



WHY DID PEOPLE COME TO MICHIGAN?

There are many reasons people move to a new place. Sometimes, it's for a new job or opportunity. Other times, it's to be with family. In the early 1800s, people began moving to Michigan for similar reasons. Let's look at some reasons why people were leaving their homes, and why they were choosing to come to Michigan.

The Push from Home

What makes people decide to leave their home for another place? Beginning in the 1830s, many people were coming to Michigan from the eastern part of the United States. The eastern United States was a crowded place. One reason people started leaving was because there wasn't any land to buy. If a family owned farmland, it was passed down to the oldest son. If you weren't the oldest son, you had to go somewhere else to buy land. Another reason people left home was for opportunity. There were many places in the United States where people didn't have the opportunity to own land, vote, get a job or open their own business. People would sometimes leave home to look for those opportunities. They could find them in Michigan.

The Pull to Michigan

Why did people choose to move to Michigan? One big reason people chose Michigan was that there was a lot of cheap land. Michigan was much bigger than states on the east coast. In addition to size, the United States government took a lot of land from Michigan's Tribal Nations during this time. The United States then made this land available to settlers for a cheap price.

In 1830, a person could buy good farmland for about \$1.50 an acre, and small farms were 40 acres. In states like New York, farms for sale were much smaller and cost much more. By 1840, prices were between \$2.00 - \$6.00 per acre for land in western Michigan. Most importantly just about anyone could own land in Michigan. That wasn't true of other states. In some states, if you were a woman or if you weren't white, you couldn't own land.

Another reason people chose Michigan was for opportunity. With so many people moving to Michigan, it was a great place to open a business. Taverns (hotels), bakeries, grocery shops and clothing shops were necessary in Michigan's new towns and cities.

Moving to a new place can be scary and a little strange. After the Erie Canal opened and the tribes were removed from their land, a lot of people chose to move to Michigan for land and opportunity.