



agRICULTURE

From First Peoples to New Immigrants

Food traditions in Minnesota have been born, discovered, shaped, and renewed for thousands of years. As a community, we are richer for it. What would Minnesota be like without wild rice, lefse, and pho?

Explore with us how native cultures and immigrants—both past and present—have had lasting impacts on our food system, playing important roles in farming, food production, economic growth, and expanding our tastes.

This exhibit highlights a handful of cultures. These and many others have transformed the food landscape in Minnesota—creating a new era of **agriCULTURE**.



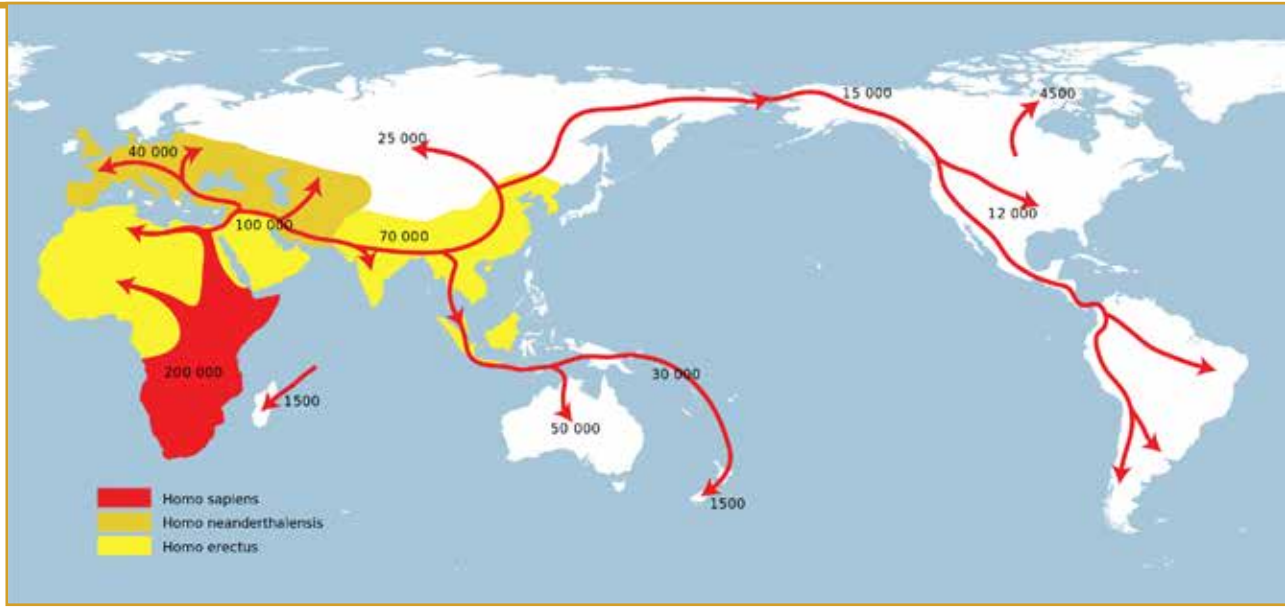
Timeline

From First Peoples to New Immigrants

BCE

1600 **French**

French invading the east coast push Ojibwe tribe west into Minnesota.



10,000 BCE **First Peoples**

Paleo-indians (Stone Age) The earliest inhabitants of America were nomadic tribes hunting large game.

1,000 BCE **First Nations**

Woodland and Hopewell cultures establish trade and extensive burial systems.



1650 **French**

Voyager Pierre Esprit Radisson's expedition arrives in what is now Minnesota, opening up the region to fur trade.

1776 **Europeans**

Settlers begin to arrive from New England, as well as new immigrants from Norway, Sweden, Ireland, and Germany.

1802 **African Americans**

George Bonga was the first known African American born in Minnesota.

1825 **Germans**

The first Germans come to Minnesota as American soldiers at Ft. Snelling.

1845 **Irish**

Escaping Ireland's potato famine, Irish immigrants came to Minnesota to work as lumberjacks and farmers.

1870 **Chinese**

First Chinese move to Minnesota.



1910 **Mexicans**

The railroad, meatpacking, and sugar beat industries start recruiting Mexicans to Minnesota.

1899 **Swedish**

The number of cooperatively run Swedish creameries in Minnesota peaks.



1946 **African Americans**

The Credjafawn, an African American Grocery Co-op in St. Paul, was founded.

1976 **Hmong**

Migration and Refugee Assistance act (passed in 1975), is extended to allow Hmong refugees to come to the U.S.

1988 **Somali**

Refugees flee war-torn Somalia.

