

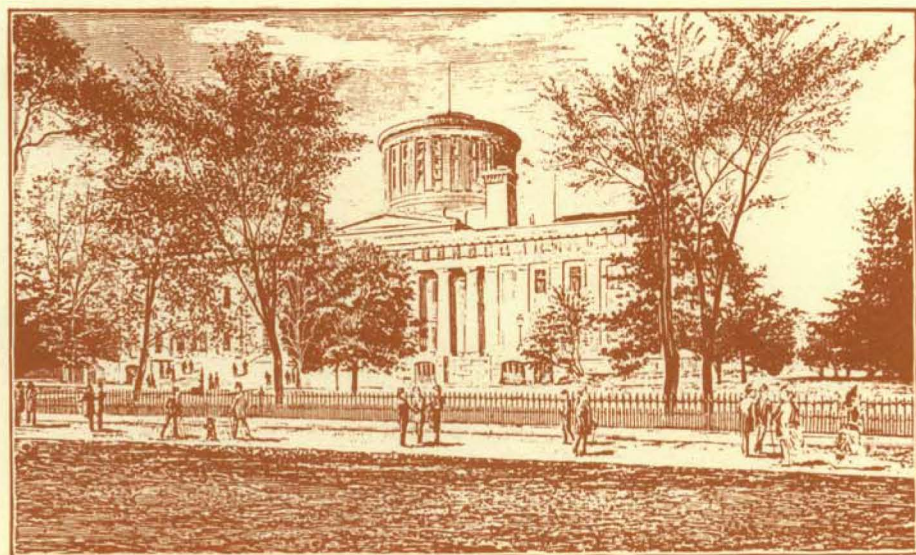
*edited by*

Jeffrey P. Brown & Andrew R. L. Cayton

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THE Pursuit  
OF Public  
Power

Political Culture in Ohio,  
1787–1861



THE PURSUIT OF PUBLIC POWER



# The Pursuit of Public Power

Political Culture in Ohio,  
1787–1861

EDITED BY JEFFREY P. BROWN AND  
ANDREW R. L. CAYTON

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# Introduction

ANDREW R. L. CAYTON AND JEFFREY P. BROWN

This is a book of essays about the origins of politics in the state of Ohio, which became the seventeenth member of the United States of America in 1803. In the broadest sense, politics is about power—how certain people acquire it, how they maintain it, how they exercise it, and how other people take it away from them. Here, however, we concentrate on a much narrower definition of politics, specifically the development of a system of two organized parties fighting, more or less permanently, for victories at regularly scheduled elections. To one degree or another, we are interested in the nature of political culture. We are exploring the rules, customs, assumptions, and behaviors of early-nineteenth-century European American males living within the somewhat arbitrary boundaries of a socially heterogeneous and ideologically democratic society called the state of Ohio.<sup>1</sup>

Our objective is to think about why white males chose to organize and explain both the pursuit and exercise of public power in the ways they did. To accomplish this, we examine such specific topics as the role of political parties in mediating regional differences, the nature of political rhetoric, voting procedures, the relationship between economic and political interests, and the role of a powerful issue such as slavery in testing the limits of organized parties. We approach these issues from a variety of perspectives. Indeed, if there is one thing we all agree on, it is that we do not all agree about the origins and evolution of partisan politics in early Ohio.

Ohio has never been without historians. In the first half of the twentieth century, several studied its political history with thoroughness and insight. Contributors to this volume owe a great deal to scholars such as Randolph Downes, William T. Utter, Francis P. Weisenberger, and Eugene Roseboom. To a significant extent, these men discovered and examined the basic sources and pieced together the basic stories that we here only refine and elaborate.<sup>2</sup> What we bring to the study of Ohio politics

are the questions, assumptions, methods, and interpretive paradigms that have dominated the study of nineteenth-century American history since the 1960s.

Ohio has always attracted a disproportionate share of historians because it was the first state created from the Northwest Territory, the first to be shaped along the guidelines outlined in the Northwest Ordinance of 1787. Particularly at the start, Ohio's political structures had a national dimension. It was born in a womb constructed and nurtured by the federal government; it was an experiment in colonizing new territory and in designing and implementing republican governments; and its experience influenced federal policy and political structures in other parts of the United States. The preoccupation of recent studies of late-eighteenth-century America with political economy has heavily influenced much of the latest work on the 1790s and early 1800s. In particular, Ohio historians have been rewriting the political history of the territorial and statehood periods within the context provided by the intellectual world of classical republicanism—the obsession in the early Republic with encouraging disinterested leadership, avoiding permanent divisions, and exposing the selfish corruption of individuals.

