

River Byway News

— SPRING 2005 —

Byway Nominated for National Designation 2

Old House & Barn Expo a Success 2

Valley Visitor Centers Opening .. 3

Profile of a Waypoint: White River Junction 4

Lebanon Walks Back in Time 6

Birding Trail Migrates North..... 6

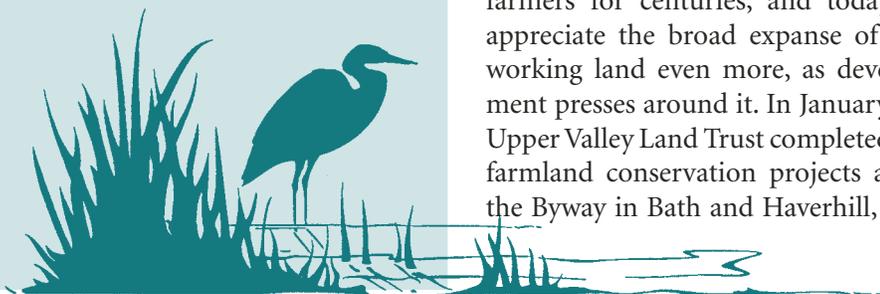
Web Sites to Wander 6

Updates from Waypoint Communities..... 7

Bird's Eye View of WRJ 8



**CONNECTICUT
RIVER
BYWAY**



Preservation in Progress

Protection of those distinctive symbols of “home” in the Connecticut River Valley that are cherished by those of us who live here, and that speak authentically about this place to those who visit, is a key goal of the Byway. Here we present the stories of two such treasures in the Riverbend Region, one of the natural environment, and the other of the built environment. In each case, their setting on the Byway had a significant role in securing their preservation.

Monroe-McIndoe Falls Bridge Saved

By James Garvin

THE Monroe-McIndoe Falls Bridge, one of the most dramatic spans across the upper Connecticut River, will be rehabilitated in 2006. Discussions leading to the decision to restore the structure demonstrated the immense significance of this span and its sister bridges. These bridges are clasps that bind a cultural region that lies on both sides of the historic stream.

The seventy-five-year-old steel structure, which connects the villages of Monroe, New Hampshire and McIndoe Falls in Barnet, Vermont, will undergo a rehabilitation costing an estimated \$2.2 million. The work will repair the floor system of the bridge, where deterioration of wood and steel members has caused the structure’s load limit to be reduced

Continued page 2



Photo courtesy of NH Department of Transportation

The 1930 Monroe-McIndoe Falls Bridge, seen here as it appeared in the 1940s, is the longest of its type surviving in New Hampshire.

Farmland Conserved in Haverhill and Bath

The fertile floor of the Connecticut River valley has been prized by farmers for centuries, and today we appreciate the broad expanse of rich working land even more, as development presses around it. In January, the Upper Valley Land Trust completed five farmland conservation projects along the Byway in Bath and Haverhill, New

Hampshire, permanently protecting a total of 538 acres. In the same month, UVLT received a \$200,000 federal Scenic Byway award in support of future farmland conservation efforts along the Connecticut River Byway.

Four of the five newly conserved parcels belong to Paul Knox of Knoxland Farm in Bradford. They include three parcels along the Ammonoosuc River

Continued page 5

Bridge Saved, continued

to three tons and has threatened to close the crossing altogether. The entire structure will be repainted, restoring it to the appearance it had when new in 1930.

The Monroe-McIndoe Falls Bridge is one of only five single-span bridges of its design in New Hampshire. Its distinctive arched structure is called the "Parker truss," named for Boston engineer Charles H. Parker, who patented the design in 1870. The curved upper chords of the Parker truss impart a soaring beauty to bridges of this type, although the more prosaic intent of the engineer was to equalize the compressive stresses in the connected members that compose the truss and to economize in the use of structural metal. With a span of 305 feet, the Monroe-McIndoe Falls Bridge is the longest of its type in New Hampshire.

Most moderate- to long-span highway bridges built in New Hampshire and Vermont during the 1920s and 1930s adopted the Parker truss design. Many of those bridges have succumbed to the passage of time and the pressures of increasing traffic. Of the five single-span Parker truss bridges that survive in New Hampshire, two over the Pemigewasset River are currently slated for replacement. The first links Plymouth and Holderness, the second Bristol and New Hampton.

