



Vermont History Day 2027 Theme: Innovation in History: Impact, Influence, Change



Do you want to choose Vermont topic related to this year's Vermont History Day theme? Using primary and secondary sources is a crucial aspect of building an argument, backed by evidence. The Vermont History Center houses an extensive archives and object collection for the public to use.

See for yourself. Come Explore!

Topic Ideas to Get You Started

Understanding innovation historically means examining the idea itself, and then diving deeper to research its impacts. How did people envision, develop, and put new ideas or approaches into practice? In turn, how did those innovations reshape the societies around them?

Industrial/Mechanical/Tools Innovation

- Samuel Hopkins - US patent for potash (1790)
- Samuel Morey - steam engine & paddle wheel (early 1790s)
- Silas Hawes - patented steel carpenter's square (1819)
- Thaddeus Fairbanks - Fairbanks scales (1830)
- Thomas Davenport - electric motor (1834)
- Isaac Fischer Jr. - sandpaper (1834)
- John Deere - steel plow (1837)
- Gardener S. Blodgett - cast iron cooking oven (1848)
- Elisha Otis - 1st safety passenger elevator (1853)
- Wilson Bentley - 1st person to photograph snow crystal (1885)
- Edwin Fellows - Fellows Gear Shaper (1896)

Agricultural Innovation

- Breeding - Morgan Horse (1793)
- Dairy Cooperative(s) - Vermont Dairymen's Association (1869)
- Maple
 - H. Allen Soule - 1st evaporator to cut boiling time (1872)
 - VT Maple Sugar Makers' Association - institutionalizing standards (1893)
 - Nelson Griggs - patent for spout and flexible-tubing sap-gathering system (1950s)

Recreation Innovation

- Julio Buel - 1st fishing spoon lure (1830)
- Wallace Bertram - 1st tow rope (1834)
- Charles Orvis - patented fly-reel (1874)
- Jake Burton Carpenter - 1st snowboard (1977)

Environmental Innovation

- Smith-Putnam wind turbine - 1st hooked to electrical grid (1941)
- Bottle Bill (1953, expanded 1972)
- Act 250 (1970)

Educational Innovation & Innovative Ideas

- Emma Willard - Middlebury Female Seminary (1814)
- Samuel Reed Hall - ran 1st "normal" school (teacher training school in America (1823)
- John Dewey - UVM graduate (1879) who later developed pragmatism and progressive education theory
- Goddard College - progressive education model (1938)

Civics & Social Innovation

- Town Meeting Democracy (began 1762)
- Abolition - VT Anti-Slavery Society (1834)
- Abolitionists - Thaddeus Stevens & Delia Webster
- Women's Suffrage - school votes (1880); town votes (1917)
- Suffragette - Clarina I.H. Nichols
- Rural Electrification (1938) & Agricultural Cooperatives
 - Vermont Electric Cooperative (1938) & Washington Electric Cooperative (1939)
- Civil Union Law - 1st state to legally recognize (2000)
- Marriage Equality through legislative process (2009)

Art & Music Innovation

- Estey Organ Company (1850s)
- Joshua Stoddard - steam calliope (1855)
- Lumiere Brothers' factory - Autochrome color plates as film innovation (1902-03)
- Bread and Puppet - counter culture protest street protest art (1974)
- Phish and the jam band movement (1983)



How To Access Resources

The Vermont Historical Society's Leahy Archival Library & Museum Collections

The Leahy Archival Library is located at the Vermont History Center (60 Washington Street, Barre, VT) and is open Tuesday through Friday from 9am to 4 pm. It is also open the same hours on the second Saturday of each month. Walk-ins are welcome and students can use the library for free. The Leahy library is non-circulating, which means materials stay on-site. Plan to take notes, scan, or photocopy what you need during your visit. Questions? Call: 802-479-8509; Email: library@vermonthistory.org.

Viewing objects from the museum collection (tools, textiles, machinery, etc.) is by appointment only on Wednesdays and Thursdays. It is preferred that appointments are made 1-2 weeks in advance. To make an appointment, call: 802-479-8517 or email: collections.manager@vermonthistory.org



Start online! Search the Library Catalog, Museum Catalog, and Digital Vermont for your topic to see what exists. Then email the librarian or collections manager with specific items or subjects you'd like pulled, and schedule an in-person visit. That way your trip to Barre is focused, and you can use your time there more efficiently.

Library Catalog → <https://catalog.vermonthistory.org/V92022/OPAC/Search/AdvancedSearch.aspx>

Museum Collection → <https://vermonthistory.org/catalog>

Digital Collection → <https://digitalvermont.org>

New to the Research Process?

Once you've narrowed a "big idea" down to a specific topic, it's time to begin the research process.



Use this checklist as a guide.



1

Find Secondary Sources

- Make a list of possible resource locations.
- Record names of people who helped you locate a source at a library, archive, museum, etc. They are resources, too!

2

Read Secondary Sources

- Take detailed notes.
- Use a source tracking system to organize sources. Check out the Student Research Guide for more information: <https://vermonthistoryexplorer.org/vhdeducatorresources/>

3

Locate Primary Sources

- Make a note about how you'd like to use the primary source in your project.
- Record the source to be able to cite them in an annotated bibliography later.

4

Analyze Gathered Sources

- Do you have enough evidence to support your argument/claim?
- Make a list of research questions that still need answering.

5

Dig Deeper

- This is your final opportunity to gather the information that you need for your project. What may you be missing?
- Feeling stuck? Ask your a mentor for help.