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# The tourist's New England : creating an industry, 1820-1900.

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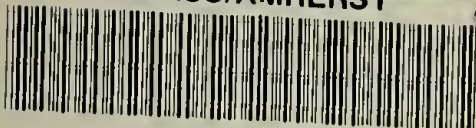
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THE TOURIST'S NEW ENGLAND:  
CREATING AN INDUSTRY, 1820-1900

A Dissertation Presented

by

DONA L. BROWN

Submitted to the Graduate School of the  
University of Massachusetts in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

September 1989

Department of History

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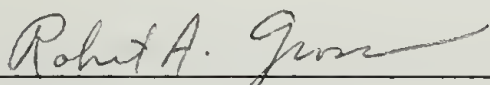
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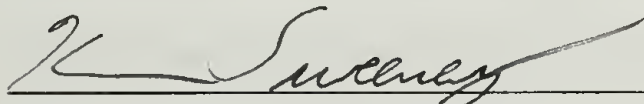
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ABSTRACT

THE TOURIST'S NEW ENGLAND:  
CREATING AN INDUSTRY, 1820-1900

SEPTEMBER 1989

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New England's tourist industries played crucial roles in the region's economic and cultural development in the nineteenth century. Tourism was among the first industries to develop in the northeast, and in many places it became one of the most important. Along the "fashionable tour" to Niagara Falls and Saratoga Springs, in one of the nation's most commercially developed areas, hotels, stagecoach lines, and guidebook industries were among the new businesses springing up during the 1820s. Following an introductory chapter on the origins of commercial tourism, this dissertation explores New England's tourist industry through four case studies.

The White Mountains of New Hampshire became one of the nation's most important scenic tourist regions between 1840 and 1860. The process of making the White Mountains "scenic" was complex: promoters not only created an infrastructure of hotels and railroads, but developed the proper romantic "associations" with the landmarks of the region, and trained would-be tourists in scenic appreciation. By mid-century, summer tours to the White Mountains



were an accepted part of fashionable life among the wealthy. And by the 1860s, tourists who were neither leisured nor wealthy were exploring their own vacationing forms. On Martha's Vineyard, a summer resort evolved from a Methodist camp-meeting to meet this need, combining new forms of leisure with a reassuringly religious and homogeneous environment.

By the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the region of New England itself was becoming a tourist attraction. Tourists eager to get a glimpse of "Old New England" toured decaying towns and rural backwaters, looking for a world that seemed more old-fashioned, more virtuous, and more comforting than their own worlds. In response to this new outlook, tourist promoters on Nantucket worked to make the island "quaint"--and succeeded. In northern New England, "Old Home Week" institutionalized nostalgia about the real or imagined farm childhoods of tourists, becoming part of a larger campaign by northern New England states to convince tourists to come "home" to the farm for the summer. By the end of the century, the image of "Old" New England and the region's economic dependence on tourism were inextricably linked.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iv
ABSTRACT .....	vi
LIST OF FIGURES.....	ix
INTRODUCTION: THE INVISIBLE INDUSTRY.....	1
Chapter	
1. TOURS, GRAND AND FASHIONABLE: THE BIRTH OF THE TOURIST INDUSTRY IN THE UNITED STATES, 1800-1830.....	13
2. "INTERESTING ASSOCIATIONS": CREATING A SCENIC TOURING INDUSTRY IN THE WHITE MOUNTAINS OF NEW HAMPSHIRE, 1840-1860.....	37
3. COTTAGE HEAVEN: LEISURE, RELIGION AND VACATIONING ON MARTHA'S VINEYARD, 1860-1875.....	85
4. "MANUFACTURED FOR THE TRADE": NOSTALGIA IN NANTUCKET, 1870-1890.....	132
5. "THAT DREAM OF HOME": NORTHERN NEW ENGLAND AND THE FARM VACATION INDUSTRY, 1890-1900.....	176
CONCLUSION: NEW ENGLAND REVISITED.....	224
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	239

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1. Title page of Theodore Dwight's <u>The Northern Traveller</u> . .....	27
2. "Travel on the Erie Canal." .....	28
3. Congress Hall at Saratoga Springs. ....	32
4. The Notch House. ....	43
5. George P. Bond's map of the White Mountains, 1853. ....	53
6. Map of the "Old and Favorite" railroad route to the White Mountains. ....	55
7. Map of the region, 1867. ....	64
8. The Profile with tourists. ....	70
9. The Profile House in the Franconia Notch. ....	79
10. The Pemigewasset House. ....	80
11. A camp meeting. ....	88
12. A cottage and a tent at Wesleyan Grove. ....	91
13. Map of Wesleyan Grove, 1868. ....	92
14. Household chores at Wesleyan Grove. ....	108
15. Respectable visitors from New Bedford. ....	115
16. Quakers from Nantucket. ....	115
17. Less respectable visitors. ....	115
18. The Sea View Hotel. ....	128
19. Advertisement for cottage lots at Sunset Heights. ....	141

Figure	Page
20. Advertisement for cottage lots at Surfside.....	142
21. A Quaint Nantucketer: "Fred. Parker, the Hermit of Quidnit." .....	153
22. The "Oldest House" as a farmhouse, c. 1865.....	168
23. The "Oldest House" as a tourist attraction.....	169
24. Old Home Week invitations.....	179
25. "I'm going a-milking, sir,' she said." .....	209
26. "The Tail of a Cow and a Summer Boarder." .....	220
27. Summer boarder mix-ups.....	220
28. "The Helpful City Boarder Plans for Roast Chicken." .....	221

## INTRODUCTION

### THE INVISIBLE INDUSTRY

Writing about New England's tourist industry can be almost like writing about the weather--it has come to seem like a natural part of the region. Even a casual observer can sense how inextricably tourism is enmeshed in the contemporary economy and culture of New England: in the autumn the farmers sell pumpkins and apple cider to urban daytrippers in search of rural experience; the calendars promise a return to peace and contentment with a visit to the stillness of the hills or the faded fishing villages; even the ruins of industrial cities are becoming transformed into great museums in an attempt to revitalize their long depressed economies. Tourism has often seemed in the twentieth century like the answer to economic problems great and small--from declining farm profits to deindustrialization. One cannot escape the tourist industry, any more than one can escape the images of "New England" it now markets.

Yet our current acceptance of the importance of tourism--signified, among other things, by college degrees in "Hotel, Restaurant, and Travel Administration"--has not led to an understanding of the crucial role tourist industries have played in the region's history. For a hundred and fifty years, tourism has shaped the region's landscape, influenced (and at times invented) its culture, and played an integral role in its economy. But for several reasons, the industry itself has possessed a sort of "transparency": its workings

have been almost invisible even in the economic and cultural areas where it has had the most profound impact.

Perhaps the most important statement to make about nineteenth century tourism is also the most obvious one: that it was an industry, not metaphorically, but in literal fact. Tourism was in fact among the earliest forms of industrial capitalism in the northeast. As early as the building of the mills of Lowell, as early as the beginnings of mass production in the workshops of Rochester, the business of tourism began to take shape in the towns of New England and New York. In the United States, the line between pleasure travel and commercialized tourism was crossed in the 1820s, when tourists began to follow a route advertised as the "northern" or "fashionable tour" from New York City to Niagara Falls. My first chapter explores what happened as the "fashionable tour" developed: tourist promoters transformed what had been private, custom-made travel arrangements into more "mass-produced" commercial products. Inns for travelers became hotels that catered to tourists; personal letters of introduction were replaced by commercially-available guide books; and small-scale entrepreneurs speculated in local improvements that would attract more tourists.

Tourism was often a rural area's first contact with outside capital and organization. In the White Mountains, for example, tourists in the 1830s encountered a country on the edge of the frontier. Farmers were still clearing virgin forest, no accurate maps existed, and accommodations were available only in rude inns built for lumberjacks and peddlers. But this rather primitive region very rapidly built up the most advanced tourist industries in the country: the fame of the

Notch of the White Mountains and Mount Washington became the basis of the most important industry in the region by mid-century. This is the process I discuss in my second chapter.

Like the mills and factories that were transforming other rural areas (or sometimes the same areas), the tourist industry brought rural regions, piece by piece, into its own complex network of trade--and into an urban cultural dialogue as well. The White Mountains, for example, became part of a major commercial railroad link that made it possible for tourists from Boston to reach the heart of the region in nine hours. By the 1850s, the region was a study in contrasts: there was "scarcely a dwelling to be seen except for the hotels," but those hotels were filled with tourists who were playing cards, drinking champagne, and comparing notes on the latest fashions--tourists who had made scenery a part of a larger fashionable vacation experience.<sup>1</sup>

On one level, then, the story of New England tourism is the story of an industry expanding into the countryside, during a time when many other industries were doing the same.<sup>2</sup> Like the looms and spindles of Lowell, tourist businesses proliferated rapidly--growing in numbers, but also expanding in sophistication and complexity--and expanding from a few specialized locations in the 1840s to cover most of the region by 1900. Sometimes it took the form of big business,

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<sup>1</sup>Adolph B. Benson, ed., America of the Fifties: Letters of Frederika Bremer (New York: The American Scandinavian Federation, 1924), p. 323.

<sup>2</sup>It is especially analogous to the four New England studies included in Steven Hahn and Jonathan Prude's collection, The Countryside in the Age of Capitalist Transformation, which of course forms part of a larger body of work on the degree of capitalist transformation--both economic and cultural--that existed in the northeastern rural world in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Steven Hahn and Jonathan Prude, eds., The Countryside in the Age of Capitalist Transformation (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985).

with the infrastructure and capitalization of a major corporation. At other times and in other places, tourism was more like a "cottage" industry--more like palm leaf hat-making, for instance, than like textile manufacturing.

But to describe tourism simply in material terms is to ignore some of its complexity. The White Mountain region was drawn into a national commercial network, but it was also drawn into a national cultural industry--an industry which introduced tourists to the region's scenic wonders (by way of paintings, guidebooks, and poems) before they ever got there, and offered training at the same time in a proper appreciation of that scenery. Similarly, on Martha's Vineyard in the 1860s, a Methodist camp meeting was transformed into a summer resort. My third chapter describes the process by which this transformation took place. Local cottage builders, real estate agents, and investors played important roles, but what made the transformation possible was a soul-searching marketing campaign conducted by some of the Methodist campers themselves, who took on the work of reassuring themselves and others that relaxation and leisure could be shorn of their associations with vice--in both its aristocratic and proletarian forms. The "product" of this particular tourist industry was not simply a piece of property at the shore, but a moral justification for leisure, and an environment of class safety.

In other words, tourist industries sold intangible experiences along with tangible products. They were not unique in this regard: other cultural business from fashion to antiques also combined tangible and intangible products. And like other businesses, tourism often marketed experiences that seemed outside the realm of buying and



selling. Nineteenth century tourists (like twentieth century tourists) were accustomed to thinking of some experiences as "private," untouched by market transactions. Hotel rooms and bathing machines were products on the market, but sublime scenery, quaint customs, and religious experiences appeared to be above price.

Tourism was not unique in this regard. Literary and artistic productions operated under the same denial of their place in the market. And women's unpaid work in the home, although deeply influenced by market forces also operated behind a veil that seemed to separate it from contact with the world of buying and selling. The society that separated home from work, women from men, and artistic experience from work and daily life, was also the society that created a "separate sphere" for leisure and for tourist experiences. That is one reason the tourist industry appears "transparent." Workers in these industries, as in many service industries, seem to operate outside the marketplace. Artists worked to fulfill an inner need; women did housework and childcare from an innate desire to serve; and tourist workers followed a natural inclination to please their "guests."

The notion of tourist workers as naturally pleasant, hospitable, and entertaining played an especially central role in a new kind of tourism that came to dominate New England's tourist industries by the last quarter of the nineteenth century. This new industry was shaped by a profound "sentimentalization" of New England, which expressed itself as well in an extensive literature--history, novels, short stories, and journalism--and in architectural and landscape reforms led by

summer people in many rural villages of New England.<sup>1</sup> Tourists in the last quarter of the nineteenth century increasingly sought out isolated or remote parts of New England, looking for an imagined pre-industrial world of pastoral beauty, rural independence, virtuous simplicity, and religious and ethnic homogeneity. New England in the last quarter of the century was the most highly urbanized, industrial and ethnically diverse region of the country, but the "Old New England" sought out by tourists was Anglo-Saxon, rural, and pre-industrial.<sup>2</sup>

For the communities that became involved in this form of tourism, the new angle made another kind of sense. New England's industrialization had left depopulated backwaters in its wake: where whaling had been put out of business by petroleum, where harbors were too shallow for the new ships, where farmers competed unsuccessfully with western grain and foreign wool, and where young people grew up and moved away. Wherever they could, promoters put their dilapidated buildings and grass-grown streets to work, as "Old New England." This kind of nostalgic touring romanticized the native

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<sup>1</sup>The literature of "sentimentalization" included the new "local color" genre, pioneered by the New England novels of Harriet Beecher Stowe, and perfected in the work of Sarah Orne Jewett (and including also less well-known writers like Rose Terry Cooke and Elizabeth Stuart Phelps)--see Josephine Donovan, New England Local Color Literature: A Women's Tradition (New York: Frederick Ungar Pub. Co., 1983). For an example of the impact of "summer people" on the creation of "colonial villages," see William Butler, "Another City Upon a Hill: Litchfield, Connecticut and the Colonial Revival," in Alan Axelrod, ed., The Colonial Revival in America (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1985).

<sup>2</sup>Gary Kulik is the person who has most influenced my understanding of the nature of this imaginative "re-invention" of New England. He has spoken on the subject on a number of different occasions, ranging from a panel he chaired at the American Studies Association conference in October, 1989, to a talk given at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst in April, 1986, called (appropriately) "The Invention of New England."

tourist worker as much as the "old-fashioned" towns and villages. On the island of Nantucket, the subject of my fourth chapter, tourists hoped to encounter quaint "old salts" and charming native customs, while Nantucketers themselves searched for a new livelihood to replace the whaling industry. Tourism thus played a crucial role in organizing relations between isolated backwaters and industrial centers, not only in the first stages of commercialization, but in the last stages as well--not only for the countryside in the 1830s, but for failed port cities and abandoned commercial centers in the 1880s.

In the meanwhile, the countryside had also begun to invite nostalgic tourism. In Vermont in the 1890s, for instance, the State Board of Agriculture began a promotional campaign designed to bring summer boarders to the state's farms as a method of maximizing profits on the more traditional diversified farms. This program, and the related institution of "Old Home Week" that helped to advertise the region, are the subjects of my fifth chapter. In summer boarding, a wide array of interests came together: for city dwellers in search of pure food and pure air, for urban reformers fearful of the "degeneracy" of the New England countryside, for progressive state leaders interested in bringing investments into the state, and for farmers looking for another "cash crop" to tide them over--the tourist industry seemed to offer an ideal solution.

In a sense, Vermont in the 1890s was a place not unlike Hawaii or the Bahamas in the middle of the twentieth century--where inhabitants and visitors confronted each other with fundamentally different notions of the meaning of the place itself, and where sentimental notions of the traditional came face to face with a real

world that was actually in some ways traditional.<sup>1</sup> Vermont's Board of Agriculture used sentimental notions of their state and their calling--notions of the "old home" urban tourists had left behind in youth--to protect the real-life diversified farms and farm economies that seemed to be in danger.<sup>2</sup>

At the end of the century, then, the paradox of the tourist industry came together in an ironically harmonious whole: the New England countryside and its rural life were fully integrated into a modern economy: the countryside had been transformed (not by tourist industries alone, of course, but by modern dairy farming, immigration from the farm, and "urban" comforts like plumbing). But the same tourist industry that had brought these isolated areas into a modern economic and cultural framework also relied on a vision of the countryside as a place set apart--on its difference from normal life in the city, on its connections with the tourist's cherished memories of childhood, and on its apparent "pre-industrial" continuity.

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<sup>1</sup>Anthropologists have argued fiercely over whether the inhabitants of Bali, Hawaii, and other such places have been primarily victimized by the confrontation involved in this kind of tourism--robbed of their cultural authenticity by the need to perform their cultural rituals for tourists--or have primarily benefited from tourism by an increase in income and choices. Others have argued that tourism actually helps to preserve traditional culture in these places by supporting and paying for the revitalization of old rituals and crafts. The power differentials are more exaggerated in these cases than in the case of Vermont farmers and their summer boarders, but the questions raised are useful. See Davydd J. Greenwood, "Culture By the Pound: An Anthropological Perspective on Tourism as Cultural Commoditization," in Hosts and Guests: the Anthropology of Tourism, Valene L. Smith, ed. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1977); Alan Bruce Goldberg, "Commercial Folklore and Voodoo in Haiti: International Tourism and the Sale of Culture," Ph. D. Dissertation, Indiana University, 1981.

<sup>2</sup>Once again, the question is framed by Hahn and Prude's collection, which ends with a section called "The Countryside After the Great Transformation," in which Hal Barron discusses the degree of traditionalism still present in Vermont's farming towns at the end of the nineteenth century: these were still places "where local farmers were at once tied to larger national markets and also entwined in a face-to-face local life." "Staying Down on the Farm," Countryside, p. 340.

All this is a long way to travel in five chapters--quite a "whirlwind tour," in fact. I have put together five very different case studies; they move not only chronologically, but thematically as well, covering different time periods, different places, and different kinds of tourism. And the choice of places raises certain questions: some very well-known tourist regions are not included here. Why not Cape Cod, for example? That is the easiest question to answer: Cape Cod until very late in the nineteenth century was regarded as a kind of New England outback, inhabited by an ignorant and isolated population with almost no contact with the outside world. Thoreau (who went out of his way to visit un-touristed areas) visited the Cape in the 1850s. Writing about what is now one of the most popular beaches on the Cape, he described it as "a vast morgue, where famished dogs may range in packs, and. . . carcasses of men and beasts together lie . . . rotting and bleaching in the sun."<sup>1</sup> The railroad had reached as far as Hyannis by the 1860s, and Provincetown by 1873, but the outer Cape remained relatively untouched by tourism for decades, and it was not until the age of the automobile that Cape Cod really came into its own.

A few other choices were equally clear: the "Fashionable Tour" route to Niagara marked the beginning of commercial touring; and the White Mountains were both the earliest and the most popular scenic region of the United States before the 1870s. But for the second half of the century, the issues became more complex: there were larger

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<sup>1</sup>Henry David Thoreau, "Cape Cod," in Collected Writings, edited by Robert R. Sayre (New York: Library of America, 1985), p. 979.

numbers of tourist attractions to choose from, and more diverse styles. In making these choices I was guided by several considerations: I tried to focus on tourist styles as they were coming into being--at the moment when they reflect a new picturesque sensibility, a new attitude toward leisure, a new sense of the region's past, or of tourists' relation to their own past. But more importantly, I have looked for places that most illuminated the conflicts at the heart of the industry and of the culture it served.

When I began work on these studies, I knew that I wanted to focus on "middle class" tourism, rather than on the fashionable resorts of the elite or the destinations of the working class. That meant that I would not write about Newport, for example, although it was the most famous of all summer resorts in the nineteenth century. Among the pastoral retreats of the 1890s, I chose to write, not about the palatial "cottages" of Lenox and Stockbridge, but rather the Vermont farms that catered to school teachers and saleswomen. And among coastal resorts, I chose one that catered, not to the urban proletariat (like Rocky Point on Narragansett Bay or Revere Beach outside Boston), but to respectable artisanal and shopkeeping families.

Had I chosen to write about the tourists of different class backgrounds, I could have related the story of mass leisure "filtering down" from the wealthy to the poor over the century--of the gradual inclusion of people with less money and leisure time into the vacationing tourist's world. That would have been a reasonable train of thought to follow, but I found myself more interested in something different. As I began to work on my case studies, I found that they focused on a series of struggles among groups of people between

whom there were mostly small but crucial differences in power, over some of the most important cultural issues of their day.

All the actors on this stage could be called "middle class": the artisanal families of Wesleyan Grove and the investors of Nantucket; the genteel tourists of the White Mountains and the speculators who housed them; the Vermont farm families and their city boarders. But to categorize them all in this way would be to ignore some of the most important struggles of the century--over class identity, the uses of leisure time, the meaning of industrial culture, and control of the past. And these were the issues I came to find most intriguing.

Choosing Wesleyan Grove as my seaside resort, for example, made it possible to explore the conflict many nineteenth century tourists experienced between their sense of who they were, religiously and socially, and the new secular pleasures they found so intriguing. At Newport (or at the other end of the social scale, in working-class resorts like nearby Rocky Point), there were few such qualms. And Vermont's summer boarding industry revealed an encounter between two groups of people--farm families and city boarders--both of whom considered themselves "middle class," and who found themselves in conflict over what that meant about their relationship and about themselves. As I worked on each study, I found that I encountered, not satisfied and respectable bourgeois citizens, but people in conflict--people who were laying claim to status for themselves, but who were also attempting to define meanings for others. And their experiences as tourists or tourist providers expressed a shifting, uncertain sense of values and identity. Ultimately, then, these studies are not about "the middle class," but about constantly shifting groups of people in the

process of making and un-making the meanings that define the middle class--a process that is revealed especially clearly in tourism

To us the subject of tourism may seem frivolous, less serious than other aspects of peoples' lives. But these stories reveal that it was an intensely serious business for both hosts and guests, one that involved their deepest convictions and their most profound uncertainties. I have argued that tourism is a "transparent" industry, in the sense that it is difficult to perceive its workings in the economy. But it is also "transparent" in another sense (something like the way we would say a person's excuses were transparent): it seems to allow glimpses of the lives of both hosts and guests at crucial moments--moments when such hazy notions as commercialization, the birth of a leisure-oriented society, or sentimentalization became vitally important in their lives. These five chapters, I hope, take advantage of that transparency to reveal some of the ways tourism actually worked, and some of the ways nineteenth century culture worked as well.



## CHAPTER 1

### TOURS, GRAND AND FASHIONABLE: THE BIRTH OF THE TOURIST INDUSTRY IN THE UNITED STATES, 1800-1830

Tourism seems to have no official moment of birth. The Oxford English Dictionary traces the first use of the word "tourist" to around 1800: "A Traveller is now-a-days called a Tour-ist." But even the definition of this new word referred back to older kinds of pleasure travel--of "tourism"-- before the invention of the word. By the nineteenth century, the elites of English and European society had been "touring" for two centuries, traveling to the great cities, to the watering-places, and on the "grand tour" of the continent--traveling for health, for education, and for diversion.

In fact, the appearance of the new word, "tourist," at the turn of the eighteenth century did reflect real changes. Most historians who have written about tourism have discerned an important shift in the nature of tourism at some time between the late eighteenth and mid-nineteenth centuries. This shift has sometimes been described as technological: from the "Age of Stagecoaches" to the "Railroad Age." It has also been described as a shift in sensibility: a move away from the urbane and sophisticated tour of the eighteenth century to the romantic nineteenth century tours inaugurated by Byron and Wordsworth. And it has been defined, always, by social class: and often

by a sense that earlier, more aristocratic forms of tourism were somehow more authentic--more "active," more thoughtful--than later forms, which had been brought down to the level of the masses.<sup>1</sup>

The transformation these historians have described was real. But it was a transformation, not so much of tourist experiences, as of the way these experiences were organized and produced. It was the rise of commercial tourist industries that was new--industries that responded to the demands of tourists who had once been served by informal, personal arrangements. Unlike tourism in general, this transformation is easy to date: in England it dates from the mid-eighteenth century creation of commercial tourist industries in the Lake District. In the United States, the tourist industry was born in the 1820s, with the creation of a tourist route known as the "fashionable" or "northern" tour.

In 1822, a newspaper editor from Saratoga Springs, Gideon Miner Davison, published a little book called The Fashionable Tour: or, a Trip to the Springs, Niagara, Quebeck, and Boston, in the Summer of 1821. The route he outlined for tourists became the most popular tourist itinerary in the United States during the first half of the nineteenth century. It encompassed a variety of attractions--public buildings like Boston's new State House, revolutionary battlegrounds like Fort Ticonderoga, technological miracles like the Erie Canal--but

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<sup>1</sup>See, for instance, Anthony Burton, The Green Bag Travellers: Britain's First Tourists, (London: Deutsch, 1978), on technology; Jane Louise Mesick, The English Traveller in America, 1785-1935, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1922), and Esther Moir, The Discovery of Britain: The English Tourists, 1540-1840, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1964), on class; Paul P. Bernard, Rush to the Alps: the Evolution of Vacationing in Switzerland, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), on romanticism.

its most important destinations were Saratoga Springs and Niagara Falls. The "fashionable tour" offered new experiences for tourists, but it was not simply a tourist itinerary. More importantly, it was a commercial enterprise; along its route, new businesses were invented which catered exclusively to tourists, as well as new methods of serving tourists' interests--and profiting from them.

Behind the "fashionable tour's" commercial innovations was a generation of a more traditional kind of tourism in the United States, one which had its roots in centuries-old European touring customs. Curious to see first-hand the principles of a new government, the edges of a half-civilized world, or the economic workings of a potential competitor, European travelers in the United States were relatively common as early as the end of the eighteenth century. A retired British cloth manufacturer named Henry Wansey, for example, took a tour of the United States in 1794. He did so, as he later recounted, simply because he desired to learn about a country "of which we hear so much, and know so little."<sup>1</sup>

Wansey's curiosity was characteristic--and so was his decision to write a book about his experiences. More than seventy accounts of travels in the United States written by foreigners were published in the twenty-five years following the Revolution, and most of these expressed similar motives for making such a difficult and unusual

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<sup>1</sup>Henry Wansey, Journal of an Excursion to the United States of North America, (New York and London: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1969), pp. vii-ix.

tour.<sup>1</sup> This sort of investigative tourism fostered a whole genre of travel accounts of the customs and character of Americans, continuing through the first half of the nineteenth century and even beyond. These curious Europeans made a unique impression on their hosts at the time, and for long afterward. Their place in the history and literature of the United States is so firmly rooted that we do not even ordinarily think of them as "tourists"--a word that now seems too trivial to describe the weighty preoccupations of de Tocqueville's Democracy in America and Harriet Martineau's Society in America.

Some Americans responded to these analyses with their own travels and their own reports on the state of American society. One of the best-known of these writers was Timothy Dwight, president of Yale College, and a leading minister of the orthodox Congregational clergy in New England. Dwight was typical in his deep concern for the defense of his country (which he understood to be the region of New England and New York) against the accusations of outsiders. His Travels in New-England and New York, published in 1821 after his death, discussed the consequences of democracy, the effects of New England's special religious circumstances, the growth of manners and morals in frontier towns, even as it described the places he had passed through on his journey.

Travelers like these, although they were concerned with the special circumstances of the United States, were acting within a well-defined European context. The Grand Tour of Europe, as it had

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<sup>1</sup>Henry Wansey, Henry Wansey and his American Journal, 1794, ed. by David John Jeremy (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1970), p. 28, and Mesick, The British Traveler, pp. 8-9.

evolved among the English gentry during the eighteenth century, was a well-known model for touring foreign countries. Travelers in the United States followed the pattern of the Grand Tourists in posing for themselves more or less serious questions about the nature of the societies they visited: "It is not in looking at pictures and statues only, that travelling is of use, but in examining the laws, customs, and manners of other countries, and comparing them with our own."<sup>1</sup> Although of course not all tourists were able or willing to take the larger issues of the Grand Tour so seriously, for the most part tourists paid at least lip service to the cause of social and political research.<sup>2</sup> The purposes of a tour of America might vary according to profession: Wansey, a retired cloth manufacturer, planned his tour around visits to American cloth factories, hoping to discover whether American manufacturing posed a threat to his own country's trade. But the overriding motive expressed by most tourists was a more general curiosity about American social and political life.

Travelers like these followed an itinerary similar to that of travelers on the Grand Tour in Europe. Just as the European Grand Tour moved from Paris through the cities of Italy, tours of America centered in Boston, New York, and Philadelphia. (In the early nineteenth century, travelers sometimes included Washington, D.C., some of the southern cities, and occasionally the newer cities of the

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<sup>1</sup>P. Beckford, Familiar Letters from Italy, to a friend in England, vol. I, p. 9, quoted in Jeremy Black, The British and the Grand Tour (London: Croom Helm, 1985), p. 183.

<sup>2</sup>Both on the Grand Tour and on the American tour, tourists who wrote published accounts of their travels seem to have concentrated more heavily on political analysis; those who left unpublished manuscripts or letters paid more attention to manners and customs. (On the Grand Tour of Europe, see Black, The British and the Grand Tour.)

west.) These tourists followed itineraries designed to allow as much time as possible in major towns and cities, while moving with the greatest possible speed through rural areas. Wansey's tour of America, for instance, consisted of a total of five days on the road and seven weeks in the cities of Halifax, Boston, Hartford, New York, and Philadelphia.<sup>1</sup> Tourists seldom toured the inland areas of any regions intensively. Just as Paris represented France for most British Grand Tourists, for tourists in America Boston was New England, Charleston was the South, and New York City was the United States. American travelers, who knew the areas more intimately, might spend more time in smaller towns, but the focus of all these travelers was still on the culture and economy of the cities.

American tourists' itineraries looked much the same as Edward Gibbon's Grand Tour itinerary in 1764, when he described his tour of Switzerland as including in each city the "Churches, arsenals, libraries, and all the most eminent persons."<sup>2</sup> The primary attractions were patriotic landmarks, public buildings and institutions, and public expressions of culture-- church services, graduation day at Harvard, military exercises, and so forth. In Boston, for example, everyone went to see Faneuil Hall (American Southerners especially were intrigued by this revolutionary landmark), the new State House, and later the monument at Bunker Hill. Captain Basil Hall described his 1826 tour of Boston as a "round of sight-seeing" that included "Rope-

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<sup>1</sup>Jeremy, Henry Wansey, p. 33.

<sup>2</sup>George A. Bonnard, ed., Gibbon's Journey from Geneva to Rome: His Journal from 20 April to 20 October 1764, quoted in Christopher Hibbert, The Grand Tour, (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1969), p. 87.

works--printing-offices--houses of correction--prisons--hospitals--penitentiaries--schools--almshouses--Navy and building yards," all of which "passed in quick, but not in careless review."<sup>1</sup>

Church services were especially popular in cities known for their unusual (to the tourist) religious expressions. Robert Hunter, who took an extensive tour of the United States in 1785, described one of his Sundays in Boston as a round of visits to exotic church services: in the morning he attended the familiar Anglican service, but in the afternoon he went to a Quaker meeting house, where he and his friend "came out no wiser than we went in;" in the evening they went to an "Anabaptist meeting" where he "heard a most curious doctrine."<sup>2</sup> While in Quebec, tourists attended Catholic churches; in Boston, Unitarian services were a chief attraction. By the 1820s, in fact, Unitarian minister William Ellery Channing's sermons had become one of the best-known attractions for visitors in Boston.

Tourists like Wansey and Hunter did not venture alone into foreign cities in search of these novel experiences: their tours were structured around personal connections, and these personal connections were made with the help of letters of introduction brought from home. Although it was possible for these American "grand tourists" to visit public landmarks and institutions on their own, they rarely did. Instead, they counted on the help of their new acquaintances in showing them the sights. Wansey wanted to see

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<sup>1</sup>Basil Hall, Travels in North America in the Years 1827-1828, vol. 2, (Edinburgh: Cadell, 1830), p. 145.

<sup>2</sup>Robert Hunter, Quebec to California in 1785-1786, ed. Louis Wright and Marion Tinling, (San Marino, California: The Huntington Library, 1943), pp. 123-4.

American cloth manufacturing, for example. In order to do that, he and his traveling companion first dined with "Mr. Charles Vaughan, a considerable merchant, to whom we had letters of introduction." With this new acquaintance he went to the Unitarian chapel on Sunday and met the minister, Mr. Freeman, who then took him on a tour of "that pleasant suburb, Charleston" and its "curious wool-card manufactory."<sup>1</sup>

In this circuitous way, Wansey was finally able to get what he had come for--a private tour of a factory. But even the more public parts of the tours, the visits to Bunker Hill, Fanueil Hall, Harvard or Yale, were made within the context of personal social events. While later tourists would visit Bunker Hill with the help of a guide book or brochure, Wansey toured Bunker Hill with his new acquaintance "Mr. Armstrong," accompanied by one Captain Greatan, "an officer on the spot at the very time," who gave them what they thought was an eyewitness account of the battle.<sup>2</sup>

At institutions like Harvard College or the Massachusetts State Prison at Charlestown, tourists used letters or local introductions to gain access to the heads of the institutions. Often the directors themselves conducted tours: Henry Gallaudet, founder of the American Asylum for the Deaf and Dumb in Hartford, conducted tourists through his classrooms and explained the methods used there; Kirke Boott, the manager of the Lowell mills, took tourists

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<sup>1</sup>Wansey, Journal of an Excursion, pp. 43-47.

<sup>2</sup>Wansey, Journal of an Excursion, p. 14. Apparently it was actually a recounting of his father's "eyewitness" experience of the battle.



through the factories.<sup>1</sup> Visiting colleges, a favorite pursuit of many tourists, was also done by means of a personal letter of introduction to the college president. One tourist described her failed attempts to tour Brown University: "I called several times at the house of the President, but never found him in."<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps the most important function of the letter of introduction was to help the tourist gain access to some of the most popular "attractions" of the time: well-known and distinguished representatives of American society (as Gibbon described their European Grand Tour equivalents, "all the most eminent persons"). Wansey, like many other tourists, was able to use his letters to gain access to the highest office-holders:

Had the honor of an interview with the President of the United States [Washington], to whom I was introduced by Mr. Dandridge, his secretary. He received me very politely, and after reading my letters, I was asked to breakfast.<sup>3</sup>

Social engagements were a crucial part of the tourist experience, and letters of introduction were the means to those engagements. With them, a tourist could have breakfast with the President of the United States, or take a tour with the president of Yale.

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<sup>1</sup>Una Pope-Hennessy, editor, The Aristocratic Journey: Being the Outspoken Letters of Mrs. Basil Hall Written During a Fourteen Month's Sojourn in America, 1827-1828, (New York: Putnam, 1931), pp. 91-2; Anne Royall, Sketches of History, Life, and Manners, in the United States, 1826, (New Haven: 1826, reprinted Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1970), p. 297.

<sup>2</sup>Royall, Sketches, p. 369.

<sup>3</sup>Wansey, Journal, p. 122.

Letters of introduction were based on the assumption of a degree of social equality between visitor and host. One writer reported to the Southern Literary Messenger, for instance, that northern city-dwellers were not inhospitable, as some people had claimed. On the contrary, they offered a cordial reception to those with the proper credentials: "strangers who bring letters of introduction, or persons whose family, education and manners are such as to entitle them to move in their circles."<sup>1</sup> Without letters (which is to say, without the social background letters represented), this kind of tour could be difficult to make.

One tourist who had difficulty using these informal networks effectively, for instance, was Anne Royall, who was the author of several travel books based on her tours of the United States. Between the years of 1824 and 1829, she made a living by traveling and selling the accounts of her travels in books like her Sketches of History, Life, and Manners, in the United States. (Royall was a widow; as a young girl from a poverty-stricken family, she had married a much older and much wealthier man whose relatives had contested the legitimacy of the marriage. Her claims to gentility were also jeopardized by the fact that she supported herself by traveling alone throughout the country.) Royall's attempts to tour America in the manner of the gentry were plagued with difficulties. To be sure, her reputation as an author often preceded her, and in many cases she was treated more or less as an equal by the well-known people she visited. But her lack of

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<sup>1</sup>J.Q.P., "Extracts from Gleanings on the Way," Southern Literary Messenger 4 (April 1838), p. 251.

"credentials" often got her into trouble--trouble which she did not scruple to report in her books:

Respecting the public library of Albany, I am unable to say any thing. The Librarian, (the greatest boor except two in Albany,) would neither let me examine the books, or show me the catalogue. A gentleman who was present, however, informed me that it contained 4,000 volumes.<sup>1</sup>

When Royall presented herself at the doors of well-to-do and distinguished people to "pay her respects," she experienced a variety of reactions, ranging from avoidance to graciousness. The latter she never failed to reward in the pages of her books, where the keeper of the Hartford poor-house, for example, was described for her readers as "one of the most benevolent of his species," and his wife as "the most feeling, angelic, transcendently kind and charitable of females."<sup>2</sup> Obviously, Royall had her ways of gaining access to institutions and to well-known people; she recorded interviews with the elderly John Adams, John Hancock's widow, Noah Webster, and many others.<sup>3</sup> But it is also apparent even from her own accounts that the informal social world she hoped to be able to describe in her books was often closed to her.

And it was this social world that constituted the heart of the American "grand tour." It was at dinners, parties, and social occasions of all kinds that these tourists were able to get the kinds of information they wanted about local behavior and customs. Informal socializing was the most time-consuming and probably the most

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<sup>1</sup>Royall, Sketches, p. 278.

<sup>2</sup>Royall, Sketches, pp. 295-6.

<sup>3</sup>Royall, Sketches, pp. 331, 347-8, 387.

important part of the traditional early nineteenth century American tour. Published accounts did not always reflect that fact. In 1827 and 1828, Captain Basil Hall (a British naval officer) and his wife Margaret Hunter Hall, together with their year-old daughter and her nurse, made a fourteen-month tour of the United States and Canada. Captain Hall subsequently published Travels in North America, his third travel book. Mrs. Hall also wrote extensively about the trip in the form of letters to her sister, published only in the twentieth century.<sup>1</sup>

Captain Hall's book was a formal account of the pitfalls of democracy. Mrs. Hall's letters were a vivid description of the dinner parties, receptions and visits on which the Halls based their understanding of American life. While Captain Hall focused on public events and institutions, his wife described the private events and personalities that filled their days. And it was at the dinner parties described by Mrs. Hall that her husband did the "research" which supported his conclusions about American society and character: for instance, his often-repeated perception that "the most striking circumstance in the American character . . . was the constant habit of praising themselves, their institutions, and their country."<sup>2</sup>

This kind of "grand tour" was rooted in a world of personal contacts; its focus was social, and it was deeply enmeshed in the everyday world of both travelers and hosts. Although these travelers were embarked on serious projects, they often found time to look after

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<sup>1</sup>Una Pope-Hennessy, editor, The Aristocratic Journey: Being the Outspoken Letters of Mrs. Basil Hall Written During a Fourteen Month's Sojourn in America, 1827-1828, (New York: Putnam, 1931).

<sup>2</sup>Hall, Travels, vol. I, p. 109.

their other professional interests as well. Timothy Dwight took a number of tours in various parts of New England and New York between the mid-1790s and 1815. On those trips he gathered statistics, looked at scenery, and visited public buildings. But he also managed to preach every Sunday in the places he was touring, and to fulfill other professional obligations at the same time. Combining "business" and "pleasure" in this way would not have seemed strange to anyone involved in it: this kind of touring was not segregated from ordinary life. Tourists engaged in the same activities in a strange city as they would have in their own homes--they went to church, ate dinner, visited friends and relatives--and they judged these new places with the same standards they would have used at home.

In the same way, the services provided for these travelers were part of a larger travel network that served commercial, non-touring purposes as well. These travelers stayed in the same inns, rode in the same stage coaches, and followed the same routes as local travelers and merchants on business trips. They were guided in their travels by friends and acquaintances in an informal network that combined business, social, and leisure connections. In other words, there were many "tourists" in 1800 in the United States, but there was, in effect, no tourist industry.

With the invention in the 1820s of the "fashionable tour," as Gideon Miner Davison dubbed it in his guide-book, all this began to change. Along the northern route, the first tourist businesses began to take hold: tourist experiences were increasingly organized and commercialized (and increasingly available to people for whom the

American "grand tour" would have been out of reach). The region of the "northern route" was fertile ground for all kinds of industrial and commercial development during these years--and tourist industries, too, found the ground congenial. The guide books themselves represented a new kind of business (see figure 1). Among other things, the region's extremely modern travel arrangements fostered the growth of the fashionable tour.

From one angle, indeed, the "fashionable tour" could be understood primarily as a series of novel transportation experiences--none of which were created with tourists in mind, but which were powerful attractions in their own right. From New York City to Albany, tourists traveled up the Hudson River by steamboat, the fastest and most luxurious method of travel available at the time (despite its reputation for being dangerous). Travelers were impressed, even intimidated, by the speed of this method of travel: one traveler described his family as "sorely shaken and bamboozled" by the speed of their Hudson River steamboat.<sup>1</sup> From Albany, tourists could travel west on the Erie Canal or by stagecoach. The stagecoaches were the most efficient in the country, running on the best roads, although still bone-shaking enough to make a canal boat a pleasant alternative. The canal boats were themselves extremely slow (the fastest traveled only three miles in an hour), but many tourists found them picturesque and relaxing (see figure 2).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Hall, Travels, vol. I, p. 93.

<sup>2</sup>Seymour Dunbar, A History of Travel in America, vol. 2 (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1915), p. 851.

*The*  
**Northern Traveller,**  
 AND  
**Northern Tour,**

with the Routes to  
 THE  
**SPRINGS, NIAGARA, & QUEBEC,**

and the  
**Coal Mines of Pennsylvania.**  
 — also —

**TOUR OF NEW ENGLAND.**

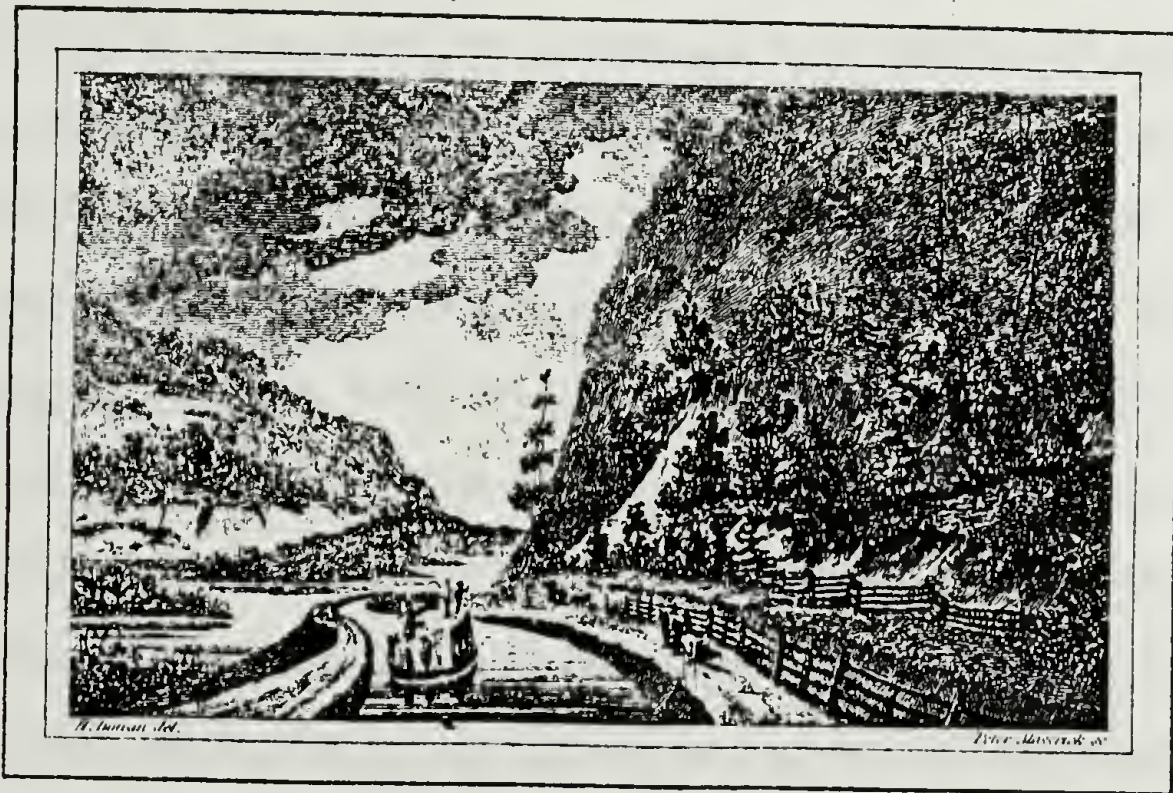


**NEW YORK.**

**J & J. HARPER.**

**1831.**

Figure 1. Title page of Theodore Dwight's The Northern Traveller, 1831 edition. (AAS)



TRAVELLING on the ERIE CANAL.

