

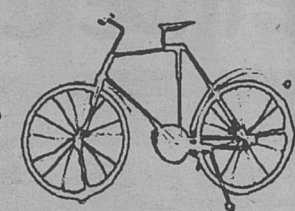
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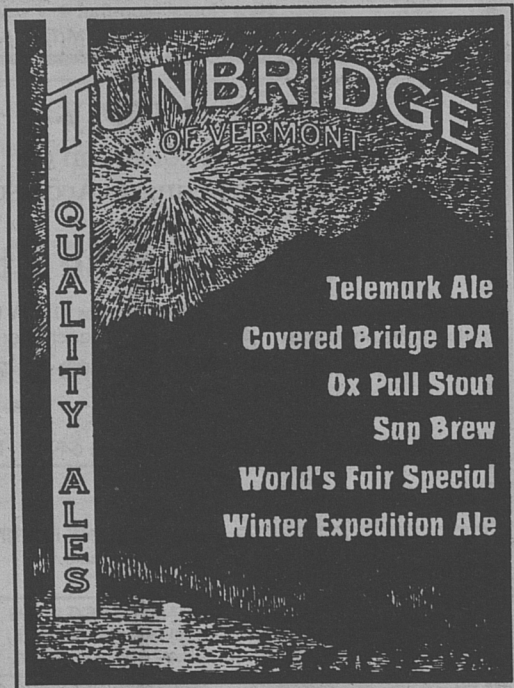
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# AUTUMN Travel

## Hidden Southern Gems Dorset and Manchester, Vermont

BY TIM EVANS

The state of Vermont has countless hills and valleys hiding little secrets just waiting to be discovered. White church steeples, towns, villages, inns, shops, and country roads dot the old mountains and hills. Four distinct seasons each offer colors and textures of their own — Mother Nature's background for the traveler in Vermont.

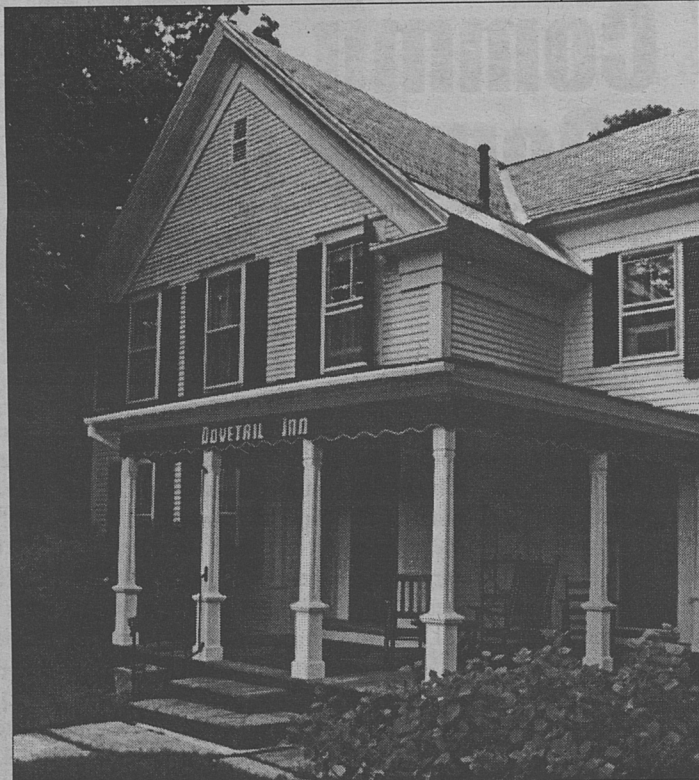
The state is also divided into fairly distinct areas: the populated northwest, the rural and rugged Northeast Kingdom, and the gentle rolling hills of the center and south. With so much

ties, the town has a quiet, artsy ambiance and charm.

Long known as a writers' and artists' resort, the village is home to the Dorset Playhouse; established in the 1920s, the structure is still rented each summer to the professional Dorset Theater Festival. The Colony House on Church Street provides lodging for the actors during the summer and is available to writers and playwrights at other times of the year.

Another landmark in town is the Dorset Inn, which can be found on the corner of Church Street and Route 30. Built in 1796, it is Vermont's oldest continuously operating inn.

photo Max Stroud



of Vermont's population concentrated in the northwestern Chittenden County area, it is sometimes easy to forget that there is so much more to this wonderful state. But Vermont is small enough that tourists can reach any area within a 2 or 3 hours of driving, making it easy to find a day or a weekend of fun and adventure.

One town that is worth exploring in any season is Dorset in the southern part of the state. Located on Route 30, just five miles north of the more populated and sprawling Manchester, this delightful town is the quintessential Vermont village. Tree-lined streets and white clapboard houses make for a picture-postcard scene. With an excellent summer theater, popular inns, and an array of outdoor activi-

Boasting 35 guest rooms all in one building, there is also a sitting room with fireplace, an excellent restaurant with charming décor, and a reasonably priced tavern. The inn, along with many other buildings in downtown Dorset, is on the National Register of Historic Places.

Also of note is the Marble West Inn on Dorset West Road. It is an informal yet elegant bed and breakfast off the main road. There are eight comfortable individually decorated guestrooms, each with a private bath. A spectacular view of Green Peak and Owl's Head Mountains, a relaxed atmosphere and nearby outdoor activities are the Marble West's attractions. We stayed there two years ago and found it tasteful and comfortable, loaded with

interesting antiques and pieces of furniture. A library and a grand piano round out the warm atmosphere.

Another interesting attraction in nearby Manchester Village is Hildene. Built in 1902 as the summer home of Robert Todd Lincoln — Abraham Lincoln's eldest son — it is rich with history as well as architecture and incredible gardens. This spectacular home and the surrounding 412-acre estate are truly worth a visit; there are formal guided tours of the house and visitors have freedom to roam the grounds. In winter, Hildene operates a cross-country ski touring center offering rental equipment and a warming hut.

Manchester and Manchester Village offer the visitor a contrast in styles.

Manchester Village is located within the municipality of Manchester and takes pride in its historical preservation. Similar in look and feel to Dorset, it boasts a main street listed in the National Register of Historic Places and has laws governing home designs in the village.

Manchester, on the other hand, is suffering growing pains due to its more touristy appeal. Critics say Manchester is an example of uncontrolled growth, with its growing numbers of factory outlets, specialty shops and lights. Others say it has the best of both worlds, allowing economic growth while keeping its Vermont charm. Bottom line: if you're into power shopping or scenic strolls, you can find both in the quiet village and the resort town of Manchester.

### Nothing Ruins Spontaneity like a No Vacancy Sign

If you've got a specific spot in mind, it is wise to check for up-to-date phone listings, addresses and operational details of inns and lodgings before traveling, especially during the peak foliage season. Be sure to check out the Vermont travel guides that abound at most bookstores. (The local library probably has a few also.) One particularly useful guide — especially for the facts and figures in this article — is *An Insiders Guide to Southern Vermont*, edited by Margaret Bucholt. ▼

photo Max Stroud

