

# McKay Tower History



Mid 1700s

# People of the Grand



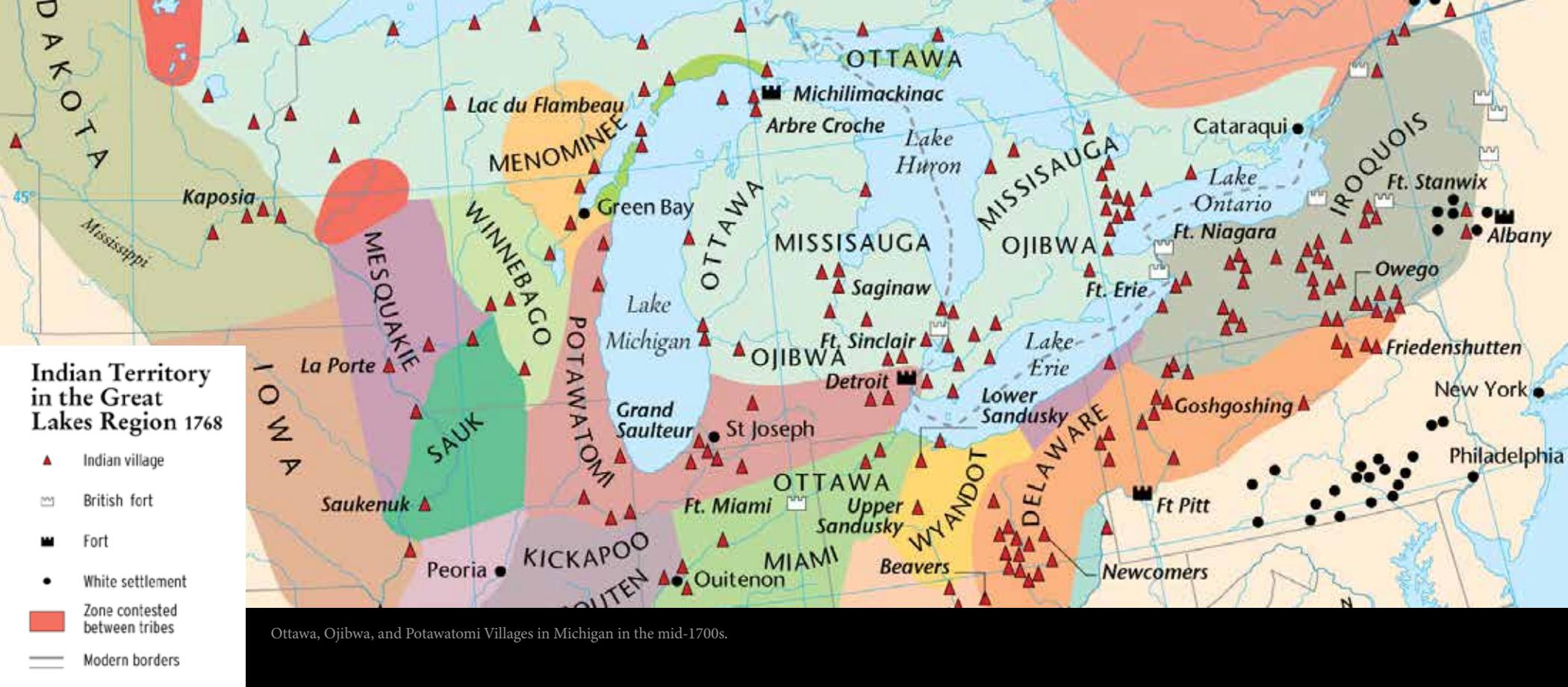
The Anishinaabe lived on the banks of the Grand River long before the first white settlers arrived from the east. “Anishinaabe” is an Indian language word meaning “the people,” to which the Ottawa (Odawa), Chippewa (Ojibwe) and Potawatomi (Bodewadmi) referred to themselves.

They called the Grand River “Owashtenong,” which means “the-far-away-water,” because it was the longest river in the territory.

Owashtenong provided bountiful fishing and game, supporting a large population, and served as a major transportation route for trade. Indeed, the word Ottawa (Odawa) derives from the Indian language word that means “to trade.”

During this era, the Grand River Valley was governed and controlled by a regional confederation of 19 Ottawa (Odawa) bands later referred to as the Grand River Bands of Ottawa. The Grand River Bands of Ottawa (“Grand River Ottawa”) had multiple villages located on the Grand River and on various tributary rivers of the Grand as well as other rivers in western Michigan encompassing the territory just north of the Kalamazoo River up to the Manistee River. The Grand River Ottawa shared jurisdiction over lands south of the Grand River with the Potawatomi.

“People of the Grand,” by Robert Bushewicz (Chief Preparator of Exhibits, Grand Rapids Public Museum), circa 1980. [Mural Painting]



In the mid-1700s, what is now the City of Grand Rapids was home to two Ottawa villages that were located on the west side of the Grand River separated by a quarter mile.

The first, known as Muckatosha's Village, was located about a quarter-mile below the rapids, in the neighborhood of what is now West Fulton Street, where Watson Street SW and Mt. Vernon Avenue SW intersect. In the late 1700s to early 1800s, Muckatosha's Village was said to have an average population of 700.

The second village, known as Bowting (meaning "the rapids") was near the bottom of the rapids and was led by the Ottawa Chief Nowaquakezick (a.k.a., Noonday) and had a population of about 500.

The Grand River Ottawa maintained gardens and other improvements at these villages and, in the winter months, traveled to traditional hunting and trapping camps in the southern and northern parts of their Territory.

Prior to 1790, the Grand River Ottawa sought to maintain control of their territory and the resources in their lands by fostering trading relations with the French, the British and the new Americans.

