

# In Search of the Eighteenth Century Rowley Road, Shoreham Township, Addison County, Vermont

by Ronald F. Kingsley and James Rowe, Jr.

## Introduction

Roads today cover the surface of our land in a complex branching pattern. They are a necessary convenience and serve to connect people and places. Finding traces of early roads made through the wilderness after nearly two and a half centuries and determining their significance in history are complex and challenging tasks. For more than 50 years Vermonters and historians have taken an active role in searching for traces of Vermont's first road, the 1759 Crown Point Military Road. Today the Crown Point Road Association offers tours and programs to the public. In the past the Daughters of the American Revolution (D.A.R.) had generously contributed funds to place markers along the route to recognize, document, and preserve this achievement (Vara 1999). The *Amherst Papers* (1759-1763) and William Cockburn's surveying documents (Cockburn 1767a, 1767b, 1770, 1771) have been most helpful to the investigators in guiding the discovery process.

The Crown Point Road extended from the east shore of Lake Champlain slightly south and across from Fort Crown Point in Bridport Township to Fort #4 at the Connecticut River settlement of Charlestown, New Hampshire. Over the years, improvements and relocations of the route were made, including a branch from the road to the east side shoreline of the lake and on the opposite shore north of Fort Ticonderoga. The road was intended to serve as a supply and communication route to the British forts on the west side of Lake Champlain at Ticonderoga and Crown Point. As settlement increased over the years, the inhabitants began to make new roads to connect with existing roads and trails (Crown Point Road Association 1992; Vara 1999:64-69, 95; Charlton 1931:163-195).

Many pathways, popularly called "roads," were literally cut and shoveled through Vermont's wilderness over the years following British General Lord Jeffrey Amherst's orders for the construction of the military supply road. During the American Revolution, the 1776 Hubbardton - Mount Independence Military Road served a prominent function. It provided an escape route for the American rebels on Mount Independence when under attack in early July 1777 by the British Army under the command of Lieutenant General John Burgoyne. Again in September 1777 the same road provided an approach for the rebels to the Mount in their attempt to recapture the forts. Vermonters, under Joseph and Mabel Wheeler, sought to locate this historic road (Wheeler and Wheeler 1968; Kingsley and Doblin 1999).

Lake Champlain is generally recognized by scholars and

the general public as having served a central role as a waterway for hunters, traders, farmers, and military personnel during the formative period of the development of the United States and Canada (National Park Service 1999). The shoreline and eventually the inner regions became the location of many fortifications, farms, trading posts, and early roads during the eighteenth century when a territorial struggle existed between France and Britain. Many of these sites are yet to be located, documented and studied.

Since 1986 the principal investigator and several Vermont volunteers have been involved in documenting historic sites along the Lake Champlain's shoreline. In addition to locating and documenting evidence of the participation of the German auxiliaries in the Burgoyne Campaign of 1777, the project team has also searched for evidence of settlement during the eighteenth century. This would include modifications of the land which could be recognized as early roads and buildings, the presence of rock wall boundary markers, well holes, changes in vegetation, and artifacts in the soil.

During the documents research phase the investigators located a copy of the 1783 Shoreham town survey map. On another copy of the same map, found at a different location, there had been drawn the route of an early road. It appeared as a crude dashed line extending east from near the ferry landing at Rowley's Point (later renamed Larrabees Point) across several lots to where it crossed the Orwell township line near Hardigan Hill. Along the route was written "Rowley Road" (Shoreham Town Records 1783-1964; MacIntire and Witherell 1984).

The discovery of the addition to the map was provocative as to its possible relationship to the Ticonderoga Branch. Researchers recognize the value of maps but they are also cautious when interpreting them. Cartographic historians urge caution with regard to interpreting old maps for inaccuracies associated with them, namely when it was drawn, distances and bearings, and the selection of topographical features (Blakemore and Harley 1980:54-75).

The discovery prompted a search for evidence of the road and it's possible association with the historical events within the township. Maguire (1965:2-23) suggests that Rowley Road is a portion of the elusive Ticonderoga Branch of the Crown Point Military Road. In this case Rowley, having lived on the Point prior to the American Revolution, would have likely been familiar with it and later recorded and named it Rowley Road.

This article has two objectives: (1) to discuss how early roads were constructed and how they might be discovered as part of an archaeological survey, and (2) to present the

findings of this investigation, namely available information from pertinent documents and investigators, summarize the evidence of the archaeological field survey, and make some tentative interpretations.

### **The Research Investigation**

#### **Early Roads**

Living and surviving in the wilderness in the Champlain Valley during the eighteenth century presented constant challenges for both the farmer settler and soldier. For them meeting the need for food, shelter, and safety were immediate and daily concerns. On a broader scale they were aware of the importance of establishing and maintaining a communication and transportation system which reduced isolation and facilitated the transportation of vital supplies. Water routes and animal trails often provided the most direct and simplest modes of travel through the wilderness. Trails were eventually widened to accommodate travel by horse and later by ox or horse drawn wagons. These trails also served as a route to drive cattle from one location to another. Military roads, where present, were often included as part of an emerging system of roads used by the settlers, along which their dwellings were located nearby.

Early roads are frequently described in documents as mere crude pathways. Passage was hindered by trees, stumps, boulders, swamps, marshes, streams, gullies, and ravines. The course of roadways tended to follow the high ground which afforded drainage during wet periods. Low lying, marshy areas and creeks were generally circumvented whenever possible because they required either bridges or corduroy roads for passage of wagons and cannon. When steep hills had to be traveled, a gradual angled path was dug along the side or an ox-bow configuration path cut down the hill. In these cases stone and soil shoulders were constructed to widen and support the pathway. When a crest of hill was encountered, workers would remove the ridge thereby permitting a more gradual passage. Over time, stumps and boulders could eventually be removed to improve the quality of the road. Roads tended to be constructed around twelve feet wide, however, over time, vegetation would often reduce the space unless crews or residents in the area provided periodic maintenance. A complex system of interconnecting roads emerged as settlement increased. Eventually some roadways became abandoned as more adequate routes became established.

By the end of eighteenth century the concept of the toll turnpike emerged. In the nineteenth century, roads were frequently employed for pleasure and the transportation of goods from farms and businesses. Roads became more permanent but not necessarily of better quality. Inns and taverns were established between far distant stretches in order to assist travelers and to provide some additional income to local residents. From the beginning of the nineteenth century, canals and then later railroads emerged which offered alternative modes of transportation for people and goods (Jordon 1948; Searight 1894)

#### **Description of the Study Area**

Shoreham Township is located in southwest section of Addison County. The 25,000 acres of land is situated with Orwell to the south, Cornwall and Whiting on the east, Bridport on the north, and Lake Champlain on the west.

Currently a portion of the land within the study area is used for pasture, hay and corn. The Orwell quadrangle map shows a ravine with many steep sloping hills and in which Beadles Cove Brook and its branches are situated. The ravine is situated near and parallel with the Orwell town line after having crossed the line just west of Hardigan Hill (U.S. Department of the Interior Geological Survey, 1949). The vegetation is composed of coniferous and deciduous trees with areas of brush. Evidence of the track bed of the former Addison Branch Railroad can still be seen from Beadles Cove and inland where it crosses into Orwell Township. The soils are composed of the Vergennes, Nassau, and Nellis Series. (Goodhue 1861:58-60; Shoreham Historical Society 1988:4-8; U.S. Department of Agriculture 1971:32-33).

### **Methodology**

Three sources were employed to investigate the Rowley Road. These include documents and reports (maps, environmental studies, and publications); personal contacts (consultations and assistance of researchers and interviews with local residents); and archaeological field reconnaissance of surface areas, subsurface testing, and remote sensing for the detection of non-visible, subsurface metal artifacts.

#### **Documents and Reports**

While researchers recognize all too well that information recorded in documents such as maps, journals and diaries, valuable as they are, they can be disappointingly vague, incomplete, or even inaccurate. Town documents reveal that Shoreham was chartered in 1761 by Governor Benning Wentworth of New Hampshire and granted to Col. Ephraim Doolittle and 62 associates who became the Grantees. Settlement was meager until after the American Revolutionary War. In 1775 some men disembarked from Hands Cove in Shoreham and participated in the capture of Fort Ticonderoga under the leadership of Ethan Allen. Burgoyne's campaign from Canada in 1777 resulted in most of the residents fleeing the area until 1783 when the community was resettled and grew in number.

