



The Mitten

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THE NORTHWEST ORDINANCE

According to President Franklin Roosevelt, the Northwest Ordinance was the “highway” on which “the United States was built.” Approved by the Continental Congress on July 13, 1787, the Northwest Ordinance established a system to govern the Northwest Territory.

The Ordinance determined that the Northwest Territory (the area east of the Mississippi River and north of the Ohio River) would be carved into smaller territories that eventually became states.

The Ordinance also laid out a three-stage program to govern territories and prepare them for statehood.

In the first stage, the president appointed a governor, a secretary and three judges to govern a territory. In the second stage, once a territory reached a population of 5,000 free white adult males, it could elect a legislature.

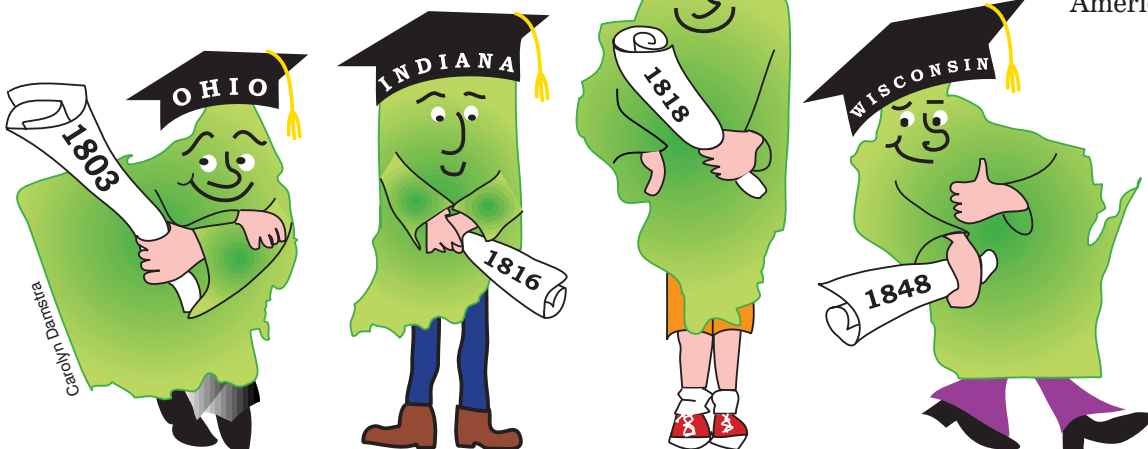
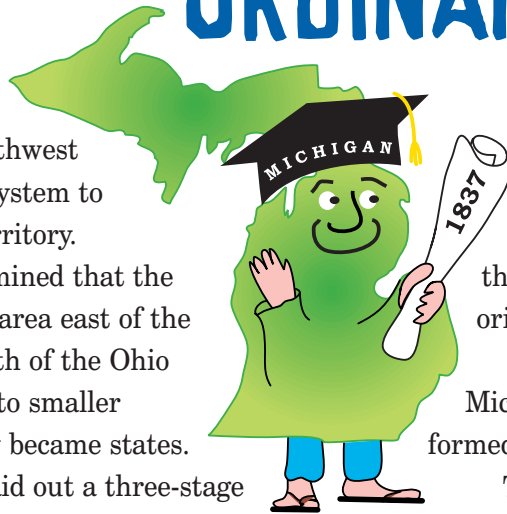
The third occurred when a territory reached a population of 60,000 free residents (both male and female). The territory drafted a constitution.

After obtaining congressional approval, the territory became a state. When this happened, the territory, according to the Northwest Ordinance, entered the Union “on an equal footing with the original states in all respects whatsoever.”

Five states—Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan and Wisconsin—were eventually formed out of the Northwest Territory.

The Northwest Ordinance also guaranteed that settlers living in the Northwest Territory would receive the same rights enjoyed by Americans living in the original thirteen states. These rights were later included in the Bill of Rights.

The Northwest Ordinance established a system for new states to join the Union in an orderly fashion. It was one of the most important documents in American history.



Graduating to Statehood

SLAVERY

in the Northwest Territory

As the Northwest Ordinance was being discussed by the Continental Congress, a **delegate** from Massachusetts suggested adding a provision banning slavery in the Northwest Territory. The Ordinance, including this measure, was adopted on July 13, 1787. It was the first time the federal government set limits on the expansion of slavery.