Figure 2. "Travel on the Erie Canal." From Theodore Dwight's The Northern Traveller, 1831 edition. (AAS)



The stage lines, the steamboats, and the canal system were not built primarily with tourists in mind. But other businesses sprang up which did cater only or primarily to tourists. After a few years in which Davison's Fashionable Tour dominated the field, other writers entered the guide book market. In 1825, Theodore Dwight published his guidebook The Northern Traveller; Containing the Routes to Niagara, Quebec, and the Springs (a rather more erudite guide than Davison's, with an emphasis on cultural attractions and on the achievements of New England). Local guides like Abel Bowen's Picture of Boston, first published in 1829, also began to appear. And The Fashionable Tour itself went through ten editions by 1840, including two French editions, published in Paris in 1829 and 1834.<sup>1</sup>

Many promoters of tourist industries were involved in several new tourist businesses at once. G. M. Davison himself, the author of The Fashionable Tour, went on to supervise the construction of the second railroad opened in the United States, built between Schenectady and Saratoga in 1833.<sup>2</sup> The railroad cut the total travel time between New York City and Saratoga Springs from about 48 hours to 17 hours, and it also provided the amusement of another novel method of transportation--which he duly reported in the 1833 edition

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<sup>1</sup>In the following decades, the guide book market took off. Publishing houses specialized in guides and tourist items, and places like Newport and the White Mountains were the subject of entire collections of guides; in comparison, the market for these books in the 1830s was still very limited, but many of these guides went through dozens of editions, and many travel writers mentioned using one of them.

<sup>2</sup>The National Cyclopedia of American Biography, volume 17 (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1967), p. 115, under John Mason Davison.

of his guidebook as "one of the greatest sources of novelty and pleasure in a visit."<sup>1</sup>

One tourist business led to another: Parkhurst Whitney was a hotel-keeper at Niagara Falls who built and enlarged the Eagle Tavern (which later became the Cataract House Hotel) on the American side of the Falls. In pursuit of business for his hotel, in 1818 Whitney built a stairway to the foot of the Falls, which made it possible for guides to take tourists for thrilling excursions "behind the Cataract." And Whitney also operated a ferry below the Falls with the landlord of the Pavilion Hotel on the Canadian side.<sup>2</sup> Similar new tourist businesses--hotels, stage coach lines, and amusements--characterized the "fashionable tour" along its entire route.

But the experiences of tourists along the "fashionable tour" were not transformed overnight. In many respects, the new tourists continued older patterns of pleasure travel. Tourists on the northern route often used traditional forms and customs, even as they participated in the most innovative touring practices of the day. Matthew Barney was a "fashionable tourist" in 1836--but he was also a cooper from Nantucket hoping to make a business deal in Albany. Barney used a guide book called The Tourist--loaned to him by a fellow Nantucketer he met on a steamboat on the Hudson River. But at the same time, Barney's entire trip to Niagara was framed by visits to

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<sup>1</sup>Janice Zita Grover, "Luxury and Leisure in Early Nineteenth-Century America: Saratoga Springs and the Rise of the Resort," (Ph.D. dissertation, 1973, University of California, Davis,) p. 18. Davison, The Traveller's Guide: Through the Middle and Northern States, and the Provinces of Canada, (New York: G. and C. and H. Carville, 1833), pp. 150-151.

<sup>2</sup>Ralph Greenhill and Thomas D. Mahoney, Niagara (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969), pp. 109-110.

relatives and friends from Nantucket, who often put him up in their homes, showed him the sights, and gave him advice on his travel plans--an effective substitute for the letters of introduction used by the elite.

Even the heart of the new "fashionable tour" experience was not unambiguously new. Saratoga Springs played a crucial role in the creation of the "fashionable tour:" as early as 1803, hotels were being built for the exclusive accommodation of visitors who intended to stay for some length of time, and who thus required entertainments and relatively luxurious services--billiard rooms, bars, and ballrooms--for their stay (see figure 3).<sup>1</sup> And Saratoga was the home base for Davison's railroad and guide book ventures. But Saratoga was also completely comprehensible within a traditional touring context. Although it was located almost in the wilderness, Saratoga was in a sense a substitute city. Just as Bath played a traditional role in London's elite travel patterns, Saratoga and Ballston Springs fulfilled traditional social needs for New York's and Boston's mercantile elite and for the southern planters who traveled there.<sup>2</sup>

And "fashionable" tourists had many tastes in common with more traditional tourists: they toured cities like Quebec and Albany, and were intrigued by the political and social features of the places they visited. In fact, the focus of the first edition of Davison's Fashionable Tour was almost entirely on "traditional" attractions: battlefields, West

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<sup>1</sup>Grover, "Luxury and Leisure," p. 99.

<sup>2</sup>For a somewhat different reading of the meaning of Saratoga Springs (over the entire nineteenth century), see Grover, "Luxury and Leisure ."



CONGRESS HALL, SARATOGA SPRINGS

Figure 3. Congress Hall at Saratoga Springs. From Theodore Dwight's The Northern Traveller, 1831 edition. (AAS)

Point, and the social and cultural features of the major cities and the Springs. Even in his section on Niagara Falls, Davison dwelt in the most detail on the battlegrounds of the War of 1812. And even Alexander Bliss, a young lawyer on his honeymoon journey to Niagara Falls in 1825, seemed to find it natural to stop and view the new state prison in Auburn, New York. He reported that he and his bride had "found it much more spacious than any prison we had before seen."<sup>1</sup>

But even as the "fashionable tour" remained within the framework of traditional tours, it began to transform them. Perhaps most importantly, the new commercial enterprises challenged the implicit but real exclusivity of the American "grand tour." Hartford's American Asylum for the Deaf and Dumb, for instance, became so popular that the director established public visitors' hours; according to The North American Tourist, on "the afternoons of Wednesday, . . . all the classes of deaf and dumb may be seen, and the process of instruction by signs; and at other times two of the classes only are visible."<sup>2</sup> The "fashionable tour" pioneered in new methods of touring that could be undertaken without personal contacts, outside the informal social network that earlier tourists had used. Guide books could sometimes take the place of letters of introduction, especially for open attractions like scenery and battlegrounds.

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<sup>1</sup>Journal of Alexander Bliss, June 22, 1825 (American Antiquarian Society manuscript collection). The wedding journey was only beginning to come into style as the fashionable tour was being created in the 1820s, and the "honeymoon" provided one of the most important motives for the fashionable tour. See Ellen Rothman, Hands and Hearts, a History of Courtship in America, (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1984), p. 82 and p. 175.

<sup>2</sup> The North American Tourist, (New York: A.T. Goodrich, 1839), p. 214.

Even Saratoga Springs was transformed by the commercialization of the fashionable tour. To be sure, Saratoga was part of a long tradition of elite watering-places, but in the 1820s it was becoming possible for quite ordinary people to reach Saratoga for a short visit; guide-books could give hints on the proper places to stay, and the proper behavior for the parks and public watering-places of Saratoga. Very quickly it became difficult to distinguish among the genteel and the pretenders.<sup>1</sup> The more personal, socially-oriented forms of tourism continued to exist in the nineteenth century, and continued to be appropriate to tourists who functioned primarily in the informal but rigidly defined world of the upper classes. But these forms existed side by side with a rapidly developing commercial tourist industry, available to anyone who could pay.

Of course, the most important feature of the new fashionable tour had never needed any letters of introduction at all. The high point of the fashionable tour was the pilgrimage to Niagara Falls: Niagara was in a sense the tour's reason for being. And in this regard, too, the fashionable tour pioneered important changes in tourism. In pursuit of scenic attractions--chiefly Niagara, but later many others as well--the northern route took tourists far from the urban centers of culture and commerce into the hinterlands. Fashionable tourists of the 1820s and 1830s still stopped at cities, but the proportion of urban to rural travel on the whole was quite different from that of traditional tourists.

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<sup>1</sup>In fact, Saratoga Springs during the first half of the century was subjected to a great deal of suspicion about its claims as a haunt for the elite--almost any reference to the place brought forth sarcasms about the questionable gentility of its clients.

Because scenic attractions like Niagara took travelers far off the commercial routes, they distorted older forms of tourist experience far more than other sites. Traditional tourists on the American "grand tour" had followed the same routes and used the same accommodations as other travelers, but travelers along the northern route increasingly found themselves in the exclusive company of other tourists. Special accommodations sprang up in out-of-the-way places: at Niagara Falls by 1825 one could stay overnight at the Eagle Tavern on the American side, or at the far more luxurious Pavilion Hotel on the Canadian side, which could already accommodate 100 guests.<sup>1</sup>

As the northern route evolved (and as scenic attractions were developed), it ventured farther and farther afield into the hinterlands of New York and New England. By the 1830s, it was common for a "northern tour" to include a return trip through the Catskills, the Green Mountains, the Berkshires of western Massachusetts, or the White Mountains of New Hampshire. In 1832, when Nathaniel Hawthorne took the northern tour, he followed the well-traveled route to Niagara Falls, and from there to Quebec, but Hawthorne extended his return trip to Boston through the White Mountains of New Hampshire, in search of romantic scenery (and in an attempt to avoid the cholera that was plaguing the city that year).

As the northern tour expanded into scenic regions, new industries sprang up. And these new industries were ultimately to

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<sup>1</sup>John Sears, "Doing Niagara Falls in the Nineteenth Century," in Jeremy Adamson, Niagara: Two Centuries of Changing Attitudes, (Washington, D.C.: Corcoran Gallery of Art, 1985), p. 78.

transform tourist experiences into something very different from those of earlier travelers. Increasingly, tourists were becoming part of a new kind of institution, separated from the activities of normal life. Tourism took on an element of fantasy: tourists traveled not into another part of the world, but into another world altogether, where they were not grocers or lawyers but tourists, where they suffered more discomfort, but also perhaps experienced greater luxury than at home, and where they sought out intense private experiences and were expected to allow them to be overwhelming. By the 1830s, these changes were creating an entirely new kind of tourism--not only commercialized, but transformed in content. Just as the new kind of touring was taking tourists farther from the normal commercial routes into the hinterlands, it was also taking them farther from normal experiences and into a different sort of world. In this new world, letters of introduction and social connections would not help. The new tourist needed interpreters--guides and promoters, painters and poets--who would make meaningful a world quite different from the world at home.



## CHAPTER 2

### "INTERESTING ASSOCIATIONS": CREATING A SCENIC TOURIST INDUSTRY IN THE WHITE MOUNTAINS OF NEW HAMPSHIRE, 1840-1860

When Nathaniel Hawthorne made his trip through the Notch of the White Mountains in September 1832, he encountered a surprisingly large number of people there. The inn at the Notch was full of tourists. In a sketch of his travels for the *New-England Magazine*, Hawthorne described his fellow tourists: there were a mineralogist, a doctor, two newly-wed couples from Massachusetts on the "matrimonial jaunt," two gentlemen from Georgia, and a young man with opera glasses spouting Byron quotations--a typical group of "fashionable tourists."<sup>1</sup> The innkeepers, Ethan Allen Crawford and his father Abel Crawford, catered to two groups; they had made their inn, as Hawthorne described it, "at once the pleasure house of fashionable tourists, and the homely inn of country travellers."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Nathaniel Hawthorne, "Sketches from Memory," *Mosses From an Old Manse* (New York: Wiley and Putnam, 1846), p. 481 (first published in *New-England Magazine*, 1835.)

<sup>2</sup> Hawthorne, "Sketches from Memory," p. 479.

In spite of the full house at the Notch, the White Mountains were an unlikely tourist destination in 1832. Far removed from the major tourist routes, the region was only half-settled, the roads were primitive, and the scene chaotic. Instead of the smiling pastoral scenes to which many "fashionable tourists" were drawn, the White Mountains presented dreary scenes of half-cleared fields and primitive shacks. And northern New England, too, had something of a bad reputation: New Englanders were accustomed to thinking of the northern edges of their settlements as backward, savage, and unchurched, places where the New England virtues of industry, sobriety, and godliness were replaced by slovenly illiteracy and unpainted houses. But Hawthorne was not mistaken in his choice. On the contrary, like other prominent or yet-to-be prominent Americans who were visiting the region, he knew exactly what he was doing.

Hawthorne explained in a letter to his friend Franklin Pierce, perhaps only half-jokingly, "I was making preparations for a northern tour. . . on account of a book by which I intend to acquire an (undoubtedly) immense literary reputation. . . ." <sup>1</sup> And other aspiring artists were doing the same: when Thomas Cole visited the White Mountains in the summer of 1827, he went on the advice of his patron, Daniel Wadsworth, in search of scenery to paint. Cole wrote to Wadsworth from the mountains that "in such sublime scenes . . . man sees his own nothingness. . . ." <sup>2</sup> But he must also have seen the

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<sup>1</sup>Hawthorne, The Letters, 1813-1843, edited by Thomas Woodson, L. Neal Smith, Norman Holmes Pearson, The Centenary Edition of the Works of Nathaniel Hawthorne, volume 15 (Ohio State University Press, 1984), p. 224.

<sup>2</sup>J. Bard McNulty, editor, Correspondence of Thomas Cole and Daniel Wadsworth, (Hartford: Connecticut Historical Society, 1983), p. 12.

possibilities of his own greatness: Cole's White Mountain paintings brought him his first public recognition.

Art historians have recognized the role that artists like Hawthorne and Cole played in publicizing the scenery of the White Mountains, but they have only recently begun to explore what the White Mountains could do for aspiring artists. Cole and Hawthorne were in the region, not because they wanted to publicize its scenery, but because its scenery could publicize them.<sup>1</sup> The Notch of the White Mountains was acquiring a national reputation during these years. The region's first big publicity-maker had come in the summer of 1826, when a landslide in the Notch made national news by destroying a large family of settlers. The tragedy of the Willey family was covered extensively in the national and regional press; it served as a focus for the increasing interest in the White Mountain region, and in romantic mountain scenery in general.<sup>2</sup> Both Hawthorne and Cole were to use the scene and the event to stir interest in their own work: Cole with his 1839 painting, "The Notch of the White Mountains," with its tiny cottage at the foot of looming mountains; and Hawthorne with his story, "The

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<sup>1</sup>For an insightful interpretation of the impact of paintings on images of the White Mountains, see The White Mountains: Place and Perception (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1980); for an examination of the relationship between painters and tourist attractions, see Elizabeth Johns, "Art, History, and Curatorial Responsibility," American Quarterly 41 (March 1989), pp. 143-154, a review of several exhibits, including especially "The Catskills: Painters, Writers and Tourists in the Mountains, 1820-1895," at the Hudson River Museum of Westchester.

<sup>2</sup>Robert McGrath has pointed out the peculiar usefulness of the Willey tragedy as an "instant ruin" in the creation of interest in White Mountain scenery, since it provided an immediate focus for the kinds of thoughts of immortality and imponderable fate that in Europe would have been provided by medieval castle ruins or battle sites. See Robert McGrath, "The Real and the Ideal" in The White Mountains: Place and Perception, p. 59, and in "Ideality and Actuality: the Landscape of Northern New England," in New England Prospect: Maps, Place Names, and the Historical Landscape, (Boston: Boston University, 1980), p. 109.

"Ambitious Guest," first published in 1835 in the New-England Magazine. These, along with a wide variety of other stories, poems, and paintings, served to keep the Willey story in the public eye, and to highlight the awe-inspiring majesty of the region's scenery.

The Willey story had not been what originally attracted attention to the White Mountains, however, nor were Hawthorne and Cole its only publicists. As early as 1820, "fashionable tourists" and scientists had been traveling to the Notch in order to climb Mount Washington, and the innkeepers of the Notch were instrumental in providing for and encouraging the trade. Between 1819 and 1829, the Crawford family built a series of three inns at various points in the Notch to take advantage of this interest. (In winter, they catered to travelers bringing goods through the Notch, which was only possible after a deep snow.) They built a foot path up the mountain in 1819, succeeded by the first bridle path, begun in 1827 and reaching the summit in 1839. At the same time, they advertised their inns and the surrounding attractions in regional newspapers.

The visit to "Crawford's" was as much a part of the White Mountain experience as the ascent of Mount Washington: when Hawthorne decided to write a sketch of his White Mountain tour, what he described was not the summit or the scenery but his night in the old-fashioned inn, and the company he met there. The Crawfords worked hard to make the ascent of Mount Washington accessible. They improved the roads, established shelters along the way, and even built separate shelters for the ladies and gentlemen of the party. (They made a point of telling people that the tour was safe for ladies.) But they also understood that visitors were intrigued by the rustic inn and

its remote location, and they were adept at emphasizing the "wild" elements of the tour: Ethan Allen Crawford kept a bear in a cage, for instance, and maintained a deer park and tame wolves at the inn.<sup>1</sup> Like the guides of the Swiss Alps who fired a cannon to set off avalanches for the benefit of tourists, Crawford understood that the "dangers" of wild mountain life were part of what drew tourists to the region.

In 1826, when the Willey tragedy made national news, Ethan Allen Crawford recognized in it the beginnings of a greatly increased tourist trade for his region. Ever on the lookout for publicity, he noted that this "great and wonderful catastrophe" had "caused a great many this fall to visit the place."<sup>2</sup> He made sure that the site of the tragedy was appropriately marked: the house where the Willeys had lived was still standing, and travelers through the Notch could tour the house, place a stone on the spot where some of the bodies had been recovered, and imagine for themselves the experience of the family who "fled . . . from the house to seek their safety, but thus threw themselves in the way of destruction."<sup>3</sup>

For the Crawfords, the Willey landslide was a stroke of luck. Their experiences came to be associated both with pioneer life and with new ways of sentimentalizing the family: "On this delightful parterre dwelt this happy family, content with their lot, rich in the affections that

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<sup>1</sup>Lucy Crawford, The History of the White Mountains from the First Settlement of Upper Coos and Pequawket (Portland: F. A. and A. F. Gerrish, 1946--reprint of 1845 edition), pp. 136-7.

<sup>2</sup>Crawford, History, p. 105.

<sup>3</sup>Theodore Dwight, The Northern Traveller, 4th edition, (New York: J. and J. Harper, 1830), p. 352.

clustered around their own hearth-stone, and confiding firmly in the providence of God."<sup>1</sup> (See figure 4.) But more than anything else, the Willey incident heightened the focus of the early tour on intensely romantic scenery, complete with "terrifying" grandeur and thoughts of immortality, which characterized White Mountain experiences in these early years.

For "lovers of the wild and wonderful operations of Nature," as one visitor phrased it, "these scenes furnish unspeakable gratification . . . ." This Boston newspaper editor recorded his reactions to a walk through the Notch in 1826 (before the landslide):

no words can tell the emotions of the soul, as it looks upward and views the almost perpendicular precipices which line the narrow space between them; while the senses ache with terror and astonishment, as one sees himself hedged in from all the world besides.<sup>2</sup>

This is quite literally a description of the mixed feelings with which most travelers confronted the region's wildness, but it is also the language of romantic touring--of the "sublime" mountain experience that English tourists had been seeking out since it had been "discovered" in the middle of the eighteenth century.

In Europe, romantic writers had done much to transform "savage" mountain scenes into "sublime" or "picturesque" mountain scenery during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Wordsworth in the Lake Country of northwestern England, and Byron and Shelley

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<sup>1</sup>The White Mountain and Winnipisiogee Lake Guide Book, (Boston: Jordan and Wiley, 1846), p. 46.

<sup>2</sup>Excerpts from the diary of Joseph T. Buckingham, in Kenneth Walter Cameron, Genesis of Hawthorne's "The Ambitious Guest" (Hartford: Transcendental Books, 1955), pp. 6-8.

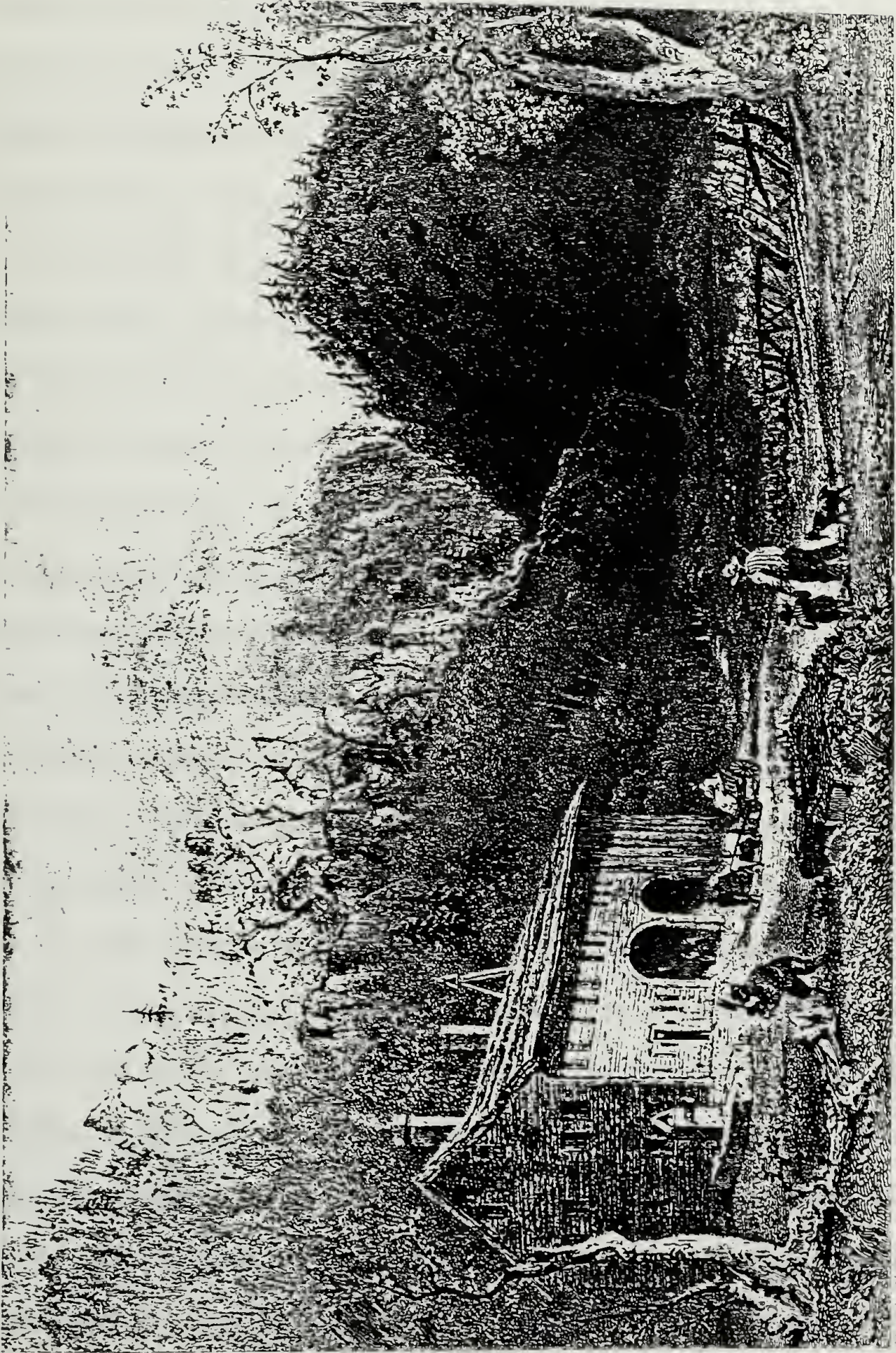


Figure 4. The Notch House. From N.P. Willis, American Scenery, 1840. (AAS)

in Switzerland, had helped to create a new cult of romantic scenery that by the 1820s was common to both Europeans and Americans. The fashionable young tourist whom Hawthorne observed in the White Mountains was quoting Byron, but he might have gone on to quote Shelley, Wordsworth, or Schiller (or any one of many lesser known poets) to the same effect.

Of course, the "discovery" of scenery was not the product of poetry alone. As Raymond Williams has suggested, scenic touring of the "wild regions of mountain and forest" was part of a more general increase in consumption among the English elite in the eighteenth century--and part of a separation of the "productive" land (with its new income-generating potential) from that which was to be "consumed." What was discovered was the notion that the landscape could become a part of "conspicuous aesthetic consumption." As Williams described it, "to have been to the named places, to exchange and compare the travelling and gazing experiences, was a form of fashionable society."<sup>1</sup> On the other side was the discovery that landscape could be made to pay: a fully developed tourist infrastructure of guide books, hotels, routes, and local guides was in place in many scenic regions of Europe by the end of the eighteenth century. English tourists in the Lake District, in Wales, and in the Swiss Alps followed guide books, stopped at scenic points, hired guides, and stayed in special tourist hotels located in the designated "scenic" areas. By the time Wordsworth published his Guide Through the District of the Lakes in 1835, over a

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<sup>1</sup>Raymond Williams, The Country and the City, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), pp. 121, 128.



dozen other commercial guide books had already appeared.<sup>1</sup> The romantic scenery industry in the Lake District and in the Alps was created not only by Wordsworth and Shelley, but by hotelkeepers, guides, and many less well-known authors. And so it was in the United States.

But American artists and entrepreneurs who hoped to link their fortunes with the rise of the White Mountains (or with similar regions, like the Catskills) encountered cultural issues somewhat different from those of European promoters. For one thing, American scenery--including White Mountain scenery--seemed to lack the romantic and poetic "associations" that would endear it to the viewer. European scenes were admired because they called forth a wide variety of feelings, memories, and attachments: "associations" that would draw the observer into an emotional relationship with the object, that would give the observer an "interest" in the scene.<sup>2</sup> Scenery, to create these kinds of "associations," must be drawn into some relationship with human activity. One of the objections to American scenery was that it consisted only of miles of endless forest untouched by human hands. But many scenes clearly touched by human hands were not appropriate, either. As N. P. Willis explained in his introduction to American Scenery, "the appearance of girdled trees, . . . burnt or fallen stumps, rough enclosures, and stony ground, are blemishes which an

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<sup>1</sup>Peter Bicknell, ed., The Illustrated Wordsworth's Guide to the Lakes, (Exeter, England: Webb and Bower, 1984), pp. 7-12.

<sup>2</sup>In this sense, as Robert McGrath has pointed out, the Willey tragedy created just such associations, and acted as an "instant ruin."

unaccustomed eye can with difficulty overcome."<sup>1</sup> Savage mountains inhabited by primitive people were awe-inspiring and grand; pastoral valleys dotted with civilized villages and church spires were lovely and peaceful; but the appearance of a half-settled community on the edge of cultivation was not one that readily brought to mind poetic associations.

Sarah Josepha Hale explored this problem in 1835, when she wrote that "the barrenness, the vacancy [in American scenery], painfully felt by the traveller of taste and sentiment, arises from the want of intellectual and poetic associations within the scenery he beholds." Hale had a solution in mind, one that would employ the talents of the best possible kinds of publicists in the project of making American scenery "scenic:" she believed that only the "light of song poured over our wide land, and its lonely and waste places 'peopled with the affections'" would make American scenery attractive.<sup>2</sup>

American artists could take upon themselves the task of endowing American scenery with "interesting associations," of giving to them the meaning and cultural impact of the older, historically richer European scenes--in short, of interpreting American scenery to American viewers.<sup>3</sup>

If the traveler "of taste and sentiment" was to find anything beautiful in White Mountain scenery, its "lonely and waste places" would have to be made meaningful in this way. In its earliest stages,

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<sup>1</sup>Nathaniel P. Willis, American Scenery (London: George Virtue, 1840), p. 26.

<sup>2</sup> Sarah Josepha Hale, "The Romance of Travelling," in Traits of American Life (Philadelphia: Carey and Lea, 1835), pp. 189-191.

<sup>3</sup>Of course, this is precisely what Wordsworth and Byron had done in Europe, but by the 1830s, that process had worked so well that its consequences seemed a natural part of the landscape of the Alps and the Lake District.

that process was begun inadvertently, by the Willeys and their landslide; but it was continued by people like the Crawfords (in ways that Hale little anticipated), as well as by Thomas Cole and Nathaniel Hawthorne (just as she had in mind). White Mountain scenery in its very earliest stages of development was linked with the lives of several very different kinds of people who hoped to create careers for themselves out of their mediation between the landscape and its viewers.

Perhaps just as often, though, it was not the scenery itself that was found "barren," it was American sensibilities. Scenery enthusiasts were aware that Americans often lacked a proper appreciation even of the "wild and beautiful" scenery that was already there for them. Mrs. Basil Hall, for instance, on an American tour in 1832, wrote scathingly of American pretensions: "There is no want of talking . . . about sensibility and romantic scenery and being passionately fond of this thing and having a passion for that . . . but it is all 'words, words, words,' and there is plainly a want of sentiment."<sup>1</sup> For Mrs. Hall this was not only an aesthetic criticism, it was ultimately a class critique: scenery was for her a test of what she saw as the class pretensions of the Americans around her.

An appreciation of scenery was not easily learned or demonstrated (that was one reason why it made for such a subtle indicator of class status): as Mrs. Hall pointed out, "words, words, words" alone would not suffice. Hawthorne, for instance, made fun of the Byronic young

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<sup>1</sup>Una Pope-Hennessy, ed., The Aristocratic Journey: Being the Outspoken Letters of Mrs. Basil Hall Written During a Fourteen Month's Sojourn in America, 1827-1828, (New York: Putnam, 1931), p. 69.

man's effusions about the White Mountains (the young man had a well-known name in magazines and annals, and had contributed a poem to the guest book at the Crawfords' inn), but he had offended Hawthorne by his insincerity, his "coldness," not by his enthusiasm. He had learned the words, but not the emotions. In fact, Hawthorne took romantic scenery very seriously: he began his account of the journey with a long description of "the romantic defile of the Notch," and was later to make use of his White Mountain memories in three other stories.

Romantic artists like Hawthorne and Cole looked to White Mountain scenery for their advancement in a way that separated them from producers like the Crawfords: it offered them not only a profession, but an exalted one. It guaranteed not only work, but a claim to the status conferred on those who truly understood the romantic scenery of the Notch. In this regard, Hawthorne and Cole were not only producers, they were also consumers of scenery: like Daniel Webster and many other ambitious young men, they traveled to the White Mountains during the 1830s to demonstrate their genteel sensitivity to romantic scenery, and at the same time, to claim for themselves the elite status signified by that sensitivity.

By the 1840s, the process of making White Mountain scenery "scenic" was expanding in all directions. Once informal arrangements took on organized commercial forms. Taken out of the hands of primitive entrepreneurs like the Crawfords and romantic artists like Hawthorne and Cole, the development of the region was taken over by commercial enterprises. On the most basic level, mass transportation

and accommodations replaced the inns and stagecoaches of the 1830s. And culturally, too, the stories and paintings of a handful of "fashionable tourists" were overwhelmed by an entire industry of guidebooks, periodicals, and scenery albums, produced and reproduced at an ever-expanding rate. The new commercial tourist industries were built on touring patterns laid out by the earlier tourist trade networks, and they were immensely successful. Within twenty years they were to transform the White Mountain region into one of the top two or three tourist destinations in the country.

Railroads first began to reach toward the White Mountains from the cities during the 1840s. Between 1850 and 1855 the railroads reached the foothills of the mountains as close as Littleton on the west, Lake Winnepesaukee to the south, and Gorham on the east, which brought the tourist within eight miles of Mount Washington. Railroads continued to be built throughout the nineteenth century, but until near the end of the century the travel situation remained much the same: railroads brought the tourist to the edges of the "scenic" areas; from there, coaches carried tourists "inside" to hotels close by the chief scenic attractions.

These railroad routes were not initially planned for tourist travel. For example, the Atlantic and St. Lawrence Railroad (which ran from Portland, Maine, to Montreal) was an attempt to capture the trade of the northern interior for Portland, and was heavily financed by Portland businessmen. The rail line from Boston to Concord, New Hampshire, and the lines up the Connecticut River valley were also clearly designed to encourage non-tourist commerce. It was not until after the Civil War that investors began building railways directly into

the White Mountains with the tourist trade in mind. Still, these earlier railroads, built for the lumber and dry goods trade, were a key to local tourist development in the White Mountains.

Hotels followed the railroad routes. By the 1840s, hotelkeepers and investors from more populated parts of the region began to involve themselves in the White Mountain hotel trade. Rural innkeepers like the Crawfords were replaced by city entrepreneurs. The best-known example of this new kind of hotelkeeper was Horace Fabyan, who was to become a White Mountain legend in his own right.<sup>1</sup> Fabyan was no "mountain man" like the Crawfords; but neither was he a large-scale investor, as were the developers who followed him in the White Mountain hotel business. A provisions dealer and unsuccessful land speculator from Portland, Fabyan invested in White Mountain hotels in anticipation of the completion of the Atlantic and Saint Lawrence Railway, which was to pass through the White Mountains only eight miles from Mount Washington on the east.

When Ethan Allen Crawford was forced out of business by debt, Fabyan took over the Crawford House in 1837, and the Willey House in 1845. Fabyan's inside information on the railroad route (and his local connections through marriage to a Conway woman in 1834), allowed him to open new and larger hotels in the Notch. The Crawford Inn, which Fabyan renamed the Mount Washington House, accommodated over a hundred guests by 1845, and the newly-rebuilt Willey House over fifty. But Fabyan eventually suffered the common fate of tourism

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<sup>1</sup>All the following information on Horace Fabyan comes from Peter Bulkley, "Horace Fabyan, Founder of the White Mountain Grand Hotel," *Historic New Hampshire*, vol. 30, no. 2 (1975), pp. 53-77. Bulkley reconstructed the life of this legendary, but almost unknown, figure from court records, tax lists, and census reports.

entrepreneurs in this period: outmaneuvered on several fronts, when his Mount Washington House burned down in 1853, he was unable to rebuild because of legal battles over the the land on which it stood.<sup>1</sup> (He left his mark on the region, however. The train station that was later built near his hotel site was named for him, and even today the abandoned train depot houses a restaurant called Fabyan's.)

As Fabyan built up his two modern hotels in what was now becoming known as the Crawford Notch, other areas also began to bill themselves as part of the White Mountain tour. In the Franconia Notch to the west, the Lafayette House opened in 1835, followed by the Flume House in 1848. By 1853, when the Atlantic and Saint Lawrence Railway was completed, two new hotels had been built on the eastern side of Mount Washington, an area previously little known to tourists. One of these hotels, the Alpine House in Gorham, had been built by the railway itself. The manager of this hotel also ran the Summit and Tip-Top Houses, two small hotels built on the top of Mount Washington in 1852 and 1853.<sup>2</sup> By the end of this railroad-inspired building boom in the mid-1850's, there were nine hotels in the interior White Mountain region. These hotels, added to those in North Conway and the other surrounding villages, could accommodate as many as two thousand tourists per day.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>It was sold to Sylvester Marsh, a wealthy investor and former resident, in 1864 for development as part of his scheme to build a cog railway to the top of Mount Washington. Within a few years, it was in the hands of a corporation made up of Marsh and his friends. Corporate ownership became the norm in the resort hotel business by the 1870s, as I will explore in more detail in chapter 3.

<sup>2</sup> Frederick Kilbourne, Chronicles of the White Mountains, (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin and Company, 1916), p. 174.

<sup>3</sup>Bulkley, "Horace Fabyan," p. 63. These were the two hotels in the Franconia Notch (Flume and Lafayette--later Profile), the Glen House and the Alpine House to the east of

In time, this development reorganized the entire region of the White Mountains. The "pre-tourist" White Mountain region, like most of New England, had been organized by town, with fairly primitive roads joining the towns to each other and to towns outside the region. The largest settlements were around the outskirts of the mountains and in the river valleys. Tourism emphasized the most remote and unlivable parts of the interior of the region--the notches and the peaks themselves--so that already on George Bond's 1853 map of the White Mountains, most towns appear as vague entities on the edges of the region, while hotels and attractions are centrally located and clearly marked (see figure 5).

Roads played an important role in scenic development. Most of the attractions of the region became well-known simply because they were on the side of heavily-traveled roads through the region; they existed primarily as something to look at on the way "from Burlington to Boston (By way of the White Mountains)," as one "fashionable tour" guide book described it.<sup>1</sup> But as the tour of the White Mountains became increasingly organized, these attractions became part of a well-known sequence. Hotels which had originally been stopping-places on a journey through the mountains became stages of a tour: each provided its own attractions within walking or driving distance.

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Mount Washington, the Tip-Top and Summit Houses on top of Mount Washington, and the three Crawford Notch hotels--the one called Fabyan's, the Crawford House originally run by Abel Crawford, and the Willey House.

<sup>1</sup>Gideon Miner Davison, The Fashionable Tour: A Guide to Travellers Visiting the Middle and Northern States, and the Provinces of Canada, 4th edition (Saratoga Springs: Davison, 1830), p. 330.



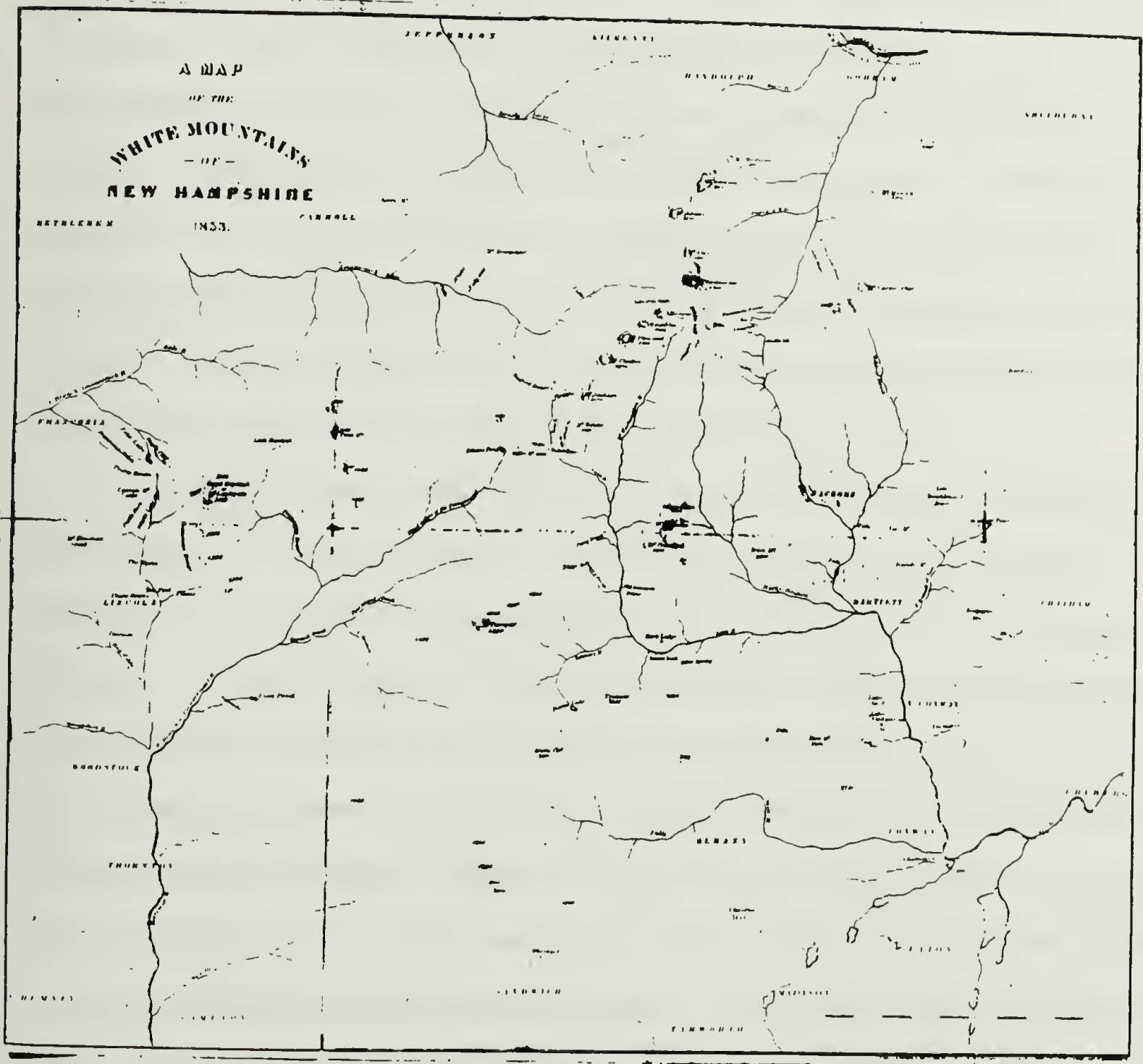


Figure 5. George P. Bond's map of the White Mountains, 1853. (AAS)

The tourist region of the White Mountains gradually acquired very clear borders: the towns where the railroads ended (Littleton, Gorham, Center Harbour, and Plymouth) formed a rough circle around the central attractions, and functioned as gateways to the scenic region. Once inside the region, one began to sight-see. The interior parts of the mountains became organized around the routes which took tourists from one gateway to another: from Franconia to Crawford Notch, from Crawford Notch to Gorham or Conway, from Conway to Plymouth, and from Plymouth to the Franconia Notch.

Tourists followed well-defined routes which helped to organize the region. The usual pattern of travel was to take the train from Boston or New York to the outskirts of the region (or the train and stage in the case of North Conway), spend the night or perhaps longer in a hotel in one of these towns--taking walks, climbs, and drives to the clustered points of interest in the area--and then travel by stage through the mountains, stopping for various lengths of time at each of the major sites. The stagecoach rides were a major part of the tourist experience, since much of the scenery of the notches and peaks was seen from the road (see figure 6).