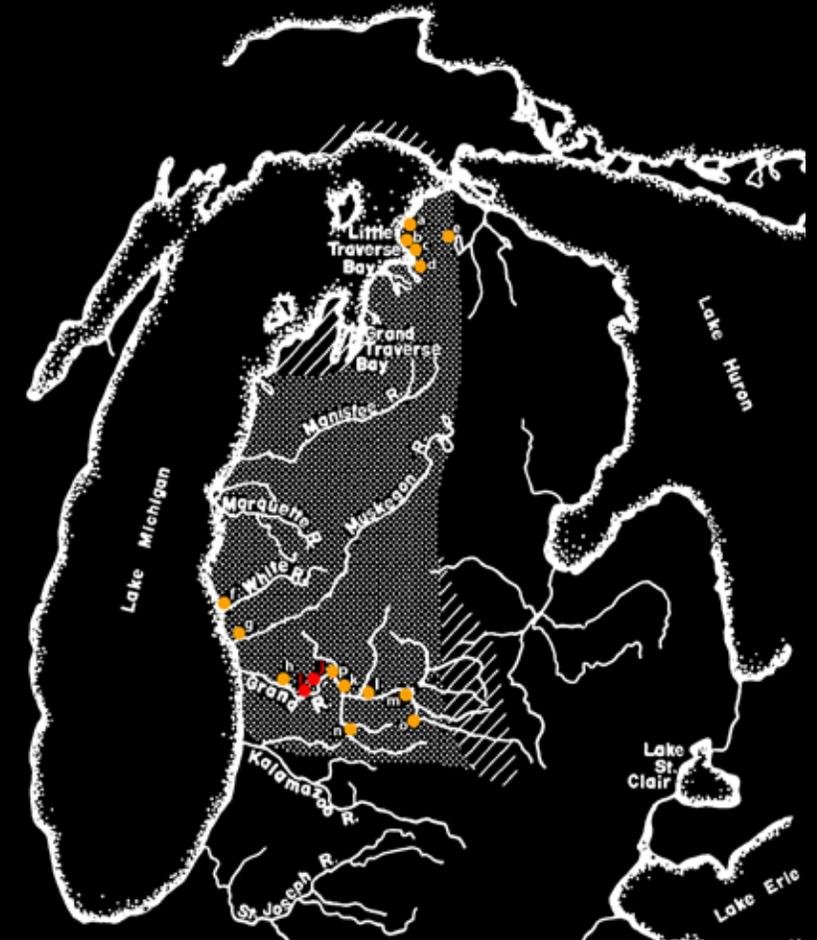




"The Signing of the Treaty of Greene Ville [sic]," by H.C. Christy, 1945. [Oil-on-canvas]



Painting of Grand River, circa 1820s, Robert Bushewicz, Chief Preparator of Exhibits, Grand Rapids Public Museum.



Map showing the Ottawa villages in Michigan circa 1812.

### Michigan Ottawa Villages

*Shaded areas indicate the range of Ottawa territory after the War of 1812. Cross-hatched areas are hunting and fishing territories shared with the Ojibwa.*

**Between 1812 and 1836, the Ottawa inhabited the following large, permanent villages between Mackinac and the south shore of Little Traverse Bay:**

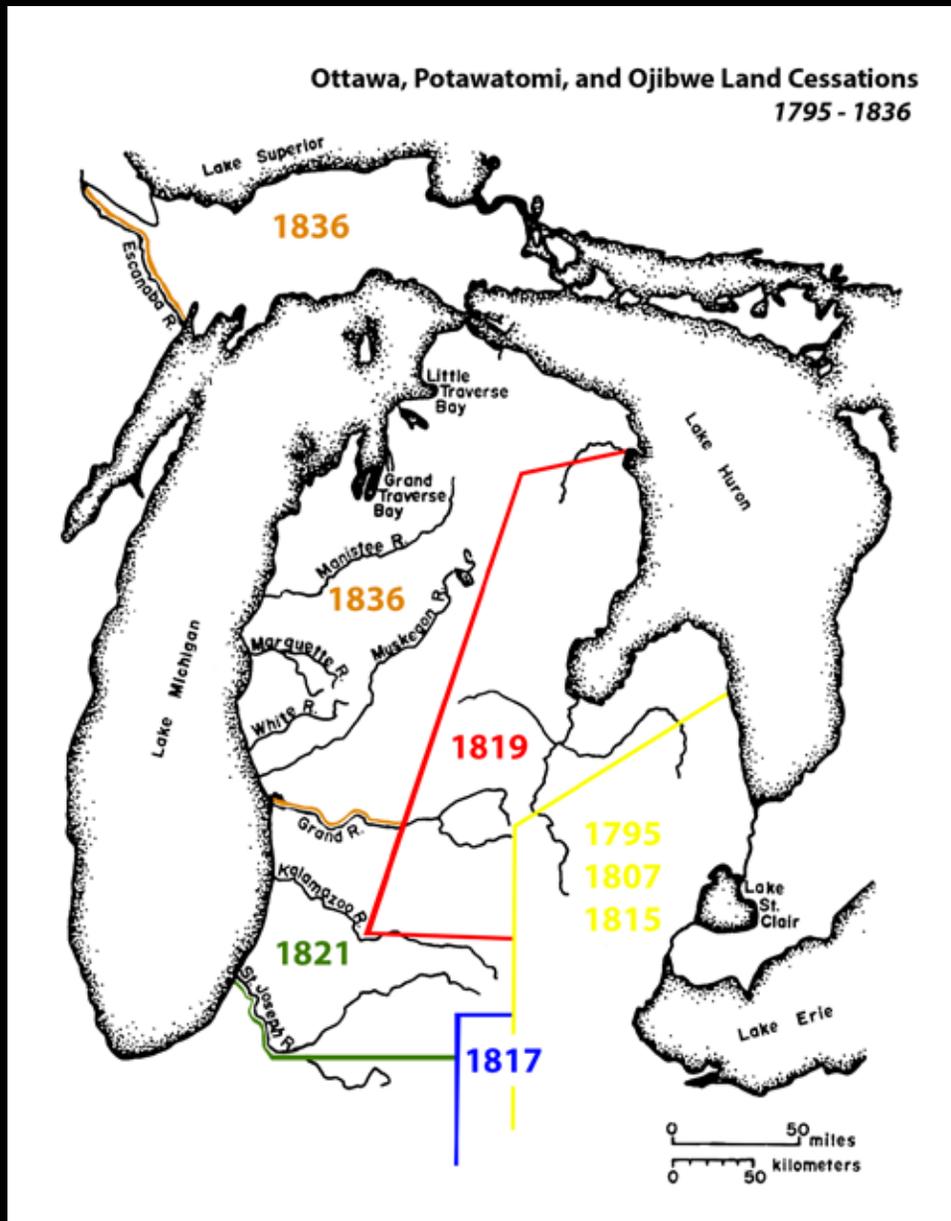
- a. Cross Village (Ah nu-ma-wau-tek-um-ung, or "Pine Tree Place")
- b. Middle Village (A-pi-tus-wa-ung, or "Half Way Place")
- c. Harbor Springs (Wip-kwi-um-ung, or "Bay Place")
- d. Peabody (Ee-c-dah-s ah-ung, or "Approaching Light Place")
- e. Cheboygan Village, later called Burt Lake Village.

**The southern Ottawa Villages were:**

- f. White River Village;
- g. Muskegon River Village;
- h. Fort Village;
- i. Makatah's Village;
- j. Rowntick ("Rapids"), or Nowapwakistik's Village;
- k. Nongee's Village (or Thornapple River Village);
- l. Cobmoosa's Village (or Flat River Village);
- m. Maple River Village;
- n. Middle Village (also called "Shengobeeng");
- o. Misheminkoning (or "Apple Place"/"Orchard");
- p. Prairie Village.

*The above villages were places of permanent residence. The Ottawa inhabited many other seasonal sites for collecting maple sugar, fishing, and hunting.*

*Adapted from McClurken, 1986, 50.*



Map showing the Ottawa, Potawatomi and Ojibwe land cessations between 1795-1836.

1821

# Treaty of Chicago

Not long after the Treaty of Greenville, the United States government sought concessions of lands by Michigan tribes to meet the demands of settlers.

