

E. TURTLE MOUNTAIN RESERVATION

The Turtle Mountain Reservation is located in central North Dakota near the Canadian border. Formally, the reservation is known as the "Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians," since the Pembina Band of Plains Ojibwa (Chippewa) formed the nucleus of the original group. A mixture with Cree, Assiniboiné, and Metis (mixtures of Indian and French-Canadian) has developed a group with distinct characteristics, however, and it is common to hear the statement that "we are not like other Indians."

1. *Historical and Cultural Background*^a

The Chippewas (or Ojibwa), a leading branch of the Algonquian linguistic family, during the three centuries immediately following the discovery of America, occupied an extensive territory extending indefinitely back into the hinterland of the northern and eastern shore of Lakes Superior and Huron. They filtered through the Sault Ste. Marie into what are now Michigan, Wisconsin and Minnesota, and moved westward into the present Dakotas and Montana, pushing the Sioux southward in many fierce conflicts over the rich hunting grounds. For more than two centuries Superior was a Chippewa lake.

As the Chippewas spread to the west and south, they tended to break up into loosely defined groups more or less independent of the wide-flung tribes; and just as in the East they had beaten the Iroquois back to the shores of Lake Erie, their western groups came to grips with the Fox and the Sioux and forced them southward to established treaty boundaries.

For a century or more before the establishment of the U.S.-Canadian boundary, the Chippewas and closely related groups had occupied a wide belt on either side of its future location and across it the Chippewas mingled with a closely associated group, the Crees, down to the present.

The Pembina Band was one of the Chippewa bands that moved into the Plains, where they adopted the horse, became buffalo hunters, and generally became culturally a Plains tribe.

The Turtle Mountain Chippewas, originally the Pembina Band, so called because the nucleus of the Band was settled in the Turtle Mountains (really hills) occupied an extensive area with necessarily indefinite boundaries, since the country was not surveyed. It was located in the extreme northeastern part of North Dakota and extended from the Canadian border south to Devils Lake and from the Pembina Mountains on the east, indefinitely westward.

The southern boundary, and to some extent, the indefinite western range, had been in undisputed possession until about 1880. In addition, their claims lapped far over into Canada. Their disregard for the border led to many complications later.

The Chippewas or Ojibwa were also at one time the most numerous tribe north of Mexico. However, they did not often enter the light of history, owing to their remoteness from the frontier during the period of colonial wars. Nevertheless, into their country came the great fur companies, the Hudson Bay and the Northwest, and into their territories pushed the French pioneer hunters, trappers and woodsmen.

As hunting, trapping, and lumbering diminished and river and lake navigation changed, while agricultural enterprises came in, the Chippewas were left stranded as they have been for three generations. Although the Government recognized the claims of the Turtle Mountain Chippewas, no reservation was set up for their use for many years and the Indians were left to shift for themselves, obtaining their living mostly from fish and game within the region. Game was scarce after the passing of the buffalo, and the Indians were often reduced to starvation conditions.

On 3 March 1873, Congress appropriated \$25,000 for the purchase of a township on the White Earth Reservation in Minnesota as a home for the Turtle Mountain Indians. An additional \$10,000 was provided in the bill to enable the Indians to move to their new location. The majority of the Turtle Mountain Band refused to accept this proposition of Congress and these people continued to occupy their former home in the Turtle Mountains since they felt that their claim to the territory was valid and that they must continue occupancy of the lands to protect their interests. Those Pembina who did not move to White Earth are still known as the "Bronchos."

^a The substance of this section is freely adapted in part from materials obtained from the US Department of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Turtle Mountain Agency, on the early history of the Chippewa.