

THE AUTUMNAL PEREGRINATIONS  
OF DIVERS LADIES,  
TO WIT FRAN LARKIN, BETTY BECHTEL,  
NANCY GLANVILLE, NANCY SWEETLAND  
AND MARGARET MARTING, THROUGH  
CERTAIN TOWNS, VILLAGES AND RURAL  
SETTINGS OF NEW ENGLAND.



by  
R. Stephenson

1996

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including Boston town & surroundings,  
Lexington & Concord and other places of  
*Massachusetts*; and in *New-Hampshire*, Jaffrey,  
Peterborough, Keene, Walpole, Cornish,  
Plainfield, Claremont, Hanover, Lyme, Orford &c,  
&c; and in *Vermont*, Weathersfield, Rockingham,  
Brattleboro, Westminster, Windsor, Hartland,  
Norwich, Manchester, Thetford, Fairlee &c, &c.  
all undertaken during the month of October,  
1996, and with an extended stay at The Old  
Tavern in Grafton, Vermont.



Fran, Betty, Nancy, Nancy and Margaret at Tuttle House.

## **Thursday 10 October 1996**

Logan Airport, late on a rainy Thursday afternoon. Fran and Betty arrive on United Flight 34. Into the *Lumina* van and off through East Boston, under the harbor via the Sumner Tunnel and then winding our way to the Chilton Club, 367 Dartmouth Street, just north of Copley Square, named for Mary Chilton, the first white child born in Plimouth colony (I think that's right, but it does get a bit confusing). The Club is abuzz, triple parking in front, a club dinner within. I go looking for parking and end up in the Common Parking Garage, newly rebuilt under Boston Common, where the van lives most of the time for the next few days. Returning on foot to the Chilton, I go up to the top floor where Betty & Fran are ensconced in a cozy room. Moments later, dinners on trays arrive: fish, potato, and other good things. The Irish maid is very solicitous. Soon I'm off, traversing the Back Bay and to the Gaeths who are my hosts for the Boston duration.

*Day's mileage: 125*

## **Friday 11 October 1996**

A little gray at the start but the forecast sounds good. I meet up with Betty and Fran at the Chilton and we set off on foot for a look at Boston. Up Commonwealth Avenue, the city's grand boulevard. Along the Mall, past the statues at each cross street, alphabetically named from Arlington, at the Public Garden, through Berkeley, Clarendon, Dartmouth (where we start off), Exeter, Fairfield, and so on. Blue sky and brisk temperatures now make the walk perfect. We go through the Garden, past the Washington equestrian statue, across the bridge (sorry that the Swan Boats are all stored away for the winter) admiring the Thurlow Weeping Willows, up to Charles Street (the original edge of the Back Bay before the landfilling began in the mid-1800s). We walk along Charles Street, the main drag, if you will, of Beacon Hill, and take a right up

Chestnut Street and over (with a peak of Acorn Street, a narrow cobbled lane) to Louisburg Square, a London-like square with brick bow-fronted houses overlooking a fenced green oval complete with Columbus statuary. Then up Mt Vernon Street with its wide setback on the north side, past one of the city's three Harrison Gray Otis houses, on up to the back door of the State House, Massachusetts' capitol, the original portion being one of Bulfinch's first architectural commissions. We emerge on the south side and head across Beacon Street to the Boston Athenaeum, swathed in cloth at the moment because of facade cleaning; a large building with a small address: 10-1/2 Beacon Street! We tour all 5 floors and from the top plant-infested patio peer down at the Old Granary Burying Ground and across to the steeple of Park Street Church.

Down at ground level again we continue to the start of Beacon Street at Tremont, seeing Kings Chapel across the way (beside which is the city's oldest cemetery) and on the other corner, the Parker House, famous for its rolls (and lots of literary associations, too). Past the somewhat moorish Tremont Temple, into the Old Granary to see the graves of Paul Revere, Franklin's parents, Sam Adams, John Hancock, the victims of the Boston Massacre and other early worthies. Past Park Street Church at "Brimstone Corner" and into America's oldest park, the Boston Common, where we stroll towards and through the Public Garden and then past the Ritz, down the first block of Newbury Street, then over to Boylston, past the old Museum of Natural History (now *Louis*, an upscale clothing store), to Copley Square where we head for H. H. Richardson's "crowning architectural achievement," Trinity Church, a mid-day organ concert in progress when we arrive. We sit there for perhaps a half hour, enjoying the music and the marvelous interior with its Burne-Jones and LaFarge stained glass windows. We have a peak at the organ afterwards and head out to the Square which is

in the midst of a Boston Fire Department demonstration: two aerial ladders raised in an arch with firemen rappelling down on ropes (the union's contract is probably about to be renegotiated!).

With Frannie desirous of sherry we go across the street to the Copley Plaza for lunch. A table or two away, Gus Saunders unaccountably sits there broadcasting on radio about who knows what. We then traipse across the square and into the McKim building of the Boston Public Library, one of the city's architectural masterpieces and currently being renovated. Then over to the New Old South Church across the street, an interior not dissimilar from Trinity.

Downstairs into the Copley Square T Station and by trolley to Park Street; downstairs to the Red Line and out to Harvard Square. Past Graham Gund's gatehouse (most expensive building ever, per square foot) and Massachusetts Hall (not only the President's Office but also a freshman dorm), past the John Harvard Statue, through Tercentenary Theatre (where commencement is held), past Widener Library, briefly in and out of the Fogg Museum, past Memorial Hall with its missing tower, and then to Peabody Museum to see the famous Glass Flowers (Fran successfully uses the reciprocity ploy, which I later recount to the Museum's director, a friend, who is dismayed).

Foot-weary, we head back through the Yard to the Harvard Square Station, back to Park Street Under, up to the Green Line and out to Copley Square and then to the Chilton Club. A civilized cup of tea and those macaroons again, and for me back to Gaeths, and for Betty and Fran, the evening and dinner at the Chilton.

