

Editorial

East End Park: A Community Effort

When I was a reporter for the Standard nearly a decade ago, the idea of a beautiful new park on Woodstock's East End – which had crumbled into what many knew as “the jungle” – was exactly that, just an idea.

However, in more recent years, community members determined to see that vision through to reality have made great strides toward that goal. And those strides have culminated in the successful effort to clean up and beautify the East End, and most recently, in a finalized plan for a community park there.

Indeed, it's been a shining example of what local people working together can accomplish, and we'd say it's shaping up to be one of the greatest community accomplishments Woodstock has ever seen. Once the East End Park is complete, Woodstock will have another large green space with which to attract visitors and commerce.

Sustainable Woodstock's East End Action Group has led the charge, and, with all the work done on the ground there at the East End, it's easier now to see how seamlessly the planned park would fit there. Joby Thompson of the East End Action Group said they're excited about the project, noting it was the group's “persistence and vision” that led the way to this point. They've also seen people from the community help with various tasks, from clearing brush to grant writing.

“There have always been people pitching in and still are,” Thompson said.

That community spirit was there in spades at Sustainable Woodstock's First Quack Around the Park Duck Derby, held several weeks ago. Thompson said a major goal of that event was simply to get people down to the East End who hadn't seen how much it has improved. She guessed there are still many local residents who haven't gone over there yet to see the results of the progress with their own eyes.

If you haven't, we encourage you to do so – it's an inspiring thing to see. And with much work ahead, the effort continues with the same determination.

“We're dogged about it, if nothing else, so we'll be coming out and asking the community for more support,” Thompson said. “But we're excited about our plan and what can happen and what it can provide for the community.”

It's worth noting as well that the East End has Woodstock's only public access to the Ottauquechee River – a nice boon for the park. The plan for the East End Park also includes a small amphitheater, along with the ample green space for people to enjoy.

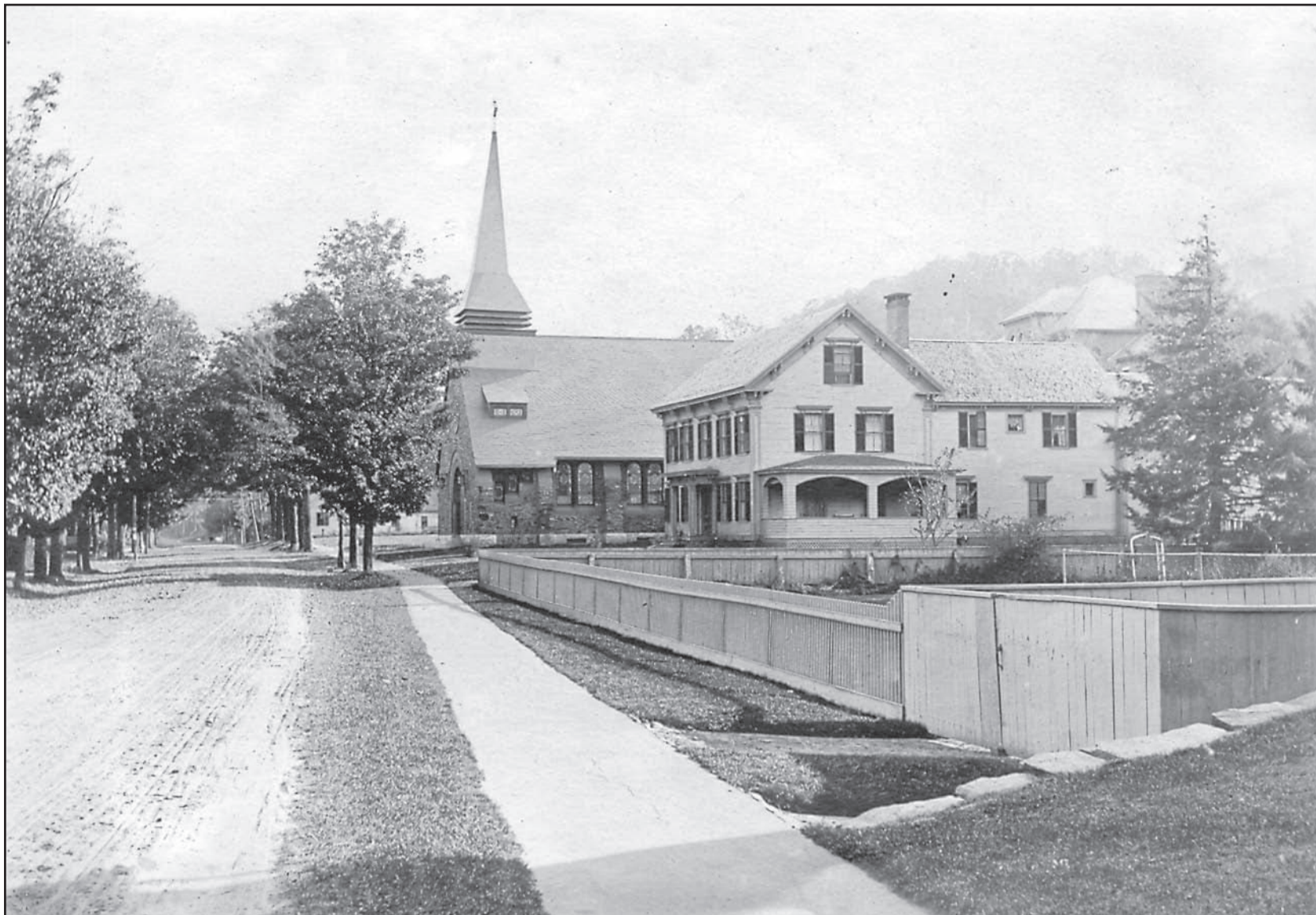
Now, Thompson said, the East End Action Group is moving into a construction-phasing schedule that's planned out over the next one to three years.

