

Timeline of events leading up to Act 250

- **1962:** Philip Hoff is elected Vermont's first Democrat governor in over 100 years.
- **1964:** Vermont Civil Rights Union forms and initially focuses on fundraising and support for the African American community in Jackson, Mississippi.
- **1966:** Governor Philip Hoff introduces legislation that would prohibit housing discrimination.
- **February, 1966:** Fair Housing bill fails in the House of Representatives.
- **January, 1967:** Fair Housing taken back up by the House.
 - Fair housing eventually passes, but with a significantly weakened enforcement mechanism.

The Vermont-New York Youth Project

- **February, 1968:** At the National Governor's Conference, Governor Hoff receives an advanced copy of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders report (Kerner Commission report).
 - Report finds that urban unrest is the result of white racism.
 - Hoff is deeply affected; declares May to be "Vermont Response Month;" partners with New York Mayor John Lindsay to form the VT-NY Youth Project, where White Vermont Youth and Black/Puerto Rican New York youth would attend summer camp side-by-side in Vermont.
- **Summer, 1968:** First VT-NY Youth Project involves over 600 youth.
 - Vehement opposition from many Vermonters. Hoff later stated he believed he lost a third of his party support over the project.

1968 Gubernatorial Election:

- Lieutenant Governor John Daley, a Democrat.
- Two Republican candidates:
 - Attorney General James Oakes.
 - Deane Davis, a businessman.
- **June, 1968:** A reporter asks Davis what he thinks of the Youth Project. On the spot, he replies "I hope it will do more good than harm...People are concerned—concerned that rioting and criminalities will invade Vermont."
 - Oakes and Daley express support for the Youth Project.

The Irasburg Affair:

- **July 4, 1968:** Reverend David Lee Johnson, a Black man from California, moves with his family from California to Irasburg. With them is Barbara Lawrence, a recently-divorced, young White woman, and her two children.
- **July 18, 1968:** Johnson family awakens to nightriders shooting at their house.
- **Evening of July 19, 1968:** State police have identified a suspect, Larry Conley. State police take two more weeks to investigate, ostensibly to look for a motive. Investigation quickly turns to

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Johnson's background. This may have been related to rumors that the Johnson family was in Irasburg to gain a foothold for a wave of Black settlement.

- **Early August, 1968:** State Trooper protecting the Johnson home claims to have seen Lawrence and Johnson engaged in intercourse.
- **August 9, 1968:** Lawrence and Johnson are arrested at gunpoint for adultery.
 - Lawrence confesses after hours of interrogation and is fined and sent back to California; two weeks later she recanted, saying she was coerced.
 - Johnson refuses to confess.
 - Orleans County State's Attorney Leonard Pearson pushes on with prosecution, despite having declined to prosecute adultery in the past.
 - Attempts are even made to bring Lawrence back from California to testify; this is blocked by a judge in California, and charges against Johnson are dropped in Vermont.
 - Attorney General Oakes (who is running against Davis for the Republican nomination) refuses to assist Pearson with this prosecution.
- **September 3, 1968:** Six men arrested for verbally assaulting Johnson; Pearson declines to prosecute two of them.
 - Oakes tries to convince Pearson to prosecute the two other assailants.
- **September 8, 1968:** Oakes loses to Davis in the Gubernatorial election by a large margin.
- **September 23, 1968:** Hoff appoints a commission to investigate the "Irasburg Affair."
 - Commission concludes that the initial shooting involved racial prejudices, that the police did not move quickly to investigate the shooting but "moved with zeal and speed in perfecting the proof of the adultery charges."
- **September, 1968:** Johnson family moves back to California.
- **November 5, 1968:** Davis elected Governor.
- **November, 1968:** Irasburg commission releases report, concludes that the initial shooting involved racial prejudices, that the police did not move quickly to investigate the shooting but "moved with zeal and speed in perfecting the proof of the adultery charges."
- **December, 1968:** Hoff publicly censures Public Safety Commissioner Erwin Alexander.
 - Alexander is openly defiant.
- **January, 1969:** Governor Davis is inaugurated, quietly declines to join Hoff in censuring Alexander, allows the issue to disappear.
- **By May, 1969:** Land use dominates political discourse in Vermont. Davis leads the charge.