a hot field in August. It was called Vermont Redeemer. I bought it because of that smell, which was unlike that of any loaf I'd encountered, and because it was made entirely from organic wheat grown in Vermont, which I'd not thought possible.

And what bread! Back home, I tore off a hunk, troweled butter over the top, and wolfed it. I'd always thought that most whole wheat bread tasted like rank sawdust, so this was a game changer. It had the nutty, green liveliness of mown hay, and I realized that although I had tasted a lot of delicious bread before, none of it had ever tasted freshly killed.

I had no idea why, so I contacted the bakery that had produced the loaf and asked. "We mill all our flour the day before we bake—that's what you're tasting," explained Blair Marvin, who runs Elmore Mountain Bread with her husband, Andrew Heyn. "We built our own mill. Want to come see it?"

Oh, yes, I did.

By the time I arrived at Elmore Mountain Bread, at the end of a dirt road in the Vermont woods, I'd boned up on grains. In 1800, Vermont and Maine were the breadbasket of the Northeast, supplying New York and Boston. New England once had 15,000 mills lining its waterways, grinding flour for local consumption. Only after the Erie Canal opened in 1825, and railroads followed, did the Midwest win the grain game.

Today, a handful of gigantic steel roller mills in the Grain Belt produce most of our flour, and it is almost all white—the ultimate generic, shelf-stable commodity. And as with other commodities, flavor is not a consideration. Most commercial flour is made from standardized blends of high-yielding wheats designed to have as little noticeable character as possible, and whatever perfume the wheat might retain quickly dissipates after grinding. It's the blank canvas the artisan baker paints on, not the art.

At least, that's what I thought until I stepped through Elmore Mountain Bread's screen door and confronted the oven, a brick altar of wheat veneration. Three metal doors crossed its face, and a rosy-cheeked woman with fair hair spilling out of her black cap was pulling golden baguettes from the middle door. Marvin gave me a floury handshake as she scored a batch of Vermont Redeemer with that intricate wheat pattern. "All the other bakeries have straight scores," she explained. "I wanted to do one that was kind of hard, because I felt like it was a really special bread." Beads of sweat glistened on her nose. "Sorry," she said, "the oven's crazy hot today."

Elmore Mountain's bread is wood-fired, the new



Blair Marvin at work at Elmore Mountain Bread, the wood-fired bakery and stone-ground flour mill that she founded with husband Andrew Heyn in Elmore, Vermont.

standard for hard-core bakers. Marvin fires the oven at 9 a.m. the day before and lets it burn for 12 hours. The masonry retains so much heat that 700 loaves can

be baked in the cooling oven the following day. "We carefully designed the breads to work with the oven," Marvin explained. Focaccias, which like high heat, go in first, then baguettes, then more substantial breads that need a longer, cooler bake, like Vermont Redeemer. Breads with maple syrup or honey go in last. "We spent years staring at this thing, baking thousands and thousands of loaves and figuring out how best to utilize the heat," Marvin said.

For years, Marvin and Heyn had used a conventional oven with a single door. They could move just three loaves at a time with a peel, losing heat every time. By

the time that oven expired, they had pages of notes on their dream oven, which a talented mason named William Davenport built for them. The new oven is larger, better insulated, and bolstered by a steel framework so the bricks won't blow apart from the constant heat, and it allows them to load or unload two dozen loaves at once with a belted loader through one of the doors without disturbing the others. The moisture from the new batch helps steam a crackly crust on the finishing batch.

Soon the tight-knit community of wood-fired bakers was making the pilgrimage to Elmore to see "the Turtlerock oven," as Davenport called it. One of the first visitors was Dave Bauer, a celebrated North Carolina baker. Bauer was grinding his own local heritage grains on a small stone mill from Austria to produce uniquely Southern breads and pizza crusts. You can't imagine what a difference fresh-milled flour makes, he told Marvin and Heyn. They were skeptical. "I wanted consistent flour," Marvin recalled. "I wanted predictability."

