

# Settlement

## Background

Samuel de Champlain first visited Vermont in 1609. Although the French built a fort at Isle LaMotte in what is now Vermont in 1666, permanent European settlement here did not begin until the 1760s. Meanwhile, Europeans came to Vermont to trap and trade for furs: beaver, otter, fisher, bear, and other pelts that could be sold to manufacturers of hats, coats, and other clothing in Europe and in Britain's North American Colonies. The Europeans brought manufactured goods such as iron tools, blankets, and clothing to trade with the Abenaki. They also brought diseases such as smallpox, which decimated Native populations.

The struggle between the French and the English for control over land and the fur trade drew the Abenaki and other Native American groups into war. The clash played itself out through the 1740s and 50s, and warfare kept settlers away from the Vermont frontier. In 1754, the English, French, and Indian War, which would decide the conflict once and for all, began. Some Native American groups sided with the French, and others with the British. The British, owing to their stronger economic position and greater population, emerged victorious in 1763.



*Clearing Up a Field by Roland Evans Robinson (in the early 1800s).*

Rokeby Museum

Peace was not the only factor that set the stage for Vermont settlement. In 1741, the Crown had made New Hampshire a British colony, and in 1749, New Hampshire Governor Benning Wentworth issued a land grant for Bennington. By 1764 Wentworth had issued grants for more than 3,000,000 acres in the area between the Connecticut River to the east and the Hudson River to the west—land that had traditionally been the home of the Abenaki people. Known then as the New Hampshire Grants, these lands would one day be called Vermont.

The grants issued by Wentworth offered economic opportunity for land speculators and for settlers too poor to afford land in other parts of New England, much of which was already heavily settled. Land in the Grants could be had for 1/100th of the cost of land in Maine, which was part of Massachusetts until 1820, and 1/400th of the cost of land in Western Massachusetts. Speculators purchased grants from New Hampshire and sold lots to willing settlers, who cleared acreage, built log cabins, and brought their families to the Green Mountains.

As they moved into Vermont, settlers altered the landscape on which the Abenaki had hunted, fished, and farmed for millennia. The Abenaki fiercely defended their territory, but disease and military losses dimin-

ished their number. Many eventually moved north into Canada, and those who remained in Vermont were pushed onto marginal lands.

The issuance of grants by Wentworth proved a boon to settlers and speculators. It also created conflict, as the government of New York also claimed the land between the Hudson and Connecticut Rivers as its own.

Both New York and New Hampshire appealed to the Crown for a decision on the ownership of the disputed territory. In 1764, the Crown Privy Council ruled in New York's favor, establishing the western border of New Hampshire at the Connecticut River. Following that ruling, New York began aggressively issuing land patents, or titles, in the disputed territory. Many of those patents conflicted with New Hampshire grants.

To defend their investments, Ethan Allen, his family, and other settlers who owned title to lands originally granted by New Hampshire formed the Green Mountain Boys. This military group harassed and evicted "Yorkers" and the surveyors, attorneys, and government officials who defended New York's claims.

In July 1767, the Crown Privy Council ordered New York to stop issuing patents in the area between the Hudson and the Connecticut, but this did not settle the conflict. New York established three counties in what is now western Vermont, and it continued to fight in court to uphold its patents. The American Revolution interrupted the dispute, but did not resolve it. In 1777, Vermont unilaterally declared itself a state, but it was not formally admitted into the Union until 1791, after it had agreed to pay New York \$30,000 in compensation for the disputed lands.

### **About This Segment**

Produced by Nora Jacobson and Dorothy Tod, this segment explores the settlement of Vermont in the period prior to the American revolution. The segment includes surveyor John Dutton's exploration of ancient roads and description of Colonial settlement patterns. Abenakis Judy Dow, Donna Roberts Moody, Nate Pero, and Bea Nelson discuss the impact on Native American life this intrusion represented.