As recently stated in an article by our reporter Michelle Fountain, the first of the three phases to complete the park will be done within the next 18 months. This includes planting (including apple trees on the hill and an edible garden), drainage work, several paths (including one along the river), picnic tables, stone benches and a bike rack. The article further reported that a Jack and Dorothy Byrne Foundation grant will help start the work, according to Sustainable Woodstock Director Sally Miller, and fundraising is ongoing to make all of the work possible.

As the project moves ahead, there are sure to be even more volunteer opportunities for those interested in helping out with the East End Park.

We look forward to seeing more progress there, and, with the strong community effort behind the park, it's clear that the East End's most exciting days are yet to come.

— Gareth Henderson



This historic photo shows Our Lady of the Snows Catholic Church on South Street in Woodstock Village.

Photo Courtesy of Woodstock History Center

What's in a Name? A Look Woodstocks in the US

Living in Woodstock is source of confusion when strangers ask you where you're from. Almost always the reaction, universally, is, “Oh, yes, the rock festival.” The furthest away from home we have gotten this was in Ireland! Of course the famous 1969 rock concert was called Woodstock, but it was in Bethel, New York, only near Woodstock.

Some people know that “Groundhog Day,” one of the best movies ever made, was filmed largely in Woodstock, Illinois, that is, even though its location was supposedly Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania. Woodstocks exist in 22 states in America. This seems like a lot, but about 30 other names with a similar number of appearances exist, topped by the champion, Washington, with 88 (some states obviously have more than one, but this counts modifiers—like Washington Courthouse, Connecticut— I presume), and Springfield with 41.

What brought this all on was a visit I paid to the library last week. There I came across a book, “Vermont Place-Names, Footprints of History” by Esther Munroe Swift. In it she comments on the origin and history of Vermont place names in our state, Woodstock being alphabetically last, as always. She says that the usual assumption for the naming of Woodstock in the New Hampshire grant of 1761 is that it was named for Woodstock, Connecticut, a town in the northwest corner of that state from which many of our early settlers came. When you look at a map of Connecticut and notice that the next town south of Woodstock is called Pomfret, this seems a logical assumption. Swift notes, however, that there is a possibility that New Hampshire Governor Benning Wentworth may have had a tribute to Woodstock (“a place in the woods”), Oxfordshire, England in mind. There is also the possibility he may have wanted to honor his wife's relative William Bentinck, the second Viscount Woodstock. I think those are a stretch, though, and the Connecticut connection is far more likely. Maybe that was named after the Oxfordshire town.

Woodstock was made the shire town of Windsor County in 1794 after trading the title with Windsor for a few years, and became “official” in 1797 with the establishment of the first post office in the village. Then the village was known as the Woodstock Green, or simply, the Green. Of course, the village, the post office, and the Green still exist today. Much of the early development of the town was west of the village, on “the flats”, which we know today as West Woodstock. Here the conjunction of a rare

expanse of flat land and water power from the Ottauquechee River made a good location for mills. Grist mills and saw mills were essential in any 18th century permanent settlement, and many other kinds of mills were as important, including oil mills (to make linseed oil), cloth mills, steel mills (which we might today call machine shops), and others.

Originally the settlement was called The Flats, but when Jabez Bennet established a saw mill and a corn mill there in 1788 it became known as Bennet's Mills. In 1830, when Rueben Daniels set up mills making wool pickers and cards, rope sacking, and especially feed cutters, for which he was noted, the settlement became known as Daniels Mills. West Woodstock finally got its own post office in 1884. It closed in 1966.

Early Woodstock was divided eventually into North and South Parishes. Though the North never got its own post office, the South Woodstock post office opened in 1828, and is of course still there today. North of The Flats was the community of English Mills, named for Joel English who had very successful saw and grist mills there. Eventually the name of the community was changed to Prosper, in recognition of English's prosperity, so the story goes. There was even a Prosper post office for a short time, between 1896 and 1903.