When Caroline Barrett White and her husband visited the White Mountains in 1854, she traveled to Portland by boat, and then took the railroad to Gorham. (She met her husband there, and they traveled to Fryeburg, Maine, where they stayed for several weeks.) On September 6 she and her husband reached the "Old Crawford House" by way of North Conway. On the following day they climbed Mount Washington on horseback. On the next day they traveled to Littleton, where they

# WHITE MOUNTAINS.

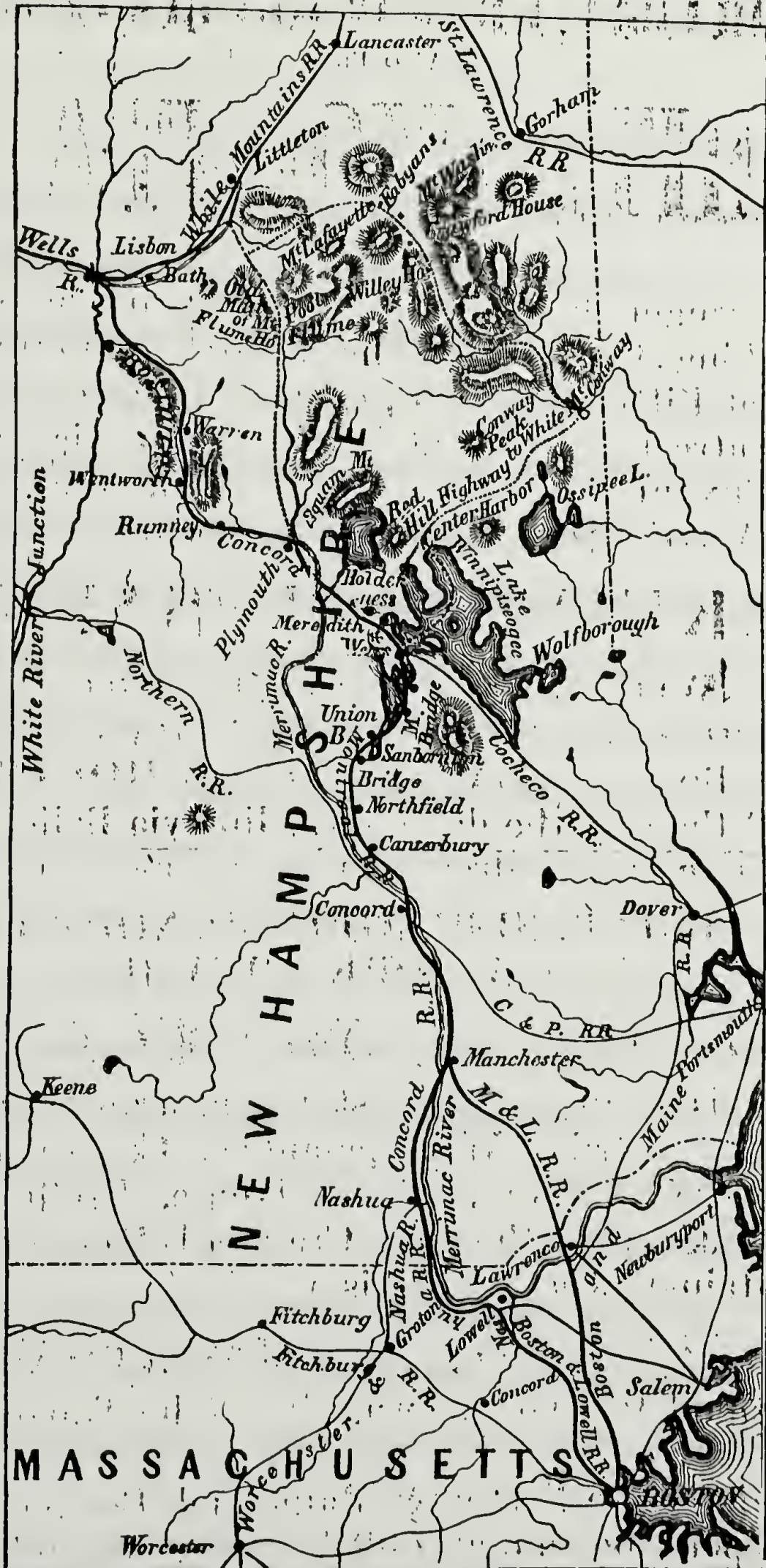


Figure 6. Map of the "Old and Favorite" railroad route to the White Mountains. 1857 handbill. (AAS Graphic Arts collection)

climbed another mountain and explored a little more. The end of that day found them in the Franconia Notch, at the White Mountain House-- a good hotel, she recorded, with good food and service and "a splendid Chickering piano." The Whites had their own horses and buggy and so could travel at their own pace, but their pattern of travel was much the same as those who took the commercial stagecoaches.<sup>1</sup> They spent a total of four days in the scenic region.

The experience of traveling in the White Mountains was shaped to a large extent by the physical development of the region, but it was also shaped by a growing guidebook and travel literature. Lucy Crawford's History of the White Mountains from the First Settlement, published in 1845, marked the beginning of a new generation of White Mountain publications, devoted to publicizing the region's attractions. As a memoir of her family's role in the first days of tourism in the region, it marked both the end of that more primitive time and the beginning of the romanticization of that period to promote new kinds of tourism. At the same time, popular visual images of the White Mountains were becoming increasingly available, from the first book of illustrations, Scenery of the White Mountains, published by the well-known botanist William Oakes in 1848, to the first accurate map of the region, published by George P. Bond in 1853 along with five lithographs taken from Benjamin Champney drawings.

Guide book writers and illustrators played a crucial role in popularizing the region. They were often deeply involved in local

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<sup>1</sup>Diary of Caroline Barrett White, vol. 5, August-October 1854, American Antiquarian Society. Caroline Barrett White was the wife of Francis Adams White, who was a partner in a Boston tanning firm and later full-time real estate investor.

tourism: Benjamin Willey, the author of Incidents in White Mountain History, was the brother of the famous Samuel Willey, whose family's tragic deaths had created one of the prime tourist attractions of the mountains. John Spaulding ran the Tip-Top House on Mount Washington and wrote Historical Relics of the White Mountains. Samuel C. Eastman and his brother wrote and published books like his Guide to the White Mountains, in Concord, New Hampshire. Tourism was in some sense their profession, as it was for hotelkeeper Horace Fabyan--a profession they were inventing for themselves. The definitive guide book for the period, Thomas Starr King's The White Hills, was written not by a local promoter, but by a Unitarian minister from Boston. But Starr King, too, had made tourism his profession. With his White Mountain writings--in the Boston Transcript and in his guidebook--he made a name for himself by promoting the area. (He later moved to San Francisco and performed the same services for the Yosemite region.)

Guide book writers, like painters and poets, interpreted scenery for sight-seers. They defined the sights worth seeing, picked out less well-known attractions and described them, and enshrined them along with the better-known sights. Writers continually expanded the number of attractions and views it was important to experience; they drew in larger and larger geographic areas, organizing the tour of the White Mountains in an increasingly elaborate form. And at the same time, they drew in larger audiences: they were crucial developers of the "associations" necessary for scenic touring. While American authors and painters like Hawthorne and Cole were instrumental in creating these "interesting associations," guide book writers applied

them freely, reproducing every poem, engraving or anecdote that came to hand.

Most importantly, perhaps, guide book writers "developed" sight-seers as well as scenery: they showed travelers what was expected from them as scenic tourists. Although American scenery enthusiasts believed that the need to train tourists was uniquely American, in fact it was necessary wherever scenic tourism flourished. What earlier tourists had learned informally, from romantic literature and from one another, the tourists of mid-century often learned from guide books. Guides to the Lake District in England served the same didactic purposes as American guides: they indicated where to stand and what kinds of thoughts to have at each point. In the Lakes, view stations were even marked on the hills, sometimes cut into the turf, so that visitors would know where to stand for the best view.<sup>1</sup>

The proper appreciation of scenery was understood to be part of a genteel education, a matter of class rather than nationality. Wordsworth, for example, argued passionately against the extension of a railroad into Windemere in the Lake District, which would have brought people of more modest means into the "scenic" areas. In a letter to the Morning Post in 1844, he wrote that "the perception of what has acquired the name of picturesque and romantic scenery is so far from being intuitive that it can be produced only by a slow and gradual process of culture," a process available only to the gentry.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Esther Moir, The Discovery of Britain: The English Tourists, 1540-1840. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1964), pp. 144-145.

<sup>2</sup>Ronald Rees, "The Scenery Cult: Changing Landscape Tastes Over Three Centuries," Landscape 19 (May 1975,) p. 42.

This "slow and gradual process of culture" was precisely what many American promoters of scenery hoped to accomplish in a short time with their sight-seers. When Thomas Cole addressed the Catskills Lyceum in 1835 on the subject of American scenery, he expressed a similar understanding of the nature of scenery appreciation. But Cole hoped to train people who had recently acquired wealth and status to the appreciation of romantic scenery. He spoke of the "advantages of cultivating a taste for scenery" in transforming "those whose days are consumed in the low pursuit of avarice, or the gaudy frivolities of fashion." Cole hoped, in fact, that the cultivation of good taste, especially in scenery, would be a powerful defense against the "meager utilitarianism" and "sordid tendencies of modern civilization."<sup>1</sup>

Some guide book writers openly proclaimed their hope of training people to the right appreciation of scenery, and by extension, to the proper social values. Starr King was the most openly didactic of the guide book writers, as befitted his position as Unitarian minister: "The object of this volume is to help persons appreciate landscape more adequately; and to associate with the principal scenes poetic passages."<sup>2</sup> King, like Thomas Cole, hoped that training in the experience of scenery would have far-ranging effects on artistic taste (and thus on morality) in general: "The effect of White Mountain journeys should be seen in our homes, in a purer delight in art, and an intelligent patronage of it."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Thomas Cole, "Lecture on American Scenery," Northern Light 1 (1841), pp. 25-6.

<sup>2</sup>Thomas Starr King, The White Hills: Their Legends, Landscape, and Poetry, (Boston: Crosby, Nichols and Company, 1860), p. vii.

<sup>3</sup>King, The White Hills, p. 72.

In pursuit of these goals, King and the other travel writers were careful to explain to their readers how best to experience the scenery they viewed, giving instructions on where to stand, what time of day to visit, and even how to react: "The surprise to the senses in first looking upon a noble landscape, ought to show itself in childlike animation. . . . perpetual surprise and enthusiasm are signs of healthy and tutored taste." <sup>1</sup> This was manifestly an impossible prescription, and it reveals a little of the difficulty involved in teaching scenery, or any other romantic sensibility: the proper appreciation of scenery was clearly learned behavior, requiring "cultivation" in moral as well as aesthetic principles. Yet "healthy" taste ought to be in some way natural, springing from the heart, not merely "words, words, words," but an expression of one's deepest feelings.<sup>2</sup>

Not all tourists concurred with these notions of scenery. Starr King himself reported one skeptic's response to the scenery of the Notch: "'Now,' said he, 'what can be honestly said of this Willey Notch, but "Good Heavens, what a rough hole!"'"<sup>3</sup> One very well-known tourist and travel writer, Henry David Thoreau, went out of his way to

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<sup>1</sup>King, The White Hills, p. 58.

<sup>2</sup>In this regard, scenic tastes followed the pattern explored by Karen Halttunen in her study of advice literature from the same period, Confidence Men and Painted Women. Halttunen argues that this literature required of those who wished to be considered genteel both a completely "transparent" heartfelt sincerity, and an adherence to a rigorous and complex etiquette to fit every occasion. This contradiction, Halttunen argues, was at the root of the sentimental culture of the 1840s--and I would add, at the heart of this kind of scenic appreciation, which was another way of expressing the delicacy and appropriateness of one's feelings. Karen Halttunen, Confidence Men and Painted Women: A Study of Middle-class Culture in America, 1830-1870, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1982).

<sup>3</sup>King, The White Hills, p. 204.



challenge scenic conventions whenever he could. Thoreau visited the White Mountains in 1858, but they were an exception for him.<sup>1</sup> He spent almost all his travel time in regions that were as far away as he could get from the "interesting associations" of genteel tourist regions, and almost all his writing took the form of anti-scenery tracts. In the forests of Maine with the loggers, and on the beaches of Cape Cod, Thoreau was in search of an experience of nature with no human "associations." In his writings, he made these places into a kind of embodiment of Nature un-toured: "vast and drear and inhuman," like Mount Katahdin in Maine; "inhumanly sincere, wasting no thought on man," like the deserted beaches of Cape Cod.<sup>2</sup>

Many White Mountain tourists may simply not have been trained in the "picturesque sensibility" in the 1840s and 1850s. As Peter Bulkley has discovered from analyzing the only known White Mountain guest register for the 1850s (from the Tip Top House on the top of Mount Washington for 1853 and 1854), most tourists there were merchants and businessmen or professionals from Boston and other northeastern cities. But 13% were lower level white collar workers, and a surprising 20% were listed as laborers, and 10% as farmers. These clerical workers and laborers--usually carpenters and skilled workers like engravers, printers, and machinists--were mostly from

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<sup>1</sup>He was in the White Mountains to climb Mount Washington and catalogue its alpine flora.

<sup>2</sup>Henry David Thoreau, Collected Writings (New York: Library of America, 1985), including "Ktaadn," p. 645; and "Cape Cod," p. 979.

nearby cities, with perhaps two or three days to spare. Farmers generally came from the surrounding neighborhood.<sup>1</sup>

But guide books seldom acknowledged the heterogeneity of the tourists in the White Mountains: they presented matters as though their readers were wealthy and leisured, but also as though their readers had not had access to training in scenic discourse. Perhaps they imagined their audience to be among the merchants and professionals who made up the majority of scenic tourists, and who could have aspired to sophistication in such matters. Or perhaps guide books could be used to differentiate genteel scenic tourists from the carpenters and farmers who were visiting the same places. Guide books did occasionally give instructions on how to avoid tourist sites that were too crowded or too common: "sight-seeing made easy for beginners" was one writer's contemptuous dismissal of the popular Willey house tour.

At any rate, advice on how to behave was only the most obvious and ponderous method of influencing tourists' understanding of scenery. Words and pictures could "tutor" the taste without any open didacticism. On the most basic level, the struggle to name the features of the White Mountains functioned as an important way of mediating between scenery and sight-seers. Simply observing the great rise in the number of named places between the publication of the first accurate map in 1853 and the maps included with the guide books of the 1860s will give an idea of the importance of the process of

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<sup>1</sup>Peter Bulkley, "Identifying the White Mountain Tourist: Origin, Occupation, and Wealth as a Definition of the Early Hotel Trade, 1853-1854," Historic New Hampshire 35, no. 2 (1980), pp. 107-159.

naming (see figures 5 and 7). Bond's 1853 map (figure 5) shows a relatively empty landscape, in comparison with that of the later guide book maps . The naming of unnamed places and things was part of the process of making the region "scenic": the more named things there were, the more places for tourists to visit, and the more orderly and differentiated the landscape became.

But some names were better than others. Bond's 1853 map still shows a preponderance of "pre-scenic" names, given by local settlers to landmarks and settlements, or by explorers to places of scientific interest. Local inhabitants tended to name places either for the people who lived there, or for the places they had left behind: Israel River, for instance, was named for Israel Glines, a hunter who camped there; Berlin Falls was named for the town of Berlin, Massachusetts, from which local settlers had migrated. Scientific explorers were responsible for the many names of political figures in the region. In 1820, for example, a party of scientists and local officials ascended Mount Washington and officially began the process of naming the peaks that became known as the Presidential Range.

But tourist promoters wanted local names to distinguish the White Mountain region from ordinary rural regions and from daily life. By the 1840s, these concerns had begun to have an impact on White Mountain names. Some tourist names memorialized earlier explorers, hotelkeepers, and popularizers: the Notch became Crawford Notch, in memory of the by-then legendary first innkeepers; Tuckerman Ravine and Oakes Gulf were named for two well-known botanists who had been enthusiastic explorers of the region. But increasingly, new names were not those of "founding fathers," either of the nation or of



Figure 7. Map of the region, 1867. From Samuel C. Eastman, The White Mountain Guide Book, 1867 edition. (AAS)

hotels. Instead, romantic names like Diana's Baths, Silver Cascade, Giant's Stairs and Sleeper's Ledge began to crowd out earlier, simpler names like the Flume, the Pool, and the Basin. Romantic names could evoke very general associations, like Diana's Baths, or very specific regional associations, like Mt. Chocorua, named for the Indian hero of a legend associated with the region.<sup>1</sup> Cow Brook, which flowed near the location of the landslide that destroyed the Willey family, was renamed Avalanche Brook by two hikers--a name designed to heighten a sense of drama in the area.<sup>2</sup>

Names that were romantic or that evoked the first tourist experiences served the purpose of making clear that the White Mountains were not simply the backwoods: they were romantic scenery. The names given by the original settlers were worse than useless for this purpose, not only because they were unromantic, but because they were associated with northern New England's image as a half-civilized backwater. Many promoters came to see such prosaic names as a great handicap to the development of the region. Starr King was most outspoken in his opposition to the names of the White Mountains region, calling the names of the Presidential Range "absurd" and "a wretched jumble."<sup>3</sup> (The names of the Presidential Range, although not objectionable in themselves, were often criticized for

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<sup>1</sup>In fact, two mountain peaks in the White Mountains were named after Indian leaders not even remotely connected with the region: Mount Tecumseh and Mount Osceola, both apparently named sometime during the 1850s, referred respectively to an Ohio River valley leader and a Florida Seminole leader. Robert and Mary Hixon, The Place Names of the White Mountains, (Camden, Maine: Down East Books, 1980), p. 128 and pp. 165-6.

<sup>2</sup>Hixon, Place Names, p. 19.

<sup>3</sup>King, The White Hills, p. 28.

being too prosaic for the romantic environment of the mountains--too much a part of the everyday world.)

Most writers did not openly call for re-naming the sites, especially the Presidential Range, which possessed at least some meaning for mid-nineteenth century tourists, but instead opted for a kind of parallel unofficial naming system, often based on real or imagined Indian names for places. Most guide books made much of the "original" names of the region, the peaks, and the local landmarks. This was a convenient way of attaching romantic Indian associations to the region, since the writer was free to embellish the interpretation of such Algonquin terms as "Waumbek," which means "white rocks," but could be interpreted as something like "Mountains of the Snowy Foreheads."<sup>1</sup>

Naming attractions was part of the larger process of creating poetic "associations" for the White Mountains. Promoters used a wide variety of associations to generate interest in the region--American, European, Indian, or whatever came to hand. The most general of all associations were those which were grafted onto the White Mountains as a reflection of European landscapes and ideas. They included simple references like the "Switzerland of America," or phrases like, "On the left he will see realized his conceptions of Italian scenery."<sup>2</sup> They also included the often-used conceit of "mountain freedom," which associated historical or legendary events which had occurred in

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<sup>1</sup> Hixon, p. 174, gives the Algonquin interpretation, and Benjamin Willey, Incidents in White Mountain History, (Boston: Nathaniel Noyes, 1856), p. 14, gives the romantic interpretation.

<sup>2</sup>The White Mountain and Winnipisiogee Lake Guide Book, p. 26.

other mountain areas with the White Mountains. The Notch, for instance, was a mountain pass, "like those in the old world where often a few brave men, defending their liberties and native soil, have driven back or destroyed invading armies."<sup>1</sup>

The understanding of mountainous regions as the home of freedom was characteristic of European image-making. Wordsworth had described the Lake District before tourism as "a perfect Republic of Shepherds and Agriculturists . . . whose constitution had been imposed and regulated by the mountains which protected it."<sup>2</sup> And Switzerland's mountain republics had been immortalized in Schiller's William Tell. But in the White Mountains, this association quickly became naturalized, so that it seemed to reflect the image of the region, and even the contemporary politics of New England as a whole:

No oppression, certainly none sustained by law or custom, can ever exist around the White Mountains. This is a cheering reflection. No slave can ever live on them, or near them. They are consecrated to freedom. They are suited to produce a race of vigorous freemen.<sup>3</sup>

This writer may have had the early white settlers of the region in mind when he used the expression, "a race of vigorous freemen," or he may have meant the original inhabitants. Writers frequently made use of Indian legends to create romantic associations. Mount Chocorua, for instance, was "associated" with the legend of "Chocorua's curse," a story that describes an Indian chief driven to the brink of a cliff by white

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<sup>1</sup> William Oakes, Scenery of the White Mountains, (Boston: 1848), plate 3--n.p.

<sup>2</sup> Bicknell, ed., The Illustrated Wordsworth's Guide to the Lakes, pp. 110-111.

<sup>3</sup> Willey, Incidents, p. 306.

pursuers, and finally forced to jump to his death. Thomas Cole's painting of the crisis of that story appeared in 1830, the same year in which Lydia Maria Child's short story version appeared in The Token. Several different versions of the legend appeared in different guide books and collections, often with crucially different plots. (The main disagreement centered on details of the plot which served to establish whether the blame was due to the white men who killed Chocorua, or to Chocorua himself.) But guide book writers frequently pointed out how few remaining Indian associations there were in the region. Where "noble savages" had not left enough influence on the landscape, promoters could turn to the equally noble (and perhaps equally "savage") first white settlers of the region.

By the 1850s, the Crawfords themselves were featured prominently in these sorts of tales, often as heroic figures--American picturesque peasants, noble savages, and hardy yeomen rolled into one. In Starr King's description of his first trip to the mountains in 1849, he recalled a stage load of people looking at a bear chained to a pole, but "equally interested in seeing a specimen of the first settlers and of the aboriginal tenants of the wilderness."<sup>1</sup> Both Abel Crawford and his son, Ethan Allen Crawford, became walking representations of pioneer hardihood. King wrote of Abel Crawford that "during the last ten years of his life he was a noble object of interest to thousands of visitors from all parts of the United States."<sup>2</sup> And Spaulding wrote of

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<sup>1</sup> King, The White Hills, p. 222.

<sup>2</sup> King, p. 220.



Crawford's early life that "he dressed in the tanned skins of the moose, and became in the chase a perfect Nimrod."<sup>1</sup>

At the same time, the artistic vanguard of tourists also became part of the attraction. Samuel Thompson of North Conway, an innkeeper and owner of a stage company, struck an interesting bargain with the artists who had begun to visit North Conway during the 1840s. He agreed to board them for the low price of \$3.50 per week, and to send their lunches out to their "sketching-grounds"; in return they agreed to "date all their mountain sketches from North Conway"--a simple, but ultimately very successful, advertisement for local scenery.<sup>2</sup> By the mid-1850s, North Conway had become a well-known artist colony, attracting some forty artists each summer, and of course many other tourists who wished to see (or to be identified with) them.

The most successful scenic attractions were the work of many different promoters, and usually combined a number of different "associations" in one more-or-less harmonious combination. The Profile in the Franconia Notch--also known as the "Old Man of the Mountains"--was the product of just such a complex transformation (see figure 8). The Profile became the most recognizable symbol of the state of New Hampshire: to this day the highway signs of New Hampshire feature the Profile drawn as part of the outline of the state. It was considered such an important part of the state's heritage that in

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<sup>1</sup> John Spaulding, Historical Relics of the White Mountains, (Boston: Nathaniel Noyes, 1855), pp. 16-17.

<sup>2</sup> Here and There in New England and Canada: Among the Mountains (Boston: Passenger Department, Boston and Maine Railroad, 1889), p. 20.



THE PROFILE.

Figure 8. The Profile with tourists. From George Keye's Hand-Book of Northern and Western Pleasure Travel, 1875 edition. (AAS)

the late 1920s, when the face showed signs of crumbling, the state of New Hampshire had its rocks bolted and chained in place.<sup>1</sup>

But while the ascent of Mount Washington and the Willey House in the Crawford Notch had been well-known since the 1820s, the Profile emerged as an attraction only gradually. It seems to have been discovered by road workers as early as 1805, but early guide books referred to the Profile during the 1830's only as one among a number of mildly interesting natural curiosities.<sup>2</sup> Theodore Dwight's guidebook The Northern Traveller described Franconia (the town nearby) as a place "where are iron works, and a curious profile on a mountain, called the Old Man of the Mountain."<sup>3</sup> Harriet Martineau remembered it, but located it in the wrong notch, in her Retrospect of Western Travel.<sup>4</sup>

During the 1840s and 1850s, the Profile was transformed from a local curiosity into a nationally recognized symbol of the White Mountains, and indeed of New England in general. William Oakes, in his important collection of sketches, Scenery of the White Mountains, published a series of sketches which portrayed the Profile from the exact spot which gave the best view, and from successively farther spots to the left and right, with a text describing the changing faces and their characteristics, ending with a description of a "toothless old

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<sup>1</sup>John Anderson and Stearns Morse, The Book of the White Mountains (New York: Minton and Balch, 1930), p. 56.

<sup>2</sup> Kilbourne, Chronicles, p. 103.

<sup>3</sup> Dwight, The Northern Traveller, p. 340.

<sup>4</sup>She reported that she had seen the Profile in the Crawford Notch. Harriet Martineau, Retrospect of Western Travel, vol. 2 (London: Saunders and Otley, 1838), p. 112.

woman in a mob cap."<sup>1</sup> In 1850, Hawthorne's story "The Great Stone Face" was published. In 1853, the new owner of the Lafayette House changed its name to the Profile House, both recognizing and contributing to the Profile's new significance. Eastman's 1859 guide book described the route to the Profile from the Profile House: there was a road from the hotel to a "rude bench by the wayside" and a "guide-board inscribed with the single, simple word, 'Profile.'" Starr King went so far as to prescribe the best time of day for viewing it-- "about four in the afternoon of a summer day."<sup>2</sup>

The Profile clearly benefited from Hawthorne's story and from his success as an author. But most guide book writers made only passing reference to the actual substance of Hawthorne's allegory. They referred to the story of "The Great Stone Face" primarily as a means of conferring status on the Profile, rather than as a way of interpreting its meaning. The most long-lasting and successful associations with the Profile were from an entirely different source. At the foot of the mountain where one views the Profile today, a sign records an anecdote which is attributed to Daniel Webster. This same remark showed up in guide books as early as 1856, but without the attribution. In Willey's Incidents in White Mountain History, the anecdote is told this way:

Said an eccentric speaker, at a celebration a few years since in Fryeburg, "Men put out signs representing their different trades; jewellers hang out a monster watch; shoemakers, a huge boot;

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<sup>1</sup> Oakes, plate, n.p.

<sup>2</sup> King, The White Hills, p. 112.

and, up in Franconia, God Almighty has hung out a sign that in New England he makes men.<sup>1</sup>

In slightly different forms, this remark was quoted by Eastman in 1860 and in other later guide books. Somewhere along the way it picked up an association with Daniel Webster, and a specific relation to New Hampshire, rather than simply Franconia or "these regions." This is the image of the Profile which became most powerful: its representation of the "Granite State," its people and its political beliefs.

By 1860, the Profile had become one of the best-known images of New England, and one of the best-known scenic tourist attractions in the country. The surrounding area became a backdrop for the Profile: tourists stayed in the Profile House, climbed Profile Mountain, and rowed in Profile Lake. "Spin-off" attractions in other parts of the mountains made use of the Profile's new fame: the "Old Maid of the Mountain," the "Infant," the "Imp," and the "Young Man of the Mountain" were discovered on other mountainsides with bare rock showing.<sup>2</sup>

Mountain peaks were "discovered," too: the ascent of Mount Washington was only one of an ever-increasing number of climbs, rated according to difficulty and type of scenery to be viewed from the top. Indeed, Mount Washington was not even supposed to have the most impressive views: the thrill of ascending Mount Washington depended only in part on the view from the top. Most tourists did not experience the full impact of a clear view for the simple reason that,

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<sup>1</sup> Willey, Incidents, p. 36.

<sup>2</sup> Samuel C. Eastman, The White Mountain Guide Book, third edition (Boston: Lee and Shepard, Concord: Edson C. Eastman, 1863), p. 81.

then as now, it was rarely clear on Mount Washington. And writers on scenery usually pointed out that the view from the top was by no means the most beautiful in the White Mountains. Other smaller mountains often revealed more lovely scenery, since the peak of Mount Washington was so distant from the valleys that one could usually see no signs of life or cultivation.

Many tourists were interested in climbing the mountain in order to satisfy scientific curiosity, to "botanize" or to study rock formations on top. But for the most part, the travel literature promised not so much a beautiful view, as an emotional experience--the experience of closeness to God, or a vision of the larger plan of existence. Caroline Barrett White described her experience at the top: "The scene was perfectly wild--the wind howled and soared around the summit like the waves of the sea . . ." And she recorded her final summary of the experience: "I look upon this day as an era in my life--I trust its rich experiences will not be lost upon me."<sup>1</sup> For less sophisticated travelers, a guide book might help one experience the summit properly: "Words fail to give adequate expression to the feeling that has come over you and you stand in mute silence before this awe-inspiring scene."<sup>2</sup> (Some tourists, however, had the temerity to be disappointed in the ascent. Anthony Trollope reported, "I did not gain much myself by my labour," but added sarcastically that he did not dare to recommend omitting it.<sup>3</sup>)

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<sup>1</sup>Diary of Caroline Barrett White, vol. 5, September 7, 1854.

<sup>2</sup>Eastman, White Mountain Guide Book, p. 271.

<sup>3</sup>Anthony Trollope, North America (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986), p. 37.

For the most part, however, the new White Mountains experience put together by guide book writers, hotel keepers, and other promoters of tourism was a very effective one. By the 1860s, a traveler in the White Mountains could envision the region as comparatively rich with the kinds of "associations" scenic tourists sought out. Tourists drove and walked through mountain scenery whose every peak and waterfall had a story attached to it, stayed overnight in a hotel with a romantic Indian name, and visited scenes they had often seen pictured in gift albums and prints of well-known paintings. A region which was originally known only for its forbidding landscape became well-known for the beauty of its scenery, its romance, and its fascinating attractions. By the 1860's, the White Mountains had become a booming tourist region: perhaps ten thousand visitors toured the region every summer.<sup>1</sup> In direct contrast to the region's image prior to its development as a tourist attraction, writers after 1860 often considered the White Mountains' wealth of "associations" to be the region's chief characteristic.

As late as 1852, William McLeod had written in Harper's that the "stupendous scenery" and "rare loveliness" of White Mountain scenery were "sadly deficient in the hallowing charm of historic or poetic association . . . ," that they lacked either "mighty incident," "Indian romance or the settler's legend . . ."<sup>2</sup> But McLeod's article was one of the last times this complaint was to appear. Thirty years after

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<sup>1</sup> F. Allen Burt, The Story of Mount Washington, (Hanover, New Hampshire: Dartmouth Publications, 1960), p. 237.

<sup>2</sup> William McLeod, "The Summer Tourist; Scenery of the Franconia Mountains," Harper's New Monthly Magazine 5, number 4 (1852), p. 4.

McLeod's complaint in Harper's, a guide book writer could count on the "interesting associations" of the White Mountain region to distinguish it from its scenic competitors. Moses Sweetser's popular guide book claimed for the White Mountains that they took "precedence over many loftier and more imposing ranges . . . ," that the "pens of poets and dreamers, scientists and historians, have been busy for over two centuries with these mountains." The "aborigines and the pioneers" and the "hardy and heroic ancestry" were enough to make the White Mountains a more scenic place than its new competitor to the west, "the untamed and unoccupied forest . . . from which the Coloradian peaks rise," or even than the "fierce desolation of unfailing ice" in the Alps.<sup>1</sup>

At the same time that the White Mountains were being made more attractive in this way, however, they were being transformed by their own success. The more accessible the wilderness of the mountains became, the more comfortable tourists could feel with it. Caroline Barrett White responded with emotion to the grandeur and wildness of the mountain scenery she saw, but she also felt comfortable with the region in a way that would have been incomprehensible for a tourist in the days before good hotels and roads. She recorded two days after her visit to the summit of Mount Washington that she had not thought of anything "save the mountains since my ascent of Mount Washington." But the emotion they inspired

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<sup>1</sup>Moses Sweetser, The White Mountains: A Handbook for Travellers, first edition (Boston: J. R. Osgood and Co., 1876), p. 18.



was not awe: "I often feel like exclaiming 'dear old mountains.'"<sup>1</sup> And when she and her husband climbed Pleasant Mountain outside Fryeburg, they spent a leisurely afternoon on the top, looking at the view, eating dinner, and playing ten pins--a very pleasant day, but hardly a thrillingly intense experience.<sup>2</sup>

Tourism promoters encouraged this kind of comfort, sometimes at the expense of the kinds of emotional experiences they were promoting. On the one hand, guide book writers like Starr King encouraged people to have thoughts of God and their own mortality when experiencing the awe-inspiring immensity of the mountains. On the other hand, they advised them how to get there and back in two days, and where the most comfortable hotels were. By the end of these twenty years of development, comfort and relaxation were beginning to receive equal billing with the experiences of sublimity that the region had first promised.

And at the same time, the experience of reaching the summit of Mount Washington changed dramatically between 1840 and 1860. A fairly arduous climb in the company of a few fellow adventurers and a rustic guide was replaced by a horseback ride up to a hotel, from which one could look at the view in the company of perhaps a hundred other tourists, eat dinner, buy a souvenir, and return back to the hotel in the same manner. In 1853, a path from the eastern side of the mountain was built. In 1861 a carriage road was completed; by 1869, a

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<sup>1</sup>Diary of Caroline Barrett White, volume 5, September 9, 1854.

<sup>2</sup>White understood the conventions of romantic touring quite well, but had come by 1854 to express herself more informally: ten years earlier, on a trip through southern New Hampshire, she had expressed herself quite differently: "Never before did I gaze upon the sublime picture with such rapture . . ." White diary, volume 1, p.48.

special railroad took visitors to the top. In 1852, the first hotel was built on the summit, joined by a second in 1853. By 1859, over 5,000 people ascended the mountain each summer.<sup>1</sup>

The White Mountain hotels of mid-century held forth the same promises of comfort, company, and high fashion as a hotel in any northern city. Frederika Bremer wrote in 1849 that although "the whole of this mountain district is very wild, and there is scarcely a dwelling to be seen excepting the hotels for travelers," the place was

overflowing with noisy, unquiet company. . . and. . . all kinds of noisy pleasures. . . . Champagne corks fly about at the hotels, gentlemen sit and play cards in the middle of the day, ladies talk about dress-makers and fashions.<sup>2</sup>

And in 1862, Anthony Trollope wrote that the White Mountains were "reached with ease by railways and stage-coaches," and "dotted with huge hotels, almost as thickly as they lie in Switzerland . . ." (see figures 9 and 10).<sup>3</sup>

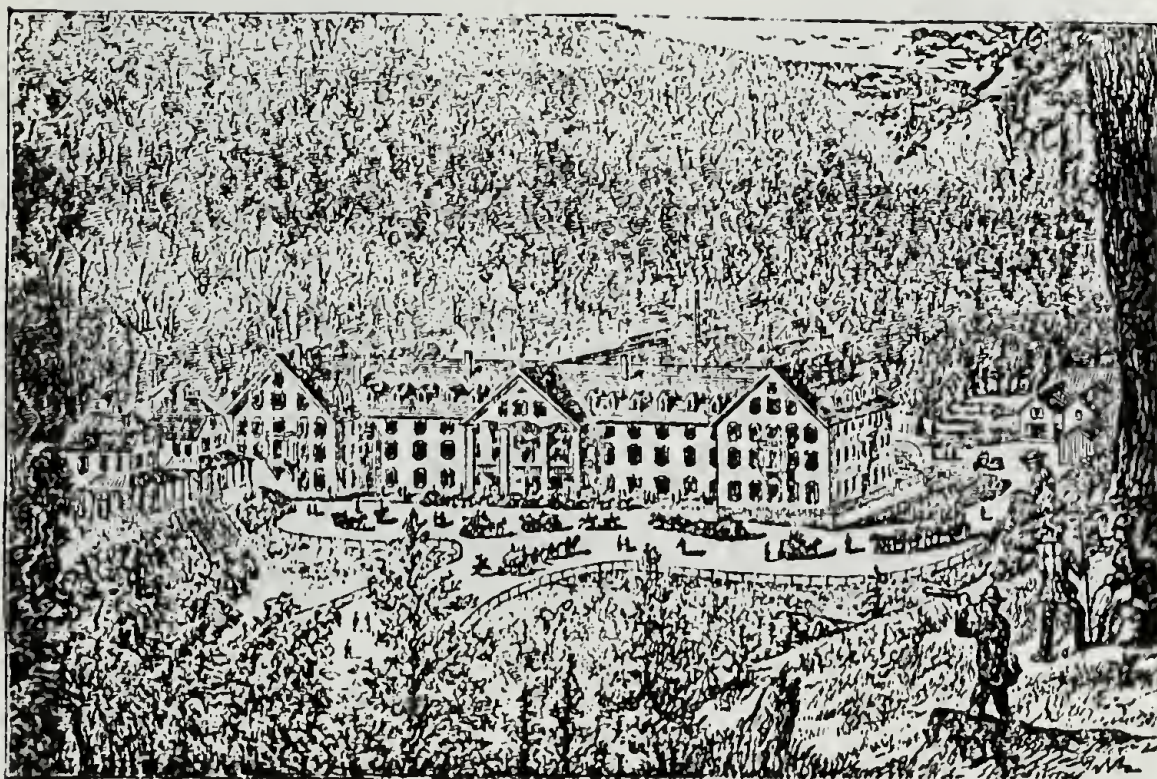
Precisely because of the popularity of the region, and because of the successful association of romantic scenery with genteel status, tourist promoters of the second half of the century were to encounter new difficulties and contradictions. By the 1860s, the ascent of Mount Washington had become so popular that tourists who were interested in the experience of solitude and communion with God or nature were obliged to avoid the beaten track. The "commonly travelled routes to

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<sup>1</sup>Eastman, White Mountain Guide Book, p. 106.

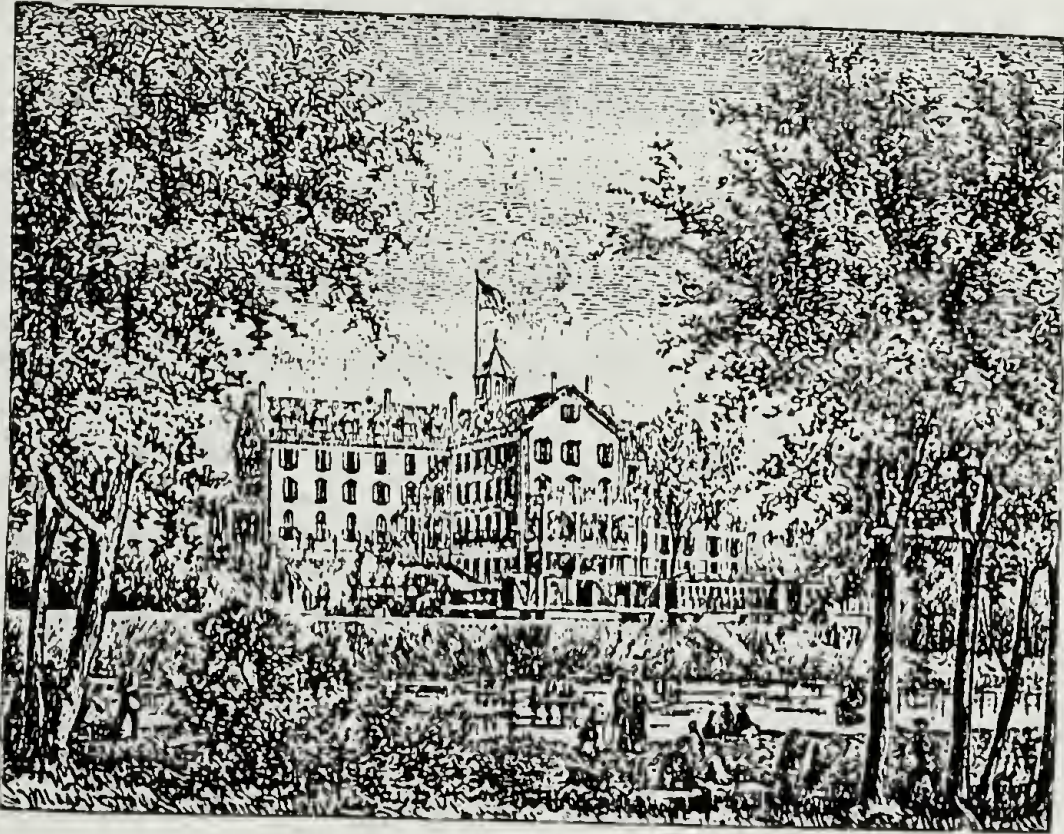
<sup>2</sup>Adolph B. Benson, ed., America of the Fifties: Letters of Frederika Bremer (New York: American Scandinavian Federation, 1924), p. 323.

<sup>3</sup>Trollope, North America, p. 35.



PROFILE HOUSE.

Figure 9. The Profile House in the Franconia Notch. From George Keye's Hand-Book of Northern and Western Pleasure Travel, 1875 edition. (AAS)



PEMIGEWASSET HOUSE.

Figure 10. The Pemigewasset House. George Keye's Hand-Book of Northern and Western Pleasure Travel, 1875 edition. (AAS)

the summit" no longer supplied the "loneliness and wildness . . . and . . . adventure in the experience" they had formerly promised.<sup>1</sup> And sometimes no alternate route could compensate for the changes that crowds brought with them to the scenic attractions.

The Willey site, for instance, such an awe-inspiring experience during the 1830s, had been irrevocably changed by 1855, when a "commodious two-story" hotel was built near the house. By 1859, guide book writers were beginning to express irritation over its commercialization. Samuel Eastman's guidebook pointed out that the Willey house was both too crowded and too commercial for serious scenic tourists: although "of late years it has become important as a showplace, twelve and a half cents being charged for showing each person through the house," he believed that there was "nothing within the ruinous edifice of sufficient interest to warrant even this trifling expenditure." And he made it clear that tourists in the know would avoid the crowds at the Willey House, which he described as "sight-seeing . . . made easy for beginners."<sup>2</sup>

Some places were clearly too crowded, but it was perhaps not so much a matter of too many people, as of too many different kinds of people. Tourists bent on demonstrating their gentility would not be comfortable jostling with carpenters and farmers at the Willey House, and although the first tourists found Crawford's mixed clientele intriguing and exotic, later tourists were not so enthusiastic about mingling with the multitude. As scenic tourist businesses grew in

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<sup>1</sup>King, The White Hills, p. 351.

<sup>2</sup>Eastman, White Mountain Guide Book, p. 79.

complexity and luxury, they grew increasingly able to provide their guests with a measure of social exclusivity, if only by becoming increasingly expensive. And at the same time, the reputation of the White Mountains was transformed. Instead of reading about the region in poems and short stories, most people read about it in the society pages of city newspapers.

The transformation from a romantically obscure destination for poets and painters to a luxury resort for wealthy urbanites was one that was being made in several of the most important northeastern tourist regions during these same years, along the shore as well as in the mountains. Nahant, on the coast north of Boston, enjoyed years of popularity for its sublimely desolate coastal scenery before it fell from fashion with Boston's wealthy summer travelers in the 1850s. The Catskills had a history very similar to that of the White Mountains, although their role as a tourist region has been obscured by their importance as the inspiration of so many great American painters. And the town of Newport, Rhode Island (where, as Thoreau put it, the tourist "thinks more of the wine than the brine"), saw the growth of a tourist industry which paralleled that of the White Mountains in all its transformations.

If the White Mountains were the most famous of the scenic tourist destinations, Newport perhaps more than any other place made the transformation from scenery to luxury successfully. By the 1860s, Newport and the White Mountains were the preeminent summer resorts in the country: where tourists had originally looked for picturesque rock formations and visions of eternity, they now also

looked for ballrooms and card parties. But Newport, too, had been "discovered" through its romantic scenery, which had been identified and packaged in the 1850s in the same way as that of the White Mountains.<sup>1</sup> The same fanciful names, the same kinds of "Indian" legends and romantic poems, the same kinds of standardized views, were created by painters, poets, guidebook writers and promoters. For Newport, as for the White Mountains, the roots of the tourist industry lay in the "interesting associations" that had first drawn tourists into the countryside. And in Newport, as in the White Mountains, these "associations" became part of a more comprehensive tourist industry that provided diversions for an increasingly elite clientele.

