

Today in History - May 11

< May 11 >

Select date

May 11



Go

Today's Stories: [The Star of the North](#)

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The Star of the North

On **May 11**, 1858, Minnesota became the 32nd state admitted into the Union. Minnesota's application for statehood was submitted to [President James Buchanan](#) in January, but became entangled with the controversial issue of Kansas statehood, delaying it for several months until it was finally approved by Congress.



Capitol Building, St. Paul, Minnesota. Carol M. Highsmith, photographer. [Highsmith \(Carol M.\) Archive](#). Prints & Photographs Division

Known as the "Land of 10,000 Lakes," or "Star of the North," Minnesota is the northern terminus of the Mississippi River's traffic and the westernmost point of an inland waterway which extends through the Great Lakes and, with the St. Lawrence Seaway, to the Atlantic Ocean.

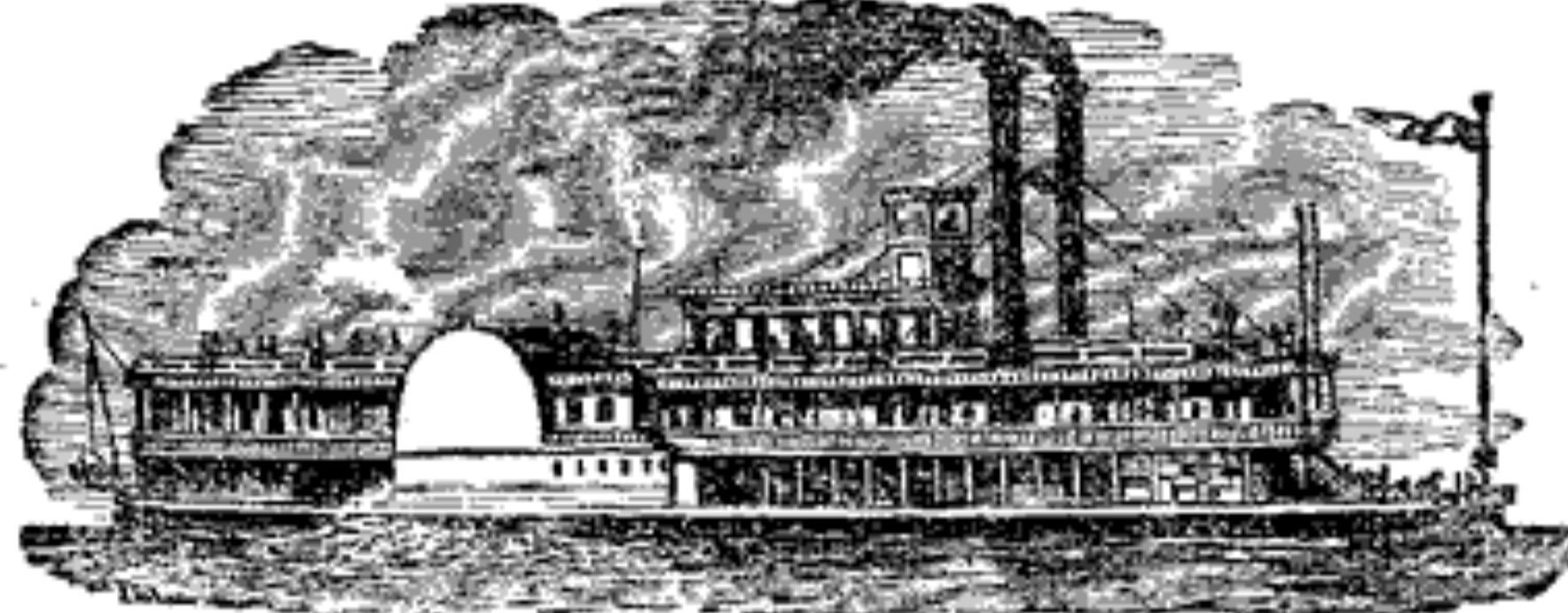
The Ojibwa (Chippewa) and Dakota (Sioux) were among the tribal peoples who first made this land their home. For them state borders were non-existent, and their territory extended far beyond what is today Minnesota. The French claimed this region from the mid-1600s to the mid-1700s, developing a strong fur trade but ceding lands east of the Mississippi to Britain. The U.S. acquired the area and its rich natural resources through the [Treaty of Paris](#) (1783), and the [Louisiana Purchase](#) (1803).

