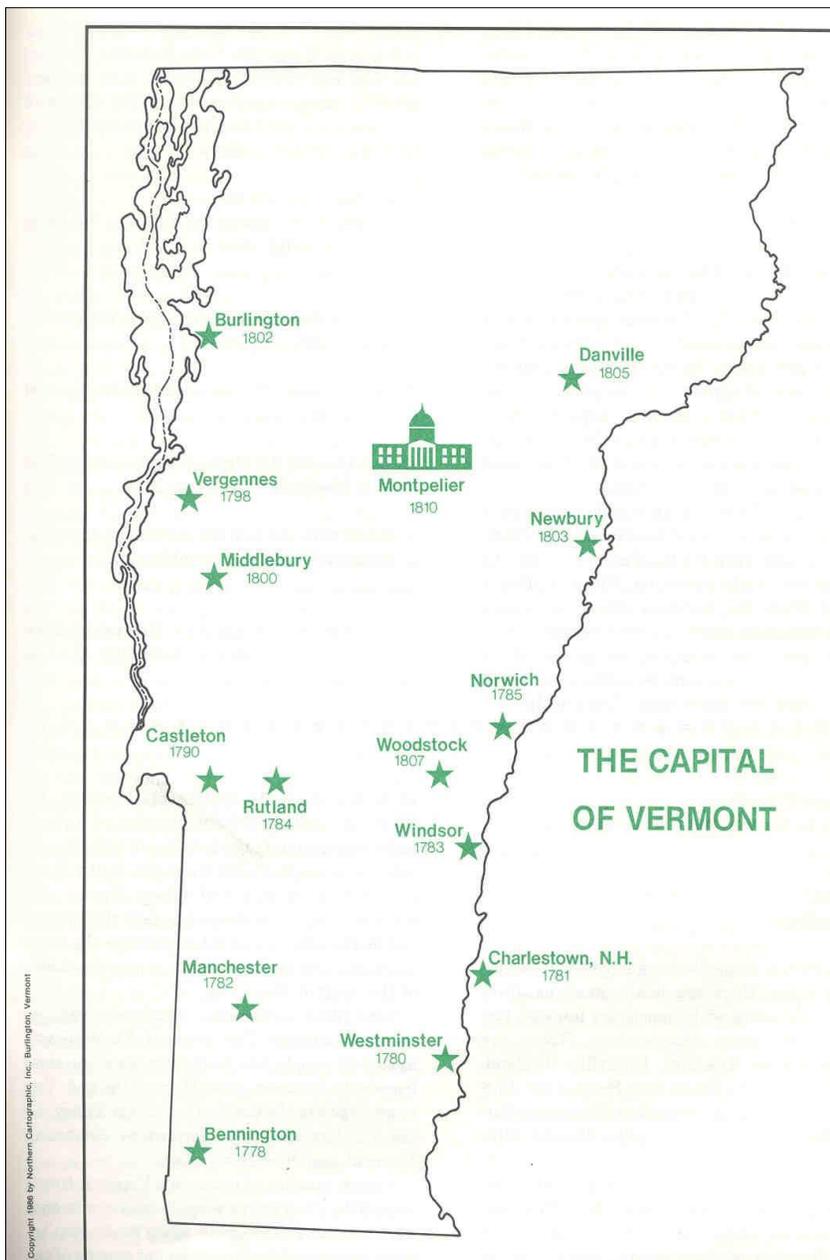


Montpelier: Vermont's Capital

From: *The Vermont Geography Book*

Montpelier was not always the capital of Vermont. At first, the Vermont General Assembly met only once every two years. Many of the first meetings were held in Windsor, Bennington, Rutland, and other towns. In 1781 when certain towns from New Hampshire formed the second Eastern Union with Vermont, the General Assembly even met once in what is today Charlestown, New Hampshire.

Look at the map which shows the places where the General Assembly met in different years. Look at the dates and notice the locations of the different towns. Can you see how they moved to the north year by year?



Capital vs. Capitol

Capital = a city that serves as a center of government.

Capitol = the building in which a legislative assembly meets.

The capital of the state also shifted between towns east and west of the Green Mountains each time the General Assembly met. Travel across the mountains was hard in these early years. By shifting east and west the difficulty was shared by towns on both sides of the state. This lasted for almost 30 years. This idea of sharing political power was called the "mountain rule."

It was soon felt that a permanent site for the General Assembly was needed. Burlington was one town considered for the location. People in Randolph thought that their town would be a good place for the capital of Vermont. Randolph was a pretty town and it was also located near the middle of the state.

In 1805 the General Assembly chose Montpelier as the new seat of the state government. Montpelier was located near the center of the state and afforded easy travel along the Winooski River valley. Because it had only a few settlers, it was neutral politically and the General Assembly had never met there before. The local residents raised \$8,000.00 for a new State House and Thomas Davis, the son of the first settler in town, donated the land. The new building was finished in 1808. That year Montpelier was made the permanent capital of Vermont.

By 1826 it was clear that the original wooden State House was too small. In 1831 it was agreed that a new State House should be built. The idea of a different location for the capital was still alive. Montpelier, Burlington, Woodstock, Windsor, Rutland, Middlebury, and Randolph were all interested in the honor. After much debate, Montpelier was again chosen. The work was begun in 1833 and the new State House was completed by 1837. This second State House burned while it was being heated for a special session of the General Assembly in the winter of 1857. The third and present capitol building was completed in 1859.

Prompt: Using what you learned from the activity on the Giant Traveling Map of Vermont and the reading above, describe **how and why** Vermont's capital changed over time.

