Why this Trail is being organized

The Vermont in the Civil War Heritage Trail follows US Route 7, South to North. Each site is a link to the crucial contributions Vermont made to the preservation of these United States in the American “War Between the States.” There are also many little-known connections critical to that War, and it is our Mission to better illustrate and explain those connections. From Abolitionist John Brown to Stephen Douglas to William Lloyd Garrison to Frederick Douglass to the Northernmost land battle of the Civil War, to the General who made the decision to flank Pickett’s Charge at Gettysburg, Vermont has a significant story to tell.

The contributions and influences Vermont had on the Civil War are not widely known or appreciated, even within the state. We are here to fix that. There are other important sites and connections to the Civil War in Vermont, but the majority of our sites are found along the ‘western coast’ of Vermont, along the Route 7 corridor. Future expansion of our Trail may include Eastern sites such as the rifle, machinery and clothing factories of the Connecticut River Valley, and more.

What’s next?

We are looking at a lot of improvements ahead for our Trail. They include plans for a website, geo-locating application, QR codes for additional information and pictures, virtual reality tours, and local/statewide Public Broadcasting videos and presentations. Our current brochures are only the beginning!

Cover image: William W. P. Heath, 4th Vermont Infantry (Photo courtesy of the Library of Congress)
Gen. Abner Doubleday, July 2, 1863 at Gettysburg

Bennington

Bennington Museum contains Civil War stories and artifacts, including some for George Stannard, as well as Clyde du Vernet Hunt’s famed statue “The Lincoln Trilogy.” Vermont’s first Veterans’ Home, 1887, with a graveyard including veterans from every Vermont Civil War Regiment, is just North of the Museum on Route 7. Bennington is where young newspaperman William Lloyd Garrison started the anti-slavery journal of the Times in 1828, which later became the impetus for the anti-slavery movement, The Liberator, published 1831-1865.

Manchester

Hildene, home of Robert Todd Lincoln. The Lincoln family also had reservations at The Equinox Hotel for the week after Lincoln’s assassination. They had vacationed there the two prior years.

Rutland

The famous Bardwell Hotel was a gathering place for numerous important Civil War figures, both North and South. Rutland includes the home of General Wheelock Vezey, and the Fairgrounds were the site for training of Lt. Col. William T. W. Ripley’s famous 1st U.S. Sharpshooters and mustering site for departing troops. Ripley’s younger brother, Brig. Gen. Edward Hastings Ripley, led the Union Army into Richmond, the Confederate capitol.

Brandon

Birthplace of Stephen Douglas, the Great Debater and Lincoln’s opponent in 1860 election. The home is currently the site of the Brandon Welcome Center and the Brandon Museum.

Middlebury

Famous public address site, the Congregational Church, with Wm. Lloyd Garrison and Frederick Douglass. It was the site of The Great Convention, abolitionist event of July 1863. Middlebury College 1860 commencement speaker Edward Everett, Mass. Governor and Harvard President, gave the main address at Gettysburg cemetery just before Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address. The College graduated Alexander Twilight, the first black person to earn a degree in America.

Vergennes

Deep connections to Abolitionist John Brown. Very large crowd attending Brown’s funeral procession back to his North Elba, NY farm for burial. He had frequent trading visits, with his 20 children over the years prior. Vergennes Railroad Depot – oldest depot in VT – received Brown’s casket en route to NY. Main Street downtown contains some of original trading area used by John Brown family.

Panton

Ferry crossing at Arnold’s Bay to NY State, for John Brown’s body returning to his North Elba farm for burial. A State marker is at the site.

Ferrisburgh

A documented stop on the Underground Railroad, is now the Rokeby Museum. Downtown Ferrisburgh Park also has a historic marker for Frederick Douglass speech at Town Hall in July 1843.

Shelburne

The incomparable Shelburne Museum. Two Civil War-era homes, the Dutton House and the Settlers House, show daily life of the time. Some Civil War connections with the Webb family and Shelburne Farms as well.

Burlington

Battery Park with its statue of Gen. William Wells was also a drilling site for Capt. John Lonergan’s troops, many later becoming Fenian members. Lakeview Cemetery contains monuments for Generals Oliver Otis Howard and Wm. F. Wells, as well as the large family plot for Gen. George Stannard, hero of Gettysburg. His is the only statue in the Cemetery in human form. The Hill area of the city has homes of Generals Oliver Otis Howard and the G.G. Benedict House, from the Civil War historian and later publisher and owner of The Burlington Free Press for 40 years.

Winooski

Site of many woolen mills that provided fabric for Union uniforms and blankets.

Milton

The General George Stannard House (and farm site) and the Milton Historical Museum, with its monument to all of Milton’s Civil War served and fallen.

Georgia

Monument at the birthplace of General George Jerrison Stannard.

Saint Albans

Saint Albans Museum and Taylor Park, main site of the famous St. Albans Raid of 1864, the Northernmost land battle of the Civil War. Many buildings original to Civil War remain, including the current One Federal/The Foundry Restaurant. This former foundry was first operated, then owned by Gen. George Stannard. The Milton Steamboat House and the Rokeby Museum is a gathering place for numerous important Civil War figures, both North and South. Rutland includes the home of General Wheelock Vezey, and the Fairgrounds were the site for training of Lt. Col. William T. W. Ripley’s famous 1st U.S. Sharpshooters and mustering site for departing troops. Ripley’s younger brother, Brig. Gen. Edward Hastings Ripley, led the Union Army into Richmond, the Confederate capitol.

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Shelburne Road

(current VT Route 105) was the escape route for Confederate Raiders of 1864, including the wooden bridge they attempted to burn. Escapees fled through Canada through Highgate, Vermont.