Important Publications: The Dickinsons of Amherst, Photographs by Jerome Liebling; Essays by Christopher Benfey, Polly Longworth & Barton Levi; St. Armand; A Year in the Notch; Exploring the Natural History of the White Mountains, by William Sargent; Generation Exodus: The Fate of Young Jewish Refugees from Nazi Germany, by Walter Laqueur.

Editor’s Note: When I see the UPNE catalog, new and forthcoming and backlist titles, I begin to feel like a youngster who is entering a favorite soda fountain and candy store. In each direction there is a new pleasure to behold: interesting, thoughtful, fascinating books. You want to touch each cover and seek a quite corner where you could begin reading immediately—a bibliophile’s delight!

Founded in 1970, UPNE is a unique publishing consortium (Brandeis University, Dartmouth College, Middlebury College, University of New Hampshire & Tufts University) and housed at Dartmouth College, the host institution. UPNE has earned a reputation for excellence: its publishing program reflects strengths in the humanities, liberal arts, fine and performing arts, literature, New England culture and interdisciplinary studies.

I had the pleasure of speaking (by telephone) with UPNE Director, Richard Abel, and here are some parts of our conversation:

JL: When UPNE was founded, was the idea of creating a consortium considered an unusual idea?
RA: “...an idea ahead of its time (1970)...one of the first” presses to do so.
JL: I love the eclecttic scope of your publishing program. I see the fascinating, The Dickinsons of Amherst, Susan Baker’s Following Proost and Mayewski and White, The Ice Chronicles. Each title stirs one’s imagination...
RA: “...we like to think that we are doing imaginative publishing.” We attempt to have a “common focal point: grab the reader’s attention.”
JL: These titles certainly do just that.

JL: The idea of attempting to see a place, Dickinson’s Amherst or Marcel Proost’s Combray, Balbec...as, the poet/author once saw it is intriguing and a superb way for future readers to appreciate these great works of literature.

Mr. Abel indicated that you (the reader) gain a much deeper understanding of a poem or a novel by actually being able to see the place that is being written about. For example, he mentioned having lived in Mississippi and gaining an enhanced understanding of William Faulkner’s novels by being in the fictional Yoknapatawpha County.

JL: In Dickinson’s Amherst, there’s an illusory sense that it in 1866 and Emily Dickinson is actually in her house.

Mr. Abel noted, The Ice Chronicles, that UPNE tackles the difficult issues of the 21st century: the earth’s climate, global warming, the impact on our societies. In The Ice Chronicles, the gap between scientific advances and the public discussion of these issues is narrowed and the issues become lucid.