

Toledo, Ohio - 19th century

In 1824 the Ohio state legislature authorized the construction of [Miami and Erie Canal](#) and later its [Wabash and Erie Canal](#) extension in 1833. The canal's purpose was to connect the city of Cincinnati to [Lake Erie](#) because at that time no highways existed in the state and it was thus very difficult for goods produced locally to reach the larger markets east of the [Appalachian Mountains](#). During the canal's planning phase, many small towns along the northern shores of [Maumee River](#) heavily competed to be the ending terminus of the canal knowing it would give them a profitable status.^[9] The towns of Port Lawrence and Vistula merged in 1833 to better compete against the towns of [Waterville](#), [Maumee](#), and Manhattan.

The inhabitants of this joined settlement chose the name Toledo, "but the reason for this choice is buried in a welter of legends. One recounts that [Washington Irving](#), who was traveling in Spain at the time, suggested the name to his brother, a local resident; this explanation ignores the fact that Irving returned to the United States in 1832. Others award the honor to Two Stickney, son of the major who quaintly numbered his sons and named his daughters after States. The most popular version attributes the naming to Willard J. Daniels, a merchant, who reportedly suggested Toledo because it 'is easy to pronounce, is pleasant in sound, and there is no other city of that name on the American continent.'^[8] Despite Toledo's efforts, the final terminus was decided to be built in Manhattan a half mile to the north of Toledo because it was closer to the lake. As a compromise, the state placed two sidecuts before the terminus, one in Toledo at Swan Creek and another in Maumee.

An almost bloodless conflict between Ohio and the [Michigan Territory](#), called the [Toledo War](#) (1835–1836), was "fought" over a narrow strip of land from the [Indiana](#) border to [Lake Erie](#), now containing the city and the suburbs of [Sylvania](#) and [Oregon](#). The strip—which varied between five and eight miles (13 km) in width—was claimed by the state of Ohio and the Michigan Territory due to conflicting legislation concerning the location of the Ohio-Michigan state line. Militias from both states were sent but never engaged. The only casualty of the conflict was a Michigan deputy [sheriff](#)—stabbed in the leg with a pen knife by Two Stickney during the arrest of his elder brother, One Stickney—and the loss of two horses, two pigs and a few chickens stolen from an Ohio farm by lost members of the Michigan militia. In the end, the state of Ohio was awarded the land after the state of Michigan was given a larger portion of the [Upper Peninsula](#) in exchange. Stickney Avenue in Toledo is named for One and Two Stickney.^[10]

Toledo was very slow to expand in its first two decades of existence. It's very first lot was sold in the Port Lawrence section of the city in 1833. It held 1,205 persons in 1835, and five years later it held just seven more men. Settlers came and went quickly through Toledo and between 1833 and 1836, ownership of land had changed so many times that none of the original parties still existed. The canal and its Toledo sidecut entrance were completed in 1843; soon after the canal was functional, the canal boats became too large to use the shallow waters at the terminus in Manhattan. More boats began using the Swan Creek sidecut than its official ending, quickly putting the Manhattan warehouses out of business and triggering a rush to move business to Toledo.



A 1955 [Interstate](#) planning map of Toledo

Most of Manhattan's residents moved out by 1844. The 1850 census gives Toledo 3,829 residences and Manhattan 541. The 1860 census shows Toledo with a population of 13,768 and Manhattan with 788. While the towns were only a mile apart, Toledo grew by 359% in ten years while Manhattan only grew by 148% because of the change in the canal outlet. By the 1880s, Toledo expanded over the vacant streets of Manhattan and Tremainsville, a small town to the west.^{[9][11]}

In the last half of the 19th century, railroads slowly began to replace canals as the major form of transportation. Toledo soon became a hub for several railroad companies and a hotspot for industries like furniture producers, carriage makers, breweries, glass manufacturers, and others. Large [immigrant](#) populations came to the area, attracted by the many factory jobs available and the city's easy accessibility. By 1880, Toledo was one of the largest cities in Ohio.

And...*A Brief History of Sylvania (A Suburb of Toledo)*

The Founding

In 1832, General David White acquired the title to a “considerable” tract of land lying in the eastern half of the future site of Sylvania. He constructed a log house at the northeast corner of Summit and Monroe streets. On July 13, 1836, the plat of the town of Sylvania was recorded by Judge William Wilson. A large granite boulder at the corner of Erie and Division streets marked the beginning of the present City of Sylvania.

Sylvania almost didn't happen! A dispute between White and Wilson led White to record the town of Whiteford in Michigan. White favored the name “Whiteford,” and Wilson favored the name “Sylvania” – the Latin word for “woods or trees.” Had it not been for this disagreement, Sylvania would have been named Whiteford!

Sylvania's Early Schools

The first school building was erected in 1834 on the west side of Main Street, midway between Erie Street and Blank (now Maplewood Avenue). General White paid for this first school.

This site proved unsuitable, however, because of noise from the rail line running through town and the efforts of the train engineer to negotiate the curve north of Erie Street. The school was then moved to “the opposite side of town,” somewhere near the southwest corner of Summit Street and Blank (Maplewood).

The first “real” school opened in 1844. It was built with fossil stone from the nearby quarry and was named Stone Academy.

As the village and its population grew, more classrooms were needed and a larger, brick school was completed in 1869. This new facility was named Sylvania High School. It was built two stories high to accommodate children in the higher grades on the second floor, as well as the elementary students on the first floor.

Sylvania began construction of Burnham School in 1925 on land given by Henry Burnham. (Sylvania High School remained in use until 1929, when the new school was completed and ready to house all the students.)

At the time, the school “afforded the utmost in educational facilities.” In the 1933 book, *A History of Sylvania for the First Hundred Years*, several people who attended both the old school on Main Street and the new Burnham facility recalled that the Burnham building was “practically a total failure, since it had no belfry to climb.”

The Ohio Canal System

