



STEPS TO STATEHOOD

The People

On January 12, 1835, territorial governor Stevens T. Mason announced that Michigan was ready to become a state. But, the United States Congress said no. Congress said Michigan had work to do before becoming a state.

First, at least 60,000 people had to live within its boundaries. Governor Mason already ordered a *census*, a count of people, of Michigan, in 1834. The census counted more than 85,000 people living in Michigan.

The Laws

Second, the people of Michigan needed to write a constitution. A *constitution* is a set of laws or a plan about how the government will work. In April 1835, *delegates*, people who represent others, were elected by voters to write a constitution.

The delegates met in a *Constitutional Convention*, a meeting to form and adopt a new constitution. Ninety-one delegates came to the meeting. Forty-five of them farmed. Twenty worked as store owners, mill workers or lumbermen. In addition, there were 12 lawyers, three doctors, two land surveyors, a writer, a schoolteacher and a person who designs buildings. Eight people did not record their professions. All the delegates were white men. Indigenous people, African Americans and women were not a part of the decision making process.

Writing a constitution was hard work. Deciding who could vote in elections was especially difficult. In some states people had to own property to vote. The delegates debated over what Michigan's voting rules should be. Eventually, they decided that every white man over 21 years old could vote if he lived in the state for six months. Indigenous people, African Americans and women were not allowed to vote.

On October 5, 1835, Michigan voters accepted the constitution and elected Stevens T. Mason as the first governor. One month later, Mason was sworn in as Michigan's first governor. But Michigan was still not accepted as a state.

No Fighting With Ohio

Before Michigan could become a state, it had to stop fighting with Ohio. Both Ohio and Michigan claimed that they owned a small strip of land near present-day Toledo, Ohio. But Congress refused to allow Michigan to become a state until Michigan and Ohio reached a compromise.

It took more than a year for the Toledo War to be settled. In the end, Toledo became part of Ohio. Michigan was given the western part of the Upper Peninsula instead. Finally, on January 26, 1837, Michigan became a state.