The most remarkable thing about Ohio in the period covered by these essays, however, is not its political vocabulary but its rapid growth. Nothing else about the state received greater attention from contemporaries. As early as 1826, Benjamin Drake and E. D. Mansfield marveled that Ohio's increase was "perhaps without parallel in the history of this or any other country."<sup>3</sup> It was, without question, the fastest-growing place in the Midwest in the first half of the nineteenth century.

Ohio's non-Indian population rose from several hundred in 1790 to 230,760 in 1810; 937,903 in 1830; 1,980,329 in 1850; and 2,339,511 in 1860. In these years, Ohio averaged a demographic increase of almost 400,000 every decade. Most of this increase came from migration into the state, which peaked in the 1830s and declined thereafter. Still, 40 percent of Ohioans in 1850 had been born somewhere else. This rapid turnover in people is fundamental to understanding the political development of the state. For its citizens were a fluctuating mass of highly mobile peoples who were overwhelmingly strangers to one another. They were also predominantly male (by a margin of 1,004,117 to 950,933 in 1850) and young (more than 30 percent were under the age of 10 and 84 percent under 40 in 1850).<sup>4</sup>

In the early nineteenth century, moreover, Americans did not share a relatively homogeneous culture of the kind created by technological improvements in transportation and communication in the late-

nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Like the United States as a whole, Ohio was a conglomeration of relatively distinct local societies; in fact, people from virtually every kind of regional and demographic background could be found within the state. Virginians dominated the south-central part of the state, especially the Scioto Valley. New Englanders were prominent, if not dominant, in the Muskingum Valley and absolutely controlled the settlement of Connecticut's Western Reserve in the northeastern corner of the state. The eastern section of the state became home to Pennsylvanians as well as to North Carolinians and Virginians opposed to slavery. The southwestern corner, from Cincinnati up the valley of the Great Miami through Dayton, attracted all kinds of people, among them residents of New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, and Kentucky.

The location of the political and military headquarters of the Northwest Territory enhanced the diversity of the Cincinnati area; by the 1820s, the "Queen City of the West" was well on its way to its position at midcentury as one of the most important commercial centers in the United States. In the 1830s, 1840s, and 1850s, German and Irish immigrants arrived in Ohio in large numbers, settling where there were jobs, in the Cincinnati area and along canal routes. The census of 1850 revealed that the 295,000 people who had migrated to Ohio came from a wide variety of places. One-half were from the northeastern United States (especially Pennsylvania and New York), one-fifth were from the southeastern states (particularly Virginia), and almost 30 percent had been born in northwestern Europe (mostly Germans, Irish, and English).<sup>5</sup>

From the beginning, then, Ohio's political structures had a pronounced regional dimension. To a great extent, politics reflected struggles between regional communities of like-minded peoples, struggles that would occur not just over the proverbial political pork barrel but over substantive issues such as slavery. The interaction between very diverse peoples—immigrants with a wide variety of religions, economic practices, and attitudes about family and personal behavior—was as intense in Ohio as anywhere in the United States between 1788 and 1861. One would have to look hard to find a U. S. city in the 1840s more likely than Cincinnati to have every imaginable kind of voter within its limits. Can one imagine a state more likely to give votes to all kinds of candidates in times of party confusion, such as the 1820s and 1850s?

Economic as well as demographic transformation characterized Ohio in the first half of the nineteenth century. Ohio has also attracted historians because of their recent preoccupation with the expansion of the market—the institutions and behaviors associated with commercial

capitalism. The diversity in the social origins of Ohioans was matched by their diversity in economic practices. The state nurtured all kinds of crops and industries, from corn to pork packing, and it spent a great deal of money from the 1820s through the 1860s attempting to remove impediments to market capitalism and encourage its development. Because the diverse peoples of Ohio were far from agreeing on the necessity of state intervention in the economy, or indeed on the value of integrating Ohio into the larger national and international marketplace, political divisions frequently coalesced around economic issues. Should the state spend money to build canals, roads, and bridges? Or to provide public education? Should it regulate the behavior of banks and corporations? Nowhere were issues raised by the capitalist transformation and the transportation revolution more thoroughly debated than in Ohio.

Together, the rapid and diverse demographic and economic growth of early-nineteenth-century Ohio help us to understand better the state's precociousness in the development of what North Americans came to think of "normal" political structures. As Donald Ratcliffe has shown us so well, white males in Ohio established the institutions and customs of partisan, democratic politics as quickly and as thoroughly in Ohio as anywhere else in the United States. From the late 1790s through the 1850s, political divisions in Ohio reflected well-developed ideological positions. Federalists and Jeffersonian Republicans in the first decade of the nineteenth century, Jacksonians and Whigs in the 1820s, 1830s, and 1840s, and Republicans, Know-Nothings, and Democrats in the 1850s had, for the most part, a sharp sense of how they differed from each other. More often than not, electoral campaigns revolved around issues that seemed to matter to a great many eligible voters.