The Treaty of Chicago was negotiated to seek a cession (sale) of land that included the Grand River Ottawa lands south of the Grand River and a large portion of the Potawatomi lands in southwestern Michigan, but retained hunting, fishing and gathering rights in the lands ceded.

Although most Grand River Ottawa chiefs and headmen opposed the sale of lands to the U.S., a few chiefs agreed to sign the 1821 Treaty.

Despite the objections of most Grand River Ottawa leaders, the U.S. government considered the treaty valid and enforced its terms. The primary Chief approving the treaty, Keewaycooshkum from Prairie Village near the confluence of the Grand and Rogue Rivers, was widely condemned for acting outside his authority and was reportedly either exiled to the Manistee River or executed as a result of his actions.

In Testimony whereof, The said Lewis Cass and Solomon Sibley, Commissioners as aforesaid and the Chiefs and Warriors of the said Ottawa, Chippewa & Potawatamie Nations have hereunto set their hands at Chicago aforesaid this 29<sup>th</sup> day of August in the Year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and twenty one.

In presence of-

Alex. Wolcott Jr. Ind. Agent

Dr. B. Williams Adj. Gen. M. M.

G. Godfrey Indian Agent

W. W. Rogers Indian Agent

James Pease

J. Curry P. Hunt.

Phillip M. West

Lewis Cass

Solomon Sibley

Kewagoushecum <sup>his</sup> mark

Nokawjegaun <sup>his</sup> mark

Kee-to-aw-bee <sup>his</sup> mark

Metchi-mi-chi-na-wa <sup>his</sup> mark

Ep-pe-san-se <sup>his</sup> mark

Kay-see-see <sup>his</sup> mark

Mea-put-to <sup>his</sup> mark

Ottawa

One of the signature pages from the 1821 Treaty of Chicago.

Under the terms of the Treaty, the U.S. government was to furnish the Grand River Ottawa with a teacher, blacksmith, cattle, metal tools, oxen, plows to clear the land, government-supplied provisions and other resources to be located upon a square mile of land for mission purposes for 10 years; however, due to opposition from Chief Muckatosha, who opposed the Treaty's validity, implementation of these terms was delayed.

Finally, at the request of Chief Nowaquakezick, Isaac McCoy established the first Baptist mission in 1826 on the west side

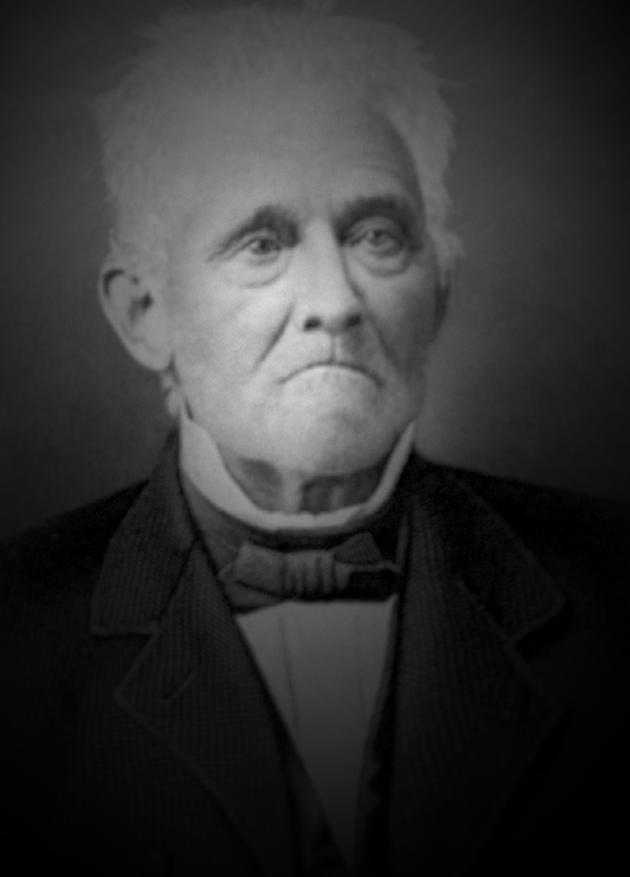
of the Grand River, at the foot of the rapids, near Chief Nowaquakezick's village.

One possible reason why Chief Nowaquakezick was so friendly to McCoy could have been that he was trying to protect his people from a future dominated by Americans by securing access to the resources and political support provided by the mission.

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1826

# Grand River Settlement



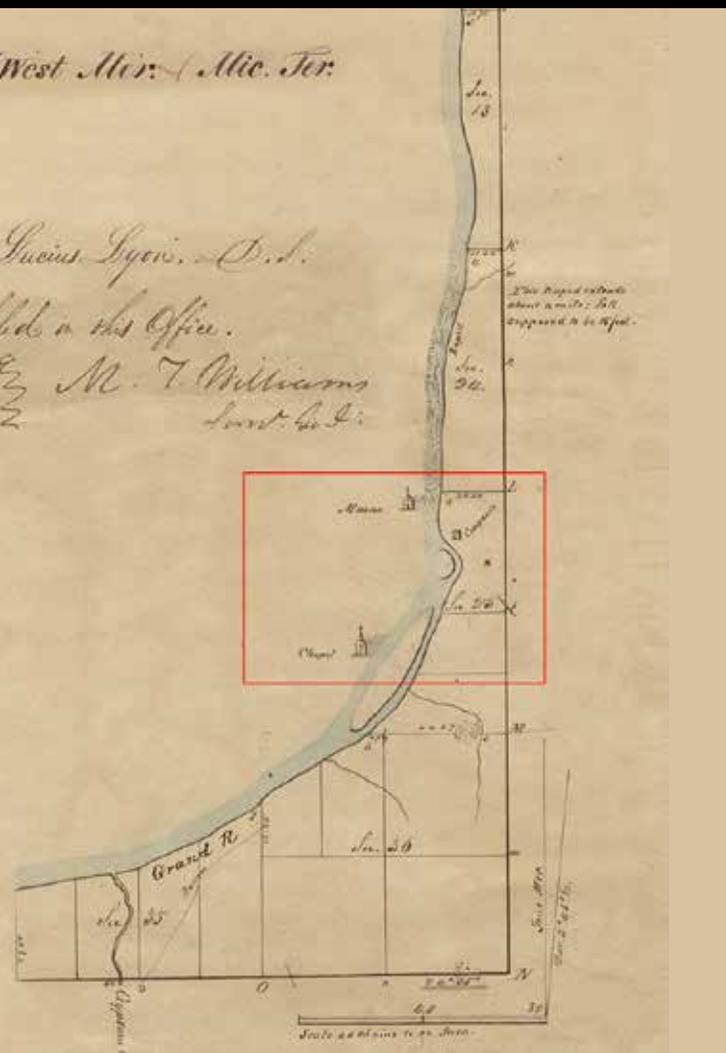
In November 1826, Louis Campau and several other French-speaking individuals settled on the east side of the Grand River, opposite the mission, and began operating a trading post with the Native Americans of the area. Campau was reported to have had an excellent relationship with Chief Muckatosha, who aligned his Village with Catholic missionaries.

