

# FREEDOM & UNITY:

## The Vermont movie



**Freedom & Unity: The Vermont Movie — One state. Many visions.**

### **Vermont Movie Short Synopses of Six Parts**

#### **Part One – A Very New Idea**

Part One explores the roots from which the future state of Vermont grew. Samuel de Champlain steps into a canoe, paving the way for Yankee immersion into native culture. We look at early settlement, native peoples' resistance, and the little-known history of African American settlers. Pioneer rebel Ethan Allen leads the struggle for independence, resulting in Vermont's radical constitution- the first to outlaw slavery. Finally, Vermont's heroic role in the Civil War reminds us that, despite occasional missteps, Freedom & Unity—Vermont's state motto—continues to chart the state's course into the present.

#### **Part Two – Under the Surface**

Part Two deepens the journey, digging beneath the surface of Vermont's bucolic image to explore labor wars, eugenics experiments, the McCarthy era, and progressive Republicanism. Covering over a century—from pre-Civil War to 2009—it chronicles the rise of unions and quarry work, Barre's Socialist Labor Party Hall, the marketing of Vermont, the state's reaction to New Deal policies, George Aiken's gentle populism, and Republican Ralph Flanders' heroic stand against Joe McCarthy during the Red Scare. Emigrés from urban areas, "back-to-the-landers" like Helen and Scott Nearing and filmmaker Nora Jacobson's father, Nicholas Jacobson, came to Vermont in search of an alternative lifestyle.

#### **Part Three – Refuge, Reinvention and Revolution**

In the mid-20th century, political pioneers like Bill Meyer, a Congressman who challenged the Cold War, and Governor Phil Hoff, whose 1962 victory set the stage for historic change, rose to take the lead in state politics. Innovation was everywhere: in the work of "talented tinkers" like Snowflake Bentley and Thaddeus Fairbanks, in the rise of IBM, and in the creation of the Interstate highways. We see the pros and cons of the highways--the high price of "eminent domain." Revolution was in the air—rare archival footage provides a vivid look at the "hippies," the realities of communal life and the paths of members of the counter-culture who established roots in Vermont. Who changed whom?

#### **Part Four, Doers and Shapers**

Part Four explores the people and institutions that push boundaries. Starting with education, we take an engrossing journey through the philosophy of John Dewey, leading to the hands-on style of Goddard College, the Putney School, and the inseparable connection between education and democracy. We explore other progressive movements: Vermont's famous Billboard law and Act 250, cultural movements such as Bread and Puppet Theater and finally Vermont's groundbreaking civil union law. Democracy at work—differing voices, different points of view.

#### **Part Five – Ceres' Children**

Part Five takes a deeper look at some of Vermont's cherished traditions: participatory democracy and the conservation ethic, from the ideas of George Perkins Marsh, one of America's first environmentalists, to contemporary volunteer groups and activist movements. The film captures 21st century debates over natural resources, then circles back in time to show how these concerns originate in the ethics of farmers, who depended on the natural world for their survival. The disappearance of dairy farms has raised a tough question: how big is too big? How can Vermont survive in a world economy? Can Vermont be a model for small, local and self-sufficient farming?

#### **Part Six – People's Power**

Part Six tackles contemporary tensions over energy, independence, the environment and the state's future. Chronicling the struggle to close the Vermont Yankee nuclear plant, it reveals the power of protest, the influence of lobbyists and the importance of town meeting debate and a citizen legislature. It follows the battle over windmills in Lowell—a struggle over scale, aesthetics and environmental impacts—and explores thorny questions about economics, sovereignty and climate change. Finally, the devastating impacts of Hurricane Irene reveal the power not only of nature, but of people and community.