

Overview

This three-day lesson introduces the students to the conflicts between the Yorkers and the New Hampshire Grants by asking the students to pretend they are settlers or investors who receive charters and patents for new towns in Vermont. The students divide the towns and investigate the natural resources on their land. After writing their own Constitution, the students learn about Vermont's Constitution and see the official document that made Vermont the 14th state.

Related Vermont History Explorer Articles

Becoming a State <https://vermonthistoryexplorer.org/becoming-a-state>

Enduring Understandings

Events in the past have made Vermont the place that it is today.

Essential Questions

How did Vermont become the size and shape that it is today?
What are some of the significant events in Vermont history?
How do multiple perspectives affect our understanding of history?

Focusing Questions

How did European settlers divide the land that is now Vermont?
How did the New Hampshire grants differ from the New York Patents?
What events led to the development of the independent state of Vermont?
How did Vermont become the 14th state?

Materials and documents to print

- Pennies or poker chips to represent money
1. New Hampshire Town Charter
 2. New Hampshire Lotting Plan
 3. New Hampshire Lotting Plan Numbers (pre-cut and placed in a cup)
 4. 1869 Map of Bennington
 5. New Hampshire Writing Prompt
 6. New York Land Patent
 7. New York Lotting Plan
 8. New York Lotting Plan Numbers (pre-cut and placed in a cup)
 9. 1869 Map of Readsboro
 10. New York Writing Prompt
 11. Town History Writing Prompt

Scans to print or project

- Becoming a State Slideshow which includes:
- A. 1813 Vermont Map by Mathew Carey
 - B. 1764 Boundary Declaration
 - C. 1774 Map of New Hampshire Grants by Thomas Jeffreys
 - D. 1775 Map of New York Patents by Gerard Bancker
 - E. 1777 Vermont Constitution
 - F. 1791 Vermont Statehood Document

Adapting the activity

For smaller classes or to simplify the activity, consider having the whole class represent either New Hampshire **OR** New York, instead of having students act out both sides.

Plan for Day One

1. Show students the 1813 Vermont Map (A). Review that the Abenaki Indians were living in the area that is now Vermont before the European Americans started settling the area. Discuss the current boundaries of Vermont, noting the Connecticut River as the boundary with New Hampshire.
2. Tell the students that Governor Benning Wentworth chartered the first English town in what became Vermont on January 3, 1749. He named the town Bennington after himself. Note the location of Bennington on the map. Wentworth thought that New Hampshire stretched west to line up with the border between Massachusetts and New York. This border was 20 miles east of the Hudson River in the south and Lake Champlain in the north. However, New York claimed the territory north of Massachusetts and east to the Connecticut River. The land that is now Vermont was disputed territory between the two colonies. New York's Lieutenant Governor Cadwallader Colden started issuing patents for New York towns in Vermont in 1764.
3. Split students into two groups. One group will be settlers who received a town charter from New Hampshire. The other group will be settlers who received a land patent from New York. Divide each group into smaller groups with four or five students. Print enough copies of the documents for each group. If the class is divided into three New Hampshire groups and three New York groups, print three sets of the New Hampshire documents (#1-4) and three sets of the New York documents (#6-9).
4. Explain to the New Hampshire group that colonists are running out of land in Massachusetts and Connecticut. They want to start a town in the New Hampshire Grants where there is plenty of land for farms. Use pennies or poker chips to represent settlers working to save money to buy land. Give some students two "coins" and give others three "coins."
5. Explain to the New York group that they are investors who want to buy land in what will become Vermont so they can sell the land and make money. These students are Yorkers. Give some students one "coin" and give others two "coins." (They need fewer coins than the New Hampshire group.)
6. Inform students that as a group, they will pay money to their respective Governors to get a charter or patent for their towns. They will need to work together to pick a name for their towns. If available, read a passage from *Green Mountain Hero* (by Edgar Newman Jackson) about how the Vermont towns of Salisbury, New Haven and Middlebury were named (page 56). Otherwise explain that settlers named Salisbury and New Haven after towns in Connecticut. The town in between was named Middlebury, because it was in the middle.

7. Each group of students will petition their respective governors to start a town. Collect six “coins” from each group of students. (Save the rest of the money for day two.) Some students may need to pay more than others. Give the New Hampshire students the land grant (#1) from Governor Benning Wentworth. Have the students read the grant, helping as necessary, and note how the town’s boundaries are marked by trees. This grant is based on the real grant for Bennington and uses the historic language. The students should sign their names to the grant and then write in the name of their new town.
8. Also collect the “coins” from the New York groups. (Save the rest of the money for day two). Some students may need to pay more than others. Give them the land patent (#6) from Lieutenant Governor Cadwallader Colden. Have the students read the patent, helping as necessary, and note how the patent reinforces New York’s claim to the land. This patent is based on the real patent for Readsboro and uses this historic language. The students should sign their names to the patent and then write in the name of their new town.
9. Have the students share the names of their new towns and the reasons they chose the names.