A few days after Bauer's visit, a FedEx box appeared on their doorstep. Inside were bags of heirloom Bloody Butcher dent corn, Abruzzi rye, and Turkey Red winter wheat that Bauer had milled the day before. They opened up the bags and stuck their heads inside. "BOOM!" Marvin said. "It was this face-punch of flavor! It blew us away. The smell of it! The aroma! That was the moment. We were like, Sold! Done! We have to do this."

Heyn, who has the laconic reserve and tinkering mindset of an old-school New Englander, began poring over 19th-century milling books, boning up on things

I leaned my head into the bucket of flour and breathed in the romance of a hayloft, and for the first time, I thought of flour as a seed.

like the shape of millstone furrows and the trajectory of wheat berries, and came up with a design for a set of granite millstones that would grind flour finely enough to make a superb baguette. He ordered the stones from some flabbergasted granite carvers, built a mill around them, ordered some whole wheat berries from Kansas (the only organic supply available that year), and in November 2013 began milling his own flour.

The impact on Elmore Mountain's bread was profound. Grinding their own grain allowed them to preserve the germ—the oil-rich heart of the kernel that is ejected by industrial roller mills in making

When Heyn couldn't find the kind of mill he needed for grinding wheat, he taught himself how to build one by hand—something he now does for other bakers with his New American Stone Mills.



white flour—and whatever portion of the husky bran they wanted, giving their flour a creamy color and intense flavor. Marvin couldn't believe what she'd been missing. "Wheat is not just a blank slate," she said. "Each variety has its own aroma, complexity, sweetness, muskiness, barniness—all of these flavors to translate into the bread."

Even better, Marvin and Heyn now had the option of buying wheat berries directly from any farmer they could find. Their first thought was to source locally, but they were stymied: At the time there were only three people growing wheat commercially in the state, and it was spoken for. The dream of the local loaf was put on hold.

Meanwhile, Heyn found himself in the millstone business. "Other bakers got interested," he told me. "They'd say, 'What, you built your own mill? You're milling all your flour in-house? That's crazy!' And then they'd say, 'Hey, would you build me a mill?'"

Heyn now spends more time on his New American Stone Mills than he does in the bakery. He's built mills for bakers and millers in Rhode Island, Connecticut, and North Carolina, and a 48-inch monster in Minnesota.

Why? I wondered. Why would people already committed to long, hard days of sweaty baking pile the arduous task of milling on top?

For an answer, Heyn brought me to his mill. A thin stream of whole wheat berries funneled down the inverted pyramid of the hopper into the eye in the center of the runner stone, out through the furrows where the whirring runner stone met the stationary bedstone, and into a bucket as fresh flour. I leaned my head into the bucket and breathed in the romance of a hayloft, and for the first time in my life, I thought of flour as a seed.

Of course, if asked I'd have said that grain was made of seed heads, but a lifetime of experiencing flour as a nutritionally barren white powder had conditioned me to think of it otherwise. Seeds: tasty, nutritional gold. Flour: starchy scourge.

But this was so clearly different. I began to wonder if the ills we assign to wheat have a lot more to do with the industrial process than with the plant. Marvin agreed. "With the industrialization of food, the quality of bread has gone down, and it's gotten a bad rap. As we were seeing more and more people not want to eat bread, it increased our desire to make better-tasting, healthier, more interesting bread that was closer to the way people have been eating bread for thousands of years."

To be honest, though, I still didn't get it. I loved having access to flavorful, local bread, and I certainly understood an artisan baker's wanting to make the best bread ever, but I still didn't get what would turn a normal farmer into a "graniac" too. And I wouldn't, until I tracked the Vermont Redeemer wheat to its source: Rogers Farmstead, in Berlin.

When I pulled up beside the Rogers farmhouse on a steamy summer day, a small boy with a crewcut was surveying a ragtag collection of field equipment like a general reviewing his troops. He waved me over urgently. "That's the twactor," he said solemnly, pointing. "Combine. Thwesher. Mowedboahd pwow." I nodded in faux comprehension. The red barn, the old farmhouse, the antique equipment, the crewcut—it could have been a diorama of life on the prairie 50 years ago.

A 40-year-old version of the same boy, right down to the crewcut, stepped out of the barn and shook my

hand. Nate Rogers explained to me that one of the first steps in becoming a small-scale wheat farmer was hunting down equipment nobody had made in years. "That length grader shipped from Oregon. I found those cleaning screens in Orono, Maine. The combine's from northern Michigan. That moldboard plow's out of Quebec. Five grand. A steal. You can't get this stuff anymore."