2000s

Ecuadorians & Karen

Motivated by economic collapse at home, Ecuadorians start making their home in Minnesota. The Karen people migrate to Minnesota from Southeast Asia as refugees.



Photo by Dana Thompson

sioux chef

Sean Sherman has worked in restaurant kitchens since he was a teenager. But when the 41-year-old Oglala Lakota chef set out to write an indigenous cookbook, he was surprised he couldn't find much information about the foods his ancestors ate. After years of research, Sherman, now known as "The Sioux Chef," is resurrecting Native cuisine and taking it to the streets. His Tatanka Truck serves up dishes like manoomin (wild rice) salad and cedar-braised

pté (bison). For the Tatanka Truck, Sherman partnered with the Little Earth of United Tribes, creating jobs and training opportunities for their community. He stays connected to native farmers, sourcing organic produce from farms like Wozupi Tribal Gardens in Prior Lake.

"These flavors speak of the land, of a particular region. A culture without food, is a lost culture." – Sean Sherman

appetite for change

appetite for change

Appetite for Change is teaching its community members how to grow, identify, and prepare wholesome foods. Last year, it held 49 cooking workshops and fed over a thousand people through their Community Cooks program. Thanks to the success of a recent \$60,000 Kickstarter campaign, Appetite for Change will be growing its job training programming for youth, including teaching culinary skills at their new restaurant, **Breaking Bread Cafe**

and Catering. Appetite for Change offers its community a passport to a whole new world of soil, seeds, and possibility.

“I like the community coming out, gaining knowledge from them and giving them knowledge they can take away. It’s been an eye-opener for me.”
– Lataija Powell, Youth Leader with Appetite for Change



Photo by Mark McCrae-Hokenson

tomás silva

Tomás Silva is one of Minnesota’s newest farmers. Even though he grew up around food (his family owns St. Paul’s **El Burrito Mercado** restaurant), it was only recently that the St. Paul native decided to try his hand at farming. Tomás wants to make healthier food available not just to himself and his family, but also to the Mexican-American community where he grew up. Tomás is also using farming to help recover from past challenges, including

addiction. Beyond simply growing tomatillos, squash, and melons, farming is helping Tomás to live a better life.

“Farming helps me to slow down and connect with nature. There’s something therapeutic about it. I’m not just farming for myself—I also want to help others find a healthy lifestyle through good food and farming.” – Tomás



Photo courtesy Mill City Times

FARMER CULTURAL

mohamed gaabane

Mohamed Gaabane is the proud owner of **Chicken Head Farm** in Silver Lake, Minnesota where he tends to 90 laying chickens, 15 goats, five acres of sweet corn, and two acres of mixed vegetables. When Mohamed arrived in Minnesota in 2006 as a 70-year-old refugee from Somalia, he couldn't have predicted that his life would one day revolve around cultivating his very own plot of farmland. Thanks to training from the Minnesota Food

Association's Big River Farm Training program and loan financing from AgStar's Emerging Agribusiness Lending Program, Chicken Head Farm is now in its second season. Mohamed's newest goal is to launch a farm training program to teach other Somali immigrants about the hard-earned rewards of farming.