### **Saturday 12 October 1996**

The day is lovely, clear and blue. I pick up the van and head for the Chilton. With the travellers on board we twist and turn through Boston and see a few sights. Up beside the Common, down School Street, past the old City

Hall and the Old Corner Book Store, ahead is the Ames Building (second highest masonry building in the world!), a right at the Old State House, over (literally) the spot of the Boston Massacre, down State Street, to Atlantic Avenue-Commercial Street. Along the edge of the harbor, with its renovated granite wharf buildings, into the North End, down Hanover Street, past St Stephen's Church, the only surviving Bulfinch church in Boston. Rose Kennedy was baptized here. Opposite is the Paul Revere Mall, with the bronze equestrian statue of Revere, which leads to the Old North Church where Robert Newman hung the two lanterns from the steeple that led to Paul Revere's (and Dawes' and Prescott's) ride to Lexington and Concord. Up to Copp's Hill Burying Ground (where Robert Newman is buried), past the narrowest house in Boston, down the hill and over the bridge to Charlestown, where the Puritans first settled (but lacking a good water source, they soon moved to the Shawmut Peninsula, present-day Boston). We savor a fleeting view of the *U.S.S. Constitution*. Up to the Bunker Hill Monument (actually on Breeds Hill), and after some touring about, back to Boston proper, through the colorful and congested weekly marketplace by Faneuil Hall and into the Callahan Tunnel, under the harbor, by the airport and north on Rt 1A.

After some miles we make a detour to Nahant, a peninsula jutting into Massachusetts Bay and one of America's earliest summer resorts. Some interesting houses and dramatic views south to the city skyline.

Northward again, through Swampscott and into Marblehead and out to the Neck, by some impressive houses, the Corinthian and Eastern Yacht Clubs and finally to the steel lighthouse. We get out for a stretch, a comfort station stop, a look at the rocky shore and the view across to Marblehead village.

Back in the van and into the old town of Marblehead. We park near the town hall and go in to have a look at "The

Spirit of '76," the famous monumental patriotic painting of the Revolution.

We go by foot through the narrow streets, down to the waterfront and a look across to the lighthouse where we just were.

In the van again and travelling northward to Marblehead's neighbor, Salem. We encounter busy times in Salem, a witches' get-together. Parking in the downtown garage, we find our way out to the street and into the Peabody-Essex Museum (America's first museum), where lunch is the first item on the agenda. Then into the Museum itself, the Santa Barbara reciprocity ploy works again and we wander through the impressive collection of Chinese export items, shipping memorabilia and a fine Currier & Ives show, all very nicely displayed.

We walk a block down the street to the Essex Institute, the local history museum that a few years ago merged with the Peabody Museum to form the present institution. Lots of interesting things. We learn what *that* plant is: bittersweet!

Retrieving the van, we head through Salem looking for Chestnut Street which we eventually find, a street of several blocks lined with high-style Federal-style houses of the Salem merchants, their fortunes made from the China trade.

Time is flying by and although there's more to see up the coast towards New Hampshire, we have to head back. We go out to Rt 128, Boston's inner circumferential highway that is so associated with the region's high tech development in the 1960s, and south down Rt 95 and back to the city and the Chilton Club.

We reconvene there in the early evening and on foot head for the theatre district, to the Charles Theatre for a performance of the *Blue Man Group*. How can one describe it? Not easily. Loud and colorful and 'unusual' sums it up for me. We learn that Fran has won the Nobel Prize; I end up with a blue pate. I think Betty begins to wonder what

she has gotten into.

Still reeling we walk a few blocks to Legal Sea Foods for dinner as guests of Doug and JoDel Gaeth. Seafood all around.

By cab back to the Chilton Club and the end of a busy day.

*Day's mileage: 59*

### **Sunday 13 October 1996**

Another lovely day. We meet up at 10 am at the Chilton Club and stroll out on to Newbury Street, past the galleries and boutiques, to Massachusetts Avenue and around the corner to the Harvard Club. After leaving a message for Nancy Sweetland, we check out Harvard Hall (the high ceiling of which would at times be the object of butter pats projected upward by dinner knives). Into a cab at the corner and down Mass Ave, a right at Symphony Hall and out Huntington to the Museum of Fine Arts. In through the Huntington entrance (with the 'Appeal to the Great Spirit' behind us) and soon after I leave Fran and Betty on their own for an hour or so.

Back again, I rejoin the museum mavens at the Cafe. After a visit to the Museum Shop, we head for the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, within view further along the Fenway and on the way have a look at the MFA's Japanese Garden.

The Gardner is crowded because of a concert but we manage to get in (though the Santa Barbara Shuffle fails to work this time). The Gardner defines the term 'eclectic collection.' Not only the items but their arrangement are set forever. Interesting to see the empty frames of the paintings stolen in that 'biggest of all art thefts.'

By Green Line back to Copley Square. On the way to the Chilton Club we duck in and check out *Papa Razzi*, a restaurant a block away, and make a booking for that evening. Once at the Chilton, I go on my way, leaving the

ladies to live dangerously.

Not long after I'm back again at the Chilton and now the numbers have increased to three with the arrival of Margaret Marting. We traipse out and head for *Papa Razzi*, Nancy arriving some time later from the Harvard Club where she's staying, the ladies now numbering four.

We have a jolly time and, I think I recall, some significant desserts.

Thus ends another day.

### **Monday 14 October 1996**

The van comes out from under the Common; we pack up at the Chilton and then at the Harvard Club, and head off, along Storrow Drive, through Cambridge and by Harvard, out along Rt 2 and into Lexington, where we park beside the Battle Green. A stop at the Visitors Center (Francie buys a camera), followed by a walk around the Green, viewing the houses, the memorials, taking photos of the 'Minuteman' statue, and trying to envision the scene back in 1775 as the British Regulars made their way through the village on the way to Concord and, who knows who, "fired the shot heard 'round the world."

