

HOTEL COOLIDGE
 PO Box 515
 White River Junction,
 Vermont 05001
 Tel 802-295-3110 x 173
 800-622-1124
 Fax 802-291-5100
 davidbriggs@hotelcoolidge.com
 Fax 802-291-5100

WHITE RIVER JUNCTION

A Bustling Commercial Center

Part of the town of Hartford on the west bank of the Connecticut River, the village of White River Junction was born out of improvements in transportation technology. The fact that three railroads met at this point where the White River drains into the Connecticut proved a perfect location for a commercial oriented community to thrive. Those first railroads were the Vermont Central, the Northern New Hampshire and the Connecticut & Passumpsic River lines. In 1875, the short Woodstock Railroad joined in at the junction. All the railroads projected out to all points of the compass.



Within fifty years, the confluence of so many active railroads continued to spark the commercial success of White River Junction. In 1848, only one track ran through town, by 1900, there were eight. Those rail lines easily managed the fifty daily passenger trains besides all the freights passing through the junction. Busy rail yards grew both south and west of the village and a pall of smoke belching from coal burning locomotives was not an unfamiliar sight.

As rail traffic increased, commercial businesses opened in White River Junction. The White River Paper Company manufactured high quality paper products. Smith & Sons produced a wide range of candies and crackers. So many businesses placed buildings adjacent to the rail sidings that one earned the name of 'railroad row.' But White River Junction was more than a railroad town.

However, settlement failed to quickly occur on the western shore of the Connecticut River. It took the railroads to transform the site of the village. Before a single rail was laid, there were only three farm dwellings and the same number of families at the locality.

Downtown White River Junction still personifies the time when it served as a bustling commercial center when the railroad was king and White River Junction earned the distinction of being the most important railroad junction in northern New England. The junction gained such importance that armed residents guarded railroad bridges in 1917 against the threat of German sabotage.

Before the introduction of the railroad, what would become White River Junction proved to be rather insignificant. New Hampshire governor Benning Wentworth granted a town charter to Hartford in 1761, being the first town so formed east of the Green Mountains. After the end of the French & Indian War in 1763, new settlers discovered the charted town quite accessible through travel on the Connecticut River. Waterpower provided by the Connecticut, White and Ottauquechee Rivers were capable of running a number of mills.

Being a burgeoning transportation hub proved an attraction to both visitors and businesses and White River Junction "became a place with its name." With the opening of the railroad, the State of Vermont commissioned White River Junction to be one of two wool depots in the state. Such a designation allowed this village to manage a large portion of the Merino wool raised in Vermont and destined for other New England mills. Rapid growth dictated a post office to be opened in the village by 1850.

It was only natural that with a busy railroad junction, passengers would require proper accommodations. Colonel Samuel Nutt, observing the prospect, purchased Enfield, New Hampshire's Grafton House, moved it to White River Junction and located it opposite the tracks. Nutt rechristened his new hotel the Junction House and it flourished in the ever-increasing volume of passenger traffic. Fire destroyed Nutt's hotel in 1878, as well as its replacement in 1925. A year before the second blaze the hotel was renamed the Hotel Coolidge in honor of the nation's sitting President, native son, Calvin Coolidge. The name was carried over to the third hotel constructed on the site in 1925. Thousands of people stayed at this hotel every year during its heyday.



continued >

Archival Materials
 Outstanding Custom Framing
 Shadowbox Framing

JUNCTION FRAME SHOP

Where framing is an Art!
 55 SOUTH MAIN STREET
 WHITE RIVER JUNCTION, VT
 (802) 296-2121

77 Gates Street
 White River Junction, VT 05001
 802-295-8044
 Hours Tuesday to Saturday 10 AM-5 PM
 www.lampscapes.com

LAMPSCAPES

Vermont Soapworks

Discount Factory
 Outlet & Soap
 Museum

FREE Tours Available!
 616 Exchange Street, Middlebury VT
 802-388-4302 www.vtsoap.com

THE BAKERS' STUDIO
 Fine Breads and Pastries

25 South Main Street
 White River Junction, Vermont
 (802) 296-7201
 thebakersstudio@valley.net

Best NEW YORK STYLE BAGELS
 Coffee • Pastries • Sandwiches

C&S Pizza

"Delivery within a 4 Mile radius"

SEE OUR MENU
 802-295-5622

104 S. Main St., White River Jct., VT

elliott newman
 estate & fine jewelry

central street • woodstock, vermont
 802-457-2344

Who Is Sylvia?

