



Vermont State History ~ In a Nutshell ~

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Vermont State History In a Nutshell
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www.KnowledgeBoxCentral.com

ISBN

Ebook: 978-1-61625- 627-2

Publisher: Knowledge Box Central
<http://www.knowledgeboxcentral.com>

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What is the "In a Nutshell" series?

This is a series of concise, easy to understand information on many popular topics. You will find that many of products in this series can also be found as part of larger publications and/or curriculum on the publisher's website. At the end of each book, you will find a list of questions that may be used to help you review the material.

Vermont State History Lapbook Journal Study Guide



The Great Seal of Vermont

If there is one word that describes Vermont and its inhabitants, it is "independent". Vermonters have retained that independence by fighting off claims to their territory by neighboring states. The heroics of Ethan Allen and his Green Mountain Boys kept their neighbors at bay, and by 1777 Vermont had drawn up its own constitution as a free and independent state.

Further asserting the independent thinking of the state, Vermont became the first state to outlaw slavery. The Georgia state legislature proclaimed that Vermont was so independent that "the whole state should be made into an island and towed out to sea." And even before the United States declared war on Germany, the Vermont legislature did so itself.

The tradition of independence carries on to the present day, as Vermonters continue to jealously guard every person's right to be free thinkers. Amidst the beautiful scenery of Vermont's hills and valleys, individualism and independence remain strong.

STATE NAME

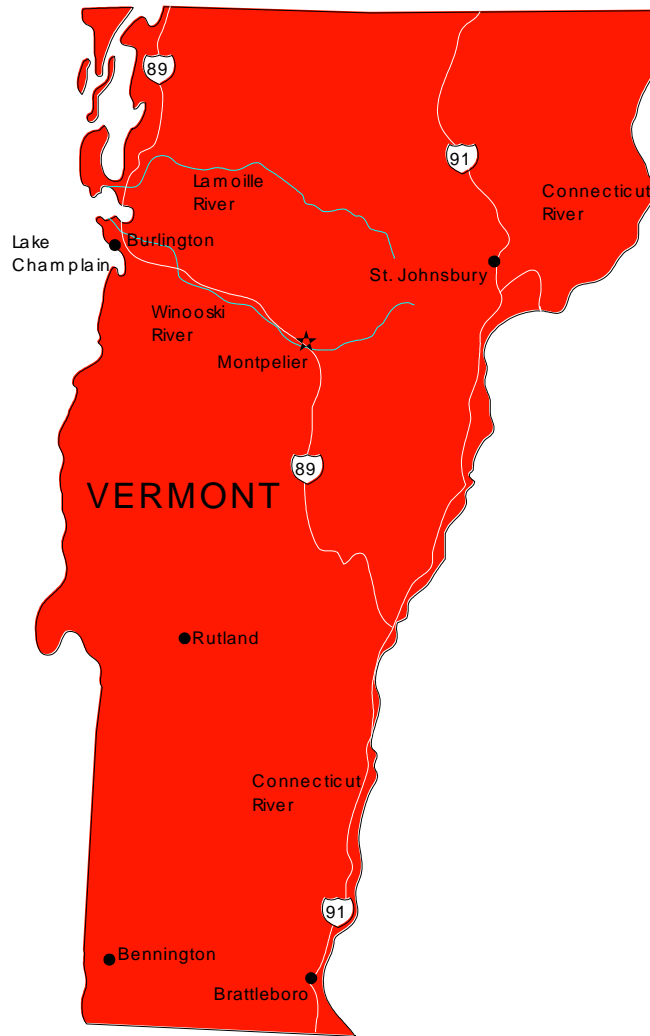
Vermont is an English form of the name that French explorer Samuel de Champlain gave to Vermont's Green Mountains on his 1647 map. He called them "Verd Mont" meaning green mountain.

STATE CITIZENS

People who live in Vermont or who come from Vermont are called Vermonters.

