WISCONSIN

THE BADGER STATE *Became a state May 29, 1848 (30th)*

Wisconsin sits between two Great Lakes and the Mississippi River. It is a land of dairy farms, cranberry marshes and deep north woods, known across the country for its cheese.



Why the Badger State?

In the 1820s and 1830s, miners came to Wisconsin to dig for lead, a soft gray metal. The story goes that some had no houses for the winter, so they lived in tunnels dug into the hillsides, the way badgers do. People began calling the miners badgers. In time the nickname spread to the whole state.



From Wheat to Cheese

Wisconsin's early farmers mostly grew wheat. In the 1860s the soil wore out and insects attacked the crop. Farmers turned to dairy cows, and refrigerated rail cars let them ship their goods to far-off cities. Today Wisconsin makes about a quarter of the nation's cheese. One kind, Colby, was invented near the town of Colby in 1885.



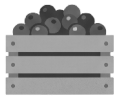
Five Brothers and a Circus

In 1884 five brothers named Ringling started a circus in the town of Baraboo. That first year they traveled by wagon and added a trick horse and a bear. By 1888 the show was big enough to travel by train. It came home to Baraboo every winter until 1918. The old winter quarters are now a museum with the world's largest collection of circus wagons.



The Girl from the Big Woods

Laura Ingalls was born on February 7, 1867, near the town of Pepin, in a forest known as the Big Woods. When she was 65, she published a book about those early years, Little House in the Big Woods. She wrote it as Laura Ingalls Wilder. Seven more Little House books followed in her lifetime.



The Berry That Floats

Cranberries do not grow in water. They grow on low vines in sandy beds that are not under water in spring or summer. In fall, growers flood the beds and machines knock the berries loose. Each berry has small pockets of air inside, so it floats. Workers then gather the red berries from the surface.



A Cave Found by Accident

On August 4, 1939, workers at a limestone quarry near Blue Mounds set off a blast. It opened a hole into a cave that no one had known was there. Inside were stalactites, which hang from the ceiling, and stalagmites, which rise from the floor. The cave began forming about a million years ago. Visitors were touring it by the next May.

BY THE NUMBERS

Population	About 6 million (21st most)
Size	About 65,500 square miles (23rd largest)
Highest point	Timms Hill, 1,951 feet
Counties	72
Neighbors	Minnesota, Iowa, Illinois, Michigan

DID YOU KNOW?

- The name Wisconsin likely comes from a Miami word meaning "it lies red." It describes the red sandstone along the Wisconsin River.
- In Milwaukee in 1868, Christopher Sholes helped invent an early typewriter. He also came up with the QWERTY keyboard.
- Wisconsin is the only state where cheese must be made or supervised by a licensed cheesemaker.
- Wisconsin license plates first carried the words "America's Dairyland" in 1940.

FIND IT ON THE MAP

1. Which city is the capital?
2. Which city is closest to the Door County Lighthouses?
3. What color are the eggs of the American robin?

Answers: 1. Madison 2. Green Bay 3. Bright blue