We continue westward, along the Battle Road, into Concord, around the square and past Concord Academy and here and there, and then out to that 'rude bridge.' We park and walk down the path to the bridge across the Concord River, an inspiring scene. Retracing our steps, we detour to the neighboring 'Manse,' the home of the Emersons, Hawthorne for awhile and Thoreau whenever he got hungry out at Walden. The place was closed that day but we looked in the windows and took some photos.

Next stop, Walden Pond. Near the parking lot is a reproduction of Thoreau's cabin and what do you know but there is Henry David emerging just as we arrive. Or rather an actor portraying the same. After hearing about cannon balls bouncing down stairways at Harvard and the

price of construction materials, we head off along Rt 2, up I-495 to Rt 119 and westward through Groton—filled with early architecture—past Lawrence Academy, and a detour to Groton School, alma mater of FDR. Via back roads to Rt 119 again, through Townsend and a right at West Townsend, onto Rt 124 and into New Hampshire.

Seems confusing but not really! We then wander through the rural landscape until we arrive at New Ipswich where we stop at Barrett House, a high-style elaborate Federal mansion owned by the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities, the country's earliest preservation organization. This is the last day of the season and, after being welcomed by Catherine Seiberling, the site manager, we enjoy an elaborate tea with sandwiches, fruit, cheeses, sweets and, of course, tea (in our case: *Lapsang Souchong*). But beforehand, as a pre-prandial treat, we ascend the hillside to the summerhouse for a view of the unfolding autumnal scene. After tea, a tour of the house. Into the van and onward again, along Rt 124, next stop, Jaffrey. After provisioning at the state liquor store, we travel westward to Jaffrey Center, my home village, and meet up with Mary Payson who shows the group around Melville Academy, our local history museum. And then a visit to our Meetinghouse—the frame was raised in 1775 on the day of the Battle of Bunker Hill—and a walk through the Old Burying Ground to view Willa Cather's grave and those of Amos and Violet Fortune. After a tour of my house and a bit of bee feeding, we head off again, going westward, past Mt Monadnock (most often climbed mountain in the world) and onto Marlborough—home of the Frost Free Library—and up the widest main street in America, in Keene, out past the Colony Mill and not long after through East Westmoreland, into Walpole and across to Vermont over the Connecticut River (which as Nancy Sweetland knows we'll cross many times in the next week), up Rt 5 and via a backroad to Rt 121. Westward we go as

the sun begins to set, through Saxtons River and not long after into the quaint little village of Grafton, our home for the next week. We stop briefly at *The Old Tavern* and then repair to our own little place, the Tuttle House, just around the corner. Awaiting us is Nancy Glanville, fresh up from Darien.

After getting settled, we stroll over to *The Old Tavern* and enjoy a fine dinner with everyone together for the first time, a dinner that is capped off by a candled cake in celebration of Nancy Sweetland's 70th birthday, a cake that will re-appear for many nights to come.

*Day's mileage:* 141

## **Tuesday 15 October 1996**

To The Tavern for breakfast, repeated for a week. Buffet style: juices, fruit, cereals, all type of rolls and pastries, coffee and tea.

Off on our first country tour. Cool, indeed crisp, clear and blue and windy. Into Saxtons River and north past Vermont Academy and through some nice scenery and foliage (which can be said for the next few days, too).

Our first stop is the Rockingham Meetinghouse, one of the great early meetinghouses in New England, set on a hill top with panoramic views to the north. The state marker reads: "Built in 1787, the second on this site, this simple but beautifully proportioned structure served the town as a house of public worship and town meetings for nearly a century. The church was restored in 1907 with its old box pews, high pulpit and sounding board." The meetinghouse is open and we are guided about by an extraordinary docent who we quickly name 'motor mouth,' a fast talker and mostly unintelligible. But we get the gist of it and soon escape to walk around the adjacent cemetery.

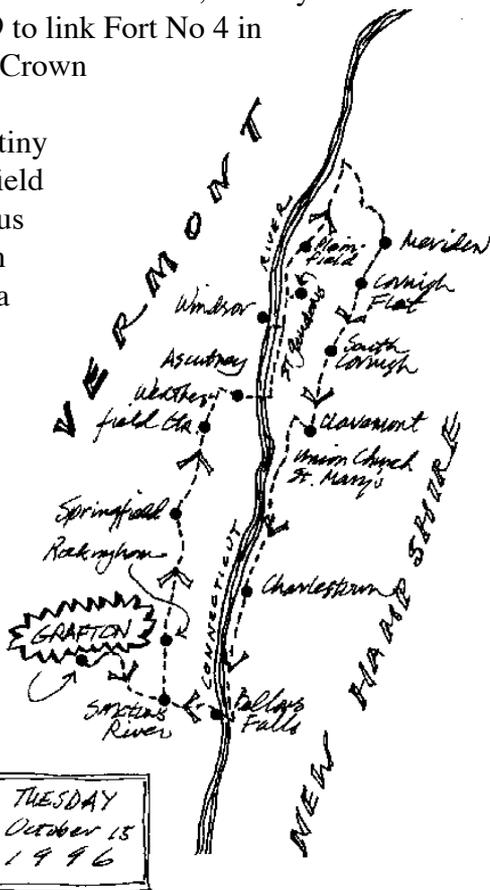
We drive down to Rt 103 and cross over the river (and the railroad tracks which later the ladies will travel along) and up the other side over Parker Hill, an area of

once-thriving farms, past Hardscrabble Corner and into Springfield, a reasonably large city famous as an early pioneer in the machine-tool industry. We drive along Main Street, see the large brick mill buildings beside the Black River, pass the twin-steepled church, and continue northward into Weathersfield, crossing—although there is no sign of it—the Crown Point Road, built by Lord Jeffrey Amherst in 1759 to link Fort No 4 in Charlestown, NH, with Crown Point, New York.

Soon we are at the tiny settlement of Weathersfield Center with its marvelous meetinghouse set within a maple grove. We had a look around and admire the scene.

