



# Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation Newsletter

Number Eight

Fall 2001

## Cooperman Fife & Drum Company

The next time you hear a banjo, attend an Irish music concert, watch a Civil War reenactment or play "Jacks" think of Cooperman Fife & Drum Company. This Saxtons River company is a leading manufacturer of musical instruments, instrument parts and historic games and toys. If you travel to Williamsburg VA. and buy a game, toy, drum or whistle, it is likely your purchase was made by Cooperman.

Civil War reenactors often use Cooperman rope drums to marshal the troops. Irish bands might rely on two Cooperman products, their penny whistle and their bodhran drum to play their jigs and reels.

Cooperman has been making its products in Vermont since 1987 at the former Cowing Woodturning Factory on RT 121. The company was started by the late Patrick Cooperman, a New York Fire Fighter and member of a VFW Fife and Drum Corps. He started his business in 1961 as a sideline.

Today, Cooperman runs two facilities; here in Vermont and in Centerbrook, CT. Son Patrick heads the Saxtons River facility while daughter Patricia runs the



*Patrick Cooperman holds wood hoops that will become a drum and banjo rim. Cooperman's lumber is locally harvested and sawn at the company mill.*



Connecticut facility.

The Vermont operation is a buzz of saws, bending machines, and wood finishing tools punctuated by the occasional whistle, drum or tambourine interlude. The company, which sells \$2 million in products yearly, employs 16 workers in Vermont.

These workers enjoy the unusual four-day work week which was instituted in the spring. According to Cooperman, this work schedule allows workers the time to attend to their personal lives. The company, he said, has not seen any loss in production on the new schedule.

Cooperman has a customer base of over 600 museum store accounts. It produces instructional, educational and historic items. A big seller is the penny whistle, a simple instrument easily learned. The company sells 100,000 of their rolled metal whistles annually.

Cooperman is a licensed manufacturer for Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.

"Basically," says Patrick Cooperman, "we are a wood turning business." The company uses local woods for most of its products. It purchases nearly 50,000 board feet of lumber annually and saws it at its own saw plant.

Cooperman attends several trade shows each year. The Percussive Arts

Society show is an important place for him to introduce new products. Through this show the company introduced a line of drums designed by

*continued on page 4*

### INSIDE THIS EDITION...

- News From BDCC. Page 2
- Travel Industry Hit by Sept 11 Events

## FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

### BDCC Executive Committee

**Phil Steckler**, Country Business Service 254-4504 phsobi@sover.net

**Kevin Meyer**, Mary Meyer Corp. 365-7793

**John Meyer**, Pieciak & Co 257-1307 jmeyer@sover.net

**Dart Everett**, Everett Real Estate 254-9258 deverett@sover.net

**Bruce Gardner**, Janos Technology, 365-7714 Bgardner@JanosTech.com

**Carl Lynde**, First Vermont Bank 257-6519 clynde@banknorth.com

**Bill Palumbo**, Kenyon Realty 464-2101

**Mark Richards**, Richards, Gates, Hoffman & Clay, 254-6016 richarma@richardsins.com

**Debbie Boyle**, Chittenden Bank 258-4019 dboyle@vnb.com

**Hugh Barber**, Southern Vermont Engineering, 254-9318 hbarber@sveassoc.com

---

### The BDCC Newsletter

**William McGrath**, Executive Director bdcc@sover.net www.sover.net/~bdcc/

**Sandy Otero**, Administrative Assistant

**Art Edelstein**, Newsletter Editor arte@sover.net

---

### Company News

Do you have news of interest to the Brattleboro area business community? Has your company expanded, introduced a new product, won an award?

Send your information to:

Newsletter editor  
Brattleboro Development  
Credit Corp.  
76 Cotton Mill Hill  
Brattleboro, VT 05301

Or fax it to us 257-0294 or email us bdcc@sover.net

### News From BDCC

By *Bill McGrath*

I am pleased to report that the local economy is not as bad as we might have predicted considering the downturn the national economy has experienced this year. This is tempered by the events of September 11.

This summer has been a busy one for me. I have spent a considerable amount of time and energy working to bring several new businesses to the area. Of particular importance to our region is our continuing negotiations, currently eight months long, with C&S Grocers. C&S has yet to decide where to build their new headquarters, but Brattleboro and Keene are the remaining contenders. C&S will construct a 120,000 square foot building when they finally decide where to place it. I must tell you the competition to land this building contract has been very stiff.

There is a lot at stake here. C&S, a \$9 billion corporation, employs 600 people who average \$52,000 in salary annually. The company will hire an additional 175 people, no small addition to the local workforce.

While we await C&S's decision, I am pleased to announce that Stratford Publishing of Brattleboro is expanding and adding 70 jobs to their payroll. The company does electronic typesetting for publishers like Random House.

Also, Applied Bolting Technology is locating to Rockingham from Ludlow. The company manufactures "smart washers." They will create 10 new jobs at an average salary of \$41,000 per year.

Desroucher Inc. of Albany NY is buying a 51-unit inn and B&B in Dover. That purchase will create 20 new jobs.



In general, we seem to be weathering the national economic slowdown well. As any visitor can see, downtown Brattleboro and Bellows Falls have very robust economies. People are spending money.

Of course the events of September 11 will have an affect on our region. The World Trade Center episode, I believe, will be a boom to tourism. Air flights around the region will diminish and tourists will take to their automobiles more. Southeastern Vermont should benefit from this shift back to car travel.

