

Farmers' Markets  
Worth the Drive

Arts Take Center  
Stage in Weston

A Salute to  
Strawberries

*YANKEE*

# Our Vermont

SUMMER 2019



Celebrating the people, places, and traditions  
that make southern Vermont so original

# Magic Time

One of my most memorable hikes with my sons happened on a Vermont summer morning some 25 years ago, when Danny was 6 and Josh was 4. After climbing Okemo on its front face, we stopped in the main lodge. It was quiet and cool inside, and resting on a table was a large aquarium filled with marbles, or possibly paper clips or pins; beside this was a pad of paper and some pencils. “Guess how many, win a season pass,” the sign announced. Josh, who was learning his numbers, guessed 2,345. A few weeks later, a letter addressed to “Mr. Josh Allen” arrived at our home. He had won—which to a 4-year-old was like being dusted with magic—but since he could ski free anyway for another few years, Okemo awarded the season ticket to me. That was a *great* day’s walk.

This is my prelude to saying that summer works a certain kind of enchantment on Vermont. The state’s autumn panorama of color-soaked maples

and oaks rightfully beckons visitors from around the world, but to those who call these towns and villages home, the long, dreamlike days of summer cast a spell like no other. The snowy mountain trails that filled with skiers and snowboarders have long since melted, and the paths now lead hikers to vistas that look across three states. Places like Mount Snow and Okemo and Stratton and Killington live up to their billing as year-round resorts, tempting visitors with adventure parks and lift-serviced mountain biking and scenic golf courses.

Summer is also the season for which locavores wait so patiently. At this time of year, there’s a lot of food that doesn’t need to travel more than a few miles from local fields to reach our plates. Wherever you find yourself this summer, depending on the day, you’re likely to find a gathering of local growers, sturdy-looking and tanned from the fields, proudly displaying their fresh produce. (For more on southern Vermont farmers’ markets, see p. 5.)

For me, summer in Vermont has always triggered a yearning for days when time seems to slow, when we recall childhood’s wonder at sun and water and lightning bugs on the wing as twilight edges darker. It’s a season that makes us feel that adventure awaits around the bend, that the woodpile can wait, and that even a little boy can climb a mountain and find magic by calling out numbers and tossing a card in a box.



*Mel Allen*  
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# YANKEE

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*On the cover: Originally built c. 1840, the Burt Henry Covered Bridge spans the Walloomsac River near Bennington. Photograph by Briana Lyons/The Yellow Note.*

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# Starting Line

*The Covered Bridges Half Marathon isn't just one of New England's prettiest road races. It's also an unofficial kickoff to summer.*

**A**few summers ago, a friend and I were sitting around talking about our favorite road races. It wasn't long before he started gushing over the Covered Bridges Half Marathon, a late-spring race that winds through the picturesque towns of Woodstock, Quechee, and Pomfret.

"It's the most beautiful race I've ever run," he said. Then his mood got serious, as he prepared to impart some valuable wisdom. "But you gotta register right away. It fills up quick. *Everybody* wants to run the thing."

*Everybody* is maybe a bit of a stretch, but the popularity of this event is undeniable. In a region where winter can feel especially long, it's a sort of summer kickoff for the communities that host it as well as the athletes who run it. When I went to sign up in mid-December, I just barely got in. A few minutes after registration began, it ended: The 2,300 slots had been filled.

The Covered Bridges Half Marathon (CBHM) dates back to 1992, when founder David Chioffi and some supporters sketched out a course highlighting the Woodstock area's best running routes. Dirt roads, farmland, and, of course, covered bridges were all on the itinerary. Four hundred runners turned out for that inaugural run; by 2001, the entrants numbered nearly 3,000.

The course has changed a bit over the years, and an entrants cap was imposed to help keep things manageable. Neither has put a dent in the race's popularity, which has spurred the development of a charitable

arm. Each year the CBHM donates more than \$60,000 to area nonprofits whose missions center on youth sports and activities in the Upper Valley of Vermont and New Hampshire.

To a non-runner, it may seem odd to plunk down \$75 to do something that you can essentially do anytime you want for free. But a road race (the good ones, anyway) has a festive bonus: It's like a rolling block party.

That's certainly how it felt when I ran my first CBHM. Roads lined with people. Strangers applauding strangers. Big signs and big cheers as waves of us passed through the town centers. At various points, the music of live bands: brass and zydeco, string and folk. It's the closest I've come to feeling like a celebrity.

But my friend was right: The true star of the day was the setting. On a course that begins at Pomfret's famed Suicide

Six ski area, runs past Billings Farm in Woodstock, then follows the Ottauquechee River before wrapping up in Quechee, runners are immersed in a version of Vermont that seems lifted from a movie screen. But there you are, on meandering dirt roads, beside rolling pastures, in delightful town centers, and yes, passing through those iconic covered bridges.

At the end, enthusiastic bystanders urged us on as we ran down the home stretch. I crossed the finish line, collected my medal ... and immediately began talking to my buddies about the signup in December. Like summer itself, I'll be at the starting line. —*Ian Aldrich*

*This year's Covered Bridges Half Marathon is June 2. For more information, go to cbhm.com.*



In Woodstock, runners emerge from one of the three classic covered bridges along the race route.

# Super Market

*Summer finds downtown Rutland bustling  
with one of the biggest farmers' markets in the state.*



Burlington may call itself the Queen City, but in Vermont only Rutland can boast having a farmers' market fit for royalty.

Amid the throng of nearly 100 vendors at the downtown Saturday market, Queen Elizabeth II frequently pops up—in the form of a life-size cutout—diamond tiara on her head, sensible pocketbook on her arm, and bearing Her Majesty's message of the day. *Eat Lettuce—It's Good for You! Or, Where's the Beef, Where's the Peas? Follow the Arrows if You Please.*

"Oh yes, people just love the queen," says Judy Dark, manager of the Rutland County Farmers Market. The ever-so-proper prop, a gift from the English co-owner of market staple 3 Bears Bakery, spends the off-season folded up in a box in Dark's home—"and I joke that spring is coming when I hear her kicking to get out," she says.

Beginning May 11, the queen will be out and the summer market will be in full swing. Known as one of the oldest and largest in Vermont, it's actually two-for-one nowadays: About 40 vendors represent the Rutland County Farmers Market, and about 60 hail from the Vermont Farmers Market (VFM), a Rutland-based group that became the first in the state to operate year-round.

The pairing is a seamless one, says Paul Horton, president of the VFM. "Although we do have our own spots, the average person walking through would never be able to tell there are two separate markets. We work well together, and we all like to have a good time."

Even in Vermont, where farmers' markets provide more fresh food per capita than in any other U.S. state,

Kara Fitzgerald, co-owner of Cuttingsville's Evening Song Farm, greets a shopper perusing Brussels sprouts, bok choy, peppers, and more at the Rutland summer market.

the Rutland market stands apart for both its long history (which goes back to the 1970s and the dawn of the modern farmers' market movement) and for its diverse offerings. Shoppers can load up on just-picked corn, lettuce, and strawberries, sure, but also things like sunflower shoots, hemp-infused honey, teriyaki sauce, raw milk and yogurt, mushroom tea, grass-fed Irish Dexter beef, wine and honey mead, and heirloom potatoes in a rainbow of colors. There are bedding plants and cut flowers, jewelry and other hand-crafts, and grab-and-eat treats ranging from Hawaiian shave ice to empanadas and Indian food.

"I've had many conversations from people around New England who come to the market and say they just

## When You Go

Located in Depot Park in Rutland, the **Downtown Summer Farmers' Market** runs May through October. The main market is 9 a.m.–2 p.m. Saturdays; a second, smaller market is held 3–6 p.m. Wednesdays. *For more information, go to rcfmvt.org or vtfarmersmarket.org, or visit the Facebook pages of the Rutland County Farmers Market and the Vermont Farmers Market.*

can't believe what we have here in Rutland," says Horton, who adds to the cornucopia himself with produce from his farm in Benson. "This may be sort of an older, blue-collar town, but we've had fantastic support from the community that's made the market what it is."