Rogers grew up on a dairy farm in upstate New York. He loved farming but knew dairy had no future, so he became an engineer at Vermont's IBM plant. Still, he kept dreaming about raising his kids on a farm, so when he heard about a rundown farm for sale beside the Dog River, just south of Montpelier, he jumped on it.

There was no master plan. Rogers thought maybe he'd raise beef cattle, but he was trying to stay open-minded. "You have to let the land dictate what you're going to do."

And the land, it turned out, had some very clear ideas on the subject. When Heather Darby, an agronomist with the University of Vermont extension service, visited the farm, she turned over foot after foot of rock-free, well-drained sandy loam, and told Rogers something she tells very few farmers: Think about wheat. "I knew the soils were

good, but I didn't know how good," Rogers said. "They're ridiculous. When you end up with prime river bottom, you have to maximize it."

Darby introduced Rogers to Redeemer, a variety of wheat from Ontario she'd been testing for years. Redeemer thrived in well-drained soils, had excellent flavor, and was resistant to fusarium, a toxic fungus that wrecks most wheat in wetter climates. Rogers went all in. It was an immense gamble, but he had the magic touch. His first crop of Redeemer came through beautifully—and he realized he had no idea what to do with it. There was no local grist mill in Vermont.

But there was Elmore Mountain Bread. When Blair Marvin heard that a farm 25 miles down Route 12



Marvin applies the signature Vermont Redeemer pattern to raw loaves. "It's so much work—and boy are my hands numb by the end of the day—but this bread totally deserves it," she says.

All Rise!

from them was sitting on a crop of organic wheat, she had trouble believing it. She cold-called the farm and got some samples, and in 2014 the first experimental loaves of Vermont Redeemer began rolling out of the Turtlerock oven.

One of those loaves was hand-delivered to Nate Rogers, and that was all it took for full-blown grain fever to take hold. “I was really intrigued by the scalability,” he told me. “Grains are much more scalable than vegetables. If you have five acres of vegetables, that’s a big deal. But with grain, 50 acres isn’t that much more work than five.” In 2015, he harvested 20,000 pounds of Redeemer and sent samples to Marvin and Heyn, who came down to the farm to talk business. “It was one of the coolest conversations I ever had,” he recalled with a smile. “They brought lunch, and we sat on the lawn on a big blanket with the kids running around, and I said, ‘OK, how much do you guys want?’ And they said, ‘We want it all.’ And I said, ‘It’s yours.’”

And that was the beginning of a beautiful relationship—a farmer who needed a miller and a baker. Not only did they want Rogers’s entire crop but they also wanted to put his name on the label and tell the story of the bread.

Now Rogers is on a roll, and thinking big. He’s growing oats; he’s playing around with buckwheat. Bigger tractors and combines loom. And he could easily see his 100 acres of wheat becoming 500. “Every piece you pick up makes the next one easier,” he said with a glint in his eye. “We’re just scratching the surface of what we can do.”

This article is an excerpt from Rowan Jacobsen’s 2017 Yankee feature story, “On the Rise.” To read the whole story, go to newengland.com/vtbread.

Among the things that this past year has helped us appreciate is the nourishing power of fresh bread, baked by hand—and in Vermont you don’t have to look far to find it. In addition to **Elmore Mountain Bread** (elmoremountainbread.com), here’s a sampling of top-notch independent bakeries whose offerings warm the soul no matter how cold it is outside. Most sell their wares at local stores; check the websites below to find out where to buy.