Taft Mills was also named after the owners of a successful enterprise, a machine shop and foundry that became nationally known, principally for the excellence of the scythes made there and shipped all over the country. Stephen Taft established the mill in 1790 and ran it with his brothers Seth and Daniel until Daniel's death in 1857. The hamlet became Taftsville officially in 1841 with establishment of the post office.

Other areas and topographical features are named after individuals who lived in or on them. Chandlers Mills, Cox neighborhood, Curtis Hollow, Mower's Mills, and Blake, Baylies, Fletcher, and Gilbert Hills are all well-known examples. Mount Tom and Mount Peg are popularly supposed to be named after individuals of whom nothing else is known but their first names. However, there are Mount Toms all over New England and one authority on place names has speculated that its origin could be a Native American expression meaning “hill, mountain, or look out place”. We also have a Gulf Stream, named for the Barnard Gulf, from whence it comes, Happy Valley Brook, and Kedron Brook from a biblical name for a land of promise.

What's in a name? Quite a lot, if you dig a little bit.

HISTORICALLY SPEAKING

By Tom Bourne

How You Doin'? Want a Cheese Nip?

First of all, if you're a senior and she's a sophomore, it's practically a lock to begin with. You don't even have to try. You saunter onto the bus, you and your senior buddies. And you saunter in the way that seniors saunter. You've been refining your saunter since you became a sophomore and there were freshman around to look up to you, and your saunter has grown more self-assured with the passage of the next few years until by the time you're a senior, you saunter so majestically and yet so insouciantly that you almost envy the younger kids for not being you so that they can admire you.

You stop at the top of the steps, and nod to the driver whose reason for having a place in the cosmos is simply to get you back and forth between the bus stop and the school and who doesn't really exist apart from that. “Hey, Herbie,” you say to him magnanimously, “How you doin'?” “Ok,” he says and leaves it at that because he doesn't want to presume to trouble you any further. Your eyes sweep over the bus and there she is, sitting by herself halfway back. She's a sophomore and she is so cute you can't stand it. Her name is Kathy Culhane, and her life is about to take a turn she's probably dreamed about but never really thought would happen.

Your buddies saunter toward the rear of the bus and take seats back there. You saunter down the aisle until you come to the seat where Kathy is sitting. You look at her with just the hint of a smile, knowing her heart is fluttering and you say, “Mind if I sit?” She looks up at you for a second and then she manages to find her voice and says with downcast eyes as if she thinks that if she looks up at you too long, you'll vanish and she'll wake up from a dream, “Ok.”

You casually toss your books; your loose-leaf binder with the cool sayings scrawled all over it, your biology text, your U.S. History II text and your English Lit text up on the rack overhead. You flop down on the seat and casually sprawl there, slouching in a lordly manner with one foot stretched out into the aisle where people have to step over it. You turn to

her and say “How you doin', Kathy?” If her heart was fluttering before, right now it has almost stopped beating because YOU KNOW HER NAME. You can see the entry in her diary that night, written in pink ink with big looping letters and little circles for dots over the “i's. You can hear the breathless conversations with each and every one of her girlfriends over the phone all evening.

You've been munching all this while on the cheese nips in the bag you carried onto the bus in violation of the no eating or drinking on the bus rule, which in your senior splendor you don't even deign to acknowledge, and as if to confer on her from on high the same privilege, if only for the length of time of a bus ride, you tilt the bag toward her and say, “Want a cheese nip?” Her eyes shining with what would surely, if you wanted it, be a lifetime of devotion,

she tentatively reaches out her sweet little sophomore hand just as all the books you tossed up on the rack so haphazardly, come crashing down on your head and your lap.

For a second or two you're not quite sure what happened but you do know that there are cheese nips and cheese nip crumbs all over you and Kathy. There are loose-leaf pages scattered in the aisle, most prominently the one you had doodled in U.S. History which was the rather imaginatively proportioned and anatomically detailed nude.

You also know, almost for a certainty, that your left ear has been severed by a glancing blow from your Biology text and that it hurts terribly and you would give anything to reach up and just see if it's still there, but even in your pain and exponentially growing embarrassment there is still a little part of you that is trying to figure out if there's a way to salvage the situation and act as if for reasons of your own you'd planned the whole thing.

There is no way. Kathy is looking at you with her eyes wide and a hand over her mouth. Not in horror at your missing ear, because your ear is

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You Never Can Tell

By CHUCK GUNDERSEN



VERMONT STANDARD

Established in 1853

Published every Thursday by Vermont Standard, Inc.
PO Box 88, Woodstock, Vermont 05091
(802) 457-1313 Fax (802) 457-3639
www.thevermontstandard.com

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Subscription Rates

\$25 — eEdition • \$10 — eEdition Add On To Current Subscription
\$35 — In-State Delivery (VT Only) • \$45 — Out-of-State Delivery
NO REFUNDS

Second Class postage paid at Woodstock, Vermont 05091
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