

# Bennington

## Heart of the Southshire



Bennington County is comprised of 17 towns and is the only Vermont county with two shire towns (county seats): Manchester in the Northshire (nine towns) and Bennington in the Southshire (eight towns.) The two shire towns are linked by the scenic Shires of Vermont Byway, which intersects with the Stone Valley Byway in Manchester and the Molly Stark Byway in Bennington. To the south, the Byway travels through the scenic Pownal Valley to the Berkshires.



This panel was funded by the Federal Highway Administration in partnership with the Shires Byway Committee, Bennington County Regional Commission and The Better Bennington Corporation.



Statue of Colonel Seth Warner in front of the Bennington Battle Monument which was built in the late 1880s commemorating the famous Battle of Bennington that took place during the Revolutionary War in 1777. Old Bennington, Vermont

Bordered by forested mountain ranges east and west, Bennington is a four-way crossroads alive with a creative economy that blends an authentic sense of place with a powerful historical and agricultural heritage and inviting recreational opportunities. Bennington is enlivened intellectually by the presence of five institutions of higher education including the innovative Bennington College. Its historic downtown and surrounding community invite visitors to experience Vermont.



The First Congregational Church (Old First Church) of Bennington, as well as the cemetery where Robert Frost is buried. Old Bennington, Vermont PHOTO HUBERT SCHRIEBL

### First Town Chartered

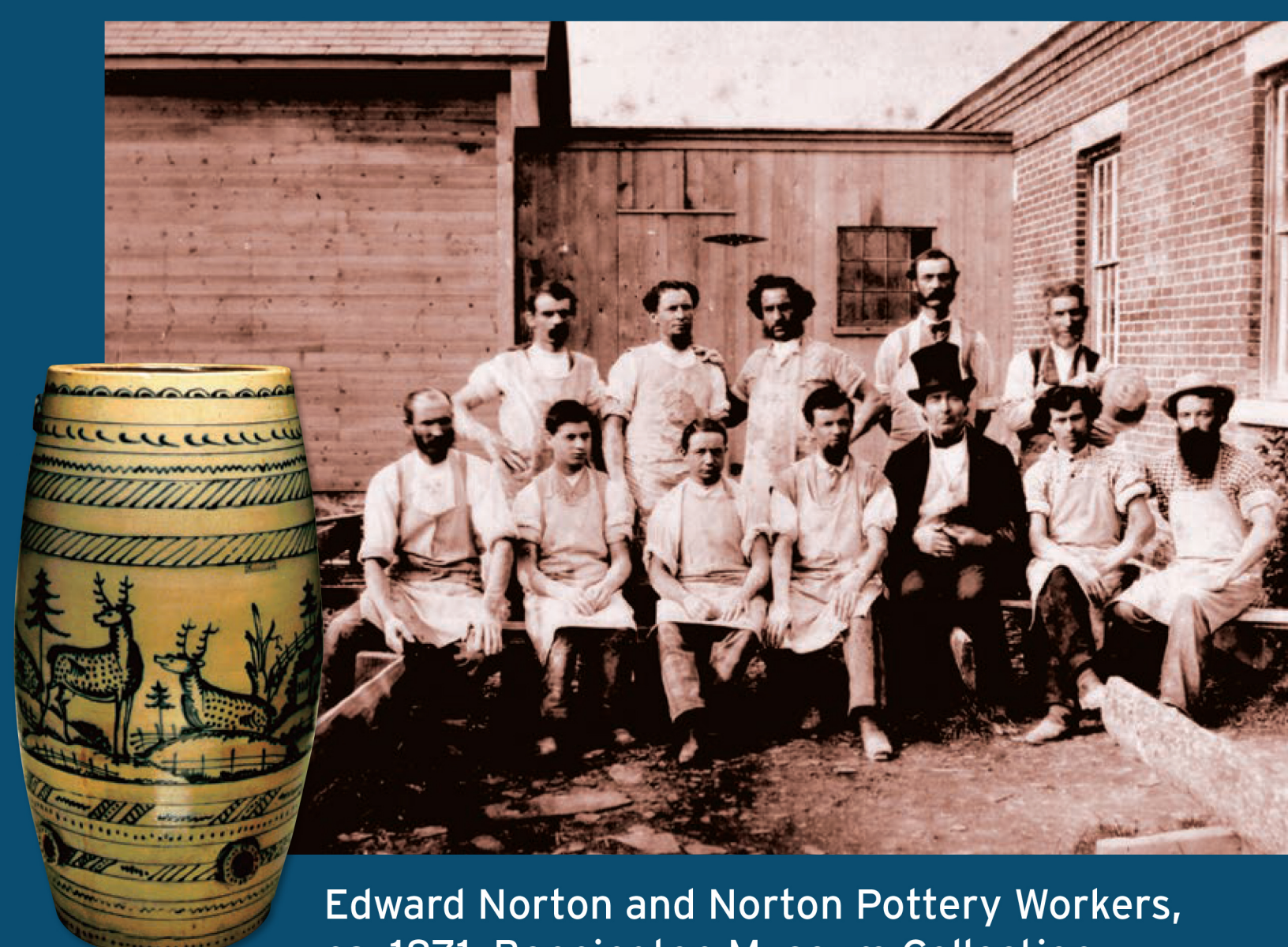
Saturated in history, Bennington was the first town in Vermont, chartered in 1749 and settled in 1761. Here, Ethan Allen and the Green Mountain Boys plotted and defended land they had purchased against threats by New Yorkers. Vermont's most-visited State Historic Site, the 306-foot Bennington Battle Monument, commemorates the Battle of Bennington, August 16, 1777, a major Revolutionary War victory over British invaders that demonstrated a cohesive sense of American unity and independence.