Plan for Day Two

10. Explain that the “settlers” now have to divide up their land – land that they have not yet seen. Historically, some of the settlers drew lots to divide up their land. Pass out the blank lotting plans, giving the New Hampshire students copies of the New Hampshire lotting plan (#2) and the New York students copies of the New York lotting plan (#7). Note how the land is divided into square lots, regardless of the terrain.
11. For the New Hampshire groups, have students examine the land that was already claimed. “BW” stands for Benning Wentworth. Other land was reserved for a minister and a school. (Sometimes the land was sold to raise money for a school, and the school was built elsewhere.) Sixty-four acres of land in the center of the town was reserved for the town green, following a typical New England settlement pattern. Pass out a cup of pre-cut lotting plan numbers (#3) to each New Hampshire group. Have them draw lots to divide the land. Each student should draw the number of lots equal to the “coins” they paid and write their names on the corresponding space on the lotting plan. Pass out copies of the 1869 map of Bennington (#4). Have students compare their lots from the lotting plan to the land of the town as it developed over 120 years. Is the student’s land on top of a mountain or near a river or stream? What natural resources would they have on their land? Would the land be good for farming? Or would they sell their land to another settler?
12. For the New York groups, have students examine the land that was already claimed. Land was set aside for the governor, a grammar school, and for the church – marked as the Society for the Propagation of the Bible. (Sometimes the land was sold to raise money for the school or the church and the buildings built elsewhere.) Unlike the New Hampshire town, no land was reserved for a green because New York settlement patterns differed from the New England settlement patterns. Pass out a cup of pre-cut lotting plan numbers (#8) to each New York group. Have them draw lots to divide the land. Each student should draw the number of lots equal to the “coins” they paid and write their names on the

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corresponding space on the lotting plan. Pass out copies of the 1869 map of Readsboro (#9). Have students compare their lots from the lotting plan to the land of the town as it developed over 100 years. Is the student's land on top of a mountain or near a river or stream? What natural resources would they have on their land? Would the land be good for farming? Would they be able to sell their land to another settler to make money?

13. By 1764, tensions were rising between the New Hampshire Grants and the Yorkers. King George III sided with New York, confirming that the boundary between New York and New Hampshire was the Connecticut River. Show the students the 1764 Boundary Declaration (B). King George's decree also confirmed the boundary between Vermont and Canada. Ask the students in the New York and New Hampshire groups who agrees with King George? Who disagrees with King George? Unfortunately for the settlers, the decree from King George did not resolve the disagreements between the New Hampshire Grants and the Yorkers.
14. Show the students the 1774 Map of New Hampshire Grants by Thomas Jeffreys (C). A decade after King George's decree, this map shows the towns as chartered by New Hampshire Governor Wentworth. Have the students find Bennington on the map – the real town that their new town is based on. Also have them find the town of Cumberland.
15. Show the students the 1775 Map of New York Patents by Gerard Bancker (D). This map shows the land from the Yorkers' perspective. Have the students find Readsborough on the map – the real town that their new town is based on. This is the land that is marked Cumberland on the previous map (C). Have the students look for where Bennington should be on the map. Look for the Wallomsook River. These maps show why there were tensions between the settlers who had received land from New Hampshire and those who had received land from New York. The two colonies were dividing up the same land into different towns.
16. Tell the Yorkers that King George III has said that they can keep their land and continue to settle or sell it. Tell the New Hampshire Grants that King George III has said their lands belong to New York. However, if they pay money to New York to recharter their land, they can keep it. If the New Hampshire groups agree to pay two coins per group, they can keep their land. Ask the students to make a decision and pay their "coins" if they want to stay on their land. Otherwise, they must either leave and return to their previous homes or decide to disobey the king if they stay on their land. The students from New York do not have to pay more money.
17. Distribute the appropriate writing prompts to each group asking the students to think about the king's decision and their decisions as land owners.

Plan for Day Three

18. As a class, read the Vermont History Explorer chapters about The Green Mountain Boys (<https://vermonthistoryexplorer.org/the-green-mountain-boys>) and about The Westminster Massacre (<https://vermonthistoryexplorer.org/the-westminster-massacre>). Ask the students how the actions of the Green Mountain Boys and the New York sheriff during the

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Westminster Massacre would affect their decisions as settlers or land owners. How would the New Hampshire Grants feel about the Yorkers? How would the Yorkers feel about the sheriff? Ask them what they would do if New York wanted to collect the rest of their “coins” causing all the groups to go into debt. Would they fight back if they thought they would lose their land? What are other ways to solve the disputes? Historically, the events encouraged the land owners to start to think about being Vermonters separate from both New Hampshire and New York.

19. In 1777, Vermonters decided to write a constitution declaring their independence from New York and defining their rights. Ask the students in groups to decide what rights they would want to have as Vermonters. Encourage them to think about things that made them angry at King George III, the Yorkers or the Green Mountain Boys. How would they want to protect their property rights? How would they protect their rights as settlers? Ask the groups to share and write their “Constitution” on the board.

20. Show the students the copy of the 1777 Vermont Constitution (E). This Constitution started with a Preamble that draws from the Declaration of Independence. In addition to saying what the king had done wrong, the Constitution listed Vermont’s complaints against New York. The [Constitution](#) continued with “A Declaration of the Rights of the Inhabitants of the State of Vermont” containing the following provisions:
 - slavery is outlawed for any male over 21 and any female over 18
 - the government cannot take private property without paying for it
 - Vermonters have freedom of religion
 - only people within the state can control the “internal police” (no NY sheriffs)
 - government representatives are elected by the people of the state
 - Vermonters have freedom of speech and the right to bear arms
 The Constitution also organized Vermont’s government. Compare the rights in Vermont’s Constitution with the rights that the students wanted in their Constitution.

21. Vermonters wrote their Constitution during the Revolutionary War when the thirteen colonies were fighting against England. Vermont wanted to become a state and join the former colonies, but New York and New Hampshire did not want Vermont to become a state. In 1791, Vermont agreed to pay New York \$30,000 to resolve all land conflicts. The United States allowed Vermont to become the 14th state on March 4, 1791. Show students the scan of the statehood document (F). The signature at the bottom is Thomas Jefferson’s.

22. Assessment: Using the Town History writing prompt (11), have the students write the history of their “new” towns. Encourage them to review the process of getting a charter or patent, dividing the land, and ultimately becoming part of Vermont and part of the United States.