

CHANGING FACES OF MINNESOTA AGRICULTURE

Minnesota's First Farmers

Long before white settlers arrived and long before statehood, the Ojibwe (sometimes called Anishinabe) and the Dakota Native Americans were farming.

The Ojibwe

The Ojibwe lived in the northern lakes and forest regions of what would later be Minnesota. They fished, hunted and gathered their food. These first farmers harvested wild berries, fruits and wild rice. They planted corn, pumpkins and squash. They tapped maple trees for sap to make into tasty treats.

The Dakota

The Dakota lived in the southern and south-western plains of what is now Minnesota. Their villages dotted the banks of rivers including the Mississippi, Minnesota, St. Croix and Cannon. Dakota men hunted for wild animals, and Dakota women were the farmers. Working with simple hoes made of bone or wood, they raised corn, beans and squash. Dakota people also gathered many wild foods. Most of the food was eaten as it ripened, but some was always stored for winter eating and spring planting.

The Ojibwe and Dakota sometimes fought with each other, but they usually got along.



Fort Snelling was the first farming community in the area (1820s). Native farming had begun hundreds of years earlier.

Original drawing by Peter Rindisbacher, Courtesy Minnesota Historical Society

Fort Snelling

By the early 1820s Fort Snelling had been built on a hill where the Mississippi and Minnesota Rivers meet. The U.S. government believed that the fort would help protect the U.S. fur trade from the British and would help keep peace. The troops needed plenty of food, and Colonel Josiah Snelling ordered that 200 acres of land beside the Minnesota River be tilled for crops. The 1823 harvest brought wheat, oats, corn, potatoes, carrots, turnips and cabbage.

Soon a lot of cropping was taking place in the area around Fort Snelling. Besides the Indians, other farmers came along. Like other first farmers, these were **subsistence** farmers—growing essentials for survival. These new arrivals—people who settled on unoccupied land without a legal claim to do so—were called squatters. The squatters felt safe being so close to Fort Snelling, and they traded their extra produce for other supplies at the Fort.

Connections Through the Years: Agriculture and People

1. From earliest times, the development of human culture was always linked with agriculture. Explain why this is true.

2. Why was it important for early Indian villages to be located near rivers or lakes? _____

3. Who built Fort Snelling and why? _____

4. What might have happened to Fort Snelling if the crops had failed in those early years? _____

5. In what ways do you think Dakota and Ojibwe culture and lifestyle changed when European settlers began arriving? _____

CHANGING FACES OF MINNESOTA AGRICULTURE

European Settlers Move In

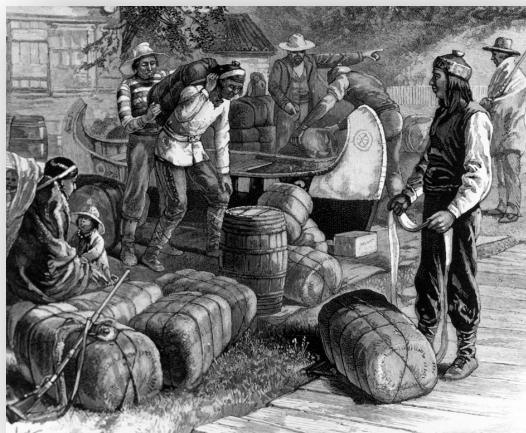
By the 1830s, hundreds of settlers had moved into the areas along the Mississippi and Minnesota Rivers. Still, until about 1850, most of the people living in Minnesota were Dakota and Ojibwe. They lived in the thick forests, wide prairies and along the riverbanks. Government leaders, fur traders and missionaries wanted to make treaties to open the Indian lands to white settlement. That's when things really began to change.

Treaties Open Indian Lands for Settlement

The government pressed the Indians to sell more land so white settlers could move in. Through a series of treaties made during the 1800s, much of the Ojibwe and Dakota land was transferred to the U.S. government. With each treaty, settlers pushed farther into Minnesota. After the 1851 treaties opened southwestern Minnesota for settlement, streams of European settlers rushed in.

Minnesota's Newcomers

From 1849-1858 thousands of newcomers moved to Minnesota Territory. Many came from Germany, Norway, Sweden, Ireland and other European countries. American port cities like Boston, New York and New Orleans were full of European settlers.



An early 1800s northern Minnesota or Canadian trading post.

Posters, ads and newspaper articles urged the immigrants to move to Minnesota.

Newcomers came with their skills, talents, trades and beliefs. They came by foot, canoe, oxcart, stagecoach and steamboat. Railroad companies offered special prices on rail passage. They even helped immigrants acquire land.

Minnesota was the fastest growing place in the United States! By the 1860s, white settlers were in the majority.

