

THE LANDSCAPES OF POTTON
OUR COLLECTIVE CULTURAL HERITAGE



Owl's Head, the Magic Mountain, from chemin White

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ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We thank Jean-Charles Bellemare, responsible for development at the MRC Memphremagog, for his support of the project.

Also, we are grateful to Mme Josiane Ouellet, chief editor of the magazine *Continuité*, for permission to use selected texts in our exhibition on the landscapes of Potton.

DÉPÔT LÉGAL 2014 – ISBN 978-2-9805510-9-3

Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec

Bibliothèque et Archives Canada

Reprint | June 2018

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Municipality of the
Township of Potton



INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Expo Paysages! Our exhibition, which takes place at the Mansonville Round Barn during the summer of 2014, is intended to celebrate the many splendours of Potton through the presentation of texts and photos, each worth a thousand words. Scenery of exceptional beauty abounds in the Township of Potton. Such natural magnificence appears enduring but is, in fact, fragile. The goal of our exhibit is to make our fellow citizens, visitors, and elected representatives aware of that vulnerability and to consider what might be done. This brochure complements our exhibition by providing context, and we hope that it will be a catalyst for thoughtful debate within our community.

Potton Heritage wishes to thank our municipal council, the MRC Memphrémagog and the Groupe bénévole municipal de Potton for their assistance in presenting this exhibition and brochure.

The first part of this brochure describes our landscapes. We then attempt to illustrate the challenges they face and we conclude by presenting specific recommendations to overcome these challenges which are based on the existing regulatory framework.

THE LANDSCAPES OF THE TOWNSHIP OF POTTON

The Township of Potton is situated in the southwestern part of the MRC Memphrémagog. It is bounded on the north by the Township of Bolton and to the south, by Vermont. Lake Memphremagog is to the east, and the Sutton Mountains, to the west. The territory of Potton covers an area of 264 square kilometres, representing 20% of the territory of the MRC Memphrémagog.

The terrain is characterized by a mix of natural landscapes, countryside, mountains, lakes, rivers and streams, all of which provide incomparable scenery of breath-taking beauty. Composed of biophysical, heritage and man-made features, these panoramas are easily discovered from our roads, waterways and trails.

Incomparable Potton, is a brochure published by the Potton Heritage Association, and is intended as a guide to the scenic beauty of these roads and landscapes. Distinctive road signs indicate the route.

Biophysical elements

The topographical relief of the mountainous and hilly terrain of Potton is the dominant biophysical component of our landscapes. The peaks of Owl's Head, Elephantis, Bear and Hawk Mountains are landmarks in Potton, where the Sutton Mountains and Jay Peak in Vermont also punctuate the horizon. The valley of the

North Missisquoi River, which bisects our Township; that of the Missisquoi River at our southern extremity; the plateaus of Vale Perkins along Lake Memphremagog to the east; and Clark Hill, to our southwest, are also important biophysical elements.

The Heritage

Immigrants from New England first settled in Potton in the early 1790's. They brought with them their cultural and religious practices, and an architectural style inspired primarily by their customs and traditions. This heritage remains, scattered throughout Potton in the form of churches, cemeteries, barns, residential and commercial building styles, and is especially visible in our place names. By the mid 1800's, the beauty of the natural landscapes had emerged as a driving force in the development of our Township. Lake Memphremagog and Owl's Head Mountain became popular attractions.

Several components of built heritage and landscapes in Potton are identified in the register of significant heritage elements, and are recognized in the MRC's Land Use and Development Plan (*Schéma d'aménagement et de développement de la MRC*), notably the Round Barn in Mansonville, the Pont de la Frontière covered bridge, the core of Mansonville, as well as some exceptional landscapes.

Land use

The main land uses impacting the landscapes of Potton are the village of Mansonville, the hamlets of Dunkin, Highwater, Knowlton Landing, Vale Perkins, the development of Owl's Head, week-end homes, farms and natural areas.

The village of Mansonville and surrounding hamlets underpin our landscapes. Examples of our Anglo-American styled built heritage can be seen in these communities.