In return, the Saturday market brings a vibrancy to the community that goes beyond the vendor stalls. There are live sets by area musicians, some of whom, like the "rock and rastabilly" trio Rick Redington and the Luv, have been coming year after year to get the market crowd in a party mood. For families, though, the real celebrities might be the Rutland firefighters who park their big, shiny red truck on-site and invite kids to come explore it.

Most important, the market is set up to give a helping hand to Vermont residents who are nutritionally at risk. It accepts Farm to Family coupons, which let families enrolled in the state's WIC program buy fresh fruits, fresh vegetables, and fresh-cut herbs. And it accepts—along with regular debit and credit cards—EBT cards from the food-assistance program 3SquaresVT.

For those who haven't experienced the Rutland market before, take some advice from Dark, who has been the Rutland County Farmers Market manager for almost 20 years (and a vendor, selling produce and plants from her garden, for even longer). "There's a lot to take in, so you definitely should walk through the entire market first, and make notes about places you want to come back to. Then loop back, and start loading up your bag."

And while there are certainly some regular customers who just hit their favorite booths and head home, for everyone else, Dark says, "Why not slow down, stroll around, and make a nice day of it?"

And if you do go? Don't forget to pay your respects to the queen. —Jenn Johnson



For those who like to refuel as they shop, Rutland's prepared-food offerings run the gamut from breakfast pastries to globally inspired treats, such as the Asian vegetarian dishes from Good Karma Kitchen co-owner Jesse Labow.

## SHOPPING LIST

*Most of the southern Vermont farmers' markets listed below run from May to October; many also have winter hours/locations. Check the markets' individual websites for details before you go.*

### THURSDAYS

■ **Manchester:** Producer-only market in the heart of Manchester Center with about 30 vendors, live music, ample parking, and fun programs such as the PoP (Power of Produce) Club, which helps get kids excited about sampling local fruits and veggies. 3–6 p.m. in Adams Park, Route 7A. [manchesterfarmers.org](http://manchesterfarmers.org)

### FRIDAYS

■ **Greater Falls Farmers Market (Bellows Falls):** More than a dozen local vendors selling jams and jellies, hot sauce and salsa, farm produce, smoked cheese, artisan breads (even gluten-free), and more. Also on tap: raffles and special events. 4–7 p.m. in Hetty Green Park, 2 Church St.; [gffarmersmarket.com](http://gffarmersmarket.com)

■ **Townshend:** Fresh and dried herbs, wood-fired breads, fine candies, and other foods and goods from a dozen-plus vendors at the historic West Townshend Country Store, which also cooks up pizza in its outdoor oven and hosts live music on Friday nights. 4:30–7 p.m. at 6573 Rte. 30; [westtownshend.wixsite.com/wrcp](http://westtownshend.wixsite.com/wrcp)

### SATURDAYS

■ **Bennington:** Producer-only market where you can shop for everything from fresh ravioli and gluten-free energy bars to hand-painted tea towels and upcycled jewelry. The talents of local chefs and musicians are also featured. 10 a.m.–1 p.m. in Riverwalk Park, 150 Depot St.; [benningtonfarmersmarket.org](http://benningtonfarmersmarket.org)

■ **Brattleboro:** 50-plus vendors selling produce, plants, crafts, ethnic foods, and more, with special activities throughout the year including kids' days and live music. (Note: On Tuesdays from 4 to 7 p.m. the market moves to Flat Street downtown.) 9 a.m.–2 p.m. at 570 Western Ave.; [brattleboroareafarmersmarket.com](http://brattleboroareafarmersmarket.com)

■ **Norwich:** Producer-only market showcasing 60-plus vendors—growers, bakers, weavers, carvers, and potters, to name a few—all hailing from one of the four surrounding counties. 9 a.m.–1 p.m. at 301 Rte. 5; [norwichfarmersmarket.org](http://norwichfarmersmarket.org)

■ **West River Farmers Market (Londonderry):** Elderberry soda, goat cheese, cut flowers, fresh blueberries, pottery—there's something for everyone from the 40-plus vendors here. Plus: live music and special events for kids. 9 a.m.–1 p.m. at the intersection of Routes 100 and 11; [westriverfarmersmarket.com](http://westriverfarmersmarket.com)

### SUNDAYS

■ **Dorset:** Producer-only market with 50-plus vendors selling everything from fresh fruit and vegetables and free-range eggs to artisan cheeses and wines, hot prepared foods, and crafts. Area musicians provide live entertainment. 10 a.m.–2 p.m. at 2732 Rte. 30; [dorsetfarmersmarket.com](http://dorsetfarmersmarket.com)

■ **Putney:** Producer-only market with 40-plus vendors specializing in locally grown organic produce, handmade crafts and gifts, and farm-made value-added products like fresh goat cheese and maple syrup. Live music and special events every week. 11 a.m.–2 p.m. at 8 Carol Brown Way; [putneyfarmersmarket.org](http://putneyfarmersmarket.org)

# The Taste of Summer

*Celebrate the glory of fresh-picked strawberries with this sweet collection of recipes.*

If you're a Vermonter who hankers for strawberries in November or March, you can get them—thanks to the miracles of modern agriculture—but they don't tend to be very good. The sweetest, juiciest varieties can't tolerate long-distance shipping and a week of room-temperature display, so commodity berries are selected for stability rather than flavor.

This means settling for a pale, pulpy simulacrum of summer fruit ... unless you're willing to do what our forebears did and simply wait for June, when sweet, juicy berries are ripe for the taking. The most popular local varieties—'Cavendish' and 'Earliglow', among others—are bred for hardiness, disease resistance, yield, and size, sure, but also flavor.

Once the early-summer strawberry season has wrapped up, you still can find local berries at farmers' markets. More and more growers are experimenting with so-called "day-neutral" varieties—such as 'Tristar' and 'Tribute'—which can produce well into the warm days of early fall. And because they're picked fresh and sold close to the source, they're much better than their West Coast cousins. So feel free to indulge your strawberry habit in September—just be sure to buy local. —Amy Traverso

## Fresh Tomato-Strawberry Salsa

*With their tart sweetness, strawberries complement tomatoes in a surprising way—and a little heat from jalapeño pepper pulls the mixture together.*

- 1 pint fresh strawberries, diced
- 1 pint ripe cherry tomatoes, diced
- ½ cup diced red onion
- 1 small or medium jalapeño pepper, seeded and minced
- 1 small garlic clove, minced
- ½ cup loosely packed cilantro leaves, roughly chopped
- ¼ cup freshly squeezed lime juice
- 2 tablespoons honey
- ½ teaspoon kosher salt

In a medium bowl, stir ingredients together. Serve with tortilla chips or toasted pita, or as an accompaniment to grilled fish, chicken, or pork.





## Butter Lettuce Salad with Strawberries, Avocado, Walnuts & Chèvre

*Sweet-tart berries are the perfect foil for rich avocado and creamy goat cheese.*

### For the dressing

- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup white or red balsamic vinegar
- 1 tablespoon minced shallot
- 1 teaspoon Dijon-style mustard
- $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon kosher salt
- $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- $\frac{2}{3}$  cup extra-virgin olive oil

### For the salad

- 1 cup walnut halves
- 1 large head butter lettuce
- 2 cups medium strawberries, hulled and quartered
- 1 ripe avocado, peeled, pitted, and cut into  $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch-thick slices
- $\frac{1}{2}$  small red onion, thinly sliced
- 3 ounces chèvre (goat cheese), crumbled

First, make the dressing: In a medium bowl, whisk together vinegar, shallot, mustard, salt, and pepper. Drizzle olive oil in a thin stream, whisking constantly, until an emulsion forms. Set aside.

Then, make the salad: In a heavy-bottomed skillet over medium-low heat, toast walnuts, stirring often, until lightly browned and fragrant, about 10 minutes. Set aside.

Toss lettuce with enough vinaigrette to coat leaves lightly. Arrange on six plates. Gently toss berries, avocado slices, and onion in more vinaigrette and divide among plates. Top with walnuts and chèvre. *Yields 6 servings.*



## Strawberry-Rhubarb Coffee Cake

Made with buttermilk, brown sugar, and fresh fruit, this coffee cake is an early-summer favorite.

