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History of the State of Vermont

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Sketch of topography of Vermont.

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To form our first sketch of the most of them covered with timber to their bases. In some places the timber is of the same kind as that of Canada, but in others it is of a different kind. The mountains are of a great number of heights and are separated by deep valleys.

SKETCH OF THE TOPOGRAPHY OF VERMONT.



1. Vermont constitutes the north-western part of that section of the United States, which is called New England. It lies between 42 degrees 44 minutes, and 45 degrees of north latitude; and between 3 degrees 31 minutes, and 5 degrees 24 minutes east longitude from the Capitol of the United States at Washington. The length of this State from north to south is 157½ miles. The width is various, being 90 miles at the north end and only 40 at the south. The mean width is about 57 miles, and the whole surface of the State, about 9000 square miles, or 5,760,000 acres. It comprehends the territory lying between Connecticut river and lake Champlain, which was formerly known by the name of the New Hampshire grants, and is bounded north by Canada, east by New Hampshire, south by Massachusetts, and west by New York.

2. The face of the country is generally uneven and the central parts mountainous. The range of Green Mountains, which give name to Vermont, extends quite through the State from south to north, keeping nearly a middle course between Connecticut river and lake Champlain. These mountains rise, in several places, to a height exceeding 4000 feet above the level of the sea,

but they are not generally precipitous, and are most of them covered with timber to their summits. The loftiest of these summits are the Nose and Chin in Mansfield, Camel's Hump, and Shrewsbury and Killington peaks.

3. Among these mountains, arise a great number of streams, which following the several declivities, find their way into Connecticut river on the east, or lake Champlain on the west. The principal streams, which fall into the Connecticut, are the Wantastiquet or West river, Black, Otte-Quechee, White, Wells and Pasumpsic. Those which fall into lake Champlain, are Otter Creek, Winooski, or Onion, Lamoille and Missisco. Black, Barton, and Clyde rivers run northerly into lake Memphremagog. These are all considerable streams, and they all abound in falls and rapids, which might afford water power for propelling machinery to almost any amount.

4. Lake Champlain stretches along the western border of Vermont for the distance of about 100 miles, and varies from half a mile to thirteen miles in width. It affords an easy communication between the Hudson and the St Lawrence, and it will be seen by the following pages that both the French and English frequently availed themselves of the facilities it afforded in their predatory expeditions against each other. Lake Memphremagog is situated on the northern boundary of Vermont and lies about half way between lake Champlain and Connecticut river. It is between 30 and 40 miles long, and from 3 to 4 miles wide. These lakes, as well as the rivers and smaller streams, were formerly well stored with fish; and from their waters the natives derived a large share of their subsistence.

5. When first visited by Europeans, this whole tract

of country was one unbroken forest. At that period the hand of industry had no where laid bare the soil to the genial influence of the summer's sun. The borders of the lakes and rivers were then shaded by a beautiful and lofty growth of pine and elm—the uplands were heavily timbered with maple, beech and birch, interspersed with a variety of other trees—while the mountains, which lifted their blue heads among the clouds, were clothed to their towering summits, with the perpetual verdure of their hardy evergreens.

6. These forests, and the margins of the lakes and streams, were well stored with moose, deer, bears, wolves, otter, beaver, and a variety of other animals, which made this region the favorite hunting ground of the natives; and here, from time immemorial, the successive generations had pursued the chase, vying in fleetness with the passing wind, and free as the mountain air, which they inhaled.

7. Where now we behold smiling villages, thronged by the busy multitudes, and cultivated farms, yielding the peaceful fruits of regulated industry, then were seen nought, but dark and gloomy forests and the pyres erected in their midst, for the immolation of those, whom the fortune of war had thrown into the hands of an enemy. Where now from our fields and hamlets the hum of business daily ascends, save when exchanged for 'the sound of the church-going bell,' and hushed for the rational and solemn worship of Almighty God,—then were heard only the war-whoop and the death song of the savage—the commingled strains of fierceness and exultation—the horrid shrieks of cruelty and of death.

8. But changes so auspicious in the general aspect of things have not been effected without toils, and difficulties

and dangers, to which the present inhabitants of Vermont, surrounded by their conveniences and comforts, are utter strangers. The ruggedness of the country, the density of the forests, the length and dreariness of the winters, and above all their exposure to the depredations of the merciless savages, were for a long period sufficient to deter all from emigrating hither excepting men of the stoutest hearts and most robust bodies. And then the labors of cutting down the forests, subduing the soil, procuring means of subsistence, and defending their possessions against unjust and arbitrary claims, were calculated to continue in vigorous exercise all their powers of body and mind.

9. But as they possessed neither the means, nor the leisure for mental cultivation, their characters, as would be expected, partook very much of the boldness and roughness of the mountain scenery amidst which they resided. From being accustomed to face dangers of different kinds, and to surmount difficulties by their personal exertions they acquired an unlimited confidence in their own abilities, and imbibed the loftiest notions of liberty and independence. These traits of their general character, as will be seen by the following pages, were fully developed during the controversies, in which it was their lot to be for many years involved, and they have at all periods marked their proceedings in the council and in the field.