



- Everywhere -

A SIGN



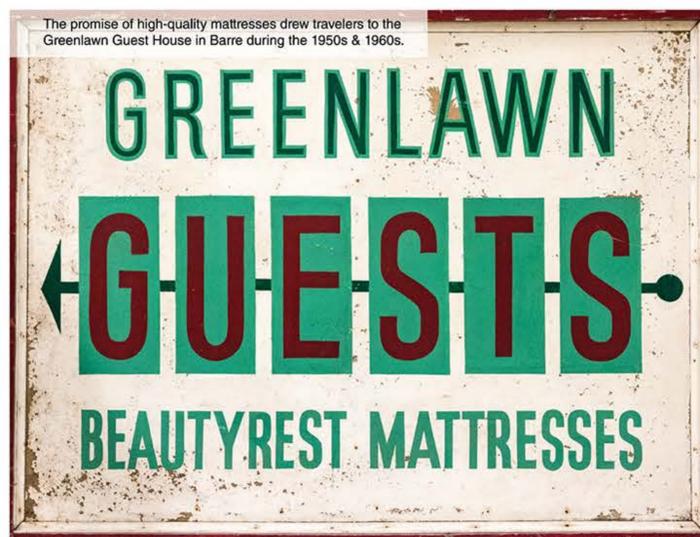
The diversity, artistry, and impact of signs on our everyday lives are immeasurable. What sign will you notice next?

Signs are everywhere. They inform, educate, and promote. Big or small, they relay messages in a shared language. But common attributes in signage can be found beyond the bounds of the written word. Eighteenth and nineteenth century signs often used shapes and symbols to overcome language and illiteracy barriers: a shoe for a cobbler's shop, mortar & pestle for a pharmacy, a tankard for a tavern. Today, we communicate in emojis in much the same way.

By the 20th century, many businesses created unique (often large and bold) signs to stand out in a more crowded market and attract customers who were now driving quickly by. Over time, many of these signs became part of the fabric of their communities - a way to orient people to a town, or a source of shared community memory.



This early 19th-century painted-wood sign for the Blacksmith Shop of Sylvanus Aldrich of Barre, VT, uses symbols such as a horseshoe & anvil to indicate the services provided.



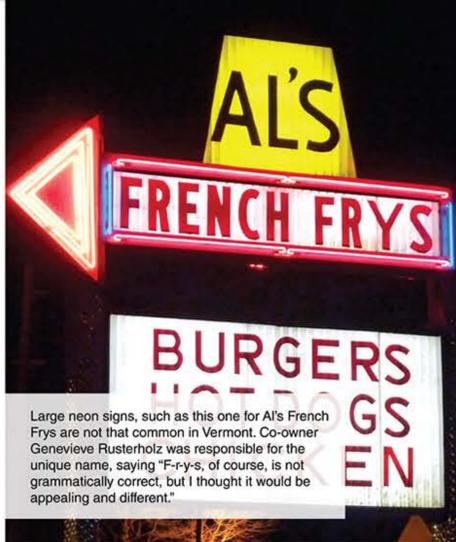
The promise of high-quality mattresses drew travelers to the Greenlawn Guest House in Barre during the 1950s & 1960s.



In the 20th century, mass-produced signs provided both recognizable artwork and language, as well as opportunity for personalization. This sign was created for the State Hospital Farm in Waterbury, VT, which operated from the late 1800s until it closed in 2012.



Arrows are often used to draw people to a location. The Park Squeeze restaurant in Vergennes, created an updated version of this distinct sign on Main St. when it took over the space from its long-standing predecessor, the Park Diner.