### For the topping

- $\frac{2}{3}$  cup granulated sugar
- 1  $\frac{1}{4}$  tablespoons salted butter, melted

### For the cake

#### Butter, for the pan

- 1 cup buttermilk
- 1 cup firmly packed light brown sugar
- 1 large egg
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 2  $\frac{1}{2}$  cups all-purpose flour, plus more for the pan
- $\frac{2}{3}$  cup vegetable oil
- $\frac{3}{4}$  teaspoon table salt
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1  $\frac{1}{3}$  cups rhubarb ( $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch slices), from 3–4 stalks, depending on size
- $\frac{3}{4}$  cup chopped strawberries
- Strawberry slices, for garnish

Preheat oven to 330° and set a rack to the middle position. Butter and flour a 9-inch springform pan.

Make the topping: In a small bowl, stir together the sugar and butter until crumbly. Set aside.

Make the cake: In a medium bowl, stir together the buttermilk, sugar, egg, and vanilla until smooth. In the bowl of a standing mixer, combine the flour, oil, and salt; mix on low until crumbly (scraping down the sides of the bowl once). Add the buttermilk mixture to the flour mixture and beat on medium until smooth. Add the baking soda and baking powder, and beat for several seconds. Fold in the rhubarb and strawberries by hand. Pour the batter into the prepared cake pan and sprinkle evenly with the sugar topping.

Bake the cake until a tester inserted into the center of the cake comes out clean, 50 to 60 minutes. Just before serving, arrange the strawberry slices in a circle on top, with a few in the center. Serve warm or at room temperature.

## Strawberries with Mascarpone Mousse

*Pairing fresh local berries with a creamy mascarpone mousse yields a treat that's both simple and decadent.*

### For the mousse

- 1 cup mascarpone
- 1 cup heavy cream
- 6 large egg yolks
- ¼ cup granulated sugar

### For the berries

- 4 cups sliced fresh strawberries
- 2 teaspoons sherry vinegar
- 1 teaspoon loosely packed fresh lime zest
- 1–3 tablespoons granulated sugar, as needed

In a large bowl, beat the mascarpone and cream together with an electric or stand mixer until medium peaks form. Set aside. Fill another large bowl with a few inches of ice water and set aside.

Set up a double boiler and bring to a boil, then reduce heat to medium-low. Whisk the egg yolks and sugar together in the bowl until they turn pale in color and thicken noticeably—the temperature should measure 165° to 170° on an instant-read thermometer. Remove from heat immediately and transfer the bowl with the egg mixture to an ice water bath to stop cooking.

Working in four batches, gently fold the egg mixture into the whipped cream mixture until evenly mixed. Divide the mousse among eight 8-ounce jars or ramekins and refrigerate until set, at least 2 hours and up to overnight.

About 30 minutes before serving, combine the strawberries with the vinegar and lime zest. Taste and add sugar as needed. Let the mixture macerate until you are ready to serve, then top the mascarpone mousse with the strawberries and serve cold. *Yields 8 servings.*



ADAM DETOUR



## Strawberry-Rhubarb Shortcake with Whipped-Cream Biscuits

*Folding whipped cream into the dry ingredients gives these biscuits a tender, fluffy texture.*

### For the filling

- 1 pound medium-size strawberries, hulled and quartered
- $\frac{3}{4}$  cup granulated sugar, divided
- 2 tablespoons freshly squeezed orange juice
- 1  $\frac{1}{2}$  cups chopped fresh rhubarb
- Pinch table salt

### For the biscuits

- Unsalted butter, for baking sheet
- 2 cups sifted all-purpose flour
- 1 tablespoon baking powder
- $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon table salt
- 2 tablespoons granulated sugar
- Freshly grated zest of 1 orange
- 1 cup heavy cream, plus extra for brushing
- Coarse or granulated sugar

### For the whipped cream

- 1 cup heavy cream
- 2 teaspoons granulated sugar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Mix berries with  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup sugar and 2 tablespoons orange juice in a medium bowl. Toss gently and set aside.

In a small saucepan, combine rhubarb,  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup sugar, and salt. Cook over medium heat, stirring, until sugar melts, 8 to 10 minutes. Remove from heat and cool to room temperature. Add berries and stir. Set aside.

Meanwhile, make the biscuits: Preheat oven to 400°. Grease a baking sheet with butter, and set aside. In a bowl, whisk together flour, baking powder, salt, sugar, and orange zest. Whip cream until it forms firm peaks and fold gently into flour mixture until dough begins to come together. Turn out onto a floured surface and press into a disk about  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch thick. It will be slightly crumbly.

Using a 2½-inch-wide biscuit cutter, cut biscuits and lay them on baking sheet. Brush with extra cream and sprinkle with coarse or granulated sugar. Bake the biscuits until golden, 15 to 17 minutes. Cool on racks.

Just before serving, make the whipped cream: Beat cream, sugar, and vanilla until firm peaks form.

To plate, split each biscuit horizontally. Spoon berry and rhubarb mixture onto bottom half; cover with top half. Garnish with whipped cream.

## Classic Strawberry Ice Cream

*Just strawberries, milk, cream, and eggs: a simple formula that lets the fresh berry flavor shine through.*

- 3½ cups strawberries, cut into ½-inch pieces**
- 1 cup sugar, divided**
- 2 cups light cream**
- 1 cup milk**
- 5 egg yolks (from large eggs)**
- ¼ teaspoon table salt**

In a medium saucepan over medium heat, cook strawberries with ½ cup sugar, stirring often, until berries begin to soften, about 3 minutes. Remove from heat; then pour half the berries into a bowl and mash. Set all berries aside.

In a medium saucepan, bring cream and milk to a simmer; then remove from heat. Meanwhile, in the bowl of a standing mixer or with a hand mixer, whisk egg yolks with remaining ½ cup sugar until pale and fluffy, about 3 minutes. Pour ½ cup of hot cream/milk into egg mixture, whisking as you go; then transfer egg mixture back into pan. Cook over medium heat, stirring continuously, until custard reaches 175° on an instant-read thermometer (it will thicken noticeably).

Remove pan from heat and pour mixture through a strainer into a bowl. Stir in salt and mashed strawberries (not chopped berries). Refrigerate 6 to 12 hours. For faster results, stir over a bowl of ice, but let custard sit several hours for best texture.

Once mixture is done chilling, it should register between 35° and 40° on an instant-read thermometer. Pour into ice cream maker, leaving 1 inch at top to allow for expansion, and prepare according to freezer instructions. Add remaining berries and juices during final 5 minutes of chilling. For firmer ice cream, chill in freezer at least 3 hours.



RUA CASTILHO/STOCKFOOD

Amanda Ellis and Ross Thurber met as students at UVM's College of Agriculture and Life Sciences; now married, they run his family's farm in West Brattleboro.

# Crop Talk: Lilac Ridge Farm

*As part of an ongoing series, we meet up with family producers bringing the bounty of southern Vermont to our table.*

**F**ew families in southern Vermont are as closely identified with farming as Ross Thurber's. The Thurber lineage extends all the way back to the American Revolution, and today the 45-year-old works the same West Brattleboro land that his father and his grandfather did. While its main business is an organic dairy, the Thurber farm also sells fresh produce and maple syrup at its on-site farm stand. We recently chatted with Ross, who manages the 600-acre farm with his wife, Amanda, while he did his morning chores.

### Tell us a little bit about your farm's history.

My grandfather bought it in 1938. It was much smaller then, only 75 acres, and he kept six cows, ran a chicken brooder business, and grew some strawberries. My father, Stuart, is the one who really modernized it. He focused on making it a more viable dairy operation. He ramped up production, bought more land, and did it all without saddling the farm with any debt.

### Was there always an expectation that you'd take over from him?

Ever since I was 6 I was asked about it. My three sisters wanted to pursue other things, and I wasn't so sure about running the farm either. But then I went to the University of Vermont, and I fell into the early days of sustainability and organic production. After I graduated I came back and instituted systems like rotational grazing and moved us into organic production. My wife, Amanda, who I met in college, was a huge part of it. It was a shared vision and required a lot of energy.