Rowley, whose name appears written along the dotted line on the map in Figure 1, was Thomas Rowley, Esq. (b. 1721, d. 1796). He came to Shoreham before the American Revolution where he resided on a point of land after whom it was named, Rowley's Point. Rowley served his community as clerk of Proprietors of Shoreham, a Town Clerk, and surveyor for the Proprietors and the town. In 1786 he sold the Point to John S. Larrabee who renamed it Larrabee's Point. The new owner managed a regularly run ferry under a grant of the Legislature

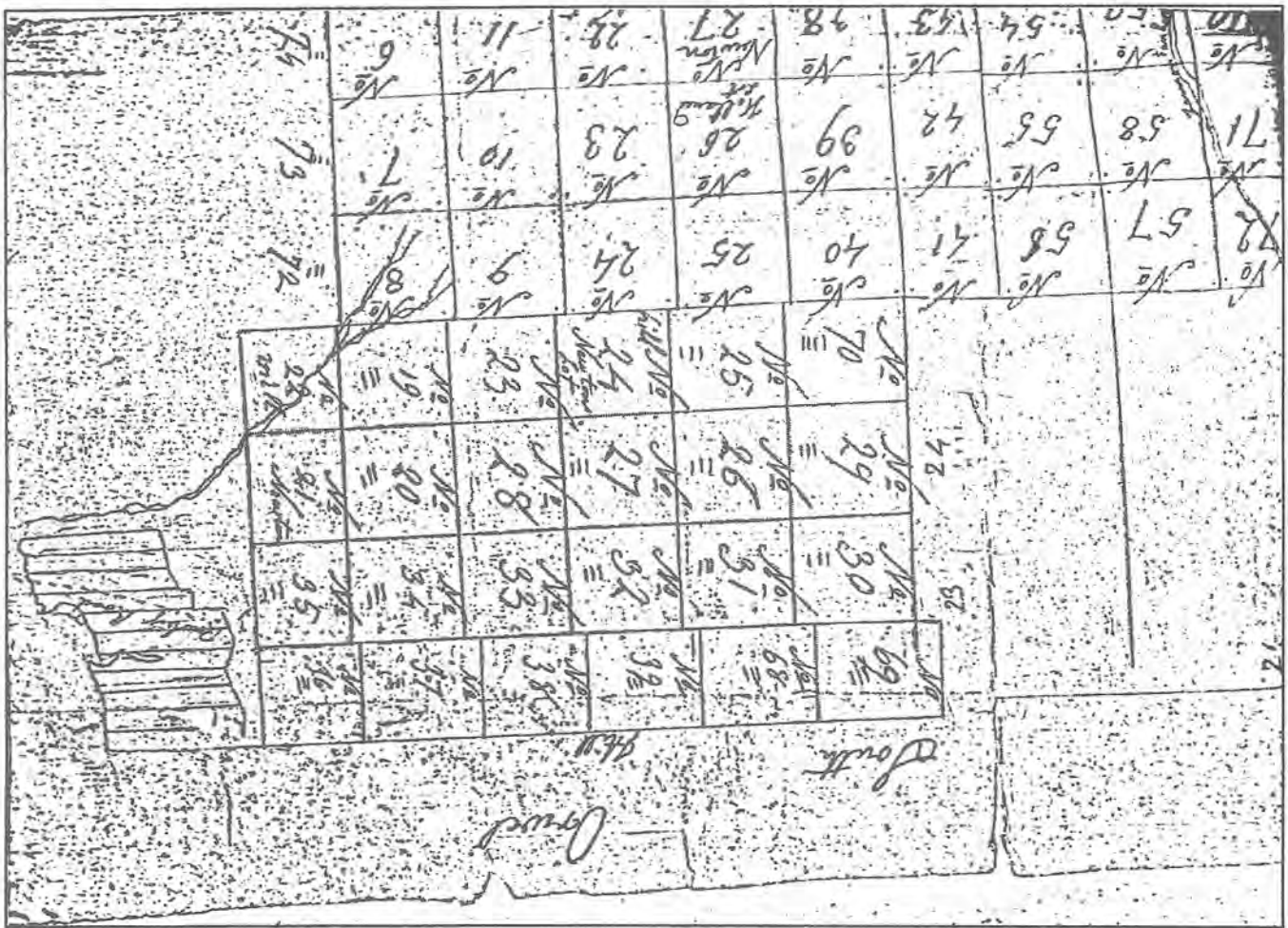


Figure 1. Portion of a photostatic map of the 1783 Shoreham Township Survey on which an approximate location of the Rowley Road was marked at an unrecorded date (Vermont Historical Society. Reproduced with permission. Note: Map repositioned by editor so north appears at top ).

located at the Point (MacIntire and Witherell 1984:190; Goodhue 1861:20, 162-179).

At the meeting of the Town Proprietors on 28 April 1783, Thomas Rowley, then Proprietors' Clerk, voted to approve the survey of the town. The town was organized into five divisions, each containing lots. Names would be later drawn for ownership. The first division was 72 lots of 100 acres; second division lots adjoined the lake shore, each being 26 acres; a third division lots each 100 acres, which were laid out in parallel lines with the first division; a fourth division had lots of 100 acres, laid out in parallel lines with the lines of the first and third divisions; and the fifth division was the village lot which was subdivided into 68 one-acre lots. Rowley was voted to be the surveyor. Surveying had begun in 1765 by a Paul Moore (Maguire 1965; Shoreham Historical Society 1988; Goodhue 1861:46, 48).

The Shoreham Town map (copied in 1906) shows the Basin Harbor Road which was laid out in 1787, the present route of Smith Street, and a road leading directly west with a terminus at the ferry landing on Larrabee's Point between shoreline lots 11 and 12 (MacIntire and Witherell 1984). Another map, "A Manuscript Map of Vermont," which is held at Harvard University Library and drawn in the 1790s, shows two roads leading to Larrabee's Point, one along the south side of Hands Cove Creek and the other being the present Route 74 leading to the ferry landing at the Point (Joseph Wheeler's Papers; Brinton 1955).