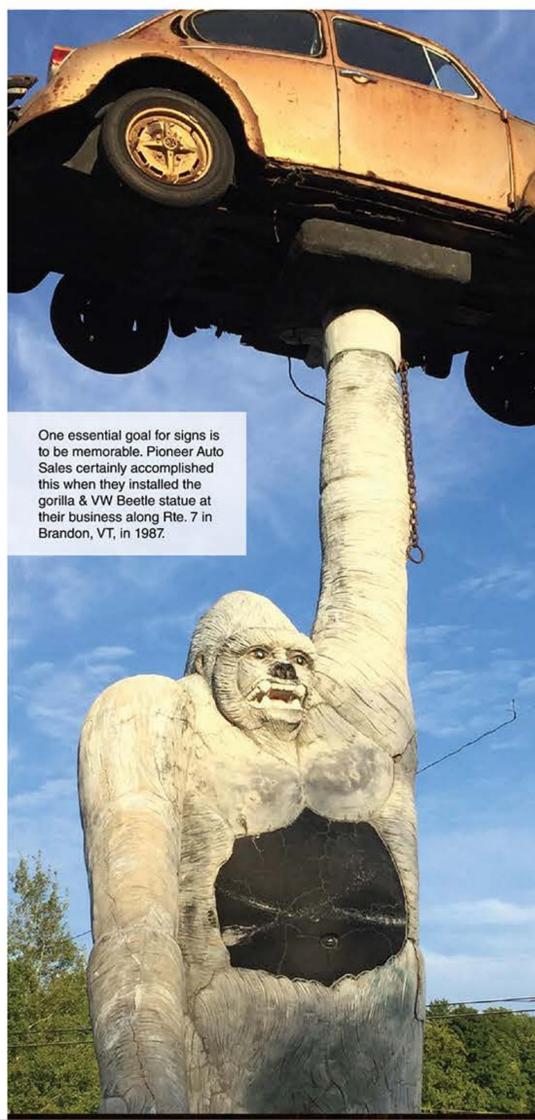
Large neon signs, such as this one for Al's French Frys are not that common in Vermont. Co-owner Genevieve Rusterholz was responsible for the unique name, saying "F-y-s, of course, is not grammatically correct, but I thought it would be appealing and different."



Automobiles offered new opportunities in the 20th century for on-the-go signs as seen on this 1950s delivery truck for Cross Bakery in Montpelier, VT.



Comically oversized objects are routinely created as unique marketing signs, including the "World's Tallest Ladderback Chair" in Bennington, VT. Different versions of the chair have graced this location since the late 1940s.



One essential goal for signs is to be memorable. Pioneer Auto Sales certainly accomplished this when they installed the gorilla & VW Beetle statue at their business along Rte. 7 in Brandon, VT, in 1987.



Your attention, please!

Signs provide information, but first they must grab your attention. Through the years, signmakers have come up with many ways to do that. Sometimes that's through size – and it's usually the bigger the better. Signs on sides of buildings, oversized novelty items like chairs, boots, and of course, the billboard – large enough to be read by cars passing by at 65 mph. Color is another way to attract attention: bright orange construction signs warn us of potential danger.

Advances in materials and technology have led to even more ways signs can attract attention. Electricity brought lighted signs visible at night, and eventually colorful neon signs that transformed landscapes. The 20th century brought digital signs that can change their message daily.



Signs at work

In the 20th century, informational and governmental signs moved towards standardization as their key component, to better communicate with a changing population. Roadways, public areas, emergency services, and government institutions all received signs that featured common shapes, colors, sizes, and symbols to improve wayfinding for all members of the public.

Some signs reflect changes in culture over time. Civil Defense signs became commonplace in towns after World War I, nuclear fallout shelter signs after World War II. Many types of signs have come and gone as certain services have waned. Railroad, manufacturer, and toll road signs that were once common on the landscape are now fading away.

The Interstate came to Vermont in the late 1950s, and with it came large, standardized signs to indicate exits and other traveler information.



RATES OF TOLL	
A FOUR WHEELED PLEASURE CARRIAGE	50 CENTS
DRAWN BY TWO BEASTS	---
EACH ADDITIONAL BEAST	4
A TWO WHEELED PLEASURE CARRIAGE	25
DRAWN BY ONE BEAST	---
EACH ADDITIONAL BEAST	4
A WAGON DRAWN BY TWO BEASTS	25
EACH ADDITIONAL BEAST	4
A HORSE WAGON DRAWN BY ONE BEAST	20
EACH ADDITIONAL BEAST	4
A CART DRAWN BY TWO OXEN	20
EACH ADDITIONAL BEAST	3
A PLEASURE SLEIGH DRAWN BY TWO HORSES	20
A PLEASURE SLEIGH DRAWN BY ONE HORSE	12
A SLED OR LUMBER SLEIGH DRAWN	
BY TWO BEASTS	12
A SLED OR LUMBER SLEIGH	
DRAWN BY ONE HORSE	8
DRAWN BY HORSE AND RIDER	6
FOR MEN, WOMEN, CHILDREN, MULES	2 CENTS EACH
OR NEAT CATTLE	
ALL SHEEP OR SWINE	6 CENTS A DOZEN
AT THE RATE OF	

