

# The Burlington Free Press

Wednesday, March 17, 2004 •••

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## Vermont



**STATE OF CHANGE:** A University of Vermont historic photo and geology project helps people reconnect with the past and discover how the state's landscape has changed. **Page 1B**

## Photo collection reveals changing Vermont

By Matt Sutkoski  
Free Press Staff Writer

The gap between then and now in Vermont is wide, as a fast-growing Web site created by University of Vermont researchers indicates.

The site juxtaposes photographs taken decades or even a century ago with recent snapshots taken in the same spots as the historical pictures.

More than 2,000 photos taken in almost all Vermont communities show how a century or more of farming, logging, commerce and life have altered the state's landscape in sometimes striking and surprising ways.

One photo shows the Shelburne Road widening project. Not the construction under way now, but the one in 1932. The snapshot was taken near or just south of the present day Kmart.

The scene shows workers installing curbing on a road less than half as wide as the present iteration, no traffic, and farm fields abutting the road.

The Web site has several purposes, said Paul Bierman, an associate professor of geology at UVM.

Students throughout Vermont can learn about societal, geological and other changes in their communities through the project.

Project directors work with students in elementary, middle and high schools and in college to collect old photographs and take new pictures.

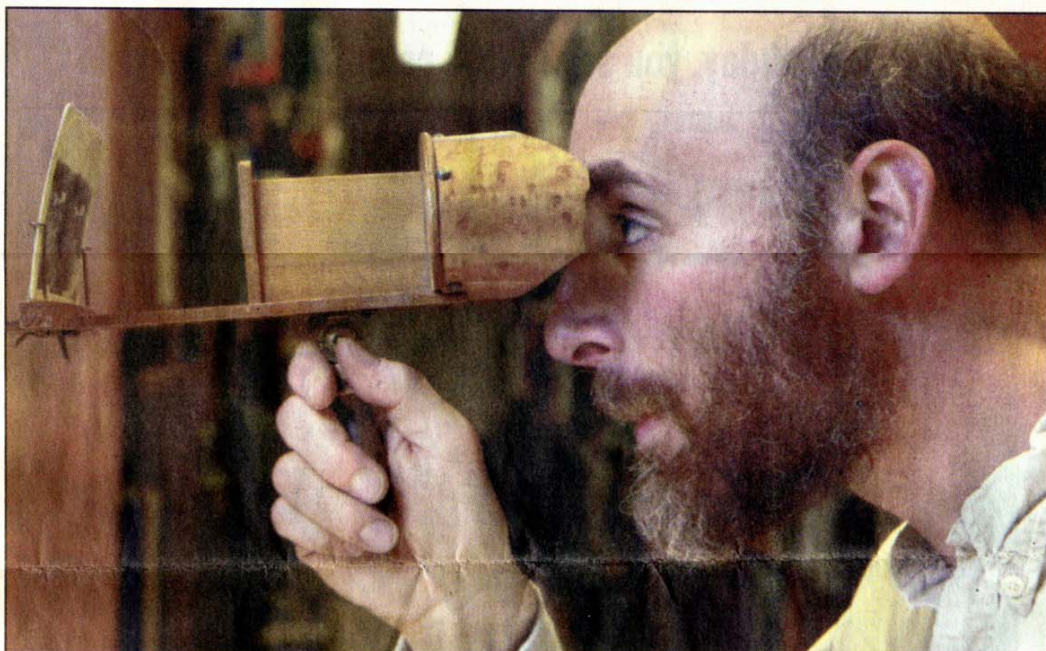
"Getting the student to find the picture makes it more real," said Jens Hilke, the project coordinator for the Landscape Change Program. "When they're done, the images are proof for the young mind that landscape changes."

Anyone who has old photographs of Vermont is invited to submit photographs to the Web site. The Web site allows people to easily find photos of towns they are interested in.

"There's 2,000 images, and it's growing," Bierman said.

Bierman said the project has attracted the attention of many Vermonters who are interested in their surroundings and how things have changed over the years.

"Vermont is a state with deep historical roots, but I got into this as a geologist," Bierman said. Bierman's geologist's eyes can spot how humans have altered the landscape.



