

## **The Potawatomi Reservations in Benton, Fountain, Warren and Tippecanoe Counties**

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The Potawatomi Indians, accompanied by the Kickapoo, came on horseback into Indiana from the north and northwest prior to 1790. All of northern Indiana, before the migration of these two tribes, was inhabited by the Miami. The Miami, an Indian of the woods, refused to mount himself even though he could have secured horses to do so. The Potawatomi and Kickapoo, being mounted, had an advantage in warfare, and slowly but surely drove the Miami south and east until the Wabash River in western Indiana marked the western and northern line of the Miami Country. Practically all of the reservations made in Indiana to the Miami Indians are south and east of the Wabash River, while, with one exception, the grants and reservations made to the Kickapoo and Potawatomi are north and west of the Wabash River.

This exception, which is located in Tippecanoe County and the northeast corner of Fountain County, was made to the children of Kaukeama, a Potawatomi princess, the only sister of Topenebee and the daughter of Aniquiba, the great chief of the Potawatomi. The name of Kaukeama, according to Jacob P. Dunn, means "the girl who ran away from home." Both Aniquiba and Topenebee lived on the St. Joseph River in Berrien County, Michigan. As principal chiefs of the Potawatomi, they were at the head of both the state and religious affairs of all the Potawatomi tribes. This chieftainship among the Potawatomi was passed from father to son.

William Burnett, who probably eloped with Kaukeama, was a handsome young French trader from Vincennes. After their marriage, Kaukeama and her husband continued to live

in the Wabash Valley. It seems that her marriage turned out to be a very happy one, for she returned to her former home only for visits, spending the balance of her life in the Wabash Valley. The Potawatomi like all Indian tribes, with the exception of the principal chiefs who remained permanently located on the St. Joseph River in Michigan, were nomads, staying but a short time in any one place. After the marriage of Kaukeama to William Burnett, her life was very much the same as that of this roving tribe of Indians.

Her father's sister had married Sheshepah, or Little Duck, the principal chief of the Kickapoo. It is said Sheshepah's father was a Potawatomi, and his mother a Kickapoo, that he was born at Kickapoo Falls near Attica, and his mother's father was the principal chief of the Kickapoo. In the history of Vermilion County, Indiana, there is a very good account of Sheshepah written by John Collet. Sheshepah signed the Indian treaty at Greenville, Ohio, July 22, 1814, as principal chief of the Kickapoo. His signature is later attached to three of the Indian treaties as a chief of the Kickapoo. His marriage to the sister of Aniquiba partly accounts for the close relationship of the Kickapoo and Potawatomi in this locality. After the marriage of Kaukeama to William Burnett she always lived near Sheshepah and her aunt. Sheshepah made his home in Vermilion County near where the big Vermilion River empties into the Wabash. He had but one child, a son, of whom he was extremely fond. At the age of seventeen his son fell about fifty feet from a tree and was killed while hunting bear near where the Collet Home for the Aged now stands, south of Cayuga in Vermilion County, Indiana. Perhaps Kaukeama after that time lived near her aunt and Sheshepah on account of their grief over the loss of their only child. A good portion of the time she lived in Fountain County near a spring about where Fred LaTourette's house now stands. Here most of her children were born; here the family was living in 1823. In 1908 there were living near Dana in Vermilion County Burnetts who claimed to be descendants of a brother of William Burnett.

Aniquiba apparently had but three children, two sons, Topenebee and Shissahecon (who signed the treaty of Septem-

ber 3, 1809, at Fort Wayne for himself and his brother, Topenebee), and Kaukeama, the daughter. The reservations to Topenebee, with the exception of one section known as the Indian Float, located in Benton County, were in the state of Michigan. The story of this section is well told in *The Land of the Potawatomi* by Elmore Barce, page 108. This grant was made in the treaty on the banks of the Tippecanoe, October 27, 1832.

The following quotations from treaties between these Indians and the United States are from the *United States Statutes at Large*, Volume 7, *Indian Treaties*.

