



MARSH BILLINGS
National Historical Park

WOODSTOCK, VERMONT

MARSH-BILLINGS

IS THE FIRST NATIONAL PARK TO FOCUS
ON THE THEME OF CONSERVATION HISTORY
AND THE CHANGING NATURE OF
LAND STEWARDSHIP IN AMERICA.



"THE MESSAGE AND VISION OF CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP AND ITS IMPORTANCE FOR THE FUTURE
WILL, ONCE AGAIN, GO OUT ACROSS THE NATION FROM THE HILLS OF VERMONT."

LAURANCE S. ROCKEFELLER



WELCOME TO

MARSH BILLINGS
National Historical Park

"WE MUST CONCEIVE OF STEWARDSHIP NOT
SIMPLY AS ONE INDIVIDUAL'S PRACTICE, BUT
RATHER AS THE MUTUAL AND INTIMATE
RELATIONSHIP, EXTENDING ACROSS THE
GENERATIONS, BETWEEN A HUMAN COMMUNITY
AND ITS PLACE ON EARTH."

JOHN ELDER

MIDDLEBURY COLLEGE



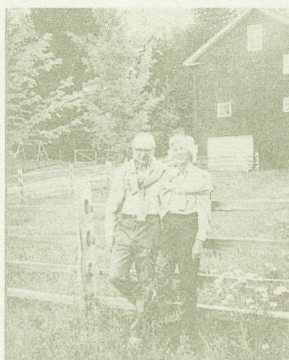
WRITER, STATESMAN, AND CONSERVATIONIST, GEORGE PERKINS MARSH, WHO SPENT HIS FORMATIVE YEARS ON THE PROPERTY, PUBLISHED HIS SEMINAL WORK, *MAN AND NATURE*, IN 1864. THE BOOK IS CONSIDERED TO BE THE FOUNTAINHEAD OF AMERICAN ECOLOGICAL THOUGHT.



FREDERICK BILLINGS, WHO MADE HIS FORTUNE IN THE WEST, PURCHASED THE MARSH FAMILY PROPERTY IN 1869. HE PUT MARSH'S CONCEPTS OF STEWARDSHIP INTO PRACTICE BY TRANSFORMING THE ESTATE INTO A MODEL OF PROGRESSIVE FARMING AND FORESTRY.

STEWARDSHIP

Marsh-Billings National Historical Park, encompassing the historic Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller Farm and Estate in Woodstock, Vermont, is the first unit of the national park system to focus on the theme of conservation history and the changing nature of land stewardship in America. The park, a gift to the people of the United States from



LAURANCE SPELMAN AND MARY FRENCH ROCKEFELLER, SHOWN HERE AT THE BILLINGS FARM & MUSEUM IN 1982, DONATED THE NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK TO THE PEOPLE OF THE UNITED STATES.

Laurance S. and Mary F. Rockefeller, actually represents several generations of conservationist thought and practice. It was the grandfather of Mary F. Rockefeller, Frederick Billings, who had created the estate in the late nineteenth century. He established a progressive dairy farm and a professionally managed forest—both significant improvements in a region severely depleted by deforestation and overgrazing. In these efforts, Billings had been influenced by the writer, statesman, and conservationist George Perkins Marsh, who earlier had grown up on the property. In his landmark book *Man and Nature*, first published in 1864, and reprinted and revised several times thereafter, Marsh described the spreading ecological destruction of America's countryside and argued for a new ethic of responsible stewardship.

Today the park is a cultural landscape of great historic significance and integrity. It reflects the continuity of more



JULIA PARMLY BILLINGS AND HER DAUGHTERS CONTINUED TO PURSUE BILLINGS'S FARSIGHTED APPROACH TO FARMING AND FORESTRY WELL INTO THE TWENTIETH CENTURY. SHOWN FROM LEFT TO RIGHT ARE: ELIZABETH BILLINGS, MARY MONTAGU BILLINGS FRENCH, JULIA PARMLY BILLINGS, AND LAURA BILLINGS LEE.

than a century of careful management by Billings, his wife, Julia and daughters, and Mary F. and Laurance S. Rockefeller.

This landscape, with its forests, fields, and gardens, offers tangible evidence of the historical contributions of George

Perkins Marsh and Frederick Billings to the theory and practical application of land stewardship principles. Thus the park is an excellent place to interpret their contributions, as well as the more recent contributions of Laurance S. Rockefeller, to American conservation and the national park system.