This large, wooden sign for the Peru Turnpike, the last private toll road operating in Vermont (1814-1916), displays the rate for all types of early-19th-century travelers.

**ALL TRUE,
FOR OLD TIP.**

A fabric campaign banner for the 1840 Presidential election supporting William Henry Harrison uses his nickname, "Old Tippecanoe." The banner was made in Grafton, VT, and carried at a campaign rally on Stratton Mountain.



Women hold up one of many signs during a 1910s rally for women's voting rights. This sign touts the 1911 success of the suffrage movement in California, allowing women to vote almost a decade before federal laws were amended.



Protesters carry both a printed banner and homemade signs while marching during the 2000 Vermont Civil Union debates.



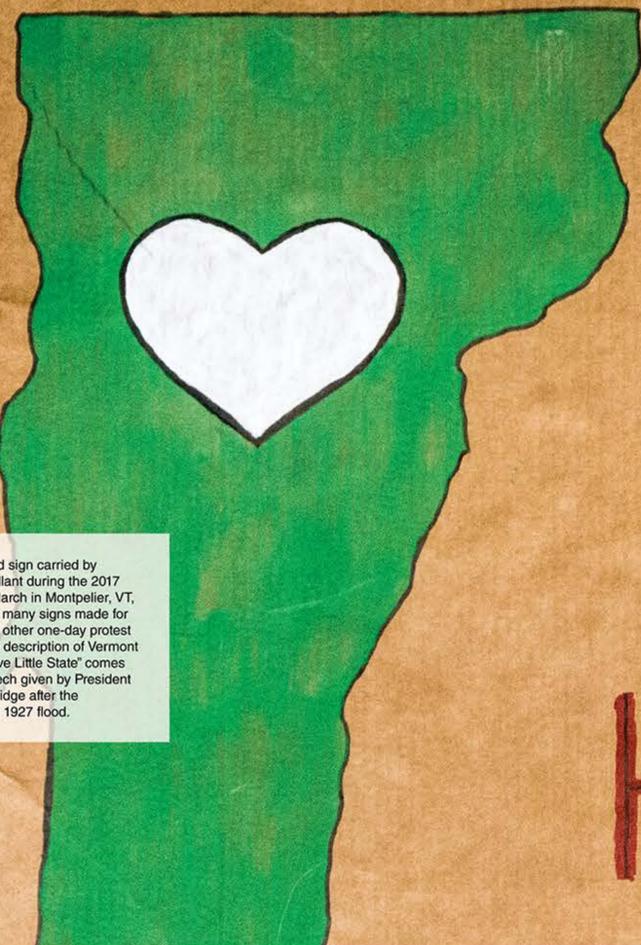
Express Yourself

Signs are often an opportunity for individual expression within the context of a shared culture. Nowhere is this more visible than with signs that express a viewpoint on a cause, political issue or candidate, or even local events and conflicts.

Political lawn signs have become ubiquitous on the landscape. They may help a candidate or political party, but more often they serve as the expression of an individual's viewpoint. Historians believe John Quincy Adams was the first politician to use lawn signs in the 1824 election, but they became common in the 1960s when the plastic versions we know today were manufactured.

While some signs stay on the landscape for decades, those created for political expression are often transient in nature. They may be homemade and use household materials, like posterboard or bed sheets. This is especially true for those created for a one-time event, like a march or parade. Besides size and color, these types of signs often use wordplay or extreme language and visuals to stand out and be provocative.