Brotbakery, Fairfax

German-influenced Brotbakery serves up crusty loaves of sourdough, whole-grain and sprouted-grain breads, and ever-changing specialties (think: a beer bread made with Zero Gravity lager). It also turns out pastries and cakes, as well as German Christmas treats such as fruit-filled *stollen* and delicately spiced *lebkuchen*. brotbakery.com

Red Hen Baking Co., Middlesex

Bread comes out of the oven seven days a week at Red Hen, founded 21 years ago by Randy George and Eliza Cain. Adding to the freshness factor: More than 90 percent of the flour comes from farmers within 150 miles of the bakery. Offerings include polenta bread, olive bread, seeded baguettes, and a pumpernickel relative called “sprouternickel,” plus an assortment of pastries and sweets. redhenbaking.com

Naga Bakehouse, Middletown Springs

Since opening in 2003, Naga Bakehouse has made its name with fire-baked, naturally leavened artisan breads, but also with its spirit of invention. There’s Naga’s version of the Passover bread matzoh, called “Vermatzah”; its community pizza nights; and, new for 2021, a collaboration with the Regenerative Food Network to launch Spoon Mountain Millers, powered by grain from local and regional farms. [On Facebook](#)

O Bread Bakery, Shelburne

Chuck and Carla Conway moved to Vermont in 1973 to start their own bakery—and they’ve

been baking ever since, operating for much of that time out of the Farm Barn at historic Shelburne Farms. Their focus is on European-style creations made with organic ingredients, encompassing Italian ciabattas, French bâtarde, Swiss farmhouse loaves, and more. obread.com

Patchwork Farm & Bakery, East Hardwick

Thanks to a chance encounter with a book about sourdough and brick ovens, Charlie Emers embarked on a career as a commercial baker in 2001, working out of a building on his three-acre farm. Today he sells two dozen or so varieties of baked goodness, including challahs, ryes, pitas, and his own “Everyday Matzoh,” available year-round. patchworkfarmbakery.com

Slowfire Bakery, Jeffersonville

A staple of the Burlington Farmers Market, Slowfire’s goods are always tasty and also sometimes a memorable show of creativity (e.g., cider-squash country sourdough). The lineup of breads ranges from wheat to masa, and Italian to Danish rye, plus there are croissants, kouign amann, and other pastries. [On Facebook](#)

Rise Up Bakery, Barre

Rise Up’s downtown building has roots as a bakery that go back to 1913, when its oven turned out Italian breads to feed Barre’s many immigrant quarry workers and stonemasons. In 2019, Vermont native Jim Haas became head baker at the restored bakery—now part education center—where he teaches classes and makes naturally leavened, wood-fired breads. riseupbakeryvt.com



Snow Man

When you love plowing snow, it's easy to get in over your head.

When it snowed in early November, we were not surprised. There is often sticking snow in early November, or even in October, when the stubborn remnants of foliage cling to the trees, and you'd swear you never saw anything more beautiful in your life: all those red and orange leaves against pure white, the land like a slate wiped clean. A new beginning. Or at least the promise of one. But inevitably, that early snow will melt, and sooner rather than later, that promise will go unfulfilled.

Still, if I've learned anything over the nearly 50 Vermont winters I've seen come and go, it's to take nothing for granted. So I vowed to make the most of it. I retrieved my cross-country skis from the loft over

the cows' run-in shed, where the chickens had enjoyed roosting for much of the summer; nothing says the joys of rural living like scraping dried chicken poop off your skis. Soon after, I smashed out the driver's-side window in the plow truck when I slid off the driveway and directly into the gnarled branch of what had previously been one of my favorite apple trees; nothing says the joys of rural living like a lap full of window glass and a very stuck truck.

Yet the early snow was memorable for all the right reasons, too, particularly because it was accompanied by consistently cold temperatures, which made for excellent skiing and, once I got the window replaced, trouble-free plowing. I love plowing snow; it's one of those tasks that

require a fine balance of finesse and force. You need to know when to gun it, and when to lay off the gas. You need to know how far to push back the banks early in the season to ensure there will be room to pile the later storms. And you need to understand the vagaries of snow—how even a degree or two in temperature can make the difference between effortless plowing and the sort of accumulation that lends itself to four-letter words and extraction by tractor.

My affection for plowing explains in part why I was so delighted when, from out of the blue, I received an email offering me an unusual snow-removal job. The email was from a man named Robert who, with his partner, Emily, was moving to town from Alaska. “There is a small cabin at the end of a half-mile driveway, where we’ll be living until we build a small house,” he wrote. “I can imagine the driveway is covered with a mix of snow and ice, and plowing will take quite a bit of effort.” Naturally, it was this last part that really captured my attention.