Marsh-Billings National Historical Park and Billings Farm & Museum are uniquely positioned to demonstrate and interpret a conservation philosophy that evokes a strong sense of place, created and sustained by human activity. Neither a wilderness nor entirely a product of culture, this is a place where natural processes and cultural traditions are equally respected.

And underlying all this is a vision of stewardship, which can be interpreted on many levels, practical and philosophical. And so the park is an important center for public interpretation, education, and innovative activity. Through a network



of partnerships and outreach initiatives with nonprofits, universities, and other organizations, the park encourages the best thinking and practices in conservation stewardship. The focus is on Vermont, yet the principles are relevant to the future of many other communities and landscapes.

PARK OVERVIEW

Marsh-Billings National Historical Park is located in Woodstock, among the rolling hills and pastures of eastern Vermont. Incorporated in 1772, Woodstock was renowned in the late 1800s and early 1900s as one of New England's most beautiful villages. It has been a resort town for over a century.

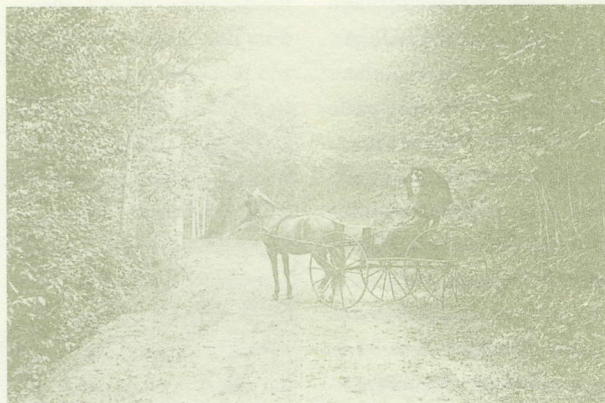
The boundary of the national park includes Mount Tom forest and pastures as well as the Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller Mansion and surrounding residential buildings, and grounds. Within the park's boundary, in a "protection

zone," is Billings Farm & Museum, which is privately owned and operated by the Woodstock Foundation, Inc. The Woodstock Foundation and the National Park Service are working in partnership to present both the park and the museum to the public.

FOREST

The national historical park includes 550 acres of forest on the slopes of Mount Tom. Beginning in the 1870s, Frederick Billings developed what he considered to be his crowning achievement in Woodstock—the forest, with its tree plantations and networks of trails and carriage roads. Encompassing 50 different forest stands, the Marsh-Billings forest includes plantations of single and mixed species as well as former farm fields now in various stages of forest succession. Of the tree plantations set out by Billings in the 1800s, 11 survive today. One of the

GEORGE PERKINS MARSH FRAMED A CONCEPT OF STEWARDSHIP WHERE SOUND "HUSBANDRY" COULD BE THE FOUNDATION FOR A MORE PRODUCTIVE AND CIVIL SOCIETY.



BILLINGS CONSTRUCTED A 20-MILE NETWORK OF FOOTPATHS AND CARRIAGE ROADS TO SHOWCASE THE MANAGED FOREST AND PICTURESQUE VIEWS OF THE COUNTRYSIDE. SHOWN HERE, IS A BILLINGS FAMILY FRIEND DRIVING ON THE CARRIAGE ROADS, C. 1887-96.

oldest continuously managed woodlands in North America, this forest still produces saw logs and firewood. At the same time, it is managed with a strong emphasis on aesthetics, education, and recreation.

Ever since Billings constructed his 20-mile network of footpaths and carriage roads to showcase the

managed forest and picturesque views of the countryside, the community has been welcome in the Mount Tom woodland. Today these trails and carriage roads are also a major component of a wider network of cross-country skiing trails, operated under easement by the Woodstock Ski Touring Center.



THE MARSH-BILLINGS-ROCKEFELLER MANSION WAS DESIGNATED A NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK IN 1967. THE MANSION IS SHOWN HERE AS IT APPEARED IN 1886.

