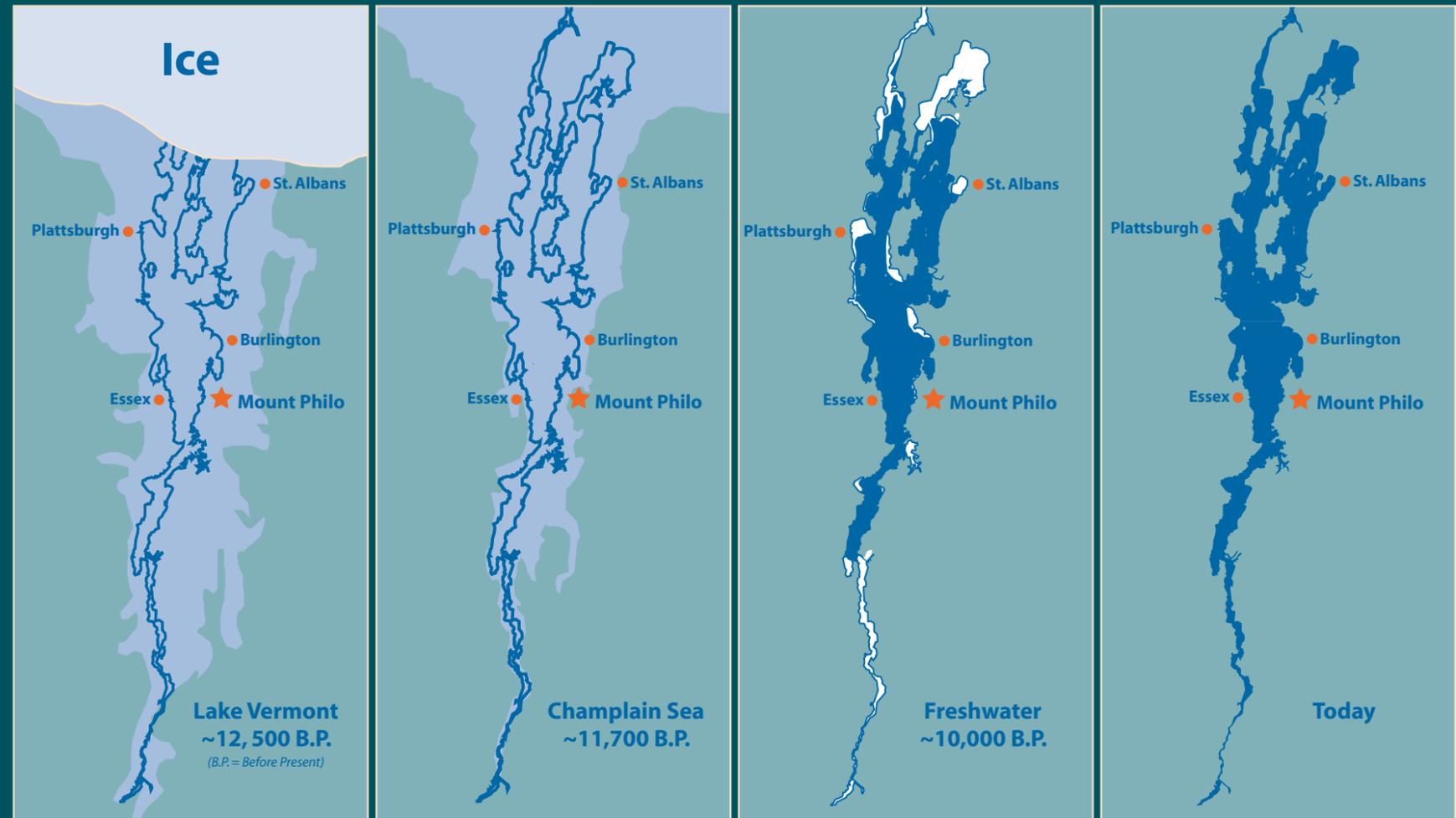


Island in the Sky

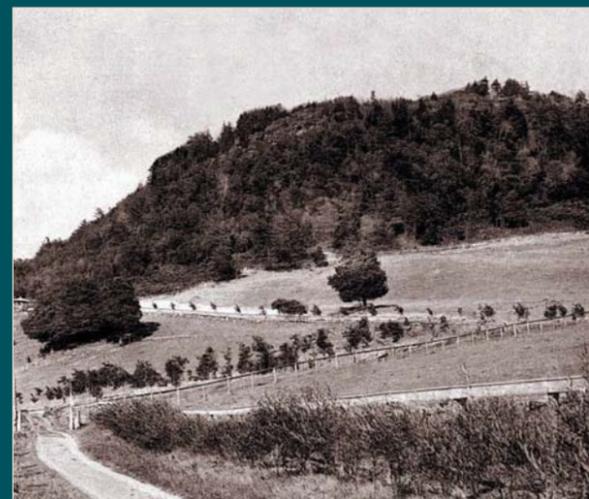


Mount Philo (which measures 968 feet above sea level) was not always a mountain. As the glaciers of the last Ice Age melted 12,000 years ago, the water left behind created Lake Vermont covering the Champlain Valley. A thousand years later, salt water from the St. Lawrence River crept up the valley to form the Champlain Sea. If you were standing here then, you'd be underwater. The Champlain Valley began to take its present shape about 10,000 years ago when the land, freed of the mile-high ice pack, rebounded and rose to block the Atlantic and the freshwater Lake Champlain was formed. Indigenous people that would eventually form the Abenaki and Mohawk nations arrived and settled in the millennia that followed.

Mt. Philo is known as *Mataguesaden* or Rabbit Mountain to the Abenaki for whom it was an important landmark and lookout. Early European settlers cleared much of the forested mountainside. Later, intensive sheep grazing in the mid-1800s turned much of the landscape into rocky pasture. In 1924, the owner of Mt. Philo, Mrs. Frances Humphrey donated the land to the State of Vermont and it became Vermont's first state park. Water and weather continue to shape the mountain. Winter storms and the occasional hurricane have left their mark. Can you find evidence of the Ice Storm of January 1998? It snapped countless trees and demonstrated how change is the only constant in our landscape.



Beach gravel and shell fossils can still be found about 2/3rds of the way up the mountain. Source: D. Chapman (1937), American Journal of Science.



1908 photo by B. Barker. Courtesy of University of Vermont, Bailey-Howe Library, Special Collections.



A 1906 postcard of the Mt. Philo Inn which is still in operation today. Original source: Vermont Historical Society. Courtesy of University of Vermont Landscape Change Program, www.uvm.edu/perkins/landscape.

In 1901 Frank Lewis owner of Mt. Philo and the Mt Philo Inn, used horse and plow teams to clear a path to the summit of the mountain. He placed benches and shelters along the route to offer Inn guests and other hikers places to rest.

Vermont State Parks invites you to hike, bike or drive to the top and enjoy the panoramic view. Be inspired by migrating hawks and eagles in the spring and fall, the dramatic rock outcrops, delicate wildflowers and plentiful wildlife in all seasons. Additional interpretive panels tell of the land's historic use, stewardship and the work of the Civilian Conservation Corps here in Vermont's first State Park.

Please take only pictures and leave only footprints. Enjoy your Vermont State Parks!