

**UNDERSTANDING TWO CENTURIES OF CENSUS
DATA OF MICHIGAN'S UPPER PENINSULA**

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What follows is one of the first census reports dealing with the Upper Peninsula census from the first Federal census for the region in 1800. This was the second Federal census taken for the United States. The figures are naturally useful, but can be overwhelming to a person who is not familiar with the history and development of the region. So beyond the figures, I am providing a brief explanation for the rise and fall of the population.

COUNTY POPULATION OF THE UPPER PENINSULA, 1800-1900											
County	1800	1810	1820	1830	1840	1850	1860	1870	1880	1890	1900
Alger								-	-	1238	5868
Baraga							-		1804	3036	4320
Chippewa				626	534	898	1603	1689	5248	12,019	21,338
Delta							1172	2542	6812	15,330	23,881
Dickinson					-						17,890
Gogebic		-				-				13,116	16,738
Houghton		-	-	-		708	9234	13,879	22,473	35,389	66,063
Iron		-								4432	8990
Isle Royale	-	-				-	-		55	135	—
Keweenaw	-							4205	4270	2894	3217
Luce	-	-				-	-			2455	2983
Mackinac	561	615	819	877	923	3598	1938	1716	3902	7830	7703
Marquette			-			136	2821	15,033	25,394	39,521	41,239
Menominee				-				1791	11,987	33,639	27,046
Ontonagon	-					389	4568	2845	2565	3756	6197
Schoolcraft						16	78	1	1575	5818	7889
TOTAL	561	615	819	877	923	5745	21,414	43,700	86,085	180,608	261,362

COUNTY POPULATION OF THE UPPER PENINSULA, 1910-2000											
County	1910	1920	1930	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	
Alger	7675	9983	9327	10,167	10,007	6352	7113	9740	8972	9862	
Baraga	6127	7662	9168	9356	8037	7151	7789	8484	7954	8746	
Chippewa	24,472	24,818	25,047	27,807	29,206	32,655	32,412	29,029	34,604	38,543	
Delta	30,108	30,909	32,289	34,037	32,913	34,298	35,924	38,947	37,780	38,520	
Dickinson	20,524	19,456	29,941	28,731	24,844	23,917	23,753	25,341	26,831	27,472	
Gogebic	23,333	33,225	31,577	31,797	27,053	24,370	20,676	19,686	18,052	17,370	
Houghton	88,098	71,930	52,851	47,631	39,771	35,654	34,652	37,872	35,446	36,016	
Iron	15,164	22,107	20,805	20,243	17,692	17,184	13,813	13,635	13,175	13,138	
Isle Royale					-			-	-	-	
Keweenaw	7156	6322	5076	4004	2918	2417	2264	1963	1701	2301	
Luce	4,004	6149	6528	7423	8147	7827	6789	6659	5763	7024	
Mackinac	9,249	8026	8783	9438	9287	10,853	9660	10,178	10,674	11,943	
Marquette	46,739	45,786	44,076	47,144	47,654	56,154	64,686	74,101	70,887	64,634	
Menominee	25,648	23,778	23,652	24,883	25,299	24,685	24,587	26,201	24,920	25,326	
Ontonagon	8650	12,428	11,114	11,359	10,282	10,584	10,548	9861	8854	7818	
Schoolcraft	8681	9977	8451	9524	9148	8953	8226	8575	8302	8903	
TOTAL	325,628	332,556	318,685	323,544	302,256	303,054	302,892	320,272	313,915	317,676	

¹1870 Census: Gladwin, Marquette, Montmorency, Otsego, Roscommon, and Schoolcraft counties were reported together and credited to Marquette County.

The settlement of the Upper Peninsula has been based on extractive industries over the centuries. In the beginning it was the fur trade first introduced by the French, and then continued by the British and Americans. As a result between 1800 and 1840 the population increased by only 362. This is best understood when it realized that the gathering of furs was in the hands of the indigenous Native American population and there was no demand for external laborer nor was the area, with its isolation and cold climate attractive to economic potential of an incoming population.

With the discovery of copper and iron in the 1840s the population of the Upper Peninsula dramatically changed. In 1840 the population was a mere 923 and within the decade it rose to 5745 in 1850. Then between 1850 and 1860 the population skyrocketed with the development of the mineral industries. This industry not only needed miners and trammers to physically get the ore out, but there were also technicians, engineers, mill workers and related laborers who were necessary. With the coming of a large stable population there was a demand for services and food which also attracted new people. All of this came with the price of a booming and rich economy. Of the 21,414 people in the Upper Peninsula in 1860, 12,055 were settled in Houghton and Ontonagon counties (Copper Country) while another 2821 were settled on the Marquette Iron Range for a total of 16,628. In the remaining farming and timber counties (Chippewa, Delta, Mackinac, Schoolcraft) the numbers had risen to 4786.

The decades between 1870 and 1920 are the boom years for the Upper Peninsula for as mentioned earlier, the mining industry was the most complex commercial base and attracted the greatest number of people. As a result the population of the region which in 1870 was 43,700 constantly rose so that by 1920 there were 332,556 people - all all-time high. Of this number 211,254 (63.5 percent) were living in the mining counties.