U.S. administration of the northwest lands formally began with the 1787 passage of the [Northwest Ordinance](#). The ordinance, one of the most important pieces of legislation passed by the Continental Congress, set out the requirements for a territory to become a state. The collection [Documents from the Continental Congress and the Constitutional Convention, 1774 to 1789](#) features a discussion on [Incorporating the Western Territories](#). For additional information on England's yielding of land west of the Appalachian Mountains, see the Today in History feature on the [Surrender of Fort Sackville](#). A representation of [Fort Sackville](#) is accessible on The George Rogers Clark National Historic Park site.

From the 1820s on, [Fort Snelling](#) protected the growth of the area now called Minnesota. During the Civil War, the fort served as a training center for thousands of young Minnesota volunteers who joined the Union Army. Twenty-four thousand soldiers who trained at the fort fought in the Union Army, serving gallantly at Gettysburg or during the Indian Outbreak. Once a military outpost at the edge of a small settlement, Fort Snelling is now located at the center of Minnesota's "Twin Cities"—[Minneapolis](#) and [St. Paul](#).

Until the second half of the nineteenth century, immigration into Minnesota was slow. However, as the value of the state's woodlands and fertile prairie was realized, settlers poured into the region with New England lumbermen leading the way. Between 1850 and 1857, the state population skyrocketed from 6,077 to over 150,000. As a large state with land for homesteading, Minnesota attracted immigrants from Norway, Sweden, Finland, and those seeking to own land in the United States. An [1878 brochure](#) published by the Minnesota State Board of Immigration, describes the many reasons for moving to the state.

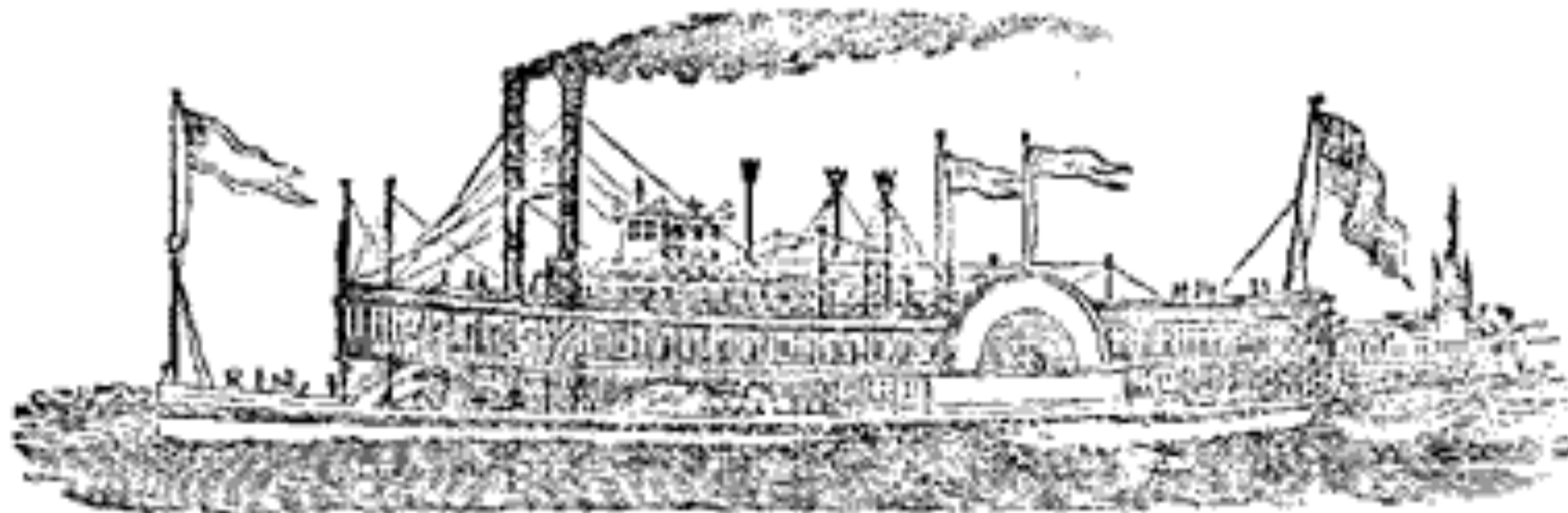
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1869. SEASON ARRANGEMENT. 1869.