Given the rarity of these structures, it is remarkable that the towns of Monroe, New Hampshire, and Barnet, Vermont, share a second Parker truss about two miles upstream from the Monroe-McIndoe Falls Bridge. Somewhat newer and shorter than its downstream companion at McIndoe Falls, the second span was built in 1937 and is 268 feet long.

The presence of this second span not far upstream impelled the New Hampshire Department of Transportation to entertain the idea of dismantling the McIndoe Falls Bridge when the cost of its full rehabilitation was calculated at around \$2 million. At a public informational meeting on November 30, 2004, NHDOT officials broached the subject of removing the span and leaving the recently rehabilitated upstream bridge as the sole crossing between Monroe and Barnet.

New Hampshire and Vermont residents who attended the meeting pointed out that the villages of Monroe and McIndoe Falls are interdependent, neither being self-sufficient in services or facilities. Loss of this bridge would result in a four-mile detour for those who need to cross from one village to another—an eight-mile round trip. With an estimated 400 cars per day using the McIndoe Falls Bridge, removal of this crossing could result in 3200 extra miles of automobile travel between the two villages each day. Residents in both Barnet and Ryegate, Vermont, depend on a clinic in Monroe, New Hampshire, so the delay caused by the extra travel could have medical implications as well.

NHDOT also learned that the bridge is part of the Connecticut River Byway, and reacted quickly. Within a few days, department officials committed themselves to rehabilitating the bridge, adding federal funding in order to meet the budget. Requests for bids on the job will be issued in the fall of 2005.

The strong public support for retaining the structure recalls the fact that there has been a bridge at this point on the river since 1803. No less important today than in the nineteenth century, this crossing bonds the towns on each side of the Connecticut. The structure ranks high in the engineering history of the upper Connecticut River Valley, and equally high as a thread in the social fabric of the region.  James Garvin is State Architectural Historian at the New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources.

Byway Nominated for National Designation

THE States of Vermont and New Hampshire and the Connecticut River Byway Council have officially nominated the bi-state route as a National Scenic Byway. Months of work on the complicated, 50-page application, plus photos and attachments, ended on April 8 with the click of a mouse and submittal to the National Scenic Byway Center. In the process, we learned that the total length of the byway, including spurs and connections, is 498.5 miles. We expect an announcement in late September in Washington, D.C. For more information about the Connecticut River Byway and national designation, visit www.crjc.org/scenicbyway.htm.



Visit the National Byway Center web site at www.byways.org.

Old House & Barn Expo a Success

THE New Hampshire Preservation Alliance reports that this year's Old House and Barn Expo, held in Manchester on April 2-3, was a great success. Record-breaking attendance saw over 2800 people at this year's Expo. The event hosted over fifty exhibitors and offered hourly lectures on dozens of topics, ranging from Preservation Tips for Family Photographs and Papers to Safely Renovating Your Older Home.

You can take it all home with you in the new *Old House & Barn Resource Directory*. The New Hampshire Preservation Alliance has compiled a directory with over 100 listings to help homeowners find the products, services and trades people for repair and restoration projects. It is available from the Preservation Alliance for \$6.50 (includes s/h).

Visit www.nhpreservation.org/html/home.htm. 

River Byway News

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Valley Visitor Centers Opening

H AVERHILL CORNER

Alumni Hall will host a Grand Opening on May 21, 2005. Come tour this handsome historic building, now entering its third life as the Cultural and Interpretive Center for the Wells River-Woodsville waypoint region, after leaving behind its past as county courthouse and school gymnasium. Meet new executive director Mark Chain of Lyman, and admire the texture and grace of the old building so well preserved by Haverhill Heritage and the community.

The event begins with a ribbon-cutting ceremony at 3:00 pm. The Heritage Brass Quintet will play before the ceremony and during the tours, reception, and refreshments that follow. There will be a gallery show of the work of local professional artists, coordinated by Boston artist Tom Stocker (a summer resident of Haverhill). That evening at 8:00 pm, Willem Lange will speak on "New England Yankees, How We Got That Way and What Might Be Done About It."

