

Grad leaves a mark

By **EMILY CUTTS**
STAFF WRITER

CASTLETON — Charlie Cacciatore plans to study history but Thursday morning, he made some of his own.

The 18-year-old spearheaded the effort to have a historical marker placed at the intersection of North and Pencil Mill roads. The sign's inscription describes the history of the 35 years of slate pencil manufacturing in Castleton between 1843 and 1878.

"It's exciting. It's good for the community," he said. "It's important to remember our history."

Cacciatore, who said he has an interest in politics as well, said the history of the pencil mill illustrates the story of America — immigration, industrialization, success and failure. About a quarter-mile up the road from the marker, there is a stone foundation believed to be part of an old storehouse for the pencils made at the manufacturing plant variously known as Adams Manufacturing and, later, Vermont Slate and Alum.

Cacciatore said he wants to get the marker installed before he goes to Middlebury College this fall to study history and literature.

The entire process of gaining approval from the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation took about 18 months. Cacciatore began work to get the historical marker during his junior year at Fair Haven Union High School, balancing college entrance exams, applications and advanced placement courses.

His mother, Lisa Cacciatore,

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Charlie Cacciatore
and

Pencil Mill Factory

on

Sucker Brook in Castleton, VT

Mark

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recalled Thursday morning her son coming home from school one day and telling her he would submit the application.

"He just ran with it," she said. "He did the research, wrote up the proposal."

The proposal for the marker was approved about eight months ago, but they

had to wait for winter to end before they could install it, she said.

Charlie Cacciatore said it was "such a great feeling" when he finally received the email that the proposal would be granted.

"I'm just so proud of him. He had an idea, ran with it and stuck with it," his mother said.

In his application, Cacciatore highlighted the history of the mill.

"I find the pencil mill to be an intriguing part

of Vermont's history," he wrote. "Though it only existed for about 30 years, during its time it bustled with life, creating a product in extremely high demand."

Soft slate was found in the area surrounding the mill. It was mined and turned into pencils that could easily write and erase on slate boards or tablets, he explained.

"Not only did the local schools use these pencils, but the pencils were also exported to schools across

the United States and around the world," he wrote in his application. "It provided people with a tool that was necessary and which could be made nowhere else but in Castleton, Vermont."

In addition to the proposal, Cacciatore was responsible also for writing what would appear on the historical marker provided by the state.

On hand to witness the installation was Joseph M. Doran, who helped

Cacciatore gather some of the required documentation on the site's history. He taught social studies at Castleton Village School until his retirement this week.

Doran said Cacciatore contacted him about a year ago to see if he had anything on file about the mill.

"It's exciting to see a young person involved like this," he said.

Doran said at this point, he now considers Cacciatore the authority on the pencil mill.

As the marker went up, neighbors stopped by to see what was happening and snap a few pictures of the marker to explain the road's name to visitors.

One woman walking in the area joked that now she would have to stop and read the sign.

The newly installed marker will be the sixth in Castleton, according to the state's list of roadside historic markers.

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EMILY CUTTS / STAFF PHOTO

Members of Castleton's Highway Department, along with Charlie Cacciatore, work to install the historical marker. Cacciatore led the campaign to have it created.