The White Mountains had become a fashionable summer place, a place of resort for increasing numbers of well-to-do city people who found it necessary and desirable to "go away" for part of the summer. This transformation of the region was the embodiment of its promoters' success, not only in marketing its scenery, but in persuading tourists that the proper appreciation of scenery was the sign of a cultivated taste, ample leisure, and elite sensibilities--a kind of "conspicuous aesthetic consumption." But that success also changed the experience of the region: the "package" tour still included romantic scenery, but as part of a more complex vacation experience.

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<sup>1</sup>Newport had an older history as a watering-place for southerners in the eighteenth century, but that business had died out long before the wave of interest in romantic scenery brought tourists to Newport in the 1840s.

As Thoreau described it, it was romantic scenery set beside "a ten-pin alley, or a circular railway, or an ocean of mint julep."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Thoreau, Collected Writings , p. 1039.



## CHAPTER 3

### COTTAGE HEAVEN: LEISURE, RELIGION AND VACATIONING ON MARTHA'S VINEYARD, 1860-1875

By the 1860s, summer travel had become an established part of life for many of the wealthier city-dwellers of the northeast. Newspapers featured travel sections during the summer months, carrying reports from the fashionable resorts and the best-known scenic regions: from Saratoga, Newport, the White Mountains and the Catskills. And although most city-dwellers might never reach these destinations, increasingly there were other places, perhaps closer to home, that offered vacations to those with less time and money to spend. Outside the cities, the business of providing for tourists was expanding into rural and coastal areas previously unnoticed by travelers. Whether by boarding on farms outside the city, in lodging houses by the shore, or by erecting "tent cities" or small cottages in coastal colonies, a growing number of Americans of increasingly limited means found ways to take a week or two away from the cares of their city lives. These tourists, and the people who catered to them, created entirely new tourist industries--inexpensive, but also designed to fulfill social needs and aspirations distinctly different from those of the tourists who filled the hotels at Saratoga or in the White Mountains.

In August, 1865, the New York Times ran reports from the White Mountains, Saratoga, and the Catskills, all well-known summer haunts for the leisured. The Times also ran a report on a place the reporter assumed would be new to most of his readers--a place called Wesleyan Grove, on the island of Martha's Vineyard. Wesleyan Grove was a Methodist camp-meeting ground which was attracting a great deal of attention to the island that year, as visitors reported its remarkable transformation into a summer resort. Before mid-century Martha's Vineyard had been well-known as a whaling and coastal trading port--along with its sister island of Nantucket a part of New England's profitable but volatile maritime industries. But by the end of the 1860s, Martha's Vineyard was coming to be known as the home of Wesleyan Grove, or as it would later be called, "Cottage City."

The island of Martha's Vineyard had been a whaling center in the early nineteenth century; its central port of Edgartown provided the harbor for both its own and neighboring Nantucket's whaling ships (since Nantucket's harbor was too shallow for the boats when they returned full of whale oil). Its population supported itself in whaling and in shipping of all kinds; in 1835, one visitor estimated that out of an island population of about 3000, five or six hundred were at sea for most of their lives.<sup>1</sup> But the whaling industry had been badly damaged by competition in the mid-nineteenth century, and during the Civil War, the island's whaling fleet was almost entirely destroyed. Martha's Vineyard was not as dependent on whaling as nearby Nantucket.

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<sup>1</sup>Samuel Devens, Sketches of Martha's Vineyard and other Reminiscences of Travel at Home, by an Inexperienced Clergyman, (Boston: J. Munroe and Company, 1838).

Outside Edgartown, other towns on the island supported themselves by fishing, farming, and local trade. But the 1860s and 1870s were a period of economic depression and depopulation on Martha's Vineyard, and a time in which the island's investors were looking around for other ventures.

The camp meeting that was founded at Wesleyan Grove in 1835 was the product of a wave of Methodist revivalism that had swept over southeastern New England, converting large portions of the local Congregationalist population. "Wesleyan Grove" was the name given to a piece of barren ground that had been leased by local Methodists for their camp meeting. The camp meeting, so characteristic of Methodist revivalism in all parts of the United States, had taken root in Wesleyan Grove, and had grown dramatically over the following two decades; in those years, Wesleyan Grove acquired a national reputation as one of the most successful and institutionally stable of the Methodist camp meetings. Its week-long yearly revivals took place in August, and often gathered thousands of worshippers from the islands, Cape Cod, the nearby mainland cities, and farther (see figure 11).

Wesleyan Grove's first worshippers stayed in communal "society tents" set up by their home churches, ate in communal boarding tents, and slept on straw--when prayer meetings did not keep them up all night wrestling for souls. But by the 1850s, many families had begun to stake out their own pieces of ground and to set up private tents surrounding the open circle where the meetings took place. By 1855, there were fifty of the communal society and boarding tents, but there were also as many as 150 private family tents; the following year, the camp-meeting elders authorized the publication of a list of rules, and a

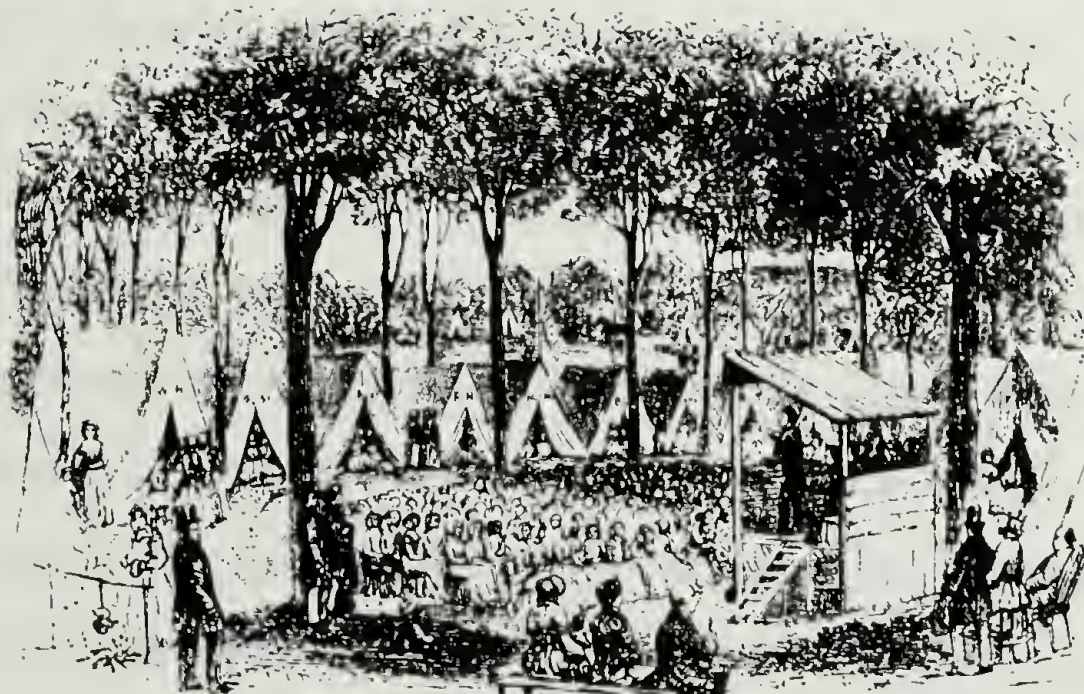


Figure 11. A camp meeting. From B. W. Gorham, Camp-Meeting Manual, a Practical Book for the Camp Ground, 1854. (University of Massachusetts, Amherst--Special Collections)

tax on tents. By 1859, Wesleyan Grove's success had reached a pinnacle, reflecting the success of Methodism in the region: that year twelve thousand people attended the Sunday preaching, and four hundred tents graced the grounds.<sup>1</sup>

But 1859 was also the last year in which the growth of Wesleyan Grove was to seem an unmixed blessing to its supporters. Before the late 1850s, the growth of the camp-meeting was unquestionably consistent with the purposes of its founding. More visitors meant greater permanence and stability for the meeting, and a richer religious experience for everyone. But in 1859, signs were everywhere that qualitative as well as quantitative changes were taking place in the Grove: newspaper correspondents showed up from the mainland, and an artist from New Bedford took stereoscopic views of the grounds during camp-meeting week. Perhaps most significantly, the first permanent cottage was built on the grounds that year: a young Providence architect named Perez Mason designed a cottage for his family and the family of William B. Lawton.

Over the next ten years, Wesleyan Grove was transformed at a bewildering rate. Hebron Vincent, the secretary of the newly-formed Martha's Vineyard Camp Meeting Association, recorded the yearly changes with a mixture of delight, confusion, and trepidation. Looking back in 1867, he wondered whether he had been imagining the whole process. Where once had been a few hundred "poor, humble, followers of the Master," he now saw displays of wealth and fashion any

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<sup>1</sup>Methodism had by the 1850s become the largest denomination on Martha's Vineyard, and was influential as well on Cape Cod and in the cities of New Bedford and Fall River. See Jeremiah Pease, "The Island's First Methodists," The Dukes County Intelligencer 22 (November 1980), pp. 58-70.

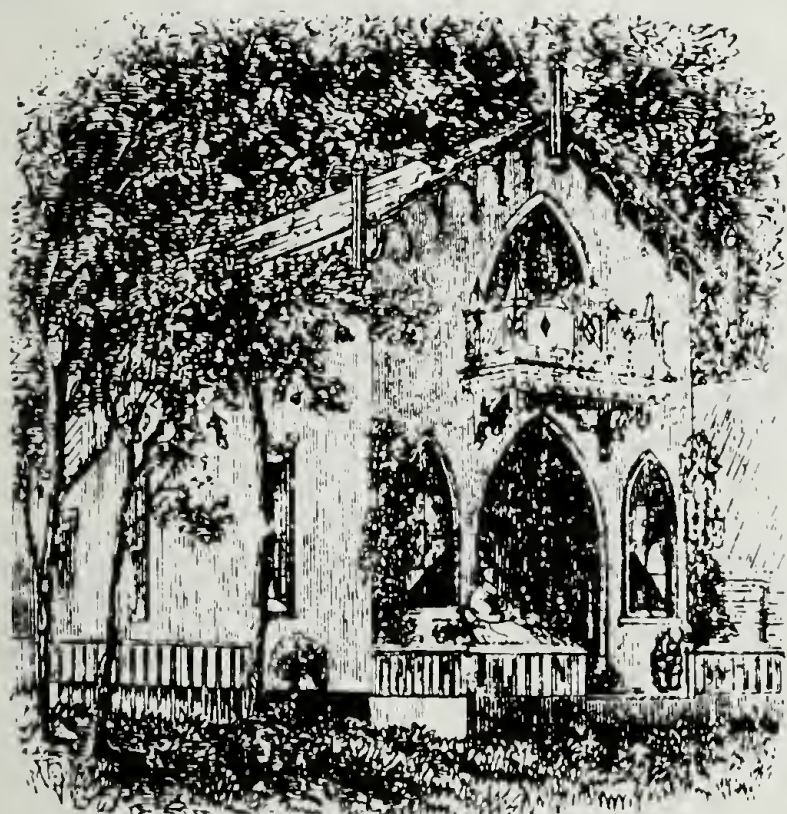
summer resort might imitate. Replacing the collective tents were family cottages in increasing numbers, built with "taste and elegance." In 1864, there were forty cottages in the Grove (out of a total of around 500 tents and cottages); by 1869, there were over 200 cottages, and over 600 tents and cottages together (see figure 12). At the same time, the grounds had expanded to cover thirty-four acres, with several new neighborhoods of cottages and tents surrounding small parks of their own (see figure 13).<sup>1</sup> Finally, the Martha's Vineyard Camp Meeting Association bought the grounds of Wesleyan Grove in 1865, after having taken up a collection among the holders of tent and cottage lots that summer.

The new crowds of visitors were also behaving differently. Beginning in the 1860s, families began to come to the grounds before the week of camp meeting to "rusticate." By 1864, the correspondent for the Providence Journal was on the grounds two weeks before the beginning of the meeting, reporting that "a week or two here with a circle of friends, in advance of the great concourse, is in many respects pleasanter than the week of the meeting."<sup>2</sup> Croquet, sea-bathing, and walks occupied more and more time once devoted to prayer meetings and services. Steamboats at the rate of four or five a day brought crowds of daytrippers to look on and wander around the grounds. And Hebron Vincent stopped recording the number of

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<sup>1</sup>Hebron Vincent, History of the Camp-Meeting and Grounds at Wesleyan Grove, Martha's Vineyard (for the eleven years ending with the meeting of 1869) (Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1870), pp. 23-27.

<sup>2</sup>Providence Journal, August 8, 1864, p. 1.



SPECIMEN OF COTTAGES.



STYLE OF TENTS.

Figure 12. A cottage and a tent at Wesleyan Grove. From "Camp-Meeting at Martha's Vineyard," Harper's Weekly September 12, 1868.  
(Dukes County Historical Society)



Figure 13. Map of Wesleyan Grove, 1868. (DCHS)



conversions at each camp meeting, preferring after 1863 to refer only to "some," "a few," or "several" people whose hearts had been changed.

By the mid-1860s, visitors from near and far were commenting on the changes at Wesleyan Grove. From the summer travel section of the New York Times to the editorial pages of Zion's Herald, reporters and editors discussed the situation at Wesleyan Grove with varying degrees of concern. The Christian Advocate commented severely in 1865 that, after having received "glowing accounts of the beautiful situation, fine opportunities for sea bathing, and luxurious private dwellings" at Wesleyan Grove, after hearing that "the singing was . . . superb, the preaching superior, the congregations immense," they had been appalled to read Vincent's announcement that only one person had been converted there that year: "A good many fishers of men to drive so little business!"<sup>1</sup> The editor of the Vineyard Gazette in nearby Edgartown added his voice to the complaints in 1866, when he wrote that "instead of . . . the work of grace and goodness, we hear the merry jest and see the rallying around the croquet ground."<sup>2</sup>

But the New York Times correspondent for that summer defended the camp meeting: "The atmosphere is a religious and moral one, and while this shall be its pervading character . . . it can never fail to possess a healthy moral tone, that must be beneficial to all who attend it."<sup>3</sup> And an anonymous writer to the Vineyard Gazette

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<sup>1</sup>Christian Advocate, 1865, quoted in Henry Beetle Hough, Martha's Vineyard, Summer Resort after 100 Years (Rutland, Vermont: Tuttle Publishing Company, 1936), p. 52.

<sup>2</sup>Vineyard Gazette, August 31, 1866.

<sup>3</sup>New York Times, August 31, 1866.

agreed, arguing that "the world should not be made sad, but as much like heaven as possible."<sup>1</sup> In its defense, supporters of Wesleyan Grove launched themselves into a number of more general discussions of the proper uses of leisure and relaxation. Hebron Vincent explored the problem in detail in his yearly chronicles for 1863, 1864, and 1865, where he devoted large parts of his remarks to a defense of Wesleyan Grove's growing secularization. (Vincent was a member of the original generation of island converts who had established the camp meeting in 1835. An ardent Methodist, he was deeply committed to camp meetings as a religious tool, and to Wesleyan Grove in particular. He consistently defended the camp meeting against all charges of secularism, but in the process he provided a sensitive gauge of the ambiguities and conflicts that arose from the changes he reported.)

Vincent argued in 1864,

Is not health a blessing, which, as Christians, we are bound to preserve and promote? And even though business press us, and we think we have not the time to spare, should we not take the time for such a purpose, and that at a season when we most need relaxation and rest?<sup>2</sup>

These arguments echoed others that would have been familiar to both Vincent and his critics--arguments used by the supporters of camp meetings themselves. A camp-meeting manual published in 1854 had set up just such a dialogue to convince skeptics that camp-meetings were a valuable evangelical tool: "do you not need, just now, a protracted season of rest from worldly care?," the enthusiast questioned the skeptic. And afterwards, "Did you find any great

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<sup>1</sup>Vineyard Gazette, August 27, 1869.

<sup>2</sup>Vincent, History of the Camp-Meeting, pp. 128-129.

difficulty in leaving your home and your secular business to attend the meeting?" No, replied the former skeptic, "I found I could easily arrange my engagements so as to leave."<sup>1</sup> Moreover, Vincent argued, the alternatives to using Wesleyan Grove as a resort were worse: "many without scruple go to Saratoga, Niagara Falls, or some similar resort, from which they return with depleted wallets and with, to say the least, no more religious principles and enjoyment than they went with." It would be far better for everyone if such people took their vacations at Wesleyan Grove, where at least they were exposed to religious principles.<sup>2</sup>

In these arguments, Vincent reflected the concerns of many of his fellow cottagers over the legitimacy of vacationing and of leisure time in general. And he also took part in a larger public debate over these same issues. As early as the 1850s, many liberal religious leaders had been extolling the practice of summer vacationing. Henry Ward Beecher, for example, wrote extensively on the moral and religious uses of vacationing for urban professionals: "Here, then, for a few weeks we shall forget the city and lay aside its excitements . . . . There is ample space for retrospection, a mental state which is almost denied to public men in the life of a city," and which would give the vacationer time for "the most earnest reflection, and for the most solemn resolutions for the future."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Reverend B.W. Gorham, Camp-Meeting Manual, a Practical Book for the Camp Ground (Boston: H.V. Degen, 1854), pp. 45 and 49.

<sup>2</sup>Vincent, History of the Camp-Meeting, p. 129.

<sup>3</sup>Henry Ward Beecher, Star Papers (New York: J. C. Derby, 1855), p. 143. Daniel T. Rodgers has explored the meanings and contradictions of Beecher's writings on leisure in chapter 4 of The Work Ethic in Industrial America, 1850-1920, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), especially pp. 94-102.

And while Beecher was laboring to establish the legitimacy of idleness for his parishioners, new classes of people were increasingly being urged to escape their "incarceration in the city," as Beecher called it.<sup>1</sup> By 1867, Bayard Taylor wrote in Atlantic Monthly that "even our farmers are beginning to have their little after-harvest trips to the sea-shore, the Hudson, Niagara or the west."<sup>2</sup> And closer to Wesleyan Grove, an editorial in the Providence Journal in August of 1865 described the tremendous growth in the habit of summer vacations among the "brain-workers" of the city--the bank cashiers, clerks, and bookkeepers--and applauded it. The editor (who also happened to own a cottage at Wesleyan Grove) attributed the new need to the ever more crowded and frantic city environment, and argued that vacations had become essential to the health of city-dwellers.<sup>3</sup>

Questions about the legitimate uses of leisure were being debated nationally by people of varying classes and perspectives. But they were of special significance to the vacationers who were to become Wesleyan Grove's special constituency: those with income enough to consider some expenditures on vacations, but who had not been trained in the habitual use of leisure--who were secure financially, but whose lives had required a constant commitment of most of their time to work, and whose religious and social training had

<sup>1</sup>Beecher, Star Papers, p. 188.

<sup>2</sup>Bayard Taylor, "Travel in the United States," Atlantic Monthly 19 (April 1867), p. 477.

<sup>3</sup>In general, advocates of summer vacationing for city-dwellers focused on the benefits to health--of fresh air, "relaxation from business cares," and the more negative virtue of not being exposed to cholera--similar reasons, as John Stilgoe has pointed out, to those given for moving to the suburban edges of the cities. See Stilgoe, Borderlands: Origins of the American Suburb (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988).

been designed to encourage that commitment.<sup>1</sup> When Vincent argued that "relaxation from business cares" was "consistent with the Christian character," was in fact a Christian duty, he was not simply offering a justification for the secularization of Wesleyan Grove. He was offering a justification for its cottagers' leisure activities--a new argument for a group of people perhaps more accustomed to the idea that one's Christian duty was unremitting labor. And Wesleyan Grove, more than other new resorts, made this justification its reason for being.

The first cottage-owners of Wesleyan Grove were perhaps particularly likely to find Vincent's reasoning reassuring. They were neither primarily the professionals and merchants whose absence from the cities during July and August had become expected, nor the new clerical workers whose fate concerned the Providence Journal's editor, although they included both these groups in their ranks.<sup>2</sup> The majority of those who built cottages between 1862 and 1872 were artisans or shopkeepers of varying degrees of prosperity: out of a sample of 104 cottage owners who are identifiable in city directories, twenty-four held clearly artisanal occupations--coopers, blacksmiths,

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<sup>1</sup>And, moreover, people whose connections to an older form of community leisure, on the farm or in the traditional workshop, had been severed, so that leisure for them had come to mean something that took place outside of work and away from home.

<sup>2</sup>The names of these cottage owners are taken from several sources, but primarily from the records of the Martha's Vineyard Camp Meeting Association's applications to put each surviving cottage on the National Register of Historic Places; these reported the first owner of the cottage where it is known (Copies were consulted at the Dukes County Historical Society). I have taken from these records the list of all the first cottage owners, with construction dates ranging from 1862 to 1872, for six neighborhoods in Wesleyan Grove. I have also added the names of cottage owners from other sources--newspaper articles which listed the names of contributors to funds, for example--which have probably skewed the results slightly upward in class.

tanners, and watchmakers. Almost another quarter (twenty-three) were shopkeepers of varying levels of wealth and status--Fall River grocers, Hartford milliners and New Bedford "merchant tailors." About fourteen held "white collar" jobs--agents for factories, bookkeepers, and clerks. And only a handful were clearly of the professional status which would command substantial summer leisure, and the education to use it.<sup>1</sup>

Wesleyan Grove's cottagers were not, of course, industrial workers: it would have taken the entire year's wages of a typical industrial worker during the 1860s to pay for a cottage at Wesleyan Grove.<sup>2</sup> But they often held occupations not far above industrial workers on the social ladder. They were established heads of businesses of various sizes; most owned their own homes, but their callings were for the most part far from genteel. Many of the more prosperous were manufacturers: James Davis and Henry T. Stone, partners in a Providence box manufacturing business, for instance, were loyal supporters of Wesleyan Grove. They contributed a total of \$150 to the collection to buy the grounds of Wesleyan Grove in 1865, and both were on the Finance Committee for several years.

But between the wealthier cottagers, listed as merchants and manufacturers in the directories, and those listed as blacksmiths and coopers, there may have been less social distance than first appears.

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<sup>1</sup>These include four men listed as "merchants," four with no occupation listed (who might have been retired or independently wealthy), and seven with "professional" titles; but of the seven professionals, four were ministers, which among the Methodists was no indication either of elite training or of substantial leisure.

<sup>2</sup>Daniel Horowitz, The Morality of Spending, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), p. 10.

Among the eight men who contributed \$50 to the fund to buy Wesleyan Grove in 1865, for example, there were three men listed as manufacturers, and two managers--the superintendent of the New Bedford and Taunton Railroad, and the treasurer of the Wamsutta Mills men. But three others had occupations of lower status: Edmund Chase, of E. Chase & Son, "tanners and curriers;" Iram Smith, who had a dry goods company in Fall River; and Robert C. Brown, a bookkeeper at the Fall River Iron Company, were also among the most generous contributors. Some work done in other cities suggests the possibility of a lingering sense of "artisanal" identity among men who had actually become something more like manufacturers or businessmen.<sup>1</sup>

In the case of Wesleyan Grove's cottagers, the distinction between a "blacksmith" and a "manufacturer" of heavy machinery might have been an ambiguous one. (In southern New England, it is possible that Methodism acted as a statement of allegiance to artisanal social values even when its adherents had become wealthy or distinguished.) In order to establish these connections with certainty, it would be necessary to follow the lives of the cottage-owners over a span of years. But whatever sense of religious or class solidarity Wesleyan Grove's cottagers may have had, it is clear that they were not, for the most part, of the educated, professional group that might be called to mind by the phrase "middle class," although for the most part, they were measurably "middle class" in economic terms--that is,

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<sup>1</sup>A recent study of the artisans of Bangor, Maine, for example, indicates that in mid-century, some men worked to preserve a sense of a common "producer's" identity across the growing gulf between those who were able to capitalize their businesses and become manufacturers, and those who were not. (Carol Toner, paper presented at the New England Historical Association conference, Lowell, Massachusetts, April 22, 1989.)

they were relatively economically secure, owned homes, paid taxes, and (evidently) had money to spend on summer cottages.

Many observers at the time believed that Methodism had begun by converting the poor and humble, but had raised them to new heights of respectability and prosperity, that Methodists embodied "industry, sobriety, intelligence, the love of order, and purity of life," and that such traits led to wealth, or at least to security.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps Hebron Vincent's background was typical in this regard: he was the child of an impoverished Martha's Vineyard farm family, originally apprenticed to a shoemaker, who worked his way through a sketchy education in preparation for the ministry. Vincent never became wealthy, but he did become a pillar of his community, as Methodist minister, secretary for the Martha's Vineyard Camp Meeting Association, and advocate of educational reform; and he attained a measure of security through a handful of town offices which he held for most of his adult life.<sup>2</sup>

And it is true that Methodist publications at mid-century reflect a new concern for questions of wealth and display. The discipline was revised later in the century to allow much more elaborate and expensive decoration of churches, and to exclude language on the incompatibility of wealth and Christianity.<sup>3</sup> Wesleyan Grove's controversies were only a part of a larger discussion among

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<sup>1</sup>Moses Scudder, American Methodism (Hartford: S. S. Scranton and Co., 1867), p. 569.

<sup>2</sup>Hebron Vincent, unpublished autobiographical sketch--manuscript application for membership in the New England Methodist Historical Society. Hebron Vincent papers, Dukes County Historical Society.

<sup>3</sup>Ellen Weiss, City in the Woods, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 139-140.



Methodists; and perhaps, too, they were a part of a larger struggle of people dealing with the temptations of leisure and luxury for the first time--and of those who associated these temptations with the dangerous habits of the elite.<sup>1</sup>

The resort that these industrious and sober citizens made from their camp-meeting grounds reveals a vacationing sensibility far different from that of the educated and fashionable at Newport, Saratoga, and in the mountains. Its image was necessarily a complex one, offering aesthetic and sensual pleasures to those who were perhaps not fully convinced they ought to have them. Far from emulating the style of the fashionable resorts, with their expense, display, and elite social style, Wesleyan Grove embodied the preferences of a far different group of tourists, who defined themselves in opposition to the fashionable resorts. Even when they had the money to take part in the life at the fashionable resorts, and even when they had the leisure to devote to it, the White Mountains were no place for vacationers who had not been trained in the "picturesque" sensibility. And Newport was no place for those not comfortable with elite leisure pursuits--the carriage-riding, card-playing, dancing, and champagne suppers that set apart the fashionable from the plain.

Cottagers found Wesleyan Grove attractive precisely because it was not an elite resort. One Hartford resident reported, for instance,

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<sup>1</sup>In a study of Providence, for example, John S. Gilkeson found that before the 1860s, formal leisure organizations had existed only for the merchant elite of the city, who "flouted the norms of the sober middle classes" by drinking, playing cards, and spending money freely. See John S. Gilkeson, Middle Class Providence, 1820-1940, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), p. 138.

that he had decided to buy a cottage in Wesleyan Grove in 1865 because he believed that "what Saratoga, Newport, and other places of like character are to the gay and festive, this would be to the moral and religious."<sup>1</sup> Again and again, promoters and visitors emphasized the qualities of Wesleyan Grove by comparing it to what it was not. It was not a fashionable watering-place, it was not Saratoga, and above all, everyone agreed, it was not Newport.

Newport by the 1860s was the most socially exclusive and fashionable American resort. Its social and financial requirements were more rigorous than any of the other resorts of New England. Although it was not yet exclusively the home of the millionaires it was to host by the 1880s and 90s, its name was already synonymous with money and high society. For the city dwellers of southern New England, Newport was the embodiment of elite rejection of a sober, hard-working existence.<sup>2</sup> The appeal of life at Wesleyan Grove was precisely the extent to which it offered an alternative to public perceptions of the life at places like Newport, and yet also offered entertainment and leisure. Wesleyan Grove could provide relaxation, and at the same time allow visitors to feel that these were entirely different from "Newport" leisure activities--and at affordable prices.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>David Clark, The Way Reverend Moses Scudder Secured a Cottage at Martha's Vineyard (Hartford, 1870), p. 9.

<sup>2</sup>Perhaps nothing was so emblematic of the gulf between these vacationers as alcohol. Southern New England's Methodists had, in common with the vast majority of the respectable shopkeepers and artisans of their cities, an intense commitment to temperance. Newport was well known for its defiance of the liquor laws, and the way in which "persistent Newport visitors, who have grown old with their sherry and their port," simply brought along their stores of liquor rather than buying of their hotelkeepers. Harper's Monthly 5 (July 1852), p. 267.

<sup>3</sup>Newport was a common foil for many new vacation places and vacationing styles in the second half of the nineteenth century; but it could be used in a number of different

"Not being Newport" implied many things, but perhaps most importantly, it implied low prices. Most of the cottages at Wesleyan Grove were hardly more than tents themselves, and indeed were built to mimic the tents they replaced; but even the expense of constructing one of these cottages involved a substantial commitment for people of modest means. In the mid-1860s, the cottages cost an average of \$400 to build--an expense that seems often to have been shared among families and groups of friends. Neighbors on the campgrounds were often neighbors at home--the residents of County Park on Wesleyan Grove were almost all from New Bedford, for instance. And it seems clear that more than one family often occupied, and perhaps helped to pay for, these tiny cottages. Moreover, the other expenses after building the cottage were small--the rent for the ground was only a few dollars a year, and food was prepared in kitchen shacks or tents to the rear of the cottages.

In one (not entirely typical) case, we can trace the details of the building of a cottage at Wesleyan Grove. David Clark was not a Methodist, but his introduction to Wesleyan Grove came through his acquaintance with the Reverend Moses L. Scudder, the minister of Hartford's Methodist church and a neighbor of Clark in Hartford at the time. Clark was clearly a wealthy man, although his occupation was listed as "farmer" in the Hartford directory; Moses Scudder was something of a Methodist celebrity. He had recently published a popular history called American Methodism, which had brought him

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ways. For a different use of the concept of "not being Newport," see Henry Ward Beecher's essay "Inland vs. Seashore," which used the comparison to highlight the privacy and quiet of his vacations in the Berkshires. Beecher, Star Papers, p. 111.

national attention. Clark visited Wesleyan Grove in the summer of 1865 on Scudder's recommendation that "many who are not Methodists" found the place charming as a summer resort.

While he was there he took a step that many visitors decided on that year: he (and as many as fifty other people) ordered a cottage to be built for the next summer. Clark's cottage cost \$500, and was slightly larger and more ornate than many of the new cottages. It was designed to accommodate both Clark's family of four and the Reverend Scudder's family of five. (The typical cottage contained two small rooms on the ground floor, divided by partitions or curtains, and sleeping quarters under the steeply pitched roof. Cooking was done in a tent or shed behind the cottage. Clark's cottage followed this pattern, but was a little larger than usual.) According to Clark, the original plan was to combine both families' housing in two adjoining lots. The cottage would have a tent next to it, in which Scudder's two sons would live. This was probably a common arrangement; pictures of the cottages and their occupants in the 1860s and 1870s often reveal a startling number of people in each cottage, and estimates of the population and number of tents and cottages indicate that at least six or seven people per cottage must have been normal during camp meeting.<sup>1</sup>

Most of the early cottage owners had more connections--familial, business, or religious--than did David Clark, which might have made

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<sup>1</sup>In 1868, for example, there were roughly 4,000 people "stopping permanently" for the summer, with as many as 10-15,000 visiting for a week or two of camp meeting. And during that year there were roughly 600 tents and cottages on the grounds (and also, of course, a number of boarding houses and small hotels). See Vincent, *History*, pp. 189, 210-211.

the expense seem more reasonable. Many were devout Methodists and church officers in their home communities, as was Clark's fellow Hartford resident Galusha Owen, a milliner whose connection with Wesleyan Grove sprang from his long-term family commitment to the Methodist church at home, where both he and his father were trustees. Some had business partners or connections among the cottagers: Joseph Buckminster and William Macy were two cottagers who were partners in a dry-goods store at home in New Bedford, for example.

And many had direct business ties to the island. Both Warren Ladd and Andrew G. Pierce of New Bedford played supportive roles in the development of Wesleyan Grove: when the elders of the camp meeting decided in 1865 to buy the land on which it was held, each gave \$50 to the cause. Both of them stood to gain, indirectly, from Wesleyan Grove's development. Ladd was superintendent of the New Bedford and Taunton Railroad, the principal means by which southern New England travelers reached the steamboat for Martha's Vineyard. And Pierce was the treasurer of the New Bedford and Martha's Vineyard Steamboat Company.

Many of the cottagers who were native to Martha's Vineyard were involved in even more direct business connections with Wesleyan Grove. Sirson P. Coffin of Edgartown, the superintendent of the campgrounds for many years, was also a lumber dealer and builder. Several island families were cottage builders as well as cottage owners. Charles Worth, who became quite a well-known cottage builder and real estate broker, lived year-round on the campground. Worth's life illustrates one aspect of Wesleyan Grove's transformation that is part of

another story--the work it brought to the island when it was in a serious economic and population decline. He had left the island for California twice already, and returned only in 1861 with the beginning of the cottage boom.<sup>1</sup>

These connections may often have reduced the expense of vacationing in Wesleyan Grove. At the same time, they constituted one of its chief attractions. For many people, expense alone was not the main objection to a fashionable resort like Newport. Many cottagers found in Wesleyan Grove a very literal "home away from home," populated with acquaintances from home and relatives from other nearby cities, following a social schedule much like that at home, and living in cottages that seemed more like urban parlors than anything else. For the men of the family, business acquaintances were often nearby. Indeed, some of the men of Wesleyan Grove were actually doing business while they were there: builders and reporters, real estate agents and photographers, could vacation and work at the same time.

The women of the families also, of course, worked and vacationed at the same time. Wesleyan Grove continued the mixture of social calls and domestic work familiar to them at home. The New York Times reporter for 1867 observed "children . . . playing in the walks; ladies sitting sewing or reading or chatting in the doorways," and "the hum of the sewing-machine" in the background. In Wesleyan Grove, though, women's work was often much more visible than at home: many observers reported seeing women cooking dinner, laying

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<sup>1</sup>Weiss, City, pp. 58-9.

tables, and making beds through the open doors and windows, "the processes of cooking, ironing, and other household duties, performed by the mothers or daughters themselves, with graceful unconsciousness or indifference to outside eyes." It is possible that this public display was intended to equalize relations between those who did much of "their own" work at home, and those who had servants. And cooking while on vacation, as everyone knows, could be seen as a form of entertainment rather than as domestic drudgery (see figure 14).

Indeed, visitors to Wesleyan Grove were most impressed by this peculiar openness. The cottages, like the tents they replaced, seemed to offer an extremely public existence. They were built very close together, with wide windows and doors usually left open, and much of family life taking place in plain sight of neighbors and tourists. Seeing into private family space, and especially seeing women at what was obviously considered private work, was quite disconcerting to some observers: "It seems to be a point of etiquette to show as much of the interiors as possible, and one can learn something of cooking and bed-making and mending, and the art of doing up the back hair."<sup>1</sup> But many observers found it appealing: the "graceful unconsciousness" of the women while they worked seemed to reveal "a veritable age of innocence, like Eve's before she bit the fatal apple. . ."<sup>2</sup> Like the New York Times reporter for 1866, many observers felt they had somehow

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<sup>1</sup>Charles Dudley Warner, "Their Pilgrimage," Harper's New Monthly Magazine 73 (July 1886), p. 174.

<sup>2</sup>James Jackson Jarves, "A New Phase of Druidism," The Galaxy 11 (December 1870), p. 780.



Figure 14. Household chores at Wesleyan Grove.  
From "Camp-Meeting at Martha's Vineyard,"  
Harper's Weekly, September 12, 1868. (DCHS)



"got into" Eden, where "beautiful and charming young ladies . . . sit on the piazzas in light and airy attire."<sup>1</sup>

The extraordinary openness of life in the cottages, in fact, looked to observers, not like an extremely public existence, but like a peculiar kind of privacy. Wesleyan Grove's living arrangements were not particularly "public" when compared with the great hotels, for example, where one occupied public space for everything except sleeping--eating, playing and socializing in public. But in the great hotels, and presumably in the private summer houses of Newport, public space was formal: one dressed to be seen, and the preparation was kept in the background. Wesleyan Grove, by contrast, seemed informal, domestic, and intimate.<sup>2</sup> This "Eden" was a paradise where even reporters who were strolling through the lanes peering into other people's kitchens and bedrooms had a sense of shared privacy: they were looking, not at a public presentation, but at a "gracefully unconscious," intimately private world.<sup>3</sup>

Even the word "cottage" was filled with similar associations with informality, domesticity, and family intimacy during these years. Although Wesleyan Grove's cottages did not conform to the style set out in Andrew Jackson Downing's influential patterns of the 1840s and

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<sup>1</sup>New York Times, August 31, 1866.

<sup>2</sup>Karen Halttunen has suggested that middle-class Victorian houses were segregated into "back-regions," where all preparations for self-presentation were made, and public space, where the "genteel performance" took place; Wesleyan Grove seems to have presented the illusion that these separations had been done away with--that there was no "performance" going on, and no preparation necessary. Karen Halttunen, Confidence Men and Painted Women: A Study of Middle-class Culture in America, 1830-1870, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1982), pp. 92-123.

<sup>3</sup>Jarves, "A New Phase," p. 781.

1850s, they shared the connotations of simplicity and rural informality that were associated with the medieval and rustic styles of Downing's cottages; to these associations they added their own clear references to Gothic religious themes and to the tents that preceded them. Like the "cottages" of Newport, and like many others that bore no resemblance whatever to the Downing style, Wesleyan Grove's "cottages" laid claim to a social meaning of simplicity and artlessness rather than to a specific architectural style.<sup>1</sup>

The cottages, moreover, were preeminently domestic--"best suited to families"--since they both "embodied economy" and "insure[d] the privacy of home life."<sup>2</sup> In the great hotels, there was little place for children. One of the chief appeals of this sort of cottage life, and indeed of seashore vacationing in general, was the ease with which children could be included. The informality of life, the inexpensiveness, and the moral safety, all contributed to the sense that children were welcome there.<sup>3</sup> At Wesleyan Grove, a comfortable environment for families with children was expanded into an almost idyllic sense of safety: more than one observer described small children wandering unsupervised through the "rustic lanes" of Wesleyan Grove with labels attached to their backs detailing the

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<sup>1</sup>For an analysis of the unique architectural style of Wesleyan Grove's cottages, see Ellen Weiss, City in the Woods, especially chapter 3.

<sup>2</sup>Richard Luce Pease, A Guide to Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket, (Boston: Rockwell and Churchill, 1876), p. 35.

<sup>3</sup>British historians have made this point particularly clear in regard to the development of English seaside resorts in the early and middle nineteenth century. See especially J. K. Walton, The English Seaside Resort: A Social History, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983), p. 43, and J.A.R. Pimlott, The Englishman's Holiday: A Social History, (Sussex: Harvester Press, 1976), p. 121.

cottage or tent to which they should be returned, "as safely as the lambs in Paradise before Eve listened to the serpent."<sup>1</sup>

The physical design of Wesleyan Grove contributed to the sense of shared domesticity. In contrast to the long straight avenues of Newport, or the rows of hotels at Saratoga, Wesleyan Grove's curved, narrow streets and closely packed cottages gave outside observers the sense of walking through a private world. Indeed, whole neighborhoods turned inward around their own private parks, where the residents' children could play under the eyes of one or another of the cottagers. This sense of privacy was no doubt enhanced by the fact that neighborhoods like these were often composed of cottagers from the same cities, even the same neighborhoods, on the mainland.

In some ways life at Wesleyan Grove was, more than anything else, like life at home in the city--or perhaps even more like life in the suburbs that were beginning to spring up on the outskirts of cities.<sup>2</sup> The cottages were decorated in parlor fashion, "with pictures, books, pianos, melodeons, shell ornaments, and other devices for ensnaring."<sup>3</sup> In fact, the interior parlors spilled out onto the verandas and lawns around the cottages: inhabitants hung their bird cages and parlor decorations from the branches of trees outside their cottages, and received guests on the grass in front of their doors. The cottages were often referred to as "parlor-like," and indeed they looked in

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<sup>1</sup>Jarves, "A New Phase," p. 779.

<sup>2</sup>Ellen Weiss interprets Wesleyan Grove, in fact, as a prototype for "that pervasive American residential habit, the suburb." *City in the Woods*, pp. xiii-xiv.

<sup>3</sup>New York Times, August 31, 1866.

some cases as if they were nothing but parlors, with all the style and function of those rooms in the 1860s. The kind of informality and domesticity emphasized at Wesleyan Grove was very much in line with the most popular domestic advisors of the period. Home-made decorations, an abundance of plants, comfort over formality, were all part of the scheme of creating an attractive inexpensive style of living suited to urban families of limited means.<sup>1</sup>

Filled with the routines and acquaintances of home, Wesleyan Grove was reassuringly familiar. It was not Newport--not expensive, not elite, not formal, not "fashionable." And it was safe, too, from the dangers from the other end of the class ladder, or so its enthusiasts claimed. As Vincent put it, the residents of Wesleyan Grove were "bent on excluding from their midst whatever defiles or degrades humanity," principally "bad characters" and "intoxicating drinks."<sup>2</sup> As the cottages went up, however, the need to protect Wesleyan Grove from danger seemed more urgent. The campground's own Camp Meeting Herald of the summer of 1866 saw fit to publish "A WORD OF ADVICE" to all "light-fingered gentry, and rowdies generally, to keep clear of Wesleyan Grove, for they are sure to be caught if they attempt to carry on their evil practices."<sup>3</sup>

There was a great deal of talk about protecting Wesleyan Grove from "evil practices," but in spite of the concern, it was a safe place to

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<sup>1</sup>See, for example, Harriet Beecher Stowe, "House and Home Papers," *Household Papers and Stories*, (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1896), pp. 54-68, or Catharine E. Beecher, The American Woman's Home, (Hartford: The Stowe-Day Foundation, 1985), pp. 84-103, on inexpensive ways to make the home beautiful.

<sup>2</sup>Jarves, "A New Phase," p. 782.

<sup>3</sup>Camp Meeting Herald 3, no. 1, (August 21, 1866).

vacation. From time to time, Vincent's chronicle or the Vineyard Gazette would report a minor skirmish with evildoers--a cache of liquor found and destroyed, a "worthless vagrant" arrested--but the handful of incidents that were reported only emphasize the relative safety of the community, particularly in comparison with the cities where most cottagers lived. Even the local Vineyard Gazette tended to make a joke of these incidents: in August, 1869, when five men were caught gambling on the Bluffs above the camp meeting, the Gazette took full advantage of the opportunity to make puns about "bluffing"--which was also Wesleyan Grove's term for flirting.<sup>1</sup>

"Not knowing, however," as Vincent put it, "what wicked men might be tempted to do," Wesleyan Grove took pains to protect itself. It was not, after all, only crime which threatened the cottagers. Apparently in the same category as "rowdies and rogues" and "worthless vagrants" were destitute beggars: in 1867 Hebron Vincent reported that a committee had been drawn up to discourage "private charity" on the campground, since so many people in need had been appearing during camp-meeting week.<sup>2</sup> "Poor humble followers of the Lord" were all very well, but Wesleyan Grove could no longer afford the threat to its communal safety that seemed to arise from such obvious destitution.