Q UECHEE GORGE

The long-awaited Quechee Gorge Visitor Center will open in June on Route 4. The project, a model of cooperation between the Town of Hartford, the US Army Corps of Engineers, and the Hartford Area Chamber of Commerce, will provide an attractive and well-appointed destination for the many visitors who come to see Vermont's famously spectacular gorge on the Ottauquechee River.

Quechee visitors will be able to use computers with touch screens, a 24-hour reservation phone bank (coming soon), and have direct access to the many trails that explore the Gorge area on both sides of Route 4 and the bridge, including those of the Vermont Institute of Natural Science. The focus of the Center is the region's natural heritage, including outdoor recreation, state and national parks, and the history of the Gorge and environs from one million years ago to the present day.



The Mollie Beattie Bog in the Nulhegan Basin of the Conte Refuge. The ecology of this fine, acidic forested wetland is well interpreted for visitors on an ADA accessible boardwalk. The Bog is dedicated to the memory of a vivacious Vermonter who became Secretary of the US Fish and Wildlife Service. Keith Weaver (center), Nulhegan Basin Division Manager, leads a tour under the tamaracks for Connecticut River commissioners and Executive Director Sharon Francis.

"The interior of the building will surprise everyone," says Gayle Ottmann, Executive Director of the Hartford Area Chamber of Commerce. "From the outside it gives the appearance of being very small, but once you go into the building, stand at the top of the stairs, and look out the two-story windows into the tree tops, you get a wonderful sense of really being in the woods, which creates the expanse we are looking for."

The Chamber of Commerce, which will maintain a Travel and Tourism Office in the Center, hopes to recruit a volunteer force similar to the Granite State Ambassador program.

N ULHEGAN BASIN

Far to the north, where sugar maples give way to spruce, the Nulhegan Basin Division of the Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge is looking forward to groundbreaking for a long-awaited refuge visitor center and headquarters in Brunswick, Vermont. The entire Connecticut River watershed

is home to this refuge, unusual in that in most parts of the watershed, it's a state of mind rather than a traditional refuge. Not so in the Nulhegan River basin in the Northeast Kingdom, where the US Fish and Wildlife Service worked with the State of Vermont, the Conservation Fund, and other partners to protect this pristine tributary watershed when Champion International put the land up for sale in the late 1990s.

Congress has set aside funding for a new Headquarters and Visitor Center for the Conte Refuge at Nulhegan, and basin manager Keith Weaver hopes that construction will begin this summer. The Nulhegan River basin is a prime stop on the northern extension of the Connecticut River Birding Trail.

Those who can't wait until next summer to learn more about the Conte Refuge should visit the Montshire Museum in Norwich, Vermont, an official Refuge education center. It is now staffed five days a week by the Refuge's Outdoor Recreation Planner, Kevin Lowry. 



WHITE RIVER JUNCTION

Profile of a Waypoint

We continue our tour of the Connecticut River Byway's Waypoint Communities.

BY GAYLE OTTMANN

“Beginning at a White Pine Tree marked Opposite to the South West Corner of Labanon cros the river Connecticut, from thence North Sixty Eight degrees West Seven Miles, from thence North Thirty four Degrees East Seven Miles, from thence South Sixty Degrees East Six Miles to a Hemlock Tree marked at the Head of White River falls from thence Down the river to the first Bound mentioned....” (from the Charter of the Town of Hartford, Province of New Hampshire, July 5, 1761). And so was established the Town of Hartford, Vermont.

In 1849, the *Republican Observer*, the first paper ever published in White River Junction stated, “...there were only three farm dwelling houses and the same number of families at the locality known as the Junction upon the south side of White River and only five scholars in the school district. The locality opposite upon the north side of White River was known as the ‘Point’ and was practically three miles distant as the only access to it by carriage was to make the circuit of White River Village (today’s Hartford Village).”

White River Junction is one of five villages located in the Town of Hartford. This makes for traveler confusion whenever the town name is mentioned, since “Hartford” does not appear on any maps. Other villages include Wilder, Hartford Village, West Hartford, and Quechee. The surveyor’s description cited above outlines the boundaries of White River Junction. Between 1847 and 1863, five rail lines converged on the site, and it became the town’s leading business center. An 1883 birdseye view of White River Junction in its heyday appears on the back cover.

