

Residence of Detroit occasionally wonder about the source of the streets John R, Dequindre and Joseph Campau. The latter being the main street through Hamtramck. All these names are tied to one family in early Detroit. What follows is some interesting stories of the line of this family.

I share a common ancestral connection to these persons. As a reminder my 8th great grandparents are Etienne Campeau and Catherine Paulo. Catherine is listed as one of the Fille du Roi of Canadian history who came to Quebec in 1663. Two of their sons are Jacques and Michael (my 7th great grandfather). Both came to Detroit shortly after its founding in 1701.

Joseph Campau and Adelaide Dequindre

Jacque's grandson, Jacques' (James) (1739-1789), married Catherine Menard. He is my 2nd cousin 7 times removed. Together they had 12 children. A son, Joseph Campau (Campeau anglicized) married Adelaide Dequindre. Joseph was among the most famous of their children. He was an early real estate mogul building many properties used as rentals and said to be Michigan's first millionaire and in his time the richest man in Michigan. He did run afoul of the pastor at St. Anne's church (now cathedral) said to be founded on the day after the founding of Detroit in 1701. The pastor was Gabriel Richard (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gabriel_Richard) who is another prominent figure in Michigan history having founded a school along with Chief Justin Augustus Woodward (another street name) that eventually became the University of Michigan. The sources of their dispute were many. After a fire destroyed St. Anne's, the church wanted to acquire the nearby land that also was the home of Joseph Campau. It is unclear whether Joseph wanted a premium for this property or just flatly refused to sell but hard feelings erupted on both sides. Joseph was known to describe the religious leadership of the church in the most unflattering language. Additionally, Joseph engaged in selling liquor to the natives which was illegal as well as being condemned morally by Richard. The final straw came when Joseph joined the local Masonic order, which was forbidden to Catholics even in my early years of the 1960's. Joseph was ultimately excommunicated. More can be learned about him at (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_Campau).

Louis Campau Jr.

Another son, Louis Sr. (1767-1835) married Teresa Moran. He attained local prominence as a merchant living along the Clinton River. Their son, Louis Jr.



(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louis_Campau) is recognized as the founder of Grand Rapids, Michigan where he had established a trading post.

Barnabas Campau

Another son of Jacques and Catherine Menard, Barnabas (1775-1845) was also known as Barnaby or Barney Campau. In 1805, he was lieutenant of riflemen in the Legionary Corps. He served in the War of 1812 as a private Col. Gabriel Godfroy's 1st Reg., until August 16, 1812 when his Detroit. In 1829, he became the stockholder in the Bank of Michigan. Michigan State Bank, which folded years he was a merchant and fur estate. In 1817, at the age of 42, he Hog Island, from David B. Macomb, \$5,000. William Macomb had the heirs of Lt. George McDougall, in it from the Indians for eight barrels of rum, three rolls of tobacco, six pounds of vermilion paint, and a belt of wampum. These items together were worth less than \$200. Barnabas's heirs sold Belle Isle to the City of Detroit for \$200,000 in 1879. His heirs were Mrs. Angelique Piquette, Emelie Campau, John Barnabas Campau, and Alexander Macomb Campau. In 1808, he married Therese Cicot (1780-1817). He remarried on February 26, 1821, to Archange McDougall (1791-1829). He is buried at Mt. Elliot Cemetery.



in Capt. Solomon Sibley's Co., Michigan Militia from July 2nd company surrendered at alderman-at-large and a In 1834, he was trustee of four years later. For many trader, accumulating a large bought Belle Isle, then named heir of William Macomb, for purchased Hog Island from 1793. McDougall had bartered

Alexander Macomb Campau

The second son of Barnabas and Archange, was Alexander Macomb Campau's who was known as a strong-willed individual; some would say a tyrant.

He was sent to Georgetown University at the age of seventeen, and a Detroit newspaper article, many years later, tells of his challenging train ride to Washington, D.C. In the early days of train travel, trains ran off the tracks every few minutes. The story details young Alex Campau, "dressed in his suit of maroon-colored broadcloth, with stock and lace ruffles at throat and wrist had to get off each time, and with his fellow passengers, helped to put the cars back on the rails."

He returned to Michigan after graduating from Georgetown University in 1844. Alexander attended the University of Michigan, in Ann Arbor, for one more year of studies. He was one of only 11 students and 2 professors. He married Eliza Stringham Throop on April 15, 1846 and they had nine children. Alexander further developed the fisheries on Belle Isle, having inherited the island from his father, Barnabas, and at one time, employed nearly 500 Frenchmen. He also was a large landowner in Detroit, attending to 600 to 700 tenants, in a nearly feudalistic way.