Institutionally, Ohio politicians were pioneers. As early as the statehood movement in the first years of the 1800s, they resorted to caucuses and conventions to organize their activities and to foster and enforce adherence to the positions of the group as a whole. They used newspapers, speeches, and handbills to rally the faithful and win converts to the cause. In part, the early development of partisan techniques in Ohio was a reaction to the diversity of the state and its voters; they had to be organized somehow. Importantly, statewide elections were often very close, thus increasing the pressure for some extra effort that might bring victory. Indeed, the very fact that Ohioans were so different from one another, that there was no clear cultural group in a position to dominate all others, made a system of partisan organization imperative if a particular group wanted to attain and exercise power over the rest. In this

respect, Ohio was precocious politically in the nineteenth century for many of the same reasons that New York was in the eighteenth century. Both were socially heterogeneous, economically diverse, and politically divided. Politicians had to learn to organize and compromise if they intended to survive, let alone triumph.

The relative evenness of party division in nineteenth-century Ohio also made its political system highly susceptible to dislocation at the hands of third-party movements. The very precariousness of party divisions gave splinter parties—whether the Anti-Masons in the 1830s, the Liberty and Free-Soil parties in the 1840s, or the Know-Nothing and Republican movements of the 1850s—power out of proportion to their numbers. Because the movement of a few thousand voters could change the outcome of an election, the major parties often found themselves at the mercy of social movements spawned in the cultural breeding grounds of nineteenth-century Ohio.

In sum, in the absence of a core population group, in a society dedicated to certain democratic principles, diversity of opinions and regional interests encouraged the rapid development of institutions and attitudes designed to bring victory to like-minded peoples. Partisan politics was a means of organizing heterogeneity, of attempting to reduce a vast number of positions to a manageable two. Yet the cultural diversity of Ohio and the inability of one group to win a dominant political position meant that the state's political structures had trouble weathering storms created by moral issues that allowed little room for compromise.

One final point. As fruitful as recent work on Ohio has been, particularly in illustrating the ways in which the state fits into the larger patterns of republican government, the market revolution, and the breakdown of party systems, we historians have sometimes become too enamored of our interpretive paradigms. We are so obsessed with finding the end of the Revolution or the beginning of parties or the first hints of the Civil War that we neglect the fog in which most men operated. It is worth emphasizing that party politics evolved haphazardly in Ohio. No one wrote a pamphlet explaining how it should, and would, work in 1800. Men improvised, drawing on various sources and precedents and repeating what worked.

It is arguable that historians ultimately have a better sense of what was happening in the past than the people we study, lost as they were in the multiple sensations of their lives. From our removed perspective we can discriminate among events and organize them into patterns that were imperceptible to people in the middle of them. But we pay a price

for this ability. We drain the past of its complexity, particularly the ambiguities and irresolutions of life, in order to prove or disprove our interpretive models. In the end, the words and actions of human beings must remain at the center of our constructions of their lives. The ultimate irony of writing history is that by reducing the past to a well-defined pattern we lose much of its texture. For, in many ways, the less neat, the less orderly, our interpretations of the past, the more likely it is that we have actually recaptured some sense of life in a time and place we can never fully understand.

# Ohio Timeline

PREPARED BY JEFFREY P. BROWN

- 1783 Peace treaty ends American Revolution.  
Timothy Pickering and Theodoric Bland propose creation of a veterans' state in Ohio. Pickering suggests forbidding slavery.
- 1784 Treaty of Fort Stanwix with Iroquois.  
Congress accepts Virginia's cession of Northwestern claims, with the Virginia Military Tract reserved.  
Congress passes ordinance for government of the Northwest.
- 1785 Congress passes Land Ordinance.  
Col. Josiah Harmar orders construction of Fort Harmar at the mouth of the Muskingum.  
Conclusion of Fort McIntosh Indian negotiations.  
Geographer of the United States Thomas Hutchins leads party to survey Seven Ranges in upper Ohio Country.  
John Amberson calls a convention of early settlers. Ensign John Armstrong sent to drive out the settlers.
- 1786 Shays's Rebellion in New England.  
Richard Butler appointed superintendent of Indian Affairs in the Northwest.  
Shawnees accept Treaty of Fort Finney.  
Connecticut cedes Congress all Northwestern claims except Western Reserve.
- 1787 Congress passes Northwest Ordinance.  
Congress authorizes Ohio Company Purchase and John Cleves Symmes's Miami Purchase. Creation of Scioto Company.