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One of the splendid, first class, fast running Side-Wheel Steamers of this Line will leave St. Paul every morning, Sundays included, for La Crosse, Prairie du Chien, Dunleith and St. Louis, touching at all intermediate Landings, and making close connection with ALL RAIL ROUTES touching the river between St. Paul and St. Louis for all points East, West and South.
Through Tickets for passengers given to ALL PORTS on the Clippewa, St. Croix, Minnesota and Mississippi Rivers. A Tri-Weekly Line will run between SAINT PAUL AND TAYLORS FALLS, touching at all intermediate points, leaves Saint Paul every Monday, Wednesday and Friday. Persons traveling on this route will enjoy the Picturesque Scenery of the St. Croix, the "Dalles" of which are pronounced equal to the Palisades of the Hudson.

General Offices, Lower Levee, St. Paul Minn.

[Northern Line Packet Co.](#) Advertisement in *The Minnesota Guide. A Handbook of Information for the Travelers, Pleasure Seekers and Immigrants...* St. Paul: E.H.Burritt & Co., 1869.

[Pioneering the Upper Midwest: ca. 1820 to 1910.](#) General Collections

Still a leader in farming, lumbering, milling, and medical research, Minnesota is also an important center for the printing industry and a major producer of iron ore. Its largest city, Minneapolis, is home to the University of Minnesota, numerous museums, and theaters such as the Tyrone Guthrie Theater and the Walker Arts Center, and the world's largest cash grain market.

St. Paul is the state capital.



[Bird's Eye View of Duluth](#)[Minnesota]. Peter Schawang, c1914. [Panoramic Photographs](#). Prints & Photographs Division

Learn More

- Search across [loc.gov](#) on [Minnesota](#).
- Numerous photographs can be found in the [FSA/OWI Photographs](#), [American Environmental Photographs, 1891-1936](#), and [Historic American Buildings Survey](#) collections, and in the [Prints and Photographs Division](#) collections.
- Don't miss [Pioneering the Upper Midwest: ca. 1820 to 1910](#). This collection portrays the states of Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin from the seventeenth to the early twentieth century through first-person accounts, biographies, promotional literature, local histories, ethnographic and antiquarian texts, colonial archival documents, and other works from the Library's General Collections and [Rare Book and Special Collections Division](#). Also featured is the special presentation [The History of the Upper Midwest: An Overview](#).
- The [Denver Public Library Digital Collections](#) contain images of Native Americans in Minnesota.
- [Map Collections](#) include early maps of a number of Minnesota cities, such as [Brainerd](#), [Minneapolis](#), [Saint Cloud](#), [Saint Paul](#), [Rochester](#), and [Winona](#). Expand and enlarge the image to zoom in on houses, paddle wheelers, horse drawn carts, bridges, and much more in fine and accurate detail.
- To see more images of the state, search across the photo collections on [Minnesota](#), or the name of a specific location. [Panoramic Photographs](#) offers over sixty-five panoramic photographs of the state from [Hibbing](#) to [Fergus Falls](#).

< May 11 >

Select date

May 11



Go

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