Wesleyan Grove seemed "safe" when it protected its vacationers, not simply from pickpockets and toughs, but from daily encounters with people far above or below them on the social scale (see figures

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<sup>1</sup>Vineyard Gazette, August 27, 1869.

<sup>2</sup>Vincent, History, p. 182.

15, 16, and 17). In this one important matter, of course, Wesleyan Grove was nothing at all like being at home in Fall River or New Bedford: the class exclusiveness of Wesleyan Grove was not something most of its cottagers probably experienced in their own neighborhoods, past or present. Although in mid-century the wealthiest residents of many cities were beginning to isolate themselves in class-stratified neighborhoods, most of the cottagers of Wesleyan Grove were not yet in a position to make this kind of move, at least not at home. At Wesleyan Grove they could afford to make this change, to surround themselves with people of similar experiences and values, and to keep out the diversity of the industrial city.

But that sense of safety was not achieved without struggle. In the formative period of the 1860s, outsiders tended to see the forces of pleasure and religion at Wesleyan Grove as in a state of open conflict, often embodied in the cottages themselves. The New York Times correspondent in the summer of 1867 believed that the cottagers and the tenters occupied two completely different social worlds. He wrote that the cottage residents--"families from the mainland" who were spending "the season" at Wesleyan Grove--rarely went to the religious meetings "except to wander around in idle curiosity." As for the other visitors, the Times correspondent found ample opportunity for lampooning the "vehemence" of their religious expressions, their bad table manners, and, in short, their lowly origins.<sup>1</sup> The Providence Journal correspondent was more respectful

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<sup>1</sup>New York Times, August 20, 1867, p. 2.



FROM NEW BEDFORD

Figure 15. Respectable visitors from New Bedford. From "Camp-Meeting at Martha's Vineyard," Harper's Weekly, September 12, 1868. (DCHS)



FROM NANTUCKET.

Figure 16. Quakers from Nantucket. From "Camp-Meeting at Martha's Vineyard." (DCHS)



BATHING ON THE BEACH.

Figure 17. Less respectable visitors. From "Camp-Meeting at Martha's Vineyard." (DCHS)

of Methodism and of the camp-meeting in general, but he too argued in 1868 that there were two different kinds of visitors there: Methodists, and "a great many other people whose Methodism consists mainly in some method of getting to Wesleyan Grove every summer."<sup>1</sup>

The cottages, and the new uses of Wesleyan Grove they represented, did intensify conflicts on the campgrounds. Hebron Vincent reported, for instance, that in 1865 a number of tent-dwellers were displaced to make way for new cottage lots. As Vincent put it, "some of the old settlers . . . had the misfortune to be removed from their endeared spots to others less enjoyable." This was unavoidable progress, as Vincent saw it, but however inevitable the progress that doomed one's "house of cloth . . . to be superseded by one of wood," it was not a process that benefited everyone equally.<sup>2</sup>

The controversy between David Clark and Moses Scudder over their cottage brought to light some of the ways in which the new pursuit of vacation pleasure could interfere with Wesleyan Grove's pursuit of Christian community. The two families had shared the cottage for the season of 1868. Soon after that, however, Scudder was telling his friends that Clark had bought the cottage as a gift for him, and Clark was claiming it as his own. The conflict became public in 1869 when the two men began to exchange accusations in the Hartford Courant. Clark eventually had a pamphlet published entitled How the Reverend M.L. Scudder Got His Cottage, in which he told his

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<sup>1</sup>Providence Journal, August 20, 1868.

<sup>2</sup>Vincent, History, pp. 133-4.



side of the story, and also revealed a great deal about the inner workings of cottage life at Wesleyan Grove.

The argument between Scudder and Clark originated in difficulties a great many Wesleyan Grove cottagers must have experienced. For one thing, the tiny cottage was occupied by seven adults during August of 1868 (and sometimes more--at one point Clark invited some relatives to spend the night). Opportunities for conflict arose almost daily. Scudder's daughter apparently insulted Mrs. Clark, and Clark's grown son complained to him that the Reverend Scudder's tantrums got on his nerves: "I would not stay here with that fussy man, Scudder, for one hundred dollars a day."<sup>1</sup> One of the most obvious sources of tension between the two families was the disagreement over who was to pay for the groceries that were bought daily when both families were there. Clark believed that Scudder always contrived to bring him along whenever anything needed to be paid for: "I soon saw that he possessed a spongy nature, and concluded not to accompany him any more; but from the bakers, fruit dealers, and poultry-men, I continued to supply the table as long as we remained."<sup>2</sup> Scudder in turn accused Clark and his family of living off him while they were on Martha's Vineyard. Most cottagers did not end up hiring lawyers and exchanging insults in the newspaper, but many of them must have encountered difficulties like the ones between the Scudders and the Clarks.

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<sup>1</sup>David Clark, Rev. Moses Scudder, p. 15

<sup>2</sup>Clark, p. 14.

The cottages and the social diversification they symbolized presented not only theoretical but practical problems for Wesleyan Grove: how to balance the needs of (relatively) prosperous and respectable cottage-owners with penniless Methodist enthusiasts who traveled to the camp meeting with their own provisions and slept in the straw, but also how to reconcile the speculative excitement over the cottages with the detachment from worldly things the camp meeting hoped to encourage. And the conflicts between pleasure and religion, so often reported in the press, were crosshatched by another conflict, less often discussed, that seemed in the long run even more threatening to Wesleyan Grove's vocation.

In 1867, Hebron Vincent's chronicle announced, with resignation, that: "[w]herever, in this land of the Pilgrims, there is any special gathering of the people. . . , there will be the indomitable Yankee, with . . . his plans of some kind for turning up the dollar." More to the point, "there, too, will be gentlemen, all ready, if the opportunity offer, for a profitable investment."<sup>1</sup> In that year, gentleman investors had formed a company with local resident Captain Shubael Norton, the owner of a large piece of land that bordered on Wesleyan Grove which they hoped to turn into a resort community. (Of the company's six principal investors, four were from Martha's Vineyard: a retired merchant captain, the owner of a coal shipping business, the heir to a whaling fortune, and an Edgartown storekeeper and banker. The two off-island investors were William Hills, a Boston flour merchant, and Erastus P. Carpenter, a factory owner who was to

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<sup>1</sup>Vincent, *History*, p. 170.

become a professional resort developer.)<sup>1</sup> The Oak Bluffs Land and Wharf Company, as they called their corporation, began selling cottage lots that very summer, and laid out plans for a wharf and a hotel. The creation of a frankly secular resort like Oak Bluffs focused a whole new set of challenges to the religious purity of Wesleyan Grove in that year. The pursuit of profit, even more than the pursuit of pleasure, seemed to threaten the purposes of Wesleyan Grove.

At first, Wesleyan Grove's leaders looked for ways of blocking out whatever secular influences Oak Bluffs might turn out to harbor. In 1866, the Vineyard Gazette joked about the "Camp Meeting war" and warned of a plan to build a "Chinese wall" around Wesleyan Grove.<sup>2</sup> And in 1869, Wesleyan Grove cottagers actually did just that: a fence was constructed around the campgrounds, and the gate was closed nightly at 10:00 p.m. But more frequently, Wesleyan Grove's efforts to protect itself from the influences of Oak Bluffs were marked with some ambivalence. As the Oak Bluffs Company transformed the area adjacent to Wesleyan Grove, the leaders of Wesleyan Grove went into business on their own behalf in 1870 with another nearby piece of land across a lake (or "over Jordan," as it came to be called). As an "escape route" in case the camp-meeting was forced to move, they formed the Vineyard Grove Company, and they, too, began selling lots for cottages. By 1872, the two companies together had sold over six hundred cottage lots, and had completely transformed the place: promoters began to speak of a "Cottage City" which encompassed all three areas.

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<sup>1</sup>Hough, Martha's Vineyard, pp. 61-62.

<sup>2</sup>Vineyard Gazette, August 31, 1866.

But for all that, the leaders of Wesleyan Grove continued to be wary of the influence of Oak Bluffs, and saw their own speculative ventures not as joining the enemy, but as a defensive maneuver.

But if the leaders of Wesleyan Grove drew a circle to keep Oak Bluffs out, Oak Bluffs did not return the favor. Rather than setting itself up in opposition to Wesleyan Grove, Oak Bluffs embraced it. The Oak Bluffs company directors took pains to enforce Methodist moral requirements in their development: no steamboats landed on Sunday at their wharf; no liquor was to be sold (openly) at their fashionable hotel; Oak Bluffs land deeds bound buyers to the rules of the Martha's Vineyard Camp Meeting Association. Oak Bluffs directors seemed to recognize the extent to which the appeal of their location depended on the special mix of religion and pleasure that constituted the world of Wesleyan Grove. For Oak Bluffs, of course, everything was to be gained by associating the two locations together as one summer experience in the minds of visitors. So Oak Bluffs acted to widen but not destroy the boundaries of safety and comfort established at Wesleyan Grove.

Oak Bluffs developers, too, emphasized the "non-Newport" attributes that had made Wesleyan Grove attractive. Oak Bluffs was explicitly advertised as cheaper than aristocratic Newport or Saratoga, designed for those who desired the "benefits of the sea air and out of door exercise without the discomforts of a fashionable and crowded watering place."<sup>1</sup> Although Oak Bluffs cottages were often considerably larger, more ornate, and more expensive than those on

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<sup>1</sup>Advertisement in Providence Journal, August 22, 1867.

Wesleyan Grove, they were still more like Wesleyan Grove cottages than like the stylish "cottages" being built at Newport. In City in the Woods, her study of the architectural history of Cottage City, Ellen Weiss has pointed out that some of the professionally-designed cottages of Oak Bluffs intentionally mirrored the cottage styles of Newport, but in the smaller scale that brought them back down to actual "cottage" size--yet another way of saying that Cottage City was "not Newport."<sup>1</sup>

And Oak Bluffs residents, although sometimes far wealthier than those of Wesleyan Grove, often came from similar social worlds. Two of Oak Bluffs' wealthiest cottagers, William A. Claflin and Isaac Rich, were both millionaires, but they were also both committed Methodists. Claflin was the governor of Massachusetts, but also the son of a manufacturer who had started life in desperate poverty. And Isaac Rich had risen from childhood poverty to his millionaire status in the 1870s, and had gone on to become the principal founder (with Lee Claflin) of Methodist Boston University.<sup>2</sup> One could be extremely wealthy, apparently, and still feel more at home among the local builders, patent medicine salesmen, and tradesmen at Oak Bluffs than among the elite at Newport.

At Oak Bluffs, as at Wesleyan Grove, the chief charm still lay in its "social home life." Oak Bluffs, too, offered "comfort and benefit consistent with the average purse," and its moral and class safety were the key to its popularity. To businessmen who left their families on

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<sup>1</sup>Weiss, City, pp. 96-98.

<sup>2</sup>Weiss, City, pp. 96 and 113.

vacation and commuted back and forth to work, Oak Bluffs advertisements offered complete assurance: "your wife and daughter can mingle with the multitude and hear no word to offend and your little boy and girl can go and come at their pleasure without fear of trouble or harm."<sup>1</sup> Oak Bluffs was not on sacred ground, but it was near enough to partake of many of its blessings--it was, as one observer phrased it, a "gentile suburb" of Wesleyan Grove.<sup>2</sup>

Ultimately, Oak Bluffs presented a mix of business, pleasure and religion quite different from that on the campgrounds, but in many cases the boundaries between the two were blurry. On the campgrounds, for instance, the land was safeguarded by the Martha's Vineyard Camp Meeting Association: it could not be bought or sold. At Oak Bluffs (and at Vineyard Highlands) speculation was uncontrolled. By the 1870s, land prices had quadrupled. But speculators were not all outsiders with no ties to the camp-meeting: some of the most devoted supporters of Wesleyan Grove made money (or tried to) by speculating in cottage lots at Oak Bluffs or Vineyard Highlands.

Wells Baker, a dry-goods merchant from New Bedford, for example, had given \$20 in 1865 to help purchase the grounds of Wesleyan Grove. Between the summer of 1871 and the summer of 1872 he also made a substantial profit on two Oak Bluffs lots, which he bought for \$225 and sold for \$1300. He kept a third lot for his own

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<sup>1</sup>The Cottage City, or The Season at Martha's Vineyard, (Lawrence, Massachusetts: S. Merrill and Crocker, 1879), p. 33.

<sup>2</sup>Jarves, "A New Phase," p. 779.

use. The boundary between sacred ground and speculative ground was a clear one, but physically the two were not very far apart: Pequot Avenue at Oak Bluffs, where Baker's lots were located, is directly across the street from one of the entrances to Wesleyan Grove, no more than a few hundred feet from the gate. The same profits could be made at Vineyard Highlands: the Reverend Moses Scudder bought the first lot sold by the Vineyard Grove Company in 1870 for \$100, and sold it two years later for \$400.<sup>1</sup>

Oak Bluffs took the picturesque elements that were already a part of Wesleyan Grove's life and gave them full play. At Oak Bluffs, cottages sprouted turrets and towers and boasted ocean views. Sometimes cottages were moved from the campgrounds and put together to make larger ones at Oak Bluffs. Street names were frankly fanciful, referring more to other fashionable scenic resorts than to the campground's religious associations: Narragansett, Penacook, and Samoset were intended to evoke the Indian "associations" of the White Mountains and Newport rather than the campground, where the streets had names like Siloam, Commonwealth, and Trinity.

Oak Bluffs was laid out by Robert Morris Copeland, a popular landscape architect who had made his name designing fashionable cemeteries. Copeland took the circular motif of Wesleyan Grove and expanded it into an elaborately curved, studiedly informal design--mirroring the intimacy of scale at Wesleyan Grove, but maintaining more normal spatial arrangements. Deeds to Oak Bluffs land specified

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<sup>1</sup>Dukes County Land Grants Records, Baker--volume 53, numbers 37, 39, and 41; and volume 50, numbers 41 and 42. Land Grants Records, Scudder--vol. 47, no. 2. Dukes County Land Records.

the distances allowed between cottage and street and between the cottages, and they explicitly prohibited the erection of tents there. In short, Oak Bluffs looked like Wesleyan Grove without any of its visual ties to the camp-meeting--almost as picturesque, but without the inconvenience and primitive conditions of Wesleyan Grove.

As it turned out, the creation of Oak Bluffs eased the tension within Wesleyan Grove, since it made its conflicts in part geographical rather than internal. And it also acted to broaden the appeal of the two places taken together, by expanding the ways in which they could include the secular and the sacred, the profit-making and the pleasure-seeking, in one place. By the end of the 1860s, the development of Oak Bluffs had substantially changed the nature of what was now being referred to as "Cottage City," not by eliminating or directly competing with the religious atmosphere at Wesleyan Grove, but by expanding the range of possibilities while maintaining the sense of religious safety.

Eventually a continuum of acceptable entertainments evolved, ranging from the camp meeting itself to the more worldly pleasures of billiards, dancing, and roller skating: visitors arriving at the Oak Bluffs Wharf were greeted by a brass band, for example, while more conservative vacationers landed at the Highlands Wharf and stepped ashore in dignified silence. At Oak Bluffs, "harmless" leisure pursuits could go on full-scale without colliding directly with prayer meetings. This was especially important for croquet players, who had overrun the campgrounds in the late 1860s, occupying every open piece of lawn, even around the preacher's stand. The Camp Meeting Association was forced to take drastic measures: in 1867 they



prohibited the game during the week of the meeting. At Oak Bluffs, a fashionable hotel could be erected without fear of disrupting the home-like neighborhoods of the grove--and croquet could proceed without fear of disruption from religious services. This is not to say, however, that Oak Bluffs transformed the piety of Wesleyan Grove into a cover for secular entertainments. Both forms of entertainment coexisted. Even when Oak Bluffs sponsored the first of its immensely popular "illumination nights" in 1869, there were still a number of people who preferred to go to one of the two "largely attended" prayer meetings on the campgrounds.<sup>1</sup>

"Illumination Night" was one of the most successful entertainments sponsored by the Oak Bluffs Company, and it also revealed the extent to which the new entity of "Cottage City" both assimilated and transformed the meanings of Wesleyan Grove. On Illumination Night cottage dwellers in all the communities--Wesleyan Grove, Oak Bluffs, and Vineyard Highlands--strung Japanese lanterns everywhere, and decorated their cottages with banners. The slogans on the banners reveal an intense awareness of the campground's history, referring back to the camp meeting in an assortment of puns and jokes designed to connect religious and vacationing themes: "The Vineyard is Our Resting-Place, Heaven is Our Home," or "We Trust in Providence, Rhode Island."

Perhaps the most evocative of all was the slogan, "We'll Camp Awhile in the Wilderness, and Then We're Going Home." It seems to be a straightforward reference to vacationing, but is actually lifted from

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<sup>1</sup>Vincent, History of the Camp-Meeting, p. 225.

an early Methodist hymn that would have been familiar to everyone there, if only as a relic of the primitive past. In the revival song, home was heaven, and earthly life was the wilderness. In the Illumination Night version, Cottage City was now the "wilderness" (shorn of all its former associations with hardship and danger); and after "camping in the wilderness," the cottagers were returning to their true "home"--not heaven, but their daily lives in Fall River or New Bedford. The summer sojourn on Martha's Vineyard no longer reflected an image of a future heavenly "home;" it was now both a respite and a continuation of "home" in the city.

By the time Wesleyan Grove had become Cottage City, it had been joined by an entire army of oceanfront resorts up and down the coast of New England, from Newport to Bar Harbor. As an 1886 Harper's article had it,

The eastern coast [of New England] . . . presents an almost continued chain of hotels and summer cottages. . . . When one is on the coast in July or August it seems as if the whole fifty millions of people had come down to lie on the rocks, wade in the sand, and dip into the sea. <sup>1</sup>

And by that time, too, Cottage City had become quite typical of these new resorts. The Oak Bluffs Land and Wharf Company invested thousands of dollars to make Cottage City popular with all kinds of visitors. As many as twenty boats a day landed at the Oak Bluffs wharf during August, bringing thousands of daytrippers on excursions from New Bedford or Fall River, as well as cottage and hotel visitors. The

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Dudley Warner, "Their Pilgrimage," Harper's New Monthly Magazine 73 (July 1886), p. 170.

Sea View Hotel stood as a prototype of the great resort hotel, with all the latest improvements in style and comfort, including a billiards room, barbershop, gas lighting, and steam heat (see figure 18).

None of the new seaside resorts would have been complete without a hotel like the Sea View, if only for the sake of its function as a visual and geographic center. Their impressive size, their ornate architectural style, their huge public rooms, and their technological innovations made them landmarks rather than simply living quarters. Hotels like the Sea View in many ways came to represent the seaside resort in the public imagination. Even today, seventy-five years after most of them burned down, the "great hotels" remain foremost in the public imagination of late nineteenth century vacationing. And the Oak Bluffs Company had also succeeded in bringing the Old Colony Railroad down to Woods Hole, thus completing their railroad link with Boston.

This kind of corporate development was quite characteristic of coastal resorts during the last quarter of the century. On Martha's Vineyard alone, there were several other attempts to imitate Oak Bluffs' success--along the shores of Katama near Edgartown, and in several other parts of the island, speculators divided up land into cottage lots and planned to build hotels and wharves. Most of these went nowhere, and, like the Oak Bluffs Company itself, the investors went bankrupt in the 1874 credit crisis. Along many other parts of the northeastern shore, corporations invested in railroad lines, built wharves and hotels, and divided up lots for sale in the same way.

At the same time, other resorts partook of Wesleyan Grove's appeal. It became characteristic of the new vacation trade, especially along the coast, for example, to hold out the promise of informality,

MARTHA'S VINEYARD.



THE SEA VIEW HOUSE—MR. LOUIS FRENKEL, PROPRIETOR.

Figure 18. The Sea View Hotel. From Robert Grieve, Illustrated Martha's Vineyard, Nantucket and New Bedford, 1889 edition. (AAS)

privacy and domesticity: "the entire absence of conventionalities or conditions which require the sojourner to continue irksome society customs or relations."<sup>1</sup> William Dean Howells remarked about his favorite summer place on the coast of Maine years later, "At this function [dinner]. . . it is de rigueur for the men not to dress . . . . once a visitor from the world outside . . . burst out with the reproach, 'Oh, you make a fetish of your informality!'"<sup>2</sup>

Cottage City was also part of a larger movement to cater to the summer vacation trade for a wide variety of social classes--each in its own place. The northeastern shore trade was divided by class, one town taking on the elite trade with fashionable hotels and private houses, the next building up a middling trade with boarding houses and inexpensive cottages, the next offering services to day-long excursionists from the lower echelons of nearby cities. Howells described the stratification of his own vacation community in Annisquam, Maine, with precision: "Beyond our colony, which calls itself the Port, there is a far more populous watering-place, . . . known as the Beach, which is the resort of people several grades of gentility lower than ours." This next beach was "lined with rows of the humbler sort of summer cottages . . . supposed to be taken by inland people of little social importance." Down even farther were the beaches for excursionists, who came to the beach by trolley, and spent "long afternoons splashing among the waves, or in lolling groups of men,

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<sup>1</sup>Fall River and Old Colony Railroad, The Old Colony; or Pilgrim Land, Past and Present (Boston, 1887), p. 29.

<sup>2</sup>William Dean Howells, "Confessions of a Summer Colonist," Atlantic Monthly 81 (December 1898), p. 744.

women and children on the sand."<sup>1</sup> By the 1870s, all of Narragansett Bay was turning to this kind of "shore business," specializing in working class resorts like Rocky Point, twelve miles from Providence, with its Coney Island-like amusements, cheap food, and beach.<sup>2</sup>

Wesleyan Grove and its offshoots partook of all the forces that were transforming the New England coast: the economic speculation, the shift in vacation styles, and the segregation of tourist towns along class lines. Cottage City was toured by people of various classes--it had its excursionists and its fashionable hotel--but it remained preeminently the summer home of the "inland people of little social importance" that Howells had heard of, but never met. Charles Dudley Warner wrote a serial story for Harper's in 1886 called "Their Pilgrimage," in which he had his pair of lovers travel up and down the coast to every resort in the east, in the meantime including a kind of travel guide to the resorts. Cottage City still stood out for its unique ambience: "on the New Bedford boat for Martha's Vineyard our little party of tourists sailed quite away from Newport life."<sup>3</sup> At Cottage City, the vacationers were still of a peculiar sort:

Most of the faces are of a grave, severe type, plain and good, of the sort of people ready to die for a notion. . . . these people abandon themselves soberly to the pleasures of the sea and of this packed, gregarious life, and get solid enjoyment out of their recreation.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Howells, "Confessions," pp. 744-745.

<sup>2</sup>Gilkeson, Middle-Class Providence, pp. 221-222.

<sup>3</sup>Warner, "Their Pilgrimage," p. 173.

<sup>4</sup>Warner, p. 172.

It was not Eden to everyone, but for better or worse, Cottage City still offered an image of leisure shorn of its aristocratic and extravagant associations, one which instead associated leisure with an unpretentious style, family intimacy, and the Christian duty of relaxation.

## CHAPTER 4

### "MANUFACTURED FOR THE TRADE": NOSTALGIA IN NANTUCKET, 1870-1890

"Cottage City" was one of the most popular of New England's resorts in the last quarter of the century, but some tourists sailed right past it without any interest--and on to the island of Nantucket. One tourist reported that in 1881, four-fifths of the steamboat's passengers got off at Oak Bluffs, that "paradise of the commonplace," while a discriminating few went on to Nantucket. Cottage City was far from heaven, in her view. On the contrary, it seemed to her to be a punishment out of Dante's Inferno: "condemned through infinite ages to live in a small wooden house open in front, rear, and on both sides to the eyes, ears, and tongues of the good and happy grocer and his family." Fortunately, there was Nantucket, where the grocer and his family were not apt to be encountered. As this tourist explained: "some of us love the dust of centuries, some of us love the almighty dollar; and as only twenty miles of water lie between Nantucket and Oak Bluffs, we may all be satisfied almost simultaneously."<sup>1</sup>

What was it that made Nantucket so different from Martha's Vineyard? In some ways, Nantucket's tourist industries were much like those of Cottage City. Nantucket investors laid out cottage

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<sup>1</sup>Jane G. Austin, Nantucket Scraps, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin and Company, 1893), p. 9.



communities modeled after Oak Bluffs, and built a railroad and a hotel as the focus for resort activities on the island. The Woods Hole branch of the Old Colony Railroad connected Boston tourists to a steamboat line that would bring them to Nantucket as easily as to Martha's Vineyard. And Nantucket's charms as a seaside resort were much the same as those of Martha's Vineyard: advertisements promised the same cool breezes and the same healthy air that were to be found on the other island.

But in another sense, Nantucket's tourist industry was quite unlike anything that had gone before. In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, tourists were increasingly turning to the more isolated and obscure parts of New England--places that, as an Old Colony Railroad pamphlet described it, "preserved the ancient types and customs of New England . . . . the original flavor and atmosphere which distinguished the region in the old colonial days."<sup>1</sup> For tourists in search of the quaint and exotic, the new wharves of Oak Bluffs could not compare to the "grey old wharves" of Nantucket and "many another quaint bygone place," at which tourists could find remnants of another, older world.

Nantucket's new tourist industry was part of several cultural currents that were making such "quaint bygone places" newly attractive to tourists. In a variety of ways, a new fascination with all that was not modern, urban and industrialized was making itself felt: in a new interest in handcrafted works and "primitive cultures;" in a

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<sup>1</sup>Fall River and Old Colony Railroad, The Old Colony: or Pilgrim Land, Past and Present (Boston, 1887), p. 52.

return to the history and artifacts of the "colonial" period in American history; and in a vague but pervasive sense of the "old days" connected with farm and village life. And all these interests fueled a new trade in the old, from antiques and "colonial revival" architecture, to historical novels and tourism.<sup>1</sup>

In all these innovations, the region of New England played a central role. Increasingly in the late nineteenth century, New England was being portrayed as "Old New England," a place that embodied a whole range of values and experiences associated with the past--both with a specifically colonial national past and with a more vaguely understood past associated with the simpler village life remembered and imagined by those who came to adulthood at mid-century. And New England's tourist industries were catering increasingly to widespread nostalgia for this "Old New England." Travel books and advertisements portrayed the entire region as a living museum, a storehouse for cherished ways of life that no longer seemed to exist in the cities (even the New England cities) where tourists lived.

Tourists in search of "Old New England" were looking for an imagined experience of the past--for virtuous simplicity, rural independence, class harmony. But these imagined experiences were signified by outward and visible signs, and it was to these outward manifestations that tourists turned. Not coincidentally, the visual

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<sup>1</sup>Jackson Lears, in No Place of Grace, brings together these cultural trends in one analytical framework as the "anti-modernist impulse," part of a cultural crisis among members of old Yankee families unable to face the challenges represented by modern industrialized society. T. J. Jackson Lears, No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981). For a social analysis of the "colonial revival," see Alan Axelrod, ed., The Colonial Revival in America, (New York and London: W.W. Norton and Company, 1985).

images that meant "Old New England" were also signs of isolation and economic failure. Rotting wharves and grass-grown streets, old buildings and outdated fashions, became a sign of something other than poverty and failure. For inland "colonial villages" like Deerfield, Massachusetts and Litchfield, Connecticut, quiet and decay came to represent the serenity and dignity of the old days. In old port towns like Newburyport, Salem, and Nantucket, "old Yankee" customs, quaint clothing, and uncouth accents seemed to signal an adherence to the values of the past.<sup>1</sup>

Neither Nantucket's history nor its situation in 1870 made the island especially susceptible to this kind of romanticization. (But neither, perhaps, were most of the towns that underwent this "re-invention.") In fact, Nantucket presented an almost entirely entrepreneurial and indeed urban history. Nantucket natives were neither rustic nor naive. They had always, on the contrary, enjoyed a reputation for being widely-traveled, urbane, and shrewd. Instead of a communal and harmonious past, Nantucket presented an unusually fragmented and disorderly one--racial and class tensions abounded, and traditional loyalties were weak or nonexistent. Not even religious homogeneity tied this community together. Nantucket had been settled by Quakers, but they had lost their predominance in the freewheeling days of the early nineteenth century. Neutral in everything but the pursuit of profit, Nantucket boasted none of the

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<sup>1</sup>About Newburyport, for example, the Boston and Maine Railroad's 1889 guidebook, All Along Shore, remarked that "It is a place of simple habits and old-time virtues where frugality and sobriety supplant the anxiety and restlessness that so greatly cloud many lives." Moses F. Sweetser, Here and There in New England and Canada: All Along Shore, (Boston: Boston and Maine Railroad, 1889), p. 66.

Revolutionary war heroes that were becoming such an important part of the imagined New England past.<sup>1</sup>

Just as New England in general had made its mark in the early 19th century largely on the basis of its economic and technological modernity, Nantucket had made a name for itself as a leader in one of the most lucrative, but also one of the most volatile, of early nineteenth century businesses--the whaling industry. Nantucket's whaling industry had prospered whenever it was unhindered by war, but the island had reached its peak during the 1830s and 1840s, when its renowned whaling captains had dominated the high-risk, high-profit Pacific whale fishery--"like so many Alexanders; parceling out among them the Atlantic, Pacific, and Indian oceans," as Herman Melville described them in Moby Dick.<sup>2</sup> During those years, island families rolled up immense fortunes, which they used to compete in transforming downtown Nantucket into a thoroughly modern city, complete with elm-lined streets, brick commercial buildings, and their own stylish Greek Revival mansions. Dozens of whale-related on-shore industries, including 39 candle and oil factories, employed hundreds of people, and added to the prosperity--and to the urban landscape--of the island.

But by the late 1840s, Nantucket was already beginning to feel the pinch of its heavy reliance on a single industry. Whale products

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<sup>1</sup>See Edward Byers, The Nation of Nantucket: Society and Politics in an Early American Commercial Center, 1660-1820, (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1987). Byers stresses the freewheeling aspects of Nantucket's social and economic life--its highly developed mercantile capitalism, weak communal ties, and religious tolerance--in contrast with notions of colonial New England's village homogeneity.

<sup>2</sup>Herman Melville, Moby Dick, chapter 14.

had always been subject to extreme fluctuations in price, and the industry itself was now in trouble, threatened by the growing scarcity of sperm whales, and the growing abundance of substitutes for whale lighting oil. In the end, Nantucket's decline was precipitated by all these factors and by its inability to compete with the deeper harbors of newer ports like New Bedford. During the best years of the whale fishery, as many as eighty-five Nantucket vessels at once were at sea; in 1853, only fifteen sailed from port.<sup>1</sup>

The island's wealthiest families began to withdraw their investments from whaling industries and to look for outside sources of income. Many of Nantucket's ordinary citizens made similar decisions--they continued to sail out of Nantucket, but they often decided not to sail back. In 1849, one Nantucket ship lost its entire crew to the gold rush when it stopped in San Francisco. But even without that unusual incentive, people were leaving the island. The population of Nantucket was already in decline by the end of the 1840s; it continued to decline, precipitously, from a peak of almost 10,000 to a low point of about 3500 by 1880. The last whaling ship left Nantucket in 1869, but by then visitors were already remarking on the town's rotting wharves and its empty streets.

The story of the rise and fall of Nantucket's whaling industry can be read in any of the dozens of popular histories and guides to Nantucket written from the 1870s through the 1980s--indeed, the

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<sup>1</sup>Edwin P. Hoyt, Nantucket: the Life of an Island, (Brattleboro, Vermont: The Stephen Greene Press, 1978), p. 136. Harry B. Turner; Argument Settlers (Nantucket: Inquire and Mirror Press, 1917), p. 31.

writing of that history was part of the process of transforming Nantucket. But the story of the transformation itself is a little more difficult to recover. How exactly did New England's new nostalgic tourist industry replace whaling as the primary means of livelihood on Nantucket? Most accounts have described the transformation as largely accidental: "if it had not happened that just about that time the American people began to acquire the vacation habit, the probabilities are that our old town would soon have been almost entirely depopulated."<sup>1</sup>

In reality, of course, it was not by accident that tourism became Nantucket's primary industry, any more than New Bedford accidentally replaced its own declining whaling industry with textile mills. As early as the 1860s, while nearby Wesleyan Grove blossomed into a summer resort, it had become clear to many islanders that the "summer business" might be an effective alternative to whaling. In 1865 the editors of the Nantucket Inquirer and Mirror, Henry D. Robinson and Roland B. Hussey, printed a three-page pamphlet designed to capture the Boston summer trade with a description of the "Beautiful Island of Nantucket," its unsurpassed "Pure Sea Air" and its hospitable inhabitants. In editorials of the mid-1860s, the editors encouraged islanders to invest in the summer trade, and to think of it as a business proposition: "We have something to sell; that something is health, comfort, and pleasure."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>William F. Macy, The Story of Old Nantucket, 2nd edition (Boston: Houghton Mifflin and Company, 1928), p. 142. This 1915 account by the president of the Nantucket Historical Association is typical in its attention to the whaling industry, and its lack of interest in what followed (and after all, it is the story of "old Nantucket").

<sup>2</sup>Nantucket Inquirer and Mirror, March 31, 1866.

But the editors of the Nantucket Inquirer made it clear that they hoped for better things. In fact, many islanders would have preferred to have followed the New Bedford route from whaling to factories (even though so many twentieth century tourist promoters and preservationists have been grateful for Nantucket's "salvation" from industrialization). In an editorial entitled, "Our Future," the Inquirer encouraged its readers to "have a higher ambition than to make Nantucket only a watering place." New Bedford, they pointed out, "has two shoe factories . . . . She has a tanning establishment, blue works, a petroleum factory, and two flour mills."<sup>1</sup> Nantucket, too, could aspire to this level of industrial prosperity, if a few difficulties could be overcome.

The editors put forth several reasons for the island's lack of success in new enterprises, blaming in part the "more than Turkish apathy" that had settled on its inhabitants. But the editors also believed that at least one potential industry--the cod fishery--was not stagnating for lack of energetic workers but for lack of capital. Editorials pleaded with investors to put money into the cod business, the "small fishery" which was making money for Gloucester, Newburyport, and Provincetown: "Men of moderate means, we call on you! . . . put a part of your well-earned means in a fishing vessel, and . . . benefit not only yourself alone, but also your island home."<sup>2</sup> (They had apparently already given up on "men of great means.") The Inquirer's editors believed that cod were more reliable than tourists:

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<sup>1</sup>Nantucket Inquirer and Mirror, September 30, 1865.

<sup>2</sup>Nantucket Inquirer and Mirror, September 30, 1865.

rather than "catering to the wants and tastes of a capricious city folk, and the chance of making anything only given to a few," Nantucket might be able to take "first rank among the fishing towns in Massachusetts."<sup>1</sup>

Where was the capital that could have made Nantucket into another fishing town like Provincetown or Gloucester? Some of the great fortune-holders had simply left the island in search of the pleasures of greater cities: Jared Coffin, who had built one of the great brick houses in downtown Nantucket in 1846, sold it the following year and moved to Boston. But other island resources were simply being invested elsewhere. If there was no capital forthcoming to invest in the "small fishery" of cod, there were more than enough local resources to invest in railroads and real estate speculation on the island. During the 1870s, a handful of residents and former residents of Nantucket invested heavily in the island's development as a resort. In a pattern typical of the period (very much like Oak Bluffs, for example), these investors planned interlocking projects--several "cottage cities," a luxury hotel, and a railroad to run between the resort towns and the old town. Corporations were established to sell shares in these enterprises; lots were surveyed and divided; advertisements were placed in city newspapers and local guides (see figures 19 and 20).

Much of this development was based on a few families' extensive landholdings on the island. The Nantucket Surfside Land Company, for example, was incorporated in 1873 with Henry Coffin as its

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<sup>1</sup>Nantucket Inquirer and Mirror, February 24, 1866.



HAND BOOK OF NANTUCKET: 53

Summer Resort!

**SUNSET HEIGHTS!**

**COTTAGES AND LOTS FOR SALE!**

The attention of all seeking a delightful Summer Resort is invited to the natural advantages and beauties of this spot. Situate on a bluff at the South-east side of the island and close to the delightful

**VILLAGE OF SIASCONSET,**

the situation is not surpassed, if equalled, by any on the New England coast. Great improvements have been made, a large tract of land laid out into house lots, several cottages erected, and others ready to put up.

**BATHING HOUSES**

are located close at hand on the beach and the surf-bathing is

**Equal to any in the World.**

Fresh and salt water fishing may be carried on within a short distance of the "Heights."

Regular stage communication with the town of Nantucket through the summer is established, and passengers can be taken to Sunset Heights from the steamer.

The house lots average 50 x 75 feet—some larger—and will be offered to purchasers at prices ranging from **ONE HUNDRED** to **TWO HUNDRED AND FIFTY DOLLARS.**

Lithographed plans are ready, which with any information required, will be furnished upon application to

**CHAS. H. ROBINSON,**  
or **DR. F. A. ELLIS,**

**Nantucket, . . . Mass.**

Figure 19. Advertisement for cottage lots at Sunset Heights. From Isaac Folger, Handbook of Nantucket, 1874. (AAS)

HAND BOOK OF NANTUCKET. 63

## **SURF-SIDE!**

The Nantucket Surf-Side Company,

having purchased a tract of about 2,000 acres  
of land on the

**South Shore of Nantucket,**

**With a Water Frontage of Four Miles,**

extending from Miacomet pond on the West, to  
the South East Quarter, are now prepared to  
sell lots at

**Prices within Reach of All.**

**These Lots are 80 x 120 feet.**

The location is unsurpassed, and there is no  
cooler spot for a Watering-Place on the Eastern  
coast of the United States.

For plans or particulars, call on or address

HENRY COFFIN, *President.*  
GEO. W. MACY, } *Directors,*  
ALFRED SWAIN, }  
Nantucket, Mass.  
or CHARLES F. COFFIN, *Treasurer,*  
174 State St. Boston, Mass.

Figure 20. Advertisement for cottage lots at  
Surfside. From Isaac Folger, Handbook of  
Nantucket, 1874. (AAS)

president. It was designed to set up a resort community on the south shore--to be called Surfside--on land that belonged to Charles and Henry Coffin. The Coffin brothers were heirs to one of the greatest of the island whaling fortunes, which had included in the 1850s a fleet of seven whaleships, half a million dollars in inventory, warehouses, shipping supplies, a number of candle and oil factories, and a substantial amount of real estate on the island.<sup>1</sup> Their land, like much of the undeveloped land on Nantucket, was held as shares of commons, a remnant of the original proprietors' settlement.

Until the early nineteenth century, most of Nantucket's land had been held in common by the families of its original settlers, and most islanders could claim a proprietary interest, if only by holding a tiny fraction of a share. Shareholders had customarily petitioned the proprietors to "set off" their share of commons when they wished to build a house or settle a farm. By the early 1820s, the common holdings had been greatly reduced in a lawsuit brought before the state Supreme Court by a group of prominent island merchants, who challenged the entire system's legality.<sup>2</sup> But even in the 1860s and 1870s, large stretches of barren land and shore were still held in common, simply because nobody had wanted them before. In the 1870s, investors found a use for this land: barren seashore had become beachfront property. From that time on, there were increasing numbers of petitions to "set off" pieces of land on the shore

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<sup>1</sup>William Gardner, The Coffin Saga, (Nantucket: Whaling Museum Publications, 1949), pp. 194-198.

<sup>2</sup>Byer, Nation of Nantucket, pp. 273-4.

for development, land which had virtually no value unless and until it became resort property.

Most local investment was in the form of landholdings like these, but outside capital was also raised through local connections. The Nantucket Railroad was capitalized at \$100,000, most of which was raised in Boston at \$100 a share. But the railroad was primarily the creation of islanders: the idea had come from Philip Folger, who was the grandson of a wealthy Nantucket whaling merchant, but who lived in Boston. Folger was instrumental in organizing Boston capital to invest in the Nantucket Railroad, but his island connections allowed him to do business there, too: in 1881 he sold the railroad a piece of land that had been set off to him twenty years earlier for \$8500.

Railroad and land development schemes were typically closely connected with each other in these resort enterprises, and so it was on Nantucket. The Nantucket Railroad's general manager was Charles F. Coffin, the son of Henry Coffin, and its treasurer was John Norton, who was also a principal investor in Surfside. The railroad depot became the real estate office of the Surfside Land Company--and in fact, was the only building on the south shore for several years. In 1883, the company finally managed to erect the Surfside Hotel, a structure they had bought in Rhode Island and moved to its new location. From then on, the railroad and the hotel functioned together. The hotel provided a destination for an excursion from town, and all kinds of summer entertainments were held there.

But the Surfside Hotel and the Nantucket Railroad were all that came of this development. No cottages were built on the plains surrounding the hotel on the south shore. On the basis of newspaper

accounts, one would have thought that the Surfside Company was having remarkably good success selling real estate: in July and August of 1882 the Nantucket Inquirer reported that they had sold almost 180 lots. But this success was an illusion. A grand total of seven people had bought lots at Surfside between 1872 and 1881, for which they had paid \$20 or \$30--during a time when a normal price for such a lot would have been at least \$100, and when many Oak Bluffs lots were going for \$400. It is technically true that 136 lots were sold in 1882, but these transactions involved fewer than twenty people, who paid \$1 for anywhere from one to fifteen lots at a time.

Some of the buyers were local people involved in the tourist trade. Joseph Barney, who "bought" 36 lots from the Surfside Land Company in 1882, was the agent of the Nantucket and Cape Cod Steamboat Company. The Mowry family, which opened the Sherburne Hotel in 1877, took possession of thirty lots in 1882. Perhaps the cottage lots were being given away along with stock in the company, or as part of some other kind of incentive program; but at any rate, no cottages were built on these lots. The success of the development was entirely on paper, which was made clear in 1887 when 900 acres were sold at auction to cover debts.<sup>1</sup>

A number of other planned cottage developments experienced similar fates. Joseph and Winchester Veazie, former islanders who

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<sup>1</sup>This information comes from the Nantucket Registry of Deeds for these years. In fact, the Nantucket Inquirer reported that the Surfside Land Company had sold over 300 lots by November 1882. The only way that this number can be squared with the Registry of Deeds information is if one includes a June 1882 sale of most of the company's land to the trustees of the company for \$120,000, in a transaction that was apparently designed to put up front money for the company, and to empower the trustees to sell bonds to recoup their losses--obviously not a sale of cottage lots at all.

also owned land to be used for the railroad's right-of-way, planned an enormous development of 1700 lots to be called "Nauticon." In 1876, another group of investors laid out "Sherburne Bluffs" on the north shore. The Coffins, a few other islanders, and some wealthy off-islanders, including the well-known painter Eastman Johnson, were involved in the scheme. Sherburne Bluffs was to have had 150 house lots, but apparently foundered over a disagreement between wealthy would-be cottagers and island investors over a road to be built between the cottages and the sea.<sup>1</sup> And "Sunset Heights," near the village of Siasconset, was divided into lots which were put on the market in the mid-1870s by a doctor and a real estate agent, both local. But by 1881 only a few cottages had been built there. This rate of failure was not unusual for such speculative resort ventures as these during the 1870s and 1880s. Even the relatively successful Oak Bluffs Land Company on Martha's Vineyard was forced out of business in 1882 after selling its remaining lots and the Sea View Hotel to pay its debts.<sup>2</sup>

But despite these failures, tourists flocked to Nantucket in larger numbers each year. As many as ten thousand came in the summer of 1880. The hotels of Nantucket were full every summer, and each summer they were expanded to accommodate more guests. The Nantucket Railroad and the Surfside Hotel became focal points of the resort experience on Nantucket. Excursions to Surfside were an important part of summer life on the island: the hotel hosted dances,

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<sup>1</sup>Sherburne Bluffs papers, Peter Foulger Museum and Library of Nantucket Historical Association; Edwin P. Hoyt, Nantucket, the Life of an Island (Brattleboro: Stephen Greene Press, 1978), p. 136.