STATEHOOD

In 1777 Vermont declared itself an independent republic. Fourteen years later, on March 4, 1791, the Continental Congress declared Vermont the fourteenth state, making it the first state to join the Union.



Map of Vermont – Capital, Major Cities and Rivers

STATE CONSTITUTION

The Constitution of the State of Vermont is the fundamental body of law of the U.S. State of Vermont. It was adopted in 1793 following Vermont's admission to the Union in 1791 and is largely based upon the 1777 Constitution of Vermont which was ratified at Windsor in the Old Constitution House. At 8,295 words, it is the shortest U.S. state constitution.

The first chapter is a "Declaration of Rights of the Inhabitants of the State of Vermont," was drafted in 1777, and is followed by a "Plan or Frame of Government" outlining the structure of governance with powers distributed between three co-equal branches: executive, legislative and judiciary.

Prior to 1791 Vermont was an independent state, known as the Vermont Republic, governed under the Constitution of the Vermont Republic. The Vermont Constitution was in 1777, and remains, among the most far reaching in guaranteeing personal freedoms and individual rights. It is the first constitution in the New World to prohibit slavery, guarantee universal manhood

suffrage regardless of property ownership, and universal free education, a mandate for public funding of primary and secondary education available to all citizens.

The Vermont Republic's constitution's Declaration of Rights of the Inhabitants of the State of Vermont anticipates the United States Bill of Rights by a dozen years.

The Vermont General Assembly has the sole power to propose amendments to the Constitution of Vermont. An amendment must originate in the Senate, where it must receive a two-thirds vote. After passing the Senate, it must also receive a majority vote in the House. Any amendment that passes both Houses, must be repassed by majority votes, after a newly elected legislature is seated; again, first in the Senate, then in the House. The proposed amendment must then be passed by a majority of the state's voters at a referendum. Only every other Senate session may initiate the amendment process. Thus, Senates elected in off-year (i.e. non-Presidential) elections may initiate amendments, but not Senates elected during Presidential elections. (Vermont Constitution, Chapter 2, Section 72)

Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constitution_of_Vermont

STATE GOVERNMENT

The State of Vermont follows the classic pattern of American government, with three distinct branches: The Legislative Branch (the lawmakers), the Executive Branch (the Governor and State departments) and the Judicial Branch (the courts and the judges). Each branch is sovereign in its own area of responsibility, but it is also influenced by the checks and balances from the other branches.

Legislative Branch

The legislature, which meets in regular session every year, is composed of two bodies: the House of Representatives with 150 members and the Senate with 30 members. Representatives and senators are elected to two-year terms. The legislature enacts the laws that govern the state. Laws so enacted must be approved by the governor. The legislature may override a governor's veto by a two-thirds vote of both houses.

Executive Branch

The elected officials of the Executive Branch are the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Secretary of State, State Treasurer, Auditor of Accounts and Attorney General. Each official is elected to office for a term of two years. The governor functions as the chief executive officer overseeing all administrative departments of the executive branch.

The lines of authority within an executive branch agency or department start with an agency secretary or department commissioner, who is appointed by and responsible to the Governor, and who is responsible for the overall operation of an agency or department. The secretary or commissioner may be assisted by a deputy. A department is generally comprised of divisions each headed by a director. The divisions, in turn, are typically divided into sections headed by chiefs and may be further divided into units headed by supervisors.

Judicial Branch

The judicial power of the state is vested in the Supreme Court, Superior Court, and such other courts as may be provided by law. The Supreme Court consists of one chief justice and four associate justices, who are appointed by the governor and confirmed by the legislature for six-year terms.

http://humanresources.vermont.gov/services/new_employee_orientation/government_organized

U.S. CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION

The legislative branch of the United States government makes laws for our nation and raises and distributes money to run the United States government. The most evident part of the legislative branch is the United States Congress. Congress is divided into two parts, called houses. The two parts are the Senate and the House of Representatives. Congress is referred to as a bicameral body because it is made up of two houses. The Latin roots of the word bicameral, "bi" and "cameral," mean two chambers or rooms.

