

In 1972, my grandfather, William Cobb the owner of The Electronic Lab, was finding himself in the Bristol Area installing rooftop antennas and televisions too much to take care of his own clientele in the Middlebury area. And so, his son (my father), David Cobb, decided to leave Simmons Precision where he had been working on the Apollo project and opened Bristol Electronics, where he began the family business that, as of a year ago, three generations own. The company began by selling, installing and repairing small electronics, mainly televisions and rooftop antennas.

Dad has always led by example. He was and still is, at the age of 72, an extremely hard working Vermonter that treats his clients as if they are his neighbors...because they are.

Bristol Electronics began installing very large satellite dishes in the early 80s. As satellite technology changed, dishes became smaller and more compact. The company became the largest Dish Network installer in Vermont and remains the only repair service that we are aware of for the large dishes that are still used by television and radio stations within Vermont. Although there is very little of this work, it is an honor to be able to take good care of these customers.

In 2010, we realized that the renewable sector was changing fast. We made it our mission to figure out a way to aid our customers, not only in reducing their carbon footprint, but also in getting a good return on their investment. Since we were already accustomed to installing equipment on roof surfaces and running wiring to the ground level where we installed electronic devices, it seemed like a logical step to begin our journey into the renewable market.

We installed our first three photovoltaic systems in 2010, however the return on investment was better in the thermal sector over the course of the following year. Utilizing the solar hot water systems manufactured by Country Home Products in Vergennes, Bristol Electronics became the #1 Solar Thermal installer in Vermont, with 87 installations. As the price per watt for photovoltaic systems decreased, making it more financially advantageous for our customers, we turned our attention to photovoltaics in 2012 where it has remained our primary focus since.

We certainly are not the largest residential solar installer in the state, however we are making quite a splash with 184 residential installations, 2 business installations and an installation at the St. Peter's Catholic Church in Vergennes. While this may not sound like much when compared with to the very large group of Suncommon installations, we do pretty well with our small team.

We are very proud of the life that we have made for ourselves and our employees. The solar industry has made it possible for us to grow from a company that employed 1 or 2 Vermonters to one that currently has 6 full-time employees, 1 part-time employee, and three folks that assist us on an as needed basis. Furthermore, we have opened up a seasonal solar installer position to accommodate an individual's winter and spring job as a sugar maker. Since we began installing photovoltaic systems, we have installed over 3,800 solar modules equaling over a megawatt. We have orders in our build schedule to install 505 modules equaling 146 kW on 22 sites, which will keep us busy through the end of June. We have never seen sales this strong. However, the threat of the change in tariff this year brought a flurry of orders toward the end of last year in order to obtain the additional 1¢ solar adder.

The solar portion of our business has allowed us, our family and our employees to grow and to provide a product and service that we feel extremely passionate about to our beloved customers and neighbors. We have grown in our abilities to provide meaningful employment to more Vermonters. We have grown in our ability to purchase our products locally, thus enabling us to positively affect our suppliers and economy.

Our success has affected many Vermonters along our way. Aside from our customers, we have had a direct affect on local suppliers and businesses. We purchase the majority of our solar equipment (US made I will add) from Green Mountain Electric Supply in Colchester. We purchase the steel for our ground mounted frames from Capital Steel in Barre. Some of our attachment points are manufactured in Morrisville, Vermont. A point we are extremely proud of. We purchase some supplies from Home Depot and Lowe's but also our local hardware stores. We purchased a small excavator and a skid steer, both with several attachments, from Champlain Valley Equipment in Middlebury. We purchased a Ford F-350 from G. Stone Motors in Middlebury a couple of years ago and traded in an F-150 to purchase a brand new F-350 diesel pick-up truck which gets better gas mileage about a month ago. Once we find the "right" vehicle, we will replace our third service vehicle, hopefully within a month or two. We are often hounded by suppliers outside of Vermont to do business with them instead, however we are loyal and pride ourselves on shopping local to the best of our abilities.

I'd like to walk you through a typical project. Typically, our first contact is by a homeowner calling our office because they have seen our testimonial ads in the Addison Independent or have been referred to us by a friend or loved one. That first telephone conversation is the point where we begin our relationship. We take the time to answer their questions and let them know that our whole goal is to do just that, answer questions. A site evaluation date is set with the customer when one of our solar installers visits their site to answer questions and obtain the needed details to put together a brainstorming estimate. This site evaluation can take from half an hour to several hours depending on the questions from the customer. When the site dimensions, pitch, compass heading and shade details land in the office at the end of the day, we begin working on all of the options that might exist that we would want to know if the property were our own.