By 1827, McCoy's mission compound was 160 acres and had several log houses (some with plank floors and glass windows), a sawmill financed with Treaty funds, a farm, agricultural tools and fenced pastures for the 55 head of cattle supplied by the government to begin Ottawa herds.

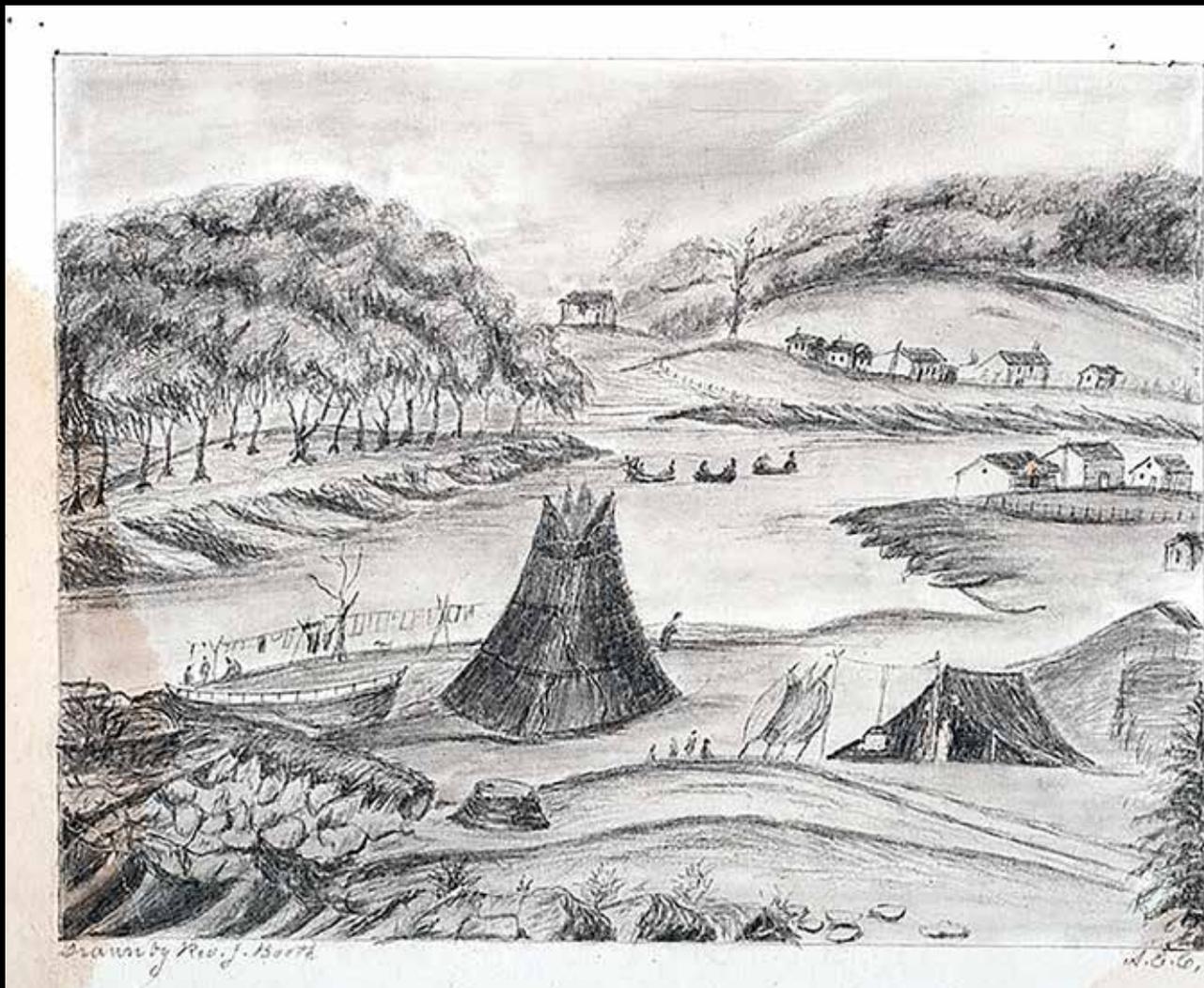
Living on the premises were non-Indian farmers who were to teach the Ottawa "American-style" agricultural practices, carpenters to build their houses and a missionary, Leonard Slater, to minister to their spiritual needs and supervise mission operations.

Ottawa people from other villages, including Muckatosha's, made similar efforts to adapt to the new political and economic realities in order to retain control over their homelands.

Louis Campau, circa 1870



Survey of the Grand River at the rapids. Reprinted from "April 1831 Survey," by L. Lyon, 1831.



Working around the drawing clockwise: The single cabin on the hill between the trees belonged to Chief Noonday; the collection of houses on the far side of the river is the mission; the three buildings at "three o'clock" are Louis Campau's trading post; an Indian wigwam, shelter, and canoe are in the foreground; and island #1 is at "nine o'clock." Indian canoes are on the river and women appear to be washing clothes near the wigwam. Areas on both sides of the river have been fenced (Drawing by Baptist Missionary John Booth, 1831).

1833

## The Guild Family

In 1833, Joel Guild moved his family from New York to Grand Rapids, purchasing the site of the present day McKay Tower from Louis Campau for \$25.

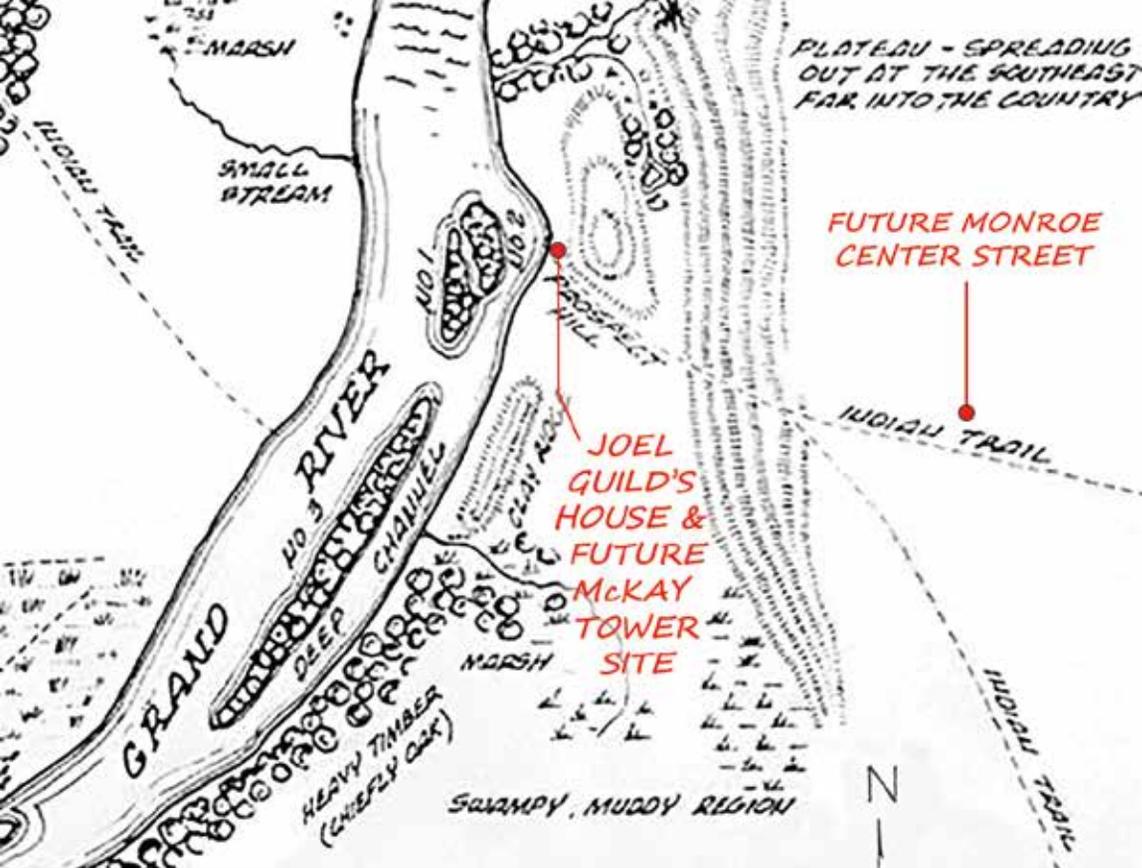
It took Guild roughly 10 weeks to build his 16 x 26-foot house. It was the first frame house in Grand Rapids, and the lumber for it

