

The water highway of the Middlesex Canal made possible rapid development of Middlesex County as shown in population growth recorded in the US census. The table below records that the Middlesex County grew 4x faster than Essex County between 1810 and 1820 and more than 2x times faster for the next 20 years.

www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1900/bulletins/demographic/13-population-ma.pdf

	1850	1840	1830	1820	1810	1800	1790
The State	994,514	737,699	610,408	523,159	472,040	422,845	378,787
		35	21	17	11		
Essex	131,300	94,987	82,850	74,655	71,888	61,106	57,913
		38	15	11	3.8	17	5.7
					4 percent		
					16		
Middlesex	161,333	106,611	77,961	61,472	52,789	46,928	42,737
		51	37	27	16	18	9.8

Population Growth of Essex and Middlesex Counties Compared.

One source of growth was the tanning industry in Woburn. Prior to low cost transportation, each farming village would have a tannery using the hides of local cattle and tanbark from nearby producing leather for local use.¹ With the Middlesex Canal, bark from the forests of New Hampshire, could be delivered at low cost and hides from around the world could delivered at low cost from Boston. The brig *Pilgrim*, built in Medford in 1825, sailed to Mexico's California in 1834 to buy hides, a voyage described in the Harvard Classics book, *Two Years Before the Mast* by Richard Henry Dana, Jr. Woburn had the businessmen to build tanneries using the Middlesex Canal and water from Woburn's many brooks.² With leather produced in Woburn and later neighboring cities, Boston had become by 1935 the largest sole-leather market in the world.³ Massachusetts likely became a shoe manufacturing center because the Middlesex Canal was the beginning of major leather manufacturing.

1. "That is, there were no particular places in the United States where the tanning industry was centralized. There was no system of transportation whereby hides could be gathered from far and wide into one center, tanned, and shipped to the manufacturers of leather goods." Riley, George Archibald, "History of Tanning in the State of Maine" (1935), Page 27-134pdf. Electronic Theses and Dissertations. 2419. <http://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/etd/2419>

2. *Woburn: A Leather City*, a documentary by John McElhiney, (6) [Woburn: A Leather City - YouTube](#).

3. "Boston has the largest sole-leather market in the world". Riley, op. cit, page 87-134pdf.