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Chief Okemos

Okemos was born in Shiawassee County around 1775. He distinguished himself at the Battle of Sandusky during the War of 1812 and won the respect of the Saginaw Chippewa people. Chief Okemos later signed several treaties on behalf of the Chippewa, including the 1819 Treaty of Saginaw. During the 1830s and 1840s Okemos led a band of Indians, most likely Chippewa, Ottawa, and Potawatomi people, who lived south of here along the Red Cedar River. The band traded with white settlers in the area, including Freeman Bray who founded the village of Hamilton in 1840. By 1850 the band had dispersed as some people were forced by the U.S. government to live on reservations. Chief Okemos eventually relocated to Shimnicon, an Indian settlement in Ionia County. He died near DeWitt in 1858.

Significant Date:

Revolution and War (1760-1815)

Registry Year: 2003 **Erected Date:** 2004

Marker Location

Address: SE corner of Hamilton & Okemos Rds.

City: Okemos

State: MI **ZipCode:** 48864

County: Ingham

Township: Meridian

Lat: 42.71673400 / **Long:** -84.42887400

Web URL:

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Okemos Villiage

Native Americans led by Chief Okemos lived in this vicinity when white settlement began in 1839 with the arrival of Sanford Marsh and Freeman Bray. A post office named Sanford was established the following year. Bray founded the village of Hamilton in 1840, and he recorded the plat in 1851. In 1859 the state legislature renamed the village Okemos in honor of the Indian leader. By 1874 hotels and stores dotted the Detroit-Grand River plank road (present-day Hamilton Road), and sawmills, gristmills, and planing mills operated at the site of present-day Ferguson and Wonch Parks off of State Road (now Okemos Road). Okemos gradually developed into a trade center for agricultural activity in the area. In 1923 Grand River Road became a state trunk line and was rerouted north of its original location.