Secondary residences occupy a significant portion of the Township. Beginning around the mid 1800's, many visitors chose to establish summer homes, primarily along the shores of Lake Memphremagog. This phenomenon persists to the degree that its shoreline is nearly totally subdivided and privately owned. The growing popularity of the area, related primarily to the beauty of these landscapes, is reflected in ever increasing property values and in the means of those able to afford to buy in the area.

Main roads

Three main routes cross the Township of Potton: Route 243 (called route de Mansonville within Potton), Chemin du Lac, an extension of Chemin de Vale Perkins and Chemin Owl's Head, and the Chemin de la Vallée-

Missisquoi, from Highwater to Glen Sutton. Our mountains are visible landmarks, thanks to the many visual 'windows' along these routes.

Agriculture

Farming, particularly dairy, was once a very important vocation in Potton. Farms were located primarily along roads bordering the plateaus and fertile ground of the Missisquoi and North Missisquoi river valleys, as well as in the Vale Perkins area.

Today, farming is primarily concentrated on raising beef cattle. Only one dairy farm remains in Potton, that of Wayne Bedard on chemin West Hill. Fields are now used mainly for hay production and as pasture for the beef industry. Operations belonging to Marcel & Sébastien McDuff on Route 243; Geoff & Carol Birrell on Chemin du Monastère; and B.W. Ball on Chemin Peabody and Chemin du lac are the largest of the cattle raising farms in Potton. Several smaller farms have also converted from dairy to beef. Recently, significant areas of Potton have been devoted to corn production.

In many ways, the land used for farming provides the best view of landscapes. Cleared fields, the cultivation and crops producing different textures and colours, animals, and farm buildings are all components of an enriched landscape. In an area such as ours, which is substantially covered by large forests, open fields enhance wider viewsheds.

Views opening onto fields, lakes and mountains, provide a variety of attractive scenery. The observer then has perspective to more varied views. Farming enhances our landscapes for the benefit of all, whether resident or visitor. The cumulative efforts of farmers represent a collective wealth, since farming helps create and enhance specific land features. Without the presence of farms and farmers to care for our lands, we will witness Mother Nature inexorably reclaiming her own, returning farmland to brush.

Our natural areas

The MRC's Land Use and Development Plan identifies a number of forested areas as natural landscapes of superior interest. Of these, several are located in the Township of Potton, notably Owl's Head, Elephantis, Bear and Pevee Mountains. These natural landscapes, atop mountains and on hillsides, can be clearly seen region wide. With our lakes, rivers, countryside, and nuggets of heritage, these natural zones directly enhance the landscapes that characterize Potton.

A number of large protected areas are found in the Township. Of particular note, the Green Mountains Nature Reserve (8 164 hectares), owned by the Nature Conservancy of Canada; the Ruitter Valley Ecological

Reserve (117 hectares), property of the MRC Memphrémagog; and the Ruiter Valley Land Trust (300 hectares), a non-profit organization, founded in 1987 by Robert Shepherd and Stansje Plantenga.

WHAT IS AT STAKE FOR OUR LANDSCAPES ?

The pleasing landscapes of Potton are composed of the elements just described. It is, however, the visual perspectives offered from our roads, waterways, mountain tops and farmland that allow us to truly grasp not only the range of our territory, but also to appreciate and to be moved by the beauty of the diverse and dynamic landscapes that so typify our Township.

As vistas along our roads and the lakeshore disappear or become more obscured, such incomparable natural heritage is threatened. Because it is generally accepted that roads transform 'country' into countryside, it then follows that the loss of views along these routes, whether on land or water, also entails a loss of landscape. Since the quality of landscapes is at the heart of the culture of a region, it then follows that any appreciable reduction of the visibility of these landscapes will lessen the appeal of our area and will eventually mean fewer visitors. Sooner or later, this will translate to social, economic and demographic decline.

Our Mountain views : threats associated with the growth of building at elevation

The potential for recreational tourism as well as residential development on mountainsides, because of the panoramic views available, increases property values for owners and the lure for vacation homes. This type of economic growth risks modifying the natural integrity of our mountain summits. Because mountains are visible region wide, so too will be the impact. All residential development, particularly on the eastern face of Owl's Head Mountain, should be in strict conformity with the regulatory framework.