Indeed, White River Junction was home to one of New England’s busiest railroad hubs, the Vermont State Fair,

livery stables and hotels, wholesale bakeries, its own football team, lumber companies, and many small businesses that served its citizens and visitors. However, not unlike other communities throughout New England that depend on one or two major businesses to fulfill their economic needs, when the railroad industry declined, so did the village.

For years, White River Junction was in decline—empty story fronts, shabby buildings, broken signs, few cars and no people. In the late ’70s and early ’80s, the business folks in the downtown area, the Town of Hartford, and interested citizens began to dream and plan and recreate. Out of this came the beginnings of the resurrection—the River City Revival.

With the huge impact of no sales tax across the river in New Hampshire, the State of Vermont’s permitting process for development, little or no tax incentives at the State or local level, and the lack of a pleasing aesthetic environment, White River Junction had an uphill battle. But, battle it did. Today, we see the evidence.

Knowing full well that the community could not compete with its New Hampshire neighbors by bringing in large retail businesses, the stakeholders began to research the idea of a ‘niche’ community. Why not create a climate for small, entrepreneurial stores and shops that produced products or services relating directly to the customer searching for the unusual, the unique, and the one-of-a-kind? Yet



Photo by Stephen Hussar, courtesy Town of Hartford.

The Waypoint Interpretive Center is located in the historic and still active train station in downtown White River Junction, and also serves as a Vermont Welcome Center. “Old 494” stands guard outside. This restored locomotive engine hauled passenger cars and light freight up and down the river valley from 1892 to 1938.

at the same time, they wanted to hold on to the cultural heritage that laid the foundation for the village.

Fortunately, the Creative Economy Initiative arrived in the Upper Valley right on time. This was indeed the answer to the revitalization and return of this small Vermont village—one that still provided daily needs and services such as groceries, banking, garages, schools, churches, personal care—yet opened its doors to the fresh, the new, the ‘out of the box’ thought process that has awakened a sleeping giant.

What does the future hold for White River Junction? If you ask 10 people on the streets of the village, you will get 10 different answers. But that is what the future is all about—10 different answers. With the influx of private investors who believe in the village and are willing to partner with the Town of Hartford and other organizations, the future of this village is on the right track. ☒

Gayle Ottmann is Executive Director of the Hartford Area Chamber of Commerce, a Selectwoman of the Town of Hartford, a member of the Connecticut River Scenic Byway Council, and a Connecticut River Commissioner.

Farmland Preserved, continued

just east of the village of Woodsville and a fourth parcel that lies in a sharp oxbow of the Connecticut River just below North Haverhill village. The fifth parcel, just downstream of the Haverhill-Newbury bridge, belongs to Walter and Margaret Gladstone of Newmont Farm in Bradford.

“The Connecticut River Valley soil is just exceptional,” said Knox, who farmed in Weare, New Hampshire for 20 years before moving his operation to the Upper Valley. “When we left southern New Hampshire we sold a wonderful piece of land on the river. It left an awful feeling knowing that somebody might develop it. I wish we’d conserved it when we had the chance. It was a teachable moment for me.”

The combined total cost was just over \$450,000 including appraisals, surveys, legal costs, and other transaction expenses. New Hampshire’s Land and Community Heritage Investment Program (LCHIP) provided \$223,500, matched by \$89,000 in federal funds from the USDA Farm and Ranchland Protection Program and \$140,500 from the Upper Connecticut River Mitigation Enhancement Fund of the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation. This fund was established in 1997 as part of the re-licensing process for three hydroelectric dams on the Connecticut River at Fifteen Mile Falls.

“A grant from New Hampshire’s LCHIP program was essential,” says UVLT Executive Director Jeanie McIntyre. “While much can be accomplished through local efforts, the protection of some of

our region’s most special lands requires broad-based investment. LCHIP can serve as a gateway to federal programs and national foundations.”

