

# Landuse and Cultural History



The Intervale has one of the richest land use histories in Vermont. The Abenaki were present on the Intervale's 700 acres over 5,000 years ago in camps that were used for hunting, gathering, and fishing. People were especially active on this stretch of the Winooski River between 100 B.C. and 1000 A.D., because it provided some of the most productive fishing grounds in the Champlain Valley.

Ethan Allen, a folk hero and flamboyant statesman, settled with his family in the Intervale in 1787. His home, located downstream from here, is a historical landmark administered by the Winooski



Ethan Allen's home was built on a knoll just above the vast Intervale floodplain. An easy two-mile paddle downstream from here will take you there. (Photograph courtesy of Gardener's Supply.)

Valley Park District. Allen purchased the land here because of its rich soils and access to Lake Champlain, which was the main transportation corridor 200 years ago.

Agriculture changed here with the railroad's arrival in 1849. Faster access to markets in southern New England made dairy farming profitable for Vermonters. The Intervale has rich history of dairy farming, which continued with the Calkins Family until 1991. Other farming activity during the early 1900s included hog farming and processing, and poultry, grain, and vegetable farming.



This herd is making its way down Intervale Road. (Photograph courtesy of Gardener's Supply.)

By 1950, much of Burlington's Intervale was experiencing serious neglect. The area became a dumping ground, which included an illegal junkyard with nearly 500 cars. In the late 1980s, the Intervale Foundation was founded to revitalize the Intervale as a place for sustainable agricultural and environmental ventures.

The Intervale is now a thriving agricultural ecosystem. The Intervale Foundation manages 350 acres, which include: a dozen organic farms, Vermont's largest composting operation, food and fuel production from agricultural waste, youth development opportunities, and other innovative initiatives.



This group is helping the Intervale Community Farm get its abundant carrots to market. (Photograph courtesy of the Intervale Foundation.)