

James Otto Lewis
Researched by Diane Wolford Sheppard

John Andreas Philip Ludewig immigrated to Philadelphia from Swabia in 1784 and anglicized his name to Lewis. Eventually he moved to Detroit. His son, James Otto Lewis was born in Detroit 3 February 1799. James Otto Lewis married Sophie Pelletier, daughter of Isidore Abraham Pelletier and Sophie Solomon, *circa* 1822.¹

James Otto Lewis was an artist and engraver and through his acquaintance with Governor Lewis Cass, Lewis attended all of the major Native-American conferences in the 1820s and 1830s with Cass, Thomas McKenney, Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, and General William Clark. During these conferences, James Otto Lewis painted the portraits of many of the chiefs in attendance. Lewis submitted over 40 watercolors to McKenney for possible inclusion in the *History of the Indian Tribes of North America*. Instead of using the watercolors, McKenney hired Charles Bird King copy the portraits.²

In 1836, James Otto Lewis published *The aboriginal port folio; or, a collection of portraits of the most celebrated chiefs of the North American Indians* (Philadelphia: Lehman and Duval Lithographers, 1836). The portraits which follow were downloaded from the New York Public Library's website (<http://digitalgallery.nypl.org/nypldigital/id?483172>). The portraits chosen as examples are from the following tribes: Chippewa/Ojibwa, Miami, Ottawa/Odawa, and Potawatomie. See the PDF for McKenney and Hall for sample portraits painted by Charles Bird King, many of which were originally painted by James Otto Lewis.

Although not as extensive as the portraits available from the New York Public Library, the Clarke Historical Library at Central Michigan University, presents a number of portraits as well as an essay about treaty negotiations during this period.

See:

https://www.cmich.edu/library/clarke/ResearchResources/Native_American_Material/Treaty_Signers/Pages/default.aspx

¹ Christian Denissen, *Genealogy of the French Families of the Detroit River Region, 1701-1936* (Detroit: Detroit Society for Genealogical Research, revised edition, 1987), p. 751. The couple were the parents of nine children. Sophie Solomon was the daughter of Ezekiel Solomon, the Michilimackinac merchant, and Élisabeth Dubois. Isidore Abraham Pelletier was the great grandson of Jean François Pelletier and Marie Louise Robert, both of whom were present in Detroit during its first ten years.

² James D. Horan, *The McKenney-Hall Portrait Gallery of American Indians* (New York: Bramhall House, 1972), 56.



James Otto Lewis - *Pen-now-we-ta, a Miami Chief* - Painted at Fort Wayne by J.O. Lewis, 1827
Courtesy of the New York Public Library www.nypl.org #483179



James Otto Lewis - *Nabu-naa-ke-shick or the One Side of the Sky, a Chippewa Chief* - Painted at the Treaty of Fond du Lac (on Lake Superior) by J.O. Lewis, 1826.
Courtesy of the New York Public Library www.nypl.org # 483180



James Otto Lewis - *Na-ma-nis Cut, a Pottowattamie Chief* - Painted at the treaty of Fort Wayne 1827 by J.O. Lewis. Courtesy of the New York Public Library www.nypl.org # 483187



James Otto Lewis - *Francis Godfroy. A celebrated chief among the Miamis, half French & half Miami* -
Painted by J.O. Lewis at the treaty of Fort Wayne 1827.
Courtesy of the New York Public Library www.nypl.org # 483188.



James Otto Lewis - *Brewett, a celebrated Miami Chief* - Taken at the Treaty of Massinewa by J.O. Lewis, 1827 - Courtesy of the New York Public Library www.nypl.org # 483208



James Otto Lewis - *A celebrated Ottawa Chief* - Painted at the treaty of Fort Wayne 1827 by J.O. Lewis.
Courtesy of the New York Public Library www.nypl.org # 483211



James Otto Lewis - *Chat-o-nis-see, Pottowattomie Chief* - Painted at the treaty of Fort Wayne by J.O. Lewis, 1825.

Courtesy of the New York Public Library www.nypl.org # 483213



James Otto Lewis - *Ke-wa-din or the North Wind, Chippeway Chief* - Painted by J.O. Lewis at the Treaty of Fond du Lac, 1826.

Courtesy of the New York Public Library www.nypl.org # 483218



James Otto Lewis - *Richardville, the Head Chief of the Miami tribe of Indians* - Painted at the treaty of Fort Wayne 1827 by J.O. Lewis.

Courtesy of the New York Public Library www.nypl.org # 483238