Not long after we find ourselves in Ascutney, stop for gas with the ladies commandeering both restrooms, and head across the Connecticut River into New Hampshire where we turn north on Rt 12A in Claremont, driving through some pretty farmland, past the birthplace of Salmon Portland

Chase (Senator, Lincoln's Secretary of the Treasury, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court and namesake of the Chase Manhattan Bank), into Cornish, a quick look at Trinity Church and on to the Cornish-Windsor Covered Bridge,



the longest in the northeast. We pass through it—our first covered bridge of many—and find ourselves back in Vermont, in the town of Windsor, the “Birthplace of Vermont.”

Feeling peckish, we repair to the Windsor Diner, opposite the Old South Church on Main Street, for lunch. Among the items consumed: chili, mashed potatoes and Perrier water (unaccountably, just plain water not available). The waiter, whose mother made the chili, may still be telling his friends about that day.

After lunch, we walk up the street to Windsor House which houses the Vermont Crafts Center, and do some looking and a bit of purchasing as well.

On the way back we have a look at the cemetery beside Old South, rehang the sign on the church and resume our journey. Back across the Cornish-Windsor Bridge to New Hampshire and north a bit to the Saint-Gaudens National Historic Site, the home and studio of Augustus Saint-Gaudens, the great sculptor and leader of the “Cornish Colony” of artists and writers that flourished up until the mid-20th century. (Someone’s membership somehow gets us in again, free!) What a setting! Views to Mt Ascutney, the birch allee, the gallery with its pool, the pergolas, gardens and sculpture. We tour the house, being careful not to be late (as we won’t be admitted after our reserved time). We all enjoy Marley, the white cat.

We continue northward to the next town, Plainfield, also with associations to the Cornish Colony, and pass over our second covered bridge, the Blow-Me-Down Bridge. Along Plainfield’s main street, past the Town Hall, which has a Maxfield Parrish theatrical backdrop, the Mothers & Daughters Club, and up to Brook Road, where we take a right heading for Meriden. A short detour by several lovely early houses, past the Mill Cemetery and over our third covered bridge (Mill Bridge). Just after the Helen Woodruff Smith Bird Sanctuary on our left we enter Meriden which is

mostly taken up by Kimball Union Academy. At Rt 120 we take a right and head south, back into Cornish. We circle the common at Cornish Flat with its Civil War statue and church and continue down into Claremont, a large city (for New Hampshire at least), past the Opera House, through the downtown square and along some of the back streets, where we find the Russian Orthodox Church and the hardware store where “If we don’t have it, you don’t need it.”

Soon we find ourselves in West Claremont, on Jarvis Hill, where on east side of the street stands Union Church, the oldest Episcopal Church in New Hampshire, and across the way, surrounded by a cemetery, St Marys, the state’s oldest Catholic Church.

After taking some photos and admiring these two landmarks we continue south through North Charlestown and then Charlestown village itself, the earliest settlement in the area and really the frontier for many years. It was in Charlestown that Fort No 4 was located which saw its share of Indian raids during the French & Indian War.

We keep going, through South Charlestown to North Walpole where we once again cross the Connecticut into Bellows Falls, Vermont. We travel west on Rt 121, through our now-old-friend, Saxtons River, after which we find ourselves stuck behind a pokey driver who we surmise is a father teaching his daughter how to drive slow-slow-slow. (Later in the week we believe we encounter her again having by then learned to drive fast-fast-fast.) Eventually we pull into a quaint little village which we are pleased to learn is none other than Grafton.

After a drink at Tuttle House we repair again to *The Old Tavern* for dinner.

Is it this evening some of us watch the Gore-Kemp Vice Presidential Debate?

*Day’s mileage:* 110

## **Wednesday 16 October 1996**

Another beautiful autumn day. Today's major destination: Woodstock, to meet friends of Betty for lunch (Peter & Marjorie Behr). We leave Grafton going west on Rt 121, through Houghtonville to Windham and south through South Windham to West Townshend, over to East Jamaica and on Rts 30/100 through Jamaica to Rawsonville, where we take a right (Rt 100) bringing us to South Londonderry, then Londonderry itself. Continuing on we come to Weston, famous for its Common, its summer Playhouse and the Vermont Country Store. We park alongside the Common and stroll to the store, which seems to expand between my every visit. Some shopping gets down: Margaret a new black cape; Francie a hat; myself some dried corn kernals which make a good munchy with the evening cocktail.

Off we go, north again, through Ludlow and by the Okemo Mountain ski area, and at Plymouth Union we take a right onto 100A which soon lands us in Plymouth Notch, a lovely little village in a fine setting which is now the President Calvin Coolidge State Historic Site. We stop and wander about a bit. Deciding not to visit Cal's house (the woman wants to punch our group ticket which we don't have—and she's not pleased!), we go instead into the Union Church (1840) with its beautiful beaded wood panelling on walls and ceilings, its marvelous curved pews and its Estey organ. A few steps away is the general store with early Gulf gas pump in front and a variety of general store stuff inside. Some purchases are made. Coolidge's summer White House was on the second floor and he was born in the back room.

We're on the road again, coming onto Rt 4 at Bridgewater and heading for Woodstock. We arrive at the spacious and busy Woodstock Inn and meet up with Peter & Marjorie and enjoy a lovely buffet lunch, after which Betty goes off with the Behrs to their new house in South



bridge we didn't go through) for some cheese, wine and other comestibles.

On our way again, we arrive back to the Woodstock Inn and reconvene with Betty and the Behrs.

The travellers then go southward on Rt 106 through South Woodstock, Felchville, Downers, along the North Branch of the Williams River. Pretty rural scenery. At North Springfield we get onto Rt 10 and head for Gassetts, then south on Rt 103 through Chester (where we return the next day via the train), then south on Rt 35 through miles of forest and eventually come to the prettiest little village which turns out to be, of all places, Grafton.