Despite this rather rosy census picture, there were problems in certain counties. Until 1910 there was a continuous increase in population in Houghton County. Then the population declined from 88,098 in 1910 to 71,930 in 1920.² Why was there a decline of 16,168 people in a ten year period? There were three developments which took place both within and without the county which brought the decline. First there was the infamous copper strike of 1913-1914. During the strike many people,

² The picture for the Copper Country - Houghton, Keweenaw, Ontonagon counties - reflected the situation in Houghton County. In 1910 there was a population of 103,904 and by 1920 it had declined to 90,679 or a decline of 13,225 people.

especially immigrant miners left the uncertainty and turmoil of the region for other mining district around the nation. After the strike others decided to leave as they had been black-balled for future work possibilities due to their involvement in the strike or they had "given-up" on copper mining and the Copper Country. Many Finns left to develop farms as did some Croatians who moved to Paw Paw, Michigan. Second in January 1914, in the middle of the strike, Henry Ford announced the 8-hour day and the \$5 per day wage-base. This was obviously attractive to many people. Not only was the Ford offer attractive, but the automobile industry in southern Michigan was on the rise and the booming urban centers of the south were very attractive for a variety of reasons: economic, social, cultural, political, etc. For instance many Cornish people moved south beginning in 1919 with the end of World War I and mid-range jobs in the auto industry in Flint and Metro Detroit and at Burrough's adding machine company to name two major industries. Third, many of these seasoned miners began to realize that the copper industry would not last forever and they could see around them that the quality of ore at the higher levels was gone and the mines would have to go deeper to extract better grade ore and this would become more costly as the years passed. As happened, foreign mines, especially in Chile were able to produce copper as a cheaper commercial price.

On the iron ranges the decline was not as severe. The Marquette Range dropped 953 people. However the Menominee Range increased by 5865 and the Gogebic Range rose by 12,701. Unfortunately we do not know if this was due to a shift in internal Upper Peninsula migration from Houghton and Marquette counties or due to external emigration into the region.

In the agricultural and timber producing counties - Alger, Baraga, Chippewa, Delta, Luce, Mackinac, Menominee, Schoolcraft - in 1910 the population was at 115,964 and in 1920 it was at 121,302 or an increase of 5338.

The years that followed 1920 have seen further erosions to the population and some small increases. The decade of the Roaring Twenties saw the overall Upper Peninsula population decline from 332,556 - a high-point in the two hundreds of census taking - to 318,685 or a decline of 13,871. This can be attributed to the booming automobile industry in southern Michigan and elsewhere and to the general robust economy of the United States. During this time Detroit was attracting not only immigrants from Europe and elsewhere but immigrants living in other parts of the country migrated to Detroit. Americans, especially both Black and White southerners, migrated North during these years.

The Great Depression years (1930s) saw an increase of 4859 as people fled the unfamiliar and hostile (perceived) urban environments of the closed automobile industry and returned to the family, friends and food (fishing, hunting, potatoes) in the Upper Peninsula.

The years of World War II (1941-1945) also saw a decline in population as it went from 323,544 in 1940 to 302,256 in 1950 or a decline of 21,288 people. What were the reasons for this decline? Men and women left for military service or headed to urban areas seeking lucrative jobs in the booming war industries. You must remember Detroit's nickname, "Arsenal of Democracy." But the war industries could also be found in Green Bay, Milwaukee, Chicago, Twin Cities, etc. - all within 400 miles of the Upper Peninsula if not closer. The roads were good and the rail service excellent.

The half century between 1950 and 2000 saw a dramatic decline in both copper and iron mining and production. In 2000 there are no longer any copper mines in operation and only two iron mines are in production on the Marquette Iron Range. Although there is talk and promotion of a "future" for mining in the central Upper Peninsula by the National Mining Association and Kennecott Mining, it is seriously doubtful that this projected mining will ever return to the production levels of former years along with its attendant population increase.

Two United States Air Force installations - K.I. Sawyer in Marquette County and Kincheloe in Chippewa County - developed in the 1950s had an impact on the population of the counties. Marquette County's population in 1950, before Sawyer opened, was 47,654 and then rose some 8500 by 1960 when Sawyer was well established and attracting Air Force personnel and families. In Chippewa County the population rose 3449. The changing military needs of the Cold War had an impact on the Upper Peninsula. The economic loss sustained by the closure in 1978 of the Kincheloe base south of Sault Ste, Marie was offset when state prison facilities were established on the site. However this did not bring a return population. In Marquette County the population was 70,887 in 1990. K.I. Sawyer AFB closed in 1995 and this was an economic and social shock to the central Upper Peninsula. As a result of this closure the population in Marquette County declined to 64,634 in 2000 or a loss of 6253 people.

We can conclude that from the past population figures, the state of the economy of both the region and the state of Michigan (2007), and the general location of the Upper Peninsula with its isolation and severe climate, the population trend of the past will continue.

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