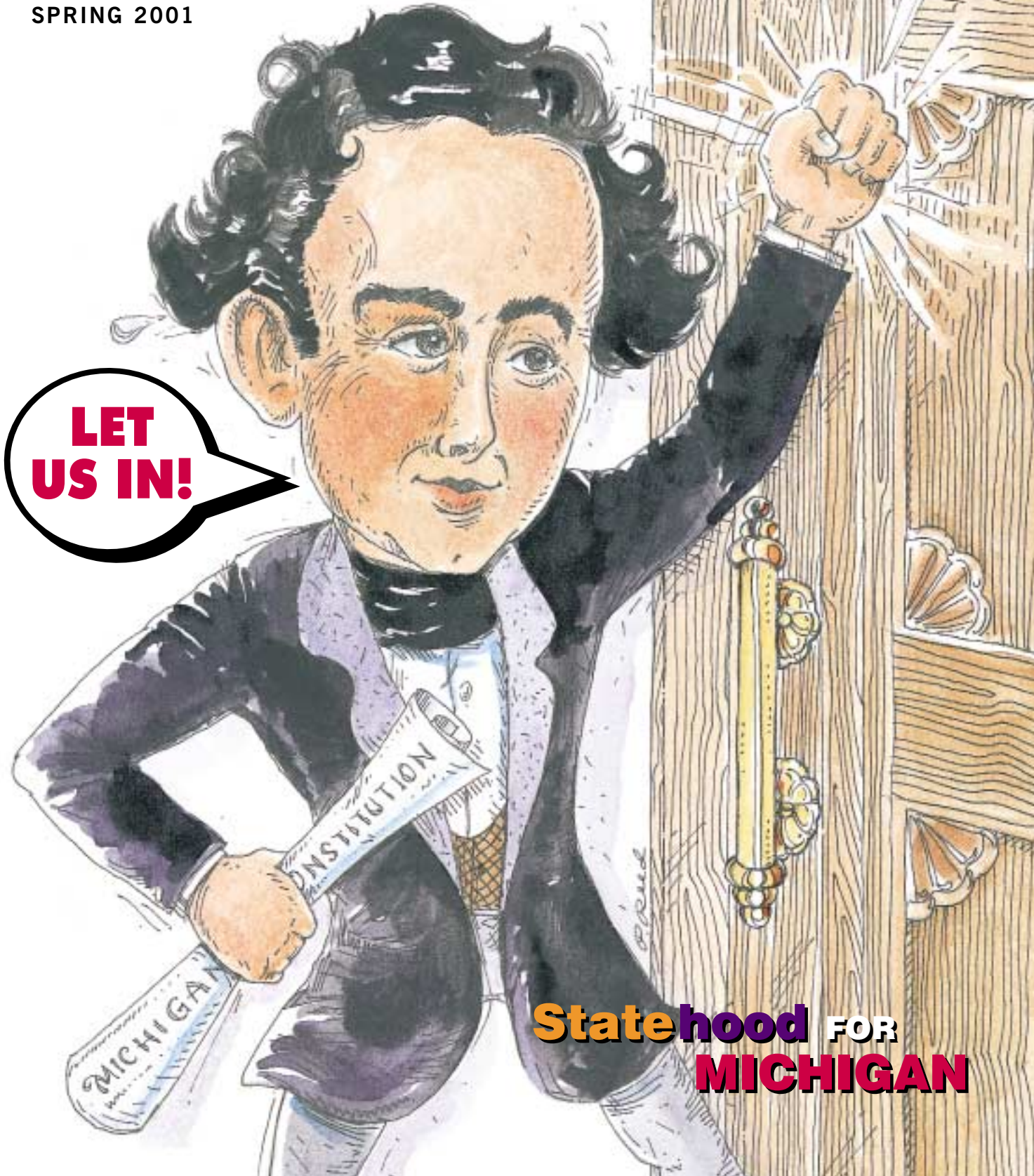


MICHIGAN History FOR kids

SPRING 2001



**LET
US IN!**

**Statehood FOR
MICHIGAN**

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Michigan grows fast in the 1830s

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THE EDITOR SAYS...