### Besides the dairy operation, what else do you produce?

We have a good-size strawberry operation. We offer pick-your-own but also sell them at the farm stand in front of the house. That's also where we sell our veggies—basics like tomatoes, eggplant, broccoli. We have a sugarbush, and in a good year we produce as much as 450 gallons of maple syrup. This year we're looking at growing hemp for the first time. The market for it just keeps growing, so we'll see how long the bubble lasts and where it goes. But I'm excited about it.

### What opportunities do you have today that your father or grandfather didn't have?

There's more retail and tourism options to take advantage of. We now rent out the main farmhouse on



Ross and Amanda with their kids, from left, Isabella, Willem, and Henry. At far right are Ross's parents, Stuart and Beverley Thurber.

Airbnb. It's been really nice and offers us a different kind of income. Guests love the ambience of the farm, and there aren't the hardships that come with being a landlord.

### Do you see one of your three kids taking over from you?

That's the hope, right? To keep the family farm going. But it comes down to their skill set and what their passions are. You can't force it. My philosophy is to have a solid working base so that when it's time to turn the farm over to someone new, they'll be in a good position to make changes without the burden of the infrastructure being in total disrepair or having to deal with a lot of debt. I want to do the same for the next person as my father did for me.

# Where Theater Really Matters

*With a new leader and a second performance space, the Weston Playhouse deepens its local roots as it grows toward the future.*

The Weston Playhouse is known for bringing new life to beloved plays and musicals, such as *The Music Man*.



HUBERT SCHREIBEL



**O**n any given summer evening in Weston, a village of some 560 people, it may seem as though much of the town is headed to the local theater. Before the curtain rises at 7:30 in the 300-seat Weston Playhouse, residents and theater lovers from miles away will have enjoyed dinner at the Harness Tavern downstairs, perhaps, or at the Bryant House down the street. Then, as the houselights dim, chatter quiets. Many in the audience know each other, and they've come here not just to attend a performance—they're connecting through a shared experience, which they can talk about with their neighbors for days.

Nearly all small towns in New England have the same community anchors: church, library, school, town hall, general store. But only a few can boast their own professional theater, and only one has a theater that stands on the edge of the green, in a building where town meeting is held, one so handsome that the *Boston Globe* called it “the most beautiful theater in New England.”

For those who live here, the Weston Playhouse is more than a source of entertainment, and even more than a cultural hub. Since opening in the summer of 1937 with

Noël Coward's *Hay Fever* (starring a 24-year-old Lloyd Bridges), it has become a generational touchstone: Parents take their children, who grow up and take their own kids. It is the heirloom that belongs to all.

So when a big change happens to something so deeply rooted in the community, people pay attention. And for the Weston Playhouse, that change happened last summer.

That's when the theater's trio of artistic and production directors—Malcolm Ewen, Tim Fort, and Steve Stettler—decided 2018 would be their last season. For three decades they had shaped the Weston Playhouse and created a reputation across the state—and throughout New England—for stellar musicals and dramas. The time had come, they said, for new energy and new vision.

The Weston Playhouse at Walker Farm (above) opened in 2017 as a cutting-edge supporting venue to the classic 1935 playhouse (inset) on the Weston village green.



Enter Susanna Gellert, who arrived last July from the Theatre for a New Audience in Brooklyn, New York, to become the new executive artistic director. “They created an unbelievable collaborative place,” she says of her predecessors. “They were part of the architecture of the town. I want to keep the feeling of community [they fostered]. I want it to feel familiar; it doesn’t need to be fixed. They are all resources. They are always there if I need them.”

I am talking with Gellert less than three months before the 2019 summer season opens. We are sitting in the administrative offices at Walker Farm, just north of the 1935 theater. Across the driveway is the spanking-new, multimillion-dollar Weston Playhouse at Walker Farm, a 160-seat theater that is a legacy from Gellert’s predecessors, who, after years of staging experimental works in such venues as the local rod and gun club, spurred a massive fund-raising effort for

**A veteran of the New York and Baltimore theater scenes, Susanna Gellert (above) is embarking on her first full season as the Weston Playhouse’s executive artistic director. She inherits a legacy shaped by (inset, from left) Tim Fort, Steve Stettler, and Malcolm Ewen.**

a new performance facility. Now on the site of the town’s last dairy farm stands a venue to attract performers, playwrights, and audiences year-round.

With us are two of Gellert’s recent hires, Andy Butterfield and Jenna Jordan, who are helping launch the new season.

When all three of them talk about the past, present, and future of theater in Weston, their words spill out with such enthusiasm and passion I can barely keep up.

Gellert calls herself “a flatlander through and through”—but she is quick to add “with a little bit of Vermont in my blood,” from her summers in Wilmington, 40 miles south. “We love living here,” Gellert says, referring to herself and her husband, a lighting designer. “We are making theater in a setting where theater really matters. In New York, you go to see the *show*. Here, it’s embedded in the community. This is the core of the town.” She pauses. “It makes me a little weepy,” she admits.

Summer theater thrives on providing entertainment and escape, which the upcoming season at the Weston



Playhouse promises to deliver: classic musicals *The Fantasticks* and *Oklahoma!*, and the acclaimed drama Edward Albee drama *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*

"As audiences, we know what we're getting with *The Fantasticks* and *Oklahoma!*," Gellert says, adding that her challenge will be "how to make them new and exciting and yet familiar." For instance, she wants her audiences to look at *Oklahoma!* through a modern-day lens. "*Oklahoma!* to me is the American musical that answers, How does America come together?" she says. "It doesn't let anyone off easy. It shows conflict and disturbances. It asks, 'Who is an outsider?' But still, people came together to forge a place."

Her eyes light up when she talks about the Playhouse at Walker Farm. Now, there is a new place not only for drama but also for musicians to perform throughout the year. She sees a future in which playwrights will want to stage new work there. A future in which, on a winter night, people will gather in a space so intimate they can almost touch the actors, and see plays that challenge and open their minds and hearts.

Gellert talks about how she uses the setting of Weston when she auditions actors in New York. "I tell them cell-phone service is spotty. There are no big grocery stores or shopping centers. But I say, 'You will spend your summer where it's so beautiful and you'll be able to focus on your work and not what critics may write.'

A highlight of the 2018 playhouse season, *Million Dollar Quartet* imagined an epic jam session with Elvis Presley, Johnny Cash, Jerry Lee Lewis, and Carl Perkins.

"And," she adds, "I say, 'You will get to know your audience in a way that you have never done before.'"

When she imagines the opening of the 2019 summer season, she knows that more than 200 local citizens will have signed on as volunteers: to be ushers and ticket takers, to help with housing for the performers, and to simply make everyone feel that this is their home. But she also has spent years in the theater waiting for opening nights. She understands that success is measured in more than just good vibes. "I know I will be nervous, and calling Andy and asking, 'How does it look out there. How's the house? Are we sold out?'"

And Gellert knows the likely reply: "Yes." —Mel Allen

## 2019 Season Lineup

***The Phantom Tollbooth*** | June 13–30, Walker Farm

***The Fantasticks*** | June 20–July 13, Weston Playhouse

***I and You*** | July 4–21, Walker Farm

***Oklahoma!*** | July 18–August 10, Weston Playhouse

***Always ... Patsy Cline*** | August 1–24, Walker Farm

***Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*** | August 15–September 1, Weston Playhouse

***Indecent*** | September 26–October 20, Walker Farm

For tickets or information, go to [westonplayhouse.org](http://westonplayhouse.org).



While VINS excels at providing an up-close look at wild birds, such as this barn owl, soon it will also give visitors a literal bird's-eye view of its campus.

# The Sky's the Limit

*The Vermont Institute of Natural Science aims high with its newest attraction.*



**H**ave you ever wanted to relax on a spider web 40 feet off the ground? Or wondered what the view is like for an eagle perched atop a towering tree? Thanks to a major project now under way at the Vermont Institute of Natural Science (VINS) in Quechee, you can soon get a whole new perspective on a lofty, rarely seen world.

A wildlife care, rehabilitation, and education center founded in 1972, VINS is taking advantage of a natural hillside just east of its main complex to build a Forest Canopy Walk: an elevated boardwalk that will enable visitors to stroll right through the treetops. When it opens this fall, it promises to deliver an up-close experience of life some 40 feet above the forest floor while offering educational activities and learning stations along the way. Among the highlights: a 20-foot-wide “spider web” for climbing and relaxing, a human-sized version of an eagle’s nest, and a treehouse observation platform that rises 100 feet above the ground.

