

New Hampshire



Minute Man

A bulletin issued in the interests of the New Hampshire Society, SONS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION and in tribute to the PATRIOTS OF THE THIRTEEN COLONIES, who pledged their lives and fortunes to establish the Republic.

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THE TROUBLESOME GRANTS



An accurate map of His Majesty's Province of New-Hampshire in New England & all the adjacent country northward to the River St. Lawrence, & eastward to Penobscot Bay, containing the principal places which relate to the present war on the continent of North America. By Saml. Langdon.

In 1749, New Hampshire Governor Benning Wentworth began chartering towns in disputed territory to the west of the Connecticut River. For years to come, the towns were known as the “New Hampshire Grants.” Settlers in the Grants found themselves in the difficult situation of residing in a territory claimed by both New York and New Hampshire. On July 8, 1777, in the midst of the Revolution, with a British Army threatening invasion from the North, settlers in the Grants attempted to solve their political problems by declaring themselves the Independent Republic of Vermont. By August of that year, New Hampshiremen under John Stark successfully clashed with a British force in Bennington, one of the Vermont towns chartered by Governor Wentworth (and named for himself).



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For years before the Battle of Bennington, many Connecticut Valley towns in New Hampshire believed that they had more in common with their neighbors on the other side of the river than they did with the powerful towns of the New Hampshire Seacoast. In 1778, some voted to secede from New Hampshire and join the new Republic of Vermont. The Republic ultimately agreed to accept Cornish, Lebanon, Hanover (the home of Dartmouth College, then New Hampshire's only university), Lyme, Orford, Piermont, Haverhill, Landaff, Bath, Lyman, Apthorp (Littleton/Dalton), Enfield, Canaan, Cardigan (Orange), Gunthwaite (Lisbon) and Morristown (Franconia).

Political negotiations failed to bring the towns back into the New Hampshire fold. For a time it appeared that an entirely new state would be formed in the Connecticut Valley. By 1781 thirty-six New Hampshire towns had voted to join the Vermont Republic and a furious New Hampshire Legislature was pointing to Dartmouth College as a hotbed of secessionism. The Continental Congress attempted to intervene, indicating that it would recognize Vermont statehood if the Republic gave up its claim to the New Hampshire towns, but Vermont declined and tensions continued to escalate. In the winter of 1781, New Hampshire and Vermont sheriffs both sought to exercise arrest powers in the secessionist towns. New Hampshire and Vermont militia units were mobilized against each other on the border. On January 12, 1782, with the American revolution not yet over, the New Hampshire Legislature declared that the rebellious towns had 40 days to recognize that they were part of New Hampshire – or else. Civil war appeared imminent.

At about this time, the Republic of Vermont received a communication from General George Washington, the commander of the Continental Army threatening “coercion” if the claims to the New Hampshire towns were not relinquished. On February 20, the Republic capitulated, thereby avoiding war.

The secessionist movement had a lasting impact in both New Hampshire and Vermont. Vermont's statehood was delayed until 1791. In New Hampshire, the State Constitution of 1783, in response to Dartmouth College's role in the secessionist movement - prohibited college faculty from service in state government. The provision was repealed in 1792. New Hampshire's large Legislature is in part a product of these troubles. The Legislature's size (now the third largest legislative body in the English-speaking world) was in part designed to assure the full representation of Connecticut Valley towns in New Hampshire governmental affairs.

