

History of Walpole Island

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HISTORY OF WALPOLE ISLAND

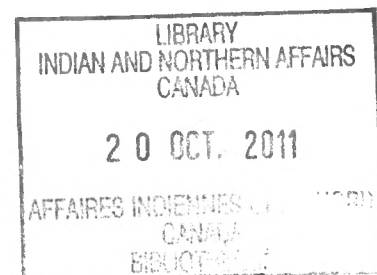
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According to the traditions of all three tribes, the Potawatami, the Chippewa and the Ottawa were originally one people, and seem to have reached the region around the upper end of Lake Huron together. Here they separated, but the three have since sometimes formed a loose confederacy or acted in unison.

The Chippewa settled in the valley of the Thames and the surrounding country in the 17th century after the Iroquois had driven out the Wyandot and Neutral Indians. The Iroquois then turned their strength against the Ottawa who controlled the river of that name, and the Ottawa fled westward to the Pottawatami country.

A quadripartite treaty was signed by the Ottawa, the Wyandot, the Chippewa and the Pottawatami, by which agreement the Chippewa obtained the part of the country north-east of a line drawn east and west through the city of Detroit, while the Detroit River was taken as the dividing line from north to south. The Chippewa settlement on the Thames was not disturbed. The Chippewa were the only parties to the agreement to be given what is now Canadian territory. They overspread the country lying between the Ottawa River, Lake Huron and Lake Ontario, and extended themselves along the northern shore of Lake Erie.

There is no clear evidence as to when the Chippewa Indians first settled on Walpole Island, but it was probably after the War of 1812. In 1830 the Government of the Province attempted to persuade them to settle on one of the reserves on the mainland, where they would be further removed from the whiskey traders on the American shores.



They had become so attached to the Islands that they would not move, the principal Chief, Shaweny-peniney, remarking that it "makes his heart sick to think of" leaving his long-inhabited favourite spot. This would indicate that Walpole Island was settled for some years prior to 1830.

Around 1831 some Ottawa families emigrated from the United States and settled on Walpole Island. Permission to settle was granted on the condition that the Chippewas in Council should notify their consent to the proposal made by the Ottawa. During the 1830's the government attempted to gather on Manitoulin Island the scattered bands from around the lakes, and also the Indians who had fought under the British flag and considered themselves British but resided in the United States. They visited Canada each year for the purpose of sharing in the distribution of presents, and thus were called the "Visiting Indians". The presents consisted in part of guns and ammunition, which caused friction with the United States Government and led to the decision to discontinue presents to non-resident Indians after August 1839.

Certain treaty stipulations between the Pottawatamies and the United States Government obliged these Indians to move west of the Mississippi. Around 1839 the Government attempted to induce the Pottawatamies to comply with their agreement. This trouble had a stronger influence on the migration of the Pottawatamies to Canada than did the termination of presents to non-resident Indians. Most of them crossed the St. Clair River and although the British Government tried to persuade them to move to Manitoulin Island they persisted in settling on Walpole Island and the neighbouring mainland.

Previous to 1839 the population of Walpole Island was around 300 Indians, but in 1842 presents were distributed to 1140, namely:

Chippewas -- old residents,	319
Chippewas -- arrived within a year.....	197
Pottawatamies and Ottawas, from Michigan.....	507
On their way to settle.....	117
	<u>1,140</u>

Three Chippewa families had settled on the Anderdon Reserve and when the survey was made in 1839 a tract of land was set apart for them. In 1846 Superintendent Clench was directed to request them to remove to Walpole Island. They consented on condition that their land be sold and the proceeds used to settle them in their new home, and the removal at once took place. The land was surrendered for sale in 1848 and the proceeds placed to the credit of the Chippewas of Walpole Island.

Three families of Chippewa Indians who had settled on Point Pelee moved to Walpole Island in 1856 and were comfortably settled there. There were 16 persons in all.

The Chippewas had been left for many years without any interference or assistance on the part of the Government and they fell prey to the profligate whites who had settled on the frontier, and who by various means obtained leases and took possession of the most fertile and valuable parts of the Island. When the settlement was first placed under the charge of an Assistant Superintendent, Mr. J.W. Keating, in 1839, the Indians had scarcely an acre of cultivatable land in their possession. Under the authority of an Act of the Provincial legislature, passed in 1839, Mr. Keating expelled many of the most mischievous intruders and placed their farms at the disposal of the Indians, who thereupon became more settled in their habits and turned their attention to agriculture.