"Farming is real life." – Mohamed

HER CULTURE

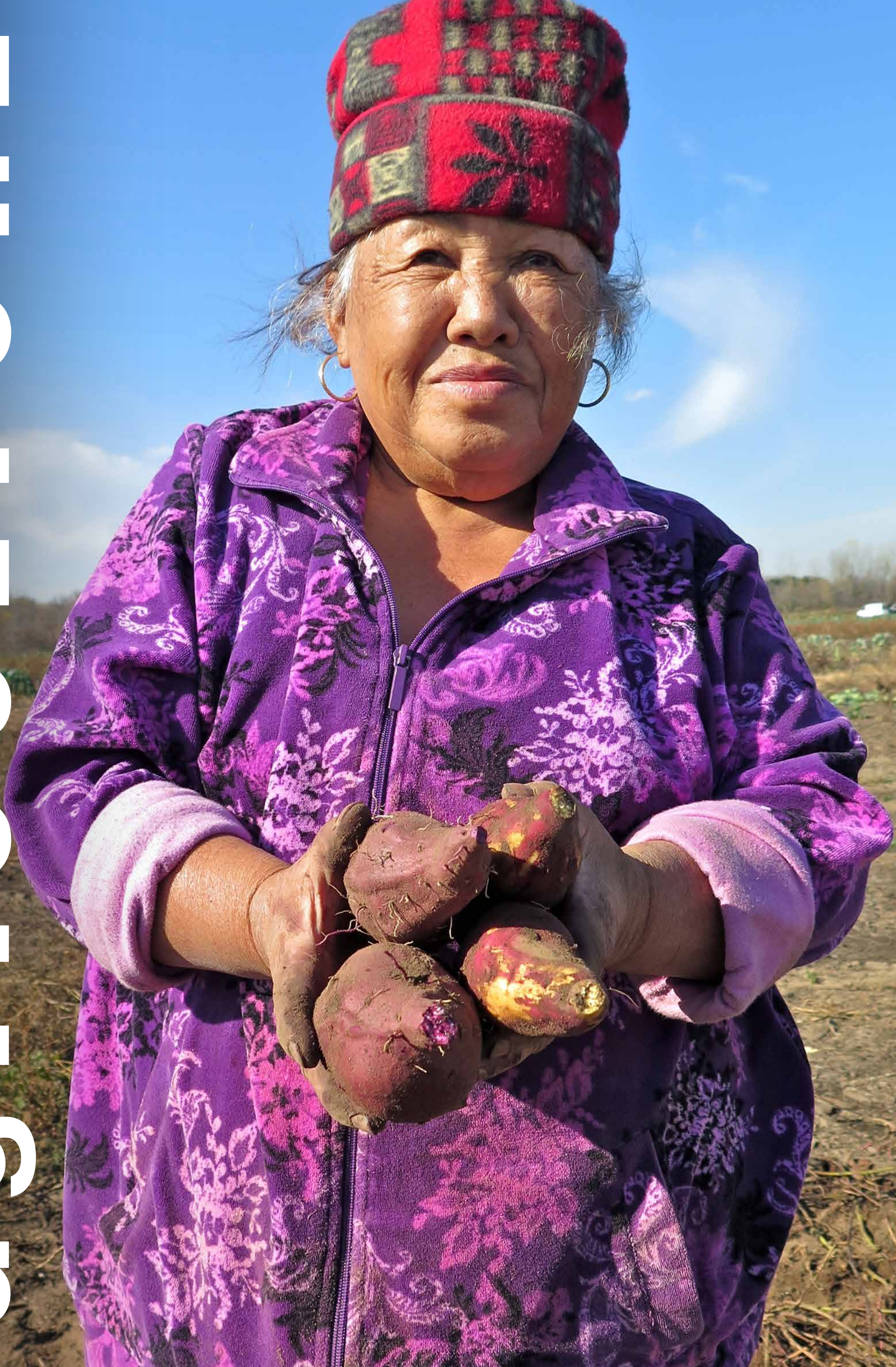


Photo by Mike Hazard / HAFA Farm

hmong american farmers association

When Hmong refugees began resettling in Minnesota in the 1970s, they used their farming traditions to survive. Today, over 60% of all farmers in Twin Cities' farmers markets are Hmong. The **Hmong American Farmers Association (HAFA)** is a membership-based organization that builds the capacity and the wealth of Hmong farmers, while building a sustainable and fair food economy. HAFA manages a 155-acre farm in Dakota County

where Hmong farmers can lease land, learn sustainable agricultural techniques, and participate in the HAFA Food Hub, which aggregates, markets, and distributes farmers' produce to local schools, retailers, and institutions.

"If we are talking about changing the world... let us think critically about how to create a world where everyone wins."
— Pakou Hang, HAFA Executive Director



Photo by Mark McCrae-Hokenson

gandhi mahal

“Food is the true wealth,” says **Ruhel Islam**, owner of the Minneapolis restaurant Gandhi Mahal. He recently installed an aquaponics farm beneath his restaurant’s kitchen where they raise four different species of tilapia fish. Ruhel’s commitment to sustainable food production can be traced back to his native Bangladeshi roots, where farming and self-sufficiency was a way of life. Beyond aquaponics, Ruhel sources much of his produce

from the restaurant’s nearby city gardens and a rooftop beehive and pollinator garden. The restaurant’s waste is reduced through recycling or composting, and used cooking oil is converted to biodiesel.

“We are working toward our dream. One day we will become completely self-sufficient so that we can lead as an example.” – Ruhel Islam

Ojibwe & Dakota

agriculture

- Minnesota is home to the **Ojibwe** (also Chippewa or Anishinaabe) and **Dakota** (also Lakota, Nakota, or Sioux) tribes.
- The Ojibwe migrated to the region from the Atlantic coast over **500 years ago**. The Dakota are thought to be descended from woodland tribes who built effigy mounds in the region.
- The **name “Minnesota”** comes from a Dakota word meaning “Whitish or Sky-tinted water.”
- Tribes endured winter by consuming nutrient dense, **low-glycemic foods** that were stored in preserved food caches.
- Native families traditionally planted subsistence **gardens with crops** like corn, squash, and beans.
- Wild rice is a **sacred food** for the tribes, considered a sustainable and renewable gift from their creator.
- Despite modernization, many Native Americans still practice **traditional food customs** here in Minnesota.

