

RECOGNIZING THE CONTINUED SUCCESS OF ANIMAL FARM BUTTER

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, in my home State of Vermont, where there are more cows than people, the local dairy industry is the bedrock of our communities. From Derby to Pownal, small dairy farms provide honest jobs and produce fine dairy products sought after by Michelin Star restaurants across the country. These farms also provide the beautiful backdrop of green pastures, grazing livestock, and the iconic bright red barns that attract hundreds of thousands of visitors to our picture perfect little State every year.

Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, consolidation within the agriculture industry, falling milk prices, supply chain delays, and the rising costs of equipment and other goods, small dairy farms have been hit hard. These difficulties, both longstanding and recent, continue to lead some lifelong Vermont dairy farmers to move on to other careers or to retirement, where they are often faced with the difficult decision to either sell their business and livestock to large, industrial factory farms, or undertake the difficult journey to find a local farmer who can take on their business and beloved cows.

Today, I would like to highlight a piece of good news from the Vermont small dairy industry, a story of how the retiring founder of the most sought-after small-batch cultured butter operation in the country found a graduate of the University of Vermont's animal science program to continue a famous Vermont tradition. Together, Vermonters Hilary and Ben Haigh, learning from Shoreham's own Diane St. Clair, have continued a boutique butter business—yet another example of Vermont perseverance, and the high-quality products coming from Vermont's small family farms, like the Animal Farm Creamery.

I ask unanimous consent that the June 10, 2022, New York Times article titled "America's Most Luxurious Butter Lives to Churn Another Day" be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the New York Times, June 10, 2022]
 AMERICA'S MOST LUXURIOUS BUTTER LIVES
 TO CHURN ANOTHER DAY
 (By Melissa Clark)

SHOREHAM, VT.—In a wooden barn perched on a grassy hill, some of the most celebrated cows in the dairy business—the bovine royal family of American fancy butter—sampled hay in their new abode.

Diva, the bossiest of the group, hovered regally over the shy, gentle Cinnamon. Lying down were Ruby and Lacy, who were chewing cud over their folded forelegs. Rutabaga, May and Patch ruminated impassively as Dell peed, effusively, in greeting.

A few months earlier, in February, the herd's former owner, Diane St. Clair, loaded them onto a trailer and drove them seven miles down the road from her Animal Farm

Creamery in Orwell, Vt., to Rolling Bale Farm in Shoreham, a 100-acre organic property nestled into a clearing about an hour south of Burlington.

"That was a hard day," Ms. St. Clair said. "But there was no way for me to continue."

Ms. St. Clair had spent the previous 22 years making the most sought-after small-batch cultured butter in the United States. It's the same butter that the chef Thomas Keller serves at the French Laundry and Per Se—and that retails for an eye-popping \$60 per pound.

But at 65, she was ready to retire. Decades of twice-daily milking, barn mucking and hoisting 70-pound jugs of fresh milk into the butter churn had taken a toll on her back. Her husband, Al Clarisse, a large-animal veterinarian who was her only helper, had developed knee problems. And although her heart still clung to her cherished Jersey cows (her "other family," as she called them), her creative urges had shifted from butter to a new, more sedentary, but just as aromatic, passion: blending exclusive perfumes.

The question was, would she be able to find the right people to take on her treasured herd and her churn? Or would her extraordinary butter, with its subtle nutty, grassy flavors that changed with the seasons, simply disappear?

For many small dairies in Vermont, retirement can be a heartbreaking matter of selling off cows and equipment to large agribusinesses and calling it quits. In 1969, Vermont had 4,017 dairy farms, most of them small, family-run operations. By 2020, that number had dropped by 84 percent to 636, with many having consolidated to benefit from economies of scale.

Even at farms where the next generation wants to step up, dairy farmers are finding it increasingly difficult to make a living. A national oversupply of milk, made worse during the pandemic, brought down prices to the point where it may no longer make financial sense to keep going.

