



A Timeline of Iowa History

The Beginnings

The Geology

c. 2.5 billion years ago: Pre-Cambrian igneous and metamorphic bedrock, such as Sioux Quartzite, forms in the area that is now Iowa.

c. 500 million years ago: A warm, shallow sea covers the area that is now Iowa.

c. 500 million years ago: Sedimentary rock begins to form, including limestone, sandstone, dolomite, and shale.

c. 500 million years ago: Cambrian rock forms. c. 475 million years ago: Ordovician rock forms. c. 425 million years ago: Silurian rock forms. c. 375 million years ago: Devonian rock forms.

c. 350 million years ago: Mississippian rock forms. c. 300 million years ago: Pennsylvanian rock forms. c. 160 million years ago: Jurassic rock forms. c. 75 million years ago: Cretaceous rock forms.

c. 3 million years ago: Glaciers form during a cooling of the earth's surface, and the ice sheets gradually, in several phases, move over the area that is now Iowa.

c. 12,000 years ago: The last glacier melts and the geographical features of Iowa are exposed. First known humans in Iowa.

c. 8,000 years ago: A warming of the climate and reduced rainfall encourages the spread of prairies across the area that is now Iowa.

c. 5,000 years ago: Increased rainfall spurs the growth of hardwood forests in protected areas in the area that is now Iowa.

The First Iowans

The Archaeology

c. 12,000 years ago: Archaeologists believe the first known human beings to live in Iowa, the Paleo period, left fragmentary remains of their hunting practices.

c. 8,500 years ago: For about 7,000 years Iowa is occupied by "Archaic" cultures.

c. 3,000 years ago: Appearance of the Woodland cultures in eastern Iowa, and Great Oasis culture in western Iowa.

c. 2,500 years ago: Middle Woodland cultures construct mounds in Iowa.

c. 1,500 years ago: Late Woodland cultures construct Effigy Mounds in Iowa.

c. 1,000 years ago: Mill Creek culture inhabits northwestern Iowa.

c. 1,000 years ago: Nebraskan Glenwood culture inhabits southwestern Iowa.

c. 900 years ago: Oneota culture inhabits Iowa for several centuries.

The Arrival of the Europeans

1673: Louis Jolliet and Pere Jacques Marquette are the first known Europeans to discover the land that will become Iowa.

1682: Rene Robert Cavelier, sieur de La Salle claims the land in the Mississippi River valley, including Iowa, for the King of France.

1762: Claims to the land that will become Iowa transferred to the King of Spain.

1788: Julien Dubuque creates first European settlement in Iowa.

1799: Louis Honore Tesson receives a land grant from the Spanish government for a tract of land in Lee County.

1800: Basil Giard receives a land grant from the Spanish government for a tract of land near the present town of Marquette.

1800: Claims to land that will become Iowa are transferred to France.

1803: France sells Louisiana Territory, including land that will become Iowa, to United States.

1803: Iowa becomes part of Upper District of Louisiana with capital at St. Louis.

1804: Iowa is part of District of Louisiana, but is assigned to Indiana Territory for practical administration.

1804: Captain Meriwether Lewis and Lieutenant William Clark cross Iowa on their expedition to explore Louisiana Territory.

1804: Sergeant Charles Floyd, on Lewis and Clark expedition, dies.

1804: Treaty with Sac Indians concluded in St. Louis, including land that will become Iowa.

1805: Lieutenant Zebulon Montgomery Pike explores upper Mississippi River valley.

1805: Iowa becomes part of Territory of Louisiana with capital at St. Louis.

1806: Lewis and Clark expedition returns down Missouri River.

1808: Fort Bellevue (later called Fort Madison) constructed in what became Lee County.

1812: Iowa becomes part of Territory of Missouri with the capital at St. Louis.

1813: Fort Madison abandoned.

1819: First steamboat on Missouri River reaches Iowa.

1819: Stephen Long expedition explores Iowa.

1820: First steamboat on Mississippi River reaches Iowa.

1820: Missouri admitted to Union as state, leaving Iowa with no official jurisdictional authority designated.