### **Before Viewing**

- What does the word "frontier" mean?
- In the Colonial Era, why did European settlers move to the frontier?
- What were the challenges of frontier life?
- Who lived on the land in Vermont before European settlers arrived?

### **Vocabulary**

**New Hampshire Grants:** land titles issued by New Hampshire Governor Benning Wentworth for land between the Hudson and Connecticut rivers in what is today Vermont

**land speculator:** a person who buys land and hopes to sell it at a profit



*A Vermont Pioneer Woman Protects Her Family by artist Roy F. Heinrich, first published in September 1942 in the Saturday Evening Post and Life Magazine as part of a National Life advertisement entitled "Do Women Need Life Insurance?"*

National Life of Vermont

**Yorker:** a person who held a land title to lands between the Hudson and Connecticut that was issued by the government of New York Colony.

### **After Viewing**

- What attracted the first European settlers to Vermont?
- How did settlers' arrival affect the lives of Abenakis?
- Why was there a dispute over the land that is now Vermont?
- What role did Ethan Allen and the Green Mountain Boys play in this dispute?

### **Grades 4-5**

**A Settlement Plan** With your classmates, take a walk in a nearby outdoor area. Pretend you are settlers from Massachusetts coming to Vermont to live. Working in a group, make a plan for settling the land. Which part of the land would you want to clear, and why? Which land might you want to leave the way it is until a later date? Where would you put your cabin? Where would you put your barn? Where would you plant your crops? Take notes and photographs so you can remember your decision. Then go back to your classroom and write a letter to your family back in Massachusetts explaining your plan. Include drawings to show what you will do.

### *Vermont History and Social Sciences Grade Expectations*

Initiate an inquiry (3-4:1; 5-6:1); Communicate findings (3-4:7; 5-6:7); Interpret geography/solve geographic problems (3-4:11; 7-8:11); Human interaction with the environment (3-4:12; 5-6:12); Interaction/interdependence between humans, environment, and economy (3-4:18; 5-6:18)

**History Alive!** What was life like in Vermont during Colonial times? Why not learn about it from a real live person? The Ethan Allen Homestead in Burlington, Vermont, can send a costumed history interpreter to your classroom to tell you about life way back then. You can choose from the following visitors: a Colonial farmer, a French voyageur, a British soldier, a Colonial innkeeper, or an Abenaki grandmother. The visits last 30 minutes, and can be presented to up to 40 students of any age. For more details, visit [ethanallenhomestead.org](http://ethanallenhomestead.org). If you have a visitor, be sure to prepare some questions in advance. Record the visit on video so you can share it with others.

### *Vermont History and Social Sciences Grade Expectations*

Connect past with present (3-4:8; 5-6:8); Understand how humans interpret history (3-4:9; 5-6:9); Human interaction with the environment (3-4:12; 5-6:12); Understand how cultures change (3-4:13; 5-6:13); Interaction/interdependence between humans, environment, and economy (3-4:18; 5-6:18); Make economic decisions (3-4:20; 5-6:20)

**Cook Like a Colonist** The early settlers of Vermont ate a diet based on the crops they grew and the food they gathered from the land around them. Once they had cleared the land, the first crops many settlers planted were wheat and corn. The corn could be dried, ground or pounded into corn meal and used for cooking. To eat like a colonist, try making some johnnycakes. Start by looking up a johnnycake recipe in a cookbook or online. Gather your ingredients. Then with the help of your teacher or another adult, make a batch of johnnycakes. Be sure to top them off with some tasty Vermont maple syrup!

### *Vermont History and Social Sciences Grade Expectations*

Conduct research (3-4:4; 5-6:4); Make connections to research Human interaction with the environment (3-4:12; 5-6:12); Interaction/interdependence between humans, the environment, and the economy (3-4:18; 5-6:18)

## Grades 6-8

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**Your Lot in Life** Using lengths of rope or string, divide your schoolyard or another large outdoor area into a grid of square “lots” of equal size. Number each lot, then have students draw numbers to see which lot they will settle. After lots have been drawn, have each landholder write a description of the advantages and disadvantages of their lot. Those could include the distance from resources such as recreation equipment, trees, and transportation as well as sunlight and water for growing crops.

