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REMARKS AT DEDICATION OF MARKER AT SHELBURNE FALLS
October 20, 1991, by Frederick J. Reed

Today, on the occasion of the dedication of this marker, let us review some highlights of Shelburne's early economic history, with some mention of a few early settlers who took part.

Ira Allen, well-known for extensive development and ownership of property in this part of the Green Mountain State, added some land around Shelburne Falls to his domain in 1785.

Rand's History of Chittenden County (1886) in the chapter on Shelburne states: "The first settlement commenced at Shelburne Falls was in 1785, by Ira Allen, then a resident in Winooski Village. A rudely-constructed log bridge was built across La Plotte River, a dam was constructed, ------- a saw-mill erected on the north side of the stream, and a forge on the south. In 1786 a dam was constructed at the lower end of the falls, and a grist-mill put in operation the next season."

The log bridge, just referred to, served for several years as the way to cross the La Plotte River. Eventually, another bridge was built north of the village. Until then the main route from Shelburne to Burlington was by way of the Falls bridge, north on Spear Street to the later site of the Mary Fletcher Hospital and then west into the town of Burlington.

Rand, in a separate section of the Shelburne chapter, tells us: "James Hawley, a native of Connecticut, went from Arlington, Vermont, in the fall of 1786 to Winooski Falls, in the service of Ira Allen. He was a mechanic, and built the mills for Allen, residing in the latter's house during the progress of his work. He then built the mills at Swanton for Allen, and removed to Shelburne in 1792, at once constructing the mills at the falls for his old employer."

The several historians give us different information and we are left in
doubt as to just who actually did the building and as to the correct date or
da tes of construction. If actually built in 1785 or the earlier part of 1786,
the millwright must have been someone other than James Hawley because, accord-
ing to Hawley's granddaughter and also to historian Rand, he hadn't arrived
on the northern Vermont scene. And as he didn't live in Shelburne until 1792,
it is not easy to visualize him commuting six days a week from Winooski Falls
to Shelburne to build something, especially considering the long workdays of
those early years. Even today, that commute would be a chore!

An additional comment about James Hawley by Rand states: "In accordance
with a peculiar custom of those times he (while living at Ira Allen's) was
appointed by Ethan Allen to act as tapster at that hero's funeral, whenever it
should take place. He was, accordingly, steward on that occasion."

The above is clarified when we read a sentence from a paper written many
years later by Hawley's granddaughter (the one already mentioned): "Ethan
(Allen) kept a barrel of liquor in his cellar for his funeral and he appointed
my grandfather to draw the liquor at that time." The drawing took place in
due course after the old Green Mountain Boy's death. Perhaps Ethan's share
of the barrel's contents was in him, as anti-freeze, when he went to the here-
after on that cold day in 1789. After Mr. Hawley's task had been achieved,
it is easy to surmise that only a mere fragrance of spirits remained in that
barrel for any later enjoyment.

Joshua Isham came to St. George in 1784 and then removed to Shelburne in
1793, purchasing property east of Shelburne Falls. His first business venture
was the purchase of Thaddeus Tuttle's store, including goods, land and potash,
probably in late 1795. Tuttle moved to Burlington in January of 1796 and
became a prominent merchant there. A bit later he purchased Ira Allen's

grist-mill and saw-mill and operated them throughout his long life, which
ended in 1840. His daughter Sophia married Moses Bliss and they became the
parents of Joshua Isham Bliss, who became a prominent educator and later a
highly esteemed Episcopal clergyman. During his last fourteen years he served
as rector of St. Paul's Church in Burlington. I have with me a picture of the
St. Paul's choir, taken probably in 1896. In the picture are J. Isham Bliss
and his newphew, the Rev. George Yemans Bliss, his assistant, who was to
succeed him as rector in 1899, and later become bishop coadjutor of the Episco-
pal Diocese of Vermont. George Y. Bliss was born in Shelburne, the son of
George Bliss, brother of J. Isham Bliss. My Father, then 15, was in the choir
and is in the picture.

Peregrine White was born on the Mayflower as she lay at anchor in Cape
Cod Bay on November 20, 1620. He was the first child born to English parents
in New England. Nathan White, a descendant of Peregrine, came to Burlington
in 1791 and, in 1799, removed to Shelburne. He bought, from Thaddeus Tuttle,
a farm onPottier's Point, the north end of Shelburne Point. Nathan had three
sons, Robert, Andrew and Levater. Levater was a master craftsman and spent
his long life in steamboat construction and maintenance. Andrew White settled
in Cleveland, Ohio.

Robert White married a daughter of James Hawley and their daugher Eliza-
beth married Elijah Root, who for fifty-five years, 1827-1882, was Chief
Engineer for the Champlain Transportation Company. Root was in charge of
building all steamboats of the company, from the first one, the Franklin, up
through the Vermont II, launched in 1871. He retired in 1882 and died in 1883,
before the construction of the Chateaugay, the first iron-hull steamer, in
1888. During this long period, which spanned the building of all of the
company's twnty-one wood-hulled steamers, he was in close association with

his wife's uncle, Levater White. Thus we tie that area of Shelburne industry,
the Shelburne Harbor shipyard, back to a Shelburne Falls pioneer.

Elizabeth Root wrote, some years after her husband's death, a most
interesting article which was read before the Vermont Antiquarian Society in
1902 by George Grenville Benedict, Free Press owner and long-time corresponding
secretary of the Vermont Historical Society. Mrs. Root, then 92, was living
in California. It was printed in the Free Press and I have the copy from my
mother's scrapbook.

I am a great, great, great, great grandson of Moses Pierson. Maybe it's
simpler to say that one of his great granddaughters had me as a great grandson.
That in-between generation relative, Helen Maria Pierson, married Curtis J.
Pattridge of Shelburne Road, South Burlington. Smith Frisbee Pierson who
lived up yonder on the hill, was her uncle and his son James Smith Pierson,
your Library benefactor, was, of course, her first cousin. That makes Jim
Pierson my first cousin three times removed. Too removed for bequest!

Some members of the Partridge family, in leaving Massachusetts for the
rarified air of upper New England, changed the spelling to fit the pronuncia-
tion. So, my genealogical search for Partridge relatives is just another
version of "patridge hunting".