

Vermont History Day 2024



History is an ongoing process. We may not understand the long-term consequences of a historic event until many years later. These moments of notable change are turning points. Turning points can be momentous occasions of change, for better or worse. The 2024 Vermont History Day (VHD) theme of *Turning Points in History* covers all these historical moments. This theme can be intimidating due to the range of historical events that fall into this category. Turning points can be ideas, events, and actions. Often, turning points can be more than one thing. There are many moments in Vermont's storied past that fall into each of these three categories, all of which are candidates for a meaningful VHD topic.

Turning Points as Ideas

Turning points come from ideas. Students can examine historic moments of invention and innovation in the arts and sciences. Vermont inventor Samuel Morey assessed early iterations of the steam engine in the Connecticut River. Students could examine the effects Morey's experiments had on the development of the steam engine. This idea led to a turning point in industrialization which forever changed the economic and environmental landscape of the world.

Turning Points as Events

Turning points can be events in the past. Many events in the past have become catalysts for change. Students could examine the role of the Westminster Massacre of 1775 in prompting Vermonters to separate from New York. This event heightened preexisting tensions between New Yorkers and Vermonters. It set Vermont on track to become the 14th state of the United States of America.

Turning Points as Actions

Turning points can also be actions in history. One approach to this would be to examine the political history of Vermont. Laws throughout the state's history have influenced national change. In 2000, Vermont became the third state in the US to legalize civil unions for same-sex couples. Students can understand the wider impact that civil unions had on the LGBTQ+ civil rights movement in the early 2000s.

Projects for Vermont History Day do not need to specifically be about a Vermont topic. However, focusing your project on a Vermont history topic could be beneficial. There are many different local museums and archives across the state. Local experts at these locations are happy to help with projects. At Vermont History Day, we also have [special prizes](#) to award projects that focus on state history topics. These special prizes include a monetary gift from our prize sponsors.

The Vermont Historical Society is an excellent place to start looking for topics! For example, let's say a student is interested in learning about the role of Vermonters during the Civil War. The student may start with a visit to the [Vermont History Museum](#), to see personal artifacts from Vermont soldiers who fought in the Civil War. Or they decide to visit the [Digital Vermont](#) website and view the collection of [Vermont Civil War flags](#). The Digital Vermont website also has political broadsides that recruited Vermonters for the Union Army. The student may decide to focus their project on the St. Albans Raid, the only battle of the Civil War fought on Vermont soil. The [Leahy](#)

[Library](#) at the Vermont History Center features an extensive collection of broadsides from the raid, as well as scholarly works written about the event.

There are many moments in Vermont's history that would make excellent projects for the 2024 Vermont History Day contest. Here are some potential topics to help students get started:

Topic list

Ideas

- Vermont as a Republic (1777-1791)
- Jeffery Brace publishes his memoir *The Blind African Slave* (1810)
- Samuel Morey's experiments with steam engines (1815)
- Thomas Davenport's Electric Engine (1834)
- Abby Hemenway and the local history movement (1860s)
- George Perkins Marsh publishes *Man and Nature* (1864)
- Wilson "Snowflake" Bentley's micrograph photography (1880s)
- Establishment of the Long Trail (1910s)
- Norman Rockwell's modernist art (1939-1953)
- The counterculture movement in Vermont (1960-1970)

Events

- Samuel de Champlain arrives in Vermont (1609)
- The Westminster Massacre (1775)
- The Black Snake Affair (1808)
- The Vermont Sheep Boom (1830s)
- The arrival of the railroad in Vermont (1840-1860)
- The St. Albans Raid (1864)
- Buffalo Soldiers in Vermont (1909-1913)
- Granite Worker Strikes (1922)
- The Vermont Eugenics Survey (1925-1936)
- The first Vermont ski tow (1934)

Actions

- Creation of the Vermont Constitution (1777)
- The "Spitting Lyon" (1798)
- Alexander Twilight becomes the first Vermont Legislator with African ancestry (1830)
- Clarina Howard Nichols' fight for women's suffrage (1840s)
- Justin Morrill's Land Grant College Act (1862)
- Lewis Hine photographs child labor (1910)
- Edna Beard becomes the first woman state legislator in Vermont (1921)
- The Vermont Parkway (1925)
- Act 250 (1970)
- Legalization of Civil Unions (2000)