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RESIDENTIAL COMPLEX

The mansion, a large three-story brick residence sited on a promontory at the head of Elm and River streets, is the centerpiece of the residential complex. The mansion was originally built for George Perkins Marsh's parents and their growing family, in 1805-7. After Billings purchased it in 1869, the mansion was thoroughly renovated twice. It was remodeled a final time

after it became the residence of Mary F. and Laurance S. Rockefeller in 1954. Collections belonging to the Billings and Rockefeller families include more than 500 paintings and prints—works by such artists as Thomas Cole, Albert Bierstadt, John Frederick Kensett, and Asher B. Durand. Together these works shed light on changing environmental perceptions and suggest the influence of art and artists

on the conservation movement in the mid- to late-nineteenth century. The residential complex also includes a two-and-a-half-story belvedere reminiscent of a Swiss cottage and a three-story Queen Anne-style carriage barn.

BILLINGS FARM & MUSEUM

The farm includes 88 acres of pastures, hay meadows, cropland, and small portions of lowland woods, along with a herd of registered Jersey cows, Southdown sheep, draft horses, oxen, chickens, and other farm animals. An active dairy, which grows its own feed and sells milk, is a major component of the outdoor museum that is operated on the farm.

A living museum of Vermont's rural heritage, Billings Farm & Museum interprets significant themes of the national historical park. There, permanent exhibits portray the values of 1890s farm families of east-central Vermont and explore the relevance of those values to today's culture. The restored 1890 Farm House expands on the museum's interpretation of rural farm culture, addressing the



THE MANSION PARLOR, 1989.



THE MORE THAN 500 PAINTINGS AND PRINTS IN THE COLLECTIONS OF THE BILLINGS AND ROCKEFELLER FAMILIES SHED LIGHT ON CHANGING ENVIRONMENTAL PERCEPTIONS AND SUGGEST THE INFLUENCE OF ART AND ARTISTS ON THE CONSERVATION MOVEMENT IN THE MID- TO LATE-NINETEENTH CENTURY. SHOWN HERE IS *CATHEDRAL ROCK, YOSEMITE, 1870*. ALBERT BIERSTADT (1830-1902).



historical role of the Billings Farm. The operating dairy farm, where championship Jersey cows have been raised since 1871, conducts and interprets responsible agricultural land stewardship. Museum programs interpret the progressive agricultural interests of Frederick Billings as well as the relationships between rural farm culture and the stewardship of working landscapes in an agricultural countryside.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PARK

Marsh-Billings National Historical Park has an important place in the history of conservation stewardship. Its significance lies in both people and practices—several prominent American conservationists and more than a century of continuous, careful stewardship, evident in the park's landscape, buildings, and museum collections.

THE FARM INCLUDES PASTURES, HAY MEADOWS, CROPLAND, AND SMALL PORTIONS OF LOWLAND WOODS ALONG THE BANKS OF THE OTTAUQUECHEE RIVER.

BILLINGS FARM & MUSEUM'S JERSEY COWS HEADING TO THE BARN FOR AFTERNOON MILKING.



Before the park was established, the mansion and its environs were determined to be of such national significance that they were listed as a National Historic Landmark. In addition, as part of the Woodstock Village Historic District, the residential complex and much

of the farmland were listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In 1847 George Perkins Marsh saw that Vermont's landscape was in trouble. That year he spoke before

the Agricultural Society of Rutland County, Vermont, and observed, "Every middle-aged man who revisits his birth-place after a few years of absence, looks upon another landscape than that which formed the theater of his youthful toils and pleasures."

Growing up in Woodstock, Marsh had been a keen observer of nature. He had observed the systematic destruction of Vermont's forest cover, first for potash and lumber, then for croplands and upland pastures. He watched as the thin soils of the surrounding hills eroded. He saw the mud run through the streets of town after heavy rains. He watched the gullies on the sides of Mount Tom grow deeper, year after year. The Vermont landscape that Marsh knew in 1847 no longer resembled the place of his birth.



HAYING ON THE BILLINGS FARM, C. 1890.

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Many years later, however, while writing *Man and Nature*, Marsh was looking far beyond his native Vermont. Having served his country as a statesman in a number of posts around the Mediterranean Basin—in Turkey, Greece, and Italy—and having traveled in the Middle East, he had observed traces of the near collapse of ancient classical cultures which had exhausted their land and resources. Reflecting on what he had seen, Marsh then framed a concept of stewardship where sound “husbandry” could be the foundation for a more productive and civil society. This was a vision that Marsh’s biographer, David Lowenthal, has characterized in this way: “If man could ruin nature, he might also mend it.”