was produced at the sawmill located on the Ottawa Mission. Guild and his family moved into the house on Aug. 31, 1833.

Joel Guild held the first township election, consisting of only nine voters, at his residence on Apr. 04, 1834.

Engraving of Joel Guild's house built on the spot of the future McKay Tower - circa 1833.



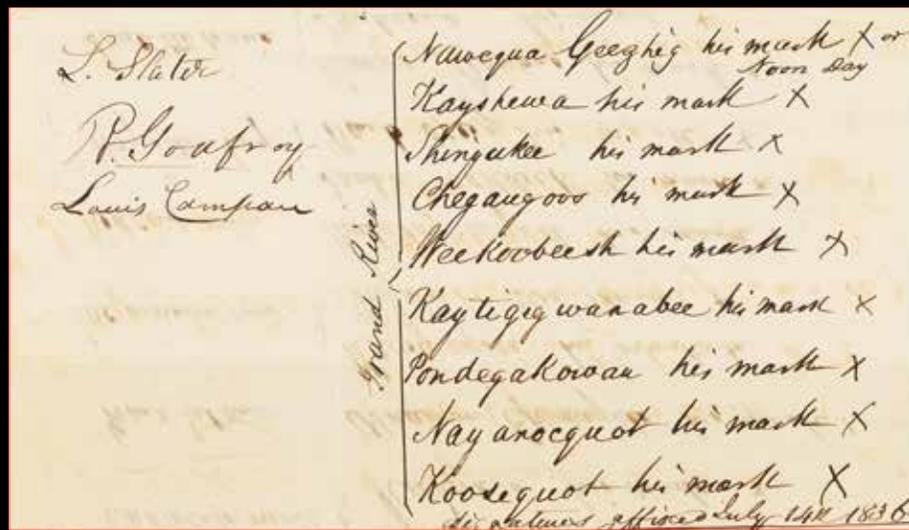


1836

As new settlers persistently moved into the Michigan Territory and continued encroaching on Grand River Ottawa lands, pressure built to seek another large cession of land from the Grand River and other Ottawa and Ojibwe Bands to the north.

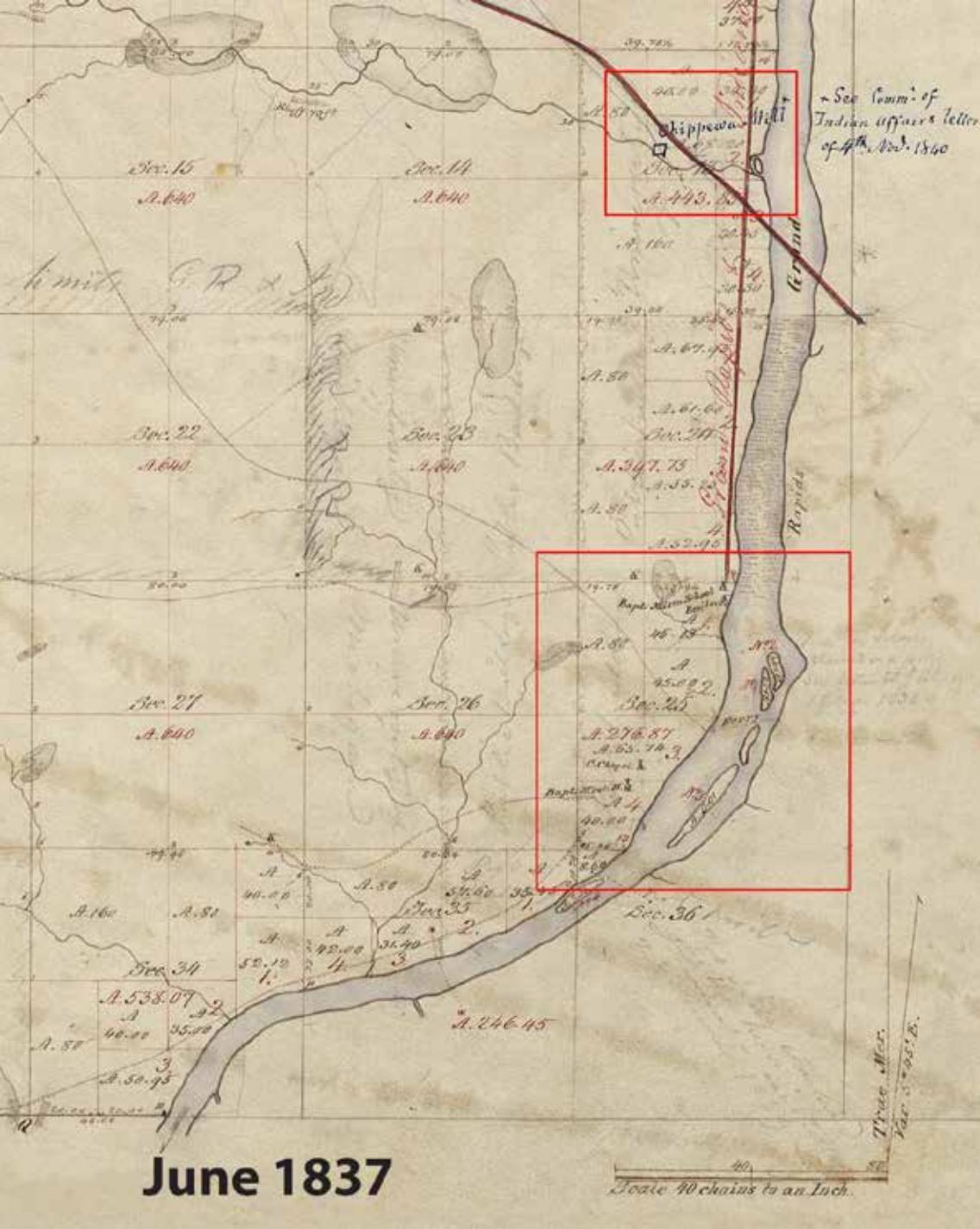
Knowing the Grand River Ottawa in particular were opposed to further land cessions, the United States negotiators brought the delegation of chiefs and headmen from the Ottawa and Ojibwe Bands to Washington, D.C., to conduct these negotiations under circumstances intended to pressure those Leaders away from the support of their communities.