Abandonment of farmland

The decline in farming in our municipality results in significant visual impacts:

- Brush overgrowth on abandoned farmland and the disappearance of views formerly visible from roads. Sectors of chemin Schoolcraft, and Route 243, between East Bolton and Mansonville are examples.
- The loss of pertinent built agricultural heritage among others, through the collapse of unused barns, including round barns.
- A shift in land use due to the planting of tree farms, particularly fir and pine. This type of reforestation clashes with the harmony of the landscape and contributes significantly to the disappearance of scenic views.

- Massive deciduous or coniferous hedges along roadsides screen large swathes of the viewshed beyond.
- Overall, the biggest threat consists in the ongoing degradation of farmland that reduces the visual appeal of our landscapes and will lead, in time, to less tourist traffic and fewer secondary homes. In the longer term, what will follow is a significant weakening of the overall social and economic fabric of our community.

The protection and promotion of the quality of our landscape, and the sums spent for that purpose, are investments with significant economic benefits. The preservation of farming activities, as the predominant vector of our landscapes, becomes of major importance for the entire community.

Threats to built heritage

The recent shared-cost grants for exterior renovation permitted the restoration of several homes of heritage interest in Mansonville. It is a step in the right direction. We note however that several buildings require more attention by municipal authorities: the Round Barn of Mansonville, the Pont de la Frontière covered bridge, both cited as structures of heritage significance and both in urgent need of repair. Properties belonging to the Municipality, they may not be left to abandonment. We are aware that citizens must mobilize to save them from destruction, as is currently being done for the Round Barn.

CONCLUSION

An appeal for the preservation and enhancement of this Township's landscapes

Landscapes are an asset for everyone. They are part of our heritage. It is up to us, as a community, to value and appreciate them. Their fate is largely in the hands of local and regional authorities, as well as the property owner, who by the nature of his holdings have an important influence on their quality. This brochure seeks to sensitize the population of the Township of Potton and the MRC Memphrémagog to the high stakes that we are facing. We invite you to rally to the effort of maintaining and perhaps recovering some of the most scenic landscapes in Quebec.

What can be done by our municipal authorities?

The Charte des paysages estriens was adopted unanimously on May 7, 2012 by Potton's municipal council, resolution 2012 05 35. Its goal is to ensure that landscapes will be given due consideration when intervening in the surrounding environment. It seems not only essential but also logical that the municipality begin to respect the commitments contained in this charter, and put to practical use the Manual of best practices that accompany it.

With regard to the proposals in the MRC's Land Use Planning and Development Plan (SAD-MRC), we recommend an evaluation of the stakes that are described therein, such as visual screening or blocking views from roadsides. Brush between the actual road and the fences along it, is therefore within road limits, and this has become widespread in our Township. This is a major reason for the disappearance of some views.

A pilot project for the roadside control of brush could be put into place in 2014 by the Municipality in partnership with the Groupe bénévole municipal de Potton (GBMP).

The Municipality could consider establishing permit requirements for the reforestation along tourist routes and roads.

Regulations concerning building in mountainous zones, PIIA-5, should be tightened, particularly concerning the elevation at which construction is prohibited on our mountainsides. The Municipality should ensure that any new construction in mountainous zones harmonizes with the surrounding landscape. It should also strictly enforce the regulation that prohibits building on slopes with a grade of more than 15%.

A program, targeting specific elements, could also be introduced to help owners to preserve and re-use some older agricultural buildings that enhance our landscapes.

The Municipality should adopt the regional development plan for the agricultural zone of the MRC, and within its scope, adopt concrete measures to create a land bank, in Potton. As is the case in MRC Brome-Missisquoi, a land bank increases accessibility to lands for the benefit of next-generation farmers, and puts abandoned fields to better use.

With financial support from the Municipality, the GBMP should establish stopping places along the routes suggested by "Incomparable Potton" allowing the visitor to more fully admire the scenery before him and be informed about its characteristics.

