

**A REPORT ON THE
1836 AND 1855 FEDERAL
TREATIES WITH THE OTTAWA AND
CHIPPEWA INDIANS OF MICHIGAN**

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Part 5: Implementing the 1836 Treaty

Significance of the Years, 1836-1841

No one understood the terms of the 1836 treaty better than the Michigan Superintendent of Indian Affairs, Henry Schoolcraft. Not only had Schoolcraft negotiated the treaty terms, but he was also the person who interpreted the Senate's amendments to the treaty in the Articles of Assent. As questions arose about the meaning of various parts of the final document, it was usually Schoolcraft who provided the initial interpretation, and it was Schoolcraft who was charged with implementing the treaty's provisions. Most of the important clarifications of the treaty's provisions occurred during the first five years after the treaty went into effect, and Schoolcraft, who was a meticulous record keeper, compiled an extensive record, unlike most of his successors, of the questions that arose and the decisions that were made.

In the course of implementing the treaty provisions, Schoolcraft encountered considerable opposition from the L'Arbre Croche Ottawas, particularly from Augustin Hamlin, Jr., who would challenge a number of his decisions. His determination to appoint many of his relatives, including his brother, James Schoolcraft, and his wife's relatives, the Johnston brothers, to government positions, while understandable from the point of view of obtaining literate subordinates who also spoke the Indians' language, as well as his partisan loyalty to the Democratic party at a time when its influence in Michigan was waning, drew increasing criticism from his detractors: Indians, disgruntled Métis relatives of the Indians, traders who believed that they had not been fairly compensated, and members of the Whig opposition in Michigan. Efforts to oust him from his position as superintendent mounted during the last years of his tenure, and as they did, Schoolcraft became increasingly intransigent. None of these efforts succeeded until the Whigs took control of the federal government in 1841. At that time, although none of the earlier charges against his administration had been proven, Schoolcraft was summarily sacked. His replacement, the trader Robert Stuart, was not inclined to maintain the voluminous correspondence that Schoolcraft did. As a result, the archival record becomes thinner after 1841, and our knowledge of what was occurring in treaty cession area correspondingly declines.