<sup>2</sup>Hough, Martha's Vineyard, Summer Resort, pp. 165-7.

clambakes, skating parties, and picnics. And visitors did build their own summer houses--not in the planned developments, but along the shore overlooking the bay near town, and in the village of Siasconset (pronounced Sconset) on the southeast corner of the island, which was being transformed from a collection of fishing shacks to a summer community.

Smaller-scale tourist businesses were also thriving in the 1870s and 1880s, outside of the local circle of resort investors. An 1882 guidebook listed nine hotels and more than twenty boarding houses on the island. A wide variety of other tourist businesses were also profiting from the new trade. Isaac Folger's 1874 Handbook of Nantucket featured an advertisement on every right-hand page, clearly revealing that Nantucket was fully equipped as a resort: there were bathing-machines and ice-cream parlors, yachts for pleasure cruises and a "fashionable tailor," all attesting to the buying power of the summer visitor. Nantucket in the 1870s was becoming a summer resort, whether or not its largest investors were making money.

But in spite of the hopeful letter to the Nantucket Journal in 1879 arguing that the Nantucket Railroad might "have the effect of dotting the plains with . . . cottage cities," Nantucket, with or without the Surfside Land Company, was not going to be another Oak Bluffs.<sup>1</sup> It was not simply that the efforts of investors were failures, but that they misjudged Nantucket's developing clientele, who seem to have been interested neither in the "crowded haunts" of elite watering-places,

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<sup>1</sup>Nantucket Journal, August 13, 1879, quoted in Clay Lancaster, The Far-Out Island Railroad (Nantucket: Pleasant Publications, 1972), p. 4

nor the gregarious closeness of a "Cottage City." Those visitors who sailed past the "Cottage City" to Nantucket preferred the privacy of boarding at a small hotel or with a family: as the Nantucket Inquirer put it, they "do not care for such a variety [of people] as they expect to find at hotels."<sup>1</sup> The Providence Journal pegged the summer people of Nantucket as the sort who "value good breeding more than fashion," which was perhaps to say that they could not afford the "fashionable display" of Newport, but that Cottage City-like familiarity was beneath them.<sup>2</sup>

Nantucket's visitors were far more cosmopolitan than Martha's Vineyard's cottagers. Hotel registers of the Sherburne Hotel (one of the largest on the island) for the summer of 1879 showed a much wider range of geographical backgrounds among Nantucket's tourists than at Oak Bluffs. Visitors from cities as far away as Cincinnati and Baltimore were quite common. Most were from New England or New York, but almost one-third were from outside the region--the mid-Atlantic, the Midwest, and even a handful from the southeast.<sup>3</sup> And most were from substantial cities. In the village of Siasconset, according to an 1881 account, the summer people were mostly professionals: "literary men and women," artists, college professors and "weary women, teachers of seminaries," as well as "men of affairs,"

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<sup>1</sup>Nantucket Inquirer and Mirror, August 22, 1868.

<sup>2</sup>Providence Journal, July 30, 1881.

<sup>3</sup>Register of Sherburne Hotel, 1879, Peter Foulger Museum and Library of Nantucket Historical Association.



who left their families on the island for the summer and came themselves for a shorter stay.<sup>1</sup>

More importantly, these tourists were looking for a different kind of resort experience on Nantucket. Accounts of visits to Nantucket indicate that tourists were as intrigued by Nantucket's quaintness and its romantic history as they were by its cool breezes and surf. By the 1870s and 1880s, visitors to Nantucket had been exposed, not only to the claims of island promoters, but to an extensive literature written by and for outsiders, which emphasized its quaint atmosphere alongside its healthy sea air. At the very moment when Nantucket's promoters were straining to provide the most modern conveniences and luxuries for their visitors, the same visitors were perhaps equally intrigued by the "grey old wharves," the decay and the look of antiquity they found.

Since the 1860s, visitors had been writing histories and descriptions of Nantucket which highlighted its peculiar combination of glorious past and quiet present. In guidebooks, in articles for national magazines, in travel books like Samuel Adams Drake's Nooks and Corners of the New England Coast, an entire literature of nostalgic touring was being created; and Nantucket (along with many other New England towns and villages) found itself the focus of this new enthusiasm for "quaint bygone days." According to off-island enthusiasts, it was Nantucket's picturesque history that made the island worth visiting. Like Rome, the ancient glory of Nantucket had

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<sup>1</sup>A. Judd Northrup, 'Sconset Cottage Life: A Summer on Nantucket Island, (New York: Baker, Pratt and Company, 1881), pp. 147-8.

faded, but its heritage remained. As an article in Harper's put it, "the fame of Nantucket is historic, and the glory of having given birth to the boldest and most enterprising mariners that ever furrowed the seas is hers, imperishable and forever." The article went on to draw a connection between Nantucket's main product--whale oil for lighting--and the experience of the "good old days" that Nantucket now represented: in between the ages of "lusty barbarism" (lighted by tallow) on the one side, and "overstrained and diseased civilization" (lighted by kerosene) on the other, stood Nantucket and the "golden age of reason"--lighted by whale oil.<sup>1</sup> Samuel Adams Drake, whose books did much to romanticize the coast of New England, followed a similar train of thought: "In coal oil there is no poetry; Shakspeare [sic] and Milton did not study, nor Ben Jonson rhyme, by it."<sup>2</sup>

Nantucketers, too, were proud of their history, and considered their past an important attraction of the island. In 1869, the Congregationalist minister F. C. Ewer drew up a map of the island which became perhaps the most-often used image of Nantucket for the rest of the century. At first glance the map looks like similar ones drawn up for Martha's Vineyard tourists, but it also included a historical timeline that filled up almost half the space, tracing the history of the island from 1602 to 1865 in some detail. The map highlighted historical locations--"Site of Old Indian Meeting House,"

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<sup>1</sup> D. H. Strother, Harper's New Monthly Magazine 21 (November 1860), p. 745-6.

<sup>2</sup> Samuel Adams Drake, Nooks and Corners of the New England Coast, (New York: Harper Brothers, 1876), p. 336.

and "Site of the Old Sheep Pens"--as though they were the main attractions of the island.

But outsiders were often not so much interested in historical landmarks as they were in the people of the island. Charles Sweetser urged travelers in his 1868 Book of Summer Resorts not to "fail to go to Nantucket and see the islanders."<sup>1</sup> Outsiders often found that it was the people of Nantucket who were its most important historical relics. According to the guide books, the "frank, hearty, high-toned elements which have always characterized [Nantucket's] population," were all still to be seen there in the 1870s. Nantucketers were enterprising, vigorous, frank, hospitable, honest and temperate. These characteristics reflected both their remarkable experiences and their ethnic purity--the island's "population (was) not increased, nor has it ever been, by. . . discordant elements from varying climes and nationalities."<sup>2</sup> The notion that New England's most important "export" was its people played an important role in the re-invention of the region--relying, as it did, on both the idea of a special regional character, and the fact of population shifts out of the rural parts of the region.<sup>3</sup> (It also ignored the crucial role played in Nantucket's whaling industry by its own native American population and by the large

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<sup>1</sup>Charles Sweetser, Book of Summer Resorts, (New York: J.R. Osgood, 1868), p. 69.

<sup>2</sup>The Old Colony, pp. 66-67.

<sup>3</sup>In the White Mountains, for example, the same notion was expressed in the anecdote of the Profile, which God had supposedly erected to show that "in New Hampshire, he made men."

minority of Portuguese, South Sea island, and black American sailors who worked on Nantucket whaling ships.<sup>1)</sup>

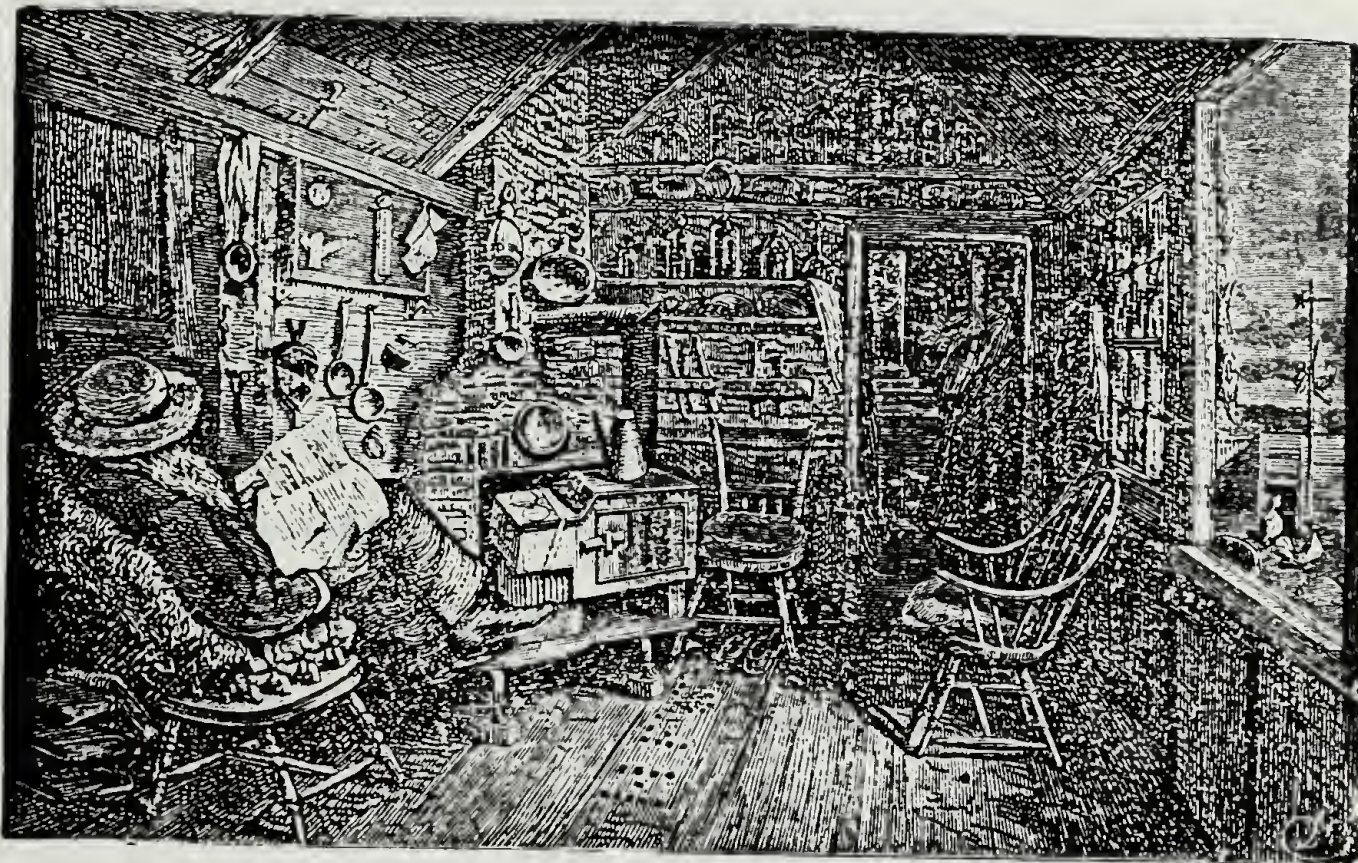
Off-island enthusiasts were not always precise about what kind of "character" one would find on Nantucket in the 1870s and 80s. Contemporary islanders were less likely to be presented as representatives of native character than as native characters, quaint "old salts" with accents and expressions amusingly reminiscent of former days. Guidebooks and travel accounts of the 1870s and 1880s are filled with stories of Nantucket eccentrics, whose charming oddities were a link to the old days. In short, the character of Nantucket people was presented nostalgically, as something no longer quite of this world. The paintings of Eastman Johnson, who lived on the island between 1870 and 1887, reflected this nostalgic quality. He portrayed the entire island as a peculiar old place, filled with old whaling captains and obsolete customs. And in the popular travel literature, the same images prevailed: pictures of "The Town Crier," "The Hermit," and quaint customs accompanied sketches of scenery and landmarks (see figure 21).<sup>2)</sup>

To some extent, Nantucketers themselves found they could agree with these assessments. Edward Godfrey reported in his 1882 guidebook that there were still many people left in town "whose lives possess a romantic interest . . . . who could entertain one for hours

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<sup>1</sup>Byers, Nation of Nantucket, pp. 93-101 and pp. 159-170.

<sup>2</sup>For an account of the transformation of visual images of Nantucket, see Robert A. di Curcio, Art on Nantucket, (Nantucket: Nantucket Historical Association, 1982).



FRED. PARKER, THE HERMIT OF QUIDNIT, NANTUCKET.

Figure 21. A Quaint Nantucketer: "Fred. Parker, the Hermit of Quidnit." From Robert Grieve, Illustrated Martha's Vineyard, Nantucket, and New Bedford, 1889 edition. (AAS)

with moving tales of shipwreck, disaster, suffering, and adventures of all kinds."<sup>1</sup> And he reported that Mrs. Eliza McCleave, who had a sea-shell collection which the public was welcome to visit, was herself "the most quaint and curious of all" in the collection.<sup>2</sup> But in general, native Nantucketers were not inclined to romanticize their traits: Godfrey acknowledged that Nantucketers were indeed "hospitable, honest, intelligent, brave," and that they were "possessed of characteristics and peculiarities always noticeable in isolated localities;" but he concluded that Nantucketers were "after all just like the rest of the world, neither better nor worse."<sup>3</sup>

Both Nantucketers and their visitors agreed that islanders were especially hospitable. But it was outsiders who typically portrayed the "honest . . . open countenance" and traditional hospitality of the Nantucketers as traits which qualified them in some natural way to be porters or hotel keepers. The native character of Nantucketers was apparently such that they seemed to provide voluntarily many of the services that made their island attractive: they were good guides, and they were glad to recount stories of their whaling days. As Frank Sheldon wrote in Atlantic Monthly, "they have plenty of time to answer questions good-humoredly and *gratis*."<sup>4</sup> In this view, the people of Nantucket provided services for tourists, not because they needed

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<sup>1</sup>Edward K. Godfrey, The Island of Nantucket, What it Was and What It Is, (Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1882), pp. 7-8.

<sup>2</sup>Godfrey, Island of Nantucket, p. 6.

<sup>3</sup>Godfrey, Island of Nantucket, p. 72.

<sup>4</sup>Frank Sheldon, "Nantucket," Atlantic Monthly 17 (March 1866), p. 300.

their business, but out of a natural expression of their own character and "old-fashioned" values. Nantucketers seemed to some outsiders to be untouched by the vices of the age. Far from participating in a scramble for money, they appeared to live--and to be hospitable--almost without any visible means of support.

Nantucketers knew that their prices must be kept low if they were to compete with other, more convenient resort locations. But for many outsiders, Nantucket's low prices were a sign, not of their depressed economy, but of their naivete and utopian simplicity: Frank Sheldon described Nantucket prices as "[t]he blessed old prices of my youth."<sup>1</sup> At times outsiders wrote about Nantucket in phrases reminiscent of later tourists' interest in the "natives" to be "discovered" on far-away islands like Bali and Hawaii, where the local population were thought to be similarly naive about profit and loss. Sheldon reported that the reactions of his traveling companion to Nantucket were "similar to those of Captain Cook or Herman Melville when they first landed to skim the cream of the fairy islands of the Pacific."<sup>2</sup> He meant the "skimming" literally--it referred to the very low price of renting a cottage on the island, and to the numbers of services Nantucketers were so naive as to render free of charge.

Of course, Nantucketers were not utopian islanders who knew nothing of business or profit. They were quite open about their motives for bringing tourists to the island. The main attraction of the tourists was of course their money. Nothing could have been more

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<sup>1</sup>Sheldon, p. 300.

<sup>2</sup>Sheldon, p. 301.

direct than the Inquirer's editorial reminder in 1866 that "we want the money that strangers will leave."<sup>1</sup> William Macy recalled the fascination that the new "strangers" had held for him in his childhood: they were better dressed and noisier than townspeople; and they spoke differently, too--"[t]hey called the commons 'moors' and everything was 'quaint.'" But what was most interesting about them was the high prices they would pay for services he had previously considered of very little value.<sup>2</sup>

In the tourist's view, Nantucketers in pursuit of whaling profits had not been entrepreneurs, but adventurers; and Nantucketers in search of profit from tourists were not engaged in business, either, but in an expression of their "hospitable" nature. But while both islanders and visitors considered Nantucketers to be by nature welcoming and gracious, there are signs that Nantucketers were not eager to embrace the new professional hospitality. According to one observer, Nantucketers had been quite slow to come up with a polite term for the strangers in their midst. In pre-tourist days, non-Nantucketers had been referred to as "coofs;" it was only the need for the money they brought with them that had created a demand for a more neutral term--"off-islanders." (As she put it, "'Coofs' are now 'off-islanders' just as Jews in New York are called Israelites when they move into Fifth Avenue.")<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Nantucket Inquirer and Mirror, March 31, 1866.

<sup>2</sup>William F. Macy, Story of Old Nantucket, p. 144-5.

<sup>3</sup>Austin, Nantucket Scraps, p. 53.



Another tourist reported that islanders had too much self-respect to serve tourists with great alacrity: it was important not to give them orders, but to humor them with requests for their services. "These people need and want to make an honest living, and you are the most convenient material at hand out of which to make it. But they are descended from blood that ruled the wave and humbled the Leviathan . . . ." and they did not like taking orders.<sup>1</sup> Of course, this was in part simply another way of romanticizing Nantucketers, whose pure blood made them unwilling to stoop to servitude; Samuel Adams Drake constantly juxtaposed the ancient rectitude of the natives of the New England coast with the sad decline brought about by tourism: "we may, perhaps, live to see a full-fledged lackey in Nantucket streets."<sup>2</sup> But romantic or not, what they were actually describing was a rather "inhospitable" unwillingness to be at the beck and call of tourists from the mainland.

Outside promoters knew, of course, and sometimes admitted--just in case their readers didn't catch the point when they put it more tactfully--that Nantucket hospitality was born of desperation more than of native character. But the experience Nantucket offered to Gilded Age tourists was clearly at least in part an idealized experience of "old-fashioned" class relations, a return to the imaginary time when the interests of employer and employee were one. The Old Colony Railroad's promotional pamphlet for the resorts along its route, called Pilgrim Land, pointed out that Nantucket's dependence on tourism as

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<sup>1</sup>Northrup, 'Sconset, p. 69.

<sup>2</sup>Drake, Nooks and Corners, p. 331.

its only livelihood made life more pleasant there for tourists. It provided the "dreamy, quiet, conservative conditions" that tourists wanted, and it allowed what they called "the free devotion of every natural feature and facility and advantage of the island to the interests of the summer sojourner and pleasure-seeker." In short, islanders had no choice but to serve the needs of tourists. But even here, the author of Pilgrim Land managed to use this revelation of the true relationship between Nantucket's poverty and its hospitality to reinforce a rosy vision of class harmony:

now both the permanent population and the transient residents are at one. . . and the main business of Nantucket, on the part of all concerned in her existence, is to make of her situation a garden of delights.<sup>1</sup>

This was a far cry from the resignation expressed by the editors of the Nantucket Inquirer, who acknowledged that they had little choice but to serve the tourist trade, but who drew a sad comparison with "the busy days of our commercial activity," and saw the island's dependence on tourism as a sign of failure:

It must be confessed that our hopes of making our attractions for pleasure seekers a means of introducing any kind of permanent business, have proved a failure, and the prospect of such a consummation has grown fainter and fainter. We must . . . submit gracefully to our fate.<sup>2</sup>

The editorial concluded with a forced enthusiasm whose ironic tinge made it anything but convincing:

But we forget that we must not talk or write in this strain, at the risk of being called croakers. . . . So we retract any

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<sup>1</sup>The Old Colony, p. 66.

<sup>2</sup>Nantucket Inquirer and Mirror, September 15, 1877.

heresy of which we may have been guilty, and straightway lay plans for another campaign to entertain the guests of 1878.<sup>1</sup>

The editors of the Inquirer had initially encouraged the growth of tourism, but they were not alone in expressing reservations about it. Isaac Folger, editor of another island paper, the Island Review, also wrote a guide book he published in 1874. The Handbook of Nantucket was published specifically for summer tourists, and featured advertisements for tourist services on every other page. But Folger also indulged in a moment's reflection in his prologue, when he admitted that he longed for the "good old days when we were all engaged in the busy pursuits of life . . . [,] when our streets resembled the crowded thoroughfare of a city."<sup>2</sup>

That some islanders had qualms about the tourist industry is clear; but there is little evidence of open conflict between those who supported the tourist industry and those who were not so enthusiastic, or between tourists and islanders. There are a few evidences of discontent with the new industry, and there is even one intriguing hint of sabotage: in 1881, the Inquirer ran a news brief entitled "Villainous," which reported that "there appears to be a desperate character in our midst, who is endeavoring to wreak vengeance on the Nantucket Railroad Company for some real or fancied injury." The "villain" had obstructed the railroad path on two different occasions when it had been carrying tourists to Surfside.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Nantucket Inquirer and Mirror, September 15, 1877.

<sup>2</sup>Isaac H. Folger, Handbook of Nantucket, (Nantucket: Island Review, 1874), pp. 10-12.

<sup>3</sup>Nantucket Inquirer and Mirror, August 27, 1881, July 1, 1876.

There were signs, too, of a less "villainous," but very real, lack of enthusiasm for making tourists comfortable on the island. In 1876, the Inquirer several times in one issue pleaded with people to preserve an atmosphere of "good feeling" at the beginning of the summer season, in order not to frighten off tourists. In one article, it announced the steamboat company's policy of keeping islanders behind a line on the pier when steamboats came in, because their "crowding about the gangways" had "become so annoying to passengers." The steamboat company was attempting to prevent Nantucketers from showing up to look over the "cargo" of an arriving boat--a custom that apparently died hard on the island, although it was quite clear that tourists did not like being greeted in this manner. The newspaper requested that people honor the company's demand out of a "sense of propriety," and "thus prevent any resort to compulsory or police force."<sup>1</sup>

But in spite of any discomfort they might have had, Nantucketers were increasingly dependent on its tourist trade. And islanders quickly became aware of what their visitors expected from them. The editors of the Inquirer mused about the feeling of being made "quaint:"

We have, like most other places and people, our peculiarities and our whimsicalities, which must strike the observation of the visitor, and if these are shown up to the world, sometimes with a little dash of caricature, we must face the music and join in the smile at our own expense.

After all, any publicity was good publicity, and if mainland newspaper correspondents reported stories that were patronizing, or simply untrue, that was part of the business: "if we put up for notoriety, we

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<sup>1</sup>Nantucket Inquirer and Mirror, July 1, 1876.

both desire and expect to be talked about."<sup>1</sup> The editors' only concern was that there might not be enough quaintness left to make the island alluring. Not much of Nantucket's distinctive architecture, and not many of Nantucket's unique characters, remained to give the tourist a taste of the flavor of "Old Nantucket." Nantucket had become just like everywhere else.

But this was a problem that need not have concerned the editors of the *Inquirer*: Nantucket's unique atmosphere was already being re-created all around them. If history and "quaintness" were in demand, they could be produced. Edward Godfrey's 1882 guidebook reflected this reality: Nantucket, he reported to tourists, had once been filled with antiques, rich in "old crockery, clocks, furniture . . . and curiosities of all kinds." And in fact, there were still a lot of antiques for sale, but "when one wants a history to what one buys,--well, the dealers here are just as honest as elsewhere, and stories, like goods, can be manufactured for the trade."<sup>2</sup> What was true of antiques was true of "quaintness" in general: Nantucket's unique atmosphere, in the words of Godfrey's guide book, could be "manufactured for the trade."

The process by which Nantucket was made quaint, and indeed the process by which individual islanders turned to this particular "trade," is a difficult one to trace. It has shaped the Nantucket of today far more than the local investors' speculation in cottage lots, but compared with the deeds and blueprints of the resort trade, there are

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<sup>1</sup>Nantucket Inquirer and Mirror, July 21, 1877.

<sup>2</sup>Godfrey, Island of Nantucket, p. 57.

not many remnants of its construction. The people who were most often mentioned by guidebooks as "quaint" have left no traces of their own thoughts: it is not clear whether or not Mrs. Eliza McCleave thought she was selling her own peculiarities as well as a look at her shell collection; and although one can speculate, it is not certain whether Billy Clark, the town crier, was aware of how many books featured photographs and descriptions of him. The old sea captains who sat for portraits, took tourists fishing, and told whaling stories have not recorded how they came to these occupations. But by the early 1880s, some islanders had clearly begun to respond to tourists' notions of Nantucket, and even in some respects to shape it.

One of the landmarks of that transformation was the reunion of the Coffin family, held in August 1881. On the face of it, the Coffin reunion was little more than a promotional scheme, scheduled to take advantage of the opening of the Nantucket Railroad, which brought visitors out to its railroad depot on the open plains of what was envisioned as Surfside. The investors of the Surfside Land Company hoped to sell cottage lots. The master of ceremonies, a local lawyer named Allen Coffin, was running for governor of Massachusetts on the Prohibition ticket. The reunion followed two other similar big events that summer: on July 4, the railroad was opened amid great fanfare; and on August 1, a roller skating rink was opened at the depot of the Nantucket Railroad (a clam bake and a dance were held to celebrate).

The reunion was very much like these other entertainments, although it required more organization. Members of the "Clan" had been summoned from all over the country: out of 233 signatures on the guest register, 90 were from outside New England and New York.

Most in evidence, though, were the seventy Coffins from New York, Brooklyn, and Boston, while only 21 Nantucketers signed the register, along with one Martha's Vineyard Coffin.<sup>1</sup> Many of the visitors were in-laws or only tangentially related to the Coffin family; perhaps they found the idea of attachment to a "first family," even such a minor one, appealing.

The reunion program took place at the terminus of the Nantucket Railroad, where the Surfside Land Company had divided up cottage lots for sale. From August 15 through 18, visitors combined the kinds of sea-side entertainment that had become standard--picnics, clambakes, excursions to other parts of the island--with speeches and ceremonies that appealed to a more sentimental interest.<sup>2</sup> One speaker traced the English roots of the Coffin family; another discoursed on the nature of American citizenship. The opening speech, delivered by Judge Tristram Coffin of Poughkeepsie, New York, combined the usual appeals to the healthy atmosphere of the island with a more nostalgic angle:

The dear little island still stands! . . . For a long period commercial prosperity smiled upon it; the names of its merchants were known throughout the world; but that fair day has passed by, perhaps not to return. . . . Its storehouses were closed, its docks fell to decay, its once thriving center became

"An ancient town, a very ancient town,

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<sup>1</sup>Printed sources reported that 500 people were in evidence at the reunion, so it is possible that local guests did not sign the register.

<sup>2</sup>The Coffin reunion was reported on at length in many newspapers; the Nantucket Inquirer & Mirror printed a supplement called the Daily Memorial to commemorate the event on August 17, 1881. (Even though so much detail was reported, however, they did not manage to convey the fact that it rained heavily for the entire three-day period, as Jane Austin later reported in her book, Nantucket Scraps.)

With rotten wharves, and quiet grassy streets,  
And quaint old houses wrinkled in the sun."

. . . Today hosts of congenial visitors attracted by its exhilarating health-giving climate, and by the pleasant and sincere life here to be enjoyed, are thronging to it more and more as their summer home, and the posterity of its own children will flood back upon it by thousands as the years go by.<sup>1</sup>

After Judge Coffin's speech, the band played "In the Sweet Bye-and-Bye" (a song aptly chosen to reinforce the image of Nantucket as "old home," and as seaside resort: the song promises that "we will meet on the beautiful shore"--exactly where they were meeting).

The Coffin reunion met with some skepticism from Nantucketers, some of whom saw it as a ridiculous pretension on the part of the family, and most of whom seemed to recognize its promotional nature. One correspondent of the Nantucket Inquirer suggested they continue to hold reunions year after year, one family at a time, for the sake of the tourist revenue it would generate. Henry S. Wyer published an extensive parody of the reunion, making fun of both its promotional aspects and its family sentimentality. He wrote a mock program for another reunion, "Ye Second Coffyn Reunion," at which various figures were caricatured, including the agent of the Old Colony railroad line and two hotelkeepers, who were portrayed on the lookout for tourists. Orations were entitled: "Where there's a (Coffyn) will there's a way," and "Was Shakespeare a Coffyn?"<sup>2</sup>

The reunion apparently failed to generate much interest in Surfside. But it had other, more important effects on the tourist

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<sup>1</sup>Daily Memorial, August 17, 1881 (supplement for Nantucket Inquirer and Mirror).

<sup>2</sup>Flyer, "Ye Second Coffyn Reunion," Coffin Reunion collection, Peter Foulger Museum and Library of Nantucket Historical Association.



business. For one thing, the reunion engaged islanders in the tourist trade through a gentle process which required neither large initial investments nor a major shift in self-perception. The Coffin reunion committee went door-to-door asking families to take in a boarder or two for the event: a personal favor for returning relatives, rather than a decision to open a boarding house. One effect of such a move was illustrated by the story of the Chapmans, a retired farm couple who had recently moved to town from Long Island Sound. Chapman and his family were convinced to allow reunion guests to stay in their house on Step Lane, and when some of their guests that year returned the next summer, the Chapmans decided to go into business. Soon they bought more property, enlarged the house, and expanded one of its chief attractions--its open platforms on the water side. The Chapmans' house became the "Veranda House" in the 1890s, a hotel which could accommodate as many as 150 guests at a time, but a place which maintained the kind of personal, "family" connections between host and guest that allowed them to appear as equals.<sup>1</sup>

The reunion changed perspectives on the island in other ways as well. The Coffin reunion was in one sense an attempt to take control of the romanticization of the island's history: not simply to profit from it, but to define it--to make a statement about historical character, race, and heritage, rather than about the eccentric "characters" the tourists encountered. Nantucket's first families were implicitly linked

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<sup>1</sup>This story is told in a centennial edition of the Inquirer and Mirror, One Hundred Years on Nantucket, 1821-1921, a supplement printed on June 23, 1921, in an article called "Facts about . . . the Veranda House," by Henry B. Worth. In chapter 5, I will explore the relationship between boarding-house keepers and their visitors in another context.

with the romantic colonial past and all the "old-fashioned" values embodied in that period. It helped to stake Nantucket's claim to families "as refined and conservative as those of Old Virginia, or Eastern Massachusetts generally." And indirectly, the Coffin reunion also helped to move the focus of nostalgia on the island entirely away from people, and in the direction of architecture.

Even more than on its claims to "Old New England" background, Nantucket's reputation was to rest on its appearance. And the Coffin reunion played an important role in transforming both the actual appearance of the island, and the way that appearance was interpreted. Nantucket's physical appearance was being transformed in the 1870s and 1880s: commentators from both on and off the island pointed out the changes tourism was making. William Macy recalled from his childhood during the 1870s that

[t]he old town began to spruce up, houses, barns and fences were repaired and painted, and something like prosperity dawned once more. . . .New hotels were built or projected, old mansion houses were turned into boarding houses, and at the height of the season all were filled to capacity.<sup>1</sup>

From an outsider's perspective, Samuel Adams Drake described the same process with less enthusiasm:

Old brasses were being furbished up, and cobwebs swept away by new and ruthless brooms. The town is being colonized from the mainland, and though the inhabitants welcome the change, the crust and flavor of originality can not survive it.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Macy, Story of Old Nantucket, p. 146.

<sup>2</sup>Drake, Nooks and Corners, p. 330.

In some ways, then, Nantucket looked newer after tourists began to flock to it--more like its commercial heyday, less like its days of "quaint" decay.

The transformation of the "Oldest House" is one example. The Oldest House was a farmhouse on the edge of town which had been built by Jethro Coffin in 1686. During the Coffin reunion, the house was recognized as a family heirloom, and Judge Tristram Coffin of Poughkeepsie purchased it in order to preserve it. At that point, the house had been unoccupied since 1867, when the farm family that owned it had abandoned it and moved to a less expensive house in town. In the 1860s, the house had looked very much like the rest of Nantucket--a little battered, but no more so than other buildings still in use (see figure 22). By the time it was bought in 1881, the building needed substantial repairs, both because of its age and because it had become well-known in the 1870s as the "Oldest House," and the traffic had done some damage. It was the practice of tourists, for instance, to write their names on the inside of the house, and to take a shingle with them as a memento. By 1881, when the repairs began, the house had already been transformed from the battered farmhouse it seemed to be in the 1868 picture to the relic of a bygone era--a tourist attraction, although a very dilapidated one (see figure 23). In 1881, the shingles were replaced (with old shingles from another very old house in town, which was not entitled to the protection granted to the "oldest house"), and a new roof was added. In 1886 the interior was repaired, and the graffiti removed. In that year, it was opened to the



Figure 22. The "Oldest House" as a farmhouse, c. 1865. (From the collection of the Peter Foulger Museum and Library of the Nantucket Historical Association.)

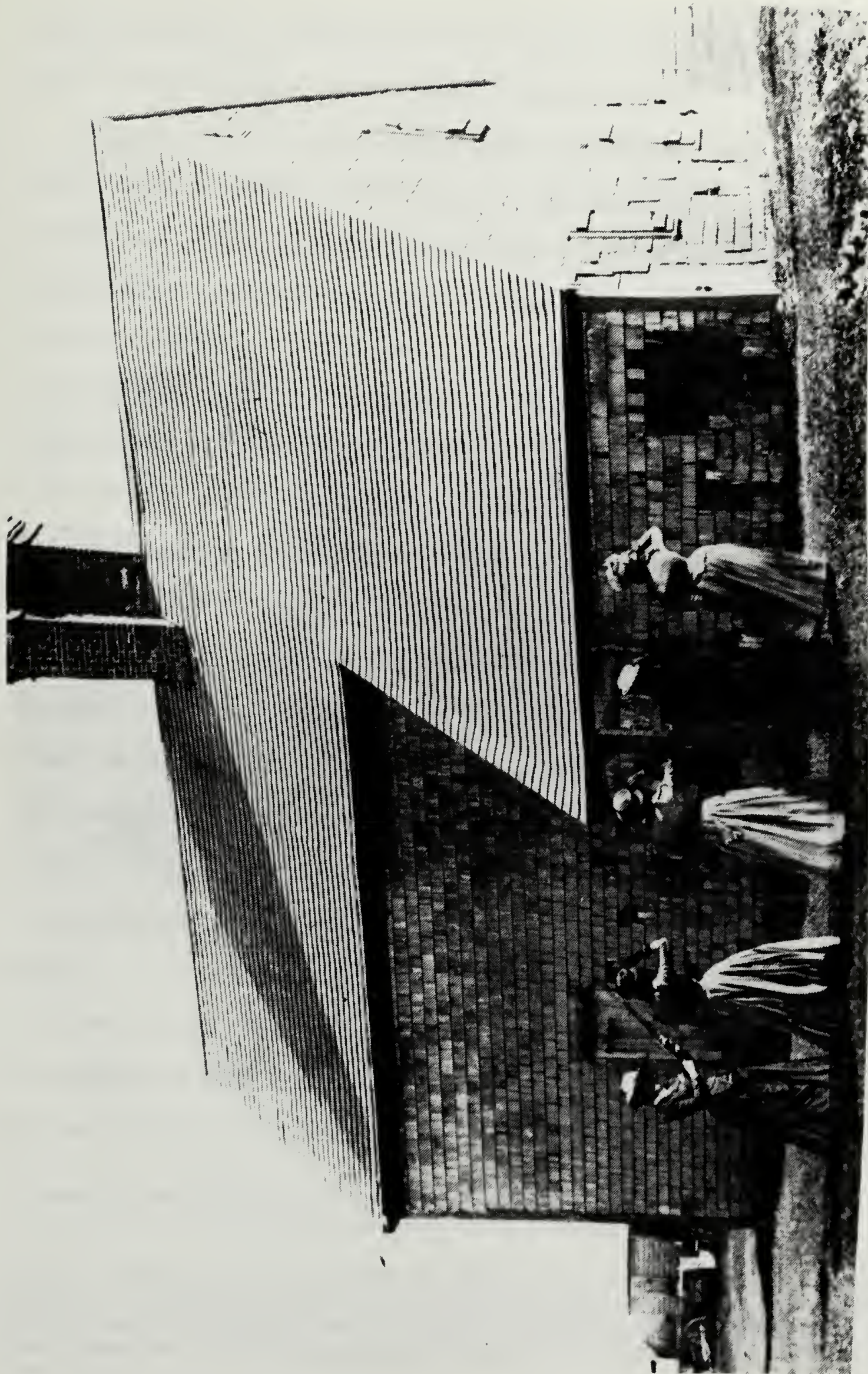


Figure 23. The Oldest House" as a tourist attraction. (Nantucket Historical Association)

public as part of a celebration of its two hundredth anniversary--a much newer-looking, refurbished "oldest house."<sup>1</sup>

But in another sense, the Oldest House looked still "older" in 1885 than in 1865.<sup>2</sup> Now clearly set off from other structures, it was no longer an abandoned farm house but a relic whose significance was interpreted by local guides and by a sign on the door. And the town as a whole partook of this change. By the 1880s, both islanders and visitors were very much aware of the historic and nostalgic significance of Nantucket's buildings. More and more, historic architecture was being identified as such: the "oldest" house, the old Friends' meeting house, the Old Mill, were recognized as attractions, and the "colonial" features of many Nantucket structures were more clearly defined. When the Nantucket Historical Association was founded in 1894 to protect these features, it had already become clear which buildings were most "historic," and why. Of course, the appearance that seemed so antique and timeless in 1885 had been brand new only fifty years earlier, when the town had been built with whaling money in its days of prosperity. But to visitors, Nantucket's appearance in 1885 carried a weight of historical and nostalgic associations not only with the Nantucket of the 1840s, but with the Nantuckets of 1680 and 1775--in short, of the "old days" when life was romantic and picturesque, full of entertaining manners, clothing, and

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<sup>1</sup>It was not until 1923, when the Nantucket Historical Association took over the ownership of the house, that it was restored to a seventeenth century style.

<sup>2</sup>This is a paradox explored at length by David Lowenthal, in The Past is a Foreign Country. See especially page xxiv: "Manipulation makes the past both more and less like the present--less because we set it apart, more because we put our own stamp on it." David Lowenthal, The Past is a Foreign Country (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

customs. It was manifestly "old," but it was no longer decaying; it carried associations with the romantic past, but no more associations with failure and defeat. And in that regard, Nantucket had adapted remarkably well to its dual functions as a seaside resort and a nostalgic escape: the image it had "manufactured for the trade" was one that was to serve it well for the next century.

Nantucket was not the only place in New England whose past came into the foreground in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Many of New England's villages and towns went through similar processes. In Litchfield, Connecticut, emigres from New York created a "New England village" appearance for their summer colony that was more "colonial" in 1870 than it was in 1770.<sup>1</sup> In Deerfield, Massachusetts, residents responded to the loss of their competitive edge in agriculture and manufacturing by transforming the village into a living memorial to the past.<sup>2</sup> Plymouth began its ascent to national prominence as the home of the "Pilgrims" as early as the 1850s. And in Marblehead, Ipswich, and many other "quaint" towns, old houses were sought out and catalogued as the homes of eighteenth-century heroes or the sites of romantic tales.

All these historical attractions shared an appeal that rested at least as much on a sense of nostalgic timelessness as on a sense of history, but the new nostalgic trade they shared took different forms

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<sup>1</sup>William Butler, "Another City upon a Hill: Litchfield, Connecticut, and the Colonial Revival," in Axelrod, ed., The Colonial Revival.

<sup>2</sup>David C. Bryan, "The Past as a Place to Visit: Reinventing the Colonial in Deerfield, Massachusetts," (Senior honors thesis, Amherst College, 1989).

in different places. Some places, like Plymouth, and later Deerfield, came to market their historical attractions as part of a national heritage, and to stake claims for their significance within a national political context. In other places, nostalgic associations, romantic history, and old buildings were used primarily as a way of enhancing the tourist's resort experience. Nantucket's history remained "quaint"--an expression of local uniqueness, useful primarily as entertainment. Nantucket remained a resort town with a special appeal, rather than a historic shrine.

Nantucket was still a one-industry town--but instead of whales, it now depended on tourists. Like Deerfield, Litchfield, and other "antimodernist" havens, it served as a refuge from an increasingly complex, modern urban world: but Nantucket was as much an exotic island retreat as the homestead of the ancient paternal virtues. Nantucket's need to provide both resort entertainments and a sense of the past never worked entirely smoothly. The need for tourist money has both required and interfered with the preservation of its unique flavor. (A modern visitor sometimes senses a jarring contradiction between these two roles: looking at Nantucket, one sees its pristine white clapboards, grey shingles, and red brick; listening to Nantucket, one hears the sounds of rented cars on cobblestones, buzz saws and hammers, and bars and restaurants full of college students and vacationers eager to eat, drink, and tan.) The definitive statement on the relationship between these two functions was made in 1935 in a preservationist plea called "95% Perfect": Nantucket's tourist trade hinged on its ability to look quaint--and Nantucket's economic survival



depended on the tourist trade.<sup>1</sup> Sheer economic necessity dictated the preservation of old houses no matter what the cost.

In this relationship may lie one of the differences between Nantucket and many places which became historic or literary shrines. Nantucket was too dependent on the money of outsiders to shape a new history of its choosing, even if the images of outsiders were sometimes contested by Nantucketers. In Deerfield at the end of the nineteenth century, by contrast, promotion was largely in the hands of natives, or of descendants who identified strongly with the history and experience of their ancestors. Deerfield's history was very much a story of "our town." Nantucket's fate, like that of many New England towns and villages at the end of the century, was in the hands of outsiders who found the island's unique history more charming than inspiring.<sup>2</sup>

Many of the visitors who wrote the nostalgic history of these New England places were neither patronizing nor superficial in their attempts to preserve the cultural and historical legacy of the towns they visited. Samuel Adams Drake was a serious historian as well as a travel book writer, and even his accounts for tourists were filled with his concern for the preservation of the architecture and history of the coastal towns. Sarah Orne Jewett's moving descriptions of the people

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<sup>1</sup>Everett U. Crosby, 95% Perfect, (Nantucket: Inquirer and Mirror Press, 1937).