A unique store, featuring men's & women's clothing and accessories from mid-nineteenth to twentieth century

26 Central Street
 Woodstock, Vermont 05091
 802-457-1110

Vintage Clothing • Accessories • Linens

UPPER VALLEY FOOD CO-OP
 180 N. Main Street, White River Junction, VT 05001
 802-295-5804

POND RIDGE MOTEL & APARTMENTS
 A/C • Phones • TV
 www.vtliving.com/pondridgemotel
 Email - PRM4VT@aol.com

On The River
 Rt. 4, Woodstock, VT 05091
 (802) 457-1667

DAVID CRANDALL
 fine jewelry creations

The Bridgewater Mill, 1st Floor • 802-672-5475
 P.O. Box 150, Bridgewater, VT 05034

WHITE RIVER JUNCTION

A Bustling Commercial Center

continued >

Perhaps one of the greatest attractions coming to the village was the appearance of the Barnum, Bailey and Hutchinson's Circus on August 11, 1882. Papers advertised "Two Great Performances" and the "Greatest Living Showman, BARNUM!"—Mr. P.T. Barnum himself. Fifty-five railcars carried the circus into town and throngs watched the colorful parade. Then a total of 29,000 people enjoyed the two shows: featuring three rings, Jumbo, with twenty-one other elephants, numerous performers and the "Traveling Museum of Wonder Marvels." Nearly matching the circus performances was Buffalo Bill Cody's Wild West Show on July 23, 1895. Trains operated special excursions to bring in out-of-towners. People packed the street to watch the parade of participants and then a crowd, estimated at 12,000, thoroughly enjoyed seeing the western experience come to life.

After the fairgrounds closed, the Twin-State Airport was constructed upon the grounds. Planes regularly stopped here on flights originating or ending in Boston.

In 1907 Garfield Miller, whose father worked for the Excelsior Carriage Company, took a risk in signing a contract with the Cadillac Company to sell their automobiles. The carriage company was renamed the Miller Automobile Company, which rapidly sold the cars proving automobiles were the wave of the future.



If Buffalo Bill, Barnum's circus, fairs and airplanes were not sufficient attractions, every spring, White River Junction residents witnessed mammoth log drives down the Connecticut and White Rivers. For days in the late 19th and early 20th Centuries, thousands of logs, cut for either lumber or pulp, would float by the village. Agile drivers hopped from log to log making certain no jams formed along the banks or against bridge piers. As the log volume thinned, crews followed in the rear to free any straggling logs on their trip downstream, signaling the end of the drive until the following year.

Most log drives were uneventful, but one started unexpectedly on March 28, 1913. Between a combination of high water and rain, a log boom across the White River at Sharon burst, releasing over 2.5 million feet of pulpwood logs downstream. Swept by the current, the logs struck the covered bridge across the White River at the Junction. The overwhelming pressure forced the bridge off its abutments and swung it against the south river bank. Before coming to

rest, the northern end slammed into the Boston & Maine railroad bridge just downstream. Weighed down by a number of freight cars, this bridge survived. The company that owned the logs later paid the town \$15,000 in damages.

Way before the advent of Vermont Life Magazine, Charles Cummings of White River Junction published The Vermonter—The State Magazine. Though the magazine traced its roots to St. Albans in 1895, Cummings printed the magazine in the village from 1906 to his death in 1945. The monthly periodical ran numerous articles on all topics dealing with Vermont and featured extensive use of photographs.