The resulting cession of lands in the 1836 Treaty of Washington dramatically changed the lives of the Grand River Ottawa.



(top) Map of the Grand River rapids area before settlement. Created from 1831 and 1837 land survey records, as drawn by E.C. Swanson.

(bottom) One of the signature pages from the 1836 Treaty of Washington.



Grand River Ottawa village sites and homes were quickly claimed by new settlers and land speculators. The 1836 Treaty also included language which contemplated that the Grand River Ottawa would relocate on lands that were not sold (were “reserved”) by the Ottawa – a reservation on the Manistee River.

Most Grand River Ottawa refused to leave their homes along the Grand River. A large number, however, were forced to leave their homes and improvements behind, including those the Baptist Mission helped them establish. For this reason, a number of Grand Rapids settlers received ready-made houses, farms and even a working sawmill, all at Ottawa expense.

The Ottawa did not sit idly by and let the new settlers run their affairs. They actively worked to make a place for themselves in the new American economy. They also used annuity money from the cession of their lands to purchase property that became available in and around their former villages as it came on the market for public sale.

As Indians, they were still subject to treaty provisions, including the clause contemplating their removal to a reservation on the Manistee River; however, as landowners, they had unchallengeable rights to enjoy the use of their property, which implied the right to remain in Michigan and prevent a future that involved permanent removal.

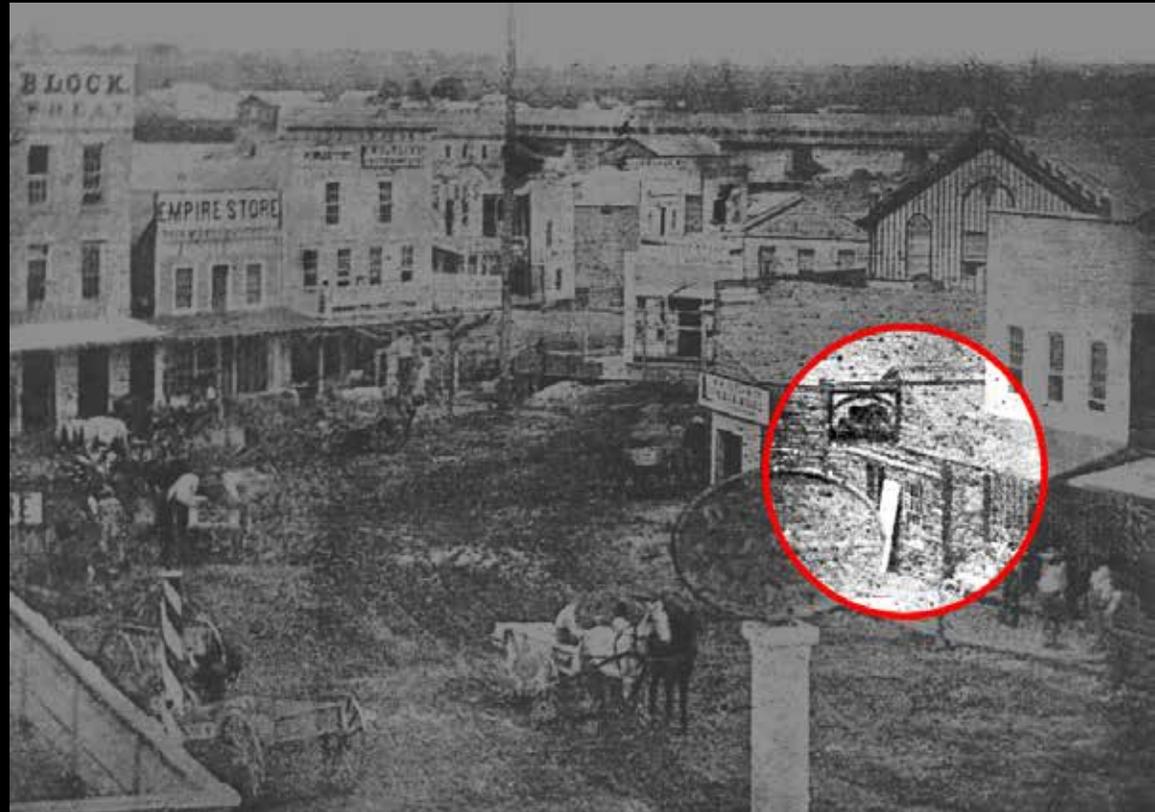
Survey of the Grand River at the rapids. Reprinted from “June 1837 Survey,” by N. Brookfield, 1837.

1852

# The Evolution of Guild's Property

Sometime after 1852, Joel Guild's house was replaced by a small frame building occupied by Joseph Houseman, father of Henry L. Houseman of the former clothing firm Houseman and Jones that used to operate on Monroe Center Street. A short time after, a two-story frame grocery store operated by Alma Bradford was built. Then, a small frame building used by David S. Berry as a saloon and restaurant with a gambling annex was built.

A daguerreotype photo of "Grab Corners," later called Campau Square in Grand Rapids, taken in 1852. On the right, circled in red, a dark swinging sign of a bull denotes a meat market in the building that Joel Guild constructed as his first village residence in 1833.



1855

# The Treaty of Detroit

## Grand River Bands.

Ke, bau, nay, ge, ghuik Chief

Shaw, gwaw, bau, mo Chief

Aish, ke, bau, gosh, 2<sup>nd</sup> Chief

Nay, waw, goo Chief

Ke, be, ne, seh, Chief

Maw, be, gay, kake Chief

Ke, ne, we, ge, ghido Chief

Men, daw, waw, be Chief

Maish, ke, aw, sho Chief

Pay, Shaw, se, gay, Chief

Pay, bau, nie, Headman

Pe, go, Chief

Chung, gwosh, Chief

Shaw, be, quo, ung, Chief

Andrew J. Blackbird, Headman

Ke, sis, swaw, bay, Headman

Kaw, te, naish, cum, Headman

his + mark, seal,

Part of the Ottawa's efforts involved negotiation of a new Treaty, the 1855 Treaty of Detroit, which was intended to provide a permanent homeland by reserving lands for the Grand River Ottawa in what are now Muskegon, Oceana and Mason Counties.

Unfortunately, the terms of that Treaty were never fully, nor properly, implemented by the United States and many Grand River Ottawa families were denied lands in those reservations.

