

VERMONT GOVERNMENT FINDS A HOME

Montpelier has not always been Vermont's **capital**. In fact, Vermont has not always had a capital. During the 30 years following Vermont's Declaration of Independence in 1777, representatives met in taverns, churches, and meeting houses in 14 different towns throughout the Green Mountains. One of these temporary capitals was even located in what is now the New Hampshire town of Charlestown.

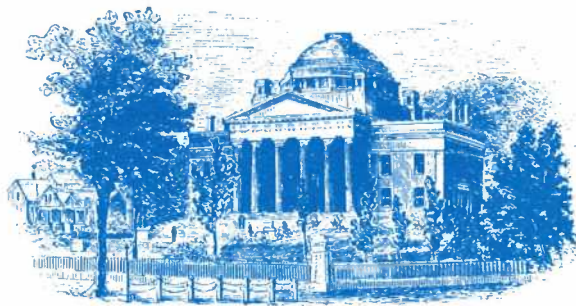


THE FIRST STATE HOUSE.

In 1805, during a session in Danville, it was decided that a permanent capital should be set up in Montpelier, a town where the legislature had never met. Besides its favorable, central location in the state, Montpelier had something else in its favor. That something was money; money to build the **capitol**. Montpelier citizens agreed to raise \$8,000.00 in labor and materials for the new State House. When the construction cost more than was expected (\$10,000.00) residents again pledged the money, this time by raising their taxes. The land for the building was donated by Thomas Davis, son of Montpelier's first settler.

In 1808 the three-story State House was completed. The ten sided structure was built of wood. It was not too long, however, before it became overcrowded with legislators whose desks were said to have been "whittled out of use" by their jackknives. The building was torn down in 1836 to make way for a new, larger capitol.

This next State House was designed by architect Ammi B. Young and was modeled after the Greek Temple of Theseus. It cost \$132,000.00 by the time it was finished in 1838. It had a huge granite **portico** with six massive granite columns. The granite used in the construction was hauled from the quarries in Barre. Each 25 mile round trip took about 18 hours.

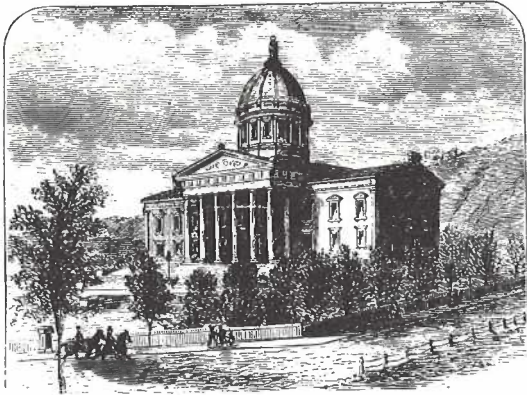


THE SECOND STATE HOUSE.

For almost twenty years Vermonters admired this beautiful State House. However, on the night of January 6, 1857, disaster struck. A special session to revise the Vermont Constitution had been scheduled for the following day. The stove was loaded with

wood and left to warm the building before the legislators arrived the next morning. By evening the stove became so hot that the timbers near it caught fire. The flames quickly spread to the rest of the capitol destroying all but the granite sections. Montpelier residents struggled to put out the blaze but only managed to save some of the paintings and books in the building.

Vermont's third State House was built on the same site. It was completed in 1859 and has been used steadily for 160 years. It is larger than the second State House, but similar in design. The granite portico and columns left standing after fire destroyed the second capitol now form the entrance to our present State House.



THE VERMONT CAPITOL.

Vocabulary

Capital - town or city that is the official seat of government in a state or nation.

Capitol - the building in which a state or national legislature assembles.

Portico - a porch or walkway with a roof supported by columns.