1824: So-called "Half Breed Tract" set aside in what would become Lee County.

1830: So-called "Neutral Ground" established in what would become northeastern Iowa.

1830: Isaac Galland founds first school in Iowa.

1832: Treaty with Sauk Indians (the "Black Hawk Cession") opens Iowa land for legal European settlement.

1834: Iowa becomes part of Territory of Michigan with capital at Detroit.

1834: Fort Des Moines # 1 established near Des Moines River rapids.

1835: Lieutenant Colonel Stephen Watts Kearny explores Des Moines River valley and north central Iowa.

1836: Lieutenant Albert M. Lea publishes Notes on the Wisconsin Territory; particularly with reference to The Iowa District, or Black Hawk Purchase.

1836: The "Keokuk Reserve" opens to European settlement.

1836: Iowa becomes part of Territory of Wisconsin with capitals at Belmont, Burlington, and Madison.

1836: First newspaper in Iowa published: The Du Buque Visitor.

1836: First bank in Iowa starts—Miners' Bank of Dubuque.

1837: Treaty called "Second Black Hawk Cession" opens additional land in Iowa to European settlement.

1837: National economic depression slows settlement of Iowa.

1838: Territory of Iowa created; Robert Lucas appointed governor.

1838: Federal land offices established at Dubuque and Burlington.

1839: Abner Kneeland founds pantheist colony of Salubria in Van Buren County.

1839: "The Case of Ralph" decided by Territorial Supreme Court—allowing a slave residing in Iowa (a free state) to retain his freedom. This decision was overturned by the Dred Scott decision nearly two decades later.

1839: Iowa argues southern boundary with Missouri, commonly called the Honey War.

1839: "Dillon's Furrow" road established from Dubuque to Missouri border.

1839: St. Raphael's Seminary established in Dubuque.

1840: Federal Census of Iowa's population: 43,112.

1840: Winnebago tribe moves into so-called "Neutral Ground."

1841: Fort Atkinson built.

1842: Treaty called "Sac and Fox Cession," first of three such treaties, opens additional land in Iowa for settlement.

1843: Fort Des Moines # 2 established near Raccoon River forks.

1844: Mount Pleasant Collegiate Institute incorporated.

1844: Constitutional Convention convenes in Iowa City and a constitution is drafted and presented to United States Senate.

1845: Draft constitution, approved by Congress and signed by President Tyler, is twice rejected by popular vote of people of Iowa.

Putting Down Roots

1846: Second Constitutional Convention convenes in Iowa City and drafts a constitution to present to United States Senate. It was approved by Congress, signed by President Polk, and approved by popular vote of the people of Iowa.

1846: State of Iowa admitted to United States, with capital at Iowa City.

1846: Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints begin their trek from Nauvoo, Illinois, across Iowa.

1846: Treaty called "Potawatomi Cession" opens additional land in Iowa to settlement.

1846: William F. Cody, known as "Buffalo Bill," born in Scott County.

1847: Great Seal of the State of Iowa adopted by first General Assembly.

1847: The State University of Iowa chartered in Iowa City.

1847: Group of Dutch immigrants settles at Pella.

1848-1849: Fort Atkinson abandoned.

1850: Federal Census of Iowa's population: 192,214.

1850: Hungarian refugees found New Buda in Decatur County.

1851: Native American Indian tribes relinquish their last official claim to land in Iowa by the "Sioux Cession" treaty.

1854: First State Fair held, at Fairfield.

1854: Meetings in Crawfordsville and other towns lead to the formation of the Republican Party.

1855: German immigrants found the Amana colonies in Iowa County.

1855: First classes held at State University of Iowa in Iowa City.

1856: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints hand cart expedition leaves Iowa City.

1856: First railroad bridge across Mississippi River completed at Davenport.

1856: Mesquakie tribe members persuade state government to allow them to purchase land in Tama County and create a privately owned settlement.

1856: Federal land granted to railroads.

1857: New constitution adopted in Iowa.

1857: The capital of State of Iowa moved to Des Moines.