The newcomers, the Pottawatamies, were very different in character and

habits from the resident Chippewas. They were skillful hunters and had depended solely upon the chase for many years. They possessed no land or property of their own but were kindly received by the resident Indians and allowed to settle on their lands, although they preferred roving habits to the restraints of a settled existence. They had no annuity and after the distribution of presents ceased they depended for support entirely on their own efforts. Their chief hunting grounds were near the Thames River and the upper parts of the two branches of Bear Creek. They also hunted in the United States but this was a dangerous practice because it was against the law of that country. The Chippewas were ruled by a head Chief and five inferior Chiefs, who lived surrounded by their relatives and connections through marriage. Though under the control of the head Chief, the young men gave special recognition to their own leaders.

After the expulsion of the squatters the Chippewas met together and subdivided the farms and arable land among themselves according to their members. Thus, each separate band cultivated one vast enclosure, each man planting more or less land according to his industry.

They made progress in agriculture - in 1839 their only crop was Indian corn, their only implement the hoe. By 1844 they had nine ploughs, nine yoke of oxen, and many scythes and sickles. The Chief owned two cows and there were a large number of pigs and horses. Within two years at least one hundred heads of families had started to till the soil and there were 600 acres of cleared land. The families with no land under cultivation lived by hunting and fishing and the sale of baskets and mats. Indian corn was still the chief crop but they also raised potatoes, oats, buckwheat and peas, and were commencing to raise wheat. The Chippewa

women still did much of the lighter field labour but the men hunted and fished only during the winter months as the game had almost disappeared from the neighbouring hunting grounds.

The Indians of Walpole Island were occupying the farms and houses hitherto possessed by the white squatters, together with a few houses built by themselves, in all twenty-eight dwellings and four log barns. There was no village, the farms being detached as among the previous owners.

They had only two meals a day and those were not very regular, one in the morning on rising, the other in the evening on returning from work. However, workers might, while in the house, frequently dip into the kettle of corn soup, which was kept continuously filled to give to visitors or poor, hungry Indians who asked for hospitality. There were many such, who had to abandon all their property in the escape from military pursuit in Michigan.

In January, 1841, Rev. James Coleman was appointed a Church of England Missionary at a salary of \$100 per annum from the Parliamentary Grant. There was no suitable house for him on the Island and no competent interpreter, although twenty Indian families had applied for religious instruction. A church and schoolhouse and a parsonage were erected in 1844, and the Rev. Andrew Jamieson was appointed to the Mission. Because he could not obtain a suitable interpreter he learned the Chippewa language himself and his work was successful.

The Indians were anxious that their children be educated and arranged for a schoolmaster to be appointed and paid from band funds. The children were able to learn very quickly and had great mechanical ability.

Ten years later (1854) the population of Walpole Island was estimated as 824 Indians, of whom 442 were Chippewas, 313 Pottawatamies, and the remainder were members of the Ottawa and other scattered tribes.

During 1854 the Methodist Society supported a missionary among the Pottawatamies, who lived in a separate settlement apart from the Chippewas. The Methodist Society erected a church and schoolhouse and undertook to pay the salaries of a schoolmaster and clergyman. The Chief and several of his band joined the Methodist Church.

Another large schoolhouse was built the same year in a central part of the Island and the teacher was one of the Walpole Island Indians who had been educated at the Industrial Institution at Muncey Town, to which the Chippewas contributed \$350 yearly.

Much progress was made in agriculture in the ten years from 1844 to 1854. There were 2439 acres of cleared land, and the crops were wheat, corn, oats, beans, peas, potatoes, buckwheat and hay. They still lived on their several more or less scattered clearings, rather than in a village, but they had 4 frame and 94 log houses, while 41 families lived in wigwams. There were also 28 barns, of which 6 were frame buildings, the rest constructed of logs. They had 41 yoke of oxen, 75 cows, 179 horese, besides numerous young cattle, pigs and sheep. They used the same farming implements as their neighbours, namely waggons, carts, sleighs, harness, ploughs, harrows, fanning mills, threshing machines, and carpenter's and blacksmith's tools.

