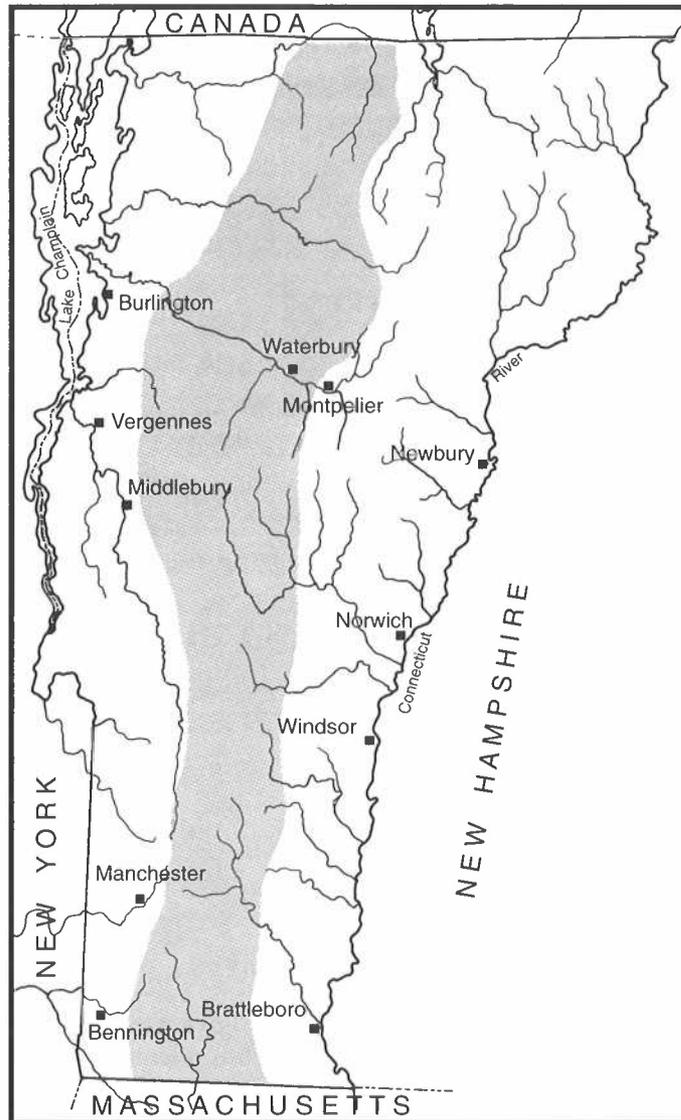


ON THE SURFACE

When white settlers first came into Vermont it was a mostly unsettled wilderness between New York and New Hampshire. The governor of New York and the governor of New Hampshire each thought he alone had the right to grant the land to settlers. The two governors sometimes gave the same land to different people. The settlers were caught in the middle. They sometimes became violent as they tried to protect their homes and land. Only when Vermont became a state in 1791 was the question of ownership settled. The land question affected the way Vermont developed. So did where Vermont is and what its land is like.

Vermont is bordered by New York on the west, New York and Massachusetts on the south, New Hampshire on the east. On the north it is bordered by another country—Canada. Vermont is a long, thin state. But sometimes it has seemed like two states. The Green Mountains run from north to south most of the way down the middle of the state. They and the mountains in the south cut Vermont in half.

In colonial times and into the 1800s there were no real roads across the mountains. Only three rivers cross them. There was little con-



Some early settlements in Vermont. The shaded area shows the mountains that divide the state.

tact between the people who lived on either side. In 1789, for instance, it took days to deliver a wagon made in Vergennes to its owner in Montpelier. The road was little more than a path. Men had to cut down trees and move logs and rocks to get the wagon across the mountains. In Waterbury the road ended at a cliff. The men had to lower the wagon down the side of the cliff on ropes before they could finish their trip.

Because of the mountains in the middle, Vermont was settled at its edges.

On either side of the Green Mountains are lowlands bounded by important bodies of water. On the western edge of the state lies Lake Champlain. The border with New York is in the middle of the lake. The land in the wide Champlain Valley is quite flat and the soil is fertile. It is good farmland. People who settled on this side came mostly from New York, western Massachusetts, and Connecticut.

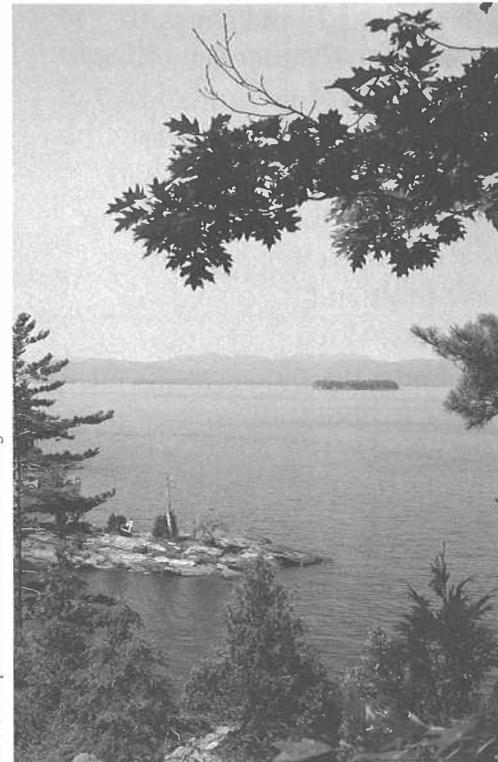
On the eastern edge of Vermont the Connecticut River forms the border between Vermont and New Hampshire. The land is hilly but good for farming. Settlers came there from New Hampshire, eastern Massachusetts, eastern Connecticut, and Rhode Island—older settlements to the south and east that border the ocean.