Conservation of the Bath and Haverhill farmlands comes at a time when the Connecticut River Joint Commissions and the many other LCHIP supporters are seeking reinstatement of meaningful funding for the state program. At this writing, the New Hampshire House Finance Committee has recommended a much smaller amount after the full House voted overwhelmingly to support the Governor’s recommendation of \$10 million.

UVLT’s purchase of conservation easements on these parcels is part of an ongoing effort to conserve prime farmland in Piermont, Haverhill and Bath, New Hampshire and Fairlee, Bradford, and Newbury, Vermont. The region remains an active farming community, but faces increasing development pressure. To date, UVLT has conserved seven parcels in the three New Hampshire towns and 21 parcels on the Vermont side of the river,

for a total of more than 3300 acres of farmland that will remain productive.

A conservation easement restricts future development of a parcel, but encourages uses such as farming, forestry, or low-impact recreation. Conserved land may stay in private ownership, and the restrictions are binding on all future owners of the land. The land trust is charged with ensuring compliance.

The Upper Valley Land Trust is a non-profit, member-supported organization that conserves farmland, forests, wetlands and waterways, recreational and scenic areas, and other natural resources. UVLT works solely in the Vermont and New Hampshire towns of the Upper Valley region, assisting individuals, neighborhood groups, local governments, and organizations to permanently protect land under conservation easements. Since 1985, UVLT has protected almost 300 parcels of land encompassing more than 27,000 acres. For more information visit www.uvlt.org. ☒

The Upper Valley Land Trust contributed to this article.



Looking west across the Connecticut River, with the conserved Gladstone parcel in the oxbow to the north (right). Other UVLT-conserved farmlands appear across the river in Vermont bounded by the adjacent oxbow downstream (left).

Photo by John Rush, courtesy of the Upper Valley Land Trust.

Walk Back in Time

BYWAY communities hoping to stir their citizens' interest in local historic sites should take a page from Lebanon's book. The Lebanon Historical Society has joined with a local naturalist to offer a history *and* nature walk at the Mill Parcel, a City-conserved park on the banks of the Mascoma River.

The human stories of valley towns are often interwoven with their natural history. Nowhere is the connection so obvious as with waterpower.

Society President Jay Collier explains that the Mill Parcel sheds light on aspects of geological, biological, and human history. Walkers will see the bridge abutments and remnants of an 18th-century slate mill that became the Emerson Edge Tool Co., and subsequently a bobbin mill before it was abandoned about fifty years ago. The group will explore the Northern Rail

Trail to view remnants of the railroad itself.

The Lebanon Historical Society has taken its history squarely into the twenty-first century, with an extensive new web site at www.lebanonnhhistory.org. Pick your favorite decade and find out what was going on in Lebanon at the time.

Collier reports that the group is also hosting a mailing list for Upper Valley history and heritage on the announcement page of its website. The list carries news and events at historical societies, libraries, museums, and other local non-profit organizations that focus on the history and heritage of the Upper Connecticut River Valley of both New Hampshire and Vermont. Subscribers can submit messages on behalf of established historical organizations, and all announcements will be screened. ☒

Web Sites to Wander

☞ Intrigued by photographs of the last century, showing treeless sheep pastures where you now find deep forests, or a single farmstead at today's busy crossroads? Check this site, hosted by the University of Vermont, which displays historic photographs illustrating landscape change in Vermont statewide, including scenes from Connecticut River communities. <http://uvm.edu/perkins/landscape>.

☞ Those interested in old maps will want to visit www.old-maps.com. In addition, the Library of Congress makes available a collection of panoramic, or bird's-eye view maps, such as the one of White River Junction on page 8, at <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/pmhtml/panhome.html>. A number of Byway communities are included.

☞ For the latest news in the world of historic preservation, the National Trust for Historic Preservation has started a (free) news magazine, Preservation Online. Go to www.nationaltrust.org/magazine/newsletter to sign up.

☞ Heritage Preservation Services programs of the National Park Service have a new web address: www.cr.nps.gov/hps.

The new 2005 edition of the *Funding Directory for Historic Preservation Projects in Vermont* will be ready in May and available from the Vermont Division of Historical Resources. Contact them at 802-828-3045 or view it online at www.HistoricVermont.org. Also, see the Fall 2004 *River Byway News* for more grant sources.

Birding Trail Migrates North

THE folks who brought you the beautifully illustrated guide to 46 birding and nature sites in the greater Upper Valley three years ago have been hard at work on a northern extension. Charlie Browne of the Fairbanks Museum, Dave Govatski of the US Forest Service, and Margaret Watkins of the National Park Service have worked with Birding Trail organizer Bill Shepard to create a guide that covers 40 new sites in northern New Hampshire and Vermont.

A collection of sites, rather than a traditional "trail," the guide takes its cue from the river and starts at The Nature Conservancy's preserve at Fourth Connecticut Lake. The guide covers five other sites in Pittsburg, and visits Mount Monadnock in Lemington, Kingdom Trails in Burke, The Balsams, Pondicherry, Coleman and Weeks State Parks, the Victory Basin, and the Fairbanks Museum, among others. All are public access sites, some of which can be driven, and some are even wheelchair-accessible.

The new guide, designed to be visually compatible with the original Upper Valley edition, will carry the spectacular photographs of Jim Block and will also emphasize visitor etiquette. Other partners in its creation are ValleyQuest and USGen New England, the power company that until April 1 owned the hydro dams on the river.

The Birding Trail offers visitors and residents a way to enjoy birds, butterflies, plants, and other aspects of the natural world. Supplies of the free guides will be provided to Byway waypoint centers for distribution.

Bill reports he is beginning work on a third section, north of the Massachusetts border. The vision through his binoculars is one of a single, river-long, four-state birding trail. Look for more in upcoming issues, and in the meantime, be sure to visit www.ctriverbirdingtrail.org. ☒

Updates from the Waypoint Communities

ST. JOHNSBURY is finalizing contracts with the State of Vermont for a byway grant and a transportation grant for an intermodal facility at the historic 1883 Victorian train station in downtown St. J. Architectural plans will be complete by the summer, and it is hoped that restoration work on the building will begin next winter. The center is currently open on weekends and will open seven days a week in June. The center gets 2000 visitors per week, and downtown businesses have noticed an increase in foot traffic since it has opened. The town, which has put up interim simple directional signs, hopes the waypoint center will draw shoppers from a planned urban renewal area nearby into the historic downtown.

Haverhill will soon start on a riverside park located at the confluence of the Ammonoosuc and Connecticut Rivers, on land purchased from the State of New Hampshire with federal Scenic Byway funds. The park will offer a walking path, benches, lighting, and possibly an amphitheater, after contaminated soils

are removed. The town has contributed \$5,000 for the operational budget of Alumni Hall out of economic development funds, and use of the building is already generating other revenue.

Fairlee selectmen are currently working with Two Rivers Ottauquechee Regional Planning Commission and the Vermont Agency of Transportation to determine how to transform the historic rail depot into a waypoint center without causing undue harm to the rare building's historic qualities.

