

THE NORTHWEST ORDINANCE
AND
THE NORTHWEST TERRITORY

Points to Remember

- I. Northwest Ordinance passes in 1787
 - A. Created a single Northwest Territory out of lands north of the Ohio River and east of the Mississippi River that were ceded by France
 1. Land was to be divided into 3-5 smaller territories
 2. When population of a territory reached 60,000 the people could apply for statehood
 3. Each new state would come into the Union on “an equal footing” with the original 13 states
 - B. Included a bill of rights for the settlers, guaranteeing freedom of religion and a trial by jury
 - C. Also stated, “There shall be neither slavery nor involuntary servitude in said territory.”
 1. Marked the national government’s first attempt to stop the spread of slavery
 2. People who already owned slaves were allowed to keep them
 3. Often the slaves were not black but were Indians
 - D. Further guaranteed to the people living in the territory
 1. Protection against unjustified imprisonment
 2. States formed in the Territory would always be a part of the United States
 3. All lakes and rivers leading to the Mississippi and St. Lawrence Rivers would be open to use by any U.S. citizen
 4. Indians were to be treated considerately – no land would be taken from the Indians without their consent
 5. Schools and education would always be encouraged because “religion, morality, and knowledge are necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind”
 - E. Three stages in becoming a state, each depended on the number of voters in the territory
 1. “So soon as there shall be five thousand free male inhabitants, of full age, in the district, upon giving proof thereof to the governor, they shall receive authority, with time and place, to elect representatives from their counties or townships, to represent them in the general assembly”
 2. “For every five hundred free male inhabitants there shall be one representative, and so on, progressively, with the number of free male inhabitants, shall the right of representation increase, until the number of

representatives shall amount to twenty-five; after which the number and proportion of representatives shall be regulated by the legislature:”

3. “No person be eligible or qualified to act as a representative, unless he shall have been a citizen of one of the United States three years, and be a resident in the district, or unless he shall have resided in the district three years; and, in either case, shall likewise hold in his own right, in feesimple, two hundred acres of land within the same”
4. In order to vote a person had to be a free white male who owned at least 50 acres of property
5. Until the final stage was reached Congress had much power over the government – the first officials were not elected, but appointed by the Congress

II. 1805 – Michigan Territory was created

- A. Southern border was to be “an east-west line drawn through the southerly bend or extreme of Lake Michigan”
- B. At the time only a small part of the Upper Peninsula was included in Michigan
- C. Would have a governor, a secretary, and three judges
 1. All were appointed by the President of the United States, Thomas Jefferson
 - a. William Hull, from Massachusetts, Governor
 - b. Stanley Griswold, from Connecticut, Secretary
 - c. Frederick Bates, Augustus Woodward, and Samuel Huntington, judges who presided as the judicial equivalent of today’s Supreme Court
 2. Laws for territory would be made by the governor and the judges because there was no legislature at the time
 3. Laws were to incorporate provisions already in effect in one or more of the states
- D. Detroit, where most of the people lived, was designated the capital

To view a complete copy of the Northwest Ordinance, see
www.ohiohistory.org/onlinedoc/northwest/ordinance/index.html