August 3, 1795, the Potawatomi and other Indians made a treaty with Anthony Wayne at Greenville. In this treaty there was reserved "one piece [of land] six miles square at the Ouatanon or old Weea towns on the Wabash River" [page 50].

Peeresh signed the treaty of September 29, 1817, made at the Rapids of the Miami as one of the principal chiefs of the Potawatomi [page 167].

In the treaty of October 2, 1818, the following notes are taken from the schedule of grantees, Article (4) says, "The United States agree to grant to the persons named in the annexed schedule, and their heirs, the quantity of land therein stipulated to be granted; but the land so granted shall never be conveyed by either of the said persons, or their heirs, unless by the consent of the President of the United States" [page 185].

Schedule referred to in foregoing treaty:

"There shall be granted to James Burnett, Isaac Burnett, Jacob Burnett, and Abraham Burnett, two sections of land each; and to Rebecca Burnett and Nancy Burnett, one section of land each; which said James, John, Isaac, Jacob, Abraham, Rebecca and Nancy, are children of Cakimi, a Potawatamie woman, sister of Topinibe, principal chief of the nation; and six of the sections herein granted, shall be located from the mouth of the Tippecanoe River, down the Wabash River, and the other six (five) sections shall be located at the mouth of Flint River.

"There shall be granted to Perig, a Potawatamie chief, one section of land on the Flint River, where he now lives. There shall also be granted to Mary Chatalie, daughter of Neebosh, a Potawatamie chief, one section of land, to be located below the mouth of Pine River" [page 186].

Article (3) Treaty at Chicago, Illinois, August 29, 1821. "There shall be granted by the United States to each of the following persons, being all Indian by descent, and to their heirs, the following Tracts of Land:

"To John Burnet, two sections of land.

"To James Burnet, Abraham Burnet, Rebecca Burnet, and Nancy Burnet, each one section of land; which said John, James, Abraham, Rebecca, and Nancy, are children of Kaw-kee-me, sister of Top-ni-be, principal chief of the Potawatamie nation.

"The land granted to the persons immediately preceding shall begin on the north bank of the river St. Joseph, about two miles from the mouth, and shall extend up and back from the said river for quantity" [page 219].

At this same treaty there was granted to "Pierre Moran or Peeresh, a Potawatamie Chief, one section of land, and to his children two sections of land, at the mouth of the Elk-heart river."

"The section of land granted by the Treaty of St. Mary's in 1818, to Peeresh or Perig, shall be granted to Jean B. Cicot, son of Pe-say-quot, sister of the said Peeresh, it having been so intended at the execution of the said Treaty" [page 219].

Pe-say-quot, the sister of Peeresh, was the wife of Zachariah Cicott. She is buried at Independence, Warren County, Indiana, and her Christian name was Elizabeth. Zachariah Cicott, after this treaty, bought this claim of his son, Jean Baptiste Cicott, and Zachariah laid this claim in Warren County where his trading post was then located. The present town of Independence is located on this section of land.

In the treaty made in Chicago, September 26, 1833, in Schedule "A" (referred to in the Treaty, containing the sums payable to Individuals in lieu of Reservations) there was paid to Martha Burnett (R. A. Forsyth, Trustee), \$1000; William

Burnett (B. B. Kercheval, Trustee), \$1000 [pages 435 and 436].

In the treaty of September 27, 1833, the first article is on cession of land.

Article 1. "The said chiefs and head-men cede to the United States, all their land situate in the Territory of Michigan south of the Grand River, being the reservation of the Notawasepe of 4 miles square contained in the 3d clause of the 2d article of the treaty made at Chicago, on the 29th day of August, 1821, and the ninety-nine sections of land contained in the treaty made at St. Joseph on the 19th day of September, 1827; and also the tract of land on St. Joseph River opposite the town of Niles, and extending to the line of the State of Indiana, on which the village of To-pe-ne-bee and Pokagon are situated, supposed to contain about 49 sections" [page 442].

Schedule "A" referred to in the Article Supplementary to the Treaty containing the sums payable to Individuals, in lieu of Reservations of land, gives to Rebecca Burnett (Edward Brooks, Trustee) \$500; Mary Burnett, (Edward Brooks, Trustee) \$250; and Martha Burnett (R. A. Forsyth, Trustee) \$250 [page 444].

The Mary Burnett receiving the \$250 in schedule "A" of the foregoing treaty was the daughter of Rebecca Burnett and the granddaughter of Kaukeama.

Isaac Burnett, licensed Indian Trader, died at Fort Wayne, December 1, 1820. The interest he had in Tippecanoe County was purchased, at the administrator's sale of his property, by his brother, James Burnett at 50 cents an acre.

John Burnett died in Carroll County, Indiana, before 1830. Peter Weaver was appointed administrator of his estate, to dispose of his lands in Tippecanoe County. All of his holdings in Tippecanoe County were sold to General Fielding Lowery for \$2479.94, to pay a promissory note, due August 17, 1817.

Isaac, Abraham, Jacob, John, and James all died before April 10, 1836, and not one of them were married. Rebecca, who probably married a Burnett, had one daughter, Mary Burnett, who married a man by the name of Francis Palm.

John, Abraham, and Jacob Burnett all died in Carroll County, Indiana, before 1829.

Nancy Burnett married John Davis and had two sons, William and Richard Davis, and lived near Fort Wayne. James and Rebecca lived at or near Detroit, Michigan.

The following notes are from a true copy from Original Plat in Surveyor General's Office Recorded August 21, 1821. Book A, page 354:

Outline Plat of Burnetts reservation at the mouth of the Flint Creek in township 22 north, range 6 west. Six sections for the Burnetts on Flint River southeast of the Wabash. Plat dated June 2, 1829. Ed Tiffin, surveyor general; surveyed in 1823 by Price L. Kellogg. Section No. 1 in the south west quarter of the reservation was allotted to John Burnett; section two south west corner, to Jacob Burnett; section three east of two, to John Burnett; section six in the north east corner, to Isaac Burnett; section five in the south east corner, to Nancy Burnett; section four between the first and fifth, to Isaac Burnett.

The six sections at the mouth of the Tippecanoe River were laid off starting one mile up the Tippecanoe from where it empties into the Wabash and running a straight line from that point six miles, one mile northwest of the Wabash River and this divided the six sections fronting on the Wabash River and comes very near to Battle Ground, all in Tippecanoe County. The Burnett's Creek just west of Battle Ground is named for these Burnetts and runs through this last reservation. After the Burnetts left Fountain County, they probably located near Burnettsville in White, or Carroll County.

The section allotted to Topenebee was finally located as section 31, township 26 north, range 9 west, in Benton County, Indiana. The north branch of Sugar Creek runs through this section and perhaps one half of Sugar Grove was originally on this section of land. It is located southwest of Earl Park.

Topenebee traded this land to Alexander Coquillard of South Bend for wagons for the use of his tribe. Alexander Coquillard sold this section to Edward Sumner. At that time

Edward Sumner was living in Fountain County, on Shawnee Prairie not far from Newtown. Sumner sold his holding in Fountain County and moved to this land and finally became the largest land holder and the largest cattle dealer in Indiana. When he died he was worth more than a million dollars. See *The Land of the Potawatomi* by Elmore Barce, page 104.

At the time the grant laid at Independence by Zachariah Cicott was granted to his brother-in-law Peeresh, Peeresh lived on Flint Creek, Tippecanoe County, adjoining the Burnetts' reservation and it was intended that this tract of land should be adjacent to the land of the Burnetts, but Cicott was given the right to lay it about his trading post at Independence, after it came into his possession.

The section of land allotted to Mary Chatalie was laid in Warren County just across the river from Attica. Mary Chatalie first married Jehu P. Wamsley, who himself was half Indian. Wamsley constructed on this section of land the first mill to grind grain in this locality. The stones were turned by hand and Wamsley, being a very large, powerful man ground the grain by hand in this mill for both the Indians and the first white settlers. The mill stones are still in existence and lie in a yard of a farmhouse on the north side of the road leading from Attica to Williamsport. Jehu P. Wamsley was the first Master of the Masonic Lodge No. 18, F. & A. M. His picture hangs in the Masonic lodge room at Attica and can easily be distinguished from any other picture there because in his hand is his gun from which he never parted company. He and Mary Chatalie were divorced, but before the divorce was granted, she conveyed the fee simple of a portion of her reservation to him, reserving to herself a life estate. She afterwards married William Griffith, after whose death the young widow had an interesting escapade with William Parent, a soldier in the War of 1812, as well as a soldier of fortune, who was living with his family in Attica and farming her land in the Wabash Valley Bottoms. William Parent divorced his wife and married Mary, and his sons, who were grown, farmed the land until Mary died. After her death the heirs of J. P. Wamsley found they owned the fee simple of a part of her landed estate. This brought on a law suit entitled "Parent vs. Wamsley, Administrator," 20th Indiana, page 82.

Jehu P. Wamsley died May 31, 1858, and Mary Parent died childless July 13, 1858. They are both buried, very close together, in the old graveyard in Attica. The stone that marks the grave of Mary Chatalie is a good grade of stone, not native of this country. It lies flat over her grave and covers it entirely. Under it is a very splendid brick foundation, none of which is exposed to view. The flat stone is, perhaps, four inches higher than the soil about it and on the stone is carved this epitaph: "Here lies Mary Parent, daughter of an Indian Chief, who died July 13, 1858, age 55 years. Erected by William Parent." William Parent was killed by the cars at Williamsport graveyard just east of Williamsport.

Topenabee and all the sons of Kaukeama Burnett, who were old enough to take part in war; Peeresh, the brother-in-law of Cicott, and Neebosh, the father of Mary Chatalie, fought with the Indians in the battle of Tippecanoe and with the British until Tecumseh was killed, in the War of 1812.

Freedom, to an American citizen, is an inspired word. The very air we breathe seems permeated with its presence. The Potawatomi Indians fully understood the meaning of the word Freedom, and believed that "all men were created equal" and that "honor should be given those only to whom honor was due." Their government, however, was perhaps the only Indian government that was not representative in its form, its chiefs holding their position by reason of the right of heredity. All their wealth and stock belonged to the tribe in common, and they were bound to each other by the strongest bonds of brotherhood. They worshipped the "Great Spirit" whose power they saw and acknowledged in the splendor of the sun, the glories of the night, in the clear springs that bubble forth from the lips of Mother Earth, in the rippling brooks, the fertile valleys, the winding rivers, the clear water of the great lakes, the foliage of the forest, the great waters of the deep and the angry waves of the rivers, lakes and oceans. No important matter was ever undertaken without an appeal to the "Great Spirit." Their religion without creed or "ism," was a religion of "love one another."

The Indian did not know the value of his land or what the treaties really meant. To the Potawatomi Indians these



treaties meant that they would soon have to leave this beautiful Valley of the Wabash forever, and somewhere beneath the inverted bowl of heaven, decorated at night with stars, sparkling diamonds above them, find a hunting ground. In the spring time the air was filled with the perfume of blossom, of shrub or vine or tree. Nature, the master mechanic and landscape gardener, had full sway in woods and prairie, hill and valley. As these dusky warriors left the land of their youth forever, the pale face came to take their places, to clear the forest, to cultivate the land, over which they hunted, to build homes, and schools. And now of this mighty tribe there is not a vestige left in Indiana. To quote Mrs. Sigourney,

“Yes, say they have all passed away,  
That noble race and brave;  
That their light canoes have vanished  
From off the crested wave;  
That 'mid the forests where they roamed  
There rings no hunter's shout,  
But their names are on our waters  
And ye cannot wash them out.”