Since moving from Woodstock to Quechee in 2004, VINS has worked to broaden its offerings and make ecologically sound, sustainable use of its 47-acre property. Among its recent projects was the renovation of an old pollinator garden into an adventure play-scape for kids that features a climbing wall, a pipe tunnel, and a huge xylophone.

VINS’s central mission has always been to motivate people to care about the environment. And to that end, it hosts a bevy of educational programs—including frequent presentations starring live raptors, such as eagles, hawks, and owls—and interactive exhibits. One popular display that’s reopening this summer is “Birds Are Dinosaurs,” which explores the connections

**Show in an artist's rendering, the Forest Canopy Walk will offer easy access to a treetop world for all VINS visitors.**

between our feathered friends and their distant relatives. For most visitors, though, the lineup of bird enclosures is the central attraction. Here you can watch a turkey vulture eat, see ravens groom each other, and marvel as a snowy owl swivels his head all the way around to get a better look at you.

While much of what VINS has to offer is on public display, the group also does a lot of important work behind closed doors, as a treatment and rehabilitation center for injured birds. Most of the birds that live at VINS are, in fact, rescued animals that were not able to be released back into the wild.

Spend a little time with these resident avians—Arizona the golden eagle, Falston the Coopers hawk, and Barnard the great horned owl, to name just a few—and you may find it hard to tear yourself away. Not to worry: VINS has a popular adopt-a-raptor program that will help you stay in touch with your new feathered friends. —*Joe Bills*

## When You Go

Located at 149 Natures Way in Quechee, the **Vermont Institute of Natural Science** is open 10 a.m.–5 p.m. daily in summer (10 a.m.–4 p.m. winter). Admission is \$16.50, with discounts for seniors, students, educators, veterans, and youth; free for ages 3 and younger. *For information, call 802-359-5000 or go to [vinsweb.org](http://vinsweb.org).*

At three to four hours round-trip, Manchester's Lye Brook Falls Trail is a great way to spend a summer afternoon.

Destinations

# Taking the Big View

*Green Mountain vistas await on these favorite southern Vermont day hikes.*

NATHANIEL ASARO



In a state famous for beautiful green mountains, it should come as no surprise that some of the Northeast's finest hiking trails run through the landscape. And while some can lead you through the wilderness for weeks at a time (hello, Long Trail), others offer stunning views with just a few hours of effort.

In the southern half of Vermont, there are a number of rewarding day hikes for families, Green Mountain newbies, and solo trekkers who merely want a little exercise. Here are five of our favorites.

### Bromley Mountain Trail, Peru

This 5.5-mile round trip cuts along a part of the Appalachian/Long Trail system, running through a mix of northern hardwood forest. Bromley is widely considered a challenging hike, with the final section of the trail being steep and rocky terrain. But if you make it to the top, you won't regret it: Views include Stratton Mountain to the south, and Mount Equinox to the southwest.

### Haystack Mountain Trail, Wilmington

Considered a moderate hike, the nearly 5-mile out-and-back Haystack trail begins on a narrow gravel road before snaking into the woods. Steeper sections offer a number of outcroppings that preview the grander sights from the peak. Up top, you can peer into New Hampshire—that's Mount Monadnock to the east—as well as look north to Vermont's Mount Snow.

Though widely known for the ski area on its northern peak, Stratton Mountain is also home to great hiking trails that lead to views of both the Green Mountains and the Taconics.

### Hannum Trail, Putney

There are a host of different routes to the top of Putney Mountain, but a favorite for young families is the 1.2-mile Hannum Trail loop. Climbing trees, easy grades, and a gorgeous grassy summit all play starring roles. In autumn, the peak is a popular spot for hawk watchers.

### Lye Brook Falls Trail, Manchester

The big treat on this relatively easy 4.6-mile course is the namesake waterfall, which at 125 feet is one of New England's tallest. Along the way, hikers pass through the 15,680-acre Lye Brook Wilderness, a retired logging territory that still shows signs of the old railroads, charcoal kilns, and sawmills that once helped drive the local economy. Note: Extreme caution is required at the falls, as many of the rocks near the trail are slippery.

### Stratton Mountain Trail, Stratton

This rather strenuous 8-mile hike traverses a stretch of the Long Trail, old logging roads, and a nearby historic farm site before giving way to a challenging ascent. Views from the trail include a dead-on shot of Somerset Reservoir to the south, while Stratton's summit affords hikers the chance to climb a 70-foot fire tower for a 360-degree panorama of the Green Mountain Range and New York's Taconic Mountains.



Quechee Hot Air Balloon  
Craft and Music Festival

Destinations

# Out and About

*As spring gives way to summer, we round up events in southern Vermont that are worth the drive.*

MAY 25

## BENNINGTON

*Mayfest Arts and Crafts Festival*

As one of the top 10 “arts vibrant” small communities in the U.S., Bennington shows its true colors at this celebration featuring 100-plus crafters and artisans. Rounding out the fun: a food court and oodles of kids’ activities. [betterbennington.com](http://betterbennington.com)

MAY 25–26

## WOODSTOCK

*Sheep Shearing and Herding at Billings Farm*

See the historic farm’s sheep shed their heavy winter fleece, and watch as border collies follow commands and their instincts to round up their woolly charges. (And mark your calendar for June, when the farm’s cows take the spotlight for Dairy Celebration Days.) [billingsfarm.org](http://billingsfarm.org)



MAY–JUNE

## MANCHESTER

*Celebration of Peonies at Hildene*

When its thousands of peonies start blooming, the c. 1907 formal garden at Robert Todd Lincoln’s Vermont estate is a sight not to be missed. [hildene.org](http://hildene.org)

JUNE 7–9

## BELLOW FALLS

*Roots on the River*

This homegrown festival marks its 20th anniversary with more than a dozen acts

in the big tent, including the Bottle Rockets and James McMurtry, plus the hugely popular “Full Throttle Gospel Hour Show” Sunday at the venerable Rockingham Meeting House. [vermontfestivalsllc.com](http://vermontfestivalsllc.com)

JUNE 14–16

## QUECHEE

*Quechee Hot Air Balloon Craft and Music Festival*

The skies fill with a riot of color as New England’s longest-running hot air balloon festival returns. Among the on-the-ground diversions are live music and comedy, a kids’ play zone, and more than 60 artisan and food booths. [quecheeballoonfestival.com](http://quecheeballoonfestival.com)

JUNE 20–AUG. 31

## DORSET

*Dorset Theatre Festival*

Staged in an intimate theater built from two pre-Revolutionary War barns, the productions in

the 2019 Main Stage season are Noël Coward’s *Private Lives*, the world premieres *Dig* and *Mrs. Christie*, and the new comedy *Slow Food*. [dorsettheatrefestival.org](http://dorsettheatrefestival.org)

JUNE 27–28

## WINDSOR

*Harpoon BBQ Festival*

Celebrate the summer in the best way: by pairing fresh-brewed beer with some of the world’s best barbecue, cooked up by fiercely competitive teams from all over New England. [harpoonbrewery.com](http://harpoonbrewery.com)



JUNE 29–JULY 27

## KILLINGTON

*Music in the Mountains*

The 2019 lineup is still taking shape, but this Saturday-night concert series by the only resident professional classical music organization in central Vermont is an opportunity no music lover should pass up. [killingtonmusicfestival.org](http://killingtonmusicfestival.org)

JULY 2–AUG. 11

## EAST DORSET

*Vermont Summer Festival*

Riders from throughout North America and beyond saddle up for six weeks of top equestrian competition and show jumping in the Green Mountains. [vt-summerfestival.com](http://vt-summerfestival.com)

JULY 4

## PLYMOUTH NOTCH

*Calvin Coolidge Birthday Celebration*

Commemorate the nation’s birthday as well as that of the only U.S. president born on July 4. The President

## Destinations

Calvin Coolidge State Historic Site plays host to a naturalization ceremony, old-time music, tours, barbecue and birthday cake, wagon rides, and more. [historicsites.vermont.gov](http://historicsites.vermont.gov)