Molly is our head estimator and she begins by generating drawings of each roof surface. Then she figures out what the return on investment will be per solar module on each roof surface to determine which roof surface would be the best if the decision was purely based on money. She looks at ground mounted array sites and calculates their potential return on investment where they are appropriate.

After speaking with the customer's utility company to obtain the usage details for the site, she uses the per module details that she has calculated to construct an estimate. Our estimates are commonly 5-20 pages long with many additional supporting documents.

Once the brainstorming estimate has been completed, I go out to the customer's home and sit with them to answer any new questions that have arisen as well as go over the estimate in detail. My quote deliveries rarely take less than and hour and a half and have taken in excess of 6 hours in some cases. I tell folks that I don't linger, but I make sure that I have the time needed to stay and answer their questions and brainstorm together so that they can make an educated decision.

Our goal at this point is to provide them with all of the information that we would want to know if the property were our own.

Usually at this point, our customers need time to think. I reassure them that we are available to come back or visit over the telephone when they have further questions or need to brainstorm more. Once in a while, a customer will place an order at this point, however it is rare. There are usually a few more visits or phone calls before an order is placed. We are not the kind of business that calls back and bugs folks. We wait for them to check in with us. It feels better this way.

Once an order is placed, we set a time to get paperwork signed and pickup a deposit. At this point the job is placed into our build schedule that is fluid with Mother Nature's interruptions and the flow of custom projects that sometimes take more or less time than planned. Roof mounted projects typically take 2-4 days with ground mounted arrays taking 4-7 days to install. The absolute best day of the project is the day that we energize a system. To see the customer's consumption meter spinning backward is a treat. Every time we see it for the first time on a site is exciting.

We hear from our customers when we are out living our personal lives as well as when we have booths at the fair and home shows. They seek us out. They also send notes through e-mail and snail mail. I can't express the feeling that I get when this happens. They tell us of how the decrease in their monthly expenditures has affected them. They tell us how their energy consumption has changed. They don't take energy for granted when they "flip that switch". They feel an ownership of it that they never felt before. This extends to their children and folks that visit them. It is amazing how having solar on your property changes the way you look at energy so drastically. I have brought a few examples of testimonials from our customers. There are more on our website, should you wish to see them.

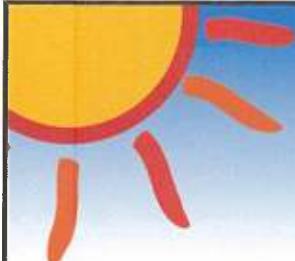
I have heard and read much about what seem to be called “distributed resources”. When I hear this term, I think of all of the roof surfaces that surround us scattered within our amazingly gorgeous surroundings that could be utilized for solar energy production. There are times when we utilize a small ground mounted array approach, but it honestly breaks my heart when I see the huge field power plant installations. We have so many barns in our glorious state that are not being utilized. Although I know some ground mounted arrays are necessary, and we do install small ones, I appreciate it when solar modules can be placed on roof surfaces that have no other purpose than to keep the weather out of a building.

It has been explained over and over, that when solar photovoltaics are installed throughout a community instead of in a field, less infrastructure is needed by the utility, less line loss is experienced and better distribution is realized. It makes sense to me that if the energy produced is spread among all of our buildings instead of coming from an individual power plant, it could be more stable with less of a carbon, and not to mention scenic, footprint. It spreads the return on investment out among Vermonters. We wouldn't need the power companies to install larger lines and equipment with all of their carbon footprint and potential health related issues with more small systems.

We actually ran into a very serious situation late this past year that touches on the use of distributed resources. Two of our customers' CPGs were placed on hold by Green Mountain Power. We were told that there was a very large job that was in the pre-planning stage that could potentially stop us from installing any small solar systems within most of Addison County. The two jobs that were put on hold were told that there was a 30 day delay that could be followed by a 60 day delay in getting the CPG and that the CPG might not be allowed when all was said and done depending on the outcome of the large project's plans. The delays would be determined by the progress of the potential extremely large array that was in the pre-planning stage. Since our projects were ready to be installed, it seemed extremely unfair, and yet there was nothing that could be done. It concerns us greatly that this could happen again in the near future. These kinds of projects potentially take away a homeowner's ability to install solar on their own property for their own return on investment and carbon footprint reduction purposes.