#### Personal Communications

Over the years many dedicated persons have participated in documenting the route of the Crown Point Military Road and have contributed information on the elusive Ticonderoga



Branch. Some have also been helpful in addressing the topic of this article, the Rowley Road. Among them are the early investigators and among the founders of the association: Phyllis and Hubert Humphreys, of West Rutland, who have shared their ideas, notes, and maps from the records and field reconnaissance; Al Ransom, of Rutland, a surveyor, researcher, historian and archivist of the Crown Point Road Association, who provided assistance in identifying the boundaries of the division lots, and his thoughts and observations during reconnaissance; J. Robert Maguire, of Hands Cove, historian, researcher, writer, retired lawyer and trustee of the Fort Ticonderoga Association, who generously shared his vast knowledge and documents; and James Rowe, Jr., president of the Crown Point Road Association, who participated in the search for the road and other phases of study of the German Auxiliaries Project (GAP).

The research findings and notes of the late Joseph and Mabel Wheeler were most helpful which are to be found in his *Papers*. In a letter to Mrs. Humphreys on February 29, 1965 he interpreted the map in John Trumbull's autobiography (Trumbull 1841). Wheeler wrote that the Ticonderoga Branch was "more than a half-mile north of the eastern point of Ticonderoga and over 1 mile north of n. end of Independence." In an earlier letter to her on September 5, 1964, Wheeler reported having observed the same evidence of a roadway seen by the Humphreys along the northeast side of Hardigan Hill which extended a short distance west. Local residents were also aware and puzzled by this seemingly disconnected section of a roadbed. Artifacts retrieved at a cellar hole (VT-AD-969) along a section of this road on the east side of Hardigan Hill were found to be of late eighteenth- to early nineteenth-century manufacture.

Many people have speculated on the possible route of the Ticonderoga Branch. However when the division lot boundaries were identified using an aerial photograph, the position of the Rowley Road appears to be located along the west side of Hardigan Hill. The archaeological survey extended to sections of the terrain east of the Basin Harbor Road and Hardigan Hill in an attempt to locate evidence of what might have been disconnected fragments of early secondary roadways.

