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Minnesota

Minnesota is located in the northern Midwest bordered to the north by Canada. Minnesota is separated from North Dakota to the west by the Red River. South Dakota forms the rest of the western border. Iowa is to the south and Wisconsin is to the east. Lake Superior, one of the five Great Lakes, makes up the northeastern border of Minnesota.

One of the nicknames for Minnesota is "Land of 10,000 Lakes". In fact, there are over 11,000 lakes in the state. The area was originally home to the Dakota people. Minnesota derives its name from "mni" the Dakota word for water, which transferred to English as "minne." Not only is there Minnesota the state, there are the cities of Minneapolis and Mnetota plus Lake Minnetonka and Minnehaha Falls, to name some examples.

Early History

Present-day Minnesota was occupied by Native Americans known as the Dakota people who evolved from the ancient Woodland and Mississippian cultures. The Dakotas continued to be a woodland people, living in the northern forest of Minnesota. However in the late 1600s, the Ojibwa people, also called Chippewa, began to settle in Minnesota. The two groups fought and the Dakotas moved to new lands in the prairies to the south and west of their original home. Based on present-day Minnesota boundaries, the Ojibwas lived in northern Minnesota and the Dakotas lived in southern Minnesota.

Also during the 1600s French settlers were already colonizing Canada, which they called New France. French explorers and traders were reaching Minnesota in the middle of North America and traveling by canoe southward into Minnesota. French fur traders Radisson and Chouart met with the Dakotas for the first time in 1659 near the shores of Lake Superior.

Like other explorers of the day, Daniel Greysolon, Sieur Duluth was searching for the Northwest Passage that would take him to the Pacific Ocean. He traveled across Lake Superior and reached present-day Minnesota in 1679 and claimed the Minnesota area for France. He encountered the warring Dakotas and Ojibwas and became involved in negotiating a peace between the tribes before traveling further west. The city of Duluth is named in his honor.

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In the late 1600s more fur traders were entering into Minnesota and buying beaver pelts and other furs from the native people. These French Canadian men were called voyageurs, a French word for travelers. Voyageurs would typically travel in large canoes sturdy enough to haul furs to Canada or to the closest trading post.

Meanwhile the British were also interested in the fur trade because there was a great demand for beaver fur for making men's hats in Europe. The result was that four groups wanted to control the same lands: Ojibwas, Dakotas, French and British. In 1736 the Ojibwas won a war with the Dakotas; as a result, the Dakotas moved west of the Mississippi River. Next the Ojibwas allied with the French because they had been trading partners for a long time. The British fought the combined French and Indian forces from 1754 until 1763 in the French and Indian War.

Britain eventually won the war and gained control of these northern French lands east of the Mississippi River. The British fur trading companies called the North West Company and the Hudson's Bay Company controlled fur trading.

Towards Statehood

Minnesota was not involved in the Revolutionary War but when the American colonies achieved independence, the young United States gained control of all British land east of the Mississippi River. In 1787, the federal government established the Northwest Territory to control the area around the Great Lakes that did not belong to any state. In 1803 the U.S. bought French lands in North America, including part of present-day Minnesota, in the Louisiana Purchase.

Zebulon Pike, a lieutenant in the U.S. Army, was sent to Minnesota in 1805 to remove foreign fur traders and soon the American Fur Company controlled the fur trade in the area of Minnesota. Pike acquired land at the present site of Minneapolis and in 1825 the area was defended by Fort Snelling. The fort became a settlement and its position near the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers was suitable for industries that needed water power to run their modern 1800s machinery.

Over the years, the Northwest Territory was split up several times. Land in eastern Minnesota was part of the Wisconsin Territory while western Minnesota was part of the Iowa Territory. When Wisconsin became a state in 1848, land in eastern

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Minnesota was not included within the state boundaries. The local people requested to become the Minnesota Territory. When it was created, the new Minnesota Territory included all of present-day Minnesota plus land that today is part of North and South Dakota.

In 1849 there were only about 4,600 settlers in the new Minnesota Territory. At this time, the Dakota people controlled most of southern Minnesota. In 1851 they completely gave up their land, about 24 million acres in southern and western Minnesota. Immediately, white settlers came to farm the newly available land which was suitable for raising crops. In 1857, there were approximately 150,000 settlers in Minnesota. Minnesota became a state in 1858.

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Circle True or False after analyzing each of the following statements.

1. True False Canada and North Dakota form the northern border of Minnesota.
2. True False Lake Minnesota, one of the Great Lakes, forms the northeastern border of Minnesota.
3. True False In the late 1600s the Dakota and Ojibwa people both lived in the area of present-day Minnesota.
4. True False The city of Duluth, Minnesota is named for the first fur trader who encountered the Dakota people.
5. True False Voyageurs were French Canadian fur traders who would typically travel in large canoes sturdy enough to haul furs back to Canada or to the closest trading post.
6. True False By the 1700s there were four groups who wanted to control the land in present-day Minnesota: Ojibwas, Dakotas, French and British.
7. True False The valuable fur trade in Minnesota was first controlled by the Dakotas, then the British and finally the American Fur Company.
8. True False The United States gained control of the land in present-day Minnesota due to the Revolutionary War and the Louisiana Purchase.
9. True False The U.S. Army established Fort Snelling near present-day Minneapolis to protect the American fur trade.
10. True False The population of Minnesota increased dramatically after the Dakota people gave up control of the ground suitable for farming in southern Minnesota.

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Answers

1. False
2. False
3. True
4. False
5. True
6. True
7. False
8. True
9. True
10. True