African American

agriculture

- Some of Minnesota's first African-American residents were **escaped slaves** who traveled north up the Mississippi River.
- George Bonga, the first known African-American person born in Minnesota in 1802, was a **fur trader** who spoke Ojibwe and married an Ojibwe woman from Leech Lake.
- One of Minnesota's **first grocery co-ops**, the Credjafawn Co-op, was started in 1946 in St. Paul by members of an African-American social club.
- Minnesota's African-American population is **concentrated in urban areas** where residents are increasingly turning to community gardens and urban farms as sources of fresh, affordable, healthy food. Crops include okra, collards, sweet potatoes, and purple hull peas.
- Fresh Corners, an African-American **urban growers cooperative** on the North side of Minneapolis, supplies locally-grown produce to restaurants, corner stores, and farmers markets throughout the Twin Cities.

- Latinos are Minnesota's **fastest growing** ethnic group and Mexicans make up the largest slice of the state's Spanish-speaking population.
- As many as 26,000 Mexican migrant workers came to Minnesota in the early 1900s to work in the Red River Valley's **sugar beet fields**. After WWII, mechanization in the industry led some Mexican workers to transition into canning factories and meat packing plants.
- Saint Paul is home to one of the largest **Cinco de Mayo** celebrations in the U.S.
- In the face of labor shortages, the state's **dairy industry** now relies heavily on the contributions of Latino workers who make up an estimated 40% of Minnesota's dairy workforce.
- Many Mexican immigrants come from agricultural communities. Having grown up on farms, they are working to become Minnesota **farm owners** themselves.
- Mexicans brought **traditional crops** like tomatillos and a great variety of chilies, which have become staples in Minnesota.

- Minnesota is home to the **largest Somali population** in the United States. Immigrants began settling as refugees in the early 1990s.
- Somalis hail from a long legacy of **nomadic herders** & agriculturalists who traveled great distances to find pasture for their goats, sheep, and camels.
- Somali **poetry and folklore** expresses a love of freedom and open spaces that is rooted in a nomadic way of life.
- As new arrivals, many Somalis found work in Minnesota's **meat packing** and canning industries.
- Staple **Somali foods** include: *injera* (similar to a pancake), *mufo* (bread made with corn flour), rice, beans, corn, meat, milk, and bananas.
- Somalis traditionally eat a **halal diet**, which prohibits pork and alcohol. Halal-certified meats must be raised and processed humanely, which includes animals not witnessing the slaughter of another animal.

- Hmong are an ethnic hill tribe from **Southeast Asia**. They have historically labored as subsistence farmers, living in close-knit communities.
- During the **Vietnam War**, the CIA secretly recruited Hmong soldiers to patrol parts of the Ho Chi Minh Trail.
- After the Vietnam War, all Hmong families in Laos were deemed traitors and forced into “**re-education camps**” by the Communist faction.
- Many Hmong **families fled** their homes for Thailand and other countries, and many died trying to escape.
- The first Hmong refugees arrived in Minnesota **40 years ago**. Now the Twin Cities are home to the largest urban population of Hmong people in the U.S.
- Many Hmong parents use their **agricultural skills** to raise their families, buy homes, and send their children to college.
- Hmong farmers have introduced **new foods** to Minnesota including long beans, bitter melon & chicken leg horn peppers.

French

French explorers arrived in the 1600s, followed by “Voyageurs,” French Canadian indentured servants who enabled the fur trade by transporting pelts in their canoes. For subsistence they relied on pemmican, a mixture of dried meat and fat created by Native Americans.

Scandinavian

Scandinavian immigrants began arriving in Minnesota as early as 1845. They soon formed cooperative creameries and consequently tripled the number of cows in the state. In 1921, half of these cooperatives merged to become Land O’Lakes.

Polish

The chance to own farmland brought Poles to Minnesota in the mid–1800s. Early Polish homesteaders banded together in agricultural cooperatives to share insurance coverage and farming equipment.

German

Many Germans immigrated to Minnesota in the 18th and 19th centuries, also with the dream of owning a farm. They worked short-term jobs in the cities to earn \$50 to \$100, which was sufficient money to purchase 40 acres of farmland in 1850.