- Congress appoints governing officials for Northwest Territory, including Governor Arthur St. Clair and Secretary Winthrop Sargent.  
United States Constitutional Convention.
- 1788 Ratification of United States Constitution.  
Ohio Company settlement at Marietta (April 7).  
Settlement at Losantiville (Cincinnati).  
Arrival of Governor St. Clair and creation of first Northwest Territory legal code.  
Creation of Washington County.
- 1789 George Washington inaugurated as president.  
Treaty of Fort Harmar with Delaware and Wyandot.  
Erection of Fort Washington at Cincinnati.  
Arrival of Judge John Cleves Symmes.
- 1790 Creation of Hamilton County.  
Settlement at Gallipolis.  
Failure of Josiah Harmar's Indian campaign.  
Rufus Putnam and George Turner become territorial judges.
- 1791 Passage of federal Whiskey Tax.  
Gen. Arthur St. Clair and Federal army crushed, November 4, 1791.  
Founding of Manchester.
- 1792 Congressional committee exonerates General St. Clair.  
General warfare with Indian nations.  
Francis Dunlavy founds classical school at Cincinnati.
- 1793 Failure of peace negotiations by Beverly Randolph, Timothy Pickering, and Benjamin Lincoln.  
First newspaper, Cincinnati's *Centinel of the North-Western Territory*, founded.
- 1794 Whiskey Rebellion campaign.  
Gen. Anthony Wayne wins semivictory at Fallen Timbers.  
Revision of Miami Purchase agreement.
- 1795 Treaty of Greenville opens two-thirds of Ohio to U. S. settlers.  
Founding of towns of Dayton and Hamilton.

- Creation of Connecticut Land Company.  
U. S. House of Representatives rejects all but one of the territorial laws passed since August 1, 1792.  
Passage of Maxwell's Code of Laws.
- 1796 Rev. Robert Finley and Nathaniel Massie create Chillicothe.  
Moses Cleaveland surveys Western Reserve.  
Youngstown founded.  
Land Act of 1796 creates Pittsburgh and Cincinnati land offices and United States Military Tract.  
Ebenezer Zane creates Zane's Trace.
- 1797 John Adams inaugurated as president.  
Creation of Jefferson and Adams counties.  
First settlement at Lucas Sullivan's Franklinton.
- 1798 Quasi-war with France. Passage of Alien and Sedition acts and Kentucky and Virginia resolutions.  
Edward Tiffin and Thomas Worthington settle in Ohio.  
William Henry Harrison becomes secretary of the Northwest Territory.  
Creation of Ross County.  
Hamilton County self-census plan leads Governor St. Clair to census and creation of assembly.
- 1799 First Territorial Assembly selects William Henry Harrison as Northwest delegate to Congress. Controversy over veto power.  
Publication of Cincinnati *Western Spy*.
- 1800 Thomas Jefferson elected president.  
Harrison Land Act for sales of 320-acre parcels at two-dollars-per-acre bids, with credit purchasing provision.  
Several plans to divide Northwest Territory. Harrison achieves passage of bill to create Indiana Territory.  
Connecticut surrenders jurisdiction of Western Reserve.  
Second assembly selects Paul Fearing and William McMillan as delegates to Congress.  
Charles Willing Byrd appointed secretary of the Northwest Territory.  
Creation of Clermont, Fairfield, and Trumbull counties amidst controversy over county-creation powers.

- 1801 Creation of Belmont County. U. S. House rejects proposal to redivide Northwest.
- 1802 Census finds 45,028 people in Northwest (Ohio/Michigan area).  
Francois André Michaux travels through Ohio Valley.  
Congressional Enabling Act for statehood convention, future land sales, and road funds. Wayne County (Detroit/Michigan) removed from Northwest Territory.  
Ohio Constitutional Convention.  
Governor St. Clair replaced by Charles Willing Byrd.
- 1803 Edward Tiffin elected governor. Massive elections of county officials. First assembly chooses Thomas Worthington and John Smith for U. S. Senate. Jeremiah Morrow elected to U. S. House of Representatives.  
Creation of Butler, Columbiana, Franklin, Gallia, Greene, Montgomery, Scioto, and Warren counties.  
Louisiana Purchase.  
Miami Exporting Company chartered.
- 1804 Senator Worthington modifies Land Act to 160-acre parcels.  
Chartering of Ohio University.  
Creation of Muskingum County.  
Assembly passes restrictive black laws.
- 1805 Explosion of settlement.  
Treaty of Fort Industry.  
Creation of Athens, Champaign, and Highland counties.
- 1806 Creation of Geauga County.  
Aaron Burr Affair (December) disrupts Ohio.
- 1807 Creation of Miami County.  
Governor Tiffin sent to U. S. Senate and succeeded by Thomas Kirker. Complex electoral race between Nathaniel Massie and Return J. Meigs, Jr. Meigs wins but is ruled ineligible. Kirker retains office.  
*Rutherford v. M'Faddon* ruling inaugurates court-assembly struggle.  
Senator John Smith acquitted of complicity in Burr affair.  
Treaty of Detroit.