As a result of these dynamics, Grand Rapids has since Treaty times continued to have a significant population of Grand River Ottawa people who continue to advocate for the rights and interests of the Grand River Bands.

One of the signature pages from the 1855 Treaty of Detroit, including Chief Maish-Ke-Aw-She, of which Ronald Yob, the current Tribal Chairman of the Grand River Bands of Ottawa Indians, is a direct descendant.

1865 – 1914

# The Changing Face of Campau Square

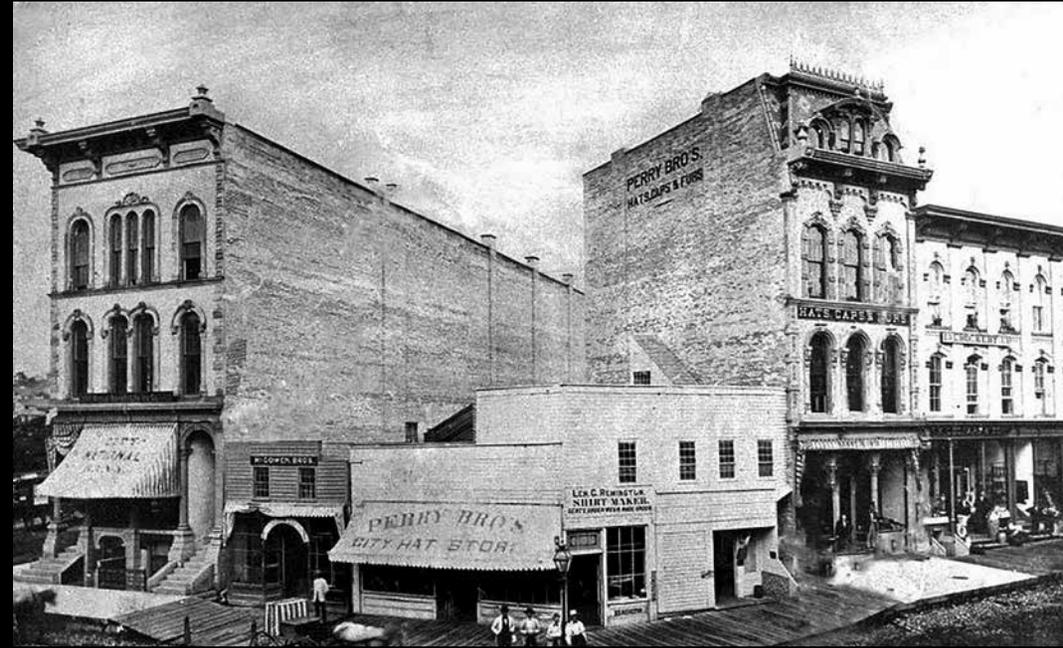
On Feb. 17, 1865, the City National Bank was formed. It was built sometime in the mid-1860s on the corner of Monroe and Pearl.

At some point between the years of 1873-1874, the smaller buildings at Campau Corner were removed. These two buildings were McGowan Brothers Meat Market, owned by Almeron & John McGowan, and Remington's Custom Shirts.

In 1874, Earner Nellis and James L. Moran, the latter being Grand Rapids' first superintendent of police, designed and built what would become the Wonderly Building.

Sometime in 1881, both Nellis and Moran passed away. Their widows sold the building to James H. Wonderly, who renamed it after himself and eventually added two stories.

In 1890, J.H. Wonderly worked with architect Sidney J. Osgood to renovate and beautify his six-story building to include two towers.



Campau Square - circa mid-1860s



The National City Bank and Wonderly Building - circa 1908



Grand Rapids National City Bank - circa 1914

1914

## The Grand Rapids National City Bank

In 1914, the Grand Rapids National City Bank (an entity created between the 1910 merger of the Grand Rapids National Bank and the National City Bank) acquired the Wonderly Property with the intent of running both itself and its auxiliary, the

City Trust and Savings Bank, in one large building facing Campau Square.

The bank and the Wonderly Building were both demolished in 1914 to pave the way for the first four stories of the current McKay Tower structure.

Construction of the new building was slated to begin on July 1, 1914. It was designed in such a style to imitate the "new Chicago banks" of the era.

The Grand Rapids National City and the City Trust and Savings Banks began occupying their new home the following June.

1925

# Construction of the Tower Begins

On Oct. 1, 1925, construction work was scheduled to begin for the next 14 stories of the renamed Grand Rapids National Bank's new tower. It was estimated that 600 tons of steel would be required for this new addition.



Construction of Grand Rapids National Bank Tower - circa 1925-1926.



Construction of Grand Rapids National Bank Tower - circa 1925-1926.

1926

# Greater Grand Rapids of the Future

GRAND RAPIDS NATIONAL BANK AND BUILDING SECTION

**The Sunday Herald**

GRAND RAPIDS NATIONAL BANK AND BUILDING SECTION

GRAND RAPIDS, MICH., SUNDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 3, 1926.

## A Dedication

**G**RAND RAPIDS has just celebrated the one hundredth anniversary of its founding by Louis Campau. For sixty-one years of that time, the Grand Rapids National Bank has been a factor in the industrial and commercial progress of Grand Rapids and in the building of this ideal home city, which we know as "A good place to live." Receiving its charter in 1865, this bank has grown in strength and prestige to become the leading commercial banking institution in Western Michigan.

And now as Grand Rapids looks away from its century of history to the decades yet to come, the Grand Rapids National Bank, as an expression of the confidence it reposes in our city's progress, has completed its splendid 16-story home on Campau Square, dedicating it to the Greater Grand Rapids of the future.

*Such a building is truly a public institution, having as it does such a broad representation of commerce, trade and the professions under one roof. It is with this thought in mind that this section is presented to the people of Grand Rapids and Western Michigan.*



On Oct. 3, 1926, in a special section of The Sunday Herald, the Grand Rapids National Bank dedicated its newly completed tower to the "Greater Grand Rapids of the future."

In 1929, the Grand Rapids National Bank utilized the authority of The National Banking Act of 1863 (and subsequent legislation) to print national currency.



National currency (\$10, \$50 and \$100 denominations) printed at the Grand Rapids National Bank - Series 1929.



1930

## The Great Dome

On April 19, 1930, the Grand Rapids National Bank lit its new “great dome of red light” for the first time.

At the time, it was thought to be the largest neon-lighted beacon in the United States. It cost \$18,000 to install and was projected to cost \$55 per month to operate.

1933

# The Great Depression



In March 1933, the Grand Rapids National Bank failed because of the Great Depression. It was one of six banks in the city that was forced into reorganization or liquidation.

The National Bank of Grand Rapids was established in the tower in 1933 after the failure of the Grand Rapids National Bank, and reportedly closed 2 years later.

This image shows the National Bank of Grand Rapids (see sign on the side of the building) as operating in the tower - circa 1933-1935.

1942

# Frank McKay

In 1942, Frank McKay, a well-known businessman and State of Michigan Treasurer (1925-1931) purchased the former Grand Rapids National Bank building and renamed it McKay Tower.

