



Multicultural Voices Across the Nation

[Utah](#) [California](#) [Americana](#) [Environment](#) [Other Sections](#) [Store](#) [Contact Us](#) [Business Links](#)

You are here [Utah](#) [The Diversity Place](#)

Monday, March 28, 2011

Utah's population is changing radical by historical realities



Jenny Lane, mother of two and guidance counselor at South Royalton School, was met on a bench at The Marketplace on Church Street in downtown Burlington.

The Marketplace on Church Street helps downtown Burlington maintain cultural and commercial relevancy

By **Albert C. Jones**

America, The Diversity Place

CHURCH STREET, Burlington, Vermont — Funny, isn't it, how you can go your whole life and never have heard of someone until you come across the communal memory of them or have that moment in time that says this is the working of fate.

The moment doesn't have to be deep or life-altering; it doesn't have to be a moment of revelation, especially if the discovery is made in silence. On the other hand, the moment can be. What this moment is, really, is a happening that comes with going from the place just left to arrival at this the next place.

Following Route U.S. 2 East, from South Hero, until it allows you to enter onto Interstate 89 South, the next place is downtown Burlington. The moment comes with seeing the statue of saxophonist Big Joe Burrell in front of Halvorson's Upstreet Café, then meeting Jenny Lane and watching and hearing the bluesy music — performed right here on the street — of the two guys who call themselves Spider Roulette.

Big Joe Burrell, in a natty suit, stands as the personification of cool and those who heard him blow the saxophone and played jazz with him, have created an Ark of Testimony. Scattered throughout are the cows, public art, featuring life-sized fiberglass cows uniquely painted by local artists. Vermont is known for its dairy farms and the iconic Ben & Jerry's Homemade Ice Cream.

Church Street downtown — also known as The Marketplace — is a place to feel at ease, walk, sit in a public places, observe people and being at the confluence of discovery, meaning there is presence with being here. The element here is hip or the arrival of cool.

The couple from Grand Rapids, Michigan, in the boat ready to motor from the marina onto Lake Champlain — across from the Hero's Welcome Café — said you have to go to Church Street. "It's fashionable," they said. "You will see a lot of people wearing Birkenstocks. It's a laid back place."

This city has put a whole lot of resources into preserving Church Street, while at the same time keeping it relevant. There are days gone by when city centers and downtowns thrived as Main Street USA, places where you could shop, dine, be entertained or just come out to play. In those days, downtowns did not have competing edge city developments that gradually led to the demise of downtowns or hamstringing downtowns to the sidelines of commerce all across America.

Here in Burlington, it would be a shame if downtown had lapsed and left a gulf of atrophy between old neighborhoods and the prized waterfront development that is within walking distance. Here, the presence is witnessed, you can tell by how carefully people, especially women, have selected stylish summer clothes or, in the case of young men, clothes that make fashionable the rugged individual. They have done all this prepping and preening just to come to Church Street and to be seen here in The Marketplace.

For sure, no one preps for a cultural experience to go out to the mall at edge city. Joy throughout this long summer day is discovered on Church Street. Months of summer are being enjoyed by the people here as a rite of passage.

Many of the women are wearing a replica of the same summer dress, black, sleeveless and cut at mid-thigh. They have survived another Vermont winter and their joy, their reward, if you will, is to have the ease of casual movement in The Marketplace. This is a people play. Every element of it, "A Mid-Summer's Afternoon Dream," is being acted out outdoors. The ritual of fun under the sun is cause célèbre.

Again, the arrival of cool, well-pronounced in its manifestation, is happening right before your eyes.

One can only imagine what "A Mid-Summer's Afternoon Dream" might be like, when players in the Discover Jazz Festival are stretching notes, steadied in rhythm, building on major chords, and delivering improvisational solos. Part of Big Joe Burrell's legacy here was playing in the Discover Jazz Festival.

Burrell came to Burlington, found what he was looking for and never left. How many others either drove here or walked here to make their unique discovery of self, place and time and never left?

Still walking along the four blocks on the art deco pavement, The Marketplace, from Pearl Street to College Street, the selection of restaurants are being checked out for a place to dine. The discipline now is to eat the main meal of the day before three o'clock, practicing a regimen to aid in losing weight.

Leunigs Bistro says it is "Burlington's own little Parisian Café." Dining is outside at a table under an umbrella. The house-made Black Bean & Rice Burger is tried. It comes with Vermont cheddar, baby arugula, avocado spread, red onion and roasted red peppers on a whole wheat bun, and with French fries.

This suffices as the main meal of the day. Walking again, now it's time to inquire about the statue of Big Joe Burrell.

After a man leaves it open, a woman moves from one bench in the open sun to another bench covered with shade. Another man, watching for an opening also moves to occupy the same bench. Both have found a place that offers the cover of shade. The woman decides, with a polite smile and an acknowledgment, saying it is okay for us to share this same bench.

She has a book in her hand, sits, opens the book in her lap, and resumes reading. The camera case is placed on the bench and the latches snapped open.

Camera dangles around the neck, walking across to the statue. Photographs of saxophonist Big Joe Burrell are taken from several angles. The statue was dedicated on Friday, June 4, 2010, right here where it stands in front of Halvorson's Upstreet Café. Fittingly, it was dedicated at the start of the ten-day Discovery Jazz Festival.

Funny, isn't it, how people go from their places of origin to the places of their destiny. For Big Joe Burrell, it was birth in Michigan, with countless stops in between as a touring musician, to Burlington, Vermont. He died here in 2005 at age 81. He came here, they say, in 1976, with credits of having played with Count Basie and B.B. King, among others.

That kind of resume and an endless love for music in his heart marked the arrival of cool. For sure, experience with Count Basie meant orchestrated swing and indigenous blues with B.B. King. Here, Big Joe Burrell's legend grew as a blues vocalist and saxophonist.

What followed the dedication of the Big Joe Burrell statue was a performance on the Fountain Stage by the Unknown Blues Band, which Big Joe Burrell fronted for many years, and an assortment of other musicians, some he helped to train and others who admired him. Halvorson's Upstreet Café was for Big Joe Burrell what the Café Carlyle in New York was for the late Bobby Short for all those years — home to the never-ending engagement.

Meanwhile, seated back on the bench, before she can retrain her focus on the paperback novel, the woman is asked what you are thinking. Are you a former Miss Vermont?

She looks you directly in the eyes, smiles and says, "No."

That created an opening for conversation, which began with the familiar. She is Jenny Lane, mother of two and a guidance counselor at South Royalton School. She came with a planned respite while her teenage daughter delights in shopping, something that this woman is only lukewarm to doing. Their drive was 75 miles on the Interstate from Royalton to get to Church Street.

"On the Road: People Bridges to People" is explained to her. She agrees that notes and photographs can be taken. Jenny Lane turns her face and looks directly into the camera and is patiently still for five clicks of the shutter.

"Did you know Joe Burrell?"

"No, I didn't," she says. "My husband would know who he is. He's a musician."

Her role as a counselor is helping students make adjustments when problems need solutions. South Royalton has fewer than four hundred students. Most graduates go on to college.

"Why do you like about Vermont?"

"I like the green of it, being careful about the Earth," she says. "There is a consciousness about the environment. Recycling is important. We hope the politicians are conscientious about how much logging there is and make sure the rivers stay clean."

"I grew to love it here and would not want to live anyplace else," says Jenny Lane, who was brought to Vermont from Florida by her family when she was 5 years old. "Vermont is a nice place to raise a family."

She is among those not bothered by the hard winters. She lives in the Green Mountains, which has downhill ski resorts at Mansfield, Killington and Ellen. There is plenty to do outdoors in winter.

"Where we live we have 40 acres," Jenny Lane says. "There is plenty of frontage separating our house from the road and there is plenty to view. There are lots of wild animals around. I'm sure there are moose on top of the ridge. When I go for walks, I see moose tracks. We hear coyotes all the time."

"We keep beehives on the roof because there are bears," she says. "We have two hives for the honey. Bee pollen is supposed to be good for you. You can take the hives apart and get the beeswax."

Vermont Law School, the state's only accredited law school, is near where she lives and attracts students from various backgrounds. Jenny Lane has participated in diversity programs at the law school. She mentions refugees have been resettled in nearby Winooski and encourages a visit there, if time allows.

As an educator she knows the English Language Learner challenges that come with refugees being resettled to Vermont in recent years from Bhutan, Somali-Bantus, Sudan, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Burundi, the Congo, Eritrea, Uganda, Burma, also known as the Union of Myanmar and Iraq.

Who would have ever guessed that language interpretative services provided by Colchester-based Vermont Refugee Resettlement Program include 36 languages other than English? Colchester, home to only 17,000 residents, is the third largest community in Vermont.

After the Winooski and refugees conversation, Jenny Lane is open about her impression of Church Street.

"I think it's a little over done — a little too expensive," she says. "Some of the cows are well-done pieces of art. Others are just here to promote a business."

"My kids like to come up here and shop," Lane says.

Jenny Lane's daughter calls her on the cell phone. She has decided on an outfit that has been marked down 50 percent. Mother appreciates hearing that the daughter is being a smart shopper when it comes to price.

Funny, isn't it, how someone as nice as Jenny Lane can appear at that time appointed by fate? She walks away and, with the afternoon giving away to evening, it was time to discover another cultural aspect of Church Street.

Hikers with backpacks heavily stuffed — two young men and a young woman — walk by as a man plays an amplified acoustic guitar sitting on a stool and another man on a stool plays a harmonica player. Sitting on a bench, the duo is listened to and watched for about a half-hour before going over to ask questions.

Formed in 1988, they call themselves Spider Roulette. Keith Williams, the one with the full beard, wearing the Kangol brim, oversized glasses and red sneakers, is the acoustic guitar player. The harmonica player, Peter Lind, is wearing a baseball cap and sunglasses.

"We play blues, folk and roots music — a couple of jazzy tunes," Williams says. "We even play the Irish waltz, 'Poor Boy's Delight.' That song begins 'Would you dance with me, Molly?'"

"We grew up in the 1960s," Williams says. "We play the music of our generation, the music we grew up listening to."

"I tried to emulate Bob Dylan early on," says Lind. "Then I discovered there are better harmonica players out there. Little Walter blows him out of the water."

They play the busking circuit here in Vermont, which includes the farmers markets in City Hall Park, St. Albans, and Montpelier.

"We have been busking around here forever," Williams says. "We just got invited to play the farmers market in Westford."

Williams describes himself as an underemployed computer teacher. He is a software designer and formerly general manager for an engineering company. Lind is part of the staff that makes up new flavors at Ben and Jerry's. He is an official taste tester. Key lime pie is a recent new flavor.

Here, The Marketplace requires performers to audition for a busking license.

"You can play as often as you want," Williams says. "There can be only two acts per block. Actually, you have to move every two hours."

Lind says, "We like being here because Church Street is like the town square."

"We are on the same physical level with everybody," Williams says. "Kids will stop and dance. They are right here on the same level. There is something about playing the blues. It strikes a note inside people. Baby boomers love it, especially when we play Arlo Guthrie's 'City of New Orleans' or the Animal's 'House of the Rising Sun.'"



Formed in 1988, Keith Williams and Peter Lind call themselves Spider Roulette and are featured players on the busking circuit in Vermont, including The Marketplace.



The Diversity Place

Copyright 2009 America Diversity All rights reserved Powered by [Thinkbox](#)

Login