I think, but am not sure, that it is this evening that we go to the Cannon's for drinks. They're friends of Nancy Glanville and live up near the Brick Church. And it turns out that Dottie Cannon is a friend of Margaret's through a Garden Clubs of America connection. Small world. We have a tour of their charming house, find out about the Pettingill connection (a Wisconsin congressman related to Tom) and see lots of memorabilia, admire their white standard poodle named "Miss Dwinnell," marvel at their industrial-strength ice machine and hear about the flood that hit the village earlier in the year (all but one road into Grafton was cut off). An enjoyable visit.

Back to Tuttle House for dinner (ordered earlier from The Tavern and brought back).

Perhaps it is this evening that we watch a bit of one of the World Series games. The first two, played in New York, are lost by the Yankees to the Braves. We all know now what happened in the end.

*Day's mileage: 136*

### **Thursday 17 October 1996**

Another lovely day looms before us. We are lucky weather-wise. Off we set on an excursion to Manchester. But first we head east, through Saxtons River once again

(and noticing and commenting on the halloween decorations sprouting on houses here and there), to Bellows Falls, an historic city at the Great Falls of the Connecticut, home of Hetty Green, the “Witch of Wall Street,” the site of America’s first canal, and railhead of the Green Mountain Railroad, which is still a real railroad but also runs trips for rail enthusiasts up to Chester and back along the Williams River.

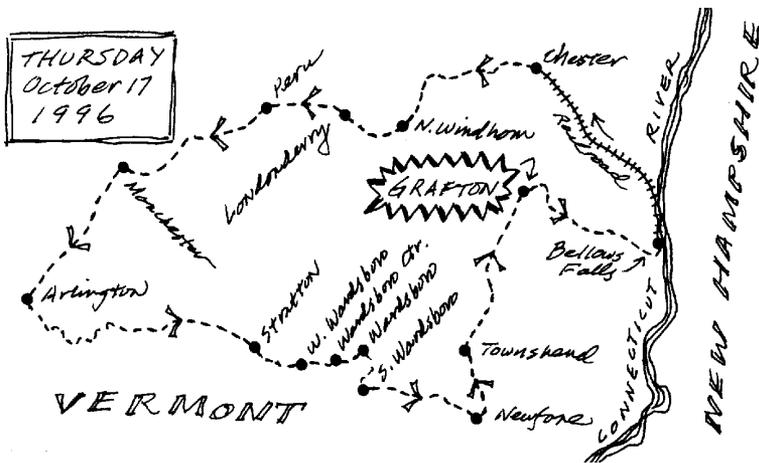
I leave the excursionists at the depot and head off to meet them at Chester. I can’t report on their adventures as I’m not there but it seems that a good time is had by all. They pass through Brockway Mills (which we did too on our first day just after we visited the Rockingham Meetinghouse) and close by two covered bridges: the Worrall Bridge and the Bartonsville Bridge.

I meet them just as they arrive in Chester. Once back in the van we head west on Rt 11 through North Windham and Londonderry (which we went through, south to north, on the day before), through Peru, past the Bromley ski area—one of Vermont’s earliest—and then down through Manchester Depot into Manchester Center, which in recent years has developed as an shopping outlet center. Just as outlets have sprung up around L. L. Bean in Freeport, the same thing has happened here, the impetus being Orvis.

We start looking for a lunch spot and find a crowded Friendly’s hard by the J. Peterman outlet, high on our intrepid shoppers’ must-do list. In time we get a table, have a highly efficient waitress and a tasty lunch. The Peterman *et al* contingent leaves on its rounds, and Margaret, Nancy G. and I head for Orvis and then the supermarket to stock up on food and wine.

Together again, we go south, past the Equinox Hotel, by some lovely houses and buildings stretching along Rt 7A with its marble slab sidewalk. Just south of the village, we turn into “Hildene,” Robert Todd Lincoln’s colonial revival estate. What a setting! High up on a hill

colonial revival estate. What a setting! High up on a hill with beautiful sweeping views to the south, east and west. We view a short film in the visitors' center then walk up to the house where we are greeted by organ music in the entrance hall. The organ was a gift from Lincoln to his wife; the pipes were installed in the stair landing between the first and second floors. The house we find interesting; we are lead around by a well-informed docent. Lincoln was a successful businessman and for some years was the CEO of the Pullman Company. The estate remained in the family until well into the 1950s. The gardens in front of the house are extensive and no doubt beautiful in the spring and summer. The views out and down into the valley are marvelous. We see a falcon or two doing their thing down



below at the Falconry School!

We continue south to Arlington (where Norman Rockwell lived before going south to Stockbridge) and over to East Arlington. A wrong turn takes us through and through again yet another covered bridge, this one the Chiselville Bridge.

We finally find our road, climb up over the mountains

through Kelley Stand, up and then down, through the Green Mountain National Forest. A very empty though pretty landscape. We cross the Appalachian Trail and the Daniel Webster Memorial State Historic Site (apparently Black Dan travelled here and made a well-attended speech; hard to imagine a well-attended speech in such deserted surroundings). Through Stratton to West Wardsboro, Wardsboro Center, Wardsboro, South Wardsboro (that's a lot of Wardboros) to Newfane, just as dusk is approaching. Newfane is a real jewel: two churches, the county courthouse, the well-regarded Four Columns Inn. We circle the common and admire the scene.

Then northward on Rt 30 and into Townshend, another often-admired Vermont village. With dinnertime looming we stop by the general store to seek out some Ben & Jerry's and indeed find it!

Now on Rt 35, still going northward, we take a left fork and before long arrive in a remarkably pretty little village and are surprised to learn that it goes by the name of Grafton!

Dinner at Tuttle House and the tired travellers unwind.