Lake Champlain and the Connecticut River were not only borders. They were important

travel and trade routes. Even without the mountains it was difficult to travel in Vermont in the early days. In mud season travel on land was almost impossible. People did travel long distances, but they went mostly on foot. They had to carry whatever they brought with them. In winter snow made travel easier. Settlers used sleighs and snowshoes. In some ways it was easier to deal with people who lived across the lake and the river than with people who lived

nearby in Vermont.

As more people came to Vermont settlement moved inland away from Lake Champlain and the Connecticut River. People built houses along rivers and streams. They farmed and built stores and churches and inns. Towns grew up.



Vermont Department of Tourism and Marketing

A view of Lake Champlain from Burlington.



The Connecticut River at Newbury.

There was still little connection between the east and west. Travel and trade moved north and south on either side of the mountains.

On the west side of the moun-

tains much trade went on Lake Champlain out of Burlington, north to Canada and south to Albany. On the east side the Connecticut River carried products to southern New England.

When white settlers came Vermont was covered by forest. They cleared land for their homes and farms. They used the wood they cut to build their houses and make their furniture. They used it to make tools and toys, to cook with, to heat their homes. What they didn't use they burned or sold. Many people made potash from the ashes of burned wood. It was used in making soap and glass. Later it was used in medicines and fertilizer. Logs and potash were important items of trade.

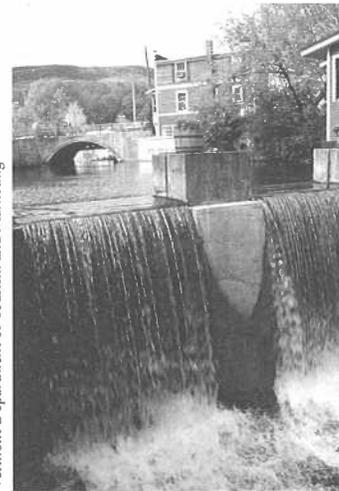
From early times the Connecticut River and Lake Champlain carried farm products, cider, and furs as well. Later, boats also carried lumber and goods made in the factories and mills that grew up next to many of the state's waterfalls. Marble, granite, and slate, quarried in

Vermont, were also shipped out to build monuments and buildings in other states.

The differences between the eastern and western sides of the state were political as well as geographical. Disagreements over who owned the land had divided Vermonters from the start. But the mountains divided them even more. Because of them Vermonters faced away from each other. There was no settlement in the center to which both sides had ties. So the people on one side of the mountains did not always trust the people on the other. Often they did not understand that they had interests in common. This made governing the state difficult.

In the early days there was an election for governor every year.

The only way the two sides thought they would be treated fairly



Businessmen built their mills and factories next to waterfalls like these in Manchester (left) and Middlebury (right).



Mount Mansfield is the highest mountain in Vermont.

was to take turns electing the governor. One year he would come from the western side of the state. The next year he would be from the eastern side.

Good roads, railroads, cars, radio, television, the telephone all connect us now in ways that were not possible earlier. But the mountains still divide us. People move north and south in the state quite easily along the interstates and roads like Routes 7 and 22A. East-west traffic is much lighter. There are fewer roads that cross the mountains. In winter when those roads are icy and covered with snow people tend to stay on their own side.

There are many towns in the mountains now, but Vermont is still a state very aware of its edges and its neighbors. The NBC television outlet that covers Burlington is based on the other side of Lake Champlain, in Plattsburgh, New York. Norwich, a town on the Connecticut River, shares a school district with three of its New Hampshire neighbors. There are edges to the north and south too. People who live in Bennington, in the south-

west corner of Vermont, get their television and radio programs from Albany, New York. When the Haskell Opera House in Derby Line reopens in May 1997 the audience will sit in the United States while the orchestra plays in Canada.

But the geography of Vermont also gives us our identity. The cold winters and muddy springs we share bind us together. So do the mountains that separate us. The land we live on has given us a history and an identity that is different from that of the people who live across any of our borders. It makes Vermont Vermont and all of us Vermonters.

ANN E. COOPER, *Editor*

Rooting Around

Your local library or historical society can help you find out when your town was chartered and who the first settlers were. Where did they come from? Why did they come? How did they get there?

Are there old farms or mills or factories where you live? What kind of products were made there? What crops were grown? How were goods shipped in and out of your town? Where did they go?