Changes in the Land

As settlers came, many turned to logging and farming. They cleared more and more of Minnesota's heavy forests, prairies and savanna grasslands. More roads were built. With larger fields now available, wheat became a more important crop. A grist (grinding) mill built at St. Anthony Falls (in the heart of today's downtown Minneapolis) became a big business. The mill ground wheat into flour to feed the

ever-growing population. Cities and farms grew larger and larger. Cities needed farmers

to supply their food. Farmers needed city folks to buy their products. By the early 1900s, Minnesota was on its way to being a major agriculture state.



A mid-1800s flour mill packing room; workers packing flour into sacks and barrels.

Photos Courtesy Minnesota Historical Society

Think & Discuss

1. White settlers and American Indians did not view the land the same way. How would American Indians answer:

When I look at this land, I see _____

How would white settlers answer: When I look at this land, I see _____

2. Why did people leave their homes and families in Europe to come to America? _____

With so many areas to choose from, what influenced each group to settle where they did? _____

3. In what ways did the land change with the widespread immigration in the 1800s and 1900s? _____

How do these land changes still affect us today? _____

CHANGING FACES OF MINNESOTA AGRICULTURE

Minnesota agriculture began with American Indians. Next came settlers, primarily from Europe, during the 1800s and early 1900s. By the late 1900s, **immigrants** were arriving from all over the world. Our agriculture keeps changing along with the population.

Today's Newcomers

Minnesota is home to many new immigrants. They include people from Southeast Asia, India, Latin America, Somalia, the former Soviet Union and many other nations. Like earlier newcomers, these immigrants left their countries for specific reasons. Many left to escape violence, joblessness or poverty. They came for new opportunities. Many came to join family or friends already in Minnesota.

Changing Cities and Towns

Most immigrants moved to the Twin Cities, Duluth or Rochester. Other communities such as St. Cloud, Moorhead, Willmar, Worthington, Marshall, Worthington, Owatonna and Albert Lea also became home to thousands of immigrants between 1990-2000. Many moved to small towns and rural areas to work in agriculture. For example, jobs at farms, processing plants and meatpacking businesses made Worthington a magnet for seasonal workers and new immigrants. By 2000, Worthington was Minnesota's third

most racially diverse city. (Minneapolis and St. Paul are first and second.)

From fields to processing plants and grocery stores to restaurants, immigrants make huge contributions to Minnesota agriculture every day.



Photo Courtesy University of Minnesota Agricultural Experiment Station

New Menus, New Celebrations

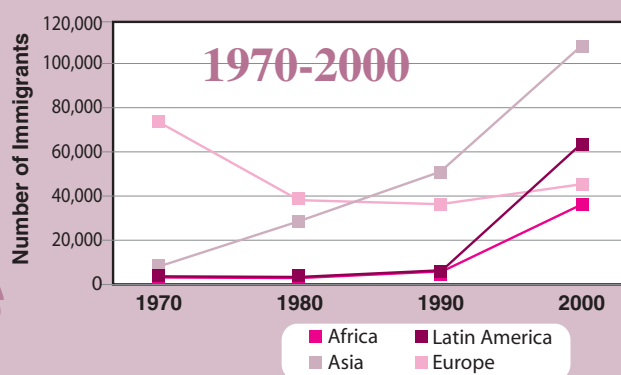
Native Americans found plenty of edible plants and animals in the natural world, but early colonists often kept to their European food traditions. Every wave of newcomers brought their own tasty foods, flavors and traditions.

Today we still enjoy bountiful American native ingredients such as wild rice, corn, squash and cranberries. We also enjoy great food diversity. What new

foods and flavors have you tasted in Mexican, Thai and Indian restaurants? Asian grocery stores and community farmer's markets?

Along with foods, immigrants bring their music, dance, clothing and art to their celebrations and festivals. What examples can you name?

Immigration Trends into Minnesota



- Why do you think so many Asian immigrants chose Minnesota as their new home?
- Which group of immigrants has decreased? What might be some reasons?

New Connections Through the Years

1. What do you think the toughest part of immigrating has been for our newest immigrants?
2. Do you know anyone who has moved to Minnesota from another country? Why did they come to Minnesota? How did they feel about leaving their homeland?
3. How would you feel if your family decided to move to a different country? What important things would you need to learn?
4. What foods do you enjoy that came to us through immigrants?

Some information for this page is excerpted from *Northern Lights: The Stories of Minnesota's Past*, Minnesota Historical Society Press • 2003

Did You Know? Minnesota was home to 260,000 foreign-born residents in 2000. Over 6% of Minnesota's population was born in another country. What do you enjoy most about the growing diversity?

The number of immigrants living in the United States nearly tripled between 1970 and 1998.

(Source: The Center for Immigration Studies)