#### Archaeological Field Survey

An archaeological field survey provides the researcher with other sources of information not generally recorded in documents. Locating evidence of a road that existed nearly 250 years ago necessitates gathering and interfacing many fragments of evidence. Many areas of the land have been exploited and modified by deforestation, agricultural practices, development, and progressive erosion. Yet there are some locations where changes have been minimal, particularly in gullies and ravines.

While the most direct route is the shortest, the topography of the terrain often ultimately dictates the reality. An

examination of the topographical map revealed that the survey area was in large part a very rugged terrain as one approached the Orwell town line. The reconnaissance component of the survey involved integrating local topographical conditions with markers of former roads. Remote sensing for metal provided evidence of areas of activity. An intensive study was implemented within a rectangular-shaped area defined by the lake shoreline on the west, east beyond the Basin Harbor Road, north by the Hands Cove Creek ravine, and south to the Orwell Town line. Land modifications were noted during the survey as well as evidence of eighteenth-century buildings. Both of these would be then evaluated for their possible association with a road.

Sections of the terrain were found to be a physical challenge to examine given the presence of vegetation, marshes, creeks, and steep embankments. The survey was undertaken over several days and some selected areas were re-examined. Preliminary map study was found essential to exploring the terrain before reconnaissance was undertaken. Old and recent maps were employed to provide a perspective of the landscape as well as details of physical environment. The 1783 Shoreham Township map showed the Rowley Road and served as a general guide, an aerial map (Division of Property Valuation and Review, Hardigan Hill 1978) revealed evidence of existing eighteenth-century lot lines, and the topographical map provided information about the characteristics of the terrain (U.S. Department of the Interior, Orwell 1949).

The following observations and features were derived from the findings of the archaeological survey within the study area (see Figure 2):

1. A terminus of a road is present leading to the shoreline. The ridge of the embankment had been removed which permitted a gradual approach to the lake's shoreline. The roadbed is 12 to 15 feet wide and is presently lined on both sides by a row maple trees. A shovel test in the bed of the road revealed evidence of late eighteenth-century artifacts. The first terrace was the former location of some buildings associated with the Burleigh brothers' commercial business during the late nineteenth century (Astmann, Kingsley, and LaPointe 2000). The terminus of the road appears to be located around the vicinity of lots 9 and 10 in the Second Division of the 1783 town survey. The landing of the ferry on Larrabee's Point is approximately one hundred yards north from the terminus. Archaeological evidence derived during GAP supports a local belief that Rowley's (Larrabee's) Point had been a bivouac area during the eighteenth century (Shoreham Historical Society 1988:53)

2. The field leading from the shoreline east and along the south side of the present Route 74 is flat and offers a suitable location for a road. The field is defined by a deep gully on the south where the Beadles Cove Brook flows to the lake. No modifications of the surface remain nor were any artifacts located to identify a specific route.

