

The Meaning of Article 13 of the Treaty of Washington, March 28, 1836

Gregory E. Dowd

University of Michigan, Ann Arbor

Great Lakes, including the Ottawas and Chippewas. Great Britain was emerging as the most powerful nation on earth; its empire was in dynamic ascent. No one living across the St. Mary's River, the St. Clair River, or the Detroit River from the British empire could ignore it. The War of 1812 was just twenty-one years behind the negotiators of the Treaty of 1836. The potential of Indian alliance with Great Britain gave Michigan's Indians some bargaining strength; knowing this, America could not simply impose its will.

### **The Black Hawk War (1832) and Michigan-Indian Relations**

When the various delegates signed the Treaty of Washington, it had been only four years since the most recent war in the Great Lakes region, the Black Hawk War, 1832. This brief effort on the part of a band of Sauk and Fox Indians to resist their removal across the Mississippi--an effort disastrous to both the band and to the Sauks and Foxes generally--did not much affect Michigan. To be sure, the Great Sauk road, which Black Hawk and his so-called "British Band" had once traversed en route to British Fort Malden, ran through what is now Michigan. But Black Hawk's War was not supported by Great Britain, nor did he raise many Indian allies. Fought mainly in Illinois and Wisconsin, at little cost to American troops in terms of lives, few in the Michigan peninsulas were in danger. Schoolcraft remained calm throughout the affair. A war club, along with calls for alliance, apparently did circulate among the Ottawas and Chippewas, but far from accepting the call to arms, they sent the object to the American agent, and he forwarded it to the territorial governor. If the Black Hawk War meant anything in Michigan, it meant that relations with the Ottawas and Chippewas were generally good and worth preserving. This may have worked in Ottawa and Chippewa favor in 1836.<sup>127</sup>

---

<sup>127</sup> For the war club see George Porter to HRS, Detroit, Sept. 26, 1832, NAM1R68: 506.