At about the same time that Marsh was making his Rutland speech, another



FREDERICK BILLINGS’S EMPLOYEES, 1893.

Woodstock native nearly a generation younger than Marsh was preparing to go to California with the Gold Rush. Frederick Billings made his fortune in the West, first in law and later in railroads. By the time he returned to Vermont, in the mid-1860s, he found that deforestation and upland grazing had continued unchecked. More than three-quarters of Vermont’s forested lands had been

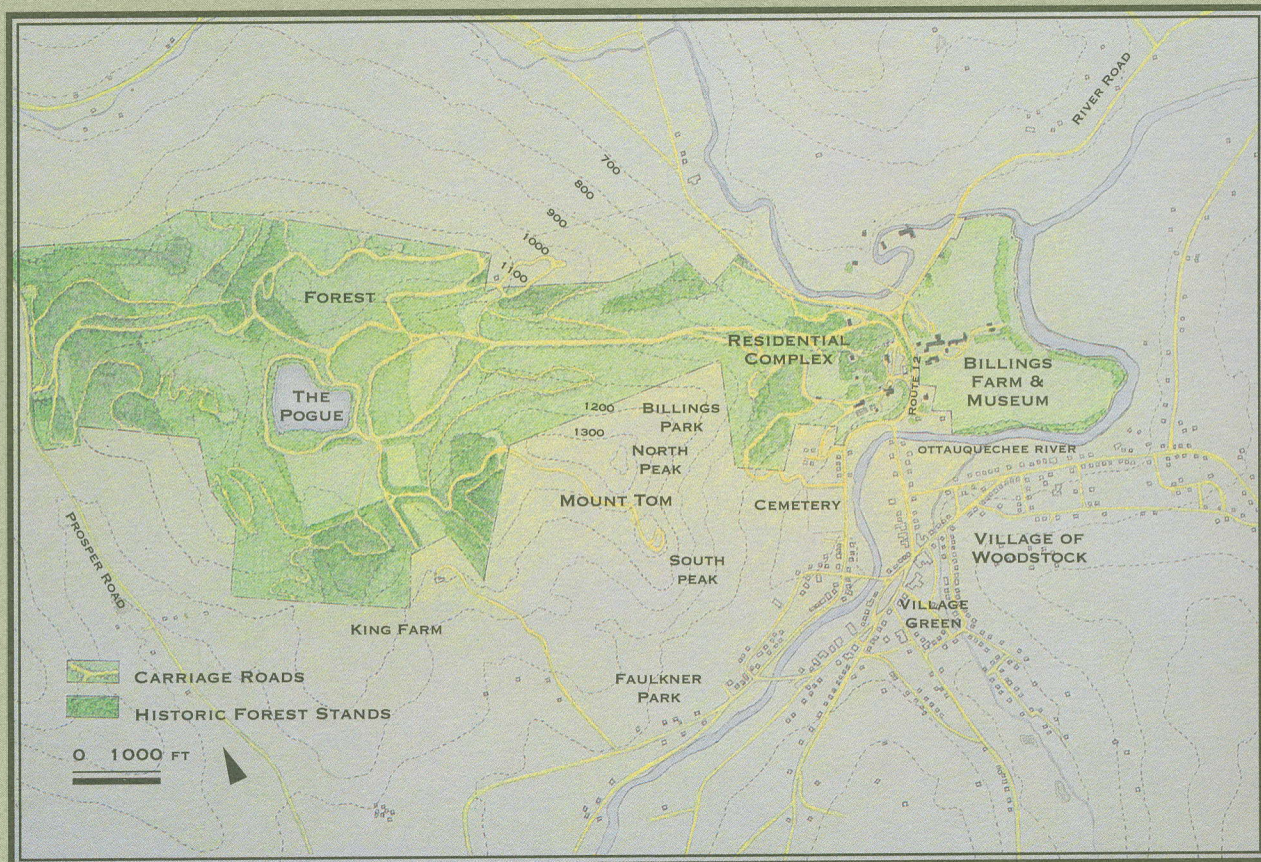
stripped. Reading *Man and Nature*, Billings was profoundly impressed by Marsh’s message. He purchased Marsh’s boyhood home and, with the ambition to make the estate a model of progressive farming and forestry, he began to make changes. With his new plantations, the uplands would become a managed forest. On the lowlands he developed a state-of-the-art dairy.