1857: The State Historical Society of Iowa created at Iowa City.

1857: A nationwide economic depression slows settlement of Iowa.
1858: Iowa Agricultural College and Model Farm created at Ames by General Assembly.
1859: Samuel Jordan Kirkwood elected Governor of Iowa.
1860: Federal Census of Iowa's population: 674,913.
1860: Tornado strikes Camanche killing at least 42 people.
1861: Annie Turner Wittenmyer organizes Soldiers Aid Society and diet kitchens to improve medical services for soldiers during Civil War.
1861-65: 75,000 Iowans serve in Civil War and 13,000 die.
1862: Samuel Freeman Miller appointed to U.S. Supreme Court.
1862: Homestead Act becomes law.
1863: First bank under general national banking act of United States opens in Davenport.
1865: James Harlan, United States Senator from Iowa, appointed Secretary of the Interior.
1867: First railroad completed across the state.
1868: Iowa integrates public schools when state Supreme Court rules that Susan Clark, an African American, can attend Muscatine public schools.
1868: Iowa ratifies 13th amendment to U. S. Constitution, allowing African-American males to vote.
1868: Patrons of Husbandry organize first Grange in Iowa.
1869: Iowa Board of Immigration created.
1869: First classes held at Iowa Agricultural College and Model Farm at Ames.
1870: Federal Census of Iowa's population: 1,194,020.
1870: Jesse Hiatt grows first Delicious apple tree on farm in Madison County near East Peru.
1871: Amelia Jenks Bloomer elected first president of Iowa Woman Suffrage Association—50 years before women gained the right to vote.
1873: Nationwide economic depression causes much trouble for Iowans.
1874: Herbert Clark Hoover born at West Branch.
1876: Iowa State Normal School founded in Cedar Falls.
1879: Meteorite weighing at least 744 pounds falls to earth near Estherville.
1880: Federal Census of Iowa's population: 1,624,615.
1880: James Baird Weaver of Bloomfield nominated for president by Greenback Party.
1880: John Llewellyn Lewis born at Cleveland Coal Camp near Lucas in Lucas County.
1882: Tornado strikes Grinnell killing at least 39 people.
1884: State Capitol dedicated in Des Moines.
1885: William Larrabee elected governor of Iowa.
1888: Henry Agard Wallace born on farm near Orient, Iowa.
1890: Federal Census of Iowa's population: 1,912,297.
1891: Grant Wood born on farm near Anamosa in Jones County.

1892: James Baird Weaver of Bloomfield nominated for president by Populist Party.
1892: John Froelich invents first gasoline-powered tractor, Clayton County.
1893: Nationwide economic depression causes much trouble for Iowans.
1893: Tornado strikes Pomeroy killing at least 60 people.
1893: Czech (Bohemian) composer Antonin Dvorak spends summer in Spillville.
1894: The Iowa Bystander, an African-American newspaper, begins publication in Des Moines.

Land, Town, and World

1896: Rural Free Delivery Act begins mail delivery to Iowa farms.
1897: Wild Rose becomes official State Flower.
1897: First consolidated school in Iowa opens at Buffalo Center.
1897: James "Tama Jim" Wilson of Traer appointed secretary of agriculture in President William McKinley's cabinet.
1898: Name for college in Ames changes to Iowa State College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts.
1899: David B. Henderson, Dubuque, elected Speaker of United States House of Representatives.
1900: Federal Census of Iowa's population: 2,231,853.
1900: Iowan Carrie Lane Chapman Catt elected president of National Woman Suffrage Association, a post she held for 28 years.
1901: Albert B. Cummins elected governor of Iowa.
1901: Jesse Field Shambaugh starts 4-H Club.
1901: Fort Des Moines # 3 established at Des Moines.
1902: Extension Department starts at Iowa State College.
1905: F. A. Harriman becomes first Iowan to die in automobile accident 2 miles south of Hampton on U. S. 65.
1908: William Boyd Allison dies, after serving almost 44 years in United States Congress as both representative and senator.
1909: Name of college in Cedar Falls changed to Iowa State Teachers College.
1910: Federal Census of Iowa's population: 2,224,771.
1911: "The Song of Iowa" becomes official state song.
1912: First rural public hospital created in Washington.
1913: Keokuk Dam completed.
1917: United States enters World War I.
1917: Camp Dodge built near Des Moines.
1917: Private Merle D. Hay of Glidden dies in France, first American casualty of WW I.
1918: Marian Crandell, teacher from Davenport, killed in France.
1918: Governor William Harding issues "Babel Proclamation," outlawing use of languages other than English in public.