While the events in New York and Washington are tragic, I believe they point to a potential shift in where certain businesses will locate. We now have a great opportunity to recruit businesses from the metropolitan New York area. We can help these businesses move to a safer state. This move benefits both these companies and their employees. I will concentrate my efforts on small manufacturers and the financial services industry.

This fall I will attend the Plastics USA show in Chicago on October 1. I will be there to recruit businesses and to see if we can make associations with businesses looking to sub-contract work to our area.

# Summer Tourism Business Flat

## *Terrorist Tragedy Affects Fall Foliage Business*

Summer business was flat according to an informal survey of Southern Vermont Inns and B&Bs conducted by Lynn Barrett at the Southern Vermont Regional Marketing Organization. “May and June were slow due to the heavy rains, but July picked up with August slowing down,” said Barrett.

“It’s interesting,” reports Ron Naples, of the Southern Vermont Lodging Association, “our May and June were slow, but we caught up in July and August.”

Innkeeper Tad Lyon of the Red Shutter Inn said that they had the best July ever with August falling off.

“Our summer started slow and took off in July,” said Paul Florindo, Innkeeper of The Inn at Cranberry.

Jill Mancivalano of Adams Farm reports that Motor Coach business was the same as last year, but sales were down. “The number of people visiting the farm was up 5-8 percent, but spending was the same or less,” she said.

All in all business was flat going into foliage season with the terrorist tragedy bringing many cancellations from Europe and the West Coast. Many cancellations however were quickly filled in by the domestic market.

The Windham Hill Inn was filled the

third weekend of September with couples who had planned to go to Europe - Spain, Italy and the Danube - but chose to drive or take a domestic flight to nearby Vermont instead.

“Within 48 hours of the tragedy all Europeans had cancelled,” Innkeeper Michael Simonds of Windham Hill Inn said, adding that the vacancies were quickly spoken for. “We generally get

two to three times more requests than we could accommodate,” he said. The couples came from Massachusetts, Connecticut, Ohio and Virginia. One couple from Greenwich, CT. said that the refuge of Vermont was particularly inspiring at this tragic time.

With the onset of the fall color season several innkeepers predicted increased

business as New Yorkers seek to get out of the city for a rest.

One inn owner said that with the September cancellations, opportunities for short notice visits have opened up.

JoAnn Carew from Three Mountain Inn in Jamaica said. “Our long distance guests bailed, Californians in particular, but the local people are sticking around and filled in the cancellations.”

“Columbus Day weekend is still sold out,” Dorena Hart from Frog’s Leap Inn in Arlington said.

The Four Columns Inn in Newfane said that “quite a few” guests had can-

celled but that they still don’t have much available for vacancies.

Other venues have felt the crunch more acutely.

Dave Cerchio from the Nutmeg Inn in Wilmington expressed rather bleak expectations.

“Business is terrible,” Cerchio said. “With the increase in room and meals tax, and nobody flying in — I expected a 30 percent decrease this month but now I’m thinking 40 percent down this month during our best season.”

Kevin Stephens from Trails End Inn in Wilmington had a similar story.

“Normally we have one or two cancellations a week,” Stephens said. “We have had 10 or 12 in that period in the past weeks.” He considered that people who can drive rather than fly might take that option.

Tad Lyon from the Red Shutter Inn echoed the idea.

“We may also see the skiers who normally fly to Aspen staying on the East Coast,” Lyon said.

According to Grigs Markham at the Windham Hill Inn, business was about even with last year through June. July and August have been down relative to last year.

Our guests are definitely booking later and we are adjusting for the “later booking” factor. At this point, foliage season looks to be as good as last year.

*“Our long distance guests bailed, Californians in particular, but the local people are sticking around and filled in the cancellations.”*

— JoAnn Carew  
Three Mountain Inn, Jamaica

## Cooperman Fife & Drum

*continued from page 1*

drummer Glen Velez.

Cooperman also goes to museum shows where he shows his latest toy product and games. "We do a lot of product development," says Cooperman. The company is constantly talking with musicians and historians about new instruments and items it can produce.

Banjoists might be surprised to learn that the wood rims for many banjos, including the prestigious Gibson company's line, are made here. Banjo rims are also exported as far away as the Czech Republic.

Business has been so good in recent years that in 1998 the company added 5,000 square feet of manufacturing space to the original Cowings facility. "The new building more than doubled our operation and we added seven employees," said Cooperman.

The loan to build the addition was secured with help from BDCC. "Bill McGrath has been instrumental in help-



*Cooperman Fife & Drum products include a variety of drums, tambourines, penny whistles, jaws harps and jacks.*

ing us secure financing for this operation," said Cooperman.

Cooperman says he is pleased at the way his business has evolved in Vermont. "We're really happy being in Vermont. We are growing down our Connecticut business and increasing our Vermont business, we like it here better," he explained.

Cooperman Fife & Drum Co.  
[www.cooperman.com](http://www.cooperman.com)

The Vermont Economic Development Authority (VEDA), the state's economic development lender, has money available to lend to eligible businesses. Current VEDA rates are 4.5 or 5 percent, depending on the use of the funds. Please call Bill McGrath at (802) 257-7731 for more information.

## Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation

76 Cotton Mill Hill  
Brattleboro, VT 05301

Phone: (802) 257-7731  
Fax: (802) 257-0294  
[www.sover.net/~bdcc](http://www.sover.net/~bdcc)  
[bdcc@sover.net](mailto:bdcc@sover.net)

Presorted  
Standard  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Brattleboro, VT  
Permit #39