

Lifetime Remarks  
May 9, 2019

Thirty years ago I gave a talk at the Center annual meeting. It became an Occasional Paper. It was “Fifteen Years and Counting: Vermont Research 1974-1989 (and beyond).” In the “beyond” part, I offered suggestions for further research. I haven’t seen that paper for many years, but it contains some interesting prognostications.

It called for a general history of Vermont. In 2004, *Freedom and Unity*, the history was published, written by Michael Sherman, Gene Sessions, and P. Jeffrey Potash.

It called for an update of Andrew Nuquist’s *Vermont State Government* and in 1999 Michael Sherman organized a dozen scholars to produce *Vermont State Government Since 1963*, published jointly by the Center and the Snelling Center.

It called for a history of the Vermont judicial system, and just a couple of months ago the VHS published *The Law of the Hills*, my history of the courts.

It called for biographies of justices, and Bob Mello’s *Moses Robinson and the Founding of Vermont* was published in 2014. It even noted the need for attention to former Chief Justice

~~ENM&NA&P~~ Curiously, I feel I am in an elliptical orbit. Almost 30 years ago Gregory and I were finishing the Council of Censors book. Now I’m working with Peter Teachout on a book on the Vermont Constitution. This time it’s different. Not only do I have time to organize and think, but I have tools I didn’t have back then—the research portals of Westlaw, Hathitrust, newspapers.com, and Google Books, among others. I have a network of scholars who will read what I write and tell me when I’m off base.

Forty years ago I was writing speeches for a living. Dick Snelling was the only Governor, it was said, who had read all the previous inaugural addresses of his predecessors. I worked on drafts of a few of these talks over the years. Now I’m going deeper. That talk 30 years ago called for a biographical history of Vermont Governors, and I’m now working on what I’ve called an Inaugural History of Vermont, treating each Governor biographically, and then focusing on what each one accomplished, comparing the dreams and promises of the inaugural with the legislative reaction. I’m just cresting 1882 now.

Almost 30 years ago I was compiling a history of the Town of Berlin. Earlier this week I started back over the same ground, again with these new tools, and writing a series of sketches of the town’s leading citizens.

Thirty years ago, when I started writing about Vermont judicial history, I felt alone.

justices were published. Today, I am part of a community of scholars—notably Gary Shattuck, Bob Mello, Steve Martin, Jim Douglas, Greg Sanford, among others—a network of advice, criticism, and comfort. I am proud o