

## WHY DOESN'T THE UPPER PENINSULA BELONG TO WISCONSIN

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You asked about the origin of the Wisconsin-Michigan boundary, which separates the Upper Peninsula from Wisconsin and makes it part of the State of Michigan, although the region is separated from the Michigan Peninsula by the Straits of Mackinac.

This is an interesting question, and goes back to the Northwest Ordinance of 1787. The Northwest Ordinance of 1787 had made certain statements about what was to be the future boundaries of states to be formed out of the Northwest Territory, but in actual practice Congress frequently disregarded them. When Michigan was assuming statehood in 1835, she claimed that on the basis of the Northwest Ordinance a strip of Ohio including the City of Toledo should be hers. Congress declined to reopen the matter which had been settled when Ohio became a state and instead gave Michigan the area which is known as the Upper Peninsula. This was accepted by Michigan only because it was a condition to her admission to the Union. The rich mineral resources of the Upper Peninsula were not known at that time.

Another factor which brought about the establishment of the Michigan-Wisconsin boundary line was an inaccurate map of the area used by the congressional committee in 1835, a map which was produced by a Senator Preston of South Carolina. This map alleged that the Montreal and Menominee Rivers met at Lac Vieux Desert and thus made an island out of the northern peninsula and Senator Preston felt that this would make a fair division of the country. Several years later, the War Department in a survey discovered that the map was incorrect and that the Montreal River did not meet the Menominee River at Lac Vieux Desert. So the boundary line was drawn south on the Montreal River, and then straight across the land to Lac Vieux Desert and then to the headwaters of the Menominee River. Controversy over this boundary line was not really settled until 1926 when the U.S. Supreme Court reaffirmed it.

Wisconsin also had a boundary dispute with the State of Illinois. Contrary to the provisions of the Northwest Ordinance, Congress moved the Illinois boundary about 61 miles north of the southern extremity of Lake Michigan. Thus an area of about 8,500 square miles was subtracted from Wisconsin so that Illinois could have access to the Great Lakes. This happened in 1818 when Illinois was admitted to the Union but when Wisconsin became a territory in 1836, the controversy over this boundary flared up again. The disputed territory includes the present sites of Chicago, Evanston, Waukegan, Freeport, Rockford, Elgin and other cities.

Our sources for the above information were taken from the following books: William F. Raney, Wisconsin, A Story of Progress, 1940; H. Russell Austin, The Wisconsin Story, 1948; F. L. Holmes, Wisconsin (5 vol.), 1946; and Wisconsin Historical Collections by the Wisconsin Historical Society.