What can the owner of agricultural land do?

Here are a few suggestions:

- Make an agreement with a farmer for the use of your land;
- Invite next-generation farmers to use your land;
- Mow your fields and open spaces from time to time to stop brush from gaining a foothold;
- Where plantations already exist, space plants to encourage visual openings;
- Maintain the roadside along your property to ensure filtered views on landscapes, at the very least;

- Refrain from planting coniferous trees or reforesting land without considering the effect on the landscape;
- Refrain from storing machinery and unused objects in full view;
- Make an ecological gift to protect a remarkable site in perpetuity.

An appeal to all

As a community, we have the responsibility of preserving the collective asset our landscape heritage represents. Do not hesitate to remind our elected representatives to respect the commitments they have made. Above all – let’s get involved and each doing what we can for our bit of Potton!

‘Don’t kill the beauty of the world’ implores singer Diane Dufresne in her “L’hymne à la beauté du monde” (“Hymn to the beauty of the World”). Her plea resonates of both negligence and attachment to that which surrounds us. This clash plunges us into drama: Human beings are defacing the only world they have, – a world where beauty is nonetheless precious. There is little doubt that art, in this profound sense, is in tune with our society. Think about our landscapes, an undeniable source of beauty – but in no less danger because of it.

Guy Mercier, *Continuité*

PHOTOGRAPHS OF OUR LANDSCAPES

Beginning on page 15, we present a selection of photos from the exhibition on the landscapes of Potton.

ANNEX -THE REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

Over the last few years, a regulatory framework for the conservation of landscapes has been established at several levels of government. In this annex we present an overview of the sections applicable to our township.

Municipality of the Township of Potton - The PIIA (Site Planning and Architectural Integration Plan)

PIIA-1 (Heritage buildings in the village)

This PIIA identifies and protects 26 buildings within the village of Mansonville judged to be of exceptional or strong heritage value, such as the Manson, Reilly, and Giroux houses among others, as well as the churches, the Town Hall, Giroux's store and the CIBC.

PIIA-5 (mountainous zones)

This regulatory framework is aimed especially at construction in mountainous areas, in order to protect natural landscapes of superior interest. The objectives applicable to the study of a given project (subject to these regulations) are below:

- to ensure the integration of the project into the physical characteristics of the land;
- to favour a harmonious development, while respecting the characteristics of the surrounding natural environment;
- to minimize the impact of any work on the flow of water and erosion;
- to minimize deforestation and the loss of forest cover;
- to integrate building into the surrounding natural environment;
- to minimize changes likely to affect visual perspective.

Too often however, economic imperatives result in decisions to authorize so called 'minor' exemptions or in the introduction of regulations without respecting the PIIA concerned.

The Charter of Townships' Landscapes

The Municipal Council of Potton, by unanimous vote, adopted the Charter of Townships' landscapes on May 7, 2012 (Resolution 2012 05 35).

The Charter is intended as a tool to raise awareness for the need to protect and enhance our landscapes. It rests on a set of values, principles and commitments shared by elected representatives, municipalities, ministries, private enterprise, organizations and citizens whose actions have an impact on the landscape. Its

goal is to ensure that landscapes will be given due consideration when intervening in the surrounding environment.

In spite of adoption by our Municipality, concrete measures for the practical application of the Charter have yet to be established, including the use of the Manual of Best Practices that accompany it.

MRC Memphrémagog

The Land Use and Development Plan of the MRC (Le Schéma d'aménagement et de développement)

The 17 municipalities, which together form the MRC Memphrémagog, are aware that the attraction of their territories is fundamentally tied to a natural environment, as characterized by a variety of natural, agricultural, and wooded landscapes. In spite of urban development and the popularity of vacation homes, the quality of these landscapes and their preservation, remain a major component of the attraction our regional landscapes continue to exert.