3. Beadles Cove Brook continues along the south side of

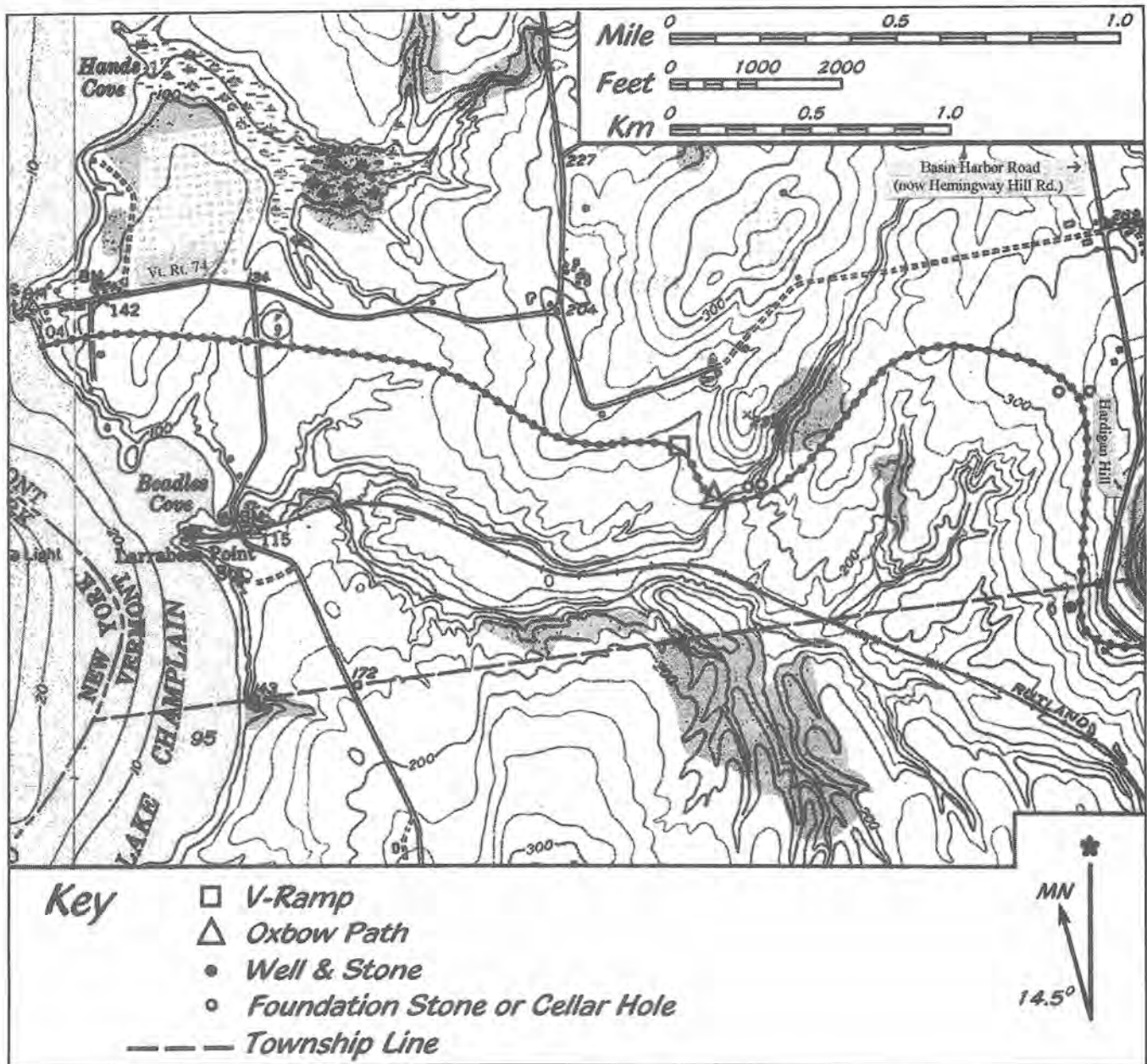


Figure 2. A suitable route for the Rowley Road.

the field and then fans out with several branches to the north, east, and south, each creating hindrance for travel. The terrace above the ravine is very suitable for travel until a gully was encountered leading south toward the brook. A V-shaped cut was still evident along the sides of the embankment within the gully. The shelf created by the cut would have permitted passage along the slope and onto a flat field to the east. The field was situated above a northerly bend of the brook. An oxbow or switch-back path with some shoulders supported by

stone was located on the south side of the embankment facing the brook. Evidence of two building sites (VT-AD-969) was found located on the east side of the brook which contained eighteenth-century artifacts.

4. A cultivated, rolling field is situated along the east side of the brook. It extends north but is encircled on the south, east, and west by the brook and steep embankments associated with the ravine. Once across the brook next to the foundations, a route northeast is suitable for a road. A gully situated along

the east side of the field creates an obstacle to travel east and south. A southeast route parallel with the Basin Harbor Road (now called Hemingway Hill Road) is possible once past the northern end of the gully. A collection of foundation stones was discovered to the southeast after crossing around the gully. A cellar hole with some brick (VT-AD-1093), approximately four hundred feet from the stone, was discovered along a terrace leading south toward the Orwell town line. This feature was approximately five hundred feet west of the Basin Harbor Road.