When Frank McKay died in 1965, he willed his tower to the University of Michigan. In 1986, the University acquired full ownership under the terms of the McKay wills.



(left) Frank McKay sitting at his desk.

(right) The tower roughly a year before Frank McKay purchased it - circa 1941.



McKay Tower - circa late 1980s.

2000 – 2012

## New Owners

When the economy was right in the year 2000, the tower was sold to Greystone Associates of Skokie, Illinois, so that the university could gain the most for the property and put the proceeds into an endowment for medical research, as the late Frank McKay intended.

In April 2006, Mark Roller of Spring Lake purchased McKay Tower through McKay Tower Partners, LLC.

In May 2012, Jonathan Borisch, principal with Steadfast Property Holdings, LLC, purchased McKay Tower.



The Ballroom at McKay, circa 2022. Photo courtesy of Russ Climie, Tiberius Images.

2012  
**The Ballroom**

At the end of 2012 and early into 2013, Borisch renovated the former Grand Rapids National Bank lobby and converted it into the Ballroom at McKay.

2013

# A Brighter Beacon



On Aug. 10, 2013, Borisch decided to restore the historical dome on top of McKay Tower, replacing the screw-in incandescent bulbs with roughly 1,200 small LEDs capable of glowing in a variety of colors and patterns as well as producing multiple color-changing effects and animated images.



(top) Close-up of McKay Tower's dome - January 2022. Photo courtesy of Nathan Ruffer, Waséyabek Development Company, LLC.

(bottom) McKay Tower's dome stands out as a beacon on the Grand Rapids skyline. Photo courtesy of Neebeesh Elliot, owner of Eagle Flight Drones.

2020

# Gun Lake Investments & Waséyabek Development Company

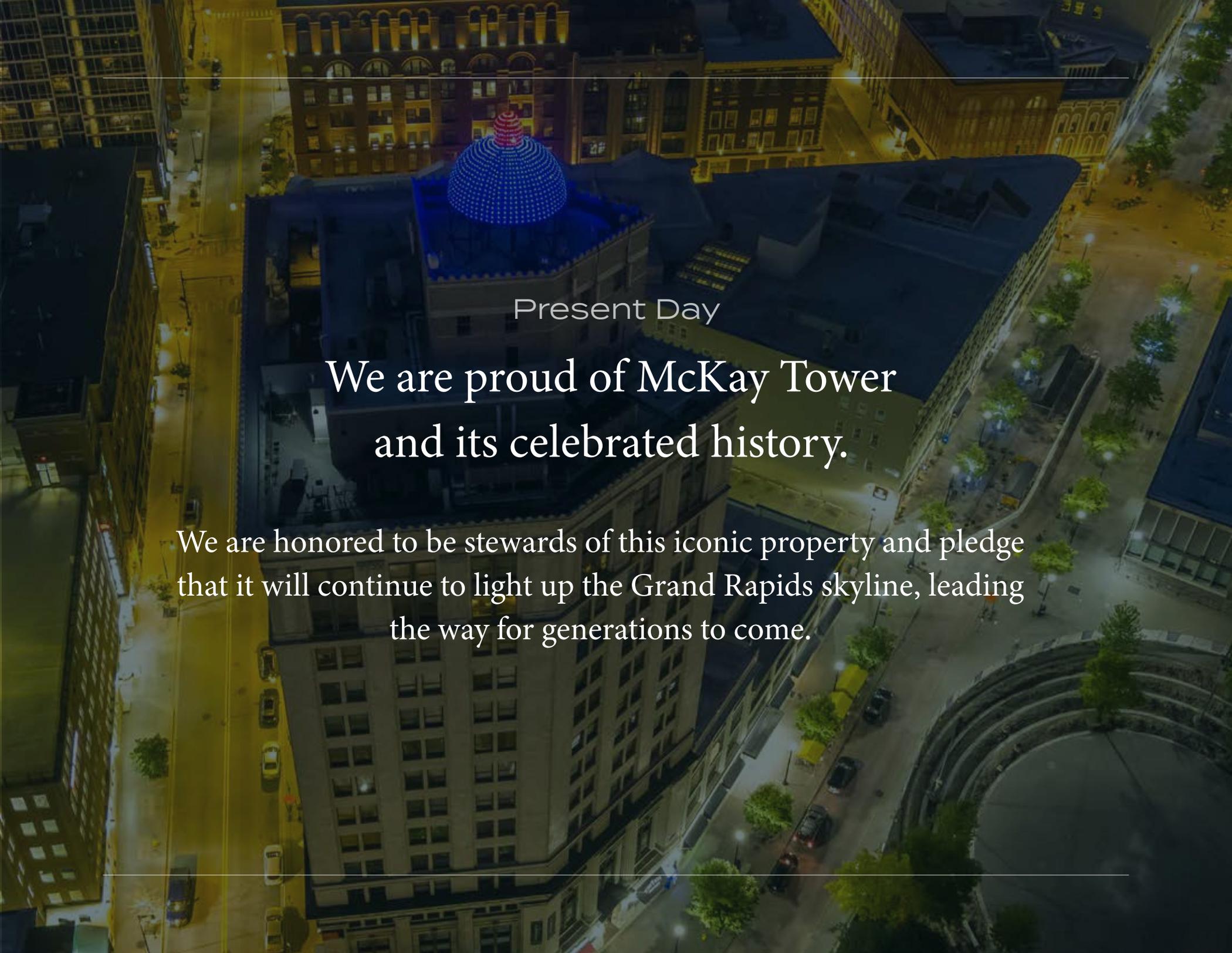
On Jan. 15, 2020, the Match-E-Be-Nash-She-Wish Band of Pottawatomis Indians (a.k.a., the Gun Lake Tribe) and the Nottawaseppi Huron Band of the Potawatomi (NHBP) purchased McKay Tower.

The acquisition represents a rare co-investment by the non-gaming economic development entities of two Michigan Native American tribes (Gun Lake Investments and Waséyabek Development Company, respectively).

Michigan's Mergers and Acquisition (M&A) community recognized the significance of the McKay Tower acquisition by awarding GLI and WDC with the 2021 MiBiz 8th Annual Mergers and Acquisitions Real Estate + Development Deal of the Year!

Sergeant Major, Doug Taylor, NHBP Tribal Historic Preservation Officer, offers a blessing during the opening ceremony marking the public announcement of the Gun Lake Tribe and the NHBP acquiring McKay Tower in January 2020. Photo courtesy of Russ Climie, Tiberius Images.



An aerial night photograph of the McKay Tower in Grand Rapids, Michigan. The building's roof is illuminated with a large, glowing blue and red light display that resembles a stylized American flag. The surrounding city streets are lit up, and other buildings are visible in the background.

Present Day

We are proud of McKay Tower  
and its celebrated history.

We are honored to be stewards of this iconic property and pledge  
that it will continue to light up the Grand Rapids skyline, leading  
the way for generations to come.

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Thanks also to the Grand Rapids Public Library for their assistance in locating and providing several of the local history sources.

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