Welcome to the Vermont History Museum!

Use this guide to explore Vermont history in the award-winning, permanent exhibit Freedom and Unity: One Ideal, Many Stories. It will help you discover how Vermonters have worked to achieve the ideal expressed in the state motto: Freedom and Unity. This 5,000 square foot exhibit is organized chronologically, beginning with Vermont’s first inhabitants and continuing to the present time.

Who is a Vermonter?

Three questions guide your exploration of this exhibit: Who is a Vermonter? What is wise use of the land? How do we foster a democratic society?

Consider the changing and varying answers to these questions as you explore an Abenaki wigwam, examine the impact of nineteenth-century sheep farming, or sit and immerse yourself in a World War II-era living room.

This guide highlights artifacts, images, stories, and hands-on activities in the exhibit. See these and more at the Vermont History Museum. Enjoy your visit!

Vermont experience history

About the Vermont Historical Society

Founded in 1838, the Vermont Historical Society is the only organization in Vermont that collects artifacts, books, and documents that reflect the entire history of the state, including every geographical area and every chronological period.

Our mission is to engage both Vermonters and “Vermonters at heart” in the exploration of our state’s rich heritage. Our purpose is to reach a broad audience through our outstanding collections, statewide outreach, and dynamic programming. We believe that an understanding of the past changes lives and builds better communities.

In addition to the Vermont History Museum in Montpelier, the Vermont Historical Society is also housed in the Vermont History Center in Barre. Located in an historic 1892 building, the Vermont History Center is home to the Howard and Alba Leahy Library, the Vermont History Center Book Nook, the Vermont Historical Society’s collections, and administrative offices.

The Leahy Library is a center for research and discovery. The curious researcher will find books, maps, photos, and other resources documenting the history and people of Vermont. With a special interest in family history, the library has the largest printed genealogical collection in the state. This is the place for researchers to leave the present behind and explore Vermont’s rich heritage. We look forward to seeing you at the library soon!

School groups and home study groups are welcome to visit the museum and participate in a guided tour, self-guided tour, or scavenger hunt, free of charge. Hands-on workshops are also available for educational groups at a small fee. All groups must schedule their visit in advance. For more information or to arrange a trip, please call (802) 828-2291.

Membership

Your discovery of Vermont history does not have to end today! Membership to the Vermont Historical Society includes free museum admission, unlimited free use of the Leahy Library, discounts on most store purchases, a subscription to the Vermont History Journal and History Connections newsletter, and so much more! Please inquire at the information desk or call (802) 479-8500.

For more information or to visit us:
E-mail: vhs-info@state.vt.us
Website: www.vermonthistory.org

Vermont History Museum
109 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05609
Phone: (802) 828-2291
Fax: (802) 828-1415

The museum and museum store are open Tuesday–Saturday, 10:00 am–4:00 pm

See this exhibit online: www.freedomandunity.org

Coming in 2012! Vermont Heritage Galleries at the Vermont History Center

Conveniently located . . .

Vermont History Center
60 Washington Street
Barre, VT 05641
Phone: (802) 479-8500
Fax: (802) 479-8510
Leahy Library
Tuesday–Friday 9:00 am–4:00 pm
Wednesdays until 8:00 pm
second Saturday each month 9:00 am–4:00 pm
Administrative offices
Monday–Friday, 8:00 am–4:00 pm

Vermont History Center Book Nook
Tuesday–Friday, 9:00 am–4:00 pm
explore Vermont’s past

1600s, Abenaki History
Look closely at the mural of an Abenaki village around 1650. Contact with Europeans had significant cultural and environmental impact, but the Abenaki largely continued to live amidst the natural world around them. Be sure to touch the animal furs in the wigwam.

1700s, the Revolutionary War & Catamount Tavern
The Catamount Tavern was a gathering place for men who played a vital role in the creation of the state of Vermont and in the American Revolution. Explore the re-creation of the Tavern to understand the roles and contributions of all Vermonters during this exciting time period.

early 1800s, Building Communities
Much of what contributes to the appeal associated with Vermont today, such as the town greens and white steepled churches, was constructed between 1820 and 1860. Learn about Abdiel Kent and other Vermonters whose individual achievements were the building blocks of new communities.

theater, Debates in the People’s House
Achieving consensus in a democratic society often involves bitter conflict and debate. This 18–minute film Freedom and Unity: Debates in the People’s House addresses three times in Vermont’s history when contentious issues (the abolition of slavery, women’s suffrage, and Civil Unions) were debated in the Vermont State House.

1860s, the Civil War
During the course of the Civil War, more than 34,000 Vermonters served in the military, about 10 percent of the population. Artifacts like Corporal Joseph Hitchcock’s tin plate and bullet demonstrate both the contributions Vermonters made to the war effort and the impact the war had on them.

mid-1800s, the Railroad in Vermont
What is the connection between the railroad and the telegraph? Find out by visiting the stationmaster’s office. Send a message in Morse code and write a letter to your ancestors from the 1800s.

late 1800s, Industrialized Vermont
Inventions like the Cooley Creamer made Vermonters leaders in commercial agriculture and manufacturing. With the help of the railroad, Vermont products such as milk, butter, cheese, granite, slate, and marble were delivered to markets in northeastern cities.

early 1900s, Creating an Image
By the 1940s, Vermont had succeeded in creating an attractive image of the state for tourists. However, this image did not include Vermont industries or the immigrants who worked in them. Investigate a Vermont’s home and a tourist’s cabin and consider these questions: What was the real Vermont? Who were Vermonters?

1940s, World War II
During World War II, the radio was the primary communication tool. Relax in the World War II–era living room and listen to the radio as it broadcasts songs, programs, and news from the time period.

1950s to the present, the Transformation of Vermont
The debate between individual rights and community good continues to the present time as Vermonters struggle to balance the ideals of freedom and unity. Consider different points of view in discussions over the ski industry, flattlanders vs. woodchucks, and land use.

info you might need
Restrooms Restrooms are located in the front lobby.
Food/beverages Food and beverages are not permitted beyond the information desk. Visitors are welcome to eat in the Snelling Room or on the front porch when available.
Photography/videotaping Visitors are welcome to photograph and videotape in the exhibit spaces for their personal use only.
Handicapped accessibility Handicapped access is available throughout the museum’s entrance on Governor Davis Avenue.
Guided tours Guided tours for groups can be arranged by scheduling in advance. Please call (802) 828-2291 for more information.
Cell phones/personal electronic devices Please turn all cell phones and personal electronic devices to silent while visiting the exhibit spaces.

Welcome to the Vermont History Museum!

Don’t forget to see the catamount!