National Embargo eliminates most trade, inaugurates depression.

- 1808      Creation of Ashtabula, Cuyahoga, Delaware, Knox, Licking, Portage, Preble, Richland, Starke, Tuscarawas, and Wayne counties. Actual settlement or creation of county government delayed in Ashtabula (1811), Cuyahoga (1810), Richland (1813), Starke (1809), and Wayne (1812) counties.  
 Samuel Huntington elected governor over Thomas Worthington and Thomas Kirker.  
 Election of James Madison as president.  
 Introduction of red-chaff bearded wheat into Ohio.  
 Banks chartered in Marietta and Chillicothe.
- 1809      Appointment of Senator Stanley Griswold.  
 Creation of Darke and Huron counties, with county government delayed until 1815 (Huron) and 1817 (Darke).  
 Acquittal in impeachment trials of Judges Calvin Pease and George Tod.  
 Edward Tiffin sent to U. S. Senate.  
 Representative Jeremiah Morrow sponsors two-year extension on credit payments for federal land.  
 Miami University chartered. First attempt to found University of Cincinnati.
- 1810      United States census finds 230,760 people in Ohio.  
 Creation of Clinton, Coshocton, Fayette, Guernsey, Pickaway, and Madison counties.  
 Sweeping Resolution removes most Ohio officeholders. State capital temporarily transferred from Chillicothe to Zanesville.  
 Creation of Tammany lodges.  
 Return J. Meigs, Jr., defeats Thomas Worthington for governor.
- 1811      Battle of Tippecanoe. Indian warfare continues.  
 Introduction of China hogs and merino sheep into Ohio farming.  
 Steamboat Orleans enters Ohio-Mississippi commerce.

- 1812 Ohio militia mobilizes (April). War with Great Britain declared June 18. Fort Detroit surrenders in August. William Henry Harrison and James Winchester lead forces to Great Lakes.  
Ohio shifts from one to six representatives in Congress. Sweeping Resolution repealed. Tammany lodges dissolve. James Madison reelected over De Witt Clinton. Edward Tiffin becomes first commissioner of the General Land Office.  
Creation of Medina County, with formal inauguration of its government delayed until 1818.
- 1813 Winchester's forces crushed at River Raisin, January 22. First siege of Fort Meigs (April–May). Dudley's Defeat. Victory at Fort Stephenson (August). Oliver Hazard Perry destroys British Lake Erie fleet (September 10). Victory at Battle of the Thames (October 5).  
Creation of Harrison and Monroe counties, with government inaugurated in 1813 (Harrison) and 1815 (Monroe).
- 1814 Return J. Meigs, Jr., becomes postmaster general through 1823. Othniel Looker serves as governor. Thomas Worthington elected governor in fall.  
Founding of Cincinnati's Lancastrian Seminary.
- 1815 War ends. Victory at Battle of New Orleans. Collapse of national Federalist party.  
Explosion in settlement known as the Great Migration, with 2,974,299 acres sold in 1812–17.  
Steubenville woolen factory opens.  
Creation of Lawrence and Pike counties, with inauguration of government in Lawrence delayed until 1817.
- 1816 Election of James Monroe as president. Passage of national Tariff of 1816 to stimulate manufacturing. State capital shifted to Columbus.  
Creation of Jackson County.  
Rapid chartering of new banks under Bonus Law.  
Thomas Worthington reelected governor.
- 1817 Treaty of Maumee Rapids opens northwest Ohio settlement. Surveyor William Harris draws Harris Line boundary between Ohio and Michigan.