*Day's mileage: 124*

### **Friday 18 October 1996**

Off again, north to Hanover and beyond. Down through our old friend Saxtons River and then on to Bellows Falls with a quick stop at the depot for an engineers cap for Margaret (a gift, we presume), then up Rt 5 and onto the Interstate and then off again at Exit 7; back onto Rt 5, a quiet section of this once major north-south route, through river bottom land, still some farms, cornfields, views to the river and across to New Hampshire. Soon into an area called Weathersfield Bow. We stop in front of the Consul William Jarvis house, an important historical landmark. Jarvis was the one who, in 1811, first imported Merino sheep into the US and changed Vermont

and New England agriculture. No sign of any sheep today.

Soon we are in the village of Ascutney, which we passed through on Tuesday, and continue north along the Vermont side of the river to Windsor. We wave at the Diner as we pass, wondering if they by now have real water. [Note: I've been back since and asked them about this. They say it's a problem with the pipes; rather than fix them, it's cheaper—for them—to serve bottled water!] Past the Constitution House, where the Vermont constitution was drawn up. Soon we are in Hartland, have a look at the cemetery, and on to White River Junction, where we drive by the railroad station with the old engine out front, by the Coolidge Hotel, past the oldest Cadillac agency in America, over the White River, through Wilder; and soon we're in Norwich where we cross the Connecticut yet again.

Into Hanover, and up the hill to the center of the town and the Dartmouth College campus. We seek out a parking spot and find one down at the end of Fraternity Row, from which we walk up to Baker Library overlooking the Green. In the lower floor, in the reserve book area, is one of the great American murals: Jose Clemente Orozco's "The Epic of American Civilization." Created between 1932 and 1934, in frescoes, it depicts "the major aspects of American culture from the prehistoric migrations of primitive tribes to the intellectual and spiritual aspirations of the twentieth century." At the end of the corridor is the Map Library which we have to pay a quick visit to as I worked there during my four years at Dartmouth as did my brother, John. We then wander upstairs to the Treasure Room, the College's rare book collection. We look at Daniel Webster's elephant folio copy of Audubon's *Birds of America*, opened to a single page, turned periodically. It seems that old Dan never fully paid his bill for that grand book! We head out the front door of Baker and cross the Green, passing a massive wood structure being constructed by freshman students: this will be set alight as a bonfire this evening,

a tradition before each home football game. [*Postscript:* Dartmouth went undefeated this season, first time in years.]

At the south end of the Green is Hopkins Center, the College's art center and student union. We have lunch at the snackbar and afterwards visit the adjacent Hood Museum, built a few years ago to house Dartmouth's art collection. While the travellers enjoy the art, I retrieve our van and gas it up.

Once together again, we head back across the river and into Norwich village, past the common and some lovely houses, onto Rt 5 again for a bit and then over to the road to Union village, enjoying some expansive views to the northeast.

At Union Village, a small settlement, we pass through another covered bridge and, via Academy Street, start climbing up to Thetford Hill, enjoying even more panoramic views up the valley and over to New Hampshire. We enter Thetford Hill, a lovely small village with fine houses; its white meetinghouse is the oldest one in Vermont in continuous use.

We then head down the hill, going east on Rt 113, to the riverside village of East Thetford, and then north again on Rt 5. We are soon entering North Thetford where we take a short detour down to a boat landing on the shore of the river. What river, Nancy? The Connecticut, of course! From here we get a good view across to New Hampshire; in an earlier time there was a covered bridge at this location and we can still see the abutments.

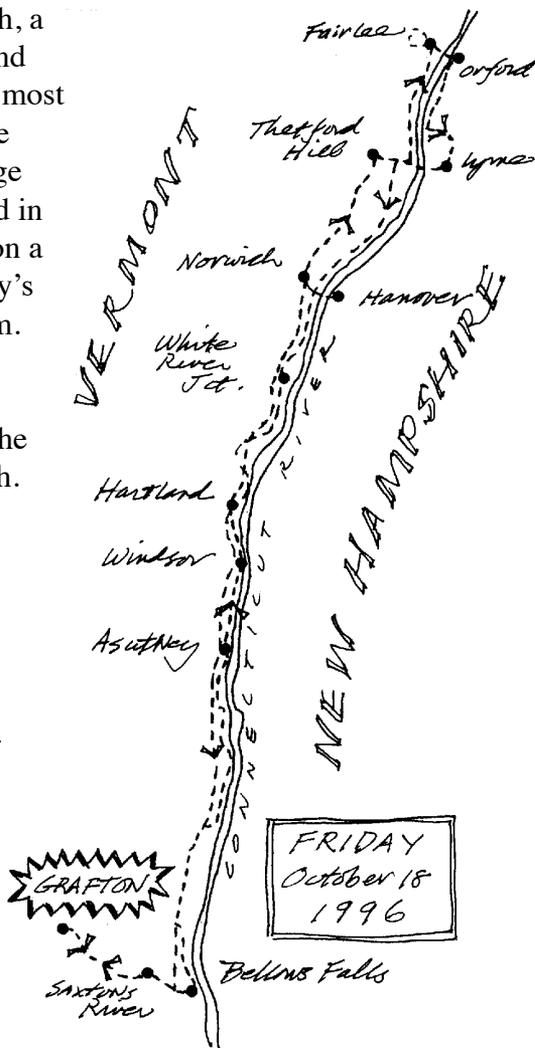
The next settlement northward is Ely; we pass the railroad depot, recently renovated. Ely was the railhead for what was once America's largest copper mine up in neighboring Vershire.

Another few miles brings us to Fairlee where we make a circular tour around Lake Morey, surrounded by tall hills, lined with summer cottages and several camps for boys and girls. We encounter some Dartmouth cross-country

skiers training on wheels around the Lake. It is said that the lake's namesake, Samuel Morey, sank his steamboat here in disappointment over the theft of his invention by Robert Fulton.

Back into Fairlee we once again cross the Connecticut and find ourselves in Orford, considered by many to be one of New England's most beautiful villages. Stretching along the main street are many fine houses, an unusual gothic revival church, a spacious common and burying ground and most impressive of all, the seven so-called Ridge Houses, set back and in a line and elevated on a ridge. Samuel Morey's house is among them. The elegant and high-style Federal architecture shows the influence of Bulfinch.

