PROJECT SCROLL RESEARCH NOTE 2026-04

The earliest L in Kalamazoo yet found: Schoolcraft's "Kikalemazo" of 1820, and the likely atlas of 1823

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SUMMARY

The published histories of the name, the Kalamazoo Public Library's and Wikipedia's among them, say the L in Kalamazoo first appears in the treaty of 1821, or in an unnamed "atlas of 1823." It is older. On 4 September 1820, a year before the treaty, Henry R. Schoolcraft "passed the river Kikalemazo," and printed the entry in his journal of 1821. The atlas, we believe, is Carey & Lea's *American Atlas*: its map of Michigan Territory, dated 1822 and unchanged in most copies of 1823, names the river "Kikalemazo R.," Schoolcraft's spelling exactly. And a French memoir of 1763 or a little after adds an eighteenth-century witness to the older spelling with an N: "Kikanamaso."

THE RECORD

1. **Henry R. Schoolcraft, *Narrative Journal of Travels through the Northwestern Regions of the United States* (Albany: E. & E. Hosford, 1821), p. 396, entry of 4 September 1820**

   > *"On travelling ten miles, we passed the river Kikalemazo, which appears from its mouth, to be a stream of considerable size."*

   Internet Archive · See the record (https://archive.org/details/narrativejournal00scho?q=Kikalemazo)

2. **H. C. Carey and I. Lea, *Geographical, Statistical, and Historical Map of Michigan Territory* (Philadelphia, 1822), in their *American Atlas* (1822; unchanged in most copies of 1823)**

   > *The river lettered "Kikalemazo R."*

   Michigan State University Libraries, map library · See the record (https://archive.lib.msu.edu/maps/MSU-Scanned/Michigan/1822-michigan.jpg)

3. **David Rumsey Map Collection, catalogue record for Carey & Lea, *A Complete Historical, Chronological, and Geographical American Atlas* (1822)**

   > *The record of the atlas's editions of 1822, 1823 and 1827, on which our dating of the map in the 1823 atlas rests.*

   David Rumsey Map Collection, Stanford University · See the record (https://davidrumsey.com/maps2466.html)

4. **"Mémoire sur la partie occidentale du Canada, depuis Michillimakinac jusqu'au fleuve du Mississipi," *Le Bulletin des recherches historiques* 26 (1920), pp. 25–32 (concluded pp. 56 ff.)**

   > *"A quinze lieues de celle-ci est celle de Kikanamaso plus considérable et qui est navigable vers le sud l'espace de quarante lieues": fifteen leagues beyond the Ouichitanon (by our reading, the Grand River), the Kikanamaso. The editor dated the memoir "1763 ou peu après"; it calls L'Arbre Croche "le nouveau village."*

   Internet Archive · See the record (https://archive.org/details/lebulletindesrec26soci_0?q=Kikanamaso)

WHAT IT CHANGES

Schoolcraft's entry of September 1820 is a year earlier than the treaty, and Carey & Lea's map is the likely atlas; *The Rag Picker* (1984) had noted the 1822 map's "Kikalemazo" without naming the atlas. Earlier work had already printed the older N spellings: Potier's "kikanamaso" of about 1760 (Robert Toupin, 1986 and 1996); the *Felicity* log's "Kikanamaso (Kalamazoo)" (*The Minute Man*, March 1925); and "Reccanamazo," printed in *Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections* 10 (1886), p.

248, and tied to the Kalamazoo by William L. Jenks in 1912 (as “Reccanamazoo”) and by Albert F. Butler (*Michigan History*, 1949). The memoir of 1763 or a little after, in the *Bulletin des recherches historiques* (1920), is in no history of the name we found.