After his death, Julia Billings and her daughters continued to pursue Billings’s far-sighted approach to farming and forestry well into the twentieth century. Their legacy of stewardship was then continued and enhanced by the third Billings generation: Mary French Rockefeller, along with her husband, the conservationist Laurance S. Rockefeller. In 1982 they established Billings Farm & Museum. Ten years later they donated the mansion, its art and furniture, and forest lands for the national historical park. In addition, through the Woodstock Foundation, Mary F. and Laurance S. Rockefeller set up a dedicated endowment fund in 1992 to preserve and maintain the mansion, its outbuildings, and the immediate surrounding property, as well as to manage the forest within the park.



CARRIAGE ROAD THROUGH THE MOUNT TOM UPLANDS,
WHICH BILLINGS REFORESTED IN THE LATE NINETEENTH CENTURY.





MARSH-BILLINGS NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK

MARSH-BILLINGS NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK AND BILLINGS FARM & MUSEUM ARE LOCATED OFF OF ROUTE 12 IN WOODSTOCK, VERMONT.

FROM BOSTON, TAKE ROUTE I-93 NORTH (58 MILES) TO I-89 NORTH. TAKE I-89 THROUGH LEBANON, NH (57 MILES) TO EXIT 1 (ROUTE 4). TAKE ROUTE 4 WEST (13 MILES) THROUGH QUECHEE AND TAFTSVILLE TO WOODSTOCK.

FROM BURLINGTON, TAKE I-89 SOUTH (85 MILES) TO EXIT 1, TAKE ROUTE 4 WEST (13 MILES) THROUGH QUECHEE AND TAFTSVILLE TO WOODSTOCK.

FROM ROUTE 4 IN DOWNTOWN WOODSTOCK, TURN RIGHT ONTO ROUTE 12 NORTH. CROSS THE IRON BRIDGE OVER THE OTTAUQUECHEE RIVER. BEAR RIGHT ONTO RIVER ROAD; TAKE THE FIRST RIGHT INTO THE BILLINGS FARM & MUSEUM PARKING LOT.

MARSH-BILLINGS NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK AND BILLINGS FARM & MUSEUM ARE OPEN DAILY 10:00 AM – 5:00 PM, MAY THROUGH OCTOBER.

**MARSH-BILLINGS NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK
(802) 457-3368
BILLINGS FARM & MUSEUM
(802) 457-2355**

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PAGE 4. (BOTTOM RIGHT). COLLECTIONS OF MARSH-BILLINGS NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK.
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PAGE 6. (TOP). BILLINGS FAMILY ARCHIVES.
PAGE 6. (BOTTOM). BILLINGS FAMILY ARCHIVES.
PAGE 7. WOODSTOCK HISTORICAL SOCIETY, WOODSTOCK, VERMONT.
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MARSH-BILLINGS NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK TODAY