Members of the Senate are called Senators and members of the House of Representatives are called Representatives. Senators and representatives serving in these two bodies are sometimes referred to as congressmen, or women, and sometimes as legislators because their business is to legislate or make laws. The role of the legislative branch is defined in the United States Constitution.

Each state elects people to represent them in the United States Congress in Washington, DC. The citizens of each state elect two senators to represent them in the Senate. They also elect representatives to represent them in the House of Representatives. The number of representatives each state sends to the House of Representatives is not a specific number like the Senate, but is based on the population of the state. The people, that are elected to represent the state's citizens in the United States Congress, are referred to as the Congressional Delegation.

There are 100 senators in the U.S. Senate. Each is elected to a term, in the Senate, of six years. There are 435 representatives in the U.S. House of Representatives. Each is elected to a term, in the "House," of two years.

The citizens of Vermont elect two people, like every other state, to represent them in the Senate and one person based on Vermont's current population in the most recent federal census, to represent them in the House of Representatives.

STATE SEAL

Vermont's great seal was designed by Ira Allen and accepted by the General Assembly in 1779. A new seal made in 1821 included much of the basic design of the original seal, but was not as symbolic in character. The current seal (adopted in 1937) is a precise reproduction of the original design

The rows of wooded hills indicate the Green Mountains; the sheaves and cow are symbols of agriculture; the wavy lines at the top and bottom represent the sky and water. The central focus of the seal is a pine tree (pine trees at that time were impressive, often standing a hundred feet above surrounding trees).



STATE CAPITAL (Montpelier)

Montpelier is the capital city of Vermont and the county seat of Washington County. The population was 7,855 at the 2010 census. By population, Montpelier is the smallest state capital in the United States. The Vermont History Museum and Vermont College of Fine Arts are located in Montpelier.

The Vermont State House is located on State Street on the western edge of downtown Montpelier, a block north of the Winooski River. It is the seat of the legislative branch of Vermont government. Set against a wooded, the building and its distinctive gold leaf dome are easily visible while approaching Montpelier.



A careful restoration of the Vermont State House began in the early 1980s led by curator David Schütz and the Friends of the Vermont State House, a citizens' advisory committee.

The general style of the building is Neoclassical and Greek Revival and is furnished in American Empire, Renaissance Revival, and Rococo Revival styles.

Some rooms have been restored to represent latter 19th century styles including the "Aesthetic Movement" style.

VERMONT'S THREE STATE HOUSES

A Brief History

Vermont did not always have a state house, or for that matter, a state capital. From 1777 when the Republic of Vermont was founded during the early years of revolution, until 1807, Vermont's General Assembly met 46 times in 14 different towns.

In 1805 Montpelier was chosen as the "permanent seat of the legislature for holding all their sessions." There were two conditions. First, Montpelier had to give land for the capitol. Second, the State House was to be built by September, 1808.

Thomas Davis and Montpelier's first permanent settler, Col. Jacob Davis, donated the land, and the first State House was built on it at a cost of \$9,000. It was a three-story wooden meetinghouse-type structure located near the present site of Vermont's Supreme Court building.



The first State House

The first State House had steep winding staircases flanking recessed galleries on its front facade, and a belfry surmounting its hipped roof. Warmed by a two-story stove in the center of its single legislative chamber, members of the General Assembly sat at pine desks on plank seats with straight backs. One historian notes that many of the desks and much of the building itself were "whittled out of use" by legislative jackknives. At any rate, the building deteriorated and was outgrown by the state's emerging bicameral legislature, so it was torn down.

Vermont's second State House, designed by Ammi Young, was completed in 1838 at a cost of \$132,000.

With a front portico modeled after the temple of Theseus in Greece, this classically-inspired building displayed a low saucer-shaped Roman dome and was the perfect embodiment of the chaste principles that typified the Greek revival fashion then sweeping the country.