<sup>2</sup>The contrast is especially clear if one compares the people who inhabited the imaginary Nantucket with the people who inhabited the imaginary Deerfield. In Deerfield those who did most to create its new image romanticized themselves and their own families; it was C. Alice Baker's friends who were dressed in "colonial" garb and photographed in ancient doorways. In Nantucket, picturesque figures like Billy Clark, the town crier, were photographed by outsiders for their own purposes. See Susan Mahnke, ed., Looking Back: Images of New England, 1860-1930 (Dublin: Yankee Books, 1982), for images of Deerfield.

of Dunnet's Landing on the coast of Maine illustrate how far a tourist may go in sympathetic depictions of "native" village culture. But they also reveal a social relationship between the author and her subjects which ultimately undermined that sympathy: the city visitor from whose viewpoint The Country of the Pointed Firs is recounted can find no real common ground with the eccentric inhabitants of that deserted corner of the world. The difficulty of their lives, and their peculiar strengths, were chronicled with respect and sensitivity, but no one could mistake these characters for the social equals of the city visitor.<sup>1</sup> Ultimately, even writing like Jewett's served as an outsider's guide to a charming and exotic world--a tourist's version of the town of Dunnet's Landing.

In "nostalgic" tourist places like these, the discovery of local history and culture were a crucial part of the tourist industry, but they were also ultimately at the service of that industry. Nostalgic writing about Nantucket (or about the witches of Salem, the fishing villages of coastal Maine, or the small towns of Vermont) might serve many purposes, but whatever else that kind of writing did, it served the tourist trade which had become essential to the economic survival of the region. Quaint features were an asset to these towns, but up-to-date services were a necessity; architecture might be historically correct, but it must be pretty. Its people should be proud of their illustrious past, but they must also be willing to wait on tables. And the

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<sup>1</sup>Sarah Orne Jewett, The Country of the Pointed Firs, and Other Stories, (Garden City, New York: Anchor-Doubleday 1956 --reprinted from 1896 edition). See especially numbers 2, 3, and 4 of the sketches that make up The Country of the Pointed Firs.

special nostalgic ambience of "quaint bygone days," whatever other purposes it might serve, must be "manufactured for the trade."

## CHAPTER 5

### "THAT DREAM OF HOME": NORTHERN NEW ENGLAND AND THE FARM VACATION INDUSTRY, 1890-1900

In 1899, the governor of New Hampshire made national news with two startling moves. In April he revived an old New England custom: he appointed a spring fast day to call attention to the decadence of rural church life in New Hampshire. Two months later, in June, he called a special statewide meeting (under the auspices of the New Hampshire Board of Agriculture) to create an entirely new New England custom--Old Home Week. The governor's two innovations both confronted with unusual candor the troubles that had overtaken northern New England, but it was the thoroughly modern institution of Old Home Week that took hold of the regional and national imagination in a special way. Before five years had passed, all the New England states and even some of the other eastern states had created their own Old Home Week programs.

Governor Rollins' Old Home Week plan was not a completely new departure: as early as 1853, the city of Portsmouth, New Hampshire had sponsored a "home-town reunion" for its scattered natives, and an increasing number of family reunions like Nantucket's Coffin reunion served similar purposes.<sup>1</sup> Old Home Week followed a

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<sup>1</sup>Thomas F. Anderson, "Old Home Week in New England," New England Magazine 34 (August 1906), pp. 684-5.

straightforward plan--older rural states like New Hampshire simply invited their former residents home for a week to visit. The governor of the state would form a committee and issue a proclamation setting the dates for the week. If a town wished to participate, it could send away for a packet of information from the state, with instructions on how to get appropriations from its town meeting and how to plan a program. In northern New England, a town might appropriate anywhere from fifty dollars to as much as a thousand dollars for its Old Home Week celebration. It might choose to celebrate the entire week mandated by the state (in New Hampshire, it was the last week in August; in Vermont, it was the week including August 16, the anniversary of the Battle of Bennington), or simply one or two of the days. Sunday church services were always included, along with a whole array of entertainments: picnics, band music and speeches were affordable even for the most impoverished celebrators--wealthier towns (or more enthusiastic ones) could lavish time and money on historical pageants, new memorial statues, and floral parades.

Invitations from each town were sent out to all the native sons and daughters of the state who could be located, asking them to "come back again" to the towns they had left, "to return and visit the scenes of their youth."<sup>1</sup> Town committees canvassed the town and gathered as many names and addresses as possible of natives who had left. A reception committee greeted homecoming visitors at the train, and escorted them to their accommodations at the houses of relatives or

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<sup>1</sup>New Hampshire Old Home Week Association, Annual Report of Old Home Week in New Hampshire (Manchester, 1899), p. 9.

friends--or volunteers if they no longer knew anyone in town. The appeal to potential visitors was two-fold: the invitations appeared, as one enthusiast put it, "just when the absentees are beginning to think longingly of their summer vacation."<sup>1</sup> But the pitch was also unabashedly sentimental (not to say guilt-inducing), particularly from Governor Rollins, who asserted that "when we ask you to come home, it is your mother's voice."<sup>2</sup> An often-repeated joke at the time was that at least one industry had been given a tremendous boost by Old Home Week--local poetry-writing. Invitations, speeches, memorial gravestones, all made free use of popular appeals to home, mother, and childhood (see figure 24).<sup>3</sup>

Old Home Week, as Governor Rollins imagined it, was designed with several objectives in mind. It was intended to raise spirits among the natives of older rural areas, by giving them a chance to interact socially with representatives from the wide world, and by encouraging a sense of pride in their surroundings--all of this to ward off the mental and ethical degeneracy which many believed stemmed from the isolation of rural life. But most of its enthusiasts were also quite frank in their hope that Old Home Week might inspire former residents to spend money in their home towns, either as a one-time endowment of a library or school, or by buying a summer home there--perhaps the "old home" itself.

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<sup>1</sup>Anderson, "Old Home Week," p. 680.

<sup>2</sup>Frank West Rollins, Old Home Week Addresses (Concord, 1900), p. 73.

<sup>3</sup>Anderson, "Old Home Week," pp. 673-685.

REPORT ¶ ¶ ¶ ¶ ¶ ¶

'But far more bright, more dear than all,  
That dream of home, that dream of home''

# OLD HOME WEEK IN NEW HAMPSHIRE

... Come back again ...



"HOW DEAR TO MY HEART ARE THE SCENES OF MY CHILDHOOD."

AUGUST 26 TO SEPTEMBER 1

1899

Figure 24. Old Home Week invitations. From the cover of the New Hampshire Old Home Week Association, Annual Report of Old Home Week in New Hampshire, 1899 edition. (AAS)

Old Home Week was greeted with a great deal of enthusiasm in its first years, both from local promoters and from national magazine writers and reformers. During the first years, as many as seventy of New Hampshire's towns, and forty of Vermont's, participated in Old Home Week in some form.<sup>1</sup> The program did not fulfill its planners' dreams by becoming an annual event, at least not for most northern New England towns and villages, where the strains--both financial and psychological--began to tell after a few summers, but Old Home Week continued to be celebrated regularly throughout the early twentieth century. A few towns still celebrate it today.

And in fact, Old Home Week's effects ranged far beyond the numbers of native New Englanders it brought home to the farm. Old Home Week became closely associated with the fate of rural New England, both in image and reality. Governor Rollins himself anticipated that the kinds of national publicity Old Home Week generated might be more lucrative in the long run than individual gifts from former residents. Old Home Week would make "the name of home . . . synonymous with that of New Hampshire in the minds of newspaper and magazine readers far and wide . . ."--and that was a connection that could be put to practical use.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps its most successful role was as a part of a series of state-sponsored programs in northern New England--programs designed by the states to shore up

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<sup>1</sup>For Vermont, "The First Observance of Old Home Week," The Vermonter 7, no. 2 (September 1901), p. 1; for New Hampshire, William H. Burnham, "Old Home Week in New Hampshire," New England Magazine 22 (August 1900), p. 647.

<sup>2</sup>Rollins, Old Home Week Addresses, p. 94.



the agricultural economy of the region by capturing a share of the burgeoning tourist industry. Old Home Week was aimed at the pocketbook of the former resident, certainly, but its creators hoped as well to inspire among all potential tourists an understanding of rural New England as the "old home."

Governor Rollins was the leader of a state that seemed to be in deep economic trouble. He saw tourism as one way of saving its economy, along with a set of values and experiences he associated with its rural way of life. But he was not only the governor of New Hampshire--he was also a published author, a graduate of MIT, the son of a United States senator, and the president of a Boston banking firm--who happened to be a member of a family with roots in Concord, New Hampshire.<sup>1</sup> Governor Rollins was as much the spokesman of an essentially urban and professional "outsider's" perspective on northern New England as he was of a native perspective. He had as much a sentimental attachment--a tourist's attachment, perhaps--to the values of his old New England farm home, as he had a practical attachment to the region's prosperity. And Old Home Week reflected not one, but at least two different cultures, and two different agendas for the region where it was born, the experiences of potential urban tourists as well as potential northern New England hosts.

Among both tourists and promoters of tourism, the value and significance of northern New England's rural life were being subjected to intense scrutiny by the end of the century. The overwhelming economic and cultural changes that had transformed southern New

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<sup>1</sup>Who Was Who in America, vol. I, 1897-1942.

England in the last half of the century had also brought the northern states into a new role. Southern New England--Rhode Island, Connecticut, and Massachusetts--had become a region of large industrial cities, populated increasingly by immigrants and their children. The northern New England states, although they were not as sparsely populated as many western states, were still overwhelmingly rural. In comparison with other regions, even the northern parts of New England were ethnically diverse--Vermont's population in 1890 was almost one-third first and second generation French Canadian immigrants. But in comparison to southern New England, the region still looked white, Anglo-Saxon, and Protestant.

At a time when an imagined "old New England" of small towns, rural virtues and ethnic purity formed an increasingly attractive antidote to the new ethnic urban city, the location of that New England seemed to be moving north. Once looked on as the backwater of the region, where residents were little removed from barbarism, northern New England now took on some of the associations once connected with the "Yankee" towns and farms of Connecticut and Massachusetts. Northern New England was increasingly considered the home of New England's heritage, both moral and racial. In short, the fate of the northern New England states was becoming increasingly significant for the many people--both outside and inside the region--who looked to the region for the preservation of values threatened by the new urban industrial order.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Jackson Lears has analyzed the complex web of values and experiences that were pursued by many late nineteenth century people in search of antidotes to modern urban industrial life; some of these "antimodern" associations were attached to northern New England--particularly, I think, notions of "Anglo-Saxon" racial identity. But there were clearly many forms of antimodernism, and the nostalgia that fueled northern

At the same time, these rural, comparatively homogeneous northern states were experiencing economic and cultural crisis of their own. As Hal Barron has shown, the villages and towns of northern New England had experienced a kind of "de-industrialization" by the 1880s, as their local factories were gradually put out of business by the larger, more efficient production centers in their own larger towns and in southern New England.<sup>1</sup> Northern New England's heavy dependence on farming was increasing by the end of the nineteenth century. The few exceptions--the manufacturing centers of southern New Hampshire, the lumber business in northern New Hampshire and inland Maine, the tourist trade spreading out over the mountains of New Hampshire and up the coast of Maine--for the most part served only to emphasize the general dependence on agriculture. But during the late nineteenth century the region's farm economy had experienced a more or less constant drop in price in wool, its primary cash crop, along with damaging competition for grain crops from the midwest. Perhaps more disturbing, parts of rural northern New England were losing people at what seemed to be an alarming rate. During the last quarter of the century, the specter of the "abandoned farm" arose to haunt, first the politicians and planners of the northern states themselves, and later the urban reform writers of the national magazine circuit.

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New England's tourist industry fits only partially into Jackson's framework. T.J. Jackson Lears, No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981) especially pp. 107-117 on "Anglo-Saxon" racial ideology.

<sup>1</sup>Hal Barron, Those Who Stayed Behind: Rural Society in Nineteenth Century New England, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp. 69-74.

In reality, the depopulation problem may have been misunderstood.<sup>1</sup> The population of the three northern states remained the same or grew slowly throughout the period from 1860 to 1900. This was so in spite of the massive outmigration which had been normal since the middle of the century--between 1850 and 1900, about 40% of the natives of Vermont left it in every decade. The frontiers of Maine continued to gain in population, as did the growing factory towns of southern New Hampshire, and the larger towns of Vermont. But within these states, the more remote hill towns and farms--those without easy access to the railroads which made competition possible--were losing population to the larger towns and cities.<sup>2</sup>

This pattern of migration out of the state, to the west and to the cities, was actually a typical one for settled agricultural areas--it was happening in New York, Ohio, Indiana, and farther west by the early twentieth century.<sup>3</sup> But for rural New England, the pattern provoked concern and even a sense of crisis by the last quarter of the nineteenth century. For many people outside the region, the depopulation of New England raised disturbing questions about the values that were now increasingly coming to be associated with a mythical "Old New England" and its rural, Anglo-Saxon heritage. And for the farmers of northern New England, increasing hard work for

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<sup>1</sup>Harold Fisher Wilson wrote the economic history of the region in The Hill Country of Northern New England: Its Social and Economic History, 1790-1930 , (New York: Columbia University Press, 1936). He shared the contemporary perspective on the decline of the region. For a revision of this view and a review of the data, see Barron, Those Who Stayed Behind, a study of the town of Chelsea, Vermont, and a general revision of the decline framework.

<sup>2</sup>Census information, as arranged in Wilson, Hill Country, pp. 102-108.

<sup>3</sup>Barron, Those Who Stayed, pp. 11-15.

declining (or non-existent) profits, a sense of helplessness in the face of international market forces, and the loss of sons and daughters to cities, presented a crisis of their own.

It was in response to these problems that native northern New Englanders created tourist promotional programs--designed both to alleviate the economic problems of their region and to build on their cultural strengths. Northern New England boasted several kinds of tourist industries by the 1890s: New Hampshire's scenic White Mountains trade was already forty years old, and the coast of Maine had become prime summer resort territory. But the programs of the 1890s encouraged the rise of a new kind of tourism, new because it looked to the northern farm in itself--not to scenery or to fresh air alone, but to rural life--for its fulfillment. All of northern New England benefited from the state programs that encouraged this new tourism. But in Vermont, New England's most rural state, farm tourism became the keynote of the tourist industry.<sup>1</sup>

Appropriately enough, the promotion of tourism in Vermont was largely the work of the state's Board of Agriculture, which launched an ambitious and innovative campaign during the 1890s to interest both potential tourists and Vermont's farmers in the new business. The Board of Agriculture's interest in encouraging tourism grew out of its mandate to preserve farming in the state--the purpose for which the Board had been created by the state legislature in 1871. An innovation

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<sup>1</sup>Vermont's landscape artists and earlier promoters had attempted to bring in a share of the scenic tourist trade which had come to New Hampshire in mid-century. But their efforts to portray the Green Mountains as craggy, picturesque, and awe-inspiring--like the White Mountains, in short--were largely unsuccessful. See William C. Lipke and Philip N. Grime, eds., Vermont Landscape Images, 1775-1976, (Burlington: Robert Hall Fleming Museum, 1976).

in itself, the Board was intended to help insure the continued viability of Vermont farming by disseminating advice and information to farmers. It sponsored meetings, ran seminars and published yearbooks, all designed to increase farmers' ability to profit from farming by introducing them to new crops and techniques. In particular the Board concerned itself with the problem of abandoned farms in isolated areas--and it was its attempt to re-populate marginal areas that first led it into the summer vacation business. A series of pamphlets were issued beginning in 1891, first called Resources and Attractions of Vermont, but later renamed Vermont . . . a Glimpse of Its Scenery and Industries. These were written by Victor I. Spear, statistical secretary of the Vermont Board of Agriculture and the guiding hand behind its tourist development policy.

During the early 1890s, Spear was responsible for a number of efforts to encourage tourism in Vermont: a groundbreaking statewide survey of tourist services, with findings published as the Report on Summer Travel for 1894; the series that began as the Resources and Attractions of Vermont; and another series of pamphlets designed specifically to market abandoned farms. The first pamphlet of this series, called A List of Desirable Vermont Farms at Low Prices, was mailed out in 1893 to prospective farmers in a plain brown wrapper, but by the 1895 edition, it had become Vermont, Its Fertile Farms and Summer Homes, and sported a wildflower sketch on its cover. The promotional campaign that had begun looking for farmers to settle on abandoned farms ended up looking for summer vacationers to buy them: the new 1895 version listed summer resorts, hotels, and boarding houses as well as abandoned farms for sale.

During the 1890s, the Board advertised farms to tourists, but it also advertised tourism to farmers; as part of its attempt to encourage new and more profitable crops. Tourism was one among these new "crops," and an especially promising one: indeed, Victor Spear argued in an article on "Farm Management" that "there is no crop more profitable than this crop from the city. . ."<sup>1</sup> Tourism was designed to fit into a newer, highly diversified, highly commercial type of intensive farming which maximized profit on a number of high quality products for a discerning market--maple sugar, fresh dairy products, eggs, fresh vegetables, and ultimately even the fresh air and scenery of the farm itself. Objections to the development of the tourist industry seemed often to come not from conservatives, but from advocates of a more streamlined, factory-like system--usually dairying.<sup>2</sup>

Increasingly, all the new crops of Vermont tied its farmers to new consumers. Indeed, tourism was just one in a long line of new "cash crops" introduced to New England's farmers as specialties which could help them compete with the west. Producing for the market was not new to Vermont farmers--they had been involved for two generations in the national and international wool markets. But their new products sold to urban markets essentially "rural" experiences. They depended on the farmer's ability to guarantee consistent high quality, and increasingly on the image of rural purity--so that Vermont farmers came to depend on their reputation for the sweetest butter,

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<sup>1</sup>Victor I. Spear, "Farm Management," Vermont State Board of Agriculture Report, 1892-1893 (Montpelier, Vt.: 1893), pp. 56-57.

<sup>2</sup>For example, Arthur H. Gleason, "What New Hampshire Can Do: Why It Should Abandon Its Plan of Attracting Summer Boarders," Country Life in America 9 (1905), pp. 76-78.

the freshest milk, the purest maple syrup--and to guard that reputation as an important financial asset. At a time when nationally-known brand names were beginning to compete with local products, the state itself, in cooperation with producers' associations like the Vermont Maple Sugar Makers' Market and the Vermont Dairymen's Association, became a kind of brand name, a guarantee for the quality and authenticity of the product.

And for the tourist, the state of Vermont came to guarantee the most authentically rural farm experiences. In the end, summer tourism became a crucial part of this kind of farming--one of the methods by which farming was enabled to survive in northern New England. Tourists bought abandoned farms on marginal land and then bought vegetables and labor from farmers. Or better yet, they boarded at the farm house and made use of farm products that would otherwise go to waste. As an advocate of the tourist trade explained, summer boarding provided the farmer with retail prices for the products he ordinarily shipped to the cities, and it also exploited "products" of the farm which he could not otherwise sell at all--"his pure spring water, clear fresh air, and beautiful scenery. . . at retail price."<sup>1</sup>

This promotional campaign belonged particularly to the Board of Agriculture, and reflected the Board's special concerns, both in its appeal to tourists, and in its appeal to farmers. The Board of Agriculture was not alone in its attempt to bring tourists to Vermont--local promoters and other state officials played supporting roles, often

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<sup>1</sup>C.T. Wiltshire, "The Summer Boarder As An Asset," The New England Homestead 64 (May 18, 1912), p. 623.



combining enthusiasm for tourism with their own projects. The secretary of the Vermont Fish and Game League, for example, pointed out that stocking fish for out-of-state fishermen had trickle-down effects for everyone, since fishermen patronized railroads, hotels, guides, and country stores.<sup>1</sup> And the state's railroads launched major advertising campaigns at the same time, publishing yearly pamphlets like the Rutland Railroad's Heart of the Green Mountains, and the Central Vermont Railroad's Summer Homes Among the Green Hills.

But for the most part, the tone of the campaign was set by the programs of the Board of Agriculture, which was in charge of Vermont's tourist industry until the creation of a separate Board of Publicity in 1911. And the unusual circumstances that had drawn the state into its involvement with tourism--of rural depopulation, declining farm profits, and national urbanization--also called forth the special themes used by the Board and echoed by other promoters, by farmers, and by tourists themselves by the end of the century. For the two decades during which the state of Vermont's tourism promotion was under the aegis of its Board of Agriculture, it reflected the interests and values of Vermont's progressive farm policymakers--and it was these values that framed the Vermont farm family's understanding of the tourist industry it embarked upon.

There was nothing inevitable about the rhetoric employed by the Vermont Board of Agriculture. People who wanted to promote tourism in Vermont had available to them a variety of marketing themes. Often

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<sup>1</sup>John W. Titcomb, "The Fish and Game Supply of Vermont, in Vermont State Board of Agriculture Report, 1891-1892 (Burlington, Vt.: Free Press, 1892), p. 158.

they echoed the familiar references to New England's founding fathers, the language of antimodernism used to such advantage in other parts of the region--Vermonters were presented as "Anglo-Saxon," racially homogeneous, the vigorous guardians of democratic traditions and religious freedom. And of course Vermont promoters placed heavy emphasis on the scenic beauty and healthful air of the "Green Hills" as well.

Yet by far the most compelling and successful theme used by Vermont's promoters was one which relied heavily on a different kind of past. Like Nantucket, Vermont made its fortune on nostalgia. But for Vermont, it was a different past that made its fortune. Nantucket's adventurous and hardy whalers, Deerfield's courageous pioneers, presented an image of the days of the nation's youth, when the founding fathers had acted with rugged virtue and self-reliance. Vermont's image relied, not on the colonial past, but on the immediate past--the childhood days of those who were now tourists, and of farmers who were now hosts. It was not the founding fathers, but home and mother, who called Vermont's visitors back to the past.

There was no inherent reason why this should have been so--no reason why Vermont's Green Mountain boys could not have matched Nantucket's whalers in the manly virtues, or why Vermont's granite hills could not have inspired the same homilies to rugged character as did New Hampshire's. And some of the state's promotional literature did use these angles--promoters pointed out that Vermont's Civil War regiments had never lost a battle flag, and that they had lost a higher percentage of their population in that war than any other state; they emphasized the pioneer spirit, the hardiness and self-reliance of the

first settlers, who had settled "A rough land of rock and stone and tree,/Where breathes no castled lord nor cabined slave. . ." <sup>1</sup> But Vermont's promoters more often emphasized a softer vision of the past and of their state, extending even to their depiction of the mountains of Vermont as the "Green Hills" of home--protective, gentle, and nurturing.

This understanding of Vermont was deeply rooted in its actual demographic and economic conditions--its farms actually were the childhood home of thousands of people living in cities to the south. And it was rooted as well in the sensibilities and values of its natives, especially in the perspective of the state officials who contributed most to the tourist campaign. It was based on an understanding of the meaning of the New England farm that both grew out of native values and could be made to appeal to potential tourists. And it was at heart an attempt to attract visitors by invoking the values and images that Vermont's farm leaders were accustomed to seeing as their strongest cultural assets.

The Board of Agriculture's tourist promotion campaigns of the 1890s shared the basic assumptions of the Board from its first days--both in its emphasis on a progressive farm agenda and in its reliance on the imagery of home and childhood. As Hal Barron has suggested in his study of Chelsea, Vermont, Those Who Stayed Behind: Rural Society in Nineteenth Century New England, the farm periodicals and Board of Agriculture bulletins of late nineteenth century Vermont

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<sup>1</sup>Spear, Victor, Vermont, A Glimpse of Its Scenery and Industries, (Montpelier, Vt.: Argus and Patriot, 1893), p. 5, and p. 1.

outlined a philosophy as well as a farm program. These agricultural writers espoused a perspective that had been shared by New England's farm writers since the middle of the nineteenth century and even before: they called for more modern intensive farming techniques to compete with the west, but they did so intending to bolster a traditional "producer's ethic"--a set of values that they clung to in direct opposition to the spirit of the age. Against the allure of western speculation and urban riches which drew young Vermonters from the farm, they championed the values of contentment, stability and home.<sup>1</sup>

But home and the old ways could be maintained only by experimentation--by new social patterns, new crops, and new farm arrangements.<sup>2</sup> For northern New England, competing with the west meant competing for markets, but it also meant competing for the sons and daughters of New England farmers. So Vermont's agricultural reformers for years had campaigned for farm innovations, but also for innovations that would make the farm more "homelike" for the farm family itself, in order to keep its children at home. For years, Vermont's farm experts had been advising farmers how to cultivate the virtues associated with home and family.<sup>3</sup> The first Report of the

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<sup>1</sup>Barron, Those Who Stayed, pp. 31-36.

<sup>2</sup>Thomas C. Hubka has noted the mixed conservatism and progressivism in the familiar attached house-and-barn arrangement of many New England farms, which was designed as an improvement in efficiency that would make it possible to compete with western farmers, and also to continue a traditional mixed agricultural system. Thomas C. Hubka, Big House, Little House, Back House, Barn: the Connected Farm Buildings of New England, (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1984), p. 180.

<sup>3</sup>Sally McMurry has described one element of this struggle in an article on rural rejections of conventional urban parlors. Sally McMurry, "City Parlor, Country Sitting Room: Rural Vernacular Design and the American Parlor, 1840-1900," reprinted from Winterthur Portfolio 20, no. 4 (Winter 1985), p. 273.

Board of Agriculture, in 1872, advised farmers to keep their sons and daughters down on the farm by making their farms "not merely a place in which to stay, but a home, around which will cluster all the hallowed associations of life," and a center from which progress and improvement would "emanate."<sup>1</sup> In practical terms, the farmer was encouraged to allow time for leisure, to be more nurturing of his children, more protective of his wife--in short, to take on more modern middle class family patterns as he took on more modern competitive farming methods.

Vermont farm writers urged the Vermont farmer to modernize his social relations into a more "home-like" pattern--both to become more like a middle class businessman in his family relations, and also to take on a role not unlike that of middle-class women in the late nineteenth century, to create a home and nurture those in it. If Vermont farms seemed more home-like than other places in the country at the end of the century, it might have been due in part to thirty years of encouragement from the Board of Agriculture. By the end of the century, this kind of family life may have seemed old-fashioned to tourists, but only thirty years before, it had been promoted as part of a modernizing program designed to allow Vermont farmers to compete.

In fact, another way of reading the words of the Vermont farm writers would be to say that they were involved, not only in a struggle between traditional and modern notions of appropriate economic

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<sup>1</sup> E. R. Towle, Esq., "How to Make Farm Life Pleasant," Vermont State Board of Agriculture Report, 1872 (Montpelier, Vt.: 1872), p. 542.

goals, but in an internal contradiction deeply embedded in nineteenth century American culture, between the characteristics and values of the Victorian home (the world of women) and those of the industrialized working world (the world of men). The Vermont farm writers embodied these conceptions of home and world, woman and man, in a regional form as well. And they gave to their own region the task, customarily assigned to middle class women, of protecting the values associated with home--peace and contentment, emotional intimacy, traditional morals. Rural New England seemed closely aligned with these values already by virtue of its being composed mostly of farmers, who after all did not go "out" into the world to work as middle class men did; like women in the early nineteenth century, the role of farmers and their work seemed to change, and to become more distinctive, because it had not changed along with the work of the industrial world. The Board's tourism promotions reflected this understanding of their own role as New England farmers.

Victor Spear, the prime mover of the Board's tourist program, was a good example of "those who stayed behind." Educated at Dartmouth, he had hoped to pursue a career as a civil engineer, but was prevailed upon by his parents to come home to take over the farm. As a farmer, he achieved prominence by his consistent championing of new high-profit farm enterprises: first in raising breeding merino sheep for the west, then in lumbering and in maple sugar. He served in a number of offices during the last quarter of the century: in town offices in his home town of Braintree; in both houses of the state legislature; on the Board of Agriculture, and as the treasurer of the Vermont Maple Sugar Makers' Market. As the Statistical Secretary of

the Board of Agriculture, he was active in encouraging Vermont farmers to take on new crops--maple sugar, dairying, and of course the "crop from the city," tourists.<sup>1</sup> In short, Spear was an educated and progressive leader. But his work was shaped by experiences fundamentally different from New Hampshire's Governor Rollins'.

For farmers like Spear, advocacy of progressive techniques did not obscure the fact that the Vermont farm stood--perhaps alone--against the speculative bent, the wanderlust, and the greed of the age. In both their advice to farmers and their invitations to tourists, they juxtaposed the Vermont farm and the world of money. Victor Spear's words to farmers made this very clear:

there are not millions in farming. Men who have ambition to simply run up a big bank account . . . to pile up money for the sake of the money, farming is not the place for it . . . . But for a man who has an appreciation of home. . . . Vermont farming is a good occupation.<sup>2</sup>

Spear had put aside his dreams of becoming an engineer, perhaps of "piling up money," in favor of his own "appreciation of home," and he made his argument in favor of tourism rest on this understanding.

Tourist work for Spear was an extension of home-making, indeed almost a charitable enterprise:

[our city cousins] want a little good food, they want a little milk to drink that has not been skimmed; they want a little good butter . . . . they want to get out of the city . . . . Let us see if next season we can not . . . benefit ourselves and do good to others.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Information on Victor Spear was gathered from these sources: Albert Nelson, editor, Who's Who in New England (1909), p. 872; Jacob Gullery, Men of Vermont (1894); and Prentiss C. Dodge, Encyclopedia of Vermont Biography (1912).

<sup>2</sup>Spear, "Farm Management," p. 55.

<sup>3</sup>Spear, "Farm Management," p. 57.

Vermont farms for Spear were the proper homes, and farmers the proper homemakers, not simply for the farm family, but for all sorts of other people as well. In order to preserve the values they cherished, Vermont farmers had to extend these values--and they had to do this both because they needed to influence others with these values, and because they needed the profit they would get from it.

When Spear wrote for an outside audience, he used this same understanding for a different purpose. The Board's advertising pamphlets expressed sentiments that had prevailed for decades in the farm advice journals of northern New England. His very first publication, Resources and Attractions of Vermont, put forward this claim in its starkest form:

Vermont from her beautiful hills cries to her absent  
sons and daughters,  
Come back to your mother, ye children, for shame!  
Who have wandered like truants, for riches or fame.  
With a smile on her face, and a sprig in her cap,  
She calls you to feast from her bountiful lap.<sup>1</sup>

This plea might have been written in the 1870s with the intention of bringing home the farmers who had gone out west to settle. But in 1891, the invitation was much more ambiguous. It was intended to invite the exiles home, of course, but it was also intended to invite tourists "home" for the summer.

During the 1890s, the summer tourist industry in northern New England became a major business. Although the states' methods of

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<sup>1</sup>"Attractions of Vermont," (excerpts from Resources and Attractions of Vermont), Vermont Board of Agriculture Report, 1891-1892 (Montpelier, Vt.: 1892), p. 102.



counting were rudimentary, they were sufficient to show the importance of the summer tourist industry to the region. New Hampshire's state Bureau of Labor estimated in 1900 that the total income from tourism for 1899 was \$6,600,000, and the total number of summer guests was 174,000 (at a time when New Hampshire's population was 411,588).<sup>1</sup> Vermont's industry was smaller, and grew more slowly at first. Its statistics were even less reliable, but it seems clear that during the 1890s, around 50-60,000 visitors were in Vermont each summer, and that there were as many as 650 hotels, resorts, boarding houses, and farm boarding places in the state during the 1890s--enough to justify Victor Spear's opinion that summer tourists were second only to dairying in bringing money into the state.<sup>2</sup> These places ranged from large hotels, accommodating 150 or 200 people, to farm houses with room for a single family, or even a single boarder.

While the Board of Agriculture's program encouraged tourism in all its forms--camping out, resort hotels, buying summer homes--the most characteristic form of this new vacation was the growth of summer boarding on farms. This was both a less formal and a far less

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<sup>1</sup>L. H. Carroll, "One State and the 'Summer People' Industry," The World's Work 4 (August 1902), p. 2383.

<sup>2</sup>In 1894, Victor Spear published a Report on Summer Travel for 1894 (Montpelier, Vt.: Vermont State Board of Agriculture, 1894), in which he reported that 54,236 summer guests had been in Vermont--this was based on a very rudimentary reporting system, and probably radically underestimated the total. The Vermont Board of Agriculture's Agricultural Report for 1896 reported 60,000 visitors for the summer of 1895 (p. 110); and its Agricultural Report for 1897 reported 36,502 visitors with only about half the usual hotels and summer boarding places responding (p. 195). 650 is the largest number of places which took advantage of the free advertising in the Board's pamphlets, reported in the Vermont Board of Agriculture's Report for 1895, p. 171. Spear's opinion is recorded in his Report on Summer Travel for 1894, p. 7.

expensive type of vacation than a hotel visit. Farmers (or more often, farm wives) who wanted summer boarders simply advertised in nearby city newspapers, and then screened the letters they received for the type of visitors they wanted. Arrangements varied a great deal--some households had room for only two or three people, some had room for as many as twelve or fifteen. Prices also varied--from as low as \$3.00 per week to over \$12.00 per week for a family--still substantially less than a week at even a moderately priced hotel. For these prices, the boarders received what were ordinarily fairly simple accommodations--a shared room, access to a common parlor--and fairly elaborate meals, often served to them separately while the farm family ate in the kitchen. Advisers repeated frequently that good food was far more important than lavish accommodations, and that city boarders would be content with clean, rather spartan living conditions if only they were given really interesting "country-style" meals.

The Board of Agriculture's promotional program, like Old Home Week, seemed especially to invite former residents of Vermont to visit, but there is little evidence about how this worked. Farm boarders varied widely in social class, though almost all were city dwellers. Sometimes they were people who could have afforded a more lavish vacation--wealthy ladies who wanted to milk cows and make their own preserves--but most often they seem to have been from middle to fairly low income groups. The families of businessmen often came from nearby cities (Burlington or Brattleboro), so that the wife and children could stay for an extended period, while the husband came out for weekends. And from more distant cities (Boston, Springfield, or Hartford) came single women or men, on

rather marginal incomes but with distinctly white collar occupations-- "school-teachers, bookkeepers, and clerks," as one farm wife reported, "all intelligent and refined."<sup>1</sup> Some summer boarders were actually related to the farm family--these were clearly "coming home" in a far different way from the others.

In fact, farm vacations exhibited a remarkable flexibility in their ability to cater both to those people for whom it was actually some form of going home to the farm they had recently left, and to those people for whom it was a safely distanced fantasy of home and the old days. The actual relationship of urban tourists to the farm vacation may have depended in large part on the degree of distance between them and their own farm pasts--but visitors of all kinds were in a position, perhaps for the first time, of being able to envision the countryside as a playground, rather than as a mass of conflicting obligations, restraints, and memories.

But this is partly because tourists' understanding of the New England countryside was shaped by more influences than the Vermont Board of Agriculture. And even in reading the Board's promotional literature, the tourist was free to understand the sentiments of the Board in an essentially different way from the ways they were understood by farmers. The future of northern New England's farms and of rural life and values were, after all, the subject of heated debate among outsiders--non-farmers and urban experts--at the end of the

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<sup>1</sup>Kitty Kent, "Varied Menu for Boarders," New England Homestead, August 11, 1900, p. 139.

century. Popular magazines like Harper's and Atlantic Monthly filled their pages with articles on the decline of New England (by which they now meant rural, and especially northern, New England). Between 1890 to 1910, titles like "Broken Shadows on the New England Farm" and "Is New England Decadent?" were an almost constant presence in the popular magazines.<sup>1</sup> Writers focused on the decay of New England, from Sarah Orne Jewett's loving evocation of a dying countryside to Edith Wharton's grim depictions of the emptiness and savagery of village life.

Urban reformers often described the "decline of rural New England" primarily as a question of character: the best and the brightest had moved west or to the cities, and those remaining were unadventurous and small-minded at best, mentally or morally defective at worst. Unlike the farm writers, who saw their region's problems as primarily economic--low profits, too much competition, inefficiency--these reformers discovered widespread social, religious and moral problems in the region.<sup>2</sup> The New England farmers they discovered at the turn of the century were too much like the urban poor--morally indiscriminate, religiously inclined toward skepticism or too-fervent revivalism, badly educated and badly fed--and not enough like the independent Yankee yeomanry on which they thought the nation depended.

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<sup>1</sup>Clarence Deming, "Broken Shadows on the New England Farm," The Independent 55 (April 30, 1903), pp. 1018-20; W.A. Giles, "Is New England Decadent?," The World Today 9 (Sept. 1905), p. 991. For a partial bibliography of these articles, see Wilson, Hill Country, pp. 403-437.

<sup>2</sup>Hal Barron contrasted these two perspectives in Those Who Stayed, p. 31.

New England farm writers usually dismissed these charges as the products of ignorance, referring sarcastically to a writer-reformer like Alvan Sanborn as "a bright young man, who. . . writes for the Atlantic Monthly all sorts of things that aren't so, about New England rural life."<sup>1</sup> But urban reformers like this did share some of the underlying understanding of Vermont's own farm writers about rural New England. The region should be, if it was not, the repository of all that the nation held most dear, values which seemed to oppose the industrial capitalist order it was now enmeshed in: ethnic purity, the discipline and hard work of rural life, independence, contentment with simple pleasures, closeness to nature.

And in fact, these "rural degeneracy" exposes were not at heart fundamentally different from the even more prevalent sentimental writing about New England and the farm childhood. Arguments over the decline of New England rural life were based in fact on a shared belief in a sort of golden age, when New England's institutions and values had created a kind of democratic rural utopia, and had influenced the entire country. A wide variety of writings--history, sociology, personal reminiscences, "local color" stories--reflected this shared belief. The argument was over when "the old order of life, with its romantic charm, its simplicity, its godliness, its reposeful calm," had been replaced with "the beautiless affectations of a crude and very

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<sup>1</sup>New England Homestead 35 (July 24, 1897), p. 89. For a summary of farmers' responses to the rural reform aspects of the Country Life movement, see chapter 7 of William L. Bowers, The Country Life Movement in America, 1900-1920, (Port Washington, New York: Kennikat Press, 1974), pp. 102-127. Bowers finds widespread resentment of the assumptions of the movement, and a general consensus that the farmer needed economic justice, not moral uplift.

modern civilization."<sup>1</sup> The reformers believed it was going or gone; the nostalgic writers argued that northern New England was still a "veritable rural utopia."<sup>2</sup>

For these writers whether sentimental or scientific, the countryside of New England was primarily a resource, for the nation's political health, and for the city person's own moral and psychic health. Reformers feared that this source was becoming tainted, but they shared with more sentimental writers the hope that the region could yet be made to yield the proper antidotes to modern urban life. It is easy to see in these writers the same impulse that would draw increasing numbers of urban vacationers to the New England countryside in search of rural experiences for themselves. In one way or another, they hoped to extract these values and experiences from rural life, rather than to return to the country life for good. In a pattern that seems characteristic of Victorian social compromises, just as women in the middle class home were supposed to impart moral training to men on their way out into the world, Vermont farms were to confer peace and contentment on visitors who belonged elsewhere most of the time.

Summer tourists who traveled to Vermont or other parts of rural New England to experience a farm vacation were thus in the middle of several intersecting dialogues on the meaning and uses of the New England countryside. Usually urban in background, they were free to

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<sup>1</sup>Rollin Lynde Hartt, "A New England Hill Town," Atlantic Monthly 83 (April 1899), pp. 571-2.

<sup>2</sup>New Hampshire Old Home Week Association, Annual Report p. 72.

adopt an essentially sentimental approach to the farm and to their own childhoods. At the same time, their distance from the farm and its values was not apparently so great that they were immune to the Board of Agriculture's implicit critique of modern urban life (and of their own choices)--since after all these were tourists who might have chosen to go to the coast or to a scenic resort rather than home to the farm for a vacation. Perhaps it is most useful to see the farm boarding tourist as someone on contested terrain in the most literal sense: standing on ground that could be understood either as the foundation for resistance to urban industrial life, or as a pleasant retreat from some of its symptoms.

There were at least two different perspectives at work on northern New England's tourist industries: an "insider's" promotional philosophy, based on a traditional understanding of the value of farm life, and an "outsider's" vision of rural New England as a palliative. But in reality, the two angles often seemed to converge. (And in reality, of course, it is too simple to attribute to all Vermont's farmers, rich and poor, and to their politicians and leaders, the same perspective; and it is equally crude to attribute to all tourists the same "outsider's" perspective.) In Old Home Week, for instance, it is difficult to disentangle native pride from urban nostalgia. Old Home Week effectively ratified the work of the native promoters by converting former natives to summer tourists in the most dramatic and successful way.

At the same time, however, Old Home Week was more the product of those who had left than of "those who stayed behind." In

Edith Wharton's novel, Summer, Old Home Week served to highlight a stark contrast between the sentimentalism of city visitors returning home to "North Dormer" and the constricted and hopeless lives of those who still lived there. As Wharton told the story, "the incentive to the celebration had come rather from those who had left North Dormer than from those who had been obliged to stay there, and there was some difficulty in rousing the village to the proper state of enthusiasm."<sup>1</sup> It was outsiders who toured the village looking for eighteenth century architecture, and outsiders who spoke, as one of the novel's Old Home Week enthusiasts did, of "the old ideals, the family and the homestead, and so on."<sup>2</sup> Although it was local inhabitants who prepared the festivities, it was not necessarily their perspective that was expressed. No lingering critique either of urban or of rural life was allowed to filter through Old Home Week invitations. While the central conceit remained--northern New England was more the "old home" than ever--the flattery and the attention were focused on the returning conquering heroes, and not at all on "those who stayed behind." And the virtues associated with rural life were more than ever portrayed as objects to be brought back from a visit there.

Enthusiastic returning visitors often seemed to mirror the native promoters' ideals. Herbert Wendell Gleason, for instance, wrote glowingly about Old Home Week in a 1900 article in New England Magazine, arguing that "the spirit of commercial greed has wrought

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<sup>1</sup>Edith Wharton, Summer, (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1917), p. 170.

<sup>2</sup>Wharton, p. 173.



sad havoc with the ideals of our fathers," especially of "the old New England idea of home, with its cheerful simplicity, quiet atmosphere, strong ties of affection and ruggedness of virtue."<sup>1</sup> Here Gleason's urban nostalgia met rural conservatism on some of its own ground, using some of the same language: "commercial greed" was at war with "the old New England idea of home." But Gleason was not advocating a return to rural life--Old Home Week itself was to be the cure for this problem. He defused the critique of "commercial greed" by suggesting that the solution lay simply in summer visits home and the restoration of colonial houses. In this way, Old Home Week brought the national discussion about the value of the northern New England farm to a practical focus, but a deeply nostalgic one: a city-dweller could help to preserve the good old days and ways, not by actually returning to those ways, but by a summer's visit "home."