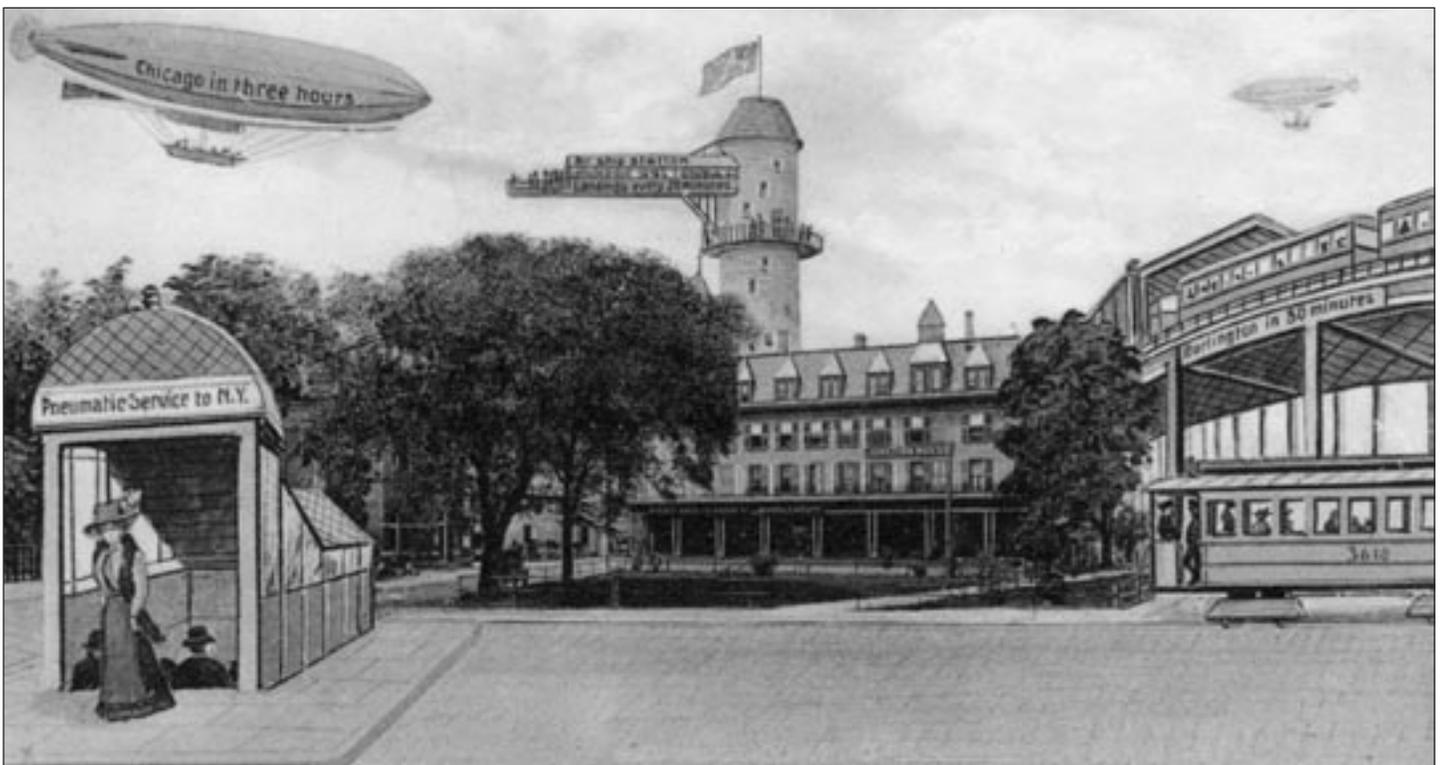
The Welcome Center at **White River Junction** is home to the Chamber of Commerce, which rents part of the space. It is open seven days a week and sees visitor numbers equal to those at the state visitor center across from the State House in Montpelier. The town plans to add more signs to help visitors find the center.

Windsor officials hope that work on the waypoint center will begin shortly. The Mount Ascutney Chamber of Commerce has been without a home for two years, and is looking forward to moving into the space.

The **Bellows Falls** Waypoint Interpretive Center is open seven days a week, staffed with a combination of volunteer and paid help. The town owns the building and runs it with the chamber, with both contributing financially. There is a farmer's market in warm months, and an intermodal project is underway at the adjacent rail center. The town has replaced the sidewalks leading to the downtown area and added historically compatible lights. A grant is in hand to prepare plans to redevelop an historic stable nearby. Bellows Falls has invited Charlestown's Fort at Number Four to put an exhibit in the center, demonstrating the center's regional coverage.

Claremont's visitor center is being remodeled to accommodate its occupants. It is open, but does yet not have staff to greet visitors.