Orford is our northernmost point of the day's itinerary and here we homeward and travel south for a few miles, then bear right onto the River Road, past several early houses and some attractive farm complexes, over the Edgell Covered Bridge, and take a left



onto North Thetford Road, going east to Rt 10 where we turn right and head south to Lyme, another attractive village with a fine country store, white meetinghouse with extensive carriage sheds and a large cemetery across the road, a shady common and a couple of inns.

From Lyme we wander west, cross the Connecticut for the last time today, pass through East Thetford and on Rt 113 climb towards Thetford Hill, but just before, we get onto the Interstate and head south in speedy comfort to Bellows Falls. Here we exit and go west on Rt 121, do a little detour so we can enjoy yet another covered bridge, then through Saxtons River and eventually and unexpectedly into yet another charming village by the name of Grafton.

We bid farewell to Nancy Glanville, headed to Connecticut with giant pumpkin in tow.

Dinner at Tuttle House. Perhaps it was this evening that a select few repaired to the Phelps Barn for a drink and some music.

*Day's mileage: 171, the most of any day yet.*

### **Saturday 19 October 1996**

Our first taste of not great weather; a little gray and overcast. We set out to have a look at the Monadnock Region. Down to our friend, Saxtons River, and on to Bellows Falls. Resisting a stop at the depot, we continue south to Westminster Station and through that narrow railroad underpass, once again across the Connecticut River, a left on Rt 12, north a mile or so and a sharp right onto Bellows Falls Road, by the cemetery and into Walpole village, famous because of its Louisa May Alcott connections, as the place where Michener wrote *Hawaii*, for having the state's largest concentration of millionaires and for having a chocolate shop, to which we immediately repair. There it stands right in the center of the village, next to the library, across from the water trough. We go in

and admire the chocolate at \$32/lb. Some less expensive options are purchased and a cup or two of mocha/coffee. We do a circuit around the village, by the old Academy (now the historical society), the Unitarian Church, the Catholic Church, the Congregational Church and the Episcopal Church. A solid church-going community is Walpole.

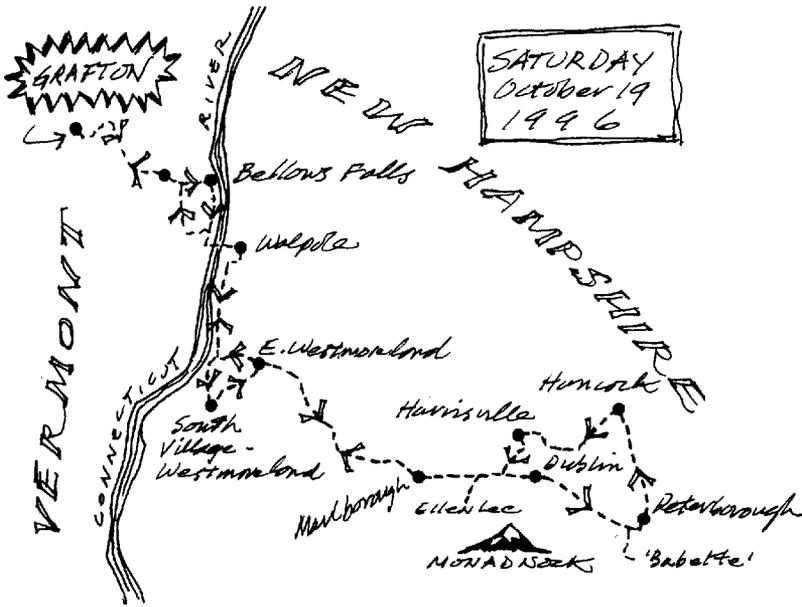
Off again we go south on Rt 12, and at Westmoreland Depot we take the right fork, onto Rt 63, through some lovely farmland, and soon we're at Park Hill, a village of Westmoreland, notable for its meetinghouse, one of the oldest and most stately in the region. We drive up beside the little common, by the parsonage, past the "Thou Shalt Not Park" no parking sign in front of the meetinghouse and then head towards Westmoreland village, known locally as South Village. Past the Town Hall, the common and the diminutive library, and back to Rt 12 at East Westmoreland. From there we continue on to Keene and Rt 101 and eastward to and through Dublin (New Hampshire's highest community—in elevation that is), alongside Dublin Lake and a view of Mt Monadnock, past the offices of *Yankee Magazine*, and on towards Peterborough. Despite the erratic driver in front of us, we're only a few minutes late in arriving at RiverMead, where we drop off Margaret for a visit with her Cleveland friend, Babette Weir. Then off to meet Francie's friend, Ellen Lee Kennelly, for lunch in Peterborough.

We find a busy Peterborough, drop into The Toadstool Bookstore, meet Ellen Lee, and hope to eat at Aesop's Tables (too crowded), go over to Latacata (closed) and eventually, not far away, to Carolyn's Bistro, crowded but they take us in and we have a fine lunch, well looked after by Carolyn herself. Ellen Lee invites us back to her house once we do some more touring.

Well fed we head back to RiverMead and have a short tour of this very attractive retirement community. It was

built on land owned by Babette's family (Morison), and after our tour we all pile in the van and drive a mile or so away to the brick Morison house at Upland Farms to see the view; a little overcast, but we get the idea, a panoramic view of Mt Monadnock.

From Peterborough we go north on Rt 202 and bear off to Hancock, one of the region's prettiest towns: A lovely main street with all the elements: meetinghouse, store, inn, library, school, cemetery, post office, common, historical society, bandstand and almost no traffic.



We head south now on Rt 137, through woods, an occasional old house, and lots of ups and downs. We take a right, heading for Harrisville. More woods. Past Lake Skatutakee with all its little cottages, and then into Harrisville, a small, very brick, mill village, almost unchanged from its days as a rural textile town. In fact, it's a National Historic Landmark. We drive around several of the mill buildings, up Mill Alley,

along the Canal, through the Cemetery, past the little brick chapel-like library with its charming sign (showing two children reading books at a table), and to the Harrisville Designs building, an old brick barnlike warehouse. We park and go in to see the yarns and looms that are now produced in Harrisville. We say hello to Chick Colony, whose family ran the mills through several generations and is mainly responsible for Harrisville's salvation and rejuvenation.

We're off again, heading south from Harrisville for a mile or so, and then take a right and head up the hill, past the recycling center (i.e. dump), up over the ridge, past the Georgian Revival mansion of Mary Stewart Meath, and down to Rt 101 again, opposite Dublin Lake.

We take a right, along the lakeshore and then a left onto Charcoal Road to the modern house of Ellen Lee Kennelly. We have cider and cookies, admire again the view of Monadnock, and soon are headed westward again.

We continue on Rt 101, into Marlborough, and then Keene; we stop at Boston Market, recently opened, and load up with a Chicken Feast to take back to Tuttle House.

We zip back on Rt 12, through East Westmoreland, into Walpole, across the Connecticut River once again, into Vermont, through Westminster Station, up to Rt 121, westward through Saxtons River, and without even realizing it we enter still another quaint little village which oddly enough turns out to be Grafton, Vermont.

*Dinner:* Chicken, corn, mashed potatoes, other veggies, cornbread, and that everlasting birthday cake and Ben & Jerry's.

*Day's mileage:* 152.

### **Sunday 20 October 1996**

Today it's rain all day. Weren't we lucky weatherwise up to now! In fact the TV and papers are calling this the storm of the century or something similarly dramatic.

So the decision is made to spend the day in Grafton,

something we haven't actually done since arriving.

Different things are done or not done: visiting the several shops in the village, going to the Cheese Factory (or was that the next day?), sitting by the fire, reading, perhaps a nap.

Our one excursion was at the end of the day when we, minus Margaret down with a cold, ventured into Saxtons River for the church supper which we had seen advertised on the notice board at the Grafton post office (the flyer said something to the effect of "See real men cook ... and clean up afterwards!"). The place was jammed, but we got seats at the long tables and had some friendly conversation with the locals, men, women and children. The menu: pot roast, gravy, mashed potatoes (Nancy was in heaven), squash, boiled onions. For dessert: apple pie and cheese and coffee.

Well fed, we head back to Grafton having accomplished a total of 16 miles for the day.

## **Monday 21 October 1996**

Still rainy and when not, overcast.

Nancy's daughter was expected by lunch but called to say the road up her way was washed out. This storm is still being billed as bigtime.

So the challenge of the day is to get Nancy up to Waitsfield, accomplished in the end by her catching a bus in Brattleboro.

Margaret has friends from Londonderry coming for lunch, so Betty, Francie, Nancy and myself head out.

We pass through some territory previously covered—Townshend and Newfane—and continue south on Rt 30 to near West Dummerston, head across the West River on the temporary bridge, just upstream of the closed-and-under-repair West Dummerston covered bridge, and climb the hill to Dummerston Center, a little village with a nice church, grange hall and a handful of old houses, and then through East Dummerston and soon to Rt 5. We head south

into the relative urban setting of Brattleboro and cruise the Main Street, past Sam's Department Store and the art deco Latchis Hotel and park across from the old railroad depot, now the local museum. We walk a block or two up Main Street and turn into Carol's Main Street Cafe where we enjoy lunch.

Back to the van and northward to the bus stop behind a Citgo gas station. The bus is right on time and despite some baggage check confusion we get the peregrinating Nancy onto the bus with instructions not to speak to the backpacker wearing high heels but to sit behind the woman bus driver [and we understand she followed instructions].

The remaining travellers set off again, with a quick detour around the block sort of speak, to view Rudyard Kipling's house—Naukhala—which we could only see from the road. Then over the Connecticut River and east on Rt 9 with a detour through Chesterfield village, with its stone town hall, library and post office, the first Methodist church in New Hampshire. Chesterfield was the birthplace of Harlan Fiske Stone, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court.

We continue past the cemetery behind the library, past another cemetery, and then back onto Rt 9.

Soon we're in Keene where I drop off Francie and Betty at the Colony Mill—a former textile mill, now a very nice shopping mall—and go off to a director's meeting of the Historical Society of Cheshire County.

Back to the Colony Mill for the mall mavens, then we swing by Boston Market for some dinner to go and out of town along Rt 12, through Westmoreland, to Walpole, once again across the Connecticut, to Saxtons River and into a quaint Vermont village by the name of Grafton.

Dinner at Tuttle House, our last dinner and our last evening in Grafton.

*Day's mileage: 91.*

## **Tuesday 22 October 1996**

Our last day in Grafton. After breakfast, we pack up van and head south for the last time (wondering if the roads might be washed out from all the rain) through Saxtons River (remembering that church supper), Walpole (the chocolate shop), Keene (Boston Market), and then through some new territory — Troy and the lovely village of Fitzwilliam with its common, inn and famous meetinghouse — and from there, across the Massachusetts border into Winchendon, onto Rt 2 and east, eventually through Concord — where we stop for a photograph surrounded by pumpkins — and soon we're approaching Boston, through Cambridge, along the Charles River past Harvard, along Storrow Drive and the Back Bay, onto the expressway and through the tunnel, into East Boston and to the airport.

Margaret's the first to leave the group via Continental and then Francie and Betty at the United terminal. The mileage now stands at 1239 since I picked up the van.

I then retrace, approximately, our route back to Keene to drop off the van. The ending mileage that day: 227. Grand total for the entire trip: 1339



And so ends the New England autumn sojourn of Betty Bechtel, Nancy Glanville, Fran Larkin, Margaret Marting and Nancy Sweetland. A fine time was had by all especially by this guide and note-writer. Many thanks for the memories.

Robert B. Stephenson  
Jaffrey, New Hampshire  
*December 15, 1996*



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