



MichiganWomenForward



## Agatha Biddle

(1797-1873)

*Inducted: 2018*    *Locale: Mackinac Island*    *Era: Historical*    *Group: Native American*  
*Area(s) of Achievement: Business, Native American Rights, Philanthropy*

Agatha Biddle of Mackinac Island was a Native American Chief, community leader, preserver of Native traditions, philanthropist, and businesswoman of the Mackinaw area during the nineteenth century. Her exact birth date is unknown, but was likely in 1797. Her mother was Odawa and her father European. She was later adopted by her mother's French husband. Although her siblings were formally educated, Biddle was raised by the traditional practices of the Odawa people. She married Edward Biddle in 1818.

Biddle taught her husband the importance of hospitality to the Native American people. This later proved essential to his success as a fur trader. She always identified with the Anishinaabe heritage, was fluent in the language, and worked to keep the traditions alive in the surrounding community. She became a prominent leader to both the Anishinabek and Euro-American in the Mackinac community.

During the 1830s, the era of Indian removal, Biddle worked to preserve age old cultural traditions of the Odawa nation. This was made even more difficult when, in 1836, certain members of the tribe negotiated the Treaty of Washington, ceding most tribal land to the Federal Government. Many chiefs refused to recognize the treaty. However, the alternative was forced removal west, which was something nobody wanted. The tribes, under leaders like Agatha Biddle negotiated the 1855 Treaty of Detroit, which kept the Odawa in their homelands, restored some of their lost hunting and fishing rights, as well as obtaining monetary compensation.