- Creation of Morgan County, with government inaugurated in 1819.  
 Twelve turnpike company charters granted.  
 Branches of the Bank of the United States created in Cincinnati and Chillicothe.
- 1818      Creation of Brown, Clark, Hocking, Logan, and Perry counties.  
 National Road reaches Wheeling, Virginia.  
 Ethan Allen Brown elected governor.
- 1819      Second effort to found University of Cincinnati. Creation of Medical College of Ohio in Cincinnati. Cincinnati receives charter as city.  
 Creation of Meigs and Shelby counties.  
 National financial collapse. Charles Hammond leads assembly in taxing Bank of the United States branches. John L. Harper and an armed force collect taxes at Chillicothe branch.  
 Voters overwhelmingly defeat proposed state constitutional convention.
- 1820      Census finds 581,295 people in Ohio, making it the fifth most populous state in the nation, with the third largest amount of manufacturing.  
 Continued financial depression.  
 Land Act shifts purchases from federal government to a cash basis.  
 Creation of Allen, Crawford, Hancock, Hardin, Henry, Marion, Mercer, Paulding, Putnam, Sandusky, Seneca, Union, Van Wert, Williams, and Wood counties.  
 Inauguration of government delayed in Allen (1831), Crawford (1836), Hancock (1828), Hardin (1833), Henry (1834), Marion (1824), Mercer (1824), Paulding (1839), Putnam (1834), Seneca (1824), Van Wert (1837), and Williams (1824) counties.  
 Ethan Allen Brown reelected governor.
- 1821      Governor Brown fills U. S. Senate seat. Allen Trimble becomes governor.  
 Continued financial depression.  
 Commercial Hospital and Lunatic Asylum chartered.

- 1822 Micajah T. Williams leads assembly in supporting canal construction.  
Miami Exporting Company suspends banking.  
Ohio expands from six to fourteen seats in the U. S. House of Representatives.  
Allen Trimble defeats Jeremiah Morrow for governor by plurality.  
Creation of Lorain County, with government inaugurated in 1824.
- 1823 Low point of western land sales.  
John McLean replaces Return J. Meigs, Jr., as postmaster general.
- 1824 U. S. Supreme Court overturns Ohio law taxing Bank of the United States branches.  
Creation of Holmes County, with government inaugurated in 1825.  
Jeremiah Morrow narrowly defeats Allen Trimble for governor.  
Henry Clay carries Ohio presidential vote by a narrow margin over Andrew Jackson and a substantial margin over John Quincy Adams.
- 1825 John Quincy Adams chosen president by U. S. House of Representatives with support from ten of Ohio's fourteen representatives.  
Resumption of construction of National Road, July 4, 1825.  
Third report of Canal Commission. Assembly inaugurates work on Ohio and Miami canals. Completion of New York's Erie Canal.  
Caleb Atwater and Ephraim Cutler lead assembly in adopting statewide public-school taxation.  
Akron laid out on Portage Summit of Ohio Canal.  
William Henry Harrison chosen a U. S. Senator.
- 1826 Allen Trimble elected governor.  
Western Reserve College founded in Hudson, Ohio.
- 1827 Opening of Akron-Cleveland branch of Ohio Canal.  
Benjamin Ruggles reelected to third U. S. Senate term.  
Frances "Fanny" Wright opens Ohio lecture series.

- 1828 Adams and Jackson followers in U. S. Congress each propose giving Ohio a massive federal land grant. Compromise awards Ohio both proposals. Allen Trimble reelected governor. Ohio voters support Andrew Jackson over John Quincy Adams for president by 67,597 to 63,396 votes.
- 1829 Antiblack riots in Cincinnati. Ohio Asylum for Educating the Deaf and Dumb founded in Columbus. Senator William Henry Harrison briefly serves as U. S. minister to Colombia. Jacob Burnet elected to Senate. President Jackson appoints Postmaster John McLean to U. S. Supreme Court.
- 1830 Census finds 937,903 people in Ohio. Duncan McArthur elected governor. Federal Indian Removal Act begins process of removing Ohio Indians. Oxford College for Women founded.
- 1831 Joseph Smith and Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints arrive at Kirtland. Thomas Ewing elected to U. S. Senate. Anti-Mason movement grows. State convention held in Ohio.
- 1832 Completion of Ohio Canal from Cleveland to Portsmouth. Robert Lucas elected governor as Jacksonian candidate. Andrew Jackson defeats Henry Clay in Ohio by 81,246 to 76,539 votes. Miniscule support for Anti-Masonic candidate William Wirt. Intense discussion of a potential state bank.
- 1833 Creation of Carroll County. Maumee Treaty removes Ottawa Indians. Growing number of settlers in northwest Ohio. Ohio Company for Importing English Cattle founded in Chillicothe. Oberlin Collegiate Institute founded.

