

**A MEMOIR OF THOMAS
CHITTENDEN, THE FIRST
GOVERNOR OF VERMONT; WITH
A HISTORY OF THE CONSTITUTION
DURING HIS ADMINISTRATION**

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A Memoir of Thomas Chittenden, the First Governor of Vermont; With a History of the Constitution During His Administration by Daniel Chipman

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By DANIEL CHIPMAN, LL. D.

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MEMOIR OF CHITTENDEN, &C.

CHAPTER I.

His Birth—His Settlement in Salisbury—The Governors of New York and New Hampshire both make grants of lands in the territory now included in the State of Vermont—Col. Chittenden removes to the New Hampshire Grants—Driven from his farm in 1776.

THOMAS CHITTENDEN was born in East Guilford, in the then Colony of Connecticut, on the 6th of January, 1730. Of his ancestors, nothing is known, except that his parents were respectable, but moved in the ordinary walks of life. His father was a farmer, and the subject of this memoir labored on the farm, being allowed only the advantages of a common school education.

In the 18th year of his age, being too full of enterprise and resolution to be confined within the narrow circle within which he seemed to be destined by his education and fortune to move, he engaged in a voyage to the West Indies. In this

enterprise, he was unfortunate. The mother country being at war with France, he was captured by a French vessel of war, and landed on a West India island, without money, and without friends. In this condition, he was left to find his way home, which, after a series of suffering and fatigue, he accomplished. After this unfortunate voyage, a sailor's life had no charms for him, and he determined "never again to leave his plough, to go ploughing on the deep." He accordingly continued on the farm with his father, until the 4th of October, 1749. About this time, he married Elizabeth Meigs, and soon after removed to Salisbury, in Connecticut. He thus made a Yankee settlement, married early, and began to move. The first settlement in the town, by the English, commenced about the year 1738, and the town was organized in November, 1741. This northwestern part of Connecticut, watered by the Housatonic river, and lying west of the Green Mountain range, remained a wilderness many years after the other parts of the colony had been settled. A fear of the Indians had prevented a settlement in this quarter, until the population in the older parts of the Colony had become somewhat crowded, and notwithstanding it was considered

a perilous undertaking to move a family into the remote wilderness of Salisbury, yet, there were in the older settlements so many men of enterprise and resolution, anxiously seeking a wider range for their exertions, that the town settled rapidly. And as the inhabitants displayed all that energy peculiar to new settlers, retaining their Puritan habits of economy, they soon became independent farmers. Coming as they did from different parts of New England, where customs and habits of thinking somewhat different had prevailed, and uniting in the formation of a new society out of these different materials, their minds were invigorated, and they naturally obtained a more enlarged and just view of men and things.

During the first half century, there were but few men of public education in the town, but there were a number of self-made, well-educated men, who were distinguished as public men in the county and in the Colony.

Judge Church, in his address delivered at the centennial anniversary of the organization of the town, in November, 1841, remarks: "It is a just occasion of pride in any community, that it has sent forth from its members to other regions

men of eminence and usefulness, and perhaps the town of Salisbury, retired and obscured as it is, has furnished other sections of the confederacy her full proportion of distinguished men." And in designating the individuals of this class, with great propriety, he places Thomas Chittenden at the head of the list. That the inhabitants of the town placed him among their first citizens, is evident from the fact, that he represented the town in the Legislature, in the years 1765, '66, '67, '68, '69 and '72. He was also Colonel of a regiment of militia, and a Justice of the Peace, until he removed from the town. This last was, at that time, an office of distinction, for, during the whole century, after the organization of the town, thirty-five individuals only were in the commission of the peace.

The French province of Canada having been ceded to Great Britain by the treaty of 1763, all danger from the Indians was removed, and the New Hampshire Grants were open for settlement. The Governor of New Hampshire, claiming jurisdiction as far west as the present west line of Vermont, granted a great number of townships west of Connecticut river. Col. Chittenden and some of his sons were grantees in several of