We are grateful to be able to install small solar systems for Vermonters. Systems that provide decades of carbon footprint reduction and a great return on their investment. We hope to continue working with our neighbors in this way. To be here to answer their questions. To be here to take good care of them.

I was five years old when my father began the journey that has been Bristol Electronics. My son Stephen, now my business partner, spent his early days in a playpen in the shop on Main Street in downtown Bristol as I worked for Dad. Now I run the company and Stephen is our lead solar installer. We are always looking to keep up with technology and are encouraged by what we see coming in the renewables market. Solar is our passion. Any one of us will stop to answer questions and brainstorm with anyone that wishes to chat at anytime. It is our life. It not only puts a roof over our heads and food in our bellies, it is a means to improving the carbon footprint for us and for our customers and we are proud to be a part of it all.



Bristol, VT Homeowner Recommends Bristol Electronics

We are so pleased with our electric solar panels that we want to tell everyone about our great experience! The wonderful team at Bristol Electronics installed the ground-mount array last fall. We had them put in our solar hot water system several years prior and had established a good working relationship with them. We already knew them to be reliable and quick to fix any problems that arose.

We enjoy the idea of being a part of protecting the environment so when it came time to deciding on what type of solar panels to install for electricity, we contacted Bristol Electronics first, while also considering other companies and products as well. There's a big world out there with a variety of choices and it was hard to know whose product was actually best for our needs. Finally in the end, we decided on choosing Bristol Electronics because of their reliability, best price, the best installment time frame and most efficient system using micro-inverters instead of the conventional less expensive string inverters.

The team provided very professional and pleasant service all the way from the planning stages to final clean-up. When we finally made the decision to "break ground", they were exceptionally fast, professional and easy to work with. From start to finish, we were making electricity in about 2 weeks. Indeed, our yard looks better now than before they started! In the end, we are saving a lot of money on both our solar hot water and solar electric systems. Thank you Bristol Electronics for your excellent service in meeting our hopes and expectations!

Sincerely, Ed & Emily Hilbert – Bristol, VT

802 . 453 . 2500
BristolElectronicsVT.com
FREE SITE EVALUATIONS





Huntington, VT Homeowner Recommends Bristol Electronics

It's been a year now since Bristol Electronics installed those 20 beautiful solar panels on our barn roof. We could not be more pleased with the entire experience - from initially contacting you for a consult and estimate, to the easy and timely installation, to the performance of the panels, and to how they have changed the way we view the production and consumption of electricity. Without sounding too melodramatic about it, we are consistently impressed and amazed each sunny day to see how much electricity they produce - it's a wonderful confluence of solar physics and human ingenuity. We love watching that electric meter spin backwards.

Over the course of the first year the output from our panels was over 95% of the estimated amount, and that was in spite of a cloudy, snowy winter. Yet, we accumulated enough credit with GMP that we took the next step and replaced our propane hot water heater with a super-efficient electric one. I never thought we would go back to an electric water heater.

Since our first involvement with Bristol Electronics eight years ago when we had our satellite TV service installed to now, we have loved dealing with your company, whether it's for a service call or something as sophisticated as the solar panel installation. Making a call to Bristol Electronics is like phoning a friend: someone always picks up the phone promptly, and responses are timely, friendly, and helpful. Your employees are all first-rate and provide high-quality, friendly service. Thank you for being our friend and neighbor.

John Gergely – Huntington, VT



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"Bristol Electronics makes it easy for you to go solar. From the detailed, patient explanations, to the rebates, estimates and permits, Bristol Electronics takes care of it all. I obtained several quotes from various companies but it was Bristol Electronics who ultimately won my business with their friendly, approachable attitude and superior knowledge of the technology. When I began this project I was uneducated and apprehensive. Now I find myself encouraging my friends and family to call Bristol Electronics for a free quote and explanation because I truly believe in their product and company. They are highly skilled and professional in every respect.

Stephen and his crew encouraged my children's curiosity and made learning fun for them. Little things like making handprints in the cement of our solar system sparked talks about reducing your carbon footprint and how everyone can help, even children. The whole experience could not have been easier or better. Seeing the power meter run backwards is just icing on the cake.."

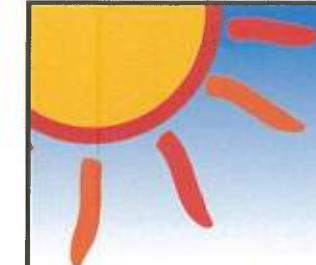
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Michelle Lass – Bristol, VT



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