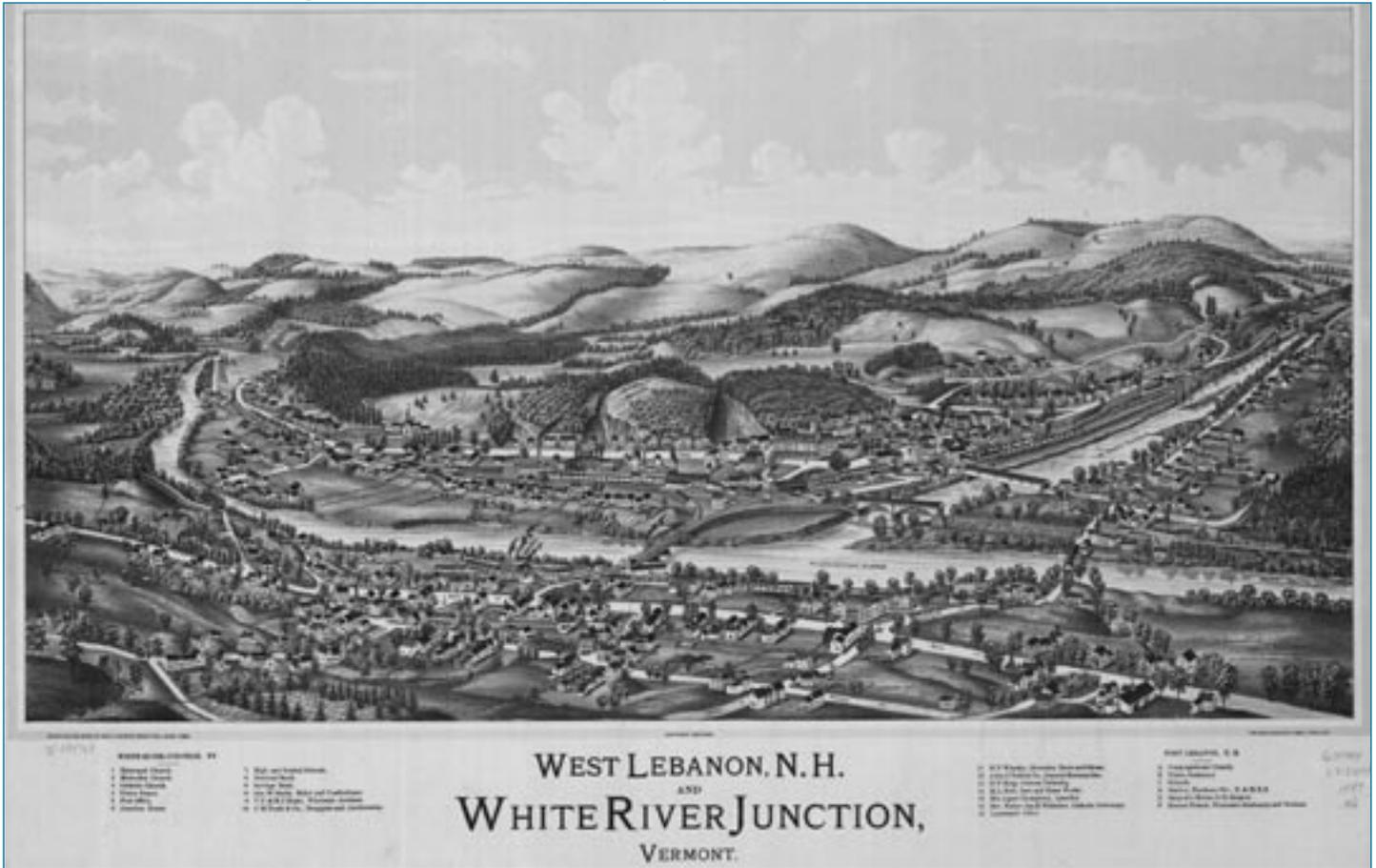
Brattleboro currently lacks only funding for the physical center, a great waterfront project that is ready to go. It will be the first in Vermont to tie into two byways: the Connecticut River and Molly Stark Byways. 



Early 1900s view of what the future held for White River Junction – first and foremost, a stylish transportation hub.

From the collection of Frank J. Barrett, Jr.

Twin Villages Linked by River and Rail



Bird's eye view of White River Junction and its neighbor, West Lebanon, 1883. White River Junction was named for its location as a meeting place of rivers, railroads, and highways. Early covered bridges over the Connecticut (1803) and the White (1815) Rivers created crossroads communities. In this scene, looking southwest, the busy village of West Lebanon is in the foreground. Note the Westboro Rail Yard, complete with billowing smokestacks, on the New Hampshire side, and the train crossing the bridge from Vermont. For more on White River Junction, see "Profile of a Waypoint" on page 4. To see this and more bird's-eye views offered by the Library of Congress, see Websites to Wander on page 6.



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