Old Home Week was characteristic of the intersections where the understanding between national reformers and local promoters came to a practical, though not always smooth, settlement. In spite of the different focus of Old Home Week, it formed a seamless whole with local farm writers' attempts to promote the region: tourist promoters were generally also Old Home Week enthusiasts. In Vermont, for instance, two regional magazines--the Vermont and the Inter-State Journal--played an important role in getting the state involved, arguing that "the establishment of Old Home Week is in line

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<sup>1</sup>Herbert Wendell Gleason, "The Old Farm Revisited," New England Magazine 22, (August 1900), p. 678.

with what has already been done toward bringing many summer visitors into the State."<sup>1</sup>

But the differences between northern natives and tourists could not always be mediated entirely by rhetoric. Vermont tourist promoters had in mind the preservation of a farm economy and way of life, a way of life they certainly felt was in some ways inimical to the urban white collar existence of most tourists. Perhaps more often, tourists had in mind the extraction of certain feelings and experiences with which they could return to their modern city life with the advantages of pre-modern rural life in their suitcases. The incongruities between what Vermont farms and villages were, and what their purpose was understood to be by tourists, became apparent as soon as the promotional programs began to pay off.

Northern New England's tourist promoters, having helped to create a new demand for a nostalgic farm experience, were then obliged to respond to it. Tourists who wanted to experience life on the old farm, or even more likely, wanted their children to experience it, traveled in increasing numbers to the hill towns at the end of the century. They brought with them a whole host of expectations and assumptions about farm life and the New England countryside, many of them engendered by the promoters themselves. But the fulfillment of these expectations was not always easy--what the Board of Agriculture meant by the value of farm life was clearly not exactly what many tourists had in mind. The advisers of northern New England farmers were acutely aware of the need to give summer boarders a nostalgic

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<sup>1</sup>"Vermont Old Home Week," The Vermonter 6, no. 10 (May 1901), pp. 166-7.

experience; New England Homestead advised its readers: "Make the house a home for your 'paying guests,' but above all, make of it a purely country home; do not make the mistake of trying to make a city home of it. They left the city to get into the country."<sup>1</sup> But what constituted a country home? What did these "city cousins" want from their visit home?

Farmers were often made uncomfortably aware of the wide difference between their understanding of rural life and the understanding of their "city cousins." In part it reflected a simple difference between daily life and vacation life--between work on a farm and play on a farm, as this farm wife's heavily underlined sarcasm made clear:

they are so enthusiastic over many things, it does us good. They find the morning so fresh after you have served their late breakfast, and the glass of milk so refreshing after their afternoon nap, and the cream is so delicious, and the piazza so cool, you think some day you would really like to enjoy it yourself for a few minutes.<sup>2</sup>

In theory, farm visitors wanted to experience a way of life they associated with the old days, with the virtues of rural simplicity and closeness to nature. But often they were comparing their experiences to other vacations as well as to life in the city. They did not really want to "go home," of course--they wanted to go on vacation. They wanted a different experience from the usual resort life, an inexpensive, healthy, "natural" vacation; one which they believed to be more appropriate for children; and one which avoided the "unhealthy

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<sup>1</sup>Wiltshire, "The Summer Boarder," p. 623.

<sup>2</sup>Mrs. A. J. Gibbs, "A Talk with Farmers' Wives," Vermont Board of Agriculture Report, 1889-90 (Montpelier, Vt.: 1890), p. 118.

excitements" of hotel life. In practice, this meant some very specific things, none more important than food.

City visitors seemed to want some of the same things Vermont farmers were increasingly making available to them in the cities. As Frank Rollins interpreted urban tastes for farm readers in New England Magazine, they wanted "plain country fare"--good butter, good bread, fresh vegetables and eggs--and they wanted it cooked "simply": "throw away your frying-pan; go bury it in the pasture twenty feet deep."<sup>1</sup> And furthermore, they wanted fresh flowers and service "by as pretty a girl, a farmer's daughter, as you can find, neatly and prettily dressed."<sup>2</sup> Rollins was one among several promoters to add the "farmer's daughter" to the list of farm products more effectively exploited at the point of production. New England Homestead illustrated its article on boarding tourists with a photograph of a jaunty farmer's daughter standing at the doorway of the barn--the caption read, "I'm going a-milking, sir, she said."<sup>3</sup> (See figure 25.)

"Plain country fare," according to those who advised farmers on how to replicate it, consisted of fresh milk, fresh eggs, fresh vegetables and fruits of all kinds, and their preparation was to be as "simple" as possible, in city terms. Presumably it was neither the kind of food prospective tourists were accustomed to eating in the city, since it was denoted "plain country fare," nor the kind of food farmers

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<sup>1</sup>Frank W. Rollins, "New Hampshire's Opportunity," New England Magazine 16 (July 1897), pp. 539-40.

<sup>2</sup>Rollins, "New Hampshire's Opportunity," p. 539.

<sup>3</sup>Wiltshire, "The Summer Boarder."



*"I'm going a-milking, sir," she said*

Figure 25. "'I'm going a-milking, sir," she said." From C. T. Wiltshire, "The Summer Boarder as an Asset," New England Homestead, May 18, 1912.

were accustomed to eating in the country, since they needed so much help in figuring it out. In reality, visitors often contrasted the fresh seasonal simplicity of the city visitor's dreams with the monotonous, high-fat diet of most farmers. Urban reformers recorded with repugnance the endless round of pork, biscuits, doughnuts, and pies the average farmer ate.<sup>1</sup>

Food could easily become the stumbling block on which the entire vacation foundered. William Dean Howells rented a house in Shirley, Massachusetts for his family during the summer of 1876. Like a growing number of contemporaries, his position as editor of the Atlantic Monthly gave him both the flexibility and the money to go away for the summer, but kept him within a day's travel of his offices in Cambridge. In June, he wrote to his father that they had the "promise of a very pleasant summer" before them: the local woman who cooked for them would have to be taught their "ideas of cooking," but she was willing to learn, and "so far, all goes well." Six weeks later, Howells suddenly informed his father that the family had fled their summer home because of their "extreme discontent" with their landlord and his family. The landlady was not, after all, willing to learn their ideas of cooking. As Howells informed his father, "everything on the table was sour, dirty, or rancid. . ." <sup>2</sup> The problem so intrigued Howells that thirty years later he framed a novel, The Vacation of the Kelwyns, around his family's attempts to compel the farm wife who

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<sup>1</sup>Now, of course, "plain country fare" on the New England farm brings to mind just the kinds of food--the doughnuts, pie, and baked beans--rejected by these turn-of-the-century tourists.

<sup>2</sup>William Dean Howells, letters to his father, in the Selected Letters, volume 2, June 18, 1876 and July 30, 1876, edited by George Arms et al (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1979).

boarded them to give them "plain country fare, with plenty of milk and eggs and berries" in the place of the "cowy milk," bitter tea, greasy eggs and rancid butter she insisted on providing.<sup>1</sup>

Food was not the only subject on which urban and rural understandings of the farm collided. Alvan Sanborn, who reported on the deplorable eating habits of rural New Englanders in Atlantic Monthly, was equally displeased with the "up-to-date gewgaws" and "smart sets of parlor furniture" he found in farm homes.<sup>2</sup> New England Homestead argued with its readers that tourists did not expect city accommodations in the country--"in point of fact they do not want them"--and suggested that they get rid of their "stuffy draperies, dusty carpets and superfluous furniture" and brighten up the place with painted woodwork and tasteful wallpaper.<sup>3</sup> The stuffy draperies and dusty carpets were of course, in all likelihood, the most "up-to-date" and urban of the farm's furnishings, and they seem also to have been the very kinds of objects most associated with domesticity in the urban parlor. But city tourists were not necessarily interested in modern farms: farm furniture, clothing and customs should be old-fashioned and quaint. Howells' Kelwyns were disappointed to find that the house they had rented from the Shakers in New Hampshire came complete with new furniture straight from the warehouse, in place of

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<sup>1</sup>William Dean Howells, The Vacation of the Kelwyns (New York: Harper and Bros., 1920), pp. 5 and 32-33.

<sup>2</sup>Alvan F. Sanborn, "The Future of Rural New England," The Atlantic Monthly 79 (1897), pp. 79-80.

<sup>3</sup>Wiltshire, "The Summer Boarder," p. 623.

the "Shaker quaintness" of "rag carpets and hooked rugs" they had expected.<sup>1</sup>

Tourist enthusiasts of all kinds were eager to smooth over these difficulties. The Central Vermont Railroad reported in its pamphlet Summer Homes among the Green Hills of Vermont in 1894 that it had, "at no inconsiderable expense," recruited a number of Vermont families to "open their comfortable, and often luxurious homes" to the summer boarder.<sup>2</sup> And increasingly, the state involved itself in attempts to train Vermont farm wives to cook "plain country fare" properly, and in general to train farm families to entertain tourists. More informal networks also dispersed information; at the turn of the century, New England Homestead readers wrote in large numbers every summer, reporting their experiences with summer boarders, their advice on how to set up such businesses, and their evaluations of its worth.

By the end of the century, no reasonably well-informed farm wife could have been ignorant of the kinds of food and accommodations that city people liked. Every summer issue of the farm magazines carried advice about fresh cream, eggs, chicken, vegetables, and fruit, and more: how to rotate the food to create variety, how to capitalize on the boarder's imagination. One farm wife observed that "the vegetables that passed directly from the garden to the stove, under the direct observation of the boarders, were considered to be far superior

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<sup>1</sup>Howells, Vacation, p. 26.

<sup>2</sup>Central Vermont Railroad, Summer Homes among the Green Hills of Vermont (St. Albans, Vt., 1894 edition), p. 21.



to any others." It had sometimes been inconvenient to cater to the boarders in this way, she acknowledged, "but it paid, you know."<sup>1</sup> The same direct advice on furnishings was available in the magazines from those who reported their experiences: "the old furniture proved very interesting and the painted floors were just the proper thing."<sup>2</sup>

The advice was so well understood that one farm wife reported her experiences to the contrary with some astonishment: "My boarders ate pie!" In her article, entitled "Pie a Standard Dessert," Mrs. A. M. Lewis of New Hampshire reported that her boarders had eaten her pie with relish, although they had been a bit apologetic about it, one of them explaining "somewhat humbly" after eating three pieces, "I did not know before that pie was so good to eat." After that day, she reported, she "felt no fears;" she served them pie, and even baked beans and doughnuts. "To tell the whole truth," she concluded, "they liked everything that was good. . ."--but she hastened to add that perhaps she had been unusually fortunate in her boarders.<sup>3</sup>

The battle over "plain country fare" was not essentially a matter of ignorance; it was at least in part a battle for control of the vacation--and ultimately for the meaning of rural life. For if vacationers did not expect "city" food or urban parlor furniture, they expected certain kinds of amenities that entailed a considerable amount of extra work for both the farmer and the farm wife. Producing a constant supply of

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<sup>1</sup>Mrs. A.M. Lewis, "Pie a Standard Dessert," New England Homestead 43 (July 20, 1901), p. 71.

<sup>2</sup>Lewis, "Pie," p. 71.

<sup>3</sup>Lewis, "Pie," p. 71.

fresh food for the boarder's table involved the farmer in very different kinds of work than did the customary farm garden. As one Vermont farmer reported it, "city people. . . eat three times as many vegetables as do the farmers. . . (and) eat three or four times as many sorts." He advised farmers who wished to cater to the summer trade that they must "plant every sort of fruit and vegetable, . . . that may ordinarily be found in the city markets," that they had to plant early and repeatedly, and that the whole business involved a great deal of planning, constant attention to the garden, and familiarity with a variety of vegetables their own families had rarely seen.<sup>1</sup>

For farm wives, boarders were not just extra people for whom they cooked and cleaned. They added entirely new demands--for fresh towels every day, for variety at meal time, and for patience with those who wanted to "help out" in the kitchen. Susan Warner's 1882 novel, Nobody, touched on the difficulties of accommodating a city boarder on a New England farm. The strains both of anticipating urban tastes and expectations, and of providing for urban amenities on a rural cash budget, were illuminated in a conversation between the daughters of the family. As the skeptical daughter put it, "She is a city body, of course. Do you suppose she will be contented with our ways of going on?" New curtains for the parlor windows, new table cloths and napkins, silver plated forks instead of steel, and soft coal

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<sup>1</sup>George W. Perry, "The Summer Boarder Garden," in Fifteenth Report of Vermont State Horticultural Society, Ninth Report of the Vermont Commissioner of Agriculture, 1916-1918 (St. Albans, Vt., 1918), p. 62.

fires instead of wood, were only part of the list of changes necessary to accommodate the new boarder.<sup>1</sup>

But if boarders made demands on the farm family's time and budget, they also brought in cash at a time when the farm family's needs were ever more increasingly tied to the market. One farm woman took in summer boarders long enough to make \$35 for a bicycle (although the writer who reported her story asked, "Was that compensation for rising before 5 o'clock every morning, baking, brewing and serving separate meals to farm help?").<sup>2</sup> And Susan Warner's heroines found that the \$12 a week they would make from their boarder would compensate them entirely for a farming year in which their only cow had died and both their apple and hay crops had failed. Instead of the apple crop that year, it was the boarder's fee that paid for the family's winter clothes.<sup>3</sup>

At the same time, though, boarders contested the farm family's control over their own house, and more deeply, over the relationship between host and guest. There was no simple answer to the question of what this relationship was: were the farmer and his wife servants, or host and hostess? From the standpoint of the boarder, the farm family resembled servants; they were responsible for feeding and cleaning up after the boarders. From the standpoint of the farm family, they were hosts with guests (although these guests sometimes

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<sup>1</sup>Susan Warner, *Nobody* (New York: Carter and Brothers, 1882), pp. 255-261.

<sup>2</sup>Evangeline [pseud.], "The Other Side," *New England Homestead* 41 (August 18, 1900), p. 20.

<sup>3</sup>Warner, *Nobody*, pp. 248-258.

acted unreasonably). The work they did, although it entailed many adjustments, was essentially of a piece with their ordinary farm work, no more a matter of personal service than farm work in general. And although they debated in the magazines whether the extra work was worth the extra income--weighed the "worries and small trials," the "petty annoyances," with the profit to be gained--no one suggested that the work of boarding tourists was essentially different from ordinary farm work.

Farm wives who described their experiences in New England Homestead painted an extremely varied picture of the relation of boarder to host. In some cases they reported a clearly equal relationship between their own family and the tourist family: one woman reported that she had made "several warm friends" among her boarders and that she often visited them when she was in town.<sup>1</sup> More often, the general advice was to keep a distance, not out of any sense of inferiority, but out of a sense of appropriate privacy, and out of a desire to protect one's own family. It was appropriate to "cultivate lasting friendships with those who are so inclined," as long as one could make sure that they were "the right sort and sincere."<sup>2</sup>

It is clear not only from the promotional literature but from the words of these farmers and farm wives themselves that they viewed their position as at least equal to that of their visitors from the city. They were quite capable of making assessments of the class status of

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<sup>1</sup>Mary Gray, "A Charming Boarding Place," New England Homestead 41 (August 4, 1900), p. 116.

<sup>2</sup>"Aids to Guests' Comforts," New England Homestead 43 (July 12, 1901), p. 44.

their visitors and of evaluating their desirability on that basis: one farm woman wrote in a column called "First Class Boarders" that "there are several classes of people who spend, the less favored a week or more, the more favored from one or two months to all summer, in the country." She recommended the "more favored" group as being on the whole easier to please; and she cautioned against mixing classes, since it would be "pleasanter if all the members of your household are congenial" (apparently she included her own family among those who would be "congenial" to the "more favored" classes).<sup>1</sup>

If urban tourists expected old-fashioned hospitality from a naturally humble farming class, they often encountered something radically different. And this disjuncture was helped along by the structure of summer boarding itself, which included so many uncertainties as to the status of the boarder. It was simply unclear who was in charge: "the visitors with one accord, however humble their social status in the city, [regard] themselves as vastly superior to the farmer. . .", but "the farmer regards [the city person] as essentially ill-bred, and. . . laughs to scorn his pretensions to superiority . . ." <sup>2</sup>

This perspective could be very frustrating to the boarders, who sometimes expected a level of personal service quite out of keeping with the farm family's understanding of the situation. Small details could become momentous: once having decided that the boarders would eat alone, and the farm family in the kitchen, who would serve them--and how continuously? Howells' vacationing family complained

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<sup>1</sup>"First Class Boarders," American Agriculturist 66, no. 1 (July 7, 1900), p. 18.

<sup>2</sup>"To the Summer Boarder," New England Homestead 41 (August 25, 1900), p. 186.

that they had to go into the kitchen for second helpings or hot water for their tea.<sup>1</sup> Farm wives complained that boarders invaded their "sanctum"--the kitchen--"at any or all hours."<sup>2</sup> In these small details, the wide disparity between the Board of Agriculture's rhetoric and the urban visitor's expectations worked itself out.

Ultimately, these struggles reflected a contest over the farm family's identity, and over the meaning of the farm. These farm wives knew that some of their boarders wished to see them as quaint representatives of a simpler world, but they sometimes had their own reasons for appearing otherwise. If their boarders preferred old-fashioned furniture, clothing and customs, they themselves may not have wished to appear out of step and "countrified." From their perspective, modern conveniences and fashions did nothing to threaten the essential value of farm life. Their own magazines were full of advertisements and advice on how to keep up with the modern improvements of the cities: "A Country Girl Can Dress Just as Smart as a City Girl" went one New England Homestead advertisement for Ladies' Home Journal. Farm families were well aware of the fact that these tourists, who were so nostalgic, would also be quick to condemn any truly old-fashioned foods and habits they encountered.

These areas of contention often revealed themselves in trivial issues, but they were nonetheless powerful and real. A glance at the contents of the summer issues of New England Homestead for 1905

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<sup>1</sup>Howells, Vacation, p. 6.

<sup>2</sup>Kitty Kent, "Varied Menu for Boarders," New England Homestead 41 (August 11, 1900), p. 139.

shows a new familiarity with summer boarders, and a more critical perspective. Instead of an array of advice letters and accounts of experiences designed to encourage and reassure the farm family, there is a series of cartoons on summer boarders and their foibles. The cartoons emphasize summer boarder's ignorance of farm life, and they hint that there may have been some conflict over the summer boarder's desire to "help out" with farm chores (see figures 26 and 27). In the cartoons, the boarder, not the farm family, is on trial. One cartoon, in addition to mocking the city boarder's ineptitude, manages to belittle his much-discussed dietary preferences at the same time: the city boarder is in search of "plain country fare," in this case roast chicken, but he gets stuck with the much-despised pork through his own inadequacy (see figure 28). Farm families may have accepted summer boarders and tourists, but not necessarily the values and perspectives of their guests, and certainly not their guests' definitions of farm life and rural people.

These conflicts between farmers and boarders reflect an incompatibility between the northern New England farmer's critique of urban industrialism, and the city tourist's attempt to adapt to it by taking vacations. The hidden incongruity between the meaning of the farm "home" for northern farmers and for visiting tourists became an all-too-concrete conflict over pies, towels, and carpets. But in spite of these revealing incongruities, the fit between the Vermont farmers' experiences and their visitors' experiences held fast. The summer tourist business prospered in northern New England, and for the most part, both visitors and farmers seemed to get what they expected. If

The Tail of a Cow and a Summer Boarder.



Boarder—Say, you old fool, can't you keep your tail still a minute?



Boarder—There! That ought to hold you for awhile.



Cow—Beg pardon, uncle, but there's a fly on your nose.



Ever notice how the summer boarder mixes things up when he tries to help you milk?

Figure 27. Summer boarder mix-ups. From New England Homestead, July 1, 1905.

Figure 26. "The Tail of a Cow and a Summer Boarder." From New England Homestead, July 25, 1905.





THE HELPFUL CITY BOARDER PLANS FOR ROAST CHICKEN BUT GETS PORK INSTEAD

Figure 28. "The Helpful City Boarder Plans for Roast Chicken." From New England Homestead, July 17, 1905.

their understanding of the meaning of their experiences was not the same, this did not destroy the alliance they had made.

In the end, northern New England, and especially Vermont, took on a role touched by elements of both these perspectives. The nostalgia that surrounded the region was deepened by the ways in which the tourist industry needed real, "old-fashioned" farming, and in which farming depended on tourism. Even after the direct connection between Vermont agriculture and Vermont tourism was severed with the creation of a separate Board of Publicity in 1911, the two industries remained closely intertwined. In 1930, for instance, the Vermont Agricultural Extension Service arranged two state-wide conferences on the subject of entertaining tourists, including such topics as "How to Attract and Hold the Tourist," "Presenting an Attractive Exterior," and "Meals for the Tourist." (The farmers of Vermont, like the modern woman, were being encouraged to become more active--rather than waiting quietly for their customers to come calling, they were to "attract and hold" them with an "attractive exterior.")<sup>1</sup> By that time, small-scale tourist businesses played a major role in the economy of the state.

Northern New England farmers turned to the tourist business to bring in revenue at a time when many other farming options were being restricted, but they did not on that account simply give up control of the industry to the shapers of the larger culture which created the demand for their kind of tourism. In fact, they were able to use the new industry not only to bolster their faltering farm

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<sup>1</sup>Burlington Free Press, April 10, 1930, p. 9, as quoted in Wilson, Hill Country, p. 279.

economy, but also to confirm their understanding of farm life as an especially useful and rewarding occupation.

Perhaps the Board of Agriculture's promotion of tourism did not save Vermont agriculture, at least not at the turn of the century. Dairy farming was mostly responsible for that, as it was for the revival of agriculture in all of northern New England. But programs like it did forge a link between the region's two most important industries--between hay fields and pastoral scenery--that allowed the states to become the "real New England" of the imagined past, to play the role of the "old farm" to thousands of visitors each year, and at the same time to preserve actual farms and real twentieth century farmers in a difficult time of transition.

CONCLUSION:  
NEW ENGLAND REVISITED

New England's tourist industries have changed dramatically since the end of the nineteenth century--so dramatically that it is sometimes almost impossible to trace the marks of earlier tourist industries on the landscape, leaving people to believe that they are the first visitors in places that once hosted hundreds of tourists. Hikers stumble on the remains of earlier tourist industries in the same way that they discover the stone walls that once divided open fields. In some places, like the White Mountains, the absence of the great Victorian hotels and the railroads is almost palpable, leaving one with a haunted feeling that something is missing. In other places, one would simply never know that they had existed.

In 1900, the tourist industry had penetrated almost every corner of the region, from the coast of Maine to the hilltowns of Connecticut. The railroad guide books marketed every stop along their routes as the perfect vacation destination--all roads led off the beaten track, it seemed. With titles like By-Ways of Central Vermont, Here and There in New England, and Down-East Latch Strings, promoters hoped to make it clear that any stop on the line would do. But even in 1900, as these industries transformed the region's landscape, changes in taste and technology were transforming many of the established attractions. On Martha's Vineyard, for example, the end of the century brought the public features of the "Cottage City" virtually to an end. The railroad

went bankrupt, the Sea View hotel burned down, and the projected cottage developments on other parts of the island were left with nothing but deserted beaches and abandoned hotels; only the summer community of Oak Bluffs remained intact--still quite popular, but no longer the center of public fascination that it had been in the 1870s.

The Sea View's fate was typical of many Victorian hotels at the end of the century, which leave no trace today. The Surfside Hotel on Nantucket collapsed in 1899; many of the White Mountain hotels had burned down and been replaced repeatedly throughout the second half of the nineteenth century. But by the century's end, they were not being rebuilt. The reasons for this neglect were partly social: the alternatives to hotel life--summer cottages, boarding houses, farms--were increasing everywhere. For those with limited budgets and time, there were many less expensive ways to take a vacation; and for the wealthy, the great hotels no longer offered either the exclusivity or the fashion statement they had offered in mid-century. Visiting a White Mountain hotel in 1900, one would be more likely to encounter an assembly of the International Association of Ticket Agents, taking advantage of a special group rate, than the kinds of wealthy and elite tourists who had frequented the hotels in mid-century.<sup>1</sup>

On top of these cultural shifts came a crucial technological breakthrough. Within the first two decades of the twentieth century, the automobile began to reinforce the social changes that had been emerging before it existed. The great hotels had functioned as part of

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<sup>1</sup>Peter B. Bulkley, "A History of the White Mountain Tourist Industry, 1818-1899," master's thesis, University of New Hampshire, p. 113.

a railroad network; they were often owned by railroads. At the turn of the century, passenger railroads had served almost every corner of New England. But by 1920, their use by tourists had been seriously challenged by the automobile, which was used at first almost exclusively for tourism.

Automobile patterns of touring were radically different from railroad patterns. Railroads brought the traveler to fixed points at fixed times. Most tourists in 1900 expected to stay in one place, and to use it as a home base for their explorations of mountains or beaches or historical buildings; the great hotels depended on that pattern. Early automobile travelers were more adventurous; they liked to "explore" back roads and towns off the beaten track. They took itinerant vacations, staying for only a night or two at each location. For the most part, the great hotels were not able to adapt to this new pattern.

Some nineteenth century tourist industries, on the other hand, seemed to flourish in the twentieth century's new automobile-oriented trade. In Vermont and other parts of rural New England, automobile tourists were easily accommodated by the kinds of small-scale rural services which were already in place. The residents of small towns, or farmers with land near roads, could board motoring tourists overnight. By the 1930s, many of these places had built tourist cabins, or "motor courts," next to their own houses; roadside restaurants and souvenir shops sprang up. In 1931, the New Hampshire Extension Service conducted a conference designed to train such new entrepreneurs: talks were given on "How Roadside Shops Can Be Turned into Money Making Magnets," and the

"Successful Management of a Tea Room."<sup>1</sup> (In fact, northern New England's tourist promoters in the 1890s had anticipated that their roads might become more important tourist routes than their railroads, and had struggled to improve their roads for that reason--but they had thought the new tourists were coming on bicycles. Governor Rollins of New Hampshire had entertained hopes that bicyclists might patronize roadside stands, local boarding houses, and most of the industries that in fact were developed by automobile travel.<sup>2</sup>)

Automobiles in this instance seemed to speed up a trend already in place by the end of the nineteenth century: away from the great resorts and toward a more informal, small-scale tourist experience. They also intensified a related transformation I have outlined for the nineteenth century: an increasing emphasis on "privacy"--the tourist's (or the tourist family's) ability to experience whatever was to be experienced without contact with strangers. The great Victorian hotels were designed with public interaction with strangers in mind--private rooms were small and crowded, for instance, while public rooms were elaborately decorated and imposing. But by the second half of the nineteenth century alternative forms of tourism had emerged, all of which emphasized their greater privacy, informality, and family domesticity in comparison with the hotels. The little cottages of Wesleyan Grove, the larger "cottages" of Newport, the

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<sup>1</sup>Harold Fisher Wilson, The Hill Country of Northern New England, p. 279.

<sup>2</sup>Frank W. Rollins, "New Hampshire's Opportunity," New England Magazine, 16 (July 1897), p. 538.

rented farm houses in the Berkshires, and even boarding houses from Nantucket to Vermont, were all said to provide greater privacy for the tourist.

But however much emphasis late nineteenth century tourists often placed on privacy, many of them were still looking for the very personal forms of service that had existed for elite tourists in the early part of the century: they often tried to create personal ties with the farmers who boarded them, or with the people who told them "quaint" stories. And in pursuit of those goals, they sometimes sought out tourist experiences most late twentieth century tourists would find intolerably "public"--too close to other tourists, or too intimately involved with the host family's life. Twentieth century tourists have even higher standards of privacy than tourists in 1900: neither the "public" fashionable touring world of the mid-nineteenth century, nor the more "intimate" and informal world of small-scale touring in the later nineteenth century, would be "private" enough for most late twentieth century tourists.

In the twentieth century, automobiles made it possible to frame the entire touring experience, even getting there, in complete privacy. The motor cabins and courts that became motels in the mid-twentieth century offered spatial arrangements that reversed those of the traditional hotel: motels are judged by the luxuries and amenities available in one's private room, rather than in the often almost non-existent public space.<sup>1</sup> And if late twentieth century tourists want

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<sup>1</sup>The development of motels is explored in John A. Jakle, The Tourist: Travel in Twentieth-Century North America (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1981), pp. 163-166.



even more privacy, they can invest in time-share condominiums, where one can live completely sealed off even from the tourist industry workers--"quaint" or otherwise--who had once made up such an important part of the touring experience.

But "privacy" in nineteenth century tourism meant more than being alone with one's family. It meant greater segregation--the assurance that one would not meet people who were not one's "sort," not of the same social class (except as "naturally hospitable" workers, or quaint locals). When the great hotels were abandoned by elite tourists in the late nineteenth century, it was not simply because they had come to be seen as too public, but because they could not guarantee the kinds of exclusivity they had once promised. In the twentieth century, one part of the search for "privacy" is still the search for a socially homogeneous environment. "Bed and breakfasts," for instance, seem to stand out as a rather "public," socially open vacationing experience, in contrast to the hermetically sealed condominium vacation. But "bed and breakfasts" work socially because they can provide the unspoken assurance that in their open and informal world one will encounter only tourists--and hosts--of a homogeneous, usually upper middle class professional background.

And in the twentieth century, tourist destinations are stratified not only by social class, but by a variety of other factors as well. Nineteenth century coastal and mountain resorts were used as a kind of "marriage market" (at least until the later part of the century, when they gained a reputation for "manlessness," as William Dean Howells described it), but they were not nearly as homogeneous as a twentieth

century "singles" resort.<sup>1</sup> Whole regions of the vacation landscape today are divided by such social factors as age and "lifestyle": on Cape Cod, college students go to Hyannis for college-style night life; psychologists meet each other in Wellfleet; and Provincetown attracts gay tourists (and tourists to look at the gay tourists) from all over the northeast.

Meanwhile, the tourist season has become increasingly generalized. Nineteenth century tourists occupied the landscape only in July and August, but the twentieth century tourist industry has colonized the rest of the year. The first important invasion of the "off-season" was the development of winter sports, most importantly skiing. New England skiing was pioneered by Dartmouth College students in the White Mountains: as early as 1910 the Dartmouth Outing Club was sponsoring skiing races on the sides of Mount Washington. The sport became widely popular in the 1930s, when college students from all over the northeast began to take it up, and with the students came skiing instructors, skiing equipment and winter accommodations.<sup>2</sup> Since then, northern New England has come to rely increasingly on its winter tourist population as well as its summer people. Even more recently, what was once called "autumn" has been transformed into "foliage season," in an attempt to keep the

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<sup>1</sup>In 1900, William Dean Howells wrote to his son that he would have liked to have stayed in Annisquam, Maine, for the rest of the summer, but that it gave his daughter no chance to find a husband: "But it is the most manless place I ever saw." Howells, Selected Letters, volume 5, edited by George Arms et al (Boston: Twayne Publishers 1979), p. 244.

<sup>2</sup>F. Allen Burt, The Story of Mount Washington (Hanover: Dartmouth Publications, 1960), Chapter 11, "Skiing."

tourist dollars rolling in through the slow period of September and October.

And while the structure of the tourist industry has changed dramatically in the twentieth century, so too has the region itself. New England's tourist industries in the early twentieth century were facing increasing competition from the ever more popular and accessible attractions of the West. As more and more tourists made the lengthy trek west to the Rockies, Yellowstone Park and the Pacific Coast, New England could hardly claim to offer a comparable wilderness experience. Yet at the same time, New England's landscape was visibly "wilder," more wooded and less farmed, than it had been only a generation or two earlier. The region that in the mid-nineteenth century was more than three-quarters cleared land, is today more than two-thirds re-forested.<sup>1</sup> And the tourist landscape has changed, too--both the pervasive woodland and the endangered farm landscape have become objects of attention.

Wilderness and its preservation came to be a major focus for touring in the early twentieth century, but its roots were earlier: in the camping tours of the Adirondacks popularized by the controversial Boston clergyman "Adirondack" Murray as early as 1869, and in the preservation movement which had its first victory in 1872 with the creation of Yellowstone National Park.<sup>2</sup> In the early twentieth century, wilderness and the "outdoors" became an important part of the tourist

<sup>1</sup>John Brinckerhoff Jackson, American Space: The Centennial Years, 1865-1876 (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1972).

<sup>2</sup>David Strauss, "Toward a Consumer Culture: 'Adirondack Murray' and the Wilderness Vacation," American Quarterly 39 (Summer 1987), pp. 270-283; Roderick Nash, Wilderness and the American Mind (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977).

experience even in relatively tame New England; as the trails of the Appalachian Mountain Club replaced the bridle paths in the White Mountains, camping and hiking became increasingly important elements of tourism in all of northern New England. Summer camps for children became part of a wilderness boom in the 1920s: in that single decade, the three northern New England states acquired nearly 500 children's summer camps.<sup>1</sup>

Woodlands were put to new uses by twentieth century tourists, and so, increasingly, were the region's pastoral landscapes. After World War II especially, New England's remaining farm landscapes came to have a new significance for tourists of the region. The disappearance of farms, and the mechanization that followed the war, created a new interest in the old image of farms as the home of old-fashioned virtue and decency. And New England's farms were of course the most virtuous of all. Until recently, the nineteenth century alliance between Vermont farms and Vermont pastoral tourism seems to have held fast. Even today, when Vermont's farms are competing for land with huge skiing complexes and the summer housing market, many farm preservationists hope to associate it with the pastoral tourist's landscape for which Vermont is famous: the Natural Organic Farmers' Association in Vermont distributes bumper stickers that plead with tourists to "Help Keep Vermont Beautiful-- Save Its Farms."

At the same time, Vermont's farms in the twentieth century have come even more decidedly to represent, not progress or nature, but

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<sup>1</sup>Wilson, The Hill Country, p. 292.

the old days. The taste for New England antiquities has increased over the years. And here, too, changes in the region have affected the structure of tourism. Not only "colonial" places like Deerfield and Litchfield now market their histories, but the great industrial edifices left behind by the de-industrialization of the region during the 1920s are increasingly found to have stirring histories and fascinating architecture. When Lowell's downtown "millscape" was transformed into a National Park in 1978, it marked the coming-of-age of an entirely new attitude toward a part of New England's history that had been ignored by the region's tourists since the mid-century turn toward nostalgia. Once these highly mobile immigrant-filled industrial cities had been shunned by romanticists: now these buildings and artifacts, too, are part of "old New England."

The twentieth century has seen an intensification of efforts to preserve and market the "oldness" of New England. On Nantucket, the first of New England's historic districts was formed in 1955, protecting most of the town's oldest neighborhoods from change. In the decades that followed, the intensive re-working and "preservation" of Nantucket's waterfront and commercial center have continued to generate controversy over the balance between preservation, beauty, and profit--between Nantucket as architectural goldmine and Nantucket as coastal resort.<sup>1</sup> Tourist promoters would argue that New England's tourist industry provides as many recreational and resort experiences--from sunbathing to skiing--as it does historical and

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<sup>1</sup>Jane Holtz Kay, Preserving New England (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986), pp. 61-65.

nostalgic ones. But from the standpoint of outsiders, what is still most distinctive about the region is its oldness, from eighteenth century farmhouses to early twentieth century railroad depots.

Nineteenth century tourist images of New England had been varied, too: tourists imagined at different times that they were visiting the birthplace of the nation, the old home of their childhood, the home of advanced radical political theories, or the best beaches in the country. From the mid-nineteenth century on, though, what they imagined most consistently was that visiting New England tourist attractions somehow provided a respite from the conditions of modern urban industrial life--the very life New Englanders were being alternately praised and blamed for creating in the United States. ✓

This paradox is no longer with us in its same form: for us, it seems entirely natural that late nineteenth century tourists perceived New England as old; the shock is in the discovery that New England was ever "new," that tourists might once have looked to the region for an experience not unlike what we seek out when we visit NASA or Disney's Future Land. For twentieth century tourists, much of the landscape of New England belongs unambiguously to the past. When modern New Englanders read of a struggle over whether to replace a Berkshire town's factory with an art gallery, or an old Lowell mill with a new micro-chip laboratory, we may be startled to think of these places as having a future at all, not simply as storehouses for ways of life that have disappeared.

Although interest in oldness remains an extremely important part of New England tourism, modern tourists (like nineteenth century tourists) have not always bothered to distinguish what kind of

✓ "old" they are looking at. In the same way, interest in region itself seems to have increased in the twentieth century, rather than declined as regional distinctiveness has declined. New England's unique qualities have become ever more attractive as tourist packaging. Specialization has made New England's image more distinct: few promoters today would think of comparing Nantucket to the South Seas, or Oak Bluffs architecture to that of a medieval castle. And in the end, that idea of New England became perhaps the most effective sales pitch of all. It was not until the second half of the nineteenth century that promoters had referred to the entire region of New England as an attraction. But in the twentieth century, the region became perhaps the main attraction, as the region came to embody the unchanging past. A rural town in Connecticut or Vermont, a fishing village in Maine, or the ruins of an industrial city in Massachusetts, could all be the tourist's "New England"--and they all depended on tourism.

Some of the conflicts at the heart of nineteenth century tourism have thus been resolved: for us, all of New England is unambiguously "old," and the only challenge is to travel in such a way as to avoid the car dealerships and video stores. We no longer have any trouble reconciling vacations with religious and moral convictions; leisure is an accepted part of life for all who can afford it. But some of the nineteenth century's conflicts are very much with us. In public policy discussions on the effects of tourism, positions range from a wholehearted embrace of tourism in every form, to a concern for its effects when it infringes on endangered values--on cultural distinctiveness, on wild nature, or on other valued relics, like farms.

But few people address the more fundamental conflicts at the heart of tourism.

Twentieth century tourism is a far more diverse industry than nineteenth century tourism; it involves more people in more complex ways than it did in 1900. In a single issue of the region's trendiest magazine, New England Monthly, one can find descriptions of the New York Yacht Club's visits to New England harbors, a photo essay of "touristy" places on the Maine coast, and directions for how to find one of the few remaining places "where family-owned farms get by with herds of sixty Jerseys, residents supplement their incomes by tapping maples in the spring, and most of the general stores still double as post offices."<sup>1</sup> But tourism is still an exceptionally revealing industry. It still reflects the cultural preoccupations of tourists and their "hosts," and it still embodies political and economic conflicts that go largely undiscussed in our world.

Many scholars have argued that tourists are often uncomfortable being tourists because they dislike being part of a "herd"--because they like to think of themselves as "insiders," rather than part of a mass of outside observers. I think the discomfort goes deeper: that as tourists, people often encounter questions of power in peculiarly intense and direct ways. It does not require the staggering social and economic differences between first-world tourists and third-world "hosts" to illustrate how power differences constitute an essential part of the tourist experience. As tourists, people directly confront their own power and status in a number of ways (and indeed tourism makes

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<sup>1</sup>All in New England Monthly 6, no. 8, August 1989.



of people with very little power at home or at work a kind of temporary elite): they make a very clear statement of their claim to a particular status by their choice of touring styles and destinations; they play with the trappings of elite luxury and leisure in hotels; they encounter a world where art and culture and social life are laid out for their sampling; and they are invited to "forget" that people work to provide them with these temporary pleasures.

In the late nineteenth century, the power relations between hosts and guests were both explored and hidden by notions of "natural" hospitality, and of going "home" to the farm. Today, they can be obscured by the impersonality of hotels, condominiums, and automobile travel, or by the segregation which prevents personal contact with the wrong kinds of people. But at the heart of tourism is an experience of power differences, temporary perhaps, but nevertheless intense: an experience of luxurious ease, of control over one's time, of access to cultural or natural resources--combined with a largely unacknowledged sense that the workers providing these services have, for the moment at least, none of these things.

In this sense, too, tourism is a peculiarly "transparent" industry: one of the marks of a successful tourist attraction is its success in making the production process, its workers, and their lives invisible. But the impact of tourist industries is not invisible--neither the money it brings to many communities nor the difficult questions it poses. On Nantucket, year-round residents are evicted from their apartments during the summer months so that landlords may rent to summer people willing to pay triple the normal price. In Vermont's Champlain Valley, summer houses spread out over the best farm land in the state-

-land that embattled dairy farmers can no longer afford. And, as New England Monthly has reported, New Haven's Department of Cultural Affairs recently spent \$15,000 in an attempt to train the city's residents to be polite to tourists, in order to attract visitors to the seventh-poorest city in the nation.<sup>1</sup> Of course, tourists see the evidence of these facts everywhere they go: to get to the lovely lake-front cottages, one must drive past the decaying farmhouses and the rusting mobile homes.

The question of whether New Haven's cab drivers have anything to gain by attracting tourists with their good manners, or whether Nantucket's workers would prefer to attract fewer tourists and stay in their own houses, or whether Vermont's farmers would choose to risk lower property values along with fewer wealthy land investors, are no more frequently discussed than the comparable questions for any other industry.<sup>2</sup> But when they are raised, for tourism as for other industries, they are discussed as though they are the unique products of the latest stages of modern society. This dissertation does not answer these questions, but it does show that they have what has often been denied them: a history.

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<sup>1</sup>New England Monthly 6, no. 8, pp. 13-14.

<sup>2</sup>That is, it is not often discussed when the industries are located in the developed world; there is a great deal of open discussion of control, power and money among anthropologists, economists, and political scientists who study the tourist industry in poor countries. See, for instance: Ben Finney and Karen Ann Watson, A New Kind of Sugar: Tourism in the South Pacific (Honolulu: East West Center, 1976); Linda K. Richter, The Politics of Tourism in Asia (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1989); Francois Ascher, Tourism: Transnational Corporations and Cultural Identities (Paris: UNESCO, 1985).

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### Nineteenth Century Guide Books

I have created a separate category for guide books because they are a tremendously rich source, and largely unexplored. The distinction between guide books and travel literature of other kinds--sketches of scenery, reminiscences of travel, or histories of tourist regions--is not a clear one. But the works listed here generally offer information on routes and prices, compare different hotels and attractions, and offer tips on a wide variety of subjects ranging from mountain hiking clothes to fashionable beaches. This is by no means a complete bibliography, but a casual look at the list will reveal the existence of whole tourist businesses behind these books: railroads like the Old Colony and Central Vermont lines, publishing houses like Appleton's, and individual careers like that of Moses Sweetser.

Many local historical societies in New England's tourist regions possess useful guide book collections; the most comprehensive collection of national and local guides I have encountered is at the American Antiquarian Society in Worcester, Massachusetts.

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Journal of Alexander Bliss (1825 honeymoon to Niagara)  
 Diary of William B. Banister (1837 journey)  
 Diary of Caroline Barrett White (volume 1, journeys to Lake  
 Sunapee and southern New Hampshire; volume 5, White  
 Mountains; volume 13, White Mountains)

#### Graphic Arts collection:

railroads, steamboat and stagecoach handbills  
 hotel billheads

### Peter Foulger Museum and Library of the Nantucket Historical Association,

#### Nantucket, Massachusetts

#### Coffin Reunion collection

Lodging and Eating collection, including Sherburne House hotel registers

Nantucket Railroad papers

Reminiscences collection

Sherburne Bluffs papers

### Registry of Deeds Office, Nantucket Town and County Building, Nantucket, Massachusetts

#### County Land Records:

records of land transactions of Nantucket Surfside Land Company, Sherburne Bluffs Company, and others

#### Superior Court Office:

records of nineteenth century court-ordered divisions of common land

### Dukes County Historical Society, Edgartown, Massachusetts:

Hebron Vincent papers

Wesleyan Grove and Oak Bluffs tourism collections

Wesleyan Grove cottage records (records compiled for application to  
National Historic Registry for each standing cottage)

Dukes County Court House, Edgartown, Massachusetts

Land Records Office:

Records of the land transactions of Oak Bluffs Land and Wharf  
Company and Vineyard Grove Company