The Campau family, since their early arrival in Detroit, had always been good Catholics so when Alexander's church came to him, wishing to build a new house of worship, he loaned them the money they requested to be paid back with interest. The church was erected on land he donated. As time passed, no effort was made to pay him back. When Alexander inquired about his loan repayment, he was told, "the money went to God."

He never got his money, and he left the Catholic Church, worshiping till the end of his days, at Christ Church, Detroit located on E. Jefferson, next door to Sibley House. At the age of 85, he lay on his deathbed, and a Catholic priest was called to his bedside to administer the last rites. As the priest placed the cross to Alexander's lips so he could kiss it, he defiantly spat upon it instead! He died, recalcitrant to his last day, on April 1, 1908.

Montgomery Throop Campau

A son of Alexander Macomb and Eliza Troop was Montgomery. Prior to 1881 he moved from Detroit to Denver, Colorado where he met his death. Newspaper accounts indicate that on May 31, 1881 while dining at a boarding house with Mr. and Mrs. Deveraux an enraged Charles W. Stickney entered and fired a shot at Montgomery. The first shot struck Mrs. Deveraux in the chest killing her instantly. Montgomery running for his life reached the parlor before being fatally shot in the back.

The sordid detail as outlined in the press with such headlines as "The Criminal Intimacy of Mrs. Charles W. Stickney with M. T. Campau, Prominent Real Estate Man" was that Mrs. Stickney (although not proven to be his wife) had become pregnant while having an affair with Campau and was unsure which man was the father. Her husband had offered to overlook the affair in exchange for \$10,000 and some real estate. Some months later, trying to absolve herself of any blame, Mrs. Devereaux claimed that she was seduced by Campau thus inflaming her husband's emotions.

For the better part of a subsequent 14-day trial testimony that his father attempting to convince the jury did find him was purportedly the first reached in Colorado. In ill-gotten real estate to mentioned is made of the \$10,000.



year, Charles remained in jail. In a his attorneys brought expert and uncle had been insane the jury that so was Charles. In fact, innocent because of insanity. This time such a verdict had been July 1883, Charles turned over the the widower of Mrs. Devereaux. No

Montgomery is buried at Mt. Elliott Cemetery in Detroit, Michigan.

John R. Williams

A daughter of Jacques Campau and Catherine Menard was Mary Cecilia. Her first husband was Thomas Williams. They had a son named John R. Williams. John R. was mentored by his uncle Joseph Campau and they had many business dealings together.

The Detroit Historical Society in their Encyclopedia of Detroit states the following:

“Born in Detroit on May 4, 1782, John R. Williams was the first elected mayor of the City of Detroit. His parents were Englishman Thomas Williams, and Cecile Campau, descendant of one of Detroit’s early French settlers. Williams was fluent in both languages. Some sources claim he added the middle initial “R” to his name to distinguish himself from another John Williams, though the evidence is inconclusive.

Williams was appointed to the army in 1796, but resigned in 1799 to form a trade partnership with his uncle Joseph Campau. While in Canada, trying to obtain supplies for his business, Williams was in a duel in which he shot Robert Cavelier, Sieur de La Salle, descendant of famous explorer Rene-Robert Cavelier, Sieur de La Salle. Sieur de La Salle was only wounded, yet Williams was put in jail in Montreal for several months. During the War of 1812, Williams was captain of an artillery company and again became a prisoner when Detroit fell.

After the war, Williams moved briefly to New York, but in 1815 the Williams family returned to Detroit. There, Williams was appointed associate justice of the county court and was later made a county commissioner and adjutant general of the Michigan Territory. He assisted with the writing of the city charter of 1824 and served as the first elected mayor of Detroit. He would go on to serve as mayor for six non-consecutive terms, over a period covering 1824–1846. Mayoral terms were one year until 1857.

In 1831, Williams and his uncle Joseph Campau were instrumental in the founding of the newspaper, the Democratic Free Press and Michigan Intelligencer which eventually became the Detroit Free Press. Williams owned a slave, Hector, who worked there as a clerk. Williams and Campau purchased the equipment and subscriber list of the Oakland Chronicle, moved the equipment to Detroit, and provided the financial backing for publisher Sheldon McKnight. Williams was married to Mary Mott and the couple had ten children. John R. Williams died on October 20, 1854, holding the title Major General of the Michigan Militia, and is interred at Elmwood Cemetery. One of Detroit’s main thoroughfares, John R Street, is named for him. The majority of his papers are held at the Burton Historical Collection of the Detroit Public Library, and a smaller collection is in the William L. Clements Library at the University of Michigan”