

Loss of business substantial

It was to have been one of the best weekends of the summer for area businesses. The Ben and Jerry's One World, One Heart Festival was slated for Saturday, June 27, the Mad River Green Farmer's Market was expected to draw a big crowd, and there were several weddings planned in The Valley.

The raging waters of the Mad River and its tributaries changed the financial forecasts for many businesses between Friday night and Saturday morning.

The decision to cancel Ben and Jerry's One World, One Heart Festival was made by Sugarbush at 5:00 a.m. at the request of the Vermont State Police who advised Sugarbush that the flooding had caused a major natural disaster and the roads were impassable and people were in life-threatening situations.

Closed roads left the many wedding and Ben and Jerry's visitors, who were on the mountain, trapped up there, especially during the forenoon hours when portions of Route 100 were closed between Moretown and Warren and southward.

Many of the Mad River Green Farmer's Market vendors could not get to the site, nor could their customers. Retail businesses in Waitsfield and Warren that did open suffered from lack of customers and some businesses, such as those on Bridge Street suffered not only from lack of customers, but suffered severe flood related damages as well.

"The farmer's market was closed on the day of the flood because of the impassable roads. Some farmers and vendors gathered on Sunday for a few customers which was heartening," said Burgi Hall von Trapp, farmer's market organizer.

"We invited everyone to join us at the Farmer's Market on the Fourth of July weekend when we'll be open Saturday, July 4, from 9:30 to 4:00 p.m. and

on Sunday, July 5, from 9:30 am to 1:30 p.m.," she added.

From Sugarbush Chamber of Commerce executive director Susan Roy came the message to help the local business' who sustained damaged by buying local and to use marketing to let tourists know The Valley is still here.

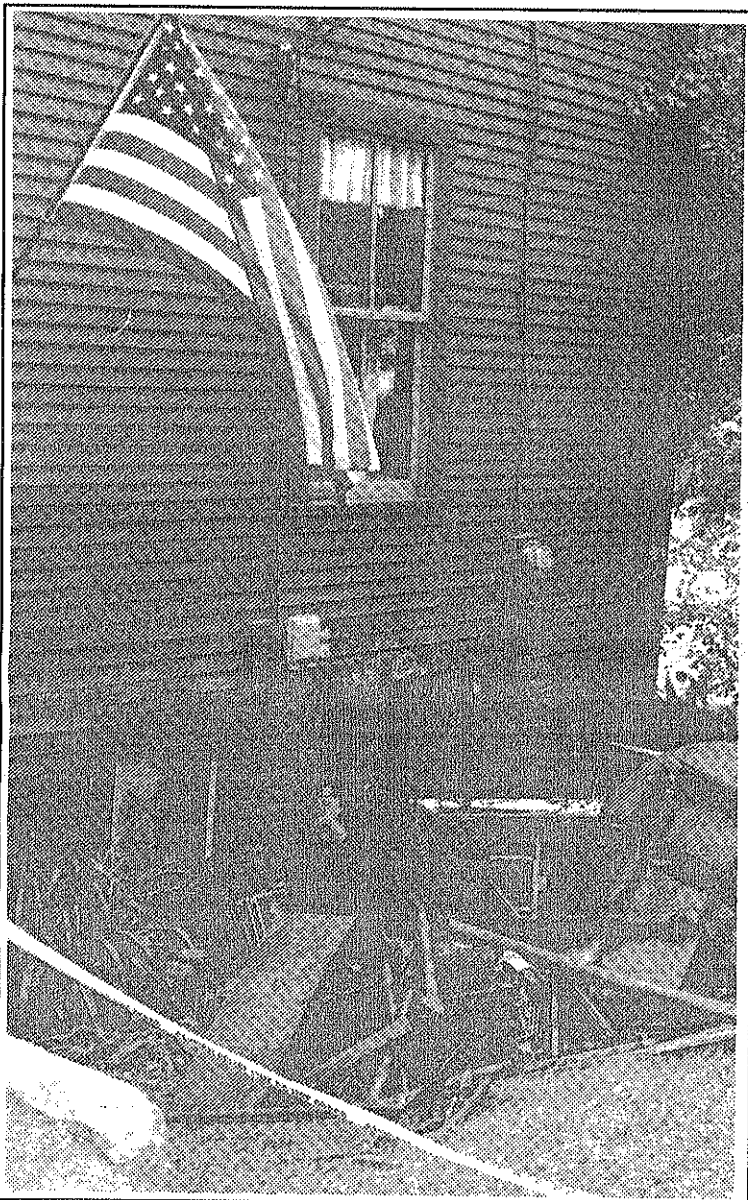
"While a monetary value can be placed on the cost of replacing a building and inventory, it is nearly impossible to place a dollar value on lost revenue. With the cancellation of the Ben and Jerry's festival went countless business dollars for the Mad River Valley. Especially hard hit were the businesses of Bridge Street, the Lareau Farm and American Flatbread. And even more devastating was the agricultural loss sustained by Valley farms.

It is imperative that we get the word out to tourists and summer visitors that we are still here," Roy said.

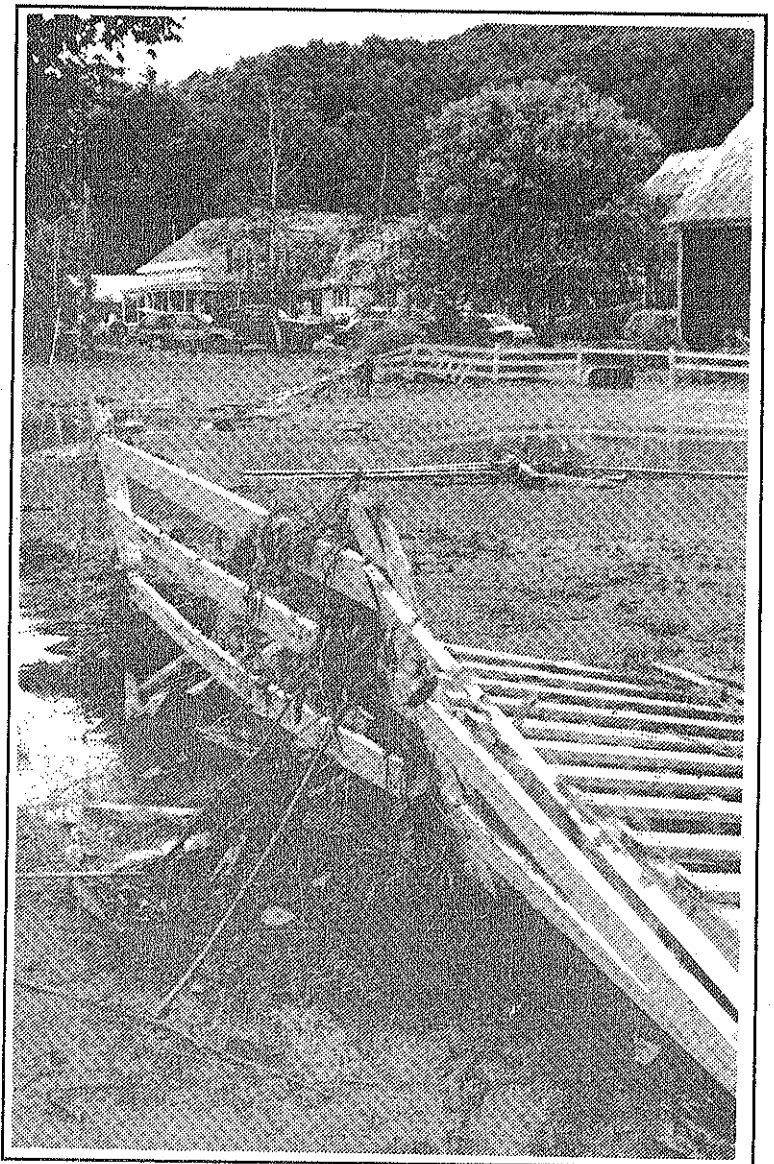
"The local businesses need to be patronized now more than ever, not only by tourists, but by locals. The chamber's buy local campaign is now an urgent appeal. Splurge a little on flatbread, buy a teddy bear for a child, check out the funky gifts, try a delectable brownie, buy produce from our farmers.

Nineteen hundred ninety-eight is proving itself to be a difficult year, with the ice storm, the early thaw and devastating rains, but we still have several months to recover," she added.

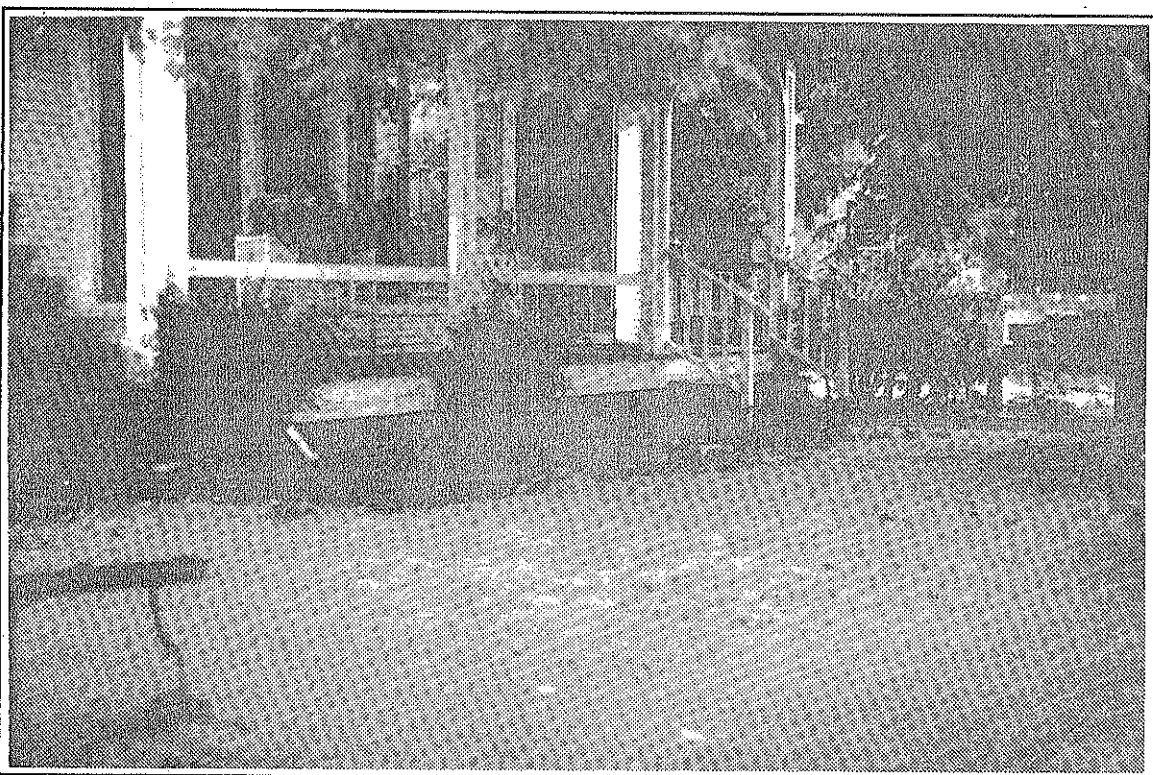
—LAL



Robin Foster's Bridge Street photo studio took a serious hit during the flood.



Debris was left against the fence at the Lareau Farm Inn in Waitsfield.



Flood waters lap at the steps of All Things Bright and Beautiful in Waitsfield.

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