The second State House

This State House was constructed of Barre Granite. It took a team of four horses and a yoke of oxen 18 hours to deliver a load of granite and return to the Barre quarries about ten miles away.

Built on an elevated site blasted out of the hillside, the State House enjoyed a stronger foundation and grander approach. The high ground would also serve to protect the building from the flooding of the Winooski River across the road.

On a cold night in January, 1857, a fire, caused by the wood-burning heating system, destroyed nearly everything within the granite walls. Ultimately the walls themselves would come down, leaving only the Grecian portico to be incorporated into the design of the third State House.

The third and present State House was built on the same site as the second. Its basic plan is similar to Young's, but it was built on a larger scale with a distinctly different ornamental scheme reflecting the Renaissance Revival style popular at the time. This State House was constructed over a two and a half year period, cost \$150,000, and was dedicated in 1859. Additions in the rear date from 1888, 1900, and 1987.

Source: <http://www.leg.state.vt.us/sthouse/history.htm>

STATE MOTTO

The state motto of Vermont is "Freedom and Unity."

STATE FLAG

Vermont was the fourteenth state to be admitted to the union. It was admitted in 1791.

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Proud to be a member of the United States, the first Vermont Flag, a state militia flag, was created in October, 1803. Tennessee and Ohio had been admitted to the union at this time and,

perhaps anticipating the national Congress, Vermont's first flag was created with seventeen stripes and seventeen stars in the tradition of the U.S. Flag. The word "VERMONT" was spelled out in upper case letters above the stars and stripes. Fifteen years later in 1817, the national Congress stepped back and authorized the current flag design of thirteen stripes and a star for each state.

Vermont went back to the drawing board and authorized a new design on October 20, 1838. This new design continued to align with that of the U.S. Flag. This new design reduced the number of red and white stripes from seventeen to thirteen. Instead of a star for each state, however, the union contained one large white star on a blue field. Within the confines of the star was displayed the Vermont Coat of Arms. This flag remained as the official state flag until 1919.

Eventually Vermonters began to desire a more unique state flag that would not be so easily confused with the flag of the United States when hanging from a pole. As the idea for a change became more prominent, it was found that the flag authorized in 1838, was not ever really used to any extent and that not many were even aware of its existence. The flag carried by Vermont regiments in the Civil War, the Spanish American War and at the outbreak of World War I was a flag that displayed the Vermont State Coat of Arms on a blue field. This design had customarily been carried as the Governor's flag.

And so, in 1919, the third Vermont State Flag was authorized. This third design displayed the Vermont State Coat of Arms on a blue field. This is the Vermont State Flag as we know it today.

STATE NICKNAME

The Green Mountain State

This well-known nickname for the state of Vermont is in reference to the Green Mountains named by Samuel de Champlain in 1647. Currently, this nickname is displayed on Vermont license plates as seen on the 1997 plate to the right. Earlier plates pleaded "See Vermont" or simply stated "Green Mountains."

STATE BIRD

The hermit thrush (*Catharus guttatus*) was adopted as the official state bird of Vermont by an act of the Legislature in 1941, effective June 1, 1941.

The Hermit Thrush was selected because it has a distinctive sweet call, and because it is found in all 14 Vermont counties. The bird's usual habitat is the ground and low branches of shrubs and trees in woodland areas.



Below, you will find 15 general questions to help review what you have learned. Use the following page(s) for documenting your answers. Older students may choose to write a State Report as well.

Review Questions:

1. List the states and/or bodies of water that border this state.
2. What was the date of statehood?
3. What is the state capital?
4. What is the state motto?
5. Name at least one state nickname.
6. Describe the state flag.
7. What is the state bird?
8. What is the state flower?
9. List at least 5 other state symbols.
10. Describe this state's government.
11. Name the major imports and exports for this state.
12. Describe the weather and climate in this state.
13. List at least 5 famous people from this state.
14. Describe at least 5 significant events in this state's history.
15. What other interesting information have you learned about this state?

Answers to Review Questions:

