M H R

Ottawa Adaptive Strategies to Indian Removal

Author(s): James M. McClurken

Source: *Michigan Historical Review*, Spring, 1986, Vol. 12, No. 1 (Spring, 1986), pp. 29-55

Published by: Central Michigan University

Stable URL: https://www.jstor.org/stable/20173071

REFERENCES
Linked references are available on JSTOR for this article:
https://www.jstor.org/stable/20173071?seq=1&cid=pdf-reference#references_tab_contents
You may need to log in to JSTOR to access the linked references.

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at https://about.jstor.org/terms

Central Michigan University is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Michigan Historical Review*

This content downloaded from
149.10.125.20 on Fri, 04 Mar 2022 00:19:09 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

Ottawa Adaptive Strategies to Indian Removal

by
James M. McClurken

The Indian removal policy of the Andrew Jackson and Martin Van Buren administrations made the years between 1829 and 1841 particularly difficult for the nearly three thousand Ottawa of Michigan.[1] Directly involved in the frontier process, with its resulting competition for the land and resources they had exploited for centuries, tensions between the Ottawa and the intrusive Americans sometimes resulted in violence, alcoholism, and population reduction through smallpox and other infectious diseases. Yet, to characterize the Ottawa as passive victims of racially prejudiced land hungry settlers, unscrupulous profit mad traders, or domineering government policy makers obscures the active and successful role they created to meet the challenges they faced between 1836 and 1855, the years when they were being incorporated into a broader American political and economic system. This paper, then, examines how the Ottawa of Michigan successfully used the natural and human resources at their disposal to avoid removal to Kansas or Minnesota between 1836 and 1855.

James M. McClurken is at the Museum, Michigan State University, and a Ph.D. candidate in anthropology. The author wishes to express his appreciation to Dr. James Clifton, Dr. Charles Cleland, and Dr. Margaret Holman for assistance in the preparation of this article. The research for this article was conducted under a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

[1] This estimate is drawn from two documents, Henry Rowe Schoolcraft to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 30 September 1839, National Archives Microcopy M234, R.403:130-40, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Record Group 75, National Archives, Washington, D.C. and Augustin Hamlin, Jr. and William Johnston to Joel R. Poinsett, 19 August 1840, National Archives Microcopy M1, R.47:173-4, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Record Group 75, National Archives, Washington, D.C. Hereafter cited as NA, Microcopy No., Reel No. and page. The estimates given in this paper excludes the villages on Grand Traverse Bay which considered themselves as ethnically Chippewa until the late 1840s and includes the Drummond Island Ottawa who were originally inhabitants of the Little Traverse Bay region.

Michigan Historical Review 12 (Spring 1986)
Copyright © Central Michigan University 1986

This content downloaded from
149.10.125.20 on Fri, 04 Mar 2022 00:19:09 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

The few full length works which have dealt with the Jacksonian Indian removal period have focused more upon the supposed character and motives of the president and his administration than on the specific Indian communities which their actions affected.[2] Perhaps because of their small number, these studies have been highly influential in shaping the perspectives of the American public and scholars alike. The majority of removal case studies focused upon the so-called Five Civilized Tribes of the southeastern United States and portrayed a defeated, victimized Indian. The trend began with Grant Foreman's *Indian Removal: The Emigration of the Five Civilized Tribes* which introduced the practice of judging Jacksonian Indian policy by the human tragedy it caused as Indians were forced to walk the "trail of tears."[3]

The trail of tears metaphor for removal policy was later applied to other Indians who lived east of the Mississippi River with little or no additional research to test its validity. Foreman himself planned to continue his examination of the impact of removal policy by studying its influence in the Old Northwest in *The Last Trek of the Indian.* Actually, he devoted less than twenty percent of the work to the northern Indians. Foreman most closely examined the removal of the Potawatomi village of Menominee and the Sauk and Fox which were exceptions in Old Northwest removal since they, like the southern Indians, were compelled to move west by military force.[4] The more recent full length case studies of Indian

---

[2] Many shorter case studies of varying quality have also been written. See, for example, Robert F. Bauman, "Kansas, Canada, or Starvation," *Michigan History* 36 (September 1952): 287-89; David R. Edmunds, "The Prairie Potawatomi Removal of 1833," *Indiana Magazine of History* 68 (September 1972): 240-253; and Elizabeth A. Neumeyer, "Indian Removal in Michigan, 1833-1855", (M.A. thesis, Central Michigan University, 1967). Besides these works, the few full length ethnohistories of the Old Northwest discuss removal in varying degrees. Among these are James A. Clifton, *Prairie People: Continuity and Change in Potawatomi Indian Culture, 1665-1965.* (Lawrence: Regents Press of Kansas, 1979), 234, 242, 253-257; James A. Clifton, *The Pokagons: Catholic Potawatomi Indians of the St. Joseph River Valley* (New York: University Press of America, 1984), xii-xiii, 36-76; and David R. Edmunds, *The Potawatomis: Keepers of the Fire* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1978), 240-75.

[3] Grant Foreman, *Indian Removal: The Emigration of the Five Civilized Tribes* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1932), 294-312.

[4] Grant Foreman, *The Last Trek of the Indians* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1946); James A. Clifton, "Trial by History: A Perspective on the

This content downloaded from 149.10.125.20 on Fri, 04 Mar 2022 00:19:09 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

removal continue to emphasize the southern examples. These include Arthur H. DeRosier's *The Removal of the Choctaw Indians* and Michael Green's *The Politics of Indian Removal: Creek Government and Society in Crisis.*[5] The most well-known studies of Indian policy during the Jackson and Van Buren administrations also accepted the limited scope presented in earlier cultural histories.[6]

The forces which prompted change in Ottawa society were beyond the conscious motives of any partisan group. The Ottawa themselves actively used their material, social, and political skills and resources to prevent starvation and social disintegration. At the same time, their leaders successfully short-circuited federal attempts to relocate them west of the Mississippi River. The Ottawa succeeded so well that they represent one of the most exceptional cases in the history of Indian removal in the Old Northwest. While many other Native Americans were cleared from Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois, the Ottawa maintained a variation of their older subsistence patterns and culture throughout the nineteenth century. They accomplished this, moreover, in the same localities that they had used for a hundred years before the Americans came to the Great Lakes.

The 1836 Ottawa-Chippewa Treaty, negotiated in Washington, was the first attempt of the United States to induce the removal of the Ottawa. At the time of the treaty, many federal officials believed that the United States held a sufficient amount of unsold agricultural land in Michigan. This land, acquired in previous treaties with Michigan Indians, was expected to meet settlement needs for many years so that further cessions were not actively solicited. Indeed, of the 25,570,000 acres that had been surveyed in the territory, only

---

Indian Policy in the Old Northwest" (Paper presented at the Conference on the American Indian, Texas Tech. University, 1980).

[5] Arthur H. DeRosier, Jr., *The Removal of the Choctaw Indians* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1983); Michael D. Green, *The Politics of Indian Removal: Creek Government and Society in Crisis* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1985).

[6] Francis P. Prucha, *American Indian Policy in the Formative Years: The Indian Trade and Intercourse Acts* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1962), 224-249; and *The Great Father* 2 vols. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1985), 183-296; and Ronald Satz, *American Indian policy in the Jacksonian Era* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1975), 39-136.

This content downloaded from
149.10.125.20 on Fri, 04 Mar 2022 00:19:09 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

5,927,452 acres were sold by 1834.[7] In 1835, however, the Ottawa from L'Arbre Croch village, or Wekwitonsing, on Little Traverse Bay, offered to sell a portion of their more marginal lands, hoping to supplement their dwindling income from the fur trade with a cash annuity and goods. Henry Schoolcraft, the federal agent who then administered Indian affairs in the Michigan Territory, decided the time was right to purchase not only the surplus lands of one village but all remaining Indian claims to Michigan land. He viewed the acquisition of land as preparation for statehood, which came in 1837.[8]

Schoolcraft was an important figure in nineteenth century Michigan Indian affairs. He began his career in the Great Lakes region as the "mineralogist" on the Cass expedition to the source of the Mississippi River in 1820.[9] Lewis Cass and Schoolcraft shared many similar intellectual interests and a mutual respect. Equally important, they shared a common political party and from the time of the expedition onward they maintained a political patron/client relationship. In a political system where political offices were dispensed along party lines as payment for favors or to place loyal and trusted agents in key positions, Cass used his political power as governor of the Michigan Territory to provide Schoolcraft with employment.[10]

In 1822 Schoolcraft was appointed Indian agent for the Sault Ste. Marie agency, a branch of the much larger Michigan Superintendency which was administered by Michigan's territorial governor, Lewis Cass.[11] When Cass became Secretary of War during the Jackson administration he

---

[7] Elbert Herring to Henry Schoolcraft, 29 August 1835, NA, M21, 17:27; and Paul W. Gates, *History of Public Land Law Development* (Washington, D.C.: Zenger Publishing Co. Inc., 1968).

[8] Schoolfcraft to Stevens T. Mason, 17 September 1835, NA, M1, 36:218; and Schoolcraft to Herring, 3 November 1835, NA, M1, 69:140.

[9] Philip P. Mason, *Schoolcraft's Expedition to Lake Itasca: the Discovery of the Source of the Mississippi* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1958), x-xi.

[10] The patron/client relationship as it manifested itself in the nineteenth century is discussed in Anthony F. C. Wallace, *Rockdale: The Growth of an American Village in the Early Industrial Revolution* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1978), 55-56; and in James Clifton, *Prairie People: Continuity and Change in Potawatomi Indian Culture* (Lawrence: Regents Press of Kansas, 1977), 119-120, 523.

[11] Mason, *Schoolcraft's Expedition to Lake Itasca*, x-xi; Edward E. Hill, *The Office of Indian Affairs, 1824-1880: Historical Sketches* (New York: Clearwater

This content downloaded from
149.10.125.20 on Fri, 04 Mar 2022 00:19:09 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

assumed the responsibility for administering all of the nation's Indian Affairs. After his departure from Michigan in 1832, the agencies at Mackinac and Sault Ste. Marie were combined and Schoolcraft became responsible for the affairs of the largest agency in the superintendency. In 1836, Schoolcraft was again promoted and became Michigan's Superintendent of Indian Affairs. Since all Superintendents of Indian Affairs were directly answerable to the Secretary of War, and because Schoolcraft held direct communication with his old friend Lewis Cass, his opinions quickly made their way to the centers of power in the Jackson and Van Buren administration.

Schoolcraft carefully tested Ottawa opinion concerning a large cession in Michigan in 1835. He asked for responses from both major Ottawa divisions, those living in the north between the Straits and Mackinac and Grand Traverse Bay, and the southern bands who lived along the Grand River inhabiting territory between the Kalamazoo and Muskegon rivers. Schoolcraft found tenuous support in the north and complete refusal to sell in the south.[12] Nonetheless, in the fall of 1835, he went to Washington where he convinced Secretary of War Cass to pursue negotiations not only with the Ottawa of L'Arbre Croch but also with their kinsmen throughout the lower portions of the territory, as well as with the Chippewa of northern Michigan.[13]

During that winter Schoolcraft prepared the way for the treaty by enlisting the aid of prominent Michigan merchants who organized a delegation of chiefs to visit Washington and negotiate a cession.[14] On the other side, the Ottawa were sharply divided on the wisdom of any land sales. They were unanimous in their opposition to moving to western lands, and

---

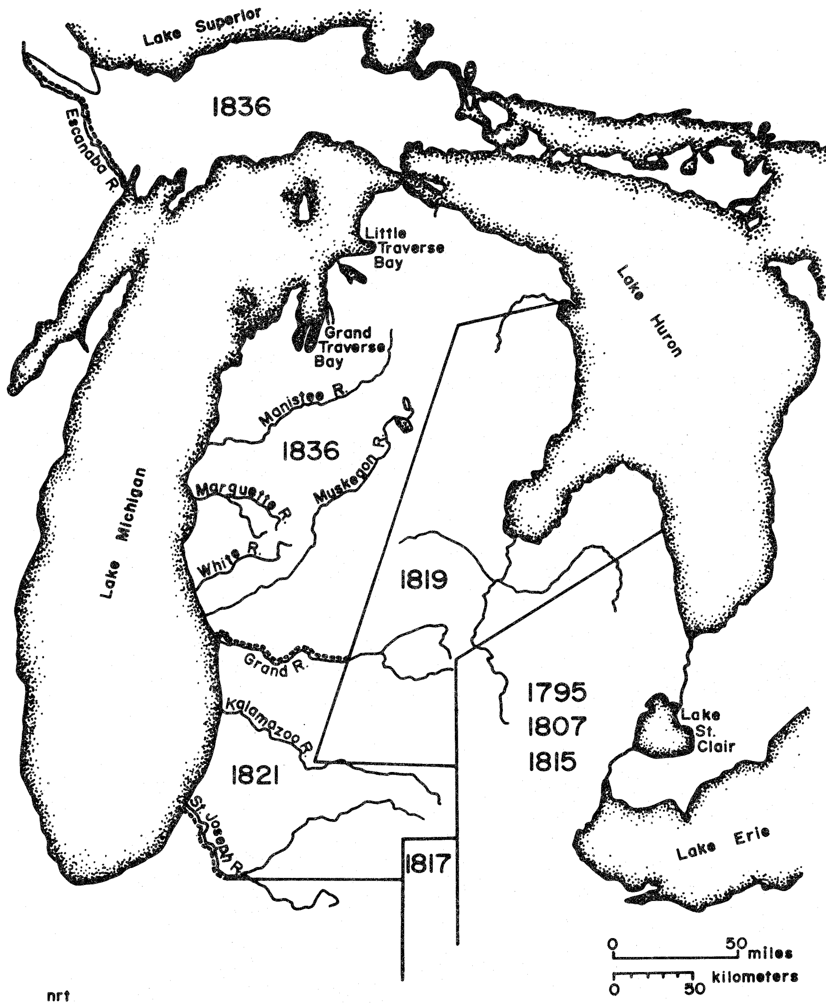
Publishing Company, Inc. 1974), 90, 94-95; Herring to George Porter, 10 April 1832, NA, M1, 30:153: Herring to Mason, 3 May 1832. NA, M1, 30:209; and Schoolcraft to Porter, 30 June 1832, NA, M1, 30:420.

[12] Schoolcraft to Herring, 30 October 1838, NA, M1; and Schoolcraft to Herring, 3 November 1835, NA, M1.

[13] Lewis Cass to Schoolcraft, 14 March 1836, NA, M1, 427:179.

[14] Among the prominent Michigan traders who accompanied Michigan Indians were Rix Robinson and Lucius Lyons of Grand Rapids, John Holiday of LaPointe, and John Drew and William Lasley of Mackinac. Charles J. Kappler, ed., *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties,* 5 vols. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1904-1941), 2:255.

This content downloaded from
149.10.125.20 on Fri, 04 Mar 2022 00:19:09 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms



Courtesy of the author

Indian Land Cessions In Michigan

(The treaties of 1821 and 1836 ceded the eighteenth and nineteenth-century Ottawa homeland. Although the remaining treaties were made primarily with the Potawatomi and Chippewa, the Ottawa formally signed them relinquishing all potential claims to Michigan lands.)

This content downloaded from
149.10.125.20 on Fri, 04 Mar 2022 00:19:09 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

once in Washington, the Ottawa negotiators struck a hard bargain.[15]

The text of the original 1836 treaty indicated that the Ottawa had no intention of leaving Michigan. They reserved territory, for example, surrounding their major villages in the northern portion of the lower peninsula which were outside of the direct line of American settlement, and provided that the proceeds from the sale of other lands should be used for the economic development of the reserved tracts. The first draft of the 1836 treaty reserved 142,000 acres in five tracts to be held in common, besides the rights to maintain residence on several large islands in Lake Michigan and Lake Huron. It also provided mission stations and schools; annuities payable in Michigan; the services of farmers, blacksmiths, and gunsmiths at key locations in the area ceded; a dormitory for Ottawa and Chippewa who visited Mackinac; and salt and fish barrels for their developing commercial lake-fishing business. Most important, it allowed the Ottawa and Chippewa continued subsistence and other economic uses of the ceded areas until they were surveyed, sold and settled. No date was fixed for terminating this use. Further, no mention was made of removal west of the Mississippi River or abandonment of the entire area ceded in the original draft of the treaty.[16]

The United States Senate on the advice of Senator Hugh L. White, Chairman of the Senate Indian Committee, amended the land tenure article in the original version of the treaty but left the other articles intact. White wished to "embarrass or disoblige President Jackson and his agents" by limiting important political patronage positions which usually arose from the establishment of permanent reservations, and in this he succeeded by making the Ottawa reservations only temporary.[17] At the end of the five years the Ottawa were to

[15] Even A. Hamlin, Jr. who initiated the visit to Washington clearly stated that the Ottawa wished to sell only a portion of their lands. The Baptist missionary Isaac McCoy who was present at the negotiations reported that this desire of the Ottawa was clearly stated at the proceedings. See Hamlin to Cass, 5 December 1835, NA, M234, 421:723; and Isaac McCoy, *History of Baptist Indian Missions* (New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1970), 494-95.

[16] Kappler, *Indian Affairs,* 2:450-455.

[17] Henry Schoolcraft, *Personal Memoirs of a Residence of Thirty Years with the Indian Tribes on the American Frontier* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, Grambo and Company, 1851), 538.

This content downloaded from
149.10.125.20 on Fri, 04 Mar 2022 00:19:09 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

surrender their reservations in return for a cash payment of $200,000 and land west of the Mississippi River, should they decide to move there.[18] Ottawa leaders then had provided themselves with sufficient capital to develop their skills in fishing and farming and to make a place for themselves in the expanding American economic and political system which demanded their territory. But Congress took from them the land they intended to use as their base.

By the revised version of the 1836 treaty, then, the Ottawa preserved their right to live in Michigan as long as they wished, but would lose their reserved land whenever the President chose to dispossess them. Ottawa leaders were not pleased with the Senate amendments but were subsequently persuaded to ratify them. This action was taken on the strength of Schoolcraft's verbal promises guaranteeing their usufructuary right to hunt indefinitely on ceded lands "with the other usual privileges of occupancy" until they were required for settlement. The Ottawa believed that their northern lands were not suitable for American farmers and that, even though the tenure of their reservations was uncertain, they could use those lands for many years. Despite the uncertainty of their tenure, then, the Ottawa believed that they had the time and resources to adjust their lifeways to the emerging American state.[19]

Despite the exertions of the Ottawa leaders and assurances of their local agent, removal was still a threat to the Michigan Indians. During the meeting called in July 1836 to ratify the Senate version of the Treaty of Washington, Ottawa leaders consequently petitioned the President saying that if they must move, they wished to be given lands in an environment more like their own, at the headwaters of the Mississippi River.[20] Perhaps the Ottawa leaders saw this as a means to forestall any possibility of removal by linking westward emigration to a northern Indian territory secured by future treaties with the Chippewa of Minnesota. One thing is certain: the leaders who

---

[18] Kappler, *Indian Affairs,* 2:450-455.

[19] Schoolcraft to Cass, 18 July 1836, NA, M1, 37:3; *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1839* (New York; AMS Press, 1976), 476-477; and Schoolcraft to Carey A. Harris, 27 February 1837, NA, M1, 37:168.

[20] Kawgayosh et. al. to the President of the United States, 14 July 1836, NA, M234, 402:236.

This content downloaded from
149.10.125.20 on Fri, 04 Mar 2022 00:19:09 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

had throughout the treaty negotiations sought to remain in Michigan, who signed the amended treaty only upon assurances of powerful government representatives that they would not be forced to move west without their express consent, and who fully appreciated the treaty's provision for usufructuary rights of the natural resources in their territory were not volunteering to leave Michigan.

The idea of a northern Indian territory west of Lake Michigan was not entirely new. As early as 1825 John C. Calhoun, who was Secretary of War during the administration of James Monroe, had proposed making the land west of Lake Michigan and north of Illinois an Indian territory for those peoples living in New York, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and Michigan. National and local conditions in the 1820s, however, prevented implementation of this concept. When Calhoun first presented the plan it was linked to the issue of slavery and branded as an attempt to block the westward expansion of free states so no action was taken by Congress to support it.[21] Schoolcraft again raised the issue of northern removal to a more narrowly defined country near the Falls of Saint Anthony in southern Minnesota during the negotiation of the 1836 treaty, but no provision was made for removal to such a location primarily because the government owned no land in this region on which the Indians could settle until the Chippewa treaty of 1837.[22] Even after a clearly defined territory was assigned for the plan, continuing hostilities between the Chippewa and the Sioux made it unwise to move the Michigan Ottawa and Chippewa to the region even in the 1850s.[23] Moreover, between 1821 and 1833 the Hudson Bay Company traders offered fierce competition to American traders who were unable to control the sentiments and economies of the local Indians in the regions of Minnesota and northwestern Wisconsin. Even as late as 1844 American traders had to contend with the British for the Red River trade.[24] It was not

---

[21] Prucha, *The Great Father,* 1: 245-246; George A. Schultz, *An Indian Canaan: Isaac McCoy and the Vision of an Indian State* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1972), 79.

[22] Schoolcraft to Cass, 30 March 1836, NA, T494, 3:362.

[23] Neumeyer, "Indian Removal in Michigan," 10.

[24] Rhoda Gilman, "Last Days of the Upper Mississippi Fur Trade," *Minnesota History* 44 (Winter 1970): 126, 131; Cass to James Barbour, 19 May 1826, NA, M234, 419:482; Cass to Schoolcraft, 21 August 1826, NA, M1,

This content downloaded from 149.10.125.20 on Fri, 04 Mar 2022 00:19:09 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

advisable therefore, to send more Indians to the region to become subject to British influence. Since the Michigan Ottawa adamantly refused to move from a woodland environment to the prairies of Kansas and since government officials continued to vacillate over the pros and cons of the northern Indian territory, the Ottawa secured the time to pursue their own anti-removal tactics.[25]

In carrying on their own cultural agenda between 1837 and 1839, two groups of Grand River Ottawa formed agricultural communities, the Griswold Colony in Allegan County and the Ottawa Colony in neighboring Barry County. Ottawa Colony was formed immediately after the signing of the 1836 treaty by the Ottawa at Bowting, or the rapids of the Grand River at modern Grand Rapids, where they associated with the Baptist mission of Leonard Slater.[26] The second community called Griswold Colony was formed by the Reverend James Selkrig in 1839.[27] The Ottawa plan was to avoid removal by moving toward America's vision of civilized living. The Ottawa of L'Arbre Croch followed the southern example and also purchased land at government land offices.[28] The Ottawa recognized "that lands held as are other Indian lands" had the most uncertain form of tenure. They responded by becoming property owners and taxpayers.

Missionaries and the incoming American settlers who respected the clergy proved useful allies to the Ottawa by helping them make land purchases, by providing the materials needed for intensive agriculture, and by organizing political support. In the case of the Griswold people, for example, the tactic of enlisting American allies began when they allowed the

---

66:519; George Johnston to Schoolcraft, 21 January 1827, NA, M1, 67:1; Johnston to Schoolcraft, 28 January 1827, NA, M1, 67:9.

[25] James Clifton, "Wisconsin Death March: Explaining the Extremes in Old Northwest Indian Removals," Forthcoming, 1986.

[26] McCoy, *History of Baptist Indian Missions,* 496-497; Johanna E. Feest and Christian F. Feest, "Ottawa," in *Handbook of North American Indians* (Washington: Smithsonian, 1978), 15:777-778.

[27] *Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections,* (Lansing: W. S. George and Company, State Printers and Binders, 1884), 5:381; and *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1839,* 513-515.

[28] Schoolcraft to James Schoolcraft, 20 May 1839, NA, M1, 37:684; John R. Kellogg to Schoolcraft, 28 May 1839, NA, M1, 46:409; Eshquaguenaby and Koossay to Schoolcraft, 10 December 1839, NA, M1, 47:727; and Esquagonaby and Kosa to Schoolcraft, 5 January 1841, NA, M1, 50:9.

This content downloaded from
149.10.125.20 on Fri, 04 Mar 2022 00:19:09 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

missionary, James Selkrig, who opposed removal and promoted "civilization", to place his mission near their village. They cultivated the relationship with their missionary much as they worked the soil near the mission and the fruits of their alliance clearly appeared when Selkrig used his influence to halt attempts to move his parishioners west of the Mississippi River.[29] The Ottawa also maintained relationships with secular organizations and private citizens. In 1837 the people of Griswold Colony forwarded a petition to the Secretary of War in which twenty local citizens, who were supportive of the Ottawa endeavor, stated their belief that the Indians would improve and become good citizens by remaining in Michigan. The petition thus asked that the Ottawa not be subject to removal.[30] This strategy of maintaining relationships and enlisting aid from Americans eventually paid large dividends.

By 1838 government officials realized that the Ottawa would never move west unless they were strongly pushed. Henry Schoolcraft, therefore, arranged for an Ottawa party to explore lands in Kansas in an effort to spur removal. The majority of Ottawa, however, were not willing to make the trip, and it was difficult to form a delegation. When Schoolcraft lit the tobacco pipe which he customarily used to open official councils, none of the L'Arbre Croch Ottawa would smoke, an act which he correctly interpreted as an open act of hostility. Schoolcraft warned them of the damage to their political relations with the United States and threatened to tell the President of their actions. These were serious threats. By virtue of his status as agent, Schoolcraft controlled the annuity payments from the treaty of 1836. If he were angry with a particular group of Indians, he could exclude their names from annuity payrolls and thus withhold badly needed cash. Since the President was the only person in the United States who could guarantee the Ottawa permanent tenure of their reserved lands, the Ottawa did not wish to anger him. The meeting halted abruptly, and the Ottawa leaders then met in private conference. That afternoon they appointed delegates to represent the Little Traverse Bay region on the exploring expedition. The Sault St.

---

[29] H. H. Cumming to A. S. Longring, 26 November 1849, NA, M234, 403:487.

[30] Joseph Wakoso to Poinsett, 9 January 1837, NA, M234, 442:417.

This content downloaded from
149.10.125.20 on Fri, 04 Mar 2022 00:19:09 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

Marie Chippewa, though, refused altogether.[31]

Only five of the twenty-four delegates who left Michigan that June were among the 147 chiefs listed on the pay schedule attached to the 1836 treaty which listed the rank and location of the recognized Ottawa leaders at the time. Only two of the five chiefs who went, Muckatosha (Black Skin) and Megisininne (Eagle Man), were first class chiefs who held respect and influence beyond the bounds of their immediate family and village. The remaining three leaders were heads of individual families. None of these delegates represented the entire Ottawa population; and they had no authority to make a commitment. The Ottawa delegates were not satisfied with the territory they saw, a land which, among other deficiencies, lacked maple trees for sugar. James Schoolcraft, the brother of Henry Schoolcraft, conducted the delegation. On their return, he pressured delegates to chose a tract of Kansas land and sign an agreement stating that they would move there. Although most of the delegation marked the "agreement," it was clear even to James Schoolcraft that they had no intention of migrating or living there and would do all in their power to prevent the move.[32]

In the fall of 1839 the Ottawa still resisted the idea of removal, and Schoolcraft noted that if the Indians believed removal imminent, the majority would go to Manitoulin Island on the Canadian side of the international border.[33] Schoolcraft sought to discourage the settlement of disgruntled Indians on

---

[31] Schoolcraft to Harris, 29 September 1838, NA, M234, 402:889; Henry Schoolcraft, "Private Journal of Indian Affairs, continuation of A, commenced at Mackinac 1 October 1837," Henry Schoolcraft Papers Microfilm Edition, reel 47, frame 30641; Schoolcraft to Harris, 1 March 1838, NA, M1, 37:422; Schoolcraft to Schoolcraft, 18 May 1838, NA, M234, 415:609; James Schoolcraft to Harris, 9 June 1838, NA, M234, 415:612; James Schoolcraft to Harris, 26 June 1838, NA, M234, 415:624; and James Schoolcraft to Harris, 18 [June] 1838, NA, M234, 415:620.

[32] Kappler *Indian Affairs,* 2:755; James Clifton, *A Research Report Regarding United States v. Michigan for the Native American Rights Fund* (Unpublished manuscript [1978], 20-24; Memorandum of an agreement entered into this 23rd day of August 1838 between the United States and the Ottawa and Chippewa tribes of Indians, NA, Record Group 75; and James Schoolcraft to Harris, 29 August 1838, NA, M234, 415:636.

[33] James Schoolcraft to Henry Schoolcraft, 1 May 1839, Schoolcraft Papers, reel 30; James Schoolcraft to H. Schoolcraft, 18 May 1839, NA, M1 46:375; Schoolcraft to T. Hartley Crawford, 4 April 1840, NA, M1 38:375; and Schoolcraft to Crawford, 15 July 1840, NA, M1, 38:296.

This content downloaded from 149.10.125.20 on Fri, 04 Mar 2022 00:19:09 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

the British side of the American border where (with British aid) they potentially could pose a military threat on the Michigan frontier. Schoolcraft thus informed the Indians that if they crossed the border for permanent residence, they would forfeit their share of annuity payments and treaty-specified goods. Schoolcraft also requested that the government regarrison Fort Mackinac to lessen the threat. The potential for emigration across the international border was heightened by the fact that Ottawa tenure to their reservations from the 1836 treaty would expire in 1841. Although many had purchased land in the vicinity of their villages, a greater number had not. Schoolcraft was concerned about where the homeless would go when their land was offered for sale. He continued his attempts to effect removal of the Michigan Indians to the west as a final settlement to the problem until he was dismissed from office when the Whigs came to power in 1841.[34]

Meanwhile in 1840, the Ottawa of Mackinac, with the aid of a Congregational minister, the Reverend Alvan Coe, circulated a petition asking that the government allow the Michigan Indians to maintain their reservations beyond the stipulated five year period. Commissioner of Indian Affairs, T. Hartley Crawford, responded that the United States might allow the Ottawa to remain in Michigan beyond 1841.[35] The Whigs, who were now in power and who had been vocal in their criticism of the Jackson-Van Buren removal policy, had not yet decided what their own stance would be on this issue.[36] In 1841 Reverend Coe went to Washington and again lobbied on behalf of the Indians' request to remain in Michigan. He then learned that the United States was contemplating a treaty for cession of the St. Peters country from which they could create a final home for the Michigan Indians. When all other avenues failed, Coe appealed to the elder statesman and Congressman, John Quincy Adams, for whatever aid he could provide. Adams

---

[34] Schoolcraft to James Schoolcraft, 20 May 1839, NA, M1, 37:684; Schoolcraft to Crawford, 20 May 1829, NA, M1, 37:684; Crawford to Schoolcraft, 8 June 1839, NA, M21, 26:192; Crawford to Schoolcraft, 26 July 1839, NA, M1, 47:103; and *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1840,* 242-243.

[35] Crawford to Schoolcraft, 4 November 1840, NA, M1, 49:415.

[36] Robert Stuart to Crawford, 18 October 1841, NA, M1, 49:415.

This content downloaded from
149.10.125.20 on Fri, 04 Mar 2022 00:19:09 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

claimed that the Congress might still permit the Indians to remain indefinitely.[37]

After Henry Schoolcraft lost his office as superintendent of the Michigan Indian agency in 1841, the Ottawa's fortunes improved. Schoolcraft was replaced by Robert Stuart, former agent of the American Fur Company at Mackinac. Perhaps Stuart's close ties with the fur traders who relied upon the labors, skills, and annuity payments of the Ottawa led him to oppose Ottawa removal. He also felt that the majority of the land which the Ottawa occupied in Michigan would not be settled for years to come. Stuart believed that the farming improvements of the Indians demonstrated their ability to become a part of American society and warranted their remaining.[38]

The change in federal administrative attitude greatly improved Ottawa chances of success in avoiding removal. After 1841 many American citizens in Michigan made known their support of the Ottawa cause. At Mackinac, the citizens formally asked the Indians if they wished to remain and what they disliked about removal. The Ottawa replied that they did not want to move; that they did not like the climate in the West; that they feared hostile western tribes; and that they did not want to abandon the privileges they had at their missions. At L'Arbre Croch the Ottawa again threatened to go to Canada, if pressured to remove, and formally requested American citizenship so that they could not be dispossessed.[39] Stuart once again inquired what the Commissioner of Indian Affairs intended regarding removal only to learn that the President was still contemplating a more favorable location in the north.[40] These repeated vacillations did not satisfy the Ottawa. In 1843 the Grand Traverse Ottawa and Chippewa again petitioned the President, asking that they be allowed to remain in Michigan and to purchase land.[41] In 1844, the Ottawa and Chippewa tried another tactic. They jointly petitioned the

---

[37] Neumeyer, "Indian Removal in Michigan," 60-61.

[38] *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1841,* 345-48.

[39] Ruben Turner to Stuart, 23 June 1841, NA, M1, 50:601.

[40] Stuart to Crawford, 25 June 1841, NA, M1, 38:508; Crawford to Stuart, 19 July 1841, NA, M1, 50:43; and Crawford to John Bell, 27 July 1841, NA, M234, 425:231.

[41] Aish-qua-go-na-be et al. to the President and Congress of the United States, 1843, NA, M234, 425:523.

This content downloaded from
149.10.125.20 on Fri, 04 Mar 2022 00:19:09 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

Michigan legislature for a permanent home in Michigan and American citizenship, arguing that their land was too cold for Americans but that *they* could make do on it. The Michigan legislature then instructed their congressional delegates to support the Indians' petitions.[42]

Between 1844 and 1855, the federal government made no effort to remove the Ottawa, but the Indians and their supporters continued to press the government for a firm, binding decision. In 1850 the Michigan legislature granted the Indians citizenship on the condition that they renounce their tribal ties. This clause was intended to guarantee citizenship to those metis or persons of mixed Indian descent, who formed the largest part of the population in northern Michigan.[43] Still, the Ottawa were able to turn this legal provision to their advantage.

The state government did not realize that the "Ottawa and Chippewa tribes" were a legal fiction invented by representatives of the United States. These peoples were comprised of bands formed of extended families who were related to one another by kinship, shared a common lifeway, language, and heritage, and held common interests. They had no tribal government, and hence the Ottawa could honestly and easily denounce a tribal affiliation; but they could not deny the vital cultural traits which unified them and which continue to do so to this day. No criteria were specified by the Michigan legislature to determine how this renunciation of tribal affiliation was to be made or verified, and thus almost any Ottawa who had Americans to vouch for them could become citizens.

In 1851, the Michigan legislature requested the federal government to make arrangements for the permanent residence of the Michigan Indians in the state even though their legal status remained vague. This request prompted the United States Senate to investigate the condition of Michigan Indians and the need for their removal. The Senate report concluded that the Americans in the vicinity of Indian settlements wanted the Indians to remain. Commissioner of Indian Affairs George Manypenny then requested an appropriation from

---

[42] *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1844,* 481-482.

[43] Richard White, "Ethnohistorical Report on the Grand Traverse Ottawas", (Unpublished manuscript for the Native American Rights Fund [n.d.], i, 60-62.

This content downloaded from 149.10.125.20 on Fri, 04 Mar 2022 00:19:09 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

Congress to secure the Ottawa's right to permanent settlement in Michigan.[44]

The Treaty of 1855 finally ended the threat of removal and secured the Ottawa reservations as communal holdings for five years, at which time the land was to be divided into privately held parcels for family owned and operated farms. For nineteen years, Ottawa leaders had exercised the utmost skill and determined exertions to escape removal; and, after this long-sought victory, they anticipated the enjoyment of their success.

Other Native Americans in the same difficult straits as the Ottawa entered into negotiations with the United States on much the same terms and lost not only their land and resources but found themselves located on the western prairies. Others, like the Ottawa, including Chippewa, Menomini, Stockbridge, Oneida, and many Winnebago similarly avoided removal "beyond the Mississippi." Still, the Shawnee, Miami, Delaware, Seneca, Wea, Piankashaws, Wyandot, the majority of Potawatomi and other tribes to the south of Ottawa territory left the woodlands for Kansas.[45] How then did the Ottawa escape the removal policy of the Jackson and Van Buren administrations? The answer to this question is multifaceted and includes geographical, demographic, economic, and political components.

The geography and demography of the Old Northwest gave the Ottawa substantial advantages. Until the opening of the Erie Canal to the western lakes in 1825, the population of Michigan territory grew more slowly than that of Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois. Settlers initially followed the Ohio and Mississippi rivers and then moved northward. With the opening of the Erie Canal, they quickly spread throughout the northern counties of Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois.[46] The United States,

---

[44] Peter Dougherty to Walter Lowrie, 4 June 1851, NA, M234, 598:15; and E. Murray to Luke Lea, 21 September 1851, NA, M234, 403:706.

[45] For a survey of sources on removal literature for these groups see footnotes 2 through 6. For those groups not specifically listed in the removal footnotes, the best single source is the *Handbook of North American Indians,* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1978), vol. 15.

[46] George N. Fuller, *Economic and Social Beginnings of Michigan: A Study of the Settlement of the Lower Peninsula During the Territorial Period, 1805-1837* (Lansing: Wynkoop, Hallenbeck, Crawford Co., 1916), 73.; Alec R. Gilpin, *The Territory of Michigan, 1805-1837* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press), 136; and John D. Haeger, *The Investment Frontier: New York Businessmen and the Economic Development of the Old Northwest* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1981), 40-41.

This content downloaded from
149.10.125.20 on Fri, 04 Mar 2022 00:19:09 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

then, was not besieged with petitions from settlers seeking preemption rights on Ottawa lands while the territory to the south was in high demand. Moreover, much of the Michigan Territory's prime agricultural land had been opened by treaties in 1819 and 1821 and vast tracts of this land still remained unsold as late as 1834.[47] In 1836 the Ottawa were under direct pressure to cede their northern lands and remove, yet in 1837 the American economy entered a long period of depression which slowed Michigan's settlement and allowed the Ottawa time to devise new strategies.[48] They had time, for instance, to demonstrate their capacity for economic adaptations in wage labor and market oriented agriculture. Consequently, they were able to form allies among local citizens, merchants, and missionaires.

Geographical location also had important political ramifications. The Ottawa maintained their ties to the British in Canada.[49] From the earliest days of direct American control, Michigan officials worried over the threat of hostile Indians perched on their border ready to support British military actions against the inhabitants of the territory. Few Michigan Ottawa permanently moved to Canada, but they regularly played on this American concern and threatened to leave Michigan for Indian settlements on Manitoulin and Walpole islands when pressures for removal became too intense.[50] This option was viable as late as 1840 when government pressures on Michigan Indians forced many Ottawa, Potawatomi, and Chippewa to move to Canada.

In a different fashion, the 1836 treaty provided the Ottawa with a powerful economic tool—annunities paid in hard money.

---

[47] Paul Gates, *History of Public Land Law Development* (Washington, D.C.: Zenger Publishing Co. Inc., 1968), 165.

[48] Peter Temin, *Jacksonian Economy* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1969), 134-136.

[49] Robert S. Allen, "The British Indian Department and the Frontier in North America, 1775-1830," in *Canadian Historic Sites: Occasional Papers in Archaeology and History*, No. 14, 1975); James Clifton, *A Place of Refuge For All Time: The Migration of the American Potawatomi into Upper Canada, 1830-1850*, Mercury Series No. 26, (Ottawa: National Museum of Canada, 1975); and Robert J. Surtees, "Indian Reserve Policy in Upper Canada, 1830-1845" (M.A. thesis, Carleton University, 1966).

[50] James M. McClurken, "Bands, States and the International Border: Nineteenth Century Factors In Ottawa Responses to the United Sates Removal Policy, 1812-1855" (Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Society for Ethnohistory, 1985), 1-21.

This content downloaded from
149.10.125.20 on Fri, 04 Mar 2022 00:19:09 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

Even though the Michigan fur trade declined in importance to both merchants and Indians, the Indians became market consumers who purchased their necessities with currency from the treaties. They were often the only cash paying customers in many parts of the territory. This source of cash was so important that traders in various regions of the state vied for the right to host annuity payments. They complained loudly when the Office of Indian Affairs attempted to change their location in order to protect the Indians from the abuses of alcohol, typical of annuity sessions, and from merchants who collected debts by force from the Indians.[51] The economic contribution of Ottawa cash to the Michigan economy became more pronounced during the Panic of 1837 and the subsequent depression years. During this economic depression, Ottawa silver and gold was an especially important mainstay for many of the influential traders in the state, and it was often sought after in later periods of prosperity. Since the traders had often become prominent figures on the developing frontier, they were unwilling to see this important source of income slip from their hands when they had the power to prevent it.[52]

For many years two special features of the 1836 treaty intensified the traders' lobbying to keep the Ottawa in Michigan. First, either at the expiration of five years or when the President determined that the Ottawa must leave their reservations, the Ottawa were to receive $200,000 as final payment for their remaining lands. Second, the 1836 treaty established a fund of $300,000 to pay the debts the Ottawa had acquired before the ratification of the treaty. After all verifiable debts had been paid to traders and other American claimants, a substantial balance of about $79,000 remained

---

[51] John Garland to Harris, 24 September 1837, NA, M234, 402:315; Noonday et al. to Schoolcraft, 20 October 1837, NA, M1 43:371; Schoolcraft to Harris, 16 November 1837, NA, M234, 402:482; John Mcdonell and John Clark to Harris, 17 November 1837, NA, M234, 402:362; Adam L. Roof et al. to the President of the United States, 19 April 1838, NA, M234, 402:706; "Indian Payment, Grab Game." *Grand Rapids Enquirer,* 2 November 1841; and William Lee to Stuart, 27 November 1843, M234, 403:332.

[52] James L. Clayton, "The Growth and Economic Significance of the American Fur Trade, 1790-1890," *Minnesota History* 40 (Winter 1966): 214-219. For a detailed study of the importance of the Indian trade to one trading establishment see Robert A. Trennert, Jr., *Indian Traders on the Middle Border: The House of Ewing, 1827-54* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press), 7, 49, 63-64, 100, 113-117.

This content downloaded from 149.10.125.20 on Fri, 04 Mar 2022 00:19:09 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

which the government invested in stocks for the Ottawa. Traders continued to sell the Ottawa goods on credit for many years after the treaty with the intention of having their generous claims for outstanding accounts reimbursed when these final matters were concluded between the government and the Indians.[53] Traders did not wish to see the people who were surety for their claims moved beyond their control, thereby lessening an opportunity for substantial profits.

The system of surveying the public domain and selling parcels on the open market provided the Ottawa with an opportunity to acquire acreage in the vicinity of their villages, especially those parcels on which their homes, gardens, fishing stations, and maple sugar groves were located. The potential for land purchase was enhanced during the depression since the Ottawa had cash in a buyer's market. Land sales in the United States dropped from a record high of 20,074,870 acres sold in 1836 to only 4,805,462 in 1837.[54] Because sales of public lands remained slow after 1837 and because the Ottawa had ample funds from the 1836 treaty settlement, they entered the real estate market and bought back small parts of what they had so recently ceded.[55]

As land owning taxpayers the Ottawa created an ambiguous legal position which has not been resolved to this day. On the one hand, they were subject to state and local laws protecting their rights to hold and use property. At the same time, they were wards of the federal government and subject to the stipulations of the 1836 treaty including its permissive removal clause. By eliminating the vulnerability of holding land under

---

[53] *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1840,* 415; Schoolcraft to Crawford, 23 April 1839, NA, M1, 37:658; Crawford to Schoolcraft, 11 June 1839, NA, M1, 46:505; Justin Rice to Stuart, 12 November 1844, NA, M1, 57:168; Samual Abbott to William Richmond, 12 October 1846, NA, M234, 426:176; Ewing and Chute to Peter Barbeau, 18 April 1851, Peter B. Barbeau Papers, 1834-1889, Ms. Bb-28, Box 2 folder 6, Steere Collection, Bayliss Public Library, Saulte Ste. Marie.

[54] Gates, *History of Public Land Law Development,* 145-46, 165.

[55] See, for example, McCoy, *History of Baptist Indian Missions,* 496-497; Noonday et al. to Schoolcraft, 29 March 1837, NA, M1, 42-291; Schoolcraft to Harris, 8 April 1837, NA, M1, 37:190; John Garland to Harris, 24 September 1837, NA, M234, 402:315; Schoolcraft to J. Schoolcraft, 20 May 1839, NA, M1, 37:684; and Kellogg to Schoolcraft 28 May 1839, NA, M1, 46:409.

This content downloaded from
149.10.125.20 on Fri, 04 Mar 2022 00:19:09 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

the uncertain tenure allowed by the treaty, the Ottawa hoped to avoid direct pressures for removal.[56]

By purchasing land, the Ottawa also responded to American demands that they become "civilized." The Ottawa eagerly adopted one of the key symbolic markers of that distinction—acquiring private property.[57] This accelerated a much earlier movement of the horticultural Ottawa toward the American ideal of the yeoman farmer. These efforts included the introduction of draft animals to increase the acreage under production and the addition of European grains, fruits, and vegetables to their traditional subsistence farming.[58] The Ottawa of the Grand River, especially those connected with missions, were most active in investing their annuities in land and adopting a program of rapidly intensifying agricultural production. The land they purchased was often registered in the names of missionaries, if the group was church affiliated, or in the name of chiefs and family heads, if the group remained religiously independent. In later years some Ottawa were particularly successful in building houses and barns, raising livestock, and growing crops for the market. The lands, though, were usually corporately held, and private ownership of these resources was not a predominant pattern until the 1860s.[59]

Unless the Ottawa purchased land and held the title, their material holdings were not safe. They could easily be taken by squatters who were almost certain of being forgiven their trespass by preemption laws.[60] The Ottawa at Bowting Village experienced the impact of preempionists immediately after the signing of the 1836 treaty. Their log houses, barns, and fields, developed with the proceeds of the 1821 Treaty of Chicago, were quickly claimed by Americans. Those people who did not follow the Baptist missionary to Ottawa Colony were forced to

---

[56] Schoolcraft to Harris, 8 April 1837, NA, M1, 37:190; Harris to Schoolcraft, 22 April 1837, NA, M1, 42:357; and Louis Wason et al, to His Excellency Stephen T. Mason, Governor of the State of Michigan, 2 July 1839, RG 44, B. 157, F.6, State Archives of Michigan, Lansing, Michigan.

[57] Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr., *Salvation and the Savage: An Analysis of Protestant Missions and American Indian Response, 1787-1862* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1965), 71.

[58] Feest and Feest, "Ottawa," 15:780-781.

[59] Slater to Schoolcraft, 5 December 1838, NA, M1, 45:411; *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1840,* 360-361; and *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1841,* 306-361.

[60] Gates, *History of Public Land Law Development,* 219-247.

This content downloaded from 149.10.125.20 on Fri, 04 Mar 2022 00:19:09 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

withdraw to an older and undeveloped village site down river from their valuable improvements.[61] The 1836 treaty like the 1821 treaty set aside funds for reservation developments and the lands were subject to preemption. Contrary to the covert intentions of the 1836 treaty, however, the Ottawa did not live on their allotted land and make improvements which would become the property of other beneficiaries after five years. They often purchased land in the vicinity of the resources their families traditionally laid claim to throughout the territory. Those who did not purchase land continued to rely upon their usufructuary rights to the resources of their diminished estate and lived on the land until it was surveyed and sold. This was especially true of the Grand River people who refused to move to the stipulated reserve on the Manistee River and continued to live at their old village sites throughout the 1850s.[62]

Even those Ottawa who purchased land for farming often continued a pattern of seasonal migration seeking natural resources, such as maple sugar, berries, and furs, for their support. These products were then sold in the expanding markets provided by settlers. Income from these resources was supplemented by cash wages from the growing lake fishing industry. Whether adopting a more intensive form of agriculture, exchanging gathered resources in the market economy, or engaging in seasonal wage labor, the Ottawa were adapting their skills to the American economy.

The Ottawa, then, fashioned their own "civilization policy" for survival in Michigan and set out to convince the missionaries, Indian agents, state officials, and even the federal government of their potential for becoming citizens.[63] This was the public relations and political dimension of their adaptation,

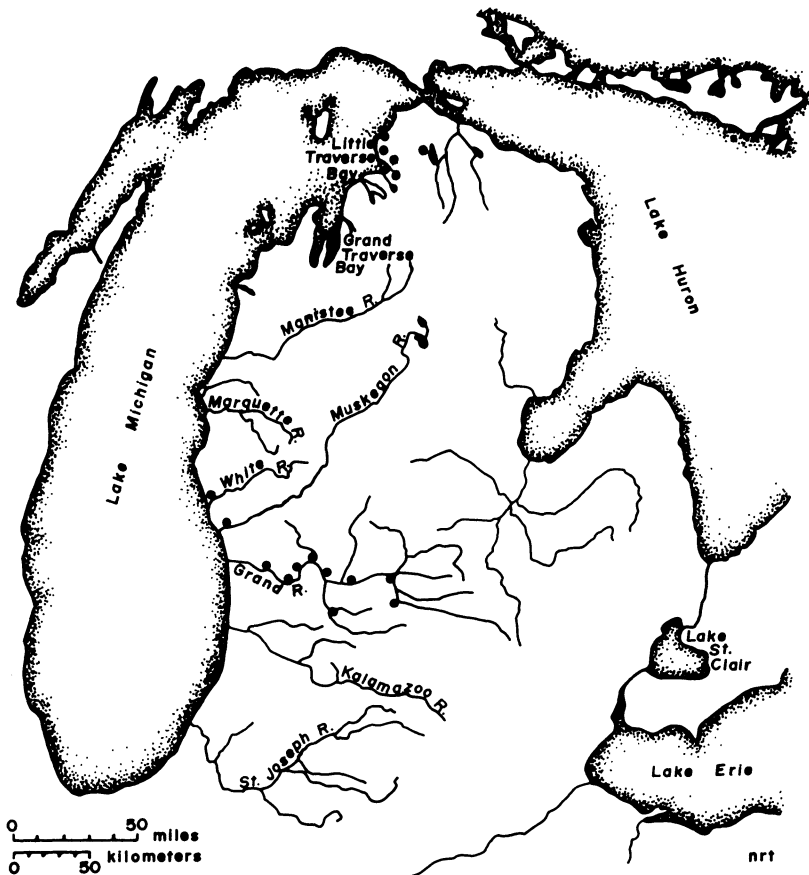
---

[61] Slater to Schoolcraft, 18 January 1837, NA, M1, 37:143; Harris to Schoolcraft, 3 February 1837, NA, M1, 37:109; S. Smith to Lucius Lyons, 13 February 1837, Lucius Lyons Papers, William L. Clements Library, Ann Arbor; Schoolcraft to Harris, 27 February 1837, NA, M234, 422:632; and Mcdonell and Clark to Harris, 8 June 1827, NA, M234, 402:357.

[62] Schoolcraft to Crawford, 23 May 1839; NA, M1, 37:688; Crawford to Schoolcraft, 19 August 1839, NA, M1, 47:297; and Crawford to Schoolcraft, 29 August 1839, NA, M1, 47:331.

[63] Wakaso to the President of the United Staes and the Senate and House of Representatives, 29 April 1836, NA, M1, 72:486; Harvey Clark to B. Butler, 9 January 1837, NA, M234, 422:416; *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1841,* 345-348; and Apakosigan et al. to his Excellency John Tyler, President of the United States, 20 May 1842, NA, M234, 424:765.

This content downloaded from
149.10.125.20 on Fri, 04 Mar 2022 00:19:09 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms



Courtesy of the author

Michigan Ottawa Villages In The 1820s

(Little Traverse Bay Villages from north to south were: Cross Village (Anamiewatigonwink) at modern Cross Village, Middle Village (Old L'Arbre Croche), L'Arbre Croche (Wekwitonsing) near Harbor Springs, Little Traverse (Agaming) near modern Petoskey. A fifth affiliated village, sometimes called Cheboygan but later referred to as Burt Lake Village, was located at Burt Lake west of the Little Traverse Bay Villages.

Other villages included the White River Village located near the mouth of White River in the vicinity of Whitehall and Montague and Muskego Village near the mouth of the Muskegon River. The Grand River villages from left to right were: Fort Village near the mouth of Crockery Creek, Muckatasha's or Black Skin's Village near modern Grandville, Bowting at Grand Rapids, Prairie Village at the mouth of the Rogue River, Nongee's Village at the mouth of the Thornapple River, Flat River Village at the mouth of the Flat River near Lowell, Maple River Village near Lyons/Muir, and Meshimnikoning or Apple Place near Portland. A final village known as Middle Village or Shingobeeng was located near the forks of the Thornapple River in Barry County. By the end of the treaty era, most of the Grand River villages had been abandoned. Their populations either became farmers near the old villages or moved to mission settlements and reserved lands.)

This content downloaded from
149.10.125.20 on Fri, 04 Mar 2022 00:19:09 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

and the success of some settlements became a major argument for allowing all Ottawa to remain in the state.[64] They built and maintained networks of friends and allies through which they petitioned the state and federal government for the status of citizenship—a status which many Ottawa leaders saw as the ultimate guarantee of security in Michigan. These networks included Americans who had married into the Ottawa kin groups and who maintained ties with them. They embraced also those traders who sought financial gain, the missionaries who sought to build church rolls, and a new wave of humanitarians from the East who wished to aid in their transition from nomadic hunters to settled, "civilized" farmers.[65] All of these groups needed the Indians for their own survival and exerted considerable pressure on the government on their behalf.

Ottawa political organization also contributed to effective avoidance of removal. They were organized into two primary geographical divisions, those residing between Mackinac and Grand Traverse Bay, and those in the south between the Kalamazoo and Muskegon rivers. The greater part of the southern population lived on the Grand River. Within these divisions the largest political units were lineages of shallow genealogical depth, or small groups ranging between 25 and 100 people who were related to each other through kinship. Each unit consisted of several nuclear families which were represented by a leading male who had acquired his status by exhibiting culturally valued leadership skills and by providing generously of his material wealth to his kin. Leaders of Ottawa lineages held uncertain power in that they could not dictate terms of agreements to their people because their own position was dependent on the consensus of their followers. Each lineage was politically autonomous, and decisions regarding cessions of territory could only be reached through consensual agreement among a majority of these units.[66]

---

[64] *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1844,* 311.

[65] One example of organized humanitarian aid to the Indians was the Western Michigan Society to Benefit Indians, which actively sought to act as a buffer between Indians and settlers, and to move the Indians down the path of civilization. See Clark to Butler, 9 January, 1837, NA, M234, 422:416; and Kellogg to Schoolcraft, 28 May, 1839, NA, M1, 46:409.

[66] Feest and Feest, "Ottawa," 15:782.

This content downloaded from
149.10.125.20 on Fri, 04 Mar 2022 00:19:09 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

Courtesy of the Michigan Department of State, Michigan History Division

Indian Camp, Carp River (ca. 1860s)

(This illustration depicts Ottawa life in the middle of the nineteenth century during the American government's civilization program. The picture shows a combination of native and American technology, the traditional house style surrounded by forest, and the use of American clothing.)

This content downloaded from 149.10.125.20 on Fri, 04 Mar 2022 00:19:09 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

Courtesy of the Grand Rapids Public Library

Burt Lake Indian Village (ca. 1890s)

(This photograph illustrates the degree to which Ottawa culture at Burt Lake and throughout Michigan changed to fit the American vision of civilization by the end of the nineteenth century.)

This content downloaded from
149.10.125.20 on Fri, 04 Mar 2022 00:19:09 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

Severally the Ottawa political divisions were difficult to manipulate or negotiate with; collectively reaching a firm consensus was next to impossible. The northern and southern divisions had differing interests and had to be brought to agreement before any legal action could be taken, a task that Americans found most difficult. Still, the Ottawa did make consensual agreements and presented a unified front when the occasion demanded it, as they did against the American removal policy. The Ottawa form of decentralized political organization contributed to their opposition to removal in still another way. Because the Ottawa lived in scattered, small clusters and were seldom visible as a large and potentially threatening opposition group, the people of Michigan were more willing for them to remain in the state than were citizens of Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi where large tribes were united with a highly sophisticated and coherent tribal political organization.

In summary, the Ottawa of Michigan were not passive victims of the removal policy. They identified the forces operating both for and against their remaining in Michigan and used them to their benefit. Geography was an ally in that their northern lands were not as quickly settled as those in the south, thus decreasing the political pressure for removal and giving them time to act. Their position near the international boundary between the United States and Canada allowed them to play on old American fears of military alliance with the British. Economically, it was important to a group of influential traders that the Ottawa remain in Michigan. The Ottawa also intensified their traditional subsistence pursuits of agriculture and fishing and entered the wage labor market in which their knowledge of Michigan's environment was helpful. Settlers who came into the region, including missionaries and other special interest groups, aided the Ottawa in their efforts to remain by exerting pressure on the United States government. The Ottawa's political organization served their interests because the diffuse authority of their leadership was more difficult for special interest groups, including the American government, to manipulate. Further, the Ottawa lineages were spread over the land in small numbers and thus did not appear to challenge the well-being of American settlements. Still the threat of removal sufficiently united the Ottawa bands that they stood as a firm block in time of

This content downloaded from
149.10.125.20 on Fri, 04 Mar 2022 00:19:09 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

impending crisis. The successful struggle of the Ottawa to remain in their homeland, by adapting to the expanding American economy and political system often on their own culturally defined terms, demonstrated that the Ottawa were the antithesis of the poor, downtrodden, and defeated Indians so frequently described in historical literature.

This content downloaded from
149.10.125.20 on Fri, 04 Mar 2022 00:19:09 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms