One Grand Park: Remaking New Hampshire Farms into Summer Homes, 1870-1930

Lorayne Billings

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ONE GRAND PARK: REMAKING NEW HAMPSHIRE FARMS INTO SUMMER HOMES, 1870-1930

by

Lorayne Billings

Final Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Liberal Studies

SKIDMORE COLLEGE
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Advisors: Professor Mary Lynn and Professor Deborah Cadman
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ABSTRACT

In the late nineteenth century, the growth of industry, western competition, costs, and poor soil caused some New Hampshire farmers to quit the farm, leaving the buildings uninhabited. New Hampshire state officials were not interested in rescuing those farms, but were interested in stemming the negative publicity about abandoned farms. The state legislature passed an act to encourage immigration into the deserted farms, and Nahum Bachelder, secretary of the state board of agriculture, advertised the farms as summer homes for well-heeled urbanites. He eventually received criticism for pursuing self-serving interests and for neglecting official agricultural duties, specifically to the struggling New Hampshire farmer. Bachelder was forced to resign from the grange and was ousted from the board of agriculture, but not until the summer recreation business had penetrated the rural New Hampshire landscape permanently.
INTRODUCTION

When most early farmers settled in upland New Hampshire in the late eighteenth century, they were interested in a subsistence livelihood, not in producing a surplus. Early settlers endured hardscrabble land and practiced a cooperative symbiosis with neighboring homesteads. This arrangement worked until about the middle nineteenth century when the nation’s economic culture transformed from agrarian to industrial. Life in rural New Hampshire hills, as elsewhere in the nation, was forever altered. A significant portion of rural hill population headed south to work in the textile factories in the growing Merrimack River Valley cities. Hill towns literally moved downhill toward industrial centers. By the late nineteenth century, New Hampshire farmers were beset by outward migration, high taxes, high costs of keeping farm workers, high rates charged by railroads, inadequate soil, and insufficient acreage to compete with vast western farms that produced large-scale harvests. One by one hill farms failed and farmers left their property, either leasing their farms or leaving the buildings uninhabited. Newspapers and the popular press broadcasted alarmist headlines that New England was in decline, but they neglected to mention that the upper Midwest was also experiencing the same troubles with abandoned farms. However, what struck a chord with New Hampshire state officials were the assumptions made by the press. Journalists speculated that the brightest and best left, and they surmised that the unfit—the mentally feeble and physically weak—were the ones who remained. New Hampshire state officials were embarrassed about these perceptions.

Nahum Josiah Bachelder, a state agriculture and grange official, responded to the negative publicity. He campaigned energetically to re-populate the deserted farms by using state funds to publicize them for sale. The advertising publications combined farm ads with Bachelder’s own promotional essays—the tactic being to redirect unfavorable perceptions about the state and to inhabit New Hampshire’s unoccupied farms with residents above reproach. In his rhetoric, he re-packaged the farms as summer homes for the well-heeled urbanite. Using his penchant for marketing, Bachelder portrayed rural New Hampshire as a scenic and gentrified
sanctuary for the affluent, rather than a place where families struggled and sometimes failed to make a living.

As Nahum Bachelder became involved in wooing the wealthy, he seemed less interested in his duties as agricultural leader. There is no indication that he ever presented himself as an agent to whom troubled farmers could turn but, instead, encouraged the celebrated and rich into abandoned farms. Public censure of Bachelder’s practices prompted notice of neglect in his state agricultural work and his national grange activities which, at times, were at cross-purposes with grange tenets. Finally, after twenty-four years, Bachelder was removed from his posts in agricultural organizations. The administrations that followed, no doubt, endeavored to regain trust from New Hampshire farmers and grange members.

Many New Hampshire farmers lost their farms to speculators or to resignation when something might have been done by Nahum Bachelder. Farmers who left farming to join the labor force in local factories experienced a transformation from independent land owner to a worker dependent on wages. Some were glad to do this. For others who wanted to remain on their farm, I believe Bachelder was responsible in part for their loss of livelihood on the land.

The results of Bachelder’s activities between 1889 and 1913 to redefine the use of New Hampshire farmland can be still felt today. Capitalizing on the urban dweller’s illusion of a rural past, Bachelder’s focus was to encourage people to establish a haven in the New Hampshire countryside on farms that once supported families and livelihoods. Today the state of New Hampshire follows a similar direction as a recreation state. Bachelder’s vision is as active now as in the late nineteenth century—the notion that New Hampshire be “one grand park.”
PART ONE
1. Early New Hampshire Farming

Original settlers who chose their homestead location in the hills of New Hampshire based their decision on immediate necessity. Unfortunately, the soil on which they depended did not serve them in later years. River valley and intervale farm homesteads with rich, fertile soil fared better. In the early years after settlement, what the farm families could not produce, they managed to barter or exchange with other farm homesteads in their region. Eventual market-driven competition with expansive western farms resulted in the great transformation for New Hampshire hill farmers.

Farm Location

In the 1790s, New Hampshire received a great inflow of English settlers from its seacoast area, from thickly-settled eastern Massachusetts, and from Connecticut. New farmers pushed north and west beyond the Merrimack River Valley into the hills. Those who selected high elevations as home sites did so for practical reasons: the land was not subject to flooding and, more importantly, hill settlers could keep track of forest fires or approaching Indians. After they cleared pine woodlands, the newly exposed, rich soil of the forest floor provided hill farmers with fertile land. Over time, the shallow topsoil on the hills washed away into the valleys, draining the earth to its sandy layer and exposing more rock. In fact, New Hampshire’s agricultural success in the nineteenth century could be measured according to where the better soils were. Farm land along river plains had deep, rich soil, farm land in mountain valleys, or intervale, gathered goodness from the hill runoff. Approximately fifty years after settlement, soil on hill farms grew thin, and the hill farm population began to decline. John Black claims that New England soil had more disadvantages than any other
region in the United States, but two factors served as major drawbacks; the region’s sandy and acidic soil was highly prone to leaching and it required necessary additions of lime.1

Between 1790 and 1840, farm success also depended on its proximity to transportation. Naturally, farms near well-traveled roads or major rivers benefited. New Hampshire had a satisfactory road system during this period; even remote northern parts of the state were not completely isolated. Most roads and turnpikes ran diagonally east-west across the state leading from the Connecticut River valley to the Boston market. In addition to roads (and before the coming of the railroads), major rivers provided access to early water transportation.2

River valleys and mountain ridges defined northern New Hampshire topography and dictated where farmers settled. Farms usually clustered in a geographical region that established a farm neighborhood. In New Hampshire and Maine, the neighborhood became the arena for much of the lives of farm families. Neighborhood farms customarily participated in cooperation, or “mutuality” between farm families. Mutual aid meant sharing in matters of health (births, deaths, and sicknesses), education (district schools), artisan skills (blacksmiths, carpenters), recovery from disasters (fires, accidents), and harvesting celebrations. Farmers collectively shared labor, animals, tools, information and machinery.

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Vermont has always seemed to be superior in agriculture than New Hampshire. There used to be a saying that Vermont had more cows than people. Ralph Hill claims that the mammoth ice sheet that covered New England a million years ago somehow carried less stone into Vermont than into New Hampshire and when the ice melted, it carried less soil away from Vermont. For this reason, Ralph Hill suggests that Vermont farmers could find an easier livelihood from the soil. Some swear that Vermont is greener than New Hampshire—that one can tell the difference as soon as one crosses the Vermont-New Hampshire border. Ralph Nading Hill, *Yankee Kingdom: Vermont and New Hampshire.* (New York: Harper, 1960) 253.

**BEGINNING COMMERCIAL**

Farm households were not truly self-supporting but depended on other neighboring farms and small industries to make up for what they did not produce. Families established a system of direct exchanges or cash barter with other farms. Each family kept records of what they gave and received, and the ledger would be settled at the end of the year.

Farmers also exchanged labor or land for cash. Farm families of average means worked on more prosperous neighboring farms for cash income, and this provided a way for many marginal farmers to survive. Some farmers exchanged the use of their land for cash, even with farmers outside their neighborhood. For example, by the 1850s, quality hay became a premium in every New England state, and pastured animals had to work hard to find adequate eating. Some New Hampshire farmers realized the heightened demand, and they applied manure and re-seeded their hayfields in regular rotation. Between 1840 and 1860 when Massachusetts farmers found it necessary to look elsewhere to find suitable nutritious pastures for their herd, they typically drove their stock to verdant fields in New Hampshire and Vermont for summer grazing.

Cash exchanges motivated farmers to engage in multiple farming occupations. Finding supplemental income was often a crucial factor in the financial well-being of many farm families. Before 1870, supplemental cash could come from household industries, such as shoe and hat making. In many New Hampshire town histories, there is evidence of an impressive number of wood products manufactured in homesteads—pails, barrels, and wooden bowls—that provided farm families income during slow seasons that otherwise brought in little cash.

Most hill farms had a woodlot on which the farmer could harvest timber as a reliable cash resource during the winter months. Each rural town customarily had a neighborhood sawmill which processed logs from local farm woodlots into lumber. Sugar maple trees on farm

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4 Villages along rivers set up small water-powered mills and produced scythes, rakes, horse hames, bedsteads, chairs, and clothespins. Eventually, in the winter months farmers may have left their farms during the day to work in a small wood mill. Hubka, *Dublin Seminar* 16. Russell, *A Long, Deep Furrow* 385, 386, 404.
woodlots, or sugarbush, provided the farmer additional income from maple products. New Hampshire, Vermont, Maine, western Massachusetts and Connecticut enjoyed this source of income, particularly in the mid-1800s when the price for maple sugar competed favorably with cane sugar.

AN ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION

The system of bartering and exchange worked until after the Civil War when household industries declined in number, and farm families began to buy goods in the commercial marketplace. New Hampshire in the postwar period reflected the national trend of rural society trying to keep pace with a growing industrial society. As farmers shifted to a dependency on outside markets, it marked a decisive break with the traditional agrarian past. Producing crops to satisfy the marketplace came reluctantly to some farmers, and some could not compete in commercial market farming. To survive, other farmers farmed their land intensively and they misused, or "skinned," their land. They exhausted the soil by neglecting to fertilize, by failing to cut timber selectively, or by ignoring fire-hazardous brush after cutting. Those who abused their land discovered quickly that they contributed to their own hardships. Such self-defeating practices ensured failure. After 1870, this became an all too common occurrence.

2. A CRUCIAL PERIOD IN RURAL NEW HAMPSHIRE

The majority of New Hampshire people still lived on farms after the Civil War. However, a major change was underway that would affect the whole country. As industry grew in urban centers, factory employment flourished. Farmers lost their hired farm hands to higher factory wages. Farm sons and daughters grew restless over the lure to earn money in the mills. Sometimes those who left the farm never got as far as the industrialized cities, but worked in the single-industry mill in town. Regardless, farm families, which included farm laborers, were breaking up. The unprecedented scale of industrialization in the nation was the central fact for

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the inevitable changes in eastern farm population during the period between 1850 and 1880. The outward migration from rural New Hampshire was tempered by foreign immigrant workers arriving in urban New England factories. The aspect of rural New Hampshire farms changed as people moved in and out—many left, some remained, and others—tenants, foreign immigrants, and seasonal visitors with dreams of living in the countryside—came in.

**Changes on the Farm**

When fathers and sons returned to their farms from the Civil War, they came back with a new idea of the world outside New Hampshire and it contributed to an unhappiness with rural farm life. It was referred to as the “fever” in returnees. Whenever veterans opened an eastern newspaper, railroad advertisements encouraged them to go west. The advertisements particularly targeted young men. What urged youth to leave was an attractive offset to “the dullness of the good country life.” New Hampshire sons of farmers considered farming conditions a dead end. They had witnessed their parents trying to make a marginal living, challenged by costly labor and farm implements, the weather, and taxes. Farm youth concluded rather quickly that economic success could be found in factory cities or in the exciting West. Farming as an occupation no longer was economically reliable for the younger generation; its income could not compare with other ventures.⁶

Often, one son in a farm family took over the ancestral farm. But second or third sons left to work in a factory, a store, a railroad, or on a shipping vessel. Working for wages offered a quicker way to make money. This prospect appealed to many young men and they willingly traded their independence to be self-employed. The farm bred young people to be hard workers, and industrial America was waiting to utilize them.⁷

---


Who Left?

The rush of settlers who came into small New Hampshire hill towns in the 1790s increased the state’s population by 32%. The following statistics show the population over a hundred-year span in Warner, a small hill-farming community in central New Hampshire, between 1820 and 1870. After the Revolution, the population grew in the community almost ten times by 1820.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1775</td>
<td>262</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1790</td>
<td>863</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1800</td>
<td>1569</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1810</td>
<td>1838</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1820</td>
<td>2446</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1830</td>
<td>2222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1840</td>
<td>2126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1850</td>
<td>2038</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1860</td>
<td>1971</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1870</td>
<td>1667</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What happened in Warner was not true for the state as a whole. Population grew in the state until 1860. After that time, rural towns rapidly lost population to urban centers. The following chart shows the beginnings of the population shift after 1820.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Population of New Hampshire</th>
<th>Percent increase over previous decade</th>
<th>Rural population</th>
<th>Percent of urban to total population</th>
<th>Percent of rural to total population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1820</td>
<td>244,460</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
<td>236,834</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>97.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1830</td>
<td>269,328</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
<td>255,853</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>95.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1840</td>
<td>284,574</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
<td>256,043</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>90.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1850</td>
<td>317,976</td>
<td>11.7%</td>
<td>263,649</td>
<td>17.1%</td>
<td>82.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1860</td>
<td>326,073</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>254,035</td>
<td>22.1%</td>
<td>77.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1870</td>
<td>318,300</td>
<td>-2.4%</td>
<td>234,844</td>
<td>26.2%</td>
<td>73.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*1870 was the only year since 1800 that declined in population over the preceding decade.

No doubt, mobility struck a cord in the young, nineteenth-century farm boys, moving and exploring appealed to their ideal of the self-made man. After all, their pioneering ancestors

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8 Shermon, "The Grange" 7.
had built a home with an ax, and they wanted to follow in the same tradition. It was the American idea that a better life can be found somewhere else, if one just moved.  

Nevertheless, Hal Barron suggests, farm youth tended not to move too far. “It seems that those who moved to the city from the countryside may not have moved too far from their rural roots. In New England, farmers’ sons in factory towns continued their hometown associations.”

One population group who helped initiate and sustain the emigration movement more than any other was the farm laborer. Since farm machinery had made work more efficient, the farm helper was certainly the most likely to leave. Luckily, as his job was in the process of elimination, it was counteracted by labor demands in coal mines and on railroads being constructed to the rest of the country. Barron adds that when the regional economy began to decline, there were other categories of people more likely to leave. For example:

- artisans who had been displaced by factories;
- nonagricultural people, such as clerks in stores, who were more apt to move south into manufacturing cities;
- professionals or businessmen, such as doctors and lawyers, who found limited opportunities in New Hampshire were apt to move further away; and
- young women school teachers who found opportunities in the opening West.

WHO STAYED?

Large numbers of young New Hampshire men and women were employed in cotton manufacturing, first in Lowell and then Nashua, and finally nearby Manchester which had been “laid out for a manufacturing city.” It had become customary for farming communities after 1830 to watch their youth migrate to the southern factory cities. Some do not believe a popular notion that it was the most able and ambitious who left the farms, and that agriculture suffered because of it. Those who were more successful in farming were apt to stay put.


12 Barron, Those Who Stayed Behind.

13 The discovery of gold and silver in California and Nevada was an impetus as well.

14 Barron, Those Who Stayed Behind.

Howard Russell maintains that most established farms remained occupied. Children—especially oldest sons—on farms with fertile soil and good locations were inclined to hold onto the family farm, ensuring the farm's permanence. "Stayers" had stability in their lives; it is what Hal Barron refers to as "persistence." He suggests that those with the following circumstances were inclined to remain.

- property ownership and wealth (of any kind)
- farmers or merchants (considered the most established occupations)
- social ties to the community (church, family, and other activities)
- heads of household (To keep their offspring at home, parents often added ells to farmhouses and created extended families. It was common in the nineteenth century for one offspring to stay at home to help aging parents.)

**Who Came In?**

By the 1870s New England farmers were fast losing their traditional farm help. Young farm laborers who had formerly hired out for a season or two before setting up their own farms were now going elsewhere. To fill the void, eastern Massachusetts farmers began in the middle 1800s to hire immigrant farm laborers. When immigrants arrived, they herded into cities or manufacturing towns because the most active labor recruiters were the large New England textile companies. In the middle 1800s, Irish accounted for 65% of the Lawrence Massachusetts foreign population. However, some foreign laborers passed through Massachusetts and New Hampshire factory towns and filtered north and west into interior hill towns. Polish immigrants migrated into the Connecticut River valley in western Massachusetts and Connecticut to work in the tobacco and onion fields. Finns went to north-central Massachusetts and southern New Hampshire. In far northern New England, it was the same. French-Canadians migrated south into Vermont and Maine. One week in 1869, 2,300 French passed through St. Albans, Vermont on their way to various mills in the Merrimack River valley. In Vermont, immigrants (an amalgam of Italians, Scots, Finns, French-

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16 Russell, *A Long, Deep Furrow* 393, 435
Canadians, Irish and even Spanish and Swiss) worked in marble and granite quarries. The Irish arrived from the St. Lawrence and Lake Champlain areas in the middle 1800s to lay the railroad tracks. In addition to textile manufacturers, farmers often recruited new arrivals directly from Castle Garden (the Ellis Island of the period). In fact, during the nineteenth century, immigrants passed all over the northern New England states satisfying much-needed farm labor. LaWanda Cox maintains there was a substantial number of foreign farm laborers in the Northeast in 1871 and 1872. The following table summarizes the proportion of each group.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Irish</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French-Canadian</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nova Scotian</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In New Hampshire, however, the population ratio of foreign-born to native was smaller in rural farm towns. The following chart from the 1870 edition of *The Statistics and Gazetteer of New Hampshire* shows the population in five agricultural towns in the western part of the state.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Town</th>
<th>Native</th>
<th>Foreign-born</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Charlestown</td>
<td>1560</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Croydon</td>
<td>652</td>
<td>(none)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claremont</td>
<td>3518</td>
<td>535</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunapee</td>
<td>797</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newport</td>
<td>2059</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The statistics do not reveal whether they were farm owners or laborers.

The previous chart validates that foreign immigrants were on New Hampshire farms because the more agriculturally-successful towns, Charlestown and Claremont, contained the

---

largest number. In 1871, Horace Greeley confirmed that the “Irish, Germans, and Canadians are here” to work on Yankee farms and that most work was being done by “foreign-born employees.” 21

Interestingly, if foreign immigrants owned farms, they were less likely than the migratory Yankee to move away. Hal Barron claims that, of the ethnic groups, Irish farmers were the most persistent. Immigrant farmers clustered in adjacent farms, and they wanted their children established on farms near their own. Yet, when this occurred, native farm owners generally left the neighborhood. A popular saying was, “When the German comes in, the Yankee goes out . . . Therein lies an essential difference between native and foreign-born.” 22

Since the Civil War, immigrants were also in demand outside the New England states. During the 1860s and 1870s, 25 out of the 38 states promoted immigration. The states appointed agents or commissions of immigration to lure new settlers from overseas. Michigan began the practice in 1845. Northwestern states competed with each other for Europeans to people their vacant lands and to develop their economies, namely their logging, mining, and fishing industries. 23 In New England, an outstanding example of successful recruitment is the story of Aroostook County, Maine.

**THE SWEDISH IN MAINE**

Like New Hampshire, Maine state officials became alarmed during the 1860s that people were pulling up stakes and departing. During that time, Wilbur W. Thomas left Maine in 1863 for Sweden, appointed as a “war consul” by President Lincoln. Thomas fell in love with Sweden; he learned the language, customs, manners, and became familiar with Swedish history. He noticed that young Swedish families were leaving for America, but they were not headed to Thomas’ native Maine. Agriculture was the major occupation in Sweden at the time, and the great majority of emigrants were farmers. 24 When Thomas came back to America, he decided on a plan to attract the Swedes to Maine, or “do whatever is necessary to root a Swedish colony firmly in the soil of Maine.” By 1870, he proposed a plan to the Maine

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legislature, and they liked his idea. The legislature passed an act that created a board of immigration with Thomas as commissioner. In that role, Thomas returned to Sweden, distributed notices in villages, and spread the word that he was there to recruit young Swedish men with families to return with him to Maine. Only Swedes with the “highest testimonials of character” could qualify (usually by a pastor), and the emigrants had to pay their own passage as well. In return, the state of Maine gave 100 acres of woodland in Aroostook County to every head of family for the purpose of farming. Six hundred Swedish families returned with Thomas, and they arrived in the late summer of 1870 near Presque Isle on the Nova Scotia border in time to plant a crop of turnips. Within three years they had cleared 22,000 acres. The Swedes planted potatoes in such an amount and with such success that they made Aroostook County, Maine one of the leading potato producers in the United States.

3. Farm Success and Failure

By the 1870s, it was clear that New Hampshire farmers had not fully grappled with the idea that farming was a business. While men in the country were starting to make fortunes in railroads, steel, oil, and textile industries during what Mark Twain called the “Gilded Age,” New Hampshire farmers were having trouble adapting to their new economic transformation. Although most New Hampshire farmers read agricultural newspapers, they persisted on the same course of farming methods that their parents practiced before them. But the nation’s gradual shift from an agrarian culture to an industrialized culture was causing terrible suffering for farmers all over the country. For New Hampshire farmers, the grange eventually offered encouragement, especially as a social center, in dispensing information, and in their support of agricultural education. For some New Hampshire farmers, an important source of economic relief came from another source. The growth of urban wealth caused middle and upper-class city dwellers to retreat to the country for rest and recreation. Vacationers with lesser means

could stay with a farm family for a few weeks or for the summer. This proved quite a respite for struggling New Hampshire farmers trying to keep the wolf from the door.

**EXAMINING FARMING METHODS**

In 1870, the Governor of New Hampshire appointed ten citizens, one from each county in the state, to constitute a state board of agriculture. In their first year of organization, the board sent a questionnaire to New Hampshire farmers on their individual farming habits. The following table contains several results from that survey.  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do farmers read agricultural newspapers, books, and so on for betterment and education?</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>Farmers read more newspapers than books. Those who did not read anything believed there was no benefit to it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do farmers attend or show produce at agricultural fairs?</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>“Farmers usually attend fairs,” one farmer replied frankly. Those who did not attend fairs (from the Lakes Region) said “we are behind the age.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does their region have a farmers’ club?</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>This was before the grange successfully ‘took hold’ in New Hampshire.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do farmers in their region use fertilizers or otherwise improve the soil?</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>This is an indication of the soil deficiency. Hill farmers used the most fertilizers—lime and alkaline for acid soil. Others who refrained thought adding fertilizer to soil was a form of cheating.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do the farmers keep good bookkeeping practices?</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>The positive responses said that only “some” or a “few” farmers in their region practiced good bookkeeping. More often, the respondents said they did not keep books or records nor did they have knowledge of other farmers doing so.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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27 Comment from a respondent on whether farmers did a lot of reading: “... not much brain work shown to improve the methods of cultivation; if there is a study it does not get to the surface, the soil does not receive the benefit of it.” New Hampshire, “Reports from Towns” 41.


29 I think this is key to whether a farmer was successful or not. One respondent summed it up: “Farmers do not keep their farm accounts as they should, for at the end of the year I do not think there is one in five can tell how much they have made... or how much they owe.” Respondents generally said that farmers kept records and accounts “to themselves.” It was in the New Englander’s sense of privacy to mind their own business. New Hampshire, “Reports from Towns” 94.
The 1870 survey revealed that farmers were content to follow the same farming methods as their ancestors; most were not open to experimentation with an exception in the use of bagged fertilizer. Interestingly, apart from farm labor, farmers’ worries included the mistreatment of animals (horses) and problems caused by intemperance.

**Testimonials and Grievances**

In 1872 and 1873, a New Hampshire agricultural bulletin carried a report each month from a particular farming community. As farmers divulged their conditions, the reports could not disguise low morale. Testimonials revealed several recurring themes in their difficulties: laments for the emigration of youth, the high cost of labor, poor schools, and high taxes.  

On emigration, a farmer from Randolph in northern New Hampshire estimated that seven-eighths of his town’s young men and women had left to work on railroads and in workshops, “and the other one-eighth would if it was not for the influence of the parents.” He added that few young people remained on which the “fever” could feed. Another northern New Hampshire farmer said in order to keep sons on the farm, they must be shown that they can make money.

Labor costs were the most serious difficulty with which the farmers had to contend in the 1870s. To hire farm help, farmers had to compete with wages offered by city factories. New Hampshire farmers were increasingly frustrated with the type of help that they could get and complained it was usually of “poor quality.” The hired hand did less work yet his wages were higher than before. To fill the gap created by the shortage of male farm laborers, LaWanda Cox says women did a great deal of farm work such as hoeing, shoveling, raking, and picking fruit.

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30 Not all was well on western farms in the 1870s, especially in the Great Plains. Upper Midwestern farmers were bedeviled by droughts and hot summers, and then blizzards and sub-zero winters. In 1878, there was a devastating invasion of grasshoppers that wreaked havoc with crops. Some discouraged pioneers returned east or continued further west. Actually, good western farmland was going into the hands of major investors—timber dealers, cattle grazers, mining corporations, and land speculators. The United States government gave free western land to railroads. But the good land disappeared fast. In the middle Atlantic states, as well, there was a high turnover of property and a high amount of land speculation.


All reports from farmers concurred that taxes were a great strain. Taxes, they claimed, were an obstacle to making more than a mere living. Farm land was vulnerable to heavy taxation by the town, in fact, in some towns it was their only taxable wealth. As a rule, farm real estate was assessed higher than village or city property. It seemed inequitable that town selectmen regularly granted abatements under pressure to other businesses when the town received threats that the business (a factory) would leave town. Farms were not usually permitted such accommodations. However, a Marlborough, NH town historian, Charles Bemis, maintained that financially-strapped farmers in his town could ask the town for a tax abatement and, he claimed, it was generally granted. 33

Farmers did read journals and bulletins, yet not all their attitudes toward the writings in the agricultural press were favorable. Farmers wanted facts, not frequent advice on what appeared to be “fluff,” such as the beautification of rural homes or discussions of showplace farms. If anything, such accounts reaffirmed what ordinary farmers did not have and contributed to the farmer’s discontent with his lot. In fact, what was greatly unsettling to farmers was frequent chastisement spewed forth by the media, usually advice on how to work harder and live on less. In 1872 a Massachusetts farmer spoke out against “soft-handed agricultural editors” who gave long dissertations on how to manage the farm. He claimed that at farmers’ meetings, a doctor, editor, or politician lectured on what he knew about farming. The farmer thought it would be more useful to have a farmer say something appropriate, interesting, and instructive. 34

**Support from the Grange**

The first grange movement had started in the late 1860s in the Great Plains and the war-ravaged South. The farmers’ group spread slowly into New England, St. Johnsbury, Vermont opened the first local grange in the Northeast in 1871. The grange movement reached New Hampshire, Massachusetts, and Maine over five years after it had begun in the rest of the

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country. The business panic and depression of 1873 propelled New Hampshire farmers toward a vehicle that would protect them and their interests. Six New Hampshire grange chapters opened in 1873, a year later there were 20 chapters, and then 60 chapters the next.

Grangers in the West during the 1870s complained about railroads, monopolies, and eastern money barons. At first, the foundation principle for granges was the protective and financial benefit to farmers through cooperative buying and retailing. This never caught on in New Hampshire or the rest of New England partly due to a lack of skilled leadership in cooperative retailing. Financial inexperience caused cooperative ventures to fail. Additionally, New Hampshire farmers had expected “spontaneous miracles” from the organization. By 1879, the New Hampshire grange chapters had disbanded. 35

A second, more vigorous granger movement occurred in New England, New York, and Pennsylvania after 1880. It proved successful in New Hampshire in 1886. This time the grangers’ expectations were different. Instead of financial gain, the grange concentrated on “agricultural, humane, and social benefits.” The grange formed a farmers’ relief association, a life insurance company, and an insurance company that protected farmers against one of the greatest threats to his property—fire. Sven Nordin says that membership records show that unfavorable agricultural conditions in the Northeast during the last two decades of the nineteenth century corresponded with the growth of granges. The grange, indeed, seemed a benevolent, democratic organization during hard times. Grange songs told of the aspirations and grievances of rural folk, and constantly stressed unity against difficulties. One popular song, was “Stay on the Farm, Boys.” 36

The most important grange benefit was the talk and gossip at the grange hall from which members knew what was going on in their farm district. The value of the local grange was its role as a rural social center. Also, the local hall served as a source of education. The grange followed on the idea of the old Lyceum and served as a focus for excellence and betterment in


farming methods. Grange founders devised a format called the lecture hour. The philosophy of the lecture hour was to discuss items of mutual concern. After the usual animated discussion among members, the topic was offered a resolution. Members voted on the resolution and, if affirmed, it became a grange policy.

Grange action was truly a “grass roots” event. Issues started at the local level could progress to the state grange, and then to the National Grange. In essence, work done in a local grange hall could carry into the halls of the United States Senate where members of the National Grange took on a lobbying role. These members were committed to take stands on legislative issues consistent with the grange’s vision of helping rural farmers. As part of their policy, the grange insisted they did this strictly on a non-partisan basis. Regardless of the grange’s value, it could not hold young people on the farm nor could it reverse the distress on New Hampshire’s hill farms.

THE INFLUENCE OF THE GRANGE ON NEW HAMPSHIRE’S AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE

After the Civil War, the United States Congress passed the Morrill Act to establish colleges of agriculture and the mechanic arts in several states. One provision of the act was that the United States would grant public land for those colleges. Agriculture had been declared an authentic science. At first, the grange enthusiastically supported agricultural education in the nation’s land-grant colleges.

New Hampshire responded in 1866 by creating the New Hampshire College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts. In its characteristic fashion, however, the state wanted to remain independent from any federal aid, yet wanted to proceed. They decided to err on the side of safety, and they formed an agricultural college that was connected with an established institution. State officials felt that Dartmouth College could be counted on to support the

38 Howard, People, Pride, and Progress 57; Sherman, “The Grange” vi.
agricultural college in its infancy. Even though it was located at Dartmouth, the agricultural college remained a separate and distinct entity. New Hampshire College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts had a difficult beginning. Two years after its founding the College had only ten students; six years later, it increased to thirty-three—hardly an impressive enrollment. This frustrated state agricultural leaders.

NO LIBERAL ARTS WITH AGRICULTURE

The National Grange began to suspect that there was something wrong in the nation’s land-grant agricultural colleges. The grange feared that funds designated for agriculture were being used instead to teach liberal arts courses. The grange was doubtful of arrangements like New Hampshire where schools of agriculture had been “grafted” to an existing university. Teaching anything but agriculture in institutions with “classical departments” made the grange highly suspicious. Accordingly, the National Grange did not hesitate to criticize college officials. That criticism also created a strain between Dartmouth and officials at the New Hampshire Board of Agriculture. After a visit to the agricultural college at Dartmouth, the board in its annual Report of 1871 stated bluntly that it had “no voice in the management of the College.”

By 1883, Dartmouth had increased the agricultural program to four years, yet the grange and the state board of agriculture questioned faculty interest and competence. The grange deduced that classical institutions were “dismal failures” in imparting agricultural education. The unfortunate part of it was that young New Hampshire farmers lost time seeking an education. The disappointment was especially acute for the state when a whole library of information could not offer sufficient inducement to hold New Hampshire’s young men.

Finally the New Hampshire State Grange stepped in and stated they did not favor Dartmouth College as the site for an agricultural school. In 1885, the New Hampshire legislature appointed a committee to investigate the feasibility of moving the College of Agriculture and the Mechanic Arts from Hanover to a new location. The next year the New

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Hampshire Pomona Grange conducted an animated discussion on the removal of the agricultural school to Durham, New Hampshire. Grange members voted in favor of the removal by a large majority. "The chief reason . . . was the connection with a classical institution which overshadowed the agricultural department." 42 Meanwhile the Hatch Act in 1887 provided additional federal support for agricultural experiment stations. Stations had already been established at state colleges in Massachusetts and Maine. Vermont and New Hampshire followed their lead. Yet whatever help the station at Dartmouth seemed to New Hampshire farmers, it could not overshadow the fact that the agricultural professors had little contact with the farmers in the state. In 1888, New Hampshire tried to impose efforts to bring the faculty of the College into "harmonious action" with the farmers, but apparently with no luck. Within five years, the College moved to Durham.

**SUMMER BOARDERS TO THE RESCUE**

There was a developing source of income for some New Hampshire farmers by the 1880s: the arrival of the summer boarder. The Boston and Maine Railroad had been carrying tourists into New Hampshire’s White Mountains, the "Switzerland of America," for many years (see Figure 1). It had been fashionable for gentile travelers to view romantic scenery along the heavily-traveled rail routes that connected to major northeastern cities. By the 1880s, high-priced mountain hotels were prospering with their well-to-do summer clientele. 43 Urban dwellers with more modest means could afford as well to escape from the city for several weeks. For less expense than a hotel, middle-class professionals could take a prolonged summer holiday by staying with a rural farm family. New Hampshire farm families had discovered that summer boarders were a profitable sideline to their farming business.


43 Like the White Mountains of New Hampshire, the Green Mountains and the southern Lake Champlain region of Vermont became fashionable summer spots in the mid-1800s. Mineral spring spas around the state attracted many. In Maine, as well, Poland Spring water had gained a reputation. Lakes and seashore in Maine such as Sabbathday Lake, Moosehead, Old Orchard, and, of course, Bar Harbor had also gained recognition. Russell, _A Long, Deep Furrow_ 467.
A COMPLETE GUIDE
TO THE
WHITE MOUNTAINS
And Other New Hampshire Scenery,
WITH A
CHAPTER ON MONTREAL AND QUEBEC.
To a marginal farm this influx of summer boarders brought stabilization and an opportunity to offset financial difficulties. 

State officials were pleased with the population influx. Publicity about emigration had included conjectures about the declining character of those who remained in rural areas. Officials felt that the sophisticated classes of summer boarders would be a boost for New Hampshire’s morale and image. At the end of the decade, Reverend Julius Ward said that contact between the native population and cultivated, refined people from the city had improved and strengthened the social well-being of New England. Reverend Ward quickly clarified that he did not mean the summer boarder was always mentally superior to his host, but “a reciprocity was established.”

**Politics and the Boston and Maine Railroad**

Of course, the Boston and Maine Railroad, too, was extremely happy with the summer boarder phenomenon. They, too, claimed that summer guests were a mental and moral tonic to the people of New Hampshire. The Boston and Maine corporation stated bluntly that the New Hampshire farmer had learned what can be raised with profit and what can not.

In addition to bringing in summer boarders, the railroad’s well-developed railroad transportation system was important to every New Hampshire farmer who participated in a commerce-based economy and who shipped produce to market. The Boston and Maine exercised considerable power not only over the farmer who used the rails but over the entire state. The corporation decided on track and station locations, the service quantity and quality, as well as the railroad rates which, of course, had an incalculable impact on the towns it serviced.

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But the Boston and Maine penetrated further into New Hampshire’s soul. The big factor in the 1880s was the corporation’s political domination of New Hampshire government. Since the 1870s, the railroad corporation became politicized out of necessity during its scramble to control New Hampshire’s many independent railroad lines. However, to lease or buy other lines, Boston and Maine needed state approval. To ensure that New Hampshire state officials worked in their favor, railroad leaders focused their energy on key nominations for office in New Hampshire’s legislature and administration. The railroad corporation routinely sent free passes and mileage tickets to every New Hampshire legislator, senator, government official, and “persons of influence” such as lawyers, editors, and newspaper managers. Legislator’s families rode free and ministers rode free or at special rates. The Boston and Maine kept the list of free riders from public knowledge; there were never official records and, of course, the railroad kept silent. Tactics, like the free passes, usually got the railroad what it wanted.

Two of the chief lieutenants of the Boston and Maine Railroad in New Hampshire were Frank Streeter, general consul, and Henry M. Putney, chairman of the New Hampshire Railroad Commission (see Figure 2). Putney, it so happens, was also publisher of the Mirror and Farmer, a newspaper of grange and agricultural editorials for New Hampshire farmers. In fact, Putney’s newspaper became an indirect voice for both the state grange and the railroad corporation, a combination that seemed genial. Putney was a recognized force in the state, often dictating policy and controlling political nominations. Opening days of a legislative session in New Hampshire’s capital city found Henry Putney taking up residence in what was known as the “railroad room” in a hotel across the street from the New Hampshire State House.

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48 Wright, Progressive Yankees 56.
50 Frank Streeter, born in Vermont and educated at Dartmouth, had opened a law office in Concord in the 1870s. He negotiated on behalf of an independent railroad when it merged with the Boston and Maine, but Streeter later became a key official in the latter.
51 Dartmouth-educated Henry M. Putney was editor and “controlling spirit” of New Hampshire’s major newspaper for thirty-six years. Putney wielded a nimble and vitriolic pen. Because he was New Hampshire Railroad Commission chairman for over twenty years, Putney’s editorials, no doubt, were endowed with incentive from the powerful Boston and Maine Railroad. “Henry Putney,” The Granite Monthly 41.8 (August, 1909): 273.
52 The Mirror and Farmer later became the Manchester Union Leader.
Boston and Maine's interference in New Hampshire politics became a major hindrance. In 1883, there was a futile reform attempt by the New Hampshire legislature to rid its sessions from the railroad corporation’s manipulation. Four years later there were frank accusations that the railroad bribed the state legislature to file a measure granting the Boston and Maine corporation 99-year leases on tracks and independent lines. There were allegations of flagrant vote-buying by the Boston and Maine during the legislative session. Regardless, the New Hampshire governor vetoed the measure. The Hazen Bill, a statute of reform regulations to curb bribery and railroad lobbying, passed in 1889. The Bill, however, granted the Boston and Maine leases and mergers which allowed the railroad to take over local New Hampshire lines. The corporation acquired enough to control 9/10s of New Hampshire’s 1,128 miles of tracks. Despite their control, the railroad continued intruding in the state’s political activities through the 1880s. By the end of the decade actual vote buying subsided because little opposed the interests of the Boston and Maine.

**The Railroad and the New Hampshire State Grange**

What happened in New Hampshire with the Boston and Maine Railroad was not unknown in the rest of the country. In the 1870s, granges all through the United States fought free passes distributed to grange members. But the railroads were aggressive. To encourage the favor of grangers, the railroad companies often granted special privileges to them. It was not unusual for lines to carry grange delegates to and from annual meetings at reduced fares; nor was it unusual for railroad companies to transport grangers and their stock at special rates to agricultural fairs. On the national level, grangers had little faith that any regulations would solve the nation’s railroad transportation problems. Members of the grange were afraid that “railroads possessed the will and the means to ‘buy up’ legislatures and courts.”

In New Hampshire, the Boston and Maine Railroad not only had a profound hold on state policies but on the direction of New Hampshire farmers. The railroad brought beef cattle into...
New Hampshire from the Midwest for less than a northern New Hampshire farmer could ship cows to the Boston market. Even though the state grange knew the railroad charged exorbitant costs to the farmer, they did little about it and, in fact, reacted passively to Boston and Maine’s power.  

Rexford Shermon says that the grange did nothing to denounce the railroad’s gradual takeover of other lines even though it created a virtual monopoly. Instead, the organization took a conservative position (into the early 1900s) with little interest in reform. This is hardly surprising since the highest New Hampshire railroad official was also owner of the state’s largest newspaper that carried grange and agricultural news. Nationally, the grange did little to challenge railroads. While it was the philosophy of the grange to condemn “moneyed interests,” the organization remained passive because, in a number of instances, grange leadership contained businessmen and railroad executives.

Railroads in Vermont and Maine catered to state grange members. Grangers there, too, were not especially interested in confronting the railroad problem. In fact, the Maine grange expressed appreciation to the railroad for providing the tickets to attend annual sessions. Nevertheless, later in the 1880s, these same state granges were found complaining of high railroad rates and discrimination in railway service and asking for legislation to remedy these evils.

4. THE ABANDONED FARM PHENOMENON

After either struggling with depleted soils, residing in a town missed by the railroad, or watching their children go elsewhere, marginal New Hampshire farmers gave up their hill farms to make an easier living elsewhere. They left poorly-located, ill-conducted farms that had dropped out of production, and they shut their farmhouse doors. But could farms or land actually be abandoned? Abandonment meant property without claim. Could property exist without title of ownership? Paul Glenn Munyon claims that land-recording methods after

\[54\] Anderson, To This Day 184; Nordin, Rich Harvest 232. Wright, Progressive Yankees 58, 59, 60.

\[55\] Shermon, “The Grange” 210, 211.

1870 would have made it almost impossible for property literally to be abandoned. In most cases the legal owners of the land continued to claim title to the land, even though they may have moved away from the area. If property were truly abandoned, it would revert to the state for non-payment of taxes. This did not happen. Most owners continued to pay taxes on farms they had vacated. Therefore, the term “abandoned farms” actually meant either unoccupied or neglected farms.

Selling farms during those times was extremely difficult. Sometimes a farmer quit farming operations, but he continued to occupy the good buildings. Neighbors usually cut the hayfields because land (compared to farm buildings) was least likely to be abandoned. Frequently, a neighboring farmer often bought or leased the unused fields and added them to his own pasture or woodland holdings. Horace Greeley observed similar adjustments: “The small farm is . . . quite often absorbed into the estate of some thrifty neighbor.”

A HISTORIAN’S RECOLLECTIONS

When Charles A. Bemis of Marlborough, NH, finished a history of his small town near Mount Monadnock, he recalled the locations of 93 bygone farms. Bemis usually verified some abandoned farm sites by family burial plots still on the land. He believed that there were various reasons why the farm was given up, one of which was as farmers aged, they moved into the village. But what happened to the farms after they left was even more varied. Bemis stated that after some farm owners left their farms, the buildings were occupied by a string of tenant owners who would stay awhile and then move on. The transient occupants tended not to maintain the buildings until finally houses became unfit for habitation and were allowed to decay. Of course, fire would claim unoccupied farms more often than occupied farms. Yet Bemis told of farm buildings being rescued. Often when a farm was abandoned, the buildings

57 Munyon, A Reassessment 18.
59 Greeley, What I Know of Farming 286, 287.
were removed to another site. Bemis cited 58 instances of homes and barns moved—like people—usually from the country into the village. Lumber from the old buildings was recycled and served to construct new buildings. French-Canadian and Scandinavian immigrants employed in the Marlborough granite quarries commonly dismantled unused houses and built their homes from the reclaimed lumber.  

**THE MEDIA SPECTACLE**

In the early 1880s New Hampshire depopulation and farm abandonment was of especial interest to the public. “Anxious” descriptions of abandoned farms filled the popular press. Yet some local sentiment regarded the “crisis” as exaggerated. Writers of literature at the time rarely associated their statements on farm abandonment with actual numbers. Deserted farms appeared in the press as “prosaically as market quotations.”  

The following are samples of article titles in popular magazines during the late 1800s. At least one word appears repeatedly in the title that has a negative connotation (coincidentally, most start with the letter “D:” “decline,” “decay,” “decadence,” and “deserted.”)

- “Decay of New England” (1869) *The Nation*
- “The Decay of Farming in New England” (1889) *The Forum*
- “A Good Farm for Nothing” (1889) *The Nation*
- “Is Agriculture Declining in New England?” (1890) *New England Magazine*
- “Decay of Rural New England.” (1890) *The Saturday Review*
- “The Decadence of New England,” (1890) *The Forum*
- “The Decladence of Farming,” (1890) *Popular Science Monthly*
- “The Decline of Rural New England,” (1891) *Popular Science Monthly*
- “The Deserted Homes of New England” (1893) *Cosmopolitan*
- “The Doom of the Small Town.” (1895) *The Forum*
- “Our Rural Degeneracy” (1899) *The Boston Transcript* (newspaper)

Unoccupied or neglected farms were hardly a New England phenomena. Munyon claims that there was also evidence of a strong concern about rural depopulation in the Midwest. A onetime Vermont farmer who had long lived in the West claimed in 1878 that the proportion of unsuccessful farmers was as great in Illinois as in Vermont. Additionally, the governor of Wisconsin observed that the abandonment problem was every bit as serious in Wisconsin as in New England. Russell, *A Long, Deep Furrow* 432.  

By the 1890s, one county in the “Dakotas” had more abandoned farms than all of New Hampshire. Alonzo Towle, “Meetings of the Board: Remarks,” *State of New Hampshire, Annual Reports, 1890* (Manchester, NH: John B. Clarke, 1891) 627.
The previous epithets served only to arouse fears, and to place the fault of the New England decline on farmers. Each title contained an aura of death, and unfortunately, a sense of fatalism. Some, however, claimed that the “hysteria” over depopulation was, for the most part, untrue. As far as the population numbers were concerned, they were right. Most people had just shifted from rural to urban factory towns, those who left New Hampshire rural areas were replaced in number in the urban areas. With the negative publicity came speculations: that New Hampshire had lost her brightest and best, that the general standard of intelligence and enterprise had been reduced, and that depopulated towns declined in character as well. Joseph Walker, an optimistic New Hampshire lawyer and dilettante farmer, thought all who believed the above were “fainthearted” and to speculate about such ideas was seldom useful. Walker asserted that “croakers” who made these assumptions were only good to serve as a “corpse to start a new graveyard with.” Walker had a point, negative sentiment could be a self-fulfilling prophesy. Certain self-serving groups turned their “evidence” of population decline into social reality. Yet one fact could not be denied: farming was not attractive to New Hampshire youth anymore, and that fact forewarned trouble.

WHO BOUGHT ABANDONED FARMS DURING THE 1880s?

When word spread that New Hampshire farmers were having hardships and their land could be bought cheaply, it was an opportunity for wealthy individuals and corporations to buy abutting farm parcels and combine them into large tracts. Some individuals speculated on distressed properties leasing them to tenant farmers as absentee landlords or to city dwellers for the summer. The original farm owners often had no other recourse than to be displaced from their land. With no assistance from the state of New Hampshire, they lost their home and livelihood. What was a tragedy for some was an opportunity for others. Low prices of abandoned farms meant the possibility of ownership for certain immigrants and unemployed

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62 A sense of fatalism was fed also by a low birth rate that failed to make up for the decline in population. “A century ago, and even fifty years ago . . . one would see from five to eight white-haired children racing about the premises of almost every young farmer. He will do well now if he can find half that number. The subject is an important one, and it demands the careful consideration of the moralist, the minister, and of all thinking people.” Harriman, The History of Warner, New Hampshire 525.

factory workers who dreamed of owning their own farm. It also meant that the original owners could rent their farm to a tenant to keep the farm operating. Sometimes farm tenancy graduated to farm ownership. Unfortunately, that is not what New Hampshire officials envisioned for repopulating the state’s deserted farms. In the face of negative publicity about the rural regions of their state, officials still stubbornly held that astute buyers would invest in the undervalued land.

THE WEALTHY

Sensing that strapped farmers in the hilly region in western New Hampshire felt that they could not sell their property for market value, Austin Corbin saw a good thing and began buying farms. He bought farm after farm in an area that spanned four towns with relative ease. As he increased his purchases, adjacent farmers became anxious about their neighbor’s departure and feared isolation. Often farmers were not planning to sell but, in resignation, they turned to Corbin who boldly claimed that he cheerfully paid every owner’s asking price. At first Corbin planned to work in secrecy buying the farms “to prevent people from holding out and drive up the price of land.” But word that he proposed a private game preserve got out, and it was met by mixed reactions. Some local residents were clearly resentful.

“Austin Corbin, grasping soul

Wants this land from pole to pole.”

Corbin’s game park failed to impress most local residents and they asserted that Corbin proposed to destroy valuable farm land to little purpose. Certainly, a game preserve was incongruous with the rural farming neighborhood, and residents did not like the feeling of being preempted by affluent outsiders.

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64 Austin Corbin, born in western New Hampshire, became known as the “most conspicuous figures of his time in American financial and railway circles.” His career began by organizing a bank in Davenport, Iowa and then developing New York’s Manhattan Beach and Coney Island. He devised and was president of the Long Island Railroad. After he had become an established success, he came back in the 1880s to his birthplace in New Hampshire between Lake Sunapee and the Connecticut River to restore his home into a summer retreat. Henry H. Metcalf, “An Important Historical Event,” The Granite Monthly 43.8 (Aug.–Sept., 1911) 253.

65 Elizabeth Rybicki, “The Acquisition of Land for Corbin’s Park, 1886–1906,” Thesis, Dartmouth, 1994 6, 7, 15. When Corbin initially presented the idea of the Park to state officials, he claimed it would be a conservationist’s dream. To avoid any wrath from wildlife protectionists, Corbin employed a well-known naturalist, lecturer, writer, athlete, and scientist Ernest Harold Baynes. Corbin gave him a house near the Park. Baynes became the spokesman and served as a public relations representative for the Park.
Austin Corbin bought property from 275 individual owners (paying between $1.00 and $25.00 per acre), and his purchases included a one-room schoolhouse and a town cemetery. The total land acquired was between 20,000 to 25,000 acres (the numbers vary in different sources) in four bordering towns. Austin Corbin established what was known as the Blue Mountain Park, or the Blue Mountain Game Preserve, on which he stocked buffalo, moose, elk, white-tailed deer, and European wild boars (see Figure 3).

Corporations

Large companies acquired farms in the northern New Hampshire hills “for a song” and, like Austin Corbin, pieced parcels together to make huge tracts. When area hill farmers looked to buy more land for their wood lots (a valuable source of income for them), the New Hampshire Land Company refused to sell. Northern farmers were “frozen out” by the lumber trust.

New Hampshire hill farmers had come to rely more and more on their home wood lots for cash, it was dependable work in an otherwise sparse winter. Because their livelihood depended on it, farmers managed their wood lots as a resource that should never be exhausted. In fact, their select logging methods were advocated by forest scientists. In contrast, “professional” lumber men from the land company cut everything, crushed saplings, and burned them to charcoal. The New Hampshire Forest Commission in the 1880s hesitated to regulate the trust’s deforestation practices because the forests were private property. However, in 1891 the Forest Commission placed blame for harmful land management on the hill farmers. The Commission commented that the soil had washed away from cleared farmland on steep hills. “The entire effort at farming in mountain forest regions . . . is often a

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66 The same amount of acreage the Swedish settlers cleared in Aroostook Country, Maine for potato fields.

67 The process of acquiring a forty square mile land mass was not without problems. A man named Reuben Ellis who owned 290 acres within the Park sued Corbin for discontinuing roads leading to and from his farm. Ellis was essentially land-locked behind a fence. Corbin pleaded that he had granted a “pass,” that allowed Ellis to go over the Park lands any time to get to his home provided Ellis pay the expense of a gatekeeper and compensate Corbin for any damage that could be suffered by such an gate-opening and crossing of land. Rybicki, “The Acquisition of Land” 7.

Corbin's Park

Figure 3
most destructive and suicidal mistake . . . It would have been much better if some of our 'abandoned farms' (in the hilly areas) had never been cleared.”

Not everyone agreed with state officials that hill farmers made a “suicidal mistake.” Reverend Johnson from North Woodstock, a town at the foot of the White Mountains, wrote a monograph about farm depopulation in the northern New Hampshire hills. In his opinion, hill farmers abandoned their farms for reasons that were unlike those elsewhere in the state. Johnson asserted that if hill inhabitants could not expand their wood lots, they would fail on the “scant returns” from their rough farms. Rev. Johnson accused the New Hampshire Land Company for taking away an essential component for survival and for driving the hill farming population from Woodstock.

AN ARTISTS COLONY

In contrast, there were times when some local residents were not deprived of their livelihood by land investors who bought and leased abandoned farms in their area. Residents sometimes profited by activities of speculators. The Cornish-Plainfield region, in the western New Hampshire on the banks of the Connecticut River, was an isolated agricultural region in the 1880s. Even though the soil was rich bottom-land along the River, the region in the late nineteenth century was rather down at the heels. A New York lawyer bought an abandoned farm property in Cornish for a modest amount, and then decided to further speculate on other depressed properties. He, in turn, leased those farmhouses and cottages to artists such as Thomas Dewing, Stephen Parrish and his son Maxfield, and George deForest Brush. The artists were glad for the cheap rent because they said, “if you rented an old farmhouse, you got a barn with it to paint in . . .” Cornish became a popular summer retreat by 1885 with esteemed painters, sculptors, writers and political figures, and it became known as “little New

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In 1896 when the treasurer of the Amoskeag Manufacturing Company in Manchester, NH claimed the Merrimack River was drying up in summer and flooding in spring, conditions which shut down the mills. The Amoskeag official blamed the floods on heavy logging in the White Mountains at the headwaters of the Merrimack River. But even this indictment from an industrial giant was to no avail with either the state or with the land company. Carlson and Ober, “The Weeks Act,” 4.

70 Johnson, Help for the Hills 3, 4.

By the 1880s, many Maine farmers, as well, were relying more and more on the farm wood lot for cash income. When that was depleted, Maine farmers either had to get a job with wages or leave the farm. Russell, A Long, Deep Furrow 432.
York." After renting a place for a few seasons, sculptor Augustus St. Gaudens liked Cornish well enough to buy his own place in 1891, a former brick tavern atop a hill with a spectacular view of Vermont’s Mount Ascutney. Eventually there were ninety or so New York artists’ residences in the Cornish-Plainfield area. What had begun as land speculation on deserted properties turned into the creation of an artists’ community.

Some local Cornish-Plainfield residents were glad of the notoriety. By the late 1890s they saw the demand for beautiful landscapes by artists and tired urban workers and they, too, rented their properties. Artists, in turn, attracted more summer visitors from the city, and area residents soon began realizing the benefit in income. A summer studio in Cornish became so popular an idea that landlord-residents could increase their rental prices to match demand.

But Cornish-Plainfield townspeople learned that they had to cater to the New York visitors. In fact, the artists and summer residents depended on local residents for services. On the surface, it looked like a working reciprocity between the seasonal residents and full-time inhabitants. It was not, however, as amicable as it seemed. Social interaction between the two groups was virtually non-existent. Children of the New York residents did not play with or go to school with Cornish and Plainfield children. Yet local residents maintained a relationship with the outsiders that they, in fact, nurtured because they realized their primary income source was no longer agriculture. Farming as they had once known it was a thing of the past. The summer business now offered them some financial relief, but it made them somewhat subservient in their own community.  

FEARS OF THE POOR BUYING FARMS

Land investors and speculators took ownership of depressed farm properties by either buying mortgages and then leasing the farm back to the owners, or by purchasing unoccupied farms and leasing them to tenants. During the 1880s officials in the state of New Hampshire grew dismayed that the independent farm owners of the state might be replaced by a class of tenant farmers. Adding to the alarm were fears that the tenants might be poor immigrants who would not only lease but eventually be able to buy farms that had decreased in value. It

was hard for natives to accept that the stronghold of the English settlers had fallen into hands of people who were as willing to work as hard as they first did and endure the same privations.  

Foreign immigrants who came after the Civil War generally lacked the money to buy farms and had been, at first, farm laborers. Some of these immigrants, especially those who had been farmers in their country, came expressly looking for abandoned farms. These immigrants were resolutely determined, and no time seemed to be better for them to own a farm in New Hampshire. Hal Barron claims that tenant farmers and farm laborers did indeed manage to buy farms and make their own independent start. In fact, the status of farm laborer or tenant may have been temporary in the “agricultural ladder” toward farm ownership.

Yet, purchasing an abandoned farm when one starts poor is a hard and slow way to keep out of debt. Usually, there is a dire narrow profit margin to carry them through inevitable slower and leaner times. Even if immigrants or the poor could find deserted farms at favorable prices, they needed several years to reclaim and renovate the property, time spent with low returns. Under those circumstances, it was as likely for an experienced farmer to fail. An industrial laborer, with his lack of experience, was in a still sorrier plight. But it was done, and more likely it was the following generation that operated the farm who realized the benefit. Poor farms generally remained poor. In fact, if reclaimed farms never got off the ground they, in turn, may have been abandoned again.

**BACKLASH IN NEW HAMPSHIRE AGAINST FOREIGNERS OR POOR BUYING FARMS**

In late nineteenth century, businessmen in the Northeast, particularly factory owners, wanted a steady supply of cheap labor, and they actively recruited labor in French Canada and Europe. The result was that the foreign-born population increased more sharply in the New England’s established Anglo-Saxon environment than in any other part of the country.

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72 Higham, Strangers in the Land 139; Hansen, The Immigrant 174, 175.
Nationwide, prevalent anxieties over the newcomers had fueled nativist feelings. According to Dale Knobel, nativism is a public temper, a set of attitudes, a state of mind—really, a mass paranoia about “outsiders” whom are perceived as a threat to the American character. The nativist movement in late nineteenth-century America involved hundreds of thousands of people and it was among “the most sustained social movements in the first 150 years of the United States.”

In an age of organization and incorporation following the Civil War, there was a growth in the number of fraternal orders, mutual benefit societies, or “brotherhoods” such as the Masons, early craftsmen’s societies, reform leagues, and orders of the rural grange. These organizations shaped ideology and outlook, and they proposed that they alone knew who was authentically American. The work of organizations was to establish a national ‘character’ that would lead the rest of the nation. Knobel says the American public found nativist sentiment attractive in times of collective stress such as periods of economic downturns or during the change from an agrarian to an industrial society in the late nineteenth century.

The rural grange, however, at first expressed little concern about the rising tide of immigrants. Even though the grange made intensive efforts to recruit immigrants, especially Germans and Scandinavians, the organization attracted little foreign membership. Wary immigrant clergy objected to the secrecy and ritual of grange society and warned their parishes that it corrupted moral fiber. The immigrants apparently listened to their church leaders because there was a general lack of foreign names on grange membership rolls. Regardless, the grange in the 1880s, a society of “brothers” and “sisters,” reversed its stand on immigration and in the second granger movement, came out with a program with objectives to preserve “America for Americans.”

Urban manufacturing centers feared the power of organized foreign immigrants. This followed a new phenomenon that Americans had experienced in the 1870s and 1880s—the labor strike. Americans believed the railroad strikes and industrial violence had been instigated by foreign labor and immigrant radicalism. Higham states that the first socialist party in America, largely an immigrant organization, was traced to the 1870s. Higham, *Strangers in the Land*.


Knobel, “America for the Americans.”

Howard, People, Pride and Progress.

Norstin, Rich Harvest.

Knobel, “America for the Americans.”
By the mid-1880s, New Hampshire state and grange officials had anxieties about who would purchase or rent cheap, available hill farms. Native citizens in New Hampshire’s small towns, as well, driven by fears that immigrants were invading their towns, began to covet their Anglo-Saxon heritage, and it became popular to trace their lineage to early settlers who helped found their town. A group of state officials felt they had to do something quickly to avert the possibility that immigrants and the poor would overrun small rural New Hampshire towns. By the end of the 1880s, one state leader envisioned a plan that would define who could inhabit deserted farms.

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80 In published town histories from this era, the back of the volumes contain genealogies of native citizens tracing family members from the time they emigrated from England, Ireland, Scotland, to their arrival and establishment of a home in the town. There was tremendous pride in being descended from the town’s original settlers. At “town affairs” such as centennial celebrations, there were speeches proclaiming their love of their nativeness and expressing suspicions for “outsiders.” For an example, see the *History of Bedford, New Hampshire from 1737* (Concord, NH: Rumford Printing, 1903) 68.
PART TWO
5. A Campaign to Repackage the Deserted Farm

Negative publicity about New Hampshire’s empty farms gave the state a bad name. Governor David Goodell, in his June, 1889 address to the state legislature, said that he wanted “thrifty’ foreigners or “desirable classes of immigrants,” and others who might be looking to buy farm land, to contact owners of tenantless farms and, thus, bring about the transfer of deserted farms to “capable and willing farmers.” The governor inferred that unoccupied farms were owned presently by incapable and unwilling farmers. This reasoning followed a long history of chastisement of marginal farmers by the press and by reformers. Now the state had an opportunity to save face and replace those farmers who had failed and who had caused New Hampshire some degree of shame and embarrassment. The state could recruit harder-working farmers to re-occupy the farms and to succeed where the original farmers could not. What was important in Goodell’s words was the inclusion of “others” who were looking for abandoned farms at a bargain. The “others,” it turned out, would become highly prized and largely publicized by the New Hampshire Board of Agriculture. To achieve resettlement of deserted farms, Goodell appointed Nahum Josiah Bachelder as Commissioner of Immigration (see Figure 4). At 35, Bachelder had been secretary of the New Hampshire Board of Agriculture for two years. His duties as an immigration commissioner merged with his duties as secretary of the board of agriculture and, as time went on, the duties of one office seemed to contradict the other.

81 Message of His Excellency, David H. Goodell, Governor of New Hampshire, to the Two Branches of the Legislature, June Session, 1889. (Manchester, NH: John B. Clarke, 1889).

Governor David Goodell proposed this act a few months after the great land rush in Oklahoma. When homesteaders looking for farm land in the West outnumbered available homesteads, the United States government decided to open the Indian Territory for settlement. The Territory was public land originally put aside for the relocation of Indian tribes east of the Mississippi. The government opened 3 million acres in the center of the Territory, now Oklahoma, to homestead settlers. In April, 1889, the first rush of “boomers” took place. It could have struck Governor Goodell that no one rushed into New Hampshire in exactly the same way to inhabit deserted farms.

Goodell was a farmer from Antrim, NH who studied scientific farming methods. He was a strong promoter of temperance and became a lifelong prohibitionist. Goodell was among the first members of the Board of Agriculture in the 1870s until he was elected Governor in 1888.

82 In 1889, the Bedford, NH grange considered a topic for discussion, “Is it, or is it not, for the Best Interests of New Hampshire to Colonize the State with Foreigners?” History of Bedford, NH (1903) 562. Some people, like Reverend Julius Ward, thought such colonization was a good idea. Ward stated that remote, deserted farms were currently being purchased and populated by immigrants, chiefly Irish or French-Canadians. To Ward, that meant new blood was being incorporated into New England life. He believed it would be in New England’s best interest to invite “well-behaved” foreigners to settle on unoccupied farms. Ward, “The Revival of our Country Towns” The New England Magazine 247.
Figure 4
NAHUM JOSIAH BACHELDER

Nahum Bachelder became the center of the campaign to reoccupy New Hampshire farms. Governor Goodell could not have picked a more capable man for the job. Bachelder, an energetic and enterprising man, had been resourceful since his boyhood and showed early skills in marketing that would serve him well as an adult. The Bachelder family farm was an impressive place, located on a hill overlooking a field sloping to Highland Lake. It was a place favorable to receive summer guests. Fresh air and scenic beauty were a prerequisite to attract people looking for rest and leisure from urban life. It was important that affluent guests were in congenial surroundings protected from working-class vacationers or any contact with disturbing influences. Among the boarders Nahum Bachelder’s family took in was the Quackenbos family from New York. The insight Nahum Bachelder gained from knowing members of the urban upper-class such as the Quackenbos family would help him in his later work, namely in understanding of how much money out-of-staters were inclined to spend in New Hampshire. The Quackenbos family eventually built their own summer place on Lake Sunapee.

When Nahum Bachelder was 21 in 1875, he took over management of the family farm. He reorganized the farm, purchased superior livestock, and produced cream and butter for the leading hotels in Concord, Manchester, and Boston. He also made specialty items like cider-vinegar pickles for the Boston market. As Bachelder immersed himself in his own success, he seemed to ignore that other New Hampshire farmers were not as lucky.

What would later serve Bachelder well in his career would be his tireless energy. He stated in his Reminiscences: “I was favored with a strong constitution which gave me the physical ability to withstand hard work and all kinds of hardship... After sitting in a session

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83 Nahum J. Bachelder, Reminiscences and Addresses (Andover, NH, 1930) 5.
84 When the Quackenbos family first arrived at Highland Farm, their son, John, six years older than Nahum, had just graduated from Columbia with a medical degree. John became an early influence on Nahum Bachelder as they spent the next ten summers together hunting and fishing. Bachelder would later remark that Quackenbos had greater educational effect on him than school. Bachelder’s parents believed that Nahum would always be a farmer, so he never went further than high school, something which Bachelder would later regret. Bachelder, Reminiscences 9.
for three hours I was so full of vigor and pep that I ran every step home for no reason except to get rid of some of my surplus energy."  

Coupled with his physical energy was Bachelder’s conspicuous ambition. After joining the local farmers’ grange at age 23, he became lecturer the following year and master the year after that. His rapid ascendency in the grange continued. After four years as master of his local grange, he became secretary of the New Hampshire State Grange for which he was paid $300 a year. Receiving wages seemed to be a turning point for Nahum Bachelder because for the next thirty years, he did more talking about agriculture than actual farming.

At age 33, Nahum Bachelder had a good year. He received word from H.H. Metcalf that there was a vacancy as secretary of the state board of agriculture. Metcalf said he would arrange a meeting with the chairman of the board. On March 1, 1887, nine members out of ten voted Nahum Bachelder as secretary of the New Hampshire Board of Agriculture. Bachelder’s salary was $1,000 in addition to the $300 as grange secretary.

Apart from his administrative work, Bachelder’s life took another turn in 1887; he married Mary Putney, sister of Henry M. Putney, the railroad commission chairman and publisher of the *Mirror and Farmer*. Mary and Nahum moved into the main house at Highland Farm and continued receiving summer guests. “We filled the main farmhouse with summer boarders which business my wife managed with great success for several years, while I devoted my time and energy to the rapidly growing grange and Board of Agriculture work.” As good as this sounded, Bachelder claimed he had no money. It seemed they were not earning anything from actual farming, even with high quality livestock. In fact, Nahum and Mary depended on Nahum’s wages, summer boarders, and the possibility that someday they would inherit the farm.

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85 Bachelder, *Reminiscences*, 2, 3, 4, 5, 15, 16.
86 Henry Harrison (“H.H.”) Metcalf was founder, editor and manager of *The Granite Monthly*. Metcalf would become one of Bachelder’s “inner circle” of friends; he wrote public relations pieces advocating Bachelder’s work for the State. Bachelder, *Reminiscences* 26.
DEVELOPING AGRICULTURE THROUGH IMMIGRATION

In August, 1889, the New Hampshire legislature passed an act that permitted development of agricultural resources for the state through “immigration and other means.” As immigration commissioner, Nahum Bachelder’s duty was to collect information on agricultural opportunities and then to “circulate” that information wherever it might be “for the best interest of the State.” Bachelder had to do this within a budget of $2,500.  

Bachelder lost no time. On August 24, 1889, he sent a letter and questionnaire to the selectmen in each town. He requested the name and address of the owner of each abandoned farm with tenantable buildings, even if that farm was in operation by the occupant of a neighboring farm. He asked for the name and address of the owner of any occupied farm that was for sale because, he wrote, the state would “give some assistance to this class.” Bachelder told the selectmen that the purpose of this measure is the “repopulation of the abandoned farms, at the same time expecting to stimulate and encourage the business of husbandry in all sections of our State.”  

Two hundred twelve (212) towns replied, 58 of which reported no abandoned farms; the remaining 154 towns reported a total of 1,342 abandoned farms with tenantable buildings. Bachelder immediately sent a form to the address of each abandoned farm owner requesting information and the selling price of the farm. He claimed every statement from the owners would be accurate because the owner must have it notarized by a justice of the peace.

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88 State of New Hampshire, Laws of the State of New Hampshire (Manchester, NH: John B. Clarke, 1889) 42.
89 State of New Hampshire, Report of the Commissioner of Agriculture and Immigration, August, 1890 (Manchester, NH: John B. Clarke, 1890) 6, 7.

According to an article on “Farm Laws” published in the 1888 New Hampshire Report, farm ownership seemed tenuous at best a year before the Immigration Act passed. John Shirley referred to a New Hampshire court case that found that “a man is a tenant at will of his farm, and may remain so until three men can be found who will say under oath that it would be better on the whole for the community for someone else to own it. . . . [But] no man is in danger who has nothing which anyone wants . . . [an abandoned farm].] The short of all this is that no man in this State owns or ever can own a farm. He can only own the right to the use of one so long as he uses it in a reasonable way . . . but he has not even this right if the authorities exercise their power . . . to take it from him . . . or if the Legislature fixes the terms . . . or orders it taken from him and given to some one else, upon the payment of such sum as some tribunal may say he ought to take for it. When you get a farm you get this right and nothing more.” John M Shirley, “Farm Laws in New Hampshire,” State of NH, Annual Report, 1887–1888 (Manchester, NH: John B. Clarke, Co., 1888) 332, 333.
More than likely, the farm owner undervalued his farm because it may have languished for some time on the market with no buyers. Bachelder himself admitted a year later that “many of the abandoned farms were superior to occupied and profitable farms.” 91

SEEKING OCCUPANTS FOR ABANDONED FARMS

As soon as replies from farm owners came into his office in September and October, 1889, Nahum Bachelder immediately leaked the news to the press outside New Hampshire, that is, “newspapers having a national reputation.” The majority of space in these articles concerned itself with advantages of having a home in New Hampshire.

Four months into the campaign, the November, 1889 issue of The Granite Monthly appeared with the Price List of Abandoned Farms in New Hampshire, a 2 ½-page, simple list of 118 farms around the state with the name and address of the owner, the farm’s acreage and price. No other description accompanied the list because it may have been done in haste. At the beginning of 1890, the Price List was followed by a small, unpretentious, pamphlet called A List of the Deserted Farms of New Hampshire with a Map of the State (see Figure 5) which contained approximately two or three lines of description for each farm. Expanding the marketing campaign, Bachelder then prepared a 103-page booklet in 1890 called Secure a Home in New Hampshire, Where Comfort, Health, and Prosperity Abound (see Figure 6). It contained 340 advertisements for farms; a map of the state; statements on the financial, educational, and social advantages of living in New Hampshire; a list of 1,300 summer hotels and boarding houses; statistics on the rapidly-increasing summer industry; and numerous illustrations of New Hampshire scenery. In the initial publications, the immigration commissioner expressed his wish to recruit prospective buyers who would convert farms into boarding house businesses. He printed 6,000 copies of Secure a Home and distributed them throughout the United States, with “a few” going to England, Canada, and Sweden. 92

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91 State of New Hampshire, Report of the Commissioner of Agriculture and Immigration (1890) 6
92 Bachelder, Reminiscences 15
This first publication made clear Bachelder’s intentions for unoccupied farms. Over half the pamphlet was taken up with the lists of summer hotels and boarding houses and photos of scenery.
A LIST
OF THE
DEserted
FARMS
OF
New Hampshire,
WITH A MAP OF THE STATE.

The following valuable and interesting facts in regard to Deserted Farms of New Hampshire have been condensed from a pamphlet upon this important subject prepared by Commissioner of Agriculture N. J. Bache-elder, and they are, therefore, perfectly reliable, as Mr. Bacheelder's information was verified by the selectmen of the different towns.

The map of the State is a fac simile of the one published by the New Hampshire Railroad Commissioners in their annual report.
SECURE A HOME
IN
New Hampshire
WHERE COMFORT, HEALTH, AND PROSPERITY
ABOUND.

*1890*

Figure 6
Bachelder’s actions made state officials sit up and take notice. Naturally, they saw it as the answer to the region’s doldrums and population decline. According to Bachelder’s report to the state in 1890, the advertising publications had an unexpected affect on remaining New Hampshire farmers. It seemed to rejuvenate their interest in farming.

First Claims of Success

In his first annual report since beginning the re-occupation project, Nahum Bachelder admitted that he had no precedent to follow. Whatever he did in his role as commissioner of immigration could only be regarded as experimental. Bachelder considered the New Hampshire Board of Agriculture’s hesitancy to advertise hundreds of deteriorating farms in a state known for its picturesque scenery. Perhaps the self-conscious show of failure could bring more disgrace to the state and could adversely affect tourism. Yet Bachelder realized that no one would buy anything unless they knew it was for sale, and he later commented, “. . . at no time have we had any reason to regret the course taken.”

Bachelder advertised for sale approximately 348 of the original 1,342 New Hampshire farms without occupants. From the 6,000 copies of his first sale catalogue, he said he received 2,257 letters of inquiry (over 33 1/3% return). By the first anniversary in August, 1890, he claimed that 141 farms were sold and re-occupied; 160 farms were not sold but were re-occupied (by tenants or owners) making a total of 301 farms re-occupied. That is almost an 85% success rate.

94 Bachelder said, “It may be safely asserted that the realizing sense of the situation has already led to the beginning of a more thoughtful and intelligent system of farming and a higher appreciation of the opportunities that surround us.” Bachelder, Reminiscences, 471.
95 State of New Hampshire, Report of the Commission of Agriculture and Immigration (1890) 6. It is odd that Bachelder seemed not to have consulted with other New England states. The result of Maine’s promotion of Swedish immigration was in its twentieth successful year.
96 Bachelder, State of New Hampshire, Annual Reports, 1890 471.
97 Most inquiries were from within New England and neighboring states. Nearly half of the queries came from Massachusetts (975); one-fifth from New Hampshire (422); New York and Vermont (334 combined); and Maine and Connecticut (83 combined). Other replies came from the Midwestern states, and a few from Southern states. Thirty inquiries came from Canada; two from England; and none from Sweden. State of New Hampshire, Report of the Commissioner of Agriculture and Immigration (1890) 471.
Coupled with the report of his success, Bachelder made clear who he felt should occupy the deserted farms. “When we consider that the class of people purchasing and renting these farms is generally such as appreciates the grand scenery, healthy climate, and association with an intelligent class of people . . . They come, not to make money but to spend it, and fortunate indeed will it be for the State when the unsold abandoned farms are utilized by this class of people.” Unmistakably he rejected the poor as candidates to take possession of the farms. Additionally, Bachelder implied he did not want foreigners. He noted that if abandoned farms were not adopted as summer homes but occupied for agricultural purposes, then they had been “mainly taken by Americans and we believe they will have the energy to succeed.”

Not only did Nahum Bachelder, as secretary of the state board of agriculture and secretary of the state grange, ignore New Hampshire’s farm owners in distress, but he used his own judgment and biases on who should populate New Hampshire farms.

**Support and Praise**

The New Hampshire State Grange agreed with the idea to market the farms. After Bachelder’s initial success, the organization adopted his campaign in 1890 as one of their tenets. “Resolved, That we look with interest upon the laudable effort being made to repopulate the best of our deserted farms, and give it our cordial sympathy and support.” An article in *The Granite Monthly*, as well, responded to Bachelder’s first-year advertising campaign success with an opinion that it was the beginning of a new order of things, that “men of wealth from the great cities” would move to the hill farms of New Hampshire. The author, J.B. Harrison, showed frank disregard for New Hampshire farmers when he stated that outside knowledge and judgment could “properly” manage New Hampshire farms and woodlands. Harrison proposed that outsiders would bring culture, employment, and increase the value of the land.

When Hiram Tuttle followed David Goodell in the New Hampshire Governor’s office, he too endorsed Bachelder’s activities. “Never in the history of the State has such active and 

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98 Bachelder, State of NH, *Annual Report*, 1890, 478. He could not have been more insulting to struggling New Hampshire farmers who wanted to keep their farms.
systematic efforts and such *liberal* expenditure of money been made as at the present time for the promotion of agriculture and kindred interests.” For some reason, Governor Tuttle believed that the commissioner of immigration in his combined role in the state board of agriculture was actually encouraging farming interests in the state. Tuttle assumed the 5 million dollars left annually by summer tourists was going into the farmers’ pockets.  

**Knowing the Value of the Press**

As Bachelder worked on advancing his advertising campaign for deserted farms in 1891, the New Hampshire State Grange elected him master. His twin roles as secretary of the board of agriculture and grange master made him a significant and influential spokesman for New Hampshire agriculture. Regardless, Bachelder maintained a focus on the abandoned farm advertising campaign. Bachelder understood the value of the printed word and it was evident in the quantity of material published by the board. Bachelder’s writing was confident in these publications; it was both eloquent and full of bluster. Moreover, a coterie of publisher-friends gave him auxiliary support. Journalist H.H. Metcalf always granted Bachelder “favorable press’ in the magazine, *The Granite Monthly*, with articles that advocated Bachelder’s activities. Metcalf was also editor and publisher of the *New Hampshire Agriculturist and Patrons Journal* during the 1890s, a publication for New Hampshire State Grange members. In fact, for many years to come, Metcalf acted loyally in a public relations capacity touting Bachelder’s accomplishments.

Of great importance to Nahum Bachelder’s public voice was his brother-in-law and newspaper editor Henry M. Putney. Putney provided Bachelder access to the *Mirror and Farmer*. For twenty years, Bachelder wrote a weekly column in the newspaper that usually covered the front page and half the second page. Bachelder confessed that his name “... did not appear in connection” with the editorials. Why he remained anonymous when he was...
so conspicuous with his other writing seems a paradox. Yet one must assume that, as a paid state official and high-ranking member of an organization (the grange) that professed nonpartisan politics, Bachelder tried to appear in the public eye as unbiased, and carefully avoided connecting his name with political opinions. Furthermore, Bachelder played two powerful roles: writing opinionated editorials that gave him covert influence (somewhat deceitful because the author could not be identified) and serving two public offices of administrative influence.

**Publications for Advertising Abandoned Farms**

Bachelder asserted that the booklets printed by the New Hampshire Board of Agriculture were for the purpose of advertising unoccupied farms for sale, yet they resembled tourism brochures. The 6” x 9” paperbound booklet, *Secure a Home in New Hampshire, Where Comfort, Health, and Prosperity Abound*, in 1890 and 1891 devoted half its pages to a list of farms for sale and the second half to a list of summer hotels and boarding houses in New Hampshire. It became so popular that it was published annually for the next thirty years. In 1890 the board of agriculture issued another first-time publication called *Lakes and Summer Resorts in New Hampshire* (see Figure 7). This booklet followed more closely the vision that Bachelder had in mind for New Hampshire’s direction, that is, farms for sale that could be converted into summer boarding houses. *Lakes and Summer Resorts* listed names and addresses of boarding houses, their proprietors, guest capacities, and the daily and weekly fee. On the page opposite the list of farms were scenic views of New Hampshire lakes and mountains (see Figure 8).

In 1891, the New Hampshire legislature passed a resolution for publishing and distributing a second edition of *Lakes and Summer Resorts in New Hampshire*. It gave authority to the commissioner of agriculture to print not more than ten thousand copies nor exceed two-thousand dollars in costs. But Bachelder, in his *Reminiscences*, complained that this sum was “ridiculously small in comparison with the interest at stake and the possibilities of

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<tr>
<th>Proprietor or Landlord</th>
<th>Name of House</th>
<th>P. O. Address</th>
<th>No. of Rooms</th>
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<td><strong>ACWORTH.</strong></td>
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<td>H. R. Neal</td>
<td>Mountain View</td>
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<td>Mrs. Charles Allen</td>
<td>Sunset Hill Farm</td>
<td>South Acworth</td>
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<td>G. H. Mischartz</td>
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<td>R. J. Shure</td>
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<td>Charles Humphrey</td>
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<td><strong>ALBANY.</strong></td>
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<td>J. W. Rickford</td>
<td>Bear Mountain</td>
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<td>Hill House</td>
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<td><strong>ALEXANDRIA.</strong></td>
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<td>Frank W. Nayes</td>
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It appeared that Bachelder encouraged the state to spend liberally with an eye on furthering his own private interests. In the 1891 issue of *Lakes and Summer Resorts*, Bachelder discreetly hinted of his own Highland Farm when he stated that some farms "are located upon the borders of lakes and ponds, where will be found most satisfactory rest and quiet, with fishing and hunting in abundance." \(^{106}\) Of course, Bachelder’s own Highland Farm appeared in the list of boarding houses. Ralph Chaffee, in his *History of Andover, NH*, says that Bachelder himself bought abandoned farms in the Andover area with the intent of leasing them to summer visitors. \(^{107}\)

**SELLING GOOD LAND CHEAP**

It was the summer visitor to whom Nahum Bachelder appealed in his state-funded publications, tempting readers with a “deal” on cheap farm property. In 1891 Bachelder claimed, “Many of the farms taken up during the past year have been purchased by city people for summer homes . . . Land for building purposes can be secured around these lakes for a trifling sum, and the cottages now built range in cost from one hundred to forty thousand dollars.” \(^{108}\) Bachelder contradicted a typical motivation to sell property at the highest price and instead “de-valued” the properties by stressing their low cost. Sadly, as a grange official and a member of the state board of agriculture, Bachelder undercut the interests of the farm owner in favor of the urban buyer. He gave no indication of helping struggling New Hampshire farmers keep their farms, but implied that he wanted outsiders to realize benefits

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\(^{105}\) Bachelder, *Reminiscences* 27.


Bachelder may not have been the only one who used the publications for personal advantage. In the farm descriptions, the name to contact was sometimes an agent presumably hired as an intermediary for the absentee owner. However, this agent’s name was often found with two or three other farm advertisements within an area. An agent advertised six farms in 1890. It is hard to know whether the agents were acting as a broker for farm owners, or whether they were land speculators who had purchased the farms to lease or sell. It seemed to matter not, however, that these real estate agents advertised in a state-funded publication and received free marketing. It hardly seemed equitable in publications intended to help the New Hampshire farmer.


from a farm abandoned by its owner. "There is a grand opening here for people desiring to engage in the summer boarding business." 109

The 1891 and 1892 issues of *Lakes and Summer Resorts* were identical to Nahum Bachelder's corresponding immigration reports to the state of New Hampshire. Reflecting Bachelder's interpretation of "immigrant," the reports were, in fact, marketing pieces on the hospitality business. In 1892, Bachelder justified why he published lists of summer guest houses in a farm publication. "... [T]he summer hotels and boarding houses ... have become of so much importance in developing the agricultural resources of New Hampshire that they very properly are given a place in the agricultural report of the State." 110 To continue along this course, he requested more funds from the state. "It would be for the interest of the State to increase the appropriation for this line of work." Bachelder claimed that the work of the board of agriculture had gotten such good reviews that other New England states were initiating similar actions 111

In response to Bachelder's appeal for more money, the New Hampshire legislature in 1894 increased his publishing budget to three-thousand dollars. That year Bachelder issued the first edition of another paperbound booklet, *New Hampshire Farms for Summer Homes* (see Figure 9) in addition to *Secure a Home* and *Lakes and Summer Resorts*. The title left no doubt about Nahum Bachelder's preference for New Hampshire farms.

In *New Hampshire Farms for Summer Homes*, Bachelder described New Hampshire abandoned farms as marked-down goods. "Many of these farms can be purchased for less than it would cost to replace the buildings, and for one-fifth of the cost of the permanent improvements upon them ... (they) can be put in shape for summer use at little cost, and they

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In 1891, the Vermont Board of Agriculture issued pamphlets on the state's scenery. Like New Hampshire, the Vermont Board of Agriculture was, at first, in charge of the state's tourist industry. In 1893 the Vermont Board listed the first in its abandoned farm series, *A List of Desirable Farms at Low Prices*. At the start, the publication was published in plain brown wrappers aimed at interested farmers but, like New Hampshire, Vermont's publications quickly transformed into advertising farms for summer houses for the wealthy buyer. However, unlike New Hampshire, Vermont focused their theme on "coming home to Vermont." Dona Brown, *Inventing New England: Regional Tourism in the Nineteenth Century* (Washington & London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995) 143, 144, 145.
NEW HAMPshire FARMS
FOR SUMMER HOMES.

ISSUED BY
STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE,
BOARD OF AGRICULTURE.
N. J. BACHELDER, SECRETARY.
can be bought for a price less than many a man pays for having his family crowded into a hotel for a single person.” At times, Bachelder did remark that the farms were desirable, yet he never claimed that, as a result of this, their value had increased. For example, in one page of *Summer Homes*, he described farms in five instances as “favorable” or “valuable” compared to nine instances as “abandoned,” “vacant,” or “worthless.” Repeatedly, he mentioned that New Hampshire farmland could be bought for “a trifling sum.” (italics are his)\(^{112}\) Such intentional debasement of the farm’s value was surely a marketing strategy, its purpose certainly not to help the New Hampshire farm owner. Reading the advertisements, he would have believed that his property had been discounted to near worthless.

**“IMMIGRANTS” WHO BOUGHT FARMS AND LAND**

From Nahum Bachelder’s accounts that New Hampshire farms could be purchased at a lower value, one might have presumed that he expected farms to be bought by people of modest means. Middle- or lower-income wage earners who sought family vacation homes now found that they could afford an abandoned homestead.\(^{113}\) Yet, ever-enterprising Bachelder made it quite apparent that he wooed a higher economic class. In the 1894 edition of *New Hampshire Farms for Summer Homes*, he boasted, “The millionaire can now . . . farm for fun, and may also find on these farms the opportunity he wants to scatter his income, promote his health and happiness, and prolong his life . . . Many of the farms in the State are now owned by such rich men . . .”\(^{114}\)

For some of the affluent who bought abandoned farms, however, the farm homestead could not reflect their grandiose lifestyle. In that case, the land alone served as a site for their summer retreats. Such was the case for the Webb family in Marlborough, NH in the late nineteenth century. Charles Bemis, the local historian, recalled that the Webbs moved an

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\(^{112}\) State of New Hampshire, Board of Agriculture, ed. N.J. Bachelder, *New Hampshire Farms for Summer Homes* (Concord, NH: Edward N. Pearson, 1894) 5, 6, 7, 9

\(^{113}\) Ernenc, “Economic Give-and-Take” 105, 106


In the late nineteenth century, there were marked disparities in wealth and income. In 1890, the top one percent of wealthy holders owned 51% of all property. In this top one percent (125 thousand families) each family owned, on average, $264 thousand of real and personal property. Twelve percent of all United States families (5.5 million) owned 86% of all property. The other 88% of families owned 14 percent of the wealth, or an average of $150 worth of property for each family. Walter Licht, *Industrializing America: The Nineteenth Century* (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins UP, 1995) np.
abandoned farm house three hundred feet to provide space for their magnificent summer mansion.\textsuperscript{115}

Farmhouses and land near New Hampshire lakes sold more frequently than farms in the hills or mountains (with the exception of land bought by forest companies and by Austin Corbin).\textsuperscript{116} For example, beginning in the 1880s, farm property around Lake Sunapee came into the hands of non-resident taxpayers who remodeled farm houses or built cottages that served as summer homes or retirement residences. It became so popular that by 1920, the village of Newbury, at the southern tip of the Lake, received more than half its property taxes from non-resident taxpayers. One transaction dazzled this little village in 1888, the year before the New Hampshire legislature decided to recruit immigration to unoccupied farms. Jonathon Rowe sold his stunning lakeside farm to John Hay, a wealthy Washington lawyer and former secretary to President Lincoln, for a rumored $10,000 (see Figure 10).\textsuperscript{117} During that same period, the long-time friend of Nahum Bachelder, Dr. John Quackenbos (former summer guest at Bachelder's Highland Farm), became another major landholder on the Lake Sunapee shores. Quackenbos was now a successful, published doctor who lectured throughout the country. An article in The Granite Monthly in 1894 profiled the Quackenbos' property which was developed into a summer resort called Soo-Nipi Park and Soo-Nipi Lodge. The Park extended two miles along the eastern shore of the Lake and included Quackenbos' own place called "Nirvana Cottage." The Park was not open to all because

\textsuperscript{115} Marlborough Recollections np.
George D. Webb, a former farmer from Worcester, Massachusetts, owned Webb Granite Construction Company which performed heavy construction work, such as bridges, foundations, and public buildings, all over the country. Webb operated granite quarries in Worcester as well as Fitzwilliam and Marlborough, NH. The Webb family ran a summer guest business for awhile in the old abandoned farmhouse that he moved to make room for his mansion. When George Webb died in 1910, the Webb quarries were taken over by another company, but still managed by his eldest son, Charles Webb who also made his home in Marlborough, NH. Granite quarries were an important industry in parts of New England during the late nineteenth century. Regional quarries employed a large proportion of immigrant labor.

\textsuperscript{116} Coos County in the northern part of New Hampshire and Grafton County, a hilly region north of Dartmouth College, had the cheapest land available, yet seemingly, the less desirable. In 1890, at the beginning of the advertising campaign, they listed for sale around 40\% of their unoccupied farms, compared with an average of 25\% for the rest of the state.

\textsuperscript{117} Rexford B. Shennon, "One Year on a New Hampshire Farm," Historical New Hampshire 32 1&2 (1977) 4.
By the time John M. Hay bought his estate, he had been one of Abraham Lincoln's private secretaries and aid-de-camp, as well as a diplomat in Paris, Vienna, and Madrid. Hay was a writer and had published The Bread-Winners in 1884, a satirical attack on labor unions and a defense of economic individualism. The book was popular with upper-class Americans in the 1880s. It could be, at the time he purchased his Newbury, NH property, that he was working with John Nicola on a 10-volume biography, Abraham Lincoln: A History which was published in 1890. In 1897, Hay was ambassador to England, and then in 1898, he became Secretary of State under William McKinley. John Hay died in Newbury in 1905. The Hay Estate, known as The Fells, is operated today as an environmental center open to the public to tour the gardens and walking trails along the shore of Lake Sunapee.
Dr. Quackenbos was discriminatory about what type of summer vacationer he allowed within his park. "The grounds, 400 acres in extent... are secure against invasion from abroad or rebellion from within" (see Figure 11). Such sentiment followed Bachelder’s strategy to keep the poor and the foreigner out of New Hampshire.

Not all wealthy investors bought New Hampshire lakeside property for private estates. On the southern shore of the state’s largest lake, Winnipesaukee, speculators and entrepreneurs bought farms, divided the acreage into house lots, and built modest but charming cottages. Their market was middle-class families, not the wealthy. The working class, in the late nineteenth century, had the financial means to obtain and emulate what the wealthy enjoyed, that is, owning a vacation home near the edge of water.

6. RURAL NEW HAMPSHIRE AT CENTURY’S END

The last thirty years of the nineteenth century were the most difficult that New England farmers faced. Between 1880 and 1900, New Hampshire farms dropped by 60% and Vermont farms by 50%. Connecticut and Massachusetts farms receded as well. The final decade of the nineteenth century experienced a national agricultural depression which affected the already struggling New England farmers. Eastern farmers could still not compete with more fertile-field agriculture found west of New England. Yet western farmers in the late nineteenth century were in trouble too. Kansas farms encountered droughts and struggled with irrigation problems. In contrast, there had been great floods in the Ohio Valley.

Meanwhile New Hampshire farmers added another element to their rural landscape. Groups of urban visitors came into the country not on public trains but on bicycles. Cyclists went where and at what speed they wanted on side rural roads—even onto farm property and frightening farm animals. Farmers regarded their behavior with annoyance, and bicyclists complained about the poor condition of rural roads. It was not long before state officials

118 "Isis of our Northland: Lake Sunapee," The Granite Monthly 17.2 (1894) 121.

Dr. John Quackenbos specialized in mental and moral diseases, lecturing on neurasthenia. Quackenbos also believed in hypnotism as a cure for mental illness and "the drink habit." He published articles in journals such as "Causes and Recent Treatment of Neurasthenia," "Psychic Influence in the Home," and "Rational Mind Cure."

119 Shulte, Summer Homes 46, 47)
realized that improved roads would encourage more visitors into New Hampshire. The grange followed by saying good roads were a necessary benefit for the farmer.

In the final year of the century, the state governor introduced an idea that coincided with a widespread sentiment among urban dwellers who were now looking to find a fast-disappearing rural past. He invited former residents who had migrated to return to their home towns for a week-long celebration of nostalgia and patriotism. The events also attracted outside visitors and provided them to experience idealistic values of living in small rural communities. With the endorsement of the state grange and agricultural department, towns held these festivities while, in reality, farmers were experiencing one of the worse depressions in their history.

**FURTHER WEAKENING OF NEW ENGLAND AGRICULTURE**

While Nahum Bachelder encouraged the migration of wealthy summer people into New Hampshire in the 1890s, the nation was in an economic downturn. Yale agriculture professor William Brewer, speaking before the New Hampshire Board of Agriculture in 1890, thought the depression in the nation’s agricultural sector was “the severest which this generation has known.” One factor was the over-production of farm crops in the Midwest that caused lowered prices. When one million Midwestern farmers harvested crops on their vast farm acreage, the magnitude of the production forced down prices. However, New Hampshire topography limited farms to operate in fields that were no larger than a western corral. The eastern farmer could scarcely compete with the expansive land allotted cattle grazing or grain growing as in the western farms. J. Bailey Moore, writing in 1893 about Candia, New Hampshire farmers, said that people in northeastern cities could enjoy vegetables from the South during the winter months when the North could not raise crops. “...[C]attle, sheep and swine can be brought a thousand or two miles from the West and sold with profit in

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Land speculators in the Midwestern states often pooled their land holdings together to create huge properties of thousands of acres into “bonanza farms” where they grew spectacular harvests. They imported battalions of laborers at harvest time from Chicago and other Midwestern cities.
Manchester at a lower price than they can be raised in New Hampshire." It was a difficult task, he added, to demonstrate to anyone that farming in this area was very profitable.

Farming in the West, too, became less profitable. When Midwestern farmers struggled to pay their mortgages, eastern businesses felt the impact. Thousands of New England businessmen and banks had set up mortgage-loan offices advancing money to western farms thinking it was safe. Compared to eastern farmers, western farmers borrowed extensively and had a high rate of indebtedness. Two successive crop failures in 1886 and 1887 on western farms managed to collapse the mortgage loan business.

**NEW HAMPSHIRE FARMING IN THE 1890S**

High costs of hiring farm help hurt New Hampshire farmers in the late nineteenth century. In 1890 a farm owner averaged $326 in returns for the year, and the hired man got $337 for a year’s work. This scant or even non-existent income left some farmers with little incentive and a constant temptation to leave their occupation. When compared to other occupations, low economic rewards contributed to both laborers and owners deserting the farms. Indeed, it was not uncommon for farm owners to be employed contentedly as farm laborers themselves. However, most owners left their farms for regional factory towns, they were unlikely to leave for the West in these years because of an unfavorable economic position there.

University of New Hampshire professor E.H. Thomson studied the New Hampshire farmer between 1880 and 1900. It was not surprising a farmer’s success depended on how

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122 J. Bailey Moore, *History of the Town of Candia, Rockingham County, NH from its First Settlement to the Present Time* (Manchester, NH: George W. Browne, 1893) 265.


125 Gladden, “The Embattled Farmers” 315, 316.
efficiently he used his land. In other words, a bigger farm with more acreage did not guarantee greater returns. Rather, it was whether the New Hampshire farmer managed his farm in such a way that it fit the topography, soil, and the market that he intended. Thomson discovered that successful New Hampshire farmers did not practice farming differently from those who were unsuccessful, but they utilized their land and equipment more advantageously. New Hampshire farmers operated on small margins, and they eliminated what did not bring in profit, including land. 126 H. H. Metcalf, in the late 1890s, wrote a brief essay in each issue of The Granite Monthly about a successful New Hampshire farmer. Metcalf’s interviews, unlike Thomson’s findings, showed that the farmer who did well owned land over 100 acres, some up to 1200 acres. Additionally, operations were not limited to one farm but included owned or leased acreage in nearby locations. Sometimes two or more farmers joined together to buy additional land. Metcalf’s brief essays revealed additional data about what made New Hampshire farmers prosperous in late nineteenth-century New Hampshire: the majority of farmers had inherited their family’s farm; despite a lack of higher education, more than half the farmers expressed an interest in experimenting with new technology and “advanced ideas” such as fertilization; farmers followed closely the bulletins of agricultural experiments at the New Hampshire Agricultural College, and half the farmers still believed in mixed farming—that is, doing different things at different times of the year, such as maple sugaring, apple cider making, logging, blacksmithing, and so on—whatever it took to make a living. 127

HELP FOR THE NEW HAMPSHIRE FARMER FROM THE GRANGE

In 1892, a member of the National Grange addressed the New Hampshire Board of Agriculture. “We have been studying in our grange meetings now how the wealth of the country is going into the hands of the rich people . . . I believe, and many other farmers believe it too, that the first step towards improving the condition of the American farmer is through organization.” 128 Nahum Bachelder’s activities as New Hampshire’s grange master

126 Thomson, Agricultural Survey of Four Townships 19. This probably was done purposely, because large land holdings meant more costs in property taxes. The area of New Hampshire farm land decreased by 54% between 1880 and 1900.


revealed no intent to help marginal New Hampshire farmers much less encourage them to organize in protest. New Hampshire grange chapters, apparently, were already comprised mostly of successful farmers. Regardless of what Nahum Bachelder claimed that same year—that the “the grand object of the Grange is in assisting the farmer and his family,” he wanted New Hampshire farms in the “hands of the rich people.”

Yet, the grange did make a difference for its members. Grange meetings and discussions taught farmers the value of examining problems and thinking about their work. They could no longer be guided by the same rules their forefathers had followed. The grange informed farmers of what was new in agricultural ideas and methods, and showed them ways to accommodate the changes. This was particularly valuable in the climate of fear that pervaded New England agriculture in the 1890s. Some farmers, feeling a sense of urgency, could seek solace and relief in the grange.

By the 1890s, New Hampshire’s grange had managed to get an agricultural college that concentrated on the science of agriculture, not liberal arts. The outlook for educating New Hampshire farmers’ sons was looking brighter. In 1893, classes started at the newly relocated New Hampshire College of Agricultural and Mechanic Arts in Durham. Fifty-one students enrolled in the freshman class; thirteen upper-class students transferred from Hanover when the school moved.

NEW HAMPSHIRE SAVED BY ITS SCENERY

Alonzo Towle, a medical doctor, was puzzled in 1890 about why New Hampshire farmers could not compete with western farmers. He thought a lot of time and energy had been wasted on why the New Hampshire farmer had not advanced. It was easy to see, he claimed, that misfortunes for a western farmer were apt to be as great as those for a New Hampshire farmer. For example, Kansas farmers were getting $7 per ton of corn, but were paying $8 per ton of coal to keep warm. Midwestern farmers were plagued by drought and over-abundant

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129 In his essays each month about a New Hampshire farmer, H.H. Metcalf revealed that fourteen out of fifteen successful farmers were active grange members.
131 Nordin, Rich Harvest 41.
harvests, distresses that were less common in New Hampshire. Professor Brewer agreed with Towle on that point. He strongly believed that some Midwestern states probably had more abandoned farms than New Hampshire, “but they present a less picturesque subject for writing about, so we hear less about them.” Additionally, Brewer felt that the New England farmer’s condition had been exaggerated and distorted. The agricultural depression was made more conspicuous in New England because the media focused mainly on this region’s “abandoned farm” situation. Professor Brewer suspected that there was a “remarkable misapprehension of the real facts . . . and as a result we have an abundance of curious reasoning from those who have pet theories to maintain and who have an easy and sure cure for the evil.”

Alonzo Towle’s solution was to stop whining and focus energy on “the advancement of agriculture among ourselves,” and become less dependent on the rest of the country. However, Professor Brewer optimistically had his own “sure cure for the evil” that ensured New Hampshire’s recovery. According to him, New England farms needed to readjust in order to survive—not by producing more, but by using “the money value of our picturesque landscapes [that] cannot be ignored.” In Brewer’s opinion, New Hampshire was in an opportune position to exploit a popular contemporary phenomenon—city inhabitants looking to regain health and vigor in the country. He thought the value of rural New Hampshire property would return and even increase, if New Hampshire farmers would entertain visitors who came into the state seeking a pastoral landscape. Additionally, he thought, hill farms could transform into seasonal residences for the tired and stressed. It was on this point that Alonzo Towle and Professor Brewer disagreed. Brewer’s theory would result in what Towle warned against: a region that relied economically on outsiders’ pocketbooks. However, it was Professor Brewer’s opinions that reflected the urban middle-class temperament in the late nineteenth century.

132 Alonzo Towle, MD, “Meetings of the Board; Remarks” State of New Hampshire, Annual Reports, 1890 2. (Manchester, NH: John B. Clarke, 1891) 627.
133 Brewer, The Brighter Side 4, 5, 6.
134 William H. Brewer, “Is It True that Farming is Declining in New England?” State of New Hampshire, Annual Reports, 1890 (Manchester, NH: John B. Clarke, 1891) 303, 315.
135 Towle, “Meetings” Annual Reports, 1890 629.
BICYCLES AND ROADS IN RURAL NEW HAMPSHIRE

Outdoor recreation had grown in popularity after the 1880s and bicycling in the countryside successfully combined the pursuit of both health and pastoral scenery for the urban middle class. As more cyclists raced over country roads, their mishaps called attention to serious faults in the state of rural roads. The farmer had demanded good roads for years, but it was the demands of the cyclists that awoke New Hampshire. Again, New Hampshire farmers had been overshadowed by the importance of the outside visitor.

THE BICYCLE BOOM

In the midst of the agricultural depression, between the 1880s and early 1900s, the urban dweller discovered the rural countryside on a bicycle. 137 City folk on bicycles swarmed into the countryside, sometimes picnicking near planted fields or orchards—frequently pilfering vegetables and fruits. Indeed, the bicycle boom of the 1890s created an antagonism in rural America toward bicyclists. It was the younger riders, especially, who raced through the country in pursuit of distance and speed records, and sometimes scared or injured farm animals as a consequence. 138

However, the bicyclists’ organization, the League of American Wheelmen, was not particularly concerned with the damage caused farmers, but rather with the safety of its riders. 139 Considering the numerous bicycle accidents, it was evident that not every street or highway was in suitable condition. The League of American Wheelmen demanded better roads. The farmer, usually unsympathetic with bicyclists, agreed with the American Wheelmen. The day for an awakened interest in good roads had arrived. 140

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138 Farmers were an infrequent participant in the bicycle craze; bicycles were seldom within their economic reach. At prices around $200, bicycles were primarily purchased by urban middle and upper classes.


139 Official Publication of the New Hampshire Division League of American Wheelmen (Manchester, NH: Press of Nate Kellogg, 1895) 3.

140 The League guaranteed legal protection to its members in case of an accident. Members were granted a fee for treatment at any hospital for injuries received while riding a bicycle.

Hampshire State Grange, so far, had given little support to the farmer on road improvement, but they did suggest to tax outsiders on bicycles to fund road maintenance. “To the cyclists, the New Hampshire Grange must have appeared especially cantankerous.” In truth, however, it was the Boston and Maine to whom the state grange remained loyal in penalizing tourists using bicycles, not trains, in New Hampshire.

**The Good Roads Movement**

Since the advent of the bicycle craze, New Hampshire grangers came to realize the disparity between the excellent rail system and poor rural roads. Suddenly in the mid-1890s, every granger talked about the value of highways to farmers—making rural life more attractive, bringing in tourists, and helping trade and communications. The grange pushed for a law to create better highways. Surprisingly, state grange master Nahum Bachelder saw no reason to build macadamized roads—he believed in well-built gravel roads. Bachelder stood by the Boston and Maine Railroad which wanted to delay good roads and highways as long as possible. Previously, the responsibility for better roads in small towns had rested on local farmers. To pay the town highway tax, farmers could pay in cash or they could work on the roads. Most paid by exchanging labor repairing or building roadways. Once a year, farmers treated Good Roads Day as something of a holiday (like harvests) to drink and to have some fun—and incidentally to work (see Figure 12).

By the end of the decade, New Hampshire’s governor, Frank W. Rollins, also promoted good roads as a stimulus to the tourist trade. H.H. Metcalf commented in the *Agriculturist and Patrons Journal* that “good roads, more than any other thing, are an attraction for the class of people who see rest and recreation in the country in the summer, and who have the money necessary to further their own enjoyment providing the surrounding conditions are

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142 As people moved out of the area, the burden became heavier on those who stayed behind to care for the roads, especially where there were only few residents on one road. Shennon, “The Grange” 324. John L. Saturley, *The Grange: A Century of Service in New Hampshire, 1873–1973* (Concord, NH: Bridge & Byron Pr., 1974) 111. Shennon, “One Year on a New Hampshire Farm” 12.

143 The son of a Senator, Frank Rollins, was nominated for the governorship in 1898 by the Boston and Maine Railroad. Tourism was always on Rollins’ mind, and he endeavored to beautify the State and tidy it for visitors. Rollins was active in the Good Roads movement (for the tourist’s sake) and forest preservation (for scenery’s sake). Bachelder described Rollins as “a careful man, careful in his work, in his business, careful with his friendships.” Nahum J. Bachelder, “Agriculture in New Hampshire,” *State Builders: an Illustrated Historical and Biographical Record of the State of New Hampshire* (Manchester, NH: NH Publishing Corp., 1903) 331.
Figure 12

GRADING THE ROAD
favorable.” Metcalf’s remark suggested that improved roads in New Hampshire were more a benefit for outsiders than its own citizens. This type of comment seemed particularly insulting when it is found in a publication directed to New Hampshire farmers.

In the interest of roadside scenery for tourists, state officials wanted to make New Hampshire highways as attractive as possible for the traveler, so the state called on its citizens to remember Arbor Day by planting shade trees along roadsides. H.H. Metcalf appealed to rural citizens and reminded them of the increased value trees bring to a property. “[A]lthough bringing no immediate return in dollars and cents, by adding to the attractiveness of the country and increasing the pleasure of travel through these regions, [planting trees] is really a profitable investment in the end, as it tends to increase the influx of summer boarders, who are an unfailing sources of revenue in large sections of the State.” Indeed, city visitors who came into the rural countryside in the 1890s wanted to be reassured that rural life still existed as they imagined it. One leading state official responded to their needs with a unique proposal that took advantage of the business of reminiscence.

OLD HOME WEEK: INVITATION TO NATIVES TO RETURN

In 1899, Governor Frank W. Rollins announced he had an idea. He called a meeting in June of that year with the board of agriculture and with representatives of the grange. A committee formed (with Rollins as president and Nahum Bachelder as secretary) and they created a permanent organization called the Old Home Week Association. H.H. Metcalf, Bachelder’s public relations person, served on the executive committee (see Figure 13).

The first purpose of Old Home Week was to entice native sons back “home” to their birthplace. “When you think of the old home, you bring back the tenderest memories possessed by man,” Governor Rollins waxed. Bonfires—“great beacon fires”—on surrounding hills on the eve of the opening day of Old Home festivities beckoned “sons and

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146 That could have been one person, since Nahum Bachelder was both secretary of the Board and New Hampshire State Grange master. “Old Home Week,” The Granite Monthly 219, 220.
daughters" to return and assist in "kindling the fires of state patriotism." At the Bedford, NH festivities (1903), poems and songs contained motifs of warm attachments for childhood homes ("God bless the home.") At the closing of exercises, Bedford celebrants sang "Auld Lang Syne." Additionally, Rollins hoped returning natives would leave money in the form of donations to towns to help with shrinking revenues from taxes. In wringing sentimental reminiscences from returning children, he thought perhaps they would open their pocketbooks.

Governor Rollins and Nahum Bachelder worked well together, and they made Old Home Week an unqualified success. The Old Home Week Association’s operating headquarters, coincidentally, shared offices with the state board of agriculture. Indeed, the board promoted Old Home Week from appropriations given the office of the commissioner of immigration (Bachelder’s office). The objectives of the immigration office and the objectives of the Old Home Week Association were considered one and the same. It is no surprise that the New Hampshire State Grange, too, became one of the chief supporters of Old Home Week. When the three organizations—the New Hampshire Board of Agriculture, the New Hampshire State Grange, and the Old Home Week Association—unified their efforts, their promotion objective was to reinvigorate old rural New Hampshire culture. Other New England states followed: Maine adopted Old Home Week in 1900 and Vermont complied the next year.

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149 In contrast to the theme of return in New Hampshire’s Old Home Days is the unsentimental theme of return in the late nineteenth-century fiction of Hamlin Garland where the protagonist goes again to the rural scenes of his youth in the upper Midwest. The return is seldom successful, the expectations having been too high. Even though the land is rich and beautiful, the farmhouses, to Garland, are “lonely shelters” in decline, the result of grinding poverty and harsh, relentless drudgery of farm life filled with scant financial rewards. Farm life, in Garland’s realistic fiction, is a daily struggle for simple survival. Hamlin Garland, *Main-Travelled Roads* (New York: Penguin, 1962).

150 A biographical sketch of Nahum Bachelder a few years later stated that “Governor Rollins found in Mr. Bachelder an invaluable assistant.” “Nahum Bachelder,” *State Builders* (1903) 202. Rollins’ cautiousness, perhaps, balanced well with Bachelder’s dynamism. However, Rollins’ affection for Bachelder may not have been mutual. In Bachelder’s *Reminiscences*, there is never a mention of Frank Rollins.
OTHER MEANINGS OF OLD HOME WEEK

Governor Frank Rollins’ addresses at Old Home Week activities in various towns revealed other reasons for the annual celebration than a reunion of native inhabitants. For Rollins, Old Home Week allowed him to lecture on the value of eradicating negative perceptions about New Hampshire generated by “abandoned farm” publicity from outside. This could be accomplished, he advised, by ensuring that New Hampshire residents understood the importance of pleasing the summer visitor. He advised some towns to spruce up and to make it look like the “olden” days because Old Home Week’s theme was also, incidentally, to capture the “nostalgia fantasy” held by urban tourists. Frank Rollins encouraged the idea of “sentimentality” of a past era because he feared creeping industrialization into the rural countryside. “I believe everything which we can do to cultivate sentiment...sentiment in the highest order, of the most advanced kind...is an offset to the dangers of materialism.”

During August, 1900, Governor Frank Rollins visited towns across New Hampshire to address first-time Old Home Week gatherings. The content of his orations adapted to the town he was in. For example, in Mont Vernon, a hilltop community with a grand hotel, spa, and tea room that catered to wealthy summer visitors, Rollins told the residents, “I have had the strongest sort of proof that the prosperity of New Hampshire (is) as a state of summer entertainment.” He added that the attractive hilltop views and restful solitude could be appreciated most by summer people (implying the local residents could not appreciate it). He advised Mont Vernon residents to show their appreciation for the summer people’s presence. Rollins’ speech matched Nahum Bachelder’s convictions, that seasonal visitors’ needs were more important than New Hampshire’s full-time residents.

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151 Rollins, Old Home Week Addresses 52.
152 Rollins, Old Home Week Addresses 93.
153 Rollins might have implied that he did not want any contempt shown toward visitors from outside. It could have been an indication that there may have been some disgruntlement. There was, by the turn of the century, a widening gap between the rich and the poor. Rollins, Old Home Week Addresses 93, 35, 96.
SPRUCING UP

When Rollins visited New Ipswich, he recommended the town take up beautification and “tidying up” activities. “I feel that our New England towns and villages might be very much more attractive and furnish pleasure and amusement to their own people and to the ‘stranger within their gates’ if they would pay more attention to the beauty spots which are about them.” One motivation for sprucing up might have been purely business. During the Old Home Week festivities, there was always the possibility of property sales. The celebration could have served as a tableau, the real estate “open house” of today. Rollins emphasized that houses should be painted a certain color and landscaped with English-type hedges, vines, fences, and paved paths. Clearly, his goal was to attract the anglophile.

ENFORCING NATIVISM

Unfortunately, Old Home Week served to enforce nativist sentiment. Reinvigorating an old rural culture also encouraged a homage to ancestors. In fact, many activities during the celebration encouraged tracing family lineage and ancestry. Old Home Week included historical sketches and dedications of memorials which generated an interest in local history and genealogy. Rollins, in his hometown of Rollinsford where his family had been prominent, said candidly, “It is a very pleasant thing to see that so many farms in this vicinity are still in the hands of the descendants of the original settlers, good old New Hampshire stock.”

Rollins echoed prevailing anxieties that immigrants might replace departing New Hampshire farmers. When he attended the Old Home Week festivities in North Woodstock, a hill-farming community in which, most likely, there were numerous deserted farms, he continued this sentiment. Rollins informed the Woodstock audience that he expected them to “adapt themselves to the new conditions which have arisen and meet the new questions

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154 Rollins, *Old Home Week Addresses* 112.
155 Rollins, *Old Home Week Addresses* 112.

This small farming community near the Massachusetts border had a large Scandinavian population in those years. Rollins’ lecture to tidy up seemed odd because Scandinavians are known for their cleanliness and neatness. Rollins may have been focusing on the first textile mill in New Hampshire built in New Ipswich village in the early 1800s. The town center might have appeared more as a “mill town” than the idealized pastoral village Rollins wanted for the summer trade. Today, in addition to the brick mills, New Ipswich village has old, beautiful colonials with clapboards painted regulation white with dark green shutters.
bravely. If they do not, they must give way to alien races who are coming in and who are shrewd enough to see the possibilities . . .” 156 The message of the Old Home Week celebrations seemed blunt and candid: no one other than descendants of original settlers should inhabit New Hampshire farms and communities.

7. A NEW CENTURY: SENTIMENT AND REFORM

As the new century opened, annual Old Home Week celebrations had gained in popularity. Summer visitors, too, had become a major industry in New Hampshire. State leaders promoted New Hampshire as a “vast sanitarium” for the urbanite, and they continued to hone their proficiency in gaining profits from seasonal visitors. State officials recognized the summer guests’ search for “quaintess” and they directed farm boarding house owners to emphasize old rural culture. 157 Ultimately, the impact of outside visitors was so great that hardly a New Hampshire town had not felt their influence in one way or another. The focus of romantic nostalgia offset fears that foreign immigrants or migratory tenants would change New Hampshire’s rural landscape in detrimental ways.

WORSHIPPING THE PAST: THE SUMMER BOARDER AND THE COUNTRY LIFE MOVEMENT

THE COUNTRY LIFE MOVEMENT

Governor Rollins’ protest against the expansion of industrialism matched the mood of the country at the beginning of the twentieth century. The sentimental expressions of Old Home Week and the farms-into-summer-homes campaign synchronized with a popular temperament known as the Country Life Movement. At the end of the nineteenth century, the urban middle-class lamented the passing of agrarian life and became preoccupied with recapturing the health and simplicity of rural living. The Country Life Movement was made up of well-

156 Rollins, Old Home Week Addresses 7, 39.
157 Wright Progressive Yankees 3.
educated members, the majority of which had come from farms or small towns. At the core, they wanted to recapture an agrarian past that represented the mainstay of America. Country Lifers embraced their subject, country ideals, with the belief that rural America served as an important counter to the growing industrial cities. The country symbolized what America had been and could be an antidote to what it was becoming.

Nahum Bachelder recognized the Country Lifer’s fondness for the rural life and placed farm advertisements in their main publication, *Country Life in America* (both New Hampshire and Maine advertised). Successive *Country Life* issues carried articles on the subject of abandoned farms. In his characteristic brag and bluster, Nahum Bachelder, in one article, reported his frustration at not being able to keep up with the number of inquiries to his office. The state of New Hampshire already entertained groups of urban dwellers in sympathy with their search for the rural experience. But from the farmers’ viewpoint, the summer boarder, more than the Country Lifer, was of particular economic interest.

**The Summer Boarders’ Thirst for Nostalgia**

New Hampshire state officials placed much importance on the summer boarder both as a component in the state’s tourist business and as a source of salvation for struggling farmer. To keep this resource returning year after year, farmers received plenty of advice, dispensed from various popular magazines or even from state government leaders. The advice mostly had to do with maintaining and cultivating an old-fashioned “feel” in the farm homestead. In 1901, Governor Frank Rollins published a speech to the New Hampshire legislature on the importance of summer boarders and summer hotels to New Hampshire’s future. He afterward distributed the booklet to each member, its contents almost wholly a discourse on how to serve summer visitors. The crux of Rollins’ speech was how to achieve the “authentic” country experience that the city dweller imagined. Rollins outlined what wholesome food should be served, how a farmer’s daughter should dress, the appearance of the farm dining table, and tips on making the farm more attractive with paint and freshly-cut flowers. Not

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159 Shulte, *Summer Homes* 78, 79.
only did the farm family have to conduct its farm business and cater to its guests, but Rollins advised that family members should act as guides to points of interest in their area. “Be polite, contented, and good-natured,” he recommended. 160 A popular farmers’ weekly journal, *The New England Homestead*, published in Massachusetts, took up the same campaign in the early 1900s. To cultivate the summer boarder “crop,” farmers needed to know how to decorate their homes to provide city visitors that romantic and nostalgic farm experience. Detailed advice, such as painting the woodwork and floors with light, glossy paint, papering walls with prevailing tints of rose or yellow, using only home-made rugs and old-fashioned feather beds, ensured that the farm home could be almost be an exaggeration of itself as a pure country farm. 161

Indeed, New Hampshire farmers had learned the profitability of summer boarders as a sideline to farming, it was part of the doctrine of mixed agriculture that they had followed all along. Yet there were incidences where the intrusion and demands from summer visitors could make a farm family’s life miserable. Dona Brown points out that the “rules” that the farm family had to follow to create a nostalgic experience often constrained the farm owner in his own home. He had to keep old furniture around, and preserve floors and walls in an old-fashioned style, rejecting any ideas of modernizing. The summer boarder had to receive “country fare” meals with fresh ingredients cooked simply, and they valued the opportunity to witness the farmer pick the vegetables for the dinner table. Farmers obliged; one farm wife commented, “it paid, you know.” Some farm families were displaced from the main house when they moved into temporary quarters in a back room or attic, so that every bedroom could be rented to a paying guest. During meals, Brown notes, that the farm family frequently ate in the kitchen while summer visitors were seated in the farm’s dining room. The demands to attend to the boarders’ indulgences often relinquished the farm family’s control over their own house. Relationships between hosts and guests oftentimes became strained. Brown asks, “Were the farm woman and her husband servants, or were they hostess and host?” 162 To
follow closely the formula enforced by certain groups in the state of New Hampshire, the summer boarder would be considered superior to his host.

**Reformers: Correcting the Countryside**

Mixed with the Country Lifers' emotional sentiment for an agrarian past was their alarm that people were leaving farms for cities. The Country Lifers sought remedies to conserve what they did not want to lose. They were not too naive to recognize that some farmers experienced problems such as isolation, poverty, and problems with drunkenness. But Country Lifers were largely non-farmers who never endured the day-to-day struggle with monotonous chores, bad weather, insects, diseases, and pests. Country Lifers tried to propose reforms to correct the wrongs, but responses from farmers was far from enthusiastic. Advice from such reformers, they concluded, was not practical. 163

**Keeping Out the Immigrant and the Poor**

Conservative Country Lifers did not believe in hiring foreigners as farm help. 164 To them, the farmer had been the prototypical American, independent, self-reliant, a rock of republican government and a conservator of national morals. Country Life reformers presumed that farmers as a group could protect American values from incoming immigrants.

