

Population Explosion-1860-1880

Iowa and her sister states of the Midwest were undergoing a veritable "population explosion" during the 1860's. The St. Louis *Democrat*, anticipating the forthcoming census of 1870 which was being widely discussed in the press, presented its own projected figures for population and apportionment of representatives in 1870, based on the presidential vote in 1868.

States	Population	Representation	
		1870	1860
Maine	628,276	4	5
New Hampshire	335,854	2	3
Vermont	318,267	2	2
Massachusetts	1,354,171	8	10
Rhode Island	210,545	1	1
Connecticut	552,181	3	4
New York	4,850,918	28	31
New Jersey	893,800	5	5
Pennsylvania	3,632,962	21	23
Delaware	134,661	1	1
Maryland	755,737	4	5
Virginia and West Virginia	1,675,582	10	11
North Carolina	1,042,300	6	7
South Carolina	703,812	4	4
Georgia	1,110,195	7	7
Florida	154,482	1	1
Total Atlantic States	18,353,743	107	120

POPULATION EXPLOSION—1860-1880 21

States	Population	Representation	
		1870	1860
Alabama	1,011,510	6	6
Mississippi	830,965	5	5
Louisiana	744,754	4	5
Texas	632,553	4	4
Arkansas	457,198	3	3
Tennessee	1,109,847	7	8
Kentucky	1,155,713	7	8
Ohio	3,012,968	18	18
Michigan	1,356,186	8	6
Indiana	2,061,162	12	11
Illinois	2,696,616	16	13
Wisconsin	1,161,402	7	6
Iowa	1,166,634	7	5
Minnesota	424,624	2	1
Missouri	1,673,475	10	6
Kansas	261,888	2	1
Nebraska	91,008	1	1
California	652,020	4	3
Oregon	134,214	1	1
Nevada	125,018	1	1
Colorado	100,000	1	0
Total Western States	18,353,693	107	120
Total Western and Pacific States	20,859,815	126	115
Add for Territories	350,000	—	—
	39,563,506	233	235

Note that in 1870 the states of the Old Northwest, the Old Southwest, and the Trans-Mississippi West, had finally equaled the population of the Thirteen Original Colonies, plus Maine,

Florida, and West Virginia, which constituted the Atlantic States. Iowa editors could look with genuine pride at the gains registered by the Hawkeye State compared with the gains of the six New England States. At the same time, editors were quite aware of the fact that Iowa could support more people—which meant more subscribers and advertisers. They accordingly urged state governing officials to invite foreign groups in, following the lead of such states as Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Kansas.

In response to repeated editorial prodding, the Thirteenth General Assembly appropriated \$5,000 and instructed the Governor to appoint an Iowa Board of Immigration to encourage immigration. The law authorized the Board to appoint a Secretary to prepare a pamphlet containing such information as was needed by foreigners desiring to seek new homes in the West. The Secretary, A. R. Fulton, was to point out the "superior advantages" which Iowa offered to all who might be induced to seek homes within her borders. According to Fulton:

That Iowa is not only destined to be, but already is [1870], a great and noble State, these pages, it is hoped, will show to all into whose hands they may chance to come. May their plain statement of facts prove a means of inducing thousands to find homes within the borders of Iowa, to share the advantages and blessings which await all who will come and partake of them.

The soil, climate, and general opportunities for starting a farm on the Iowa prairies must have caught the eyes of many anxious immigrants. According to Fulton:

The following figures will give a general idea of the necessary outfit for working a farm of forty acres:

Team (oxen or horses)	\$150 to \$300
Wagon and yoke or harness	100 to 150
Plow	20 to 30
Cultivator and harrow	20 to 40
Other necessary implements	10 to 20
	<hr/> \$300 to \$540

Since railroads had penetrated to nearly all parts of the State, the difficulties of procuring building material had, in great measure, disappeared. The prospective immigrant was advised that the first thing to do after securing his land was to provide a shelter for himself and family. The manner of doing this, according to Fulton, depended on circumstances:

If he should locate where he can procure suitable timber, he may build a temporary cabin of logs; or, he may obtain pine lumber and nails at the nearest railroad station, and put up a small house in less than a week, at a cost of from \$50 to \$100. A cheap, but durable kind of thatched roof has just been invented and introduced by Mr. Lionel Foster, of Burlington, Iowa, which promises to diminish very materially, the expense of building in our prairie country. It dispenses with all lumber in the roof, except rafters, the other materials used being straw or prairie grass, and a composition, of which coal tar is the principal

ingredient. The cost of the material is said not to exceed \$1.75 per square of 100 feet. Cheap houses are also supplied ready made, in Chicago, and shipped over the several lines of railroad to the various stations in Iowa.

Few men were better informed than Governor Samuel Merrill on the tremendous population explosion that had taken place in Iowa since statehood was achieved in 1846.

Our State, with its first quarter of a century just completed, has already made a history by her progress, her enterprise, and her patriotism, of which all her citizens may be proud. The sparsely settled territory of 100,000 souls, which twenty-five years ago became a State, has grown to an opulent commonwealth, of 1,350,000 people. The luxuriant soil Iowa was known to possess has more than fulfilled its early promise; while her treasures of stone and coal, then hardly suspected to exist, have added largely to her wealth. Railroads, then scarcely west of Ohio, now stretch their 3,000 miles of iron in a network over the State; and the telegraph goes with them. Her political record has been equally honorable. The first free daughter of the Missouri Compromise, she has been true to her heritage of freedom. Among the first to rush to the support of an endangered Union, and to lay her best blood on the altar of her country, she was also first to strike from her constitution the odious discrimination between her citizens on account of color. The past career of Iowa, both as territory and State, has been honorable, progressive, substantial. May her future be even more so!

Although the farm lands were filling up rapidly and the Frontier Line of 1870 had crossed over the Big Sioux and passed into South Dakota by 1880,

the cities of Iowa were increasing at an amazing rate. Newspapers in Iowa were filled with the stories of this growth, not only their own home town growth but that of their sister Iowa cities.

The following figures reveal there was a real population explosion in Iowa cities as well as in rural areas:

	1860	1870	1880	1960
Burlington	6,706	14,930	19,450	32,430
Cedar Rapids	1,830	5,940	10,104	92,035
Clinton		6,129	9,052	33,589
Council Bluffs	2,011	10,020	18,063	55,641
Davenport	11,267	20,038	21,831	88,981
Des Moines	3,965	7,805	14,005	208,982
Dubuque	13,000	18,434	22,254	56,606
Fort Dodge	672	3,095	3,586	28,399
Fort Madison	2,886	4,011	4,679	15,247
Keokuk	8,136	12,766	12,117	16,316
Iowa City	5,214	5,914	7,123	33,443
Mt. Pleasant	3,530	4,245	4,410	7,339
Muscatine	5,324	6,718	8,295	20,997
Oskaloosa	4,393	3,204	4,598	11,053
Ottumwa	1,632	5,214	9,004	33,871
Sioux City		3,401	7,366	89,159
Waterloo	1,013	3,454	4,060	71,755

The following figures reveal a continued spiraling upward to 1880, and a marked decrease between 1880 and 1900. Since 1900 population growth has stagnated, the increase from 1900 to 1970 will barely equal the average increase for each of the two decades from 1860 to 1880.

YEAR	WHITE	COLORED	TOTAL
1840	42,924	188	43,112
1850	191,881	333	192,214
1860	673,779	1,134	674,913
1870	1,188,207	5,813	1,194,020
1880	1,614,600	10,015	1,624,615
1900	2,219,160	12,693	2,231,853
1920	2,384,181	19,005	2,403,186
1940	2,520,691	16,694	2,537,385
1960	2,728,709	25,354	2,754,063

The almost complete elimination of immigration, the exodus from farm to cities, and the tendency to smaller families account for the changing pattern of population growth.

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