Despite this ban, a small number of slaves continued to live in the Northwest Territory after 1787. The Ordinance allowed residents living in the territory to keep slaves if they already owned them.

Some territories tried to get around the ban. In 1805 the Indiana territorial legislature adopted a law that permitted slaves to be brought into Indiana. The slaves were called “indentured servants” and had to sign a contract. Some of these contracts required the slaves to serve their masters for up to 40 years of service. Children born to these slaves were required to work for their master until they reached 30 years old. If the slaves did not voluntarily sign these contracts they were removed from Indiana and sold.

In Michigan, slavery began with the arrival of the French. When the British arrived in 1761 they discovered Native American and African slaves in Detroit. A 1782 **census** showed 78 male and 101 female slaves living in Detroit. The number of slaves declined after the British left Detroit in 1796. Only 15 African Americans lived in Detroit in 1805. It is unclear how many were slaves, but businessman Joseph Campau owned ten slaves at this time.

Most Michigianians neither owned nor approved of slavery. In 1807 a Canadian living in Windsor demanded that his two escaped African American slaves—then living in Michigan—be returned to him. Territorial Justice Augustus Woodward denied the request. He declared that slavery did not exist in the Michigan Territory and that every “man coming into this Territory is by law of the land a freeman.”

The 1830 census showed 32 slaves living in the Michigan Territory, but these numbers dwindled quickly. Michigianians also grew critical of human slavery. As the Civil War neared, some citizens worked along the Underground Railroad to assist people escaping slavery in the southern states.

**“There shall
be neither
Slavery nor
involuntary
Servitude
in the said
territory”**

*Article Six,
Northwest Ordinance*



1.

According to the Northwest Ordinance, no fewer than three and no more than five states were to be created out of the Northwest Territory.



2.

When Ohio entered the Union as a state in 1803, the Indiana Territory was created. Because of the great distance Michiganders had to travel to conduct business at the Indiana capital, Detroiters asked for their own territory. The Michigan Territory was created in 1805.

PROGRESSING TO STATEHOOD



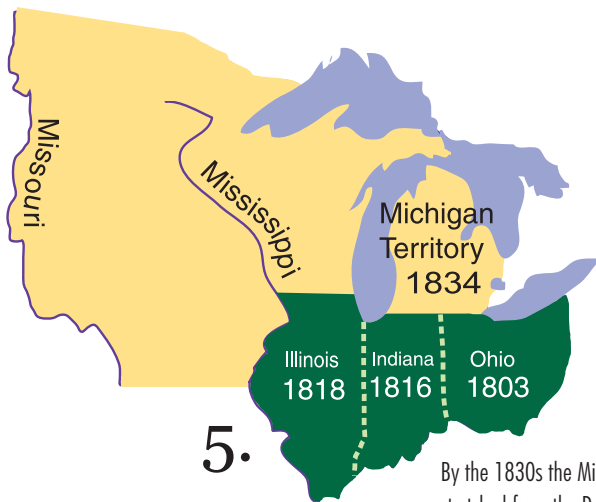
3.

When Indiana became a state in 1816, the Illinois Territory was created.



4.

When Illinois became a state in 1818, the Michigan Territory was expanded.



5.

By the 1830s the Michigan Territory stretched from the Detroit River to the Missouri River.



6.

When Michigan became a state in 1837, the Wisconsin Territory was created. Wisconsin became a state in 1848.

What Did You Learn?

BONUS:

How many slaves lived in the Michigan Territory in 1830?

- a. 32
- b. 78
- c. 15

1. *When did Congress approve the Northwest Ordinance?*

- a. 1761
- b. 1830
- c. 1787

2. *How many states were eventually created out of the Northwest Territory?*

- a. 5
- b. 3
- c. 13

3. *What did the Northwest Ordinance do?*

- a. Prohibit slavery
- b. Established a three-stage program for territories to become states
- c. Established a system to govern lands east of the Mississippi River and north of the Ohio River
- d. All of the above

Vocabulary WORDS



Delegate: an elected or appointed person who represents others

Census: an official counting of a population

The Mitten is produced by the staff of Michigan History magazine, which is part of the Michigan Historical Center. The Michigan Historical Center is part of the Department of History, Arts and Libraries. Dedicated to enhancing the quality of life in Michigan, the department also includes the Mackinac Island State Park Commission, the Library of Michigan, the Michigan Film Office, and the Michigan Council of Arts and Cultural Affairs.

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**DOCUMENT
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