- Ohio develops clear Democratic party and National Republican antecedent of Whig movement. Thomas Morris (D) elected to replace Benjamin Ruggles (NR) in U. S. Senate.
- 1834 Revival of Miami Exporting Company.  
City of Columbus chartered. New penitentiary placed in Columbus.  
Split within Lane Theological Seminary, with many members moving to Oberlin.  
John McLean's presidential prospects are damaged when his supporter James Findley is defeated for governor by Robert Lucas.
- 1835 Governor Lucas urges extension of Ohio counties to the Harris Line boundary with Michigan. Creation of Lucas County. Both Ohio and Michigan prepare to assert authority over the area.  
Marietta College is chartered.
- 1836 Federal government accepts legitimacy of Ohio-Michigan border.  
Village of Toledo and city of Cleveland chartered.  
Strike by Cincinnati carpenters, stone cutters, and construction workers.  
Ohio supports William Henry Harrison (W) over Martin Van Buren (D) for president by 105,405 to 96,948 votes.  
Van Buren becomes president.  
Election of Joseph Vance (W) as governor.
- 1837 Panic of 1837.  
Assembly passes "Plunder Act" to assist railroads.  
Oberlin admits women to its four-year curriculum.  
Thomas Ewing leaves U. S. Senate. William Allen (D) replaces him.
- 1838 Creation of Erie County.  
National Road passes Springfield.  
Joshua Giddings begins twenty-one-year career in Congress.  
Joseph Smith and L.D.S. church move to Missouri.  
Caleb Atwater publishes *History of the State of Ohio*.  
Financial depression continues. Imprisonment for debt outlawed.

- Ohioans involved in 1837–38 Canadian Rebellion.  
Benjamin Tappan (D) elected to U. S. Senate over abolitionist Thomas Morris.  
Wilson Shannon (D) elected governor. First governor who had been born in Ohio.  
Assembly decides to build new statehouse in Columbus.
- 1839 Economic conditions worsen.  
Assembly passes Ohio Fugitive Slave law and laws to protect railroads from malicious destruction.
- 1840 Census finds 1,519,467 people in Ohio. Ohio is the nation's third state in corn production and first state in wheat production.  
Creation of Lake, Ottawa, and Summit counties.  
Plunder law repealed, ending state aid to railroads.  
Economic conditions remain very bad.  
Ohio's Liberty party is formed.  
Thomas Corwin (W) defeats Wilson Shannon for governor.  
William Henry Harrison (W) of Ohio is elected president.  
Carries Ohio by 148,043 votes to 123,944 for Martin Van Buren (D) and 903 for James Birney (L).
- 1841 President Harrison appoints Thomas Ewing secretary of the Treasury. After John Tyler becomes president, Ewing resigns.  
Significant growth of banking issues in state politics amidst continuing economic hard times. Assembly defeats Governor Corwin's proposal for a state bank with city branches.  
Democratic candidates carry state elections.
- 1842 Wyandot leave upper Sandusky reservation.  
Continued hard times. Collapse of Miami Exporting Company.  
Latham Act regulates banking.  
Wilson Shannon (D) defeats Thomas Corwin (W) for governor by 119,774 to 117,902 votes. Leicester King as Liberty party candidate carries significant 5,134 votes.  
Campaign to move state capital to Newark.
- 1843 Wabash and Erie Canal links Lafayette, Indiana, to Toledo.  
Economic times improve.

- Columbus confirmed as state capital.  
Wilson Shannon supports controversial president John Tyler.  
Assembly repeals Ohio's Fugitive Slave Law after U. S. Supreme Court *Prigg v. Pennsylvania* (1842) case makes it plain that the federal government has sole authority in this area.  
William Allen (D) reelected to U. S. Senate.
- 1844 Wilson Shannon appointed minister to Mexico, and Thomas Welles Bartley (D) becomes governor.  
Mordecai Bartley (W), father of Governor Bartley, defeats David Tod (D), son of George Tod, for governor. Bartley receives 146,033 votes to 145,062 for Tod and 8,898 for Leicester King (L).  
Henry Clay (W) carries Ohio over James Polk (D) and James Birney (L). Polk elected president.  
Whig Assembly selects Thomas Corwin (W) over Benjamin Tappan (D) for U. S. Senate.
- 1845 Creation of Defiance and Wyandot counties.  
Completion of Miami Canal.  
Kelley Bill creates state bank and allows individual banks.  
Assembly passes personal property tax bill.  
Representative Jacob Brinkerhoff tries to prohibit slavery in west/northwest Texas.  
M. B. Bateham publishes *Ohio Cultivator*.
- 1846 Creation of Ashland and Mahoning counties.  
Assembly creates State Board of Agriculture.  
Kelley Tax law revises state tax system.  
William Bebb (W) elected governor over David Tod (D) and Samuel Lewis (L).  
Mexican-American War. Many Whigs, including Governor Bebb, denounce Polk administration and conduct of war.
- 1847 Democratic state convention denounces President Polk (D) for retaining Tyler officeholders. David Tod made minister to Brazil.  
State Representative Clement Vallandigham persuades assembly to endorse a popular sovereignty concept for newly acquired territories.