**JULY 11–14**  
**BRANDON**  
*Basin Bluegrass Festival*  
Bluegrass pickin' and the rolling green hills of Vermont combine for a weekend of family fun. [basinbluegrassfestival.com](http://basinbluegrassfestival.com)

**JULY 11–AUG. 10**  
**MANCHESTER**  
*Manchester Music Festival*  
Festival concerts, young artists concerts, community recitals, and master classes fill the air of downtown Manchester with the sound of timeless chamber music and symphony orchestras. [mmfvvt.org](http://mmfvvt.org)

**JULY 13–AUG. 11**  
**MARLBORO**  
*Marlboro Music Festival*  
Created in 1951 by legendary pianist Rudolf Serkin, this world-class chamber music festival showcases the talents of young musicians and master artists side by side. [marlboramusic.org](http://marlboramusic.org)

**JULY 18–21**  
**BRATTLEBORO**  
*Southern Vermont Dance Festival*  
Workshops, lectures, and performances cater to dance professionals and dance enthusiasts alike. Many events are free and open to the public. [southernvermontdancefestival.com](http://southernvermontdancefestival.com)

**JULY 26–28**  
**WOODSTOCK**  
*Bookstock*  
Bibliophiles, rejoice in three days of appearances by prize-winning and emerging writers, poetry slams, art exhibits, live music, workshops, and

an enormous book sale. [bookstockvt.org](http://bookstockvt.org)

**JULY 26–AUG. 4**  
**WILMINGTON**  
*Deerfield Valley Blueberry Festival*  
A blueberry pancake breakfast and a pie eating contest are only the tip of the iceberg at this sprawling 10-day community party. [vermontblueberry.com](http://vermontblueberry.com)



**AUG. 1–4**  
**SPRINGFIELD**  
*Stellafane Convention*  
One of the oldest and largest assemblies of night-sky enthusiasts returns with astronomy talks, telescope-making demonstrations, swap tables, and lots of heavenward gazing. [stellafane.org](http://stellafane.org)



Stellafane Convention

**AUG. 3–5**  
**BENNINGTON**  
*Bennington Arts Weekend*

This citywide celebration includes the Southern Vermont Art and Craft Festival and the 4 Corners North Homebrew Festival, along with First Friday fun and live music. [bennington.com/baw](http://bennington.com/baw)

**AUG. 8–11**  
**WILMINGTON**  
*Deerfield Valley Farmers' Day Fair*

More than a century old and still going strong, this traditional fair offers fun, food, and a little friendly competition, from a demolition derby to a kids' tractor rodeo to an exhibition hall filled with prize winners. [dvfair.com](http://dvfair.com)

**AUG. 9–11**  
**STRATTON**  
*North American Obstacle Course Racing Championships*

See intrepid athletes run, jump, climb, and swing their way to the finish line as Stratton Mountain Resort hosts the return of this event. (Want to try it? Some events are open to the public, no prequalification needed.) [noramchamps.com](http://noramchamps.com)

**AUG. 13–17**  
**RUTLAND**  
*Vermont State Fair*  
Agricultural exhibits, livestock shows, amusement rides, concerts, comedy shows, pig races, and much, much more. [vermontstatefair.org](http://vermontstatefair.org)

## Hoofing It Up in Brattleboro

A laid-back reimagining of Spain's infamous "running of the bulls," the annual **Strolling of the Heifers** parade returns June 8 to fill Brattleboro's historic Main Street with as many as 100 cud-chewing queens for a day. Decked out in flowers—and sometimes tutus, boas, and hats—the heifers lead the way for a herd of floats, bands, and creatively costumed local residents. (This year's theme is "Our Farmers Are Our Heroes," so expect a few agrarian-flavored Supermen and Wonder Women in the mix.)

The parade is the high point of a weekend that aims to connect people with healthy local food as well as celebrate those who produce it—hence the Slow Living Expo, a Saturday showcase of all things sustainable and renewable, and the Brattleboro-area farm tours slated for Sunday, along with a farmers' breakfast. But the weekend is also about plain old-fashioned fun, from dancing at a Friday-night street party to betting on goat races to oohing and aahing at circus performers. There's even a twist on another world-famous European event: a scenic but challenging cycling tour dubbed the Tour de Heifer. *Strolling of the Heifers Weekend, June 7–9; strollingoftheheifers.com*



# Making Peace with the Battenkill

*A veteran fly fisherman gets an unexpected lesson from one of America's most fabled trout rivers.*



MARK FLEMING



*Commonly they did not think that they were lucky, or well paid for their time, unless they got a long string of fish, though they had the opportunity of seeing the pond all the while. They might go there a thousand times before the sediment of fishing would sink to the bottom and leave their purpose pure; but no doubt such a clarifying process would be going on all the while.*

—Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*

I had fished the Battenkill just once before. I caught nothing and had felt unlucky and poorly paid for my time.

I returned 20 years later, determined, this time, to catch a worthy trout on a dry fly and thus make my peace with this legendary Vermont river. I had no illusions. Everyone knows the Battenkill is one of the world's most challenging trout streams.

I talked to the clerks at Orvis in Manchester, and the proprietor of the little fly shop over the New York border, and the other anglers I encountered along the river, and even the groundskeeper at the inn in Arlington where I stayed. They talked mostly about insects. A few blue-winged olives were hatching—not enough to interest the trout. There were midges. Small fish might eat them, but worthy Battenkill trout ignore midges.

One hesitates to ask another fisherman to divulge the location of a hot spot. Such knowledge is, and should be, earned. So I scouted for places where I, if I were a worthy trout, might choose to live. I found dark runs against undercut banks. I found pools where the river widened below a chute of quick water. I found long flats separated by riffly runs.

I discovered that the Battenkill has very little water that doesn't look as if it would harbor worthy trout.

I knew they lived here. Stories of the Battenkill—both

those in literature and those exchanged among fishermen—invariably mention the river's "lunker browns." These wily old trout show themselves rarely. Most of them are caught in the early spring by bait fishermen. But now and then a persistent fly fisherman finds one that has slipped from its sanctuary among submerged roots to sip insects.

On the first day I caught a six-inch brown trout that glittered in my hand like a gold nugget before I slipped him gently back into the river. He was a perfect miniature of the prize I sought, a descendant of the European browns that were first introduced into the Battenkill in the 1930s. On the second day I caught my first "brookie"—brook trout, a species native to the Battenkill. Perhaps this one was a descendant of those that settled here after the glaciers retreated. More likely his ancestors were hatchery trout that were heavily stocked more than a century ago. Either way, at just 11 inches, he, too, went back into the river.

After a third day that yielded two more miniature brown trout and one finger-size brookie, I decided my best chance lay just over the New York border, where a waitress had told me that "lots of big trout" were taken.

On the morning I set out, rain clouds obscured the mountains, and mist hung over the river. The air was still and heavy and damp. A good day for insects. A

good day for a worthy brown trout to come out to eat them. A good day for a fly fisherman.

I waded across the river above the covered bridge and picked my way upstream, moving slowly, watching the water. Rounding a bend, I paused at the tail of a flat that extended so far upstream that the mist blurred its head. The left bank, I saw, was the deep one. Some dead timber had collected there, and a big oak grew at an angle over the water. Its branches swooped so low that they nearly tickled its surface.

Here, I decided, I would take my stand. In four days I had not seen a more likely lair for a worthy trout. I would sit here all day, if necessary, to wait for him to show himself.

Before long, a ring appeared on the water's surface near the tailout, not 30 feet from me. I waited, and when the trout rose again, I knew he was a small one, another six-incher. I ignored him.

Gradually more rings began to show on the glass-smooth surface of the long pool. I sat quietly in the misty rain and watched them. Small trout, all of them, but even so, they fed cautiously. A minute or more separated each quick foray to the surface.

An hour passed before I saw the unmistakable black nose. We call the big ones "toads" because that's what their noses look like against the water, and I had found one here on the Battenkill. I didn't move for ten minutes, the interval it took him to come to the surface three times.

The odds, I knew, were slim. Even if I hooked this fish, he would bolt to what I assumed was his lair under the tangled timber against the bank. My tippet was too slender. It would snap if I tried to hold him back. Otherwise he would wrap me and surely break me off.

