

# The Daniel Chipman Homestead

By W. M. MEACHAM '21

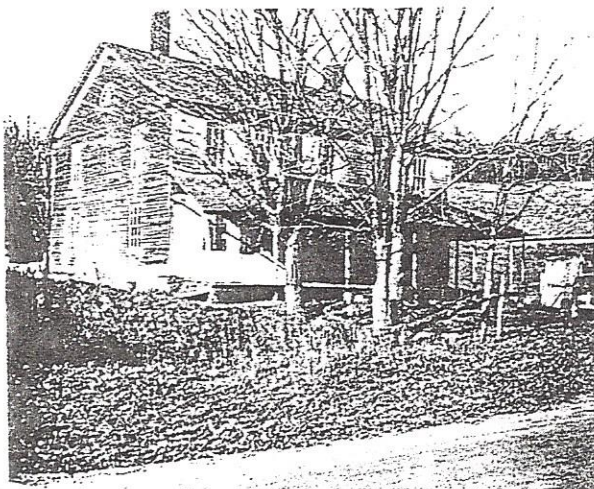
WHEN we found for sale this old colonial house, built by Daniel Chipman in 1828, we quickly decided that this 170-acre piece of property was worthy of preservation. Still retaining its three great fireplaces and old Dutch oven completely intact, some of the original old Salisbury glass was still in its windows and practically every part of its structure was as sound as the day it was built. The beauty of Ripton's first frame residence had become hidden behind a porch added fifty years ago and recently in a state of collapse. The old picket fence had long since become firewood as had the great, green window shutters. The cobble-stone walk leading to the still intact main entrance was found buried six inches below the turf. Flagstone walks at the side entrance are still being discovered beneath the lawn. The superstructure of the old well and its old oaken bucket had vanished but will soon be restored. The traditional ell at the east end containing the back kitchen, store room, ample wood shed, and rooms for hired help, and tramps who wandered this way, has only its stone-wall foundation as a reminder of its yesteryears. The present owners plan some day to reconstruct this part of the edifice.

A VERMONTER come home is alumnus William M. ("Bill") Meacham. Born in Hyde Park, Vermont, the Chairman of our Alumni Fund Committee has long been the solid sort of person Middlebury admires. His career in education has been distinguished, notably for his head-mastership of the Farm and Trades School in Boston. When "Cap" Wiley wrote to him of the noteworthy trend on the part of several Middlebury graduates who have come back recently to the environs of the College to "dig in," alumnus Meacham responded with the accompanying article. But his is not a "digging in," rather it is the affirmation of an enduring love.

Daniel Chipman, his brother Nathaniel, and their uncle, Gamelias Painter, were important people in the pioneer days of Middlebury, in the founding of the College, in the political life of Vermont, the independent republic, and the subsequent life of our native state as a part of the United States. During the 14 years Vermont was a republic, in spite of the fact that she had her own mint and performed the other usual functions of a nation, no state nor national taxes were levied. Dartmouth College was privileged to be located in Vermont at that time. Those were the good old days in many respects.

So we have as our home, across the road from the Ripton general store and post office, a fine old colonial homestead steeped in the history of my alma mater and a community of fine people. This twenty-cow farm has the rarified, invigorating air of the Colorado uplands minus those huge Rocky Mountain mosquitos. The timbered mountain-side across our trout stream on the south side is a part of this property as well as the nut-tree pinnacle where Ripton's town band gave weekly concerts not many years ago. Abundant spring water flows through pipeline from our spring high up in the mountain pasture to the north. These hillsides are a haven for winter skiing enthusiasts.

We are unmolested by the congestion of resort multitudes yet via a good side road we are eight minutes from Vermont's water gem and popular fishing spot, Lake Dunmore, and Ethan Allen cave, headquarters of the Green Mountain Boys at the base of Mt. Mooselamoo. On [Continued on page 16]



Before



After

## THE DANIEL CHIPMAN HOMESTEAD

(Continued from page 13)

one side we are fifteen minutes from my alma mater and on the other side the beautiful mountain campus of Bread Loaf is "just up the road." Three minutes takes us in sight of Lake Champlain and just over the mountain is that beautiful valley with its Granville Notch, unsurpassed by the famed grandeur of Canada's Gaspé.

Bears are not uncommon in this area and deer are so abundant that we often see them in the road at night. The farmers hereabouts find them profuse, pestiferous consumers of their crops.

This enchanting Old Colonial holds a train of human romance from its great living room to its rafters hewn from virgin timbers of the forests surrounded by Joseph Battell's whispering pines. Daniel Chipman brought his wife and young son here before the pioneers were cultivating the soil of this area. He was the leader in organizing this new town, originally called Riptown, apparently because it was carved out of several adjoining townships. Then when, some years later, Daniel's son George took unto himself a wife, the older folks built the cottage now standing across the road and moved to that less spacious abode, leaving the old home to the young folks.

Space permits only hinting at the superb situation of this property which has passed down through the Fisher family after the Chipmans. Many a time in their childhood did Harry and Ray Fisher romp about the lawns and gardens beneath the towering maples of their grandparents' Ripton Hollow home. Now these two men are well known alumni of our college.

This venerable house standing in its gracious dignity and mellowed with age has seen the rise of a community to 2,000 inhabitants with seven mills, and two churches filled Sunday after Sunday through many years. This home has held every kind of human joy and pathos. In 1869 the trout stream passing through this property went on a rampage and left destruction in this little village to the amount of \$110,000.00.

The history of Ripton would fill a big volume and the tales themselves would center largely around this pioneer Old Colonial. The 125-year old Daniel Chipman homestead is as closely associated with Middlebury College as any house off the campus could be and, thanks to the foresight and philanthropy of Joseph Battell, is within stone's throw of her mountain property. My alma mater, Middlebury College, has no superior. Her supremacy is not alone because of her unequalled grandeur of locale but also because of her virtue and the quality of many fine people always connected with her. Ever since her natal struggles during the early part of the nineteenth century, there have been the Chipmans and Battells. To own and occupy this piece of real estate is almost like owning and occupying a piece of Middlebury College—sufficient reason for a devoted alumnus to have and to hold.