Who is the “Boy Governor” and why is he on the cover of our magazine? Stevens T. Mason was only twenty-two years old when he became the leader of the Michigan Territory. In this issue of *Michigan History for Kids* you will learn how Michigan wanted to be a state. It wasn't easy. But thanks to men like Mason, Michigan became the nation's 26th state in January 1837. Cover drawing by Patrick Reed.

Ask the Professor



Has Lansing always been the Michigan state capital?

—BRANDT from OKEMOS

because it had the state university. Marshall was rejected because many people wanted the capital more in the center of the Lower Peninsula. Finally, a landowner offered to give the state twenty acres in Ingham County for the capital. The area was a wilderness with no roads and few people. At first the place was called Michigan. The name was soon changed to Lansing.

NO. Detroit was the capital for the first ten years after Michigan became a state. In 1847 a new capital site was chosen.

Many towns were considered. Detroit was rejected because it was too close to Canada, and it might be easily attacked in a war.

Ann Arbor was rejected



Robert Thom

- In 1848 a new white frame building was opened in Lansing that became the capitol.

In The NEWS

LAST DECEMBER, General Motors Corporation said it will stop making Oldsmobile cars. This surprised many people because Oldsmobile is America's oldest car brand. In 1897 Ransom Eli Olds of Lansing made his first car. It looked a lot different from today's cars. The car looked more like a carriage that horses pulled. It did not have a steering wheel. The driver used a control stick called a tiller to turn the car that could only go about twenty miles an hour. In 1908 Oldsmobile became part of General Motors. Since then Oldsmobile has made medium-sized cars. General Motors will stop making Oldsmobile cars because they are not selling well. Oldsmobile cars will remain popular with car collectors. Car collector Jim Wilkinshaw said, For us old guys, we will always like the old Oldsmobile.

Oldsmobile Heritage Center



FAST FACT:
In 1904 Olds sold 2,500 of his cars for \$650 each. In 2000 Oldsmobile sold 266,000 cars with an average price of \$22,000 each.

I Introducing

Willie the Wolverine



HI!

I'm Willie.

You are going to see a lot of me in *Michigan History for Kids*. In future issues, I'll introduce you to some of my friends. You might be wondering why a wolverine is going to teach you about Michigan's past. Well, let's take a look at the wolverine and why Michigan is called the Wolverine State.

WHY WOLVERINES?

Wolverines never lived in Michigan. They are native to Canada. When Michigan was trying to become a state, people from Ohio called Michiganians "Wolverines." The wolverine was known as a bad, vicious animal. That's what people from Ohio thought of the Michiganians who were trying to take the Toledo Strip. (Find out more on page 8.)

We asked you...

If you could invent a mascot and/or nickname for our great state, what would it be?



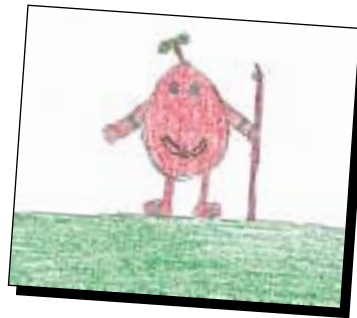
“I think Michigan should be called the Clear Water State. I think that this would be a good nickname because all of our Great Lakes are fresh water.”

—HAYLIE from SHEPHERD

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

“The Cherry State would be the best nickname because Michigan is very popular for cherries.”

—JOSH from SHEPHERD



“The Bird State ... because there are a lot of birds in Michigan like Blue Jays.”

—JESSE from MIDLAND

WOLVERINE FACTS

Although wolverines may appear cute and cuddly, they really are predatory animals. One adult wolverine, with its sharp teeth, can kill a caribou—an animal almost eight times as big as the wolverine.