Back in 1920, Hollywood came to White River Junction. That year, famous producer, D.W. Griffith, decided to film the movie "Way Down East" in the village. Starring Lillian Gish and Richard Barthelmess, the silent film ended in climatic fashion with Miss Gish stranded on a moving ice floe in the Connecticut River. Many local residents served as extras in the filming.

Today the village of White River Junction extends to the upper village, where fairgoers mingled and planes flew only to be replaced by the junction of Interstates 89 and 91, parts of the Eisenhower Interstate highway system.

*Text edited by Donald Wickman.
Special thanks to the Hartford Historical Society for the photographs.*



Hemingway's
RESTAURANT
Fine Dining
4988 US Rt. 4
Killington, VT 05751
802-442-3886

Como Va
Unique Italian Cuisine with Old World Service in an informal, up-scale atmosphere.
Como Va Restaurant is now available for on or off-site catering to help add flavor to any occasion.
Lunch Served Tuesday-Saturday 11:30 a.m.-2:00 p.m.
Dinner Served Tuesday-Saturday 5:00 p.m.-9:30 p.m.
*All major credit cards accepted. Reservations suggested.
1 SOUTH MAIN STREET
WHITE RIVER JUNCTION, VT
802-280-1956
www.comovarrestaurant.com

AMERICAN
A Sign & Graphic Company
802-362-5314
802-362-3671 Fax

HILLBILLY
FLEA MARKET & COLLECTABLES
12,000 square feet of old & new furniture, glass, antiques, books, old saws, sleds, and much more!
Route 4
Old Bridgewater Mill Basement
Bridgewater, VT - (802) 672-1331



Published by The Historical Pages Company ©2005 (802) 287-2332 • www.historicalpages.com • Printed by Journal Press, Poultney, Vermont (802) 287-9811

F.H. Gillingham & Sons
Vermont's Oldest General Store
Est. 1886
802-457-2100
Open Every Day
16 Elm Street, Woodstock, VT 05091

Free Local Phone Calls & Continental Breakfast
Rooms with Hot Tub Available
Evergreen Rooms
Smoking & Non-Smoking Deluxe
Conference Facility
Voice Mail in Every Room
Business Suite • Fitness Room
Sauna with Tanning Facilities
Corporate Direct Billing

AMERICA'S BEST INN
802-254-4583
059 Putney Road, Brattleboro, VT 05301
1-800-BESTINN • Fax 802-254-4585
www.americasbestinn.com

Aubergine
1 Elm St.
Woodstock, VT
www.purple-eggplant.com
Kitchenware • Gifts • Gourmet Foods
802-457-1340

JACARANDA ANTIQUES & USED BOOKS
7137 Route 4
PO Box 44
Bridgewater, VT 05034
(802) 672-4260
ngezi@vermontel.net

THE SUN OF THE HEART
BOOKSTORE
BOOKSTORE
Books For Growing Souls
Open 7 Days 10-5:30
The Bridgewater Mill
Route 4
Bridgewater, VT 05034
•802/672-5151•
We special order
and ship books for you
www.sunoftheheartbooks.com

Play Hard. Eat Well.
- Chef-prepared entrées
- Natural & specialty foods
- A bounty of fruits & veggies
- Full deli with local and international cheeses and fresh meats
Open year round!
Rt. 7 West, Woodstock • Closed Mondays
woodstockfarmersmarket.com • 457-2051

Fullerton Inn
CHESTER, VERMONT
21 Room Inn,
Fine Dining &
Cozy Tavern
On the Green (Route 11)
Chester, Vermont
802-875-2444
Comfortable Vermont Hospitality
www.FullertonInn.com

JACARANDA ANTIQUES & USED BOOKS
7137 Route 4
PO Box 44
Bridgewater, VT 05034
(802) 672-4260
ngezi@vermontel.net

THE SUN OF THE HEART
BOOKSTORE
BOOKSTORE
Books For Growing Souls
Open 7 Days 10-5:30
The Bridgewater Mill
Route 4
Bridgewater, VT 05034
•802/672-5151•
We special order
and ship books for you
www.sunoftheheartbooks.com