1918: Iowa Farm Bureau Federation organizes.

1919: Radio station WSUI starts at State University of Iowa, first radio station in state.

1919: Carrie Lane Chapman Catt helps found National League of Women Voters.

1920: Federal Census of Iowa's population: 2,404,021.

1920: John Llewellyn Lewis elected president of United Mine Workers of America.

1920: First air mail flight lands in Iowa.

1921: Radio station WOC starts in Davenport, first commercial radio station.

1922: May E. Francis elected Iowa Superintendent of Public Instruction.

1926: Henry Agard Wallace founds Pioneer Hi-Bred International.

1928: Iowan Herbert Clark Hoover elected president of United States.

1928: Carolyn Campbell Pendray becomes first woman in Iowa House of Representatives.

1930: Federal Census of Iowa's population: 2,470,939.

1932: Viola Babcock Miller becomes Iowa Secretary of State.

1932: Carolyn Campbell Pendray elected to Iowa Senate.

1932: Farmers' Holiday Association organized.

1933: Eastern Goldfinch becomes official state bird.

1933: Iowan Ida B. Wise Smith elected president of the national Women's Christian Temperance Union, a post she held for 13 years.

1936: Exceptionally hot and dry summer and cold and snowy winter cause hardships for Iowans.

1938: John Llewellyn Lewis elected first president of Congress of Industrial Organizations.

1939: Iowan John Vincent Atanasoff develops the first prototype computer.

1940: Federal Census of Iowa's population: 2,538,268.

1940: Henry Agard Wallace elected vice president of United States.

1941: United States enters World War II.

1942: Fort Des Moines becomes training center for Women's Auxiliary Army Corps.

1942: Five Sullivan brothers from Waterloo are killed in action in the same engagement.

The Heartland in Transition

1946: John R. Mott awarded Nobel Peace Prize.

1948: Henry Agard Wallace nominated for president by Progressive Party.

1950: Federal Census of Iowa's population: 2,621,073.

1950: Television station W01 starts at Iowa State College.

1955: National Farmers Organization starts.

1958: Dr. James Van Allen discovers radiation belt which bears his name.

1959: Name of college in Ames changes to Iowa State University of Science and Technology.

1960: Federal Census of Iowa's population: 2,757,537.

1961: Oak tree becomes official state tree.

1961: Name of college in Cedar Falls changes to State College of Iowa.

1967: Geode becomes official state rock.

1967: Name of college in Cedar Falls changes to University of Northern Iowa.

1970: Federal Census of Iowa's population: 2,825,041.

1970: Iowan Norman Borlaug receives Nobel Peace Prize for creating disease-resistant plants to feed people in underdeveloped countries.

1970: "Iowa: A Place To Grow" becomes the state theme.

1971: Descendants of Frederick M. Hubbell donate Terrace Hill to State of Iowa.

1976: Iowa's first "first-in-the-nation" caucuses.

1980: Federal Census of Iowa's population: 2,913,808.

1986: Linda K. Neuman becomes the first woman appointed to Iowa Supreme Court.

1986: Jo Ann Zimmerman elected as the first woman to serve as Iowa Lieutenant Governor.

1989: First "Iowa: Eye To I" (bus trip across the state) class held.

1990: Federal Census of Iowa's population: 2,776,755.

1990: Bonnie J. Campbell elected Iowa Attorney General.

1993: Disastrous floods hit all parts of Iowa.

1995: General Assembly officially adopts design for state flag, something generally believed to have happened in 1921.