I focused on the first challenge, which was to wade into position to make my cast. A careless step would send telltale ripples across the pool, so I moved downstream and crossed in the quick water of the pool's tailout. Then I climbed the bank and pushed through the alder tangles to a spot directly across from the fish. I paused there until his nose showed again. Then I slipped down the bank and into the water.

To place an accurate cast over my trout, I'd need to wade to midstream. There was virtually no discernible current. I began to edge forward, shuffling my feet slowly, wary of making waves. He rose again. I was closer, now, and I saw the size of his nose more clearly. A 16-incher, at least. Maybe 18.

I had to resist the impulse to cast. I was still too far from him. One careless presentation would spook him. So I waded forward cautiously.

A hollow thunk echoed from somewhere upstream, but it barely registered. I was focused on my trout. I was almost there.

Then the man in the canoe materialized out of the mist. He paddled placidly down the middle of my pool, directly over the place where my trout had been rising.

"Any luck?" he asked cheerfully.

I shook my head. "Nope."

"Say," he said. "You got the time?"

I glanced at my watch. "Three-fifteen."

"Thanks." He waved. "Well, good luck, then."

I watched the canoe's bow waves roll toward the banks. The canoe became a shadow before the mist enveloped it. I waded to shore.

Three-fifteen. I had started at nine. In effect, I had been stalking that toad for over six hours.

I waded carelessly back to the car. There was no need to worry about my waves spooking fish. Every worthy trout in the river had been sent scurrying by that one man in his canoe.

I stopped at the diner on the state line for coffee. The guy behind the counter said, "Been fishin', huh?"

I nodded.

"Do any good?"

I smiled and shook my head.

"Listen," he said. "Out behind the field here they were jumpin' all over the place last night. Nice ones, too. Eight, ten inches, some of 'em. You oughta try it there."

"Thanks," I said. "I appreciate it."

He gave me a free refill, and when I stood to go, he said, "Just take that dirt road there and you can park beside the field."

I did. The river ran dark and deep along a granite ledge overhung by hemlocks. It was beautiful and peaceful in the mist, and I spotted the rings of a few rising trout and caught two of them. They weren't the "nice" ones the guy at the diner had seen, but they were five or six inches long, beautiful miniature Battenkill brown trout.

I fished until it was dark, casting rhythmically, no longer in search of a worthy trout, and finally the sediment of fishing sank to the bottom and my purpose became pure.

And so I made my peace with the Battenkill.

—William G. Tapply



An elusive brown trout from the waters of the Battenkill, where brook trout are the far more common catch.

# The Audacity of Liz Putnam

*A story for anyone who wonders whether a single person can change the world.*

**L**ike most origin stories, this one begins at the intersection of chance and destiny. Liz Titus Putnam is telling it to me on a soft summer morning in South Shaftsbury, Vermont, about five miles north of Bennington, as we sit outside on a patio with her husband, Bruce, looking out at West Mountain. The peaceful farmstead, called Manatuck Farm, has been in her family since 1951, when her parents detoured to Vermont to see a friend while on their way to scout coastal properties for a second-home retreat from New York City. The friend showed them a once-sturdy 18th-century farm that had fallen into disuse, and to their surprise they fell in love with the possibilities and the views that took their breath away.

Now in her 80s, Liz is full of bounce and vigor, as befits someone who has hiked endless miles on some of the most beautiful trails in America. The origin story she is telling is about her Student Conservation Association (SCA), which you may never have heard of, although it's the reason that anyone who's stepped foot in a national park has walked in her shadow.

This is an auspicious day for me to be here. News has just come that Maine has gained a new wilderness park—some 87,000 acres of mountains, forests, and waterways—to be named Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument. Tomorrow marks the centennial of the National Park Service, and while the occasion is being celebrated across the country, we are here, talking about one of its most important and little-known stories while watching a farmer haying a meadow.

—

Liz is telling me about chance. It was one evening in October 1953, and Elizabeth “Liz” Sanderson Cushman, then a 20-year-old college junior, had settled into a chair at the Vassar College library in Poughkeepsie, New York, and begun thumbing through the latest issue of *Harper’s Magazine*. A provocative headline caught her eye: “Let’s Close the National Parks.” The article



Liz Putnam (née Cushman), left, in 1958 with fellow Vassar graduate Marty Hayne, her partner in creating what would become the Student Conservation Association. “Our goal when we started was just not to be in the way,” Liz jokes today.

was written by historian Bernard DeVoto, who argued that America had neglected its most precious landscapes. Beneath his simmering anger was an urgent plea for help. He wrote that Yellowstone, Yosemite, the Grand Canyon, and Rocky Mountain National Park, among others, had become “slums,” overrun with tourists hungry for adventure after the war. He described rangers who worked 16-hour days, seven days a week, many living with their families in tar-paper barracks built years earlier, and whose morale, he said, was “eroding.” His solution: Until Congress cared enough to properly fund the parks and restore their standing as “priceless” resources, it needed to “close and seal them, assign the Army to patrol them and so hold them secure till they can be reopened.”

Who knows how many people may have read DeVoto’s story, sighed, and then went about their lives? And this is where Liz’s story turns to the role that destiny plays. It was as though she had been raised to act on DeVoto’s plea, when going about her life meant one

Liz Putnam at age 83, photographed for *Yankee* at her home in South Shaftsbury.

Vermont Icons





thing: *Go and help those beleaguered rangers.* “And I felt there were other young people,” she adds, “who would love the opportunity to do work that needed to be done. The idea seemed so obvious and simple.”

Obvious and simple, perhaps, to someone whose childhood was spent on Long Island when it was still a verdant landscape of forests and fields; growing up, Liz kept animals and even walked with her pet goat to the post office. “We all need adventure,” her father would say, and he’d tell her about his cavalry days riding after Pancho Villa. He led his family on wilderness expeditions in northern Quebec, which began with their boarding a train in Montreal, then stopping long after midnight “in the middle of nowhere.” Following native guides, they paddled and portaged three days deeper, until they reached a cabin so remote that Liz remembers the sounds of moose grazing in the underbrush, trout splashing, the howl of wolves in the night. She would always say, “The stillness, the quietness, the beauty stayed with me forever.”

But she also knew her father had nearly died from gas attacks in World War I, and her mother had been a miracle birth, a 1-pound preemie whose twin sister

SCA began in 1957 at just two sites, Grand Teton National Park and Olympic National Park. But by the time this photo was taken—showing young volunteers at Rocky Mountain National Park in 1971—the program had become widely established in parks and forests at the national, state, and local levels.

did not survive. Her mother, whose New England roots stretched back to the *Mayflower*, would tell Liz, “We are fortunate to have been given life. But along with that gift should come the question, *Why am I here? What can I do with my life that is positive?*”

Liz pauses. “They were so resilient. They ingrained in my brother and me that if you need to do something, you do it. You simply do it.” And one other thing, she adds, perhaps the most enduring lesson of all that her parents passed along: “All things are possible.”

The road to possible led Liz straight to the office of A. Scott Warthin Jr., her academic adviser and head of Vassar’s geology department. Warthin had recently established a new interdepartmental conservation major, one of the first of its kind in the country. She had this idea, she told him. She wanted to become a conservation major and write her senior thesis on how to create a student

conservation corps modeled after the New Deal's Civilian Conservation Corps. But she didn't want just to write a paper—she wanted to bring the idea to life.

After much interdepartmental pushing and pulling to get her idea approved, Warthin prevailed and found a way for her to get the required credits. Her voice becomes emotional when she describes how they stood together at the Department of the Interior in 1986 to receive conservation awards: Liz and Marty Hayne Talbot, her partner in the Student Conservation Corps (its earliest name) when it was starting out, and her teacher, now ill and frail. "It was the greatest day for me," Liz says. "It was just before he went into hospital, and he could hardly talk. He just patted the award." She pauses. "Thank God for that man. He had faith in his kids."

