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Celebrate 250 Years of Vermonters' Influence on America at Town Fair 2026

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By Ted Brady, Executive Director, VLCT

If social media existed in 1776, members of the Green Mountain Boys and their contemporaries may have set their relationship status with the United States of America as “it’s complicated”. But as attendees at this year’s Town Fair will learn, local leaders in Vermont played an outsized role in the Revolutionary War. Vermont author and historian Howard Coffin will share just how consequential the people and places of the Green Mountains were in his keynote address to Town Fair attendees on October 7 at the DoubleTree in South Burlington.

Town Fair 2026 will celebrate our nation’s 250th birthday, along with the 250 years of local leadership that Vermonters have contributed while achieving this milestone. But I’d be lying if I said I’m not a bit sheepish about showing up for the party. I’m worried our neighbors in New York and New Hampshire might bring up the little dispute we had with them before gaining statehood more than a decade after the country formed. Or maybe our neighbors in Quebec will remind me of Vermont’s attempt to join Canada right before the end of the Revolutionary War. And might a descendant of the original inhabitants of Vermont – who lived here for thousands of years before our country was founded – like to have a conversation?

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The country's semiquincentennial celebration doesn't neatly coincide with Vermont's 250th birthday. Technically, Vermont wasn't born until 1777 – and didn't become a state until 1791. So we'll celebrate Vermont's 250th at least two more times this century. We must also note that many Vermont communities are older than our country, having celebrated their own semiquincentennials decades before 2026. Bennington was technically created in 1749, a few more towns were chartered in the southern part of the state by 1760, and 63 others, including Addison, Hartford, and Maidstone, were chartered in 1761.

Our relationship with the formation of the country was complicated to say the least, but Vermonters – or whatever they were called in 1776 – had a lot to do with the founding of our country.

Back in June, I sat down for lunch with Howard Coffin at the Wayside Diner in Berlin to talk about Town Fair. Like many Vermonters, I know Howard from his books about the Civil War and have heard him speak at one of the more than 1,200 talks he's given in his career. I also remembered hearing about Howard from my former boss, U.S. Senator Patrick Leahy. When I was working with Leahy in D.C., Howard was an advisor to U.S. Senator James Jeffords. Jeffords and Howard worked together to preserve Civil War battlefields. As a former coach of the Leahy softball team, I was amused to hear Howard tell some stories about his exploits playing on the Jeffords softball team. I was quick to tell him the Leahy team beat the Jeffords team at least once during my DC-based softball managerial stint.

During that lunch, I learned about Howard's time in the Army, writing for *The Rutland Herald*, and serving on the National Civil War Sites Advisory Committee. He even shared a story about a close encounter with Dwight Eisenhower. But he became most animated as he launched into recounting the significance of the Revolutionary War battles near Bennington, in Hubbardton, and on Lake Champlain. Undoubtedly, the

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diners sitting in the booths adjacent to ours got a little history lesson that day.

While Vermont might not be turning 250 this year, Howard is eager to tell VLCT's members about the Vermonters and our neighbors who helped us win the Revolutionary War. I look forward to hearing the whole story, and maybe having a piece of cake to celebrate this important milestone.

I hope every municipal official in Vermont considers joining me for the celebration. Be sure to register at vlct.org/townfair before the Early Bird deadline of Monday, August 31.

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