ALISON REDLICH, Free Press

Paul Bierman looks at images of Highgate Springs taken in the late 19th century with a stereoscope at the University of Vermont's special collections in Bailey Howe Library on Tuesday. When a pair of photographs taken of the same scene at slightly different angles are viewed through a stereoscope, they look like a single, three-dimensional image.



Courtesy of University of Vermont Special Collections

A postcard of Winooski from the special collections library at the University of Vermont. Researchers at the University of Vermont are pairing historical and modern photos to document the changes in Vermont's landscape.

The most obvious change in Vermont's landscape is trees. There weren't many a century ago, when farmers and loggers cleared the land. Now the state is mostly forested.

Without trees, landslides were common. One picture of Highgate in the 1860s shows the effects of cutting down trees. Steep hills show signs of landslides.

### Historic photos

- **WHAT:** A Web site that compares photographs of Vermont scenes from decades ago with the same scenes today.
- **WEB SITE:** [www.uvm.edu/perkins/landscape/index.html](http://www.uvm.edu/perkins/landscape/index.html).
- **TO CONTRIBUTE:** Click on "Submit a photo" on the Web site.

Another old photo of the Statehouse in Montpelier shows small landslides on the then-treeless embankment behind the building.

An 1897 photo of a Vershire farm scene shows a dam that has since been dismantled. Bierman thinks the spot where the photo was taken would still contain layers of sediment where water was held back, yielding geological clues.

Some of the old pictures are aerial photos of Vermont taken just as the water from the great flood of 1927 was receding. "These are the first aerial photos that we know of, at least the first large sequence," Bierman said.

See **HISTORY**, 3B



Photos courtesy of University of Vermont Special Collections

A photo of Vershire taken in 1897.

# HISTORY: Photos show Vt. change

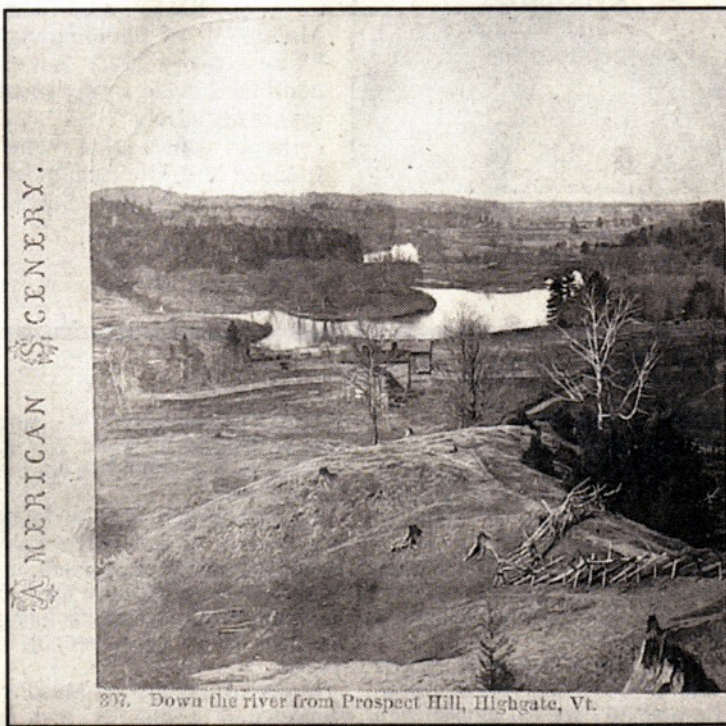
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Other photos show how towns and cities have changed. An 1859 photo of Burlington showed a circular City Hall Park with streets arcing gracefully around the park.

In some instances, details of Vermont's surroundings haven't changed much. A photo taken in 1905 showing what is now the Old Brick Store in Charlotte indicates the building looked almost exactly the same as it does now.

Bierman said the site is bolstered by grants that his department has won, including money from the National Science Foundation. He vows to continue collecting photos as long as possible. "Our long-term goal is to work with as many historical societies as we can," Bierman said.

He also invites people to scour attics, closets and boxes



307. Down the river from Prospect Hill, Highgate, Vt.

A photo of Highgate taken in the late 19th century.

for old photos, and to contact him so he or other researchers can scan more photos into the Web site.

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