Next, try to lay out the land in portions so that the resources are shared more equally. What are the advantages and disadvantages of laying out lots this way? If you were a proprietor who did not live on the land, which method would you choose—and why?

### *Vermont History and Social Sciences Grade Expectations*

Understand past, present and future (5-6:10; 7-8:10); Interpret geography/solve geographic problems (5-6:11; 7-8:11); Human interaction with the environment (5-6:12; 7-8:12); Understand issues of human interdependence (5-6: 16; 7-8:16)

**Intruders in Our Midst** Imagine you are an Abenaki living in Vermont in 1750. Settlers have come to the area, and are building houses on one of your “quarters,” or areas where you and your family traditionally hunt or gather crops. Prepare a talk to give to the settlers. In your talk, explain the impact of their plan on your traditional way of using the land, and suggest a solution by which both Europeans and Abenakis might be able to live side by side. When your talk is prepared, give it to a group of “settlers” and ask for their response.

### *Vermont History and Social Sciences Grade Expectations*

Initiate an inquiry (5-6:1; 7-8:1); Design research (5-6:3; 7-8:3); Conduct research (5-6:4; 7-8:4); Communicate findings (5-6:7; 7-8:7); Understanding of human interaction with the environment (5-6:12; 7-8:12); Interaction/interdependence between humans, the environment, and the economy (5-6:18; 7-8:18)

**Vermont Land for Sale** Using a digital video camera and editing software, shoot and edit a 30-second commercial for land being sold in the New Hampshire Grants in the 1760s. In your commercial, include information about who is offering the land, how much it costs, and where it is located. Point out any advantages you can think of to land available in other parts of New England, while being honest about the difficulties of life on the frontier.

### *Vermont History and Social Sciences Grade Expectations*

Initiate an inquiry (5-6:1; 7-8:1); Design research (5-6:3; 7-8:3); Conduct research (5-6:4; 7-8:4); Communicate findings (5-6:7; 7-8:7); Understanding of human interaction with the environment (5-6:12; 7-8:12); Interaction/interdependence between humans, the environment, and the economy (5-6:18; 7-8:18)

## Grades 9-12

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**The Gods of the Hills** In the years after the American Revolution Ethan Allen wrote a book called *Reason: The Only Oracle of Man*, which expressed his views on religion. Do some research to find out more about this book, the ideas it expressed, and the public’s response to its publication. How did Allen develop his ideas about religion? How did Allen’s ideas compare to those of America’s Founding Fathers, such as George Washington, Alexander Hamilton, Benjamin Franklin, and Thomas Jefferson? Present your findings in the form of an essay.

### *Vermont History and Social Sciences Grade Expectations*

Initiate an inquiry (9-10:1; 11-12:1); Develop a hypothesis (9-10:2; 11-12:2); Design research (9-10:3; 11-12:3); Conduct research (9-10:4; 11-12:4); Develop reasonable supporting explanations (9-10:5; 11-12:5); Communicate findings (9-10:7; 11-12:7); Understand how humans interpret history (9-10:9; 11-12:9); Understand how cultures change (9-10:13; 11-12:13)

**Record Search** Land records tell important stories about Vermont’s early years. Contact officials in your community and ask if you can visit town offices to look at some of the early land records for your town. Before your visit, prepare some research goals, such as identifying early settlers or the areas in which they settled. Document your visit on digital video; you may also be able to obtain some photocopies of key records. When you return to the classroom, share the information from your records search in the form of a short talk.