The snow was at least four feet on the ground. There was simply no way our plow truck was up to the task; this was a tractor job all the way.

When I received the email, the snow lay as deep on the ground as in any winter in recent memory, and the weather had been relentlessly cold and stormy. But our new neighbors weren’t due in town for a month. “I’ll get it clear for ya one way or another ... hopefully, we’ll have a thaw and it’ll be a bit easier than it would now!” is how I jauntily replied to Robert.

Of course, a thaw never came. In fact, the weeks between that email exchange and Robert and Emily’s expected arrival day were as thawless as any I’ve known. And the snow! One storm after another, none of them massive, but not inconsequential dustings, either: four inches one day, six the next. Three inches, then eight. And so on. Every week, we walked a bit closer to the sky.

And every week or so, I trudged up to the base of Robert and Emily’s driveway to appraise the situation. It’s maybe worth noting that our family’s land is approximately 1,800 feet in elevation, and that their driveway started a mile up the road from ours. And climbed from there.

Not long before their arrival, I emailed Robert with an update. “Wanted to alert you that I may have grossly underestimated the time necessary to clear it”—in my zeal, I’d previously told him it could take a couple of hours—“there’s a LOT of snow.” Robert was understanding, and we decided to move forward based

on my assurances that I’d do my best to get the drive cleared as quickly as possible. And also maybe based on the fact that he and Emily didn’t have a heck of a lot of options, as they’d soon be arriving with all their worldly possessions. They were obviously rugged folk—who else moves to Vermont in the middle of winter, into a cabin with no utilities at the end of a half-mile driveway that starts above 2,000 feet in elevation and then climbs? I hadn’t even met them yet, and I was already a bit in awe.

Frankly, I was also (maybe just the littlest, tiniest, teensiest) in over my head. By now, the snow at our place was at least four feet on the ground. There was simply no way our plow truck was up to the task; this was a tractor job all the way. But clearing snow with a tractor is significantly slower than plowing, and even with the extra-deep bucket on our Kubota, I knew it was going to be like bailing a bathtub with a teaspoon. Fortunately, I also knew that our neighbor Scott had just taken delivery of a brand-new tractor. “I’ve got an amazing

opportunity for you” is what I said when I stopped by Scott’s place. He laughed. But he didn’t say no.

And that’s how it got done. Between the two of us, Scott and I put nearly 20 hours into the job. In places, the snow on Robert and Emily’s driveway was an honest

six feet deep, and there were places that were so steep I could barely make it up even after I’d moved the snow. I cleared snow two or three hours at a time, until I was too cold to carry on; then I’d return home to warm myself by the fire and drink another cup of coffee before heading out again. I kept my fingers crossed that we wouldn’t get a big storm, and miraculously, we didn’t.

I finished moving snow the evening before Robert and Emily arrived, working by the tractor’s dim headlights, stopping every 15 minutes or so to warm my hands against the engine block. I hoped they’d be able to make it all the way to the cabin in their truck, although frankly, I wasn’t sure (turns out, they did—barely). But I’d done all I could do. At the height of the driveway, in the dooryard of their little cabin, I shut the tractor down and sat for a minute. The silence, particularly in the aftermath of the tractor’s diesel clatter, was complete. The sky above was startlingly clear and cold; the stars improbably bright.

I knew there’d be nothing easy about living up here: no electricity, hauling water, the road sure to close in again soon—and even that’d be better traveling than the spring thaw, when it’d turn to mush. But in that moment, cold and tired as I was, I felt just the smallest twinge of envy, and I could understand why they’d fallen for the place. And maybe for the first time in my life, I was really, really glad to be done plowing snow. —*Ben Hewitt*



The Barnebakken

*How a little creativity led to the ultimate stay-home amenity:
a backyard rope tow.*

The slick, wet November snow that coated our family's humble Vermont hillside was hardly enough for skis to slide on. So it was with well-worn work boots on my feet that I reached for the rope to test our homemade ticket to backyard-skiing paradise. Having just spliced together with my neighbor Andrew two sections of 3/4-inch-diameter rope into a single 1,000-foot loop, I seated the rope around the rear wheel of an old riding lawn mower and, for the very first time, fired up our backyard rope tow. I leaned back, pressured my heels, tightened my grip on the ascending line of the rope—and was yanked into a semi-controlled bout of world-class boot skiing before dropping the rope 50 feet up the hill and proclaiming, “It works!”

My brother-in-law showed up just in time to witness the momentous occasion, and he offered to help. “Grab

your skis,” I suggested, half jokingly. “It’s going to be a fun winter.”

But unless soggy grass and wood chips is your thing, skiing was not recommended just yet. Besides, we still had some fine-tuning to do before the long season ahead. So we got to work. We had an emergency shutoff to install, some securing of the motor to complete, and, most important, a sign that read *Barnebakken* (Norwegian for “kids’ hill”) to carve and attach to the side of the tow shack. For added motivation, wet snowflakes continued to fly all afternoon.

It's hard to pass up a few moonlit runs on a calm winter night when you've got your own ski lift. Inside the brightly lit tow shack is the key to it all: a repurposed riding mower.

For nearly 20 years, my wife, Emily, and I have done cross-country and backcountry skiing on and around our property in

the Mad River Valley. But it wasn't until we logged a crowded stand of red pine trees behind our home in 2017 that the idea of installing our very own rope tow took hold. We were intrigued by how building our own lift up a snowy hill might make the sport even more fun, social, and accessible. Now, with our two young daughters, Maiana and Lenora, and several of their young cousins nearby, our hunch was that the investment required to get a rope tow up and running would pay off for years to come.

Logger Rich Hallstrom chuckled when he saw me flagging a straight line of red pines behind our house—trees we wanted left

behind as 12-foot-high stumps, the future towers for our tow. They would serve as mounts both for lights and for the return wheels that guide the rope back down the hill, among other functions.

"I can't say I've seen this on a job before," Rich said. He chipped away at clearing five acres of trees through the winter of 2017, revealing a southwest-facing hillside that was once home to flocks of sheep and even some cattle. Stone walls line the north and south sides of the hill, and thanks to the hard work of earlier generations, there's hardly a rock larger than a plum out there. It was on hillsides like this one that mechanized ski areas got their start in the first half of the 20th century, when rope tows were relatively commonplace across New England's snow country.

In late spring, we used the proceeds from the logging to grind the stumps in place and to buy pasture seed, which we spread by hand. Over the summer, our family constructed a simple shack at the base of the hill to house the motor, installed a return wheel at the top of the hill, and sourced a few other ingredients—an old riding lawn mower, bits of hardware, and rope, of course—some of which was passed along to us by our friends Angus and Kricket McCusker. The McCuskers have rope tows in both their front and back yards, and the time we had spent skiing their tows together was the final dose of inspiration we needed.



Initially powered by a neighbor's hand-me-down belt-driven riding mower, the Barnebakken today hums along on a more powerful shaft-driven mower.

After my proud test run on that snowy November afternoon, flakes piled up overnight, and in the morning Emily and I headed out for our inaugural runs on the Barnebakken. Donning sturdy leather gloves, we grabbed the rope and in just 35 seconds were whisked 500 feet to the open views and breezes of our hilltop.

Within a few runs, it was clear we had created something magical. "I can't believe we have our own ski area!" Emily said.

Before long, spinning the tow—or Coco, as we named our mower and motor—became second nature, and usually spontaneous: during lunch breaks from

work, after school, après-dinner, under the winter moon.

Why not? We set up a cozy fire pit with benches at the base of the hill, and fire-roasted Barnebakken Burgers were born. Marshmallows were toasted. Jumps and whoop-de-dos took shape all over the hill, providing endless entertainment for all ages.

"Daddy, let's make a hundred whoop-de-dos!" suggested 3-year-old Lenora. Increasingly, we witnessed the girls

and their visiting ski buddies becoming immersed in a continuous and fun-loving flow of skiing motion that would keep up for a handful, a dozen, or even 20 runs, as 5-year-old Maiana proudly claimed one day.

It was a warm, rainy Saturday morning in spring when we finally called it quits for the season. The fun was not so much in skiing the leftover areas of snow, but rather in skiing the growing grassy patches and puddles between them. In an hour, the kids were properly soaked and muddied.

We gathered after one last tow up top. The girls leaned against the shutoff gate, gave it a good push, and that was it.

"Thanks, Coco!" shouted Lenora.

Under a drenching rain, we skied for the comforts of home below. Kicking off our skis, we wondered if it might snow just once more before summer, or if it was simply time to roll Coco out of her shack and start mowing the lawn. —*Brian Mohr*



Knock on Wood

*More than 40 years on (and one pandemic later),
Middlebury's family-owned Maple Landmark is going strong.*



LORI PEDRICK (BLOCKS); COURTESY OF MAPLE LANDMARK

You might think that growing up in a family business that revolves largely around making toys would give a kid a certain stature among his peers. According to Andrew Rainville, you'd be sorely mistaken.

"I wouldn't say anybody was jealous that I got to go home to a 'toy factory,'" says Andrew, who at age 25 serves as director of communications for Maple Landmark, the wood products business his father, Michael Rainville, founded in 1979. "If anything, the other kids weren't too thrilled with me showing up to school with some fancy projects that I did, having an access to this whole woodshop."

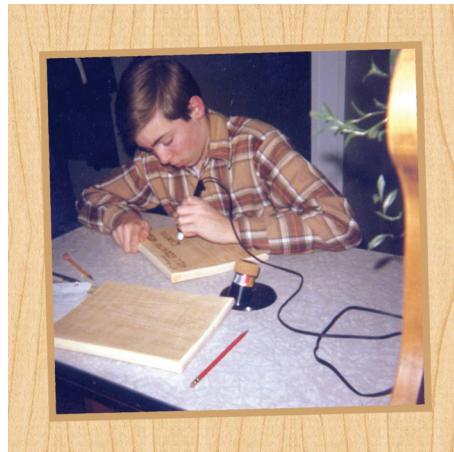
He chuckles, then adds, "They may have called it cheating—I called it 'using my resources.'"

But what was just a part of family life for Andrew (he doesn't even have a first memory of being around the shop, "mostly because there hasn't been a time when I wasn't here") is something akin to a real Santa's workshop in the eyes of many youngsters. Maple Landmark's 28,000-square-foot facility in Middlebury is a hive of activity, with nearly 40 employees hand-crafting eco-friendly wood products of all shapes and sizes—a good deal of which are, yes, toys, games, and gifts.

There are alphabet blocks and map puzzles, toy trucks and shape stackers, cribbage boards and checker boards and building blocks—a whole raft of childhood essentials that have earned numerous national honors over the years. At the top of the heap, though, is the toy railroad product line NameTrains, in which letters made from brightly painted Vermont maple serve as train cars and can be linked up via magnets to spell out names and words. It's Maple Landmark's biggest seller, and in fact when 2020 began, the company was expecting that the new NameTrains series of world-famous bridges would be the "big thing" that happened that year.

Then a bigger thing came along.

"I guess it was the week of March 9th or so when the warning signs started going off," Andrew says. "We had some orders canceled or delayed or whatnot. And then we were actually supposed to go to a [trade] show in Portland, Maine, that weekend. Our van was all packed up and ready, and then we got an email saying the show's canceled, so we turned right around



FROM TOP: A teenage Michael Rainville in 1979, the year he founded Maple Landmark; a view of the Middlebury headquarters; the Rainvilles, from left, Michael, Jill, Andrew, and Adam (Michael's mother, Pat, and sister, Barbara, also work at the company—and until 2015, so did his grandmother, Hattie.)



and unpacked it. That was kind of the beginning of the avalanche."

On March 24, when Governor Phil Scott ordered all nonessential Vermont businesses to halt their in-person operations, Maple Landmark sent its employees home and prepared to hunker down. "It was tough seeing everybody walk out—you know, some people have been working here for 20, even 30 years—and you really don't know what tomorrow is going to be like," Andrew says.

Now one of the company's favorite selling points became its lifeline: family ownership. Andrew's brother, Adam, is a project manager; mom Jill is the office manager; and dad Michael is president and CEO. Together, the four of them tackled the job of keeping Maple Landmark going during the shutdown.