Consequently, the Plan puts forward the following goals:

- to confirm the structuring role that quality landscapes and building architecture underpin within the territory, and to encourage regulations to preserve them;
- to preserve those routes and panoramic views on landscapes of superior interest;
- to understand, enhance and protect heritage elements;
- to preserve quality natural landscapes of superior interest and maintain landscape visibility;
- to preserve corridors along panoramic roads and panoramic views; to ensure that new development respects and integrates the visual and aesthetic in sectors of aesthetic and visual interest, as well as within corridors considered of superior visual interest.

In the Township of Pottou, landscapes of superior interest include the massifs of Owl's Head, Bear, Elephantis, Hawk, and Burnt Mountains, Clark Hill, as well as the hilly slopes to the west of Mansonville and on chemin White.

The panoramic views, in the form of road corridors, reinforce 'windows' onto exceptionally pleasing and varied landscapes. Examples of these include chemins Bellevue, du Lac, Laliberté, Leadville, Miltimore, Owl's Head, Peabody, Province Hill, Schoolcraft and White.

The panoramic and picturesque roads which contribute strongly to the visibility of our rural heritage, natural landscapes and countryside are the following: route de Mansonville (243) and Vallée-Missisquoi road, as well as Bellevue, du Lac, Laliberté, Leadville, Miltimore, Owl's Head, Peabody, Province Hill, Schoolcraft, Vale Perkins and White.

Development Plan for the Agricultural Zone

In January of 2013, the MRC Memphrémagog began the preliminary work needed to draft a development plan for agricultural zones in the region. PDZA, an acronym for "Plan de développement de la zone agricole", is a precise and detailed appraisal of the state of farming. It is also a planning tool intended to encourage the full farming potential of an MRC.

One of the priorities of the PDZA is to develop short, medium and long-term action plans, in partnership with stakeholders, to establish concrete means to enhance agricultural zones in order to reach the objectives set out in the project. The development plan for the agricultural zone (PDZA), including an action plan, is projected for 2014.

Government of Québec

The Cultural Heritage Act

The Cultural Heritage Act, in force since October 19, 2012, aims to promote knowledge, protection, enhancement, and the transmission of cultural heritage, which reflects the identity of society. The Ministre de la Culture et des Communications is responsible for the enforcement of this law. The Act also gives powers of intervention to municipalities and the Government of Québec. Citizens have a priority role to play in the matter of heritage. If they are to be stewards of heritage assets, they must necessarily ensure their preservation. Citizens may propose to their municipal council, or to the Minister, that an element of cultural heritage be given the status of "special public interest".

It should be noted that the Municipality of the Township of Pottton has designated as historic monuments the Pont de la Frontière covered bridge, as of October 6, 2008, and the Round Barn in Mansonville, as of July 7, 2009.

One of the most important elements of this Act is the designation of Cultural Heritage landscapes.

“The Act gives the possibility to municipalities and stakeholders to request the Government of Québec to designate a cultural heritage landscape. The characteristics of cultural heritage landscapes must result from the interrelation of human and natural factors. These must be characteristics worthy of conservation by reason of historic interest, symbolism or identity. A cultural heritage landscape is thus designated not only for its aesthetic considerations, but also, and above all because its characteristics bear witness to a particular human activity. “

Extract of ‘À propos de la Loi sur le patrimoine culturel’, page 8, (unofficial translation)

The Natural Heritage Conservation Act

The object of this Act is to safeguard the character, diversity and integrity of the natural heritage in Québec, through measures protecting its biological diversity. The intent of the Act is to facilitate the establishment of a network of protected areas.

The Green Mountains Nature Reserve, the Ruitier Valley Ecological Reserve and the Ruitier Valley Land Trust, mentioned in the first section, constitute such protected areas.

The characterization of cultural landscapes

In December 2013, the MRC commissioned the firm of expert consultants, *Ruralys*, to carry out a region-wide study of the features that characterize a cultural landscape. This research is the first step in a fairly substantial process of obtaining the designation of cultural heritage landscape from the Government of Québec. The process includes, amongst other requirements, *“the demonstration that the community concerned recognizes these remarkable landscapes, the demonstration of which includes public consultations”*.

The designation as a cultural heritage landscape, in effect, gives the seal of quality to that landscape, opening the door for technical and financial assistance in furthering efforts devoted to local development.