5. The terrace continues south and crosses the town line near the west side of Hardigan Hill. The remains of a well and some scattered stones were found 162 feet south of the Orwell line. From this location the terrace gradually rises up the grade. Evidence of an early, unidentified enclosed house foundation was noted within a more recently constructed house, which had been demolished and replaced by a new house on the site. From this point the terrace emerges with the current road.

### Discussion and Interpretation

This study investigated two issues: (1) locating a feasible route for the Rowley Road, and (2) addressing the evidence from the current survey and the available documents to determine a possible relationship between the Rowley Road and the Ticonderoga Branch of the Crown Point Military Road.

The route of the road presented in Figure 2 represents a composite position of the variables considered in the investigation. The path closely resembles the line of the road identified as the Rowley Road. A straight line path to Hardigan Hill, as suggested by dashes on the 1783 survey map in Figure 1, would necessitate traveling through the vast ravine-brook-marsh area. The route drawn on the map appears to have some unclear twists in the vicinity of the brook, but not to the degree proposed in this investigation as presented on the topographical map. A greater bend to the northeast around the ravine represents an optimal route. A path through the ravine would pose very serious problems for wagons to negotiate several steep hills and branches of the brook, particularly during wet periods.

No clear evidence was found to support the ravine route. No military artifacts were found along the composite route, as well as anywhere within the scope of the reconnaissance. If the position of the ravine route was the path, then the presence of the foundations and hill cuts, discovered during the survey, would have to have been made as secondary road additions. Unfortunately much of the evidence of the early road and related activity have been lost by erosion and development over the centuries, such as by the construction of the railroad bed in the ravine and along Beadles Cove Creek during the late nineteenth century.

The St. Clair map of the Burgoyne campaign of 1777 against Ticonderoga and Mount Independence presents a "not to scale" sketch of a military road built by the German auxiliaries on the east side of Lake Champlain. This map suggests

that the Germans may have used a portion of the Rowley Road as a route to the southeast from their encampment along the lake shore at Rowley's Point (St. Clair 1881).

Members of the Crown Point Road Association and others continue to search for evidence of the elusive Ticonderoga Branch, in documents and on the land. Evidence of partial roadways and cellar holes, sometimes with artifacts, will undoubtedly continue to be discovered by investigators such as Phyllis and Hubert Humphreys, James Rowe, Jr., Al Ransom, John Chiamulera, and Craig Hanson. Town documents will occasionally provide some additional clues about the presence of early roads and locations of homesteads from the past.

This investigation was an opportunity to examine and to integrate the documentary evidence together with the findings of the archaeological survey and to identify a feasible route for the Rowley Road. For some, the mystery may still remain unresolved, that is if a portion of the Ticonderoga Branch of the Crown Point Road and the Rowley Road are one in the same. In the future there may be other fragments of documentary evidence that might be discovered that will give cause to re-address the mystery and, hopefully, further clarify and settle the issue.

### Acknowledgments

The investigators thank and acknowledge those people cited under personal communication for their interest, information, and support that has made possible an interpretative presentation on the Rowley Road. Also the Vermont volunteers who assisted in implementing the archaeological survey phase of the survey, namely, James Rowe, Jr., of Huntington, Craig Hanson of Orwell, William Hoyenski of Shoreham, and Al Ransom of Rutland; the library staff of the Vermont Historical Society, the University of Vermont, and the New York State Library; the town clerks and librarians of Shoreham and Orwell; U.S. Department of Agriculture Soil Conservation Service; and the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation. In addition we extend our appreciation to all the property owners and their families who gave permission to conduct this survey on their land in search of the Rowley Road in the Larrabee's Point, North Shoreline Division, and Basin Harbor Road Regions; J. Robert Maguire, Steven Jackson, Walter Pyle, John Sullivan, Glen Cousino, Harmon Thurston, William Telgen, Randall Brisson, James Rowe, Sr., Alden Atwood, Virginia Brown, James Bullard, Edward Hall, Ethel Kelley, William Rader, Sr., Mahlon Teachout, and Wesley Larrabee. Special thanks to Dr. Stephen Astmann for his suggestions and to Kenneth Rohling for preparing the figures that appear in this article.

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