"It's just a new mountain to climb, I guess. We kind of took [the pandemic] in stride and responded as best we could."

"Mom did all the packing and shipping, Dad did some of the production work, and my brother and I did a bunch of the assembly," Andrew says. "We were just trying to keep things flowing."

Not only did Team Rainville keep things flowing, but they also were able to gain new perspective on their company's production operations. They came out of the shutdown with a list of possible improvements—and better yet, they eventually were able to bring all their employees back (into a workplace now sanitized, masked, and socially distanced, of course).

Maple Landmark even ended up adding some new creations to its already vast catalog of some 1,500 different products. At the suggestion of sales manager John Gallagher, they began making drying racks for face masks; there are also thank-you ornaments for first responders and wooden gift blocks printed with sayings like "Explore the Great Indoors" and "Wash Your Hands (No, Seriously.)"

Not everything on the sales side has returned to normal—far from it. The company's formerly fast-growing custom business took a big hit (among the obvious no-gos: wooden tap handles for bars and plaques for awards ceremonies), and there was a steep dropoff in wholesale orders. Yet there's been a huge jump in online sales—so big, in fact, that customers planning to do Christmas shopping on the Maple Landmark site may not want to wait till December.



Sustainably harvested Vermont maple takes on fanciful new life in the Farm Block Set, named a 2014 Top Toy of the Year by *Creative Child* magazine.

"In many ways, we look at this as another year, with another year's worth of challenges," Andrew says. "It's just a new mountain to climb, I guess. We kind of took it in stride and responded as best we could."

And even as the pandemic landscape continues to shift, he says the belief at Maple Landmark is that their close-knit company and their strong community ties will help see them through whatever comes.

"It feels like we're just, you know, local people making wooden products for our neighbors. Maybe we're shipping something across the country or across the world, but we make everything with the idea that it might be getting sent right next door."

"It's that kind of small-business feel that we really enjoy," he says. "And it's why we don't want to be anywhere else [but Vermont]. It's why we're here, and it's why we're going to stay here." —Jenn Johnson

Maple Landmark's showroom in Middlebury has reopened under new Covid safety guidelines. For information on visiting or to learn more about the company's products, go to maplelandmark.com.

Carving Out a Legacy

How the late founder of Burton Snowboards helped shape a world-class sport.

Jake Burton Carpenter might not have invented the snowboard, but a compelling case can be made that he created snowboarding.

In 1977, not long after earning an economics degree from New York University, Carpenter moved to Londonderry, Vermont. By that time, he had already started tinkering around with a fun alternative to skiing. Like several other innovators at the time, he was inspired by the Snurfer, a kind of snow “skateboard” intended mainly for kids. He played with designs in his barn, where early snowboard prototypes were made with gear and materials often improvised from what was on hand (including, as the story goes, a scuba mask to be worn while applying polyurethane).

That same year, Carpenter officially launched Burton Snowboards, which he soon relocated to Manchester. He and his team of five employees likely composed the world’s first snowboard factory.

At that point, snowboarding was still a fringe activity, with only a few ski areas allowing it on their slopes. Carpenter dedicated himself to changing that. The former Snow Valley in Winhall became the first New England ski area to welcome snowboarders. Suicide Six and Stratton soon followed suit, then Jay Peak and Stowe.

As demand for snowboards began to build, Carpenter kept refining his design. In 1979, he introduced the Burton Backhill (pictured), the first board that could support custom graphics, offered two stance options, and had a front binding that could be adjusted without tools.

By 1982, Suicide Six was hosting the National Snowboarding Championship. Three years later the event moved to Stratton Mountain and was renamed the U.S. Open Snowboarding Championships. Snowboarding had officially gone mainstream.

Today, Burton is the largest snowboard brand in the world. Carpenter remained at the helm until a few years before his passing in 2019; now company owner and board chair Donna Carpenter carries on her late husband’s legacy with a focus on protecting and advocating for the sport he loved. —*Joe Bills*

A close-up look at the landmark 1979 Burton Backhill. Measuring 51 inches long and weighing just under six pounds, it was outfitted with twin aluminum alloy fins and included a removable “power leash.”



COURTESY OF BURTON SNOWBOARDS

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