Yet there were social scientists who believed that immigrants, especially those who were from agricultural communities in their native country, could introduce new methods of agriculture into the United States. 165 That opinion was shared by some American farmers who welcomed the immigrant farm owner or farm laborer, believing they were superior agriculturists. Those with a more heightened concern about the “alien invasion” believed that farm ownership would make immigrants into responsible and conservative citizens. Until 1909, social scientists encouraged efforts to place immigrants and urban poor on rural land to

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ease the labor shortage due to emigration from the farm. However, after 1909, the same scientists recanted. They worried that dumping immigrants into the countryside might intensify rural problems. Rural isolation could slow down the Americanization of foreigners and perpetuate Old Country traditions, customs, and language. Therefore, reformers concluded that cities were the best place for the assimilation and control of immigrants. 166 What really concerned reformers was that immigrants might endanger the rural strongholds of Americanism.

Nevertheless, there were foreign immigrants in rural New England since the mid-nineteenth century who populated the area as either farm owners, laborers, or tenants. 167 The following chart shows the country of origin for people living on both New Hampshire and New England farms in the early twentieth century.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country of birth</th>
<th>Residing on New Hampshire farms</th>
<th>Total residing on New England farms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Canada (English &amp; French)</td>
<td>1,514</td>
<td>9,884</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>England</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>1,786</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>1,924</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>957</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>1,784</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scotland</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>594</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>1,812</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>1,840</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>1,502</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1,670</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FARM TENANCY

When New Hampshire farm owners wanted to dispose of their farms and found they could not “liquidate” their property quickly enough, they often leased their farm to tenants. Local farm owners who remained in the rural community often resented the succeeding tenant and referred to him as a transient. According to Hal Barron, the tenant was an “obscure historical

167 Hansen, The Immigrant 172.
"figure" perhaps because of his impermanence. Many, including Country Life reformers, opposed tenant farmers, either native or foreign. They thought that renters lacked two very important elements that belonged in a small town: conservatism that comes with property ownership and participation in the community. Tenancy, in their eyes, corrupted the archetype of the independent farmer. The American tradition, since Thomas Jefferson, had stressed the family-owned farm. From its very nature, tenancy in the nation developed a poor reputation because short-term leasing tended to destroy any incentive to maintain the physical appearance of leased farms. Tenancy was also unfavorable because that it was associated with poverty. Tenants sometimes were unemployed factory workers who looked to the country as a safe haven from job insecurities caused by massive unemployment and labor upheavals during the 1890s depression. By the start of the twentieth century, there was concern nationally because tenants operated over one-third of the country's farms. The following chart shows the farm tenancy rate in the United States in 1900.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Farm operator</th>
<th>No. of farms</th>
<th>Percentage of all farms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Owners</td>
<td>3,149,344</td>
<td>54.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenants on shares</td>
<td>1,273,366</td>
<td>22.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenants for cash</td>
<td>752,920</td>
<td>13.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part owners</td>
<td>451,515</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managers</td>
<td>59,213</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owners and tenants</td>
<td>53,299</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Definitions**
- **Owner:** wholly owned by farm occupants
- **Tenants on shares:** rented for a share in the product
- **Tenants for cash:** rented for a fixed amount
- **Part owners:** owned in part by occupants and in part by some other person who used the land
- **Managers:** owned by individuals or corporations with a salaried manager
- **Owners and tenants:** owner occupied part of farm, the remainder was worked by tenants

However, there should not have been such concern in New Hampshire. While tenancy increased in all of the United States by 9.8% between 1880 and 1900, in New Hampshire it...

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decreased by 0.6% The following shows that each New England state was below average in the growth of tenancy compared to the rest of the country. 171

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Growth in tenancy between 1880 and 1900</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Connecticut</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Massachusetts</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vermont</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maine</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhode Island</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Hampshire</td>
<td>-0.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Generally, the farmer/landlord believed leasing his farm to a foreigner was out of the question; he wanted to keep his farm in “native stock.” 172 But if he sold his farm to a speculator who bought a number of abandoned farms for “a song,” the speculator would place immigrant tenants on the properties. (The majority of tenants in New Hampshire and Vermont were usually French-Canadians.) Frequently, these families were willing to live on next to nothing, and hold a second job full-time at a mill. Many immigrant families did an efficient job of reclaiming the land and improving the buildings. 173

The argument condemning a tenant farmer as someone who would live in the country but never be part of it seemed a hypocrisy in a state such as New Hampshire which enthusiastically welcomed part-time summer residents. In a non-agricultural publication, Bachelder berated farm tenants and accused them of contributing to a productive farm’s downfall. “[T]he farm became abandoned or passed into the hands of people with only temporary interest in it or in the town in which they located.” 174 After his work in attracting seasonal residents, this statement seemed crazily inconsistent.

171 Shannon, The Farmer’s Last Frontier 418.
"IMMIGRATION" MORE CLEARLY DEFINED

Tenants were, in fact, good candidates to settle down on the “much maligned abandoned farms.” Sometimes tenancy could progress into farm ownership. Encouraged by the advertised low prices of deserted New Hampshire farms, there were some who surely responded to the advertisements. This, no doubt, pressed Nahum Bachelder to accelerate his enticement of only the wealthy buyer looking for a good bargain in New Hampshire farms.

Nowhere in his marketing rhetoric for over twenty years did Nahum Bachelder put a welcome mat out for anyone other than the rich. The irony in New Hampshire was that, as commissioner of immigration since 1890, Bachelder resisted the very thing that his role suggested he would do: recruit foreign immigrants to occupy the state’s deserted farms. If anything, the immigrant and the poor were the antithesis to what Nahum Bachelder and Frank Rollins wanted for New Hampshire. Instead, Bachelder proclaimed how the affluent summer resident was somehow better equipped to run the farms.

What was most conspicuous in the campaign to reoccupy deserted farms was that any interest to reverse New Hampshire’s downward agricultural course by whatever means never seemed forthcoming from Nahum Bachelder and the agricultural institutions to which he belonged. There would be no planned replenishment of farming by encouraging immigrants in a similar way as Maine recruited Swedish farmers in 1870. Bachelder’s behavior for twenty years revealed that the New Hampshire Commission on Immigration was a dummy governmental department, a contrivance invented for interests only in developing the tourist business and an offensive disregard for the encumbered farmer.

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175 Hansen, The Immigrant 172.
176 Governor Goodell’s original intentions in 1889 were that he wanted “capable and willing farmers,” either foreigners or natives, to occupy New Hampshire’s tenantless farms. Message of His Excellency, David H. Goodell (1889) 9.
PART THREE
8. BACHELDERISM

As his campaign to repopulate the farms continued into the twentieth century, Nahum Bachelder ascended toward the fulfillment of his political ambitions. Bachelder apparently received approval and encouragement; he was elected to the state’s highest office. He also received increases in his agricultural budget for publishing activities, obviously an endorsement for his “elevation” of the New Hampshire farmer. At what seemed Bachelder’s apex, he received criticism for his obsequious affiliation with the railroad corporation. Bachelder worked hard to develop and nurture the tourist and summer boarding business that also meant revenue for the Boston and Maine. Public suspicion that Bachelder was just a front man for the railroad signaled the beginning of Bachelder’s gradual downfall. Not deterred, he went on to hold the highest office in the grange. But more criticism followed him for neglecting his work in the board of agriculture and for his self-serving work in the National Grange. Throughout it all, Bachelder kept his hands in his publishing endeavors, for it was that activity upon which he built his career and accomplished his goals. Unfortunately, we can only know the man through what he wrote. 177

BACHELDER AND THE HOSPITALITY BUSINESS

The New Hampshire Board of Agriculture regularly published four paperbound booklets distributed throughout the nation, free of charge. The amount of expense to issue Nahum Bachelder’s publications is testimony to the state’s commitment to his activities. Clerical services and postage in 1900 were a substantial sum for that time—$1200. 178 Two booklets, Gems of the Granite State and Lakes and Summer Resorts in New Hampshire, directly

177 There is little detail on Nahum Bachelder as a person in addition to information related to his activities or official duties. According to an Andover, NH librarian, Bachelder requested all his personal papers be destroyed at his death. The librarian did have some related information handed down in the town over the years. Bachelder’s oldest son was diagnosed with schizophrenia during his college years, and was institutionalized at the state mental hospital. Bachelder’s daughter Ruth lived with her parents and never married. There are stories that she sat looking out a window for much of the day. About six years after his wife’s death in Florida, Bachelder, age 80, returned to New Hampshire on the train in 1932 and immediately went into a Manchester, NH hospital where he died within days. It strikes me that he died alone. A search for his burial site revealed that he is not buried in the same Andover cemetery as the rest of his family.

178 N J. Bachelder, “Immigration Account,” “State of New Hampshire, Annual Reports, 1899-1900” (Manchester, NH, Arthur E. Clarke, 1901) xii, xiii)
marketed the hospitality business. In fact, Bachelder’s eager penchant for that business revealed itself in his publishing activities. He maintained that it was tied in an indirect way with New Hampshire farmers. The 1900 edition of Gems (see Figure 14) was a special edition that Bachelder called an “Annual Souvenir” for his “friends, the Summer Hotel and Boarding House Proprietors of New Hampshire, with feelings of appreciation of their efforts in developing the rural sections of the state.”

After the death of his father in 1902, Nahum Bachelder planned to expand his own summer guest business at his family farm. In addition to Highland Farm, Mrs. Bachelder and Nahum had, over the past ten years, purchased deserted farms in the Andover, NH area, made repairs and improvements, and then leased them to summer visitors. Including Highland Farm, they rented seven places to summer people. They tried unsuccessfully to run one of their properties as a summer hotel (known as the Halcyon House) which was located near Boston and Maine Railroad tracks conveniently running by the adjacent Halcyon Depot.

GOVERNOR BACHELDER

Nahum Bachelder wanted a more remarkable career than the hospitality business, and he left Highland Farm’s summer guest business in the capable hands of Mrs. Bachelder to attend to the dictates of his ambitions. After working with former Governor Frank Rollins on Old Home Week, Bachelder himself decided to try a run for the New Hampshire governor’s seat. He knew very well the protocol that insured political success in New Hampshire and, accordingly, he consulted with the Boston and Maine Railroad’s general counsel,
Frank Streeter on whether he should run for governor. Streeter was cool in his reply—he gave neither approval or disapproval, but joked that it would look good on Bachelder’s gravestone. Bachelder evidently thought that was adequate consent. The railroad, after all, had nominated Frank Rollins. Often gubernatorial candidates in New England were expedited by clearing them first by Boston and Maine officials, especially Lucius Tuttle of Boston, the corporation’s president. Tuttle scrutinized nominations, platforms, and appointments and determined the final choices. In New Hampshire, between 1890 and 1910, no one could attempt to win an office or expect nomination to the legislature, the governorship, or the United States Congress without the prior approval of the railroad, or more precisely, New Hampshire’s railroad commissioner, Henry Putney. Putney, of course, worked closely with Tuttle and Frank Streeter. It was understood that Henry Putney dictated policy and controlled nominations of the New Hampshire Republican Party. “Brother Bachelder” knew that well. Later, Bachelder’s enemies would say that he was promised the governor’s seat by the railroad, and he in turn “served the Railroad well and faithfully.”

Bachelder’s opponent was Henry F. Hollis, a Democrat and lawyer who became an adversary of the Boston and Maine Railroad nine years later. Bachelder felt confident that he would be elected and, therefore, paid little attention to actual campaigning. In his Reminiscences, Bachelder proudly claimed, “I spent less than $1,000 in the campaign and made but four campaign speeches, while my Democratic opponent, Henry F. Hollis made over sixty . . .” Hollis did not have the obligatory backing of the Boston and Maine corporation

183 Bachelder, Reminiscences 29, 30.

184 Shermon, “The Grange” 213; Wright, Progressive Yankees 58, 59, 60.


186 Hollis was a lawyer of great talent. He was eloquent and razor sharp in the courtroom and succeeded in winning verdicts against great corporations, one of which, in 1912, was the biggest ever awarded from the Boston and Maine Railroad. He was a friend of labor, especially for advancing laws against child labor and supported a 58-hour work week for women and children. He made a vigorous campaign for the suffrage amendment. Anderson, To This Day np.

187 Bachelder, Reminiscences 30.
so, therefore, Bachelder won (see Figure 15). But, it was actually a close race because Bachelder did not have the number of votes characteristic of a Republican victory. Without the involvement of the railroad, the outcome might have been different. Bachelder defeated Hollis by only 8,200 votes, when the usual Republican majority in New Hampshire was 15,000. 188 It was apparent that some Republicans voted for the Democrat Hollis.

Nahum J. Bachelder was the only governor who filled two official positions simultaneously and collected salaries for both from the state of New Hampshire. He relinquished his position as master of the state grange, but kept his position as the agricultural board’s secretary during his term as New Hampshire governor. 189 He continues his post as lecturer in the National Grange. In his Reminiscences, Bachelder said, “I attended to the work of the (National) Grange and State Board of Agriculture during the two years I served as Governor and continued it for nearly ten years afterward . . . While the office (of Chief Executive) gave me no financial reward, I appreciated the honor attached to it.” 190

A CRITIC OF THE GOVERNOR

The year that Nahum Bachelder became governor of New Hampshire, the small town of Cornish elected Winston Churchill to the state’s legislature (see Figures 16 and 17). 191 In his legislative work, Churchill proposed reforms, such as the construction of better roads. Traditional New Hampshire Republicans, like Bachelder, and the controlling Boston and Maine Railroad played along with Churchill’s ideas, expecting him to be a harmless fellow. 192 In the end, they rejected all his reform proposals.

189 Anderson, To This Day 189, 190.
190 Bachelder, Reminiscences 34, 35.
Inaugural Dinner

Given by

Gov. N. J. Bacheleder

To Invited Guests

Eagle Hotel.

Thursday, January 8, 1903

Olive J. Fielden, Sec.
For some reason Bachelder was attracted to Churchill and assigned him to be a uniformed representative (the governor’s own lieutenant colonel) at social functions. Churchill became bored and then angry when he realized that Bachelder was merely a front man for the Boston and Maine Railroad. He realized Bachelder’s brother-in-law, Henry M. Putney, was the man who really ran New Hampshire. Bachelder’s and Putney’s less-than-honest dealings offended Churchill. Apparently others were angry as well, and Churchill perceived Bachelder as an unpopular governor by the end of the his term in 1904. Churchill thought New Hampshire citizens were ready for a change from the railroad’s hegemony, and, in 1904, Churchill himself ran for governor. He promised to rid New Hampshire politics of Putney’s involvement. What is more, Churchill claimed, funding for his campaign was his own, not the Boston and Maine’s. Of course, the local press (one of which must have been Putney’s paper) reacted with strong criticism, but Churchill attracted the attention of the press outside New Hampshire in articles about the railroad’s rule over New Hampshire government. Nevertheless, Churchill lost the Republican gubernatorial nomination.

Churchill was not finished with exposing the control of the Boston and Maine in New Hampshire politics. After running for governor, Churchill published Coniston in 1906, a novel in which the main character rises from small town government into a political “boss” over the state, with abstruse power, sly and coarse in his dealings with state politicians (supposedly based on a clever Yankee stereotype.) Coniston was a tract on the corrupt political times in New Hampshire and how the state strayed from the principles of government. In the novel, the political “boss” eventually must turn his power in the state over to the railroad syndicate, a more pernicious authority. Churchill wrote in the afterword to Coniston, “It is inevitable that many people of a certain New England state will recognize Jethro Bass . . . he was a strange man of great power . . . Self-examination is necessary for the moral health of nations as well

194 As always, Bachelder’s friend, H.H. Metcalf wrote a promotional piece as Bachelder left office in 1905. “Never a politician, seeking no political office and holding no public position of any kind by the election of the people . . . there came at last a strong demand from the farmers of the state . . . in the selection of a gubernatorial candidate” H.H. Metcalf, “A New Honor for New Hampshire,” The Granite Monthly 38.1 (1906) 4
as men, and it is the most hopeful of signs that in the United States we are to-day going through a period of self-examination.”

**Bachelder’s Agenda for Abandoned Farms**

When he was both governor and secretary of the board of agriculture, Nahum Bachelder wrote that the board’s duty was “to promote the interests of various branches of agriculture by the diffusion of information and to arouse an interest among the people therein.” He said that he advertised the opportunities offered by vacant farms for both farming purposes and summer homes on an extensive scale over the past ten or more years. Some people, he claimed, were at first disgusted by his widespread promotion of unoccupied farms, and objected to exposing New Hampshire’s misfortunes to the nation. Regardless of that criticism, Bachelder explained, he added three new publications to further the development of the summer business “that means so much to the rural sections of the state.” Later in 1905, at the annual meeting of the board of agriculture, Bachelder explained bluntly in a speech that New Hampshire farms had a far greater value for the summer business “than for the production of crops . . . More than 2,000 farms have been purchased and improved by our adopted citizens as summer homes, many of them of little value for agricultural purposes.” Bachelder’s friend, John Quackenbos, made a speech at the annual New Hampshire farmers meeting in 1903, and he saluted Governor Bachelder “into whose wise hands has providentially been committed the development of the American Switzerland as a perfect

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Bachelder may have been correct in his assessment, but his opinion seemed inconsistent coming from a high-ranking member of at least two organizations devoted to elevate, educate, and aid farmers. The “adopted citizens” to which Bachelder referred were obviously acceptable as long as they were not poor, foreign, or tenants.
vacation realm for the poor as well as for the rich, for the overworked and the nervously
exhausted, for the lovers of nature."

In the twentieth century, poor farmers or their family members had to work full time in a
local mill or factory and farm only on a part-time basis. After 1900, more and more farms
served chiefly as homes, and the actual farming business was down to a single cow and
garden. Despite this, the farm was a valued resource when mill work slackened and the
farmer could depend on the cow and garden. Do you think, as Quackenbos proposed, that
the farmer thought of New Hampshire as a vacation realm?

Enhanced Farm Advertising

Nahum Bachelder continued to devote energy to changing public perception about rural
New Hampshire. He worked to reinvent the image of empty farms on scanty land into a bold
portrayal of rural New Hampshire as a vacation sanctuary. Bachelder accelerated his
promotion of the summer guest business, and he zealously marketed that abandoned farms be
remade into vacation homes. All the while, he prodded the state to give him more money to
heighten his campaign.

His two standard publications dedicated for the most part to farm advertisements—Secure
a Home in New Hampshire and New Hampshire Farms for Summer Homes—maintained the
same format for ten years. After the new century, however, New Hampshire Farms changed
to a larger format. The cover changed to a stylized Art-Nouveau design on improved glossy
stock instead of plain “construction paper” stock (see Figure 18). Inside, the typeface became
more refined. Shortly after Nahum Bachelder’s term as governor ended in January, 1905,
once again the state treasury granted additional funding for publishing endeavors to the board
of agriculture. A 50% increase in the printing budget permitted Bachelder to issue
increasingly elaborate editions of New Hampshire Farms. In addition to the paperbound
editions, Bachelder also published Farms with padded, velveteen covers. He added the word

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200 John D. Quackenbos, “New Hampshire Agriculture New Hampshire as a Vacation State,” State of New Hampshire,
I’m sure New Hampshire farmers wanted to hear this at a meeting on agriculture from a doctor who specialized in
neurosis-type conditions. By this time, weren’t the farmers the ones nervously exhausted?


Figure 18
“available” to the title (New Hampshire Farms Available for Summer Homes) hoping, perhaps, to persuade his audience that farms were easily obtainable. Yet they were not obtainable for all. Bachelder wanted to impress the reader exactly who was buying New Hampshire farms. He smugly incorporated pictures of estates accompanied by signed testimonials from the rich and, sometimes famous, owners (see Figures 19 and 20).\footnote{The hard-bound editions are hard to find today and are considered collectors’ items. Neither the New Hampshire Historical Society, the State Library, not the State Archives owns a hard-covered copy although all own paperbound editions. Dartmouth College is guarded about its one hard-bound copy.} Bachelder could not resist flaunting the distinguished summer home owners in accompanying accounts that, by now, overshadowed the space allotted for farm advertisements. Among his favorites were Hon. Franklin MacVeagh who became Secretary of the Treasury under President Taft, the popular contemporary author, Winston Churchill (apparently Churchill thought it proper to pose and to show off his estate in the publications); ex-President Grover Cleveland, John Hay, former secretary to President Lincoln, Augustus St. Gaudens, Professor John Quackenbos, and William Wood of the American Woolen Company.\footnote{State of New Hampshire, “New Hampshire Agriculture: Summer Homes,” Annual Reports, 1908–1910 (Concord, NH, 1911) np.} To complete the package in New Hampshire Farms, Bachelder furnished a directory (a “who’s who”) of 2,300 New Hampshire summer residents, a fold-out map of the state delineating railroad lines and depots, and a catalogue of summer hotels and boarding houses. Nahum Bachelder did not hide his awe of the newcomers’ wealth. He asserted that scores of summer people had purchased farms that would take six figures to “express the cost of them.”\footnote{One testimonial in New Hampshire Farms for Summer Homes from Honorable William E. Curtis who bought an abandoned farm, praised Bachelder’s efforts “to secure the sale [of New Hampshire farms] to rich men in the cities and elsewhere for summer homes.” But Curtis also wrote that a city family (middle-class) could also manage to buy a New Hampshire farm for a summer home, remodel it, and fix it up at a small expense. Curtis noted in an offhand manner, “The usual method is to put a bath tub and a French range inside and a broad piazza outside.” State of New Hampshire, Board of Agriculture, New Hampshire Farms for Summer Homes (Concord, NH: The Rumford Press, 1908) 27, 31.}

Among Nahum Bachelder’s favorite marketing strategies, from the first printing in the 1890s to the new elegant editions of New Hampshire Farms for Summer Homes, was to promote Austin Corbin’s private game preserve as an example of what could be done with abandoned farms. He declared that, “... the time is fast approaching when New Hampshire..."
You ask me why I like New Hampshire? It seems to me that the townships of Cornish and Plainfield merely have to be seen to answer that question. The hills are high and the valleys deep, and the scenery has all the ruggedness necessary to great beauty, while it remains pastoral. In fact, it is said by many to have a quality not possessed by any other scenery in this country. I believe this to be true. It is not unlike parts of Italy. The climate is delightful. The nights are cool and the days in midsummer not all unbearable on these hills. I have known of no day since I have been here when I have not been able to take a good deal of exercise.

In 1903 the summer home of the German embassy was on Governor's Island, Lake Winnipisegee. In an autograph letter the ambassador, Count von Sternburg, writes that he chose the spot.

... On account of what I had been told about its mountain and lake scenery and its excellent climate.

All I can say is that my anticipations were greatly surpassed. I have seen a good deal of the world, but I have seen no spot with which The Weirs could not hold its own, even in Scotland and the Bavarian Highlands.

The summer my family and I spent on Governor's Island will certainly remain a delightful souvenir, and we shall always remember the courtesy of the people of the state with whom we came in contact.

Mr. James Richard Carter of Boston, speaking of his first visit to Jefferson, wrote: "The beauties of the situation and the health-giving qualities of the air and the climate led me to return the following season. My enjoyment of the place was fully as great the following season, and finding an old farm on
this country. I believe this to be true. It is not unlike parts of Italy. The climate is delightful. The nights are cool, and the days in midsommer not all unbearable on these hills. I have known of no day since I have been here when I have not been able to take a good deal of exercise.

"Hoping that I have answered your inquiries, I am,

"Sincerely yours,

[Signature]

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The dean of Dublin—and of New England literature as well—writes:

"In answer to your inquiry I will say that I was first led to Dublin some twenty years ago by Rev. A. W. Jackson, then of Peterborough, who had been an officer in my regiment, and drove me up there. My wife and I boarded in the farmhouse of John Mason, about where Mr. Catlin's summer residence now stands. Having pleasant memories of it, I went up there again with my family in the year 1890 and occupied the house of Miss Mary Green; and liked the region and the society so much that we bought a lot from our friend, Mrs. J. S. C. Green, and began building a small house that autumn.

"New Hampshire is surely destined, in my opinion, to become more and more the resort of summer visitors, as no other mountainous region in America, so far as I know, is equally favorable for those who enjoy that sort of scenery and atmosphere. This is what draws my family to it, and I have the minor personal association that I am descended on my mother's side from New Hampshire ancestry, through the Appleton and Wentworth families of Portsmouth."

[Signature]
will be one grand park, leading all sections of our country in providing desirable homes.”  

Corbin’s Park, Bachelder added, had become an “object of interest and instruction . . .” In truth, this was hardly plausible when, in an effort to establish a secure area for the protection and propagation of fish, birds, and game, Austin Corbin posted his land and placed notices on his ten-foot fence warning all persons against trespassing. In fact, the state of New Hampshire had passed an “Act for the Better Protection of Corbin Park” in 1895 that granted Corbin the right to fine anyone $25.00 if they walked within the gates.

MASTER OF THE NATIONAL GRANGE

When his term as governor ended in 1905, Bachelder was elected master of the National Grange (see Figure 21). He held onto his post at the New Hampshire Board of Agriculture, even though his master’s position demanded that he spend more time in Washington than New Hampshire. Bachelder assumed his new post in Washington with the same “vigor” and nervous energy that had worked so successfully for him in New Hampshire. In addition to the master’s post, he was also chairman of the National Grange’s legislative committee, a group that conferred with United States representatives and senators. The power of the committee was that it often determined grange policy. Bachelder’s work in the grange shifted the farmers organization subtly toward a more conservative spirit.

As he began his term as national master, Bachelder duplicated what had bought him so much success in his New Hampshire summer-home advertisements—his instinct and mastery

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207 The irony is that there were no homes in Corbin’s Park. To construct Blue Mountain Forest Park, Corbin destroyed about 75 farms, some of which were still occupied at the time of sale—they were not all abandoned.

208 The fence contradicts any notion that the Corbin preserve is open to the public; it was never intended that tourists or anyone other than Blue Mountain Club’s exclusive members could enter the Park. It is unclear whether the ten-foot high fence encompassing the park was meant to keep the animals in or keep people out. The public had no access then and to this day it has no access: Blue Mountain Park is still a privately-owned hunting preserve.


When Bachelder was elected master, it seemed that it was a turning point in his life when he may have been undecided about his future. There were speculations that he wanted to run for Congress, and his work with the grange legislative committee in Washington may have prompted this ambition. Surprisingly, in the 1905 edition of New Hampshire Farms Available for Summer Homes there was an advertisement for his own home, Highland Farm. The asking price was $4,000, more expensive by about 60% than any other advertised properties in the issue. Obviously, Bachelder was not in a hurry to sell.
NAHUM J. BACHELDER
Tenth Master of the National Grange

Figure 21
in publishing. Since the 1890s, Bachelder had also published and edited *The National Grange Weekly* newspaper in Concord, NH. With the sanction of the National Grange’s executive committee in 1907, Bachelder added the *Grange Monthly Bulletin*, a publication that aired the views of the grange. That same year Bachelder boldly proposed a new weekly publication to be published in Concord, NH with himself as editor-in-chief. The unusualness of Concord as the location for printing Washington publications added to the curious fact that Bachelder owned 51% of the publishing enterprise, even though the printing costs were paid by grange funds. It was unanimously approved, and Bachelder called it the *National Grange Official Organ*. Against policy, Bachelder introduced a political agenda into the new paper. It “frequently brought the Grange to the fringes of its non-partisanship by promoting Roosevelt during the election years.” On one issue’s cover were several photographs of Theodore Roosevelt. 209 In his address to the National Grange in 1908, Bachelder proclaimed haughtily to have spared neither “money or effort” to publish that issue. And yet, in his *Reminiscences*, Bachelder said that he never mixed politics with the grange (in accordance with the grange’s Declaration of Purposes). “I have acted upon that principle ... [and] never mixed political and Grange work.” His printing contract with the National Grange lasted until May, 1910. 210

**CRITICISM ESCALATES**

Bachelder’s abandoned-farm promotional practices in New Hampshire were, however, beginning to elicit responses of mild disapproval. The criticism came after Bachelder left the governor’s seat and it proved significant enough to be included in New Hampshire’s *Reports* for 1905 through 1907. 211 Accounts on rural development in New Hampshire denounced Nahum Bachelder’s proposition that implied there was greater reward in neglecting the land, or more specifically, in *not* farming. 212 The report then claimed that Bachelder’s “bow, when

209 Howard, *People, Pride, and Progress* 127.
212 For example, Bachelder had described Corbin’s Park, once home to 375 farms, as “now a large corporation, which presents one of the best examples to be found anywhere of the profitable use of hill lands for scientific forestry and the marketing of lumber.” N.J. Bachelder, “Summer Homes,” *State of New Hampshire, Annual Reports, 1910–1912* (Manchester, NH: John B. Clarke Co., 1912) 278.
aimed at shooting at immigration prospects for abandoned farms, has proved to be one labeled ‘summer homes’.” One of Bachelder’s aspirations was to be New Hampshire’s main spokesman, the report maintained that Bachelder was unsparing of personal interviews or correspondence especially for metropolitan newspapers that promoted New Hampshire as a summer state. Boston newspapers called Bachelder “New Hampshire’s press agent.” The report asserted that Bachelder’s practices were inconsistent with the pledged duties of a leader in an agricultural organization. This disapproval from within the state of Bachelder’s activities followed that of Winston Churchill’s.

Criticism in a national magazine was more caustic and far-reaching. Arthur Gleason’s two articles in one issue of *Country Life in America* examined New Hampshire’s abandoned farm situation in 1905. In the first article, Gleason called that year a critical moment in New Hampshire’s agricultural history. He wrote that even though New Hampshire promoted abandoned farms at discounted prices, they were not a bargain for either farmers or immigrants because of a crucial farm labor shortage. If one did buy a neglected farm, much work would be needed to re-clear and re-work the land because it had been ignored for a long time. He included with his article pictures of lonely, desolate buildings in a place he sarcastically called “Deadville,” suggesting a dearth of civilization. Gleason pointed out that there was scenery to burn, but looking at the photos of the village, he asked, “Would anyone want to live there?” (see Figure 22).

Gleason’s second article followed this invective with a proposal that salvation for remaining New Hampshire farmers would be scientific agriculture. Intelligent scientific farming, not the summer boarder, Gleason observed, was the answer for New Hampshire. The summer business “looks like a quick and easy solution, but the summer boarder and resident is economically hurtful to the state,” he claimed. Gleason gave three clear reasons why he felt this way. First, the summer boarder caused an abnormal demand on farmer’s time during the summer, the most important farming months of the year. Secondly, the alleged money spent by summer visitors was exaggerated, and thirdly, the wealthy summer resident

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The deserted village of "Deadville." One of its houses is for sale with 65 acres of land for $500!

"The religious spirit has been utterly killed out by low talk and constant gossip; there is no dignity of relations between man and man in oneily abandoned 'Deadville.' But lift up your hearts for 'Deadville' and the other similar communities and worth in the restorer! One man of good hope and knowledge can bring back prosperity to 'Deadville.'"

Mountains at the horizon line on the north, the Ragged Mountains east. The place is ransacked. "I'm tired of working it," he said to me. "It pays. It has paid me. We live well." here. One hundred and fifty acres will fifty head of cattle. That's the best thing

A bargain at $1,500—chance for a dairy farm of 55 to 60 acres, 3 mile and a half from Pittsfield. It has 250 apple trees.

Sorry and a half house; 5 rooms on ground floor; 4 above unfinished. 15 feet square, with an L 20 x 20. Barn 40 x 40; sheep barn 20 x 22; also open shed, carriage shed and barn. Tillable land 10 to 12 acres; pasture 20; timber 15 to 18; brookside meadow 6 or 7. Cuts a run of hay to the acre. Shire rights on part of lake. With skillful handling the could carry 8 cows at 50 sheep, or estimating that 9 sheep can feed where one cow lives it could maintain two cows and 70 sheep by all the winds that blow. The hottest day there is graciously mitigated. I tried it on a hot day. (He does. I used him.) "But I want to sit quiet. The boys are in the city. I There's timber, milk, meat, corn, pasturing poultry to work at."

Think of it! Only sixteen hundred dollars for these buildings and a 70-acre farm amid such scenery and five miles from Pittsfield!

"Beaver Hill" Farm. 30 acres pasture; 35 tillable; 3 timber. In a square block, so which can be added 40 acres of pasture for $200 to $400 more. Old orchard of 100 trees

This is the place presided over by the strong figure of a man sixty years old who wants to sell. could hire labor, but I'd have to do the work. Let somebody else try it. There's a living in the Webster locality, within a radius of a mile there are thirty farms for sale, all of the going.

"One of the greatest views in the eastern United States"—seen from the house shown on page 51. New Hampshire has "scenery to burn". But who wants to live in Deadville? The top picture shows you what the village is like. Could you stand the social life there?

Figure 22
who employed local help raised wages that permanent resident farmers could not afford to pay. 216 Gleason claimed that he approached the secretary of New Hampshire’s Board of Agriculture, Nahum Bachelder, with that argument. Gleason implied that Bachelder agreed with him, promising that in his future publications he would put “emphasis on the land for farming this time instead of the land for summer residents.” However, Bachelder seemed to have said this only to assuage Gleason; any subsequent issue showed no change in philosophy.

**BACHELDER RESPONDS**

Bachelder reacted to criticism of his work in the New Hampshire Board of Agriculture by placing the blame on others. At the New Hampshire farmers annual meeting, Bachelder accused the farmers of not seeing things quite his way about the summer market. “The opportunity in this direction is not fully appreciated by our farmers and not enough preparation is made to supply it.” After all, he added, the benefits from summer people were not all financial. There are “eminent statesmen, famous educators, great financiers, noted authors, poets and sculptors . . . traveling about in our rural towns, conversing with rural people and stimulating better thoughts and higher ideals of citizenship.” 217 The truth is summer people usually had little interaction with local people other than for hiring their services. Conversely, all New Hampshire farmers weren’t that impressed with summer visitors. Instead, they were interested primarily on how to keep their farms and financially support their families, not tips on how to practice better citizenship from someone separate from the community.

In his official report to the state of New Hampshire in 1907, Bachelder restated his impatience with New Hampshire farmers that they were not cooperating or agreeing with his outlook on abandoned farms. In the same report, he also asked for more funds, saying testily that the “paltry $3,000” expended annually for advertising farms should be increased five


times over so that he could place the publications upon tables in “the homes of wealthy people in all the great cities.” 218 The following year, Bachelder had something different to say to a larger audience. His master’s address to the National Grange was self-congratulatory. “We assert that the person who gives most attention to promoting agriculture manifests the broadest statesmanship and takes the most patriotic action . . . The farmer is more important than the farm, and the agency that contributes to his development as a citizen is of more value than any that only contributes to financial gain.” 219

But local criticism emerged more frequently in the New Hampshire press about the “gains” realized from the farms-into-summer homes campaign. A 1909 article in the usually complaisant Granite Monthly suggested unhappiness with Nahum Bachelder. The article, written by an “occasional contributor” to the magazine, contained a sketch of a successful central New Hampshire farm. At the article’s conclusion, the anonymous author’s comments revealed that he felt pessimistic about Bachelder’s promotional scheme. “It is to be hoped that too many of our New Hampshire farms will not pass into the hands of those who are summer residents merely whose interests are incidental and whose attention to agriculture . . . is a pastime rather than an occupation.” 220

CRITICISM FROM OUTSIDE

The most severe censure against Nahum Bachelder in his role as state agricultural official came in 1910 from the well-known agricultural newspaper, the New England Homestead. The Homestead’s fiery indictments accused Bachelder’s management of subordinating “the needs of New Hampshire agriculture to the promotion of the summer recreation industry and also for his personal political ambitions.” 221 Indeed, some had surmised that Bachelder’s eyes were on the United States Senate.

In November, 1910, an editorial in the New England Homestead proclaimed that Bachelder’s inefficiency in running the board was “a blot upon New England agricultural

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219 Bachelder, Master’s Address (1908) 6.
221 Shennon, “The Grange” 234.
progress.” The editor, Glenn C. Sevey, condemned Bachelder’s doctrine as essentially a “sell out” of New Hampshire farmers, a doctrine that claimed New Hampshire was better adapted to the summer business than to the growing of any farm crops. “How do New Hampshire farmers like that sentiment? Are they ready to retire their farm tools while N.J. Bachelder swings in a hammock and encourages summer boarders?” A cartoon accompanied Sevey’s assertions (see Figure 23). Sevey’s most serious accusation proclaimed Bachelder’s neglect (as a “salaried man” in public office) in performing livestock, nursery, or dairy inspections for the welfare of rural New Hampshire farming. Sevey also charged that Bachelder ignored fertilizer licensing and inspection. Sevey claimed he could cite nineteen instances where fertilizers was sold without licenses in New Hampshire. Disclosing the contents in fertilizer bags was an important issue with farmers. Since the 1870s farmers had used bagged fertilizer frequently on soils of only meager natural fertility. In fact, New England topped the entire country in its expenditure on fertilizers. Fertilizer manufacturers had regularly made extravagant claims of what was in the bags and, unfortunately, they were often false statements. Some brands were found to contain a large percentage of sand and water. Such deceit spurred the New England states to force manufacturers to list the correct contents on the bags. Maine was the first to pass an act to prevent such fraud in their state.

Bachelder’s idea for developing New Hampshire agriculture, Sevey claimed in the New England Homestead editorial, was mainly in the printing of an attractive book, New Hampshire Farms for Summer Homes. Bachelder’s promotion of the summer home and summer boarder business, Sevey asserted, played directly into the hands of the Boston and Maine Railroad. “Secretary Bachelder puts thousands of dollars into the treasury of the Boston and Maine Railroad.” At the conclusion of the article, Sevey called for Bachelder’s resignation and argued that New Hampshire needed to select a commissioner who was not a

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223 This was a serious offense because tuberculosis, or “consumption,” in cattle had been quite a problem in New England since the 1880s. Bachelder apparently expended small effort on cattle inspections in New Hampshire, a tragic outcome for some farmers when over 300 New Hampshire cattle per year were dying from contagious diseases. Frank S. Billings, a Boston veterinarian, alerted the state of Massachusetts in 1885 by declaring the disease was widespread in the state. That same year, cows at Maine’s state college were found to be infected and the entire herd was destroyed. Rhode Island also slaughtered many cattle with tuberculosis. Shortly after, all New England states set up quarantines. Massachusetts adopted a tuberculin test in 1894 and that same year Vermont began inspections. In fact, Vermont took the lead in testing animals for tuberculosis through 1920.

SECRETARY BACHELDER’S IDEA OF PROMOTING NEW HAMPSHIRE AGRICULTURE

Figure 23
"politician, who knows the desires of the farmers, who will work for them, and who is not so hopelessly tied up with other interests that he cannot give rural affairs any decent attention . . . One man has blocked the wheels of rural development in New Hampshire too long." 225

New England Homestead editor Glenn Sevey dared publicly to take exception with Bachelder’s behavior. Nevertheless, the rebuke seemed to have little affect on Bachelder’s activities. The New England Homestead, however, did not soften its criticism. The next year, the agricultural newspaper denounced New Hampshire Farms for Summer Homes for its lack of relevance with established farming. “As usual the New Hampshire Board of Agriculture has turned out a very pretty booklet of farms and summer homes for sale.” 226

Charles Burkett, another outspoken critic from the New England Homestead, announced that to read Winston Churchill’s Coniston was to know about the political situation in New Hampshire. Burkett pointed out that Nahum Bachelder, as governor, never protested against the Boston and Maine Railroad’s domination of New Hampshire politics. “He quietly accepted the honor of governor and took his medicine calmly, as meekly, as unprotestingly, as an ordinary employee of the railroad company.” Burkett charged Bachelder with forgetting grange policy by being a professional politician. In addition, Burkett condemned Bachelder’s holding several jobs simultaneously, that is, New Hampshire governor, secretary of the board of agriculture, secretary of Old Home Week, secretary of the Board of Cattle Commissioners, agricultural editor of the leading political paper of the state, and various leading roles in the state grange. “His sole aim is to promote his own advancement, power, and wealth.” Burkett maintained that Bachelder wanted to be U.S. Senator and used the grange to land the job, “a trick as you know, at variance with grange principles . . . [better no farmer in the Senate] than one posing to speak for farmers who misrepresents their desires or needs.” 227

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225 “An Inefficient Board of Agriculture” New England Homestead 493, 495.

Howard Russell states that the grange, unfortunately, became ladders to personal political advancement. Russell, Long, Deep Furrow 476.

H. H. Metcalf, touted Bachelder’s promotion to master of the National Grange in The Granite Monthly. Bachelder, he said, was “a tireless worker for the promotion of interest and general welfare of the farmers of the land . . . Mr. Bachelder has unquestionably done more than any other man in New Hampshire to promote the progress of agriculture in the State and welfare of the people engaged therein.” Metcalf, “A New Honor for New Hampshire” The Granite Monthly 38.1 (1906) 3, 4.
Moreover, Charles Burkett attacked Nahum Bachelder’s work as national grange master. He strongly objected to Bachelder’s half ownership of the *National Grange Official Organ*. He criticized Bachelder’s role as both publisher and editor of the paper because Bachelder collected a salary as editor and he received funds for publishing costs. “The grange organ (newspaper) does not appear to be the property of the grange organization but is a personal asset of the national master.” Secondly, Burkett charged Bachelder with abuse of power, more specifically in using grange fund reserves to loan a past master several thousand dollars. It was especially brazen since Bachelder, it seemed, never released grange funds to help needy members. *Homestead* editor Glenn Sevey bluntly queried Bachelder on the use of grange funds. Why could not they be used to uplift worthy, but needy, farmers instead of the subsidization of Bachelder’s private grange newspaper? Bachelder responded curtly to the editorial that the grange was an educational organization, funds are not to be used for “charitable” purposes.

**Schism in the National Grange**

Criticism of Nahum Bachelder’s grange leadership was not confined to faultfinders from outside. The national grange membership had undergone divisive changes during Bachelder’s term. In fact, the organization had separated into two factions: traditional conservative members and Progressive reform members. The master of the Maine State Grange, Obadiah Gardner, led the vanguard of the Progressive reform movement (see Figure 24). The Progressive grange members formed an alternative group called the Conference of Progressive Granges, and they defiantly opposed the conservative Bachelder regime. Eight state granges (Maine, Michigan, Washington, Pennsylvania, Kentucky, Oregon, Colorado, and Ohio) in the Progressive movement met simultaneously but separately from the National Grange’s yearly convention. The schism could not be more clearly defined. Progressive grange members were disgusted by Bachelder’s “machine rule,” and claimed the organization was burdened by

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228 Burkett, “Chaos in the National Grange” 412.
his financial mismanagement and his obvious seeking of political gain. In February, 1910, Obadiah Gardner wrote a letter to the editors of a Midwestern state grange newspaper charging Master Bachelder with wrongdoing. The letter was published, and it opened a rift among grange membership.

At first the National Grange executive committee defended Bachelder. They called a conference to investigate only the criticisms and complaints against Bachelder alleged in editorials and articles in the New England Homestead. The grange committee did not censure its master but instead brought libel charges against the Homestead for "false and malicious statements reflecting on the integrity and character of grange officers." The National Grange offered financial and legal support for Bachelder and made a substantial sum available "for the protection of the good name of the Order and its officers." Hoping to stop any more trouble, the National Grange executive committee expelled two Progressive grange members at its annual meeting in November, 1910. The Progressive members reacted a month later when the Maine State Grange called for official figures and full details of the expenditures of all National Grange funds. But by now Nahum Bachelder had caused the National Grange enough public embarrassment, and the executive committee forced him to submit to intensive grilling. As a concession, Bachelder agreed to relinquish his grange newspaper. The investigating committee was not satisfied, and they subpoenaed Nahum Bachelder to a hearing the following May.

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230 Shennon, "The Grange" 212.

231 Howard, People, Pride, and Progress 128; Shennon, "The Grange" 232; Guptill, "The Grange in Maine" 121.


When the National Grange Organ was moved from Bachelder's Concord, NH office to a publication office in Westfield, MA in early 1911, there were less than 9,000 names on the mailing list, and most of those subscribers were sadly in arrears on their subscriptions.
The hearing day was reported widely throughout the United States. The meeting revealed more injurious facts about Bachelder, such as his retention of lobbyists from lumber trusts, New England woolen mills, and even the American Newspaper Publishers Association. Charles Burkett in the *New England Homestead* called for Bachelder’s retirement as national grange master. “Enough has happened already to disgust most of us.” The National Grange felt it had been humiliated publicly, its effectiveness shattered, and its members disillusioned. Again, the *New England Homestead* charged that Bachelder had “made a mess of it.” 235

Six months later, at the National Grange’s annual session in 1911, Nahum Bachelder refused to be a candidate for another term as national master calling it his own decision. Obadiah Gardner, the leading “rebel” who led the fight within the grange against the Bachelder regime, was appointed to the U.S. Senate. 236 At the beginning of 1912, Sevey remarked in the *New England Homestead*, “Unpleasant as has been the publicity which seemed the only way to clean up things in the national grange, it is bringing good results . . . the air has been purified.” 237

**EFFECTS ON THE NEW HAMPSHIRE GRANGE**

In New Hampshire, the state grange master, Richard Pattee, affirmed that calm had returned to the National Grange. But the recent events affected Pattee and the New Hampshire State Grange. Pattee began to publicly dissociate himself from the practice Bachelder had established in New Hampshire. State master Pattee seemed determined to show that the state grange supported only the New Hampshire farmer, not the needs of the


Apparently unaffected by criticism, a former master of the National Grange arrogantly and simultaneously paid tribute to Bachelder at the 1910 annual New Hampshire Board of Agriculture meeting. “When the history of the grange is written the accomplishments of his administration will stand unrivaled . . . We of the grange . . . work for the improvement of the farmer on the farm, for the benefit of the locality in which we live.” State of New Hampshire, “New Hampshire Agriculture Reports: Annual Field Meeting, 1910,” *Reports, 1909–1910* (Concord, NH, 1911) 243.

236 Howard, *People, Pride, and Progress* 130, 137; Guptill, “The Grange in Maine” 123.

U.S. Senator was a position that Bachelder coveted. It is also interesting that Bachelder’s opponent in the New Hampshire governor’s race, Henry Hollis, was also appointed to the U.S. Senate.

Boston and Maine Railroad or the business of summer tourism. Pattee spoke in defense of the
farmer, topics that Nahum Bachelder and Frank Rollins previously rejected. 238

Indeed, in 1911 and 1912, Richard Pattee seemed to burst forth with a volley of attacks
against the previous administration’s belief in the importance of the summer tourist. In the
interest of better roads, Pattee believed development of automobile boulevards should not be
in lieu of rural road improvements. Pattee argued that the rights of the resident should take
priority over the rights of transient visitors or the comfort of passing tourists. It was the
farmer, after all, who paid the highest percentage of taxes of any class in the state. 239 The
next year Pattee expounded on the real value of farm property, something Nahum Bachelder
had diminished. In the 1912 Journal of Proceedings, Richard Pattee said, “It has often been
said that the greatest value of much of our farm land is in its scenery. However great its
scenic value, that value is immeasurably enhanced when such farms are well tilled, with
comfortable homes housing intelligent and happy families.” Pattee even proposed money
should be spent on improving and extending farming in New Hampshire. “The Legislature
makes an annual appropriation which is almost wholly spent to advertise the advantages of
New Hampshire as a summer resort. We are strongly of the opinion that more should be
spent to bring before the public its advantages and opportunities as a place of permanent
residence... We in no way underrate the importance or advantage of the summer business in
our state, but we believe the permanent residence of even less prominent or less wealthy
people vastly to be preferred.” 240 Apparently the State Grange agreed and they voted it in as
one of their policies. “Resolved, that it is the sense of this body that a greater effort should be
made by the state to induce permanent settlement upon the farms of New Hampshire.” 241 It
had taken over twenty years for the New Hampshire State Grange to arrive at this resolution,
twenty years of permanently and tragically losing farms, families, and neighborhoods.

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Proceedings, 38th Annual Session, December 1911 (Concord, NH, 1912) 12.
Proceedings, 39th Annual Session, December 1912 (Concord, NH: The Rumford Press, 1913) 98.
THE LAST OF BACHELDERISM

After his difficulties in the National Grange and reproach from the agricultural press, Nahum Bachelder seemed at first to make changes in his work at the New Hampshire Board of Agriculture. Bachelder wrote in the preface to the tenth edition (1912) of *New Hampshire Farms for Summer Homes* that the board would continue advertising the Granite State as a place of summer rest, recreation and residence, but it would also emphasize more than ever the opportunities New Hampshire offered for the “farmer who seeks profit as well as pleasure, wealth as well as health, fertile soil as well as inspiring scenery.” The next page after the preface, however, belied any interest in farming and instead reverted to Bachelder’s emphasis on the summer home. The page contained a photograph of a grand summer estate in Northfield, NH (see Figure 25).

However, in the 1911–1912 edition of the state’s *Report* there seemed an indication of Bachelder’s atonement. He told how a board of agriculture member called upon and interviewed fifty New Hampshire farmers to obtain information regarding the opportunities for successful and profitable farming in the state. Bachelder said he compiled their responses and other material into a farm publication that emphasized the farming advantages in New Hampshire. However, that is all that Bachelder revealed on the subject, suggesting that he might have done this to satisfy prevailing criticism. Bachelder’s true interest re-emerged in the remainder of the 1911–1912 report. He boasted that more than 5,000 summer homes had been established in the state and more than $10 million invested in the improvement of abandoned farms and the construction of summer homes since the beginning of his campaign.

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243 A University of New Hampshire professor did make a careful study of four farm communities in southern New Hampshire in 1909 to furnish data on the profitability of several types of farming. He remarked that the popular belief that New Hampshire farm land was a deserted waste was untrue, and said the much-talked-of abandoned farms were not to be found. E.H. Thomson, *Agricultural Survey of Four Townships in Southern New Hampshire* Circular 75 (Washington, DC: US Department of Agriculture, 1911) 3.

Another survey done by the University Experiment Station in 1913 delineated the differences between profitable and unprofitable farms in New Hampshire, the most important of which was the efficient use of smaller amounts of land. Poorer farms were apt to have too much acreage and too many expensive buildings and, therefore, their taxes tended to be higher. The trend in 1913 was toward the farm more as a place of residence and as only a partial means of support (the farmer had a job in the mill). But the Board of Agriculture’s failure to properly help the New Hampshire farmer over the years can perhaps be deduced in the experiment station’s following statement: “The greatest handicap to the most rapid progress in agriculture at the present time is the lack of confidence and faith which the farmer has in the calling of agriculture.” Fred E. Robertson, *Some Profitable and Unprofitable Farms in New Hampshire* Circular 128-A (US Dept. of Agriculture and the NH College Agricultural Experiment Station, 1913) n.p.
twenty years ago. These homes were occupied either part or all of the summer months by 30,000 persons from outside the state, often “men of wealth and literary attainments.”

Stresses of urban living accelerated in the twentieth century and Bachelder judiciously made the most of this phenomenon in his publications. Over fifty pages in the 1913 edition of *New Hampshire Farms for Summer Homes* gave prominence to an urban dweller’s dream to own a country home. A “hunt for a homestead” was based on sentiment and Bachelder took the opportunity to evoke feelings that it was a search for “home.” The city dweller lamented that he quested for the “New Hampshire boyhood I had missed.”

Nevertheless, this was Nahum Bachelder’s last chance to build fantasies for urban dwellers or to boost his farms-into-summer-homes scheme. After twenty-three years, his publishing days were coming to a close. The 1913 edition of *New Hampshire Farms for Summer Homes* would be Bachelder’s last.

9. **Cleaning House: A New Administration**

In the fall of 1912, New Hampshire elected a Democratic governor, Samuel Felker, a lawyer from Rochester, NH (see Figure 26). Felker was a strong reformer who also had the support of the New Hampshire Republican Progressives. In his role as governor, he made a number of controversial changes in top administrative positions, one such change concerned agriculture. Felker wanted to get rid of Nahum Bachelder, so he sponsored the reorganization of the state’s board of agriculture. Without delay, the New Hampshire legislature abolished the New Hampshire Board of Agriculture and replaced it with a new Department of

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245 That figure for part-time residents must have outweighed the farm tenancy rate that everyone feared ten years before. The *New England Homestead* reported a decline by 13% in tenant farming since 1900. *New England Homestead* 62.6 (February 11, 1911) 222.

246 As transportation and roads improved, business and professional people wanted a home in the country. More and more people were moving outside the city and living in the country year round and riding to and fro to their work in the city. In Connecticut, this was becoming more common around the cities of New Haven, Bridgeport, and Hartford. It was a general trend for people to “commute” into the cities for their day labors and return at night.


248 Felker took his oath of office at 10:15 in the evening, rather than the traditional high noon, so that workingmen could attend his inauguration. He became a national celebrity as the only governor to take the oath of office that year without wearing a silk shirt. Anderson, *To This Day* 200; Wright, *The Yankee Progressives* 143.

Summer Home at Northfield, N. H., of F. B. Shiel of Lowell, Mass.
People's Choice for Governor.

Democracy's Progressive Candidate,

SAMUEL D. FELKER.

His Platform and Public Record Merit Your Vote.

CHARLES C. WILLEY,
Chairman Democratic City Committee
Rochester, N. Y.
Agriculture. This paved the ouster of Bachelder who had served as secretary of the old agency for twenty-six years.\textsuperscript{249} Governor Felker appointed his cousin, Andrew L. Felker, a Meredith farmer and prominent grange leader, to head the new Department of Agriculture. The governor was heaped with editorial censure for this act, and even his own Democratic Executive Council hedged for a time on the replacement. Even though the accusations hurled at Governor Felker could have included nepotism, the changes enacted would prove an improvement and beneficial to New Hampshire farmers. Accompanying the drastic transformation in the state’s agriculture department was the turnover of officials at the old board’s sister organization, the Old Home Week Association.\textsuperscript{250}

**Bachelder Returns to Farming**

After his “release” from official duties in 1913, Bachelder stated he had to make a choice whether to engage in a business like real estate (which he had done in a way for the board) or go back to farming on his family farm in Andover. He chose the latter. But he had not paid attention to his farm in years, and he admitted the business and the buildings had been neglected. Bachelder went to work to reclaim Highland Farm in a display of fervent activity as if to show that it was an art lost on most other New Hampshire farmers. With his usual vigor and enthusiasm, he re-cleared many overgrown acres on Highland Farm. He purchased twenty high-grade Jersey cows for milking and butter, added pigs and pure-bred chickens, and then he outfitted his barns with new equipment. In his *Reminiscences*, Bachelder commented, “I had men to do the milking, for I detested it.”\textsuperscript{251} New fruit trees, a new maple sugar house, and new large farm machinery rounded out his inventory. But in 1919, after five years of farming, Bachelder at age 65, admitted Highland Farm yielded no profit, and he auctioned the contents of the farm. From then on, Bachelder and his wife spent only summers on the farm.

\textsuperscript{249} In his reminiscences, Bachelder said, “I had for several years desired to be relieved of the cares and duties of the office, but had made no move to bring it about.” Bachelder, *Reminiscences* 28, 29. Anderson, *To This Day* 200.

\textsuperscript{250} Both Frank Rollins and Nahum Bachelder left their posts in the Old Home Week Association in 1913. H.H. Metcalf replaced Frank Rollins as president.

\textsuperscript{251} Bachelder, *Reminiscences* 15, 71, 72.
and winters in Florida. "I have not taken farming up again . . . the high cost of labor precludes farming except at a loss ." 252

**A NEW ORDER: THE GREATEST GOOD TO THE LARGEST NUMBER OF PEOPLE**

When Andrew Felker took office as head of the New Hampshire Department of Agriculture in January, 1914, he proceeded on a course that would eventually outdo what Bachelder claimed to have accomplished (see Figure 27). 253 An important aspect of the new Department of Agriculture was training the New Hampshire farmer to think as a businessman. Felker quickly demonstrated that he would do all he could to serve the New Hampshire farmer with information. He expanded the Department to work with the federally-funded extension service and the experiment station, county farm bureaus, the New Hampshire Farm Bureau Federation, the New Hampshire State Grange, and specific associations and societies devoted to livestock, horticulture, and other farm products. 254 There is little doubt that Commissioner Felker was a promoter and champion of New Hampshire agriculture. He gave attention to solving agricultural problems and to bring a better life to rural residents. 255

**NEW PUBLICATIONS FOR ADVERTISING FARMS**

In his first annual report to the state in 1914, Andrew Felker commented on the farm advertising done in the previous administration. He called *New Hampshire Farms for Summer Homes* an "artistic" book issued to those seeking seasonal homes. 256

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252 Bachelder, *Reminiscences* 75.

Whether Bachelder understood this twist of fate is unknown. Highland Farm turned into disuse as did hundreds of other farms in a day when Bachelder had the authority and strength to do something about it.

253 Felker, 44, was a self-made, temperate man who financed his own education. He began farming at age 18 and became an active member in the grange.


On the national level, the Smith-Lever law of 1914 established government agricultural educational assistance with county agents and extension work. The Farm Bureau Federation began in 1911. Farm bureaus grew to rival the grange as a private agricultural group designed to help the farmers. Squares, *The Granite State* Vol. 2 509.


In fact, Andrew Felker became known as the most revered public servant in New Hampshire’s State House history. He would serve in this post for over 30 years and, even though a Democrat, he would be re-nominated for appointment by Republican administrations. When he became Commissioner in 1913, the New Hampshire State Grange offered him the position of master but, unlike Nahum Bachelder, he refused saying he was opposed to holding two equivalent positions at once.

HON. ANDREW L. FELKER
Of Meredith
Commissioner of Agriculture

ANDREW L. FELKER,
New Hampshire

Figure 27
Felker admitted that it would be the “height of folly” to discontinue publishing it, although he stated tactfully that the summer home issue had been thoroughly covered in the past editions. With this in mind, he announced plans to issue a booklet entitled New Hampshire Farms “without restricting, by title or otherwise, the use of the farms therein described to the maintenance of summer homes.” Felker added that this new edition would be of value to farmers looking for farms and “a different sequel to Summer Homes.”

When New Hampshire Farms: Your Opportunity published, the paperbound book remained in the same format as Bachelder’s Summer Homes, but Felker’s theme was different. First, actual New Hampshire farm scenes illustrated the covers (see Figure 28). The content of the interior text also changed drastically. The new edition no longer contained photographs of grand estates and signatures of the famous and wealthy, but in their place were pictures of farms and farm crops from around New Hampshire (see Figures 29 and 30). The physical layout was maintained, but details in the publications revealed each administration’s different outlook.

For example, the “header” repeated at the top of each page in Bachelder’s publications was “Summer Homes;” in Felker’s publications, it was “New Hampshire Farms.” The new Department did publish New Hampshire Farms Available for Farming or Summer Homes, its closest effort to conform to the previous administration’s marketing effort. However, in comparison to Bachelder’s more lavish publications, this newest edition had a rather unpretentious style (see Figure 31). If one looked at only each administration’s publications, the differences in philosophy would be strikingly apparent (for example, compare figures 29 and 30 with previous figures 19 and 20). Clearly it was not Felker’s intention to publish velvet-bound copies advertising New Hampshire farms to a wealthy audience.

Three years into his administration, Felker wrote in his official report that “it has been the policy of the Department. . . to use every legitimate means for bringing the greatest good and satisfaction to the largest numbers of people. . . Every legitimate opportunity to advertise the agricultural (not recreational) advantages of the state through letters, books, pictures, circulars, and exhibitions has been employed.”

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257 State of New Hampshire, Report of Board and Department of Agriculture (1914) 335.

year with another. This gives a profit of $75 per acre. There are several farmers who raise from fifty to a hundred acres a year. It requires some capital. Land for potatoes costs about $100 an acre; fertilizer, seed, machinery and labor are expensive; but the returns surely warrant the investment.

The crop employs hardly more than half the year. There is time for other things and in this region it is the season when other things are to be done. Logging is the winter job of the whole north country. The big lumber companies hire men and teams at good prices. They also let logging jobs on the contract sys-

tem and men have made fortunes in this line of jobbing. Nearly every farm has a wood and timber lot. Firewood sells at from $1 to $6 per cord. Stumpage formerly reckoned at 50 cents per cord is worth now from $1 to $1.50 and rising. This is the home land of the spruce and poplar. The growth of the wood pulp paper industries provides a market for spruce and poplar at from $6 per cord up. Many farmers spend the winter most profitably in getting firewood or pulp from their own lands. Some of the largest pulp mills in New England are located in our state at Berlin and at Lincoln. At Lisbon, Groveton, Conway and other places there are immense plants for the manufacture of hard and soft wood lumber.

But why continue? It all sums up in this, in productivity of soil, in proximity or access to market, in secondary or side-line industries northern New Hampshire farming offers inducements second to none in New England. In educational advantage, social opportunity and moral influence no better section can be found.

The question naturally arises, what will a farm here cost?

Such farms as the pictures show contain from 100 to 500 acres. These farms bring from $2,500 to $10,000. They are not cheap farms. They are good farms.
No matter what line of farming is followed this market is of tremendous advantage.

An interesting source of income in this section is that from guiding sportsmen; fishermen in the summer and hunters in the fall pay many hundreds of dollars to young men who know the woods and streams. In the spruce forests of the mountains some men make money gun hunting. These and others are side lines peculiar to this section. They are local opportunities.

The most important branch of northern New Hampshire farming is dairying, making milk and cream for the city market. The special advantage to this region in this business lies in its splendid hay production. The well-watered, newly cleared pastures afford excellent feed from May to October. The fields and meadows grow big crops of hay and fodder. This land has not been overcropped and underfertilized. Look at the barns included in the pictures of this book. They show where money is made as the houses show where it is spent. There is much discussion concerning the profit or loss in dairy farming. Where land averages to raise from two to three tons of hay per acre and where pastures carry half as much grass as the fields dairying will pay if it will anywhere. These are the figures for north country New Hampshire farms.

But this splendid forage yield makes possible the alternative of beef raising if dairying does not pay. A north country farmer changed from Jerseys to Herefords a few years ago. He started with a small herd of pure-breds. Last year he sent cattle to seven foreign countries and sold others in eleven states. His profits were made because the splendid grazing lands enabled him to raise cattle at low cost. There is a growing demand for the best stock, and here is the most economical place in New England to raise it.

The largest so-called "cash crop" in northern New Hampshire is potatoes. Colebrook ships at least a carload of potatoes a day the year round and some days it is train loads. These potatoes cost about 25¢ a bushel to raise. The average yield is about 300 bushels per acre. They sell for at least 50¢ per bushel one.
Figure 31
OPPORTUNITY
OFFERED BY
NEW HAMPSHIRE
FOR
AGRICULTURAL PROGRESS

THE
OLD MAN
OF THE
MOUNTAIN

THE
GREATEST
NATURAL
LANDMARK
OF NEW
ENGLAND

New Hampshire has recently voted to preserve this wonderful piece of natural beauty.

THIS FOLDER ISSUED BY
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
ANDREW L. FELKER, Commissioner
State House
CONCORD - NEW HAMPSHIRE

Write above address for Listed Farms available for general and dairy purposes; also Booklet of "NEW HAMPSHIRE FARMS—YOUR OPPORTUNITY"

Figure 32
and pamphlets that promoted farming, for example, *Opportunity Offered by New Hampshire for Agricultural Progress* (see Figure 32, previous page). The *Opportunity* brochure was aimed toward prospective farm buyers. It contained no mention of tourism and no mention of transforming farms into seasonal homes, but rather information on banking facilities, schools, fertility of the soils, and profitability in certain crops. The brochure’s pages were filled generously with photographs related to farming. Felker apparently thought that pictures of livestock, fruit orchards, and other crops would tell the story of New Hampshire farms better than pictures of grand summer estates. Titles in the brochure revealed as well Felker’s objective: “New Hampshire Presents Opportunity,” “New Hampshire Farmers Succeed,” and “Farm Dwellings are Homes.”

In 1927, the Felker administration published a booklet called *Farming in New Hampshire*. Inside was a section called “People Who Have Succeeded.” One essay was about Achilles Nassikas, a young poultry farmer who came to the United States from Greece in 1913 and paid his way through the University of New Hampshire. Nassikas then started his own farm. The appearance of this story in a state agricultural publication was evidence that the new Department of Agriculture had broken from the Bachelder administration’s philosophy. Andrew Felker did not fear foreign-born farmers, nor did he seemingly work to keep them from New Hampshire.

By 1930, Andrew Felker and the Department of Agriculture were decidedly keeping up with the times. Andrew Felker wrote of an “interesting development” in a book published by the New England States’ Commissioners of Agriculture. Felker had observed in New Hampshire agriculture a “number of women who have taken to poultry raising and are making a decided success of it . . . flocks handled by a farm woman has equaled or exceeded the returns from all the rest of the farm.”

In the same article, Felker admitted that summer tourists in New Hampshire were an asset, but he bemoaned the fact that tourists consumed $1 million worth of farm products most of which were not raised on New Hampshire farms. “At present we provide less than one third of what goes on the tables in the White Mountains.” 262 Some things had not changed in the forty years since the 1880s no matter what Felker tried to do.

**The Coming of the Automobile**

After 1920, John Black claims that the great backward movement in New England agriculture since the mid-1800s began to slow. But the New Hampshire rural landscape had changed permanently. Where ox carts, horse and wagon had traveled, or occasionally bicycles, there were now automobiles. The pneumatic tire developed by Goodyear in 1916 proved of immeasurable value to farmers. 263 As automobiles began appearing in New Hampshire, it seemed that only the wealthy could afford them. However, the average resident was still being taxed for building the roads, and he became resentful for payment for what appeared to be someone else’s pleasure. When the state introduced a gasoline tax to help pay for highways, large property owners (farmers) who had previously shouldered a disproportionate amount of the tax burden for roads gave a sigh of relief. 264 However, the roads were less than perfect. Surfaced roads, like crushed stone and macadam, accounted for less than 15% of all New Hampshire highway miles in the mid-1920s. Most roads, however, were still gravel which changed easily to mud after rain. 265 (Nahum Bachelder and the Boston and Maine Railroad had fought against surfacing the roads in an effort, perhaps, to delay road transportation that could replace rail transportation.)

264 Berger, *The Devil Wagon* 90, 92.


For the many advantages the automobile and trucks had for the farmer, one major benefit was that he had to depend less and less on the Boston and Maine Railroad. During the 1920s, highway improvement was a major issue of the day. New Hampshire was busy making it easier for automobile owners from elsewhere to tour the state. The new automobile culture could not be stopped, and farmers were participating in it as well as the hotel and restaurant businesses accommodating tourists in autos. By 1927, farmers added roadside stands to their retinue of mixed farming. New Hampshire in the 1930s was strongly dedicated to the traveler by automobile and the state hosted its first Roadside Operators Conference in 1931 designed around the new science of hospitality. The lectures and demonstrations in the conference were mainly for people with business establishments on automobile routes, such as overnight accommodations and meals in private homes, tea rooms, gift shops, roadside stands, and summer boarding services. Topics in the Roadside Operator’s Conference included “What the Tourist Wants,” “The Successful Management of Tea Rooms,” “Ways of Making Establishments More Attractive,” “Opportunities in Gift Shops” and “Methods of Roadside Marketing” (see Figures 33 and 34). It was the first such conference of its kind in the country and it reflected the preferred course for New Hampshire’s future. In 1931 a Waterville Valley, NH inn owner said that the hospitality business began when farmers opened their farmhouses in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to provide homelike comfort and hospitality to strangers. The reputation of the inn or farmhouse, more than any other country businesses, became known in big cities. Nahum Bachelder contributed markedly to the state’s perpetual interest in the hospitality business. Unfortunately, he carried it to such an extreme that it overshadowed other concerns of the day. New Hampshire took up his cause gladly and built their identity on it.

266 Beane, “Agriculture and Forestry” New Hampshire 4 1041.
Good signs—neat, few words, large letters, placed at an angle to the road.

Figure 33
An example of what not to do.

Figure 34
10. CONCLUSION

A field survey map from 1934 graphically tells of the extent of deserted farms in a western New Hampshire county (see Figure 35). The map’s impact comes from an integration of surveys done in 1860, 1890, and 1934. From this, one can see the devastating amount of farms abandoned over a period of seventy years. Of 960 homesteads in 1860, only 261 were inhabited in 1934. After occupants of one farm left, neighboring farm families did likewise until whole districts died and their roads were abandoned. This upland region was particularly hard hit; it suffered more decline in farming activity than in valleys and intervale regions.  

Some occupied homesteads in the map, however, could be abandoned farms reclaimed by part-time residents. By the 1930’s the number of seasonal residences in the Grafton County area equaled deserted farms. How this happened was due, in part, to the actions of Nahum Bachelder, appointed to promote re-occupancy of deserted farms in the late nineteenth century. But the original intent to restore farms for farming purposes lost its meaning in Bachelder’s hands. In fact, it came to be generally accepted that most neglected farms could not be realistically returned to farming operations. This premise helped New Hampshire state officials determine in the late nineteenth century that the best use for abandoned homesteads was as vacation homes for the well-to-do.

Were summer guests and part-time residents the savior of New Hampshire during the state’s agricultural decline? One farmer’s point of view answered affirmatively: “Some say that it is not cows that we milk but city people. They come with money bags full—what more could we ask?” On the other hand, early twentieth century reformer Henry Bailey Stevens maintained that to accept that philosophy was to repress the farmer. Urban visitors, he said, were largely parasitic in relation to the soil, their demands for the rural experience were based

LEGEND

- Occupied Homesteads (Field Survey, 1934)
- Abandoned between 1850 - 1860
- Abandoned between 1860 - 1890

EXISTING ROADS (Field Survey)
- Roads abandoned 1880 to 1934
- Roads abandoned 1860 to 1890

DATA FROM FIELD SURVEY (1934)
AND FROM MAPS PUBLISHED
IN 1860 AND 1890

ABANDONMENT OF HOMESTEADS

SOUTHERN GRAFTON COUNTY
AGRICULTURAL EXPERIMENT STATION
UNIVERSITY OF NEW HAMPSHIRE, DURHAM, N.H.
on emotions of unrealistic sentiment. The New Hampshire farmer, in turn, became unproductive by feeding upon them. 270

Hardly a New Hampshire town did not feel the influence of summer visitors between 1870 and 1930. Howard Russell states that the decline of the hill farms was not as unmixed an evil as some viewed it. "The coming of the summer visitor and his tendency to like what he found made for a healthy intermingling of life patterns and often brought tangible benefits in the form of libraries, parks, and street trees." I do not agree that it was the presence of only the wealthy visitor who enriched the state—they were here for self-fulfilling purposes. Rather, I believe that the most interesting, vital, vibrant New Hampshire towns were the factory towns that were built by a mix of ethnic groups. It was the addition of foreign immigrants who enriched certain areas of the state, something Nahum Bachelder feared in his time.

But, as a servant to the state, Bachelder cannot be faulted because he adulated wealth and welcomed celebrities into rural New Hampshire. His most wrongful act was that, in his excitement to capture the affluent visitor, he turned his back on the struggling New Hampshire farmer who wanted to stay on his farm. Nahum Bachelder, as an agricultural leader and highest member in the grange, an organization chartered to elevate the farmer, worked hard to ensure that did not happen.

The rural New Hampshire landscape has changed since the state's first fateful dedication to reinvent farmland for the recreation business. But at what cost to the nineteenth-century farmer—and at what cost to us today? New Hampshire continues its obligation to the tourist and depends on financial nourishment from outside visitors. Bachelder's vision is as alive today in New Hampshire as one hundred years ago—an image that the state be "one grand park."

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Abandoned homesteads in Grafton County, New Hampshire in 1927
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