Montpelier: Capitol Village

A photographic history of major events for the Statehouse, Montpelier, and Vermont

The State House (1925 about)
LS00836_000

The State House (7/10/2000)
LS00342_001
The state of Vermont has grown considerably from the late 1700’s to today, and no town better exemplifies this change than its capitol city, Montpelier...
Montpelier became the Capitol of Vermont in 1805

The first Capitol Building was built in 1808.

First Known Image of Montpelier (1821 about)
LS06266_000
Even though it was the state Capitol, Montpelier was still mostly rural in the Early 1800’s.
GRANITE WAS DRAWN 10 MILES FROM THE NEIGHBORING TOWN OF BARRE BY OX CART TO BE USED IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE NEW BUILDING.
The Statehouse that we have today was built in 1859 after a fire destroyed most of the previous one.

The statehouse in Montpelier is surrounded by physical souvenirs of Vermont’s past...
The Statehouse has undergone many incarnations:

- 1803
- 1838
- 1857
- 1908
- 1940
- 2002
On top of the capitol dome is Ceres, the Roman goddess of agriculture.

Ethan Allen’s brother, Ira Allen wrote of Vermont’s inhabitants: “They are all farmers…”

On the front portico stands a statue of Ethan Allen, leader of the Green Mountain Boys.

The original Statehouse dome was sheathed in copper and painted red, not covered in 24-carat gold-leaf like it is today.
Agriculture has always been one of the major sources of livelihood for Vermont.
In the early 1900’s, extensive logging had reduced the total woodland area to 25%.

Note the lack of trees behind the Statehouse.

In French, the word “Montpelier”, can be translated as “Bare Hill.”

Bare Hill Behind the Statehouse (1900 before) LS04027_000
Luckily the State has recovered its forests.
Many towns were devastated by the flood of 1927...
But Montpelier was one of those most affected...
Due to its geographic location between steep valleys, Montpelier was especially prone to flooding...

Flooded Courthouse and Bank (1869-10-04 exactly) LS03906_000

Flooded downtown (1869-10 exactly) LS03922_000
In the aftermath, the city was cost over 3,200,000 dollars in damages, but only one life was lost.
Even today, the city is prone to natural disaster, and is in constant danger.
But through all disaster the capitol and the city has persevered, The city has grown with the state, and the state with the city.
“They hewed this state out of the wilderness, they held it against foreign foe, they laid deep and stable the foundation of our state life, because they sought not the life of ease, but the life of effort for a worthy end.”

-Theodore Roosevelt (words written on plaque in Statehouse front hall)

The statehouse acts as the ultimate reminder of Vermont’s history and position, a grand golden beacon, rising in granite from green hills, surviving flood and fire, to serve as the home of representatives from the entire state.