Bennington was settled by Congregational Separatists who in 1762 organized Vermont's first church. In the cemetery behind the Old First Church are the graves of six Vermont governors and the poet Robert Frost. Just next door is the Bennington Museum, which houses the largest public collection of Grandma Moses paintings as well as art and historical artifacts of the region and Vermont from the 18th century to the present.

To the north in Shaftsbury is Robert Frost's Stone House Museum, open from May to December, where he wrote "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening." Frost lived here from 1920 to 1929.

### Diverse Economic History

The early economy of sawmills and gristmills soon led to paper and iron production and then to woolen and textile mills, supplemented by sheep and dairy farming. In 1785 Captain John Norton began making pottery, which flourished during the nineteenth century and was strongly revived by the Bennington Potters in the twentieth. Older industries, largely powered by the Walloomsac River, have been replaced today by those dealing with computers, automobile parts, plastics, and specialized fabrics.



Edward Norton and Norton Pottery Workers, ca. 1871, Bennington Museum Collection. Insert: Water Keg, 1855-1859, J. & E. Norton Pottery, Salt-glazed stoneware with cobalt decoration. Gift of John Spargo. Bennington Museum Collection.



Fly-fishing on the Walloomsac River at the Henry Bridge, Bennington.

### Five Covered Bridges

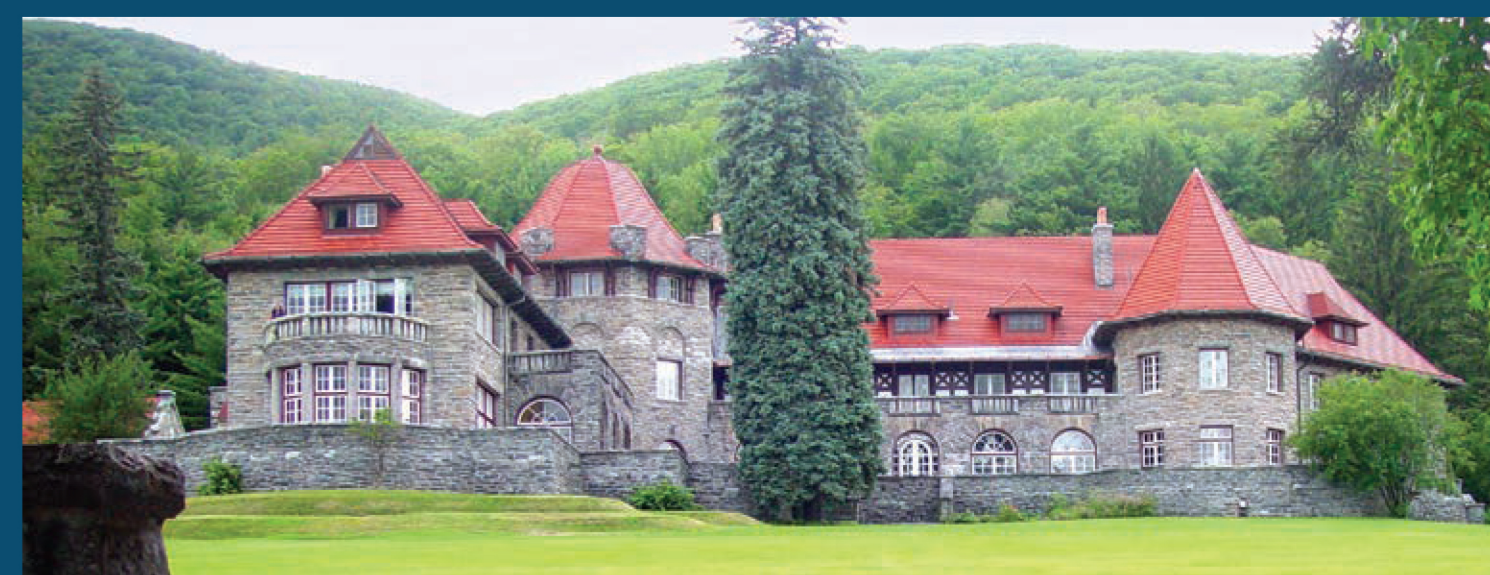
Bennington County is home to five covered bridges; three along the Walloomsac River in Bennington, one over the Batten Kill in West Arlington and the last crossing over the Roaring Branch near East Arlington.



Well known for cross country skiing, Prospect Mountain to the east was the site of the 2014 National Snowshoe Competition.

### Recreational Opportunities

The Green Mountain National Forest, always to the east, tempts one's inner-Thoreau to explore, hike, hunt, fish, or cross-country ski. The forest nearby has two Wilderness Areas designated by Congress: the George D. Aiken and the Glastenbury.



Edward H. Everett's 1911 mansion, now Southern Vermont College.



East Main Street, Bennington, Vermont, 1947. Photograph by Richard A. Hunt. Bennington Museum Collection