THIS BRAVE LITTLE STATE



SAYS

NO

TO

HATE

A cardboard sign carried by Patricia Gallant during the 2017 Women's March in Montpelier, VT, is typical of many signs made for marches or other one-day protest events. The description of Vermont as the "Brave Little State" comes from a speech given by President Calvin Coolidge after the devastating 1927 flood.



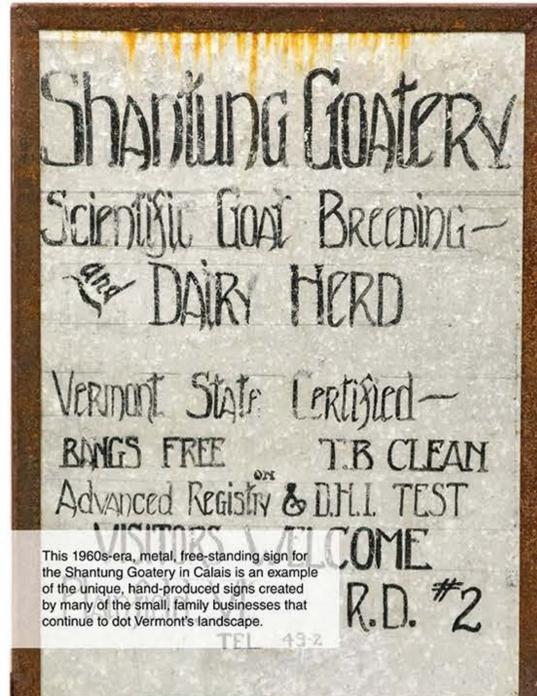
Sign Here: Vermont

Vermont is home to many unique signs that reflect the character, history, and culture of the state.

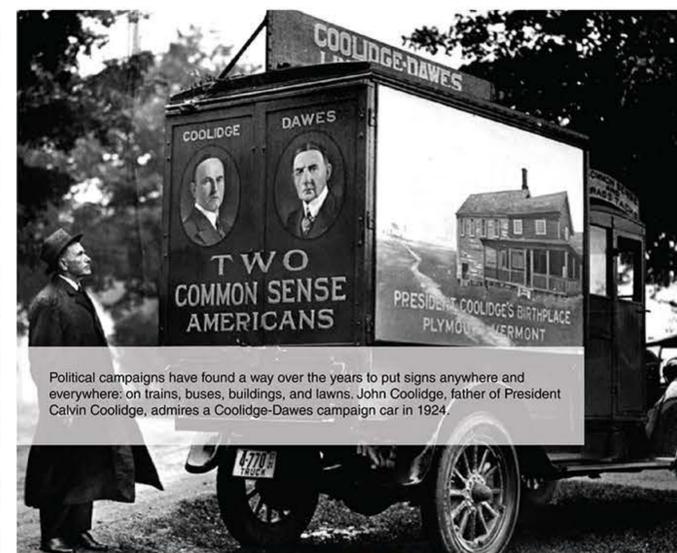
Agriculture and foodways are an important part of Vermont's history. "Real Vermont Maple Syrup" signs direct you to our many sugarhouses and nowhere else will you find a sign for a "Creemee."

One part of Vermont's unique sign history is actually about the signs we don't have. Many people who admire the rural beauty of Vermont today do not know that early in the 20th century billboards were a common sight along the state's roads and highways. Starting in the 1930s, individuals and municipalities began limiting or banning billboards. They believed they needed to preserve Vermont's inherent scenic beauty amid a booming tourism market, and billboards were officially banned by the state in 1968.

Many other familiar Vermont signs reflect the rural nature of the state. Camp sign posts lead travelers down to a lake. Homemade signs advertising anything from firewood to honey to small engine repair can be found on any road you take.



A typical view along Vermont's roadways prior to the 1968 ban on billboards. Photographer James P. Taylor, founder of the Green Mountain Club, extensively documented Vermont's roadsides in an effort to showcase what he thought were "unattractive" elements on the landscape.



Political campaigns have found a way over the years to put signs anywhere and everywhere: on trains, buses, buildings, and lawns. John Coolidge, father of President Calvin Coolidge, admires a Coolidge-Dawes campaign car in 1924.