- ▶ THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE OFFERS GUIDED TOURS IN THE HISTORIC MARSH-BILLINGS-ROCKEFELLER MANSION AND GARDENS, AND THE MOUNT TOM FOREST. THESE TOURS EXPLORE THE HISTORY OF CONSERVATION AND INTERPRET THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF MARSH, BILLINGS, AND ROCKEFELLER TO CONSERVATION THOUGHT AND PRACTICE. ADVANCED RESERVATIONS ARE STRONGLY ENCOURAGED FOR MANSION AND GARDEN TOURS.
- ▶ WALKING THROUGH MOUNT TOM'S HISTORIC FOREST STANDS, VISITORS CAN LEARN ABOUT ONE OF THE OLDEST PROFESSIONALLY MANAGED WOODLANDS IN THE UNITED STATES. THE PUBLIC IS WELCOME TO HIKE THE NETWORK OF CARRIAGE ROADS AND TRAILS ON MOUNT TOM, WITHOUT AN ENTRANCE FEE. THE USE OF MOUNTAIN BIKES, SNOWMOBILES, OR OTHER MOTORIZED VEHICLES ARE PROHIBITED BY THE DEED OF GIFT ESTABLISHING THE PARK.
- ▶ BILLINGS FARM & MUSEUM IS A LIVING MUSEUM OF VERMONT'S RURAL HERITAGE AND AN ACTIVE DAIRY FARM. LOCATED WITHIN THE BOUNDARY OF THE PARK AND OPERATED BY THE WOODSTOCK FOUNDATION, INC., THE FARM & MUSEUM IS A PRIVATE, NON-PROFIT EDUCATIONAL ORGANIZATION. THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE AND THE WOODSTOCK FOUNDATION ARE WORKING SIDE BY SIDE IN PARTNERSHIP—OPERATING MARSH-BILLINGS NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK AND THE BILLINGS FARM & MUSEUM, RESPECTIVELY—TO PROMOTE A VISION OF CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP THAT IS AS RELEVANT TODAY AS IT WAS IN GEORGE PERKINS MARSH'S ERA.
- ▶ THE PARK IS COMMITTED TO INITIATIVES THAT REACH BEYOND ITS PHYSICAL BOUNDARIES TO PEOPLE, ORGANIZATIONS, AND INSTITUTIONS ACROSS AMERICA CURRENTLY ENGAGED IN STEWARDSHIP WORK. THROUGH THE *STEWARDSHIP INITIATIVE*, THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE AND THE WOODSTOCK FOUNDATION HIGHLIGHT AND ENCOURAGE EFFECTIVE AND INNOVATIVE APPROACHES TO STEWARDSHIP.
- ▶ THE *CONSERVATION STUDY INSTITUTE* IS ANOTHER BUILDING BLOCK FOR THE PARK'S OUTREACH PROGRAM AND SUPPORTS THE ACTIVITIES OF THE *STEWARDSHIP INITIATIVE*. THE INSTITUTE, WORKING WITH ACADEMIC AND COMMUNITY-BASED PARTNERS, PROVIDES A FORUM FOR THE STUDY OF CONSERVATION HISTORY, THE PRACTICE OF CONSERVATION TODAY, AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS IN THE FIELD.
- ▶ ESTABLISHED IN THE 1870S AS A MODEL FARM AND FOREST, THE MARSH-BILLINGS-ROCKEFELLER PROPERTY HAS BEEN CAREFULLY MANAGED AS A WORKING LANDSCAPE EVER SINCE. THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE AND THE WOODSTOCK FOUNDATION WILL CONTINUE THE TRADITION OF FORWARD-LOOKING MANAGEMENT AND, WITH OTHER PARTNERS, OFFER DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS IN SUSTAINABLE FORESTRY AND AGRICULTURE. THE BILLINGS FOREST WILL REMAIN VERMONT'S FIRST AND OLDEST TREE FARM.



LOGS FROM HORSE-DRAWN SKID TO PORTABLE SAWMILL. DEMONSTRATION FOR WOODLAND OWNERS, A COLLABORATIVE PROJECT OF MARSH-BILLINGS, BILLINGS FARM & MUSEUM, U.S. FOREST SERVICE, VERMONT DEPARTMENT OF FORESTS, PARKS AND RECREATION, AND THE VERMONT WOODLAND RESOURCES ASSOCIATION, 1995.





"I SAT ON A LITTLE STOOL BETWEEN MY FATHER'S KNEES IN THE TWO-WHEELED CHAISE HE ALWAYS DROVE. TO MY MIND THE WHOLE EARTH SPREAD OUT BEFORE ME.

MY FATHER POINTED OUT THE MOST STRIKING TREES AS WE PASSED THEM AND TOLD ME HOW TO DISTINGUISH THEIR VARIETIES. I DO NOT THINK I EVER

AFTERWARD FAILED TO KNOW ONE FOREST TREE FROM ANOTHER. . . .

WHAT STRUCK ME, PERHAPS MOST OF ALL, HE STOPPED HIS HORSE ON TOP OF A

STEEP HILL, BADE ME NOTICE HOW THE WATER THERE FLOWED IN DIFFERENT

DIRECTIONS, AND TOLD ME SUCH A POINT WAS CALLED A WATERSHED. I NEVER

FORGOT THAT WORD, OR ANY PART OF MY FATHER'S TALK THAT DAY."

GEORGE PERKINS MARSH



MARSH-BILLINGS NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK

P.O. Box 178

WOODSTOCK, VERMONT 05091