

Mackinac M 1561
Old Wing Mission
Indian Farmer
Oct 22nd , 1851
John J. Merrill Farmer for Ottowas & Chippewas
was at Grand Traverse Bay

Joseph Dame wishes him to be retained

Nov 1851 Reference to Comm of Indian Affairs
Dept of Interior
received Indian Office 6 [Nov?] 51
Answered Nov 8th 1857

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Old Wing Mission Oct 22

Dear Sir

There has been a petition got up against me as Indian Farmer at this Place, with charges against me that are without foundation. I came to this place the 14th October, 1850. I found no team nor have I had any since I have been here. I have kept at work to the best advantage that I could for the benefit of the whole of the Indians. The Chief Wakazoo that got up the Petition and Mr. Smith got it up because I would not render [tender?] all my services for the [this?] chief. My Predecessor was a Carpenter and for the last 2 years did work all the time for said chief. He built him a Mackinaw boat worth \$50 and the chief got in a drunken frolic and gave it a way. The farmer then commenced him another boat and before it was finished he was removed. The farmer told me if I did not work for said Chief the most of my time they would report me to the agent. I told him that I come here for the benefit of them all and so I should act, and that I should not work for the chief any more than I should for the rest of them. As for boat building I now [sic] nothing about. I am a Farmer. I come here by the recommendation of E.P Hasting Pension agent, the Editor & Proprietor of the Detroit advertiser[?] Colin [Coln.?] Williams the post master of Detroit and others and should he say to betray my trust. The man this Mr. Smith the teacher wants to get in as farmer is a carpenter and is of the same Politicks with himself. They are John P. Hail whigs made out of Locofocos [<https://www.libertarianism.org/columns/loco-foco-movement-lost-chapter-history-liberalism-part-one>] and are opposed to the Present Administration. If I am removed I can not get away from here until next May or until the opening of Navigation (we are completely shut in through the winter) the first of Oct next I will resign to some good Whig and go in to the Campaign again as a working whig [?] as I always have been. As to the other Chiefs that signed the petition they live from 6 to 14 miles from here & I now [sic] nothing about them, but our chief Wakazoo is a miserable drunken creature. This place is new they come here two years ago last spring and is a timbered country. It is 80 miles from Mackinac. No roads to any place, 150 miles to Saginaw [**Sagunaugh**], 120 to Grand River we are on the west side of Grand Traverse Bay. It is up hill business for me to farm it with out a team. There is but 4 white families living with in fifteen miles of this place, and the mission is badly managed by the Teacher at this place for the last two years there has been but 5 months school taught and no school at this time. I could state more but will close [your?] friend in past.

John J. Merrill, Indian Farmer

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Dear Sir

I am aware that there has been complaint entered against Mr. Merrill & I think that they are without a just cause. I have been over there at his place considerable this summer past and he has always manifested a willingness to do what he could for the benefit of the Indians & has encouraged them to habits of industry and has worked for them as he had opportunity. He has no team & the most of the work that is required is team work & as there is no team there was not much that he could do for them, but whenever a team would be obtained he went & worked with them and got them to turn out and make a road from the bay to the lake & make a bridge across a stream which was quite a job of useful work, and I understand that he was with them at work on the road and bridge. The difficulty seems to be that they are about to build a village & they want some person that is a carpenter to do their work on their houses and they think that Mr. Case, being a carpenter, would be of more use to them. But there is a carpenter at the mission where they can get their doors, sash, &c. made. I have no doubt but if Mr. Merrill had a team that he would do his duties as farmer with them. I have been a farmer for them under Mr. Schoolcraft and Mr. R Stuart and know something of the duties which are due them as such they prospered & improved rapidly while I was with them.

I think that there is as good a prospect still for them at the mouth of the bay under Mr. Merrill. All of which I submit for your consideration.

Yours respectfully

Joseph Dame