- Senator Thomas Corwin (W) denounces the Mexican-American War, but a movement to nominate him for the presidency collapses after news is received about Zachary Taylor's victory at Buena Vista.  
Jacob Burnet publishes *Notes on the Early Settlement of the Northwestern Territory*. Henry Howe publishes first edition of *Historical Collection of Ohio*.
- 1848 Creation of Auglaize and Morrow counties.  
Emergence of Free-Soil party.  
Seabury Ford (W) narrowly defeats John Welles (D) for governor by 148,766 to 148,442 votes.  
Presidential candidate Lewis Cass (D) carries Ohio over Zachary Taylor (W) and Martin Van Buren (FS), but Free-Soil movement receives nearly 11 percent of the vote.  
Taylor carries national election.  
Controversy over Whig effort to divide Hamilton County.
- 1849 Salmon Chase elected to U. S. Senate by Democrat–Free-Soil coalition. Ohio Free-Soil party damaged. Alliance repeals Ohio's Black Laws.  
President Taylor appoints Thomas Ewing first secretary of the Interior.  
Division of Hamilton County repealed.  
Voters heavily endorse new state constitutional convention.
- 1850 Census finds 1,980,329 people in Ohio. Recent German, Irish, and English immigration means that 11.5 percent of Ohioans are foreign born. Almost 62 percent of Ohioans are Ohio born.  
Ohio has 299 miles of railroad track. First state agricultural fair is held in Cincinnati. Cleveland seamstresses support a strike by journeymen tailors.  
First state women's rights convention in Salem, Columbiana County.  
Cincinnati becomes Catholic archdiocese with jurisdiction over Ohio, Kentucky, Indiana, and Michigan.  
Creation of Fulton and Vinton counties.  
President Millard Fillmore (W) replaces Secretary of the Interior Thomas Ewing, but appoints Thomas Corwin secretary of the Treasury. Ewing is elected to the U. S. Senate.

- Reuben Wood (D) defeats William Johnston (W) and Edward Smith for governor.
- 1851 Creation of Noble County.  
New state constitution ratified, including a clause giving the assembly power to act against alcohol use.  
Free-Soil-Whig coalition elects Benjamin Wade to U. S. Senate.  
Reuben Wood (D) defeats Samuel Vinton (W) and Samuel Lewis (FS) for governor.
- 1852 State limits labor to ten hours per day for children under eighteen, and for women in manufactories.  
Ineffective state regulation of railroad rates for railroads competing with canals.  
Franklin Pierce (D) carries Ohio presidential election over Winfield Scott (W) and John Hale (FS).  
Ohio increases representation to twenty-one representatives.
- 1853 Local school boards given power to determine courses and books. Limited creation of segregated schools for black Ohioans.  
National women's rights convention held in Cleveland.  
Reuben Wood becomes American consul in Valparaiso, Chile. William Medill (D) becomes governor. In fall, Medill defeats Nelson Barrere (W) and Samuel Lewis (FS).
- 1854 George Pugh (D) elected to U. S. Senate over Salmon Chase.  
Kansas-Nebraska Act raises furor. State Anti-Nebraska convention in Columbus.  
Rapid growth of anti-immigration Know-Nothing (American) party.
- 1855 Jacob Brinkerhoff and Supreme Court Justice John McLean endorse American movement. Anti-immigrant riot in Cincinnati.  
Ohio Republican party formed in July and combines Free-Soil and Anti-Nebraska movements.  
Salmon Chase (R) defeats William Medill (D) and Allen Trimble (A) for governor.

- 1856 Kansas slavery-related bloodshed swings much of American movement into Republican movement. Ohio Whigs erode.  
John C. Frémont (R) defeats James Buchanan (D) and Millard Fillmore (A) in Ohio presidential election, but Buchanan carries national race.
- 1857 Panic of 1857, triggered by failure of Ohio Life Insurance and Trust Company.  
New state capitol building opens.  
State juvenile offender work farm created.  
Benjamin Wade reelected to U. S. Senate.  
Salmon Chase (R) narrowly defeats Henry Payne (D) and Philadelph Van Trump (A) for governor. Democrats carry assembly.
- 1858 Ohio has 2,788 miles of railroad track.  
University of Wooster founded.  
Assembly passes bill to replace state bank with independent treasury.
- 1859 Dr. Norton Townshend elected president of State Board of Agriculture.  
Assembly leases state-owned canals.  
William Dennison (R) defeats Rufus Ranney (D) for governor.
- 1860 Census finds 2,339,511 people in Ohio. Third most populous state in United States. State is 14 percent foreign born.  
Abraham Lincoln (R) carries presidential election in Ohio over Stephen Douglas (D), John Bell (Constitutional Union), and John Breckinridge (Southern Democrat). Lincoln and Douglas carry 94.6 percent of the vote.  
South Carolina secedes from the Union, invites other southern states to join it in forming a new nation.