All of this has caused the demise of many beloved farms and dairy products, including the prizewinning cheeses from Orb Weaver Creamery, whose owners spent years trying to pass on their dairy to young cheesemakers before finally having to sell off their last cow and close down. This was something Ms. St. Clair intended to prevent: Keeping her business intact and her bovine "other family" together—and far from any industrial mega-farms—was her top priority.

"I wanted my cows to go to a farm that would treat them like I did, with people who would know their names, and who would name their calves," she said.

Happily, Ms. St. Clair's story is a rare piece of good news in the world of small dairies. It's an example of how one single-minded, cow-loving farmer was able to create a market for the kind of handmade cultured butter that had nearly gone extinct in the United States. Then, through a combination of resolve and serendipity, she was able to pass that business to a young family with exactly the right kind of grit, experience and disposition to carry it on. And they happened to live just down the road.

Building a Better Butter

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When Ms. St. Clair started Animal Farm in 1999, she knew she wanted to raise Jersey cows. With them came a seemingly endless river of milk that needed a purpose.

"Everyone else in Vermont was doing cheese," Ms. St. Clair said, "I saw a niche with butter." Specifically, the kind of tangy, high-fat, marigold-colored butter she'd eaten in Europe, for which the ultra-creamy milk her Jersey cows produced was perfectly suited. (Most dairy cows in the United States are Holsteins, which yield a larger quantity of milk with a lower fat content.) Back then, no one she knew in the United States was making small batches of European-style butter from their own cows, and there were no guidelines for how to do it. The nearby Vermont Creamery had started making European-style butter a year earlier, in 1998, but from purchased milk, which, like making wine from purchased grapes, puts the agricultural part of the equation out of the producer's control.

Besides, Ms. St. Clair said, "I was in it for the cows."

Relying on out-of-print dairy manuals from the 19th century, she eventually figured out that culturing the cream before churning it, a process also called clabbering, vastly improved both the taste and the texture, making the end result thicker and more pliant, and adding a pleasing nuttiness.

Culturing is a standard practice for premium butter in Europe, and it was in the United States as well before the widespread industrialization of the dairy industry shifted to uncultured "sweet" butter, those pale, bland sticks in the supermarket, because it was faster and cheaper to produce at scale. (The intense labor involved in producing small quantities of handmade butter from Ms. St. Clair's own Jersey cows, along with high demand from luxury restaurants, accounts for the extravagant price tag.)

Once Ms. St. Clair was satisfied with her experiments, she overnights a sampler 3,000 miles away to a famous chef she'd never met, along with a handwritten letter requesting his feedback. Thomas Keller remembered the moment well.

"Diane sent me five little knobs of misshapen butter in a Ziploc bag," he said. "I called her immediately and said, 'How much do you make? We'll buy it all.'"

Eventually, she built a small dairy near the barn, brought in a few more Jersey cows and, still working mostly by herself and by hand, increased production to 100 pounds of butter per week and the plush, lightly sour buttermilk that was its byproduct.

This was the business she had needed to sell. Ben and Hilary Haigh, both 33, of Rolling Bale Farm turned out to be the ideal buyers.

GREENER PASTURES FOR A CHERISHED HERD

Hilary Haigh has always been "a little obsessed with butter," she said.

When she was studying animal science at the University of Vermont, her brother gave her a countertop butter churn, which she used for years before switching to a food processor when she and Ben married.

The couple met, coincidentally, at Animal Farm when they were both in college. Ms. Haigh, who grew up on a nearby farm, was cow- and house-sitting for Ms. St. Clair. Mr. Haigh was helping his uncle build the dairy's roof.

The two started Rolling Bale Farm in 2014, raising pastured beef, chicken and lamb to sell at the local farmers' market. They also kept a family cow to provide plenty of milk to drink and to feed Ms. Haigh's churn.

Having a microdairy like Ms. St. Clair's was a dream, Ms. Haigh said, "it just happened sooner than we anticipated."

When she and Mr. Haigh heard that Ms. St. Clair was looking for buyers, they sent her a handwritten letter expressing their interest.

