

Finding Your Ancestors in MICHIGAN

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Q: WHAT do you think of when you hear the word MICHIGAN?

HISTORY: First were Native Americans; “mishigamaa” means “large water” or “large lake”
French missionaries and trappers. After French & Indian War the land becomes British.
1783 American Revolutionary War ended with territory awarded to America.
1805 Territory of Michigan was formed. 1837 Statehood as 26th state.

SIZE: 10th in population of US states; 11th most extensive total area; largest east of Mississippi;
Only state with two peninsulas.
Lower Peninsula - a Mitten shape; manufacturing, services, farming, high-tech industry;
Upper Peninsula “the U.P.” – tourist destination; abundance of natural resources

INDUSTRY & EMPLOYMENT: Detroit largest city; center of automobile companies;
Ford’s “assembly line” transformed industry. The automobile transformed private life!
Jobs attracted immigrants from Europe and migrants from across the States.
Grand Rapids – 2nd largest city – important center of manufacturing –
WW II armaments produced 11% of total, second only to New York.
Battle Creek – several companies for prepared foods,

AGRICULTURE: Milk – most valuable agricultural product. Livestock products are many.
Leading producer of tart cherries, blueberries, pickling cucumbers, navy beans.
Second only to California among U.S. states in the diversity of its agriculture.
Sugar beets for Michigan Sugar Co., the largest east of the Mississippi, 4th largest in U.S.

TRANSPORTATION: Has 9 International (road, tunnels, bridges, ferry) Crossings with Ontario,
Canada. The 2 peninsulas are connected by the Mackinac Bridge.
The Soo Locks on St Marys River navigates the 21 foot drop between Lake Superior & Lake
Huron, so large freighters travel from Atlantic Ocean westward to Duluth, Minnesota.
85 miles is the farthest distance from anywhere to a Great Lakes shoreline.
Recreation is a large tourist destination, summer and winter.

IMMIRATION: Agriculture, Forests, Mines were the drawing cards.
1837 – 1930 Foreign immigrants made Michigan = 30 languages spoken in schools.
Detroit in 1950-60’s doubled its population in a decade.

MEDICAL RESEARCH CORRIDOR includes: University of Michigan, Michigan State University,
Wayne State University.

FOREIGN IMMIGRANTS came from many countries to make Michigan a true melting pot. Michigan was made the state it is today from the immigrants who traveled from their homeland during the years 1837-1924.

1. CANADA

Push

- Political refugees from a 1837-1838 revolt.
- Depression of the timber and shipbuilding industries.

Pull

- Military, agricultural, economic, and industrial opportunities after the civil war
- Michigan's close proximity to Canada provided a fresh start for some

2. GERMANY

Push

- Economic hardships, unemployment and crop failure
- To avoid war and military service
- German government encouraged the poor to emigrate

Pull

- Fertile farmland
- State of Michigan recruited immigrants
- Established German settlements (see note)

Note: The first German immigrants came to Washtenaw County, in 1830, setting up missions. Two early missions were in Ann Arbor, 1833, and Frankenmuth, 1845. These missionaries wrote back to Germany and encouraged others to immigrate.

3. NETHERLANDS

Push

- Religious upheaval in Netherlands
- King William I tight control over the Reformed Church
- Economic depression

Pull

- Religious freedom
- Improvement of existence
- Economic opportunities in furniture industry, utilities and finance

4. HUNGARY

Push

- Liberal revolts in 1848-1849
- Peasants lack of economic success
- Antisemitism led to immigration of Jews.

Pull

- Labor opportunities in mining; lumbering; and sugar beet producing in the Thumb area of Michigan.

5. Italy

Push

- Few economic opportunities

Pull

- Manual labor and mining jobs

6. ENGLAND/CORNISH

Push

- the dying copper mining industry in Cornwall, which is in southwest England. Once a great copper mining area.

Pull

- copper and iron mines in the Keeweenaw Peninsula, in the Upper Peninsula, which today is known as "Copper Country"

7. IRELAND

Push

- Famine

Pull

- a place to start new
- improvement of existence

The Irish in Michigan worked in mining and construction of railroads and canals. They helped build the canal in Grand Rapids in 1835. Some Irish were known as pack-peddlers. Merchants from Northern Ireland traveled rural areas selling fine table and bed linens.

8. FINLAND, SWEDEN, NORWAY

Push

- Lack of suitable farmland
- End of the guild system led to more urban centers
- Change from rural to industrial system
- Left to escape parental control, military service, political or religious persecution

Pull

- Availability of land
- Economic opportunities with many Scandinavians working in the railroads, mining and furniture making.

9. POLAND

Push

- Failure of political revolts
- Small land holdings
- Low wages
- High taxes

Pull

- Labor, including railroad workers, sewer and water main workers, and street pavers. Later, for automobile and foundry.

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HOW and WHERE to RESEARCH for your FAMILIES in MICHIGAN

INTERNET - www.MIGenWeb.org

Each state and each county has their own
Research Helps –
Local cemeteries, churches, histories, tax lists, etc

www.FamilySearch.org/wiki

Search by place or topic
Online Research is amazing!

MICHIGAN ARCHIVES and LIBRARIES – listed on FamilySearch/wiki

National, Regional, Statewide Repositories

www.seekingMichigan.com <http://www.digitalstatearchives.com/michigan>

GOOGLE - digitized millions of books - search GoogleBooks for out-of-print books - can search and print! Works well to search for older County Histories.

HISTORICAL SOCIETIES - COUNTY or STATE

Very helpful! Find addresses and phone numbers and web sites on line
Photos, books, obituaries – they are marvelous!

RELATIVES - Family Bibles, photographs, etc.

Most helpful is finding living descendants of Great or Great-Great Grandparents

RECORDS WORKING WITH OTHER RECORDS!

Use papers from relatives to coincide with censuses
Birth records supporting Marriage Records, etc.

MAPS - Highways, Townships, Counties, States, and more

Example: Township PLAT maps with names of land owners

CENSUSES – FEDERAL and STATE

POPULATION use with Townships and counties

NON-POPULATION SCHEDULES for 1850-1880 specials:

MORTALITY

DEFECTIVE, DEPENDENT and DELINQUENT CLASS

AGRICULTURE

SOCIAL STATISTICS

MANUFACTURING

1890 VETERANS