DESCRIPTION: The wolverine is short and stocky with yellow-brown fur. Two yellowish stripes run along the wolverine's sides.



LENGTH: The wolverine is just over three feet long.

WEIGHT: An average wolverine weighs over thirty pounds.

weighs over thirty pounds.

AGE: Wolverines can live up to seventeen years.

DIET: Wolverines eat small animals and bird eggs in the summer. During the winter they eat larger animals such as deer, caribou and moose.

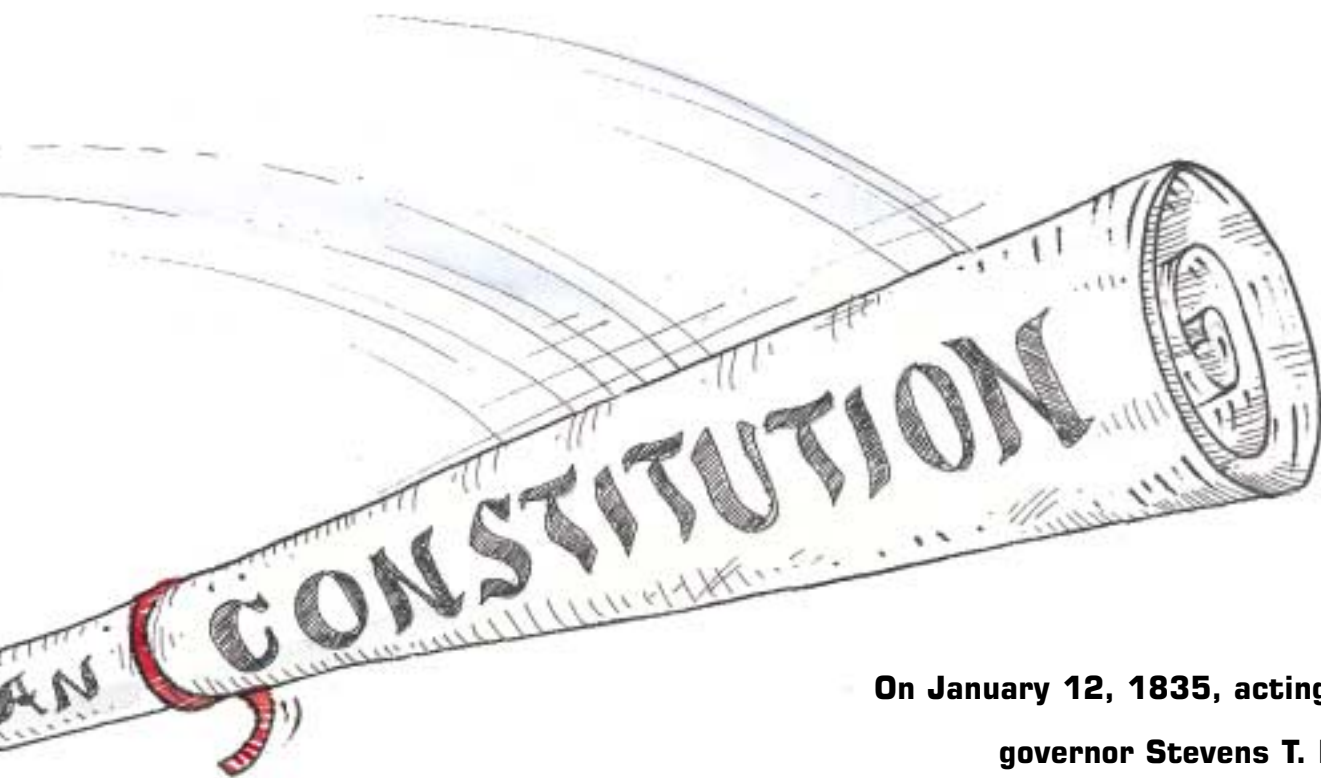
TELL US!