It reminded Ms. St. Clair of the letter she'd sent Mr. Keller all those years ago. "Who sends letters anymore?" Ms. St. Clair said. "It's like it's all come full circle."

After piecing together two loans and a grant to come up with the \$281,000 necessary to buy the business and install a dairy at Rolling Bale Farm, the Haighs took over Animal Farm Creamery in January. (Ms. St. Clair wanted to retire on her farm, so the business and cows were sold, but not her property.)

Now, several times every week, Ms. Haigh makes butter and buttermilk exactly as Ms. St. Clair taught her: by hand, by herself, in a dairy built on the same pasture where the Haighs' herd grazes, but with the addition of her two young sons tumbling underfoot, eating as much butter and cream as they can get their small hands on.

Then, once a week, she ships the butter to the same six accounts that Ms. St. Clair had long supplied: Thomas Keller, the Inn at Little Washington in Virginia, Menton in Boston, Ocean House in Rhode Island, Dedalus Wine Shop and Market in Vermont, and Saxelby Cheesemongers in New York.

So far, Ms. Haigh said, none of the accounts seemed to notice the change of hands. Benoit Breal, an owner of Saxelby Cheesemongers, said the transition had been "100 percent seamless."

"The quality is the same," he said, "it's still the quintessential artisanal butter. There's no one else doing it like that."

For her part, Ms. St. Clair misses her cows. But she's happy to have the time to immerse herself in orris root, ylang-ylang and the other heady tools of perfumery needed for St. Clair Scents.

And Diva, Cinnamon, Dell and the rest of the herd seem to have fully adapted to their new home. "Ben and Hilary love their animals; they're good farmers," Ms. St. Clair said. "Now when I go to visit the cows, they're like, 'Oh, hi, Diane.'"

She paused and added, a little wistfully, "They're doing fine without me."

RECOGNIZING THE GRANITE INDUSTRY IN BARRE, VERMONT

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, I have been honored that Vermonters have sent me here to the U.S. Senate to represent them for many years. In turn, I always welcome the opportunity to recognize the commitments, achievements, and successes of Vermonters and the industries found in the Green Mountain State. Today, I want to highlight the granite center of the world—not Italy, China, or Brazil—but Barre, a small town of just over 8,500 year-round residents nestled among the Green Mountains in central Vermont.

It was 350 million years ago when geologic processes created a unique granite formation 10 miles deep, 4 miles long, and 2 miles wide in the heart of present-day Barre. This extraordinary formation is now home to the world's largest deep-hole granite quarry that produces a form of granite called "Barre Gray." Known around the world as the finest quality gray granite on the market, Barre Gray has

been an economic engine and tourist attraction in central Vermont since the first quarry opened in the 19th century. Barre Gray is renowned by fine architects, builders, and sculpture artists in every corner of the world and is just another example of the exports coming from Vermont and extracted by Vermonters.

The granite industry in Barre has brought jobs and economic opportunity to thousands of Vermonters over the years, including many immigrants. Like my grandparents, many people came to Vermont from Europe in the 19th and 20th centuries in search of a better life. Through a combination of hard work, skill, luck, and the geologic processes that created Barre Gray 350 million years ago, many Scottish, Irish, and Italian immigrants were able to build better lives for themselves in Vermont working in the granite industry. Unfortunately, many of the immigrants working in the Barre granite industry also died in high numbers during the 1918 influenza pandemic. As many of the Vermonters we tragically lost to COVID-19 are now laid to rest under Barre Gray granite headstones, so too are many of those who worked the Barre granite quarry over 100 years ago.

Today, the granite quarry and surrounding manufacturing facilities employ more than 1,000 Vermonters who create the vast majority of the granite used in headstones and memorials in the United States. The Rock of Ages visitor center offers tours of the quarry and their 160,000-square-foot manufacturing facility, which in addition to the nearby Vermont Granite Museum, attract more than 100,000 visitors per year. These institutions also serve as important educational experiences for classes of local school children who frequently take field trips to see the geology taught in their textbooks take place in real life.

The granite industry and its history in Barre were profiled in a June 16, 2022, article published in the Washington Post. I ask unanimous consent that the article titled, "In Barre, Vt., granite is a way of life—and beyond," be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Washington Post, June 16, 2022]
IN BARRE, VT., GRANITE IS A WAY OF LIFE—
AND BEYOND
(By Walter Nicklin)

If one's final earthly travel destination is a graveyard, then the penultimate stop might well be Barre, Vt., the self-proclaimed "granite center of the world." Here, in the scenic foothills of the Green Mountains, are the quarries that produce many of America's most sought-after tombstones.

Business is booming. The pandemic's "excess mortality" has meant increased demand for quality granite to be quarried, then crafted into memorials. Moreover, as aging baby boomers realize they won't live forever, they often embrace their own mortality by purchasing "pre-need memorials."

Even if you don't like the idea of picking your own tombstone, Barre (pronounced

"Barry") is worth a visit. You'll gain an appreciation for what you may have previously taken for granted, or simply preferred not to contemplate—namely, gravestones. You'll learn about their fascinating history, along with the remarkable industry and craft required in creating them. Most fundamentally, you'll be exposed to the geological story behind the sturdy stone that carvers use to immortalize human transience.

Although small (population less than 10,000), Barre is easy to find, just seven miles from the state capital of Montpelier. Signage for Exit 6 on Interstate 89 lets you know this is where the "Granite Quarries" are. You then might drive along Quarry Street or Stone Road on your way to a place called Graniteville. Along the way, you may pass the Cornerstone Pub & Kitchen, spot fence posts made out of granite and catch sight of what otherwise would be unremarkable commercial signs, such as for lawyers' offices, engraved in granite.

Granite, granite, everywhere—highlighting the town's economic *raison d'être* and the stone artistry of its residents. In front of the public library stands a stone statue of Charles Dickens's Mr. Pickwick. Another statue—of the poet Robert Burns, next to the Vermont History Center—was erected by the 19th-century Scottish masons who brought their stonemasonry skills to Barre. On the other side of town is another, equally imposing statue personifying the Italian stonemasons who also brought their skills to Barre.

The European immigrants brought with them a tradition of organized labor, and Barre became the headquarters for the Quarry Workers' International Union of North America. Still standing on Granite Street is the old Socialist Labor Party Hall, listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2000.

Rock of Ages—not the hymn but a quarry company with a visitor center of the same name—is perhaps Barre's single biggest tourist draw, typically attracting more than 100,000 visitors annually. In the fall, when the leaves turn colorful, attendance peaks. But in mid-May, on the very first day it opened for the summer season, my wife, Pat, and I were pleased to find not much of a crowd. In fact, ours was one of only three cars in the caravan that Roger, the tour guide, led from the visitor center to the huge Rock of Ages excavation site called the E.L. Smith Quarry. Still, Roger jotted on an index card the number of cars and the number of occupants in each car, so he could be sure that he could account for everyone at tour's end—that no one had fallen and vanished into the massive hole in the ground. Covering about 50 acres and almost 600 feet deep, it lays claim to being the world's largest operating deep-hole quarry for dimension stone. (Crushed stone—gravel—is the product of other quarries.)

Now retired after having worked most of his life in the quarry, Roger knew whereof he spoke. He explained that the granite quarried here—known as "Barre Gray"—is known worldwide for its fine grain, even texture and superior weather resistance. Its unique proportions of quartz and feldspar (granite's main ingredients) make it especially hard while also exceptionally receptive to intricate carving and sculpting.

The granite was formed as intrusive igneous rock approximately 350 million years ago. Called a pluton by geologists, the Barre granite formation is calculated to be four miles long, two miles wide and 10 miles deep. Based on what had been extracted since the Barre quarries began operation in the 19th century, Roger estimated that "it would take 4,500 years to extract all the granite."

Perched on the quarry's edge was a chain-link fence to prevent visitors like us from