LIMITS

We have seen the 1822 map; that it was unchanged in most copies of 1823 is the David Rumsey Map Collection’s record, and the identification rests on the map’s spelling and date. Some accounts spell the atlas’s form “kikalamezo,” a spelling of British atlases (Sidney Hall’s index of 1831 has “Kikalamezo R.”); the Kalamazoo Public Library gives “Kikalemazo,” which matches Carey & Lea letter for letter. That the memoir’s Ouichitanon is the Grand River is our reading of the name, which resembles the Grand River’s Ottawa name, Owashtanong, and of its place three leagues beyond the Maskigou (Muskegon); but the memoir calls the Ouichitanon small, carrying a canoe only six leagues, which fits the Grand River poorly. The identification of the Kikanamaso with the Kalamazoo does not rest on it. The memoir’s date is its editor’s, “1763 or a little after.”

WHAT WE SEARCHED BEFORE CALLING IT NEW

Full-text searches of the Internet Archive for every spelling (Kekalamazoo, Kikalemazo, Kikanamaso, Kikalamazoo, “boiling pot,” “reflecting river”); Vogel, *Indian Names in Michigan* (1986); Romig (1973); Gannett (1905); Durant (1880); the *Compendium* (1906); the Kalamazoo Public Library’s pages; Wikipedia’s “Etymology of Kalamazoo”; the city’s history page; the research repositories Zenodo, OpenAlex and Crossref, with Google Scholar, JSTOR, Academia.edu and ResearchGate through web searches (OSF, Semantic Scholar, CORE, SSRN and arXiv could not be searched from our tools).

Our standard for calling a finding new is set out in How we research (projectscroll.com/how-we-research/).

“New” means new to print as far as we can tell. If you know of an earlier publication, tell us and we will credit it here and raise the note’s version.

WORKS CITED

Earlier work, catalogues and databases named in this note, besides the records quoted above.

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2. Wikipedia, “Etymology of Kalamazoo.”, accessed October 2026. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Etymology_of_Kalamazoo
3. Treaty of Chicago, 29 August 1821, in Charles J. Kappler, ed., *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties*, vol. 2 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1904), from p. 198. Internet Archive. https://archive.org/details/bp_996062-2
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5. Robert Toupin, “Les routes de canot et de terre au pays des Illinois et dans la vallée de la Ouabache au XVIIIe siècle: les recueils de Pierre Potier,” in Commission de toponymie, *450 ans de noms de lieux français en Amérique du Nord*, ed. Georges Gauthier Larouche (Québec: Les Publications du Québec, 1986), pp. 446–454, at pp. 448 and 452 (“Le petit kikanamaso,” “Le grand kikanamaso”). Internet Archive. https://archive.org/details/micro_IA40243212_1506?q=kikanamaso
6. Robert Toupin, ed., *Les Écrits de Pierre Potier* (Ottawa: Presses de l’Université d’Ottawa, 1996), pp. 144–151: the itinerary naming the petit and grand kikanamaso, dated to autumn 1760. Internet Archive (borrow). https://archive.org/details/lesecritsdepierr0000unse

7. Report of the Kent Chapter (Claude T. Hamilton's talk on the log of H.M.S. *Felicity*), *The Minute Man* (Washington: National Society of the Sons of the American Revolution) 19, no. 4 (March 1925), p. 66: "for the Kikanamaso (Kalamazoo)." Internet Archive. https://archive.org/details/minuteman00sons_0/page/66/mode/1up
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9. Albert F. Butler, "Rediscovering Michigan's Prairies" (concluded), *Michigan History* 33, no. 3 (September 1949), pp. 220–231, at p. 225: "Reccanamazo, or Ke-Kalamazoo." Internet Archive. https://archive.org/details/sim_michigan-history_1949-09_33_3
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THE FULL STORY

The finding is set out in context, with the rest of its sources, in How Kalamazoo got its name (projectscroll.com/news/how-kalamazoo-got-its-name/). In the discoveries register:

- `first-l-schoolcraft-1820` (projectscroll.com/discoveries/#first-l-schoolcraft-1820)
- `kikalemazo-carey-1822` (projectscroll.com/discoveries/#kikalemazo-carey-1822)
- `kikanamaso-french-memoir` (projectscroll.com/discoveries/#kikanamaso-french-memoir)

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BibTeX

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