Liz, whose title with SCA is founding president, has



**SCA volunteers clear downed trees in Florida's Big Cypress National Preserve in an effort to protect the nesting sites of red-cockaded woodpeckers against wildfires.**

a national operations center in Charlestown, New Hampshire, and headquarters in Arlington, Virginia. Her memories always seem to circle back to chance and destiny—she wonders at the fortuitous meetings with environmental leaders who encouraged her at a time when it would have been easy for her to be daunted. (For instance, at the start she signed fund-raising letters "E. Sanderson Cushman," aware that women were not yet

60 years of stories to tell. They trace how SCA grew from its tenuous grass roots—when her "office" was often the trunk and back seat of her car—into a \$35 million nonprofit with

regarded as strong enough to go into the wilderness and hold their own.) "So many people rescued us," she says. "Miracle people kept appearing."

The student corps' trial run began in the summer of 1957, when Grand Teton National Park and Olympic National Park greeted a few dozen volunteers with hard backcountry work and cabins to live in; Liz had raised just enough funds to give these pioneers room and board. "We went by the seat of our pants that first year," Liz says. "Marty and I were just two girls figuring things out."

But a few dozen students became a few hundred, then a few thousand, word spreading across the country, from park to park, volunteer to volunteer, that here was an opportunity where need met youth, and the youth came through. Since the first students picked up shovels and axes, more than 80,000 SCA volunteers have worked

millions of hours clearing trails, building cabins, restoring wildlife habitats—whatever needs to be done. And while they are working and exploring, the natural world grabs many and won't let go: SCA says seven out of every 10 program alumni are now working or studying in an environmental field.

The walls of the Putnam house are lined with Liz's awards and citations from nearly every notable conservation agency in the country. There's a photo of President Obama hugging her in 2010 after awarding her the Presidential Citizen Medal. But the memento she might hold most dear is the humble wide-

brimmed hat of a park ranger, given to her by the National Park Service, which to her says she is one of them.

When the conversation turns from the past to today, Liz grows somber for a moment. It's a feeling she does not easily tolerate in herself—"It's always better to be hopeful than hopeless," she says—but she fears for the future of public lands if climate-change deniers and anti-environmentalists sweep into power.

So she steers her thoughts to what she knows best, and believes in: the power of young people to do good, heading into forests and lakes and streams. "SCA has always given me the feeling of hope for the future," she says. "When I see the kids in action, it puts life back in me again." —*Mel Allen*

Vermont Icons

The meetinghouse's "pigpen" box pews are still largely made up of original 18th-century materials.

# Timeless Treasure

*The architecture and spirit of early New England lives on at the Rockingham Meeting House.*

DAVID R. FRAZIER PHOTO LIBRARY, INC./  
ALAMY STOCK PHOTO



*It was a quaint and beautiful custom of those days which set the Lord's house always upon a hill, in the centre of the town, a silent and lofty guardian watching over the affairs of men in the valley below. The meeting-house of the first church organized in Rockingham, a type in itself of the stern, unyielding dignity of those rugged characters, stands close by the graves of those who once made the life of the community, overlooking the Williams River valley, and the peaceful farms below.*

—Lyman Simpson Hayes, *History of the Town of Rockingham, Vermont (1907)*

**I**ts walls were raised barely a decade after the “shot heard round the world.” Construction was still under way when Vermont became a state. It has stood through a civil war and two global ones, depression and recession, the atomic age and the digital revolution. And today it would be as recognizable to those who built it as when the first coats of paint—though red and brown then, not the more expensive white—were drying on the clapboard siding.

Located just off Route 103, a little over a mile from busy Interstate 91, the c. 1787 Rockingham Meeting House is the oldest public building in Vermont that’s still virtually unaltered, not to mention one of the best-preserved colonial-style meetinghouses in New England. Even the minor changes—painting the exterior white, installing a new pulpit—are a few generations old at this point, dating back to a 1906 restoration and rededication. It has never been lit by electricity or heated by anything but wood.

Completed in 1801, the meetinghouse has long outlasted its original role, when “the good people from the farms in the neighborhood laboriously climbed the hill to sit without fires, with chilling feet and benumbed hands, through sermons two hours long, or convened on week days to transact the weighty business of the town,” wrote historian Lyman Simpson Hayes. By about 1840, the various congregations that worshipped here had

FROM LEFT: The Rockingham Meeting House (seen from the west) shortly after its 1906 restoration, and how it appears today (seen from the east).

all settled into their own buildings; three decades later, town meetings moved to the village of Bellows Falls, which had become Rockingham’s population center.

The meetinghouse, which was designated a National Historic Landmark in 2000, is today owned by the town of Rockingham and advocated for by the Rockingham Meeting House Association, which carries on the 112-year-old tradition of the Rockingham Meeting House Pilgrimage in August, part of Old Home Days celebrations.

The property—which also features a cemetery whose 1,000-plus headstones include those of Rockingham’s first settlers—is open to the public daily from Memorial Day to Columbus Day, with docents on hand to share historical tidbits with visitors and help them appreciate the enduring beauty of this Vermont original. As Hayes wrote not long after the 1906 rededication:

“[H]iding in its unseen parts countless massive timbers of great strength, it served both the town and church, and stood against the buffeting of the wind on the exposed hilltop for many years. Now its days of usefulness are largely passed, and it remains as an emblem of the past—its character, and what it stood for.” —Jenn Johnson

# The Wheel Deal

*For vintage-car enthusiasts, mecca might just be in Bennington, Vermont.*

**D**o you know what a camshaft does? Does your mind automatically read the letters *NOM* as *not original motor*? If the answer to either question is yes, then you're probably familiar with *Hemmings Motor News*, the car enthusiasts' bible that turns 55 this year.

Visit its headquarters in Bennington, though, and you'll see there's a lot more to *Hemmings* than just the magazine. For starters, it employs more than 100 people, which might surprise the casual passerby. Its old-fashioned gas station is typically what catches folks' attention, along with its gift shop, the Car Lover's Oasis, which is a motorhead's dream. Even better, next door is a free museum stocked with nearly three dozen classic vehicles—a collection that is supplemented by privately owned, lovingly maintained vintage cars during the Thursday-night summer "cruise-ins" here.

Surely all this is far cry from what founder Ernest Hemmings imagined in 1954 when he launched

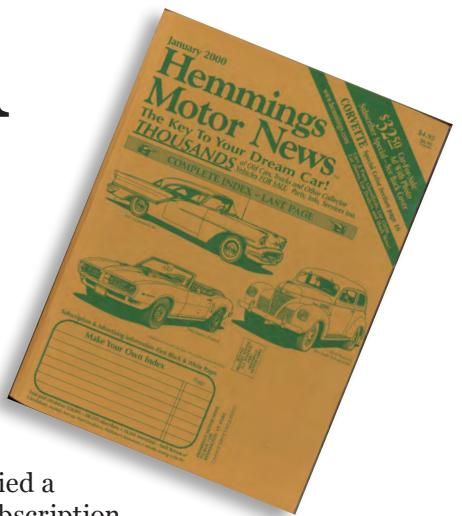
*Hemmings Motor News* in Quincy, Illinois. The first issue was four pages, hand-typed, and carried a promise of a year's subscription for 50 cents. In introducing his "little monthly magazine," Hemmings wrote that he hoped it "will be of real interest to the person interested in older models."

Apparently, it was. In the late 1960s an old-car enthusiast from Bennington, Terry Ehrich, was so taken with *Hemmings Motor News* that he acquired it and moved operations to Vermont. By 1985, the magazine had more than 210,000 subscribers, and annual revenues were approaching \$10 million. Its cover was brown and utilitarian, and the newsprint pages inside numbered more than 400, each one packed with a pirate's treasure map of ads.

Now owned by a North Carolina-based firm, American City Business Journals, *Hemmings Motor News* is a full-color magazine with more articles than ever before; plus, it has several spin-off publications and a website featuring searchable ads and offering a veritable mountain of car-related content. This success is entirely fitting, it seems, for an enterprise whose vision for the future has always allowed its love for things past to shine through. —*Joe Bills*



Visitors to the *Hemmings Motor News* headquarters are welcome to wander through its gleaming array of vintage cars, trucks, and motorcycles. ABOVE RIGHT: A 2000 copy of *HMN* shows the old-school format that defined the publication for decades.



KEN AIKEN (MUSEUM); HEMMINGS MOTOR NEWS (MAGAZINE)



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