PROJECT SCROLL RESEARCH NOTE 2026-31

How the village of Bronson became Kalamazoo: Senator Comstock's amendment of February 1836, and George Torrey's reason of 1869

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SUMMARY

The village of Bronson, platted by Titus Bronson and Stephen Richardson in 1831, was renamed Kalamazoo by an act approved 2 March 1836. The Senate journal shows how. On 17 February 1836, on Mr. Comstock's motion, the Senate asked its committee "to inquire into the propriety of changing the name of the town of Arcadia in the county of Kalamazoo, to that of Kalamazoo." The bill reported was "A bill to alter the name of the township of Arcadia": the township only. At its third reading, on Mr. Comstock's motion, it was amended to add "and also the name of the village of Bronson, changed and hereafter known and called Kalamazoo," with effect from "thirty-first day of March next," and passed. The House, where a Mr. Burdick of Kalamazoo sat, concurred. Durant's county history of 1880 names Burdick, Sheldon and Lyon as the movers but gives no reason beyond "some good reason, we presume." George Torrey had given one in the county history of the Kalamazoo directory of 1869: they were "disgusted with the eccentricities, obstinacy, and want of enterprise in their co-partner, Bronson."

THE RECORD

1. ***Journal of the Senate of the State of Michigan … 1835 and 1836*** **(Detroit: John S. Bagg, 1836), 17 February 1836, pp. 123–124**

> *"On motion of Mr. Comstock, Resolved, That the committee on the division of towns and counties be instructed to inquire into the propriety of changing the name of the town of Arcadia in the county of Kalamazoo, to that of Kalamazoo, and to report by bill or otherwise."*

Internet Archive · See the record (https://archive.org/details/journal73senagoog)

2. ***Journal of the Senate*** **(1836), pp. 152–153**

> *"The bill entitled 'A bill to alter the name of the township of Arcadia,' being read a third time, on motion of Mr. Comstock, … the bill was amended by striking out 'passage of this act,' and inserting 'thirty-first day of March next;' and also by inserting after 'Kalamazoo' where it occurs the last time, as follows: 'and also the name of the village of Bronson, changed and hereafter known and called Kalamazoo;' and the bill so amended, then passed the senate."*

Internet Archive · See the record (https://archive.org/details/journal73senagoog)

3. ***Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Michigan; First Session*** **(Detroit: Morse & Bagg, 1836)**

> *"Mr. Lothrop, of Kalamazoo, asked and obtained leave of absence for his colleague Mr. Burdick, for one day."*

Internet Archive · See the record (https://archive.org/details/journal43senagoog)

4. **George Torrey, history of the county, in *Kalamazoo County Directory, with a History of the County* (Kalamazoo: J. M. Thomas, 1869), p. 60**

> *"In 1836 the Legislature changed the name of the village and township to Kalamazoo. This change of name was brought about through the influence of Burdick, Sheldon and Lyon, who, disgusted with the eccentricities, obstinacy, and want of enterprise in their co-partner, Bronson, determined the village should no longer bear his name."*

Internet Archive · See the record (https://archive.org/details/bad0949.0001.001.umich.edu)

WHAT IT CHANGES

The renaming of the village was not in the bill as first reported: it was added on the Senate floor by Horace H. Comstock's amendment. And a reason for it is in print eleven years before Durant, in Torrey's history of 1869, which does not mention a cherry tree.

LIMITS

The journals record motions and votes, not debate, and do not say why Comstock moved the amendment. Torrey wrote thirty-three years after the event and gives no source; his reason is the partners' view of Bronson, not Bronson's. The identification of "Mr. Burdick, of Kalamazoo" with Cyren Burdick rests on a list in the House journal.

WHAT WE SEARCHED BEFORE CALLING IT NEW

Internet Archive full text of the Senate and House journals of 1835–36 and the session laws; Durant (1880), Torrey (1869), the *Pioneer Collections* (1877) and the *Compendium*

(1906); the Kalamazoo Public Library's pages; Wikipedia's "Etymology of Kalamazoo"; the city's history page; web searches (October 2026). None records the amendment or quotes Torrey's reason.

Our standard for calling a finding new is set out in How we research (projectscroll.com/how-we-research/), and how we weigh each kind of record in Scrollsigns (projectscroll.com/scrollsigns/).

"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.

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WORKS CITED

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

1. Michael Urbanski, "How Kalamazoo Got Its Name," *Project Scroll* (2026). https://projectscroll.com/news/how-kalamazoo-got-its-name/
2. Samuel W. Durant, *History of Kalamazoo County, Michigan* (Philadelphia: Everts & Abbott, 1880), p. 220. https://archive.org/details/bad0947.0001.001.umich.edu

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:

- `senate-comstock-amendment` (projectscroll.com/discoveries/#senate-comstock-amendment)
- `torrey-1869-reason` (projectscroll.com/discoveries/#torrey-1869-reason)

HOW TO CITE THIS NOTE

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