

Hope College

## Hope College Digital Commons

---

Van Raalte Papers: 1840-1849

Van Raalte Papers

---

11-20-1847

### Report from the Acting Superintendant of the Office of the Indian Affairs

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.hope.edu/vrp\\_1840s](https://digitalcommons.hope.edu/vrp_1840s)

Grand Rapids History & Special Collections, Archives, Grand Rapids, MI. This digitized material is intended for personal research/study only. The original documents may not be reproduced for commercial use in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, without permission in writing from [Grand Rapids History & Special Collections, Archives](#).

---

#### Recommended Citation

"Report from the Acting Superintendant of the Office of the Indian Affairs" (1847). *Van Raalte Papers: 1840-1849*. 166.

[https://digitalcommons.hope.edu/vrp\\_1840s/166](https://digitalcommons.hope.edu/vrp_1840s/166)

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Van Raalte Papers at Hope College Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Van Raalte Papers: 1840-1849 by an authorized administrator of Hope College Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@hope.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@hope.edu).

20 November 1847

Detroit, Michigan

In a report of the (unnamed) acting superintendent of the office of Indian Affairs, the person reported that Old Wing Indians have fine tracts of land and "by the aid of the farmers and teachers, have made some improvement and advancement towards civilization."

Excerpt from a published document in the Grand Rapids Public Library, a gift of Donald Van Reken.

GR Public Lib. 5 courtesy Don  
Van Riken

The November 1847 report of the Acting Superintendent of Indian Affairs gives us a broad perspective of the ideals of those involved in working with the Indians and also gives us a vision of the problems they encountered.

817

[1]

No. 1.

OFFICE ACTING SUPERINTENDENT INDIAN AFFAIRS,  
Detroit, November 20, 1847.

SIR: My absence and engagements upon official duties, and attending the payment of annuities to the several tribes of Indians within this district, and that of Wisconsin, renders the transmission of my annual report thus late.

The general condition of the Indians within the Mackinac agency, is as comfortable, and their improvement as rapid, as can be expected, under the embarrassments consequent from (and the increase of the white population in their vicinity) the scattered condition of the bands.

It is greatly to be desired that some arrangement be made for collecting the dispersed families into colonies or larger settlements, where they may receive the full benefit of the teachers, mechanics, and farmers, who are provided for their improvement.

Those who are located near the schools and missions are progressing, while those remote, or who but seldom come within their influences, are making no advancement. The farmers and mechanics afford much aid to those near at hand, but can be of little service where their labors are extended to different localities, requiring much time in making preparations, and in travelling from place to place.

The Ottawa, Griswold, and Black river (Old Wing) colonies, have each fine tracts of land, and by the aid of the farmers and teachers, have made some improvement and advancement towards civilization. Their progress, however, is likely to be interrupted by the appearance of white settlers who are surrounding them, a fact which has always operated disastrously to their welfare.

The missionaries labor hard, and those employed to aid them make great efforts to retain them and to keep proper influences in operation, but they are perplexed with difficulties arising from the contiguity of the white population.

About nine hundred of the Ottawa Indians reside in the valley of the Grand river, and on the streams emptying into it; and are without any aid from schools, carpenters, or farmers. The smith's shop at the mouth of "Thorne Apple," is of service to them in repairing guns and traps, and the few who have land and cultivate it, procure utensils necessary for their labors.

The August 31, 1847 report from Missionary Smith is interesting in that there were many illnesses in the area. There is also mention of the Dutch colony of 1500 people and of the small-pox in this colony. He hints at the difficulties between the new Dutch settlers and the Indians. It is interesting to note that Smith complains that the "Indians go to the lake shore to spend the summer..."