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PHOTOGRAPHS OF OUR LANDSCAPES

Beginning on next page, we present a selection of photos from the exhibition on the landscapes of Potton. These photos are grouped according to the following themes:

- Owl's Head and Lake Memphremagog;
- Landscapes of the Eastern Sector;
- Landscapes of the Western Sector;
- Built Heritage;
- Agriculture;
- Nature;
- Challenges; this theme summarizes our preoccupations.

The choice of these photos, first those selected for the exhibition and then those chosen for the brochure, is based on very personal judgement. Travelling through our township will make you realize how rich our landscapes are.

OWL'S HEAD ET LE LAC MEMPHRÉMAGOG



La baie Sargent, vue du chemin du Lac
View from chemin du Lac onto Sargent Bay

OWL'S HEAD AND LAKE MEMPHREMAGOG



Le mont Éléphant, vu du sommet d'Owl's Head
View from Owl's Head onto Mt. Elephantis



Vue du sommet d'Owl's Head, en direction est
View from the summit of Owl's Head towards the east



Vue du sommet d'Owl's Head, en direction sud-ouest
View from Owl's Head towards the south-west



Le mont Owl's Head, vu du chemin Laliberté
Owl's Head from chemin Laliberté

PAYSAGES DU SECTEUR EST



Vue sur le mont Hawk et les Appalaches, du chemin Hill Top
View from chemin Hill Top onto Mt. Hawk and the Appalachian Mountains

LANDSCAPES OF THE EASTERN SECTOR



L'étang Sugar Loaf
Sugar Loaf Pond



Vue en direction nord, du mont Owl's Head
View from Owl's Head towards the north



Vue en direction sud-ouest, du chemin Laliberté
View towards the south-west from chemin Laliberté



Vue du terrain de golf Owl's Head et de Jay Peak
View from Owl's Head golf course towards Jay Peak

PAYSAGES DU SECTEUR OUEST



Cimetière Ruiters Settlement, à Dunkin
Ruiters Settlement Cemetery at Dunkin

LANDSCAPES OF THE WESTERN SECTOR



Maison du peintre Craig Skinner, à Dunkin
Painter Craig Skinner's house at Dunkin



Vue sur la vallée et le mont Bear, de la route 243
View from Highway 243 across the valley towards Mt. Bear



Le sommet Rond des monts Sutton, du chemin West Hill
Round Top from chemin West Hill



Barrage de l'étang Fullerton
Fullerton Pond Dam

PATRIMOINE BÂTI



La grange ronde de Mansonville
The Round Barn in Mansonville

BUILT HERITAGE



Le magasin Jewett, à Vale Perkins
The Jewett Store in Vale Perkins



Maison patrimoniale au 283, rue Principale
Heritage building, 283 rue Principale



Le monastère russe
The Russian Monastery



L'hôtel de ville du Canton de Potton
The Town Hall of Potton Township

AGRICULTURE



Scène champêtre sur le chemin de Vale Perkins
Rural setting on chemin Vale Perkins

AGRICULTURE



La ferme de Ben Ball – chemin Peabody
The Ben Ball Farm – chemin Peabody



Les vaches laitières de Wayne Bedard – chemin West Hill
Wayne Bedard's milk cows – chemin West Hill



Balles de foin dans la vallée Missisquoi
Hay bales in the Missisquoi Valley



Bovins dans la vallée Missisquoi
Cattle in the Missisquoi Valley

GRANDE NATURE



Prairie de verges d'or
Goldenrod meadow

NATURE



Vue sur le lac Memphrémagog, du sentier Panorama
View onto Lake Memphremagog from Panorama trail



