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This Day In History

JANUARY | 15

1777

Vermont declares independence from colony of New York

Having recognized the need for their territory to assert its independence from both Britain and [New York](#) and remove themselves from the war they were waging against each other, a convention of future Vermonters assembles in Westminster and [declares independence](#) from the crown of Great Britain and the colony of New York on January 15, 1777. The convention's delegates included Vermont's future governor, Thomas Chittenden, and Ira Allen, who would become known as the "father" of the University of Vermont.

Delegates first named the independent state New Connecticut and, in June 1777, finally settled on the name Vermont, an imperfect translation of the French for green mountain. One month later, on July 2, 1777, a convention of 72 delegates met in Windsor, Vermont, to adopt the state's new—and revolutionary—constitution; it was formally adopted on July 8, 1777. Vermont's constitution was not only the first written national constitution drafted in North America, but also the first to prohibit slavery and to give all adult males, not just property owners, the right to vote. Thomas Chittenden became Vermont's first governor in 1778.

Throughout the 1780s, Congress refused to acknowledge that Vermont was a separate state independent of New York. In response, frustrated Vermonters went so far as to inquire if the British would readmit their territory to the empire as part

of Canada. Vermont remained an independent nation even two years after [George Washington](#) became president of the United States of America under the new U.S. Constitution. However, as the politics of slavery threatened to divide the U.S., Vermont was finally admitted as the new nation's 14th state in 1791, serving as a free counterbalance to slaveholding [Kentucky](#), which joined the Union in 1792.

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