If you lived in the 1830s, and had to move from New York to Michigan, what **ONE** thing would you bring with you and why?

Send your response to:
Michigan History for Kids
Attn: What do you think?
Michigan Historical Center
717 W. Allegan Street
Lansing, MI 48918-1805
or e-mail: damstrac@state.mi.us



W



**On January 12, 1835, acting
governor Stevens T. Mason
announced that Michigan faced
a crisis. Michigan's request to
write a constitution had been
rejected by Congress. Mason
said that Michigan had a right
to be a state and that we should
write a constitution anyway.**

**We
Want In!**

B

orn in Virginia and raised in Kentucky, Stevens T.

Mason came to Michigan when his father was appointed territorial secretary in 1830. Following his father's **resignation**, Mason was made secretary by President Andrew Jackson. He was nineteen years old. After Michigan's territorial governor died in 1834, Mason served as acting governor. Called the "Boy Governor," he worked hard to make Michigan a state.

To become a state, Michigan had to prove that 60,000 people lived

STEPS to STATEHOOD

within its boundaries. Governor Mason ordered that people be counted. This counting, or **census**, showed that more than 85,000 people lived in Michigan.

The next step was to write a constitution. A constitution sets up the basic rules for governing the state. In April 1835 delegates who had been elected by voters met in Detroit and wrote a constitution. The constitution called for the election of a governor and a state **legislature**.

One of the hardest things to decide was who could vote in elections. In some states you had to own property to vote. But Michigan decided that every white man over 21 years old could vote if he had lived in the state

1. A **territory** was governed by a **territorial governor** appointed by the president of the United States. The governor had an assistant called the **territorial secretary**. When the governor was unavailable to do his job, the territorial secretary served as **acting governor**.

2. When a territory had 60,000 people it could write a state constitution. A constitution sets up the way a people want to be ruled. If the Congress approved the constitution, the territory became a state. Voters of the new state then selected a governor and a legislature.

for six months. Women, Native Americans and African

Americans were not allowed to vote.

On October 5, 1835, Michigan voters accepted the constitution. They also elected Mason governor.

One month later, Mason was **inaugurated** as Michigan's first state governor. But Michigan was still not a state. Both Ohio and Michigan claimed that they owned a small strip of land near present-day

WILLIE FACT

Did you know that because of Mason's age he was nicknamed the "Boy Governor?" But he disliked this so much he once punched a newspaper editor who called him that.



Toledo, Ohio. Until the struggle could be settled, Congress refused to allow Michigan to become a state.

In Washington, Congress **debated** the manner in which Michigan asked to become a state and the issue of Toledo. Senator Jefferson Davis of Mississippi said Michigan had embarrassed itself, claiming “to be a State before she could be one.” Congressman John Quincy Adams of Massachusetts believed that “by every law human and divine,” Toledo belonged to Michigan.

After much discussion Congress offered to add the western Upper Peninsula to Michigan if it would give up Toledo. At first,



Detroit Institute of Arts

Mason and most Michiganians said no. Detroiters said that the western Upper Peninsula could never be settled. It would remain “forever a wilderness.”

But soon Mason realized that Michigan had no choice. He wrote that refusing Congress’s proposal offered “so little hope of gain but the certainty of permanent loss and lasting injury to ourselves and the nation.” In the

Stevens T. Mason was Michigan’s youngest governor. He helped draft Michigan’s first constitution and make Michigan a state.

fall of 1836 he urged Michiganians to accept the land swap. Many agreed.

On January 26, 1837, President Andrew Jackson signed a law making Michigan the 26th state.

In 1840 Mason left the job of governor and moved to New York City with his new wife. He became a lawyer and fathered three children. When he was 31 years old Stevens got sick. Doctors could not cure him and he soon died. He is buried in Detroit.

Today, many of the things that Mason did still affect the lives of every Michigani— including yours. ■



State Archives of Michigan