### *Vermont History and Social Sciences Grade Expectations*

Initiate an inquiry (9-10:1; 11-12:1); Design research (9-10:3; 11-12:3); Conduct research (9-10:4; 11-12:4); Communicate findings (9-10:7; 11-12:7); Understand human interaction with the environment (9-10:12; 11-12:12); Interaction /interdependence between humans, the environment, and the economy (5-6:18; 7-8:18)

**Forensic Architecture** One way to learn more about the history of your town is to study its buildings. The Rockingham Meeting House in Rockingham VT is the oldest Vermont building in a condition close to its original state. It tells a story about Vermont, and the buildings in your town can tell stories, too. With the help of your local historical society or a local architect, create an architectural tour of your town. First, identify buildings erected during your town’s early years. Then find out more about their past uses and architectural significance. Shoot photos of the buildings in the present, and gather photos of them in the past. Then use your research materials to create an online guide that people can use to do an architectural tour of your town.

### *Vermont History and Social Sciences Grade Expectations*

Initiate an inquiry (9-10:1; 11-12:1); Design research (9-10:3; 11-12:3); Conduct research (9-10:4; 11-12:4); Develop reasonable explanations that support research (9-10:5; 11-12:5); Communicate findings (9-10:7; 11-12:7); Understand human interaction with the environment (9-10:12; 11-12:12); Interaction/interdependence between humans, the environment, and the economy (5-6:18; 7-8:18)

## On the Road

**The Settlers’ Cabin at the Shelburne Museum** in Shelburne, VT offers an up-close look at life in 18th century Vermont. Made of hand-hewn logs and with a stone fireplace, it is furnished as a typical settlers’ home of that era would have been. The Shelburne Museum features a broad expanse of American historical art and artifacts, from circus memorabilia and folk art to tools, carriages, quilts, and the steamboat Ticonderoga. You can learn more online at [shelburnemuseum.org](http://shelburnemuseum.org).

**The Ethan Allen Homestead Museum** is located in Burlington, Vermont, at the last home in which Allen lived. It features lifestyle, tools, and crafts displays, presentations of 18th century home and military life. It also offers educational programs covering the Colonial economy, town meeting, and the life of children. The museum also hosts special events such as Revolutionary War Reenactments and a lecture series. You can find out more online at [ethanallenhomestead.org](http://ethanallenhomestead.org).

**The Vermont History Museum** in Montpelier offers students guided tours and self-guided tours of its permanent exhibit, “Freedom & Unity: One Ideal, Many Stories.” This exhibit explores 350 years of Vermont’s history, from Abenaki life to European settlement to the present time. The Museum also offers “You Be the Historian.” During this program, students study documents and artifacts from Vermont’s past to learn about the skills used by historians. Many classes combine a visit to the Museum with a tour of the State House or a program at the Vermont Supreme Court. For more information about the Vermont History Museum, visit the Vermont Historical Society online at [vermonthistory.org](http://vermonthistory.org).

## ***Career Corner: Costume Designer***

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If you are interested in fashion and like the idea of working in movies, you might consider a career as a costume designer. Working within strict budgets and tight schedules, costume designers are responsible for all the costumes used by actors during the production of a film. To do this, a costume designer may create original costumes or purchase existing clothing and modify it as needed. A great way to start with a career in costume design is to work on school plays or other local productions. The producers of such shows almost always need volunteers, and it's a great way to get guidance and on-the-job experience.

### **RESOURCES**

#### ***Links***

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***Ethan Allen Homestead:*** [ethanallenhomestead.org](http://ethanallenhomestead.org)

***Vermont Historical Society:*** [vermonthistory.org](http://vermonthistory.org)

***The Shelburne Museum:*** [shelburnemuseum.org](http://shelburnemuseum.org)

***Bellows Falls/Rockingham:*** [rockbf.org](http://rockbf.org)

Information about the Rockingham Meeting House can be found by going to the “The Town and Its Villages and Hamlets” page, searching for Rockingham, and clicking on the photo of the Rockingham Meeting House.