WALPOLE ISLAND LANDS

The Chippewas of Chensil Ecarte and St. Clair (Sarnia Band) surrendered their land to the Crown in 1827, for an annuity of \$4,400. with the

following reserves being set apart for them:

Sarnia, in the Township of Sarnia.....	10,280	acres
Kettle Point, Township of Bosanquet.....	2,446	acres
River aux Sables (Stony Point), Bosanquet Twp.....	2,650	acres
Moore, in the Township of Moore.....	2,	acres

One portion of the Sarnia Band was first settled on the Sarnia Reserve in 1831; another portion had settled on Walpole Island, which seems to have been appropriated as a future home for the Indians after the War of 1812. The remainder, only a few families, settled on the reserve at Stony Point. A letter written March 6, 1836, from Superintendent William Jones to Colonel James Givins, Chief Superintendent of the Indian Department states:

"The Indians of Walpole Island have, some time ago, stated that they wish to have the lower Reserve exchanged for land on Little Bear Creek, in Dover, that they wish to be a distinct Band from these of this place, and to remain on the Island and receive their goods separately from the Indians here (Sarnia Reserve) - complaining such of the unfair distribution of the land payments."

A division of the annuity and lands common to both groups, took place at a general Council of the Sarnia and Walpole Islands Bands later in 1836. The Walpole Island Band agreed to take as their share of the annuity, \$1,400,00, and the small Reserve in Moore, containing 2575 acres, in addition to Walpole Island which could not be considered exclusively a Chippewa Reserve. The Sarnia Band retained the remaining \$3,000.00 of the annuity, and the Reserves at Kettle Point and Stony Point in addition to the Sarnia Reserve. The only evidence we have of this agreement is found in the Commissioner's Report of 1856.

In 1837 Mr. S.P. Jarvis, Chief Superintendent of Indian Affairs, wrote to Indian Superintendent William Jones, stating that:

"Walpole Island belongs to the Government and not to the Indians. The Lieutenant Governor is not willing that it should be occupied by Indians."

However, ten years later, in 1847, the Governor's Civil Secretary, Colonel Campbell, in a letter to Colonel Clench regarding the proposal of certain Indians to move to Walpole Island, said in part:

"In reference to the Wyandottes, His Excellency has no objection to the proposed arrangement provided you ascertain that it is sanctioned by the Chippewas who own the land."

In 1843 the Chippewas of Walpole Island surrendered their small Reserve in Moore Township and it was sold for their benefit. (No. 53 $\frac{1}{2}$ p. 128, Treaties and Surrenders.)

The Walpole Island Indian Reserve was definitely established by the Proclamation of November 8, 1850, published under the provisions of the Indian Protection Act, Cap. 74, 13 - 14 Vic. The islands which were declared Indian lands by this Proclamation were Walpole, St. Ann's, Squirrel, Stag and Eagle.

An Act of Parliament of the Province of Canada, June 30, 1860, respecting management of Indian lands and property, (Cap. 41, Sec. 2) read as follows:

"2. All lands reserved for the Indians or for any tribe or band of Indians or held in trust for their benefit shall be deemed to be

reserves as before the passing of this Act,
but subject to its Provisions."

The land sales from the Walpole Island Indian Reserve after the Proclamation of 1850, are as follows:-

1. Peach Island in Detroit River, July 21, 1857, surrendered to be sold.
(No. 85, p. 200, Treaties and Surrenders.) Chippewas of Walpole Island.
2. Keshebahahnelegoo Monesha Island, July 21, 1857, surrendered to be sold.
(No. 86, p. 221, Treaties and Surrenders.) Chippewas of Walpole Island.
3. Islands:- Middle Sister, Hen and Chickens, or Bird Islands, North Harbour, East Sister and Middle. January 1, 1870. Surrendered to be sold for the benefit of the Chippewas, Pottawatamies and Ottawa Indians residing on Walpole Island. (No. 121, p. 278, Treaties and Surrenders.)
4. Customs Lots on Indian Subdivision Lot 39, Block B, transferred to Crown Canada for \$5,500.00. July 1, 1954. Quit Claim Deed.
5. Navigation Channel, October 14, 1958, Surrender for Sale to transfer to Dept. of Public Works, for \$200,000, reserving mines and minerals and reversionary interest if and when channel is abandoned.

The agreements regarding the first three of these sales are printed in Treaties and Surrenders on the pages as shown.