Le ruisseau Ruitier
Ruiter Brook Creek



La rivière Missisquoi
Missisquoi River



Rochers au sommet d'Owl's Head
Rock formation on the summit of Owl's Head

ENJEUX



Friche sur le chemin Ruitter Brook
Brush along chemin Ruitter Brook

CHALLENGES



Écran obstructif
Inappropriate screen



Bande de friche le long du chemin Peabody
Brush strip on chemin Peabody



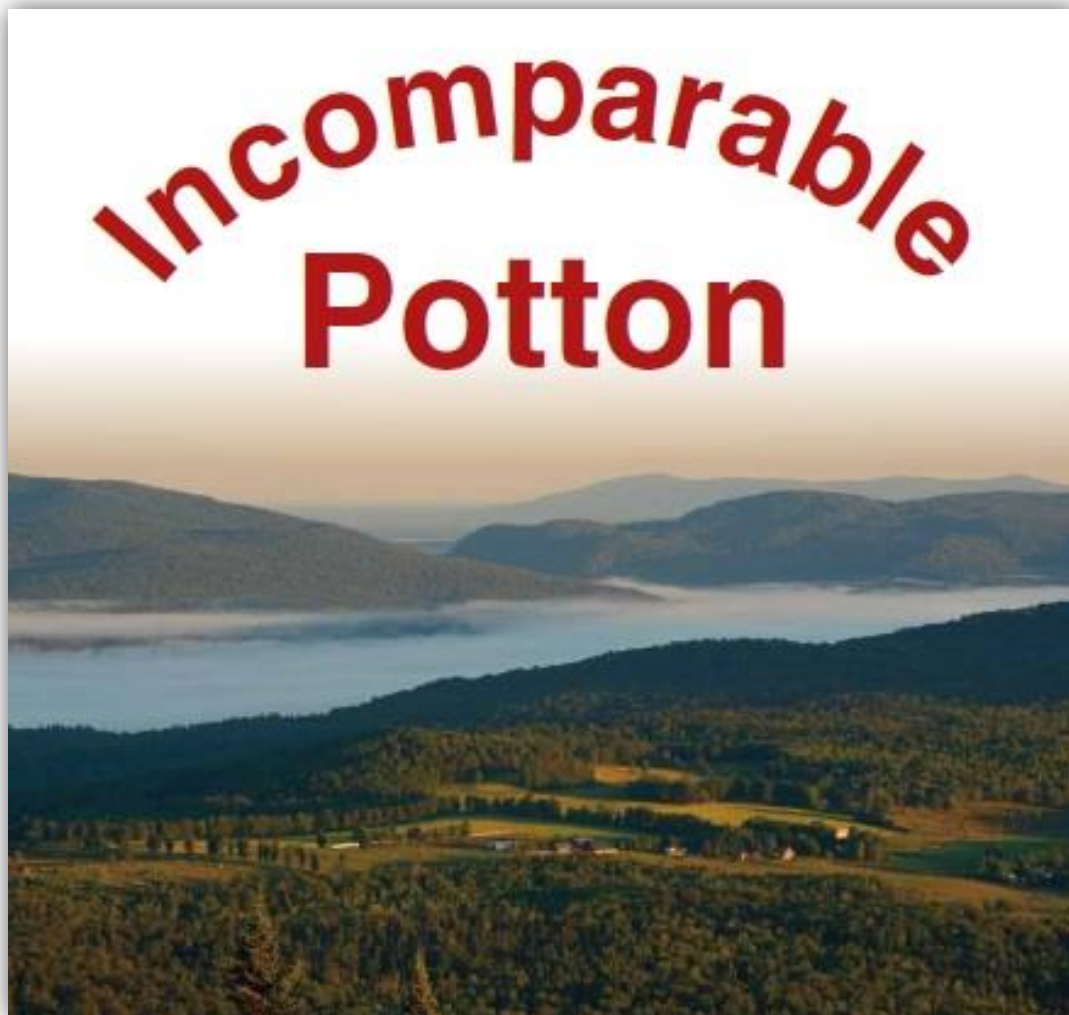
Plantation de conifères discordante
Unharmonious pine plantation



Implantation mal intégrée
Poor siting in a natural environment

**BROCHURE DISPONIBLE
AU BUREAU TOURISTIQUE**

**BROCHURE AVAILABLE
AT THE TOURIST OFFICE**



UN CIRCUIT POUR ADMIRER
NOS PAYSAGES

A CIRCUIT TO DISCOVER
OUR LANDSCAPES

