

Happy Birthday Minnesota

Today, 11 May 1858, the state of Minnesota was admitted to the Union of the United States. Minnesota had been admitted as a territory on 3 March 1849. Interestingly the Minnesota Territory not only included present-day Minnesota, but also about half of present-day South Dakota and two thirds of North Dakota with the western boundary being the Missouri River. When the Territory was formed, it included three significant 'white' settlements, St. Paul, St Anthony (now part of Minneapolis) and Stillwater. St Paul was selected as the capital, Minneapolis as the site of the University of Minnesota and Stillwater as the Territorial Prison. The first Territorial Governor was Alexander Ramsey as a member of the Whig party and was also the State's second Governor. Ramsey was the first Union governor to commit troops during the Civil War. When he heard about the firing on Ft. Sumter, he went to President Lincoln and offered Minnesota's services. Later as US Senator, he voted for the Impeachment of Andrew Johnson. Ramsey is also remembered for his statements calling for the killing or removal of Native Americans in Minnesota. These statements came during the time of the 1862 Dakota War. Later President Hayes appointed Ramsey as one of the commissioners to govern Utah under the Edmunds Act. The Act made it illegal for polygamists to vote or hold office.

The history of Minnesota is rather colorful. The first known settlers were nomadic followers of large game following the last glacial period. The body of an early resident known as the Minnesota Woman was discovered in 1931 in Otter Tail County. The body has been carbon dated to about 8,000 years ago. They were followed by the Anishinaabe, the Dakota and other Native American tribes. French fur traders arrived in the 1600s. European settlers started arriving in the 1800s and Ft Snelling was built in 1805 by Zebulon Pike to protect them. Fort Snelling played a key role in the infamous Dred Scott court case. Slaves Dred Scott and his wife were taken to Ft Snelling by their master John Emerson. The Scotts lived at the fort and other parts of the Territory and when Emerson died, the Scotts argued that since they had lived in free territory, they were no longer slaves. Ultimately the US Supreme Court ruled against them. Ft Snelling served as an Army post and training center and is home to a National Cemetery. An early settler near Ft Snelling was Pierre 'Pig's Eye' Parrant, a moonshiner who established a saloon there. The name of the area was first called Pig's Eye, later Lambert's Landing and finally St Paul.

After the US Congress passed enabling legislation for a State constitution to be drafted, Republicans and Democrats could not agree on the wording. Finally, a compromise was reached but the Republicans and Democrats signed different copies of the same document. The constitution was approved by the voters, 30,055 for and 571 against and we became the State of Minnesota.